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Shock value

A comparative analysis of news reports and official police records on TASER deployments

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper sets out to encompass a comparative analysis of news reports and official police records of TASER deployments from 2002 to 2005.

Design/methodology/approach – The methodology involves a content analysis of all *LexisNexis* and *New York Times* articles involving police use of the TASER during the study period (n = 353). Regional (*New York Times*) and national (*LexisNexis*) news reports describing police use of the TASER are compared with police reports of all TASER deployments by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) during the same timeframe (n = 375).

Findings – Descriptive statistics and logistic regression are used to compare the data sources with respect to: the circumstances in which the weapon is deployed; the characteristics of the suspects involved in the TASER incidents; and the significant predictors of continued suspect resistance and repeated use of the TASER by an officer.

Research limitations/implications – The paper examines official police records on TASER deployments from one police agency. This limits the ability to generalize the research findings to other police agencies that have adopted different practices and policies regulating the deployment of CEDs. Additionally, the content analysis includes only articles in the mainstream print media.

Practical implications – The paper concludes with a discussion about some myths associated with news reports on police use of the TASER, and their potential impact on both public perception and police practices.

Originality/value – To date, research has not systematically compared media representations of the TASER with official reports on police deployments of the weapon. That is the focus of this paper.

Keywords Policing, Electronically operated devices, Social problems, Law enforcement, Legal process, United States of America

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Introduction

The use of conducted energy devices (CEDs) to incapacitate violent or combative suspects is becoming a more common police practice[1]. Despite the adoption of the TASER by 9,800 law enforcement agencies in the USA, few studies have examined the

typical circumstances in which the device is used and the factors associated with its effectiveness (White and Ready, 2007; Seattle Police Department, 2002; Meyer and Greg, 1992). Research on the use, effectiveness and physiological impact of the TASER can be a valuable source of information for policymakers and police administrators. However, empirical studies may not ultimately decide the prevailing public attitudes about the acceptability of this new technology. The news media can be an equally powerful force in shaping opinions about the appropriateness of police practices and technology. In this regard, recent images in the news media have raised questions about the acceptability and potentially harmful physiological effects of the TASER. In 2004, Amnesty International released a widely publicized report describing more than 70 fatalities that occurred after an officer used the TASER on a suspect. The document recommended a moratorium on police use of CEDs until more conclusive research can be conducted. In response to growing concern, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF, 2005) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP, 2005) have issued guidelines for the use of CEDs. Additionally, the federal government is currently supporting a number of studies on the weapon's use and effectiveness, as well as the potential for injury and death.

Today, both favorable and unfavorable media images of police practices compete for public attention and serve as the backdrop against which the TASER is being appraised by the public and government officials (Lovell, 2003). This ongoing discourse has occurred in the public domain and has been widely publicized. News reports detailing incidents in which police officers used the weapon against children, the elderly, and public figures have made national headlines. Conflicting perspectives have been represented by the media, but news reports seldom discuss information that is not provided by CED manufacturers and police agencies, on the one hand, or civil rights groups on the other. Moreover, a substantial body of literature demonstrates that media coverage of issues relating to crime and criminal justice is often unrealistic or inaccurate, particularly with regard to the police, and that this coverage may distort public perception (Manning, 1977, 1997; Lawrence, 2000; Ian Ross, 2000). In response to intense media scrutiny of crime control efforts, police agencies sometimes modify or reconsider their practices, thus creating a reflexive feedback loop (Manning, 2001; Lovell, 2003). For example, in Memphis, TN in 1988 the media scrutinized police actions in a case where a mentally ill suspect was shot and killed. In response to mounting pressure, the police department created a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), comprised of officers who received 40 hours of mandatory training on responding appropriately to the mentally ill. More recently, in November 2006, heavy media coverage followed the shooting of Sean Bell by New York City police officers. The NYPD reacted by commissioning the RAND Corporation to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of their use of force policies and procedures.

Because of the publicity surrounding the TASER and the media's potential to influence police policy, research on the role of the media in representing the TASER and in shaping police practice is warranted. To date, research has not systematically compared media representations of the TASER to official reports on police deployments of the weapon.

This study encompasses a comparative analysis of news reports and official police records of TASER deployments from 2002 to 2005. Specifically, the methodology involves a content analysis of all *LexisNexis* and *New York Times* articles involving

police use of the TASER during the study period (n = 353). Regional (*New York Times*) and national (*LexisNexis*) news reports describing police use of the TASER are compared to police reports of all TASER deployments by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) during the same timeframe (n = 375). Descriptive statistics and logistic regression are used to compare the data sources with respect to:

- the circumstances in which the weapon is typically deployed;
- the characteristics of the suspects involved in the TASER incidents; and
- the significant predictors of continued suspect resistance and repeated use of the TASER by an officer.

The paper concludes with a discussion about some myths associated with news reports on police use of the TASER and the implications for their impact on both public perception and police policy and practice.

Police use of force and the emergence of the TASER

Police officers have the legal authority to use force in various situations, such as when they seek to protect themselves, make an arrest, overcome resistance, or gain control of a dangerous situation (Walker and Katz, 2002). Although research shows that police use of physical force is relatively rare[2], Bittner (1970) and other policing scholars contend that the discretion to use force is a defining function of the police. It shapes police-community relations and influences the behavior of both citizens and police during even routine encounters. The application of physical force can have potentially devastating consequences, not only for the suspect and the officer, but also for police agency, the community and their relationship (Fyfe, 1988; Geller and Scott, 1992). The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) concluded that the police were an activating cause of many of the riots that occurred during the 1960s. More recently, civil disorder and riots followed the shooting of an unarmed suspect by police in Cincinnati (2001), and police-community relations in New York City were severely strained by the Abner Louima and Amadou Diallo incidents in the late 1990s[3]. The acquittal of the officers involved in the Rodney King incident in 1991 sparked five days of rioting, taking more than 40 lives and costing more than one billion dollars in property damage.

Because of the potentially harmful consequences that may result from the use of force, police agencies have sought to expand the alternatives to the firearm. While efforts to develop less lethal weapons date back to the 1920s, when chemical munitions became available for civilian purposes, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice made this issue central to the national policing agenda in 1965 when it recommended the development of less lethal alternatives. Subsequently, two widely adopted less lethal weapons include various forms of chemical spray (i.e. mace, pepper spray and oleoresin capsicum) and, more recently, conducted energy devices (CEDs).

