

An Assessment of Gang Activity in Elk City, Oklahoma

A Report Developed for the
Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention
Rural Gang Initiative

Prepared by the
Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center
Oklahoma Statistical Analysis Center
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Background and Introduction.	6
Demographics.	7
Priority Problems.	9
Program Targets.	26
Available Resources.	34
Appendix A: Data Questions.	1
Appendix B: Research Design	35

Executive Summary

Background - The Rural Gang Initiative and the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) *Comprehensive Gang Model* was developed for use in urban and suburban communities to reduce youth gang crime, particularly violence. The latest research indicates an increase of youth gangs in rural areas. In response, OJJDP undertook the Rural Gang Initiative (RGI) in 1998, to adapt the Comprehensive Gang Model for use in rural communities. Elk City, Oklahoma, was one of four communities selected to attempt to adapt the model to a rural setting.

Two tasks were required during the initial *planning* year. The Model presumes that the community has acknowledged the problem. The first task was to assess and analyze the community's gang situation. This process began with data collection establishing the domain and populations affected or involved in gang activity, i.e., gang member, at-risk individual, family, peers, school, police, and community. The second task would be to develop strategies to implement the model to improve the capacity of the community to prevent, intervene in, and suppress youth gang activity through a targeted application of five identified, interrelated core strategies.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| * Community Mobilization | * Social Intervention |
| * Provision of Opportunities | * Suppression, Social Control, |
| * Organizational Change and Development | and Accountability |

This multi-faceted, multi-layered approach depends upon an integrated approach by a team of community agencies and organizations toward targeted youth group(s) implemented through a cohesive use of all five strategies. Eight critical elements distinguish this Model from other approaches.

- Continuous problem assessment using qualitative and quantitative data.
- Targeting of the area and population most associated with the problem assessed.
- Appropriate mix of the five core strategies.
- Organization of an Intervention Team.
- A community-representative Steering Committee to supervise and guide the project.
- A plan for coordinating efforts and sharing appropriate information.
- Community capacity building to sustain the project and address long-term issues.
- Ongoing data collection and analysis to evaluate the process and measure impact.

Demographics

The population of Elk City, estimated at 11,018 in 1997, has increased by 15% since the 1980 Census with little fluctuation among gender. All of the minority populations experienced higher rates growth over the past 20 years than the Caucasian population. The largest increase in terms of ethnicity occurred among those of Hispanic origin, rising from 3% to 5% of the total population.

The largest change in the age of the population occurred in adults age 35-64, increasing from 27% to 34%. The next largest increase, from 6% to 9%, occurred among 10-14 year-olds. The largest decrease occurred among 20-24 year-olds, dropping from 10% to 6%.

The median household income was \$28,461, and the average household income was \$42,051 in 1997. One in six families (15%) lived in poverty, with 64% of the single mothers with children under 18 living in poverty. The unemployment rate in Elk City was 3.9%. One-quarter (25%) of all families in Elk City were single parent families. One in twenty residents (5.7%) over the age of 5 spoke a language other than English at home, including 4.1% designating Spanish as the language of the family.

In 1997, there were 507 alleged reports of child abuse and neglect, and 152 confirmed cases in Beckham County of which Elk City comprises 57% of the population. There were 16 youth in foster homes, a 167% increase from 1980. Twelve percent of Beckham County's population received food stamps in 1997. -

The data reveals the primary characteristics of gang members to be targeted for intervention: 15 to 17 year-old males, most likely South Side Locos, living in the Southeast quadrant of Elk City, who use drugs and alcohol, and face severe personal and family stressors.

Priority Problems

Based on an analysis of relevant data, four problems are critical contributors to the current gang situation in Elk City, Oklahoma.

Lack of activities and opportunities, especially for minority and low-income residents.

When asked, "Why have gangs developed in Elk City?" boredom was the number one response from five of six groups of people interviewed. Job skills training opportunities are also very limited in the community, mostly education-based and with only one agency providing job training and assistance. The Alternative School is an after-school program with the capacity to serve a maximum of 55 students and has an extremely long waiting list.

Dropout rates are another area for concern. While remaining relatively stable the past three years, the disparity between races is disconcerting. In the 1996-1997 school year, the minority dropout rate was six times the rate for Caucasian students, while in the 1997-1998 school year it was five times the rate of Caucasian students. Most recently, in 1998-1999 the minority dropout rate was twice the rate for Caucasian students.

Another consideration is the location of activities and opportunities. There are few service providers or recreational facilities available in the Southeast quadrant of the community. There are three service providers and two recreational facilities with one scheduled to open later in the year. At the same time, this area has the highest minority population and some of the lowest socio-economic levels.

Lack of recognition among community members of the cultural diversity within the community.

Police data pertaining to police identified gang members and the school survey data concerning self-identified gang members do not agree. The range of variance is much smaller among Native American and Hispanic gang members than it is among Caucasian and African-American gang members. The largest discrepancy appears when looking at the statistics for African-American gang members. African-Americans represented 22% of the offenders in the police data, 32% of the gang members in the police intelligence files, but a scant 4% identified themselves as gang members through the anonymous school survey.

Community residents and parents of both non-gang involved youth and gang involved youth, educators, and service providers felt that labeling was an issue present in the community perception of the gang presence. Key leaders and parents of gang-involved youth believe that the youth were labeled and stigmatized by the community. Educators agreed with the parents of gang-involved youth that police unnecessarily stop youths (especially African-Americans and Hispanics) and harass them because they think the youths are involved in gangs. Parents of gang involved youth also felt the school harassed their children if they thought they were involved in gangs, and labeled younger siblings of gang members on the basis of their elder siblings' behavior, instead of their own.

Substance use and abuse, particularly by identified gang members, but the community as well.

Gang involved students had a higher percentage of substance use than students not involved in gangs according to all sources. Concerning lifetime prevalence, the percentage of gang-involved students using or trying various substances was nearly twice (alcohol and tobacco products) to eight times (cocaine) that of the use admitted by non-gang involved students.

Gang members were also more likely to begin using or trying substances at an earlier age, than students who are not gang involved. Gang-involved students were most likely to first try smoking marijuana between the ages of 10 and 14. Overall, a higher percentage of gang members (95%) have drunk alcohol at least once, compared to non-gang involved students (62%).

Substance use among family members and within the community also appears to be of concern. Gang members also revealed that they knew several adults personally who used substances or sold drugs. From the school survey, it appears the problem is even more prevalent. Forty-five percent of the gang involved students admitted having family members with drug or alcohol problems, as did 34% of the non-gang involved students.

High rates of gang-related offending in the Southeast quadrant of Elk City.

The Southeast quadrant of Elk City has the highest occurrence of all types of offenses committed by resident gang members, compared to the other quadrants in the community. In the past four years, 106 gang related offenses have occurred in the Southeast quadrant. Twenty percent of the offenses in the Southeast quadrant were property offenses, 19% were public nuisance offenses,

18% were drug and alcohol offenses, 18% were other offenses, 15% were person offenses, and 10% were weapons offenses.

This is mostly a low-income area with few recreational areas, few services, one subsidized housing addition, and no school facilities, except for the Administrative Office of the School system. In addition, it is the core area for Elk City's African-American community, holds one of the two Native American communities, and part of the Hispanic community.

Program Targets

The data clearly exhibit the primary characteristics of the intervention targets - 15-17 year-old males living in the Southeast quadrant of the community, who belong to the South Side Locos. They use drugs and alcohol and face several personal and family challenges. The data sources agree that Southside Locos are the largest gang in Elk City and should be the logical primary target. In addition, the Westside 107 Hoova Crips should not be overlooked because their former gang, 107 Hoover, did have higher rates of offending per member.

The data clearly indicate that gang members are likely to be involved in some sort of substance use and possibly abuse. Thus, targeting gang-involved individuals for intervention efforts from this standpoint would be reasonable.

Available Resources

Community Mobilization

Within the community mobilization domain there are two resources currently available in Elk City. The first is the Juvenile Drug Court, which was established in Sayre, Oklahoma, in 1998 and has since serviced 26 individuals. However, for youth to become involved in drug court they must have some sort of criminal charge pending against them or be adjudicated in need of supervision. The second resource currently available in Elk City is the Rural Gang Initiative. However, this resource is still in the planning stages.

Social Intervention

There are several programs within the community that could be seen as social intervention resources. These include: Youth Boxing program, Girl and Boy Scouts, church youth groups, Teen PRIDE, youth recreation leagues, Teen Court, Character First curriculum, Great Expectation curriculum, Red Rock Behavioral Services, Great Plains Youth and Family Services, Multi-County Youth Services, Narcotics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Opportunities Provision

Under opportunities provision there are four resources currently available: the Western Oklahoma Literacy Center, tutoring, Alternative school, and Vo-Tech education.

Suppression

There are six agencies currently involved in the suppression of gangs in Elk City. These include the Elk City Police Department (ECPD), ECPD Gang Suppression Unit, Beckham County Sheriff's Office, Office of Juvenile Affairs, and both the county and municipal courts. There are few law enforcement strategies, if any, currently in place for the prevention and intervention of gang activity. One step the ECPD has taken against gang activity in the community was to create the ECPD Gang Suppression Unit in September 1997.

The Rural Gang Initiative and the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model¹

Current research indicates an increase of youth gangs in rural areas. In response to this phenomenon the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) undertook the Rural Gang Initiative (RGI) in 1998. With the purpose of adapting the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model for use in rural communities. One of the four sites selected to test this application is Elk City, Oklahoma.

The two facets of the initial RGI grant are:

- a) conduct an assessment and analysis of the community's gang situation; and
- b) to develop strategies to implement the Model.

The first step is the assessment and analysis of the Elk City gang phenomenon. The data collected addresses the areas, or domains, affecting the youth involved in gang activity. The domains addressed in this assessment included the individual, family, peers, school, police, and community.

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model was initially developed for, implemented, and tested in urban and suburban areas. The Model was designed to reduce youth gang crime, particularly violence, in targeted communities; and to improve the capacity of the community to prevent, intervene in, and suppress youth gang activity through targeted application of five identified interrelated strategies. The five strategies called for in the model are:

- (1) community mobilization;
- (2) social intervention;
- (3) provision of opportunities;
- (4) suppression, social control, and accountability; and
- (5) organizational change and development.

This multi-faceted, multi-layered approach involves the individual youth, the family, the gang structure, local agencies, and the community-at-large. The Model is based on five core strategies delivered in an integrated approach by a team of community agencies and organizations to a targeted group of youth as identified by the assessment data. These strategies are implemented in the community through a cohesive use of all five strategies. Without a factually based, clear understanding of the nature and scope of the community's gang problem, the community will be unable to respond to the core problems effectively and efficiently.

The Model demands that the community first acknowledge the problem. Step two is thorough assessment of the problem in the context of the community. The third step involves setting goals and objectives for the community, followed by relevant programming and implementation of that programming as it relates to the assessment data. Finally, the Model urges follow-up evaluation of the programs implemented, as well as continuing assessment of the gang situation in the community. In summary, the Model requires an approach that includes eight critical elements that distinguish it from other approaches to dealing with gangs:

- Continuous problem assessment using qualitative and quantitative data;
- Targeting of the area and population most associated with the problem assessed;
- Mix of the five key strategies: community mobilization, social intervention, opportunities provision, suppression, and organizational change/development;

¹ All information pertaining to the RGI and the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model were taken liberally and extensively from the Rural Gang Initiative Handbooks I and II developed by OJJDP and the National Youth Gang Center.

- An Intervention Team;
- A Steering Committee of policymakers and community leaders to oversee and guide the project;
- A plan for coordinating efforts and sharing appropriate information among members of the Intervention Team, the Steering Committee, and persons within the partner organizations. This requires a determination of what information is needed by these various individuals and a mechanism for the timely sharing of that information;
- Community capacity building to sustain the project and address issues that are long-term in nature; and
- Ongoing data collection and analysis to evaluate the process and measure its impact.

Assumptions

Knowledge of the assumptions and limitations of the data are necessary for full understanding of the data collected. The remainder of this section will cover the assumptions made during the assessment. Data limitations encountered will also be articulated.

- Unless otherwise specified, the statistics reported from the police data refer only to gang members offenses committed by Elk City residents
- School data statistics refer to students from both Elk City Public Schools and Merritt Public Schools
- The term “gang member” referencing the police data includes *police-identified gang members*, *associate gang members*, and *suspected gang members*
- The term “gang member” referencing the school survey data includes only students who admitted to being a gang member through an anonymous survey (self-identified)
- “Gang members” identified during the gang member interviews either admitted to the interviewer to belonging to a gang, or admitted to associating with a gang on a regular basis

Limitations

- Gang member interview responses should not be generalized to all gang members in Elk City because the subject sample was a very small, non-random pool, as all participants were hand chosen by members of the assessment team
- Information solicited from the focus groups, individual interviews, and community survey instruments are the opinions and perception of the respondents. The fact that many people may think the same way or have the same idea does not necessarily make that opinion or perception indisputable or true.

The remainder of this report overviews the community demographics, the priority problems and program targets identified by the assessment data, a summary of the resources presently available in the community. Appendix A will address specific questions asked by the OJJDP of the assessment data. Appendix B will address the methodology utilized for the assessment.

