

The Effects of Education Narratives on  
High School Persistence among Navajo  
Girls

By  
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# Acknowledgments and Thanks

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Navajo Nation Department of Dine' Education (DODE)

Navajo Nation Board of Education (NBE)

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The Chapters who gave their gracious permission to interview girls in their communities

Marina

Walden University, Dr. Joyce Haines, Dr. Anne Hacker, Dr. Paul Rutledge

My husband and children

## Definitions

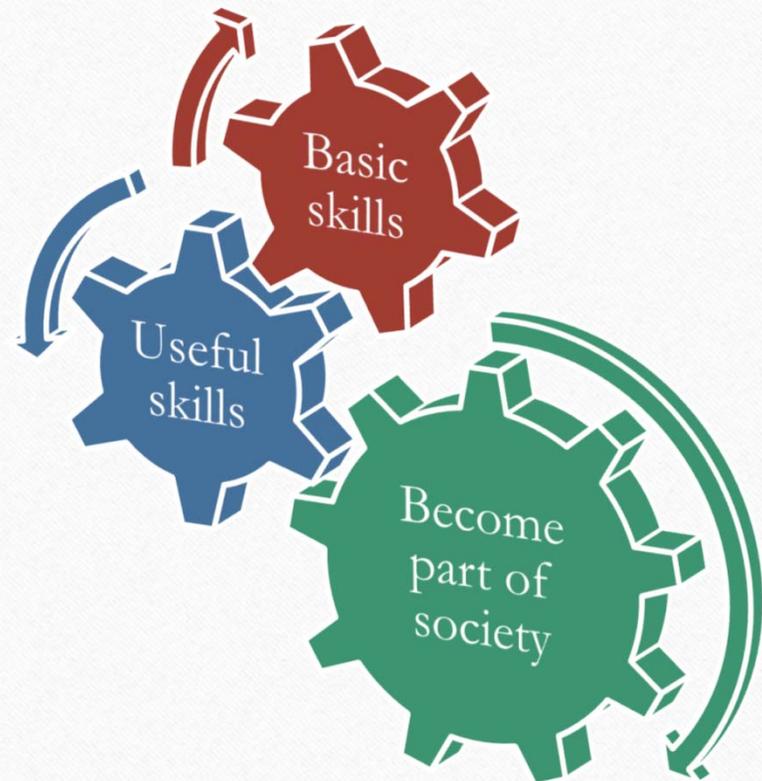
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Narratives are stories

**Narrative policy analysis:** what motivates the policy writing process?

**Education narratives:**

- ❖ Why send children to school?
- ❖ What should school look like?



# Purpose of the study

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- To examine federal and Navajo education narratives
- To understand why many Navajo girls drop out of high school

# Methodology

- **Interviews:** DODE administrators
- Navajo girl who had dropped out of high school
- Documents:
  - A Nation at Risk (1983)
  - NCLB 2001
  - RTT 2009
  - NNSEA 2005

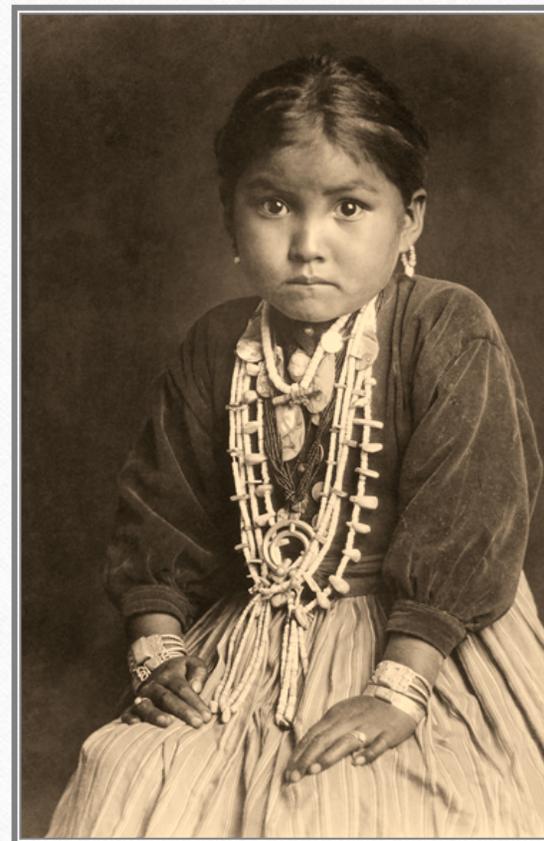
## Why focus on girls?

