An analysis of police officer satisfaction with defense and control tactics

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Abstract There is a lack of research into the police’s physical defense and control tactics training. Approximately 600 officers in the USA form the research population and their opinions are sought about the defense and control tactics training they receive, their experiences in using these tactics and their interest in alternative techniques and training methods. Results support the idea that in-service training might be improved. There are high levels of dissatisfaction with the training and there are hints as to how training can be improved.

Introduction

Compared to many other countries, the structure of policing in the USA is highly diverse and decentralized (Bayley, 1985). Although this may foster innovation in law enforcement (Skolnick and Bayley, 1986), one disadvantage is that it can lead to duplication of effort and the frequent adoption and discarding of flawed strategies (Strawbridge and Strawbridge, 1990, p. 6). In an era of scarce resources, duplication of effort and the adoption of flawed strategies, tactics, or training methods is wasteful – or worse – potentially harmful to officers and those whose safety they are responsible for. Therefore, the objective identification of strategies, tactics and training methods that can be demonstrated empirically to be effective for their intended purposes would be useful to law enforcement administrators and other public officials responsible for their selection.

One area of critical concern in law enforcement is the training of recruits and officers to safely and efficiently gain control of resistive and combative subjects. Because of the decentralized structure of policing in the USA, there are no nationally agreed on standards regarding:

- amount of training (duration and frequency) recruits and officers receive in defense and arrest and control and tactics (hereafter referred to as defense and control[1] tactics;

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methods of instruction (e.g. which methods are most efficient for adequate skill acquisition and retention); nor

which specific techniques are most effective for safely gaining control of subjects and officer self-defense.

It is apparent, however, that substantial variation exists in the amount of time devoted to training in American police departments and academies. For instance, a 1990 survey of municipal and county police agencies with 500 or more sworn personnel ($N = 72$) found that the number of hours of defensive tactics instruction for recruits ranged from a low of ten to a high of 148 hours[2]. Only seven agencies (10 per cent) reported that officers received any in-service training in defensive tactics (Strawbridge and Strawbridge, 1990). The consequences of the observed variation in training times for dealing with resistive and forceful encounters are unknown, but at the extremes variation in the amount of training may be associated with the likelihood of force being used by officers or suspects in the first place, the probability that officers or suspects are injured given that force is used, and the magnitude of the injuries sustained. Until research is conducted on this and related aspects of training, however, such arguments will remain speculative, and law enforcement administrators may be left to adopt training methods without the benefit of objective and empirically based criteria.

Another fundamental problem is that there appears to be no experimental research on how best to insure law enforcement officers acquire and retain adequate skill levels in defense and control tactics. If appropriate skill levels are not acquired and retained, even well-intentioned officers may inadvertently place themselves, their fellow officers, suspects, or bystanders at unnecessary risk of injury or death.

The lack of empirical research on physical defense and control tactics training is surprising given that studies on use of force, whether based on official data, surveys of citizens, or observations of police-citizen encounters, show that when force is used by police or suspects it is almost always physical force, i.e. the use of hands, fists or feet only (see e.g. Bayley and Garofalo, 1989; Garner et al., 1995; Greenfeld et al., 1997; Pate and Fridell, 1993). Although the consequences of the use of deadly force are severe, cumulative effects of the much more frequent application of non-deadly force may be significant in terms of its impact on police-community relations, injury-related medical costs, and work time lost (see e.g. Jefferis et al., 1997; Kaminski and Jefferis, 1998; Kaminski and Sorensen, 1995, pp. 3-4). Research on this topic, therefore, is critical.

The purpose of this paper is to begin to fill the gap on research on police defense and control tactics. Survey responses from approximately 600 officers from a large West Coast municipal police department are analyzed to determine their opinions about the defense and control tactics training they received, their experiences in using the tactics during street encounters, and their interest in alternative techniques and training methods. In addition, multivariate analyses...
are conducted to determine whether and how opinions and experiences vary by respondent characteristics, such as officer age, sex, height, rank, victimization experience, and fitness level.

**Background**

Probably the first “training” provided to officers on arrest techniques and defensive tactics was the simple issuance of the truncheon. Also known as the “short billy club,” it was the standard weapon of the London Metropolitan Police, the world’s first organized police force (Clede and Parsons, 1987). Various types of suspect resistance, whether verbal or physical, were typically responded to with the officer’s truncheon, i.e. officers routinely clubbed individuals over the head. This practice continued with the inception of police forces in the USA in the mid-1800s.

Following the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, the methods of applying force by police came under greater scrutiny (President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967). Combined with efforts to enhance police-community relations and the increase of excessive force lawsuits against municipalities, a drive to further improve the manner in which police used force ensued (National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, 1969). More sophisticated impact weapons and more socially acceptable ways of employing them were developed (Finn, 1979; Robin, 1996; Steele, 1992). A movement toward empty-hand subject control and self-defense that emphasized the minimization of subject injury emerged in the 1970s (see e.g. Akido Training Police, 1970; Pines, 1970).

As might be expected, those who met the challenge of training officers to control physically resistive and combative individuals without injuring them were usually martial artists (Gruzanski, 1963; Parsons, 1976; Pines, 1970; Moynahan, 1962; Shomer, 1937). Jiu-jitsu, aikido-based and other martial art systems were often sold to administrators because they frequently, but not necessarily accurately, guaranteed that officers could be trained to control even the most violent subjects without injuring them (Anderson, 1994; Martin, 1997; Pines, 1970; Redenbach, 1998).