Demographics

The data indicate that the total population of Elk City, estimated at 11,018 in 1997, has increased by 15% since the 1980 Census of 9,579 (Table A13). During the same time, the population of

Beckham County only increased by 0.6%, while Oklahoma experienced a 9.8% growth rate. There has been little fluctuation among gender (estimated to be 52% female in 1997), or race/ethnicity. Caucasians remain relatively constant around 94% of the population since 1980. African Americans represent 3% of the population, while American Indians make up about 2%. Even though the race distribution remained relatively the same during this time period, all of the minority populations within the community experienced higher rates of overall growth than the White population in Elk City. In other words, while the population of Elk City has expanded over the past 20 years, the minority population experienced more growth overall than the White population.

The largest increase in terms of ethnicity occurred among those of Hispanic origin. Hispanic origin includes individuals of all races, but having a Hispanic ancestry or ethnicity. Essentially those who are of Hispanic origin are counted twice in the Census data, once for their race and once for their ethnicity. The Hispanic-origin population of Elk City rose from 3% to 5% of the total population from 1980 to 1997, an 81.2% increase.

The estimated age distribution of Elk City in 1997 was:

- children under the age of 10 were 17 % of the population,
- 10-14 year-olds were about 9%,
- 15-19 year-olds were almost 7%,
- 20-24 year-olds were nearly 6%, and
- those 25 years of age and older comprised 60% of the total population.

The largest increase from 1980 to 1997 occurred in adults age 35-64, increasing from 27% of the population to 34%. Of course, this increase is consistent with the aging of the "baby boom" generation into that age group. The next largest increase, from 6% to 9%, occurred among 10-14 year-olds. The largest decrease occurred among 20-24 year-olds, dropping from 10% in 1980 to an estimated 6% in 1997.

In 1997, ten of Beckham County's seventeen largest employers were located within Elk City. The median household income was \$28,461, and the average household income was \$42,051. The median household income increased 99% from 1980. However, both Beckham County and the State experienced larger increases of 108% and 113% respectively. Average income increased 135% from 1980 to 1997.

One in six families (15%) lived in poverty in 1990, a 64% increase since 1980. And nearly twice the increase experienced by the State during the same time. The poverty rate among single mothers with children under 18 was 64%, a 251% increase since 1980. Or more than four times the rate of increase for the State during the same time.

In 1997, the unemployment rate in Elk City was 3.9%, in line with the rates experienced by the County and the State. In general, the unemployment rates in 1997 were similar to the rates experienced in 1980, while there was a minor increase in rates during 1990.

Two out of three (67%) Elk City residents 25 years-old and older are high school graduates, an increase of 29% since 1980. Furthermore, in 1997 the dropout rate among 9-12 grade students was 5.6%, a decrease of 76% since 1990, when the dropout rate was 7.8%. Overall, the dropout rate among Elk City students has fallen 44% since 1980.

Demographic characteristics related to family include the percentage of single parent homes and the percentage of the population that spoke a language other than English in the home. In 1990, one-quarter (25%) of all families in Elk City were single parent families, constituting a 109% increase since 1980. One in twenty residents (5.7%) over the age of 5 spoke a language other than English at home, including 4.1% specifically designating Spanish as the language of the family. These rates are similar to those in 1980.

The 1997 data documents important characteristics of Beckham County, of which Elk City comprises 57% of the population. There were 8.6 marriages and 5.2 divorces per 1,000, both rates are down from previous years by nearly 60%. The 1997 teen birth rate in Beckham County was 80 per 1,000², well above the State rate of 64.7 per 1,000. It is also noted that the State rate has consistently decreased since 1980.

In 1997, there were 507 alleged reports of child abuse and neglect, and 152 confirmed cases in Beckham County. This was a 6,238% increase from 1980 in the number of alleged reports and a 7,500% increase in the number of confirmed cases. While these increases are phenomenal, one must account for changes that have occurred since 1980 in regard to child abuse and neglect. General awareness in the community, stricter reporting guidelines and mandates, and public understanding of the perception of child abuse has been enhanced dramatically in the past 20 years. There were 16 youth in foster care in the County in 1997, a 167% increase from the 6 in foster care in 1980. Twelve percent of Beckham County's population received food stamps in 1997, while only 3% received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (formerly Aid to Families with Dependant Children). These figures have remained relatively stable for the past 20 years.

Priority Problems

Based on an analysis of the data, four problems make the greatest contribution to the current gang situation in Elk City, Oklahoma. These four seem to contribute equally to the phenomena, with one or another dominating at certain times.

- Lack of activities and opportunities within the community, especially for minority and low income residents;
- Lack of recognition among community members of the cultural diversity within the community;
- Substance use and abuse, particularly by identified gang members, but the community as well; and
- High rates of gang-related offending in the Southeast quadrant of Elk City, Oklahoma.

The assessment data also reveals the primary characteristics of those gang members who should be targeted for intervention, i.e., 15-17 year-old males, who most likely belong to the South Side Locos, living in the Southeast quadrant of Elk City, who use drugs and alcohol, and face several personal and family stressors. While this list is not exhaustive, it does cut to the core of the findings identified in the assessment data. The following sections will address how the assessment data support the identified problems and target characteristics in depth.

² Teen birth rates for 1990 and 1980 were unavailable

Lack of Activities and Opportunities. Boredom was the number one answer given when gang members were asked, “why have gangs developed in Elk City?” Similarly, when asked what could be done to reduce gang activity in the community, they resolutely responded as needing programs and recreation, i.e., something to do. There are very few opportunities for youth if they are not active in competitive school sports or similar activities for positive recreational involvement.

Interestingly, it is not only the gang members who are aware of the lack of activities and recreation in the community. Five of the six category groups (community residents and parent of non-gang involved youth, court system, educators, parents of gang involved youth, key leaders, and law enforcement) interviewed felt that boredom and having nothing to do had a big effect on gang development in the community. Similarly, 29% of the community residents responding to the community survey felt one of the top three reasons gangs had developed was because of boredom, and 28% felt it was because of a lack of activities in the community (Figure A27). Furthermore, all of the groups interviewed felt that providing activities and programs in the community would reduce gang activity, with half of the groups speaking directly for a Teen Activity Center. From the community survey, 46% of the residents felt community programs and recreation would help reduce gang activity, while 28% felt that job opportunities and job training would alleviate some of the gang activity (Figure A28).

In support of the community’s perception, 32% of interviewed gang members said they would get out of the gang if they got involved in a recreation or sports program, 23% would leave the gang if they became involved in a school or education program, and 18% would leave the gang if they got a steady job (Table 1). When looking at gang activity, most members reported that their gang “hung out” at someone’s house from 7:00 p.m. to midnight; and that most gang fights occurred on Fridays and Saturdays (Table 2). It is then apparent that the gangs come together because they do not really have anything else to do. Logically, establishing programs to occupy youth during evenings and weekends might help reduce gang activity within the community.

The school survey examined why students were getting involved in gangs and also looked at risk and protective factors. Self-identified gang members reported that they joined their gang because it was fun, and 35% felt that their gang involvement provided excitement (Figure A11). Gang characteristics of those reporting strongly indicate that the gangs provide structure, rules, and defined roles for its members. Obviously, these needs are not being met elsewhere in their lives.

The school survey analyzed pro-social involvement in the community. Results are clear that the non-gang involved students from Merritt and Elk City scored much higher than gang involved students in terms of opportunities and rewards for pro-social involvement. In fact, gang involved students scored much lower than both the national average and a matched comparison group on opportunities for pro-social involvement. However, in terms of rewards for pro-social involvement they scored equally to the national average and just above the matched group. Therefore, gang involved students appear to have fewer opportunities for positive involvement within the community, but once involved, they are rewarded for their involvement. It should be

noted though, that non-gang involved students from Elk City scored 34% higher than gang involved students in respect to the rewards for pro-social community involvement.

Table 1. Why are youth leaving gangs?

Source: Gang Member Interview

Respondents were asked to respond to all the categories that applied.

	MALE (n=17)	FEMALE (n=5)	ALL (n=22)
Advice/pressure from relative	41%	0%	32%
Advice/pressure from others	18%	20%	18%
Move out of area	12%	0%	9%
Steady boyfriend/girlfriend	12%	20%	14%
Get married	35%	20%	32%
Become a parent	47%	20%	41%
Family responsibility	47%	0%	36%
Obtain a job	24%	0%	18%
School/education program	29%	0%	23%
Recreation/sports program	35%	20%	32%
Grow out of it	53%	40%	50%
Go to jail/prison	18%	20%	18%
Other:			
Get kicked out	6%	0%	5%
Do it for myself	6%	0%	5%

- Of those who would leave on advice or pressure from others, when probed about who could get them to leave the gang others included: close friend; baby; counselor/mentor; and current gang members who been through tough times
- Of those who would leave because of family responsibility, when probed about what could get them to leave the gang the responsibilities included: taking care of baby/child; job; and family

Table 2. Characteristics of Gang Fights

Source: Gang Member Interviews

REASON FOR FIGHT		LOCATION OF FIGHT		TIME OF DAY		DAY OF THE WEEK	
Way of life/Way it has always been	59%	Own turf	57%	3pm to 6pm	64%	Monday	38%
Territory/Turf	18%	Rival's gang turf	29%	6pm to 12am	86%	Tuesday	38%
Gang signs/Colors	71%	Contested gang turf	57%	12am to 6am	36%	Wednesday	38%
Reputation/Impress others	41%	Another town	36%			Thursday	38%
Gang rivalry/Retaliation	71%	School campus	60%			Friday	85%
Drug dealing	18%	Around school	57%			Saturday	69%
Personality conflicts	71%					Sunday	46%

- The average number of gang fights in the past year is 12.77 fights a year.
- Other reasons given for gang fights were: can't stand other person; dissing; family; and jump one of our homeboys
- Other locations given for fights were: parks; streets; wherever they happen to see each other

There are approximately six outlets for youth to become involved in the community. Most are specialized and do not appeal to a wide range of youth.

- Youth Boxing Program includes both males and females. Participation is limited to high risk and minority adolescents. Youth also have to comply with a list of rules to be eligible to stay in the program.
- Girl and Boy Scouts are both available in the community, however, this is one of those programs that appeals to a very narrow range of adolescents.

- Church youth groups are available, but while many youth may enjoy the activities, some may be hesitant to get involved because their families are not “religious” and therefore feel uncomfortable.
- Teen PRIDE is an organization available through the Office of Youth & Family Programs with open membership offering recreational trips to a variety of places. Most of the youth currently involved are middle-class, “normal” kids, and very few who are at high risk of gang involvement.
- Youth recreation leagues for softball, baseball, and soccer are available in the summer, and fall and spring for soccer are limited to those who can afford entry and registration fees and equipment.
- Youth can become involved in Teen Court as staff. This special interest activity draws adolescents who have an interest in law or legal proceedings. Some of the youth who get involved are those who have been through Teen Court as an offender and return because they enjoyed the experience.

Opportunities are also limited within the community. The majority of opportunities are education based, these include the Literacy Center, tutoring, vo-tech, and the alternative school. There is only one agency that specifically provides job training and assistance, however, this program is scheduled to lose its funding this year and will not be operative again until Summer 2001. The Literacy Center and tutoring offer excellent resources for those needing assistance with school work or reading competency. Vocational and Technical education is a good resource for those enrolled in school and is free for students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, with Elk City Schools providing buses to the campus located in Burns Flat. However, for those not enrolled in school, transportation and cost become an issue.

The Alternative School in Elk City is an after-school program with the capacity to serve a maximum of 55 students at any one time. Adding a Junior High component this year has only increased the already long waiting list. A review of suspension and dropout rates for the past three years, points to a substantial need for expansion of the Alternative school. For the past three years, at least, the suspension rate for the Junior High is roughly six times higher than that of the high school (Table 3).

Dropout rates are another area for concern. While the dropout rates for the Junior and Senior Highs have remained relatively stable the past three years, rising slightly in the 1998-1999 school year, the disparity between races is of concern. In the 1996-1997 school year, the minority dropout rate was six times the rate for Caucasian students, while in the 1997-1998 school year it was five times the rate of Caucasian students (Tables 4 and 5). Most recently, in 1998-1999 the minority dropout rate was twice the rate for Caucasian students (Table 6). Although the minority dropout rate has decreased every year, these rates are alarming when compared to the rates for Caucasian students.

Transportation and cost are issues that prohibit many youths from becoming involved in activities. To participate, one must be able to get to the activity. There is no public transportation system in Elk City. Youth *must* rely on family and friends for rides. When drivers are at work or have other obligations coinciding with a function the youth is supposed to attend, presumably, the youth loses. Cost is of concern because those at highest risk for gang

involvement tend to be low-income. Registration fees of \$40 to play spring soccer are added to the cost of shoes, uniforms, transportation, and other miscellaneous costs, making it unlikely a child who's family is receiving food stamps and/or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families will be able to participate.

Table 3. Student suspensions from school, by year, school, and reason.

Suspensions	1996-1997			1997-1998			1998-1999		
	ECJH	ECHS	TOTAL	ECJH	ECHS	TOTAL	ECJH	ECHS	TOTAL
Fighting	33	10	43	34	13	47	49	6	55
Hitting/Kicking	18		18	16		16	6		6
Disobeying school official	21	1	22	56	9	65	16	3	19
Truant	4		4	10	1	11	1	3	4
Bumping teacher	1		1						
Alcohol/Drugs	4		4				4	2	6
Threats	2	1	3					2	2
Weapons	1		1	1		1	1	1	2
Harassment	1		1						
Theft	1		1				5		5
Smoking	1		1	2		2			
Pornography	3		3				1		1
Disruption of school/class		1	1	39	4	43	16		16
Cursing				6		6	23		23
Throwing object				2		2			
Extortion				1		1			
Gang related activity				5		5			
Vandalism							1		1
TOTAL	90	13	103	172	27	199	123	17	140

Table 4. Dropouts from Elk City Public Schools 1996-1997.

