WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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Reprinted from
THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF CRIMINOLOGY
Vol. 27, No. 4, Autumn 1987

SWEET & MAXWELL LTD.
11 NEW FETTER LANE, LONDON EC4P 4EE

Law Publishers

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Some Implications for their Fear of Crime

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The purpose of this study was to look for causes of women's fear of crime. It was hypothesised that experiences of sexual harassment, which usually are not serious but could occur relatively often, can lead women to be fearful and restrict themselves to their homes. A distinction was made between victimisation inside the family and outside the family. The results showed a strong relation between fear/anticipation and victimisation for situations inside the family frame. However, there appeared to be a weaker relation between victimisation and fear/anticipation outside the family; a low educational level was the best predictor of higher fear/anticipation scores. Techniques of neutralisation can explain the difference in results for situations inside and outside the family frame. Finally it is suggested that women differ in their ability to handle potentially dangerous situations (by neutralising feelings of insecurity). This means that there are two "explanations" for women's high scores on fear and anticipation scales: they have experiences of sexual harassment, which men usually do not have to confront; and they score higher on factors which influence people's ability to handle potentially dangerous situations.

Our subject, feelings of insecurity, risk assessment, avoidance and precautionary behaviour of women and its relation to sexual harassment, can be placed in the larger context of studies on fear of crime and victimisation. The relation between fear and victimisation is not unequivocal: many studies on fear of crime do not find, as one might expect, a simple positive relation between being victimised and expressing fear of crime. Several methods have been used to try and solve this inconsistency. We will review some of them.

Most studies on victimisation risk and fear of crime found apparent inconsistencies for different socio-demographic groups: for instance, elderly people and women. The first Dutch victimisation studies (Van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1980) showed that women have a lower victimisation rate for all but sexual offences. While their overall victimisation rate is lower, women express more fear of crime than men of the same age group and urbanisation level (Cozijn and Van Dijk, 1976). It appears, from their study, that the crimes inspiring most fear are rape (28 per cent. of those

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I would like to thank Ab Mooijaart, Peter G. M. van der Heijden, Jan J. M. van Dijk, Richard Block and an anonymous reviewer for their comments on previous drafts, Bernadine Ensink and Francine Albach for kindly providing the data, and Helen Liepman, Mariska Brouwers and Frans Schachtschabel for their help with the translation.

thinking about being victimised), assault (23 per cent.), and robbery (20 per cent.). Many studies found similar results: overall lower victimisation rates for women (except for sexual offences) but much higher fear levels (Feyerherm and Hindelang, 1974; Garofalo, 1979; Bowker, 1979; Holland Baker *et al.*, 1983; Maxfield, 1984; Van der Heijden and Israels, 1985; Block, 1986). Garofalo (1979: 87) found that age and sex have much stronger effects on fear than actual experience with personal victimisation. Bowker (1979: 381) specifies that men are more likely to be the victims of personal property crimes, murder and assault, while women are more often the victims of rape and family crimes. Summarising, one might say that many studies did not find a relation between victimisation rates and fear of crime and some authors concluded that there was consequently something irrational about fear of crime.

Many researchers thought the problem of fear of crime should be studied carefully because this inconsistency between victimisation and fear should not be taken for granted. We will briefly discuss some of the paths of research which are followed. One possibility is to concentrate on the independent variable of the relationship, namely victimisation. Some authors looked at the victimisation rates from a different angle, or computed them using new methods. A second possibility is to look more closely at the dependent variable: the concept of fear of crime. Fear of crime was operationalised differently in the various studies and sometimes in a rather restricted way. Thirdly, one can look at the causes of fear of crime and argue that indeed women are more afraid of crime than men, but they might have "good reasons" for being more frightened: some researchers stress the importance of characteristics common to women, for example, higher vulnerability levels because of less physical strength. Finally, some researchers argue that there is one special reason for the fear of women: fear of rape (or, more generally, fear of sexual offences). Fear of crime is equated, for women with fear of rape, and therefore research should concentrate on this aspect of women's fear of crime.

Victimisation rates

The first possibility is to pay more attention to the victimisation rates. Some studies looked very carefully at the victimisation rates instead of relying solely on overall rates. Steinmetz and Van Andel (1985) computed victimisation rates for men and women controlling for age, socio-economic status (SES) and urbanisation level. It appears from their analyses that victimisation rates in the larger cities for particular age and SES-groups are approximately the same for men and women, and that there seems to be a relation between victimisation rates and the amount of worry about crime. However, differences between men and women in levels of fear remain present and cannot be explained completely by controlling for urbanisation, age and SES.

Balkin (1979) and Stafford and Galle (1984) paid attention to the measurement aspect of victimisation rates. Balkin computed victimisation rates, adjusted for exposure of people to criminality. He concluded from

analysis based on the adjusted victimisation rates that these adjusted rates correlate better with fear of crime than the unadjusted rates do. Stafford and Galle obtained similar results. However, other things being equal, females still express more fear of crime (Stafford and Galle, 1984, p.179). Adjusted victimisation rates do appear to be an improvement on traditional rates, but cannot account for all the differences in fear of crime between men and women.

The concept of fear of crime

It has been shown above that there are some problems with the computation of victimisation rates. There is also discussion about the concept of fear of crime (see also Cozijn and Van Dijk, 1976; Gaquin, 1978; Balkin, 1979; Garofalo, 1979, 1981; Lee, 1982; Warr and Stafford, 1983; Maxfield, 1984; Stafford and Galle, 1984). Fear of crime can be divided into a variety of aspects, some of which have already been mentioned above: risk assessment, feelings of insecurity, worry about becoming a victim of a particular crime, ideas about how serious crime problems are in the neighbourhood, and reactions to crime or to the fear of crime. The main problem is that the different operationalisations do not relate in the same way to victimisation rates. Some correlate positively to victimisation and some are not related to all.

