

# Designing a Fact-Based Self-Defense Curriculum for Women

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## A Caveat

A self-defense course is never the best way to achieve the goal of safety for its participants. The inherent limitation of any such “target-hardening” scheme designed to make individual course participants harder to attack is that it places the burden of preventing assaults on the potential victims of such assaults.<sup>1</sup> By its nature, target hardening also simply leads to perpetrators picking easier targets. The only effective solution to the problem of rape and other assaults on women is societal change. It must be made both clear and intuitive exactly what constitutes sexual assault and that it is entirely unacceptable. But the point of the following paper is not societal reform; rather, it is training women to take care of themselves.

## Introduction

Why a self-defense course for women? Why such an emphasis on rape prevention? The first point is discussed below, in Part II: Curriculum Design, but the second point merits introduction. In a self-defense curriculum targeting women, the chief difference that must be addressed is the one form of assault that is predominantly targeted at women, almost always committed by men, and still misunderstood by much of society. Women are frequently socialized to be ill-

equipped to face an attack that is not only reasonably likely to occur in their lifetimes, but is overwhelmingly likely to be perpetrated by someone they know. The consequences of rape are severe in both physical and psychological terms. In a society where rape remains a common crime, it must be the core issue addressed in any women's self-defense curriculum.

The background information presented in this paper introduces the specific self-defense problems facing women and provides the framework on which the self-defense curriculum was constructed. The number and type of assaults committed against women are discussed first, followed by women's attitudes about these assaults and how they think they can defend themselves. Following that is a discussion of extant advice on self-defense, and information on victims and rapists. Finally, data is presented on the consequences of fighting back and the best methods of resisting assaults. The curriculum that forms the second half of the paper should, hopefully, make even more sense following a reading of the background section.

## **Part I: Background**

### **Rape and Assault: Scope of the Problem**

It is now appreciated among researchers, if not the general public, that rape is a widespread crime. There were 109,062 reported rapes in 1992,<sup>2</sup> which is certainly an underreporting of the true rate. Government estimates put the actual number of rapes at somewhere from three to ten times the reported

rate.<sup>3</sup> The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) estimated 500,000 rapes and attempted rapes annually in 1992 and 1993.<sup>4</sup> This survey, while not based on crime reporting, still depends on self-reporting by women and hence can be expected to underestimate the total numbers. Different studies, relying on variously worded surveys, have reported combined rape and attempted rape rates of one woman in four with a completed rape rate of one in ten,<sup>5</sup> or up to one in five in some regions.<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, reported rape rates have been declining in the last decade and have been level for the last few years. According to NCVS data, the current estimated rate is about 170,000 rapes and attempted rapes annually.<sup>7</sup> Note that in all the reports cited, the cases referred to as rape are those that fit the most common, specific legal definitions of rape. The NCVS website defines rape as:

Forced sexual intercourse including both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means penetration by the offender(s).

Outside of rape, women face many other forms of violence that are naturally also of major concern. Estimates and studies show that “physical assaults against women result in more than 5,000 deaths and one million injuries per year in the United States,” and that “violence is the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among inner-city women.”<sup>8</sup> In the workplace, the assault rate against women is twice that against men.<sup>9</sup> Most at risk for workplace assault are single women between 16-18 years old, followed closely by single women in the 25-34 range.<sup>10</sup> Note

that these ages bracket the college age category, when rape is most prevalent.<sup>11</sup>

### **Who is Responsible?**

Despite increasing awareness and education, some people continue to subscribe to the belief that sexual and other assaults are mostly committed by strangers. In reality, both kinds of assault are quite often committed by men known to the victim, rather than by a stranger lurking in a parking garage or dark alley. The most famous study, conducted by Mary Koss for *Ms. Magazine* and the National Institute of Mental Health, showed that 84% of women knew the man who raped them, a statistic that remains true today, according to the most recent NCVS data.<sup>12</sup> In a study of work-related physical assault by LaMar *et al*, the percentage varied based on profession. However, in what turned out to be the riskiest occupations in terms of assault—health care, educational and social services—95% or more of the victims knew their attackers.<sup>13</sup> Foshee *et al*'s study of the “Safe Dates” program showed a baseline of one in five relationships including physical violence between adolescent partners.<sup>14</sup> Fanslow *et al*'s study on assault-related injuries in women treated in emergency departments showed the following breakdown of attackers:

Attacker	% of Assaults
Partner or former partner	63.0%
Family member	17.8%
Acquaintance	13.0%
Stranger	6.2%
total	100.0%

Note once again that this is a matter of self-reporting,

which can be problematic even in a confidential emergency medicine setting. Half of the identified assault victims would not identify the source of their injuries other than stating it was an assault.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond indicating that most assaults and rapes will be committed by someone the woman knows, it is very hard to pin down any traits in potential attackers based on survey research. Many of them fit into the “normal guy” image.<sup>16</sup> Despite the frustrating tendency for rapists to appear in most ways similar to normal men, Robin Warshaw has compiled a list of traits held in common by identified rapists. These include being “more likely to falsely profess love and to get engaged or get a woman drunk in order to have sex with her.” Two thirds of identified rapists indicated that the victim was at fault due to her behavior. Some felt justified due to their own drunkenness or sexual excitement. Rapists were heavier drinkers, believed any sexual intercourse was appropriate and generally believed rape-supportive myths.<sup>17</sup>

Warshaw has developed a shopping list of warning signs for potential acquaintance rapists, collected from discussion with rape victims and rape counselors.<sup>18</sup> These include:

- Emotional abuse (insults, ignoring opinions, unhappiness with woman showing initiative).
- Controlling behavior.
- Negative attitudes toward women.
- Unreasonable jealousy.
- Heavy drinking and drug use or promotion of same.
- Refusing to let the woman pay (e.g. for dinner) and becoming angered if she tries.

