

**ATTRIBUTIONAL INFLUENCES IN THE SOCIAL WORKER'S  
ASSESSMENT OF THE CLIENT'S PROBLEM**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Social Welfare  
in the School of Social Work**

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
1988**

**D.S.W. converted to  
Ph.D. in 2011**

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## ABSTRACT

### ATTRIBUTIONAL INFLUENCES IN THE SOCIAL WORKER'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CLIENT'S PROBLEM

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Social work practice theory has long been concerned with the issues of cause and responsibility inherent in efforts to define the unit of attention. This concern has focused, in part, on the potential for bias in the determination of causality, generally expressed in terms of a person-environment dichotomy. The present emphasis on an eco-systems framework for assessment in practice is viewed as an effort to respond to the debate which has resulted. These concerns of social work have been paralleled in attribution theory and it is suggested that this body of work provides an appropriate framework for an examination of the potential for causal and responsibility bias in the process of social work assessment.

The present study employed a single factor completely randomized design to investigate the influence which information presented by the client with respect to the cause of and responsibility for the problem of marital separation would have on the social worker's a) attributions of cause and responsibility for the client's problem, b) evaluation of the potential efficacy of social work intervention c) attraction to the client, and d) belief in the veridicality of the client's statements. 77 experimental subjects were randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions, with each condition representing one of four levels of a model of attributed responsibility. These are: a) causal responsibility, b) knowledge responsibility, c) intention responsibility, and d) coercive responsibility. The independent variable was manipulated through client statements in audiotaped interview analogues, and subjects were misled into believing that they were listening to an actual interview. Data analysis provided support for the hypothesis that the four treatment groups would significantly differ on the level of responsibility which subjects attributed to the client for the problem presented, indicating that worker's are differentially influenced by client information regarding the responsibility inherent in the problem which leads the client

to seek help. It was also found that the treatment groups were differentiated on the basis of evaluations of the potential efficacy of social work intervention, indicating that the influence of attributional information presented by the client led subject's to differential conclusions about the potential for a successful treatment outcome.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people who have made generous and significant contributions to the completion of this work. Foremost among these is Martin Whiteman who has served as major professor over the life of the project and to whom I attribute responsibility for the germination of the effort. A number of years ago, Martin introduced me to the underlying theory and it has been his sure hand and incisive comments which have served to shape the project to its present end. I have been greatly challenged by his demands for conceptual clarity and empirical rigor, and by his encouragement for independent initiative in the development of the research. He has been infinitely patient in the face of my extreme impatience and I am grateful for his understanding of the many struggles I have faced in pursuit of my goals. I have profited greatly from our association, in many venues, and am indebted to him for his efforts on my behalf.

I owe an intellectual debt to Carol Meyer for exciting an examination of the fundamental principles underlying social work practice, a quest which has led, in part, to the present work, and a personal debt for her invaluable contributions to my professional development. I have had the privilege to know Carol in a variety of contexts and roles. As classroom instructor she challenged my conceptions of social work practice and successfully engaged me in the process of coming to terms with the theoretical and value bases of practice. As faculty colleague and mentor Carol was instrumental in helping me develop a sense of professional practice as an academic endeavor. Her work and wisdom serve me well as I try to help my students develop a sense of their own professional identities. Finally, as advocate Carol consistently offered support and encouragement as I underwent the rites of passage into the social work educational arena

Art Naparstek, Dean of the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University is acknowledged for his generous financial and material support. Art took quite a risk in having me join his faculty without a doctorate in hand and I am grateful for the trust he placed in me. My colleagues on the faculty at MSASS have offered encouragement and support at every step of the process and I acknowledge their collective

contribution. Of my colleagues, particular mention must be made of Neil Abell, who has listened, commiserated, advised and assisted, all while valiantly trying to hold his own head above water. Howard Goldstein offered both instrumental and theoretical support despite the fact that this was a quantitative study. Finally, Claudia Coulton provided invaluable assistance with both the design of the study and the analysis of the data. Lee-wha Jane provided formal and informal assistance with the data analysis.

A number of good friends deserve a round of applause. Art Weiner listened to my rantings during the germination of research ideas and has been a consistent source of caring, encouragement and instrumental assistance throughout the course of this project. He is the best friend I could ask for. Larry Friesen and Donna Smith contributed affection and ideas throughout the course of our doctoral studies. Without their commitment and caring from the outset of this long and arduous process I doubt I ever would have gotten this far. Martha Dore and Alan Levy provided friendship and support through some very troubling times. They also helped me with my dissertation. Like manna from heaven, Sandy Coyle generously volunteered her time and energy to help with data collection, asking nothing in return. Brenda McGowan was most helpful in reviewing and commenting on the interview transcripts.

I wish to thank Carla Miner and Adina Blum for lending their talent to the realization of the project. Also deserving of my thanks are the students at MSASS who volunteered as pilot test subjects. Special mention goes to my students over the last two years. They have been uncomplaining of my preoccupation with this research and of my visitation of snippets of dissertation at unsuspecting moments in the course of my classroom lectures. They are the best by far. Finally, I wish to shout my thanks from the top of Terminal Tower to all the agency directors who gave me access to their staffs for data collection and who, I might add, universally allowed data collection to take place on agency time, and to all the social workers who graciously volunteered as experimental subjects.

For  
Shirley and Evan

'Tis joy to him that toils, when toil is o'er,  
To find home waiting, full of happy things.

Euripides

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Social work practice theory has, in recent years, moved increasingly in the direction of an ecological or eco-systems perspective. The basic tenet of such a perspective holds that an individual and his or her environment are engaged in a continuous and reciprocal interaction in which each influences and shapes the other toward a progressively adaptive balance. Achieving a balanced relationship, often termed a "goodness of fit", serves to minimize the incidence of social and personal stress, thereby releasing otherwise constricted energy for more constructive, creative and satisfying pursuits. Maladaptation, in this sense, is seen as a reaction to the stress engendered by the demands of life or unfavorable environmental circumstances, or as a breakdown in the coping capacities of the personality. More often, it is the interaction of these factors which is implicated in the development of personal and social problems. At any rate, the behavior which is attendant on the perceived stress, however defined, is viewed as an effort to restore balance in the person and environment system.

Assessment in the eco-systems perspective, then, is primarily concerned with the relationship between the individual and his or her social and physical world. Particular emphasis is given to locating points of conflict which result in an imbalance in the inter-relationships of the person-environment system, and on identifying the relative contributions of potential conflict sources determining a given problem or event. In essence, assessment is a search for those elements in a stated problem which cause the problem, and the location of causal elements at some point in a dynamic field consisting of person and environment. Assessment further implies a determination of directionality for causal elements with a subsequent assignment of responsibility for the problem or event. The eco-systems perspective holds that causal elements may be multi-directional in a reciprocal influence process.

Professional social work has long been concerned with the issue of causality in human problems, a concern which is evident in the practice arena in efforts to define the unit of attention. In essence, the unit of attention has been conceived of as an interactional

field composed of all elements which are felt to influence the genesis and maintenance of a given state of affairs. The nature of this interactional field and the location of contributory elements in that field has been a matter of some debate in the evolution of practice theory. At any rate, these elements have been fairly consistently dichotomized into person on the one hand and environment on the other hand, with the environment consisting of both people and objects, the social and physical world. The application of interventions, then, is dependent on the location of causal elements at some point in the field, generally predominating in either the person or the environment, or at some point in the interaction. This defines the unit of attention and provides the focus for ameliorative efforts.

One concern of the profession in this regard has been a recognized tendency in practice to focus on the individual to the exclusion of environmental attention. This concern is evident in the recent literature. Germain (1970) notes, for example, that the medical model, disease model influence on casework has led to a consistent bias against environmental attention despite efforts to define the unit of attention as the person-in-environment configuration. Germain and Gitterman (1980) note that:

For social work, ecology appears to be a more useful metaphor than the older medical-disease metaphor that arose out of the linear world view...the medical-disease metaphor tends to locate people's problems and needs within the person, obscuring social processes in which the person is embedded (p. 5).

Meyer (1983) has also noted a tendency for caseworkers to become preoccupied with the person rather than the environment. She feels that the legacy of the medical model and its essentially linear construction of human problems is, in part, responsible. She adds, however, that a person focus is also influenced by the fact that skill in working for change in people is much easier to acquire since the theory from which it is derived is fairly specific. Environmental change, on the other hand, requires knowledge of diverse theories which are, perhaps, less familiar to casework practitioners and more difficult to distill into an assessment and intervention approach. Meyer proposes the eco-systems perspective as a means of addressing this bias, providing a more holistic framework for practice.

Concern with regard to issues of causality in human events, and the potential for causal bias, has been paralleled in social psychology, particularly in the field of attribution

theory. Jones and Nisbett (1971), for example, cite evidence which demonstrates that an actor and an observer in a situation will maintain much different perspectives on those elements which contribute to, or cause, the actor's behavior. It has been found that the actor will attribute his or her actions to the perceived requirements of the situation whereas the observer will attribute the same actions to stable characteristics, or dispositions, of the actor's personality. Jones and Nisbett see this phenomenon as resulting from forces which impel the salience of situational or personality information under certain circumstances. The actor will focus on environmental cues because he or she is not in a position to effectively note subtle variations in his or her own behavior. The actor can, however, cast the environment in a more objective light, thereby inferring the environment as the causal agent. The observer, on the other hand, attends closely to the actor's behavior because it is the action itself which provides the most apparent information to explain any behavioral outcome. Thus, situational cues are largely ignored and the actor is left as the most likely causal candidate for any observed behavior.

Arkin and Duval (1975) have cast the Jones and Nisbett (1971) divergent perceptions hypothesis in terms of a focus of attention-causal attribution formulation. That is, for any event with two or more plausible causal objects, the more a person attends to any one object over others, the greater the attribution of cause to that object. Focus of attention is determined by the differential analysis of event cues in an effort to arrive at a reasonable causal explanation for an event. Duval and Duval (1980) have suggested that the force impelling this process may be a quest for simplicity in cognitive organization, for stability and predictability in one's view of the world.

More recently, Shaver (1985) has examined the issue of causal and responsibility attributions in the formulation of an attributional theory of blame. Shaver notes that attributional processes are engaged in response to negatively valued events, events that call for explanation and accountability. Here, observers to an event make social judgments about the extent to which culpability for the event may be assigned to properties of the individual in question or to aspects of the relevant environment. The necessary preliminary step in such a process is a determination of causality. That potential bias is present in the attribution of causality is evident through a recognition that it is rare in social events for any outcome to be engendered by a single, unambiguous antecedent event. It is more typically the case that multiple antecedents are both sufficient and necessary for the occurrence. Such multiple antecedents may include both human actions and the circumstances in which



such actions occur, and the cause for the event may rest in either the person or some aspect of the circumstance. In short, the wide range of attributional options available to an observer renders the process of causal determination complex at best. It is this complexity in the causal field which serves to increase the likelihood of misattribution for both the cause of the event and the resulting responsibility assigned.

The attribution literature has also directly examined the issue of ascribed responsibility and has noted attributions of responsibility to be an extension of causal determination. Responsibility, in this sense, implies behavioral autonomy, the freedom to act in a manner other than that observed for the event in question. Kruglanski and Cohen (1975), for example, note that when the cause for a behavior may be assigned to the actor's person, a considerable attributional stability with regard to his or her freedom prevails. Since the actor is seen as responsible for his or her behavior there is no need to consider alternative sources of causation. By contrast, when personal causation may be ruled out, possible situational causes become more important in the determination of causality. That is, behavior may be constrained by the demands of the situation, effectively absolving the individual of any responsibility.

Ickes and Kidd (1976) cite several studies as offering support for the notion that attributed responsibility for an outcome varies as a function of causal locus, with internal causes leading to a greater attribution of responsibility than external causes. The authors point out, however, that in some circumstances responsibility denotes intentionality, the presence or absence of behavioral choice regarding a particular event or problem. This is an important distinction, holding, as it does, the implication that an observer may attribute cause for an event to an actor but not attribute responsibility for the event to the actor if it is believed that there were constraints on the actor's behavior.

Shaver (1985) has drawn a distinction between cause and responsibility in noting that while causes can exist independently of human action, such as in an earthquake causing damage to buildings, it is not possible to consider responsibility without human agency, either as cause or as observer or both. Shaver notes that the assignment of responsibility is a purely social judgment while the attribution of cause is a physical judgment. To assign responsibility one must first determine that human agency was, at least in part, causally implicated in the event to be attributed. Then, to the extent that some human action is determined to have caused the event, an observer is free to enquire as to the extent to which the person who caused the event may be held accountable for the observed outcome. Thus,

an attribution of causality is a necessary precondition for any consideration of an attribution of responsibility.

Clinical applications for attribution theory have been noted. Batson (1975), for example, follows Jones and Nisbett (1971) in citing a number of studies which indicate that professional helpers are more likely to see a person in need as the source of the problem. Batson cites several reasons for this. First, a professional may be aware that it is often far easier to bring about change in the individual than it is to bring about change in the individual's social circumstances. Second, professional helpers may have learned that failing to spot a troubled individual is a more serious error to make than suggesting that someone is troubled when, in fact, they are not. Finally, the professional helper's exposure to troubled individuals may be greater than his exposure to the social environment, making individuals more salient as the loci of causation.

Batson (1975) has also noted that casting background information into a medical model may have two unintended effects. First, a medical model necessarily focuses attention on the person as the source of the problem. Second, information cast in a medical model may result in a reduction of information processed by the helper by casting doubt on the reporting person as a reliable source of information. That is, once the person is seen as having caused the problem, this is taken as presumptive evidence that any information given is subject to distortion or fabrication. Batson conducted a study using taped client interviews which were constructed for the purposes of the research. The "client" in the study attributed a problem to social circumstances, such as school, friends or parents, with which he needed help to change. The results revealed that only 31% of 228 observer attributions were to social circumstances as the locus of the problem.

Rowland (1980) combined the results of three studies to show that trained counselors exhibit the attributional bias common to all observers. In these experiments, all counselor groups demonstrated relatively more person-based attributions of causality than situational attributions of causality. Furthermore, it appears that counselor dispositional attributional bias increases with training and experience. Student counselors demonstrated more dispositional bias than did naive subjects and advanced counselors indicated significantly more dispositional bias than did either naive subjects or student counselors.

Issues of cause and responsibility bear importance for professional social work in several respects. First, it is apparent that causal considerations form part of the determination of the unit of attention in social work practice. That is, assessment may be

said to essentially constitute a process of causal determination, a process which serves to define the unit of attention. Specification of the unit of attention, in turn, serves to identify the potential foci for intervention. Thus, an understanding of attributional processes as they serve to influence an understanding of the unit of attention would serve the profession in more clearly delineating the arena for assessment and intervention.

Second, it is clear that attributional processes are a pervasive phenomenon, permeating virtually every aspect of human life. The desire to understand the world and to engender stability in such an understanding, thereby rendering the world a predictable place in which to live, appears to be a most compelling feature of human affairs. The attributional literature suggests that all people make attributional judgments as a normal part of everyday life. As such, it is essential that social work practice account for such processes in any attempt to understand human problems.

Third, it may be assumed that any client requesting services with regard to a particular set of problem events will make attributions of cause and responsibility for the problem events reported. Thus, as the client's story unfolds in the process of assessment, the worker hears the client's attributional understanding of the people and events which are perceived to have created the problem situation which the client brings to the social work encounter. Again, creating an awareness of these processes would serve the profession by providing an additional framework for assessment.

Finally, it is reasonable to assert that the worker also makes attributions of cause and responsibility for the problem events reported by the client. As noted earlier, assessment is essentially a process of causal determination and, as such, it falls to the worker to arrive at a causal understanding of the problems which the client brings to the worker for assessment. The client's situation, with rare exceptions, involves behavior on the part of the client and involves, in addition, the behavior of an array of other people with whom the client is in intimate interaction. Thus, the worker not only determines causality for the client's problem events but assesses the relative level of responsibility of the client and others in the development and maintenance of the problems as causally defined.

A recognition of the importance of attributional processes for problem assessment in social work suggests the questions with which the present study is concerned. Essentially, it is of interest to determine the extent to which attributional processes do, in fact, serve to influence the worker's understanding of the client's problem, particularly in view of the potential for bias in the process of attribution. It is also of interest to determine the extent to

which worker attributions of cause and responsibility serve to influence the evaluations which the worker makes regarding the potential efficacy of social work intervention. Finally, it is of interest to determine the extent to which worker attributions of cause and responsibility serve to influence the worker's attraction to the client and belief in the client's truthfulness in reporting information for the assessment.

Thus, the following questions are posed:

1. What is the relationship between the client's attributions of cause and responsibility for an event and the worker's attributions of cause and responsibility for the same event.
2. What is the relationship between the worker's attributions of cause and responsibility for an event and the worker's judgment with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention.
3. What is the relationship between the worker's attributions of cause and responsibility for an event and the worker's attraction to the client.
4. What is the relationship between the worker's attributions of cause and responsibility for an event and the worker's belief in the veridicality of the client's presentation.

The present study, then, has been undertaken in an examination of the role which a client's attributional statements play in the worker's understanding of the client's problem and in the worker's evaluations with regard to the potential for successful social work intervention, attraction to the client as a person and a belief in the client's truthfulness in presenting information relevant to the assessment. An experimental methodology was employed which utilized four assessment analogues, each presenting differential information with respect to the relevant dimensions of a model of attributed responsibility (Shaver, 1985). This resulted in four stimulus conditions expressing the stimulus variables of 1) causal level responsibility, 2) knowledge level responsibility, 3) intention level responsibility, and 4) coercive level responsibility. In the first stimulus condition subjects heard the client assert that she was the cause of the marital problems but did not know that

her husband might leave her and did not intend that the separation take place. In the second stimulus condition, subjects heard the client assert that she was the cause of the problems which led to the marital separation and knew that a separation might occur but did not intend that the separation take place. In the third stimulus condition, subjects heard the client assert that she caused the marital problems, knew that her husband might leave her and intended to bring the couples' difficulties to the fore. In the fourth stimulus condition subjects heard the client assert that she caused the problems which led to the separation, knew that her husband might leave her and intended to bring attention to the couples' difficulties. Additionally, subjects in the fourth stimulus condition heard the client present several environmental stressors which may have coerced the client into acting in the manner described.

Subjects then completed a set of scaled item responses which measured the extent to which responsibility was assigned to the client at each of the four levels of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion. In addition, subjects completed a set of scaled item responses which measured subjects' evaluations with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention, attraction to the client and a belief in the client's veridicality. Thus, the four stimulus variables were examined against a set of dependent attributional variables of 1) causal level responsibility (cause), 2) knowledge level responsibility (knowledge), 3) intention level responsibility (intention), and 4) coercive level responsibility (coercion), and a set of dependent evaluation variables of 1) potential efficacy of social work intervention (efficacy), 2) attraction to the client (attraction), and 3) belief in the veridicality of the client's informational presentation (veridicality). The methodology employed in the study will be more fully examined in chapter three.

A consideration of the questions posed above suggests the following hypotheses. First, it was hypothesized that, taken as a whole, a significant difference in the mean responses to the scaled dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention, and coercion would be found between the four stimulus condition groups. Consistent with Shaver's (1985) attributional theory of blame it was proposed that subjects would attribute increasing levels of responsibility to the client for each of the scaled dependent attributional variables from stimulus condition one to stimulus condition two to stimulus condition three. At stimulus condition four responsibility would still be attributed to the client but at a level which would fall somewhere between those of stimulus condition two and three. The individual hypotheses expressed therein may be stated as follows: a) the absolute lowest

level of attributed responsibility for each scaled dependent attributional variable will occur at stimulus condition one; b) the next highest level of attributed responsibility for each scaled dependent attributional variable would occur at stimulus condition two; c) the third highest level of attributed responsibility for each scaled dependent attributional variable would occur at stimulus condition four; d) Finally, the absolute highest level of attributed responsibility for each scaled dependent attributional variable would occur at stimulus condition three. As noted, it was further proposed that these levels of attributed responsibility would be significantly different across stimulus conditions.

Second, it was hypothesized that a significant difference in the mean responses to the scaled dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality would be found across stimulus conditions. These hypotheses may be stated as follows: a) the most favorable evaluation with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention, attraction to the client and belief in the veridicality of the client's statements would occur at stimulus condition four; b) the second most favorable evaluation with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention, attraction to the client and belief in the veridicality of the client's statements would occur at stimulus condition one; c) the third most favorable evaluation with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention, attraction to the client and belief in the veridicality of the client's statements would occur at stimulus condition two; d) finally, the least favorable evaluation with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention, attraction to the client and belief in the veridicality of the client's statements would occur at stimulus condition three. This is consistent with Batson (1975), Ickes and Kidd (1976), Wills (1978) and others, in that differential attributional assessments with respect to the determination of cause and responsibility for an event will result in differential evaluations of the person who is potentially responsible for the event. That is, to the extent that a person may be held responsible for the outcomes of their own behavior there will be a corresponding tendency to negatively evaluate the person and to view any potential helping response as not being contextually appropriate.

Third, it was hypothesized that as subject's attributions of responsibility to the client increased, evaluations of the client with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention would decrease. This is consistent with Berkowitz and Daniels (1965), Schopler and Mathews (1965), Schopler and Batson (1965), and Ickes and Kidd (1976) in that responsibility is a function of the perceived dependence of another person's outcomes. In a helping situation, the perception that one is dependent on a potential helper through no

fault of one's own increases the likelihood that help giving behavior will ensue. Conversely, the extent to which another person's needs in a potential helping situation are determined to be a function of their own behavior, that is, that they are responsible for their own outcomes, tends to diminish a belief that an offer of help will produce any meaningful change. Thus, offers of help are not likely to be forthcoming.

Fourth, it was hypothesized that as attributions of responsibility to the client increased, attraction to the client would decrease. This is suggested by Benlifer and Kiesler (1972) who note that the professional helper's tendency to locate problems within the client may result in a perception of the client as less well-adjusted and as less likable. This is supported by Wills (1978) who notes that likability is one of several dimensions along which clients will be rated by professional helpers in the process of determining the client's potential for the helping endeavor. The author notes that likability is, in part, a function of perceived attractiveness. Wills cites a number of studies in support of the contention that persons who are determined to bear causal responsibility for their problems will be seen as less concerned about their problems, as having less potential for change and as less likable.

Fifth, it was hypothesized that as attributions of responsibility to the client increased, evaluations with regard to the veridicality of the client's informational statements would decrease. This is suggested by Batson (1975) who notes that the information which a client presents to a worker may be discounted to the extent that the client is seen as bearing causal responsibility for the problem for which information is to be gathered. That is, it is inferred that the information which the client presents is subject to greater distortion by virtue of the client being the major source of his or her own troubles.

In sum, the hypotheses are as follows:

1. A significant difference between the four stimulus groups will be found with respect to the dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion.
  - a. For each of the dependent attributional measures of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion, the lowest level of attributed responsibility will be found in the responses to stimulus condition one.

- b. For each of the dependent attributional measures of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion, the next lowest level of attributed responsibility will be found in the responses to stimulus condition two.
  - c. For each of the dependent attributional measures of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion, the next lowest level of attributed responsibility will be found in the responses to stimulus condition four.
  - d. For each of the dependent attributional measures of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion, the highest level of attributed responsibility will be found in the responses to stimulus condition three.
2. A significant difference between the four stimulus groups will be found with respect to the dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality.
- a. For each of the dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality, the most favorable evaluation of the client will be found in the responses to stimulus condition four.
  - b. For each of the dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality, the second most favorable evaluation of the client will be found in the responses to stimulus condition one.
  - c. For each of the dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality, the third most favorable evaluation of the client will be found in the responses to stimulus condition two.



- d. For each of the dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality, the least favorable evaluation of the client will be found in the responses to stimulus condition three.
3. As responses to the dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion increase, a significant decrease will be found with respect to the dependent evaluation variable of efficacy.
  4. As responses to the dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion increase, a significant decrease will be found with respect to the dependent evaluation variable of attraction.
  5. As responses to the dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion increase, a significant decrease will be found with respect to the dependent evaluation variable of veridicality.

It is proposed that attribution theory provides a useful framework for an examination of these issues in social work assessment. It is further proposed that a study designed to examine these issues will provide valuable information with regard to assessment processes. If, as has been suggested, there is a bias in the direction of internal, person-based ascriptions of cause and responsibility, and if these are reflected in clinical judgment, it would say much about the need to develop educational and training strategies to increase the sensitivity of social workers to the biasing effect of attributional processes, and to the need to consider environmental factors in the assessment of human problems. An understanding of the role of cause and responsibility attributions in assessment may also provide a useful stimulus and framework for further research efforts into issues germane to the professional practice of social work.

Chapter two, which follows, will present the literature relevant to the treatment of cause and responsibility in social work practice theory and the literature relevant to the treatment of cause and responsibility within the field of attribution theory. In addition, literature relevant to the clinical implications of attributions of cause and responsibility will also be reported.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Cause and Responsibility in Social Work Theory

Social work practice theory has long granted the notion that human problems are determined through a process of individual and environment interaction, although there has been historical and continuing debate as to the extent to which attention is given to the environmental side of the equation. The profession's concern for the individual in environment is historically evident, however, and reflects an effort to introduce new elements into the process of understanding personal functioning. An expanded awareness of the range of potential causes of individual distress, through attention to both person and environment, serves to increase the number of options available to the worker for effective intervention. The worker, then, gains more freedom to act in the client's interest as the domain of the case broadens to include elements which lie outside of the client's person. The inner forces of the client's self and the outer forces of the client's social and physical environment are seen as converging over time in the creation of personality. Maladjustments in living, then, are also the product of the interaction of these forces.

Thus, in social work's early development, the interaction between the individual and his or her social world was clearly recognized. This interaction was, however, cast in essentially linear terms. Mary Richmond (1922), for example, notes that casework consists "...of those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment (pp. 98-99)." The essential thrust of any effort at change, then, is directed toward the personality and the mechanism of change is to be found in the client's social relationships. Again, Richmond

notes that casework's special domain is "...the development of personality through the conscious and comprehensive adjustment of social relationships (p. 98)." Here it is suggested that there is a cause and effect relationship between social context and individual development which is essentially linear in nature. Recognition is given to the fact that mutuality of influence is extant in the relationship but the elements of that relationship are cast on a continuum, with personality and social environment marking the endpoints. Thus, the preponderance of case data would suggest both the direction of influence and the location of the difficulty as lying toward either endpoint. That is, the difficulty would be located either in the personality or in the social environment and the direction of such influence would be either inner to outer or vice versa.

It has been suggested (Germain, 1970) that this linear conceptualization was derived from the approach to scientific inquiry extant at the turn of the 20th century. This scientism was concerned with issues of ultimate causation and casework practitioners of the time believed that there was also an ultimate or root cause in human problems. Uncovering the core causal elements in any problem situation would suggest the steps to be taken toward remediation. Richmond notes,

But if social workers are justified in their belief that by its very nature personality depends in considerable part upon healthy action and reaction between the total social environment and the individual, then many of life's tragedies can be traced to the attempt to make some one social relationship serve for all the others (p. 111).

This suggests that the client's perceptions of his or her world and the client's reaction to those perceptions has been rather narrowly constructed, with wants and needs limited in their range of social expression. Patterns of social responsiveness will be found to be consistent over time and the astute worker can trace these patterns to their core development in significant and influential social relationships. The potential causes of current distress, then, are to be found in the evolution of social relatedness, with contemporary expression in the client's personality in interaction with the social environment. As noted, however, these potential causes are felt to be located in a single sphere of the client's life. That is,

causal elements are either located within the structure of the personality or within the social environment and not in both simultaneously. This belief leads the worker to act predominately in one domain of the client's life in efforts to effect change.

Richmond (1917) cautions caseworkers through an explicit recognition of the dangers of single cause constructions. She says, "The common inclination is to seek for one cause. Social workers, however, need to bear in mind that where cause must be sought in human motives, as is apt to be the case in their work, they must not expect to find that it is a single simple cause but that it is complex and multiple (p. 92)." Here, too, is a recognition of the potential for causal bias. That is, to the extent that a single cause is sought, and found, the probability that such a cause might be located in a unitary sphere of the client's life is increased. Here is also found a recognition that an understanding of human problems involves not just a causal determination but also contains an implicit determination of the responsibility inherent in the problem. That is, Richmond notes the profession's concern with examining individual motivation as a potential causal force. This essentially denotes that people may act on their own behalf and in a manner which may serve to engender the problems brought to the caseworker. In short, individuals may be held responsible for the problem circumstances which their voluntary and intentional behavior was instrumental in producing.

Support for the linear problem construction in casework came from the influence of Freudian thought in the 1920's and 1930's. Essentially, psychoanalytic theory held that the causes of behavior were to be found in the conflicts of early childhood development and were manifest in the psyche, the tripartite seat of the personality. Uncovering these early developmental conflicts would serve to free the psychic energy which bound the conflict, resulting, in turn, in change in the derivative neurotic behavior. The focus of attention was toward the individual as the target of change and the client was portrayed as the repository of all information concerning the genesis of neurotic conflicts. The environment was given recognition but only as a peripheral object in which the personality was formed incident to innate forces or drives within the individual. Neurotic behavior, then, is the effect of a linear causal process originating within the personality, which is formed over time with influence from environmental forces (cf. Hamilton, 1958, Goldstein, 1984).

Some divergence between Richmond's (1917, 1922) conception of casework and psychoanalytic thought are noted. Psychoanalysis, for example, devoted almost exclusive

attention to the individual's intrapsychic make-up, an attention which effectively obscured the social processes which were stressed by Richmond and her followers. Additionally, Richmond's casework looked toward creating environmental change opportunities, as deemed appropriate to the client and the client's situation. These opportunities, in turn, would allow for change to take place in the structure of the personality. Hers was a dual focused approach which stressed environmental study as well as personality study as the key to unlocking the core causes of the client's trouble. Freudian psychology, on the other hand, stressed a unitary approach in which any environmental change occurred as peripheral to intrapsychic change.

Social work was much influenced by psychoanalytic thought, however, and many caseworkers came to rely on Freud's work, as well as other advances in the field of psychiatry, as the guiding theory of practice. Robinson (1930), for example, notes that "It is important...to distinguish between family work with an environmental approach and psychiatric work with personality factors. That the problem in either case is fundamentally a personality problem...is pointed out...(p. 78)." Here is an explicit negation of the utility of environmental work without recognition that human problems are fundamentally personality based. Caseworkers who do not attend primarily to personality issues are essentially missing the major arena for intervention and, according to Robinson, the only legitimate opportunity to define social work practice.

Concern for this development, with its individual, client based focus, prompted Hamilton (1951) and others to reassert the importance of the individual in interaction with the social environment as the appropriate framework for assessing human behavior. Noting the dimensions of a social case, Hamilton says:

A social case is composed of internal and external or environmental factors. One does not deal with people in a physical sense or with environments in a physical sense but treats individuals in relation not only to their social experiences but also to their feelings about these experiences. So when one thinks of a social case one must always consider it in terms of both inner and outer interacting factors (p. 4).

