IN CONSIDERING THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF WOMEN'S FEAR OF RAPE (FOR), this paper will examine both the psychological elements of FOR as well as women's experiences of rape. Information in this paper has been based on a study conducted at the University of Queensland during 1992. All subjects in this study were female aged eighteen years and older from non-clinical populations. There was a total of 412 subjects, with 58.8 per cent of subjects under thirty years of age, a median age of eighteen to nineteen years and an age range of eighteen to sixty-seven years. A number of different populations were accessed, although the largest group was comprised of first year psychology students completing the questionnaire to gain credit, of which there were 133 (32.3 per cent).

Subjects were given a questionnaire investigating both their fear of being raped and a number of questions regarding their experiences of being raped. In addition, all subjects were asked to provide their views on, for example, how rape should be defined and what methods they use to try and avoid being raped.

This paper will initially consider the issue of fear of rape and refer to previous studies conducted in this area. The rest of the paper will be based on the findings of the present study in the two main areas of FOR and descriptive variables of the rape experiences of the subjects.

Fear of Rape (FOR) and Fear of Crime (FOC) Studies

It has been recognised within the area of criminology, since the results of the 1969 President's Commission of Law Enforcement (USA), that the social consequences of crime are not limited to simply the direct victims of a particular crime (Warr 1985), but that the incidence of fear of crime within the society far outweighs the number of actual victims (Hindelang, Gottfredson & Garofalo 1978; Maxfield 1984; Skogan & Maxfield 1981). A number of
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researchers have commented on the negative psychological effects of experiencing frequent fear; specifically that it reduces quality of life and forces people to change their behaviour (Clemente & Kleiman 1977; Hamner & Stanko 1985). Fear of crime is also frequently used as a central issue in soliciting potential voters during political campaigns.

The recognition of the possible negative consequences of fear of crime has led a number of researchers, particularly from the fields of criminology, sociology and media, to investigate the nature of FOC. Findings have consistently indicated that sex and age are the two biggest predictors of individuals' FOC—women and the elderly have significantly higher levels of FOC than other groups (see Baumer 1978; Garofalo 1979; Hindelang 1974; Maxfield 1984; Warr 1985). As incidence statistics show that men, particularly young men, are the most likely victims of all crimes except sexual assault (Junger 1987), the inconsistency between likelihood of victimisation and fear of victimisation has fuelled much debate.

It is the area of sexual assault and women's fear of becoming victim to this type of crime that has been suggested by a number of researchers to be the pivotal point in understanding the apparent discrepancy between genders in terms of FOC and actual victimisation. It has been suggested that all women are victims of rape to the extent that they all experience a fear of rape and it is thus a 'universal condition' (Warr 1985) for women (Brownmiller 1975; Burt & Estep 1981; Griffin 1971). As early as 1971, Griffin and, in 1975, Brownmiller were writing about the devastating effects for women of the widespread and 'insidious' fear of rape. In 1978, a study by Riger, Gordon and LeBailly suggested that women had an additional crime to fear that men did not—rape, and so more overtly introduced the topic of fear of rape to research. Maxfield (1984) in a Home Office study of fear of crime in the United Kingdom has also suggested that a central explanation of women's fear of crime is the threat of rape. Junger (1987) suggested that fear of crime equated for women with fear of rape. As such, Junger stated that fear of rape is the area researchers should concentrate on when investigating women's fear of crime. Riger, Gordon, and LeBailly (1978) conclude in their study investigating women's fear of crime, that examination of fear of rape would be especially useful in understanding women's greater fear of crime.

Despite these assertions and recognition throughout the FOC research that women's FOR is a topic of significance, little research has been done in the area. The studies have generally been in response to the suggestions that women's FOC is irrational, commonly attempting to prove that women's fear is indeed rational (see Riger, Gordon, & LeBailly 1978; Riger & Gordon 1981). It seems that concentrating on whether or not fear is rational is unnecessarily adopting a defensive rather than an inquiring perspective.

