FINDING AND KNOWING THE GANG NAYEE—
FIELD-INITIATED GANG RESEARCH PROJECT:
THE JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION

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THE JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION

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A NAVAJO PREFACE

by Philmer Bluehouse

As I write, I have just returned from giving offerings to the Holy Beings and the Creator up in the Ch’oo’gai Mountains near my home. I went there with my family and a guest. It was a
difficult journey. It reminded me of the many difficult journeys others have taken. It also reminded me of good times people enjoyed in their journeys, as I did this time. I talked with the Holy Beings in ordinary prayer to help me discover the meaning of my particular journey, and I felt the difficulties and joy we all have. While talking with the Holy Beings, and in the presence of the Earth Surface Holy Beings (my family and guest), I thought of the many creations we exist with, and I sought to discover their existence and purpose. What was the purpose of my journey to the mountains?

I asked for guidance and discovery on the Mountain. I gave pollen in the proper way, as instructed by the Holy Beings. I gave the rock offerings in the proper fashion and ended with the appropriate prayer. The same was done by my family and my guest. I gave corn pollen offerings again to seek more knowledge. I anointed my inner spirit by placing pollen on my tongue. I anointed my mind and body by putting sacred corn pollen on top of my head. I said the proper prayer while doing so. Having done that, I felt a burden lift, and I was rejuvenated. It was good.

I found myself lingering, with words, about life and its meaning. I heard a repetition—“It must be shared; it must be shared.” I asked myself, “What must be shared?” I envisioned the Creation event, the relativity of all creation; its abilities and limitations; its beauty and flaws; its existence and nonexistence; and its power and powerlessness. It is me. I am that vision. I am humble. I am. It must be shared. It must be taught.

I then prepared ceremonial precious stone offerings as the most sincere reciprocity, and to demonstrate my humility to all of Creation, which taught me in that moment. All that was done properly, as instructed by the Holy Beings. I also did that to reconnect to the Sacred and
maintain that liaison in the future. It was done.

I then turned to my son and said, “It is time to instruct you of the things of life, and to reveal the foundation of all creation.” I told him that we all have the answers to all things. They are sometimes in our hands and sometimes in the things all around us. Answers are represented in the things we possess and those we do not for the moment—the answers are visible and invisible.

I opened a bundle, wrapped in white cotton cloth. I showed my son the Sacred Mountain Dirt. It was proudly dressed and adorned in white unwounded buckskin and it contained precious black stones, turquoise, abalone shell, and white oyster shell. It is beautiful—the Mountain Dirt is my world. It is my living demonstration of the Creation, as described to me in the “No Sleep Ceremony” which was performed not too long ago. The Mountain Dirt represents me, my spirit, my being, and all the things around me. The outer visible things are shown for the moment—the rest, the inner existence, will be revealed in time. I am confident of that.

I showed my son the Sacred Rock Crystal—it sparkled like the most precious diamond, with facets all around, visible but invisible, and I said, “It is to see points of view into the future and past. There are many facets—and so it is with life.” I showed him the Lightning Arrowhead—it is for protection everyone must have and to understand the power of protection on every journey.

I showed my son the Sacred Mirage Stone and said, “Use this in ceremonies to dress in the sacred ability to travel with and among the Holy Beings; to gain proper entry into their domain and to walk with and talk to them.” I said, “You are an Earth Surface Holy Being. Do not forget that, son.”
I showed him the remaining pieces of horn—of the Mountain Sheep. They are the only creature on the Journey that kept sanity and shared the secrets of that sanity with all of creation. The horn particle is almost worn away from use in many Sacred Reparation Ceremonies, where it is placed in mountain tobacco and smoked in a clay pipe. The tobacco is gathered using the proper ceremony, using the proper offerings and the right chant.

I showed the Sacred Eagle Plume and described how Monster Slayer and Born for Water were given a plume to overcome trials and tribulations in life. Those were the basic teachings to a young person by a father.

My son followed the instructions I gave to him—the ones originally furnished by the Holy Beings. He carried the bundle I opened. When a basket with Holy Objects faced him, he breathed the proper breath and ingested their essences into his being—the Sacredness of the moment and the information and wisdom of the rock pile shrine, through the basket holding the sacred items, which were developed by thousands of pilgrimages by others before us. He did this from the East; from the South; the West; and the North. He smiled, his posture changed—he knew, he knew.

I share this intimate moment as one strategy. There are many strategies—just as significant and just as powerful. “It must be shared. It must be shared. I am. It must be shared— it must be taught.”

As I showed, Nature and the Creator who made It have many things to offer. There are many values established by analogies described in Creation and Journey Narratives, and in the ceremonial described above. There are many representatives, or Holy Beings, within the Creation, which guide and lead the way to reality and tangibility. There are traditions, which are
not necessarily religions, but ways of life which are inherent in the sacredness of many Native Peoples of the North, Central, and Southern continents of the Americas. They have a message to help minimize the pain and suffering we all experience. Many traditional solutions, when properly revealed and taught, are practical and meaningful. We need to learn them and teach them to one another as people. Practical solutions are in our abilities and sometimes in our limitations—they are visible and invisible. There are indigenous strategies to find them. In this are visible and tangible agents of change—most often for the better.

There are usually shifts in paradigm in everyone’s journey. They happen naturally before our birth, in our birth, in our delivery, in our growth, on our learning and development, and in our ability to maintain ourselves in this world. Change is naturally in our creation, our life, and in our death. It was designed that way. Therefore, it is possible to visit the apparent and the not so apparent behavior of our people, and to help shift the paradigm for the better.¹

The lesson of my journey is this: If we are to have any impact on crime and violence, and particularly gang violence, we must reach out to youth and children. We must teach them the prayers, ceremonies and the values of our Navajo culture. We must show those things to them so they will accept them and take them within. Navajo values are our refuge in this, another challenge to our identity as Navajos. We will continue—as Navajos.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study of the emergence and nature of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation is the product of many inquiries. It includes a review of the literature on youth gangs nationally, the rise of gangs in

¹ Philmer Bluehouse was the former (and first) Director of the Peacemaker Division of the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation. He now works with the Dine’ Medicine Man’s Association.
Indian Country, and Navajo history and culture; interviews with gang members; interviews with “stakeholders” or Navajo Nation program officials and others with an interest in the issue; and focus group meetings with members of the Navajo Nation public, which were held at four locations on the reservation. The study provides a profile of the gang and crew members the field work team interviewed, their activities, the views of agency stakeholders, the results of focus group meetings, an examination of off-reservation relationships and influences, and the relationship of cluster housing and gang formation.

When matching the responses of the youths we interviewed for this study and the national literature, we find that Navajo youths join gangs for many of the same reasons that youths in urban areas join them—poverty, unemployment, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse within families, and family breakup. Contemporary lifestyles and media portrayals of the attractiveness of gang life have their role in influencing Navajo youths to adopt a gang style, but one of the big problems is identity— who are the youth of the Navajo Nation? It has a very young population, with a very large group of Navajos who are about to enter their teens. Many of these youth have lost their language and culture, although they identify themselves as Indians (rather than Navajos) and they are interested in their identity as Indians. Overall, they are the product of “multiple marginalization,” which means that when young people are pushed out or put to the margins or edge of society, without ways to meaningfully participate in social life, and when they come from broken or ill families and communities, they tend to associate for several reasons—income, recreation, protection, identity—and most of all—to have the family they do not have at home.

Interviews with Navajo youths confirmed the literature research findings, as the field team looked at the basic demographics of how old those youths were; where they lived; the languages
they spoke; their understanding of traditional Navajo ways; their relationships with others; and their interests. The field team also looked at gang activities, including non-delinquent or non-criminal activities (what gang members do most of the time), crime and violence, substance abuse, drug use and dealing, weapons acquisition and use, and the importance of drugs. Overall, Navajo youth gangs are not as heavily engaged in drug dealing, acquiring weapons, and the escalation of weapons violence as gangs in urban areas, but there is a danger of “hardening” and an escalation of drug trade and weapons violence in the Navajo Nation unless the gang problem is effectively addressed.

Stakeholders are very interested in the rise of gangs, and many have regular contact with gang members. The stakeholders want to know more about Navajo gangs and their activities, and they want to be more effective in dealing with them, as they operate Navajo Nation programs. They recognize that new programs to respond are necessary, but they wonder where the money will come from. Many recognize that an adequate response to Navajo gangs requires better cooperation and coordination among Navajo Nation programs, even if they must rely upon the resources they presently have.

The focus group participation and responses were particularly important. The meeting notes show that while people gathered to talk about gangs, they immediately identified issues such as a lack of parenting skills, the loss of language and traditions and the values associated with them, and the fragmentation of families and communities as forces which are responsible for the rapid rise of gangs in the Navajo Nation. They also identified dependence—on the national government and upon the Navajo Nation government—as a barrier, and they recommended that families and communities must mobilize to solve problems.

Finally, there is a policy analysis based upon the literature and interviews with gang
members, stakeholders and members of the public. There are policy conclusions which are addressed to the Navajo Nation Council, chapters, agencies, schools, and other segments of Navajo Nation government and society. Overall, the analysis concludes that gang violence and vandalism are related to other Navajo Nation social ills, including domestic and family violence, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, poverty, unemployment, and the loss of language and culture—the very things that fuel gang activity in urban areas. The Navajo Nation is “urban” in a sense, with agency towns and a wage economy that are the products of the destruction of the traditional Navajo economy. The disruption of traditional economies, living patterns, and relationships, coupled with urbanization, are major factors in gang formation, and to deal with it, the Navajo Nation must develop strategies for intervention and prevention—not only of violent gang activity but of social disruption in general—which will call upon Navajos to develop a new sense of their identity as Navajos. Long-term solutions will require Navajo Nation-wide mobilization and community mobilization, and many of the Navajos who participated in this study agree that part of the mobilization plan must include the revival of the Navajo identity through the language, culture and traditions they still hold dear.
II. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This study is based upon a wide range of activities, including literature research, field work findings, meetings and focus group discussions, and analysis. It addresses the following topics in the chapters:

1. The historical context of violence and gang activity in the Navajo Nation.
2. A statement of the problem in the rise of gangs in the Navajo Nation.
3. The research methodology used to do field work.
4. A review of general gang literature and the emerging literature on gangs in Indian Country.
5. A profile of gang study respondents.
6. Navajo gang activities.
7. Stakeholder participation and responses.
8. Focus group participation and responses.
10. Cluster housing and its relation to gang emergence and activities.
11. Policy implications of the data.
12. Conclusion.

This report is the product of many minds and hands. The principal researchers, who guided the research approach and design, compiled both qualitative and quantitative data, undertook a comprehensive literature review, and recommended findings on the basis of data analyses, were Dr. Troy Armstrong and Barbara Mendenhall, from the Center for Delinquency and Crime Policy Studies at California State University in Sacramento, California. Philmer Bluehouse, of the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch Peacemaker Division, directed the project. James W. Zion, the Solicitor to
the Courts of the Navajo Nation, gave technical and legal support to the project, contributed his experience with Navajo literature, and completed the final edit of the report. Dr. Marianne O. Nielsen of the Department of Criminal Justice, Northern Arizona University, was a technical consultant who assisted with field work design and implementation. Daniel Wall participated in the design of field work strategies and instruments, had a primary role in the field work initiative, and compiled an initial version of this report.\(^2\) Harmon Mason participated in the design of field work strategies and instruments, had a primary role in the field work initiative, and was instrumental in the project due to his first-hand knowledge of gang-involved youth. The project proceeded under the guidance of The Hon. Robert Yazzie, Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation.

\(^2\) Mr. Wall’s contribution was largely technical and scientific, while Mr. Zion contributed legal and policy analysis.
III. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE AND GANG ACTIVITY IN THE NAVAJO NATION

The geographic location, size and demography of the Navajo Nation is the initial contextual consideration for this study. The Navajo Nation lies in the northeast of the State of Arizona, the northwest of New Mexico, and the southern portion of Utah, to the south of the San Juan River. It has more than 25,000 square miles of land, making it twenty square miles larger than Ireland. It is larger than several European countries. It is bigger than the State of West Virginia, and slightly smaller than the State of South Carolina, which is the 40th state in size. While the year 2000 Census data for Navajos is not yet readily available, the Navajo Nation has previously used population figures of 220,000 to 250,000 Navajos, with 180,000 people living within the Navajo Nation, 175,000 Navajos and more than 50,000 Navajos who live in border towns near the Navajo Nation or in metropolitan areas (according to the Navajo Nation Washington Office). Youth cohorts for the population are large. Fifty percent of the population is under age 21; approximately 41% of all Navajos are under age 18; and 25% of the Navajo population is under age 9.

Navajos are unique as an Indian people, because they have been successfully able to adapt to sharply-changing circumstances and the arrival of new peoples in their aboriginal homeland. For example, intensive Spanish settlement began in 1598, and during the 224-year period of Spanish domination through 1822, there was a pattern of mutual raiding, slave-trading, and warfare which prompted three treaties between the Navajo Nation and Spain. While the Spanish considered the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande Valley and outlying areas to be Spanish subjects, Navajos were always considered to be a separate Indian nation, with their own territory. The Mexican period began in 1822, and it lasted only a short time, until the occupation of Nuevo Mexico in 1846, and its surrender to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. Likewise, conflicts
existed between the Republic of Mexico and the Navajo Nation, marked by raiding, slave-trading (particularly Mexican seizures of Navajo women and children captives), and periods of war. Mexico concluded six treaties with Navajos during that 24-year period. When the English-speaking Bilagaanaa (Navajo for Anglos) arrived, they inherited the problem of relationships with Navajos, and concluded six additional treaties between 1846 (the Treaty of Bear Springs) and 1868.

Navajo culture and its economies evolved as the newcomers influenced Navajo life. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Navajos had a hunter-gatherer economy and added the cultivation of corn, squash, and other types of crops to that economy. The Spanish transplanted transhumant sheep and goat grazing from their home country. The Navajo Nation is perfectly suited to that kind of economy, because it is arid, and has plateaus, steppes and mountains. Transhumant grazing is the practice of taking sheep, goats and livestock to the high ground of the mountains and plateaus during the warm months for grazing, and return to valleys during the winter. Navajos acquired sheep, goats, horses and cattle from the Spanish and a new Navajo grazing economy thrived. The Pueblos of New Mexico revolted in 1680 and expelled the Spanish for a period of twelve years. When the Spanish re-entered New Mexico in 1692, they made a series of punitive expeditions against the Pueblos. Many fled and joined the Navajos, adding a new kind of cultural exchange that transformed Navajo culture.

A period called the Navajo Wars began just as the United States was torn by its great Civil War. The Spanish and Mexicans were unsuccessful in their wars and punitive expeditions against Navajos, because when a group of Navajos was attacked, they scattered in all directions and the expeditionary forces were unable to pursue them. The New Mexico Territory (today’s New Mexico and Arizona) was an important strategic asset to the North because the South wanted it for the
expansion of slavery and the resources of California, further to the west. When the United States Army began its punitive expeditions into the Navajo Nation, the tactic was to wage war in both summer and winter, and to hunt down Navajos wherever they could be found. The policy this time was not to simply pacify Navajos—a “reservation” for Navajos and Apaches was established at a place called Bosque Redondo on the Pecos River in eastern New Mexico. There, on a patch of alkali-laden river bottom, surrounded by dry land, the Army sought to solve the “Navajo problem” the residents of New Mexico Territory complained of by making Navajos prisoners approximately 400 miles distant from their homeland. Bosque Redondo, guarded by Fort Sumner, was an early example of a concentration and re-education camp. In 1865, a board of Army officers met to plan a new social organization for Navajos, in a code of law. The officers assumed (wrongly) that Navajos had a patriarchal form of leadership, with male leaders, and a village lifestyle. Accordingly, the Army devised a plan where eleven (Navajo) villages would lie within a large irrigation ditch at Bosque Redondo, and one (Apache) village would be outside the ditch. There was to be a “chief” for each village and a subchief for every one hundred persons. The chiefs were responsible for daily activities, the supervision of planting and work, and petty offenses. They were to report to the Fort commander each evening. The commanding officer would preside over trials for more serious offenses, with the chiefs serving as a jury. Thus, the Army introduced the “strong man” form of law and order to Navajos during their captivity.

Following a series of crop failures, starvation and various disasters, the Army realized that the concentration camp experiment on Navajos was a failure. While the New Mexico press clamored for the removal of Navajos prior to and during the Navajo Wars, it now criticized the Army for its cruelty. The cost of feeding the Navajo captives was prohibitive. In May of 1868, a
national treaty commission sent General William T. Sherman and Colonel Samuel F. Tappan to Fort Sumner to conclude a treaty with Navajos. It was a document which was essentially negotiated at gunpoint, but the treaty minutes show that the lead Navajo negotiator, Barboncito, bargained with Sherman in a capable way. There are two forms of the treaty which was signed on June 1, 1868—the version written in English and signed with the mark of twelve Navajo leaders who were chosen, and the version in Navajo oral tradition. The fact that there were two understandings of the Treaty—the document as written and an oral history of what was said during treaty negotiations—has a lot to do with contemporary conflicts.

On the first day of treaty negotiations, General Sherman spoke to all the Navajos—perhaps 8,500 of them, gathered behind the fort hospital. At the end of the day, he said that it could not negotiate with all the Navajos at once, and he asked them to return the next day with “ten men.” The following morning, Sherman asked if the Navajos had chosen their negotiators, and ten men stepped forward. The general then asked that one man be selected as the chief spokesperson. Barboncito stepped forward. Sherman then told the Navajos that Barboncito was to be their chief and that the remaining men (eleven in all at the end of the third day) would be his council. The general told the assembly that when they returned to their own land, Barboncito would be responsible for their good order. He said that if Barboncito could not take care of problems, his council would help him. If neither Barboncito nor his council could act, the Army would be back. Navajos remembered that, because the experience at Bosque Redondo was one of the most traumatic in their history.

While the treaty, as written, provided for a small reservation (in comparison with other treaty reservations), and it provided that no Navajo who lived outside the reservation could claim benefits under the treaty, there was an oral Navajo understanding which was separate and distinct from the
treaty provisions. The Army threatened Navajos with removal to the Indian Territory in Oklahoma, and Barboncito pleaded for his people to return to their homeland. At end, Sherman said, “Go home,” and that is what Navajos did—many returned to areas outside their reservation, and particularly to an area of northwest New Mexico called the “Checkerboard Area” today. It gets that name from checkerboarding in the form of alternate patches of fee, federal, state, school, and Indian allotment lands. It is a jurisdictional nightmare for federal, Navajo Nation and state officials who are attempting to deal with gang problems.

When Navajos returned to their homeland, they slowly rebuilt their flocks and resumed their prior pastoral economy. One of the motivations for the United States treaties with the Navajo Nation was to assure the building of a southern transcontinental railroad to link the east and California, and the Santa Fe Railroad slowly made its way across aboriginal Navajo land. With the arrival of the railroad came Indian traders who established trading posts immediately outside the original reservation, and they began a new kind of pastoral economy. The traders sold Navajos staples they had become accustomed to at Bosque Redondo (coffee, flour, and cotton cloth), and Navajos sold or traded wool, mutton, and other raw material. The trading post system, looking to tourism, prompted popular Navajo crafts which were sold to traders, including beautiful silverwork (a great deal of which was based on Spanish designs and influenced in turn by Moorish art) and woven rugs and blankets. Navajos grew prosperous during this period, and they largely lived independently of the American society around them. The area was settled by non-Indians, following the railroad, who engaged in mining, and brought the Texas cattle culture into New Mexico. Navajos also borrowed the cattle culture, and the tradition of Navajo cowboys is a strong element of Navajo culture today.

There have been several watershed events in Navajo history—wars with Spain and Mexico,
the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680 and its aftermath, the Navajo Wars, the Treaty of 1868, and the return home. Immediately prior to the Depression, gas and oil were discovered near Shiprock, New Mexico, and the United States formed a Navajo Nation council as a body to sign drilling and extraction leases. The influx of new money created tension between “traditionalist” and “modernist” factions of Navajos. When the Roosevelt administration entered office, it had to deal with the Depression and with droughts around the United States. One of the worst was in the Southwest, and the administration thought that overgrazing Navajo livestock would create dust storms which would clog new dams on the Colorado River. Indian Affairs Commissioner John Collier began an aggressive program of livestock reduction among Navajos, where he brutally had Navajo livestock sold or destroyed. There were gender issues in the program—men were told to get rid of their favorite horses, and the reduction targeted goats, a favorite animal of women. Immediately prior to and during World War Two, the livestock reduction program effectively destroyed the Navajo grazing economy.

Another watershed period was World War Two. In that period of total war, Navajos joined military service in large numbers, men left to replace civilians who joined the service in work such as construction and maintenance of the Santa Fe Railroad, and many women entered civilian war service. When they returned, they had a taste of the life outside, and imported American lifestyles. One of the imports was increased alcohol use. Alcohol had already entered the Navajo Nation earlier when there was an American lifestyle of drinking to excess. Returning Navajos also brought demands for modern forms of government.

American Indian policy fluctuates over periods of time, and immediately prior to the end of World War Two, Congress began implementing the “Termination Policy.” With the enactment of
legislation in 1953 to subject Indian reservations to state jurisdiction, Navajos feared a takeover. When a bill was introduced in the Arizona Legislature to subject the Navajo Nation to Arizona’s civil and criminal jurisdiction, the Navajo Tribal Council reacted. It began enacting its own law codes and created its own court system in 1959. The termination policy, coupled with the experiences of Navajos who experienced work and life in the outside world, helped the Navajo Nation enter the modern period. Roads across the Navajo Nation, radio, television, and other exposure to American society also impacted and changed Navajo society.

There have been two modern federal legislative enactments which have had a great impact upon the legal culture of the Navajo Nation. The first was the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Among other things, it permits Indian nations to establish a constitution and bylaw form of government. Navajos rejected a constitution under the Act in a close vote, rejecting one largely because of the livestock reduction program. The Act also recognizes the “existing” powers of Indian tribes, including the authority to enact legislation for public health and welfare, public safety, and judicial systems. The second important law was the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. It permits Indian nation governments to assume federal functions for the delivery of basic governmental services in contracts and grants. The development of Navajo Nation government under the Indian Reorganization Act, and the assumption of federal functions under the Indian Self-Determination Act, prompted the growth of Navajo Nation government.

In turn, that growth made new changes in Navajo society. It introduced the wage economy, which impacted traditional Navajo living patterns. The growth of regional governmental service centers, the “agency towns,” also disrupted traditional life. Traditionally, Navajos are matrilineal

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3 The Navajo Nation has five agencies, with Shiprock and Crownpoint in New Mexico, and Fort Defiance, Chinle and
and live matrilocally. That means that they primarily trace relationships through their mothers, and tend to live in the mother’s land area.

Given the destruction of the rural grazing economy, rapid population growth, a transition to living in a nuclear family rather than an extended one, a wage economy in the midst of poverty, the growth of agency towns, and problems of “urbanization” (in a large rural area), the Navajo Nation now faces social problems which are associated with destructive federal Indian policies, population growth and the consolidation of people in settled areas. While many who study Navajo life are attempting to evaluate the influences and effects of these dynamics, we do know that there has been an abrupt change in the social disruption and crime levels in recent years. The impact of the imported alcohol culture from a time when American drinking habits were excessive is harsh, and most Navajo Nation crime is alcohol-related. While earlier studies of Navajo crime in the mid-1970s concluded that Navajo Nation crime rates were generally lower than general American ones, Navajo Nation crime rates are now quite high. Navajo Nation court statistics show a change in criminal activity from petty crimes (largely offenses against the public order, such as public intoxication and disorderly conduct) to serious offenses. Most are in-family crimes, and most are coupled with alcohol abuse. As the Navajo Nation’s youth cohorts have grown in size, with large numbers of children who are of gang age and soon to reach gang age, the problem of gangs has risen and grown rapidly.

Tuba City in Arizona. There are also other communities which are the center of governmental services.
IV. THE RISE OF GANGS IN THE NAVAJO NATION

Before addressing the problem of the rise of gangs and gang activity in the Navajo Nation, it is important to define the term. There can be “gangs” in several different senses. Some (e.g. Henderson 1997) point to “gangs” in the sense of Navajo war parties and young men raiding during the Spanish, Mexican and early American phases of Navajo history. Those are collective activities of a very different kind (and it should be pointed out that Mexicans and other Indian tribes were also raiders during those periods). There are “gangs” in the sense of “party gangs,” or people who engage in rival group activities in boarding schools or modern community schools. We are talking here about a “gang” in the sense of the Navajo Nation Police definition in testimony to a joint oversight committee hearing on “Increasing Gang Activity in Indian Communities,” held on September 17, 1997. “A ‘gang,’ according to the Navajo Nation Police, is ‘an ongoing formal or informal association of persons whose members or associates individually or collectively engage in the commission, attempted commission, facilitation or solicitation of any felony act or who has at least one individual who is a criminal street gang member.” This is not simply the collective activity of young people in the urbanized agency towns, but an association of individuals to commit serious crimes as a group, with at least one person who commits “street crimes.” The Navajo Nation testimony indicated that it “sees the usual symptoms of gang activity: tagging, drive-by shootings, gang fights, vandalism, and burning buildings in retaliation. There is some evidence of growing vigilante activity as a popular response to government inaction.” At that time, the Navajo Nation Police reported there were at least 75 active gang “sets” or groups in the Navajo Nation, but the numbers of individuals who were active gang members or associates could not be assessed. The testimony highlighted the problem in terms of age cohorts: the 1997 cohort of Navajo males between
the ages of 21 through 29 years (11,643) was 7% of the total Navajo population. There were 7,340 male Navajos between age 14 and 17, or 4.4% of the population. Those are the ages of most gang members.

On April 16, 1998, Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona, the Chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Terrorism and Technology, noted the Navajo Nation’s report of 75 active gangs, with a ratio of officers to citizens of .9 per thousand, as compared to a national level of 2.9 officers per thousand in rural, non-Indian communities. He said that two Navajo Nation police officers were killed in the line of duty while on patrol since 1996, and that 300 Navajo officers are responsible to patrol 17.5 million acres of land, on bad or impassible roads. On April 23, 1987, Steven R. Wiley, the Chief of the Violent Crimes and Major Offenders Section of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, gave a report on “Violent Street Gangs in America” to the Senate Judiciary Committee. It reported on gangs nationally, but he said this about gangs in Indian Country:

Violent street gangs have also become a significant problem in Indian Country. On the Navajo Reservation in Arizona alone there are approximately 55 street gangs, many of which have some affiliation with gangs in California, Phoenix, Albuquerque, and Chicago. These gangs have been responsible for a dramatic increase in violent crimes in the Navajo Nation. The Salt-River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community near Scottsdale, Arizona experienced a significant increase in murders and drive-by shootings between 1993 and 1994. Current trends indicate that Indian gangs are mirroring the gang activity occurring in the communities surrounding Indian Country. Some Indian gang members are claiming allegiance with the larger nationally known gang “nations,” such as Folks.

The Navajo Nation crime picture has changed sharply in recent years, in a transition from petty crime associated with alcohol and public disorder, to violent alcohol-related crime. At the same time, associations of youths to engage in felony-level crime and property crimes (i.e. tagging and vandalism) have grown. Mr. Wiley mentions associations of Navajo gangs with urban areas, and that implicates another important feature of modern Navajo society—a high degree of mobility.
Navajos left the Navajo Nation to engage in war and the war economy during World War Two, the Korean War, and the Viet Nam War. They were also part of a failed termination era Bureau of Indian Affairs policy to relocate Navajos for employment and job training. Navajos were sent in large numbers to urban areas, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Phoenix, or Albuquerque, and poverty and unemployment have forced Navajos to live in the region’s metropolitan areas or the “border towns” surrounding the Navajo Nation. There, young people are influenced by the associations they make, including gang associations. Given strong cultural ties to home, relatives, and the Navajo Four Sacred Mountains, there is a great deal of mobility. As Navajos go to the cities for jobs, they return on weekends or for ceremonies, bringing their children with them. Navajo Nation police have noticed that if a young Navajo gets into trouble in an urban area, his family may send him to live with relatives in the Navajo Nation. There are popular Navajo Nation stories about youths from Chicago or elsewhere importing a given gang name to the Navajo Nation.

All of these factors—urbanization in agency towns; growing youth cohorts; widespread poverty and unemployment; and the mobility of the Navajo population—result in the phenomenon of emerging associations of individuals to engage in criminal activity collectively, or whose members engage in such activity. The rise of gangs in the Navajo Nation (in the sense of the definition by the Navajo Nation Police) is recent, rapid, and shocking. For that reason, the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch applied for a U.S. Justice Department grant to “find and know the gang nayee.”
V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study and report are unique. It is the product of a team of Navajo and non-Navajo justice personnel, Navajo traditionalists, academic criminal and juvenile justice specialists, and even young members who have been affiliated with gangs. It uses Navajo philosophical concepts and builds upon an ethnographic approach to research.

The Navajo concept is that of nayee. Its literal translation is “monster.” It has a deeper meaning, however, and it is “things that get in the way of living your life.” That can include a wide range of human psychological ailments and impediments, including depression, marital strife, avoidance and withdrawal behaviors (e.g. alcohol dependence, homelessness, dropping out), and extropunitive behaviors (e.g. family violence). We can also think of gang activities that are criminal as being a monster—youths who commit acts of vandalism, engage in organized gang fights (often at places such as convenience stores, trading posts, drive-in restaurants, or behind chain grocery stores), commit arson or destroy property. We are talking about things that go beyond relatively harmless youth activities.

What do you do about a “monster” in Navajo thinking? Drawing from Navajo tradition, the hunter of a monster will first try to figure out what he is up against. As Chief Justice Robert Yazzie has said, “You think out carefully and proceed cautiously.” In traditional Navajo jurisprudence, you do not punish the actor, as with punishing a gang member simply because that person is one—you punish the action. To find out what kind of actions or activities we are dealing with when looking at gang activity, it is necessary to find out who the Navajo gang members are, what they think, and what they do.

That is not an easy task. Given popular fears about gangs and rising gang activity in the
Navajo Nation, gang members are leery. Navajos are tired of being studied by non-Navajo researchers, and they are suspicious of outsiders. They are targeted or shunned in schools and other places because of their markings of “gang” affiliation (colors, tattoos, hairstyle, ways of talking, etc.). They set themselves apart from others and they are set apart. It is not easy to talk with them, and their activities are a mystery to those who do not belong.

The research team spent a great deal of time discussing the precise methodology to be used for this study. Some of the questions the team blocked out were:

- What are the distinctive features of Navajo gangs?
- How are they organized?
- What attracts their members?
- How are they recruited and how do they join?
- How is membership maintained?
- What are the membership requirements?
- What is the nature and extent of gang-related activities, including the kinds of offenses that are committed and their frequency, and activities in the associated area of hooliganism?\(^4\)
- To what extent may an old Navajo warrior code prompt the character of Navajo gangs, and to what extent can traditional Navajo warrior values be used to make positive use of youth organization?

Those questions formed the basis for the research design. The action plan in the design of the study

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\(^4\) “Hooliganism” is a category of petty crime which is most often associated with drinking and with the lifestyles of young males. It includes disorderly conduct, fighting, vandalism, drinking and driving, road rage, reckless driving and associated behaviors.
was to develop strategies for answering the questions. The team agreed that they had to be sensitive to the Navajo culture by involving grassroots people in the initiative and using indigenous knowledge, which is Navajo cultural assumptions and expectations.

In fine-tuning an ethnological approach to the study, the team used two methodologies, and designed both quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures. The team developed three separate, yet overlapping, data sets: (1) a survey of gang members using a structured interview format; (2) a survey of stakeholders\(^5\) using structured interviews, and (3) general community member surveys. A fourth aspect to the study was a survey of off-reservation law enforcement personnel to survey the cross-jurisdictional aspect of the problem and the impacts of population mobility. A fifth source of information was ethnographic observations based upon team interactions with everyone who was contacted for the study. Principal researchers, Troy Armstrong and Barbara Mendenhall, interviewed off-reservation police officers and some youths who were thought to be gang-involved or who were gang members.

The gang member (or suspected gang member) instrument had 70 separate questions which were designed to get brief answers or stimulate commentary. The questions clustered around the topics of:

- Age, gender, race, language and kinship;
- Gang history and structure;
- Gang-specific activities (e.g. drug use, drug trade, alcohol consumption, violence, weapons, and legal or illegal activities);

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\(^5\) The team agreed that “stakeholders” in the problem of gangs was an important idea. That is, in Navajo thinking, an offender’s activities affect his or her family, clan, and community. In this sense, stakeholders include law enforcement officials, social service agencies, community leaders and others affected by gang activity or who see it.
• Family structure and dynamics;
• School attendance and problems in school;
• Opinions of contacts with law enforcement personnel and the Navajo Nation courts;
• Employment;
• Mobility;
• Awareness of and involvement in traditional Navajo life; and
• Involvement in popular culture.

The stakeholder instruments had fourteen open-ended questions, focusing upon the themes of the nature of each agency’s involvement with gangs and gang issues, and its proposed solutions to the gang problem. A total of 192 stakeholders were interviewed across the Navajo Nation, in eleven communities or areas, Arizona metropolitan areas, and border towns in New Mexico surrounding the Navajo Nation. The stakeholders were from twenty-two different kinds of agencies or constituencies, including private citizens and businesspeople.

While fifteen separate communities (largely agency towns) were initially identified as likely sites for data collection, time and financial and personnel constraints limited surveys to three regions:

• Fort Defiance, Window Rock and St. Michaels, which are communities in the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation which are associated by proximity to the New Mexico border town of Gallup;

• Shiprock, Ojo Amarillo, and Hogback, in the northwest New Mexico portion of the Navajo Nation, which are linked to the border towns of Farmington, Bloomfield and Kirtland, New Mexico; and

• The isolated communities of Kayenta, Chinle, and Tuba City, in the interior of the Navajo Nation, and the community of Canoncito (now To’hajiilee), near Albuquerque, New Mexico.
Given the problem of gang member isolation and potential criminal activity, in addition to the problem of Navajos not wanting to respond to non-Navajos, the surveys were conducted by two young Navajo men, and a young Navajo woman. The two men had prior gang connections, and the lead interviewer was chosen for his reputation of forthrightness and integrity when he was an active gang member. He knew the rules of the “gangsta” world, and that gave him access and credibility. Another interviewer was an Anglo doctoral student, who conducted interviews with stakeholders, (and with some gang members.

The field team used “snowball” or “chain referral” sampling methods. That is done by initiating contacts with individual gang members known to the data collector and then “snowballing” out from that small circle to a wider network. Snowballing has its limitations, in terms of achieving a true random sample of the target population, but this study was necessarily limited by the secretive and criminal nature of gang activity.
VI. GENERAL GANG LITERATURE AND THE EMERGING LITERATURE ON GANGS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Prior to an analysis of the findings of the surveys, it is important to first establish the general context for gangs in the Navajo Nation in a survey of the general literature on gangs in the United States and the growing literature on the specific problem of gangs in Indian Country.

The general literature on youth gangs in America begins in the early 1920s, and it addresses these issues:

- The definition of a “youth gang;”
- Ethnic and racial identity;
- Why youths join gangs;
- Which youths are at risk to join a gang; and
- Gang intervention and prevention strategies.

Definition of “Gang”

Numerous definitions of the term “youth gang” have been offered and criticized in an attempt to reach a common understanding of the phenomenon. There are difficulties in agreeing to a broadly-defined term definition and in identifying the features to be used to reach a definition. Klein (1995) stressed the street component more than age, because youth gangs have expanded to include members in their mid- to late-20s and even into their thirties and forties.6 One aspect of a possible definition is to describe what gang members do, including spending most of their time hanging out, frequently in public places, smoking tobacco or marijuana, drinking (mostly beer), roughhousing,

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6 This report uses the terms “street gang” and “youth gang” interchangeably, because several socioeconomic factors have caused Navajo gangs to include members in their twenties and older. The “street” term may seem ironic in the rural Navajo Nation setting, but the agency towns have their “streets,” and that word is a metaphor for gang life and folk ways.
playing ball, “messing around” with girls, or sauntering around in an aggressive way. “Cruising” is
the automotive way of hanging out, with members engaged in driving around with no particular
purpose or goal.

Another key characteristic for a definition of a youth or street gang is “its involvement,
attitudinal and/or behavioral, in delinquency and crime” (Klein: 1995: 23). Much research
concludes that gang involvement leads to increased rates of criminal activity by participating youth
(Howell 1998). While crime does not appear to be the most common gang activity, or even the
primary motivation for joining a gang, communities perceive youth gangs as a significant problem
because of criminal activity by gang members. Curry and Spergel (1992) surveyed Chicago, Illinois
African-American and Latino male youth in selected middle schools and found that 14% of them
showed some level of involvement in gangs, but no involvement in delinquency. Klein (1995) noted
the importance of self-recognition as a named gang with criminal orientation and a propensity for
violence in defining whether a given group should be considered to be a gang. One principal
indicator of a gang problem is the presence of graffiti on walls, fences and other large standing
objects, although graffiti may only indicate the presence of writer or tagger crews and not street
gangs. When graffiti is gang-related, its visual symbols mark claimed gang territory, list gang
members, show the colors and images with which the gang identifies, and challenge rival gangs and
law enforcement personnel. Graffiti plays a role in group cohesion as symbols of membership.
While not all youth gangs use graffiti, colors, or gang symbols, most of the gangs identified in this

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7 This is an issue in the Navajo Nation. The presence of graffiti may distort the true nature of a group’s activities, as
with the situation where a tagging crew was identified by local police as a “hardcore” gang and a major threat to the community,
solely for the activity of making graffiti.

8 While Navajo gang members claim territory in much the same way, the implications of territory were not clear.
study used graffiti, gang symbols, colors and hand signs to distinguish themselves from other gangs.

There have been other lines of inquiry for definitions; some of these have been more limiting than enlightening. One approach has been to use gang definitions developed by community law enforcement agencies (Huff 1990; Kent 1991; Sanders 1994). This approach is limited because law enforcement and government have a vested and direct interest in defining what is or is not a gang or gang activity. In addition, saw enforcement interest in defining youth gangs can vary from community to community and can change over time in the same community (See Huff 1990). Another method of defining gangs has been an analysis of the types of gangs, using developmental schemes for expected steps in gang evolution (Taylor 1990), but not all gangs pass through the same stages. However, models that include an analysis of a particular gang’s transformation over time, especially in newly-formed gangs, are useful to understand shifts in gang member behavior and values.

Sanders (1994) reviewed the various definitions of gangs in the literature in the context of exploring numerous gangs in San Diego, where there were both emergent and established gangs. Several ethic groups were represented in the gangs he researched. Sanders (1994) definition can be adapted for Navajo Nation gangs. A “gang” would be:

- A group of youths and younger adults who organize; and who
- Show a willingness to use deadly violence (and thus, deadly weapons) to claim and defend territory; and who
- Attack rival gangs,
- Extort or rob money; or
- Engage in other criminal behavior as an activity associated with the group (e.g. vandalism, property destruction, theft, etc.); and
• Is recognized by itself (gang as gang) and by its immediate community (where the members live and act) as a distinct group which is dangerous;
• Organize by age and gender; and
• Have a leadership which is informal and which changes over time.

There are other features of gangs which may not define them, but which are a part of gang character. Spergel and his colleagues (cited in de la Rosa and Soriano 1992) estimate that more than two-thirds of gang members are ethnic minorities, and the majority are African-American and Latino. Another common attribute is access to and the willingness to use firearms (Conly 1993). Howell (1998) reviewed the literature on the extent to which gang members use firearms, finding that:

• Most violent gang members illegally own or possess a firearm.
• The lethality of assaults with firearms appears to have steadily increased due to the availability and use of deadlier weapons.
• Gang members arm themselves because they believe their rivals have guns.
• The proliferation of guns and shootings by gang members escalates violence by creating a demand for more sophisticated firearms among rival gangs so none will be caught at a disadvantage.

This study found that a substantial number of respondents indicated that members of their gangs carry guns. Therefore, that can be considered as an element of gang activity in the Navajo Nation, and law enforcement will have to pay serious attention to Howell’s findings about the escalation of more lethal weapons in larger numbers, and an escalation of inter-gang violence,

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9 We should take care to avoid racial stereotyping and possible resulting selective arrests and prosecution (racial profiling). There may be distinct socio-economic reasons for those statistics, and group dynamics which lead to them (Ed.).
should Navajo Nation gangs repeat the trends he found.

Gangs and Ethnic or Racial Identity

Over the past several years, studies of youth gangs based upon ethnic and racial identity have begun to appear. Efforts to compare ethnic gangs on the basis of cross-cultural differences have rarely been attempted, and those studies have been recent. This section will examine South East Asian-American, African-American, and Latino/Chicano/Mexican-American youth gangs in terms of their distinctive features. The purpose of this review is to determine cultural influences on shaping the nature and activities of these kinds of youth gangs. Understanding the dynamics of ethnicity and culture in gang formation has important implications for developing culturally-relevant strategies for intervention and the prevention of illegal youth gang activity. Ethnic dynamics in gang formation and culturally-relevant responses are important factors for assessing the nature of Navajo youth gangs and appropriate interventions.

Youth gangs have been studied by sociologists, anthropologists and criminologists since the

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10 The terms “Latino,” “Chicano,” and Mexican-American are used interchangeably here. “Latino” may be used to refer to street gangs in the eastern or midwestern United States, with members who are primarily Dominicans (from Santo Domingo) or Puerto Ricans. “Chicano” and “Hispanic” (as opposed to African-American or Asian-American) refers to gangs of the Southwestern United States. These distinctive terms are indicative of the self-identity of the individuals who make up these gangs.
early 1920s. Those scientists have attempted to understand the essential characteristics of youth gangs, their primary activities, why youths join gangs, the profile of youths who are at-risk for gang membership, and the most effective strategies to intervene in gang activity or prevent it.11

More recent research continues to explore these issues, but it has tended to add an overlay of ethnic-focused, ethnographic, contextual, and comparative inquiry. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention recently published a brief overview of youth gangs which includes a profile of ethnic gangs based upon the published literature on them (Howell 1998). He states that African-American gangs in large cities tend to replace now nonexistent social networks that linked youth with legitimate work opportunities. Therefore, African-American gang members may be more involved in the entrepreneurial activity of drug trafficking, as a gang activity or as individuals. African-American gangs use violence in spontaneous, unplanned actions to protect their turf from rival gangs. Latino gangs are usually age-based cohorts in a neighborhood territory, or “barrio,” that the gang feels compelled to violently defend against the incursion of other Latino gangs or intruders. Latino gangs provide a family-like environment for youth who feel isolated and marginalized from

11 One of the key issues about “what gangs do” is the use or sale of drugs. The literature on those issues is extensive and contradictory. This section does not attempt to give a comprehensive review. In reviewing gang research, Howell (1994) notes that youth gangs are generally not involved in drug sales, except as an individual enterprise, which argues against an association of turf conflicts and drug sales for most gangs. Decker and van Winkle (1994) conclude from their survey of research on gang drug sales that some highly-organized gangs do deal in drugs as a gang activity, but most youth gangs are too disorganized to effectively do that as a group enterprise. Other gang researchers have made similar findings, (e.g. Decker and van Winkle 1996; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Fagan 1989; Klein 1995; Klein, Maxson and Cunningham 1991; Maxson 1995). Decker and van Winkle studied African-American street gang members in ages between the ages of 13 and 29 in St. Louis and found that most had sold (but not used) crack cocaine. The entrepreneurial drug activity was related to, but not controlled by, gang membership.
both the traditional Latino culture and mainstream American culture. That form of isolation and marginalization is called “choloization.” It is a key cultural component of Latino gangs and it involves a complex of style, behavior, and attitude which is distinctive. Southeast Asian gangs are more involved in property crimes, and tend to not be identified with a specific geographic territory. They also provide a surrogate family for members. In contrast to African-American and Latino gangs, many Southeast Asian gangs do not use colors, hand signs, graffiti symbols, or give other visual clues to their gang involvement. A lack of parental control and alienation from their traditional culture have been cited as major factors for the activities of Southeast Asian gang members and members of recent immigrant gangs (Hunt, Joe and Waldorf 1995; Lewis 1991; Vigil and Yun 1990).

