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## The Origins of Navajo Youth Gangs

**ERIC HENDERSON, STEPHEN J. KUNITZ, AND  
JERROLD E. LEVY**

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In recent years, much attention has been given to the proliferation and emergence of street gangs among ethnic groups in locations formerly gang-free.<sup>1</sup> Navajo tribal members and officials have expressed strong concerns over both the presence of male youth gangs and what has been perceived as growing levels of violence.<sup>2</sup> Such concern is reasonable in a society in which accidents, suicide, homicide, and alcoholism are among the top ten causes of death for males.<sup>3</sup> Thus, “injury mortality” is “the single most important health problem of the Navajo.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1997, the Navajo Nation estimated that approximately sixty youth gangs<sup>5</sup> existed in Navajo country. Through the Peacemaker Division of the judicial branch of the Navajo Nation, the tribe secured federal funding to study gangs.<sup>6</sup> The tribe has since been actively pursuing means to ameliorate the conditions that lead to gang formation.

Gang values encourage risky behavior. Many of these behaviors are taken to extremes, such as heavy drinking and drug use. Mortality from injuries and alcohol “occur most frequently in young adult males.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, an examination of the history of gang formation, and the extreme forms of risky behavior associated with gang activity holds importance for both law enforcement and public health policy.

Although newspaper accounts<sup>8</sup> of Navajo gangs often stress the gulf between gang behavior and that of youths in earlier times, the origins of Navajo gangs in the early 1970s has some connection to Navajo adolescent male peer groups in the nineteenth century. More importantly, however, recent gang formation has been stimulated by off-reservation models and changing social and demographic factors within Navajo country. It appears that gangs have formed around core members who were socially marginal

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members of their communities. Membership in a gang, although limited to a small minority of Navajo youths, represents one significant contemporary path followed in the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The relative contribution of nature and nurture in the transition from youth to adult has been one of the more persistent controversies in anthropology. It has been asserted that some societies develop social and cultural values that ease the transition, while others make the transition far more painful and difficult. Within a single society, individuals adjust differently to conditions of adolescence,<sup>9</sup> and the material conditions of life influence practices within and between cultures. Among the Navajo, the transition to adulthood often has been difficult, especially for males. Injury mortality among the Navajo has exceeded national levels throughout the century, and young Navajo males suffer higher rates of accidental deaths, suicides, and homicides than do Navajo women.<sup>10</sup> In addition to psychosocial factors, environmental hazards (such as poor roads and old vehicles) contribute to these elevated rates.<sup>11</sup>

Terrie Moffitt has developed a dual taxonomy to account for the relationship of age to antisocial behavior.<sup>12</sup> She distinguishes a small set of individuals with "life-course-persistent antisocial behavior" from a much larger number of adolescents who mimic the actions of these most deviant peers. She argues that "temporary versus persistent antisocial persons constitute two qualitatively distinct types of persons"<sup>13</sup> based on differences in both nature and nurture. The behavior of persistent antisocial persons roots itself in biology and early socialization, which is grounded in neuropsychological deficits and exacerbated by developmental events.<sup>14</sup> This type of behavior peaks during adolescence,<sup>15</sup> and, according to Moffitt, the major cause of this rise is "adolescent-limited delinquents" engaging in "social mimicry" of the antisocial style of life-course persistent youths.<sup>16</sup> Her theory of adolescence-limited delinquency views most adolescent "deviance" as "an adaptive response to contextual circumstances."<sup>17</sup>

Moffitt links her theory to the type of society in which these people live or, to use Julian Steward's term, the level of socio-cultural integration.<sup>18</sup> In industrialized nations most adolescent males commit some delinquent acts and only "a small minority abstains completely."<sup>19</sup> Delinquency increases with "modernization" because "[t]eens are less well-integrated with adults than ever before. What has emerged is an age-bound ghetto ... from within which it seems advantageous to mimic deviant behavior."<sup>20</sup>

Moffitt's theory is useful in examining the emergence of male youth gangs in Navajo country. For the past one hundred years, male youths frequently have forged partying groups at ceremonies or other events. The expansion of Navajo participation in the boarding school system after World War II isolated youths from parents and community. This probably intensified peer group identification and the formation of loosely structured groups of males seeking a good time, so to speak. In general, Navajo males often have difficulty attaining "role and status satisfaction"<sup>21</sup> given their generally subordinate positions in a wage work economy. Given this situation, a young "Navajo male appears more prone to anomie and to frustration than does the

female.”<sup>22</sup> This observation, combined with Moffitt’s view that delinquency is perceived by youths as providing access to the desirable resource of “mature status”<sup>23</sup> helps to explain the emergence of Navajo youth gangs in the 1970s.

In the classic formulation, “delinquent gangs” are a subtype of an urban street corner group of peers of one sex<sup>24</sup> whose most frequent activities are generally “sleeping, eating and hanging around.”<sup>25</sup> Even among members, commitment to and identification with gang life varies,<sup>26</sup> being greatest among those who are socially the most marginal. For instance, in discussing Chicano gangs in Southern California, James Diego Vigil and John Long stress the importance of the *cholo* subculture—a subculture at the fringe of indigenous, Hispanic, and mainstream *Norte Americano* cultures.<sup>27</sup> Cholo subculture thus is defined as “marginal,” and “core participants” in Chicano gangs are “among the most marginalized of these cholo youths.”<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, informants who were core members in Navajo gangs were more marginal to both Navajo and Anglo culture than most other Navajo males. As hypothesized by Moffitt, these numbers displayed elevated levels of behaviors associated with conduct disorder. Both social marginalization and the nature and extent of antisocial behavior among core members are important in understanding the emergence of Navajo gangs.

Adolescent male groups array themselves along a continuum of group cohesiveness from spontaneous aggregations of young males through what Carl Taylor terms “organized/corporate gangs.”<sup>29</sup> Malcolm Klein, seeking some minimal criteria to distinguish gangs from other groups of youths, has identified “two useful signposts” to distinguish gangs from less formal “play groups:” (1) a “commitment to a criminal orientation” and (2) “the group’s self-recognition of its gang status.”<sup>30</sup> Navajo informants also recognize these minimal “signposts” as essential to gang mentality. Some locally designated gangs in the 1970s were relatively benign, while others were more organized and violent.

Informants applied the term *gang* primarily to groups of kin-related age mates residing in the same community. In addition, most of these named groups were viewed as prone to committing delinquent acts such as theft, vandalism, violence, and minor drug sales. However, as with many non-Navajo gangs, the primary focus of the first Navajo youth gangs appears to have been “partying” (or “hanging-around”).<sup>31</sup> Such emphasis differed little from other young and informal male drinking groups that were common during the years of the reservation livestock economy when most Navajos lived in scattered rural “camps.”<sup>32</sup> During these times, young men often gathered at ceremonies to gamble, drink, and meet women. Such groups were ephemeral, dissolving at the end of the ceremony as participants returned to live and work within their extended families.

