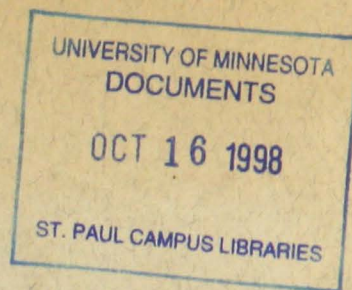


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The Personal Interview

as a Method in

Agricultural Extension Supervision

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FOREWARD

During the academic year of 1952-53 Miss Evelyn Morrow, Home Agent Supervisor in the Minnesota Extension Service, pursued graduate work at the University of Chicago in the Department of Education. Because of her interest in supervisory problems Miss Morrow submitted a paper on "The Personal Interview as a Method of Agricultural Extension Supervision" in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

With some minor revisions this paper is presented herewith. It contains a philosophy of the use of the personal interview as a tool in extension supervision and the methods and procedures in its use which should prove stimulating and useful to extension administrators and supervisors. It is presented as a contribution to the growing body of literature dealing with Extension problems.

Paul E. Miller, Director
Agricultural Extension Service

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics is a nation-wide system of rural education and is a part of the land-grant college in every state. It is maintained to aid rural men, women, boys and girls in meeting the ever-changing problems of the farm, the home, and community and developing for themselves a more satisfying country life.

The county is the Extension unit upon which the whole system is based. Here, at the county level, are employed the county agricultural agent, the county home agent, and in some instances, the county 4-H Club agent. Of the 3,106 counties which make up the United States, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska, 3,047 have the services of a county agricultural agent; 2,565 have county home agents; and 242 counties employ 4-H Club agents.¹

The 1951 Federal Cooperative Extension Service report shows that approximately 12,450 workers are employed in the service. Personnel selection and training are two of the most important aspects of Extension Administration because the effectiveness of the entire program depends directly on the quality of its county personnel.

Recruitment, selection and continuous training of county personnel is one of the major staff executive responsibilities of the district supervisor. Supervision holds the strategic place in helping to maintain proper relationships between all levels of personnel and fields of subject matter. Not only does supervision hold the key to establishing and keeping good human relationships in the organization but also it ties together or coordinates all phases into a program. This process involves a constant two-way communication between field and central staff. Supervisors have found the personal interview an excellent tool to use in maintaining this two-way communication and dealing with all interpersonal relationships.

In recent years increasing attention has been given to the importance of interviewing in the field of supervision. This trend may be attributed to the spirit of modern supervision which stresses a progressive movement away from the prescription of specific devices and toward the constant stimulation of the agent to understand principles and their uses in guiding behavior. This concept embraces the fundamental principles of human relations.

There are major difficulties which seem to stand in the way of utilizing the interview more extensively at the present as a supervisory method in Extension work. The first and foremost reason is the lack of training and clear understanding of the basic techniques and procedures of the interviewing process by district supervisors. Another difficulty confronting the supervisor is the time and travel involved in contacting all the agents in his area. In Industry and Education this problem diminishes because employees are usually housed in the same building but in Extension, agents are located in each county of the state.

Supervisors generally agree that the personal interview is one of the best techniques to employ in dealing with human relation problems and are vitally interested in acquiring greater skill and ability in the process.

This paper does not purport to cover the entire field of interviewing but limits itself to the exploration, analysis, study and selection of the most significant principles, procedures and techniques that are applicable to Extension supervision.

¹Extension Activities and Accomplishments 1951, Extension Circular 481. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952.

The writer will endeavor to define aims and objectives of interviewing as a method in Extension supervision; to present an analysis and critique of methods of interviewing; to give emphasis to the different kinds of interviews most commonly employed; to identify the basic principles, procedures, techniques, and limitations of the interview; and will attempt to formulate a tentative guide for Extension agent interviewing that can be explored, tested, and refined and improved with practice.

CHAPTER I

PERSONNEL INTERVIEWING AND SUPERVISION

The importance of personnel interviewing in Extension work can hardly be overestimated. Although, the individual interview may not seem particularly significant, it is apparent that the Extension program could not function as it does without the thousands of interviews conducted every day by state and county personnel. The interview is an indispensable method of learning, directing, and promoting the mutual understanding required wherever people work.

When one thinks of interviewing, myriad associations come crowding in. Some of these suggest very simple and some very intricate problems which arise daily within the circle of Extension workers. Every Extension worker engages in interviewing every working day of the year, sometimes he interviews and sometimes he is interviewed. There has been an unfortunate tendency to dignify any encounter between supervisor and agent, or agent and cooperator, as an interview. Actually, to merit the term, the meeting should conform to certain specifications:

What is Interviewing?

The interview is a central technique in the total process of counseling. Strang defines the essential feature of the interview as "a dynamic, face-to-face relationship in which the counselee is helped to develop insights that lead to self realization."¹ Wrenn identifies the interview as "an event in the process of counseling and considers it as a personal and dynamic relationship between two people who approach a mutually defined problem."² Wrenn recognizes that the actual interview relationship may range from the casual to the purposeful in its objective. Garrett classifies "interviewing as an art, a skilled technique that can be improved and eventually perfected primarily through continued practice."³ Garrett further states the mere practice is not enough but that skills can be developed to their fullest potentialities only when practice is accompanied by knowledge and understanding of the theory underlying interviewing.

The interview has a great advantage over any written material in that it is flexible, affords a face-to-face relationship, and gives opportunity to observe behavior and to probe into statements not clearly stated or understood. The interview has a further advantage over written material in that people will often tell things about themselves--their hopes, ambitions, emotional attachments, discouragements, and financial problems that they would never write down. These facts all give insight into agents; behavior and permits a better understanding.

¹Ruth Strang, Counseling Techniques in College and Secondary Schools p. 100. New York: Harper & Bros., 1949.

²Gilbert Wrenn, "Counseling with Students," pp. 119-44, Guidance in Educational Institutions Part I, 37th Yearbook of National Society for Study of Education. Published by the Society Bloomington, 1938.

³Annette Garret, Interviewing, Its Principles and Methods, p. 8. New York: Family Service Association of America, 1942.

⁴Walter V. Bingham and Bruce V. Moore, How to Interview, p. 1. New York: Harper and Bros., 1941 (revised).

Basically the interview is an oral exchange of information and a communication of feeling-tone between two people. The two person situation is basic, for it permits a give-and-take that is lost in all other interpersonal relationships.

Each interview ought to be a satisfying experience for both participants. It is quite impossible to codify the interview or subject it to rigid regulations. Interviewing takes place between human beings who are too individualized to be reduced to a formula. The nature of the conversation must be adapted to the agent or person being interviewed and must be so directed to bring out the needed information without reserve. "The interview will vary not only with the nature of the material sought but, of necessity, with the age, sex, status, friendliness, ease, sense of privacy, and perceptiveness of both the interviewer and interviewee."¹

The Function of the Interview in Extension Supervision

Extension needs to introduce in their organization a skill in human relations comparable to the skill which they use in program planning. The present trend does emphasize more than ever the integrity and worth of the individual agent. One must always bear in mind that a human problem requires a human solution.

The interview is used in Extension supervision in two general ways, that of interviewing applicants for county Extension positions and counseling with agents on the job. The use of the interview in employment of personnel will be discussed at length in Chapter II. At this point attention will be focused on functions or purposes of the educational and counseling interviews as they apply to extension workers.

The personal interview may have any one or all three main functions according to Bingham. It is used in securing information from people, in instructing them, and in influencing or motivating them.² Closely related to the last of the three functions is the opportunity that it affords an agent to unburden his mind. This process of unburdening is in itself a wholesome experience for the agent. "Impulsions can be talked out instead of acted out."³ There are many concrete example of agents' attitudes being improved because of emotional abreactions which the interview afforded. The agents receive a "lift" as well as "tension release" from interviews. There is an interplay of attitudes, motives, and feeling as well as an exchange of information and ideas in a successful interview.

¹J. W. Macfarlane, "Interview Techniques," Journal of National Association of Deans of Women, VI (January, 1943), 61-6.

²Bingham and Moore, op. cit., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 159.

The interview is the most effective single technique for obtaining a clear picture of agents' plans, attitudes, and adjustments. The county agent has a problem of fitting his behavior to the mores and customs of social groups on his job. The supervisor is in a position to help agents avoid unnecessary difficulties; to eliminate confusion and frustrations that will influence or bring about undesirable consequences; to help the agent learn to live with problems that must be continued and tolerated, and to help agents solve their own problems.

The interview method of helping people with their problems is not new. It has been the chief professional tool in fields of psychiatry, industry and social work for years. A sharp distinction needs to be made in Extension between a visit to the county for the purpose of carrying out routine assignments and those visits that involve counseling or that of helping the agent as an individual.

The interview is a professional method, in the popular sense of the word, "based upon a simple but definite structure; it accomplishes its purpose by the employment of processes and techniques; its dynamic is the interaction between interviewer and interviewee."¹ The advantage of interview teaching is that the situation allows give-and-take. The supervisor can make sure his explanations are understood as he goes along. A comparative simple formula for interview teaching was set forth in the "on the job training program," after World War II, "tell him, show him, let him do it, observe and correct his work."

Berdie, in discussing counseling as an educational technique, defines it as an educational situation offering all agents opportunities for development. It affords the supervisor the chance to observe behavior, both verbal and otherwise; to identify possible problems; to establish good relationships; and the agent learns that someone is actually interested in him as a person. Too often the supervisor is more concerned in county problems than the problems of the individual agent.

One can readily see that the interview is relied upon in a great variety of important situations. Each interview is a new and unique situation and that the problem or personal difficulty of each agent demands individual consideration. Each interview is an opportunity to get new ideas about human nature (in oneself and others) about policies, practices, current situations and problems in the Extension program. The interview when recorded is valuable for case history, permanent records, and to refer to before another visit to the agent. Interviewing is an essential device for diagnosing organizational stability.

The interview may be used for any of the following purposes:

1. To establish friendly relationships.
2. To obtain information
3. To give information, encouragement, reassurance or guidance in planning for the future or in evaluating the past.
4. To act as a "catalyst for the subject's thought processes"

¹ Ruth Strang, Counseling Technique in College and Secondary Schools, p. 55. New York: Harper and Bros., 1949.

and to give him the experience of a satisfactory use of a given period of time.

5. To select personnel.
6. To serve as an instrument of research.

The supervisor who has clearly in mind what the interview may or may not accomplish is in the best position to use the technic most effectively.

The Supervisor as an Interviewer

Supervision is a dynamic function taking its color from the human element with which it deals. As viewed by the supervisor, wants, abilities, aptitudes and motives are not merely terms employed by the psychologist to explain behavior; they are the basis upon which he must plan and execute his daily work.

Interviewers in human adjustment work must be able to accept and understand individual differences in heredity, backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes as a basis for acceptance and understanding the interviewee. Personality is affected by our social heritage or the culture of the past and by our more immediate background and environment. To understand the individual it is necessary to have an appreciation of human nature.¹

What kind of a person makes a good interviewer? "The interviewer's job is that of talking on friendly terms with all kinds of people. He must establish good person-to-person relationships; he must orient his interviewee; he must maintain efficient communication; and he must be just."² His skill and judgment, or the lack of it, may have a dynamic effect on someone's career. "This sense of responsibility means that the interviewer will recognize the simple ethics of the kind stated in the oath of Hippocrates, which is sworn to by medical doctors, is a binding requirement."³

Supervisors are human beings, and as such they manifest the same desirable or undesirable traits that beset other human beings. The weather, the problems at home, illness, pressure of work, and a host of other variables tend to bring out varying moods and attitudes. However, at all times, the supervisor must present a picture of stability (outwardly at least) and calmness.⁴

The characteristics of an effective interviewer have been enumerated repeatedly in literature reviewed. In tracing the source it was found that most traits as stated by authors are based on opinion rather than experimental evidence.

¹Anne Fenlason, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

²James D. Weinland and Margaret V. Gross, Personnel Interviewing, p. 34. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1952.

³Ibid., p. 35

⁴Jeannette Hook, "Is Your Interview Showing," Occupations LII (February, 1952), 332-4.

There is no definite proof whether a person with extrovert or introvert, dominant or submissive tendencies makes a better interviewer. However, there is agreement of opinion concerning effects of some personality qualities and those traits that a good interviewer should possess.

Wonderlic, who reports that he has trained several thousand men and women interviewers, suggests four general qualifications: good conversational ability, good mental ability, a keen sense of humor, and a pleasing appearance. In addition he requires four specific characteristics: (1) interest and curiosity in people, (2) understanding and sympathy, (3) some personal experience with hardship, and (4) adaptability to social situations.¹

First and foremost the supervisor must have an interest and an understanding of people. One learns to understand people by having a wide acquaintance with many different kinds of people, by having a consuming interest and a continuing curiosity about people, their backgrounds, experience and what life means to them. In the final analysis the supervisor must be an expert in human nature. Proficiency in this skill will be only gained by watching people everywhere, observing how they live, talking to them, and studying about them.

Considerable emphasis has been placed upon emotional maturity. A supervisor who has achieved a satisfying maturity is not likely to be shocked, surprised or disgusted by an agent's behavior or conversation. To do so would inhibit the agent and cut off the supply of information and destroy the confidence and rapport established.²

The ability to judge human traits is another worthy characteristic. An assumption that people with red hair are quick tempered is without scientific foundation. In nearly all interviews judgments of personality is being made. The supervisor is judging the agent as to his ability and intelligence; and the agent is judging the sincerity and motives of the supervisor. There is a social give and take, an adjustment of personalities in which judgment and interpretation of each other's traits are inherent. Inability to judge personality traits constitutes a common variable error in interviewing.³

The supervisor must be open-minded, avoid judging in terms of personal biases or prejudices and must be able to identify in the agent those specific traits that will be beneficial on the job.⁴ In other words the supervisor must assist the agent to develop those traits that make for success and try to eliminate those traits that block progress.

If the supervisor is genuinely interested in an agent, other desirable attributes will naturally follow. He will be frank, enthusiastic and friendly, without insincerity or sentimentality. He will try to maintain a professional attitude without appearing cold and defensive.⁵ The supervisor will be objective in approach, will not show too much authority, will be patient, not rushed or hurried, and will respect the rights and dignity of each agent.

¹E. F. Wonderlic, "Improving Interview Techniques," Personnel, XVIII, No. 4 (January, 1942), 232-238.

²Strang, op. cit., p. 73.

³Bingham and Moore, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

⁴Claude Thompson, Personal Management for Supervisors, p. 72. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948.

⁵Strang, op. cit., p. 73.

To maintain poise and optimism, the supervisor must guard against fatigue and ill health. Without health there is tension and irritability. Too often in Extension, supervisors are too fatigued from that two hundred miles or more drive over icy roads to be a contributing participant to an effective interview.

