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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
ROLE OF THE INTERVIEWER IN A
COMMUNITY SURVEY RESEARCH STUDY
AND
AT INTAKE IN A CHILD GUIDANCE
CLINIC

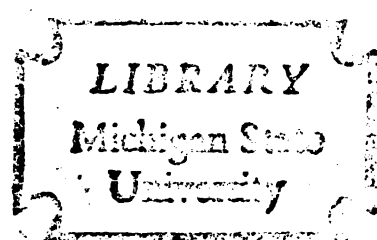
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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE INTERVIEWER
IN A COMMUNITY SURVEY RESEARCH STUDY
AND
AT INTAKE IN A CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC

~~By~~
Emma C. Chaffee

A PROJECT REPORT

Submitted to the Department of Social Work
Michigan State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

July

1955

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many persons have contributed to the completion of this project, and to all of them I am deeply indebted. Thanks are due to members of the faculty of the Department of Social Work. I am especially grateful to my project committee: Dr. Lucille Barber, Mr. Manfred Lilliefors, and Dr. Ernest Harper--all of whom made valuable suggestions which were incorporated into the project.

I also wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Helen Lanting, Director of the Lansing Child Guidance Clinic, Dr. Leo A. Haak and the Michigan Communications Study for permission to use the materials on which this comparative study was based.

To Thomas Chaffee, thank you for long-enduring interest, patience, and encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As an interviewer for a research study during the summer of 1953, the writer became interested in comparing the respective roles of the research interviewer and the caseworker in a social agency. Practice as a student social worker the previous year with the Bureau of Social Aid and with the Lansing Child Guidance Clinic, 1953-54, provided casework experience. The Child Guidance Clinic experience included intake interviews, giving the writer an opportunity to evaluate the roles of interviewers in two "first" interview situations.

The Problem

In this exploratory study the writer proposes to focus upon the interviewers' roles in a research study and at intake in a children's psychiatric clinic. The roles will be examined for common elements, principles on which each is based, and differences in purpose, need, and setting that modify interviewing in practice. Comparisons of methods and the activities of the workers in meeting differing purposes and needs will be considered. Content per se is not to be covered, only as it pertains to the

methods employed and the resultant relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

This study proposes to inquire into the area of Annette Garrett's metaphorical statement:

Interviews...take place for all sorts of reasons. At one end of the scale is the interview of the census-taker whose one immediate purpose is simply to obtain specific information. At the opposite end is the definitely therapeutic interviewing of the psychiatrist or psychoanalyst. Between lies the vast majority of interviews where the aim is to help in one way or another, and information is sought primarily to point this help at actual needs and to make it effective. ¹

The Method

Social science research interviews are designed specifically for purposes of research, for gathering facts that can be coded, tabulated, and compared. The goal is increased knowledge about social science. The emphasis is upon uniformity of structure in order that trait characteristics can be isolated and counted under controlled conditions. Social work ^{intake} interviews, on the other hand, are dependent structurally upon the situation and needs of the individual clients, for the goal is knowledge about the client, his problem, and how he can be helped. Only secondarily may knowledge about social work per se be the goal.

¹Annette Garrett, Interviewing, Its Principles and Methods (Family Welfare Asso., 1942), p. 10

The structural and content individuality of social work interviews makes comparisons difficult. The differences in methods of recording also comprises a handicap in objective comparisons. The answers on the survey were recorded verbatim and on the spot. The intake interviews were in summarized form and only an occasional verbatim remark was given. Notes were taken during the intake interview of factual data, and the actual recording was made two days to two weeks later.

Considering these limitations, the writer proposes to analyze the two types of interviews as a process: the basic principles and understanding of the interviewer in approaching his task; a description of respective purposes, needs, settings, and how these affected the methods used and the relationship between interviewee and interviewer.

Annette Garrett, in her analysis of how to interview, divided the interview into component factors and discussed each separately. She forewarned that these could not be so simply separated. "In practice none of the methods to be discussed operates in a vacuum but only in organic relation with most of the others."²

These methods were: (1) observation (2) listening (3) listening before talking, or "Begin where the client

² Ibid., p.30

is" (4) questioning (5) talking (6) answering personal questions (7) leadership or direction (8) interpretation. Recording will be added as a ninth method because of its significance to research.

By narrative description of interviews, comparing and analyzing the use of these methods as outlined by Annette Garrett, the writer will explore the similarities and differences in the roles of interviewers in social science research and at intake in a psychiatric clinic. Implications which these considerations reveal for the relationships of interviewer and interviewee or other aspects of interviewing will be noted.

Common bases for comparison are these: The writer conducted the interviews in both settings. Both types of interviews were first meetings. Both were concerned with the gathering of information. Both, as purposeful communication, involved the social interaction of two persons responding to one another in a cooperative task.

The Setting

Research project:- The purpose of the Michigan Communications Study was to determine what the people of a small Michigan community knew about their schools, where they got their information, and what they thought

about the schools.³ The pilot study⁴ during the summer of 1953 was the first step in a study of communication effects of various media in school-community communication. A later experimental study was made in five other Michigan communities to evaluate the relative effectiveness of a newspaper approach and a school booklet approach in contributing to increased information and a more favorable opinion on the part of citizens in respect to their schools.

The prepared schedule covered nine content areas: school facilities, pupils, school programs, teachers, methods of teaching, administration, costs, evaluation, and sources of information about schools.

The schedule for the pilot study was revised eight times and pre-tested. All of the interviewers participated in the final revision. Respondents were selected on the basis of a ten per cent random sample from the 1949-50 community directory and building permits for homes built since 1949.

³Leo A. Haak, "What Citizens Know and Think About Their Public Schools", Report #2 (Michigan Communications Study, 1954) p. 3. (Mimeographed.)

⁴The pilot study was conducted by the Social Research Service of the Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, M.S.C., in cooperation with the Midwest Administration Center of the Univ. of Chicago. It was under the direction of Dr. Leo A. Haak, Dept. of Social Science, and Dr. Wilbur Brookover, Depts. of Sociology and Anthropology and Social Science. Special thanks are due to Dr. Haak for permission to use this material and his generous help in its preparation.

The average interview for eight interviewers took one hour and seventeen minutes. There were thirteen and one-half pages of questions. Out of a total of four hundred interviews conducted in the pilot study, the writer completed fifty-five. After each interview the interviewer wrote a brief evaluatory statement of respondent reaction, any unusual circumstance or significant feature of the interview.

The interviewers represented a variety of backgrounds in academic training and work experience: high school and college teaching, National Opinion Research Center interviewing, Counselling and Guidance, Sociology and Anthropology, and Social Work.

An instructional orientation was given the interviewers concerning their task. The National Opinion Research Center book on interviewing was made available for reading, and other sources of information on interviewing for research were recommended. As participants in the final drafting meetings, the interviewers had a clear idea of over-all goals and procedure and felt a part of the total research process. The interviewers rode to the out-lying community in the same car and ate together at noon. There was ample opportunity for camaraderie and interchange of ideas. One of the less experienced in research interviewing, the writer learned from co-workers about techniques and methods of interviewing for research.

When the sample of interviews was completed, the interviewers continued as coders and tabulators and saw the mass of collected data begin to take statistical and meaningful form. Later all interviewers participated in an evaluative meeting with the State Councils of the Michigan Communication Study. Experiencing research as a process and understanding the importance of the interviewing as one step in the total process gave the writer a new awareness of subtle forces, external and internal, which could influence the interview and the ultimate validity and reliability of the collected data.

