

Interviewing Techniques

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Cal State Northridge
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Interviewing

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- Many fields rely on interviews to gather information and/or for decision making purposes when people are involved
 - Psychology (obviously), but not just clinical
 - Counseling
 - Forensic
 - Industrial/Organizational
 - Business
 - Research
 - Law
 - Contractors

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Goals of Interviewing

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- An interview is like a test
 - Gather Data
 - Make Predictions
 - Can ascertain reliability
 - Can ascertain validity
 - Can be administered to groups or individuals
 - Can be structured or unstructured

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Goals of Interviewing

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- An interview is like a test
 - Some interviews can be stand-alone tests themselves
 - Employment interviews
 - Psychiatric Interviews
 - Medical histories
 - Often used in conjunction or to augment other tests
 - Thematic Apperception Test has an interview

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Goals of Interviewing

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- Establish rapport
- Gather information efficiently
- Form clinical impressions
- Supplement testing information

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Reciprocal Nature of Interviewing

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- Because interviews involve interactions between people it's natural that both of the participants are affected
- In criminal investigations (Akehurst and Vrij, 1999) if the suspect become more "active" this leads to the interrogator to become more "active" and vice versa
- This can inadvertently lead to the suspect to be viewed more suspiciously

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Reciprocal Nature of Interviewing

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- Other studies (e.g. Heller, 1971) have shown that when actors responded with anger to highly trained interviewers, the interviewers reported becoming angry themselves
- This process of mutual influence during an interview is known as *social facilitation*

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Reciprocal Nature of Interviewing

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- Social Facilitation
 - We tend to act like those around us.
 - If the interviewer is tense, the interviewee will be tense; if the interviewer is relaxed, the interviewee will be relaxed.
 - Works during interviews, as well as during crisis interventions or anytime people interact for extended periods of time
 - Also seen in social and developmental psychology

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Reciprocal Nature of Interviewing

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- Social Facilitation
 - Since social facilitation has a strong behavioral influence on both the interviewer and the interviewee it is easy to see that it can lead to bias in an interview
 - A "good" interviewer will be aware of the power of social facilitation and remain calm and in control regardless of the interviewee's behavior

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- > Proper attitude
 - > interpersonal influence
 - > the degree to which one person can influence another
 - > is related to interpersonal attraction
 - > the degree to which people share a feeling of understanding, mutual respect, similarity

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- > Most important factor in patients' evaluation of interviews: their perceptions of the interviewer's feelings.
 - > When the interviewer was seen as cold, defensive, uninterested, uninvolved, aloof, or bored, interviews were seen as "poor."
 - > When the interviewer was seen as warm, open, concerned, involved, committed, and interested, these interviews were seen as "good."

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- > Responses to avoid in an interview
 - > Those that increase stress
 - > Judgmental statements
 - > Puts interviewees on guard
 - > communicates approval or disapproval of the interviewee
 - > Evaluative statements
 - > also communicates approval or disapproval
 - > may inhibit self-disclosure if interviewee feels that their statements are being evaluated

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- Responses to avoid in an interview
 - Probing statements should be used carefully
 - Avoid: "Why..." questions
 - Causes defensive responses
 - May require respondent to reveal more than they comfortable revealing
 - At times, probing statements are necessary but should be made with care.
 - In general, "how's" are better than "why's"

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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Poor	Better
Why did you yell at him?	1. Tell me more about what happened. 2. How did you happen to yell at him? 3. What led up to this situation?
Why did you say that?	1. Can you tell me what you mean? 2. I'm not sure I understand. 3. How did you happen to say that?
Why can't you sleep?	1. Tell me more about you sleeping problem. 2. Can you identify what keeps you from sleeping? 3. How is it that you are unable to sleep?

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- Responses to avoid in an interview
 - Hostile statements
 - unnecessary if trying to gather information
 - may be used in a "stress interview" but not to be done without experience in this area
 - False reassurance
 - Do not give a person reassurance when it is possibly unwarranted
 - "Everything will be alright."

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- Effective Responses
 - Open-ended questions
 - those that cannot be answered specifically
 - are better than closed-ended questions
 - those that can be answered specifically
 - Open-ended questions promote the flow of information, provide a wide range of area for the interviewee and interviewer to explore.
 - However, sometimes closed-ended questions are necessary (e.g. specific info, non-response, children, etc.)

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Asking the right questions ...

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- Interviewing skills require not only knowing what questions to ask, but also *how to ask them*.
 - Does your baby have any problems sleeping?
vs.
 - What time does she usually go down for the evening? Does she sleep through the night? How many times does she awaken during the evening? How easily does she get back to sleep. When is she up for the day? Is she a morning + afternoon napper or just a once-a-day napper? How long does she nap for? Do you ever have to awaken her for meals?

