

# CARAS Conference on Leather-Kink Research and Clinical Knowledge (C2C)

## C2C-East 2023 Program Summary

April 7-9, 2023  
Cleveland, Ohio

Program Version: April 4, 2023

CARAS is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. CARAS maintains responsibility for this program and its content.





## About the C2C

The Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS) is excited to continue a unique collaboration between CARAS and the Cleveland Leather Annual Weekend (CLAW): the CARAS-CLAW Conference: Leather-Kink Research and Clinical Knowledge (C2C).

Join fellow researchers, health care professionals, educators, students, advocates and others for an engaging intellectual and professional experience in a unique venue. For psychologists and other health professionals who require Continuing Education (CE) for licensure, C2C attendees may earn up to 8 CE credits, as indicated in the program. All CE sessions include content at the introductory level.

This community-academic collaboration is a first example of how an academic-research-clinical conference can be embedded in a major community event. Now in our fourth iteration, the C2C has demonstrated that academic conferences do not have to be boring affairs!

Special thanks to Bob Miller, Carolyn Meeker, Robert Bienvenu, and Vivienne Kramer for their leadership and efforts to make this conference a reality!

## For More Information:

For current information regarding the C2C-East, please visit <https://carasresearch.org/c2c-east>

To download this program, please visit: [https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c\\_east\\_2023\\_program](https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c_east_2023_program)

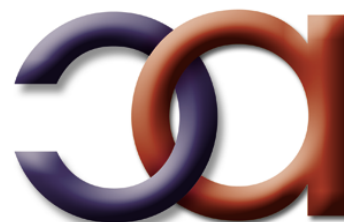
For CE program procedures and additional C2C-East CE session information, please visit: [https://caras-researchlink.org/C2C-East-2023\\_CE-Info](https://caras-researchlink.org/C2C-East-2023_CE-Info)

To subscribe to CARAS, please visit <https://www.carasresearch.org/subscribe>

For information about the C2C-West 2023, Nov. 24-26, 2023 in Los Angeles, please visit: <https://carasresearch.org/c2c-west>

For questions regarding the C2C, please email [c2c@carasresearch.org](mailto:c2c@carasresearch.org)

CARAS  
PO Box 699  
College Park, MD 20741



## C2C-East 2023: Schedule at a Glance

All C2C sessions are in the Superior Room (1st Floor), Renaissance Hotel

TIME	SESSION	LEAD PRESENTER(S)
	<b>Thursday, April 6, 2023</b>	
6:00-8:00 pm	Meet the Faculty, CLAW 23 Meet and Greet Renaissance Cleveland Hotel, Gold Assembly, 3rd Floor	
	<b>Friday, April 7, 2023</b>	
9:00-9:30	Friday, April 7, 2023: C2C Kickoff!	Carolyn Meeker Andrea Echols Rob Bienvenu
9:30-10:30	Expanding the Research Design Repertoire: Use of Biomarkers and Digital Measures in Kink Research (1 CE)	Rob Bienvenu
11:00-12:30	Getting Out of Jail Free? The Legal (Im)possibilities of Rough Sex/BDSM (1 CE)	Alex Fanghanel
12:00-4:00	<i>CARAS Booth at the CLAW Vendor Mart</i>	
2:00-4:00	The Egalitarian Monogamist and Other Embarrassing Identities: Studies of Consent and Stigma Within the BDSM Community (2CE)	Taylor MacKenzie Brad Sagarin
4:30-5:30	Erotic Adventures at Play: Injuries, Medical Complications, and Navigating Health Care Encounters (1 CE)	Richard Sprott Anna Randall
	<b>Saturday, April 8, 2023</b>	
9:30-10:30	Communaked: Using Nudity and Informed Consent to Heal Shame and Foster Connection	James Laidler Dennis Nguyen
11:00-12:30	Autism and BDSM (1 CE)	Ariel Pliskin
12:00-4:00	<i>CARAS Booth at the CLAW Vendor Mart</i>	
2:00-4:00	Where Does Leather/Kink Fit Into Mental Health Training? (2 CE)	Katherine King Rob Bienvenu Andrea Echols
4:30-5:30	What Research on Leather and Kink is Needed Today? Community Leaders and Researchers Panel Discussion	Community and Researcher panelists & audience members
	<b>Sunday, April 9, 2023</b>	
11:00-12:30	What're You Into?: Exploring Dating from an Anti-Racist Perspective	Dennis Nguyen
2:00-3:30	CARAS Research Consultation	CARAS Staff
12:00-2:00	<i>CARAS Booth at the CLAW Vendor Mart</i>	
For additional information about the CARAS Continuing Education (CE) program, and C2C East 2023 CE sessions, please visit the URL below or QR code to the right:		
<a href="https://caras-researchlink.org/C2C-East-2023_CE-Info">https://caras-researchlink.org/C2C-East-2023_CE-Info</a>		

## Expanding the Research Design Repertoire: Use of Biomarkers and Digital Measures in Kink Research

**Robert Bienvenu, Ph.D.**  
**Brad Sagarin, Ph.D.\*\***

This session continues a discussion launched by CARAS in 2022 about expanding the approaches used by scientists to study leather/kink/BDSM.

