Social Desirability Response Set in Clinical Interviewing

Kenneth J. Pierre
Loyola University Chicago

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SOCIAL DESIRABILITY RESPONSE SET

IN

CLINICAL INTERVIEWING

by

Kenneth J. Pierre

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT
of
SOCIAL DESIRABILITY RESPONSE SET IN CLINICAL INTERVIEWING
by
Kenneth Jerome Pierre
Loyola University, Chicago

Research was conducted on the occurrence and control of the social desirability response set in clinical interviews. Sixty clergymen were interviewed by 13 clinical psychology graduate students and professionals. Three settings for the interviews: a university office, a psychologist's office, and a seminary office; two styles of interview: structured and non-structured; and two forms of personal address: given name and title were combined in a 2 x 3 x 2 design to test the effect of the context of the interview, as opposed to the content of the interview, upon the occurrence of the social desirability response set in the interviews.

A comparison of the results of the Edwards Social Desirability Scale given before and after the interview yielded a percentage change score for each interviewee across the interview. The Semantic Differential Technique was used to measure the congruence of the interviewer and the interviewee in describing the effective experience of the interviewee during the interview, under the assumption that congruence within the interview dyads would be precluded where the social desirability response set was operative.

It was hypothesized that interviews conducted in a university or a psychologist's office would be less affected by the response bias under study than would interviews conducted in a seminary office because of the cues which the latter setting would provide the clergymen-interviewee to prompt him to respond in a less personal and more role-determined and socially desirable manner. It was hypothesized that the structured interview would be less affected by the social desirability response set than the unstructured interview because the structure would reduce the anxiety in the interviewee and, therefore, decrease his need for a defensive use of a response set. It was hypothesized that interviews which were placed on a more personal basis by the use of the interviewee's given name would be less apt to be affected by the social desirability response bias than interviews placed on a professional basis by the use of the interviewee's professional title as a means of address.

The pattern of results from the two dependent measures mapped closely on one another and each of the three experimental hypotheses were supported by statistically significant results from at least one of the dependent measures. The university setting proved to be less affected by response bias than either the psychologist's office or the seminary office settings. The structured interview and the use of the interviewee's given name during the interview both resulted in greater percentage change across the interview on the Edwards Scale and greater congruence between the interviewer and interviewee on the Semantic Differential Scales, than did the opposite conditions of unstructured interviews and the use of the professional title as a means of address. A significant interaction between the setting and the style of the interview indicated that non-structured interviews conducted in the university setting would be less affected by the social desirability response bias than under other matched conditions.

The generalizability of these results to populations other than the limited professional sample of the present study was discussed.
VITA

Kenneth J. Pierre was born in St. Paul, Minnesota on January 16, 1937. He received his primary education at St. Andrew's Grade School and his secondary education at Cretin High School, both in St. Paul. After attending Nazareth Hall Junior College, he entered the St. Paul Seminary to complete his college work and his graduate studies in theology. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts Degree in Church History from the St. Paul Seminary. After his ordination to the priesthood in February of 1963, by Archbishop Leo Binz, he spent one year in pastoral work and two years of work in the chancery of the archdiocese of St. Paul.

In September of 1966, he began his graduate studies in psychology at Fordham University in New York. He completed his work at Fordham in August of 1968 and was granted the degree of Master of Arts in psychology in February, 1969. In September of 1968, he began his doctoral studies in clinical psychology at Loyola University. He did his pre-doctoral internship at Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital in Chicago, Illinois in the Psychology Section of the Department of Psychiatry. After completing the internship in August of 1970, he returned to Loyola to finish his course requirements and his doctoral research.

He is an associate member of the American Psychological Association, a member of the Academy of Religion and Mental Health, and a member and past president of the Loyola Chapter of Psi Chi, a professional fraternity.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In the past twenty-five years the subject of response sets and the variance they introduce into assessment have received intensive research investigation and have stirred vigorous and productive debate. The field was opened to study by Cronbach (1946). For the past fifteen years the sub-area of the social desirability response set, first investigated by Edwards (1957), has been of steady interest to researchers. Other response set sub-areas which have received sustained study have been the acquiescence set (Cronbach, 1946, 1950; Couch & Keniston, 1960; Jackson & Messick, 1965; Rorer & Goldberg, 1964), and the dissimulation response set (Meehl & Hathaway, 1946).

Concurrent with the differentiation of sub-areas of response sets has been an investigation of the influence of sets in a wide variety of assessment instruments. The original area of concern was with response sets as they affected responses to items on objective instruments for the assessment of personality. With time the research has broadened into the field of projective testing such as sentence completion tests (Meltzoff, 1951; Rozynko, 1959), the Rorschach (Luchins, 1947; Hutt, 1950; Langer, 1962; Lord, 1950), Thematic Apperception Test (Murstein, 1961), and the Rosenzweig Picture-Frustration Study (Schwartz, 1964). The effect of response sets on the interview as an assessment and the therapeutic instrument has also been investigated (Hyman, 1954; Lennard & Bernstein, 1960; Clemes & D'Andrea, 1965; Allen, 1965; Schwab & Heneman, 1969; Siegman & Pope, 1965; Pope & Siegman, 1962).

The present research sought to investigate the presence and control of the social desirability response set in clinical interviewing. More
specifically it sought to determine the effects of the conditions under which the interview was conducted upon the interviewee's use of the social desirability response set during the interview.

Both common sense (Asch, 1946; Richardson, 1965) and scientific research (Hyman, 1954; Lennard & Bernstein, 1960; Clemes & D'Andrea, 1965) indicated that situational factors, such as whether or not a personal interview was to lead to job placement did affect the data gathered in psychological assessment. The problem has been stated in the following way by Richardson (1965, p. 61):

In order to identify the factors that influence participation, one must recognize that every interview involves two individuals functioning in a social context. The behavior of each of them will be influenced by their prior experiences, their social background, and their expectations and perceptions of what constitutes an interview. And these factors will be modified further by the social context - the structure and character of the community, the characteristics of the social milieu in which the respondent lives, the impact of the study, the degree of communication among the respondents, and even the physical setting of the interview.

The present study sought to influence the occurrence of the social desirability response set by manipulating the social and situational matrix in which clinical interviews were conducted as described by Richardson. In keeping with this goal the following hypotheses were advanced:

Hypothesis I.
The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews conducted in a structured interview style than in interviews conducted in an unstructured manner.

The empirical support for this hypothesis came from a series of studies beginning very early in the history of response set investigation. Cronbach stated as early as 1946 (p. 483) that "Response sets have the greatest influence on scores in ambiguous or unstructured situations."

Berg (1957, p. 155) agreed with the findings of Cronbach and stated,
...response biases appear more frequently as the stimulus situation is unstructured.

The second and third hypotheses were more subject specific than the first. Since the subjects to be interviewed in this study were professional persons (clergymen) the presence or absence of clerical cues in the interview setting should affect the interviews conducted in various settings. Edwards (1967a) has pointed out that a cultural consensus on what is and is not desirable in a given society is the standard against which behavior is judged in the formation of the social desirability response set. Clergymen belong to a clerical subculture. Kennedy (1968) held that a clerical culture existed for many clergymen which prompted them to become identified with the externals of clerical life and institutional life.

Hypothesis II

The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews conducted in psychologists' offices and university offices than in seminary offices.

Richardson, as mentioned above, has suggested that the physical setting of the interview may exert a modifying influence on the interviews conducted there. Physical settings which remove the interviewed professional from his professional setting should decrease the influence of his cultural norms upon his behavior and his use of responses which would be suggested as socially desirable by that culture.

Hypothesis III

The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews during which the professional person being interviewed is addressed by his given name than in interviews in which he is addressed by his proper title as a professional.

As in hypothesis II the rationale for this hypothesis was somewhat subject specific. Clergymen treated as professional persons during this
interview should tend to respond in a more culturally conditioned and socially desirable way when addressed by their proper title than when they are addressed more personally and directly by their given name.

The purpose of this study, then, was to examine the effects which situational variables have on the occurrence of the social desirability response set in clinical interviews.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of related literature will be divided into two main sections, each with several subdivisions. The first part of the review will cover response sets: their definition, the varieties of sets, the nature of the variance associated with them, and some special fields of application of response sets. The second part of the review will cover the literature which provided the rationale for the present study: the research question, the independent variables, and the dependent variables within the study.

RESPONSE SETS

Definition of Response Sets

In a pioneering article, Cronbach (1946, p. 476) defined a response set as "any tendency causing a person consistently to give different responses to test items than he would if the same content is presented in a different form." This article and definition gave a name to and delimited a specialized area of psychological investigation, which had been alluded to but not defined in earlier articles by Cronbach (1942), Lentz (1938), and Lorge (1937).

Langer (1962, p. 299) offered an alternative definition to that of Cronbach when he defined response set as "an internalized style of test response which appears to be independent of the stimulus item."

In a further refinement of the definition, Rorer (1965) proposed a distinction between response sets and response styles. Response sets, according to Rorer, were those instances of test behavior in which the respondent used idiosyncratic material with which to evaluate item content in the selection of his answer. Response style, on the other hand, was used to refer to a tendency to select some particular response option independently of the item content. Sets were seen as being operative in the face of meaningful item content, whereas,
styles were used to determine responses in the absence of meaningful item content. A response set, for Rorer, was a conscious or unconscious desire on the part of the respondent to answer in such a way as to produce a certain picture of himself. Style may be regarded as a habitual way of responding and set as the hypothetical construct which is thought to determine the operation of the style (Gibbons, 1968).

The Langer definition seems to be preferable in its succinctness and in its stress upon the internalized and apparently independent quality of the response set. Langer's phrase 'appears to be independent' would seem to cover Rorer's point that response sets vary in their content relatedness. Some sets, e.g. acquiescence, ignore the content of the stimulus item entirely, while others, e.g. social desirability, are dependent upon content cues to activate the response set. The word 'test' in the Langer definition should be broadly interpreted to include a wide variety of psychological assessment procedures since response sets have application in several special fields of assessment, as will be shown later.

Varieties of Response Sets

In parallel with the refinement of the definition of response sets, an effort was made to elaborate the various types of response sets. The 1946 article of Cronbach had been, in part, an attempt to catalogue the varieties of response sets which he had observed until that time. He listed five response sets including: 1) the tendency to gamble, caution vs. incaution; 2) definition of judgment categories; 3) inclusiveness; 4) bias, acquiescence; and 5) speed vs. accuracy. He saw that there might be further identifications of response sets beyond those which he described. Frederikson and Messick (1959) presented a list of ten response sets which included: 1) acquiescence, 2) evasiveness, 3) choice of extreme judgment categories, 4) inclusiveness, 5) social desirability, 6) dissimulation, 7) skipping, 8) rapid and slow test
Social desirability was first investigated by Edwards (1957). He began by asking experimental subjects to judge a group of personality traits in terms of whether or not the subjects would consider the traits to be desirable in others. Edwards would ask his judges to scale the traits they were judging according to this definition. Each trait would then be assigned a social desirability scale value as a result of this process. In a recent article the socially desirable response was defined in the light of this scaling process as a "true response to an item with a socially desirable scale value or as a false response to an item with a socially undesirable scale value." (Edwards, 1967b, p. 56).

Two other investigators in this field, Crowne & Marlowe (1964, p. 353) have defined social desirability as "the need of subjects to obtain approval by responding in a culturally appropriate and acceptable manner."

Two of the other response sets mentioned above are related to, if not reducible to, social desirability. The desire to answer "yes", "like", or "true", which marks the acquiescence response set, is sometimes seen as an attempt to be agreeable, to act as one thinks others would like him to act. Edwards (1961) has that social desirability is prepotent in relation to acquiescence. If social desirability is aroused by an item, acquiescent tendencies will then be of little importance. He holds that items which are neutral in regard to social desirability will be much more susceptible to acquiescence.