- Physical violence (including grabbing and pushing).
- Intimidating actions.
- Becoming very angry when frustrated.
- Not seeing the woman as an equal.
- Fascination with weapons and enjoyment of cruelty or bullying (toward children, animals, etc).

### **Women's Attitudes**

In the design of a self-defense curriculum for women, the prevailing attitudes of women about sexual assault and self-defense need to be addressed. In both cases, many women hold beliefs that do not accord with reality.

While contemporary women are significantly less likely to believe the most common “rape myths” than in the past, both as a function of changing societal attitudes and being targeted by specific rape prevention programs, a great many still believe fundamentally damaging misconceptions. The belief in stranger rape continues to be strong, despite the evidence to the contrary from studies such as those of Koss and others, cited above. This is most evident in the most common responses given by women to the question of what lifestyle changes they had made to prevent rape:

- “keep car doors locked” (87% of respondents);
- “stay in well-lit areas at night” (79%);
- “don’t go out alone after dark” (68%).

Only twenty-seven percent of respondents spoke of the much more useful action of avoiding “dates where there is a lot of alcohol” and even fewer had taken self-defense courses.<sup>19</sup>

On the issue of resisting a sexual assault when it occurs, women tend to believe that they can resist more successfully if the attacker is unarmed, while feeling more comfort if they are armed. A study by Easton *et al* on perceptions relating to sexual assault resistance indicated that women were more likely to say that resisting an armed attacker would increase their chances of being harmed, raped or murdered. This same study showed that fewer than one in nine women questioned knew that the vast majority of rapes involve no weapons at all.<sup>20</sup>

Many women still believe and mentally prepare for the “classic” rape, in which a stranger, armed with a knife or gun, ambushes a woman walking alone at night and drags her into the bushes, where she is raped. As such, it is unsurprising that women are unprepared for rape and physical assault by male acquaintances, which often occur in the “safe” indoors and are committed by men who aren’t obvious lunatics. This is certainly exacerbated by the fact that news coverage of rape focuses on attacks by strangers, generally only reporting on acquaintance rape when one of the parties involved is a celebrity.

### **Conventional Advice on Rape and Self-defense**

Contemporary advice on rape and rape avoidance is a medley of contradictory messages from different sources. Older, “stranger avoidance” ideas are presented, as is newer information that includes knowledge about acquaintance rape. Though the latter scenario is far more common and merits greater attention, both situations are worth thinking about. However, on the issue of self-defense a woman will

run into two competing schools of thought. In one, she is advised to be completely passive to avoid harm, while the other school suggests that she should fight back vigorously. In the absence of daily personal experience with violent offenders, it is naturally unclear to the average woman which approach is better.

In terms of rape avoidance, the old advice and some of the new advice merge fairly seamlessly in current approaches. Many college campuses have some form of sexual assault prevention programming, though it is largely voluntary and not always visible. One typical booklet on rape, *Avoiding Rape on and Off Campus*,<sup>21</sup> begins by debunking common myths about rape, including the myths of night rape, stranger rape and random rape. Despite making a point of “more than half of all rapes” being committed by acquaintances, however, the advice is still largely targeted at avoiding stranger rape. Tips include walking briskly, locking doors, closing blinds at night, not opening doors to strangers and varying walking routes. Only two of the tips, “trust your instincts when you feel danger” and “think through what action you would take if confronted by a rapist,” can be applied to an acquaintance rape.<sup>22</sup> More recent collegiate programs present a much more useful view of sexual assault. For example, the Student Safety Awareness Program at the University of California at San Diego recently ran a poster campaign that simultaneously addressed the realities of acquaintance rape and made an effective attack on peer pressure by emphasizing that not only does “No always mean no,” most of the campus men surveyed believed this to be the case.<sup>23</sup>



Once again, the sum of advice on self-defense for women continues to be a hodgepodge of contradictions. One prevailing view for quite a while has been that women should not in any way provoke their attackers. Consider the following suggestions, cited by Bart.<sup>24</sup>

We recommend passive resistance, like getting a person's confidence by talking and doing what you were taught to do as girls growing up, to help resist attack.

Treat the rapist as a human being...gain his confidence...reassure him so that he knows you represent neither a mental nor a physical threat to him...go along until you can safely react.

Nearly the same advice is given by former FBI Special Agent Candice DeLong in her recent book, *Special Agent: My Life on the Front Lines as a Woman in the FBI*.<sup>25</sup> There, DeLong advises that fighting back can lead to major injury and should be avoided. A female Special Agent in the FBI seems like the model of a woman who can both take care of herself and knows what she's taking about in terms of crime and self-defense. That she makes this recommendation for nonresistance in a mass-market book suggests that it is still very much a mainstream idea.