TASER is an acronym for Thomas A. Swift Electric Rifle. The Advanced M26 TASER and the X26 model introduced by TASER International in 1999 and 2003, respectively, are "new generation" CEDs that have proliferated. Both devices eject two small probes that deliver a 50,000 volt shock over a five-second cycle. According to TASER International (www.taser.com/products/law/Pages/TASERX26.aspx):

> The TASER uses a replaceable cartridge containing compressed nitrogen to deploy two small probes that are attached to the weapon by insulated conductive wires with a maximum length of 35 feet (10.6 meters). The weapon transmits electrical pulses along the wires and into the body affecting the sensory and motor functions of the peripheral nervous system. The energy can penetrate up to two cumulative inches of clothing, or one inch per probe.

While the technology has the capacity to cause acute discomfort, it is not designed as a pain compliance weapon, but rather as a method of incapacitating the suspect using an electrical charge that overrides the central nervous system, resulting in the temporary loss of neuromuscular control. The short-term incapacitation of the subject provides the officer a brief window of time in which to gain compliance, control the individual, or apply handcuffs.

As adoption of the TASER becomes more common, researchers and police officials have begun to question the appropriate conditions for using the device, its effectiveness, and the risk of serious injury. In terms of its appropriate use, most departments train police officers using a "continuum of force" that guides decision-making based on the amount of danger and resistance present during a citizen encounter. The US Government Accountability Office (2005) found little consistency among police agencies regarding the appropriate conditions for using the device. For example, the Phoenix and San Jose Police Departments reported allowing use of the TASER when a suspect actively resists arrest, but they did not require that the suspect assault the officer. The Orange County Sheriff's Department reported permitting use of the device when a suspect passively resists the commands of an officer. Like many police agencies, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) changed their policy as use of the device became more widespread. The LVMPD currently allows officers to use the weapon when they encounter resistance while making an arrest, and also as a form of self defense in response to aggressive or potentially lethal resistance (Sousa *et al.*, 2007). In response to growing public concern about the appropriate use of CEDs, both the IACP (2005) and PERF (2005) have issued guidelines for their deployment. Both organizations recommend that CEDs be used exclusively against individuals who are actively resisting or exhibiting aggression, and they should generally not be used against pregnant women, children, and visibly frail persons[4].

News media coverage of TASER-related incidents suggests that the device is not always effective, although only a small number of studies have examined the "success rate" of the device in certain jurisdictions. The Madison Police Department found that the device performed effectively during 77 percent of all deployments from July 2003 through January 2005. White and Ready (2007) examined all TASER incidents from 2002-2004 ($n = 243$) in one police department and reported that the weapon stopped the suspects' resistance in 86 percent of cases. Field report analyses produced by TASER International (2002) and several police agencies have placed the TASER's effectiveness at similar levels, ranging from 83 to 94 percent[5]. Researchers have not yet systematically identified the factors that are associated with effective deployments.

Amnesty International (2004) provided a detailed account of 74 individuals in the USA and Canada who died after being subjected to the TASER[6]. The report found that many of the suspects had a preexisting heart ailment and/or ingested drugs such as methamphetamines before the incident. The medical research has not established a causal link between the TASER and serious injury or death, but the device has been

found to be a contributing factor by coroners in several cases noted in the report. A number of studies have examined the health effects of CEDs (Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Human Effects Center of Excellence, 2005; Ho *et al.*, 2006; McDonald *et al.*, 2005). Findings suggest that the TASER does not cause ventricular fibrillation when used for short intervals on healthy adults. Jauchem *et al.* (2005) studied the impact of repeated use of a CED on pigs in a laboratory setting. While notable changes occurred in certain physiological characteristics, the authors concluded that:

> [...] it is doubtful that these short-term elevations would have any serious health consequences in a healthy individual.

Additionally, the Canadian Police Research Centre (2005, p. ii) conducted an exhaustive review of the existing research, concluding that:

> [... definitive research or evidence does not exist that implicates a causal relationship between the use of CEDs and death.

Existing research has not yet evaluated the effects of the device on vulnerable or unhealthy human populations. Also, studies have yet to examine the predictors of fatalities and unsuccessful outcomes based on actual police deployments of the TASER using official reports.

Media, police, and police practices

Most citizens have little or no contact with the police and, to a large extent, their perceptions and beliefs regarding crime and criminal justice are shaped by the print media, television and films (Gaines *et al.*, 2001). Unfortunately, a substantial body of literature indicates that the news media's portrayal of crime and criminal justice is often inaccurate (Hallett, 2007; Chermak, 1995; Manning, 1997). In this mediated reality, electronic and print media may distort the public's understanding of the issues by intimating that the USA is experiencing a crime epidemic (crime has dropped much of the last decade) and that crime is synonymous with violence (most crime does not involve violent behavior) (see Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Chermak, 1994, 1995). News media also exaggerate the crime-fighting and investigative aspects of police work, while downplaying the roles of order maintenance and routine preventive patrols (Mastrofski, 1983). Surette (1998, p. 47) refers to this distortion as the "law of opposites". Even "reality-based" programs such as COPS are erroneous depictions of police work and the daily functioning of the criminal justice system (Hallett and Powell, 1995).

The police have a tenuous relationship with the news media which is mutually beneficial yet undependable. Traditionally, police officials have not been trusting of the media, partly because of the belief that reporters do not understand or appreciate the complexities of the role of law enforcement in society (Lovell, 2003). To complicate matters, the portrayal of police officers as faultless or heroic crime fighters can undermine public opinions of police effectiveness. The standard to which big-city police are held is daunting and unrealistic. Moreover, some police administrators believe that cooperating with the media is beyond the scope of their responsibilities. Despite this apprehension, police agencies benefit from news coverage through the tightly controlled release of information by public information officers (PIOs) and press bureaux.

Manning (2001, p. 153) argues that "the police self is shaped by mass media", that police go to considerable lengths to control their image and how it is presented in the news media (see also Chermak, 1995; Ericson, 1989). Similarly, Chermak (1995, p. 21) notes that "police departments actively construct public images of themselves so that news presentation benefits the organization rather than harms it." Hallett (2007) suggests that television programs such as CSI and COPS may be viewed as public relations efforts. In effect, the media's perception of police is just as distorted as other elements of crime and criminal justice, but unlike these other areas, the police have played an active role in creating that distortion[7].

