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November 5 trending I saw a tweet the other day that said questionable consent is a misnomer. If the consent is questionable, she said, then there is no consent. The implication is that it's rape. It is direct, straightforward consent, where both the man and the woman absolutely, positively want sex and say it out loud, and never doubt it all or after the action. Then there's direct, straightforward rape, where either one or the other doesn't want sex, and says it, and fights back, and reports it after that rape. Both of these cases are as clear as the day, but there is a whole lot of gray area in between. For example, what if a woman consents to sex but changes her mind? What if she consents to sex, but the man is too rough? What if she never verbalizes the word no or strikes back, but she thinks them all the time? To be honest, most people consider these rapes, and I'd agree with them (even if details matter too). It becomes more ambiguous. What if a woman feels pressure that she will be physically harmed if she does not comply? Probably it's rape, but what if the man never really, directly threatens her? What if he doesn't even realize it's her fear? Does it make sense to label him as a rapist because he's too stupid to face it, and she doesn't verbalize her refusal? Or, if instead of fear of physical harm, what if she is worried about financial harm? Maybe her kid is sick and she needs the money, or maybe she just wants a new Prada bag. And what about blackmail, like revealing someone's past or dirty pictures or whatever, does it count as rape? What if a woman chooses to have sex with her husband every night, even if she does not like it, so her children will have a roof over their heads. It may not be rape, but it definitely counts as questionable consent. For me, this is the biggest gray area of all: misunderstanding. Words of consent or power are not often spoken. So much is nonverbal or built into other words through innuendo. Even the nicest guy, who would never dream of raping a woman, rarely demands the words Yes, I want to have sex with you before you go in. No, he relies on signals, which means there is room for error. The tragedy of these scenarios is that the woman may feel violated and suffer shame, and yet the man is not a rapist. In the prologue to Yes Means Yes, Margaret Cho has an essay that is very convincing, but her story is that she was in her husband's apartment. In the middle of the night, he came and had sex with her. I don't want to put words in her mouth, but it seems like rape to her. As a reader, I got that feeling. And yet she didn't say no. How is it different from so many other non-rape sexual encounters, where the woman was a perfectly willing participant? One difference is that she didn't want it. And yet, lust can not really be used as a litmus test rape. rape. are women who have experienced orgasms during rape, which does not make it any less so. And conversely, a woman who has no physical desire can consent, and it is not rape. One doesn't imply the other, anyway. What I have found, in discussing these issues, is that every woman falls at a slightly different point, making it almost impossible to make blanket statements. Now, back to the woman who made the comment about questionable consent = rape, it may be true for her. I doubt she considered all the situations that fall into questionable consent, but maybe she did. Maybe she looks at every single scenario I've described here, and someone I don't have, and feels that anything other than verbal, explicit, 100% consent is rape. That may be true for her. Verbal consent is a rare thing to give. Who starts sex with a Q&A-session? BDSM formalizes this process, which is ironic since players are sometimes accused of being rapists. But which of the vanilla people checks in for consent and boundaries between the coffee after dinner and hitting the sheets? The truth is that questionable consent is more common than not. November 5 trending From Fanlore Dub-con refers to sex involving questionable consent in fanworks. This indicates that consent is unknown, not established with certainty, or obtained through questionable circumstances. Questionable consent differs from consent that is definitely absent. as in rape, non-con (non-consensual), or rape, as used in fanworks. While stories in the genre dub-con are often rape in a real context, they are semantically different from non-con in a fictional context because of the fictional setting's privileged insight into the characters' motivations and desires. Marking a work 'dub-con' often serves to indicate the genre or tone the story will take, rather than being an indication that the events in are consensual. Often, a character involved is unsure whether they want to participate or may be willing to participate, but unwilling no matter the reason to verbalize it. Unlike in the real world, where lack of a clear yes means a no, in fiction, the author can show the character's internal thoughts, such as a tangle of yes-no-maybe-I-don't know emotions that complicate the dynamics of interaction. Dub-con can also be used for stories from one character's point of view, where they do not know for sure whether the other character agrees or enjoys the situation. This is common in Fuck or Die, Sex pollen, and similar stories, where some kind of external mechanism requires or forces characters to have sex. Dub-con can be used to explore the differences between physical pleasure and emotional pleasure without explicit, realistic trauma involved in forced sex. Dub-con is also used to specify a relationship (or event) that excludes the ability to provide consent, such as master/slave, student/teacher, prisoner/guard, patient/doctor or child/adult. In these situations, the character is assumed with less authority, while sometimes an intelligent adult, is not able to give informed, meaningful consent to a sexual relationship because the power imbalance is too susceptible to abuse. The phrase is more common in the American media fandom tradition. An unscientific review of sites reveals that rape or noncon is the tag commonly used. [1] Not all