



Part 3 - All the way - gray rape and third base

[This stream of consciousness comment](#) has been bothering me for a while but I haven't quite had the energy to tackle it until now when I was shamed into doing so because some other poor bugger has come and read the post, found the comment, and probably wondered (rightfully) why that comment wasn't taken to task by me already – I mean, especially given [this whole post](#) is written in response to troubling comments from another man on [another part of my blog](#).

Quick things I want to say about the issues raised in that comment:

- Avoiding rape is not much like avoiding mugging; people need to desist with this comparison. My vagina is not a purse, it is not my job to be careful when I walk about that you don't realise I have my vagina with me. It is a part of my body, I have a right to exist with my body parts. Other reasons why rape is not like mugging – you don't generally find that 3 out of 4 people mugged are mugged by someone they know/like/love/trust. (For more on why rape is *not* like mugging read [this](#) or [this](#) or [this](#)).
- 'Gray rape', as described in [this infamous Cosmopolitan article](#) has already been roundly criticised [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#). These are great responses which I can't improve upon so I'll leave that there.
- 'Gray rape' as described in [this infamous The New York Times article](#) has been thoroughly criticised [here](#). (Note that I have included a male critic of the 'gray rape' concept for each of these articles as evidence that men can and do understand the concept of consent).
- No-one I know who was raped has ever described their experience as 'gray rape'. I am sure there are some ambiguous encounters but I don't know much about them, personally, and I haven't been at all convinced by the definitions provided in those two articles above. I do think, however, that feminists should enter into a discussion of the more ambiguous settings of rape because it really needs exploration and analysis. Like, the Julian Assange case has really shown, if nothing else, that the world wants to talk about it. So I am happy to talk about gray rape.
- But, gray rape is *not* – when she says no to sex but you had great sex a week ago so she must have known what you'd want when she came over; when she says no to sex but she did just start a blow-job for you so what's the difference; when he says no to sex but he has an erection so he must be lying; when she says no to anal sex or sex without a condom but you think she will get into it once you start; when she was so high she couldn't answer yes or no; when she says no to sex while lying naked in bed with you. Ignoring the lack of consent would make all of these scenarios plain old rape and there is nothing novel or gray about them.
- 'Numb' is different to 'passive'. We should take note of rape victims/survivors describing their response as 'numb'. It is significant. As Jim C. Hines says [here](#):



Isn't it her responsibility to say no and make it clear she's not interested? Is it fair to blame the guy if someone's sending mixed signals?

This seems like a duh moment to me, but the phrase "mixed signals" means the signals are mixed. There's no clear message as to what the person wants ... meaning you have to find out. With as much miscommunication as you get in most relationships, don't you think it's a good idea to make sure you're both on the same page?

When working with rape survivors, I talked to a number of people who had frozen when they realized what was happening. Sometimes these were people who had been raped before. **Freezing is a survival response to a threat. It does not equal consent.**

(My use of bold above).

- If someone goes numb in a situation of fear they don't have a choice about whether they can refuse more firmly for you in order for you to feel they are justified. They are numb with fear and shock! As [this comment](#) points out, fighting back in a situation of rape can get you beaten/killed. Someone who doesn't fight back during rape may be trying to minimise the threat they face. And not realising initially that you were raped can be a product of a victim-blaming culture rather than a "comical" lack of self-awareness about one's sexuality.
- Second, note this. If in doubt about the consent, if you really can't tell if someone is 'just giving in' or 'being overcome with arousal' (a la *the heat in our crotches*, as described in that comment) you could ask ([it can even be quite a hot experience to ask](#)). Yes, it is possible for someone to change their mind, be overwhelmed with lust for you, (I've changed my mind before, too) but you need to check. You should aim for 'enthusiastic consent', as described [here](#) by Jeff Vandermeer:

There is a reason for the "enthusiastic" part of the phrase. Consent without enthusiasm is rather lukewarm. "OK FINE go ahead." "I don't care." "I have no opinion." "Whatever, if it gets you to get off my back." Consent that is in place because it's easier than saying "no" isn't much different from rejection. It is given because the giver feels there is no other choice (besides the potential for abuse, violence, and other bad things).

We need to stop assuming that we can communicate desires through some convoluted dance of subtle cues and half-no's. Consent should be uncomplicated: only "Yes!" and other such affirmative variants can mean "yes"...

.. Enthusiastic consent is about welcoming. "Yes, I would like you to." "I would love it if you did." "Your presence here is not an invasion, nor just benign, but a welcome addition to my life." It says something to welcome another person's touch, verbally, openly.



- Finally, this question, which was raised at the end of the comment:

do you just make out with guys who your never, never going to fuck. ever. after all that drunken passionate makout

- Yes. Sometimes I did.

This post was first published [here](#) - thanks to author for permission to cross post