A great deal of current police sociology builds on classic qualitative and ethnographic works on public police (Manning 2005), yet these works (e.g., Bittner 1967; Bittner 1970; Ericson 1982; Grimshaw and Jefferson 1987; Klockars 1985; Manning 1977; Skolnick 1994; van Maanen 1972) and subsequent studies have left almost entirely unexamined the ways in which separate public police components interact, save perhaps some limited comment on the intersections between generalist officers and specialists (Ericson 1981; Marx 1987; Reiner 2010). Moreover, while much attention has been paid in recent years to the policing milieu outside of police forces – and for good reason – there is still foundational sociological work to be done to understand coordination between police before, or at least at the same time as, we seek to understand coordination within the larger policing ‘web’ (Brodeur 2010).

To understand the coordination of police work, we must define key concepts regarding police, organization, boundaries, and governance. It has already been established that the following will examine public police forces organized under the general Anglo-American model found in countries such as Canada, the USA, UK, Australia, and so on. The study will provide insight into these kinds of police and tangentially into other police forces in democratic countries with alternate forms of police organizations, such as those in continental Europe, which divide their police activities in different ways but with very similar ends, means, and technologies to their Anglo-American counterparts (Manning 2010). The book is not directly concerned with the broader array of policing agencies, public or private, that contribute to social ordering through activities such as economic sanction, border maintenance, or investigation and information brokering, nor the everyday actors who
may interact with and contribute to policing, such as private third parties who enforce laws and regulations or assist with their enforcement (Mazerolle and Ransley 2006).

All police organizations under examination here can be said to have been brought about by similar social conditions and with similar ends in mind. The public police in Anglo-American countries arose within a context of the ascendance of the modern state. The conditions that coincide with the arrival of organized police forces include increasing social and economic stratification, urbanization and the expansion of a middle class, and extension more broadly of state capacity to regulate and circumscribe a growing sphere of citizen activity. Public police also exist – in their Anglo-American iteration at least – in a context of general (though not always specific) consent from citizens to be policed and normally operate within established peace rather than seek to pacify citizens in active organized conflict with one another (although many states of exception to this have existed and persist today).

Public police provide a service of law enforcement and order maintenance, established with a license to use coercive force up to and including deadly force against a civilian population in a set geographic jurisdiction. They do not hold a monopoly on any of their activities but retain primacy in many capacities and competencies, especially vis-à-vis state intervention, criminal sanction, and the minimal application of force (see e.g., Brodeur 2010). Their ends of law enforcement and order maintenance are often in conflict with one another, as are the means that may secure either or both of these outcomes in a given situation (Grimshaw and Jefferson 1987). Their work is both potentially supportive of social inclusion, democratic expression, and community building as well as, conversely, class repression, political suppression, and deepening social divisions (Reiner 2010). However, whether they are acting justly or unjustly, positively or negatively, mending or destroying social fabric, public police activity is increasingly coordinated between discrete public police organizations. Yet, the processes and protocols of coordination work should not be seen as neutral territory in the development of just policing, though aspects of coordination are about managing effectiveness in ways that may escape normative scrutiny. The ways in which coordination is handled has consequences for governance, accountability, and visibility in both jurisdictional and inter-jurisdictional police work.

The first part of this chapter will outline the vocabulary to be used throughout the book. While terms such as ‘organization’ and ‘institution’ may have common-sense meanings, they are contested in the