

Academic Librarians' Experiences & Observations of Microaggressions

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Introduction & Background

Demographics of Professional Librarians

- ◆ 2000: 82.3% Female, 89.0% White (Diversity Counts, 2007)
- ◆ 2009-2010: 82.8% Female, 88.0% White (Diversity Counts, 2012)

Diversity in Library Literature

Emphasizes building diverse collections, serving diverse populations, and case studies of specific recruitment and/or retention programs.

Problem Statement

Despite a number of programs designed to recruit and retain minority librarians, the demographics show little gain over the past decade. What other factors might we need to consider?

Microaggressions

- ◆ Microaggressions can target any marginalized group; they can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, or disability (Sue, 2010)
- ◆ “Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273)
- ◆ “Perpetrators are usually unaware that they have engaged in an exchange that demeans the recipient of the communication” (Sue, 2010, p. 5)
- ◆ Microaggressions can be categorized as microassaults, microinsults, & microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007)
- ◆ The cumulative effects of microaggressions can be detrimental (Sue, 2010)

Purpose(s)

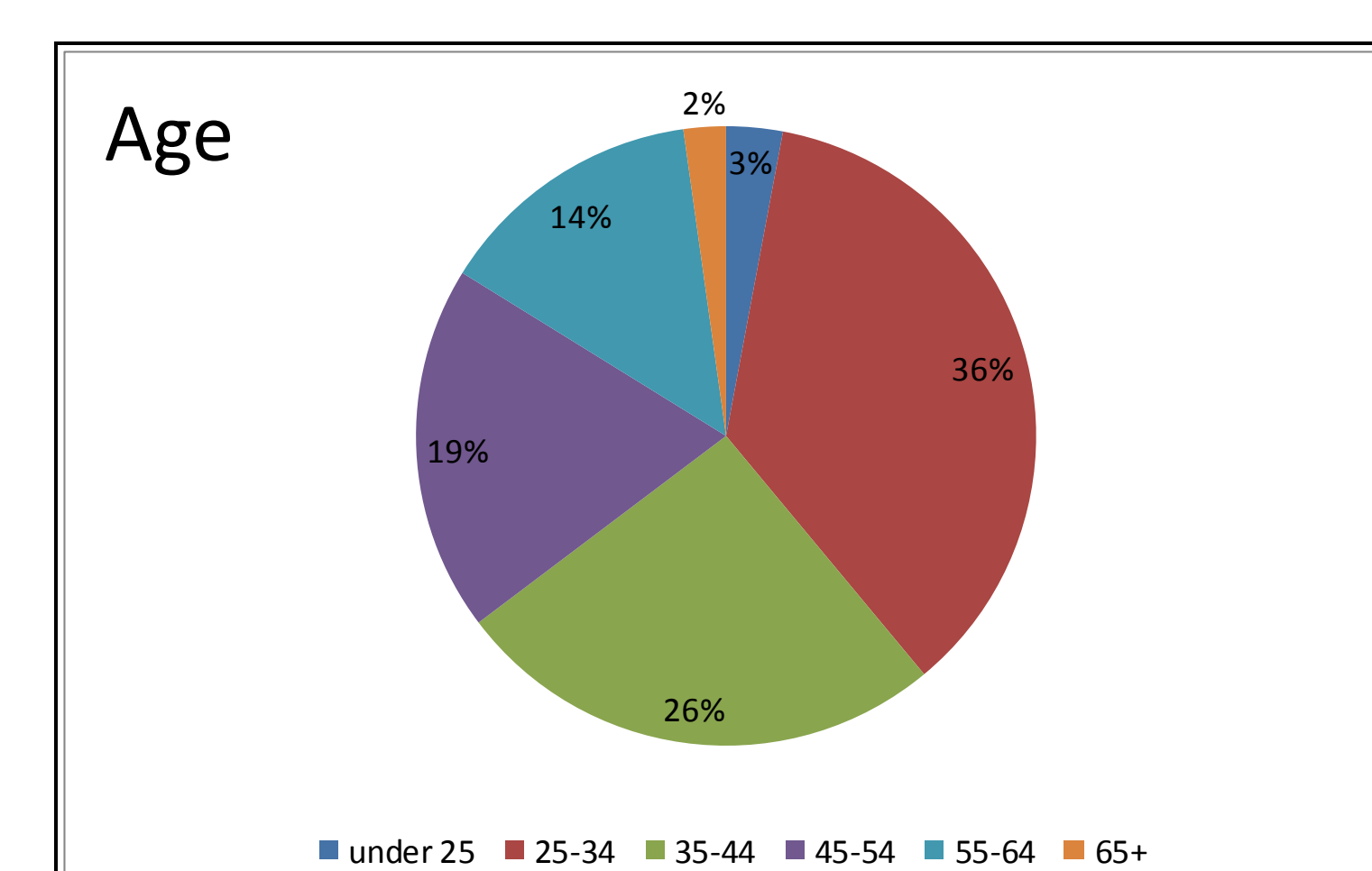
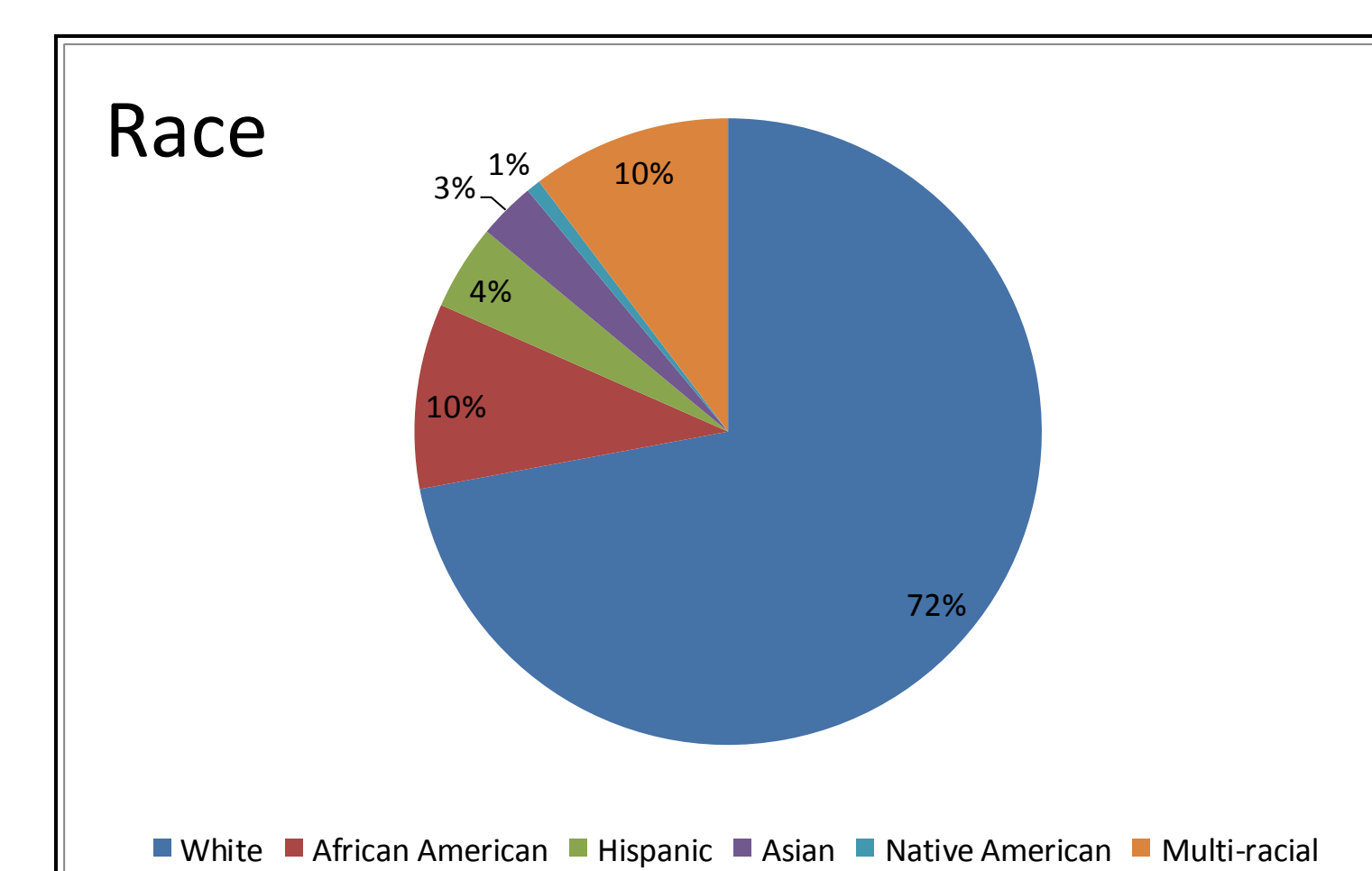
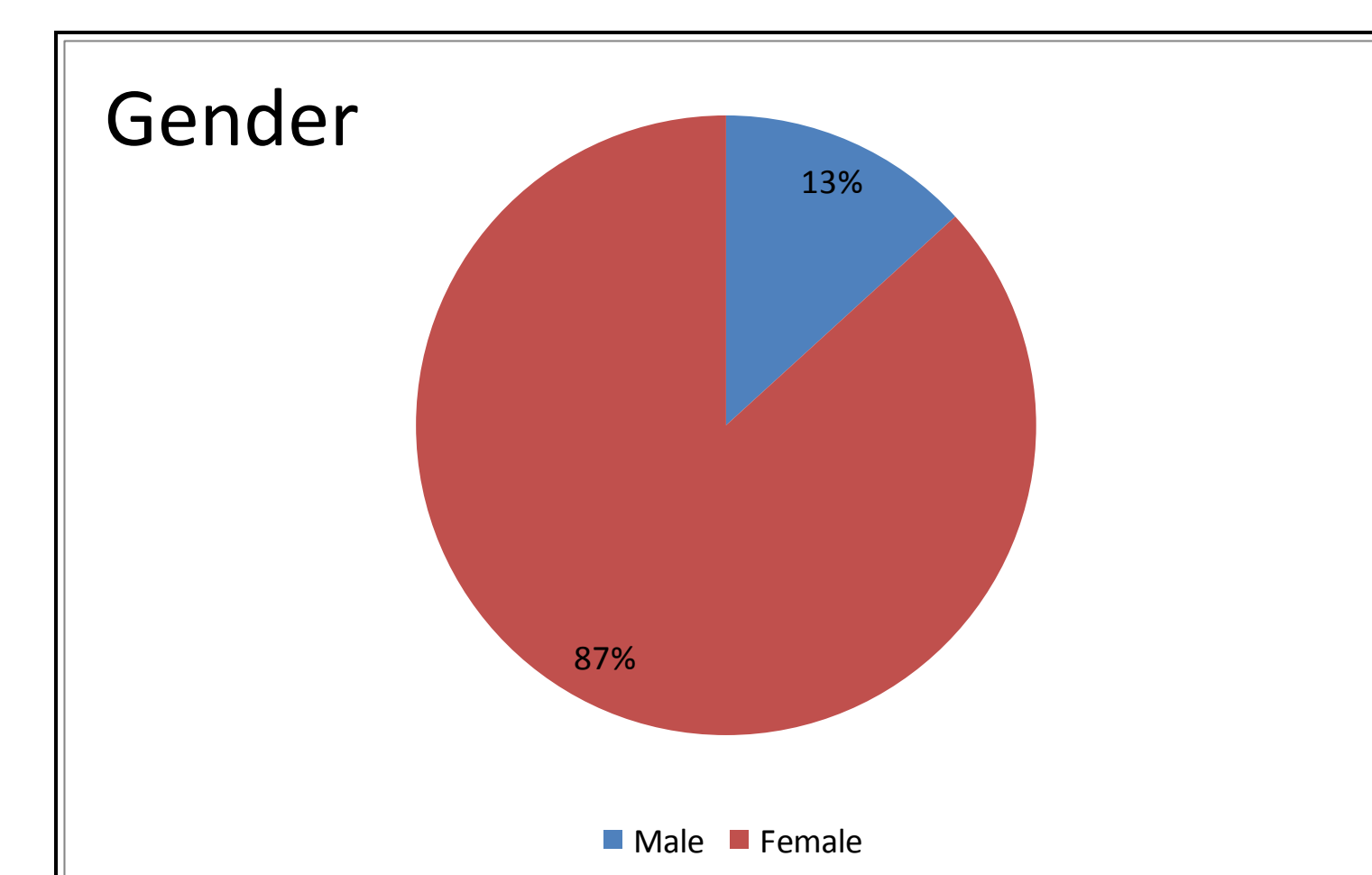
1. Investigate the prevalence of racial microaggressions in academic libraries.
2. Determine whether non-minority librarians are conscious of racial microaggressions their minority colleagues may be experiencing.

