

Matching US African American Librarians' Experience to US ARL Data

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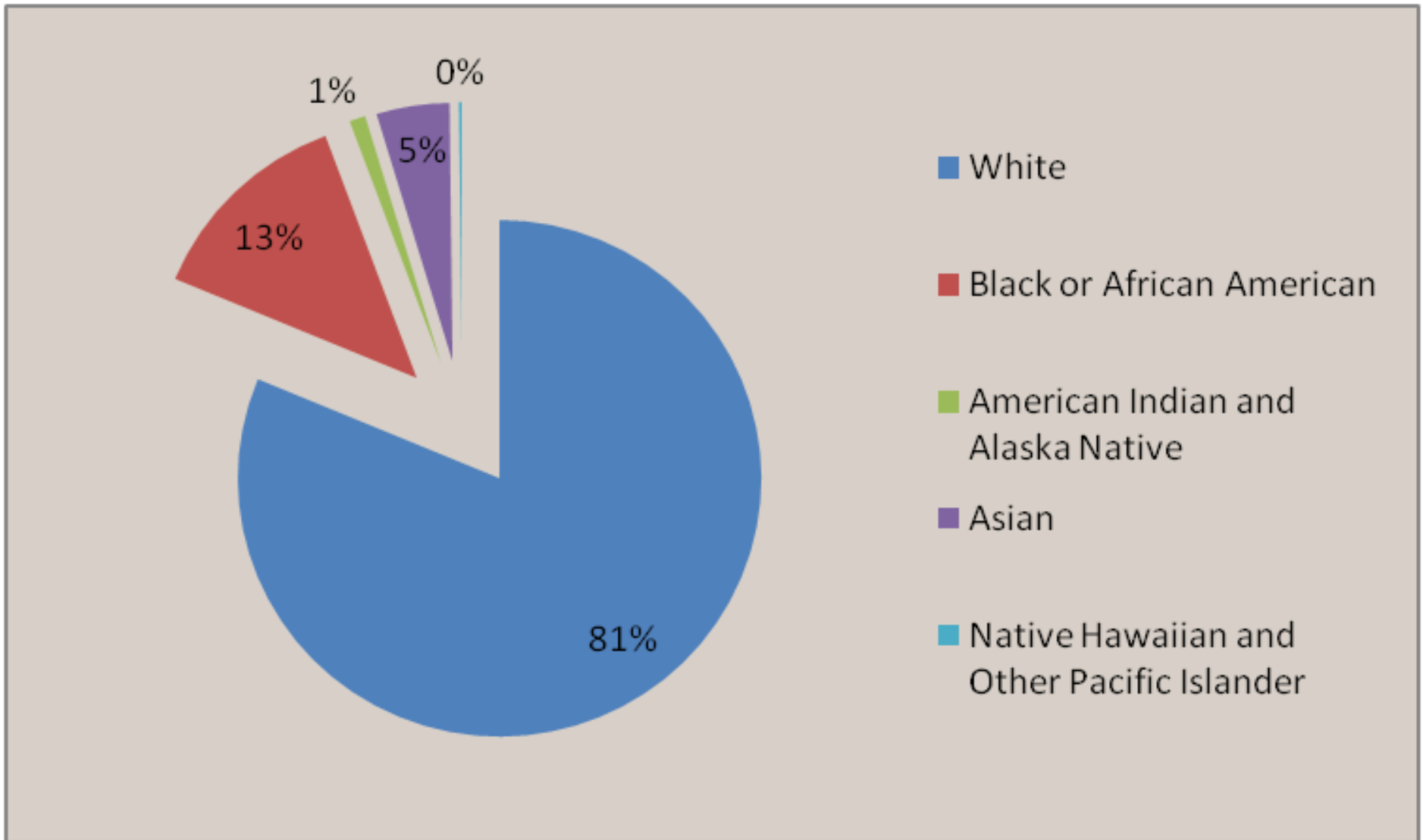
Research Question

Does the experience of African-American librarians in ARL libraries explain their low representation in the US ARL libraries?

