Reporting Microaggressions through a Mobile App

Christy M. Byrd, PhD

University of California, Santa Cruz

What are microaggressions?

- Microaggressions are subtle and often unintentional verbal or nonverbal slights that demean an individual based on their membership in a marginalized group (Sue, 2010).

- Examples
  - Being stared at in the dining hall
  - Someone asking to touch your hair because it is “exotic”
  - Being told you speak English well when it is your first language
  - Being mistaken for someone in a service role

What types of microaggressions are there?

- Alien in one's own land
- Ascription of intelligence
- Colorblindness
- Criminality
- Use of sexist/heterosexist language
- Denial of individual prejudice
- Myth of meritocracy
- Pathologizing cultural values/styles
- Second-class citizen
- Traditional gender role prejudice
- Sexual objectification
- Assumption of abnormality

What are the effects of experiencing microaggressions?

- Psychological effects
  - Anxiety
  - Depressive symptoms
  - Self-esteem
- Academic effects
  - Lower feelings of belonging
  - Lack of confidence in abilities
  - Poor performance

What are the limitations in the existing research literature?

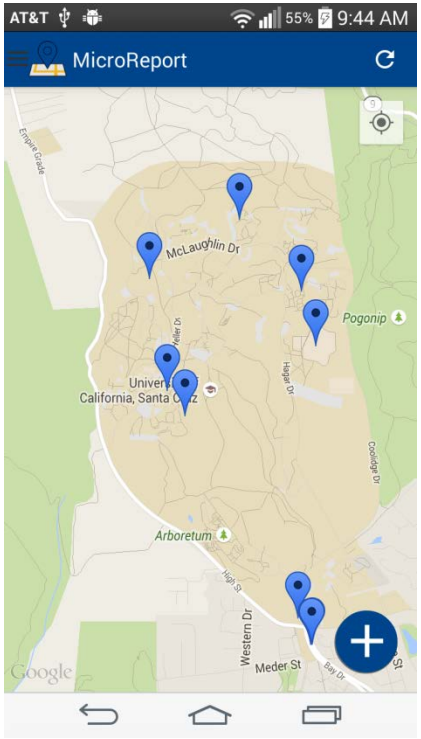
- Research relies on recall weeks or months later - may be inaccurate and underestimate impact
- Need to examine how different groups are affected differently
- Daily diary studies are expensive and fatiguing
- No existing research on intervention strategies

What are the goals of the study?

- Investigate the utility of a mobile app for reporting
- Study effects of microaggressions over time
- Test a potential intervention

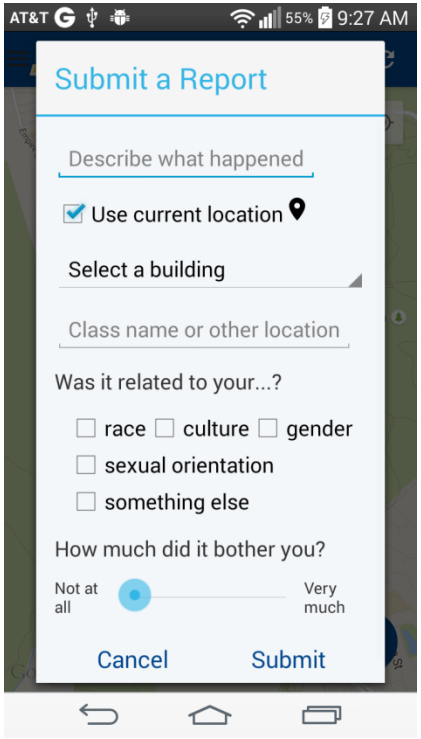
What is MicroReport?

- A mobile app for Android and iOS phones developed at UCSC
- Users can report microaggressions and view others' anonymized reports



What is the structure of the study?

- Use the app for one academic year
- 4 surveys
  - Perceptions of campus
  - Academic outcomes
  - Psychological well-being
  - Identity beliefs
- 2 workshops each quarter
  - Basics
  - Responding to microaggressions



Workshops

Basics

- What are microaggressions?
- Themes
- Previous research

Self-Defense

- Appeal to values
- State your feelings
- Use humor
- Give information

Who are the participants? (Survey 3)

