Dear Dr. Zucker,

Thank you for provisionally accepting the manuscript ASEB-22-209, “Consent Norms in the BDSM Community: Strong But Not Inflexible.” Below, we describe how we have responded to each of the revisions in the editorial decision letter.

Sincerely,

Hannah Tarleton

**1. Unmask everything in the revision.**

**2. Abstract: Provide the N/sex, not just the gender information as provided.**

In this study, we measured gender but not sex, so unfortunately we cannot provide sex information. However, we clarified the gender information by replacing the percentages with the counts for each group.

**3. Keywords: No more than 5-6. Relationships, scene, and “pickup playnua” do not strike me as useful. What is “playnua”?**

We have updated the keywords so that there are only 5.

**4. Avoid “and colleagues”: use et al.**

We have removed all “and colleagues” from the manuscript and instead used et al.

**5. Method, not Methods.**

We have changed the heading to Method.

**6. P. 9: change to A total of 202…**

We have changed the first sentence on P. 9 to say “A total of 202…”

**7. References: italicize the name of the journal.**

We checked all references to ensure that the name of the journal is italicized.

**8. Table 2: delete the Total row**

We have deleted the Total row.

**9. Table 3: italicize t, d**

We italicized the t and the d.

**10. Table 3: what do the asterisks signify?**

The asterisks signify significance (\**p* < .05, *\*\*\* p* < .001). We have added a footnote to Table 3 with this information.

**11. Figs. 1-3: If the response scale is 1-7, then 1 should be at the horizontal axis.**

We have updated the axis to appropriately reflect the response scale by making sure that 1 is at the horizontal axis.

**12. Fig. 1-3: Are the error bars SDs or SEs? Make this very clear in the revision.**

We have added a note underneath all figures to indicate that error bars show standard error.

**13. Your revised manuscript should be submitted within 3 months of receipt of this decision Letter. If the revision requires the collection of new data, it should be submitted within 6 months of receipt of this Letter. If you require an extension beyond either of these dates to resubmit, please contact me.**

Reviewer #3

This is an interesting and important topic, but the article leaves many questions in my mind. These are not simple questions and I do not think the authors can answer them. Are there differences between consent when playing in male-female dyads, versus male-male dyads, vs gender-expansive play (and all the combinations)? Was sex consented to differently than BDSM? How often did the BDSM play involve sex? This was an attitude survey--it did not elicit information about consent violations, either personally experienced or violations the respondents knew about. It did not ask about the circumstances of the initial play. Was it at a BDSM event where others were around? Was it pickup play between complete strangers vs. versus people who were recommended ("she is a hot bottom" or "he is an expert with a bullwhip" etc.)? There is no discussion of whether the respondents knew about or followed/ preferred RACK, SSC, or the 4Cs systems. How often were safewords used or how often the respondents expected they would be used? How many individuals were in a romantic relationship?

**We appreciate the reviewer’s agreement that this is an important topic and agree that the questions the reviewer poses are important to explore. However, they are beyond the scope of this study as it evaluates BDSM community norms, not actual consent practices. We have added to the future directions section to call for research on the effects of context of play on consent communication (p. 19) and consent practice behavior (p. 20). Additionally, to clarify the scope of the present study, we edited the abstract and present study section to emphasize the focus on community norms (p. 1 and p. 6).**

In the abstract, the authors state, "BDSM practitioners determine the required stringency of consent communication", but I do not see that discussion in the text.

**Clarified the sentence the reviewer was referencing in the abstract to focus on community norms (p. 1).**

It is relatively common in both college samples and experienced BDSM players to think that the strictness of consent applies to others, but not each other.

**This is a good point. We added to future directions to suggest exploring consent practice (p. 20)**

Did the respondents define themselves as BDSM practitioners? How experienced were they? Did they find the consent discussions awkward? Were the discussions easy for the respondents?

**The method section describes that the respondents are all kink identified and describes the range of time involved with kink (top of p. 9). Future directions examining the ease of consent conversations for participants could be valuable (p. 20).**

It appears that pickup play was the first or second scene, but not necessarily between strangers. I do not see the questionnaire in the supplemental materials, so I cannot be sure [Editor's note: Are there supplemental documents? If so, I did not see them].

