

**WHAT WOULD  
MACGYVER DO?  
THE MEANING(S) OF  
RESISTANCE AND  
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[S]he who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how.

(Nietzsche, quoted in Frankl, 1962 p 76)

## **Introduction**

Rape resistance is, at best, a thorny issue; at worst, an expectation by which victims of rape are assessed and judged. On the one hand, women have been told that a little resistance is all it takes to fend off a rapist; it is only by submitting that a woman 'gets herself' raped (Firth, 1975). Hence criminal justice system agencies have interpreted physical injuries to the woman as evidence of her resistance, interpreting these as necessary indicators of a lack of consent (Reekie & Wilson, 1993; Brereton, 1997; Lees, 1997; Mack, 1998; McSherry, 1998; Gregory & Lees, 1999). On the other hand, the prevention advice often given to women has been not to resist, that resistance may anger a rapist and provoke greater injury, even death (Cohen, 1984; Block & Skogan, 1986). In the face of such contradictory advice, the message to women is chillingly clear – we are damned if we do and damned if we don't. Although we are socialised against being aggressive and expected to be submissive in our relationships with men,

The irony is that when confronted with a rapist who is physically stronger and may be armed, a woman is suddenly expected to struggle, fight, and resist to a degree not otherwise expected (Burgess, 1999 p 8).

In recent years feminist researchers have examined the resistance issue with greater sophistication. Research has been conducted to obtain the evidence necessary to assess the merits of the advice offered to women (Bart & O'Brien, 1985; Ullman & Knight, 1992; Ullman, 1998). Most accounts, however, have focussed on physical resistance. The emphasis has been on the strategies that can be employed in the presence of an attacker to try to limit the physical damage inflicted. While many feminists have vigorously acknowledged the importance of the woman's wisdom and intuition in assessing whether physical resistance is a sensible choice or not, the debate has been largely centred still on physical means (Kelly, 1988; Burton, 1998).

Considerable discussion has also occurred regarding the issue of survival (Kelly, 1988; Gregory & Lees, 1999; Lamb, 1999). The concept of victims being survivors won popular acclaim from the 1970s onwards. The passivity of the concept, victim, was rejected in favour of a term that more appropriately recognised and affirmed women's abilities to manage, survive and integrate her experience of sexual assault through the recovery process. 'If you're alive, you've survived' was the adage, with the word victim being used pejoratively to denote weakness and what we have, from the 1990s onwards, termed a lack of agency. Accounts of women's survival following a rape attack have tended to focus on the recovery process in the aftermath of rape (Kilpatrick et al., 1987; Koss, 1990; Herman, 1992; Resick, 1993), rather than the strategies used to survive when the attacker was still present.

The paper presented here examines material from women's own accounts of rape experiences which challenge such formulations of 'resistance' and 'survival'. Drawing on interviews conducted with victims of New Zealand serial rapist, Malcolm Rewa, questions are raised regarding the limitations of the existing concepts of 'resistance' and 'survival' in relation to women's responses to rape attacks.

Formulations that stressed women's abilities to resist and their capacities to survive have been critically important in challenging popular notions of women as passive victims, lacking agency. However, the women's accounts presented here suggest a need to question whether such concepts are adequate to reflect the complexity and diversity of women's responses to rape attacks.

## Resistance

Historically evidence of physical resistance was demanded as evidence of rape, a belief amazingly evident in the views expressed by a detective sergeant in the 1970s:

It should be borne in mind that except in the case of a very young child, the offence of rape is extremely unlikely to have been committed against a woman who does not immediately show signs of extreme violence. If a woman walks into a police station and complains of rape with no such signs of violence she must be closely interrogated. Allow her to make her statement to a policewoman and then drive a horse and cart through it. It is always advisable if there is any doubt of the truthfulness of her allegations to call her an outright liar (Firth, 1975 p 1507).

Traditional police advice often urged women, when attacked, not to resist. Such police advice to women to submit to rape has been criticised on several grounds (Kelly, 1988; Stanko, 1990). Firstly, it reflects a view of rape as simply unwanted sex – give in and let him have his way with you, and you will be okay. As Betsy Stanko pointed out, the woman is not submitting to sex but to rape, a vast violation of her body and being. The very essence of rape makes it impossible to ‘submit’ to – rape by definition implies being taken ‘against’ one’s will. Secondly, there are times when women, when attacked, have decided not to resist physically, but to portray this as ‘submission’ ignores the mental component involved. Submitting to his will is a different prospect from evaluating the situation and determining that physical struggle may not be the best strategy with a particular offender. A lack of physical resistance, then, does not denote a lack of mental resistance. Liz Kelly is one of the few writers to have observed:

Women resist by refusing to be controlled, although they may not physically resist during an actual assault. Resistance, therefore, involves active opposition to abusive men’s behaviour and/or the control they seek to exert (Kelly, 1988 p 161).

Much of the more recent literature on resistance has tended to equate resistance with rape avoidance. The sociologist, Pauline Bart (1985), was one of the first to publish material on effective rape avoidance, alleging that women who fought back were more likely to escape being raped than those who were passive. Her research, published in the 1980s, was the first to openly challenge police advice that women should not resist. Bart noted that the more strategies a woman used (such as yelling, running, and reasoning), the more likely she was to escape the attack with minimal physical injuries. Some strategies did tend to be more effective than others. Pleading with an

attacker, for instance, seemed to increase the likelihood of a rape being completed – an unsurprising finding given the passivity and deference associated with a pleading or begging stance.

A later analysis of rape incidents in the United States by Kleck and Sayles (1990) confirmed Bart's findings. They noted in their findings that victims who resist are much less likely to have the rape completed against them than non-resisting victims, and that most forms of resistance are not associated with higher rates of victim injury. According to their research, approximately 3% of rape incidents involve some additional serious physical injury, with the rape being clearly the most serious injury that most victims suffer. A recent study by Sarah Ullman (1998) similarly found that victim resistance to verbal or physical attacks did not escalate offender violence, nor result in increased physical injury to the victim.

As a result of such research findings, resistance and self-defence training are increasingly being advocated as a means to assist women in avoiding rape and the psychological effects it typically produces (Warshaw, 1988; Kleck & Sayles, 1990; Heyden et al., 1999). The emphasis on physical means of resistance is often paralleled by a discussion of surviving rape that equates it with physical survival.

## **Survival**

Walking away from the Twin Towers on September 11<sup>th</sup> was deemed sufficient to render one a survivor, and in physical terms that is true. However, we also know that people can physically survive an incident or trauma but be mentally and emotionally damaged, even incapacitated (Koss, 1990; Herman, 1992; Burgess & Hazelwood, 1999). The return of soldiers from Vietnam, for instance, was accompanied by serious addiction and mental health problems, giving rise to frequent analyses of post-traumatic stress disorder (Herman, 1992; Crowell & Burgess, 1996).