Elk City Junior High and High School Combined	1996-1997 Dropouts								TOTAL
	Black		Native American		Hispanic		White or Other		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<i>Dropout Rate=5.78%</i>									
Academic Problems									
Behavioral Problems									
Truancy	3	1	2	1	6	1	8	6	24
No Show			1	3	1	2	5	2	14
Marriage						1		2	3
General Dislike of School	1						4	1	5
Needed at home								1	1
Employment									
TOTAL	4	1	3	4	7	4	17	12	47
	Total Male	31	Total Female	21	Total White	29	Total Non-White	23	
	Male Dropout	6.83%	Female Dropout	4.71%	White Dropout	3.64%	Non-White Dropout	22.12%	

Another concern is the location of activities and opportunities. There are few service providers and recreational facilities available in the Southeast quadrant of the community (Figure 1). There are three service providers in the Southeast quadrant, the Office of Youth & Family Programs, the Public Health Department (which has broken ground on a new location in the Northwest quadrant), and Great Plains Youth & Family Services. Furthermore, there are three recreational facilities in the quadrant: one park, the Soccer Complex, and the Lincoln Teen Center (not yet open). This area of the community has the highest minority population and some of the lowest socio-economic levels. The lack of access to services and recreational facilities is

very apparent. The majority of services are in the Southwest quadrant, but even that area has limited recreational facilities with only one park, and only one (closed after-hours) school facility. In contrast, the northern quadrants of the community house the most and newest school facilities, and five parks—including the community swimming pool, rodeo grounds, and softball and baseball complexes.

Table 5. Dropouts from Elk City Public Schools 1997-1998.

Elk City Junior High and High School Combined	1997-1998 Dropouts								TOTAL
	Black		Native American		Hispanic		White or Other		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Dropout Rate=5.49%									
Academic Problems									
Behavioral Problems	1			4	5		4	1	15
Truancy			4	2		1	11	13	31
No Show									
Marriage									
General Dislike of School	3						1		4
Needed at home									
Employment								1	1
TOTAL	4		4	6	5	1	16	15	51
	Total Male	29	Total Female	22	Total White	31	Total Non-White	20	
	Male Dropout	6.17%	Female Dropout	4.79%	White Dropout	3.75%	Non-White Dropout	19.61%	

Table 6. Dropouts from Elk City Public Schools 1998-1999.

Elk City Junior High and High School Combined	1998-1999 Dropouts								TOTAL
	Black		Native American		Hispanic		White or Other		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Dropout Rate=7.02%									
Academic Problems								1	1
Behavioral Problems					1	2	4		7
Truancy	2	1	3	1	1	3	4	8	23
No Show	1		2	1	1		5	9	19
Marriage								2	2
General Dislike of School							1	3	4
Needed at home							1	3	4
Employment				1				1	2
TOTAL	3	1	5	3	3	5	15	27	62
	Total Male	26	Total Female	36	Total White	42	Total Non-White	20	
	Male Dropout	5.79%	Female Dropout	8.29%	White Dropout	5.83%	Non-White Dropout	12.35%	

In sum, access to services, opportunities and activities are rather limited for high-risk youth in the community. Addressing these limitations, by offering more opportunities and activities, as well as improving access to those opportunities, would likely have a positive impact on the gang phenomena within the community.

Lack of recognition among community members of cultural diversity with the community. This report would be remiss if the data discrepancies concerning race were not addressed. As they are, the discrepancies themselves appear to be one of the priority problems within the community. To begin with, it is apparent that the police data pertaining to police identified gang members and the school survey data concerning self-identified gang members do not agree.

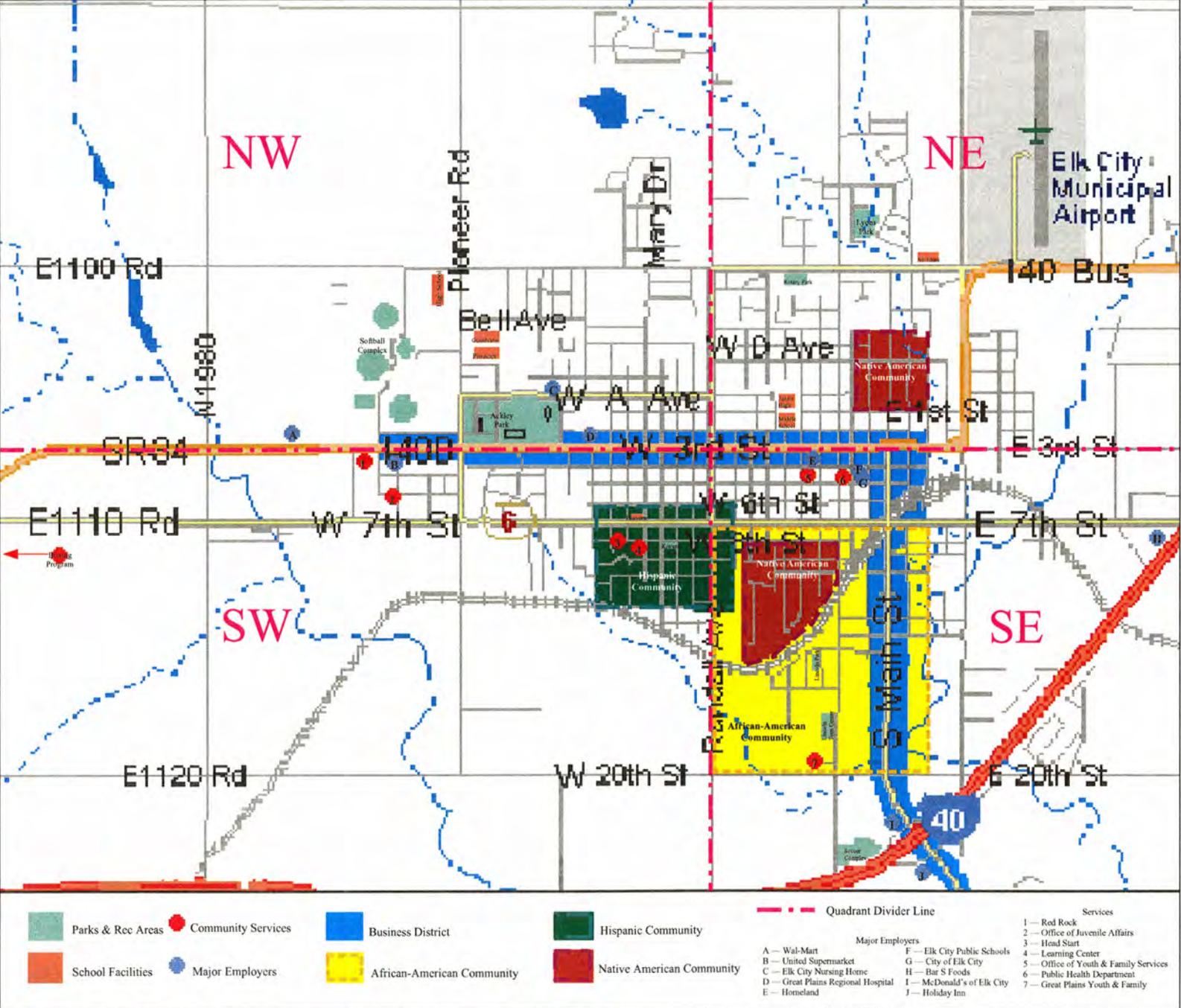


Figure 1. Map of services and recreation available in Elk City.

Table 7 presents the percentages each race accounts for from the different data sources. The range of variance is much smaller among Native American and Hispanic gang members than it is among Caucasian and African-American gang members. Native Americans make up anywhere from 10% to 14% of gang members today, with the police intelligence data and school survey data in close agreement. Similarly, Hispanics account for 17% to 22% of gang members today, with the police intelligence and school survey concurring that they account for 22% of all gang members. There is more of a discrepancy when accounting for Caucasian gang members. They represented 18% of the offenders in the police data, 31% of gang members are Caucasians according to Police Intelligence, but 44% of the self-identified gang members in the school survey were Caucasian. This is a variance of 13 to 26 percentage points, or a range of 50 (18%) to 122 (44%) gang members using the police intelligence total number of 278 known, associate, and suspected gang members in Elk City—that is up to 72 unaccounted gang members.

Table 7. Race distributions from available data sources.

	Police Data – Offender Level	Police Data – Offender Level, 18 & under today ³	Police Intelligence Data	School Survey
Caucasian	18%	24%	31%	44%
African-American	22%	29%	32%	4%
Native American	10%	15%	14%	13%
Hispanic	17%	32%	22%	22%
Other	N/A	N/A	<1%	17%

The largest discrepancy appears when looking at the statistics for African-American gang members. African-Americans represent 22% of the offenders in the police data, 32% of the gang members in the police intelligence files, but a scant 4% identified themselves as gang members through the anonymous school survey. That means there are up to 78 identified gang members who have either been misidentified by the police or did not respond truthfully to the school survey. This raises at least two questions: 1) Are the police over-identifying minorities as gang members as some in the community would allege? 2) Did African-American students under-report their gang involvement? The truth is most likely somewhere in the middle.

The school survey attempted to account for students who gave false or inconsistent answers, and in fact thirteen students were excluded from the final sample pool because they did give false or inconsistent answers to control questions. Nonetheless, one might argue, that as gang members, these youth are probably adept at lying, thus, it is conceivable that they fooled the school survey. Regardless, this question is unanswerable. If gang involved students were truly consistent in lying on the survey, then it is possible they could have made it into the final sample pool, however there is no way to verify if that happened.

On the flip side, there is just as much conjecture, and again, not much hard proof. What is reported in the data are the responses of those participating in focus groups and individual interviews. When asked, “why do you think gangs have developed in the community?”

³ This category is included to try to approximate those in the police data who would likely still be in school, since the police data may date as far back as July 1995.

community residents, parents of non-gang involved youth, court system personnel, gang members, parents of gang involved youth, and key leaders agreed on a few critical points: that discrimination/bias/and prejudice existed in the community; that youth who joined gangs were disenfranchised and rejected by the community; and that a certain amount of youths are labeled gang members when, in fact, they are not. Responses from the community survey revealed that 7% and 4% of residents felt prejudice and police labeling, respectively, were among the top three reasons gangs exist in Elk City (Figure A27). Community residents and parents of both non-gang involved youth and gang involved youth, educators, and service providers all felt that labeling was an issue present in the community due to the gang presence. When asked about the general community reaction to gangs, community residents, parents of non-gang involved youth and gang involved youth, court personnel, and key leaders reported that the reaction included prejudice against minorities and lower socio-economic status persons, and that gangs were a minority problem. Key leaders and parents of gang involved youth also felt that the youth were labeled and stigmatized by the community and that the youth would never be able to shake the label even if it was no longer relevant. Educators agreed with the parents of gang involved youth that police unnecessarily stop youths (especially African-Americans and Hispanics) and give them a hard time because they think the youths are involved in gangs. Parents of gang involved youth also felt the school harassed their children if they thought they were involved in gangs, and labeled younger siblings of gang members on the basis of their elder siblings' behavior, instead of their own.

When asked what could be done to reduce gang activity in the community, community residents, parents of non-gang involved youth, court personnel, parents of gang involved youth, key leaders, gang members, and service providers felt that more tolerance and acceptance of each other and differences, especially concerning racial and class prejudices on a community-wide basis would help alleviate the problem. Educators, service providers, gang members and their parents believe the termination of minority youth being labeled as gang members would help the problem.

From this it is apparent that some community members recognize an undercurrent of racial and class prejudice within the community. Whether this undercurrent plays a role in the way law enforcement performs its duties is outside the scope of this assessment. What has been presented are comments made by community members pertaining to the topic at hand. Only residents of Elk City can determine the extent to which racial and class discrimination affects the community.

Another interesting aspect to this issue, is in the process of conducting the focus groups and individual interviews, when participants were asked about the characteristics of gang members, the overwhelming response was that gang members were minorities, primarily Hispanic, who lived in or around the Flats, and that gangs were brought to Elk City by people who moved in from larger cities. This viewpoint was consistent in almost all of the interviews and focus groups that were conducted. The stability of these assumptions intrigued the assessment team, and it was not until the newspaper archive was completed that a true understanding of these assumptions came about. It seems a series of articles, containing all of these characteristics, ran in early 1995 and ostensibly helped establish these assumptions in the community's perception (Figure 2). These articles and the resulting community perception express the power of the press within a small community.

