Race, Tasing, and Children: How the Use of Tasers Has Been Overlooked as a Method of Police Brutality and the Consequences for Black Children

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The issue of police brutality is not new, especially when examining police brutality targeting Black people. Much of the recent attention towards this brutality is centered around cases of police shootings or deaths of Black adult men. This thesis examines police brutality that is largely overlooked: the use of Tasers on children and the specific implications this has on Black children. Framing this research within the Critical Race and Dehumanization Theories, this thesis works to pull together why Tasers are overlooked as a technology of police brutality, and why Black children are at significant risk for this abuse. The data analyzed is from the state of Connecticut's *The State of Connecticut Electronic Defense Weapon Analysis and Findings, 2016*. These findings illustrate the racial and age implications of police Tasings within the state of Connecticut. This shows that among youths (under 18 years of age), Black youths face significant risk of being Tased by police, raising concern surrounding police use of Tasing and the lack of regulation of using Tasers.

Keywords: race, youths/children, Tasers, policing

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CHAPTER 1:
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Policing has advanced and become more sophisticated in ways that pose far more of a threat to those who fall victim to its brutality. Simultaneously, the laws and policies in place are not updated to protect people from these technological advances. One of the most memorable lines from Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* is when in conversation about the criminal legal system, she states that there is no true "golden age" of policing on which to base reform (K.Y. Taylor, 2016, p 132). Current discussions of policing in the United States often include an underlying tone that the brutality and corruption seen today is somehow unique. How can it be that police brutality is both a continuation of the past *and* taking new forms? Simply put, it is evolving. It is obvious that there are new facets of policing that have only developed due to advancement of technology or an increase in state spending (Urban Institute, 2019), but at its core, policing in the United States has continuously served to function on the same levels of dehumanization and abuse of people marginalized within the United States. This is why there has never been a "golden age"; there has never been a time in which policing did not function as social control and as a way to maintain law and order over people who are the targets of institutionalized racism and oppression.

Policing received a facelift in recent history due to more resources and the development of advanced technology. This facelift has given the system more ways to impose order and terrorize communities. On the other hand, it has been historically difficult to create federal regulation of policing due to the nature of our governmental system, one that is designed to limit the power of Congress over state policies (James & Harrington, 2018). Thus, what we are seeing

is the most evolved form of policing up to date, with little to no federal oversight or regulation of the individual police forces, and herein lies the problem.

This lineage and evolution of the criminal legal system has been extensively investigated and exposed by scholars such as Michelle Alexander. One theme from Alexander's (2012) classic book, *The New Jim Crow*, that plays an especially important role in the purpose of this research is the idea that the incarceration system has rebirthed itself over hundreds of years. The resulting manifestations include the same objective: social control of predominantly Black men through a racial caste system. She states that "unless the public consensus supporting the current system is completely overturned, the basic structure of the new caste system will remain intact" (Alexander, 2012, p 18). It is my goal that this thesis will be a continuation of investigation into this racial caste system and extend further to investigate its role in the policing, specifically, the Tasing, of children of color.

The invention and implementation of the Taser[1] is an example of what policing has become today. A Taser is considered to be a low or "less lethal" use-of-force weapon (Butler, 2017). When placed in the lineup of assortment of militarized police tools and weapons, it is easy to underestimate and overlook this small, hand-held "stun gun." Yet, it is this overlooking that has led to what may very well be seen as an epidemic, as more than 1,000 people have died after being Tased by police since the early 2000s, when Tasers were first being adopted by police forces, with more than 100 of those autopsies claiming the Taser to be one of, if not the main cause of death (Eisler, 2017). In addition, as Tasers are considered to be one of the less lethal police tactics, it follows that they would be allowed to be deployed on vulnerable communities, such as children. And they are.

[1] Tase, Taser(s), Tased and Tasing(s) have the first letter capitalized due to this being a copyrighted instrument.

This thesis is a critique in the development of technology and policing, and the lack of policy and standards in place to protect the most vulnerable groups from this development of "non-lethal weaponry." In many ways, technology has helped address issues of police brutality as now there are means of recording, social media, and application outreach that have further exposed the flaws and shortcomings of the system (Manjoo, 2015). However, I argue that policy has largely overlooked police technological advancements as more harmful than helpful, from the militarization of policing to the implementation of Tasers. My research is focused specifically on Tasers to address (1) their reputation of being a weapon classified as low-level use of force, yet a weapon just the same; (2) the resulting lack of policy and guidelines, on federal, state, and local levels; and (3) the implications on children of color, and I hypothesize, especially Black children. This thesis is conducted within the framework of the Critical Race Theory and Dehumanization Theory.

Deadly and "Non-Lethal"?: Tasers

What exactly is a Taser? It is the common name for a conducted electrical weapon (CEW) or conducted/conductive electrical/energy device (CED), a handheld device that produces 50,000 volts, firing through 9-13 mm darts and causes momentary disabling through involuntary muscle contraction (LAAW International, 2017; Plouffe, 2016; Alpert et al., 2011). Invented in the 1970s, Tasers quickly became popular during the 1990s as police forces needed a non-lethal weapon that was a step above a baton and below a firearm (Plouffe, 2016; Alpert et al., 2011). By the 2000's it became a popular addition to police forces across the United States. Tasers were implemented as a "non-lethal" weapon, an alternative to using a gun. Axon, formerly known as TASER International, is the popular company behind the Taser. It sells to the

general public, but mainly provides services to law enforcement ranging from body cameras, data and evidence software, and "smart weapons"; Tasers. Axon even offers bundles, combining products and offering ways to save money through included weapon upgrades and artificial intelligence features in their "Officer Safety Plan" (Axon, 2019). Axon company leaders pride themselves on providing a police response consistent with their mission to protect life, preserve truth, and accelerate justice (ibid).

However, there has recently been a call to re-evaluate whether or not Tasers can actually be considered "non-lethal." Axon's claim that 99.75% of Taser use has not resulted in serious injury is based on a source from 2009 (Lloyd, 2009). Axon released numerous documents regarding the safety of the use of Tasers as a method of policing. One of these sources is a study on CEW involvement in arrest related deaths (ARDs), which cites a range from 1.8-30% CEW used in ARDs (Brewer & Kroll, 2009). Not only is this range quite large, but this study also claims medical examiners must be "impartial in spite of great media and advocacy pressure (especially in the case of an ethnic minority death)," and that due to the nature of CEWs, medical examiners have included CEWs as contributing to death when they shouldn't have (Brewer & Kroll, 2009, p. 290). This study implies that deaths have been overestimated and the data is questionable, even using race as a factor in autopsy error. In 2017, Axon released a comprehensive research compilation in which the goal was to address "misconception" surrounding Tasers, which included that death of the subject in custody has been largely overstated (LAAW International, 2017). Reuters has completed a study of their own, finding a minimum of 1,081 deaths in the United States following the use of a Taser (Reid et al., 2019; Eisler, 2017). Some of the debate over the lethality of Tasers arises from the fact that the electrical current used in Tasers does not accumulate in the body, thus making it difficult to

understand the role of Tasers in death after their use. Whereas subduing someone with a baton or physical force can leave an array of visible damage, the evidence of Taser use "does not linger or accumulate in the body" (Brewer & Kroll, 2009, p. 290).

Current Study Goal

There is an overwhelming disjuncture between the medical research warning about the risks for Tasing youth (relative to adults), and the meager research on police practices of Taser deployment on the body of a child, someone under 18 years of age. Yet the reality is that it is often up to the individual department's discretion of how to use Tasers and on whom, as long as the practices are considered to be Constitutional (Cole, 2016). With growing concern over the actual deadliness of deploying a Taser, this shows that not only has technology developed within policing as a form of social control, but that policy and regulation has not kept up with the technological development in order to protect people from it.

There has been little to no research conducted on police use of Tasers on children, much less on distinguishing children's risks based on their race/ethnicity. Yet what the existing data and research shows is very grim. We know that "despite making up only 2% of the total US population, African American males between the ages of 15 and 34 comprised more than 15% of all [police shooting] deaths logged" in 2015 (Swaine, 2015). While this data includes a range of ages, it is shocking that the youngest is 15, the age of a high school sophomore. While there is growing research on police brutality of Black people, Black men in particular, there is virtually no research being conducted on the police brutality faced by Black children, let alone on the use of Tasers on Black children. Thus, where there is little attention being paid, how can there be

hope for bringing justice to those who are being neglected by the very state entities sworn to "serve and protect"?

This thesis furthers investigation into how the development of technology has influenced policing, how Black children are being affected, and how implementing more regulation over police technology can help to address the systems that hurt those who are already most vulnerable. This research is intended to narrow in on policing tactics, such as policing in schools, and the theories that explain how Black children are brutalized at disproportionately high rates. My goal is to continue tracking policing in the context of the development of technology and its advancements has led to the overlooking of Tasers as a risk to the safety and well-being of Black children.

Theoretical Perspective: Critical Race and Dehumanization Theories

This thesis theorizes that consistent with #BlackLivesMatter (Cobbina, 2019; Weissinger & Mack, 2018), Black youths are at risk for police brutality. Expanding upon that, Black children are at risk specifically for being Tased by police. The theoretical frameworks I am using for this thesis are the Critical Race and Dehumanization Studies. Using Critical Race Theory allows for the findings to be analyzed within the grander scope of policing, society, and Black experience in the United States. The Dehumanization Theory allows for a discussion on how the disproportionate dehumanization of Black children makes them a target for police Tasing, and how this is a further extension of the reality of policing of Black people within the United States.

I. Critical Race Theory

Through the use of the Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Matsuda et al., 2018), this study can be contextualized within the functioning of institutions that exist within the

United States today. This particular theory is useful in the critique of political and social norms that brought this problem to fruition. It will allow Tasers to be examined within the larger contexts of policing and who is being policed. An important aspect of Critical Race Theory is intersectionality, which is the praxis of viewing someone's identity in its entirety, and how this identity affects the way that they are allowed to exist in society and function within its institutions.

This framework is used to expose the racism that exists within policies and practices of the criminal legal system, especially within today's alleged post-racial, colorblind society. It will also aid in identifying the gaps within the criminal legal system that have become traps for Black children, including and not limited to the school-to-prison pipeline and lack of federal policy that leaves children unprotected because of *who is being affected*. Critical Race Theorists often argue that "the imperial, objective voice of law so often veils the perpetuation of racial hierarchy" (The Bridge Project), and it is this veil that the research within this thesis hopes to work to uncover and lift off of the most vulnerable populations within the United States.

II. Dehumanization Theory

Dehumanization Theory helps to explain why Black children, specifically, are likely to fall victim to police brutality. Dehumanization is the process of removing personhood, which thus removes rights to protections and even life. It is the process of likening a human to something non-human, such as an animal or an object. In addition, it is also when "human attributes, such as morality, self-control, or emotions are attributed to some, but not others" (Gervais, 2013, p. 4). The history of dehumanization in the United States has affected the lives of many marginalized people, such as those who are differently abled or part of a racial minority.

Dehumanization is critical to understanding why it could be that Black children are more likely to be Tased than White children.

This theory is used to point out the psychological and historical reasons why Black children may be thought to be able to be subjected to Tasing or why they may need to be Tased in the first place. In later sections, the dehumanization of Black children will be further analyzed to understand the position it holds to this day. It is also important to note that the effects of this theory are amplified when applied through intersectionality, for example, when a Black, autistic student was Tased in his high school in Louisiana (Klein, 2019). The reality is his case does not stand alone. Dehumanization of Black children puts them at a greater risk for becoming victims of police brutality.

Through the lenses provided with the Critical Race and the Dehumanization Theories, it is the goal of this study to illuminate how the Tasing of Black children is a continuation of racism in the United States to enforce a kind of social control onto Black people. It is through the dehumanization of Black people, and thus Black children, that exposes how Tasers have been allowed to be used on Black children, and how with the advancement of technology in policing, Tasers pose a new and unregulated threat that has been largely overlooked until recently.

Conclusion

I am taking an investigative approach to the whether Tasing, an often overlooked means of police use of force, even brutality, is disproportionately faced by Black children. In order to provide a full and complete understanding of the complexity of non-lethal violence on Black children, I will provide a comprehensive roadmap of not only how this issue has been overlooked, but also the ways in which there is hope for addressing it. This will be done within

the context of interdisciplinary research that covers the political, social, economic and technological components of the problem.

