THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF CRIME,
CRIME PREVENTION,
AND POLICE PERFORMANCE
IN CORPUS CHRISTI
1977

By

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Coastal Bend Council of Governments, asked penetrating questions and has encouraged similar studies throughout the Coastal Bend after the results were presented to the Regional Crime Prevention Advisory Council on January 31, 1978. Finally, Mr. Paul Kinstley and Ms. Pam Graber of the CBCOG's Crime Prevention Department have given considerable help to this publication.

While the individuals mentioned above have helped make this a better report, I accept responsibility for any errors.

Robert R. Bezdek

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I.

INTRODUCTION

An emerging area of research in major cities of the United States
involves public opinion polls dealing exclusively with crime-related
topics. From publications sponsored by the U. S. Department of Justice
one readily observes that these studies were conducted in the 1970s.[1] The
purpose of these studies was to aid decision makers in the criminal justice
area with systematic information on a variety of topics. These topics in-
cluded evaluation of local police, attitudes of individuals toward crime
and crime rates, attitudes of victims of crime, among others. In our
specific locality, Corpus Christi and the Coastal Bend Region, no systematic
research is available on these topics. With this in mind this study was
conceived and conducted in Corpus Christi to obtain some preliminary data on
matters pertaining to crime.

This study differs from the mentioned ones in two ways. First, while
those projects sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice involved per-
sonal interviews with several thousand individuals in major U. S. cities
(and thus were very expensive), the survey on Corpus Christi implemented

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[1]U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Victimization Surveys in Eight
American Cities: A Comparison of 1971/72 and 1974/75 Findings (Washington,
D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1976); U.S. Department of Justice,
Public Opinion About Crime: The Attitudes of Victims and Nonvictims in
Selected Cities (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977);
U.S. Department of Justice, The Police and Public Opinion: An Analysis of
Victimization and Attitude Data from 13 American Cities (Washington, D. C.:
U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

telephone interviews for 559 respondents.[2] Second, the national projects dealt indepth with a more limited number of topics. This study of Corpus Christi was designed to tap the following topics: 1) perception of crime and the crime rate; 2) evaluation of police and contact of the police; 3) crime prevention, and 4) demographic characteristics. Let us turn to the findings.[3]

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[2]Alfred J. Tuchfarber and William R. Kleck, Random Digit Dialing: Lowering the Costs of Victimization Surveys (Cincinnati: Police Foundation, 1976). These authors convincingly argue that the costs of crime-related surveys can be greatly reduced by using telephone interviews. This survey of Corpus Christi would have been impossible without the use of telephone interviews.

[3]For those interested in methodological concerns, such as the development of the questionnaire, the system for choosing the respondents, and the implementation of the interviews, see Appendix B.

II.

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

In this section the results of the survey will be presented. The percentages are rounded off to the nearest whole number, and thus the total percentage will add up to 99 percent to 101 percent, except where multiple responses are indicated. The intention is to briefly discuss the findings without injecting the author's own interpretation except in a few cases where the reader could be mislead. Generally, the title of the table indicates the substance of the question asked; it is recommended that the reader go to Appendix C to study the exact phrasing of each question. While the entire sample size was 559, in some instances fewer than this number responded. Thus, in each table the reader will see (N=___) to indicate how many individuals fell within each category. The presentation of the findings is clustered into four categories. These are demographic characteristics of the sample, perception of crime, perception of police performance and contact of police to report crimes and crime prevention.

Demographic Characteristics of
The Sample

In Table 1 data are presented on the respondents' sex, annual family income, and education. Since the interviewers used the May, 1977 telephone directory to choose the respondents, one would expect our data to conform to

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the characteristics of those who have a listed telephone number. Unfortunately, there is no way to gather demographic data from the telephone directory. Thus, in order to determine whether we can generalize from the Corpus Christi survey, we can compare our data with the 1970 Census.[4] The reader must remember, however, that the census data is about eight years old and thus outdated. In any case, we would not expect wide discrepancies between the two sets of data except for data that could be accounted for by biases within the telephone directory.

TABLE 1

Sex, Annual Family Income, and Education
of the Sample

Sex		Annual Family Income		Education	
Male	Female	Less than $13,000	More than $13,000	Less than High School	High School Or More
49%	51%	42%	58%	25%	75%
(N=559)		(N=434[a])		(N=559)	

[a]This excludes the categories of "no response," "retired," and "unemployed."

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[4]U. S. Bureau of Census, Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts, Final Report PHC (1)-51 Corpus Christi, Texas, SMSA.

The sample was composed of 49 percent male and 51 percent female respondents with the 1970 census data indicating that 48 percent of the over 16 population of Corpus Christi was male and 52 percent was female. The survey results were very accurate probably because each student was encouraged to obtain interviews from five males and five females.

Annual family income and education show some discrepancies with the 1970 census data. The census indicates that 51 percent of the Corpus Christi family incomes were below $10,000, whereas 42 percent of our survey respondents said that their annual family income was less than $13,000. If we consider inflation, our results may reflect the present situation more accurately than the 1970 census. In our survey 75 percent of the respondents stated that they had at least a high school education, whereas the census figures indicate than only 51 percent of the Corpus Christi population of 25 years or older reported at least a high school education in 1970. Part of the problem might be accounted for by the fact that 15 percent of our respondents were under 25 years of age, but perhaps the more significant problem is that a telephone survey would be biased in favor of those with a higher education level.