This review of ethnic youth gangs shows that there are varying cultural influences on youth that shape the nature and activities of the varying gangs. One overarching influence is the marginalization of youths who join gangs. Whether they are immigrants or members of an established minority, they are marginal to mainstream American society and alienated from legitimate avenues of experiencing adolescence and young adulthood. The marginalization issue will be addressed in this survey of Navajo Nation gangs. Another problem with marginalization is the difficulties it causes for success in school and employment. Although some ethnic youth gang members do well in school, the majority have serious problems with academic achievement, and even those who do well are likely to feel marginalized in the school community. Marginality within the family is also an issue. Conflicts between traditional ethnic cultural values and newly-absorbed “American” values may be a factor in the conduct of first and second generation ethnic gangs. Although successful interventions might include programs to support parents as authority figures in
their children’s lives, they will only work with parents who are able to find the time to participate, and who are not themselves having problems with substance abuse, physical or sexual abuse, or illegal activity. Unfortunately, the families of ethnic gang members do experience these kinds of problems, or they work long hours to establish themselves and survive. Although there are distinct expressions of gang behavior which may be shaped by varying cultural influences, and interventions must take them into account, the underlying reasons for youth participation in gangs may be universal.

**Why Youths Join Gangs**

The reasons underlying the emergence of gangs in particular settings and why youths are attracted to being involved with gangs are major items of research. Theories include examinations of causality based upon theories of social disorganization, illegal adaptation from a lack of access to legitimate opportunities, social innovation from being at the bottom of a system of social stratification, and competition for scarce resources (Porche-Burke and Fulton 1992; Sanders 1994). Sullivan (1989) and Klein (1995) suggest that explanations from each of these approaches are not contradictory, and they can explain gang emergence and the attraction of gangs better when the theories are integrated into a multi-strained causal framework.

Sullivan (1989), in making an ethnographically-based comparison of youth crime involving African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and whites in Brooklyn, New York, found that the terms used by youths to describe their criminal activities were “getting paid,” and “getting over,” and they indicate that economic motivation and pride in “beating the system” were the motivations for illegal activities. Neighborhood-specific legal economic activities for youth in each neighborhood correlated with the range of criminal behavior and the length of time those activities were pursued to
earn money. In neighborhoods with a higher level of economic opportunity, working class white and African-American youth were less likely to commit crimes and had shorter periods of time in which they engaged in crime for economic gain. Vietnamese youth gang members said they were “going to work” when the went out to commit a robbery (Lewis 1995b). The absence of a legitimate means to economic success drives youths into illegal behaviors to earn money, and that is a factor in attempting to understand the rise and the activities of Navajo Nation gangs. Gang activities appeared to be defined in terms of work being equated with illegal access to financial resources. That is, these gang members simply view illegal economic activity as a form of work.

Sanders (1994), in a longitudinal analysis of ethnic gangs in San Diego, argued that values such as loyalty, bravery, honesty, and integrity are situationally grounded in the context of gang social structure. He says that these values need to be incorporated into an understanding of their meaning for gang participants. He believes that gang violence may be a framework for adolescent youth to establish identities to develop and demonstrate valued attributes.

The possibility of a warrior role or identity for Navajo youths parallels Sanders’ findings (Nielsen, Zion and Hailer 1998). The Navajo stakeholders who were interviewed for this study spoke of the warrior persona, but gang members did not identify with that image when interviewed. That may be an aspect of cultural distancing by a younger generation that is experiencing language and culture loss. However, image and self-identity are important issues to Navajo youth, and the existence of those factors and their use to address Navajo youth will be explored further.

Jankowski (cited in Short 1991) concluded that violence is the coin of gang life and economy at the group and individual level. He found that the willingness of gang members to back each other up with violence earns individual and gang recognition in the world of gang interaction. However,
“backing each other up” also includes other kinds of assistance to others, including emotional and financial support.

Several researchers have found a “fun factor” in gang activity (Horowitz 1990; Howell 1998; Lewis 1995a; Magagnini 1993; Sanders 1994; and Sullivan 1989). The sensual dynamics and enjoyment of taking drugs, drinking, partying, and engaging in dangerous and illicit risk-taking activities can be compelling motivators and attractions for youth. While most gang activity consists of hanging out and not doing very much, it frequently involves the excitement of discussing anticipated gang activities, reliving past events and speculating on rumored events with a lot of emotional involvement (Klein 1995). Boredom can also play a role in those activities.

Another frequently-mentioned motivator is the attraction of a gang as a surrogate family which offers a refuge where youths receive “affection, understanding, recognition, loyalty, and emotional and physical protection” (Morales 1992: 107). However, Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) dispute the contention that gangs are a surrogate family. They gathered data in Denver, Colorado which suggested to them that gang membership is a short-term endeavor for most youths. Very few remained in a gang for more than a year, and many said they did not want to be in a gang. Rothenburg and Mishan (in Lewis 1995a) reported that many Vietnamese youth gang members were not actively involved and hung around the gang “residence” only briefly. Perhaps a gang is a “surrogate family” for core members, but it is a peer support system for members who are marginal. It is important for youths to receive group interpersonal gratification and affection, so a gang can be a social framework where youths can exchange valued care and support with peers.

Gang formation as being facilitated through the alliance of non-gang youths in the context of violent confrontation shows how and why youths may get involved in a gang as a group (Sanders
When challenged by the question, “Where are you from?” Mexican-American youth from the Del Sol neighborhood in San Diego decided that rather than respond, “I’m not from anywhere,” to avoid conflict, but which entails losing face, they answered, “Del Sol, y que?” Meaning, “I’m from Del Sol, and what are you going to do about it?” thereby starting a new gang. That kind of gang formation, based upon identity with a neighborhood and proud defiance based on residence, was indicated by some of this study’s respondents. Sanders (1994) believes that the emergence of Southeast Asian gangs in San Diego was related to Southeast Asian youths being discriminated against and bullied by African-American and Mexican-American gangs in the neighborhoods where all three groups lived. Gang behavior to them can be explained as collectively organizing against group discrimination and threats (Magagnini 1993).

Public perceptions of gangs can fuel that kind of reaction. McCorkle and Miethe (1998) found that the nature, frequency, and severity of a particular condition or issue can be grossly exaggerated to justify further economic or political action or to enhance the legitimacy of various affected organizations. The result is what they call “moral panic,” where public fears and state interventions greatly exceed the actual threat. Using public records, media accounts, and official crime data, they examined the response to gangs in Las Vegas to compare threat with response. This is an important consideration, because overreaction and the misuse of suppression tactics to deal with gangs can create a “moral panic,” and it can have the opposite of the desired effect when dealing with gangs. More specifically, overreaction and the identification of otherwise innocent Navajo youths as violent gang members can fuel the attraction of gangs for youths who are discriminated against as perceived gang members.

There are similar dynamics for the transformation of groups that are engaged in legal
activities, such as break-dancing or the fad of the day, or non-violent illegal activities, such as tagging (non-gang graffiti vandalism), into violent gangs. Rivalries among groups during break-dance competitions or among tagging crews streets has sometimes escalated into gang-like behavior, including the use of deadly violence against rivals and involvement in illegal activities such as armed robbery (Klein 1995). Some of the party and tagging crews in the Navajo Nation reported rivalries with other crews and established gangs, and resulting tensions could push those less violent groups into violent criminal activity. This study identified seven crews, three of which were “party crews,” and three were “tagger crews.” They were less criminally active than the gangs that were identified. Numerous crew members reported smoking marijuana and several reported that crew members sold drugs, carried firearms, or both. Members of a group in Tuba City reported that although they engaged in a variety of criminal activities, they did not want to form a crew or gang, because “things are cool the way they are.” They felt that being labeled as a gang would draw more attention from law enforcement and lead to dangerous gang rivalries. There is a danger of otherwise harmless (i.e. non-violent) crews being pushed into gang status through group rivalry, but at the same time, some Navajo youths are aware of possible official or gang reactions with negative impacts.

The emergence of gangs as a group response has generated distinctive styles of dress, language and music in popular culture. Movies, television, magazines and music influence youths to look like and act like a gang-banger. Distinctive styles are a ready-made symbolic approach which any ethnic group can adopt to form a gang, fit into popular American group culture, and reduce the group’s self-perceived level of marginalization (Martinez 1992). It may be that American youth gangs offer the best example of successful organization for physical and social security (Leonelli
Leonelli says that “For those who are frustrated by conforming to all the competing demands, the gang has become a subculture that syncretizes elements of ethnic heritage with a veneer of urban sophistication. Gangs provide a means through which the tangible pieces of the American Dream can be obtained without assimilation.” Navajo youths may or may not identify with their Navajo culture, but the popular images of gangs in the media give them a means to identify with other youths who have organized themselves to make a statement.

Who is At-Risk to Join a Gang?

Several researchers attempted to develop profiles to identify youths who are particularly at risk for gang involvement (Lewis 1991; Kent 1991; Klein 1995). The profiles incorporate several factors, including ethnicity, language ability, cultural competence, family resources, and academic achievement. Researchers have also examined factors that appear to be associated with high and low levels of gang activity to predict the spread of gangs and develop and implement effective interventions.

Lewis found that male and female students in grades 6 through 12 who speak English as a second language, have been in the United States for more than four years, but who read English at less than third grade levels, and who have been truant three or more times during a school year, are the most at-risk of joining a gang. She establishes a period of four years in the United States as the time to acquire the “unwritten cultural map” (Lewis 1991: 3). She presumes that minority youth who have been in the United States for more than four years have had sufficient time to learn and internalize most American cultural assumptions, including the value of achieving individual financial success. However, because they do not get the skills required for that success, i.e. the fundamentals of reading and writing, they have little hope of achieving it. The reference to an
English reading level of less than third grade is a determination that success is impossible for students with less than a third grade level of reading skills, and truancy is an indication that a student either cannot understand what is happening in class or has lost touch with instruction. She cites other risk factors, including having non-literate parents, being an unaccompanied minor, or living with non-related adults (particularly boys without a father figure), and prior attendance at several schools. Although Navajos are native to the United States, there are aspects of the Navajo situation with regard to obtaining the keys to economic success that may indicate conditions for gang involvement. The complex question of the risk for gang involvement implicates social, economic, and education issues.

Many factors that put youths at risk for gang involvement are linked to problems in a youth’s family. Sullivan (1989) reports that nonattendance of school, which is a matter of poor parental supervision and resulting poor academic achievement, is a predictor of delinquency. Several researchers conclude that sibling or other family member involvement with gangs creates a high risk factor (Conly 1993; Decker and van Winkle 1994; Leonelli 1996; Sanders 1994; Sullivan 1989). A Sacramento, California community member who runs an outreach program for at-risk youth observes that “without their gang, they have nothing to eat, ragged clothes to wear...they live in stinking, rotting places. Kids come from that, what are they going to do? It takes a mighty strong kid to not be a member of a gang” (Trotter 1991: A2).

Klein (1995) developed a list of variables that may predict involvement based upon what has led some youths to join gangs while most in the neighborhood have not. The youths who join gangs show one or more of these characteristics:

- Low self-concept;
• Admitted involvement in violence;
• Defiance of parents;
• Deficits in adult contacts;
• Social disabilities or deficits;
• Deficient school performance, both academic and disciplinary;
• Limited repertoire of skills and interests;
• Poor impulse control;
• Early conduct disorder;
• Early onset of delinquency; and
• Perceptions of barriers to jobs and other opportunities.

(Klein 1995: 80).

There are community factors in addition to individual ones that are associated with the emergence of youth gangs. As they have spread beyond major urban areas where they first emerged, there has been attention to social variables that make it more or less likely street gangs will take hold in new areas, including small towns and rural communities. Wells and Weisheit (1998) examined data from the 1995 National Youth Gang Survey to reach conclusions about gangs in rural areas. They found that there are certain conditions which make some communities have a higher risk for the proliferation of youth gangs. One of them is the proximity of the rural community to a larger metropolitan area with highly-developed and chronic youth gangs.

That is the situation of the Navajo Nation. It is close to Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque and border towns with gang activity (e.g. Gallup). Modern transportation makes it easy for Navajos to come into contact with gang activity in other places, and the mobility of the Navajo population
makes proximity more likely.

A high level of poverty in a rural area is another factor in the development of gangs, in addition to proximity to a metropolitan area. Rural areas where economic development is linked to nearby manufacturing facilities have also experienced increased levels of gang activity, even though they may not be located near a city. Rural areas with farm-based economies which are not located near a metropolitan area had the lowest risk of emerging gang problems. The key for community risk appears to be economic development which is associated with a changing mode of production, i.e. industrialization, as opposed to continued reliance upon a traditional agricultural base. The factor of economic change may be a key to an upsurge of gangs in rural areas, whether the change involves increasing affluence or increasing or persistent poverty.

Many gang researchers identify the growth of an urban underclass as a social factor linked to the proliferation of youth gangs as formulated by William Julius Wilson (Curry and Decker 1998; Hagedorn 1988; Klein 1995). His theory is cited as giving insight into the reason particular communities are more or less at-risk for gang proliferation. Wilson attributes the “likelihood that people will turn to illegal or deviant activities for income” (quoted in Spergel 1995: 149) and the proliferation of other problems, such as gangs, to socially-isolated neighborhoods without legal employment opportunities, poor schools and other social institutions, a lack of conventional role models, and circumscribed cultural learning from mainstream social networks. The underclass theory is a point of reference to explain the increasing age of contemporary gang members, many of whom are not aging out of gang membership, and gang involvement due to the lack of living wage jobs that are available to low-skilled workers. This is not as much a gang issue as it is one of economics and jobs, as related to deviant activity. Gang-involved youths are not aging out of their
illegal activities, and non-gang youth involved in criminal enterprise are also not aging out of theirs. Hagedorn (1988) describes the transformation of inner-city Milwaukee from the 1960s through the 1980s from being working class white with factory jobs to under-class minorities with only part-time, temporary, service jobs. The change occurred with Mexican and Southern black migration to northern cities, the working class movement to suburbs, and the deindustrialization of the United States as factories closed, moved to lower-wage foreign countries, or required higher skills. Youths who may previously have been gang members only during their teens were no longer able to find low-skill industrial jobs to offer an employment ladder out of illegal ways of getting money, and they stay gang-involved. Hagedorn suggested that the gangs which emerged in Milwaukee in the 1970s will “reproduce...as a multigenerational phenomenon” (1988: 128).

Wilson’s urban underclass theory may apply to the Navajo Nation, where a proliferation of youth gangs is linked to a transition from a grazing and agricultural economy to situations where families increasingly live in urban-styled neighborhoods and cluster housing with no likelihood of ability to return to traditional ways of life. The fact is that the traditional Navajo economy was based upon a large, arid, land base, and the Navajo population is too large to support that kind of economy. There is not enough land for Navajos who want to follow the traditional economy. The situation of urbanization and a wage economy is aggravated by limited economic opportunities, few social institutions (both familial and organized) to serve as “safety nets,” and a shortage of role models that represent a successful transition from traditional lifestyles into a modern, multicultural world. The old social institutions of family and clan are disrupted by the wage economy and urban living styles, and although the land base does not support the traditional economy, Navajos from off the land are forced to the agency towns only to find unemployment or minimum wage jobs.
Communities which are most at risk for the emergence of youth gangs mirror the factors for individual at-risk youths, namely, they are socially disorganized, have the instability of high levels of population turnover, population mobility, and out-migration of middle class and skilled workers. There are now neighborhoods with substantial numbers of minority residents or newly-arrived immigrants. Economic and social deprivation is high in many communities, with limited opportunities for work and recreation, poverty-ridden conditions of daily life, poor adult supervision, and barriers to participation in mainstream culture and economies. Successful gang intervention strategies must address those kinds of circumstances to get at the roots of gang participation.

**Gang Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

Researchers are attempting to address the problem of whether the levels of gang member recruitment and illegal gang activity can be substantially reduced (Howell 1994; Miller 1990; Spergel and Curry 1990). There is evidence in some cities of youth gang problems diminishing or not appearing, despite the presence of community characteristics which are commonly associated with gangs. Researchers look for positive factors as the basis for policies for gang control or reduction programs. Among these are considerations of youthfulness and the transient nature of gang affiliation. Attraction to and involvement with gangs is often a very brief and a passing interest for youths. A survey of Denver, Colorado youth in high-risk neighborhoods found that 60% of those identified as gang members reported that they would likely not be gang-involved and were expected to drop their gang affiliation in the near future (Esbensen 1993). In Rochester, New York, Thornberry found that “54% of gang members were active for a year or less and only 21% were active for 3 or more years” (1998: 149). An organizer of an anti-gang project in California observed that young people stay out of gangs if they can get the same things they seek in a gang elsewhere—
acceptance, respect, and peer admiration (Trotter 1991).

The potentially positive role of youth gangs as a setting to learn social skills through youthful interaction suggests the possibility of socially-acceptable groups taking over that function (Magagnini 1991; Heath and McLaughlin 1993). Some community programs described by Conly (1993) and Heath and McLaughlin (1993) do not attempt to get youths to quit gangs, but instead focus on eliminating negative, especially criminal, behavior of gang members and involving youth in prosocial activities that strengthen and empower disenfranchised youth. This is a co-optation strategy to eliminate negative behaviors which are associated with gang activities. The high visibility of gang youths makes it relatively easy for law enforcement and social service personnel to track their involvement and activities, to give an opportunity to channel youth into positive programs.

The implication for the Navajo Nation is that Navajo Nation law enforcement, social service agencies, and other programs will need to develop expertise in identifying gang involvement early on and develop appropriate policies, procedures, and intervention programs to divert involved youths. Improved capacities for networking and communication between agencies will be important to develop successful and effective intervention and prevention initiatives.

The problems which have been shown to be the most effective in reducing the presence of gangs are those that emphasize community organizing and mobilization and offer improved social opportunities in improved education systems and enhanced job placement (Spergel and Curry 1990; Spergel 1995). Isolated program efforts are not likely to be effective. For example, an analysis of several kinds of interventions showed that programs such as vocational training, career counseling, and teaching job search and interview skills, do not reduce recidivism rates of noninstitutionalized
serious juvenile offenders (Lipsey and Wilson 1998). One worker in a program that provides services to deal with drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and family counseling in a school said, “programs don’t change people, relationships do” (Conly 1993: 103). The problem for public institutions is how to establish a framework for positive relationships so that the outreach isn’t simply another “program,” but a means for youths to develop respectful and warm relationships to nourish their talents. One of the findings of this study is that Navajo Nation youths are smart, energetic, ambitious—and bored. There must be a greater focus on their talents and needs so that their activities and positive behaviors are reinforced, and not neglected or rejected.

Another recent model for intervention and violence prevention is the “public health model,” which uses epidemiologic measures to understand intentional injury, and it is an approach which can be valuable to examine the situational conditions which lead to an increased risk of intentional injury. Juarez (1992) argues that increased violence is associated with the declining importance and effectiveness of social institutions such as the family, school, church, workplace, culture, and government services. If he is correct, then one approach would be to ask why those institutions are declining in importance and examine why they are not effective. What do they have to offer to individuals, and youth in particular? What are their shortcomings in dealing with youth and the public? How can their strength and respect for institutions be revived?

Juarez (1992) also suggests that the public health model to prevent violence can be more effective by identifying and aiming at the characteristics of the agent of violence, i.e. weapons; the host, i.e. victims and perpetrators; and particularly the environment, i.e. communities with adverse socioeconomic conditions where traditional institutions are nonexistent or ineffective. Some current public health interventions have focused on the agent and host while decentralized community-based
advocacy, awareness and education, and community have been given the least attention (Juarez 1992; Porche-Burke and Fulton 1992; Trotter 1991). It is all very well to target gun possession, victims of crime, and perpetrators, for various kinds of intervention, but that will not work alone. Decentralization, where programs are moved out into communities and away from central bureaucracies, and community-based activities which build community, are essential to the effort as well.

Programs which attempt to intervene at critical points of involvement, such as immediately following an injury to a family member or self, may be most effective. Morales (1992) claims that there is an acute period of opportunity of about six months after an injury when gang members are motivated to quit their gang. Intervention and counseling for a gang member and his or her siblings (who are likely to join a gang) during this period could be highly effective. This is the mission of an effective victim assistance program, which should provide effective services to all victims in the period immediately following a loss, and the same holds true generally for family services following other traumatic events (e.g. an auto accident).

Some Boston programs designed to prevent violence by gang members have been effective (Jordan 1998; Kennedy, Piehl and Braga 1997). Two of the programs, which began in 1996, focused on preventing illicit trafficking in guns and preventing violence against and by gang members. Gun trafficking was reduced by tracing the origin of guns taken from youth by Boston police to the original retail outlet, and from there, to the original purchaser and to illegal gun traffickers. They were then targeted by the police and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) for prosecution. A more immediate and dramatically effective measure was to warn gangs that incidents of violence would bring immediate serious consequences. That requires the ability to identify gang
members and to immediately communicate with them to warn them.

Gangs whose members have committed violent crimes are targeted collectively to prevent them or their members from committing further criminal acts. The crimes that were targeted include major crimes, such as drug dealing, and minor crimes, including driving an unregistered vehicle or drinking in public. When someone from a gang committed an act of violence, all the members of the gang were targeted for strict observation and compliance. That included conditions of probation and parole, the service of outstanding arrest warrants, and special attention to gang members who entered the justice system for priority in prosecutions. In 1992, probation officers got increased authority over their clients by putting the officers in patrol cars with police officers for an immediate arrest. “Operation Night Light” involved a team to observe violations of conditions of probation and immediately arrest a probationary youth violator. The combination of interventions—tracing and prosecuting illegal gun trafficking, focused surveillance and severe consequences for gang members committing acts of violence, and the immediate arrest of probation violators by police and probation teams—led to a decrease in youth homicide. Unfortunately, the level of police and probation staffing required to conduct such an intensive program is currently beyond the capability of the Navajo Nation Police and Courts, because they are already staffed at far below average rural ratios of program personnel to population.

“Get tough” law enforcement efforts to suppress gangs and gang activity ignore potentially positive aspects of youth gang involvement and, as the result of suppression tactics, increase gang cohesiveness rather than diffuse the gang’s influence. Klein (1995: 43) said, “gang cohesiveness is central to the nature and control of street gangs.” Involvement in a gang is group process in action. Any intervention that increases group cohesiveness of the gang will increase the group’s core
activities. That includes illegal behavior and violence.

The failure of suppression tactics is obvious, as with the failure to defeat enemies by intensive bombing (e.g. Viet Nam and Iraq). If Klein’s conclusion that the use of suppression tactics without engaging with youths who organize in a positive way is correct, then that may call into question tactics such as targeting gangs—as gangs—and the use of enhanced sentencing techniques for gang members. The question is whether such tactics actually have a deterrent effect on gang membership or criminal activity (as a gang or crimes committed by members alone), or whether they strengthen in-group solidarity, alliances, and cohesiveness. Put another way, if gang members say, “we bad,” and law enforcement and the courts agree, then that enhances the reputation of the gangs.

Supportive social service efforts directed at youth gangs may also have a similar and unintended effect of increasing gang cohesiveness and the group’s commitment to delinquency. Kline’s evaluation (1995, 1997) of programs to assign detached street workers to the four most violent gangs in Los Angeles in the 1960s concluded that the primary result was increased illegal gang activity. The workers were funded to decrease gang violence and resocialize gang members to prosocial attitudes through organized legal group activities, such as tutoring, individual counseling, and advocacy with community institutions, such as schools, welfare agencies, the courts, etc. Despite those efforts, an analysis of arrests showed a significant increase in offenses which were commonly committed in the company of others, in contrast to low-companion offenses, which remained stable. As group cohesiveness increased, delinquency also increased, most notably among younger gang members (Spergel 1995). Two other evaluations of street gang-worker projects in different cities resulted in similar negative outcomes in gang cohesiveness that resulted from such interventions. Klein (1995, 1997) also tested the theory that reducing group cohesiveness would
reduce delinquency. He found that decreasing gang cohesiveness decreased illegal activities.

These last studies defy conventional wisdom, because one would think that offering increased support to gang members through such efforts would in fact reduce individual cohesiveness to the group. That does not appear to be the case. Suppression tactics increased group cohesiveness, as did the social work interventions. While Klein showed that reducing group cohesiveness reduces delinquency, he did not provide answers about the process. Again, it appears that engaging youth groups by utilizing group cohesiveness which is redirected into positive activities is a more likely tactic.

**Gangs in Indian Country: Recent Evidence**

It appears that the phenomenon of youth gangs in Indian Country is less than ten years old. The evidence of Indian Country gangs has appeared only recently. The first public accounts of that presence were in newspapers. They were widespread, including the New York Times, the Arizona Republic, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Observer (1995), Associated Press, the Tulsa World and the Phoenix Gazette (1994), and the Cleveland Plain Dealer (1993). The reporting was very sensational (and may have contributed to “moral panic”). As problems associated with illegal gang activity escalated in the early 1990s, Indian nations began to look for resources to deal with them.

As concern over the problem grew, it became clear that little was known about the nature and prevalence of Indian youth gangs. Research efforts and other forms of inquiry and documentation slowly began to appear; the application for this OJJDP-funded study was prepared in June of 1995. A 1995 application for SafeFutures funding from the United States Department of Justice by the Fort Belknap Reservation mentions gang-like behavior (Perez 1995). The Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety issued a brief report on gang activity in 1995. By early 1996, law enforcement officers
found that the problem of gangs in Indian Country was sufficiently prominent to offer a training seminar for law enforcement officers and community leaders on “Gangs in Indian Country” (Nielsen, Zion and Hailer 1998). The Federal Bureau of Investigation prepared a report on Indian Country gangs in 1999.

The first systematic empirically grounded data on the nature and extent of the gang problem on American Indian reservations was developed by Julie Hailer (1996a, 1996b). Her initial survey of Indian Country law enforcement agencies examined the extent of gang crime and activity on Indian reservations and the characteristics of the gangs reported. In 1995, she mailed a brief, 43 question, survey form to all known reservation police departments and Bureau of Indian Affairs offices. A total of 116 survey forms was mailed, and 67 or 58% were completed and returned. Twenty-one agencies said they had designated gang officers, and 23 had officers who worked specifically with juveniles. Eighty percent of respondents reported an increase in juvenile crime in the years between 1990 and 1995. The survey asked if the respondents perceived that violent crime was increasing, and 75% said that they thought it was; 15% reported a decline in violent crime; and 4% reported that violent crime levels remained steady. Thirty-one of 67 respondents assigned gang activity as a reason for increased crime levels.

The key question for the survey was whether the respondents reported the presence of any identified gangs on their reservations. Thirty-four of the 67 respondents reported the presence of identified gangs. The number of gangs on separate reservations varied from 1 to 33, with a majority of reservations having 3 or 4 gangs. Of 30 gang names listed, 8 indicated an Indian identity by name—Native Gangsters, Rez Boys, Rez Dwellers, Naturals, Indian Pride, Sovereign Nation Warriors, Little Indian Crips, and Red Pride. The other gang names were a mix of Latino, African-
American, or local, non-Indian, names. The estimated ages of Indian Country gang members ranged from 11 to over 18 years old, with very few respondents reporting gang members under 10 years old. Thirty respondents indicated that there were female gang members, and 29 reported no presence of female gang members on their reservations. The kinds of frequency of crimes committed by gang members is shown in this table:
Table 1

Gang-Related Crime in Indian Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFENSE</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol offenses</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misdemeanor theft</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti tagging</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault and battery</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle burglary</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential burglary</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with a deadly weapon</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony theft</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial burglary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs—sales or under influence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen vehicle</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other data collected in the survey included the respondent’s perceptions of why a tribal youth would join a gang, what they thought precipitated the formation of gangs on their reservation, the nature of gang composition, what determined which gang a youth would join, and what the agency was doing to prevent gang activity. Another question was when gangs first began to appear. One respondent noted gangs appearing in 1985; 8 reported gangs emerging between 1989 and 1991; 13 reported gangs coming to their attention in 1992; 15 indicated 1993; 6 said 1994; and 2 stated 1995.
Other studies of Indian youth gangs followed. One is looking into the presence of gangs among the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation, near Rapid City, South Dakota (De Witt 1998). Another is comparing the similarities and differences among gang and non-gang youth between 18 and 27 years old among three Sioux tribes in South Dakota, North Dakota, and western Minnesota (Grant 1999). The De Witt study involved both field observations and interviews with community stakeholders, primarily law enforcement officials, on the problems of gangs within the Oglala Sioux Pine Ridge Reservation. Gang-associated problems related by stakeholders associated included severe family dysfunction and low academic achievement. Larger tribal problems thought to be conducive to an emerging gang presence and activities included a disaffected and ill-equipped police force, a corrupt political system, and an economic environment of extreme poverty, high unemployment, and a general lack of economic opportunity. The signs of gang presence included “an ambiance of graffiti.” DeWitt (1999) reported that the origins of reservation youth gangs were in nearby cities. Another identified factor was undocumented Mexican men moving onto the reservation, marrying and having children or fathering them with tribal member women and bringing a Latino gang culture onto the reservation as part of these contacts.

Grant (1999), a police captain and gang task force commander, has for several years been exploring the youth gang problem among three Sioux tribes near Rapid City, South Dakota. He hypothesizes that youth with strong ties to their biological family and highly-attuned to their culture will be less involved with gangs. He reports that the gangs found in South Dakota Indian Country are similar to gangs in the Navajo Nation because of gang activity that flourishes in South Dakota’s two largest cities, Rapid City and Sioux Falls, which are located at either end of
the state. Most of the nine South Dakota reservations are located between the two cities, and tribal youth have ready access to both. He concludes that gangs became active in those cities and nearby Indian Country in the early 1990s because of critical social elements that contribute to the emergence of gangs, namely high unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse, social disenfranchisement and marginality. Youths who became involved in gang activities outside the state were returning to the cities and reservations and bringing their gang behavior with them. The trend was also exacerbated by the popularization of gang culture in the mass media. Grant concludes that many Indian youths in South Dakota are not connected to their native culture and instead choose a common popular culture they can embrace easily and which allows them to feel they are united for a common purpose. The South Dakota Indian population is highly-mobile, and there was a higher rate of mobility as families moved from cities to a reservation and back again, attempting to get away from gangs, but finding them in either location. The Indian identity of South Dakota Indian gangs is reflected in names such as “Native Bitches, Rez Rats, Indian Gangster Disciples, Red Brotherhood, and Native Mob.”

The Federal Bureau of Investigation produced a report on Gangs on Indian Reservations (Conway 1999). The first part of the report describes Indian Country gang activity in general, and the second gives reservation-specific assessments of gang activity. Those descriptions are based on various sources, but are primarily founded on interviews with tribal law enforcement officials, FBI agents, Bureau of Indian Affairs police, and other tribal agencies and reports. Conway states that “because gangs in one form or another are located on ALL reservations, this report focuses on only a select few reservations experiencing significant problems” (Conway 1999: 2). The conclusion that there is gang saturation on all reservations in Indian Country has
significant implications in terms of the need for research, appropriate responses, and resources for their deployment.

The FBI report is based upon a survey in which respondents were asked to provide information about the degree of gang involvement in their area and the severity of gang activities on reservations. The influence of gang culture in popular media is cited as a major factor in Indian youth identifying with themes of oppression and fighting for survival in hostile territory. The report discusses issues of drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activities, the use of weapons, the limited capability of law enforcement agencies in Indian Country, community denial of gang problems, the prevalence of gangs in schools, and the marginal status of youth as contributors to the gang problem. The report’s description of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation is framed in terms of the Nation’s geography, economy, political structure, and housing patterns. Specific discussions of Navajo Nation gangs addresses their activities, a listing of the gangs, existing and proposed responses to the problem, and legal impediments to success. The FBI reports 55 existing Navajo Nation gangs and documents the origins of the Fort Defiance and Window Rock “Cobras.” The report reports the gang situation at Canoncito (now To’hajiilee), which was reported to have the most intense level of Navajo gang activity.

The FBI reports that marijuana is grown in the Navajo Nation for recreational use and it is being used in trade with off-reservation gang members to obtain crack cocaine. Witness cooperation with Navajo Nation police and with the joint FBI-United States Attorney-Navajo Nation Police Safe Trails Task force is cited as a significant factor in improving prosecution in gang-related cases. That cooperation may be attributed to the size of the Navajo Nation and the ability to relocate witnesses to other communities prior to trial.
Despite these recent developments, the fact that there has been minimal attention to problems of crime and delinquency in Indian Country is reflected in the scant mention of Indian youth involvement with gangs in criminology literature. Spergel’s recent (1995) comprehensive review has only one sentence which says that Indians are active in gangs in Minnesota and in several Southwestern states (1995: 60). Curry and Decker’s recent textbook (1998) briefly mentions the OJJDP-funded SafeFutures program at the Fort Belknap Reservation of Montana, where gangs are a growing concern, and a Female Gang Prevention and Intervention Program targeting female Indians. Another recent book includes a brief section which reviews the evidence for the presence of Indian gangs in selected cities and on reservations (Goldstein and Kodluboy 1998: 88-90). They compare the development of gangs among Indian youth with the experience of Southeast Asian immigrants, because both groups have histories of being rooted in highly-structured, traditional cultures, but they have recently experienced intense culture change and accompanying stress and confusion of identity. The authors note a variety of sources documenting the presence of gangs in Indian Country, primarily tribal reports and newspaper articles. The predominant mechanism for gang migration to reservations, according to Goldstein and Kodluboy, is the mobility of Indian families as they move between cities with street gangs and their reservations. They also mention media influence, where there is persistent “bombardment of Native American youth with gangster music, articles about gangs, gangsters on television programs and especially the movies, and the portrayal as role models of former or current gang members who are athletes, singers, or rappers” (Goldstein and Kodluboy 1998: 90). New connections are being made between city-dwelling Indian gang members and the professional criminal adult leadership of well-established Chicano street gangs which have
strong ties to organized drug trafficking. There is a specter of possible linkage of Indian youth gangs with criminal enterprises such as the Mexican Mafia through city-dwelling Indian relatives.

Nielson, Zion and Hailer’s article on Navajo Nation gang formation and intervention initiatives (1998) gives an historical and statistical overview of the Navajo Nation, its justice system, and its emerging gang problem. Aside from that social and criminal problem, they discuss the peculiarities and confusion of legal jurisdiction under American Indian law for law enforcement and prosecution. They also discuss the legal problems with jurisdiction in the Navajo Nation legal system. The article summarizes information on Navajo Nation gangs provided by the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch and Division of Public Safety, including the numbers and size of gangs, communities where they are located, the estimated number of gang-related offenses based on court records, types of criminal and other activities of gangs, and the involvement of females in gangs. The authors point to the loss of traditional cultural orientation or the misdirection of cultural concepts as contributing factors to gang formation and involvement.

They also review some steps that were previously taken to deal with gangs within the Navajo Nation. The first organized effort was a special session of the Navajo Nation Council in October 1993, and while concerned agencies lacked funds for effective gang suppression, the Council directed justice officials to respond more effectively. Interested agencies began to hold regular joint meetings, internal, tribally-initiated research studies were launched, and agencies sought grants for intervention programs. The Navajo Nation Council enacted a curfew law in 1995. The Navajo Nation Police also gave gang-related investigation priority status and
assumed a lead role to develop community awareness. The Police also adopted a formal policy of coordination of activities with state and federal justice agencies in the Safe Trails Task Force. Finally, the authors discuss the utility of using traditional Navajo culture to address gang problems, including the use of Navajo peacemaking with juvenile offenders.

The Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety produced a brief report which indicated the number of gangs in the Navajo Nation, their location, and the number of members of each gang. The police identified “28 gangs in thirteen communities. The largest and most recently formed gang [was] the Vicious Cobras with an estimated 200 members. The second largest is the Westside City in Canoncito with an estimated 50 to 75 members, and the third is the Dragons of Window Rock/Fort Defiance, with about 50 members. The rest [of the gangs] range in size from five to 40, with the average number being eighteen” (Nielsen, Zion and Hailer 1998: 99).

This review of the published literature and other sources of information about gangs in Indian Country shows the need for additional research. Although Hailer’s survey, the FBI report, and other studies provide a preliminary baseline of information to understand and assess the problem, the current information is too exploratory and sketchy to develop a complete picture of youth gangs in Indian Country across America. However, the review of what we have shows the emergence of some common patterns of circumstance, activity and behavior that characterize gang activity. They include the fact that the socioeconomic conditions in Indian Country are fertile soil for gang development, population mobility allows the transportation of gang culture through tribal members who go from reservation to cities and back again, and popular media offer Indian youth a gangster lifestyle. There has been rapid change in Indian Country in the past few decades which is associated with extremes of deprivation in all sectors of
socio-economic well-being, rapid population growth, the emergence of large Indian youth
cohorts, and urbanization. All the developmental and formative factors in American gang
literature are observable in Indian Country and in the Navajo Nation.

Following a review of the literature, we will now begin discussion of the data derived
from field work to explore what this information can tell us about gangs in the Navajo Nation.
VII. A PROFILE OF NAVAJO RESPONDENTS

This section summarizes survey responses which together provide a profile of gang members, gang associates and crew members who were interviewed for this study. These are the elements of the profile:

- Basic demographic data;
- Awareness and involvement in clan affiliation;
- Family and peers;
- School and workplace;
- Avocational interests;
- Factors of identity and multiple marginalization.

Those are key elements which are usually addressed to attempt to answer the question of why youths join gangs. The responses show the range of Navajo youth who are gang-involved and the range of risk factors we think are avenues into gang involvement. Many gang-related Navajos are from severely troubled, poverty-ridden families, but some are from strong, intact, and financially-secure families. Many have family members or close friends who are gang-involved, but others do not. Many have problems in school related to attendance, performance, and behavior, but some are very successful in school. Most of those who spoke with us are not involved in traditional cultural activities, do not consider themselves to be religious or spiritual, and have no interest in those things. However, more young Navajos than may be expected are interested in Navajo religion or spirituality, or other religions, and consider themselves to be spiritually involved. Many of the Navajos we spoke with know their clan relations, and sometimes clan affiliation is what drew them into a gang. Answers from 103 respondents

12 The differences between “gangs” and “crews” will be discussed in outlining gang activities. Essentially, gangs are engaged in more serious criminal activity, while crews are organized primarily for parties and graffiti.
produced this gang affiliation profile:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROFILE FACTOR</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang member at the time of interview</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew member at the time of interview</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of both a gang and a crew</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang associate at the time of interview</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former gang member</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former crew member</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former member of both a gang and crew</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the low numbers of individuals who identified themselves as gang associates, or former gang and crew members, those categories will not be addressed in later tables and discussion.

We are primarily interested in gang-involved youth and those who are involved in crews.

Current and former gang members and gang associates are collapsed into the category of gang members. When gang and crew members are differentiated, the discussion of crew members will include respondents who reported being exclusively current and former crew members. The following table shows the number of gang and crew members:
Table 3

Current and Former Gang and Crew Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang members (current, former, associate and joint membership)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew members (current and former)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The field team did 97 interviews between July 1996 and May 1997. Six additional interviews were completed between May 1997 and March 1998. While most of the interviews are complete, some respondents stopped their interview before completion because they said they had to do something else immediately. All said they would complete the interview later, but a new interview could not be scheduled. Several respondents refused to answer certain sections of interview questions—most frequently the ones asking questions about family or gang identification. Some respondents skipped questions, causing response numbers to vary.

Following an initial period of testing the interview questions, there was a revision of the format in July 1996, where additional questions about the family were added after twelve interviews. That also reduces the totals for family-related questions.

A. BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS: AGE, GENDER, RESIDENCE, RACE, LANGUAGES SPOKEN

The following tables provide basic demographic data about the study’s respondents.
Table 4

Age and Sex of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean or average age of respondents was 18.4 years, the median or mid-point age was 18, and the standard deviation was 3.1. Since so few females were interviewed, they are not separated for separate discussion later in this report. The following table compares the age of the respondents to their status as a gang or crew members.
Crew members were all within the ages of 16 through 19 years old (both of the 20-year old crew members were former crew members), while gang-involved youth ranged from age 13 as a low to a high age of 28. The seven former gang-involved youth were 15, 16, 20, 21, 24, 27 and 28 years old. Crew membership appears to be related to older adolescence, while gang involvement is an important social association for youth in their adolescence, and beyond for some.

While the study attempted to interview gang-involved youth in communities that were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GANG</th>
<th>CREW</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
known to have gangs, the next table shows the community of residence of the respondents at the time of their interview. The high number of respondents in the Fort Defiance-St. Michaels-Window Rock area (which has several small communities a short distance from each other) reflects where the interviewers were based and the fact those three communities are centers of gang activity. The use of the term “area” following a geographic place name indicates that some respondents lived near but not in the given place, and there are individuals who lived outside the Navajo Nation in a named state.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION OF RESIDENCE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuba City area</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayenta</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Defiance</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganado</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houck</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klagetoh</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahatah Dziil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Michaels</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window Rock</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiprock area</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crownpoint area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoncito-To-hajiilee</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, Arizona</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Arizona</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque, New Mexico</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallup, New Mexico</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: New Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moab, Utah</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Navajo Nation has five administrative agencies and seven judicial districts. Another indicator of residence is where the respondent lived by agency or an off-reservation state.

Table 7

Residence in the Fort Defiance Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fort Defiance</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window Rock</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Michaels</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klagetoh</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houck</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahatah Dzil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganado</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

Residence in the Chinle Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

Residence in the Tuba City-Western Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayenta</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonalea-Red Lake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10
Residence in the Shiprock Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hogback</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiprock</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11
Residence in the Crownpoint-Eastern Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crownpoint</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iyanbito</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoncito-To’hajiilee</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12
Off-Reservation State Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARIZONA</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Arizona</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Total</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW MEXICO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: New Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico Total</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTAH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moab</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in the literature review, ethnicity is an important factor to consider in gang formation and activities, and the responses of the individuals who were interviewed on their self-identification by race and ethnicity was important. To what extent were gang youth of mixed ethnicity or non-Navajo, and did they and their families speak Navajo? The answers are related to understanding the underlying causes of gang affiliation and for intervention and prevention strategies. Ability to speak the Navajo language is related to reintegrative activities focused upon Navajo culture which require a knowledge of the language. The question was “What is your race?” and the interviewers explained it in terms of ethnicity, i.e., “Are you Navajo, another tribe, Mexican, or Caucasian—What ethnic groups to you belong to?”

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE OR ETHNICITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navajo</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Indian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo-Mexican</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo-White</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo-Pueblo</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo-Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo-Other Indian</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety-four percent of the respondents were Navajo or Navajo-Other. Only six were not Navajo,
and five were from other Indian tribes. That shows that gang-involved youth in the Navajo Nation are almost entirely Navajo or part Navajo. However, the responses to the question “what languages do you speak?” shows a loss of fluency in the Navajo language, because only 38% of the respondents spoke Navajo and an additional language, primarily English. Navajo is spoken in 44% of these youth’s homes.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE(S)</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navajo and English</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish, English and Navajo</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calo and English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo and Spanish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE(S)</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navajo</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo and English</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a factor in personal identity, culture is linked to the ability to speak the language of one’s society culture. These findings indicate erosion of cultural identity and attachment through language loss. A majority of the respondents do not speak Navajo, and neither do their families. That may be a major impediment to culture-based approaches to the problem, unless youth who are joining gangs begin at some point in the intervention process to identify themselves as Navajo, with an interest in the culture, and there are English language approaches for them.

B. CLAN AFFILIATION

The primary clan affiliation of Navajos is through their mothers in matrilineal clan membership. An individual is “of” his or her mother’s clan, “born for” his or her father’s, and clan relationships are also traced through grandparents. Kinship terms are used to describe clan members as being a “mother, father, uncle, aunt, brother, sister, cousin, or child,” depending upon the age of the other person or other circumstances. There are important and complex social obligations in those relationships which could be important in both attracting youths to gang membership (to associate with clan members) or deterring individuals by clan membership or persuading gang members or gangs to avoid criminal activities. A lack of knowledge of one’s clan affiliations shows a loss of elementary Navajo relationships and cultural capacity. The following table shows an erosion of this traditional knowledge and accompanying relationships.
Table 16

Knowledge of Clan Affiliation
(What clans do you belong to?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAN KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knows clan(s)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the partially</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not know or will not say</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a clan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. INVOLVEMENT IN TRADITIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

Issues of identity, affiliation, associations, identification with others, and group solidarity are important issues in gang formation and membership. One primary question concerns the extent to which these respondents have lost their Navajo identity by a lack of involvement with traditional culture and religion. To measure cultural loss, a series of questions in addition to languages spoken and knowledge of clans were asked, including:

- “Do you do any traditional stuff?” The response indicates respondent’s involvement in traditional Navajo culture.

