

# Experience of Embodiment in Indigenous & White Post-Secondary Students

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## Indigenous Recognition

This study's Indigenous committee and community partner, Membertou First Nation provided approval for the following information to be shared.

Throughout this poster, the term Indigenous is used to broadly refer to First Nations (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit persons. Although "Indigenous" refers to all these groups, either collectively or separately, it is important to note the rich diversity of culture that exists within and across various First Peoples in Canada and the world.

This study was approved by Dalhousie's Research Ethics Board and Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch.

## Introduction

- There is a lower rate in successful completion of university degrees for Indigenous peoples.
- To date, there is minimal knowledge regarding the psychosocial well-being of Indigenous post-secondary students in Atlantic Canada.
- It is unclear how their well-being is impacted by being immersed in the university/college experience compared to that of white students.
- Embodiment, an important aspect of well-being that encompasses the relationship between the self, the body, and society was examined in university students.

## Purpose

- To identify possible protective and risk factors related to student experiences of embodiment that may impact completion of post-secondary education
- To examine how experiences of embodiment are associated with experiences of cultural socialization, ethnic-racial discrimination, and weight discrimination

## Hypotheses

- H1)** Indigenous students would have lower total scores on the experience of embodiment scale than white students
- H2)** Experiences of embodiment total scores would correlate positively with cultural socialization within the Indigenous group
- H3)** Experiences of embodiment total scores would correlate negatively with level of racial and ethnic discrimination and a stronger negative correlation would emerge for the Indigenous group
- H4)** Experiences of embodiment total scores would correlate negatively with experience of weight discrimination and a stronger negative correlation would emerge for the white group

## Method

Online survey across colleges and universities within Atlantic Canada (14+)

### Participants

- 41 Indigenous participants (6 men, 30 women, 4 Indigenous or cultural gender & 1 prefer not to answer)
- 167 white participants (23 men, 139 women, & 5 non-binary/queer/no gender identity)

*Note: Results are preliminary as our Indigenous group has not yet reached the sample size (N=110) suggested by a priori power calculation*