Table 2 shows the ethnicity of respondents. Our sample was composed of 7 percent Black American, 24 percent Mexican American, 68 percent Anglo American, and 1 percent other, whereas the 1970 census data indicate that the over 16 population consisted of 5 percent Negro, 36 percent Spanish surnamed persons, 58 percent Anglo American, and 1 percent other. Our percentages

TABLE 2

Ethnicity of Respondents

Anglo American	Mexican American	Black American	Other
68%	24%	7%	1%
(N=559)			

for Mexican American and for Anglo American show some discrepancies. The bias is probably that Mexican Americans do not have the same proportions of telephones as do the Anglos. A partial explanation may lie in the fact that Spanish surnames are clustered in the telephone directory, and thus our technique of choosing respondents would preclude the selection of the exact proportion of Mexican Americans and Anglos. Some evidence from alphabetized voter registration data suggests that this may be the case.[5]

One last check on demographic characteristics is presented in Table 3 on the telephone exchanges in Corpus Christi. Data from the telephone company

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[5] In a recent study by 13 of my students of the 20,917 "lost" voters in Nueces County, we found Spanish surnames to be highly clustered. Each student counted Spanish surnames on approximately 30 pages of computer printout. We found wide discrepancies in the number of Spanish surnames each student found in the pages covered; the range was from 665 to 176, with only three out of the thirteen students being close to the average of about 450 Spanish surnames. In other words, while more research is needed to determine the bias involved, it appears that a sample based on each interviewer receiving an equal number of pages to choose an equal number of names might discriminate against Spanish surnames, which were highly clustered in the "G's" as well as the "R's" and "S's."

TABLE 3

Residential Telephone Exchanges (October 31, 1977)
Compared with Exchanges from Survey

Exchange	Residents	Survey	Difference
241	6.0%	5.0%	-1.0%
265	.4%	.2%	- .2%
852	12.0%	12.0%	0
853	13.0%	10.0%	-3.0%
854	11.0%	11.0%	0
855	10.0%	11.0%	+1.0%
882	7.0%	7.0%	0
883	7.0%	9.0%	+2.0%
884	7.0%	5.0%	-2.0%
888	4.0%	2.0%	-2.0%
933	.4%	.4%	0
937	6.0%	6.0%	0
991	13.0%	13.0%	0
992	3.0%	6.0%	+3.0%
	99.8%	97.6%[a]	-2.2%

[a]The percent is not closer to 100 because of rounding-off error with a long list of numbers.

indicate that our selection procedure was very representative of the residential telephone exchanges. In fact, the average difference between the telephone exchanges in the city and our survey was only 2.2 percent. Therefore, we can argue that our data are representative of those Corpus Christi residents who have listed telephones. Now we can turn our attention to the second cluster of concerns, namely, the perception of crime.

The Perception of Crime

To determine the public's perception of crime and the crime rate, we developed several questions. The basic questions dealt with the three advantages to living in Corpus Christi, the three greatest problems facing the residents of our city, perception of the crime rate in the respondent's neighborhood, perception of the crime rate in the U. S., perception of safety in the respondent's neighborhood at night, and perception of safety in the neighborhood during the day.

When the student contacted the interviewee, he identified himself with Corpus Christi State University but did not immediately state the purpose of the survey. A statement on the subject matter of the survey would have biased the respondent on the first two questions. The first question (See Appendix C) asked for the three greatest advantages to living in Corpus Christi. This was included for at least three reasons. First, the results of the question could be useful for placing the problems in perspective. Second, since the question was open-ended (allowing the respondent to give a variety of responses), conceivably "lack of crime" or some related issue could have emerged. Third, this type of positive question is a good way to "break the ice" in an interview.

TABLE 4

Three Advantages to Living in Corpus Christi

Advantage	First	Second[a]	Third[b]	Total Percent[c]
Climate	34%	17%	10%	61%
Outdoor Rec.	26%	21%	12%	59%
Moderate Size	10%	13%	11%	34%
(N=559)				

[a]About 13 percent of the respondents did not give a second reason for living in Corpus Christi.

[b]About 32 percent of the respondents did not give a third reason for living in Corpus Christi.

[c]The total percent adds up to more than 100 percent because of multiple responses.

TABLE 5

Three Greatest Problems Facing the Residents of Corpus Christi

Problem	First	Second[a]	Third[b]	Total Percent[c]
Crime	14%	10%	6%	30%
City Conditions	10%	10%	6%	26%
School	10%	9%	4%	23%
(N=559)				

[a]Twenty-nine percent of the respondents did not mention a second problem for Corpus Christi.

[b]About 54 percent of the respondents did not mention a third problem for Corpus Christi.

[c]The total percent adds up to more than 100 percent because of multiple responses.

Table 4 indicates what the respondents thought were the three greatest advantages to living in Corpus Christi. Climate and Outdoor Recreation were virtually equal in the minds of the respondents with statements relating to Moderate Size definitely third. The People, Jobs, and Beauty of the area received 17 percent of the comments or less.

Table 5 reveals the respondents' perceptions of the three greatest problems facing the residents of Corpus Christi. If the students had stated at the beginning of the interview that the survey dealt with crime, then one would anticipate that this percentage would have been higher. City Conditions and School Issues were rated second and third respectively. The Cost of Living was rated at 23 percent (the same as School Issues) but received fewer first and second mentions. Jobs were rated at 6 percent.

Some observations are warranted for the three greatest advantages and the three greatest problems. More respondents could mention advantages to living in Corpus Christi than problems facing the residents. More specifically, the top two advantages had about a 60 percent mention, whereas the top two problems had a mention of about 30 percent (a ratio of two to one).

