

University of Arizona Library

Interlibrary Loan
1510 E. University Blvd
Tucson, AZ 85721
(520) 621-6438 / (520) 621-4619 (fax)
OCLC: AZU
U of A Ariel: 150.135.45.156
askill@u.library.arizona.edu

ODYSSEY ENABLED

Borrower: AZA

TN.#: 967938



Call #: HV894 .E3 v.10-12 1975-77

Location: Main Library

ILL #: 80941570



Reference #:

Journal Title: Education and training of the
mentally retarded.

FREE

Article Author:

Article Title: Leslie E; Social factors
contributing to exceptional navajo students

Shipping Address:

Arizona Health Sciences Library, ILL
1501 N. Campbell, Rm 2151
P.O. Box 245079
CAMPUS

Volume: 12

Issue: 4

Month/Year: Dec 1977

Pages: 374-376 (scan notes and title/copyright
pages for chapter requests)

Fax: 520-626-2831

Notice: This material may be protected by
Copyright Law (Title 17 U.S.C.).

Email Address:

ahsill@ahsl.arizona.edu

Paged by *WV* (Initials) *8-12, 1200*

Reason Not Filled (check one):

- NOS NFAC (GIVE REASON)
- LACK VOLUME/ISSUE
- PAGES MISSING FROM VOLUME

University of Arizona Interlibrary Loan

ARIEL INFORMATION:

Ariel Address: 128.196.164.43



Enter Ariel Address Manually if unable to scan.
If Ariel address blank, send via email.

may do so by submitting a petition of candidacy to Susan Phillips, The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

An informal interview with governors and candidates will be held Sunday, April 30, 1978 in Kansas City with the formal interview following the next morning. During these interviews, each candidate will have the opportunity to express his/her reasons for seeking office. The Student CEC Governors and Executive Committee elect the new officers at the annual business meeting during convention week. Petition forms and officer roles are available upon request from Council Headquarters and must be completed and returned to CEC via registered mail on or before February 15, 1978. The Student CEC offices to be filled are President, Vice President-Committees, Vice President-Programs, Vice President-Publications, and Vice President-Communications.



**Susan R. Phillips, Assistant Unit Head,
Unit Development, CEC**

ERNEST LESLIE and FRANK TODACHEENY, authors of the two following articles, are undergraduate students at the University of Arizona's Navajo Special Education Clinical Teacher Development Program. Each is a Navajo member of the Navajo Nation Student Chapter of CEC and presented his paper at the 1977 Convention in Atlanta. (See next issue of ETMR for papers by two more Navajo students).

ERNEST LESLIE

Social Factors Contributing to Exceptional Navajo Children

There are a number of elements which have been established in this country as those contributing to mental retardation. It is important at this time to stress that *all* exceptionalities are unique in their own form—in etiology, prevalency, number, and degree.

The Navajo people are called, "Dine", meaning, "The People". Their reservation was created by a treaty between the United States Government and the Navajo Tribe in 1868. The Navajo Reservation is situated in the four-corner area of Arizona, Utah,

Colorado and New Mexico's state boundaries, encompassing 25,000 square miles, or about the size of West Virginia. Over half of Navajoland is warm, arid, and with desert-like climatic conditions; the average rainfall is about eight inches. Approximately 15% of the reservation is arid with very little vegetation. Within this boundary live above 150,000 Navajos, most of whom are scattered and in isolated family groups. Living in isolated, low populated aggregates, we, the Navajo people, had to cooperate for most of our lives with the same group of relatives in order to

survive. With this cooperation, Navajos had one other outstanding trait; this was our ability to adapt to new environments, people, customs and cultures.

Presently, of the total population of 150,000 Navajos, 60,000 individuals are school age children. These children pursue their educational endeavors at nearby Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding Schools, public schools, private mission schools or contract schools. Because of the remoteness, some Navajo children are not provided services of any sort. Statistics show that presently 30% or 180,000 school age children need some kind of special educational service. The average number of completed school years among the Navajos is five, as compared to 12 years for the United States population. With this data, it is relevant to surmise that not all Navajos are educated. Too, it should be pointed out that many Navajos are not thoroughly convinced of what mental retardation is.

The traditional Navajo viewpoint says that the causal factors of mental retardation are due to three contributing factors:

1. Contact with dangerous forces such as lightning, snakes, the spirits of the dead, the enemy, etc.
2. Breaking a taboo; having sexual intercourse during the period of ritual abstinence, committing incest, or practicing witchcraft and making a mistake.
3. Malicious intent of a witch or other evil person.