These suggestions center on the concept that fighting back will only make things worse. Implicit in these instructions is the idea that the only thing fighting back *can* do is make things worse; i.e. there will be no effective resistance. Others, however, have promoted the opposing ethos of fighting back in any way possible. Programs like Bay Area Model Mugging take this approach. Many people rightly point out that

rape is a horribly traumatic event, both physically and psychologically. Possible consequences from rape include:<sup>26</sup>

- General physical trauma from the attack;
- Specific damage to the vagina or anus;
- Disease;
- Infertility (a possible consequence of transmitted disease or trauma);
- Unwanted pregnancy;
- Significant psychological problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Indeed, the probable risk of developing PTSD after rape (49.0%) is barely lower than torture and kidnapping (the highest, at 53.8%) and well over that for severe beating (31.9%) and shooting or stabbing (15.4%).<sup>27</sup> Of the possible outcomes from rape, PTSD may be the most harmful, as it can be both long-lasting and debilitating, removing the victim's ability to function normally. Consequences of rape frequently require extensive medical care and some cannot be effectively fixed (e.g. infections or substantial trauma). Regardless of specific outcomes, a rape victim's life is permanently altered by the experience.

College martial arts courses are one venue where the issue of self-defense will be addressed to some degree. While some arts emphasize sport and others gear towards self-defense, all are frequently attributed anecdotally with increasing women's confidence and ability to defend themselves. Surprisingly, Madden's study of college martial arts programs demonstrated that the typical student, following three months of instruction, felt more vulnerable and less able to control events relating to personal safety than a

comparable general fitness class student. Madden suggests this may be a combination of self-selection, with victims of prior assaults choosing to take self-defense courses rather than general fitness instruction, and the repeated emphasis by instructors that “expertise is needed to use techniques effectively.” In addition, he points to the traditional emphasis on care in using self-defense measures, common in mixed-sex self-defense courses.<sup>28</sup>

Books aimed specifically at women as an audience for self-defense instruction are often nothing more than a smattering of advice on stranger rape appended to a main body of conventional martial arts instruction. Some of them manage to distill this instruction into a pragmatic core of lessons particularly pertinent to fighting.<sup>29</sup> Others keep their emphasis on conventional martial arts instruction, spending the bulk of their text discussing stances, forms and anything else one would encounter in a martial arts class in their chosen style, without any discussion of the psychology of self-defense or application of the techniques in question to self-defense.<sup>30</sup> In effect, quite a few books are martial arts guides tweaked and justified to become “self-defense” books. Experienced martial artists should be aware of the uneven quality of martial arts guide books, but the average consumer or new student of martial arts may not be so wary. Some of the best advice on this topic came from the self-defense section of a book that was mostly devoted to women’s practice of sports judo:

We know that several of the methods  
shown and described sound very nasty,  
but so are the circumstances envisaged.  
It would not be right to advise ‘nicer’

methods as, quite frankly, they would not work. You have to be quite drastic, even ruthless, if you are to escape. Personally we think anyone who attacks a girl or woman deserves all that he gets.<sup>31</sup>

### **Who is Raped?**

The victim of a rape is chosen, one way or another, by the rapist. Thus, it is enticing to imagine that there are identifiable traits of women who are victims of rape. Many studies have attempted to figure this out by examining traits in women who were and were not raped, searching for correlation. Of course, many people continue to blame the victim, stating that she was “asking for it” by wearing seductive clothes, drinking a lot, accepting a ride, or even letting a man buy her dinner.<sup>32</sup> Setting these unvalidated, anecdotal “causes” aside, if there were identifiable factors rapists used to target women for rape, they might be incorporated into self-defense instructions for women.

Correlative studies of women who were and were not raped showed that women who were raped were more likely to:<sup>33</sup>

- Drink;
- Drink and drive;
- Have eating disorders;
- Use illicit drugs;
- Have been in a physical fight with a partner;
- Have had multiple sexual partners;
- Smoke cigarettes;
- Dress in a self-reported provocative manner;
- Have a history of sexual victimization;
- Participate in sorority functions;

Of these factors, most of them cannot be adequately related temporally or causally to the rape itself. As these are simply correlative studies, some of them may well be consequences of the rape. Common rape consequences can include reduced personal caution and increased sexual activity.<sup>34</sup> Thus, for example, it may not be that women who smoke cigarettes are more often victims of rape, but rather than victims of rape subsequently care less for their personal well being and thus smoke cigarettes. The strongest factor is prior victimization, as women who are raped or otherwise victimized, especially as children, have an increased chance of rape. In one study forty-one percent of rape victims said they “expect to be raped again.”<sup>35</sup>

Anecdotally, women who are raped often report having ignored a bad feeling they had about the situation.<sup>36</sup>

Some of the women said that they had a feeling that “something was wrong” before attacks occurred. Many had noticed their attackers acting “suspiciously,” although it was often difficult for the women to say exactly what these men were doing to arouse such suspicion. Although a woman often noticed the attacker and he made her uncomfortable before he made any specific move, she ignored her feelings, labeling them “paranoid” or “oversensitive.” There was a tendency for women to give men the benefit of the doubt. This means that even though there might have been some clue that the situation was one of potential sexual assault, women distrusted their own feelings.<sup>37</sup>

Given this difficulty in identifying factors from

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rape victims, what do rapists see that leads them to target someone for rape? In general, men and women have a different outlook on many apparently normal things. "A man may interpret a woman's behavior as implying that she is willing to have intercourse, while a woman simply thinks she is being human and friendly."<sup>38</sup> Beneke's interviews with men who are not rapists reveals that many of them felt that clothing and other factors definitely promoted rape and thoughts of rape.<sup>39</sup> In answering questionnaires, only one percent of rapists identified their own act as "definitely" rape. Only twelve percent reported their victim struggling and thirty-six percent reported verbal resistance, despite rape victims reporting seventy percent struggling and eighty-four percent reasoning.<sup>40</sup> It is clear that men and women are not seeing the same things, both in daily life and in assaults.