Child Guidance Clinic:- The Lansing Child Guidance Clinic is a social agency sponsored by state and local organizations. In a staff-prepared report its functions are stated as follows:

... In general the clinic tries to improve and protect the mental health of the children in the community. It does this not only by providing psychiatric and psychological service to families where children have emotional problems, but also by its consultative and participant relationship to all other health, welfare, and educational agencies. The mental health of children is a community responsibility. The clinic shares this responsibility with all other agencies in the community that deal with children. 5

Members of the professional staff--psychiatrist, psychologist, and social worker--used a team approach in the client's first contacts with the agency in the diag-

5 "1953 Annual Report", Lansing Child Guidance Clinic, (Mimeographed.)

nostic study process. The psychiatrist saw the child for a clinical evaluation to get information about the child's inner world of feelings and to gain as much insight as possible into his personality structure. The psychologist administered different kinds of diagnostic and projective tests to assess areas of special abilities, intelligence, and personality in which there might be question.

The social worker interviewed the parents, both if possible, to learn about the child's personal development and family relationships. It was usually important to cover the following topics in the first interview: source of referral and some idea of the parents' expectations regarding help; a description of the child and his problems, habits and fears; factual data of marriage and births; family history of both parents; physical and emotional development of the child, prenatal to the present; an explanation of diagnostic process and clinic function if needed. The average length of an intake interview was approximately one and one-half hours.

It was the social worker's responsibility in the intake interview to gain some understanding of the needs of her client and to learn about factors of the past and the present that may have brought him to the clinic.

After these initial interviews the workers met in conference with the total professional staff to put their information together to evaluate the factors involved in the client's difficulties and to make the most feasible plan for his better adjustment to his environment. The case was accepted for treatment, referred to another agency, closed with an interpretative interview, or a combination of these plans evolved to fit the situation and need. In any decision the parents were seen again by the intake interviewer to discuss the findings with as much frankness as was possible and to make plans for future action.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

The literature on interviewing is bountiful.

Social workers, guidance counselors, psychiatrists, opinion pollsters and others have considered the interview and published their respective points of view on how it should be done. Several schools of thought have developed.

Except for an occasional reference or inference the writer found almost no literature specifically comparing different types of interviewing.

An exception to this was, "A Sociological and Psychiatric Interview Compared."¹ It proved stimulating to the writer in formulating the subject of this paper. The article described a project carried out by Dr. Reckless, a sociologist, and Dr. Selling, a psychiatrist. Their premise was that in a general way the differences in point of view and approach of psychiatry and sociology were recognized. But how were these differences reflected specifically in a given case study interview?

Walter C. Reckless, Ph.D., and Lowell S. Selling, M.D., "A Sociological and Psychiatric Interview Compared", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry (1937) Vol. 7, pp.532-539

A cooperating agency chose a subject to be interviewed--a thirty year old woman who was trying to make an adjustment after quitting prostitution. Both the sociologist and the psychiatrist conducted their interviews without previous knowledge of the interviewee, any exchange of information or pre-arrangement of methods to be used. Each interviewer wrote his analysis independently of the other's data and independently of the other's remarks.

The sociologist obtained a life history. He seemed interested in having the subject tell about her experiences and reveal her attitudes toward various situations. He learned about the origin of her career as a prostitute and the extent of her demoralization in the life. Pursuing the socio-legal aspects, the interviewer depicted her life as a professional sex delinquent in our society.

The psychiatrist made an inventory of personality traits. The situations and happenings were significant to the psychiatrist only as they elicited the interviewee's feelings and reactions and revealed her emotional status. He evaluated her most deep-seated feelings, (guilt, inferiority), emotional attitudes, fantasies, worries and psychotic tendencies.

The two interviewers met on common territory when they tried to get the interviewee's attitudes toward her

experiences. The psychiatrist inquired into more general attitudes toward women, children, society, and life. The sociologist probed the situational, more specific experiences.

Perhaps the most important resource for this paper was Annette Garrett.² Miss Garrett's straightforward, practical discussion of techniques and methods provided the basic outline by which the writer could compare two types of interviewing. Miss Garrett's analysis is systematic and usable. She does not try to reduce interviewing to a list of "do's and don't's". The second half of the book presented selected interviews for suggestive discussion.

Pauline V. Young, a helpful resource, presented the interview³ as a socio-psychological process of interaction. She outlined three types of interviews based on the respective roles of the interviewer and the interviewee: the non-directive interview, the focused interview, and the repeated interview. Reviewing within the limits of a chapter some of the basic techniques of interviewing, Miss Young was concerned with the validation of data and the limitations of the interview in respect to its validity:

²Garrett, op.cit.

³Pauline V. Young, Scientific Social Surveys and Research (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1949), Chap. 11

Little basic research has been completed which would aid in establishing a body of scientific principles governing the process of interviewing--which remains largely an art rather than a science.⁴

In an earlier approach to social work interviewing when psychology was non-dynamic, Miss Young presented a comprehensive analyses of methods, purposes and techniques with illustrative case material which proved to be a stimulating reference.⁵

Most books on methods in social research contain chapters on the interview. Several proved most valuable to this writing. Authors Cannell and Kahn⁶ provided practical assistance in their discussion of techniques for attaining reliability and validity in research data collection by the interview method. The chapter was a thorough examination of the potentialities and limitations of the interview as a research method and inquired into the psychological basis of the interview. A passing reference was made in this chapter to a follow-up inquiry into respondent reaction to interviews for a 1951 Consumer Finances Study conducted by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan.

⁴Ibid. p.246

⁵Pauline Young, Interviewing in Social Work, (McGraw-Hill Book Co.), 1935

⁶Charles F. Cannell and Robert L. Kahn, "The Collection of Data by Interviewing", Chap. 8, Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz, eds., Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences, (Dryden Press), 1953

A five-page report of this inquiry ⁷ was secured from Author Cannell. After the interviewing was completed on the Consumer Finances Study, a letter was sent to all respondents for whom there was an address, thanking them for their cooperation. A return postcard was inclosed on which the respondent could indicate whether he remembered the interview and if he wanted a copy of the report on the research. Space for comments on the interview was also provided. Of the cards returned, comments were overwhelmingly favorable (96%-98%) to the interview, its conduct and content, and the interviewer. Most comments related to the interviewers and their personal qualities, praising them for ability and personality. The human relationship aspect of the interview process seemed to have made the greatest impression upon the respondents.

Readings for this paper principally represented the subject areas of social casework, interviewing in several fields, methods in social research and social work research. Social work periodicals were a rich source of ideas. A complete reference list is contained in the bibliography.

⁷ "Response to Post Card Follow-up of Interviews 1951 Consumer Finances Study", Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, June 1, 1951, (Unpublished)

CHAPTER III

INTERVIEWING FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

As a term in the social sciences the "interview" may be defined as "the securing of information through a professional conversation with an individual for a research study or to aid in social diagnosis or treatment."¹ It is a deliberately planned conversation, using definite techniques and methods to accomplish a particular purpose.²

In general, the subject matter of sociology encompasses the inter-relationships of cultural and societal phenomena and the individual. Sociologists look for the underlying continuity in the actions of all people in their attempts to explain the existence of regularity in social behavior.³

Therefore, in the interview, a direct approach to discovering the attitudes and perceptions of individuals, it is important that the social research interviewer have understanding of human behavior and personality. He needs

¹ H.P. Fairchild (ed.) Dictionary of Sociology (N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1944), s.v. "interview."

² R.C. Oldfield, The Psychology of the Interview (London: Methuen, 3rd. ed., 1947) pp.6-7

³ Logan Wilson and William L. Kolb, Sociological Analysis, (Harcourt, Brace, and Co.) 1949, pp. 1-5

to know that the respondent from the poor housing area may be hesitant and unsure of himself and his answers; that the unfriendly interviewee may be reacting to previous experiences, now precipitated upon the interviewer; that a person expressing conflicting feelings with equal vehemence may feel both ways.

The measure...of success as an interviewer is very largely dependent upon the extent to which he is insightful and successful in recognizing and dealing with the social-psychological phenomena of the interviewing process.⁴

The interviewer encounters a wide gamut of human feelings, situations and reaction. Ideally the interviewer meets this diversity with warmth of interest, respect for feelings, and recognizes every individual's right to make his own choices. He needs to be aware of his own attitudes and prejudices so that they do not interfere in the interview. One of the limitations of the interview as a research method is the possibility of the interviewer's involvement in the data and the likelihood of bias.