Demonstrations using sober, pain-compliant police personnel playing the role of “suspect” often made it appear that vendors could work magic. The methods seemed to be sound in the controlled environment of the police academy gym, and with no other information to base sound decisions, these vendors were often selected by administrators to train their officers. Those who created some of the methods frequently included officers who already worked for police departments, and they would be assigned to conduct training because of their “expertise” in the martial arts (Dossey et al., 1997; Parsons, 1976; Redenbach, 1998).

Many of the pioneers in the police-training field developed their methods into “systems”[3]. The systems soon became proprietary, with their originators having an intrinsic interest in the growth of their popularity. Administrators often selected these systems on their face, without consideration of objective
criteria of a particular system’s effectiveness or the time needed to train and maintain officer skill levels (Dossey et al., 1997; Parsons, 1976; Redenbach, 1998).

Perhaps most critical, many of the martial art-based systems failed to take known, human motor performance limitations into consideration, such as physical lag times, attention, and deterioration of fine motor skills under stress (Martin, 1997; Redenbach, 1998). Most often, the end result was abandonment of the training in field conditions. Officers would commonly revert back to whatever was their most dominant response to a given situation, such as using a flashlight or nightstick to club suspects over the head or simple brawling (Cox et al., 1987; Redenbach, 1998).

Another limitation of the traditional, martial arts-based systems, are their over-reliance on pain-compliance. Typically, officers are trained to place subjects into a preparatory control hold such as a joint lock, and if the suspect fails to comply, the officer applies pressure to the joint. The resulting pain results in an avoidance response by the subject who would then acquiesce (Martin, 1997). The most common problem with the pain-compliance philosophy is that many individuals the police detain and arrest are under the influence of drugs, alcohol or adrenaline and their ability to feel and react to pain may be impaired or absent (McLaughlin, 1992). Officers may be applying so much pressure to a joint-lock that actual tissue or bone damage results, but the subject may not feel it. Escalated application of force and increased injuries to subjects may frequently be the outcome (Hentoff, 1989; Serrano, 1990).

Given limited time and resources for training recruits and officers in most US police agencies, the current trend in defense and control tactics instruction is to look less toward traditional Asian martial arts for training models and more toward the disciplines of exercise physiology and sports psychology (Siddle, 1995). The deterioration of fine motor skills, the limited ability to remember multiple tasks, and diminished perceptive abilities under stressful conditions are now providing the framework for training methods. These newer systems tend to share similar characteristics:

- they teach as few procedures as possible to deal with the widest variety of situations. An example would be to teach a handcuffing method which remains basically unchanged, regardless of applying them to high risk or low risk subjects, and regardless of whether applied to persons in standing, kneeling or prone positions;
- they teach skills that do not exceed the limitations of human performance, such as reaction time and attention;
- they teach techniques that are based on gross motor skills, i.e. using large muscle groups, as fine motor skills are more difficult to learn, maintain, and are the first to deteriorate under stress; and
- training occurs in environments as similar as possible to those officers encounter in the field, rather than just in the training facility (Dossey et al., 1997; Martin, 1997; Redenbach, 1998).
For various reasons, however, many law enforcement agencies have failed to keep up with new developments in the field. Probably the most common reason is administrative apathy, as the administrator is busy administrating and has little time or interest in keeping up with recent developments in the physical training field. This leaves him to trust that the person he charges with that responsibility is staying current with new developments and research to ensure that maximum effectiveness is maintained. Unfortunately, this may or may not be the case (Dossey et al., 1997; Parsons, 1976; Redenbach, 1998).

Because line officers put their training to the “ultimate test,” surveying law enforcement officers regarding their experiences and opinions of training is important. The most important question to be answered is “does it work for him or her in the field?” Although it may work for the “master instructor,” does it work for most of the officers most of the time? The average line officer is the one using the training, and his or her feedback should not be ignored.

Questions such as whether or not officers use the methods taught are critical. If the training is not being used, it may be because it is counter-intuitive, out of context, or simply too complex. After applying the training in the field, the officer should report that it benefited him or her. If it does not, or officers simply fail to use specific techniques, additional training should be provided or the methods abandoned in favor of more appropriate ones.

Furthermore, analyses should be conducted to explore how officer satisfaction with training varies by age, experience, size, gender, and other factors. Size may be important, as large officers may tend to rely on brute strength to overcome resistance, whereas small officers may need to rely on more skillful means to subdue offenders. As officers age, their preferences for using particular methods may change.

Older officers, for example, may express a dislike for working close to the ground, such as applying handcuffs to a prone subject. It may be incumbent for trainers to offer alternatives, such as placing suspects on their knees for handcuffing or changing the prone handcuffing method to a simpler, less physically demanding one. Gender differences also may surface, as female officers may express a stronger desire for more or different self-defense training than their male counterparts.

If substantial numbers of officers report that certain tactics are difficult to learn, remember, or apply effectively in the field, it may be important to examine the current training to see how it might be simplified. It is important also to examine the responses by officers who report successes with the methods they actually use in the field, and to model training after that (Mckee, 1997). The information gleaned from surveying officers hopefully would lead to improvements in training, and ultimately to increased officer and public safety.

Data and method
Data for the analysis were obtained from a survey given to officers from a large West Coast police agency with approximately 1,300 sworn members[4]. The survey was administered over a two-week period in June of 1998. Each survey
was sequentially numbered, and distributed to team sergeants (supervisors) at staff meetings with instructions for them to give the surveys to their officers and return them within one week. After being pre-tested with a small number of officers for clarity issues and time requirements, the instrument was administered to approximately 800 subjects consisting of officers, sergeants and lieutenants working mostly uniformed patrol. An acceptable 75 per cent response rate was obtained ($N = 601$). About 75 per cent of the responding officers were working beat assignments, although officers working in special operations assignments such as narcotic and street crime units, special weapons and tactics teams, and horse-mounted officers, etc. were also included.

