Updated Gang Assessment

June 2014

Community Perceptions

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Contents

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The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model suggest that no picture of a community's gang problem would be complete without the views of the community. The primary reason for gathering this type of information is to determine how community members view gang activity and how they believe that gangs affect the community.

City of Durham's 2013 Resident Survey

For purposes of this report, the Gang Reduction Strategy Steering Committee requested that two questions be added to the annual City of Durham's 2013 Resident Survey. Representatives from the City Manager's office and the Durham Police Department crafted the tow questions, neither of which had appeared on previous Resident Surveys.

The Resident Survey was distributed and managed by the ETC Institute, a national leader in market research for local government organizations, located in Olathe, Kansas. The purpose of the annual survey is to help determine priorities for the community as part of the city's ongoing planning process.

The number of completed surveys was 413, which amounted to a 34% response rate. Surveys were distributed by mail and phone to a randomly selected sample of households and results have a 95% confidence level with a + or − 4.8% overall margin of error. The two questions submitted by the Steering Committee were answered as follows:

Q. *Do you think gangs are a problem in Durham?*
> *Yes – 78%*
> *No – 17%*
> *Not provided – 5%*

Q. *Why do you think gangs are a problem in Durham? (By percentage of respondents who felt that gangs were a problem in Durham – multiple selections allowed)*
> *Media reports – 66%*
> *Word of mouth – 55%*
> *Personal experience/knowledge – 31%*

Based on responses to the first question, it appears that just over three-fourths of Durham residents believe that gangs do exist in Durham and that these gangs present problems to the

community. There was no opportunity on the survey to specify exactly what types of problems gangs in Durham cause.[1]

The second question gives some indication of where community residents get their information about gangs. Based on responses (with multiple responses being allowed), it appears that two-thirds of Durham residents find out about gangs and gang activities through the media while half of the residents find out through word of mouth. Just under a third indicated that personal experience/knowledge leads them to believe gangs are a problem in Durham.

Impact of the Media

The fact that many Durham residents get their information on gang activity from the media is not unusual. Only a small percentage of Durham residents are direct victims of crime perpetrated by a validated gang member (aggravated assault, for example) so far more residents can be expected to gain their knowledge through the media or word of mouth than through personal experience.

Deborah Lamm Weisel and James C. (Buddy) Howell, authors of the first Durham Comprehensive Gang Assessment, reported in 2007 that *"On a day to day basis, it is the local media that offer the dominate source of information and shape perceptions about crime and gang problems in Durham. Our observation of media coverage in Durham was that policymakers were highly concerned about coverage and interpretation by local media"*[2]

Weisel and Howell found it unusual that no reporters from Durham sought to gather information during the year-long assessment process. Also unusual was that Durham reporters did not attempt to verify the findings for validity, and reported counts of gang members that were in contrast to those recorded by the Durham Police Department and the Durham County Sheriff's Office.

At the time of the first assessment (2007) media coverage of gang crimes in Durham typically included names of individual gangs. This practice increased the notoriety of gangs and individuals (further emboldening them), and provoked fear among citizens. A review of print media that covers Durham (Herald Sun/News and Observer) indicates that, at least for the past

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[1] In another survey, discussed later in this section, community residents indicate specifically what types of problems are caused by gang activity

[2] Deborah Lamm Weisel and James C. (Buddy) Howell; Comprehensive Gang Assessment – A Report to the Durham Police Department and Durham County Sheriff's Office (September 2007, revised November 2007)

three years, names of individual gangs have not been included in any articles about gang crime or gang activity.

There has been a steady drop on the number of gang related articles, published in North Carolina between 2003 and 2013, that reference gangs in Durham. Research by Ellen Paddock[3] Indicates the percentage of Durham-focused articles was around 50% ten years ago, but hovers around only 8% currently, as illustrated by the following table.[4]

Table C1 – Articles published on gangs and gang activity in North Carolina, 2003 - 2013

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (as of 7/23)
Total # gang-related articles published in NC	37	36	90	58	64	84	52	41	97	85	40
Durham	17	20	26	15	13	8	4	1	7	7	3
% of Total articles about gangs in Durham	45.95%	55.55%	28.9%	25.86%	20.31%	9.52%	7.69%	2.04%	7.21%	8.24%	7.5%
Statewide			6	1	2	6					
Mecklenburg Co., Charlotte	8	5	14	10	7	10	4	11	11	9	3
Cumberland Co., Fayetteville Fort Bragg			1			2		1	3	4	3
Guilford Co., Greensboro	5	2	1	1	10	9	6	3	4	3	
Wake Co., Raleigh	1	2	20	12	5	18	4	3	8	4	1
New Hanover Co., Wilmington	1		1		1	2	1	1	5	7	4
Forsyth Co., Winston-Salem	1	1		1		2		2	2	3	