While police brutality affects all races, Black people in the United States have a unique place in the police state, and "irrespective of gender and sexual orientation,...are more likely to be victims of police use of force...than are members of other racial groups" (Owusu-Bempah, 2017, p. 24). This thesis not only addresses the rarely-touched topic of Tasing in the context of #BlackLivesMatter, but specifically the Tasing of children. Using 2016 statewide Connecticut law enforcement data, I will focus on whether, and if so, how, race/ethnicity are related to Tasing in general, and specifically the Tasing of youth.

Chapter 2 is a literature review of the dehumanization of Black children, the school-to-prison pipeline, the effects of police militarization, and the introduction of the Taser as a policing tool. The chapter will discuss how the Taser functions, the current medical research and investigative reports into the effects of Tasers, and the current policy in place regarding Taser use. These discussions will help to shape and situate the current data on this issue. Chapters 3 will cover the methods used in this thesis and Chapter 4 reports the quantitative findings of Tasing on youth, using an available data set collected by the University of Connecticut. The final chapter, Chapter 5, summarizes the theses, particularly the policing of Black children through Tasing, and provides policy recommendations. More specifically, this section discusses how to realistically move forward within the current criminal legal system, given the findings from this thesis study.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Policing is ingrained into U.S. society, to the point where it can be argued that we, as a society, have normalized much of policing that is not recognizable to other developed countries. Part of this normalization comes down to an inability to fully grasp the scale of the issue at hand. What I mean by this, is that much of the workings and actions of police and accompanying institutions are lacking in accurate and representative statistics. In the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, it was declared that all law enforcement report on excessive use of force, and that these reports will be publicized by the Attorney General (An Act to Control and Prevent Crime, 1994). This would allow for the belief that the actions of police regarding use of force are accessible and represent the full extent of the response. This, however, is not the case. Indeed, not all agencies submit their data, and some of those that do, offer incomplete data via limited recording or lack of demographic data (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2018). So, not only is it feared that fatal use of force is not being recorded in its fullest extent (ibid), but this lack of recording can trickle down to inept reporting on the use of less-lethal weapons. One major cause of this is the fact that there are no federal standards for how to even report these incidents (ibid).

Rather, what we seem to find is that we are trying to piece together understandings of police brutality through headlines and spotty statistical services. Often, the only instances where police Tasing of children is common knowledge is when it plasters the page of a newspaper or website. In addition, investigative journalism has been a major resource for tracking

developments in the fatality of Taser responses (Reid et al., 2019). Ultimately, there is a major gap in the understanding of how policing functions in the United States and who it is affecting.

This is particularly alarming when recounting the data we *do* have. The history of policing of Black people in the United States through the criminal legal system has been widely studied (Alexander, 2010; Balko, 2013; Hinton, 2016), and shocking racist statistics are readily available. Black people are incarcerated at five times the rate that White people are (NAACP, 2020). For example, it is estimated that one out of every three Black boys can expect to go to prison in their lifetime (ACLU, 2020). While Black people make up just about 13% of the entire U.S. population, they made up 23% of people killed by police in 2018 (Mapping Police Violence, 2020). It is endlessly apparent that policing in the United States disproportionately targets and harms Black people. And this violence does not draw the line at Black children.

Unfortunately, we have become very much aware that Black children have fallen victim to police brutality. These breaking news stories are usually of unarmed Black youth who have been murdered[2] by police. My question is, what about Black youth who are facing violence in other ways? Specifically, Tasers are weapons considered not to be as lethal as guns, and as low on the use-of-force spectrum as pepper spray (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2018). The headlines and investigative journalism of Black children being Tased by police do not seem to garner attention the way that other tragedies do. I suggest that this is partly due to the fact that Tasers are considered to be harmless, and thus do not tend to be associated with the excessive use of force.

The purpose of this literature review chapter is to summarize the current research known on police responses to Black youth and the limited research on police use of Tasers. I hope to

[2] Far too often the investigations of these cases do not result in identifying the police response as "murder." I am choosing this language given that most of these should have been processed as murders.

bring together existing research and literature to piece together how U.S. society has accepted the police use of Tasers on children, which children are disproportionately likely to fall victim to police use of Tasers, as well as how we got to this point. I argue that Tasers and their use by police are not fully understood, and therefore, are rarely questioned. This ignorance, then, led to a lack of concern about Tasers in general, but specifically among youth, resulting in too much discretion for police to use this level of force. I will use the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Dehumanization Theory to analyze the existing research and literary works surrounding policing, technology, and social views of Black youth in order to understand how and why Tasers are being used on children and why Black children in particular face this threat at higher rates.

Adultification and Desensitization: How Black Children are Viewed in Society

One of the roles that the dehumanization of Black children plays in their policing is the perception that they are older than they really are. As Butler states "sometimes, when things are done to black men, we don't think of them as violent in the way that we would if these things were done to anyone else" (Butler, 2017, p. 49), and for Black people, this dehumanization begins when they are young. Black children are dehumanized and thus are vulnerable to being targeted within the criminal legal system (ACLU, 2014; Rovner, 2016). This is because when Black children are dehumanized, they may not be seen as needing the protection equated to being a child, thus subjecting them to harsher treatments that are reserved for perceived adults (Goff et al., 2014). Dehumanization means the removal of humanness, and thus morality, from the person. When Black children are dehumanized, they are inherently seen as less innocent, which can translate as seeing a child as older than they truly are (ibid). This is particularly dangerous when the use of force by police is left to discretion. The dehumanization of Black children is

exposed in the cases of Treyvon Martin, 17, and Tamir Rice, 12 (Weinstein, 2012; Danylko, 2014). In Martin's case, the initial confrontation began because a White male, Zimmerman, viewed the teenager as "suspicious" and potentially linked to robberies in the area, thus reducing Martin's innocence and potentially aging him in the eyes of his killer (Hayes, 2012); Zimmerman was aware of Martin's race at the time (Fetters, 2013). Tamir Rice was playing in the park with a toy gun when he was shot and killed within two seconds of the officer's arrival (Fitzsimmons, 2014). The FBI agent who arrived on the scene four minutes later to administer aid claimed that he thought Rice was "the size of a full-grown man" (Nam, 2015).

This aging and desensitization are not limited to Black boys. Black girls have historically been viewed as older than they are, coined "adultification" (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Epstein et al., 2017), and so have Latinx youth (Lopez, 2017). A study completed in 2019 found that "adults view Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than their white peers" (Blake & Epstein, 2019). This theorization has also been called "age compression," which is defined as "an inability on the part of adults (including law enforcement) to see Black girls...as children, and their propensity to treat them as they would Black adults" (Morris, 2016; as cited by Ritchie, 2017). These instances are present in moments of police brutality against Black girls. In the summer of 2015, a viral video emerged of an adult male cop manhandling an unarmed 14-year-old Black girl, Dajerria Becton, as she sat in the grass, forcing her onto her face and kneeling on top of her (Blay, 2015; Ritchie, 2017). Journalist Zeba Blay states that the officer "did not think he was restraining a helpless teenaged girl, but a 'black woman'" (ibid). This emphasizes the recurring theme of the police removing a child's right to protection and denying their innocence

as a form of dehumanization. *This seemingly state-sanctioned police practice places Black children in lethal danger*.[3]

What this adultification allows for within the police system is for upping the pain and force administered onto Black children, including the use of Tasers. This analysis can be made through the lens of the Critical Race Theory, which allows for the deconstruction of this use of power to understand the significant role played by race/racism. Black children are dehumanized by being perceived as less innocent and more adult-like. This process removes them from the social construction of our ideas of childhood and what that particular part of an individual's life warrants protection, placing Black children seemingly legally at lethal risk by police responses. This contradicts the protected legal status that is supposed to come with being a youth (under 18 years old) within the United States, because they are viewed as still developing socially and psychologically, allowing more leniency in their culpability (Epstein et al., 2017). When Black children's innocence is removed, it is replaced with culpability, thus pushing them out of the protected status still there for their peers. It places them with more perceived responsibility and thus allows for police to enforce this responsibility and treat them the way that they would treat other adults. Notably, this is not to argue that there is no racism in police responses to adults (Alexander, 2012; K.Y. Taylor, 2016; Krisberg, 2018).

Modern Police Evolution: The Militarization of Police and Policing in Schools

The modernization of policing tools has created responses that before recent history were nonexistent. First is the militarization of police. This phenomenon of militarization began in the 1960's War on Drugs, when paramilitary SWAT teams were first created with the help of the

[3] I label this as "state-sanctioned" given the few cases where police killing innocent Black youth have rarely resulted in any criminal convictions, or even firing from their law enforcement jobs.

military (Lieblich & Shinar, 2018). SWAT teams were quickly created in cities across the United States as police forces focused on drug crimes, primarily in Black and Brown communities. Another surge that brought more teams began with the War on Terrorism. This was intensified as police forces had access to federal grants to further militarize their forces, such as the Byrne Grant Program and by Homeland Security, who began "handing out anti-terrorism grants like parade candy, giving cities and towns across the country funds to buy military-grade armored vehicles, guns, armor, aircraft, and other equipment" (Balko, 2014). This militarization of police forces created an accessibility and normalcy that allowed the weapons and tactics acquired to no longer focus on terrorism or dangerous drug raids, but on more mundane crimes such as regulatory inspection (ibid).

Not only is this bringing military weaponry and tactics into cities and among civilians, but it creates a disconnect between police forces and those they are serving, making it seem like war in occupied territory, where everyone is a potential threat and foreign enemy. One of the clearest examples of this was the police response to the protests in Ferguson, Missouri in the summer of 2014 in the wake of the police killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown. When protesters were met with military-style vehicles, police in riot gear, police dogs, tear gas, and snipers (Williams, 2015). Governor Nixon ordered in the National Guard, bringing 2,200 troops to the city of 21,000 people (NBC Universal, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts), creating an occupation of a city and a feeling of war. The militarization of police forces is helping to create an "us vs. them" mentality that makes interactions with police more like interacting with a military force.

Another way that policing has developed is the normalization of police presence in schools. This began with the establishing of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

Prevention as well as the Secondary Education Act, both enacted in 1974. These acts allowed for the Justice Department to have access to schools, and to allow for "widespread police patrol in the hallways and classrooms of schools serving 'economically and educationally disadvantaged children'" (Hinton, 2016, p. 236). This opened the door to police patrolling and presence within schools, evolving to schools having their own police forces, commonly called school resource officers (SROs), who are sworn law enforcement officers (Hinton, 2016; COPS).

This allowed for an increase in not only surveillance but contact of children with police officers. It has been found that the more non-White students a school has, the more likely that school is to have an SRO and the more likely the school is to have an armed SRO (Robers et al., 2015). In addition, Butler states in his book *Chokehold* that "70 percent of school discipline cases referred to the police are African American and Latino kids" (Butler, 2014, p. 44). This creates an increase in contact of Black students with law enforcement within schools, where children are required to spend the majority of their day and week. Combining this increase in contact with the dehumanization can create a dangerous combination for Black children, who are subjected to policing within schools and thus police brutality as a means for enforcing social control within these educational environments. One of the critiques made through the Critical Race Theory is that of the school-to-prison pipeline (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Having an ever present police force within schools increases the likelihood that students will face entering the criminal legal system, as it has been found that in schools where police are present, students are five times more likely to be arrested for disorderly conduct, disruptive but not violent behavior, than schools where no police are present (Lind, 2015).

Not only does this allow for policing to begin earlier in the lives of children, but the nature of policing poses a physical threat to young and still-developing kids. As Balko stated,

"Police today are also given too little training in counseling and dispute resolution,

> and what little training they do get in the academy is quickly blotted out by what they learn on the street in the first few months on the job. When you're given an excess of training in the use of force but little in using psychology, body language, and other non-coercive means of resolving a conflict, you'll naturally gravitate towards force" (Balko, 2014, p. 327).

Headlines and social media all too frequently include smart-phone videos of police using excessive force on students where dispute resolution techniques should have been used. One of the most harrowing is a cell-phone video recording of a Black female student refusing to leave her desk and the male SRO throwing her from the desk, dragging her across the room, and placing her under arrest (Stelloh & Connor, 2015). Another instance shows school security footage of an SRO picking up and slamming an 11-year-old child who appears to be Black or Brown to the floor twice as the child was walking complacently alongside the officer (McLaughlin, 2019).