Table 6 presents the results of two questions: the respondent's perception of the crime rate in his neighborhood and his perception of the crime rate in the U. S. From Table 6 we can see that the largest percentage of individuals in Corpus Christi (45 percent) thought crime remained the same in their neighborhood with approximately 40 percent thinking that it had increased. On the other hand, the respondents thought crime had increased dramatically in the U. S. About 59 percent thought crime had increased a lot

TABLE 6

Crime in the Neighborhood Compared to Crime in the U. S.

	Neighborhood	U. S.
Increased a lot	19%	59%
	39%[a]	85%[a]
Increased a bit	20%	26%
Remained same	45%	5%
Decreased a bit	7%	4%
Decreased a lot	3%	3%
Don't know	7%	4%
	101%	101%
	(559)	(559)

[a]These percentages are the result of adding both categories of "crime increase."

and 26 percent thought that crime had increased a bit; the total who thought crime had increased in the U. S. was 85 percent. This percentage contrasts dramatically with the local perceived increase of 39 percent. Our findings that residents of Corpus Christi clearly perceive their neighborhood as being safer from crime than is the nation as a whole parallel almost exactly those of a national study.

Only about half as many respondents (40 percent) believed that crime in their neighborhood has increased within the past year

or two as believed that national crime had increased during the same period. Another 41 percent said that neighborhood crime has remained about the same . . . .[6]

Table 7 likewise presents the results of two questions, perception of safety in one's neighborhood at night and during the day. Approximately 69

TABLE 7

Safety   One's Neighborhood at Night
And During the Day

	Night	Day
Very Safe	29%	67%
Reasonably Safe	40%	27%
Somewhat Safe	16%	3%
Very Unsafe	14%	2%
Don't Know	1%	1%
	100%	100%
	(N=559)	(N-559)

percent felt very safe or reasonably safe in their neighborhood at night, while about 94 percent felt very safe or reasonably safe in their neighborhood during the day. The responses indicate that the overwhelming majority of people in Corpus Christi feel safe in their neighborhood.

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[6]U.S. Department of Justice, Public Opinion About Crime: The Attitudes of Victims and Nonvictims in Selected Cities, p. 15. Italics were theirs.

The Perceived Causes of Crime, Table 8, were also included in the category of perception of crime. Adding the "agree" categories together, one can see that the top four perceived causes of crime were items 1 (Judges and laws too lenient), 8 (Unemployment), 2 (Citizens unaware of ways to prevent

TABLE 8

Perceived Causes of Crime

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Don't Know Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Total
1. Judges & laws too lenient	52%	27%	11%	6%	4%	=	100%
2. Citizens unaware of ways to prevent crime	35%	40%	8%	13%	4%	=	100%
3. Publicity encourages crime	43%	25%	11%	13%	8%	=	100%
4. Lack of experienced policemen	9%	23%	27%	25%	15%	=	99%
5. Insufficient number of policemen	34%	24%	24%	12%	7%	=	101%
6. Violence of television	41%	25%	10%	13%	12%	=	101%
7. Police have too little power	32%	25%	22%	14%	8%	=	101%
8. Unemployment	39%	37%	9%	9%	6%	=	100%
9. Too easy to get firearm	35%	23%	11%	15%	16%	=	100%
10. Breakdown of traditional institutions	45%	27%	11%	12%	5%	=	100%

(N=559 in all categories)

crime), and 10 (Breakdown of traditional institutions). In each of these cases, the middle category, "don't know, neutral," was low, that is 11 percent or less. The item that the respondents disagreed with the most was number 5, (Lack of experienced policemen), and that was the item that received the highest middle rating, "don't know, neutral."

Finally, we asked whether there were "other" causes of crime that the respondents wanted to mention. While 80 percent did not mention other causes, the remaining 20 percent (110 respondents) thought "drugs" was the most important followed by "no parental guidance" and "too easy on criminals." If we work out the percentages based on the 100 respondents, then 35 percent mentioned drugs with 13 percent and 11 percent mentioning the latter two perceived causes of crime.

Evaluation of Police, Crimes Committed, and Police Contact

This section will present the findings on the evaluation of the police, whether the individuals were victims of different types of crimes, to what extent they reported the different crimes to the police, and how satisfied those who reported crimes were with the police response. There were a couple of concerns when developing these questions. First, from contact with the local police, it was known that they expected a low rating from the residents of Corpus Christi. However, it was thought that they would be pleasantly surprised by the results. Second, it seemed plausible that this survey would indicate that many crimes, particularly smaller ones (theft of a bicycle), would not be reported to the police; many studies have shown this to be the case.

In dealing with this category, there are two caveats. First, the reader should remember that the questions spelled out a time period, "during the past year." Second, the memory of individuals on the time period as well as the crime they or their family were the victim of, especially if the crime was minor, may not be accurate.

The rating of the police confirmed the expectation that the police would be pleasantly surprised by the findings. Table 9 shows that 45 percent gave the police a good rating, 47 percent gave the police an average rating, and only 8 percent gave the police a poor rating. One can question what an "average" rating really means, but perhaps the

TABLE 9

Evaluation of Police Performance

Good	45%	(250)
Average	47%	(262)
Poor	8%	(45)
	100%	
	(N=557)	

best way to determine this is in a future survey where more categories exist. The findings on Corpus Christi here again parallel those of a national study. In surveys on thirteen U. S. cities, the 1972/73 survey show that 42 percent of all respondents rated their police as good, 37 percent as average, and 13 percent as poor, while the 1975 surveys indicate

40 percent as good, 41 percent as average, and 12 percent as poor.[7] There are two small differences in comparing the Corpus Christi survey with the national one. First, our police received four or five percent fewer "poor" ratings. Second, our survey shows that less than .5 percent responded to the "don't know" category, while the national survey had seven (7) percent responding "don't know" on both occasions. In summary, the Corpus Christi police received slightly better ratings.