- “Have you had any traditional ceremonies held for you?” The response indicates the level of exposure to traditional activity by the respondent and the level of traditional involvement by the respondent’s family.

- “Have any of your relatives participated in traditional ceremonies?” This question measures the level of traditional involvement of the family and the respondent’s awareness of these kinds of family activities.

- “How do your relatives deal with illness? Do they go to doctors, medicine men, or both?” This question gives another measure of family involvement with traditional practices. Many persons with little involvement in traditional Navajo cultural activities will still make arrangements for traditional healing by a medicine man. The decision to hold a ceremony triggers a complex set of
traditional reciprocal family and clan obligations.

- “What do you think of traditional healing practices?” A response to this question could show a belief in and respect for Navajo tradition even though the respondent does not participate in traditional activities. A positive response could show a potential for future participation in traditional ceremonies.

- “Are you a religious person?” The response to this question could reflect potential interest and involvement in traditional Navajo religion or spirituality or other positive spiritual or religious involvement.

The following tables show the responses to these questions.

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in Traditional Activities</th>
<th>(Do you do any traditional stuff?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents who said “yes” indicated that they had participated in the following kinds of traditional religious activities. The figures are not totaled because some respondents participated in more than one kind of activity, and some respondents only replied “yes.”
Table 18

Kinds of Traditional Navajo Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American Church</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweatlodge Ceremonies</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sings (healing ceremonies)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dances</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squaw Dance&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other traditional ceremonies</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19

Types of Ceremonies Held for Respondents<sup>14</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Ceremony</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American Church ceremony</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers or “a Prayer”</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing or healing ceremony</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N’daa</em> (Squaw Dance)&lt;sup&gt;15&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ceremony</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<sup>13</sup> This is an unfortunate term which is still used in English to refer to the *N’daa*, which is associated with healing ceremonies.

<sup>14</sup> This table is not totaled because one respondent participated in more than one kind of ceremony, and some respondents only replied “yes” to the question of whether they did traditional stuff.

<sup>15</sup> We do not know if the *N’daa* was held “for” the participant or he or she participated in one.
A larger proportion of respondents who knew their clan affiliations also participated in traditional activities. Of the 44 respondents who reported that they had participated in traditional activities:

- 25 (57%) knew their clan affiliations.
- 8 (18%) did not know or did not want to say they knew their clans, and the remainder either partly knew their clans or did not have clans (namely, those of other Indian groups).

Of the 54 respondents who did not participate in traditional activities:

- 22 (41%) knew their clans.
- 22 (41%) did not know or did not want to say whether they knew their clans, and the remainder either partly knew their clans or did not have clans.

The families of gang members were more likely than the gang members to participate in traditional activities. Eighty gang-involved respondents reported that their relatives participated in traditional ceremonies. The patterns of answers may show cultural changes that are taking place in the Navajo Nation. The answers to these questions about cultural practices equate tradition with religious beliefs or ceremonial practices. The fact that so many respondents identified with the Native American Church, a non-Navajo tradition, may be the source of some interesting additional work to relate the preference for N.A.C. ceremonies to the unique dynamics of the Church, a subject which is related to separate studies of healing techniques in Church doctrines and practices, i.e., the N.A.C. is a pan-Indian, syncretic (Christian and Indian) belief system having traditions and techniques which may be a key to involvement for youths who have lost their traditional Navajo language and spiritual orientation. The role and techniques of Navajo Christian sects should also not be overlooked when approaching individual gang-oriented Navajos from the aspect of spirituality.
A higher level of family involvement in traditional Navajo culture is reflected in responses to the question of whether a gang-involved youth’s relatives address illness by going to doctors, medicine men, or both, as demonstrated by this table:

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Relatives Deal With Illness</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go to doctors</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to medicine men</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to both</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the question of whether the respondents considered themselves to be “religious,” slightly less than half (46.6%) said they were or that they were “kind of” religious. Since some of the respondents belong to Christian denominations, the response to the question does not necessarily equate with belief in Navajo religious traditions.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Identification as Being Religious (Are you religious?)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table shows that there is no correlation between whether respondents consider themselves to be religious and their belief in the effectiveness of traditional Navajo
cereonies. However, those who do not consider themselves to be religious seem less decided about the effectiveness of traditional Navajo healing. Seventeen respondents who indicated they are not religious say they do not know if traditional Navajo healing “works,” or give an equivocal response about what they think of traditional Navajo healing. Only five respondents indicated that they were “kind of religious” gave an equivocal response to what they thought of traditional healing. No one responded that they did not know whether traditional healing worked.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification as Being Religious and Belief in Traditional Healing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another aspect of traditional Navajo culture relates to the possession and utilization of land. Respondents were asked whether their family possessed land and, if so, what kind of activities the respondent engaged in when he or she went to the family’s land. Answers to those questions give an indication of Navajo culture and tradition in relation to the land. These questions also measure the transition of Navajo society from a pastoral economy to wage activity.

<sup>16</sup> Or, “It doesn’t matter.”
economy, and the disruption of traditional Navajo land use due to federal livestock reduction policy, population growth, and urbanization in agency towns.

Very few respondents reported that no relatives had land. The family members most often reported as having land are grandparents. Parents (mothers and fathers combined) held only 20% of the land reported. That shows that the parental generation of gang members had far less ownership of family land. The issue for the future will be how land will be divided among parents and siblings of the current generation, and the implication for that will be whether ownership struggles will intensify land disputes, or whether the current parental generation will be satisfied with wage labor. We speculate that given cultural attitudes toward land, the former will be the case.

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent(s)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunts or uncles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family combination</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighty-five individuals, or 83%, said that someone in their family had land. The next question was if the respondents visited their family land and, if so, what they did there.
Table 24

Activities on Family Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t go there</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chores</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives on the land</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes care of land</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor recreation(^{17})</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and combination(^{18})</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink and/or get high</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit family, kick back</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.5%(^{19})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety-two respondents had family members with land, and 89% (82) of the respondents visit it or live on it. Eighty percent are involved in productive and legal activities while visiting, and only eight respondents reported engaging in illegal activities there. Thirteen percent of the respondents whose family have land actually live there. This distributional pattern indicates that most of the youths who were interviewed still have some ties to the land. That kind of cultural affiliation appears to be clearly stronger than other ties to Navajo culture and tradition.

\(^{17}\) Primarily shooting guns, and some riding of horses or off-road vehicles.

\(^{18}\) Does not include drinking or drugs.

\(^{19}\) One respondent said he feels most relaxed and safe there.
Almost half of the gang-involved respondents, and three-quarters of their families, have some interest in religious or spiritual life and attach value to it. Ties to the land are the strongest link to traditional culture, because a majority of gang-involved respondents are positively connected to their family’s land. However, the loss of the ability to speak Navajo and a lack of knowledge about clanship, places respondents in a condition of cultural incompetency regarding their own culture and traditional religion. We must ask whether the loss of language or culture is the product of youths not caring about it, or whether they do not know their language and culture because the prior generation failed to teach them or were deprived of that knowledge themselves. Many Navajo Nation programs (e.g. alcohol counseling and domestic violence prevention) stress Navajo linguistic and cultural values, and there is a great deal of interest in language and culture retention in education programs. The expansion of the use of cultural approaches to these youths may depend upon whether or not they identify themselves as Navajos or want that identity.

D. RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILY, GIRL FRIEND/BOY FRIEND, CHILDREN, MARRIAGE, PEERS, SCHOOL, AND WORK

This area of inquiry touches upon family, relationships, and the social networks of Navajo youths who are involved with gangs and crews. When the research design of this project was being developed, our team stressed the fundamental importance of the family. Not surprisingly, stakeholders shared the same opinion. Therefore, a series of questions were included about current and prior family dynamics. Some respondents refused to answer some or all of the family-related questions. This explains why the data reported in this section sometimes reflect less than the total of 103 respondents. They were also asked a series of questions about their educational experience and recent employment history. Therefore, this section presents a
multi-dimensional picture including an analysis on the respondent’s current households, what their cohabitants do, family histories (including parental control and family dysfunction), how the respondents grew up, significant others and children, peer relations, and school and work experience.

The respondents live in a variety of household and family situations. The options are living with one or both parents; with aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, or cousins; with spouses or a girlfriend’s family; or with a group of gang members (some of whom may be related). None of the respondents lived alone, although one young man reported that he had his own house in the family homestead. Only one respondent was transient, and stayed with a succession of relatives, and one 13-year old respondent lived in a series of foster homes. The household size ranged from one other person to ten people, and most respondents lived in households with three to six people.

Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>0 20</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Res.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 Only one respondent was a transient who moved between relatives’ homes, and one lives in foster homes.
Table 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Configuration (usually includes other relatives)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both parents (including step-parents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother is only parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step or foster parent(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriend or boyfriend’s parent(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With other relative or other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own household (with wife or girlfriend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We then wanted to know what the other people in the household did.

Table 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities of Other Persons in Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEP-PARENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUNT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Six respondents lived in extended families.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATION</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRANDFATHER</td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRANDMOTHER</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cared for child(ren)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Went to school</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SISTER</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cared for child(ren)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRIEND</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUSIN</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Went to school</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUSIN-BROTHER</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Went to school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPHEW</td>
<td>Went to school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIECE</td>
<td>Went to school</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIRLFRIEND</td>
<td>Went to school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cared for child(ren)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed at home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOYFRIEND</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stayed home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIFE</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Went to school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cared for child(ren)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The activity terms above mean the following:

WORK: Includes self-employment, i.e. an artist or jeweler.
SCHOOL: Includes all levels of schooling.
CARES FOR CHILD: Stays home to care for one or more children.
STAYS HOME: Adult who does not work or preschool children.

The activities of the females included work (39%), going to school (34%), providing child care (8%) and staying home (20%) (some are of preschool age). Among the males, 35.5% worked, 33% went to school, 27% stayed home (some preschool), and .5% did “other.”

There had been some gossip at large about gang-involved youth being the children of law enforcement officers, so we felt it was important to ask the question. Responses came from 101 respondents.

Table 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No relative in law enforcement</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt 7, Uncle 11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent + other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle + other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Slightly less than half of the respondents reported that they had a relative in law enforcement.

We asked if the youths had a family member who had been or was in military service, and we got this response from 101 respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No relative in the military</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather 9, Grandmother 1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent + other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle + other</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other combination</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only about one fourth of the respondents indicated that they had no family member who had not performed military service.

The next issue is parental control, and gang-involved youths were asked a set of questions to ascertain the level of parental control within the family. One of the questions was, “Who makes decisions in the home?”
Most respondents (70%) appear to have adults in the home who are responsible for family decision-making, either directly or as a family process. The respondents who indicated, “I make my own decisions,” and “Everyone makes their own decisions,” are older respondents who live with other adults, but the number also included some young respondents who clearly are not influenced by the decisions their parent or parents may attempt to impose.

Another aspect of parental control is how parents discipline their children. Twenty-five (31%) of the 80 persons who answered the question reported that their parent or guardian provided either no discipline or abusive discipline. The rest reported a variety of disciplinary methods ranging from talking, to grounding, to spanking. It is difficult to place a value on the disciplinary sanctions of “spanking” and “whipping,” but the latter is likely abusive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No one does</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone together</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents or step-parents</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make my own decisions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone makes their own decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KIND OF DISCIPLINE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They don’t/didn’t discipline me</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They talk(ed) to me</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They ground(ed) me, cut my allowance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They spank(ed) or whip(ped) me</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They beat (abuse) me</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed (talk, ground, spank)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One controversial issue of current concern is whether it is “traditional” for Navajos to spank their children. Some maintain that spanking is traditional, while others maintain that it is not. Individual views of that method of child discipline may be linked to the individual’s experience in boarding school or the military, and there is a possibility that there is a gender basis for the answer. Thirty-one of the eighty respondents indicated that they had been spanked, whipped, beaten, or abused.

Another parental supervision issue is whether the youth currently had a family curfew or had one while growing up. The responses to that question suggest a lenient pattern of this kind of behavioral control by parents. Nearly three-quarters of gang-involved youth reported that they did not have a family curfew, and if a curfew is set, youths do not obey it. The Navajo Nation Council enacted a curfew law in the fall of 1995, but we saw no evidence of aggressive enforcement of that law, except by housing managers. It is possible that the lack of this kind of parental control reflects a Navajo cultural value that young people are responsible for themselves.
and should not be controlled by others. The pertinent Navajo maxim is, “It’s up to him,” and that applies to children as well as adults. The lack of control by a family curfew may also reflect youths who are out of everyone’s control, including law enforcement officers. One 16-year old young man said, “I am on probation. I am supposed to be home by 10:00 p.m., but I usually don’t. I got caught two times for the curfew law.

Table 32
Kinds of Family Curfew
(What is your curfew like?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KIND OF CURFEW</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t/didn’t have one</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have/had one but break it</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have/had one</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another indicator of parental control, or the lack of it, is whether the respondent had ever run away from home or had been kicked out of his or her home. That question also addresses the stability of family life. The high number of youths who said they had either run away from home, been kicked out of their home, or both, may reflect disruption in the family. It may also reflect the ease with which Navajo youths leave home to stay with other relatives. However, the interview question was not, “Have you ever left home to live with another relative?” but whether the respondent had ran away from home or been kicked out of the home.

Many respondents talked about leaving because of serious conflicts with parents or other caregivers involving a major physical altercation. The responses of gang members and crew members were different on this question. Of 81 gang-involved youths who answered the
question, 69% had run away (36 individuals), five had been kicked out of their home, and fifteen had both run away and been thrown out of the home. Of thirteen crew members, 46% had run away (4) or been kicked out (2). None of the crew members had both run away and been kicked out of the home.

Information derived from both quantitative and qualitative inquiry about the effectiveness of parental control and involvement in the lives of gang-involved youth revealed a pattern in which their parents are not able to exercise effective control in many cases and have not been able to do so since the youths were quite young.

In exploring issues of family conflict and dysfunction, we asked respondents with whom they had grown up. Their answers indicated a lack of parental involvement in the lives of many of these youths. Of 103 respondents, only 47.5% reported growing up with their mother, and 30% reported growing up with their father. The comments by some respondents indicated a certain level of parental neglect. This table shows the responses:
Table 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster mother</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster father</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-parent</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-brother</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-sister</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By myself</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With other</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many youths reported that they had a miserable childhood, living with alcoholic, abusive, and negligent parents. They also said that as a result, they were forced to grow up on their own, or they grew up only with the support and nurturance of peers and siblings. The level of reported in-family conflict was high. When asked about the presence of major conflicts in the family,
one-third reported no personal conflicts, while 8% reported “normal” levels of arguing, conflict, and deaths in the family. However, 59% reported high levels of family conflict, ranging from serious fighting to trauma related to alcoholism, and numerous other interpersonal upheavals. Crew members reported much lower levels of serious fighting, and slightly lower levels of alcohol as a factor in family conflict. The proportion of crew members who cited no family conflicts was almost twice as high as gang-involved youths.

Table 34
Conflict in the Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF CONFLICT</th>
<th>GANG</th>
<th>CREW</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land dispute</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death in family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious fighting</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(physical and verbal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental split</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerous (death,</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fights, affairs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol-related</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consumption of alcohol, both currently and in the past, contributed substantially to family dysfunction. A common response to the question of whether anyone in the household drinks was “not anymore.” Respondents reported the use of alcohol was a major factor in parental conflict
and abuse, child abuse, frequent physical confrontations between aunts, uncles and grandparents, murders, drunk driving arrests, child neglect, and other disruptive and traumatic activities. One common pattern was a history of family disruption because of parents’ alcohol abuse when the respondent was younger, followed by the parent or parents stopping the use of alcohol more recently. Unfortunately, the damage of alcohol-related conflict had already been done. Some of the seven persons who replied that no one in their family drank anymore directly associated their gang involvement with parental neglect due to alcohol abuse. The family rate of alcohol use is slightly higher for gang-involved youths than for crew member youths. Ninety-six individuals answered the question, “Does anyone in your household drink alcohol?”

Table 35

Drinking in the Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NOT NOW</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy percent of gang-affiliated youth reported that there was drinking in the home, and 64% of crew-affiliated persons indicated that there was drinking in their home. Seven percent of gang members and 9% of crew members reported there was drinking at an earlier time, but that currently, family members did not drink. There were similar results on the question of drug use in the home. The following table shows the number and relationship of persons in the home who drink and/or use drugs, and apparently only brothers of respondents use drugs at a higher rate than they consume alcohol.

Table 36
Drinking and Drug Use in the Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>NOT – ANYMORE</th>
<th>CURRENTLY Drinks</th>
<th>CURRENTLY Uses drugs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (relative or friend)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fewer households had members who used drugs than drank alcohol. Of 94 who were asked about drug use in their home, 41 said there was none, and 53 said that there was drug use. Gang-involved respondents and crew members reported similar levels of drinking and drug use by their siblings, and roughly one-third engaged in those activities. However, the difference between the level of parental involvement in drinking by the parents of gang-involved and crew-involved respondents is significant. Approximately 48% of gang-involved respondents reported a parent who drinks, while only 38% of crew members reported a drinking parent.

Respondents were asked if there had been any physical or sexual abuse in their families. Of 96 who answered both questions, only two reported any sexual abuse, while 35 reported physical abuse in their families. One respondent reported physical abuse when responding to a general question about major personal conflicts in the family. Given other information about the levels of sexual or physical abuse in the Navajo Nation, and the relative absence of such abuse reported here, the responses may not accurately reflect levels of these kinds of abuse in these youths families. These answers come from personal interviews, and questions about either
sexual or physical abuse are sensitive ones which individuals may not wish to answer accurately.

Another indicator of family dysfunction that was explored in the study is the number of close relatives who had criminal convictions and who had served time in jail or a prison. Fifty-nine of 87 respondents, or 68%, reported that a family member had served time for the following general kinds of offenses:

Table 37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OR LEVEL OF OFFENSE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol-related offense</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other misdemeanor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OR LEVEL OF OFFENSE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol-related offense</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other misdemeanor</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General “yes”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 39
Parents Serving Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OR LEVEL OF OFFENSE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol-related offense</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other misdemeanor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General “yes”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 40
Siblings and Cousins Serving Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OR LEVEL OF OFFENSE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol-related offense</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other misdemeanor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General “yes”</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-three other relatives who had served time but are not included in the relationships above include aunts, uncles and grandparents. When gang-involved youth and crew members are compared for differences in the numbers of self or family members being incarcerated, there are some important differences, which are shown by the following table:
Table 41

Comparison of Gang-Involved and Crew Member Family Incarceration Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>OVERALL</th>
<th>SELF</th>
<th>PARENT</th>
<th>SIBLING OR COUSIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While many of the questions about the respondents’ family dynamics and circumstances elicited information about negative incidents and activities, there are some positive aspects. For example, respondents were asked about what they would like to see changed in their family, and about what they were proud of about their family.

Table 42

Changes in the Family Respondent Would Like to See

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KIND OF CHANGE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing, it’s OK now, don’t know</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the family be together more</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live somewhere else (with family)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less alcohol or drug use</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members need to be more fair</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (mostly family economics)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get along better</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table of responses indicates that 48% of gang-involved youth appear to either be satisfied with the family’s situation, or they were unable to think of what kind of change they wanted to see. Improved family finances were important to 19% of those with a constructive response.
Ten percent would like to see more time with the family, and the cessation of alcohol or drug abuse was a concern of 11%.

Table 43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family heritage</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness, communication, support</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other&lt;sup&gt;22&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were separate narrative responses about pride in the family which were negative. Four respondents were not proud of anything about their families. One gang member said he was proud of his family’s drinking abilities. Some of the respondents expressed pride in having survived the kinds of severe family problems outlined above.

The element of pride in having survived difficult times may be a key factor in the relationship between the youths who were interviewed and their birth families. The point is, most of these youths are strongly tied to their parent(s), or maintain ties with other family members, despite having experienced severe problems because of poor parental parenting skills when both parent and child were younger. Only a few of the respondents were estranged from their parent(s) because of ongoing substance abuse by the parent. Most of the youths were also

<sup>22</sup> Examples include, “raising me, my mom—single parent, big family, we’re alive, drinking, food.”
positively connected to other relatives. Only the one 13-year old living in foster homes because of his mother’s behavior was not living with a family member or on his own as a young adult. Many parents learned more successful ways of living as they matured and may serve as examples of having turned their lives around, according to the reports of their sons and daughters. This may be part of the mysterious process of “aging out” of self- and other-hurting behavior and drug or alcohol abuse we would like to find ways of hastening.

As with most adolescents, the respondents to the questions in this study have complex relationships with members of the opposite sex. Of 99 individuals who answered questions about that issue, 42 said they do not have a girlfriend or a boyfriend. Six of 11 girls have a boyfriend, and 51 of 88 boys have a girlfriend. Two 13-year old males said they had a girlfriend, but the other respondents in such relationships are 15 years of age or older. More of these youths have a girlfriend or boyfriend than not by the time they reach age 17 or older. The four married respondents (all male) were age 21 or older.

Some of the narrative responses indicate the nature of the relationships from a male point of view. Some male respondents mentioned “settling down” as a result of being married, and making a change from making their own decisions to making decisions jointly with a wife or girlfriend, now that he has a relationship or a child. Some of the comments about girlfriends included, “I don’t have a girlfriend. I see people with girlfriends and they seem to always be arguing.” “Girlfriend? Used to, but I kicked her to the curb.”

Of 100 respondents who answered the question of whether they had children, 19 said they did, for a total of 32 children. The following distribution was found:

- One 17-year old unmarried female with 1 child
- Nine males (2 married) with one child each (the youngest respondent was 17)
• Seven males (none married) with 2 children each (the youngest was 19)
• One married male, 23 years old, with 3 children
• One male (unmarried but living with a girlfriend), 28-years old, with 5 children.

Several male respondents said they were living with a girlfriend who had children and caring for her children even though they were not his own. The interview narratives and quantitative data give the impression that the Navajo gang-involved young men are more responsible than might be expected. Although many reported having gang or crew affiliation to get sexual access to young women, and several reported having children they do not support, most form relationships and care for the children of those relationships. The high level of acceptance of the duty to care for children indicates the strong Navajo value of care for the family and the persistence of that cultural value among members of emergent youth gangs in the Navajo Nation.

Peer relationships are linked to gang involvement, and they were an important dimension of the daily life of the study’s respondents. When asked who they grew up with and what they got out of being in a gang or crew, relationship with peers was a major factor respondents regularly cited. Friendship and peer relations were predominant factors mentioned in narratives about what led to initial involvement in a gang or crew. Numerous respondents said these kinds of things: “I grew up with these guys.” “I grew up with a bunch of gang-bangers—I was brought into the gang by friends.” “My friends were doing it so I did it. My friends started the gang.” Thirty-three respondents said that one of the significant benefits they got from being in their gang or crew was friendship. Another motivating factor they mentioned for gang involvement was belonging to something. They described gang involvement as a natural function of growing up and hanging out in the neighborhood—of “being born into the gang;” belonging to a
particular group; the gang or crew being a group that sticks together; and helping each other and watching each other’s back. Many described their gang as a strong organization of friends that cannot be splintered and a setting where people do not backstab each other. These peer relationships are tied into the larger family network, because many of the peers and friends are also cousins and clan relations. Sixteen respondents mentioned growing up with their friends and 38 growing up with their cousins. Several respondents also described their gang as a family: “having an empty feeling inside before the gang,” and being “my first real family—taught me about trust and respect.”

Some respondents described gang involvement as a negative factor in peer relationships. One said, “Joining the gang was a mistake because it gets me in trouble and I can’t even make good friends with other kids.” Another said, “It’s hard finding out your cousin is in another gang. Most of my cousins are in different sets in the city.” There is a lower level of exclusive gang relationship in reservation-based gangs. One youth said, “Cobras and Dragons used to hang out and be friends. I’m still friends with gang members from many different gangs based on childhood friendship.” Some gang-involved youths are able to move outside their particular gang to maintain friendships with non-gang youth or members of other gangs, but gang involvement was a major factor in forming friendships outside the gang.

Respondents were asked several questions about their school history, including:

- Whether they were currently in school, and if not, why;
- Whether they had been expelled or suspended, and if so, how often and why;
- How many schools they had attended;
- Their general opinion of school, teachers, counselors and principals; and
- How the schools had treated them.

Several respondents spoke in detail about their school experience, and those narratives
give insight into contextual and emotional aspects of their educational world. Aside from a few outstanding students, the school careers of most respondents ranged from dismal to mediocre, even for those who remained in school.

Regarding school status, 26% of respondents stated they had dropped out of school, 53% were attending school, 13% graduated, 6% were not in school but intended to graduate, and 2% had some form of self-motivated, independent study.

Table 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>NOT IN SCHOOL</th>
<th>IN SCHOOL</th>
<th>GRADUATED</th>
<th>PLAN TO GRADUATE</th>
<th>SELF EDUCATION</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the numbers are small, they suggest that the ages when these youths begin to leave school without graduating are between 13 and 16 years old. That pattern of dropping out is
common among American adolescents in general. However, we need to know more about why these youths drop out. To what extent is it because they cannot compete with other students, due to some kind of learning deficit requiring an assessment and special education? To what extent is their behavior such that they are pushed out or made to feel unwelcome? To what extent might gang or crew membership or perceptions of such membership cause overreaction or pushing out by school management?

Another line of comparison between gang and crew membership is one’s gang or crew status compared to school status:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFILIATION</th>
<th>NOT IN SCHOOL</th>
<th>IN SCHOOL</th>
<th>GRADUATED</th>
<th>PLAN TO GRADUATE</th>
<th>SELF-EDUCATION</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gang-involved student dropout rate was 27.8%, compared with a crew member dropout rate of 15.8%. The rates of those in school showed a similar pattern of 52.2% gang members enrolled in school, and 61.5% of crew members who were enrolled. The rates for those who planned to graduate but who were not currently enrolled and those who were in some kind of self-training program were the same. Gang involvement put students at a higher risk of dropping out of school than crew membership.

There was a minimal difference in responses of how either gang- or crew-involved youths felt about their treatment by the school staff and administrators. Gang-involved youths
were less likely to be left alone by staff and administrators (4%) as compared with crew members (10%), but the proportion of gang-involved students who had problems with the way they were treated (47%) was only slightly higher than the percentage of crew members who felt they were treated badly (40%). Slightly more crew members (40%) felt they received acceptable treatment in school, compared with 36% of gang-involved youth who were comfortable with their treatment in school.

Table 46

Gang or Crew Status and Perceptions of Treatment in School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>GOOD/O.K</th>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>LEFT ALONE</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The positive opinions of both gang and crew members about the school experience (“O.K., cool, Ok before gang membership, it’s a party, easy”) were roughly comparable and represent the feelings of approximately 50% of both groups. Negative opinions of school (“teachers bad, boring, sucks, hard, too many rules”) were held by 34% of gang-involved respondents and 25% of crew members.
Table 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = Teachers O.K  
B = Bad  
C = Boring  
D = Sucks  
E = Cool  
F = O.K, pre-gang  
G = It’s a party  
H = It’s easy  
I = It’s hard  
J = Too many rules  
K = Other

The respondents were asked their opinions of their teachers, counselors, vice principals and principals. Responses to this question were combined for gang and crew-involved youth.

Table 48

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’re cool/all right</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some good/some bad</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’re assholes</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t get along with them</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 49

Opinions of Principal(s)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They’re cool/all right</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some good/some bad</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’re assholes</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t deal with him much</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 50

Opinions of Counselors

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They’re cool/all right</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some good/some bad</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’re assholes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t deal with them much</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Counselors got the highest rating, with nearly half the respondents having a positive opinion of their counselors. About 20% of the students had no experience with a counselor. Only 18% of counselors received a bad rating. Teachers were fairly well-regarded, with one-third being rated highly and another third having the mixed reaction, “some good-some bad.” Principals and vice principals, who are responsible for administration and discipline, received the lowest rating.

Some of the students elaborated on why they didn’t like school personnel:

- They target gang members first when something happens—they give us a bad reputation.

- They treat you by the way you look—nonmember associates are treated as full-fledged gang members—and accuse you of illegal activities.
• They give us no respect—they think we are wannabes. They consider us as one and not as individuals—if one messes up, then they blame all of us.

• They treat me like hell—no respect—white man on your back talking shit.

• I think it sucks because they mainly focus on smart or athletic people—not gang members. Schools show disrespect because they think we’re negative.

• School sucks ‘cause there are too many fucking assholes around. Counselors only care about jocks and bitches—I don’t give a fuck about school, just about weed and girls.

• They watch us all the time.

• They don’t push academics on the reservation.

• They put us aside and they really don’t want to listen.

• They want me out.

• They hate the Cobras—you can’t wear green and black but other gang members wear their colors.

• Too strict—it’s beginning to look like prison with all the security.

• Most rules deal with the gangs—all the rules they make are kind of dumb—everybody breaks them all the time.

• I tried to break a lot of school rules to see what would happen and to see if I got caught.

• Different from other people because I was expelled.

• If a gang member gets the best of school authority, they will expel you.

• Teachers are racists.

• Some teachers did not help me at all. Three teachers tried to help me—others were just fucking with me.

• Got into an argument...got swatted—I said, that’s all? and got swatted again.
• Counselors get paid for nothing—they didn’t care.

• Teachers get mad because I’m always doing crazy shit. They take me to DARE meetings to try to get me out of the gang.

• School was too crowded—it was easy to ditch because of the open campus.

• There were a bunch of taggers—it was a big game. A lot of kids would sell drugs at school (Albuquerque). At Window Rock the teachers didn’t care to teach.

There were also positive comments about school personnel:

• They help me—they see me trying to turn my life around.

• I’m trying to learn something before my brains are gone.
  • I’m trying to stay out of trouble.

• School was cool because I was in football.

• School was fun—I like seeing my friends everyday.

• It is boring but you need it. If you want to get anywhere in life you need an education.

• I thought it was a waste of time, but as it turns out, it wasn’t.

• School is good, it keeps you out of trouble and gives you an education for the future.

• It’s cool—it’s like going to work.

• Teachers go out of their way to help you.

• I gave the teachers respect because they were teaching us the basics of how to start our lives.

• You got to be straight with him (the principal). You tell him the truth he will be cool and help you out. He gives you opportunities.

There were also mixed messages about school personnel:

• Teachers and/or counselors wanted to help me, but I couldn’t control myself or I
didn’t want to learn.

- I didn’t give a shit ‘til I was a Junior.
- I like school but just one teacher likes me.
- It was fun. It was important and I knew that. I regret that I dropped out. I should have stayed in school.
- School’s alright if you go but if you miss, you miss out on a lot. It is hard if you drop out.
- I would like to see younger gang members back in school.
- I was in jail for 15 days. I would have been longer but the school got me out.
- I was kicked out of school in 10th grade for fighting—I miss school and wish I could go back.
- I left school because I couldn’t get a ride to and from [lives in a gang household].
- School treats me pretty cool—I get away with a lot.
- Other schools denied me an education but this school [an alternative school] I’m at is all right.
- Detention was pretty cool—that’s where I was almost everyday.
- School was a place to hang out—get drugs and girls.
- My extra-curricular activity is getting high and waiting for after-school fights.

Some respondents made negative comments about the presence of gangs in school:

- I couldn’t handle school because other gang members trip at school and I got in too many fights. Schools are cool but it was me because I did some stupid shit.
- School was cool—I liked school until I started messing with the gangs and I got into a lot of trouble. I began not to care about school.
- It’s all good but some punks like to start shit.
- I got involved with a bad crowd [at Gallup High School]. It took me an extra year
At Window Rock High it was hard to get acquainted with people because they didn’t understand my Phoenix slang.

In rank order the respondents liked science and mathematics classes, followed by physical education, English and history.

Table 51

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing (none)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood shop</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welding</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students liked several extracurricular activities—primarily sports. However, 35% reported no involvement in any extracurricular activity. Very few respondents reported being engaged with school or participating at an involved level. One respondent, who was described as a hard core member responsible for starting his gang, said that he is currently a youth program
leader and university student. He was on his high school student council before graduating.

Respondents reported high levels of suspensions and expulsions for a range of activities, some very minor and others quite serious. The following table compares the respondent’s age with suspension. It was rare for a gang-involved youth to never have been suspended, and gang members are suspended at much higher rates than crew members (90% of gang members had been suspended compared to 77% of crew members).

Table 52

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reasons for suspension were:

- Fighting
- Weapons
- Drugs, alcohol
- Tagging the school
- Stealing
- Vandalism
- Bomb threat
- Gang activity at school
- Almost starting a riot
- Absenteeism, walking out of class
- Talking back, cussing
- Sleeping in class
- Dress code violations

The following tables show the respondents’ expulsions, but we did not ask how often each had been expelled. Expulsion rates are higher for gang-involved respondents than for crew members. Their expulsion rate is lower than that for suspensions, but it is still very high.

Table 53

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Half of all gang-involved students had been expelled, and half had not. As for crew members, 31% had been expelled, and 69% had not. The grounds for expulsion were:

- Fighting, assault
- Weapon on school campus
- Dealing drugs, assault and battery
- Fighting with a teacher and selling drugs
- Causing damage to the school
- Ditching and robbing houses on school day and getting chased by the cops
- Breaking into a house and causing damage
- Bomb threat
- Drinking on campus
- Coming to school drunk
- Gang activity at school
- Wearing colors and having too many tattoos
- Forging a pass
- Missing detention
- Bad attitude (after suspension for marijuana smoking on campus)

One of the hypotheses explored through the gang member questionnaire was that the total number of schools attended in different locations would be related to poor academic experiences. This assertion appears not to be sustained by the collected data. Several respondents reported attending schools in as many as eight places, and three-quarters of the respondents said they had attended schools in two to four locations. No association between the number of schools attended and school completion can be made. The number of locations of the schools attended is related to the mobility of these youths and their families, who have moved extensively between the Navajo Reservation and off-reservation cities. That is related to the
importation of urban gangs to the Navajo Nation.

The information collected on school histories and attitudes toward school show a pattern of troubled educational experiences. Respondents were suspended and expelled at high rates, and nearly one-third left school before graduation. They had poor attitudes about school, and perceived that the schools had poor attitudes about them. The attitudinal situation is somewhat better for crew members in comparison with gang-involved youths. An association can be made between gang membership and risk of school failure. It may be related to the perception by students that school staffs do not want gang-involved youth in their schools. School completion rates are poor. One researcher established that the dropout rate for 629 Navajo students in two high schools over a six year period (school years 1984-1989) was 41% (Deyhle 1995). She suggests that school success and failure are related to processes of racial conflict in the larger community and a lack of expectation by Navajo students that completing high school will lead to meaningful employment. She also noted that Navajo students who are more secure in their traditional culture are more likely to achieve success in school and their vocation.

The next subject we explored was employment. Respondents were asked if they had worked in the prior year, how many jobs they held, what kind of work they had done, how many hours they worked each week, and how much they earned. Nearly two-thirds of the group had worked in the prior year, as shown by the following tables:
**Table 55**

Employment in the Prior Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did not work</th>
<th>35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in general</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, 1 job</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, 2 jobs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, 3 jobs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, 4+ jobs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 56**

Kinds of Jobs

| Unskilled | 33 |
| Skilled | 24 |
| Maintenance | 4 |
| Job program | 17 |
| Other | 1 |
| Total | 79 |

Only respondents who were age 16 or older reported having more than one job during the prior year. The following table compares the respondent’s age and whether they worked in the prior year. Except for 16 and 17-year old respondents, who were nearly evenly divided between working (48%) and not working (52%), age 18 is the threshold year where the number of respondents who had worked the prior year began to exceed the number who did not work.
Table 57

Age and Work the Prior Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>DID NOT WORK</th>
<th>WORKED</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The work experience of gang-involved youth as compared with crew members is similar to educational involvement, with crew members reporting higher proportions of having worked.

Table 58

Gang and Crew Status and Employment the Past Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>DID NOT WORK</th>
<th>WORKED</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

121
Among gang-involved individuals, 37% did not work during the prior year, and 63% had worked. The two crew members who did not work were 15% of their group, while the 11 who did work were 85%.

There were some differences between gang-involved respondents and crew members regarding the kind of work they did during the previous year, with a larger percentage of crew members involved in job programs.

Table 59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>GANG</th>
<th>CREW</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job program</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forty-two percent of gang and crew members performed unskilled labor, while 31% of gang-involved individuals were skilled laborers, as compared with 25% of crew members. In contrast, 33% of crew members worked in job programs, while only 19% of gang members held such jobs. The maintenance category had both skilled and unskilled positions. Fifteen respondents (16 jobs) worked in a summer youth employment program operated through the local chapter house, Navajo Nation Government or other government agencies. One 25-year old respondent was a government worker. The higher proportion of summer youth employment and the lower proportion in skilled jobs for crew members likely reflects their younger ages. Of 67 jobs where wages and hours were reported, 54% were full-time jobs of 40 working hours per week.
Thirteen jobs called for more than 40 hours per week, and 18 were for fewer hours. Wages were low because of the predominance of unskilled and summer youth employment. The amount earned per hour, compared with the kind of job, yields these findings:

- Unskilled job wages range from $3.00 to $8.00 per hour;
- Skilled job wages included those for one waitperson-restaurant manager who earned $3.15 per hour [plus tips?], and the remainder of those who were paid skilled labor rates earned between $5.55 and $16.00 per hour;
- Maintenance job wages ranged from $2.50 to $5.75 per hour; and
- Job program wages were from $4.25 to $8.00 per hour.

Table 60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAGES PER HOUR</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2.50 to $3.75</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4.25 to $4.87</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5.00 to $5.95</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6.00 to $6.50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7.00 to $7.50</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8.00 to $8.50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$9.50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$11.50 to $12.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15.00 to $16.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that almost two-thirds of all respondents had worked some time during the past year, that is not evidence that they were working on a regular basis. We did not ask if the respondent was currently working, how long they worked, or if they had a regular job.

Interview notes indicate that at least five respondents had regular, full-time, and ongoing
employment. One was regularly employed part-time, and six said that they dealt drugs regularly. All other employment appeared to be seasonal and sporadic. Some of the responses that show a lack of regular work are related to the high mobility of the respondents. Several said they had been working regularly somewhere else. The employment picture for these youths is best for teenagers who are interested in summer youth program employment and for older respondents with some skills.

Overall, the data collected on this topic show that there are differences in the families, peer relations, school experiences, and employment history between Navajo youths who are involved in gangs and crews in the Navajo Nation. The families of gang-involved youths are more dysfunctional, with higher levels of drinking, illegal activity, and more serious family conflict. Gang-involved youths are less likely to be in school and to complete school, and less likely to have employment. They are also more likely to remain involved with a gang for a longer period of time.

E. AGE OF INITIAL INTEREST IN GANGS AND FORMAL INITIATION

The study respondents seemed to be aware of the gravity of their choice to join a gang. The difficulty in making this decision appears to be reflected in the length of time they reported between starting to hang out with a gang and the point in time when they joined, in relation to the time respondents indicated they began to hang out with a crew and when they joined. The 74 gang member respondents who answered the question of how old they were when they started to hang out with, and when they joined the gang averaged 23 months between the act of beginning to hang out and joining. The 16 crew members reported an average of 9 months between beginning to hang out and joining.
### Table 61

**Time Between Starting to Hang Out and Joining the Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN JOINED</th>
<th>GANG</th>
<th>CREW</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately</td>
<td>Hung ages 1-23 (25)</td>
<td>Hung ages 13-15 (6)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After one year</td>
<td>Hung ages 9-18 (13)</td>
<td>Hung ages 14-17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After two years</td>
<td>Hung ages 8-20 (14)</td>
<td>Hung at age 15 (1)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After three years</td>
<td>Hung ages 9-16</td>
<td>Hung at age 12 (1)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After four years</td>
<td>Hung ages 6 &amp; 11 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After five years</td>
<td>Hung at age 8 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After seven years</td>
<td>Hung at birth &amp; 5 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After nine years</td>
<td>Hung at age 9 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After ten years</td>
<td>Hung at age 5 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After eleven years</td>
<td>Hung at age 5 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Crew members started hanging out with their crew when they were older, and the youngest was age 12. They also stopped hanging out when they were younger, and the oldest was 17. Gang members started to hang out with their gang at younger ages, with one starting at birth (“I was born into the gang”), and stopped hanging out at age 23. Joining behavior is similar, but youth tended to hang out longer before joining a gang. More than half of the crew members (56%) joined between the ages of 15 and 16. A similar proportion (59%) of gang members joined between the ages of 13 to 16.

The patterns of initiations for joining the group also differ between gangs and crews. Thirteen crew members responded to the question of how they were initiated into their crew: 10 (77%) had no initiation, because the crews were formed by a group of friends who decided to
formalize their group. One crew member was beaten; another stated that initiates had to perform a criminal act; and one refused to comment. Eleven gang members said they had no formal initiation (16%) since they were involved in starting the gang. In contrast, 49 gang-involved youths reported having to endure a physical assault (72%); two were required to commit a criminal act; and one reported engaging in group sex. Five would not reveal what their initiation entailed. Almost all of the initiations involving physical assault required the initiate to be beaten by four or five gang members for some time without defending himself or herself. Three respondents reported running a gauntlet as the centerpiece of their initiation. That involved running unprotected through a double line of gang members (usually ten on each side), while they hit the initiate with their fists.

F. INTERESTS

Another working hypothesis explored in this study was that Navajo youths involved in gangs would be heavily influenced by popular youth culture and its glamorization of “gangsta culture.” The questions to assess that topic asked about the respondents’ favorite movies, television programs regularly watched, and magazines regularly read. They were asked who they looked up to, what kinds of community activities they participated in, and what social activities they attended.

The electronic media the respondents liked varied widely. The following table shows favorite movies (for those who watched them).
More than two-thirds (68%) liked gang-banging or action movies or both.

The respondents’ interests in music were similar, but their interest in music which is related to gang-banging was higher, with 85% saying they listened to rap or hip-hop.

Table 63

Music Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KIND OF MUSIC</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rap/Hip-Hop</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rap + Other</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All kinds</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old School</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was an indication of a less specific influence or interest in gangsta culture in the
television shows the respondents preferred to watch. That may be due to the lack of gang culture-specific television shows (other than movies or specials). The Music Television Channel (“MTV”) plays a great deal of the music the respondents prefer, and exposure to MTV may have influenced the youth culture which is associated with the growth of Navajo Nation gangs in the 1990s. While MTV was watched by 21% of the respondents, a much higher percentage of respondents indicated they did not watch television at all. A few of the respondents said they did not watch television because they did not have cable and could not receive it, but most said they did not watch television because they were not interested in it.

Table 64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHOW</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t watch television</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedies</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-American comedies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpsons</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTV</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination, including MTV</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination, but not MTV</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police drama</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (news, cartoons, educational)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing in particular</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The magazines the respondents said they liked to read included some gangsta culture
periodicals. Hispanic gang members are interested in building, driving, and showing “lowrider”\textsuperscript{23} cars, and \textit{Lowrider Magazine} is the primary publication for that culture. \textit{Vibe} and \textit{Source} are the leading Rap-Hip Hop music magazines on the market. More of the respondents read \textit{Vibe} and \textit{Source} and listened to Rap and Hip Hop music that those who watched MTV on television. While MTV is associated with gangsta culture and may popularize it, that channel does not appear to be interesting or influential with these respondents.