## METHODS

The data for this paper are drawn from extensive interviews with about fifty Navajo men between ages twenty-one and forty-five. Most resided in reservation communities or a border town along the eastern portion of the Navajo

Reservation, although about a half dozen key informants resided in an agency town in the interior of the reservation. The informants constitute a sub-sample of the more than 1,000 individuals who participated in a case-control study of Navajo alcohol use. During the field interviews, several individuals mentioned the importance of their gang in their young drinking experiences. This subset of individuals was questioned at length about their gang involvement. A larger number of individuals was asked about gangs in schools and communities during adolescence. Through these informants we gained a substantial amount of qualitative data concerning the emergence of gangs in the two areas, as well as statements regarding gang activities and structures (or lack thereof).

Several caveats must be borne in mind. First, this is a preliminary survey. Researchers asked individuals if they knew of any gangs in the area when they were younger. The topic was rarely pursued if individuals responded negatively. Second, a number of people knew of gangs but had little contact with gang members or gang activities. Some could not provide gang names, while others provided estimates of gang size and activities.<sup>33</sup> Third, if a person had been affiliated with a gang in some fashion, we asked about gang activities and structure. In general, former members were open about their own involvement in the gang but were reluctant to name and discuss the activities of others. Since we encountered only about a dozen self-identified members, the data presented provide only a preliminary sketch of early gangs. Some interviewees minimized their experiences, while others exaggerated their gang involvement. Four members of one gang were interviewed<sup>34</sup> and provided relatively extensive—and basically consistent—information. Four other individuals who grew up in the same community also provided information regarding this gang and its members.

### NAVAJO COUNTRY AND CULTURE CHANGE

The Navajo, an Athabaskan-speaking people, began settling in the San Juan River drainage prior to 1500 and had settled throughout their current land holdings by the mid-nineteenth century. Subsistence patterns changed as they spread across the land. From the Pueblos they adopted horticulture and from the Spaniards they gained livestock through trading and occasional raiding.<sup>35</sup> By the 1800s sheep pastoralism was the mainstay of Navajo subsistence. A few Navajo—primarily young men seeking livestock to establish the nucleus of a flock—launched raids on neighboring groups (primarily Spanish settlements along the upper Rio Grande). Beginning in the late 1840s, the U.S. Army responded to these raids. Between 1863 and 1868, the army incarcerated most Navajo on a reservation at Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Under the terms of the Treaty of 1868, the Navajo returned to a portion of their homeland. As the Navajo population (and their flocks) rapidly expanded, the United States enlarged the reservation through executive orders and congressional acts.<sup>36</sup>

An extensive network of trading posts gradually spread across the territory, progressively involving Navajo pastoralists in market relations.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the federal government established administrative centers at several

locations across Navajo country, thus creating the nucleus for the growth of agency towns.

The agency town in each case was the seat of governmental buildings and activities, whether hospital, school, or administrative office, or some combination of these. As the place through which federal money flowed for expenditure and as the seat of administrative authority and operations they were sources of jobs for Indians. Consequently they attracted Indians who built houses at the edges of the areas where governmental buildings were placed.<sup>38</sup>

Agency towns grew slowly through most of the twentieth century. The vast majority of Navajos continued to live in dispersed, semi-nomadic, extended family groups (primarily matrilineal) focused on pastoral pursuits.<sup>39</sup> Children helped in these tasks and only a small proportion of them attended school.<sup>40</sup> As late as 1950, less than half of the school-age population attended school.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1930s, the federal government's livestock reduction program destroyed the Navajo pastoral economy and altered Navajo social structures.<sup>42</sup> World War II drew many Navajo further into the wage economy, but Navajo fortunes declined during the postwar recession. The government again intervened. Congress passed the Navajo Hopi Long-Range Rehabilitation Act in 1950 to expand schooling and develop reservation infrastructure.<sup>43</sup> By the late 1950s, nearly 90 percent of Navajo children were attending school, many in distant federal boarding schools.<sup>44</sup> Federal policy also encouraged the relocation of younger tribal members to distant urban areas.<sup>45</sup>

After the 1950s, portions of Navajo country witnessed a boom in natural resource exploitation (uranium, coal, gas, oil, and timber). The agency towns grew more rapidly over the ensuing decades as a result of increasing provisions from the government in the forms health, education, and welfare. Today about a quarter of the reservation's population resides in these administrative and service centers. Moreover, both the Indian and non-Indian populations of towns bordering the reservation also increased.<sup>46</sup>

By the 1970s there were at least four distinct types of communities in Navajo country: (1) rural communities where settlement remained dispersed and in which livestock pastoralism continued as a central activity (even if not remunerative); (2) a few densely settled communities of small family farms; (3) the agency towns; and (4) border towns (urban places near the reservation primarily populated and politically dominated by non-Navajos). While most Navajos continued to reside in rural communities, the other community types were growing and were conducive to the formation of youth gangs.

To understand the life chances of young Navajo males, several factors must be taken into consideration: (1) an end to raiding with the establishment of the reservation; (2) the waning of the livestock-based economy; (3) increased participation in the formal educational system; (4) the growth of the agency towns; and (5) increasing linkages between Navajos and urban areas (both border towns and distant cities). Changes in economic strategies, settlement patterns, and extended family residence arrangements during the past four decades have affected the extent and nature of kinship obliga-

tions.<sup>47</sup> For younger males, intergenerational cooperation declined as the livestock economy waned and participation in schooling increased. In densely settled areas, there was daily contact with a greater number of peers. Such shifts typically diminished the opportunity for adolescents to share in the daily lives of older relatives.<sup>48</sup>

The emergence of a youth culture, comprised of age mates among Navajos in agency towns, is reflected in kinship terminology changes—the recent and widespread use of the English term *cousin-brother* to designate a set of relatives. Kinship terminology generally responds to changes in the sexual division of labor, residence arrangements, and, more directly, descent systems.<sup>49</sup> The rapid diffusion of the English term *cousin-brother* appears to be the result of complex changes in education and residential arrangements. *Cousin-brother* seems to be an informal “age-grade” marker expressed in the kinship idiom.

