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A STUDY OF MOOD

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It is generally conceded that moods, or the fluctuations in the general level of affectivity, are important factors in behavior. Due to its variability, mood must be studied either by means of records or judgments made at frequent intervals or by reports covering periods of considerable length. The investigations reported to date indicate that several approaches have been used in an effort to deal with these conditions.

The questionnaire method was used by Cason (1) in his study of "The Curve of Feeling." His 899 subjects filled out questionnaires in which they reported on the average level of feeling at different hours of the day, days of the week, and months of the year. These reports were made in terms of a scale on which plus five indicated "the best that anyone can feel, minus five the worst that anyone can feel, and zero the approximate average level of feelings of the whole population". He found that the average level of feeling was lowest during the first and last half hours of the day; that Monday showed the lowest average level of feeling of the week. The annual variations reached low points in the months of January, February and March and high points during June and September. He also found a general tendency for his subjects to rate themselves above the point marking the average level of feeling for the entire population.

A similar study was reported by Springer and Roslow (4) in which the same method was used. These investigators based their conclusions on data gathered from similar questionnaires filled out by 133 male college students. In addition, a re-test was given after an interval of 30 days. Their results were essentially the same, but they reported the method to be relatively unreliable. The obtained coefficients of reliability varied from .32 to .70, with an average of .47. They pointed out two possible sources of error in the method;

* Manuscript recommended for publication by Dr. J. R. Kantor, June 21, 1937.

first, the premium placed upon memory, and second, a possible tendency among the subjects to rate themselves as they should feel rather than as they actually feel.

Fisher and Marrow (2) reported a study of moods induced through post-hypnotic suggestion. Association tests were given, and both the associations and the association times were used in comparing the effects of moods of depression and elation. They found qualitative differences in the associations of the subject as well as changes in response time. During hypnotically induced periods of depression the response time was found to be 167% of that for normal moods. No significant differences between response times for normal and elated moods were found.

Hersey (3) studied the emotional cycles of workers in an industrial plant. In the measurement of mood he used both the introspections of his subjects and observations of appearance, general behavior and attitude made by the experimenter. The former were recorded through the use of a scale varying from plus six, marked 'happy, elated,' to minus six, marked 'worried'. Each step of the scale was indicated not only by number but also by descriptive terms. Seventeen subjects were used in this study, five for a period of five months and 12 for a period of one year. Hersey found evidence of a cyclical trend in 'emotional tonus' characteristic of the individual. These cycles were reasonably constant for each subject, varying less than one week from the average. The investigator suggests that these cycles may be due to variations in metabolic activity.

Sullivan (5) reported an investigation of "Mood in Relation to Performance". At the beginning of each experimental period each subject reported his mood by means of a scale prepared for the purpose. The scale was ten centimeters long, and indicated the range of moods from extreme depression to extreme elation. The subjects were instructed to mark the scale according to the mood at the time in relation to these extremes. Thus the subjects made a rapid quantitative report on mood, reducing to a minimum alterations which might result from lengthy introspections.* The performance tests used included speed of tapping, strength of grip, controlled association, free association, addition, reproduction of a line of variable length, pulse rate and blood pressure. Sullivan con-

* Several subjects in the present investigation reported a tendency toward an alteration in mood when considerable time was spent in introspection. Judging solely from these spontaneous reports the change was usually toward the point of indifference.

cluded that "the conspicuous feature of this investigation is the low coefficients that result from correlating measures of mood with tests of performance."

The present investigation was undertaken to determine whether or not this graphic method is suitable to be used in studying the variability of mood, and the determination of factors which are operative in bringing about these variations. Specifically, the relationship between the subjects' judgments of mood and physical condition is the main problem. For this purpose blanks were prepared containing scales for both judgments. The mood scale consisted of a horizontal line 80 centimeters in length, with a short vertical mark at the mid-point. The left end of this scale was marked 'Depressed' and the right end 'Cheerful'. Near the bottom of the blank was the scale for recording judgments of physical condition. This line was 54 centimeters in length marked 'Poor' and 'Excellent' at the right and left ends, respectively. An explanation of these terms was given in the typed instructions furnished each subject, as follows:

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Date and Time: Indicate the time to the nearest five minutes, e.g. 10:25 a. m.
2. Mood: The scale is to be marked according to the mood existent at the time. Consider the extreme of depression to be the most depressed state that you have ever experienced, and the extreme of cheerfulness to be the most cheerful state that you have ever experienced. Draw a line across the base line of the scale at a point which indicates your present mood in relation to these extremes.
3. Comment: This space is provided for terms descriptive of your mood, such as blue, elated, etc. This space may be left blank if you so desire.
4. Cause of Mood: This space is provided for a statement of any circumstances or conditions which you believe to be responsible for your mood at the time. If you can think of no reason for the existence of the mood indicate this by writing 'none' in the space.