The consequences of this fear of rape are varied. Feminist theorists argue that, generally, women's fear of rape serves the purpose of denying women freedom of movement by trapping them into their traditionally assigned roles (Holgate 1989) and is thus a form of social control of women by their being in a state of fear and using restrictive precautionary measures (Riger & Gordon 1981). Specific behavioural consequences of fear of rape include a number of attempts to avoid victimisation, such as installing locks and alarms, curtailing social activities and staying indoors at night. It is suggested that these perceptions of the necessity to alter lifestyle and take precautions have negative psychological consequences for women (Gomme 1986). Fear of becoming a victim of rape may also reduce willingness to help others, basic trust, and generally undermine sociability.
Understanding Women's Rape Experiences and Fears

(Brooks 1974; Clemente & Kleiman 1977). Riger and Gordon's (1981) research suggests that women take greater precautions to try and avoid rape than any other crime, even though the risk is lower than it is for many other crimes like robbery, for example. Women also take many more precautions in terms of their personal safety than do men (DuBow, McCabe & Kaplan 1980). Warr's (1985) research indicated that most women appear to go through at least one period in their lives during which much of their primary socialisation has fear of sexual attack as a central concept.

Specific Findings in FOR Research

The few studies that have been conducted investigating women's fear of rape have reported a number of interesting findings. The degree to which women fear being raped emphasises the seriousness and extent of this issue. There have been a number of suggestions made as to why women would be particularly afraid of rape. Central explanations include the actual incidence of rape, high estimation of risk of victimisation, the seriousness of consequences, perceived low levels of physical competency, previous sexual harassment including previous rape experiences, knowing someone who has been raped, media influences and an array of so-called psychological and social issues such as the influence of mothers' messages (Junger 1987).

The perceived risk of being raped is very high according to some studies (see Warr 1985; van Dijk 1978), but not particularly high according to other studies (see Riger & Gordon 1981). Risk of being raped is related to the risk of other crimes, such as murder, assault and robbery. This relationship is to be expected as rape is most frequently associated with these other types of crimes.

A different approach to women's risk of being raped was conducted by a number of studies asking men what the likelihood would be of them raping women. In a study by Malamuth (1981), 35 per cent of men indicted that there would be some likelihood of them raping (two in a five-point scale) and 20 per cent of men responded higher than three on the same scale, where five indicated 'very likely to rape if not caught and punished'. Koss and Oros (1982) found that 23 per cent of a random sample of 1,846 college men responded 'yes' to the question: 'Have you ever been in the situation where you became so sexually aroused that you could not stop yourself even though the woman did not want you to?'. These findings suggest that the actual risk of sexual assault of women is very high.

A number of studies have investigated the influence of avoidance attempts in relation to rape from a variety of perspectives. One area that has received a great deal of attention has been the identification of the legal and social implications of women's ability or inability to avoid being raped in terms of myths that have perpetuated victims been viewed as either responsible for the abuse, or at least, willing participants (see Box 1983; Brownmiller 1985). These beliefs are evident in legal proceedings in which rape is considered probably the only crime where the victim has to prove their 'innocence'. The false belief that women can avoid being raped is supported by a number of sources including articles and official self-help suggestions made by the police.

The research regarding ability to control being raped provides mixed reports. Some studies (see Gordon & Riger 1989) suggest that women may use many strategies but do not believe that they can control whether or not they are raped, whereas other studies (see Schepppele & Bart 1983) suggest that women do believe that they have some control.
Results from a study by Heath and Davidson (1988) suggest that exposure to the message of the randomness of rape decreases women's sense of ability to avoid being raped, and as such increases their sense of helplessness. They then use fewer precautionary measures, although their fear of rape may be higher than those women who have not been exposed to such a message.

Another area of interest has been the differences in fear of rape between women who have been raped and those who have not. Some studies have found no differences between rape-related fear in women who have/have not been raped (Kilpatrick, Veronen & Resick 1979; Veronen & Kilpatrick 1980). However, other studies (see Scheppele & Bart 1983) have found differences in levels of fear between victims and non-victims of rape. An analysis of victimisation surveys indicated that victims of rape are more likely to feel unsafe while walking in the streets of their neighbourhood (Henig & Maxfield 1978). Toseland (1982) suggested that individuals' fears may be increased by knowledge of victims and that individuals who have personally been victimised may be much more afraid of being raped again.

