

Police Department Representation In New York State

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Abstract

Police recruitment and retention is an issue which has vexed departments for the past decade. With the rise of the Computer Age, departments have tried new means of attracting candidates. Also of note are country-wide department initiatives, particularly in the last twenty years, to obtain representative police departments – that is, departments that mirror the communities they serve. This paper serves as a state-level view of how well the twenty largest cities fare in terms of representativeness for female, African American, and Latino patrol officers.

Police Department Representation in New York State

Driven by a perceived recruitment crisis and the desire to increase the number of female and minority applicants, police departments have utilized diverse recruitment strategies over the past two decades (Jordan, Fridell, Faggiani, & Kubu, 2009; White & Escobar, 2008; Raganella & White, 2004; Rowe, 2002; Bernstein, 2001; Ferkenhoff, 2001; Vest, 2001; Baxley, N.D.). Yet, females and minorities remain significantly underrepresented in the vast majority of departments (White & Escobar, 2008; Raganella & White, 2004; Bernstein, 2001; Sanders, Hughes, & Langworthy, 1995). Policing is increasingly becoming a field where officers need to have intimate knowledge of the communities they patrol; research has illustrated that departments not reflective of their respective communities are more prone to have poor relationships within the community, sometimes leading to misconduct on the officer's part (White & Escobar, 2008; Rowe, 2002). It appears that, to truly become successful in policing today, it is necessary for a strong relationship to be created between the police and community (Ho, 2005).

Many departments have adopted the principles of the Community-Oriented Policing philosophy; one of the main tenants of the philosophy is that the best way to address crime is not necessarily to hire more officers, but to build a stronger relationship with the community and to establish rapport (White & Escobar, 2008; Vest, 2001). In order to establish rapport it is necessary for a department to ensure that not only can their officers excel at upholding the law, but that they also have strong interpersonal and analytical skills; furthermore, they must have a deep understanding of the community they patrol (Vest, 2001).

Although the factors that drive male and female officers into policing are virtually identical, the recruitment of women to policing has remained a challenging process for many departments (Ho, 2005; Raganella & White, 2004). The hesitancy of women to join the field is

perhaps due to the roles they have traditionally been placed in. Up until the 1960s, women who were allowed into policing were placed in positions where they would maintain a matronly role, such as working with juveniles; even today, policing maintains its predominantly masculine façade (Raganella & White, 2004; Flavin & Bennet, 2001). Women in the field are frequently forced to choose between the two extremes of POLICEwoman and policeWOMAN, the adoption of either denies the officer of her true self (Flavin & Bennet, 2001).

The lack of a female presence on the police force may be more than just the product of paternalism, it may be indicative of institutional sexism. The prevailing thought throughout history has been that women have no place in policing; this was reinforced with the frequent utilization of minimum height requirements that had a disparate impact on female applicants (Flavin & Bennet, 2001; Sanders, Hughes, & Langworthy, 1995). Research has indicated that women officers report a significantly smaller amount of encouragement from fellow officers than their male counterparts, and sexual harassment from male officers has been described as occurring at an epidemic rate (Flavin & Bennet, 2001).

Appendix A provides a visual representation of the ratio of the percentage of Females in a population to the percentage of Females in that population's respective department. An important caveat to recall when looking at Appendixes A through C, however, is that these graphs display only the overall representation within the community; they do not indicate representativeness in terms of how many eligible, employable members are present within the community. As indicated below, Buffalo and New York City appear to be the two most representative departments, each with less than three women present in the population for every one woman on the police force. Troy and North Tonawanda were found to be the least representative departments, both with over eleven women present in the community for every

one woman on the police force. Such discrepancy may occur because policing may never appear to be an option for women when they see so few on their town's force; in order to increase the number of applicants, recruiters must act in a proactive manner to show that policing is a viable career path for women (Foss, 2009; Jordan, Fridell, Faggiani, & Kubu, 2009; Flavin & Bennet, 2001).

The relationship between police and the African American community is tenuous at best. Throughout the past century, the manner in which African Americans have been treated by the police has resulted in feelings of distrust and a tendency to be critical of police actions (Raganella & White, 2004; Rowe, 2002; Hochstedler & Conley, 1986). While a myriad number of factors influence an individual to apply for the police, two hypotheses have been presented as to why so few African Americans apply; these are the 'denial' and 'choice' arguments (Hochstedler & Conley, 1986).