The supervisor must have the ability to listen, to analyze facts and situations, to see relationships between various factors and to size up a situation rapidly. These abilities come from mental alertness and wisdom gained from experience, as well as from reflective and imaginative insight.¹

The supervisor's personality and behavior obviously conditions the success of the interview. His preferences, tastes and attitudes are part of the total situation to which the agent reacts. Winning respect without commanding awe, inspiring respect by appearance and dress, social adequacy, tact, courtesy, and conversational skills are all necessary elements or traits of a successful interviewer. The kind of behavior a supervisor gets from an agent is determined to a large extent by the kind of behavior exhibited.

In summary, the supervisor must have real human worth, the capacity to observe and adapt, a sense of humor, common sense, an experience with a wide array of cultural mores, an appreciation of the indefinite variety of defenses that humans build up to protect ourselves not only from others but from ourselves, real respect for a sense of privacy, need for self-esteem, and confidence that under no circumstances will be violated. No technique devisable will compensate for a lack of these qualities in a supervisor.²

Each supervisor must know his own area of defensiveness, vulnerability, and retrospective inaccuracy and work toward improvement by study, practice and self evaluation.

The demands seem high but the rewards exceed them. The satisfactions are many in a successful interview.

Methods of Interviewing

There are undoubtedly as many methods of interviewing as there are interviewers. By and large, it is safe to assume that most interviews conducted by Extension supervisors are unplanned and unregulated. Of course, the supervisor has some notion of the information which he hopes to derive, but beyond that he relies upon snap decisions on the spur of the moment to guide the interview. The results of such practices do not add much to the effectiveness of supervision. The best practices in interviewing calls for a definite plan of action.

The past few years have witnessed a great deal of conflict in regard to the methods of interviewing. Books and lectures on interviews have resounded with the pronouncements of the enthusiasts of one school of thought or another. It must be recognized that people participate in interviews

¹Ibid., p. 73.

²Macfarlane, op. cit., pp. 61-6

for different purposes. The method of conducting an interview will be influenced to a considerable extent by the purpose of that interview. It was stated earlier that the purposes of an interview are varied, they are found on analysis to reduce fundamentally to three purposes: (securing information,) informing, and motivating. In other words, a supervisor interviews an agent either in order to learn something from him, to tell him something, or to influence his feeling or behavior.¹

The terminology applied to different methods of interviewing shows considerable individualism. No attempt will be made to discuss all the methods described in current literature, but will endeavor to discuss the directive and non directive, and patterned or guided interviews.

Directive and Nondirective Interviewing. -- The question of the directive versus nondirective approach is not new. In fact, it can be shown to be as old as society, by shifting the subject matter just a little. Religion and law have been primarily, but not entirely, directive. The Quaker meeting is nondirective but the usual minister or priest, however, is very directive. The judge tends to be very directive, but when witnesses are examined, both the directive and nondirective techniques are used.²

Directive interviewing is that in which the interviewer directs the interviewee to answer specific questions. The interviewer has a set of definite questions to ask and often in a definite order. In checking this list at the end of an interview the interviewer is assured that he has covered all the important points. Applying the method to Extension, the agent would be asked to give specific information which the supervisor believes will have bearing on the agent's fitness for the work or that will help solve his problem.

The nondirective technique has been used successfully for several years in employee counseling in industry, and has been used more recently with marked success in the selection of employees by the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania.³ The nondirective interview involves having the interviewee talk about almost anything which he thinks would be of an interest to the interviewer. The interviewer refrains from giving any clue as to what he would like to hear. This plan is based on the theory that directive interviews often reflect biases of interviewers and hence are likely to yield unreliable and inaccurate information.⁴ This particular method in its entirety would not be used by Extension supervisors but many techniques of the method can be used to advantage in a so-called compromise method.

¹Bingham and Moore, op cit., p. 27

²James D. Weinland and Margaret Gross, op cit., p. 200

³George D. Halsey, Selecting and Inducting Employees, p. 97 New York: Harper and Bros., 1951 (1st edition).

⁴Michael J. Jucius, Personnel Management, p. 180, Chicago: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1947.

Erickson clearly points out the major characteristics of the directive and nondirective interviews in the following condensed statements.

Directive Interviewing.

1. The interviewer assumes a large part of the responsibility for the solutions of the interviewee's problems; collects information about the case; studies, interprets data; records the interview and follows up on the case.
2. The interviewee accepts the counseling relationship; provides information; decides on the plans for the future and begins to implement the decisions agreed on.
3. Both participants study information, analyze causes of difficulty and together formulate solutions.

Nondirective interviewing.

1. The interviewee applies for help either voluntarily, or by referral and accepts the responsibility for solving his own problem; he is given every opportunity to express himself freely; he begins to develop insight and to understand himself as he is; and begins to formulate suggestions and to make his own decisions for the solution of his problem.
2. The interviewer expresses a willingness to help; accepts, recognizes, clarifies, restates, and objectifies the statements of the interviewee; and diagnoses or interprets the interviewee's statements but he does not express his own feelings, ideas, or decisions.¹

This discussion describes the role of the two participants, the interviewer and the interviewee, in a very clear way.

Patterned or Guided Interviewing. -- A patterned interview is one in which a little bit of the freedom of an unprepared, spontaneous interview is traded for a bit of organization and order. The interviewer finds the patterned interview helpful since it aids in the solution of three of his major problems, namely: (1) the problem of maintaining the orientation of the interviewee as he asks him a variety of questions, (2) the problem of communication which depends upon memory in asking the right questions and recalling the answers, and (3) the problem of making just decisions which require estimating different levels of qualifications.²

Research is lacking on the patterned interview to give sufficient proof that the major problems mentioned by Weinland in the foregoing statement are always solved. The patterned interview does not completely solve the memory problem but it does help hold the different parts in close relationship.

¹Erickson, op. cit., pp. 53-54

²Weinland and Gross, op. cit., p. 213.

It will be observed that a patterned interview, by its very nature is a directive rather than a nondirective interview. In the patterned interview one finds an emphasis on logical direction, time saving, and even measurement. In the non directive interview the emphasis is on obtaining full expression from the interviewee. The intensive planning that has gone into producing a guide for the patterned interview has led to the establishing of areas of importance, so that the questions cover what experience indicates are the most important aspects of the problem. But it must be remembered that each individual problem needs a different approach. Any guide or pattern, if held with too great rigidity will not accomplish the goal with complete satisfaction. An experienced supervisor will adjust the interview even while using the guide but a poorly trained or inexperienced supervisor depending too heavily upon the fact that the guide is supposed to touch all important aspects, might not be able to adjust and gain all the information needed.

One may say the major tenet of the guided interview--to ask questions in some orderly continuing fashion, guided by certain themes or trends in a person's life-- is basically sound and should be an advantage in every directive interview. The interviewer who fumbles for what questions to ask and in what order gives the interviewee a poor impression and human error readily enters.

McMurry gives a number of arguments which may be generalized in the support of any carefully patterned interview.¹

1. The interviewer works from definite job specification and knows the definite problem to be solved.
2. Prior to the interview, the interviewer has checked and has available data relevant to the particular interview.
3. The interviewer has a definite plan and knows what questions to ask to obtain the needed information.
4. The interviewer has training in conducting interviews and has the ability to put the interviewee at ease and knows how to extract pertinent information without antagonizing the interviewee.

There is considerable difference of opinion as to just how completely one should use any of the described methods. One school of thought definitely takes the stand in favor of the patterned directive interview. At the other extreme are those who say to use any form at all tends the the interviewer to follow the pattern slavishly.

In discussing this question, Fear and Jordon say that "most poor interviews suffer from one or two causes: (1) conducted without plan, they tend to ramble over many un consequential topics or, (2) the same stereotyped questions are applied to all interviewees with the result that the interviewer adopts a mechanical approach which is conducive neither to obtaining the complete confidence of the individual nor securing all the essential information. The "master of ceremonies" technique seeks to obviate these faults through a planned conversational approach. Here the interviewer encourages the interviewee to talk about

himself, his problems, and interrupting only when more specific information is needed."¹ In general, more agents will respond to this approach because it does not immediately put them "on the spot" as the stilted question and answer method so often does.

There are at least two apparent problems involved in deciding which method of interviewing to use. One is the obvious problem of the person-to person relationship. If the supervisor is demanding, abrupt, and overbearing, he will direct the interview to its ruin. By treating the agent as an equal, you win his cooperation and by being friendly and considerate, it is possible for the supervisor to do directive interviewing without opposition or distaste for the ordeal by the agent. The purpose of the interview will determine the method used by the supervisor. The training interview will by nature be directive. The counseling interview may be nondirective. The supervisor will have to decide the method to use that will best accomplish the aim or purpose of that particular interview.

Experience would probably have indicated by now if either technique or method were always best since both the directive and nondirective method have been tested in practice. The supervisor will have to decide which of the methods to use, each method has its weakness and each method has its merits. It is generally agreed by both schools of thought that the individual who is being counseled ultimately must make his own decisions, but the schools of counseling insist that their methods are best in bringing about the desirable end. As far as proof is concerned, no school of thought in counseling can demonstrate its superiority beyond question. The fact that both methods are retained suggests that the better procedure to use will depend upon the purpose and the supervisor's skill in techniques.

The trend as observed in literature and by consultation with personnel managers would show that the nondirective interview is given emphasis at the higher and supervisory levels and emphasis on the strictly guided or directive interview for the "regular" working jobs. Successful application of any method rests upon the training, experience, skill and common sense judgment of the supervisor.

¹Fear and Jordan, Employee Evaluation Manual for Interviewers.
New York: Psychological Corporation, 1943.

CHAPTER II

KINDS OF INTERVIEWS COMMONLY USED IN EXTENSION SUPERVISION

Industry, extension, and education makes extensive use of the interview in a variety of situations. Personnel executives and supervisors do a great deal of interviewing in order to keep informed of conditions and relations, to know their employees, to instruct and stimulate them and to forward the continuing process of occupational adjustment. The aim of the interview in industry is not merely to select and place individual workers in the right jobs, must also to increase their earning power and their satisfactions in the work they do. "So, while it is natural to think first of the personal interview in connection with employment practice it is widely used for functions other than hiring but which are intimately related to the employment process."¹

Some of the various kinds of interviews found to be used by industry and education other than the employment interview are: for job analysis; for follow-up and adjustment of employees; for training; the employee relations interview for fact finding with reference to attitudes, working conditions, and a miscellaneous group of management relations; and the exit interview which takes place when the employee leaves or is dismissed.

Writers in current literature classify the kinds of interviews differently. No simple classification of interviews is satisfactory for all purposes and certainly not for all occupations. The writer of this paper has adopted for purpose of discussion a simple working classification that seems usable in an efficiently planned interviewing program in Agricultural Extension in building and maintaining an effective staff. The classification of interviews to be discussed are:

1. The employment interview--finding the right person for a specific county agent job.
2. Orientation, induction, and training interviews. This group of interviews are interpretative, educational and training in nature. The supervisor is called upon to give advice, to offer suggestions, to help formulate rather concrete plans of action and even to bring some influence to bear on the agent to adopt a plan of procedure.
3. The counseling interview. The group of interviews to be considered in this section are the problem, complaint, disciplinary and exit interview. Something has gone wrong in each case and must be corrected if possible. The primary purpose of the counseling interview is that of benefiting the county agent.
4. The progress interview which is partly counseling and partly educational is beneficial to both the agent and the organization.

¹Walter V. Bingham and Bruce V. Moore, How to Interview, p. 90. New York: Harper & Bros., 1941.

Each interview must achieve some specific objective or else it should not be held. The employment interview will directly provide county extension agents and the counseling interview should reduce emotional tension and leave agents free to apply all their energies to their work tasks. These and other objectives will be accomplished by the interview only to the extent that interviewing is effective. It is the primary purpose of this chapter to outline and review the salient features and objectives of each kind of interview. Extension supervisors may find it helpful to study and consider the suggestions given in order to improve the interviewing program. The kinds of interviews will now be examined.

The Employment Interview

Probably the first written record of an interview, if interpreted liberally, was of God's questioning Adam and Eve relative to their eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. God's purpose was to determine whether or not they were qualified to continue to live in Paradise. It has been said that interviewing as a basis for selection has continued through the centuries in one form or another including the slave markets of the Roman Empire, the guilds, factories of the Industrial Revolution of England and so on down to the present time. Our modern interviewing is a direct outgrowth of personnel management after World War I.¹

The employment interview is accorded particular emphasis because of its universal use in the selection of employees. Every organization to-day uses the interview as a part of its employment procedure. To discuss one part of the employment technique without considering the whole problem is difficult. Most supervisors do not depend on the interview alone; they use other aids such as application blanks on which each item is of some known diagnostic value; written recommendations from former employers; and educational records. These aids are used to supplement rather than supplant the interview and are often more useful in discovering whom to reject than they are in selecting whom to hire. Attention will be directed to the importance of interviewing as the main item in a well-rounded employment procedure rather than consideration of supplementary aids.

Many studies have been made of the effectiveness of the personal interview as an aid in determining whether or not an applicant possesses the qualities necessary for success in a given vocation. For the most part, these studies paint a gloomy picture of the accuracy of the interview in predicting success even in such positions as a salesman, in which the employee's personality plays an important part.² The fact remains that more than ninety-eight per cent of all selections for employment in the Extension Service are made on the basis of a personal interview supplemented by a written application, letters of recommendations and educational records. Extension Service finds it one of the most valid and dependable tools of selection if administered by understanding supervisors. The writer does not believe that the interview is unalterably inaccurate and undependable. This belief is based on seven years of actual experience with interviewing applicants for positions. The failure is due more to lack of skill and understanding on the part of the supervisor than to any inherent weakness in the process itself.

¹Dale Purcell, "Hiring Interviews," Personnel Journal, XXII (January, 1944), 263-267

²George Halsey, Selecting & Inducting Employees, p. 73. New York: Harper & Bros., 1951 (1st Edition).

The general function of the employment interview is already evident. It may be helpful, however, to outline in some detail the four specific objectives which this supervisor has found useful in the process.