The only published study on women's fear of rape done in Australia was by Holgate (1989) and investigated the possible influence of having experienced sexual harassment on women's fear of rape. Holgate suggested that the continued experience of sexual intimidation in women's daily life, as reported by the majority of subjects, may generalise feelings of vulnerability and may thus restrict women's lives.

Most research until the present on FOC has generally concentrated on the effect of age and gender (Skogan & Maxfield 1981) and also other demographic variables such as: income, education, construction of household, and occupation. Age, generally, is a predictor of fear of crime, and some studies have indicated that it also plays an important role in women's fear of rape. Box, Hale and Andrews (1988), in a study regarding general fear of crime, found that women were more afraid than men of crime in every age group. The study discussed earlier by Warr (1985) clearly showed that younger women (those aged under thirty-five) were more afraid of being raped than older women.

In summary, women's fear of rape appears to be of considerable influence in women's lives, and there have been a number of identified predictors of this fear in the literature to date. However, there is also a great deal of disagreement regarding the factors and their relative importance. The research done thus far on FOR has identified the three major psychological factors in FOR:

- avoidance, or ability to control;
- likelihood of occurrence; and
- consequences.

All of these factors have been used in different studies, to various degrees expanding the understanding of this issue. However, none of these studies have purposefully combined these factors in a model to specifically test women's fear of being raped.

The following study combined these three components to predict fear of being raped and investigate the phenomenology of the FOR experienced by Australian women. This paper proposed a model of fear that postulated that the degree of fear an individual experiences may be perceived as the association the individual has between the object and
threat; thus how dangerous they perceive the object/situation to be, combined inversely with the degree of control they perceive they have over the situation. Therefore, the more threatening the individual finds the situation/object, the greater their fear and, conversely, the more control they believe they have, the less their fear. The dimension of perceived dangerousness or how threatening the event/object is, is further explained by dividing it into two components: how likely the event is and how bad or serious the consequences would be (Butler & Mathews 1983).

Assessment of women's subjective experiences of fear of being raped included how often they consider being raped, how they believe this compares to other women's fears, to what extent they are fearful of being raped, and what are women's beliefs about men's propensity to rape and their chances of being murdered if raped. The study also addressed a number of questions thus far yielding opposing results in the literature, including: the effects of victimisation or personal knowledge of victims on women's fear of being raped, and whether women believe that they can to some extent control being raped.

**Findings**

*Women's fear of being raped*

Ten per cent of women indicated that they were not at all fearful, and 50 per cent only slightly fearful of being raped. However, one-quarter of the women indicated that they were quite to extremely fearful at this time in their lives of being raped. These latter results indicate that there are a number of Australian women who are very concerned about the chance that they may become victims of rape. Subjects indicated that on average they would worry once a month about becoming victims of rape. Subjects also believed that their level of fear of being raped was comparable to those of other women, indicating that the subjects perceived their levels of fear generally as fitting the norm. This result indicates that women generally believe that other women are also afraid of being raped, which perhaps makes this fear more the norm in our society. With the possible acceptance of the normality of women being afraid of men raping them, there may be less concern about the negative implications of this situation.

Results from the present study suggest that Australian women have similar fear levels to those of women in overseas studies (see Riger, Gordon & LeBailly 1978; Warr 1985). Demographic data indicated that, the younger women were, the more afraid they were of being raped.

The subjects generally also believed that there was a moderate likelihood of being killed when raped. It seems reasonable to suggest that a person who believes that death could be a likely consequence of being raped would experience increased fear of such an event.

Results indicated that subjects on average believed that nearly half of the population of men (48.4 per cent) would rape a woman if they could be sure of not being caught or punished. This estimate is higher than those actually provided by men (see Malamuth 1981). The result suggests that women would expect half of the male population to rape them if given the opportunity, and this belief would most probably increase women's beliefs about the likelihood of being raped and, therefore, their fear of being raped. This belief can be postulated to also alienate men and women to some extent, which was indicated by the findings of the Real Rape Law Coalition sexual assault phone-in (1991) where the most
common consequences of being raped was a lack of trust of men and poor relationships with men.