Some scholars contend, however, that media coverage of police can also be fairly critical. Graber (1980) finds that media reports often focus on the failure of police to control crime, and Lawrence (2000) argues that media coverage often places police under considerable public scrutiny. Surette (1998) and Chermak *et al.* (2006, p. 262) acknowledge the inconsistent messages conveyed in the media, offering a "conflicting portrayal of police as heroic and professional crime fighters, while simultaneously portraying police as ineffective and incompetent". Other research has also spotlighted differences in how the media reports are received, particularly among Whites and minorities, with race frequently serving as a "significant moderator of the effects of news media exposure (Chermak et al, 2006, p. 263).

One area where police have been less effective in "controlling the media message" is that of highly publicized cases involving the use of force. Research suggests there may be a race effect. Kaminski and Jefferies (1998), found that, after watching police make an arrest on television, African Americans were more likely than whites to believe that police used excessive force. Several studies have found that public support for police in minority communities has eroded substantially following highly publicized police scandals (Tuch and Weitzer, 1997; Weitzer, 2002; Lasley, 1994). Chermak *et al.* (2006) found that media coverage of a police scandal in Indianapolis substantially influenced perceptions of the officers' guilt: the more a citizen read about the case the more likely he or she was to believe that the officers were guilty.

This study seeks to add to this area of research by focusing on another type of publicized event involving police use of force: incidents in which an officer uses the TASER to control or subdue a suspect. There has been little empirical research examining the TASER in general, and no research on media coverage of its use. Prior studies suggest that media coverage of these types of events has been critical of police, placing additional strain on police-community relations and subsequently influencing police policy (Chermak, 1995). This paper examines these issues with regard to the TASER by comparing media coverage of TASER incidents to official reports from the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

Methodology

This study encompasses a comparative analysis of news reports and official police records of TASER deployments from 2002 to 2005. Specifically, the methodology involves a content analysis of all *LexisNexis* and *New York Times* articles involving police use of the TASER during the study period ($n = 353$). Regional (*New York Times*) and national (*LexisNexis*) news reports describing police use of the TASER are compared to police reports of all TASER deployments by the NYPD during the same timeframe ($n = 375$). This inquiry focuses on four research questions:

RQ1. What type of information is covered in news reports about the TASER? For example, what do the articles contain in terms of the types of stories published, their frequency by time and region of country, costs and benefits of the weapon, and the circumstances surrounding police use of the TASER?

RQ2. How consistent are news reports and police records in regard to TASER incidents? To date, no empirical research has compared media depictions with official reports of police use of the TASER. Are regional news reports from the *New York Times* consistent with NYPD records on TASER deployments? How do the regional media and police data compare to national-level media reports derived from *LexisNexis*?

RQ3. What are the significant predictors of whether or not a suspect will continue to resist after an officer uses the TASER? Are news reports and police records consistent in identifying predictors of continued resistance? This is an important measure of effectiveness because it is arguably more objective than personal opinions provided by officers after using the weapon. Knowledge of the risk factors associated with suspect resistance may help police agencies develop guidelines for avoiding the escalation of violence after the weapon is deployed.

RQ4. What are the significant predictors of repeated use of the TASER by an officer during the same incident? Are news reports and police records consistent in identifying predictors of repeated use of the TASER by an officer? The media may be more critical of cases involving repeated use of the TASER than cases in which an officer deployed the weapon only once. Anecdotal evidence suggests that fatalities are more common when the weapon is used repeatedly. Does content analysis of TASER incidents support this claim? Identifying factors associated with repeated use of the weapon may provide knowledge to reduce abusive practices.

Content analysis of news reports describing police use of the TASER

Researchers conducted an extensive search of news reports describing police use of the TASER using *LexisNexis* and *New York Times*. Researchers used keyword searches to identify all news reports involving the TASER from January 2002 through December 2005. Once the universe of news reports was identified (n = 623), researchers then recorded information for 68 variables relating to the general content of the articles and the circumstances in which police used the TASER. The coding scheme for the content analysis was modeled after the NYPD's TASER report to allow for consistency in data collection and facilitate a valid comparison. Duplicate cases were excluded to prevent certain articles from being overrepresented in the comparative analysis. Duplicate cases were defined as any news reports that contained the same information as another report (typically published on the same date) describing a specific incident in which police used the TASER on a suspect. The duplicates were identified by cross-referencing the articles using the author or suspect's name and the newspaper in which the article was published. In all, 270 articles were excluded, many of which were reprinted with little change to the content or format of the article. Researchers also removed news reports in which the TASER was referred to incidentally but was

not the primary focus of the narrative. The content analysis below is based on 353 non-duplicate *LexisNexis* and *New York Times* articles on police use of the TASER published during the study period[8].

Missing data can present problems for researchers conducting content analysis of news reports. Several steps were taken by the researchers to ensure consistency in coding the media data and to minimize the impact of missing information. First, whenever two or more duplicate articles were published covering the same story, the researchers were instructed to code the article containing the most detailed information. The authors monitored this process[9]. Additionally, the coding instrument was carefully worded to reduce ambiguity and minimize missing data. Specifically, the instrument is focused on types of information that are typically included in articles concerning the TASER. Unfortunately, certain types of information such as the race, height and weight of the suspects, the distance to the suspect, and many of the officer characteristics, could not be included in the final analysis because a large proportion of the news reports did not contain this information.

Finally, it is helpful to understand that each question on the content analysis instrument was designed so that researcher recorded whether or not a specific piece of information was stated in the article. The researchers were not allowed to speculate about any characteristics of the police-citizen encounters[10]. Because of these efforts to minimize discrepancies in coding, the main source of error is missing information, which may occasionally result in a "false negative", such as when a researcher correctly indicates that an article does not state the suspect is mentally ill when in fact he is. We attempted to minimize this type of error by focusing the analysis on items that are expected to yield reasonably accurate data, and by comparing these items with the police data for convergent validity.

