

USING TRAFFIC BARRIERS TO “DESIGN OUT” CRIME

**A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF LAPD'S OPERATION
CUL-DE-SAC**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	3
Chapter One: Introduction and Background	12
Purpose	12
Historical Development	12
Planning OCDS Program	15
OCDS: 1990-1991	24
OCDS: 1992 to Present	26
Related Programs	29
Organization of Report	34
Chapter Two: Methods	36
Analytic Strategy	36
Data	36
Limitations	37
Analytic Method	38
Displacement Analysis	40
Agency Support	41
Chapter Three: Statistical Findings	44
Overall Crime Reductions	44
Murder and Drive-by Shootings	44
Predatory Crimes	54
Property Crimes	58
School Effects	65
Chapter Four: Interview Findings	74
Community Member: Positive Comments	74
Drive-by Shootings	78
Fear of Crime	79
Fear of Retaliation	81
Routine Activity Changes	81
Community Members: Negative Comments	83
Lesser Evils	83
Appearance	84
Atmosphere	85
Emergency Access	86
Gang Interviews	87
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations	90

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report is a program analysis of Operation Cul-de-Sac. Operation Cul-de-Sac was implemented in 1990 by the Los Angeles Police Department and involved the closure of 14 streets with permanent traffic barriers within a South Central Los Angeles community deemed the "most dangerous" for gang crime in the entire City. The program was primarily constructed to "design out" drive-by shootings taking place between rival gangs who frequented this community. Operation Cul-de-Sac is arguably the first attempt in the nation by police to counter predatory gang activity using traffic barriers. Because the program was carried out under the Daryl Gates Administration, Operation Cul-de-Sac remains a highly controversial program within the City of the Los Angeles and within the Los Angeles Police Department. The purpose of this report is to provide an objective analysis of the program's potential contributions to the understanding of how and under what circumstances traffic barriers and related community re-design strategies can be used to prevent criminal activity.

Key Findings

Overall Crime Reduction

Overall crime reductions in the OCDS program area for predatory crimes (including murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault and purse snatch) and property crimes (burglary, grand theft, auto theft, burglary from auto, theft from auto, theft from persons, bike theft and other theft) decreased approximately 20% during the first year of OCDS program operation (1990), as compared to the number of crimes in 1989 before the program began. The second year decrease (1991) in all crime categories was approximately 14%, as compared to 1989 figures. In 1992, which marks the first year OCDS

program effects were rendered ineffective by budget cuts and policy changes, crime increased by 14% to its 1989 pre-program levels.

Murder and Drive-by Shootings

- General Program Effects

The incidence of drive-by shootings (using murder as a proxy measure) and murder appear to have been reduced significantly by the introduction of traffic barriers. The number murders (the majority of which were gang related) before OCDS averaged 5 or more per year without the traffic barriers; with the traffic barriers, only 1 murder was recorded in the two year period during which the OCDS program was fully operative.

- Displacement Effects

No displacement effect for murders (and drive-by shootings) was discovered; instead, evidence suggests that the traffic barriers may have resulted in "positive displacement": a reduction in murder within patrol areas surrounding the OCDS program area.

- Adaptation Effects

There was no evidence of criminal adaptation to the traffic barriers with respect to murder, because murder remained low for the entire two year active OCDS program period. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that "walk-up," bicycle or any other adaptive method for carrying out a gang murder was used to replace opportunities for vehicular assaults (i.e., drive-by shootings) which were removed by the traffic barriers.

Predatory Crimes

- General Program Effects

Predatory crimes dropped approximately 8% the first year and 37% the second year the traffic barriers were in place, compared to the year before (1989) OCDS began. However, the majority of this drop in crime is due to declines in the number of aggravated assaults reported in the OCDS program area. It is here assumed that this finding is possibly explained by less frequent contact between gang members via autos as a result of street closures by traffic barriers.

- Displacement and Adaptation Effects

Predatory crimes did not appear to be displaced because such crimes in patrol areas contiguous to OCDS remained stable during the time the traffic barriers were fully in place. Likewise, adaptation effects were not likely because predatory crimes continued to drop for both years the traffic barriers were fully in place.

Property Crimes

- General Program Effects

The effects of traffic barriers on property crime, as evidenced here by findings from this study, do not support a clear OCDS program effect. Although property crime decreased substantially during the first year that the traffic barriers were in place (approximately 31%), similar reductions were evidenced in areas contiguous to the traffic barrier site. It is possible that the OCDS program resulted in a decrease in property crime in these areas as well, but such a conclusion cannot be confirmed by the data included in this analysis. However, during the program's second year of operation, property crimes within the traffic barrier community, and in areas contiguous to the

community, increased to their pre-program levels. This may indicate an "adaptation" effect.

- Displacement and Adaptation

There is no evidence of traditional displacement effects for property crime; however, "positive" displacement may have been responsible for declines in crime within contiguous patrol areas. Increases in crime present during the second year of full OCDS operation may indicate criminal adaptation.

School Effects

- Reduction in Truancy

Data for average daily attendance figures for Jefferson High School (located within the OCDS program area) provide some indication that truancy decreased by approximately 200 students per day approximately one week after the traffic barriers were installed by LAPD. Interviews with parents support this conclusion by suggesting that parents and students were less fearful of criminal victimization resulting from walking to and from Jefferson High School after the traffic barriers were installed.

Community Interviews

- Fear of Crime and Routine Activities

Interviews with residents of the OCDS program area, some of whom were students and street gang members, suggested that fears over suffering victimization were reduced following the installation of traffic barriers. In general, residents expressed feelings that they "were more in control of their neighborhood" and that "the streets had gotten quieter" as a result of the traffic barriers. Students and their parents felt that routes between their homes and local schools were safer, and truancy at the local high school was reduced after the traffic barriers were in place. Some residents claiming to be street gang members reported that they felt safer as well.

Negative Aspects of Traffic Barriers

- Appearance, Upkeep and Community Participation

Resident interview revealed several points of dissatisfaction with the traffic barriers. Included among these were the general appearance of the barriers, the failure of the LAPD to maintain the barriers once they were installed, and the lack of opportunity provided by the LAPD for community members to participate in the planning and development of the OCDS traffic barriers program.

Policy Recommendations

The OCDS program represents, in many respects, the untapped potential of traffic barriers as a crime prevention tool. This is because the traffic barrier configuration used by LAPD for OCDS was targeted specifically toward one variety of crime (i.e., drive-by shootings) and did not take into account factors that may have been operative in creating or reducing other criminal opportunities. Lessons learned from this pioneering effort can be significantly improved upon in future traffic barrier crime prevention programs. Listed below are policy recommendations for such future efforts:

1. A "community approach" rather than "single street approach" should be used to guide the placement of traffic barriers.

The OCDS program was purely experimental with regard to using traffic barriers within an entire crime-ridden community, rather than on individual crime-ridden streets. Investigations of other sites in the Los Angeles area where individual streets have been blocked by traffic barriers did not show promising results. It appears as though individual street blockages do not result in the same crime reduction benefits as do entire community blockages, such as that used in the OCDS program. There are two reasons to support this conclusion.

First, while residents on blocked individual streets do report that their streets are quieter and have less vehicle traffic, residents living on streets immediately surrounding these areas complain that traffic from the blocked street is merely "re-routed" to their neighborhood. Second, residents on these streets complain that they are increased targets for crime as the result of "re-routed" offenders who drive through their neighborhood while looking for criminal opportunities. In other words, there may be a significant displacement effects associated with single traffic barriers used to block single streets. General community road blockages, such as those used in the OCDS program, appear to have many more crime prevention benefits than single road blockages. Ostensibly, community blockages have the potential to change routine activities of offenders, and to reduce criminal opportunity by increasing defensible space, while single street blockages do not.

2. Major schools and locations of potential criminal activity should be included in traffic barriers configurations

Numerous research studies have identified that crime, especially of a property variety, is likely to concentrate in and around neighborhoods where there is a school. This is particularly true when the school is large in size. In the OCDS program, a major high school was included in the traffic barrier configuration. It is believed that this served to curb offending not only by reducing opportunities to commit crimes around the school, but also by reducing truancy; which, in turn, reduced the number of potential victims lingering in and around neighborhood streets. Parks and other popular public gather spots for teenagers and school age adolescents may be included in this category as well.

3. Use traffic barriers to change crime causing routine activity patterns.

If the OCDS traffic barriers were successful in preventing crime by changing routine activities that lead to crime, it was quite by accident.

However, future traffic barriers projects could be developed to do what the OCDS program may have accidentally accomplished. This can be carried out as follows:

- Before deciding on a final configuration for traffic barriers, survey existing traffic flows within the target community and identify major flows passing through high crime opportunity areas (chances are, these areas will report high numbers of crimes; but they may not, due to high numbers of unreported crime).
- In looking for high crime opportunity areas, try to identify streets, places and individuals that may be considered "attractive targets" for crime. These may include liquor stores, fast food restaurants, schools, parks, streets with cars that are ungaraged at night, locations that are poorly lighted, "fancy" or high theft cars parked on streets, gangs, gang "hang outs," parking lots and so forth.
- Configure new traffic flow patterns to streets that provide the lowest criminal opportunity, i.e, streets that do not allow parked cars, or streets with steady flows of traffic that do not allow stopping, or streets that are bordered by open fields. The general idea here is to alter the routines of offenders who use streets on a regular basis which may result in the crossing of paths with likely victims or likely victim households or victim businesses.

4. Use traffic barriers to increase "defensible space."

The ability to restore defensible space is perhaps the most beneficial crime prevention attribute of the traffic barrier. To create defensible space,

the traffic barriers must be used to increase the "span of control" of persons in areas plagued by crime. The general notion here is to use the traffic barrier to increase the visibility of activities and people unfamiliar to a particular location. This is carried out by restricting the flow of unfamiliar activities and people into neighborhoods that have "lost control" due to an unrestricted flow of vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

Zones should be established with traffic barriers that maximize defensible space. In configuring these zones, "natural guardianship" of particular locations should be taken into account. If there are no eyes and ears within a skillfully designed defensible space zone, such zones will not deter crime. In particular, locations that provide constant visibility of traffic barrier zones are most favorable. Persons that remain home during daytime hours (i.e., housewives, retired persons), windows that are lighted at night that provide clear views of streets, churches or other gathering places that provide high profile activities during daytime and nighttime hours are examples of "natural surveillance" sources that should be the centerpoint around which defensible space zones are created with traffic barriers.

5. Allow community members to participate in the planning and design of traffic barrier placement.

Community acceptance of traffic barrier programs will be enhanced greatly when community members are allowed to participate in all phases of the program development. OCDS incorporated one community meeting prior to the installation of traffic barriers. According to LAPD officials who initiated OCDS and to community members who experienced the program, this one meeting was not enough. Again, community members need to be actively involved in every step of the traffic barrier program planning process.

The Future of Traffic Barrier Programs

In Los Angeles, and perhaps elsewhere, traffic barriers remain an extremely controversial crime prevention tool. It is without doubt that the OCDS traffic barrier program became mired in political controversies focusing on the LAPD and its relationship with the citizens of the City of Los Angeles. If future efforts to create traffic barrier crime prevention programs are to be even remotely successful, they must first be designed to address potential "political" barriers.

Central to addressing political concerns about the motives surrounding the placement of traffic barriers is the question "Are police the proper sponsors of such programs?" If there is unanimous public opinion that the police are indeed the best sponsors, then such programs should proceed as did the police-sponsored OCDS program in Los Angeles. However, in the face of even minor public opposition to police sponsored traffic barrier programs, it is here strongly advised that alternative community-based organizations should assume the responsibility for designing and implementing these potentially controversial (yet effective) crime prevention programs.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Purpose

This report is a program analysis of Operation Cul-de-Sac. Operation Cul-de-Sac was implemented in 1990 by the Los Angeles Police Department and involved the closure of 14 streets with permanent traffic barriers within a South Central Los Angeles community deemed the "most dangerous" for gang crime in the entire City. The program was primarily constructed to "design out" drive-by shootings taking place between rival gangs who frequented this community. Operation Cul-de-Sac is arguably the first attempt in the nation by police to counter predatory gang activity using traffic barriers. Because the program was carried out under the Daryl Gates Administration, Operation Cul-de-Sac remains a highly controversial program within the City of the Los Angeles and within the Los Angeles Police Department. The purpose of this report is to provide an objective analysis of the program's potential contributions to the understanding of how and under what circumstances traffic barriers and related community re-design strategies can be used to prevent criminal activity.

The Historical Development of Operation Cul-de-Sac

During the late 1980's, an incident which resulted in the slaying of an LAPD patrol officer by a hardcore street gang member sparked the "War on Gangs" by police in the City of Los Angeles. In 1988, the LAPD's annual missions and goals, commonly referred to as "Battle Plans," stated specifically that the Department had declared war on gangs and gang violence. This war declaration was the impetus for several innovative

programs aimed at curbing gang crime, the most comprehensive of which was Operation Cul-de-Sac (hereafter referred to as OCDS).

The OCDS program objectives were unlike those of any other anti-gang program initiated by the LAPD. OCDS did not involve the use of LAPD's elite gang suppression squad CRASH (Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) nor did it involve the mass arrest of alleged gang members in "sweeps" such as those performed under the name of "Operation Hammer." Instead, OCDS approached the gang problem by attempting to "design out" existing opportunities for gang crime by using traffic barriers placed within socially and physically decaying South Central Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Gang violence, namely in the form of drive-by shootings, reached its worst and most deadly levels in Los Angeles during the late 1980's. Most of this violence was largely the result of street gangs engaging in warfare over the sale of crack cocaine. African-American gangs were the primary actors in this deadly scenario.

During these excessively violent times, the LAPD discovered the crime prevention qualities of "the traffic barrier." This discovery, which was quite accidental, took place in LAPD's Rampart Division in early 1988. According to officers who had worked Rampart in the late 1980's, street drug sales were so out of control in the area that police were trying anything and everything in order to get a handle on the situation. As one Rampart patrol officer explained:

"Things were the worst I'd ever seen them in the Rampart. You could just walk down the street and get any kind of drug you wanted. And if they didn't have the drug, you could wait a few minutes until they did. There was even one time when, at LAX (LA

International Airport), a guy who had never been to the U.S. before got off a plane and asked one of our undercover officers where Rampart was because he wanted to buy some drugs. Now that's bad."

In order to counter the massive illegal narcotics sales in Rampart, the LAPD resorted to using regular "sawhorses" placed in pedestrian and vehicle pathways which carried a small attached to them reading "Narcotics Enforcement Area." The initial purpose of the sawhorses was to hold the small warning sign, which police hoped would act as a deterrent to persons openly buying and selling narcotics in Rampart.

Without actually stepping up narcotics enforcement in Rampart, because there was insufficient manpower to do so, police noticed a rapid decline in arrests for drug sales almost immediately following the installation of the sawhorses on Rampart's streets and sidewalks. Interviews with those who had been arrested in the area on drug related charges revealed two related reasons for the sawhorses' success. First, persons selling drugs claimed that their business had gone down dramatically after the sawhorses were in place, and that they were not going to spend their time in a location where there were no buyers.

Second, offender interviews revealed that the sawhorses in Rampart created the perception among potential narcotics buyers that the drug sales area was "difficulty to enter and to exit quickly." Police concluded that the crime prevention utility of the sawhorses was in their ability to reduce the opportunity of drug sales by literally scaring away the customers. Thus, Rampart's illegal drug clientele was being deterred at the prospect of losing anonymous, rapid entrances and exits from high profile narcotics sales areas.

Robert L. Vernon, LAPD's Assistant Chief of Police (now retired), in charge of the Department's Office of Operations, took a keen interest in the new found success reported in Rampart. He also had been examining several "single street" closures in the Los Angeles area that had been implemented as makeshift attempts by police to stop gang-involved drive-by shootings. According to Vernon (1996), "I thought to myself if closing these single streets works to stop gang crime, I wonder what would happen if the concept were applied to an entire community with gang problems?"

Taking this idea many steps further, Vernon (1993) drew a conceptual analogy between gang-ridden neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles and gang-free neighborhoods of middle-class suburbia: "In conceptualizing a strategy for Operation Cul-de-Sac I wanted to give the socially disadvantaged neighborhoods what the middle-class neighborhoods already had; that is, a physical characteristic something like cul-de-sacs that naturally deters gangs and drive-by shootings."

For the most part, the OCDS program was conceived and implemented without relying on an existing theoretical framework. Quite simply, the specific goal of OCDS was to test the effectiveness of traffic barriers as a way to "design out" drive-by shootings in an entire gang-ridden community. Although it is possible to attach theories to the OCDS program after-the-fact, the initial program was based on finding a solution to a specific problem-- rather than a test of a specific theoretical perspective. However, in the truest sense, the development and implementation of OCDS is a textbook application of Clarke's (1980) concept of "situational crime prevention."

Planning and Setting Up Operation Cul-de-Sac

According to Clarke (1992), situational crime prevention comprises opportunity-reducing measures that are:

- directed at highly specific forms of crime (in the case of OCDS, drive-by shootings);
- that involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible (in the case of OCDS, permanent street closures with traffic barriers);
- and increase the effort and risk of crime and reduce rewards as perceived by a wide range of offenders (in the case of OCDS, making it more difficult to enter and exit gang territory to execute--and escape police after--a drive-by shooting).

The process of planning and setting up OCDS was guided by an action research model which incorporated the basic tenets of Situational Crime Prevention targeted specifically at stopping drive-by shootings. The following specific steps of this method, as outlined by Clarke (1992) and implemented by LAPD in the OCDS program, are listed below:

1. The program site was selected and data were collected about the nature and dimensions of gang involvement in drive-by shootings within the OCDS program area.

The first step in formulating the OCDS program was to select an appropriate test site. The only criterion guiding LAPD's selection of this site was that it had to be the worst community in the City with regard to the incidence of drive-by shootings. The selected OCDS program site, know as RD 1345, was comprised of inner-city neighborhoods occupying approximately ten-square blocks (.8 square miles) within South Central Los Angeles. (An RD, or "Reporting District" is an LAPD patrol area which corresponds precisely to a census tract; for example, RD 1345 is Census

Tract 1345 in the Los Angeles-Long Beach SMSA). Although this location was largely residential, it also included various small businesses and a major high school (Jefferson High School).

Because the primary goal of OCDS was to "design out" drive-by shootings, RD 1345 was selected as a primary test site because it had the highest rate of drive-by shootings in the City of Los Angeles (Vernon, 1996). During 1989, the year preceding initial implementation of OCDS, RD 1345 posted 38 drive-by shootings and 5 homicides (LAPD, 1990). The RD's 1989 Part I crime rate was fifth highest of all RD's in Los Angeles, including approximately 332 predatory crimes and 409 property crimes.

Once RD 1345 was identified as the "statistically worst" drive-by shooting local in Los Angeles, LAPD Command Staff personally inspected the site to verify its criminal reputation. Recalling his first visit to the RD, Chief Robert Vernon recounted:

"We went out to RD 1345 to see if the place really lived up to its reputation as the most dangerous RD in the City with regard to drive-by shootings. I remember seeing lots of houses with bullet holes in them and asking residents for their input. They [the residents] told me that all the bullet holes I saw were from drive-by shootings that hadn't even been reported. So the statistical profile of drive-by shootings of RD 1345 at that time, if anything, was an understatement" (Vernon, 1996).

Rampant gangs and gang crime had taken control over RD 1345. Aside from drive-by shootings, neighborhoods within the RD contained numerous high volume "crack houses" where hardcore African-American gangs were competing in the street sales (and manufacture) of crack cocaine. These gang were also at war with resident Latino/Hispanic street gang who

resided in the area. In addition, LAPD's gang intelligence (CRASH-Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) reported that core members of approximately 26 known "hardcore" gangs were conducting illegal activities with RD 1345. Disproportionately large numbers of persons on active parole from the California Department of Corrections also resided in the area during 1989 (LAPD, 1990).

Analysis of demographic changes during the 1980's in RD 1345 offers some explanations regarding why this small community had become so crime-torn. Comparisons between census data from 1980 and 1990 for RD 1345 (see Table 1) suggest many social and economic shifts that are statistical earmarks of criminal opportunity. For example, RD 1345's overall population had increased from approximately 5,500 in 1980 (U.S. Census, 1980) to over 9,000 residents (U.S. Census, 1990) in 1990--representing a 68% increase over the decade. Adding to the population density problems of the area is the fact that the community contains only 700 dwellings; therefore, in many residences, numerous families are presumed to occupy a single dwelling.

Second, the area experienced rapid racial transition during the 1980's. Over this decade, RD 1345 experienced a significant influx of Central Americans (primarily from El Salvador) and South Americans (primarily from Columbia), many of whom had immigrated illegally to the U.S. Third, the number of crime-prone age males residing in the RD nearly doubled from 1980 to 1990. Compounding these problems was the area's rapidly declining economic condition, which had fallen from 8.9% of families below the poverty level in 1980 to 16.5% of families in 1990 (U.S. Census, 1980 and 1990).

