Research exercise: The Impact of Racial, Ethnic, and Socioeconomic Differences on Autism Identification and Treatment

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The Impact of Racial, Ethnic, and Socioeconomic Status on Autism Identification

Part I.

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Context

- As of March 30, 2012 - 1/88 children diagnosed with ASD (Baio, 2012)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder: disabilities characterized by difficulties with socialization and communication, and characterized by repetitive and stereotyped behaviors (Baio, 2012)
  - Autistic disorder, Asperger syndrome, PDD-NOS
- Males are 3-4 times more likely to have autism than females
- All cultures, ethnicities, races, and socioeconomic groups appear to be equally susceptible to autism (Boyd, Odom, Humphreys, & Sam, 2010)
- Positive correlation between early intervention and long-term prognosis
- Alarming differences in timing of identification for children from upper class, minority, and low-income families

Autism Diagnoses: Findings from Previous Research

- Able to reliably diagnose children as young as two years old; most children not identified until they enter school
- In 2005 - “Near poor children” diagnosed eleven months later than children from wealthier families (Mandell, 2005, p. 1484)
- In 2007 - African American children almost 3 times less likely than Caucasian children to be diagnosed on their first visit to a specialist
  * Diagnosed an average of 1.4 years later than Caucasian children (Mandell, 2007)
- In 2008 - African American and Hispanic children received diagnoses between the ages of 7.9 and 8.8 years; Caucasian children diagnosed at 6.3 years (Morrier, 2008)

Research Questions

1.) What factors cause disparities in the timing of autism identification across sociodemographic groups?
2.) What early warning signs and symptoms of autism do early childhood educators need to be aware of in order to alert parents?
3.) What screening practices can be easily implemented in early childhood classrooms to recognize children who demonstrate early symptoms of autism?

Factors Affecting Identification Timing

1.) Physician Perspectives
2.) Parental Education
3.) Insurance Coverage