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- Other ways to keep interactions flowing
 - Transitional phrases
 - Verbatim playback
 - Paraphrasing and restatement
 - Summarizing
 - Clarifying
 - Empathizing / Demonstrating understanding

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Principles of Effective Interviewing

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- Other ways to keep interactions flowing
 - Transitional phrases
 - "I see"... "Um hm"
 - sometimes are not effective
 - best to back up to something relevant to what the interviewee just said
- Verbatim playback
 - Repeats information that interviewee just stated
 - Reinforces the fact that you are listening
 - Also useful in that using the interviewee's words "connects" you to the interviewee

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Interviewing Skills: Active Listening

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- Paraphrasing / Restatement
 - rephrasing the content of what has been said
 - reinforces the fact that you are, in fact, listening
 - "checks in" with the client, to make sure that you've interpreted the information correctly.
- Summarizing
 - paraphrasing combined with reflection
 - pulls together the meaning of several responses
 - used to organize previous information
 - can be used to direct the interview

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Interviewing Skills: Active Listening

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- Clarification
 - asking questions to better understand statements made during interview
- Reflection / Empathy / Understanding
 - rephrasing the *feelings associated with what has been said*
 - reinforces listening
 - verifies feelings

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Interviewing Skills: Active Listening

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- Quantifying understanding
 - Carl Rogers 5-point understanding scale based on degree of empathy
 - Levels 1 and 2 represent no or superficial understanding
 - Level 3 requires enough understanding to be able to repeat back what the other person has said
 - Minimum level sufficient for effective interviewing

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Interviewing Skills: Active Listening

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- Quantifying understanding
 - Level 4 responses include not only accurate levels of empathy but the response adds “noticeably” to the interviewee’s response
 - E.g. the empathize and understand to well that they can state the interviewee’s emotions as well or better than they can
 - Level 5 responses include not only accurate levels of empathy but the response adds “substantially” to the interviewee’s response

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Initial Interview Objectives

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- Some Examples...
 - Identifying information
 - Reason for referral
 - Referral source
 - Parental objectives
 - Family History
 - Prenatal history
 - Perinatal history
 - Postnatal period
 - Infancy
 - Developmental milestones
 - Medical History
 - Abuse
 - Treatment history
 - School history
 - Social History
 - Current behavioral concerns
 - Diagnostic criteria

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Types of Interviews

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- 4 general types:
 - Evaluation/Diagnostic Interview
 - Structured Clinical Interview
 - Case History Interview
 - Mental Status Examination

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Types of Interviews

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- Evaluation/Diagnostic Interview
 - Unstructures or semi-structured interviews
 - Start of with open-ended questions
 - Maintain an atmosphere of “listening, facilitating and clarifying”
 - Utilizes *confrontation* in which the interviewer points out an discrepancy or inconsistency
 - Between IS and WANTS TO BE
 - Between SAYS and DOES
 - Between respondents PERCEPTION and interviewers EXPERIENCE

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Types of Interviews

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- Evaluation/Diagnostic Interview
 - Details can be filled later with more direct, closed-ended questions
 - But this should only occur if:
 - Data cannot be obtained another way
 - Time is limited
 - The respondent is not cooperative

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Types of Interviews

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- **Structured Clinical Interview**
 - Specific set of questions in a set order combined with a specific set of rules as to probing etc.
 - Follows the diagnostic criteria for disorders defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* version III (1980) and later
 - It makes sense that if the disorder have specific criteria for diagnosis a set of questions should help to identify the criteria

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Types of Interviews

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- **Structured Clinical Interview**
 - Unfortunately assumes that respondents are being honest and capable of self-observation
 - One of the first was the Structured Clinical Interview for the DSM-III (SCID)
 - Other examples:
 - Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children
 - Referral Decision Scale
 - Diagnostic Interview Schedule
 - Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale

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Types of Interviews

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- **Case History Interview/Biographical Sketch**
 - With open-ended interviews you can learn a great deal about a respondent and what is important to him/her
 - Case histories fill in the rest of the info that doesn't come up in the other interviews
 - Typically is made up of primarily direct (closed-ended) questions so stylistically different as well

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Types of Interviews

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- Case History Interview/Biographical Sketch
 - Should include:
 - Work history
 - Medical history
 - Family information and family history – especially members that have similar difficulties
 - Major life events
 - Education
 - Often computerized but lacks facial and body language info

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Types of Interviews

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- Mental Status Examination
 - Used primarily to diagnose psychosis, brain damage and other major mental problems
 - Examination includes info on the person's
 - Appearance
 - Attitudes
 - General Behavior
 - Emotions (e.g. dominant, appropriate, fluctuating, flat)
 - Intelligence
 - Attention

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Interviewing Issues

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- Developing Skills
 - Can you learn to be a good interviewer?
 - Many rules and skills have to be together with a lot of practice.
- Interview Reliability
 - Inter-Interviewer reliability has been reported to fluctuate wildly and it's thought that this is because of differential goals(e.g. positives vs. negatives)
 - Validity studies need to have the interviews focus on specifics

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Interviewing Issues

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> Interview Validity

- > Halo effect - an evaluation made during an initial interaction "clouds" later evaluations
- > General Standoutishness - one primary characteristic causes bias and prevents objectivity (e.g. grooming, attractiveness)
- > Culture - Can an interviewer from one culture accurately evaluate a respondent from another culture?
 - > Eye contact (Japanese, Arabs and; African Americans and WhiteAmericans)

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