



Indigenous Subjectivities: Diné Youth (De)Construct Identity

Committee Members:

Dr. JoAnn Phillion, Chair
Dr. Chrystal Johnson
Dr. Tsianina Lomawaima
Dr. Erik Malewski
Dr. A. G. Rud
Purdue University

**Navajo Research
Conference
October 18, 2017**



Valerie Shirley, Ph.D.
University of Arizona
College of Education

Overview

Critical Indigenous Qualitative Research Study

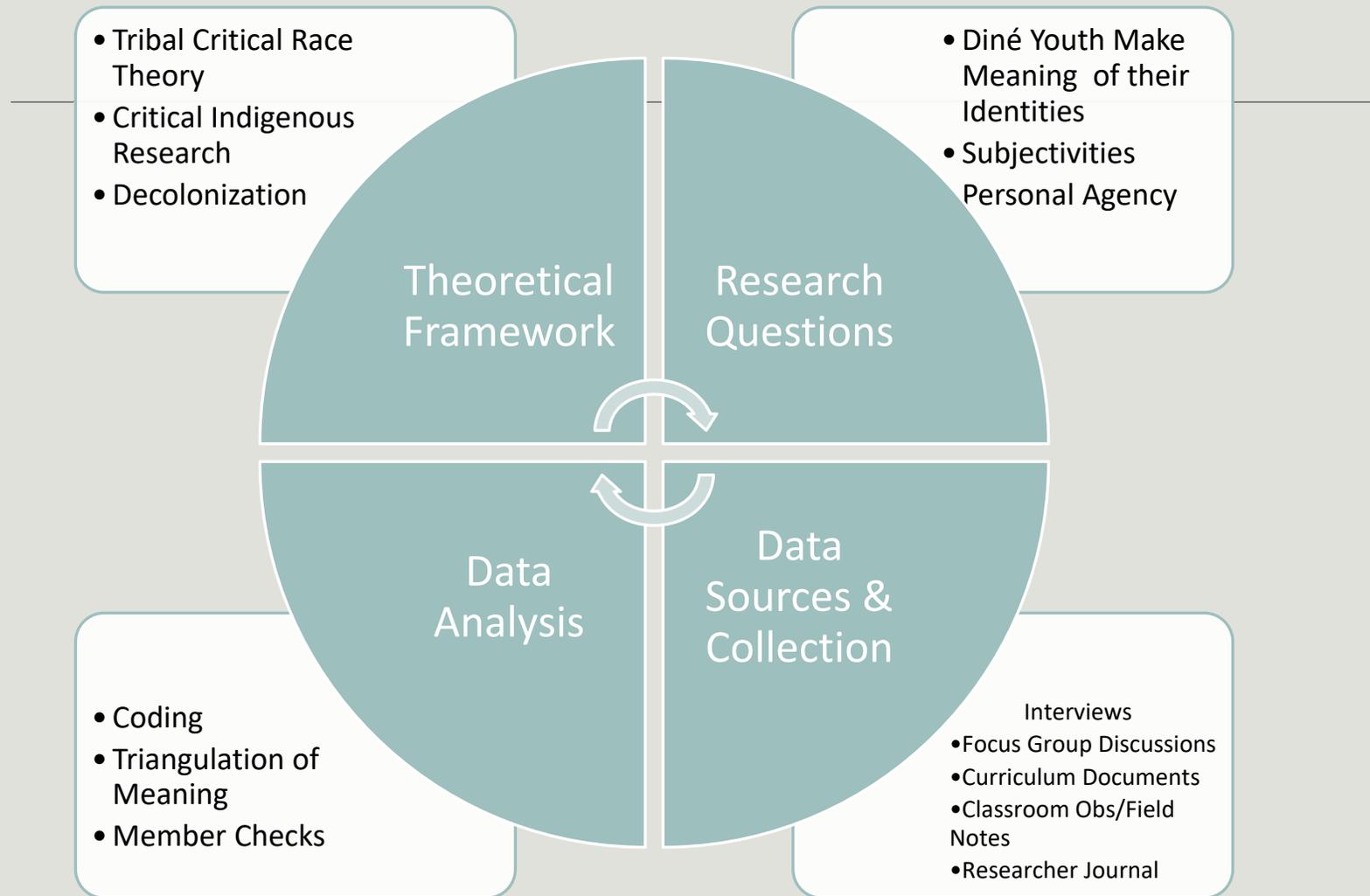
- Political, Decolonizing, Includes Indigenous Values

Site and Participants

- Tribal Community School
- 10 Diné youth participants (12-14 years of age)
- 1 Diné female teacher

Examined how Diné youth conceptualized their identities in relation to the history of colonization, media influences/popular culture and Diné stories, concepts and philosophy

Methodology



Pedagogical Framework: Decolonization



A large part of decolonization entails **developing a critical consciousness** about the cause(s) of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices. Decolonization **requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage**. Decolonization is **about empowerment**—a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples' values and abilities, and a willingness to make change. It is about **transforming negative reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities**. (Winona Wheeler cited in Wilson, 2004, p. 71)