Women who had been raped were significantly more fearful of being raped after completing the questionnaire than before attempting it. This suggests that exposure to questions about rape may adversely affect women who had previously been raped.

On average, subjects knew 2.1 other women who had also been raped. Those women who personally knew rape victims were significantly more afraid of being raped themselves than those who did not know victims personally.

**Psychological variables predicting fear of rape**

To investigate women's fear of rape, three areas related to rape were chosen as constructs within which questions were asked. The three areas were age, location and type of offender. Subjects were asked for each of these areas how likely it would be to be raped at each of seven different age groups (for example, between twenty and twenty-four years of age), at each of six different places (for example, in a public place, at home), and by each of seven different attackers (for example, by a stranger or by a partner). Subjects were asked for each of these groupings how serious the consequences of being raped at each of these ages, in each of the locations and by each type of attacker, would be. A further check of the model of fear was to also ask subjects how difficult it would be for them to avoid being raped in each of the situations described.

Separate analyses for each age level, location and type of offender indicated that the strongest predictor of fear in all instances was the perceived likelihood of being raped. The saliency of likelihood in predicting fear of rape, ascertained by means of the psychological model, is similar to findings of other studies (see Warr 1985). This finding also corresponds to research conducted on fear of crime in general. Although a number of critics of FOR, and specifically FOC research to date, have questioned the importance of likelihood as a predictor of fear, results from the present study confirm the saliency of this factor.

Most subjects consistently indicated that being raped at any age, in any location, and by any type of offender would have extremely negative consequences. When asked to indicate the extent of damage of specific types of consequences provided in the questionnaire, subjects indicated that the most damaging consequence of being raped would be emotional; that is, experiencing anger, fear, helplessness, anxiety and depression. Psychological consequences such as becoming increasingly suspicious, developing phobias and experiencing nightmares were considered the next worst consequence. Unlike the results of the Real Rape Law Coalition sexual assault phone-in (1991), subjects indicated that, in relative terms, their relationships would be least affected.

Previous studies have produced conflicting results regarding women's belief in whether rape avoidance strategies are useful. The variability of subjects' estimations regarding their ability to avoid certain situations indicates that women do believe that they have to some extent a degree of control over being raped. The belief that one has some control over a situation is essential in combating fear, and any attempts to help women reduce their fear of being raped would need to increase women's belief and knowledge in how to increase their control over the situation.

Although the degree of intrusiveness, time consumption and restriction imposed by various methods to attempt avoiding rape varied greatly, they can be assumed to have one
element in common—women generally appear to spend varying amounts of time structuring their lives around protecting themselves from the fear of possible sexual attack by men. The influence of this fear is suggested by the fact that all subjects indicated taking at least some precautions against being raped. The results suggest that there are a large number of women in the society fearing attack from men at any time, and a number of them are adopting quite intrusive methods of resisting such attack.

Of interest is the finding that both women who have been raped and women who knew rape victims personally, used significantly less avoidance strategies than women who had not been raped, or did not know victims personally. It is possible that because these groups have already experienced being raped or knew others who had, being raped may seem less avoidable and strategies seem less effective than the group who have not had more direct experience of rape. This suggestion corresponds with the earlier research by Heath and Davidson (1988) that women exposed to information about the possibility of being raped at any time received the message of the inevitability of rape, and thus increased their feelings of helplessness and decreased their use of precautionary behaviours.

Combining these findings with the earlier discussed increase in fear after completing the questionnaire for women who had been raped, it is suggested that increased information about rape may generally lead to increases in women's anxiety and fear of being raped. Further research in this area would be valuable in terms of interventions, as increased education programs may in fact be causing greater distress for women.