### Measures

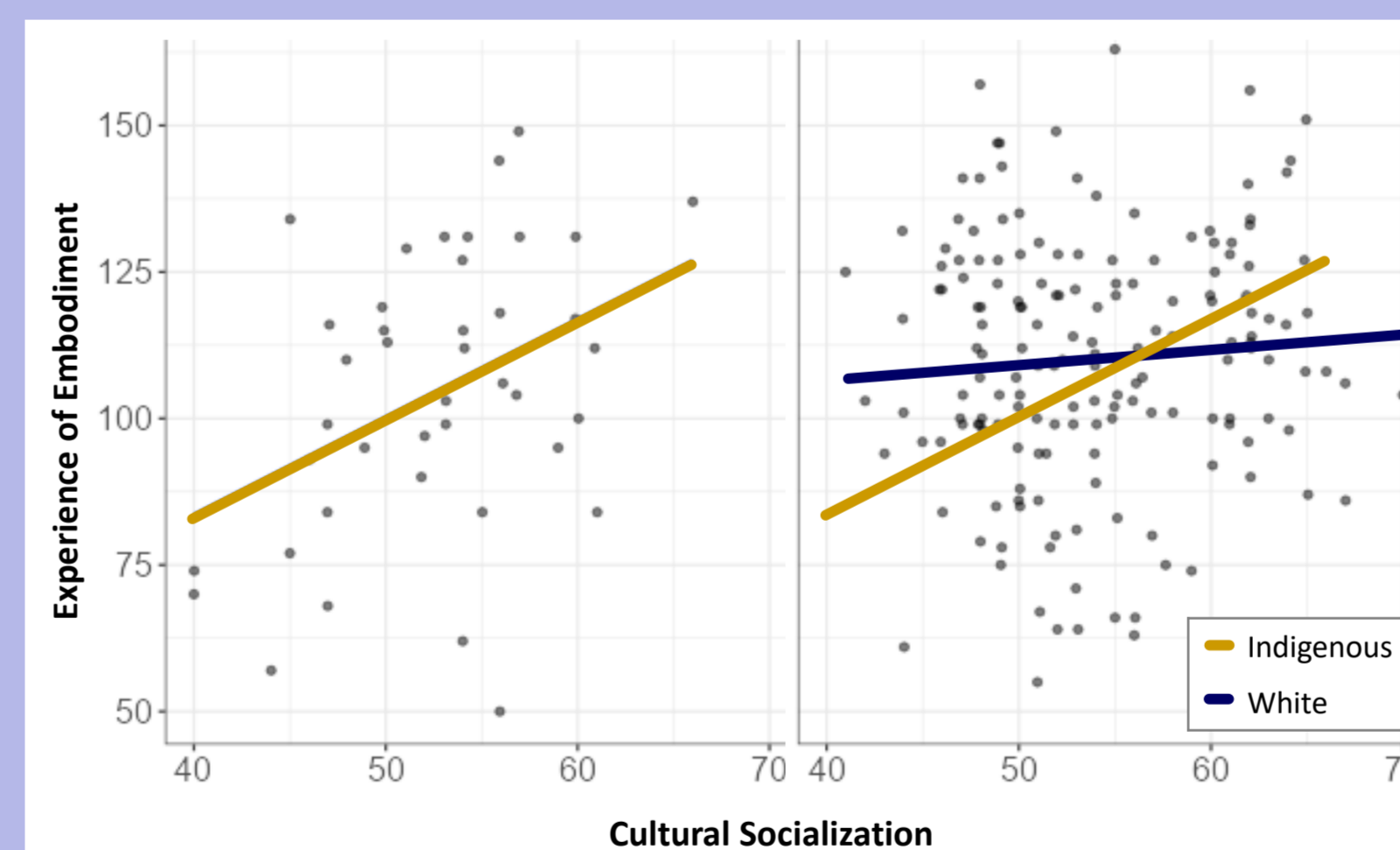
- Demographic and Background Questionnaire (including BMI)
- The Experience of Embodiment Scale
- The Cultural Socialization Scale
- Brief Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-Community Version
- Everyday Discrimination Scale – modified for weight discrimination

**Statistical analyses:** T-tests for group comparisons, Spearman's rho for correlations, and Fishers z for comparison of correlations between groups

## Results

- H1)**  A lower level of embodiment, indicative of poorer well-being, was expected for the Indigenous group was not supported. Experience of embodiment scores did not differ significantly between groups.

- H2)**  A higher level of embodiment, indicative of better well-being, was expected to be associated with higher cultural socialization scores was supported for Indigenous students.