The particular dangers of racism and policing in schools is made clear in the case of a six-year-old Black girl arrested at her school by an SRO for kicking someone. When the child's grandmother told the officer that the child has sleep apnea and that may be causing her to act out, the officer replied that he, too, has sleep apnea but does not behave that way (ibid). This shows that the dehumanization of Black children allows adult officers to place adult reasoning and rationale on the child's behavior and actions, and this creates dangerous situations for Black children when it comes to police interaction.

An aspect of this that is also shocking is that the officers in some of these videos are Black. The call for an increase in diversity and for Black officers specifically is a historic one,

dating as far back as the 1860s (Forman, 2017). There were many reasons to want diversification within law enforcement, ranging from economic to social justice. One of the reasons was the hope that this diversification would slow the rate of brutality and the excessive use of force towards Black people by police (Forman, 2017; Hernández, 2017). This approach has obviously not achieved ending the racist, brutal acts by police. Significantly, changing policing responses to youth (or otherwise) cannot rest solely on adding more Black officers to a police force, which has been an argument since the 1960s (Forman, 2017). Indeed, research has found that some Black officers hold racist, antiblack sentiments, including viewing Black citizens as a threat to law and order (ibid). A more recent ProPublica study found that "Black officers account for a little more than 10 percent of all fatal police shootings. Of those they kill, though, 78 percent were black" (Gabrielson, 2014). The purpose of discussing the rise in Black police officers is not to psychoanalyze some of their behavior towards other Black people, rather it is to point out that across the board, police exhibit brutality regardless of the race of the officer. Just as law enforcement agencies need to take care in the qualifications and belief systems of White officers in hiring decisions, they must do so with officers of every race/ethnicity. Moreover, hiring Black or other marginalized groups in token numbers, does not allow them to change policing as much as it allows policing to change them (Belknap, 2015). This should be applied to understanding policing in schools and the children of color being affected and why deploying Black officers or other officers of color to schools will not solely be the solution to this problem.

Over-policing impacts the "structural inequalities experienced by Black people by alienating them from mainstream society" (Owusu-Bempah, 2016, p. 29). When Black children are expelled, suspended, and reprimanded in ways that their peers are not- when they are being brutalized within their own schools- this serves as part of that discipline. The psychological and

physical trauma endured is unimaginable, and these children thus are faced with early contact with police and the criminal legal system through ways that are not experienced by the rest of society. While the United States is grappling with the growing militarization of police and the growing presence of police in schools, these developments are helping to hide a more low-key advancement in policing and technology: the Taser. As police forces are becoming more militarized, it is easy to view Tasers as non-lethal and thus not the most pressing issue in policing developments. However, categorizing this weapon as non-lethal and then increasing police presence in schools creates an environment where these weapons are being deployed onto children in ways that are deemed corrective and not a threat to their lives and well-being.

Tasers: Continuing the Conversation

As noted in the previous chapter, the findings on the medical impact and safety of Tasers is sufficiently worrisome. A particularly troubling component of the use of Tasers is the psychological and cognitive effect that it can have on those exposed to its impact. A 2016 study by Drexel University and Arizona State University was funded by the U.S. DOJ and "marks the first time that the Taser has been submitted to a major randomized clinical trial on a community sample outside the purview of Taser International [now Axon]" (McKechnie, 2016). This study examined the cognitive effects of Tasers, in the context of Miranda Rights. It was found that among healthy adults (18-34 years old, with no medical/cognitive problems), those Tased experienced cognitive dysfunction for less than an hour (Kane & White, 2015). In addition, it was found that "the results also showed that TASER exposure caused significant negative change in several subjective state self-measures, including concentration difficulty, anxiety level,

and feeling overwhelmed" (ibid, p. 20). Axon refutes these findings, claiming that the results "over relies on non-objective self-reporting" (LAAW International, 2017, p. 123).

The existing research on physiological effects combined with the lack of research on psychological and cognitive effects of Tasers raises alarms regarding their use on children. Tasers are not recommended for use on "groups who may be at risk for sudden death and those who are more vulnerable to physical insult," which include children (Institute of Justice, 2011, p. 23). Axon themselves have released a safety and health warning regarding the use of Tasers that officers should "use a CEW on [children] *only* if the situation justifies an increased risk," acknowledging that "CEW use has not been scientifically tested on these populations" (Axon Enterprise, 2018, p. 3). All of the data is pointing to the fact that while Tasers are deemed safe to use on healthy adults, not only is there limited psychological and cognitive research on its effects, but also that "the safety margins of CED use in normal healthy adults may not be applicable in small children" (Institute of Justice, 2011). In addition, a 2017 study found that "anxiety and trauma symptoms, poor physical health, and chronic health

> conditions have also been associated with invasive and aggressive policing particularly among Black men and women in the U.S." (Alang et al., 2017; Geller et al., 2014; Sewell and Jefferson, 2016; as cited by Fedina et al., 2018, p. 154).

This is particularly concerning considering these effects are only more likely to be amplified and more dangerous on the younger bodies and minds of children, *and* that among children, Black children are disproportionately likely to be Tased by the police. Stated alternatively, there is a concern that Taser use on children is more dangerous than Taser use on adults, *and* Black children are at a heightened risk of being Tased by police and thus at a higher risk of the

outcomes of this potentially lethal response. Within just five years, Huffington Post tracked 87 instances of SROs Tasing children in their schools (Klein, 2016).

The reality is that the true reach and effect of Tasers on children is largely unknown, and worse, not documented by law enforcement regarding both the use and the outcomes. Children are a protected status when it comes to being research participants, and police Taser use on children is not something that is kept track of on a national basis. The equipping of Tasers to SROs rose 4% from 2006 to 2010 and is expected to continue to increase (ibid). While Tasers have been used to de-escalate dangerous situations and increase safety for both the officer and perpetrator (Alpert et al., 2011), they are also abused, having been used on children who are simply noncompliant but pose no actual threat (J. Taylor, 2018; Ramirez, 2019). In addition, Tasers are not to be pointed at the thoracic area, as studies regarding impact on the heart are relatively inconclusive (Axon Enterprise, 2018; Zipes, 2013; Alpert et al., 2011). Yet, that does not stop officers from firing there anyway, whether intentional or not, and the increased risk this poses to youth is frightening (Klein, 2016; Berardini & Stroud, 2016). This is especially troubling due to the lack of research and understanding in the safety of Taser use on children, the fact that Tasers are advised to be used in instances of "increased risk" (Axon Enterprise, 2018), and that Black children are adultified. These overlapping layers all point to the fact that Tasers not only are being misused, but that when officers are evaluating the level of risk in a situation, adultification of Black children removes them from protected legal status of their peers, and this affects the officers' responses (Klein, 2016).

Who Calls the Shots: Police Funding and Regulation

Knowing that Black children are adultified and treated as such, that the militarization of policing and police in schools have brought new levels of police contact to children, and that Tasers are being used as a "non-lethal" weapon (yet are far from it), what are the federal regulations in place to protect vulnerable populations? The answer is depressingly simple: there are none. The more complicated answer is that it is up to the discretion of the individual police agencies. Each agency places a Taser somewhere along their use-of-force continuum, where each use of tactics or weapons are allowed with increasing threat (Butler, 2017; Alpert et al., 2011). It was found that from more than 500 agencies, most place Tasers on the same level as pepper spray, and below impact weapons (Alpert et al., 2011). Part of why Tasers have been overlooked for so long is due to the language surrounding them. The narrative that Tasers are "safer" and necessary for police to not use lethal force "serve to reinforce a discourse of seeming innocuousness around the divide but one where its utility and value is difficult to contest" (Neverson & Adeyanju, 2018, p. 1644). This narrative is used to justify the rise in its use as a safe alternative to using guns. Yet the data that supports this safety and non-lethality is just not there. Groups such as the ACLU and Amnesty International have both been vocal about their doubts of the safety of the device (ibid), and there are growing accounts of journalists chiming in. So why are Tasers still so popular and unregulated? A lot of this question can be answered by looking at the structure of policing agencies and how they are funded.

Policing agencies that are funded by federal grants, such as the Byrne Grant Program, are awarded money depending on their statistics. These statistics are not about crime reduction, rather agencies are rewarded based on things such as number of arrests, warrants served, and drug seizures (Balko, 2014). This is troubling because of the history of justifying law

enforcement actions through statistics. When there arose new ways of collecting data on race in the late 1800s, "black criminality would emerge, alongside disease and intelligence, as a fundamental measure of black inferiority" (Muhammad, 2010, p. 20). The United States has historically used race and crime statistics in order to navigate social order and policing. These statistics and "intellectual efforts" were used and are still used today to justify "nearly every manner of anti-black terror, oppression, and exploitation, from lynching to convict leasing to political disenfranchisement" (ibid, p. 30). What this shows is that these crime statistics are further enforcing and justifying the current methods of policing, and thus giving these agencies more money as a result. This leads to the inability of the state to control all actions of their agencies.

As Balko points out, it allows for the creation of things like narcotics task forces, who do not report to the state because they are being federally funded (Balko, 2014). Due to this,

> "local officials can't even control them by cutting their budget…[and the task forces] are virtually immune to accountability…[as] in 2009 the Justice Department attempted a cost-benefit analysis of these task forces but 'not only were the data insufficient to estimate what task forces accomplished,' the report read, 'data were inadequate to even tell what the task forces did for routine work'" (Balko, 2014, p. 244).

While these results are detailing drug task forces, the reality is that federally funded agencies exist among similar realities. The Office of Law Enforcement Assistance (OLEA) under the Johnson administration aided agencies in getting federal grants to upgrade their techniques, program, and weapons and also provided funding for getting SROs into schools (Hinton, 2016). OLEA soon became what is known today as the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) (The United States Department of Justice, 2019).

Federal funding is problematic because it removes the ability of the state to restrict the activities of what the federally funded programs and officers are doing. On the other hand, state funding and Congressional limitations are opposite roadblocks in the ability of Congress to create limitations within agencies. In these cases, Congress and the federal government cannot interfere with state agencies due to the limitations of their power in state affairs, and can only be influential in withholding their funding or creating new laws prohibiting certain actions (Cole, 2016).

Thus, while statistics of crime and Taser "safety" will continue to encourage Tasers to be classified as low use-of-force and even considered to be non-lethal, the funding of police agencies poses a serious hurdle in creating safety regulations for the weapon. Tasers are allowed to be classified along the continuum by each police agency, and those agencies often decide the circumstances in which they should be used, but even if those regulations are violated, there is no legal ramification because there are no laws regarding Taser use by police in 45 of the 50 states (Woolverton, 2016). This poses an imminent threat to the general public who are considered to be at higher risk if struck by a Taser. As long as the use of Tasers is up to the discretion of individual agencies, there is no way to control its use, even while the full extent of its lethality, and the psychological and cognitive effects are largely unknown and unstudied, especially on children.

Conclusion

In the age of colorblindness, racism in policing is getting incredibly difficult to combat. Colorblindness, or color-blind racism, is "the idea of solving the race problem by ignoring it" (Kendi, 2017, p. 467). It is the practice of society and politics believing that racism is behind

us as a nation, and thus cannot explain current disparities or trends of today. The Critical Race Theory that allowed for the analyzing of these topics is especially critical of colorblindness because it is hard to combat racism when it is not being acknowledged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As long as race is overlooked in policing practices, it will be incredibly hard moving forward to address the injustices that are the result of racism. Part of this overlooking is the granting of discretion to law enforcement agents- they are allowed to justify their actions, whether that be deploying a Taser, searching for drugs, or killing someone, if they felt that the situation called for that level of force or those particular actions. This discretion ensures "that conscious and unconscious racial beliefs and stereotypes will be given free reign" (Alexander, 2012, p. 103).

What this creates is a world that allows for racial stereotyping to justify the way that society and institutions, and thus police, can treat Black people. It is the world that allows the continued free reign in the use of a weapon that no one knows the true effects of. One in which schools are no longer safe for some children. It is the world that has left Black youth unprotected. As this chapter emphasizes, it is time to address these realities. The following chapter will describe current data on police use of Tasers within the state of Connecticut.

