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BOOK REVIEWS

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

Book Review Essay on:

DETECTING MALINGERING AND DECEPTION: FORENSIC DISTORTION ANALYSIS by H.V. Hall and D.A. Pritchard. Delray Beach: St. Lucie Press. 1996. 357 pp.

CLINICAL ASSESSMENT OF MALINGERING AND DECEPTION (2nd ed.) edited by R. Rogers. New York: Guilford Press. 1997. 545 pp.

MALINGERING AND DECEPTION IN ADOLESCENTS: CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENT IN CLINICAL AND FORENSIC SETTINGS by J.T. McCann. Washington DC: American Psychological Association. 1998. 243 pp.

Think you're so honest? When was the last time you called in sick to work when you really just wanted to goof off? How about fudging a little on your resumé when a prized job opening was at stake? or whispering to your child or spouse to say you're not home so you don't have to talk to a caller?

As all three of these volumes make clear, the concept of malingering is a fluid one both in clinical-forensic practice and in everyday life. Deception and dissimulation are at least as much a part of human nature as brutal honesty. We all do things to make a favorable impression or avoid an unpleasant consequence. The difference is how far we'll go and how good we are at it. Most of the subjects we see in forensic psychological practice have one good reason or another to distort the truth—for example, to avoid a prison sentence or collect an accident settlement—and these books guide mental health professionals in evaluating the different syndromes that contribute to subject dissimulation.

All of these volumes point out that *malingering* represents the deliberate and conscious attempt to feign or exaggerate impairment, and therefore has to be differentiated from other syndromes such as somatization, conversion, and factitious disorder, where the motives for dissimulation—e.g., to expiate guilt or assume a dependent/controlling relationship with a family member—may be unclear or unconscious to the subject him- or herself. In most cases, there is no firm dividing line, and the skillful forensic psychologist must tease apart the various threads of motivation that contribute to each subject's individual cloak of dissimulation.

Of the three, the volume by Hall and Pritchard is the most practically useful for forensic psychologists in the trenches, while Rogers' book, a revised edition of a volume that has now become a classic in the field, is more scholarly and academic in tone and content. Both cover much of the same material, including neuropsychological syndromes, pain and somatization, posttraumatic stress disorder, feigned amnesia, substance abuse, forensic hypnosis, and malingering in children (yes, they're good at it).

In addition, Hall and Pritchard discuss interviewing and interrogation, criminal profiling, competency to stand trial, criminal responsibility and the insanity defense, dangerousness prediction, and expert testimony. As a result, while necessarily skimming on comprehensive coverage of some areas, the book transcends the topic of dissimulation *per se* and comprises a virtual manual of forensic psychology.

Rogers' volume offers additional chapters on psychological and medical syndromes, sociopathy, psychometric testing, structured interviews, polygraphy ("lie detection"), drug-assisted interviews ("truth serum"), evaluation of sex offenders, and research methodology. The chapters have all the virtues and drawbacks of contributions to an edited book, ranging in quality from pithy and practical to parochial and pedantic. Still, in its sheer breadth of scholarship, this volume has no peer as a standard reference text in malingering and deception.

McCann's book is disappointing, not because of its more limited scope, which is fine, but because of a lopsided emphasis on some areas of relevance to adolescent forensic psychology with a near-total neglect of others. Good introductory chapters summarize the similarities and differences between adolescent and adult malingering syndromes, but later chapters on assessment focus almost exclusively on a very few of the author's favorite psychometric instruments and structured interview protocols. Despite the huge impact of ADHD, learning disorders, developmental cognitive and intellectual deficiencies, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse, conduct disorder, and school problems in adolescent forensic psychology, barely a few pages are devoted to neuropsychological assessment, and of these, mention is made only of the Wechsler IQ scales, the Bender-Gestalt, and the Luria-Nebraska battery.

Indeed, both Rogers' and McCann's books emphasize the objective, psychometric approach to assessment of malingering, while Hall and Pritchard seem to place more trust in the intuitive, empathic skill and experience of the examiner to "get in there" with the subject and discern fact from fiction through all clean and messy aspects of the clinical interaction.

In sum, my recommendation for prospective forensic mental health clinicians who want to learn about malingering and dissimulation is as follows. Study Hall and Pritchard's book cover-to-cover and keep Rogers' volume close at hand to refer to when you need in-depth, authoritative information on specialized topic areas. Read McCann's smaller volume if all you require is a brief overview of adolescent forensic psychology, but recognize its limitations. Finally, in a field rife with confusion, controversy, and downright quackery, all three books deserve credit for their efforts to clarify the complex and challenging topic of malingering in clinical and forensic psychology.

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NEW TREATMENTS FOR CHEMICAL ADDICTIONS edited by Elinore F. McCance-Katz and Thomas R. Kosten. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Press. Review of Psychiatry Series. xix + 211 pp.

This edited monograph, part of the American Psychiatric Association's *Review of Psychiatry Series*, is a compilation of five review papers on contemporary topics in addiction