Newspaper Article Timeline

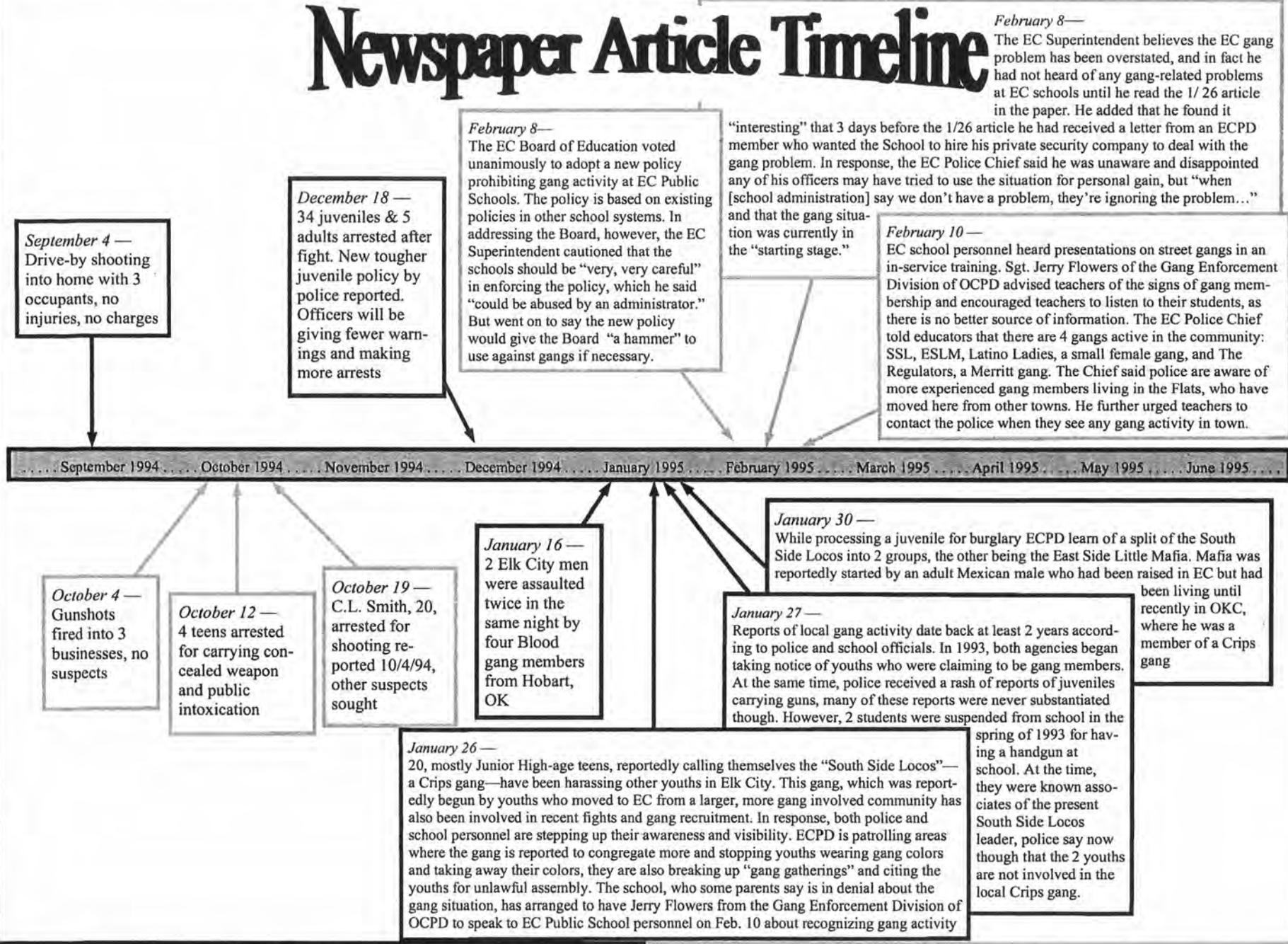


Figure 2. First year of the Daily Elk City News newspaper articles gathered for the RGI assessment.

In all, the racial and class prejudices that exist within the community must be recognized and addressed within the community for any impact to really be made upon the gang phenomena in Elk City. If community members are willing to address these issues, it is likely that gang activity will be reduced and a more understanding and tolerant community may result.

Substance Use/Abuse. Alcohol and drug use was specifically questioned in both the school survey and gang member interviews. The police data gets at this information in a different way, by accounting for the number of offenses committed by gang members that were drug and alcohol related.

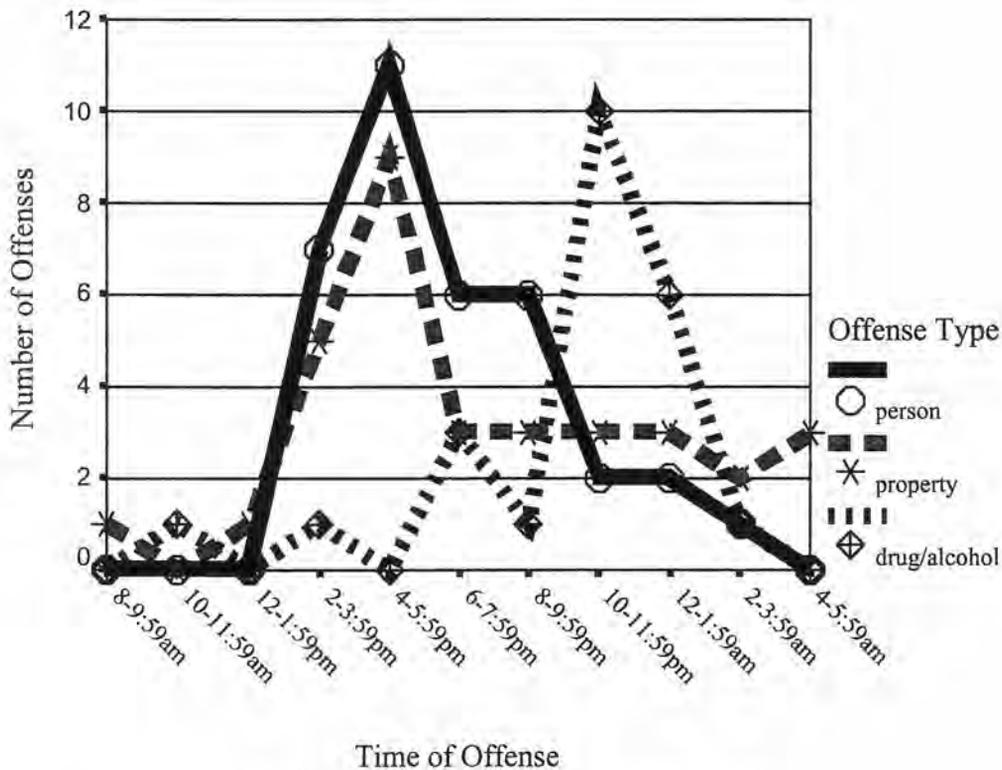
The school survey questioned students' use of substances two ways. First, the survey inquired whether or not students had ever used or tried specific substances in their lifetime. Secondly, questions were asked pertaining to their substance use in the past 30 days. In all cases, gang involved students had a higher percentage of substance use than students not involved in gangs. Concerning lifetime prevalence, the percentage of gang-involved students using or trying various substances was nearly twice (alcohol and tobacco products) to eight times (cocaine) that of the use admitted by non-gang involved students (Table A8). In regard to use prevalence in the past 30 days, the percentage of gang members who had used substances was almost twice (alcohol) to 22 times (cocaine) the percentage of non-gang involved students. In particular, the substances of choice for gang members in the past 30 days were: Cigarettes (51%), Alcohol (49%), and Marijuana (24%). Lifetime prevalence revealed even higher rates of use, alcohol and cigarettes each had been tried/used by 91% of the self-identified gang members, likewise, 71% had used or tried marijuana. It should be noted that the lifetime prevalence of substance use was in all cases around twice that of 30 day substance use prevalence.

Students were also asked at what age did they first try certain behaviors. From their responses, gang members were more likely to begin using or trying substances at an earlier age than students who are not gang involved. Gang-involved students were most likely to first try smoking marijuana between the ages of 10 and 14, with 17% first smoking Marijuana at age 14, whereas non-gang involved students began trying Marijuana between the ages of 13 and 16, with 5% first smoking Marijuana at age 15 (Figure A14). Eighteen percent of non-gang involved students have smoked marijuana at least once, compared to 72% of gang-involved students. For both gang-involved and non-gang involved students, age 10 and under held the greatest risk of first trying alcohol and cigarettes. Forty-three percent of gang-involved students smoked their first cigarette when they were under 10 years old (Figure A15). Among non-gang students, 15% smoked their first cigarette at age 10 or under. Moreover, a total of 54% of non-gang involved students have ever tried cigarettes compared to 89% of gang members. While being higher for gang-involved students, the age of first use for both groups follows the same trend for those between age 11 and 14, peaking first at under age 10 and then peaking again at age 13. However, at age 15, gang students first use of alcohol falls below the non-gang involved student rate (Figure A16). Overall, a higher percentage of gang members (95%) have drunk alcohol at least once compared to non-gang involved students (62%).

From the gang member interviews, 64% (14) of those interviewed admitted that they had used or tried drugs in the past year, 86% (19) admitted to using alcohol (Table A7). Out of those who used drugs, 55% (12) reported using drugs on a weekly basis and 27% (6) report using drugs on

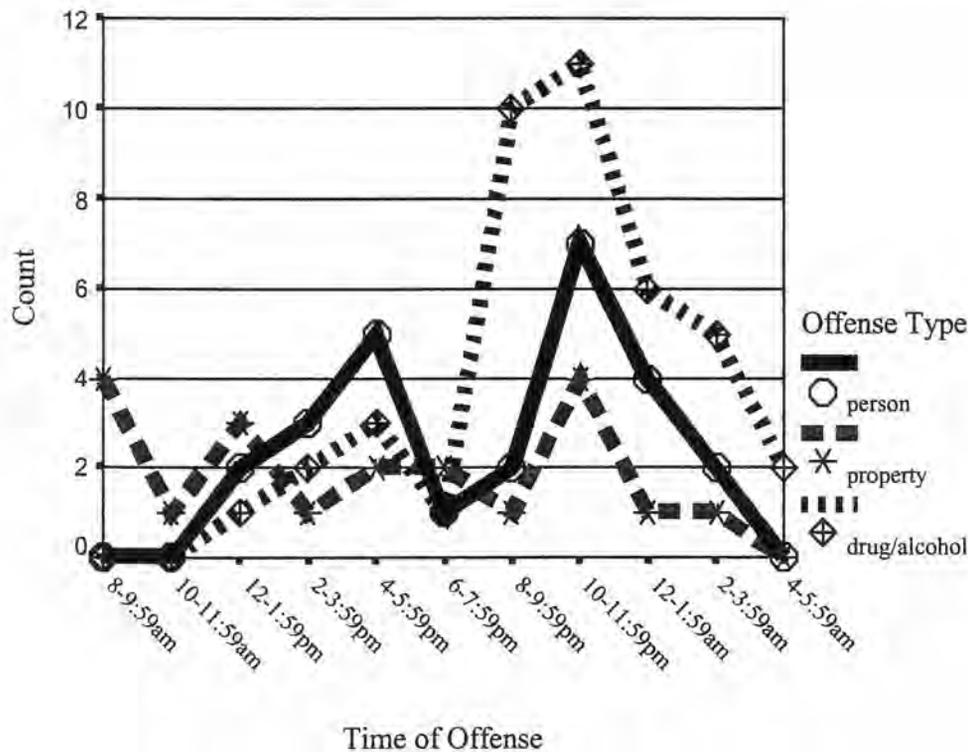
a daily basis. When questioned specifically about the drugs they used, again marijuana and beer appear to be the substances of choice. Sixty-four percent (14) admitted smoking marijuana in the past year, 77% (17) drank beer, and 59% (13) drank hard liquor. As to how easy it is for youth to obtain drugs within the community, 63% (14) of the interviewed gang members reported that it is somewhat to very easy to access drugs, 28% (6) reported that it was somewhat to very hard to access drugs in the community, and 9% (2) did not know (Figure A17).

Drug and alcohol offenses were also common among gang members. From the police data, drug and alcohol offenses are the leading type of offenses committed by gang members (Figure A2). Twenty-one percent of all gang offenses are drug and alcohol related. Specifically, these offenses included drug possession, drug transportation, drug use, drug sales, public intoxication, DUI, and under age possession of alcohol. These offenses cut across all boundaries and were perpetrated by both genders, all ages, races, and members of the identified gang sets. The majority of these offenses occurred on Fridays and Saturdays (Figure A9) and peaked for both juveniles (Figure 3) and adults (Figure 4) between the hours of 10:00pm and 2:00am on both weekends and weekdays. Thirty-two percent of the interviewed gang members admitted to selling drugs in the past year (Table A7). When asked why they sold drugs, 18% said they sold drugs to benefit themselves and 14% said they sold drugs to benefit both themselves and the gang. From the school survey, 22% of gang involved students admitted selling drugs, compared to 2% of non-gang involved students (Table A5).



Source: Police Data

Figure 3. Hourly trends of juvenile (<18) offending.



Source: Police Data

Figure 4. Hourly trends of Adult (18+) offending.

Substance use among family members and within the community also appears to be of concern. When interviewed, 36% of the gang members reported that a close relative had a drug abuse problem (Table A6), in addition, 27% of the gang members themselves admitted abusing drugs (Table 7). Gang members also revealed that they knew several adults personally who used substances or sold drugs (Table A9). Eighty-one percent of those interviewed knew at least one adult who used drugs, 64% knew at least one adult who sold drugs, and 91% knew adults who had gotten high or drunk in the past year. When asked about their perception of substance use in the community, 73% of interviewed gang members said drug dealing was a problem in the community and 82% reported that both drug use and alcohol use were problems in the community (Table 8). From the school survey, it appears the problem is even more prevalent. Nearly 80% of gang involved students knew an adult who used drugs, 57% knew an adult who sold drugs, and 93% knew an adult who had gotten high or drunk in the past year (Table A10). Many of the students who are not involved in gangs also knew adults who engaged in negative behaviors. Almost 40% of the non-gang involved students knew an adult who used drugs, 24% knew an adult who dealt drugs, and 58% knew an adult who had gotten drunk or high. Forty-five percent of the gang involved students admitted having family members with drug or alcohol problems, as did 34% of the non-gang involved students (Figure A18). Furthermore, 62% of gang involved students admitted they had a sibling who used alcohol, marijuana, or cigarettes, compared to only 49% of non-gang involved students (Figure A19).