The interviewer begins in a natural way, friendly and interested, unhurried, relaxed, telling who he is and talking of things in common. He makes sure that optimum conditions for privacy and physical and mental comfort prevail. He gives the respondent confidence in the non-

⁴Chas. F. Cannell and Robert L. Kahn, "The Collection of Data by Interviewing", Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz, eds., Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences, (Dryden Press), 1953, pp. 332-333

judgmental acceptance of any feelings or opinions to be expressed. He keeps interruptions at a minimum and does not engage in any distracting activity or gesturing.

Observation

The interviewer can learn by observing more than literal meanings. There are numerous ways to communicate: posture, gestures, mannerisms, general appearance, habits of thinking, tones of voice, choice of vocabulary, facial expression, mood; any changes in the foregoing; what the client talks about; what he evades; what he repeats.

Resistance and unsatisfactory answers can sometimes be diminished if negative feelings are observed early and accepted: Mr. D., a middle-aged corpulent man, consented to an interview grudgingly. He said that some "fool" had been through several years before during the war asking about gasoline rationing. The interviewer did not pursue this remark but launched immediately into the questions. At the interview's beginning he said, "Don't know" or gave one staccato answer to every question: "Back to the person," meaning that it was an individual matter. He refused to generalize. When probed he proclaimed, "No matter how much you try, you won't get an answer out of me on the ones I say I don't know." The writer went along with this, recognizing that it was perhaps useless to do otherwise. By the middle of the

interview his obstinate resistance had melted. He was giving detailed answers, filling in information previously refused, and telling stories to illustrate his meaning. At the end of the interview he then told about the earlier interviewing experience. He thought the questionnaire on schools made a lot more sense.

Had the writer responded to the feeling expressed in his remarks at the beginning, Mr. D. might have cooperated earlier. However, letting the questionnaire sell itself eventually proved effective. This incident is also indicative of the basic social nature of interviewing.

There are good reasons for placing a strong emphasis on "emotional satisfaction" in a research interview. To begin with the respondent for one research study does not cease to exist, but tells others about his experience. Social research in a broad sense depends upon the good impression which the interviewer makes on his respondents. This is obviously true when a study is being conducted in a small community, in which news of the interviews will be carried from neighbor to neighbor in a short while.⁵

In the community where this study was made, there was a large percentage of retired elderly persons. The writer interviewed several persons past seventy years of age. Observing signs of weariness and nervousness with the schedule, the interviewer stopped occasionally to permit a rest. Invariably they expressed appreciation for

⁵ William J. Goode and Paul K. Hatt, Methods in Social Research, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1952) p.196

this consideration, at the same time taking pride in having completed what they had started. One not-so-elderly respondent became so fidgety and agitated that the writer suggested returning the next day to complete the schedule. The second trial produced a satisfactory interview. A well-known figure about town, the respondent hailed the interviewer gaily thereafter and made good-humoured inquiries about the progress of the interviewing.

Listening

Observation and listening are closely allied. In the research interview listening is necessary for accuracy in recording. The interviewer's concentration upon the business at hand can help his respondent under distracting circumstances. Mrs. W. was a harried young mother whose home seemed to be a favorite spot for all the neighbor's small children. The interview was punctuated by her irritable little boy who was being annoyed by three other children under three years of age. Fighting went on unabated. The baby cried. However, Mrs. W. remained willing to answer and in spite of the distractions carefully considered each response.

Listening helped set the climate of the interview and encouraged sincere and serious thinking on the part of the respondent. Careful listening communicated to her that her answers and opinions were important.

Listening Before Talking
or
"Begin Where the Client Is"

With the pre-written interview schedule the "listening before talking" admonition was not altogether appropriate. The schedule began at the same place with every respondent. The questions were the same whether his intelligence was dull or superior, whether he had little knowledge of the topic or none, or whether he was eager or resistant to the interview. The research interviewer's prime aim was to discover facts about social processes, public opinion, social attitudes, etc., not to understand an individual's behavior for the purpose of therapy.

Only at the beginning and termination of the interview was there ordinarily an interchange of conversation of any length. The interviewer's opening words were uniformly established by the instruction materials. Interviewers were advised not to change these too much, nor to be deterred by too many questions by the respondent. Launching as quickly as possible into the interview was said to be the best way to parry these queries. At the end of the interview the respondents often asked questions about the purpose of the research and its probable outcome, wondering if they would ever hear "how it came out."

Questioning

The Communications Study schedule asked thirteen and one-half pages of questions, to be covered in about an hour and twenty minutes. Three types of questions were intermixed: questions of fact, of opinion or attitudes, and of personal data information. The objective of the order of questioning was to encourage a positive relationship with the interviewee and to maintain his interest. It was assumed by the committee that fact questions tended to be frustrating ("especially to those who do not know the answer and know that they do not know")⁶, that people were unwilling to give some details of personal information, but they enjoyed expressing their opinions.

An illustration of the types of question is the following section of the schedule on Pupils. Six are questions of fact, three are opinion (2.1.1; 2.2.1; and 2.6), and three are personal data questions (2.8; 2.9; and 2.10).

2. Pupils

2.1 Since about 1950 has the enrollment in your grade school decreased (), stayed the same(), or increased ()?

2.1.1 What do you think will happen to grade school enrollment in the next five years? Will it decrease (), stay about the same (), or increase()?

⁶ Leo A. Haak, "The Development of an Instrument To Determine What People Know and Think About Their Public Schools", Chap. I. (Michigan Communications Study, 1953) p.1. (Unpublished.)

2.2 How about the enrollment in your high school since about 1950? Did it decrease (), stay the same (), or increase ()?

2.2.1 What do you think will happen to high school enrollment in the next five years? Will it decrease (), stay about the same (), or increase ()?

2.3 At what age may pupils enter school? _____

2.3.1 By what age "must" they be in school? _____

2.3.2 At what age may pupils legally end their schooling? _____

2.4 How does the school find out the number of pre-school children who are not yet in the school? (Under five years) _____

2.5 About what proportion of the high school pupils live outside of the _____ school district?
Record verbatim response.

2.6 If the _____ High School is overcrowded, or becomes overcrowded, what do you think should be done?

2.7 About what proportion of the pupils who enter your high school graduate? Record verbatim response.

2.7.1 About what proportion of the pupils who do graduate from your high school go on to college? Record verbatim response.

2.8 By the way, how long have you lived in this school district?

2.9 Do you have any children? Yes () No()

2.10 In which grades in your grade school and the _____ High School have you had children?

Ask only if you get a "Yes" to 2.9

Now I'd like to find out something about your children:⁷

⁷Schedule, Eighth Draft (Michigan Communications Study, June 26, 1953) pp.2-3, (Mimeographed.)

To minimize the barrage effect of asking so many questions, the interviewer was counselled to read the questions in as conversational a manner as possible, preferably memorizing them. Transitional phrases and words also lent a conversational effect. Questions were asked courteously, avoiding inflections that might influence an answer.

Many people did not like to be questioned. One respondent, herself a school teacher in the community, put off the granting of an interview three times. On the fourth request she consented reluctantly. She seemed to identify closely with the school system and thought the schools were the best she had ever known. She knew the research was being done with the cooperation of the school administration and understood the confidentiality of her replies, but she remained resistant. The interview took place all over the house--in the kitchen while she mixed a batch of cookies, in the living room while she ironed, and in the bathroom while she bathed her child. At one point she interpolated, "What are you folks trying to do--find out how ignorant we are?"

When respondents said that they did not know the exact answer, interviewers encouraged them to guess or to make an approximate answer. Several reacted to this with anxiety. They seemed to feel it was wrong to guess at an answer, as if they were telling a falsehood.