From discussions with the local police as well as from a study of the national surveys, one would expect the Corpus Christi police to receive a substantially lower evaluation from minority groups, such as Blacks and Mexican Americans. The findings in Table 10 indicate that there is virtually no

TABLE 10

Evaluation of Police Performance
by Race/Ethnic Group

	Black	Mexican American	Anglo
Good	42%	44%	46%
Average	47%	44%	47%
Poor	8%	12%	7%
Don't Know	3%		
	100%	100%	100%
(N=544)	(N=38)	(N=126)	(N=371)

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[7]U.S. Department of Justice, The Police and Public Opinion: An Analysis of Victimization and Attitude Data from 13 American Cities, p. 11.

difference in the evaluation of the local police by our tri-ethnic community. However, in the 1975 national study, "Whites" gave a 47 percent good evaluation, 37 percent average, and 9 percent poor, while "Blacks/others" gave a significantly lower good evaluation of 24 percent, an average rating of 50 percent, and a much higher poor evaluation of 19 percent.[8] Thus, the findings in the Corpus Christi survey should be gratifying to all of us.

Table 11 shows the respondents' answers to a "break-in to the building where they live" and their perceptions of "attempted break-ins to the building where they live." Thirteen percent said there was a break-in and

TABLE 11

Break-In and Attempted Break-In

	Break-In	Attempted Break-In
Yes	13%	11%
No	86%	89%
Don't Know	1%	0%
	100%	100%
	(N=559)	(N=559)

11 percent said that there was an attempted break-in. In both cases the overwhelming majority, 86 percent and 89 percent respectively, answered "no."

Table 12 reports data on stolen items left outside the house that were

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[8]U.S. Department of Justice, The Police and Public Opinion: An Analysis of Victimization and Attitude Data from 13 American Cities, p. 11.

stolen. The single item most often mentioned was a bicycle, 7 percent, followed by children's toys, 3 percent. The "other" category, 10 percent, included a variety of items.

TABLE 12

Stolen Items Left Outside the House

Item Stolen	
Bicycle	7%
Children's Toys	3%
Garden Hose, Sprinker	1%
Garden Tools	2%
Lawn Mower	1%
Other	10%
No	77%
	101%
	(N=559)

Table 13 shows the percentages reporting whether they or a member of their family were a victim of a crime by type of crime. As might be anticipated the highest percentage, 10 percent, comprises the category of items inside the vehicle such as a CB radio, tape deck, etc. When we calculate the percentages of those who were victims (thus leaving out the "no" response category, we find that out of the 123 individuals who said they were victims, 41 percent

reported theft of an item inside the vehicle. The other categories appear self-explanatory.

TABLE 13

Victim of Crime and Type of Crime

	Includes "no" response	Victims Only
Car, Truck, Motorcycle	4%	17%
CB Radio, Tape deck, or item from vehicle	10%	41%
Robbed by Force	1%	6%
Victim of Theft with no Force	2%	8%
Injured with a Weapon	1%	3%
Injured, no Weapon	1%	4%
Raped		2%
Other	4%	18%
No	78%	
	101%	99%
	(N=559)	(N=123)

The data in Table 14 deal with the expectation that lesser crimes would tend not to be reported. The data indicate that at least a slight majority of the respondents tended to contact the police on all categories of crime. Any explanation for the fact that all crimes tend to be reported would be pure speculation with the present level of analysis.

TABLE 14

Contact Police for Crimes Mentioned

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Not Applicable	Total Percentage
Break-In	10%	4%	87%	101%
Attempted Break-In	6%	5%	90%	101%
Items Stolen Outside Home	9%	8%	83%	100%
Individual or Family Member Victim	10%	6%	84%	100%

(N=559 for all categories)

Some answers might be forthcoming from further study. The lesser crimes, such as "attempted break-in" and "items stolen outside the home," were not reported to the same extent as the apparently more serious crimes of "break-in" and "individual or family member a victim."

From Table 15 we can see that 184 individuals reported that they called the police when a crime was committed and that the majority were satisfied with this police contact. Some individuals might have been victims more than

TABLE 15

Satisfaction with Police Contact

Very Satisfied	36%
Somewhat Satisfied	26%
Somewhat Unsatisfied	17%
Very Unsatisfied	20%
	99% (N=184)

once and thus could have reported that they contacted the police several times. The findings are that 62 percent of the individuals reported that they were satisfied with only 37 percent reporting that they were unsatisfied.

Of those who were unsatisfied, over 80 percent gave similar responses. These generally can be placed into the category of disillusionment because the police were unable to "solve the crime." In other words, such responses as the police "did not recover the stolen items," "failed to catch the criminal," and "no fingerprints were taken" were common. Some individuals stated that the police lacked interest, were rude, or suspicious toward the victim. Still others responded that the police took too long to arrive or could not come to certain locations (such as a private parking lot).

It was thought that there would be a relationship between the level of satisfaction with police contact and the evaluation of police performance. The data in Table 16 indicate a relationship. Out of the 72 respondents

TABLE 16

Satisfaction with Police Contact by Evaluation of Police Performance

	Good Job	Average Job	Poor Job	
Very Satisfied	63%	23%	8%	
Somewhat Satisfied	21%	34%	13%	
Somewhat Unsatisfied	8%	25%	17%	
Very Unsatisfied	8%	18%	63%	
	100%	100%	101%	
	(N=72)	(N=88)	(N=24)	(N=184)

who had contact with the police and gave them a good evaluation, 63 percent were very satisfied and 21 percent were somewhat satisfied. At the other extreme, out of the 24 who had contact with the police and gave them a poor evaluation, 63 percent were very unsatisfied and 17 percent were somewhat unsatisfied; however, the reader must keep in mind that generalizations are difficult with only 24 respondents in this category.

