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An Investigation of the Relationship Between Homework Assignments in Counseling and Perceptions of Specific Counselor Characteristics

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**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS IN COUNSELING AND
PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIFIC COUNSELOR
CHARACTERISTICS**

by
George T. Starrett

**A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Doctor of Education
Department of Counselor Education
and Counseling Psychology**

**Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 1996**

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS IN COUNSELING AND
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CHARACTERISTICS**

George T. Starrett, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1996

This study investigated the relationship between the use of homework assignments in counseling and perceived counselor characteristics. An analog design was used with 60 introductory psychology students serving as subjects. One of two video taped counseling vignettes was presented to the two subject groups. The counselor depicted in the control group tape did not use homework assignments, while homework assignments were used by the counselor depicted in the treatment group tape.

After viewing the one of the two tapes the subjects completed the Counselor Evaluation Scale (CES) and the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S) to provide ratings of each of the two counselors on the dimensions of effectiveness, expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness.

Evaluation of group mean differences using independent sample t-tests indicated no significant differences between group mean scores at the .05 level of significance.

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George T. Starrett

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of counselors in relationship to clients' outcomes has historically been an important area of interest in the research and clinical literature. Counselor effectiveness is most commonly measured by clients' perceptions of counselor influence. The study of counselor influence variables associated with outcomes of therapy has been widely reviewed in the research literature. Many of these initial studies area were based upon theories of opinion or attitude change (Festinger, 1957; Festinger & Aronson, 1960). To a large extent, opinion change research was based upon Festinger's (1957) theory of social comparison processes.

Festinger proposed that individuals are more likely to receive information favorably from someone that they see as similar to themselves. Festinger and Aronson (1960) suggested that when individuals find that an opinion advocated by a credible communicator is discrepant from their own, they experience dissonance. The greater the discrepancy between their opinion and the opinion of the credible communicator, the greater the level of expressed dissonance. In order to resolve their dissonance, individuals have four basic choices: (1) change their

opinion to bring it closer to the communicator, (2) change the communicator's opinion to bring it closer to their own, (3) seek support for their own opinion, or (4) discredit the communicator to invalidate the communicator's opinion and make it less meaningful.

The fact that a relationship exists between the credibility of communicators and the manner in which information is received by their audience was reported by other early investigators (Arnet, Davidson, & Lewis, 1931; Haiman, 1949; Hovland & Weiss, 1952). Byrne and Ramey (1965) proposed a mathematical linear relationship between (a) the amount of positive reinforcement received from a communicator divided by the degree of negative reinforcement received from a communicator and (b) perceptions of communicator attractiveness.

A central claim in much of the early research was that the degree of similarity between the counselor and the client have differential effects on the perception of the counselor by the client. Gigg and Goldstein (1957) described the importance of obtaining an evaluation of the client's reaction to the counselor and to the counseling process. These authors suggested that in order to understand what constitutes successful and effective counseling, it is important to identify the factors of the process that lead to positive outcomes. Goldstein, Heller, and Sechrist (1966) argued that the extrapolation of certain principles and research findings in social psychology literature can increase our understanding of counseling and our effectiveness as counselors.

Strong (1968) proposed that the activity of counseling is a process of

interpersonal influence, and that specific factors or variables are important in determining the outcome of this process. This led to a variety of studies in which investigators became more interested in those variables which mediate the interpersonal influence process. The manner in which the client perceives the counselor has been identified as an important factor, and has been the focus of many investigations. Investigators have reported a variety of variables which serve to influence the client's perception of the counselor. The relationship between the counselor's perceived reputation as an expert (Aronson, Turner, & Carlsmith, 1963); the counselor's objective evidence of expertness such as diplomas, awards or certificates (Bergin, 1962; Bockner & Inskso, 1966); the counselor's title (Conoley & Bonner, 1971; Scheid, 1976); the counselor's own level of self-disclosure (Curtis, 1982); the counselor's age (Helms & Rode, 1982); the counselor's attire (Stillman & Resnick, 1972); the counselor's fee (LaCrosse & Barak, 1976); and the counselor's gender and group affiliation (Subich, 1984) have been reported to influence the clients' perceptions of counselors.