Navajo language cousin terms are classified by anthropologists as an Iroquoian kin terminology—parallel cousins and siblings are referred to by the same term and cross cousins by another term.<sup>50</sup> Today the term *cousin-brother* has gained currency among both young adults and teenagers and makes sense as a means of reconciliation between the Iroquoian terminology and the Eskimoan terminology of American English. The kin included under the rubric *cousin-brother* varies depending upon the individual using the term—some young men include all male cousins and siblings, while others limit the term to siblings and parallel cousins of the first degree (consistent with the Iroquoian terminology). Still others extend the term to members of the same clan of approximately the same age, anyone of the same age and somehow related.<sup>51</sup> For most of those who use the term, there is no specific referent to a Navajo linguistic kinship category. Rather, it expresses the solidarity of age-mates and as such has become central to the way Navajos in juvenile groups conceive of their relationships to one another. Members of one’s gang frequently are denominated as “cousin-brothers” (and less frequently simply as “bros,” or brothers).

#### A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON NAVAJO MALE YOUTH GROUPS

In contrast to the elaborate *kinaalda*, giving public recognition to a female’s transition to adult status, male puberty is not marked with a rite of passage.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the Navajo, unlike neighboring Puebloans, lack sodalities for both males and females. There were no warrior societies that typified tribes of the Plains and Prairies.<sup>53</sup>

There are reasons to believe that young Navajo males long have held some values that are distinct from other members of Navajo society. Vogt suggests that the “raiding complex” of the early nineteenth century involved a tension between older men with large flocks (“ricos”) and “the young pobres who wanted raids to build up their herds of horses and sheep.”<sup>54</sup> Raiding parties generally were comprised of four to ten men who lived in a single locality<sup>55</sup> and were under the command of an experienced man with ritual, war-related knowledge.<sup>56</sup> The establishment of the reservation brought an end to raiding and, hence, to this group activity among Navajo men.

In the pastoral economy of the early reservation years, the ideal behavior for a young Navajo man was to marry and reside with, and work for, his in-laws.<sup>57</sup> Some Navajo youths, of course, did not conform to this ideal, but traveled about, usually alone, seeking out women and forms of excitement such as gambling and drinking.<sup>58</sup> In the course of these travels, young men often congregated at ceremonies to form ephemeral groups. In the late nineteenth century, such groups sometimes engaged in gambling, drinking, and fighting at ceremonies.<sup>59</sup>

Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, examining Navajo society in the waning years of the pastoral economy, proposed that acculturative pressures resulted in deviance and criminality among groups of younger Navajo males: "Thefts occur chiefly in areas under strongest white influence, especially at 'squaw dances' [Enemyway ceremonies] frequented by ne'er-do-well young men who are souls lost between the two cultures."<sup>60</sup> But these groups should not be confused with the loosely organized street corner gang model that emerges from early gang ethnography.<sup>61</sup> Navajo groups lacked continuity of membership from one event to the next. However, the roots of Navajo gangs may have some connection to these male associations at ceremonies. Some informants refer to young men acting like a gang at Enemyway ceremonies. A man who grew up in a rural community in the 1940s (herding sheep and playing with cousins and other relatives his own age) remembers that, at Enemyways, his group fought with rocks, sticks, and fists against boys from an adjacent community. Within each group the pre-adolescent to young teenage boys were connected both by bonds of kinship and residence in the same community. There were no reports of rivalries or organized fights extending beyond the specific socio-ceremonial occasion.

A strikingly similar description for the early 1970s from two informants involves older teenage boys in another rural pastoral community. A "north side" group would fight a "south side" group at Enemyway ceremonies. The "southsider" said his group was "like a gang" when they came together at Enemyways. They expected fights. The "northsider" recounted a 1973 fight at an Enemyway in another community: "It was like a gang fight." When he stepped in to defend one of his group who was being beaten, someone in the rival group "hit me with a bottle."

The behavior of such groups at Enemyways and other ceremonies, or, more recently, tribal fairs, often is described as gang-like because groups of related youthful males consorted together. However, the groups were not gang-like in their continuity and cohesion. The youths did not "hang around" together after the gathering or think of themselves as members of an enduring group.<sup>62</sup> Given the rural settlement pattern and subsistence pastoralism dominating Navajo life through the 1940s, there was no opportunity for enduring male youth groups, or gangs, to develop. Most youths worked for their families, herding sheep or working on small farm plots. Often these were solitary chores. There was little time to just hang around. There were few schools or other institutions where youths could congregate away from adult supervision on a consistent and sustained basis. Young men could get together at ceremonies or other events, but these were sporadic occasions.

By the 1950s the majority of school-age Navajos were, for the first time, receiving a formal education, often at off-reservation federal boarding schools.<sup>63</sup> Men attending these institutions generally recall the experience as regimented and disciplined. Sometimes there were problems between Navajo students and students from other tribes. Several informants who attended the boarding school at Ignacio on the Southern Ute Reservation recalled fights between Navajo and Ute students in the 1960s. Individuals who attended Albuquerque Indian School and Sherman Institute reported similar confrontations between Navajo students and members of other tribes. Again, there are indications of gang-like behavior from these reports. One man referred to himself as a member of a “gang of young punks” when he resided at the BIA dormitory in Albuquerque around 1960. He was twelve at the time. With three other Navajo youths at the dorm, he stole from stores—pencils, notebooks, and shoe polish (things he needed for school, he explained). Some of the other kids took things they “didn’t need ... like baloney.” Sometimes they “broke into” stores to take things.

The boarding school environment on the reservation also spawned gang-like groups of Navajos from different communities. In one central reservation high school, day students from an agency town banded together in fights with the boarding students from the rural pastoral community. Rural youths not only resided in the same community, but also lived among relatives, an extensive network of extended family members. In fact, in some contexts interviewees used the idiom of kinship rather than territory in referring to people of a rural locality. These groups were like gangs but were explicitly distinguished from more recently named gangs.

Robert Yazzie, chief justice of the Navajo Nation, recently wrote that “traditional” Navajo legal theory stressed the importance of such kinship relations. An offender “is someone who shows little regard for right relationships. That person has no respect for others. Navajos say of such a person, ‘He acts as if he has no relatives.’”<sup>64</sup>

The consequences of universal schooling for young Navajo males are difficult to assess. The boarding school experience and the resulting rivalry with other tribes (and with other Navajos from other communities) likely generated greater peer group cohesion. Moreover, some informants report that when young males returned home for the summers, they felt less responsibility to aid kin. Because of the decline in livestock pursuits, there was less need to do so. They could, and did, stay with relatives in agency or border towns, visit relatives in distant rural communities, or gather with school friends to attend rodeos, ceremonies, or simply to “party in the boonies.” A youthful male drinking “cohort” (sometimes with a common boarding school experience or ties of kinship) could form “more or less spontaneously at various events and places,” especially in agency and border towns.<sup>65</sup>

During and after the 1960s, increasing numbers of Navajo students attended on-reservation schools rather than off-reservation boarding institutions. Each agency town had a growing high school (often with a boarding component). Many rural students were bussed in to these schools. Along the eastern edge of the reservation, many farm community youth attended nearby off-reser-

vation public schools that had a predominately non-Navajo student body. It is in these environments—the agency towns and the border town schools—that the first self-identified Navajo gangs emerged in the early 1970s.