It is important to affirm that surviving rape is significant in its own right. However, physical survival is often stressed as occurring at the time of the attack, with mental and psychological survival forming part of the post-rape recovery process. Linked to this are notions of resistance equating to physically being able to avoid rape. Thus the goal or aim of resistance

strategies is assumed to be rape avoidance. How can self-defence strategies protect a woman from being raped? What can potential victims do to deter an offender from raping them? What works?

These questions are clearly significant and have been rightly at the centre of recent research and debate. The women I interviewed, however, seemed to operate with diverse and expanded notions of what resistance and survival mean. The sense that Rewa was seeking to control and dominate these women prompted many to respond with strategies of their own. In fact, every woman interviewed referred to ways in which she tried to take some measure of control back in the situation, ways in which she tried to limit his domination of her. Such strategies were evident in both women who were raped and women who were not raped, since Rewa's problems with erectile dysfunction meant that several rapes were not completed.

The women whose rapes were not completed seemed to be similarly affected by the attack as those who were raped. The knowledge that rape was his likely intent and the impact of the fear and terror he inflicted irrespective of the outcome meant that all the women were hugely affected, and in comparable ways. The judge's reading of the Victim Impact Reports at sentencing made it abundantly clear that little distinction could be made in terms of the effects between those who were physically raped and those who were not. The violation was mental as well, and knowing he was a rapist and wanted to rape her, and probably had raped her already in his mind, seemed to be just as damaging and humiliating.

What all of Rewa's victims did was to choose the best way for each of them to respond to a situation which no woman should ever have to respond to, and the richness and diversity of their strategies deserves closer examination.

## **The Study**

### **Profile of the women**

In 1998, Malcolm Rewa stood trial for a total of 45 counts involving 27 women whom he had attacked between 1987 and 1996. All but two of these attacks had occurred within suburbs of Auckland city, and involved women ranging in age from 15 to 43 years of age. His trial lasted three months, at the end of

which Rewa was convicted on a majority of counts, mostly for Sexual Violation by Rape.

In the months after the trial, I was privileged indeed to be given the opportunity to meet with some of the women whom Rewa attacked.<sup>1</sup> They were keen to tell their stories, and to see some good come out of the ordeals to which they had been subjected. The result was that I interviewed 14 of these women, obtaining in-depth qualitative material relating to their experiences with the police and trial, the effects of the attack, and their recovery processes.

Seven of the women interviewed were attacked between 1989 and 1992 and seven were attacked between 1993 and 1996. Rewa stood trial on 20 different counts relating to these 14 women – 10 of Sexual Violation by Rape (in addition to which, he was charged with raping three of the women twice and one three times); two of Attempted Sexual Violation by Rape; two of Assault with Intent to Commit Sexual Violation; and one of Abduction.

Table 1 lists these in comparison with the total counts for which Rewa was indicted.

*Table 1: Counts of Indictment against Rewa*

<b>Offence</b>	<b>Number of Counts in Total</b>	<b>Counts Involving the Women Interviewed</b>
<i>Sexual violation by rape</i>	32	15
<i>Attempted sexual violation by rape</i>	2	2
<i>Assault with intent to commit sexual violation</i>	5	2
<i>Aggravated wounding</i>	3	0
<i>Abduction</i>	2	1
<i>Murder</i>	1	0
<i>Total</i>	45	20

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<sup>1</sup> A full account of this research process is contained in Jordan (2001b).

## Methodology

At a rape conference in 1996, a senior detective told me that he thought the women whom serial rapist Malcolm Rewa had attacked would be excellent to interview for my research on rape. Unfortunately the trial was still a long way off so the women would not be free to speak until after that, even if they wanted to.

Two years later this same detective phoned me. His message was brief and to the point – the trial's over, the women are moving on with their lives, and some are keen to see something positive come out of this experience. Would I like to meet with them? The outcome was that, despite thinking my research agenda was already full, I decided this was too unique an opportunity to miss. He gave me one woman's phone number to contact, having already obtained her permission to do so, and with her co-operation an initial meeting was held at her place between myself and five of the women. Together we decided to extend my research to include their input, with several of the women offering to review my existing interview schedule and adapt it to their own experiences.

Also discussed at the meeting were practical issues concerning, for example, whether and how to contact women not at the meeting, and where and when to hold the interviews. The woman who was hosting the meeting that afternoon offered her place as an interview venue and the others agreed it would be very suitable, given that it was private, comfortable, and familiar since most of the women had already been there for a post-trial lunch.

In terms of contacting other women, Patricia sent a brief report of the meeting to others who had attended the post-trial lunch had left contact details. These women were asked if they were interested in hearing more about the research and, if so, their permission was sought for me to be given their contact details. A policewoman who had been extensively involved in supporting the women through the trial attempted to contact women who had not been to the lunch, to see if they were interested in hearing about the research. This was to ensure that, if possible, every woman was given the opportunity to participate if she wished.

From these contacts I had 18 names to follow up. The remainder had, in most cases, left the country, apart from one woman who wanted no further

contact about the case and another whom the policewoman decided not to contact because of her disturbed mental state. Most of the women spoken to initially agreed to participate, apart from three women who changed their decision between the time of the initial contact and the time of the proposed interview. Fifteen women were interviewed in total; this number included 14 of the 27 women whose cases were heard in the 1998 trial of Malcolm Rewa, plus a woman whom Rewa had been convicted of raping in 1975 who was called to appear as a witness in the later trial.

### **Interview process**

Each of the women who agreed to being contacted about the study. I phoned, and discussions were held concerning content, confidentiality, process, and any other issues raised by the women. If the woman agreed to go ahead, then we arranged a time when I could meet with her to discuss it further and, with her consent, commence the interview process.

The women were offered the option of being interviewed at Patricia's apartment or at their own home or workplace. Nine of the Auckland women opted to use the apartment; one chose her place of employment since it was more convenient, and I visited the remainder, most of whom were outside Auckland, in their homes.

An interview schedule was used to guide the interview process, and this was divided into two main parts – the first was modelled on the earlier rape study (Jordan, 1998, 2001a) and involved questions concerning police reporting, interviewing, and trial experiences, while the second part concentrated on the effects of the attack on the woman and those around her, and her recovery and healing process. Several of the women who had been at the initial meeting commented on a draft of the schedule and it was adapted to reflect the issues they raised.

It became evident, from the very first interview, that many of these women had reflected considerably on their experiences and had a lot which they wished to convey. In nine cases, the women opted to complete the second part of the schedule on a separate occasion. This made the data-gathering exercise more expensive and complicated for me logistically, but was definitely worthwhile in terms of the depth and quality of the information obtained. However, even those interviews that were conducted in one session became lengthy occasions and yielded rich material. The shortest

interview lasted two-and-a-half-hours, the average was about four; and, in several cases where the woman was interviewed on two separate occasions, the total time spent on the interview was approximately eight hours.