1. To afford the opportunity to judge an applicant's qualifications as a basis for sound selection and placement. To find out how well qualified the applicant is for the position it becomes necessary to verify facts on the application blank; to discover data bearing on integrity, character, and physical fitness; to discover data bearing on temperament, enthusiasm, stability and intelligence; and to perceive applicant's initiative, power of expression, voice, poise, judgment, sense of humor, personal appearance and manners. There is the necessity in extension of selecting people who have desirable personal, social, and business behavioral traits as well as technical competence. "Can he work with people?" is the ever stumbling block in predicting success of an agent. However, equipped with all of the foregoing stated characteristics gives some assurance of success. It is relatively easy to identify, either visually or statistically, the very good or the very poor candidates; the larger number whose qualifications place them between these two extremes present the major problem to supervisors.
2. To give the applicant essential facts about the job and the organization to enable him to decide intelligently as to the acceptability of the position. The supervisor must give a complete job description, the organization structure, aims and purposes and the training needed for the job. The applicant needs to know what the job involves, that is, what the county extension agent does and the conditions under which he carries out the work. The supervisor should give an honest evaluation of the job, include all the good features but include a description of long hours, night meetings, need of a car, and other occupational hazards. A statement should be given in detail of the actual program and activities which the worker will be expected to help plan and carry out in the county. The applicant should be given definite information on the county, the office set-up, organization, and needed information about possible co-workers.
The applicant should also know the privileges and opportunities available to him as an extension worker such as: (1) recognized member of the staff of the Land Grant College he represents; (2) plan for advanced study; (3) retirement plan; and (4) vacation and sick leave. Discerning supervisors do not encourage qualified applicants to accept employment by concealing undesirable aspects of the work. If the total picture is appealing, the applicant will then enter upon his work with the correct mental set toward the advantages and disadvantages.
3. To initiate an enduring rapport--a felling of mutual understanding and confidence--between the extension service

and the applicant who is employed. This is the stage at which the individual can be made to sense that his interests are being given real considerations.

4. To promote good will toward the Extension Service whether or not the interview culminates in employment. The applicant is a representative of the public. The impression he carries away affects not only his own future actions with respect to extension, but possibly those of his family and friends. Here it is well to stress the need for un-failing courtesy in the treatment of every applicant. If applicant is not employed, the supervisor can render a real service to him by directing to other suitable employment. Such service goes a long way toward relieving feelings of defeat or resentment and toward promoting friendly attitudes toward Extension Service.¹

The interview involves an exacting appraisal of the applicant and provides an opportunity to give him detailed information about the job. The comprehensiveness of this interview will depend on the nature of the job to be filled and the special skills or personality traits to be evaluated. The supervisor tries to identify the crucial personality factors which have contributed to agents success.

Halsey² made an extensive study on why some employees succeed and why others failed. He studied groups of less successful people and groups of successful people. He compared the two groups by rating each individual on every quality that might have had any bearing on his success. Six qualities stood out as practically always well developed in personality of each person who achieved any marked degree of success. "These six qualities were thoroughness, fairness, tact, initiative, enthusiasm and emotional control. There must be an adequate and reasonably well balanced development of all six qualities. No one quality may be safely neglected."

Ramsower³ conducted a study on leadership and found that superior county agents almost invariably have the following characteristics: vision, initiative, planning ability, resourcefulness, perseverance, faith and courage. The poorer county agents just as universally lacked enthusiasm, vision, planning ability and initiative.

There is a similarity of characteristics desired in each profession and an earnest attempt should be made to secure personnel with as many of these characteristics as possible. The two foregoing studies are valuable for valadative purposes. They show what traits agents of known performance levels do or do not possess. The dubious portion of this step is being able to identify the presence or absence of the trait

¹Francis Drake, Manual of Employment Interviewing, pp. 13-14 Research Report No IX. American Management Association, New York: The Association, 1946.

²George Halsey, Supervising People, p 11. New York: Harper and Bros 1946

³H.C. Ramsower, "Leadership Qualities," Doctor's Thesis Harvard University, 1937.

while one is interviewing.¹ It is indeed foolish to assume that this complete analysis of traits could be made in one short interview.

"The percentage of your new employees who succeed is a measure of the efficiency of your hiring methods. Therefore, you are not justified in using a test, or any guide to hiring unless you know its validity, or predictive efficiency."² The important practical question, is how to improve the reliability of the interview for employment. First, one must determine what can be and what can not be obtained or learned from an interview. In order to obtain a clue as to what the factors are which can be evaluated best and most economically in the interview, it is interesting to look at the traits, characteristics and area whose evaluation by means of an interview has been attempted in the past.

Interviewing as a selective device, is helpful in determining the following characteristics according to studies made by Wonderlic.³

1. Verbal facility--ability to adapt himself to conversation and to express himself clearly and convincingly.
2. Personality--reactions to interviewer and impressions.
3. Attitudes--toward previous employers, education and people in general.
4. Appearance--obvious physical deformities; general appearance.

Wonderlic then summarizes the points for which the interview is not useful; namely,

1. Obtaining facts--all important information obtained in an interview should be verified by checking references, by investigations or by other approval methods.
2. It is not a good device for measuring mental ability or job skills.
3. Nor is it particularly used in discovering hidden aptitudes of possible candidates.

Charters⁴ has stated some of the facts which the interviewer can and cannot determine. The interviewer can form opinions on the appearance and manners of the prospect, his likeableness, his attitude toward the organization and the kind of work it offers, his outside interests and hobbies, his forcefulness, his brightness in conversation, and any disagreeable mannerisms. He cannot, however, tell how dependable, honest, persistent, or loyal a person is. In the way of a

¹Richard Husband, "Techniques of Salesmen Selection," Educational and Psychological Measurement, IX (Summer, 1949), 129-48.

²R. N. McMurry, "How Efficient Are Your Hiring Methods," Personnel Journal, XXVI (September, 1950), 45-53.

³E. F. Wonderlic, "Improving Interview Techniques," Personnel, XVIII (January, 1942), 232-238.

⁴W. W. Charters, "The Discovery of Executive Talent," American Management Association, Annual Convention Series No. 69 New York: The Association, 1927. 3-28.

general rule, Charters says, traits which do not actually function or enter specially into the behavior of the interviewee during the interview cannot be judged with any accuracy. In other words, the interviewer can get useful impressions of only a limited range of personality traits; namely, those traits which are significant in so far as people are impressed by them.

Driver¹ in reporting a research on the personal interview states there are six qualities that can be judged; namely: (1) appearance, (2) ability to learn, (3) judgment, (4) self-confidence, (5) tact, and (6) cooperation.

An important issue at present seems to be the discovery and definition of those factors whose evaluation can best, and in some cases can only be accomplished by means of the interview. The interview should not be used to secure estimates about those aptitudes, skills, and other attitudes for which sound and practical measuring devices exist or can be readily developed.

The need to consider each applicant as an individual who differs from others in talent, ambitions, and motives has been emphasized. It is this principle which underscores the desirability of planning the employment interview. Such planning, in essence, involves formulating a check list of questions on the probable course of the interview. The questions may be written if the supervisor feels he might otherwise forget something important, or they may take the form of mental notes. It is very easy to forget or to overlook some important information that should either be given or gained from the applicant during an interview.

The following suggest the nature of the questions a supervisor might well consider in preparing for an interview:²

1. Are the applicant's qualifications to be considered for a particular county or for any of several counties? In either case, am I entirely familiar with the job requirements and situations in each county?
2. Have I examined carefully the completed application? From the analysis have I gained information regarding his background, present status, formal education, nature of experience, previous employment record and why the applicant is seeking work in Extension Service?
3. Does the way in which the application has been filled out--legibility, neatness, completeness of information, agreement in dates--tell anything significant about the applicant?
4. Where practicable, have I already gathered required information about the applicant from reliable sources, so that the interview time may be used to obtain data which only the applicant can give and to observe personality characteristics?
5. In the information I already possess, are there clues to direct means of establishing rapport with the applicant?

¹R.S. Driver, "Research in the Interview," American Management Association, Office Management, Series 102. New York: The Association, 1944, 20-31.

²Frances Drake, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

Is there anything about his education, family, or home county which would furnish good material for opening remarks?

6. From what I already know about the applicant, am I conscious of prejudice or bias which I must be prepared to discount?
7. What information should the interview yield? What topics need to be covered? What is the order of their importance? What is the appropriate sequence? What is the general nature of the questions which should be asked to obtain the required information? What observations must I be particularly sure to make? What facts must I be certain to explain and discuss with applicant in relation to job?
8. Have I on hand all the material and equipment needed such as application, maps, charts, and reports?

Even as a supervisor answers the foregoing questions, he realizes that the precise tactics he adopts will grow largely out of the conditions presented. The planning furnishes a framework of procedure and reduces the chances of conducting a rambling and uncoordinated interview. It furnishes more assurance that all important information will be obtained before the close of the session. However, excellent the preplanning, the actual quality of the interview depends on the skill with which the details are carried out by the supervisor.

The principal criticism leveled at the employment interview has been that its findings are highly subjective, as contrasted to the presumed objectivity of psychological tests. One notes that the findings need to be interpreted by people so therefore, become subjective to a degree even in tests. There is no denying that interviewers judgments must be, of necessity subjective, but it does not follow that they must lack reliability and validity simply because they are subjective.¹ Since no measuring instruments are perfect in interviewing, the measurements are always accurate within determinable limits. These limits are concepts and require interpretations in terms of the theory of probability. All predictions of human performance are shown to some error arising out of the nature of human beings.

As yet, no other selective method has been devised which will completely replace a good interview. Despite the development of many scientific aids and psychological tests to the selection of new workers, the results must be interpreted and the final judgment must be passed largely on a subjective basis as we are human beings dealing with other human beings.²

Supervisors must continue to rely upon the interview as one of the best means now available for the evaluation of human abilities in applicants. Men and women are rejected or hired mainly as the result of the impressions they make upon employment interviewers. The fine art of evaluating the qualifications of human beings will always require a high order of judgment. The importance of this basic tool should not be overlooked, it deserves continuous study and attention.

¹R. N. McMurry, "Validating the Patterned Interview," Personnel, XXIII (January, 1947), 263-72.

²Wm. W. Waite, Personnel Management, p. 178 New York: Ronald Press Co., 1952.

As a representative of the Extension Service, the supervisor has at least five main obligations in regard to employment interviewing.¹ They are:

1. To treat all applications courteously;
2. To explore each applicant's background with sufficient thoroughness to decide whether immediate hiring, rejection or further investigation of potentialities is indicated.
3. To assist in the hiring of new people with characteristics like those of the best of the present group of employees;
4. To reject applicants whose services cannot be used; do not encourage applicants or give them hope, when it is evident that they are not to be considered seriously for a job; and
5. To maintain adequate records on his interviewing activities, so that the results and effects of his work can be evaluated periodically.

Orientation Interview

The Extension Service spends considerable time, effort, and money on the recruitment and selection of county agents. It would be foolish to slight the orientation process which links good selection and good job performance. It is vital to help the agent become a loyal, satisfied, efficient worker, and happy in the selection of extension as his chosen profession. Orientation is necessary before one can properly begin a new job.

The wise supervisor will plan to personally contact the agent in the county as soon as possible after placement. This is a crucial period. Records show that in several instances maladjustments and relationships have developed in the first few months that have caused agents to leave the work. The first visit serves to establish a confidential relationship between agent and supervisor and the welfare of the agent is the central concern or primary issue involved. The supervisor communicates to the agent the feeling that Extension Service regards him as an individual whose personal welfare and satisfaction on the job is important.

The adjustment a new county agent has to make is great. The first few months can be most bewildering unless guidance is given. Agents are individual with differing personalities, with a fear of new and unfamiliar situation, with a desire to succeed in life. An impulse to avoid censure and a whole complex fabric of traits, emotions, and characteristics. At no other time are the development of these characteristics and the relationships between them so subject to great influence as when he goes on a new job.² Remember your first day on the Job?

¹Richard Uhrbrock, "The Personal Interview," Personnel Psychology, I (Winter, 1948), 273-302.

²Waite, op cit., p. 202.

The value of helping the new agent to become adjusted to his surroundings, establish respect for the county, develop courage and confidence in his own ability to do the job, and find a useful place for himself cannot be over estimated. The first friendly introduction and adequate training for the work the agent is to perform can aid materially in bridging the gap between unfamiliarity, uncertainty, and fear on the one hand, and job satisfaction, efficiency, and loyalty to the employer on the other. Too often the first visit to the agent is devoted to how to perform the job but it should be given to morale building and adjustment of agent.

"Orientation is the process of organizing the mind toward a certain objective so that incidents and requirements are understood and fall into a proper perspective."¹ A new agent should be so oriented that, with a sound evaluation of his various abilities, he sees himself as an integral part of a friendly business organization. It is necessary for the supervisor to know and understand the particular demands which an individual is making of his job and how this total situation is meeting or failing to meet these demands. This is best accomplished by: (1) trying to arrange the work situation so that the satisfactions from the job do not fall short of the demands that are being made of it; and (2) helping the individual to modify the excessive and impossible demands which he may be making of a job.²

The agent should learn about the particular situation in which he finds himself and find out those things about himself which fits him for extension work. He may find some traits about himself that he will want to capitalize on and others that he may want to change in order to succeed on the job. Not all agents are socially conditioned in a fashion which has prepared them for cooperation. Social maladjustments or the inability of an agent to relate himself effectively to other persons leads him to overthink the problem, and to press to impatiently for some immediate and miraculous solution. The agent's realization of his ineffectiveness may cause periods of extreme depressions and unhappiness. It becomes the task of the supervisor to develop the constructive capacities of county agents and to help them curb their destructive or undesirable characteristics.

It should be emphasized that no one claims that agents are going to have their personalities remade by the supervisor--or by anyone. The function and efforts of the supervisor are definitely limited. He contributes to better productive effort by helping the agent get rid of disturbed feelings and, hence, feeling less dissatisfied and more content on and with the job. Agents, as every, work more efficiently when they feel there is someone in the organization who is interested in them as individuals and they are happy and content in their county.³

¹James D. Weinland and Margaret Gross, Personnel Interviewing, p. 333. New York: Ronald Press Co., 1952.

²F.I. Roethlisberger, Management & Morale, p113. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941.

³Nathaniel Cantor, Employer Counseling, p. 96. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1945.

The major objectives of an orientation interview may be briefly recapitulated:

1. To give agent information concerning or on matters important to his success.
2. To get information about the agent which will be of help in understanding him.
3. To establish mutual understanding and confidential relationships.
4. To introduce the agent to new surroundings and to help him become oriented.
5. To help establish working relationships with other county employees and leaders in extension programs.
6. To help agents avoid some unnecessary difficulties on and off the job.
7. To help eliminate confusion and frustration that will influence or bring about unpleasant or undesirable consequences.
8. To describe and define the personal qualifications needed for carrying on the work. Identify the abilities and talents that will aid the agent.
9. To help agent adjust to conditions imposed by the job and the importance of mastering difficulties as they arise.
10. To help agent understand and live with problems that must be continued and tolerated.
11. To inspire successful endeavor toward attainment of objectives of Extension Service.
12. To help agent recognize that extension work can be enjoyed to a greater extent when seasoned with recreation selected in accordance with agents interests, likes and dislikes

The agent brings with him to the work situation certain behavior patterns, certain attitudes, hopes, and expectations. In adjusting to the work situation he must adjust to the needs of the job and the limitations it sets. In many cases, the adjustment requires considerable modification of his attitudes and expectations and often involves severe emotional disturbances. Even after the preliminary adjustment takes place, however, there are constant changes and stresses which may also give rise to disturbances.¹ Whatever the cause, all changes mean fresh adjustments on the part of the agent and more problems to solve. It is to these problems that the supervisor addresses himself: he is not concerned over whether the agent

¹Burleigh Gardner and David Moore, Human Relations in Industry, pp. 295-296. Chicago: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1950 (Revised).

should be disturbed but is interested in helping the agent to make the necessary adjustment.