Similarly, the set to fake or to dissimulate is related to social desirability. If the subject attempts to "fake good" he is trying to gain social approval by giving what he believes to be socially desirable answers
(Heilbrun, 1964). Faking bad is, likewise, comparable to selecting the socially undesirable responses.

Nature of the Variance Caused by Response Sets

The question of the nature of the variance which response sets introduce into the psychological assessment process was recognized early in the history of the investigation of response sets. After pointing out that some of the response set variance is an interference with measurement and some of the variance is potentially useful, Cronbach (1950, p. 17) stated, "The problem for the tester is to capitalize on the effect of the response sets where they are helpful to validity, and to eliminate their influence where it is undesirable."

The nub of the variance problem is that the use of response sets and even the choice of particular types of response sets might reveal important personality characteristics of a person undergoing psychological assessment. Such personality characteristics would introduce useful and real variance into the assessment process. On the other hand, error variance can and does result from the employment of response sets during psychological assessment.

This problem can be illustrated from its consideration in the field of the social desirability response set. Is social desirability a simple facade which the respondent uses to put up a good front or do socially desirable responses and measures actually reveal deep-seated personality variables and traits? Is social desirability simply a response set which introduces error variance into personality assessment or is it a source of reliable variance which may reflect reliable personality traits or stylistic tendencies on the part of the subject (Pedersen, 1967)?

Spilka (1966) has summarized this discussion of real and error variance by distinguishing two factors in social desirability: 1) the self-sentiment factor, and 2) the set to respond in a socially desirable manner. This factorization suggests that both of the kinds of variance operate simultaneously
in the socially desirable response.

Block (1962) distinguished these two types of responses, but then refined the self sentiment or real factor and identified it as a correlate of adjustment. Weiner, (1959) had found high correlations between 100 items in a Q sort of adjustment and 100 items in a Q sort of social desirability. Block analyzed these correlations and found that personal adjustment traits often included behaviors which were judged separately to be socially desirable. He added, however, that the notion of social desirability which emphasized the facade type of response did not appear to relate to intrinsic psychological health. Psychopathological behaviors are socially undesirable and almost invariably socially deviant behaviors. It follows that normal behavior is socially desirable and elicits conformity from the members of society.

Spilka and Block have refined the understanding of social desirability by showing that it is a more inclusive concept than adjustment and that there is not a simple one to one mapping between social desirability and adjustment.

Megargee (1966) offered some helpful research on this question. He scored the Edwards Social Desirability Scale for three experimental groups: 21 Peace Corps Trainees who took the MMPI for clearance for overseas assignment, 41 normal college students who took the MMPI anonymously, and 65 disturbed criminals who took the MMPI in preparation for probation. Megargee held that the Peace Corps Trainees would have reason to make a good impression as well as to appear well adjusted. The college students had no reason to fake on the test because of their anonymity. The criminals would attempt to dissimulate in order to appear adjusted. Megargee found that the Peace Corps Trainees scored significantly higher, that is, in a socially desirable direction, than either of the other two groups which did not differ from one another.
He concluded that the Scale produced results which were a combination of real adjustment and the desire to make a good impression since when these factors both operated the results were significantly higher than when either of the factors operated separately. Megargee cautioned, therefore, that while social desirability may be a part of adjustment, adjustment is not necessarily a part of social desirability.

While this research, like Block's, was helpful in pointing up the two sources of variance at work in the social desirability response set, it left the question of distinguishing the spurious variance from the real variance unsolved since the college students and the prison inmates who were meant to represent these two types of variance were indistinguishable from each other.

Edwards (1953) worked with the concept of a Social Desirability Scale Value before he produced his Social Desirability Scale. A Scale Value was achieved by having a set of judges rate concepts on their social desirability. He had University of Washington students rate 140 personality trait items for their Social Desirability Scale Value. He then had the students take the 140 items and say whether they applied to themselves or not. The correlation between the two sets of results was +.871. He concluded that either desirable traits are widespread or people dissimulate. He concluded, even in this early phase of the research, that social desirability is either a general acceptance of adjustment and is somehow equivalent to adjustment; or desirability is a desire to make a good impression; or that both of these factors are operating.

Just as social desirability and adjustment are not identical and often confounded, so deviance, social undesirability, and maladjustment should not
be seen as interchangeable or in a one-to-one relationship to one another. Berg (1955, 1957) has concentrated attention on deviant responses as indicative of reliable personality traits. He is not speaking specifically of deviation from social norms, but more of deviation from the normal patterns of non-chance response sets. Nonetheless, he points out that deviation may not only be indicative of maladjustment, but it may also be a clue to finding exceptionally creative and productive personalities and persons of genius level ability.

Collectively these studies of the real and error variance in social desirability response set research have resulted in an appropriate degree of caution in interpreting the results of scales which are meant to measure this response set.

Special Fields of Application of Response Sets

Most of the literature in the field of response sets and in the sub-area of social desirability has concentrated on the effect of sets on the results produced in filling out personality inventories such as the MMPI, interest blanks such as the Strong Vocational Interest Blank and specialized scales such as the F Scale of authoritarianism. Relatively little has been done with response sets and social desirability, in particular, in other areas of personality assessment such as projective techniques and the interview.

One of the reasons for the lack of concern about response sets in the use of projective techniques was that the rationale for using these techniques was that these instruments were somehow relatively free of distortions due to defensiveness. Today it is more clearly seen that a person's defenses are not stripped away by the mechanism of projection to lay bare his inner
self as had been presumed in the past (Schwartz, 1964).

Social desirability and the sentence completion tests have been investigated by Meltzoff (1951) and Rozynko (1959). They found that the social desirability scale values of the sentence stems given to the subject had an effect on the social desirability of his responses.

Rozynko gave 15 sentence stems which had been scaled for social desirability to 50 subjects who had been given the Edwards Social Desirability Scale. He found significant (p.<.05) correlation of +.35 between the subjects' social desirability scores and the sentence completions which they produced. He also found that only subjects with high social desirability scores perpetuate the social desirability of the sentence stem into the completion.

Since the +.35 correlation is low, even though it is significant, it would have been helpful if the correlations for the high social desirability subjects had been reported separately since these subjects seemed to be most susceptible to the influence of the social desirability response set.

Meltzoff concluded from his research that, "Other things being equal, the tone and neutrality of the responses to a sentence completion test are direct functions of the subject's mental set, as determined essentially by test instructions." This conclusion might be too limited in that other factors in the situation, besides the test instructions, such as the social desirability value of the sentence stem, the test setting and purpose, and the subject's response set proneness as shown by Rozynko do have an influence upon the subject's responses to a sentence completion test.

Response sets were also found to affect performance on the Rorschach by Hutt (1950), Langer (1962), Lord (1950), and Luchins (1947). These studies concentrated on the effect of instructional sets and testing situations on the Rorschach results. They found that they could control many of the Rorschach
variables by means of instructor induced sets and variations in the testing environment.

The Langer study is representative of studies which used instructional sets to alter Rorschach responses. Langer used 97 college students as his subjects and separated them into three groups on the basis of an initial administration of the Rorschach. The three groups represented subjects who were either above the median for the group in the use of small segments of the blot (Dd) as areas to which to respond, or below the median of the group in the use of large segments of the blot (D), and those who were not distinguishable into one of these two groups. These latter served as control subjects. The two experimental groups were told to take the Rorschach again with an emphasis on the opposite locations on the blot. Both groups changed significantly, not only on the determinants in questions but on several other determinants as well.

These studies did show that instructional sets can alter projective test responses but they might be criticized for the lack of subtlety with which the response sets were induced.

Lord examined the effects of situational factors on the occurrence of Rorschach determinants. Three different affective tones: positive, negative, and neutral were used by three different female examiners in three successive examinations of each subject with the Rorschach. The Rorschach determinants were altered in the various situations with the most significant finding being that only 30% of the subjects maintained the same experience balance over the three administrations. Lord found that the examiner variable was responsible for the greatest shifts in determinants. One examiner especially seemed to influence her subjects.

Regrettfully, the study did not report the interaction effects between the three factors. The interaction between affective tone and examiner would
have been helpful in interpreting the results. A larger number of examiners might have controlled for the examiner effects which seemed to have unduly influenced the results.

Murstein (1961) cites Atkinson's doctoral dissertation on the question of response sets and the TAT. It was found that a rotated presentation of the TAT cards produced achievement motivation scores in relation to the order of presentation rather than to the content of the cards. Achievement motivation was highest in the first four cards presented and lowest in the last four positions in the order. It should be pointed out that fatigue as well as a first-four last-four response set might have been responsible for these results.

Schwartz, (1964) investigated the effect of response sets on the Rosenzweig Picture-Frustration Study. Here again instructional sets were found to influence the intropunitive, extrapunitive, and impunitive nature of the subjects' responses to the stimulus situation.

These studies showed that response sets and their influence on test results were not confined to limited-choice tests such as personality and interest inventories, but also affected projective assessments and must be taken into account in interpreting these test results as well.

As in the area of projective techniques, studies of the influence of response sets on the interview as an assessment instrument have been limited, but the problem has, nonetheless, been pursued. One set of studies followed the progression from objective and projective testing procedures into the field of live interview assessment.

Asch (1946), Kelley (1949) and Allen (1965) have pursued the question of the "warm-cold" set through several different stages. Asch told his subjects to expect another person to be "warm" or "cold". At the end of the description the subjects were asked to fill out a Semantic Differential type description of
the person. The "warm-cold" variable was found to produce large differences in the impressions of personality formed with the list of adjectives.

Kelley used the same "warm-cold" variable but in a live classroom situation where subjects were told to expect a real person who was about to enter the room to be either "warm" or "cold." This set produced results similar to those found by Asch, but this time in relation to a real person. In addition, the differences in first impressions were shown to influence the subjects' subsequent behavior toward the stimulus person. Favorable first impressions toward the "warm" stimulus person tended to produce greater interaction between the subjects and that person.

Finally, Allen instructed his subjects that the person about to interview them was either a "warm" or a "cold" person. After a 45 minute interview, the subjects were asked to fill out a Semantic Differential list of 18 adjectives describing the interviewer. In general, the results of this study were non-significant since only one of the pairs of adjectives showed a significant difference on the basis of the "warm" and "cold" sets. Some significant effects on the speech behavior of the interviewees were noted with the "warm" set subjects showing a shorter response latency than the "cold" set subjects.

In general, these three studies showed the influence of sets on expectations of other persons, but lacked subtlety in the manner in which the sets were induced. For experimenters to describe other persons as "warm" and "cold" must have been unusual enough to alert the subjects to the experimental nature of the instructions. In addition, the study by Allen used job application interviews in which to study the response set. The lack of discrimination between "warm" and "cold" set subjects on the Semantic Differential was, in part, due to the efforts by the subjects to avoid being critical of their inter-
viewers who would have some influence upon the job placement of the inter-
viewees.

As the consideration of response sets is moved into the area of the in-
terview, as in the series of experiments just reviewed, researchers prefer
to speak of expectancies rather than response sets. The two notions seem
to be similar in their underlying constructs. They both refer to a referen-
tial framework into which subsequent experiences are assimilated and to a
readiness to respond in light of that framework. Social psychologists prefer
to speak of expectancies and attitudes while psychometricians have used the
concept of response sets to refer to similar psychological processes. Sherif
and Cantril (1946) held that a person formed scales or frames of reference
if he was repeatedly faced with a given stimulus situation. Once scales had
been formed, the person reacted to subsequent stimulation in a characteristic
and selective way. According to Taggart (1962), Cronbach was applying this
notion of Sherif and Cantril in his early work on response sets. This over-
lapping of the notions of expectancies and response sets will be reflect-
ed in the literature on response sets in interviewing which follows. The
preferred research entity in this literature is the notion, not of response
set, but of expectancy.