The studies reviewed have typically investigated characteristics or traits of the counselor that serve to influence clients' perceptions of counselors. Fewer reported studies have investigated the relationship between specific counselor behaviors, or therapeutic intervention techniques, and clients' perceptions of counselors' effectiveness. Counselor behaviors which have been investigated include counselors' positive verbal statements (Strong, Taylor, Bratton, & Loper, 1971), counselors' smiling and eye contact directed toward the client (Barak &

Lacrosse, 1975), note-taking during the counseling session (Miller, 1993) and counselors' use of positive and negative self-involving statements (Anderson & Anderson, 1985). No published studies have investigated the relationship between the discussion of therapeutic homework assignments and perceptions of counselor effectiveness.

Strong's 1968 theoretical framework of social influence has been the basis for a majority of research investigating client perceptions of counselor effectiveness. Strong was one of the first investigators to identify the social influence factors as important variables which contribute significantly to the outcome of the counseling process. Specifically, he hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between the extent to which a counselor is perceived by a client as being expert, attractive and trustworthy and the degree to which a client is willing to receive information from the counselor in a positive manner, thus increasing the likelihood that the counseling process will be successful. Strong's theory suggests that expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness are independent social influence factors which affect client's perceptions of counselors' effectiveness. A number of studies have provided support for this theoretical framework (Browning, 1966; Carter, 1978; Curtis, 1982; Kaul & Schmidt, 1971; Littrell, Caffrey, & Hopper, 1987; Ponterroto & Furlong, 1985; Redfern, Darcy, & Dryden, 1993; Stillman & Resnick, 1972; Strong & Schmidt, 1970).

While the results of several investigations have supported the idea that expertness, attractiveness and expertness can be measured as independent factors,

other investigators' have reported results indicating that there are significant inter-relationships between the the three factors. Tryon's (1987) study indicated that trustworthiness is not a separate social influence factor, but is incorporated into expertness. Furlong's (1985) review of counselor effectiveness measurement suggests that a number of results challenge the premise of independent categories of social influence factors. Atkinson and Wampold's (1982) results indicated that counselor effectiveness is a global measure, and measures of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness are inter-related factors which contribute to this global measure. Other investigators have reported results supporting this hypothesis (Epperson & Pencik, 1985; LaCrosse, 1980; LaCrosse & Barak, 1976; Zamostny, Corrigan, & Eggert, 1981).

The extensive literature concerning counselor effectiveness has been viewed primarily from two theoretical perspectives. First, counselor effectiveness has been conceptualized as the extent to which counselor expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness, as separate constructs, influence client perceptions of the counselor. Second, counselor effectiveness has been conceptualized as a global measure consisting of many inter-related factors, which includes expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness. Few studies have examined these two theoretical perspectives simultaneously.

A large majority of the research measuring counselor effectiveness has focused upon manipulating general characteristics of counselors rather than on specific behaviors of counselors. A limited number of studies have investigated

the use of homework in counseling, and these studies have measured the efficacy of homework assignments as an adjunctive component to therapy. No published studies investigating the relationship between the use of homework assignments during counseling and clients' perceived level of counselor effectiveness were reviewed.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the relationship between the discussion of therapeutic homework assignments during an analog counseling session and perceived counselor effectiveness among introductory psychology students in a small mid-western community college. An analog counseling design using video taped counseling sessions was used. Ratings were obtained with the Counselor Effectiveness Scale (CES; Ivey & Authier, 1978) to measure perceived global counselor effectiveness. The Counselor Rating Form-Short Version (CRF-S; Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983) was used to measure research participants' perceptions of counselor expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness. Because some investigations have supported the hypothesis of the independence of each of the three social influence factors and other investigations have reported that these three factors are inter-related, this study has provided one measure of overall perceived effectiveness (CES) and one measure which assessed perceived expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness as independent social influence factors (CRF-S).

Definition of Key Terms

In this investigation counselor effectiveness was defined as subjects' perceptions of counselor attributes which influence interpersonal processes. Expertness was defined as the client's belief that the counselor possesses information which allows the client to obtain valid conclusions about, and deal effectively with their problems (Strong, 1968; Strong & Dixon, 1971).