The survey consists of 65 questions (Appendix) designed to collect information about:

- officer characteristics (age, sex, fitness levels, length of service, victimization experience, etc.);
- the types of defense and control tactics training officers received;
- opinions about the effectiveness of various methods of defense and control;
- whether more or less training should be provided; and
- levels of interest in alternative defense and control methods.

The focus of the descriptive analysis is on opinions regarding the ease with which defense and control tactics can be learned, remembered and applied to resistive or assaultive subjects; whether academy-taught defense and control tactics training in general should increase, decrease, or remain the same; and whether officers think too little, too much or about the right amount of in-service training time is spent on specific methods, ranging from verbal tactics to firearms instruction. In addition, multinomial logistic regression models are estimated to determine whether and how certain responses vary by officer sex, age, height, rank, military experience, training academy attended, and victimization experience (previously assaulted on the job).

Findings

Table I provides descriptive information for the sample and includes the explanatory variables to be used in the regression analyses. Most respondents were male (93.3 per cent), about 36 years old, and five feet nine inches tall. About 60 per cent reported they exercised three or more times per week (high fitness officers), while 40 per cent indicated they exercised two times per week or less (low fitness officers). The majority of the respondents (85.5 per cent) were line officers and most indicated they attended an agency-sponsored training academy (56.7 per cent)[5]. Roughly 20 per cent reported being in the military, and 69 per cent indicated they had been a victim of a violent assault on the job[5].
Table II presents the distribution of officers’ responses regarding their opinions about arrest and control and defensive tactics training received during academy attendance and following graduation (in-service training). See the appendix for the exact wording of questions and original response categories (see also the notes at bottom of Table II).

As shown in Question 1, most officers agreed that arrest and control tactics are easy to learn (72.0 per cent), and over half indicated they are easy to remember (54.5 per cent). Less than a third, however, agreed that they are easy to apply to resistive subjects (31.4 per cent).

Substantially fewer officers felt unarmed defensive tactics are easy to learn, remember and apply (Question 2). Specifically, 58.6 per cent indicated these tactics are easy to learn, and 46.4 per cent indicated they are easy to remember. About a third (32.9 per cent) reported that unarmed defensive tactics are useful for self-defense, while just under one-fourth (23.9 per cent) reported that such tactics are easy to apply when assaulted.

When asked how effective current unarmed defensive tactics training is for use during encounters with resistive suspects (Question 3), 46.7 per cent reported the training to be very effective; 37.5 per cent and 15.9 per cent reported that they were a little or not at all effective, respectively. When asked how effective the training is for use during encounters with assaultive suspects (Question 4), only 37.6 per cent indicated the tactics were very effective, while 32.4 per cent and 30 per cent indicated they were a little or not at all effective, respectively.

### Table I.
Descriptive statistics for independent variables in the analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Code/Minimum-maximum</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0 Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Male</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>22-57</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>36.03</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>5.0-6.6</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>0 High</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Low</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>0 Sgt./Lt</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Officer</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>0 No</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Yes</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy</td>
<td>0 Other</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Agency sponsored</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaulted</td>
<td>0 No</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Yes</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- a The mean age is 36.2 for males and 33.9 for females
- b The mean height is 5ft 9in. for males and 5ft 5in. for females
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Regarding the adequacy of training for defense against multiple unarmed assailants (Question 5), more than half (54.5 per cent) felt that the training is not at all adequate, 28.1 per cent felt it was a little adequate, and only 17.4 per cent felt it is very adequate.
Responses to Question 6a show that nearly half of the respondents (47.1 per cent) felt that the current amount of time spent on arrest and control tactics training is adequate, and about a fourth reported that it should be increased (26.9 per cent). When asked about the amount of time spent on defensive tactics training (Question 6b), however, only 30.5 per cent felt that the amount of time spent training is adequate while almost half (47.6 per cent) thought the amount of training should increase. Interestingly, of the 69 per cent of the officers who reported ever being violently assaulted on the job (Question 7), 58.3 per cent felt the department had not adequately prepared them for the confrontation (Question 8).

Question 9 asked respondents to indicate whether they thought too little or too much in-service training time was spent on 14 different tactics, ranging from verbal techniques to the use of firearms. Relatively few officers thought too little time was spent on verbal tactics (25.1 per cent), locks and holds (25.5 per cent), baton strikes (26.5 per cent), or use of pepper spray (32.9 per cent). Substantially greater percentages of respondents thought too little time was spent on baton controls (59.4 per cent), firearms training (60.5 per cent), and pressure point controls (65.1 per cent). Even greater interest was expressed in defense against pepper spray (77.6 per cent), takedown techniques (79.4 per cent), gun retention (83.2 per cent), wrestling techniques (83.6 per cent), defense against multiple assailants (88.3 per cent), punching techniques (88.4 per cent), and kicking techniques (88.5 per cent).