Thus, human problems are asserted to be multi-determined and emphasis is given to the interactional nature of elements in both the personality and the social environment which influence causation. This marks an extension of the earlier ideas of Richmond (1922) with respect to causation and reestablishes the profession's fundamental assumption that "...the human event consists of person and situation...(Hamilton, 1951, p. 3)."

Again, the domain of the case is expanded to include those events which are part and parcel of the client's social context. Problems in living are not formed in isolation. The study process, therefore, is seen as consisting of

...interviews with the client and those significantly involved in his situation, contact with selected aspects of the client's economic, cultural and social milieu, such as his home, his occupational, educational, religious and recreational associations and with medical or social agencies and institutions...(Hamilton, 1951, p. 182).

To understand the client and his or her needs requires a distillation and synthesis of information from disparate sources, a recognition of the "client-in-situation".

Reynolds (1951), echoes Hamilton (1951) as she also stresses the role of the environment in shaping what she terms "problems in social living." She notes that assessing the environment, as through home visits, for example, is an essential element in a comprehensive understanding of the case. Reynolds says, "The fallacy...lies in the assumption that emotions are separate from what happens to a person in daily living...(p. 129)." For Reynolds, however, the context of services is also an important aspect of problem remediation. Foreshadowing contemporary notions of service delivery in the workplace, Reynolds was instrumental in developing a union based social service program.

Despite this emergent organismic view of the person-in-situation configuration, however, the approach to help giving is essentially linear. Hamilton (1951), for example, stressed the role of perception in the casework process and noted, "The client's reality and his feeling about his reality become the constellations of casework effort wherein familial and other interpersonal factors constantly impinge upon and modify diagnosis and the goals of treatment (p. 25)." Thus, it is the client's inner construction of the self and the social

milieu which becomes the focus of casework practice. Any changes necessary in the structure of the social environment, then, are left in the hands of the client. In this sense, cause emanates from within the client's social context and is manifested within the client's personality. Reynolds (1975) offers support for this view by defining social casework as that which "...helps people to test and understand their reality, physical, social and emotional, and to mobilize resources within themselves and in their physical and social environment to meet their reality or change it (p. 131)." Again, it is the client who is the agent of change, a change necessitated by a faulty interpretation of social and physical reality.

This notion does not belie the importance of objective reality since the worker must necessarily be aware of any perceptual distortions which may influence the client's problems. It does, however, stress the client's interpretation of reality, the perceptual construction of life events and the client's awareness of how these events influence an ability to effectively function in an objective social context. In this sense, the caseworker's primary effort is directed toward the client as the agent of change, toward helping the client understand that he or she is shaped by, and in turn can help to shape, the social events which characterize the problem situation. Helping the client to broaden a perceptual understanding of the problem-in-situation serves to increase the client's freedom to respond to environmental demands and individual needs. Thus, the client becomes aware that the social and physical environment are not necessarily static entities comprised of unyielding forces which dictate problem behavior. Freedom of choice exists and, through the casework process, the client develops the skills necessary to a recognition of choice points and potential change strategies.

It is clear, however, that this view tends to locate problems primarily in the client at the same time that environment vicissitudes are recognized as impinging on the client's perceptual understanding of his or her place in the world. Here falls the potential for a recognition of the client's motivational role in determining the problem situation. Hamilton (1951) recognizes that the client may bear some responsibility in problem development and feels that this becomes an explicit part of the assessment. She says, "Diagnostic thinking strives to arrive at causes because this means a more precise definition of the problem. The fact that the client himself may be a contributor to his own social problems complicates the formulation, but does not change the aim of diagnosis (p. 218)." Hamilton further

recognizes that assessment is essentially a social judgment process in which the worker seeks to understand the client's ability and willingness to take part in the casework process and to contribute in a meaningful way to problem resolution. Again, the worker seeks to determine the extent of the client's motivation to assume responsibility for both process and outcome.

Contemporaneously with the contributions of Hamilton (1951) and Reynolds (1951), there emerged an essential debate within the profession which was centered on issues of causation and the focus of casework efforts. The adherents of Freudian psychology and its derivatives continued to take issue with the person-situation notions of Richmond (1917, 1922), Hamilton (1951) and others, asserting that such a focus tended to emphasize environmental concerns at the expense of a more client focused, dynamic casework. Robinson (1930) said, for example,

If the history of social casework teaches anything it teaches this one thing outstandingly, that only in this field of the individual's reaction patterns and in the possibilities of therapeutic change in these patterns through responsible self conscious relationships can there be any possibility of a legitimate professional case work field (p. 185).

Taft (1942), Robinson (1949) and others who developed and adhered to the Functional school of social casework looked to the use of the casework relationship as the focus of change effort. Functional theorists believed that human distress could best be understood as a relationship problem which would be expressed in the context of the worker-client relationship and in the client's relationship with the casework agency. Change took place through the structured use of these relationships in an effort to help the client better understand the use of self in a relationship context. Achieving such an understanding would help the client maximize use of self-in-relationship toward the end of an appropriate satisfaction of needs. Thus, the client is the focus of attention in the casework effort. The cause of the client's problem is found in the perception of social relationships and in the application of self in the context of those relationships. The social environment is clearly recognized and assumes importance in the conceptual understanding



of the client's problem. An over-focus on environmental issues, however, would serve to obscure the client-worker relationship focus in casework.

Taft (1942) noted the tendency for social casework to shift back and forth between a focus on external causal factors and a focus on internal causal factors and said,

It is necessary to know and appreciate the economic, the cultural, the immediate social setting of those who constitute our clientele, it is essential to understand and accept tolerantly, but without evasion, the human psychology that is common to worker and client in our culture, but this is only the beginning. There is one area and only one, in which outer and inner, worker and client, agency and social need can come together effectively, only one area that offers to social workers the possibility of development into a profession, and that is the area of the helping process itself (pp. 101-102).

Taft further notes that the causal implications of the client's problems can only be understood as the client struggles with the limits imposed by the agency setting and the casework relationship on the satisfaction of need. The client, then, assumes primary responsibility for defining that need and the worker assumes responsibility for providing clarity with regard to the limiting factors of relationship.

Thus, for Taft (1942), Robinson (1949) and other proponents of Functional casework, the client bears responsibility for the problem to which the client has causally contributed. For example, Robinson (1949) cites Taft (1946) as saying "When a man is brought to the necessity of asking assistance from an outside source because of his own inadequacy or failure to manage his own affairs, whatever has been faulty in his way of relating to the other will be brought into focus as he tries to find his role as client of a social agency (p. 21)." There is a presumption, then, that the client has experienced difficulty due to a breakdown in the ability to gain instrumental satisfaction in the context of personal relationships. Within the determined limits of a relationship with the worker and the agency, then, the client comes to understand how self has been applied in the context of

relationships and how such relationships can be more effectively managed toward the end of need satisfaction and problem resolution.

While there are clear divergences in the concepts of Hamilton (1951) and Robinson (1930, 1949), as representative of the two main streams extant in social work theory at the time, there are also a number of similarities which warrant mention. First, in the approaches of both theorists it is the client's perceptual interpretation of social reality which bears importance in defining the client's problem. Objective data serves to identify distortions in perception, thereby providing clues for the development of change strategies. Second, both theorists are concerned with issues of causation and problem locus, conceived of dichotomously along an inner-outer dimension. Third, each theorist is relationship focused with a clear recognition of the interaction of various elements of the relationship. Relationships are portrayed as multi-determined and varying in structure and importance in relation to the problem and to the casework. Fourth, the problem process is defined in essentially linear terms, as a cause and effect sequence consisting of discrete but interacting relationship elements. Finally, for each there is an implicit assumption that the extent of the client's responsibility for the development and maintenance of the problem presented to the worker provides data for an understanding of the problem itself. The importance of these similarities rests in their application to efforts to grapple with fundamental issues of concern to the profession. They point to a common foundation in professional social work and to common concerns underlying debate on the relevant issues.

The changing professional climate of the 1950's and 1960's saw a reemergence in emphasis on the social and environmental context of human problems and a focus on the unifying principles of practice, the commonalities in approaches to helping people. There occurred, moreover, a fundamental shift in practice theory toward a recognition of the interactional nature of person and environment. Influenced by social psychology and the biological sciences, the interaction of person and environment is conceived of as a continually evolving reciprocal influence process. Perlman (1957), for example, notes that the client's problem both affects and is affected by the person's social functioning. Additionally, she stresses the client's social circumstances as impinging on the problem and as being affected by the client's psychological state. There is, then, a dynamic interaction between the personality and the social environment. Perlman notes that there is a "...shift and reorganization of new and old elements in the personality that take place continuously

just because the person is alive in a live environment and is in interaction with it (p. 6).” She goes on to say of the client, “It is this physical-psychological-social-past-present-future configuration that he brings to every life situation he encounters (p. 7).”

For Perlman (1957), however, human problems are seen as a breakdown in the problem solving capacities of the individual. Problem solving is viewed as a natural process which evolves over time as a personality construct. Perlman says, “Our perception of a problem situation, our turning-over in our minds its causes and effects, our consideration and choice of some mode of dealing with it--all this may go on without our fully being aware that we are...problem solving (p. 54).” Problem solving, then, is a cause and effect sequence predicated on an ability to analyze those factors which contribute to the distress. Assessment in social work, in turn, is a process of problem solving the client’s problem in an effort to arrive at a dynamic diagnosis, the location of forces interacting “...within the client himself, within his social situation and between him and his situation (p. 171).” Perlman continues, “The dynamic diagnosis seeks to establish what the trouble is, what psychological, physical or social factors contribute to (or cause) it, what effect it has on the individual’s well being and what means exist within the client, his situation and organized services and resources by which the problem may be affected (p. 171).” Identifying the causal elements in the client’s problem is the first step toward developing potential change strategies. Perlman says,

The purposes of establishing recent or precipitating causation have...been discussed...as these: to clarify whether the problem lies chiefly in the client himself or in his life situation, to deal directly with the causal factors so as to nullify them or modify their impact, or, conversely, to take into account such causal factors as are immutable (pp. 175-176).

Again, causation is seen as existing on a continuum of inner, psychological forces and outer, social-environmental forces. Locating causal elements at some point along this continuum is also seen as the key to the casework effort.

Perlman (1957) distinguishes between the dynamic diagnosis which seeks to understand the individual in the present context and the etiological diagnosis which seeks to

understand the problem through historical time. Perlman says, "The term 'etiological diagnosis,' as commonly used, relates less often to immediate causation and more often to the beginnings and life-history of a problem, *usually to the problem that lies in the client's personality makeup or functioning* (p. 176, emphasis added)." Here Perlman appears to suggest that the ultimate cause of the client's difficulty generally is to be found in the client rather than in the environment through historical time. While there is a recognition of the fact that the environment tends to shape and influence the client's development, it is the client's personality that is causally implicated in the problem and, thus, the client is the focus of the casework effort. Given such a formulation, it is not unreasonable to assume that the thrust of casework is toward change in the client and not change in the environment.

Perlman (1957) also presents a discussion of the motivational aspects of the client's "workability" and says, "The client should see himself as an active agent in relation to his problem, either as contributing to it in the past or as working on it in the present. The caseworker needs to both test and promote the person's readiness to recognize that his behavior is an actual or potential dynamic in his problem situation (p. 188)." Here again, is recognition of the client's causal role in determining the development of the problem for work and an emphasis on the client as the target of the change effort. Moreover, implicit in the determination of motivation for casework is an assessment of the extent to which the client assumes responsibility for the development of the problem and for the effort to effect change. That is, motivation is enhanced to the extent that the client has an understanding of the fact that it is the client's behavior which works to maintain the problem as it is currently expressed. The client, then, not only has a causal role in shaping the problem but should be held responsible for the problem to the extent that the problem has been shaped by the client's actions. Implicitly, the client's actions are always implicated and, thus, the client is always responsible for the problem.

Other casework theory emerged during the 1960's and 1970's, each with some conceptual variation centered on perceptions of causation and casework focus. Hollis (1964, 1970), for example, stresses causal agents as facts to be elicited in the psycho-social study and notes that causation is "...the convergence of a multiplicity of factors in the person-situation configuration (Hollis, 1970, p. 52)." The focus of casework, however, is predominately toward the personality with environmental concerns receding into the

periphery of the casework process. The social environment is essentially a diagnostic construct subject to change in the context of personality development. For Hollis, then, casework is primarily a psycho-dynamic approach to human problems.

Smalley (1967) follows Taft (1942) and Robinson (1949) in stressing the function of the agency and the worker-client relationship as central to the casework effort. She notes that in determining a diagnosis "...no attempt is made to know and set down on paper a 'total individual in a total situation,' nor is there a like attempt for a group or a community. Rather the focus from the beginning of the relationship is on an understanding of the phenomena *as related to the service being offered* (p. 136, emphasis in original)." For Smalley, the only relevant context for a determination of causality is the client's relationship with the worker and the service agency. An understanding of the client's problem will emerge as the worker defines the parameters of the casework relationship and interprets the agency's function, and the client works to understand need satisfaction in that context. Thus, the client assumes causal responsibility for the problem for work, which is, by definition, a relationship problem.

Additional responsibility for the problem accrues to the client by virtue of the role he or she plays in the course of personal development. Smalley emphasizes "the individual as central in his own development, as capable of changing from within *through the use of inner and outer resources*, but as not susceptible to change through coercion (p. 101, emphasis in original)." Thus, it is the client who determines developmental purpose, through the exercise of will, and it is the quest for fulfillment of that purpose which serves to guide the individual's developmental course. Smalley stresses that the individual acts consciously and with motivation to achieve developmental purpose. The environment forms a context against which the individual tests purpose and, to the extent that the environment is not conducive to the achievement of purpose, the environment is subject to change. The individual, then, is not changed by environmental circumstances but, rather, alters the environment to achieve purpose. Ultimate responsibility for the direction of a life course rests with the individual and any problems which emerge are wholly the individual's responsibility.

Bartlett (1970) suggests that a focus on social functioning could be at the core of professional social work. Her use of the common base of social work practice is predicated on an assessment of social situations which induce the problem of concern, the

behavioral responses of the persons involved and the demands and supports of the environment. The assessment process draws from relevant theory to identify those factors most critical to the problem and to define their inter-relationships. This implies the location of causal factors which determine the client's problem in an effort to develop remediating strategies. Bartlett notes, however, that the assessment analysis "...might, for instance, point most strongly to deficiency in coping capacity or deficiency in environmental supports or some combination of the two (p. 145)." Again, cause is dichotomized into person and environment but with a suggestion that the person-environment continuum exists as a dynamic field.

This latter point reflects the influence of systems theory concepts which, in tandem with the biological and social sciences and the profession's body of knowledge, led to the development of an ecologically based practice perspective. Meyer (1976) notes, for example, that an eco-systems perspective allows a social work case to be viewed in terms of the interdependence of all relationships, including the relationship between the person and the social environment. Meyer says, "In a systemic view there is no inner or outer, but rather an operational field in which all elements intersect and affect each other (p. 133)." Thus, the client's problem is viewed transactionally against the backdrop of the social and physical environment. Cause, then, is also presumed to be transactional. Again, Meyer states, "Whatever the assessment of the case, the parameters for intervention are broader...and causation may be any or all points of the field of the case (p. 139)". The complexity of causal determination within such a notion is readily apparent. It represents, however, a move away from a dichotomous conceptualization of person and environment and a recognition of the dynamic nature of the person existing in an ecological field. It further represents a move from linear to reciprocal causality.

Germain and Gitterman (1980) note that problem definition will bear directly on the development of strategies for change. A perception of the problem as located internally will lead to the use of a psychodynamically based practice approach. The perception of an external cause, on the other hand, will call for social action directed toward organizational and environmental change. If, however, the problems are

...located in the interface between person and environment, and defined as maladaptive transactions within the life space, then

the professional intervention is likely to be formulated in terms of reciprocal adaptive processes....Goals will refer to a strengthened adaptive capacity and increased environmental responsiveness (p. 12).

Germain and Gitterman propose that casework is dual focused with simultaneous attention directed toward the personality, including the constructs of perception, cognition, feeling and action, and on supports in the social field and physical setting.

More recently, Meyer (1983) cites the O'Hare conference definition of social work purpose as: "To promote or restore a mutually beneficial interaction between individuals and society in order to improve the quality of life for everyone (p. 7)." She suggests that the continued utility of the psychosocial paradigm for social work practice is dependent on the willingness of social workers to develop the necessary skills for environmental intervention. This calls for a concerted effort on the part of social workers in the field to look at human distress as occurring in a dynamic field in which all the elements of the field are reciprocally influential. Linear, cause and effect thinking tends to limit an understanding of the whole of problem development and, in turn, to limit the range of available intervention strategies.

While an ecologically based perspective has gained considerable purchase in the practice arena, there remains much debate with respect to the nature of assessment in social work practice. The literature continues to address relevant issues with regard to causal locus in understanding human problems and, by extension, the determination of problem responsibility. Lattig and Zundel (1986), for example, cite Sue (1981) as positing that the counselor's world view influences the assessment process. To the extent that the counselor holds a view of the world which presumes that people can overcome hardship through hard work and perseverance, the counselor is likely to infer that clients who experience difficulties are themselves the source of the problem. Then, to the extent that the client is determined to have caused the problem, responsibility for the problem will also be assigned to the client.

Similarly, H. Specht and R. Specht (1986) discuss a range of factors which must be taken into account in determining eligibility for service. Among these are what the authors have called "personal-resource requirements." The authors state, "In instances that involve

assessment of resources other than financial resources, agency personnel usually assume the obligation of selecting those applicants who are likely to make 'best use' of the service....Best use suggests that professionals can predict which applicants will be most successful in using the service (p. 530)." Thus, it is the client's motivation which is subjected to assessment scrutiny. It is suggested that motivation may be seen as a function of the extent to which the client is willing to assume at least partial responsibility for the problem. Should a client indicate that the cause of any distress lies outside of the client and that responsibility for the problem is to be assigned to other than the client, the worker may infer that the client is not motivated on the basis of a lack of insight into the nature of the problem presented. This is supported by Witkin (1982) who has examined sources of potential bias in the assessment of the client's problem. He notes that assessment involves the assignment of causes and reasons for the problem, implying a motivational dimension in an understanding of the problem.

Thus, it is clear that social work's concern for causation, and for the role of person and environment as potential causal elements, has evolved from a linear, cause and effect construction to a more dynamic mutual influence process. The role of the environment in this process has moved from one of peripheral importance to a more substantive and central role, providing a new perspective on the person-environment interaction. It is equally clear, however, that the profession remains concerned with issues of cause and responsibility, whether cause is defined as occurring at an "interface" or confluence of interactional elements, or at some point on an essentially dichotomous continuum of inner, psychological forces and outer, environmental forces. The relevant issues in this regard have yet to be effectively resolved either through professional debate or empirical investigation.

Given these concerns, it is interesting to note the literature on attribution theory which suggests that causal attributions reflect a cognitive schema developed as a personality construct. This is viewed as a natural process constituting, essentially, a hierarchical cause and effect paradigm which is linear in nature. This notion, at face, stands somewhat at odds with contemporary social work thought. It seems, however, to offer an opportunity for gaining some insight into the natural human process of understanding cause in everyday life, a process which bears importance in the causal processes of social work assessment.



If the profession is to truly understand cause as a function of assessing human problems, it behooves practitioners to avail themselves of existing work in the area.

It is suggested, therefore, that attribution theory provides a useful framework for investigating causal issues in social work practice. The relevant issues in this regard will be subsequently discussed in a review of the literature in the field. First, a caveat is noted in the argument that the reciprocal interaction model of the eco-systems perspective belies the utility of such a linear construct. It is posited, however, that a linear, attributional approach is not incompatible when one considers that one is examining a static component of a dynamic process. The utility lies in the provision of base information from which an interactional model may be developed.

### The Attribution of Cause and Responsibility

Attribution theory evolved primarily in the 1950's and was essentially formalized in the work of Heider (1958a, 1958b, 1958c). Heider was concerned with the impact of perception on the determination of causality and subsequent behavior. He identified a tendency for individuals to see persons as causes, as opposed to object causes, and he felt that this reflected a broadened opportunity to balance a range of perceptual phenomena. That is, if a change or action is seen as originating with a person, there is an opportunity to offset the change through the person. Attributing cause to another person reduces the likelihood of self as the causal agent. The other person is, in this sense, a part of the observer's environment. Heider further suggested that there is a tendency to order incoming perceptual stimuli against a stable environment, thus providing a framework for causal analysis, an economic description of a range of complex perceptual data. He felt that, in interpersonal situations, the characteristics of the other person formed the stable anchor against which perceptions could be ordered.

With the environment perceived as a stable backdrop in ambiguous situations, there is a suggestion that in social relations it is the individual rather than the physical environment

which draws perceptual attention. Heider (1958c) notes, "...behavior in particular has such salient properties it tends to engulf the total field rather than be confined to its proper position as a local stimulus whose interpretation requires the additional data of a surrounding field--the situation in social perception (Heider, 1958c, p. 54)." The search for the dispositional qualities underlying a given event is seen as an effort to control the environment, both person and object, in support of a consistent and predictable world view. Heider says, "...man is usually not content simply to register the observables that surround him; he needs to refer them as far as possible to the invariances of his environment...the underlying causes of events, especially the motives of other persons....(Heider, 1958c, p. 81)." Thus, the motives underlying another's behavior become a paramount consideration in the determination of cause for the behavior.

Heider (1958c) distinguishes between personal and impersonal causality, viewing the former as denoting intentionality and ability, and the latter the effect of the environment. Intentional action, in turn, is characterized by both equifinality and local causality but "...only within certain limits, and these limits define what the person 'can' do if he tries (p. 102)." Thus, personal causality, the power of another to produce change in oneself, is dependent on the motivation and ability of the other, notions that for Heider define a concept of "can". Environmental forces also play a part in this process, forming a set of forces which must be overcome by "can" in an effort to achieve the desired end state. Attributions of personal causality, then, essentially serve to reduce the number of conditions necessary for change to just one, "...the person with intention, who, within a wide range of environmental vicissitudes, has control over the multitude of forces required to create the specific effect (p. 102)"

Heider (1958c) notes the relationship between causality and responsibility, with responsibility essentially being a function of the actor's intention to produce the outcome observed given the constraints of the relevant environment. To the extent that environmental forces are felt to contribute to the actor's action outcome, attributions of personal responsibility are diminished. Heider notes five forms of the concept of responsibility, which he somewhat ambiguously refers to as both phases and levels. First, an individual may be held responsible for any event outcome which has been connected to the individual in any manner. That is, the person is essentially held responsible by

association rather than by direct action. Second, an individual is held responsible for any outcome which has been produced by the individual's actions. Here the actor is a necessary condition for the outcome even though the outcome could not have been foreseen and the actor may not have acted with the intention of producing the outcome

Third, an actor is held to be responsible for any outcome which the actor might have foreseen but which the actor did not intend to produce. That is, the potential result of the action could reasonably have been known to the actor in advance but the outcome was not part of the actor's goal structure. Fourth, an actor is responsible for any outcome which was intended by the actor's behavior and where the intention to act is seen as deriving wholly from within the actor. That is, the actor was internally motivated to act in the manner observed to produce the outcome observed. Finally, an actor's intentions may not be entirely attributed to the actor but may be seen as a function of environmental forces. That is, there are forces in the environment which are arrayed against the actor such that any person would have acted in the manner observed given the circumstances under which the action was performed (Heider, 1958c, p. 112-114).

In sum, Heider (1958a, 1958b, 1958c) notes that perceptual stimuli originate in an environment which includes other persons with whom one either interacts or who one observes engaging in some behavior. There is, in addition, an awareness of self as a stimulus for interaction within the observational field. There are, then, three essential sources of causality for any event, sources which may be dichotomized into personal and impersonal spheres. These are the self, the object environment and the person environment. In interpersonal situations, another person is more likely to be seen as the cause of an event since there is a need for ambiguous perceptual stimuli to be anchored against a stable environment. This anchoring, or ordering, of perceptual data, in turn, permits predictability for life events in support of one's view of the world. Attributions of personal causality are a function of the perceived intentions of the actor in light of an assessment of the environmental forces arrayed against the actor for any given situation. Finally, should personal causality be determined, the actor is likely to be held responsible for the outcome observed to the extent that the environment is determined to have a low level of implication in the determination of the behavior which led to the outcome.

Other attributional notions emerged from Heider's (1958) work. Jones and Davis (1965), for example, asserted the attribution process to consist of the identification of the

intentions of an actor in an event, insofar as they deviate from the typical actor in the same situation. The observer infers correspondence between the effects of an action and the intention behind the action to the extent that there are unique effects of the action when compared to alternative actions available to the actor, and to the extent that the actor's behavior is low in social desirability. Desirability, in this sense, involves the determination of the probability that the actor would behave in the manner observed given an understanding of the actor's experience and social role, and an understanding of the context in which the action is performed. In short, the behavior of the actor is salient against the field of observation in that it is experientially unique and not generally desirable in context. Otherwise, by implication, the behavior recedes into a normal observational pattern and attributional processes are not engaged. Shaver (1975) has noted an implication by Jones and Davis that an actor's behavior is perceived as reflecting one among many alternative actions such that an actor has made a choice in how to behave in a given situation. The attribution of causality, then, is based on the number of non-common effects of each possible action and the perceived social desirability of each possible action. Again, this holds true whether the attribution is to self or to the environment and the attribution process is an effort to stabilize one's view of the world.

It has been noted (Shaver, 1985) that the Jones and Davis (1965) formulation implicitly addresses the issues relevant to an attribution of responsibility. The attributional process with regard to causality is one of inferring the correspondence between the actor's underlying dispositions and the outcome of the action itself. The outcome data alone, however, may be insufficient to allow for the certainty necessary for an attribution to the actor's dispositions. Thus, additional information is required. This information consists of the actor's ability to produce the outcome observed, the foreknowledge which the actor had with regard to the potential outcome of the action, and the degree of intention with which the action was performed. Such factors may be reasonably inferred by an observer on the basis of normative experience and an assessment of the circumstances under which the action was performed. It is presumed that a disposition to act precedes both the knowledge of the potential effect of the action and the formation of the intention to act. Thus, an assessment of the actor as having possessed knowledge and intention will strengthen the correspondence between the outcome of the action and the disposition of the actor.

Kelley (1967, 1973) notes that attribution theory "...describes processes that operate as if the individual were motivated to attain a cognitive mastery over the causal structure of his environment (Kelley, 1967, p. 193)." He further notes that attributions, whether to self-environment or to other-environment, occur in the context of four assessment criteria. First, distinctiveness is the extent to which an attribution for an event is unique to the entity or person under consideration. Second is the extent to which the attribution for similar events is consistent over time. Third is consistency over modality, the attributional perception of an event as being stable over modes of interaction with the event. Finally, there is consensus, the extent to which all observers to an event will attribute the event in the same manner. Kelley notes that attributions cast in light of these criteria will instill confidence that one's view of the world is essentially correct. When attributions do not fulfill these criteria, one is uncertain and hesitant in dealings with the world. This implies an attributional schema as an effort to restore cognitive balance in view of ambiguous and potentially overwhelming perceptual stimuli.

Two additional points in Kelley's (1967, 1973) formulation need to be noted as they bear on a consideration of attributed cause and, by extrapolation, attributed responsibility, particularly in cases where there is only a single occurrence of the event. First, any potential cause for an event is *discounted* to the extent that other potential causes are present. That is, potential causes are weighted differentially against the total causal field. Second, potential causes are *augmented* to the extent that forces in the environment are determined to mitigate against that causal factor. That is, the strength of the potential cause must necessarily be enhanced to overcome the array of environmental forces which inhibit that potential cause from producing the outcome observed. These notions bear importance for a consideration of attributed responsibility as follows: If a person who is the potential cause for an outcome has been observed behaving in a manner deemed sufficient to produce the outcome, the salience of the person's behavior will increase to the extent that other potential causal factors may be discounted in the presence of the actor's behavior and the actor's behavior may be augmented on the basis of a strong motivational intention to produce the outcome observed. Given an action which is determined to be intentional with regard to the outcome and held to be sufficient to overcome any inhibitory factors in the environment, the actor who engaged in the action will be held responsible for the outcome.

Attribution theory, then, views the individual as perceiving and ordering events in the observational field in an effort to maintain a stable and predictable view of the world, to create an adaptive balance in one's relations with the social and physical environment. The dimensions along which causal attributions are made are essentially dichotomous, expressing the combination of relationships between self, other and object. Differential causal assessment is dependent on one's role in relation to an event, whether one is an active participant or a passive observer. The anchoring of potential causal data along a dimension of person (self or other) and environment suggests the possibility of some bias in attribution along the expressed dimension. That is, the location of causation at some point along a continuum suggests the probability that the location will lie off the midpoint in either direction depending on the perceived directionality of the stimulus for the event precipitating the attributional effort. The forces which impel perceived directionality involves a determination of the actor's motivations with regard to the outcome observed. To the extent that the actor may be said to have behaved with foreknowledge of the potential consequences and with an intention to produce the outcome, and to the extent that the actor's behavior is found sufficient to have produced the effect, the actor will be held responsible for the outcome.

Jones and Nisbett (1971) first brought attention to the issue of potential causal bias by arguing that there exists a tendency on the part of actors to attribute their actions to the demands of the situation while observers attribute the same actions to stable characteristics of the actor's personality. The authors cite a study in which college student subjects listened to speeches or read essays and were subsequently asked to infer the communicator's actual opinion. The expressed opinions were the result of either choice or no choice with regard to the stand taken. The results showed that subjects were able to clearly discern between choice and no choice conditions but despite the constraints on choice behavior, they felt that the position espoused was the actual opinion of the presumed communicator. This suggests that observers attach little significance to the situational determinants of behavior and attribute behavior instead to a disposition of the actor. This, despite slim evidence in regard to the actor, suggesting, in addition, a pervasive attributional process at work. This "divergent perceptions" notion has been examined and validated in a number of studies and has been consistently supported in the theoretical

literature (see, for example, McArthur, 1972, Nisbett, Caputo, Legant and Maracek, 1973, Gurwitz and Panciera, 1975, Bell, 1979, and Rowland, 1980).

Jones and Nisbett (1971) distinguish between situations in which there is a passive observer and those in which the observer is an active participant. Under the latter circumstances, the authors feel that there is a tendency toward heightened salience of action for several reasons: First, that the observer is caught up in the action suggests that he will not be able to make leisurely appraisals of the setting in which the action takes place. Rather than being oriented toward understanding the relative contributions of person and situation, the actor-observer will be more closely attuned to the cues necessary to formulating his own next responses. Second, the presence and behavior of the observer may influence the behavior of the actor in ways not discerned by the observer. Finally, the surrounding environment is roughly the same for each participant in the situation. That is, as an actor-observer is aware of the environmental constraints of the situation and sees himself as behaving in accordance with his perceptions of those constraints, then any variation in an actor's behavior from that predicted by the actor-observer for the situation will be attributed to the actor's idiosyncratic interpretation of the situation. Thus, in a stable field, attributions will be toward the actor over the environment. The perception of one's role, however, will influence the process.