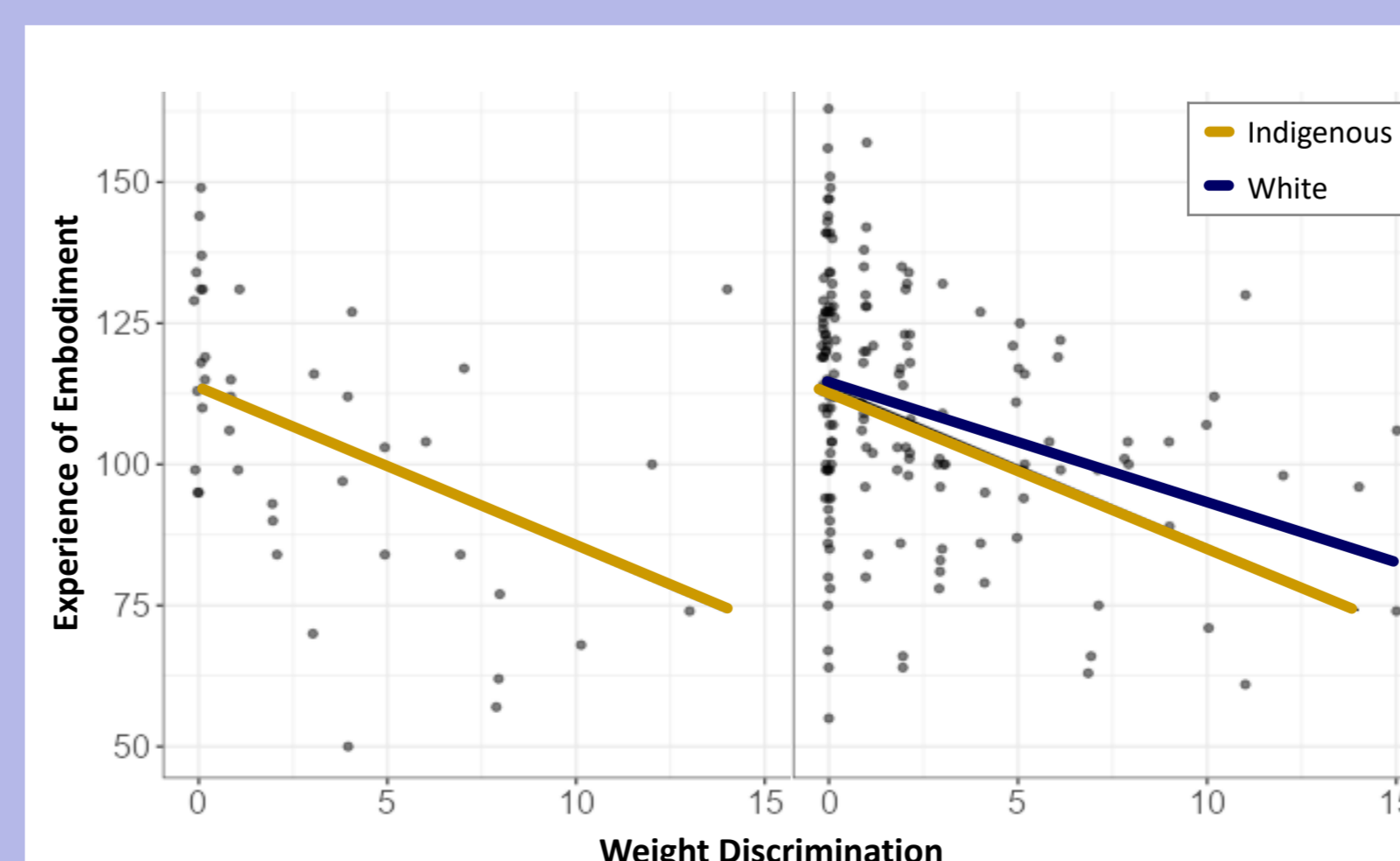


- H3)**  No correlation between the experience of embodiment and ethnic-racial discrimination was found for either group.

Both groups reported experiencing ethnic-racial discrimination (61% of Indigenous students and 56% of white students).

- H4)**  A lower level of experience of embodiment, indicative of poorer well-being, was associated with higher weight discrimination, as expected