It became clear that my schedule needed to be loosely adhered to – while some women welcomed a more structured approach, many preferred to talk in their own time about their experiences and opinions and the schedule was used as a checklist rather than as a questionnaire. I felt it was extremely important to be flexible in this regard, since what I most wanted to know was what concerns **the women** had, not simply get answers to those I thought they might have. Having the questionnaire prepared gave us a starting-point, and a clear structure for those who needed it, but otherwise my questions had to be developed spontaneously within the interview context, as responses to issues and observations made by the women themselves.

In order to minimise potential stress for the women, I was careful not to ask questions about the sexual assaults themselves; however, in some cases the woman herself chose to disclose aspects of this in the course of the interview. The women were asked if they were agreeable to my obtaining relevant details from their police file. Access to their victim impact statements was also requested. All of the women gave their signed permission to this request and, once the interviews were complete, I negotiated with the police to make a separate trip to Auckland to access this material. I was also keenly aware of the importance of maintaining a clear definition of my role as a researcher/interviewer so as not to be perceived by the women as a counsellor, nor to take on that role myself.

The taped interviews were all transcribed to facilitate analysis. A separate file was created for each of the women containing my interview notes, the transcript, and notes from her police file. This material I then analysed by identifying themes and issues in the women's accounts and experiences. The next section presents the results of one small segment of this data set - the women's accounts of the ways they managed and survived the attack. Although not specifically asked for this information, all of the woman talked at varying lengths about their responses when Rewa attacked them, and their stories made a huge impression on me. I hope this account does them justice.

## **Strategies for Survival**

Analysis of the strategies employed by the women attacked by Rewa yields interesting results. These women were all attacked by the same man, who used a similar approach and techniques in most of his attacks. He carefully observed and selected women whom he perceived to be physically vulnerable because they lived on their own or accompanied only by children. An experienced burglar, he typically entered the house undetected and woke the woman, subduing her if necessary with gags and bindings, threats against her children, or physical blows. In most cases he, a Maori male from an economically deprived and abusive background, selected successful white, relatively affluent women as his victims. In short, Malcolm Rewa largely conformed to the stereotype of the stranger rapist whom women are raised to fear yet who, for most women, bears little resemblance to their actual, generally known attacker. For the women he attacked, he was their worst nightmare come true.

Against this background, with all its potentially immobilising features, the resistance strategies employed by the women are compelling. A diverse range of techniques was employed by the different women, and sometimes by individual women, as they endeavoured to 'suss' out their attacker. These included:

- physical resistance strategies
- talking to the offender
- efforts to alert others
- doing the unexpected, and
- mental and inner resistance.

Examples from each of these categories are presented to illustrate the variation and creativity in the women's strategies of resistance and survival. In the following examples, the women are referred to by pseudonyms, selected, when she wished, by the woman herself.

### **Physical Resistance**

Eight of the women referred to forms of struggle and physical resistance, especially at the point of the initial attack. Shelley, for instance, said she kicked Rewa hard, and Gabriel was pleased she managed to kick him in the

balls though obviously not hard enough, she complained, because there was no cry of pain. Isabel kept moving her legs around to make it difficult for him, while Jennifer simply held her legs tight together. Several tried to fight him off, struggle free, or reach for the phone or a panic button.

Rewa was, however, not the kind of attacker to be deterred by such forms of resistance. He was, after all, a member of a gang who nicknamed him “Hammer” because he had one attached to his motorbike for use when encountering trouble (Williams, 1998 p 219). Thus not surprisingly, the women’s efforts were typically met with violence. Kathleen, for example, said her initial struggles were met with punches to her face and jaw. When she later kicked him and bit his hand, Rewa retaliated by grabbing her hair and banging her head repeatedly on the floor. He then bound and gagged her, rendering further physical resistance impossible. Other women also said he punched them hard when they struggled or tried to get a good look at him.

Patricia struggled and fought with him, trying every tactic she could think of until Rewa’s beanie hat fell off, throwing him into a panic.

*My whole thing was to try to get him out of that bedroom, to get me out of that bedroom, get him out of that bedroom. I was giving up at the end though because of this ‘I am going to kill you’ stuff and it was exhausting, like what am I going to try next, all of that sort of stuff. Trying to talk him into leaving that room and trying to get me off that bed, just thankful for the fact that I had fallen and he nearly lost his hat – that was his major camouflage.*

While he was distracted, hunting round on the floor for his beanie, she kicked the wall to the neighbouring flat. No one responded but it threw Rewa into an even bigger panic. He left the house without raping her. Patricia said she was still in survival and action mode:

*I chased him up the road, and thought ‘what the hell are you going to do if you catch him?’ (laughs), and so that is why I came back and rang the police.*

Six women chose from the outset not to physically resist. Three said they were too scared to do anything; each felt she was going to die, that Rewa was going to kill her. Connie tried to understand her reaction, and wondered if her passivity helped to save her:

*Now what made me be submissive and quiet? Was it a survival thing, something saying we don't try and kick out? I just thought, 'Oh well, I'm going to die, that's it, close your eyes'. My father was going to come here in the morning, find me all twisted up and dead and he's going to have a heart attack; my daughter's going to come around and find two people dead. Great.*

Other women said it was clear from the outset that physical resistance would be counterproductive and that, with an attacker of Rewa's ilk, physical resistance was never a viable option. Raquel, who was attacked whilst getting into her car, commented how difficult it can be deciding how to react when confronted by such a situation:

*You really just have to work it out at the time and that's the hard part, whether to fight or not, whether someone has got a weapon or not. Honestly, no amount of self-defence would have ever stopped this happening to me either. I was attacked from behind, surprised. If someone comes up from behind you and if you've not seen them, not heard them, the first thing you feel is a hit, a whack to the back of the head - no amount of self defence is going to save you. If you turn around and try and fight somebody who's a bit taller than you, a bit heavier than you, who is stronger than you and who has also got a weapon, you're an idiot.*

As the above examples show, strategies of physical resistance generally had little effect against the determination and tactics employed by this offender. The women considered and employed alternative strategies.