Methodology

- ◆ Online survey targeted to academic librarians, distributed via listservs
- ◆ Based on Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2011)
- ◆ 2 sets of 20 statements—experiences & observations, 7-point scale
- ◆ Responses from minority participants to experience statements compared with responses from non-minority participants to observation statements

Survey Results

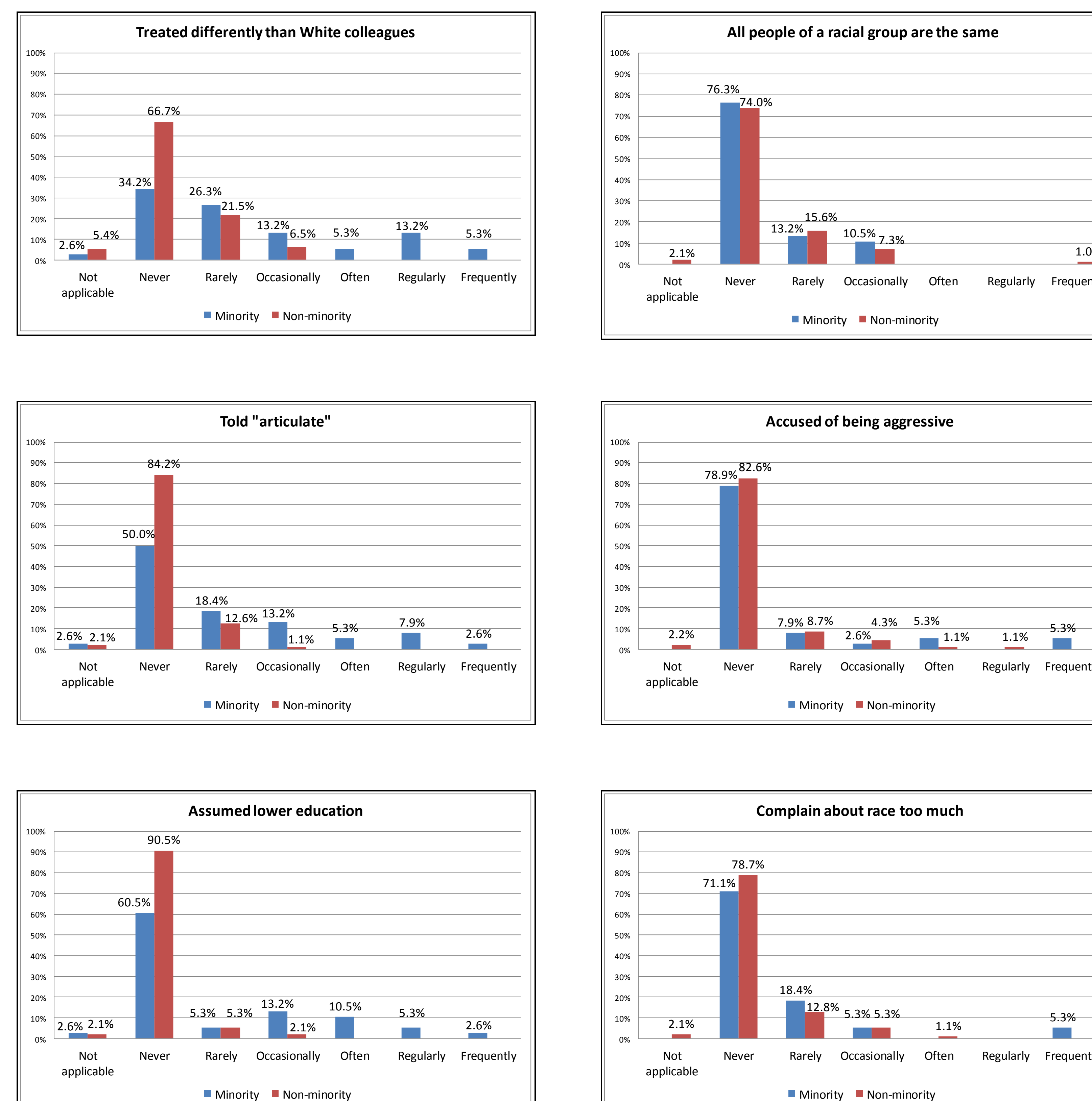
Participant Demographics



Mean Responses to Survey Items

Experience Questions	Mean Response (Minority)	Mean Response (Non-minority)	Observation Questions
A colleague told me that all people in my racial group are all the same.	2.00	2.33	A colleague said that all people in a particular racial group are all the same.
A colleague accused me of being aggressive because of my race.	2.07	2.23	A colleague assumed another librarian was being aggressive because of his or her race.
I was told that I complain about race too much.	2.11	2.24	A colleague said that another librarian complained about race too much.
A colleague assumed that I would not be intelligent because of my race.	2.27	2.04	A colleague assumed that another librarian would not be intelligent because of his or her race.
A colleague told me that I was hired because of my race.	2.30	2.20	A colleague told another librarian that he or she was hired because of his or her race.
A colleague assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other racial groups.	2.31	2.14	A colleague assumed that another librarian's work would be inferior because of his or her race.
A colleague told me I was overly sensitive about issues of race.	2.37	2.35	A colleague told another librarian that he or she was overly sensitive about issues of race.
A colleague of a different racial group has stated that there is no difference between the two of us.	2.37	2.15	A colleague of one racial group told a librarian of a different racial group that there was no difference between the two of them.
A colleague acted surprised at my professional success because of my race.	2.42	2.00	A colleague acted surprised at another librarian's professional success because of his or her race.
My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race.	2.44	2.20	A colleague's opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of his or her race.