The community also recognizes a substance use problem within the community. When surveyed, Elk City residents ranked drug dealing (19%) as more of a concern than gang activity

(11%) (Figure A25). However, the community survey also revealed that 31% of the residents felt that drug crimes had increased as a result of the gang presence in the community (Figure A26).

Table 7. In the Past Year:

Source: Gang Member Interviews

Interviewee has lived		Personal challenges		System involvement	
Group home/Halfway House	18%	Drug abuse	27%	Juvenile detention	32%
Jail/Correctional Institution	41%	Domestic violence	18%	Adult detention	9%
Hospital/Treatment Program	14%	Victim of gang crime	23%	Probation	59%
Moving from place to place	9%	Victim of non-gang crime	27%	Juvenile correctional institution	27%
		Arrested	41%		
		Family relationship problems	32%		
		Job related problems	9%		
		Income related problems	9%		

Table 8. Gang members perception of crime in the community.

Source: Gang Member Interview

How large of a problem do you think the following offenses are in your community?	NO PROBLEM	SMALL PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	SERIOUS PROBLEM	VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM
Vandalism/graffiti	14%	18%	41%	18%	9%
Burglary	14%	43%	24%	14%	5%
Car theft	32%	41%	5%	14%	9%
Robbery	36%	41%	9%	5%	9%
Threats/intimidation	27%	18%	23%	23%	9%
Gang to gang confrontations	14%	27%	32%	14%	14%
Drug dealing	27%	18%	23%	18%	14%
Drug use	18%	18%	18%	23%	23%
Alcohol use	18%	9%	27%	27%	18%
Drive-by shooting	77%	14%	5%	0%	5%
Possession of knife	14%	23%	41%	5%	18%
Possession of gun	27%	46%	14%	9%	5%
Firearms use	46%	32%	18%	5%	0%
Firearms dealing	41%	46%	5%	5%	5%
Arson	73%	18%	9%	0%	0%
Assault/battery	18%	14%	18%	27%	23%
Homicide/murder	86%	9%	0%	0%	5%
Larceny	27%	18%	36%	9%	9%
Organized crime	46%	32%	18%	5%	0%
School disruption	18%	27%	23%	23%	9%
Public nuisance	23%	32%	18%	23%	5%
Hate crimes	36%	27%	18%	5%	14%

Focus groups and interviews with various key people in the community yielded similar results. Focus groups with community residents, parents of non-gang involved youth and gang involved youth, key leaders, and interviews with court personnel, educators, law enforcement officials, and service providers all revealed the belief that gangs presented drug, alcohol and tobacco

problems within the community. Furthermore, the majority of those groups also believed that providing education about gangs, drugs, and violence to the community, parents and youth would help alleviate the gang phenomena in the community. Service providers also felt that the availability of drugs was a moderate to very serious factor in the presence of gangs in the community (Figure 4). Likewise, service providers felt drug dealing and drug and alcohol use were all moderate to very serious problems within the community.

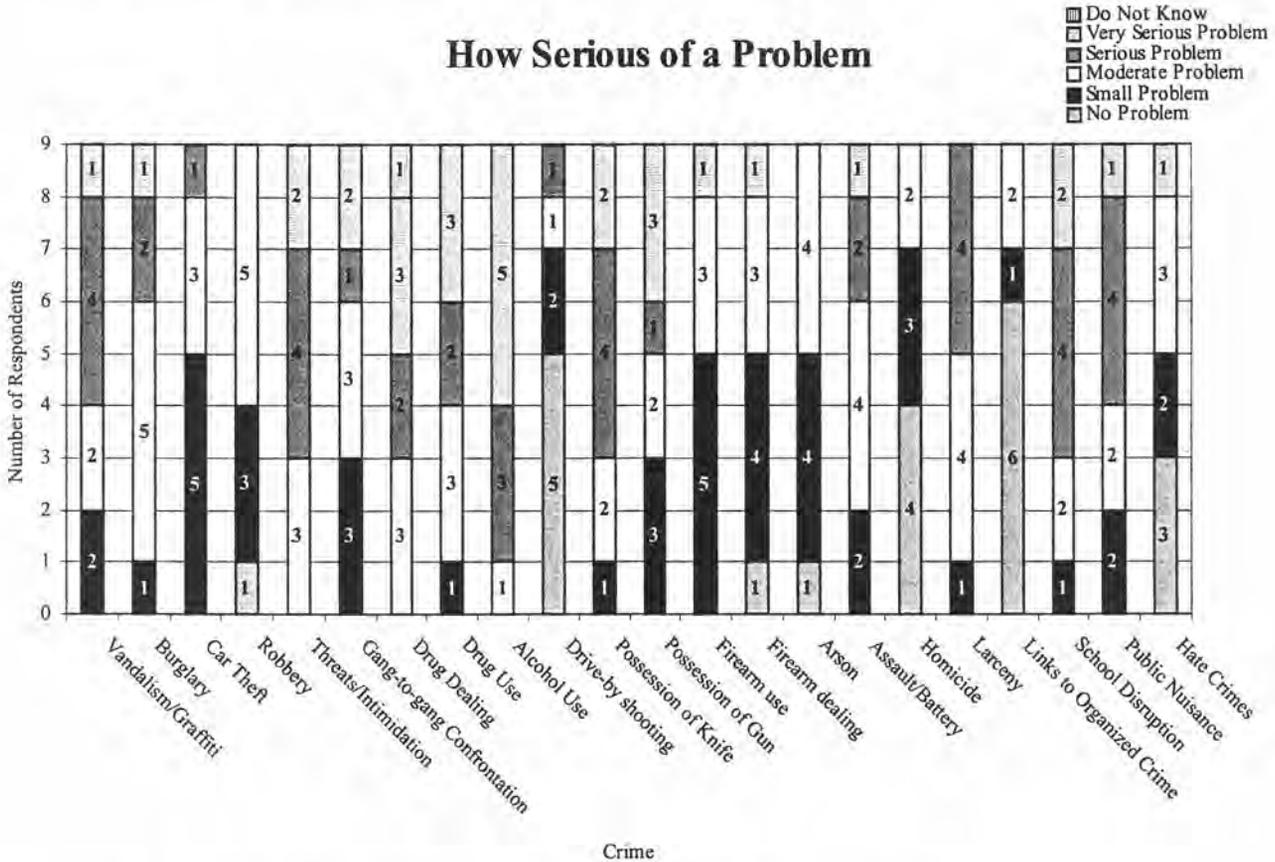
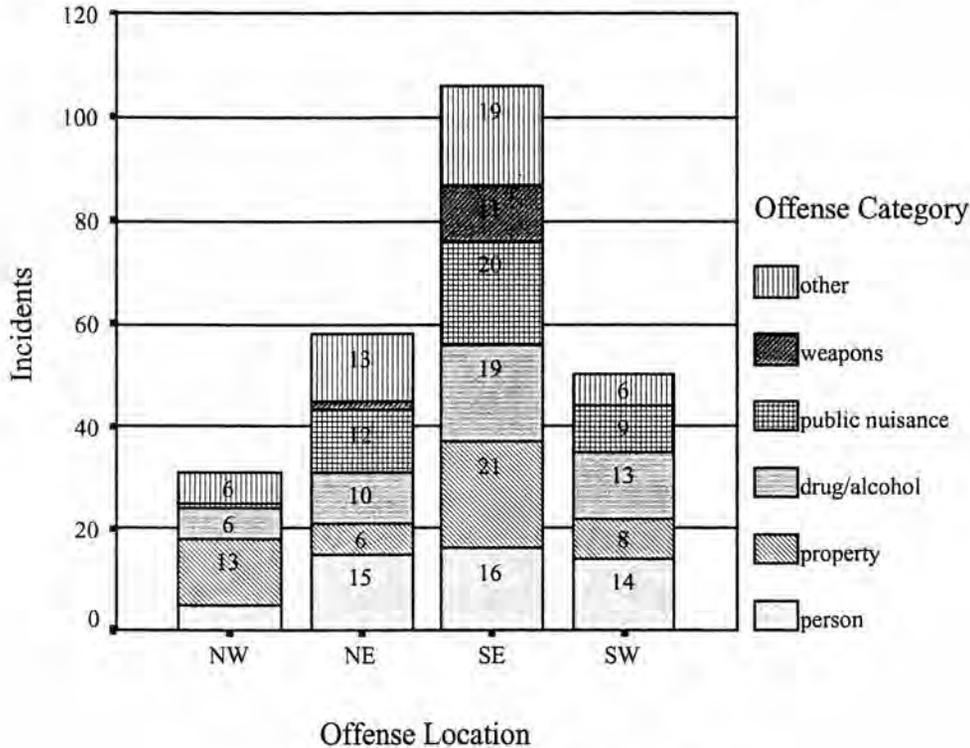


Figure 4. Service providers perception of crime in the community.

These results clearly indicate that substance use plays a great part in the gang phenomenon in Elk City. Targeting this problem for intervention and prevention efforts would seem to tackle two problems. The first problem is the substance use itself, and secondly by reducing substance use among gang members, drug and alcohol offending in particular, but other offenses as well, should conceivably go down. If the gangs were to stop offending, then by definition, they would become a peer group and not a gang; thus reducing the number of gangs and/or gang members within the community.

High rates of gang-related offending in the Southeast Quadrant. The Southeast quadrant of Elk City, Oklahoma, has the highest occurrence of all types of offenses committed by resident gang members compared to the other quadrants in the community. In the past four years 106 gang related offenses have occurred in the Southeast quadrant, 83% more than the number of offenses in the Northeast quadrant--the second highest quadrant (58 offenses) (Figure 5). Violent

offenses occurred more often in this quadrant with 44% of the gang-related violent offenses occurring here. Twenty percent of the offenses in the Southeast quadrant were property offenses, 19% were public nuisance offenses, 18% were drug and alcohol offenses, 18% were other⁴ offenses, 15% were person offenses, and 10% were weapons offenses.



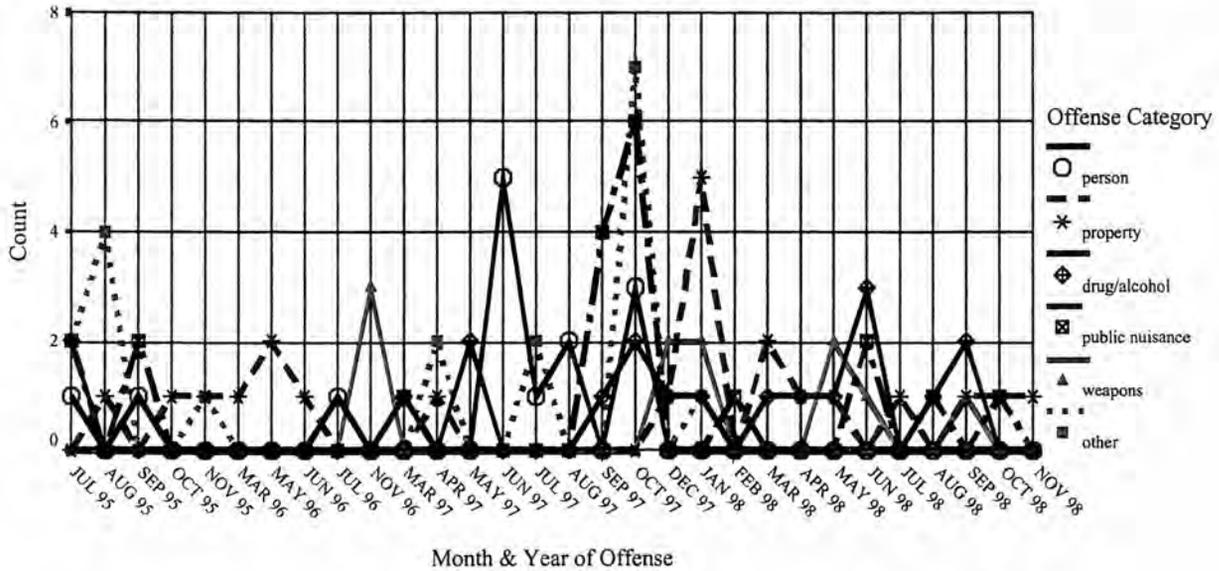
Source: Police Data

Figure 5. Offense category by location of the offense.