### **Talking to the Offender**

The majority of the women (N = 11) talked to the offender, but from a range of perspectives. Some tried to reason, some to distract, some to deter, and some simply because they could do little else. However, Rewa usually made it clear he was not there to engage in conversation. He repeatedly told the women to stop talking, as Jennifer discovered. When she asked him not to rape or hurt her, he told her to 'shut up, don't talk'. She said she was worried about her little girl; he told her 'she's alright' before again telling her not to talk. When she kept talking, he hit her round the head. When it became clear that his intention was to rape her, she asked if he was putting on protection and told him:

*You don't need to do this. You can get a girl some other way.*

Part of Jennifer's repeated efforts to talk to Rewa came from her determination to not be a passive victim in the situation. As she expressed it:

*There was times when I lay there and I thought God, why doesn't he just do it then and just get it over with, maybe I should just lie here, but there was just something, every time he came towards me to get on the bed, I thought you're not going to do this, I don't know why.... At times I was thinking, this is probably really futile, how am I ever going to fight this guy off, this is ridiculous, I've got my hands tied behind my back, but even so.... I just very seldom give in, I think that's just a personality thing as well, is that I'm a pain in the ass. I never stopped trying to untie my hands; I never stopped trying to do something. In retrospect, it could have been a totally wrong thing to do except that it was good to talk to Sandy [detective] afterwards and she said to me so often that to keep talking to them just blows them away, because they don't want you to be real, and there you go, there's another part of my personality, can't stop talking - I knew it would be useful one day!*

Several of the women asked Rewa questions. Shelley, for instance, asked him if he had children and urged him to think of his whakapapa.<sup>2</sup> Some asked if he was going to kill them, or asked him not to kill them. Several asked if he wanted money, which he often took whilst also making it clear that money was not all he wanted.

Others found that, if they were co-operating with him, he was at least a little responsive to their needs. Thus several women spoke of how, when they asked Rewa to release the binds because they were hurting, or remove a pillow because they were suffocating, he did so. Kathleen said she asked where he had put her dog and requested that he let the dog in to be with her when he left – himself a dog-lover, Rewa obliged.

Connie asked him what she had done to deserve this. He asked her what she meant, to which she replied:

*Well, normally if you hurt somebody they hurt you in return.*

Rewa responded:

*You haven't done anything wrong. I'm just a bastard. I'm sorry.*

In a similar vein, Lorna asked why he was doing this to her:

*Then he moved what was covering my face and I think he kissed my cheek or ear. He said, 'Sorry' and I said, 'Don't do it to anyone again'. He stuffed a pink toy dog by my head which reads 'I love you'. I think he just left after that.*

Several women tried saying things that they hoped might put him off. Ann, for instance told him her boyfriend would be home soon, and that she was pregnant, adding:

*I just made those things up to try and scare him and make him go away.*

Lorna, a devout Christian, told Rewa she forgave him and said he began flicking through her bible and 'he softened then'. It is difficult overall to tell whether the women's questions and expressions of their fears made any difference to his treatment of them.

What is apparent, however, is that for some of the women their efforts made them feel they were doing something active and positive. As Isabel commented:

*Well, I thought it was relevant that I'd kept trying to talk to the guy, which isn't easy if someone is trying to gag you, but he wasn't able to fully gag me. I wanted him to treat me like a human being so I wanted to talk to him to make him aware of me as a human being, not some creature that he was using. And I sort of held on to the notion that this had influenced him, that my talking to him about what was happening had some influence on the fact that he stopped doing it. But, I don't know really whether I did have any influence, I just wanted to feel that I had.*

## **Trying to Alert Others**

Some of the women tried to alert others to the fact that they were being attacked. This was difficult, given that in most cases Rewa attacked his victims knowing they were the only adult in the house. Six said they

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<sup>2</sup> The Maori term for descent line or genealogy.

screamed initially, like Jennifer whose response, she said, was to 'scream and scream and scream':

*Initially my reaction was make as much noise as possible which is very sad really because no one hears you. If someone had said to me afterwards, even if someone had heard you screaming, so many people won't interfere because it could just be domestic. If it had been one of the neighbours, yes certainly they would have interfered, but some Joe Bloggs walking up the street might have thought oh well, it's probably something domestic, I'd better not do anything.*

Rewa's response to Jennifer and others who screamed was to cover their heads and subdue them quickly through punching or gagging them. The exception was Francis, who was attacked outside her home early one morning in a situation where Rewa knew her screams were very likely to be heard and responded to. Shelley tried to reach for a panic button beside her bed but Rewa forcefully stopped her; another woman said afterwards she forgot she even had a panic button, she felt so panicked at the time.

Trying to alert others proved to be virtually impossible in most cases, a factor which rapists such as Rewa probably trade and rely on.

## **Doing the Unexpected**

When struggling or screaming seemed impossible or ineffective, some of the women experimented with alternative strategies. One told him he was a gentle lover in an effort to calm him down; another said she kept asking,

*if he knew of any more successful ways of persuading women to have sexual intercourse with him.*

Two women faked being unconscious, Gabriel for part of the time and Raquel for the duration of the attack. Rewa had hit Raquel on the back of the head as she went to get into her car, late one night in a city street. Her decision was a deliberate strategy that she adopted when nothing else seemed to be working, as the following excerpt from her interview explains:

*Well, it's funny - in most situations where they've said you can quite often talk your way out of it, I knew instantly that that was not an option by the way I was attacked, the level of violence with which I was attacked, the words that he said to me which were shut-up, shut-up, when I just let out a little cry. It's like, okay, I try and speak to this*

*person and the first thing he's probably going to do is hit me so I can't talk my way out of it. The way I analysed it was: he doesn't want to communicate with me, he doesn't want me to make any sound because he doesn't want anyone to hear but I thought my instincts told me he doesn't want to talk to me, he wants complete and total power over me. The way I was attacked was to completely have total domination and total power over my body. Basically, I'm an object, I'm not a person, I'm an object. I was tied up, it was like don't try and fight back. The level of violence I suffered just for him to get me to that position, I'm thinking he's not going to tolerate any kind of resistance, I'll get too badly injured, that's not an option. You don't do that to somebody unless you're absolutely dead serious about what you want; there's no way that he would have attacked with that level of violence if he wasn't absolutely, totally intent on raping me. I thought, this is not a guy that you mess with, what he wants he will get, talking to him is a waste of time.*

*I thought about it and I thought - he's hit me really hard on the back of the head, I could quite conceivably unconscious or half-unconscious. If he thinks I'm unconscious he won't hurt me because there's no reason to because I'm not going to fight back, so self-preservation. I can't stop this happening. I was really worried about my hands because they were tied really, really tight behind my back, and that's another thing - he untied me. I always thought that if he thought I was conscious maybe he'd have kept me tied up so that I couldn't get away, or I couldn't fight back or I couldn't scratch or do anything like that. He actually untied my hands before the rape... It worked, he was very, very careful with me and that's what I found fascinating, the way he was really quite gentle with me, the way he really treated my body. I suffered no further injury after that, no further physical injury.*

Raquel's decision process is quoted at length here to illustrate her commitment to survival and self-preservation. Her careful consideration of options following such a sudden and violent attack indicates a determination to find some way of resisting Rewa's total domination of her. For Raquel, the very fact that she successfully fooled Rewa into thinking she was actually unconscious was hugely satisfying.