### **Fighting Back: Consequences**

In light of the "common wisdom" that fighting back leads to a greater risk of injury, there has been a great deal of interest in determining the actual effects of active resistance. Considering that the once-prevailing idea of "nonresistance" is comparable to instructing an assault victim to take the extreme measure of sacrificing an arm in hopes of saving the rest of their body, it is worth looking at actual assault outcomes.

Prior studies, as cited in Thompson *et al*,<sup>41</sup> indicated that women who defend themselves suffer greater injury. This apparent correlation has since been debunked. Restructuring questions in the National Crime Victimization Survey to allow

determination of whether defensive acts occurred before or after injury revealed that self-protective measures taken prior to injury *were* effective in reducing injury. In fact, women who fought early were half as likely to be injured as women who did not fight back at all.<sup>42</sup>

Studies on the health consequences of rape show that no increased risk of injury occurs with physical resistance to the attack.<sup>43</sup> Zoucha-Jensen and Coyne's study, "The Effects of Resistance Strategies on rape," found that most injury preceded the sexual assault itself *and* preceded the victim's attempts at self-defense.<sup>44</sup> This matches the NCVS data on physical assault—people tend to start fighting back post-injury.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, psychological consequences of rape were compounded by not fighting back. Women that did not fight back showed a greater frequency of depression symptoms and sexual problems relative to those that did.<sup>46</sup> Thus, fighting back appears to be the best option. The next question, naturally, is how best to fight back?

### **Fighting Back: What Works**

In addition to addressing the health consequences of resistance, several studies have assessed the effectiveness of different strategies in preventing rape. Note that this does not refer to the kind of rape prevention methods directed towards avoiding the possibility of rape, such as locking doors and avoiding unsafe situations. Instead, these studies have analyzed the methods used once a rape attempt is initiated. Though classification of defensive measures taken can differ, the most common categories are no

resistance, verbal resistance (sometimes broken down further to talking, reasoning, pleading, yelling and other categories), physical resistance and flight. The following table, after the chief results reported by Zoucha-Jensen and Coyne,<sup>47</sup> tells the tale well:

Strategy	% Raped	% Avoided Rape
No resistance	93.5	6.5
Nonforceful verbal resistance	95.8	4.2
Forceful verbal resistance	50.0	50.0
Physical resistance	45.5	54.5
Running/fleeing	55.0	45.0

These results agree with those of other studies and run distinctly counter to the advice to be passive and try to reason with the attacker. Perhaps most startling is the data indicating that women who begged or pleaded (this is what is meant by “nonforceful verbal resistance” in the study cited above) had an increased incidence of rape, above the baseline of simple nonresistance. The three “non-ladylike” strategies of yelling, fighting and running show dramatic results in rape prevention over that “no resistance” baseline. In this particular study and others like it, the “most forceful” resistance strategy was scored as the one used.<sup>48</sup>

At least one study has gone into even more depth, analyzing not only individual strategies, but also their effectiveness in combination. While stating, “Fleeing or trying to flee was the single most effective strategy,” Bart and O’Brien discuss their important discovery that women who use multiple strategies are most likely to avoid rape. Specific strategies presented



include:

- Attempting to flee;
- Screaming or talking loudly (“usually in an effort to draw attention”);
- “Affective verbal” methods like begging and pleading;
- “Cognitive verbal” methods like reasoning and stalling;
- Environmental interventions (other people, random events);
- Physical force.

As in the Zoucha-Jensen and Coyne study, Bart and O’Brien found that crying or pleading correlated with increased rape; flight, physical resistance and yelling correlated with decreased rape. Combinations of the most effective strategies—women who yelled, fought and ran, for example—resulted in the biggest reduction in rape, especially when done early. An immediate physical response combined with yelling and fleeing was very effective in resisting rape, for example.<sup>49</sup>

Two points brought up by the Bart and O’Brien study merit their own discussion here; they relate to size and attitude. Compared to their smaller peers, women over 5’ 7” were twice as likely to avoid rape, as were women over 115 pounds. However, there was no correlation between relative size of attacker and victim—in other words, smaller women were simply victimized more often, regardless of attacker size. Bart and O’Brien suggest that smaller women are more likely to be used to being treated as and acting helpless. Considered in light of the negative outcomes associated with pleading, any attitude of helplessness

would naturally be expected to lead to worse self-defense. The other issue of attitude is what women felt when they were attacked. Women who avoided rape were often enraged by the attack and had a primary fear of being raped, while women who were raped chiefly feared injury or death. Once again, recall that in actual fact, fighting back correlates with fewer injuries than nonresistance, as discussed above.<sup>50</sup>

Given the earlier information on how men frequently see a different and less traumatic situation than women, it is worth repeating that it is the distinctly “non-ladylike” responses to an attempted rape that are successful in stopping the attack. Many rapists do not view what they are doing as rape, especially if they feel it is justified by the situation.<sup>51</sup> In addition to the physical effectiveness of resistance, vigorous resistance can alert the rapist to the fact that he is not engaged in a romantic or acceptable activity.<sup>52</sup>