In the past four years, offenses in the Southeast quadrant have shown no consistency. Other offenses had the highest number of incidents during any one-month in October 1997, which was just above the public nuisance peak during the same month. Offenses against persons and property offenses peaked in June 1997 and January 1998 respectively. Drug and alcohol offenses peaked in June 1998, while weapon offenses peaked in November 1996. The Southeast quadrant has had the most consistent overall offense occurrence of the four quadrants. However, there have been gaps when no gang related offenses occurred (November 1995 to March 1996, July 1996 to November 1996, November 1996 to March 1997), and no gang related offenses by residents were recorded from November 1998 to the end of the data collection period in June 1999 (Figure 6). Overall, more offenses occurred in the Southeast quadrant than any other quadrant for three of the four years for which data was collected. It was only in fiscal year 1999 that the Northeast quadrant had more offenses than the Southeast--20 gang related offenses occurred in the Northeast, while 17 occurred in the Southeast quadrant (Figure A6). In all but the Northwest quadrant, the gang members primarily offended in the quadrant in which they

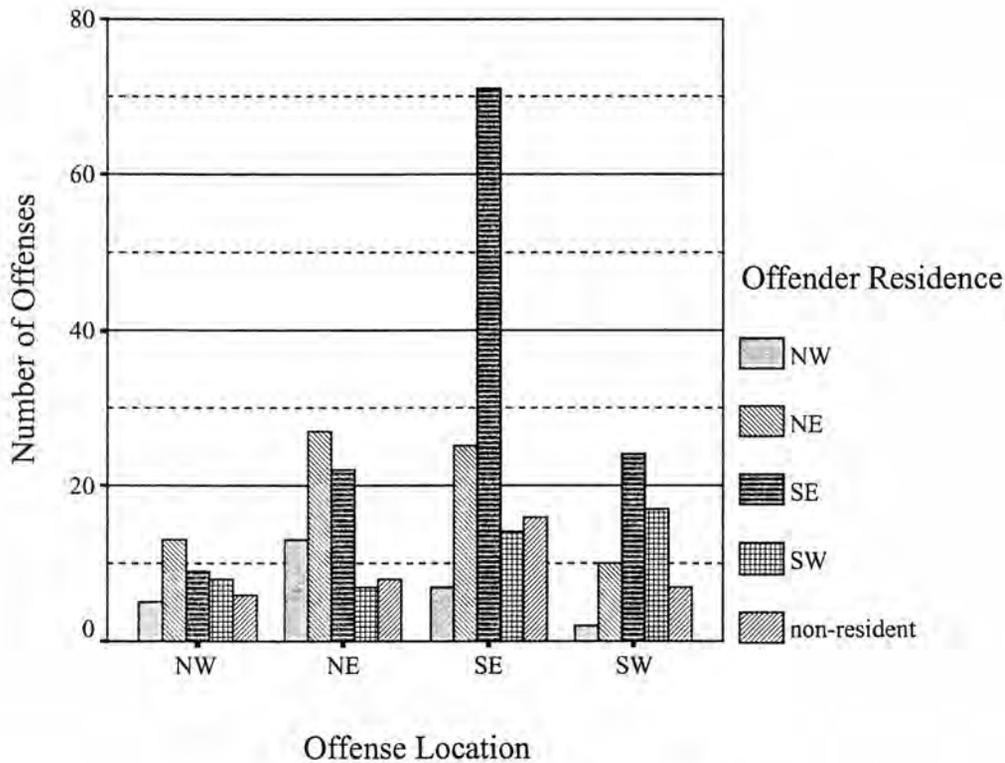
⁴ Other offenses include: traffic, other misdemeanors, obstruction, eluding, and flight from an officer.

lived (Figure 7). In the Northwest quadrant the majority of offenders resided in the Northeast quadrant.



Source: Police Data

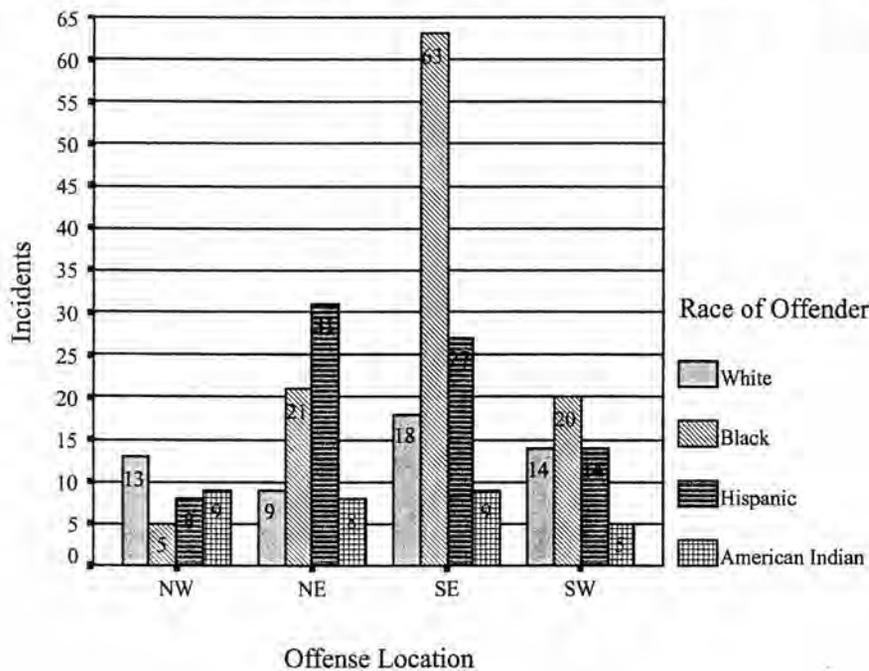
Figure 6. Offending patterns in the Southeast quadrant.



Source: Police Data

Figure 7. District where the offender resides in conjunction to the location of his or her offense.

In the Southeast, 54% of the gang related offenses were committed by Black gang members, 23% of the offenders were Hispanic, 15% were White, and 8% were Native American (Figure 8). As to the age of the offenders in the Southeast quadrant, 17% were 10-14 years-old at the time of the offense, 30% were 15-17 years-old, 28% were 18-20 years-old, 15% were 21-24 years-old, and 9% were age 25 or older (Figure 9). The Southside Locos was the most active gang in the Southeast quadrant, accounting for 54% of all the offenses, 107 Hoover account for 26% of the offenses, Westside account for 10%, Eastside Little Mafia account for 5%, the Neo-Nazi/White Supremacists accounted for 4%, and the Eastside Rolling 60's account for 1% of all the gang related offenses occurring in the Southeast quadrant in the past four years (Figure 10). In October 1997 offending in the Southeast quadrant peaked for both males and females.



Source: Police Data

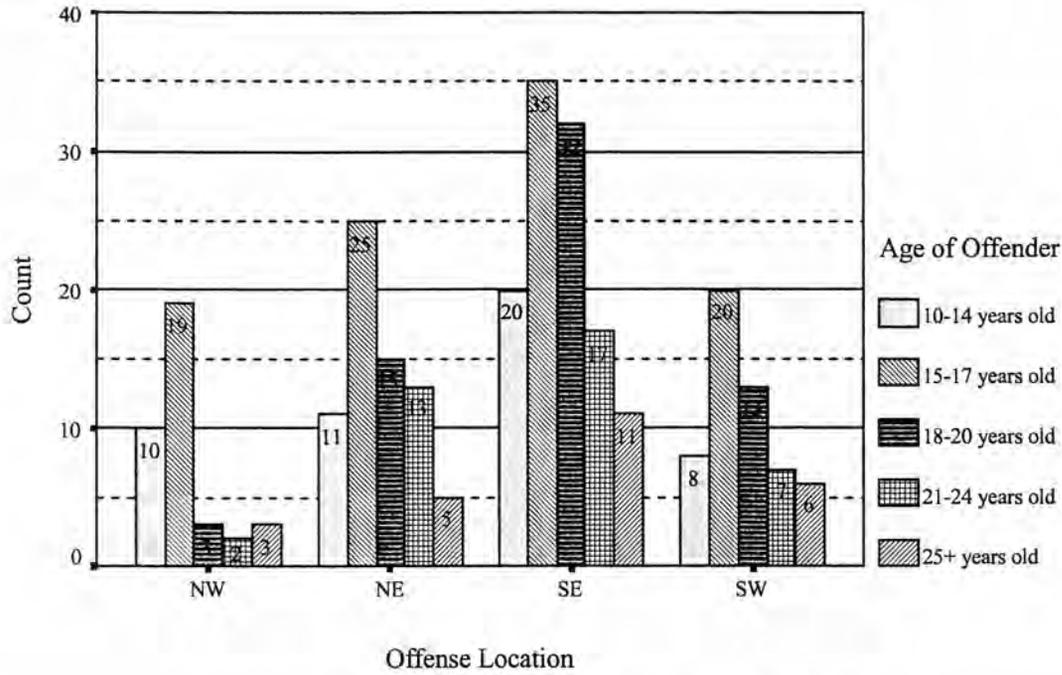
Figure 8. Location of offense by race of the offender.

From the data it is apparent that the Southeast quadrant of Elk City is the location gang offenses are most likely to occur. This is mostly a low-income area with few recreational areas, few services, one subsidized housing addition, and no school facilities, except for the Administrative Office of the School system. In addition, it is the core area for Elk City's African-American community, holds one of the two Native American communities, and part of the Hispanic community. Thus, there is a high minority population in this quadrant. However, six of the ten largest employers in the community are located in this district, as well as part of the business district. Therefore, this is an area that could improve, but it will take a concentrated effort from the community to do so.

Program Targets

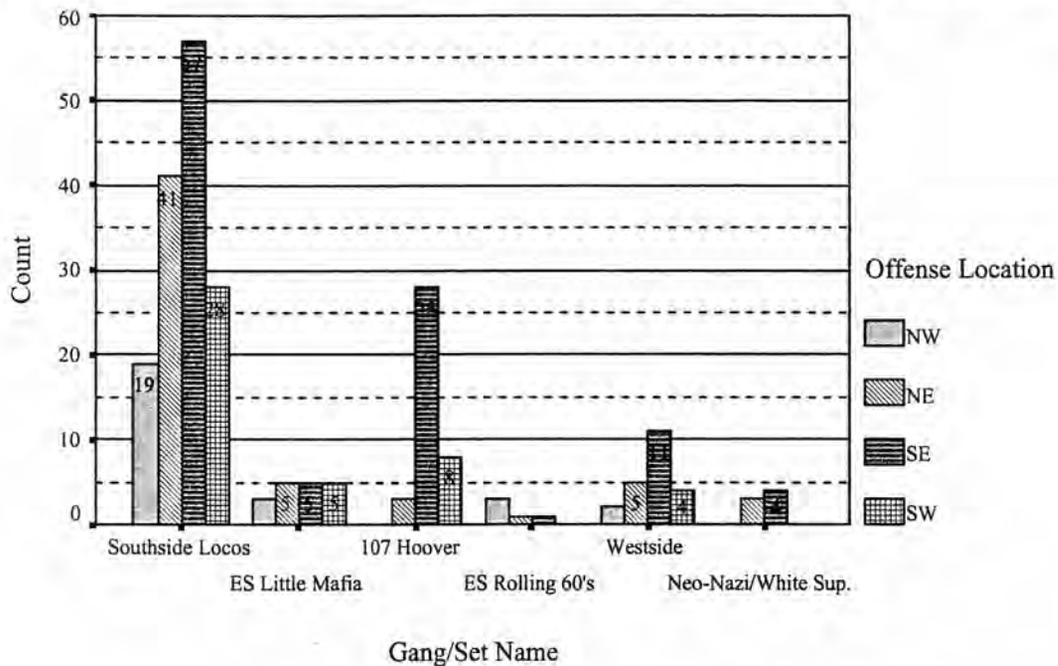
The data clearly communicate the primary characteristics of the intervention targets. These gang members are 15-17 year-old males living in the Southeast quadrant of the community, who

belong to the South Side Locos. Furthermore, they use drugs and alcohol and face several personal and family challenges. Clearly, some of the program target characteristics correspond closely with the primary problems previously articulated.



Source: Police Data

Figure 9. Location of offense by the age of the offender at the time of the offense.



Source: Police Data

Figure 10. Offense location by offenders' gang/set

Age. The three data sources that collected age related information indicated that gang members were most likely to be between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. The police data revealed that 29% of the offenses committed by gang members were committed by youth 15-17 years old at the time of the offense. Gang members who were eighteen to twenty committed 19% of the gang related offenses, 21-24 year-old gang members committed 15% of the offenses, followed by 10-14 year-olds who committed 14% of the offenses (see Table 9). Conversely, police intelligence reports indicate gang members are older. Police currently believe that only one-third of Elk City's gang members are under 18 (Table A1). It should be noted though that this is in line with the age projection of the gang members in the data base. Since the data represented four years of offending (July 1995-June 1999), those who offended at age 15 in July 1995 would now be nearly 20 years old, thus putting them in that over 18 category. An age projection of the police data shows that only 15% of those who offended in the past four years are still under age 18, while two-thirds are now over the age of 18. The two-thirds is consistent with police intelligence, which reports that two-thirds of those known or suspected to be involved in gangs are eighteen or older.

Table 9. Who is involved in gangs at incident level?

Source: Police Data

Information based on 406 cases collected by Elk City Police Department from June 1995 to June 1999.

AGE		GENDER		RESIDENCE		RACE		GANG/SET	
10-14	14%	Male	72%	Northwest	7%	White	19%	Southside Locos	40%
15-17	29%	Female	12%	Northeast	20%	Black	33%	Eastside Little Mafia	4%
18-20	19%	Unknown	16%	Southeast	33%	American Indian	9%	107 Hoover	15%
21-24	15%			Southwest	13%	Hispanic	23%	Eastside Rolling 60's	2%
25+	7%			Unknown	19%	Unknown	17%	Westside	6%
Unknown	17%			<i>Non-Resident:</i>	9%			Neo-Nazi	1%
				Neighboring County	4%			White Supremacist	2%
		Other OK County	4%			Other Gangs ¹	3%		
				Out of State	1%			Unknown	27%

*Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, therefore some may add to more than 100%

A total of 16 gangs were named, however nine of those did not have members who were residents of Elk City, these nine are included in the other category.

