



LABORATORY FOR STRESS ASSESSMENT & RESEARCH OVERVIEW & SERVICES

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The mission of the Laboratory for Stress Assessment and Research is to support and advance the conceptualization and assessment of environmental factors that influence human health and wellbeing. As summarized below, we offer services at several levels of support, including limited consultation (e.g., several hours), short-term support (e.g., several days), long-term support on already-established projects, and complete partnerships on new proposals. We have also developed several products that assist investigators in measuring life stress.

Scientific Consultation & Collaboration

We offer consultation and collaboration services at four levels of support:

- Limited consultation: Up to several hours of advice, generally in the form of one or more meetings to discuss issues related to study design, data collection, and/or data analysis and interpretation. Complimentary or per-hour fee, depending on degree of involvement requested.
- Short-term support: Typically 1-3 days of services, which could include performing a life stress assessment training workshop or performing a limited number of life stress ratings for a study. Per-hour fee, depending on extent of services requested.
- Long-term support: Involvement in an already-established project for its duration, which could include ongoing scientific consultation on the assessment of life stress and/or performance of the life stress ratings for the project using state-of-the-art interview or computer-based methods. Generally on a percent effort or project consultation fee basis, sometimes as a key personnel.
- Partnership on new proposals: Working with investigators to prepare new grant proposals, which involves assisting with study design, and helping develop the life stress sections of the proposal text and budget. If funded, involvement includes providing ongoing management of the stress assessment process, assisting with data analysis and interpretation, and helping to prepare manuscripts for publication. Generally on a percent effort basis, as a key personnel.

Stress Assessment Products & Services

We utilize the stress assessment strategy that is most appropriate for your research question and study. Generally speaking, the methods are either interview based or computer based, and they focus either on recent life stress (e.g., past 1-2 years) or on cumulative (i.e., lifetime) stress exposure. The products and services are summarized briefly below, with more detailed information on the following page.

System	Time Window	Administration	Summary
Life Events and Difficulties Schedule (LEDS)	Early adversity & past 1-2 yrs	Interview-based	State-of-the-art measure, interview + rating team
Stress and Adversity Inventory (STRAIN)	Lifetime	Computer-based	Automated cumulative life stress assessment program
Automated Stress Assessment Program (ASAP)	Early adversity & past 1-2 yrs	Computer-based	Automated recent life stress assessment program
Stress Rating Interface (SRI)	N/A	Computer-based	Automated life stress rating interface, for use w/ the LEDS

Products

INTERVIEW-BASED SYSTEMS

Life Events and Difficulties Schedule (LEDS)

The LEDS is a state-of-the-art instrument for assessing exposure to early adversity and to diverse types of recent life stress (e.g., over the past 1-2 years). This system uses a 1-2 hour semi-structured interview in which the interviewer carefully inquires about stressors in 10 domains of functioning (e.g., health, work, education, finances, relationships, etc.). Next, the interviewer presents the reported stressors to a panel of 2-3 raters who judge each stressor using a 520-page manual that outlines explicit rules and criteria for rating life stress. The manual also includes 5,000 case vignettes that are used as standardized anchors in the rating process. All ratings are made independently by each rater and are then finalized following a consensus discussion that considers extensive information about the stressor and the individual's biographical circumstances. Raters are kept blind to participants' clinical characteristics, as well as to their emotional response to the stressors (e.g., how often they cried), to prevent this information from influencing the life stress ratings. The LEDS system is thus most appropriate for investigators who require comprehensive, high-resolution information regarding participants' exposure to early and recent life stress.

Time Window: Early adversity (i.e., before age 18) and recent life stress (i.e., past 1-2 years)

Administration: Interview-based

Time: Interview = 1-2 hours/subject; Ratings = 1-2 hours/subject; Administration = 3-5 hours/subject

Estimated Cost: Approximately \$425/subject for study design consultations, life stress ratings, data management, data processing, and manuscript preparation assistance

COMPUTER-BASED SYSTEMS

We have also developed several computer-based products that facilitate the accurate and reliable assessment of life stress. These products are based on gold-standard techniques for assessing stress.