Table 6: Articles about gangs and gang activity in North Carolina. Source: http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Gang-Related-News?st=NC

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[3] Ellen Paddock is currently a Duke University Public Policy student; Ellen served as an intern at the Criminal Justice Resource Center in the summer of 2013
[4] This table was taken from an honors thesis (Sanford School of Public Policy – Duke University) written by Ellen Paddock, entitled *"Real G's and Wannabes – Policy Implications of the Changing Gang Dynamics in Durham, North Carolina"* (December 2013)

GRS Community Resident Survey (Summer 2013)

There were no funds available for a scientific survey of Durham residents specifically on gang issues, so an informal and non-scientific survey was developed. Questions on the survey were crafted with assistance from the National Gang Center.

The Internet-based survey was opened on June 21, 2013 and closed on August 13, 2013. In order to cast a wide net for responses, a link to the survey was posted on the Durham County website and was provided to all Durham neighborhood list serves and Partners Against Crime (PAC) list serves. The link was also published in the Durham Herald Sun newspaper. These efforts resulted in 749 survey responses.

Respondents were 58% female and 42% male. The ethnicity of respondents was 61% white/Caucasian, 29% black/African American and 10% of other races.

Age of survey respondents is shown in the following table:

Table C2 – Age of Survey Respondents

Age Range	Respondents (number)	Respondents (percentage)
18 – 24	44	5.9%
25 – 34	180	24.0%
35 – 44	195	26.0%
45 – 54	159	21.2%
55 – 64	131	17.5%
65 – 74	34	4.5%
75 or older	6	1.0%

Location of survey respondents (based on police district) corresponded rather closely with the percentage of population in each district, as shown in the table below.

Table C3 – Survey respondents per police district

Police District	Percentage of city's population	Percentage of survey respondents
1	16%	15%
2	26%	34%
3	30%	26%
4	26%	23%
5	2%	2%

Survey respondents were asked "Do you feel safer in Durham than you did three years ago?" 43 percent (324) indicated "yes", 46 percent (344) indicated "no" and 11 percent (81) indicated that they had lived in Durham less than three years at the time they took the survey.

The survey asked "What are the top three problems that are caused by gangs in Durham?" Of the 749 returned surveys, 695 respondents answered this question. Respondents were given eight options to choose from, with a text box to write in additional concerns. Multiple (3) responses were allowed, so the tally of results is greater than 695. The table below displays answer results.

Table C4 – Top Three Problems Caused by Gangs in Durham

Answer Choices	Respondents (number)	Respondents (percentage)
Increase in violent crimes	537	77.2%
Increase in drug crimes	393	56.6%
Increase in weapons crimes	375	54.0%
Increase fear for safety in the community	371	53.4%
School disruption	147	21.1%
Public nuisance	95	13.7%
Fighting	77	11.1%
Family disruption	67	9.6%

Based on the results of this unscientific survey, it appears that many Durham residents equate gang activity with violent crime. More than half of the respondents also see gangs involved in drug crimes and weapon crimes, and more than half also blame gangs for increased fear for safety in the community. Forty five respondents also inserted written comments to the question, and several mentioned increased incarceration of youth. As one respondent wrote "They get our young people in trouble, so they end up in jail".

Survey respondents were then asked to select the top three reasons why they believe gang activity exists in Durham. Of the 749 returned surveys, 697 respondents answered this question. Respondents were given nine options to choose from, with a text box to write in additional concerns. Multiple (3) responses were allowed, so the tally of results is greater than 697. The table below displays answer results.

Table C5 – Top Three Reasons Why Gangs Exist in Durham

Answer Choices	Respondents (number)	Respondents (percentage)
Poverty	439	63.0%
Family problems	349	50.1%
Unemployment	268	38.5%
Facilitation of drug trade	245	35.1%
Lack of pro-social activities	208	29.8%
Gang members migrated from other areas	206	29.6%
School problems	151	21.7%
Need for protection	115	16.5%
Law enforcement labeling	63	9.0%

Sixty six respondents provided written comments to the question. Many of these comments mentioned family issues – especially the lack of a strong father figure. One comments said "fathers leaving or not staying with their family, and women allow it to repeat. The boy's feeling of belonging, acceptance and career development is gained by joining a gang".