TABLE 1. Social Indicators For OCDS Program Area, 1980 and 1990

	1980*		1990*		% Change
	N	%	N	%	
Total Persons	5,562	100%	9,390	100%	+ 68.8%
Race:					
White	4,089	73.5%	4,569	48.7%	+ 11.7%
Black	76	1.4%	377	4.0%	+396.1%
Amer. Ind.	45	.8%	59	.6%	+ 31.1%
Asian	176	3.2%	622	6.6%	+253.4%
Other	1,176	21.1%	3,763	40.1%	+220.0%
Gender:					
Males	2,823	50.8%	5,087	57.4%	+ 80.2%
Females	2,739	49.2%	4,303	42.6%	+ 57.1%
Age:					
Median	30.1 (years)		26.4 (years)		- 14.0%
Crime-Prone					
Age (Males):					
15 to 24 years	668	100%	1,117	100%	+ 67.2%
Families Below					
Poverty Level		8.9%		16.5%	+ 7.6%

* Categories may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

(Sources: 1980 and 1990 Census For Los Angeles-Long Beach SMSA)

2. Analyses were conducted of the situational conditions that permitted and facilitated the commission of drive-by shootings within the OCDS program test area.

Preliminary investigations of the OCDS program area revealed that numerous drug gangs and traditional street gangs were operating simultaneously in the same neighborhoods. Thus, drug gangs were engaging in warfare to gain access to prime narcotics sales locations. On the other hand, resident street gangs in the OCDS area were fighting to hold on to their neighborhood turf.

Pre-program examinations of the patterns of gang warfare in the OCDS neighborhood, namely homicides and drive-by shootings, revealed a rather interesting discovery. In particular, residential streets on the perimeter of the community that connected to major multi-lane streets leading out of the community were the location of 80%-90% of drive-by shootings and homicide activity. Maintaining control over these streets was imperative to drug gangs because these streets also provided easy access to persons willing to buy narcotics.

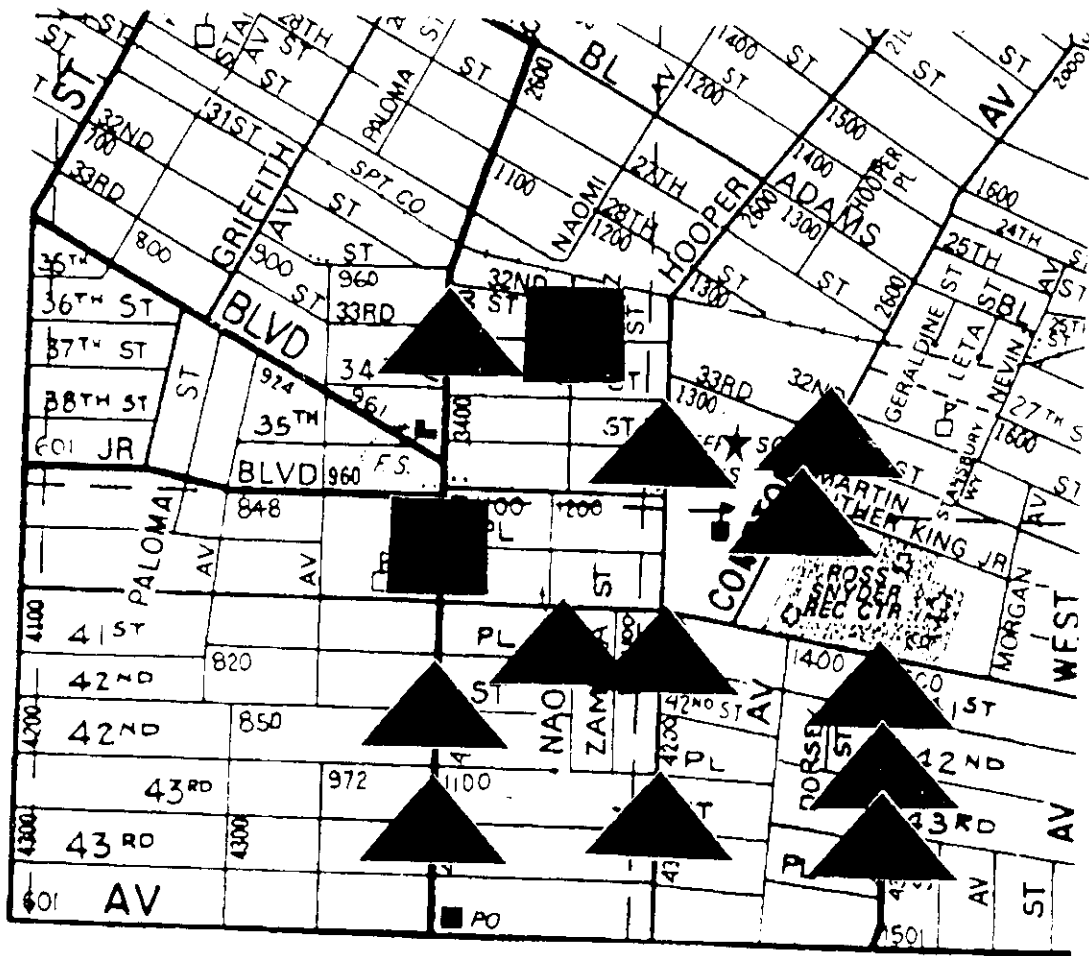
Conversely, streets that did not provide easy entrance or escape routes to the OCDS community were seldom the site of gang drive-by shootings or homicides. Hardly ever was there any sign of gang warfare where major streets did not converge with minor ones. Thus, the combination of opportunities provided by easy street access and rival gangs competing for locations on these streets was assumed to be the nexus for predatory crime in the OCDS area.

3. Possible means of blocking opportunities for drive-by shootings within the OCDS program area were studied, including an analysis of costs.

The logical means for reducing opportunities to commit drive-by shootings involved limiting the unobstructed entrances and exits on high crime streets located on the perimeter of the OCDS community. Speed bumps were one possible method, but it was later discovered that there were not restrictive enough for the type of crime being "designed out." Specifically, it is possible to travel at high rates of speed over speed bumps, although this may result in damage to the vehicle. Because nearly all vehicles used in gang drive-by shooting are stolen, possible damage to the suspect vehicle due to traveling at high rates of speed would not be a sufficient deterrent to would-be assailants.

LAPD decided that the best possible method was a permanent street closure, creating a residential environment similar to that of a "gated community." Such permanent closures would reduce opportunities to conduct criminal activity in an expeditious manner and they would act as symbolic messages to gangs that drive-by shootings and similar acts of violence would not be tolerated by those living in the gated community. It was also presumed by the LAPD that the traffic barriers would create "communities within communities" where outsiders who did not belong on particular streets could be easily identified by residents and reported to the police. The cost of creating such permanent traffic barriers was very minimal (ranging from under \$100 for concrete to around \$2,000 for more elaborate gates).

PLACEMENT OF ORIGINAL TRAFFIC BARRIERS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA



- ▲ denotes traffic barriers either removed/destroyed as of 1996
- denotes traffic barriers still in place as of 1996
- ★ denotes Jefferson High School



Shown Above: Large roadway closure with two cement planters (1990)



Shown Above: Two cement planter barriers with traffic gates removed (1996)

4. The most promising, feasible and economic measures to prevent drive-by shootings were implemented.

During the first year of OCDS, the LAPD blocked streets in the program area with simple concrete road dividers left over from the Los Angeles Olympics. At the beginning of the second year of the program, these concrete dividers were replaced with permanent traffic barriers. These consisted of a heavy iron gate (painted black), which was approximately 5 feet high and could be unlocked for emergency vehicle access. On wide roads, a large cement planter containing a tree was placed between the gate and the edge of the roadway to stop all vehicle traffic. The total cost for construction of each gate, including labor and materials, was about \$1,500 to \$2,000 (in 1990).

Operation Cul-de-Sac: 1990 and 1991

Operation Cul-de-Sac began officially in January 1990. The first step in the program's implementation was to assess citizen attitudes in the OCDS community toward the idea of police closing streets with traffic barriers. Footbeat officers, many of whom were Spanish speaking, canvassed all 700 households within the OCDS program area asking residents how they felt about the prospect of police using traffic barriers to block selected streets as an experimental crime prevention method. Similar discussions were also carried out between police and community members at Jefferson High School, which was located in the OCDS program area.

The vast majority of community feedback to police regarding the program's focus and potential impact on the OCDS community was extremely positive. For a final assessment of community attitudes, LAPD's Newton Division conducted a telephone survey of 200 randomly selected

residents which yielded a 94% approval rate for the traffic barrier installation (see Lasley et al., 1995). In all, only 10 of some 700 residents contacted in person or by phone objected strongly to the OCDS plan.

Shortly after citizen approval was obtained, the "community identity" phase of the OCDS program began. On February 1, 1990, police and various public works entities installed a series of temporary concrete traffic barriers with signs reading "Narcotics Enforcement Area" at street locations which were predetermined by police as the area's "hottest spots" for drive-by shootings. These early traffic barriers were nothing more than simple concrete road dividers, which were approximately the length of the roadway in width and about three feet high. By design, these roadblocks were effective at stopping vehicle traffic; however, due to their low height, they were not capable of stopping foot traffic. Each concrete traffic barrier was strategically placed so that it did not obstruct business or school traffic, or emergency fire access.

By the end of 1990, the concrete barriers were replaced with permanent "cul-de-sacs." These traffic barriers, as previously described, consisted of iron gates (which were locked, and could be opened with a key for emergency access) and a concrete planter with a tree (see photos in pages that follow). The only difference in crime deterrence potential between the concrete and iron gates was in regard to pedestrian traffic. The permanent barriers were approximately 6 feet high, with vertical bars, and were much more difficult to climb than the lower concrete barriers.

After the traffic barriers were put into place, the LAPD decided to use the "new community" as a test site for various community police projects. Examples of these activities include the following (Vernon and Lasley, 1991):

- The assignment of 15 regular and other cash over-time OCDS officers working footbeat, bicycle and mounted patrols who had a primary mission of "getting to know residents and the neighborhood" rather than "making arrests."
- The development of various task forces composed of public agencies and community groups to assist in the clean up of garbage, graffiti and other signs of physical decay.
- The creation of a police sponsored tutorial program in the local high school involving overtime pay for teachers who instructed after school classes on life skills for teenagers.
- The creation of "block clubs" composed of residents within each neighborhood whereby police and citizens could communicate their specific needs to each other during periodic informal meetings.
- The initiation of public picnics and other social gatherings in local parks to facilitate police-community relations as well as to allow the "new community" to establish their presence in neighborhood public and leisure areas.

Operation Cul-de-Sac: 1992 to Present

As a result of political disturbances created in the City of Los Angeles and in the LAPD by the March 1991 incident involving motorist Rodney G. King, the commitment of the LAPD to Operation Cul-de-Sac waned significantly. The program became identified as "the creation" of Assistant

Chief Robert Vernon, who at this time became mired in political controversy regarding his religious beliefs. In addition, the OCDS program also became politicized by the media and labeled a product of the "Daryl Gates Administration." In effect, the OCDS program became a target of rebellion against the LAPD by elected officials, political activists and special interest groups who had labeled the program "an effort by the LAPD to create a living prison out of South Central Los Angeles." Although the OCDS program was perhaps the largest scale community policing efforts in the history of Los Angeles (besides Team Policing in the 1970's), the Christopher Commission's (1992) review of the program was as follows:

"Another program that experimented with elements of community policing was instituted in 1989. In "Operation Cul-de-Sac," police erect barriers on streets in high-crime areas so that motorists cannot drive through a neighborhood. The most ambitious use of this program occurred in a 30-block area of the Newton district of South-Central Los Angeles. The LAPD set up two cul-de-sacs in the section and erected small barriers on other streets. The zone was saturated with officers on foot, horse, and bicycle. "Open to Residents Only" and "Narcotics Enforcement Area" signs were posted. The aim was to discourage drug dealers and gang members from driving through the area. At the same time, debris was removed from alleys and graffiti scrubbed off walls. Officers worked with other City agencies to insure that residents received basic City services.

With its targeting of high crime neighborhoods and its intensive use of officers, Operation Cul-de-Sac is not a model of community-based policing [emphasis added]. Nonetheless, the results of this program appear promising. Serious crime in Newton dropped

17% in the first year. Drive-by shootings plummeted from 38 in 1989 to only one in 1990. Assaults were down 25%. One salutary effect, reflecting the potential for positive interaction between the police and the community, was that attendance at a local high school increased by more than 100 students.

Approval for Operation Cul-de-Sac is not unanimous, however. Some critics question the fact that it operates only in minority communities and claim it produces harsh, unjustified treatment in those neighborhoods of young African-American and Latino male residents who are suspected of being gang members. For at least a few residents and certain civil liberties organizations, the barricades and concentrated police activity have created an unacceptable "armed camp." Finally, a number of officers interviewed, as well as members of the public, have suggested that Cul-de-Sac's impact on crime is illusory: when the police operate in one neighborhood, crime is simply displaced to another." (p.102-103).

Following the events stemming from the initial Rodney King incident in 1991, financial and political support for the OCDS program was all but lost. Community policing activities in the program area were cut dramatically. The traffic barriers, however, remained in place. Unfortunately, many of the barriers that were either damaged or destroyed were not maintained. By the end of the Los Angeles Riots of 1992, with many of the original traffic barriers in total disrepair (see photos on pages that follow), the OCDS program was reduced to minimal strength and effectiveness. During 1995, the LAPD removed many of the remaining OCDS traffic barriers because they believed them to be no longer effective. Residents complained of their

unmaintained, unsightly appearance. Some police officials asserted that the barriers had created a haven for drug dealers and gangs who had learned to use the traffic barriers to their advantage. Nevertheless, the final portrait of OCDS and its traffic barriers by police, elected officials was one of mixed messages: Some believed that it worked well and should remain intact; others believed that it never worked, and was rightfully discontinued and dismantled (see Los Angeles Times, 1995).

Related Programs

Since the inception of OCDS in 1990, several similar projects utilizing traffic barriers to prevent criminal activity have been created throughout the nation. The following is a brief description of these programs:

- **Five Oaks--Dayton, Ohio (1991):** *Defensible Space* author and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) architect Oscar Newman was hired by the City of Dayton to "design out" crime in Five Oaks, an inner-city suburb consisting of approximately 2,000 households located about one mile from downtown Dayton. Traffic barriers were used to close streets and alleys that provided fast entrances and exits from the crime-ridden community. Gates designed from brick and metal were used to strategically divide the larger community into several sets of mini-neighborhoods each consisting of 3 to 6 streets. This strategy was used to create Newman's concept of "defensible space" whereby residents were able to take control of physical areas around their homes and detect strange persons entering or events taking place within these areas. A program evaluation of the Five Oaks Project revealed that overall crime decreased in the gated community by 26 percent and violent crimes were reduced by 50 percent. No evidence of crime displacement was detected (U.S. Council of Mayors, 1996).



Shown Above: Broken traffic barriers (photo taken in 1992).



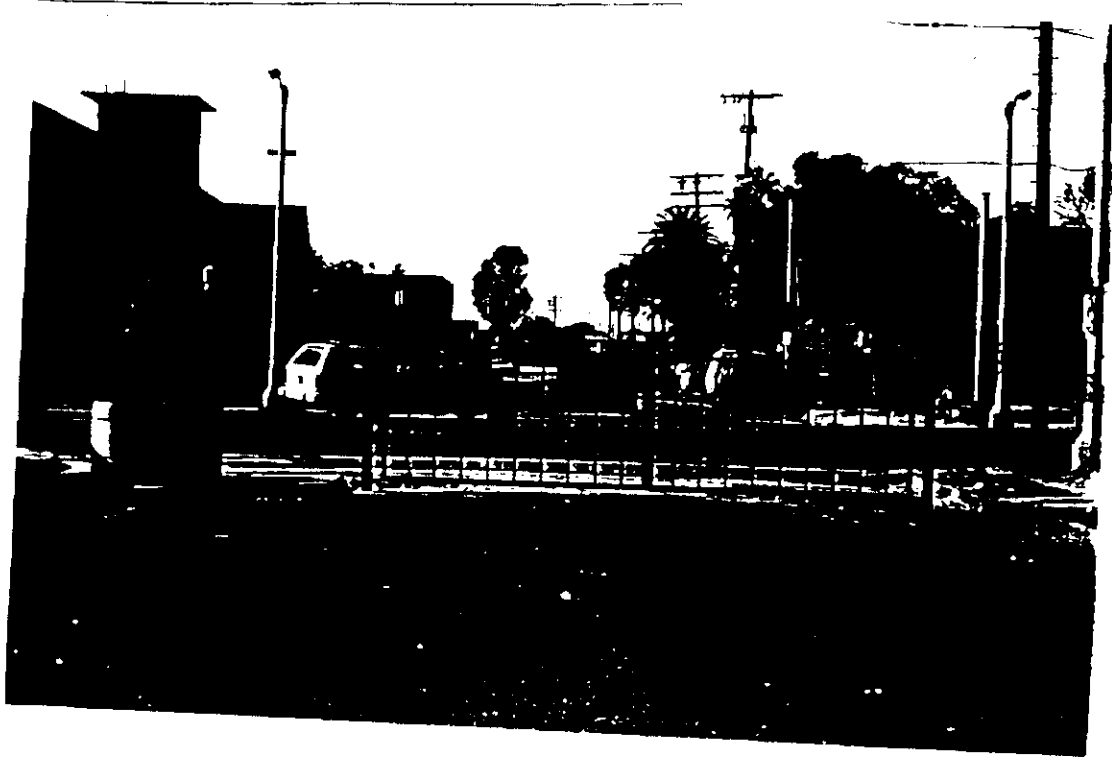
Shown Above: Cement planter used as trash can, with tree dead and gates removed



Shown Above: One of two remaining road closures in the OCDS program area.



Shown Above: Typical damaged and broken condition of unmaintained traffic barriers.



Shown Above: Traffic barriers closing roadways in 1990.



Shown Above: Roadways as they look today with traffic barriers removed (1996).

- **Elizabeth, NJ Barricade Project (1992):** Officials from Elizabeth, NJ, after visiting the OCDS program site in 1990, created their own version of OCDS to counter drug and gang activity within a crime-ridden community near downtown Newark. Although both police and residents claim the program had significant success at curbing both predatory and narcotics crime, the program came under strong criticism by civil rights organizations. Media accounts of the gated community (including the Phil Donahue Show) have reported, similar to OCDS media accounts, that the traffic barriers were a device employed by "middle- and upper-class residents" to insulate themselves from minorities. In addition, this program was also criticized in popular media accounts for "stigmatizing" those who live behind the traffic barriers as a "criminals who must be separated from the general community" (Donahue, 1992)
- **Coral Gables and Miami Shores (1993):** This project is perhaps the largest scale use of traffic barriers to date, consisting of some 180 strategically placed gated street closures. Evaluation reports indicate that crime dropped approximately 20 percent on closed streets (U.S. Council of Mayors). Designer of the project, Randall Atlas, an architect and criminologist, attributes the observed drop in crime to both the physical presence of traffic barriers and to the social changes in routine activities taking place as a result of street closures. This project is currently still under review.
- **Albuquerque, NM CPTED Project (1996):** Currently, the City of Albuquerque, NM, under the direction of Randall Atlas, is implementing a comprehensive city-wide traffic barriers project that involves the extensive use of traffic barriers and gates. Interestingly, the traffic barriers are designed to be used in conjunction with other CPTED methods (i.e.,

increased lighting) to maximize the crime prevention potential of the traffic barriers. The guiding principle of this project is to use the traffic barriers together with CPTED tactics so that criminal behavior is changed and not temporarily suppressed (Atlas, 1996). Presently, it is too early to determine the crime reduction impact of this project.

Organization of the Report

The program evaluation of OCDS which follows is organized into the following sections:

- **Methods (Chapter 2):** Field research methodology used to investigate the OCDS program is explained in detail. Analytic strategies, agency support, data sources and study limitations are discussed.
- **Findings (Chapters 3 and 4):** Study findings are presented for Part I crimes in the OCDS program area from 1989 (one year prior to program implementation) to 1992 (one year following the program's discontinuation). Part I crimes are also examined for potential displacement and criminal adaptation effects. Effects of the traffic barriers on school attendance of high school students is examined as well. Community attitudes are assessed through a series of unstructured interviews with community members and self-identified gang members familiar with the OCDS program and the OCDS community prior to the program's 1990 inception.
- **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations (Chapter 5):** General conclusions about significant findings are discussed in terms of relevant theory. More specifically, CPTED, situational crime prevention and routine-activities rationales are used to explain study findings. Policy recommendations for future crime prevention programs utilizing traffic

barriers and street closures are presented. These recommendations are derived from lessons learned during the course of the OCDS program.