A colleague assumed that I would have a lower education because of my race.	2.44	2.07	A colleague assumed that another librarian would have a lower education because of his or her race.
A colleague's body language showed they felt threatened by me because of my race.	2.44	2.16	A colleague's body language showed they felt threatened by another librarian because of his or her race.
I was told that people of color do not experience racism anymore.	2.44	2.33	A colleague said that people of color do not experience racism anymore.
A colleague has told me that people should not think about race anymore.	2.50	2.37	A colleague told another librarian that people should not think about race anymore.
A colleague told me that I was "articulate" after he/she assumed I wouldn't be.	2.52	2.13	A colleague told another librarian that he or she was "articulate" after having assumed he or she would not be.
I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles.	2.63	2.38	A colleague said that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles.
A colleague was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.	2.63	2.32	A colleague was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward another librarian because of his or her race.
I was ignored at work because of my race.	2.63	2.23	A colleague was ignored at work because of his or her race.
A colleague has told me that he/she was color-blind.	2.74	2.43	A colleague told another librarian that he or she was color-blind.
A colleague treated me differently than White colleagues.	3.04	2.29	A colleague treated another librarian differently than his or her White peers.

Comparison of Responses to Select Survey Items



Discussion

- ◆ Number of responses: 136 (38 minority, 98 non-minority)
- ◆ Mean scores: range from 2.0 to 3.4, which translates to a frequency between “never” and “occasionally”
- ◆ Mean responses from minority participants to experience questions are higher than mean responses from non-minority participants to observation questions for all but three items
- ◆ Comparison of responses, though not conclusive, suggests a discrepancy between minorities’ experiences and non-minorities’ observations
- ◆ Further investigation could include a larger sample and/or focus groups or interviews with both minority and non-minority librarians

References & Acknowledgements

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