## **Part II: Curriculum Design**

### **Why Have a Female-Specific Curriculum?**

There are distinct differences in approach and environment between a mixed-gender self-defense course and a female-only one. As discussed above, martial arts instructors teaching to mixed courses may well feel that they have to ensure that their more aggressive male students will exercise caution in using what they are taught.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, a female-only class can emphasize the right and need to use learned self-defense skills, overcoming cultural training in

passivity without worrying about breeding overly aggressive male students. Additionally, a female-only environment may “encourage the women to share their fears about sexual assault” and let them act “in a manner society has considered “unfeminine”—striking and shouting in response to male assertiveness and dominance.”<sup>54</sup> There is also the pragmatic consideration that while men need to be educated about all forms of rape, their role in relation to it is significantly different than that of women (only 3-4% of men report being the victim of a rape or attempted rape in their lifetime).<sup>55</sup> Since there are substantial differences between genders in prior cultural training, and furthermore, that women must prepare to defend against a unique set of challenges, a female-only class is the preferred teaching environment.

### **Core Principles**

This self-defense curriculum is founded upon a set of core principles that serve to provide a constant focus to the course instruction and its participants. They can help keep students on track and give them simple ideas to follow. The specific teaching that takes place within the course can be related back to these principles in each lesson. Much like basic body motions can be remembered during stress, even when intricate techniques are forgotten, the core principles will give all participants a basis for their actions even under duress. The core principles should be posted in the course area. They are:

- Respect Yourself;
- Trust Your Judgment;
- Don't Hold Back.

**Respect Yourself** — The idea behind this principle is to counter the tendency of women to defer their own self-respect, desires, and needs in the face of male pressure and societal expectations. Teaching respect of self involves emphasizing that the student's opinions and needs are just as valuable as anyone else's. When someone else's actions impinge on the student's health, welfare, comfort or feeling of safety, the woman takes precedence. Ignored feelings of discomfort or danger are a classic part of rape and assault situations. One need not compromise safety or comfort to accommodate the desires of others.

**Trust Your Judgment** — The most common failing in women who are raped, either in acquaintance or stranger rapes, is to override their own bad feelings. This point, once made, must be reinforced constantly. Participants should be told to listen to that "little voice" in their head the moment it starts in. When they first feel uncomfortable, in danger, worried or any other warning signs, they need to act on that. The most successful defense is, of course, to not enter a dangerous situation. In light of the call to "Respect Yourself," women must learn to place their judgment ahead of cultural expectations and a desire to keep others happy. At all times, they must be assured that they can and should listen to and act on their feelings.

**Don't Hold Back** — This is the third member in this triad of cultural-programming breakers. Women must be taught that everything they do in defense of themselves is appropriate. The heavily inculcated warning to "not make a scene" is the target of this principle. Women must be taught that in all cases, not only do they come first (see Respect Yourself, above),

but they are fully justified in screaming, yelling, punching, kicking and anything else it takes to make a man respect that. Women are generally conditioned to be quiet and act in a feminine manner. When an assault by an acquaintance is added on top of this, many are unable to bring even years of physical training to bear. For that reason, they must be conditioned to defend themselves with all the weapons they have at their disposal, no matter how crude or violent it may seem. They must be taught, without reservation, to make a scene and don't hold back.

### **Instructors**

The instructors for this self-defense curriculum should be women. This serves two purposes. First, it maintains the all-female environment, which lets women express themselves fully and not feel constrained by societal rules about sustaining feminine behavior in front of men. Second, it presents strong female role models for women to model their training and responses after. There is a basic problem with trying to break women's socialized "need" for a strong man by having a man who is necessarily their superior lead the course. For this reason, outside of specific male assistants used in some portions of the course, the instructors will be female.

Instructors must maintain a positive, encouraging attitude in the course. They will be discussing assault and especially rape, situations that will be made even more frightening for students by the addition of factual information on acquaintance rape. The students must be continually told that not only can

and should they fight back, but that all the evidence shows that fighting back gives them the greatest chance of avoiding both rape and injury. The principles should be emphasized, to ensure that students come out with not only an understanding of the dangers, but also a healthy sense of their right and ability to defend themselves.

### **General Instruction Notes**

Every class session should be a mixture of verbal instruction, discussion and physical training. Not only does interspersing physical activity with more sedentary speaking interactions keep people awake, it also reinforces the message of effective self-defense and not holding back. Martial training, including running and defense techniques, conveniently includes the most effective defensive strategies. Additionally, the coexistence of fighting, yelling and general physical activity next to more conventional behavior in the same environment promotes the idea that these actions are appropriate, regardless of location or circumstance.

Training in this program should emphasize realistic situations. Ideally, this would mean training in street clothes and perhaps instruction in a residential environment. Pragmatism may well dictate that instruction occur in an appropriate martial arts uniform and in a special activities room or dojang. This will probably be the case if the self-defense course occurs after a regular martial arts course, for example. Even in such cases, normal clothing and locations may be specially used for the later role-playing sessions. Whether the situation is as realistic

as possible or not, real-world situations and defenses should be emphasized in all verbal and physical instruction. Experienced martial arts instructors have a good grasp of which techniques in their body of knowledge are practical and which are for form or artistry. No time should be wasted on any defensive technique that the average student cannot effectively employ against a normal, adult male.

