

Detecting Malingering



Definitions

• Malingering

- Faking bad, exaggerating symptoms
- Examples
 - Defendants pleading NGRI
 - Inmates getting their own prison cells
 - Veterans claiming PTSD

• Dissimulation

- Faking good, downplaying symptoms
- Examples
 - Inmates applying for parole
 - Applicants applying for police jobs
 - Patients being released from mental hospitals

Methods for Detecting Malingering and Dissimulation

- Nonverbal cues during clinical interview
- Scores on psychological tests
- Comparison of symptoms to norms



Most NGRI Patients are Schizophrenic
(Rogers & Shuman, 2000)

Disorder	Percentage
Schizophrenic	62.2
Personality disorder	12.0
Organic disorder or mental retardation	5.8
Mood disorder	5.0
Other	11.6

Comparing Symptoms to Norms
The Psychological Disorder

• **Malingers**

- Overact their part
- Are eager to call attention to their symptoms
- Use absurd and inconsistent thoughts
- Symptoms may not fit a diagnostic category
- Claim the sudden onset of a delusion
- Present themselves as blameless within their feigned illness



Rogers & Shuman (2000)
6 Signs of Malingering

- Rare symptoms
- Improbable and absurd responses
- Indiscriminant symptom endorsement
- Unlikely symptom combinations
- Contradictory symptoms
- Symptom severity



Comparing Symptoms to Norms

Characteristics of the Crime

- Non-malingers seldom have a partner
- Malingers are likely to have non-psychotic alternative motives
- Non-malingers seldom planned or prepared for their crime



Hallucinations

Types of Hallucinations

(Rogers, Thatcher, & Cavanaugh, 1984)

Type	Percentage
Auditory	42
Visual	16
Olfactory	4
Somatic or tactile	7

About 1/3 of insane defendants have hallucinations compared to 1% of sane defendants

Comparing Symptoms to Norms The Hallucination

- Real hallucinations are intermittent rather than continuous
- 56% of real psychotics say that their hallucinations could be due to their imagination
- Real schizophrenics try to make the hallucinations go away

Comparing Symptoms to Norms Auditory Hallucinations

- 88% of real hallucinations are from outside the head
 - Usually outside the body
 - Sometimes from a body part
- 75% of real psychotics hear both male and female voices
- 76% hear the hallucination in both ears
- 98% of hallucinations are spoken in the person's native language
- Most auditory hallucinations are brief (<20 seconds)
- Real psychotics can identify
 - Sex, race, age, and emotional state of the voice
 - The tone, volume, and rate of the voice
- Most auditory hallucinations ask for an interaction or a response from the person

Comparing Symptoms to Norms Visual and Other Hallucinations

- Real visual hallucinations
 - Normally are in color
 - Usually of normal sized people
- Real olfactory hallucinations are usually of unpleasant odors

Comparing Symptoms to Norms Responses to Questions

- **Malingers**
 - More likely to repeat or answer questions slowly
 - Have contradictions in their accounts of a crime
 - Will often repeat their words exactly when asked to repeat what they said
 - Show concentration
 - Seldom remember things correctly

Delusions

Delusions

- A *delusion* is a patently false belief about external reality that is firmly held, despite obvious and incontrovertible proof to the contrary
- An *insane delusion* is a delusion that caused the crime or behavior under legal question to occur
- Delusions differ from overvalued ideas
 - The certainty of the inaccuracy
 - The firmness and permanency of the belief
- Delusions are found in 77% of people found to be insane versus less than 3% of the sane

Below you will find a description of a killer who is pleading NGRI. Highlight or underline each statement that you think indicates he is malingering and briefly indicate why you think the statement is a sign of malingering. Circle each statement that would be consistent with an actual schizophrenic.

Q: You mentioned to three different people that you are hearing voices.

A: *Yes, I hear them constantly.*

Q: Tell me about them.

A: *I just started hearing them two weeks ago. The voices are coming from outside my head -- the voices are three females and two males.*

Q: Does your partner also hear voices?

A: *No. That's why I am not responsible for the killing and he is.*

Q: What else can you tell me?

A: *I have hallucinations of these huge people chasing me. They are all wearing very colorful clothes.*

Q: I'm sorry, I didn't quite hear that.

A: *I said I have hallucinations of these huge people chasing me. They are all wearing very colorful clothes.*

Q: That's what I thought you said. Do you think you could be imagining all this?

A: *I might be.*

Q: Did you know the person you are accused of killing?

A: *It was my former boss who fired me.*

Practice 2

Below you will find a description of a person claiming NGRI. Highlight or underline each description that you think indicates the person is malingering. Circle the statements you think support insanity.

Q: Tell me about the voices that told you to kill radical feminists

A: *There were several voices that were always outside my head. They were usually male but sometimes were female.*

Q: You mentioned to the detective that you also had hallucinations?