Engaging Diné Youth with Critical Indigenous Pedagogical Methods

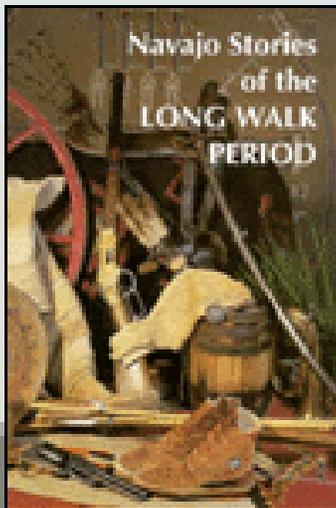
- ❖ **Critical Examination of history, current state, community and self**
- ❖ **Dialogue**
- ❖ **Self-Reflections**
- ❖ **K'é**
- ❖ **Taking Action**



Interviews & 4 Focus Group Discussions

Diné Long Walk

- Unit in Culture Class
- *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* (Roessel, 1973)



Boarding Schools

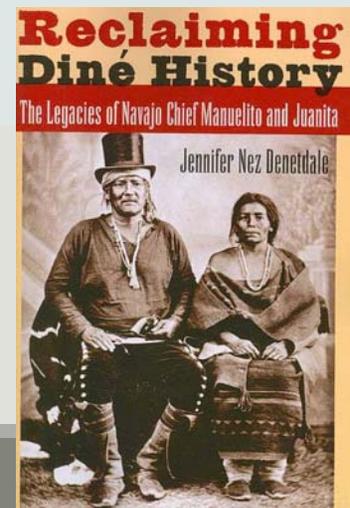
- History using photos
- Discussion of feelings and stories
- Analyzing identity in relation to past

Popular Culture

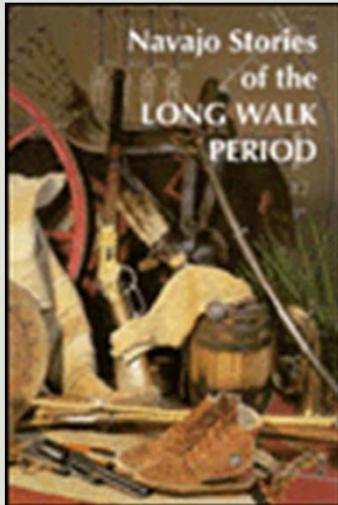
- Peter Pan
- How Hollywood Stereotypes NA
- Identity Wheel Activity

Diné Philosophy & Epistemology

- Creation Stories
- *Sa'ah Naaghaai Bi'keh Hozhoon: Journey through Life*



Examining History: Diné Long Walk

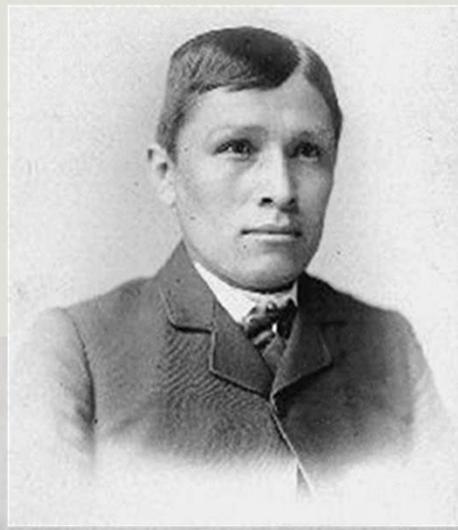


feelings
sad
dissipated
Angry
mad

thoughts
I thought the stories
I read were cruel
and unhumane.
The navajo's weren't
treated well
The us army treated them
not as well as others.

The sketches illustrate the conditions of the Long Walk. On the left, a Navajo camp is shown with a simple tent, a person, and some supplies. In the center, a soldier on a horse is depicted, representing the military presence. On the right, a military camp is shown with a building, a person, and supplies labeled 'water' and 'food', highlighting the disparity in resources between the two groups.

Erase-Replace Policies and Practices: "To kill the Indian and save the man"



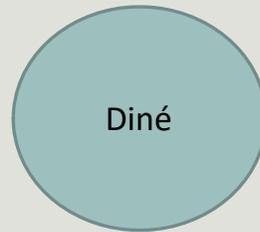
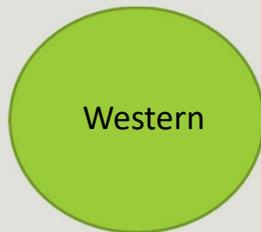
Self-Reflection: Recognizing Hegemony

Decolonization entails **developing a critical consciousness** about the degrees to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices

Identity wheel activity:

Western Aspects: school, watching tv, going to church speaking English

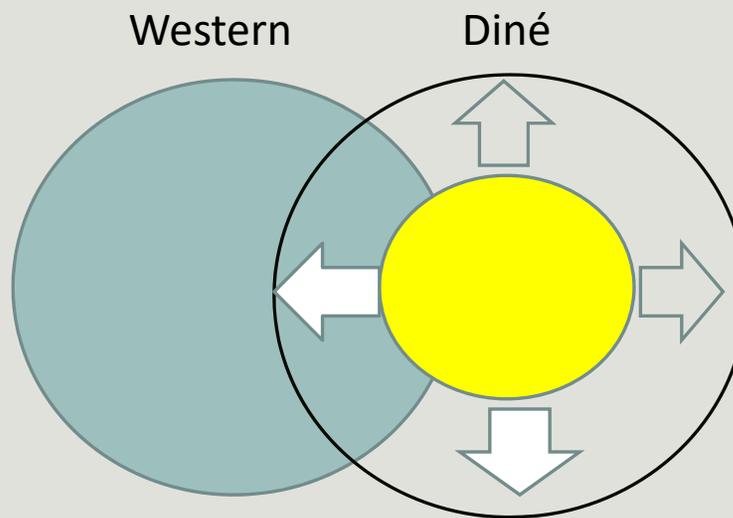
Diné Aspects: speaking Diné bizaad, school with focus on Diné cultural contexts, going to ceremonies, ceremonies for self, helping family and relatives



“I knew a little bit about the Navajo but when I wrote it down, I didn’t really know I was more into the Western than the Navajo because usually we’re supposed to be more Navajo and not that much Western but then I realized I was more influenced by the Western way. It made me feel no good.”

Fragile moment: feelings of ambivalence, anger, confusion

Balance and Take Action



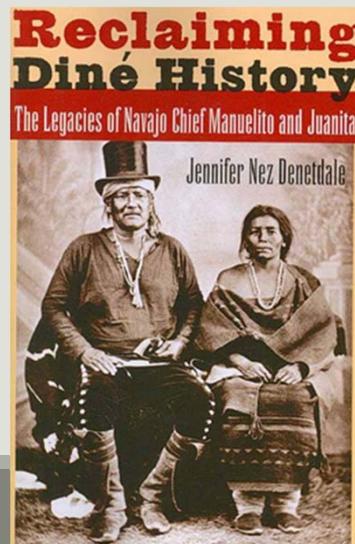
Diné Stories: Moved to Forefront of Consciousness



Changing Woman and *diiyin dine'é* are always by my side.

“Many Diné know the story of God and how he made us from his hands, but not the story of how Changing Woman made us and all of our clans.”

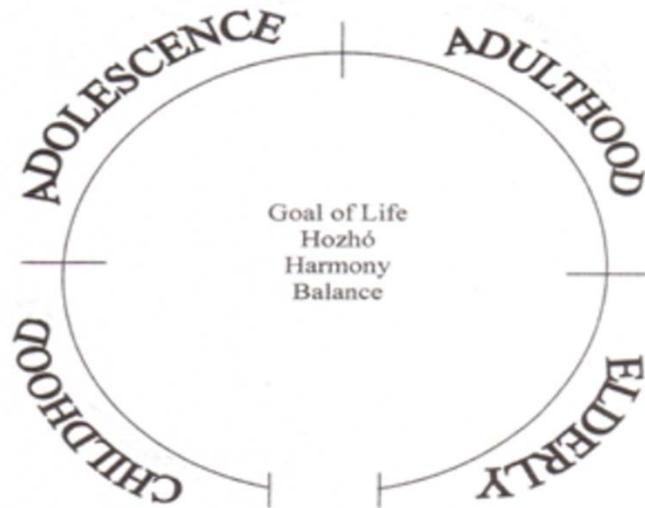
Text: Denetdale (2007)
Reclaiming Diné History





Sa'ah Naghai Bik'eh Hozhoon

Dine Philosophy of Life: Hozhó



Behave more and not make any bad choices: “Stay on the right path”

All of the Diné youth reflected on their personal actions and behavior so as to achieve the state of hozhó (the ultimate goal to restore harmony within oneself and to reach a state of balance, beauty and goodness in life).

A past negative experience that Shawn had undergone clarified how the Diné philosophy of life guided his reasoning to make healthier choices to help him restore harmony and achieve a state of hozhó. He stated:

“It’s like someone bad is following you and if you’re going to do something wrong, they’re going to push you off the path and you got to struggle, struggle through time, and it seems like a long time, but you got to struggle to get back on your path and you got to try and stay strong to stay on your path.”

Transformative Shifts

Personal Agency: T'áá hwó ají t'éego (It's up to you)



Implications

Critical Frameworks	Theory and Practice	Student Advocacy
<p>Drawing on such frameworks encourages educators to be conscious and intentional of the ways in which they can implement curriculum & pedagogy that engages students in examining social issues while simultaneously privileging and promoting Indigenous knowledge systems in the classroom.</p>	<p>Be Intentional: Create spaces of learning through critical dialogues and self-reflections; Promote critical thinking: draw on multiple resources to paint the picture; Teach for social change: Empower youth to become change agents; Emphasize Action</p>	<p>Youth calling for Diné schools to implement similar pedagogical and learning processes in their schools; Elders teach history and share Diné cultural knowledge; Storytelling nights</p>



INDIGENOUS TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT



Indigenizing Pedagogies:
Teachers as Nation-Builders
TLS 495A | Fall 2017

Ahxé'hee

Questions?
Comments?

vshirley@email.arizona.edu