



Co-developing a Culturally-Grounded Measure of Native Microaggressions

Anna Kawennison Fetter, PhD, EdM
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
Duke University School of Medicine

For Our Futures: The National Native College Student Mental Health Study

Objective: Address critical gaps in understanding mental health among Native college students.

Design: 10-person community research team. Grounded in Indigenous Research values (*Respect, Relationship, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility, & Representation* [Tsosie et al., 2022]).

Cross-sectional national survey NA/AN/NH college students ($N = 553$). Examine effects of cultural stressors (e.g., historical trauma, microaggressions, discrimination) and protective factors on mental health & wellbeing



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What are microaggressions?

- Verbal, nonverbal, or environmental communication that convey devaluation, exclusion, or invalidation of marginalized people (Pierce et al., 1977; Sue et al., 2007; Syed, 2021)

*“When I provided an article for the class on the subject, the comments were more of, ‘Ugh, we have to read this? Native Americans are gone. Why are we reading about them?’”
(Masta, 2018)*

Why do microaggressions matter in Native health?

- In meta-analysis of over 200 studies, microaggressions negatively impact on mental health → depression, anxiety, stress, and self-esteem (Costa et al., 2023; Lui & Quezada, 2019)
- Common, frequently experienced (Ong & Burrow, 2017)
- Limited quantitative data on Native experiences with microaggressions



Why do we need a measure of Native-specific experiences of microaggressions?

- We lack microaggression measures for Native peoples
- Most microaggression studies use “pan-ethnic” scales
- Microaggressions are based in specific sociopolitical histories, stereotypes, and narratives
 - i.e., the stereotype “Canadians are polite” is not transferrable to other Nationalities**
- So, “pan-ethnic microaggressions” do not capture bias, stereotypes, and narratives based on ***settler colonialism*** (Wolfe, 2006)

Developing a scale (9 months)