In this session we will provide a brief overview of the current research on leather/kink, from a research design perspective.

We will then focus on two particular design and data collection approaches: first, the use of biomarkers (such as chemical stress indicators that can be collected from saliva), which are rarely found in alt-sex research today.

Second, we will focus on digital measures, which can be collected from various devices that people today carry with them such as smart phones and watches. Digital measures are extremely rare or nonexistent in alt-sex research today, but are quickly becoming an important part of the research "toolkit," particularly in clinical research.

**\*\*Acknowledgment and thanks to Brad Sagarin, Ph.D., for materials incorporated into this presentation that were developed as part of an earlier joint presentation.**

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Friday, April 7, 2023**

9:30 - 10:30 am

CE Credits: 1

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## Learning Objectives

1. Define "biomarker" and describe the role of biomarkers in clinical and non-clinical research;
2. Define "digital measure" and how digital measures may be used in research; and
3. Assess potential uses of biomarkers and digital measures in research focused on alternative sexualities.

## Getting Out of Jail Free? The Legal (Im)possibilities of Rough Sex/BDSM

**Alexandra Fanghanel, Ph.D.**

Recent decades have seen the rise of criminal cases in which people accused of violent offences against the person occurring during a sexual encounter claim that what happened between the parties was consensual. This so-called 'rough sex' defence relies on tropes of kinky or sadomasochistic sexual practice to function as a coherent defence in the court room.

This presentation explores what is afoot in cases where this defence that injury or death that occurs within a sexual encounter is consensual is used. How are kink or BDSM narratives used as part of this rough sex defence? What assumption about BDSM do they rely upon? Is there, indeed, a difference between rough sex and BDSM? This presentation relies on data gleaned from an English legal context to work through these ideas.

Firstly, we will examine what has happened over the past 20 years in terms of the rise of the use of this 'rough sex' defence in criminal cases. Then, we will examine how practitioners of BDSM define their own practice alongside the ways in which these same practices appear to be understood in criminal cases. We will examine whether rough sex is the same thing as BDSM and whether BDSM is equivalent to rough sex. We will examine what the implications of this co-option of BDSM practice in criminal discourse are for practitioners of sadomasochistic sex who, in other contexts, already find their sexual practice criminalised. Finally, we will consider what the implications of BDSM potentially entering a mainstream legal course are. Do the subcultural elements of BDSM practice still matter? Does BDSM as a subculture need to be preserved?

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Friday, April 7, 2023**

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

CE Credits: 1

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## Learning Objectives

1. Describe the similarities and differences between BDSM and rough sex;
2. Describe the process of sexuality research using legal documents; and
3. In reference to particular legal cases, assess the effects of the intersection between subcultural sexual practices and the mainstream.

## The Egalitarian Monogamist and Other Embarrassing Identities: Studies of Consent and Stigma within the BDSM Community

**Taylor Mackenzie, B.Sc.**  
**Brad Sagarin, Ph.D.**

In this presentation, we share the results of two of our latest studies, one on the nuances of consent communication among BDSM practitioners and the other on stigma within the BDSM community.

The BDSM community is generally regarded as having strict consent practices, such as safewords and explicit negotiations. However, no research to date has examined the flexibility of these consent practices. The first study that we will be presenting was designed to investigate the nuances of consent communication among BDSM practitioners, specifically the degree to which relationship context impacts the depth and nature of consent negotiations. Participants generally endorsed stringent consent communication but showed greater flexibility in consent communication practices in longer-term relationships than short-term relationships. Results suggest that potential risks, such as not knowing how a partner communicates or what they enjoy, are taken into account when BDSM practitioners determine the required stringency of consent communication.

After that, we will be sharing the results of our latest study that examined which BDSM interests, activities, dynamics, and relationship styles BDSM practitioners would be hesitant to disclose to others within the BDSM community. Results demonstrate that, although BDSM practitioners readily disclose some activities and identities to other practitioners (impact play, bondage, Dominant/submissive dynamics), practitioners express hesitation regarding other activities and identities (race play, scat play, swinging).

These findings provide insight into another potential source of stigma faced by BDSM practitioners: the BDSM community itself.

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Friday, April 7, 2023**

2:00 - 4:00 pm

CE Credits: 2

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## Learning Objectives

1. Identify three differences between consent communication practices for people participating in pick-up play compared to people participating in scenes with a romantic partner; and
2. Identify three activities and three identities that are stigmatized within the BDSM community.