Clemes and D'Andrea (1965) attempted to assess interview expectations
and the arousal of anxiety when expectations were not met. Subjects were in-
duced to entertain guidance expectations in one set of interviews and partici-
pation expectations in another. In one set of interviews the patients were
led to expect the therapist to direct the therapy and in the other interviews
patients were led to expect that they would participate with the therapist
in determining the content of the therapy. At the end of the initial interview
the patients were asked to rate themselves on five emotions which they experienc-
ed during the interview. They also sorted 20 anxiety cards as to whether they
felt or did not feel a certain way during the interview. The therapists rated themselves on the five emotions and rated the interview on a scale of difficulty. They were also asked to identify the type of interview they preferred - guided or participative. Incompatibility of expectations with therapist preferences was found to be borne out by the elevated scores on the anxiety and emotion scales where the expectations were frustrated by the type of interview conducted. Lack of similarity between the patient and therapist in their expectations about therapy was associated with increased "strain" during therapy. This would be true because the patients attempted to direct the interview toward their preconceptions. The patient was trying to assimilate the interview material according to his preconceptions, attitudes, or sets.

Leonard and Bernstein (1960) applied the findings on interview expectations to therapy. They found that disagreement between therapists and patients about the relevance of interview subject matter was often traceable to a discrepancy in initial expectations about the therapeutic process. Therapists were found to be open to a much broader array of topics than were patients who expected a greater selectivity to be exercised in choosing the matters to be treated in therapy. They concluded that the patient had to unlearn what he thought he was supposed to talk about and to become sensitive in expectational terms to the requirements of the situation in which he found himself. We can see the operation of a social desirability response set when this problem is spoken of in terms of the patient holding expectations about what he was supposed to talk about.

Schwab (1969) investigated the degree of inter-interviewer agreement as a result of structured, moderately structured, and unstructured interviews. It was found that the amount of inter-interviewer agreement increased with the
degree of structure. That is, the interviewers who utilized a structured interview achieved greater agreement on the rank ordering of the job applicants they interviewed than did interviewers using the semi-structured and non-structured formats.

The study utilized accomplice interviewees who were prepared to present pre-determined applicant responses to the interviewers. Real applicants would have provided a more adequate test of the experimental hypotheses.

Pope & Siegman (1962) found that interviewers who used specific questions in a standardized interview tended to receive less non-fluency responses from their interviewees. The examiners saw non-fluency as a sign of anxiety and concluded that question specificity in the interviews reduced interviewee anxiety. In 1965 they repeated their experiment but attempted to control for anxiety producing content and question specificity by mixing these conditions in different segments of the interview. They were attempting to check whether their earlier results had actually been the outcome of question specificity or simply of the uncontrolled for content of an anxiety producing type. This later research (Siegman & Pope, 1965) showed that it was the anxiety producing content, rather than the specificity or non-specificity of the questions, which caused the anxious speech patterns.

These studies did not seem to be conclusive on the questions of the standardized interview with specific questions, because the second study which tried to control for the content of the interview as well as the style of interview lacked content which was clearly distinguishable on the basis of anxiety relatedness. The two topics which formed the content of the interviews were school and family. While an introductory paragraph about the special problems of family-related difficulties was meant to arouse anxiety about this topic, school problems might be as emotionally charged for some subjects as family
problems. In addition, the authors seem to ignore a significant interaction in their results which indicated that high specificity questions on emotional topics served to reduce anxious non-fluencies of speech in their subjects more than the other three possible interactions of these two conditions.

These studies by Pope & Siegman might seem to be unrelated to the questions of response sets in interviewing, but their relevance is twofold. First, and least importantly, the way a subject perceives a given testing situation can be altered by induced sets to respond in a given way as by the instructions concerning the significance of the family connected problems in this research. But the more important connection between these studies and the response set problem is that they point to the significance of the assessment situation. The specificity of questions and the degree of structure in the interview are non-content areas which do have an influence on the interview in the way they prompt the interviewee to respond.

It is important to note that Allport defined attitude, and correlatively sets, as being related to a situation. Crowne and Marlowe (1964) building on Lewin's notion of "life space" have also emphasized the importance of the situation. The meaning of a situation for an individual is defined by his expectations for the outcome of various behaviors in that situation. The very fact of being examined is likely to arouse a subject's needs and anticipations related to social evaluation. A person brings to the assessment situation a set of expectations about the situation as a result of previous learning. These expectations will affect the responses he gives in that situation.

RATIONALE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Research Question

The present study asked the question whether or not situational factors
influenced clinical interviews. More specifically, did the subject of a clinical interview invoke the use of the social desirability response set more in some situations than in others? Asked in another way, did the alteration of situational factors in a clinical interview affect the occurrence of the social desirability response set during that interview.

The question had importance in terms of the validity of the information given by a person during a clinical interview. If the person interviewed was responding in a socially desirable way during the interview the validity of the information yielded by the interview was appreciably compromised. If it can be shown that situational factors alone can affect the validity of the interview conducted, in those situations, then clinicians can be made more aware of those factors which increase the use of a response set and those which decrease the use of a set by the person interviewed.

The present study sought to influence the use of the social desirability response set in clinical interviews of Catholic priests which were done by a group of clinical psychologists as part of a nationwide study of the life and work of Catholic clergymen. The particular form of social desirability which might be encountered in an interview study of clergymen requires some explanation.

As Edwards (1967a) has pointed out, a cultural consensus on what is and is not desirable in a given society is the standard against which behavior is judged in the formation of the social desirability response set. Social and not personal desirability is the center of concern. Catholic priests belong not only to the society at large, but also to the Catholic sub-culture and, more importantly, to a priestly culture as well.
Kennedy (1968) held that a clerical culture existed for many priests which urged them to become inordinately identified with the externals of cleri-
cal life and institutional life rather than to the personal growth possibilities in their lives. In the face of this type of institutional bias and cultural concentration a social desirability response set could easily be formed.

Certain behaviors are seen as socially desirable for priests and are re-
inforced as such by training and personal interchange. This social desirability would operate to control the results which a psychologist gained in interviewing a priest, by interposing a filter between the real priest-person and his overt responses.

Other studies involving professional men have shown that these men tend to be guarded in their responses in an effort to avoid any compromise to their profession or to their own professional standing. Smigel (1958) conducted in-
terviews with members of the legal profession and found them to be more inter-
ested in protecting the large organizations of which they were partners than in becoming engaged with the interviewer. He also found an attitude of con-
servatism about the lawyers in that they resisted the probing of social scien-
tists. The men being interviewed also were very solicitous about avoiding any breach of professional ethics especially in the area of professional secrecy.

In a study of the response pattern of clinical psychology professionals and trainees, Ziller (1964) found that the professionals who knew their responses were going to be compared with those of the trainees avoided a "don't know" choice category because they perceived a "don't know" answer to be in-
congruent with their role as professionals. The task which the professionals and trainees were asked to perform was to describe the central figure in a mental health film by means of a psychiatric observation form. Only one pro-
essional checked a "don't know" alternative whereas the four trainees checked a
total of 44 "don't know" alternative responses on a comparable section of the questionnaire.

These two studies are not directly comparable to the present study but do give an indication of the type of professional vested interests which might prompt professional subjects to answer psychological inquiries in a somewhat biased and possibly socially desirable manner.

Independent Variables

The rationale of the present study maintained that three variables - the style of the interview being conducted, that is, whether the interview was a structured or a non-structured one; the setting of the interview, that is, the physical place in which the interview was conducted; and the manner of addressing the interviewee, that is, whether he was addressed by his given or by his professional name - would affect the occurrence of the social desirability response set in interviews with priests.

Style of the Interview

The first variable in the study was the style of conducting the interview. The tendency for response sets to be more prevalent in unstructured situations was recognized early in the history of response sets by Cronbach (1946, p. 483):

Response sets have the greatest influence on scores in ambiguous or unstructured situations. If a situation is structured for the student so that he knows the answer required, he responds directly to the content of the item, and response sets are probably unimportant. If he does not know the answer, his answer is determined by caution, acquiescence, or other sets.

Berg (1957, p. 155) agreed with the findings of Cronbach on this question and stated, "...response biases appear more frequently as the stimulus situation is unstructured...." He explained that when a test was unstructured a tendency could be demonstrated among respondents to favor acquiescent
response set options such as "True" and to oppose negative options such as "False". Berg also suggested that other response sets besides acquiescence might operate in unstructured situations. A response set of evasiveness might be preferred by some respondents in such situations.

In 1946 Sherif and Cantril asserted that the more ambiguous a social stimulus situation was, the more established frames of reference or anchorages would be called upon to determine a person's reaction to the social stimulus.

In therapy, Lennard & Bernstein (1960) have found that sessions in which a greater number of highly specific therapist propositions occur were rated by patients as having been marked by a more satisfactory communication. Patients found more satisfaction in therapy which included a more highly structured verbal activity on the part of the therapist. It was presumed that this structure provided a greater degree of cognitive clarity and reduced the amount of discontinuity in the communication process. These authors found that reduced ambiguity in the therapist's propositions reflected itself in a reduction of anxiety, confusion, and disorientation in the patient's verbal communication. Anxiety, confusion, and disorientation increased the level of self-esteem threat to the respondent and Meltzoff (1951) had found that self-esteem threat resulted in a loss of immediate response and the substitution of a carefully studied facade. Respondents tended to deal with threats to their self-esteem by self-enhancement and evasiveness.

Place of the Interview

The second of the three experimental variables, the physical setting of the interview, is probably the most "situational" of the three independent variables. Here the question asked would be whether or not some physical settings might reinforce the social desirability response set, while others would effectively diminish or eliminate it.
As quoted in Chapter I, Richardson sought to identify the factors that influenced participation in an interview. Along with the social context of the interview, the impact of the study and the degree of communication among the respondents, he also suggested that the physical setting of the interview might have an effect on a person's participation in the interview.

Maslow & Mintz (1956) studied the effects of the physical setting on subjects' judgments of energy and well-being in a set of photographs. Sixteen subjects were to make their judgments in the setting of a beautiful room. Sixteen others were placed in an ugly room and made their judgments there. Finally, ten subjects took the experiment in an average room. The judgments of the photographs were significantly higher (.001) for energy and well-being in the beautiful room as compared to the ugly room. The decrease across the three conditions: beautiful room, average room, ugly room, was steady and the beautiful room had significantly higher ratings of energy and well-being than the groups in either the average or the ugly rooms.

Form of Personal Address during the Interview

The final independent variable, the type of address used in the interview, seems to be unique to this study, but would find some theoretical support in the studies cited earlier about the response patterns of professional persons. If professional persons have a tendency to respond in such a way as to protect their professional role as these studies suggest, then the use of professional titles in addressing the interviewees might be seen as a reinforcement of the professional role as opposed to a personal form of address which would be intended to minimize the professional role and responses given in accordance with it.

Dependent Variables

Two instruments were used to measure the effects of the three experimental conditions upon the interview and upon the occurrence of the social
Edwards Social Desirability Scale

The first of the dependent variable measures is the Social Desirability Scale developed by Edwards (1957). Social desirability has been measured chiefly by this scale and the scale developed by Crowne & Marlowe (1964).

Edwards developed his scale by submitting 150 items taken from the F, L, and K scales of MMPI and the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale to ten judges who were asked to rate these items for social desirability. Seventy-nine items which best discriminated between high and low social desirability were chosen for the scale. The resulting scale correlated significantly (p = .01) in a positive direction with the K scale of the MMPI. It correlated negatively and significantly (p = .01) with the F, Hs, D, Pd, Pb, Sc, Ma, Pr scales of the MMPI (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964).

In a recent review of the reliability and validity of the Social Desirability Scale, Edwards (1967b) reported that an inter-judge reliability of .95 had been attained in the assignment of Social Desirability Scale Values and that a test-re-test reliability coefficient of .97 had been achieved. Concurrent validity was evident in the correlation of .92 between the proportion of items keyed for socially desirable responses in over 40 MMPI scales and the corresponding correlations of the scales with the Social Desirability Scale.

