Interviewing
Principles and Practices

Charles J. Stewart | William B. Cash

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INTERVIEWING

Principles and Practices

FIFTEENTH EDITION

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Charles J. Stewart

Purdue University

William B. Cash, Jr.

To the memory of William "Bill" Cash, Jr., student, co-author, and friend

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The late William "Bill" Cash began his work life in his father's shoe and clothing store in northern Ohio. While still in high school, he began to work in broadcasting and advertising, and this led to bachelor's and master's degrees in broadcasting and speech communication at Kent State University. After completing his academic work at Kent State, he joined the speech communication faculty at Eastern Illinois University and began to consult with dozens of companies such as Blaw-Knox, IBM, and Hewitt Associates. Bill took a leave from Eastern Illinois and pursued a PhD in organizational communication under W. Charles Redding. He returned to the faculty at Eastern Illinois and created and taught a course in interviewing.

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PREFACE

This fifteenth edition of *Interviewing: Principles and Practices* continues to focus on the fundamental principles applicable to all forms of interviewing and to seven specific types of interviewing while incorporating the latest in research, interpersonal communication theory, the uses of technology and social media, the role of ethics in interviewing, and EEO laws that affect employment and performance interviews. While we have included recent research findings and developments, the emphasis remains on building the interviewing skills of both interviewers and interviewees. Several chapters address the increasing diversity in the United States and our involvement in the global village as they impact the interviews in which we take part.

A major goal of this edition was to make it more user-friendly by sharpening the writing style, eliminating unnecessary materials and redundancies, making definitions and explanations more precise, and employing different print types to emphasize critical words, terms, concepts, and principles. We have restructured several chapters to provide clarity and logical progressions from point to point.

Changes in the Fifteenth Edition

- Chapter 1 includes a more focused development of the definition of interviewing to enable students to see the similarities and differences of interviewing from other types of interpersonal communication with an emphasis on collaboration between parties. There is a detailed discussion of how technology, beginning with the telephone, has impacted the nature of interviews, the growing use of two-way video technology to conduct interviews, and the serious implications this has for how we communicate interpersonally.

- Chapter 2 includes an expanded treatment of the nature and types of relationships in interviews and how these affect the essential collaborative process that ensues; the importance of trust, self-esteem, and self-worth in what parties are willing to disclose during interviews; the dangers of assuming that communication is taking place; and how gender and cultural differences affect our use and interpretation of language.

- Chapter 3 includes sharper and clearer explanations and illustrations of question types, the uses of questions as the tools of the trade, and a refined treatment of common question pitfalls that make it more difficult to perform interview tasks efficiently and effectively.

- Chapter 4 includes clearer and expanded explanations of interview guides and schedules, question sequences, rapport and orientation in openings, types of openings and closings, and the importance of making openings and closings dialogues rather than monologues.

- Chapter 5 includes expanded discussions of planning for and structuring informational interviews, using criteria for selecting interviewees, conducting and taking part in videoconference interviews, and managing difficult interviewees.

- Chapter 6 includes refined discussions of qualitative and quantitative surveys, sampling techniques, incentives designed to increase participation, advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face interviews, and the telephone survey.

- Chapter 7 includes revised and expanded discussions of searching for new talent (internships, career and job fairs, kiosks, and Web sites), reviewing EEO laws, understanding and adapting to the unique characteristics of the millennial generation, reviewing applicant materials prior to the interview, structuring interviews, asking on-the-job questions, and closing the interview effectively.

- Chapter 9 includes emphases on conducting the performance review interview as a coaching opportunity, selecting an appropriate review model, employing a 360-degree approach, establishing a relaxed and supportive climate, orienting the employee, and avoiding a "gunnysacking" approach in the performance problem interview in which the interviewer stores up grievances and then dumps them on an employee all at once.

- Chapter 10 includes new and revised materials on ethics and persuasion, the criteria essential for successful persuasive interviews, how to establish substantial similarity with the interviewee, the use of questions in persuasive interviews, how to anticipate and respond to objections, and how to be an active and critical interviewee.

- Chapter 11 includes revised treatments of the nature of the counseling interview; the role of lay counselors who are similar to counselees and open, caring, and good listeners; a code of ethics for the counseling interview; trust as the cornerstone of the counseling relationship; respect for and understanding of the interviewee's capabilities of making sound choices and decisions; the necessity to be culturally aware in today's global village; and maintaining relational boundaries.