Analysis of NYPD records on use of the TASER

The analysis of police reports includes all TASER deployments recorded by the NYPD ($n = 375$) during the study period (2002-2005). During this timeframe, the NYPD did not issue the TASER to all rank-and-file officers. Rather, only Emergency Service Unit (ESU) officers were equipped with the device. The ESU consists of several hundred officers and is mainly responsible for diffusing situations that require specialized equipment and expertise. In addition, all supervisors promoted to the rank of Sergeant or above are trained to use the TASER and are authorized to carry the weapon. Each precinct has at least one TASER that can be signed out by a supervisor. The Patrol Guide details the specific circumstances in which it is appropriate to use a TASER:

> Patrol supervisors or uniformed members of the service assigned to the Emergency Services Unit may utilize a TASER/electronic stun device to assist in restraining emotionally disturbed persons if necessary. The TASER/electronic stun device may be used:
>
> - To restrain an emotionally disturbed person (EDP) who is evincing behavior that might result in physical injury to himself or others, OR
> - To restrain person(s) who, through the use of drugs, alcohol, or other mind-altering substances, are evincing behavior that might result in physical injury to himself or others.
>
> Emergency Service Unit personnel will obtain the permission of the Emergency Service Unit Supervisor prior to utilizing a TASER/electronic stun device, except in emergencies (New York Police Department, 2000).

Thus, the NYPD uses the TASER primarily in situations involving an EDP or person under the influence of drugs or alcohol who is posing a threat of physical injury, where either Emergency Service officers are deployed or a supervisor is present and has a TASER in his or her possession[11]. This policy is more restrictive than many other agencies that have adopted the weapon, but nationwide data for comparing guidelines are not currently available.

The analysis of police reports is based on the "TASER/Stun Device" report which must be completed each time an officer deploys the weapon[12]. The report contains information about the characteristics of the suspect, his or her emotional state, the level of resistance, the presence of weapons, the rank and assignment of the officer, and the characteristics of TASER deployment (e.g. distance, effectiveness, etc.). Most items on the police report contain multiple-choice options, with an additional narrative section in which the officer is required to describe the incident in detail. The researchers used hardcopies of the reports to create an SPSS data set that contains 50 variables describing each TASER incident reported during the study period.

Findings

Table I provides frequency distributions for the basic content of all *LexisNexis* and *New York Times* articles relating to the TASER from January 2002 through December 2005. *New York Times* articles account for 21.8 percent (n = 77) of all cases, while the remaining cases were derived from *LexisNexis* (n = 276). Overall, 79.0 percent of the articles focused on a specific incident in which the police used the weapon on a suspect. The remaining articles discussed research on the effectiveness or physical impact of the TASER (6.8 percent), business or stock market reports for TASER International (8.8 percent) or stories in which the weapon is mentioned incidentally but is not the focus of the article (5.4 percent).

The number of publications concerning the TASER increased from 24 (6.8 percent) in 2002 to 44 (12.5 percent) in 2003, and then peaked at 179 articles (50.7 percent) in 2004. The frequency of articles then dipped to 106 in 2005 (30.0 percent). The regions of the country that were the source of the highest number articles were the West (n = 118) and the Southeast (n = 108). The region that was the source of the fewest articles was the Northeast (n = 19). Many *New York Times* articles were not counted for the Northeast because they duplicated existing articles that originated in other regions. The states with greatest coverage of the TASER were Florida (n = 63), California (n = 51) and Colorado (n =40) (not shown in table). Altogether, these states accounted for more than one-third (43.6 percent) of all original news reports concerning the TASER during the study period.

In addition to information provided about specific incidents involving police use of the TASER (discussed in the next section), many of the articles included a general commentary about the weapon. About one-third of the news reports (34.8 percent) made some reference to deaths occurring after police used the device on a suspect. On the other hand, 19.8 percent of the news reports discussed the potential benefits of the TASER (e.g. potential to reduce injuries)[13]. A relatively small proportion of the articles explained the physiological effects of the weapon (18.7 percent) or discussed when it is appropriate for police officers to use the TASER (13.6 percent).

Variable	Percent	(*n*)
Source of the article:		
LexisNexis	78.2	(276)
New York Times	21.8	(77)
Total	100.0	(353)
Type of story:		
Incident in which police used the TASER	79.0	(279)
Business or stock market report	8.8	(31)
Report on research findings on the weapon	6.8	(24)
TASER only mentioned incidentally	5.4	(19)
Total	100.0	(353)
Year of publication:		
2002	6.8	(24)
2003	12.5	(44)
2004	50.7	(179)
2005	30.0	(106)
Total	100.0	(353)
Region of country:		
Northeast	5.4	(19)
Southeast	30.6	(108)
Midwest	18.7	(66)
West	33.4	(118)
National/not applicable	11.9	(42)
Total	100.0	(353)
Did the article describe a death that occurred after police used the TASER on a suspect?		
No	65.2	(230)
Yes	34.8	(123)
Total	100.0	(353)
Did the article discuss benefits of the TASER (e.g. potential to reduce injuries)?		
No	80.2	(283)
Yes	19.8	(70)
Total	100.0	(353)
Did the articles discuss when it is appropriate for police to use the TASER?		
No	86.4	(305)
Yes	13.6	(48)
Total	100.0	(353)
Did the article explain the physiological harm from the TASER?		
No	81.3	(287)
Yes	18.7	(66)
Total	100.0	(353)

Table I.
Content analysis of *LexisNexis* and *New York Times* articles concerning the TASER (2002-2005)

Comparison of news reports and police records describing police use of the TASER

This section examines only those news reports that describe a specific incident in which police used the TASER on a suspect. Table II compares regional news reports (*New York Times*; $n = 16$), national news reports (*LexisNexis*; $n = 279$), and official NYPD records ($n = 375$) of TASER incidents during the study period (2002-2005). After removing articles about TASER incidents that were duplicated from other areas of the

Table II.
A comparison of news reports and police records describing police use of the TASER (2002-2005)