CHAPTER 2 METHODS

Analytic Strategy

The method of analysis used to study the OCDS program is a "totality of the circumstances" approach. That is, the likely effects of the traffic barriers on criminal activity are examined using crime statistics as well as personal accounts from informants familiar with the OCDS program at a street level. By comparing similarities and dissimilarities between these two sources of information, it is here assumed that the most accurate picture of the traffic barrier program can be presented.

Data

Three sources of data are included in this study. First, official crime statistics for Part I and other crimes reported by the LAPD throughout the period of 1989 to 1992 (see LAPD, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992) are examined for time trends reflecting significant changes before, during and after the traffic barriers were installed in the OCDS program site. General crime categories used in this study are as follows:

- Predatory Crimes: murder, rape, street robbery, aggravated assault and purse snatch.
- Property Crimes: burglary, burglary from auto, theft from auto, grand theft, theft from persons, other theft, bike theft and auto theft.

Second, unstructured interviews were conducted with residents of the OCDS program area who claimed to have lived in the target community prior to or before the program began in 1990. Last, unstructured interviews were conducted with self-identified street gang members who claimed to have had

personal experience within the OCDS community before and after the traffic barriers were installed.

School Data

In addition to crime data, attendance records covering the pre- and post-OCDS program periods for high schools within and surrounding the traffic barrier community were obtained from the Los Angeles Unified School District. Analyses of these data were performed to investigate claims that traffic barrier installation had resulted in increasing the "average daily attendance" of students at the high school located within the OCDS program area (Jefferson High School).

Street-level Data Collection

Gathering interview data within the OCDS community presented many difficulties from both practical and methodological perspectives. First, the program area is still one of the most dangerous communities within the jurisdiction of the LAPD. Persons conducting random interviews within this community, with or without the assistance of police, are at risk of extreme personal danger. All interviews conducted for this study were carried out without the assistance of the LAPD, in order to maintain the highest possible "naturalness" and "openness" of residents being interviewed.

For the most part, the majority of residents living within the OCDS program today are Spanish speaking (many are also undocumented), they are highly suspicious of outsiders, and they do not readily welcome personal interviews on crime and police related matters. (On numerous occasions the principal researcher was yelled at, chased and followed by residents--and on one occasion was told to leave the neighborhood by a resident who pointed a shotgun at him.)

Because the principal researcher of this study is Spanish speaking, in many instances, protective barriers were dropped by residents and brief interviews were conducted. It would be very difficult to gain interview access with residents in the OCDS area, or areas like it, without speaking Spanish. Thus, with the exception of some African-American residents, the majority of interview data contained in this report is translated from Spanish to English.

Limitations of the Data

The crime data included in this study are of an official nature; therefore, their accuracy is subject to reporting biases. In addition, specific data on gang-related crimes was not made available by the LAPD at the time this study was conducted. Therefore, analyses of drive-by shootings are conducted using the general crime of homicide as a proxy measure.

Furthermore, the limited nature of the data obtained for this study does not lend itself to complicated statistical analytic methods. Standard tests of significance and probability are not performed. The majority of findings presented here are based on the combined interpretation of changes in the frequency of specific crimes over time and qualitative interview content.

Last, it is unknown the degree to which informant interviews presented in this study reflect attitudes and opinions of the OCDS resident population. This is because the majority of interviews were carried out during the daytime hours (8:00a.m. to approximately 4:00p.m.). Age, gender and occupational status biases may have resulted from this limited interview time frame. However, some interviews conducted during the initial months of this study were conducted during nighttime hours. Nighttime interviews were dropped from the study design due to safety concerns.

Analytic Method and Time Frame

Because the OCDS program involved a community policing component, in addition to the traffic barrier installation, it is necessary to examine specific time periods in order to isolate changes in crime that can be attributed uniquely to the traffic barriers. The time periods examined in this study, along with explanations as to why or why not they should be considered relevant to the study of the traffic barriers, are presented below:

- **1989 Pre- Traffic Barrier Phase:** This is the year immediately preceding the start of the OCDS program. It is important because it establishes a baseline measure of crime in the OCDS program area prior to the imposition of the traffic barriers.
- **1990 Mixed Effect Phase:** This is the first year of operation for OCDS. During this year the program consisted not only of the traffic barriers but also of numerous community policing efforts: foot patrols, bicycle patrols, mounted patrols, and community awareness programs. Thus, during this period reductions in crime cannot be attributed specifically to the traffic barriers; rather, traffic barrier effects on crime must be assessed in concert with other community changes taking place during the first OCDS year such as increased police presence and community awareness programs.
- **1991 Isolated Effect Phase:** During this year, additional police presence and community support activities were diminished due to loss of financial support for the OCDS program. After March of this year, following the Rodney G. King incident, the OCDS community reverted back to its original state as it was prior to the implementation of OCDS in 1989. The only existing change in the OCDS community was the traffic barriers, which were still totally intact and functional during this time period. Thus,

it is here assumed that changes in the number of crimes during this specific year can be uniquely attributed to the effect of traffic barriers.

- **1992 Non-Effect Phase:** This year marks the end of OCDS, and of the maintenance and crime suppression value of the traffic barriers. During this period, most of the traffic barriers were badly damaged and rendered non-functional (i.e., they permitted vehicular access to major streets). Analysis of crime trends during this year are here assumed to reflect the full (or at least significant) removal of any prior traffic barrier effects.
- **A Note on Post 1992 Effects:** After 1992, the Hispanic/Latino population in the OCDS community increased substantially and the number of LAPD specialized gang detectives assigned to the area was more than doubled. Thus, as the result of these changes relative to years subsequent to 1992, this study focuses only on program effects from the period of 1989 to 1992.

Displacement Analyses

A primary criticism of programs such as OCDS is that they do not stop criminal activity, but rather they merely displace crimes and gangs to other areas where criminal opportunity is not being blocked. In order to investigate the probable displacement effects due to the traffic barriers, crime trends in the OCDS program area are compared against patrol areas which are "contiguous" to the OCDS community. These "contiguous areas" consist of four reporting districts (census tracts) which are immediately adjacent to the OCDS program site. It is here assumed that if crime is being displaced from the OCDS test site, it will be displaced into one or more of these geographic areas which surround the OCDS program area. Uncharacteristic increases in crime within a contiguous patrol area during the active phases of OCDS (i.e., 1990, 1991) would lend support to the displacement hypothesis.

Adaptation Analyses

Preliminary discussions with some police officials with knowledge of the OCDS program suggested the possibility that the traffic barriers "worked at first" but later failed because "criminals quickly adapted to the traffic barriers and used them to their advantage to avoid police." This theory of adaptation is a primary rationale used by some police officials to discontinue the traffic barrier program. According to one police administrator:

"After a while, the bad guys just got smart. They figured out a lot of really clever ways to use the traffic barriers to get away from us. For example, they would stick their hands through the gates and sell their dope that way. Then when a patrol unit would come up to make an arrest, they would just run down that gated street. The patrol unit would have to drive several blocks in the other direction to get to the area where the dope seller was. By the time they got there, the criminal was long gone...The community would see something like that going on and totally lose faith in the police and in the traffic barrier system."

If an "adaptation effect" was indeed created by the traffic barriers, it would likely be reflected in increases in criminal activity within the OCDS program area sometime after the barrier installation. Even if these increases were not evidenced after the first year of program operation (when there was increased police and community presence) they would most definitely be evident during the programs second year of operation (when police and community presence had been greatly diminished).

It is not unrealistic to assume that two years is an insufficient time period for criminals to adapt their *modus operandi* to fit the reduction in

criminal opportunity imposed by the traffic barriers. Thus, an "adaptation effect" would be confirmed by increases in crime within the OCDS program for 1991 (i.e., the second year of OCDS, with traffic barriers only); on the other hand, reductions in crime during this same period would fail to support an "adaptation" hypothesis.

Agency Support

After numerous interviews and discussions with street officers and administrators from the LAPD, it was decided by the principal researcher to conduct the present study totally independent of the LAPD. This decision was made for several reasons. First, and foremost, the OCDS program remains a very "hot political issue" within the Department. As one LAPD administrator stated, when asked why Chief Williams had denied access to agency data sources in support of this study:

"You know Cul-de-Sac is really touchy because it is associated with Bob Vernon, Daryl Gates and that whole situation. People go wild in City Hall every time Daryl Gates name is mentioned."

For the most part, officers still working for the LAPD who were involved in the initial OCDS program implementation were not willing to participate in this study for fear that by doing so would "jeopardize their future career at LAPD."

Thus, the decision to proceed without the formal cooperation of the LAPD was done to preserve the integrity and objectivity of information presented in this study. Fortunately, LAPD agency crime data relating specifically to the OCDS program from the period of 1989 to present is made available through public information sources within the City of Los Angeles.

These data, which were available in print form only, are presented and analyzed in the study that follows.

CHAPTER 3

STATISTICAL FINDINGS

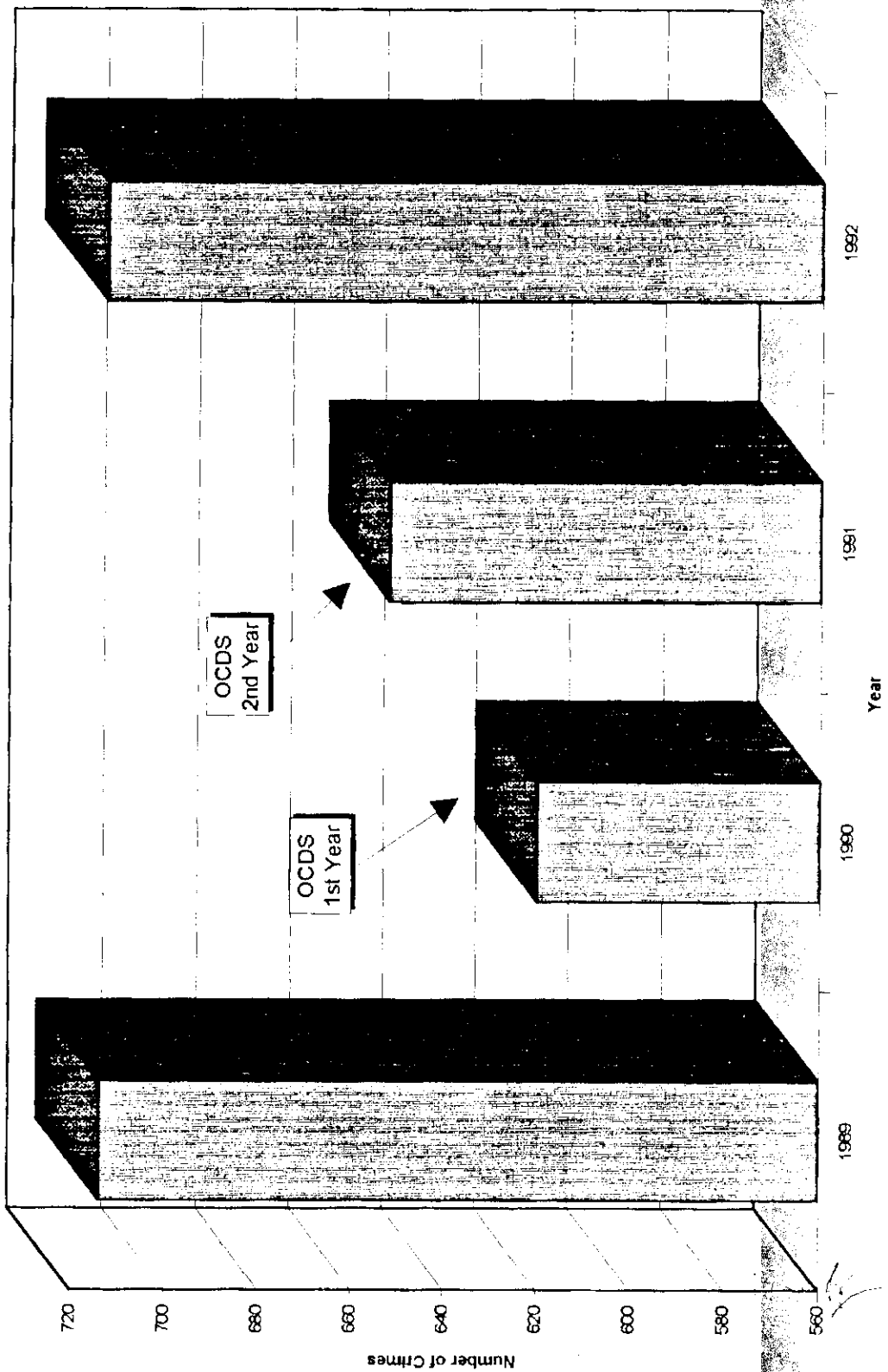
Overall Crime Reductions in the OCDS program area for predatory crimes (including murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault and purse snatch) and property crimes (burglary, grand theft, auto theft, burglary from auto, theft from auto, theft from persons, bike theft and other theft) decreased approximately 20% during the first year of OCDS program operation (1990), as compared to the number of crimes in 1989 before the program began. The second year decrease (1991) in all crime categories was approximately 14%, as compared to 1989 figures. In 1992, which marks the first year OCDS program effects were rendered ineffective by budget cuts and policy changes, crime increased by 14% to its 1989 pre-program levels (see Figure 1). In the analyses that follow, these changes in the number of predatory and property crimes are discussed in detail within individual categories of crime.

Murder and Drive-by Shootings

General Program Effects

Key Findings: The incidence of drive-by shootings (using murder as a proxy measure) and murder appear to have been reduced significantly by the introduction of traffic barriers. The number of murders (the majority of which were gang related) before OCDS averaged 5 or more per year without the traffic barriers; with the traffic barriers, only 1 murder was recorded in the two year period during which the OCDS program was fully operative.

OVERALL CRIMES REPORTED IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA: 1989 TO 1992



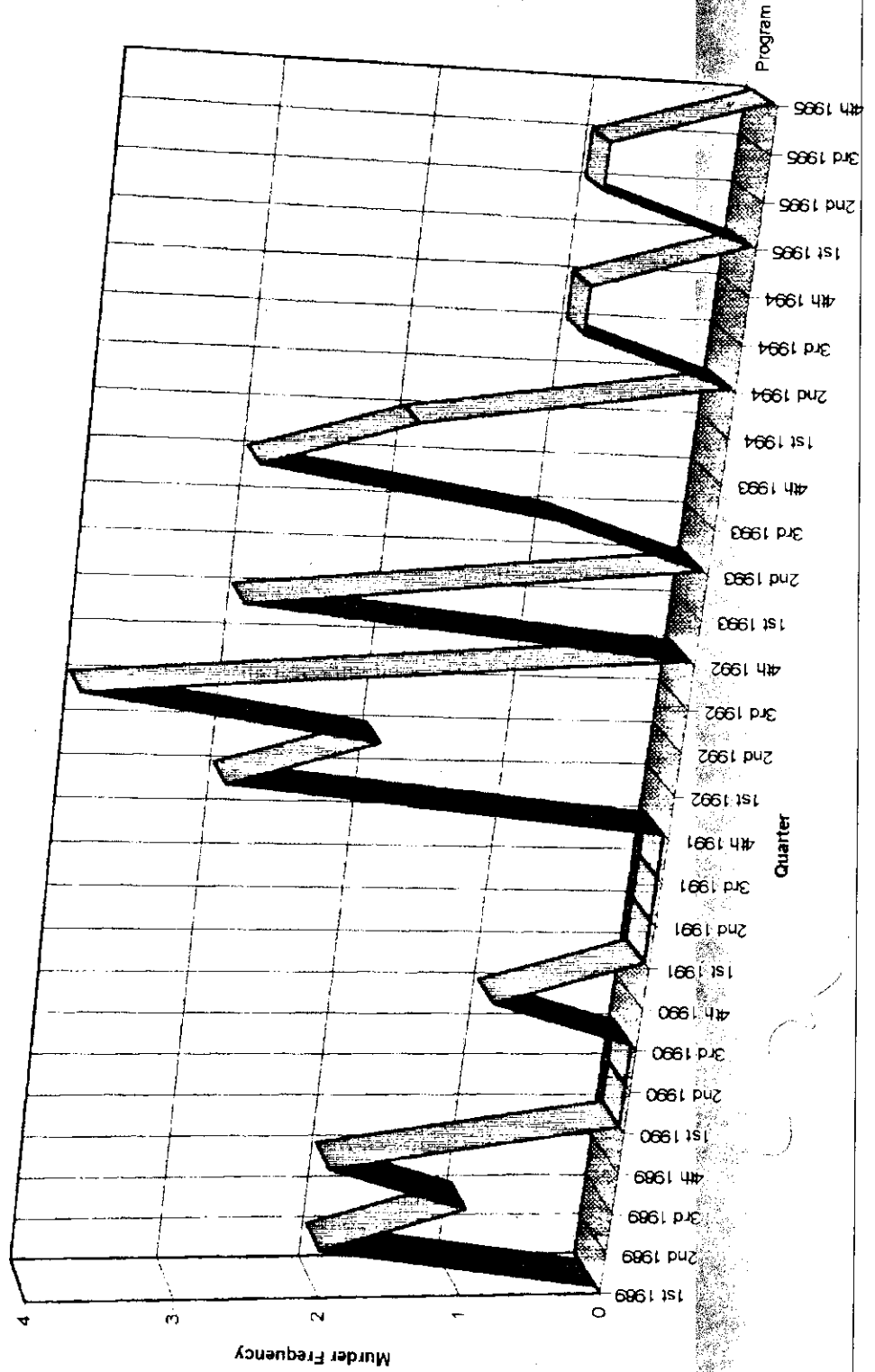
During the first year of OCDS, special statistics were gathered by LAPD on the incidence of drive-by shootings occurring in the program area. To qualify as a "drive-by" shooting, an incident must have involved shooting at either a dwelling or a person from a motor vehicle, and that incident must have been reported to police by a citizen (and subsequently confirmed by police to have actually occurred). In the year prior to OCDS, there were 38 confirmed drive-by shootings recorded by police. After the first year OCDS was in place, only one drive-by shooting within the program area was recorded by police. Unfortunately, at the time of this study, no further data on the incidence of drive-by shootings in the OCDS program area was made available. However, the tabulation of this statistics is subject to reporting bias and classification error; thus, to further confirm the reduction effect of the traffic barriers on drive-by shootings it is helpful to examine murder frequencies within the OCDS test site as a proxy measure for drive-by shootings.

The incidence of murder before and after the placement of OCDS traffic barriers is of significant importance for examining the program's overall success. Because the vast majority of murders occurring in the program area prior to 1994 were gang related and the result of drive-by shootings (approximately 90%; LAPD, 1990), changes in OCDS murder rates are likely to indicate changes in the incidence of drive-by shootings due to the imposition of traffic barriers.

Figure 2 shows the frequency of murders in the OCDS program area, by quarter, from 1989 (the year before implementation) through the end of 1995. As the figure illustrates, there were 5 murders the year prior to OCDS implementation. During the following two years (1990, 1991), after the traffic barriers were installed and during the period when they were fully

Figure 2.

FREQUENCY OF MURDERS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA: 1989 TO 1995, BY QUARTER



maintained, only one murder was recorded. As Figure 2 also shows, the number of murders in the OCDS area increased substantially following the end of 1991 when the traffic barriers fell into a state of disrepair.

It is interesting to note that the number of murders immediately following the reduction in OCDS activities by the end of 1991 climbed significantly higher than that recorded prior to the onset of OCDS in 1989. This may be suggestive of a "backlash" effect of the traffic barriers. That is, gang rivalries and actions suppressed by the imposition of the traffic barriers may have intensified due to sudden increases in drive-by shooting opportunities when OCDS program restraints had been suddenly lifted.

Displacement Effects

Key Findings: No displacement effect for murders (and drive-by shootings) was discovered; instead, evidence suggests that the traffic barriers may have resulted in "positive displacement": a reduction in murder within patrol areas surrounding the OCDS program area.

Strong evidence of displacement of murder and drive-by shootings into locations contiguous to the OCDS program area was not discovered. To the contrary, the available evidence suggests that "positive displacement" patterns (i.e., murder and drive-by reductions in areas nearby OCDS) may have resulted during the OCDS active program period (see, e.g., Cornish and Clarke, 1988).

Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 show frequencies of murders in the four patrol areas (reporting districts) which surround the OCDS program area. With the exception of one area during one quarter (see RD 1343, 2nd quarter 1991 in

Figure 4), all of these surrounding patrol areas evidenced atypical reductions in murders during the time which OCDS was actively in place. Furthermore, these figures show that murder rates climbed markedly in each contiguous patrol area following the reduction in OCDS traffic barrier effects at the end of 1991. This pattern for the adjacent reporting districts was almost identical to the decreases and increases in murders discovered for the OCDS community before, during and after implementation of the traffic barriers.