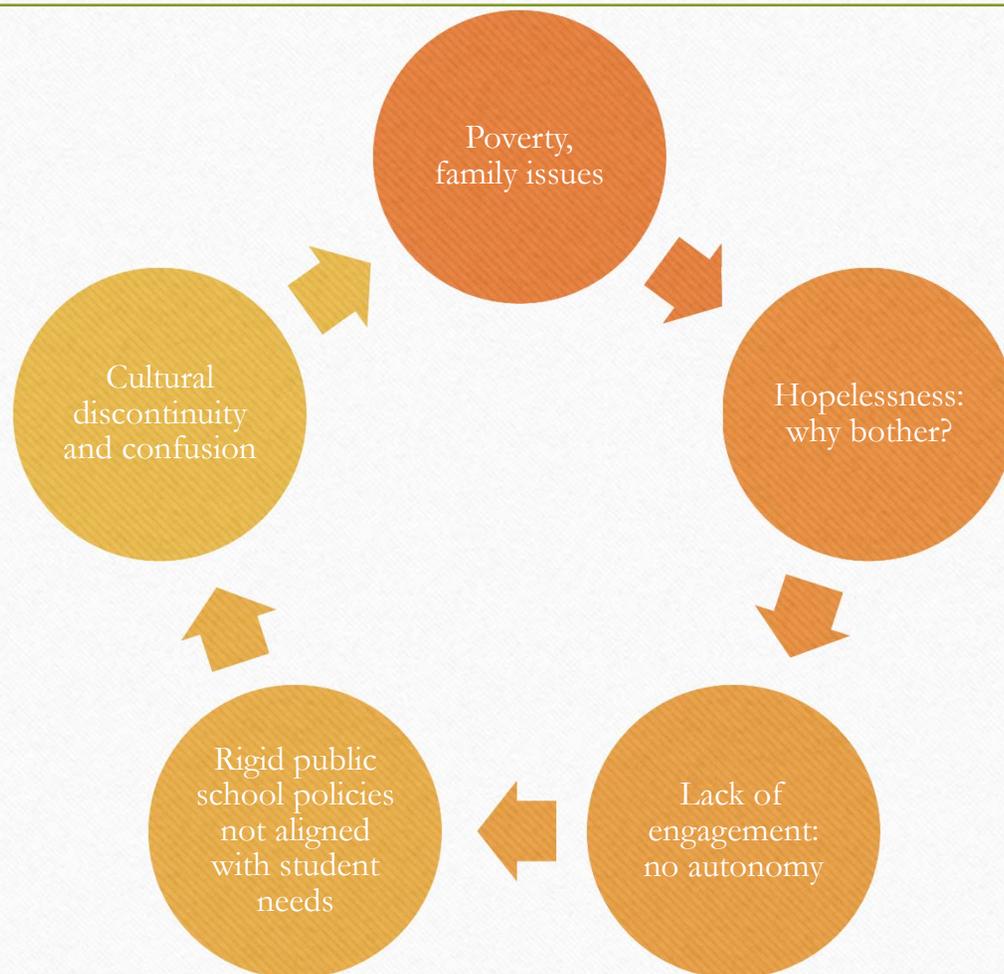
**Educating girls has wide-ranging implications:**

Health (personal, family, community)

Economic (personal, community prosperity)

Political (self-direction, participation, setting community directions)



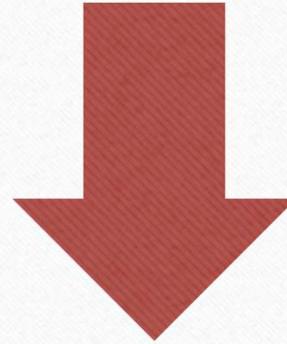


How did this girl describe her home and school environments?

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**Teased at school / fights**  
**Parents had 2 different ideas about culture/language/ceremony.**

**School: You're out, you're forgotten**



**Mother:**  
Traditions,  
ceremonies,  
family,  
language.  
"Who am I?"



**Father:** Get a diploma, go to college, start a career, make money.  
"What am I?"



What about programs  
to help her into a  
career?

- 
- *Missed the target*



# What do the federal government and Navajo Nation emphasize in their education policies?

## Federal government

- Productive workers
- College
- Career
- Money/Success
- Accountability, STEM, standardized tests, challenging standards, English, high quality teachers, AYP

## Navajo government

- Safe learning environment
- Families and community involvement
- Navajo language and culture
- Navajo government
- Challenging academics  
Teachers/Counselors familiar with Navajo culture

So.....  
What is the missing element?





# Meaningful education=Engagement

Is your child excited to go to school?

Is your child learning things that interest him or her?

Is your child able to relate this information to their everyday life?

Does your child have a real say in what courses they take?

Does your child have a personal plan and a way to make it come true?

Does the school support your child's self-determination?

# Recommendations

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Federal and state:



Grant autonomy in education to indigenous peoples

- Encourage community schools (Rock Point)



Supportive structures:  
tutoring, day care,  
counseling.



Schools become **agile**



Community-based  
internships  
Sanctuaries  
Community mentoring  
for at-risk.



Questions?

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