The denial argument lies in the belief that institutional racism is the primary reason for the lower recruitment of minorities in the field of policing (Ho, 2005; Hochstedler & Conley, 1986). If this were to be the case, then we would see areas in the recruitment process where minority candidates drop out at significantly greater levels than majority candidates that could not be attributed to socioeconomic status or other factors. The choice argument, as its name implies, states that African Americans choose not to apply for policing. Yet in the field, minority officers have faced isolation, negative reactions from their family, a hostile community, and blatant racism at the hands of fellow officers (Rowe, 2002; Cashmore, 2001). If African Americans choose not to pursue a career of policing because they perceive there to be such pervasive discrimination within the field, is their choice not limited to begin with? (Hochstedler & Conley, 1986).

Despite the negative treatment of African Americans by police throughout the last century and despite the problems which still remain with policing today, there has been progress (Ho, 2005; Raganella & White, 2004; Hochstedler & Conley, 1986). Several factors have been identified that, when present, tend to increase the number of minority officers on the police force. These factors include the presence of a minority mayor, a minority police chief, high-ranking minority officers, the overall city size, the percentage of minorities within that city, and the percentage of minorities on the labor force (Warner, Steel, & Lovrich, 1990; Lewis, 1989; Hochstedler & Conley, 1986).

Appendix B provides a visual representation of the ratio of the percentage of African Americans in a population to the percentage of African Americans in that population's respective department. As can be seen, Hempstead Village, White Plains, New Rochelle, New York City, and Buffalo are the most representative of all departments sampled, each achieving a ratio of 1.6 or fewer individuals in the population for every one officer on the department. Of all departments sampled, only one (North Tonawanda) was found to have no African Americans within their department; however, this difference was not statistically significant in comparison to the population within the community. While departments have made strides towards representation, almost every department examined displayed a significant under-representation of African Americans within their department.

Also provided on Appendix B is the overall percentage of African Americans within the varying communities. The categories 'Bottom 3rd', 'Middle 3rd', and 'Upper 3rd' were identified by ranking the percentages of African Americans in order from lowest to highest. As can be seen on the graph, it appears that the top five most representative departments for African Americans all have a population to draw from in their communities that is 12.22% or greater. The lowest

percentage for the top five is White Plains with 13.44%, the highest is Hempstead Village with 54.08%. Conversely, of the five least representative departments, Niagara Falls has the greatest overall population of African Americans, at 18.40%. Such data seems to give credit to the aforementioned claim that the proportion of African Americans within a city correlates with their overall representation on the police force (Lewis, 1989).

Appendix C is a visual representation of the ratio of percentage of Latinos in a population to the percentage of Latinos in that population's respective department. The cities of Longbeach, New York, Rochester, and Syracuse are all unique in that they have achieved a ratio of less than one individual in the population for every one officer on the department, that is to say that they display an overrepresentation of Latinos on the police force. Although a number of cities were able to achieve true representation, or overrepresentation in some cases, a number of other cities did not have any Latino officers on their police force, despite their presence within the general population.

Unlike Appendix B, there appears to be no real correlation between population within the community and representation on the police force. Various population concentrations appear to be dispersed at random throughout the graph, if there is a relationship between representation and population within the community for Latinos it is not as evident as it is for African Americans.

Although representation is viewed as a critical component for departments to achieve legitimacy within their community, some departments perceive that such policies will result in poorer quality officers (Felkenes & Lasley, 1992). While studies have indicated that those who are hired under affirmative action policies are not poorer quality officers than their counterparts, it is important that, for affirmative action to be truly effective, police must not go about hiring

applicants who are less qualified solely because of their race or gender (White & Escobar, 2008; Warner, Steel, & Lovrich, 1990; Lewis, 1989).

While research does indicate that affirmative action has not resulted in a decrease in the level of experience or motivation of new officers, affirmative action is still frequently viewed in a negative light (Felkenes & Lasley, 1992; Lewis, 1989). A number of factors have been identified as impediments to the achievement of a representative department. Fear of affirmative action policies, geographical location, economic policies, and the presence of unions all have been identified as barriers to the recruitment of females and minorities, yet the greatest factor hampering a representative police department is the perceived pervasive discrimination that occurs throughout the organization (Ho, 2005; Raganella & White, 2004; Rowe, 2002; Cashmore, 2001; Vest, 2001; Warner, Steel, & Lovrich, 1990; Lewis, 1989; Hochstedler & Conley, 1986).