Adaptation Effects

Key Findings: There was no evidence of criminal adaptation to the traffic barriers with respect to murder, because murder remained low for the entire two year active OCDS program period. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that "walk-up," bicycle or any other adaptive method for carrying out a gang murder was used to replace opportunities for vehicular assaults (i.e., drive-by shootings) which were removed by the traffic barriers.

With regard to murder, and the proxy conclusions for drive-by shootings, there is no evidence to support the "adaptation" hypothesis. That is, criminals and gang members perpetrating murders do not appear to be adjusting their criminal styles or *modus operandi* to compensate for the lack of opportunity created by the traffic barriers. If "adaptation" were indeed the case, the available evidence should show substantial increases in murders during the second year of OCDS operation. These increases would most likely be the result of gangs changing their method of committing murders to one that uses the traffic barriers to their advantage (see, e.g., Maxson et al., 1985; Klein et al. 1991). For example, vehicle assisted "hit and run" drive-by's would be replaced by non-vehicle methods such as "walk-up"

Figure 3.
 FREQUENCY OF MURDERS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA AND CONTIGUOUS PATROL AREA (RD 1342): 1989 TO 1995, BY QUARTER

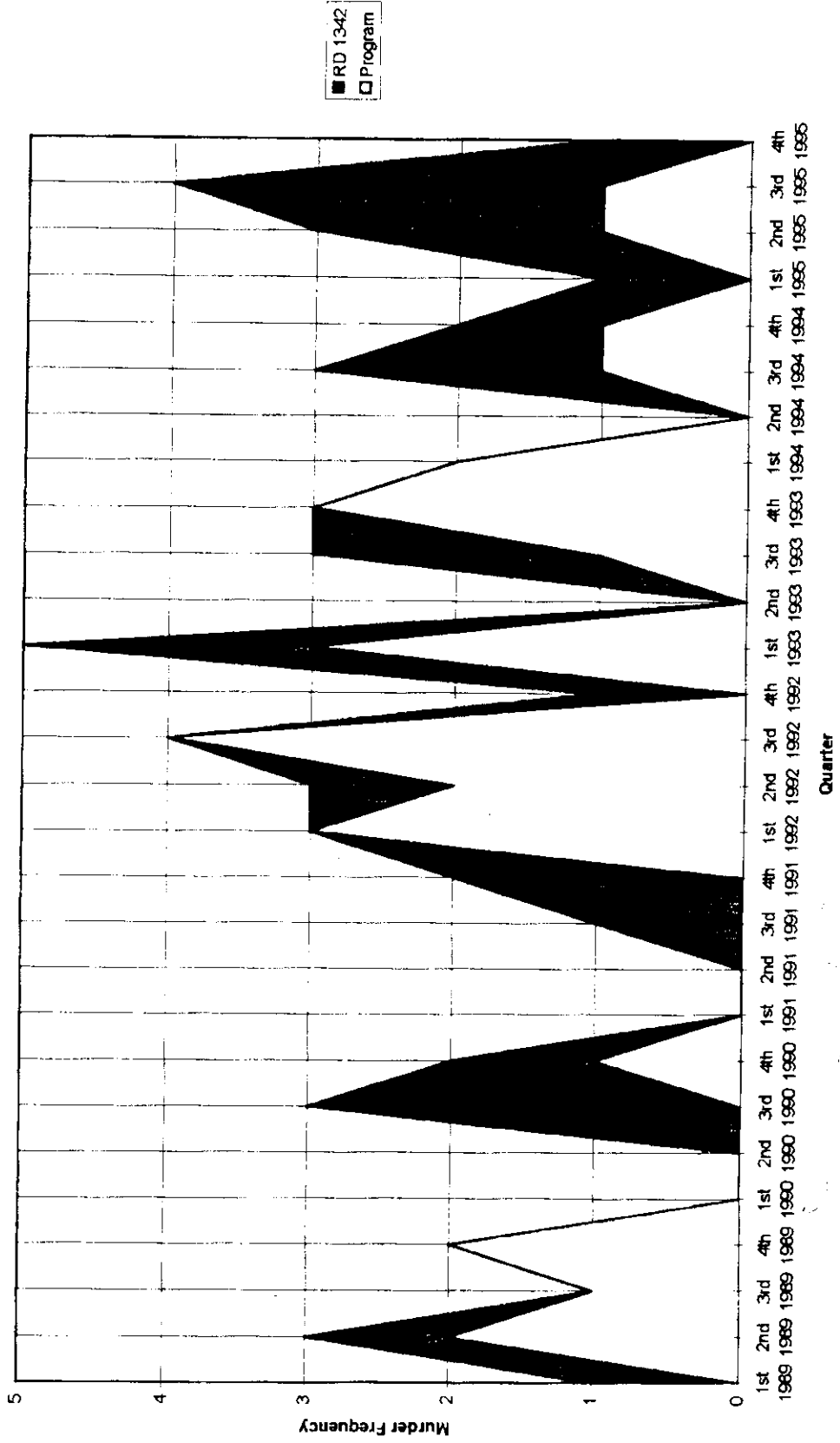


Figure 4

FREQUENCY OF MURDERS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA AND CONTIGUOUS PATROL AREA (RD 1343): 1989 TO 1995, BY QUARTER

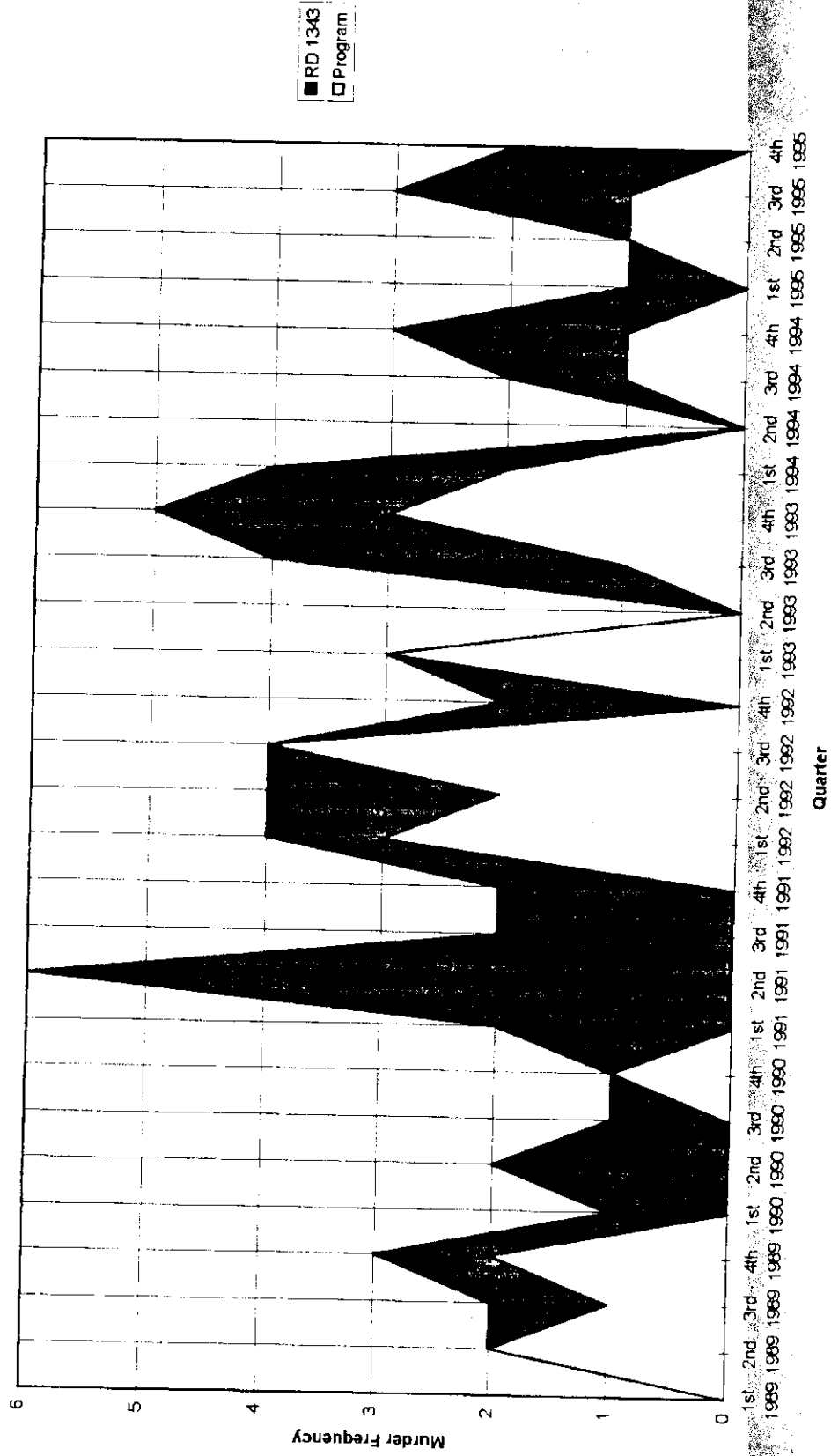


Figure 5.
 FREQUENCY OF MURDERS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA AND CONTIGUOUS PATROL AREA (RD 1347): 1989 TO 1995, BY QUARTER

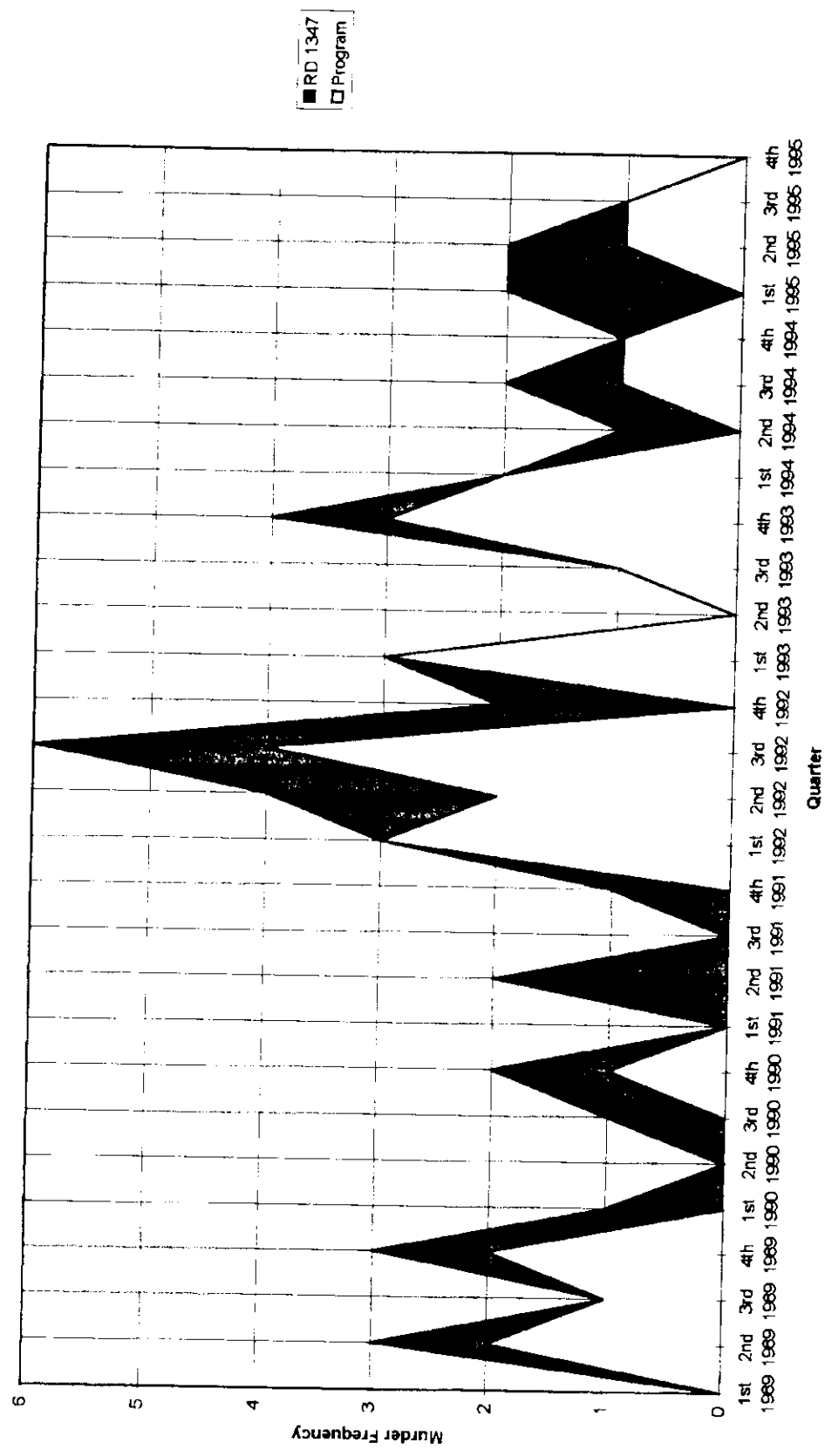
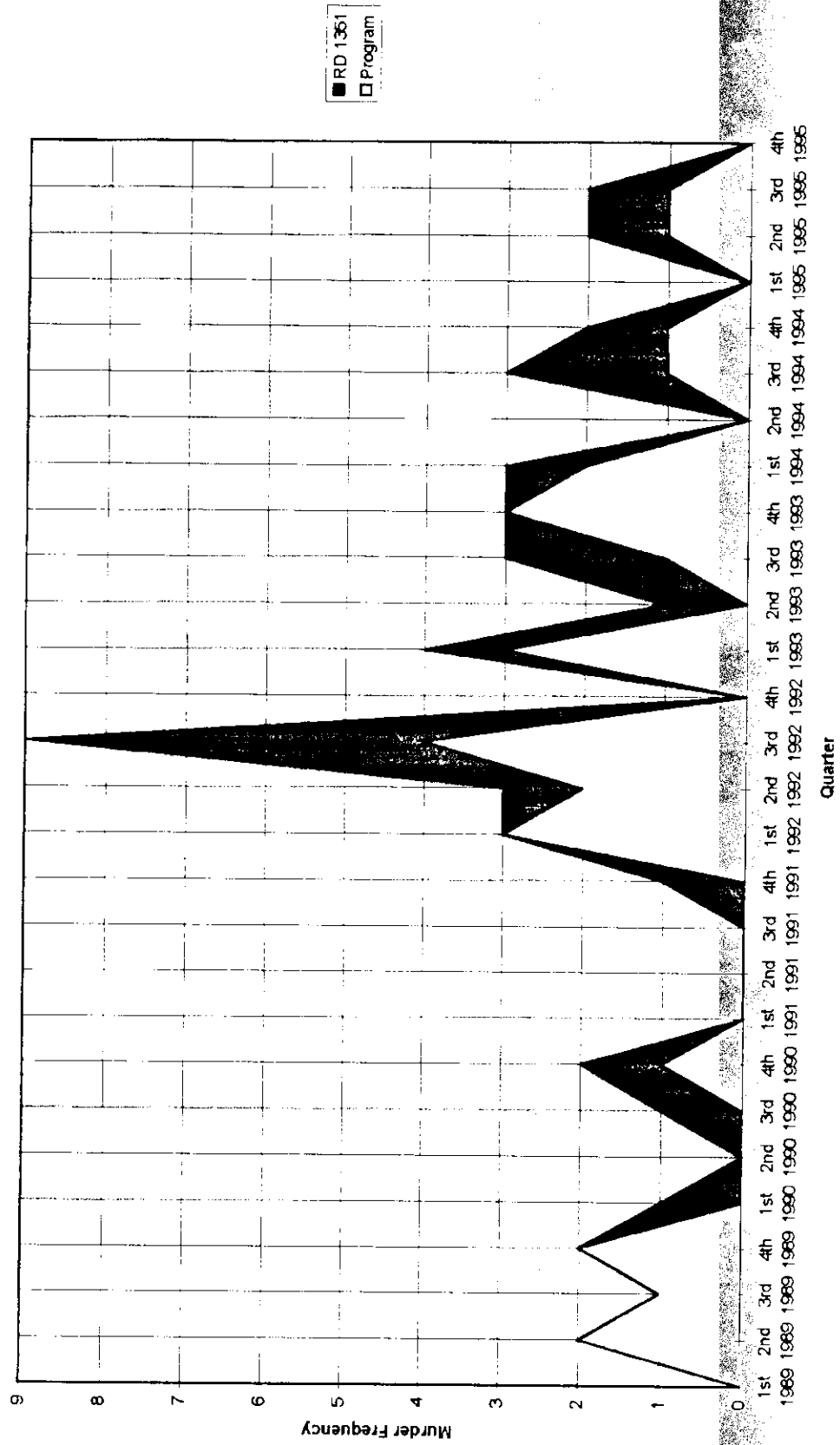


Figure 6.

FREQUENCY OF MURDERS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA AND CONTIGUOUS PATROL AREA (RD 1351): 1989 TO 1995, BY QUARTER



shootings or bicycle assisted shootings. However, because murder rates remained uniformly low during the OCDS program period, there is no reason to believe that the traffic barriers were in any way used as a "tool" for gang members to carry out deadly assaults on other gang members or members of the OCDS program community.

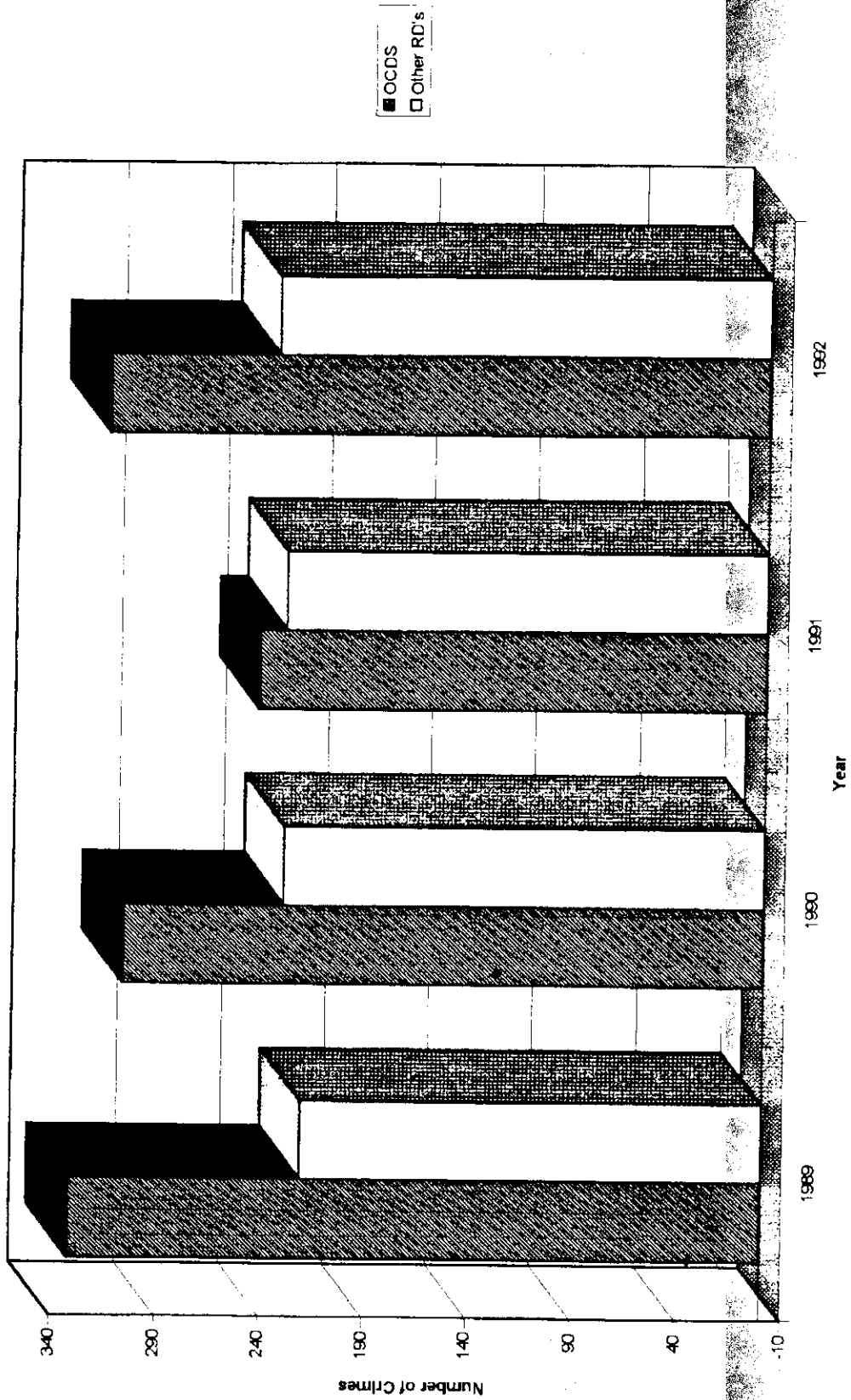
Predatory Crimes

General Program Effects

Key Findings: Predatory crimes dropped approximately 8% the first year and 37% the second year the traffic barriers were in place, compared to the year before (1989) OCDS began. However, the majority of this drop in crime is due to declines in the number of aggravated assaults reported in the OCDS program area. It is here assumed that this finding is possibly explained by less frequent contact between gang members via autos as a result of street closures by traffic barriers.