Sometimes respondents answers to questions in controversial areas reflected cultural expectations rather than real opinions. Sensing this, the interviewer wondered whether this was an unintentional misinterpretation of a question, or whether the respondent was pushed too rapidly and made to feel that an insincere reply was necessary. At this point, too, the interviewer might question what was lacking in the relationship.

...the maxim, "Truth for friends and lies for enemies," is very generally followed, not only by savages and children, but, more or less openly, by civilized people. Most persons feel reluctant to tell a lie in so many words, but few have any compunctions in deceiving by manner, and the like, persons toward whom they feel (hostility)... "Conscience is born of love" in this as in many matters.⁸

Talking

In the research interview almost no talking was required after the preliminary opening. Respondents became absorbed in the ideas presented to them in the questionnaire and any remarks from the interviewer might have been an interruption. It was necessary at times to encourage and reassure, agreeing that it was a tough set of questions for those who wearied, letting those who were concerned for accuracy know that there were no right and wrong answers from the research point of view. After

⁸Chas. H. Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1902, pp.388-389.

the schedule was finished respondents relaxed and sometimes wanted to talk further about the questions raised.

Because the interviews took place in the home or place of business, there were unavoidable interruptions or other persons present which drew the interviewer into a social situation. The interview with Mrs. P. as noted in the evaluatory statement afterwards was an example of this:

Mrs. P. answered every question she could conscientiously, although some words like "eligible" confused her. On the second page she said, "I'll bet you'll laugh at my answers when you leave here," but she gradually relaxed. Midway through, the interview was interrupted when Mr. G., a lonesome, courtly old widower, called for his laundry. (Mrs. P., a widow, did private washings.) This apparently was an anticipated weekly visit when he came for his clean clothing. He had brought along a hand-viewer and colored slides of his trip to California. He graciously included the interviewer in the entertainment.⁹

Answering Personal Questions

Even though the relationship was known to him as one of short duration, the interviewee was sometimes curious about the interviewer. Miss Garrett said that the best method for meeting personal questions was to answer them frankly and honestly but to direct the conversation back immediately to the respondent. Some of the questions asked during the research interviews might have been questions the respondents were asking indirectly about themselves.

⁹ Evaluatory statement from interview with Mrs. P.

During an interview with the attendant in a hatchery, the young man asked abruptly, "Did you see the movie Moulin Rouge?" The answer was a startled, "No", and the interviewer never learned what association there was in that particular movie and the questions on schools. He had been so cooperative and interested up to that moment, but thereafter seemed to be abstracted. It was a personal question--about himself?

For the most part personal questions were in the vein of, "Do you get paid for doing this? What do you do when you're not doing this? Are people cooperative with you?"

Leadership or Direction

In the research setting the leadership remained with the interviewer. In the first moments he assumed an active role in order to gain the respondent's cooperation. After a straightforward explanation of purpose and request for an interview, most persons were willing to grant an interview. A few remained reluctant or openly refused. Sometimes the interviewer suggested alternative times and places at the convenience of the respondent. He tried to understand the feelings behind the reluctance and respond to them. Confidentiality was stressed. He explained that the questions were not a test to those who seemed lacking in confidence. The specific nature of the sample was em-

phasized and the consequent importance of a particular respondent was pointed out. On rare occasions, particularly in cases of chronic illness, refusals were accepted.

The interviewer, in other words, proceeded on the assumption that "Human behavior is goal oriented." It was natural that in the beginning the respondent's attitude toward the interviewer would be similar to one shown any unknown caller, and the interviewer needed to relate the interview's purpose to the respondent's personal goals:

The interviewer accepts motives (curiosity, politeness, respect for authority) as a basis for beginning to communicate with the respondent. However, he immediately begins to define the situation in a manner which relates the interview to certain goals the respondent is suspected to cherish, and accordingly, gives the interview a positive valence for the respondent.¹⁰

Once consent was given, the interviewer began the schedule. He believed in the schedule as an effective, precise, scientific tool for accomplishing what it intended. Sentences were reworded or rephrased only when it was a necessity for those who were mentally or educationally handicapped. Many respondents seemed to lose awareness of the interviewer as they grappled with the successive ideas and concepts presented to them. The interviewer functioned with them simply as the person reading the questions and recording the answers.

¹⁰Cannell and Kahn, op. cit., p.335

Sometimes more activity on the part of the interviewer and less reliance on the schedule was required. In the random sample there was a percentage of persons who were mentally retarded, senile, ill, or otherwise unable or unwilling to make the effort the schedule required alone. Often the reluctant respondent was one who needed to be encouraged throughout the task. With him the interviewer was supportive. The respondent who saw the questionnaire as an examination he was flunking sometimes asked the interviewer for help on an answer. Assurance that he was doing what was expected was helpful to him.

Experience taught the interviewer how much "free rein" to give his interviewee within the framework of the purpose of the interview. Thus, in research the interviewer shared leadership with the questionnaire schedule, but the ultimate responsibility of seeing the interview through to the end and in preventing lengthy side conversations was the interviewer's.

Interpretation

Interpretation in a social research interview consisted principally of the initial explanation of the study, its purpose and method. Interviewers were instructed not to become too deeply involved in explaining the research but to begin the schedule of questions as quickly as possible.

Probing was an aspect of interpretation used throughout the schedule at the discretion of the interviewers for the most part but sometimes anticipated by the writers of the schedule. Such anticipated probes were placed in parentheses and were used by the interviewers rather than ones they made up themselves. The procedure for recording a probe was an "x" mark on the answer space. They were used when the respondent gave incomplete or unclear answers. Sometimes respondents evaded the questions with an excessive reliance upon "Don't know" answers, and the interviewer used probes to encourage adequate meaningful responses.

The probing technique was non-directive with the interviewer remaining outside the reaction. A good probe did not change the content or structure of the question. Sometimes repeating the question a second time provided enough extra stimulus to elicit a response. Or, a phrase such as, "Would you like to tell me a little more about that?" encouraged the respondent to amplify. Repeating what the respondent had already said also might stimulate him to clarify or give additional information.

On no provocation would an interviewer through a probe or in other ways express dissatisfaction, or make any kind of interpretation, in regard to the respondent's answer. A probe indicated that the interviewer wanted clarification or amplification, but at the same time it

was done in such a manner as to increase the permissive climate of the interview.

For the respondent who was unsure of his interpretation of a question, the interviewer could nod as he wrote, or otherwise convey that he accepted the respondent's answer. The questionnaire had been carefully revised several times and pre-tested to avoid ambiguities in meaning. Therefore, misunderstandings or misinterpretations could be significant to the researcher for what he was trying to discover.

Recording

While Miss Garrett did not include recording as a method of interviewing, it did become vastly important in interviewing for research. Interviewers were instructed on the schedule in underlined printing and reminded daily by the research team to record precise, verbatim responses. Paraphrasing was forbidden. It was explained and stressed that coding required exact answers for accurate classification of responses.

CHAPTER IV

INTERVIEWING FOR INTAKE IN A CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC

During its early vocational beginnings the basis of social work practice was not clearly defined.

We know that social work has not always been as systematic and as well-disciplined as it is nowadays; that it started on a more or less amateur basis of good will and warmheartedness or feeling of obligation; that social, religious, and ethical motives created it for the deprived and underprivileged persons.¹

In recent years social work has been developing its own literature and a more distinctive body of knowledge, drawing upon psychoanalytic psychiatry, psychology, biology, education, law, public administration, ethics, as well as sociology and anthropology. Its emphasis is upon the individual's personality adjustment to a changing social milieu. Improving ways of work with individuals in light of advancing scientific knowledge is a constant goal of the profession. "Personality" is increasingly understood by the social worker in psychoanalytic terms.

