



## OBJECTIVE

- Lack of acculturation is a factor impacting mental well-being in four-year university students [1, 3].
- Additionally, students are now confronting the effects of the global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, leading to the widespread in-person closure of educational institutions in many countries causing a rapid onset of online schooling, in addition to decreased socialization and adverse economic changes [2].
- To address the gaps in existing and recent research, we will conduct virtual interviews to offer a more in-depth understanding of stressors in relation to acculturation, social and cultural networks, and environmental factors, particularly those caused by COVID-19. This will serve to better identify the major stressors in the undergraduate population and their various dimensions and interaction.
- Our research question is: How do network and social capital accumulation affect the mental health stressors of undergraduate students and how did it change after COVID-19?

## METHODS

- Mixed methodology will be used in the form of survey and interview data collection.
- The survey will be distributed via bulk email and will include questions that allow us to identify the major mental health stressors of freshmen and senior students at Texas A&M University.
- Interviews will be conducted to offer more insight into the phenomena.
- Interviewing both freshman and senior students at Texas A&M University will allow us to identify changing variables, including those often overlooked relating to growth, acclimation, and exhaust. Basic demographic and preliminary information will be identified with a digital questionnaire administered post consent, pre-interview.
- Sample size calculations indicated that 380 participants for the survey would be necessary in order to obtain generalizable results with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- University culture is unique to the school and introduces new conditions that first-year college students must adapt to, a process known as acculturation.
- The setting of this study focuses on a predominantly white institution (PWI). Minorities at the PWI may find it more difficult to acculturate to the existing environment due to higher levels of social climate and interracial stress [5]. Dominant power systems within PWI's can create unique structural and cultural pressures for students of diverse backgrounds [5].
- COVID-19, or coronavirus, further hindered college students when urgent postponing or canceling of events quickly spurred, the greatest challenge being the rapid shift from face-to-face classes to online, ultimately creating the need for abrupt virtual acculturation. [5]
- Studies show that while no definitive relationship between acculturation and mental health has been established, however researchers theorize that acculturation affects socialization rates, which increases an individual's knowledge of treatment options when seeking help for mental health [3].
- Existing research has established that mental health has worsened in college students during the pandemic [7]. Despite this, there is a lack of research defining relationships between how a COVID-19 environment has influenced both acculturation and the magnitude of mental health stressors present in university students. Additionally, the data does not assess the mental health of university students prior to COVID, and thus a correlation cannot be established [3].

Life Factors Impacted By COVID-19	
Psychosocial Stressors	Social Stressors of Health
Stigma for Spreading COVID-19 [4]	Housing Instability [4]
Workplace exposure to COVID-19 [4]	Food Insecurity [4]
Getting Ill from COVID-19 [4]	Obtaining Health Care Services
Feeling of Loneliness	Loss of a Job or Income [4]
Passing of a Loved One	Transportation Difficulties
Health of Loved Ones	Loss of Education

Figure 1: Table categorizing stressors aggravated by COVID-19 by psychosocial and social health stressors, built from McKnight-Eily et al. findings (2021:164) [4].

## CONCLUSION

- IRB approval was finalized Spring of 2021 and we aim to collect data late Spring of 2021.
- From study findings we seek to build an interactive peer-based program to aid in university acculturation, provide coping strategies to confront prominent mental health stressors, and resources for further mental health intervention. [1]
- We aim for this work to assist in destigmatizing mental illness, and seek to provide avenues to build mental health education while aiding in alleviating acculturative stress in terms of adjusting to a university and or COVID-19 environment.
- In recognizing structural inequalities perpetuated by systemic forces we can encourage anti-deficit framing as an important part of advancing these types of discourses in educational conditions.

## CITATIONS

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