CHAPTER 3:

THE METHODS

Introduction

Although research addressing racialized policing responses, particularly police shootings, has expanded with the #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) movement (Cobbina, 2019), surprisingly little of this research has addressed Taser use. Additionally, given the research indicating that Tasing is more dangerous for youth and people who weigh less (Institute of Justice, 2011; Axon Enterprise, 2018), it is surprising how little research addresses the Tasing of youth. Finally, given both previous points, it is useful to study whether the police Tasing of youth is related to the youths' race, given that many of the victims of #BLM police shootings have been Black boys (Swaine, 2015). To fill these research voids, the current study uses 2016 Tasing data collected by Connecticut police departments. Connecticut is to be lauded for being the first, and perhaps still only, "state to require comprehensive, statewide data collection with respect to taser use" (Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, 2017, p. i). More specifically, in June 2014, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 14-149, requiring that police officers "document each incident in which a taser was used" (Ibid.). Notably, the report states: "The statewide model policy is silent with respect to the use of tasers on persons younger than 18 or older than 65. Nonetheless, the PERF guidelines, TASER International and several Connecticut police departments caution against using tasers on children or elderly persons" (ibid., p. 18).

The Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) at Central Connecticut State University was tasked with compiling and analyzing the 2016 Electronic Defense Weapon data for the State and writing a report. Both their report, *The State of Connecticut Electronic Defense Weapon Analysis and Findings, 2016* (Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, 2017) and the data file are available online. (From this point forward, I will refer to this as *The Report.*) The form police completed from which these data are compiled is Appendix A. Although *The Report* provides some detailed frequencies, the purpose of this thesis is to provide a deeper understanding about Tased suspects by carefully analyzing the data on

race and youth, independently and intersectionally. In addition, I present some statewide population data with which to compare the suspect demographic data. Also, unlike *The Report*, I conducted significance tests. The 2017 report analyzes the race/ethnicity data by "counting" all of the "Hispanic" (Latinx) individuals as a separate race, whereby the 8 suspects coded as "Black" and "Hispanic" are subsumed under "Hispanic," as are the 106 suspects coded as both White and "Hispanic."[4] I will provide a closer examination of these distinctions.

Before addressing the 2016 Connecticut Taser data in more detail, it is important to stress that *The Report* states: "Less than one percent (0.08%) of the approximately 660,000 arrest and traffic stop incidents in Connecticut in 2016 involved the use of tasers by police officers. This percentage may be even lower if the total number of statewide police-citizen encounters, including calls for service, were included." Thus, Tasing is likely one of the most serious uses of police force. Moreover, although *The Report* does not identify the number of incidents of law enforcement officers' shooting suspects with guns, the *Washington Post* data base on incidents of police killing suspects, reports four such incidents for Connecticut in 2016 (Washington Post, 2020). Notably, three were White men, aged 23, 25, and 51 and one Latinx man aged 27 were killed by guns (via shooting). The White men were killed by the law enforcement agencies in Fairfield, Mashantucket, and Stamford, and the Latinx man in the Thomaston agency. All had weapons, two had knives, one a "toy weapon" and the third weapon type was unknown. The one with the toy weapon was the only one reported to have "attacked" the police, and none of the suspects were fleeing.

Variables

The variables collected in the Connecticut Tasing form (Appendix A) included the date, time, and location of the incident, the law enforcement agency, and the unique incident number. Eighty law

[4] They do no report that they do this, but it is clear from analyzing the available data and comparing this to how "race" is reported in Table 4.0 on page 20 of the report.

enforcement agencies submitted a total of 542 Taser forms. (The list of these agencies and the distribution of Tasing practices is in Table 8, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.) The options for incident location were suspect's residence, other residence, indoors-public building, indoors-private property, outdoors-public area, outdoors-private property, educational facility, and commercial establishment. The Taser form collected information on the suspects' (but not the officers') demographic characteristics including race/ethnicity, sex, age, height, and weight. Two distinct variables were collected for "race" and "Hispanic" (Latinx). The race categories listed were AsPac (which we assume to be "Asian or Pacific Islander," Native Hawaiian, Black, American Indian, and White. A separate variable, "Hispanic" (which I will mostly refer to as Latinx) was a dichotomous (yes/no) variable. Taser/EDW deployment included 4 deployment types: laser only, warning arc, cartridge, and drive stun. More detailed data were supposed to be included but are often missing, including the number and lengths of the displays or arcs, drive-stun applications, and activations after probe contact. Identical suspect and officer "condition" or injuries were collected with the following dichotomous variables: not injured, bruises, abrasions, breathing difficulty, probe puncture only, lost consciousness, death, and "other."

The activity that led to the incident included the dichotomous variables crime in progress, domestic disturbance, other disturbance, traffic stop, emotionally disturbed subject, suspicious person, executing warrant, under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, and "other." Police officers' initial perceptions of the suspects were the dichotomous variables non-aggressive, previous hostility toward police, possibly intoxicated, emotionally disturbed, actively verbally aggressive, actively physically aggressive, armed with [fill in the blank], and "other." Suspect's resistance that resulted in the "application of force" were the dichotomous variables threat/hostile, dead weight/non-compliant, fighting stance/combative, threaten use of weapon, fleeing unarmed assault, armed with firearm, armed with edged weapon, armed with blunt instrument armed with [fill in the blank], failed to follow officer's directions, suicidal and "other."

Analysis

Given that race/ethnicity were central to the current study, I computed a new race variable combining the intersections of the "race" and "Hispanic" (Latinx) variables (see Table 1). Notably, there were no missing data for either of these variables. The newly computed Race/Latinx variable as well as the other suspect demographic variables were compared to the population data from American Community Survey and U.S. Census data (Table 1).

Limitations

It is important to recognize that Connecticut has been unique in implementing required reporting of the law enforcement use of Tasers. With the net-widening police use-of-force that the implementation of Tasing has provided, there has been no corresponding expectation that police Taser-use should be monitored or evaluated (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2018). At the same time that I laud Connecticut requiring such data collection, the data and study are not without limitations. First, even the 2017 report notes that:

> "the use of tasers by police appears to be under-reported. Many police departments did not report all uses of a taser….Several of the largest departments told IMRP researchers that they had been unaware of the requirement to report all activation of tasers, not just incidents in which a person was tased" (p. 24).

Moreover, most of the data rely on what police report, which could be wrong, such as the suspects' race and ethnicity, resistance behaviors, and so on. This is further compounded by implicit racial bias found in previous studies of policing (Fridell & Lim, 2016). It would be awkward to ask suspects their race/ethnicity and could understandably make the suspects concerned as to why they are being asked for this information. On the other hand, my goal is to determine whether police respond differently based on suspects' race/ethnicity and they are reporting what they believe this race/ethnicity is. It is possible that officers completing the form could have implicit or explicit bias in reporting their perceptions of whether a suspect is aggressive and so on and minimize their own overly aggressive or unprofessional responses

to the suspects (James, 2018; Matthew, 2015). Despite these limitations, this data set offers a detailed account of police use of Tasers, particularly regarding their use on minors, but also regarding suspects' race/ethnicity.

Conclusion

The 2016 Connecticut Tasing data can help fill a significant gap in police use of force and #BlackLivesMatter research. The 452 cases include 37 cases of minors (suspects under the age of 18) who were Tased. This data set also allows a wider look at the #BlackLivesMatter among all ages in terms of Tasing. The following chapter reports the findings from these data on race in general and among youth, specifically.

CHAPTER 4:

THE FINDINGS

Introduction

The previous chapters described the limitations in the existing research on police use of force regarding the police use of Tasers. This research rarely addresses race and even less frequently addresses police use of Tasers on minors. Chapter 3 described the 2016 data collected due to the June 2014 Connecticut General Assembly Public Act 14-149, which included a directive for police officers to complete a one-page form every time they used a Taser. This chapter describes the findings from analyses of these data, expanding on the analysis of these same data in *The State of Connecticut Electronic Defense Weapon Analysis and Findings, 2016* (Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, 2017), referenced as *The Report* in the remainder of this chapter. Given findings in Tables 1 through 3, that Black/non-Latinx appears to be the most predictive racial/ethnic category in Tasing, the remainder of the analyses distinguish race/ethnicity as a dichotomous variable: Black/non-Latinx in relation to all other race/ethnicity categories. More specifically, with the fairly small frequencies of many of the variables, it is necessary to make a dichotomous race/ethnicity variable and analyses in Tables 1 through 3 indicate that whether the suspect is Black/non-Latinx is the most powerful dichotomous race/ethnicity distinction. Furthermore, consistent with the other purpose of this thesis (in addition to studying race/ethnicity in police Tasing suspects), I will routinely make comparisons between minors and adults. Finally and encouragingly, it is worth stressing that although a motivator for the Connecticut General Assembly passing Public Act 140149 was due to some deaths caused by Tasing, no Tased suspects died in 2016.

Comparing Tased Suspects to Overall State Demographic Characteristics

The previous chapter referenced Table 1, which compares the Tased suspects to the overall state demographic characteristics Latinx, Race, Age (under 18), and gender/sex in Connecticut in 2016. Importantly, although actual significance tests are not presented, most of the reporting in *The Report*

appears as if there are no significant racial differences in Tasing. For example, in *The Report,* Table 8.0 (p. 25), 60% of emotionally disturbed suspects were Tased among White, Black and "all other races," while 42% of emotionally disturbed Latinx individuals are Tased. Table 11.0 (p. 28) indicates if there are any racial differences in fleeing individuals being Tased, it is slightly more likely for White suspects, and Table 12.0 (p. 29) indicates that if there are racial differences in the number of deployments, they are slightly higher for Whites than Blacks. The likelihoods of unarmed suspects being Tased ranges from 52% to 62% among unarmed suspects, with the 8 suspects who are "all other races" (Asian American and Native American) being at the highest end (62%) (Table 6.0, p. 24). Among armed suspects, White and Black suspects are equally likely to be Tased (58.8% and 56.3%, respectively), while 46.2% of armed Latinx suspects are Tased. In Table 7.0 of *The Report,* all Black suspects armed with a firearm were Tased, while 60% of Whites armed with firearms were Tased, and the one Latinx suspect with a firearm was not Tased (and no "other races" were armed with a firearm) (Table 7.0, p. 24).

Tables 1 and 2 include the 6 race/ethnicity categories resulting from combining the Latinx ("Hispanic") and race variables in *The Report's* corresponding Excel data file of the 2016 suspects Tased in Connecticut in 2016. The largest category was White/non-Latinx suspects (43.7%), followed by Black/non-Latinx (33.8%), and White/Latinx (19.6%) suspects, with Asian American/non-Latinx (1.3%), Black/Latinx (1.5%) and Native American (0.2%) constituting less than 2 percent each. Table 1 provides strong support for the disproportionate Tasing of people of color, with the exception of Asian Americans whose likelihood of being Tased is 3.5 times *less likely* (given their representation in the Connecticut population). *Black/non-Latinx individuals are almost 3.5 times as likely to be among those Tased by the police* (33.8%) as their representation in the Connecticut population (9.9%). *White/Latinx individuals (19.6%) are about twice as likely to be among Tased suspects* as their representation in the Connecticut population (9.2%). Although *Black/Latinx and American Indian Alaskan Native/non-Latinx* constitute only 1.5% and 0.2% respectively of those Tased, they *are about twice as over-represented among those Tased* as their representation in the Connecticut population. White/non-Latinx suspects constitute 43.7% of those Tased, and 67.4% of those in the population. As noted, Asian American/non-Latinx are under-

represented by more than a third among those Tased (1.3%) and their portion of the state population (4.5%). (There were no Asian American/Latinx and the only Native American was not also Latinx.) Thus, while some of the measures of Tasing as presented in *The Report* appear as if there are little to no racial differences in Tasing practices, Table 1 presents far more raced/racist police use of Tasers. Of course, some will argue that people of color, particularly African Americans, may behave in more criminally and aggressively manners than Whites and Asian Americans, which explains this extremely raced representation of those Tased. Although the current data cannot completely answer this, additional analyses can address some of this.

Recall that *The Report* "counted" all 114 suspects identified as Latinx ("Hispanic") also as a race in the "race" variable. More specifically, 106 of them were identified as White and the remaining 8 were identified as Black in the "race" variable. In Table 1, Latinx individuals are 21.0% of Tased suspects and 15.7% of the state population, thus are over-represented by about 5 percent among the Tased. Turning to age, minors (individuals under 18 years old) constitute 6.9% of those Tased while they are three times more prevalent (21.0%) in the state's population. One would expect their portion to be less than what it is in the general population, given concerns and some restrictions about Tasing minors and Tasing is one of the most serious responses by the police. Indeed, medical and criminal legal system professionals concerned with the additional health risks Tasers may pose for youth (relative to adults), would advocate for this being far less than one in 13.5 of suspects Tased (which is the ratio for these 2016 Connecticut data). Similar to other research, boys/men are far more likely to be Tased (93.4%) than girls/women (6.6%), which is to be expected as girls/women are far less likely to offend and have encounters with the police than boys/men (Belknap, 2015).