Edwards (1962) reported that social desirability was actually a bipolar factor with a socially desirable and socially undesirable pole. This corresponds to the polarization which Couch & Keniston (1960) found on the acquiescence response set when they distinguished "yea sayers" and "nay sayers" on that response set. In the light of this finding we would expect to find some subjects scoring in a socially desirable direction while another group
scored in a socially undesirable direction. This corresponds with the finding mentioned earlier that the Social Desirability Scale correlates positively with the K scale of the MMPI and negatively with the F scale. Since the K scale detects persons who tend to distort things in order to give a good picture of themselves, we would expect these persons to tend toward the socially desirable answer. Since the F scale detects persons who answer a given group of items in a way opposite to that of 90% of the population, we would expect that they would choose responses which were socially unpopular and undesirable. Low scores on the Edwards Scale quite probably represent a tendency to give socially undesirable responses. This might be seen as a general response trait just as the tendency to give socially desirable responses is such a general trait.

Criticism of the Edwards Social Desirability Scale has been rather vigorous. Chief among the critics have been Crowne and Marlowe (1964) who criticized the Edwards Scale for its pathological bias since it was made up of MMPI items which were meant to assist in differential diagnoses of psychopathology. Crowne & Marlowe developed their own social desirability scale by selecting items with high cultural approval which, when answered in either a positive or negative direction would have minimal pathological or abnormal implications. They had ten judges estimate the social desirability and pathology of the items selected. Thirty-six items received unanimous ratings for social desirability. On a five-point scale the judges estimated that these items had a mean pathology rating of 2.8 as opposed to a mean rating of 3.9 for the items on the Edwards Scale which the judges also rated. Thirty-three items which discriminated best between high and low social desirability subjects were selected for the final scale.

The Edwards Social Desirability Scale was chosen for use in the present
research because of the greater subtlety of the items in this scale as compared to the Marlowe & Crowne Scale. Answering the latter scale simply on the basis of the occurrence of absolutes, i.e. "always", "never", etc. and relatives i.e. "sometimes", "occasionally", etc. in the items causes one to answer twenty-eight of the thirty-three items in the keyed direction and to score in the 99th percentile on the Scale's standardization tables. Jackson & Messick (1958) have pointed out that the tendency to endorse statements containing phrases such as "all", "every person", "never", "must", etc. is a general one which may act independently of the item content. This is a response style to over-generalize and this Scale might simply cause the exchange of one response set for another.

Messick (1965) has criticized the Edwards Scale on three counts: first, its items are not independent of the MMPI correction scales, e.g. 48 of the original 79 Edwards items were from the F scale; second, the Edwards Scale is not independent of the MMPI content scales, e.g. 22 of the 39 Edwards items are from the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale but used with reverse keying; and third, only 9 of the 39 items are keyed true leaving the Scale open to contamination by the acquiescent response set. The first criticism would seem to raise the question of the validity of the correction scales as much as of the Edwards Scale. It is as possible that the correction scales are actually measuring social desirability since the Edwards Scale has a high positive correlation with the K scale and a high negative correlation with the F scale of the MMPI. This dilemma is not likely to be resolved, but since the Edwards Scale has been shown to measure the social desirability response set and personality trait validly, the source of its individual items would not seem to stand against it.

The second criticism has to do with the tendency of the Taylor Manifest
Anxiety Scale items to load inversely to the Social Desirability Scale items. As Heilbrun (1964) has pointed out, this phenomenon is a consequent of the actual inverse relationship between deviancy and socially acceptable behavior. Edwards has not simply taken items which detected pathology, reversed their scoring signs and labeled the result a Social Desirability Scale. Instead he has tapped and highlighted an actual source of variance in psychological assessment which must be taken into account in test interpretation even before conclusions are reached about the real psychopathology or sanity that may be present.

The third criticism has to do with a contamination between the social desirability and acquiescent response sets. Edwards (1961) has replied to this criticism himself when he pointed out that social desirability was prepotent in relation to acquiescence. If social desirability is aroused by an item, acquiescent tendencies will then be of little importance.

Two studies have utilized the concept of response set and the MMPI with populations similar to that in the present study. The first study by Taggart (1962) was an investigation of attitude change toward pastoral counseling on the part of theological students. Taggart did score the MMPI for the Social Desirability Scale and hypothesized that higher scores would show greater attitude change than would low scorers. Unfortunately, the author only states that this hypothesis was not supported but does not give the data from the Social Desirability scoring.

A second study by Grant (1967) investigated the influence of instructional sets on the ability of seminarians to fake their answers on the MMPI in order to look good or bad as well as reporting their honest answers to the MMPI items. Grant did not score the MMPI results for social desirability. He did report that the MMPI was amenable to faking in either direction, although faking in a positive direction, which would be most congruent with
social desirability results, was more difficult to do successfully than was faking in a negative direction. The Grant study differs from the present study in that his efforts to manipulate the dissimulation response set were overt and clearly explained to the subjects. The subjects were, as it were, accomplices in the investigation. In the present study an effort was made to influence the use of response bias on the part of subjects who were naive about the experimental conditions and the purpose of the study. Studying response biases as they naturally occur in psychological assessment subjects would seem to be a more helpful approach than to artificially induce biases. The accomplice status of the Grant subjects may have tended to compromise the effort to transfer his results to subjects who make real efforts at dissimulation.

**Semantic Differential**

The second measure used as a dependent variable in the present study was the Semantic Differential developed by Osgood (1957). This instrument is an ipsative technique in which the user describes his subject without reference to a normative comparison group (Block, 1962). In taking the Semantic Differential, subjects rate concepts, things, or persons against a uniform series of bipolar traits selected for their relevance to the idea, person, or thing being measured.

Osgood (1957) pointed out that frustration and anxiety situations gave rise to reactions which were learned on the basis of anxiety reduction. This can be analyzed by semantic differential measurement, especially in comparisons between individuals and between groups:

The typical procedure will be to either a) make predictions (from theory or model) about the differences in meanings of certain signs to be expected between two groups and then test the prediction against the semantic differential; b) or measure differences of meanings of concepts with the differential, make predictions about overt behavior in certain situations from these measurements, and test the accuracy of those predictions. (Osgood, 1957, p. 220).
The first alternative has been chosen for this present study. Predictions were made about the Semantic Differential results in the several conditions under investigation in this study.

The nineteen Semantic Differential Scales used in this research were formed by choosing scales from a pool of forty scales presented by Solomon (Osgood, 1957). The test-re-test reliability of each of these scales had been determined independently and found to be significant at the 1 per cent level of probability. As to the validity of the Semantic Differential, Osgood maintains that this instrument is a measurement of meaning for which there is no accepted quantitative criterion and, therefore, no validity criterion in the ordinary sense. He adds, however,

Throughout our work with the semantic differential we have found no reason to question the validity of the instrument on the basis of its correspondence with the results to be expected from common sense. (Osgood, 1957, p. 141).

Since the present study was essentially an examination of the social desirability response set, a point of special interest was the relationship between the Semantic Differential and the social desirability response set.

Osgood (1969) reported that three affective factors in meaning emerged consistently in factor analytic studies of Semantic Differential results. These factors were the evaluative, potency, and activity dimensions of meaning. Kuusinen (1969) and Heise (1969) have reported that these factors also emerged when the Semantic Differential was used in personality rating tasks as in the present research.

Two studies have examined the relationship between the evaluative factor of the Semantic Differential in personality research and the social desirability response set. Nickols & Shaw (1964) found that Semantic Dif-
ferential and Thurstone measurements of attitudes correlated highly when the object of the attitude was non-personal or non-salient for the raters, but the correlations decreased significantly when the object of the attitude had salience for the rater. In this latter case the Thurstone measurements retained their reliability and the authors concluded that the Semantic Differential ratings were influenced by the social desirability bias when personal and salient judgments had to be made.

Ford and Meisels (1965) determined the Social Desirability Scale Values of 50 Semantic Differential scales and found these values to be highly correlated \( r = +.92 \) with the evaluative factor loadings on the Semantic Differential Scales.

These studies were helpful in the present research because they showed a relationship between the two dependent variables in the research. The Edwards Social Desirability Scale was especially designed to measure the social desirability response set. The studies just reviewed have shown the Semantic Differential also to be responsive to the social desirability response set through its evaluative meaning factor.

The present research used the Semantic Differential to compare the profiles produced by two members of one interview dyad in describing a single concept - the feeling state of the person interviewed. This use of the Semantic Differential was similar to its use in the work of Burke and Bennis (1961) which investigated the perception of self and others during human relations laboratory training. Eighty-four subjects were taking laboratory training in six groups of 13 to 15 persons. They were asked to fill out Semantic Differential Scales describing their self-perceived actual behavior and their self-perceived ideal behavior at the beginning and the end of the training period. They were also asked to fill out scales describing their perception of each of the other
as an extremely homogeneous group, with very strong and highly uniform attitudes toward the acceptability of characteristics upon which our society places either positive or negative value." This study was helpful in that it showed the tendency of some persons with vocations in religion to be sensitive to the social desirability factors in assessment instruments. It also showed the overlap between the Semantic Differential technique and the social desirability response set.

Summary

The literature in the field of response sets has alerted psychologists in the field of psychological assessment to be aware of the non-relevant variance which response sets introduce into the assessment process. The social desirability response set seems to be an especially virulent type of response bias. It has been shown to affect objective and projective assessment procedures alike and the literature indicates that social desirability might have an influence on the clinical interview as an assessment procedure.

The structured quality of assessment instruments seems to serve as a control on the influence of the social desirability response set. Other situational factors such as the physical setting in which the interview is conducted have been shown to influence the behavior of interview subjects in that setting or situation.

Professional persons have a special sub-culture toward which to respond in a socially desirable way. Interviewers working with these persons should be cognizant of the possible influence of the social desirability response bias on such interviews.

The Edwards Social Desirability Scale and the Semantic Differential have both been shown to relate to the social desirability factor in assessment and have been shown to be psychometrically adequate measures for use with a population of religious professionals.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

A research design was devised to alter the situational context in which clinical interviews were conducted in an effort to study the effect of the context upon the occurrence of the social desirability response set in the interviews. The situational context is here defined as factors outside the individual, such as the style of interview which was employed (structured or non-structured), the physical environment in which the interview was conducted (university office, seminary office, or psychologist's office), and the manner of addressing the interviewee which was utilized (given name or title). Measurements by the Edward's Social Desirability Scale and the Semantic Differential were used as the dependent variables.

Subjects and Interviewers

The subjects in this research were 60 Roman Catholic Priests who ranged in age from 27 to 58 with a mean age of 37.6. The group included 38 diocesan priests and 22 religious order priests. Ten of the priests were pastors of parishes, 23 were associate pastors in parish work and 37 were working in special assignments. Fifty of the priests were participating in a summer school program of classes at Loyola University, Chicago, and ten were priests from the Chicago area not associated with the program. All of the subjects were Caucasians and were United States citizens. Their participation in the study was voluntary. These subjects were interviewed during the summer of 1969 (July through August).

The interviewers included practicing clinicians with doctoral degrees in psychology and two doctoral candidates in clinical psychology who were at
advanced levels in their doctoral studies. All of the interviewers were trained in the psychology department of Loyola University, Chicago. All of the interviewers had previous clinical interview experience. Those in practice included some who were primarily engaged in research or education, but all were engaged in clinical practice at least part-time. The interviewers were instructed to make use of their clinical judgment, experience, and skills during the interview with a mind to writing a scientifically valid report in which they would evaluate the psychological adjustment and maturity of their interviewees.

**Design**

The subjects were randomly assigned to the twelve possible combinations of the three experimental variables (style of interview, manner of addressing the interviewee, and the setting of the interview). This design allowed 30 subjects to be interviewed in a structured interview and 30 in an interview which was unstructured. Thirty interviewees were addressed by their proper titles and 30 by their given names. Twenty interviews were done in a seminary office setting, 20 in a university testing booth setting and 20 in a psychologist's private office. There were 5 subjects in each of the 12 cells in the experimental design.