As in typical martial arts instruction, information should be repeated from class to class. Just as the physical techniques require repetition to make them reflexive, the information on how rape and assault happens, the most effective methods of avoidance and the core principles need to be reinforced in each class. Just as a student should know what an elbow strike is and demonstrate one after a number of classes, so too should they be able to describe danger signs of a bad situation, know which kind of rape is most common and yell on demand. The importance of attitude in good outcomes and rape avoidance should be emphasized during all instruction, whether physical or lecture-based.

One important thing to emphasize throughout the course is that no matter how trained you are, some rapes and assaults are unpreventable. In a course with the recurring message that “you can prevent rape,” care must be taken to not leave students with the impression that, should they fail to prevent a rape, it is their fault. Under no circumstances is a rape the victim’s fault, and students should leave knowing that. Useful analogies to other situations that can be prepared for but not absolutely prevented can help here (e.g. “No matter how good a driver you are,

someone may still run into you”). Instructor can also point out to their students that fighting back works about half the time, while emphasizing that this is still ten times better than nonresistance.<sup>56</sup>

As a final note, student materials and postings should include contact information for rape counselors. Instructors should also be prepared for students to come to them for help. It is not uncommon for women to only correctly label a prior assault as rape once they have been in a good rape

**Which techniques do I keep? A worked example.**

As discussed in the main text, not every technique taught in a typical martial art should be included in a true self-defense course. Even a practical art, such as Hankido, includes techniques that will be “baggage” in a focused self-defense course. One rule of thumb is that only techniques that a student can effectively employ against an average adult male should be taught. With that in mind, here’s an example of techniques to teach, or not, from Hankido:

***Techniques to teach:***

- Simple arm and hand strikes (front, reverse, elbow)
- Simple kicks (front kick, stomp, knee lift)
- Escapes from grabs
- Simple leverages (basic arm bars)
- Ground escapes
- Striking from the ground (kicks, punches)

***Techniques to avoid:***

- Complex kicks (any kick above the waist, roundhouse, spinning and flying kicks)
- Sparring strikes (feints of any kind, backhand strikes)
- Complex leverages (anything that is not a basic arm bar, e.g. wrist techniques)
- Grappling on the ground (rather than strikes from the ground, as above)



prevention course. Instructors in such courses must then be ready to help, should this arise. Things to have on hand include:

- Contact information for a local rape crisis center;
- Pamphlets from the center, giving initial information and comfort;
- A copy of the book *I Never Called it Rape*,<sup>57</sup> for those who are not sure whether or not rape has occurred.

### **General Notes on Curriculum Design**

A detailed curriculum for a martial arts class is discussed below, but there are some general concepts that should be kept in mind in adapting or creating a new curriculum.

#### ***The suggested timeline for instruction***

- Introduction (one session/one hour total): Explanation of rape and acquaintance rape and basics of yelling, running and escape
- Basics (three sessions/three to five hours total): Basic information on typical assaults, listening to inner voice, acting in an unfeminine manner. Additional yelling and basic effective strikes.
- Intermediate (three sessions/three to five hours total): Emphasis on acquaintance rape, warning signs, responses and prevention. Planning out self-defense tactics against assault. Physical training in

multiple techniques and using techniques in series.

- Advanced (three sessions/three to five hours total): Role-playing potential acquaintance rape situations with male assistants. Training against outright assault. Advanced acquaintance rape training—using strategies against familiar faces. (Ideally done outside of martial arts environment at least once)

This very basic timeline lays out a course progression designed to prepare women for real world assault situations by preparing them with the needed information and skills to defend themselves. It is vague because the specific training needs will depend on the students enrolled. For example, introductory physical training in a course targeting typical women will include the basics of punching things, kicking things and so forth. In a course for currently enrolled female martial arts students, as described below, the emphasis will be more on practical applications of known techniques.

### **An Example Curriculum: A Semester-Long Course for Martial Arts Students**

The following curriculum is intended to serve as a guide for instruction of current martial arts students taking a semester-long martial arts course. It comprises ten one-hour courses taken as a weekly addition to conventional instruction. The design assumes that the martial art being complemented is one that teaches basic techniques of hand and foot

striking with the intent that they be used to hit actual targets. Modifications will be necessary for performance-oriented martial arts, like Wushu, which teach physical fundamentals of stance and motion but are not directed toward fighting. Generally, though, even performance or sport martial arts can be adapted to self-defense. The weekly course could be an additional hour, or could replace a normal class time each week. In the latter case, it is very important that the training environment be female only.

This curriculum assumes a fairly basic level of

#### **The Essential (one hour) Self-defense Course**

The curriculum presented is for a ten-session course. Circumstances don't always afford us that much time. So what do you do if you only have one hour?

The basic recommendations stand. The course is best done in a real-world environment, with street clothes. Instructors should be female. The core principles should be posted, or at least given to the students on handouts. A basic timeline for an hour course follows:

- 5 min: Introduction to core principles, yelling exercise.
- 10 min: Exploring rape myths and facts, discussing fighting and fleeing as effective and safe defenses.
- 15 min: Introduction to the front kick and elbow strike, with yelling.
- 15 min: Discussion about common traits in rapists; preventing acquaintance rape; how to make a scene.
- 5 min: Introduction to basic escapes, with yelling.
- 10 min: Work with male assistants (saying no, grab escapes, and striking a padded assistant, all with yells).

