

PART TWO

SEQUENTIAL PHASES IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS AND ASSOCIATED TECHNIQUES

6

THE INTRODUCTORY PHASE

NOW THAT we have distinguished an interview from a conversation, described the distinctive nature of the social work interview, discussed the interview as a special example of communication, and discussed the relationship, we are ready to examine the dynamics of the social work interview. Each interview has a distinct beginning, middle, and end, and in the sequence of interviews is part of a process that, over time, achieves the goal of the contact between agency and client. The interview process is the consciously dynamic movement through successive stages to accomplish the purposes of the interview.

The problem-solving steps in social work—exploration, assessment, and treatment (or data collection, data assessment, and intervention)—are not clearly demarcated. Similarly, in a given interview the introductory activities are not sharply differentiated from those of the development phase, which in turn are not clearly demarcated from those of the termination phase. The entire process is somewhat like a symphony. Although at any particular time one phase or theme may be dominant, we hear the other steps, muted, in the background. For the purpose of more explicit analysis, we now artificially separate the steps and discuss each in turn.

Chapters 6 through 10 are concerned with analyzing the steps in the interview from beginning to termination. The interview begins before the two participants meet—in their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes—as they move toward the actual encounter.

THE INTERVIEWEE'S BACKGROUND

Meta-analyses of research on the factors that are related to positive outcomes of therapy have concluded that both the client's characteristics and the