


2013

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## Recommended Citation

Rine, Abigail, "Don Draper Was Raped" (2013). *Faculty Publications - Department of English*. 10.  
[https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/eng\\_fac/10](https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/eng_fac/10)

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# Don Draper Was Raped

Abigail Rine

In an episode of *Mad Men* last month, a prostitute named Aimee has sex with a teenaged Don Draper (née Dick Whitman) after nursing him through a nasty chest cold. Actually, let me rephrase: Aimee doesn't just have sex with young Dick Whitman--she rapes him.

Throughout most of the episode, Aimee serves as a surrogate mother for Dick; she lets him recuperate in her bed and offers him rest, comforting words, spoonfuls of warm broth. However, in their penultimate scene together, Aimee's maternal kindness turns oddly predatory. She approaches her bed where Dick is lying weakly, fever newly broken, and asks, "Don't you want to know what all the fuss is about?" "No," Dick replies forcefully, averting his eyes and hugging the blankets tightly against his chest as she reaches under the covers to touch him. "Stop it," he says, clearly uncomfortable, even afraid. But Aimee doesn't stop.

To me, this interaction was an unambiguous depiction of rape--and not simply statutory rape. Dick is in a physically weakened state and repeatedly makes it clear that he does not want Aimee to touch him sexually, much less "take his cherry." As a child of the '80s, I was raised on a healthy diet of "No Means No." Rape isn't just something that happens at gunpoint with a strange man in a dark alley; rape, essentially speaking, is being subjected to sex without consent. And Dick clearly did not consent.

Of course, I recognize that even my simple definition of rape as sex without consent gets murky when applied to concrete scenarios. Take the recent controversy over the infamous "gray rape" scene between Adam and Natalia on *Girls*. After that episode aired back in March, feminist publications erupted with substantive discussions about consent, rape culture, and sexual violence. Writers from major publications ranging from *Slate* to *Salon* to *Ms. Magazine* chimed in, speculating whether or not what transpired between Adam and Natalia should be seen as rape.

I didn't expect the *Mad Men* episode to generate as much interest--after all, the scene, despite more clearly depicting a lack of consent, is far less explicit than the one in *Girls*. But I did anticipate general acknowledgement from writers and critics that Dick had been, if not raped, at least violated or mistreated by Aimee.

That didn't happen. To my surprise and dismay, I found that the vast majority of responses (including *The Atlantic's*) glossed over the encounter, benignly describing Dick as "losing his virginity" or having his virginity "taken" by Aimee. Even more disturbing were those that portrayed the exchange as something positive, even empowering. According to one participant in a roundtable discussion at *The Wall Street Journal*, Aimee "guides [Dick] through his first sexual experience." A recap at *The Daily Mail*, despite recounting Dick's protestations, underplays the interaction as a mere "tryst."

I had to really dig to find Matthew Guerruckey's analysis at *Drunk Monkeys*, the only article I came across to give any serious attention to the abusive dynamics between Aimee and Dick. There was far more online chatter (even indignation) about Betty Francis making a rape joke in

an earlier episode, and most writers seemed more disturbed about Grandma Ida stealing Don's watch than Aimee stealing sex without consent.

The most unsettling account I read was Paul MacInnes' recap for The Guardian, which somehow concludes that Dick not only consents to Aimee's advances, but actively desires them: "Aimee knew what young Dick really wanted and was prepared to do what was necessary to give it to him."

Let's pause for a moment and imagine a parallel scene between, say, a slightly older Sally Draper and an adult man. He tries to seduce her. "No," she says, when he begins to touch her, "Stop it." He ignores her; she lapses into silence; he has sex with her. Now let's picture the feminist outcry if a writer for a mainstream publication were to describe this as not only consensual, but as Sally getting what she "really wanted."

There is clearly a double standard at work here. Even though our cultural understanding of rape has gained nuance and depth over the last 50 years, thanks in large part to feminist activism, our narratives about sexual assault remain thoroughly mired in gender myths. Of course, it is true that most victims of rape are women, and most perpetrators men. But if the most recent data is any indication, sexual violence against men at the hands of women is far more prevalent than feminist and mainstream narratives often indicate.