## **Erotic Adventures at Play: Injuries, Medical Complications, and Navigating Health Care Encounters**

**Richard Sprott, Ph.D.**  
**Anna Randall, DHS, MSW, MPH, LCSW**

Kink activities broaden erotic expression beyond the genital, yet erotic activities such as bondage, rough sex, and other fetish activities may place practitioners at increased risk for injury or medical complications. Over their lifetimes, 13.50% of kinky people reported an injury or medical complication related to their kink or BDSM activities and 19% reported delaying or avoiding healthcare because of perceived stigma. Understanding the complex psychological implications to clients who experience kink injuries may increase confidence and proficiency in kink-affirming care.

Built upon findings from TASHRA health surveys and additional published research, we will detail existing and recent research on the risk profiles of kink activities, common injuries and their contributing factors; and self reports of incidents and clinical interactions between health providers and kink participants. Particulars regarding vulnerable subgroups, comorbidities, and maladaptive behaviors will be presented.

### **Details**

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Friday, April 7, 2023**

4:30 - 5:30 pm

CE Credits: 1

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### **Learning Objectives**

1. Describe three common injuries or health complications related to kink activities; and
2. Explain the impact of anticipated stigma and perceived risk of injury or medical complication on decisions to delay or avoid care.

## Communaked: Using Nudity and Informed Consent to Heal Shame and Foster Connection

**James Laidle, MA, B.S.**  
**Dennis Nguyen, MSW, LCSW**

Social nudism has seen a steep rise in popularity—often attributed to the pandemic lockdown highlighting the virtues of not putting pants on—but it's also proven to be good for your health. Communal naked activity improves body image and social anxiety and is also linked to lower levels of depression, healthier diets, and less disordered eating.

But queer nudist groups, like most queer spaces, have a problem: They are dominated by 'homonormative' culture where neoliberal, white, upper-class values reign supreme and sexual activity remains taboo. No boners please. Conversely, in many sexual settings it is connection and emotional intimacy that is unwelcome. No names, and definitely no conversation.

Communaked, based in Chicago, is a group of sex-positive men that facilitates an array of naked events, with transparent and intentional boundaries, in order to foster empathy, connection, and friendship. In this presentation, the founders will demonstrate how they use relational cultural theory, trauma-informed sex-positive approaches to sexual pleasure, and intentional community design practices to create an innovative alt-sex community that reduces internalized sex shame and uplifts marginalized identities.

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Saturday, April 8, 2023**

9:30 - 10:30 am

CE Credits: n/a

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## Learning Objectives

1. Describe how nudity in group environments reduces shame among queer men;
2. Apply informed consent techniques to build community and uplift marginalized identities; and
3. Design groups, spaces, and events that acknowledge shame and employ strategies to promote healing.



## Autism and BDSM

### Ariel Pliskin, MSW, LCSW

Have you wondered how autistic and other neurodivergent people have contributed to BDSM? Or if autistic people are particularly drawn to the kink community, and if so, why?

This presentation aims to be sex positive and neurodiversity affirming and will share relevant findings from recent psychological and social science research. Among these, Kink may meet distinct sensory needs as a form of self-stimulatory behavior, or "stimming." Norms of explicit negotiation and consent can meet a neurodivergent preference for clear structure and explicit, literal language. BDSM provides opportunities to hyperfocus and experience "flow" as a positive psychological state.

Socially, BDSM can offer inclusion and accommodation to people who have faced exclusion, prejudice and discrimination. BDSM can also provide liberation from heteronormative scripts which harm autistic people (and all people).

Neurodivergent audience members will be invited to share reflections on the following questions: How has BDSM met needs related to your own neurodivergence? In what ways have BDSM cultures been more inclusive to you than other spaces? How could BDSM communities grow to be more accessible and inclusive to autistic people?

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Saturday, April 8, 2023**

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

CE Credits: 1

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## Learning Objectives

1. Describe two socio-cultural streams that combined by the 1990's to shape an autism-friendly BDSM that exists today;
2. List neurodivergent sensorimotor needs and identify sexual and BDSM activities which may satisfy them;
3. Compare the differential impact of discrimination on autistic people assigned male and those assigned female;
4. Define neuronormativity and heteronormativity, explain how the neurodiversity paradigm differs from the pathology paradigm and explain the relationship between neuronormativity and heteronormativity.