## THE ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTH GANGS

### **Early Gangs on the Eastern Edge of the Reservation**

The earliest references to self-identified gangs come from about 1970 in an agency town located near the eastern boundary of the reservation. In that year, one interviewee claims to have formed a gang, the Cruisers,<sup>66</sup> with about a dozen other schoolmates between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. Their primary activity consisted of drinking together at the town's drive-in theater on weekends. They shoplifted items "a bunch of times" to pay for liquor, which they got someone older to buy for them.

Other agency town interviewees of the same age cohort engaged in similar behavior but did not identify with a named gang. One person reported going around with about ten "other guys," stealing bicycles. They "hung around all over" the agency town. He recalled his group going to the drive-in to "beat on people for nothing" (for no particular reason), while the Cruiser recalled that his gang was involved primarily in fights with a rival gang called the Renegades, who were located in a border town. While the use of weapons, as well as the targets of violence, differentiated the Cruisers from the more informal group, the main difference between the report of the Cruiser and the non-gang interviewee is self-identification with a *named* group.<sup>67</sup>

Only the Cruiser reported named gangs as early as 1970. Group violence at the agency town drive-in did, however, figure into several other accounts given for the late 1960s and 1970s. In 1975, one individual became aware of gangs in the area when he saw a fight at the agency town drive-in.<sup>68</sup>

Names were obtained for the gangs operating in this agency town—Farm Boys, Spikes, Skulls, and Black Knights. The Metallics, at an adjacent farm community, and the Dead Boys, in a nearby rural community, also operated at this time. These gangs had fifteen to thirty-five members. They used guns, knives, chains, clubs, and other weapons in fights with rival gangs. One Skull reportedly shot himself in the calf with a .22 pistol at the school in 1980.

A non-gang member described the Skulls as a group of agency town high school students who were "from the reservation" (meaning rural reservation communities). Another former student would "just party [and] party with them," in the early 1980s but did not consider himself a member. The Skulls most frequently partied on the periphery of the agency town, drinking beer and smoking marijuana. There was little or no violence at these parties, but sometimes gang members ended up in the agency town jail for public intoxication. According to this informant, there were only fifteen or twenty Skulls and they did not have a leader. "They argued about that and nobody knew who the leader was," he commented.

The gangs of the 1970s, then, emerged in the densely populated agency towns and family farm communities. They were small and loosely structured.

Although associated primarily with areas, some noted that the core of the gang consisted of kin living in proximity to one another.

### **Gangs at an Interior Agency Town**

Data from the interior agency town reveal patterns similar to those from the eastern agency town area. A former core gang member, Paddy Lefty, gave relatively extensive descriptions of these gangs for the early 1980s. He identified six named groups (including one by a clan name and another by a family surname), and two unnamed groups (designated by the directions from the center of the agency town).<sup>69</sup> These gangs consisted mostly of relatives—especially cousins and brothers—who referred to each other as “Bro.” The gangs were relatively small and lacked internal organizational structure. He could not identify anyone who clearly acted as leader in any of these gangs. These were rival groups that sometimes fought each other with bats, two-by-fours, chains, and knives.

Many of the gang activities Lefty described involved “hang[ing] around,” drinking, and vandalism. Sometimes his gang would build a bonfire at a drinking party, but this was rare since fires would attract the attention of the police. Once they burned a large tree on the south side of town “to see what would happen.” Often they would bust glass bottles on the highway, again to see what would happen. They sprayed painted buildings, broke windows, and slashed car tires. The gang members obtained money by robbing people (mostly heavily intoxicated men), bootlegged alcohol, and sold small amounts of marijuana. The gang appears to have disintegrated by the late 1980s as members were incarcerated (including Lefty), left town to seek work (or excitement), or took on family responsibilities.<sup>70</sup>

It may be that interior agency town gangs emerged slightly later in the 1970s than did gangs in the eastern agency town and its environs. Gangs in both areas were rather small and composed mostly of relatives within an age cohort residing primarily in the agency town and nearby farm communities. The gangs associated with adjacent rural communities generally were active only in the school and town.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF CORE GANG MEMBERS**

Only in the roughest fashion is it possible to estimate the extent of gang membership in these two areas during the 1970s. The information provided by informants indicates that, at most, 15 percent of Navajo male youths in the two areas were affiliated, peripherally or minimally, with gangs. The actual proportion most likely was significantly less than half this figure.<sup>71</sup> A number of individuals identified as gang members during this period had died (most frequently in drinking- or violence-related accidents or incidents) or were in prison. Only four core gang members could be interviewed at length. This number is too small for a quantitative analysis, but the life histories of these four former gang members and comparisons with more peripheral members and hangers-on (also interviewed) provide important clues about gang

dynamics. The interviews indicate patterns consistent with Vigil's insights concerning marginalization and Moffitt's thesis that many adolescents mimic the relatively few with life-course-persistent antisocial personalities.

All four core gang members were from troubled families. All had fathers who were heavy drinkers and three of the four fathers were physically abusive to their wives and children. One father forced his sons to fight each other because he "didn't want us to be chickenshits, he didn't want us to be pussies." Another core gang member was punished severely by his father, but it was his older brothers who were most abusive—they used to drink and "beat the shit out of me." The fourth informant said his father was not violent but that he had abandoned his family, leaving "my mom [to] grow me up." His mother punished her son "for anything I might do ... every evening, every day" with "a big belt" or by "twist[ing] my ears." The parents of three of the gang members divorced. The father of the fourth had a second wife and children in a distant community.

None of these core gang members' families were well integrated into their communities. While only one informant came from an extremely poor family, the families of the other three resided away from their home communities (two off the reservation) for several years before the boys reached adolescence. Two of the boys lived for a time with their aunts and one was placed in off-reservation foster care for two years. Navajo was reported as the predominant language in the homes of all these youths. Although none of the families maintained flocks of sheep, two of the youths sometimes herded sheep for grandparents. In sum, these youths were reared on the "margins" of Navajo and white communities.

Prior to puberty and gang membership, all of these youths reported behaviors associated with conduct disorder. Prior to age twelve, all had taken items from stores and two had run away from home. By age thirteen all were frequently skipping school, three of the four had experienced their first sexual encounter, and all but one were already gang members. With gang involvement, delinquent behaviors increased. By age fourteen, all had smoked marijuana and had used at least one other mind-altering substance (usually glue, gas, or paint) and three of the four reported frequent fights and at least one arrest (the fourth was not arrested until age sixteen). By age sixteen, all reported engagement in vandalism and weapon use during fights. These self-reports show early antisocial behaviors which deepened with age and gang involvement.