Variables	News Reports – National (*LexisNexis*) Percentage	News Reports – National (*LexisNexis*) Number of valid cases	News Reports – Regional (*New York Times*) Percentage	News Reports – Regional (*New York Times*) Number of valid cases	Police records (NYPD) Percentage	Police records (NYPD) Number of valid cases
Suspect characteristics:						
Male suspect	93.9	(278)	93.8	(16)	88.8	(374)
Minor or senior citizen	16.3	(233)	12.6	(16)	3.9	(332)
Emotionally disturbed or mentally ill	25.9	(282)	56.3	(16)	92.5	(375)
Under influence of drugs or alcohol	19.4	(283)	28.6	(14)	12.8	(368)
Armed with a weapon	36.2	(282)	26.7	(15)	39.6	(359)
Assaulted a police officer	38.6	(280)	50.0	(16)	53.3	(366)
Suspect arrested	59.9	(282)	56.3	(16)	24.1	(361)
Verbal or passive resistance	14.7	(264)	14.3	(14)	5.2	(366)
Incident characteristics (i.e. circumstances):						
Officer used TASER more than once	33.8	(263)	50.0	(16)	19.3	(352)
Suspect continued to resist	28.7	(272)	73.3	(15)	33.0	(351)
Suspect died after TASER used	31.8	(283)	68.8	(16)	00.0	(375)
Officer missed target	5.3	(283)	6.3	(16)	7.8	(296)
Other low lethal used before TASER	24.3	(281)	20.0	(15)	4.8	(368)
Other low lethal used after TASER	33.1	(275)	13.3	(15)	12.8	(375)
Backup officer(s) present	88.5	(243)	93.3	(15)	93.5	(340)
Officer not satisfied with TASER	34.5	(284)	6.3	(16)	21.3	(347)

country, the number of *New York Times* articles is relatively small. While this is a limitation, these articles are important to consider because the media and police department are based in the same city and the articles cover many of the same issues as those outside of the New York region, with a few notable exceptions.

The variables included in the analysis are separated into two categories: suspect characteristics and incident-related circumstances. The level of consistency across the data sources is notable for many variables. Suspects were mostly male according to the national news reports (93.9 percent) and the regional news reports (93.8 percent), as well as the police records (88.8 percent). A fairly small proportion of the suspects were under 18 or over 60 years old according to the three data sources (16.3 percent, 12.6 percent and 3.9 percent, respectively)[14]. This is relevant because several police agencies have been strongly criticized in the media for using the TASER on juveniles and seniors. Most of the suspects described in the national and regional news and police records were not reported to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol (19.4 percent, 28.6 percent and 12.8 percent, respectively)[15].

About one-third of the TASER incidents involved an armed suspect according to the national (36.2 percent) and regional (26.7 percent) news reports and police records (39.6 percent). Of the 142 police reports in which the suspect was armed with a weapon, 84 percent of the suspects possessed a knife or cutting instrument. The remaining cases frequently involved a blunt object such as a metal pipe, baseball bat, chair or stick. The national and regional media also described the largest group of armed suspects as possessing a knife or cutting instrument (50.0 percent and 75.0 percent, respectively). About half (53.3 percent) of the police reports involved a situation in which the suspect assaulted an officers, compared to the 38.6 percent of national news reports and 50.0 percent of regional news reports. The level of suspect resistance was surprisingly consistent across the data sources. The TASER was deployed in response to verbal or passive resistance in 14.7 percent of the national news reports, 14.3 percent of the regional news reports, and 5.2 percent of NYPD police reports. In other words, the TASER was used in response to active physical resistance or situations where the suspect physically assaulted an officer in more than 85 percent of the incidents reported by the national and regional media and the NYPD.

A number of variables show inconsistencies across the data sources. Substantial differences exist among national news reports, regional reports, and police records in regard to the percentage of suspects described as emotionally disturbed/mentally ill (25.9 percent, 56.3 percent and 92.5 percent, respectively). Large differences also exist in regard to the proportion of suspects arrested (59.9 percent, 56.3 percent and 24.1 percent, respectively)[16]. While this appears to indicate a difference between the NYPD and the news reports in police discretion to deploy the TASER against the mentally ill, this inconsistency is likely the result of the restrictive NYPD policy. As noted earlier, line officers do not have access to a TASER; only ESU personnel and supervisors are authorized to use the device[17].

The differences in arrest rates may also result from department policy regarding mentally ill/emotionally disturbed suspects. Although research indicates that mental illness is increasingly criminalized (Teplin, 2000), conventional wisdom suggests that diverting those suffering from mental illness from the criminal justice system is a beneficial approach (Lurigio *et al.*, 2000). Consistent with NYPD policy, a large majority of suspects in the police reports (95.6 percent) were transported to a hospital for a

physical examination. After the examination, 24.1 percent of the suspects were subsequently arrested, while the remaining suspects were held for psychiatric examination and/or civil commitment. The higher arrest rate observed in the national and regional news reports corresponds with a smaller number of mentally ill/emotionally disturbed suspects who would not require a psychological evaluation or commitment.

The second category of variables in the comparative analysis consists of incident-related circumstances. Once more, the data sources show consistencies for many variables, with a few important exceptions. The TASER was used repeatedly by an officer during the same incident in 33.8 percent of the national news reports and 50.0 percent of the regional news reports, compared with only 19.3 percent of the police records. Moreover, 31.8 percent of the national news reports and 68.8 percent of the regional reports indicated that the suspect died after the TASER was deployed. In contrast, one fatality (less than 1 percent) was recorded by the NYPD during the study period. This finding is noteworthy because it underscores the extent to which the media focus on deadly or scandalous police practices that are newsworthy (see Table II).

The suspect continued to resist after the officer used the TASER in 28.7 percent of the national news reports, 73.3 percent of the regional news reports, and 33.0 percent of the police records. The difference between the *New York Times* and NYPD records is substantial, especially taking into consideration the earlier differences in repeated use of the TASER and deaths. It appears that NYPD records are more consistent with the national news reports than the *New York Times* on several indicators, although it is important to keep in mind that the regional data are less reliable because of the small number of cases in the New York area.

Both the news media and police reports indicate that the officers who deployed the TASER missed the target less that 10 percent of the time (5.3 percent, 6.3 percent and 7.8 percent, respectively) and backup officers were present about 90 percent of the time (88.5 percent, 93.3 percent and 93.5 percent, respectively). Other less lethal weapons (i.e. baton, pepper spray, etc.) were used before the TASER was deployed in 24.3 percent of national news reports, 20.0 percent of the regional reports, and 4.8 percent of the police records. After the TASER was deployed, other less lethal weapons were used in 33.1 percent of the national news reports, 13.3 percent of the regional news reports and 12.8 percent of the police records. The responding officer(s) expressed dissatisfaction with the TASER in 34.5 percent of the national news reports, 6.3 percent of the *New York Times* reports, and 21.3 percent of the police records[18]. Like several of the earlier indicators, the NYPD records appear to be slightly more similar to the national reports.