Statistics and descriptive variables related to rape in an Australian sample

Rape or attempted rape reported in Queensland ranged from 137 in the 1983–84 period to 366 in the 1988–89 period (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990). This report also stated that rape and attempted rape offences that have been reported to police increased by 27.1 per cent in Queensland since 1987–88. Due to a lack of actual incidence surveys, it is not known what percentage of actual rapes these statistics represent.

The current study asked a number of questions regarding the subjects' experiences of rape in an attempt to obtain more accurate incidence statistics. Subjects were asked whether they had been raped, and if so to indicate:

- the number of times they had been raped;
- their age at the time of the attack;
- the location of the attack, their relationship to the attacker;
- what injuries they had sustained;
- whether they had reported the incident, and
- if they did not report the incident, the reasons for not doing so.

Investigation of the issue of rape definition for the purposes of the study revealed a number of major difficulties. Most definitions of rape include the term 'consent'. There are, however, numerous legal difficulties and negative implications for the victim. A report by the Real Rape Law Coalition in Victoria (1991) criticised the inclusion of the concept in the definition
of rape, arguing that the use of 'consent' as the determining issue in the majority of rape cases is based on prevalent myths about sexual assault. If rape is defined by an absence of consent, the paper argues, then lawful intercourse should logically contain clear consent. This is rarely explicitly the case. The term 'consent' is highly problematical and is often used to discredit victim's accounts if they did not clearly refuse their consent, verbally or physically. Further support for the contention regarding consent is provided by Grabosky (1989) who suggests that, at times when there is no evidence which corroborates lack of consent, such as victims who acquiesce without struggle for fear of injury or their life, efforts are frequently made to discredit the witness/victim and thus put them on trial. The use of 'consent' in defining rape thus seems to both complicate a clear understanding of a rape situation and place a great deal of stress on the victims of rape, without clearly contributing to resolving the issue.

It has been suggested that the definition of rape should be broadened. However, doing so may well result in a highly subjective appraisal of any situation potentially perceived as rape, and would further complicate and possibly weaken legal procedures to bring to justice those individuals who rape others.

In consideration of the issues discussed, it is clear that the definition of rape is a complex issue. A useful definition of rape would need to include factors encompassing what is generally accepted by both society and victims as rape, without placing the onus on the victim to prove their innocence. It is suggested that a definition for use specifically in a questionnaire would need to be concise, to enable subjects to easily comprehend and refer to it; include the issues generally accepted as constituting rape; that is, the use of force or threat, and any means of penetration (unlike the present law in Queensland); and should not include the term 'consent'. Thus, for the purposes of the study, a definition fitting these criteria was designed:

Rape is defined as vaginal, anal, and/or oral sexual contact involving force or threat of injury.

Using this definition of rape, nearly one-fifth (17.5 per cent) of women in the study reported that they had been raped according to a strict definition of rape which did not include sexual harassment or attempted rape. Only 5.5 per cent of the seventy-two women who experienced being raped reported this incident to the police. However, even though the present study has had a large success at eliciting actual data regarding rape incidence, it is suspected that the actual figures are even higher. One reason for this suspicion is that a number of women, either verbally or in writing, described being raped (often digitally), but did not themselves view the incident as rape.

Consideration of subjects’ own definitions of rape (see Appendix A) also indicated a reluctance on the part of many subjects to view anything but penile penetration of the vagina as rape, although the definition provided did not stipulate means of penetration. It is, therefore, very likely that the number was depressed by non-agreement about definition and possible other factors found in other studies, such as denial of the experience of being raped (see Dukes & Mattley 1977).
Reasons for not reporting rape

Subjects who were raped, but who did not report the incident to police, provided a number of reasons for omitting to do so. The main reasons seem to fall into the categories of:

- shame and embarrassment;
- threats from the offender;
- protection of family, friends and intimate relationships from stigma;
- protection of self from stigma;
- feelings of responsibility for the incident;
- lack of awareness of what the implications were (usually with subjects who were very young at the time of attack);
- concern about not being believed;
- the lack of legal support (in the case of husband's being the perpetrator);
- pressure from others to not report;
- unwillingness to proceed with the legal process; and
- protection of the offender when in an intimate relationship.