Lefty, the interior agency town core gang member, described his entry into gang life. His older brother drank with the D.T.s. When Lefty was eleven this brother got him into the D.T.s. Lefty says that he soon assumed the role of "shanker" because "I wouldn't mind stabbing somebody" (and because he was one of the youngest gang members). He claimed he had stabbed several people. Mostly, however, the gang would "roll winos." Sometimes they would shoot dogs, "kill them just for the hell of it." He frequently skipped school and was sent to an off-reservation boarding school as a high school freshman. He was expelled for fighting, returned to the agency town in the mid-1980s, and renewed his gang-related activities. His conduct attracted the attention of social workers who eventually sent him to a state juvenile facility.

When Lefty returned to the agency town, he continued bootlegging, drinking, and marijuana use. The old gang, however, was no longer operating. Lefty was frequently arrested for fighting and for alcohol possession. He made four suicide attempts. At age twenty-two, after an assault arrest, he entered a residential treatment program because he grew “tired of drinking and smoking [marijuana]” and “wanted to make something of myself.”

### THE METALLICS: A CASE OF GANG FORMATION

In the eastern reservation area, interviews with several informants concerning the Metallica reconstructs gang formation and highlights the interplay among community, marginality, and personality. In the early 1970s, the three eldest Nance brothers formed the gang. These brothers were born in the 1950s in Southern California. The family returned to Mrs. Nance’s home community (a reservation farming area) in the late 1960s. The father was described by two of his sons as a heavy drinker who was abusive to the boys and to their mother. Moreover, he was frequently away from home, working, drinking, and engaging in extra-marital affairs.

These brothers were day students at a border town high school after the family returned from California. They gained a reputation for violence and toughness. They were familiar with Southern California gangs and self-consciously set out to create a gang on their own. Apparently, one of the first members was a “clan-brother” who eventually came to be a core member.

At home the brothers frequently fought with their father and younger siblings. One younger brother, Marlin, recalls that when his older brothers drank they “beat the shit out of me.” Marlin began shoplifting when he was eight. At thirteen he and some friends burglarized a trading post, taking jewelry and knives. They drank and sniffed glue under a nearby bridge and were apprehended for it. The next year, Marlin and some of these boys joined his older brothers’ gang. He stopped sniffing glue and began using marijuana. Later he started drinking alcohol. He helped his older brothers, two of whom had graduated from high school, and other gang members grow and sell marijuana. Marlin also sold a little of the peyote he stole from his father’s ceremonial supply. When Marlin was sixteen his father died suddenly of a stroke. “I had what I wanted,” Marlin recalled, referring to an end to his father’s abuse. Marlin began to engage in acts of vandalism with other gang members and occasionally fought with rival gangs. Mostly, however, the gang got together to drink.

This was consistent with JL’s memory. JL was a peripheral member of the gang. A year younger than Marlin, JL was connected to the Metallica primarily through his association with Marlin. When interviewed, JL said his mother was related to Mrs. Nance and while he was not sure of his own clan, he thought (incorrectly) it was the same as the Nance brothers. JL liked to drink and party with the Metallica but did not engage in as much delinquent behavior and was involved, he says, in only one gang fight. Unlike core members of gangs, JL had always lived in the community. His antisocial behaviors began at a later age and were less extensive. He began skipping school about twice a month and shoplifting when he was about thirteen or fourteen and began

using tobacco and drinking weekly at fifteen, generally only when was he was in the company of the Metallica. JL apparently modeled the behavior of the gang members. His family was more integrated into the community. His parents had more than one hundred head of livestock and his mother was a weaver. JL's father was an unskilled laborer who worked relatively consistently to help support the family (albeit with less income than the parents of the core gang members). There were problems in the home, however. His father drank heavily, although this did not affect his employment or cause him to be mean. When sober, however, JL's father occasionally would whip JL with bailing wire or a leather belt if he disobeyed instructions. JL's mother, on the other hand, would get "mean" and strike JL's father when she drank. JL's older half-brothers also drank and would get "mean," sometimes punching JL. Thus, JL's family situation may have contributed to his seeking out gang members as role models.

In the late 1970s several Metallica leaders killed a rival gang member from the agency town and were sent to prison. As a result, the gang began to dissolve. By the early 1980s, Marlin's two eldest brothers had gotten full-time jobs. JL drifted away from the gang, joined the Jobs Corps and then began working at temporary jobs. JL continued to drink heavily but with less aggressive groups of individuals.

Interviewees estimated that the Metallica included between twenty and thirty-five members.<sup>72</sup> The first members (in the early 1970s) were of approximately the same age and incorporated a somewhat younger group in the late 1970s. The gang was short-lived and lacked cohesion. The Nance brothers seemed to have fought each other as much as members of rival gangs. Marlin reported stabbing an older brother six times during a drunken brawl. Another probable gang member knifed and killed his own half-brother. Moreover, they did not party exclusively with one another or with their own relatives and neighbors (their "cousin-brothers"). In fact, members often partied with strangers and sometimes members of rival gangs. The murder of the rival gang member did not prevent Marlin from subsequently partying at the agency town with the victim's brother. One party ended when the victim's brother broke Marlin's jaw as "pay back" for the murder. This incident indicates that there was little structure to drinking groups, even so-called gangs. Individual group members drank with almost anyone and interest in any party involving alcohol seemed to prevail over group solidarity.

## DISCUSSION

During the years of the reservation livestock economy, from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s, Navajos lived in scattered rural camps. Young males sometimes gathered at ceremonies to meet women, gamble, and drink. However, such groups were ephemeral, dissolving with the termination of the ceremony. Young men spent most of their days with their mother's or in-laws' families.

The agency towns provide a striking contrast with the rural dispersed settlement patterns and the lifestyles associated with the livestock economy and

the off-reservation boarding schools. In the rural areas, youths only have sporadic contact with more than a handful of age-mates and often spend long hours alone, herding sheep. At the boarding schools, youths were under the (nearly) constant supervision of school personnel. In the towns, families do not care daily for large flocks of sheep and youths do not spend most of their time isolated from others of the same age. Youths are in frequent contact with one another, both at school and in other daily activities. Adult contact and supervision is more intermittent. It is in this context, we have argued, that a youth culture has emerged.

That Navajo gangs would first appear in these communities makes sense. Even groups drawing members from rural communities seem to have operated within the high schools of the agency and border towns. In the agency towns, hundreds of families live in relative proximity, some in housing projects. Youths attend high schools near their homes. They could easily get together to “party” away from adults and outside of the context of ceremonial gatherings. Most interviewees who spent their high school years in agency towns or communities reported partying in informal groups in the 1960s and 1970s. Agency towns have grown since the turn of the century and many young residents in the 1970s were second- or even third-generation agency town dwellers. Thus, they were surrounded by networks of vaguely defined kin. They often were unaware of the precise nature of these relations and, as is clear from informants’ comments, adolescent males emphasized connections to peers rather than to their place in the complex multi-generational kinship structure. The invention of a new kinship term, cousin-brother, marks this change.