The orientation interview is important because it establishes confidence in the agent and in the supervisor and furnishes the basis for later and more extended contacts. It gives the agent a feeling of being approved and stimulates good will.

Induction Interview

New agents may be defined as persons who have just been employed as Extension workers in a county. Each agent must know what is expected of him; be familiar with the standards of performance for the job; understand what additional information and skills are needed to meet the requirements of the job; and then proceed to qualify himself for the task that is assigned to him. To these new agents the supervisor has several obligations. His objective should be to give sufficient help and encouragement to these workers so they will accept the new job with enthusiasm, courage, and a certain amount of confidence, yet not be given so much help that self-initiative is destroyed. The induction interview should follow as soon as possible after the orientation training.

It is vitally necessary that a new agent have a general understanding of the entire situation that confronts him as a county agent and his part in the total program. This understanding can best be acquired by a personal interview with the supervisor. There is a definite advantage of personally explaining the work rather than sending the agent a handbook with all the information. The supervisor can ascertain if explanations are understood as he goes along and an opportunity is afforded the agent to ask questions at any point. Instructions and explanations are not very helpful or valuable unless they are clear and convey a mutual understanding. Before closing the interview, make certain that all the information and material is understood and agreed on by the agent. As a last token of the induction interview present the agent with a written copy of the "Extension Handbook" for future reference.

Some of the more important points that the supervisor should discuss and include in the induction interview are:

1. To find out what the agent already knows about the Cooperative Extension Service.
2. To acquaint the agent with the general picture of the objectives, policies and procedures. These features should be pointed out from the National and State viewpoint.
3. To describe the privileges that the work extends to the agent such as professional status, retirement plan, and self-improvement program.
4. To review the county set-up so new worker will understand clearly the history, organization, policies, the status of county program, and existing relationships within the county. The agent should be encouraged to determine the

cultural and economic patterns of the county as a means of understanding the people with whom he works.

5. To inform the new agent of the entire extension personnel, national, state and county; and how they function and their relationships to county work. This should include specialists, administrators, other county agents, local leaders, governing bodies, cooperating agencies, and all special groups with whom the agent ordinarily carries on the program.
6. To help the agent arrange a calendar of work based on the county program in order that the new agent may learn to be a good organizer and manager of work and time. It is important for the agent to see how the many activities may be scheduled to permit an orderly, regular flow of work without too many peak loads. Also impress the importance of weekly conferences with co-workers, and month by month planning to avoid chaotic situations and better utilization of time.
7. To give assistance to agents in office management, and efficient use of clerical help.
8. To assist agents with methods of getting desirable results from county program and activities, making reports, keeping records, and the need for evaluating their work.
9. To outline and describe some of the major responsibilities and those shared with other agents.
10. To assist agents in creating a favorable sentiment for the Extension program in the county. Publicity.
11. To provide ample time for the agent to ask questions.

The induction interview which informs an agent of his rights, his duties, and his privileges is not a counseling interview but a learning situation.

Training Interview

"Training is a sign post. It says that this or that is the right road but you must walk the road yourself."

Training, either formal or informal, must be given to all people who work. The newly hired agent must be trained in the tasks he is to perform as part of his job. The care with which this training is planned and carried out will be reflected in the quality of the work the agent does in the county. Planty and his colleagues propose this aim for training: "To build continuously and systematically to the maximum degree and in the proper proportion that knowledge and those skills and attitudes which contribute to the welfare of the organization and the employee."¹

¹Earl G. Planty, et al, Training Employees and Managers, p. 25. New York: Ronald Press Co., 1948.

Training is defined as an educational situation or process by which the skill and ability of employees to perform specific jobs is increased. It also offers an opportunity for the further development of the individual. Training is a continuous process in Extension work and requires a carefully planned program whether done in groups, conferences, or by personal interview.

The general objectives of any training program includes three factors regardless of the way it is administered; namely,

1. the acquisition of knowledge by the agent,
2. the development of skills, and
3. the development or modification of attitudes.¹

All agents require training but the amount and kind will vary greatly from agent to agent. The supervisor will have to analyze the case of each agent and then plan the training to fit the needs of the individual agent. The amount of training will vary with the agent's background, previous training and experiences, abilities, skills and actual expressed needs.

The long and expensive process of "learning by experience" may be acceptable in certain situations but is hardly a good one to use in case of county agents. Every agent must acquire certain skills and learn certain basic facts about the Cooperative Extension Service at an early stage of his employment in order to make him a more effective agent. The majority of the basis procedures can best be passed on to the agent by a personal interview with the supervisor. The training interview will:

1. Explain procedures in analyzing and discovering the problems of rural people and the development of county programs.
2. Give assistance in organizing rural people for group action and provision for training local leadership. (County Program Planning Committee, Advisory Councils for 4-H Club and Home Extension clubs et cetera).
3. Discuss the different methods of disseminating educational material, such as training meetings, group meetings, publicity--radio and newspaper, personal contact--office call, telephone, and farm and home visit.
4. Discuss approved methods of procedure and techniques that will result in the adoption of approved practices.
5. Describe ways to make the fullest use of facilities and services available from state extension office.
6. Show the need for cooperation with other extension agents in developing and carrying out coordinated plans.
7. Discuss the need to cooperate with other educational agencies and organizations on approved activities for the improvement of rural life.

¹Waite, op. cit., p.222.

8. Outline how to conduct all activities in accordance with policies of the Extension Service.
9. Interpret research and surveys as useful tools to help rural people in determining the situation with respect to their needs.
10. Help agent develop criteria by which to judge his personal effectiveness as well as the county program.
11. Assist in choosing methods for personal professional improvement.
12. Provide time for agent's problems and questions.

The personal interview in the training process offers an agent the opportunity to verbalize his plans and to explicitly recognize his goals. The supervisor has an opportunity to observe the agent's behavior, both verbal and otherwise, to identify areas of weakness or strength, thus pointing the direction in which more help may be needed. This method of training should be continuous and an ongoing process--not a sporadic effort which blossoms for a new agent and quickly disappears as the agent becomes adjusted to work.

The Counseling Interview

Counseling is intimately related to the adjustment of people, vocational as well as personal. Everyone has problems, be they only connected with taxes and thought of approaching death. With some people, however, problems bear down so hard that they cannot be solved without help. Pastors, physicians, and lawyers represent the oldest professions to which people turn when in distress. Social workers and mental hygienists too, are adept at helping people in trouble.¹ Extension supervisors need to devote considerable energy and time to gain understanding and skill in this area of human relations.

Industrial counseling is a relatively new field. There are few people who have been professionally prepared for interviewing in this field. It is the writer's conviction that without some professional development almost no one can perform the duties of an efficient counseling interviewer. The supervisor must have a deep understanding of dynamic psychology and he must acquire skill to use it.² It has to be learned over a period of time and through his own painful discovery of mistakes. He must grow at his own tempo and in his own way as he will not gain much through verbal and intellectual instruction. The development of a professional self is an arduous task. The supervisor must constantly keep in mind that he is involved in another's human problems by virtue of his profession, and he must conduct the interview in relation to the agent's need for service.

There are many divergent views of personal counseling cited by authors. In order to understand the purpose and function of the counseling interview, it will be well to carefully examine some of these views.

¹Bingham and Moore, op. cit., p. 180

²Cantor, op. cit., p. 139.

Roethlisberger and Dickson state that "the counselor's sole object is to lead the employee to a clear understanding of his problem such that he himself comes to realize what action to take and then assumes responsibility for taking it."¹ The counselor accomplishes a great deal even though at no time does he give direct advice or exercises authority. He functions as a catalytic agent. "The role of the counselor is thus that of carefully listening and observing, of making diagnoses, and then stimulating the most effective kind of action."²

Garrett describes "the aim of counseling interview is to obtain knowledge of the problems to be solved and sufficient understanding of the person troubled and of the situation so that the problems can be solved effectively."³ Cantor explains "the job of the employee consultant is to help the employee help himself to adjust to a problem that interferes with his performing an efficient job. . . . The consultant's aim is to help the worker adjust to his particular job, which is being performed less efficiently than it might be, cause of some kind of psychological disturbance. To help the employee get rid or lessen the intensity of the emotional burden and so free him to do a better job is the consultant's sole objective."⁴

"The general purpose of the counseling interview might be given as aiding employees to solve their own problems and developing enough self-understanding to solve their future problems by themselves."⁵ Weinland and Gross further state that this general purpose may have four aspects:

1. To encourage the immediate release of tension in the employee by encouraging him to express himself completely and without restraint.
2. To identify and clarify the employee's problems.
3. To re-orient the employee in regard to himself and his problems; that is, help him to a more complete insight and self understanding, and
4. To sponsor and expedite the employee's decisions and subsequent activity.

One readily detects many common elements in the foregoing statements of purposes or objectives of counseling interviews. Nine-tenths of counseling seems to be getting the employee into the problem solving attitude. This involves getting him out of the emotional and into an intellectual frame of reference.⁶

¹F. J. Roethlisberger and Wm. Dickson, Management and the Worker, p. 599. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Press, 1946.

²Ibid., p. 601.

³Annette Garrett, Interviewing--Its Principles and Methods, p. 26. New York: Family Service Association of America, 1942.

⁴Cantor, op cit., p. 66.

⁵James Weinland and Margaret Gross, Personnel Interviewing, p. 394. New York: Ronald Press, 1952.

⁶D. S. Arbuckle, "Good Counseling. What Is It?" Educational Administration and Supervision. XXXIV (May, 1948) 304-9.

The overall general purpose implied is that the employee learn new patterns of behavior for dealing with critical situations in his life, patterns of behavior in which motivational and emotional factors are of importance. Counseling not only helps him to solve immediate problems but should enable the agent to increase the integration of the emotional and motivational aspects of his behavior so as to increase his potentialities for handling subsequent decisions and problems.¹ Each counseling interview involves some form of human behavior. Attitudes, emotions and feelings are often the hidden drives to action. The supervisor who does not fully understand human behavior and motivation will not reach a very high degree of proficiency in counseling.

The general utility of a counseling program in Extension can best be understood by specifying more clearly the general human problems to which the activity is addressed. Many problems that appear to be a matter for factual solution are in reality problems of revision of attitudes and release of deep-seated feelings of antagonism, guilt, shame and indecision.² The general type of problems that the agent brings to the supervisor are:

1. Working conditions--too long hours and too many night meetings.
2. Off-the-job time problems--the agent may live in an area where there is limited recreation facilities and may feel isolated and without friends.
3. Family relationships--the job does not permit time enough to be with family.
4. Personality difficulties--emotionally immature and disturbed, not well adjusted and unhappy.
5. Health--mental and physical disturbances; has no "pep" or vigor; tires easily; worries too much.
6. Training difficulties--needs more training but doesn't know in what area; wants more specific training, but does not want to ask for it.
7. Social problems--undesirable housing conditions, failure to adjust to job and community, and conflict with co-workers.
8. Financial problems--sense of insecurity.

Most of the problem which an agent face involve an emotional adjustment, as well as a change in behavior. "The ease with which he adjusts to a new job, or accepts the daily routine of his work, all depend to a large extent upon his attitudes and emotional state. If he is filled with anxieties or with feelings of frustration and if he develops morbid preoccupations over the change, then this adjustment is painful, difficult and slow. If the situation is satisfying, if the change is felt to bring status and opportunities, then the adjustment is rapid and easy."³

¹E.S. Bordin, "Four Uses of Psychological Tests in Counseling," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XI (Winter, 1951), 779-81.

²John Darley, "The Interview in Counseling", p. 8 Retraining and Re-employment Administration. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Dept of Labor, 1946.

³Gardner and Moore, op. cit., p.285.

Individual agents present different problems, but the interviewing methods used by supervisors will be characterized by the following common elements. The supervisor will:

1. Understand the dynamics of human behavior in its individual and social aspects.
2. Be concerned primarily with understanding and not judging the agent.
3. Keep at the center of the interview the importance of the agent's problem and feeling, not his own.
4. Clearly recognize that he can offer help in one way only, viz., freeing tension so that the agent can take hold of his problem and settle it in his own way.
5. Realize that constructive effort can come only from the positive or active forces within the individual agent.¹

These elements are present in every interview. The way in which they will be applied, however, will vary in the light of the particular agent and problem presented. The supervisor can never accurately know in advance what the agent's needs are going to be, nor whether the help that is offered is going to be accepted. The supervisor can control the direction of the interview by permitting the agent to discover for himself what he really wants and what action he wants to take. The supervisor supplies help and guidance when needed. A complete solution to every case cannot be produced by a supervisor any more than a physician can cure all his patients by methods known to medical science.

Numerous agents really do not need advice from supervisors, but what they need is assistance in freeing themselves from some of the confusion in which they have become bogged down. The agent may have some need, problem, block, or frustration that he wants to attempt to change or satisfy. "There are times people do not really want anything done about the things of which they were complaining. What they did want was an opportunity to talk about their troubles to a sympathetic listener."² Information gained by this contact will throw light on the situation and the agent will gain encouragement to make his own decisions.

All people experience various conflicting interests, desires, and emotions. The harboring of such conflicting feeling is technically known as ambivalence. An understanding of this concept is essential to a supervisor who is attempting to work successfully with county agents. One common manifestation of ambivalence occurs in the areas of dependence and independence. The agent wants to operate on his own but at the same time relies heavily on the supervisor for help and direction. Other instances of ambivalence are manifested by agents who obviously want help but who are unable to ask for it, who ask for advice but do not utilize it, who agree to certain plans but do not carry

¹Cantor, op. cit., p. 71.

²Roethlisberger, op. cit., p. 18.

them out, and who say one thing but their behavior indicates the opposite. A properly conducted counseling interview is one time when these situations may be brought to light and seen in a better perspective.¹

Rules for conducting the counseling interview vary with the kind of personal and social situation being explored. Roethlisberger and Dickson gives five rules for the conduct of a counseling interview that were formulated by interviewers in Western Electric Company, Chicago. It is significant that Roger in his work in clinical psychology and Roethlisberger and Dickson in their work in industry independently developed almost identical interviewing techniques for counseling. The general rules formulated were as follows:

1. The interviewer should listen to the speaker in a patient and friendly, but intelligently critical manner.
2. The interviewer should not display any kind of authority.
3. The interviewer should not give advice or moral admonition.
4. The interviewer should not argue with the employee.
5. The interviewer should talk or ask questions only under certain conditions:
 - a) To help the employee talk.
 - b) To relieve any fears or anxieties on the part of employee which may be affecting his relation to the interviewer.
 - c) To praise the employee for reporting his thoughts and feelings accurately.
 - d) To veer the discussion to some topic which has been omitted or neglected.
 - e) To discuss implicit assumptions, if this is advisable.