An hour course moves quickly, and not all students will understand or absorb everything in that time. Thus, instructors should ideally remain available for additional questions and assistance afterwards, and literature on the core principles, rape and effective self-defense should be given to each student as she leaves.

competency for the martial arts students and is modeled for a largely beginning audience. With more experienced practitioners, the physical instruction portion of the class can be reduced, focusing on application of techniques with which they are already well trained and familiar. The remaining time should be spent on the factual and psychological component of the course. Do not assume that experienced martial artists already know the actual facts about rape and assault, or about how to most effectively resist it. However, since more information can be imparted in each class, due to the reduced need for learning of new techniques, it is possible to compress the course when teaching such advanced students.

The instructors should prepare information and summary sheets for each class. These serve to record in written form the information presented and discussed in class. Extra copies should be available at subsequent classes. This material is another means of reinforcing the messages imparted during the workout. Handouts can also include citations for the information presented. The most accessible books on the topic, Warshaw<sup>58</sup> and Bart<sup>59</sup>, should be cited on the introductory handout.

The ten sessions are outlined below.

### ***Session #1: Introduction***

Warm-up: Running, yelling. It is important to make sure everyone participates in the yelling portion of warm-up in the first class, even if they do a bad job of it. Again, a comfortable and safe environment makes this easier for the students. Starting with silly words also helps.

Information presented: Rape realities—acquaintance rape versus rape myths; benefits of fighting back; consequences of rape; core principles.

Physical training: Functional basics; with yelling. Functional basics include hand strikes to the face and groin, low kicks to the legs and groin, elbow strikes to the face and escapes from grabs. Naturally, limited time is available for this introduction, but students will be reviewing the basics in the following class sessions.

#### **Adapting a Performance or Sport Martial Art**

Some martial arts are more art or sport than fighting style. Wushu is emblematic of this, teaching poise, grace, agility and fluid motion, but with an emphasis on play-acting of fighting rather than actual combat. Similarly, experienced Taekwondo competitors tend to have habits that help them score in refereed competition, but are potentially risky in a street fight. It is unlikely that a few sessions of self-defense training will change such ingrained reflexes.

The key goal in adapting such arts to self-defense is psychological. Course participants need all the same instruction in the realities of rape and the value of fighting and fleeing if a situation cannot be avoided. They should be told that they are already physically capable of defending themselves, then given guidance in developing the right attitude. As in all cases, the core principles are paramount.

Instructors should not attempt to adapt the students' styles for self-defense. Instead, students should be presented with the basic physical techniques as a "self-defense toolbox." Teaching the basics as an independent package helps prevent the appearance of risky practices in dangerous situations. Instructors should emphasize that the students are already accomplished athletes and are simply learning a new skill set. In this way, students are not made to feel like amateurs despite their years of training in their preferred art.

***Session #2: Basics #1***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, basic strikes, core principles.

Information presented: What is a typical assault? Common scenarios for acquaintance rape,<sup>60</sup> importance of trusting first feelings; additional discussion of which defense measures are most effective (running, making noise, fighting).

Physical training: Strikes; strikes from being grabbed; simple grab escapes.

***Session #3: Basics #2***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, basic strikes, core principles.

Information presented: More on typical assaults; emphasis on rape happening in “safe” places rather than in the classic rape myth “dark/outside/night” locales; shaking the need to act feminine or not make a scene; trusting yourself and your feelings.

Physical training: Strikes; strikes from grabs; grab escapes; strikes to heavy bags.

***Session #4: Basics #3***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, strikes and escapes from grabs, core principles.

Information presented: Emphasis on use of effective strategies; scenarios of successful self-defense;<sup>61</sup> trusting your instincts.

Physical training: Strikes; strikes from grabs; grab escapes; strikes to heavy bags.

***Session #5: Intermediate Class #1***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, strikes, core principles.

Information presented: An in-depth discussion on

avoiding acquaintance rape situations: warning signs; how to avoid a setup;<sup>62</sup> maintaining control of a situation (including drug and alcohol discussion).

Physical training: Escapes from the ground; putting strikes in a series; yelling offensively.

“Putting strikes in a series” refers to setting up basic, logical combinations, such as a kick to the groin followed by an elbow to the face, then practicing them so that the students can feel the flow of the techniques.

### ***Session #6: Intermediate Class #2***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, ground escapes, core principles.

Information presented: Avoiding the setup; trusting yourself; full discussion of physical and psychological health consequences of rape; why fighting back is *not* unsafe.

Physical training: Striking from the ground; escapes from the ground; strikes in series.

### ***Session #7: Intermediate Class #3***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, ground escapes, strikes in series, core principles.

Information presented: The value of acting immediately on instinct; discussion of effectiveness of multiple strategies; emphasis on ineffectiveness of traditional methods (passivity, pleading).

Physical training: Striking from the ground; escapes from the ground; emphasis on yelling and screaming while fighting.

***Session #8: Advanced Class #1***  
***(first class to use male assistants)***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, ground escapes, strikes in series, core principles.

Information presented: Warning signs in men;<sup>63</sup> designing a “rape situation” contingency plan in advance; maintaining control.

Physical training: Introductory grab escapes from male assistants, then ground escapes and strikes with male assistants.

***Session #9: Advanced Class #2***  
***(Role-playing Assault Situations)***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, strikes in series, core principles.