Racial and Age Categories and Comparisons among Suspects Tased by the Police

In an effort to disentangle race/ethnicity, I constructed a race/ethnicity variable by combining *The Report's* race and "Hispanic" variables. Tables 2 and 3 include my analyses to examine measures of race/ethnicity *and* age, specifically the experience of minors (youth), among those Tased. Table 2

compares minors and adults who were Tased. First, in addition to the small numbers for Asian (n = 7) and Native Americans (n =1) in the data set, *none* of these Tased suspects were under 18. Moreover, *none* of the 8 Black/Latinx Tased suspects were under 18. In fact, of all of these race/ethnicities with no one under 18, only one, a Black/Latinx suspect, was under 22 years old (a 19-year-old Black/Latinx man). Table 2 presents all this information, as well comparing the racial/ethnic category representations among those 18 and older, the adults.

What is clear in Table 2, is that Black minors, particularly Black *boys*, who are not also Latinx are the most at risk of being Tased by the police; they constitute 59.5% of Tased youth, followed by White/non-Latinx youth constituting 27% of Tased youth, and White/Latinx constituting the final 13.5% of Tased youth. Recall in Table 1 that White/non-Latinx are 67.4% of Connecticut's population, while White/Latinx and Black/non-Latinx are 9.2% and 9.9%, respectively, of Connecticut's population. Further, note that even among the Tased adult suspects in Table 2, White/Latinx individuals are more than twice as likely to be Tased (compared to their portion of the Connecticut population), and Black/non-Latinx individuals are more than three times as likely to be Tased compared to their representation in the Connecticut population. Although this racial distribution is less skewed among White/Latinx Tased minors (13.5%) compared to adults (20.4%), it is far more skewed among the Black/non-Latinx Tased suspects. Black/non-Latinx minors are *six times more likely to be Tased (59.5%) than the 9.9% of the Connecticut population who are Black/non-Latinx.*

Finally, Table 2 includes the significance test results for including all 6, only the first four (White/non-Latinx, Black/non-Latinx, White/Latinx, and Black/Latinx), and only the first three (White/non-Latinx, Black/non-Latinx, and White/Latinx) race/ethnicity categories. Although the first two suffer from some cell sizes of an expected frequency of less than 5, there is only one such cell when using the first four race/ethnic categories and no cell-size problems when using the first three racial categories. *In all the cross-tabulations, the disproportionate racial/ethnic distribution across age as it pertains to whether an individual is a minor, are significant* (ranging from $p = 0.033$ with all 6 race/ethnicity categories to $p = 0.005$ for the first three categories).

One of the most astounding findings is in Table 3: *Even among minors, Black/non-Latinx youth are all the minors under 16 years old who were Tased.* That is, all eight Tased youth ranging from 7 to 15 years old (one 7-year-old, one 13-year-old, two 14-year-olds, and three 15-year-olds) were Black/non-Latinx. Three (12.3%) of the 37 minors who were Tased were girls: two Black/non-Latinx girls aged 13 and 17, and a 17-year-old White-Latinx girl. Even among the two other age categories, 16 years old and 17 years old, Black/non-Latinx were the most over-represented: 46.2% (n = 13) of the youth 16 years old and half (50.0%, n = 16) of the youth 17 years old were Black/non-Latinx. White/Latinx constituted 15.4% of the youth 16 years old and 18.8% of the youth 17 years old, while White/non-Latinx were 38.5% of the youth 16 years old and 31.3% of the youth 17 years old.

Next, based on the findings presented in Table 2, I constructed numerous dichotomous race/ethnicity variables, to examine their relationship to measuring youth as under 18 or under 22. These dichotomous (yes/no) variables were Latinx (regardless of race), White including White-Latinx, Black/non-Latinx, Black or Black-Latinx, and Black and/or Latinx. Table 3 presents these findings. *All dichotomous race/ethnicity variables except for Latinx (regardless of race) were significantly related to being under the age of 18.* The dichotomous race variable most strongly and significantly related to minor status was when race was measured as Black without including the Black/non-Latinx suspects (Table 3).

Tased Suspects' Demographic Characteristics

Table 4 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the entire Connecticut police-Tased sample, distinguishing between whether the suspect was Black/non-Latinx. The only variable that did not reach statistical significance was sex/gender. Given the findings from Tables 2 and 3, it is not surprising that suspects in the younger categories were disproportionately Black/non-Latinx. Black/non-Latinx suspects (12.2%) were almost 3 times as likely as "other" race/ethnicities (4.2%) to be minors (under the age of 18), while there were far smaller differences in the older age groups ($p \leq 0.005$). The measures of physical size, height, weight and mass (height x weight) consistently and significantly indicated that

Black/non-Latinx suspects are over-represented in the larger body measures while "other" race/ethnicities are more frequently in the smaller body measures. In terms of height, the biggest gap in height categories was for the tallest group (6'1" to 6'8") with Black/non-Latinx suspects (30.2%) almost twice as likely as "others" (16.6%) to be in this group ($p \leq 0.001$). Black/non-Latinx suspects were less often in the two lower weight categories and higher in the two higher weight categories, with the biggest gap for the lowest weight category (95-135 pounds) where "others" (9.8%) were 2.7 times more likely than Black/non-Latinx (3.6%) ($p \leq 0.05$). Similar findings were in the mass (height x weight) variable where the two lower body mass categories were higher for "other" race/ethnicities and the highest category was higher for Black/non-Latinx suspects. Although my data cannot prove this, these findings indicate that Black/non-Latinx individuals are further at risk of police Tasing when they are bigger (taller, weigh more, and have a greater body mass).

Given the concerns about the Tasing of minors in this thesis, and particularly Black/non-Latinx minors, Table 5 is almost identical to Table 4 except that it is restricted to the youth in the sample and sometimes with more restricted categories. It is not surprising how few youths are in the data (37) combined with some missing data for some of the variables, that there was only one significant finding. The previous section addressed girls' ages and race/ethnicity; that three minors were girls of which two were Black/non-Latinx and one was White/Latinx. Also, this Table provides an age breakdown of minors that differs from Table 3 in that it is simply Black/non-Latinx versus all other races. This was the only significant variable in Table 5, although it should be interpreted with some caution due to two small cell sizes. Once again, that all of the youth under 16 are Black/non-Latinx drives the significance of this variable. The findings on body size solely with minors is similar to that of the entire sample, even though none of them reach significance (although the mass variable approaches significance at $p = 0.081$): Black/non-Latinx youth who are larger in body measures appear to be disproportionately at risk of being Tased by the police.

Police Responses among Tased Suspects

i. Responses based on Minor (Youth) Status

Table 6 presents a comparison of police responses to Tased suspects based on whether they were minors or adults. Deploying a cartridge is the most severe Tasing response, and as expected (and hoped) police were significantly more likely to deploy a Taser cartridge among adult (51%) suspects, although they still deployed a cartridge with almost a third (32.4%) of the minors ($p \leq 0.05$). There were no significant differences regarding police officers warning youth or adults; they warned first in 83.9% of the cases. Turning to injuries resulting from the police incident, although adults were significantly more likely to be injured (48.6%), three-in-ten youth were also injured (29.7%, $n = 11$, $p \leq 0.05$). There were no significant differences between minors and adults in terms of suffering bruising, an abrasion, and having difficulty breathing, but these were all rare, with abrasions being most common (16.5% of adults and 10.8% of minors). Although it was just under reaching significance, adults (31.5%) were about twice as likely as minors (16.2%) to have a puncture injury from the Taser ($p = 0.051$).

Turning to reasons the police were called, there were only two significant differences between adults and minors (Table 6). First, police were about twice as likely to be called for minors (43.2%) than adults (23.7%) regarding a crime-in-progress ($p \leq 0.01$). Second, Police were 3.5 times as likely to be called for adults (28.9%) than minors (8.1%) being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs ($p \leq 0.01$). There were no differences between youth and adults in terms of police involvement due to a domestic disturbance, another disturbance, a traffic stop, an emotionally disturbed person, a suspicious person, or executing a warrant. In terms of police officers' initial perceptions of suspects, most differences between youth and adults were non-significant (i.e., non-aggressive, previous hostility, emotionally disturbed, verbally aggressive, and physically aggressive). An exception was that police were three times more likely to be involved in a Tasing incident with adults (41.4%) than youth (13.5%) with a suspect who was possibly intoxicated ($p \leq 0.001$).

Finally, in terms of the types of resistance suspects used, most were not significantly different between youth and adults (i.e., deadweight/non-compliance, fighting stance/combative, threatened

weapon use, fleeing, armed with a firearm, armed with an edged weapon, armed with a blunt instrument, failing to follow directions, and suicidal resistance[5]) (Table 6). The resistance tactics that were significantly different were that adults (50.4%) were more likely than minors (32.4) to pose a threat/hostility ($p \leq 0.05$) and to use an unarmed assault on the officer (12.0% of adults and 0.0% of minors ($p \leq 0.05$). Given that police are supposed to avoid using Tasers on minors, it is troubling that these significant differences indicate that the adults were more threatening/hostile and to commit an unarmed assault of the officers. Also, while only two of the eleven suspect resistance variables were significant, many were plagued by small cell sizes and 3 variables approached significance. For example, youth (51.4%) were more likely to flee than adults (36.5%) ($p = 0.073$), youth (5.4%) were more likely to have a firearm than the adults (1.6%) ($p = 0.100$), and youth (18.9%) were almost twice as likely to have an edged weapon than the adults (10.2%) ($p = 0.101$).

ii. Responses based on Race/Ethnicity

Table 7 is identical to Table 6 except that it compares the police responses to Tased suspects by race/ethnicity rather than age (minor status). Recall that the dichotomous race/ethnicity variable used was whether the Tased suspect was Black/non-Latinx. There were no race/ethnicity differences in terms of whether the police deployed a cartridge (the most serious Taser tactic) and whether a Tased suspect was warned first. The only suspect injury that was significantly different based on race/ethnicity was that Black/non-Latinx (2.7%) Tased suspects were more likely than the other race/ethnicities (0.3%) to experience difficulty breathing ($p \leq 0.01$), however, this should be interpreted with some caution as this was a very rare phenomenon with small cell sizes. There were no differences in race/ethnicity in terms of being injured (in general), being bruised or suffering an abrasion or a puncture injury from being Tased.

Conversely, there were four of the eight variables assessing the *reason for police involvement* were significant for whether Black/non-Latinx (Table 7). Black/non-Latinx Tased suspects (32.8%) were about 1.6 times more likely than others (20.9%) to include a crime-in-progress ($p \leq 0.01$), and 1.6 times

[5] It is not clear what "suicidal resistance" means.

more likely than others to include a traffic stop (18.0% of Black/non-Latinx, 11.1% of others, ($p \leq 0.05$). This is consistent with "driving-while-Black," the highly disproportionate traffic stops of Black drivers (Engel & Calnon, 2004; Gilliard-Matthews, 2017; Roh & Robinson, 2009). "Others" (all race/ethnic categories other than Black/non-Latinx) (33.7%) were 1.5 times more likely than Black/non-Latinx (21.9%) to have an "emotionally disturbed person" be a reason for police involvement ($p \leq 0.01$), and 1.4 times more likely to have police involvement be due to the suspect being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (21.3% of Black/non-Latinx, 30.1% of others, $p \leq 0.05$). There were no significant race/ethnicity differences for police involvement for the variables domestic disturbance, other disturbance, suspicious person, and executing a warrant, however police involvement for executing a warrant approached significance. More specifically, police were about twice as likely to be involved due to executing a warrant for Black/non-Latinx suspects (7.7%) than "others" (3.9%) ($p = 0.62$).