Having studied various aspects of the survey, we can perhaps better come to grips with one of the major concerns of this study. This deals with the steps taken to prevent crime.

Crime Prevention

One of the major reasons for this project was to determine how the residents of Corpus Christi had responded to the many appeals for them to help reduce the crime rate. The data in Table 17 lists the findings of crime prevention techniques taken. In light of information from the crime prevention unit at the police department, there is possible exaggeration of what individuals claimed that they were doing.[9] If the answers reflect reality, then it seems reasonable to conclude that the efforts of local organizations have been effective.

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[9]Members of the police crime prevention unit have stated that individuals report having taken crime prevention steps, but some police follow-up visits indicate that many individuals have over-estimated the steps taken.

TABLE 17

Crime Prevention

	Yes	No	Already Done	Total
Take keys out of car	38%	7%	55%	100%
Lock Car	40%	19%	41%	100%
Put all Items Inside House	45%	21%	34%	100%
Lock Doors in House	46%	8%	46%	100%
Put special Locks on Doors	34%	54%	13%	101%
Install Special Equipment	10%	86%	5%	101%
Leave Lights on When Out	46%	20%	34%	100%
Buy or Have Access to Firearm	20%	64%	16%	100%
Identify Valuables (with Driver's License)	32%	59%	9%	100%
Call Police if Suspicious	31%	60%	9%	100%

(N=559 in all categories)

Perhaps a more realistic way to test the above responses is to check the answers to the question about other measures taken to prevent crime. Table 18 records the responses. Eighty percent of the respondents could not mention any other steps that they were taking to prevent crime. This may be suggestive of exaggeration in Table 17. However, this possible exaggeration is easy to understand when we consider that people want to "look good"

TABLE 18

Other New Steps taken to Prevent Crimes

Dogs	6%
Mind Own Business	a
Fence	1%
Moved	1%
Secured Locks	3%
Neighborhood Watch	5%
Door viewer installed	a
Crime Prevention Sticker	a
Change Phone Number	a
Bring Car Items Indoors	1%
Lock Car in Garage	a
Take Suspicious Car license	a
Control Children	1%
Fool Potential Criminals	1%
Chain Things Down	a
Improve Lighting	1%
Photograph Valuables	a
Use More Caution	2%
Not Applicable	80%
	102% b
	(N=559)

[a]Percentages were less than one-half of one percent.

[b]Due to rounding off error in a long list of items the percentage is higher than would be expected in a smaller table.

or give the "right" answer and that the interviewers were asking sensitive questions.

In conclusion, when we take into consideration that people see their neighborhoods as being safe, the police as doing a good job, and other

factors, we can conclude that crime prevention techniques are difficult "to sell." In other words, if the residents of Corpus Christi do not see crime as a major problem in their neighborhoods, then perhaps they are unwilling to accept some simple crime prevention techniques. At the same time additional research needs to be done in this area before such a conclusion can be accepted. The additional research could involve personal interviews with a dozen respondents in order to determine whether they clearly see a relationship between a safe neighborhood and unwillingness to accept crime prevention techniques. One might find some other variable (such as extra work or money involved) responsible for the relatively low acceptance of crime prevention techniques.

III

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion a summary of the major findings and the future
direction of research will be presented. The major findings of the survey
thus far can be listed:

1. Contrary to statements about low public evaluation of the local
   police, the data indicate moderate to strong support. The
   results certainly indicate that very few individuals give the
   police a poor rating. National surveys indicated similar
   support.

2. There were no major differences in rating of the police by
   different ethnic/racial groups, contrary to the findings in
   other cities.

3. The residents of Corpus Christi believe that there is virtually
   no crime increase in their neighborhood compared to their per-
   ceptions of what has happened to the crime rate at the national
   level. From a variety of responses, it would appear that people
   are fairly content with what they perceive to be a low crime rate
   in their neighborhood. This finding parallels those of national
   studies.

4. The residents of Corpus Christi probably exaggerated what they
   had done or were doing to prevent crime.

5. One could tentatively conclude that the public is reluctant to
   accept crime prevention techniques because they do not see crime
   as a very serious problem in their neighborhood.

The future direction of research seems clear. First, more research
on the data collected will take a considerable amount of time. These
findings, in turn, will aid us not only in understanding this survey but

also in developing a better instrument for possible, future surveys.
Second, the selection of the respondents can be improved. The telephone
survey is the best approach because of the enormous costs involved with
personal interviews, but "quota" sampling should improve the representative
nature of the sample. In other words, one could specifically ask for a
certain number of Mexican Americans, Blacks, and Anglos as we did for males
and females. However, it seems that some personal interviews would be
helpful among those individuals who do not have telephones in order to
determine whether their answers fit into the same pattern as the rest of the
community. Third, the information gathered has already been used by law
enforcement officials, the city council and staff, and the university.
As a result, it is easy to recommend consideration of a follow-up project
within the next couple of years. Since this survey has been of an explora-
tory nature, the next survey could hone in on certain, specific aspects
covered "too broadly" in this project. The national surveys cited in this
study are cases in point. Some of our questions were similar, if not
verbatim. By and large these studies dealt with a specific topic, such
as evaluation of local police, and stayed on that topic. This approach
might provide us more meaningful data.