The school survey revealed that 60% of those who self-identified as gang members were between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. Thirty-one percent of the self-identified gang members were twelve to fourteen years old, and only 9% of those 18 and older identified themselves as gang members. The current grade classification of the self-identified gang members is as follows:

- 26% were in the 7th grade,
- 11% were in the 8th grade,
- 20% were in the 9th grade,
- 17% were sophomores,
- 15% were juniors, and
- 11% were high school seniors (Table A2).

The juxtaposition of these two statistics proves insightful, especially when you consider the surveys were administered in September. At least 18% of the gang members were older than they normally should have been for their grade classification and 62% were at the higher end of the age range for their grade classification. This being said, it could be postulated that at least

18% of the gang members have been held back at least once in school if not twice, and it is plausible that some of the 62% who are older in age for their grade may have also been held back at least once.

The gang members interviewed during the assessment were primarily (68%) between the ages of 15 and 17 when they were interviewed. Eighteen percent of the interviewed gang members were between the ages of 18 and 21, and 14% were age 10-14 (Table A6). However, while these statistics do coincide with those found in the police data and the school survey, it should be remembered that the gang members interviewed for the project were non-randomly, hand-picked and therefore do not represent all of the gang members in the community.

In addition to the previously mentioned data, the school survey and the gang member interviews document that the majority of the gang members in Elk City joined their gang around the age of thirteen or fourteen (Table A13). This means that they are joining the gangs a year or two before they appear in police records for the most part. Taken in conjunction with the police data two possibilities arise. First, even though these individuals have reportedly joined a gang, they may not immediately begin offending, or it may be that they are not identified as a gang member by the police until they are older and therefore offend under the police radar until they are identified.

From the data, it becomes evident that 15 to 17 year-olds should be the primary targets for intervention efforts. They are the largest age group involved in the gangs and also perpetrate the most offenses. This does not mean, however, that younger teenagers should be ignored. Considering the data show that they are joining the gang at age 13 or 14, more prevention efforts should be targeted at this age group and younger.

Gender. Similar to the age data, all of the sources regarding the gender of the gang members in Elk City overwhelmingly suggest that the majority of gang members are male. At the offender level, 57% of the known gang offenders were male (Table 10). Males also out-offended the females by a six to one ratio. Although males represented only 57% of the known offenders, they committed 72% of all the offenses in the past four years, whereas females who made up 11% of known gang offenders, accounted for a sparse 12% of all gang related offenses during the same time. Police intelligence reports concur that the gang members are essentially male. The latest intelligence summarizes that of the 278 known, associate or suspected gang members in the community, 208 (75%) are male. The school survey reveals similar results. Two-thirds (67.4%) of the students who identified themselves as gang involved were male. Males also represented 77% of the interviewed gang members.

Gang Affiliation. Gang affiliation was recorded in both the police data and in the gang member interviews. The school survey asked youth if their gang had a name, but did not ask them to specify the name of their gang. From the police data, eight gangs were identified to have members who were Elk City residents. Those gangs were: South Side Locos, 107 Hoover, Westside, Eastside Little Mafia, Eastside Rolling 60's, White Supremacists, Neo-Nazi, and Bounty Hunters. According to the offender level data, 23% of all offenders, both Elk City residents and non-residents were affiliated with South Side Locos (Table 10). South Side Locos were followed by Westside and 107 Hoover in number with 7% of all offenders who affiliated

with each gang. Furthermore, the incident level data reveals that the South Side Locos accounted for 40% of the gang related offenses occurring in Elk City in the past four years. Whereas, Westside and 107 Hoover accounted for 6% and 15% of all offenses respectively. Upon closer inspection, this means each member of South Side Locos comes in contact⁵ with police on average 3.4 times and commits 2.2 crimes each. Westside members average 1.7 contacts with the police and 0.6 crimes each, and 107 Hoover members average 4.2 contacts with police and 3.6 crimes each. From this, it is apparent that even though the Southside Locos outnumber all of the other gangs in the community, 107 Hoover members have more contact with the police. This is not to say that they necessarily offend more often than Southside Loco members, they are simply apprehended more often.

Table 10. Who is involved in gangs at the offender level?

Source: Police Data

Information based on 406 cases collected by Elk City Police Department from June 1995 to June 1999. This table represents the 138 individuals and the 68 unknown individuals that were connected with the cases.

GENDER		RESIDENCE		RACE		GANG/SET	
Male	57%	Northwest	4%	White	18%	Southside Locos	23%
Female	11%	Northeast	18%	Black	22%	Eastside Little Mafia	4%
Unknown	32%	Southeast	21%	American Indian	10%	107 Hoover	7%
		Southwest	8%	Hispanic	17%	Eastside Rolling 60's	2%
		Unknown	37%	Unknown	33%	Westside	7%
		<i>Non-Resident:</i>	12%			Neo-Nazi	1%
		Neighboring County	6%			White Supremacist	2%
		Other OK County	4%			Other Gangs ¹	6%
		Out of State	2%			Unknown	48%

*Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, therefore some may add to more than 100%

A total of 16 gangs were named, however nine of those did not have members who were residents of Elk City, these nine are included in the other category.

Police intelligence records show that 43.9% of known, associate, and suspected gang members are affiliated with the Southside Locos and 9.7% gang members are affiliated with Westside 107 Hoova Crips⁶ (Table A1). Of those interviewed by the assessment team, two-thirds (67%) of the 22 gang members claimed some sort of South Side Locos affiliation, whether it be Southside Locos, Southside Juniors, or Southside Locas. Eastside Little Mafia was claimed by 19% (4) of the interviewed gang members, and one (5%) gang member each claimed Westside, PBC (Playboy Crips), and 107 Hoova.

The data sources agree that Southside Locos are the largest gang in Elk City, followed by the now Westside 107 Hoova Crips. Therefore, the primary targets for intervention efforts would most likely belong to some set of the Southside Locos. However, based on offending patterns, those who belong to Westside 107 Hoova Crips should not be overlooked because their former gang, 107 Hoover, did have higher rates of offending per member.

⁵ Contact with police include: field contacts, written warnings, information reports naming the offender, and offenses in which case numbers are assigned to the offense.

⁶ Since the time of the data collection Westside and 107 Hoover have joined together creating one gang, the Westside 107 Hoova Crips.

Location of Residence. Place of residence was recorded in both the police data, when known, and in the gang member interviews. The closest to residence location the school survey got was to ask students if they lived in the in town, in the country, or on a farm. Primarily gang members seemed to reside in the Southeast quadrant. At the offender level, 21.4% of known gang members live in the Southeast quadrant, 4.4% live in the Northwest, 17.5% live in the Northeast, and 8.3% live in the Southwest quadrant of Elk City, the remainder either do not live in Elk City or their residence location is unknown (Table 10). Incident level data indicates that 33% of offenders lived in the Southeast quadrant, 7% lived in the Northwest, 20% lived in the Northeast, and 13% lived in the Southwest. Upon closer examination, this means that those living in the Southeast and the Southwest quadrants came in contact with the police an average of 3 times each. Those in the Northeast had an average of 2.2 contacts with the police, while Northwest residents had an average of 3.1 contacts with the police. In terms of actual cases, Southeast and Southwest gang member residents averaged 2.2 cases each, Northwest residents averaged 1.6 cases each, and Northeast residents averaged 1.5 cases each.

In terms of actual offense location, more offenses occurred in the Southeast quadrant than any other quadrant for three of the four years for which data was collected. It was only in fiscal year 1999 that the Northeast quadrant had more offenses than the Southeast--20 gang related offenses occurred in the Northeast, and 17 occurred in the Southeast quadrant (Figure A6). In all but the Northwest quadrant, the gang members primarily offended in the quadrant in which they lived (Figure 7). In the Northwest quadrant the majority of offenders resided in the Northeast quadrant.

From the gang member interviews, 41% (9) of the interviewees reported they lived in the Southeast quadrant, 34% (7) lived in the Northeast, and 14% (3) each lived in the Northwest and Southwest quadrants (Table A6). From this data, it appears that those living in the Southeast quadrant are the primary targets for intervention, followed by the Northeast residents. Since the Southeast quadrant has both the highest number of offender residents and the highest number of offenses occurring there, the youth in that area should also be targeted for prevention efforts as well. Thus, it appears that those living in the Southeast quadrant are the primary targets for intervention, followed by the Northeast residents. Additionally, the Southern quadrants appear to have the highest population of minority residents, as well as being the central location for low-income housing in Elk City. In light of this, the argument could be made that the youth in this area should be considered high-risk for gang involvement and targeted for strong prevention efforts as well.

Substance Use. As seen earlier in the priority problem section, substance use is prevalent among gang members. The data clearly indicate that gang members are likely to be involved in some sort of substance use and possibly abuse. Thus, targeting gang-involved individuals for intervention efforts from this standpoint would be reasonable. Clearly, prevention efforts are also needed within the community because both gang involved and non-gang involved youth are trying and using a variety of substances. This propensity for substance use also points to the last target characteristic, which is personal and familial challenges. The research is very clear that youth who use or abuse substances often turn to those substances in order to cope with other challenges in their lives.

Personal and Familial Challenges. The gang member interview provided the most specific information from gang members about the challenges they faced in their families and personal lives. The school survey asked a few questions related to family and personal situation, it also addressed several risk factors that the youth may face.

When interviewed, 82% (18) of the gang members had one or more family stressors occur in their family in the past year. Of those gang members, 41% (9) had five or more family stressors occur in the past year, and 14% (3) had all of the family stressors that were inquired about happen to their family in the past year (Table A6). The most common family stressors these youths faced were as follows: 50% (11) had a close family member arrested in the past year, 50% had a close family member in a gang, and 50% had a close relative die in the past year. Drug abuse was a problem in 36% of the families and 32% had domestic violence occurring in their homes. Other issues that they faced in their families included close family members who had family relationship problems, job related problems, income related problems and family members who were victimized by both gang and non-gang crimes. Results from the school survey revealed that 45% of gang involved students and 34% of non-gang involved students had a close family member with a drug or alcohol problem (Figure A18). Gang involved students were also more likely to have a sibling who was involved in delinquent activities.

In addition to having challenges within their family situations, many of the gang members who were interviewed also faced many personal challenges as well. Twenty of the 22 individuals interviewed were unemployed, twenty had been suspended from school at one time or another, 41% (9) had been expelled from school, and 4 had dropped out of school at one time (Table A6). However, of the four that had dropped out, one later returned to school, and one earned their GED. Two of the gang members had children of their own, 41% lived with a single parent, one lived with a foster parent, and two each lived with their grandparents or a parent and a step-parent. Additionally, a higher percentage of gang involved students (4.5%) spoke a language other than English at home compared to non-gang involved students (1.5%) (Figure 11).

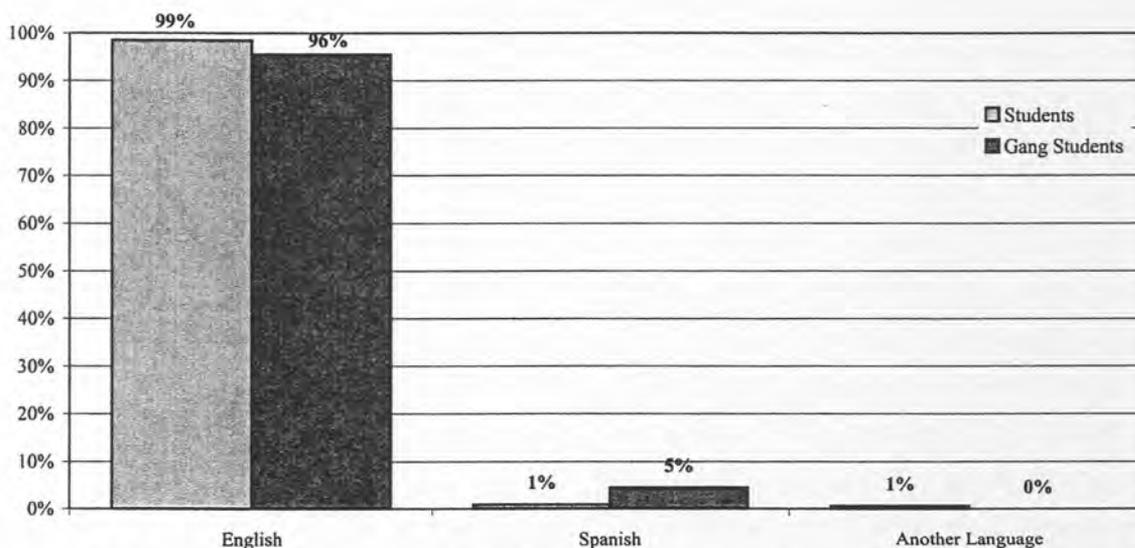


Figure 11. Primary language spoken at home by students responding to the school survey.

Findings from the school survey show gang involved students' families are much more transient than non-gang involved students' families. Gang youth are more likely to move than non-gang youth. Indeed, 76% of gang involved students have moved three or more times since Kindergarten, while only 43% of non-gang involved students have moved that often (Figure A26). The greatest difference is found when comparing students who have lived in 7 or more homes since Kindergarten; 29% of gang-involved students have moved seven or more times, whereas, only 11% of non-gang involved students had moved that often. Furthermore, only 5% of gang involved students have never moved, compared to 26% of non-gang involved students.