## Challenges in Incorporating Kink into the Psychology/Mental Health Curriculum

**Katherine King, Psy.D.**  
**Robert Bienvenu, Ph.D.**  
**Andrea Echols, M.Ed.**

In the early 21st century, generations of work by scholars and activists have created institutional frameworks that recognize and support LGBTQ+ people in healthcare, education, law, and other areas of society. In various academic and professional disciplines today there is the ability to focus on queer studies and LGBTQ+ populations. The same cannot be said for kink, leather, BDSM, M/s, or fetish populations. While there has been some progress, for example in fostering recognition and some recommended standards for what is expected of a "kink-aware" professional, today there are no degrees in "kink studies" and this is an area that is not incorporated in the standard curriculum at educational institutions that train professionals and scholars.

This workshop will focus on the challenges of bringing kink knowledge to the curriculum of psychology and other mental health disciplines. There are various elements of this, including understanding existing accreditation and training models, destigmatizing kink and leather in academia, and building a base of supporting research. There are also issues that are specific to disciplines and educational institutions such as how "curriculum" is defined and the bureaucratic processes through which knowledge is certified and institutionally supported.

We will define key terms, provide an overview of today's typical curriculum for clinical psychology and related mental health disciplines, with focus on what a "kink-aware" curriculum might look like. We will look at existing domains of competency, and how to kink/leather education may fit into these areas. We will also explore pragmatic starting points and practical strategies for eventually achieving this across the many institutions that train mental health professionals.

This workshop will be interactive and will provide opportunities to discuss and brainstorm particular issues that must be addressed in order for a mental health branch of "kink studies" to be institutionalized.

The voice and knowledge of community members is a critical part of this process, and we invite members of the CLAW community who are not academics or clinicians to join us as we define this important task.

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Saturday, April 8, 2023**

2:00 - 4:00 pm

CE Credits: 2

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## Learning Objectives

1. Describe typical content areas that comprise the curriculum in clinical psychology educational programs today;
2. Define attributes of kink populations and practices that are relevant to competent clinical work with kink clients in psychology;
3. Analyze gaps that exist in today's typical clinical psychology curriculum with reference to kink populations and practices; and
4. Propose strategies for incorporating this knowledge in clinical psychology curriculum in the future.

## What Research on Leather and Kink is Needed Today?

**Rob Bienvenu, Ph.D. (Facilitator)**

Panelists

Community	Researchers
Bob Miller	Kate King
TBA	Ted Gideonse
TBA	Rob Bienvenu

and Audience Members!

A founding principle of CARAS, the Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities, is that active collaboration between researchers and sexuality communities is essential for high quality sexualities research. To enact this kind of community-academic collaboration requires respect, on-going communication, identification of research questions that are relevant to the communities being studied, and the ability to challenge misrepresentations, among other factors. This "community-engaged" approach to research has been variously titled, but in all cases involves active communication between community members and researchers.

This panel discussion provides a forum for such active communication — between community leaders with a deep understanding of kink-leather-BDSM communities and folk, and researchers who are focused on these communities in their work.

In this session we provide an overview of a community-engaged research approach, some examples of academic research addressing kink, and then engage in a discussion between community leaders and researchers about research.

Audience members are encouraged to join this discussion about what research addressing Leather, BDSM and kink is important and ought to be a focus of researchers today!

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

**Saturday, April 8, 2023**

4:30 - 5:30 pm

CE Credits: n/a

## Learning Objectives

1. Identify key principles of community-engaged research;
2. Assess strengths and weaknesses of community-engaged vs. not community-engaged approaches to research addressing kink-leather-BDSM communities; and
3. Propose and prioritize key issues that should be a topic of research today, from both a community and academic perspective. Present a list of the final recommendations.

This is the fourth iteration of this panel discussion - previous discussions were held in Los Angeles (x2) and Cleveland (x1). CARAS plans to publish a summary of the recommendations from these sessions in 2023.

## What're You Into?: Exploring Dating From an Intersectional Perspective

**Dennis Nguyen, MSW, LCSW**

Dating is hard. What makes it harder is that technology and dating culture are evolving at an intense speed. Queer folks dating in the 2020s have to balance limited advice from mentors who remember using gay.com and figuring out new landscapes with dating apps and social media, particularly for those with intersectional identities (ex. kink, poly/non-monogamous, POC).

In the absence of queer mentors or experienced peers, clients often look to their counselors and friends for guidance. It is our duty as queer mental health professionals and mentors to stay up to date on strategies to help our clients navigate modern dating.

This workshop will facilitate this by exploring common issues in queer/kink/poly dating utilizing an anti-racist perspective, provide examples of concrete tools to navigate dating, and explore intersectional issues when discussing dating.