Table 65

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAGAZINE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowrider Magazine</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibe</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other music magazines</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other car magazines</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoo</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti arts magazines</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reading material</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many respondents expressed an interest in sports when answering several of these questions. Thirteen said that they participated in community sports activities. When they were

\textsuperscript{23} A “lowrider, as it is with the American “hot rod” culture, is a vehicle that has been customized and modified. The “low” refers to modifying a vehicle’s suspension and putting small wheels on it to make it ride low to the ground.
asked about interests in school, 16 said that physical education was their favorite class, and 45 reported sports as the extracurricular activity they chose. When they were asked what activities their gang or crew participated in, 11 said it participated in sports. When asked what they would like to see changed in the area where they live, several said they would like to see more organized sports activities and facilities for young people.

We also sought to assess the influence of popular youth culture by asking whom the respondents admired. Their responses did not suggest any predominant influence of gangsta culture by the people they named. Of 95 who answered the question, 30% reported looking up to a family member. The proportion of crew members who had admired their parents was higher for the group, while gang-involved youth admired other family members at a higher rate. Another 16% of all respondents said they admired a friend or a fellow member (a “homie”). Proportionally more of the crew members admired fellow crew members that did gang members. Only 9% of respondents named a celebrity as being a primary role model, and the rate was the same for crew members and gang-involved youths. Some, but not all, of the celebrities named were rap artists. Others were athletes. The largest response was that the respondent admired no one, appearing to make a strong statement of social alienation. That response was higher for gang-involved youths. One respondent stated the feelings of gang members by saying, “No one ever helped me out with nothing.” Another reflection of alienation among gang-involved youths was that 13% of that group only admired themselves.
The “other” category includes traditional Navajo heroes, successful but not famous Indians, and mentors.

The answers to questions about media interests and role models give a mixed conclusion about a hypothesis that Navajo youth gang members were influenced by non-Navajo media portrayals of gangsta culture. The respondents consumed gangster culture via movies, magazines and music. Television was not a preferred medium for gangsta culture, and rap artists and gangsta celebrities were not named as role models. The respondents were more interested in sports as participants than as spectators, and only 5% reported watching sports on television.
G. **IDENTITY AND MULTIPLE MARGINALIZATION**

Self and group identity is a basic part of adolescent development, the period of life when an individual makes the transition from being a child to becoming an adult. The questions to address that process include, “who am I (including gender identity), whom do I belong with, what kind of person am I and what kind of person do I want to be, what activities do I like, what shall I do with my time, whom shall I associate with, who are we collectively and who is not part of our group?” Young people try to answer and resolve those questions as they pass through adolescence. Under normal circumstances, most youths identify closely with their family, and the question “who am I?” is resolved as, “I am like the people I live with.” Group identity flows from that basic identity. Whether the outcome is positive or negative, prosocial or antisocial, the values and behaviors that are associated with the family are the ones adopted by young people.

Identity, and its creation, is not simple for many youths. Given various kinds of structural impediments, appropriate socialization may not occur in the family. That can leave a child in a developmental void where socialization develops through other means, including street and popular culture (Vigil 1996). Many American youths are affected by the marginalization of their natal or birth group from the majority culture. There are several marginalizing forces that affect the development of Navajo and other Indian youths. They include poverty, socialization on the streets of agency towns, the loss of connection with Indian culture and community,

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24 Our “identity” is who we think we are and what we want to be like—our persona, which is developed by the people and ideas we identify with. “Marginalization” is the process of excluding or putting people at the margins of society, through classifications based on race, ethnicity, wealth, culture, and other factors. The marginalization is “multiple” when there are several different reasons for excluding people or self-exclusion (Ed.).
alienation from tribal government and institutions (including chapter level ones), a lack of connection to prosocial peers, negative and delinquent peer influence, and identification with popular youth culture. There is “a vicious cycle [that is] perpetuated through the family, through the community, and through the schools” (Wilson 1987: 37). An examination of the factors that drive multiple marginality gives additional insight into the development of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation. This section addresses factors of ethnic, peer, family, school, and community identity as a framework to understand the multiple marginality experienced by the youth respondents in this study.

The last half of the 20th century was characterized by the emigration of several ethnic populations to post-colonial western nations. Those are the areas, primarily in the Americas and the Pacific, that Europeans invaded, subjugated indigenous peoples, and settled. “Post-colonial” refers to this process of those areas breaking loose from the colonizing European power. There has been a major resurgence of Indian populations and Indian nations during the same period. Indian populations have grown from an all-time low in total numbers in the 1890s to revival, and there has been an explosion of the numbers of youths in Indian Country. Indian birth rates tend to be higher than the general population, and that leads to large youth cohorts (a “cohort” being set by decades of age) and large youth populations. Whether such is the product of choice or systematic rejection by the majority society, many groups, particularly people of color, maintain separate ethnic and cultural identities. There is a “persistence of culture” where distinct groups maintain their basic cultural values. The persistence of ethnic identity has

25 The term “post-colonial” refers to the situation in countries which had been colonized by other powers but gained their independence. There is a school of thought called “post-colonial studies.” A great deal of the studies focus upon state treatment of people of color (including Indians) and minorities (Ed.).
prompted studies which address conflicts between the majority or popular culture of the country as a whole and separate ethnic identities. There is consensus that traditional institutions such as schools and the workplace, which helped formed a common identity for young people from emigrant ethnic cultures, have lost their legitimacy. There is “no longer a sense of ‘whole culture’ with allocated places and a shared, universal value system to help structure the passage into settled adulthood. No longer can we be blind to the ‘whiteness’ of our major traditional public sources of identity” (Willis, et al. 1990: 12).

In earlier times, schools were the social institution that served to “assimilate immigrants and prepare them for work in an industrial United States. Hard work, English and a little luck were all that was really needed to make it” (Hagedorn 1988: 44-45). Today, there are no longer factory jobs for unskilled workers—there are only minimum wage fast food and service jobs for those who do not read, read well, or have a good grasp of the English language. Polk states:

Data from more recent years suggest an ominous change, and a new pattern whereby the lower status channels lead either to no employment or to entrapment in the lower levels of a dual labor market, a level that consists of marginal, low-paid, often part-time jobs that provide little in terms of training for the future or access to advancement. This situation is creating a new class of marginal youth. [Polk 1984: 467-469]

Given that economic situation, youths who are having problems in school, or who are frustrated by their experience there, see little advantage in staying in school and graduating from high school. Young people in economically-depressed communities see that the low-level, low-paying, dead end jobs of the few employed adults are not worth pursuing or, if taken, require them to abandon the American dream (reinforced in popular media) of being economically successful because those kinds of jobs cannot achieve the dream. In that kind of situation, where there is no real economic choice and exclusion from the American dream, the attractions of
drugs, crime and gangs are a powerful alternative. Instead, illegitimate activities are an avenue for youths to show competence and independence in supporting themselves.

Policy makers recognized the unavailability of legal work as an institution to build identity, then looked to the need for interventions based on ethnic or racial pride to improve the self-esteem and identity of youths. That recognition and work began in the 1970s. However, one comprehensive study which explored the characteristics of effective youth organizations concluded that ethnic identity was of minimal importance to youths engaged in the process of building an identity “that could get a young person somewhere in the immediate community. Ethnic labels could mean something only later on; achieving a sense of belonging and of knowing that they could do something and be someone in the eyes of others had to come first” (Heath and McLaughlin 1993: 6).

The informal interviews we conducted revealed a sense of pride by gang-involved youths in being Indian first, and then Navajo—to a much lesser extent. Their identity at ages 15 through 18 revolves around Pan-Indian concepts, and they focused on their larger group identity as the original inhabitants of America. Heath and McLaughlin (1993) also found that ethnic identity alone is inadequate to provide a comprehensive support network and the conditions of identity that are necessary for youths to resist the pressures of gang violence and drugs. That is the situation of the young people who were interviewed for this study.

Young people, and particularly ethnic youths with minimal access to employment, use leisure activities rather than work to build an identity. Young people pursue the symbolic work of creating an identity in leisure activities, primarily consuming the entertainment media of the electronic age. Music is a medium young people use to create identity. Many young people are
attracted by rap music, which reflects economic powerlessness, racial domination, the despair of urban life, police harassment of youth and minorities, gender conflict, and sexuality. It also offers connections of historical place, spirituality, and mutual oppression (Willis, et al 1990).

The choice of clothing style is an experiment with identity or states identity. Clothing may be the first signal a young person uses to demonstrate his or her new identity as a street gang member or an associate. “Saggin’ and baggin’” clothing styles and “gangsta rap” music from diverse ethnic groups shows how insignificant ethnic identity is to many youths in the late 1990s and the new century. Popular commercial culture allows alienated youths to explore “the gap between lived experience and human hopes in a world with too many broken promises and too many unrealized dreams” (Lipsitz 1990: 177).

Youths who are alienated from school and shut out of work can explore and create identity through popular culture and proclaim their own alienation by identifying with despised groups, such as the Latino gang cholos of Los Angeles or African-American street gangs, using music and costume. The evolution of rock-and-roll music was a process of creating a “unity of disunity” derived from African-American, Latino, Anglo and other musical sources (Lipsitz 1990: 139). George Lipsitz wrote a historical review of popular culture in post-World War II America, and said that “marginalized cultures can insinuate their oppositional values into the texts of popular culture and create allies among people with similar though not identical experiences” (1990: 253). Music, a large part of popular culture, has long been a means to create collective identity and build a social force, e.g. the hidden protests of Black slave spirituals, union organizing, protest songs, civil rights and anti-war songs. Lipsitz expands on that concept, saying, “Popular culture routinely provides opportunities for escaping the parochialisms and
prejudices of our personal worlds, for expanding our experience and understanding by seeing the world through the eyes of others” (1994: 160). The music industry blended a variety of indigenous musical sources during the last decades of the last century and created a “shared cultural space” that is not dependent upon shared geography, but instead uses commercial space which replaced the “lost public sphere” (Lipsitz 1994: 6).

That shared cultural space appeals to alienated ethnic youths, including Navajos, who are creating an identity outside their traditional society, and who tend to see their traditional society as not rooted (with implications of strength and foundation), but stuck in the past, with little relevance for the problems those youths are facing in the present. One of the most important musical genres of the new, global, cultural space is “hip hop” culture. That includes break dancing, graffiti, B (“breaker”) boy fashion, Djaying (the creative mixing of recorded music), beat boxing, or freestyling with the mouth. The rap musical form originated in the 1970s and evolved into “gangsta rap” in the 1980s. The hip hop culture needs to be understood to appreciate its attractions and association with the youth gangs that emerged in the early 1990s, and the identification of some Navajo youths with that genre of popular culture.

According to Lipsitz, hip hop culture is based in a Subsaharan African musical tradition, which:

Expresses a form of politics perfectly suited to the post colonial era. It brings a community into being through performance, and it maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion, and despair created by the austerity economy of post-industrial capitalism. [Lipsitz 1994: 36]

The hip hop musical form is “participatory, collective, and collaborative. Rhythms are layered on top of one another as a dialogue [that] raises challenges to Western notions of musical (and social) other. [Hip hop] is the deployment of oral traditions in an age of electronic
reproduction” (Lipsitz 1994: 37). The contemporary American hip hop culture is the creation of inner-city youth, including Latino, Black Caribbean and African immigrant youth of the 1970s and 1980s who were pushed out of schools facing budget cuts, unserved by urban bureaucracies cutting back on services, and mistrusted by merchants and neighborhood institutions. Given that they were not wanted by their communities, hip hop creators turned to the wider world, and particularly African history and its images, to develop a music that resisted global race and class (and sometimes gender) oppression. Hip hop has inspired other kinds of music and evolved on its own. One current hip hop DJ (disk jockey) told us that hip hop is now all jazz, with older music by Bob James being used to create beats.

Hip hop and breakdancing came to the Navajo Nation in the early 1980s. One study of a bordertown high school near the Navajo Nation focused on social identity and interaction among Anglo, Ute and Navajo adolescents and identified an alienated group of mostly Navajo breakdancers (Deyhle 1986). When that discovery was related to the lead gang ethnographer for this study, he said that breakdancing became popular with small groups across the Navajo Nation at about that time. Deyhle (1986: 112) described student involvement in break dancing as “a powerful support group for these Indian students. The clique dictated clothing and social stance. It offered its members both self-confidence and means for expressing success in an otherwise indifferent or negative school and community environment.” Students learned about breaker clothing styles and moves through movies, magazines and television. Deyhle conducted a follow-up study in the same community in 1990, and found that break dancing was no longer popular, and many former breakdancers were involved with heavy metal music, a music genre which is identified with “anger, distrust, sadness, powerlessness, and alienation [that] still
represented a resistance against White domination” (Dehyle 1988: 6). Rap music was the musical genre of choice for most of the respondents in this study. Of 102 of them, 87 said that rap or hip hop was their favorite music. Thirty-nine listened to another kind of music, and ten reported liking “all kinds” of music. Rap music was available on television in the 1980s when television cable services and MTV began airing music videos with rap artists (Nightingale 1993).

Max Roach, a jazz musician, described rapper LL Cool J’s music as militant. It focuses on rhythms rather than lyrics, and in that, Roach heard the sound of an army on the move. He said that despite the murders of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, “this new art form arises and the militancy is there in the music, the politics was in the drums” (quoted in Lipsitz 1994: 38). Lipsitz (1994) also identifies the attraction and energy of hip hop culture and rap music in ongoing exchanges of ideas, rhythms, melodies, images and histories among worldwide communities of the African diaspora, and countries around the globe in an era of postcolonial world capitalism. Some youth of the Navajo Nation participate and accept identity in a form of the music called gangsta rap.

Respondents who lived in urban centers were exposed to gangsta rap in the 1980s and 1990s at movies or while watching television or listening to CDs or cassette tapes. Respondents who lived in the Navajo Nation made an emotional connection with it when living in cluster housing projects where electricity, cable television or VCRs were available, or while living in dispersed homesites where electricity is produced by a generator to power a satellite dish. Young Navajos also learned the new musical style from friends who has access to those kinds of media.

Identification with particular forms of music and using the music of other cultures to
create identity fits within a long history of oppressed peoples identifying with elements of popular culture as a means of expressing and exploring new identities and confronting historical injustices. The successes of the Civil Rights, Black Power and anti-war movements of the 1960s and 1970s inspired and informed other people of color throughout the world as they struggle to overcome colonialism and oppression by outside forces of power.

The same kinds of forces and dynamics exist in the Navajo Nation. Individual Navajos, whether they are traditional, Anglo-acculturated, educated or not, are affected by the Navajo Nation’s colonial status and dependence. There are shared problems of dependence upon the Government of the United States for basic governmental services and employment, and reactions to colonialism in federal Indian policy also impacts Navajo youths. That dynamic affects them, and alienated young Navajos choose to identify with the strength, independence, cohesive values of loyalty and mutual support, and militant opposition to institutions of authority, as expressed in gangsta rap, with its anthems for American street gangs. That also means identifying with the anti-social behaviors of substance abuse, gang-banging, and terrorizing communities. We do not agree with the simplistic conclusion about youth crime that “rap music has become the central explanation for everything that’s wrong with youth today” (Kelly 1994:350). However, rap music is an emotionally strong and compelling attraction into one strain of popular culture adopted by youth who are in the process of creating identity and who are not able to successfully develop a satisfactory sense of identity through traditional Navajo culture. Many Navajos speak of their identification with the land—what happens when Navajos are moved off the land and into cluster housing in agency towns? Where are their roots of identification when that process happens?
Normative socialization and the development of self-identity by Navajo youths are a baseline for understanding the information provided by the gang and crew-involved youths who were interviewed for this study. “Normative” refers to norms or values, and “socialization” is group acceptance and the sharing of certain values. There is scant literature on the subject as it relates to Navajo youth. Although there is substantial literature on Navajo culture and society, little of it tells how to raise a healthy, self-actualized Navajo youngster (Bahr 1994).

Maureen Schwarz (1997) examines the positive adolescent socialization process for Navajo children to become Navajo adults in depth. One of the basic principles of Navajo pedagogy, or traditional teaching, is that “learning is accomplished by doing” (1997: xiv). That could be a clue to the rapid and widespread development of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation. Accepting that learning is based on practice—doing things—young people are attracted to gangsta culture by popular media, and quickly go about copying its lifestyles without learning their drawbacks. They acquire a popular lifestyle that seems attractive to them and put it into action, involving others to learn it as well.

Leighton and Kluckhohn studied Navajo children and identified common Navajo personality traits of “individualism, activity, curiosity, elasticity, and practicality” (quoted in Dinges, et al. 1979: 265). Although many young Navajos have not been specifically taught Navajo traditions or the language, things such as commonly-accepted personality traits are passed on to children, and young Navajos today still have them. Navajo Children’s Legal Services (1983) developed a document which describes age-related stages of childhood development. Ideally, Navajo child-rearing is primarily geared toward the promotion of self-discipline and independence in children. Parents and relatives are responsible to nurture and
guide children from before birth. As a child matures, he or she will begin to explore the environment through trial and error. That way, a child learns what is permissible and what is not as adults give verbal warnings about inappropriate behavior. A mother is expected to respond quickly to any expression of want by her child, to create a mother-child bond for a lifelong relationship. When there are problems with child-rearing within a family, it is unlikely that others will interfere. Parents are responsible for recognizing when they have a problem and to then seek help from relatives.

The ideal is for parents to teach their children to be self-disciplined and independent through an experiential process of the child’s trials and errors in an environment where even close relatives are reluctant to intervene. Aside from the argument about whether whipping or other forms of physical punishment are “traditional” in the Navajo culture, within extended families, there are relatives to make certain that the punishment of a child is appropriate and not excessive. Traditionally, families and relatives are there for children, and to help out when there are problems. However, it is not easy for relatives to look after their younger relatives when families are taken off the land, their patterns of communal living are disrupted, and parental abuse is possible when Navajos live in small family units. Child abuse and neglect, including excessive punishment, is a powerful factor in the emergence of delinquency, adult crime, and gang involvement.

Schools in the Navajo Nation are grounded in the general American culture, and non-Nativo teachers and administrators have different ideas and rules about the age at which children can make their own choices and the degree to which behavior can be legitimately controlled by adults. Differences in looking at children and teaching them can create conflict in a Navajo
child’s sense of self and create cognitive dissonance. Deyhle and LeCompte (1998), who are education anthropologists, say that Navajo culture integrates all aspects of development—cognition, moral development, and social development—in a unified approach to life experience and learning. Since a child’s gender role is a matter of concern much earlier in childhood development, there is little time between childhood and adulthood: “By age 15, girls and boys are socially and sexually mature; Navajos expect that their physically mature children will begin to exercise socially mature behavior and assume its consequences” (Deyhle and LeCompte 1998: 157). These are some of the expectations of Navajo adult and child relationships:

9 to 15 year olds:

- are becoming adults—they are adults after puberty;
- must learn to make their own decisions and assume the consequences;
- are acquiring understanding of what is in their best interest;
- should not be forced to do something they are unwilling to do.

Adults:

- do not control their children’s behavior;
- should not interfere in the behavior decisions of others, even their own children;
- can only provide suggestions and guidance for behavior;
- should discourage [but not prevent] sexual behavior among their children;
- should encourage gender segregated work/social activities, roles, and expectations among their children;
- show they care about their children by respecting their independence. [Deyhle and LeCompte 1998: 158]

In addition to egalitarian concepts of raising children to be independent, non-interference with children by parents, and non-interference with family problems by outsiders, Navajo culture reinforces the complementary value of group consensus, cooperation and collectiveness. A person who does not help relatives when they are expected to do so, for example, by assisting
with the costs and work of a ceremony and by attending a relative’s ceremony, is described as acting like he has no family (Lamphere 1977). Young Navajo parents who are unable or unwilling to become involved with reciprocal activities of helping extended relatives become isolated from them, and lose connections with the extended family that are important to rear children.

One of the most desired characteristics Navajo parents desire for their children is individual autonomy (Dinges, et al. 1979; Trotter, et al. 1997; Schwarz 1997; Deyhle and LeCompte 1994). Individual autonomy was identified as a cultural barrier to changing substance abuse problems (Trotter, et al. 1997). Those researchers also identified a generation gap between Navajo youth and adults as having a negative impact upon the development of interventions and proper channels of communication. Those are social forces which must be identified and remedied—whose fault is it if young Navajos have lost their culture and language? There is an old education maxim that “if the student has failed to learn, then the teacher has failed to teach.” Respect for elders may produce difficulties in communication about sensitive subjects across generations. There may be less difficulty in communications with other trusted seniors, particularly within the extended family, yet such communication is lost when the extended family is disrupted.

The goals of normative socialization for Navajo children include self-discipline, autonomy and independence, taking responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions, being reciprocal with and supportive of extended family members, and being modest and private about intimate matters. Where families are healthy, communities are well-integrated, and traditional culture is strong, the socialization process will produce well-adjusted individuals who will
adhere to the vision of Navajo society. However, where there are multiple marginalities (putting people outside the culture) caused by disruptions of the family structure and its support system, and disruptions of community structure and institutions, and ethnic group identity and tradition, failed mechanisms of socialization put youth at risk of identifying with gangs. Family, community, and ethnic group disruption have been identified as causes for the growth of youth gangs in the United States in general, and that also appears to be the situation in the Navajo Nation.

Most youths form their closest and earliest identity within their family. Identity formation and identification, can take place within families with many different structural configurations (e.g. single parent, as well as the nuclear family) and under differing socioeconomic conditions, including poverty. Most youths do not become involved with gangs when there are family problems, and no single dysfunctional factor which exists within the family causes a youth to identify with a street gang. However, when a combination of factors which prevent positive involvement with children are present, there is greatly reduced identification with the family. When those negative factors are present in urban settings and positive community organizations do not provide an alternative, youths may create their identity through street culture. The factors that can lead to a lessened or weak identity with family include:

- problematic socioeconomic factors (either affluence or poverty);
- single parent households with poor supervisory skills;
- the lack of responsible extended family members for support of both struggling parents and children;
- drug and alcohol abuse by parents;

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• lack of education;
• larger numbers of children [in today’s society];
• younger parents;
• a lack of involvement in traditional culture;
• the loss of ties to the larger family and community;
• parents with problems guiding their own lives;
• parental indifference and the general absence of adequate supervision (created by both parents working or a single parent who works—“latchkey children”);
• criminality among family members; and
• any form of child abuse or neglect.

Where children and young people do not, or cannot, identify with their family for those reasons, they are likely to identify with the values of a deviant family. Violence (as with domestic violence) is learned behavior, as are the other social ills that families can teach their children. To illustrate this and show how family identity, a lack of it, or a misplaced identity, can play out in the lives of children in poor settings, the following comments by this study’s respondents show these things well:

• I just want the alcohol to go (family to stop drinking). There was physical abuse related to alcohol, and uncles served time for DWI and murder.

• Everybody in the household drinks.

• Everyone over 18 drinks.

• We get along all right—just party all day. I grew up hardcore. I’m proud about family’s drinking. Dad served time for murder. Nobody makes decisions in the house—parents are probably jackin’ off—they don’t work.
• I’d like to see my mom stop drinking. I grew up in jails and shit—first time in around 12 or 13. I grew up with my grandmother, then with my aunt ‘til I was about 15, then started messin’ around on my own. No discipline—I just did what I wanted.

• Dad would drink and he beat on my mom. Dad used to fight all the time. I grew up in an abusive home with brothers and sisters—parents split up last year. Mom would whip me. Respondent is transient and stays with a series of relatives—everybody drinks where he stays and a number of his relatives do drugs.

• Step-dad worked and caroused, Mom was working all the time. I grew up on my own—me and my older sister grew up together, we just hung out.

• I grew up in a series of foster homes—my whole family drinks. Dad killed someone and went to prison.

Another important component in identity is the community and one’s identification with it. Research of peer socialization and education of Navajo youths shows that the local community is one of six major factors that influence their attitudes, behavior, and achievement in school (Dinges, et al. 1979: 282). The authors of that study note that most Indian communities are geographically isolated, do not provide access to money-producing jobs or to such educational institutions as libraries, and do not offer many models of success through education. Since few jobs are available to young people and given minimal contact with peers who have benefitted from education, the adolescent peer culture is likely to favor activities which produce excitement, pleasure, or escape from boredom. “The youth who grows up in a traditional Indian community, with respect for the traditional religious and ceremonial life, is likely to be well-adjusted to tribal life, but he may need very special help from his elders or from teachers to combine this kind of favorable adjustment with the skills and attitudes that make for economic success outside the local community” (Dinges, et al. 1989: 282). Very few of the respondents interviewed for this study said that they were either involved or interested in traditional Navajo
religious and ceremonial life. Only 14 of them said they knew their clans, were religious, participated in traditional religious activities, or believed that ceremonies worked. They have little formal grounding in Navajo culture. There was nothing they said in interviews to lead us to believe that they can get help from elders, teachers, or community members to connect them with Navajo tradition and the community.

Most of the respondents were alienated from the Navajo Nation’s formal institutions of social control. Of 96 respondents who were asked, “What is your opinion of Navajo Tribal government?” only two said that it was effective. Others made derogatory comments, such as “It’s like a gang, they’re criminals.”

Respondents asked how they were treated by Navajo Nation law enforcement said this:

- 54 reported that police were abusive;
- 11 said [of police] some were good, some were bad;
- 14 did not know or had no experience with the Navajo Nation Police;
- 5 said the police were crooked;
- 4 said the police need more training;
- 7 had positive comments about the Navajo Nation Police.

The comments about the Navajo Nation court system included these:

- 34 did not know or had no experience with the courts;
- 4 said the courts do not do anything;
- 15 said the courts need to be stricter;
- 19 said the courts treated them “poorly”;
- 19 had positive comments or said the courts were too strict.

Aside from having a low regard for and minimal identification with institutions of authority, most of the study respondents were not involved in affecting change by participation in Navajo Nation elections or chapter meetings. All 103 respondents replied to questions about voting and participation in such meetings. Approximately one-third (32) were registered to vote
or planned to vote, but only 9 said that they attended chapter meetings. While racial discrimination may affect a lack of ethnic group political participation in other places, that element is not present here. One-half of the study respondents reported having experienced racial problems, but more than 90% of those problems were described as happening with Anglos outside the Navajo Nation. Four respondents said they had experienced racial problems in the Navajo Nation, and three reported that racial problems “were everywhere.”

Another part of “community” is the predominance of cluster housing projects in the Navajo Nation. Generally, they are “socially marginal spaces where patterns of social disorganization sprout and flourish” (Vigil 1988: 18). James W. Zion, one of the participants in this study, was formerly the general counsel of the Navajo Housing Authority, and he suggested that cluster housing is a gang formation issue during the planning phase of this study. He stated that Navajo Nation Police officials had told him that they see the most severe crime problems in Navajo Housing Authority cluster projects. New projects are being built without regard to law enforcement, education, social services, or other needs associated with community identification. Local government is expected to provide those services, and federal funding does not cover government infrastructure expansion along with new or additional housing projects.

Another component in identity formation is peer socialization. The respondents in this study cited a lack of positive peer activities in their communities being a particularly important factor in their own and younger youths’ involvement in gangs. Involvement with delinquent, crew, or gang-involved peers is a major factor that influenced why and how they joined their crew or gang, and why they maintain intense identification with that group. The gang-involved peers with whom they identify are often related to them as brothers, cousins or both (in the
Navajo way of looking at relationships). Respondents frequently cited growing up with gang-involved friends, brothers or cousins, or growing up in an urban community where there were often African-American and Latino gangs. Some respondents spent much of their time immersed in street culture and associating with gang members in urban areas.

One of the most important public institutions in the Navajo Nation is the school systems. The respondents in this study cited gang involvement as a major factor in school failure. However, they were also keenly aware of the importance of education to their own long-term identity and success. They repeatedly mentioned education as a necessary ingredient for pursuing their long-term economic goals. Despite their identification with the importance and need for an education, formal and informal interviews gave a sense that schools were not environments where gang-involved youths were welcomed or made to feel comfortable. That raises the issue of schools pushing gang-involved youth out, as has been documented in other parts of the country.

Vigil studied several high schools in the Los Angeles area and found that “unlike the 1974 study, the 1988 restudy found no cholos or gang members in its sample at either [of two] schools studied. Yet the street gang activities and acts of violence had mushroomed in the 1980s. Thus it is clear that both schools had found more or less subtle ways to push out or otherwise discourage the cholo segment of the Chicano student population” (1997: 10). Curry and Decker (1998) discussed findings on the relationship between street gangs and schools in

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26 We say school “systems” in the plural, because there are many different kinds of schools in the Navajo Nation—those operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, “contract schools” operated with B.I.A. funding, state schools, and some private or parochial schools.
research efforts across the United States, and found that a process exists where schools push gang-involved youth out of educational settings due to the disruptions they cause in schools, and that gangs pull gang-involved youth out of school with demands for participation in gang activities. Where rival gangs are active in a school, students, whether involved with a gang or not, avoid school because they are intimidated by gang members and fear the violence of gang fights. Some of the respondents to this study said they did not attend school because they were picked on by rival gang members. The requirement of “being down” for the gang goes against school requirements and achievement in school, and obligate a youth to commit to an alternative culture and to frequently ditch school to participate in a gang fight (Curry and Decker 1998; Hagedorn 1988). There is a vicious cycle, where frustration with school pushes a youth into gang involvement, which fulfills his or her need for a sense of belonging and accomplishment, but increases problems with school and leads to dropping out and increasing gang involvement (Spergel 1995). Deyhle and LeCompte (1994) found that cultural differences in the way Navajo parents raise their children conflict with western child-rearing goals in border town and reservation schools are responsible for taking Navajo children out of the schools. There is a “labeling theory” (Lyons et al. 1998; Tsamis 1998; Sampson and Laub 1997; Adams 1996; Edwards 1993) which holds that Navajo youth who are described by Anglo educators as educationally unmotivated because of lengthy school absences to participate in ceremonies will accept that label and lose interest in an education system which is unable to see the value of maintaining traditional collective and traditional family obligations. Similarly, youths who are labeled as gang members by adults (such as teachers and school administrators) will live up to adult expectations and identify more strongly with their gang involvement.
When the factors of gang-involvement, differing modes of Navajo child-rearing, and not growing up in a traditional Navajo environment accumulate, problems with school involvement are compounded. The primary result is that although this study’s respondents recognize the value of education, only a few of them identified with the education system sufficiently for academic achievement.

Another outcome of the accumulation of factors listed above is multiple marginality and identity. The concept of multiple marginality integrates the principle elements of several theories that have been formulated to explain gang delinquency, including strain theories, (limited) opportunity theory, underclass theory, and subcultural values theory (Vigil 1988: 10). Marginality, or isolation from community, is sparked and maintained by structural features of alienation and deprivation in the environment to which people must adapt. Over time, that process has a cumulative effect on the lifeways of a particular ethnic group. Vigil argues that “a descending order of analysis from macro (group history), meso (family history) to micro (life history) should be undertaken to show through time how ecological and economic conditions create sociocultural stresses and ambiguities, which, in turn, lead to subcultural and psychological mechanisms of adjustment” (1988: 11). In other words, a society which is hostile to distinct groups impacts the lives of the group, family, and individuals, forces them into a “subculture” role (or different kinds of roles—some of which are antithetical to the dominant culture, such as gang crime and drugs), and impacts individual choices. We can say that a given type of subculture is created by society.

An excellent example of multiple marginality as a factor in gang involvement can be
found in the group history and experiences of the Vietnamese Boat People who began to arrive in the United States in 1978. Unlike earlier groups of Vietnamese refugees whose children did not become involved in street gangs, the Boat People immigrants were poor and uneducated, came from rural agricultural communities, and had gone through numerous relocations since the 1975 Communist takeover of Viet Nam. They received less government assistance than prior refugees, and entered a society with an established anti-Vietnamese prejudice. The new immigrants’ family networks were destroyed, and they were prey to Vietnamese officials, pirates, and fellow residents of overseas relocation camps. By the time they arrived, the Boat People’s only goal was simple survival. Their children experienced numerous marginalities, with breakdowns in family structure and authority, difficulties with schools, and low regard in the communities where they settled. Their experiences were similar to those of Indians, and other Southeast Asian, Mexican-American and African-American youth, with resulting attractions to the long-established social institution of the street gang as surrogate kin, peer group, and community to those multiply-marginalized youth (Vigil 1993). Several researchers say that these kinds of multiple marginalities are most troublesome for a generation of youth who, for various reasons (including immigration and other displacements), must create their identity in a social framework and culture which parents do not know, and where parents have lost the traditional means of social control to manage their children (Vigil 1988, Lewis 1991, Sanders 1994). Navajos also suffer from multiple marginalities—being forced off the land by the destruction of the traditional grazing economy and the advent of a wage economy, being relocated in Navajo ghettos in border towns or cluster housing projects in agency towns, disruption of traditional cultural and family networks, and destroying traditional sources of
support from extended groups of relatives and from connections with the land. This is the product of poorly-conceived Indian policies.

While this is not the place to address the history of genocide (a term frequently used beyond its strict meaning), ethnocide, or the arguable history of racist policies directed against Navajos as Indians, there is some merit in suggesting that when the history of forces and traumas which have accumulated and impacted the Navajo People is examined, it is fairly easy to see why there is culture conflict and why Navajo youths join gangs. Multiple marginalization generated historically by many factors beyond the control of the Navajos has created such a climate characterized by multiple social ills and high levels of institutionalized violence that surely there must be a human rights obligation to do something about it.

Related histories of long-term culture conflict for various ethnic groups, the destruction of traditional cultures, relocation, losses of productive employment opportunities, and other disruptions in the structure of social institutions of urban communities led to the development of newly-entrenched social institutions and subcultures we know as youth or street gangs. When Navajo families moved to urban areas where there were street gangs, Navajo youths encountered them and had to deal with them as social organizations. Navajo multiple marginality met urban multiple marginality in a new form of cultural exchange. Navajos joined urban gangs, and brought the street gang culture with them. Returning Navajo youths, many living in cluster housing with other Navajo youths, taught their relatives, neighbors, and new friends a new lifestyle—one that offered them an identity, an opportunity for achievement in the eyes of their peers, and a form of resistance. Youths from an originating environment of multiple marginality learned the survival tactics of another, then returned to inform others how to respond to that kind
of situation. There are no sufficiently powerful or positive social institutions to offer an identity for people on the margins, to either address that situation or to counteract the attraction of street gangs. Consequently, there is a nexus between a desire to try out something and trying it through experience that exploded into the emergence of Navajo youth gangs that have been proliferating since the early 1990s.
VIII. NAVAJO GANG ACTIVITIES

Nationwide, youth gangs are defined and receive attention from government, the media, law enforcement, academics, and the public at large, because of their collective activities and intimidating criminal behavior. Researchers such as Fagan (1989, 1990) and Klein (1995) have shown that gang-identified youth have higher levels of delinquency and drug involvement than other young people. Navajo youth gangs have gotten the attention of Navajo Nation government officials and community residents from violent and destructive acts and from the fear they generate by their appearance and activities. Although a great deal of their delinquency (for children—crimes for adults) is in the form of nonviolent crimes, such as theft, vandalism (including tagging), and status offenses (such as truancy and underage drinking), the Navajo Nation’s response is primarily to more violent and sensational criminal activity, linked to gang activity. Much of this kind of behavior had not been seen before in the Navajo Nation, and not at the same level and degree of intensity as previous juvenile crime.

While the focus is upon criminal activity, gang members who act collectively also spend a lot of time on non-criminal pursuits. As Sanders (1994) noted in recording non-delinquent pastimes of youth gang members, they claim to spend most of their time doing what other, non-delinquent, youth groups do—they like to hang out, go to parties, and spend time with friends to be sociable. That view is shared by other gang researchers (e.g. Jankowski 1991; Keiser 1969; Klein 1971; Miller 1982), who see that most of what gang boys do is not delinquent in nature. Klein (1971: 23) says, “This is the most important fact about gang behavior; most of it is non-delinquent.” Having surveyed what Navajo youth gangs do, the same holds true for them.
A. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GANG AND CREW MEMBERSHIP

Two different kinds of delinquent youth collectives or groups were identified during this study. Respondents self-identified themselves as gangs and crews in these numbers:

- Current gang member: 67
- Current crew member: 11
- Current member of both gang and crew: 8
- Current gang associate: 8
- Former gang member: 5
- Former crew member: 2
- Former member of both gang and crew: 2

There are significant differences between “gangs” and “crews.” Crews are small groups of less than 15 persons who are organized for a particular focus or purpose. It might be “tagging,” or creating graffiti, which is usually artistic. It is “legal” if it is done with permission, but it is usually “illegal,” because it is put on public or private property without permission. In that case, it is seen to “deface” the property, and it is thus a form of vandalism. Some graffiti shows great artistic skill and innovation (as is true with most Navajo art). Another purpose might be to party together. Most crew members attributed friendship as the reason for their involvement, along with socializing and protection from other groups. Twelve crew members who were interviewed identified a total of nine crews. We developed a profile of crews and their activities in interviews. Several crew members belonged to different crews in the Navajo Nation or in an urban area. There was a suggestion that graffiti crews use several group names to mislead law enforcement about who is in which crew, to evade detection. This study found seven crews in the Navajo Nation. Four of them were described as primarily party crews, and three as tagging crews.

One tagger described the difference between gangs and graffiti tagging crews by saying,
“Gangs go out and cause trouble. A tagging crew goes out and puts positive art on walls.” The focus of party crews is getting together to drink, smoke marijuana, and attract girls. Three of twelve crew member respondents said that girls are crew members; four said girls were not in their crew; and five other crew members said that girls are only involved with their crew for sexual purposes. Drug sales were stated as not being important for four crews, while drug sales are important for two of the party crews and one of the tagging crews. A member of one of the party crews based in Albuquerque, expressed a strong drug sale orientation, because “that is where we get our money.” Although violence is not a big factor for crew member respondents, some said that protection from gang members is the reason for their crew involvement. Four of the crews reported that only a few members carry guns, and three crews reported that most or all of their members carry guns. None of the crew members reported an initiation process to join, and most crews have been started by a small group of friends who hung out together and decided to give a name to the group. The respondents from all but one of the seven crews identified in the study said that they were among the group that started the crew. Several respondents from different crews said that the crew did not want to get too big.

Crew members are less criminal, less violent with rivals, less involved in drug sales, and much less violent toward non-gang persons. Crews are small, loosely-organized, and based on affiliations of friendship, focusing on social activities. Except for illegal graffiti, illegal substance abuse or possession of alcohol, and some drug sales, crews are generally not involved in deliberate criminal activity.

The study identified 31 gangs, which were as varied as youth gangs throughout the United States. Many of the gangs are also located in communities outside the Navajo Nation.
The Navajo Nation connection for gangs identified in this study are (with the names of gangs underlined):

- 8 gangs are based on the Navajo Nation, although the gang name may be from elsewhere (West Side Original K [killer?] Crips/Partners in Crime, Red Bone Thugs/Native Pride, South Side Casas, Insane Cobra Nation, Insane Gangster Disciples, St. Michaels Dragons, West Side King Crips).

- 3 gangs based in a Navajo Nation border town—two also in a regional urban area (East Side Crip Killers, 8 Trey—also in Phoenix, Northside Locos—also in Albuquerque).

- 10 gangs are based in Albuquerque, with 5 having a presence in the To’iha’ii’ilee Chapter near Albuquerque (Killer Park Crips, Martinez Town, Los Carnales Locos, South Side Pyru Cardinales, Eighteen Street, West Side Royal Knights, North Side Locos [also in a border town], Westgate Chicanos, West Side Los Carnales, and West Side Locos).

- 4 are Phoenix-based, with one also having a reservation presence (South Side Posse, West Side Varrio Hollywood Locos, West Side Pirus and West Side City Crips).

- 2 gangs are based in numerous cities and border towns, and are also widespread across the Navajo Nation (West Side Rollin Sixty Crips, West Side Rollin 40s Crips).

- 3 gangs are based in southern California with no reservation presence (Lil Lay Low Crips, Escondido Varrios Diablos, Surenos Trece [in Albuquerque]).

- 1 gang is based in Oklahoma, with no reservation presence (East Side Bloods).

Of thirty one total gangs, at least sixteen have a presence in the Navajo Nation. We are unable to assess whether this is a representative sample of gangs present within the Navajo Nation, and there is no claim that the list above represents all gangs that operate within the Nation. We next address the activities of Navajo crews and gangs, based upon interviews with respondents.
Table 67

Female Gang or Crew Members
(Are Girls in Your Gang or Crew?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER</th>
<th>GANG</th>
<th>CREW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>34 (41.7%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26 (31.7%)</td>
<td>4 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For sex</td>
<td>16 (19.5%)</td>
<td>5 (41.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine gang members said that the involvement of girls in their gang was “the same as the guys.”

The remainder of this section examines the activities of the gangs that were identified for this study. There will be a further comparison of the differences between crew and gang groups and what they do.

B. NON-DELINQUENT ACTIVITIES

Gangs have gained national media and law enforcement attention, and prompted a great deal of research into who and what they are, because of their illegal activities and not their participation in normal adolescent group activities. They are largely perceived as criminals who pose a major threat to community safety. However, gang members regularly pursue legal activities as part of their collective behavior. Like most teenagers, gang members do a lot of hanging out with friends, watch television, cruise in autos, and look for girls.

The sample of 103 youth gang members who responded to our questions shows a wide range of activities which are important to them, but which are neither criminal nor delinquent. Forty-eight respondents said that hanging out and kicking back with fellow gang members was the major way of spending time. Seventy-seven respondents emphasized the importance of
partying, and that included activities such as going to the movies and dances. Twenty-three mentioned participating in sports with other gang members, and attending community events such as fairs or automobile shows. Six respondents said they were volunteers in community service projects.

We did not attempt to find out how many hours a week gang members were engaged in normal non-delinquent adolescent behavior, but most of their daily routine was devoted to harmless and even dull activities. However, the patina of gang identity overshadowed their innocent activities, because these individuals consistently described and defined themselves as being organized in opposition to other youths and adults in the Navajo Nation. For example, while hanging out is not an illegal activity, gang members “slang” (sell marijuana) while hanging out or plan “crazy stuff” that is illegal. Whatever they do, they say that it is “their own thing.”

C. CRIME AND VIOLENCE

The illegal consumption of alcohol and drugs is at the top of the illegal behaviors Navajo gang members do as groups, and the same is true for individual behavior. The possession of non-prescribed drugs is illegal under federal and Navajo Nation law, and the possession of alcohol within the Navajo Nation is also illegal under Navajo Nation and federal law. Alcohol possession and consumption is illegal for minors. There are other kinds of illegal behavior that have brought considerable negative attention to these individuals in the context of their gang membership.

Although gang members do nothing important most of the time, violence plays an integral role in their lives. Violence is a defining attribute of gangs, and an activity that sharply
differentiates their lives from non-gang peers. Gang member violent behavior includes acts against other gang members and non-members, including personal intimidation and threats, minor assaults, violent gang fights, organized drive-by shootings, fire bombing, and premeditated assaults and murders. There have been major incidents of willful property destruction aimed at schools and public buildings, and a great deal of minor vandalism, property destruction, and the illegal tagging of buildings, public walls, and other structures.

We raised the issue of aggression against other gangs, known as “gang banging,” as violence-related behavior in talking with gang members. That behavior, which is common to many gangs, is linked to staking out territory for symbolic ownership, or protecting a particular geographic area as “home turf” from other gangs. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents said that their gangs claimed a specific territory (62 of 97 who answered questions). Seventy-five respondents answered the question, “What do you do when other gangs enter your gang’s turf?” Five said they did nothing; 24 said they would do nothing unless they were provoked; 30 said they would initiate an altercation or challenge the other gang; 14 claimed they would respond to the presence of another gang by physical assault or shooting. Informal discussions of gang violence with informants indicated that turf incursion is the only time gang fights are serious.

Fifty-five respondents spoke of gang fights as a central part of their gang identity and reputation as a regular activity. Violent interactions include fistfights (the most common confrontation), stabbings, bludgeoning, and the exchange of gunfire, with wounding and possible death. Gang-banging has also involved drive-by shootings to retaliate against rival gangs or their members. Weapons, and guns in particular, are most often directed against other gangs and
their members.

Regarding violence directed against people who are not involved with gangs, 30 of 95 respondents who answered said that they had participated in some of that violence, and that some was random and some was purposeful. Ten respondents spoke of confronting non-gang members to intimidate them. Twenty-three said they attacked non-gang members only if provoked by them. One form of harassment was directed against individuals who were disrespectful of gang members, called “getting in their faces.” Gang members also described situations where bystanders who happened to be present during violent activity were injured.