**Interview**

Each of the 60 interviews conducted in the study was of one hour to one and one-half hours in length. The interviews were taped. They each covered the same general content areas under two major headings: 1) Personal History and 2) Core Areas of the Priesthood. The Personal History content included: parents, siblings, family values, important other people, changes in the family, illness and accident history, school career, relationship with peers, psychosexual development, and self-concept at the present time. The Core Areas of the Priesthood content included: development of vocation, priestly assignment, interpersonal relations, faith, priesthood, celibacy, and the future. Each of
These areas included a number of sub-areas to be discussed (See Appendix A). These subject areas were chosen in order to allow the interviewers to reach an appraisal of the psychological adjustment of a sample of American priests as that adjustment was reflected in their life and work. This was the aim of the larger study in which the present research was conducted.

The interviewer began each interview with the following statement and question: "As I understand it, you volunteered for this project because of an interest you have in a nationwide study that is to be conducted on many Roman Catholic priests. Could you tell me some of your reactions to such a study." After this initial exchange the interviews proceeded in either a structured or non-structured manner as will be explained below.

At the conclusion of the interview, the interviewer asked the interviewee to complete the Semantic Differential and Social Desirability Scale post-interview measures and the interviewer completed the post-interview material. In all, the interview and the testing period following the interview were about two hours in duration.

**Experimental Conditions**

The two experimental conditions within the control of the interviewers, i.e., the structured vs. non-structured interview style and the given name vs. titled manner of address, were introduced to the interviewers during a half day briefing session prior to the beginning of the actual interviews.

The interviewers were instructed to conduct the structured interviews in a directive and systematically questioning style. The questions listed under each sub-area of the content of the interviews were to be directed at the interviewee in a methodical way (See Appendix A). The unstructured interview, by contrast, was to allow the interviewee to lead the interview into
the areas which he felt were pertinent. Following the interviewee's lead the psychologist was non-directively to encourage the subject to cover the content areas. Each interviewer was given a description of the two contrasting interview styles in an effort to delineate the two methods more clearly for the interviewer (See Appendix B).

With regard to the manner of addressing the interviewee, each interviewer was instructed to explicitly address the clergyman being interviewed by either his given name, i.e. "John", "George", or his proper title, i.e. "Father", "Monsignor", at least once during the interview period and to avoid using the opposite manner of address during the interview. The manner of address to be used in each interview was specified for the interviewer before each interview.

The final condition in the experiment, i.e. the setting of the interview was designated for each interview by the experimenter and was not in the control of the interviewer. Several clinicians' offices in the Chicago area were used. A number of testing booths in the psychology department at Loyola University were utilized. Finally, several offices in the Quigley North Seminary building were the other options in the setting condition of the experiment. Each interview was arranged several days in advance and the clergyman was informed of the place for the interview in such a way as to identify the setting as associated either with the University, the Seminary, or the Clinician's Office.

**Testing Instruments**

Three weeks before the interviewing period began the interviewees were part of a group of 225 priests who volunteered to take the MMPI. Sixty priests who were later to be scheduled for interviews were randomly chosen on the basis of a table of random numbers from the larger group of volunteers. The Edwards Social Desirability Scale of the MMPI was scored for each of the 60 subjects
and this social desirability score was used as the pre-test measure of social desirability. The interviewees were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions for the interviewing. Of the 60 priests who completed the pre-test measure, ten were unavailable at the time of interviewing. The pre-test measures for these ten were not included in the experimental data.

Upon completion of the clinical interview, each interviewer provided the interviewee with the two post-interview measures, the Edwards Social Desirability Scale and the Semantic Differential Scale. Both were in mimeographed form (Appendices C and D). Upon their completion they were returned to the interviewer. The interviewer also completed a Semantic Differential Scale (See Appendix E).

The Edwards Social Desirability Scale was given on a pre- and post-test basis to permit a comparison of these two sets of scores across the interview, but especially across the experimental conditions under which the interviews took place. In accordance with the hypotheses presented in Chapter I, it was predicted that the scores for the Edwards Scale would show greater change in a direction which would show less response set bias in the structured interview, when the interview took place in a clinician's office or university office setting, and when the interviewee was addressed by his given name.

In keeping with Edwards (1962) finding that social desirability was actually a bipolar continuum with a socially desirable pole and a socially undesirable pole, separate analyses of the results on the Edwards Social Desirability Scale scores for high scorers and for low scorers were performed. The experimental conditions should have a differential effect upon these two groups, with the optimal conditions tending to lower the high scores and raise the low scores across the interview more than would be true under the less favorable
conditions. The importance of finding condition-related differences in these changes was recognized because a simple regression effect would tend to lower the high scores and raise the low scores, but would not do it in a condition-related way.

Since the Edwards Social Desirability Scale was constructed to measure the social desirability response set, the rationale for its use in this study was rather straightforward. The use of the Semantic Differential as a measure of the presence of response bias was operationally defined for the purposes of the present study in the following way. Upon completion of an interview both of the participants in the interview described the feelings of the interviewee during the interview by means of the Semantic Differential Scales. Where social desirability had been operating, the interviewee, it was thought, would tend to select adjectives of a socially desirable nature with which to describe his feelings, e.g., 'I felt 'Good', 'Positive', 'Calm', etc. The interviewer, on the other hand, would have another perception of the feelings of the interviewee and would select adjectives such as 'Bad', 'Negative', 'Excitable', etc. with which to describe the feelings of the interviewee who had been maintaining a social desirability response bias. As a result of these discrepant perceptions, the parties in the interview would produce discrepant Semantic Differential Scale Scores in describing the same concept, i.e., the feelings of the interviewee during the interview. In interviews which were not as affected by social desirability a greater disclosure of real feelings in the interview would have brought the Semantic Differential Scales of the interviewer and interviewee into greater agreement and they would be less discrepant.

Burke and Bennis (1961) had used the Semantic Differential technique in such a way as to measure congruence and discrepancy between ideal and actual self and between self-perception and perception of self by others in a way similar to the way in which congruent and discrepant scores were used in the present study.
In order to render the Semantic Differential scoreable for the present research, a forced choice judging method was utilized. Five advance clinical psychology graduate students were asked to select one pole as the positive extreme and one pole as the negative extreme on each of the 19 scales of the Semantic Differential. In making their decisions the judges were asked to consider which of the two adjectives in each pair would mark the feelings of a person during a successful clinical interview of that person. The valence favored by the majority of the judges was assigned to each scale. This permitted a rating to be given to each of the seven steps on the Semantic Differential Scales. A rating of +3, +2, +1, 0, -1, -2, -3 was given to each of the 19 scales (see Appendix F). The sum of these scores across the 19 scales was determined for the interviewee and the interviewer in each interview dyad. The absolute difference between the sum on the interviewee's form and sum on the interviewer's form was the unit which was statistically analyzed. As an example of this procedure the five scores in the first cell of the statistical array, that is, for a structured interview, done at a University Office, and during which the interviewee was addressed by his given name, showed the following absolute differences between the interviewee and his interviewer: 6, 10, 4, 20, and 7 for a total absolute difference across these treatment conditions of 47. Since the experimental design was a 3 x 2 x 2 design 12 total absolute difference scores represented the full array of the experimental conditions.

Statistical Analyses

Since the experimental design was a 3 x 2 x 2 factorial design and since the experimental hypotheses required that differential effects be shown for the three experimental conditions, the analysis of variance technique for the comparison of multiple treatment means and the t test and Mann-Whitney U test (Siegel, 1956)
for the comparison individual pairs of means were chosen for the statistical analyses.

Three main statistical treatments were performed. First, the Semantic Differential Scale scores were analyzed in relation to the experimental conditions. Secondly, the Social Desirability Scale scores were similarly analyzed in connection with the experimental variables. Finally, the connections between the two dependent variables, the Social Desirability and Semantic Differential scores was analyzed.

The Semantic Differential scores which were used for the statistical analysis were the discrepancy scores between the interviewer and interviewee in each dyad. A $3 \times 2 \times 2$ analysis of variance on these scores was performed. Mean, standard deviation and $t$ test results were also calculated.

The Social Desirability Scale scores presented a more complex statistical problem. Separate analyses of the highest one-third and lowest one-third of the Social Desirability scores were performed by means of the Mann-Whitney $U$ test (Siegel, 1956). In these treatments a "percentage change" score as presented by Hanlon (1965) was used.

Finally, statistical examinations of the relationships between the two dependent variables were necessary. These included correlations between the results on the Semantic Differential and Social Desirability measures.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research will be presented and discussed in two stages. First, the Semantic Differential and Edwards Social Desirability Scale results will be presented. The statistical analyses of these two dependent variables will be presented, first, as two independent sets of results and then in their relationship to one another. After the results have been presented, the second section of this chapter will discuss them in relation to the experimental hypotheses which were under investigation in the present research.

Semantic Differential Results

As stated in the previous chapter, both the interviewer and the interviewee completed a Semantic Differential form describing the feelings of the interviewee during the interview. The scores used for the statistical analysis of the Semantic Differential results were the summated scores on the two Semantic Differential forms resulting from each interview dyad. The similarity or difference between these two sums was taken as a measure of the congruence or discrepancy between the two parties in the interview as they sought to describe the interview's feelings during the interview. Table 1 shows the results of the analysis of variance on the Semantic Differential scores.

Table 1 shows that two main effects of the treatment conditions and
TABLE 1

Analysis of Variance on Semantic Differential Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sums of Squares</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term of Address (A)</td>
<td>183.75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>183.75</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Interview (B)</td>
<td>584.13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>292.07</td>
<td>4.69*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style of Interview (C)</td>
<td>322.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>322.02</td>
<td>5.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term by Place (A X B)</td>
<td>121.60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60.80</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term by Style (A X C)</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place by Style (B X C)</td>
<td>461.73</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>230.86</td>
<td>3.69*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term by Place by Style (A X B X C)</td>
<td>37.20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Cell</td>
<td>2985.20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>62.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p. < .05
one interaction effect reached significance at the .05 level of significance. The place of the interview and the style of interview conducted were the significant main effects and the interaction of place with the style of the interview conducted there was the third significant result. The other main effect being studied, the term of address used during the interview, did not reach significance at the .05 level but did result in an F ratio of 2.97 which would be significant at the .10 level where an F ratio of 2.80 is required for significance.

To identify the specific differences which were reflected in the analysis of variance data, t tests were done on the five possible comparisons of experimental conditions. Table 2 shows the results of these comparisons. This table shows that the structured interview condition resulted in a congruence between the interviewer and interviewee which was significantly (p.<.05) better than that achieved in the unstructured interviews. Likewise, the university office was significantly (p.<.01) better than the seminary office as a setting which produced congruence between the interviewer and the interviewee. The use of a given name as opposed to the interviewee's title as a term of address during the interview was significant at only the p.<.20 level as was the comparison between the psychologist's office and the seminary office settings. The comparison between the university setting and the psychologist's office was not significant.

**Edwards Social Desirability Scale Results**

In presenting the results of the Edwards Social Desirability Scale a comparison will first be made between the data gathered in the present study and that which the literature contains on the Edwards Scale in general. Secondly, an analysis of the results within the present study will be presented.
TABLE 2
Comparison of Effects of Interview Conditions on Semantic Differential Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term of Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given Name</td>
<td>10.57a</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>-1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>14.07</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style of Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>-2.04**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-structured</td>
<td>14.63</td>
<td>9.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Office</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>-2.95*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary Office</td>
<td>16.35</td>
<td>10.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Office</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>-1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist's Office</td>
<td>11.85</td>
<td>9.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist's Office</td>
<td>11.85</td>
<td>9.22</td>
<td>-1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary Office</td>
<td>16.35</td>
<td>10.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aLower scores indicate less interviewer-interviewee discrepancy
*p. < .01
**p. < .05
Table 3 shows several lines of comparison between general Edwards Social Desirability Scale data and the results of the present study, but several artifacts make direct comparisons difficult. The data on mean scores and standard deviations were gathered on quite dissimilar populations. Edwards' population included only college students while the present study included only clergymen. Still, the general pattern of scoring on the Edwards Scale is evident. The Scale includes 39 items, which, if all are answered in the keyed direction, would result in a Social Desirability Scale score of 39.