- Chapter 12 includes emphasis on the roles we all play in health care interviews, the critical importance of relationship between health care provider and patient, the sharing control during the interview, the influences of culture and gender in health care interactions, ways to lessen the negative impact of long waiting periods, opening questions, reasons for patient resistance to disclosure during interviews, ways to lessen the loss of information during and after interviews, how collaboration can promote self-persuasion, compliance with recommendations, and closing interviews.

Chapter Pedagogy

The **role-playing cases** at the ends of Chapters 5 through 12 provide students with opportunities to design and conduct practice interviews and to observe others' efforts to employ the principles discussed. **Student activities** at the end of each chapter provide ideas for in- and out-of-class exercises, experiences, and information gathering. We have made many of these less complex and time-consuming. The **up-to-date readings** at the

end of each chapter will help students and instructors who are interested in delving more deeply into specific topics, theories, and types of interviews. The glossary provides students with definitions of key words and concepts introduced throughout the text.

Intended Courses

This book is designed for courses in speech, communication, journalism, business, supervision, education, political science, nursing, criminology, and social work. It is also useful in workshops in various fields. We believe this book is of value to beginning students as well as to seasoned veterans because the principles, research, and techniques are changing rapidly in many fields. We have addressed theory and research findings where applicable, but our primary concern is with principles and techniques that can be translated into immediate practice in and out of the classroom.

Ancillary Materials

The 15th edition of *Interviewing: Principles and Practices*, is now available online with Connect, McGraw-Hill Education's integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect also offers SmartBook for the new edition, which is the first adaptive reading experience proven to improve grades and help students study more effectively. All of the title's website and ancillary content is also available through Connect, including:

- A sample interview that illustrates the type of interview, situation, principles, practices, and mistakes parties make to challenge students to distinguish between effective and ineffective techniques, questions, and responses and know how to remedy them.
- An Instructor's Manual, written by Charles Stewart, for each chapter.
- A full Test Bank of multiple choice questions that test students on central concepts and ideas in each chapter.
- Lecture Slides for instructor use in class.

Acknowledgments

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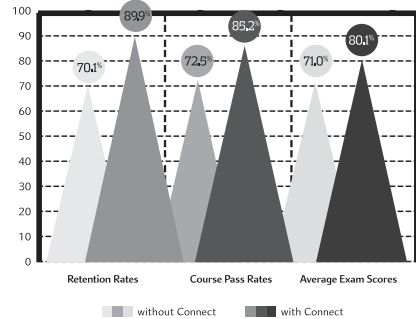
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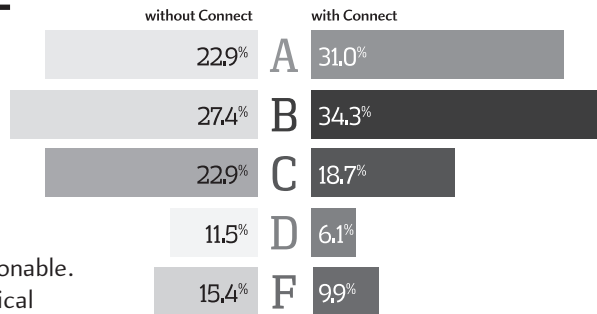
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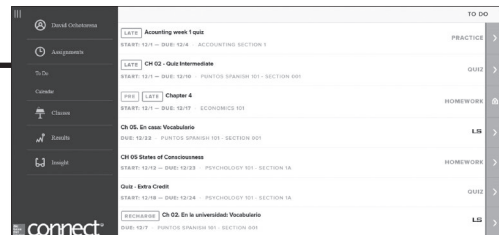
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CHAPTER 1

An Introduction to Interviewing

A few years ago one of the authors was talking to a hospital administrator at a fund-raising event, and the administrator asked what classes he was teaching. When the author mentioned a class in interviewing that included several nursing students, the administrator replied that nursing students didn't need an interviewing course because jobs in nursing were plentiful. This administrator was exhibiting a common misconception about interviewing, that it is merely a job-seeking activity. In fact, interviewing is the most common form of purposeful, planned, and serious communication. An interview may be formal or informal, minimally or highly structured, simplistic or sophisticated, supportive or threatening, and momentary or lengthy. It may share characteristics with brief interactions, social conversations, small groups, and presentations, but it differs significantly from each.