Interviews disclosed that a lot of the violence is related to personal issues between gang members. There are fights over girls, marijuana, alcohol, rumors, gossip, or even hard looks. There are personal conflicts between members of the same gang and the same set. Rumors or gossip about relatively minor issues are common and can lead to serious violent confrontations. Individual conflicts can escalate into group confrontations, as members ask their homies for backup. Those kinds of personal conflicts usually run their course after a few weeks, although serious confrontations can lead to a series of ongoing revenge attempts. One of the problems with this kind of conflict is sorting out whether it is personal behavior by a person as an individual or a purposeful gang crime. Is it friends backing someone who has a personal fight, or friends as a named group carrying out the activity?

As with most associations of people, social mechanisms exist within the group to control internal and intra-gang conflicts over personal disputes. However, few of the Navajo gangs have a leadership structure possessing the ability to control an individual member’s violent behavior. Reportedly, only the originator of the Cobra gang can control gang violence, and he is in a
unique position of authority as the “OG” (“Original Gangster”) of the first and largest youth
gang in the Navajo Nation. Youth violence is also a problem for non-gang-involved youth.
Anderson, in “The Code of the Streets” (1994), says that youth who have been socialized by
street culture are also quick to take offense and feel the need to violently defend their honor in
the face of disrespect by other youths. Weyerman (1998) gives horrifying detailed descriptions
of brutal murders that are now commonplace in the Navajo Nation. None of them were gang
related, but part of an increasing climate of youth violence.

Although a minority of gang members said that violence was a regular activity, 81 of 91
respondents said they carried firearms. In responding to the question about being injured using
some kind of weapon, 58 of 93 said they had been hurt with a weapon as part of gang
involvement. The rate of injury depended upon gang or crew affiliation—66% of gang members
said they had been hurt, 20% of crew members made the same claim, and 78% of individuals
with both gang and crew affiliations reported that they had been injured.

No information was obtained or offered regarding involvement in a homicide or
premeditated murder by Navajo gang members (for obvious reasons). Indictments for murder
were brought against gang members of groups we contacted during field work. We were later
told that some gang members who participated in the study met deliberate violent deaths thought
to have been perpetrated by members of rival gangs. Some of the study respondents are now in
prison for violent felonies. Violence is an occupational hazard of gang membership in the
Navajo Nation.

D. SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

Drug and alcohol consumption as a factor in the identity and behavior of youth gang
members in the Navajo Nation must be seen within the broader context of drinking and chemical abuse throughout Indian Country. There is a strong, persistent, and regularly-observed correlation between substance abuse and a myriad of other social problems in Indian communities, both on reservations and in urban areas (including communities that are not usually considered to be “urban,” such as Gallup, New Mexico or Holbrook, Arizona). Severe social problems such as child abuse and neglect, automobile accidents and deaths, the loss of employment, ill health, crime, and the neglect or damage of property, have long been linked to drug and alcohol consumption (Dozier 1966; Ferguson 1968; Graves 1967). Navajo Nation officials regularly offer anecdotal evidence, based upon their experience, that alcohol abuse is linked to high rates of in-family assaults and domestic violence.

Considerable published research exists on alcohol use and abuse in Indian Country. Indian leaders have been concerned about the destructive effects of alcohol for a long period of time, and several early Indian nation treaties with the United States contain a specific prohibition against alcohol. Federal law prohibits the “introduction of alcohol” into Indian Country where a given nation’s law prohibits it (including the Navajo Nation), and the federal prohibition statutes are an example of federal law following Indian law. It is important to immediately confront the stereotypes about Indian drinking. There is no genetic flaw which prompts high levels of Indian drinking, “blitz” drinking (where people drink as much as possible in a short period of time before the police arrive), or “binge” drinking (where people will drink for days until the alcohol supply runs out). Some Indian nations had alcohol as a traditional drink, but most did not have alcohol. It was introduced to the Navajo Nation early on in contact with Europeans, but it is likely that it did not create widespread problems until it was re-introduced when the Santa Fe
Railroad passed through the Navajo Nation in the 1880s, the border towns were founded, and the trading post network began. That was a period of time in American social history when Americans were very “wet.” Drinking to excess was widely-accepted, and that kind of drinking was taught to Navajos. While alcohol consumption has created problems in the past (with Navajo Nation court records showing high levels of criminal charges for public intoxication and disorderly conduct in the past), it has prompted social illnesses of epidemic proportions in recent times. Given the destructive forces related above, in recent years, alcohol has been associated with violent assaults, homicides, and widespread in-family violence. Alcohol abuse is also learned behavior.

Excessive alcohol consumption gives as many problems to young Indians as it does to adults (Armstrong, et al. 1996). Beiser and Attnave (1982) estimated that the alcoholism rate among Indian adolescents is two to three times higher than the rate for the overall youth population of the United States. The most extensive survey of substance abuse among Indians was done by Oetting and Goldstein (1979), who studied patterns of abuse in junior and senior high schools. They found the highest alcohol use rates among Indian 11th and 12th graders (juniors and seniors in high school), where 90% of the students who responded to a self-administered questionnaire admitted they used alcohol. Public Law 99-570, the Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse and Treatment Act of 1968 found that:

alcoholism and alcohol and substance abuse is the most severe health and social problem facing Indian tribes and people today.... Four of the top ten causes of death among Indians are alcohol and drug related injuries (eighteen percent of all deaths), chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis (five percent), suicide (three percent), and homicide (three percent).... Indians between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age are more than two times as likely to commit suicide as the general population and approximately eighty percent of those suicides are alcohol related.
The majority of criminal and delinquent acts committed by either urban or rural Indians are alcohol-related. The national rate of alcohol-related crimes among Indian populations is approximately eight times higher than among Blacks and Hispanics, and twenty times higher than among Whites (French and Hornbuckle 1982). Weibel-Orlando (1984) reached similar conclusions, and said that attempts to understand high rates of Indian delinquency are related to alcohol and drug-linked crimes.

Prior to discussing alcohol and substance abuse by youth gang members, it is important to understand how Navajo youths categorize their drinking and drug-taking behavior. Trotter, et al. (1997), found that Navajo teenagers tend to talk about alcohol-related behavior and problems as an area which is separate from other forms of substance abuse. Those teens tended to lump all other kinds of chemical abuse together, but when it comes to questions about “other substance abuse,” they talk about illegal drugs and inhalants. Inhalant abuse is a leading form of chemical intoxication among reservation Indian youths. The Navajo youths interviewed by Trotter, et al., said that juveniles who use inhalants on a regular basis are put at the bottom of the Navajo youth social ladder. We were unable to get much information on inhalant use from the respondents in this study. That could mean that they did not view themselves as being at the bottom of the youth social ladder, inhalants were not popular, or the respondents recognized their danger.

The consumption and use of drugs in groups by gang members is related to the same kinds of behavior by large numbers of non-gang Navajo youths. One characteristic activity for Navajo youth gang members is the regular consumption of alcohol. They drink from large bottles known as “40s” (forty ounces of high-alcohol malt liquor). Gang members said that their most frequent pastime was drinking 40s, usually while also smoking marijuana, when hanging
out, partying, “kickin’ it,” or cruising.

Getting mildly intoxicated (“getting a buzz”) is an important part of drinking and taking drugs. When these youths go about “serious partying,” that can lead to extreme intoxication and acts of erratic, risky, and even assaultive conduct. Some of the drinking behavior includes that of heavily alcohol-dependent youths who regularly drink to the point of stupor. Extreme intoxication sometimes leads to violence, particularly if members of different gangs are partying.

Gang respondents who said that they did not drink or smoke marijuana themselves said that drinking and smoking are the most common and socially-acceptable kind of gang activity. The one thing that Navajo gang and crew members do collectively in a regular way is socialize informally while drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. That kind of behavior is so normal among gang members that it is difficult to interpret their answer to the question, “Does drinking play an important role in your gang?” They see the word “important” to mean something out of the ordinary, with a particular value or specific significance, and not ordinary and accepted behavior. If the answer to the question is understood as accepted and regular behavior, then drinking as being important might have prompted a far higher number of “yes, it’s important” answers. The responses of the 93 gang members who answered that question were:

- 26 said it’s not important.
- 49 said, yes, it is important.
- 3 replied that it’s important at parties.
- 13 indicated it had slight importance.
- 3 told us that it depends on the person.

When we asked “at what kinds of activities would you drink?” of 90 respondents, they gave these answers:

- 3 said they do not drink.
- 29 told us that they would drink any time and at any activity.
• 41 said they drank at parties.
• 4 related that it depended on the individual.

Ten former and current crew members gave these answers:

• 1 said he did not drink.
• 1 told us that crew members would drink any time and at any activity.
• 8 said they drank at parties.

Based upon these responses by gang and crew members, it appears that crew members consider drinking to be important as a social activity at parties. Gang members tend to view drinking as important and appropriate in most social settings. The importance of drinking as a group behavior seems to be greater for gang members.

The results of a study of Chicago gangs provides certain insights about the meaning and significance of drinking and drug taking that is relevant to the situation in the Navajo Nation:

[A]lcohol and drug use is valued for enhancing the fun of partying and as a means of demonstrating “machismo” (manliness), for example, by drinking substantially more than others. Machismo has been selectively reformed to emphasize sexual prowess, fighting ability, and a quick readiness to fight.... Adult authorities, school officials, police, and to a lesser degree even parents are regarded with suspicion and latent hostility, which in occasional stressful situations erupts into violent encounters over restrictions imposed on the youth’s partying. [Vigil and Long 1990: 61]

E. DRUG USE, DRUG ENTERPRISE, AND WEAPONS

One ongoing controversy about gangs is a debate over their perceived role in drug trafficking. There are two lines of argument about drug distribution and sales: Some researchers say that there is little evidence of carefully-planned and managed sales of drugs as a centralizing force for collective behavior, and others say they have evidence of gangs doing drug sales as a business. Researchers who claim that youth gangs do not operate entrepreneurial drug enterprises point to the fact that gangs do not have the key organizational characteristics that are needed for that level of coordinated activity. Good marketing requires skills such as strong
leadership, a commitment to common goals, an enforced code of loyalty and security, and a powerful reward system. That view of gangs as formal and rational organizations seems to be inconsistent with descriptions of them in the literature. There is some research which shows little evidence of organized drug trafficking among gangs and instead shows higher levels of drug use rather than sales. Drugs are more a matter of “partying” than they are a matter of profit.

The same debate over the nature and level of drug trafficking by gangs spills over into discussions of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation. We heard many assertions by people within and outside the Navajo Nation that Navajo gangs are heavily-involved in drug trafficking, and that one of the major attractions of Navajo gangs was the potential of profit from drug sales. Off-reservation interviews with law enforcement officers in Gallup and Albuquerque, New Mexico indicated that they believed that Navajo youth gangs were trafficking in drugs as part of a deliberate criminal enterprise. Some of them worked in special drug and gang units, and they had some first-hand information about Navajo youths and their possible ties to drug activities. Several themes emerged from interviews with those officers: First, there is clear and widespread evidence that in Gallup and Albuquerque, Navajo youths were affiliating in substantial numbers with known Hispanic and African-American gangs heavily-involved in drug sales. Second, Phoenix and Albuquerque are known to be major regional drug distribution centers, and that fact is not lost on Navajo youths who are interacting with urban gangs to get substantial quantities of illegal drugs. Law enforcement officers who were interviewed believe that Navajo youths have become deeply involved in drug transactions and they have begun to carry substantial quantities of drugs, primarily marijuana, powder cocaine, and crack, to the Navajo Nation for sale. The officers (seeing the Navajo Nation situation from an off-reservation perspective) think that drug
operations are a catalyst for Navajo gang activity becoming a criminal enterprise on the Reservation. The third theme is that the officers also believe that Navajo gang involvement with drug sales is aimed at accumulating sufficient capital to buy weapons. Gang members have not been able to buy them because they did not have enough money, but now, there is an elevated level of weapons-related violence against the public at large and in gang-banging. Officers felt that drug sales, the acquisition of weapons, violent gang-banging with weapons, and drive-by shootings, were being introduced into Indian Country.

We had those themes and assumptions in mind when addressing an increased level of drug involvement and sales by Navajo gang members. We also looked at whether Navajo gangs are moving in the direction of becoming a conscious and deliberate criminal enterprise that revolves around drug trafficking. We interviewed 103 gang members and asked these questions:

- What kinds of activities does the gang regularly participate in?
- What is the role and level of drug use among gang members?
- What is the role and level of drug sales among gang members?
- Do gang members carry firearms?

These are the kinds of responses we got:

- No drug use was indicated by 16 respondents.
- Some use was indicated by 8.
- Very substantial levels of drug use was indicated by 54.
- 25 refused to answer our questions about this.

It appears that drug use is common to heavy among most gangs and crews, but their members described drug use as smoking marijuana. There was some reference to using powder cocaine. There was a smaller subset of gangs who made reference to using more powerful drugs, including crack, crank, PCP, LSD, mushrooms, and even heroin. Those indications came from respondents from eight off-reservation gangs, three on-reservation gangs, and one gang that is
Questions about drug sales by gang members produced the following information:

- 16 gang members (4 of whom were also crew members) and 5 crew members said that their gang or crew was not involved in drug sales.

- The sale of drugs was said to be important by 64 gang members (5 of whom were also crew members) and 3 crew members.

- 38 gang members and 3 crew members reported the sale of drugs by individuals only.

- 17 gang members reported collective (gang) sales related to buying alcohol and drugs for partying.

- 4 gang members reported collective sales to buy weapons.

These responses support an argument that the increased presence of drugs has not caused Navajo Nation youth gangs to become criminal enterprises that profit from drug trafficking. It appears that drug sales are being made by individuals for individual profit. Given the level of poverty among Navajo Nation youths, and their lack of work opportunities, drug sales for personal use and as an individual enterprise is not surprising. Drug sales are an opportunity for them.

While 79.5% of the gang and crew members who were interviewed said that drug use plays an important or somewhat important role in their groups, and 76% said that drug sales were important or somewhat important, the responses show that sales are being done by individuals in the context of gang or crew membership. Those affiliations provide contacts with suppliers, a market for sales to individuals, and a social setting for marijuana sales and consumption. Interviews with 17 members of the Cobras gang of the Fort Defiance and Window Rock area elicited these comments:

- Drug use is mostly smokin’ weed.
• Younger ones are more into hard drugs.
• Drug sales are on an individual basis.
• Drug use is a side thing.
• Many sell drugs, and sometimes they give proceeds to the leader if he is around.
• Drug sales are important—we save the money to get the things we need—guns, drugs and money in our pockets.
• Hardly anybody sells now because the cops break into their houses for no reason.
• Drug sales is important to some sets, like Rio Puerco [a Fort Defiance cluster housing project].
• Drug sales is our only source of income.
• Drug use and sales are both important.
• Most everyone sells for themselves—we need to get more organized.
• Drug sales is important for both individual gain and gang gain.

Those comments suggest that drug sales by members of the Cobras range from individual sales, which are common, to an occasional motivation to sell for money to carry out group goals. One respondent mentioned the potential and possibility of the Cobra Nation getting into drug sales as an enterprise, and one mentioned the acquisition of guns as a goal.

Interviews with members of the following gangs showed they were even less focused on group drug sales than the Cobras, although sales by gangs were occasionally mentioned:

• The West Side Varrio Hollywood Locos distribute in communities that are both on and off-reservation;
• The 68 Cult of Klagetoh;
• The Insane Gangster Disciples, a reservation-based gang that is in several locations.
The North Side Locos, based in Gallup and Albuquerque;
The South Side Casas, of St. Michaels;
The West Side Crips, of Fort Defiance;
The West Side Rollin Sixty Crips, which is located in many communities; and
The West Side Royal Knights, a set of an Albuquerque gang based in To’hajiilee.

Overall, when we spoke of drug sales as a collective activity, such sales were linked to the following purposes:

- to buy beer for parties;
- to distribute to all the homies, friends and family;
- to pay utilities (for a house occupied by gang members); and/or
- to buy more drugs or to buy weapons.

There is a Navajo gang link to city gangs that operate as drug enterprises, as indicated by respondents who belong to:

- The East Side Bloods of Tulsa, Oklahoma;
- Los Cardinales Locos of To’hajiilee (a set of an Albuquerque gang);
- The Surenos Trece of Albuquerque;
- The West Gate Chicanos of Albuquerque; and
- The West Side City Crips of Phoenix.

They said that drug sales were a collective gang activity, and they also said:

- The gang deals—the money goes back into more drugs or legal fees;
- The gang sells drugs—crank, crack, heroin;
- We all sell drugs—the money is kept for oneself; and
- You have cash all the time.

The only gang of those listed above that has a presence in the Navajo Nation is the Los Cardinales Locos set at To’hajiilee, which is approximately 35 miles west of Albuquerque.
Members of party and tagging crews placed slightly less importance on drug use than gang members, but drug sales are much less important to crew members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>DRUG USE IMPORTANT</th>
<th>DRUG SALES IMPORTANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang members</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Members</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marijuana use plays a role that is similar to alcohol use. It plays a major role in defining who gang and crew members are and what they do in terms of lifestyle and social values. Most gang and crew members smoke marijuana and get drunk regularly or have previously smoked and drank. Selling marijuana, and other drugs to a lesser extent, is an opportunity for individuals to make money to get more drugs. Drug consumption is a social activity, as it is with alcohol. While there is widespread drug use among Navajo gang and crew members, there is little evidence that Navajo gangs are involved in drug sales as an enterprise. The reservation-based gang members who say that their set is a drug enterprise are at To’ohnian, which is a small community distant from the main body of the Navajo Reservation. Other respondents who reported enterprise-like activities are located in large cities off the Navajo Reservation.

Another issue related to drug sales is the possibility of engaging in collective drug sales to acquire weapons for use. Off-reservation law enforcement officers think that connection is an important consideration for Navajo gangs because of experiences in the region’s cities. Sales for weapons was not indicated by our interviews. However, we did look into whether organized drug sales are linked to weapons acquisition (i.e. guns), and whether that resulted in increased
levels of violence between gangs or directed against members of the public.

Eighty-nine percent of gang and crew members reported carrying guns, but there was little evidence of those weapons having been acquired from the proceeds of collective drug enterprise sales. Only 4 respondents reported that gang drug sales were made to buy guns. However, there are two possibilities: First, individual gang members, using their gang affiliations, have access to illegal networks where they can get guns. Second, individual gang members may be getting the money to buy guns from their own drug sales. A majority of Navajo Nation gang members have firearms, which they have gotten in various ways.
IX. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSES

When the framework for the field research was being developed, there was a general consensus among the design team that a “stakeholder” component should be incorporated. A “stakeholder” is anyone who has an interest in the problem being studied to try to find solutions. There are many of them in the Navajo Nation. This section of the report will describe the stakeholders and relate a summary of their suggestions. They varied from not having an understanding or awareness of gang activity, general comments about how gangs should be approached, or specific suggestions.

A stakeholder questionnaire was developed for agencies and individuals who were involved with Navajo gangs, or whose programs had an impact on gang issues, and who worked in communities within the Navajo Nation, in border towns surrounding the Nation or in metropolitan areas. Respondents were asked how they were involved with gang members or gang issues, what they thought led to the emergence of gangs, the issues which most concerned them, and what they thought should be done about the problems they identified.

One hundred eighty-nine stakeholders were interviewed between July 1996 and November 1997. Three additional stakeholders were interviewed in February 1998 for a total of 192 interviews. Some interviews were held with several stakeholders present. Interviews were held in the following communities:
The stakeholders in those communities, or representing those constituencies, said (147 of 191) that their agency or program does have contact with gangs. Thirty-one said they were not sure if their agency had such contact, and seemed equivocal about the presence of gangs in their community. Several different kinds of agencies were represented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STAKEHOLDERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navajo Nation Judicial Branch (judges and</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>probation officers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Health Services Department</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. of Youth and Community Services</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo Nation Police</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecutors</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Defender</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Div. of Social Services</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Navajo Nation agency</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Officials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Town Police</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Probation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing management (public &amp; private)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School district administration</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Health Service</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other medical provider</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential youth center</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-residential youth center</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other agencies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private citizens and businesses</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholders were represented by the following professions and occupations.

Table 71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police or security</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator or manager</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program employee or service provider</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency director</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacemaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politician or business owner</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecutor or probation officer</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter official</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical provider</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>192</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those descriptions of communities, constituencies, programs, and professions or occupations show the diversity of the people and programs most involved with gangs and gang members. There are several kinds of organizations and individuals that deal with gangs, gang members, or youths who may be prone to adopt that kind of lifestyle, including the judicial
system, counselors of different agencies, housing managers, school personnel, medical providers, youth treatment centers and youth programs. Schools have an extremely high level of contact with gang members, as do the police, courts and agencies that provide youth counseling services. The problem of gangs is so recent that agencies have not compiled statistics to provide detail about the nature and extent of the gang problem from their points of view. For example, the court system does not maintain records to identify criminal or delinquency defendants as gang members, and only identifies offenses. It is not a crime to be a gang member, consequently, that information is not usually kept. The police, who are closest to the problem on the streets, do not report crime as being gang-related as such. They address gang-related crimes as they occur and maintain estimates of gang activity (much of which is reflected in other parts of this report).

The major gang-related issues that concern stakeholders the most are:

- Drinking - 29.7%
- Drug use - 29.2%
- Illegal graffiti or tagging - 25%
- Loss of culture - 19.8%
- Low self-esteem - 18.2%

The issue which is of greatest concern is youth violence, and 71.3% of stakeholders agreed on that. That concern was particularly expressed by stakeholders from the Fort Defiance, St. Michaels and Window Rock areas. Educators are especially concerned for the safety of students and teachers, particularly in those three communities.

Certain issues which we thought would be a concern were not identified as important, or were not stressed, by stakeholders. Theft is not a major concern. There are educator concerns about gangs interfering with education, but only to a small degree. Stress to individuals was not considered to be an issue. There was no general sense that a lack of jobs or poverty were factors
in creating gangs, or that more jobs would address the problem. That could be because all the respondents were employed and poverty and unemployment are already endemic problems in the Navajo Nation. The respondents did not appear to feel personally impacted by gang violence or concerned for their personal safety.

Overall, the stakeholders seem to think that the severity of gang activities in the Navajo Nation is low in comparison to metropolitan areas. They noted the emergent nature of Navajo Nation gangs and a recognition that gangs are not severely chronic. However, they felt the situation is getting worse. Most think that the gang problem is over-rated, although gang youths do have some influence over non-gang youths. Stakeholders rate the problem as being more severe in the Fort Defiance-St. Michaels-Window Rock areas where gangs are the most active. One of the unique things about those communities is that they are either the capital of the Navajo Nation (Window Rock) or bedroom suburbs of the capital. Many of the children in those communities are the children or relatives of people who work in the bureaucracy.

Stakeholders do not suggest that single parent families are a problem. That is well, because of the danger of stigmatizing single parents, and particularly women. However, stakeholders are concerned about poor parenting, and that is considered to be a major factor in gang formation. A total of 78 stakeholders agreed with that. Education stakeholders point to a lack of positive role models as an issue. One of the problems identified is that there is a disconnect between gang and crew members and public officials. While there is some degree of respect for police or judges, there is no respect for elected officials as role models to look up to. Several stakeholders point to the lack of recreational activities for youth to keep them occupied, interested, and out of trouble. Stakeholders also noted the role of the media and popular culture
as affecting the growth of gangs.

Stakeholders particularly note a connection between gang issues and family and community issues. The family issues include the need for parents of youths involved in gangs to participate in parent education programs and be involved in community gang programs. The community issues include the fact that communities must address gangs on their own, and youths themselves, their parents, and the whole community, must be involved in the process. Communities need more information about gangs to be effective in dealing with them. Teaching traditional Navajo knowledge would be effective, because that would offer constructive activities for youths.

There is a low level of pessimism about the Navajo Nation gang situation, because stakeholders do not think that there is nothing that can be done. They recognize the emergent nature of gangs in the Navajo Nation, but are confident in the ability of communities to make a difference, if people recognize the problem, face it, and address it. One important view expressed by several stakeholders is that we must not treat gang members as gang members but as people who deserve respect. Other stakeholder comments were program-specific. Some will be related in other parts of this report or in the policy analysis section.
X. FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSES

Another valuable tool for purposes of this study is the focus group. It is a gathering where a group of individuals is given information about a specific problem to prompt discussion and to elicit the views of the group about the problem. Four focus group meetings were held. The first was held in Window Rock on October 16, 1998. The second was in Shiprock, on October 30, 1998. The third, on November 13, 1998, was held in Tuba City. The fourth and last was at the To’hajiilee Chapter, on November 20, 1998.

A. THE WINDOW ROCK FOCUS GROUP MEETING

The meeting was held at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock. Twenty-one people attended. The participant list indicates that participants were employees of local schools, school counselors, students, officials of the Navajo Housing Authority Drug Elimination Program, NHA housing counselors, employees of the Department of Youth and Community Services (DYCS), probation officers, members of the Family Harmony Project, youth program representatives, members of the general public, and other service providers. Public notice of the meeting was given by letter; postings at the Window Rock Post Office, health facilities, schools and all local trading posts; an interview on the community cable television channel, and publication in the Navajo Times.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

One of the stronger motivations for Navajo youths joining gangs is that gang members are close relatives, friends, and siblings. When relatives join gangs, that influences other family members to join as well. Sometimes, youths do not find a bond within the family, so they seek it elsewhere. A person who had a family member in a gang said this:
And he used to defend them to me everyday. He used to tell me that, “Who are you? Just because you work for DYCS [Division of Youth and Children’s Services], just because you work in this community, who are you to tell me that you can process them through just juvenile court and family court, and that you can’t even pay attention to the things that they do in their community.”

One participant identified emotional coping skills as a problem, and that youths are taught to hate:

A major problem is they think bad of each other. I guess among us, the way I see in community is a hate, I think if we are brought up in the past to hate, and also the children learn the hate. When a mother talks about the other family. Especially if they have some livestock, they hate people and then get the child involved in the hate.27

Youths are not taught to deal with emotions in a correct way. They are taught negative emotions. Given that parents spend a lot of time at work and doing other things, they do not spend enough time with their children. That brings up issues of parental responsibility and supervision, as an individual at the meeting said:

I think the problems that are associated with alcohol and gangs and all the problems that we have, goes back to the parental responsibilities, that obligation to raise children. And the main problem I see is when a couple separates, either party goes into another relationship. They make a family again. And it seems like there is a lot of absent parents in the household. Lack of supervision at the house.

An Anglo school counselor said that the youths he saw do not believe in a higher power and they don’t believe in Navajo tradition and culture. That lack of belief is likely the result of parents and grandparents not teaching it or not using traditional Navajo ceremonies. The counselor said:

I agree alcohol is one of the big problems. I work with students who are suicidal. They have no belief in a higher power, which I find very difficult to accept from a Native American student. But, unfortunately even worse, they have no belief in their tradition

27 In the past, if people owned a lot of livestock, they were considered well off, and that could prompt jealousy.
and culture, because they have never been taught that culture.

Alcohol abuse is a major problem among Navajos, and we tend to deal with it by denying that it is a problem. We deny that it is a problem and point fingers elsewhere. For those reasons, we do not do anything about it. It is getting worse, and abusers are getting younger. A probation officer observed:

And the youngest that they sent to my office was a six year old. A six year old drunk! And I work with kids from six to seventeen and a half. Eighteen are considered as an adult.

The Navajo Nation tries to deal with alcohol abuse by providing outpatient and inpatient treatment programs. There are many treatment services, but their focus is counseling. Some facilities write to clients three times, and if there is no response from the client, the case is closed due to a lack of interest by the client. Counseling services are not persistent enough:

We’re very limited. What they’re doing is they just write to them three times and if they don’t show up, that say “forget it, the patient is not interested, they are not going to come.”

Another concern was that resource providers in the Navajo Nation must address turf issues and they need to collaborate with one another more. Yet another concern was cluster homes. Navajo people have problems living in cluster housing because they prefer living in privacy:

The clustered homes are not the way the Navajo live. You have your homesite, you have got the scattered homes, not the clustered homesites. That’s difficult for a lot of our family members, our families to live with. They like privacy.28

2. ASSESSMENT

28 This is a traditional concern, and there are traditional standards of etiquette about private activities and the proper way to approach someone’s home (Ed.).
The participants in the Window Rock focus group meeting offered many reasons why youths join gangs. Two reasons which were offered were that youths are looking for help from someone to point them in the right direction, and they want guidance on every aspect of their life. Youths are looking, but they are not getting the help they need:

Because they are humans just like everybody else, but just lacking directions.

They are looking for guidance, but they are not getting it.

Navajo youths do not have knowledge of traditional cultural concepts. Adults tend to say that those youths are not interested in their tradition and culture, but we tend to not teach them. One participant said that Navajo youths do want to learn:

And what I started to find out was that a lot of these kids that we say are culturally deprived and traditional deprived, they wanna know! They wanted to go over to the Medicine Man’s Association. They wanted to sit in on that cultural workshop.

We tend to prejudge the youth and say that they are not interested in anything. That is also in the area of communication, where we say that there is a problem. Perhaps we need to refocus and understand our youth before prejudging them and saying that they have a problem with communication. We should learn their language and learn their way of thinking to understand them. Then, perhaps we can learn what their feelings are:

So this morning, we are talking about the children here, some of the children have unclear minds and we do not understand their thinking.

Perhaps communication in Navajo is a problem because youths are afraid of saying something which might mean something totally different from what was meant. The Navajo language is very difficult to learn because one word can also sound the same as another word, so if you say it incorrectly, that can change the meaning of the word:
You know and being here, I am not very bilingual. However, I do understand to an extent, and I am afraid to speak Navajo fully. Because you can say something wrong and mean a whole different thing.

We can change our youth by how we talk to them; by using good character and sharing everything with them. That includes showing our love and speaking a loving language. One participant said:

A lot of the children that we see that could be emotionally touched and you know, with our charismatic healing words, our characters, whatever we have within ourselves to share to these children, we can possibly change their ways of life. We can show them what it is to love.

That leads to the area of parenting responsibilities. The parenting responsibility starts at home, by talking to youth, by being concerned for them, and by caring for them and loving them. That point was put this way:

It does have to start with the parents, how they talk to their kids, how much they love them and what their concern is when a child is going to go out the door, or whatever they are going to do. You know, you have to tell your child that you love them, and that you care what happens to them.

Parents must take on more child rearing responsibilities. We must not use the “poor me” syndrome, where we say that “they” will cure our problems, instead of saying that “we” will solve our problems. One participant said:

Give them the responsibility back. Because it seems like our government says, “Well, give me your problems, man. I will take care of it for you.” And we have that old “poor me” syndrome. Yeah, the government will take care of me. I mean, you know, I think I will just wait for next month, for my next pay check. The government will take care of me. You know, these are real issues that we need to face. The Navajo people need to take that responsibility back.

The same person observed that:

So I am saying, the point I am making is that we, as people—ordinary folks at an ordinary community level—have knowledge and information about the problem that we see in this community. And we together have to try to address those problems. We can’t
say, “Ah, yeah, let’s go call Window Rock so they can make a decision for us out here. Let’s go call somebody who has authority to make a decision for us. That’s a very interesting comment I am making—”Let them make a decision for us.” Why do we have to give up the power to somebody else? You know, it reminds me of the Creation and a journey of our people. Where for whatever reason, because of our own doing, because of our lack of participation—because of our lack of misunderstanding, and miscommunication with each other, and yellow realm of our journey. There is a separation of men and women. And each blame each other back and forth—”Well, you’re the problem—you’re the problem.” Back and forth, there was a lot of finger pointing. So they separate, go their own ways. Four years later, they said, “We can’t do this anymore; let’s come back together.” So they learned a lot of stuff. But those types of incident, those types of things that are back in our Creation and Journey Narrative and miscommunication, misunderstanding, not really working with one another. Okay, [that] is the teaching of that separation sex narrative. That says, “Look, we should not be doing those things.” Here we are in 1988, miscommunicating again. Pointing fingers at one another—”Well, they are the problem.” They are the problem, you know.” Instead of looking back and saying, “What can I do to solve the problem. What can I do to resolve the issue.”

Another speaker agreed that parents have not taken responsibility for problems:

When the child breaks the law and comes before the judge, the judge just sees the child as a law breaker. And the parents gets involved and they always look up to the leaders and they never have taken responsibility in the home.

Another speaker spoke to assuming responsibility:

One time I have overheard someone talking, they were sitting behind me. “Oh yeah, this gang—gang activity. They should hire someone specialist from New York. Have that New York come down, he will solve our problems for us.” Then I turned around and said, “No—we have the capacity, we have the ability. We have people working here—Look at yourselves. You are sitting here. We have young students here going back and learning some of our cultural ways. Any we hire these folks because they know how to translate in Navajo. They will relearn and they know it.”

Sometimes, the old “poor me” syndrome is a financial issue. We tend to say that we

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29 This speaker refers to the “River of Separation” scripture, where the men and women divided and lived across a river from each other for a period of time. Following excesses by both sexes, they were reunited. This addresses gender relationship issues, jealousy, and blaming others (Ed.).
don’t have enough money to deal with our problems, and then start to look elsewhere for financial support. We sometimes look at financial support as being a cure-all for all problems. On the other hand, that is not always the case. A person who worked successfully with gang members said that he works with gangs with little funds. He did not get any financial support from the Navajo Nation, and said:

And I am tired of hearing, you know, telling people that, but for me, I have gotta do this for my own and my own community. And I am going to continue to do it. I don’t care whether or not I got political support from the Navajo Nation or not. All I have got from the Nation is grief, and that’s all I had.

Perhaps we need to teach the youth the laws and help interpret the laws to them so they will understand them. With that understanding, they will learn the consequences associated with the law. Perhaps with this knowledge, they can make the right decisions. A person who works in the judicial system said:

The laws that we have to deal with in our reservation. The laws that we have to deal with in our Navajo Tribal Code. The laws that we have in our own culture and our tradition. I think that the little kids will really learn that. A lot of kids come through my office, and they are missing that. Some of those that come through don’t even know. There are laws, but nobody teaches them.30

When we talk about law, we usually talk about incarceration and suppression. One person said that they are not working:

You know when you have incarceration failing. I was the executive director when that

30 This is in line with the comments of judges from the former Navajo Court of Indian Offenses (1892-1959), who complained that the “law,” in the form of Coyote stories that teach right and wrong, were not being taught, and that created problems (Ed.).
Silver v. Pahe went into effect, and I had to deal with the detention facilities. Suppression isn’t working.\footnote{The case mentioned by this speaker was a successful suit by DNA-People’s Legal Services against the Navajo Nation for bad jail conditions. Limitations in jail space and the inability to incarcerate convicted offenders is a subject of considerable debate. See, Yazzie (1994), Zion (1993), (1984, (1983).}

Many service providers attended the focus group meeting. Several said that they, as service providers, were not working together. One person, who represented social service providers, said that when she approached other service providers to work together, she was often told, “This is the work that I do, and this is my way.” She said:

I need to work with you. We need to justify how big of a problem we have in Chinle, but again, people would say “No, this is the work I do—this is my way.”

When saying, “This is the work I do,” people are establishing a boundary or turf. The establishment of turf is probably the cause of other service providers not collaborating with each other. Someone commented on that, saying:

We don’t collaborate as resources—”This is my turf; this is my what; this is my attachment area; this is my chapter; these are my people.” These are some of the things we say.

3. SOLUTION STATEMENTS

One approach is to keep our youth busy so they will stay away from joining a gang. One person said:

And that’s what we are trying to do. Everything from dances to community; from workshops to community gatherings; from Easter to Halloweens; and to everything. That’s what we have been doing. And it is basically to get those kids—keep those kids busy.

Jobs is another way of keeping them busy:
And to this day, I have hired forty-eight of these young men, and we have taught them drywall, electrical, plumbing and the whole nine yards in the carpentry business.

Another participant spoke to the need to empower youth:

But if we empower them, if we involve them in all that we are doing for them, I think that will work.

Parents have responsibilities, but youths have them too. They should be given more responsibility over things. When giving responsibilities to youth, one item stands out: Learning to make right choices in life. We need to teach youths how to make the right choices in life.

That is very important, because traditionally, everyone is in control of their own destiny in life:

So, and another thing, I try to stress to the kids is that it is their choice now, you know. They are in high school. Whatever happened to them, you know, is going to be their choice, you know. They can’t change what happened in the past. They can change their future if they want to.

One way to influence youth is to act in a positive loving way:

We do not call our children my child or my baby, shi yazshi and shi awhee. We gave them life and they left, and they are on their own. So today, they do not understand where they are came from—they ask themselves, “Who am I?” With this lack of understanding they turn and look at the white people. This is the reason they get together with their peers, or other youth who they can along with. So they get together and form groups. This group is gangs and is here to stay. Although we think there is no way we will be able to fix this problem, it is ours, as parents, to fix the problem. If our child is involved with the gangs, we will take time to call them our baby, and sit down with them and talk with them. Maybe this is how they will start listening to us again. We need to hug our youth. We need to be concerned where they go—verbally guide them, and most important, they need love. They are looking for that love. If we don’t do these things, our youth will get into everything.

One person said that parents need to learn parenting skills:

You know, you nurture, and you develop your children. It starts from there, but where are the parents they don’t have? And that’s what we are doing here in Rio [Puerco Acres]. We are bringing parenting skills for them.

Youths also need to learn basic life skills, which should be taught by parents,
grandparents, and other elders:

Have them work with people from their chapter, medicine men, grandparents, elders—people who have good words of wisdom—that can be there to talk to the children. Let’s give it back to them, because we don’t seem to be solving any problems ourselves. Let the elders teach in the schools.³²

Life skills education includes learning traditional and cultural teachings, and that process works:

Our teaching, our medicine—whatever we believe in traditionally—that is the medicine we can turn back to, and I am really for it. I am really strongly supporting that, because I know it works.

Teaching should be a hands-on process:

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³² There are schools in Canada which have accepted that recommendation, and report that involving elders in teaching youth is a successful approach (Ed.).
So, we try to show them, “You know, this is the way to do it.” Or, “This is what you can do.” And also, down in Navajo [New Mexico], we are trying to build two hogan. We are calling it a multipurpose hogan. The idea behind this is that we are going to teach winter stories, winter games, like shoe games and stuff.33

Prayers and ceremonies can be used to address some of the youth problems, and we can help rehabilitate our youth by using traditional ceremonies. That can be done through prayers and songs:

We can also use the medicine men, that can help them rehabilitate by using prayers. So if some of these ceremonies are done for them, they will realize themselves. I have seen many children get better and started to have a better relationship with their parents.

One participant focused on the law way in dealing with problems, and said that we just need to enforce the laws of the Navajo Nation:

Also with the Navajo Nation, I think it is just a matter of enforcement. It think that is all it is. The enforcement of rules, and also as a team effort, that is how we will help our youth.

B. THE SHIPROCK FOCUS GROUP MEETING

The meeting was held on October 30, 1998 at the Shiprock Chapter House. Given the limited number of participants, a general session was held with the entire audience. The sign-in sheet shows that 39 people attended the meeting. Participants included people from the Boy’s and Girl’s Club, the NNMC Injury Prevention Group, local school personnel and school officials, students, local service providers, youth home officials, chapter officials, and members of the general public. Nineteen letters of invitation were sent to chapter officials. Sixteen were sent to local services providers. Notices of the meeting were posted at the post office, health

33 “Winter stories” refers to portions of the traditional Navajo Creation and Journey narratives and Coyote Stories. The “shoe game” is a traditional form of gambling, which teaches relationships and sharing (Ed.).
facilities, schools, and all local trading posts. Notice of the meeting was published in the Navajo Times. Letters were sent to identified stakeholders.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

Youths are basically looking for a need to belong, and they find it with gangs:

Another area that there is a higher rate of gang activity—that comes from a need to belong—some of them state they don’t feel safe at home.

One person observed that youths seem to be more angry than in the past. That person saw youths as being angry and hatful against everyone, including immediate family members, and said:

I have worked with children for about five years now. So, I would say a couple things—one is, with teenagers, there seems to be a change. Children that reach 13, I have seen as angry. That they have—that they did not have when they were younger. I am not sure why that anger exist, but I have seen it. Another thing that I have seen is the lack of respect for elders.

Another expressed concern was the lack of communication. That is a problem, because some youth do not understand the Navajo language, and vice-versa, some elderlies\(^{34}\) do not understand the English language. That becomes very difficult at times, because most of the traditional teachings come from the elderlies, and they are usually taught in the Navajo language. One commentator said that we are the ones who created the problem of communication, by not using the Navajo language:

I think it is us that have created this problem for our kids. We have made our children have difficulties in speaking and understanding their own language. We have done it ourselves.

An elderly person observed that youths are not learning life skills:

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\(^{34}\) The Navajo-English term for “the elderly” is “elderlies;” using the word elderly in the plural. That reflects Navajo language usage, where Navajo grammar form is used in speaking English (Ed.).
What is really learned in schools? Nothing. All they learn is to write on papers. On the history books, they are not learning the correct material. The Treaty of 1868 was to learn how to make clothes—they do not want us to learn that today. How can we learn? We are allowed to learn only the incorrect information. So we will have to correct the problem first, and that is the only way we will be able to correct the problem.35

One person was concerned that there was no community involvement in the school system, particularly when it comes to activities for youth. That person said that we can all participate in activities by volunteering our services, saying:

And then there is a school setting there with that type of facility that could be used. And, I am not saying that we need to expect the school staff or the government or the tribe to pay people to run these programs. But if the community people, the chapter people, as volunteers would be willing to take responsibility for opening up, locking the school, cleaning it up. You know, not just one or two people to do it, but a whole group of people and youth to clean it up after they used an activity. And I don’t mean just open basketball. I mean more things, when let’s let someone like [a name] could come and speak to a group one night at a open community talk on self-esteem or real positive things where the school is not a place where parents are intimidated to go because they are not educated.

One participant was concerned that parents teach their youths that it is O.K. to drink alcohol by drinking in front of them:

Then they drink the alcohol and their children are seeing what the parents are doing, and they start to thin it is okay to take the substance. The children have started to drink too, and it has gotten worst.

One participant doubted the success of dealing with problems using the law way, saying that locking up people as punishment for wrongdoing does not work:

35 The reference to the Navajo Nation Treaty of 1868 is likely to its education provisions which required the United States to provide for Navajo education for a certain period of time. A great deal of the education of the time was on vocational skills, such as making clothing, and this elderly speaker seems to bemoan the fact that “book learning” has been substituted for teaching practical skills in life (Ed.).
Why just throw somebody in jail and say, “Hey, this is your punishment” and stuff. And that is going to straighten them out? That ain’t going to work. You’re right—it does not work. We have to have good programs with the justice system that work with people on different types of things.

2. ASSESSMENTS

One person suggested raising the self-esteem of youth and observed:

Who was the best students? Who was the best athlete in Shiprock High School? Who was the best poet—poetry writer over there? Who was the best automobile mechanic over there? Who were the best 4-H? They should get that money down here so you get the recognition to build up the self-esteem of the many Navajos. We are not doing it.

One person compared the parenting that was done during his youth to the parenting that is being done today. That person indicated that they obeyed their parents back then, and they stayed out of trouble for that reason. That is not the case today:

And, what I see is a lot of the problem is the consequences—lack of consequences. When I was growing up, you were afraid of your parents, they don’t necessarily beat you, but you did not want to get in trouble, because you just did not want to get in trouble with your parents. And now, it seems like parents don’t have that kind of effect on the children, and then kids, my own kids, know. Kids in general, and I know my own kids have told me they know they will not get into trouble.

A school official said that students want their parents to get involved in their school activities:

The students that I have been talking to at the Shiprock High School, they have a lot of ideas about the things that they like to see happening in their school and things they would like to work out in their own lives and their own families. And that is why I say they’re—they have taken this opposition in life, and I have seen that when you walk through the school right now—if you go right now—they have this big poster-size paper with the suggestion that they have to, for community and their school, think about how to

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36 Several participants expressed concerns about legal interference in parental authority. Many expressed fear that if they punished their children, they would be subjected to prosecution. That issue arose in both stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings.
make this a safer place. And how to address some of these issues. So it is definitely a reminder of a lot of great ideas. And I think that it would be great to get some of their input into this as well. They have a lot to say. What are some of the things? Yeah, some things—parent involvement. They want parent involvement—one wanted community involvement in the school.

