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Psychiatric Interviewing Techniques III. Naturalistic Study: Eliciting Feelings

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Summary: A naturalistic study was undertaken of 36 video and audio-taped interviews undertaken by 7 different psychiatric trainees. The interviews studied were those conducted in the ordinary course of clinic work for diagnostic and therapeutic planning purposes by trainees when first seeing the parent or parents of a child newly referred to a psychiatric clinic. It was found that a variety of rather different interview techniques seemed to facilitate emotional expression. These included a low level of interview talk with few interruptions, a high rate of open rather than closed questions, direct requests for feelings, interpretations and expressions of sympathy. The issue of how far these associations reflected causal influences is discussed.

An essential requirement in the initial interview with the parents of a child referred to a psychiatric clinic is that sufficient feelings, emotions and attitudes be expressed for the clinician to be able to assess the nature and quality of family relationships, to evaluate the parents' feelings about particular behaviours and happenings in the family, and to determine their attitudes to clinic referral and their response to the therapist (Rutter, 1975; Cox and Rutter, 1977). Quite subtle distinctions between different emotions may be needed and, of course, it is essential to differentiate the directions of expressed feelings in dyads (i.e. mother to father as well as father to mother); to differentiate between the several possible dyads (i.e. between the two parents as well as between parent and child); and to consider possible non-dyadic alliances and conflicts. In order to make these assessments it may often be desirable to interview the whole family together, as well as seeing individual members separately, so that those interactions may be observed as they occur. However, basic to all these interviews is the question of which interview styles or techniques are most likely to encourage informants to express their feelings freely. That is the issue tackled in the study reported here. Individuals vary in how many clues they give concerning their inner feelings so that it is important for interviewers to have in their repertoire a range of techniques to elicit emotions (Pope, 1979). Our purpose was to determine which techniques might serve that purpose.

Methods

The basic research strategy involved a naturalistic study of interviews by psychiatric trainees with the parents of child patients at a psychiatric clinic (Rutter and Cox, 1981). By determining the statistical associations between various defined characteristics of interview techniques or methods and various interview 'outcome' measures, it was possible to find out which features of clinical interviewing were linked with the more successful eliciting of feelings and emotions. A comparison paper (Cox *et al*, 1981 II) describes the findings with respect to the techniques associated with the more successful gathering of relevant factual information.

All the interviews were conducted by psychiatric trainees with at least eighteen months psychiatric experience. The interviews were those conducted in the ordinary course of clinic work for diagnostic and therapeutic planning purposes by the trainees when first seeing the parent or parents of a child newly referred to the Maudsley Hospital psychiatric outpatients department. All interviews were video and audio-tape recorded in the same interview room (see Rutter and Cox, 1981 for details).

Conjoint family interviews and interviews with either immigrant parents or parents who did not speak colloquial English at home were excluded. No other case selection was employed. The analysis was undertaken with 36 interviews given by 7 different psychiatrists. There were 25 joint interviews with both parents together and 11 single interviews (9 with mothers and 2 with fathers). Two of the individual interviews were the mother and father of the same child and occurred sequentially on the same morning; they were treated as separate interviews. Most

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analyses were based on the first 30 minutes of each interview in order to provide a comparable time base. The findings for joint and for individual interviews were always examined separately in the first instance and combined only when no differences between them were found.

The scoring of the interviews was undertaken by either of two observers (A.C. and K.H.) who had been the raters in the reliability study (Rutter and Cox, 1981).

Results

In presenting the findings all expressions of feelings are considered together. The results are usually expressed just in terms of mothers. It seemed unwarranted to pool the sexes because not only did mothers talk more than fathers (Cox *et al*, 1981 II) but also they expressed more feelings (mean score on first 30 minutes 24.5 vs 12.9 for joint interviews; $t = 4.39$; df 24; $P < 0.001$). However, the results for fathers were always analysed in the same way and the pattern of associations found was generally similar. Interestingly, although the two parents differed in terms of the feelings expressed, they did not differ in levels of self-disclosure (mean score for 25 joint interviews: 3.84 for mothers compared with 3.48 for fathers; $t = 0.31$; df 24; N.S.).

The first question to be examined was how far the amount parents talked was related to how much feeling they expressed. This was important because we had already found that the style of interviewing was associated with marked differences in the amount of talk by parents (Cox *et al*, 1981 II). Table I shows a positive product-moment correlation of .66 in the joint interview and .46 in the individual interviews between the amount of talk by mothers (measured in terms of lines of transcript in the first 30 minutes) and the number of feelings expressed in the first 30 minutes. Thus, the more mothers spoke, the more likely they were to show emotions. The same applied to fathers.

