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Professor Cotton & Scalise

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Homework #2

The research paper I read, and will summarize, was titled "Thimerosal: Autism's Scapegoat" written by Malia Bender on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2004. This excellent example of a research paper discussed the possible correlation between a mercury based compound in vaccines, called Thimerosal, and a child's chance of being diagnosed with Autism. Thimerosal was put in vaccines to lengthen shelf life and lower the prevalence of bacterial infections. Bender explained that the most common reason people started suspecting vaccines as a cause for autism is due to timing. She goes on to explain that the time when a child starts showing symptoms of autism is around the same time as they are receiving vaccines, so this lead to the false belief that vaccines are the cause when the truth is that it has been there dormant all along. She makes a very strong argument against the accusation that Thimerosal could be to blame for a child being diagnosed with Autism, including using examples of pseudoscience being present. One study that she uses that examples pseudoscience is the study done by Bernard used several extreme cases in children to blame autism on mercury poisoning due to the Thimerosal in vaccines. Although she has many more valid points in the paper, she goes on to make an overall conclusion about why this issue is still relevant eventhough it has been disproved many times. Bender answers this question saying that parents trying to find closure want something to blame for their suffering. Thimerosal has taken this blame eventhough it is not even included in vaccines anymore. This issue is

something that I have a genuine interest in this topic, and thoroughly enjoyed reading this paper.