Despite this, we know that policing has increasingly become a desirable profession with more women and minorities entering the field in recent years (Raganella & White, 2004; Flavin & Bennet, 2001). Indeed, officers go into policing for similar reasons irregardless of their race or gender (Raganella & White, 2004). Although setbacks have occurred throughout the years there has been notable progress in attempts to achieve representation (Ho, 2005; Sanders, Hughes, & Langworthy, 1995). Many departments are now of the opinion that the hiring and retention of quality staff goes hand in hand with representation (Decker & Huckabee, 1999; Warner, Steel, & Lovrich, 1990).

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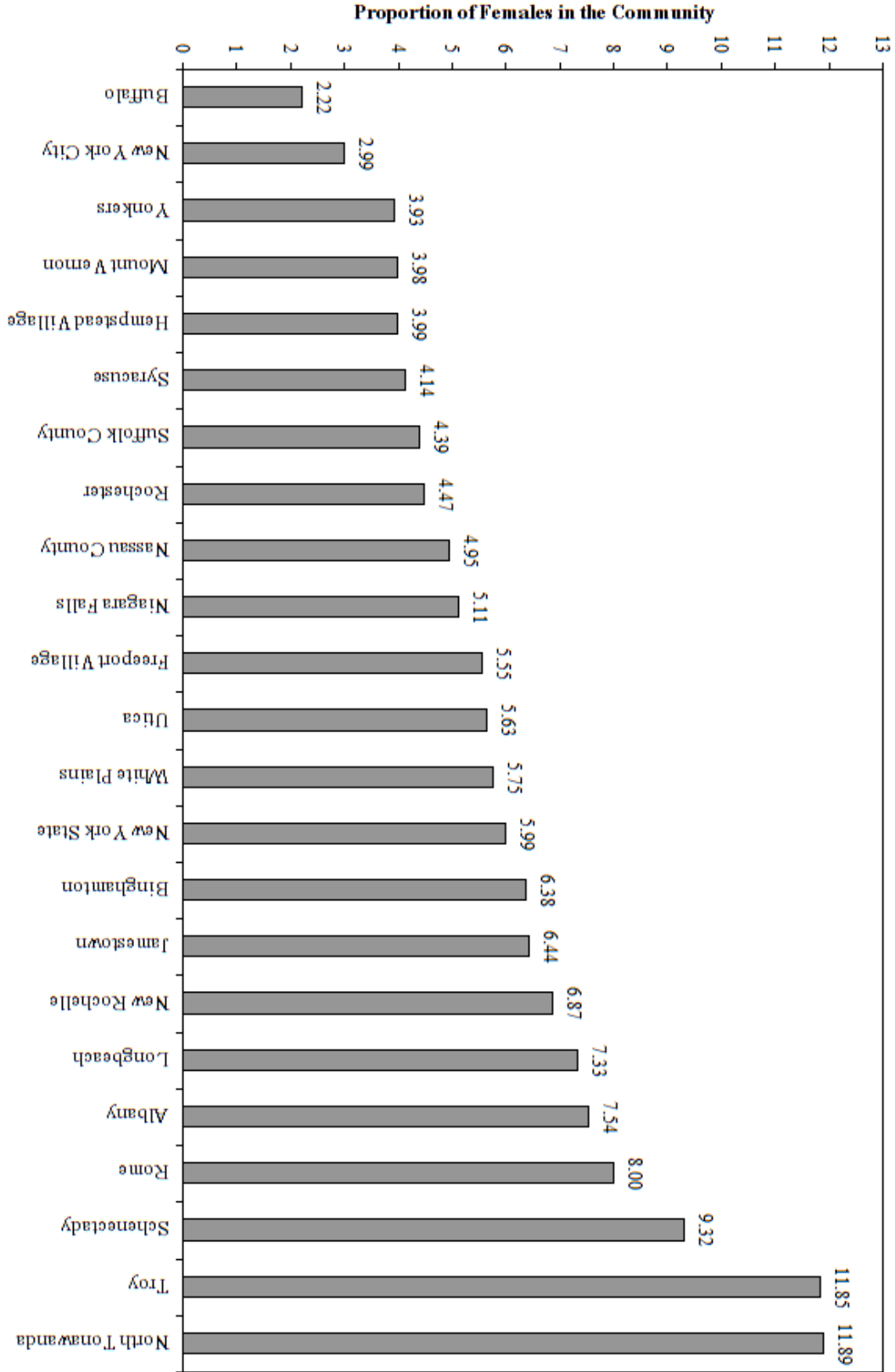
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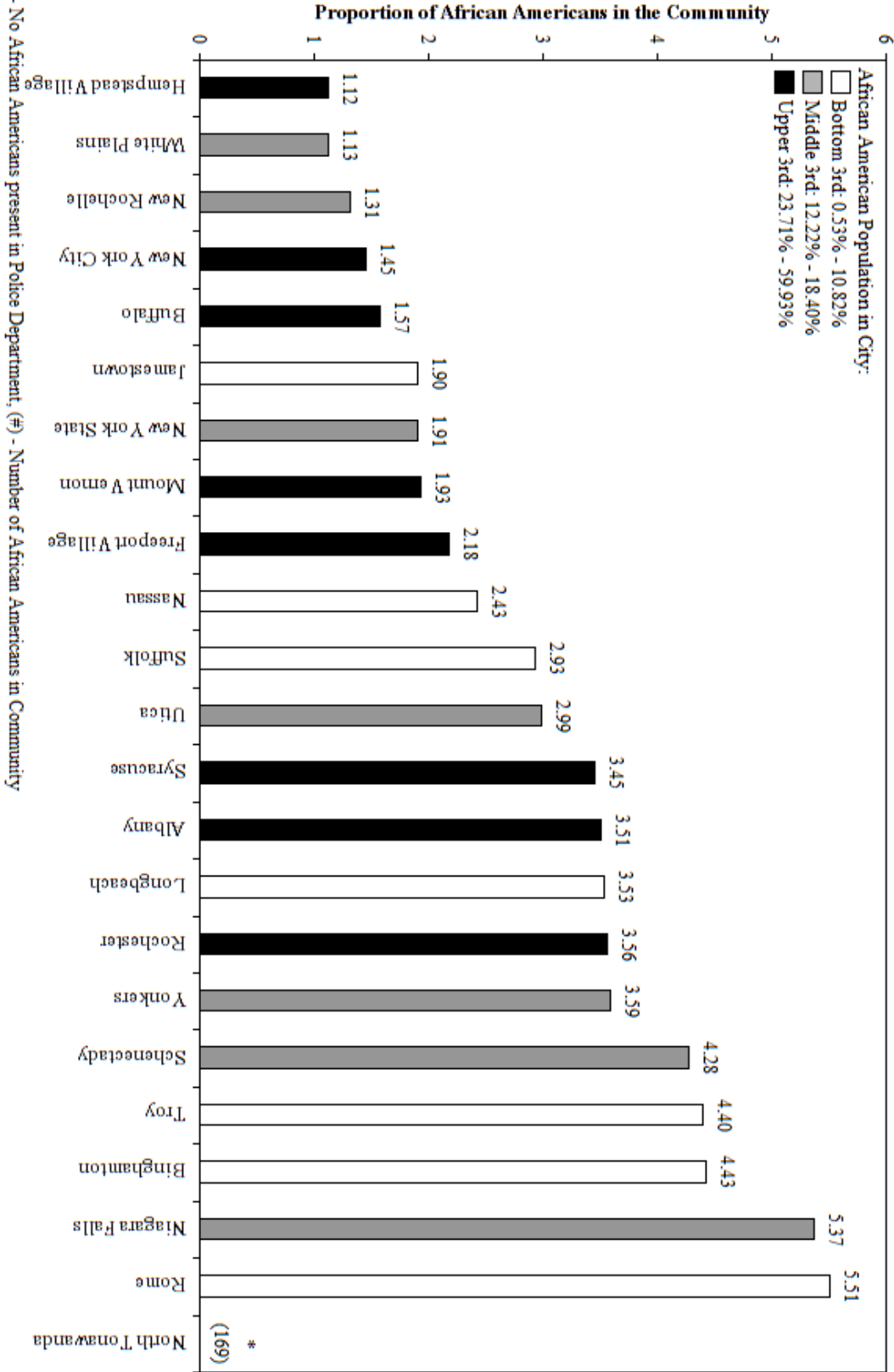
Appendix A



Ratio of Percentage of Females in Population to Percentage of Females in the Police Department
Data Source: NYS DCJS, US Census ACS: 2006 - 2008