It is not possible to formulate a specific set of rules that may be followed verbatim because each counseling interview is a new and unique situation. Each problem or personal difficulty demands individual consideration. The supervisor needs to modify rules and procedures in accordance with characteristics of the current case and situation. There is always the danger of an inexperienced supervisor to attach a significance to the rules of interviewing that they do not have. He tends to treat them as absolute prescriptions which should never be violated.

¹Garret, op. cit., pp, 17-18.

²Roethlisberger and Dickson, op. cit., p. 287.

If the supervisor knows the agent and understands the actual situation, he has extreme latitude in which he can and will adjust his plan of action as necessary. There is really only one basic rule for supervisors to follow in talking to agents about problems and grievances; take a sincere interest in what he is saying and try to understand and meet his need. It is especially important to keep a friendly attitude to avoid dealing with matters in an overly-analytical way.

One of the important conditions of this type of personal counseling is that the interviews be strictly confidential. The supervisor must steel himself against the natural impulse to talk over with other extension agents choice bits of personal information that come to him in the course of interviewing. The one best way to gain an agent's confidence is to deserve it. The supervisor who violates confidence by comparing agents grievances, complaints, and problems will soon acquire an undesirable reputation among his agents. The agents will no longer regard him as the one person to whom it is safe to talk and express their feelings, fears, and ambitions. The supervisor must at all times adhere to high professional ethics. All methods employed must be above reproach and all information gathered from agents must be safeguarded.

Gardner and Moore describes several results of effective counseling interviews; namely,

1. The first, and in many ways the most striking, effect is what is technically referred to as emotional release or catharsis. Often at the beginning of the interview the agent may be emotionally disturbed, angry, in tears, extremely tense, or so upset that he can hardly talk coherently. As the interview proceeds, the nervous tension usually begins to disappear. This change does not mean the problem has been solved or that adjustment has taken place, but it does indicate that the emotional tension has been relieved.
2. Another effect is that it helps to clarify the individuals thinking. When under severe emotional stress, the individual usually has difficulty in thinking through his problems; he jumps to conclusions, makes irrational interpretations, and rushes into actions which prove ineffective or even harmful. The individual begins to re-examine his problems; the molehills of minor incidents no longer appear to be insurmountable mountains; he sees new angles and makes new interpretations.
3. "Problem-solving" effect may occur during the interview or it may take place later. Often the interview seems to start the agent thinking through his problems; and though he may not arrive at any conclusion he continues to consider it more clearly until finally he comes to some conclusion.
4. Another type of result is what may be called the "readjustment" or reorientation of the individual. It involves a general readjustment of the agent when he has been incapable of either achieving his own satisfaction or of

adapting to the demands made upon him. In some cases the only possible solution may be the acceptance of his own limitations and the limitations of the job and an adjustment of all his hopes and expectations.¹

A person reading this paper might have gained the impression that the supervisor is concerned only with the agent who has a problem. Actually, the supervisor is constantly working with the entire group of extension workers in his area and takes precautions that he does not limit himself to problem cases. Each supervisor is assigned to a particular territory which contains from twenty-nine to thirty-two counties each in Minnesota. In this district are county agricultural agents, home agents, 4-H club agents, office secretaries and an endless number of voluntary leaders. It is the job of the supervisor to develop and maintain friendly relationships with every individual with whom he works. By giving as much attention as possible to each agent, he is able to dispel the idea that only agents in difficulty are interviewed. It is found that even the best adjusted agents from time to time face problems which are disturbing, or they get involved in frictions within work or social groups, and benefit from the opportunity to have someone outside the county with whom they can talk. Supervisors are sincerely concerned with the welfare of every extension worker in his district.

One realizes that agent counseling requires considerable psychological insight. The facts and problems of the counseling interview do not seem too difficult, but a thorough knowledge of them may well mean the difference between success and failure in the interview. The supervisor must appreciate and understand the fact that true motives are usually hidden and that what agents tell at first are usually only symptoms; the fact that at first there is always resistance to be nullified; the fact that the solution may come through changed attitudes as well as changed conditions; and the fact that a human being values his sense of security and self-respect, and desires recognition. One needs to realize that arbitrary orders, logical arguments, or exhortations do not change a person's attitude nor convince him he is wrong. It is important to get below the surface of complaints, antagonisms, lack of cooperation and similar difficulties in order to know what to do about the problems that agents present. Once the supervisor realizes that there may be other things behind the manifest complaints and that by interviewing he may get to the real root of the problem, then he is encouraged to try and deal with those difficulties instead of avoiding them.² It is well to bear in mind that many grievances or problems are trivial, but few are too trivial to merit consideration and attention by the supervisor. Expression and explanation are two good means of clarifying grievances and problems and counseling gives the agent this opportunity.

To a good supervisor, agents are individuals to be analyzed, compared and understood. He learns over a period through counseling interviews that many ideas about human nature are false and misleading. Not all men who swagger are bold, nor are all mild mannered people easy to "push around." Nor are people who talk as though they aimed to conquer the world hard working and energetic. Counseling gives the supervisor a real insight into the peculiarities of human nature. To perform this duty more effectively, supervisors need more education in human relations. They need to be well adjusted individuals within themselves or else they cannot understand and assist others.

¹Gardner and Moore, op. cit., pp. 298-300

²Ibid., p. 305.

It is not enough these days to be trained in a profession. One must also be equipped to deal with human problems as well as technical problems. This knowledge of human nature and dynamics will be useful only if the supervisor learns how to apply it in specific cases.

It is a real privilege as well as a great responsibility to do counseling for it often makes good agents out of agents who were failing; lifts and builds morale of the working staff; improves cooperation; and makes the agent happier and more satisfied with his chosen profession. The supervisor gains personal satisfaction by having the confidence, respect and approval of the agents with whom he works. This confidence will be maintained if the supervisor remembers never to judge the problem from a viewpoint of morality, and if he reserves decision until all the details are known. The one real regret is that the supervisor is unable to personally contact agents as often as desirable because of time and travel limitations.

Progress Interview

To induct and train new agents and then to neglect to evaluate their progress nullifies much of the effort which has gone into the preceding interviews. The supervisor must check periodically on each agent to make certain he is performing in accordance with expectations and to ascertain if the agent is satisfied and happy with his work. The question arises, when and how often to hold a progress interview. This is largely a question of practicability although most supervisors will find time for only one interview of this nature annually but will discuss various aspects of it at regular visits to the agent and when the occasion warrants it.

Some students of personnel management point out that there are at least two fundamental psychological needs in order for employees to be happy and productive: (1) a sense of security and (2) a sense of success. A sense of security not only means economic security but security in knowing what is going on, security in feeling that one's work is wanted, that one is part of the group, and that one has opportunity for self-expression in one's work. A sense of success is the feeling that one is making progress and that there is general acceptance of one's work, and that one's skill and ability are being utilized to full capacity. The agent wants recognition on the part of others that he is doing his job well.

There are certain basic procedures of dealing with agents which strengthen good relations and keep problems from arising. They involve understanding principles of human behavior. Every agent working in the district is different from every other agent; he has a different capacity, a different background, and has different hopes and ambitions. The agent cannot leave part of himself at home when he goes to work so carries all of these individual differences to work. A supervisor needs to know as much about the individual agent as possible, because as stated, each agent is different and these differences affect the job. The supervisor is fortunate indeed when he has sufficient time to really know each agent and learn to work effectively with him. Unfortunately, most supervisory staffs are not large enough to make that possible. Certainly the objective of supervisors is to obtain competent agents, to provide the climate which will be most conducive to superior performance, proper attitudes, and harmonious adjustments. This is a problem of human relations requiring an understanding of human motivation. It is a problem of satisfying the needs of the agents within the context of the Extension Service needs.

The progress interview is important and should be arranged and carefully prepared in advance. The first step in developing plans for the progress or anniversary interview is to formulate the aims and purposes of the procedure. Just what the supervisor wishes to accomplish by means of the progress interview should be thought through carefully for this will determine in great measure the direction the interview will take. Progress interviews are commonly used for the following purposes by extension supervisors:

1. To let the agent know how he is getting along. A word of reassurance helps to break down a sense of insecurity, which is detrimental to the work of everyone.
2. To commend and give credit where due. Recognize extra or unusual performance, and do not wait too long. Wise commendation given when deserved helps to bring about the feeling of personal satisfaction and enjoyment which usually results in increased pride in doing good work and the putting forth of greater effort to achieve goals.
3. To find exceptional talents, look for ability that is not being used, or is being restricted, and assign specified jobs that involve investigation, research, and study within the county to agents who have such ability.
4. To discover agent's weaknesses as a basis for planning further training.
5. To assist in evaluating and appraising county program on long time basis to give sense of achievement to agent. Too often observation of work performance is based on general impressions rather than systematic observations.
6. To tell an agent in advance about changes that will affect him. Sudden changes in plans without a reasonable amount of advance notice are upsetting. Sensible and mature agents accept changes graciously if an explanation of the reason for the change is given.
7. To discuss salary adjustment if warranted. Length of service has often been recognized out of proportion to the merit of the individual. Many agents are carried upward on the escalator of automatic increases without justification.
8. To encourage the agent to air his discouragements and personal grievances. The interview provides a medium for free and frank discussion of personal and work problems.
9. To issue, if necessary, warning of a failing record and unsatisfactory work and steps necessary to make good. This warning should also be in written form for the records.

10. To motivate agents to do a better job and to develop professionally. Encourage attendance at Extension Summer School, refresher courses, workshops et cetera.
11. To develop agent's morale by stimulating confidence in fairness of the Extension Service.
12. To encourage the agents to always maintain professional attitude toward one's job.
13. To ask agents for their opinions. This helps their self-confidence. As a closing question, "What do you like best about your work?" This ends the interview in a constructive fashion.

The foregoing is an impressive list of purposes and it is doubtful if any one progress interview could accomplish them all. In fact, in formulating an individual plan for the interview, it is well to limit the purposes to as few as possible. This affords opportunity to concentrate effort in the areas needing the most help. Each plan will have to be adapted to each agent. The supervisor's attitude should be one of helpfulness and the interview should bring out definite suggestions and plans for the agent's future development. Following the interview, definite plans, recommendations and suggestions covered in the interview and agreed upon should be sent to the agent in writing for future reference. Good counseling will lead an agent to self-analysis and set him on a program of self improvement.

A skillfully handled progress interview informs the agent and gathers information for the supervisor. There are a few special techniques that should be used in holding the progress interview. To begin with, the agent should be oriented to the purpose of the interview and be told that a similar interview is accorded to all agents. That relieves the tension the agent may feel when he is asked for time for the interview; he may feel he is being "called on the carpet." As a general rule, the information should be given to the agent in as simple manner as possible, do not elaborate on an aspect when clear concise statements will serve the purpose. The real purpose is to help the agent "find himself" and his most available path of advancement and to see the hindrances within himself that are holding him back.

To congratulate an agent on what he has done will help to get the interview moving and gives the agent's self respect and confidence a boost that makes him able to take a few constructive criticisms in his stride. To inform an agent of his low ratings so that he will consider them objectively and see what he can do about improving them is always difficult and requires skill. Experience indicates that the best way to do this is to wrap up the low ratings in the high ones. When any necessary criticisms have been considered, it helps to review his strong points in order to leave the agent in a good frame of mind. The real purpose of the interview cannot be accomplished without concomitantly strengthening employee loyalty and increasing efficiency.

An agent wants to know how his work is regarded by those who exercise authority over his future status in the organization. The progress interview makes possible certain outcomes that are not achieved in any other

way. Some of the major outcomes are:¹

1. Job performance can be improved by letting the agent know his weaknesses and strengths and by making definite plans with him to overcome his weaknesses and to make capital of his strengths.
2. Grievances can be lessened and often prevented by letting the worker understand the basis for action which may have to be taken in the future and by clearing up misunderstandings about past actions that have affected him.
3. The supervisor and the agent can be brought into a closer relationship wherein each has a better understanding of the other and the agent is made to feel that he "belongs" to the organization.

The Exit Interview

No task in supervision is more unpleasant than that of telling an extension agent his services are no longer needed. As a result, no part of supervision is more poorly handled. The supervisor should not shirk this task. Everyone who accepts the responsibility for directing the work of others should know that, sooner or later, it will be his task to tell someone that he must look for another job. He should try to learn how to perform this unpleasant duty in a manner that will let the agent leave with his self-respect unimpaired, and with a feeling that he has been fairly and justly treated.

The exit interview is gradually winning acceptance as a basic instrument of personnel control, although, it was long resisted by supervisors who feared discovery of petty tyrannies and injustices. The resistance was born of fear--fear arising out of ignorance and general misunderstanding of the purpose and results of exit interviewing. Many companies now require exit interviews before final wage payments are made, and testimony as to the desirability of the procedure is steadily accumulating. In nearly all cases, probably the most important conclusion from experience is that the exit interview affords management vital information which is obtainable in no other way. An agent who is leaving either as a result of resignation or discharge can express his thoughts more freely than the agent whose opinion is sought while he is still concerned with the protection of his job.²

It becomes necessary to remove county agents from the payroll for various reasons; some resign and others are discharged. The first underlying principle in all cases, however, is that all information related to the incident should be obtained and recorded for future references. Exit information is basic to:

1. An analysis of the cause of agent turnover; provides clues for improvement so agents will not continue to leave for the same reason.
2. It permits checking on morale of agents, working conditions and policies of the Extension Service, and

¹Reign H. Bittner, "Developing an Industrial Merit Rating Procedure," Personnel Psychology, Vol. I (Winter, 1948), 403-32.

²Charles Drake, "Exit Interview As a Tool of Management," Personnel XVIII, No. 6 (May, 1942), 346-50.

3. It may help agent secure another job thus building up good will for the organization.

When the information gathered relevant to the case indicates that the agent is leaving because of personal relationships with co-workers, or because of a misunderstanding of policies, it is often possible to solve the problem and retain the agent. In some cases a transfer to another county may accomplish the objective. However, before this move the supervisor must be certain that the agent has the ability and potential capacity to make good.

The most important function of the exit interview is to learn why the agent is leaving. It is not difficult to draw out some form of statement from him, but it is quite a different matter to uncover the true cause for his departure. "The agent finds it difficult to analyze the total situation; if he attempts it, he may even rationalize and accept the most conventional ground for leaving.¹ If the agent has resigned for another position, the supervisor can learn through skillful questioning why the agent feels there is better opportunity with the other work. It is amazing how often the supervisor can learn of legitimate agent grievances from the last words of a departing agent.