In the final analysis, however, the acceptance of this report by the
entire community is critical if future projects can be considered seriously.
More specifically, the greater the use of this report, cited accurately,
the greater the possibility of similar studies.

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Political Science 301

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APPENDIX B

RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERVIEWS

The purpose of this appendix is to discuss the development of the questionnaire, the system for choosing the respondents, and the implementation of the interviews. Input for the questionnaire came from a variety of sources, Mrs. Bocock, the police department, and my colleagues. Since, to the best of my knowledge, no survey of this type had been conducted in Corpus Christi, the attempt was to develop an instrument that could be labeled "exploratory," that is, while there were several specific areas of interest that needed to be tapped, it was hoped that findings from the survey could lead to better efforts in the future. One of the more specific concerns was that the questionnaire not be too lengthy and that coding could easily be done while the students were conducting the interviews.

The system for choosing the respondents presented some concern. Our objective was to contact residences in Corpus Christi. Because of the considerable time and expense involved with personal interviews, as well as the sensitive subject matter of this survey, the supporters of the project suggested that we use telephone interviews. That seemed logical, but there was concern with some of the difficulties of telephone interviews, namely, certain biases (such as the fact that lower income individuals tend not to have telephones and thus would be excluded) are inevitable. Using "random digit dialing" for the last four digits within each telephone exchange was

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considered. The hope was that we could receive a representative cross-section of the city. However, we shortly discovered that random digit dialing would have involved the interviewers in spending time calling numbers that did not exist as well as having to apologize for calling non-residential numbers. Finally, it was decided to use the telephone directory of May, 1977 since it was easily accessible to all students.

Because of the difficulties expected with the telephone directory, the goal was to obtain as many interviews as possible. Since there were a large number of interviewers, we were able to obtain 559 interviews, which hopefully increased the accuracy of this survey. Each student took four pages of the telephone directory with some taking an additional four pages. As a result we were able to cover the entire number of pages.

After each student received his four pages of the directory, each was also given a list of twenty-five (25) random numbers (taken from a table of random numbers). The instructions were to count all residential telephone numbers (business and government telephones were skipped) on the four pages and then choose those telephones which came from the list of random numbers. For example, the first number was 100, and thus the student would call the 100th residential telephone number. Students were asked to complete ten (10) interviews each; some did less. The procedure was to stay with the first ten telephone numbers found from the random numbers list and to call the numbers at three different times before replacing one of the first ten numbers with another. No student ran out of the twenty-five random numbers. In addition, students were requested to interview five males and five females.

Finally, several factors should be mentioned concerning the interviews. First, the interviews were conducted during the latter part of November and the beginning of December, 1977. Second, most interviews were conducted in the evening from about 6:30 to 9:00. Third, each interviewer properly identified himself as a student at Corpus Christi State University. Fourth, confidentiality of the responses was guaranteed. If the interviewers encountered any difficulties with their identity or the confidentiality of the results, they were instructed to have the individual call me. Approximately ten called with most being very complimentary about the way the students handled themselves. With my experience with surveys in Corpus Christi, I would have to say that ten calls from respondents is high, but then the subject matter of crime is very sensitive.

Very few surveys are totally accurate. Generally, the margin of error is easy to determine by looking at some table. Unfortunately, these tables deal with personal rather than telephone interviews, with the latter not being quite as accurate. Another problem already mentioned is the sensitivity of asking questions about crime. I feel certain that some of our responses were biased. Overall, however, I think our margin of error was relatively small and have tried to give some general guidelines for the answers given, which varied according to the sensitivity of the question asked.

APPENDIX C

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION
OF CRIME, CRIME PREVENTION, AND POLICE ACTIVITIES
IN CORPUS CHRISTI, 1977

{Choose respondent according to class instruction.}

Hello! I'm _____, a student at Corpus Christi State University.
We are conducting a survey in our community.

{According to class instructions, ask for the male or the female of the house
if appropriate.}

C1-4   Respondent's Number; leave blank on coding sheet.

C5-6   Record your interviewer's number.

C7   1) Male   2) Female

First, let me ask you a couple of questions on Corpus Christi before further
explaining the purpose of the survey.

Q1   Question 1. What do you think are the three greatest advantages to living
      in Corpus Christi?
      C8-9, 10-11, 12-13

Q2   What do you think are the three greatest problems facing the residents of
      Corpus Christi?
      C14-15, 16-17, 18-19

Q3   Would you say, in general, that the local police are doing a good job, an
      average job, or a poor job?
      C20   1) Good job
                 2) Average job
                 3) Poor job

Q4   Within the past year or two, do you think crime in your neighborhood has
      increased a lot, decreased a lot, decreased a bit, or remained the same?
      C21   1) Increased a lot
                 2) Increased a bit
                 3) Decreased a lot
                 4) Decreased a bit
                 5) Remained the same
                 6) Don't know

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Q5   Within the past year or two, do you think that crime in the United States has increased a lot, increased a bit, decreased a lot, decreased a bit, or remained the same?

C22   1) Increased a lot
         2) Increased a bit
         3) Decreased a lot
         4) Decreased a bit
         5) Remained the same
         6) Don't know

Q6   How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?

C23   1) Very safe
         2) Reasonably safe
         3) Somewhat unsafe
         4) Very unsafe
         5) Don't know

Q7   How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood during the day?

C24   1) Very safe
         2) Reasonably safe
         3) Somewhat safe
         4) Very unsafe
         5) Don't know

Q8   During the last year did anyone break into your home, garage or other building where you live?