¹Grete L. Bibring, M.D., "Psychiatry and Social Work", Principles and Techniques in Social Casework, Cora Kasius, ed., (Family Service Asso., 1953) p.301

Ideally the social worker brings to the interview situation a superior quality of understanding of human behavior. She deals with a fragile and tender substance, human feelings and human life. Therefore, in addition to understanding, reverence for the material she is working with is a most desirable attribute. Knowledge that the ideal is seldom attainable and an awareness of her own humanity are wholesome controls on her activities.

Interviewing is the "tool of communication, par excellence."² One of the most significant contributions of the field of social work has been in the practical development of the interview as a tool and skill. Understanding the meaning of the interaction between interviewer and client and utilizing this interaction to the social benefit of the client are primary activities of social casework. Miss Garrett's formulation of principles and methods of interviewing, the basis of organization for this paper, clearly lends itself to interviewing of all types as well as to the specific casework setting, interviewing for intake in a Child Guidance Clinic.

Observation

People "act out" as they talk out, communicating in language beyond speech: by posture, voice, gesture,

²Celia S. Deschin, "Psychiatric Casework Interviewing as a Research Method in the Human Relations Field", Journal of Psychiatric Social Work, April, 1953, p.129

facial expression, choice of words, and other ways. By careful observation the interviewer can learn about feelings from a client's pantomime as well as from words.

In general, the aim of the first interview at the Child Guidance Clinic was to obtain a balanced picture of the client's problem, physical, social, and emotional. It also provided an opportunity for exploration on the part of the parents as a preparation and preliminary to treatment. The interviewer's capacity for observing and understanding feelings could determine the future course of a client's acceptance of help. A client on his first visit to the clinic was frequently tense, frightened and uncomfortable, and the interviewer needed to help him feel at ease. Sometimes a client felt resentful about coming to the clinic, and the interviewer helped him express his negative feelings.

One person might be eased by questions relative to his situation or in giving a detailed life history. With another questions aroused guilt and anxiety. One person might be favorably impressed by the interviewer's note-taking, but a second would be disturbed and lost by an interviewer's attention to recording. By noting these individual differences, perhaps altering his methods, the interviewer could favorably effect the movement of the interview.

Observation of a client's transition from one

subject to another, or association of ideas, might provide a cue for understanding. At least two of the twenty-two intake interviews at the Child Guidance Clinic were basically marital problems. On both occasions the mothers dropped hints of this during the first half of the intake interview. One mother repeated several times as she recounted her daughter's symptoms, "It's our own fault." Finally, after a long hesitation, she said, "There is one more thing I think I should tell you that has a great deal to do with Dona's behavior..." The second mother indicated the real source of difficulty by avoiding all mention of her husband, then touched the subject cautiously by recounting little incidents of planning the family schedule "to make it easier for Mr. R." The second half of the interview was a frank discussion of her unhappy marriage.

Another mother, whose teen-agers were rebelling against rigid family controls, revealed her preference for small children (whom she could control) by showing a gallery of snapshots of her children in her billfold--all taken when they were babies or pre-school age. There was not one current photograph among them.

In any process of history-taking, the psychiatric social worker must be cognizant of a host of variables without which the recording of data is sterile and uninformative...An astute observer will listen with one ear and discern with the other, more

dynamic ear. If not, he may become engulfed and incorporated by the informant...³

Listening

It is sometimes difficult to say whether an insight comes through the eyes or the ears. At intake they were most effective as collaborators, with the interviewer listening attentively at all times. Harry Stack Sullivan's description of the activity of the psychiatric interviewer is an explanation for close concentration:

The psychiatric interviewer is supposed to be doing three things: considering what the patient could mean by what he says; considering how he himself can best phrase what he wishes to communicate to the patient--and, at the same time, observing the general pattern of the events being communicated or discussed.⁴

Everyone likes to be listened to; no one is charmed by the "deaf ear". A positive relationship is furthered by an attentive interviewer. It might be the client's first experience with having his feelings seriously considered.

Occasionally note-taking seemed untenable at intake, particularly when the client was suspicious. Memorizing important data, subjects discussed, and the order in which they were approached for accurate recording later required skilled listening.

³ Alan A. Lieberman, M.D., "A Psychiatrist Views the Role of the Psychiatric Social Worker in the Mental Hospital", Journal of Psychiatric Social Work, June, 1953, p.196
⁴ Harry Stack Sullivan, The Psychiatric Interview, (W.W. Norton and Co., 1954) p.50

"Many questions have been answered before they are asked; these need not be asked by a good listener."⁵

Listening Before Talking

"Begin where the client is," is an admonition appropriate to the psychiatric clinic and in keeping with basic social work principles. At intake the interviewer had in mind an outline of information that he needed for evaluation of the client's problem in staff conference. Without comment, question or probe, the parent might give all the information that was necessary. Expressed in his own words and in the order of his understanding, his story was more revealing than one prompted by the interviewer. Also, information might be requested prematurely before the client was ready to give it, endangering the relationship and the achievement of the ultimate goal.

Listening before talking can also prevent the intrusion of irrelevant information which talk of any kind from the interviewer might suggest. The interviewer can not afford the mistake of assuming that his client knows more or less than he actually does. It was important to gain some idea of the client's level of understanding about his child's feelings and problem, the reaction to coming to the clinic, and the kind of language he understood before making comments.

After breaking an appointment made by the school

⁵Mary E. Richmond, Social Diagnosis, (Russell Sage Foundation) 1917, p.133

authorities, Mr. Y. came to the clinic in response to a letter from the caseworker. His belief that the clinic was the threshold to the training school was disclosed when the interviewer asked what Jackie's problem was. He answered by defending his son. When the idea was conveyed to him that the clinic purpose was to understand why children act as they do and to help them, he relaxed and told in a slow, inarticulate manner about Jackie's deprived home life: a mother who was seriously disturbed but refused to go to a doctor. Mr. Y. was so limited in vocabulary, so overtly unresponsive, that the interviewer was unsure of his understanding and attitudes. There were long but not empty silences. An unusual amount of probing for an intake interview was necessary. At the end of the hour, which had seemed like silent communion, Mr. Y. said that he would like for Jackie to improve in school and he would be willing to come in again. He added that he might as well have come when the first appointment was made. When the interview was on paper, an astonishing amount of vital information had been given. Although suppressed, strong feeling was also evident.

Questioning

Learning how to ask questions is an important skill in interviewing. The well-framed question, spontaneously composed at intake or fashioned painstakingly by a com-

mitted months in advance, does not cross-examine or threaten and is seldom direct. "Letting fly the question direct means receiving in return evasions, prompted by a repugnance for what seems to be intruding brusqueness."⁶ Questions should be phrased so that the meaning is clear. Their wording should not imply an answer.

Questions are usually asked for information. They sometimes serve secondary purposes at intake in a psychiatric clinic: answering factual questions can relieve anxiety; questions can serve as a means of transition from one subject to another; questions can guide the interview into relevant areas. Annette Garrett counselled: "A good general rule is to question for only one or two purposes, to obtain specifically needed information and to direct the client's conversation from fruitless to fruitful channels."⁷

The interviewer at intake asks a minimum of questions and certainly no more than is important for the diagnostic process. "Necessary questions should be so framed as to make truth-telling easy. Questions that can be better answered by someone else are not necessary ones."⁸

Questions that open the way to a new area of attitudes and information have been called "unlocking" questions. "Whom does your child resemble?" was such a ques-

⁶ Ibid., p.74

⁷ Garrett, op. cit., p.38

⁸ Richmond, op.cit., p.133

tion sometimes asked at intake in the Child Guidance Clinic. The following is an excerpt from the interviewer's intake recording of an interview with Mr. and Mrs. C., whose fourteen year old son was breaking and entering:

When the worker asked whom J. resembled, the mother said that the paternal relatives thought he resembled the mother, and the maternal relatives thought he looked like the father. (The mother thought neither side of the family liked J.) Father thought it was pretty much 50-50, and then said after a pause, "Do you mean whom does he resemble in personality?" He then went on to say that he thought that the maternal relatives liked J. more, while his parents seemed to prefer J.'s older brother. (These parents were confused and disgraced by their son's delinquencies and were intensely concerned about what other people were saying and thinking.)