**Thank you for pointing out how this may be confusing. We clarified how the question set order was determined in the method section (p. 9). We hope that the addition of supplemental materials clarifies this further.**

I do not know how the authors decided that consent during pickup play was more stringent and was the level of stringent consent statistically significant?

**Thank you for illuminating the need for clarity surrounding our main finding. We described how we measured and analyzed this hypothesis in the results section (bottom of p. 10-p. 11). To further clarify these findings for readers, we added “significantly” to discussion section (p. 15) to clarify that, as described in the results section (p. 12-13) and in Table 3, the results were significant.**

It also is not clear why the authors compared pickup play to romantic relationships rather than play among established BDSM partners.

**Expanded on reasoning for focus on pickup play and play in romantic relatinships in introduction (p. 6).**

It leads to questions about consent among long-term romantic partners beginning to add BDSM to their relationship.

**This is definitely an interesting question! We added this possibility to consider in future directions (p. 19).**

Top of page 11, were these individuals engaging in BDSM without a safeword? It is not clear that without a safeword these interactions would be considered consensual.

**Top of pg 11 clarified “explicitly establishing a safeword” to better represent the study - absence of an explicitly established safeword could mean either no safeword or a general community safeword, but that’s beyond the scope of this study**

Bottom of page 11, not clear that a top needs to renegotiate removing an activity, rather the top can choose not to do it.

**Our findings indicate that it was acceptable for both tops and bottoms to remove activities within pick-up play and within romantic relationships. We did not specifically examine the difference between a top choosing not to do an activity or needing to renegotiate the removal of the activity.**

**Idk what to add here because that feels like more of a judgment statement than anything. Sometimes tops do need to negotiate that. Tops can safeword too.,**

I am also not clear what renegotiating means in the context of this paper. One could imagine an agreement that slapping will be part of the scene, but the bottom did not realize that the top included face slapping in their definition while the bottom thought they were just agreeing to breast slapping. he bottom feels that face slapping is something they did not agree to and a consent violation. Is this renegotiating?

**While examining renegotiations is important in understanding consent practices, it is not focal to this research. Added note to future directions to investigate nature of renegotiations (p. 20). Supplemental materials now include the exact items we used, which include an example for renegotiations during a scene that should help add clarity to our operational definition.**

Top of page 12, "found no effects of self-identified BDSM role on renegotiation during a scene" but it is not clear if that is the respondent's self-identification or the grouping that the authors created.

**Thank you for pointing out how this may be confusing to readers. We clarified that this moderation analysis used BDSM role categories (p. 12) and expanded upon the BDSM role categorization in the method section (p. 10).**

Top of page 16, "slightly more acceptable,"--was this statistically significant. If not, what was the meaning of slightly more acceptable?

**Added “but significantly” to clarify this finding in the discussion section (p. 16).**

As I read the paper, I am questioning how experienced these respondents were in both BDSM and nonBDSM play. Were the respondents answering for themselves or their opinion of what the "community" would say?

**Experience, at least in terms of years, was described in the method section (p. 9). We are unsure what the reviewer means by “nonBDSM play” in this context. Clarified that the survey asked participants for personal opinions on p. 9 and suggestion for future directions investigating how personal belief may differ from practice (p. 20).**

It seems reasonable to assume that if a couple has not engaged in BDSM with each other before, the play may be a bit tentative. In a romantic relationship, we can assume that whatever is working will be expanded. One would expect that could explain the finding that the romantic partners were more intense.

**Our findings support the assumption stated by the reviewer here that newer couples may be more tentative when exploring their BDSM play, in that their consent communication will likely be more extensive. We are unsure which finding the reviewer is referring to regarding intensity, as this was not a variable measured in this study.**

In the end, I am not sure what meaningful insights can be gleaned from the paper, what it actually found. I really would like to see it published, but the authors need to clearer.

We are unsure what Reviewer 3 is expecting throughout this paper as we believe it is clear that this survey examined norms (neither attitudes nor actual behaviors). Thus most of the commentary is completely irrelevant for this paper as the questions refer to a study that do not exist. We could not ask about the specific context of the negotiations as the hypothetical negotiations never happened; we are looking more broadly at what beliefs people would expect to hold.