Multivariate analyses

Table III displays the results from the logistic regression models predicting suspect resistance after an officer used the TASER. Two models are presented: one model based on the national news reports and one model based on the police records. It was not possible to conduct the analysis for the regional news reports due to an insufficient number of cases. The likelihood ratio tests for the models were statistically significant and Nagelkerke $R2$ estimates indicate that the media and police report models accounted for 24.9 percent and 23.2 percent of the explained variation, respectively. A comparison of the two models reveals that three variables are significant predictors of suspect resistance in both models:

Predictor variables	News reports B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Police records B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Under influence of drugs/alcohol	0.972	0.400	2.643*	1.183	0.446	3.264**
Assaulted a police officer	1.287	0.330	3.621**	0.791	0.316	2.205*
Officer missed target	0.168	0.627	1.183	1.336	0.536	3.802*
Other low lethal used before TASER	0.258	0.383	1.294	0.287	0.657	1.332
Other low lethal used after TASER	1.024	0.347	2.783**	1.951	0.439	7.036**
Suspect armed with weapon	0.154	0.349	1.166	0.220	0.311	1.246
Age of suspect	−0.006	0.014	0.994	−0.006	0.014	0.994
Emotionally disturbed/mentally ill	0.653	0.366	1.921	0.336	0.612	1.400
Constant	−2.155	0.571	0.116	−1.884	0.832	0.152
Log Likelihood	226.883			267.330		
R square (Nagelkerke)	0.249			0.232		
Chi Square	42.210			44.714		
DF	8			8		
Significance	0.000			0.000		
n	216			243		

Notes: $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$

Table III.
Logistic regression models predicting suspect resistance after police used the TASER: a comparison of news reports and police records (2002-2005)

(1) suspect intoxicated by drugs or alcohol;

(2) suspect assaulted a police officer; and

(3) police used another less-lethal weapon after the TASER was deployed.

The presence of each condition more than doubles the likelihood that the suspect continues to resist after the TASER is deployed.

Missing the intended target with the TASER was a significant predictor of suspect resistance based on the police data but not media reports. Taking both data sources into consideration, the risk of a suspect continuing to resist during a TASER incident is highest when the individual is violent and intoxicated, and when the responding officers have used multiple forms of less lethal force and missed the intended target in the initial deployment of the weapon. Importantly, mental illness, possession of a weapon, and the suspect's age were not associated with continued resistance based on either data source.

The models predicting repeated use of the TASER by an officer (i.e. more than one deployment) during the same incident are shown in Table IV. One variable was a significant predictor of repeated use of the TASER in both models: continued suspect resistance after the TASER is deployed[19]. The effect was substantial for the media data. Additionally, missing the target with the TASER was a significant predictor of repeated use of the weapon according to the police records but not the news reports. In sum, these findings suggests that the decision to use the TASER repeatedly during the same incident is based on events that occur after the initial deployment of the weapon (e.g. continued resistance and missing the intended target) rather than circumstances that are evident before the weapon is deployed (e.g. intoxication, mental illness, age, and possession of a weapon).

Predictor variables	News reports B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Police reports B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Suspect continued to resist	2.069	0.406	7.921**	1.046	0.370	2.847**
Under influence of drugs/alcohol	0.312	0.423	1.367	0.464	0.479	1.590
Assaulted a police officer	−0.525	0.390	0.592	0.319	0.364	1.376
Officer missed target	1.309	0.710	3.702	1.507	0.543	4.512**
Other low lethal used before TASER	−0.334	0.421	0.716	1.018	0.675	2.766
Other low lethal used after TASER	−0.068	0.379	0.934	0.759	0.445	2.137
Suspect armed with weapon	−0.620	0.375	0 .538	0.142	0.354	1.153
Age of suspect	0.000	0.015	01.000	−0.004	0.016	0.996
Emotionally disturbed/mentally ill	0.679	0.374	01.972	0.272	0.717	1.312
Constant	−1.351	0.572	0.259	−2.480	0.988	0.084
Log Likelihood	215.453			218.190		
R square (Nagelkerke)	0.263			0.194		
Chi Square	42.938			32.196		
DF	9			9		
Significance	0.000			0.000		
n	206			239		

Notes: $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$

Table IV.
Logistic regression models predicting police use of TASER more than once: a comparison of news reports and police records (2002-2005)

Limitations and considerations

A number of methodological limitations of the study should be considered. First, the paper examines official police records on TASER deployments from one police agency. Although the paper includes all records on TASER use during the study period, the NYPD has deployed the TASER in a controlled and restrictive manner (see White and Ready, 2007). This approach limits the ability to generalize the research findings to other police agencies that have adopted different practices and policies regulating the deployment of CEDs. An additional limitation is that the comparative analysis only captures TASER incidents that have generated an official police report or resulted in an article in the print media. Incidents that have not been officially recorded or portrayed in the print media are not reflected in the analysis. Moreover, there is at least some anecdotal evidence of a deterrent effect when a police officer displays the TASER to a potential subject but does not use it; much like the firearm, a suspect may become compliant when confronted with the possibility of being shocked with the TASER. Many police practitioners would consider this type of incident as a successful de-escalation, but these situations are not captured in either of the data sources. Finally, the content analysis was limited by the brevity of the news reports. Many articles did not provide details regarding the characteristics of the officer, the race, height and weight of the suspect, and the distance of the TASER deployment, which prohibited the inclusion of these variables in both the comparative and multivariate analyses.

The exclusion of certain news reports from the content analysis warrants some additional consideration. The initial universe of cases consisted of 623 articles concerning the TASER. Because the main focus of the study was to provide a reasonable comparison of the data sources, it was first necessary to make the data sources as comparable as possible. This resulted in a decision to exclude any duplicate cases (n =270), which consisted of any news reports that contained the same information as an earlier report describing a specific incident in which police used the TASER on a suspect.

Although the removal of duplicates was a necessary step for the purposes of this study, the excluded cases may be an interesting focus of further investigation. A high frequency of recycled articles was found in particular newspapers, sometimes authored by the same reporter. A large proportion of these duplicates also involved rare yet potentially scandalous circumstances (e.g. 12-year-old suspect) and cases resulting in death. This raises two important questions for future research: What are the best predictors of whether news reports on police use of the TASER are repeated?; and do these cases have a greater impact on public opinion about the acceptability of the TASER than other cases that are not duplicated? As Surette (1990: 184) notes:

> [T]he influence of media coverage remains after a case is initially reported and this coverage subsequently affects other similarly charged cases. This is termed an 'echo effect'."