Literature review



Co-creating items with CRT

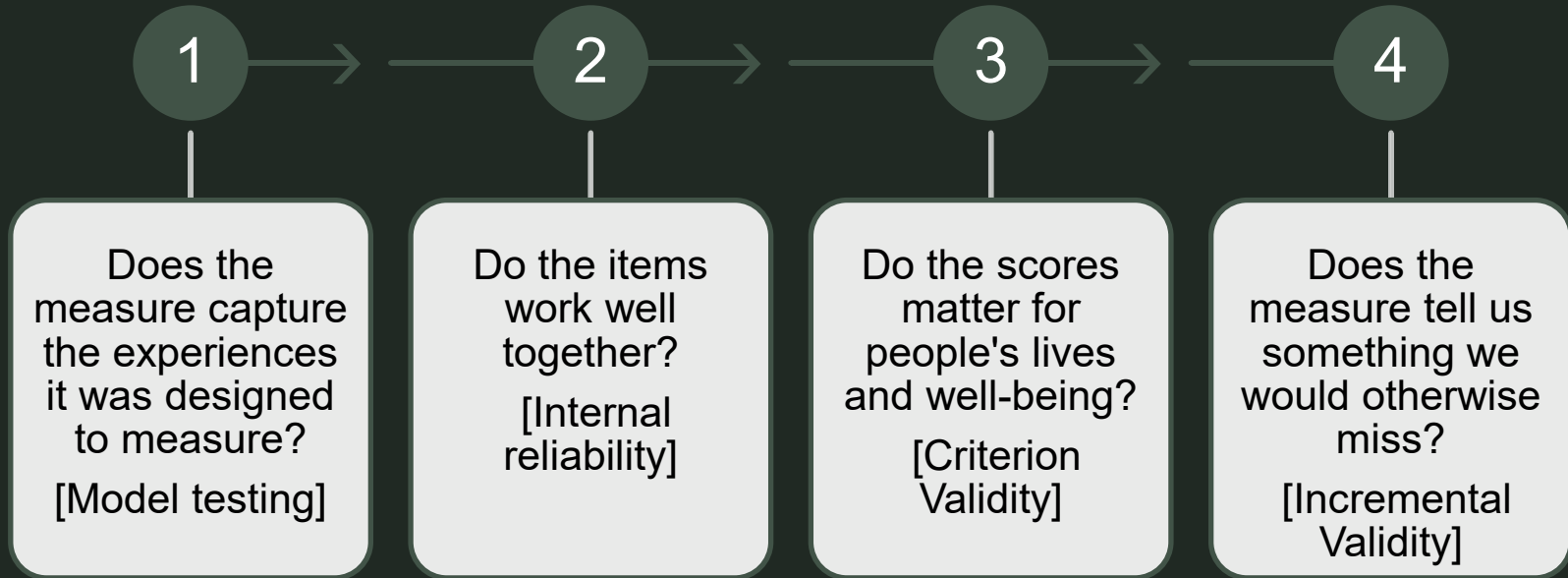


Expert feedback



Qualitative piloting among Native college students ($N = 22$)

Testing the Measure



1

2

The Four Domains of the 32-item Native Experiences of Microaggressions & Erasure Scale (NEME)

Interpersonal Appropriation
and Tokenization

- Being treated like a symbol rather than a person
- Sample item: *Been asked to speak for all Native people?*

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Settler-Colonial Erasure

- Messages that Native people don't exist, matter, or belong today
- Sample item: Seen people act as if Native issues are not important or relevant?

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Authenticity & Identity Policing

- Having your Native identity questioned
- Sample item: *Been asked if you are a “real” Indigenous person by a non-Indigenous person?*

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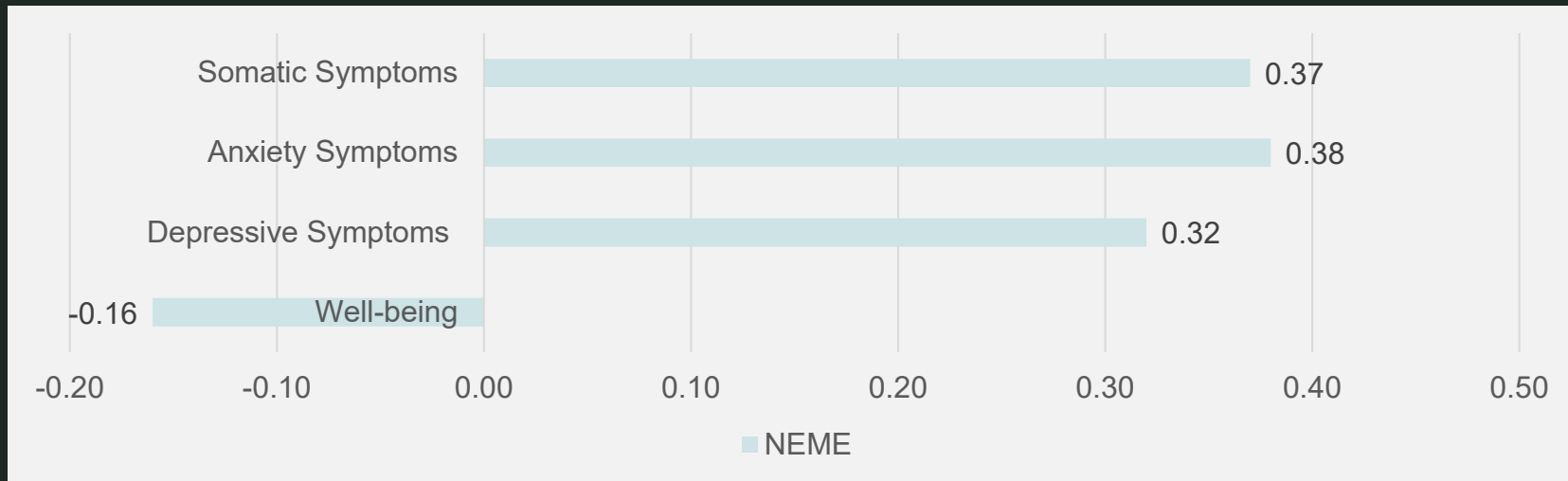
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Negative Stereotypes

- Harmful beliefs about Native people
- Sample Item: *Heard others assume Native people have “casino money”?*