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Sunday, April 9, 2023**

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

CE Credits: n/a

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## Learning Objectives

1. Describe common issues in queer dating utilizing an anti-racist perspective;
  2. Demonstrate tools to navigate dating; and
  3. Explain intersectional issues when discussing dating.
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## CARAS Research Consultation

### CARAS Staff

During this session, and otherwise by appointment, students and other individuals or organizations interested in conducting research on kink, leather, consensual non-monogamy, or related sex work topics may meet with CARAS scientists to discuss their ideas and projects. The scope of these discussions may range from early project brainstorming, to specific discussions including research design considerations, methodology, ethics-regulatory (IRB) review, and potential multi-institutional collaborations.

For more information and to schedule an appointment, please chat with a CARAS staff member onsite and/or email CARAS at [c2c@carasresearch.org](mailto:c2c@carasresearch.org)

## Details

Superior Room (1st Floor),  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

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**Sunday, April 9, 2023**

2:00 -3:30 pm

This session may extend to 4:30

CE Credit: n/a

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## Learning Objectives

n/a

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# C2C Scientific Posters

## **The Effects of Societal Stigma on Sex Workers: How Do They Manage?**

This poster reviews the existing literature regarding the effects societal stigma has on the personal lives of sex workers, the barriers that they face because of societal stigma, and the ways in which they try to address these concerns. Research shows that stigma negatively impacts sex workers' mental health (Treloar et al., 2021), strains sex workers' interpersonal relationships (Wolfe, 2019), and negatively impacts sex workers' working conditions (Benoit et al., 2018). This environment leads to an increase in their feelings of guilt and shame (internalized stigma; Wolfe, 2019; Siegel, 2022). Systematic barriers related to societal stigma include inadequate access to healthcare (Wolfe, 2019) and unequal treatment by the criminal justice system (Wolfe, 2019). Sex workers use multiple stigma management techniques to try to ease the impact of stigma. Such techniques include information control, distancing techniques, identity management, reframing, and rejection of societal stereotypes (Siegel et al., 2022; Benoit et al., 2020). These techniques will be explored and examples will be given regarding how they may look. To this end, research that highlights the voices of sex workers as they share their lived experience with regards to stigma and stigma management will be highlighted and centered.

Alexandria (Lexie) Evans,  
B.A.

Wendy Dragon Ph.D.

## **Between Memory and Archives: Tracing the History of Pet Play**

Due to the stigmatization and marginalization of alternative sexualities, their history is often shrouded in myths. Despite its rising prominence in recent decades, pet play, in which adult humans perform behaviors culturally associated with pets, also faces the challenge of ascertaining its often mythologized past. The poster highlights findings from ongoing research on pet play history that are mainly based on oral history and archival materials from the Leather Archives and Museum (LA&M). We aim to demonstrate how online and offline events facilitated the emergence of dynamic communities, the importance of gear culture in performing pet identities, and the growing international solidarity across different forms of pet play. Due to the limited space, the poster emphasizes pup play as the main case study.

Guangshuo Yang, Ph.D.

# Presenter Biography

## Robert Bienvenu, Ph.D.

Rob Bienvenu is a sociologist with over twenty years of federal research, research management, and regulatory affairs experience. His research has focused on two areas: health, and the history and social organization of kink communities. Rob is a co-founder of CARAS and serves as its Executive Director. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Leather Archives and Museum, and a member of the selection committee of the Leather Hall of Fame.

## Andrea Echols, M.Ed.

Andrea Echols, M.Ed., LPC, NCC, is a kink-aware licensed professional counselor in Alabama that is working toward a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision. She graduated with a BS in Psychology, then earned a M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the University of Montevallo. Currently, she is working toward a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Alabama. She is also the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) Coordinator for CARAS.

## Alexandra (Lexie) Evans, B.A.

Lexie Evans is currently a second year psychology doctoral student at Wright State University's School of Professional Psychology in Dayton, Ohio. Her clinical areas of interest include forensic psychology, sex work, stigma and stigma management.

## Alexandra Fanghanel, Ph.D.

Alexandra Fanghanel, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Criminology at the University of Greenwich, London, UK. She is co-lead of the Gender, Deviance and Society Research Group. She researches public space, securitisation, and sexuality. Dr. Fanghanel is also a member of the CARAS Institutional Review Board (IRB). Her recent book, *Disrupting Rape Culture: Public Space, Sexuality and Revolt* was published in paperback in 2020 by Bristol University Press.

## Ted Gideonse, Ph.D., MFA

Ted Gideonse is an Assistant Professor of Teaching in the Department of Health, Society, and Behavior and Director of Undergraduate Affairs in the Program in Public Health at the University of California, Irvine. He also serves as the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities, an organization he discovered while volunteering for CLAW. Ted is a medical and psychological anthropologist, and his research has focused on the psychocultural effects of health discourses, particularly those focused on sex, drugs, and HIV. At UCI, he teaches the massive survey course "AIDS Fundamentals" and the writing-intensive Undergraduate Public Health Practicum, the capstone experience for Public Health BA and BS students. Dr. Gideonse received a BA in Sociocultural Anthropology from Harvard College, an MFA in Creative Writing from the New School University, and a PhD in Anthropology from the University of California, San Diego. Before academia, Dr. Gideonse was a journalist, a literary agent, a film critic, and, rather briefly, a judge for Guinness World Records. He lives in Downtown Los Angeles with his partner and their two cats Bob and Kip Noll.