Attractiveness was defined as the client's positive feelings about, liking and admiration of, desire to obtain approval of, and desire to become more like the counselor (Strong, 1968; Strong & Nixon, 1971). Trustworthiness was defined as a client's belief that counselors consistently demonstrate positive mood, interest, attentiveness, and confidentiality as well as topical and factual information. Trustworthiness results in the counselor being perceived as a legitimate influence (Raven, 1965) or a socially sanctioned source of assistance in problems of living (Strong, 1968).

Counselor effectiveness was operationalized using two separate rating scales in this study. The CRF-S (Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983) is based on the assumption that counselor effectiveness is comprised of three independent social influence factors: expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. The CES (Ivey & Authier, 1978) is based on the hypothesis that counselor effectiveness is a unitary, or global, construct. The theoretical underpinnings of both instruments suggest that perceived counselor effectiveness is related to counseling processes and

outcomes.

In this study, counselor effectiveness, as an overall measure, and the social influence factors of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness were assessed using two separate rating scale instruments. As a result, a measure of overall perceived effectiveness, as well as the perceived levels of the specific social influence variables which are believed to mediate the counseling process, were obtained. A review of the literature is provided to demonstrate previous research practices and outcomes in studies investigating counselor effectiveness factors and client's perceptions of counselors' behavior in relation to specific counselor characteristics or behaviors.

For this investigation, homework assignments were defined as the counselor instructing the client to record self-report data on a daily basis for the period prior to the next scheduled counseling session.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this investigation was to evaluate the relationship between perceived counselor effectiveness and the presence or absence of therapeutic homework assignments to clients during videotaped analogue counseling sessions among students enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a small midwestern community college. Counselor effectiveness was measured both as a unitary construct using the CES and as a construct comprising three independent dimensions of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness by using the

CRF-S. Null hypotheses were stated and were evaluated at the .05 level of significance. Independent sample t -tests were used to evaluate the obtained data.

Hypotheses

Four null hypotheses were investigated in this study. The hypotheses examined the effects of the treatment group being presented a video taped vignette of a counselor discussing the use of homework assignments during a counseling session.

Null Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant differences between control and treatment group scores on the Counselor Evaluation Scale (CES) which is a measure of overall perceived effectiveness.

Null Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant differences between control and treatment group scores on the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S) on the dimension of expertness.

Null Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant differences between control and treatment group scores on the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S) on the dimension of attractiveness.

Null Hypothesis 4: There will be no significant differences between control and treatment group scores on the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S) on the dimension of trustworthiness.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The study of factors which influence clients' perceptions of counselors is an important area of investigation. The currently available literature is based upon early investigations of opinion change research. Initial research in this area included several investigations directed toward identifying factors which influence subjects' perceptions of communicators or counselors.

The initial investigations in this area contributed to the development of many of the early theoretical assumptions in the area of counseling. Subsequent investigations were targeted toward identifying factors or traits which contribute to an individual being viewed favorably by their audience, thus having the ability to influence the opinion of their audience. More recent research has led to the identification of specific factors, identified as social influence factors, which are important in the process of counseling. These factors determine the extent to which counselors are perceived by clients as being expert, trustworthy, or attractive. The availability of this information has been important to counselor training programs and active practitioners.

This chapter will provide an overview of the early theoretical foundations established through investigation in the area of opinion change research. The extent to which social influence factors should be viewed as three independent

factors or as a unitary measure of counselor effectiveness has been long debated. Literature demonstrating the empirical investigation, and application of each of these two views is presented. Investigation of methodological measurement techniques are also reviewed to demonstrate the manner in which these theoretical constructs have been evaluated.

Early Theoretical Framework for Counselor Influence

The study of counselor social influence factors and their association with counseling outcomes has been widely reviewed in the research literature over the past several years. Many of the early studies in this area were based upon opinion or attitude change research. Several of these early studies investigating opinion change used Festinger's (1957) theory of social comparison processes to explain the results of their investigations.

A central claim in much of the early opinion change research was that similarity and dissimilarity between communicators and their audience contributes significantly to the perception of communicators by their audience. Many variables contribute to, or detract from, a positive perception of the communicator. Byrne and Rhamey (1965) proposed a mathematical "law of attraction" with a linear relationship identified as a function of the amount of positive reinforcements received from an individual divided by the degree of negative reinforcement received from the individual.

