

SPATIAL POLICING

*The Influence of Time, Space, and
Geography on Law Enforcement Practices*

Edited by

Charles E. Crawford

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To Raeshell, Ryan, and Devin

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Preface

Citizens across the United States including practitioners and criminal justice students may be troubled when they take the time to critically assess police actions in their respective cities. Research has shown that most police-citizen encounters are civil, leaving many puzzled when they read articles in the local paper of mistreatment, or hear of differential practices in neighborhoods that may only be a few blocks away. This critical assessment leaves many questions for research and exploration. For example, are the differential practices simply a result of the group of people the police encounter? What is it about an area of the city that makes it a hot spot for crime at night? Why do the police act, speak, and patrol so differently across segments of the city? At their core the questions all show an awareness of the influence of space, time, and geography on law enforcement.

Researchers have also begun to realize the importance of the situational context of police actions. Imagine a police officer apprehending a suspect. The officer may choose many different courses of action and options for the use of force. These choices do not exist in a vacuum and are conditioned by when and where the arrest takes place. Consider for a moment how the following dichotomies of spatial context can vary for an arrest: a public area versus private residence, night time versus early morning, and a high-risk patrol area versus a relatively safe suburban neighborhood. Clearly there are others spatial and temporal contexts that are much more complex, and all can greatly enhance the understanding of law enforcement practices.

Spatial Policing pulls together some of the leading researchers in policing, and those with research interests on the impact of spatial and cultural issues on criminal justice practices, to explore how widely varying contexts can influence police actions. My own interest in this topic began through studying the situational framework of police use of force. The most significant findings tended to revolve around the actions of the citizen or arrestee in response to the officer's attempt to make the arrest. Nonetheless, there were some intriguing significant results connected to space and time. For example, the dichotomy

of a public space versus a private space may appear simple at first. However, a resident's home or apartment versus a public street or parking lot has a great deal of meaning.

Reflect on the spatial context of your own home. You have a sense of authority in this context, it is private and you have ownership. Now consider a police officer in your home ordering you to comply with various commands. This represents a challenge to the authority you believe exists in your own residence. Disobeying the commands or resisting the arrest is more likely to happen in this private spatial context. Imagine the same scenario, but this time the officer has asked you to step outside or walk with them a few feet to the patrol car, essentially bringing you into their world or the public space. Your basic rights and protections are still in place, but the feeling or sense of authority is greatly reduced, and compliance is more likely given this public context. This action capitalizes on the officer's knowledge of the shift in the spatial environment.

The previous example of public versus private space demonstrates one context. Imagine how the scenario would be complicated if the exchange took place on a college campus. Does a dormitory occupant have the same sense of ownership and authority to control the space in the presence of a campus police officer? Now change the geographic location to an inner city low-income area. Would the officer's attitude be different, or use of authority greater in the personal space than if it were only a few miles away in an upper middle class suburb? Would the officer's, and citizen's race or ethnicity further influence the actions taken during this encounter? These are challenging questions with many facets that can be explored.

The issue of space in policing is probably something many practitioners and citizens are aware of, but may not have given this topic more than a passing thought other than noticing that an area looks more dangerous, or a person looks out of place at a particular location or time. Throughout its ten chapters *Spatial Policing* will investigate many of these spatial, temporal, and geographic contexts to reveal how these changing environments shape policing practices.

Chapter 1: Space and Policing by Charles E. Crawford. In this chapter I briefly review the debate over defining space and place, the theoretical contributions of the Chicago School of Criminology, and environmental criminology. In addition, I focus on two developments from the criminology of place that have had the most direct impact on policing: defensible space, and the "Broken Windows" thesis. Furthermore, I assess how cities and police departments have come to terms with battles over space between various counterpublics. It is only when police departments recognize the importance of the

spatial context they patrol and the people contained within its boundaries are they able to resolve conflict. In the end, space provides an important framework for understanding police operations in our society.

Chapter 2: *Remapping The City: Public Identity, Cultural Space, and Social Justice* by Jeff Ferrell. In this chapter Ferrell takes a fascinating look at the complexities and conflicts over public space. Ferrell illustrates that there are multiple groups engaged in battles over what may appear to be mundane public spaces: parks, parking lots, shopping areas and sidewalks. As Ferrell points out, the conflict between these groups revolves around cultural space or the deep meanings groups attach to these locations. As space is redefined through conflict there must also be control of those who are deemed foreign in these recreated locations, bringing marginal groups into a direct confrontation with city officials and the criminal justice system.

Chapter 3: *Community Policing and Spatial Analysis* by Michael J. Palmiotto and Brian F. Kingshott. In this chapter Palmiotto and Kingshott explore the basic history of community policing, and how important the issue of space is for this approach to providing law enforcement service to citizens. Space can be described in many important ways for community policing, a neighborhood, a community, a beat, or a zone. As the authors illustrate, many of the problems and quality of life issues that community policing may have to contend with comes down to controlling space. In this context, space gets to the core of the problem-oriented approach of community policing.