Although the traffic barrier placement in the OCDS program was designed specifically to impact drive-by shootings, there is reason to believe that the street closures may have affected general predatory crimes as well. Figure 7 shows trends in the numbers of selected predatory crimes (murder, rape, street robbery, aggravated assault and purse snatch) for the time periods before (1989), during (1990-1991) and after the imposition of the OCDS traffic barriers (1992). The trends in Figure 7 are compared to an average taken of predatory crimes occurring during this same time frame within the four patrol areas (RD's 1341, 1343, 1347, 1351) contiguous to the OCDS program area.

Figure 7.
 ANNUAL NUMBER OF PREDATORY CRIMES FOR OCDS PROGRAM AREA AND COMPARISON PATROL AREAS:
 1989 TO 1992



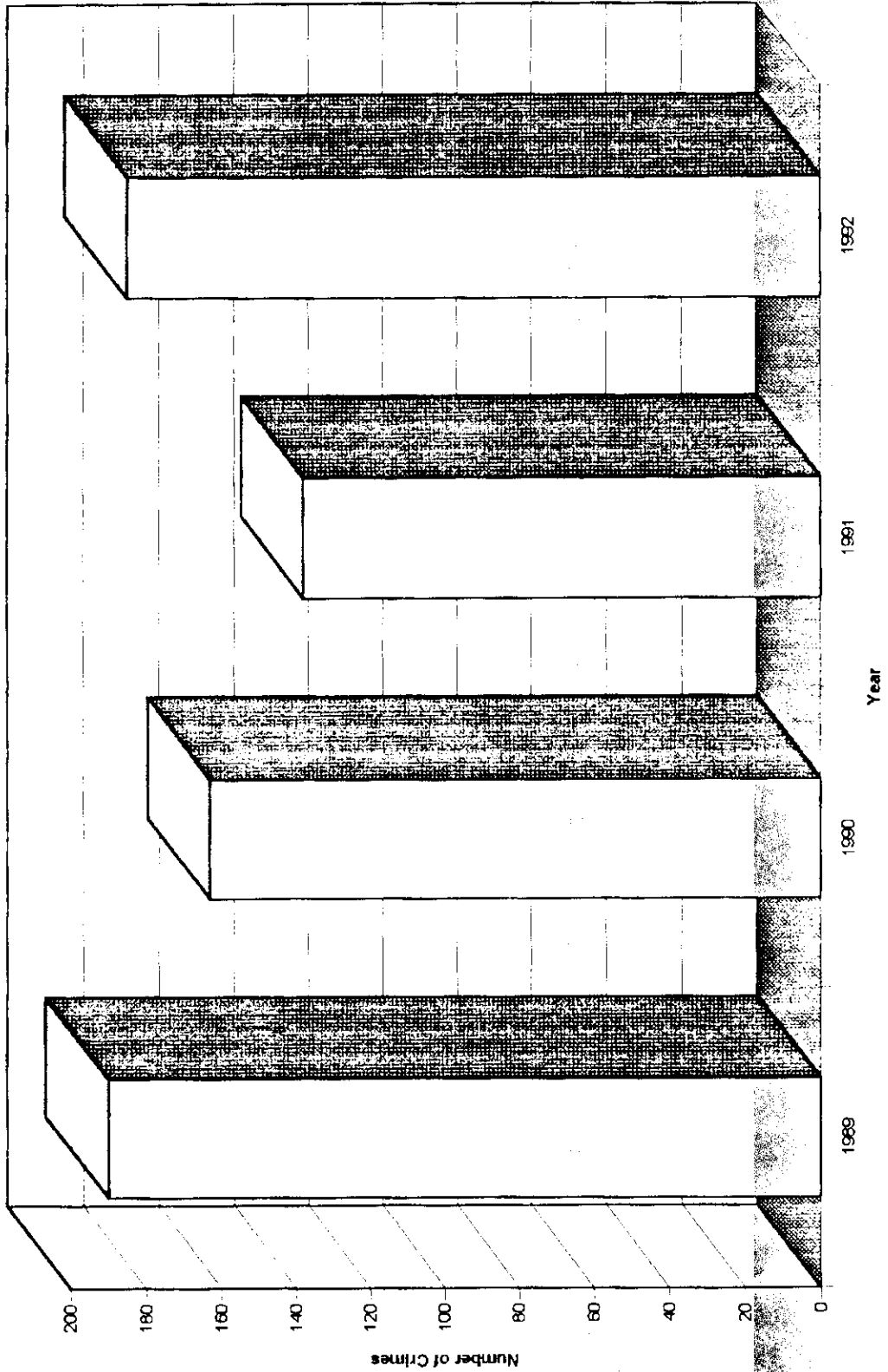
The time trends in Figure 7 suggest that reductions in certain predatory crimes were present during the two years following the installation of the OCDS traffic barriers. The reduction evidenced during the second year of the program (36.6%, compared to 1989 figures, $n = 332$ vs. 243 crimes) was substantially higher than that of the initial year (8.1%, compared to 1989 figures, $n = 332$ vs. 307 crimes). By comparison, the average number of predatory crimes occurring in the four patrol areas contiguous to the OCDS program area remained relatively stable during the time period that the traffic barriers were in place.

Examination of individual predatory crime categories, with the exception of aggravated assault, produced inconclusive results regarding a likely traffic barrier effect. Specifically, trends for street robbery, rape and purse snatch failed to indicate a likely increase or reduction as a result of the traffic barriers. Conversely, the entire reduction in predatory crimes observed in Figure 7 appears to be due to a reduction in one predatory crime category: aggravated assault.

Figure 8 shows the number of aggravated assaults before, during and after the traffic barrier placement. The trends in this figure are identical to those observed earlier in Figure 7 for predatory crimes in general. Thus, it is here assumed that if indeed the traffic barriers had any effect on predatory crimes, this effect was limited to the reduction of aggravated assaults. One explanation for this finding may be that, out of all predatory crimes examined here, aggravated assault is most tied to inter-gang conflict (at least in the OCDS program area). This may be further explained by the possibility that the traffic barriers may have reduced the likelihood that gangs would come into contact with one another (either on purpose or accidentally) via auto.

Figure 8.

NUMBER OF AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA: 1989 To 1992



Displacement and Adaptation Effects

Key Findings: Predatory crimes did not appear to be displaced because such crimes in patrol areas contiguous to OCDS remained stable during the time the traffic barriers were fully in place. Likewise, adaptation effects were not likely because predatory crimes continued to drop for both years the traffic barriers were fully in place.

No evidence of displacement or adaptation effects due to the traffic barrier placement was discovered. This conclusion is supported by the finding that predatory crimes (and more specifically, aggravated assaults) decreased for each of the two years that the traffic barriers were fully intact. Furthermore, predatory crimes in the patrol areas contiguous to the OCDS program area remained stable during this period (thus, ruling out probable displacement effects). Evidence of criminal adaptation (i.e., offenders adapting to the traffic barriers and using them to aid criminal activity) would require that the predatory crimes increase at some time during the OCDS program period. This trend in the data was not discovered; instead, predatory crimes continued to drop during the active OCDS program period.

Property Crimes

General Program Effects

Key Findings: The effects of traffic barriers on property crime, as evidenced here by findings from this study, do not support a clear OCDS program effect. Although property crime decreased substantially during the first year that the traffic barriers were in place (approximately 31%), similar reductions were evidenced in areas contiguous to the traffic barrier site. It

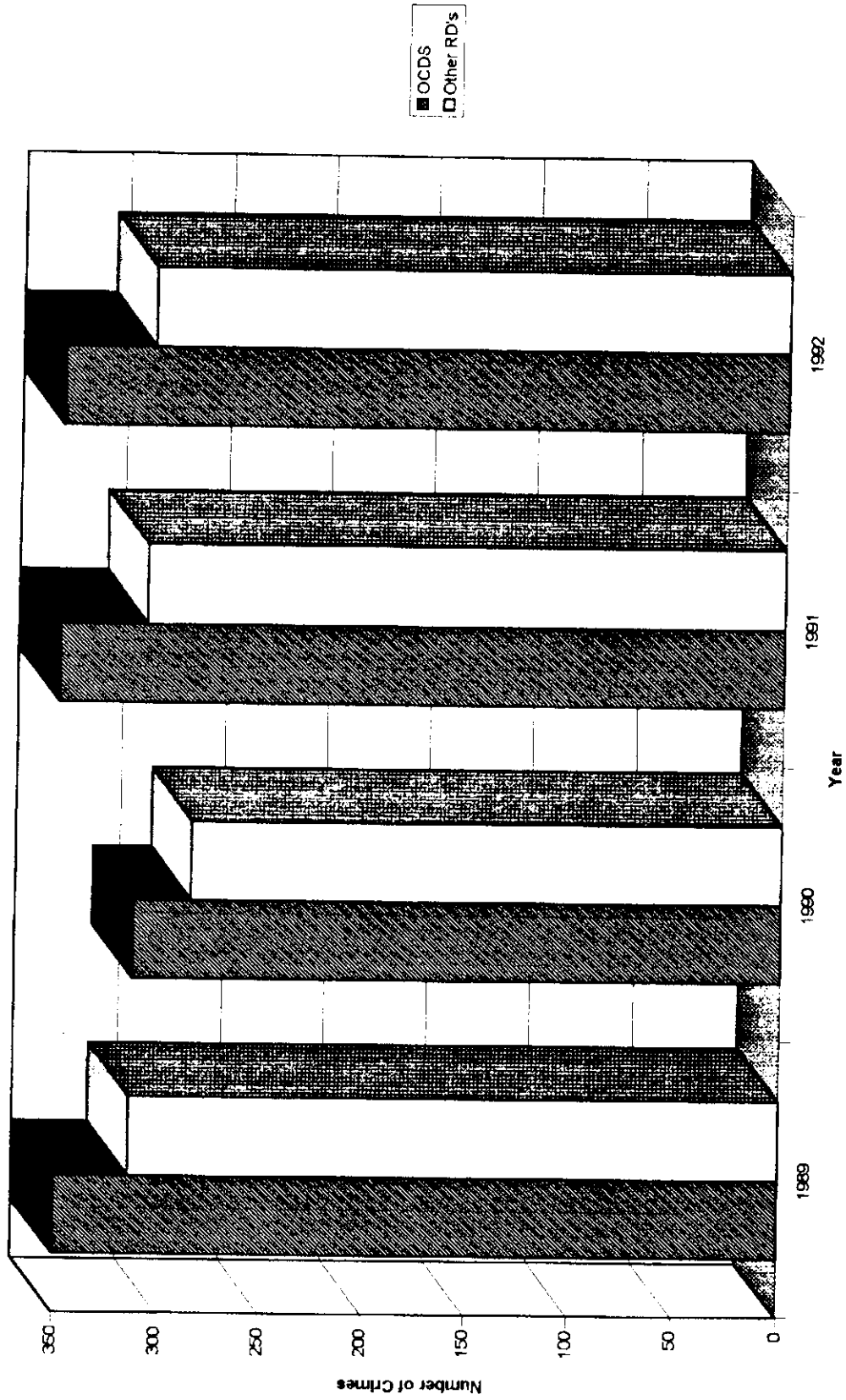
is possible that the OCDS program resulted in a decrease in property crime in these areas as well, but such a conclusion cannot be confirmed by the data included in this analysis. However, during the program's second year of operation, property crimes within the traffic barrier community, and in areas contiguous to the community, increased to their pre-program levels. This may indicate an "adaptation" effect.

Although it is very plausible that the traffic barriers could have resulted in lowering the incidence of property crime, the data presented in this section do not provide a clear picture of an OCDS program effect on property crimes examined in this study (burglary, auto theft, burglary from auto, grand theft, bike theft, theft from auto, theft from persons). Figure 9 presents the number of property crimes occurring in the OCDS program area from 1989 to 1992, compared against the number of property crimes in contiguous patrol areas. As these data indicate, property crimes in OCDS fell from 409 incidents before the traffic barrier installation to 313 incidents (a 31% reduction) after the first year the barriers were in place.

However, property crimes increased again to 409 incidents (nearly as high as the pre-barrier number) after the second year of the OCDS program. Similar trends during these same time periods, i.e., decreases from 1989 to 1990; increases from 1990 to 1991, were discovered in the patrol areas contiguous to the OCDS program area. However, the first year reduction in property crimes attributed to the traffic barriers was about three times greater than that discovered for the neighborhoods adjacent to the OCDS program area (30% first year reduction for OCDS vs. 10% first year reduction for contiguous patrol areas). The overall program effects reflected by these findings remain unclear with regard to the likely impact of traffic

Figure 9.

NUMBER OF PROPERTY CRIMES IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA AND CONTIGUOUS PATROL AREAS: 1989 TO 1992



barriers on property crime. On the one hand, reductions in crime within the program area as well as contiguous areas could suggest that the traffic barriers had a "positive displacement" effect (i.e., the crime reduction properties in OCDS spread outward). On the other hand, these observed reductions in property crime may be the result of natural or non-program related effects occurring in the general program area. Whether the former or the latter explanation is correct cannot be deduced from the data analyzed here.

Examination of individual property crime trends reveals that offense categories, residential burglary and auto theft, accounted for the majority of the observed first year reduction in general property crimes. Time trends (1989 to 1992) for frequencies of these two crime categories representing the OCDS program area are shown in Figure 10 and 11. Unlike predatory crimes, which exhibited steady declines throughout the OCDS program period, auto thefts and residential burglaries both declined only the first year of OCDS (40% decrease for auto theft; 29% decrease for residential burglary). Interestingly, both the former and latter crime categories marked nearly identical proportionate increases (about 50% of the first year gains) during the program's second year (20% increase for auto theft; 15% increase for residential burglary). Again, this finding must be interpreted with caution because the same general increase and decrease patterns were also discovered in the patrol areas contiguous to the OCDS program area. Therefore, it is not known whether the crime patterns observed here were, in part, the product of the traffic barriers or the result of natural crime cycles or both.

Figure 10.

NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL BURGLARIES IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA: 1989 To 1992

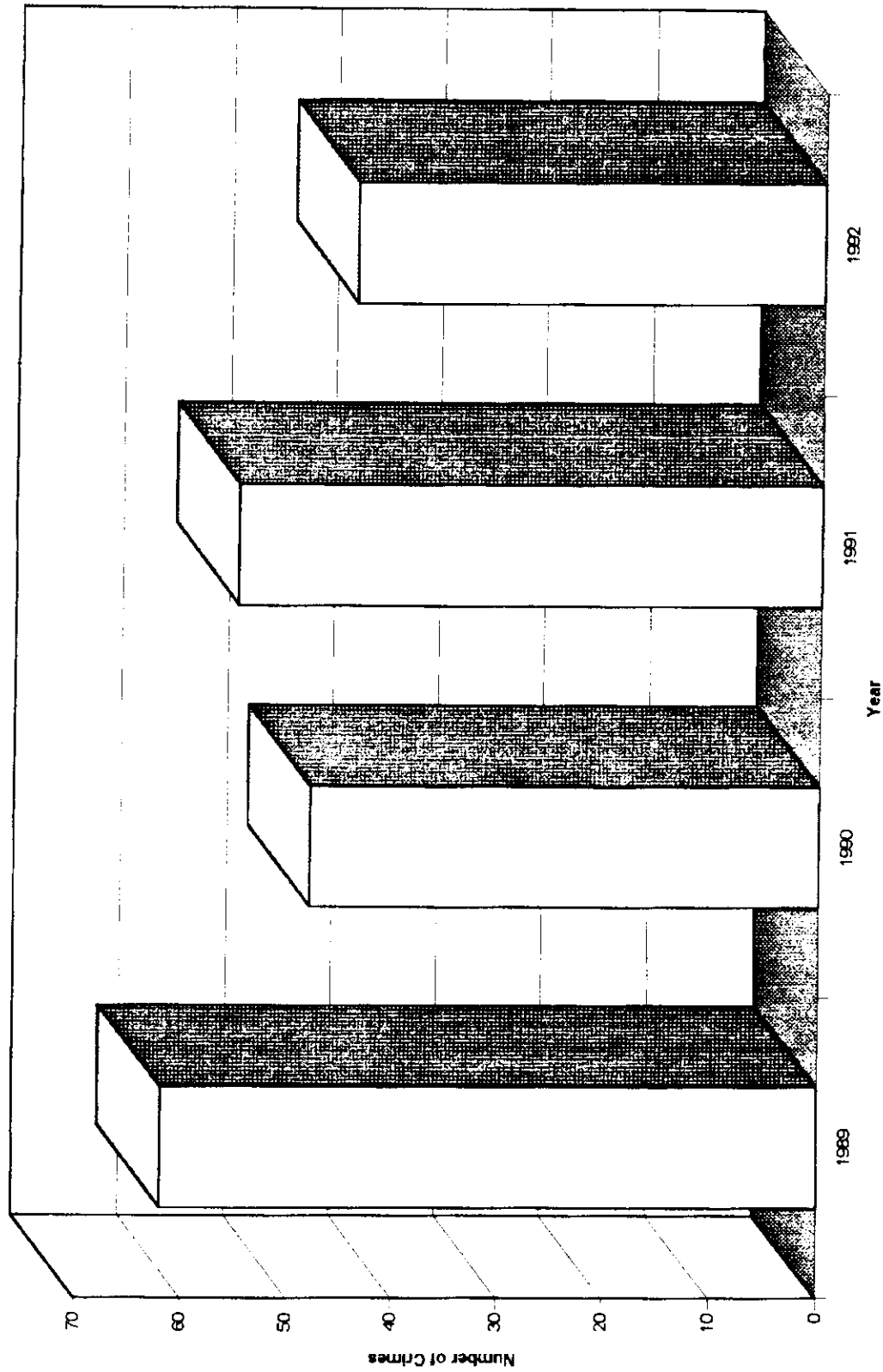
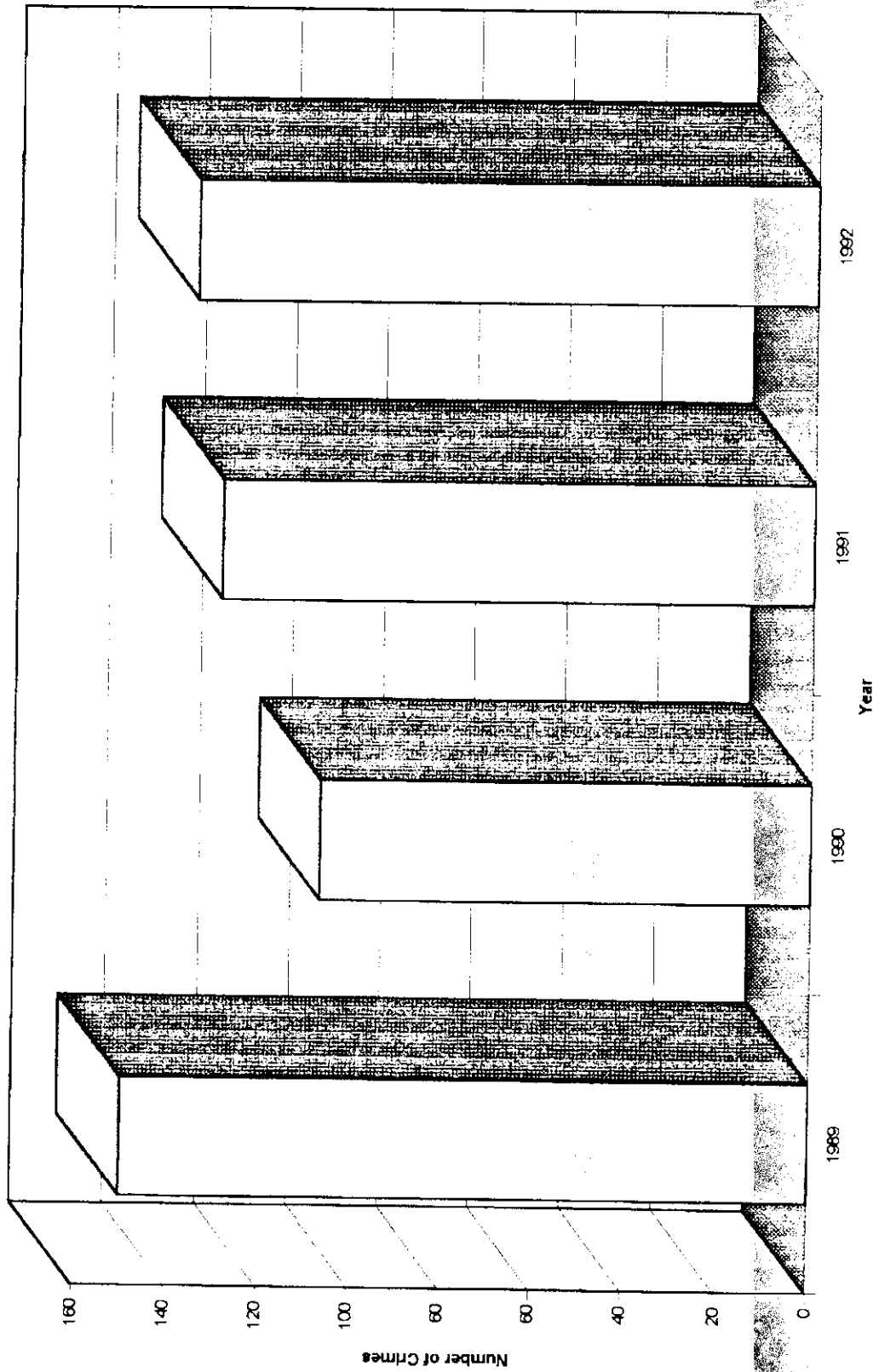


Figure 11.