With most parents, particularly mothers, any exploratory probe into her child's babyhood--toilet training, sleeping, feeding, walking and talking, temper, habits, etc.--elicited voluble descriptions of the child's early development and the family circumstances which might have affected him at various stages. Mr. and Mrs. C. were exceptions. They blocked on queries concerning J.'s early years. From subsequent contacts and information it would seem that this was because they wanted an immediate solution to their predicament and could not conceive of their personalities, or their son's, as changeable. They could not accept the idea that they had to find the answers the long painful way in their own attitudes and feelings. Throughout the interview the phrase, "Make J. do this-or-that," was repeated many times.

Talking

Talking on the part of the interviewer was confined to the early moments of the interview for purposes of easing the client's feelings of embarrassment or strangeness in the new situation. Sometimes parents took the initiative in stating immediately the nature of the problem that brought them to the clinic and, without prompting or questions, covered the necessary information. Usually the worker opened the interview by saying, "Would you like to begin by telling me something about A's difficulty?" Thereafter, occasional questions were sufficient to guide the interview into relevant areas of information. Parents came to the clinic with a variety of ideas about the clinic's function. Many asked in effect, "Do I have a problem important enough to be concerned about? Am I doing something wrong?" A few referred by the school thought it was punishment because their children were bad or failing. Some wanted the clinic to make their children "mind" after their own attempts failed.

Before the close of the interview there was an opportunity for clarification of agency purpose if this was needed, and appointments were made for the child with the psychologist and the psychiatrist. Most parents felt an urgent need for help, and they presented their situations as frankly and fully as they could.

Sometimes the client used talk as an evasion from

facing a problem. Sometimes interviewers talk to evade the painful, too. It is doubly wasteful when client and interviewer enter into the conspiracy together. The social worker needs to be aware of the temptations and the meaning of excessive verbiage.

Answering Personal Questions

The writer has no record, nor remembers any instance, of a personal question at intake in the Child Guidance Clinic. Had there been personal questions, they might have been significant in respect to the establishment of a closer relationship with the client, or he might be asking for support from the interviewer. The besetting emotion of most parents coming to the clinic was concern and involvement, negative or positive, in their child's difficulties. It was unlikely that a personal question concerning the interviewer would be verbalized at intake.

Leadership or Direction

At intake in the Child Guidance Clinic the center of attention was upon the client, his need and what he could give in information and expression of feeling. He thus became an active agent in the process of his own, or his family's, change. The client learned more easily if given the opportunity to determine with guidance from the interviewer the course of his own learning experience.

"The interviewer's function in the last analysis is to enable the interviewee to make his own social adjustment."⁹

The interviewer was responsible for creating a permissive atmosphere in which his client could relax. He extended a choice to the interviewee as to the way he sought help.

Thus, the interviewee had freedom within limits. Hopefully the interviewer had the leadership of the interview at any point and could assert his control if the interview ran into unproductive channels. The interviewer was in a stronger position to maintain control if he had knowledge of his own feelings and attitudes. He could not maintain a professional relationship by letting the client dominate, by reacting to hostility with hostility, or in other ways letting personal reactions and involvements enter into the dynamics of the interview.

The interviewer knew the policies and procedures of the agency, the kind of help that could be offered, the information that was needed, and he held his interviewee within these bounds of reality. The overt direction which the interviewer at intake exerted was dependent upon the interviewee's capacity for self-help and understanding.

⁹Pauline V. Young, Scientific Social Surveys and Research (Prentice-Hall, 1949) p.74

Interpretation

At intake, interpretations and advice were studiously avoided and used sparingly on subsequent interviews as well. It was desirable that the client gain insight and self-knowledge from the experience of the interview but not from any verbal interpretations of the interviewer.

The final decision in regard to treatment, referral, or closing the case was made by the psychiatrist with the staff in conference where the "whole picture" in regard to the client and the agency could be taken into account. The total picture often included the results of psychological testing and the opinion of community persons or agencies who worked with the child in his home and community setting as well as the psychiatrist's clinical evaluation. This decision was given to the child's parents in a second interview.

Recording

Recording of intake interviews was for the functional purposes of the Child Guidance Clinic services to clients. They were dictated from brief notes into summary form. Process was indicated by the chronological order of the subjects covered. Interviewer's questions or comments were not always included in the recordings, and there was little thought on the part of the writer that the records might be used later for research purposes.

CHAPTER V

COMPARISON OF THE ROLES OF THE INTERVIEWERS

In the research project the interviewer communicates with the respondent in order to get information. In the social agency the interviewer communicates with the client in order to serve and help him. Both interviewers employ parallel methods of communication for these differing purposes: observation, listening, questioning, talking, and the others. The foregoing narratives of two types of interviewing describe modifications in the roles of the interviewers in accordance with differing purposes, needs, and circumstances.

At the same time common elements in the two roles are revealed. Besides using similar methods and techniques, both interviewers have an organizational plan. Both utilize knowledge of human behavior in their response to expressions of feeling, in their recognition of emotional involvement, and in the establishment of a professional relationship.

The Role of the Interviewer Differs With the Purpose of the Interview

The Research Interview:- The interviewer adapts his role to the purpose of the interview. This may be a relatively uniform role as in the public opinion poll where the interviewer's focus is upon gathering information and getting the answers to questions for the specific purpose of research. The questions, their wording, and the order of asking are kept constant. Emphasis is put on getting the answer and insight into feelings or reactions are secondary to this purpose. Insight is important insofar as it elicits truthful answers.

The interviewer's role in a research study is an active manifest one of asking questions, listening with interest but without revealing comment, and recording the answers verbatim. To be effective in his role the interviewer may use methods of a friendly conversation or a therapeutic session, but he does not lose sight of his first purpose in being friendly or therapeutic. His foremost goal is gaining information for scientific research.

The Intake Interview:- The interviewer's role in a children's psychiatric clinic is a consistent one in respect to professional attitudes of helping but unstandardized in the use of methods. Insights are most important as a means of getting information. The focus is upon the client. The first encounter at intake is usually for

getting data for diagnostic purposes, but the data are as often in the area of feelings and attitudes as in facts of births and deaths.

It is generally accepted that the intake interview rightfully accomplishes more than the accumulation of facts: An inflexible attendance to getting information can make an interview barren. Movement on the part of the client toward accepting help, understanding his problem, and participating actively in the solution depends upon the flexibility of the interviewer in gauging "where the client is" and the goal possibilities in a first interview.

The Role of the Interviewer Differs With the Need

The Research Interview:- In the research study the need originated with the interviewer, who wanted answers to his questions. He sought out the respondent and persuaded him that there was value and necessity in answering the schedule of questions. The interviewer could not accept many refusals without destroying the randomness of the study. A prospective respondent might say, "I know nothing on the subject, but my neighbor is well-informed. Go ask her." The reply to this was that the researchers were not interested in his neighbor's opinion because the neighbor was not a part of the sample. The appeal could be varied, but it had to be convincing that the research

had worth, the interviewer was trustworthy, and the respondent as a particular, specific person was important.

Thus, as the interview began, the interviewer was the recipient and the respondent was the giving person. This often became a mutuality of giving and taking between interviewer and respondent as the latter grew interested, realizing he could receive gratification from the communication and relationship. The interview had to be completed, and while aided in varying degrees by respondents and skillfully composed questions, the task rested ultimately with the interviewer.

Perhaps one indication of the difference in need was the more personal interest which respondents sometimes displayed in the research interviewer. They asked more personal questions. In the clinic the client was too concerned or overwhelmed by his need to think of anything else.