Two of the six *initial police perceptions of the suspect* variables were significantly different based on whether the suspect was Black/non-Latinx (Table 6). First, "others" (46.5%) were 1.8 times more likely to be "possibly intoxicated than Black/non-Latinx (25.7%) ($p \leq 0.001$). Second, Black/non-Latinx suspects (47.5%) were 1.2 times as likely as "others" (38.4%) to be perceived by the police as physically aggressive ($p \leq 0.05$). There were no significant differences in police officers' initial perceptions based on whether the suspect was non-aggressive, had previous hostility to the police, was emotionally disturbed, or was verbally aggressive. Out of the eleven *suspect resistance* variables, only one reached statistical significance in terms of whether Black/non-Latinx: Black/non-Latinx suspects (48.6%) were 1.5 times as likely as "others" (31.8%) to flee the police ($p \leq 0.001$). Two other suspect resistance variables approached significance and are worth reporting. First, Black/non-Latinx suspects (54.1%) were 1.2 times more likely than "others" (45.4%) to not follow police directions ($p = 0.055$). Second, "others" (45.7%) were 1.2 times as likely as Black/non-Latinx suspects (37.7) to use a fighting stance/be combative to the police ($p = 0.076$).

Specific Law Enforcement Agencies' Race/Ethnicity and Minor Responses

Table 8 lists all of the Connecticut law enforcement agencies in 2016 who submitted at least one Tasing report. It also lists, where I could determine it, the demographic characteristics percent Black/non-Latinx, percent minors living in poverty, and percent Black/non-Latinx living in poverty to provide a more structural context of racism, poverty, and their intersections, as well as to provide a context for how each law enforcement agency's Tasing of Black/non-Latinx suspects compares to their specific percent Black/non-Latinx. These are not "perfect" and as evidenced, the demographic data for these locations came from varying sources. I prioritized data that was from 2016 (American Community Supplemental Survey 2016, 2020; American Community Survey, 2020), data providing the mean (average) from 2014 to 2018 (American Community Survey 2014-2018, 2020), and finally, U.S. Census data for 2010 (U.S. Census 2010, 2020). First, *The Report* identifies 14 agencies that "prohibit or discourage the use of a taser against children and aged persons": Ansonia, Cheshire, East Haven, Fairfield, Greenwich, UConn, Groton, New Haven, New London, Ridgefield, Stratford, Waterbury, Vernon, and Wethersfield. Of these 14 agencies, 3 Tased a minor and in every case, the youth was Black/non-Latinx. The only person Tased in Greenwich, with a population of 7.9% Black/non-Latinx, was a Black/non-Latinx minor. Twelve (12.1%, n = 4) of New Haven's (31.2% Black/non-Latinx population) and 6.7% (n = 2) of Waterbury's (20.2% Black/non-Latinx) Tased suspects were minors (all Black/non-Latinx). Finally, perusing Table 7, even with all of the missing percent Black/non-Latinx by location, there are numerous examples where the percent of Black/non-Latinx Tased far exceeds the percent Black/non-Latinx in the population (e.g., Danbury, Darien, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, Farmington, Glastonbury, Greenwich, Hartford, Meriden, Middletown, Milford, Naugatuck, New Haven, New London, Newtown, Norwalk, Putnam, Simsbury, Stamford, Stratford, Trumbull, Waterbury, West Hartford, West Haven, and Windsor Locks).

Conclusion

The 2016 Connecticut Tasing data can help fill a significant gap in police use of force and #BlackLivesMatter research. The 452 cases include 37 cases of minors (suspects under the age of 18)

who were Tased. The analyses documented the significant over-representation among Black/non-Latinx Tased suspects, and this racial disparity was strongest for minors. Although one of the police response variables in this chapter was that Black/non-Latinx suspects are more physically aggressive compared to "other" race/ethnicities, the only other significant police response variables where Black/non-Latinx suspects were disproportionately prevalent were that police involvement was more likely with Black/non-Latinx suspects when there was a crime-in-progress, a suspect fleeing the site, and for a traffic stop. Black/non-Latinx suspects' fleeing could be related to #BlackLivesMatter with such suspects, whether they are guilty or innocent, fearful of being shot by the police. The findings on traffic stops appears to be consistent with earlier cited work on racial profiling in police traffic stops. On the other hand, the police response variables that were disproportionately associated with a race/ethnicity "other" than Black/non-Latinx, were for being emotionally disturbed, being under the influence of alcohol/drugs, and being possibly intoxicated.

Research comparing Tased adult and minor suspects indicates that youth suspects are more likely than adults to have a firearm and/or edged weapon, but they were also less likely to perpetrate an unarmed assault against the police. Indeed, they never did so while 12.0% of the adult suspects did. The adults were more likely to be reported as threatening/hostile than the minor suspects. The final table, Table 8, indicates that law enforcements are not alike in their likelihood of Tasing youth and/or Black/non-Latinx individuals.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Through the Critical Race and Dehumanization Theories, this thesis worked to deconstruct the threat of police brutality to African Americans, with a focus on Black children, using an intersectional approach. Thanks to the #BlackLivesMatter Movement, there has been an unprecedented investigation of racism within policing and how it targets Black people. Although much of the recent research and investigation into this police brutality examined why Black men are targeted, very little research has focused on how this targeting can include Tasing, and particularly the risk of police Tasing Black children. Indeed, there is no in-depth research on the use of Tasers as a form of police brutality against Black children. The findings within this thesis are the first of its kind to take this approach, and hopefully a steppingstone to further studies on Tasing as potentially a form of police use of excessive force, including police brutality, and the potentially unique risk for Black children. The findings reported in Chapter 4 work to understand the implications of a groundbreaking data collection by the state of Connecticut using *The State of Connecticut Electronic Defense Weapon Analysis and Findings, 2016*, which are further discussed within this chapter. The contributions and future of research within this area, as well as suggestions for policy, are contained within this chapter, as well.

Significant Findings and their Implications

One of the first major findings from these analyses draws important similarities and differences among adults (18+) and youths (under 18) in terms of Tasing incidents. The first

being that adults are more likely to be Tased than youths by just under 19%, and no significant differences were found in whether the officer warned the suspect. Additionally, adults were more likely than youths to suffer injuries, and although some injury areas were shared in likelihood by youths and adults, these were nonsignificant. Adults were also more likely to have the police called on them due to being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Finally, adults were more likely to be perceived by the officer as hostile/threatening and likely to commit unarmed assault of the officer. This shows that at face value, it does not seem that youths are being singled out by Tasings, or are suffering, more than adults are. However, what these results may mean is that police officers are using Tasers on youths for reasons that do not require that level of force, as adults did tend to be more hostile/threatening to the officer.

Crucial implications arose from examining instances of police Tasing under the racial/ethnic lens. It was found that being a racial or ethnic minority increases the likelihood to be Tased at rates that exceed the percent of state population they make up. It was found that Black/non-Latinx people are 3.5 times as likely to be Tased than they make up in percent of Connecticut population. For White/Latinx, this likelihood is almost twice as likely compared to the state percentage of population, and both Black/Latinx and American Indian Alaskan Native/non-Latinx are nearly twice as likely to be Tased compared to their state demographic percentage, as well. What this shows is that as a racial or ethnic minority within Connecticut, these groups are being Tased at rates that exceed the makeup of that group's representation within state demographics. These findings further support the claim of racial and ethnic disparities within the criminal legal system that target minority groups (Rovner, 2016; Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018).

The final and arguably most critical finding that is key within the scope of this thesis is found when Tasings of children are examined by age. The analyses showed that Black children (under the age of 18) make up 59.5% of youth Tased, while the entire Black/Non-Latinx population (all ages) in the state of Connecticut make up just 9.9%. This racial/ethnic disparity in youth Tasing was also shown among White/Latinx youth, who made up 27% of the youth Tased by police, yet the entire White/Latinx population within the state constitutes just 9.2%. This analysis found significance in racial/ethnic distribution among minors and exposes the huge gap in racial disparities in Tased suspects by age among youth. Expanding on this analysis further, it was found that among all youth Tasing incidents for the age group 16 years old and under, each incident involved a Black/non-Latinx child. Even when looking at the Tasing incidents among the 17-year-old cohort, Black/non-Latinx youth were overrepresented, making up 50% of the cases. What these findings show is that Black children are more likely to be involved in a Tasing incident, the likelihood increasing as the age decreases from 17 years old. There are, of course, many things this may be attributed to, such as an increase in committing crime or posing a threat to the officer. Yet, after examining these numbers under the Critical Race and Dehumanization Theories, there is reason to be skeptical that these numbers do not represent larger issues of racism and adultification of Black children.

How to Move Forward: Research and Policy Recommendations

These findings are critical in choosing how to move forward with research in the use of Tasers on children, and the racial implications they have for Black children specifically. To begin, this thesis can be used within the #BlackLivesMatter Movement and further Critical Race and Dehumanization Studies. This research can begin to narrow in on specific police brutalities

against Black children that expand beyond the current focus of police shootings and general police brutality. It is important to note that the #BlackLivesMatter Movement does not focus solely on issues of police brutality, but the contributions of this thesis and the findings can help to further expand the range of available research and findings of racism within the criminal legal system.

What this thesis and these findings show is that there is much room for expanding upon the examination of police Tasing of youths and additionally, Tasers in general. There is virtually no research being conducted on police use of Tasers on youths. This makes it difficult to begin to understand the breadth of police brutality and who is falling victim to it. Also, there is not a general consensus on the safety of Tasers, especially not on the safety of their use on children. Further medical research would aid in better understanding their effects and dangers. This thesis begins to broach these subjects and analyze existing data that for the first time addresses the racialized Tasing of youths. It is my hope that this research can be a steppingstone to the much needed additional studies and examinations into police use of Tasers, Taser health implication, police use of Tasers on youths, and police use of Tasers on youths of color, specifically Black youths.

As discussed in Chapter 2, it is hard to imagine a way to federally regulate police use of Tasers at this time. However, there are more immediate steps to take that can begin to move the criminal legal system in that direction. The most pressing being the collection of data. It must be noted that Connecticut has taken a large step in that direction by requiring officers to report on the use of Tasers. This step provides an example that can be encouraged among other states. That being said, the existing report of the data collected by Connecticut and used in this thesis did not address the highly raced impact of Tasing on either adults or children.

An important step in improving the research of police use of Tasers would be a federally mandated statewide Taser-use report requirement. This would offer researchers, government officials, police forces, and the public access to uniform data collection. Additionally, it would provide clear data collection instructions to police forces, to aid in their ability to track Taser use. Another policy recommendation on a smaller scale would be for individual police forces to review Taser safety in the context of use on children, and work to move away from using this technology unnecessarily or excessively until further research can be conducted on its safety on youths. It is clear that restricting the use of Tasers at a national level is not realistic in the near future, but this does not mean action cannot be taken now to improve the current situation. Working to improve data collection and research on Tasers and Taser use will provide the information necessary to take the critical policy steps toward protecting youths, particularly Black children, from police brutality.

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APPENDIX 1

State of Connecticut - Office of Policy and Management Electronic Defense Weapon Report

Law Enforcement Agency	Report Prepared By	Reporting Year	Date of Report

Law Enforcement Agency does not authorize its officers to use electronic defense weapons
Law Enforcement Agency authorizes its officers to use electronic defense weapons, but had no deployments during the calendar year

Incident Case Number	Date of Report	Date of Incident	Time of Incident

Sex	Race	Height	Weight	Age	Hispanic
					Yes No

EDW Deployment Type Laser Only Warning Arc Cartridge Drive Stun
#, Length of Displays or Arcs
#, Length of Drive-Stun Applications
#, Length of Activations After Probe Contact
EDW Downloaded By (Attach Data Report)

Warning Provided to Subject? Yes No

Subject Condition		Officer Condition	
Not Injured	Probe Puncture Only	Not Injured	Probe Puncture Only
Bruises	Lost Consciousness	Bruises	Lost Consciousness
Abrasions	Death	Abrasions	Death
Breathing Difficulty		Breathing Difficulty	
Other:		Other:	

Location Environment

Subject's Residence	Indoors - Public Building
Other Residence	Indoors - Private Property
Outdoors - Public Area	Educational Facility
Outdoors - Private Property	Commercial Establishment

Officer's Arrival (Check one)

Marked Cruiser	Officer not in Uniform	Other
Unmarked Vehicle	Officer Identified Self	
Officer in Uniform	Not Initial Officer on Scene	

Activity that Led to Incident (Check all that apply)

Crime in Progress	Suspicious Person
Domestic Disturbance	Executing Warrant
Disturbance (other)	Under Influence of Alcohol and/or Drugs
Traffic Stop	Other
Emotionally Disturbed Subject	

Officer's Initial Perception of Subject (Check all that apply)