The dismissal interview presents a very different situation. Discharge from a job is an emotionally traumatic experience for the agent and, as such, should not be undertaken without the most careful study and preparation. Injudicious and inconsiderate separations, with brusque notification usually creates in the county agent feelings of resentment, failure, and inadequacy which can do much to upset his future life.²

The action of a discharge interview must be fair, or no amount of technique can send the person away without resentment. First of all, the supervisor should have a clear and known list of reasons for discharge and be sure he is right in his final recommendation of dismissal. If the reason is that the agent cannot do the work, the supervisor should check carefully to see if the agent had proper and sufficient training, and a reasonable time in which to adapt himself to the job. The supervisor needs to check to see that earlier warnings of a falling record with explanations of what steps were needed to take to make good were issued to the agent. Next, the agent must be told in person that his services are no longer needed. The exit interview should not be hurried. Too often there is no opportunity for the agent to find exactly why he is being dismissed or to express his own feeling. It is essential that the supervisor make an authoritative statement of reasons for discharge, for nothing destroys an agent's morale as quickly as rumors and uncertainty of dismissal. Considerable thought should be given to just what words to use, always remembering the objective--no impairment of courage, self-respect, or good will toward the Extension Service. As a final sincere gesture of good public and human relations, offer the agent assistance in finding another job. It is advisable to recommend that the agent leave the county as soon as possible upon notification of discharge. There are known cases of agents continuing to work under this condition and it has proven detrimental to the county and to the agent.

Studies show, with monotonous regularity, that personal characteristics are the basis for some ninety per cent of discharges.³

¹Bingham and Moore, op. cit., p. 106.

²Waite, op. cit., p. 501.

³Ibid., p. 501.

This fact serves to emphasize the necessity for care in selecting agents. It is most illuminating to the supervisor when he can interview at the time of exit, the very agent he originally employed. It helps to reveal the elements of success and failure in the hiring procedures. It directs attention to the personal characteristics that are important for an agent to possess to achieve a high degree of success in extension work.

A certain amount of turnover in early years of employment is inevitable. Regardless of how careful the agents have been selected, there are some people hired who are not suited to extension work, their interests lie elsewhere or they lack the capacity to do the work. "The prompt elimination of unsuitable persons is extremely important to a stable, happy, and efficient working force."¹ Agents who are not suited to the work create problems for themselves and fellow workers. It is kinder to discharge an agent than to keep him in an environment where he cannot make good. The supervisor must be extremely alert to the agent's fitness and ability during the first year or two. It is wiser to direct an agent to another job after the first year than to wait until he has struggled along for six, seven, or more years. Much vigilance is needed to enforce the policy of dismissing unsatisfactory agents. Too often kindheartedness and a feeling that maybe the agent will do better delays the disagreeable task. This practice is unfair to the agent and to the county. Losing one's position during the early period of employment need not impair one's self respect, but after many years of service, dislodging the agent becomes increasingly difficult; the agent suffers a real psychic hardship by remaining in the county where he neither gives nor receives satisfaction.²

The investment in every agent and the social undesirability of dismissing an agent must not be allowed to stand in the way of discharge when the course is obviously indicated. The exit interview should be managed with the same warm wisdom that makes a supervisor's dealings with his agents worthy and in the best sense, human.

This chapter has defined and explained the kinds of interviews commonly employed by the supervisor in carrying out his duties in extension supervision. At this point, it may be wise to note that the same methods can well be applied to similar kinds of interviewing that the county agent does in the county. A few concrete examples will be cited to clarify this point:

1. Techniques and methods of the employment interview with slight variations can be applied to the selection of local leaders as it involves finding the most capable person for the job, too.
2. When the leader has been selected, he needs to be oriented to his job and he also needs training to do the job well. The county agent can well use the orientation, induction, and training interview with necessary variations in the county.
3. Many farmers and homemakers are troubled and worried over everyday problems. They come to the county agent for information and advice which will help them solve

¹M. C. H. Niles, Middle Management, pp. 139-41. New York: Harper and Bros., 1941.

²Ibid., pp. 139-41.

their problems. The counseling interview procedure will provide help for the agent in this case.

4. Leaders need a word of praise, commendation, and constructive criticism occasionally to keep them happy and effective on their jobs. The progress interview would afford help to the agent to do this job.
5. There are times when a leader has become inactive and ineffective and must be asked to resign. This task requires all the tact and careful planning that the exit interview entails.

The following chapter will state a number of general principles, techniques and limitations of the interview that can be applied and used in Extension work whether it be an interview for training an agent, a leader, or helping a farmer solve a problem or preparing an interview for a radio program. The interviewer may be able to improve his methods and techniques if he has at his command general principles and special procedures which have been crystallized from experience and investigation. Each interviewer will have to select those salient features of the interview that fits his particular interview.

CHAPTER III

INTERVIEWING: ITS PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

Proficiency in interviewing can be acquired by extension workers. It consists not in one general ability but in a combination of many specific habits, skills and techniques. Some of these abilities come naturally after a period of experience, but high competence is attained only by conscious attention and study of methods used. Interviewing has been defined as an art by authors, not an exact science. Thus, the skillful interviewer is not bound by rules and may introduce individuality and initiative in the process at will. Nevertheless, the study of general principles and specific techniques may serve to assist the inexperienced interviewer and serve also to remind the experienced interviewer to review critically his own methods.

The interview as a purposeful conversation is found in the literature of past centuries in the writings of theologians, philosophers and educators. Its application by professional workers is less easy to trace. Until very recently, such study of the interview has been almost inseparately tied to its specific professional use as each profession formulated their own distinctive method of interviewing. To-day there is a recognition that the interview has the same attributes wherever it is used.

The principles and techniques here outlined summarize many studies and represent a consensus of experience, a consensus, however, which is in some instances far from unanimous. In such cases the writer has chosen to use positive statements not overburdened with qualifications. The general discussion of the principles and methods is annotated by the comments of the writer in light of her experience. It is hoped that the discussion will provide useful source material on which extension workers will wish to test and compare their own principles and methods. The points on which opinion differs will serve to point the way to further study and research.

Principles

A number of principles of interviewing have been developed by trial and error and by study of actual interviewing practices. These principles have been carefully analyzed, studied, and screened through the writer's experience, and other extension workers may find them worthy of exploring and adopting. Their adoption does not provide an unfailing high road to successful interviewing but serves to increase the probability of a useful exchange of information and views. The mere reading of the principles will not assist any extension worker; the principles must be practiced in order to gain proficiency in interviewing.

The general principles which may serve as a conceptual schema for extension interviewing are:

1. The objective to be gained or purpose to be served by the interview must be clearly established.

It is neither possible to plan an interview effectively nor to act convincingly during one unless the objective or purpose is known. A practical difficulty in extension, however, is that many interviews must be conducted on the spur of the moment.

2. It is necessary that every interview must have structure.

This refers to the general plan or arrangement of the interview. The planning, systematizing and deciding the general procedure is a matter of strategy or structuring.

3. It is to be remembered that every interview is a learning situation.

The person learns something about himself and his attitudes and something about his problems and the present situation. Learning processes must be understood. The interviewer "paces" the interview into a pleasant, stimulating and helpful experience.

4. The interviewer must establish and maintain rapport.

Rapport is rather a technical term which merely describes the prevailing climate that is achieved and maintained throughout the interview. It implies a harmoniousness atmosphere in which two people can work together successfully. The only ideal relationship for successful interviewing is mutual confidence.

5. The interviewer must respect the interests and individuality of the interviewee.

Every individual has intrinsic worth as a person. To underestimate the intelligence of people and to display an attitude of superiority is certain to nullify any possible good of an interview. Accept the interviewee as a conversational equal during the interview.

6. The interviewer must assist the interviewee to feel at ease.

To this end, the interviewer must act and be relaxed, and at ease with himself. Any failure in this respect results in an atmosphere of tension uncondusive to a free exchange of ideas.

7. The interviewer must maintain good communications.

Since an interview consists of communicating with another individual, it is obvious that the whole interview will be a failure if the system of communication does not work. The interviewer will need an extensive vocabulary from which he can always choose the best, and the simplest, word for each situation.

8. The interviewer must treat each interviewee justly.

This implies that none of the interviewer's personal wishes or prejudices has affected his decisions in any way. For this reason, justice is traditionally portrayed as a blindfolded woman holding aloft a balance scale.

9. The interviewer must respect the confidential nature of the interview.

An interviewer must keep in confidence all facts that are strictly confidential and this principle must not be violated.

10°. The interviewer must treat what is being said in its context.

Why a person likes or dislikes things, why he is more or less interested in different matters can have meaning only in context of the individual's experience.

The foregoing list of principles is in no way exhaustive. It merely describes some principles that are common to all interviews.

Attention will now be directed to suggestions for techniques in interviewing. Before starting the discussion, it might be well to distinguish between principles and techniques as terms are used in this paper. The term principles has been used as a generalized statement of an observed uniformity relative to some aspect of interviewing. Principles, general rules, fundamental truths are the guides by which one proceeds from one situation to another. Workers in any complex field such as interviewing, equipped with principles are more competent and definitely superior to workers equipped with techniques only. Principles are the ways of controlling the doing of things and techniques are the ways of doing things.

Techniques

Techniques are the characteristic ways of achieving a given end by special procedures. There are several general techniques to be used in all interviewing, but it is evident that certain procedures must be conditioned by the purpose of the interview. One danger that arises from listing a set of rules is that an interviewer in his attempt to find a few simple rules that will guide him, will seize upon certain techniques which are highly valuable in certain cases and apply them in others where they are less relevant.

It is always dangerous to list things to do and things not to do in practicing any skill. This is particularly true in interviewing since one does not have very much research to fall back on in proving the points. Most authors who have attempted listing techniques for interviewing have stated what not to do. The writer will attempt a list of positive suggestions which may be of some assistance as guideposts and are in no way dogmatic.

It should be clear that the discussion presented gives but a selection of some of the most salient techniques in interviewing. They have been culled from a vast store of relevant knowledge accumulated over years by professional workers, in industry, education and extension work. Again, it should be noted that there is nothing sacrosanct in the order in which the various techniques are treated. They are so interrelated that a discussion of any one of them involves some aspects of many of the others.

The list that follows is not considered a rigid set of rules for interviewing; it merely attempts to summarize and state suggestions by which interviewers may study and improve their own techniques.

1. Decide what you want to accomplish.

Define the objective to clarify the real end to be served by the interview. Prepare a schedule or list of questions. This does not mean one

should hold the interview to predetermined questions asked in a stereotyped form, but does help to give topical sequence. It serves to organize the conversation so it leads naturally and easily into agent's basic problems. It also prevents aimless rambling, lengthy digressions and the possibility of omitting important areas.

2. Make appointments as far in advance as possible.

This procedure saves time and shortens the period of preliminary explanations.

3. Provide appropriate setting for the interview.

The interview should be limited to the two participants and should be marked by a high degree of freedom from distractions and interruptions. Privacy and freedom from interruptions are essential to the success of any interview.

4. Examine and discount personal bias and prejudice and unverified beliefs.

"The extent to which we are all more or less committed in advance to certain ungrounded convictions, opinions, points of view, or preconceptions is seldom fully realized."¹ The interviewer should keep his views and opinions to himself unless they are significant to the interviewee.

5. Develop skill in opening the interview.

Make a friendly approach. Unless one gets off on the right foot the interview may be a failure. The method of approach will vary according to circumstances. A casual approach is essential, and introductions and purposes are best kept as brief as possible. Allow the interviewee time to become adjusted. Open the interview by conversing briefly and informally about some subject of mutual interest. An experienced interviewer develops a skillful approach and adapts his opening remarks to the situation.

6. Develop skill in establishing and maintaining rapport.

The first step in an interview is to help the interviewee relax and feel at ease. Naturally this is difficult unless the interviewer himself is relaxed. Rapport involves among other qualities readiness to accept a person for what he is. Do not argue or criticize interviewee as it will tend to cut out free expression. Interviewer should appear unhurried and give full attention to the interview.

7. Keep control of the interview.

If the interview is to have the continuity and the end results that will lead to a modification of the interviewee's behavior, the interviewer must keep control of the interview. He may have to pull the client back from conversational by ways to its normal course thus avoiding having conversation ramble too far.

¹Bingham and Moore, op. cit., p. 30.

8. Acquire skill in observation.

It goes without saying that one should observe what the interviewee says. It is less obvious to remark that one should note equally what he does not say, what significant gaps there are in his story. That people do not always say what they mean or act as they feel is continually apparent in interviewing.

Every interview has its nonverbal accompaniment of emotional factors shown by variations in facial expression movements of body, muscular tensions, change in volume and quality of voice, volubility or silence.

The interviewer is constantly making assumptions at every stage and they are subject to change as he observes and develops new insights and understanding in their interrelationships. In making assumptions based on observations, one can never be sure that an alternative assumption or explanation might not apply.

9. Develop skill in listening.

Keeping quiet is a virtue that the interviewer must develop. Knowing when not to inject oneself into an interview is often as important as asking questions deftly. One who frequently interrupts to say what he would have done under similar circumstances is not a good listener, but neither is he who sits like a bump on a log. Absence of response may easily seem to the interviewee to reflect absence of interest. A good listener indicates by brief relevant comments or questions that he has grasped the essential points of the interviewee's story.

Most interviewers are embarrassed if no conversation is going on. Short silences are necessary at times; the interviewee may be groping for words or ideas, and the interviewer may need a moment to study the case before proceeding. Do not fill silences with a lot of talk that breaks the trend of thought. Listening is one of the fundamental operations of interviewing.

10. Develop skill in phrasing and asking questions.

Perhaps the central method of interviewing is the fine art of questioning. A good general rule is to question for only two purposes: (1) to obtain specifically needed information and (2) to direct the interviewee's conversation from fruitless to fruitful channels.

In general, questions which call for narrative statements and questions that cannot be answered by a brief "Yes" or "No" are to be preferred. The use of leading or suggestive questions multiplies the chances of evoking inaccurate or wrong replies. Questions should be used to encourage interviewee to talk fully rather than to drag information out of him by belaboring him with questions. Too many questions will confuse and block the interviewee, while too few may place too much of the burden of the interview on him and leave important areas unexplored. Avoid the always present danger of putting answers into the interviewee's mouth.

The interviewer must learn when to ask questions only at the appropriate times. It becomes necessary to ask questions when the interviewee finds it hard to express himself; when fear and anxiety are interfering with

relationship; to direct the interviewee toward omitted or incompletely discussed topics; and to clarify, interpret, or explain matters only explicitly assumed.

11. Permit the interviewee to talk freely.

There must be ample opportunity for expression. In general, the interviewer should comment only for purposes similar to those for which he asks questions--to reassure or encourage the interviewee, to lead him on to discuss further relevant matters, and so on. The one additional kind of talking that interviewer does beyond these purposes is the definite giving of information or advice.

