

Guidelines for Police Leaders interviewers

General Remarks

The general goal of the interviews is to present the views and interpretations of policing developments and current issues *by experienced practitioners*. What do they see happening in policing in their countries and internationally, and how do they evaluate or interpret developments. We have many analyses and interpretations of policing by scholars and policy makers from outside the police organization. What we would like to have are views and interpretations from within the organization. What do police leaders who do the work see happening in policing: what are the issues they consider important? What changes do they see as successes or failures? What are likely lasting futures or passing fads? What we are also seeking is to build personal profiles of the judges interviewed: Their career, background, influences that shaped their personality, their successes, failures, joys, temptations and frustrations in their career, in their job.

The basic goal of the interviews is to capture the views of police officials. Your role should not be to be too critical or interpret what the officials meant to say, but to write as accurately as possible what the officials told you. It is their views, based on their experience and thinking, that we are interested in. We know what scholars think about policing; but we know less what the people who do policing think about and how they evaluate trends, developments and issues in policing. That is the important goal.

The basic reason for doing the interviews in the first place is our firm belief that police officials know a lot; that practitioners can make significant contributions to our understanding of the prospects and problems of policing today. It is that knowledge and their judgments of policing that we are after. But that knowledge is not easily captured.

The practical reason for the interviews is that police leaders do not have the time to write and reflect on their experiences, views, opinions and perspectives. We think interviews are one means to capture that knowledge and that is why we are requesting researchers like you to record their views.

We want to re-emphasize one major point. *We do not want the official rhetoric (or the official success stories)* that high level people sometimes fall back on during interviews; we want their *personal views and thinking*. If you have the sense that you are getting the formal language and official views of policing and reforms, see if you can get the officials to go beyond that and push them for their own views. The interviewer should seek to get the person interviewed to move beyond simple answers, and get them to analyze and reflect on their experiences and knowledge. That takes skill on the part of the interviewer - but that is why you were asked to do an interview.

Topic areas which should be covered:

These are the basic areas we would like to cover. In some cases there may be other areas of importance in 'your' country or community and you should ask about those areas as well.

For example, questions of police leaders in transitional countries will likely deal more with changes in policing philosophies and organizations than question for leaders in stable democracies. We know, when asking you do conduct an interview, that you are quite familiar with the policing situations in 'your' country and that you will tailor your questions toward the dominant local issues which have had to be dealt with by the leaders. Be creative but not overly so.

We have listed a number of topics that should be covered in the interview. Please try to cover the topics mentioned below as the conduct and flow of the interview dictates. And add, elaborate, follow up as you see fit and necessary to clarify points, expand on ideas, or pursue an insight offered.

All the topical areas should be asked, but the specific questions listed below for each topic area are suggestions. Interviews have their own dynamics. Follow them down their most fruitful avenues. Since each of you will be interviewing officials within different organizations the list and sequence of questions will have to be adjusted in any case.

The wording of questions is, of course your own. In follow-up questions, try to get specific examples or details of generalizations made. (Examples are probably among the most useful pieces of information to readers.)

Career

Tell us a little bit about your career: length, organizations worked in, movements, specializations, etc. What motivated you to enter/stay in police work?

Changes experienced

What do you see as the most important changes which have happened within your organization over the course of your career e.g. in police philosophies, police priorities, management, gender, diversity, training, specializations, equipment organizational culture, human rights compliance, legal powers etc.?

Have current economic conditions resulted in budget cuts and if so, how has this impacted the organization?

As regards external relationships what changes have you observed e.g. in police relationships with public, interagency cooperation, personnel within the criminal justice system, relations with minority communities, political influence, human rights activists

Personal policing philosophy

What do you think is/should be the role and functions of the police? What should be dropped or left to other public and non-state organizations? What should be done about un-policed areas?

What facilitates/hinders good relations with the community, with government, with other criminal justice organizations, with nonstate security providers such as community groups, customary and commercial enterprises?

What should be the priorities of your police service?

Problems and successes experienced

What areas have you seen develop during your time and how has it been achieved. What obstacles have stood in the way of progress?

In your experience, what policies or programs have worked well and which have not? And why?

What would you consider to be the greatest problem facing the police at this time? Are corruption or lack of resources issues?

How can corruption and human rights abuses be tackled in the service?

Theory and Practice

Would you say theory has played a part in your practice and that of your organization?

What kind of research, in what form, on what issues do you find most useful for practice?

Does your organization do research on its own?

Transnational relations

How have you and the work of your organization been affected by developments outside the country (human rights demands, universal codes of ethics, practical interactions with police from other countries, travel outside the country, new crime threats, 'the war on terror' etc.)?

How transferable do you regard your skills to police services in countries of different development levels; and what value is there in advisers and senior officers coming to your service from abroad?

Democratic Policing

What do you see as the key elements of democratic policing?

Does maintaining law and order mean that policing is involved in maintaining the existing social order and power structures or can it allow serious protests against the government and laws and powerful elites? Can the police resist demands from the government to crack down on opposition and protest?

What levels of public support does the police service have?

Looking ahead

What are the most likely developments you see happening? What would you like to see happening?

What to do before and after the interview

Before

Get a sense of how much time you are likely to have and what questions you can get to during that time. In no interview will you be able to ask all the questions you want. And,

when you write up the interview, you will have space for about 6-8,000 words (on the average). Choose your priorities. The top priorities for us are the reflections by the officials interviewed on changes experienced during their careers, how they evaluate those changes, and the interrelations of theory and practice. We also want insights to the person of the leader interviewed. These are high priorities for the interviews.

After the interview

1. Please write a short introduction to the actual interview. The introduction should:
 - a. Briefly describe the basic structure of policing in your country. You have to be the judge of how much an informed reader is likely to know about the country and how much should be explained.
 - b. Describe, briefly, the interview itself. Where and when it was conducted; how long it took, or multiple sittings; how honest and open you feel the discussion was.
2. You should, if at all possible, tape record the interview. For publication, edit the interview to bring out the most important discussion and answers. Chances are you will have much more information than we will have space for your interview in the proposed book.
3. Write a short conclusion on your impression of the interview. What the major themes were, how well the views expressed accord with the known literature, but do not be overly critical on this point, please. Again briefly.
4. Write a glossary of terms or events mentioned in the interview a reader might not be familiar with. E.g., if interviewing a German official *Bundeskriminalamt* is mentioned, describe very briefly what that is; or if in an interview with a South African official, SAARPCO is mentioned, describe that. Just select the most likely items non-experienced readers might not know.
5. We have had two basic styles in writing up interviews. Both are acceptable, but we prefer the second style.

One style is to simply transcribe the interviews - questions asked, answers given.

The second style, which requires more work, is to write short statements about the topic of a question and then insert long excerpts from the interviews. The main point is to have the voice and views of the leaders being interviewed, not your own.

4. Send the completed interviews to Bruce Baker and Dilip Das.
bruce@bakerbrum.co.uk, Dilipkd@aol.com

The total interview, with introduction, conclusion and glossary should be about 6-8,000 words.

Finally, each interview will be a book chapter which should be useable to teach students in a university class or as a book, it should be a source of knowledge and information to readers interested in policing including police practitioners, policy makers, police trainers, police researchers, academics in universities as well as teachers and trainees in police academies.