Following are a number of specific comments made by subjects, asked why they did not report being raped, which speak for themselves.

Fear of my life. Offenders were petty thieves, drug users/dealers well known to the police. No faith in the system and no awareness of any support available' (woman raped by a group of acquaintances).

The two men concerned were my mother's lovers, and because my mother was present (inebriated) at the time of the rape, the matter was never reported. There was nothing anyone would do anyway and it would not have been worth any further emotional anguish and distress (woman, raped by two men, aged 14).

It was my best friend's boyfriend and I could not stand the thought of hurting her, it all came out anyway so I should have reported it and the pain for me was much worse than she felt. I was also ashamed to think that I might have avoided it had I fought harder.

I felt guilty that I had led him on.

I didn't think anyone would believe me as I had avoided being beaten up by offering minimal resistance.
At the time it was a misunderstanding. He didn't realise what had happened or what he was doing. We discussed it and now both realise each others feelings. It was an accident and won't happen again.

At the time of his life, I knew he had many problems and he made an effort not to hurt me physically or verbally.

**Relationship with attacker**

One result from the present study, relatively disparate from previous findings, is that 90.8 per cent of the victims knew their attacker. These statistics regarding the acquaintance with the attacker are higher than those reported elsewhere; for example, according to figures from the US Department of Justice (1986), 55–60 per cent of women knew their attacker. However, this figure is considered unrepresentative of the actual incidence of being raped by someone known to the victim (Gordon & Riger 1989). One significant implication of the finding that most victims knew their attacker, is in helping to understand the remarkably small number of rapes which were reported to police. Acquaintance with the rapist was a major factor in not reporting rape. Consistent with this finding, three of the four rape victims who reported the offence in the present study, were attacked by strangers. The one woman who reported rape by an acquaintance was severely hurt during the attack. These conditions are similar to those found by Williams (1984) to predict likelihood of reporting. The high rate of acquaintance with their attackers may explain to some extent the remarkably low rate of reporting by victims in the present study.

Interestingly, subjects in the present study indicated that they believed strangers would be the most likely offenders. In terms of the findings of the present study and of most other studies, this belief is very inaccurate. It does suggest that the women in this study, like the rest of society, still believe that rape is something perpetrated by a stranger. The implications of this belief include the difficulty women have in reporting rape perpetrated by people they know and also in dealing with consequences such as feeling responsible and embarrassed which are often exacerbated by knowing the perpetrator.

A possible further consequence of not reporting rape is that perpetrators are not being charged and that many repeat offenders may be reinforced for their criminal behaviour by not being punished for their crimes. The majority of rapists and paedophiles have histories of sexual offences before they are incarcerated for the first time, and the lack of previous consequences for their behaviour is commonly used to justify sexual assault on a number of people. The lack of reporting appears, therefore, to have many negative repercussions for both the victim and the potential victims in society.

**Summary**

In conclusion, this paper has discussed areas of a study conducted with 412 women in Queensland in 1992. The psychological model used to investigate women's fear of rape proved valuable in increasing the understanding of this area. One-quarter of women were quite to extremely fearful of being raped. Subjects also believed that their fear of being raped was shared by other women, indicating that women believe that fear of rape is the norm in our society. Specific elements, including likelihood, consequences and avoidance of being raped, of FOR were discussed. The data also provided statistics regarding the
incidence of rape in Queensland, reasons for under-reporting of rape and subjects' views on what constitutes being raped.

References


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Appendix A

There seems to be considerable disagreement about what constitutes a 'real' rape (Sanders 1983). This argument is supported by the Real Rape Law Coalition report which suggests that it is frequently believed, by society generally, and reflected in rape victim's concerns, that 'real' rape fits into the 'stranger danger' mould (Real Rape Law Coalition 1991, p. 2). Rape perpetrated, particularly by an offender with whom a victim is in an intimate relationship, is difficult both for the victim to perceive as rape, and commonly for society to accept as such (Tetrault & Barnett 1987). Ellis (1989) suggests that the differences in estimates of actual rape statistics vary due to the differences used in criteria used to identify rape. Rape may thus be viewed as an act which varies along a continuum in terms of the amount of force used, risk of injury, and degree of non-consent involved (Malamuth 1986). Not only are there discrepancies in the legal and societal definitions of rape, but also by individuals who have been victimised (Schepple & Bart 1983). Following is a detailed description of subjects’ views on what constitutes a rape.