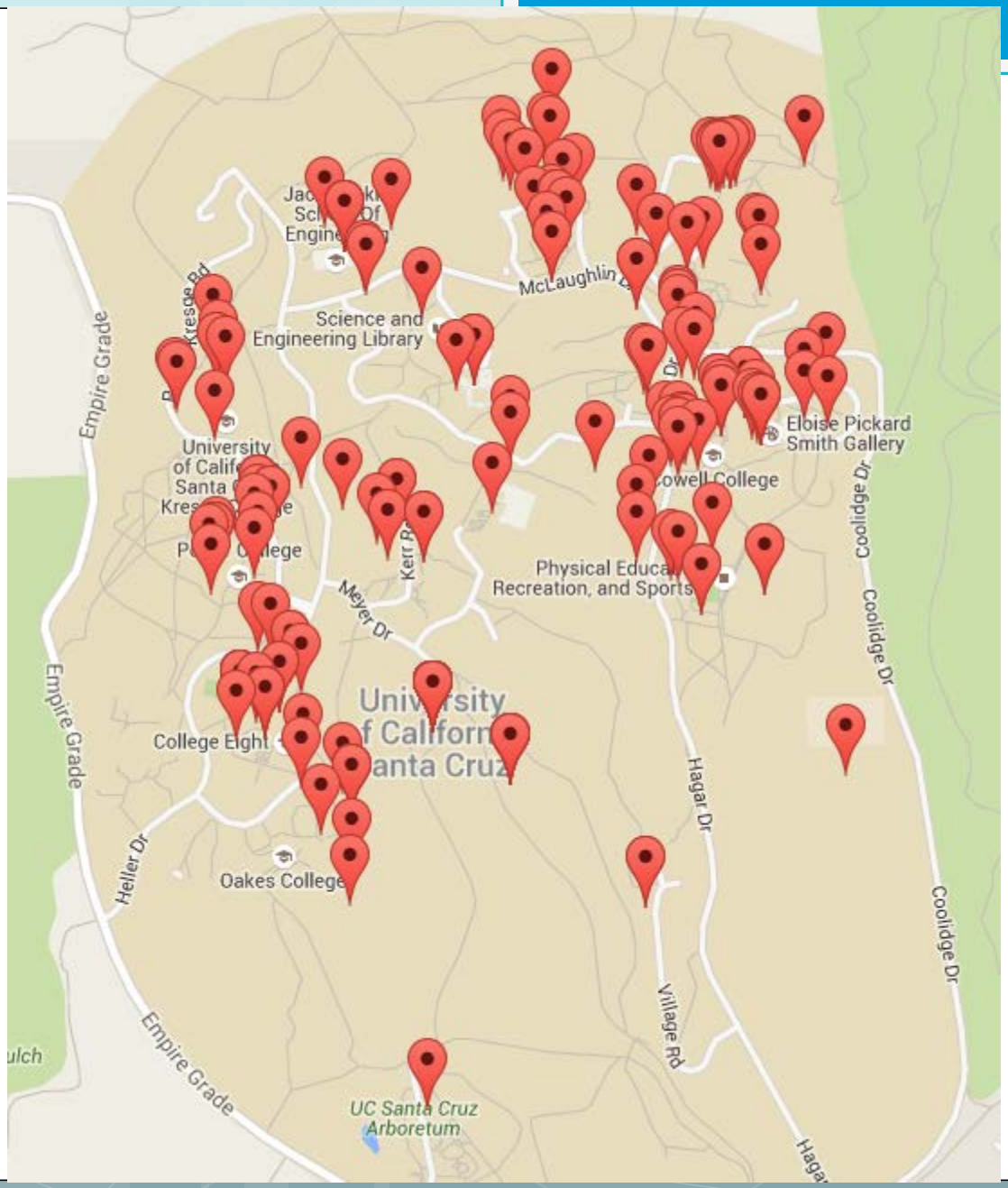
- 211 UCSC undergraduate and graduate students (70% women)
- 31% Android users, 68% iPhone users
- 18% lesbian, gay, or bisexual
- 26.5% Asian/Asian American, 5.2% Black/African American, 30.3% Hispanic/Latino, 26.1% White/European American, 8.1% Multiracial
- 57% first generation college students