Some interviewees find it difficult to state what they mean concisely. The interviewer should not override or overtalk the interviewee if he is fumbling for the phrase he wants. A very frequent error of beginning interviewers is to supply words for the interviewee to use.

12. Develop skill in meeting resistance.

Be aware of what the interviewee omits or tries to say but cannot--it may be a crucial matter. The interviewer encounters resistance not only from interviewee but from himself. Resistance is often expressed in the form of hostility. The interviewer cannot allow himself the luxury of yielding to his natural irritation and discouragement over unexpected or irrational behavior of the interviewee.

The interviewer needs to set a suitable tempo and should not push too hard for emotionally toned material which interviewee is resistant about giving.

13. Develop skill in summarizing the interview.

The amount of learning that has gone on can be roughly estimated by summarizing the interview. It is advisable to have the interviewee summarize the interview because it affords an opportunity to see if he has understood and interpreted the facts discussed. The plan or alternative plan worked out in the interview for future action should be carefully reviewed.

14. Skill in ending the interview.

This is not an easy task. The interview may degenerate into a most casual social conversation. It is important in any event for an interviewer to learn a good technique for ending an interview when it is really over.

No interview which is still yielding applicable facts should be summarily ended even though information seems sufficient to understand the problem. The problem of achieving diplomatically a quick exit is not always an easy one. The plea of "an appointment" at a specified time is a plausible excuse for a seemingly hurried departure which frequently proves successful for extension workers.

15. Be careful not to take too many notes during the interview.

Note taking takes too much time and attention and may cause the interviewee to talk less freely.

16. Make plans for follow up work whenever necessary.

Techniques used in interviewing must, of course, be adapted to the purpose in hand: encouraging the interviewee to talk; establishing a relationship of mutual confidence; linking the topic of inquiry to the interests of the person interviewed; focusing his attention on the question at issue; clarifying the purpose or results; or accomplishing whatever at the moment is the immediate aim of the interview. Whatever the specific objective, the interviewer must know what techniques to use and to shift quickly from one procedure to another if necessary.

Interviewing can best be achieved if the interviewer has at his command those general basic principles and techniques which have been crystallized from experience and investigation.

Limitations and Common Errors of the Interview

A great deal of confusion exists as to what can and cannot be accomplished by the interview. Even with its faults and limitations, it is one of the most important links in the chain of events leading to employment and in handling human relations on the job. The interview remains popular as a selection procedure despite its questionable reliability.

How reliable is the interview? The reliability of the interview will depend upon who is doing the interviewing, the real purpose to be achieved, the degree of standardization and the time spent for each interview. Interviewing often gives unreliable results when undertaken by unskilled personnel. However, in the proper hands and carefully worked out, the interview can be a very satisfactory means of diagnosing human personality.

In view of the limitations imposed on the interview by the frailties of human nature, the exercise of critical caution is required both in planning and practicing the interview and in evaluating the data secured. The interviewer should become familiar with the limitations, supplementing from his own experiences and studies, the general precautions stated in the following discussion.

Under what conditions is it safe to rely on information secured by interviewing? There is a common tendency for statement of fact to reflect in some measure the emotional reaction of the two persons concerned; it is colored by self-interest. "Before depending on interviews, determine whether more reliable procedures or sources of information are available. When answers to questions can be obtained from records and documents, or by observation of situations, these answers are more reliable and usually are obtainable more economically than by interviewing."¹

The interview can be used:

1. To gain access to objective data, namely facts about interviewee's own attitudes and emotional reactions.
2. To obtain opportunity for observation.
3. To determine facts which vary with particular persons in particular circumstances. (Census data).

¹Ibid., p. 33.

4. To determine opinions or trends of belief, and
5. To serve the purposes as discussed in the previous chapters of this paper.

Studies and personal experience show that one should avoid the interview:

1. For compiling data of uncertain value.
2. For getting general information or common facts.
3. For compiling or verifying facts obtainable from records, direct observation, controlled experiments, or other sources not subject to distortion through personal influence.

The function of the interview is to uncover such sources, to give access to them and to aid in understanding and interpreting them. When used in investigations of employee's work problems, the interview has shown its value in preparing the way for acceptance of final agreements.

The usefulness of the personal interview for reliable fact finding with reference to data about external conditions and events is limited by the interviewee's knowledge, his memory, his ability to observe; and by his verbal capacity for clear and accurate expression of what he knows. There are limitations imposed by his feeling of self-concern which tend to determine his attitude and responses in the interview. He may prevaricate or hold back pertinent information, for fear the information he discloses will be turned to his disadvantage; or he may be voluble and anxious to please, telling only what he thinks the interviewer wants to hear. The common errors of the interviewee in the interview are:

1. Intentional prevarication by interviewee because of (a) possible benefits to be derived; (b) pride in self and family may result in falsification of data; (c) questions asked are too difficult and too personal; and (d) fear and distrust of the interviewer.
2. The distortion of facts by (a) events which produce a strong emotional effect upon the interviewee; and (b) influence of interest and emotion upon memory.
3. Error due to lack of information. May not be in position to know and understand the facts.
4. Due to difficulty in remembering the required facts. Some facts are hard to report because they require complicated calculations.¹

The problem of self-interest imposes on the interviewer the requirement of shaping his inquiry so that it will harmonize with the interests of the person he interviews. There must be real community of purpose.

¹ Twila Neely, "A Study of Error in the Interview," pp. 15-76 Doctor's Thesis, Columbia University, New York, 1937.

If this integration of interests cannot be established early in the interview there is little value in continuing because it will yield more intentional and unintentional information than true facts.

The interviewer is subject to the limitations of this same profound emotional characteristic of human nature as is the interviewee. He, too, has his prejudices, his personal dislikes, his pride of opinion and his self respect. It is absolutely necessary for the interviewer to achieve an impersonal attitude toward the problem and to ascertain and eliminate his own bias with reference to the questions at issue in the interview.

The common errors of the interviewer are failure:

1. To recognize that words frequently mean different things to different people.
2. To recognize that different persons interpret the same gestures and facial expressions differently.
3. To recognize and eliminate his own bias.
4. To realize that suggestive questions are one of the most widely recognized sources of error.
5. To recognize that conclusions formed may be greatly affected by personal feeling and opinion.
6. To recognize that many common errors are caused by carelessness--not listening carefully, stressing the wrong words, failure to push questions to explore all necessary areas and failure of memory to record actual results.¹

Considerable research and many experiments have been made to test the reliability of the employment interview. The actual results are woefully lacking but accumulated evidence gives these four sources of unreliability in the employment interview:

1. Thinking that in one brief interview anyone can make any reliable diagnosis of a person's character or clearly forecast his future achievement.
2. Assuming that habits are general rather than specific. Neatness in dress does not necessarily indicate neatness in work.
3. Permitting one outstanding trait or characteristic to influence judgment of other traits--the so called "halo" effect.
4. Giving consideration to so called facts which are supposed to have been secured with accuracy but which really cannot be attained at all. A proneness to make inferences from personal appearance and physiognomy as to honesty.

¹Ibid., pp. 79-110.

Extension workers need to improve their methods in interviewing to improve the reliability and validity of the data it yields. This can be done in part by gaining an insight into the nature of the interviewing process and an understanding of his peculiar limitations, its common errors, and its proper uses. Constant practice using good methods and techniques and critically analyzing each interview will give impetus toward proficiency.

Interpreting the Interview

The interviewer's first aim is to understand as fully as possible the interviewee's problem. To do this successfully the interviewer must interpret the many clues which the interviewee presents through his behavior and conversation. The interviewee's questions and answers, the things he does and does not do, and the information collected about him are essentially raw material until they are invested with appropriate meanings. The assignment of meaning to individual factors goes on continuously during the interview.¹ It has already been shown that bias, inattention, partial or misleading clues, and nervousness all lead the interviewer to attach false meaning to data.

The experienced interviewer will constantly be framing hypotheses as to the basic factors in the case confronting him, testing these, rejecting most of them, tentatively retaining others, seeking further confirmation and so on.² It may be necessary to probe deeper into some situations in order to understand the true meaning and reveal the facts in true perspective. Often interpretation consists in opening lines of communication between two previously isolated compartments of thought. "Emphasis should always be on withholding judgment until enough data has been collected to confirm, disprove or at least make questionable any hypothesis the interviewer may have."³

Moyer states four steps in interpreting an employment interview. They are:

1. Determine the meanings of the findings. Consider everything the applicant says as evidence of kind of person he is. Discover as far as possible his desires and expectations.
2. Check the reliability of these facts and impressions. This is partly judged by tone and inflection of applicant's voice, his gestures, hesitations, and so on. (These inferences are subject to serious error). Also compare facts to information on application blank, home visits, former employers or school records.

¹Frances S. Drake, Manual of Employment Interviewing, p. 44. Research Report IX, American Management Association, New York:

²Garrett, op cit., p. 47.

³Drake, op. cit., p. 45.

3. Evaluate the findings and determine the favorable and unfavorable indications of fitness for the job. Does not meet the job requirements.
4. Consider the over-all findings and decide upon the acceptability of the applicant. Making decision involves weighing the individual against the over-all job.¹

Interpretation is a powerful tool provided it is used skillfully and with perfect timing. For the interviewer to interpret for himself is essential; for him to pass his interpretations on the interviewee is usually inadvisable. In general, by encouraging the interviewee to give details more freely, the interviewer helps him see for himself the relationships between the various things he has said and how it points the way to the solution of his problem.

Recording the Interview

Recording each interview is an important step in the total process. First, it provides permanent records for future reference to be used to check personal growth of the agent and progress of the county program. Time can be saved in planning subsequent interviews by reviewing record of previous interviews. The record also provides clues for improvement in interviewing techniques. Failure in one interview may be attributed to bad luck, but in many cases, it can often be traced to flaws in techniques. Good records will provide pertinent data collected during the interview.

One of the most difficult problems in recording is that of distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant facts and between facts and inferences.² When recording the results of the interview, one must guard against the tendency toward over simplification and generalization, and difference between fact and impression must be kept in mind.

The technique for recording exact statements and at the same time to keep the interview moving is almost an impossibility. The best suggestion is to note the key words of the reply or statement and as soon as the interview is over fill in the rest of the words to give complete meaning. Extension workers who take shorthand have a decided advantage in recording interviews. There may be a few pertinent comments made by the interviewee that really amplify or explain his point of view. It may be wise to record statements of this nature verbatim.

The human memory is a most unreliable record-keeping device. Human memory is a tricky thing as anyone who has had any experience in hearing the testimony of eye witnesses to events has learned. One only cannot remember very long the details of what happened but tends to look at things from different viewpoints. There is also a tendency to fill in the gaps and some facts move forward and take a more prominent position in the record than they actually did in the interview.

Great care needs to be taken in compiling records of interviews. It must be remembered that verbal symbols do not betray feelings. Words do

¹N.A. Moyer, "Interpreting the Interview," Personnel, XXIV (March, 1948), 391-92

²Strang op. Cit., p. 79.

not tell how spoken whether emphatically or hesitantly. A recorder may give the wrong impression of the results by distorting words to conform with his own attitudes or opinions. There also is a tendency to select and record short and unusual statements that come up more than other statements that are less colorful or short but are equally important. A final word of caution is to keep all data collected from interviews as free as possible from own interpretations when making records.

The interviewer should plan time immediately after each interview for completing records. This involves filling in the gaps, writing summary of findings and conclusions. It is time consuming but a very good investment of time as it provides permanent records and a check on the effectiveness of the interview and the interviewer.

Evaluation

In spite of the frequent use of the interview in personnel work, little sound research has been published in this area. Much lore, many opinions, and numerous assumptions and hypotheses about the interviewing process exist. Many of these are frequently practices; some have found their way into the literature of personnel as the dicta of recognized authority. Few, if any, of these opinions, principles and techniques have been put to the crucial test of unbiased research. There is a real need to test the values of some of the more popular concepts about the conduct of the personal interview.

It is highly desirable that methods and procedures used in interviewing be evaluated for their effectiveness. However, before evaluation, there must of necessity be a means of identifying these procedures with the effect they produce. Numerous articles and books attempt to itemize and set forth descriptively those interviewing procedures or techniques which appear to be useful and those to be avoided. There are records of some attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of these procedures but the results are based on such a small number of cases so cannot be considered conclusive in any way.

There is need for skillful experimental work in which the interview may be compared with other methods of accomplishing specific purposes, such as obtaining information, the changing of attitudes, and influencing of behavior. From investigations of this kind, the specific purposes for which the interview is the most effective technic to use may be ascertained.

Empirical analysis was conducted by comparing a number of interviews. The interview has meaningful structure in the minds of the interviewee and interviewer and its beginning and end are definite. After reading an interview, the judge can rate the general types of techniques used as well as the degree to which certain outcomes, e.g., rapport, insight, etc., are present. No analysis of the moment-to-moment dynamics within the interview is possible. That is over-all ratings can indicate the general interviewing plan used and whether the interview was effective or ineffective, but this approach cannot very well get at the dynamics of how it happened. It was found that interviewers varied their techniques from interview to interview, from interviewee to interviewee, and from problem to problem. What the interviewer does in any interview is guided by certain basic principles.

There is no agreement on all the principles, some are generally accepted and some generally not accepted. It appears that the selection of principles are achieved with practice.¹

Each interviewer needs to review and consider what he has accomplished in each interview to improve his effectiveness. This should be done very critically, note its excellent features so they can be readily used again as occasion requires, and to select weak spots to be corrected. Before each new interview it is well to think out some one way in which to improve on earlier performances. Two common means of evaluating one's effectiveness in interviewing are:

1. A detailed comparison of one's own more successful and less successful interview. This comparison discloses the particular features needing most attention.
2. A comparison of one's procedures with those of others engaged in similar work also serves to indicate the direction of an increasingly effective method.

The scientific study or evaluation of the interview presents many difficulties, namely:

1. It is difficult to obtain for analysis specimen interviews under natural circumstances.
2. The complexity of the technic makes generalizations almost impossible. There is very wide variation in stimuli and responses.
3. Each interview is unique as well as complex. It is impossible to develop any standardized or stereotyped procedures.
4. There is a lack of criteria for determining success in interviews.²

Each interview is an opportunity to get new ideas about human nature (in oneself and others), about policies, current situations and problems. Just as meanings are assigned throughout the interview to emerging information, so the findings, as interpreted are evaluated continually as a basis for a final decision. The ease and speed with which particular factors can be assessed varies. The total evaluation is not a simple arithmetic sum or average of the separate judgments about the various factors in the interview. It is the end result of delicate weighing and balancing of the separate judgments. This continuity of evaluation throughout the interview removes uncertainty of results.