Within this new context in the 1970s, gangs coalesced around core members who came from families that were marginal in the communities to which they returned after living off the reservation or in distant reservation communities. These marginalized Navajo youth at the core of gang formation provide a striking parallel to the importance of “choloization” and marginalization in discussions of Chicano gangs in Southern California.<sup>73</sup> In the case study of the Metallica, the Southern California parallels are especially interesting because the founding members were familiar with Chicano gangs.

These core members were not only socially marginal, but also more deviant at a younger age than peripheral gang members. Core members engaged in more acts of delinquency. They also report behaviors meeting the criteria for conduct disorder prior to their teen years. In later life, many core members continued to exhibit many antisocial behaviors. Peripheral members, on the other hand, report fewer antisocial behaviors. These type of behaviors tended to begin later in life, generally corresponding to the time they joined in gang activities. Such data suggest that social mimicry is significant, as peripheral members pattern their behavior to follow the model of their more deviant core member cousin-brothers.

But early Navajo gangs also have roots in the ephemeral drinking groups of young males that spontaneously emerged at ceremonies in previous decades. Drinking parties that sometimes turn violent are not a facet of Navajo life limited to gang parties since the 1970s. Fist fights, knifings, and occasional shootings occur among the spontaneous partying groups as well as

among the gangsters. In fact, no interviewee provided a detailed description of a well-organized gang fight and only a few cases of explicitly gang-related retaliatory attacks were reported. While there may be some undiscovered cases, the lack of information indicates that gang violence was not a central focus of gang identity or activity.

How, then, can we define groups such as the Metallicas as gangs? It appears to be limited to self-identification and self-ascription. Indeed, it seems that the gang members of the 1970s and early 1980s had moved only a small step beyond the spontaneous party group by providing a name to a set of age-mates who are related through clanship and community and who party frequently together. Some sets of cousin-brothers called themselves a gang, in part to set themselves apart from rivals. Other sets of cousin-brothers, engaging in quite similar activities, never conceived of themselves in this way.

The transition from youth to man is difficult for many Navajos given the paucity of local jobs, the low economic status of many families, and the frequently voiced concerns regarding the maintainance of Navajo tradition. While a number of Navajo youths may become temporary hell-raisers, only a very few, generally the most marginalized individuals—those from abusive or disrupted families living in densely settled communities and attending local schools—become core gang members. The gangs attracted a somewhat larger set of peripheral members, apparently “adolescent-limited” delinquents, who modeled the behavior of core members.

Many core members apparently have continued to persist in antisocial acts. Two of the four gang core members interviewed had served prison terms, while the other two were arrested for spousal abuse or disorderly conduct within the two years prior to the interview. Other reputed core members died in accidents or fights, usually involving alcohol. But most former gang members, especially those peripherally involved, “aged-out” of the gang. They follow the life-course pattern that Thomas Hill described as “hell raiser” to “family man” among young Indian men (unaffiliated with gangs) in Sioux City, Iowa, in the 1970s.<sup>74</sup>

Peripheral gang members appear to have differed little in their commitment to antisocial behaviors from males who, prior to the 1970s, frequented ceremonies and other events in dispersed rural communities. However, in the more densely settled communities of the 1970s, these youths were exposed more consistently to more deviant youths who formed delinquent gangs. These core gang members apparently looked to off-reservation models, especially Southern California Chicano gangs, to construct loosely organized and named gangs. Although the core members were few in number, they attracted satellite members among peers who were neighbors and kin.

In Navajo country, “the single leading cause of death . . . is accidents.”<sup>75</sup> But rates vary by region and social factors. “Different combinations of employment and domestic and settlement characteristics produce variations in rates and causes of mortality that can be fully explicated only if one understands the local scene.”<sup>76</sup> This paper explores one aspect of the local scene in an agency town.

Significantly, “crude mortality is highest in the[se] least remote, most densely settled areas.”<sup>77</sup> The social dynamics that have led to the formation of

youth gangs in Navajo country help in understanding why this may be so. Navajo gang members exhibit a range of risk-taking behaviors and patterns of alcohol and drug use that significantly contribute to injury-related mortality. Although gang members constitute a very small minority of Navajo youth, drinking parties, assaults, and hell-raising are more widely distributed. Gang behaviors, then, provide an extreme example of the behaviors that generally contribute to leading causes of mortality among young Navajo men.

Since the 1970s, Navajo gangs reputedly have become more common, more institutionalized and more closely connected with non-Indian gangs off the reservation.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the antisocial behavior of gang members may be increasingly imitated by other youth in the most densely settled and rapidly growing Navajo communities. Thus, gangs have been added to the repertoire of behavior for some youths making the difficult transition to adulthood within the subordinate socioeconomic conditions that prevail in Navajo country.

Despite the historically limited nature of the data, there may be some important implications for gang prevention policy within the Navajo Nation today. First, not all self-identified gang members are alike. The degree of antisocial personality disorder may distinguish core members from peripheral members. This distinction may aid in developing different types of intervention for different types of gang members. Secondly, some gangs may still be little more than street-corner groups while others have hardened. The former may be more amenable to the traditional peacemaking interventions suggested by Chief Justice Yazzie. Third, the socio-demographic conditions, especially in agency towns and within the structure of limited economic opportunities, should be addressed as an element in gang prevention. It may be that a small number of antisocial individuals will emerge in any community. Given contemporary circumstances, young males with such problems seem to provide the core in the process of gang formation. To the degree that conditions for youths can be improved generally, mimicry of core members should diminish. Thus, gang prevention is not simply, or even fundamentally, a law enforcement issue. It is a public health issue in the broadest sense.

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#### NOTES

1. Irving A. Spergel, *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8, 43–54; Malcolm W. Klein, *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 31–36.