Similar to the challenges faced by family members, interviewed gang members encountered many of the same problems themselves. In the past year, 27% faced personal drug abuse problems, 18% had encountered a domestic violence situation, 23% had been a victim of a gang crime, 27% had been a victim of a non-gang crime, 41% had been arrested, 32% had family relationship problems, and 9% each had job related problems or income related problems (Table 7). Additionally, 18% had lived in a group home or halfway house in the past year, 41% had lived in a jail or correctional institution, 14% had lived in a hospital or treatment program, and 9% had spent part of the year moving from place to place. The majority of the gang members personally knew at least one or more adults who had: used drugs, sold or dealt drugs, or had gotten drunk or high in the past year (Table 9). In all, 59% had been on probation, 32% had been in juvenile detention, 27% had been in a juvenile correctional institution, and 9% had been in adult detention in the past year.

As mentioned earlier, the school survey assessed two protective factors and seventeen different risk factors. In terms of protective factors within the community, clearly non-gang involved students from Merritt and Elk City receive many more opportunities and rewards for pro-social involvement than their gang involved counterparts. Similarly, non-gang involved students scored much lower on the risk factor scales than gang involved students. In fact, non-gang involved students scored anywhere from 9% to 119% lower than gang involved students (Table A11). In comparison to the CTC matched sample, gang members scored 2% to 54% higher, and 2% to 66% higher than the national average on the risk factor scales. In eleven of the seventeen risk factors, gang involved students scores were 50% or higher than the scores of non-gang involved students from Elk City and Merritt. Those risk factors included: low neighborhood attachment (51%)⁷, community disorganization (81%), laws and norms favorable to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs use (69%), lack of family supervision (67%), lack of family discipline (69%), a family history of antisocial behavior (62%), academic failure (54%), peer antisocial behavior (72%), peer attitudes favorable to anti-social behavior (119%), early initiation of antisocial behavior (80%) and impulsiveness (57%).

The data distinctly show gang involved youth face a multitude of personal challenges and risks within their day-to-day lives. From the school survey it is clear that gang involved students are at much higher risk for atypical behavior when compared to both non-gang involved students from Elk City and Merritt and to the National Communities That Care matched group. Additionally, since for the most part, not just one stressor is present in these youths' lives, but several, it is not much of a stretch to see how these youth might become involved in non-

⁷ Percentages represent the difference between the scores of gang involved and non-gang involved students on those particular risk factors. For instance, on low neighborhood attachment, gang students scored 51% higher than non-gang involved students.

normative peer groups and behaviors. Hence, personal and familial challenges are without a doubt a contributing factor to youth gang involvement. Consequently, youth facing such situations should be considered at higher risk for such behavior and therefore be targeted for both intervention and prevention efforts.

Available Resources

Community Mobilization. Within the community mobilization domain there are two resources currently available in Elk City. The first is the Juvenile Drug Court, which was established in Sayre, Oklahoma, in 1998 and has since serviced 26 individuals. However, for youth to become involved in drug court they must have some sort of criminal charge pending against them or be adjudicated in need of supervision. Drug court is a post-adjudication service in which juveniles are required to comply with the program rules and stay clean of substance use. They receive treatment for substance abuse, family counseling, group and individual counseling, and tutoring if needed.

The second resource currently available in Elk City is the Rural Gang Initiative. However, at this time, this resource is not offering any services to youth in the community.

Social Intervention. There are several programs within the community that could be seen as social intervention resources. These include: Youth Boxing program, Girl and Boy Scouts, church youth groups, Teen PRIDE, youth recreation leagues, Teen Court, Character First curriculum, Great Expectation curriculum, Red Rock Behavioral Services, Great Plains Youth and Family Services, Multi-County Youth Services, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Youth Boxing program started in the Summer of 1999 through a police mentoring grant from the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA). The program is located about two miles west of town and membership is currently limited to target high-risk and minority youth. After the grant runs its course, the program will be opened up to other interested youth in the community. Currently, the program is free, however, there may have to be a minimal charge once the grant runs out. Transportation to the facility is available for those who cannot get there themselves. The program runs Monday through Thursday from 3:30pm to 6:00pm and on Saturdays from 1:00pm to 4:00 p.m..

Both Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts are available in the community. However, it is unlikely that those who would be targeted by the RGI would be involved, or interested in Scouts. Furthermore, the Scout Master contacted by the assessment team was not interested in speaking with us, nor did that person feel there was a gang problem in Elk City.

There are several different church youth groups active within the community. Some of these groups are more receptive than others about finding a place within their organization for youth who are at high-risk of gang involvement or are gang involved. It is also questionable how receptive high-risk youth and gang involved youth would be to getting involved in a church youth program.

Teen PRIDE, begun in 1996, is a program sponsored by the City of Elk City and was developed to meet the diverse needs of the teenage population. It has an open membership for youth 13 to 18 years of age and a minimal \$5 yearly membership fee created mostly for record keeping purposes. This program sponsors the Elk City Teen Court, the Teen Advisory Council, recreational trips to various places, and provides supervision for school or court-ordered community service. The majority of members are not high-risk youth.

There are a few youth recreation leagues offered in the community. There are summer baseball and softball leagues, and spring and fall soccer leagues. Anyone can join the leagues if they are interested; however, there are participation fees that restrict who could be involved. There is also the issue of transportation to games and practices that may restrict youth from becoming involved in such activities.

Youth are involved in the Teen Court program in one of two ways: as Teen Court staff or as respondents. First offenders have an opportunity to complete the requirements of the teen jury and if successful, the charges against them will be dropped. The municipal court judge will postpone the arraignment until the youth completes Teen Court. This is a sentencing hearing as the respondent has previously pled guilty to the charge. Many times they are ordered to serve as Teen Court staff and often they will return after their sentence period is over to participate in the Teen Court again. The Teen Court has been operating in Elk City since 1997. Eighty-six juvenile cases have gone through Teen Court and over 50 students have completed training as Teen Court staff members.

Character First curriculum was implemented this year in the Elk City school system in grade Kindergarten through 6th. The curriculum teaches character traits through nature study, people in history, arts and crafts, and music. The school response is positive and there is discussion about implementing the adolescent curriculum in the future.

The Great Expectation program was implemented in Elk City schools five years ago. It is a training program for teachers providing classroom management skills through respect, dignity and accountability. Over 75% of the teachers in Elk City (K-12th grade) have completed this training.

Red Rock Behavioral Services provides mental health services to people of any age. They provide individual, group, and family counseling, as well as drug and alcohol counseling. Currently, they are the treatment provider for the Juvenile Drug Court. Costs are on a sliding scale based on the clients' income; Title XIX Medicaid funds are also billed for services provided to children.

Great Plains Youth and Family Services, like Red Rock Behavioral Services, provide individual, group, and family counseling to children and adults. They also work with the Healthy Families program and provide in-home services such as parenting skills and child nutrition information. Costs are on a sliding scale based on the clients' income, while Title XIX Medicaid funds are also utilized.

Additionally, Multi-County Youth Services provides individual, group, and family counseling. They, however, are based in Clinton, Oklahoma, a community about 25 miles from Elk City. They also have outreach workers who work with particular populations in the Elk City area. For instance, one outreach worker provides mentoring services to Native American youths in Elk City. Again, costs are on a sliding scale based on the clients' income and Title XIX Medicaid funds.

There are two adolescent Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings a week with plans for a third group to start soon. The meetings are held at the Office of Youth & Family Programs. There are no adult NA groups currently meeting.

Presently, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Elk City primarily serves adults. When the Juvenile Drug Court first started, youth were required to attend seven AA meetings per week. This created some friction within the groups. Youths are not barred from attending the local AA meetings, however, if adolescents do attend it is of their own accord. There are 10 meetings held each week at the AA Clubhouse and the Catholic Church.

The Lincoln Teen Center is a grass-roots teen center being developed by a local non-profit, non-denominational youth ministry in an old community gymnasium. The Gym is located in the Southeast quadrant of the community and the proprietor hopes to be able to sustain the facility on donations from the community, in order to avoid a membership fee for youth who wish to participate in the Center. The Teen Center hopes to open its doors to all youth who are 13-19 years of age residing in western Oklahoma. The goal is to provide a safe, drug and alcohol free environment for the youth of Elk City to gather. This community gymnasium plans to offer basketball, a skateboard park, pool and ping-pong tables, video games, weight lifting, boxing, and wrestling. Adult mentors, volunteers and tutors will be an integral part of the programs at the Center. Currently, renovations are still underway on the facility and the doors have not opened.

Opportunities Provision. Under opportunities provision there are four resources currently available, one other resource is currently in limbo, but will be active again in the Summer of 2001. These four include the Western Oklahoma Literacy Center, tutoring, Alternative school, and Vo-Tech education.

The Western Oklahoma Literacy Center, or the Learning Center as it is commonly known, provides literacy tutors to anyone who seeks their services, but currently their clients are primarily adults. They also work with those who receive TANF funds. They are willing to provide literacy tutors for youth if needed.

Tutoring is offered through the Office of Youth & Family Programs twice a week in math, science, and English. There are approximately 10 to 20 youth who participate every week. To publicize the program, flyers are posted at the Middle, Junior High, and High Schools, school personnel also make referrals to the program. Many of the students who participate are also from the Alternative School. There is no fee for the tutoring.

The Elk City Alternative school, started in 1997, is an after-school program that holds classes Monday through Thursday from 4:00pm to 8:00pm. In the 1999-2000 school year a Junior High component was added to the school. The school can service approximately 55 students at any one time, and there is an extensive waiting list for participation. Students referred to the Alternative School program are unsuccessful in the traditional setting, primarily due to behavioral problems, too many absences, substance abuse problems or needing to work during the day to subsidize a family income.

Vo-Tech education is offered free to students enrolled in grades 10 through 12 in the Elk City School system. Adolescents who participate in the programs are bussed to Burns Flat, the main campus for the Western Oklahoma Technology Center. Those who are not currently in school, but interested in taking classes at the Vo-tech must pay for classes and find transportation to either the Burns Flat or Sayre campus.

The Southwestern Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA) has a summer jobs program for high-risk adolescents (JTPA). Unfortunately, funding for this program has been discontinued. SWODA has applied for funding for the summer youth employment program, allocations would begin in the summer of 2001. Funding is contingent upon providing the services to high-risk and out-of-school youth. Another program SWODA offers is job training for those 18 years and older. They will pay for an individual to work and be trained on the job for six months, with the understanding that the training employer will consider hiring the trainee as a full time employee at the end of the six months. SWODA is located in Burns Flat, however, their counselors will go to the client to arrange services.

Suppression. There are six agencies currently involved in the suppression of gangs in Elk City. These include the Elk City Police Department (ECPD), ECPD Gang Suppression Unit, Beckham County Sheriff's Office, Office of Juvenile Affairs, and both the county and municipal courts.

The Elk City Police Department has been one of the lead agencies in recognizing the growth of gangs within the community. As far back as 1993, ECPD has documented the presence of gangs in Elk City. Currently, the Department works under a zero tolerance, high suppression policy. One of the main sources of gang information within the Department are the detailed, individual files they keep for each known, suspected, and associate gang member. Each time contact is made with that individual it is documented within the gang file. Inactive files are pulled about once a year to maintain the accuracy and recentness of the files.

There are few law enforcement strategies, if any, currently in place to prevent and intervene gang activity. Those that are used, are unofficial, and differ from officer to officer. Some officers are more willing to try to get to know the youth personally and encourage them to stay away from gangs. On the other hand, some officers do not believe it is their job to counsel youth, but only arrest them when they break the law. The Department also trying to make parents responsible for their children by citing parents for encouraging minors to offend. Furthermore, there has been increased communication between the school system and the police department. Officers now regularly patrol school campuses; they have also made presentations to school staff concerning the gang situation in Elk City.

One step the Elk City Police Department has taken against gang activity in the community was to create the ECPD Gang Suppression Unit in September 1997. The Gang Suppression Unit maintains the gang files and works to keep the Department and the community informed about gangs and gang activity in Elk City.

The Beckham County Sheriff's Office takes a direct zero tolerance approach when they encounter suspected gang activity. However, since they are a county-wide agency, and vastly understaffed, they do not encounter as much activity as the ECPD. When they do come into contact with gang members it is usually drug related, out of the ECPD jurisdiction, or they are assisting the ECPD.

The County and Municipal courts serving Elk City take very different approaches to the gang situation. The Municipal court judge prefers not to be aware of a juvenile's gang status because he wants to judge the youth's behavior and not their life choices. On the other hand, the County court judge is made well aware of a youth's gang affiliation and has been known to include probation provisions directed at prohibiting such behavior and affiliation with other known gang members. Within the District Attorney's office gang members are treated as such. DA's will only file on cases that meet the criteria to prove a case, but they might be willing to file a weaker, but nonetheless provable case if the gang member is actively recruiting.

The Office of Juvenile Affairs primarily serves youth who have been adjudicated by the court, but also youth who have been referred by family members and the school system. One of their main services is juvenile probation. Depending on the case, probation can be fairly lenient with few restrictions, to very strict, where youth must account for their whereabouts almost hourly, or be placed on electronic monitoring. The OJA is also the gatekeeper for juvenile correctional institutions and treatment facilities.