Interpretation of MMPI-2 Validity Scales

Why is it Important to Assess Validity?

- Under certain circumstances impression management or distortion is common
  - Seeking access to costly treatments
  - Employment screening
  - Disability evaluations
  - Personal Injury
  - Court ordered evaluations
    - Competency
    - Mitigating circumstances
    - Not Guilty by reason of diminished capacity
  - Custody

Advantage of MMPI-2:
Validity Scales

- Provide information regarding the accuracy of self-report
- Indicate the extent of distortion
  - Provides a dimensional perspective
  - Relative to others taking the MMPI-2 under similar circumstances or how distorted is the self-report of symptoms and behaviors?
- Specifies the type of distortion or impression management
- Interpretation of Substantive Scales is based on information collected from individuals accurately reporting clinical state
  - Allows confidence in the clinical inferences made from the MMPI-2 based on the substantive scales.

Threats to Profile Validity

- Non-Content-Based Invalid Responding
  - Non-Responding
    - Leaving items blank or responding both T and F to same item
  - Random Responding
    - Intentional
    - Unintentional
      - » Reading Difficulties
      - » Comprehension
      - » Confusion
  - Fixed Responding
    - Acquiescence (yea saying)
    - Counter-Acquiescence (nay saying)

Threats to Profile Validity cont.

– Content-Based Invalid Responding

- Over-Reporting
  - "faking bad" by reporting non existent signs and symptoms or distorting the severity of symptoms.
  - Intentional
    - » Exaggeration versus Fabrication
  - Unintentional
    - » Highly Distressed and seeking help
- Under-Reporting
  - "faking good" or defensiveness
  - Intentional
    - » Minimization versus Denial
  - Unintentional
    - » Ego Defenses
    - » Social Desirability

Assessing Protocol Validity with the MMPI-2

Threat	Scale(s)
Non-Content-Based	
Non-responding	CNS
Random Responding	VRIN
Fixed Responding	TRIN
Content-Based	
Over-Reporting	F, F_B, F_P, FBS
Under-Reporting	L, K, S

Cannot Say (CNS)

- A 567-Item "Scale"

- Possible Reasons for Elevation:
  - Lack of cooperation & defensiveness
  - Lack of insight
  - Obsessiveness
  - Reading difficulties
  - Confusion

- Effects on Profile:
  - Deflated score
  - Depend upon location
    - If 90% of items endorsed on a scale, little impact on predictive validity of the scale.

VRIN (Variable Response Inconsistency)

- Designed to Detect Random Responding
  - Item content either similar <u>or</u> opposite in content

- 47 Item Pairs, 12 Can Be Scored Two Ways

- T-Scores Range from 30 to 120

- Applications
  - Detection of random responding
    - VRIN $\geq$ 80   Profile uninterpretable
  - Detection of "hypervigilance"
    - VRIN < 40
  - Aid in the interpretation of infrequency scales

TRIN (True Response Inconsistency)

- Designed to Detect Fixed Responding (Acquiescence or Counter-Acquiescence)
- 20 pairs opposite in content, 3 Symmetrically scored (both T or both F)
- Raw Score Converted to T-Score Which Will Always be Equal to or Greater Than 50
- A T-Score Greater Than 50 Will be Followed by a "T" or an "F"
- A fixed response set indicated if
  - TRIN $\geq$ 80T OR TRIN $\geq$ 80F
- Applications
  - Detection of fixed responding
    - Difficulty reading/comprehension
    - Oppositionality
  - Interpretation of L, K and S

F

- Used to Identify Over-Reporting
- 60 "infrequently endorsed" items among first 370 items in the booklet
- Possible Reasons for Elevation
  - Intentional Over-reporting
  - Random responding
  - Fixed Responding
  - Severe psychopathology or severe distress
  - Unintentional over-reporting
- Use VRIN to evaluate random responding
- Use TRIN to evaluate fixed responding
- Use F_P to evaluate intentional over-reporting

F_B

- Designed to detect changes in responding between first and second half of the test

- 40 infrequently endorsed items appearing in second half of booklet

- Possible reasons for elevation

  - Intentional over-reporting

  - Random responding

  - Fixed responding

  - Severe psychopathology or severe distress

  - Unintentional over-reporting

  - Fatigue

- If T-score F_B > T-score F+20, significant change in responding occurred

F_P
(Infrequency-psychopathology)

- Designed to detect intentional over-reporting in individuals with psychopathology

- 27 items endorsed infrequently by a variety of clinical samples including psychiatric inpatients

- Possible Reasons for Elevation:

  - Intentional Over-reporting

  - Random Responding

  - Fixed Responding

F_P
(Infrequency-psychopathology)

- If $F_P \geq 100$ AND VRIN < 70 AND TRIN < 70, intentional over-reporting is indicated.

- If F is elevated AND F_P < 70, the elevated score on F likely reflects severe pathology, distress, or unintentional over-reporting

- F_P >70 and <100 reflects degree of exaggeration of symptoms

Symptom Validity Scale (FBS)

- 43 item rationally derived scale based on item endorsement frequencies in individuals undergoing assessment based on disability/personal injury claims.
- The scale assesses somatic concerns, unusual beliefs, and deviant attitudes.
- T ≥ 100 associated with low false positive rate and indicative of non-credible presentation especially of cognitive impairment.
- Possible reasons for the elevations are inconsistent responding and/or overreporting of somatic or cognitive symptoms.

Uncommon Virtues (L) Scale

- Designed to detect intentional under-reporting
  - Claiming an unusual number of uncommon virtues
- 15 obvious items
- All keyed "false"
- Possible reasons for elevation:
  - Intentional under-reporting
  - Lack of insight
  - Very traditional
  - Indiscriminant "false" responding
- If L is elevated can not assume lack of elevation on MMPI-2 substantive scales is associated with the absence of psychopathology

K Scale

- Designed to detect unintentional under-reporting
  - Claim to be well adjusted and free of psychopathology
- 30 "subtle" items
- All but one keyed "false"
- Possible reasons for elevation
  - Defensiveness
  - Psychological well-being
- In clinical settings if K is elevated, can not assume absence of elevations on substantive scales is associated with absence of psychopathology.

Superlative Self-Presentation (S)

- Developed by Butcher and Han (1995) to identify under-reporting with the entire MMPI-2 item pool

- 50 items, 44 keyed False

- Contains subscales to assist in identifying specific areas of defensiveness:
  - Belief in human goodness
  - Serenity
  - Contentment with life
  - Patience and denial of irritability and anger
  - Denial of moral flaws