

***The Life Events Assessment Profile (LEAP): A preliminary psychometric analysis***  
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This project is designed to systematically assess external environmental stressors, i.e., chronic burdens and resources, thought to result in adverse mental and physical health outcomes. Life stress has been posited as a key mechanism in the etiology and course of both psychological and physical health outcomes, e.g., depression and cardiovascular disease; however, research has been hampered by the limitations of available assessment methods. The purpose of this project is to test a newly developed instrument for assessing life stress, the Life Events Assessment Profile (LEAP).

Two major types of instruments have been used for the assessment of life stressors in adults. The first involves the use of self-report checklists. Although checklist methods are quite convenient, and are, thus, widely employed, they have been shown to be only modestly reliable. The second method involves the use of investigator-based reports using well-established coding systems with semi-structured prompts and memory aids to enhance reliability of assessment. These investigator-based methods are reliable, but have not been widely adopted due to the costs associated with training, administering, and scoring. This project will attempt to examine the validity and reliability of a new assessment instrument to be used with adults, the Life Events Assessment Profile (LEAP). This new assessment tool was designed to incorporate the strengths of a comprehensive interviewer-based method without the associated costs. Specifically, the LEAP involves a structured administration and scoring system designed to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the investigator-based method. The ultimate goal of this project is to promote the feasibility of administering psychometrically sound measures of life stress in the context of mind-body research.

The specific aims of the project are: 1) to demonstrate the concurrent validity of the LEAP by comparing it with a standard checklist measure, the Psychiatric Epidemiology Research Interview Life Events Scale (PERI) and the gold standard for investigator-based measures, the Life Events and Difficulties Schedule (LEDS), 2) to compare the discriminant and convergent validity of the LEAP with the checklist method and the LEDS by examining their associations with measures of social desirability and physical and psychological symptomatology in a community-based sample of adults; and 3) to determine the test-retest reliability of the LEAP and to compare this with the test-retest reliability of a standard checklist measure. In order to accomplish these aims, research participants will be randomly assigned to one of three stress assessment conditions after completing a battery of measures to assess demographic and health outcomes. Participants will return for a second administration of the stress assessment at either one week (Group 1) or six weeks (Groups 2 and 3). Following data collection, statistical analyses will be performed to determine the psychometric utility of the LEAP.