All of these factors represent disharmony in the proper relationship of things and involve mental distress. Navajos believe that abnormalities are brought forward as a punishment for violations against nature. The mentally retarded are called, "diigis". Their state is usually caused by prenatal conditions. There are usually songs (religious rituals) performed to restore harmony with nature, which is "Hozhooji" or the "Blessing Way Ceremony". These rites are sometimes done during the prenatal stages of development.

Before the Anglo culture came in contact with our people, our ancestors did not view mental retardation as a handicapping con-

dition. Why? One of the underlying factors was the concept that a Navajo is not handicapped as long as he/she is a contributing member of the family. Usually, the immediate family took care of the handicapped individual and kept him at home, having him perform minimal tasks such as herding, sheep, hauling water, gathering and chopping fire wood.

From past experience, Navajo families with exceptional children were reluctant to expose their children for fear that their children would be taken away. "Shielding" of children came into existence due to fear of the institutionalization practices of the Anglo society. Responsible Navajo parents were most reluctant to allow their children off reservation facilities or into boarding schools which were often stressful even for normal children. Navajos are very compassionate towards their handicapped children.

Most of us think that the initial contact with the Anglo culture emphasized to the Navajo culture competitiveness, which led to recognition of various IQ scores, labeling and classifying of young Indian children. In the end, these practices revealed the educationally handicapped, slow learners, emotionally handicapped, and other abnormalities related to mental retardation.

Presently, in our remote but beautiful land, there are a number of high-prevalence diseases which contribute to mental retardation. Navajos are still plagued by serious health problems such as high incidence of spinal cord injuries, post childhood infectious diseases, viral infections, inner ear infections (otitis media), and anemia. Other health problems include diabetes mellitus which eventually leads to blindness, Down's syndrome, and brain injury. Alcoholism and drug usage compound the existing health problems. The incidence of sensory impairment such as in speech, hearing and vision is as high as 40% of the total population, or 60,000.

Health services are inadequate on the reservation. Most Navajo women do not receive proper prenatal medical care and most hospital facilities are often too far away, so women frequently give birth at home. Navajo children who are severely handi-

capped need special services, which are more adequately provided off the reservation. Because of the great distance one must travel to get service, or because of the reluctance to leave home, many severely handicapped children receive no services at all.

According to the 1970 Census, the average income for Navajos was estimated at only \$753.00 per year, compared to \$3,700 per year for the United States population as a whole. An estimated 65% of the Navajo population is subsidized in part or in whole by government, state, and tribal programs. A small number are able to sustain themselves or supplement their income through sales of Navajo silver and turquoise jewelry, rugs and livestock.

Within the past eight years, attitudes have changed and now there is a willingness on the part of Navajo parents toward educating their handicapped children. In our modern society, Navajo people are becoming better educated. However, special education on our reservation is a new frontier. These types of services are entirely new to our area. We foresee great achievements and accomplishments.

There is a desperate need to develop testing tools which would better measure the real intelligence of Indian people and other ethnic groups. This growing concern among our educators and professionals has led to controversy on how effectively we can educate Navajos who may be mentally retarded. Presently, Navajo diagnosticians are working closely with health professionals.

One difficulty arises when a person attempts to relate Navajo terminology to Anglo terms in special education. The Navajo translation for handicapped person is "diigis", or crazy. Often, a better interpretation has to be made to relate a certain type of handicap. Now that the Navajo language is being written, words can be used in the proper manner when they are applied to exceptional children.

Another setback is in getting handicapped persons to services that are available. Of the reservation's approximately 5,000 miles of roads, only 1,500 miles, or 30% are paved.

Many of the unsurfaced roads are impassable much of the year due to mud, drifting snow and sand. The scope of misfortunes should not hamper us, for the reservation now had media and communications which are available for faster services.

With the advent of new technological advancements, we hope:

1. That through education, parental awareness and total local community education, acceptance will be fostered.
2. That the desire to fulfill the goals for Navajo exceptional children will become more realistic.
3. That relevant programs will be fostered to meet the needs of all exceptionalities.

As a result of implementing strategies to achieve the above mentioned goals we look to *greeting a better tomorrow for our people.*

Pertinent Information

Elevation on Navajoland ranges from 3,500 feet above sea level to more than 10,000 feet. Topographic structures vary: there are flat alluvial valleys at the 4,500 to 6,000 feet level, rolling plains between 5,500 to 7,000 feet, mesas at 6,000 to 8,000 feet and, mountains above 7,500.

Vegetation

Native grasses, pinon, juniper trees, and sagebrush are found. In the humid mountainous region: yellow pine, oak, aspen and fir trees are found.

Culture

Our foundation for the Navajo Culture is clanships.

Income

Income is subsidized by state welfare programs, supplemental security income, social security disability insurance, general assistance (BIA), veteran's benefits, railroad retirement, and in-kind relief such as food stamps and housing assistance.