*I fooled him, and that came out in court too - it was like, I won! I don't know how to describe how that felt.... The fact that I'd fooled him, the fact that he really believed that and that I got the better of him! He didn't like it and that made me feel so good. It's like my little triumph, it's like you didn't have complete control over me, it's like I had control over something. He never even had total physical control over me in a sense, because I had control over, well yeah, he did have physical control over me but only because I let him in a sense. Yes, I had a choice in a sense and no I didn't in another sense, but mentally I had control over myself and I didn't get any further injuries because he thought I was unconscious. It was like I had control over how he treated me, I felt like I had something, I had control over him mentally in the sense that I fooled him, I don't know how to describe that but it's like really amazing.*

This example provides a good introduction to further consideration of the many different ways in which the women chose to mentally resist the attack.

### **Mental/Inner Resistance**

Every woman interviewed described some form of mental or inner resistance, a means she adopted to help her manage and survive the attack. Their use of their minds, often in highly creative and ingenious ways, amazed and inspired me.

The variation in the ways different women needed to perceive Rewa was also interesting. Several women, for example, tried hard not to see Rewa as a person. Thus Shelley remarked:

*I don't see him as this dreadful person that I hate, in fact I find my ex husband harder, you know like I have difficulties more with him than with Rewa. Because Rewa was just this faceless person that came in, did something really awful to me and I didn't know him, I still don't know him.... He could have been alien for all I know. It was a big black virus that affected me.*

Similarly, Gabriel explained:

*That's why I never let him be a person to me because my way of forming meaning was to associate that person with extreme evil or extreme badness... My way of forming meaning was fighting this*

*bizarre made up force. It was like that for me. Fighting a beast. Slaying the dragon.*

Patricia, on the other hand, felt she needed to make Rewa a real person and observed:

*When I had identified him it was a hell of a lot better for me. He became a person, I hadn't become scared of the unknown... Until then, I was thinking about the monster that he was. For the fact that I could identify him made a huge difference, a huge difference. He became, he was, human, you know, he was flesh and blood.*

At least four women dissociated as a way of managing the attack. Kathleen described well the way in which she dissociated and how it helped her to survive:

*I knew that I would do everything that I could and that if I did die it was not through lack of trying to survive... A lot of the time it didn't actually feel like I was there, it felt like I was not there sort of thing, like I had gone somewhere else and I was going to come back. A couple of times that happened, that I wasn't quite there, I wondered whether I was unconscious or not – I don't know. I remember initially that when I first realised what was happening when, in a split second, while my mind, comes to terms with it, I was sort of gone for a while. Whether you sort of block it out, I don't know, so it was like you kind of split off from it a little bit. But there was only so much of that you can do, so, before you can't survive, you have to be there to survive it. It's hard to explain, when you're there and you are thinking it's quite normal, but when you try to explain it to someone it's quite different and difficult to do, to put it into words.*

Kathleen described how she saw this process as a choice on her part, and how even at such a terrifying time she felt her sense of humour kicked in and helped her to survive:

*I think it's just an attitude thing, I think you can turn it anyway you like it, the experience, it could have been a bad thing but I just didn't let it. I mean, even as it was happening, I remember being bound, my*

*hands being tied back, and blindfolded and gagged with the duvet over me, and I was thinking: what would MacGyver<sup>3</sup> do?*

*I mean, right from then I even kept my sense of humour, even though at exactly the same time I was thinking I might die. Like some weird things go through your mind and that is about the weirdest thing that went through my mind. How would MacGyver get out of this? It's really weird.*

Some, like Gabriel, used their detachment to enable them to observe and mentally record details which they hoped might prove useful in apprehending him later.

*I took lots of snap shots in my head when I was attacked at the time because I thought that I could use them for evidence.... And I got some feedback that it was quite amazing the details that I had remembered. Things like hearing a fly and thinking he must have been wearing jeans. And the clink of a belt so he was wearing a belt. I didn't see it, but you know things like that.*

*I think when I was attacked I was stepping outside and that is why I was able to do that, because I disassociated myself from myself physically. I think I probably had that going on for quite a few months. They say that a lot about people who have been abused or attacked. You're just 1000 miles away. And so I was able to do that during the statement too because it was like 'this is what I did and this was the sound and then he did this and then I did this and I did that' and it was all fine.*

*I was trying to take in as much as I could for evidence sake cause I knew I was going to report it.... you kind of disassociate yourself, well I did. It's like, OK, this isn't personal, this is my body he is going to do this to and I am going to take note basically. I am just going to take down every detail I can possibly remember. I didn't want him wandering around thinking he was going to get away with it*

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<sup>3</sup> MacGyver was a fictional television hero in the 1980s, a secret agent famous for his ingenuity and resourcefulness in escaping from seemingly impossible situations.

Several other women adopted a similar strategy. Patricia switched herself into work mode, because in her career she has developed an acute eye for detail. As she said:

*That is my skill, that is my work. Having a photographic memory, being able to go back in there and picture everything and what was going on. I've got recall because I'm using that all the time for work and stuff.... It was almost like it was meant to be me, it was meant to happen so I could catch him because I had all the skills whereas nobody else had those skills. They needed somebody with my skills.*

Patricia believes her description and identification of the offender were vital to the police's success in apprehending the offender.

Likewise, Raquel described how she became very analytical, highly attuned to sounds and impressions and wanting to make sense of what was happening. She expressed her sense of detachment this way:

*I think when you're in survival mode, you pull a part of yourself out of yourself, or you shut a part of yourself away, and you're working on a different level.*

The strategies the women employed indicated an inner strength, a capacity to resist and a will to survive. At times the women's accounts sounded like an inner dialogue, a battle between action and inaction, submission and empowerment. This is evident in Jennifer's description of her mental responses when Rewa attacked her:

*There were times when I lay there and I thought, 'God, why doesn't he just do it then and just get it over with it, maybe I should just lie here', but there was just something, every time he came towards me to get on the bed, I thought, 'You're not going to do this!' I don't know why, I don't know where it comes from. It was actually just an abhorrence of the fact that I didn't want him to do that. I'm sure it's something that's deep down that you don't want him to do it, because as I said I lay there at one stage and thought this is obviously what you're here for, just do it and leave, but then when he came closer to me... At times I was thinking, 'This is probably really futile - how am I ever going to fight this guy off? This is ridiculous, I've got my hands tied behind my back', but even so, you just sort of, I just very seldom give in. I think that's just a personality thing as well, is that I'm a pain in the ass! I*

*never stopped trying to untie my hands; I never stopped trying to do something.*

Likewise, in the immediate aftermath of Rewa's attack, Ann described clearly the way in which she made herself move beyond the 'oh my God' sense of helplessness to taking action:

*I was actually scared because when Rewa left me, he left me blindfolded, gagged and my hands tied behind my back. And I lay there for a minute and I can remember thinking, 'Oh, I want to get these off'. And the funny thing was my brother had once told me, who was a diver, that he got stuck in a cave when he was diving and he couldn't move. He got himself in and he couldn't get himself out and if he had panicked, he would have died, but what he did was he got his breathing apparatus off. He thought, 'I've got to get this off then I can move myself and get myself out of here', which he did and obviously he survived. When I was lying there, I thought, 'My God, my God' and then I thought, 'Ann, if you're going to do this, all you're going to do is make your hands, you're going to swell them'. Because I was going, 'Oh God, I want to get out', because I was scared he was going to come back and kill me. I mean, I'm lying on my stomach blindfolded, I don't know where the man is. I don't know what I did but I just got my hands, pulled myself up and thought, 'Oh (sigh) my god'. I got my hands out, then thought: 'What do I do? What do I do? Is he watching me? Do I move?' and then I thought, 'On the count of three I've got to do this'. On the count of three I just whacked my legs out, pulled my feet out and jumped through an aluminium window which obviously took heaps of layers of skin off the back of my leg because I just slid and jumped my whole body out, I didn't care. Obviously you don't care, you're outta there.*

While Ann recalled her brother's experience, Connie drew strength from her sense that the spirit of a woman who had been killed a week earlier was helping her through the attack. As she was to later find out, Susan Burdett had been raped and killed by the same attacker – Malcolm Rewa.

*From the time it had happened, from the time he tied me up and gagged me, I kept my eyes closed. I believed I was going to be another Burdett. Strange, eh? I always said, 'Burdett was watching*

*over me that night'. I just thought it was going to be the same scenario. And I thought, 'If I'm going to die, I'm not opening my eyes. I don't want to know'. I mean, I didn't even know her. Didn't even know her, but something tells me she was watching me that night. So I thought, 'That's it, keep your eyes closed'.*

*It's because I had thought of death, that I had thought of her in my initial hours. I really think she was watching over me. But somewhere along the line, I didn't know her from a bar of soap, I just felt she must have been watching over me. Because physically I know whilst my heart was still inside my body, it was actually over the other side of the king size bed and I was trying to pull it back to survive, because I was thinking I was going to have a heart attack. The inner me was fighting and I think she was there saying, 'You can do it, calm down, do it'. That was sort of sub-consciously there. People may think I'm wrong but I really believe she was watching over me... that spiritually she was still around that she was connected to him some way - probably through the horrible deed of killing her, he may in fact, unbeknown, have brought her with him.*

*But I think she was there. I don't know why I thought about her. I read about it and thought, oh my god, what was behind that. But that was my first thought when he tied me up, I'm going to die like that Burdett, my first thought. Not, why is he tying me up. I didn't even know her from a bar of soap. You read all the time about terrible deeds, but her circumstances came straight to my head, it was the first thing, the very first thing. I've gone on thinking she was there watching over me, she was probably the one saying, 'C'mon, you're strong enough, you can do this'. Perhaps she was there, just giving me that little nudge along to get my head together, calm down and start trying to handle the situation the best I could.*

Many of these examples suggest that the choice between submission and empowerment is not necessarily best understood as a decision to act physically, but occurs mentally, as a thought that activates a spirit of survival. Thus even when they were bound and gagged, unable to move or resist at all physically, the women were often making clear choices and taking control of the situation mentally. This process is powerfully apparent also in Gabriel's

description of how she survived the attack, and how hard it was to talk about what actually happened for her. She said:

*I really felt like a lot of people thought that I had lost my mind because I couldn't really explain... I really noticed that by the expressions on people's faces when I was saying, 'Well, two weeks before I was attacked I had a nightmare and I saw this man standing in my girlfriend's bedroom and my bedroom, which were the two rooms that I was attacked in, and I made my flatmate go outside and walk around the house because I was so sure that someone was staring in and I couldn't sleep in my bedroom, I had to go and sleep on the couch. So I wasn't really that surprised'. And people just going, 'Oh yes yes yes, now would you like a panadol?' you know. I found it quite hard to talk about that.*

*And particularly to talk about, um, the transference that went on for me when I was attacked and the fact that I, I mean, this guy had me strewn over a bed half naked, bound with blankets over my face, in position, just totally ready to rape me and he's going through the knife drawer, coming back into the room and I'm thinking, 'Oh no, he's going to cut me. I couldn't handle that, I couldn't handle that. Like I could handle being raped, but I couldn't handle being cut at all, I just couldn't handle that. The scar would be there forever! (laughs). So I just, you know, I just accepted that that was what was going to happen. This guy was obviously prepared to do that, that was what was going to happen. I thought, 'What can I do, what can I do to protect myself?' So I closed my eyes really hard and I decided to just fill up the entire room with myself so that as much of that room had me in it, so that there was no room for him in there, and it was a really hard process because I didn't have much time. Then I started praying, which is bizarre because I don't pray very much at all, but anyway God sounded like a really good idea right about then (laughs). So out it came, the Lord's Prayer, the only one I've known, that I've known since I was five years old that my mother used to tell me before I went to bed. We weren't even religious – that and grace and that's about the only two I know. Anyway, out it comes and it keeps coming out and keeps coming out and I'm thinking, 'This is really making me feel better, this is really making me feel better'. So it gets louder and it*

*gets louder and I just close my eyes and try and think about me and how big I could possibly make myself in this room without moving. Bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger, and not focussing on what he is doing out there, and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. And he comes back in and he tries to rape me and he can't. I mean, it could have been anything. I mean, he had an impotence problem but for me that was really crucial because for me, I asked for help, something helped me, I was saved, you know, and it changed my life. It really changed my life because I started to believe that if I asked for help I would get it and it wouldn't be from people. I could do it myself.... This is what it means, this is what it means. I've slayed the dragon, I've won, I'm off.*

## **Summary**

It is in many ways not surprising that resistance and survival occur at such an inner, mental level. The effects of rape have been clearly and repeatedly shown to be mental and psychological, with comparatively few survivors having physical injuries to show for the ideal they have experienced (Goodman et al., 1993; Mack, 1998). As Connie observed:

*It's the inner you that's affected. Broken bones, bruises and that, they can heal and they disappear or mend. It's the inner you, I guess it's your soul, that's basically been destroyed.*

Helen also commented:

*For me, it's your head or your mental state or whatever that's affected more than what comes up physically. It's not the physicality of what he did, it's what's happened to your brain to deal with it.*

This awareness was apparent also in Helen's approach to the court trial. The police provided information regarding the physical layout of the court, but it was insufficient to assuage her fear that Rewa might come after her.