NUMBER OF AUTO THEFTS IN OCDS PROGRAM AREA: 1989 to 1992



Displacement and Adaptation

Key Findings: There is no evidence of traditional displacement effects for property crime; however, "positive" displacement may have been responsible for declines in crime within contiguous patrol areas. Increases in crime present during the second year of full OCDS operation may indicate criminal adaptation.

Because the property crime patterns, i.e., increases and decreases, for the OCDS program area are nearly identical to those in adjacent patrol areas, the assumption that property crimes were displaced due to the presence of traffic barriers in OCDS is clearly not supported. Instead, these crime patterns may reflect a "positive displacement" effect due to the traffic barriers. It is possible that whatever property crime reduction qualities the traffic barriers created in the OCDS community were effective in contiguous neighborhoods as well.

Observed data trends for residential burglary and auto theft may be suggestive of an adaptation effect. If indeed criminal adaptation did result from the imposition of the traffic barriers, it occurred during the second year of OCDS operation. Substantively, it could be reasoned that auto theft and residential burglary were most affected by the traffic barriers because both of these crimes involve opportunities created by automobiles. That is, it becomes more difficult to steal an auto or to drive away stolen articles after a burglary when opportunities to gain fast entrance and escape have been limited by traffic barriers (or at least the perception is so). However, it is entirely possible that during the first year of OCDS many "alternative" methods of offending were developed for committing auto theft and residential burglary (see, e.g., Cromwell et al., 1991) that accommodated (or

perhaps incorporated) the use of the traffic barriers to increase blocked opportunities. For example, auto thieves may have established specific street routes during specific times when they felt safe from increased risks of apprehension due to the traffic barriers. Likewise, residential burglaries could be carried out on foot or by using other modes of transportation (e.g., bicycles, motorcycles), or in select areas where cars could be parked outside of streets with barriers, yet close to target dwellings.

School Effects

The OCDS program boundaries included Jefferson High School (known to residents as "The Jeff"), a mid- to large-sized senior high school with a tough street reputation for gangs and gang violence. During an on-site interview at Jefferson, one teacher described the school as "L.A. Unified's second toughest next to Garfield High, which is where Jaime Escalante (known for the movie *Stand and Deliver*) became known for teaching math to gang kids." The student population at Jefferson High School is 91.4% Latino/Hispanic and 8.5% African American (LAUSD, 1996). Its student population is was approximately 2,200 in 1990 when OCDS began, and its current population in 1996 is approximately 3,100 (LAUSD, 1996). Jefferson High School operates on a traditional 10 month instructional school year.

Approximately one week after OCDS began, LAPD was notified by Los Angeles School District officials that enrollments at Jefferson High School had climbed significantly following the installation of the traffic barriers. According to Mr. Philip Saldivar, Principal of Jefferson High School during the first year of OCDS:

"One day, shortly after the program began, my cafeteria manager came running into my office and said 'Mr. Saldivar, the dining hall is

full of more kids that I've see, what do I do?' I told him 'feed them.' After examining our ADA's (Average Daily Attendance), I noticed that our attendance had gone up about 12% higher than before the barricade program (Saldivar, 1991)."

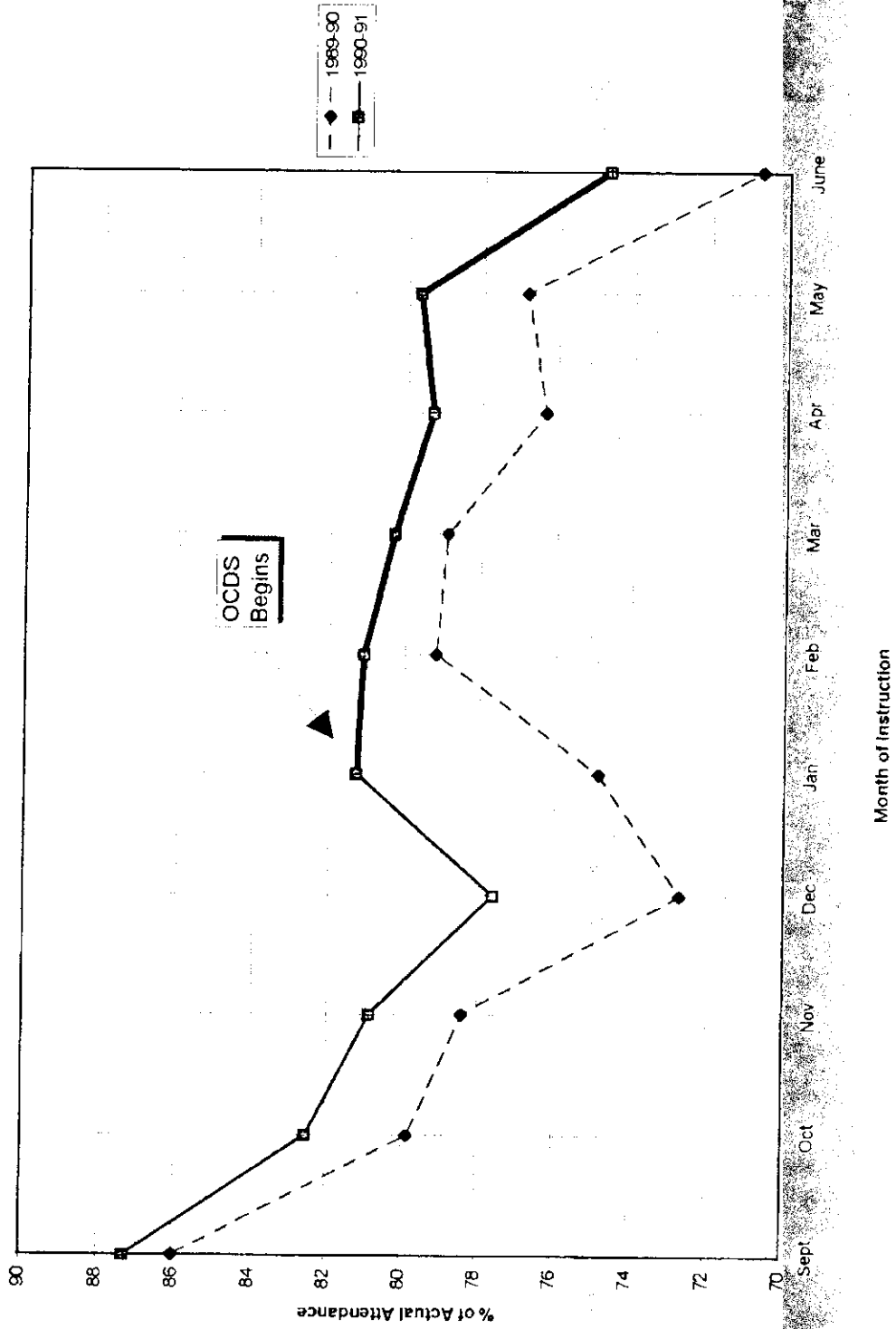
First-Year Phase Analysis

Data in Figure 12 examines the first year OCDS program effects on attendance at Jefferson High School. Figure 12 includes time trends for percentage of actual attendance, by month, for the school years immediately preceding and following the 1990 implementation of OCDS. Although these data do not show a clear program effect, there are two time trends that may indicate positive attendance changes following the start of OCDS. The first is in regard to attendance increases at Jefferson High during the first OCDS program month (January 1990).

As the data in Figure 12 illustrate, the start of Spring semester at Jefferson High during the first month of OCDS (Jan. 1990) displays a much sharper increase in attendance than that of the previous year (1989) at the same time period. In January 1989, the percent of actual attendance at Jefferson High was 74% compared to 81% in January 1990 during the first month of OCDS (which is equivalent to a 200 student increase, based on a 3,000 student population). It is unclear from these data whether or not attendance increases observed here are due to natural shifts in enrollment or to the OCDS program or both; however, interview findings offer two rationales to support a likely OCDS program effect on school attendance.

Figure 12

FIRST-YEAR PHASE ANALYSIS OF OCDS TARGET HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FOR 1989-90 AND 1990-91
SCHOOL YEARS



1. Parents were less likely to keep their child at home because fear of crime in the OCDS community had been decreased by the traffic barriers.

First, personal interviews with several parents claiming to have had children who attended Jefferson High School during the outset of OCDS revealed that parents may have been less fearful of allowing their child to attend school after the traffic barriers were installed. The following interviews with parents of children in the OCDS program area lend support to this research assumption:

“Cars were always driving up and down the streets, really fast. There were people shooting at the kids. My boy was afraid to walk to and from Jefferson because he told me ‘Mama I could get killed just walking to school.’ I would just let him stay at home, instead of going to school.”

“After the things [barriers] went in, things got quiet around here, and I didn’t worry about my son going to school and getting hurt on the way.”

2. Students were less likely to be truant after the traffic barriers were installed.

Interviews with persons in their early 20’s who claimed to have attended Jefferson High School during the OCDS program revealed that (a) many students wanted to attend school, but were afraid of victimization while traveling both to and from Jefferson High School and (b) the feeling of “calm” within the OCDS neighborhoods reduced their fears of crime and resulted in their increased desire to make the journey to and from school. The

following interviews with past students of Jefferson High School support this research assumption:

“We would hear at school, you know, that something was going to go down. You don’t want to get caught in the middle of a drive-by or something like that, you know. So, if I would hear that something was going down, I just wouldn’t go to school for a few days.”

“My mom and dad speak Spanish and no English. I’m the only one in the family that speaks English and I speak it to my parents. I was a lot less scared of getting hurt when the gates when up. You could tell when somebody was in the neighborhood that didn’t belong there...I always wanted to go to school but I was scared. I would just tell my parents that it was a holiday or something when I didn’t want to go. They didn’t know the difference because they were embarrassed to call the school because they couldn’t speak English.”

Longitudinal Analysis

Respectively, Figures 13 and 14 show multi-year time trends for percent of actual attendance measures at Jefferson High School compared to other regional high schools (see Figure 13), and to all regular high schools in LA Unified School District (see Figure 14). The clear peak in attendance shown in Figure 13 during the first year phase of OCDS, compared to attendance figures of the other two major high schools located near Jefferson, may be evidence of a program effect. Although the attendance figures in

Figure 13

PERCENT OF ACTUAL ATTENDANCE FOR OCDS TARGET HIGH SCHOOL (JEFFERSON) AGAINST OTHER REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS

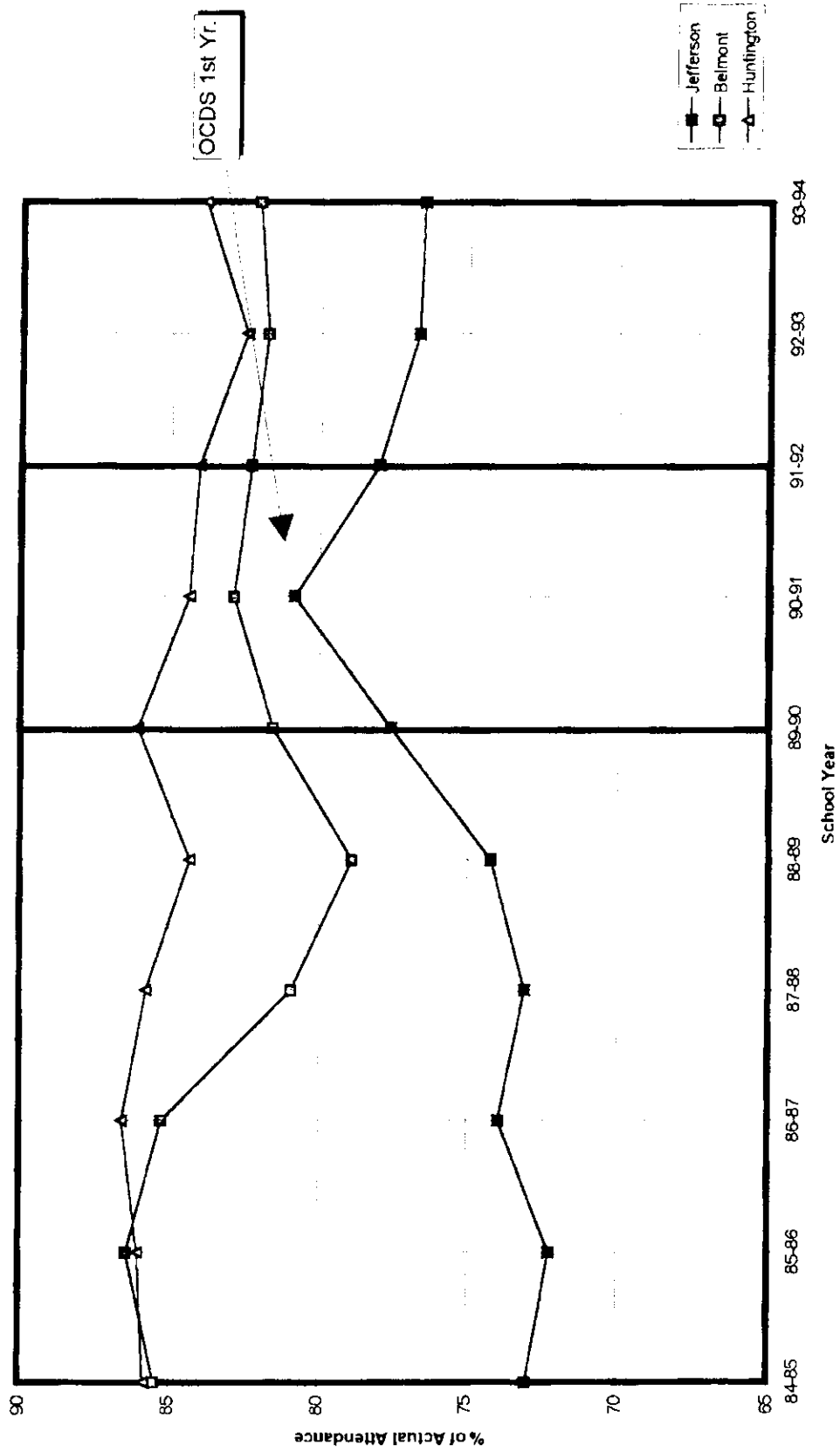


Figure 14.

PERCENT OF ACTUAL ATTENDANCE FOR OCDS TARGET HIGH SCHOOL (JEFFERSON) AGAINST OVERALL DISTRICT AVERAGES FOR REGULAR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

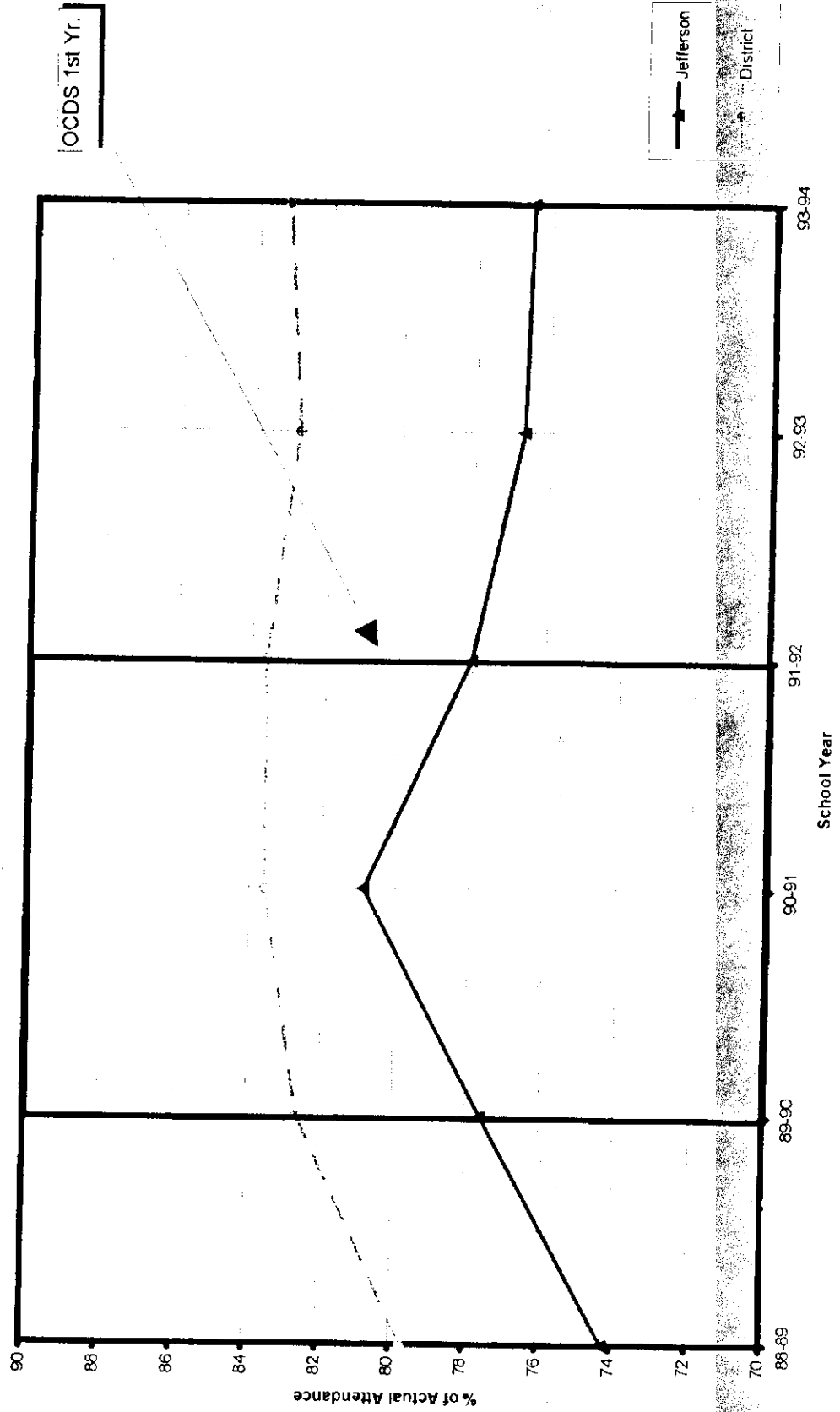


Figure 13 are trending upward prior to the OCDS start year, the sudden peak in attendance corresponding to the OCDS implementation year appears to atypically high--especially in contrast to the stable and declining attendance trends for the comparison high schools.

Interestingly, declines in annual attendance at Jefferson High appear to correspond to "downsizing" of the OCDS program during 1992. However, these declines appear to stabilize somewhat in the years following the removal of OCDS's full scale community policing effort. This stability in attendance may be due, in part, to the continued reduction in high school students' fear of crime produced by the presence of the traffic barriers.

In Figure 14, multi-year attendance figures for Jefferson High School are compared to the yearly average attendance figures for all senior high school in LA Unified School District. Again, the peak in attendance during the first year phase of OCDS is in sharp contrast to the rather flat overall district trend. Taken together, the evidence presented here suggests that the traffic barrier placement in RD1345 may have played a significant role in promoting increased attendance at Jefferson High School. In addition, the attendance at Jefferson High maintained higher levels after OCDS than before the program--even after the majority of additional police presence was removed from the area. This may be evidence of a long term traffic barrier effect on school attendance in the OCDS program area.