Aronson, Turner, and Carlsmith (1963) suggested that information

presented by a communicator perceived as highly credible will result in more significant opinion change than information presented by a communicator perceived as only moderately credible. They also suggested that the more discrepant the opinions between the highly credible communicator and the subject receiving the information, the more significant the subject's degree of opinion change.

Goldstein, Heller, and Sechrist (1966) argued that the extrapolation of certain principles and research findings in social psychology can increase our understanding of counseling, and our effectiveness as counselors. One of the principal investigators in this area of research was Strong (1968), who identified the similarities between opinion change research and the process of counseling in an attempt to promote further research in this area. In both cases, communicators attempt to influence their audience in a predetermined direction, primarily through the process of verbal communication.

Some early researchers proposed that there are three distinct factors (expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness) which combine to constitute counselor effectiveness, and that these factors can be measured as independent constructs (Strong, 1968; Barak & LaCrosse, 1975). Others have suggested that because the three factors are inter-related, counselor effectiveness should be viewed and measured as a global, or unitary, construct (Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983; Ponterrotto & Furlong 1985). Both of these perspectives are based upon early research in the area of opinion change. Early research led to subsequent investigations to determine the influence of these factors and methods for

evaluating their role in clients' perceptions of counselors. This investigation utilized methods for measuring expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness as independent factors of counselor effectiveness. Counselor effectiveness was also evaluated as a unitary construct to determine how the use of homework assignments influences research participants' perceptions of counselor effectiveness.

Counselor Effectiveness as Three Independent Social Influence Variables

Strong (1968) was one of the first investigators to identify the constructs of expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness as important variables in counselor effectiveness and the counseling process. He initially proposed that the three factors are orthogonal, or independent in nature. Other researchers (Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983; Barak & LaCrosse, 1975) provided additional research data supporting Strong's original premise.

Expertness

The perception of a communicator as an expert, or a communicator of valid assertions, is influenced by the individual's: (a) manner of presentation, or presentation of rational, objective evidence of specialized training such as certificates, diplomas or titles; (b) behavioral evidence of expertness, such as the manner of presentation and ability to put forth a rational and understandable argument for a position; and (c) a reputation as an expert (Strong & Schmidt, 1970).

Aronson, Turner, and Carlsmith (1963) investigated the relationship between an individual's perceived reputation as an expert and the extent of opinion change. A group of 112 female undergraduate college students reviewed several stanzas of poetry and rated the quality of the material. After being provided information regarding poetry writing from either an individual presented as an expert on poetry writing (a university professor) or an inexperienced (a teacher from a small midwestern college), they were asked to re-evaluate the same poetry sample they had initially evaluated. They were also asked to evaluate the credibility of both the expert and inexperienced sources.

Those individuals who were provided information from the expert source changed their opinion of the poetry sample while those who were provided information from the inexperienced source did not change their opinion of the original sample to a significant degree. Devaluation of the inexperienced source was high, while derogation of the expert source was low. This study examined the premise that an important relationship exists between the extent of perceived expertness of sources and the resultant degree of opinion change by their audience.

Other investigators (Bergin, 1962; Borkner & Insko, 1966; Browning, 1966) have reported similar relationships between opinion change and expertness. Borkner and Insko (1966) asked two groups of undergraduate students to complete a questionnaire indicating the number of hours of sleep that an average individual should require per night. After completing the questionnaire, each of the groups read separate articles on the number of hours of sleep that an average

individual requires. One group of students read an article attributed to a Nobel prize winner while the second group read an article attributed to an individual identified as the director of a YWCA in Fort Worth, Texas. The reported amount of required sleep varied from zero to 8 hours.

After reading the articles, each of the subjects provided a second response to the questionnaire. As was the case in earlier studies, opinion change was a linear function of discrepancy for the high credibility source while it was curvilinear for the low credibility source. The subjects who were provided information from the source presented as an expert changed their ratings, bringing them closer to the source while the subjects who were provided information from the inexperienced source did not change their opinion to a significant degree. The results support Festinger's (1957) theory that individuals will bring their opinion closer to the referent if that referent is seen as an expert or credible source. The results of this study may be somewhat limited because ratings were not obtained to assess the subjects' perceptions of the two sources as either expert or inexperienced.