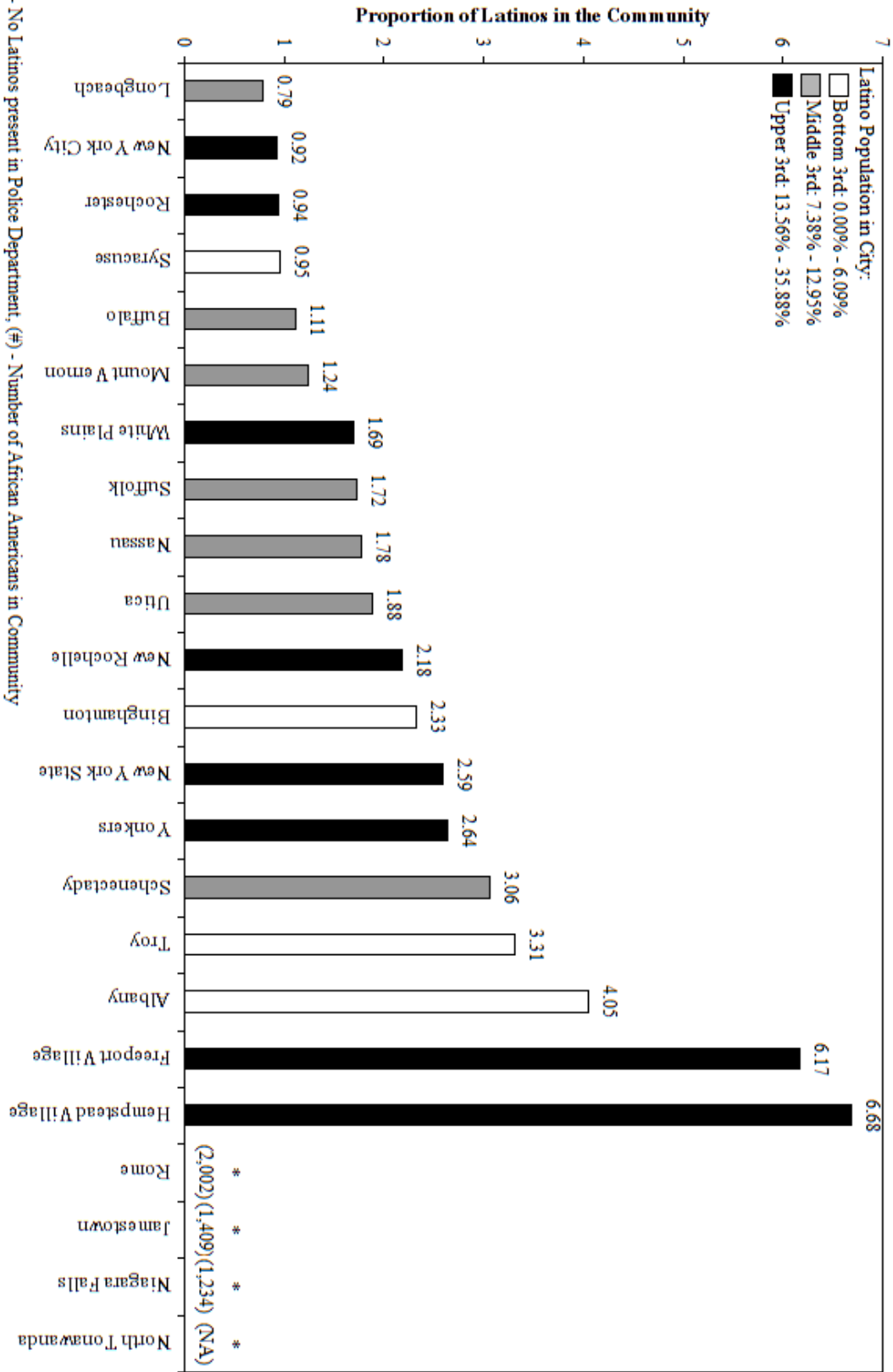
Appendix B

Ratio of Percentage of African Americans in Population to Percentage of African Americans in the Police Department
 Data Source: NYS DCJS, US Census ACS: 2006 - 2008



Appendix C

Ratio of Percentage of Latinos in Population to Percentage of Latinos in the Police Department
 Data Source: NYS DCJS, US Census ACS: 2006 - 2008



* - No Latinos present in Police Department, (#) - Number of African Americans in Community