MONTHLY ATTENDANCE AVERAGES, OCDS TARGET HIGH
SCHOOL (JEFFERSON): 1989-90, 1990-91 SCHOOL YEARS

Month	1989-90	1990-91	% CHANGE
September	86.01%	87.28%	+1.5
October	79.83%	82.53%	+3.4
November	78.41%	80.86%	+3.4
December	72.69%	77.61%	+6.7
January	74.84%	81.26%	+8.6
February	79.17%	81.09%	+2.4
March	78.89%	80.30%	+1.8
April	76.31%	79.30%	+3.9
May	76.84%	79.67%	+3.7
June	70.70%	74.69%	+5.6

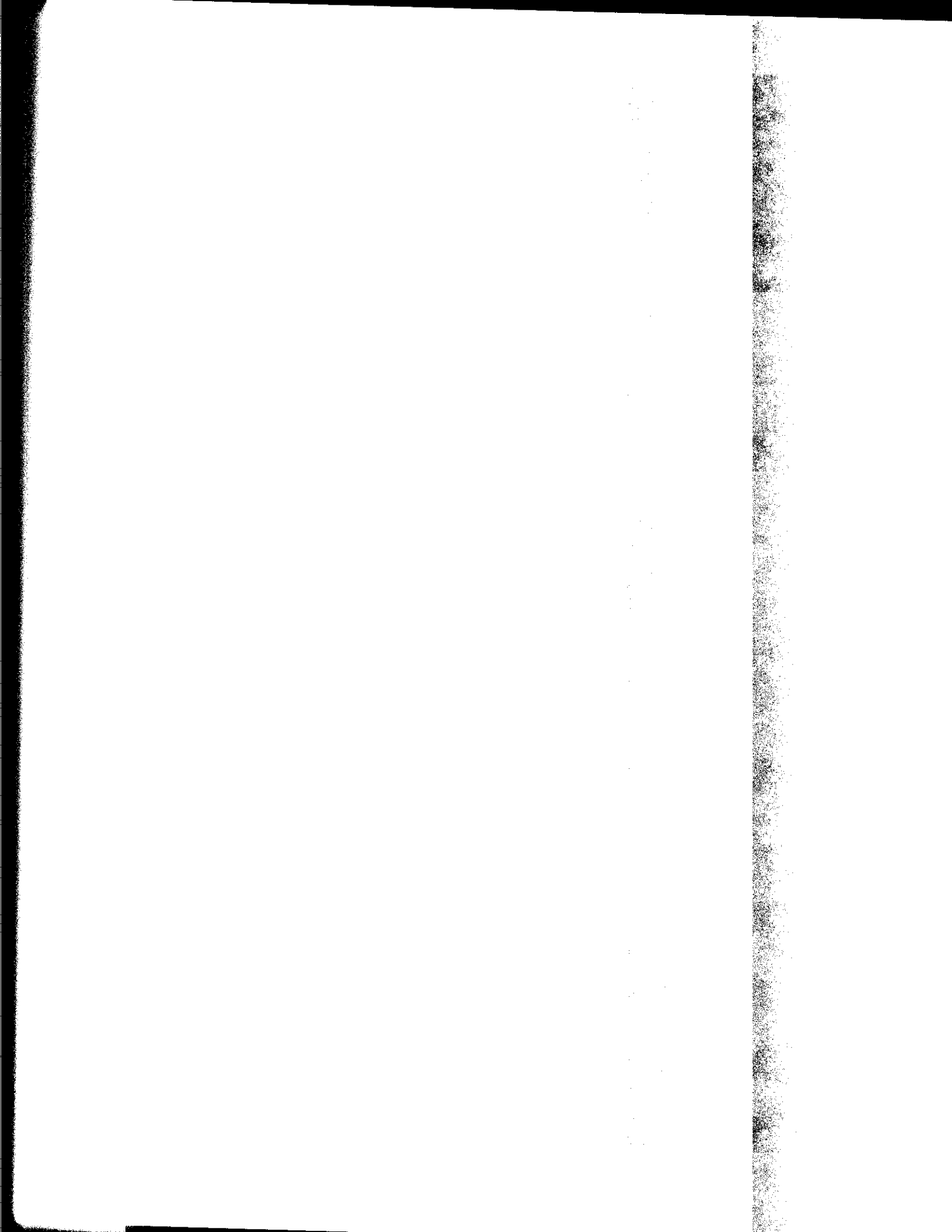
Note: Boxed area denotes first OCDS program month

Source: LA Unified School District, Information Center Branch, 1996

TABLE 2. Crime Data Used in Figures

	1989	1990	1991	1992
<u>Murder</u>				
OCDS	5	1	0	8
<u>Contig. Areas:</u>				
RD 1342	2	4	3	2
RD 1343	2	4	12	5
RD 1347	2	3	3	6
RD 1351	0	3	1	6
<u>Pred. Crimes</u>				
OCDS	332	307	243	316
Contig. Areas*	221	230	230	235
<u>OCDS</u>				
Assault	190	163	138	185
<u>Prop. Crimes</u>				
OCDS	409	313	409	397
Contig. Areas*	314	285	308	306
<u>OCDS</u>				
Auto Theft	150	107	129	135
Burglary	62	48	55	44

*Figures represent averages for RD 1342, 1343, 1347, 1351.



CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Statistical crime data show only one perspective regarding the impact of traffic barrier installation within the OCDS program area. It is also important to examine the "qualitative" community level impact of the traffic barriers as well. To do so, unstructured interviews were conducted with community members (some of whom were self-identified gang members) who claimed have personal experience with the traffic barriers both before and after their installation in the OCDS target community.

Informants providing interviews in this section were selected by a purposive sampling method. That is, effort was taken to identify informants who were the most representative of "typical" community members who resided in the OCDS program area before and after the traffic barriers were installed. Thus, the primary criterion for selecting informants was whether or not the potential informant had lived in the OCDS area prior to the 1990 start date of the OCDS program.

The purpose of these interviews was not, nor could it be, to draw definitive conclusions regarding the successes and failures of the traffic barriers. In order to do so, it would be necessary to employ systematic probability sampling methods. Without utilizing such methods, it is impossible to determine the degree to which informants interviewed here are representative of the OCDS community at large. Thus, extreme caution should be used in formulating any research or policy conclusions based on content contained in the following interviews.

Community Member Interviews: Positive Comments

Because the OCDS program community has a relatively high mobility rate, it was somewhat difficult to obtain interviews with residents who could relate experiences both before and after installation of the traffic barriers. Of approximately 200 community members approached for interview, 42 of these persons agreed to be interviewed (and claimed to have lived in the OCDS community since or before 1989). Portions of these interviews are presented below. They are grouped into common themes in order to identify issues of importance at the community level which are perhaps raised by the installation of traffic barriers for crime prevention purposes.

Crime Prevention

When asked the question "Did the traffic barriers have a positive or negative effect on crime in the neighborhood?" approximately 81% of residents claiming to have lived in the OCDS program area since 1989 indicated that the traffic barriers had some type of positive impact on crime. A common response was that the traffic barriers created an almost immediate reduction in the amount of non-resident vehicle and pedestrian traffic, and general noise, which many residents believed to be a primary cause of increased crime in their neighborhood. As one resident noted:

"I've lived on this street since 1959. It was really quiet around here back then. There was no crime and no strangers hanging around. But then in the 70's, it was terrible. Things started to fall apart. It got really noisy on the streets and crime started. But after the barricades went up on my street, things got all quiet again, just like when I first moved here. Those guys doing crimes went away from here."

When asked about specific victim experiences, about one-half (52%; n=22) claimed to have experienced what they believed to be a "serious" personal or property victimization while living in the OCDS program area. Further probes to determine specifics of the victim experience, such as single or multiple victimization, nature of crime, time-frame and so forth were not productive because most of the informants could not remember specific details about the criminal event (i.e., there was serious risk of bias due to memory fading or telescoping). However, it is important to note that many community residents claiming to have suffered one or more "serious" victimizations claimed that crime had "eased up" after the barriers were installed. The nature of crime reported in these interviews was quite general, including robbery, auto theft and graffiti vandalism. However, from the following sets of interviews, it is suggestive that the traffic barriers may have reduced actual risk of both personal and property victimization:

"There used to be kids hanging around on the sidewalks in front of my house and then they were in front of the bus stop where I have to wait to get on to go shopping. They [the kids] pulled guns and knives on me to steal my money. But after the police came in with the cement things on the streets, the kids didn't hang around on the sidewalk and the road was clear of them to where the bus stops...so I didn't get held up anymore."

"Lots of cars were taken from this street. I have two of my cars taken, both of them in the daytime. After the barriers, me and my neighbors held on to our cars with no problem. I don't think anybody on this street got their car stolen since the barriers."

"I had paint sprayed all over my house, my car and on the fence around my house. These gang kids were painting all over everything that was mine. It got so bad, I just couldn't keep up with it. I saw a big change when the police put up the fences. There was still some painting, but nothing near what it was."

Many of the resident victims complained about having their personal safety threatened by teenagers and youths "hanging around" in front of their homes "selling drugs." (It is interesting to note that the vast majority of these residents lived on or near street corners which connected to major cross-streets.) As the following interviews suggest, both buyers and sellers of drugs appeared to be affected by the traffic barriers:

"I would see them everyday in front of my house and I know they were selling drugs. You could see it. At about 4:00 every day, they would just wave little bags in front of cars passing by...I called the police when it started. The next day the drug sellers saw me and told me they would do something bad to me or my house or my kid if I called the police again. When the police put those things across the street. It made those idiots go away, because I couldn't call the police to get rid of them."

"People bought a lot of drugs in this neighborhood, and on my street. Stop, give money and drive away quick. Lots of strangers in pretty nice cars. There were no more nice cars stopping and driving away quick when the gates went up. I guess they were afraid somebody would see them or something like that."

Thus, at the community level, there appeared to be the general perception among residents living in the OCDS program area that crime has been reduced by the blockage of neighborhood streets. Furthermore, a variety of personal, property and public order crimes were reported by these informants as having been impacted by the traffic barriers.

Drive-by Shootings

However, in a general sense, the community resident interviews yielded a near consensus of opinion regarding the reduction in drive-by shootings immediately following the traffic barrier installation (only one informant felt that drive-by shooting activity was unaffected by the traffic barriers). One of these resident informants lived on a street he claimed to be "the baddest for drive-by's" in the area, and provided the following account:

"It was like I said, things were so bad on this street (Naomi St.) that after sundown my wife and me had to lay down on the floor of our house about one or two times a week because we would here shots coming from cars driving down the street. I got the holes in my house from the bullets to prove it...There was still a little shooting after the roadblocks were put in, but not on my street, and nothing like it was without the roadblocks. Hell, nobody came down my street after the roadblocks were up."

Common to several interviews was the observation by informants living on major street intersections, which were blocked by traffic barriers, was the observation that gang members in vehicles "stopped, parked and looked" at the newly installed traffic barriers on several occasions (at night) for several days during the initial week of the OCDS program. According to one resident, who lived directly next to a barrier blocking her small residential street from a very large multi-lane expressway:

“The night after the barricades were put up, I saw car loads of gang kids that I would see all the time on my street in those fancy painted, low-slung cars drive up to the barricades with their lights on and just park and look. They were all quiet. They never even got out. For a couple of nights after that, I saw them come back. Each night doing the same thing. They would just park for a minute and then just speed off. Then after about a week, they never came back.”

Fear of Crime

Nearly 86% (n=36) of study informants reported that they felt “safer” in their homes and neighborhoods after the traffic barriers were installed. Many stated that they were less fearful of crime because of the physical changes that took place around their homes following the traffic barrier installation. Reduction in graffiti, car and pedestrian traffic, trash and refuse, and “gun shots heard,” were some of the popular reasons given by OCDS residents for being less fearful of crime. Interestingly, a majority of residents (about 63%) said that the traffic barriers “restored order” to their street. When asked what they meant by “order,” the residents provided the following answers:

“Because things got all quiet around here, I was able to sift around all the confusion and see if somebody was going to break into my house or was casing somebody else’s house. Before, there were so many people walking and driving around that I didn’t know what or who was coming and going.”

“After the gates went up, I think that people set on no good knew that regular people could see them better and see what they were doing. There just wasn’t the time or place to hide out any more after

those things [the barriers] went up. Those robbers and gang members stuck out like a sore thumb.”

“If somebody wanted to get to me or my house before the fences were up, all they had to do was pretend they were just driving or walking down the street. There was so much going on around here and people hanging around that they could be waiting to make their move and nobody suspected a thing. When the fences went up, all that went away. When somebody parked on the street, everybody saw them and was looking. They would usually go away after just a little bit.”

Much of the interview information gathered in the area of fear of crime contained themes, like those above, which made reference to Newman's (1972) concept of “defensible space.” It appears as though the traffic barriers reduced the ambient flow of strangers to and from the OCDS program area, thus enabling residents to identify “who” and “what” did and did not belong in their neighborhood. It is relatively certain, however, that residents felt more “in control” of their neighborhood after the traffic barriers were installed.

Fear of Retaliation

A wide-spread concern among residents interviewed was that, prior to the traffic barrier installation, they felt helpless to report crime to police for fear of retaliation by gangs and other criminals. This is perhaps a problem unique to the OCDS program area because of its extreme saturation with hard core gangs. Residents felt that even if they were better able to detect and report crimes because of greater access to police, a great many crimes would

go unreported due to threats of retaliation from gangs. However, residents claimed that they were more willing to report crimes after the traffic barriers were installed because it would be much more difficult for gangs to carry out their threats. Residents felt that they were better able to protect themselves from random attacks from threatening gangs after the traffic barriers were installed because the gang were more conspicuous to residents, police and bystanders. The following report highlights the general attitudes of informants regarding fear of retaliation from gangs:

“One of the neighbors down the street got a gasoline bomb thrown into their living room window because the gangs thought he called the police on them. After that, nobody called the police on the gangs because we didn’t want a bomb in our window. The police were coming around on bikes and handing out letters to try and talk to us, but we didn’t want them around our house because the gangs would see and think we were telling them [the police] something about them [the gangs]... I think when the streets were closed off we felt better protected and then we didn’t mind as much telling the police what was going on because the gangs were not hanging around to see us talking to the police. That made it safer for us.”

Routine Activity Changes

Approximately 71% (n=30) of the residents interviewed noted some type of change in their routine activity patterns as a result of the traffic barrier installation. In general, these changes centered around spending more time in streets and public areas near their homes. Older residents (senior citizens), who claimed the only time they spent outside of their home before OCDS was to get into their car, reported that after the street closures they would “sit in their front or backyard” or “do yardwork” or other outdoor activities more

often. The following resident comment illustrates this change in routine activities:

“I never went out of my house at night, and I hardly went out of my house in the day. I just let the yard and the outside of the house go to pot. It was better than getting shot. When my street was closed I got out during the day more often, to sit outside or tend to the plants. But I still didn’t go outside at night.”

Younger informants (persons who were teenagers during the OCDS program) generally stated that they felt more comfortable using public areas such as parks, streets, or school playground for daytime leisure activities. As one informant recalled:

“Me and my friends could go to the park or kick around in the streets without kids from out of the area coming by to give us a hard time. You know, always there were kids from other places claiming our parks so that if you wanted to use it, forget it. I think that after the police did the barricades it kept a lot of those other guys out. At least I used the parks more often and didn’t really have too many problems.”

One key routine activity change informants claimed was a direct result of the traffic barrier installation was an immediate increase in neighbor interaction. Before the traffic barriers, informants reported that they seldom had a chance to see or talk with their neighbors. As the following informant observed, the barriers may have increased neighbor interaction by reducing fear of crime:

“Once we all spent a little more of our day outside of the house, we had a little more time to talk to each other. Before, when we were afraid of leave the house because of the gangs, we just didn’t have anytime to talk. Besides, if the gangs saw you talking to a person they would think you were talking about them. When the streets got quiet, there was definitely more time to talk with neighbors. Things got more friendly. Even if sometimes we didn’t speak the same language, we would still try to talk about the kids playing or something. We never did that before.”

Community Member Interviews: Negative Comments

Negative comments about the traffic barriers were significantly less in number than positive comments received. However, it is important to note that not all aspects of the OCDS traffic barrier program were pleasing to some of the residents interviewed. The sections that follow highlight these “negative themes.”

The Traffic Barriers As The Lesser of Two Evils

Approximately 78% (n=33) of residents interviewed felt that the traffic barriers were “the lesser of two evils.” That is, they felt the barriers had created many positive changes in their neighborhood; however, on the other hand, they also wished that there was no need for barriers in their community. As one resident observed:

“I don’t think anybody on my street really would like barricades put up everywhere just for the hell of it. But you have to understand, they made things so much better around here than the way they were. So think of it that way. We like them for the good things they have done. But if things weren’t so bad to start with, maybe we wouldn’t

like them. It's better to have them [the traffic barriers] than go back to the way things were."

Inconvenience

Several informants whose homes were located near or adjacent to traffic barriers complained that they had to drive several blocks to get to their homes because of street blockages. However, again, many of these informants noted that the extra drive was worth the reductions in crime activity and noise that they had attributed to the inconvenience of traffic barriers. Also residents who lived in homes on the end of streets where barriers were placed complained about a high number of persons using their driveways to turn around.

Appearance

Some residents complained about the "primitive" appearance of the materials used for the traffic closures. In particular, the use of black wrought-iron metal for the gate, according to some residents, "gave a prison or jail appearance to the neighborhood." However, these residents also noted that the cement planter next to the gate containing a tree was a good idea; however, many residents complained the tree was not properly maintained and would most often die. The following comment reflects the basis for this criticism:

"To me, they could have used something else besides those black iron gates. They look like prison bars. I did like those cement planters next to the gates with the tree in them. But, after a few of the people in the neighborhood quit watering the tree, it died. And after it died, some people thought the planter was a trash can, and they started putting trash in it."

Prison Camp Atmosphere and Community Isolation

News reports claiming that residents in the OCDS program area felt that the traffic barriers created a "prison camp atmosphere" and caused the OCDS neighborhood to be isolated from other communities were generally not confirmed by interviews conducted in this study. However, as noted in the previous section, a handful of those interviewed did complain about the general appearance of the the traffic barriers and felt that their appearance could have been improved. In fact, the comment that the traffic barriers looked like "prison cell bars" was noted several times. The following comment was typical of those received by most informants when asked "Do you think the traffic barriers make your neighborhood feel or look like a prison?"

"Well, I think that people from the outside might think we have trouble in here. But most everybody knows that anybody living in these streets has some type of trouble. They don't need to see the black iron gates to know that...but it doesn't feel like a prison. I don't think anyone on this street will tell you that. It may look to some people like a prison, but we sure don't feel that way."

With regard to isolation created by the traffic barriers, resident informants were asked "Since the traffic barriers were installed, do you feel isolated in any way from the rest of the neighborhood?" The following informant interview illustrates the common response to this question:

"It's pretty hard sometimes to get or leave your house fast if you want to. But I don't feel that people are staying away from my street because of that barrier. Hell no. Hey, let me tell you, if you knew the kind of people those things (the barriers) were holding out, you would

want to be isolated from them too...but the gates don't stop me from talking to people I want to talk to."

Emergency Vehicle Access

Some comments received contained concern regarding the speed of response from emergency vehicles called by residents in the OCDS program area. A few informants commented that they had called for emergency services (police, fire and ambulance) and felt that the response time had been slowed due to the traffic barriers. In general, this was a concern that was expressed by a handful of resident informants.

Participation in Planning

With the exception of one informant, there was a general feeling expressed by residents that they were not given adequate notice of the LAPD's intention to put traffic barriers in their community. Comments received were especially critical of the lack of opportunity on the part of residents to discuss with the police the method of street closure and the location of the traffic barriers. Another common complaint was that residents were not told by police of the general goals of the program and how they were expected to participate in it. They also would like to have had more information regarding how long the program was intended to last.

Upkeep and Maintenance

A common resident complaint was that shortly after the traffic barriers were installed, city official and police failed to maintain them. Many residents stated that they had to maintain the traffic barriers themselves, cleaning graffiti, watering the tree in the cement planter, and painting iron bars when they became rusted.

Gang Interviews

While gathering community level information regarding the OCDS traffic barrier program, numerous residents claiming to have been either active or former street gang members were encountered. Interviews with these individuals, all of which were quite short in duration, are presented below. Each interview statement is in response to the question "What do you think of the traffic barriers put in by police around Jefferson High School?" Systematic means of verifying either the gang affiliation or gang status of the following informants was unavailable; thus, these interviews are included for interest only and are not assumed to be representative of any particular gang population residing the OCDS program area.