Respondents were also asked whether they had ever studied self-defense methods outside that provided by the department, and if so, whether they ever used the methods in the field, and whether the methods assisted them in making arrests or in defending themselves from attack. These results are reported in Table III. A total of 51 per cent (307) of the officers indicated that they had studied one or more methods of self-defense on their own time (traditional or non-traditional martial arts, boxing or wrestling/grappling). Martial arts was the method most commonly studied (34.5 per cent), and nearly 75 per cent of those who trained in martial arts said they had used it in the field; 27 per cent indicated they had studied wrestling or grappling methods, with 90 per cent of these respondents indicating they had used them on the job. Of the respondents, 16 per cent reported they studied boxing, with 57 per cent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Trained in?</th>
<th>Ever used?</th>
<th>Assisted officer?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrestling/grappling</td>
<td>27.1 (158)</td>
<td>89.9 (142)</td>
<td>99.3 (140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td>16.2 (95)</td>
<td>56.8 (54)</td>
<td>100.0 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial arts</td>
<td>34.5 (203)</td>
<td>73.4 (146)</td>
<td>100.0 (143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditional martial arts</td>
<td>7.6 (43)</td>
<td>81.4 (35)</td>
<td>97.1 (34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: a Percentage and counts based on; all those who responded sequentially to each question; and answered affirmatively. Responses are not mutually exclusive b 51 per cent (307) has studied one or more methods
indicating they had used it in the field. Among those who reported having used any of the three fighting methods, all but two indicated the methods had assisted them in making arrests or in defending themselves from attack, suggesting that officer satisfaction with the self-studied methods are much higher (99.3-100 per cent) than the department-sponsored methods. The results suggest further that regardless of the method studied (wrestling, boxing, or martial arts), spending more time on defensive tactics training may increase effectiveness under field conditions (assuming officers who train privately spend more time training than officers restricting themselves to in-service training).

In summary, approximately half or more of the respondents reported that arrest and control and defensive tactics are easy to learn and remember, but substantially fewer officers thought defensive tactics are easy to learn. Importantly, more than half of the respondents reported that both kinds of tactics are difficult to actually use on resistive or assaultive suspects, indicating fairly high levels of dissatisfaction with the training methods or techniques learned. Further, nearly 60 per cent of the officers who reported being a victim of a violent line-of-duty assault sometime during their career felt that the training they received failed to adequately prepare them for the attack (note that this does not necessarily refer to the current training methods).

As might be expected, as levels of suspect resistance increase, officers’ perceptions of effectiveness decrease. For instance, 53.4 per cent of the respondents indicated that defensive tactics are not at all or only a little effective on resistive subjects, while 62.4 per cent indicated they were not at all or only a little effective against assaultive subjects. Nearly 85 per cent thought the defensive tactics training received was not at all or only a little adequate against multiple assailants.

Given the generally high levels of reported dissatisfaction, it is not surprising that nearly half the respondents thought that more time should be devoted to defensive tactics training, though just over one-fourth felt more time should be devoted to arrest and control tactics.

In terms of what is taught, there were high levels of interest (greater than 75 per cent) in in-service training in wrestling, takedowns, punching, kicking, defense against multiple assailants, defense against pepper spray, and gun retention techniques. There were moderate levels of interest in pressure point controls, baton controls, and firearms training (between 60 and 65 per cent), and relatively low levels of interest in verbal tactics, locks and holds, pepper spray, and baton strikes (between 25 and 33 per cent).

Finally, among officers who studied wrestling, boxing, or martial arts in their own time, virtually 100 per cent rated these methods as being helpful in making arrests or in defending themselves from attack, suggesting that spending more time on defensive tactics training may increase effectiveness.
Regression analysis

We are unaware of any research examining how levels of satisfaction with defense and control tactics and training vary with officer characteristics. It is conceivable, however, that male officers, officers who are more physically fit, and larger officers may have differing opinions about the utility of the training and tactics than their respective counterparts. Certain tactics, for instance, may require some minimal level of upper-body strength for effective execution. To the degree that upper-body strength or other factors vary with gender, age, fitness levels, and physical size, the propensity to use these tactics in the field may be associated with these characteristics. Similarly, officers with more experience on the job may prefer different tactics than less experienced officers, and officers who have been seriously assaulted may have different opinions than unassaulted officers.

To determine whether opinions regarding the utility of defense and control tactics training vary by officer characteristics, we estimate several multinomial logistic regression models[6]. Independent variables consist of officer sex, age, height[7], fitness level, rank, military experience, training academy attended, and whether or not the officer reported ever being violently assaulted on the job.

For the multivariate analysis, we are interested primarily in officers’ opinions regarding the utility of various tactics for use with resistive and combative subjects and whether or not officers think defensive tactics training time should be increased. Thus we exclude as outcome variables responses to questions about how easy defense and control tactics are to learn and remember.

The results of the regression models are presented in Table IV. To conserve space only odds ratios and significance levels are reported. The outcome variable in Model 1 is based on whether respondents think arrest and control tactics are easy to apply to resistive subjects. The only significant variable in Model 1 is officer age ($b = 1.04, p = 0.016$), which suggests that older officers are more likely than younger officers to disagree (than to agree) that arrest and control tactics are easy to apply to resistive subjects, controlling for the other variables in the model. The model chi-square statistic, however, indicates that the model fits no better than a “naïve” or constants only model ($X^2 = 21.4, p = 0.16$). We conclude, therefore, that in this model age does not contribute to our understanding of opinions about the ease of applying arrest and control tactics to resistive subjects (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989).

