Indigenous Subjectivities: Diné Youth (De)Construct Identity

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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

- Interviews
- Focus Group Discussions
- Curriculum Documents
- Classroom Obs/Field Notes
- Researcher Journal
- Coding
- Triangulation of Meaning
- Member Checks
- Tribal Critical Race Theory
- Critical Indigenous Research
- Decolonization
- Diné Youth Make Meaning of their Identities
- Subjectivities
- Personal Agency
- Tribal Critical Race Theory
- Critical Indigenous Research
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- Diné Youth Make Meaning of their Identities
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- Personal Agency
- Theoretical Framework
- Research Questions
- Data Sources & Collection
- Data Analysis
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
- disappointed
- angry
- mad

Thoughts:
- I thought the stories
  - I read were cruel
  - and inhuman.
- The Navajo’s weren’t treated well.
- The US army treated them not as well as others.
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*
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

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<th>Critical Frameworks</th>
<th>Theory and Practice</th>
<th>Student Advocacy</th>
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<td>Drawing on such frameworks encourages educators to be conscious and intentional of the ways in which they can implement curriculum &amp; pedagogy that engages students in examining social issues while simultaneously privileging and promoting Indigenous knowledge systems in the classroom.</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>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</td>
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Questions?
Comments?

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