2. Bill Donovan, "Reservation Teens Turn to Youth Groups," *The Arizona Republic* 20 (January 1997); Leslie Linthicum, "Surge of Violence on the Reservation: Gang-Scarred Housing Project Mirrors Growing Menace in Navajo Life," *Albuquerque Journal* 4 (February 1996); Carol Sowers, "Gang Members Stake Out Reservation Turf," *The Arizona Republic* (February 25, 1995).
3. Cheryl Howard, *Navajo Tribal Demography, 1983-1986: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 116.
4. *Ibid.*, 185 (Howard includes deaths from accidents, suicide, and homicide under the term "injury mortality").
5. Martin Avery, "Prepared Written Statement," On Behalf of the Navajo Nation Before the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Appropriations..., Federal News Service, April 17, 1997.
6. Troy Armstrong and Barbara Mendenhall, "On-Reservation vs. Off-Reservation Factors in the Development of Navajo Youth Gangs," Western Social Science Association, Thirty-ninth Annual Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico Criminal Justice Section (April 1997).
7. Stephen J. Kunitz, *Disease Change and the Role of Medicine: The Navajo Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 111. In the mid-1980s, injuries accounted for 85 percent of all deaths for Navajo males between ages fifteen and twenty-four. Howard, *Navajo Tribal Demography*, 131.
8. Sowers, "Gang Members Stake Out Reservation Turf."
9. Alice Schlegel and Herbert Barry III, *Adolescence: An Anthropological Inquiry* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); Martin Orans, *Not Even Wrong: Margaret Mead, Derek Freeman, and the Samoans* (Novato: Chandler and Sharp Publishers, 1996); Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making of an Anthropological Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (New York: Morrow, 1928).
10. Kunitz, *Disease Change and the Role of Medicine*, 66, 99-111; Howard, *Navajo Tribal Demography*, 128-135.
11. Kunitz, *Disease Change and the Role of Medicine*, 99, 103; A. R. Omran and B. Loughlin, "Epidemiologic Studies of Accidents Among Navajo Indians," *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association* 55 (1972): 1-22.
12. Terrie Moffitt, "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy," *Psychological Review* 100 (1993): 674-701. Moffitt develops her model from a survey of existing literature and from her own empirical work in New Zealand. Antisocial personality disorder (ASP) is defined in the DSM-IV as, "a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others occurring since age 15 years"; its diagnosis requires "evidence of conduct disorder with onset prior to age 15 years." American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic Criteria from DSM-IV* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 279-280. Conduct disorder is defined by the violation of the rights of others but it may also involve violation of "major age-appropriate societal norms or rules." *Ibid.*, 66. Thus, conduct disorder involves some level of antisocial behavior. The type of conduct disorder is determined by whether the onset is before or after age ten. *Ibid.*, 67.
13. Moffitt, "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy," 674.
14. *Ibid.*, 679-685.
15. *Ibid.*, 675-77.

16. Ibid., 686.
17. Ibid., 689.
18. Julian Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955).
19. Moffitt, "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy," 689.
20. Ibid., 691.
21. Jerrold E. Levy, Stephen J. Kunitz, and Michael Everett, "Navajo Criminal Homicide," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 25 (1969): 124–152.
22. Ibid., 134.
23. Moffitt, "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy," 686, 690.
24. Walter B. Miller, "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," *The Journal of Social Issues* 14 (1958): 5–19.
25. Klein, *The American Street Gang*, 29; James Diego Vigil, "Cholos and Gangs: Culture Change and Street Youth in Los Angeles," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990), 124.
26. James Diego Vigil and John M. Long, "Emic and Etic Perspectives on Gang Culture: The Chicano Case," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990), 56.
27. Ibid., 56
28. Ibid., 61. Vigil identifies a *cholo* as "an indigenous person who is halfway acculturated to Spanish ways; in short a person marginal to both the original and the more recent European culture." Vigil, "Cholos and Gangs: Culture Change and Street Youth in Los Angeles," 116. He adds that "when generational and status change is throttled, cholization is intensified." Ibid., 121. This view echoes Thrasher's classic comments on the importance of a "cultural frontier" in the genesis of gangs. Frederic M. Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, 2d rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 217–19.
29. Carl S. Taylor, "Gang Imperialism," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990), 108; Carl S. Taylor, *Dangerous Society* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1990), 7–8.
30. Klein, *The American Street Gang*, 30.
31. Ibid., 29 (for gangs generally); and Vigil and Long, "Emic and Etic Perspectives on Gang Culture: The Chicano Case," 61 (for southern California Chicano gangs).
32. Martin Topper, "Navajo 'Alcoholism': Drinking, Alcohol Abuse, and Treatment in a Changing Cultural Environment," in *The American Experience with Alcohol: Contrasting Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Linda A. Bennett and Genevieve M. Ames (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), 235.
33. This fact is of some interest because it indicates that, at times, self-identified gangs seem to have had little impact on the school or community environment.
34. This gang, designated the Metallica, was the gang for which the greatest amount of information was obtained and is described in some detail in a later section.
35. Garrick Bailey and Roberta Glenn Bailey, *A History of the Navajos: The Reservation Years* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1986), 18.
36. Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Navajo Indians and Federal Indian Policy: 1900–1935* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968), 16–36.

37. Frank McNitt, *The Indian Traders* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).
38. Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962), 468.
39. Eric Henderson, "Social Organization and Seasonal Migrations among the Navajo," *The Kiva* 48 (1983): 279–306.
40. Dorothea Leighton and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Children of the People: The Navaho Individual and his Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947).
41. Denis F. Johnston, "An Analysis of Sources of Information on the Population of the Navaho," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 197 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966): 48–51.
42. Eric Henderson, "Navajo Livestock Wealth and the Effects of the Stock Reduction Program of the 1930s," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45 (1989): 379–403.
43. Stephen J. Kunitz, *Disease Change and the Role of Medicine: The Navajo Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 41–42.
44. Hildegard Thompson, *The Navajos' Long Walk for Education* (Tsaile: Navajo Community College Press, 1975), 127, 137.
45. Eric Henderson and Jerrold E. Levy, "Survey of Navajo Community Studies: 1936–1974," *Lake Powell Research Project Bulletin* Number 6 (Los Angeles: Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics, University of California, Los Angeles, 1975), 101–113.
46. Navajo economic development is documented in Philip Reno, *Mother Earth, Father Sky and Economic Development: Navajo Resources and Their Use* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981). Data on the growth of agency towns and border towns is drawn from United States decennial census volumes for Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.
47. Leighton and Kluckhohn wrote that "the first and most important lessons which the [Navajo] child learns about human relationships are the approved ways of dealing with various classes of relatives." Leighton and Kluckhohn, *Children of the People*, 44. In the early 1940s, at the agency town of Shiprock, they noted more emphasis on the biological (nuclear) family but in rural communities the extended family was emphasized. *Ibid.*, 126. Shiprock children frequently mentioned parents in response to attitudinal questions but rural children commonly mentioned a wider array of relatives. *Ibid.*, 165–167.
48. Moffitt, "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy," 691.
49. George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1949), 182–83; Harold Driver, *Indians of North America*, 2d. rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 259–68.
50. "The Iroquois terminological system is bilateral in character and is only partially consistent with" unilineal clan groups. Fred Eggan, *The American Indian: Perspectives for the Study of Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 8. Nearly thirty years ago, Aberle showed that historical changes in Navajo economic adaptations "required significant modifications in kinship structure." He noted that some kin term variations suggested that "a shift toward Hawaiian cousin terms ... may be under way." David F. Aberle, "Navaho," in *Matrilineal Kinship*, eds. David M. Schneider and Kathleen Gough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 101,

172–75. In the 1970s, when we conducted fieldwork in western rural communities and an agency town, bilingual adults could provide extensive kinship terminologies with ease, but bilingual teenagers sometimes expressed confusion over Navajo terms for collaterals and in-laws. These teenagers were, however, quite familiar with English terms for these relatives. Through the early 1980s we did not learn of any neologisms for kin, and specifically never heard the term *cousin-brother*.