The dependent variable in Model 2 is based on whether respondents think defensive tactics are easy to apply to assaultive subjects. The primary interest in this model is Contrast II (Category 3 vs Category 1), which suggests that older officers are significantly more likely than younger officers to disagree (than to agree) that defensive tactics are easy to apply to assaultive subjects ($b = 1.08, p = 0.000$), while taller officers are significantly less likely to agree (than to disagree) that this is the case ($b = 0.30, p = 0.033$), controlling for the other
Table IV. Multinomial logistic regression models of officer opinions about: departmental arrest and control; and defensive tactics training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast I: Category 2 vs Category 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (0 = female; 1 = male)</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.04*</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.04*</td>
<td>1.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness (0 = high; 1 = low)</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.94***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank (0 = sgt/lt; 1 = po)</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military (0 = no; 1 = yes)</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy (0 = other; 1 = agency)</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.75*</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaulted (0 = no; 1 = yes)</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (log odds)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Contrast II: Category 3 vs Category 1 | | | | | |
| Sex (0 = female; 1 = male) | 1.29 | 0.47 | 0.78 | 0.61 | 1.41 | 2.15 |
| Age | 1.04* | 1.08*** | 1.05** | 1.02 | 1.04* | 1.10*** |
| Height | 0.89 | 0.30*** | 0.48 | 0.77 | 0.59 | 1.22 |
| Fitness (0 = high; 1 = low) | 0.93 | 0.99 | 0.80 | 0.85 | 1.32 | 1.48 |
| Rank (0 = sgt/lt; 1 = po) | 0.82 | 0.87 | 1.04 | 2.85* | 2.38* | 2.93*** |
| Military (0 = no; 1 = yes) | 0.69 | 0.70 | 0.82 | 1.25 | 1.19 | 0.64 |
| Academy (0 = other; 1 = agency) | 0.72 | 0.84 | 0.85 | 0.56* | 0.64* | 1.05 |
| Assaulted (0 = no; 1 = yes) | 1.19 | 1.33 | 1.99** | 3.90*** | 1.68* | 1.24 |
| Constant (log odds) | -0.00 | 0.05 | 2.71 | -1.61 | 0.00 | -7.34 |

\[ X^2 = 21.4 \quad X^2 = 30.2 \quad X^2 = 26.6 \quad X^2 = 45.3 \quad X^2 = 39.8 \quad X^2 = 55.1 \]
\[ p = 0.1649 \quad p = 0.0000 \quad p = 0.0023 \quad p = 0.0001 \quad p = 0.0008 \quad p = 0.0027 \]

Y category coding

| Model 1: Arrest and control tactics are easy to apply to resistive subjects | (Agree, No opinion, Disagree) |
| Model 2: Unarmed defensive tactics are easy to apply to assaultive subjects | (Agree, No opinion, Disagree) |
| Model 3: Unarmed defensive tactics are useful for self-defense | (Agree, No opinion, Disagree) |
| Model 4: How effective unarmed defensive tactics with resistive subjects? | (Very, A little, Not at all) |
| Model 5: How effective unarmed defensive tactics with assaultive subjects? | (Very, A little, Not at all) |
| Model 6: Defensive tactics training should increase, decrease, or keep same? | (Increase, Keep same, Decrease) |

Notes: * = Significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \); ** = Significant at \( p \leq 0.01 \); *** Significant at \( p \leq 0.001 \)
variables in the model. In other words, older officers are more likely than younger officers, and shorter officers are more likely than taller officers to question the utility of defensive tactics for assault situations.

Similar to the results presented in Model 2, Model 3 shows that older officers are more likely than younger officers to disagree (rather than agree) that defensive tactics are useful for self-defense (\(b = 1.05, p = 0.007\)), although officer height fails to achieve statistical significance in this model. Unlike in Model 2, however, the odds of disagreeing (rather than agreeing) double when officers report having been violently assaulted on the job (\(b = 1.99, p = 0.006\)).

In Model 4, Contrast II, we see that lower-ranked officers are significantly more likely than higher-ranked officers to believe that defensive tactics are not at all effective (versus being very effective) with resistive subjects (\(b = 2.85, p = 0.032\)). Compared to unassaulted officers, violently assaulted officers also are significantly more likely to believe defensive tactics are not at all effective (\(b = 3.99, p = 0.001\)). Compared to officers who attended a non-agency-sponsored academy, however, officers who attended an agency-sponsored academy are less likely to believe defensive tactics are not at all effective with resistive subjects (\(b = 0.56, p = 0.034\)).

Under Contrast I, Model 4 indicates that officers who attended an agency-sponsored academy are less likely than their respective counterparts to report that defensive tactics are only a little effective rather than being very effective when used on resistive subjects, but the effect is only borderline significant (\(b = 0.70, p = 0.057\)). Older officers, however, are significantly more likely than younger officers to indicate defensive tactics are only a little effective rather than very effective against resistive subjects (\(b = 1.04, p = 0.022\)).

Some similar results are obtained when respondents are asked about the effectiveness of defensive tactics with assaultive subjects (Model 5). As in Model 4, under Contrast II lower-ranked officers (\(b = 2.38, p = 0.022\)) and previously assaulted officers (\(b = 1.68, p = 0.053\)) are more likely than their respective counterparts to report defensive tactics are not at all effective rather than being very effective against assaultive subjects, while those who attended an agency-sponsored academy are less likely than their counterparts to report this (\(b = 0.64, p = 0.052\)). Unlike in Model 4, however, age is statistically significant in Model 5, with older officers more likely than younger officers to report that defensive tactics are not at all effective (\(b = 1.04, p = 0.018\)).

As in Model 4 under Contrast I, age is statistically significant in Model 5 (\(b = 1.04, p = 0.038\)), but unlike in Model 4 the variables ACADEMY and ASSAULTED are statistically insignificant in Model 5. However, officers who reported exercising three or more times per week (high fitness officers) are more likely than low fitness officers (those who exercise two times or less per week) to report defensive tactics as being only a little effective rather than being very effective against assaultive subjects (\(b = 1.84, p = 0.008\)).

Finally, under Contrasts I and II in Model 6 older officers are significantly more likely than younger officers to indicate that the number of hours of defensive tactics training should remain the same (\(b = 1.04, p = 0.015\)) or
decrease ($b = 1.10, p = 0.000$), rather than increase. Lower-ranked officers are significantly more likely than higher-ranked officers to indicate that the number of training hours should decrease ($b = 2.93, p = 0.006$), while officers attending an agency-sponsored academy ($b = 0.62, p = 0.030$) are less likely than their respective counterparts to favor keeping the amount of training the same. Previously assaulted officers also are more likely than unassaulted officers to favor an increase in the amount of training, but the effect only approaches statistical significance ($b = 0.67, p = 0.078$).

