

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public services in both urban and nonurban areas, particularly their delivery and distribution, have a definitive affect on the community and are therefore important areas of public administration. Urban services involve the actual production, provision, and delivery of local governmental services (Sharp, 1990). These services consist of various governmental "line" and "staff" activities that are produced, provided, and delivered by local governments (Baer, 1985). Law enforcement is one major component of urban service delivery and undoubtedly one of the most crucial.

Urban service delivery has come under fire, scrutinized in the areas of bureaucratic efficiency and fiscal capacity (Fitzgerald & Durant, 1980; Bolotin, 1990). Such criticism has led to reduced general support for political institutions and public officials (Fitzgerald & Durant, 1980; Bolotin, 1990), increased privatization (Seader, 1986; Campbell, 1986; Rehfuss, 1986; Bennett & Johnson, 1981), and coproduction of public services (Brudney, 1986; Brudney & England, 1983; Whitaker, 1980). The assessment of citizen satisfaction with local governmental services and their delivery and distribution contributes toward the essential process of evaluating, restructuring, and implementing effective governmental policies. Citizen evaluations provide public officials with valuable feedback on community perceptions regarding the

performance of local public agencies (Skogan, 1979).

Presently, citizen satisfaction with urban service delivery is mixed. In general the public views police and other municipal services positively within the United States. However, some dimensions of law enforcement are viewed less favorably (Rossi et al., 1974; Bloch, 1974; Hahn, 1971; Mladenka & Hill, 1978). This is especially true of crime and police-client relations within inner cities. Fear of crime continues to be a dominant theme that emerges from research on law enforcement. Various studies reveal that inadequate protection and service in predominately black neighborhoods rank as the most frequent complaint of citizens, particularly poor blacks (Wilson, 1975; Cooper, 1980; Radelet, 1986; Radelet & Carter, 1994). As a direct result of inadequate protection, police-client relations in poverty-stricken minority communities have suffered.

In the wake of this problem, police departments have examined and implemented new law enforcement strategies to establish and deliver more effective police services. Community policing is one example of new law enforcement strategy. Related to "coproduction" of police services (Koven, 1992; Whitaker, 1980), where citizens or clients who receive governmental services actively engage in individual or group action to assist or augment the efforts of service providers, this approach is both a philosophical and an organizational strategy designed to promote a new partnership of service delivery between people and police.

Although considerable research on citizen satisfaction with police services exists, little can be found that is specifically directed toward coproduction, a newly developed aspect of community policing. Assessing citizen satisfaction with local governmental services and proposals aids in evaluating, restructuring, and implementing governmental policies. Therefore, the perceptions and opinions of citizens on law enforcement require imperative analysis, particularly perceptions in inner city areas where residents have expressed pronounced concerns with unsatisfactory delivery of police services.

The implementation of a qualitative, nonexperimental research design using focus-group interviewing helped to collect, explore, and examine the perceptions and attitudes of East Athens residents and community policing officers assigned to the Nellie B and Vine community. The focus-group technique enabled the researcher to gather rich and in-depth data that also provided answers to the following three important questions: What expectations do inner city residents have for police services in general and community policing in particular? What helps to explain differing expectations? What are this implications for public administration?

Moreover, the important and relevant results from this study will not only benefit police service delivery and community policing policy efforts in East Athens but will also benefit universal efforts related to the implementation and evaluation of public policies.