C25   1) Yes
         2) No
         3) Don't know

Q9   {If yes } How many times did some one break in?
C26 { Record 0-9 times }

Q10 Did anyone attempt to break into your home?
C27   1) Yes
         2) No

Q11 {If yes } How many times?
C28 { Record 0-9 }

Q12 During the past year, was anything stolen that happened to be left outside of your home, such as in an open garage or carport, or is normally kept outside of your house? Such items could be:

C29   1) Bicycle
         2) Children's toys
         3) Garden hose, sprinkler
         4) Garden tools
         5) Lawn Mower
         6) Other   Record on coding sheet.
         7) No (nothing was stolen)

C30   1) More than one of the above items stolen
         2) More than two of the above items stolen

Q13 During the past year, have you or any member of your family been the
    victim of any other crime? Such crimes could be:
    C31   1) Car, truck, motorcycle
            2) CB radio, tape deck, or other item from vehicle
            3) Robbed by force when away from home
            4) Victim of theft with no use of force while away from home
            5) Injured with a weapon
            6) Injured without a weapon (such as a fist fight)
            7) Raped
            8) Other {Record }
            9) No (Not a victim of any other crime)

    C32   1) More than one of the above crimes mentioned
            2) More than two of the above crimes mentioned

Q14 Did you contact the police for any of the crimes mentioned above?
    C33   1) Yes, on break into home (Q8)
            2) No, on break into home (Q8)
            3) Don't know, not applicable

    C34   1) Yes, on attempt to break into home (Q10)
            2) No, on attempt to break into home (Q10)
            3) Don't know, not applicable

    C35   1) Yes, on items left outside home (Q12)
            2) No, on items left outside home (Q12)
            3) Don't know, not applicable

    C36   1) Yes, on individual or family member being victim of
                other crime (Q13)
            2) No, on individual or family member being victim of
                other crime (Q13)
            3) Don't know, not applicable

Q15 If you contacted the police in any of the above instance or instances,
    were you generally very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat unsatis-
    fied, or very unsatisfied with the police's response?
    C37   1) Very satisfied
            2) Somewhat satisfied
            3) Somewhat unsatisfied
            4) Very unsatisfied
            5) Don't know, not applicable

Q16 If unsatisfied Could you explain why you were not satisfied?
    C38-39 Briefly write out the response on the coding sheet.

Q17 Within the past couple of years, have you taken any new steps (i.e., have become more cautious) to prevent crime? These steps could include the following, which I will read and you simply answer "yes" or "no."

        1) Yes   2) No {Record on coding sheet.}
        3) Already have done these

C40	Take the keys out of your car.
C41	Lock your car.
C42	Put all items, such as bicycles, garden equipment, inside your house or garage.
C43	Lock the doors in your house and/or garage.
C44	Put special locks on your doors (such as dead-bolt locks).
C45	Install specialized equipment, such as burglar alarms.
C46	Leave lights on when you leave your house at night (or use timers).
C47	Buy or just have a firearm more accessible.
C48	Identify items of value, such as a stereo, television set, with your Driver's License Number.
C49	Call the police when you are suspicious of an event but not the victim.
C50-51	Other (Briefly describe on coding sheet)

Q18 Many people discuss the causes of crime. I am going to read you a list of some of the frequently mentioned causes of crime. Will you please tell me whether you strongly agree, moderately agree, don't know or feel neutral, moderately disagree, or strongly disagree with these mentioned causes of crime?

        1) Strongly agree 2) Moderately agree 3) Don't know, neutral
        4) Moderately disagree 5) Strongly disagree

C52	Judges and the laws are too lenient on convicted criminals.
C53	The average citizen is too unaware of ways in which he could prevent crime.
C54	Too much publicity in the media on criminal activities, which encourages other crimes.
C55	Lack of experienced policemen.
C56	Insufficient number of policemen for a city of our size.
C57	Violence on television.
C58	Laws do not give policemen enough power to catch the criminal.
C59	Unemployment.
C60	Laws make it too easy to obtain a firearm.
C61	Breakdown of traditional institutions, such as the family, school, church.
C62-63	Other (briefly explain).

Now, let me ask some basic questions to determine if our survey is representative of the Corpus Christi community.

Q19 How many years have you lived in Corpus Christi?
    C64-65 (Record number of years).

Q20 How many years have you lived at your present address?
    C66-67 (Record number of years).

Q21 Do you own or are you renting your home?
C68   1) Own or being bought
             2) Rent

Q22 Could you please tell me how old you are?
C69-70

Q23 Could you please tell me how many years of formal education you have completed?
C71-72

Q24 Could you please tell me what ethnic group you belong to?
C73   1) Black American
             2) Mexican American
             3) Anglo American

Q25 Could you please tell me approximately in what category your <u>annual family</u> income would be in?

C74   1) Less than $6000
             2) $6000 to $8999
             3) $9000 to $12,999
             4) $13,000 to $16,999
             5) $17,000 to $24,999
             6) $25,000 and over
             7) Unemployed, retired
             8) Don't know

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION. WE ARE CERTAIN THAT YOUR HELP CAN AID ALL OF US IN COMBATING CRIME.

(Record on code sheet the address, telephone number: ask for address if needed.)