In summary, there is consistent evidence that older officers hold less favorable opinions regarding the utility of arrest and control and defensive tactics in the department under study. There is also evidence that line officers (vs sergeants and lieutenants) and officers who have been victims of violent assaults hold less favorable opinions of the methods. Officers who attended an agency-sponsored academy, however, are somewhat less critical of the defensive tactics training received, but the results are less consistent. There is little support for a relationship between officer height and fitness levels and satisfaction with the training, in that significant effects were observed in only one model for each variable. Finally, no statistically significant differences were observed for officer sex or military experience.

**Discussion**

The descriptive analysis reported in Table II found that although substantial percentages of the respondents reported that defense and control tactics are easy to learn and remember, over half of the respondents indicated that these tactics are difficult to use on resistive or assaultive suspects. Further, more than half reported that the defensive tactics are not at all or only a little effective on resistive subjects, while over 60 per cent indicated they were not at all or only a little effective against assaultive subjects. Nearly 60 per cent of officers experiencing a violent line-of-duty assault reported that the training they received failed to adequately prepare them for the attack, and nearly half the total sample felt that more time should be devoted to defensive tactics training. Only about a fourth of the respondents felt additional time should be devoted to arrest and control tactics.

Such high levels of dissatisfaction suggest that many officers’ experiences with the tactics in the field were less than satisfactory or that a lack of confidence in the tactics precluded their use in the first place. Thus, it might behoove police administrators and trainers to re-examine academy and in-service training methods and consider ways to improve them, at least in those agencies experiencing similar levels of dissatisfaction among their officers.

The survey responses provide some hints as to how the in-service training might be improved. Officers expressed:

- high levels of interest in in-service training in wrestling, takedowns, punching, kicking, defense against multiple assailants, defense against pepper spray, and gun retention techniques;
• moderate levels of interest in pressure point controls, baton controls, and firearms training; and
• relatively little interest in verbal tactics, locks and holds, training with pepper spray, and baton strikes.

Interestingly, more than half (51 per cent) of the respondents indicated they had studied wrestling, boxing, or martial arts outside of the department, and virtually all reported that these methods were helpful during arrest or self-defense situations. Assuming officers spend more time in private training than in in-service training, the above finding suggests that agencies might want to increase training time to improve technique effectiveness. It is possible, however, that these officers’ responses are overly optimistic because they self-selected into their training. Nevertheless, that such a large proportion of the respondents sought instruction outside the department in methods that included techniques proscribed by the agency’s official defensive tactics curriculum, (i.e. certain techniques from martial arts, boxing, and scholastic wrestling) and used them in the field anyway suggests that some current training methods and policies may be unrealistic. It might be worthwhile investigating whether there is a need for such tactics in the field, and if so, incorporate them into the training to insure they are being applied appropriately. Furthermore, if respondents are applying the field techniques learned outside of the official curriculum, than additional training in the legal, constitutional, and decision-making aspects of force may be critical.

To explore how responses to selected questions vary by officer characteristics, a series of six regression models was estimated (Table IV). The most consistent finding across the models is that age appears to be associated with less favorable opinions about defense and control tactics training. Specifically, older officers are significantly more likely than younger officers to disagree that arrest and control and defensive tactics are easy to apply to resistive or assaultive subjects (Models 1 and 2), they are more likely to disagree that they are useful for self-defense (Model 3), they are more likely to indicate that defensive tactics are only a little effective against resistive subjects (Model 4), they are more likely to indicate that defensive tactics are only a little or not at all effective against assaultive subjects (Model 5), and they are more likely than younger officers to indicate that the number of hours of defensive tactics should be reduced or kept the same rather than being increased (Model 6)[8].

Although additional research is needed to determine why older officers (or officers with more experience) appear to find little use for the arrest and control and defensive tactics training provided by the department, we can speculate. It might be, for example, that over the years more experienced officers developed their own physical and/or verbal techniques for handling resistive and potentially violent encounters, and therefore find the “official” methods less appealing. Perhaps older officers are somewhat “less active” in the field than younger officers and so rarely need to use the techniques they learned at the
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academy or during in-service training. Whatever the reasons are for the observed differences, the findings suggest that older or more experienced officers have somewhat different training needs than younger officers. Further probing could inform trainers as to what these needs are.

There is also substantial support for an association between assault experience and officer satisfaction with defensive tactics training. Assaulted officers were less likely than unassaulted officers to agree that defensive tactics are useful for self-defense, and more likely to report that they are ineffective for dealing with resistive or assaultive subjects (Models 3-5). This finding is important in that the real test of the training provided to officers is realized under actual field conditions, such as when officers face resistive and assaultive subjects. If a substantial proportion of officers find the methods do not work on the street, instructors need to determine whether additional training time, alternative tactics, or different instructional methods (or all three) are needed for appropriate skill acquisition and retention and effective field application. (Assaulted officers were more likely than unassaulted officers to express interest in additional hours of defensive tactics training, but the difference was not quite statistically significant.) In any case, police administrators and trainers should consider obtaining periodic feedback from line officers regarding their experiences with the tactics learned.

Another interesting finding is that patrol officers were more critical of the defensive tactics training received than sergeants and lieutenants (Models 4-6). Perhaps higher-ranking officers have experienced more successes with the tactics taught. An alternative view is that higher-ranking officers may be more supportive of the administration, and hence tend to respond to the survey along “official” lines. Again, additional probing is needed to discover the reasons for the observed relationship.