TABLE I
Amount of talk and feelings expressed

Amount parental talk	Feelings expressed r
Amount of talk mother (joint, n = 25)	.66***
Amount of talk mother (indiv., n = 9)	.46
Duration of floorholding: mother (joint, n = 25)	.47*
Duration of floorholding: mother (indiv., n = 9)	.48

* P < .02.
*** P < .01.

Clearly, there was a danger that any correlation between amount of talk and expression of feelings could simply reflect the fact that the more words spoken the greater the chance to express feelings. The method of scoring we used was designed to reduce this possibility. In order to avoid the chance of a single expression of feeling being scored several times simply because it was manifest in a flood of words, the scoring rule was that only one type of feeling could be scored in a single floorholding. However, in that feelings could be either positive or negative and might be directed towards the spouse, the interviewer or any of the children, a long floorholding could give rise to several separate and different expressions of feeling.

The strong correlation between informant talkativeness and number of feelings expressed suggests that if the interviewer wishes to increase the expression of feelings, it is worthwhile to encourage the informant to talk for some time without undue interruptions.

This implication is tested more directly in Tables II and III which provide the product-moment correlations between various measures of interviewer

TABLE II
Interviewer activity and feelings expressed (individual interviews with mother, n = 9)

Interviewer activity	Number of feelings expressed r
Amount of talk by interviewer	−.69*
% interviewer talk	−.59
No. of floorholdings	−.52
No. of topics raised	−.31
% open questions	.27
Ratio open:closed questions	.20

* P < .02.

TABLE III
Interviewer activity and feelings expressed (joint interviews with mothers, n = 25)

Interviewer activity	Number of feelings expressed r
Amount of talk by interviewer	−.19
% interviewer talk	−.42
No. of floorholdings	−.23
No. of topics raised	−.22
% open questions	.45**
Ratio open:closed questions	.44*

* P < 0.05.
** P < 0.02.

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activity and the number of feelings expressed. The correlations are only moderate but the general trend is for *less* feelings to be expressed when interviewers intervene a great deal and for *more* feelings to be expressed when there is a high proportion of open questions. In general, it seems that the interviewer actions associated with an increased amount of talking by informants are also those associated with more expression of feelings.

Interviewer actions immediately followed by expression of feeling

The variables considered in the above section mainly dealt with overall levels of interviewer activity and directiveness and the total number of feelings expressed. It was also necessary to examine the *immediate* parental responses which followed specific interviewer actions. This was done by noting the parental behaviour which occurred directly after various specific interviewer actions often thought to increase emotional expression. The proportion in which feelings were expressed were compared with the proportion found in parental responses to other sorts of interviewer action (see Table IV). A chi-square test with Yates correction was used. Four actions (direct requests for feelings, interpretations, expressions of sympathy and open questions) all elicited feelings in over two-fifths of the succeeding informant statements compared with about one fifth of statements following other interviewer actions. It appeared that these actions tended to encourage informants to respond with some kind of expression of emotional feeling.

However, before this could be concluded it was necessary to examine the *context* of the interviewer actions. It was possible, for example, that interpretations were often followed by expressed feelings simply because interpretations tended to be given at a time when informants were already showing their feelings. This possibility was examined by repeating the same comparisons according to whether or not the informant had expressed feelings in the floorholding immediately preceding the specific interviewer action (Table V). If the variations in emotional expression were merely an artefact of context, it would follow that the proportions of informant responses which included some expression of feelings would not differ according to the preceding specific interviewer action, once the emotional context had been taken into account. A chi-square test with Yates correction was used.

In fact, as vertical comparisons down both columns of Table V indicate, this was not so. Thus, requests for feelings elicited further feelings in 45 per cent of cases when the informant's previous response had included feelings, in contrast to only 29 per cent of responses following closed questions. The contrast is even sharper when the interviewer action was *not* preceded by the informant's expression of feelings. In this circumstance, requests for feelings elicited feelings in 61 per cent of the informant's next floorholding compared with only 18 per cent of responses following closed questions. The findings are clear-cut in showing that the effects of these specific interviewer actions were *not* an artefact of context.