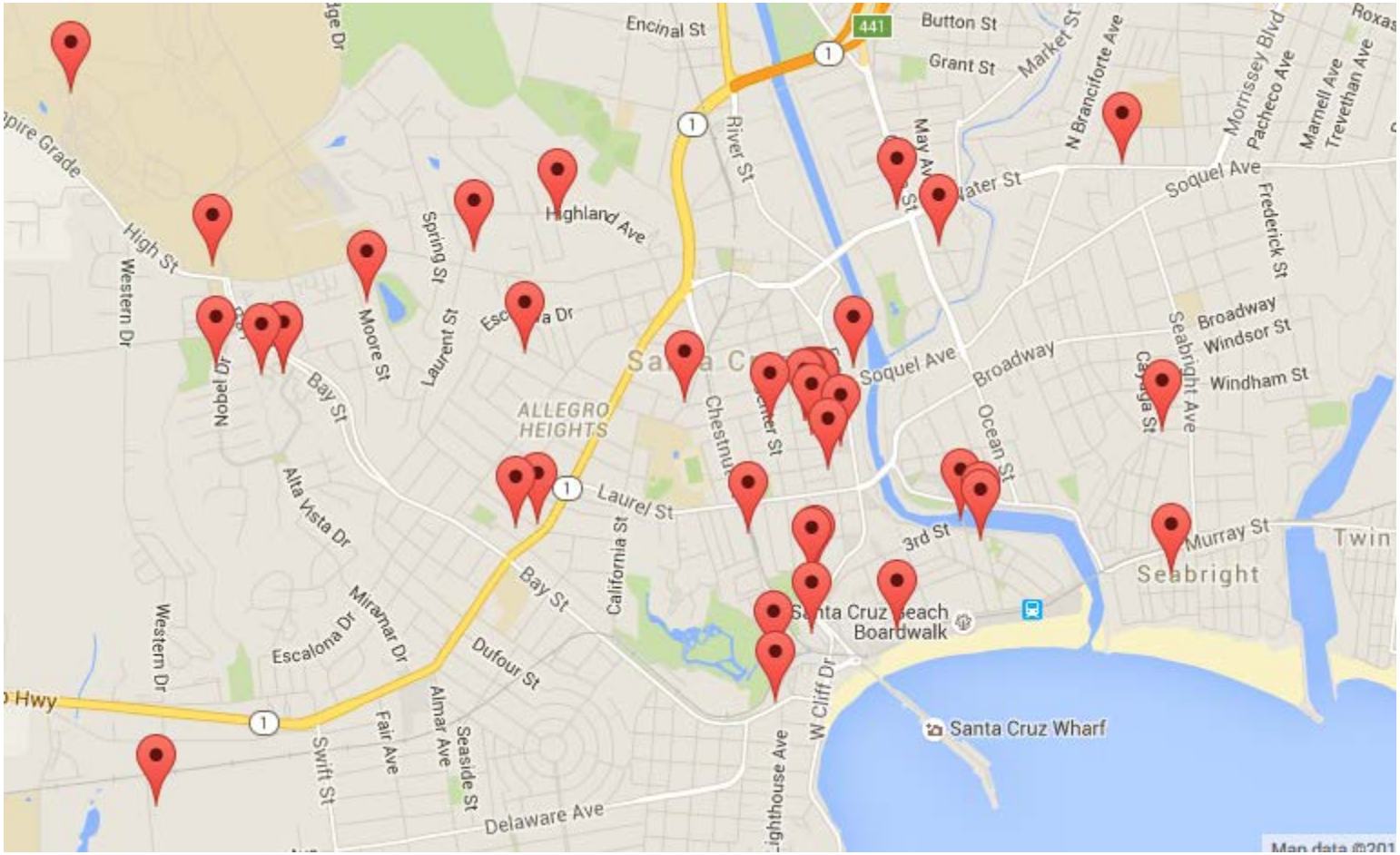
What are the measures?

- BAPC (.72)
- Basic Needs Satisfaction - Competence (.79)
- Basic Needs Satisfaction - Belonging (.82)
- College Satisfaction (.80)
- Racial-Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (.93)
- Self-reported GPA

What are the measures?

- CES-D (.74)
- Oxford Happiness Scale (.82)
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (.90)
- Perceived Stress Scale (.87)
- Coping Self-Efficacy
  - In the situation (.78)
  - Problem-focused (.90)
  - Social support (.71)
  - Stop unpleasant thoughts/feelings (.91)


Science and
Engineering Library
McLaughlin
Empire Grade
Eloise Pickard
Smith Gallery
Cowell College
Coolidge Dr
Physical
Recreation, and Sports
Meyer Dr
Hagar Dr
Heller Dr
Oakes College
Village Rd
UC Santa Cruz
Arboretum


Encinal St
441
Button St
Grant St
Market St
N Branciforte Ave
Morrissey Blvd
Pacheco Ave
Marnell Ave
Trevethan Ave
Soquel Ave
Fredrick St
River St
Highland Ave
Spring St
Laurent St
Moore St
High St
Western Dr
Nobel Dr
Bay St
Escalona Dr
ALLEGRO HEIGHTS
Chestnut St
Center St
Broadway
Seabright Ave
Windsor St
Windham St
Ocean St
Laurel St
Alta Vista Dr
California St
3rd St
Murray St
Seabright
Twin
Miramar Dr
Dufour St
Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk
W Cliff Dr
Santa Cruz Wharf
Swift St
Fair Ave
Almar Ave
Seaside St
Delaware Ave
Lighthouse Ave

Reports

- 74% have made a report
- 0-24 per person
- Mean # of reports: 1.73 (SD = 3.23)
- Mean bothered rating: 55.52 (SD = 28.41)
- Not correlated with survey measure of racial microaggressions

Longitudinal Relations for Racial Microaggressions

- Time 1 (November) to Time 3 (April)
- Belonging (ns)
- Self-esteem ($p < .001$)
- Feelings of competence ($p = .041$)
- Happiness (ns)
- Depressive symptoms ($p = .001$)
- Stress ($p = .027$)
- Controls: time 1 outcome, gender, race, social class, days between surveys

Discussion

- App usage
- Longitudinal findings
- Logistical considerations
- Next steps

Thanks to…

- Our participants
- Research assistants
- Graduate students
- UCSC Committee on Research
- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

cmbyrd@ucsc.edu