Although there is less consistent support for the remaining variables, some models suggest that officers who attended an agency-sponsored academy also are less critical of the defensive tactics training received (Models 4 and 5). This may be because officers attending other training programs might have been exposed to alternative tactics and/or instructional methods, which they may find preferable to the in-service training they receive in their current agency. In addition, in Model 2 taller officers were less critical of the training than shorter officers, but no statistically significant relationships were observed in the remaining five models. Thus the overall evidence suggests that officer height is unrelated to opinions. An additional factor that should be taken into account, though, in exploring this relationship is officer weight. Height and weight, for example, might be combined to calculate a body mass index and entered into the model, which could lead to different observed relationships.

A significant association was observed between officer fitness level and defensive tactics training in only one model (Model 5). Although this result provides little support for an association, better measures of fitness might be obtained and examined. For instance, we asked officers how many times per
week they exercised, but we did not ask them the duration of their workout sessions. Thus it is premature to conclude that a relationship between fitness levels and opinions about training do not exist.

Interestingly, no statistically significant effects were observed for officer sex. Given the relative differences in upper-body strength between males and females generally, we expected female officers to express different opinions than male officers regarding defensive tactics training. Perhaps the methods taught in the agency under study rely less on upper-body strength than some other training methods, which could account for the observed findings. We cannot answer this definitively, though, and future research on this issue should explore this possibility.

It was thought that combat training, as supplied by the military, might impact officers’ opinions regarding the defense and control tactics training received. However, no statistically significant relationships were observed between military experience and any of the six outcome variables.

When respondents were asked whether the number of hours of defensive tactics training should increase, decrease or remain the same, older officers were significantly more likely than their respective counterparts to indicate that the amount of training should decrease or remain the same, while lower-ranked officers were more likely than higher-ranked officers to indicate a desire for a reduction in the amount of training time. Officers attending a non-agency-sponsored academy, though, were somewhat more likely than officers attending an agency-sponsored academy to favor an increase in training.

Older officers and lower-ranked officers may be reacting in part to recent increases in the amount of in-service training (from approximately 5 to 30 hours per year). It is also conceivable that lower-ranked officers may be reacting to real or perceived deficiencies in the training itself, while higher ranked officers tend to be more favorable because they are more safety and liability conscious and organizationally minded. We suspect also that older officers may feel the training does not meet their needs on the street based on their experience, and that the same training repeated year after year may become tedious. Finally, officers exposed to alternative training methods in non-agency-sponsored facilities may be less satisfied with the training methods currently being taught in their department, and therefore they are less likely than officers who attended an agency-sponsored academy to favor an increase in defensive tactics training. Other surveys on this topic should include open-ended questions as follow ups so that the reasons for the observed differences in levels of satisfaction with training can be determined.

Regarding the findings discussed above, we caution readers that the observed results are specific to the department under study and therefore may not be generalizable to other agencies or training systems. Although similar findings might be obtained if the survey were administered to officers in other agencies employing the same training methods, it is highly likely that different
results would be obtained in departments employing different training systems. Thus additional research in other agencies is needed to know to what extent the findings presented here are generalizable.

Conclusion
Law enforcement agencies understandably devote substantial resources on training officers to use force within legal and administrative guidelines. Unfortunately, when it comes to physical skills training, police administrators may lack objective information as to whether their officers are being taught the most efficient methods for safely subduing resistive and combative suspects. If certain techniques or training methods are not very effective, officers, suspects and innocent bystanders may be at risk for unnecessary injury.

Empirical research is especially needed in light of the potential biases that are inherent in evaluating the various systems now available to administrators for training officers. The biases of ego, time investment, peer pressure, and personal profit motives on the part of trainers and vendors can only be set aside through empirical research. This will allow law enforcement administrators to make more informed choices, even if the only other source of information they have is the department instructor who may be wedded to the particular system he or she teaches (Redenbach, 1998).

Continual and substantial improvements have no doubt been made in instructional methods and the selection of defense and control tactics over the last several decades. Nevertheless, well-designed research and evaluation efforts can help determine which tactics and training methods will produce the desired results in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. How much initial training should be provided to recruits, how frequently in-service training should occur, what level of technique complexity is optimal, and what specific techniques work best for defense and control are issues empirical research could address.

Notes
1. Arrest and control tactics consist of physical techniques enabling officers to control subjects so they may be taken into custody, such as handcuffing and controlling subjects offering resistance (e.g. struggling, escape attempts). Defensive tactics consist of physical techniques enabling officers to defend themselves from attack, e.g. defenses against punches, kicks, tackles, firearm retention, knife defense, etc.
2. Only 20 of the departments reported the actual number of hours, while 46 reported the amount of defensive tactics training as a fraction of the total amount of academy training provided. Among these agencies, defensive tactics instruction ranged from a low of 2 per cent of the total to a high of 20 per cent, with a mean of 8.5 per cent (Strawbridge and Strawbridge, 1990).
3. Some – but not all – of the systems of police defense and control tactics instruction available to law enforcement in the USA are provided by ArrCon, the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), Koga, Krav Maga, the LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department), Lindell, Modern Warrior, Monadnock, PPCT, and Williams Defense Systems.
4. The arrest and control and defensive tactics training has been provided to the department solely by a trainer who was one of the first to professionalize this area of police training in the 1970s. The agency has used this vendor for such training for over 25 years. The agency
did not track injuries to either officers or suspects incurred while making arrests and only tracked the number of sustained internal affairs complaints. This did not provide information regarding the effectiveness of the training. Approximately two years ago, the agency increased the frequency of the training, providing approximately 30 hours per year. This resulted in complaints by personnel, and the head of the affected subdivision directed that a survey be conducted in order to investigate. Another characteristic of the agency is that its training personnel did not belong to related professional training organizations or routinely evaluate other available methods. In fact, the training personnel were only aware of one other training system and assumed the system currently used was superior. The vendor required attendance to the same blocks of instruction more than once to acquire “instructor” status. Multiple levels or “ranks” of instructors status can also be earned through repeating attendance of the same courses, along with testing, which normally required a testing fee. This system very much resembles a traditional martial arts school. This training system calls on officers to learn three, felony prone handcuffing techniques, two kneeling techniques, two standing techniques, two different pat searches (Terry frisks). It is based primarily on the traditional Japanese martial art of aikido, and does not teach punching, kicking or similar defensive tactics measures. The emphasis is on the mastery of fine motor skills, normally applied to wrist locks. Almost all of the techniques are heavily reliant on pain-compliance. Officers are also taught to search suspects before handcuffing them, which is contrary to recommendations of most trainers.