Skogan (1984) proposes three concepts with which to categorise the many descriptive findings of fear of crime research, namely beliefs about crime, assessments of risk of victimisation, and perceived threat of crime. The latter two categories deserve, according to him, the general appellation of "fear of crime." Crime related behaviour (like avoidance) is not the same as "fear of crime" and is not necessarily congruent with the emotion "fear." We will briefly introduce these three concepts.

First, beliefs about crime are opinions and beliefs about crime which constitute the cognitive aspect of perceptions of victimisation. Secondly, there is the first component of fear: assessment of risks. Risk assessment is closely related to personal vulnerability, physical power and the seriousness of the consequences resulting from criminal victimisation. Skogan calls risk assessment the evaluative aspect of fear of crime. Thirdly, there is the second component of fear: threat of crime. According to Skogan, this is the emotional component of fear of crime. According to him, the inconsistencies found in previous research will disappear through the more careful definition of what constitutes fear of crime, and by controlling for intermediary variables (such as vulnerability).

Finally, Block (1986), using factor analysis, finds three orthogonal components: general fear (fear of strangers, the unknown, and isolated situations); risk assessment (the individual's perception that he/she might be at risk of becoming a victim); and incivility (the perception that your neighbourhood is an unruly place). He found that victimisation experiences were unrelated to fear ($\gamma=0.06$) but were moderately related to risk assessment ($\gamma=0.28$) and to incivility ($\gamma=0.35$).

The cause of women's greater fear

The third possible explanation for the apparent lack of influence of victimisation on fear of crime is the existence of *other* causes of fear. Among these causes are factors on which one might expect women to score higher than men, and which could therefore explain women's greater fear. Factors which have been mentioned in the literature are: physical vulnerability; likelihood (sexual offences are more likely to happen to women); severity of the consequences of victimisation; and the educational level, age, marital status and number of persons living with the respondent (Garofalo, 1981; Toseland, 1982).

Fear of crime and fear of rape

Some authors argue that it is the fear of a special crime, namely rape, that makes women more fearful than men. Studies about the effects of rape have shown that rape usually has traumatic and longlasting consequences (Kilpatrick, Vernon and Resick, 1979). Therefore, fear of rape might be an important cause of fear of crime in general (Riger, Gordon and Le Bailly, 1978). But other studies seem to show that fear of rape cannot be isolated from other fear measurements (see for example Gubbels, Knapen and Lochtenberg, 1978; Riger and Gordon, 1981; Riger, Gordon and Le Bailly, 1982).

Techniques of neutralisation

Finally, Agnew (1985) has argued that there is a relation between victimisation and fear, but this relation is indirect. According to him, the relation of victimisation to fear can be attenuated when the victims use techniques of neutralisation. Agnew suggested this hypothesis of "neutralising the impact of victimisation" for victimisation in general, so that it should apply as well to women's experiences with sexual harassment.

Trying to explain the weak relationship between victimisation and fear, Agnew argues that this relation is mediated by the "beliefs" or the use of neutralisation techniques by the individual. These techniques have been analysed in relation to offenders (see, in particular, Sykes and Matza, 1957), but Agnew argues that victims may employ them as well. By neutralising the impact of crime, victims are able to preserve their emotional balance and continue functioning in a relatively normal way. He names five techniques and presents evidence for their existence:

- Denial of injury: victims may claim that no harm was done.
- Denial of vulnerability: the victim claims that he can exercise some control over future victimisation: for example, by learning to recognise offenders.
- Denial of responsibility: by denying responsibility, victims are able to resist feelings of guilt and shame.
- Belief in a just world: many researchers noted a preoccupation with revenge among victims and the idea that good will triumph over evil in the long run.

—Appeal to higher loyalties: victims claim, for example, that they were victimised while trying to save someone else from harm.

Agnew asserts that certain factors influence the extent to which victims can make use of these neutralisation techniques. For instance, being victimised by someone defined as "safe" makes it more difficult to deny vulnerability, or to claim the ability to recognise offenders. Therefore, a weaker relation is expected between fear and victimisation in situations with, for example, unknown men, and authorities, and a stronger relation in connection with situations within the family. In family situations, women assume themselves to be secure. If they are victimised within the family situation, it will be harder to deny their vulnerability and to uphold their claim to recognising offenders. Agnew also asserts that older persons, and persons with low socio-economic status, find it more difficult to use neutralisation techniques (because usually they will suffer relatively more) and therefore will experience more fear when victimised. Finally, the seriousness of the crime is a factor influencing the possibility of using neutralisation techniques. For very serious crimes, it is difficult to claim that no harm was done. Hence, the problem for researchers investigating the relation between victimisation and fear is not primarily one of measurement, but of intermediate variables which should be taken into account.

Summary: In the earliest studies, almost no relation was found between fear of crime and victimisation. More specifically, women were victimised relatively less than men, but expressed more fear. In search of explanations for this seeming inconsistency, several paths have been tried to "solve" this discrepancy. From these studies, it may be concluded that:

- (a) In research on fear of crime, more attention should be given to the measurement of victimisation, and to controls for intervening factors such as urbanisation level, SES, age and exposure to crime. When controlling for these variables, differences in victimisation levels between men and women seem to decrease.
- (b) The concept of fear of crime should be operationalised more carefully to allow for its different aspects, and to eliminate those elements which cannot be defined as "fear." By using more precise concepts, positive relations between "fear" measures and victimisation predictably emerge, but sex differences remain.
- (c) Women seem to score higher on some factors (e.g. low educational level, less physical strength) related to fear of crime. By integrating these aspects into their studies, researchers might be better able to explain why women are more fearful than men.
- (d) Some researchers argue that women are more frightened of crime in general because they fear one exceptional crime in particular, namely rape. More research should be done on this subject, because hitherto results seem inconclusive.
- (e) Finally, Agnew hypothesises that the relation between fear and victimisation might be weakened when victims use techniques to neutralise the impact of crime.