It is an easier task to evaluate the effectiveness of an interview than to evaluate the techniques used. The effectiveness of the interview is proportional to the care with which it has been planned in advance and to the spontaneity and sympathetic understanding with which it is actually carried through. The accumulated experience and wisdom of the interviewer will contribute to the effectiveness of most interviews.

¹E. H. Porter, "The Development and Evaluation of a Measure of Counseling Interview Procedures," Educational and Psychological Measurement, III (Summer, 1942), 105-26

²Strang, op. cit., pp. 61-62

Progress in evaluation will be slow until extension workers come to recognize interviewing as a learning situation which can be investigated by the methods developed for evaluating other learning situations. These methods involve the specification of the objectives of learning that are to be achieved, the specification of the means of achieving these objectives, the selection of criteria for determining whether the learning objectives have been achieved, and provisions for the control of relevant variables. Until more studies of interviewing are undertaken following these steps, there will be little certain knowledge of what interviewing is actually accomplishing.

Extension workers can well improve their method of definitely and clearly stating the objectives of the interview. At the present time they overemphasize the sheer mechanics of interviewing as an end in itself and try to have it serve too many needs. Until objectives have been clearly defined little can be done to evaluate the outcome of interviews.

This chapter has defined and discussed the basic component parts of the entire interviewing process. Most of what has been written represents expression of opinion only. Few, if any, of the statements made could be closely documented or conclusively substantiated by concrete experimental evidence. Most of the statements were subscribed to by practically all authors in the field whose literature was reviewed; on others there were some disagreement. The one thing on which all authors certainly would agree is that the principles, methods and techniques here considered represent the kinds to which interviewers generally should devote a greater share of their attention in order to become more proficient in interviewing.

The principles, methods, and techniques suggested are in no way dogmatic. However, if at times they have appeared or seemed that way in character may itself contribute to the central purpose of stimulating more critical considerations of the facts presented.

The concluding chapter will attempt to apply the principles, methods and techniques presented in this chapter to the eminently practical topic of "How to Conduct an Interview." The basic steps as presented will serve merely as a guide for interviewing and a means for summarizing the principles, methods and techniques discussed in the foregoing chapters.

¹ Robert M. Travers, "A Critical Review of Techniques for Evaluating Guidance," Educational and Psychological Measurement, IX (Summer, 1949), 211-25.

CHAPTER IV

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING

"When I am confronted with a complete situation involving the interaction of people, what people say is necessarily an important part of the data from which I have to make a diagnosis. Therefore, my first object is to get people to talk freely and frankly about matters which are important to them. . . . In the interview I use a number of simple rules or ideas. I listen. I do not interrupt. I refrain from asking moral judgments about the opinions expressed. I do not express my own opinions, beliefs, or sentiments. I avoid argument at all costs. I do this by seeing to it that the speaker's sentiments do not react on my own."¹

The interviewer who seeks a precise formula on "how to interview" is fated to disappointment. There can never be one complete set of rules or one guide to fit all interviews. There must be as many variations in interviewing methods and techniques as there are individual problems. Each problem demands that combination of methods and tools best suited to assist the individual in its solution. It should be clearly understood that the suggestions to be offered are but several basic steps and methods which may be employed as the habitual core of an entirely flexible interviewing process. No assumption of originality is being made--all have been used. The writer felt the need of bringing together the various methods and presenting them as a workable guide in extension interviewing.

Aristotle supplied the basic elements of structure for the interview in his simple statement that everything has a beginning, a middle, and an ending. In the discussion that follows the structure of the interview will for convenience be broken down into six basic steps. This guide may be followed by interviewers as the foundation of his interviewing techniques. In actual interviewing these steps are not discrete; one phase ends and another begins without a break, and often they overlap. The lines of approach indicated are practical guides which in the past have proved consistently successful in achieving the aims of the counseling interview.

Guide for Interviewing

- I. Preparing for the Interview
 - A. Gather necessary information and study data before interview.
 - B. Decide just what needs to be accomplished.
 - C. Define goals or objectives wherever possible.

¹Roethlisberger, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

- D. Prepare a schedule or plan for the interview. Plan questions but do not proceed by merely using a series of questions. It is sometimes helpful to have a list of questions to indicate areas to be explored. Chart course as far as possible by jotting down key points.
- E. Make definite appointment. This allows agent time to prepare for the interview. Since all interviewing time is doubly valuable in that it requires the time of two people--it should be used effectively.

II. Setting for the Interview.

- A. Provide an adequate setting. The place can do much to increase the effectiveness of the interview.
- B. Provide privacy. Have as relatively free from interruptions and distractions as possible.
- C. Provide good working conditions--files, records.
- D. Present a cordial and efficient reception. A relaxed friendly, unhurried atmosphere is necessary if agent is to be made to feel at ease.

III. Starting the Interview.

- A. Open the interview informally. The initial contact is important because it produces certain psychological momentum, arousing either favorable or unfavorable responses.
- B. Establish and maintain confidential relations. Gain and deserve the agents confidence.
- C. Explore and analyze the obvious problem and search for deeper causes or difficulties. The problem stated is not always the real problem.
- D. Define the problem as clearly as possible.
- E. Take as few notes as possible during the interview.

IV. Keeping the Interview Moving

- A. Ask questions. The central method of interviewing is the fine art of questioning.
 1. Phrase questions so they are easily understood.
 2. Avoid implying answer in your question.
 3. Never imply what you think is the correct answer.
 4. Do not probe too deeply.

- B. Listen with intelligence and sympathy. Listening is one of the fundamental operations of interviewing. The supervisor's silence may be his best contribution.
- C. Cultivate self understanding. Assist agent to an objective realistic recognition of his problem. This is the fundamental learning step of any interview. Do not force interpretations or impose judgment. Give the agent a chance to explain, qualify, and interpret his statements.
- D. Observe and watch for casual remarks, clues, what agent says and does not say. Be on alert for signs of tension, confusion and embarrassment. Much may be gained from observation as well as verbal responses.
- E. Give leadership and direction. The interviewer unobtrusively directs the interview throughout, decide when to listen, when to talk, and what to observe, and at times may have to pull the client back from conversational byways.
- F. Use imagination to evoke meaning. Learn to interpret gestures, expressions manners, inflection, pauses, and ways of responding. Give the agent a chance to be proud of himself.
- G. Render a real service to the agent. Do not miss an opportunity to be genuinely helpful.
- H. Observe these general reminders.
 - 1. Examine and discount your own prejudices, desires, and pet theories.
 - 2. Separate facts from inferences.
 - 3. Be "shockproof" --don't be startled or show surprise.
 - 4. Face facts objectively; avoid sympathy; encourage empathy.
 - 5. Avoid generalizations.
 - 6. Don't jump to conclusions.
 - 7. Don't be cramped for time.
 - 8. Don't make moral judgments.
- V. Closing the Interview.
 - A. Give agent ample opportunity to ask questions.

- B. Check carefully to see that most, if not all, of the important aspects of the problem have been explored and discussed.
- C. Formulate a course of action. Agent encouraged to explore several alternative sources of action before reaching a final decision. Have agent think through carefully the possible outcomes of certain courses of action. Agent formulates the plan.
- D. Summarize topics discussed and plans made. Have agent summarize as this contributes to the learning aspect and helps clarify for him the specific things he is to do.
- E. Close skillfully. This is not an easy task. Do not drag out--do not bargain--close tactfully and skillfully.

VI. What Follows the Interview.

- A. Interpret and record the interview. The important aspects should be recorded at once. Record pertinent comments made by agent, final plans made, outcome of interview, and plans for follow-up work where necessary.
- B. Evaluate the interview. Check the effectiveness of the interview and your own effectiveness. State what was achieved. This step is easily and often neglected.
- C. Follow up to see that plans were carried out.

The basic steps for conducting an interview as here outlined represent the thinking of several authors as reviewed in current literature and the writer's personal experience. The outline has served two purposes: (1) A guide for conducting an interview and (2) A means of recapitulating the basic principles, methods and techniques subscribed to in previous chapters of the paper.

Concluding Statements

Actual practice is indispensable in learning how to interview. It is a slow and time consuming process unless the interviewer has some general guideposts to give direction and help systematize his experiences. Experience alone will not teach one to become a good interviewer. Unguided experience may serve to establish undesirable habits and make them very difficult to eradicate. It is hoped that the basic steps as outlined will serve as a guide to the inexperienced interviewer and will interest experienced interviewers to the extent that they will compare and refine their own procedure.

The fact that interviews bring to light new knowledge of purposes and needs as well as new information about relevant facts implies that the interviewer should not let his plan of action be unalterably fixed in advance.

A great amount of flexibility in every plan for interviewing is always desirable.

"Success in interviewing is attained by discovering, mastering, and integrating the many specific habits, skills, and techniques required in order to formulate clearly the purpose of the particular interview, to plan its course intelligently, and to carry through its successive steps, from first approach to final write up, expeditiously and well."¹

The task of the interviewer is no casual one. Every professionally minded extension worker needs to strive for continuous growth in competence in the field of interviewing. This can best be done if the extension worker:

1. Approaches interviewing in a spirit of inquiry, seeking always new and better ways.
2. Evinces a lively interest in what others are learning and doing, to determine how such knowledge and practice can be useful to him.
3. Shares his own finding with his co-workers.
4. Appraises his thinking and performances in the light of the results he achieves in his interviews.
5. Reads standard literature, as well as current books, periodicals and pamphlets related to interviewing and to the larger field of personnel management.
6. Manifests an experimental and open-minded attitude toward tests and other devices being developed to assist in interviewing.

Extension workers improving in these and other ways, not only recognizes "the challenge of interviewing," but goes a long way toward meeting that challenge.

The writer has endeavored to define aims and objectives of interviewing as a method in Extension supervision; to present an analysis and critique of methods of interviewing; to emphasize the different kinds of interviews most commonly employed in extension; to identify the basic principles, procedures, techniques and limitations of the interview; and has summarized the material by formulating a tentative guide for extension agent interviewing which can be explored, tested, refined and improved with practice.

The material herein presented represents both a philosophy and a technique. The philosophy points to the recognition of each extension worker as a unique individual and the evaluation of the worker as a whole in connection with his job. The technique provides one of the means of accomplishing the objectives of Extension Work. The responsibility for the successful application of the methods rest upon the training, experience, and skill of the extension worker.

¹Bingham and Moore, op. cit., p. 43.

Extension workers skilled in interviewing are needed today as never before because of the complexity of modern society. Each day and each person brings new challenges and involments. Many of these problems confronting extension workers are too involved and personal to permit them to venture advice. Yet every extension worker can counsel safely if he will confine himself to guiding people's thinking through the maze of the emotions, the causes, and the effects of the situation that trouble them, into a plan for a solution. The truth of it is that no one is wise enough to be able to solve the problems of another person. Extension workers merely help people see a way to solve their own problems. It is another method for extension to use in helping people to help themselves.

APPENDIX

Employee Rating Report

Date _____

Name _____ Telephone Number _____

Address of Applicant _____

Applicant for position of: _____

Directions: This rating scale has been designed to furnish a record of your careful judgment concerning the applicants interviewed. Make each judgment as honestly and objectively as you can. Phrases show three degrees of the trait. Check the one most appropriate to describe the trait of applicant.

Personal Traits

1. Voice and Speech	Exceptionally clear and pleasing <input type="checkbox"/>	Pleasant; good tone <input type="checkbox"/>	Unpleasant and indistinct <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Appearance	Impressive; commands admiration <input type="checkbox"/>	Suitable, acceptable <input type="checkbox"/>	Unfavorable impression <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Friendliness	Inspirer of personal loyalty and devotion <input type="checkbox"/>	Approachable Likeable <input type="checkbox"/>	Keeps people at a distance <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Alertness	Exceptionally keen and quick to understand <input type="checkbox"/>	Nearly always grasps intent of question <input type="checkbox"/>	Slow to understand. Requires explanation <input type="checkbox"/>

<p>5. Ability to express self</p>	<p>Logical, clear and convincing</p>	<p>Gets ideas across fairly well</p>	<p>Confused, illogical</p>
<p>6. Judgment</p>	<p>Soundness of judgment</p>	<p>Acts judiciously in ordinary circumstances</p>	<p>Notably lacking in balance and strength</p>
<p>7. Emotional stability</p>	<p>Exceptional poise, calmness and good humor under stress</p>	<p>Well poised most of the time</p>	<p>Overly sensitive, easily disconcerted</p>
<p>8. Self confidence</p>	<p>Shows superior self-assurance</p>	<p>Moderately confident of himself</p>	<p>Timid, hesitant, easily influenced</p>
<p>9. Ambition</p>	<p>Excellent motivation plans for making progress</p>	<p>Wants to work; wants to get ahead</p>	<p>Ambitions not in line with job</p>
<p>10. Personality</p>	<p>Outstanding personality for the job</p>	<p>Satisfactory for job</p>	<p>Not suitable for job</p>

Comments:

Disposition: (a) Recommends for Employment _____
(b) Would not Offer Employment _____
(c) Offer Employment with Reservations _____

Interviewer's Signature

Note: To be attached and filed with written application of applicant.

How Can I Evaluate My Effectiveness in Interviewing

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Did I prepare adequately for the interview?			
2. Did I make it possible and easy for the agent to make full use of interview situation?			
3. Did I help free agent from tension or fear that might block clear understanding and constructive action?			
4. Did I help agent grow in self-understanding?			
5. Was the real problem identified and examined?			
6. Was a possible and satisfying course of action planned?			
7. Were other resources identified and used?			
8. Was plan made for follow-up?			
9. Was a record made of the interview?			
10. Was plan of action carried out? (To be checked later)			

Agent _____ County _____ Date _____

Supervisor _____

Rating the Interview

Place a check in the blank space that best describes the situation.

1. Length
Adequate _____ Too short _____ Too long _____
2. Amount of talking
Time well proportioned _____
Agent talked too much _____
Supervisor talked too much _____
3. Interview controlled by
Supervisor _____ Agent _____ Neither _____
4. Direction
Agent given every opportunity to express himself _____
Agent given some opportunity to express himself _____
Agent given little opportunity to express himself _____
5. Action or movement
Interesting, good continuity, well directed _____
Some interesting spots _____
Monotonous, aimless and poor continuity _____
6. Semantics
Very appropriate _____ Inappropriate _____
7. Responsibility for problem solving
Supervisor gave full responsibility to agent _____
Supervisor shared the responsibility _____
Supervisor assumed most of the responsibility _____
8. Problem recognition
Superficial _____ Some real problems discussed _____
Very adequate _____
9. Response to supervisor
Agent responded easily _____
Agent responded sometimes _____
Agent resisted, would not respond _____
10. Rapport
High level of rapport _____ varied _____ poor _____
11. Interaction discussion
A great deal _____ Some _____ Very Little _____
12. Did supervisor pave way for follow-up
Adequately: _____ Somewhat _____ Poorly _____

Note: Check list to be used by both interviewer and interviewee.

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