On the other hand, they do show (as comparisons across the rows in Table V indicate) that the various actions are influenced by context in different ways. Thus, direct requests for feelings are highly likely to elicit feelings irrespective of the nature of the informant's preceding remark. In contrast, interpretations are highly likely to perpetuate the expression of feelings, but they are much less likely to initiate such expressions.

We made a differentiation between interpretations which simply reflected the informants' feelings (either

TABLE IV

Analysis of interviewer actions immediately followed by expression of feeling (Naturalistic study)

Interviewer actions	Informant responses: To specified action— % with expression feeling	Informant responses: To any other action— % with expression feeling
Requests for feelings	54.9*** (n = 51)	22.2 (n = 2624)
Interpretations	44.0*** (n = 141)	21.7 (n = 2534)
Sympathetic statements	50.9*** (n = 98)	22.0 (n = 2567)
Open question	39.1*** (n = 338)	21.1 (n = 2337)
Any of above	39.6*** (n = 628)	17.7 (n = 2047)

χ^2 test with Yates correction: d.f. 1 in all instances.
*** $P < .001$.

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TABLE V

Context of interviewer action and feelings expressed (Naturalistic study)

Interviewer actions	Informant response: Preceded by own expression of feeling— % with feelings	Informant response: Not preceded by own expression of feeling— % with feelings
Request for feelings (n = 51)	45.0 (n = 20)	61.3 (n = 31)***
Interpretations (n = 141)	73.6 (n = 53)***	26.1 (n = 88)
Sympathetic statements (n = 98)	61.5 (n = 39)***	35.6 (n = 59)**
Open questions (n = 338)	44.7 (n = 94)*	36.9 (n = 244)***
Closed questions (n = 352)	29.0 (n = 100)	17.5 (n = 252)

χ^2 test with Yates correction: d.f. 1 in all instances.
Comparison with closed questions:
* P < .05.
** P < .01.
*** P < .001.

TABLE VI

Type of interpretation and feelings expressed

	Informant response: Preceded by own expression of feeling— % with feelings	Informant response: Not preceded by expression of feeling— % with feelings
Reflections (n = 103)	78.8 (n = 38)	24.6 (n = 65)
Linkings (n = 39)	56.3 (n = 16)	30.4 (n = 23)

χ^2 test with Yates correction: d.f. 1 in all instances.
Differences between Reflections and Linkings non-significant.

inferred or overtly shown), and those which involved some kind of linking of emotions or suggestions about their meaning. An example of the first would be: 'that made you feel unwanted'; and an example of the second would be 'your feeling unwanted when your husband walked out like that sounds the same as the way you felt as a child when your father left home'. The findings showed that both sorts were equally effective in eliciting feelings (Table VI).

Interviewer actions immediately followed by self-disclosure

The category of 'self-disclosure' was used for emotionally laden factual information as it was thought that techniques effective in evoking feelings might also be important in getting informants to describe events, happenings and activities of a painful or embarrassing nature. The supposition proved to be correct. Table VII shows an analysis of interviewer actions and succeeding self-disclosures. The actions studied were those previously found to be associated with the expression of feelings. Interpretations, expressions of sympathy, open questions and requests for feelings were each followed by self-disclosures in some 5 to 18 per cent of instances. When these actions were combined it was found, on average, that self-disclosures were evident in 7 per cent of the parents' next floorholdings. In sharp contrast, this was so for only 1.5 per cent of informant responses to other types of interviewer action. Again, it appears that the particular techniques used by the interviewer were important.

As with expressions of feeling, it seemed likely that the interviewer's response to self-disclosures might also be influential. This was examined by determining whether the interviewer had at least once immediately picked up any feelings which were implicit or explicit in a self-disclosing statement in the first 30 minutes of

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TABLE VII

Sequential analysis of interviewer actions and self-disclosure (Naturalistic study)

Interviewer actions	Informant response: To specified action— % with self-disclosure	To any other action— % with self-disclosure
Interpretations	8.5*** (n = 141)	2.5 (n = 2521)
Sympathetic statements	8.3** (n = 96)	2.7 (n = 2566)
Open questions	5.8*** (n = 441)	2.3 (n = 2221)
Requests for feelings	18.0*** (n = 50)	2.5 (n = 2612)
Any of above	7.0*** (n = 669)	1.5 (n = 1993)

χ^2 test with Yates correction: d.f. 1 in all instances.
** $P < 0.01$.
*** $P < 0.001$.