The conceptual framework

We have seen that there are several possibilities for researchers in search of a better understanding of the relation between victimisation and fear of crime. In the present study our purpose is to follow the fourth path, namely that fear of crime for women is—to a large extent—fear of rape. However, in most research one finds only weak support for this idea. It is hypothesised that the reason for this lack of support lies in the inadequate measurement of victimisation and the dependent variable “fear” in previous research. Much research focussed on rape and fear of rape. Women experience many forms of sexual violence and rape is a relatively uncommon crime. However, it should be noted that rape is one of the most aggressive crimes. Apart from rape, women are exposed to a variety of acts of sexual violence, which vary from relatively harmless, but unpleasant sexual remarks, through all kinds of undesired forms of physical (and sexually loaded) contacts and sexual proposals with more or less moral or physical coercion, to very severe forms of sexual violence. The majority of these events which we can call “sexual harassment” do not constitute offences as defined by criminal law and are usually not included in victimisation studies. Many of these events are not very serious (compared to rape) but they occur relatively often. Sexual harassment, in all its forms, could contribute to create a climate in which women might feel less safe than men.

An important and sometimes neglected element of sexual harassment is the woman's relation to the offender: he could be unknown to her but he could very well be an acquaintance or even a family member. In this study we will deal with this relation in the following way. Inside the family, we distinguish between two types of offenders: family members and (ex)partners. Outside the family women can experience sexual harassment by unknown men, known men, and/or authorities.

Besides an enlargement of the concept of victimisation, the concept of fear has to be adjusted. The dependent variables cover as adequately as possible reactions, anticipations and feelings of women towards sexual harassment. Thus our hypothesis is that higher victimisation rates among women will lead to more feelings of insecurity, higher assessment of risks, more precautionary behaviour and more avoidance behaviour. Because women are generally the victims of sexual harassment, this might explain the differences in fear levels among men and women. However, we will not be able to study the problem of differential fear for men and women, as in this research only women were interviewed. In the following feelings of unsafety and risk assessment will be referred to as fear (as Skogan, 1984 proposes); precautionary behaviour and avoidance, which are concepts situated at the behavioural level, will be called anticipation.

One aspect can be added to this relatively simple scheme. If our hypothesis is correct, then psychological variables which, for women, are sometimes related to fear, should be unrelated to our dependent variables. According to our hypothesis the dependent variables fear and anticipation result from a reaction to victimisation and do not constitute a feature of

women's psychological disposition, such as being relatively anxious and/or nervous. This disposition should not result in more fear and anticipation.

Finally the relationship between the socio-demographic variables and fear will be considered.

The operationalisation of the concepts

We will now discuss the operationalisation of the concepts. The definition and the operationalisation of sexual harassment comes from Ensink and Albach (1983).

Experiences with sexual harassment. Information was gathered by means of a structured questionnaire. Sexual harassment was defined as a violation of the physical integrity and/or autonomy which is related to the primary and secondary sexual characteristics of persons. Ensink and Albach categorised five types of offenders:

- Family members: fathers, uncles, brothers or other male family members. If the woman was 18 years of age or older, her experiences of sexual harassment by family members were considered to be experiences with known men.
- Partners: husbands, ex-husbands, fiancés or a man with whom a woman has (or had) a love affair.
- Authorities: men who have some power over the women (for example: doctors, civil servants, employers).
- Known men: men with whom a woman has/had conversation for at least five hours in total.
- Unknown men: all men who do not fit into one of the above four categories.

Apart from these measures of direct experience of sexual harassment, indirect experiences were measured by asking whether women talked with others about sexual harassment. We used two indices to measure this aspect: the respondent's knowledge of experiences with sexual harassment of acquaintances by unknown men, known men or authorities; and the respondent's knowledge of experiences with sexual harassment of acquaintances by (ex) partners or family members.

Socio-demographic variables. We attempted to measure key variables in the following way: Age: the age of the women ranged from 16 to 55 years old. Education: this variable has three categories: (1) low (only lower education), (2) medium (high school and lower or medium professional education), (3) high (higher or higher professional education). Professional situation: there are four categories: (1) housewife, (2) part-time job, (3) full-time job, (4) student.

Psychological characteristics. We constructed five indices to measure personality aspects of women by means of homogeneity analysis:¹

¹ We used the computer programme HOMALS. HOMALS is a programme for homogeneity analysis developed by the Department of Data Theory of the University of Leiden (Gifi, 1981). It is a generalisation of principal components analysis to the case of nominal data (see also Tenenhaus and Young, 1985). More information about the construction of the scale can be found in Van Buuren, Wöstmann and Junger, 1985).

Confidence: this index measures to what extent women behave in an assertive way. It is constituted by only two variables: "do you usually say what you think?" and "do you find it difficult to phone authorities?"; this means we should be careful in interpreting relations with this index.

Vulnerability: this index measures to what extent the respondents feel more vulnerable physically than the average man or woman, and whether they expect to become angry faster than the average man and woman.

Education by mother: this index measures to what extent the respondents were warned by their mother (during childhood) against the dangers of accompanying unknown men and whether the respondents were aware that their mother was afraid of rape.

Anxiety: this was the only standardised test in the questionnaire.² It measures respondents' tendencies to react to threatening situations with a higher state of anxiety.

Image of men: in this index we measured if women had an image of men as being less able than women to control their sexual impulses, and therefore giving women more responsibility to make sure that some situations would not end in undesired sexual events.

The dependent variables. Instead of one operationalisation of fear, four concepts were measured as dependent variables: risk assessments, feelings of insecurity, avoidance and precautionary behaviour. The first two can be considered as measurements of fear according to Skogan (1984). Insecurity is the emotional component and risk assessment is the evaluative component. Avoidance and precautionary behaviour are behavioural elements which could be the result of "fear."

Avoidance: first, respondents were asked whether they avoided certain situations in order to avoid possible sexual harassment. We constructed three avoidance indices: avoidance of situations with unknown and known men and authorities; avoidance of situations with the partner; and avoidance of contacts with members of the family.