51. A Navajo educator involved in bilingual and multicultural education expressed opposition to the use of the term *cousin-brother*—"I just hate it," she commented. She thought those using the term didn't know what they were talking about or to whom they referred. The use of the term *bro* may be expanding with greater exposure to popular media (such as television and films), participation in pan-Indian events, and connections with urban dwelling family and friends.

52. Joseph G. Jorgensen, *Western Indians* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1980), 227, 497–98.

53. Robert H. Lowie, *Indians of the Plains* (New York: The American Museum of Natural History, 1954), 106–10.

54. Evon Vogt, "The Navaho," in *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change*, ed. E. H. Spicer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 306.

55. W. W. Hill, *Navaho Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Publications in Anthropology, Number 5, 1936), 4.

56. *Ibid.*, 6–7.

57. Aberle, "Navaho," 146–48, 163.

58. These are behaviors that Miller viewed as prime forms of street gang activities. Miller, "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," 11.

59. Walter Dyk, ed., *Son of Old Man Hat* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967 [1938]), 140–142; Walter Dyk, ed., *A Navaho Autobiography*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, Number 8 (New York: Viking Fund, 1947), 44–45, 54; Left Handed, *Left Handed: A Navajo Autobiography*, eds. Walter and Ruth Dyk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 306.

60. Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, *The Navaho*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974 [1946]), 298.

61. See Thrasher, *The Gang*; and William F. Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947).

62. See Klein, *The American Street Gang*, 21.

63. Robert W. Young, compiler, *The Navajo Yearbook* (Window Rock: Navajo Agency, 1961), 20–47.

64. Robert Yazzie, "The Navajo Response to Crime," *Justice as Healing* 3:2 (Summer 1998), from a speech, "Indians, Ant Hills and Stereotypes," delivered at the National Symposium on Sentencing: The Judicial Response to Crime at the American Judicature Society in San Diego, California on November 2–3, 1997. Describing a case that may have implications for male gang activity, Yazzie writes:

In one case, where a non-Indian court intervened and disrupted the negotiations, the families of three young men who raped a young Navajo woman were about to transfer twenty-one head of cows to the victim's family. A state court had jurisdiction, and it refused to enforce the agreement. The woman was shamed by not having a public symbol of her innocence delivered to her home and she got nothing. If the

traditional arrangement had been followed, the young men would have been kept on very strict probation by their own families. (I do not know what finally happened.)

65. Topper, "Navajo 'Alcoholism': Drinking, Alcohol Abuse, and Treatment in a Changing Cultural Environment," 236.

66. This is a pseudonym. We have used pseudonyms for all individuals and for those gangs that are discussed in some detail. We believe that all of the gangs named ceased to exist well before 1990. We have retained actual gang names, unless otherwise noted, for gangs that are merely mentioned in passing. The actual gang names may be of some intrinsic interest. The names reflect, to some degree, what the youths who formed the gangs saw as appropriate monikers. Almost none of the gang names, so far as we can tell or were told, were adopted directly from off-reservation sources. This situation has apparently changed dramatically in recent years. See Armstrong and Mendenhall, "On-Reservation vs. Off-Reservation Factors in the Development of Navajo Youth Gangs."

67. Both individuals were interviewed about two decades after the events recalled and both were heavy drinkers, had traveled extensively, and were marginally integrated into contemporary agency town society. The Cruiser, especially, seemed to engage in "puffery" and he may have exaggerated the "ganglike" nature of rivalries and violence of his youth to conform it with more contemporary popular media views of gangs.

68. This is consistent with statements by several others concerning gang activity in the agency town in the mid-1970s. Some of those interviewed explicitly denied that gangs existed at this time.

69. He identified the gangs as his gang, the D.T.s (a pseudonym), the Southsiders (also known as SSRs), the LR.s (who lived at "low rent" housing), the "Bloods" (the only instance that we have of a gang name known to be cognate with a well-known off-reservation gang but which was not affiliated with that well-known Southern California gang), the M\_\_ (a clan name) Boys, and the J\_ (a family surname) Boys (both from an adjacent rural community), and two gangs that did not have names (one composed of "northsiders" and another composed of "westsiders" in the agency town). A second interviewee who lived in this agency town mentioned only the SSRs and LR.s. He "ran with" (as a peripheral member) the LR.s while in high school in the late 1970s. They would party, drinking whiskey and Budweiser, pass out, wake up, and party some more. He noted that they never drank wine "because of the stigma."

70. Another agency town interviewee confirmed the basic outline of gang activity. He also observed that in the mid-1970s his sister belonged to a small, all-girl gang at the interior agency town high school, but he knew little about the gang. Although the data on the gang scene for the interior agency town are more limited, they conform broadly to data from the eastern area.

71. If informants provided a relatively complete inventory of the gangs of the 1970s and the early 1980s in the two communities and if their rather consistent estimates of the number of gang members are accurate (that gangs had about fifteen to thirty-five members), then there were fewer than 350 gang members in the two communities. It is probable that the number was much lower in any one year. In 1980 the total Navajo population of the two areas was more than 18,000. Males between ten and

nineteen, the ages that span the age range of the gang members, account for about 12 to 13 percent of the Navajo population. Thus, perhaps 10 to 15 percent of Navajo male youths were affiliated to some degree with gangs in the 1970s.

72. There was an understandable reluctance to give names and so the characteristics of and relationships among members cannot be determined with precision.

73. Vigil and Long, "Emic and Etic Perspectives on Gang Culture: The Chicano Case," 56; Vigil, "Cholos and Gangs: Culture Change and Street Youth in Los Angeles," 121.

74. Thomas W. Hill, "From Hell-Raiser to Family Man," in *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, 2d ed., eds. James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974).

75. Stephen J. Kunitz, *Disease and Social Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 156.

76. *Ibid.*, 159.

77. *Ibid.*, 156.

78. Armstrong and Mendenhall, "On-Reservation vs. Off-Reservation Factors in the Development of Navajo Youth Gangs."