This notion of perceptual status or role in a situation suggests that modifications in perspective will alter an attributional focus. Storms (1973) demonstrated that visual orientation has a powerful effect on the inferences made by actors and observers about the causes of the actor's behavior. When a videotape replay of an event was not presented and subjects were left to assume their own orientation, actors attributed their behavior relatively more to situational causes than did the observers. Under conditions of reorientation, however, as when subjects saw a new point of view on tape, the attributional differences between actors and observers were exactly reversed. Following this, Taylor and Fiske (1975) reported two studies which tested and confirmed the hypothesis that attending to a particular individual in a social situation leads to regarding that individual as the cause of the situation. Thus, point of view, or focus of attention, determines information salience; perceptually salient information is, in turn, over-represented in subsequent causal attributions. The results of these studies show that perceptions of causality in social situations are markedly shaped by literal point of view.

Several studies have examined the role of empathy in causal attributions. Stephan (1975), for example, predicted that for defensive reasons actors would make personal dispositional attributions to a positive outcome and external situational attributions to a negative outcome. The opposite was predicted for observers. The findings of the study undertaken suggest that both actors and observers have a fairly accurate grasp of the evaluative aspects of the other's causal attributions. In the reported experiment, it was found that actors made more positive attributions to their own behavior than they thought the observers would make, and the observers made fewer positive attributions to the actor's behavior than they thought the actors would make. Regan and Totten (1975) confirmed the hypothesis that an empathic orientation would make observers relatively more likely to provide situational attributions and relatively less likely to make dispositional attributions for the actor's behavior. Gould and Sigall (1977) assumed that empathic observers are the functional equivalent of actors with regard to attributional perspective and found that empathic observers, who were given equal expectancy for success and failure, made outcome attributions typically found for actors. That is, observers attributed success to dispositional causes and failure to situational causes.

The notions presented above suggest that attributional processes are engaged in an effort to order the perceptual stimuli engendered by an event which is causally ambiguous. There is a bias in the attribution of cause to self, other and environment on the basis of the differential assessment of the importance and relevance of the stimuli for the observed event. Duval and Wicklund (1973) have suggested that the differential salience of perceptual information may depend on the focus of one's attention in relation to an observed event. The authors cite the Jones and Nisbett (1971) divergent perceptions hypothesis in noting that neither party to an event has access to the same information. The actor is more likely to know the extenuating circumstances surrounding the behavior and, therefore, is more likely to attribute causality to those circumstances. The differential salience of person-environment information is felt to stem from several sources. First, both the actor's and the observer's sensory receptors are directed outwardly. For the actor this means the environment rather than self while for the observer it includes the actor's behavior. Second, many of the actor's responses are habitual in nature and do not require self examination. The observer, on the other hand, is confronted with the actor's changing behavior against a stable background. Finally, the actor is grappling with the changing



environment which requires his or her attention in order to achieve situational success. The role of the observer, on the other hand, dictates that attention should be focused on the actor.

Duval and Wicklund (1973) conducted two experiments to test the notion that focus of attention determines causal attribution. In the first experiment, subjects responded to ten items, each presenting potential situations caused by the subject or by another person. Subjects then estimated the percentage of their causal role. To manipulate focus of attention, half of the subjects were asked to engage in a meaningless motor task while responding. In the second experiment, both positive and negative outcomes were used and a mirror was employed to focus attention on self rather than on the environment. The results of both experiments indicate that attribution to self was greater when attention was focused on self. The second experiment demonstrated, in addition, that this held true independent of whether the consequences were positive or negative.

Extending this notion, Arkin and Duval (1975) conducted an experiment in which actors made a choice among several works of art in the presence of observers. The factors of interest were (1) the source of the attribution, defined as actor or observer, (2) a camera condition in which the actor was videotaped or not videotaped, and (3) situational stability, noted to consist of a stable or dynamic environment. The authors found that actors attributed more causality to the situation than observers under normal circumstances, as when the camera was off, but that videotaping the actor reversed the usual actor-observer patterns. They further found that when the environment was stable, actors attributed more causality to the situation in the no camera than in the camera condition, while observers attributed less causality to the situation in the no camera than in the camera condition. Finally, both actors and observers attributed more causality to the situation when the environment was dynamic than when it was stable.

In a similar vein, Pryor and Kriss (1977) tested the notion that the salience of an element affects its availability to memory and that this, in turn, mediates the causal attributions made to that element. Salience was manipulated by altering sentence structure following McArthur (1972): For example, "John likes the movie" versus "The movie is liked by John". As a result, an agent was found to be perceived as more causal and more available to recall when it was made salient than when it was not. There was also found to be a tendency for persons to receive more causal ascriptions and to be more available for

recall than objects. This implies that in normal circumstances, an individual is more salient and more easily brought to memory than is an object. By extension, it is reasonable to conclude that it is the behavior of the individual which becomes the focus of attention.

More recently, Duval and Duval (1983) have drawn on the above work to propose that causal attributions are an effort to maximize simplicity within consciousness. Information about an event which cannot be readily assimilated into a preexisting causal structure is considered to be cognitively complex; that is, unconnected or unanchored in consciousness. Cognitive simplicity, then, may be maximized by connecting new and complex information to event data previously anchored in consciousness. These, in turn, form higher order causal structures, termed unit formations by Heider (1958c). The authors note, "If one element of a unit formation is defined as an 'effect' event and is connected with another event such that they become temporally ordered aspects of a single extended cause-effect sequence, then the unit formation is a process of causal attribution (p. 1-2)."

There is, however, an asymmetry in the cause and effect relationships which determine the potential causes for a given event. The temporal relationship between an effect and its potential causes and the magnitude of the properties of potential causes are the elements which influence this asymmetry. Additionally, there is a question of consistency between an effect and its potential causes such that causality will be attributed to the possible cause with properties which are more similar to the effect than any other possible causes. Duval and Duval (1983) propose a model, therefore, in which external stimuli are translated into cognitions in a consciousness which is divided into focal and non-focal systems. The authors propose that to the extent that an effect is more similar to a cognized possible cause than to other possible causes in terms of the degree of focalization, defined as duration times intensity, the consistency principle predicts that causality for the event will be attributed to that possible cause, all else being equal.

In sum, the attribution of cause is a natural process which occurs in the context of personality. Its purpose is to explain one's perception of events such that the integrity of one's world view is supported. Perceptual stimuli are ordered along specific dimensions, generally consisting of person and environment characteristics, and are differentially "anchored" toward one end of any given dimension. This anchoring is influenced by one's perception of one's status, or role, in relation to an ambiguous event, and the focus of

one's attention, specifically the amount of attention one directs to objects in the perceptual field. The perceptual field consists, essentially, of one's inner experience of an event and the range of objects in the environment, with other persons serving as environmental objects. There is a relationship among the various dimensions of the field such that the field or any combination of elements in the field may be seen as either dynamic or stable, with a tendency toward the stabilization of the perceptual field through a process of causal attribution. Then, to the extent that causality is attributed toward the person end of any attributional dimension, there is a tendency to determine that the person producing an event outcome is responsible for that outcome. Responsibility, in turn, is a function of the perception of the knowledge and intentions of the actor and an assessment of the sufficiency of the observed behavior to overcome any inhibitory factors in the environment. The literature cited indicates that attributional phenomena occur rather pervasively across a variety of settings and conditions. The process is well enough defined to lend itself readily to empirical examination.

The attribution literature has also focused specific attention on the issue of attributed responsibility. It has been noted (Berkowitz and Daniels, 1965, Schopler and Mathews, 1965, Schopler and Batson, 1965, and Ickes and Kidd, 1976) that responsibility is a function of the perceived dependence of another person's outcomes. In a helping situation, the perception that one is dependent on a potential helper through no fault of one's own increases the likelihood that help giving behavior will ensue. This implies that dependency is a function of behavioral freedom under certain circumstances. That is, a potential helper is more likely to engage in help giving behavior if the dependent other's behavior is viewed as being constrained by the contextual environment.

Conversely, an attribution of choice behavior in the other's dependency status is more likely to inhibit a helping response and to engender negative impressions regarding the dependent other. This is particularly true when dependency is viewed as a negatively valued trait or condition. At any rate, it is the intention of dependency which is at issue in assessing responsibility for an event.

Shaver (1970) conducted three experiments to examine the proposition that for defensive reasons an observer to an accident, to preclude the same accident befalling the observer, will attribute responsibility to another person who is potentially responsible. It was also proposed that the observer would attempt to differentiate from the potentially

responsible person. Further, it was felt that this tendency would increase with the probability of the occurrence and the severity of the outcomes. Across experimental conditions, it was found that heightened probability of occurrence, particularly in the form of personal similarity to the person involved, lessened the observer's attributions of responsibility and increased a sense that the person behaved in a careful fashion. Shaw and Skolnick (1971) provide support for this defensive attribution notion regarding a happy accident.

Lerner (1971), on the other hand, cites earlier work which began with the assumption that people have a need to believe in a world in which the deserving are rewarded and the undeserving are appropriately punished. Given this need, the awareness of a person who is suffering under conditions of constraint will create a conflict for an observer. The observer can either conclude that the world is not so just after all or persuade him or herself that the victim merited the suffering. The author suggests that one way an observer can resolve this conflict is to decide that the victim, although innocent by deed, deserves the fate by virtue of undesirable personal characteristics. This suggests a relationship between causal and responsibility dimensions.

Chaiken and Darley (1973) examined both the defensive attribution notion and the just world hypothesis, both cited above, in conducting an experiment in which subjects watched a videotape of a supervisor-worker pair completing a routine coding task. During the coding, the supervisor caused an accident which had consequences for the worker which were either mild or severe in nature. The supervisor or the worker was made situationally relevant to subjects by telling them that they would fill one or the other role in a subsequent experiment at some future date. The results supported the just world hypothesis in that when the consequences of the accident were severe they were less likely to be attributed to chance causes. Future supervisors blamed the accident on the experimenter rather than the perpetrator or victim (due to faulty equipment). Future workers tended to blame the perpetrator, in this case the supervisor. This latter finding provides evidence for the defensive attribution notion which was found to hold sway when in conflict with the just world hypothesis.

Other research has moved toward an examination of perceived freedom and its relationship to causal issues. Kruglanski and Cohen (1973), for example, tested the thesis that an actor's freedom, as inferred from his actions by an observer, is dependent on the

degree to which the actions are attributed to the actor's person. In the experiment, subjects received information about a target person's predispositions and about his or her behavior in specific situations. Subjects then answered questions as to the perception of this person's freedom and attributed responsibility for the behavior depicted. Consistent with the hypothesis, it was found that greater freedom and responsibility were attributed to the target when the act was consistent with the target's presumed dispositions. It was also found that when the act was inconsistent with the target person's dispositions, greater freedom was assumed when the act was also incongruent with situational demands. The authors conclude that when the cause of an act may be assigned to the actor's person, considerable stability with regard to freedom prevails. Thus, there is little need to consider other possible causes. By contrast, when personal causation may be ruled out, potential situational causes become more important in determining freedom.

Worchell and Andreoli (1974) examined perceived threats to behavioral freedom and hypothesized that behaviors on the part of others which evoke the norm of reciprocity threaten behavioral freedom by dictating what behaviors one is expected to carry out in return. The strength of the resulting reactance should be a direct function of the importance of the threatened behavioral freedom. The hypotheses were supported. Harvey, Harris and Barnes (1975) noted that when an observer sees an actor engage in a behavior with a moderately negative effect, the observer might feel some sympathy and let the actor off the hook, that is, make external attributions. When the consequences are severe, however, an observer may not feel much sympathy since to do so would imply sanction for the actor's behavior. As a consequence, the actor becomes a target of attributional analysis. This notion was experimentally supported.

The recent literature has made a considerable theoretical contribution to an understanding of the relationship between cause and responsibility. Fincham and Jaspars (1980), for example, have examined the literature with regard to the philosophy of law and note that "Holding someone responsible does not explain anything directly but may be related to the explanation one gives (p. 83)." The authors note that a determination of causality is a necessary precondition for any determination of responsibility and conclude that, from a common sense perspective, the central notion with regard to the attribution of responsibility is the idea that a person can be held accountable for actions performed by the actor and for the outcomes of those actions, and may be held accountable for actions not

performed but expected by virtue of the actor's role or status. Finally, a person may be held not accountable for some action performed because the actor lacks the ability to form the intention to act in a manner consistent with the outcome.

Fincham and Jaspars (1980) cite Hart and Honore' (1959) to conclude that the general structure of laws necessary to demonstrate causality do not indicate which of all possible conditions necessary for the occurrence of an event may be at issue in a particular instance. Essentially, one may view the process of causal attribution as one of focusing on the one essential condition among many that may be present. It is noted that in common sense a cause is perceived as an abnormal condition, a condition which may be said to be implicated causally because it is not present in the usual state of affairs. The authors state,

A voluntary human action appears to be the prototype of such an abnormal condition. It occupies a special place in causal inquiries because it is seen as a primary or ultimate cause through which we do not trace the cause of a later event and to which we do trace the cause through intermediate causes of other kinds (p. 100).

Thus, in common sense, causality is likely to be attributed to any intentional human action which is implicated in an abnormal situation which has produced an outcome which requires explanation. Such causal determination, then, serves as a prelude to the attribution of responsibility for the event. Finally, Fincham and Jaspars (1980) note that conceptual confusion has arisen in the psychological literature because causality constitutes one meaning of the word responsibility. The authors conclude that the central meaning of responsibility is closely related to the question of causality because the determination of causality appears to be critical to the determination of responsibility both in law and in common sense.

Shultz and Schleifer (1983) draw on the major attributional theorists and the philosophy of law to conclude that conditional analyses have generally attempted to account for causal connections in terms of the occurrence of one event being either a necessary or sufficient condition, or both, of the occurrence of another event. As a conditional statement, a necessary condition would be expressed as "q only if p" while a sufficient

condition would be expressed as “if p then q.” The authors report research which appears to indicate that subjects use the necessity rule in determining causality but that information on sufficient conditions is not readily used to make judgments about causality. Essentially, the authors found that subjects do accurately identify whether or not a protagonist’s behavior is a differentiating factor between the current situation and a standard situation, but subjects do not use that conclusion to determine whether the behavior constitutes either a sufficient condition or a cause of the harm. Thus, a determination of the responsibility attributable to a person rests on a determination that the actor’s behavior was necessary to produce the outcome observed, rather than just sufficient to account for the outcome. The authors conclude that among legal and moral theorists, judgments of responsibility are largely a matter of discounting various mitigating factors. Among the most common mitigating factors are voluntariness, foresight and intervening causality.

Finally, Shaver (1985) has engaged in a substantial review of the attributional literature and the literatures from both the philosophy of law and the philosophy of mind in the development of an attributional theory of blame. As have others, Shaver notes that a determination of causality is a necessary precondition to any assessment of responsibility and blame for an event outcome. The author presents a preliminary model of attributed causality which takes into account the variety of factors which influence such a determination. Essentially, Shaver holds that the first step in the process is the selection of the event to be attributed from among the range of events available and the selection of a specific action from within the range of actions available for the event chosen. In the event of a single and obvious cause, the base situation in causal determination, causality is attributed to the single minimally sufficient causal subset which may contain single or multiple elements.

In the event of possible multiple causes, on the other hand, the attributional process is differentiated on the basis of single case and repeated observation occurrences. In instances in which there is only a single experience of the event action to be attributed, the process moves to an examination of potential causal elements with regard to their necessity, sufficiency and compensatory qualities. In the event of multiple necessary conditions, cause is again attributed to the single minimally sufficient causal subset with single or multiple elements. In the event of multiple sufficient conditions, one will engage in a process of discounting to arrive at the minimally sufficient causal subset with or without an

**INUS condition.** An INUS condition is an insufficient but necessary element in an unnecessary but sufficient causal subset; essentially, that one element among all elements which is critical for the effect to be produced. In the event of compensatory conditions, which imply the presence of environmental factors mitigating against the outcome for any particular causal element, one will engage in a process of augmentation to arrive at the minimally sufficient causal subset with or without an INUS condition.

Finally, in the event of repeated observation, Shaver (1985) holds that the observer will engage in a process akin to Kelley's (1967, 1973) formulations and will examine the effect across the dimension of entities, time/modalities and persons. Furthermore, the observer will employ the assessment criteria of distinctiveness, consistency and consensus applied to each of the assessed dimensions respectively. To the extent that covariation exists, the effect will be attributed to a minimally sufficient causal subset with or without an INUS condition.

Shaver (1985) notes that attributions of responsibility will be engaged for an event with negatively valued consequences which involves human action in the production of the event. The author presents a model of attributed responsibility which may be expressed as a multi-step attributional process as follows: First, an observer to an event will determine whether a person whose behavior is the potential cause of an event outcome is actually the cause of the outcome. Should it be determined that the actor is not the cause, the attributional process with regard to attributed responsibility is aborted as cause is attributed to some aspect of the actor's environment. To the extent that the actor is determined to have been the cause of the outcome, however, the observer will next make a determination as to whether the actor had, or should have had, knowledge of the potential consequences of the action. If it is determined that the actor did not have such knowledge and did not have reasonable access to such knowledge, responsibility will be attributed to the actor at the causal level. To the extent that it is determined that the actor did have reason to know the potential consequences of the action undertaken, the observer will next endeavor to determine whether the actor intended to produce the outcome observed. If it is determined that the actor caused the outcome and had knowledge of the potential consequences but did not intend to produce the outcome observed, responsibility will be attributed to the actor at the knowledge level. Should it be determined, however, that the actor did in fact intend to produce the outcome observed, the observer will next scan the relevant environment in



search of factors which might have coerced the actor into behaving in the manner observed. Should the observer determine that the actor did cause the outcome in the presence of knowledge of the potential consequences and with an intention to produce the outcome observed, and determine that environmental factors which might reasonably account for the actor's behavior are not present, the observer will attribute responsibility to the actor at the intention level. Should it be determined, however, that environmental factors did influence the actor's behavior in the presence of knowledge and intention, responsibility will still be attributed to the actor but at the coercion level, a level which theoretically lies between that of knowledge and intention. Finally, Shaver (1985) holds that blame will be assigned to the actor to the extent that environmental factors influencing the actor's behavior are present but are judged by the observer to be insufficient to account for the actor's behavior and that the actor caused the outcome observed, acting intentionally and with knowledge of the potential consequences.

In sum, it is apparent that attributions of responsibility are attendant on a causal process which implies ascriptions of freedom for the behaviors exhibited with regard to a given event. Harvey (1976) states that in real life situations people are held responsible for their acts if they are considered free in their actions. That is, as Shaver (1985) notes, the actor could have done otherwise with respect to his or her behavior, given an appreciation of the circumstances under which the behavior was performed. It is noted that attributions of responsibility are predicated on a determination of causality for negatively valued events involving human agency. It is possible, however, that persons may be held responsible for events in which they have not been directly causally implicated. That is, persons may be held responsible by association. It is more typical, however, that responsibility accrues to persons whose behavior is more directly causally implicated in an event outcome. The theory suggests that attributions of responsibility, then, will vary with a determination of the extent to which a person causally responsible also had knowledge of the potential consequences of their actions and acted in a manner intended to produce the outcome observed. Given the presence of causal responsibility, knowledge of the potential consequences and the intention to produce the outcome, environmental factors which may have coerced the actor's behavior will serve to mitigate attributions of responsibility but will not result in the actor being held free of responsibility for the outcome.

Given that attributions of cause and responsibility constitute a normal human process, it is reasonable to conclude that it is a process extant in a counseling situation. Counseling may be defined as an event in the perceptual field of both the counselor and the client. There are, however, differences in the experience of the event for both counselor and client, particularly in early assessment interviews, as well as differences in the intent, or focus, of the event for each party. The agency or office based counselor will experience the immediate physical environment as stable and under mediational control. Thus, the client represents a new element in the field and becomes the focus of attention. For the client, however, the task is to describe events in the client's life and to provide the counselor with information to help each better understand the events described. Thus, the client's focus of attention is to the experience of an environment which is external to the counseling situation. This environmental focus of attention is, in turn, reinforced by the client's need to assimilate a new environment, consisting, in this case, of both the immediate physical setting and the counselor as an environmental element.

That the counselor also experiences the client's environment is true. It is also true, however, that in most counseling situations, this environment is experienced through the eyes of the client. It is the client's experience of the events described which provides information concerning the potential causes of the client's problem. The objective experience by the counselor of the client's environment is predicated on the counselor's assessment of perceptual objectivity on the part of the client. Distortions in perception by the client serve as causal cues. It is acknowledged that there are objective aspects to the counseling situation, such as home visits and collateral interviews. The author is here concerned primarily with the counselor's assessment of the client's problem and problem events as described by the client.

It is proposed that assessment is essentially a process of causal determination and that, to the extent that such cause is determined to involve human action, attributions of responsibility result. It is further proposed that the client enters the assessment phase of a counseling relationship having engaged in an attributional process with respect to the problem events which have brought the client to seek counseling. That is, the client has attributed both cause and responsibility for various events in the client's life. These attributions, then, form the partial basis for the information conveyed to the counselor in

the assessment interview. The counselor, in turn, then, engages in a process of attributing cause and responsibility for the events presented by the client.

There is an underlying implication that there exists a professional attributional schema which is, in part, evolved from the counselor's experience and training. Certainly, theoretical orientation will influence an assessment outlook, as will the nature of the problem and the counselor's familiarity with the problem and its implications for the client's experience. This professional attributional schema is differentiated from other attributional experiences by the professional's role in relation to a given event, in this case the assessment of the client's problem. Other influences on the development of a professional attributional schema are derived from professional and personal history and the nature of the task for which attributional processes are invoked. Given these and other considerations, an examination of the attribution and related literatures for the clinical implications of the relevant issues appears warranted.

### The Clinical Implications of Attributions of Cause and Responsibility

Attribution theory and its related concepts have been applied to clinical efforts across a variety of dimensions. Hill and Bale (1978), for example, developed a mental health locus of control and mental health locus of origin scale and found that the more an individual believes that psychological problems are endogenously based, the more that person will tend to expect that the appropriate client is a passive one involving minimal acceptance of responsibility. Similarly, a more active role is attributed to clients by individuals who understand the origins of psychological problems in terms of interactions between the person and the social environment. Thus, a view of the client's problem field as a dynamic entity influences a perception of the extent to which the client participates in that field.

Snyder (1976), on the other hand, notes Jones and Nisbett's (1971) divergent perceptions hypothesis in proposing that clinicians will view their client's behavior

(symptoms) as expressions of inherent defects, a belief that may hamper the progress of intervention and treatment. Clients, on the other hand, will tend to attribute any change which may occur to the efforts of the clinician rather than to their own efforts, thus effectively undermining any chances for long term maintenance of behavioral change. This implies that the client's perceptions are directed outwardly, thereby precluding self as a reinforcing agent in the change effort, while the clinician's perceptions are directed toward the client as the source of any difficulty expressed.

In an examination of helping behavior, Ickes and Kidd (1976) note that the dimension of success and failure must be considered. The authors note that if the counselor's perception of the client in relation to a specific event is one of failure, there may be a generalized expectancy for failure unless other factors mediate. This could appear as an expectancy for failure in counseling (i.e., not amenable to treatment, poor treatment prognosis, and so on). Another element of the helper's attributions for another's behavior is the perceived intentionality of the other's actions. Expressed as a dependency for perceived outcomes, the authors cite a study by Schopler and Mathews (1965) in noting that intentionality implies responsibility for an event and that attributions of responsibility may interact with the dimension of causality. The authors cite an additional experiment which indicates that the greatest responsiveness to a request for help may occur when a person ascribes his or her own favorable outcomes to ability but views the dependent other's outcome as unintentional and beyond that person's immediate control.

Thus, if a counselor infers failure on the part of the client for any event, there may be a tendency on the part of the counselor to believe that the client will continue to fail in future like events and to believe that the present counseling endeavor will not likely have a favorable outcome. This is, in turn, mediated by the perceived intentionality of the client's behavior in relation to the event in question. If the client is felt to be constrained behaviorally due to circumstances beyond the client's immediate control, the counselor is more likely to engage in helping behavior than if the counselor perceives the client as the causal agent and as intentionally responsible. As noted elsewhere, the dimensions of cause and responsibility each form unique elements of a problem analytic framework but with causal determination serving as a necessary precondition for the determination of responsibility.

Snyder, Shenkel and Schmidt (1976) conducted a study in which role perspective was manipulated for either the counselor or client role. It was found that counselor role subjects rated the client's problems as significantly more personality based than did control or client role subjects. The investigators also manipulated chronic versus first visit clients. Here it was found that chronic client problems were viewed as significantly more personality based than were first visit client problems. The interaction revealed that the control subjects, like the counselor perspective subjects, saw the problems as more personality located for chronic clients than did client role subjects. Control subjects, like client subjects saw the problem as more situationally located than counselor subjects when the client was first time. A caveat is noted in that experimental subjects were undergraduate students taking part in an introductory psychology course.

The issue noted above was also addressed by Wills (1978) who cites a study in which 25 professional therapists and 25 matched lay adults were shown two films depicting, in one, a normal child and, in the other, a deviant child. The results of a questionnaire revealed that both groups discriminated between normal and deviant children, attributing greater maladjustment to the deviant child. Therapists, however, consistently attributed greater maladjustment to both children. The author also cites evidence which indicates that experienced counselors rate clients with personal problems as less concerned about their problems, as having less potential for change and as being less likable. Additional evidence suggests that therapist's attitudes and behavior are substantially more favorable toward dependent or submissive clients than toward clients who are assertive or uncooperative. This implies that normal resistances to the counseling process are likely to engender unfavorable perceptions of the client on the part of the counselor.

It seems evident, therefore, that attributional processes influence the counselor's perceptions of the counseling situation and of the client. Dependent clients, for example, engender more favorable attitudes on the part of the counselor than do more assertive clients, clients who are likely to take a more active role in the course and development of their treatment. Dependency is, in part, a function of the perception of the client's problem situation as being dictated by environmental elements which are beyond the client's immediate control. There is a choice/no-choice dimension along which dependence is located such that dependency may be described according to the vicissitudes of the environment or to the client's own and voluntary actions as intending to produce the

dependent condition. This implies an attribution of responsibility for the problem circumstances. This is, by necessity, preconditioned by an attribution of causality to the client for the problem presented, and both attributions of cause and attributions of responsibility are part and parcel of the assessment process in counseling (See, also, Jones, et al., 1971, Ickes and Kidd, 1976, Douds, Fontana, Russakoff and Harris, 1977, Frieze, Bar-Tal and Carroll, 1979, and Forsyth and Forsyth, 1982).

The related literatures have provided additional evidence for attributional processes in counseling and for the presence of attributional bias. Segal (1970), for example, conducted a survey in a metropolitan welfare department to compare social workers' and clients' reports of the clients' activities. It was found that workers had no knowledge of the activities of several clients even though they had had one or more interviews with the client. Additionally, it was found that workers had incomplete information regarding their client's solitary recreational activities and that they lacked awareness of the client's performance of household chores. Discrepancies were also found in the perceptions of goals, particularly in regard to educational needs. These findings suggest a potential bias against relevant environmental information in arriving at an understanding of the client's manifest difficulties and present life circumstances.

Benlifer and Keisler (1972) suggest that it is often a helper's job to look for weaknesses so as to be able to offer help. If this is the case, and if counselors are trained to look for such weaknesses, then these same weaknesses will become salient in the counseling relationship and the client will be perceived as less well adjusted. The client is also likely to be seen as less likable than if problems and weaknesses were less salient. The authors report a study in which experienced therapists and laypersons viewed videotapes of a disturbed child who was actually in treatment and a normal child who was described as being in treatment. The results revealed that the therapist subjects attributed greater maladjustment to the normal child than did laypersons. Further, therapists liked the disturbed child less than did laypersons.

Support for these findings are found in a survey by Chalfant and Kurtz (1972) of social worker's judgments of alcoholics. The results show that an alcoholic who possesses socially desirable characteristics, such as a high socioeconomic status, high motivation, self-referral and conforming behavior, is judged more positively and is more accepted than is an alcoholic who does not possess these characteristics. Again, this implies that selected

information concerning the client's interaction with the social environment is differentially assessed, influencing the worker's subsequent judgments. It further implies that the worker's judgments are derived from an assessment which essentially entails a causal process, since alcoholism is perceived along an implicit causal dimension.

Attributional phenomena have also been cast in terms of a labeling process. Case and Lingerfelt (1974), for example, used open ended questions to elicit social worker's responses to videotaped case vignettes and found that negative labels predominated. Further, it was found that professional workers responded with a higher degree of negative labeling than did both graduate and undergraduate social work students. Graduate social work students, in turn, were higher in negative labeling than were undergraduates. Mental problems were more negatively labeled than were other problems. Gingerich, Feldman and Wodarski (1976) cite this and other studies to propose that professional training emphasizes pathology or deviance and results in a tendency to see deviance rather than normalcy when cues are ambiguous. Gingerich (1978) holds the view that labeling is a perceptual event and implies that clinical judgment results from attributional processes.

Gingerich, Kleczewski and Kirk (1982) note possible consequences of a labeling process to arise in that once the client is labeled, the worker is induced to attend selectively to client behaviors, ignoring behaviors indicating strength and competency which would serve to disconfirm the negative label. The authors replicated and extended Case and Lingerfelt (1974) and, again, found that negative labeling predominated. The authors also found, however, that the worker's practice orientation made a difference with persons ascribing to a behaviorist orientation exhibiting the lowest incidence of negative labels, followed by worker's espousing a humanist orientation and, finally, psychoanalytically oriented workers. These findings have considerable implication for attributional processes in the assessment of client problems and in the formation of subsequent clinical judgments in that the worker is, in part, concerned with supporting initial psychosocial and diagnostic impressions, selecting out information which supports such a view to the exclusion of other relevant and potentially disconfirmatory data.

In a related vein, Rubenstein and Bloch (1978) conducted a survey of workers and clients in a family service agency and found that workers identified intrapersonal problems as areas of difficulty to a greater extent than did clients. Clients, on the other hand, felt that homemaking and parenting were paramount concerns. Additionally, in discussing factors

they believed to be contributing most to client problems, workers gave relatively more emphasis to intrapersonal and interpersonal factors than to a lack of resources and tangible goods and services. Clients, on the other hand, tended to emphasize lack of resources and interpersonal rather than intrapersonal problems. The authors report that clients rarely spoke of their own behavior as contributing to their problems.

Maluccio (1979) examined worker's and client's perspectives on treatment outcome and, using only 25 cases, found disagreement on the ratings of outcome. Most clients rated their experience as satisfactory while most workers were either dissatisfied or ambivalent. Clients tended to see themselves as proactive and competent while workers tended to see clients as reactive, having continuing problems and underlying weaknesses, and as having limited potential for change. Maluccio stresses the need for workers to attend more closely to environmental issues. Finally, Settin and Bramel (1981) cite evidence which demonstrates that clinical judgments, including diagnoses and other attributional judgments of mental illness, are based on the context of the judgment process and on the therapist's expectations for the client's behavior (see also, Rees, 1976, Abramowitz and Dokecki, 1977, Kerson 1977, Witkin, 1982, Latting and Zundel, 1986 and Specht and Specht, 1986).