As Table 3 shows, test-retest correlations indicate that the Edwards' Scale achieves significant reliability over time with the same population. In the present study the experience of the interview must be cited as a likely influence in lowering the test-retest correlation of the scores. Previous studies showed a test-retest correlation of +.97, while the present study yielded a test-retest correlation of +.81.

Finally, the correlations between the Edwards Scale and the F and K scales of the MMPI are of special interest. Table 3 shows that the negative correlations between the F scale and the Edwards Scale hold, across the two populations, as do the positive correlations between the K scale and the Edwards Scale. The shift in the correlation values may be due, in part, to the use of the 79 item scale in Edwards early research and the 39 item scale in later research with the Edwards Scale, including the present study. These correlations support Edwards suggestion that the Edwards Scale measures a bipolar trait, that is, a social desirability continuum which moves from a response set to respond in a socially undesirable way to a set to respond in a socially desirable way. Low scorers on the Edwards Scale show a tendency to respond in a socially undesirable way which is what the F scale on the MMPI measures,
TABLE 3
Edwards Social Desirability Scale Scores
Comparison of Present and Past Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Correlation Test-retest</th>
<th>Correlation with MMPI F Scale</th>
<th>Correlation with MMPI K Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards (1957)</td>
<td>28.60a</td>
<td>6.50a</td>
<td>+.97</td>
<td>-.82b</td>
<td>+.69b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards (1967a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>30.53c</td>
<td>4.66c</td>
<td>+.81*</td>
<td>-.52*</td>
<td>+.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>30.35</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aN = 84 Male college students  
bN = 97 VA patients  
cN = 48 Clergymen  
*p. < .01
in part, and hence the negative correlation. High scorers on the Edwards Scale show a tendency to respond in a socially desirable way which is, in part, what the K scale on the MMPI measures and, therefore, the significant positive correlation.

Moving to a closer consideration of the social desirability data within the present study itself, the first point to be considered is the comparison between the pre- and post-interview scores on the Edwards Scale. As shown in Table 3 the means for the two administrations of the test were almost identical: 30.53 pre-interview and 30.35 post-interview. A $t$ test on this data showed a non-significant $t$-score of .15. The interview had little effect on the mean social desirability scores in the sample.

On the other hand, the standard deviations of the two sets of scores, 4.66 pre-interview and 3.99 post-interview, did show a shift toward a smaller variance on the post-interview administration. An equality of variance test for correlated samples yielded an $F$ score of .31 which was significant at the .05 level. The calculation of the coefficient of variance showed a similar shift toward a smaller variance in the post-interview scores with a pre-interview coefficient of .15 and a post-interview coefficient of .13. As will be shown shortly, there was a shift in the post-interview scores which showed high scores becoming lower and low scores becoming higher across the interview. Since the test-retest correlation was +.81, significant at the .01 level, and since the variances were significantly different, the shift toward the center did not seem to be purely random. However, since a simple regression effect would cause such a shift in scores to be observed, conclusions about the meaning of the shift in higher and lower scores would be tentative at best.
Since it was the high scorers and the low scorers on the Edwards Social Desirability Scale which the experimental treatment was meant to affect, in other words, those who were utilizing some response set in their replies, further analysis of the Social Desirability Scale scores concentrated on the upper and lower thirds of the experimental population. The pre-test scores were used to trichotomize the population. In the population of 48 subjects, the 16 lowest scores fell between 20 and 29 and the 16 highest scores fell between 35 and 39.

The low scorers had a pre-interview mean score of 25.43 with a standard deviation of 3.11 and a post-interview mean score of 27.81 with a standard deviation of 3.58. A t-test of the significance of the difference between these means resulted in a t score of 2.00 significant at the p. = .05 level. The high scorers had a pre-interview mean score of 35.87 and a standard deviation of 1.61. The post-interview scores for this group had a mean of 34.81 and a standard deviation of 1.67. These two mean scores were also significantly different at the p. = .05 with a t score of 1.83.

These results confirmed the general trend for the Social Desirability Scale scores to move toward the mean of the experimental population. Since this was not the focus of the study, that is, that the interview would reduce extreme social desirability scores, detailed inferential statistical analyses were not performed on this general data. The focus of the study was, instead, that varying the conditions in which the interviews took place would differentially affect the occurrence of the social desirability response set in the interviews.

In the analysis of the effects of the various interview conditions on the high and low social desirability subjects a "percentage change" score for each subject was utilized. The "percentage change" technique was suggested
by Hanlon (1965, 1966) and was employed in the present research because the subjects of the interviews had not been matched for initial Social Desirability Scale scores before being assigned to the experimental conditions. The percentage change scores were derived by the following formula:

\[
\text{Percentage change} = \frac{\text{Initial score} - \text{Final score}}{\text{Initial score}} \times 100.
\]

This formula permitted a control to be exercised over the heterogeneity of the initial scores and provided scores which were comparable with one another for statistical analysis. Table 4 shows the percentage change scores for high and low subjects grouped according to the three sets of experimental conditions, as well as the results of the pooled high and low scores.

The data provided in Table 4 represent scores from several small and independent samples. Since the individual scores could be treated ordinarily by ranking the individual percentage change scores and since the samples were small, the Mann-Whitney U Test was selected as the non-parametric treatment to be used in the analysis of the percentage change score data.

The Mann-Whitney U Test results showed that the term of address condition with high social desirability scorers yielded a difference between the given name and title conditions significant at \( p = .052 \) with the given name condition resulting in a greater percent of change. The structured interview condition yielded greater change for high social desirability scorers than did the non-structured interview with the difference significant at the \( p = .117 \) level. The significance levels for the other differences were all less than \( p = .20 \), and, therefore, not significant.

**Comparison of Semantic Differential and Social Desirability Results**

Comparison of the results from the two dependent variables produced the following relationships. On the one hand, the general pattern of
TABLE 4

Percentage Change Scores for High and Low Social Desirability Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Conditions</th>
<th>High SD Subjects</th>
<th>Low SD Subjects</th>
<th>High and Low Subjects Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style of Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured</td>
<td>33.10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-structured</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term of Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given Name</td>
<td>33.10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Office</td>
<td>16.60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist's Office</td>
<td>16.70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary Office</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
only the adjustment component of social desirability to determine the post-interview scores. While this surely did not happen, the adjustment component in the social desirability scores may account for the correlation between congruence within an interview dyad and relatively high social desirability scores.

A third possibility is suggested by the consistent finding that the Semantic Differential contains an evaluative component which is positively correlated with social desirability. It may be the social desirability component in the Semantic Differential which accounted for the positive correlation with the Social Desirability Scale scores.

This problem would require further research specifically designed to analyze three components and their effects upon the significant correlation found in the present research.

**Experimental Hypotheses and Experimental Results**

**Hypothesis I:**

The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews conducted in a structured interview style than in interviews conducted in an unstructured manner.

This hypothesis was supported by the results of the experiment. A statistically significant difference was achieved on the Semantic Differential results which showed a greater congruence between interviewer and interviewee under the structured interview style. The Social Desirability Scale scores for high scorers on the pre-interview measure showed a tendency to decline more during structured interviews than during unstructured ones. None of the results of the experiment contradicted this hypothesis as a main effect.

The significant interaction between the style of the interview and the place in which the interview was conducted will be discussed below.
Hypothesis II:
The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews conducted in psychologists' offices and university offices than in seminary offices.

This hypothesis was partially affirmed. The university office setting was consistently shown to be the setting in which social desirability response sets were least operative in comparison to the other two settings in the research design. Statistical significance was achieved in the comparison of the university office setting and the seminary setting on the Semantic Differential results. All other pertinent results tended to support this fact but did not reach statistical significance.

The psychologists' office setting did not differ significantly from the seminary office setting in controlling the social desirability bias, therefore, the hypothesis was not supported in this respect. An explanation might be offered for this result. Crowne and Marlowe (1964) have pointed out that the social desirability response set is related to a person's need for security, protection, and avoidance of criticism, among other things. In other words, self-esteem threat is seen as a motive for the use of response sets. A clergyman is usually cast in the role of a counselor and he must do a role reversal when he is to be interviewed by a clinical psychologist. When the interview takes place in the clinician's own office the clergyman might feel an added degree of discomfort and threat. This is not a familiar setting for him. In the circumstance he may feel especially threatened and may tend to resort to response sets for protection more than he would in a more neutral setting such as the university office or the more familiar setting of the seminary.

Hypothesis III:
The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews during which the professional person being interviewed is addressed by his given name than in interviews in which he is addressed by his proper title as a professional.
This hypothesis was affirmed by the research results. The high social desirability subjects, by pre-interview evaluation, showed a significantly greater percentage of change across an interview in which they were addressed by their given name than during interviews in which they were addressed by their proper clerical title. Other results tended to support the direction of this significant result with the exception of the low scorers on the Edwards Social Desirability Scale who showed a slight lag in their percentage of change when compared with other low scoring subjects. This difference was negligible.

The final result to be discussed is the significant interaction between the setting of the interview and the style in which the interview was conducted. The interaction suggested that subjects who were interviewed in the university setting were more responsive to the non-structured interview in their willingness to abandon any tendency they might have had to rely upon a response bias to handle their anxiety in the situation. Since no hypothesis was projected with regard to possible interaction effects, this finding deserves some interpretation. As in the case of the finding that the clinician's office did not help to limit a subject's use of response sets, so here, the special "personality" of the three settings might contribute to a possible explanation of the interaction. The university setting might be seen as quite neutral and as a non-threatening atmosphere. In the university office the threat to self-esteem which the clinician's office might have aroused and the cues for a defense of the clerical culture which the seminary setting might have presented, were not operative. If then, the neutral setting aroused less of a need for a social desirability defensiveness, the accompanying need for a defined structure to limit the use of the response
set was not present. In such circumstances the neutral situation allowed for a successful interview dyad to be built around a more relaxed and non-directive interview format, that is, a non-structured interview style.

Another question which deserves a final comment is that of the general applicability of the results of this research. While all of the results must be tentative until they receive replication, the presence of the possibility of control of the social desirability response set in clinical interviews seems to be indicated by the results of this research. Since this set has largely been researched in paper and pencil types of written assessment procedures, the present research is helpful in that it points up the need for awareness of the effects of this response bias in interpersonal assessment techniques, such as the interview.

It would seem that the results concerning the use of a structured vs. a non-structured interview style, if replicated, would be applicable in interviews, generally, where the interviewee might be inclined to invoke the social desirability response set as a defensive measure. In these situations a structured interview would seem to be the method of choice.

The other two more subject-specific conditions employed in the present research might find application with professional people other than clergymen. Interviews conducted in a neutral setting away from the professional person's familiar surroundings and interviews in which the professional title of the interviewee was replaced by a more personal term of address would seem to be less affected by the influence of the social desirability response bias.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY

In light of 25 years of research on the influence of response sets upon psychological assessment efforts (Cronbach, 1946) and of 15 years of work with the social desirability response set in particular (Edwards, 1957), the present research sought to investigate the presence and control of the social desirability response set in clinical interviewing. More specifically, this research sought to determine the effects of the conditions under which interviews were conducted upon the interviewee's use of the social desirability response set during the interview.

By experimental manipulation of the social and situational matrix in which clinical interviews were conducted with clergymen the following hypotheses were investigated:

Hypothesis I:

The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews conducted in a structured interview style than in interviews conducted in an unstructured manner.

Hypothesis II:

The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews conducted in psychologists' offices and university offices than in seminary offices.

Hypothesis III:

The social desirability response set will be less operative in interviews during which the professional person being interviewed is addressed by his given name than in interviews in which he is addressed by his proper title as a professional.

