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THE MEASUREMENT OF SELF-RATED DEPRESSION:
A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH*¹

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Notwithstanding the fact that depression as a clinical syndrome has been described for some 2000 years,² which is evident in the diverse explanatory models accounting for such behavior,³ the degree of sophistication in measuring this phenomenon remains somewhat suspect. One of the earlier measuring instruments, the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (SRDS)⁴ is a case in point. When operationalized, the global score obtained from the SRDS may not be a successful predictor of subsequent behavior.⁵ This, however, may reflect the need for multidimensional constructs, which are held to be more specific predictors of behavior in general.⁶ This is supported by the fact that the depressive behavior of individuals may be more adequately described in terms of more than one behavioral modality.⁷ The present study assesses whether the SRDS can be used to provide specific multidimensional descriptors of depressive behavior.

Ninety-six (48 male, 48 female) normal, white university student volunteers (\bar{X} age = 19.33 years, $SD = 2.08$) completed Zung's 20-item SRDS. A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was computed, and three acceptable factors emerged. Inspection of the individual item

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² Rizley, R. Depression and distortion in the attribution of causality. *J. Abn. Psychol.*, 1978, **87**, 32-48.

³ Beck, A. T. The development of depression: A cognitive model. In R. J. Friedman & M. M. Katz (Eds.), *The Psychology of Depression*. Washington, D. C.: Winston, 1974; Rehm, L. P. A self-control model of depression. *Behav. Ther.*, 1977, **8**, 787-804; Seligman, M. E. P. Depression and learned helplessness. In R. J. Friedman & M. M. Katz (Eds.), *The Psychology of Depression*. Washington, D. C.: Winston, 1974.

⁴ Zung, W. A self-rating depression scale. *Arch. Gen. Psychiat.*, 1965, **12**, 63-70.

⁵ Chevron, E. S., Quinlan, D. M., & Blatt, S. J. Sex roles and gender differences in the experience of depression. *J. Abn. Psychol.*, 1978, **87**, 680-683.

⁶ Kerlinger, F. N. *Foundations of Behavioral Research* (2nd ed.). New York: Holt, 1973.

⁷ Williams, J. G., Barlow, D. H., & Agras, S. W. Behavioral measurement of severe depression. *Arch. Gen. Psychiat.*, 1972, **27**, 330-333.

loadings (presented in descending order of importance) revealed that the first factor could be labelled Ideational Depression (item 7, 11, 16, 6, 14); the second, Physiological Depression (items 5, 9, 8, 7, 13), and the third, Behavioral Depression (items 13, 15, 12, 10, 14). These three factors accounted for 35.7% (Eigenvalue = 3.57), 13.8% (Eigenvalue = 1.38), and 12.6% (Eigenvalue = 1.28) of the variance, respectively.

The present findings are of some import of three reasons. In the first instance, the three factors characterize important aspects of behavioral depression in general.⁸ Second, the present results were obtained from a sample of normal Ss. Third, in the absence of any psychometric information about the validity of the SRDS,⁹ some support is provided for the construct validity of the SRDS. However, it remains for future research to assess the validity of these three factors in terms of treatment and outcome prediction.

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⁸ *J. Abn. Psychol.*, 1978, **87**, 1-198. Special Issue: Learned helplessness as a model of depression.

⁹ Rehm, L. P. Assessment of depression. In M. Hersen & A. S. Bellack (Eds.), *Behavioral Assessment: A Practical Handbook*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1976.