Essentially, then, professional training and experience, as well as the professional's theoretical orientation toward human problems, serves to focus the worker's attention toward the client's behavior and personality, thereby engendering selective attention to potential mediating factors in the social environment. In this sense, following Heider (1958c), client behaviors engulf the professional field. Cause, then, is presumed to rest within the client at the expense of environmental considerations. The divergent perceptions notion, in turn, would add that the client's perception of the cause of any problem behavior will tend to lie at some point in the social and physical environment. Thus, the client provides verbal information concerning such environmental perceptions and their role in problem development and maintenance. These cues are differentially assessed by the worker and serve to either confirm or disconfirm the worker's initial causal hypothesis. The predominance of negative perceptions, however, pulls the worker toward an other-internal causal attribution for the problem event. That is, the client's report of environmental factors influencing the problem are discounted by the worker in the interest of an assessment of the client's personality as the causal agent. Then, to the extent that the



client is determined to be the cause of the problem presented to the worker, the worker will attribute responsibility to the client. As earlier noted, such attributions of responsibility will vary as a function of the perception of the client's knowledge of the consequences of any action and the intention of the client to produce the defined problem. As potential environmental factors are discounted in the assessment process, there is an implicit disavowal of the potential of coercive elements in the determination of both cause and responsibility. Finally, to the extent that the client is held to be responsible for the problem presented, the worker's judgments of, among other things, the client's motivation, interest, treatability and likability will be negatively influenced.

In conclusion, it seems apparent that attributional processes are at work in the process of assessment and that substantial attributional bias may exist, particularly along a person-environment attributional dimension. It seems equally apparent that these attributional processes and biases influence the counselor's clinical judgment and, by extrapolation, the counselor's interactions and interventions with the client. That this implies a causal process and a determination of responsibility for the client's problem has been previously noted. It has also been noted (Ickes and Kidd, 1976) that cause and responsibility may be distinct but related aspects of the same process, namely, the process of determining help giving behavior. The relevant issues will now be summed and concluded.

### Summary and Conclusions

It is proposed that attributions of causality and responsibility are each elements of a process in which human events are judged. This proposal is relevant to assessment in social work practice in that the problems and circumstances which the client brings to the social worker for help in resolving represent discrete events in the lives of the client for which attributional processes are engaged. This, in turn, serves to define the assessment as a discrete event for the worker for which professional attributional processes are also

engaged. The worker perceives the client's experiences through the counseling communication in such a way that the worker arrives at an understanding of the client's problems, wants and needs in the context of the client's social milieu. The worker's perceptions are, therefore, influenced by the client's perceptual experience and, consequently, by the client's attributional analysis of self and of the social and physical world.

Assessment, then, is a professional judgment process in which the worker locates potential causes of the client's problem either in the client or in elements of the client's social and physical environment. Identifying and locating potential causal sources allows the worker to define appropriate strategies for intervention. To the extent that some human action is causally implicated in the development of the client's problem, the worker will assign responsibility to the person engaging in that action at any of the various levels of responsibility of cause, knowledge, intention or coercion. This assignment of responsibility may be either to the client or to other persons who constitute the client's social network. These attributional processes are significantly influenced by factors generally extant in the field of professional social work. For example, professional training in theory and practice, as well as professional and personal experience, help to determine the focus of the worker's attention in the assessment and treatment phases of helping. The focus of the worker's attention, in turn, engenders perceptual biases which result in a differential assessment of potential causal sources and in a differential attribution of responsibility for the outcomes which constitute the client's problem for work. The nature of the task as a more or less explicit labeling process serves to mitigate against the processing of the range of information which would support or refute the causal label. Any bias which has then developed with regard to causal locus and the assignment of responsibility for the client's problem events would tend to be maintained by the selective use of information.

It is further proposed that the social work profession's historical debate with regard to the role of the person and environment in defining the unit of attention represents an effort to address the salient issues found in the attribution literature with regard to causal and responsibility ascriptions. Social work has, in turn, contributed a consistent emphasis on the interactional nature of the problem field. Disaffection with linear cause and effect constructions of human problems has, however, obscured what may be an innate human

tendency to perceive events in essentially linear, cause and effect terms. The result has been an effort to develop an assessment model without adequate attention to the basic processes which influence a definition of human events.

The various dimensions on which attributional judgments of cause and responsibility rest are felt to be reciprocally interactive in a mutual influence process generally consistent with social work's eco-systems perspective. Thus, attributions form in a dynamic field and are understood as discrete elements of cause and effect data which, in differential analysis, suggest a predominant causal locus and, by extrapolation, a locus of responsibility. Attributions of causality, then, allow for an ordering of cognitions with regard to a defined event, while attributions of responsibility allow for an anchoring of emotions with regard to the same event.

It is additionally proposed that attributions of cause and responsibility essentially constitute elements of a professional attributional schema, a schema which is a dynamic part of the assessment process in social work practice. The interaction of schematic elements with various elements of the professional practice of social work, as well as worker and client characteristics, serve to define the worker's judgments with regard to the client's problem and its amenability to social work intervention. Thus, the bias of the worker's attributional analysis of the client's problem engenders bias in the worker's assessment of the client's person and influences the worker's judgments with regard to the potential efficacy of help giving.

The questions which are raised by these proposals and the supportive literature are germane to an understanding of social work processes and to the professional education of practitioners in the field in several respects. For example, attention to attributional phenomena will serve to add to the knowledge base of professional practice through an understanding of the influence of such phenomena in the worker's assessment of the client and the client's problem. Such attention will also add to an understanding of the worker's subsequent judgments with regard to intervention and its potential for success. It is felt that attribution theory offers a unique opportunity to develop additional tools for social work assessment and an opportunity to more clearly define a model for assessment which incorporates a dynamic, interactional problem perspective based on attributional processes and social work practice theory.

**In conclusion, then, a research effort is proposed which will examine attributional processes in the social worker's assessment of the client's problem and which will be addressed to questions concerning the relationship between the client's attributions of cause and responsibility for the problem event, the worker's attributions of cause and responsibility for the same event, and the worker's subsequent clinical judgment, attraction to the client and belief in the veridicality of the client's presentation. The methodology for the proposed study will be presented in chapter three to follow.**

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Prefatory Comment

It is important to initially note the potential for confusion which may arise from the fact that the four levels of the independent variable and four of the dependent variables employed in the study bear the same names, those of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion. Efforts have been undertaken to reduce such potential confusion by employing the terms “stimulus attributional variables” and “dependent attributional variables” to note the distinction between the levels of the independent variable and the dependent measures in question. It is hoped that such efforts will serve to aid the careful reader.

#### Design

The study employed a one factor completely randomized design with attributed responsibility constituting the factor under consideration. The rationale for this choice of methodology rested in the utilization of a model of attributed responsibility which defines, essentially, four levels of a unitary construct as follows: (1) causal responsibility, (2) knowledge responsibility, (3) intention responsibility, and (4) coercive responsibility. Thus, the independent variable of attributed responsibility could be rendered active for a

between subjects structuring and subjects could be randomly assigned to each of the four levels of the independent variable. Consideration was given to defining a second factor, that of theoretical orientation, but a two factor randomized design was ultimately rejected after considering the sampling difficulties this posed. A two factor repeated measures design was rejected on similar grounds. Consideration was also given to employing a one factor repeated measures design but this too was rejected following consideration of the loss of generalizability which would result from an inability to mislead subjects as to the nature of the stimulus items employed. The unit of analysis for the study, then, consisted of individual subjects randomly assigned to one of four levels of the single independent variable.

The design called for the development of four stimulus items, each reflecting one level of attributed responsibility as defined by the theoretical model, and a set of item responses applicable across stimulus items. Since the major research questions centered on the process of clinical assessment in social work practice, it was determined that the stimulus items needed to emulate, inasmuch as possible, actual interview conditions. Originally, this was to be effected through the construction of four videotaped vignettes of a bogus interview between a client and a social worker with each videotape expressing one level of the independent variable. Given resource limitations for the study, however, and in consideration of the considerable time investment involved, it was concluded that the stimulus items would consist of four separate audiotapes of the bogus client interview.

### Stimulus Items

The stimulus items consisted of a twelve minute (approximately) segment of an interview between a female client and a female social worker in which the client presented her recent marital separation and a decision with regard to the status of her marriage as the "problem". Marital separation was chosen as the problem area for the interview as this tends to be a fairly common problem area seen by social workers in counseling settings and would thus be familiar to most workers. This, then, would reduce potential bias

attributable to practice specialization. The gender of the social worker and client was selected with a mind to controlling for potential gender effects. That is, the social worker and the client were of the same gender to eliminate such effects in the stimulus items themselves and were made female since this reflects both the dominant gender in the profession and, typically, among clients seen by social workers. Finally, a female social worker and client were chosen since it was believed that the final sample would be predominately female.

The independent variable of attributed responsibility, then, was manipulated through client statements and resulted in the four stimulus items of causal responsibility (Tape 1: Cause), knowledge responsibility (Tape 2: Knowledge), intention responsibility (Tape 3: Intention), and coercive responsibility (Tape 4: Coercion). The transcript for Tape 1: Cause is here presented in its entirety for illustrative purposes. This is followed by an exposition of the differences between the stimulus items relevant to the manipulation of the independent variable.

#### Transcript for Tape 1: Cause

W: Good morning

C: Good morning

W: How are you today?

C: Fine, thank you.

W: I know that the circumstances here might make it a little more difficult for you to feel relaxed in talking about yourself...I just want to let you know how much I appreciate your willingness to have our interview taped this morning.

C: I'm glad to do it...I am a little nervous though.

W: If its any consolation, I'm a little nervous too...like we said before, though, any time that you want to stop or want us to turn the tape off, just let me know.

C: O. K...Thanks.

W: Good...Let's get started...I know we talked a little on the phone about your reasons for coming in today but it would help if we started from the beginning this morning. So, I'd like for you to tell me a little bit about why you wanted to come in and talk to someone.

- C: O.K...Well, my husband and I separated pretty recently...Um, he moved out of our house...he's living with his sister now. I'm feeling a bit at a loss, I guess...you know, a little confused about what happened and what I want to do. We've been having problems for some time and...I guess I really need some help to make a decision about my marriage. You know, whether to stay separated and maybe get a divorce or to try to work things out and maybe get back together again. I guess I need to decide what I want for myself. Does that make any sense to you?
- W: Yes...yes it does...This must be a very difficult time for you.
- C: Yeah, it is.
- W: It also sounds like you've been giving the possibility of divorce some pretty serious thought?
- C: Yeah.
- W: And your husband...is he thinking about divorce as well?
- C: Well, things are pretty much up in the air right now but I don't think so...I think he would like for us to get back together. At least that's what he says.
- W: I see...and how long have you been separated now?
- C: Well, he moved out about a month ago. Yeah, exactly a month ago.
- W: I see...and I take it that you and your husband have had some contact since the separation?
- C: A little bit...
- W: O.K.
- C: ...a little bit
- W: All right...so you haven't reached a point where you're not talking to each other.
- C: No.
- W: And have you been pleased with the talks that you've had with your husband?
- C: Well, things are strained...and he keeps asking me what I'd like to do about our marriage.
- W: And what answer do you give him?
- C: Well, so far I've told him that I don't know...that I'm thinking about it but that I've got to get some things worked out for myself first.
- W: I see...When we first spoke on the phone, you mentioned that there had been problems for some time. When did some of the difficulties begin?
- C: Lets see...I guess about six months ago...



W: Uh, huh.

C: ...Yeah, about six months ago. But things weren't so bad at the start you know...It...its just gotten gradually worse until about a month ago...that's when he left.

W: Uh, huh...I see...and what was your husband's reason for moving out?

C: Well, I'm not really sure...I mean, I know we've been fighting a lot lately...and I mean a lot...you know, it just seemed like we were arguing constantly. It was awful. I think I brought most of it on. I've been on his case about everything lately. You know, its funny though...I would jump on him for something he'd done and then I would feel better for a while...until I started thinking about it and I'd ask myself 'why did you do that' and then I'd start to feel bad all over again and start in on him again...I mean he doesn't deserve the treatment he's been getting, you know...I mean, I really didn't like the way I was acting but I couldn't seem to stop myself. My husband tried to understand, you know, he tried to be patient but I guess it was just too much. Finally, he said he was going to leave...that he thought we needed some time apart to sort things out. I wasn't in favor of it at first but I finally agreed...I mean, after all, I'm the one that's been the cause of all of this...I sure never thought that it would go this far though.

W: What do you mean?

C: Well, I guess I didn't realize that things had gone as far as they had. I mean, I knew I was acting pretty badly but I sure didn't think we were going to separate. I had no idea this was going to happen and I sure didn't intend for it to come to this.

W: Um...I see...and these arguments have been going on for about six months?

C: Yeah.

W: Can you give me some idea what the arguments have been about?

C: Just little things...it really didn't much matter...I mean, he could be a little bit later coming home from work than he said he would be...or it could be something that he said that I would take the wrong way...or it could be that he didn't pick something up around the house...it could be anything, you know. Just little things. It really hasn't taken very much to set me off lately...any little thing will do.

W: Mmmm...So...it sounds like there's been a lot of tension. You said that these difficulties started about six months ago. What was it that happened about that time? Did anything happen that may have led to all the tension?

- C: Well...No, I don't think that anything happened...I mean nothing you could really put your finger on...That's just it...I started giving him grief over nothing...I really don't understand the way I've been acting...I mean I could understand it if he'd done something but he hasn't.
- W: I see...and what has been your husband's reaction?...what has be said to you?
- C: I don't know...I mean, he asks me what's wrong...you know, and he tries to talk to me...to get me to talk to him...but I just cut him off...you know, I just tell him to leave me alone, that I'll get it worked out...he's really been very understanding.
- W: And how has be shown you that he's been understanding?
- C: Well, you know, he's really tried to be patient with me...he's tried to understand but his patience has worn thin...I guess that's to be expected when someone is jumping down your throat for no apparent reason...I really don't understand this...my husband is really a good man and things have been really good for him lately.
- W: What do you mean that things have been good for him lately?
- C: Well...you know, he's been feeling really good...I mean other that the trouble I've been causing...Like, things have been going really well for him at work lately...you know, he's been pleased with his job and all...and, then, he's had more free time lately...you know, time to do the things he wants to do.
- W: I see...so have the two of you had more time together recently?
- C: Well, yeah...I mean, we've had an opportunity to spend time together...that's pretty much been the case all along...you know, I mean, that's not any different than its been for us...we've always had time to spend together...The problem is that we don't really spend the time together, you know? I mean, lately when we're together I seem to spend all my time picking at him...giving him grief over some little thing or other...that's not his fault though...you know, he really doesn't have anything to do with this...Like I said, he's really been patient...he's really tried to understand...it's been me...just me...I mean, I've really been giving him a rough time for no particular reason that I can see. I've just been acting badly and I've caused a lot of trouble for us.
- W: Hmm...so, can you think of any recent changes in your life...anything different that you think might explain the difficulties you and your husband have been having?
- C: No...no...nothing at all...things had been going well for us for the most part...I mean, I guess it sounds a little silly to be acting so badly when things seem to be going

so well...I wish I understood this...I just don't know why I've been so hard to get along with...it just doesn't make any sense and it's really starting to get to me...you know?

W: Well...I can certainly understand why you feel confused...it sounds like you're uncomfortable with the way you've been acting and can't seem to find an explanation for it. What have you done to try to ease things...to come to terms with this?

C: I don't know...I mean, I've tried to talk to my husband but we just don't seem to be able to talk to each other any more...that's not his fault though...like I said, I think he's really tried...the problem is with me...I start to say something to him and then I stop myself...I just find myself pulling further and further away from him...Then I've tried talking to some friends about how I've been acting but what can they say?

W: I don't know...what do they say?

C: Well, for the most part they tell me to lighten up...that I'm really being hard on my husband...and myself...Everybody thinks he's wonderful and in many ways he is...my friends all say that he doesn't deserve this so they tell me to try to get my act together.

W: And have your friends been helpful to you? Have they been supportive?

C: Yeah, I guess so...I mean, I don't feel like anybody is really down on me. I even think my husband is ready to come back and try to work things out...I just don't know if that's what I want.

W: What would you like to see happen?

C: I don't honestly know...I mean, I don't think that my husband has done anything...I don't know why I've been treating him the way I have...I really think that until I get that sorted out there's not much point in our getting back together. I just want to work at figuring this thing out.

W: I see...earlier you said that you didn't realize that things had gone this far. What did you mean?

C: Um...just that I really didn't think my husband would leave...I really had no idea that it would come to this...I mean, I knew we were having problems but I didn't intend for us to separate. I just didn't know that it had become that bad.

As may be seen, the first transcript (Tape 1: Cause) expressed the stimulus dimension of causal level responsibility through client verbalizations indicating that she thinks she

caused the problems which led to the marital separation but without having had prior knowledge that her behavior might lead to the separation and without having intended the separation. The second transcript (Tape 2: Knowledge) expressed the stimulus dimension of knowledge level responsibility through client verbalizations indicating that the client thought she caused the problems which led to the separation and knew that her behavior was risking the possibility that a separation might ensue. She continues to state, however, that she did not intend the separation to occur. The third transcript (Tape 3: Intention) expressed the stimulus dimension of intention level responsibility through client verbalizations indicating that she thought she caused the problems which led to the separation, knew that her husband might leave her and intended to "bring things to a head" to force a decision with regard to the marriage. Finally, the fourth transcript (Tape 4: Coercion) expressed the stimulus dimension of coercive level responsibility through client verbalizations in which the client continues to assert her causal role, continues to indicate foreknowledge of the potential consequences and continues to state her intention to force the issue through her behavior. Added, however, are several environmental stressors which may have served to influence the client into acting in the manner described. These stressors, a potential job jeopardy for the client and financial stress for the couple, were structured so as to be outside of the immediate control of the client and her husband. The stressors introduced into the fourth transcript were absent from the first three transcripts. All efforts were made to hold other information in the transcripts constant. While this presented little problem for the first three stimulus items, the fourth stimulus item represents a somewhat greater departure in content. The general tone of the interview and the thrust of the content, however, remains quite similar to the other three stimulus items (see appendix A).

### Validation of Stimulus Items

The transcripts of the constructed stimulus items were presented to a panel of six experts for validation. The experts participating in the validation process all had either an earned doctorate in social work or were doctoral students in social work at the ABD stage. All but one of the raters were school of social work faculty members at four different universities. The rating instrument which accompanied the transcripts (see appendix B) contained Likert-type response items intended to capture the extent to which the stimulus items conveyed information consistent with the dimensions of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion, and the extent to which the transcripts appeared to reflect an actual client interview (Real). The item responses were represented by a five point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The results of the initial ratings are presented in Table 1 and are contrasted with the hypothetical ideal ratings which are derived from the theoretical model (Shaver, 1985).

It is noted that causal level responsibility is introduced in stimulus condition 1 and is then present in each subsequent stimulus condition. Thus, it was anticipated that the mean actual ratings for the causal stimulus dimension would begin with strong agreement as to the presence of Cause in stimulus condition 1 and that these ratings would remain constant across all stimulus conditions. It is also noted that knowledge level responsibility is absent in stimulus condition 1, is introduced in stimulus condition 2 and then is present in each subsequent stimulus condition. Thus, it was anticipated that stimulus condition 1 would find strong disagreement with regard to the presence of Knowledge while strong agreement would be found as to its presence in stimulus conditions 2 through 4. It is further noted that intention level responsibility is absent in stimulus conditions 1 and 2, is introduced in stimulus condition 3 and remains present in stimulus condition 4. Thus, it was anticipated that stimulus conditions 1 and 2 would find strong disagreement as to the presence of Intention while there would be strong agreement as to its presence in stimulus conditions 3 and 4. Finally, it is noted that coercive level responsibility is absent in stimulus conditions 1 through 3 and is introduced in stimulus condition 4. Thus, it was anticipated that stimulus conditions 1 through 3 would find strong disagreement with respect to the presence of Coercion while stimulus condition 4 would find strong agreement with respect

to the presence of Coercion. It was also anticipated that strong agreement with respect to Real would be found across all stimulus conditions. As may be seen in Table 1, the mean actual ratings for Cause, Knowledge and Intention approximate the hypothetical ideal across all stimulus conditions. It was felt, however, that the ratings for Coercion were mixed, approximating ideal only in stimulus condition 4, and that the ratings for Real might be improved given greater consistency in conveying information with regard to coercion. Thus, it was determined that revisions in the stimulus items with respect to coercion would be necessary.

Qualitative comments on the rating forms and conversations with the raters suggested modifications in the transcripts of the stimulus items which would render them more consistent in conveying the information intended. The revised stimulus item transcripts were then forwarded to the same panel of raters and ratings were secured on only the dimension found unacceptable in the initial effort, that of coercion. The second validation effort included only the first three stimulus conditions (Tapes 1, 2 and 3) since the fourth stimulus condition (Tape 4) was found to be acceptable in its entirety on the basis of the initial ratings. A second rating was also secured with regard to the extent to which the transcript appears to reflect an actual interview (Real) since it was hoped that the modifications in the stimulus item transcripts would improve the ratings in this regard. The mean ratings for the second validation (T2) of the coercive dimension and the apparent realism (Real) of the interview are presented in Table 2 and are contrasted with the ratings at initial validation (T1). The ratings at the second validation (T2) were judged to be acceptable. Table 3, then, presents the combined accepted ratings from the T1 and T2 validation efforts.

Following the validation of the transcripts of the stimulus items, the audiotaped stimulus items were produced. Experienced professional actresses were used in the roles of client and worker. It is interesting to note that in addition to considerable acting experience, the actress portraying the role of the social worker also held a Master's degree in Social Work. Both actresses were rehearsed extensively prior to the taping and the stimulus tapes were produced professionally in a recording studio. This resulted in high quality audiotapes which were free of background noise which might otherwise obscure the dialogue.

**Table 1 Mean Actual and Ideal Ratings for Level of Responsibility and Real by Stimulus Item at Initial Validation**

	Stimulus Condition							
	1		2		3		4	
	Cause		Knowledge		Intention		Coercion	
	Actual	Ideal	Actual	Ideal	Actual	Ideal	Actual	Ideal
<b>Cause</b>	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.7	5.0	4.5	5.0
<b>Knowledge</b>	2.5	1.0	4.7	5.0	4.5	5.0	4.3	5.0
<b>Intention</b>	1.3	1.0	2.0	1.0	4.0	5.0	4.3	5.0
<b>Coercion</b>	2.7	1.0	2.3	1.0	2.3	1.0	4.7	5.0
<b>Real</b>	3.8	5.0	3.8	5.0	3.8	5.0	4.3	5.0

**Table 2 Mean Ratings for Coercion and Real by Stimulus Condition at First (T1) and Second (T2) Validation**

	Stimulus Condition					
	1 Cause		2 Knowledge		3 Intention	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
<b>Coercion</b>	2.7	1.7	2.3	1.7	2.3	1.8
<b>Real</b>	3.8	4.3	3.8	4.5	3.8	4.3



**Table 3 Mean Actual and Ideal Ratings for Level of Responsibility and Real by Stimulus Item for Combined Time 1 and Time 2 Validation**

	Stimulus Condition							
	1		2		3		4	
	Cause		Knowledge		Intention		Coercion	
	Actual	Ideal	Actual	Ideal	Actual	Ideal	Actual	Ideal
<b>Cause</b>	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.7	5.0	4.5	5.0
<b>Knowledge</b>	2.5	1.0	4.7	5.0	4.5	5.0	4.3	5.0
<b>Intention</b>	1.3	1.0	2.0	1.0	4.0	5.0	4.3	5.0
<b>Coercion</b>	1.7	1.0	1.7	1.0	1.8	1.0	4.7	5.0
<b>Real</b>	4.3	5.0	4.5	5.0	4.3	5.0	4.3	5.0

### Pilot Test Instrument and Data Analysis

A set of 105 Likert-type response items was then generated for pilot testing. This reflects a subset of 15 items for each of the dependent measures of: a) attributed causal responsibility (cause), b) attributed knowledge responsibility (knowledge), c) attributed intention responsibility (intention), d) attributed coercive responsibility (coercion), e) evaluation as to the potential efficacy of social work intervention (efficacy), f) attraction to the client (attraction), and g) the perceived veridicality of the client's presentation (veridicality). The range of items constructed for the pilot test reflects an effort to capture subtle language variations with respect to responsibility related words and person-based judgments, and the various ways in which these might be reasonably presented in statement form. Background data for the pilot test subjects were not considered relevant to the reliability of the instrument and, thus, were not collected. The pilot test instrument is included as appendix C.

The stimulus item responses were then pilot tested with a sample of 77 students enrolled in the Master's degree program in social work at the School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University. Pilot test subjects were sampled by convenience and were distributed across levels of the independent variable in such a manner as to ensure relatively equal representation in each of the four stimulus conditions. This resulted in 17 subjects in condition 1, 20 subjects in condition 2, 20 subjects in condition 3, and 20 in condition 4.

The pilot test data were first subjected to a Pearson product-moment correlational analysis to determine subsets of item responses which could be used to form seven scaled dependent measures, representing the dependent variables of interest. The correlations for item responses were first examined within each stimulus condition and those items which demonstrated a significant positive correlation at  $\alpha = .05$  were retained for further analysis. These were then examined across conditions to determine the consistency of the item response correlations for all stimulus items. A minimum of five item responses was sought for each scaled dependent measure. This initial analysis produced a sufficient subset of item responses for each scaled dependent measure. To insure sufficiency, however, some item responses were included which produced significant correlations in at

least three of the stimulus conditions but which may have produced non-significant correlations in the fourth. These item response subsets were then correlated across stimulus items. Tables 4 through 10 present the pilot test items included in each of the scaled dependent measures. The correlations for the selected items are presented in Tables 11 through 17 with each table representing a separate scaled dependent measure. As is noted, the item correlations within each of the seven scaled dependent measures are quite good with all correlations reaching significance at  $p < .001$ .

Finally, the pilot test data were subjected to a response item analysis to determine the reliability of the scaled dependent measures across stimulus items. The results of the reliability analysis are presented in Table 18. As is shown, the coefficients presented indicate that the scaled dependent measures are highly reliable, demonstrating alpha ranging from .86 to .94 (Nunnally, 1978, Hudson, 1982). The results of these analyses led to the inclusion of 38 items in the experimental instrument, with a minimum of five and a maximum of seven items per scaled dependent measure. Seven filler items were added to the final instrument for a total of 45 experimental items. The filler items were intended to reduce potential bias resulting from sensitivity to the experimental items. A brief demographic questionnaire was also included (see appendix D).

The experimental questionnaire, then, consisted of 45 items representing seven scaled dependent measures and seven filler items. Each of the scaled dependent measures yielded a single score for each subject expressing a) the level of causal responsibility for the marital separation attributed to the client, b) the level of knowledge responsibility for the marital separation attributed to the client, c) the level of intention responsibility for the marital separation attributed to the client, d) the level of coercive responsibility for the marital separation attributed to the client, e) the subject's evaluation as to the potential efficacy of social work intervention in the stimulus condition presented, f) the subject's attraction to the client and e) the subject's perception of the client's veridicality in presenting the information contained in the interview. In addition, background information was collected consisting of the subject's gender, age, race, year of Master's degree, number of years of post-Master's practice experience, present practice arrangement (agency based vs. private practice vs. a combination), number of years at present agency or in private practice, primary agency responsibility, preferred method of practice and, finally, theoretical orientation to practice.

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**Table 4 Pilot Test Response Items Included in Scaled Dependent Measure of Cause**

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<b>Item #</b>	<b>Item Response</b>
Item 9	The marital separation was the result of Ms. S's behavior.
Item 17	The source of the separation is to be found in Ms. S's actions.
Item 18	Ms. S caused her marriage to break up.
Item 66	Ms. S is the originator of the problems described.
Item 81	Ms. S was the cause of her husband's decision to leave.

---

**Table 5 Pilot Test Response Items Included in Scaled Dependent Measure of Knowledge**

<b>Item #</b>	<b>Item Response</b>
<b>Item 53</b>	<b>Ms. S probably realized the potential consequences of her actions.</b>
<b>Item 78</b>	<b>Ms. S was aware of the consequences of her actions.</b>
<b>Item 87</b>	<b>Ms. S could tell that a separation would result from her behavior.</b>
<b>Item 88</b>	<b>The potential for a separation was known by Ms. S in advance.</b>
<b>Item 97</b>	<b>Ms. S was most likely conscious of the effects of her behavior.</b>

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**Table 6 Pilot Test Item Responses Included in Scaled Dependent Measure of Intention**

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<b>Item #</b>	<b>Item Response</b>
Item 21	Ms. S meant to act as she did.
Item 22	Ms. S acted purposefully in bringing about her marital problems.
Item 55	Ms. S meant to cause the problems she described.
Item 56	The separation reflects deliberate actions on Ms. S's part.
Item 58	Ms. S behaved as she did with a clear intention.

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**Table 7 Pilot Test Item Responses Included in Scaled Dependent Measure of Coercion**

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<b>Item #</b>	<b>Item Response</b>
Item 12	Outside factors forced Ms. S to act in the manner described.
Item 71	Ms. S acted as she did due to forces outside of her marriage.
Item 74	Ms. S's behavior was compelled by forces beyond her control.
Item 79	Ms. S was made to act as she did by forces in the environment.
Item 86	Factors outside of Ms. S's marriage led her to act as she did.
Item 98	Environmental forces compelled Ms. S's actions.

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**Table 8 Pilot Test Item Responses Included in Scaled Dependent Measure of Efficacy**

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<b>Item #</b>	<b>Item Response</b>
Item 11	The chances for the successful treatment of Ms. S are quite good.
Item 16	With help Ms. S has good prospects of resolving her difficulties.
Item 47	The prospects for a favorable treatment outcome are quite good.
Item 59	I think that treatment for Ms. S would have a favorable outcome.
Item 65	In this case treatment would most likely succeed.

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**Table 9 Pilot Test Item Responses for Scaled Dependent Measure of Attraction**

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<b>Item #</b>	<b>Item Response</b>
Item 44	People like Ms. S are generally pleasant to work with in treatment.
Item 50	I would find working with Ms. S to be pleasant.
Item 62	I find Ms. S to be a likable person.
Item 92	Working with Ms. S would be an enjoyable experience.
Item 102	I would enjoy meeting Ms. S under other circumstances.

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**Table 10 Pilot Test Item Responses Included in Scaled Dependent Measure of Veridicality**

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<b>Item #</b>	<b>Item Response</b>
Item 3	I think that Ms. S has told her story accurately.
Item 26	Ms. S has told her story with honesty.
Item 28	Ms. S has been open and honest in describing her situation.
Item 49	Ms. S has accurately portrayed her situation.
Item 61	I believe Ms. S to have been honest in telling her story.
Item 67	Ms. S has been honest with the worker.
Item 95	I think that Ms. S has been truthful in her presentation.