Precautionary behaviour: there are two indices which measure how many precautions women take, fearing that 'something unpleasant' in terms of sexual harassment might occur: precautionary behaviour against unknown and known men and authorities; and precautionary behaviour in situations with the partner, or members of the family.

Assessment of risk: for each of the five different types of offenders, a question was asked about how large is the risk of victimisation for women in general. Two scales were used: risk assessment for situations outside the family frame, and risk assessment inside the family frame.

Feelings of insecurity: Feelings of insecurity were measured for situations with unknown and known men. The question was: "there are some situations which some women assess as unsafe because they think of the possibility of being sexually victimised: could you say in which situation you feel unsafe, unpleasant or in which you think safety is not a consideration?"

² The Dutch version of the STAI-scale (Spielberger Trait Anxiety Inventory) was used (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 1980).

The sample

The sample has been drawn by Ensink and Albach (1983) from a data set of the University of Leiden which contains the names and addresses of a representative sample of the population of the city of Leiden, a medium-sized city in the Netherlands. From this data set a random sample was selected of 600 names and addresses of women from 16 to 55 years old. The information of the data set was quite old, so roughly 200 names and addresses were of no use because, for example, women had moved from the addresses.

The remaining 400 women in the sample received a letter giving information on the purpose of the study, asking them to participate and informing them that a female interviewer would telephone to make an appointment. Some women refused to participate and some were not at home at the time of the appointment. Finally 279 (70 per cent.) women were interviewed. Female interviewers were used because it was assumed that, given the delicate nature of the questions, women would give more valid information to female interviewers on their experiences with sexual harassment.

Validity

There were five series of questions about sexual harassment according to the five type of offenders. Before asking questions about experiences, there were several examples of what was considered as sexual harassment and several questions about how the women evaluated such facts. This extensive "warming up" (following Ensink and Albach) might have been, in part, responsible for the high amount of sexual harassment recalled by the respondents.

There are some indications of the presence of an interviewer effect. It seems that some women "recalled" more events than others depending on the interviewer who administered the questionnaire. It is difficult to know how much overall impact this had because—as the researchers explained—there were 26 interviewers which makes it difficult to analyse each interviewer's result statistically. Because of the large number of interviewers (in relation to the size of the sample) we assume that the overall effect of one or two interviewers cannot be too large. As 25 women participated in a second qualitative interview it was possible to compare the information collected from them by the two methods of interviewing. From this comparison Ensink and Albach (*op. cit.*, p.66) draw the following conclusions:

- some women mentioned events as "sexual harassment" which should not have been coded as such, considering the definition of the study;
- some women had experiences of sexual harassment which were not included in the questionnaire;
- sometimes one experience was mentioned twice by the respondent (and coded twice by the interviewer);

- from some experiences of sexual harassment a minor aspect was coded instead of the most important feature;
- some experiences were mentioned in connection with the wrong type of offender.

All these *caveats* do not make the information about sexual harassment worthless, but they do indicate that the results should be considered as an approximation of the amount of sexual harassment and the forms of sexual violence women experience.

Notwithstanding these points, the reliability and validity of the results seem to be satisfactory (Ensink and Albach, 1983).

The results

Our analyses were divided into several steps. First, we will give an overall picture of the amount of sexual harassment mentioned by women in the sample.

The frequencies of sexual harassment

Table 1 gives an overall picture of the frequencies and prevalence of sexual harassment in the sample. Table 1A gives the answers to the question "did it ever happen to you that . . .?"; Table 1B contains the same information for victimisation during the past year (which was gathered by type of offender for situations outside the family circle). Table 1C gives the "ever" frequencies according to seriousness. It appears that women have fewest experiences of sexual harassment within the family frame ((ex) partners nine per cent.; members of the family 14 per cent.) and relatively more with offenders they know less well (authorities 34 per cent.; known men 47 per cent.; unknown men 86 per cent.). There appears to be an inverse relation between the number of experiences of sexual harassment and the strength of the bond with the offender. Few victimisations happened during the last year (Table 1B). The percentages are considerably lower: authorities three per cent.; known men nine per cent.; and unknown men 23 per cent. The inverse relation between the number of offences and the strength of the bond remains unchanged. Finally, most experiences of sexual harassment can be considered as light or moderately serious. Still, 19 per cent. of the women were confronted at least once in their lives with more serious events.

For the interpretation of the results it is important to realise that the majority of the experiences mentioned in this study had taken place long ago, were not very serious and could not be considered as criminal offences. If this was not the case, it would be difficult to understand why in some situations (as we will see later) only a weak correlation exists between victimisation and fear/anticipation.

Relations within the set of dependent variables

In this section the relations within the set of independent variables will be examined. Some researchers (Gordon and Riger, 1979; Warr and Stafford,

TABLE 1

Frequencies of sexual harassment according to type of offender, during the last year and according to seriousness.¹

A. According to type of offender (%) (n=279).

Frequency	Unknown men	Known men	Authorities	(Ex) partners	Family members
0	14	53	66	91	86
1, 2	23	21	12	2	4
3-5	16	11	4	3	—
6-15	27	12	11	4	10
More	18	3	7	—	—
N=	279	279	279	279	279

B. Sexual harassment during the last year (%) (N=279).

	Unknown men	Known men	Authorities
No	77	91	97
Yes	23	9	3
N=	279	279	279

C. Sexual harassment according to seriousness (%) (n=279).²

Frequency	Light	Moderate	Serious
0	29	21	80
1	10	16	8
2-7	25	31	8
8-21	26	26	3
More	10	7	—
N=	279	279	279

¹ Due to rounding errors some columns may not add up to 100.

² "Serious events" included those facts where there was the threat or the use of physical violence and experiences with family members where psychological coercion was present.