use of dub-con includes sex. For example, an AO3 some fics have been bookmarked during tag dubcon cuddling, which is often described as a person cuddling a reluctant partner. [2] History This article or paragraph needs extension. need links to fandoms where it is common, etc. The earliest use of dub-con as a distinct tag is difficult to pin down. In a search for public Google entries, the term used in 2003 by both Harry Potter fans in Keeping Him Safe[3] dated 9. [5] In April 2004, again in Harry Potter fandom, the term dubious consent was used in switchknife's stories. [6] In November 2004, a Harry Potter Live journal used both ambiguous consent and questionable consent to describe stories in Scouting for Ron: 6 New Fics; x-posted to fic\_fairy. [7] Other fandoms also used the phrase dubious consent, such as the Lord of the Rings story Heat dated April 2004. [9] By 2005, many fans had shortened the expression to their current form dub-con which in the Realm plausible of Snarry, non-con and dub-con are my friends. [10] In 2005, a fan reported that there were 46 requests for dub-con/coersion [sic]. [11] In 2006, the term had been defined on the Urban Dictionary as: Used in fan fiction to describe sexual situations with questionable consent, where there is not exactly non-consent (non-consensual, e.g. rape), nor is it consensual [sic]. [12] Complicating dating is that many writers back-date their warnings, so a master list of fan fiction dated 2003, showing a dub-con tag, can refer to a story written in 2010. See a post for J-Rock fanfic as listed Hakuei (Penicillin) x Byou (SCREW), various other implied // [NC-17] Alice in Wonderland AU, not-quite-dubcon, (s) light humiliation with a date of October 28, 2003. [13] Since most early fandom email lists and forums were only subscription, the term may surely have been used much earlier than 2003. Controversy Some fans feel that dub-con, like non-con, is a meaningless term and should be labeled rape. They all believe without clear consent is rape, and non-con and dub-con are just euphemisms that attempt to gain public acceptance for a sharply stigmatized kink. Some argue that dub-con and non-con are harmful genres in that they promote the idea that sex doesn't have to be consensual. The debate over dub-con tag and its use began to crystallize in 2008. For example, a fan writer claimed that what qualifies as dub-con is much less than how fandom often uses it. Also fandom familiarity with the characters sometimes allows authors from showing readers the necessary explicit consent.... because we already know that the character involved is someone who would not rape. [14] Others argued that dub-con is rape by any other name: What bothers me most about this situation, and what I think you partly get on here is when people say that their fic is not noncon or they say it's dubcon or noncon depending on your point of view. Come on! Have the courage to admit that what they write is rape. Questionable consent bothers me as a qualifier because if you're not sure if someone agrees, you don't or it's rape. No excuses. So I think that people should just bite the bullet and say, this is a rape fic.... If people want to write rape fic, go for it and I'll probably read it, but let's go up and acknowledge what it is we write. I take issue with these qualifiers because I think that it is far more insidious than out and out rape porn. At least when we say it's rape, then we can move on to the next step: to say that it's wrong, just a fantasy, etc. But avoiding the label perpetuate the rape myths that have had such a detrimental effect on victims and justice: she liked it, she didn't really say no, she was a tease, they've done it before. None of these things matter, and when a person notices their fic, they have to stop pretending to do it. But others seemed to call for fandom to realize that their dub-con story is most likely going to be seen as a rape story by readers, no matter how they position it: 'I'm not asking anyone to stop writing rape-recovery fic. Or sex pollen stories. Or pon farr stories. Or... Something. Because I love rape-recovery fic. I love sex pollen stories (especially bad/fic sex pollen stories). The first slash story I ever wrote was in response to a pon farr challenge (the aforementioned LotR fic Secrets and Pleasure\*). I'm not saying that writing non-con is dirty/bad/wrong in a not/good! Way. I've written it. I read it. I collect it, in many flavors, as evidenced by the many folders of various fanfic stored on my laptop. I'm not even asking for a more realistic portrayal of rape, or recovery, or effects. Realism has its place, but fandom is above all about having fun, and spreading the hyena, and the love of it we like. What I'm asking for is this: First, that be a little more aware of what is and is not consent within our social norms (legal and social). Second, pay attention to the social framework in which a given work is set, and shifted in perspective on what is and is not consent that may arise. But most importantly, to be aware that boundaries exist, and that if your story is going to poke holes in or disregard those boundaries, you need to be able to redefine them to support the situation you're trying to present. [16] Even in 2008, writers struggled to notice a story that, when taken out of context, could be labeled as non-con when it was, both in the author's as well as the character's mind, the correct dub-con: .... That's why I'm going to have another dilemma with my un\_Love\_you stories. The term questionable consent automatically has a negative connotation associated with it; the story I warned for is dub-con because of the first scene - she wakes up with her hand inside her panties. But the whole series centers around the push-pull of the characters' relationship, and this particular story takes place after they've stopped fighting each other (and use sex as a weapon in that fight). It is actually the most forgiving of the stories, although it contains the most dubious scenario consenting. So I guess the question then becomes how do we warn (or do we warn at all) of a potential dub-con scenario when we, the authors, know that it is not