## Katherine King, Psy.D.

Dr. Katherine King is a psychologist, assistant professor, and geropsychology concentration director in the clinical psychology doctoral program at William James College. She is a member of the APA's Division 44 Committee on Consensual Non- Monogamy and has a small psychotherapy practice helping people with concerns about aging, health, gender, sexuality, relationships, and trauma.

## James Laidler, MA, B.S.

James Laidler is a British Academy Award-winning journalist, formerly at BBC News, and now lead coach at Pointerway, where he helps queer men express authenticity, heal trauma, and navigate community. He's a Masters candidate in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. James identifies as an immigrant and a cis queer White male.

## Taylor MacKenzie, B.Sc.

Taylor Mackenzie is a graduate student in the Social/Industrial-Organizational program at Northern Illinois University. Their primary research interests are stigma and gender. They received a B.Sc. degree majoring in Psychology with a Human Services concentration and Sociology and GWS studies minors from Appalachian State University in 2021.

<b>Carolyn Meeker, Ed.D.</b>	Dr. Carolyn Meeker (she/her) is the director of Experiential and Career Education at Stetson University in Florida, USA. She also serves as the Mentoring Program Director for the Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS). Carolyn has an AA in Humanities from College of the Canyons, a BA in Spanish and an MEd in Counseling in Student Affairs from UCLA, and an EdD in Adult Education and Human Resource Development from FIU. Carolyn's work and research interests include career and professional development, identity, and allyship in the workplace.
<b>Bob Miller, Esq.</b>	Bob is the President and co-founder of CLAW Corp, and the founder and Director of the Leather Hall of Fame. He serves on the Boards of Leather Archives & Museum, Int'l Mr. Leather and CARAS, and is the General Manager of Alphatribe USA. In 2016, Bob was awarded a life-time achievement award by the National LGBTQ Task Force's for his years of service to the leather community. He is a lawyer, writer and a grass- roots progressive political organizer. He lives in Desert Hot Springs, California.
<b>Dennis Nguyen, MSW, LCSW</b>	Dennis Nguyen is a Chicago based Social Worker dedicated to serving Queer BIPOC through inclusive and evidence-based behavior change counseling. His passion is exploring how intersectionality affects our experiences and helping others through counseling, community building, and workshops. Dennis identifies as a cis queer Southeast Asian male.
<b>Ariel Pliskin, MSW, LCSW</b>	Ariel Pliskin, MSW, LCSW (they/them) is an autistic ADHDer. They offer psychotherapy and sex education in Massachusetts. Ariel's published scholarly work and presentations address autism and neurodivergence, and these are a focus of their current clinical and research interest.
<b>Anna Randall, DHS, MSW, MPH, LCSW</b>	Anna Randall, DHS, MSW, MPH, LCSW (she/her/hers) is Co-Founder & Executive Director of TASHRA - The Alternative Sexualities Health Research Alliance ( <a href="http://tashra.org">tashra.org</a> ). In her private clinical practice, she is a sex therapist and California licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), working with individuals, couples, and other relational configurations. <a href="http://DrAnnaRandall.com">DrAnnaRandall.com</a>
<b>Brad Sagarin, Ph.D.</b>	Dr. Brad Sagarin is a professor of social and evolutionary psychology at Northern Illinois University and the head of the Science of BDSM Research Team ( <a href="http://www.scienceofbds.com">www.scienceofbds.com</a> ). Brad studies social influence, resistance to persuasion, deception, jealousy, infidelity, human sexuality, and statistics. Brad has been published in a variety of scholarly journals, has given radio, television, and podcast interviews, has consulted for radio and television programs, and has delivered invited lectures to academic and non-academic organizations. His research has been cited in newspapers and magazines, including The Economist and New Scientist. He holds Doctorate and Master's degrees in Social Psychology from Arizona State University, and a Baccalaureate degree in Computer Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
<b>Richard Sprott, Ph.D.</b>	Richard Sprott received his Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from UC Berkeley in 1994. He is currently the Research Director of TASHRA – The Alternative Sexualities Health Research Alliance.
<b>Guangshuo Yang, Ph.D.</b>	Guangshuo Yang Ph.D. is a historian studying how changing ideas about nonhuman animals have affected human identity and sociability. His current project includes recording oral histories of people engaged in animal role-play. An exhibition of this project opens at the Leather Archives & Museum in March.