There was mention that parents do not get involved in the school system when identifying problems. Perhaps one reason parents do not get involved is negative experiences with the school. They are the result of parents being called to the school for their child’s wrongful act, and perhaps they feel uncomfortable because their English is not good:

Where the school is not a place where parents are intimidated to go because they are not educated, or their English is not too good, so they don’t want to go to the school. A lot of times, parents don’t want to go to the school because it’s a negative experience. They go when their child gets into trouble—they are called into the school for that purpose. They go to a conference and they don’t hear good things about their child. And so the school isn’t a safe—a safe and comfortable place for them to go to.37

Another possible reason for a lack of school involvement is the lack of local ownership of the school by the people. One person said:

Kinda as an overall comment to community ownership: Sometimes, I don’t know who to blame, or maybe we shouldn’t blame anybody. It’s just that the community doesn’t feel that they own the school; that they are a part of the school; or that they are part of the hospital; or that they are part of the chapter. We kinda develop these systems in our society that—I don’t know how—it just kinda locks people out.

One participant mentioned Bible studies as an aspect of teaching tradition and culture, because we are attempting to teach values systems to help people make decisions:

My parents are Christians and they took me to church. That kind of created a value system—speaking about the traditional belief—people believe in Christianity. Somehow, that created some type of value system within me. I knew the difference between right and wrong, and I had a lot of people that were close to me when I was

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37 This speaker may be saying that parents feel uncomfortable dealing with school officials because of the way parents are treated—that they don’t feel emotionally “safe” dealing with school officials (Ed.).
growing up. I always knew my parents cared about what I was doing all the time.

One person asked why we don’t make our own laws, and said that we are supposed to be a sovereign nation. Legislative leaders need to address that:

The legislators—the lawmakers—don’t sit down, by the month, like Congress does. Loafing on the job, not doing their work. They should make these laws. And that is the way our leadership works—that’s what these politicians should speak their sovereignty. Where is sovereignty? You make your own laws to take care of your society. But it is not happening. So our politicians will realize that they gotta go to work. They can’t forever loaf around and be paid two weeks at a time. And that should be stressed from the tribal administration.

Another suggestion was to hold youths more accountable for wrongful actions:

And kids have to know that if they do something wrong, they will have to be accountable for it, and I don’t think that message is out there. Here or anyplace else.

An elderly person said that if a person kills someone or commits serious crimes, they should be treated as an adult down to 13 years old:

If you murder a person and bang him up—try to kill him, rape a lady, you should be treated as an adult, down clear to the age thirteen—we should recommend that.

3. SOLUTION STATEMENTS

Addressing media influences, one person said that programs on Navajo traditions and culture should be shown on television. The comment was:

And my idea would be to put, like a program on Navajo Nation TV, because TV was also a big problem that, you know, the youth had too much TV. So why not put something cool on TV like telling what the Dine’ people have offered, you know, because there is a lot. The emotional lives of youths should be addressed by raising their self-esteem. That could be done by honoring our youth, not only to raise their self-esteem, but to move them away

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38 There is a community channel available on cable television which serves the Navajo Nation public which could be used for that purpose, and there is a Navajo Nation media agency which does such programming.
from the negative side:

So, we should have some kind of recognition program at the various levels of the Navajo—from the top of the Navajo Nation to the chapter. It will take money. They should appropriate at least ten million dollars. And give these awards at this level, that should keep us. Putting a little pride and a spring in our step for these people there to be good, sound citizens and get away from going on the negative side.

On participant suggested that children should learn by performing services in the community:

I believe that I have a solution to, like, all the things you guys been talking about. I believe that you guys should start service learning within the school. And this is where the student goes out into the community and either, like, go to an old citizen’s home and they read to, you know, a grandparents for an hour or so. Or they can to go the local park and pick it up. Like pick up trash, be picking up certain stuff and certain stuff like that. ‘Cause that is what we are doing at our school. We have a tutor student. Go to an old age home or something like that and what it does is it make them have higher self-esteem and they communicate with their community, and also they become socially and civically more responsible when they go out into the society. But that is what I think is a solution.

One participant suggested that alcohol should be legalized to raise more revenue for the Navajo Nation:

I always talk and said liquor should be legalized. Liquor has two sides. There is a bad side—there is a good side, like anything else. The good side is that they are taxed. Off the reservation, it is used to pay the policemen. Maybe the major. It is operated so you can put streetlights. You pay for the streetlights. You pay for parking meters. That’s why liquor money—that’s how it operates. But over here, we say, “no, no, no.” And we just sought abusive laws. When somebody gets drunk, we say, “Go you drunk, you broke the law.” Man! Policing! That’s the thing. If you legalize it, you can tax it, so you can pump that into buying food for the prisoners. You can buy better uniforms for the police.

One participant spoke of “talking things out,” which is a Navajo peacemaking concept:

To solve a problem, that’s how I would figure it, that’s how to solve a problem. We all know that the best way to do it is, to sit down and talk about it. Talk about our differences, and more and more it needs to be taught, not only in schools, but at home, you know, being good examples.

Another participant related the power of prayer:
From my point of view, there are prayers. They prayers do exist. The prayers exist with the water; with the language; and with the teachings—everything exist with prayer. So if our children take this water that is blessed, there is a possibility that they will improve their thinking and their way of life. We have not totally lost our prayers, the teaching and the language.

C. THE TUBA CITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING

The Tuba City focus group meeting was held on November 13, 1998 at the Tuba City Chapter House. There was one general session. The sign-in sheet indicates that 25 people attended the focus group meeting. Participants included representatives of the Juvenile Detention Center, the peacemaker program, the Department of Youth and Community Service, NDWD, the Veteran’s Office, the Leupp Youth Home, local school personnel and officials, students, service providers, and members of the general public. Eighteen letters were sent to local chapter government representatives, and eighteen were sent to chapter coordinators. Thirteen letters were sent to Navajo Nation Government department heads. Notice of the meeting was published in the Navajo Times.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

Members of the focus group identified poverty and families and youths not using their energy in a positive way as problems which contribute to gang development:

Gangs usually develop as the result of poverty. When we have situations where young people particularly do not have ways to use their energy in a positive way.

Another problem is that youths do not have a sense of direction to go in life, particularly in their career goals:
A lot of these students, when you really start to talk about career directions and stuff, they don’t have a sense of direction—what they want to do. Maybe they want to go into auto mechanics or maybe they want to go into being a nursing assistant, or LPN, or nursing assistant—they don’t seem to know the difference between these.

A youth home worker quoted a youth on drinking:
“My parents are drinking again. My family is not what they’re supposed to be, so I kind of slipped back into my old ways. But I really don’t want to go that way, so you guys can help me out.”

There was a comment about buying children anything they want, including clothes:

We allow that to happen, allow them to dress. We allow the parents to go out and buy clothes, big baggies, we let them wear bandanas, we let them turn their caps around. You know all these signals. We don’t pick it up. And then we try to go around and forever saying this is our problem. The problem first starts in the home, and the parents need to be involved.

A lack of parenting skills and the need to teach them, along with discipline, was identified as a problem:

The way I think about it is, when you go back to when they were born—when you go back to when they were born and to their growing up period by the time they are five years old, they should be in school. So within that time, that is the time to teach children. If the child says “no,” there are some disciplinary measures that can be done, and it is the parent’s responsibility to do that. If you spank your child, then they ask why did you do that, then they call that child abuse. Then, they take them to Social Services. The child is not really abused, and it’s just that, from the Navajo way of teaching, the child is usually spanked from doing something wrong and they learn from that. I think they should have some kind of regulation saying that parents should take the full responsibility back.

Young parents need parenting skills:

Well, number one, we have our kids becoming younger parents. The younger and younger, tells us that is one area that we need to address. That’s why our kids are needing parenting skills, because they are not at the maturity level to handle that responsibility.

One participant identified the youth not learning traditional teachings as a problem:

Our grandmas and grandpas, our roots, did not do the teaching correctly, especially what their clans are, and so, they are confused and do not know it. People are saying that these children are not taught these things are the ones that are doing this and that.39

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39 Navajo common law is greatly concerned with preventing incest as a source of disruption, and knowing one’s clan is required to prevent incestuous relationships. This person appears to hint that incestuous relationships which arise from not knowing one’s clan get young people into trouble (Ed.).
Another speaker picked up on the problem with incest and related it to not teaching both Navajo and English:

A long time ago, our elderlies used to say that you are not suppose to bother your brother, and it is very sacred. We use to say that, and now they don’t, and we will have the children listen to us again, and in the modern way we are facing today? We made a mistake when we say we will let our children learn how to talk English. So our kids have forgotten how to talk in Navajo, and how will they be able to speak the language again? How can they speak both languages again, now they are only going the English way. How can we go back, and that is how I see it—it is very hard to correct. A translation has been made in 1920 and 1960, we went to the modern way back then. I am not speaking against the White people. I am wondering if they are able to relearn our way of life in English. I wonder if it is possible.

One person said that Navajo people have gotten away from using k’e (the ethics of kinship relations), or the greeting system (where you address someone using a kinship term, e.g. “my mother,” “my sister,” or “my child”), and that changes the way we interact as Navajo people. In the past, the Navajo People used the clanship system, and it basically said that you are related to everyone in some way. Today, it seems like no one wants to have anything to do with their relatives or neighbors. In the old days, k’e was connected to the concept of family love, but today that is gone:

I live in mixed emotions, because we don’t remember the k’ei system or greeting system. Even the Navajo greeting words are gone. Because of this, I am hesitant to go to the neighbor’s house. We have people that just greet you from the tip of the mouth, not from the heart. And this is making me think, and at times I ask around.

One person said that people in alcohol rehabilitation have a different view of treatment facilities today. They see treatment and rehabilitation centers as a vacation place and resort.

40 There are two closely-related terms: k’ei means the clan system, and k’e is the way people related by clanship should treat each other, i.e. with respect. K’ei is the relationship, and k’e is an ethical norm, including proper ways of greeting people by your relationship with them (Ed.).
People sign up for rehabilitation in the winter so they will be cared for, housed, and fed, and in the spring, they will go home to drink again. The person quoted someone he talked to, who said:

“It is now winter, and I am going on a vacation to the rehabilitation center. There, I will sleep good, they will take care of me and do my laundry, and feed me good. When it is summertime, I will return home and drink again.”

The commentator also quoted another person about rehabilitation:

“Don’t you know that I am taking a vacation? I am living in this rehabilitation center, and it is a resort for me. So, I’m gonna go over there just to relax, and they will wash my clothes, and I am going to eat good food, and I will sleep in a nice clean sheet. And then, when spring time comes, I am going to come out, when it is warm climate, I am going to be coming.”

A former law enforcement observed that just putting people in jail is not working:

I came into law enforcement with very high expectations of resolving some of the problems that have existed. And I am really disheartened that, to this point, the problems still exist out in the community. Twenty-seven years of being in that law enforcement area. I am not speaking against law enforcement, but I think that it, the process, the activities of the raising or putting people into force-type of situation where you house them and warehouse them, put them in a facility—you escalate the charges, and all kind of stuff—in my opinion is not working. It does not work.

2. ASSESSMENT

Youth is forgotten by our society for various reasons. One of them is that parents are so focused on their jobs that they have forgotten youth. Youth is forgotten at the chapter level:

I think that we forgot the youth. We don’t remember our children, because all we do is work. That is all we do. At six o’clock, they wake up, and we go to work. We don’t even follow them. We forgot our youth, maybe. Now even in the chapter house, during the meetings, they will be just standing there, not being involved. 41

On participant felt that parents need to take more responsibility for supervising young people:

41  This is a common complaint. Many Navajos complain that young people do not attend chapter meetings, if they do attend, they do not participate. Some say that is because youths are locked out of the chapter process (Ed.).
There needs to be a curfew. There needs to be supervision when the ball games are going on and that’s where they not allowed to be out doing any kind of gang activities.

While the suggestion that there should be traditional and cultural teaching arose during this meeting, as with others, one commentator said that the teachings should not be put into books, but taught by the elderlies, using hands-on types of teaching:

Well, for me, this writing in the books in the English language is not a good idea to me, because these were not written in the book, when our Navajo elderly man have done ceremonies on us. These things were not written on the books, and they never read the books. The stories that were told from the past, they have not forgotten about it and it is not even a forgetful subject that they have brought upon us.42

On participant said that parenting skills should be a graduation requirement:

I really like to see introduced in the schools parenting skills. Now, if you want traditional kinds of things, teach them. I really think graduation requirements should say, every students must take a course in parenting skills.

The discussion turned to drug abuse treatment centers, and the participants focused on the period of time after a person comes out of a facility, but before a return home. They said they wanted more detailed home assessments before a patient is discharged and returned home. If there are problems in the home, such as the influence to use drugs or alcohol again, there should be preventive measures. There should be an education or career plan to be implemented:

Identifies what the home situation looks like, whether they are a single parent, whether they have a dysfunctional family, or if they are on the welfare system, or if they are substance abuser themselves, or if a single parent or sets of parent.

3. SOLUTION STATEMENTS

There was a comment that youths need to know there are consequences associated with

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42 This commentator seems to say that he or she agrees with a general customary prohibition about writing down the contents of ceremonies, so they should be taught orally, and that the traditional teachings have not been forgotten (Ed.).
doing something wrong:

These kids need to know that they’re gonna pay if they do something wrong. ⁴³

As at other focus group meetings, someone stressed the quality of love:

There is a way for the children to straighten out. I wish all the people would come back together, work together, love each other, and help out one another. Bilingual education was also stressed, as in other meetings:

That is why we want to put bilingualism in the schools. Our children will learn both the Navajo and English languages, in reading and writing it. If they talk both, they will have learned both of the languages. It will be good if they learn both of them. That’s the way we want it, some of us here today.

Another participant noted the gap between youth and traditional people and said that it can be closed through language. Also advocating bilingual education, that person said:

Right now, there is a gap between young people and traditional people. There is no bridge. So what we’re saying is that we will build a bridge, a bilingual language in the schools. Put that in there—bilingual language in the schools. So our children, our youth, at that time will have two languages, English and Navajo. The way the people will teach—when they teach, the youth will understand.

Arguing on the other side about writing traditional cultural concepts to teach them, one commentator said:

So, we should put it on paper and use it to teach our children. That is the only way they will understand it. Then teaching them the English way is the way they will understand it. If we just teach them in Navajo language, that will just look at us, and they won’t know what is being talked about.

There was a recommendation that house rules should be evaluated for possible change:

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⁴³ One of the foremost Navajo Nation justice issues is the inability to make people “pay” for crimes because of a lack of jail space, and the lack of federal assistance for incarceration in carrying out the trust responsibility of assuring justice in Indian Country.
I think we as parents need to redo our rules within our homes. They should pay attention to their kids more, and say “these are my rules in this house and these are the consequences.” I think that is how they should probably fix that.

Young parents should get basic parenting skill training, and their parents—all parents—should as well:

The parents that are around 30—they do not understand the old traditional teachings. So they just go to work, and that is all they do. I am not talking against the job. We should do some type of teaching for the parents. It is not hard to talk to kids, but it is difficult for the younger parents.

Participants stressed the need for both modern and traditional knowledge and teaching:

Some of our people in the community who may not have “a degree,” okay? We seem to really start focusing on people who have gone out to get their Ph.Ds, who have gone to get their master’s, who have gone to get their bachelor’s. I am saying that in our families, in our communities, there are beautiful people who have the gift of teaching. They don’t have to go to a big university, then come back and say, “Well, I am the answer to all your problems,” you know. I guess I am suggesting that sometimes, that becomes a very destructive posture. Especially from people who have that and have come back. And they are saying that well, “We—this is what I learned in school.” That is fine, but we need to look at those values, refocus on those things that are traditional. Values that are useful to help us progress in life. I mean medicine people, as Alfred Dennison indicated. You don’t have to have a degree. You don’t have to have a license to perform a ceremony, and so on and so on. Okay, who are you to be a counselor—traditional counselor? Where is your degree? I don’t see the license on the wall. You know, I don’t have a license, but I have always dealt with human beings all my life. And some of the values that I possess on how to help a person, without having to say, “Well, give me a degree and I can help you.” Okay, I think that is important. We need to go back into the community—we need to go back to that level where our neighbor can possess those values.

Participants felt that there should be more Navajo cultural teaching in drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs within and outside the Navajo Nation:

The people that are going there may or may not speak Navajo. If they speak Navajo, and hear the Navajo way of talking and the teachings that are coming from the home, the language and teachings that was taught to us from our grandpas and grandmas a long time ago, this should be included into what they are being taught to them in the rehabilitation centers.
There should be more family involvement in counseling and treatment:
Because of some of these boys reaching back to the program after they left, we decided to go ahead and bring the family in—the mothers, the fathers, and even the brothers and sisters. Now, we set up a group in Winslow, where they actually come in—the family twice a month—they are mandatory to come in. They actually sit down with the children, their child, in this, with a mental health specialist and ourselves, one of the staff, and we go through the counseling again. And I think—I think it is working. I think it is really working. Bringing the families in like that, having the family and parents, you know, work out their issues.

On participant suggested traditional and culturally-relevant treatment centers:

So, the issue right now regarding creating treatment centers, here on the reservation will be culturally bound. That will be homeward bound design, and that will include family members as part of the treatment.

Finally, a participant suggested that there should be a youth conference, perhaps every year:

And one, the other thing is like really putting on a big conference for every type of a youth conference. Instead of traveling like with the youth, we have to travel to Shiprock; Albuquerque. Like in two weeks, I will be in San Diego. I have to go all the way out there just for a youth conference. And we can actually have a big youth conference somewhere on the reservation, either here or putting it in Window Rock.

D. THE TO’HAJIILEE FOCUS GROUP MEETING

The meeting was held on November 20, 1988 at the To’hajiilee Community School. There was a larger student attendance because it was held at the school. Rosemary Blanchard, a school field assistant, said that 78 students attended. The sign-in sheet indicated that there were 33 adults at the meeting.44 The audience included individuals from the Prosecutor’s Office, peacemaker program, teachers and counselors, school officials, the school principal, social workers, and members of the general public. Twenty-eight letters were sent to Eastern Agency chapters to give notice of the meeting, and notices of the meeting were posted at the post office,
health facilities, schools, and local trading posts. Letters were also sent to stakeholders. Notice was published in the Navajo Times.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

Youths join gangs because of the influence of television. They see a lot of negative things on television. One teacher noted the gang image on television and said that youths imitate it:

And I think that a lot of the youth are negatively influenced by the media. We are so near Albuquerque that I think a lot of the youth—they idolize the gangs that are—some of them may be affiliated with gangs—as well as the stuff they watch back home. A lot of the students I see are imitating films like “Boyz N the Hood,” and all these Black movies in South Central L.A. And they start bringing that attitude to the school. And you can always hear these certain slang that are used.

One student added this:

The second thing is there are a lot of hatred, that’s not shrinking, and there is too much gossip and rumors. With these gossip and rumors, they don’t talk to start fights and stuff, because they don’t talk to each other.

A school official spoke to trust and confidence:

Trusting other people—they don’t know who to trust. And then, they don’t want to open up to somebody that they don’t feel comfortable with, so there’s a lot of feelings going about them. They don’t have someone that they can depend on or really trust. The other part is, I had one say that stress—they had a lot, meaning they stay up late, and usually it’s because they probably watch too much TV. And therefore, they come to school in a negative way.

A teacher said that parents are not being parents:

A lot of parents aren’t being parents. They’re not there for their children. As well as substance abuse. They’re not only several students I see who are using drugs, but as well as lack of parenting and lack of community involvement in the school.

One adult spoke of parents taking greater responsibility:

I think, first, we have to consider—we have to ask—whose responsibility is it to each of these children? After school, it is no longer the teacher’s responsibility because they are off. So, when school is out, then the adults again becomes the custodians. So it is their
responsibility to entertain the children, and I think they need to find ways to do that. If they’re working and when they are not available, then they have to find the resources.

A student said that parents must check on their children:

Kids will do drugs when their parents are not around, so it’s good that their parents come in to check in on their kids.

Another student said that parents should set rules and supervise:

Well, what I would say is the problem is that the kids in the community, like child-care, parents not being parents. Like some parents don’t give their kids rules and stuff like that. Like what’s wrong from right and what’s right from wrong.

Another participant agreed that supervision is a key issue:

I find that the biggest problem is the lack of supervision by the parents. When the parents are not available, then the kids are on their own—they start to make their own rules, and lots of things happen.

As with other focus group meetings, a lack of communication was raised:

There is lack of communication with their parents; it is like not spending time with them. They probably want to spend time with their parents, and stuff like that.

One student said that students have too much free time after school, and they need activities:

The lack of activities after school—Some kids go out there and they don’t know what to do after school. They hang out with friends and get in trouble.

A teacher confirmed that students need things to do, and suggested that the community should look into the possibility of a youth center:

I think that the main thing is the youth need something to do out here in the community, like a youth center. As well as getting them involved. And I guess those are the main problems here in our community.

A student said that they want jobs:

I know some kids that wanna raise some money. And some of them don’t know where to get jobs. They take people off, what’s that? Take people off welfare. Keep people busy.
Bring in income. Give kids things to do.

Another student observed that law enforcement is lacking because police are not around:

And the lack of enforcement around the reservation—that’s like, they are never around. I don’t know. I don’t know, if anyone of you seen the cops around.

A student said that Navajo Nation curfew laws are not enforced:

We have curfews that’s supposed to end at 10:00 at night, but people don’t obey those rules and stuff.

2. ASSESSMENT

Youths are affected physically by watching too many late movies and staying up late. A person who works for the school’s special education department linked that to stress:

The other part is, I had one say that stress, they had a lot, meaning they stay up late, and usually it’s because they probably watch too much TV. And therefore they come to school in a negative way.

A medical social worker said that young people need to learn how to take care of their own problems and take on more responsibility to do that:

You kids don’t want mom and dad to solve your problems—kids just want them to hear, and it’s important that mom and dad put it back on them, on you all, to solve your problem. Once you leave home, then you have to be out there on your own, solving your own problem, then teach that to your own children.

A special education worker addressed problems with adult communication with children:

Maybe the parents aren’t home when they get home from school. The parents don’t want to communicate with them, or can’t communicate with them because they are working late hours. Or they just don’t have the verbal skills, I guess, to explain themselves. And then, it works both ways. The students also said they couldn’t speak to their parents as well—you know, they just get angry or something.

A student spoke to parental neglect when parents work and kids are home alone: And then, the next one was neglect. That was like, parents working and not giving enough time to their children. And the kids are more or less home alone and growing up on their own, and getting into all kinds of things.

Another student said that parents have to learn how to say “no,” and teach what is right
and wrong:

Some parents don’t give, like, “nos” to their kids. And they don’t—they just go out there in the reservation and do all kinds of stuff. And not around for their kids. Kids not taught right from wrong.

Some parents drink liquor with their children or buy it for them, as a student noted:

Some parents drink with their kids. And some family buy liquor for their kids.

A teacher brought up the point of youth involvement in the community to learn how to make decisions:

And they’re our future leaders. If we could train them and, you know, get them involved in something positively, maybe they’ll begin to think there is another way besides drugs and alcohol, and it seems to me like they are not really involved in a lot of decision-making here.

A special education worker said that youth need help with their studies:

And then, tutoring—They have homework and assignments that need to get done. But then they go home and their parents don’t know how to do it. Or their parents tell them, “That’s the teacher’s job,” and they need help to study.

One adult opposed establishing recreation centers, because the current facilities are not being used:

Over in Window Rock, we’ve got the sports center, the wellness center. Up in Fort Defiance, we have open gym at the high school. We have so many playgrounds and basketball courts, because everyone in Window Rock, all the youths are into basketball. You don’t see kids out in the community centers, so that kind of gives you an idea — community centers aren’t going to work.

3. SOLUTION STATEMENTS

We need to give decision-making responsibility to youth. We need to teach it to our youth so they will make their own decisions in life. A teacher said, “leave the decisions up to the people, especially those that involve youth.”

The community should teach children to refocus graffiti art to use it in a good way, and
perhaps even profit from it. One adult said:

Let’s say for graffiti, I think—to me, graffiti is an art, because I am an artist myself. Some younger kids—they apply it in the wrong way, meaning like going outside and putting it on the walls of the restroom or different areas. I think an art to put it that way, is the wrong way of application. If you were to put it in a gallery or studio, maybe you can profit from your painting. That would be the right approach to maybe somehow benefit yourself in the right way.

A student made a suggestion on how to improve family communication:

Well, the way I communicate with my mom—sometimes we sit down and we play a game or something, and then we talk about how each other developed and stuff, and maybe sometimes she’ll ask me if I have any problems at school, and I’ll tell her, so I can release everything I have inside me, so I won’t take it out on anybody else around me, and she’ll tell me something that’s inside, but we usually have a family night, or something like that, during the weekend, or something, so we can both spend time together and that’s the way we usually communicate with each other.

One parent suggested mandatory parent meetings:

We need to make, maybe mandatory meetings, for all the parents to start coming together and talking about these issues. I realize that I don’t see any parents. We have the kids here; we have counselors here; we have all types of resources that can address this issue, but we don’t have any parents to do it.

A student suggested that students could do positive things for the community:

And then there are alcohol and tagging. What? There is a lot of graffities and taggings on the water tanks and the housings. And the way we can prevent that is by doing something good for our community, instead of making it more miserable than it already is.

A special education worker addressed student supervision in school:

Lack of supervision here at—I guess at school. Teachers aren’t getting down on them hard, that they would probably like them to tuck in their shirt, I think verbally was the main issue. The teachers hear someone cussing or say something—putting somebody down, and they should say, “Well, don’t say that!” There’s no consequences involved, like you know. That should be handled more severely.
XI. OFF-RESERVATION GANG RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCES

To further understand how gangs came to the Navajo Nation, we next examine the off-reservation influences that contributed to their importation and rise. Although there were reports of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation in the 1970s, the activities and identities of the gangs we see in the 1990s are different from those of two decades earlier (Henderson 1997). Given anecdotal information we had at the start of this study, we knew that we would need to delve into off-reservation gang influences. There was a working hypothesis that “there was considerable influence and importation of gang elements from population centers surrounding the reservation with which reservation-based youth had regular contact.” There were some associated questions and assumptions, including (1) areas of the Navajo Nation that were closer to nearby cities and towns would show more gang influences from those places; (2) the situation would be different depending upon relationships with border towns or cities; and (3) the movement of reservation youths who were gang-involved on and off the reservation would perhaps be age-graded, with older youths being more mobile. As we investigated these hypotheses, we learned that mobility is a significant factor in the emergence of Navajo gangs in the 1990s.

Navajo gang members reported living in many places outside the reservation, and regularly visit off-reservation communities. Navajo families relocated to border towns and large cities, and that enabled Navajo youths to associate with and join gangs while living in those locations. Starting in the late 1980s, city dwelling, gang-involved Navajo teens returned to the Navajo Nation (sometimes sent there by parents to get the youth away from urban gangs), and brought their gang identity with them. At about the same time, “gangsta” identity became popular in popular culture, with rap music, baggy clothing, movies, music videos, magazines,
and other media, which portrayed youth gangs as an attractive lifestyle. Access to popular culture increased in the Navajo Nation with modernization and change, including:

1. The quantities of cluster housing with electricity increased.
2. Rural homesites were modernized.
3. Generators and car batteries were used to provide electricity to homes without electrical service.
4. Satellite dishes were used for television reception.
5. Easily available and inexpensive popular music could be played on battery-operated equipment.
6. Gangsta movies were available on videotape.

Those factors, Navajo youths living off-reservation, joining gangs and returning with a gang identity and experience; Black and Chicano street gang lifestyles becoming a dominant expression of youth culture; and media access to popular culture through modernization, created the means for gangs to emerge in the Navajo Nation in the 1990s.

A. MOBILITY AMONG NAVAJOS

Mobility is nothing new to the Navajo People. They have always shown high levels of mobility in get access to various resources (Deyhle and Margonis 1995; Levy, et al. 1989; Graves and Van Arsdale 1966), and that pattern has existed for at least 350 years (Hodge 1989). Both Navajos who live traditional pastoral lives (Conte 1982) and Navajos who have few or no current ties with traditional lifestyles are mobile. Navajos take advantage of opportunities in a broad geographic area while maintaining strong ties to the Navajo Nation through extensive kinship networks.

The reasons for Navajos leaving their homeland have varied. Navajo men began leaving
the reservation for seasonal wage work with the construction of railroads in the Southwest in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There were some Bureau of Indian Affairs programs that benefitted graduates of boarding schools. Official relocation efforts stopped with the Depression, when there was no economic incentive to leave the reservation. Late 1930s federal livestock reduction programs increased the numbers of people who left the reservation because of the lack of income. Navajos left for military service and war work during World War II in larger numbers. In 1949, the Bureau of Indian Affairs began a relocation program to encourage reservation residents to find off-reservation work. That program did not give financial assistance, but that assistance was given in a program that began in 1952, and it lasted into the 1970s (Hodge 1969). These events greatly stimulated movement to off-reservation communities.

Postwar relocation programs sent Navajos to cities. Border towns were not included in the relocation initiative, but Navajos moved to those communities on their own. Livestock reduction led to social fragmentation, which was also hastened by population growth, and that led to reliance upon wage labor, decreased inter-group cooperation and increased migration to areas where jobs were available (Levy 1989). Jobs were not generally available in the reservation border towns, so the relocation programs sent Navajos to distant large cities.45

Subsidized relocation efforts were designed to send Navajos to the San Francisco Bay area, Los Angeles and Barstow in California; Denver, Colorado; Dallas, Texas; and Chicago, Illinois. Studies from the 1960 through the 1980s describe Navajo migration and relocation efforts and the effects upon those who participated in those programs (Levy, et al. 1989; Conte

45 See Deyhle 1985 for a discussion of the lack of job opportunities in border towns.
1982; Griffen 1982; Kunitz *et al.* 1969, 1970; see esp. Hodge 1979; Graves and Van Arsdale 1996). A small number of Navajos were almost totally separated from the reservation by migrating to those urban areas. Many moved permanently, so that continuing ties to relatives were minimal, and consisted of short visits back to the Navajo Nation. However, most Navajos who relocated felt that off-reservation work was strictly to earn money. Their visits home were frequent, as were visits to the city by relatives from home. The migrants would choose to move back if the Navajo Nation economy provided the means to earn wages comparable to what they could earn in the city. That includes the fact that the cost of living is lower on the reservation. There was another group of off-reservation residents whose stay was transitory. They lived and worked off-reservation for brief periods of time to earn money for a particular purpose that was tied to on-reservation residence. They planned to return home when they earned a certain amount of money.

Studies of Navajo migrants found that urban residents had tenuous ties to or with the off-reservation community where they lived, and strongly-held values and attachments that pulled them back to the reservation. The major positive feature of the reservation was family, “all the people I know and grew up with” (Graves and Van Arsdale 1966: 302). A study of Navajo Nation women who were recent high school graduates found that one-third of the young women in a reservation community had gone to cities for work, but intended to return because of the high cost of living in the city, as compared to the reservation (Deyhle and Margonis 1995).

Many Navajo women who lived off-reservation would have relatives’ children stay with them in the city for extended periods of time, but eventually, the children would return to the reservation (Griffen 1982). Relocated Navajos had minimal ties to the off-reservation
community, and they did not develop ties with each other within those towns and cities. There were no Navajo communities, either in the form of unrelated Navajo families living in a neighborhood or in the form of Navajo community organizations. Just as family ties drew city residents home, the only family ties between families in the city were linkages among relatives.

B. NAVAJO RESIDENTS OF BORDER TOWNS AND REGIONAL CITIES

The individuals interviewed for this study had unstable residences. That is, many youths had just moved to where they were interviewed, were about to move somewhere else within the Navajo Nation, or would be moving to an off-reservation town or city. There was a widespread pattern of those youths living in border towns and more distant towns and cities, and then on the reservation, at various times of their lives. The respondents talked about such mobility being accepted and a standard part of life. Many of them lived with a parent or parents, or other relatives, outside the Navajo Nation, and then returned, sometimes with parents and sometimes with other relatives. Some gang members whose family lived outside the reservation were attending Navajo Nation schools when they were interviewed. The gang and crew members were highly marginalized—most were from broken homes (only 27 reported having grown up with both their mother and father) with a fair degree of dysfunction having to do with substance abuse, neglect, and domestic violence. Many lived with relatives and extended family in different places. Patterns of movement in and out of the Navajo Nation and the living arrangements of the youths were complex, but always involved living with relatives, and usually involved a high degree of mobility.

The following table shows the level of mobility of gang and crew members, who reported having lived in an average of 3.7 communities in their young lives. The number of residences
was not related to age, because younger respondents reported a similar number of residences as older ones.

Table 72

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF RESIDENCES</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern and location of prior residences confirmed our hypothesis that off-reservation residence influenced and led to the importation of gang elements from areas outside the Navajo Nation. The following table indicates the prior residences of respondents by border towns and cities in the Four Corners states:
Table 73

Places of Prior Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BORDER TOWNS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallup, New Mexico</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmington, New Mexico</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holbrook, Arizona</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cortez and Durango, Colorado</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page, Arizona</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METROPOLITAN CITIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix or Tucson, Arizona</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque, New Mexico</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, Colorado</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-five other respondents lived in other towns or small cities in the Four Corners states:

- Flagstaff, Arizona—5
- Grants, New Mexico—4
- Santa Fe, New Mexico—3
- 13 others in a total of 14 different towns

Fourteen others said they had lived in Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois (Chicago), Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, or Washington. Seven of the respondents had never lived in the Navajo Nation, even though they are Navajos. Only 17 of the respondents said that they lived in the Navajo Nation exclusively.

In addition to having multiple residences within and outside the Navajo Nation the respondents spoke of regular visits to other places:
One 13-year old mentioned visiting seven different communities regularly;

Two respondents, ages 16 and 17, said they visited five different places regularly;

Two, ages 17 and 22, reported four places;

Twenty-six (between ages 15 and 28, an average age of 19.5 years) indicated they visited three different places regularly;

Thirty-six, between 13 and 25 (an average age of 18.19 years) related that they visited two places regularly;

Twenty-five, between the ages of 13 and 25 (16 average) said they visited one other place regularly; and

Seven, between ages 15 and 27 (average 19.57) said they did not visit anywhere else regularly.

The respondents tended to be more mobile in terms of the number of places they visited regularly as they reached their late teens. There is also an apparent correlation between respondents having lived in several places and the frequency of their visits elsewhere.

C. IMPORTATION OF GANG INFLUENCES

Gang influence is associated with patterns of mobility in living and visiting off-reservation. Movement back and forth to border towns was viewed as nothing special. Border towns such as Gallup, New Mexico are part of a Navajo domain, and the border towns fall within a Navajo sphere of influence. Many of them lie within the aboriginal territory of the Navajo People. There are two general kinds of contact locales: Border towns such as Gallup, Farmington, Kirtland, Sanders, Page, Holbrook, or Winslow, and larger and more distant metropolitan areas, such as Phoenix, Tucson, Salt Lake City, or Denver. This mobility profile comes primarily from youths who live in the St. Michaels-Fort Defiance-Window Rock area.
There is a great deal of movement of those youths to other places in the region, primarily Albuquerque, Phoenix, and Gallup. The next question is where they visit regularly.

Table 74

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE VISITED</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BORDER TOWNS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallup, NM</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmington, NM</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winslow, AZ</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holbrook, AZ</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEARBY METROPOLITAN AREAS</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucson, AZ</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE DISTANT METRO AREAS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt Lake City, UT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas, NV</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern California</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City, NY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGIONAL TOWNS AND CITIES</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagstaff, AZ</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe, NM</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46 Those three communities are close to each other. Fort Defiance is approximately seven miles north of Window Rock, and St. Michaels is approximately three miles west of Window Rock.
There is a pattern to such visits. Many (71 or 69%) gang and crew members said that they visited Phoenix, Albuquerque, or Gallup the most. Of the 37 who said they visited Phoenix the most, 21 also reported visiting Albuquerque, and 10 reported visiting Gallup. Of the 27 who visited Albuquerque the most, 9 said they also visited Gallup, 8 reported visiting Phoenix, and 5 also reported visiting Farmington.

When gang members were asked where their relatives lived, responses frequently reflected family connections to Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque, or Gallup. Of those who answered the question, 41 said they had relatives in Phoenix or Tucson, 22 reported relatives in Albuquerque, and 18 related that they had relatives in Gallup.

There was a correlation between four of the gangs, three off-reservation communities (Phoenix, Albuquerque and Gallup), and the involvement of the gangs in drug trafficking. The correlation could not be extended to any of the other 30 named gangs or 6 crews, because too few members of each gang and crew were interviewed. The four gangs that demonstrated a correlation with the other communities had a minimum of five members who were interviewed. The responses of the members of the four gangs about drug trafficking, gang activities, and places outside the Navajo Nation they regularly visited showed a pattern of drug dealing in Phoenix, Albuquerque, and Gallup.
### Table 75

**Off-Reservation Visits and Drug Dealing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GANG &amp; NO. of RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED</th>
<th>NO. WHO VISIT PHOENIX 1ST &amp; 2ND MOST</th>
<th>NO. WHO VISIT ABQ 1ST &amp; 2ND MOST</th>
<th>NO. WHO VISIT GALLUP 1ST &amp; 2ND MOST</th>
<th>NO. WHO REPORT DRUG SALES</th>
<th>WHERE GANG IS BASED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cobras 17</td>
<td>9-1st 2-2nd</td>
<td>2-1st 5-2nd</td>
<td>3-1st 1-2nd</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ft. Def. / Window Rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insane Gangster Disciples 5</td>
<td>4-1st 1-2nd</td>
<td>1-1st 1-2nd</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 Navajo Nation, 2 cities$^{47}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side King Crips 5</td>
<td>4-1st</td>
<td>1-2nd</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ft. Defiance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side Rollin 60 Crips 8</td>
<td>3-1st 1-2nd</td>
<td>4-1st 3-2nd</td>
<td>1-1st 2-2nd</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>on and off reservation$^{48}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information suggests that the Cobras, who are based in the Window Rock and Fort Defiance area only, are involved in drug sales on the Navajo Nation using drug contacts primarily in Phoenix, and secondarily in Albuquerque. Visits to Gallup may involve drug trafficking and visits to family, but it is the nearest place which is convenient and allows legal sales of alcohol. The Insane Gangster Disciples are based on several Navajo Nation communities, and in Phoenix and Denver. Its members are primarily linked to visits to Phoenix to get drugs, with Albuquerque the second most-frequently visited city. The Albuquerque link may not be tied to drug trafficking. None of the Insane Gangster Disciples reported visiting Gallup. The West Side King Crips members, who are based only in Fort Defiance, are also linked to Phoenix, much less

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$^{47}$ Window Rock, Kayenta, and Tuba City, Navajo Nation, and Phoenix and Denver.

$^{48}$ Albuquerque, Phoenix, Shiprock, Farmington, Gallup and Las Cruces.
so to Albuquerque, and do not visit Gallup at all, for their drug trafficking activities.

The Rollin 60s are tied to off-reservation influence which is linked to criminal activity. That gang spread west and east along Interstate Highway 40, and north along U.S. Highway 666, in the 1980s and early 1990s and did drug dealing in small towns along those routes. Affiliations with the gang spread out of Albuquerque toward the west, and later, from Phoenix toward the east, along Interstate Highway 40. Some non-gang youths moved from Gallup to Albuquerque, joined the gang there, and later returned to Gallup. The gang spread further west and north to numerous small Navajo Nation communities through ties to cousins who visited Gallup. More recently, Rollin 60s members moved back to the Navajo Nation from Phoenix, and out of Holbrook and Winslow to Ganado and Wide Ruins. New gang members are being recruited in those small Navajo communities, but their activities are reportedly limited to partying. Rollin 60s members reportedly go to Gallup on weekends and commit crimes there.

D. NAVAJO YOUTH INVOLVEMENT WITH OFF-RESERVATION GANGS

Here, we briefly discuss the nature of gang interaction in off-reservation locales and what is happening to influence the Navajo Nation gang picture. The focus is on two locations, a large metropolitan area (Albuquerque) and a key border town (Gallup).

The most dominant influence on street gang activity in Albuquerque is Latino. Of 6,500 documented gang members there, 5,200 are Latino or Hispanic. The intensity of gang activities and public violence has increased dramatically in the past six or seven years. There has also been an increase in African-American gang activity there in recent years, marked by the arrival of the Crips and Bloods. That coincides with the emergence of rock cocaine (crack) as a drug of preference. Law enforcement officials document the presence of approximately 700 Crips in
Albuquerque. There is interaction between the African-American gangs and Indian youth there.

Albuquerque law enforcement officials were aware of approximately 70 Indian youths who aligned themselves to various sets of those gangs. That includes Navajo youths who reside in the city with some degree of permanence, and others who move between the Navajo Nation and Albuquerque. There is a drug connection, where Indian youths are getting crack cocaine for sale in both the city and in the Navajo Nation. Those sales are partly for business purposes.

There is reportedly little affiliation with the Blood gangs by Indian youths, because the Bloods have been exclusive about recruiting other African-Americans. Law enforcement officials report no exclusively-Indian gangs in Albuquerque. Indian youths are affiliated with Hispanic or African-American gangs there. While we have not interviewed law enforcement officials in Phoenix, the situation is likely much the same there. Both cities have a severe gang problem, and it is likely that Indian youths, who are influenced by the street culture, have joined gangs. Both cities are also major drug distribution centers, where drugs are being sold wholesale and taken elsewhere for distribution and street sales.

We interviewed law enforcement officials in Gallup and Farmington to look into linkages with border towns. Twelve formally-constituted gangs were identified to be operating in Gallup. Approximately 150 to 175 Indian youths (mostly Navajo) are members of those gangs. Local and county law enforcement officers in Farmington, New Mexico and the Navajo Nation Police, estimate that there are 28 to 30 gangs in the Navajo Nation in the Shiprock area, with 600 to 1,000 members. Farmington law enforcement officials report a strong connection between gangs there to Albuquerque, and also to Salt Lake City, to a lesser extent. We were told that Indian youths are involved in drug trafficking, reportedly carrying “substantial” quantities of drugs to
the Navajo Nation for sale. The drugs are primarily marijuana, but sales of powder cocaine and crack are increasing.

There are different perceptions of Indian youths coming and going in Gallup and Farmington, as opposed to Phoenix or Albuquerque. Gallup is Navajo Nation home turf. It is surrounded by Navajo allotted lands and communities. It is a major market area for Navajos, and a great deal of Gallup business relies upon Navajos as suppliers (of crafts to wholesalers), residents (given a housing shortage in the Navajo Nation), employees, and consumers. At least one all-Navajo gang is reported in Gallup, with origins and organizing at the Fort Wingate School, a Bureau of Indian Affairs school east of Gallup. In contrast, Farmington is perceived as non-Navajo, and Navajos primarily go there to shop.49 Although many of the gangs located in Shiprock are also in Farmington, there is no all-Indian gang there.

Gang names are another indicator of off-reservation influence. Aside from groups called the St. Michals Dragons gang, the Red Bone Thugs/Native Pride gang, and the Fry Bread tagging crew, the 31 gang and 7 crew names for groups in the Navajo Nation were taken from off-reservation gangs. Nothing was done to alter the gang name by using Indian or Navajo nomenclature. Although most gang members spoke of their pride in their Indian or Navajo heritage, the names they used for their gangs were imported. Many of the respondents joined their gang while living outside the Navajo Nation.

The connection between outside influence and gang activities such as drug trafficking

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49 Farmington has a long history of antagonistic Anglo-Indian relations. Although it is close to the Navajo Nation, and across the river from the Navajo Nation on its south side, it maintains a primarily-White identity. Some particularly atrocious murders of three Navajos in 1974 by three White youths, and racism in the city, has been documented (Barker 1992).
and use, and weapon acquisition and use, was clear in our interviews. This lethal combination of forces clearly have their origins in off-reservation centers where there are high levels of Hispanic and African-American gang activities.

