2005 Clinical Psychology Comprehensive Exam

Question 2: Classification with Special Reference to DSM-IV

Start a new blue book, on the cover of the blue book or top of the computer page, write: the digits of your student number as listed on the brown envelope, Question 2 Clinical Exam, and Date. Limit blue book answer to sixteen single-sided pages. Computer generated -- no more than five pages (10-point) double-spaced.

ANSWER EITHER QUESTION 2A OR 2B, NOT BOTH

Question 2A: Adult. Diagnostically, it is sometimes difficult to discriminate between patients suffering from an acute psychiatric illness (diagnosed on DSM-IV Axis I), and patients suffering from long-standing characterological disturbance (diagnosed on DSM-IV Axis II). Additional problems with reliability and discriminability of Axis II diagnoses have led some to urge that the distinction between Axis I and Axis II disorders be abandoned for psychiatric disorders occurring in adults.

You have been asked to advise the DSM-V Task force on this issue. Choose one of the following pairs of diagnoses:

(a) social phobia, (b) avoidant personality disorder

(a) bipolar disorder, (b) borderline personality disorder

and, drawing on available literature concerning similarities or differences in heritability, premorbid course, predisposing features, symptom cross-section, treatment response, and prognosis, make one of the following arguments: (1) The two disorders clearly differ qualitatively, in terms of acute vs. characterologic nature, and the Axis I / Axis II distinction should be carried over into DSM-V; (2) The two disorders differ only quantitatively on one or a few dimensions, and should both be diagnosed as Axis I conditions.

Question 2B: Child. You are presented with a referral problem by the parent of a ten-year-old boy, Todd. The parent reports that Todd’s third grade teacher of five months has been quite upset with his non-compliant behavior. Todd has been to the principal five times in the last four weeks, and has had teacher-parent notes sent home almost daily because of his disruptive behavior. There have been problems since the beginning of third grade, but these problems have worsened over the past month. Todd's mother, recently separated, is also at her wits end because she also finds him non-compliant at home. Your task is to plan the assessment for this case. What other information do you want? Why? From whom will you get this information? How and Why? Based solely on the referral information above one might consider a tentative diagnosis of either Conduct Disorder-childhood onset type or Oppositional Defiant Disorder. What criteria would the child have to meet to officially receive a diagnosis for each disorder and how would you distinguish one disorder from the other? What issues, if any are posed by the DSM-IV that make the decision difficult? Cite appropriate literature.