Stress and Adversity Inventory (STRAIN)

The Stress and Adversity Inventory (STRAIN) is the most efficient and reliable way to assess exposure to acute and chronic life stress over the life course. The measure is entirely online and systematically inquires about a diverse array of acute life events (e.g., deaths of relatives, job losses, negative health events) and chronic difficulties (e.g., ongoing health problems, work problems, relationship problems, financial problems, etc.) that have implications for human health and wellbeing. Stressors occurring in early life (e.g., childhood maltreatment or neglect, parental loss/separation, etc.) are also queried. Participants are asked to rate the severity, frequency, timing, and duration of each stressor they endorse. Questions that are inappropriate (based on a participant's demographic characteristics) are automatically omitted from the interview. Based on this information, the system produces 455 variables that are used to assess an individual's cumulative exposure to stress. Analyses can be based on a number of factors, including stressor severity and timing (e.g., Early Adversity vs. Distant vs. Recent Life Stress). More sophisticated analyses can be performed by focusing on stressors that occur in particular life domains (e.g., Housing, Education, Work, Health, Marital/Partner) or that have particular core characteristics (e.g., Interpersonal Loss, Physical Danger, Humiliation, Entrapment, Role Change). The measure is thus ideal for studies that examine biological or health outcomes that are believed to develop or change over time. The instrument can be self-administered by a participant or can be administered by an interviewer who follows a series of simple on-screen prompts. It has been used for clinical, research, and teaching purposes.

Time Window: Cumulative (lifetime) stress exposure (i.e., early adversity + adulthood stressors)

Administration: Computer-based (i.e., online), either self- or interviewer-administered

Time: Interview = 25-35 minutes/subject; Ratings = automatic; Administration = 2 hours/subject

Estimated Cost: Variable depending on study size and collaborative arrangement, please enquire

Automated Stress Assessment Program (ASAP)

ASAP, the Automated Stress Assessment Program, is a quick and reliable way to assess acute life events and chronic difficulties that occurred over the past year. Based on gold-standard, interview-based methodologies for assessing stress, this computer-based program systematically inquires about potential sources of stress in several domains of functioning (e.g., work, school, financial, interpersonal, etc). Probes regarding stressor severity, frequency, timing, and duration are accompanied by additional questions that probe the extent to which participants' ruminated over the stressors and felt as though they had control over the stressors. Biographical details about the individual and contextual information about each life stressor are also collected. The information is used to calculate the final life stress ratings, which are computed automatically by the program.

Time Window: Recent stress exposure (i.e., past year)

Administration: Computer-based; either self- or interviewer-administered

Time: Interview = 18-25 minutes/subject; Ratings = automatic; Administration = 1 hour/subject

Estimated Cost: Variable depending on study size and collaborative arrangement, please enquire

Stress Rating Interface (SRI)

The Stress Rating Interface (SRI) is a state-of-the-art way to enter and store valuable life stress data that are derived from interview-based measures of life stress, such as the LEDS. Once your stress ratings are complete, simply enter them directly into SRI. The stress information is securely stored and can be easily retrieved at any time for data analysis purposes. The system saves time and money by eliminating the need for an additional data entry person. It also streamlines the entire data collection process, reducing opportunities for data entry problems and errors. The SRI system can be customized on request.

Administration: Computer-based data entry system

Time: Data Entry = Approximately 7 minutes/subject; Ratings = automatic

Estimated Cost: Variable depending on study size and collaborative arrangement, please enquire

Services

Life Stress Assessment Training Workshop

We are available to come to your lab, center, or department to host a life stress assessment training workshop that is tailored to your specific needs and goals. Investigators and trainees alike can benefit from interactive presentations on the conceptualization and assessment of life stress. Interview and computer-based methods for assessing life stress are covered. Hands-on interviewer and/or life stress rater training can also be provided. The workshop content can be project-specific or relatively general, depending on your goals. Cost is dependent on extent of training requested. Please enquire.

Time-Limited Life Stress Consultation or Assessment Services

We can provide time-limited consultation on study design, data collection, and/or data analysis and interpretation issues. Complimentary or per-hour fee, depending on degree of involvement requested.

Contact

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