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The Evolution of Microaggressions Against Native Americans in Montana History Books

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Introduction

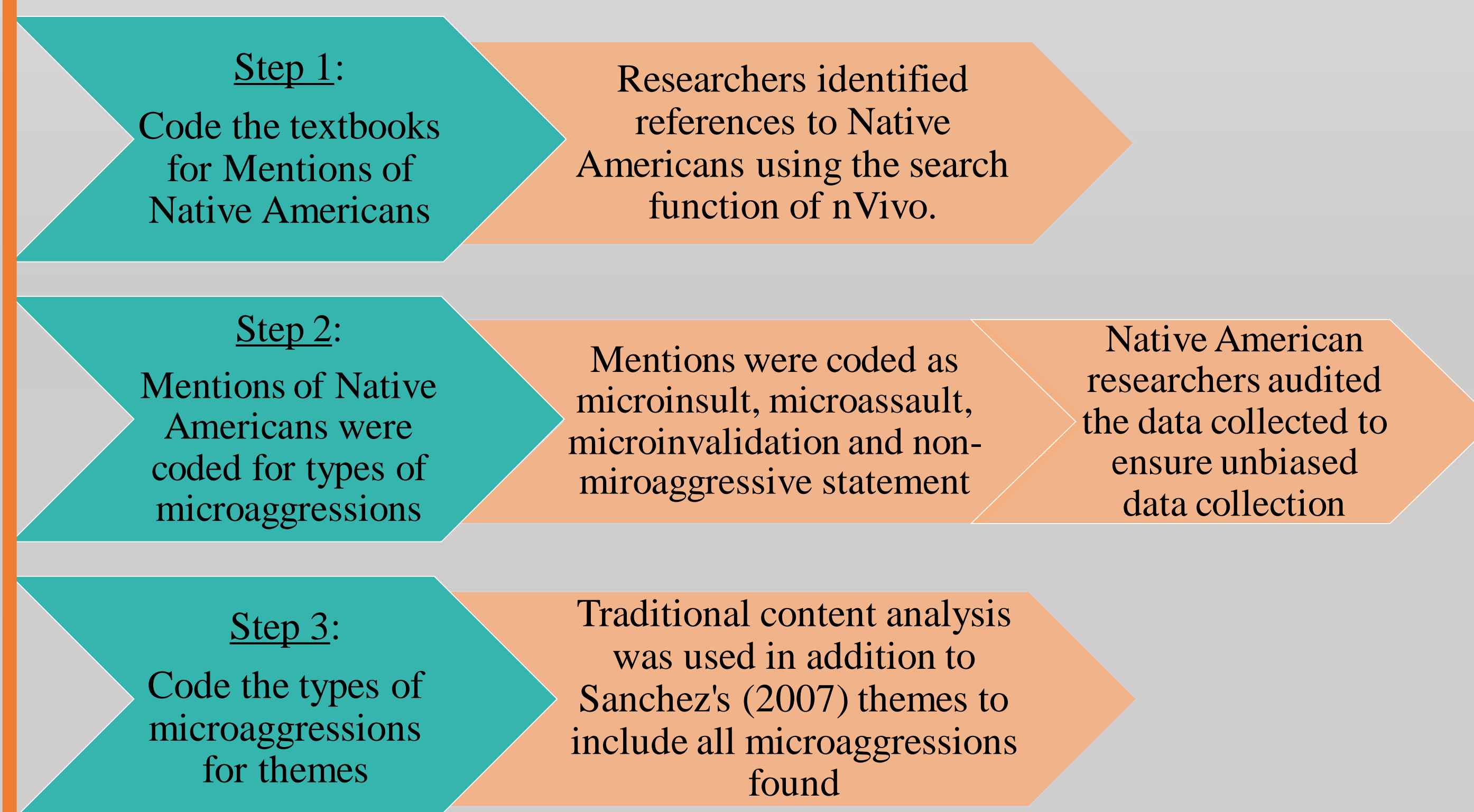
Microaggressions are a relatively understudied term in psychology, and are often not immediately recognized by even keen observers (Sue, 2010). Microaggressions are defined as any verbal, behavioral, or environmental statements or actions that are derogatory or hostile and insulting in nature specifically targeted at a person or people (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

Holter, et al. (2018) examined a number of Montana history textbooks from across the state, the earliest published in 1951, the most recent in 2008, and discovered that the texts contain many microaggressions against Native Americans. The study revealed the existence of microaggressions; however, the changes in these microaggressions over time was not considered.

This study seeks to add to the growing body of research by examining the shift in discrimination in textbooks across time and further analyzing how this prejudice has evolved.

Methods

In order to collect a sample of text books used in eighth grade Montana specific history courses, public schools on and off of reservations were surveyed.



Themes of Microaggressions

- Native American Culture
- Native American Religion
- Hardships Faced by Native Americans
- Native Americans as Problematic
- Depiction of Battles and Violence Outside of Battles
- No Mention of Native Americans where there Should Be
- Native American Tribes

Microassault:

"This was the case in 1870 when rumors spread that the western territories would be made into a large Indian reservation on which the Red Man could roam at will (p. Abbot, 1951, p. 275)."