The survey asked respondents to pick the top three things they believed should be done about gangs and gang activity in Durham. Of the 749 returned surveys, 702 respondents answered this question. Respondents were given nine options to choose from, with a text box to write in additional concerns. Multiple (3) responses were allowed, so the tally of results is greater than 702. The table below displays answer results.

Table C6 – Top Three Things that Should Be Done About Gangs and Gang Activity in Durham

Answer Choices	Respondents (number)	Respondents (percentage)
Increased number of pro-social activities for youth	385	54.8%
Increased parental involvement	352	50.1%
Improve the local school system	306	43.6%
Involve community or faith-based groups	266	37.9%
Increased law enforcement	228	32.5%
Better access to mental health services	170	24.2%
Clean up of dilapidated properties	155	22.1%
Increased involvement of the court system	128	18.2%
Increased involvement of City/County government	102	14.5%

Based on the survey responses, it appears that many Durham residents believe an increase in pro-social activities, coupled with increased parental involvement will reduce the level of gang activity. The responses also indicate that there is room for improvement in the local school system.

The survey listed six ongoing activities currently in place to address gangs, and asked respondents whether they were familiar with them. All of the survey respondents (749) replied to this question, and the results are shown in the table below. Multiple responses were allowed.

Table C7 – Familiarity with Activities Implemented to Address Gangs

Answer Choices	Respondents (number)	Respondents (percentage)
Not familiar with any of these activities	470	62.8%
Gang Resistance and Education Training (G.R.E.A.T.) classes	206	27.5%
Project BUILD	110	14.7%
Gang Reduction Steering Committee	85	11.4%
Funding of a special prosecutor for gang court cases	62	8.3%
Comprehensive Gang Model	42	5.6%
Violent offender call-ins	38	5.1%

Based on the responses, it is evident that many Durham residents are not aware of efforts in the community (outside of direct law enforcement efforts) to address gangs and gang activity.

Finally, survey takers were asked to rate the effectiveness of activities implemented in Durham to address gangs. All of the survey respondents (749) replied to this question, and the results are shown in the table below.

Table C8 – Effectiveness of Activities Implemented in Durham to Address Gangs

Answer Choices	Respondents (number)	Respondents (percentage)
I am not aware of any activities implemented to address gangs	401	53.6%
Somewhat effective, I can see some difference in certain areas	170	22.7%
Not very effective, I see the effort but very few results	93	12.4%
Not effective, the gang problem is continually getting worse	61	8.1%
Very effective, I see a noticeable difference	24	3.2%

Based on the responses, it is again apparent that many Durham residents are not aware of the activities implemented to address gangs and gang activity in Durham. Of those who are aware of efforts, most say that the efforts are somewhat effective, and difference can be observed in some areas.

Gang-Involved Youth Perceptions

There are some built-in challenges with gathering the perceptions of gang-involved youth.

The first challenge is attempting to account for the full range of gang associations and where to draw the line as to whether the youth is "gang-involved". Is the involvement an active role with participation in felony offenses or delinquent acts, or is the involvement more on the periphery, mainly consisting of associating and spending time with hardened gang members? Is one gang-involved if close family members are in the gang? What about those with former gang associations no longer claimed? There is no precise operational definition for "gang-involved" so some uncertainty can be expected.

Other challenges include finding a setting where the youth feels comfortable providing information, and establishing trust between those asking and answering the questions.

A fledgling effort is underway to interview gang-involved youth in Durham. Most of these interviews have been conducted by Project BUILD staff, using a Survey Monkey instrument with questions recommended by the National Gang Center. Although few in number at the time of this writing, it is hoped that these surveys are conducted on a continual basis so a larger sample can be examined.

Because of the small sample (16), it is difficult to draw firm conclusions at this point in the project. There are some interesting findings and recurring themes so far, including:

- 12 of 16 have a family member who is, or has been, in a gang
- 12 of 16 have been suspended from school at least once
- 8 of 16 said if they wanted a handgun, it would be easy to get one
- When asked what should be done about gangs in Durham, 2 respondents suggested getting rid of the guns or making guns less accessible

Summary

The primary reason for this section is to determine how community members view gang activity and how they believe that gangs affect the community. Parents, community residents and gang members themselves may have very different perspectives on the impact of gangs on their community. The information gathered will be useful as gang reductions plans develop.