# History of the C2C

Leather and Kink community events have long had an educational mission, dating from the first public SM organizations in the early 1970's, and from their beginnings these community events have included presentations by researchers, clinicians, and other scholars. Also, scholars interested in kink-leather communities have presented on these groups at various academic conferences since the late 1960's. More recently, academic conferences focused on alternative sexualities have had educational sessions or special-interest group meetings at concurrent leather community events, such the MOTE conference and IML in Chicago in 2019. However, prior to the C2C there has never been a complete integration of a major academic conference and a major community event, and CARAS is proud to have taken the lead, on the academic side, to make this possible.

The idea for the C2C originated in a series of conversations primarily between Bob Miller and Rob Bienvenu. Bob Miller, as co-founder and President of CLAW, and also Chair of the CARAS Board of Directors, was uniquely positioned to recognize the importance of this kind of collaboration and facilitate discussions between the two organizations. Rob Bienvenu, a co-founder and Executive Director of CARAS, saw this collaboration as a tremendous opportunity to implement the community-based model of research that has been part of the core mission of CARAS since its founding in 2005. We're very proud of the C2C, and look forward to further learning and development of the C2C over time, and to others adopting and expanding this model of community-academic collaboration!

## **C2C-West 2021, November 26-28, 2021, Los Angeles**

Over Thanksgiving weekend 2021, integrated into the CLAW 21 event, CARAS hosted the first C2C. The event was held at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, between Friday and Sunday, November 26-28, 2021. Vivienne Kramer, a CARAS Board member and distinguished community leader, managed the first C2C event. The conference was a great success, both professionally rewarding and fun for the participants, and from a practical organizational-logistical perspective demonstrated the viability of the concept. With this experience "under our belt," CARAS and CLAW agreed to continue the C2C collaboration in 2022. The event program can be downloaded from: [https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c\\_west\\_2021\\_program](https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c_west_2021_program)

## **C2C-East 2022, April 29 - May 1, 2022, Cleveland**

In late 2021 CARAS assembled a team to plan and execute a second C2C as part of the CLAW 22 event in Cleveland. Carolyn Meeker, Director of the CARAS Mentoring Program, volunteered to serve as the Project Coordinator for the C2C, with support from CARAS staff and volunteers as well as the superb CLAW team. It was another successful event, during which CARAS was designated as CLAW's Organization of the Year! The event program can be downloaded from: [https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c\\_east\\_2022\\_program](https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c_east_2022_program)

## **C2C-West 2022, November 25-27, 2022, Los Angeles**

In partnership with the the new CLAW Leather Getaway event, CARAS returned to Los Angeles to host the C2C (v3) over Thanksgiving weekend, 2022. The event program can be downloaded from: [https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c\\_west\\_2022\\_program](https://caras-researchlink.org/c2c_west_2022_program)

## **C2C-East 2023, April 7-9, 2023, Cleveland**

Our current event. We welcome Andrea Echols, who joins to CARAS team as a C2C Coordinator! For current information, please visit: <https://carasresearch.org/c2c-east>

## **C2C-West 2023, November 24-26, 2023, Los Angeles**

Forthcoming over Thanksgiving weekend, 2023. Please visit <https://carasresearch.org/c2c-west> to submit a session proposal and for current information!

# About CARAS

Founded at the Leather Leadership Conference in 2005, CARAS is the leading community-based organization that actively supports leather & kink focused research across multiple scholarly disciplines, from clinical research to the humanities and fine arts. Some current CARAS programs are highlighted below. You can support CARAS by subscribing and volunteering — join the CARAS team to learn about and promote alt-sex research! Community members, students, academics, researchers, and clinicians are welcome.

For more information, please visit our website at <https://carasresearch.org>.

## CARAS Mentoring Program

The CARAS Mentoring Program involves an eight-month one-on-one mentoring relationship. The program matches graduate students and early-career professionals in academic, research, counseling, and other alternative-sexualities related career paths with more advanced scholars and professionals. Mentors and mentees commit to talking at least once a month by video conference (e.g., Zoom), phone, or email during the eight-month duration of the mentoring program. Starting in 2023, CARAS will facilitate one mentoring cohort each year. The next cohort will commence in early 2024.

For more information and to apply, please visit: <https://carasresearch.org/mentoring>

## CARAS History and Theory of Kink-BDSM Reading Group

The CARAS History and Theory of Kink-BDSM Reading Group meets monthly to discuss readings ranging from classical texts in sexological theory and literature addressing kink/BDSM, to modern topics including the DSM and current kink/leather communities. A cross between a literary salon and a graduate seminar, the reading group will focus on these texts and ideas from a unique angle in the study of sexualities. Join a diverse group of community members, students, academics, and clinicians to engage some of the most important and challenging texts in the history and theory of kink! Beginning in 2023, CARAS will host two distinct "semesters" of the Reading Group: a Spring "Modern" semester from January-May and a Fall "Classics" semester, from August-December. The Fall Classics semester will offer Continuing Education (CE) credit for healthcare professionals.

