Hiding in plain sight: Acculturative Stress and Self-Concealment Amongst Immigrant College Students

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### Introduction
- Acculturative stress is defined as culture shock.
- Newcomers experience hostility from the host countrymen, and are left with a feeling of “other.” This feeling is called the Acculturative process.
- It occurs when groups and individuals undergo psychological changes when they come into contact with a different culture, (Williams & Berry, 1991).
- Acculturative stress also occurs when people born in 1st generation countries, (Hughes, 2003; Torres, 2004).
- Social support has been shown to reduce acculturative stress.
- Self-concealment is a product of acculturative stress— the need to hide who you are so you aren’t seen as an outsider.
- Social support may reduce self-concealment.

### Current Study
- This study examined the relationships between social support, acculturative stress and self-concealment amongst immigrant college students.

### Methods

#### Participants
This study was conducted at Dominican University San Rafael, where an online survey was sent to 150 students with F-1 and J-1 visa or 1st generation students. Only 34 participants qualified (81.25%) women and (18.75%) men. The average age was 25 (SD=4.62), with a range of 18-40. All the participants were undergraduates.

### Measures
- **ASSIS-scale (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994).** An 8 question survey that assesses an individuals stress level. Participants were asked to check all answers that applied to their situation. A example re: Perceived Discrimination; Many opportunities are denied to me.
- **PSS-scale (Procidano & Heller, 1983).** Perceived Social Support Scale a 6 question survey Perceived SC-scale stress assessment tool.
- **Self-Concealment Scale (SCS: Larson & Chastain, 1990)** This scale measures self-concealment, defined here, as a tendency to conceal from others personal information that one perceives as distressing or negative.
- **Demographic questions:** age, ethnicity, length of stay in the USA, education level, marital status and if employed or not.

### Hypothesis

**H #1** There was a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support, r = 0.15, n = 34, p = 0.200. p > .05

**H #2** Self concealment was related to acculturative stress (r = 0.49, n=34, p=0.002. p > .05

**H #3** There was a non-significant positive correlation between Perceived Social Support and Acculturative Stress, r = 0.03, n = 34, p = 0.429. p > .05

### Results

#### Table 1. Correlations between Acculturative Stress Index, Perceived Social Support and Self-Concealment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Acculturative Stress Index</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (1-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative Stress</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concealment Scale</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) There was a significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Acculturative Stress, r = 0.49, n=34, p = 0.002. That is, higher scores on Self-Concealment were correlated with greater Acculturative Stress.

2) There was a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support, r = 0.15, n = 34, p = 0.200.

3) There was a non-significant positive correlation between Perceived Social Support and Acculturative Stress, r = 0.03, n = 34, p = 0.429. That is, higher scores on Self-Concealment were correlated with greater Acculturative Stress.

### Discussion

Findings
- The purpose of this study was to (a) Identify if family support helped lower acculturative stress and if b) if Self-concealment was related to acculturative stress amongst immigrant college students. The findings found a positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Acculturative Stress, a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support and a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support amongst college immigrant students.

#### Limitations
- Several limitations must be noted in this study.
  - First, all participants were solicited from only one university campus at Dominican University San Rafael, making access to a larger more diverse population difficult.
  - Second, perceived social support in the current study, was measured from mainly two perspectives, i.e., support from family & friends. This is a limited view since Support could also come from the larger community the students find themselves in.

### Conclusion
- The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturative stress levels amongst immigrant college students; by examining the association between acculturative stress and perceived social support and self-concealment.
- College immigrant students experience high levels of acculturative stress; those with less family support show significantly higher levels of stress.