Bergin (1962) studied the effects of source expertness on participants' self-ratings of masculinity and femininity. After rating themselves on a masculinity-femininity Likert item rating scale, 60 undergraduate psychology students were assigned to either a low credibility or high credibility communicator for the research treatment. The subjects responded to each item of a Likert rating scale listing dichotomous bi-polar descriptors which included traits viewed as masculine contrasted by traits viewed as feminine. Students in the high credibility group

were directed to an office decorated with diplomas, certificates and titles. The laboratory-attired individual with whom the students met tested them with what were described to the students as complex instruments, which would allegedly yield a very accurate picture of their masculinity or femininity. The communicator reviewed ratings of each student's masculinity or femininity, which differed from the student's initial self-rating.

In the low credibility group, the students met with a high school student experimenter who obviously knew little about personality evaluation. The high school student briefly interviewed each of the students and then provided them with an appraisal of their personality style, which differed from the student subject's initial self-ratings. After their meeting with one of the two communicators, the students completed a second self-rating scale and a rating of the expertness of the communicator with whom they had met. Changes between pre-treatment and post-treatment self-ratings were a linear function of reported discrepancy in the high credibility group, but not in the low credibility group. The extent of communicator disparagement was a function of discrepancy in the low credibility group, but not in the high credibility group. A more credible communicator was more likely to promote significant change and was less likely to be devalued or disparaged.

Browning (1966) studied the effects of therapist prestige on client acceptance of interpretations in therapy. Twenty-four college student subjects were assigned to see either a high prestige or low prestige therapist. The high prestige

therapist was introduced as a Ph.D. level psychologist and worked in an office decorated with diplomas and certifications. The low prestige therapist was introduced as a graduate student in training as a therapist and worked in an office without diplomas or certificates. After an initial interview providing an orientation to therapy, each subject was provided with 24 interpretations by a therapist during two to four interviews. A significantly greater number of large discrepancy interpretations were accepted by subjects in the high credibility group compared to subjects in the low credibility group.

In a quasi-counseling setting, Strong and Schmidt (1970) studied the effects of two sources of counselor expertness: (1) expertness by title, and (2) expertness denoted by the behavior of the therapist. In this study, eight male graduate students served as interviewers for 49 male volunteers who were students in an introductory psychology course. The subjects initially rated themselves using the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (Edwards, 1953), a personality inventory which provides measures of style factors as well as an individual's need for achievement. They were then assigned to either an expert or inexperienced interviewer. Four graduate students served in the role of the expert interviewer, and four served in the role of the inexperienced interviewer.

Introduction of the interviewee to the interviewer varied; the expert was introduced as a doctoral level psychologist, while the inexperienced was introduced as an interviewer with limited experience who was filling in for the scheduled interviewer. The expert interviewers displayed behaviors which were believed to be

consistent with expert counselor behavior. They remained attentive and interested in the subjects. They looked at the subjects, leaned toward them and were responsive to the subjects through facial expressions, head nods and posture. They were organized during the interview, clarified their role, and provided structure to the interview. The inexperienced interviewers displayed inattention to the subjects by not looking at the subjects, not using gestures and not reacting to the information provided by the subjects. They provided very little feedback to the subjects. The inexperienced interviewers were not organized, providing no explanation of their role, and appearing confused about how to organize the interview.

Toward the end of the interview, each subject was asked to rate his need for achievement in comparison to other college men. After receiving the subject's response, the interviewers made two statements regarding their perception of interviewees' achievement needs in comparison to other men. Following the interview, the subjects completed three additional questionnaires similar to the initial questionnaires assessing individual achievement needs. The subjects' responses on the second questionnaire were compared to their initial responses during the interviews regarding their need for achievement. Subjects interviewed by experimenters who were introduced as experts and who displayed positive skills demonstrated more change in their ratings than did subjects interviewed by experimenters introduced as inexperienced. It is difficult to discern the functional relationship between perceived degree of source expertness and the change in the subjects' ratings because the subjects did not rate the level of perceived expertness

of the interviewers.