The potential echo effect resulting from particular reports on the TASER may serve as one of the mechanisms by which police practice both influences media imagery and also reacts to it, and is therefore shaped by it. Manning (2001) describes this process as reflexivity. According to Lovell (2003, p. 23):

> The ability of media to portray law enforcement contributes to media reflexivity, providing law enforcement officials with commentary on the level of public support surrounding various police practices. Police respond to media imagery by either reforming their strategies or, more commonly, by taking steps simply to alter their appearance. In turn, as it is a job of the media to both reflect and characterize the patterns and habits of government officials, media then represent and reflect these changes back to the police, who then decide either to abandon or adopt these revisions to their public appearance. The thesis of cultural reflexivity as it pertains to both police and the media, therefore, asserts that policing is both a reaction to, and an influence on, media imagery.

Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study it was necessary to eliminate duplicates to ensure that particular cases were not overrepresented, thus influencing the results. This decision may have limited the ability to conduct a thorough examination of the echo effect of these news reports.

Discussion

The ongoing discourse on police use of the TASER has been widely publicized, yet little research has examined the nature and content of this debate occurring in the news media. This is concerning given the well-established literature documenting distorted media coverage of criminal justice and police issues (Manning, 1977, 1997). The authors explore this issue through a comparative analysis of news reports (both national and regional) and NYPD records of TASER deployments from 2002 through 2005. Findings show consistencies across data sources with regard to many suspect and incident-related characteristics, as well as in the multivariate analyses examining predictors of suspect resistance and repeated use of the TASER. Below the authors explore the implications of this study by placing the findings within the larger context of the three main controversies that have surrounded police use of the TASER: appropriate use of the TASER, effectiveness, and the risk of death. A number of possible myths in the news media exist in relation to each of these areas of controversy. The authors examine whether the results of the content analysis support the existence of these myths.

Appropriate use of the TASER

The specific questions relating to appropriate use of the TASER have centered on use of the weapon against vulnerable populations (i.e. minors, senior citizens and intoxicated individuals), mentally ill suspects, and those who are passively resisting the police. Therefore, possible myths in the news media about the appropriate use of the TASER can be stated as follows:

- *Myth 1.* TASER incidents involving vulnerable populations (i.e. minors, senior citizens and intoxicated individuals) receive more attention in the news media.
- *Myth 2.* Incidents in the news media usually involve suspects who are passively resisting.
- *Myth 3.* Mentally ill suspects are more likely to resist when police use the TASER.

The content analysis data indicate that only 16.3 percent of national news reports and 12.6 percent of regional news reports involve TASER incidents in which the suspect was a minor or senior citizen. Additionally, the TASER was used against intoxicated suspects in 19.4 percent of national news reports and 28.6 percent of regional reports. Although these percentages are slightly higher than the figures for the NYPD data (3.9 percent and 12.8 percent, respectively), the evidence supporting media-constructed myths relating to police use of the TASER on vulnerable populations is not overly persuasive.

With regard to suspect resistance, about 15 percent of the news reports involve TASER incidents in which the suspect is verbally or passively resistant. In other words, the TASER was used in response to active physical resistance or situations where the suspect physically assaulted an officer in a large majority of incidents reported by the news media. There appears to be little support for the idea that sensationalistic news reporting exaggerates the proportion of suspects who were passively resisting the police. In addition, the multivariate analysis of news reports indicates that mental illness is not a significant predictor of suspect resistance after the TASER is deployed.

Effectiveness of the TASER

The authors examine the effectiveness of the TASER using two measures: suspect resistance after the TASER is deployed and officer satisfaction with the weapon. The potential myths in the news media about the effectiveness of the TASER can be stated as follows:

- *Myth 4.* The news media show more ineffective TASER deployments than police data.
- *Myth 5.* The news media show more officer dissatisfaction than police records.

Content analysis finds partial support for the existence of media-generated myths with regard to TASER effectiveness. The national news reports show less suspect resistance (28.7 percent) after the TASER deployment than the police records (33.0 percent), while the regional news reports indicate greater suspect resistance (73.3 percent). The authors acknowledge the high proportion of ineffective deployments described in the *New York Times*, but view it with caution because of the limited

number of regional cases (n =15). Regarding the measure of officer satisfaction, the national news reports show a slightly higher level of officer dissatisfaction with the TASER (34.5 percent) than police records (21.3 percent), whereas the regional news reports indicate lower levels of police dissatisfaction (6.3 percent). This finding provides partial support for a media myth regarding officer dissatisfaction with the weapon.

The increased risk of death

Perhaps the most controversial issue surrounding the TASER is the risk of death occurring after the weapon is deployed. The authors propose the following as a possible media-related myth about the increased risk of death:

- *Myth 6.* The news media exaggerate the incidence of death resulting from the TASER.

The content analysis suggests that there may be a media-related myth regarding the potentially lethal effects of the TASER. There is only one reported NYPD case of a death occurring after TASER deployment (less than 1 percent of NYPD cases), but 31.8 percent of national media reports and 68.8 percent of regional news reports describe cases involving suspect death[20]. Clearly, there is an over-representation of death cases in the news media, but the authors question whether this can be attributed solely to a media-created myth regarding the TASER, or if the finding is part of the larger shift in reporting to focus on violence, (i.e. if it bleeds it leads).

In sum, the evidence supporting the existence of media-generated myths about the TASER is not overly compelling, with the exception of cases involving death. The consistency of findings across data sources does not support allegations of an ideological bias in media reporting of TASER incidents. It does not appear that individual cases presented by the news media are deliberately sensationalized. However, the findings may reflect an institutional bias in which news providers are partial to sources that consistently provide news material – police agencies that offer reporters a steady stream of newsworthy information. This is interesting to consider within the context of the declining practice of investigative journalism in newsrooms across the USA, where there may be less time for reporters to interview subjects of TASER deployments and eyewitnesses who observe such incidents.