"Moderately serious" events were those where more subtle, psychological means of coercion were used. Sexual harassment by family members, which could have been categorised as light, was nevertheless considered as moderately serious, because of the fact that it is difficult for a child to resist sexual harassment by someone as close as a member of the family. The pressure, resulting from their actions, is greater than from the same behaviour of unknown persons.

"Light events" were those where no coercion was present and no physical contact was made, but where only visual or verbal contact took place.

1983; Warr, 1984) are especially interested in the relations between emotions and evaluative aspects of fear, such as feelings of insecurity and risk assessment on the one hand, and behavioural elements such as precautionary behaviour and avoidance on the other. Analyses of this subject will be presented.

Our set of dependent variables is rather heterogeneous, in the sense that feelings of insecurity can be considered as emotions, and assessment of risks represents an evaluative aspect of fear of crime (Skogan, 1984), while avoidance and precautionary behaviour are situated on the behavioural level. The question is: are these factors interrelated? In Table 2, the correlations ($p < 0.05$) are presented:

Within the family frame the behavioural elements are related: precautionary behaviour correlates with avoidance of situations with partners ($r = 0.33$) and with family members ($r = 0.49$). When women take precautions they are also inclined to avoid certain situations. However risk

TABLE 2
Correlations ($p < 0.5$) of the dependent variables ($N = 279$).¹

	Precautions (much)	Within family frame: Avoidance partner (much)	Avoidance family (much)	Risk assessment (low)	Precautions (much)	Avoidance (low)	Outside family frame: Risk assessment (low)	Feelings of insecurity (much)
<i>Within family frame:</i>								
Precautions	—							
Avoidance partner	0.33	—						
Avoidance family	0.49		—					
Risk assessment	-0.10		-0.10	—				
<i>Outside family frame:</i>								
Precautions		0.21		-0.27	0.53	—		
Avoidance			0.11	-0.17	-0.37	-0.24	—	
Risk assessment				0.54	0.54	0.76	-0.23	
Feelings of insecurity				-0.16				—

¹ N may vary due to missing values.

assessment has only a small (but significant) correlation with taking precautions ($r=-0.10$) and avoidance behaviour within the family frame ($r=-0.10$). When women perceive high risks within the family circle, they take slightly more precautions and avoid certain situations with family members.

Outside the family frame all the dependent variables are related to each other. There is a relative strong correlation between the behaviour scales: when women take precautions they also avoid situations ($r=0.53$). Insecurity is related to risk assessment: women who perceive high risks also feel more insecure ($r=-0.23$), but this relation is less strong. Finally, the behavioural elements are related to risk assessments and feelings of insecurity (see Table 2).

It also appears that scales measuring the situation in the family frame are related to those measuring the situation outside the family frame. Women who assess high risks in family situations assess higher risks ($r=0.54$), take more precautions ($r=-0.27$), avoid more situations ($r=-0.17$) and feel more relatively insecure ($r=-0.16$) outside the family frame. Women who avoid certain situations with their (ex)partner do take more precautions ($r=0.21$) and avoid situations ($r=0.11$) outside the family frame. Most of these correlations (except for the correlation between the two risk scales) are moderate to low.

On the whole we conclude that the dependent variables are clearly related. The strongest relations are found within the scales relating to situations outside the family circle. For situations inside the family frame the behavioural elements are interrelated. However, assessing high risks within the family frame is related to the scales concerning the situation outside the family frame. Risk assessment within the family frame has only a very weak relation with the behavioural elements within the family frame (precautions and avoidance).

These results demonstrate that, although the several components of fear and anticipation (precautions and avoidance) are related, there is not just one (or two) dimension underlying them all, and therefore it seems preferable to consider them as distinct factors.

The relations between the independent and the dependent variables

In this section we will examine the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The independent variables are: the psychological variables, the socio-demographic variables, and the experience of sexual harassment (direct or indirect). The dependent variables are: assessment of risk, feelings of insecurity, avoidance and precautionary behaviour. This influence was examined using three canonical correlation analyses and two regression analyses. The importance of the independent variables varies for the different independent variables, and cannot be studied using these analyses. This method provides only a rough picture of the relationships, but can be used as a guide for a more detailed study to be described on pages 372-381 below.

Our hypothesis is that women who have high victimisation levels score

high on the fear and anticipation scales; women with low victimisation levels have little fear and low anticipation rates. Psychological variables are expected to be unrelated to fear and anticipation.

As was hypothesised, there is a strong relation between sexual harassment inside the family frame and fear and anticipation (multiple correlation=0.50). But contrary to what was expected (see also the "conceptual framework" above) the relation between sexual harassment outside the family circle on the one hand and fear and anticipation on the other is relatively weak (multiple correlation=0.34) and the canonical correlation of indirect victimisation with fear and anticipation is even lower (first canonical correlation=0.24, second canonical correlation=0.15). However, these relations are in the expected directions: more victimisation leads to more fear and more anticipation. The psychological variables, also unexpectedly, are related relatively strongly to the dependent variables (first canonical correlation=0.46, second canonical correlation=0.31). Finally the socio-demographic variables are related to fear and anticipation (first canonical correlation=0.48, second canonical correlation=0.27).

The following conclusions can be drawn from these results. The socio-demographic and the psychological variables are related to the dependent variables, and should be included in further analyses. Because of the differences we find here between experiences of sexual harassment by offenders inside or outside the family frame, we will conduct two separate analyses for these two types of offenders. The variable "indirect experiences of sexual harassment" will not be included in the following analyses because of their low correlation with the dependent variables. More detailed analyses studying the relationship of each independent variable with all the dependent variables are described below and will clarify the meaning of these results.