We now have a more informed view of the role of off-reservation influences on Navajo gangs. Our research shows the high degree of mobility of both Navajo gang-involved youth and their families. Border town connections are consistent with the close historical connection between border towns and Navajos. That is particularly the case for cities and towns which were founded when the Santa Fe Railroad crossed former Navajo lands—e.g. Gallup, Holbrook, Winslow, and Flagstaff. The urban-reservation connection has been described (Hodge 1969; Kunitz, et al. 1969) as interrelated orbits with both orbits simultaneously pushing and pulling Navajos, who are trying to make use of the resources of both domains as they move on and off reservation. Certain gangs, namely the Cobras of the Fort Defiance-Window Rock-St. Michaels area, and the Rollin 60s, who are spread through the Navajo Nation, are tied to Gallup. Most of the other gangs in the southeast of the Navajo Nation are neither tied to nor influenced by the Gallup gang scene. Similarly, the gangs in the Shiprock and Ojo Amarillo areas of the northwestern corner of the Navajo Nation are not tied to or influenced by gangs in Farmington, New Mexico. Despite that, the off-reservation gang influence on Navajo gangs is obvious and strong.

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50 There was a race to build transcontinental railroads across the United States prior to the Civil War on northern, central, and southern routes. The South wanted to build the southern route first to transplant slavery into New Mexico Territory (today’s New Mexico and Arizona). The right to build railroads without obstruction was a prominent feature of treaties with the Navajo Nation.
There was a working hypothesis that there would be a different effect by border towns and cities. That appears to be confirmed. The effects from activities in the cities are stronger than the effects of those in border towns. Phoenix, Albuquerque, Denver, and other large cities, are the primary source for Navajo gangs. Families relocated to urban areas and their children were exposed to street gangs in the neighborhoods where the Navajo families lived. Many of the respondents in this study, and older gang members who were described as original gang members, joined their gang in an urban area and returned to the Navajo Nation with a strong gang identity. That attracted Navajo youths who had not left the Reservation but who were exposed to the gang lifestyle through popular media. Many gang members still have relatives living in urban areas.

A third working hypothesis was that the movement of Navajo youths who are gang-involved on and off the reservation would be age-graded, with older youths being more mobile. That was confirmed by data showing that older teenage gang members were more mobile and visited more places off-reservation. However, older gang members had not lived off the reservation more frequently than younger gang members.

The single most significant factor in the recent appearance of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation has been the movement of families and individuals off-reservation to live in large urban communities where gangs are commonplace. Navajo youths affiliated with gangs there, primarily Hispanic and African-American secondarily, then returned to the Navajo Nation to live. When they got home in the late 1980s, gang-involved Navajos found a receptive peer group. They were bored and alienated from the traditional Navajo lifestyle, and they were beginning to absorb a gang-identified popular youth culture. That convergence sparked the
proliferation of Navajo gangs and widespread gang-banging in the Navajo Nation.
Social ills are a product of urbanization, and “urbanization” for the Navajo Nation means the various “agency towns” which provide government services to Navajos. Urbanization is also represented by “cluster housing,” and it is linked with the emergence, concentration and persistence of youth gangs in the Navajo Nation. Cluster housing is housing which is publicly or privately owned, densely populated, and sited in housing projects with twenty or more housing units. A “housing unit” is a separate house or apartment with a kitchen, a bathroom or bathrooms, bedrooms, and living areas. Most housing in the Navajo Nation is provided by the Navajo Housing Authority, with some other governmental housing programs, and a few privately-operated projects. This section relates the results of our inquiries about Navajo gangs in Navajo Nation cluster housing, a brief discussion of gangs in public housing projects outside the Navajo Nation, and three planned, organizational responses to Navajo gangs in Navajo Nation cluster housing projects.

Nationwide, public housing projects are centers of poverty, family dysfunction, social disorganization, and gang activity. There has not been a great deal of research into the specific subject of the connection between public housing and gangs. However, several evaluations of programs that attempt to address youth crime and violence in public housing developments have produced new community mobilization strategies to deal with gangs in those settings.

A. CLUSTER HOUSING IN THE NAVAJO NATION

Most Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) public housing and privately-owned housing in the Navajo Nation has been built since 1970. Most of the projects are operated by the NHA, but there are some privately-owned projects by off-reservation corporations which are publicly
subsidized by low-income housing assistance programs. There a few developments with individually-owned homes and more of those kinds of projects are being planned. Cluster housing developments are located in communities throughout the Navajo Nation, and many of the projects located in small communities are small, with as few as twenty housing units. There are several places, however, where there are large projects of 150 or more units. They are located in the agency towns, which are Shiprock and Crownpoint, New Mexico; and Window Rock, Fort Defiance, Chinle, Tuba City, and Kayenta, in Arizona. There are a few mid-sized communities (in Navajo Nation terms) which are “sub-agency” town, also with sizeable cluster projects.

As of November 1996, the NHA reported that it had 6,825 housing units under management, with thirteen projects offices across the Navajo Nation. About half of the units are for rent, and half are “homebuyer” units, which Navajo families buy from the NHA. An additional 290 units, about half rental and half homebuyer, were under construction, and an additional 518 units (almost all designed to be homebuyer houses) were being planned. NHA project mangers in Chinle and the Window Rock-Fort Defiance area said that the residents of NHA projects there largely come from other parts of the Navajo Nation to access resources that are not available in their home community. That includes the availability of housing and medical care.

The cluster housing includes of a variety of building styles, but no NHA project is similar to the stereotype of the huge high-rise apartment public housing found in large metropolitan areas. The style of public housing influences the nature and levels of crime there (Taylor and Harrell 1996). While the cluster housing complexes in the Navajo Nation are quite different
from traditional Navajo housing, the house design of itself does not contribute to crime. That is, none of the projects in the Navajo Nation are high rises with interior hallways, stairwells and elevators—construction features that are conducive to criminal activity. The housing designs include single-family detached homes on small lots, duplexes, four-plexes and two-story townhouses. All homes have separate entrances directly to the outside and have some defined private outdoor space. Many of the projects channel vehicle access through fenced (but not gated) entrances so although there is open access, only residents or legitimate visitors have reason to enter. Some projects are fenced off from surrounding areas or are surrounded by undeveloped (open) land.

Traditional Navajo homesites consist of a few homes occupied by related families. Building styles range from single room hogans to multi-room modern houses. There are also mobile homes and pre-built small houses in more recent years. Homesites may not have piped water, electricity, or plumbing. They are usually distant from other sites, although some may be within “hollering” distance. Youths who live in those settings are expected to work hard caring for livestock, tending crops, hauling wood and water, and other daily chores. Several federal policies contributed to the destruction of that mode of living on the land. One of the first, and most destructive, was John Collier’s livestock reduction program, which began during the Depression. More recently, there was the forced relocation of Navajos from land which was partitioned to the Hopi Tribe in 1974. As the result of a tragic blunder by federal officials in establishing the Hopi Reservation, 3,500 Navajos were forced to leave their homes to relocate to parts of the Navajo Nation (Acrey 1979; Schwarz 1997a). Navajos who were forced to move from lands partitioned to the Hopi Tribe, and many who are compelled to move for economic
reasons, now live in cluster housing. Relocation from ancestral homes ended the mutuality of
nurture between Navajos and their land, and that is related to a rise in social problems, including
gangs, drug abuse, violence and health problems, including alcoholism, disorientation, and
depression (Schwarz 1997a).

Life in cluster housing is antithetical to traditional Navajo life and values. Youths living
in cluster homes have fewer chores and less responsibility to contribute to family subsistence.
They are likely to be living near people who are not related to them or who are not known. Of
92 gang-member respondents who said that their family had land, 22 reported that they did
traditional chores when they visited the family land, but only 12 actually lived on their family’s
land. The stakeholders who were interviewed for this study also cited cluster housing as a factor
in the rise of gangs. When asked what issues about youth gangs concerned stakeholders, 14 of
191 of them mentioned cluster housing as an issue.

B. PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PUBLIC AND CLUSTER HOUSING

Crime and delinquency are pervasive in public housing throughout the United States, and
that has increasingly been a source of concern for federal programs. As a result, the United
States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers Drug Elimination Program
(DEP) funding for public and Indian housing agencies to design and implement projects to focus
on drug prevention and suppression efforts in collaborations with human service agencies, youth
agencies, grassroots organizations and law enforcement agencies (Spergel 1995). An evaluation
conducted for HUD and the Centers for Disease Control (Paschall, et al. 1997) found that
school-based, community-based, family-based, and institution-based programs were effective in
reducing youth violence in public housing. A study for the National Institute of Justice (Popkin,
et al. 1996) evaluated the results of the Chicago Housing Authority’s (CHA) Operation Anti-Drug Initiative (ADI) that began in 1991 to combat crime problems, drug trafficking and substance abuse in three CHA high-rise housing complexes. The evaluation found that careful implementation of services and good site management were crucial in dealing with those problems. Tenant patrols and service centers providing prevention activities were effective for maintaining order—when residents accepted and used them. The gangs in the CHA complexes were well-armed and had resources, so they persisted. There was a great deal of complexity in the relationship between gang and residents. That is, the residents were intimately tied into social relations with gang members. The ADI strategies had little impact on the underlying causes of resident misbehavior—unemployment and poverty remained high, substance abuse was rampant, and tenants continued to vandalize and trash the buildings. The evaluation of DEP funding is ongoing, and will produce additional information that public and Indian housing programs will be able to use to develop effective intervention and prevention programs to address youth violence and gangs.

Many of the Navajo gang members who were interviewed for this study live in cluster housing projects and much of the gang violence reported in newspaper articles in recent years indicated that the violent incidents they reported took place in a cluster housing area. Gang graffiti is a visible and prominent feature of many public and private housing projects. Shootings and gang fights are frequent occurrences in some communities, and they occur within and outside housing areas.

A NHA application for continued funding for HUD Drug Elimination Program projects at the Chinle, Ojo Amarillo, and Navajo (New Mexico) offices cited numerous problems in NHA
projects in those communities. They included 80% of residents being impacted by substance abuse (as abusers or the affected family members of abusers) and increasing numbers of illegal incidents by residents, primarily drug trafficking, illegal gang activities, and delinquent acts by juveniles. All the housing project coordinators or housing managers who were interviewed for this research reported that criminal activities in their projects were related to drinking alcohol. There were 77 reported acts of vandalism in the Ojo Amarillo projects in 1995 prior to the implementation of the DEP project. After implementing the DEP there, vandalism reports dropped to 44 in 1995, and seven for the first eleven months of 1996.

NHA officials report that residents who complain about gang activity are intimidated and threatened as retaliation. The NHA and private housing managers have tapped national resources and organized local efforts to address problems caused by youth gangs and by criminality in housing projects.

C. HOUSING MANAGEMENT RESPONSES TO GANGS

The level of overt gang activity in Navajo Nation cluster housing subsided by late 1997, in relation to the situation several years earlier. That decline followed various kinds of interventions. Housing program staffers became more aware and persistent in pursuing evictions for nuisance and lease violations. HUD Drug Elimination Program projects were implemented in three communities where major problems with gang activity existed. Other kinds of activities were organized in communities with identified gang problems. There were three kinds of responses to reports of gang violence in four cluster housing projects. The were (1) a

51 One crime prevention strategy for dealing with crime is the use of civil actions, and there is a national trend to include behavior-related provisions in leases. Tenants of housing projects, and homebuyers in cluster projects, have a “right to quiet enjoyment” which must be honored by housing managers in efforts to enforce “nuisance” provisions of leases and homebuyer lease-purchase agreements.
comprehensive community organizing effort led by an activist housing manager, (2) strict implementation of housing regulations by managers, and (3) a comprehensive HUD DEP strategy. All four sites used those approaches in 1994 and 1995. The financial investment for those efforts ranged from no additional funding at one NHA project, to more than one million dollars for two larger areas (in population) with separate NHA complexes. The intervention strategies also ranged from no additional programs to a series of new and comprehensive services and activities. The site with the lowest expenditures and the fewest specific gang or youth interventions may prove to be the most successful in the long term, because it did not rely on new funding or the leadership of a single individual. All sites were aggressive in pursuing evictions based on lease agreements.

The standard lease agreements and lease-purchase contract provide that all tenants, occupants, and visitors must obey all Navajo Nation laws. One of these laws is the youth curfew of 10:00 p.m. on weeknights and 12:00 p.m. on weekends that the Navajo Nation Council adopted in 1995. It is illegal to possess alcohol in the Navajo Nation, and controlled substances (drugs) are illegal under Navajo Nation law. Those laws are the foundation for evictions. NHA hired a former criminal prosecutor to handle eviction proceedings. She reported that there is little difference in the number of evictions, or reasons for them, that she processes among NHA sites that have DEP funding or not. Navajo Nation judges require a showing that the NHA has done everything possible to assure families are able to keep their homes before ordering an eviction, and NHA project managers attempt to show the court that they have made every attempt to solve the problem and avoid eviction, if possible. The NHA eviction attorney said that the major factor to determine whether an eviction will be done is the assertiveness of the site
housing manager. NHA implemented a “one-strike- and you’re out” policy that provides for fast-track evictions for criminal conduct.

The eviction attorney said, and several stakeholders noted, that gangs exist and there is inaction because of a fear of retaliation. Victims tend to be uneducated, timid and without others who can help them. Several of the respondents to our questions said that families causing problems often have gang member relatives. Many of the cluster housing sites are in isolated communities which are distant from law enforcement stations, so response time is a problem. The NHA eviction counsel feels that a lack of victim assistance at present, and a lack of support by people in positions of authority, perpetuate a social environment where gangs can gain control of neighborhoods and terrorize residents with impunity.

We assessed cluster housing projects at Rio Puerco Acres, a private development in Fort Defiance, seven miles north of Window Rock; and Navajo Housing Authority projects at Pigeon Springs, Ojo Amarillo, and Chinle. All three have gang problems, and attempts were made in all three projects to develop innovative approaches to them.

Rio Puerco Acres is a private housing project, owned and operated by a private corporation, and it is financed in part by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It has 86 single-story duplex units. It is surrounded by small, privately-owned, single family homes, which are dilapidated for the most part.

Fort Defiance can be said to be a bedroom suburb of Window Rock, the Navajo Nation capital. It was originally established as the base for military campaigns against Navajos, and it was an administrative agency following the return of Navajos from Bosque Redondo in 1868. It was an excellent base of operations, because of fertile grasslands for horses and cattle. Today,
small remnants of the original fort remain (primarily the parade ground), and there are an Indian Health Service hospital and some government offices in the old part of the community. Rio Puerco Acres is one of several housing projects in Fort Defiance, and some Navajo Nation government workers live there—the director of Judicial Administration of the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch lives there with his family. Some of the initial planning for this study was done at the home of James W. Zion, the court solicitor, who lived a few blocks from Rio Puerco Acres. Sensational photographs of gang graffiti were taken a short distance from both Mr. Zion’s home and Rio Puerco Acres.

Rio Puerco Acres was a major center for gang activity in the Fort Defiance and Window Rock area from the late 1980s through the summer of 1996, when this study was being done. The Dragons and other gangs vied for territorial control of the neighborhood, using acts of gang violence in their struggle. They included murder, vandalism, intimidation, beatings, burglary and drug trafficking. Ongoing and loud late-night parties disturbed and frightened residents of the area. Navajos have a penchant for giving nicknames to people and places, and Rio Puerco Acres became known as “Little Beirut.” Four women in the project started a community anti-gang task force in the summer of 1995. While the group made little progress in ridding the project of gang activity, it was instrumental in lobbying the Navajo Nation Council to pass a youth curfew law in October 1995. The task force dissolved when gang rivalries caused conflict among the mothers. The corporate owners of Rio Puerco Acres hired a former law enforcement officer to manage the project in June of 1996. He is a 40-year old Indian of Navajo and Hopi descent who had previously worked for the Navajo Nation Police and performed a similar role in housing in several cities outside the Navajo Nation. He was under contract with the corporation
as a private investigator when he was asked to become the manager of the project.

His philosophy to address gang problems was to create special opportunities for residents and promote community mobilization. His goal was to help the community unite to support positive youth activities and take responsibility for community initiatives. He strictly enforced lease agreements with residents, helped enforce the youth curfew and the total Navajo Nation ban of alcohol and drug use, and he made other project policies. He carried out 36 evictions during his first year, removing problem tenants and persuading others to comply with their lease, project policies, and the law. Community members mobilized to create social opportunities in various projects. The manager was not intimidated by gang members, and he treated them as individuals, using honesty and respect. He personified a Navajo belief that if you are a good person, good things will happen to you. He tried to teach the lesson that even the poorest, least-respected residents could take pride in their community and show the Navajo Nation that even a crime-ridden, dangerous, and unattractive place can be made a positive environment in which to live.

One of his first steps as housing manager was to clean up and repair homes in the project. He hired local gang members to do that work. He employed more than 25 unskilled gang members between the ages of 17 and 28 between June 1996 and November 1997. He offered them a choice of work. Supervision and training were provided by a maintenance staff with expertise and skills in electrical installation and repair, drywall construction, carpentry, roofing and painting. Graffiti artists did mural work. Some youths were motivated to buy their own tools to do their work.

The manager initiated other projects. One of the first was a Neighborhood Watch
Program, which was made possible by a $3,200 grant from HUD to buy t-shirts, materials for events, and equipment. The neighborhood watch program was built on enthusiasm generated from the Mother’s Task Force, and it initially involved 50 residents. There were ten to twenty residents who patrolled the project by November of 1997. A “Rio Puerco Acres Crime Prevention Council” was recognized by the Fort Defiance Chapter. A “chapter” is a unit of local Navajo Nation government, with 110 chapters across the nation. A new Fort Defiance Chapter house is a few blocks from the project, and it too was covered with graffiti while it was under construction, creating a game between the contractors (who surrounded it with high chain link fencing) and gangs. The housing manager patrolled his project on bicycle in the evenings between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m., and again late at night. He would sometimes meet with gang members during his patrols. He responded to physical challenges from gang members his first summer on the job by fighting with six of them.

In June 1997, the United States Department of Education funded a Neighborhood Network Education Center at Rio Puerco Acres. It was one of seven sites in Arizona and the first in Indian Country. It offered a reading challenge program for children, a video center for adult education and entertainment, and a community learning center.

The manager also assisted other initiatives in Fort Defiance. Two Cobra gang members living in Pigeon Springs, a NHA housing project near Rio Puerco Acres, started a group called “Youth-for-Youth” in the spring of 1996. It was an attempt to change the image of gangs and non-gang youth throughout Fort Defiance. The group was primarily Cobra gang members, and they sought to show the community they could be trusted by hauling wood (many Navajos still use wood stoves), fixing roofs, distributing food, and shoveling snow from driveways. They also
organized community events for children and started initiatives to keep younger children out of gangs. The Rio Puerco Acres housing manager helped the gang get financial support and meeting space in the local chapter house. He served as an advisor to the group. When the chapter provided a facility for the group, the tagging of the new chapter house stopped. The manager allowed one of the founders of Youth-for-Youth to move into Rio Puerco Acres when the young man was evicted from the NHA Pigeon Springs project following a violent gang confrontation. The manager said that his philosophy in dealing with gang members was to give everyone a chance and set a personal example of respect, courtesy, dependability and professionalism for young people to have as a model.

He also promoted the principle of self-help. When residents or Youth-for-Youth proposed a new project, the housing manager helped them write proposals for funding. He sent gang members to local businesses to solicit donations for projects rather than make the solicitation for them. An additional example of his work illustrates the concept of “wrap-around” activism—he started a Bible class for ten gang youths where he also talked about traditional Navajo beliefs. He did that in a low-key way because gang members expressed animosity to Navajo tradition, although they accepted some practices of daily life, such as sprinkling corn pollen (as discussed by Philmer Bluehouse in the introduction), wearing an arrowhead for protection, and learning through animal stories.52

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52 “Animal stories” would be Coyote Stories, which are told during the winter. They relate the foibles and adventures of Coyote. Coyote persistently messes up in the stories, and they offer moral guidance to teach how not to behave, while other animal figures (e.g. Cheii or Horned Toad) teach people how to behave (Ed.)
The Federal Bureau of Investigation claimed that the number of weapons carried in the Rio Puerco area (an area of Fort Defiance defined by the Rio Puerco, a stream that comes from a canyon near the community, with a wash) were reduced through aggressive prosecution. Following these kinds of efforts, the project was no longer called “Little Beruit,” its physical appearance improved, and it finally attractive good in comparison to other housing projects in the area. There were plans to help improve private homes in the area. Area roads were improved. There were proposals for a community garden, outdoor murals, playground equipment, additions to the video training center, and jackets and supplies for Youth-for-Youth. There was a proposal to HUD for vocational training and equipment for community groups. The NHA DEP coordinator approached the Rio Puerco Acres housing manager and proposed that they combine efforts to work with the Cobras and Dragons and Youth-for-Youth to undertake drug intervention efforts. The Fort Defiance Agency\(^53\) developed a proposal for community-oriented policing, which would be the first such project in the Navajo Nation.

All of the community activities described above did not cost much. The corporation that owned Rio Puerco Acres reinvested in the property by funding clean-up and fix-up work, with a secondary effect of offering vocational training for gang youth. The only project that had a significant cost was the Neighborhood Network Education Center. While the NHA had large sums of DEP funding, the gang situation at Rio Puerco Acres was addressed primarily through

\(^{53}\) The Navajo Nation has five administrative agencies (and some sub-agencies) for the 110 chapter areas. Each agency has an agency council, make up of representatives of each chapter in the agency. Agency councils do not perform a governmental function as such, but they are instrumental in voicing positions on issues and obtaining funding for projects to serve local chapters (Ed.)
the example, enthusiasm, persistence and community mobilization efforts of one man. Those efforts could be replicated elsewhere with different leaders. The Rio Puerco Acres housing manager said that while he is pessimistic about the changes he made persisting if he left, there were sufficient guidelines in place and a framework for action, so the challenges and tasks could be assumed by others if they were also dynamic in their approach.

The Pigeon Springs housing project is a Navajo Housing Authority cluster complex with 217 units—177 rental units and 40 homebuyer units. The project has two residency services specialists and a resident intake officer who work under the direction of the NHA Fort Defiance-Window Rock Project Housing Manager. There are other services available for residents through the Navajo Nation and other public and private service agencies, such as the Indian Health Service, schools, religious organizations, and others. The only youth programs at Pigeon Springs are the NHA Youth Sports Center and the Youth-for-Youth group, which was started by two Cobra gang members. Gang activity reached unacceptable levels at Pigeon Springs in 1994, with widespread graffiti, vandalism, intimidation and late-night parties. The NHA staff were not sophisticated about youth gangs and their activities. Management did not know at the time, but later learned, that the incidents were linked to gangs.

As it was with Rio Puerco Acres, the lease agreement with renters (and purchase agreement with homebuyers) is the primary enforcement tool for dealing with problem residents. The project managers developed a method to make a prompt, determined and comprehensive response to complaints to deal with gang problems. They also addressed the physical appearance of project homes and grounds.

In 1994, NHA tried to get assistance for cleanup efforts to deal with the proliferation of
graffiti on walls. Staffers also summoned families of youths who were involved making it for orientations on tenant regulations. Families were told that if misbehavior problems persisted, they would be evicted. At first, the Pigeon Springs project staff reported that their efforts appeared to intensify gang problems, and reports to them of problems stopped because of fear of retaliation by gang members. Although they were threatened by gang members, NHA staffers overcame intimidation and persisted in efforts to intervene to deal with problems. They began to get support from the Navajo Nation Police and community leaders. As this research progressed, gang activity and violence at the Pigeon Springs project had greatly subsided by November 1997.

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54 Aside from specific lease provisions on conduct, the leases also authorize the NHA to adopt regulations for tenant conduct (Ed.)
The Pigeon Springs project did not have an array of programs which were funded by outside sources. Instead, the project management staff had to reply upon the tactic of a prompt response to complaints to address problems. Another tactic was to have a Resident Intake Officer (RIO) review the lease agreement and behavior regulations with new tenants using language and explanations they could understand. If problems arose, the RIO would receive complaints from residents (which had to be written, but were confidential) and respond immediately in a meeting to address them. They were held every Wednesday. The staff would bring a family into a meeting if there was a complaint about the conduct of any family member, and if the dispute was between families, they would be brought into a meeting. Everyone in a meeting had an opportunity to talk about the situation in a setting that resembles Navajo peacemaking. The staff made certain that youths who were complained of would be involved, and they were told that if their behavior continued, it would be the ground for the family to lose its home. Staffers also stressed that the parent(s) are the leaseholder, and that makes them responsible for the acts of their children and visitors to their homes. The staff would also make referrals to appropriate service agencies. Most problems were resolved using a prompt response to complaints. The approach was one of getting compliance with conditions of the lease, helping people get services, or leave the project voluntarily. A few families did not comply, and their cases were referred to the NHA Legal Office for evictions.

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55 This is a Navajo cultural expectation. “Making someone understand” is more than simply translating from English to Navajo. There are illustrations, examples, and concrete ways of explaining abstract legal principles, and legal translations into Navajo are difficult.

56 Peacemaking is the traditional Navajo justice method of “talking things out,” which involves discussing facts, expressing opinions and emotions about the situation, establishing what needs to be done to set things right, and developing a plan to prevent similar events in the future (Ed.)
Another tactic for compliance was a term of probation. Tenants tended to be more responsive when they feared legal complications and sanctions. The police were helpful to some extent by checking on some of the youths. However, the project staff found that police services were not consistent, and staffers were unable to get police reports on incidents that happened in the community.57

57 The Navajo Nation Police do not allow wide circulation of police reports, because of a regulatory mandate to comply with the federal Privacy Act. Query whether housing project managers or NHA attorneys have the right to access to such documents on a “need-to-know” legal basis (Ed.)
NHA staffers did not deal with complaints against outsiders who came into the project and created gang-related problems. Project youths assume responsibility for them, and assume an after-hours gang persona. The Pigeon Springs staff said that the project had all kinds of families—some are very poor; there are traditional families with parents who do not speak English or speak it well; some have some education; and there are parents who tend to shelter their children and whose sheltered children cause problems. There are also families and parents who stay out of trouble and try to help others. There are many single-parent families or step-parent living arrangements, where the parental figures have long-term problems with alcohol and domestic violence. Families with two parents are more successful in controlling their children. Many parents deny their children’s involvement in gangs. Finally, one common pattern is a mother-head-of-household with a 15 to 16-year old gang involved male in control of the family.

There is a fairly new approach being used in public housing programs to address problems in projects and improve living conditions in them—resident organizations. They are organizations of tenants and homebuyers that organize to address shared issues and problems. For example, they may negotiate with the NHA to demand fencing around a project, and several of them are interested in gang issues. There was no resident organization in Pigeon Springs to organize activities such as a neighborhood watch program when this research was done. Previous resident organization activities relied upon NHA staff to organize and run meetings, but that proved to be too great a task for the staff, given other duties. The Pigeon Springs staff felt that their use of lease reviews with participants and a quick and persistent response to complaints

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58 Renters in NHA low-rent programs have limited incomes by regulatory definition. Navajo Nation Police commanders say that low-rent tenants and violence are connected (Ed.)
alleviated gang problems. The staff tried to give good customer service to tenants and
homebuyers and encourage residents to use services that were available to help families resolve
problems. The community service programs of the Cobra-founded Youth-for-Youth program
were also helpful in refocusing gang members toward positive activities in 1996 and 1997.

Ojo Amarillo and Chinle are two of the NHA’s thirteen project offices. Each is
responsible to manage several housing developments in the area, including units in development
ranging from 20 to more than 200 homes. They include both rental and homebuyer units.

In 1992 and 1993, residents of the Ojo Amarillo project office area, which consists of ten
housing projects with 10 to 200 units (700 in all), started reporting problems with youth gangs.
NHA wrote grants for a large amount of funding for the HUD Drug Elimination Program, and in
1994, HUD awarded a $996,000 two year grant for a DEP at Ojo Amarillo. The project operated
from May 1995 through April 1997. The Chinle project office managed a DEP which began in
April 1996 and was scheduled to end in February 1998. One of the strategies in locating DEP
projects in those two areas was to compare results and outcomes. Chinle is in the center of the
Navajo Nation, away from border towns, and Ojo Amarillo is located near the edge of the
Navajo Reservation and it is influenced by the border town of Farmington, New Mexico.
Implementation of the two programs was similar, but we cannot report on the outcomes in those
two locations because field work ended before an assessment could be made.

While youth gangs were a significant element for intervention, they were not the focus of
the NHA DEP plans for Chinle and Ojo Amarillo. The problem was that 80% of NHA
participants were experiencing some kind of substance abuse. Many high-risk youths were
substance abusers. Increasing numbers of NHA participants were participating in illegal
activities, including drug trafficking, gang violence, and juvenile delinquency. The DEP plan attempted to comprehensively address problems of drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, crime, delinquency, dysfunctional families, a lack of positive role models, and poor education. Project assessments showed the need for remedial education, training for employment, financial aid for children, and social and medical services to maintain the stability of families and individual health. The DEP projects undertook a collaboration among substance abuse programs, law enforcement officers, community development agencies, education providers, and public and private service providers. The plan also included a strategy to improve security in housing projects, provide prevention programs with counseling services and youth recreation, form collaborations with existing resources and service providers, undertake in-depth screening of applicants, and develop resident organizations to eventually assume some of those functions and independently apply for funding for community services.

The programs addressed security problems in collaborative relationships with the Navajo Nation Police, Farmington police, the San Juan County Sheriff, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (which is responsible to investigate federal crimes involving Indians). There were also contracts with private security firms. Rather than go through the lengthy and bureaucratic process of developing memoranda of understanding (which are difficult to conclude under Navajo Nation law), police officials agreed to respond as needed, and as was appropriate, and provide the NHA with information. NHA personnel assisted the police in searches and raids. One related security goal was to attract Navajo Nation Police officers to live in project housing. While it took two years to implement that goal, police officers eventually moved into several
projects at Ojo Amarillo and Chinle. Officers agreed that in exchange for rent-free housing, they would respond promptly to resident calls for assistance, patrol the housing project where they lived, and serve as mentors in DEP youth activities. The NHA bought bicycles for officers in Ojo Amarillo projects, and they were also used by NHA staff to ride around the projects. The presence of police officers was effective. A known bootlegger moved out when an officer moved in across the street, resident police coordinated a drug raid, and residents reported that illegal activity decreased after a police officer moved into the project.

The Ojo Amarillo office contracted with a private security firm to patrol projects, and the Chinle office had security patrols in the evening from Wednesdays through Sundays. The Chinle DEP coordinator began to see the absence of mention of gang activities in the daily reports provided by the security firm. While there was evidence of gang-members or gang wannabes in Chinle prior to the DEP, Navajo Nation Police investigators and DARE Program officers were not seeing identifiable gang youths by November 1997. The Navajo Nation Police and FBI coordinated a raid at Ojo Amarillo, and FBI agents arrested two drug dealers who allegedly sold to gang members. They were found guilty. Police presented workshops to neighborhood watch groups. When DEP funding ended, residents reported that vandalism and graffiti increased,

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59 The NHA was finally able to get HUD backing and sanction for this initiative and the others that had been mentioned. From 1988 through 1990, the NHA executive attempted to get a regulatory waiver to offer officers houses at lower rentals, but that was rejected. HUD program officials from Phoenix scoffed at NHA ideas to address social problems in projects as “being social workers.” HUD rejected arguments that cluster housing had a relationship to crime, and hampered efforts to secure scattered site housing. Proposals and plans to address social problems, and the eventual rise in gangs, were rejected, but now they are coming into place (Ed.)

60 Given that bootlegging is common in the Navajo Nation because of the strict prohibition of alcohol, it is a lucrative business. It was common knowledge that bootleggers would sell out of NHA houses, and there were notorious “blind pigs” (illegal alcohol sale houses), such as “Gilly’s” in Fort Defiance (Ed.)

61 There has been a great deal of discussion of whether youths who wear gang-styled clothing, “colors,” or present themselves as “gang” members are actually gang members or want to assume the appearance of membership (“wannabes—want
when security services were no long being provided.

The primary focus of the DEP projects was prevention programming. The projects hired trained counselors who were able to provide various kinds of prevention counseling and make referrals of at-risk youth and families to other agencies. There was individual and group counseling and education to address domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, parenting skills, and self-esteem, anger, and stress-management. Programs were offered in collaboration with services providers such as the Division of Behavioral Health, the Navajo Nation courts, probation officers, and schools. The DEP sponsored Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in the housing projects. Referrals were made to community agencies for intervention counseling. There were 179 referrals at Ojo Amarillo from October 1995 through September 1996.
Youth recreation also played an important role in those initiatives. There were several youth programs with activities and role models to address keeping youths out of gangs and avoiding drugs and alcohol. They included scouting, sports, ropes training, talking circles, Boys & Girls Clubs, bookmobiles, sweat lodges, horsemanship, and cultural exchange visits to other Indian DEP projects in the Southwest.

The process of selecting new tenants or homebuyers also involved prevention. Prospective program participants were given an in-depth screening, which included background checks. When an application was accepted, there was a comprehensive review of the lease or lease-purchase agreement in English and Navajo (where needed) to be certain that the documents were understood before they were signed. All participants who were 18 years of age or older were required to attend orientation sessions. Some parents asked DEP staffers to talk to their children about lease requirements. The staff used a process similar to that used at Pigeon Springs to resolve complaints, but had the added ability to refer project residents to additional services and programs funded by the DEP. Another difference was that the Chinle and Ojo Amarillo NHA staff did not involve children in meetings and they did not always use the peacemaking style to address disputes between families. There were referrals to the DEP staff to address problems, but if that did not work, the NHA pursued evictions.

Several projects had a resident organization to serve as a conduit for community concerns to be communicated to the NHA management and to promote community mobilization. The NHA also received a HUD grant for Tenant Opportunity Program funds to pay for training.

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62 Given a traditional fondness for and association with horses by Navajos, and the “cowboy culture” of the Navajo Nation, that is a particularly-attractive program for Navajo youths (Ed.)
consultant services, establishing a special office and making needs determinations for residents to set up their own nonprofit organizations. That program used a resident empowerment concept to help residents help themselves. Sixteen NHA resident organizations received funding to incorporate as nonprofit corporations.

The DEP projects were costly. Although they were comprehensive intervention programs that were effective in eliminating or lessening gang-related activity while they were active, now that their funding has expired, we will need to see if housing managers can continue intervention and prevention strategies for long-lasting results. The evidence from Ojo Amarillo following the end of the DEP is not encouraging.

This comparison of three responses to youth gangs in cluster housing projects raises several difficult questions. Is it appropriate to devote large amounts of funding for programs and activities when similar results can be achieved with little additional investment? How is it possible to replicate the example of an energetic activist housing manager who was able to mobilize residents and youth and access a variety of resources? Can public and private housing managers maintain the level of effort which is necessary to select participants with care, give them thorough orientations, provide probationary sanctions, and assure that lease terms will be strictly observed? Public low-rent housing attracts poor people who bring with them the bad effects of poverty, and they cannot be locked out of housing altogether. Is an aggressive eviction policy successful in reducing the problems dysfunctional families cause for their neighbors, or does the policy only move problem families to other neighborhoods where neighbors may not have the remedy of eviction? Individual, non-program housing in rural areas and some agency towns is in areas where there is no housing management control, and police response is
inadequate. Is there a possibility of slums and barrios like those in Latin America in the Navajo Nation? Does eviction deprive assistance and resources for families in need? The largest challenge, which is the central challenge for both dealing with gangs and social problems, is whether agencies can permanently create an environment to facilitate personal relationships, tap strengths of families (and gang-involved youth), provide positive role models and leadership, and get at the root causes of why at-risk youth join gangs or become involved in criminal or delinquent gang activities.
XIII. POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The report thus far has reviewed the general literature on gangs in American, Indian and Navajo-specific literature, explored who the gangs and crews are and what they do, obtained stakeholder input, reported focus group findings, provided insights into the off-reservation gang origins and links to Navajo Nation gangs, and identified the special problem of the relation of cluster housing to gang activity, with some examples of successful strategies and tactics. Now comes the larger problem of addressing the policy implications that arise from that wide ranging discussion.

Prior to addressing policy, it is important to note the current situation of the Navajo Nation in relation to addressing social ills such as illegal gang activity. The conduct addressed in this report, reported in the news, and discussed in public venues, is only a continuum of other social ills, and part of a larger picture of social dysfunction. The Navajo Nation faces severe problems with widespread domestic violence and in-family violent crime (usually related to alcohol), self-destructive behaviors (including alcohol and drug dependence, suicide, homelessness, and the banishment of “glonnies”\textsuperscript{63}), and child abuse and neglect (including sexual abuse). Those social ills skyrocketed in the Navajo Nation during the last decade of the last century. There is legitimate concern that the Navajo Nation is in a state of anomie, where most social controls in society have broken down and the Navajo Nation government cannot replace them with forced controls. While it is true that the sad picture painted by the crime

\textsuperscript{63} The word “glonnie” is a Navajo-English slang term taken from the Navajo word for “drunk” - ‘adlaani. When Navajo Nation judges began planning drug courts, prosecutors identified the common practice of drunks gathering behind local chain grocery stores to drink. A glonnie is a person who, by reason of persistent drinking, is banished from the home or home area by the family, and who congregates with others to drink. Eventually, a glonnie may be banished to a border town such as Gallup, New Mexico or Holbrook, Arizona, where that person is homeless and contributes to the visible and troublesome alcohol-related public nuisances we see in those cities.
statistics and social illness indicators does not represent all Navajos, and many Navajo families are intact and doing well, the nature and extent of the social problems are obvious. One of the things the focus group participants brought out by their comments is that there are many Navajos who have stable personalities and a grasp of good living behaviors. That stability needs to be identified and recruited for community leadership.

Gangs are only part of the picture, and the social forces which cause young people to form or join gangs to engage in illegal conduct are also the social forces mentioned above. The findings of our research show that, aside from the popular attraction of the gangsta persona for young people, family violence, abuse or neglect, unemployment and poverty are the breeding ground for gangs and their members. In sum, any strategy to deal with gangs must be related to addressing the other social ills as well. You cannot use suppression and control tactics to deal with gangs unless you address the underlying forces that make them grow and thrive.

The Navajo Nation has not done well in dealing with other social problems. While the Nation has been progressive in adopting laws to address domestic violence and assaultive behaviors, and it has made child welfare and alcohol treatment top priorities, only so much can be done. The final chapter of the research findings on cluster housing and gang activity closed with some provocative questions. Is it better to throw a lot of money at gang problems, or can existing programs develop effective approaches using what they have now? It is doubtful the Navajo Nation will receive funding for the efforts that are needed to address all its social ills. Experience with attempts to get federal monies for jails, an improved court system, and more law enforcement officers have largely been a failure. Added to congressional neglect of the needs of Indian Country is the fact that we are now at war—with terrorism and with a flagging national
Something should be done by both federal and state officials. The statistics for Indian Country show that nationally, Indians fall at the bottom of all indicators of social and economic well-being. They have the highest rates of crime, family violence and poverty. The same is true of the Navajo Nation. It is becoming increasingly obvious that such conditions are a drag on the economies of states such as Arizona and New Mexico, and southern Utah, which have large Indian populations. The economic arguments to elected federal and state leaders of those states are simple enough—if you do not want conditions in Indian Country to be a drag on your economy, and if you want Indians to be healthy and successful workers and consumers, who contribute to the economy, the Navajo Nation’s problem is your problem—whether you are an elected state official or a member of Congress.

While the Navajo Nation leadership should set priorities based upon the findings of this report and attempt to get the resources needed to address gang problems and the social ills that fuel them, the most likely reality is that those resources will not be forthcoming. As the Wise Old Owl sang in the Disney classic, So Dear to My Heart (1949), “You’ve got to do with what you’ve got, and never mind how much you’ve got....” “What you’ve got” is a very important element of doing things with the findings in this report.

The cluster housing chapter also closed with the thought-provoking question of how we can find people like the Rio Puerco Acres housing manager or the self-motivated Navajo Housing Authority project managers. While the organization begun by the four women of Rio Puerco Acres dissolved, the kind of heart and commitment they had is an example of what should be done. Are these issues serious enough for not only the Navajo Nation government to
address, but for the Navajo People and their communities to seize as priorities?

Based upon those considerations, there are three major policy issue areas which flow from the findings of this study. First, what should the Navajo Nation’s attitude toward gangs and their members be? What should the working philosophy be? Second, what intervention strategies and tactics are most likely to be effective? Third, what prevention strategies and tactics should be attempted? The word “strategy” means the big picture—it is the large approach to be established in public policy and laws. The word “tactics” speaks to implementation of the strategies—action steps that flow from goals.

A. THE ATTITUDE OF POLICIES

As the literature and the field research shows, care must be taken in approaching gangs because of in-group loyalty and solidarity. Suppression tactics, with nothing more, do not work, and they have the effect of making gangs stronger. Even otherwise well-considered plans of having social workers interact with gang members may increase group solidarity.

There is a saying in English which reflects Navajo philosophy—”The attitude is the action.” As you think, so will you speak; as you speak, so will you do; what you do indicates the kind of person you are—people aren’t “bad,” but their actions can be. Our attitudes toward the problems of gang emergence, organization, and activities are an important part of policy development.

Are we going to think of gangs as “them” rather than “one of us”? If we make gangs and their members the subjects of action and declare them to be public enemies, that will serve the purpose of making them stronger, more secretive, and perhaps more violent. If the police declare war on Navajo gangs, that may force them into drug dealing for more than recreation and
partying, and compel them to sell drugs for guns.

One of the problematic issues with gangs as a form of crime is the fact that their members are usually young, they often wear distinctive clothing and speak a special language, which includes secret signs. They are an association, and one of the dearest freedoms Americans have is freedom of association. It is guaranteed by the Navajo Nation Bill of Rights. While there may be no freedom of association to conduct illegal activities, as the report on what it is that gang and crew members do shows, their major activities are hanging out, partying, and trying to attract girls. There are adults who hang out at bars and lounges in the border towns; partying takes places in homes and at conferences; and most men try to attract women. There is a selective enforcement issue here, and while it may not be illegal to target people who wear distinctive clothing or otherwise assume a recognizable persona, fairness issues are involved.

Who are the gang members? They are Navajos. They are young. They are related to us, as actual relatives, clan relatives, or as neighbors. One works for Navajo Nation government. They are creative. Tagging can be viewed as vandalism, or as a work of art, as noted by the artist who spoke at To’hajiilee. While we may not appreciate some of the tagging on public buildings, there are examples of tagging art which show the creativity of young artists. Most of all, gang and crew members, associates, wannabes, and even young people who only want to assume the style and taste in music of gangs, are the future of the Navajo Nation, along with the young people who do not join gangs or have no interest in the gangsta style.

There is recognition of the principle that gangs and their members should not be targeted as such, from the definition of “gang” adopted by the Navajo Nation Police and the definitions researchers have developed. The key elements of a definition are:
• Organization by age (youths and young adults) and gender;
• The willingness to engage in violent acts to claim and defend territory; and
• Informal leadership, which changes over time.

The focus should be upon the arrest and prosecution of those who commit violent crimes against persons, and those who commit serious property crimes (such as vandalism-related property crimes and burglaries). We should get deterrence right. There are two kinds of deterrence—severe punishment and the ability to promptly detect, arrest and prosecute criminal activity. Deterrence in the severity of punishment does not work, and no threat of severe punishment will deter violent or severe misconduct. Studies of police tactics show that threats of early detection and reporting of crime, prompt arrest and prosecution, and speedy trials and punishment (where guilt is established) have a better deterrent effect than the threat of severe punishment alone. As several focus group commentators (including a former police officer) concluded, jailing alone does not work. The focus for gang intervention should be deterrence by having efficient police, prosecutors, and courts. What about complaints by police and judges that the amended criminal code, with many offenses which carry no jail time, is causing criminals to laugh at the law and show disrespect for institutions? There seems to be an attitude that if an offense does not carry jail time, it isn’t worth arrest and prosecution. However, the Navajo Nation Criminal Code provides for restitution (nalyeeh) and community service, along with long probation terms (which can be enforced with the law of contempt), and those are effective punishments. The criminal law provides for assessments, and they should be used. Therefore, there should be strategies of (1) more effective law enforcement and prosecution, (2) making violent crime and serious property crimes priorities, and (3) a more effective use of the punishments that are on the books.
Setting aside any distaste for the clothing, music, language, or lifestyle of gang members, at end, we are dealing with the effects of gang affiliation and not that kind of organization as a means of association. In other words, we should follow the ancient Navajo legal philosophy of not attempting to address the actor or the person, but address that person’s actions and their impact on others. Navajo common law is founded upon the autonomy of the individual and freedom of action. That freedom should be regulated or interfered with only when it injures someone else. It is precisely those injuries that we are concerned with, including violence, intimidation and property theft or destruction.