Non-aggressive	Actively Aggressive (Verbal)
Previous Hostility Toward Police	Actively Aggressive (Physical)
Possibly Intoxicated	Armed with
Emotionally Disturbed	Other

Subject Resistance Resulting in Application of Force (Check all that apply)

Threat/Hostile	Armed with Edged Weapon
Dead Weight/Non-compliant	Armed with Blunt Instrument
Fighting Stance/Combative	Armed with Other
Threaten Use of Weapon	Failed to Follow Officer's Directions
Fleeing	Suicidal
Unarmed Assault	Other
Armed with Firearm	

APPENDIX B: TABLES 1 THROUGH 8

Table 1: Latinx, Race, Age, and Gender, Representations in the 2016 Connecticut Population and the Connecticut Police Tased Suspects

Race/Ethnicity	**Connecticut Population**[a] N = 3,576,452		**Connecticut Tased Suspects** N = 542[b]	
	%	n	%	(n)
Latinx				
Yes	15.7%	562,347	21.0%	114
No	84.3%	3,014,105	79.0%	428
Race/Latinx[c]				
White/non-Latinx	67.4%	2,411,769	43.7%	237
Black/non-Latinx	9.9%	352,345	33.8%	183
White/Latinx	9.2%	330,123	19.6%	106
Asian American/Pacific Islander/Hawai'ian/non-Latinx	4.5%	160,343	1.3%	7
Black/Latinx	0.7%	26,587	1.5%	8
American Indian Alaskan Native/non-Latinx	0.1%	4,968	0.2%	1
Age				
Under 18	21.0%	752,162	6.9%	37
18+	79.0%	2,824,290	93.1%	498
Gender				
Female	48.8%	1,745,153	6.6%	36
Male	51.2%	1,831,299	93.4%	506

[a] American Community Survey Connecticut 2016 data from Social Explorer on 4/6/2020.
[b] The only variable of the Connecticut Taser data that had missing values was age, where the n was 535.
[c] The Taser race/Latinx variable was computed using the two variables "Hispanic" and "race" in the police data. The Social Explorer data is directly from their data, no computing other than combining Asian and Pacific Islander and Hawai'ian. The sum of the race/Latinx percentages for the Social Explorer data is 91.88 (N = 3,286,135) because only the race/ethnicities included in the police Tasing data are listed in the table. The police Tasing data did not identify individuals who were bi- or multi-racial (and counted Latinx as ethnicity not race), although there likely were such individuals. In the Social Explorer data bi- or multi-racial individuals who were not Latinx constituted 2.1% of the Connecticut population and those who were Asian Latinx constituted 1.1% of the population. Like the American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AIAN)/Latinx, the percent representation of the AIAN- non-Latinx populations was 0.1, as was Asian America/Latinx. The 505 Native Hawai'ian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI)/non-Latinx were combined with the Asian/non-Latinx because the Taser data combined Asian with Pacific Islander while the Social Explorer data combined Hawai'ian and Pacific Islander. The 734 NHOPI/Latinx, were 0.02% of the total population. Some other race than what is thus far listed in the table and this footnote and who

were not Latinx were 0.3% (n= 11,451) and those same "other" race individuals who were also identified Latinx were 4.5% (n = 159,557) of the population.

Table 2: Race/Ethnicity by Whether Suspect was a Minor (N = 535)[a]

	N	Under 18		18+		χ^2	p value
		%	(n)	%	(n)		
Race/Ethnicity Categories							
White/non-Latinx	233	27.0	(10)	45.5	(223)	67.4%	
Black/non-Latinx	181	59.5	(22)	32.4	(159)	9.9%	
White/Latinx	105	13.5	(5)	20.4	(100)	9.2%	
Black/Latinx	8	0.0	(0)	1.6	(8)		
Asian American/non-Latinx	7	0.0	(0)	100.0	(7)		
Native American	1	0.0	(0)	100.0	(1)		
Significance Tests[b]							
All 6 race/ethnicity categories	535					*12.154*[c]	0.033
The first 4 race/ethnicity categories	527					*11.391*[d]	0.010
The first 3 race/ethnicity categories	519					*10.626*	0.005

[a] N is 535 due to missing ages for 7 individuals in the sample. These race categories were conducted for the current study, not the one used in *The State of Connecticut Electronic Defense Weapon Analysis and Findings, 2016* (Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, 2017).

[b] Significance tests were conducted using first, all 6 of the racial/ethnic categories, followed with the first 4 categories (without the 7 Asian American/non-Latinx and 1 Native American individuals in the sample), and finally, without Asian American/non-Latinx, Native American, and the 8 Black/Latinx individuals).

[c] Should be interpreted with caution because 4 cells have an expected count of less than 5.

[d] Should be interpreted with caution because 1 cell has an expected count of less than 5.

Table 3: Race/Ethnicity[a] by Age among Tased Minors (N = 37)[a]

Age	N	Black/Non-Latinx		White/Non-Latinx		White/Latinx	
		%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
7-15 Years[b]	8	100.0	(8)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)
16 Years	13	46.2	(6)	38.5	(5)	15.4	(2)
17 Years	16	50.0	(8)	31.3	(5)	18.8	(3)
Total	**37**	**59.5**	**(22)**	**27.0**	**(20)**	**13.5**	**(5)**

[a]This table only lists three race/ethnic categories because there were no minors in the remaining race/ethnic categories. The Pearson Chi-Square was 7.175 with p = 0.127, but 7 of the 9 cells have an expected count of less than 5. Three of the Tased minors were girls: 2 were Black/non-Latinx one aged 13 and the other 17, and a 17 year old White/Latinx girl.

[b]There was one 7-year-old, one 13-year-old, two 14-year-old, and three 15-year-old minors.

Table 4. Demographic Characteristics of Total Sample by Percent Black/non-Latinx

Characteristic	Total	Black/non-Latinx		All Other Races			
		%	(n)	%	(n)	χ^2	p value
Sex/Gender	542						
Male		93.4	(171)	93.3	(335)		
Female		6.6	(12)	6.7	(24)	0.003	0.955
Age[1]	535						
<18		12.2	(22)	4.2	(15)		
18-29		24.9	(45)	29.9	(106)		
30-39		39.2	(71)	38.1	(135)		
40+		23.8	(43)	27.7	(98)	*12.689*	0.005
Height[2]	507						
5'4"-5'8"		37.3	(63)	40.2	(136)		
5'9"-6'0"		32.5	(55)	43.2	(146)		
6'1"-6'8"		30.2	(51)	16.6	(56)	*13.363*	0.001
Weight[3]	502						
95-135		3.6	(6)	9.8	(33)		
136-175		33.1	(55)	37.2	(125)		
176-225		42.2	(70)	35.7	(120)		
226-350		21.1	(35)	17.3	(58)	*8.122*	0.044
Height x Weight[4]	500						
5985-9999		10.2	(17)	17.0	(57)		
10000-11999		22.9	(38)	27.8	(93)		
12000-13999		33.7	(56)	30.4	(102)		
14000-26250		33.1	(55)	24.8	(83)	7.649	0.050

[1] Ages ranged from 7 to 76 years old, with an average of 32.52 years. A t-test conducted on age the μ age for Black suspects was 31.29 years and for all other races was 33.15 years, with a significance of 0.075 (F = 1.021, t = -1.841, and df = 533).

[2]Heights ranged from 59” to 81” with an average of 69.64 inches. A t-test conducted on this variable for ratio-level height measure found the average for Black suspects was 70.13” and for all other suspects was 69.39”, and the significance value was 0.164 (F = 1.942, df = 30).

[3] Weights ranged from 95 to 350 pounds with an average of 189.13 pounds. A t-test conducted on the ratio weight measure found the μ weight was 196.0 pounds for Black suspects and 185.8 pounds for all other suspects. The significance value was 0.662 (F = 0.191, df = 500).

[4] Weight x Height ranged from 5985 to 26250 with an average of 13232.67. A t-test conducted on this variable for ratio-level for the height x weight, for Black suspects μ = 13812.80 and for all other suspects μ = 12945.20. The significance value was 0.567 (F = 0.328, df = 499).

Table 5. Demographic Characteristics of Minors by Percent Black/non-Latinx

Characteristic	**Total**	**Black/non-Latinx Youth**		**All Other Youth**			
		%	(n)	%	(n)	χ^2	p value
Sex/Gender	542						
Male		90.1	(20)	93.3	(14)		
Female		9.1	(2)	6.7	(1)	0.070	0.791
Age[1]	37						
7-15		100.0	(8)	0.0	(0)		
16		46.2	(6)	53.8	(7)		
17		50.0	(8)	50.0	(8)	*7.003*[2]	0.030
Height[3,4]	32						
5’4”-5’8”		27.8	(5)	57.1	(8)		
5’9”-6’0”		38.9	(7)	35.7	(5)		
6’1”-6’8”		33.3	(6)	7.1	(1)		
						4.162	.125
Weight[3,5]	32						
120-135		11.1	(2)	35.7	(5)		
136-175		38.9	(7)	50.0	(7)		
176-250		50.0	(9)	14.3	(2)	5.323[5]	0.70
Height x Weight[3,6]	32						
8040-9999		0.0	(4)	60.0	(6)		
10000-11499		52.9	(9)	47.1	(5)		
11520-18520		100.0	(5)	0.0	(0)	5.038[5]	0.081

[1] Youth ages ranged from 7 to 17, with an average youth age of mean of the youth A t-test conducted on this variable for ratio-level age measure found the μ age for Black youth was 15.45 and for all other youth was 16.53 and this was significant at the 0.041 level (F = 4.513, t = -1.841, and df = 35).

[2] Should be interpreted with caution as 2 cells had an expected count of less than 5.

[3] Height was recoded into total inches to compute weight x height and for t-tests.

[4] A t-test conducted on this variable for ratio-level height measure found the μ height for solely Black youth was 70.72" and for all other youth was 68.36" and the significance value was 0.054 (F = 4.038, df = 30).
A t-test conducted on the ratio weight measure found the μ weight was 176.8 pounds for solely lack youth and 152.9 pounds for all other youth. The significance value was 0.054 (F = 3.003, df = 30).

[5] Should be interpreted with caution as 3 cells had an expected count of less than 5.

[6] A t-test conducted on this variable for ratio-level for the height x weight, for solely Black youth μ = 12543 and for all other youth μ = 10475. The significance value was 0.1115 (F = 2.642, df = 30).

Table 6. Youth v. Adult in Police Responses, Injuries, Reason Police Involved[a]

Variable	N	Minors %	Minors (n)	Adults %	Adults (n)	χ^2	p value
Police Response[b]							
Cartridge Deployed	531	32.4	(12)	51.0	(252)	*4.753*	0.029
Warned	535	91.9	(34)	83.5	(416)	1.800	0.180
Suspect Injuries[b]	535						
Injured		29.7	(11)	48.6	(242)	*4.917*	0.027
Bruised[c]		5.4	(2)	6.0	(30)	0.023	0.878
Abrasion		10.8	(4)	16.5	(82)	0.816	0.366
Breathing Difficulty[c]		0.0	(0)	1.2	(6)	0.451	0.502
Puncture Injury (from Taser)		16.2	(6)	31.5	(157)	*3.811*	0.051
Reason for Police Involvement[b]	535						
Crime-in-Progress		43.2	(16)	23.7	(118)	*7.011*	0.008
Domestic Disturbance		27.0	(10)	26.5	(132)	0.005	0.945
Other Disturbance		13.5	(5)	19.8	(99)	0.891	0.345
Traffic Stop		21.5	(8)	13.1	(65)	2.146	0.143
Emotionally Disturbed Person		21.6	(8)	30.1	(150)	1.195	0.274
Suspicious Person[c]		10.8	(4)	9.6	(48)	0.054	0.816
Executing Warrant[c]		2.7	(1)	5.4	(27)	0.513	0.474
Under the Influence of Alc./Drugs		8.1	(3)	28.9	(144)	*7.483*	0.006
Initial Police Perception of Suspect[b]	535						
Non-Aggressive[c]		21.6	(8)	12.2	(61)	2.693	0.101
Previous Hostility		10.8	(4)	14.3	(71)	0.339	0.560

Possibly Intoxicated		13.5	(5)	41.4	(206)	*11.186*	0.001
Emotionally Disturbed		29.7	(11)	34.7	(173)	0.383	0.536
Verbally Aggressive		43.2	(16)	41.4	(206)	0.050	0.823
Physically Aggressive		48.6	(18)	41.6	(207)	0.709	0.400
Suspect Resistance[b]	535						
Threat/Hostile		32.4	(12)	50.4	(251)	*4.450*	0.035
Dead Weight/Non-Compliance[c]		5.4	(2)	12.0	(60)	1.483	0.223
Fighting Stance/Combative		32.4	(12)	43.8	(218)	1.808	0.179
Threatened Weapon Use[c]		13.5	(5)	8.4	(42)	1.109	0.292
Fleeing		51.4	(19)	36.5	(182)	3.216	0.073
Unarmed Assault[c]		0.0	(0)	12.0	(60)	*5.021*	0.025
Firearm Armed[c]		5.4	(2)	1.6	(8)	2.710	0.100
Edged Weapon Armed[c]		18.9	(7)	10.2	(51)	2.683	0.101
Blunt Instrument Armed[c]		0.0	(0)	2.0	(10)	0.757	0.384
Failed to Follow Directions		37.8	(14)	49.4	(246)	1.842	0.175
Suicidal Resistance		8.1	(3)	11.2	(56)	0.345	0.557

[a]Only 1 adult and no youth lost consciousness and no suspects died, so these variables are not included in the table.
[b]Categories are not mutually exclusive; officers could check more than one category.
[c]Should be interpreted with caution as one cell has an expected frequency of less than 5.