Chapter 4: *Minorities, Space, and Policing* by Charles E. Crawford. In this chapter I explore the police-minority relationship through a spatial framework. Many of America's most violent urban disturbances have revolved around hostile police contact in Black communities or spaces. To gain some insight into how these events may unfold, I offer a critical approach to understanding the creation of organized policing and the need to control dangerous classes. Policing the minority space contains many challenges, as there is a rich detailed history of how these spaces were created and their relationships with law enforcement. By recognizing the distinctiveness of the minority space, possible improvements in police-citizen relationships and patrol practices may be revealed.

Chapter 5: *Which Side Are You On? A Collaborative Approach to Policing the Borders* by Eileen Luna-Firebaugh. In this chapter Luna-Firebaugh introduces a geographical space and context that few may have considered, that is, Tribal law enforcement along the United States' borders. Several of the chapters in this textbook define space in local and intimate terms: community, neighborhoods, and home. However, as the focus of space becomes larger to

include sovereign nations of American Indians who have the right to govern themselves—geography, law, and security must be balanced with the needs of the individual tribes for which they work. This balancing act must be carried out in a post 9/11 America, and the concern over border security, international crime, and terrorism.

Chapter 6: Rural Law Enforcement: Real Police Work? By Robert Hartmann McNamara and Lucy Clark Sanders. In this chapter McNamara and Sanders explore the often misunderstood policing context of rural space. The chapter offers a rich discussion of the definitional issues of rural locations. Many of the traditional crimes that are associated with urban areas such as gangs, drugs, and DUIs occur in the rural setting and represent distinctive challenges for police departments operating in this framework. Furthermore, policing rural areas can entail some unusual issues such as dealing with agricultural and wildlife crimes, and patrol officers having to cover sizeable distances to provide service.

Chapter 7: Policing Urban Spaces by Kim M. Lersch. In this chapter Lersch offers a comprehensive account of policing in the urban environment. When citizens think about a law enforcement agency they typically envision the departments in our nation's largest cities. This is partly due to the considerable amount of research attention given to urban crime, police practices, and popular culture portrayals of these departments. Policing in the urban spatial context can be difficult as the concept of neighborhood and community can vary dramatically across the city resulting in differential treatment, patrol practices, and crime types.

Chapter 8: Policing Educational Spaces: Status, Practices, and Challenges by Kenneth J. Peak and Emmanuel P. Barthe. In this chapter Peak and Barthe describe the complexities of providing law enforcement service in the campus context. Perceptions of the safe and structured environment of a college or high school campus have been shattered in the last decade with a series of high profile mass episodes of violence. The mandates of traditional law enforcement to protect lives and valuable property of both the school and students are at odds with campus law enforcement's service roots. Furthermore, the educational space raises difficult questions such as where exactly does the campus end and how should various crimes be handled both in and around the school?

Chapter 9: Surveillance and Urban Public Space by Gregory J. Howard and Elizabeth P. Bradshaw. In this chapter Howard and Bradshaw explore contemporary surveillance practices and their implications for policing, and the capacity of each to structure the use and experience of urban public space. Using Chicago, Illinois, and Kalamazoo, Michigan as case studies, the authors

demonstrate that surveillance practices help to organize urban areas by controlling admission to the space and producing disciplined and managed conduct within it.

Chapter 10: Spatial Crime Prevention: Traditional Versus Non-Traditional Perspectives by Ronald G. Burns. In this final chapter Burns reviews the changing nature of law enforcement in the United States and the importance of crime prevention. Both practitioners and theorist since the Chicago School have realized that crime occurs in specific physical locations and environments. This knowledge has led to several developments to address the spatial context of crime prevention. This spatial awareness of deterrence can be found in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, Defensible Space, and the technological innovations of Geographic Information Systems applications. As Burns states, controlling space and preventing crime is at the heart of policing.

One of the goals I have for *Spatial Policing* is that it may serve as a starting point and resource for critically assessing how space, location, and time impact law enforcement practices. The space in which we all interact either in public or private is a powerful influence on our lives. The space we occupy can enhance our feelings of ownership and authority, or it may give visual and cultural cues that show how powerless and unsafe we are in a given location. City planners, architects, and security design firms are well aware of the control that can be exerted through space and location. This awareness is seen in criminology and in our nation's police departments today. After reading *Spatial Policing*, I hope that you will never look at any given space quite the same, and that you take the time to examine the design elements, visual cues, the demands placed on a given location from various groups, and most importantly how the police operate in that spatial context.

Charles E. Crawford
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