Information presented: Repeat of acquaintance rape background; discussing the need to be able to hurt or say no to a familiar person; breaking down hesitation and politeness.

Physical training: Ground fighting against male assistants; defense against blitz and hold-down attacks by male assistants; saying no to male assistants.

It is important in all three situations to allow students to opt out at any time and take a break, as they can be very stressful. A safe word of some kind should be introduced before instruction begins, so students can call for a time out as needed. The “saying no to male assistants” exercise involves having the men make simple requests and letting the female students say no to them. Sample requests include:

- “Can I walk you home?”
- “Will you help me study for class?”
- “Can I come in?”



- “Do you want to come in?”
- “Do you want a drink?”

***Session #10: Final Class***  
***(Role-playing Assault Situations)***

Warm-up: Running, yelling, core principles.

Information presented: Final summary — effectiveness of fighting back; need for core principles; avoiding the setup; fighting a “friendly” face.

Physical training: Small group role-playing of typical acquaintance rape setups; saying no to male assistants; attacking and yelling at male assistants. Once again, students should be allowed to opt out at any time.

Once again, saying no to male assistants occurs as in Session #9. Small group role-play of acquaintance rape setups involves one student acting walking through a situation with a male assistant. It is recommended that the male assistant be given a script based on Warshaw,<sup>64</sup> for example:

- Date situation — male assistant insists on paying;
- Going home — male assistant wants to come in;
- At home — male assistant offers alcohol;
- At home — male assistant pressures for sex;
- At home — male assistant attempts to restrain student.

Students should be encouraged to give the best response at each step, with that success acknowledged, and then model the following step. Students should similarly be encouraged to act uncivil toward the assistant at any point, as needed.

## **Conclusion**

We must do what we can.

While target hardening is a limited approach and there are few good studies on the effectiveness of rape prevention courses,<sup>65</sup> that cannot delay the implementation of effective self-defense training designed for women. Given that, such courses must be based on the ever-increasing body of well-researched data on what does and does not work in rape prevention. Contrary to old advice and popular belief, the most effective defense, one with no increased risk of injury, is to fight, yell and run. It seem almost glaringly obvious, but the socialization of women to be quiet, not make a scene and suppress their needs to please others has made the most effective defenses seem out of the question. Retraining women to believe in their own intuition and act for their own health and safety will do a great deal to reduce their vulnerability to assault and rape.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Schwartz.
- <sup>2</sup> Koss.
- <sup>3</sup> Burgess.
- <sup>4</sup> Synovitz.
- <sup>5</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>6</sup> Brener.
- <sup>7</sup> National Crime Victimization Study data can be viewed at the Bureau of Justice Statistics Home Page, currently at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/welcome.html>. Accessed July 21, 2004.
- <sup>8</sup> Thompson.
- <sup>9</sup> LaMar.
- <sup>10</sup> Klein.
- <sup>11</sup> Easton.
- <sup>12</sup> See appropriate sections in Koss, Warshaw and the National Crime Victimization Study.
- <sup>13</sup> LaMar.
- <sup>14</sup> Foshee.

- <sup>15</sup> Fanslow.
- <sup>16</sup> Beneke.
- <sup>17</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>18</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>19</sup> Easton.
- <sup>20</sup> Easton.
- <sup>21</sup> Pritchard.
- <sup>22</sup> Pritchard.
- <sup>23</sup> The UCSD Student Safety Awareness Program is available online at <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/ssap//>. Accessed July 21, 2004.
- <sup>24</sup> Bart.
- <sup>25</sup> DeLong.
- <sup>26</sup> See appropriate sections in Bart and Warshaw.
- <sup>27</sup> Brody.
- <sup>28</sup> Madden.
- <sup>29</sup> Fein.
- <sup>30</sup> Offstein.
- <sup>31</sup> Butler.
- <sup>32</sup> See appropriate sections in Bart, Beneke and Warshaw.
- <sup>33</sup> See appropriate sections in Brener, Newton-Taylor and Synovitz.
- <sup>34</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>35</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>36</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>37</sup> Bart.
- <sup>38</sup> Bart.
- <sup>39</sup> Beneke.
- <sup>40</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>41</sup> Thompson.
- <sup>42</sup> Thompson.
- <sup>43</sup> See appropriate sections in Siegel and Zoucha-Jensen.
- <sup>44</sup> Zoucha-Jensen.
- <sup>45</sup> Thompson.
- <sup>46</sup> Bart.
- <sup>47</sup> Zoucha-Jensen.
- <sup>48</sup> See appropriate sections in Siegel and Zoucha-Jensen.

- <sup>49</sup> Bart.
- <sup>50</sup> See appropriate sections in Bart, Siegel and Zoucha-Jensen.
- <sup>51</sup> See appropriate sections in Bart and Thompson.
- <sup>52</sup> Bart.
- <sup>53</sup> Madden.
- <sup>54</sup> Cummings.
- <sup>55</sup> See appropriate sections in Brener and Kilpatrick
- <sup>56</sup> See appropriate sections in Bart, Siegel and Zoucha-Jensen.
- <sup>57</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>58</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>59</sup> Bart.
- <sup>60</sup> See Warshaw for anecdotes to read to class.
- <sup>61</sup> See Bart for anecdotes to read to class.
- <sup>62</sup> See Warshaw once again for helpful information.
- <sup>63</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>64</sup> Warshaw.
- <sup>65</sup> Yeater.