Consent

The most common addition to the given definition was to include the clause 'without consent' or 'against the will'. Many subjects thus indicated that stating that someone was forced to do something is not the same as not giving consent. Some specified that consent must be verbal consent. Saying 'NO' was often mentioned as a way that women indicate that they do not give their consent. However, some subjects suggested that any indication that you are not a willing partner in sexual activity was sufficient. Specific indications were not, however, suggested. Some subjects commented on situations when victims were unable to give consent; for example, when under the influence of alcohol or other substances. In such cases, sexual intimacy was also considered rape, even if the victim did not object.

Means of Penetration

A number of subjects did not appear to appreciate that the term 'penetration' in the definition provided included all means of penetration. A number of subjects specified the use of other objects apart from the penis; for example, fingers (digits) or dildos. One subject, who did not report herself as being raped, described being digitally penetrated as a child. As there was no obvious force used, she did not define it as rape, although she felt 'thoroughly violated'. Some subjects commented that only forced vaginal sex was considered by them to be rape. One subject phoned the author to discuss the definition of rape, relating an experience of digital penetration by a neighbour as a child. She did not feel that this was rape, and attached a note to her questionnaire stating that she had asked a number of friends who all felt that penetration by the penis was necessary for an attack to be rape.
Distinction Between Sexual Assault and Rape

Some subjects commented that they defined 'rape' similarly to the given definition, and 'sexual assault' as any other unwanted physical contact. Incidents involving alternative means of penetration or touching and rubbing against the will were considered to be 'sexual assault'. Some reports indicated that some subjects considered digital penetration of children to be 'molestation' rather than 'rape'. A number of subjects commented that they would also include 'incest' and 'child molestation' as rape although in these cases the child may appear to be a willing partner and force is not always necessary due to the child's lack of knowledge. Some subjects thus suggested that the definition of rape should be different for children and not necessarily include the concept of 'force'. One subject suggested that rape is only 'someone I do not know making me have sex with them'.

Broader Definitions

A number of subjects indicated that the given definition was limited in their view. Examples of more inclusive definitions were: 'any unwanted violation of your being, mental or physical', 'invading one's emotional, physical and personal space', and 'obscene comments, obscene phone calls'. Other types of sexual contact included in some subjects' definition of rape, included 'touching of genitals or breasts, and fondling or kissing'. One subject suggested that:

Rape takes many forms including psychological. Males' remarks, verbal assault, sexual harassment, touches and physical sexual assault are all a form of rape. Rape also most commonly takes the form of sexual exploitation of children, women on dates and in relationships. Rape is sexual abuse in any form.

A particularly broad definition was:

The definition of rape goes beyond physical penetration. If someone takes away my right to choose or empower my thoughts and body, then either physically or figuratively, I am being raped.

Subjects did not generally clarify or define terms such as 'sexual acts'.

Men as Victims

A few subjects acknowledged that men can be victims of rape, but this was unusual and, most commonly, victims of rape were referred to as specifically female. In the great majority of cases, definitions which did indicate gender, the offender was perceived to be male.
Types of Force

Frequently subjects suggested that 'force' did not necessarily mean only physical force, but that 'intimidation' was also a way of forcing someone into 'unwanted sex'. The concept of 'coercion' was also suggested; for example, the knowledge that the partner will become angry/abusive/withhold financial or emotional support if regular sex or sex on demand was not given, was considered forcing the victim to have sex. The concept of 'psychological force' was used by a number of subjects, in that they felt that men were in a position of power over women generally, and that the use of psychological force was enough without the use of physical force. A number of women commented that they believed that they had been raped by the use of psychological force or coercion, but did not report so.