The Intake Interview:- In the clinic the need was the client's who came, often on his own volition, asking for help on a problem he could not solve alone. Sometimes he was aware that if he was to be helped he had to share personal factual information and disclose painful feelings. His need necessitated his becoming dependent in order to achieve independence. The need of each individual differed in its meaning and implications and was a factor to be evaluated by the interviewer.

It was important that the interviewer have a clear, definite, consistent identification with his role as the helping person. He was the attentive listener who sincerely desired to understand and to be helpful.

The Role of the Interviewer Differs With the Setting

The Research Interview:- Interviews for the public opinion poll were usually held in the home. On occasion respondents were seen in their places of business. In either case the interviewer was not only an interviewer but in one sense a guest of his respondent. With some respondents this fact occasionally modified the role of the interviewer. This became noticeable when the subject was in areas of sensitivity: personal questions regarding income, or the extent of schooling of the respondent and his family. If the questions were threatening, the reaction was a preponderance of "don't know" answers or a refusal to answer.

With many clients the interviewer was able to create an attitude of scientific objectivity toward the purpose of the study and its implications. The sophisticated respondent, acquainted with methods of research, achieved this separation of feeling easily. He immediately understood the nature of his relationship with the interviewer and was at ease. Others did not, and it was more difficult for the interviewer to establish a comfort-

able atmosphere and to get accurate answers.

Additional problems were created when other members of the family were present, and a request for privacy with one respondent seemed unacceptable.

Another aspect of setting, the subject of the study, cannot be discounted as a determinant of the role of the interviewer. Some subjects are more loaded emotionally, thereby modifying the role of the interviewer. This may differ between topics as well as between respondents.

The length of the interview was also a factor involved in setting. The research interviewer had two obligations in regard to time: to his respondent who might be willing to give an hour but no longer to answering questions and to the research director who operated on a budget.

The Intake Interview:- Interviews at the Child Guidance Clinic took place in a private office setting apart from personal associations and experiences. The interviewer was the objective professional person to whom the client had come. While permissive, the interviewer set the limits of the interview and had a better opportunity to determine the focus for an objective view of the problem.

The length of an interview and time schedules were also important in a Child Guidance Clinic, but the emphasis

was on the time the individual needed to present his problem. How the client used time and the interviewer's cognizance of it became a tool in the interview process.

Agencies, indigenous to their communities in varying degrees, develop functions that may be unique and different from organizations with similar purposes in other communities. These functions and purposes of a specific setting as well as ones common to all social agencies or to all Child Guidance Clinics are present and operating in the intake interview. The interviewer is a representative of these policies and his role at intake is affected by them. There may be a reality situation which the intake interviewer is taking into account: for instance, a common one, shortage of staff. The interviewer, in seeing his function as a broader one beyond the immediate one of getting information for diagnosis, may try to prepare the interviewee for the fact that the help he can be offered will be limited, or delayed, or require referral to another agency.

The Role of the Interviewer Differs With the Relationship

All of the previously noted differences in the roles of the interviewers in respect to need, purpose, and setting become an entity in forming the differences in the interviewers' uses of relationship.

The Research Interview:- The interviewer in the research study had one encounter with his respondent to get answers to a set of questions. As far as they both knew this was their first and only meeting. The respondent was volunteering his time as his contribution to scientific inquiry. (Sometimes he did not know the length of the interview, or it took longer than he anticipated.) The subject matter related to things outside himself. What he took from the experience and incorporated as his own was principally his concern; the interviewer was concerned with creating a relationship that elicited accurate information.

So in the relationship the interviewer had no responsibility for maintaining a reality base as a limitation to the respondent. No one person's answers were more valuable than another, although they might differ in profundity and understanding. An answer could be factually wrong by standards of truth in the community but not for a research study. The important value was that the answer represented the sincere opinion and best knowledge of the respondent.

During the first moments of the research study, the interviewer assumed an active persuasive role. His further participation in the interview as it proceeded was determined by the degree of dependency of the interviewee.

An easy, comfortable relationship between interviewer and respondent was important to the satisfactory completion of the schedule. The respondent had to develop trust in the interviewer in order to give the personal data information and to be honest in expressing opinions in areas of controversy. He needed to feel certain that his confidentiality would be respected and his frank expression would not damage the family welfare. When his opinions or answers were contrary to what he thought were the community's cultural expectations, the respondent was helped to express himself freely by a supporting relationship with the interviewer.

The Intake Interview:- With the intent of helping the intake interviewer in the Child Guidance Clinic saw the client to learn what he was able to tell him about a personal problem. Initially the interviewer did not know what the difficulty was. The client might know but was still unable to help himself. Together they sat down to try to find the way together. It could be the beginning of hundreds of meetings together, or it could be the only one. In contrast to the research interview the focus was upon the client and the insights that could be gained to enrich his life situation. The interviewer concentrated upon creating a permissive atmosphere in which his client was freed from the usual self-defensive tensions.

The permissiveness of the client-interviewer re-

relationship in which any attitudes and feelings can be expressed without censure distinguishes it from other life relationships. Ideally the interviewer created a climate in which the interviewee felt that no feelings were too shameful for expression and the interviewer would be trustworthy in his use of information. Because of his need for help, the client at intake was usually motivated to present the truth as accurately as he understood it. If he did not impress the worker with the seriousness of his child's situation, help might be denied. With a few parents whose presence at intake was due more to societal pressures than their own desire, the relationship was hindered and truth-telling became more difficult for the client. Cultural expectations were more apt to be determining factors in the content of the interview and the nature of the relationship.

The interviewer's responsibility to his client included recognizing what the client's conception of agency function was and to help him toward an understanding of what he could in reality expect. Ideally the problem of his family was clarified in his mind: he could evaluate what he had already done, how deeply motivated he was to use help, and whether he could accept the conditions of the specific agency setting in order to get help.¹

¹ Delwin M. Anderson and Frank Kiesler, "Helping Toward Help: the Intake Interview" Social Casework, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, (1954), p.72

Even though acceptance for treatment were a certain outcome, the intake worker at the Child Guidance Clinic did not necessarily continue with his interviewee beyond the intake process. This fact operated in the kind of relationship that developed, limiting the depth of the information given, the amount of dependence upon the interviewer and the interviewer's involvement in giving help. It was a relationship limited to exploration of a problem and was not treatment, although it might have therapeutic results.

The relationship in the Child Guidance Clinic was personal to the interviewee. Although parents realized it at varying levels of understanding, the subject of the interview--their child's problem--related directly or indirectly to self. There was no interposing pre-established tool such as the interview schedule on which the interviewer could rely. The interchange of questions, statements, answers, or replies was a direct spontaneous one focussed upon the client's immediate feelings and needs and the interviewer's representation of his agency.

In the intake interview movement of feeling, of insight, and of involvement was essential as a prologue to social treatment. Growth in self-awareness was not essential to the effective completion of a research interview, although a positive development of interest in the schedule was important. The level of participation on the

part of both interviewer and interviewee in the two settings was different. What the interviewers and interviewees invested in the two settings differed in degree and in kind, creating distinctions, as well as similarities, in the uses of relationship.

Common Elements in the Roles of the Interviewers

As differences in the roles of the interviewers in the social research survey and at intake in a Child Guidance Clinic are noted, likenesses are also indicated.

Both employ similar techniques and methods:- Both interviewers establish communication between themselves and another person previously unknown by similar methods of talking, listening, observing, questioning, etc. In utilizing these methods both interviewers identify with their respective roles in relation to the purpose, need, and setting of the interview, not with the respondent or his feelings.

Both have an organizational structure:- Both types of interviews have organization in keeping with their individual purposes. To secure reliability and validity the research study depends upon a uniform structure: hence, the pre-written unvarying schedule of questions. With the respondents' reactions in mind, the organization of the schedule is designed to encourage accurate answers for valid reliable data.