Interviews are daily occurrences.

The objectives of this chapter are to identify the essential characteristics of interviews, distinguish interviews from other forms of communication, identify and discuss traditional types of interviews, and examine the growing roles of technology in conducting and participating in interviews.

The Essential Characteristics of Interviews

Two Parties

Each interview is a dyadic—**two party**—process that typically involves **two people** such as a physician and a patient, an applicant and a recruiter, a police officer and an eyewitness, and political candidate and a donor. Some interviews involve more than **two people** but never more than **two parties**. For instance, four reporters may be interviewing a college golf coach, a travel director may be interviewing a husband and wife, or a surgical team may be interviewing the guardians of an elderly relative. In each case, there are **two distinct parties**—an interviewer party and an interviewee party. If a single party is involved (three students reviewing for a political science exam) or more than two parties are involved (four construction management firms bidding for a construction project), the interaction is not an interview.

Dyadic means two parties.

Purpose and Structure

One or both parties must arrive at an interview with a **predetermined** and **serious purpose**, a component that distinguishes the interview from social and unplanned conversations. Conversations and momentary meetings are rarely organized or

Interviews are structured.

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■ *More than two people may be involved in an interview, but never more than two parties—an interviewer party and an interviewee party.*

planned in advance, but interviews always have a degree of planning and structure that may include an opening, selection of topics, prepared questions, and background information. The predetermined purpose—to get or give information, to seek employment or recruit an employee, to counsel or be counseled, to persuade or be persuaded—will determine the nature of the planning and structure of the interview.

Interactional

Interviews are **interactional** because both parties share and exchange roles, responsibilities, feelings, beliefs, motives, and information. When one party does all of the talking and the other all of the listening, a speech—not an interview—is taking place with an audience of one or two. John Stewart writes that communication is a "continuous, complex, collaborative process of verbal and nonverbal meaning making."[1] This collaborative "meaning making" entails a **mutual** creation and sharing of messages that come from words and nonverbal signs (lowered voice, wink, a frown) that may express interest, compassion, understanding, belief, or disagreement during an interview. As communication **processes**, interviews are dynamic, ongoing, ever-changing interactions of message sending and receiving with a degree of **system** and **structure**. Once an interview commences, the parties cannot not communicate.[2] Even when they communicate poorly, they communicate something.

> **Parties exchange and share.**

Questions

Asking and answering **questions** play critical roles in all interviews. They are the dominant feature in market surveys and journalistic interviews. In others such as recruiting, counseling, and health care, questions share time with information sharing. And in others such as sales, training, and performance review, questions play strategic roles in obtaining or clarifying information and in altering a party's ways of thinking, feeling, or acting. They are literally the **tools of the trade** interview parties use to check the accuracy of messages sent and received, verify impressions and assumptions, and provoke feelings and thoughts. Chapter 3 will introduce you to the types and uses of questions.

> **Questions play multiple roles in interviews.**

An interview, then, is an interactional communication process between two parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose, that involves the asking and answering of questions.

With this definition as a guide, determine which of the following interactions constitutes an interview and which does not.

Exercise #1—What Is and Is Not an Interview?

1. Three teachers are reviewing the School Board's proposal for hiring a new Vice Principal.
2. A college recruiter for the women's basketball team is meeting with a family about a full-ride scholarship for April.
3. A police officer is speaking with an eyewitness to the crash of a school bus.
4. A student is talking to his professor about a field project assignment.
5. A member of a survey research team is talking to a stock broker about the effects of low oil prices on energy stocks.
6. A professor is asking questions during her history class about a reading on the cold war.
7. An employee runs into his supervisor at a grocery store and remembers to ask about taking a personal leave day to attend The Final Four.
8. An auto sales associate is discussing a new Chevrolet model with a husband and wife.
9. A tennis player is talking to two surgeons about surgery on her elbow.
10. Two members of a law firm are discussing the ramifications of an intellectual properties case.

Traditional Forms of Interviewing

There are many traditional forms of interviewing, and these are usually identified according to situation and function. As you read this book, you will discover that many require one or both parties to have specialized training, specific abilities, and the willingness to share beliefs, attitudes, and feelings with others. Let us look at seven of these traditional forms.

