

This Week's Citation Classic

Lubin B. Adjective checklists for the measurement of depression.

Arch. Gen. Psychiat. 12:57-62. 1965.

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To develop an instrument to measure short-term depressive affect, item analyses were conducted on a pool of adjectives between a group of depressed and nondepressed psychiatric patients and a group of normals, with cross-validation on other groups. Reliability (internal consistency, split-half, alternate form, and test/retest—the latter low as expected) of the four equivalent lists (Set 1) and the three equivalent lists (Set 2), along with concurrent validity, were found to be adequate for use of the instrument in research. [The *SCF*[®] and the *SSCF*[®] indicate that this paper has been cited in more than 190 publications.]

Measuring Depressive Affect with an Adjective Checklist

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While working at the Indiana University Medical Center in 1963, I was asked by a physician if I could recommend a relatively innocuous measure of depressive mood for use in a study of biopsychosocial aspects of pregnancy and the early postpartum period. After surveying the literature and not finding such an instrument, I volunteered to develop one. I conducted the original item selection, validation, and cross-validation only with females; revalidation with males was done several months later. As an indication of how unplanned events can take over one's agenda, however, the first article on the Depression Adjective Check Lists (DACL) was published in 1965; 10 articles on the DACL were published during the next 10 years, and the first article on the study for which the DACL was developed was published in 1975.

The DACL was introduced in a state form ("how you feel today"), and it filled the need for a brief, reliable, and valid way of measuring self-reported transient mood.^{1,2} Ease of administration and wide subject acceptance encouraged the use of the DACL. Also, the alternate forms of the DACL made the lists useful in repeated measures designs. During the latter part of the 1960s and much of the 1970s, the DACL became a convenient way of measuring short-term depressive mood. Frequent uses involved the evaluation of fast-acting, mood-elevating drugs, the evaluation of psychotherapy, investigations of the effects of mood on such cognitive functions as memory and problem solving, and the effects of mood on physical health. A national survey of depressive mood using the DACL became the

centerpiece of a book on depression by Levitt, Lubin, and Brooks.³ The subject index of the recently completed bibliography on the DACL⁴ shows a wide variety of settings and types of issues in which affect was implicated. From bit player with questionable credentials during the first half of the twentieth century, affect had moved to almost center stage and general acceptance by the 1970s.

The trait version of the DACL measures longer-enduring, more pervasive depressive mood ("how you generally feel"). A series of articles on the trait form will be published during the next few months along with a revised manual.⁵ Adequate reliability and discriminative validity have been demonstrated for the trait form. Subsets of the adjectives have been identified that differentiate persons suffering from depression and other coexisting conditions such as anxiety and phobias. The DACL has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Hebrew, Arabic, and Chinese. Translations into additional languages are underway. A version for use with adolescents (i.e., with a grade six reading level) has been developed. The most differentiating adjectives from the DACL were incorporated into the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List.⁶

As mentioned, my "agenda" was influenced considerably by the request for a simple measure of depressive mood. In retrospect, the "chance encounter"⁷ seemed to provide an opportunity to conduct an informal exploration of an important aspect of my own identity. Temperament and early life experiences were strong contributors to my readiness to respond positively to the request. Indications that the instrument met a real need were sufficient reinforcement for my continued activity in this area. I have mentioned the influence of heredity, early experiences, and chance on the development of the DACL. Equally important has been the stimulation of colleagues such as Marvin Zuckerman and Eugene Levitt among many others. Special thanks also go to those of my students whose careers were affected by work on the DACL.

Considering that I have spent so much time working with the DACL, I have sometimes thought that my professional career was built largely on asking, in many contexts and of many people, "How do you feel?" In an even lighter moment, it occurred to me that Ted Lewis and I were in the same business, although coming at it from different vantage points. Lewis, band leader, singer, and songwriter, whose best work probably spanned the second to fourth decades of the twentieth century, would open his act with the question, "Is everybody happy?" I spent much of my career in search of the few who were.

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2. Petzel T P. Depression Adjective Check Lists. (Keyser D J & Sweetland R C, eds.) *Test critiques*. Kansas City, MO: Test Corporation of America, 1985. Vol. 3. p. 215-20.
3. Levitt E E, Lubin B & Brooks J. *Depression: concepts, controversies and some new facts*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1983. 249 p. (Cited 20 times.)
4. Lubin B, Swearingen S E & Keaton K A. *Bibliography for the Depression Adjective Check Lists: 1965-1989*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press. (In press.)
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7. Bandura A. The psychology of chance encounters and life paths. *Amer. Psychol.* 37:747-55. 1982. (Cited 45 times.)