The intake interview has a flexible structure for the client's use in keeping with the permissiveness of the setting, the ultimate purpose and relationship to a worker in the agency. The interviewer has in mind an interview guide of general information necessary for the diagnostic process. So long as these points are covered, the chronological order in which they are given can be determined by the interviewee. Every client's problem is unique to him, and this is reflected in the way in which he approaches its expression at intake.

However, within this variance of organization both types of interview structures have an introduction, a body, and a close. If the body of both types were recorded verbatim, perhaps one could detect in the productive interviews a similar phenomena taking place in regard to the interviewee's initial "feeling out" of the interviewer and growing interest in the purpose and subject of the interview. This reaches a climax when the interviewee accepts his involvement, wants to cooperate, and responds without undue resistance to the task at hand.

Both utilize knowledge of human behavior:- To be effective the social worker has to know the fundamentals of personality development. The sociologist is concerned with knowing the generic, or common and repeated, aspects of sociocultural phenomena. Both social worker and sociologist are concerned with understanding human behavior,

but from different points of view and for different purposes. However, both must have basic psychoanalytic knowledge of human behavior if the purposes of the research and intake interviews are to be realized.

Both respond to expression of feeling:- Regardless of different purposes and emphases, both interviews proceed on a feeling basis. Neither can be a routine, mechanical encounter of questioning, talking, and recording.

The research questionnaire design takes into account knowledge of human motivation, pride, fears, prejudice, and intelligence. His primary role as the helping person foremost in mind, the intake interviewer responds to the client's expression of feeling more actively than the research interviewer is permitted to do within his purpose and structure.

Both recognize the interviewee's involvement:- In both interview settings there is an emotional involvement on the part of the interviewee. The variety of reactions that there can be to a research study have been recounted: One respondent might answer the questions in an objective scientific spirit, involved insofar as he sees value in the research, replying to questions seriously with a desire to add to knowledge. Others might relate their own or their family's personal experience to the topic of the study and become interested as it reveals answers concerning their family. Another might be a com-

munity leader, and if the study related to community institutions whose policies he could influence, he might become interested in what could be done in the future. Many people enjoyed testing new ideas and found the questionnaire a welcome stimulant to their everyday thoughts. Another person might be so detached from the topic, from the purposes of the study, or withdrawn from people in general that he could not be motivated to answer any of the questions or to strive for accuracy in the responses. The attitude of some said, "It doesn't matter. The schools--the world, people, my life--are unchangeable anyway."

Similarly in the Child Guidance Clinic setting there were varying levels of emotional involvement. Common psychological forces were at work--fear, shame, guilt, anger--determining the attitudes and feelings that people brought into the interview situation. There was a parallelism in the attitude of non-recognizing the possibility of change found in the research interviews: "My child's personality--my personality--is unchangeable. No one can help us." By the nature of the problems brought to the clinic greater self-involvement on the part of the interviewee was predictable. However, involvement ran the gamut from acceptance of responsibility to what seemed like wide separation in a parent's feeling from any accountability in his child's personality difficulties.

Both establish a relationship:- In both types of interviews a relationship was established. This was a positive controlled relationship, manifesting confidence in the interviewer's competence. It was at once a comfortable and a professional relationship. In research the relationship developed as the interviewer asked for the respondent's cooperation in a mutual enterprise, and the respondent, complying, found that there was satisfaction in cooperating. It was most important that this relationship be developed quickly for valid, reliable data throughout the schedule. Its early establishment was not so critical at intake.

The relationship in the intake interview developed as the client, describing a personal family problem and reviewing his child's history, sought explanations of causes so that a change could be made. This, too, was a mutual endeavor in which the interviewer guided his client into relevant information areas. The helping relationship of treatment had a significant beginning in the helping relationship at intake in the Child Guidance Clinic.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The interviewers at intake and in research employed similar methods and techniques but with different emphases. Interrogation was the principal method of the research interview, while at intake questioning was used concomitantly with several other methods.

The questionnaire schedule standardized the use of methods in the research interview. The intake interviewer adapted his methods spontaneously to the specific client and the situation.

Because of the uniformity which the schedule induced, the research interview was in one sense more directive. The intake interview had flexibility of structure, the interviewer giving little guidance in details and content. At times the interviewer provided definite direction if he thought it was needed for a productive interview. Both interviewers had an organizational plan and maintained the necessary guidance in accordance with the plan.

Writers of the interview schedule, taking into

account the psychodynamics of human behavior, made a number of assumptions in preparing the interrogations beforehand. Specific hypotheses were being tested. In meeting his client for the first time the intake interviewer knew about human behavior and the structure of individual personality but little about the specific client as an individual. Therefore, the "listening before talking" method assumed greater meaning and appropriateness to the intake interviewer.

Both interviewers identified with their respective roles in their uses of methods and techniques. These roles differed with the purpose of the interview, with the need of the persons involved, with the setting, and with the relationship to be formed for fulfilling the purpose. The research interviewer was an information-getter, and the intake interviewer was a helping person.

Insight into individual psychology was a primary purpose of the intake interviewer in a psychiatric clinic for diagnosis and possible treatment. Understanding human behavior was helpful to the interviewer in eliciting relevant information, which in turn helped the client toward insight into his problem. The subject of the intake interview related to the client's "self" in contrast to the research interview in which the topic related to something outside of self, the schools.

Trained insight into human behavior and acute aware-

ness of socio-cultural phenomena were not necessary to the research interviewer, for the expert's knowledge was contained within the schedule's design. If the interviewer effected insights, the purpose of the study and its pre-established controls could become distorted. The research was concerned with "social discovery" and analysis of basic processes in socio-cultural phenomena, not in diagnosis.

In both types of interview a relationship was established. In both this was ideally a positive controlled relationship. The interviewers endeavored to make it a comfortable and professional relationship which enabled the respondent to give reliable, valid information.

Implications

Can an interviewer switch from one type of interview setting easily? Is there a generic skill common to all interviewing situations? The conclusions of this comparative project would seem to indicate clearly that there is a basic skill applicable to different types of interviewing. Because of the skill and knowledge incorporated within the pre-written schedule, it would perhaps be easier for the caseworker to switch to the research interview than for the research interviewer without a tool to go into the clinic intake setting. Certainly the common elements of interviewing for intake and for research do

not permit one to view them as processes at opposite ends of a continuum. The two functions, "knowing" for research and "helping" for treatment, can not be absolutely or rigidly separated.

By using the interview as a method of investigation for research, the academic field of social science would seem inevitably to affect human behavior and human relations. It seems reasonable to suppose that elements common to both types of interviews make for some common consequences.

Recently the writer passed through the village where the pilot project of the Michigan Communications Study was done and noticed that a large beautiful addition to the high school was completed. Questions on the schedule relating to equipment, special rooms, building capacity, and pupil population had pointed up to participating citizens that the present building was inadequate. At the time of the study an addition was being tentatively planned. By including the community in the school problem through participation in the interviews, were townspeople better informed and more positively disposed toward a tax-supported building plan? Did the research improve the quality of building, permitting a cafeteria, a nurse's room, a swimming pool?

As a communications study, attention was focussed on citizen information about his community. Is it possible

that other aspects of community well-being were stimulated as a result of the study?

The success which the academic field of the social sciences has had in the use of the interview as a research method highlights social work's neglect of the potentialities of the interview for social work research. Perhaps social workers have thought too long of the interview as principally a method of practice and treatment. With verbatim recordings, could not the processes of the interview, the psychodynamics of the interaction, the phenomena of relationship, the measurement of need and involvement, etc., be more specifically categorized? (More specifically, that is, than "relationship," "function," "role," and the general description of methods, i.e., observation, listening.)

Interviewing in social work is still a highly intuitive process, "an art" not a science. More specific measurement of the phenomena of interviewing would be a valuable contribution to research in social work. Validity of data would be increased by the accurate separation of the interviewer's subjective interpretation from the objective evidence of fact, testimony, and observations of behavior. With fuller development of the potentialities of the interview, it would seem indicated that both research and practice would be immeasurably advanced.

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