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**Table 11 Intercorrelations Among Item Responses For Cause**


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Item Response	1	2	3	4	5
1. Item 9	-				
2. Item 17	.60	-			
3. Item 18	.55	.73	-		
4. Item 66	.60	.61	.60	-	
5. Item 81	.56	.64	.55	.63	-

---

**N=77 All correlations significant at  $p < .001$** 


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**Table 12 Intercorrelations Among Item Responses For Knowledge**


---

Item Response	1	2	3	4	5
1. Item 53	-				
2. Item 78	.56	-			
3. Item 87	.55	.67	-		
4. Item 88	.54	.64	.77	-	
5. Item 97	.58	.55	.60	.56	-

---

**N=77 All correlations significant at  $p < .001$** 


---

<b>Table 13 Intercorrelations Among Item Responses For Intention</b>					
<b>Item Response</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Item 21	-				
2. Item 22	.49	-			
3. Item 55	.60	.53	-		
4. Item 56	.57	.57	.72	-	
5. Item 58	.51	.50	.55	.68	-
<b>N=77 All correlations significant at <math>p &lt; .001</math></b>					

Item Response	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Item 12	-					
2. Item 71	.55	-				
3. Item 74	.55	.74	-			
4. Item 79	.48	.58	.52	-		
5. Item 86	.48	.64	.57	.42	-	
6. Item 98	.64	.65	.68	.61	.51	-

N=77 All correlations significant at  $p < .001$

**Table 15 Intercorrelations Among Item Responses For Efficacy**

Item Response	1	2	3	4	5
1. Item 11	-				
2. Item 16	.66	-			
3. Item 47	.77	.75	-		
4. Item 59	.75	.71	.86	-	
5. Item 65	.73	.65	.83	.82	-

**N=77 All correlations significant at  $p < .001$**

---

**Table 16 Intercorrelations Among Item Responses For Attraction**


---

Item Response	1	2	3	4	5
1. Item 44	-				
2. Item 50	.64	-			
3. Item 62	.74	.72	-		
4. Item 92	.69	.70	.78	-	
5. Item 102	.67	.62	.66	.63	-

---

**N=77 All correlations significant at  $p < .001$**

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**Table 17 Intercorrelations Among Item Responses For Veridicality**


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Item Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Item 3	-						
2. Item 26	.44	-					
3. Item 28	.56	.75	-				
4. Item 49	.59	.55	.58	-			
5. Item 61	.47	.75	.74	.66	-		
6. Item 67	.49	.83	.79	.60	.81	-	
7. Item 95	.46	.82	.74	.54	.81	.83	-

---

**N = 77 All correlations significant at  $p < .001$**

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**Table 18 Reliability Coefficients for Scaled Dependent Measures for Pilot Test Data**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Alpha</b>	<b>Standardized Item Alpha</b>
<b>Cause</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>.89</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>.88</b>
<b>Intention</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>.87</b>
<b>Coercion</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>.89</b>
<b>Efficacy</b>	<b>.94</b>	<b>.94</b>
<b>Attraction</b>	<b>.91</b>	<b>.92</b>
<b>Veridicality</b>	<b>.92</b>	<b>.93</b>

### Sampling Procedure and Experimental Protocol

Experimental subjects consisted of a sample of 77 Master's level social workers with a minimum of two years post-master's practice experience. It should be noted that the equal number of subjects in the pilot test and the experiment resulted from serendipity rather than occurring by design. The experimental sample was drawn from human service agencies serving as field education sites for the School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University and subjects were all located in the greater Cleveland metropolitan Area. Limitations were placed on the practice area of the subjects included in the sample such that only social workers employed in counseling type agencies were solicited for participation. This was defined as mental health, child guidance and family and children's services agencies and excluded medical service agencies and public and private welfare agencies. The rationale for the development of this sampling criterion rests on the nature of problem area focus and assessment in the respective practice areas. That is, a marital problem is likely to be a primary problem area focus for assessment in the former agencies and would not necessarily constitute such a focus in the latter agencies.

Initial contact with the agencies constituting the sampling frame was made with the director of the agencies selected. The purpose of the study was explained and permission was sought for the solicitation of individual staff member's participation. Agency directors were asked to designate a staff person as contact for the purposes of the research and through this person copies of a memorandum soliciting participation were distributed to members of the social work staff who met the eligibility criteria (see appendix F). The memorandum informed potential subjects as to the nature of the research, employing a deception in this regard in an effort to reduce potential sensitivity to the issues under investigation, and requested participation which was noted by signing the memorandum. The nature of the deception employed in the experiment will be discussed below. These memoranda were then collected by the designated contact person and were forwarded to the investigator. As the memoranda were returned, persons who agreed to participate as subjects were randomly assigned to one of the four stimulus conditions through the use of a table of random numbers. The random assignment resulted in 19 subjects in stimulus condition 1, 18 subjects in stimulus condition 2, 18 subjects in stimulus condition 3 and 22

subjects in stimulus condition 4. In addition, 2 subjects were eliminated from the sample following administration of the research instrument. In one case, it was revealed that the subject did not possess a Master's degree in Social Work but, rather, possessed a master's degree in a related field. In the second case, the subject withdrew consent to participate following debriefing, indicating offense at the deception involved.

Once assignment to the stimulus condition was completed, individual subjects were contacted to arrange a time for participation. In an effort to reduce the time involved in data collection, all efforts were made to run subjects in groups. This was not practical to any great extent, however, due to the potential for individual subjects in the same agency but assigned to different conditions to become sensitized to the differential application of a stimulus as a result of not being seen together. Thus, in an effort to preserve the integrity of the design, subjects were informed, for the most part, that individual appointments were desired. At the designated appointment time, the investigator or a colleague would visit the subject's agency for the purpose of data collection.

At the time of the experiment, subjects signed a written consent to participate form which detailed the nature and requirements of the study (see appendix G). Subjects were then introduced to the experiment by reading a statement which indicated that they would be asked to listen to a portion of an assessment interview between a client and a student social worker and would then be asked to respond to a brief questionnaire. Two deceptions were involved in the experiment at this point. First, subjects were told that the study concerned social worker's perceptions of marital disruption. This was consistent with the problem area content of the stimulus items and represented an effort to reduce potential bias resulting from sensitivity to the actual research question. Second, subjects were informed that the stimulus item reflected a literal transcription of an actual interview between a client and a social worker but with professional actresses portraying the roles of client and worker. A clear rationale was given for the use of professional actresses and subjects were encouraged to listen to the tape as an actual interview. This deception was further reinforced by informing subjects that the written introduction contained a slight misstatement to the effect that it was a literal transcription of an interview. Subjects were told that while this was essentially true, all name references had been eliminated to further protect the confidentiality of both the worker and the client and that vocal pauses had been eliminated to render the tape easier to which to listen. Subjects were then exposed to the stimulus items and

responded to the stimulus item responses. Once this was completed subjects were debriefed by being informed as to the true nature of the research and of the fact that the interview was not in any sense an actual client interview. Subjects were then informed that they could, at this point, withdraw their participation and were asked to sign a second consent form (see appendix G).

### Characteristics of the Experimental Sample

The research instrument was administered to a sample of 77 Master's level social workers with a minimum of two years post-master's practice experience drawn from human service agencies in the Cleveland metropolitan area. Background data indicate that the mean age of subjects was 41.5 years ( $SD = 8.9$ ) with a range from 25 to 64 years of age. 58.4% of the sample were female and 41.6% were male. At 93.5%, the sample was overwhelmingly Caucasian, with Blacks and Hispanics representing 3.9% and 2.6% of the total sample respectively. 70.1% of subjects practiced only in the context of the agency which employed them at the time of data collection, while 29.9% maintained a private practice in addition to their agency work. A mean of 11.6 years ( $SD = 8.2$ ) was obtained for the number of years since earning the Master's degree, with a range from 2 to 40 years. Subjects' had a mean of 10.5 years ( $SD = 7.5$ , range = 2-39) of post-Master's work experience and had been employed at their present agency a mean of 7.3 years ( $SD = 6.0$ , range 1-27).

Table 19 shows the primary agency responsibility of subjects in the sample. These data were collected in response to an item asking subjects to place themselves in only one of the categories listed. Thus, multiple responsibilities are not reflected and the data reports only how subjects spend the majority of their agency time. As is noted, the majority of subjects were in direct service roles (70.1%), followed by mid-level management positions (19.5%). Six subjects (7.8%) had primarily administrative responsibilities. Table 20 shows the preferred method of practice for subjects and again subjects were asked to locate

themselves in only one item response category. This item reflects only the methodological approach preferred by subjects and may not reflect the actual focus of the work done. It can be seen, however, that subjects prefer to engage clients in an individual treatment approach (50.6%), with marital and family treatment capturing the next largest segment of the sample (27.3%), followed by group treatment (14.3%).

Table 21 reports subject's theoretical orientation to practice. The difficulty inherent in efforts to capture the range of theoretical foci in the social work practice arena is evident in the fact that 28.6% of the sample placed themselves in an other category. The individual specifications for this category indicate that these subjects consider themselves either to be eclectic (23.4% of the total sample) or to ascribe to a family systems approach (5.2% of the total sample). Given the limitations noted, however, it is apparent that the largest proportion of the sample ascribe to a psychodynamic or psychoanalytic focus (32.5%), followed by cognitive or cognitive behavioral approaches (19.5%). The balance of the sample is scattered throughout the remaining categories.

<b>Table 19 Subject's Primary Agency Responsibility</b>		
<b>Agency Responsibility</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Direct Service</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>70.1</b>
<b>Indirect Service</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Supervision/Program Management</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19.5</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Method of Practice</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Individual Treatment</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>50.6</b>
<b>Group Treatment</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14.3</b>
<b>Marital/Family Treatment</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27.3</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>



<b>Theoretical Orientation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Psychodynamic/ Psychoanalytic</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32.5</b>
<b>Humanistic</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9.1</b>
<b>Cognitive/ Cognitive Behavioral</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19.5</b>
<b>Behavioral</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>Gestalt</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Social Learning</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>28.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Reliability Analysis on Experimental Data

A reliability analysis was conducted on the experimental data in an effort to assess the stability of the dependent measures across samples and across testing situations. The results of this reliability analysis are as shown in Table 22. As noted, the reliability coefficients are all acceptable with standardized alpha ranging from .69 to .95. A comparison of the reliability coefficients from the pilot test and experimental data indicate relative consistency in reliability among all the scaled dependent measures with the exception of coercion. Here the standardized alpha coefficient decreased from .89 to .69, indicating a reduction in the reliable measurement of coercive level responsibility. The alpha coefficient obtained with respect to the dependent measure of coercive level responsibility is within acceptable limits, however, and does not appear to pose any concern with regard to the reliability of the measure in question (Hudson, 1982). Overall, the experimental instrument is judged to reliably measure the dependent variables of interest in the experiment.

Chapter four, which follows, will report the findings of the research effort with regard to the hypotheses as stated. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings specific to the research hypotheses with conclusions drawn with respect to the process of assessment in social work practice and to the field of professional social work in general.

**Table 22 Reliability Coefficients for Scaled Dependent Measures  
For Experimental Data**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Alpha</b>	<b>Standardized Item Alpha</b>
<b>Cause</b>	<b>.84</b>	<b>.84</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>.82</b>	<b>.83</b>
<b>Intention</b>	<b>.82</b>	<b>.83</b>
<b>Coercion</b>	<b>.68</b>	<b>.69</b>
<b>Efficacy</b>	<b>.91</b>	<b>.91</b>
<b>Attraction</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>.88</b>
<b>Veridicality</b>	<b>.95</b>	<b>.95</b>

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

#### Prefatory Comment

As noted in chapter III, there is a potential for confusion which may arise from the fact that the four levels of the independent variable and four of the dependent variables employed in the study bear the same names, those of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion. Therefore, efforts have been undertaken to reduce such potential confusion by employing the terms "stimulus attributional variables" and "dependent attributional variables" to note the distinction between the levels of the independent variable and the dependent measures in question. Again, it is hoped that the careful reader will not find the distinction ambiguous.

#### Analysis of Attributional Variables by Stimulus Condition

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) procedure was used to test the major hypothesis of a significant difference between stimulus conditions with regard to the scaled dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion. A test of the homogeneity of dispersion matrices for all dependent measures was carried out and Box's *M* produced an *F* of 1.33 (*df* = 84, 11,538) which does not lead to rejection of the assumption of homogeneity at  $p < .001$ . A test of the assumption of homogeneity of

**Table 23 Means and Standard Deviations for Scaled Dependent Attributional and Evaluation Variables by Stimulus Condition**

Variable	Stimulus Condition							
	1		2		3		4	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Cause	2.66	.45	2.51	.68	2.46	.65	2.45	.70
Knowledge	2.77	.72	3.20	.75	3.71	.60	3.37	.61
Intention	2.48	.68	2.31	.57	2.72	.69	2.71	.66
Coercion	2.51	.53	2.47	.54	2.56	.54	2.40	.46
Efficacy	3.48	.50	3.71	.84	3.81	.52	4.02	.47
Attraction	2.85	.75	3.22	.57	3.10	.77	3.36	.66
Veridicality	2.91	.81	3.34	.64	3.24	.82	3.36	.77

within cell variances for the analysis of the scaled dependent attributional variables produced an  $F_{(\max)}$  of 1.69 with 4, 73 d.f. which does not lead to a rejection of the assumption ( $p < .01$ ). Thus, the data do not appear to violate the major assumptions underlying the MANOVA procedure (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983). The overall results of the omnibus MANOVA for the present analysis supports the hypothesis as stated by Wilks' Lambda Criterion ( $F = 2.30$ , d.f. = 12, 185.5,  $p < .01$ ), indicating a significant difference between the stimulus conditions with regard to the scaled dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion taken as a whole. Table 24 presents the MANOVA results for this analysis. As may be seen, the univariate analyses within the overall MANOVA indicate significance only for the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge ( $F = 6.40$ ,  $p < .002$ ). The dependent attributional variables of cause ( $F = .49$ ,  $p < .69$ ), intention ( $F = 1.71$ ,  $p < .18$ ) and coercion ( $F = .32$ ,  $p < .82$ ) were found to be non-significant with 3, 73 degrees of freedom for each univariate F. Thus, it may be determined that the significant difference among the groups with respect to the scaled dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion is due to the strength of the variance in scores on the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge.

In an effort to locate the differences between the four stimulus conditions, a discriminant function analysis was performed (Huck, 1974, Klecka, 1980). The discriminant function analysis produced one significant function (Chi-square = 26.40, d.f. = 12) accounting for 80.44% of the variance. The discriminant function coefficients presented in Table 24 indicate that, in terms of absolute values, scores on the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge contribute overwhelmingly to the stimulus condition discrimination. An examination of the scatterplot of the stimulus conditions for the discriminant function coefficients (Figure 1) indicates that the analysis primarily distinguishes stimulus condition 1 from stimulus conditions 3 and 4 while stimulus condition 2 is relatively evenly distributed along the primary canonical discriminant function, represented by the horizontal axis (see Figure 1). Thus, it may be concluded that most of the variance in the group means on the scaled dependent attributional variables lies between stimulus condition 1 on the one hand and stimulus conditions 3 and 4 on the other hand, and that the most significant contribution to the variance in absolute terms is made by the responses to the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge.

**Table 24 Multivariate Analysis of Variance For Scaled Dependent Attributional Variables and Standardized Discriminant Function Coefficients**

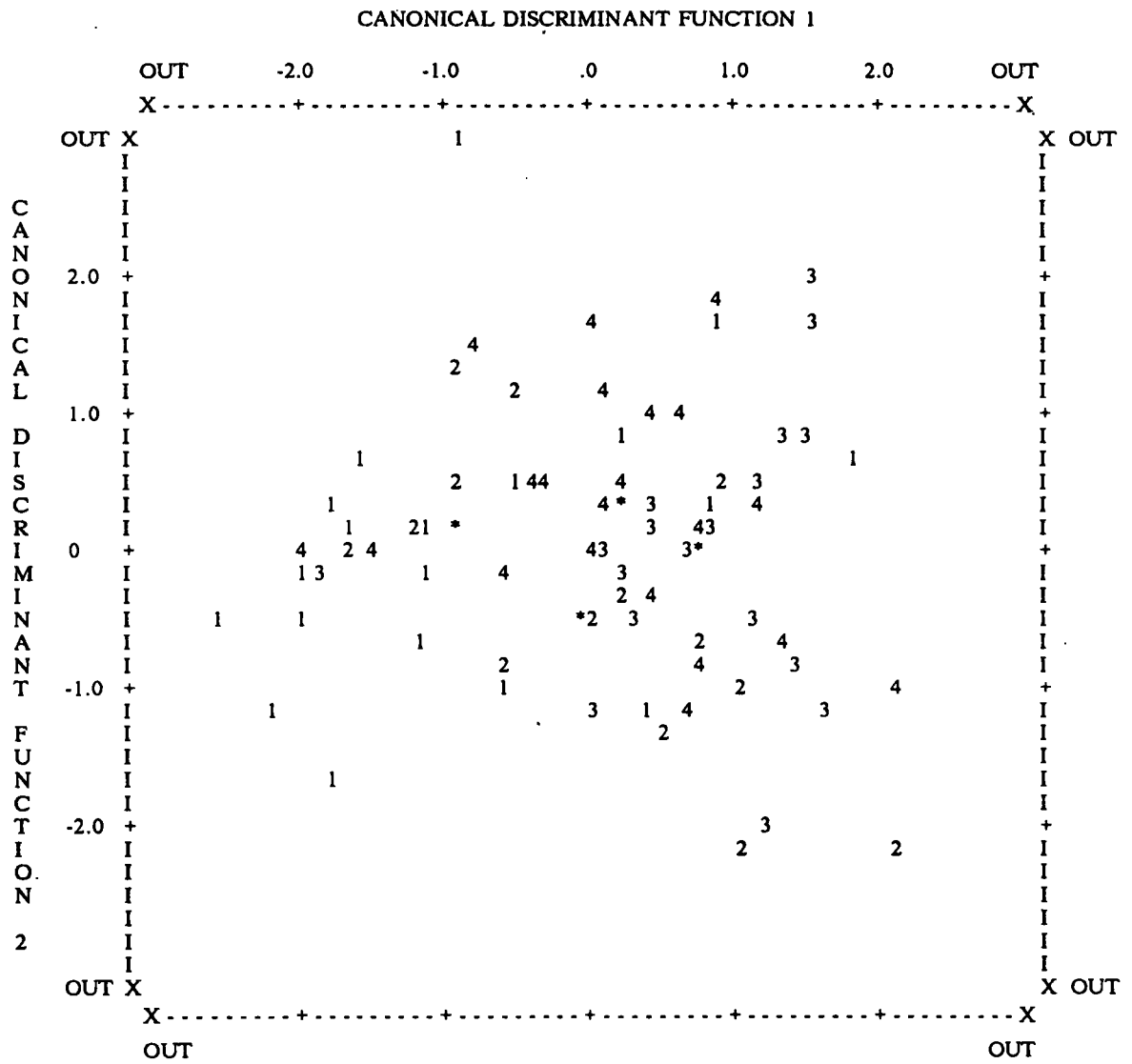
Variable	MS Between Groups	Univariate F *	p <	SDFC
Cause	.19569	.49327	.69	-.47155
Knowledge	2.86610	6.39785	.01	1.02657
Intention	.72862	1.71178	.18	-.07152
Coercion	.08522	.32090	.82	.11760

Note. Abbreviated: SDFC: Standardized discriminant function coefficients.  
Multivariate F = 2.30, d.f = 12, 185.5, p < .01

\* d.f = 3, 73

Figure 1 All Groups Scatterplot for Discriminant Function Analysis for Dependent Attribution Measures

\*Indicates a group centroid





As a follow-up to the multivariate procedure, and in an effort to further localize the differences among the stimulus groups with respect to the scaled dependent attributional variables, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted for each of the separate scaled dependent attributional variables (Kennedy and Bush, 1985). The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 25 to 28. A test of the homogeneity of variance was carried out and Bartlett-Box F led to rejection at  $\alpha = .05$  of the null hypotheses of no homogeneity of variance for all analyses. Thus, the analyses do not violate the major assumption underlying the procedure. As may be seen by the tables, the analyses produced a significant ANOVA only for the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge ( $F = 6.3979$ ,  $d.f. = 3, 73$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding is consistent with the univariate  $F$ 's produced by the omnibus MANOVA procedure.

The Scheffe' procedure was then employed to determine those groups significantly different at  $\alpha = .05$  within the significant ANOVA procedure (Kennedy and Bush, 1985). Here the results indicate that for the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge, a significant difference lies between stimulus condition 1 and stimulus conditions 3 and 4. A comparison of the scaled means for the dependent attributional variable of knowledge (Table 23) shows that subjects in stimulus condition 1 (mean = 2.77) attributed responsibility to the client at a significantly lower level than did subjects in either stimulus condition 3 (mean = 3.71) or stimulus condition 4 (mean = 3.37). This data appears to support the findings of the discriminant function analysis for the MANOVA reported above.

It was hypothesized that, for each scaled dependent attributional variable, the lowest level of attributed responsibility would occur at stimulus condition 1, followed by stimulus conditions 2, 4 and 3 in that order. An examination of the means for the scaled dependent attributional variables, presented in Table 23, provides some evidence in support of this hypothesis. While such a trend is not evident with respect to the scaled dependent attributional variables of cause, intention and coercion, it is strongly evident for the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge, that variable which appears to most strongly influence the overall stimulus group difference with respect to the scaled dependent attributional variables taken as a whole. What is most striking about the means for the scaled dependent attributional variables in Table 23, however, is the clear trend with respect to the effect of the introduction of relevant stimulus attributional information on each of the

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**Table 25 Analysis of Variance for Scaled Dependent Attributional Variable of Cause  
by Stimulus Condition**

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Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	.5871	.1957	.4933	.6881
Within Groups	73	28.9610	.3967		
Total	76	29.5481			

---

**Table 26 Analysis of Variance for Scaled Dependent Attributional Variable of Knowledge by Stimulus Condition**

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	8.5983	2.8661	6.3979	.0007
Within Groups	73	32.7025	.4480		
Total	76	41.3008			

---

**Table 27 Analysis of Variance for Scaled Dependent Attributional Variable of Intention  
by Stimulus Condition**

---

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	2.1858	.7286	1.7118	.1721
Within Groups	73	31.0723	.4256		
Total	76	33.2582			

---

---

**Table 28 Analysis of Variance for Scaled Dependent Attributional Variable of Coercion  
by Stimulus Condition**

---

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	.2557	.0852	.3209	.8102
Within Groups	73	19.3871	.2656		
Total	76	19.6428			

---

scaled dependent attributional variables, the scaled dependent attributional variable of cause excepted. That is, and as may be recalled from the methodological discussion, the stimulus variable of cause is introduced in the first stimulus condition and is carried throughout each subsequent stimulus condition. The stimulus variable of knowledge is introduced in the second stimulus condition and is then carried in each subsequent stimulus condition. The stimulus variable of intention is introduced in the third stimulus condition and is carried in the subsequent stimulus condition. Finally, the stimulus variable of coercion is introduced in the fourth stimulus condition alone.

Thus, the hypotheses essentially suggest that responses to the scaled dependent attributional variables will correspond to the introduction of the relevant stimulus variable information and that such introduction will mark the differences among the stimulus conditions with respect to the scaled dependent attributional variables. It is apparent from Table 23 that such is essentially the case. That is, responses to the scaled dependent attributional variable of cause are relatively evenly distributed across the four stimulus conditions. Responses to the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge increase between stimulus conditions 1 and 2 and remain relatively high across the remaining stimulus conditions. Responses to the scaled dependent attributional variable of intention increase between stimulus conditions 2 and 3 and remain relatively high in stimulus condition 4. Finally, responses to the scaled dependent attributional variable of coercion decrease between stimulus condition 3 and 4.

An examination of these differences was undertaken through a comparison of the relevant means using a t-test procedure. That is, with respect to the scaled dependent attributional variable of knowledge, a comparison was made between stimulus condition 1, where the stimulus variable of knowledge is absent, and stimulus conditions 2, 3 and 4 combined, where the stimulus variable of knowledge is present. Here the analysis produced a Student's t value of 3.62 ( $p < .001$  one-tailed, d.f. = 75), indicating that the introduction of the stimulus variable of knowledge produced a significant difference among the grouped stimulus conditions on the scaled dependent attributional measure of knowledge. With respect to the scaled dependent attributional variable of intention, a comparison was made between stimulus conditions 1 and 2 combined, where the stimulus variable of intention is absent, and stimulus conditions 3 and 4 combined, where the stimulus variable of intention is present. Here the analysis produced a Student's t value of

2.14 ( $p < .02$  one tailed, d.f. = 75), indicating that the introduction of the stimulus variable of intention produced a significant difference among the grouped stimulus conditions on the scaled dependent attributional measure of intention. Finally, with respect to the scaled dependent attributional variable of coercion, a comparison was made between stimulus conditions 1, 2 and 3 combined, where the stimulus variable of coercion is absent, and stimulus condition 4, where the stimulus variable of coercion is present. Here the analysis produced a Student's  $t$  value of  $-.86$  ( $p < .20$  one-tailed, d.f. = 75), indicating that the introduction of the stimulus variable of coercion did not produce a significant difference among the grouped stimulus conditions with respect to the dependent attributional variable of coercion.

#### Analysis of Evaluation Variables by Stimulus Condition

A second MANOVA procedure examined the effect of the stimulus condition variables on the three scaled dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality. As earlier reported, a test of the homogeneity of dispersion matrices for all dependent measures was carried out and Box's  $M$  produced an  $F$  of 1.33 ( $df = 84, 11,538$ ) which does not lead to rejection of the assumption of homogeneity at  $p < .001$ . A test of the assumption of homogeneity of within cell variances for the analysis of the scaled dependent evaluation variables produced an  $F_{(max)}$  of 1.65 with 4, 73 d.f. and does not lead to rejection of the assumption ( $p < .01$ ). Thus, again, the data do not appear to violate the major assumptions underlying the MANOVA procedure (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983). The overall results of the omnibus MANOVA for the analysis of the scaled dependent evaluation variables do not support the hypothesis as stated by Wilks' Lambda Criterion ( $F = 1.30$ , d.f. = 12, 173,  $p < .24$ ), indicating that there is no significant difference between the stimulus conditions with regard to the scaled dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality taken as a whole. Table 29 presents the MANOVA results for this analysis. As may be seen, the univariate analyses within the overall MANOVA

**Table 29 Multivariate Analysis of Variance For Scaled Dependent Evaluation Variables and Standardized Discriminant Function Coefficients**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>MS Between Groups</b>	<b>Univariate F *</b>	<b>p &lt;</b>	<b>SDFC</b>
<b>Efficacy</b>	.99955	2.83330	.05	.66663
<b>Attraction</b>	.93973	1.96397	.13	.40224
<b>Veridicality</b>	.83706	1.43385	.25	.21736

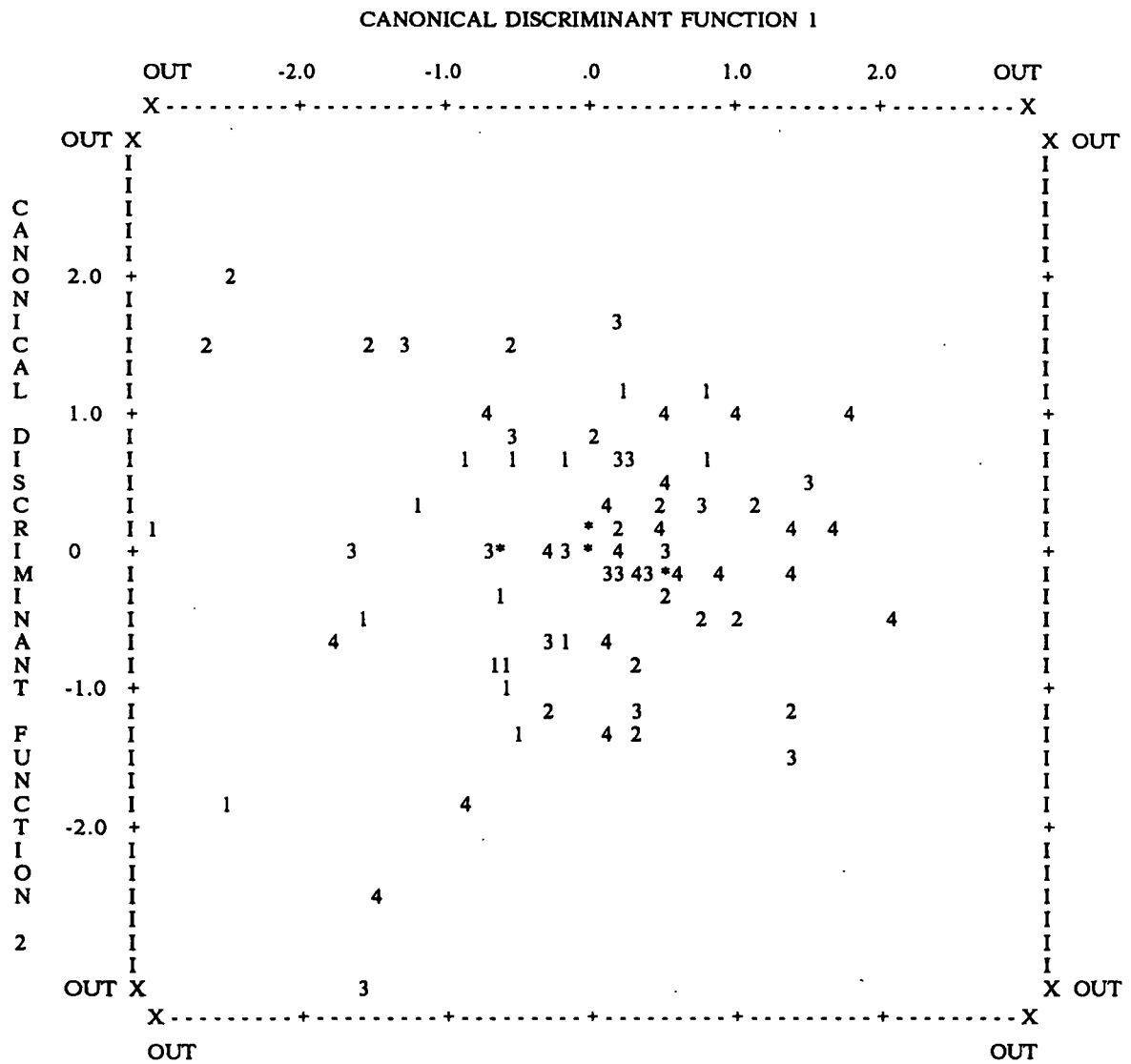
**Note. Abbreviated: SDFC: Standardized discriminant function coefficients.  
Multivariate F = 1.30, d.f = 12, 173, p < .24**

**\* d.f = 3, 73**



Figure 2 All Groups Scatterplot for Discriminant Function Analysis for Dependent Evaluation Measures

\*Indicates a group centroid



indicate significance only for the scaled dependent evaluation variable of efficacy ( $F = 2.83, p < .05$ ). The scaled dependent evaluation variables of attraction ( $F = 1.96, p < .13$ ) and veridicality ( $F = 1.43, p < .25$ ) were found to be non-significant with 3, 73 degrees of freedom for each univariate  $F$ . Thus, it may be determined that while there is no significant difference among the groups with respect to the scaled dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality as a whole, the scaled dependent evaluation variable of efficacy is itself significantly different across stimulus conditions. The discriminant function analysis for the second MANOVA did not produce any significant functions and, thus, cannot be used as a means of effectively differentiating between the stimulus conditions with respect to scores on the three dependent measures. An examination of the scatterplot for the discriminant function analysis for the second MANOVA procedure indicates that the group centroids are centrally clustered, providing additional evidence that the stimulus groups do not significantly differ with respect to the scaled dependent evaluation variables entered into the analysis (see Figure 2).