TABLE VIII

Interviewer pick up of cues and self disclosure

Interviewer pick up of emotional cues (in self-disclosures)	Self-disclosures (in first 30 minutes)		Total No. interviews
	<3	≥3	
None	21	6	27
At least once	1	8	9
Total No. interviews	22	14	36

$\chi^2 = 9.97$; 1 d.f. $P < 0.01$.

the interview (Table VIII). In a quarter of the interviews, the interviewer had picked up some emotional cues at least once. In the 9 interviews in which he had done so, all but one provided 3 or more self-disclosures in the first half an hour. In comparison, in those interviews in which emotional cues were *not* picked up, only 6 out of 27 provided as many as 3 self-disclosures in the first 30 minutes of the interview. The implication is that when interviewers were responsive to the emotional overtones of self-disclosing statements, further self-disclosures were more likely to occur.

Interviewers' affective style

Several different aspects of the interviewers' overall affective style were assessed in terms of their possible influence on the informants' expression of feelings. An overall rating of his expressed warmth (using a 5-point scale) was based on tone of voice, positive remarks said warmly, reciprocal warmth, accepting smiles and leaning forward in a context of warmth or understanding. A 5-point rating of sympathy shown to the informant was also based on tone of voice, content of remarks, and general attentiveness. A count was also made of the number of listening responses (e.g. 'mmm') and head nods made by the interviewer while the informant was talking. Finally, the questioning style was assessed in terms of the ratio of open to closed questions and the number of interpretations, expressions of sympathy, and requests for feelings used.

Table IX shows that there was little association between overall interviewer warmth and sympathy and the informant's expression of feelings. Table X indicates that these non-verbal measures of interviewer behaviour also did not correlate significantly with the number of self-disclosures in the joint interview. In the individual interviews, there was the apparently paradoxical finding that high warmth and sympathy tended to be associated with fewer self-disclosures. But the sample size of individual interviews was only 9, and with this number correlations as high as 0.59 could have arisen by chance.

There was a nearly significant relationship between the number of listening responses and head nods and the parents' expression of feelings in the joint inter-

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TABLE IX
Interviewer style and expression of feelings

Interviewer measures	Correlation with mothers' expression of feelings: Joint (n = 25)† r	Individual (n = 9) r
Warmth rating	.07	−.17
Sympathy rating	.19	−.17
No. listening responses/ head nods	.35	−.02
Ratio open:closed questions	.44*	.20
No. interpretations	−.08	−.29
No. expressions of sympathy	−.10	−.17
No. requests for feelings	.06	−.29

* $P < 0.05$; all other correlations non-significant.
† n = 24 for correlations with Warmth, with Sympathy, and with No. listening responses/head nods.

TABLE X
Interviewer style and self-disclosure

Interviewer measures	Correlation with self-disclosures: Joint (n = 25)† r	Individual (n = 9) r
Warmth rating	−.02	−.49
Sympathy rating	.19	−.52
No. listening responses/ head nods	.11	.46
Ratio open:closed questions	.26	.18
No. interpretations	−.07	.45
No. expressions of sympathy	.19	.21
No. requests for feelings	.08	.52

(All correlations statistically non-significant).
† n = 24 for first three items (as Table IX).

view, but this association was not found in individual interviews. There is evidence from other research (Greenspoon, 1962) that such vocal and non-verbal encouragements may increase productivity in some people, but the findings show considerable variability in effects.

A high ratio of open to closed questions was found to be associated with a greater expression of feelings in the joint interviews, but the correlation was insignificant in the individual interviews. However, the number of interpretations and expressions of sympathy used by the interviewer bore no significant relationship with the overall number of feelings expressed by the parent, and was associated with the number of self-disclosures only in individual interviews.

Consistency of differences between interviewers

The discussion so far has assumed that it is the interviewers' style which influenced the informants' response, rather than the other way round. This assumption was tested in the experimental study (Rutter *et al*, 1981; Cox *et al*, 1981 V; Cox *et al*, 1981 VI) but it was tested indirectly by determining the extent to which differences in style between interviewers remained consistent across different informants. Of course interviewers modified their style according to individual needs but it was possible, using one-way analysis of variance, to determine whether variations in style between interviewers was greater than the variation within interviewers (Table XI). In contrast to the findings with respect to consistency of interviewer differences on techniques to elicit factual information, where consistency was high (Cox *et al*, 1981 II), few of the techniques showed significant between-interviewer differences. This was not because interviewer means on these techniques were similar (which they were not), but rather it was because within-interviewer variability was high, especially for those interviewers who used rather more feeling-oriented techniques.