Other implications

A number of practical implications can be gleaned from these findings. First, if the influence of drugs and alcohol continues to be identified as a significant predictor of suspect resistance in other police jurisdictions, field training officers can begin to underscore the greater likelihood of a struggle among intoxicated suspects and develop guidelines to avoid the escalation of violence after the weapon is deployed. Further research is needed to ascertain whether particular substances moderate the physiological effects of the TASER or only reduce the suspect's capacity to think clearly during the altercation.

Second, the only significant predictors of repeated use of the TASER by an officer were continued suspect resistance and missing the target with the TASER. Assault on a police officer, possession of a weapon, intoxication, and mental illness were not associated with repeated use of the TASER. Police officers in the study appear to be

deciding to use the TASER more than once based on events that occur after the initial deployment of the weapon rather than circumstances that are evident before the weapon is deployed. While preliminary, these findings reflect favorably on police practices relating to the TASER. Both predictors involve situations where the officer has a reasonable need to respond with additional force, either by using the TASER a second time or resorting to another type of force.

Finally, the study finds that police use of the TASER may be a suitable topic for examining the "echo effect" in which the influence of the media can be felt across multiple cases simultaneously (Surette, 1990). Of the 353 news reports included in the study, the suspect died in 31.8 percent of the national news reports and 68.8 percent of the regional news reports, but only in one of the police reports (less than 1 percent). The study began with a universe of 623 articles, but 270 cases were excluded because they duplicated an earlier case. The news reports of TASER incidents are fairly consistent with police records, perhaps reflecting media loyalty to a consistent source of information. Nonetheless, the media recycles certain stories that do not involve typical circumstances or outcomes of TASER deployments, but are newsworthy because they rivet public attention.

Notes

1. TASER is the most widely used CED, with more than 135,000 units sold to law enforcement agencies. Stinger Systems has sold 12,000 stun devices since 2000. Law Enforcement Associates introduced their stun gun only recently, in March 2005. This paper uses the term TASER for three reasons: the study police department uses TASER; the company's dominance of the CED market; and media reports do not distinguish between model types.
2. Estimates vary based on how force is defined, but McLaughlin (1992) and the US Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999) reported that police used some level of force in one percent of all police citizen encounters.
3. In 1997, Abner Louima was sodomized with a broomstick inside the 70th precinct house; and in 1999 four police officers fired more than 40 shots at an unarmed Amadou Diallo.
4. See the IACP and PERF guidelines for more details. Both are very detailed and offer guidance in a wide range of areas.
5. Important considerations and limitations associated with this research include small sampling frames and potentially conflicting interests among those who carried out these studies.
6. Drug intoxication, preexisting heart conditions, and exposure to other forms of low lethal police force appear to be major contributing factors in most of these incidents. By March 2007, Amnesty International reported a total of more than 200 TASER-related fatalities.
7. There is a separate literature on other factors (i.e. not the media) that influence peoples' perceptions of the police such as demographics, prior victimization and prior police contacts. This research is beyond the purview of the current study, which focuses on the impact of the media. For a discussion of research examining these other factors, see (Chermak *et al.*, 2006).
8. We also examined *New York Times* archives accessed through the Timeselect search option to check for convergent validity.
9. Also, a small number of articles containing conflicting or inadequate information were excluded from the analysis. The number of excluded cases varied depending on the particular analysis, but it was typically limited to fewer than ten cases.

10. For example, one of the items on the instrument asks if the article describes the suspect as mentally ill or emotionally disturbed (yes/no). The question does not measure whether it appears that the suspect was mentally ill based on the narrative describing the encounter. The researchers were instructed to only check "yes" if the article explicitly described the subject as possessing this trait. Thus, the unit of analysis is the article itself, rather than the encounter.
11. New York Police Department (2000) also offers a definition of an "emotionally disturbed person:" "A person who appears to be mentally ill or temporarily deranged and is conducting himself in a manner which a police officer reasonably believes is likely to result in serious injury to himself or others". In situations involving an EDP, officers are instructed to create and maintain a "zone of safety" of approximately 20 feet, call for ESU and a patrol supervisor, as well as an ambulance (New York Police Department, 2000). Officers are NOT to attempt to take an EDP into custody unless: The EDP is unarmed, not violent and is willing to leave voluntarily; OR The EDP's actions constitute an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death to himself or others (New York Police Department, 2000).
12. These reports were provided to the authors by the supervisor of the department's Training Division. Although the form is used primarily for the TASER, there were 33 forms involving the use of another type of low lethal weapon - either a stun device or other similar alternative. Since the focus of this paper is the TASER, these cases were excluded from the analysis.
13. The percentage of articles containing information about the lethality of the weapon climbed from 14.7 percent in 2002-2003 (10 of 68 articles) to 39.6 percent in 2004-2005 (113 of 285 articles). Conversely, the percentage of cases discussing the potential benefits of the TASER decreased from 42.6 percent to 11.3 percent in this same timeframe (not shown in table).
14. In recent years, several incidents depicted in the media have received national attention because a TASER subject was a minor or senior citizen. The NYPD records indicate that 13 incidents during the study period involved subjects under 18 or over 60 years old. The suspect engaged in violent behavior directed at an officer or citizen during 12 of these incidents, and possessed a weapon in ten of the incidents.
15. This variable is based on police or eyewitness assessments of the suspect at the time of the incident. It is not based on more definitive tests such as a urinalysis or blood/hair analysis.
16. This variable is also based on police or witness assessment based on available evidence.
17. Per department policy, the ESU is called when a patrol officer or supervisor at the scene determines that the situation involves an emotionally disturbed person who is behaving in a manner that could result in physical injury or death to him or herself or another officer. Thus, the predominance of emotionally disturbed suspects represented in the police records reflects the nature of the suspects whom ESU personnel typically encounter.
18. These cases are also marked by failure of the contacts to penetrate the skin (43 percent) and continued resistance by the suspect (88 percent).
19. Suspect resistance was specified as an independent variable in the model predicting repeated use of the TASER, but repeated use was not included in the suspect resistance model. The rationale is based on the logical time sequence of events.
20. The difference between NYPD data and *New York Times* reports (regional) is explained by the fact that a number of deaths occurred in areas immediately surrounding New York City but did not involve the NYPD. Also, several deaths occurred in New York City as a result of the officer eventually resorting to lethal force (i.e. firearm) because the TASER was ineffective and the situation escalated.

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