5. The police role, function and effects

This chapter explores some of the political myths about police and policing by reviewing the research evidence on police practice. It considers the police role in theory and practice by focusing on three questions: what is the police role? what do the police actually do? and how well do they do it? It explores the original historical purpose of the police, the governmental authority on which it is based, the role of public opinion, why people call the police, the role and effectiveness of the police in crime control, and in broader social functions. The chapter concludes that the core function of the police is best analysed not in terms of any of their social functions but rather the special character of the means the police can bring to bear. Underlying the diversity of situations to which the police are called is the core capacity to use legitimate coercive force.
5. The police role, function and effects

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