Informant questionnaire responses

The informants' responses to the questionnaire administered after their interviews showed no significant differences according to any aspect of interview style or according to interview. The range of responses obtained was quite narrow, and most parents expressed conventional positive comments irrespective of the type of interview they had just had.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings suggest that a rather wide range of interview techniques may all be effective in eliciting the expression of emotions. Firstly, it appeared helpful to use an interview style which encouraged informants to talk freely and extensively. Parents who spoke at greater length tended to express more feelings, and techniques which encouraged talkativeness also tended to encourage emotional expression. Interviewers who used a high proportion of open questions, and who were not unduly talkative themselves, seemed most effective in this connection.

The finding is not unexpected, of course. A highly structured, clipped, interview style with most questions

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TABLE XI

Interviewer consistency on style of approach

Interviewer variable	Analysis of variance F	d.f.	Significance P
No. expressions of sympathy	1.47	4,24	NS
No. interpretations	2.50	4,24	NS
No. requests for feelings	1.15	4,24	NS
No. any of above	1.26	4,23	NS
Ratio open:closed questions	2.61	4,24	NS
Mother response variable			
Feelings expressed	1.28	4,23	NS
Negative feelings expressed	0.88	4,23	NS
Self disclosures	0.82	4,24	NS

TABLE XII

Interviewer use of specific feeling-oriented techniques

	Interviewers				
	A	B	C	D	E
Use of interpretations, Expressions of sympathy and Requests for feelings					
Mean	7.4	4.0	9.2	6.0	4.5
SD	3.9	1.6	6.9	3.7	4.5

expecting only a 'yes' or 'no' answer is scarcely likely to induce informants to expand freely in talking about their inner feelings. Nevertheless, it should be noted that on the whole only rather modest correlations were obtained and it cannot be assumed that an extremely non-directive or non-talkative style would be most effective. Observations suggested that informants varied in how far they were at ease with different degrees of structure and talkativeness. Some seemed to become rather reticent and unforthcoming if they were not initially supported and guided by a relatively high rate of interviewer questions. On the other hand, the tendency of some trainees to resort to a series of closed questions when faced with an unforthcoming informant may not be helpful in encouraging free emotional expression.

The non-verbal components of interview style seemed less important. Neither the degree of interviewer warmth or sympathy, nor the rate of listener responses or head nods, correlated significantly with the amount of emotional expression by the mothers during the interviews. It may be relevant that the range on these non-verbal variables was limited; none of the doctors were very effusive and none were very cool. Accordingly, it could be that greater extremes would have a greater influence. Nevertheless, the findings from other research (e.g. Heller *et al*, 1966; Siegman and Pope, 1972) are contradictory, and it may well be that markedly high levels of warmth and sympathy are not facilitatory for emotional expression. Perhaps a moderate rather than maximal level is optimal.

Quite apart from these general aspects of overall style, the analysis of interviewer actions immediately followed by expressions of feelings suggested that a number of specific interview techniques were effective in promoting emotional expression. However, these included a range of apparently rather diverse approaches. Thus, a straightforward request that the informants say something about their feelings appeared rather successful in getting the informant to do just that. When the parent was not already expressing feelings, this direct approach proved to be the most effective means of inducing them to do so. On the other hand, if the informant was already discussing his emotions or feelings, a direct request for him to say more about them was less effective in encouraging him to continue than the more indirect

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techniques of interpretations and expressions of sympathy. Perhaps a direct request in this context appears redundant or even insensitive.

Open questions were also quite likely to be followed by the expression of feelings. Probably they were effective largely because they encourage an extended reply which implies that the interviewer is interested in how the parent perceives the situation as a whole. Closed questions, in contrast, may inhibit emotional expression not only because they suggest a very brief factual reply but also because they suggest that the interviewer has already decided what is and what is not important and relevant. The question is specific and focussing, and by implication it carries the message that there is a lack of interest in whatever facets are *not* included in the inquiry.

Interpretations and expressions of sympathy, on the other hand, constitute responses by the interviewer. Both, by definition, directly refer to what the informant has just said. They explicitly indicate the interviewer's interest and attention with respect to emotions, feelings and attitudes. Expressions of sympathy are also likely to be reinforcing in that sympathetic tone and direct statements of concern show that the interviewer cares. When such caring responses follow the expression of emotions or feelings the informant is likely to be encouraged to go on showing his feelings. Many interpretations carry the same message.* Hence, the most striking effect of both these interviewer actions was when they followed the informant's expression of feelings in the immediately preceding floorholding. On the other hand, their effect was not necessarily entirely confined to that situation because if appropriately made the actions referred to feelings which were implicit even if not overt. In some instances, interpretations might serve to draw the informants' attention to feelings which had been below the surface of their full awareness.