Given that gang members are relatives (and even the relatives of police officers), and given the examples of how gang behaviors can change (as illustrated by community organizing efforts), we are talking about an attitude that (1) violent crime is clearly a ground for action against gang members who commit it, and (2) even gang members are deserving of the respect and k’e that are due others. They are also entitled to due process of law and all the guarantees of the Navajo Nation Bill of Rights. Therefore, the target of intervention and prevention policy should be criminal activity and the causes of gang formation, and not gang members as gang members.

Policy makers should pay particular attention to what gang members said they wanted and the problems and proposed solutions the stakeholders and focus group participants offered. Many gang members said they wanted their parents to stop drinking; they want more stable families; an education; and jobs. Many of the findings and recommendations of stakeholders and focus group participants were “soft” in that they identified difficult-to-achieve solutions (e.g. doing things about a lack of parenting and communications skills and revitalizing Navajo culture.
and tradition). A few spoke of love and talking with people in a good way. Many identified traditional kinship and k’e values. Most of all, many of the people who spoke with us want stronger families and all the other values that are associated with healthy families. There was talk of dependency on government, whether in Washington64 or Window Rock, and the need for community and individual self-dependence.

While it is difficult to reduce recommendations to concrete policy, those kinds of comments reflect the need to mobilize the Navajo Nation. The detailed focus group comments are particularly important, because they give us a feel of and a feel for what people on the local level are thinking and saying. Given the substance of the discussions, as reflected in the focus group comments, they did not have a lot to say about gangs as gangs. There were calls for more family discipline, but most of the problems the participants identified, the assessments they made, and their solution statements, were related to general social problems of the Navajo Nation. Most comments were about the family and the importance and role of children within the family. That is the kind of approach which should guide policy makers. As it is with the national situation, the Navajo Nation needs a mobilization effort to address terrorism within—domestic and in-family violence; dependence on alcohol and drugs; and the popular cry to renew the traditional Navajo identity.

B. INTERVENTION

There are many actors and organizations involved in any intervention effort. There are the Three Branch Chiefs of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches; the Navajo Nation

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64 “Washington” is the Navajo term for Washington, D.C., as the national capital.
Council; agencies, entities and programs on the national Navajo Nation level, the agencies; chapters, and agency towns; the police, courts, and social service programs; schools; and providers of basic services, including health care, mental health treatment, alcohol and drug counseling and rehabilitation, housing, and many other kinds of efforts to help people. The analysis of the implications for policy will address: (1) legislative concerns and initiatives; (2) law enforcement issues; (3) the judicial role; (4) social service programs; (5) the schools; (6) housing programs; (7) the various kinds of treatment programs (health care, mental health and alcohol and drug counseling and rehabilitation); (8) chapter and community involvement; (9) economic development and jobs; and (10) miscellaneous issues.

**Legislative Concerns**

One of the major concerns raised by the participants of this study was giving the rights of children high priority, along with the rights, duties and responsibilities of families. While the Navajo Nation Children’s Code addresses some of them, a good vehicle for a comprehensive statement of the rights of children (including the role of the family) is the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.65 It is an international treaty and a comprehensive statement of the rights of children and families which the Navajo Nation Council could approach in three ways: (1) It could ratify the Convention as a nation; (2) It could make the Convention self-enforcing Navajo Nation law; or (3) It could use the Convention to prompt discussion of children’s rights and frame legislation to enforce those rights.

The Navajo Nation maintains its identity as a nation, and a participant in the Shiprock

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focus group complained that the Navajo Nation Council is not doing enough to exercise the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation. There is nothing to prevent the Council from reviewing, ratifying and adopting the Convention of the Rights of the Child as an international treaty.

Most countries of the world which adopt international treaties then have an obligation to “domesticate” or make a convention national law by enacting legislation. The Treaty Clause of the United States Constitution makes an international treaty directly applicable as domestic law when the Senate ratifies the treaty (although the Senate can make “reservations” so that the treaty does not automatically become enforceable domestic law). If the Navajo Nation Council decided to either ratify the Convention as a treaty, or adopt it as Navajo Nation law, then there would need to be language adopting the provisions of the Convention as Navajo Nation law.

The third option would be to examine the Convention’s requirements and begin adopting its provisions as Navajo Nation law. There are many subject areas in it which guarantee the rights of children and families which would be useful to address the public’s concerns that the rights of Navajo children should be protected.

The Council should examine the style of the Convention. It is an international document which attempts to identify the human rights of children and families around the world. The Council could consider a comprehensive statement of family rights based in Navajo tradition and Navajo common law which would state the values the respondents and participants in this study identified.

Many of the focus group participants mentioned “parenting” as a subject. Do we know what that means? Should there be some form of statutory definition of what good parenting is, to guide Navajo Nation agencies or parenting programs? What are the rights of parents?
Current American constitutional law indicates that government does not have the right to intervene in family life unless there is a compelling governmental interest to do so. When should Navajo Nation government have the power to intervene in the lives of Navajo families? What are the rights of parents to privacy and family integrity? What are the duties and responsibilities of parents? The Navajo Nation Bill of Rights guarantees the right to life, liberty, and happiness as fundamental rights. What does that mean when it comes to the rights of children and families in a Navajo context? The provisions of the Children’s Code list the most serious reasons to intervene in family life for a child’s welfare, but should there be some kind of statutory guidance on what good parenting is? There are, for example, statutory statements on the rights of victims. Should there be statements of the rights of children and families? Should there be statements, for the education of the public, on the normal duties of parents to their children, based on Navajo tradition?

Some commentators on Indian customary law suggest that rather than attempt to codify it, there should be generally-accepted statements of values and principles which are the source of the law. That avoids “freezing” customary values and principles. One initiative along those lines which is worth noting is a process to develop “A National Cultural Strategy for Scotland.” Scotland won the right to have its own parliament again, and it is in the process of deciding what it means to be a Scot, in terms of that culture. Such a project, involving the expertise of elders and medicine people, public discussions, focus group meetings, and other kinds of study of Navajo values, would honor the suggestions of the stakeholders and focus group participants that it is essential to revive the Navajo language and Navajo values and traditions if we are going to address social problems. The Council may wish to consider whether there should be “A
While the stakeholders did not express a great deal of concern about theft, property damage is a serious issue. While the year 2000 amendments to the Navajo Nation Criminal Code incorporated restitution or nalyeeh for all offenses, is there a utility in reimposing fines for property offenses—the offenses most often associated with tagging, vandalism, and other kinds of gang-related property damage? Individual property owners should be paid for damage to their property or theft, and there should be a source of public funding for property replacement, repair or cleanup for gang-related crimes. Many states have assessments in criminal cases to cover a wide range of projects, and there could be assessments, fines, or both for community cleanup programs, including cleaning up graffiti and vandalism to public property.

One area of possible legislation which will require further research is the extent to which the Navajo Nation can empower its law enforcement officers to “seal the borders” of the Navajo Nation and make border searches. It is apparent that drug and gun-running is taking place, and one major interdiction method is border searches. Search and seizure law is complicated, but search options for contraband—drugs, alcohol, and illegal weapons—should be researched. Some public officials feel that weapons control is an important element of gang control. That could require the Council to enter the controversial area of gun control, or at least consider what kinds of firearms should be prohibited or controlled. For example, should assault rifles or machine guns be legal in the Navajo Nation? Should they be controlled in some form, in the event of gang war escalation? The Council may wish to have its attorneys undertake a review of current Navajo Nation firearms statutes to see if they adequately address gang issues.

The literature on gangs identifies the “public health model” of intervention. It notes the
decline of the importance and effectiveness of major social institutions—the family, schools, churches, the workplace, culture and government services. That model identifies the agent of violence—weapons; the host of violence—victims and perpetrators; and the environment— communities with adverse socioeconomic conditions (including poverty, family violence, alcohol dependence, and child abuse and neglect). Should the Council order independent studies and reports on weapons and the problems they are creating; the adequacy of victim and perpetrator legislation; and ways to revive respect for public institutions? The workplace is a concern, and there are several contemporary statutes and policies to address harassment in the workplace. That kind of conduct spills over into the home to create family disruption, and the Council may wish to consider a workplace harassment policy for the Navajo Nation government, entities, and programs.

Overall, there is no identified need for gang-specific legislation. The wearing of baggy clothing, gang colors, or associated adornment is not a crime, and it should not be a crime, because of individual privacy, free speech and association rights. There are too many problems with freedom of association to make gangs illegal of themselves, although there could be legal research into the adequacy of criminal conspiracy laws under the current Navajo Nation Criminal Code. Increased sanctions for gang-related crime could be studied, but as the research indicates, targeting gangs as gangs in a suppression model can be counterproductive and have the undesired effect of making gangs stronger. The Council can also consider the legislative implications of the discussion of policy for other identified organs of government or society below.

Law Enforcement
Most of the gang control and intervention initiatives identified in this report are a matter of police strategies and tactics. Suppression efforts must be viewed with a great deal of care to avoid making gang in-group associations stronger and increasing gang solidarity. Suppression does not work unless it is accompanied by efforts to reach out to gangs and their members in other ways.

One of the major problems in the Navajo Nation is coordinating federal, state, and Navajo Nation law enforcement efforts. There are federal concerns because of the Major Crimes Act, the Indian Country Crime Act, and the Assimilative Crimes Act. The problem is coordinating efforts, and as this is written, there are indications that the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Department of Justice will refocus their priorities in light of the need to deal with terrorism. There should be sufficient flexibility in the operations of federal authorities for them to respond to investigation, arrest, and prosecution demands based upon Navajo Nation needs and priorities. That is, the Navajo Nation Police should drive those decisions, based upon their assessment of the severity of a given crime and whether it is in fact gang-related. One of the difficult issues in the literature on gangs is how to deal with individuals with a personality disorder. Those are the people who usually do not “age out” of criminal activity. To the extent they are gang leaders, they should be given special attention. They are most often individuals with a long criminal record, and one of violent crime. They should be considered for federal or intensive Navajo Nation prosecution, but gang members should not be targeted as such. The focus should be on the length of the individual’s criminal record, the seriousness of his or her offense, and other indicators that, given the person’s record, it is likely that he or she has a serious personality disorder. The mental health issue is whether, by reason
of a mental disease or defect, the individual is a danger to himself, herself, or others and requires intensive medical treatment or incarceration.

One of the problems with the experiments in Boston of direct contact with gangs, warnings that they will be prosecuted for firearm and other offenses, and intensive police-probation surveillance, is that there is already a shortage of law enforcement and probation officers in the Navajo Nation. The Boston approach is not feasible. However, Navajo Nation police and probation officers should use this study to approach Congress for funding should the Boston experiment appear attractive to them. Gang violence and gangs may be growing in the Navajo Nation (according to the front-page, top of the fold article in the Thursday, November 8, 2001 edition of the Navajo Times), and if so, the tough Boston approach may be a desirable strategy.

There are two difficult related law enforcement considerations. The first is the fact that a child who is abused or neglected is likely to be involved in violent teen crime, and that includes gang crime. The second is enforcement of the delinquency provisions of the Children’s Code. Police should avoid selective enforcement of criminal laws against gang members, given the potential “hardening” issue, but the public should know that the criminal law will be enforced fully and fairly. The police should identify and voice any problems they have with enforcement of the Children’s Code at present. They should also work closely with agencies that are attempting to do positive interventions in gang member lives. It is interesting that many gang members spoke well of the police, showing that if they feel that enforcement is fair, they respect the law.

Judicial System
The judicial system is at the heart of intervention approaches, because it has the ability to address special needs or considerations in dealing with youths who may become gang members and in dealing with individuals who are gang members. The first consideration is the prompt and thorough processing of child abuse and neglect cases, given children who are neglected or abused are likely to enter the cycle of violence as teens.

The courts have the responsibility to deal with social disruption on two fronts—civil cases and criminal and delinquency cases. The social ills seen in civil cases include child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and family disruption. Domestic relations cases, which usually arise in the context of family disruption, are important. One remedy for domestic violence is a prompt divorce, and the numbers of guardianship cases filed by family members (who are often a child’s grandmother, aunt or brother or sister) indicate family attempts to surround a child with better living circumstances. On the criminal side, and in delinquency cases, the judges should explore more efficient ways of handling criminal cases. There should be judicial oversight for two major purposes: First, to assure that the civil rights of criminal and delinquency defendants are strictly observed. That includes the appointment of effective counsel if deprivations of liberty will be considered; disclosure of evidence by prosecutors; strict regulation of prosecutorial misconduct or incompetent defense counsel; greater attention to victim rights; and more thorough sentencing, using the tools that are presently available in criminal and juvenile law. Judges should be more proactive to assure that civil rights are enforced and criminal and delinquency cases are processed efficiently. For the most part, that means a “back-to-the-basics” approach to understanding the law, improved case management, and the judge assuming complete control of each case. One method of managing cases which is helpful is pretrial
conferences early in the case for which counsel are required to be prepared and to carry out action items set by a preliminary pretrial order.

Several of the focus group participants mentioned the traditional Navajo “talking out” process and speaking with children in a firm, but good way. Those are essentially the values of Navajo peacemaking. Several of the gang respondents, when asked what they wanted, said that they wanted their parents to stop drinking. Both students and teachers said that parents should be more involved in school activities. Several focus group participants identified a lack of communication as a shortcoming that led to youth gangs. Peacemaking is an excellent forum for youths to be able to speak their minds, and for parents to communicate. It can help with the goal that several focus group participants identified to make people take charge of their own lives. Peacemaking encourages communication. It should be used more in the court system, and other parts of Navajo government, including police, social services, the schools, and other agencies, should integrate peacemaking into their operations.

Finally, the courts should not hesitate to use judicial leadership in working with the Navajo Nation Bar Association, and holding bench-bar conferences on specific issues. Shortcomings and deficiencies in domestic relations, criminal, neglect and abuse, and delinquency cases can be resolved in such contacts, because the courts have the authority to regulate the practice of law. As it is in many jurisdictions, children are not being given appointed counsel when they face the possibility of being deprived of their liberty by being taken from their home. They must have appointed counsel. Given that members of the bar are appointed on a “volunteer” basis (to keep their bar membership), counsel should be held to high standards of practice. That can be done through continuing legal education on the basics
(substantive criminal law and criminal procedure and the Children’s Code), and making certain that counsel are competent. Effective judicial leadership can assure gang members—and anyone who comes before the court—that the law will be observed and that decisions will be fair and even-handed.

Social Service Programs

Public and private social service programs are important, because they are often the first contact agencies and programs have with dysfunctional families. The timing of that contact can be important, as shown by the research finding that gang members can be persuaded to abandon the gang life when there is intervention following trauma. That includes a death, serious injury, or even a motor vehicle accident. While resources are already overburdened, there should be some consideration of making grief counseling available to the public. Research also shows that prompt and effective intervention when a child is either abused or neglected can prevent criminal careers.

Addressing intervention strategies, as it is with other agencies, the primary question is whether social service agencies and workers are following the law. Is child abuse and neglect being reported? Is the system of giving priority to such reports, based on the severity of the abuse or neglect, working well? Are children’s presenting officers responding promptly to requests for intervention, and if so, are they efficient and knowledgeable in their response? Are social workers prepared for court, by filing prompt and thorough reports before trial and being prepared at trial?

66 Given old roads, unpaved roads, a lack of maintenance, cattle on the highways, and the mix of design and
maintenance factors with alcohol use, traffic crash injuries and fatalities are high in the Navajo Nation.
Both social workers and members of the general public talk about a lack of parenting skills. What are they? Whose responsibility is it to teach them (to young people of child-bearing age, young parents, or even older parents)? Given the common complaint that parenting skills need to be taught to the Navajo Nation’s young population, there should be discussions of how to marshal resources to do that. The discussions should involve social services programs, health care providers, the schools, family planning programs, and even charitable organizations that raise funds for community efforts. If parenting education is indeed a priority need, it should be addressed. Several focus group participants said that public service workers do not work together well and are preoccupied with “turf.” That must be addressed.

Schools

While it is easy to be critical of schools, educators, and school management, school teachers, counselors, and administrators actively participated in focus group meetings. Before addressing the policy implications of this research for schools, it should be noted that there is a lot of turf because of the unique nature of schools in the Navajo Nation. They include Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, contract schools, state-run public schools, and even a few private and parochial schools. They too need to coordinate their activities and reach a consensus that since many gang members are also students in their schools, they owe the public an obligation to do their part in a coordinated effort to address gang issues.

One of the major issues is whether Navajo students who are gang or crew members, or students who adopt a gang persona in their clothing and mannerisms, are being pushed out of school. One legal issue which is unresolved in the Navajo Nation is whether there is a right to
education as a basic civil right. Youths who join gangs or crews often have learning and behavioral problems, although many are very bright and talented. Are the schools pushing children out of school? Are the schools addressing behavioral problems under federal special education laws?

One issue which runs across all program lines is fairness and equal treatment. Those should be major considerations in school disciplinary process. Bureau of Indian Affairs schools and contract schools have an obligation to follow the Student Bill of Rights in 25 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Part 42. Are those rights being observed? That is also an issue for state schools (which are bound by their state Bills of Rights), and all schools are required to implement federal special education regulations, which have student and parent rights implications. The rights of children and parents are a fairness and equal treatment issue.

Are school remedial education programs sufficiently addressing the needs of Navajo youths? Are there enough alternative schools to address the educational deficits that gang and crew-connected youths have? Are there programs for the youths who said they wanted to graduate from high school to at least offer a G.E.D. certificate?

Another cross-cutting issue is the teaching of the Navajo language and Navajo culture and tradition. The stakeholders and focus group participants most often stressed the need to teach the Navajo language and Navajo culture and tradition. Do school curricula sufficiently

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67 Education is a constitutional right under some state constitutions. As a general matter, the federal courts have declared that the right to an education is not a federally-protected civil right. A different holding might be possible under the Navajo Nation Bill of Rights, particularly if construed in light of the education provisions of the Navajo Nation Treaty of 1868 and popular acceptance of the right to an education. The right could be an issue for legislation.
address that kind of education? Do the schools have partnerships and networks with identified elders and medicine people? Are they being brought into the schools? Are the schools encouraging and helping to establish community efforts for such education?

There is the objection that youths do not speak Navajo, are not likely to learn it, and they are not interested in Navajo culture and tradition in any event. That is a chicken-and-egg sort of problem. Is it that Navajo youths are not interested, or that no one has asked them? How can you not be interested in something you do not know? The gang and crew surveys indicated that their members are interested in their Indian identity. That is a point of beginning. Also, the community work with gangs in Fort Defiance shows the interest in at least some Indian and Navajo traditions.

One of the major traditions in the Navajo way of life is now called peacemaking. It is the traditional “talking out” process to communicate and reach consensus for decisions. The Maricopa County Community Colleges sponsored a conference at Phoenix College in March 2001 called “The Past, Present, and Future of Navajo Peacemaking: Applications Across Disciplines.” It was the first time there were public discussions about using Navajo peacemaking in different settings. Presentations addressed the use of peacemaking across disciplines in general, law enforcement, schools, social services, family court, and social services. Thomas Walker, Jr. and Mark Sorensen, of the Little Singer Community School of Birdsprings, Navajo Nation (Arizona) did a presentation on the use of peacemaking in schools. It focused upon using Navajo peacemaking for student discipline. Isabelle Kalsoyas, the Director of the Leupp Youth Residential Center, and Dr. Margaret Waller and Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, of the Arizona State University School of Social Work, did presentations on the
use of peacemaking in social service programs. Attorney-educator Roland McAllen-Walker of Phoenix College’s Tribal Court Advocacy Program recognized the subject of applying Navajo peacemaking across disciplines and organized the conference.

Peacemaking is a method of problem-solving. It is also a therapeutic process, and several focus group participants were essentially talking about the use of therapeutic approaches when they identified problems and recommended solutions. There are strong parallels between traditional Navajo healing methods (including those used by the Native American Church and some Christian denominations) and Navajo peacemaking, and Navajo therapeutic approaches to gang problems should be explored.

It appears that the schools also need to address community relations issues. Many of them date back to hearings held in the 1960s, where Navajo parents complained that they were shut out of the school systems and demanded parental control and community schools. Are parents afraid to meet with school officials? Is the only time parents are contacted and invited to meet when their children get in trouble? Is there community “ownership” of the school system, whether it is operated by a federal agency, a private nonprofit school, a state school district, or a private organization? The schools are at the forefront of gang issues, because gang and crew members are students or know they must have a good education, and teachers and school property are often targets of gang activity. Schools must address the conditions and issues identified in this study to see how they can be part of the solution, and not part of the problem.

Housing Programs

One of the brightest results of this study was the identification of what housing managers are doing to address gang activity. That showed us that dedicated people can make a difference.
They also showed us that you do not have to throw a lot of money at gangs—sticking to the basics of participant screening, responding to complaints effectively, and using the sanction of eviction are effective. The basic issues to be addressed for housing policies are (1) cluster housing itself, (2) resources for housing management, (3) the legal foundation for strict enforcement, and (4) community mobilization.

Housing is at the forefront of gang issues because gangs live in housing projects, target them, and cluster housing is associated with urbanization in the agency towns and in remote communities. Gangs spread to rural areas because their members live in housing projects.

There has been an ongoing debate between the management of the Navajo Housing Authority and the Region IX Office of Native American Housing (HUD) for a long period of time. The NHA management responds to the demands of its constituents for scattered site rather than cluster projects, and HUD officials said that scattered site housing is much more expensive than cluster projects, getting legal clearance to build scattered site housing is much more difficult, and all housing must be connected to the basic housing infrastructure—decent roads, water supply, sanitation, and electricity. The question is how to balance Navajo demands for scattered site housing with cost and infrastructure concerns.

The problem essentially begins with the Navajo Nation and not with HUD. That is, the initial problem is one of land use planning, and that is an issue which is in the control of Navajo Nation agencies and the chapters. Another problem which is associated with the destruction of the grazing economy is that as urbanized areas expand and there are too many people for too little land, there is fierce competition for land use. Those who still graze do not want their limited grazing land to be reduced, and Navajos need land for many uses, including housing.
Infringement on grazing rights is a sensitive public issue, and since the Navajo Nation is a rural area, there is suspicion of land use planning in general because of property rights concerns. However, if Navajos want scattered site housing, the first issue to be addressed is the process of setting aside homesite areas for individual homes without expending a great deal of time and effort for those permissions. A great deal of work is already being done in the Navajo Nation to address individual homesite leases in conjunction with government and banking private mortgage initiatives. Navajos who live on allotted land are hampered by cumbersome Bureau of Indian Affairs leasing regulations, which require that a majority of the holders of ownership interests in an allotment must approve a lease. Given the process of dividing the ownership among more and more owners as land passed through generations, an individual Navajo may hold a one-thousandth interest in a piece of land, and have difficulties securing the permission of a majority of ownership. If one solution is to encourage individual, non-cluster, housing, then leasing practices must be addressed.

Navajos are already seeking alternative housing. Less affluent Navajos build small houses or shacks or buy mobile homes. More affluent Navajos are now seeking private financing to build or improve homes. Many of those homes do not have running water, modern plumbing, or electricity. Many Navajos access their homes over mud paths that pass for roads, and during the winter, they leave while the ground is still frozen, and return home at night when it freezes again. Some Navajos intentionally choose hardship over cluster housing as a matter of choice, and that choice should be accommodated.

Insufficient attention has been given to waiving cumbersome regulations that require essentially urban amenities and facilities, and insufficient attention has been given to
alternatives—wind-generated or solar power; dry toilets or outhouses; water-hauling services and rain water catchments; and the fact that Navajos buy large pickup trucks precisely because of the bad roads. The innovative use of alternative housing technology can also drive down the cost of housing.

One thing the discussion of the financial aspects of housing and gang intervention does not cover is the allocation of funding. HUD ignored the social implications of housing site design and construction for many years because, as HUD Indian or Native American housing managers explained, they were in the housing business and they were not social workers. That kind of attitude directly contributed to the rise in gangs, because Navajo Housing Authority people saw what was coming and tried to alert HUD to the problem. Recently, it was able to get federal money from Congress for intervention programs to address drug problems in public and Indian housing, and it offers special grants for drug programs. The problem with them is that they are usually one-time demonstration project grants, and when the money is gone, the services disappear as well. As this study shows, ordinary line employees can do the job efficiently. The funding issue, however, is whether general grants and subsidies to Indian housing authorities are sufficient to hire the numbers of people required to enforce lease and regulation provisions, whether they have enough legal support for evictions, and whether they have the training they need to deal with misconduct, such as retaliation. We now know that gang activity and drinking-related misbehavior in cluster projects is sufficiently high to make aggressive lease enforcement and participant selection high priorities.

There is a related federal problem which stems from the original public housing model, namely who pays for governmental services. The usual requirement is that the local government
(the Navajo Nation in this instance) is responsible for things such as police services, schools, and other municipal services. Education planning alone is a serious development issue. We see news items about large new Navajo Housing Authority project construction, but we see no discussion of who is going to pay for police and other services for those projects. If you build housing without police services, then you are going to trap people in environments of crime without law enforcement support.

Another issue is control of ingress and egress at project sites—people coming and going. A member of the gang study team also participated in a workshop for tenant organization members which focused on the desires of NHA housing program participants across the Navajo Nation. He learned that aside from dealing with social problems, participants were interested in controlling access to projects—not only by drivers but by cattle and dogs. They wanted strong fences and cattle guards. Those too have been considered to be frills by HUD officials, and the Navajo Housing Authority has had a difficult time getting fences. Studies of environmental crime prevention, i.e. urban planning, have shown that the physical environment does make a difference, and that the design of streets, lighting, fencing, parking lots, and entrances can reduce crime.68 There is an associated crime-prevention issue in maintenance, which is associated with funding. It is called the “broken window” syndrome, which holds that crime is related to run-down neighborhoods. The housing managers discussed in this study understood it well, as they made efforts to clean up and improve their projects. Who pays for that? Housing management is responsible for maintenance under most local laws and leases, but homebuyers are responsible

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68 Some planning can backfire, as with street barriers that make it difficult for police and fire units to respond, or high walls in housing projects that lock gang members in with other residents.
to maintain their own units in projects. Who pays for maintenance and how much money is available for improvements is a crime issue when considering the broken window syndrome.

The third issue for housing is the legal foundation for evictions. On the one hand, judges do not like to grant eviction judgements, but on the other, housing managers owe their tenants and homebuyers a basic legal obligation—the right to quiet enjoyment. That is an ancient legal right which says that if someone rents land from a landowner, the owner owes an obligation to the tenant that he or she will “enjoy” use of the land in a “quiet” manner. Housing managers control what goes on in housing projects, and they owe a legal duty to renters or purchasers\textsuperscript{69} to protect them from disruption caused by neighbors. That includes noisy parties, alcohol and drug sales, and other criminal activity. Housing managers owe their tenants the legal obligation of protection, and there is a possibility of civil liability if a housing manager is negligent in failing to address crimes that are known to him or her.

The main body of the report expresses some concern about the effects of aggressive evictions—that people will be driven away from support services that might otherwise be available if they are evicted. Federal housing regulations and some federal finance regulations now require participant orientation and counseling, administrative due process hearings, and other measures to assure that eviction or foreclosure are the last resort. The requirements for housing managers when they exclude participants from programs are often more stringent than for other programs. The problems with aggressive eviction lie in fairness and equal treatment for housing occupants in fact, and convincing a judge that every measure to avoid eviction is taken.

\textsuperscript{69} The HUD homebuyer program uses a lease-purchase agreement which is more like a rental lease than a mortgage agreement.
One program issue for housing managers is convincing judges that they should grant an eviction for behavior and nuisance-related breaches of leases, and if that is a problem, the Judicial Conference of the Navajo Nation (the organization of all justices and judges) should be approached to discuss the issue. Otherwise, if tenants receive due process and fair treatment to address their behaviors, then repeated misbehavior is the cause of the eviction, not the whim of a housing manager.

The issue of “one-strike-and-you’re-out” for drug-related evictions should be viewed carefully, because this is an emerging issue in law. It is much the same as the problem of drug possession, where all individuals in a house may be guilty if one person possesses drugs, but not all may know about the presence of drugs. It is the problem of the innocent occupant. That requires housing managers to take into account the likelihood that parents will know of their child’s drug possession. That can be addressed, as the housing managers in this report did, by good participant selection, orientation, counseling (even informal counseling by a housing manager), and the wise use of sanctions.

The fourth and last issue for housing is community mobilization. There are some people we wish we could photocopy, such as the Rio Puerco Acres and Pigeon Springs housing managers. The issue is how we find people with the commitment and energy to clean up their project, organize residents, hire gang members in the process of fixing the project up, and support community organization. What are the incentives for such people to step forward? Here, again, this may be related to the problem of dependence—letting the government do everything. Several of the focus group participants recognized that and called upon adults and children to take charge of their own affairs. There needs to be a new climate of encouraging
community organization, and one of the elements of that climate is to reward individuals and communities that organize private efforts to make positive change. That is not a matter of a dinner or plaque, but of incentives such as acceptance, listening, and supporting new ideas. Not all ideas work, but they should be discussed seriously.

**Treatment Programs**

Most gang members drink, and many drink to excess. They may also have personal problems that are aggravated by drinking. Many may need some form of outpatient alcohol or behavioral counseling or inpatient services.

The primary lessons learned from the input of stakeholders and focus group participants are that there needs to be better program coordination, resistance of the temptation to close a file for trivial reasons or not reaching out, and simply following the law or program design. Those shortcomings can be attributed to everyone touched by this report and its findings.

One of the problems that was identified for housing that also applies to treatment programs is the kinds of incentives, sanctions, and “hooks” that can be used to compel people to seek and cooperate with treatment. That is where treatment providers must network with the courts and police, because they are the public bodies that enforce sanctions. The Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation sought longer periods of probation or suspended sentences in the year 2000 amendments to the Navajo Nation Criminal Code with sanctions for treatment providers specifically in mind. Treatment providers said that they need to compel individuals to remain with their programs for at least one and one-half years, and the Judicial Branch sought amendments to do that.

Most individuals who have drug or alcohol dependence problems also commit offenses.
While the use of alcohol or drugs may not be the cause of the offense, that use is often associated with the commission of a crime. Parents with drug and alcohol problems come before the courts when their children commit an offense or when the parents are charged with child abuse or neglect in civil children’s actions. We also see individuals with dependence problems in domestic violence cases and even in peacemaking cases where family members seek peacemaking.

There is a wide variety of sanctions courts can impose in civil or criminal cases, including suspended sentences and probation in criminal cases, where it is said that the defendant “holds the key to the jail door in his or her pocket.” In other words, if the defendant does not cooperate with court-ordered treatment, the consequence can be jail. That presents problems in a system where the U.S. Justice Department found jail overcrowding in the Navajo Nation in the year 2000, but incarceration is a matter of priority, and priorities can be set. Judges can use their contempt authority in civil cases to get compliance. Criminal contempt is punishing an individual for failing to obey an order, and civil contempt is jailing an individual to get him or her to do something required by law. The current limit for contempt jail sentences for criminal contempt is one year, under the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968. In theory, there is no limit to the amount of time an individual can be jailed for civil contempt. Therefore, the courts can use sanctions to support treatment program requirements. The only sanction where the police can be used is if an individual commits an additional offense while in treatment.

Providing prompt, accurate, and complete information to the court is the key to sanctions. A sentencing judge should be aware of the need for treatment at the time of sentence, and there should either be input up front in a criminal charge that treatment is needed, or the court should
delay sentencing to give enough time for that information to be provided. While it is more
efficient to sentence the defendant who pleads guilty when first brought before the court at that
time, there should consideration of having case classifications for delayed sentencing to address
treatment needs and issues. Judges who sentence or issue civil orders need to be aware of what
is needed so the judge can enter an appropriate order. This is where the lack of communication
and turf issues identified by focus group commentators is important.

Treatment providers should consider the utility of using peacemaking for treatment plans.
Using sanctions to compel someone to get and remain in treatment is one approach, but
peacemaking can be used to engage those who need treatment to make them want to seek and
cooperate with it. Peacemaking is also a way to involve family members in a treatment plan, let
them know what is available and what needs to be done, and seek their help and support for their
ill family member. The process can also involve treatment providers to assist developing
individual and family treatment plans.

Several of the focus group participants pointed to the need for more family-oriented
treatment to involve family members in the treatment of a relative and to consider the home
situation when releasing someone who is in treatment to prevent a relapse. The family-oriented
treatment suggestion makes a great deal of sense. Individuals who have alcohol, drug, or mental
problems most often come from families where other family members have the same problem.
That is also in accord with Navajo philosophy that requires family support.

Finally, there is the issue of integrating traditional elements into treatment programs.
There have been successful alliances of treatment providers (primarily the Indian Health Service)
and traditional healers for decades, and that philosophy should be applied to treatment programs
as well. While the young gang and crew members who were interviewed expressed little interest in traditional healing, they did show their interest in their pan-Indian identity. That suggests that things such as sweat lodges could be used as part of a treatment program. “Treatment” does not mean doing something to or on a patient—it also means involving a patient to give that person an opportunity to “name” his or her illness, express themselves, and know that they are not alone. Those are elements of traditional Navajo healing methods. Government funding of programs with traditional elements is fairly new, and we do not have studies which validate or show that traditional methods work. The focus group and stakeholder input shows that they have confidence they do work. That is worth serious consideration.

**Chapter and Community Involvement**

The focus group notes particularly demonstrate a recognition that a great deal of work to deal with gang formation needs to be done on chapter and community levels, and often, the chapter and community are one and the same. The initiatives to work with youths in Fort Defiance shows how chapter government can assist, by providing meeting space. Chapters and communities need to recognize, as groups, that there is a role for their existing organizations and formal and informal organizations which need to be formed. It takes only one committed housing manager to get the ball rolling, or committed adults or youths who take the initiative to start something positive.

Government and other organizations can help as well. The Shiprock focus group comments are an example of people inviting schools to reach out to the community. Nationally, the federal government is urging volunteer groups to get involved, and the schools and other institutions can invite the Navajo public to participate in their operations. That is not a matter of
setting up another kind of board—it is asking members of the public to get directly involved in doing the work, and even cleaning up after an event, as was suggested in the Shiprock meeting.

Commentators at the focus group meetings brought up issues of anger, jealousy, and negative energy in communities. That is an issue which must be addressed for community organization. The focus group meeting notes also suggest that there are a lot of Navajos who are interested in the health of their community and are willing to help.

Do people organizing privately in a community make a difference? The four mothers from Rio Puerco Acres were able to get the Navajo Nation Council to pass a curfew law. The legality, usefulness, or degree of enforcement of that law can be debated, but the point is that a few people who decide to get something done can be successful. The community mobilization discussed in the housing section of this report also shows that communities can get things done. The chapter level of government has great potential, because the chapter is the place where communities come together to discuss problems. Good organizing efforts by chapter leaders can help energize and rally communities around issues such as the ones raised in this report.

If government, as a community institution, has lost respect, perhaps that is due to not involving the community—acting in a public and transparent manner, giving opportunities for public involvement, and inviting community participation. A lack of effectiveness or the loss of respect is related to the turf and lack of cooperation issues. It may be easier to get things done to have a small group of people initiate action or make a decision, but gang problems are ones that pervade communities, and arise from the ill health of communities, so it is essential to involve the public.

Economic Development
The lack of a healthy economy is a cause for gang formation, and gang members get involved in crime, drug sales, and gun-running to make money when their members cannot find employment. Aside from individuals who have personality disorders, gang members tend to not “age out” of gangs when they are a source of income. Gang members describe their activities as “working,” and in a sense, crime is a means of employment. As was shown in the Rio Puerco Acres example, employment of youths in legitimate work is a successful intervention strategy.

Economic development is a primary priority for the Navajo Nation. There are many initiatives to expand employment opportunities, but the question is how jobs can be created. There is a special economic development-employment issue as a gang intervention strategy, and that is putting youths to work. Summer employment is particularly important, as was shown when we asked gang and crew members where they worked.

There are two primary economic development issues here: the level of economic development activity, and where to get money for employment. The “level” refers to large-scale economic development efforts versus smaller, more modest ones. All governments are having problems raising money. The devotion of large amounts of money for terrorism initiatives and stimulating the economy, at the same time taxation revenues are dropping because of the economic downturn, are hurting state and local governments by increasing revenue demands while tax revenues are declining. The same is true for the Navajo Nation. Aside from the recent new taxes enacted by the Navajo Nation Council, the Nation may need to look to the federal example and start charging the public for services given to them. Navajo Nation government should actively consider the use of criminal fines and civil penalties as a source of income for the kinds of programs that are needed to address gang issues, and consider how better to collect
There is an approach to economic development called the “small is beautiful” philosophy. It holds that small, community efforts for economic development are more successful, and that economies should build on what people do. What do young people do? They hold jobs that require few job skills and pay low hourly wages. There are many things that Navajo Nation communities need to get done—clean up the streets as part of the “broken window” method of dealing with crime, make the community a more beautiful place to live, and attract tourists. Fixing the infrastructure, by making repairs, painting, or cleaning up an area is another need. Communities should show that they care by immediately removing graffiti. There is plenty of work to be done, and a lot of it can be done by young people. One precedent is the old “ten day work” programs for chapters, which employed chapter members for short periods of time. The problem is how to pay even short-term, low-paying jobs.

This may be an issue of priorities, and it may be a matter of finding new ways to raise money. Potential federal funding should not be ignored, and many Navajo Nation leaders have called for both more grant writing and better use of federal funds. Prosecutors can explore better uses of fines and forfeitures, programs could consider charges for their services, and budgets could be reviewed for monies to devote to youth employment. At end, even with the difficulties of job-creation and revenue in the Navajo Nation, some thought needs to be given to employing youths to give them an incentive for responsible activities and a disincentive to get involved in crime for income.

**Miscellaneous Policy Considerations**

As was suggested in the main body of this report, gang problems are only one aspect of
There are many other strategies and tactics which can be used, and the Navajo Nation is unique because it is one of the leading Indian nations to consciously integrate traditional elements into governmental social programs. There needs to be more thought and discussion about how that can be done on both a public and private level.

Modern communication methods can be used to devise new strategies. For example, there is increasing access to the Worldwide Web and the resources it offers. An excellent source for crime prevention and gang information is the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at [http://ncjrs.org](http://ncjrs.org). It is maintained by the United States Department of Justice, and it has a large volume of materials. Many of them are studies of intervention schemes and “best practices,” showing what has been proven to work.

One of the initiatives which deserves attention is the use of civil remedies to deal with criminal conduct. One example of that is the use of nuisance law. For example, if a business attracts gangs and does nothing to deal with them, or does not cooperate with the police, a government attorney can apply to a court to close the business as a nuisance. The Navajo Housing Authority has seen nuisances in the past, with residents opening illegal “bars” in NHA homes (which are called “blind pigs” in criminal argot). Civil damage actions are also important. To what extent, for example, should individuals who are hurt by gang activities at a private business be able to sue that business, if its managers knew of the likelihood of a suit? The legal remedies of injunctions and restraining orders offer other possibilities which should be explored by the Navajo Nation’s lawyers. These remedies are not a matter of enacting some
kind of new law, but using well-established legal principles.

Several people spoke of creating new recreation opportunities and after-school programs to keep youths involved and out of trouble. They are expensive. However, combining a survey of existing facilities with volunteer efforts could identify some opportunities. There is work to be done in communities—youths can be involved with sports or games, and they can also be asked to participate in work that communities need. This is a respect issue, and adults can show their respect for young people by identifying what will help a community and inviting them to participate.

Honoring children was another suggested solution. Navajos often hold public events to honor students and other young people, and honoring is part of the process of building self-esteem. There should be a public information program that stresses that honoring, reinforcing and supporting children begins in the home, as a daily event. That is part of the oft-mentioned tradition of using k’é in everyday life. The revival of traditional Navajo thinking can be an integral part of the suggestion that we do more to honor children and build their self-esteem.

C. PREVENTION

The intervention schemes discussed above are one thing, but a great deal of thought needs to be given to prevention programs. They need not be gang-specific, but they must address the reasons young people join gangs. To briefly restate them, young people join gangs because that is their “work;” they join to get peer recognition of positive values, including loyalty, honesty, and integrity; they join for emotional support; they join to party; and they join because a gang can be the family a young person does not have. They join because their relatives are gang members, and for friendship and just “hanging out.”
They also join because their parents are not there for them, are alcoholics, or are abusive and violent. The hallmark of gangs is violent crime, and violence is learned behavior. In sum, they join because of a climate of violence and the self-induced violence of substance abuse and dependence.

Prevention is a cross-cutting issue for all government and private social programs. There is still a great deal we do not know about violence. There are many unexplored issues, such as nutrition during pregnancy, environmental pollution, concentrations of population, and other factors which may contribute to violent crime. However, there are things that we do know about crime—it is associated with communities that are not well, the breakdown of respect for public institutions which may have provided reasons for the loss of respect, the disruption of traditional economies, and—perhaps most of all—because of families that are not healthy.

We know that if there is prompt intervention at the earliest possible stage when a child is abused or neglected, that will have an impact. We know that resources and remedies for victims of domestic violence plays a role in prevention, as do efforts to build healthy families. Caring individuals, family members, extended family, neighbors, and communities are also factors in crime prevention.

Every Navajo Nation agency and government worker is involved in prevention in some way or another. The same is true for private and community institutions. The question is whether some one or some thing can prompt all agencies and workers to consider their role in crime prevention, and some event or initiative can spark public interest and commitment. Perhaps creating an office in the Office of the President or the Office of the Attorney General to coordinate prevention efforts would be useful. Traditional leadership must be involved in any
such effort. Navajo Nation news media, including the press, radio, and television, will need to take an interest in prevention and raise the public’s consciousness about the need for it.

However a consciousness of the need to coordinate efforts for prevention can be prompted, leadership will be required. That can be leadership at the highest levels or grassroots leadership. Any leadership initiative must engage the public will and interest.
XIV. CONCLUSION

There are two ways to deal with gangs—the war way and the peace way. The “war way” has more to do with intervention, and to intervene wisely, we must understand the dynamics and the lure of gangs as associations of young people. We must focus upon their activities when they commit crimes, as individuals or as a group, and simply use the old-fashioned technique of detecting and prosecuting crime. The “peace way” is prevention. Its effects are longer-lasting but more difficult to mobilize. Gang-formation is about identity, and that offers a clue for Navajos who are concerned about gangs. As so many focus group participants recognized, it is a matter of regaining a lost Navajo identity. Navajos are in a new century and they face new challenges. More than ever, the chickens of decades of failed federal Indian policy and paternalism, and interference with the powers of self-government and self-determination of Indian nations, have come home to roost in the form of poverty and social disruption. Navajos need to decide what their Navajo identity will be, and that will be a “do-it-yourself” program. Is that possible?

The interest and participation of many Navajos to help this study is an indicator. Young Navajos are, for the most part, smart, talented, and caring. They have energies and abilities to be tapped. Their adult relatives are also individuals who are committed. Their responses tend to show more of a “peace way” than a “war way” approach to the problem. They want to get back to the basics of Navajo tradition—kinship, k’e, and even greeting each other in a proper way to show relationship and respect. The future will come from either an alliance or a split of young Navajos and older ones. We can predict, from this study, that if Navajos of all ages come together in respectful relationships, that the future will be bright. If they split, we will see more
gangs and most likely, escalating drug sales and firearm violence, as in urban areas. There are things that all Navajos can do about the gang problem—together.
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Willis, P., S. Jones, J. Cunaan, and G. Hurd

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