Table 7. Race (Whether Black) by Police Responses, Injuries, Reason Police Involved[a]

Variable	**N**	**Black/Non-Latinx**		**Other Races**			
		%	(n)	%	(n)	χ^2	p value
Police Response[b]							
Cartridge Deployed	538	49.7	(91)	49.3	(175)	0.009	0.925

Warned	542	86.3	(158)	82.7	(297)	1.172	0.279
Suspect Injuries[b]	542						
Injured		43.7	(80)	48.7	(175)	1.231	0.267
Bruised		4.4	(8)	6.7	(24)	1.168	0.280
Abrasion		15.8	(29)	15.9	(57)	0.000	0.993
Breathing Difficulty[c]		2.7	(5)	0.3	(1)	*6.666*	0.010
Puncture Injury (from Taser)		27.3	(50)	32.0	(115)	1.270	0.260
Reason for Police Involvement[b]	542						
Crime-in-Progress		32.8	(60)	20.9	(75)	*7.011*	0.008
Domestic Disturbance		23.5	(43)	27.6	(99)	1.043	0.307
Other Disturbance		19.1	(35)	20.1	(72)	0.066	0.797
Traffic Stop		18.0	(33)	11.1	(40)	*4.938*	0.026
Emotionally Disturbed Person		21.9	(40)	33.7	(121)	*8.147*	0.004
Suspicious Person		10.9	(20)	8.9	(32)	0.568	0.451
Executing Warrant		7.7	(14)	3.9	(14)	3.480	0.062 T
Under the Influence of Alc./Drugs		21.3	(39)	30.1	(108)	*4.719*	0.030
Initial Police Perception of Suspect[b]	542						
Non-Aggressive		12.0	(22)	13.4	(48)	0.196	0.658
Previous Hostility		14.8	(27)	13.4	(48)	0.195	0.659
Possibly Intoxicated		25.7	(47)	46.5	(206)	*11.186*	0.001
Emotionally Disturbed		30.6	(56)	36.8	(132)	2.035	0.154
Verbally Aggressive		42.1	(77)	41.8	(150)	0.004	0.948
Physically Aggressive		47.5	(87)	38.4	(138)	*4.135*	0.042
Suspect Resistance[b]	542						

Threat/Hostile	45.4	(83)	51.0	(183)	1.532	0.216
Dead Weight/Non-Compliance	10.4	(19)	12.3	(44)	0.414	0.520
Fighting Stance/Combative	37.7	(69)	45.7	(164)	3.148	0.076
Threatened Weapon Use	6.0	(11)	10.0	(36)	2.470	0.116
Fleeing	48.6	(89)	31.8	(114)	*14.742*	0.000
Unarmed Assault	10.9	(20)	11.1	(40)	0.006	0.940
Firearm Armed[c]	2.7	(5)	1.7	(6)	0.686	0.407
Edged Weapon Armed	9.3	(17)	11.4	(41)	0.576	0.448
Blunt Instrument Armed[c]	1.6	(3)	1.9	(7)	0.064	0.547
Failed to Follow Directions	54.1	(99)	45.4	(163)	3.669	0.055
Suicidal Resistance	7.1	(13)	13.4	(48)	0.345	0.557

[a]Only 1 suspect lost consciousness and no suspects died, so these variables are not included in the table.
[b]Categories are not mutually exclusive; officers could check more than one category.
[c]Should be interpreted with caution as 1 or more cells had an expected frequency of less than 5, thus used Fisher's Exact Test.

Table 8: Connecticut Tasing Data x Department and Race and Minor Characteristics

2016 Connecticut Electronic Defense Weapon Data						**U.S. Census/American Community Survey Data**		
Police Department	All Tased N	Minors Tased N	% of Tased Who were Minors	% of Tased Who were Black/Non-Latinx	% Minors Tased Who were Black/non-Latinx[a]	% Black/ Non-Latinx	% Minors Living in Poverty	% Black/non-Latinx Who Live in Poverty
Ansonia*	2	0	0.0	0.0		14.5[b]	23.5[b]	39.1[b]
Berlin	2	0	0.0	0.0				
Bethel	3	0	0.0	0.0		2.6[c]		
Bloomfield	9	1	11.1	77.8	100.0	58.4[c]		
Branford	4	0	0.0	50.0		1.8[c]		
Bridgeport	26	2	7.7	50.0	100.0	35.0[d]	29.6[d]	21.9[d]
Bristol	25	0	0.0	12.0		3.3[e]	15.3[b]	20.7[b]
Canton	1	0	0.0	0.0		1.1[c]		
CCSU	1	0	0.0	0.0				
Cheshire*	2	0	0.0	0.0		1.1[c]		
Clinton	2	0	0.0	0.0		0.8[c]		
CT State Pol.	42	2	4.8	28.6	50.0	10.6[d]	12.9[d]	17.8[d]
Coventry	4	0	0.0	0.0		0.7[b]	14.6[b]	0.0[b]

Cromwell	3	0	0.0	66.7				
Danbury	10	0	0.0	40.0		9.9[d]	9.7[d]	17.9[b]
Darien	4	0	0.0	25.0		0.9[b]	2.3[b]	4.2[b]
Derby	4	0	0.0	25.0		5.8[b]	23.6[b]	2.2[b]
East Hampton	1	0	0.0	0.0		2.6[b]	14.8[b]	12.3[b]
East Hartford	10	2	20.0	80.0	100.0	26.8[e]	19.5[b]	8.9[b]
East Haven*	5	0	0.0	40.0		8.9[e]	16.1[b]	14.5[b]
East Windsor	2	0	0.0	0.0				
Enfield	1	0	0.0	0.0				
Fairfield*	2	0	0.0	50.0				
Farmington	4	1	25.0	25.0	100.0	1.9[c]		
Glastonbury	3	0	0.0	33.3		1.2[b]	5.5[b]	0.0[b]
Greenwich*	1	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	7.9[b]	7.1[b]	8.0[b]
Groton*	1	0	0.0	0.0		10.1[b]	26.8[b]	8.1[b]
Guilford	5	0	0.0	0.0		2.9[b]	5.3[b]	5.6[b]
Hamden	1	0	0.0	100.0				
Hartford	21	1	4.8	52.4	100.0	34.7[d]	36.9[d]	21.3[d]
Ledyard	4	3	75.0	0.0	0.0	3.2[c]		
Manchester	26	4	15.4	34.6	75.0	24.9[e]	17.9[b]	18.9[b]
Meriden	11	1	9.1	27.3	100.0	7.0[e]	19.5[b]	21.3[b]
Middletown	12	0	0.0	33.3		14.0[e]	15.8[b]	18.5[b]
Milford	5	0	0.0	20.0		4.3[e]	6.8[b]	9.8[b]
Mohegan Tribal	3	0	0.0	66.7				
Naugatuck	4	0	0.0	25.0		5.6[e]	11.5[b]	6.4[b]
New Britain	17	1	5.9	17.6	0.0	10.6[d]	35.7[d]	14.7[b]
New Canaan	2	0	0.0	50.0				
New Haven*	33	4	12.1	60.6	100.0	31.2[d]	31.4[d]	27.1[d]
New London*	11	0	0.0	45.5		10.7[e]	46.4[b]	31.9[b]
New Milford	4	0	0.0	0.0		2.7[b]	11.0[b]	29.4[b]
Newington	1	0	0.0	0.0		5.4[e]		
Newtown	2	0	0.0	50.0		0.4[b]	2.5[b]	0.0[b]

Table 8: Connecticut Tasing Data x Department and Race and Youth Characteristics (cont'd.)

2016 Connecticut Electronic Defense Weapon Data						**U.S. Census/American Community Survey Data**		
Police Department	All Tased N	Minors Tased N	% of Tased Who were Minors	% of Tased Who were Black/Non-Latinx	% Minors Tased Who were Black/non-Latinx[a]	% Black/ Non-Latinx	% Minors Living in Poverty	% Black/non-Latinx Who Live in Poverty
North Branford	2	0	0.0	0.0				
North Haven	2	0	0.0	0.0		5.2[e]	3.4[b]	18.5[b]
Norwalk	26	3	11.5	53.8	66.7	12.8[d]	7.5[d]	12.5[b]
Norwich	13	0	0.0	15.4		12.4[e]	18.9[b]	28.6[b]

Orange	3	0	0.0	0.0		1.9[b]	1.2[b]	0.0[b]
Plainfield	1	0	0.0	0.0		6.4[b]	13.7[b]	0.0[b]
Plainville	2	0	0.0	0.0				
Plymouth	7	1	14.3	0.0	0.0			
Putnam	4	0	0.0	25.0		1.5[c]		
Ridgefield*	1	0	0.0	0.0		1.1[b]	0.0[b]	0.0[b]
Rocky Hill	2	0	0.0	0.0				
Seymour	1	0	0.0	0.0				
Shelton	2	1	100.0	0.0	0.0	2.0[b]	2.6[b]	2.6[b]
Simsbury	1	0	0.0	100.0		1.5[c]		
South Windsor	4	1	25.0	0.0	0.0			
Southington	2	0	0.0	0.0				
Stamford	14	3	21.4	57.1	0.0	17.3[d]	9.7[d]	15.2[b]
Stratford*	10	0	0.0	30.0		15.7[e]	13.6[b]	16.6[b]
Suffield	2	1	50.0	0.0	0.0	5.1[b]	12.8[b]	29.4[b]
Torrington	2	0	0.0	0.0		4.3[e]	11.0[b]	16.5[b]
Trumbull	7	0	0.0	42.9		6.1[e]	1.6[b]	0.4[b]
UCONN Health*	1	0	0.0	0.0				
Vernon*	12	0	0.0	25.0				
Wallingford	4	1	25.0	0.0	0.0	1.9[b]	9.1[b]	13.4[b]
Waterbury*	30	2	6.7	40.0	100.0	20.2[d]	32.6[d]	21.5[d]
Waterford	8	0	0.0	25.0		1.8[b]	21.2[b]	15.4[b]
Watertown	1	0	0.0	0.0		1.7[b]	1.0[b]	6.9[b]
West Hartford	9	0	0.0	33.3		4.7[e]	9.9[b]	28.2[b]
West Haven	9	0	0.0	33.3		18.8[e]	17.9[b]	13.7[b]
Westport	1	0	0.0	0.0		0.5[b]	3.5[b]	20.5[b]
Wethersfield*	1	0	0.0	0.0		10.5[e]	3.9[b]	16.8[b]
Willimantic	8	0	0.0	0.0		7.0[b]	36.4[b]	36.5[b]
Winchester	3	0	0.0	33.3				
Windsor	9	1	11.1	55.6	100.0			
Windsor Locks	1	0	0.0	100.0		5.8[b]	7.9[b]	23.6[b]
Woodbridge	1	0	0.0	0.0				
Total	**542**	**37**	**6.9**	**33.8**	**59.5**			

*Had a policy restricting Tasing minors.
[a]This column is blank for departments who did not Tase any youth in 2016.
[b]Social Explorer mean of 2014-2018 data.[c]2010 U.S. Census data.
[d]American Community Survey 2016 data.
[e]American Community Supplemental Survey 2016 data.