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, a nationally representative study on sexual victimization developed by the CDC, 4.8 percent of men in the United States have been "made to penetrate" someone against their will at some point in their lifetimes. That's nearly 5.5 million men. And for about 80 percent of those men, their abusers were female.

If you find this "made to penetrate" thing a little confusing, you're not alone. I wasn't really aware that this type of sexual violence existed until a few months ago, when I came across the stories of men who had experienced it. Over at The Good Men Project, James Landrith and Levi Greenacres write about having sexual intercourse with women without their consent, recounting not only the assaults, but also the ensuing psychological aftermath. Landrith describes his "trauma response" as a sudden lapse into reckless behavior and "ridiculous promiscuity," as well as having long-term difficulty trusting women or even sharing confined spaces with them.

Both of these accounts arguably fall under the umbrella of date rape, or acquaintance rape, as the rapist was at least somewhat familiar to the victim. Most acts of sexual violence are, in fact, committed by acquaintances or partners (current or former), including 90 percent of "made to penetrate" assaults. For Landrith and Greenacres, alcohol was also involved--again, not uncommon in cases of acquaintance rape--which made it much easier for them to be overpowered. In addition, Landrith's assailant happened to be pregnant (talk about diverging from the archetypal rape scenario), and she used her vulnerable physical state to coerce Landrith into not fighting back.

To me, one of the more startling findings of the NIPSVS is this: In the 12 months prior to taking the survey 1.26 million men (1.1 percent) had been "made to penetrate," and that number is almost identical to the 1.27 million women (also 1.1 percent) estimated to have been raped during the same time period. If these numbers are anywhere near accurate, this paints a significantly different portrait of sexual violence in the U.S. than what I'm used to seeing.

The CDC, however, does not ascribe to my basic definition of rape as being made to have sex against one's will. They have placed "made to penetrate" in its own category, limiting the label of rape to being penetrated unwillingly. Using this definition, they cite the total number of male rape victims as closer to 1 in 71 men, or 1.4 percent. I will certainly admit that being penetrated has the potential to be more physically injurious than being forced to penetrate, but I'm not sure that justifies the exclusive definition, as it doesn't reflect how our cultural understandings of rape have evolved. The litmus test for rape is now widely accepted to be consent, not physical trauma.

Although it is certainly a step forward that organizations like the CDC are beginning to collect data about male victims of sexual violence, I am still somewhat troubled by the underlying implications of their terminology.

The CDC's definition of rape (which is also the one now used by the FBI to compile statistics) as limited to being penetrated rests on the assumption that only feminine bodies are raped, and, conversely, only masculine bodies commit rape. This says, essentially, that in order to be raped, a person must be forced into the feminine position of being penetrated, and in order to commit a rape, a person must have either a penis or a penis proxy. To me, this seems to rely upon a gendered understanding of sexual violence, in which victimhood is linked to femininity and sexual aggression retains a thoroughly masculine profile. I can't help but think that we should be questioning these readings of power and sexuality, rather than reinforcing them.

Putting aside the definition of rape specifically, the NIPSVS does explicitly highlight being "made to penetrate" as a form of sexual violence--and an apparently prevalent one at that. Why, then, when we see this kind of victimization portrayed on screen, is it read as harmless fun, or even romanticized as a rite of passage?

The sugarcoating of the Mad Men encounter, as well as the survivor accounts on The Good Men Project, highlight how troubling gender myths influence our awareness of sexual violence and often render male victims invisible. In our culture, male sexuality is overwhelmingly depicted as powerful, dominant, invulnerable, and sexually insatiable. Our more cartoonish notions of gender, found everywhere from deodorant commercials to bromantic comedies, perpetuate the idea that men are little more than walking boners, always up for sex. And, even though science has demonstrated otherwise, the misconception that an erection implies consent--that a man, in fact, can't penetrate unwillingly--is still commonplace.

Feminists have done important work interrogating problematic myths of female sexuality that are often used to blame rape survivors for their own victimization. But, as these responses to the Mad Men scene demonstrate, parallel myths that obfuscate male victims remain entrenched. The underlying problem here is that we too easily lapse into gender scripts instead of seeing people as complex human beings. Neither sex has a complete monopoly on agency, consent, vulnerability--or even power.