Microinvalidation:

"Relations with Native Americans were not always friendly, however. Indians, like the Blackfeet, sometimes attacked mountain men who trapped on Indian hunting grounds without permission (Hall, 2005, p. 347)."

Microinsult:

"One step too many might mean one's scalp (Thomas, Thayer, & Murphy, 2007, p. 136)."

	1951	1979	2005	2007	2008
Microinvalidation	48	4	7	10	27
Microinsult	19	5	2	8	20
Microassault	11	0	0	0	0
Non Microaggressive Statement	152	16	129	122	242
Total Mentions of Native Americans	230	25	138	240	289
% of Mentions that are Microaggressive	34%	36%	7%	8%	16%

Figure 2. Number of each type of microaggression examined per text.

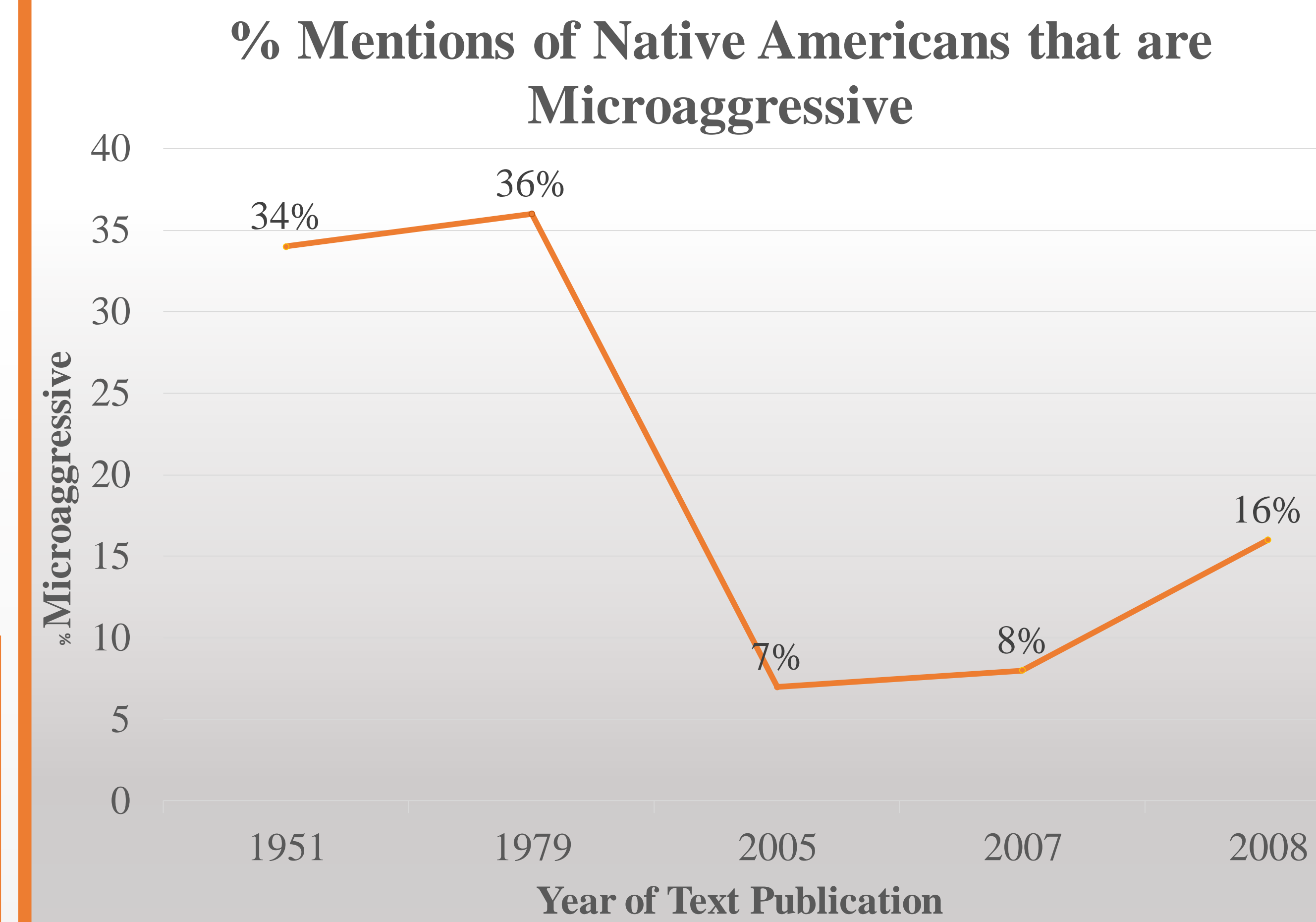


Figure 1. Presence of microaggressions across time.

Conclusion and Implications

- Microaggressive statements are still prominent in 8th grade Montana history text books
- 16% of mentions of Native Americans within the most widely used text are microaggressive statements
- These findings are incongruent with Indian Education for All

Montana "recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity." (Mont. Const. art. X, § 1, cl. 2)

- Accurate texts are currently unavailable, but teachers can actively discuss microaggressions as they come up in order to address the fact that they are no longer socially acceptable.
- Educators must seek resources outside of textbooks, so students have the best opportunity to enjoy an inclusive education.

Acknowledgements

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