Information-Giving Interviews

When two parties take part in orienting, training, coaching, instructing, and briefing sessions, they are involved in information-giving interviews, the purpose of which is to exchange information as accurately, effectively, and efficiently as possible. Information-giving interviews seem simple when compared to others—merely relating facts, data, reports, and opinions from one party to another, but they are deceptively difficult. Because this type is so common and critical in health care interviews, Chapter 12 discusses the principles, problems, and techniques of information giving.

> **Information giving is common but difficult.**

Information-Gathering Interviews

When two parties take part in surveys, exit interviews, research sessions, investigations, diagnostic sessions, journalistic interviews, and brief requests for information, the interviewer's purpose is to gather accurate, insightful, and useful information through the skillful use of questions, many created and phrased prior to the interview and others created on the spot to probe into interviewee responses, attitudes, and feelings. Chapter 5 discusses the principles and practices of moderately structured informational interviews such as journalistic interviews

> **Information gathering is pervasive in our world.**

and investigations. Chapter 6 discusses the principles and practices of highly structured surveys and polls. And Chapter 12 discusses information gathering in the health care setting.

Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interview usually consists of six to ten similar but unrelated interviewees with a single interviewer and concentrates on a specific issue or concern such as customer or client perspectives about a new or developing idea, product, or service. The interviewer guides the interview with a carefully crafted set of questions designed to generate interactions among the interviewees that produce a wide range of information, experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and understandings. Advocates of focus group interviews claim these interactions produce higher quality information and feedback.

Selection Interviews

Selection is critical in the lives of people and organizations.

The most common selection interview occurs between a recruiter attempting to select the best qualified applicant for a position in an organization and an applicant attempting to attain this position. The placement interview occurs when a supervisor is trying to determine the ideal placement of a staff member already in the organization. This interview may involve a promotion, a restructuring of an organization, or a reassignment. Because the selection or employment interview plays such a major role in all of our personal and professional lives, we will focus in detail on the recruiter in Chapter 7 and the applicant in Chapter 8.

Performance Review

Performance review is essential to employee and employer.

When two parties focus on the interviewee's skills, performance, abilities, or behavior, it is a performance review (what once was called an appraisal interview). The purpose is to coach a student, employee, or team member to continue that which is good and to set goals for future performance. Chapter 9 focuses on models for conducting performance reviews and the principles essential for the performance problem interview.

Counseling

When an interviewee has a personal or professional problem, the parties take part in a counseling interview in which the interviewer strives to help the interviewee attain insights into a problem and possible ways of dealing with this problem. Chapter 11 addresses the principles and practices of conducting and taking part in counseling interviews.

Persuasion

Persuasion is more than selling a product or service.

In a persuasive interview, one party attempts to alter or reinforce the thinking, feeling, or acting of another party. The sales interview comes immediately to mind, but we are involved in persuasive interviews on a daily basis. They range from informal interactions such as one friend attempting to persuade another to go on a Caribbean cruise to a team from a construction management firm trying to persuade a university board of trustees to select its firm to manage the construction of a multimillion-dollar classroom and office complex. Chapter 10 focuses on the often complex interactions in persuasive interviews.

Technology and Interviewing

Beginning with the invention of the telephone, technology has had an ever-increasing influence on how we conduct and take part in interviews. Most importantly, interview

parties no longer need to be face-to-face with one another but may be ear-to-ear, keyboard-to-keyboard, or screen to screen.

The Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews have become so commonplace that states and the federal government have passed "Don't Call" legislation to protect our privacy and sanity, particularly at dinner time. The popularity of telephone interviews is easy to understand. They save time, reduce monetary expenses, and eliminate the necessity of sending one or more interviewers to widespread geographical locations. The telephone is most effective in interviews in which you want to ask brief and simple questions in a short time ranging from 10 to 15 minutes.

> **The telephone interview is convenient and inexpensive.**

A major drawback of the telephone interview is the lack of **physical presence** of the parties. Hearing a voice is not the same as observing another's appearance, dress, manner, eye contact, face, gestures, and posture. Missing from telephone interviews are the subtle cues interviewers use to indicate that it's time to switch roles, to continue or end an answer, or that the interview is nearing the closing. While some interviewees prefer the anonymity and relative safety of the interview, others (particularly older ones) prefer face-to-face contacts and fear the growing frauds perpetrated over the telephone. One study found that interviewers prefer face-to-face interviews to the telephone, particularly if it is lengthy, and this negative attitude may affect how interviewees reply.