Background

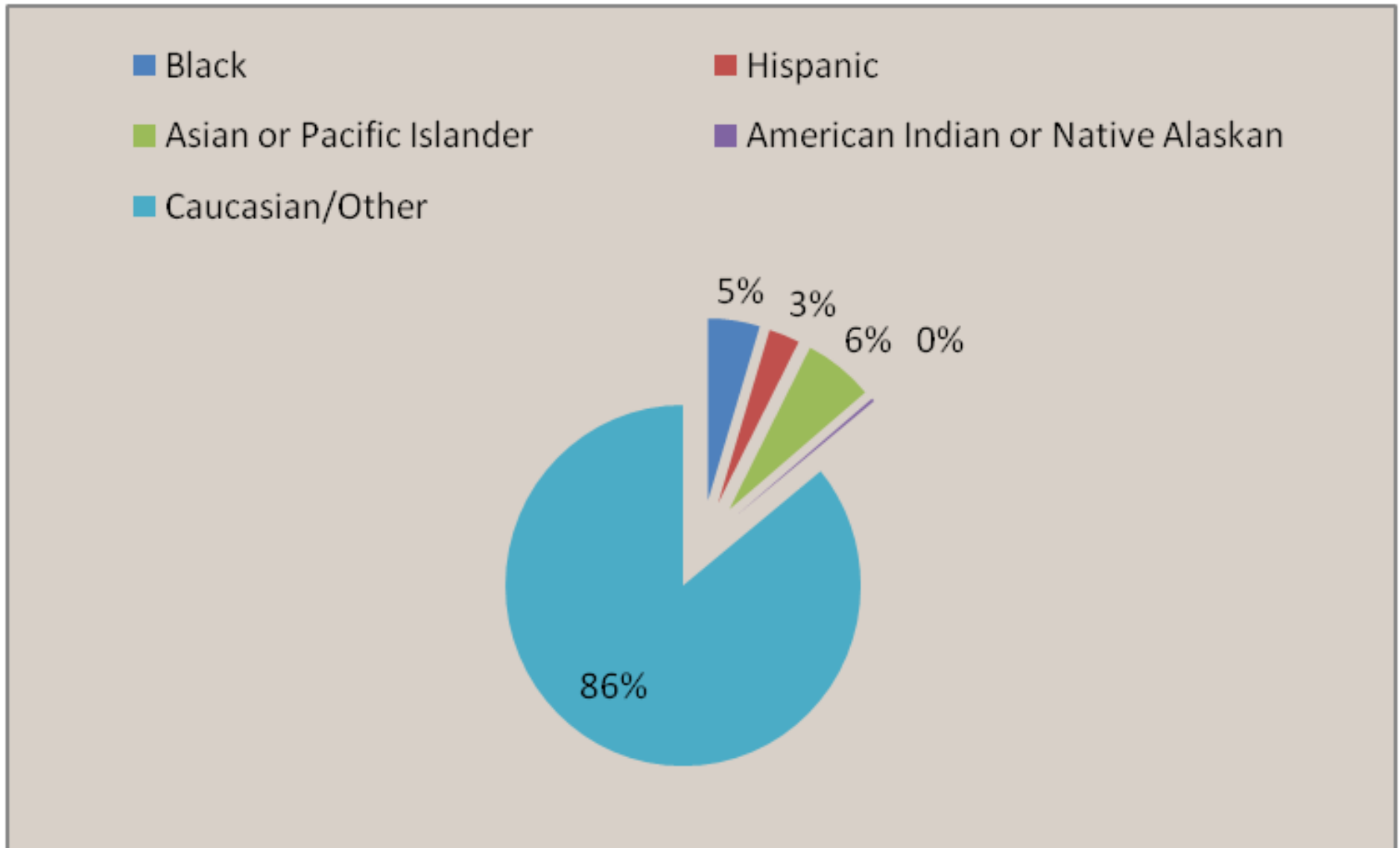
- Association of Research Libraries data tracks minority representation in member libraries from 1981
- Representation by minority group is shown from 2005 forward
- “Mismatch” between US population data and US ARL data regarding African American representation

Minority Representation in US Population (2007)



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2009

Minority Representation in US ARL Libraries (2008-2009)



Source: Association of Research Libraries, Salary Survey 2008-2009

Methodology

- Convenience sampling of African-American librarians
- Conducted two-stage interviews
- Queries related to education, challenges encountered, strengths and supports
- Grounded theory approach to analysis

Questions for Respondents

1. What made you want to become a librarian?
2. Where did you get your library degree? Do you have any other master's or doctorate degrees?
3. Why did you choose the institution where you got your master's degree?
4. Since becoming a professional librarian, how many years have you worked in ARL libraries?
5. Which positions have you held in ARL libraries?

Questions for Respondents (cont'd)

6. Have you encountered racism and/or isolation at any time during your years in ARL libraries?
7. Have you experienced other challenges during your years in ARL libraries? Please describe.
8. How did you deal with any challenges you've faced during your years in ARL libraries?

Questions for Respondents (cont'd)

9. Do you have a community or network which supports you professionally or personally?
10. Have you acquired/drawn on management or leadership skills to assist you professionally or personally?
11. What other strengths have you drawn on during your years in ARL libraries?
12. What advice would you give to a future African American library professional?

Results

- Previous experience in a library was a motivating factor
- Financial assistance and personal contact during application process
- All have been employed by ARL libraries for 5+ years
- Three have or are working on additional graduate degrees

= Highly motivated librarians

Results (cont'd)

- Racism – more often experienced indirectly
- Isolation – experienced often
- Support networks
- Difference in male and female responses

Conclusions

- Results do not adequately explain low representation of African Americans in ARL libraries
 - Financial assistance available during graduate school (ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, ARL Career Enhancement Program)
 - Support networks – personal or professional
 - Gender differences – study did not take gender into account

Limitations

- Errors in methodology
- Results cannot be generalized

Implications for Librarianship

- Rudimentary glance into reasons for low representation of minority librarians in US ARL libraries
- Reshaping of perceptions regarding minority representation
- Further study is needed.

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