At first sight it may seem surprising that interpretations which involved emotional linkings were as effective as reflections of feeling in inducing emotional expression, since such linkings could be considered a form of confrontation. Other workers have suggested that confrontations which are too dissonant, or which provoke too strong an emotional response, may inhibit the display of emotion (Pope and Siegman, 1965; Bierman, 1969). This may well be the case, but scarcely any of those used in the diagnostic interviews studied were sufficiently 'confronting' to have this effect. Most simply indicated an understanding of the parents' feelings and hence were very different from the interpretations given in some types of psychotherapy (e.g. Garduk and Haggard, 1972). It was also found in one study with acute mental hospital patients (Anderson, 1968) that confrontations given by warm, empathic interviewers increased self-exploration, whereas this was not the effect with interviewers who lacked these qualities. We did not have a sufficiently large sample of interviewers who varied in these qualities to examine the issue but clearly the context of the relationship between interviewer and informant is likely to influence the manner in which confronting interpretations are received.

Although the analysis of interviewer actions immediately followed by expressions of feeling strongly indicated that open questions, interpretations and expressions of sympathy, were effective in promoting emotional expression, the interviewers' overall rate of use of these techniques across interviews as a whole was not significantly associated with the amount of emotional expression by the informants. This appears contradictory and surprising, but there are several rather different reasons why these two methods of analysis should give rise to inconsistent findings.

Firstly, the use of overall interviewer measures (as in the latter type of analysis), unlike the analysis of interviewer actions immediately followed by expressions of feeling presupposes that interviewers show some consistency in style with respect to these interview techniques. But in fact this was not found. To the contrary, psychiatric trainees varied greatly from interview to interview in their use of different techniques. This was very different to their use of fact-oriented techniques where considerable interviewer consistency was found (Cox *et al*, 1981 II). The causes and effects of this variability in feeling-oriented techniques remain to be determined. It could be that the variability reflected a lack of understanding by the trainees regarding the techniques needed to elicit the emotions, so that they varied in their usage in a non-systematic and unhelpful way. On the other hand it could be that the trainees skilfully varied their use of specific techniques according to the needs of each different interview. Some informants spontaneously express a great deal of emotions and feelings and there is no point in using methods designed to increase emotional expression still further. Indeed, if an adequate factual account is to be obtained it may be desirable to somewhat stem the flow. It is with more reticent informants that it is particularly important to use techniques to 'draw out' feelings, and it could be that it was in these circumstances that interviewers tended

* Nearly all coding categories were mutually exclusive but expressions of sympathy were an exception to this rule. Sympathy could be double coded with other categories where this was appropriate. In practice many interpretations were also rated as sympathetic.

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to use more interpretations and expressions of sympathy. This possibility could not be tested within the design of the present study.

A second, less optimistic, alternative is that little overall effect of these feeling-oriented techniques was evident simply because their level of usage fell below the threshold of effectiveness. Certainly, it was clear that most of these relatively inexperienced interviewers made rather little use of interpretations and expressions of sympathy, but it seems doubtful whether this consistuted an important factor.

A third alternative is that there are so many different ways of eliciting emotions that it is unusual for any interviewer to fall short on all of them. This could not account for the observation that some informants expressed very little in the way of feelings or emotions; either the trainees did not use the most appropriate techniques with them or the techniques were ineffective. On the other hand, it is probable that there is a good deal in the suggestion. Certainly, a range of quite disparate techniques appeared effective in eliciting emotions. These included both the active and directive (e.g. straightforward requests for feelings) and the passive and non-directive (a low rate of interviewer talk with few interruptions), as well as some (such as interpretations and expressions of sympathy) which could be used with either a directive or a non-directive style.

Finally, it could be suggested that the sequential findings were an artefact, reflecting an effect of the informant on the interviewer rather than the other way round. This possibility was examined by looking at the context of interviewer actions with respect to the preceding informant floorholding. The results effectively ruled out the possibility of a context artefact and provided a strong inference of a sequential effect from interviewer to informant (although they could not directly test such a causal hypothesis). An experimental design was needed to examine this possibility further; such a study is reported in Rutter *et al* (1981) and Cox *et al* (1981 V and VI).

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