CODING OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Advantages to Corpus Christi

01. GROWTH - potential, resources, industry, tourism, port, NAS.
02. CLIMATE - weather, breeze, mild winter.
03. ENTERTAINMENT - arts and crafts, cultural opportunities.
04. OUTDOOR RECREATION - beach, location, water, fish, hunt, parks, boating, seashore, island.
05. GOOD INSTITUTIONS - schools, churches, police, nursing facilities, political environment, city government, city management.
06. MODERATE SIZE - suburbs, quiet, clean, no traffic congestion, ease of commuting, uncrowded, no pollution.
07. JOBS - better pay
08. BEAUTY - view, scenery, nice, like - overall like.
09. MEXICO - proximity.
10. PEOPLE - nice, friendly, pretty girls
11. COST OF LIVING - good economy, cheap to live.
12. HOUSING - good, own homes.
13. LOW CRIME -
14. COMMERCIAL ASPECT - shopping good, facilities of cosmopolitian.
15. LIFETIME RESIDENT - advantage of living here all of life.
16. PLURAL COMMUNITY - no discrimination, many racial groups, family community.
17. RETIREMENT AREA
18. RELATIVES NEARBY -

00. OTHER
99. No Answer, Don't Know.

Problems of Corpus Christi

01. TOO LITTLE GROWTH - need industry, tourism, port, more diversified economy losing oil production, threat of loss of NAS, economic problems, need shopping.
02. TOO MUCH GROWTH - too big.
03. JOBS - not enough, unemployment; low pay.
04. CLIMATE - weather, wind, warmth, hurricanes, bad for allergies, humid, no choice.
05. POOR CITY CONDITIONS - streets, drainage, lighting, downtown area, dirty.
06. COST OF LIVING - high taxes, high utilities, high insurance.
07. ENTERTAINMENT (lack of) - clubs, cultural activities.
08. POOR INSTITUTIONS - Police, child supervision, churches, abortion clinics, no organized labor.
09. CRIME - (too much) - vandalism, drugs, rape, burglaries, reckless drivers.
10. ETHNIC PROBLEMS - discrimination, undesirables.
11. SIZE - too small, too big.
12. SCHOOL PROBLEMS - poor education, teachers' salaries low, busing.
13. PEOPLE - bad, dirty, old, selfish, young, unfriendly, uninvolved people, conservative.
14. NO RELATIVES - in area.
15. CITY PLANNING - Traffic buildup, need community center, future water shortage, transportation of resources, lack of housing.
16. CITY GOVERNMENT - need new mayor, city manager bad, dislike bond issues passed.
17. LOCATION - difficult to obtain things, too far south, close to water, distance from other urban centers, not on main trucking routes, isolated.
18. CONFLICT - environmentalists vs. economic growth (expand or not), civilian conflicts, sports vs. commercial fish.

Problems of Corpus Christi
cont'd
p. 2

19. ILLEGAL ALIENS
20. WELFARE - poverty, poor people.

00 - No problems
99 - No Answer, Don't Know

Other Steps to Prevent Crime: C50-51

01. DOGS
02. MIND OWN BUSINESS
03. FENCE
04. MOVED to more secure location.
05. SECURE FIXED LOCKS - nail windows, cars, garage, barred sliding glass, gas cap
    lock.
06. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH - ask police to patrol, ask neighbor to watch, telephone
    followup on house guests depart.
07. PEEP HOLE - in front door.
08. CRIME PREVENTION STICKER.
09. CHANGE PHONE #.
10. BRING ITEMS INSIDE - at night, CB, antenna, etc.
11. TAKE LICENSE #.
12. LOCK CAR IN GARAGE
13. CONTROL CHILDREN
14. FOOL POTENTIAL CRIMINALS - leave blinds open, radio on.
15. CHAIN THINGS DOWN
16. LIGHTING - increased, repaired.
17. PHOTOGRAPHS OF VALUABLES with insurance company.
18. USE MORE CAUTION
19. SLANTED NEWS MEDIA
20. CALL POLICE IF SEE SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR/when left town.

99. Don't Know. No Answer.

Other Causes of Crime: C62-63

01. WOMEN WORKING
02. LACK OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE - parents don't care.
03. PUBLICITY
04. INFO AVAILABLE ON WEALTHY PEOPLE - news on crimes.
05. DRUGS
06. DRINKING
07. LACK OF DISCIPLINE, SCHOOL PROBLEMS - Schools, poor education.
08. INCREASED POPULATION
09. TOO MUCH WELFARE
10. RACIAL PROBLEMS - prejudice.
11. BREAKDOWN OF MORALS - lack of religion, lack of respect for police.
12. CHANGE CLOTHES w/SHADES UP
13. NEGLIGENCE - unthinking people, apathy.

Other Causes of Crime
cont'd
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14. INFLATION
15. BAD COMPANY
16. TOO EASY ON CRIMINALS - release on bond, probation, bail.
17. LACK OF THINGS TO DO for young.
18. LACK OF POLICE - Quality police.
19. MENTAL ILLNESS
20. LOW WAGES
21. PENAL SYSTEM

99. No Answer, Don't Know

Why Not Satisfied with Police Contact: C38-39

01. RESPONSE: DID NOTHING - didn't show up, poor response, no follow-up,
     unrecovered stolen items, failed to catch criminal, no fingerprints taken, could
02. POLICE PERFORMANCE - LACK OF INTEREST -   not trace.
     routine performance, rude, suspicious toward victim.
03. TOOK TOO LONG TO ARRIVE - slow response, short handed.
04. WOULDN'T COME TO CERTAIN LOCATIONS - when threatened wouldn't come, private
     parking lot.
05. ASSAULTED BY POLICE
06. POLICE HANDS TIED, frustrated. (Police did not have enough power.)
07. POOR INVESTIGATION

99. No Answer, Don't Know

END