Situations outside the family frame

This section is concerned with the relationships of the set of independent variables to the different dependent variables for offenders and situations outside the family circle. For this purpose, hierarchical regression analysis was used. First, the socio-demographic variables were introduced in the regression, secondly the psychological variables, and finally the victimisation variable was added. The aim was to find out if, as was hypothesised, experiences of sexual harassment are related to the dependent variables when we control for the influence of the psychological and the socio-demographic variables. However, for the interpretation of the results, we will rely mostly on the significance level of the beta coefficients and partial correlations (which are independent of the order of inclusion in the analysis). As there are four dependent variables (feelings of insecurity, risk assessment, avoidance and precautions) four regression analyses were computed. The results for victimisation experiences in situations outside the family frame are presented in Table 3.

Feelings of insecurity correlate only moderately with the independent variables: only educational level (partial corr=-0.21) and image of men

TABLE 3
Hierarchical regression analysis for situations outside the family frame

TABLE 3a										
<i>Dependent variable: feelings of insecurity in situations with unknown men, known men, and authorities (high: high feelings of insecurity)</i>										
	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign T	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	-0.05	0.07	-0.04	-0.62	0.53					
Educational level (high)	-0.23	-0.26	-0.21	-3.35	0.0009					
Professional situation (student)	-0.05	-0.11	-0.04	-0.62	0.53	0.27	0.07	0.07	6.4	0.00
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	0.08	0.12	0.08	1.20	0.23					
Education by mother (with fear)	0.002	0.008	0.003	0.04	0.97					
Confidence (much)	-0.07	-0.09	-0.07	-1.17	0.24					
Vulnerability (much)	-0.03	0.007	-0.03	-0.50	0.61					
Image of men (traditional)	0.15	0.21	0.14	2.18	0.03	0.33	0.11	0.04	2.0	0.07
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation (known men, unknown men, authorities)	0.09	0.06	0.09	1.48	0.14	0.34	0.12	0.008	2.2	0.14

TABLE 3b

Dependent variable: assessment of risk with unknown men, known men, and authorities (high: low risks)

	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign T	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	0.13	0.08	0.11	1.73	0.08					
Educational level (high)	0.34	0.24	0.31	5.13	0.00					
Professional situation (student)	-0.01	-0.04	-0.01	-0.22	0.82	0.29	0.08	0.08	7.6	0.00
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	-0.11	-0.18	-0.12	-1.84	0.07					
Education by mother (with fear)	-0.12	-0.14	-0.12	-1.92	0.06					
Confidence (much)	-0.06	-0.02	-0.07	-1.04	0.30					
Vulnerability (much)	-0.02	-0.06	-0.02	-0.25	0.80					
Image of men (traditional)	0.02	-0.07	0.02	0.35	0.72	0.36	0.13	0.05	2.7	0.02
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation (known men, unknown men, authorities)	-0.25	-0.24	-0.25	-4.05	0.0001	0.43	0.18	0.05	16.4	0.00

TABLE 3c

Dependent variable: precautionary behaviour in situations with unknown men, known men, and authorities (high: many precautions)

	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign T	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	-0.01	0.07	-0.009	-0.14	0.89					
Educational level (high)	-0.20	-0.22	-0.19	-3.02	0.003					
Professional situation (student)	0.02	-0.05	0.02	0.24	0.80	0.23	0.05	0.05	4.5	0.004
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	0.16	0.23	0.16	2.59	0.01					
Education by mother (with fear)	0.14	0.16	0.15	2.36	0.02					
Confidence (much)	-0.05	-0.07	-0.05	-0.81	0.42					
Vulnerability (much)	-0.07	-0.007	-0.08	-1.20	0.23					
Image of men (traditional)	0.20	0.26	0.19	2.98	0.003	0.40	0.16	0.11	6.5	0.00
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation (known men, unknown men, authorities)	0.13	0.14	0.14	2.15	0.03	0.42	0.18	0.02	4.6	0.03

TABLE 3d
Dependent variable: avoidance of situations with unknown men, known men, and authorities (high: much avoidance)

	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign T	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	-0.02	0.15	-0.02	-0.27	0.78					
Educational level (high)	-0.38	-0.42	-0.35	-5.93	0.00					
Professional situation (student)	-0.06	-0.18	-0.05	-0.86	0.39	0.42	0.18	0.18	18.4	0.00
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	0.05	0.10	0.05	0.84	0.40					
Education by mother (with fear)	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.58	0.56					
Confidence (much)	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04	-0.66	0.51					
Vulnerability (much)	-0.007	0.07	-0.008	-0.12	0.90					
Image of men (traditional)	0.13	0.28	0.13	2.04	0.04	0.45	0.21	0.03	1.7	0.14
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation (known men, unknown men, authorities)	0.11	0.05	0.12	1.88	0.06	0.47	0.22	0.01	3.5	0.06

(partial $\text{corr}=0.14$) make a significant contribution to the prediction. The multiple correlation is 0.34. Feelings of insecurity are relatively high among women with a low educational level and a traditional view of men; they are relatively low when women have more education and a less traditional view of men. Victimization experiences are unrelated to feelings of insecurity.

The prediction of assessment of risks is relatively better (multiple $\text{corr}=0.43$). It appears that educational level is the most important predictor of risk assessment (partial $\text{corr}=0.31$), followed by victimisation (-0.25). Women with a low educational level and who were relatively often a victim of sexual harassment do perceive higher risks of being a victim of sexual harassment. Women without these characteristics perceive lower risks of being victimised.

Precautionary behaviour is related to several independent variables. Women taking many precautions are usually less educated (partial $\text{corr}=-0.19$), have higher anxiety levels (partial $\text{corr}=0.16$), were warned more often by their mother against sexual harassment (partial $\text{corr}=0.15$) and have a more traditional image of men (partial $\text{corr}=0.19$) than women who take less precautions. Victimization experiences are also related to precautionary behaviour, but this relation is relatively small: women having many experiences with sexual harassment take more precautions than women with less victimisation experiences (partial $\text{corr}=0.14$). The multiple correlation between the socio-demographic variables and the psychological variables, on the one hand, with precautionary behaviour, on the other hand, is 0.40. Adding experiences with sexual harassment to the analysis leads to a multiple correlation of 0.42. This is only two per cent. additional explained variance.