Again, as a follow-up to the multivariate procedure a one-way analysis of variance was conducted for each of the scaled dependent evaluation variables (Kennedy and Bush, 1985). The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 30 to 32. A test of the homogeneity of variance was carried out and Bartlett-Box  $F$  led to rejection at  $\alpha = .05$  of the null hypotheses of no homogeneity of variance for all analyses with the exception of the scaled dependent evaluation variable of efficacy. Here a Bartlett-Box  $F$  of 2.932 ( $p < .033$ ) indicates a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance. Kennedy and Bush (1985) note, however, that such a violation may be of little practical consequence due to the fact that the one-way ANOVA procedure is quite robust to violations of the assumption when the group  $n$ 's are equal or nearly so. At any rate, caution is to be exercised in an interpretation of this finding since a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance serves to increase the probability of a Type I error. As may be seen by the tables, the analyses produced a significant ANOVA for the scaled dependent evaluation variable of efficacy ( $F = 2.833, d.f. = 3, 73, p < .05$ ). This finding is consistent with the univariate  $F$ 's produced by the omnibus MANOVA procedure.

The Scheffe' procedure was then employed to determine those groups significantly different at  $\alpha = .05$  within the significant ANOVA procedure (Kennedy and Bush, 1985). Here the results indicate that for the scaled dependent evaluation variable of

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**Table 30 Analysis of Variance for Scaled Dependent Evaluation Variable of Efficacy  
by Stimulus Condition**

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Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	2.9987	.9996	2.8333	.0441
Within Groups	73	25.7535	.3528		
Total	76	28.7522			

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**Table 31 Analysis of Variance for Scaled Dependent Evaluation Variable of Attraction  
by Stimulus Condition**

<b>Source</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean Squares</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F Prob.</b>
<b>Between Groups</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.8192</b>	<b>.9397</b>	<b>1.9640</b>	<b>.1269</b>
<b>Within Groups</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>34.9294</b>	<b>.4785</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>37.7486</b>			

**Table 32 Analysis of Variance for Scaled Dependent Evaluation Variable of Veridicality  
by Stimulus Condition**

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	3	2.5112	.8371	1.4339	.2399
Within Groups	73	42.6163	.5838		
Total	76	45.1275			

efficacy, a significant difference lies between stimulus conditions 1 and 4 with subjects in stimulus condition 1 (mean = 3.48) indicating a significantly lower belief in the potential efficacy of social work intervention than do subjects in stimulus condition 4 (mean = 4.02).

### Correlational Analysis of Attributional and Evaluation Variables

The Pearson product-moment correlations among the scaled dependent attributional and evaluation variables were examined for evidence for the prediction that increased attributions of responsibility to the client would result in decreased evaluations of 1) the potential efficacy of social work intervention, 2) attraction to the client, and 3) a belief in the veridicality of the clients informational statements. The intercorrelations among the relevant dimensions are presented in Table 33. It is first noted that there is a positive relationship among all of the scaled dependent attributional variables, with the relationships among the scaled dependent attributional variables of cause and intention ( $r = .382$ ), cause and coercion ( $r = .312$ ), and knowledge and intention ( $r = .510$ ) reaching significance at  $p < .01$  for all comparisons, indicating covariation among the dimensions expressed. It may also be seen that there is a significantly positive relationship among all of the scaled dependent evaluations variables, with  $r = .399$  ( $p < .001$ ) for efficacy and attraction,  $r = .350$  ( $p < .002$ ) for efficacy and veridicality, and  $r = .432$  ( $p < .001$ ) for attraction and veridicality, again indicating covariation among the dimensions.

It is interesting to note the significant negative correlation between the scaled dependent attributional variable of intention and the scaled dependent evaluation variable of efficacy ( $r = -.254$ ,  $p < .014$ ), indicating that as responsibility attributed to the client at the intention level increases, a belief in the potential efficacy of social work intervention decreases. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis under consideration since it has been proposed that the scaled dependent attributional variable of intention would represent the highest level of responsibility attributed to the client for the problem presented. Thus, it would be expected that high response values on the scaled dependent variable of intention

Table 33 Intercorrelations Among Scaled Dependent Attributional and Evaluation Variables

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cause	-						
2. Knowledge	.147 .102	-					
3. Intention	.382 .000	.510 .000	-				
4. Coercion	.312 .003	.055 .319	.130 .131	-			
5. Efficacy	-.156 .088	-.017 .440	-.254 .013	-.073 .265	-		
6. Attraction	.063 .292	.079 .248	-.037 .374	.190 .049	.399 .000	-	
7. Veridicality	-.023 .423	-.062 .297	-.122 .145	.229 .023	.350 .001	.432 .000	-
N = 77							

would produce low response values on the scaled dependent evaluation variable of efficacy.

An examination of the correlations between the scaled dependent attributional variables and the scaled dependent evaluation variable of attraction reveals that it is only the relationship between the scaled dependent attributional variable of coercion and the scaled dependent evaluation variable of attraction which reaches significance ( $r = .190, p < .05$ ). The correlation is in a positive direction, indicating that as attributions of responsibility at the coercive level increase, attraction to the client also increases. This finding runs counter to prediction.

Finally, an examination of the relationships among the scaled dependent attributional variables and the scaled dependent evaluation variable of veridicality reveals that it is only the correlation between the scaled dependent attributional variable of coercion and the scaled dependent evaluation variable of veridicality which reaches significance ( $r = .229, p < .03$ ). The positive direction of the correlation is counter to prediction, however, and indicates that as attributions of responsibility to the client at the coercive level increase, a belief in the veridicality of the client's informational statements also increases.

#### Analysis of Evaluation Variables by Attributional Variables

A more specific examination of the hypotheses that as the level of responsibility attributed to the client increased, a decrease would occur in the three client evaluation measures was undertaken using multiple regression analyses (Pedhazur, 1982). For these analyses, the responses to the scaled dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion were treated as independent variables and were simultaneously entered into three standard multiple regression models in an effort to account for the variability in response scores on the three dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality.



Table 34 presents the results of the analysis for the regression of efficacy on the four attributional variables. As may be seen, the  $R^2$  was non-significant at the .05 level ( $F = 1.67541, 4, 72$  d.f.) and indicates that the prediction model accounts for only .085% of the variance. The attributional variable of intention, however, was found to be significant ( $F = 4.743, p < .033$ ). Thus, it may be stated that the linear combination of the independent variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion do not successfully predict scores on the dependent variable of efficacy but that the independent variable of intention serves to predict efficacy scores. Therefore, intention is retained in the equation while the other attributional variables are rejected. This must necessarily be treated with caution since the overall  $R^2$  is non-significant. It is reported, however, since this relationship was predicted by the hypothesis

Table 35 presents the results of the analysis for the regression of attraction on the four attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion. The overall  $R^2$  was found to be non-significant at the .05 level ( $F = 1.04162, 4/72$  d.f.) accounting for only .055% of the variance. Thus, the attributional variables entered into the equation do not serve to predict attraction scores. Furthermore, no attributional variable was found to individually offer any significant contribution to a prediction of attraction scores and none of the attributional variables are retained in the equation.

Table 36 presents the results of the analysis for the regression of veridicality on the attributional variables and here, again, the overall  $R^2$  was found to be non-significant at the .05 level ( $F = 1.52453, 4, 72$  d.f.) indicating that the prediction equation accounts for .078% of the variability in veridicality scores. The attributional variable of coercion, however, was found to be significant as a predictor of veridicality ( $F = 4.875, p < .031$ ). Thus, the attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion do not successfully predict scores on veridicality. The attributional variable of coercion, however, does offer a significant contribution to the explained variability in veridicality scores and should be retained in the prediction equation. Again, this must be treated with caution due to the non-significant nature of the overall  $R^2$ . It is reported, however, since the relationship was predicted by the hypothesis.

**Table 34 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis of Efficacy on Attributional Variables**

<b>Analysis of Variance</b>					
		<b>df</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>		
<b>Regression</b>		4	2.44832		
<b>Residual</b>		72	26.30389		
<b>F = 1.67541    Significance of F = .1651</b>					
<b>Prediction Model</b>					
<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>95% Confid. Int. For B</b>		<b>Beta</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Cause</b>	-.052088	-.302874	.198698	-.052804	.171
<b>Knowledge</b>	.123247	-.095091	.341585	.147713	1.266
<b>Intention</b>	-.284491	-.544902	-.024080	-.305972	4.743*
<b>Coercion</b>	-.029675	-.315882	.256532	-.024528	.043
<b>Constant</b>	4.298186				
<b>R Square = .08515</b>					
<b>* Significant at p &lt; .033</b>					

**Table 35 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis of Attraction on Attributional Variables**

Analysis of Variance					
		df	Sum of Squares		
Regression		4	2.06494		
Residual		72	35.68363		
F = 1.04162    Significance of F = .3919					
Prediction Model					
Variables	B	95% Confid. Int. For B		Beta	F
Cause	.045720	-.246378	.337818	.040450	.097
Knowledge	.131716	-.122588	.386020	.137774	1.066
Intention	-.157004	-.460312	.146304	-.147370	1.065
Coercion	.261498	-.071855	.594852	.188634	2.445
Constant	2.352045				
R Square = .05470					
No F Significant at p < .05					

**Table 36 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis of Veridicality on Attributional Variables**

<b>Analysis of Variance</b>					
		<b>df</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>		
<b>Regression</b>		4	3.52368		
<b>Residual</b>		72	41.60381		
<b>F = 1.52453    Significance of F = .2041</b>					
<b>Prediction Model</b>					
<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>95% Confid. Int. For B</b>		<b>Beta</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Cause</b>	-.064951	-.380350	.250448	.052557	.169
<b>Knowledge</b>	.001703	-.272888	.276293	.001629	.000
<b>Intention</b>	-.159814	-.487317	.167690	-.137196	.946
<b>Coercion</b>	.398670	-.038724	.758616	.263024	4.875*
<b>Constant</b>	2.794099				
<b>R Square = .07808</b>					
<b>* Significant at p &lt; .031</b>					

**In chapter five, which follows, these findings will be interpreted and discussed with respect to their implications for the process of assessment in social work practice, for their potential impact on the relevant theoretical formulations which undergird the research effort and for their implications with respect to professional social work as a whole. Finally, suggestions for future research efforts will be offered.**

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The results of the data analysis provide support for the omnibus hypothesis that the groups exposed to the four stimulus conditions would differ with respect to the mean ratings on the dependent attributional measures of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion. The omnibus hypothesis that the groups exposed to the four stimulus conditions would differ with respect to the mean ratings on the dependent evaluation measures of efficacy, attraction and veridicality was not supported by the data. The hypotheses that response values to the dependent attributional variables would serve to predict response values on the dependent evaluation variables were similarly not supported. Prior to a discussion of the implications of these findings, it must first be noted that the experimental subjects in the study are essentially responding to statements which the client makes with regard to an interpretation of the responsibility inherent in her situation as described. It is posited, on the basis of an extrapolation from a well developed body of theory, that client attributional statements and worker attributional and evaluative responses may well represent a fundamental phenomenon when a client seeks professional social work assistance and the process of assessment is engaged. An effort was made, therefore, to present the experiment as an analogue to actual interview conditions in emulation of the assessment process. The limitations posed by this effort will be presented at a later point in this chapter. It may be stated, however, that the analogue effort met with relative success and a conclusion is drawn that subjects in the experiment were, in fact, responding to the

stimulus conditions as an actual interview situation. This contention is supported by the efforts undertaken to validate the stimulus items and, in particular, by the values obtained on the rating dimension of Real in the stimulus item validation.

It must also be noted that an additional distinction may be drawn between the two sets of dependent variables in the study and that such a distinction is necessary to a more thorough understanding of the findings. This distinction rests essentially on the notion that the dependent attributional measures of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion are process variables while the dependent evaluation measures of efficacy, attraction and veridicality are primarily outcome variables. That is, attributed responsibility forms part of the process of assessment, influencing an understanding and conceptualization of the problem for work, while efficacy, attraction and veridicality result from the attributional process. There is, of course, an interaction among the seven dimensions constituting the dependent measures such that the distinctions drawn do not achieve an absolute conceptual clarity. Further, the terms applied to the distinction are idiosyncratic to the present research and are not suggested to infer a connection to other conceptual uses.

#### Stimulus Attributional Variables and Dependent Attributional Variables

As earlier noted, the study provided results which indicate that subjects' responses to the dependent attributional variables of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion differed across the four stimulus conditions. These results indicate that stimulus condition 1 is differentiated from stimulus conditions 3 and 4 on the basis of responses to the relevant dependent variables. It may be recalled that stimulus condition 1 conveys information that the client thinks she caused the problems which led to the separation but without knowledge that a separation was imminent and without an intention to produce the separation. Stimulus condition 2, then, adds information that the client had knowledge that a separation might occur to the causal dimension, with a lack of intention to produce the separation explicitly stated. Stimulus condition 3 adds information that the client intended

to precipitate a confrontation to the cause and knowledge dimensions, while stimulus condition 4 continues the cause, knowledge and intention dimensions, adding potential environmental mediators of the client's behavior.

The results obtained further indicate that it was primarily responses to the dependent attributional variable of knowledge which served to differentiate among the stimulus groups. That is, there was greater variability in the response values obtained on the dependent attributional variable of knowledge than on the other dependent attributional variables, and that the strength of this variability was significant in accounting for the differences found among the stimulus groups. Finally, it was found that the stimulus groups were differentiated on selected dependent attributional variables on the basis of the introduction of relevant stimulus information. That is, stimulus condition 1 was differentiated from stimulus conditions 2, 3 and 4 combined on the dependent attributional variable of knowledge and stimulus conditions 1 and 2 were differentiated from stimulus conditions 3 and 4 on the dependent attributional variable of intention.

An interpretation of the above findings suggests that subject's tended to respond differentially to the client's presentation of information concerning the problem of her marital separation, and that these differential responses were localized to certain relevant dependent attributional dimensions; those of knowledge and intention. First, it would appear that for the dependent attributional variable of knowledge, subjects in the first stimulus condition attributed knowledge level responsibility to the client at a comparatively low level in response to client stimulus information indicating that she caused the problems which led to the separation but did not know that her behavior might lead to the separation. When the client presents stimulus information that she did in fact have foreknowledge that her behavior might lead to a separation but did not intend the separation, there is an increase in the level of knowledge responsibility which is attributed to her for the problem presented, although this difference cannot be termed significant. When the client presents stimulus information revealing that she caused the problems in the marriage with foreknowledge that a separation might result, and presents information that she intended to "bring things to a head", however, there is a significant increase in the level of knowledge responsibility which is attributed to the client for the problem presented, when compared to the presentation of causal information alone.



This suggests that it is the presentation of intention information which serves to bring to the fore the client's responsibility for the problem presented. Thus, it may be concluded that information with regard to the client's intentions in the situation described constitutes a sufficient condition for the attribution of knowledge level responsibility. Given that an intention to act cannot be formed in the absence of knowledge of the potential consequences of the action undertaken, it is not surprising that significant attributions of responsibility occur at the knowledge level in response to the presentation of intention information. It would seem to follow, however, that attributions of responsibility would also achieve significance at the intention level. This is not supported by the data. This may be explained, perhaps, by noting that a strong relationship appears to exist between the dimensions of knowledge and intention. It is reasonable to conclude, given covariation, that the presentation of intention information, rather than being considered discretely, serves to heighten the salience of the client's consequential knowledge of her actions. Thus, significant attributions of responsibility accrues at the knowledge level rather than at the intention level, or both.

It may be concluded, then, that while the introduction of knowledge stimulus information alone produces an increase in the level of knowledge responsibility attributed to the client for the problem presented, it is the combination of knowledge and intention stimulus information which serves to engender the highest level of knowledge responsibility attributed to the client for the problem presented. Finally, the introduction of coercive stimulus information, that is, information suggesting environmental constraints on the client's behavior, tends to mitigate the absolute level of knowledge responsibility attributed to the client but without a significant reduction. Here it may be concluded that while subjects tend to account for environmental stimulus information in making attributions of knowledge level responsibility to the client, such environmental stimulus information does not serve to reduce perceptions of the extent of the client's culpability for the difficulties encountered. Again, however, the presence of coercion stimulus information in combination with causal, knowledge and intention stimulus information results in significantly higher attributions of knowledge responsibility than does the presence of causal stimulus information alone.

Second, it is apparent that for the dependent attributional variable of intention, subjects in stimulus condition 1, where the client presents causal stimulus information

alone, tended to attribute intention level responsibility at a comparatively low level. The introduction of knowledge stimulus information in stimulus condition 2 actually reduces the extent of intention level responsibility attributed to the client but without the reduction reaching significance. When intention stimulus information is added in stimulus condition 3, however, there is a marked increase in the level of intention responsibility attributed to the client but, again, this difference is not significant. However, when a comparison is made between stimulus conditions 1 and 2 combined, representing the absence of intention stimulus information, and stimulus conditions 3 and 4, representing the presence of intention stimulus information, the differences in subjects' responses become significant.

Here it may be concluded that the introduction of intention stimulus information tends to significantly influence subjects' attributions of intention level responsibility over the presentation of cause and knowledge stimulus information alone. It is noted, however, that it may again be the combination of knowledge and intention information which serves to influence such an increase. This possibility is given credence by both the findings with respect to the dependent attributional variable of knowledge and by the strength of the relationship between the dependent attributional variables of knowledge and intention. Finally, it is noted that the introduction of coercion stimulus information in stimulus condition 4 does not mitigate attributions of intention level responsibility for the client's problem to any appreciable extent. Thus, it may be concluded that subjects do not account for relevant environmental stimulus information in making intention level responsibility attributions.

Contrary to hypothesis, the dependent attributional variable of cause did not produce any significantly differentiated responses among the various stimulus groups. This may be accounted for through a consideration of the notion that causal determination is at the very core of the assessment process, and one of the primary tasks of the worker in the early phases of social work intervention is to sift through relevant causal cues in order to construct a cogent analysis of those factors contributing to the client's problem. As such, it is not surprising, perhaps, that subjects in each of the stimulus conditions established causality for the client's problem in response to the presentation of causal stimulus information. As has been noted, the determination of causality is a judgment of physical rather than social action. Therefore, as the client presents information indicating that her behavior caused the problems in the marriage, there is no reason to infer increasing levels

of responsibility at the causal level, a level which implies a determination of physical connection to an outcome. Essentially, in each of the stimulus conditions, subjects made a causal connection between the client's behavior in the marriage and the outcome of the separation, a determination which represents an end stage process. Finally, the lack of stimulus group differences with respect to the dependent attributional variable of cause may also be accounted for in the fact that causal stimulus information is presented in each of the stimulus conditions, providing no comparative basis with which to judge the effect of the presence of the information.

The finding that there was no stimulus group differentiation on the basis of response values to the dependent attributional variable of coercion is also contrary to prediction. This suggests the possibility that subjects possess sensitivity to environmental factors to the extent that such factors are inferred in the absence of direct information concerning the influence of relevant environmental factors. This possibility is supported by the finding that the level of coercion responsibility attributed to the client for the problem presented was relatively low across all stimulus conditions. That is, even in the absence of relevant stimulus information with regard to coercive elements, subjects attributed coercion level responsibility to the client at a relatively low level, a level which remained constant across all stimulus conditions. This possibility is further supported by the finding that the introduction of the coercion stimulus variable did serve to mitigate attributions of responsibility for all dependent attributional variables, albeit to a non-significant extent. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that subjects tend to give weight to relevant environmental cues when present and may infer such cues in their absence.

#### Stimulus Attributional Variables and Dependent Evaluation Variables

The study did not provide results to support the hypothesis that a significant difference among the stimulus conditions would be found with respect to the dependent evaluation variables of efficacy, attraction and veridicality taken as a whole. Thus, it may

be concluded that composite evaluations of the client are not significantly affected by the differential presentation of responsibility stimulus information. There is data, however, which demonstrates that stimulus condition 1 is differentiated from stimulus condition 4 on the basis of response values to the dependent evaluation variable of efficacy, with stimulus condition 1 producing the most and stimulus condition 4 producing the least negative evaluations of the potential efficacy of social work intervention. This is as expected since theory suggests that the extent to which one is perceived to have incurred dependency as a result of factors beyond his or her mediational control would result in a greater likelihood of help giving behavior ensuing.

There are two findings with regard to the response values to the dependent evaluation variable of efficacy which are somewhat surprising and which are contrary to prediction. First, it was expected that the response values for stimulus condition 3 would be lower than the response values for stimulus condition 1, indicating a lower evaluation of efficacy for stimulus conditions 3 than for stimulus condition 1. The failure of the data to provide support for this expectancy may be accounted for, perhaps, on the basis of the lack of information with respect to the stimulus variables of knowledge and intention in stimulus condition 1, rather than the presence of such information. It is reasonable to conclude that experimental subjects may have concluded that since the client engaged in a defined behavior in the absence of any knowledge of the potential consequences and in the absence of an intention to act in the manner described this may reflect a relatively more serious situation than a client who acts in the presence of knowledge and intention. Essentially, subjects may have concluded that the client in stimulus condition 1 may possess less insight into her problem, or have less understanding of the problem, resulting in a less favorable prediction for a successful intervention outcome.

Second, it was expected that there would be a significant difference in the response values between stimulus conditions 3 and 4, with stimulus condition 4 exhibiting the highest evaluation of efficacy overall. While it is the case that stimulus condition 4 produced the highest evaluation of efficacy, the failure of stimulus condition 3 to produce a significantly lower evaluation of efficacy may, again, be accounted for, perhaps, on the basis of the client's demonstration of an understanding of her behavior and the consequences of such behavior. That is, while there may have been some belief that the client bore a heavy responsibility for the problem outcome, the fact that she was able to

acknowledge the extent of her culpability by admitting to behaving in an intentional manner and with foreknowledge of the consequences, serves as an indication that intervention has a greater potential for success. That is, the work of the client-worker relationship does not have to be directed toward helping the client accept responsibility for her behavior since such responsibility is already acknowledged. There is, overall, less resistance to encounter in helping the client adapt to and problem solve her circumstances.

The failure of the response values to the dependent evaluation variables of attraction and veridicality to differentiate among stimulus conditions may be accounted for in consideration of professional values which suggest respect for the worth and dignity of the individual. Such a belief would mitigate against arbitrary considerations of likability and truthfulness, considerations which are person-based rather than clinical judgments. To evaluate the client as being unattractive to the social work relationship and as not being veridical in her presentation runs decidedly counter to such professional norms. These factors also bear consideration with respect to findings to be discussed below.

#### Dependent Attributional Variables and Dependent Evaluation Variables

The study proposed that as the level of responsibility attributed to the client for the problem presented increased, subjects' evaluations with regard to the efficacy of social work intervention, attraction to the client and the veridicality of the client's informational statements would decrease. The separate hypotheses contained herein are not supported on the basis of the data obtained. The data do indicate, however, that as response values to the dependent attributional variable of intention alone increase, subjects tend to decrease their belief in the potential efficacy of social work intervention, lending partial support to the hypothesis as stated. This finding is theoretically consistent in that responsibility attributed to another, in the presence of a clear causal connection to an outcome and in the presence of foreknowledge of and an intention to produce the outcome, would serve to decrease a belief in the potential utility of a helping offer. Here it may be concluded that subjects infer that

the stimulus client is responsible for the creation of her own problem condition and, as such, is less likely to take advantage of an offer of help. That is, as she acted intentionally to produce the outcome of a marital separation, she may not be motivated to work toward effecting any change in her situation as described. Thus, social work intervention is unlikely to produce the desired outcome.

What is interesting to note, however, is the suggestion that the potential efficacy of social work intervention may be essentially considered through two distinct paths. First, and as noted above, increased attributions of responsibility at the intention level tend to decrease evaluations of the potential efficacy of intervention. Second, however, increased evaluations of the veridicality of the client's informational statements tends to increase evaluations of the potential efficacy of social work intervention. Thus, it may be concluded that social work intervention will be viewed as less potentially efficacious to the extent that the client is seen as intentionally responsible for the outcome observed. Any evaluation of the potential efficacy of social work intervention may be offset, however, to the extent that the client is viewed as veridical in presenting information concerning her problem situation. This suggests that the potential efficacy of social work intervention is determined against two factors, that of the intentionality of the client's actions and the veridicality of the client's presentation, with each factor leading to differential conclusions with respect to the potential success of treatment.

The data also indicate that as response values to the dependent attributional variable of coercion alone increase, a belief in the veridicality of the client's informational statements also increases. This finding runs counter to prediction but, on reconsideration, is logically consistent with the notion that subject's infer environmental influences in the absence of direct informational statements as to their presence, and that such inference forms part of the process of problem understanding. The client's failure to present such evidence is not necessarily taken as a lack of veracity in presentation but is, rather, a reflection of a lack of awareness of the full range of factors which serve to determine the problem presented. Thus, the fact that the client does not present relevant environmental data is weighed against the worker's inference that such factors are at play, and a conclusion is drawn that the client lacks insight rather than that she is not telling the truth. This becomes problem assessment data rather than person-focused evaluative data.

There are several reasons which may be posited for the failure to find support for the overall hypotheses that, taken as a whole, an increase in responsibility attributions to the client would result in a decrease in evaluations of the client. In the first instance, and as was noted earlier, there is some intuitive reason to suggest that the generally positive outlook expressed in the findings reflects a norm within the profession. Social work practice, like the counseling professions generally, is predicated on the premise that a successful intervention outcome is dependent on the instillation of hope in the context of the worker-client relationship. Were the worker to develop a negative outcome value at the outset of the counseling relationship, this might necessarily inhibit the communication of a hopeful perspective to the client and ultimately hinder the progress of the working relationship. Essentially, social work professionals may be socialized in the direction of espousing a positively biased outlook with regard to end stage predictions. Similarly, the development of a hopeful stance with regard to the potential efficacy of social work intervention, and the ultimate success of the intervention, is believed to be based on positive regard for the client and an acceptance of the client's story. Here again, these are values which are explicitly acknowledged in the social work practice literature and which permeate programs which train professional social workers. Thus, there may be an explicit and generalized norm which dictates that social workers should view clients in the most favorable possible light. The strength of this belief, then, was not shaken through the experimental manipulation.

In the second instance, there may have been some sense on the part of experimental subjects that they were being individually judged on the basis of responses to the outcome measures. Given a generalized professional norm for a positive outcome value with regard to the intervention effort and a set of professional values which demand regard for and acceptance of the client, it is perhaps not surprising that the findings with respect to the effect of the dependent attributional variables on the dependent evaluation variables were non-significant. Concern over the prospect of being judged negatively with regard to the evaluation variables would tend to pull scores on the various evaluation measures in a more positive direction. This would suggest the need for a more sensitive set of measures for the relevant dimensions than were developed for the present study. While the data suggest that the scores on the evaluation measures run generally in the direction predicted

by the experimental hypotheses, the strength of the correlations may have been moderated by the factors noted above.

In the third instance, it is suggested that the meaning of the response items for the dependent attribution measures was more clear in their implication than was the meaning of the response items for the dependent evaluation variables. That is, the dependent attributional variables were intended to capture data with respect to assessment, albeit with a particular focus on responsibility related issues, and the items were taken by subject's as forming, essentially, assessment inferences. This is a professional practice issue and social workers are, by and large, comfortable with making assessment inferences. Subjects did not, perhaps, infer any meaning to the attributional response items beyond the demands of an assessment of the client's problem. The dependent evaluation response items, however, reflected person-based judgments, efficacy excepted, which could be said to be independent of assessment processes. Here there was the possibility of multiple meanings to the items, or at the least, an ambiguous meaning. The items were more clearly value related and engendered, perhaps, a greater discomfort in response formulation. Thus, subjects could have been more circumspect in response to the value issues and more conservative in response to the ambiguity in item meaning.

Finally, attention must necessarily be given to the likelihood that a range of other factors are extant which might serve to enhance a predictive relationship between the dependent attributional and evaluation variables. For example, consideration had been given originally to the issue of theoretical orientation to practice as a potential second design factor, and one which would serve to influence both the responsibility and the evaluation measures. Sampling problems precluded a design control of this factor and while data with regard to theoretical orientation was collected as part of the sample demography, it is felt that the categorization lacks sufficient clarity to warrant inclusion in the analyses. At the same time, sufficient numbers are lacking to warrant post-hoc statistical control. There remains the possibility, however, that theoretical orientation to practice might well serve to explain some of the variability on the response values to the dependent evaluation variables.

Similarly, consideration is given to the possibility that primary field of practice might serve to influence response values on the dependent evaluation variables. In the present study, the sample was drawn from agencies defined by the author as "counseling" type agencies, excluding welfare and medical service agencies. While this was done on the



basis of the problem area chosen for the stimulus items, there was an intuitive reasoning which suggested that the general orientation of the agency practice environment would affect the study's outcomes. Resource constraints precluded the inclusion of a comparison sample from the welfare and health care fields. There are, however, intuitive reasons to believe that both field of practice specialization and organizational environment variables might enhance the predictive power of the dependent attributional variables with respect to the dependent evaluation variables.

### Limitations of the Study

These above considerations move the present effort to now consider the broader issue of limitations to the study as a whole. Certainly, the points explicated above suggest that limitations accrue from the breadth of the sample employed. While there appears to be justification for field of practice selection with regard to the present study, this necessarily places limitations on the extrapolation of implications for the study to social work practice as a whole. It is clear, however, that the study sample does reflect a broad range of demographic characteristics and an assumption may be made that these characteristics are normally distributed within the population from which the sample is drawn. It may further be assumed that the social workers sampled for this study reflect, by an large, the characteristics of professional social work as a whole. This latter assumption, however, would necessarily need to be tested.

There are several additional issues regarding sampling which need to be discussed. First, it must be noted that the agencies which served as a sampling frame for the experimental sample were drawn by convenience rather than using the agency population as a whole with subsequent random selection. Second, while all agencies identified in this manner were contacted for permission to solicit staff participation, not all agencies were willing to do so. While only one agency refused directly, once the staff solicitation processed commenced a number of agencies were not heard from again and resource

constraints precluded adequate follow-up. This implies that either no staff at these agencies were willing to participate in the study or that the offer by agency executives to facilitate access to the staff was not honored. There is some reason to believe that the latter case predominates.

Third, at those agencies where staff indicated a willingness to participate, there were few instances in which the entire staff agreed to take part in the study. The conclusion, therefore, must be that the experimental sample was largely self-selected, again placing limitations on the generalizability of the results. This is, of course, a pervasive sampling issue in research generally and all efforts were made to account for this through the randomization of the sample with respect to the stimulus conditions. Additionally, it is believed that those agencies and staff which agreed to participation are representative of the field as a whole.