A: *Yes. I didn't always have them. But when I did, they were in color and seemed to involve Playboy centerfolds.*

Q: Do you think that you could have been imagining these images?

A: *No! They were real. I did everything I could to make them go away.*

Q: Have these voices been talking to you for a long time?

A: *No, they started about a week ago.*

Q: Did your partner also hear these voices?

A: *I don't know.*

Q: What did the voices say to do with the money you would inherit?

A: *They didn't say.*

Q: Anything else you want to tell me?

A: *Is there anything else I want to tell you? I also smelled things. Terrible odors that reminded me of the death I saw in Vietnam.*

Practice 3

Below you will find a description of a killer who is pleading NGRI. Highlight or underline each statement that you think indicates he is malingering and briefly indicate why you think the statement is a sign of malingering. Circle each statement that would be consistent with an actual schizophrenic. Write a short (a few words) explanation for your decision next to your underline or circle.

Q: Mr. Spiccolli, You told the arresting officer and the desk sergeant that you are hearing voices.

A: *Yes, I hear them every now and then.*

Q: Tell me about them.

A: *The voices have been in my head for years. Sometimes the voices sound like my mother and other times they sound like Mr. Hand, my old high school teacher.*

Q: Does your partner also hear voices?

A: *No. That's why I am not responsible for the killing and he is.*

Q: What else can you tell me?

A: *I have hallucinations of 20-foot tall people chasing me. They are all wearing very bright red hats, yellow socks, and blue suede shoes .*

Q: I'm sorry, I didn't quite hear that.

A: *I said I have visions of these huge people chasing me. They are all wearing very colorful clothing.*

Q: That's what I thought you said. Do you think you could be imagining all this?

A: *I might be.*

Q: Did you know the person you are accused of killing?

A: *It was my estranged spouse.*

Types of Delusions

Rogers, Thatcher, & Cavanaugh (1984)

- Paranoid (53%)
- Ideas of reference (36%)
- Control (22%)
- Grandiosity (20%)
- Thought insertion (9%)

Exercise on Detecting Malingering



Using Validity Scales from Standardized Tests

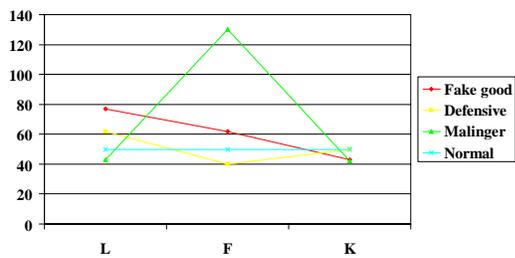
- MMPI-2 is most common
- Types of Scales
 - Standard validity
 - Special malingering scales
 - Special dissimulation scales
 - Standard clinical scales
 - Supplementary/research scales



Using Tests

MMPI-2 Standard Validity Scales

- L (deliberate, unsophisticated, faking good)
- F (faking bad)
- K (subtle, defensiveness)
- Back page infrequency scale (Fb)
 - 40 items; Measures faking bad on items in the later part of the test)
- Variable response inconsistency scale (VRIN)
 - 67 pairs of items
 - Measures inconsistent responses
 - Scores of greater than 14 indicate inconsistent responding and invalidate the clinical scores
- True response inconsistency Scale (TRIN)
 - 23 pairs of items
 - Measures tendency to pick true or to pick false



MMPI-2
Special Malingering Scales



- Gough's F-K Scale
- Cofer's Malingering Scale (MP or Cof)
- Wiener's Subtle-Obvious Scale

MMPI-2
Special Dissimulation Scales

- Gough's F-K
- Wiggins Social Desirability Scale (Sd)
- Edwards' Social Desirability scale (SD)
- Desirability Scale (L + K)



MMPI-2
Standard Clinical Scales

- Hypochondriasis (Hs)
- Depression (D)
- Hysteria (Hy)
- Psychopathic Deviate (Pd)
- Masculinity-femininity (Mf)
- Paranoia (Pa)
- Psychasthenia (Pt)
- Schizophrenia (Sc)
- Hypomania (Ma)
- Social Introversion (Si)

Which Scale is Best? Research Strategies

- Known group comparisons
- Motivated groups approach
- Fake good or bad
- Simulate another person



Which Scale is Best? Research Method Moderates Effect Sizes (Aamodt, 1990)

Research Strategy	F	F-K
Known group	1.48	.54
Motivated groups	.70	.72
Fake bad v. normal population	4.40	4.40
Fake bad v. forensic population	3.87	2.04

Which Scale is Best? Research Results

- Research clearly indicates
 - F is best for detecting malingering
 - T-score greater than 120 indicates malingering
- No other validity or clinical scales add incremental validity (Aamodt, Dwight, & Surrence, 1996)
- Intelligent people with knowledge of the MMPI-2 are able to successfully malingering (Pelfrey & Aamodt, 1996)
- People who have been coached to escape detection can successfully malingering (Rogers, Bagby, & Chakraborty, 1993)
