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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenic</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality disorder</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic disorder or mental retardation</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood disorder</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Types of Hallucinations
(Rogers, Thatcher, & Cavanaugh, 1984)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olfactory</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatic or tactile</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

• Malingerers
  – 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

• 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 in 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. Spiccoli, 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-feet 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
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Strategy</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>F-K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Known group</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated groups</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fake bad v. normal population</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fake bad v. forensic population</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, & Surrette, 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)
Amnesia Claims
Methods to Detect Malingering

• Electronic Methods
  – Guilty Knowledge Test (Polygraph)
  – Brain Fingerprinting (P300 Spike)

• Feeling of knowing
  – How likely would you be to remember
    • With more time
    • With hints
    • With a recognition task

Amnesia Claims
Methods to Detect Malingering

• Symptom Validity Testing – Episodic Memory
  – Series of 2-alternative questions (e.g., was the victim’s hair brown or black)
  – Fakers will score below chance, people with amnesia will score at chance levels

• Indirect Memory Tests
  – What is this word kn_ _ _?