*I had dreams about it and what it was going to be like and it was very scary for me because you've no idea. They gave me a picture I think, they gave me a picture of what the courtroom was set up like, but it would have been nice to almost be sat in the courtroom and gone through it earlier. Because as soon as I knew I was going, you got the letter, then you start dreaming, it's like, 'Oh my God, he's going to be*

*able to come across there and kill me'. You know again, they're not logical but you want to know that there's ten people between you and him. Because if he can do it once, he can do it again. How do you know he hasn't got a knife, how do you know?*

*It was a lot of spiritual stuff that I got into that gave me strength and whatever. This friend of mine basically we went around the box where I was going to be, we 'glit up', which is glitter of courage. We also put it into his box. We went over there and so we showed it my strength - this was my room, this was my space. So a lot of that was very much, I am Goddess of Justice, so that was very much in setting it up for myself.... It's great to know that he probably wouldn't know what the hell all this glitter was on the floor or around his box, and all the girls knew after me, that this was the strength glitter, which was really nice. They knew it was there.... So I knew that when I was not feeling very strong in the courtroom, I had that glitter there. I knew it was there so it gave me strength, it was just the significance of what it meant.*

Helen's strategy helped her to find the mental strength to manage her fear of facing her attacker in the courtroom. The strategies she and the other women employed enabled them to harness some of their own power and agency in a situation where their attacker was intent on eroding it. The women's mental resistance provided them with a means of withholding something of themselves from Rewa. He may have control of their bodies, but he could not control their mind, their spirit. A part of them existed which he could never lay his hands on, could never penetrate.

In some ways the mental processes described by some of the women mirror the voices of many sex workers when they describe how they manage their interactions with clients (McLeod, 1982; Jordan, 1991). Sex with a client becomes manageable for many only if they are able to dissociate from the interaction, telling themselves that while he may have bought temporary access to their body, he cannot reach beyond that to their mind or self. Hence Sarah, a sex worker, maintained:

*I didn't feel like the men were buying me, as such. I felt like they bought the use of my skills. They didn't buy me because 'me' is my head. That's what is inside me and nobody can ever buy that (Jordan, 1991 p 31).*

For some sex workers, the job becomes less realistic when their ability to dissociate fades and sexual acts with clients can then begin to feel like rape (ibid., 30). Their ability to resist such a sense of invasion is clearly a mental process, since the physical act is consented to in exchange for money.

The experiences recounted by the women attacked by Rewa similarly indicate a mental ability to resist victimisation even whilst physically violating acts are occurring. This was evident in their determination to resist being 'possessed', their decisions to withhold consciously a part of themselves, and their resolve that, at the end of the day, they were not going to be beaten. This realisation helps to explain Raquel's delight in having been able to fool Rewa, and Gabriel's commitment to finding some way that she could 'slay the dragon'.

## **Self Defence, Victims and Survivors**

Two related issues were commented on repeatedly by the women. The first of these related to self-defence options. Given the circumstances in which most of them had been attacked, and the measures used, the women felt that any physical self-defence training was likely to be of limited effect. Hence Raquel said her advice to women would be:

*'Go and do the self defence courses but there are still going to be a lot...', like don't expect a self-defence course to save you, don't expect it to, you've still got to be prepared. Don't ever think, 'Okay, I've done this, I know what to do', because if you don't keep practising... plus there will always be situations where no amount of self defence is going to save you. That really upset me when I heard one woman make the comment to [Raquel's boyfriend] about, 'It makes me think that every woman should go and do a self-defence course'. That pissed me off a bit, to me it was like saying if I had done a self-defence course it wouldn't have happened.*

One woman, Lorna, felt that the emphasis on self defence could be fear enhancing for some women, although the knowledge itself could be useful. As she said:

*I think in some ways it can make you fearful, but it is definitely good knowing what to do, what can help you, you know - you don't want to antagonise a psycho, do you?*

*When it comes to it, most people would go with the self-preservation thing so you do what you need to live, really, at that time. I didn't know he had killed someone. That could have been just before me or just after me but you know, I didn't know he was capable of it. I didn't know if it was his first time, I didn't know anything about it so but you don't want to be in that situation where you could be the first one to die.*

Several other women expressed annoyance at the trite way in which, after the rape, those around them proffered self-defence advice. As Jennifer complained:

*When someone says to you, 'You should break a window' or you should do those things - yeah, they're all fine things to say at the time, but you don't necessarily get the opportunity to do them either.*

Likewise Suzanne also described her feelings of frustration at the sentiments expressed by those who talked as if it was her lack of self-defence knowledge that 'got her raped'. She took heart from seeing a photo of Rewa, which clearly showed his stature and physique, saying:

*I was quite pleased when I saw that photo because he's very, very muscular, a very fit man, and I was pleased in the respect that, people afterwards were saying, 'Well, why didn't you do this, why didn't you knee him between the legs?' and things like that. I could see then that he was a very strong man, so I couldn't knee him between the legs because I was in bed when he came in. He was expecting me but I wasn't expecting him. I felt better that I hadn't been able to fight him off when I saw how muscular he was.... I got really ticked off actually. It was girls not guys that were saying... there were only two or three of them, but they were saying, 'You should have done this, you should have done that', but they don't know the situation and I wasn't going to say to them because I was in bed and he wasn't, and he knew that I was going to be in there when he came in, all those kinds of things.... I mean, I was asleep for goodness sake, it's not like you're going to jump up and have full strength in the middle of the night. I did get pretty frustrated with that. Sometimes people don't know, they can always say what they think, but they don't know unless they've been in that situation.*

Self-defence courses can obviously be useful in teaching survival techniques and strategies (Heyden et al., 1999). While many endeavour to promote attitudinal change as well, and can be confidence building and empowering, the emphasis is often on acquiring the physical skills and tactics. When others make comments about using self-defence knowledge, the examples given are typically of the eye-gouging, nose-breaking, ball-kicking variety. As the women in this study demonstrated, in many situations the scope for physical resistance will be limited, possibly counter-productive and even dangerous to attempt. In every attack situation, however, the ability to mentally resist and survive will be fundamental to the impact and also potentially to the outcome.

This leads into the second issue raised by some of the women, which relates to the debate over whether they see themselves as 'victims' or 'survivors'. For myself also, I have wrestled with the limitations of both terms. One of the women, Gabriel, gave a very clear account of how she viewed the relationship between these two words:

*You know what, that transition from victim to survivor, I think that the victim and the survivor can be parallel. That you are never, that you don't switch from being victim to survivor. You choose to take the path of the survivor, which is still the path of the victim, but it is different. I used to think it was a big shift. I used to think that, ah what did I used to think? I used to think being a victim was when why did this happen to me, what have I done to deserve this, why is this always happening to me, what, you know? That is my classification of 'victim'. It is like when something goes wrong in your life and you go, 'Oh, this always happens to me, I always have this kind of problem, you know, my whole life has been like this', do you know what I mean? And being a survivor is, 'Okay, so this happened, what can I get out of it, where can I go with this, where am I going with this, where am I with this now?'*

*You still have to acknowledge that you have been victimised when you are a survivor, that you were a victim, that it was this random awful thing that happened to you and you were victimised. I don't think there is a shift in what happens, I think there is a shift in consciousness. There is something that shifts and all of a sudden you stop going 'Why did this happen to me, why can't I get over this, why*