5. The agency has had its own training academy since about 1994, and prior to that officers were sent to a local regional academy. Thus an “agency-sponsored academy” refers to training at either of these facilities. Other training facilities include other law enforcement agencies, an academy at a junior college, another regional training academy, or a federal training facility.

6. When dependent variables are categorical in nature, logistic regressions is an appropriate method of analysis. When the outcome consists of more than two categories and is unordered (i.e. nominal), multinomial logistic regression may be used, and when the outcome is ordinal, ordered logistic regression is more appropriate, assuming the parallel slopes assumption is met. Unfortunately, most of the models for which the ordered logistic regression model was applicable failed to meet this assumption. Multinomial logistic regression is therefore used for all models (see Long, 1997).

7. We decided not to ask respondents their weight because of a concern that officers may feel they could be too easily identified, and thus might fail to fill out the survey.

8. Note that these associations change little if we substitute length of service for age, as the two are highly correlated.

References and further reading

Akido Training Police (1970), BlackBelt, 20 April.


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Appendix. Selected questions from Defense and Control Tactics Survey

1. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements below. Possible responses are:

   Agreed strongly  Agree a little  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree a little  Disagree strongly

In general, the arrest and control methods the Department teaches are:

   1  2  3  4  5
a. easy to learn [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
b. easy to remember [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
c. easy to apply to resistive subjects [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

In general, the unarmed defensive tactics taught at the Department are:

   1  2  3  4  5
a. easy to learn [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
b. easy to remember [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
c. useful for self defense against unarmed assaults [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
d. easy to apply to assaultive subjects [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

3. In general, how effective have you found the current unarmed defensive tactics training in encounters with resistive suspects?

   1  2  3  4  5
[ ] Not at all [ ] Somewhat [ ] Moderately [ ] Very [ ] Extremely

4. In general, how effective have you found the current unarmed defensive tactics training in encounters with violently assaultive suspects?

   1  2  3  4  5
[ ] Not at all [ ] Somewhat [ ] Moderately [ ] Very [ ] Extremely

5. In general, how adequate do you feel the training provided by the Department is for defense against multiple, unarmed assailants?

   1  2  3  4  5
[ ] Not at all [ ] Somewhat [ ] Moderately [ ] Very [ ] Extremely

6a. Should the number of hours spent on arrest and control training increase, decrease, or remain the same?

   1 Increase [ ] 2 Decrease [ ] 3 Remain the same [ ]

6b. Should the number of hours of academy unarmed defensive tactics training increase, decrease, or remain the same?

   [ ] Should increase [ ] Should decrease [ ] Should remain the same

7. If you have been subjected to a violent assault in the field, do you think the training provided by the Department adequately prepared you for it? (Check No. 4 if you have not been violently assaulted.)

   1 Yes [ ] 2 No [ ] 3 Not sure [ ] 4 N/A (never violently assaulted)
8. During in-service training do you think *too little* or *too much* time is spent on:

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a: verbal tactics (e.g. verbal judo)?

b: joint locks and holds (wrist locks, arm bars, etc.)?

c: pressure point controls?

d: punching techniques?

e: kicking techniques?

f: throwing/takedowns (judo throws, sweeps, etc.)?

g: ground wrestling?

h: baton striking techniques?

i: baton-assisted controls?

j: pepper spray?

k: defense against pepper spray?

l: gun retention techniques?

m: multiple-assailant defenses?

n: firearms training?

o: simulation training (Red Man, Simunitions, etc.)?

p: other?

27. Outside of the Department, have you ever trained in scholastic or collegiate wrestling/grappling?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  if NO, skip to question xxx

28. Have you ever applied this training or experience in the field as a peace officer?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

29. If yes, did it assist in effecting the arrest/defending yourself?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

30. Outside of the Department, have you ever trained in boxing?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  If NO, skip to question xxx

31. Have you ever applied this training or experience in the field as a peace officer?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  If NO, skip to question xxx

32. If yes, did it assist in effecting the arrest/defending yourself?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

33. Outside of the Department, have you ever trained in Asian martial arts?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  If NO, skip to question xxx

34. Have you ever applied this training or experience in the field as a peace officer?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

35. If yes, did it assist in effecting the arrest/defending yourself?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

36. Outside of the Department, have you ever trained in other non-traditional martial arts, such as Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (Gracie, Macado), other grappling or Krav Maga?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  If NO, skip to question xxx

37. Have you ever applied this training or experience in the field as a peace officer?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

38. If yes, did it assist in effecting the arrest/defending yourself?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

41. How often do you exercise?

[ ] Hardly ever

[ ] A few times a month

[ ] 1 or 2 times a week

[ ] 3 or 4 times a week

[ ] 5 or 6 times a week

[ ] Every day