"Captain" 38th Street:

"[The barriers are] good because that will stop all the drive-by shootings and everything because before they had that every other week people were getting shot up. I think that the barricades shouldn't just be over there by the Jeff [Jefferson High School] around here and around everywhere where it's real bad. Over there by Fremont, by Paremelee and Drew. All around they should have it. Not just in one place. It's drugs everywhere. You don't just put the barricades in one place...Well, you know, the dope dealers won't like it. But the smart people will sign the paper right away to have more traffic barricades."

"Goofy" 38th Street:

"Dang, it's all right to have the barricades. If they brought the barriers around where I am on 76th I would get out. I think putting the

barriers around the school is kinda messed up and kinda right. It's messed up because emergency cars won't be able to pass by. It's good because when there are gangs that want to fight, you know, they won't pass into the hood."

"Chino" Westside Primera:

"I used to go to Jeff, but I got kicked out for fighting with enemies and writing about my neighborhood on the wall at school... I think that the barricades don't work. There's still crime there even though they have the barricades. Community watch and things like that do a lot more than the barricades."

"Little Spider" Primera Flats:

"I used to go to Franklin and before that I went to Jeff. I left Jeff, because I got tired of running from 38th street (gang). They were trying to get me. They were always waiting for me after school. They knew that I was from Primera Flats. I don't think the barricades work to stop the drugs. Because you can just sell the drugs across the barricades, but that cops on the bikes can help to stop that. But everytime you want to buy or sell drugs, all you have to do is park the car somewhere else and walk in to buy or sell."

"Dopey" Central Street Locos:

"I will break them in [the barriers]. I try to break the things down. The cops try to stop us with those things, but they don't do no good. Me and the other locos will try to cut them and break them down so the cops can't stop us no more."

“Sniper” 46th Street Crips:

“I think they [the barriers] are alright. It’s safer now. Nowbody wants to come in and do shit like they used to. They can’t come in here and do a drive-by. They know they are going to get caught by the cops or by us.”

“Sly” Playboy Gangster:

It’s better because we don’t get shot.

“Gumby” 42nd Street:

“It’s good in a way and in a way it’s not because their trying to make the streets look like projects too now. Their covering you up so someone can’t get away after a drive-by, but now they are just going to crash into a house instead. They can just go through the alleys instead. In a way it’s good because it cools off the street rivalries between gangs because it stops other gangs from coming in. But it’s bad because it makes you feel like you live in locked projects. There’s just one way in and one way out and that’s not right. People are supposed to be free.”

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key to understanding why, and under which circumstances, traffic barriers reduce criminal activity lies within the concept of criminal “opportunity.” Quite simply, traffic barriers do nothing more than decrease opportunities to successfully complete crimes. The theoretical assumption of “criminal opportunity” are rather straight forward regarding the effects of traffic barriers: Casual or intentional offenders, both of whom most often commit crimes when they can capitalize on opportunistic situations, perceive their odds of failure to increase when confronted with physical obstacles such as traffic barriers (see, e.g., Clarke, 1983; Clarke and Harris, 1992). Traffic barriers can “naturally” reduce criminal opportunities in many ways; for example, (1) by increasing the time and effort to commit crimes or (2) by increasing an offender’s visibility to potential victims and the police (Clarke, 1992).

There are many theories which offer explanations as to why traffic barriers may reduce criminal opportunity. These theories fall under the general conceptual framework of “rational choice theory” (see, e.g., Cornish and Clarke, 1986; Clarke and Felson, 1993). Briefly, rational choice theory assumes that criminals choose their targets on the basis of a mental cost/benefit analysis (Clarke and Mayhew, 1980). That is, they weigh the potential costs of committing a particular crime (e.g., the likelihood of detection, apprehension and punishment) against the potential benefits of successfully committing the crime (e.g, personal revenge, stolen property and so forth). Traffic barriers help tip the scales in this cost/benefit formula by

increasing the potential costs of committing crime by reducing criminal opportunity.

In the section below, conclusions are drawn for findings presented in this study; in addition, they are supported by existing theories and research findings within the "rational choice" arena (see, e.g., Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984, 1989, 1990). Rational choice perspectives explain several possible reasons why and how the situational prevention of criminal opportunity, like that performed in the OCDS program with traffic barriers, would result in decreases in crime. These theoretical explanations are used as a general framework for the conclusions that follow.

1. Traffic barriers appeared to have a strong effect on reducing homicides and drive-by shootings during the active OCDS program period.

Official statistics analyzed in this study indicate that drive-by shootings and homicides decreased sharply in the OCDS program area after the installation of traffic barriers. The link between reductions in homicides and drive-by shootings discovered here is logical because the vast majority of homicides occurring in the OCDS program area are gang related, and not of a typical "heat-of-passion" variety. Therefore, an explanation of this finding should take into account the dynamics of gang conflict and how the opportunities for this conflict are reduced by the imposition of traffic barriers.

According to Sanders (1994), today's gangs engage in mobile conflict. This "hit-and-run" style of contemporary gang assault is in sharp contrast to the "face-to-face" style of early gangs. In short, the hallmark of this hit-and-run gang assault method is the drive-by shooting. And drive-by shootings nearly exclusively rely on the automobile.

In his research on antecedent events leading to drive-by shootings, Sanders (1994) identifies two situations that ultimately may lead to one gang

doing a drive-by on another. The first is the "accidental drive-by". In this situation, gangs spending their leisure time driving in an automobile have a chance encounter with a rival gang--which erupts into spontaneous warfare between the rival groups. The second type is the "strategic drive-by." In this case, revenge is sought by one gang against another and a planned out assault is carried out by one gang against another. Traffic barriers could be very instrumental in reducing the opportunity for gangs to carry out either "accidental" or "strategic" drive-by shootings.

- **The Routine Activity Explanation For Accidental Drive-bys:** Shifts in routine activities caused by traffic barriers among street gangs who spend their leisure time "cruising" in automobiles may explain reductions in "accidental" drive-by shootings occurring in the OCDS program area. Routine activity theory, advanced by Cohen and Felson (1979), suggests that crimes such as drive-by shootings are likely to occur when the "routine activities" of a particular gang increase their probability of coming into personal contact with a rival gang (in the absence of sufficient guardianship for either gang). Sanders (1994:216) provides an example of this situation:

"Three Little Africa Pirus were at a stoplight at an intersection when a car with four Eastside Pirus pulled up next to them. One of the Little Africa Pirus said, 'What's up Blood?' to the boys in the other car. After some verbal exchanges, one of the Eastside Piru members pulled out a handgun and shot several bullets into the Little Africa Pirus' car. Two of the occupants were wounded, and jumped out of the car and ran to a nearby gas station. The Eastside Pirus drove off."

It can be argued that traffic barriers reduce the odds of rival gang members meeting in time and in space "accidentally" by changing the routine driving patterns of certain gangs (see, e.g., Cusson, 1993). In the case of the OCDS program area, "accidental" drive-by shootings may have been reduced because rival gangs from outside of the OCDS area chose to avoid "cruising" on streets that were closed and appeared to take a great deal of their time to maneuver through. For example, instead of driving through the OCDS program area to reach fast food restaurants, convenience stores (Daffala, 1976), or popular "hang-outs," a gang may have selected a quicker, less obstructed route outside of the OCDS general vicinity (i.e., one without traffic barriers, such as the freeway). In doing so, the gang may have avoided a conflict with a rival gang in the OCDS program area.

The Defensible Space Explanation For Strategic Drive-bys: It is quite possible that many homicides and drive-by shootings were circumvented in the OCDS program area due to an increase in "defensible space" provided by the installation of traffic barriers. According to Newman's concept of defensible space (1972), criminal opportunity is reduced by certain street designs that provide natural territorial boundaries within which residents can effectively monitor persons and activities (see, e.g., Jacobs, 1961; Jeffery, 1971). Such designs can also increase the difficulty of entering and exiting neighborhoods, which reduces criminal opportunity by increasing the time and effort to commit crime.

Many of the findings in this study point toward a "defensible space effect" stemming from the placement of traffic barriers in the OCDS program area. More often than not, resident interviews suggested that problems such as excessive automobile traffic, pedestrian traffic, noise and strange persons "hanging around" in their neighborhood were alleviated after the traffic

barriers were installed (see, e.g., Crowe, 1991). Residents also stated that they had more "control" over their neighborhood as a result of these changes. In short, residents indicated they were better able to identify strange persons and situations near their homes as a result of the traffic barriers.

With greater defensible space in the OCDS neighborhood, it is possible that many gangs and other would-be offenders felt more visible to residents and were less willing to risk the chance of being seen committing crimes (Eck and Spelman, 1987). In other words, the traffic barriers may have increased the "natural guardianship" of the OCDS community that had been taken away when the vast expanse of residential streets became an endless grid of easy access and escape routes. As one police officer who worked the OCDS area commented "If you were selling or buying drugs, or if you were going to do a drive-by, would you want to do it in a place that only had one way out?"

It is likely that the increased defensible space in the OCDS program area affected other criminal elements besides gangs. For example, drug sales may have dwindled in the program area (as some interviews suggested) because potential clients of drug gangs were no longer able to make their illegal transactions in an anonymous neighborhood setting. Although many residents claimed that they were "afraid to report crimes for fear of retaliation," the perception among potential criminals that residents living on blocked streets were able to view clearly all criminal activity may have served as a strong deterrent for persons seeking to buy illegal drugs. Therefore, with the market for illegal drugs gone, drug gangs perhaps moved elsewhere in search of a vital client base.

2. Traffic barriers appeared to play a key role in reducing some predatory crimes, and in particular, aggravated assaults.

Predatory crimes, and namely aggravated assaults, were significantly lower in the OCDS program area after traffic barriers were installed. Again, it is most likely that predatory crime activity was reduced by the traffic barriers for the same reasons as those stated above for homicides and drive-by shootings. Because there is a strong linkage between aggravated assaults, drive-by shootings and homicide, it is logical to assume that all three types of these crimes could be "designed out" with traffic barriers specifically aimed at reducing opportunities to commit drive-by shootings.

3. It is unclear from this study's findings the degree to which traffic barriers affect property crimes.

For the most part, this study failed to confirm a traffic barrier effect for property crimes. Although a reduction in property crimes during the first year of the OCDS program was discovered, this reduction did not differ from general reductions in property crimes in patrol areas near the OCDS test site. In particular, the crimes of residential burglary and auto theft showed the greatest reductions during the first year of the OCDS program. However, during the second year of the OCDS program, when traffic barriers were in place without added police presence, property crime increased to near its pre-program levels. This general finding can perhaps be explained by two factors unique to the OCDS program community.

First, and perhaps most important, the traffic barriers were not set up to systematically increase "defensible space" for property crimes. As previously noted, the traffic barriers were arranged with the intent of blocking streets where rival gangs were engaging in a high number of drive-by shootings. The nature of defensible space created in these areas was targeted at increasing the visibility of gangs entering and exiting the OCDS community. Conversely, increasing the visibility of residential locations most at risk for

property crime was not a consideration of the original OCDS traffic barrier placement plan. Therefore, it is here assumed that the defensible space necessary to prevent predatory crimes may differ from that required to prevent property crimes (see, e.g., Poyner, 1983; Pease, 1992).

Second, the traffic barriers did not serve to "fence out" criminals who lived in the OCDS program area. Considering the fact that most property offenders live in close proximity to their victims, it can be assumed here that merely limiting entrances to and exits from the OCDS community had little impact, if any, at deterring "local" offenders already living on streets closed by traffic barriers.

3. Traffic barriers appear to have noticeable positive effects on community factors such as fear of crime, routine activities and student truancy.

Interviews with residents of the OCDS program area, some of whom were students and street gang members, suggested that fears over suffering victimization were reduced following the installation of traffic barriers. In general, residents expressed feelings that they "were more in control of their neighborhood" and that "the streets had gotten quieter" as a result of the traffic barriers. Students and their parents felt that routes between their homes and local schools were safer, and truancy at the local high school was reduced after the traffic barriers were in place. Some residents claiming to be street gang members reported that they feel safer as well.

Often, the perception of crime is more crippling to a community than actual crime itself. Residents living in neighborhoods where fear of victimization is high, routinely close themselves off from public life--which results in the loss valuable social controls such as neighbor interaction and the use of public areas for leisure activity. In short, fear of crime can eventually lead to the abandonment of a community (as it did in the OCDS program

area). Abandoned communities are soon taken over by gangs and other criminal elements.

Ostensibly, the placement of traffic barriers in the OCDS community created the perception of safety. Real or imaginary, this perception among residents that fewer unfamiliar cars and people were entering their neighborhood created a defensible space in the minds of residents. This mental creation of defensible space was perhaps translated into an actual change in routine activities. Interviews suggested that after the traffic barriers were put into place many residents felt more comfortable spending time outside of their homes and in public areas within the OCDS community. This change in neighborhood routine activities, combined with the physical presence of the traffic barriers, may have served to increase "natural" surveillance by OCDS residents of criminals, gangs and potential criminal activities.

4. Traffic barriers did not appear to cause "displacement" of or "adaptation" of criminal behavior.

At the outset of the OCDS, many observers of the program speculated that the traffic barriers would simply displace crime from the community of closed streets into contiguous communities with open ones. However, this did not appear to be the case, judging from final outcome data in this study. Instead, there is evidence presented here to suggest that the traffic barriers functioned to reduce crime not only in the OCDS program area, but in areas contiguous to the program site as well.

Similar effects have been noted in other situational crime prevention programs. Clarke (1992) refers to this phenomenon as "diffusion." Briefly, diffusion can be defined as the "positive displacement" of situational crime prevention program effects. Others have referred to the phenomenon by such

names as the "multiplier effect" (Chaiken et al., 1974), and the "free rider" effect (Miethe, 1991).

The lack of displacement in predatory crimes in the OCDS program area may possibly be explained in terms of the "offensive" and "defensive" postures of the gangs who involved themselves in the majority of the area's criminal activity. First, it is well known that street gangs are territorial. The majority of street gangs victimized in the OCDS area claimed this community as their "turf." Second, it is also well known that there is extreme danger involved when street gangs leave their "turf" and enter into the "turf" of another gang. Thus, in order for street gangs to displace their criminal activity into surrounding neighborhoods without traffic barriers, they would have to subject themselves to dangers involved in entering another street gang's territory. This, in many respects, may be a more dangerous move than committing crimes on "home turf" and risking apprehension by police with increased risk due to traffic barriers.

Randall Atlas (1996) believes that the lack of displacement in traffic barrier communities is, in part, the result of what he calls "the insulation effect." He reasons that after "the word gets out on the street" about increased security measures, such as the traffic barriers in the OCDS program community, many criminals and gangs will simply avoid entering such areas. And because they avoid a primary area (i.e., the OCDS program site), they avoid secondary areas as well (i.e., locations contiguous to the OCDS program site); thus, there is the additional creation of a reduction of crime in places contiguous to where traffic barriers are located.

Last, there was very little statistical evidence discovered in this study to support the notion of criminal adaptation created by the traffic barriers. For adaptation to be supported statistically, crimes in the OCDS program area

should show increases by the second year of program operation. For predatory crime, decreases rather than increases in crime continued throughout the second year of program operation. If indeed the traffic barriers were being used by criminals to enhance their opportunities to commit crimes, a consecutive two-year downward trend in predatory crime within the OCDS program area would clearly not be evident.

Policy Recommendations

The OCDS program represents, in many respects, the untapped potential of traffic barriers as a crime prevention tool. This is because the traffic barrier configuration used by LAPD for OCDS was targeted specifically toward one variety of crime (i.e., drive-by shootings) and did not take into account factors that may have been operative in creating or reducing other criminal opportunities. Lessons learned from this pioneering effort can be significantly improved upon in future traffic barrier crime prevention programs. Listed below are policy recommendations for such future efforts:

1. A "community approach" rather than "single street approach" should be used to guide the placement of traffic barriers.

The OCDS program was purely experimental with regard to using traffic barriers within an entire crime-ridden community, rather than on individual crime-ridden streets. Investigations of other sites in the Los Angeles area where individual streets have been blocked by traffic barriers did not show promising results. It appears as though individual street blockages do not result in the same crime reduction benefits as do entire community blockages, such as that used in the OCDS program. There are two reasons to support this conclusion.

First, while residents on blocked individual streets do report that their streets are quieter and have less vehicle traffic, residents living on streets

immediately surrounding these areas complain that traffic from the blocked street is merely "re-routed" to their neighborhood. Second, residents on these streets complain that they are increased targets for crime as the result of "re-routed" offenders who drive through their neighborhood while looking for criminal opportunities. In other words, there may be a significant displacement effects associated with single traffic barriers used to block single streets. General community road blockages, such as those used in the OCDS program, appear to have many more crime prevention benefits than single road blockages. Ostensibly, community blockages have the potential to change routine activities of offenders, and to reduce criminal opportunity by increasing defensible space, while single street blockages do not.

2. Major schools and locations of potential criminal activity should be included in traffic barriers configurations

Numerous research studies have identified that crime, especially of a property variety, is likely to concentrate in and around neighborhoods where there is a school (Roncek and Lobosco, 1983; Crowe, 1990). This is particularly true when the school is large in size. In the OCDS program, a major high school was included in the traffic barrier configuration. It is believed that this served to curb offending not only by reducing opportunities to commit crimes around the school, but also by reducing truancy; which, in turn, reduced the number of potential victims lingering in and around neighborhood streets. Parks and other popular public gather spots for teenagers and school age adolescents may be included in this category as well.

3. Use traffic barriers to change crime causing routine activity patterns.

If the OCDS traffic barriers were successful in preventing crime by changing routine activities that lead to crime, it was quite by accident.

However, future traffic barriers projects could be developed to do what the OCDS program may have accidentally accomplished. This can be carried out as follows:

- Before deciding on a final configuration for traffic barriers, survey existing traffic flows within the target community and identify major flows passing through high crime opportunity areas (chances are, these areas will report high numbers of crimes; but they may not, due to high numbers of unreported crime).
- In looking for high crime opportunity areas, try to identify streets, places and individuals that may be considered "attractive targets" for crime. These may include liquor stores, fast food restaurants, schools, parks, streets with cars that are ungaraged at night, locations that are poorly lighted, "fancy" or high theft cars parked on streets, gangs, gang "hang outs," parking lots and so forth.
- Configure new traffic flow patterns to streets that provide the lowest criminal opportunity, i.e, streets that do not allow parked cars, or streets with steady follows of traffic that do not allow stopping, or streets that are bordered by open fields. The general idea here is to alter the routines of offenders who use streets on a regular basis which may result in the crossing of paths with likely victims or likely victim households or victim businesses (see Felson, 1983, 1987, 1994 for a detailed discussion of these factors).

4. Use traffic barriers to increase "defensible space."

The ability to restore defensible space is perhaps the most beneficial crime prevention attribute of the traffic barrier. To create defensible space, the traffic barriers must be used to increase the "span of control" of persons in areas plagued by crime. The general notion here is to use the traffic barrier

to increase the visibility of activities and people unfamiliar to a particular location. This is carried out by restricting the flow of unfamiliar activities and people into neighborhoods that have "lost control" due to an unrestricted flow of vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

Zones should be established with traffic barriers that maximize defensible space. In configuring these zones, "natural guardianship" of particular locations should be taken into account. If there are no eyes and ears within a skillfully designed defensible space zone, such zones will not deter crime. In particular, locations that provide constant visibility of traffic barrier zones are most favorable. Persons that remain home during daytime hours (i.e., housewives, retired persons), windows that are lighted at night that provide clear views of streets, churches or other gathering places that provide high profile activities during daytime and nighttime hours are examples of "natural surveillance" sources that should be the centerpoint around which defensible space zones are created with traffic barriers.

5. Allow community members to participate in the planning and design of traffic barrier placement.

Community acceptance of traffic barrier programs will be enhanced greatly when community members are allowed to participate in all phases of the program development. OCDS incorporated one community meeting prior to the installation of traffic barriers. According to LAPD officials who initiated OCDS and to community members who experienced the program, this one meeting was not enough. Again, community members need to be actively involved in every step of the traffic barrier program planning process.

The Future of Traffic Barrier Programs

In Los Angeles, and perhaps elsewhere, traffic barriers remain an extremely controversial crime prevention tool. It is without doubt that the

OCDS traffic barrier program became mired in political controversies focusing on the LAPD and its relationship with the citizens of the City of Los Angeles. If future efforts to create traffic barrier crime prevention programs are to be even remotely successful, they must first be designed to address potential "political" barriers.

Central to addressing political concerns about the motives surrounding the placement of traffic barriers is the question, "Are police the proper sponsors of such programs?" If there is unanimous public opinion that the police are indeed the best sponsors, then such programs should proceed as did the police-sponsored OCDS program in Los Angeles. However, in the face of even minor public opposition to police sponsored traffic barrier programs, it is here strongly advised that alternative community-based organizations should assume the responsibility for designing and implementing these potentially controversial (yet effective) crime prevention programs.

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