The formulation of these hypotheses rested upon the accumulated literature in the field of response sets. Cronbach (1946, p. 476) initiated investigation in this field and defined a response set as "any tendency causing a person consistently to give different responses to test items than..."
he would if the same content is presented in a different form." Langer (1962, p. 299) refined that definition and proposed that response sets be seen as "an internalized style of test response which appears to be independent of the stimulus item."

Rorer (1965) distinguished a response style from a response set. Sets were seen as being operative in the face of meaningful item content, whereas, response styles were used to determine responses in the absence of meaningful content.

The varieties of response sets were enumerated by Cronbach (1946) and Frederikson and Messick (1959). Three response sets emerged as more salient than the others. They were acquiescence (Cronbach, 1946, 1950), dissimulation (Meehl & Hathaway, 1946) and social desirability (Edwards, 1957).

The social desirability response set was first investigated by Edwards as it applied to the social desirability scale value of traits as one person perceived those traits in another. Later investigations sought to determine the role of social desirability as a personality variable. This response set was defined by Edwards (1967a, p. 56) as a "true response to an item with a socially desirable scale value or as a false response to an item with a socially undesirable scale value."

Considerable debate attended the problem of identifying the type of variance which the social desirability response set introduced into assessment. Spilka (1966) summarized this discussion of real and error variance by distinguishing two factors in social desirability: 1) the self-sentiment or personal adjustment factor, and 2) the set to respond in a socially desirable manner. This factorization suggested that both kinds of variance operated simultaneously in the socially desirable response.
While most of the research in the field of response sets in general and social desirability in particular, has been in the area of objective paper and pencil assessment instruments, some work on response sets has been done in the field of projective techniques (Hutt, 1950; Langer, 1962; Lord, 1950; Luchins, 1947; Meltzoff, 1951; Murstein, 1961; Rozynko, 1959; Schwartz et al, 1964). Some research has also been directed at the influence of response sets in interview assessment (Allen, 1965; Clemes & D’Andrea, 1965; Hyman, 1954; Lennard & Bernstein, 1960; Pope & Siegman, 1965; Schwab & Heneman, 1969; and Siegman & Pope, 1962). These researchers worked mostly in the area of the effects of pre-interview expectations upon the interviewee’s behavior during the interview. These studies generally found that interviewees assimilated the interview experience into the framework which their expectations had established prior to the interview and that interview experience which was incongruent with the interviewee’s prior expectations was a source of anxiety, discomfort, and some coping behavior.

The present research attempted to modify the use of the social desirability response set, not by the explicit introduction of one expectation or another as earlier studies had done, but by the manipulation of the situational factors in the "life space" of the interview and in the interaction with the interviewer. The subjects of the interviews were clergymen and the situational factors which were altered experimentally were: 1) the style of the interview, i.e. structured vs. non-structured; 2) the setting of the interview, i.e. university office vs. psychologist’s office vs. seminary office; and 3) the form of the personal address used with the interviewee, i.e. given name vs. professional title. Since the subjects were clergymen they might be seen as responsive to the culture at large, but also to the sub-cultures of their faith and their profession, so they may have been
especially prone to the use of the socially desirable response set in response to any perceived threat to their multiple cultural identifications. Studies by Smigel (1958) and Ziller (1964) tended to support the hypothesis that professional persons are especially sensitive to threats to their professional images.

The use of the first of the experimental variables, the structured vs. the non-structured interview style, was indicated by the almost universal finding in response set studies that response biases appeared more frequently in unstructured stimulus situations (Berg, 1957; Cronbach, 1946; Lennard & Bernstein, 1960; Meltzoff, 1951; Sherif & Cantril, 1946).

Research by Maslow and Mintz (1966) and Richardson (1965) indicated that the physical setting of an interview might have an effect upon the interviewee's behavior in the interview. Three different settings were chosen for the present research: the university office, the psychologist's office, and the seminary office.

The third variable, the given name vs. the title form of personal address was suggested by Smigel (1958) and Ziller (1964) who found that professional persons were especially responsive to maintaining their professional role identification. It was felt that the use of a title as a means of address would reinforce that propensity.

Testing instruments measured the social desirability response set before and after the interviews. These were the Edwards Social Desirability Scale administered before and after the interviews and the Semantic Differential Scales completed after the interview by both the interviewer and interviewee.

The Edwards Scale has been found to be a valid and reliable measure of
Social Desirability (Edwards, 1957, 1962, 1967a). Edwards suggested that the Scale might measure a bipolar entity with some subjects responding in a socially desirable way and others in a socially undesirable way, both using a variety of the social desirability response bias. Significant correlations between the Edwards Scale and the K and F Scales of the MMPI supported this bipolarity thesis. The Edwards Scale has been found to measure a combination of real adjustment which was socially approved and a desire to make a good impression which introduced error variance into assessment efforts (Megargee, 1964).

The Semantic Differential measured the congruence or discrepancy between the interviewer and interviewee in describing the affective response of the interviewee to the interview. It was presumed that an interviewee who invoked the social desirability response bias during the interview would continue to do so during the scoring of the Semantic Differential Scales. In such a case a discrepancy between the interviewer and the interviewee would be evident in the Semantic Differential results. The Semantic Differential has been found by Osgood (157) to be a sensitive measure of a person's self-perception and the way that person was perceived by others. Allen (1965), Asch (1946), Burke and Bennis (1961) and Kelley (1949) used the Semantic Differential or a functional equivalent of it to measure interpersonal perception in individual and group therapy and interview settings. Zax, Cowen, and Peter (1963) found that a group of religious women could be distinguished from a comparable group of college women by their responses to a Semantic Differential scaling task.

The design of the present research provided that 60 clergymen would be interviewed by 13 clinical psychology graduate students and professionals in
the 12 possible combinations of the 2 x 3 x 2 factorial design of independent variable conditions in an effort to study the differential effects of these conditions on the occurrence of the social desirability response set in clinical interviews.

Each of the interviews was one hour to one and one-half hours in length and covered two major content areas: 1) the personal history of the interviewee, and 2) seven core areas of the subject's professional and personal life. At the conclusion of the interview the subjects completed the Social Desirability Scale and the Semantic Differential scales. Each interviewer also completed the Semantic Differential scales. Forty-eight of the subjects had taken the Social Desirability Scale on a pre-test basis prior to the interview.

Two of the experimental conditions were controlled by the interviewers. In the structured interview the interviewer attempted to actively direct the interview to cover a specified set of interview questions. In the unstructured interview the interviewer allowed the subject to explore areas of concern to him, the interviewee, and the interviewer used the material supplied by the subject to lead the interview into the various content areas to be covered.

The interviewer also controlled the term of address condition during the interview by using the interviewee's title or given name at least once during the interview and by avoiding the use of the opposite term of address during any one interview.

The third condition was controlled simply by the assignment of the interview dyad to one of the three experimental locations: the university office, a clinical psychologist's office, or a seminary office.

The results of the experiment were analyzed separately for each of the dependent variables. For the Semantic Differential an analysis of variance
was performed on the total discrepancy between the five interviewer-interviewee dyads under each of the 12 combinations of the experimental conditions. The analysis of these discrepancy scores showed significant F ratios at the .05 level for two of the main effects, the place of the interview and the style of the interview, and for the interaction of these two main effects. The third main effect, the term of address, reached an F ratio with a p. <.10. T tests showed that discrepancy between the interviewer and the interviewee was significantly (.01) lower for the university setting than for the semi­nary setting. These results also showed that the structured interview resulted in significantly (.05) less discrepancy than did the unstructured inter­view.

The results of the Social Desirability Scale were interpreted on the basis of a percentage change score for the pre- to post-interview administra­tions of the Edwards’ Scale. These results showed that high social desirability scorers generally lowered their scores across the interview and low social desirability scorers raised their scores. In addition, and more im­portantly, percentage change scores for the upper and lower thirds of the populations showed some differential effects of the experimental conditions. High scorers on the Edwards Scale had a significantly (p. = .052) greater per­centage change under the given name condition than under the title condition. For the same group the structured interview condition showed greater per­centage change than did the unstructured interview condition, but fell slightly short of the p.< .10 level of significance. The other differences showed a general pattern comparable to that shown on the Semantic Differential, but these differences were not significant. That pattern was: structured over non-structured, given name over title, and university setting over the other two settings.
interviewee might be inclined to use the social desirability response set as a defensive measure.

Finally, the present research suggests that interviews with professional persons are less susceptible to the social desirability response bias if they are conducted in a neutral setting away from the professional person's familiar surroundings and if the interviewee is addressed in a personal way rather than by his professional title during the interview.
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APPENDIX A

Instructions to the Interviewers on the Interview Content

Content of Interview

A definite sequence of topics will be followed in each interview.

By striving for an accurate picture of the behavior of the INTERVIEWEE, the clinician attempts to arrive at a set of statements about the capacities, motives, attitudes, and traits of the person under study.

A. Developmental Sequence:

Here the objective is to obtain information about the INTERVIEWEE as a man by studying the important people, circumstances that have influenced the growth of his personality.

B. Core Areas of Priesthood:

Here the INTERVIEWER strives to understand what this man's priesthood means to him, i.e., how it developed, how it supports, challenges, fulfills him, and what are the areas of conflict and confusion.

A. Developmental Sequence:

Assumption: Except for his capacities, a man's motives, attitudes and personality traits are dispositional features of the person, i.e., they are tendencies to act or react in one way or another. They usually are presumed to be fairly permanent.

For the most part these dispositional features of the personality have been learned by the contact he has had with his environment (especially interpersonal) as he grew through various stages of development.

A personal history, therefore, is an important way of arriving at inferences about the description and strength of these motives, traits and attitudes.
PERSONAL HISTORY

I. Family Life and Relationships

a) Parents: Father/Mother:

--what kind of person, disposition, occupation, health, religion
--alive or when deceased
--relationship to wife (husband), other children
--relationship to him:
   warm-distant: permissive-authoritarian
--traits he admired most in parents -- weaknesses
--parent he is most like
--which parent made most of the decision about him
--quality of discipline; father/mother
   harsh-kind: consistent-erratic
--what was he punished for
--what was he rewarded for

b) Siblings:

--who, how many, where was he in line of siblings
--who was he closest to
--with whom did he have most difficulty -- why

c) Family Values:

--what were the dominant values and concerns for his family
--education, religious practices, other people, money
--was his family closely knit or not
--what were some of the important crises in the life of his family

d) Other Important People:

--did anyone else live with his family
--who visited his family
--who did his family visit
--his favorite people besides family

e) Changes in Family:

--as the years went on how has his family changed:
   attitudes, ambitions, goals, etc.
--how does he feel about his family now
II. Illness and Accident History

--what kind of illness or accidents did he have
--what kind of illness or accidents did family members have
--was he frequently sick
--how did family (father, mother) react to his illness
--was he separated from family for any length of time due to illness
--any history of him having minor and recurrent illness
--any history of repeated accidents -- what parts of body injured
--what were his attitudes toward accidents, i.e.: punishment, due to hostility, neglect of others, own shortcomings, etc.
--present state of his health

III. School Career

--what kinds of schools did he attend -- how long
--academic success or failure
--what areas, courses were preferred/disliked by him
--parental attitudes toward school and his performance
--school careers of parents and siblings
--what kinds of relationships did he establish with teachers
--what kinds of sports, clubs, other extra curricular activities did he enjoy
--is he satisfied with his education

IV. Relationship with Peers

--was there ample opportunity for him to have social interactions with other children
--was he popular -- why
--was he respected -- why
--what kinds of relationship did he establish: bully, hanger-on, detached observer, intellectual leader, etc.
--any close friends -- boys -- girls: definition of a close friend what did he value in a friendship what kinds of people became his friends: intellectuals, religiously oriented, social misfits, handicapped and underprivileged, rebels, thrill seekers, party goers, etc. quality of friendship: was he only a "giver" or did he receive, too --did the pattern of his social relationships and social values change as he grew up: how -- why
V. Psychosexual Development

--what were the sources of sexual information - how adequate were they
--parental attitudes toward sex
--early experience with sex
--how did he feel about sexual development at puberty
--what types of sexual exploration occurred
--was there any over-concern about masturbation/sexual adequacy
--what kind of relationships with girls - dating, etc.
--any specific problems with sexuality during seminary -- solutions
--were there any changes in his attitudes, problems, behavior
patterns as he grew up
--what was his conception of the masculine role
--what was his conception of the feminine role

VI. Self-Concept at Present Time

--how does he feel about himself - like, dislike
--how does he feel others see and evaluate him
--what does he think his strong points and weaknesses are
--what gives him security
--does he see himself as:
  creative, flexible, daring or rather
  ordinary, rigid, safety oriented
--does he see himself as warm and affectionate or rather distant
--does he feel any power or influence -- where -- how
--what are his plans --what would he like to do in ten or twenty
years --how does he see the future
B. Core Areas of Priesthood:

Assumption: Understanding the priest as man thru his personal history will enable us to understand the dynamics involved in his present life style.