questionable because of the backstory? [17] Many of these early discussions focused on non-con and dub-con just as both readers and writers navigated their way through the unfamiliar tropical terrain. More recently, in June 2013, Tingmedwings, moderator of kink bingo, a kink meme hosted on Livejournal and Dreamwidth, claimed that fandom was abusing the dub-con tag and it was (a) harmful to readers who tried to avoid being triggered by depictions of sexual violence and (b) were harmful to society as a whole. ... But not everyone in fandom uses these terms in these ways. And I think that's a problem we need to fix. Because, especially when situations that exist in real life and that would be called rape in real life are labeled dubcon, I think it does real harm to all of us..... We currently live in a culture where not fighting back - because, for example, the rapist has threatened to kill you, or someone else, or your pet, if you don't go along with it - will very often have a rape case overturned in court. Where judges and juries and God know that the popular media will pick out and analyze every detail of a person's life to determine if they asked for it, if they secretly wanted it, if they could have fought back more than they did, why they didn't scream, why they didn't report the blackmail that was used to control them, whether their consent may have been implicit of winks or nods or secret handshakes or a general miasma of sexual invitation. In other words, we live in a world where rape culture, something we all unwittingly participate in at some point, works very hard to label things dubcon when they are really noncon. [18] The discussion flowed over to many other journals, including a thread on fail-fandomanon. Below are some randomly selected comments from these discussions to illustrate the diversity and complexity of the debate. Well, noncon used to be what dubcon is today (a term for the question of consent fic that is not rape), so I'm not really surprised that dubcon has started to shift as well. [19] I believe that this construction loses much of my understanding of dubcon, though. Like, I think of the dubcon used for those situations there, IRL, where it is impossible for us to know what people think apart from by what they tell us, it is rape, but because this is fiction and I actually know what is happening in the heads of the protagonists, I can know that this gender was actually wanted. I will also use dubcon for those cases where someone is not able to give meaningful consent because of their status, such as slavery or age, or because they are in a changed but coherent state. And I realize that yes, in real life, they should all be treated the same, but in fiction, in a situation where we as a society make finer grain differences, the part that is important to me is the feeling of the person whose consent is being questioned by the story. [20] So basically you never use dubcon, except for situations that are ambiguous to the author, or in situations that may be ambiguous to the reader, or in completely unrealistic fantasy situations, or in realistic ambiguous situations. And... in my experience, that's 95% of the fics brand dubcon. .... My main problem with deleting dubcon as a tag and saying that it's only useful in a few rare edge cases is that you've basically just collapsed two completely different fictional genres, the pornographic, romantic fantasy where the point is that everything turns out to be fine between OTP, and the brutal breakup where the point of the story is (usually) H/C and recovery. Right now, dubcon/noncon labels are what distinguish these two literary genres. I don't read dubcon and noncon to mean their actual, literal meanings any more than the First Time tag to apply to stories where someone milks a cow or sings karaoke for the very first time. [21] I read, write and enjoy dubcon, noncon and stories of rape. I'm not ashamed of this. I have never felt ashamed of labelling or warning correctly; I am very grateful that fandom provides a good structure to provide detailed codes and warnings, to give the authors the opportunity to be precise, and readers the opportunity to choose fic as they to read from a variety of works, works, which can be powerfully triggering. I strongly dislike the idea that these very useful differences should be collapsing, and that what I create and like, everyone should be gathered together as noncon or rape, whether I feel the label fits. It's a strong, visceral, kneejerk reaction of oh, hell, no I have to. I think your problem is with people who dislike, and people who don't use the same definition of consent as you do (there's some overlap between these two). Unfortunately, you take that frustration out on people who create and enjoy dubcon fanworks. This post comes across very strongly as a condemnation of dubcon, whether you intended it or not, and all the comments expressing strong agreement reinforce this. The example you gave is not what the majority of people consider dubcon, and it seems disingenuous to use \* that \* to then proclaim that the problem lies with the dubcon genre. [22] I often see the label dubcon on stories where sex is actually rape, but written on a kind of fantasy path — where the person who is raped secretly wanted it or ended up enjoying it - rather than in a way that is realistic about someone's reactions to being sexually assaulted. Noncon seems to be more often found on stories where the rape is presented as a violation and a trauma. So while I agree that the use of dubcon should be avoided for all the reasons you mention, I think (some) people who use the dubcon label are trying to draw a distinction that is also useful but not politically important in the same way as the correct distinction between questionable consent and lack of consent. As a reader, I avoid fics with realistic depictions of rape, because they often trigger me. But I'm rarely triggered by the fantasy scenarios I've seen mislabeled as dubcon, and sometimes they're a kink for me. So there is a distinction I want to preserve, but in another wording that keeps the consent issue clear. [23] But the thing is that your proposed solution (has people relabeling compulsive stories such as noncon instead of dubcon) then generates this exact same problem for those who want to read the forced stories, but not actual noncon (in the forced rape sense). Which, generally speaking, there seem to be three types of stories: - stories in which the characters' ability to consent is weakened and/or the balance of power is not quite equal, but they both like sex and are not traumatized by it (currently labeled dubcon) - stories in which the characters' ability to consent is weakened and/or the balance of power is not quite the same, and sex is outrageous and a certain degree of traumatic, but they do not recognize it as non-consensual (currently labeled dubcon) - stories with forced rape where one of the characters obviously does not give their consent and the other character knows it, but they rape them anyway tagged noncon) The problem as far as I can tell is that you like the first type but are upset by the second, so it wants to be relabeled noncon so that it can be grouped with the genre of stories that you are already not interested in reading about. But the problem for some of us is that we like the other kind but are upset by the third, so having that brand noncon instead of dubcon and having them all get grouped together makes it harder for us to find the stories we want, in the way that it's hard for you to find the stories you want now. To me, it seems that maybe we should divide the currently branded-as-dubcon stories into two different types of fic, instead of trying to lump one of them in with noncon. [24] Impaired consent [is equal] consent is questionable due to sex pollen, aphrodisiac, etc Uninformed consent [equally] consent is questionable because one or both characters are not aware of certain circumstances Tvangssamkke [equal consent is given, but due to grooming/stockholming/etc I will still go with the line between dubcon and noncon is about the signs they feel consented to sex vs. not though. Perhaps extra marking can reflect whether it comes to a happy, we had sex under dubious circumstances, and now we can admit our love place or a trauma recovery place. [25] This is not as academic as you think it is, and to say for us it's kink, for you it's false feminism is a disingenuous misrepresentation of the situation. It may be an unintended disingenuous misrepresentation - I think you and others who support your view really believe that the motivation is kink shaming or misunderstanding of fandom - but maybe, just maybe, it's time to pause and realize that no, it's not, and that there are people who want to read kink as much as you want to, thank you very much, it's just that our kinks adjust differently. I've been in fandom for quite some time too, but unlike you, I rarely sought out my kinks before AO3 allowed me to limit on what I'm actually not looking for, because experience has taught me that I'm more likely not to find them and instead find a bunch of things I don't really want to read. And I'm not the only one because this argument keeps popping up. Perhaps this consensus - these separate genres - has been around for so long because people who don't benefit from this system have either given up or retreated to either not read or to take super extra caution and strange interpretations of what is in front of them to avoid what seems to us like to mix up separate genres. The fact that this argument is becoming more and more common just means that people are tired of being quiet about it. [26] But it strikes me that codes don't just work to warn readers. They also serve to prime a reader and guide them to interpret a fic in a certain way. So to tag something like dub con can be a means for the author to signal I don't see this as rape and I don't want you to read it that way either. (Do not defend this approach, just say it can provide an explanation.) [27] I like this post. I'm very glad you did it. I get very frustrated with the compilation of questionable consent with non-consent for exactly the reasons you give here. Especially in other words, we live in a world where rape culture, something we all unwittingly participate in at some point, works very hard to label things dubcon when they are really noncon, because THIS. It makes me so uncomfortable to think that noncon is too often reserved for situations where a person physically and/or highly fought back, for situations of violence, while all these other non-consensual situations are something else that is being marked under the umbrella of dubcon, because it all just comes so close to the terrible line we always have to confront in mainstream culture/media/politics between rape- like technical rape, but not really because there wasn't physical violence and a stranger in a dark alley with lots of fighting and screaming - and real rape? And I understand that fiction is different and people want and need space to explore these issues, but the ways dubcon-not-noncon can amplify really problematic cultural narratives can be very problematic for me. [28] I wonder if we come at this from completely different angles. I have no interest in applying the real world logic to every definition for dubcon and noncon, because for me IRL they would all be rape. No one I know who uses rape, noncon, dubcon lables in different ways because they think that the IRL scenarios would have questionable consent or are not really raperape. We use the labels to help readers identify how the rape will be handled in a fic. Stepping away from the bright line of real definitions is a possible for many of us, as it helps readers find what they want to read. You use the terms as they are legal definitions, while I think most of us disagree with you using them as kink labels. It's not about standards bringing differently (and way of bringing moralization back into this debate) it explores the nuances of how the actions are depicted. So that someone who has a kink for straight up rape fic, but who is triggered by noncon fics where the rape is written erotically can easily see which fics are for them. The same with the distinction between noncon and dubcon. If we go with yours and twings arguments and just

