

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

WILLIAMS SYNDROME: A CASE STUDY APPROACH

By

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THE BOYER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, 2006

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The purpose of this study was to examine the multisystem disability of Williams Syndrome from the perspective of an educator, with the intent of understanding and addressing the educational needs of Williams Syndrome individuals. The cognitive profile of Williams Syndrome individuals presents a challenge for the educator. They are frequently diagnosed as mildly retarded with an average IQ of around 60. On standardized IQ tests, they usually do poorly and struggle with simple arithmetic. An educational psychologist, Eleanor Sernel said, "Educators are confused because the Williams Syndrome child tests like the retarded child, talks like a gifted child, behaves like a disturbed child, and functions like a learning-disabled child"(as cited in Finn, 1991, p. 58).

The methodologies used in this study included varied sources of qualitative research data including (a) multiple case studies, (b) surveys, (c) direct and participant observations, videos, and a cassette tape recording of testimonials of Williams Syndrome individuals.

This dissertation finds that educators can make a genuine and significant difference in the lives of special needs children by (a) becoming knowledgeable of a special child's disability, (b) teaching to their strengths and interests, (c) listening to their suggestions and taking them seriously, and (d) encouraging them to achieve to their maximum potential.