There must also be recognition given to the limited size of the experimental sample. While the number of subjects who participated is quite good, in fact exceeding expectations, a larger sample would have served to reduce the effect of extreme responses, or at least would have offered an opportunity to render extreme responses more normative, and would have allowed for some additional post-hoc analyses. Again, however, the size of the present sample must be considered within acceptable limits. The distribution of the sample across experimental conditions produced relatively equal numbers in each cell and demographic characteristics of the sample were normally distributed across cells. Again, it was primarily resource constraints which precluded efforts to secure a larger sample.

Finally, several limitations must be recognized with respect to the instrument employed in the study and the effort to conduct analogue research. First, the response items for the dependent measure of coercion are phrased in such a manner as to suggest that the client was, essentially, compelled in her actions. That is, environmental forces were of sufficient strength as to limit the range of alternative actions available to the client. This was intended and the items are worded to conform to that intention. It is noted, however, that environmental factors may exert a less determined influence and it is clear that any such subtlety does not form a part of the response items on the experimental questionnaire. Thus, it is possible that subjects perceived the environment as exerting an influence on the client's behavior but not as compelling her actions. To the extent that such is the case, it is clear that some response data was not captured by the questionnaire as constructed.

Second, it is noted that the stimulus items were validated on the basis of the transcripts of the tapes rather than from the completed tapes themselves. While the content of the transcripts met all criteria for validation and it was apparent that a reading of the transcripts reflected an actual interview, it is fair to suggest that a response to the content and a sense of the apparent realism of the interview could have been affected by hearing rather than reading the dialogue. It would have been preferable to have presented raters with the completed audiotapes but such was not feasible in view of resource constraints and in consideration of the potential for revisions of the stimulus items.

Third, the response sets for each of the scaled dependent measures were constructed with subtlety of language in mind. That is, the items reflect an effort to capture the range of responsibility related words and to couch them in statements which would be consistent with attributional formulations in an assessment context. There can be no absolute guarantees that this effort was successful. It is noted, however, that the reliability estimates for the scaled dependent measures are quite good, indicating that the response sets do, in fact, reliably measure the dimensions of interest.

Fourth, the response options for the experimental questionnaire were intended to express an agreement continuum with a midpoint which would fall between gradations of agreement and disagreement and which was expressed as "neither agree nor disagree". In retrospect, however, it is possible that subjects interpreted this midpoint option as constituting, essentially, a no response category. That is, the middle option was chosen when subjects did not wish to provide a clear response to the statements on the questionnaire. Thus, midpoint responses would essentially constitute no opinion rather than locating subjects' responses at some point on an agreement continuum. At the least, sufficient ambiguity exists with respect to the response options to warrant consideration in an interpretation of the findings.

The limitations posed by efforts to construct an analogue experiment revolve primarily on the issue of the realism of the interview. Initially, the stimulus items were intended to consist of constructed videotape interviews but this was ruled out in the interest of a timely completion of the research and in the face of financial constraints. Thus, audiotape interviews were substituted. It was determined to be critical to the analogue experience that subjects be told that they were listening to an actual interview. Once the

tapes were completed, however, it was apparent that this could not be done for several reasons.

In the first place, the tapes were produced in a professional recording studio and the absence of background noise seemed to belie the notion that the tapes were recorded in situ. In the second place, the author was not sufficiently schooled in the dramatic arts such that the actresses used for the social worker and client roles could be directed to vocalize in such a manner as to enhance the believability of the interview tapes. While the actresses were professionals in every sense of the word, it was clear that such direction, and much more rehearsal than seemed feasible, would be necessary to produce the quality of tapes desired.

In sum, the audiotapes had a very sanitized quality. An effort was made to account for these issues in the introduction given to subjects which stated that, while the interviews reflected a literal transcription of an actual interview, professional actresses had been used to play the roles and the tapes were produced in a recording studio. Subjects were told that this was done in order to enhance the quality of the tapes by removing background noise and eliminating vocalized pauses. Subjects were then instructed to listen to the tapes as if they were the actual interview with a reminder that it was the content of the interview that was important rather than the interview itself.

This issue is raised to note that some questions may be forthcoming with regard to the believability of the interviews and as to whether subjects were, in fact, responding to actual interview conditions. The anecdotal evidence in this regard is equivocal at best. At debriefing, most subjects responded to being told that the interview was not an actual interview by stating that they either had or had not believed that the interview was real in nature with no clear trend emerging. It may be true that the issue is in some sense moot in that subjects would respond to the prescription to listen to the interview as an actual interview by, in fact, doing so. In the final analysis, however, no clear contention may be made that the analogue was successful to the extent desired, particularly in view of the fact that the tapes themselves were not subjected to validation. It is believed, however, that on the basis of the validation of the tape transcripts and the care taken in the construction of the final product that the analogue achieved acceptable results.

Finally, several limitations must be noted in the use of audiotapes as a clinical analogue. First, an audiotaped analogue eliminates the availability of the visual stimuli which forms part of the data for assessment in a clinical context. That is, non-verbal

information forms part of the means by which social workers derive an understanding of the client's problem and serves as a guide to determining the focus for clinical exploration. Second, visual stimuli form an essential part of the context in which assessment takes place. That is, the experience of the assessment for the worker includes the setting in which the assessment takes place and the visual presence of the client. Essentially, the client's verbal presentation is viewed against the backdrop of a stimulus field which includes visual cues. An audiotaped presentation, then, eliminates some of the contextual variables which serve to influence the assessment process. Finally, and as noted, a visual presentation would, perhaps, have served to enhance the believability of the stimulus presentation.

It is noted, however, that it is a common practice to make use of audiotaped material in both the training of social workers and that social workers often utilize audiotapes in an effort to enhance their own clinical practice. In short, social workers are accustomed to hearing a client presentation on audiotape. In view of this, it is reasonable to conclude that subjects in the present experiment would have experienced audiotaped client presentations as a part of their training and practice experience and would not have found unusual the experimental request to listen to a taped interview.

### Implications of the Study

Given the limitations imposed, the study bears importance for the field of social work in several respects. First, a contribution has been made to an understanding of the assessment process as a whole and of the role of attributional processes within the assessment context. The study shows, for example, that information conveyed by the client with regard to the client's determination of responsibility for a problem event does influence the level of responsibility which the worker places on the client for the problem presented. Additionally, the study shows that relevant environmental information, while attended to in the assessment context, is not granted the weight warranted by the demands

of the assessment process, a finding which appears to stand somewhat at odds with the prevailing professional sentiment towards an eco-systems perspective in practice.

Caution must be exercised at this point, however, on at least two counts. First, and as earlier noted, there is some reason to believe that the scaled dependent attributional measure of coercion may have lacked the sensitivity necessary to an accurate assessment of the implications of the dimension of coercion for an understanding the client's problem as presented. Thus, greater reliability for the measure in question may have produced data resulting in a more definitive determination of the role of relevant environmental press in shaping the worker's attributional understanding of the problem for work. Second, and again as noted earlier, the model of attribution employed in the present study may not provide a sufficient basis for the particular demands of responsibility determination in a social work assessment context. Conceptual refinement and further empirical testing is clearly needed.

Weak support has been generated with respect to the direct outcomes of such a process in social work assessment. The data do suggest, however, that differential responsibility attributions produce some bias with regard to an evaluation of the potential efficacy of social work intervention, attraction to the client and a belief in the veridicality of the client's statements. This points to considerable hazard in assessing client problems and offering ameliorative services. It is fair to assume that clients do, in fact, offer attributional information as part of their problem presentation. In fact, this assumption forms part of the primary basis for the present study. Given that such information is conveyed and that it serves to influence worker responsibility attributions and lead to potentially negative judgments of the client and the client's potential for amelioration, there rests within the profession a responsibility to account for such biases.

This latter point suggests the need for the development of a set of teaching and training strategies which would serve to exert an impact on the potential biasing effects of attributional processes in assessment. Assessment represents a core activity for social work and considerable attention has been given to the critical components of the assessment process. The present study suggests an additional dimension which must necessarily be accounted for in professional training activities. The profession has long been concerned with the problems of assessment and considerable attention has been given to the tendency toward a linear cause and effect construction of human difficulties. The present study

offers support for the notion that cause and effect causal analyses are extant. As social work educators are desirous of moving professional practice more in the direction of ecological formulations, the profession would do well to give attention to the elemental processes which seem to inhibit such movement. It is posited that attributional effects form the partial basis for such inhibiting processes.

Finally, the study has offered support for a set of theories which appear to have a great utility for social work practice but which have been given scant attention to date from within the profession. The profession has long prided itself on the incorporation into its theoretical foundation of sound social science formulations developed in the allied professions. Here is a well developed body of knowledge which has repeatedly and empirically tested its fundamental concepts in a variety of settings and situations with excellent results. Social work would do well to examine the theories for those constructs which may prove useful to a more complete understanding of human nature.

The utility of the theoretical area for social work practice, however, must necessarily be viewed in light of limitations imposed by the model employed in the present study. Essentially such limitations accrue from the fact that the model is intended to generalize across a range of phenomena and thus lacks the specificity necessary for a consideration of the clinical context. The model essentially evolved from a theoretical area concerned with the perceptions of ordinary people determining responsibility under more or less ordinary circumstances. That is, the model is intended to account for situations any person is likely to encounter as a normal part of living. The theory, then, holds that causal and responsibility attributions are evoked in response to those circumstances which are negatively valued or which lie outside of the commonplace experience of the observer.

It is reasonable to assert that the clinical assessment, which essentially demands causal explanation and the subsequent assignment of responsibility, is not a negatively valued experience for a social worker who has voluntarily chosen to work with people who experience problems in living. Additionally, the clinical assessment may be commonplace to the experience of social workers whose professional practice is determined by efforts to understand human problems. It is plausible that attributions of cause and responsibility acquire a different meaning in a context in which attributional explanations for client events are expected in response to circumstances which are not alien to the professional experience of those people who are expected to make such attributional judgments. If the theoretical

model has utility for social work practice, then the model must necessarily be reviewed and revised to account for the specific demands of the assessment experience.

### Conclusions and Research Implications

In conclusion, the present study suggests several directions for future research. Certainly one fruitful avenue for further investigation lies in the direction of a continued examination of the process of assessment, particularly as regards the range of appropriate environmental variables which serve to influence human problems and which may tend to influence the fundamental attributional processes. Such examinations need to take place with respect to a variety of client problems and in a variety of field of practice contexts such that the profession may gain some greater knowledge of the differential aspects of the assessment phase of the worker-client relationship. The present study has offered some support for the use of analogues for such research efforts and it would be most interesting to do so through the use of videotaped interviews. It is believed that the use of videotapes as a stimulus would serve to enhance the realism of the analogue experience.

A second avenue for future investigation lies in the direction of the examination of teaching and training strategies intended to exert a significant impact on the process of client assessment generally and attributional phenomena in particular. Concern has been expressed in some social work circles to the effect that efforts to socialize students in the direction of an eco-systems perspective, or at least some non-linear problem construction, tends to wash out as students graduate and begin to practice in agency contexts. The suggestion contained in this concern is that the general practice environment does not, then, reflect the value of the eco-systems perspective and that new workers are socialized in the direction of agency or general practice norms. If such is the case, and if the profession is interested, at least from an educational perspective, in moving practice in the direction of more holistic practice conceptualizations, then the profession needs necessarily to concentrate some energy on the development of appropriate training mechanisms. Such



efforts, to insure success, would necessarily need to contain a component to research the outcomes of such efforts. It is proposed, therefore, that the present study serves to identify a set of elements which inhibit ecologically oriented practice and that the identification of such elements lends itself to the development of training efforts designed to overcome the potential biasing effects of attributional processes.

Professional social work offers a broad range of exciting opportunities for the research investigator and a broad range of opportunities to contribute significantly to the development of new knowledge for practice. It is hoped that in some small way the present study has been contributory in this respect. Certainly, the author intends to pursue the present line of investigation to the extent that support for such investigation is forthcoming. The reality of the broader professional environment, however, mitigates against experimental, analogue research for the investigation of problems fundamental to the practice arena. It is hoped that this reality will not serve to deter the scholarly investigation of relevant practice issues through the use of experimental designs.

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APPENDIX A

STIMULUS ITEM TRANSCRIPTS

## TAPE 1: CAUSE

W: Good morning.

C: Good morning.

W: How are you today?

C: Fine, thank you.

W: I know that the circumstances here might make it a little more difficult for you to feel relaxed in talking about yourself...I just want to let you know how much I appreciate your willingness to have our interview taped this morning.

C: I'm glad to do it...I am a little nervous though.

W: If its any consolation, I'm a little nervous too...like we said before, though, any time that you want to stop or want us to turn the tape off, just let me know.

C: O.K...Thanks.

W: Good...Let's get started...I know we talked a little on the phone about your reasons for coming in today but it would help if we started from the beginning this morning. So, I'd like for you to tell me a little bit about why you wanted to come in and talk to someone.

C: O.K...Well, my husband and I separated pretty recently...Um, he moved out of our house...he's living with his sister now. I'm feeling a bit at a loss, I guess...you know, a little confused about what happened and what I want to do. We've been having problems for some time and...I guess I really need some help to make a decision about my marriage. You know, whether to stay separated and maybe get a divorce or to try to work things out and maybe get back together again. I guess I need to decide what I want for myself. Does that make any sense to you?

W: Yes...yes it does...This must be a very difficult time for you.

C: Yeah, it is.

W: It also sounds like you've been giving the possibility of divorce some pretty serious thought?

C: Yeah.

W: And your husband...is he thinking about divorce as well?

C: Well, things are pretty much up in the air right now but I don't think so...I think he would like for us to get back together. At least that's what he says.

W: I see...and how long have you been separated now?

C: Well, he moved out about a month ago. Yeah, exactly a month ago.

W: I see...and I take it that you and your husband have had some contact since the separation?

C: A little bit...

W: O.K.

C: ...a little bit.

W: All right...so you haven't reached a point where you're not talking to each other.

C: No.

W: And have you been pleased with the talks that you've had with your husband?

C: Well, things are strained...and he keeps asking me what I'd like to do about our marriage.

W: And what answer do you give him?

C: Well, so far I've told him that I don't know...that I'm thinking about it but that I've got to get some things worked out for myself first.

W: I see...When we first spoke on the phone, you mentioned that there had been problems for some time. When did some of the difficulties begin?

C: Lets see...I guess about six months ago...

W: uh, huh.

C: ...Yeah, about six months ago. But things weren't so bad at the start you know...It...its just gotten gradually worse until about a month ago...that's when he left.

W: Uh, huh...I see...and what was your husband's reason for moving out?

C: Well, I'm not really sure...I mean, I know we've been fighting a lot lately...and I mean a lot...you know, it just seemed like we were arguing constantly. It was awful. I think I brought most of it on. I've been on his case about everything lately. You know, its funny though...I would jump on him for something he'd done and then I would feel better for a while...until I started thinking about it and I'd ask myself 'why did you do that' and then I'd start to feel bad all over again and start in on him again...I mean he doesn't deserve the treatment he's been getting, you know...I mean, I really didn't like the way I was acting but I couldn't seem to stop myself. My husband tried to understand, you know, he tried to be patient but I guess it was just too much. Finally, he said he was going to leave...that he thought we needed some time apart to sort things out. I wasn't in favor of it at first but I finally agreed...I mean, after all, I'm the

one that's been the cause of all of this...I sure never thought that it would go this far though

W: What do you mean?

C: Well, I guess I didn't realize that things had gone as far as they had. I mean, I knew I was acting pretty badly but I sure didn't think we were going to separate. I had no idea this was going to happen and I sure didn't intend for it to come to this.

W: Um...I see...and these arguments have been going on for about six months?

C: Yeah.

W: Can you give me some idea what the arguments have been about?

C: Just little things...it really didn't much matter...I mean, he could be a little bit later coming home from work than he said he would be...or it could be something that he said that I would take the wrong way...or it could be that he didn't pick something up around the house...it could be anything, you know. Just little things. It really hasn't taken very much to set me off lately...any little thing will do.

W: Mmmm...So...it sounds like there's been a lot of tension. You said that these difficulties started about six months ago. What was it that happened about that time? Did anything happen that may have led to all the tension?

C: Well...No, I don't think that anything happened...I mean nothing you could really put your finger on...That's just it...I started giving him grief over nothing...I really don't understand the way I've been acting...I mean I could understand it if he'd done something but he hasn't.

W: I see...and what has been your husband's reaction?...what has he said to you?

C: I don't know...I mean, he asks me what's wrong...you know, and he tries to talk to me...to get me to talk to him...but I just cut him off...you know, I just tell him to leave me alone, that I'll get it worked out...he's really been very understanding.

W: And how has he shown you that he's been understanding?

C: Well, you know, he's really tried to be patient with me...he's tried to understand but his patience has worn thin...I guess that's to be expected when someone is jumping down your throat for no apparent reason...I really don't understand this...my husband is really a good man and things have been really good for him lately.

W: What do you mean that things have been good for him lately?

C: Well...you know, he's been feeling really good...I mean other than the trouble I've been causing...Like, things have been going really well for him at work lately...you know, he's been pleased with his job and all...and, then, he's had more free time lately...you know, time to do the things he wants to do.

W: I see...so have the two of you have had more time together recently?

C: Well, yeah...I mean, we've had an opportunity to spend time together...that's pretty much been the case all along...you know, I mean, that's not any different than it's been for us...we've always had time to spend together...The problem is that we don't really spend the time together, you know? I mean, lately when we're together I seem to spend all my time picking at him...giving him grief over some little thing or other...that's not his fault though...you know, he really doesn't have anything to do with this...Like I said, he's really been patient...he's really tried to understand...it's been me...just me...I mean, I've really been giving him a rough time for no particular reason that I can see. I've just been acting badly and I've caused a lot of trouble for us.

W: Hmm...so, can you think of any recent changes in your life...anything different that you think might explain the difficulties you and your husband have been having?

C: No...no...nothing at all...things had been going well for us for the most part...I mean, I guess it sounds a little silly to be acting so badly when things seem to be going so well...I wish I understood this...I just don't know why I've been so hard to get along with...it just doesn't make any sense and it's really starting to get to me...you know?

W: Well...I can certainly understand why you feel confused...it sounds like you're uncomfortable with the way you've been acting and can't seem to find an explanation for it. What have you done to try to ease things...to come to terms with this?

C: I don't know...I mean, I've tried to talk to my husband but we just don't seem to be able to talk to each other any more...that's not his fault though...like I said, I think he's really tried...the problem is with me...I start to say something to him and then I stop myself...I just find myself pulling further and further away from him...Then I've tried talking to some friends about how I've been acting but what can they say?

W: I don't know...what do they say?

C: Well, for the most part they tell me to lighten up...that I'm really being hard on my husband...and myself...Everybody thinks he's wonderful and in many ways he is...my friends all say that he doesn't deserve this so they tell me to try to get my act together.

W: And have your friends been helpful to you? Have they been supportive?

C: Yeah, I guess so...I mean, I don't feel like anybody is really down on me. I even think my husband is ready to come back and try to work things out...I just don't know if that's what I want.

W: What would you like to see happen?

C: I don't honestly know...I mean, I don't think that my husband has done anything...I don't know why I've been treating him the way I have...I really think that until I get that sorted out there's not much point in our getting back together. I just want to work at figuring this thing out.

W: I see...earlier you said that you didn't realize that things had gone this far. What did you mean?

**C: Um...just that I really didn't think my husband would leave...I really had no idea that it would come to this...I mean, I knew we were having problems but I didn't intend for us to separate. I just didn't know that it had become that bad.**

## TAPE 2: KNOWLEDGE

W: Good morning.

C: Good morning.

W: How are you today?

C: Fine, thank you.

W: I know that the circumstances here might make it a little more difficult for you to feel relaxed in talking about yourself...I just want to let you know how much I appreciate your willingness to have our interview taped this morning.

C: I'm glad to do it...I am a little nervous though.

W: If its any consolation, I'm a little nervous too...like we said before, though, any time that you want to stop or want us to turn the tape off, just let me know.

C: O.K...Thanks.

W: Good...Let's get started...I know we talked a little on the phone about your reasons for coming in today but it would help if we started from the beginning this morning. So, I'd like for you to tell me a little bit about why you wanted to come in and talk to someone.

C: O.K...Well, my husband and I separated pretty recently...Um, he moved out of our house...he's living with his sister now. I'm feeling a bit at a loss, I guess...you know, a little confused about what happened and what I want to do. We've been having problems for some time and...I guess I really need some help to make a decision about my marriage. You know, whether to stay separated and maybe get a divorce or to try to work things out and maybe get back together again. I guess I need to decide what I want for myself. Does that make any sense to you?

W: Yes...yes it does...This must be a very difficult time for you.

C: Yeah, it is.

W: It also sounds like you've been giving the possibility of divorce some pretty serious thought?

C: Yeah.

W: And your husband...is he thinking about divorce as well?

C: Well, things are pretty much up in the air right now but I don't think so...I think he would like for us to get back together. At least that's what he says.

W: I see...and how long have you been separated now?

C: Well, he moved out about a month ago. Yeah, exactly a month ago.

W: I see...and I take it that you and your husband have had some contact since the separation?

C: A little bit...

W: O.K.

C: ...a little bit.

W: All right...so you haven't reached a point where you're not talking to each other.

C: No.

W: And have you been pleased with the talks that you've had with your husband?

C: Well, things are strained...and he keeps asking me what I'd like to do about our marriage.

W: And what answer do you give him?

C: Well, so far I've told him that I don't know...that I'm thinking about it but that I've got to get some things worked out for myself first.

W: I see...When we first spoke on the phone, you mentioned that there had been problems for some time. When did some of the difficulties begin?

C: Lets see...I guess about six months ago...

W: uh, huh.

C: ...Yeah, about six months ago. But things weren't so bad at the start you know...It...its just gotten gradually worse until about a month ago...that's when he left.

W: Uh, huh...I see...and what was your husband's reason for moving out?

C: Well, I'm not really sure...I mean, I know we've been fighting a lot lately...and I mean a lot...you know, it just seemed like we were arguing constantly. It was awful. I think I brought most of it on. I've been on his case about everything lately. You know, its funny though...I would jump on him for something he'd done and then I would feel better for a while...until I started thinking about it and I'd ask myself 'why did you do that' and then I'd start to feel bad all over again and start in on him again...I mean he doesn't deserve the treatment he's been getting, you know...I really didn't like the way I was acting...I mean, I knew that what I was doing would lead to trouble but I couldn't seem to stop myself. My husband tried to understand, you know, he tried to be patient but I guess it was just too much. Finally, he said he was going to



leave...that he thought we needed some time apart to sort things out. I wasn't in favor of it at first but I finally agreed...I mean, after all, I'm the one that's been the cause of all of this...You know, its funny but I knew it would come to this.

W: What do you mean?

C: Well, I guess I didn't realize that things had gone as far as they had. I mean, I knew I was acting pretty badly and I guess I knew it could lead us to separate. I didn't mean for us to separate, though. I never intended this to happen.

W: Um...I see...and these arguments have been going on for about six months?

C: Yeah.

W: Can you give me some idea what the arguments have been about?

C: Just little things...it really didn't much matter...I mean, he could be a little bit later coming home from work than he said he would be...or it could be something that he said that I would take the wrong way...or it could be that he didn't pick something up around the house...it could be anything, you know. Just little things. It really hasn't taken very much to set me off lately...any little thing will do.

W: Mmmm...So...it sounds like there's been a lot of tension. You said that these difficulties started about six months ago. What was it that happened about that time? Did anything happen that may have led to all the tension?

C: Well...No, I don't think that anything happened...I mean nothing you could really put your finger on...That's just it...I started giving him grief over nothing...I really don't understand the way I've been acting...I mean I could understand it if he'd done something but he hasn't.

W: I see...and what has been your husband's reaction?...what has he said to you?

C: I don't know...I mean, he asks me what's wrong...you know, and he tries to talk to me...to get me to talk to him...but I just cut him off...you know, I just tell him to leave me alone, that I'll get it worked out...he's really been very understanding.

W: And how has he shown you that he's been understanding?

C: Well, you know, he's really tried to be patient with me...he's tried to understand but his patience has worn thin...I guess that's to be expected when someone is jumping down your throat for no apparent reason...I really don't understand this...my husband is really a good man and things have been really good for him lately.

W: What do you mean that things have been good for him lately?

C: Well...you know, he's been feeling really good...I mean other than the trouble I've been causing...Like, things have been going really well for him at work lately...you know, he's been pleased with his job and all...and, then, he's had more free time lately...you know, time to do the things he wants to do.

**W:** I see...so have the two of you have had more time together recently?

**C:** Well, yeah...I mean, we've had an opportunity to spend time together...that's pretty much been the case all along...you know, I mean, that's not any different than its been for us...we've always had time to spend together...The problem is that we don't really spend the time together, you know? I mean, lately when we're together I seem to spend all my time picking at him...giving him grief over some little thing or other...that's not his fault though...you know, he really doesn't have anything to do with this...Like I said, he's really been patient...he's really tried to understand...it's been me...just me...I mean, I've really been giving him a rough time for no particular reason that I can see. I've just been acting badly and I've caused a lot of trouble for us.

**W:** Hmm...so, can you think of any recent changes in your life...anything different that you think might explain the difficulties you and your husband have been having?

**C:** No...no...nothing at all...things had been going well for us for the most part...I mean, I guess it sounds a little silly to be acting so badly when things seem to be going so well...I wish I understood this...I just don't know why I've been so hard to get along with...it just doesn't make any sense and it's really starting to get to get to me...you know?

**W:** Well...I can certainly understand why you feel confused...it sounds like you're uncomfortable with the way you've been acting and can't seem to find an explanation for it. What have you done to try to ease things...to come to terms with this?

**C:** I don't know...I mean, I've tried to talk to my husband but we just don't seem to be able to talk to each other any more...that's not his fault though...like I said, I think he's really tried...the problem is with me...I start to say something to him and then I stop myself...Its funny, though...I know that what I'm doing is just bringing on more trouble. I know that the way I'm acting just isn't helping any...but I don't mean to do it...I just find myself pulling further and further away. Then I've tried talking to some friends about how I've been acting but what can they say?

**W:** I don't know...what do they say?

**C:** Well, for the most part they tell me to lighten up...that I'm really being hard on my husband...and myself...Everybody thinks he's wonderful and in many ways he is...my friends all say that he doesn't deserve this so they tell me to try to get my act together.

**W:** And have your friends been helpful to you? Have they been supportive?

**C:** Yeah, I guess so...I mean, I don't feel like anybody is really down on me. I even think my husband is ready to come back and try to work things out...I just don't know if that's what I want.

**W:** What would you like to see happen?

- C:** I don't honestly know...I mean, I don't think that my husband has done anything...I don't know why I've been treating him the way I have...I really think that until I get that sorted out there's not much point in our getting back together. I just want to work at figuring this thing out.
- W:** I see...earlier you said that you didn't realize that things had gone this far. What did you mean?
- C:** Um...just that I really didn't mean for my husband to leave...I mean, I guess I should have known that the way I was acting might lead him to do something like this. I never intended for him to leave, though. I just didn't want this to happen.

## TAPE 3: INTENTION

W: Good morning.

C: Good morning.

W: How are you today?

C: Fine, thank you.

W: I know that the circumstances here might make it a little more difficult for you to feel relaxed in talking about yourself...I just want to let you know how much I appreciate your willingness to have our interview taped this morning.

C: I'm glad to do it...I am a little nervous though.

W: If its any consolation, I'm a little nervous too...like we said before, though, any time that you want to stop or want us to turn the tape off, just let me know.

C: O.K...Thanks.

W: Good...Let's get started...I know we talked a little on the phone about your reasons for coming in today but it would help if we started from the beginning this morning. So, I'd like for you to tell me a little bit about why you wanted to come in and talk to someone.

C: O.K...Well, my husband and I separated pretty recently...Um, he moved out of our house...he's living with his sister now. I'm feeling a bit at a loss, I guess...you know, a little confused about what happened and what I want to do. We've been having problems for some time and...I guess I really need some help to make a decision about my marriage. You know, whether to stay separated and maybe get a divorce or to try to work things out and maybe get back together again. I guess I need to decide what I want for myself. Does that make any sense to you?

W: Yes...yes it does...This must be a very difficult time for you.

C: Yeah, it is.

W: It also sounds like you've been giving the possibility of divorce some pretty serious thought?

C: Yeah.

W: And your husband...is he thinking about divorce as well?

C: Well, things are pretty much up in the air right now but I don't think so...I think he would like for us to get back together. At least that's what he says.

W: I see...and how long have you been separated now?

C: Well, he moved out about a month ago. Yeah, exactly a month ago.

W: I see...and I take it that you and your husband have had some contact since the separation?

C: A little bit...

W: O.K.

C: ...a little bit.

W: All right...so you haven't reached a point where you're not talking to each other.

C: No.

W: And have you been pleased with the talks that you've had with your husband?

C: Well, things are strained...and he keeps asking me what I'd like to do about our marriage.

W: And what answer do you give him?

C: Well, so far I've told him that I don't know...that I'm thinking about it but that I've got to get some things worked out for myself first.

W: I see...When we first spoke on the phone, you mentioned that there had been problems for some time. When did some of the difficulties begin?

C: Lets see...I guess about six months ago...

W: uh, huh.

C: ...Yeah, about six months ago. But things weren't so bad at the start you know...It...its just gotten gradually worse until about a month ago...that's when he left.

W: Uh, huh...I see...and what was your husband's reason for moving out?

C: Well, I'm not really sure...I mean, I know we've been fighting a lot lately...and I mean a lot...you know, it just seemed like we were arguing constantly. It was awful. I think I brought most of it on. I've been on his case about everything lately. You know, its funny though...I would jump on him for something he'd done and then I would feel better for a while...until I started thinking about it and I'd ask myself 'why did you do that' and then I'd start to feel bad all over again and start in on him again...I mean he doesn't deserve the treatment he's been getting, you know...I really didn't like the way I was acting...I mean, I knew that what I was doing would lead to trouble but I couldn't seem to stop myself. I don't know...maybe I meant for this to happen. My husband tried to understand, you know, he tried to be patient but I guess it was just too much. Finally, he said he was going to leave...that he thought we needed some time

apart to sort things out. I wasn't in favor of it at first but I finally agreed...I mean, after all, I'm the one that's been the cause of all of this...You know, its funny but I knew it would come to this.

W: What do you mean?

C: Well, I guess I intended to bring things to a head...I knew that the way I was acting would force us to make some decisions about the problems we've been having. I guess I knew, too, that there was a chance he might leave if I kept acting that way. Nothing else seemed to be working for us, though, so it came to this.

W: Um...I see...and these arguments have been going on for about six months?

C: Yeah.

W: Can you give me some idea what the arguments have been about?

C: Just little things...it really didn't much matter...I mean, he could be a little bit later coming home from work than he said he would be...or it could be something that he said that I would take the wrong way...or it could be that he didn't pick something up around the house...it could be anything, you know. Just little things. It really hasn't taken very much to set me off lately...any little thing will do.

W: Mmmm...So...it sounds like there's been a lot of tension. You said that these difficulties started about six months ago. What was it that happened about that time? Did anything happen that may have led to all the tension?