Conoley and Bonner (1991) conducted an analog study to examine how perceptions of counselors' expertness was affected by fees for services and professional titles of the counselors. Two groups of female undergraduate students were shown a video tape of a therapist after the therapist was introduced as either a counseling psychologist or professional counselor, and the therapists' fees were categorically described as high, moderate, or based upon a sliding scale, without presenting specific fees. After observing the video tapes, the subjects rated the professionals' perceived level of expertness using the Counselor Rating Form (LaCrosse & Barak, 1978). The results indicated that fee level significantly affected perceptions of counselor expertness. The counselor described as charging a moderate to high fee was rated by the subjects as being more expert. Professional titles were not significantly related to perceptions of expertness.

Scheid (1976) found similar results in investigating the relationship between counselor introduction and subjects' perceptions of counselor expertness. The experimenters developed video tapes of two counseling vignettes. The counselor depicted in the first tape was introduced as a high status, experienced counselor. The tape depicted a counselor demonstrating positive behaviors such as eye contact, a forward posture toward the client, the use of positive statements, and attending behaviors. The counselor depicted in the second tape was introduced as an inexperienced, low status counselor. This counselor did not display eye contact, a forward posture lean toward the client, or positive attending behaviors.

After receiving the introduction of the counselor and viewing one of the two videotapes, the subjects rated the counselor on three instruments, containing six scorable factors, which the authors defined as measures of counselor expertness. The degree of counselor experience depicted in the introduction produced a main effect only upon counselor expertness and counselor comfort factors. The behavior of the counselor during the vignette was more significant to the raters than the introduction of the counselor. The author suggested that because the extent of the counselor's experience was not clearly defined, the counselor's behaviors depicted in the tape vignette was more salient in the subjects' evaluation of counselor effectiveness.

In a related study, Schmidt and Strong (1970) video taped six graduate students (who had varying levels of training) interviewing the same male confederate client. After viewing the first 5 minutes of each of the six randomly ordered interviews, 37 male student volunteer subjects rated each of the interviewer's level of expertness on a scale of 1 (extremely inexpert) to 8 (extremely expert). The results of this study indicated that the order of subjects' perceptions of counselors' expertness was nearly the reverse of the order of the counselors' experience and training. The interviewers' level of experience was not an important factor in the perceived level of expertness by the subjects. The behavior of the interviewer during the taped vignette was the salient factor to the student raters in evaluating perceived expertness.

Anecdotal information provided by the subjects revealed that the lower

level graduate students were viewed as interested in the client, more empathic, and more involved with the client. The higher level graduate students were described as less attentive to the subjects because they listened less and were less likely to acknowledge the client's concerns. The authors did not specifically define the level of experience of the interviewers, nor did they display the rated levels of expertness across the interviewers. The extent of expert behaviors may have been varied, but this was not stated. Information was also not provided regarding the specific scaling and validity of the instrument used for the subjects to rate the observed counselors' behaviors. It is difficult to identify specific counselor behaviors which led to increased levels of perceived expertness in this study.

The results of a study carried out by Siegel (1980) indicate that physical evidence of expertness is a contributing factor to the client's view of the counselor's effectiveness. A group of male and female undergraduate students viewed two separate video tapes of standardized counseling interactions between confederate counselors and clients. In the first tape, the counselor was depicted in a setting with physical evidence of expertness (e.g., diplomas, certificates and awards) posted prominently in the office area. This evidence was not present in the second tape. After viewing each video tape, students rated the counselors on a credibility checklist, which the investigators equated with expertness. The counselor depicted in the office with diplomas, certificates and awards was rated as more credible than the counselor who did not have these materials in the

office.

The relationship between counselors' manner of verbally interacting with clients and client's perception of counselor expertness has also been studied. Lewis and Walsh (1980) reported that clients did not rate counselors differently on the basis of whether counselors communicated with the client in an explicit (direct) or implicit (indirect, allowing for the subjects to make interpretations) manner. Counselors were perceived by clients as more expert when the values which they communicated were similar to those of the clients. Due to the methodology in this study, the perceived level of expertness may be equated with trustworthiness. Thompson and Hill (1993), on the other hand, found that the manner in which the therapist interacted with the client was an important indicator of expertness. After completing three sessions of therapy with a graduate level counselor, 24 volunteer clients rated the counselor's level of expertness. The facilitative style of the counselor was identified by the subjects as the most salient factor in evaluating the counselor's level of expertness. When they viewed the counselor as being more interested in them, attentive, empathic and directly responsive, students rated the counselor as being more expert.