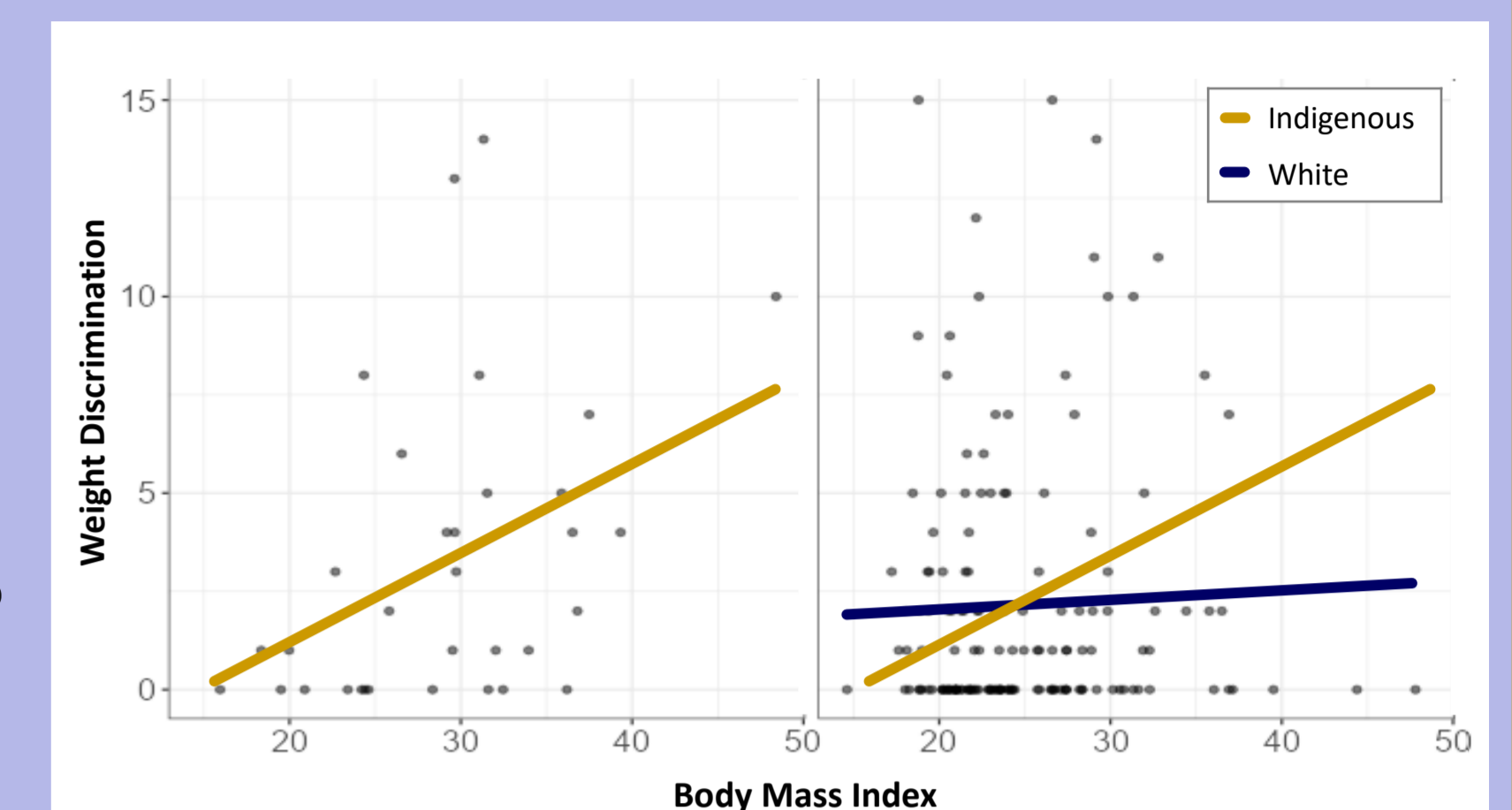
- A stronger negative correlation emerged for the Indigenous group, not the white group as initially hypothesized



## Results

- H4)** Weight discrimination was significantly correlated with body mass index for Indigenous students

Both groups reported weight discrimination with 63% of Indigenous students and 52% of white students scoring above 0 on the weight discrimination scale



## Conclusion

### Possible protective factors for Indigenous student well-being:

- Active engagement in one's Indigenous culture (**H2**)
- Access & option to complete post-secondary education from one's home community (e.g., online) (**H1 & H2**)
- Opportunity to be involved in Indigenous culture and activities on-campus (**H1 & H2**)

### Possible risk factors for all students:

- Active engagement in Western sociocultural ideals of attractiveness (e.g., thinness for women and muscularity for men) (**H1 & H4**)
- Experiencing weight discrimination, no matter one's size (**H4**)
- Attending schools that don't address systemic weight discrimination (**H4**)

### Measuring discrimination of Indigenous peoples:

- In future Indigenous embodiment research, measuring the effects of ethnic-racial discrimination may be better served through the construct of Indigenous historical loss which better captures the experience of Indigenous historical trauma (**H3**)



## Key References

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