C: Well...No, I don't think that anything happened...I mean nothing you could really put your finger on...That's just it...I started giving him grief over nothing...I really don't understand the way I've been acting...I mean I could understand it if he'd done something but he hasn't.

W: I see...and what has been your husband's reaction?...what has he said to you?

C: I don't know...I mean, he asks me what's wrong...you know, and he tries to talk to me...to get me to talk to him... but I just cut him off...you know, I just tell him to leave me alone, that I'll get it worked out...he's really been very understanding.

W: And how has he shown you that he's been understanding?

C: Well, you know, he's really tried to be patient with me...he's tried to understand but his patience has worn thin...I guess that's to be expected when someone is jumping down your throat for no apparent reason...I really don't understand this...my husband is really a good man and things have been really good for him lately.

W: What do you mean that things have been good for him lately?

C: Well...you know, he's been feeling really good...I mean other than the trouble I've been causing...Like, things have been going really well for him at work lately...you know, he's been pleased with his job and all...and, then, he's had more free time lately...you know, time to do the things he wants to do.

W: I see...so have the two of you have had more time together recently?

C: Well, yeah...I mean, we've had an opportunity to spend time together...that's pretty much been the case all along...you know, I mean, that's not any different than its been for us...we've always had time to spend together...The problem is that we don't really spend the time together, you know? I mean, lately when we're together I seem to spend all my time picking at him...giving him grief over some little thing or other...that's not his fault though...you know, he really doesn't have anything to do with this...Like I said, he's really been patient...he's really tried to understand...its been me...just me...I mean, I've really been giving him a rough time for no particular reason that I can see. I've just been acting badly and I've caused a lot of trouble for us.

W: Hmm...so, can you think of any recent changes in your life...anything different that you think might explain the difficulties you and your husband have been having?

C: No...no...nothing at all...things had been going well for us for the most part...I mean, I guess it sounds a little silly to be acting so badly when things seem to be going so well...I wish I understood this...I just don't know why I've been so hard to get along with...it just doesn't make any sense and it's really starting to get to me...you know?

W: Well...I can certainly understand why you feel confused...it sounds like you're uncomfortable with the way you've been acting and can't seem to find an explanation for it. What have you done to try to ease things...to come to terms with this?

C: I don't know...I mean, I've tried to talk to my husband but we just don't seem to be able to talk to each other any more...that's not his fault though...like I said, I think he's really tried...the problem is with me...I start to say something to him and then I stop myself...Its funny, though...I know that what I'm doing is just bringing on more trouble. I know that the way I'm acting just isn't helping any...and maybe I mean to do it...I just find myself pulling further and further away from him...Then I've tried talking to some friends about how I've been acting but what can they say?

W: I don't know...what do they say?

C: Well, for the most part they tell me to lighten up...that I'm really being hard on my husband...and myself...Everybody thinks he's wonderful and in many ways he is...my friends all say that he doesn't deserve this so they tell me to try to get my act together.

W: And have your friends been helpful to you? Have they been supportive?

C: Yeah, I guess so...I mean, I don't feel like anybody is really down on me. I even think my husband is ready to come back and try to work things out...I just don't know if that's what I want.

W: What would you like to see happen?

C: I don't honestly know...I mean, I don't think that my husband has done anything...I don't know why I've been treating him the way I have...I really think that until I get that sorted out there's not much point in our getting back together. I just want to work at figuring this thing out.

**W:** I see...earlier you said that you meant to bring things to a head to force some decisions about the marriage...that nothing else had been working. What did you mean?

**C:** Well, I've been acting pretty crummy lately and we've been having some problems...I guess I knew that the way I was acting would make us look at our problems. Like I said, we haven't been able to talk about things...so, maybe I've been acting this way to get us to make some decisions. I guess I intended to force the issue even at the risk of a separation.



## TAPE 4: COERCION

W: Good morning.

C: Good morning.

W: How are you today?

C: Fine, thank you.

W: I know that the circumstances here might make it a little more difficult for you to feel relaxed in talking about yourself...I just want to let you know how much I appreciate your willingness to have our interview taped this morning.

C: I'm glad to do it...I am a little nervous though.

W: If its any consolation, I'm a little nervous too...Like we said before, though, any time that you want to stop or want us to turn the tape off, just let me know.

C: O.K...Thanks.

W: Good...Let's get started...I know we talked a little on the phone about your reasons for coming in today but it would help if we started from the beginning this morning. So, I'd like for you to tell me a little bit about why you wanted to come in and talk to someone.

C: O.K...Well, my husband and I separated pretty recently...Um, he moved out of our house...he's living with his sister now. I'm feeling a bit at a loss, I guess...you know, a little confused about what happened and what I want to do. We've been having problems for some time and...I guess I really need some help to make a decision about my marriage. You know, whether to stay separated and maybe get a divorce or to try to work things out and maybe get back together again. I guess I need to decide what I want for myself. Does that make any sense to you?

W: Yes...yes it does...This must be a very difficult time for you.

C: Yeah, it is.

W: It also sounds like you've been giving the possibility of divorce some pretty serious thought?

C: Yeah.

W: And your husband...is he thinking about divorce as well?

C: Well, things are pretty much up in the air right now but I don't think so...I think he would like for us to get back together. At least that's what he says.

W: I see...and how long have you been separated now?

C: Well, he moved out about a month ago. Yeah, exactly a month ago.

W: I see...and I take it that you and your husband have had some contact since the separation?

C: A little bit...

W: O.K.

C: ...a little bit.

W: All right...so you haven't reached a point where you're not talking to each other.

C: No.

W: And have you been pleased with the talks that you've had with your husband?

C: Well, things are strained...and he keeps asking me what I'd like to do about our marriage.

W: And what answer do you give him?

C: Well, so far I've told him that I don't know...that I'm thinking about it but that I've got to get some things worked out for myself first.

W: I see...When we first spoke on the phone, you mentioned that there had been problems for some time. When did some of the difficulties begin?

C: Lets see...I guess about six months ago...

W: uh, huh.

C: ...Yeah, about six months ago. But things weren't so bad at the start you know...It...its just gotten gradually worse until about a month ago...that's when he left.

W: Uh, huh...I see...and what was your husband's reason for moving out?

C: Well, we were fighting a lot. I mean, it just seemed like we were arguing constantly. It was awful. I think I brought most of it on...but my husband sure hasn't been helping things any...do you know what he said the other day? He said I was going to have to cut down on my spending...and he just spent two hundred dollars on a new sports jacket...can you believe that? I know money's getting tight and we need to watch things but I don't spend much on myself...and I don't really begrudge him the jacket either...I know he needs to look nice for work...it's just that we agreed to talk over any major expenses...right now two hundred dollars is pretty major and he never said a word to me about it...I don't know...that's not the problem...I mean we were arguing so much that I guess it just got to be too much. I guess I knew that all my

arguing would lead to trouble, that it might lead us to separate. I don't know...maybe I meant for this to happen. Finally, he said he was going to leave...that he thought we needed some time apart to sort things out. I wasn't in favor of it at first but I finally agreed...I mean, after all, I'm the one that's been the cause of all this...You know, it's funny but I knew it would come to this.

W: What do you mean?

C: Well, I guess I intended to bring things to a head...I knew that the way I was acting would force us to make some decisions about the problems we've been having. I guess I knew, too, that there was a chance he might leave if I kept acting that way. Nothing else seemed to be working for us, though, so it came to this.

W: Umm...I see...and these arguments have been going on for the past six months?

C: Yeah.

W: Can you give me some idea as to what the arguments have been about?

C: Just little things...it really didn't much matter...I mean, like his buying that jacket. Or maybe he's a little bit later coming home from work than he said he would be...he's been doing that a lot lately...or he doesn't pick up something around the house...or its something he says that I take the wrong way...It could be anything...you know, just little things.

W: And what does your husband have to say about these arguments?

C: What can he say? He doesn't like it and he tells me I need to ease off...I mean, I know I've been giving it to him pretty good lately but things haven't been going so well for us lately...we've been having a lot of problems and all he does is to try to stay out of the way. He's pretty much stopped talking to me about anything except routine, day to day stuff.

W: I see...and has there been anything else that the two of you have been having difficulty over?

C: Well...yeah, I guess...you know, money's become a little tight recently....well, maybe a lot tight and we've had some fights about money.

W: So...you've been under some financial strain lately. What is it that's brought on money problems?

C: A bunch of things...I mean, we bought a house a while back...you know, not a new house but one we thought we could fix up...we bought the house thinking that I'd get a promotion soon, you know, a new position and a good raise, but now it looks like that may not work out...if we don't bring in more money its going to be hard to meet our mortgage payments...so, we argue about that, you know, argue about money.

W: I see...so, buying the new house has really put a burden on your finances...Are you likely to lose the house?

- C: I don't know...I don't think so...I mean, it really depends on what we decide to do about staying together...I guess if we stay separated we'll try to sell it. I don't know what we'll do if we get back together.
- W: Ummm...you mentioned anticipating a promotion but you're concerned now that it may not work out...what happened?
- C: Well...I've been with the same company for six years and I was due for promotion to department supervisor...but now, now the company has had to lay off some people...you know, they've had some reversals lately...I don't think I'll lose my job but its a possibility...at the very least there won't be any promotion and I probably won't even get a raise this year. We bought the house, you know, and we spent a little more than we could really afford because I had been told that I could expect a promotion this year...now we're saddled with a mortgage payment that really eats us up...and all we do is fight about it.
- W: It sounds like things haven't worked out the way you expected them to all the way around...you must be disappointed about events at work.
- C: Yeah, I'm disappointed all right.
- W: And what do you plan to do about your job?
- C: Well...I'll stay where I am...unless things turn really sour, I'll keep my job...I can't afford to quit and I don't think I'd be able to find anything as good as I've got now, even without the promotion. Maybe if I stick it out, things will turn around...I don't know.
- W: I see...and do you think that a lot of the arguments that you and your husband have been having stem from your financial problems?
- C: Well...I guess that's what set things off...you know, that and my troubles at work...its been such a hard time for me, you know...I've been trying to figure out what we can do...you know, and wondering whether my job will last or not. We were so excited about the new house but now its just a big disappointment...so we argue about that too...you know, argue about the house. That's not quite accurate...we don't argue, I argue.
- W: What do you mean?
- C: Like I said, I'm the one that started all of this...I brought it all on...you know, I've been jumping on him for every little thing...I know we've been under a lot of stress lately, both of us, but I don't think I've handled it very well...maybe I've been under a lot of pressure about things...maybe I've blown things out of proportion...you know, maybe that's the reason I've been so upset.
- W: Uh, huh...How do you think you could have handled all this differently?

**C:** Well...you know, I could have been more relaxed and not taken things out on him so much...I guess our money problems might have worked out but it just didn't seem like we were getting anywhere, you know...we just kept arguing...I mean, I've been upset and I think I've upset him too...you know, I've not been fair jumping all over him...I guess I realized that we were headed for trouble and like I said maybe I meant for this to happen...but I really think I've caused a lot more trouble than we really needed.

**W:** I see...you said that you meant to bring things to a head to force some decisions about the marriage...that nothing else had been working. What did you mean?

**C:** Well, I've been acting pretty crummy lately and we've been having some problems...I guess I knew that the way I was acting would make us look at our problems. Like I said, we haven't been able to talk about things much lately...so, maybe I've been acting this way to get us to make some decisions. There's been so much happening that's put pressure on us that I just thought that I had to do something. I guess I intended to force the issue even at the risk of a separation.

**APPENDIX B**

**STIMULUS ITEM RATING INSTRUMENTS**

Please circle the number to the right of each statement which best reflects your response to the statement

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = neither agree nor disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

1. The transcript shows that the client thinks she caused the problems which led to the marital separation. 1 2 3 4 5
  
2. The transcript shows that the client thinks she knew that her behavior might lead to a separation. 1 2 3 4 5
  
3. The transcript shows that the client thinks she intended to act in a manner which might lead to the separation. 1 2 3 4 5
  
4. The transcript shows that there are factors outside of the client's marriage which might have led her to behave as she did. 1 2 3 4 5
  
5. The transcript appears to reflect an actual client interview. 1 2 3 4 5

Please add any comments or suggestions which you feel would improve the transcript either in the quality of the interview portrayed or in conveying the information intended.

Please circle the number to the right of each statement which best reflects your response to the statement

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = neither agree nor disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

1. The transcript shows that there are factors outside of the client's marriage which might have led her to behave as she did. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The transcript appears to reflect an actual client interview. 1 2 3 4 5

Please add any comments or suggestions which you feel would improve the transcript either in the quality of the interview portrayed or in conveying the information intended.



**APPENDIX C**

**PILOT TEST INSTRUMENT**

This study is concerned with professional social worker's perceptions of marital disruption. You will shortly listen to an audiotape of an assessment interview which represents the first meeting between a client and a social worker at a counseling center located in the Cleveland metropolitan area. The roles of client and worker are portrayed by professional actresses and the tapes were produced in a recording studio. The content of the interview, however, is a literal transcription of the actual interview. The decision to use actresses rather than presenting the actual interview itself was undertaken for several reasons. First, it is the content of the interview which is of interest for the research rather than the interview itself. Second, the use of actresses provides an additional guarantee of confidentiality for both client and worker. Finally, a professionally produced tape eliminates any factors (i.e., background noise, poor recording quality) which may interfere with the content of the interview. Again, the actresses are reading a transcript of the interview just as it took place. The segment of the session which you will hear occurs at the beginning of the interview proper and the interview continues beyond the portion of the tape you will hear.

After listening to the tape you will be asked to respond to a series of statements about the client, her situation and the assessment itself. You will also be asked a few brief questions about yourself. Please respond carefully to each item.

Before beginning, it would be helpful for you to know just a little about each of the participants:

**The Client:** Jane S is 29 years old and has been married for five years. There are no children. She is employed full time in the accounting department of a large corporation in the Cleveland area.

**The Worker:** Barbara N. earned a B.S.W. in 1974 and an M.S.W. in 1978. She has practiced professionally in clinical settings for 11 years, including two years as a senior clinical supervisor.

Thank you for your participation.

On the following five pages you will find a series of statements which refer to the audiotape you just heard. Please circle the number to the right of each statement which best reflects your response to the statement

- 5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Ms. S was coerced into acting as she did by events beyond her control. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Ms. S was purposeful in her actions toward her husband.                | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I think that Ms. S has told her story accurately.                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Ms. S really seems to know what's going on in her marriage.            | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Ms. S is the direct cause of the problems in her marriage.             | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. The prospects of Ms. S working out her problems are quite good.        | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. I think Ms. S is a person I could enjoy getting to know.               | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Ms. S probably realized that her behavior would lead to disharmony.    | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. The marital separation was the result of Ms. S's behavior.             | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Ms. S seems to really understand her situation.                       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. The chances for the successful treatment of Ms. S are quite good.     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. Outside factors forced Ms. S to act in the manner described.          | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. This situation can be resolved with appropriate help.                 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. Ms. S should have known her behavior would lead marital problems.     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. Ms. S can resolve her difficulties with professional help.            | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. With help Ms. S has good prospects of resolving her difficulties.     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. The source of the separation is to be found in Ms. S's actions.       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. Ms. S caused her marriage to break up.                                | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. Ms. S acted intentionally to bring about the problems described.      | 1 2 3 4 5 |

5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. Ms. S knew a separation would derive from her behavior.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Ms. S meant to act as she did.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Ms. S acted purposefully in bringing about her marital problems.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Ms. S is the kind of person I am attracted to.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. The treatment outlook for Ms. S is most favorable.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. The separation resulted from Ms. S's behavior.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Ms. S has told her story with honesty.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. Ms. S wanted to bring about the problems she described.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Ms. S has been open and honest in describing her situation.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Ms. S seems to have a pleasant personality.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Ms. S brought about the rift in her marriage on purpose.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Ms. S has a good chance of overcoming her problems.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Ms. S deliberately caused problems in her marriage.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. I would be willing to engage Ms. S in treatment.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Ms. S's problems appear amenable to treatment.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. I enjoy working with people like Ms. S.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. I think that intervention with Ms. S would be successful.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Ms. S most likely perceived the potential effects of her behavior.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. Ms. S has been forthcoming in describing her marital situation.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Ms. S was justified in her actions due to outside pressures.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. I think I could help Ms. S resolve the problems in her marriage.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. Ms. S was driven to act as she did by factors outside of her control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 42. Ms. created her marital strife.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Ms. S's behavior brought about the problems in her marriage.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. People like Ms. S are generally pleasant to work with in treatment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. Ms. S's difficulties have been provoked by her behavior.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. Ms. S's behavior engendered the marital problems she describes.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. The prospects for a favorable treatment outcome are quite good.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. Ms. S is an agreeable sort of person.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. Ms. S has accurately portrayed her situation.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. I would find working with Ms. S to be pleasant.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. Ms. S should have known that trouble was coming.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52. Ms. S should have been clear as to the effects of her actions.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. Ms. S probably realized the potential consequences of her actions.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. The basis for the marital separation is Ms. S's behavior.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55. Ms. S meant to cause the problems she described.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. The separation reflects deliberate actions on Ms. S's part.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. Ms. S knew that her actions would cause her husband to leave her.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58. Ms. S behaved as she did with a clear intention.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59. I think that treatment for Ms. S would have a favorable outcome.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 60. Ms. S acted intentionally to get her husband to leave her.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 61. I believe Ms. S to have been honest in telling her story.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 62. I find Ms. S to be a likable person.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 63. I would enjoy working with Ms. S in treatment.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- 5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 64. Ms. S is the kind of person who is generally truthful.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 65. In this case treatment would most likely succeed.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 66. Ms. S is the originator of the problems described.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 67. Ms. S has been honest with the worker.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 68. Ms. S should have foreseen the effect of her behavior.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 69. Ms. S's behavior may be excused under the circumstances.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 70. Ms. S appears to be an interesting person.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 71. Ms. S acted as she did due to forces outside of her marriage.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 72. Ms. S acted in a deliberate manner to bring her marital problems to the fore. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 73. I think Ms. S has a good grasp of her situation.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 74. Ms. S's behavior was compelled by forces beyond her control.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 75. I think Ms. S and I are similar in many respects.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 76. The problems described by Ms. S can be resolved through treatment.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 77. Ms. S had to act as she did given her circumstances.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 78. Ms. S was aware of the consequences of her actions.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 79. Ms. S was made to act as she did by forces in the environment.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 80. Ms. S has presented her situation accurately.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 81. Ms. S was the cause of her husband's decision to leave.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 82. I think Ms. S has been open with the worker.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 83. Ms. S can satisfactorily resolve her problems.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 84. Ms. S really had no choice in acting the way she did.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- 5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 85. Ms. S seemed to understand the potential consequences of her actions.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 86. Factors outside of Ms. S's marriage led her to act as she did.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 87. Ms. S could tell that a separation would result from her behavior.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 88. The potential for a separation was known by Ms. S in advance.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 89. Ms. S's behavior is understandable under the circumstances.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 90. Ms. S behaved as she did on purpose to cause her marriage to break up. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 91. Ms. S has personal problems which caused her difficulties.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 92. Working with Ms. S would be an enjoyable experience.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 93. Ms. S impresses me as a forthright and honest person.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 94. Ms. S could probably see that her actions might cause a breakup.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 95. I think that Ms. S has been truthful in her presentation.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 96. Ms. S is the kind of person I would like to know personally.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 97. Ms. S was most likely conscious of the effects of her behavior.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 98. Environmental forces compelled Ms. S's actions.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 99. Ms. S clearly intended to bring about the problems in her marriage.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 100. The problems Ms. S describes originated in her behavior.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 101. Ms. S acted as she did in order to cause her husband to leave her.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 102. I would enjoy meeting Ms. S under other circumstances.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 103. Ms. S's actions are behind her marital problems.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 104. Ms. S was compelled in her actions.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 105. Ms. S's actions were forced by factors outside the relationship.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

APPENDIX D

EXPERIMENTAL INSTRUMENT



This study is concerned with professional social worker's perceptions of marital disruption. You will shortly listen to an audiotape of an assessment interview which represents the first meeting between a client and a student social worker at a counseling center located in the Cleveland metropolitan area. The roles of client and worker are portrayed by professional actresses and the tapes were professionally produced in a recording studio. The content of the interview, however, is a literal transcription of the actual interview, with the exception of the deletion of name references and the elimination of vocalized pauses. The decision to use actresses rather than presenting the actual interview itself was undertaken for several reasons. First, it is the content of the interview, rather than the interview itself, which is of interest for the research. Second, the use of actresses provides an additional guarantee of confidentiality for both client and worker. Finally, a professionally produced tape eliminates any factors (i.e., background noise, poor recording quality) which may interfere with the content of the interview. Again, the actresses are reading a transcript of the interview just as it took place. The segment of the session which you will hear occurs at the beginning of the interview proper and the interview continues beyond the portion of the tape you will hear.

After listening to the tape you will be asked to respond to a series of statements about the client and her situation. You will also be asked a few brief questions about yourself. Please respond carefully to each item.

Before beginning, it would be helpful for you to know just a little about each of the participants:

**The client:** Jane S is 29 years old and has been married for five years. There are no children. She is employed full time in the accounting department of a large corporation in the Cleveland area.

**The worker:** Barbara N was completing her first year of graduate study in social work at the time of this interview. She earned a bachelor's degree in education in 1978 and taught in special education for 8 years prior to beginning the present degree program.

Finally, in considering that this is a student interview, I would ask that you make every effort not to judge the quality of the interview. Again, it is the content of the interview which bears importance for the research.

Thank you for your participation.

On the following three pages you will find a series of statements which refer to the audiotape you just heard. Please circle the number to the right of each statement which best reflects your response to the statement as follows:

- 5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ms. S could tell that a separation would result from her behavior.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I think that treatment for Ms. S would have a favorable outcome.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. With help Ms. S has good prospects of resolving her difficulties.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I think that Ms. S has told her story accurately.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I would enjoy meeting Ms. S under other circumstances.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Job stress often underlies marital conflict.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The chances for the successful treatment of Ms. S are quite good.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Ms. S was made to act as she did by forces in the environment.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Ms. S probably realized the potential consequences of her actions.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Ms. S has told her story with honesty.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Ms. S caused her marriage to break up.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I suspect that Ms. S and her husband have had long standing problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Ms. S acted purposefully in bringing about her marital problems.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. The source of the separation is to be found in Ms. S's actions.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Ms. S was most likely conscious of the effects of her behavior.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Ms. S was the cause of her husband's decision to leave.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I would find working with Ms. S to be pleasant.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Conjoint treatment is the best approach in this case.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Ms. S has been open and honest in describing her situation.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. | I find Ms. S to be a likable person.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. | I think that Ms. S has been truthful in her presentation.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. | The potential for a separation was known by Ms. S in advance.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. | Working with Ms. S would be an enjoyable experience.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. | Success with Ms. S will depend on the strength of her support system.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. | The prospects for a favorable treatment outcome are quite good.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. | Ms. S's behavior was compelled by forces beyond her control.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. | Outside factors forced Ms. S to act in the manner described.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. | Ms. S meant to cause the problems she described.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. | Environmental forces compelled Ms. S's actions.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. | This will most likely be a long term treatment situation.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. | People like Ms. S are generally pleasant to work with in treatment.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. | Ms. S meant to act as she did.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. | The separation reflects deliberate actions on Ms. S's part.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. | Ms. S has been honest with the worker.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. | Ms. S was aware of the consequences of her actions.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. | It would be best to interview Ms. S's husband before proceeding further. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. | Ms. S behaved as she did with a clear intention.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. | In this case treatment would likely succeed.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. | Factors outside of Ms. S's marriage led her to act as she did.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- 5 = strongly agree  
4 = agree  
3 = neither agree nor disagree  
2 = disagree  
1 = strongly disagree

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 40. | I believe Ms. S to have been honest in telling her story.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. | The marital separation was the result of Ms. S's behavior.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. | Marital disruptions such as this are difficult treatment cases. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. | Ms. S acted as she did due to forces outside of her marriage.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. | Ms. S has accurately portrayed her situation.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. | Ms. S is the originator of the problems described.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thank you. Finally, I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

1. What is your sex? (circle one number below)

0 MALE

1 FEMALE

2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your race? (circle one number below)

1 CAUCASIAN

2 BLACK

3 HISPANIC

4 ASIAN

5 AMERICAN INDIAN

6 OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What year did you receive your Master's degree in Social Work? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many years post Master's social work experience do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your present practice arrangement? (circle one number below)

1 AGENCY BASED PRACTICE ONLY

2 PRIVATE PRACTICE ONLY

3 A COMBINATION OF AGENCY BASED AND PRIVATE PRACTICE.

7. How many years have you worked at your present agency (if applicable)? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many years have you been in private practice only (if applicable)? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your primary agency responsibility ? (circle one number below)
- 1 DIRECT SERVICE
  - 2 INDIRECT SERVICE (I.E., TRAINING, CONSULTATION)
  - 3 SUPERVISION/PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
  - 4 ADMINISTRATION
  - 5 OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your preferred method of practice? (circle one number below)
- 1 INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT
  - 2 GROUP TREATMENT
  - 3 MARITAL/FAMILY TREATMENT
  - 4 OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_
11. What is your theoretical orientation to practice? (circle one number below)
- 1 PSYCHODYNAMIC/PSYCHOANALYTIC
  - 2 HUMANISTIC
  - 3 COGNITIVE/COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL
  - 4 BEHAVIORAL
  - 5 GESTALT
  - 6 SOCIAL LEARNING
  - 7 OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation.

**APPENDIX E**

**MEMORANDUM OF APPROVAL**  
**FROM HUMAN STUDIES COMMITTEE**

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY REVIEW COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN STUDIES

TO: Jim McDonell/Martin Whiteman (Columbia) DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL SASS

SUBJECT: Notice of:  Review and Approval

Exemption

The Committee has reviewed your proposal entitled: Attributional Influences in the Social Worker's Perception of the Client's Problems

Please be advised that with respect to (1) the rights and welfare of the individual(s) involved; (2) the appropriateness of the methods to be used to secure informed consent; and (3) the risks and potential benefits of the investigation, the Committee considers your project:

Exempt

Fully acceptable

Acceptable with reservations noted\*

Not acceptable for reasons noted\*

Follow-up: The Committee wishes to have a status report on this project on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Remarks:

Date April 16, 1987

Signed Charlotte L. Horton  
For the Committee  
Charlotte L. Horton

For ORA Use

Type Project:  New  Renewal: Human Risk  Yes  No

Source of Support:  Outside Funding  Departmental or Other

Agency (Potential) \_\_\_\_\_ Agency No. \_\_\_\_\_

Are any of the following involved:  Yes  No

Minors,  Fetuses,  Abortuses,  Pregnant Women,  Prisoners,

Mentally Retarded,  Mentally Disabled Subjects

If "yes" please mark the appropriate category.

cc: Faculty Advisor

Dean

Department Chairman (or Investigator)



**APPENDIX F**

**MEMORANDUM SOLICITING PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

Dear Colleague

I am presently conducting research for my dissertation and I am looking for Master's level Social Workers with two years post Master's practice experience who would be willing to take part in a study of Social Worker's perceptions of marital disruption. The study would require that you listen to a twelve minute segment of an interview between a worker and a client and then respond to a set of 45 items concerning the client and her situation. There are also a few brief demographic questions. The entire process would take approximately 20 minutes of your time. Your participation is, of course, wholly voluntary and your responses to the questionnaire will not be associated in any manner with your name. In return for your participation, I will provide you with a brief written report of the results, if you so desire.

If you are interested in taking part in the study, please fill in the blanks on this form and return it to (NAME). She will then forward the forms to me and I will contact you to arrange a time and place for the study at your convenience. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (216) 368-6682. Thank you.

Sincerely,

James R. McDonell  
Instructor in Social Work  
School of Applied Social Sciences  
Case Western Reserve University

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

WORK PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

HOURS AVAILABLE AT YOUR AGENCY:

MONDAY \_\_\_\_\_

TUESDAY \_\_\_\_\_

WEDNESDAY \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY \_\_\_\_\_

FRIDAY \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK HERE IF YOU WOULD LIKE A REPORT OF THE RESULTS. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORMS**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

I hereby consent to participate in the research project under the direction of James R. McDonell. I understand that my participation will consist of listening to a 12 minute (approximately) audio-tape of an interview between a social worker and a client and responding to the items contained in the research questionnaire. I understand that I will not be asked to perform in any other manner. I also understand that my consent is given voluntarily and may be withdrawn at any time without prior notification. I further understand that my consent to participate in this research will be held in confidence and that my responses to the research questionnaire will not be identified with my name.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTAL CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

I have been informed as to the true nature of the research project entitled "Attributional Influences in the Social Worker's Assessment of the Client's Problem" and fully understand that the interview tape presented to me as part of the research was constructed for the purposes of the research and was not an actual interview. With this knowledge, I freely give my consent for the use of my responses to the research questionnaire by James R. McDonell for the purposes of the research as explained. This consent is given with the understanding that my participation in the research will be held in confidence and that my responses to the research questionnaire will not be identified with my name.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX H**

**DEBRIEFING PROTOCOL**

## DEBRIEFING

Thank you for your participation. There are two things I need to talk to you about. First, the study does not concern social worker's perceptions of marital disruption. Rather, it concerns the effect of differential information in regard to a model of attributed responsibility on social worker's attributions of responsibility, clinical judgment, attraction to the client and belief in the client's truthfulness. I can explain this further in a moment.

Second, the tape you heard does not in any sense represent an actual client interview. Rather, it was wholly constructed for the purposes of the research. There are four different tapes and you heard tape number \_\_\_\_\_. In the first tape, the client says that she caused the problems in her marriage but did not know that her husband might leave her and did not intend her husband to leave her. In the second tape, the client says that she caused the problems in her marriage and knew that her husband might leave her but did not intend her husband to leave her. In the third tape, the client says that she caused the problems in her marriage, knew that her husband might leave her and intended to bring things to a head. In the fourth tape, the client says the same things as in tape three but presents some information about outside stresses which might have accounted for her behavior. These are job jeopardy and some financial pressures.

Each of these tapes, then, expresses a different dimension of a model of attributed responsibility: cause, knowledge, intention and coercion. The study, then, concerns the effect that differential information in regard to cause, knowledge, intention and coercion as presented by the client has on a social worker's attributions of cause, knowledge, intention and coercion and the effect this information has on social worker's judgments as to the potential efficacy of social work intervention and attraction to the client. I have a more detailed explanation of the study if you would like to have it. Also, if you have any further questions about the study, please feel free to call Jim McDonell at 368-6682.

Now, I would ask that you read and sign a supplemental consent form which states that you are now aware of the true nature of the study and are aware that the tape was not an actual interview and you continue to consent to participation. (if data remains to be collected in the agency, ask people not to talk about the study to others as it will contaminate the sample).

(If anybody asks about the need for the deception, explain that disguising the true nature of the study is necessary to avoid sensitizing subjects to the theoretical model and that misleading in regard to the interview is necessary in an effort to emulate, in as much as possible, actual interview conditions. People are more likely to respond as if it were an actual interview if they believe it to be so.)