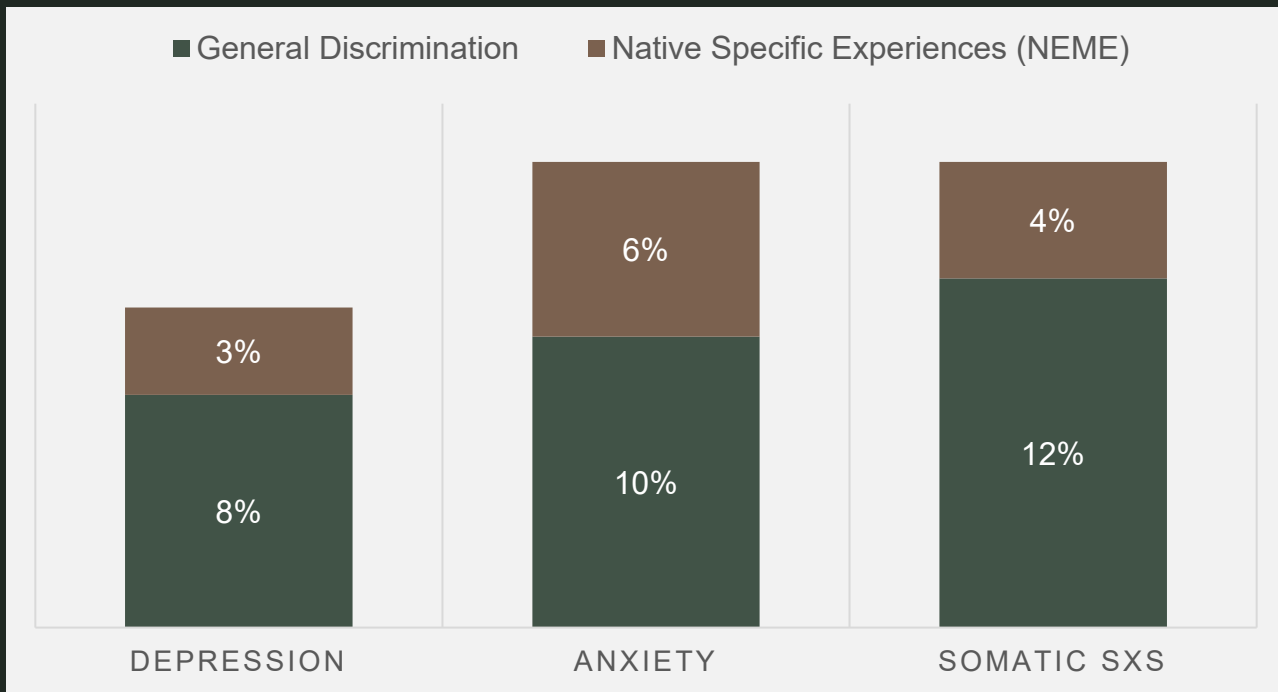
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More experiences of microaggressions and erasure were consistently linked to poorer mental health and well-being among Native college students



4

Native-Specific Experiences Matter Beyond General Discrimination



How can the NEME inform behavioral health?

- Research

Community-partnered and culturally grounded work is feasible & critical

Measuring culturally-specific stressors gives better understanding of Native experiences

- Clinical Care

These experiences matter and impact daily lives of Native youth

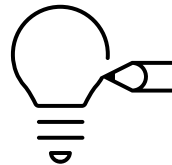
Understand what patients are coping with on daily basis

- Advocacy

For policy and practice change to reduce microaggression exposure and/or increase supports

“We cannot create
what we cannot
imagine.”

-Lucille Clifton



*“I really appreciate the diversity of questions in this survey!
There are many questions on here that typically do not get
asked about and I think they should be talked about more.”*

Nia:wen (thank you)!

The *For our Futures* Community Research Team:

- Sanoe Rapozo (Duke), Mikala Chee (Fort Lewis College), Ryan Si'al (Tohono O'odham), Abbey Woldt (UW-Madison), & Savannah Swamp (University at Albany)
- John Gonzalez (Bemidji State), Lina Martin (UW-Madison, Vanessa Borum (University at Albany), Ryan Dial (UNC-Chapel Hill), Tanisha Yazzie (University of San Diego)

Our Expert Reviewers:

- Drs. Joseph Gone, Melissa Walls, Laurel Davis-Delano, & Kelley Sittner

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