*can't I get on with my life, all these terrible things keep happening, I can't sleep at night', you know. It's that self blame kind of talk which isn't useful. But I do think, I was a victim of sexual abuse and I have survived it. I don't think I can say any more.*

Gabriel's description is useful in highlighting the way in which using the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' in an oppositional manner may appeal to feminist political thinking yet not resonate fully with women's lived experience. For her, there is no dichotomy. There is not even a strong sense of transition from one state to the other – she was both a victim **and** a survivor, not one or the other. What her and many of the other women's accounts demonstrate is that, even at the very moment that they were being victimised, they were in survival mode. They were simultaneously victims and survivors.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has presented the resistance and survival stories of women who were attacked by a stranger serial rapist. Besides being compelling and inspirational in their own right, the women's accounts challenge conventional notions and understandings. They challenge our understanding of resistance strategies, suggesting that these should not be limited to physical ploys and techniques. It has often been pointed out that this emphasis can appear judgmental of those victims who do not physically resist, who find themselves unable to kick and scream, or fail to kick or bite their attacker in the genitals (Kelly, 1988).

Whilst a recent self-defence book affirmed that the key to effective self defence was the accompanying mindset, the mental side was described as using the mind to ascertain and 'fully exploit the weakness of the offender' (Sanders, 2001 p 195). In other words, the role of the mind is stressed only in so far as it can help potential victims to resist and avoid being raped. The very title of this book is itself somewhat of a giveaway - How Dangerous Men Think and How to Stay Safe for Life. The promise that the self defence techniques contained within its covers will keep a woman 'safe for life' virtually ensures that if you read this book and are later raped, you have only yourself to blame. It also implies that if you did **not** buy and read this book, you have only yourself to blame! Notions of mental resistance and survival

feature little, with the emphasis on physicality obscuring and denying the realities described by many of the women interviewed in this study.

This is not to deny that stories of physical resistance, of women fighting back, and of women avoiding rape are hugely important and potentially highly empowering. We need strong clear accounts that counter images of passive victimhood and affirm women's strengths and physical abilities. As Susan Griffin noted more than thirty years ago:

Passivity itself prevents a woman from ever considering her own potential for self-defence and forces her to look to men for protection... Moreover, the passive woman is taught to regard herself as impotent, unable to act, unable even to perceive, in no way self-sufficient (Griffin, 1971 p 33).

However, much of the early feminist rhetoric in this area strove to make women's seeming passivity understandable. If women do not resist, it is not because they want to be raped, but because they in fact cannot resist. While such an emphasis was valuable in challenging fundamental rape myths, it was also damaging in elevating women's fear in ways that could enhance its potentially immobilising effects. Thus Nadya Burton has argued that the feminist challenge to the rape myths of the 1970s and 1980s was important, but the newly emergent feminist discourse often fell into the trap of replacing one set of simplistic assertions with another, extreme and oppositional version. As she expressed it:

The myth that rape occurred only when women resisted was countered with the denial of women's **ability** to resist in the face of terror. These new 'truths' were part of a feminist political strategy to unsettle commonly accepted views of violence against women, yet the result was a new and equally rigid discursive world (Burton, 1998 p183).

Men's power, strength and dominance was juxtaposed against women's fear, weakness and vulnerability. While fear undoubtedly can rule women's lives and be paralysing in its effects, constant reminders in this vein may be not only affirming of women's responses but serve to confirm and reinforce such thinking. Minimising women's capacities to resist has therefore been simultaneously empowering **and** disempowering.

The effect is to minimise and render marginal acts of resistance, thus privileging the link between rape and a powerless lack of agency in women, and reinforcing a fear/immobility relationship at the expense of a fear/resistance one (Burton, 1998 p 188).

In recent years, however, the emphasis has begun shifting in ways that acknowledge women's capacities to act and resist, but in a way that typically emphasises physical prowess (Reekie & Wilson, 1993; Heyden et al., 1999). Thus Burton herself primarily advocates the importance of training women in self-defence and assault prevention skills, recognising potential for individual woman's agency to have effects. Whilst not denying the importance of this, and enjoying the proliferation of female fight-back role models such as Xena and the heroine in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, I do not believe such an emphasis goes far enough, nor adequately reflects other dimensions of women's experience.

The women clearly attribute their inner and mental resistance to their survival. Physical resistance often seemed impossible, or something which they realised would be no disincentive to a man of Rewa's ilk. Their accounts raise questions regarding what resistance and survival mean, urging us to expand our often narrow definitions of such concepts.

Such expansion is consistent with our increasing awareness of the nature and effects of rape. Rape, as we know, is not only a physical act. This is partly why the 'rape is violent and not sexual' argument is limited. Rape is both violent and sexual, using sexual means to express violence towards a woman/women. Rape is also both physical and mental – the offender acts out what is in his mind, and the victim is more likely to be impacted upon mentally than physically. He need not use physical force to subdue her, nor she employ physical means to resist him. Contrary to such understandings, however, physical 'realities' continue to dominate criminal justice system perspectives and responses. Thus, as Liz Kelly and Jill Radford have noted:

Harm is defined in relation to whether the surface of the body has been 'violated'. Violation of the person, of their will, of their ability to act through the use of intimidation and threat are not criminal (apart from the threat to kill) and therefore not 'serious' (Kelly & Radford, 1996 p 29).

Our understanding of what it means to survive rape has also shifted from an emphasis on physical survival to stressing the emotional and psychological recovery process. The notion that victims need to become survivors, however, implies that each is a distinct, oppositional state rather than acknowledging, as some of these women did, that these can be parallel and simultaneous positions. At the very time that she is being attacked a woman can be understood as a victim in survivor mode, as she mentally struggles to find a way of resisting total domination by her attacker. Such an emphasis

resists the victim-blaming dimensions often implicit in self defence advice and affirms the 'rightness' of different women's responses to being attacked. In such situations, every woman finds her own way to manage and survive, her own way to resist complete control by the rapist.

To stress women's agency and survival is in itself a form of resistance (Kelly, 1988). Not only does it challenge popular conceptions of women as victims, but it is also a means of rejecting the highly individualised and apolitical approaches to understanding and responding to rape that have emerged in recent years. As Sharon Lamb articulates it:

By focusing on pathology and ignoring resiliency, medical aspects of victimhood were emphasized, political aspects de-emphasized... When victim advocacy became 'victim-centred advocacy' (Daly, 1994), offenders were demonized and crimes were individualized (Lamb, 1999 p 131).

Acknowledging individual women's stories of resistance of survival need not mean individualising our understanding of women's responses to rape; rather, it denotes an affirming of the diversity of ways in which individual women respond to and survive the gendered, political and violating crime of rape.

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