Finally we look at the prediction of avoidance behaviour. It appears that educational level (partial $\text{corr}=-0.35$) and image of men (partial $\text{corr}=0.13$) are the only variable relating to avoidance behaviour. All the other variables have statistically insignificant contributions to the multiple correlation. Women with a high educational level and a less traditional view of men do avoid situations relatively less than women with a low educational level and a traditional view of men.

Canonical correlation analysis was used to find out how much variance of the set of independent variables is explained by the combination of the dependent variables. To this end, all the dependent variables were included in one set and the independent variables in another. The first canonical correlation is 0.50, the explained variance (R^2) is 0.25. The second canonical correlation is much lower: $R=0.25$ ($R^2=0.06$).

The four regression analyses were repeated for victimisation outside the family frame during the last year instead of "ever." When this is done, victimisation (during the last year) appears to be unrelated to every one of the dependent variables. Consequently, insofar as victimisation is related to the dependent variables, only many experiences over a period of years seem to have an effect.

These results do not meet all our expectations. Women having many experiences of sexual harassment outside the family frame do not feel more

insecure. However, they do feel subjected to higher risks of being victimised. In addition, it seems that women with many experiences of sexual harassment take more precautions but do not avoid risk situations. Among the psychological variables, the factor "image of men" is the strongest predictor of feelings of unsafety, avoidance and precautionary behaviour. In general, the most important and consistent predictor of fear/anticipation is the educational level. Women with a relative high educational level feel relatively safe, assess lower risks, avoid certain situations less often and take fewer precautions than women with a lower educational level.

The results also suggests that women score higher on general causes of fear, since women with a low educational level and a traditional view of men express more fear and anticipation than women without these characteristics. Some of these factors (for example, educational level) are related to fear of crime independently of sex (see also page 361 above). Because women usually have a lower educational level they will also be more fearful in comparison to men. For a further discussion of the results we refer to the "discussion" below.

Situations inside the family frame

The results of the regression analysis for situations inside the family frame are presented in Table 4. The multiple correlation of the prediction of assessment of risks is relatively low: 0.27. Women assess higher risks in family situations when they have a low educational level (partial corr=0.15) and had been victimised (partial corr=-0.16), and assess lower risks when they have a higher educational level and no victimisation experiences. Psychological variables are unrelated to risk assessment.

Finally we look at the relations between the independent variables and avoidance and precautionary behaviour. The most important predictor for these dependent variables is victimisation experiences. Women having experiences of sexual harassment within the family frame do take more precautions (partial corr=0.49), avoid more situations with family members (partial corr=0.51) and with (ex)partners (partial corr=0.22) than women without these experiences. Avoidance of situations with (ex)partners appears also to be related to anxiety (partial corr=0.20): women feeling anxious do avoid more situations with their (ex)partners than women with less anxiety. In short, the evaluative aspect of fear is relatively difficult to predict in this study. But the behavioural factors are relatively highly correlated, almost exclusively with victimisation experiences. The multiple correlation with "avoidance (ex)partners" is $r=0.35$; with "avoidance family members" $R=0.54$; with "precautionary behaviour," $R=0.54$. If canonical correlations are computed (using the independent variables in one set and the four dependent variables, which were predicted in the four regression analyses, in the other set) the first canonical correlation is 0.65 ($R^2=0.42$), and the second is 0.21 ($R^2=0.04$) which is considerably higher than the canonical correlations which were obtained for situations outside the family frame.

TABLE 4
Hierarchical regression analysis for situations in the family frame

TABLE 4a										
<i>Dependent variable: assessment of risks with (ex)partners and family members (high=low assessment of risks)</i>										
	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign T	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	0.13	0.06	0.10	1.62	0.11					
Educational level (high)	0.17	0.13	0.15	2.42	0.02					
Professional situation (student)	0.02	-0.001	0.01	0.21	0.83	0.16	0.03	0.03	2.3	0.08
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	-0.10	-0.11	-0.09	-1.47	0.14					
Education by mother (with fear)	-0.03	-0.06	-0.03	-0.52	0.60					
Confidence (much)	-0.08	-0.03	-0.08	-1.29	0.20					
Vulnerability (much)	-0.05	-0.08	-0.05	-0.81	0.42					
Image of men (traditional)	0.03	-0.006	0.03	0.48	0.63	0.23	0.05	0.02	1.2	0.30
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation (family members, (ex)partners)	-0.16	-0.15	-0.16	-2.47	0.01	0.27	0.07	0.02	6.1	0.01

TABLE 4b
Dependent variable: precautionary behaviour with (ex)partners and family members (high=many precautions)

	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign t	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	0.07	0.18	0.06	0.98	0.32					
Educational level (high)	-0.005	-0.08	-0.005	-0.08	0.94					
Professional situation (student)	-0.06	-0.13	-0.06	-0.92	0.36	0.19	0.04	0.04	3.0	0.03
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	0.07	0.12	0.08	1.21	0.23					
Education by mother (with fear)	-0.03	0.03	-0.03	-0.49	0.63					
Confidence (much)	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.55	0.58					
Vulnerability (much)	0.08	0.13	0.09	1.33	0.18					
Image of men (traditional)	0.05	0.13	0.05	0.77	0.44	0.27	0.07	0.04	1.8	0.10
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation (family members, (ex)partners)	0.49	0.51	0.49	8.73	0.00	0.54	0.30	0.22	76.2	0.00

TABLE 4c

Dependent variable: avoidance behaviour with family members (high=much avoidance)

