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SPED 760

M2: Assignment on History of ASD

The event I chose is the most recent event on the timeline: DSM-5 in 2013. In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association updated the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* to its fifth edition. In this edition, they grouped several diagnoses into “Autism Spectrum Disorders” (ASD). The disorders that were reclassified were Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). They also removed Rett’s Disorder from Autism Spectrum Disorders. The new disorder included three levels of severity based on the level of support an individual required in social communication and restricted, repetitive behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

I chose this event because it was one of the largest changes between editions of the *DSM* and it has been debated about whether it was the right decision or not to combine those other disorders under one umbrella disorder. Individuals with autism all behave so differently that I can see why it would be beneficial to reclassify them under ASD, but I also understand how this may affect individuals with different levels of severity and different topographies of the diagnostic criteria receiving treatment or services (Tsai & Ghaziuddin, 2013).

This event is significant in the field because it completely changed the clinical framework for diagnosing autism. Before, professionals could diagnose from several different disorders that shared characteristics, but were classified differently. Now, an individual who once would have received a diagnosis of Asperger’s Disorder and may have received some extra support in school and an individual who would have been diagnosed with Autistic Disorder and needed individualized, constant support receive the same diagnosis of ASD despite their lives and experiences looking drastically different. This could also result in individuals who may have been diagnosed with PDD-NOS not being diagnosed because they do not meet all of the criteria of ASD. This also impacts research of the disorders. Tsai and Ghaziuddin (2013) argue that PDD-NOS should not be considered as part of the same spectrum as AD and that to help with research of individuals with PDD-NOS it should remain as a separate category. This also eliminates the ability to research the validity of the subtypes since they have been eliminated by the *DSM-5* (Tsai & Ghaziuddin, 2013). This decision clearly affects the field of research, the diagnosis of disorders, and how individuals with a diagnosis of ASD or one the disorders on the spectrum of ASD may not receive the services they need.

I think this assignment is incredibly useful. It is important for us to know the history of autism so that we can understand why things are the way they are now. The history of the *DSM* informs us about how views about autism have changed over time. Since the field surrounding autism is relatively new it also informs us about misconceptions people may hold from the past and where those ideas may come from. I see this as true in my job all the time. I have only been working with children with autism for about five years and the training I have received has been up to date with current understanding and research, but individuals I work with have been doing it for a long time and while they may be trained on newer practices or language, they may still hold on to old research or knowledge. I think being more informed about the history will help me understand them, but also be able to update them on what we know about autism now. I don’t have any feedback about how I would improve this assignment.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*

(5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing

Tsai, L.T., & Ghaziuddin, M. (2014). DSM-5 ASD moves forward into the past. *Journal of*

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