For more information, please visit:

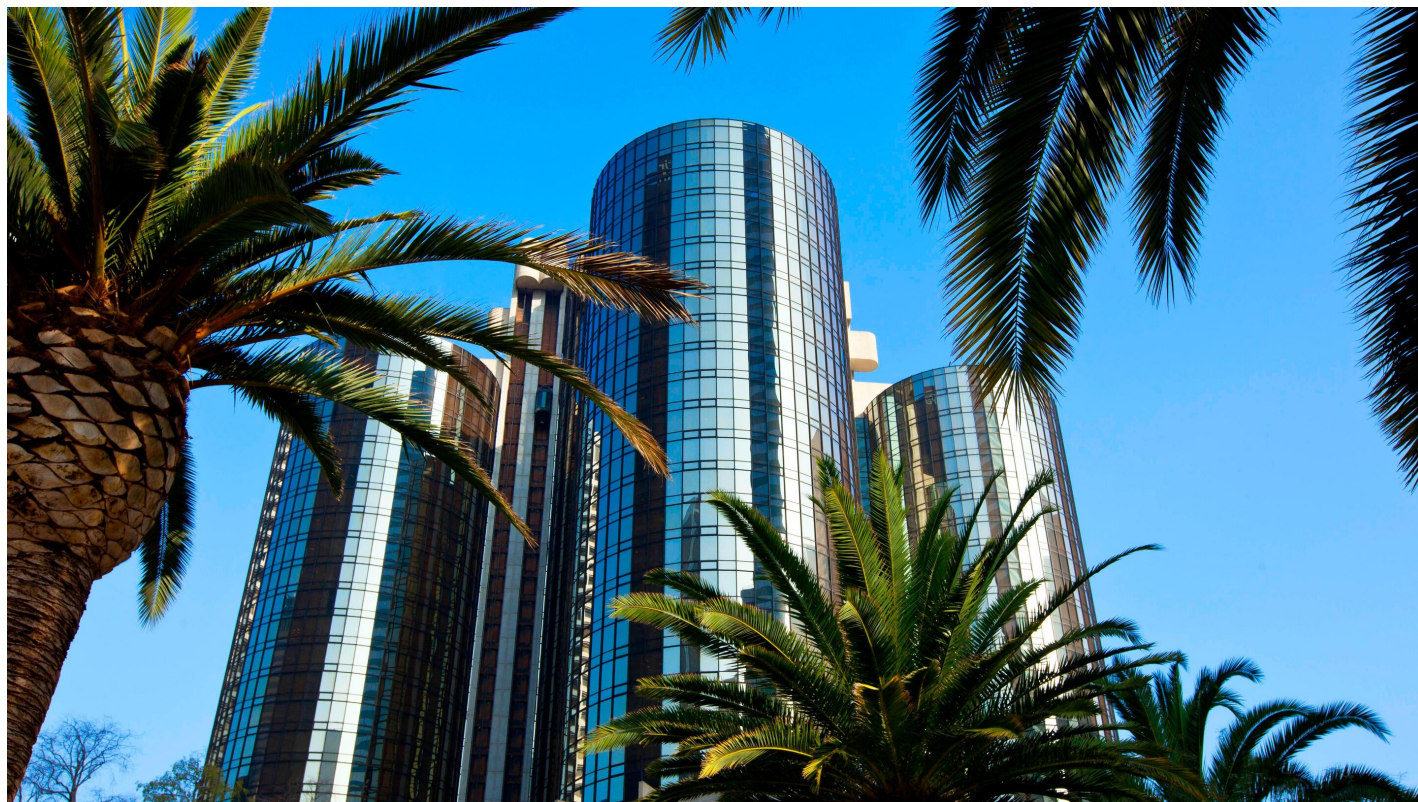
<https://caras-researchlink.org/reading-group-classics>

<https://caras-researchlink.org/reading-group-modern>

## CARAS Education Program

The CARAS Education Program provides webinars and in-person educational sessions, organizes educational conferences such as the C2C, and co-sponsors educational events with other organizations. CARAS offers a webinar program that includes research and clinical topics, as well as presentations and workshops by community experts on a wide variety of topics that are of interest to alt-sex community members and scholars. Many CARAS webinars offer Continuing Education (CE) credit.

For more information, please visit: <https://caras-researchlink.org/education>



**Join us for the C2C West 2023 Conference in Los Angeles,  
November 24-26, 2023**

**The Call for Proposals is Open!**

<https://carasresearch.org/c2c-west>