	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign T	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	-0.08	0.01	-0.07	-1.12	0.26					
Educational level (high)	-0.07	-0.06	-0.08	1.19	0.23					
Professional situation (student)	-0.04	-0.02	-0.03	-0.53	0.59	0.06	0.003	0.003	0.26	0.86
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	0.02	0.15	0.03	0.40	0.68					
Education by mother (with fear)	0.04	0.08	0.05	0.78	0.44					
Confidence (much)	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.69	0.49					
Vulnerability (much)	-0.001	0.05	-0.001	-0.02	0.98					
Image of men (traditional)	0.002	0.06	0.002	0.03	0.98	0.19	0.03	0.03	1.6	0.18
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation (family members)	0.52	0.53	0.51	9.27	0.000	0.54	0.30	0.26	85.8	0.00

TABLE 4d

Dependent variable: avoidance behaviour with (ex)partners (high=much avoidance)

	Beta	r	Partial r	T	Sign T	Multiple correl.	r ²	Change R ²	F change	Sign change
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age (old)	0.14	0.16	0.11	1.74	0.08					
Educational level (high)	-0.05	-0.11	-0.05	-0.70	0.49					
Professional situation (student)	0.02	-0.09	0.01	0.21	0.83	0.18	0.03	0.03	2.5	0.06
<i>Step 2</i>										
Anxiety (high)	0.19	0.20	0.20	3.00	0.003					
Education by mother (with fear)	-0.001	0.03	-0.001	-0.02	0.99					
Confidence (much)	-0.03	-0.06	-0.03	-0.49	0.63					
Vulnerability (much)	-0.04	0.002	-0.04	-0.57	0.57					
Image of men (traditional)	0.05	0.12	0.04	0.64	0.52	0.28	0.08	0.05	2.4	0.04
<i>Step 3</i>										
Victimisation ((ex)partners)	0.22	0.24	0.22	3.48	0.001	0.35	0.13	0.05	12.1	0.001

Discussion of the results

For a good understanding of the results it is important to remember two features of this study, namely that:

- a relatively small representative sample of women of a university town was interviewed, in comparison with many victimisation studies in which several thousands of persons were victimised;
- the measures of sexual harassment contained a large and diverse variety of facts assembled under the name of sexual harassment, of which approximately two-thirds were more than one year old and were of light or moderate seriousness.

Our hypothesis was that victimisation—operationalised as sexual harassment—would be strongly related to fear and anticipation. Psychological variables were supposed to be unrelated to our dependent variables. Our results corroborate our hypotheses only in part:

- Relatively strong relations were found between the dependent variables for situations outside the family frame. For situations inside the family frame the behavioural elements were related relatively strongly. Scales related to situations inside or outside the family frame were also found to be related to each other.
- In general women are neither frightened nor restricted in going out because of experiences by this type of sexual harassment (as measured in this study)³: no relationship is found between victimisation and feelings of insecurity outside the family frame.
- There is only a moderate to low relationship between victimisation, on the one hand, and avoidance and precautionary behaviour, on the other hand, for situations outside the family frame.
- For situations outside the family frame, a low educational level; to a lesser extent, a traditional view of men; having been warned about the risks of being sexually harassed, and anxiety (the latter two being related to precautionary behaviour only) are better predictors of fear (feelings of unsafety, assessment of risks) and anticipation (avoidance and precautionary behaviour) than victimisation experiences.
- In contrast, we found a rather strong relationship between avoidance and precautionary behaviour and victimisation for situations within the family frame. The influence of the socio-demographic and psychological variables on the dependent variables is almost negligible (except for the relations: anxiety—avoidance of (ex)partners and educational level—assessment of risks).

An adjustment of our hypothesis

An important finding of our analyses is that the relation between victimisation and the dependent variables varies in strength depending

³ This does not mean that when women are confronted with very serious forms of sexual violence such as rape, this has no influence on them. On the contrary, as we mentioned before (page 361), rape is known to have quite traumatic consequences (Kilpatrick, Veronen and Resick, 1979). The present study was not designed to measure these kinds of effects, but to search for causes of feelings of insecurity, risk assessment, avoidance and precautionary behaviour of the average woman.

upon whether the situation is inside or outside the family frame. Agnew's hypothesis might offer an explanation for this difference in the results (see pp.361-362 above).

In short, Agnew hypothesised that victims use techniques to neutralise the impact of victimisation. He assumes there are characteristics of the victim and of the crime which make it more difficult for the victim to make use of neutralisation techniques. Some of these characteristics are correlates of fear and anticipation in this study: being victimised by someone defined as safe makes it harder to neutralise the impact of crime. This means that a stronger relation can be expected between victimisation and anticipation for situations inside the family frame than outside the family frame. This is in accordance with our results. Women victimised inside the family frame by men who are supposed to respect them probably have more difficulties in handling the consequences of victimisation. Thus Agnew's hypothesis gives an explanation for the fact that there is a strong relation between victimisation and fear/anticipation inside the family frame, as well as the relatively weaker relation for situations outside the family frame.

We established that women with relatively high victimisation rates also perceive higher risks and take more precautions than women with low victimisation rates. However, if they still have to or want to go out, there is a reason for them to use techniques of neutralisation, especially to repress feelings of insecurity. Therefore feelings of insecurity were unrelated to victimisation.

Consequently we hypothesise that there is one additional aspect of the results which can be explained if we extend Agnew's hypothesis of techniques of neutralisation of the impact of victimisation to neutralisation of the impact of dangerous situations.

Finally we conclude that there are two reasons why, for situations outside the home, one might expect women to be more fearful and to anticipate victimisation more than men. Women have experiences with an additional problem (sexual harassment) which is related (but relatively weakly) to feelings of insecurity and precautionary behaviour. In addition, women will probably make less use of neutralisation techniques. Factors related to a limited use of these techniques apply more often to women than to men (for example women have usually a lower educational level than men, and the offender is more often a known person).

Conclusion

The relations to the offender emerged as an important consideration in this study. The analyses show that this aspect should be taken into account when one studies the relation between victimisation and fear. In future research on fear of crime, it might be useful to concentrate attention on techniques of neutralisation of the consequences of crime, as well as the mechanisms people use to handle situations which are not potentially dangerous, independently of previous victimisation experiences,

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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