Many of his strengths and weaknesses will be expressed in the core areas of his life as a priest.

CORE AREAS OF PRIESTHOOD

I. Development of Vocation

--at what age did he start thinking of the priesthood
--at what age did he definitely decide to become a priest
--what were the most influential factors that determined his initial interest
--what was his family's attitude toward his decision
--what was the most attractive part of becoming a priest
--what was the most difficult part of becoming a priest
--how would he evaluate the favorable and unfavorable aspects of his minor seminary career re:

   personal formation
   intellectual development
   relation to peers and authorities

--how would he evaluate the favorable and unfavorable aspects of his major seminary career re:

   personal formation
   intellectual development
   relation to peers and authorities

--vocational crises: when, nature of: i.e., faith, celibacy, authority, etc.
--how did he resolve it
II. Priestly Assignment
--describe the type of assignments he has received as a priest and his reactions to each
--what has proven to be of most satisfaction to him in the priesthood
--what has been the most difficult part of the priesthood for him
--does he feel adequate to his job - supported, challenged by it
--does he feel needed by others and respected by them as a priest
--how does he see his role of priest
--what is preventing him from doing what he wants to do in his priesthood
--what is the present status of his vocation:
  -why does he remain a priest
  -what would make him consider leaving the priesthood
  -what other occupation can he see himself in
--how does he view the changes in the priesthood: i.e., greater freedom of thought, dress, different ministries, etc.

III. Interpersonal Relations
--describe his ordinary relations with parishioners and friends:
  -warm - distant: personal - task oriented
--what kind of personal relations does he have with family
--what kind of personal relations does he have with clerical friends
--what kind of personal relations does he have with lay friends:
  -men --women
--who is his closest friend (friends)
--why is this person valuable to him
--describe other personal relationships he has had in his life
--who does he worry about, really care for, sacrifice self for
--how does he feel others care about him --who
--who does he feel really knows and understands him
--has the pattern of personal friendship changed since his ordination:
  -how --why
--how would he describe his relationship to authority: i.e.,
  -Pope
  -Bishops
  -Pastor
  -Religious superior
IV. Faith

--what are the basic values he believes in, sacrifices for, lives for
--how would he describe his faith life: i.e.,
   strong, weak, confused, etc.
--what means does he use to strengthen and support his faith life: i.e.,
   prayer, reading, discussions, liturgy, serving people
--how effective does he feel these means are
--how does he feel about the present turmoil of the Church
--what does it mean for him personally
--what is the most difficult part of this turmoil for him
--what is the most exciting, challenging part
--what are his hopes for the Church
--what are his fears for the Church

V. Priesthood

--describe his life as a priest now:
   happy, challenging, frustrating, depressing --why
--what is the most satisfying aspect of his priesthood
--what is the most painful aspect of his priesthood
--what is the most hopeful aspect of his priesthood
--does he feel supported, encouraged, rewarded by his priesthood
--does he feel he is operating at a level commensurate with his potential
   -if not, what changes would he like to see in his life
--how does he feel about priests leaving the active ministry
--why is he a priest today
--has he ever thought of leaving
   -if so, what would prompt him to leave
   -how would his life be different if he left the priesthood
VI. Celibacy

--what kind of relationships does he have now with women: family, married women, single women, nuns
--what is his definition of celibacy
--has his definition changed since ordination --how
--does he feel celibacy is an aid or burden to his priesthood --why
--how does he handle the loneliness of not being married
--does he feel celibacy should be optional --why
--if celibacy were optional, would he marry
--if celibacy were optional and he married, would he continue in the priestly ministry.

VII. Future

--if he had his way, what would he want his life to be in:
  -five years
  -ten years
  -twenty years
Instructions to the Interviewers on the Interview Style

Description of Interview Method

1) Non-Directive Interview

a) Assumption:
The person being interviewed usually finds it difficult to communicate personal data because: (cf. Wallen, "Clinical Psychology" page 143)
- he may be anxious about the moral judgment of the clinicians and the consequent criticism
- he may be anxious about placing information at the disposal of one who could use it harmfully
- he may be anxious about giving information to the clinician because it will enable the INTERVIEWER to "see through" the INTERVIEWEE and discern "horrible truths" unknown to the INTERVIEWEE himself
- anxiety may be aroused by bringing up matters which the INTERVIEWEE ordinarily avoids thinking about as a means of defending himself against self-judgment or decision

b) Procedure:

Acceptance: An attitude of acceptance should pervade the interview thus the external factors that create and support the anxiety that blocks real communication should be reduced.

The INTERVIEWER --
- shows interest without appearing to pry
- is warmly responsive without being judgmental
- is receptive without being demanding

Permissiveness: conveyed by verbal support and reassurance, but also many non-verbal ways that demonstrate to the INTERVIEWEE that it is safe to talk.

the INTERVIEWER allows the INTERVIEWEE to direct a good deal of the conversation. Each of the core area must be investigated but the skill of the INTERVIEWER will be used to suggest and guide the INTERVIEWEE's conversation from one area to the next

the timing of the interview should be relaxed, unhurried

the INTERVIEWER should listen sincerely and intently without judgmental reaction -- especially those of a negative or threatening character.
b) Procedure:

Narrowing: The INTERVIEWER begins with a broad question and follows with a more detailed series of relevant questions.

The INTERVIEWER usually will have to get more specific as the INTERVIEWEE'S resistance increases and/or the INTERVIEWEE begins to distort the report.

Progression: The INTERVIEWER begins with an issue near to the one he really wants to investigate. He then follows with questions that look to a specific point.

This differs from "narrowing" in that the sequence of questions is arranged to progress from less intimate to more intimate matters rather than from the broad to specific matters.

Progression serves to introduce questions which would otherwise appear blunt or shocking.

Embedding: The INTERVIEWER conceals a significant question in a series of questions that seem routine.

Leading Questions: When the INTERVIEWER suspects the INTERVIEWEE has a strong tendency to avoid a particular kind of answer and when the INTERVIEWER realizes a direct question may provide a clear clue to the expected answer, he may ask a question which assumes the opposite answer and see whether the INTERVIEWEE denies the assumption - "I don't suppose you experience much loneliness in celibacy."

Hold-over Questions: The INTERVIEWEE may give certain information he does not want to pursue at the moment or is unable to pursue. The INTERVIEWER should watch for a more appropriate moment to bring the matter back into the interview --- "You mentioned a while ago ---"

Projective Questions: Here the INTERVIEWER is interested in probing the evaluative attitudes and criteria of the INTERVIEWEE, i.e., what standards does he use for judgment: "Who is your best friend and why?" "What are your strong/weak points?"

Stress and Confrontation: In order to test the presence and strength of certain defense mechanisms, periodically in the interview the clinician should pursue an issue with increasing intensity and depth. This allows the INTERVIEWER to tap hidden material and to experience the INTERVIEWEE'S ability to cope with the stress of conflict and possible rejection.
the INTERVIEWER allows the INTERVIEWEE to show what he thinks is important and whatever connections he sees.

Signalling Understanding:
The INTERVIEWER shows in verbal and non-verbal ways that he understand what the INTERVIEWEE is saying --- "I see" or "Yes, I understand"

Request for Elaboration:
When the INTERVIEWEE runs out of information or seems blocked at a certain point, the INTERVIEWER can help by asking for more information or greater depth --- "Can you tell me more about that?"

Reflection of Feelings:
The INTERVIEWER must demonstrate to the INTERVIEWEE that he understands
- what he is feeling now, or
- what he felt in some past event that he has narrated --- "angry" "confused" "pleased" "scared"
- a reflective statement besides mirroring back the feeling of ambivalency, can also point out both sides of the issue that is involved in the conflict.

2) Directive Interview ("thorough search")

a) Assumption:
Ordinarily the INTERVIEWEE is able and willing to give the information the INTERVIEWER wants. The function of the INTERVIEWER is chiefly to guide the INTERVIEWEE to relevant topics by CAREFUL QUESTIONING.

- when it is difficult for the INTERVIEWEE to give authentic information he will tend to give it in a minimal way. The INTERVIEWER must take the responsibility to pursue the topic and require more than the minimum.

- the INTERVIEWEE tends to bias his remarks in favor of creating the most favorable impression of himself, especially to the INTERVIEWER. The INTERVIEWER, therefore, has to be careful not to betray any of his personal values or preference so as to give clues to the INTERVIEWEE. Close questioning of the revealed data will guard against this tendency to "look good".

- often the INTERVIEWEE involuntarily distorts his report in order to appear consistent. A thorough coverage of each topic will make it more difficult for the INTERVIEWEE to bias his report without appearing inconsistent.

- to rely largely on the INTERVIEWEE for the selection and sequence of topics is to open up the interview to carefully chosen, irrelevant material. Therefore, the clinician will have to infer a great deal about the dynamics of the reported behavior.
### Appendix C

**Edwards Social Desirability Scale**

(Please read each of the following statements. If a statement is true as applied to you, circle the T before it. If the statement is false as applied to you, circle the F before the statement.)

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T F I can easily make other people afraid of men, and sometimes I do for the fun of it.

T F I am never happier than when alone.

T F Lide is a strain for me much of the time.

T F I am easily embarrassed.

T F I cannot keep my mind on one thing.

T F I feel anxious about something or someone almost all the time.

T F I have been afraid of using a knife or anything very sharp or pointed.

T F I love to go to dances.

T F I enjoy the excitement of a crowd.

T F I feel hungry almost all the time.

T F I worry quite a bit over possible misfortunes.

T F It makes me nervous to have to wait.

T F I blush no more often than others.

T F Often, even though everything is going fine for me, I feel that I don't care about anything.

T F I sometimes feel that I am about to go to pieces.

T F It makes me impatient to have people ask my advice or otherwise interrupt me when I am working on something important.
Semantic Differential: Interviewee's Form

(This checklist consists of nineteen pairs of adjectives. A seven-interval scale separates each pair of adjectives. On each of the nineteen scales, please place one checkmark in the interval which best describes your subjective feelings during the interview which you just completed.)

IN THE INTERVIEW JUST COMPLETED I FELT......

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Appendix E
Semantic Differential: Interviewer's Form
(This checklist consists of nineteen pairs of adjectives. A seven-interval scale separates each pair of adjectives. On each of the nineteen scales, please place one checkmark in the interval which you think best describes the feelings of your interviewee during the interview which you have just completed.)

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# APPENDIX F

## Semantic Differential: Scoring Key

(This checklist consists of nineteen pairs of adjectives. A seven-interval scale separates each pair of adjectives. On each of the nineteen scales, please place one checkmark in the interval which best describes your subjective feelings during the interview which you just completed.)

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APPROVAL SHEET

The Dissertation submitted by Kenneth J. Pierre has been read and approved by members of the Department of Psychology.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the Dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the Dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The Dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 11, 1971

Date

Signature of Advisor