Two-Way Video Technology

> **Both parties must focus attention on the interaction.**

The growing sophistication of video technology such as Skype has reduced some of the problems associated with the telephone interview and enables parties to observe and hear one another in real time. These technologies enable interview parties in traditional interviews such as journalistic, employment, and medical and nontraditional interviews such as the videoconference to interact visually over long distance, faster, and with less expense. Advocates claim that two-way video interaction is a "virtual interview" because it is almost "like being there in person." In the "virtual interview," video production techniques are essential to "send the right vibe." These include selecting quality microphones and video technology, checking lighting and sound, manipulating the background or set with mood lighting and colors, selecting appropriate furniture, controlling distractions such as pets and family members, and maintaining the "illusion of eye contact." Unfortunately, even the best technology and manipulation of the scene enable the parties to see only head or upper body shots that are not the same as the total presence of face-to-face interviews. Some people find it difficult to interact freely and effectively with people on screens. With fewer interruptions and the absence of traditional cues that signal when a question has been answered or a point made, turns between parties tend to be longer and fewer in video interviews. This problem is enhanced in the videoconference in which each party may consist of two or more people. Reasons for liking videoconferences and Skype have serious implications for the communication that takes place. These perceived pluses include taking more notes, referring to notes, checking watches, and reading text messages. Both parties must be aware of the

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■ *The Internet can provide important information on positions and organizations and background on interviewers and interviewees.*

importance of upper-body movement, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions that are magnified on the screen when little else is visible to the other party. This may be why a high percentage of suggestions for being effective in "virtual interviews" pertain to video production concerns and techniques.

E-Mail

The advent of e-mail enabled us to communicate almost instantly with others around the world at any time of day or night. It is a convenient and inexpensive means of sending and receiving messages. The question persists as to when sending and receiving "electronic mail" becomes an interview and not what its name clearly implies, mail. An interview is **interactive in real time**. If two parties are sitting at their keyboards at the **same time** and **asking and answering questions** without breaks in the interaction, including probing immediately into answers or altering questions to make them clearer or more effective, an interview is taking place. Otherwise, it is merely an electronic questionnaire. It is wise to make the e-mail interview your last choice such as when time, financial constraints, geographical distances, and unavailability of video technology make a face-to-face interview impossible. In the e-mail interview, there is no opportunity for the parties to see or hear one another, so all nonverbal elements critical to the interpersonal communication process are nonexistent. Some would argue that the e-mail interview is fairer for the person who is orally challenged, but the same argument applies for the person who is verbally challenged. Studies of e-mail interviews identify other disadvantages such as difficulty in opening interviews, establishing rapport, determining emotional reactions, and translating verbal symbols and acronyms.

> The Internet lacks the nonverbal cues critical in interviews.

Webinars

> Webinars are rarely interviews.

Webinars in which a presenter lectures or speaks to an audience on the Web are becoming popular for conferences, training sessions, seminars, and workshops. They are typically not interviews but electronic presentations. If a webinar is more collaborative and interactive between two parties with questions and answers in real time and perhaps over a telephone line or voice over technology, it may be an interview and more spontaneous and interpersonal than an e-mail interview. It is wise, however, to use a webinar for its primary purposes—training and teaching—rather than interviewing.

O N   T H E   W E B

Learn more about the growing uses of electronic interviews in a variety of settings. Search at least two databases under headings such as telephone interviews, conference calls, and video talk-back. Try search engines such as ComAbstracts (http://www.cios.org), Yahoo (http://www.yahoo.com), Infoseek (http://www.infoseek.com), and ERIC (http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec). In which interview settings are electronic interviews most common? What are the advantages and disadvantages of electronic interviews? How will new developments affect electronic interviews in the future? How will the growing use of electronic interviews affect the ways we conduct traditional face-to-face interviews?

Summary

Interviewing is an interactional communication process between two parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose, that involves the asking and answering of questions. This definition encompasses a wide variety of interview settings that require training, preparation, interpersonal skills, flexibility, and a willingness to face risks involved in intimate, person-to-person interactions. The increasing flexibility of technology is resulting in significant numbers of interviews no longer occurring face-to-face, and this is posing new challenges and concerns.

Interviewing is a learned skill, and your first hurdle into becoming a more skilled interviewer or interviewee is to overcome the assumption that what you do often you do well. Ten years of interviewing experience may mean that you have repeated the same mistakes over and over, year after year. Skilled interview participants are aware that practice makes perfect only if you know what you are practicing.

