

5.3 Explaining and Classifying Psychological Disorders

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on how disorders are **defined** and **classified** 分类.

You must be able to:

- state the criteria commonly used to identify a disorder
- explain the **biopsychosocial** 生物心理社会 model
- describe the purpose and limits of a **classification system** 分类系统
- discuss the effects of **stigma** 污名 and **labelling** 标签

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ What counts as a disorder

Behaviour is usually considered disordered when it involves significant **distress** or **impairment of functioning**, and departs from what is typical or expected in the person's culture. No single criterion is sufficient alone.

■ The biopsychosocial model

Disorders are explained by biological, psychological and social factors acting together. The model is now standard because single-factor accounts predict poorly.

■ Classification and its limits

A shared system allows clinicians to communicate, researchers to compare samples, and treatments to be matched to conditions. Its limits are that categories are imposed on continuous variation, comorbidity is common, and criteria change between editions.

■ Stigma and labelling

A diagnosis can open access to treatment and to explanation. It can also become an identity others apply to everything the person does, and evidence of that effect is one reason clinicians are careful about how diagnoses are communicated.

2 Practice

2.1 State two criteria used in deciding whether behaviour is disordered. [2]

2.2 Explain what the biopsychosocial model claims. [2]

2.3 A clinician is reluctant to give a diagnosis to an adolescent.

(a) State one benefit of a diagnosis. [1]

(b) State one risk. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A limitation of categorical classification is that [1]

- **A** it prevents communication
- **B** it imposes categories on continuous variation
- **C** it cannot be used in research
- **D** criteria never change

3.2 Judging behaviour against what is expected in a person's culture matters because [1]

- **A** all cultures are identical
- **B** the same behaviour may be typical in one setting and not another
- **C** culture is irrelevant to diagnosis
- **D** distress is unnecessary

3.3 A person's colleagues reinterpret their ordinary behaviour after learning a diagnosis.

(a) Name the effect. [1]

(b) Explain one way clinicians reduce it.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **5.3 Explaining and Classifying Psychological Disorders** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Mental and Physical Health** section of the AP Psychology handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 any two of: significant distress; impairment of functioning; departure from what is typical or expected in the person's culture.

2.2 disorders arise from biological, psychological and social factors acting together, because single-factor accounts predict poorly.

2.3 (a) it gives access to treatment and an explanation. (b) it may become a label others apply to everything the person does.

3.1 B. real variation is continuous while categories are discrete.

3.2 B. what is typical depends on the setting, so context is part of the judgment.

3.3 (a) labelling / stigma. (b) communicate the diagnosis as a description of current difficulties rather than an identity, and share it only with the person's consent and where it serves their care.