The first step in developing and improving interviewing skills is to understand the deceptively complex interviewing process and its many interacting variables. Chapter 2 explains and illustrates the interviewing process by developing step-by-step a model that contains all of the fundamental elements that interact in each interview.

Key Terms and Concepts

Beliefs	Information-giving	Questions
Collaborative	interviews	Selection interview
Conversation	Interactional	Serious purpose
Counseling	Internet	Skype
Dyadic	Interpersonal	Structure
Electronic interviews	Meaning making	System
E-mail interviews	Motives	Technology
Exchanging	Parties	Telephone interview
Feelings	Performance review	Two-party process
Focus group interviews	Persuasion	Videoconference interview
Information-gathering	Predetermined purpose	Virtual interview
interviews	Process	Webinar

Student Activities

1. Keep a journal of interviews in which you take part during a week. How many were traditional, face-to-face interviews and how many were electronic? Which types tended to be traditional and which electronic? How were they similar and different? How did interactions vary? How did lack of presence, eye contact, appearance, facial expressions, and gestures appear to influence electronic interviews? How did you and the other parties try to compensate for this?

2. Make a list of what you consider to be essential characteristics of good interviews and then observe two interviews on television. How well did the interviewers and interviewees meet your criteria? What did they do best? What did they do poorly? How did the settings and situations seem to affect the interactions? If one or both parties were "celebrities," how did this seem to affect interactions, roles played, amount of time each asked and answered questions, and content of responses?

3. Select a person you know superficially (classmate, co-worker, member of a fitness club) who is willing to be interviewed. Take part in a 10-minute interview and try to discover everything you can about this person. Which topics were covered and which avoided? How did the phrasing of questions seem to affect answers? How did your relationship with the other party affect the openness with which the two of you shared and revealed information?

4. Take part in a traditional job fair and a virtual job fair on or near your campus. After you have taken part in each, list what you liked and disliked about each. What did the face-to-face encounter with a prospective employer offer that an electronic encounter could not? And what did the electronic encounter offer that a face-to-face encounter could not? How did you prepare for each encounter? If the virtual job fair experience entailed simulated interviews, how did you react to these encounters?

Notes

1. John Stewart, ed., *Bridges Not Walls,* 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), p. 16.
2. Michael T. Motley, "Communication as Interaction: A Reply to Beach and Bavelas," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (Fall 1990), pp. 613–623.

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2

An Interpersonal Communication Process

To improve your interviewing skills, you must start by understanding the **deceptively complex process** and its interrelated and interacting variables. An interview is far more complex than merely asking and answering questions or talking to someone. **The objectives of this chapter** are to develop a model of the process that summarizes, explains, and portrays the intricate and often puzzling nature of the typical interview. The completed model in Figure 2.8 looks very complicated because it summarizes a very complicated process.

Two Parties in the Interview

The overlapping circles in Figure 2.1 represent the two parties in every interview. Each party is a **unique sum** of culture, environment, education, training, and experiences. Each party is an aggregate of personality traits that range from optimistic to pessimistic, trusting to suspicious, honest to dishonest, patient to impatient, flexible to inflexible, and compassionate to indifferent. Each of you has specific beliefs, attitudes, and values. And each party is motivated by ever-evolving needs, interests, desires, and expectations.

You must also be aware that each person in each party communicates **intra-personally** as well as **inter-personally.** You literally talk to yourself. What you say to yourself and how you say it will influence the verbal and nonverbal messages you send and how you experience an interview. In a very real sense, "the whole person speaks and the whole person listens."[1]

Even though each party is made up of unique individuals, both parties must collaborate to make the interview a success. The circles overlap in Figure 2.1 to indicate the **relational nature** of the interview process in which the parties interact **with** one another. Each has a stake in the outcome of the interview, and neither party can **go it alone.** This relationship may commence with this interview or be another act in a **relational history** that dates from hours to weeks, months, or years. When parties begin a relational history, interactions may be brief or awkward because neither knows what to expect, how best to start the interaction, when to speak and listen, and what information to share. In some cultures, "all strangers are viewed as sources of potential relationships; in others, relationships develop only after long and careful scrutiny."[2] Stereotypes such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity may play significant negative roles in zero-history situations, particularly during the anxious opening minutes of