The relationship between counselor self-disclosure and clients' perceptions of counselor expertness has been investigated by Loeb and Curtis (1984). These authors investigated relationships between counselors' use of self-disclosure during the early stages of counseling and subjects' perceptions of counselor expertness. In this study, 87 undergraduate students were provided written dialogues of one

of three counseling transcripts in which the counselor provided (a) personal self-reference statements, (b) indirect self-reference statements, or (c) no self-reference statements. After reviewing the transcripts, the subjects completed a questionnaire the investigators used to measure counselor expertness. The counselor whose dialogue included personal statements and direct self-reference statements was rated the highest in perceived expertness. The counselor's dialogue which included indirect self-reference statements was perceived by the subjects as less expert than those using personal self-referent statements. The counselor's dialogue which did not include self-reference statements was not rated significantly different than those who made only indirect references.

The relationship between counselor self-disclosure regarding a personal physical disability and perceptions of counselor expertness was investigated by Mallinckrodt and Helms (1986). In this study, 169 university students were shown a video tape of one of two male counselors who each portrayed either (a) an obviously physically disabled counselor in a wheelchair, or (b) a counselor with a visual impairment which was not readily discernible. Within each condition, the counselors did or did not make self-disclosures about their portrayed disabilities. After viewing a video tape, the subjects were asked to evaluate the counselor's level of expertness on a Likert scale rating instrument. The results indicated that the counselor in the obvious disability conditions was considered more expert than the counselor with a disability which was less obvious. Whether or not the counselors made self-disclosures about their conditions did not seem to have a

significant positive or negative effect on the clients' perceptions of their level of expertness.

Remer, Roffey and Buckholz's (1983) findings indicated that counselor self-disclosure can have a positive effect on clients' perceptions of the counselor as an expert. Transcripts of two hypothetical counseling interviews in which the counselors made at least six positive or negative self-involving statements were read by 66 undergraduate students. Self-involving statements were those which drew a comparison between the counselor and the client and conveyed a sense of interest in the client. Positive self-involving statements were defined as those which drew a positive comparison between the counselor and the client; negative self-involving statements were those which drew a contrast between these individuals.

After reading each of the transcripts, the subjects rated the counselor on the dimensions of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. The results indicated that counselors who were described as making positive self-involving statements were perceived as more expert and more trustworthy. The authors did not identify varying levels of self-involving statements, but rather contrasted the use of positive versus negative self-involving statements and measured the effects of these types of statements upon the subjects' perceptions of counselor expertness.

Similar results were obtained in Anderson and Anderson's (1985) study of 53 female and 29 male university undergraduate students' perceptions of

counselor expertness in relationship to counselor self-involving statements. Subjects were provided two written transcripts of initial therapy sessions between a male counselor and a female college student. The transcripts were identical except for the inclusion of six positive or negative self-involving statements. A self-involving statement consisted of a counselor's personal, present tense response following a client statement. Positive self-involving statements (PSI) were those that supported or corresponded to client responses; negative self-involving (NSI) statements were those that either contradicted or placed a negative evaluation upon client responses.

The Counselor Rating Form (Barak & LaCrosse, 1975) was completed by the subjects to evaluate perceived levels of counselor expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. A two-way analysis of variance was used to determine the effects of (a) transcript type (PSI or NSI), and (b) gender of the subjects on levels of perceived counselor effectiveness. Gender differences were not significant. Subjects rated the counselors who used PSI statements as more expert, trustworthy and attractive than counselors using NSI statements.

Several factors contribute to the degree to which counselors are viewed as an experts by clients. The manner in which counselors are introduced, objective evidence of expertness such as diplomas or certificates, and their reputation in their community may determine initial levels of perceived expertness. Counselors' specific behaviors, level of self-disclosure, attire and language also

contribute to clients' perceptions of counselors.

The studies reviewed have utilized a variety of processes to evaluate the influence of many counselor characteristics and behaviors upon clients' perceptions of counselors' as experts. In most of cases, the variables which were investigated were characteristics or traits of counselors. Fewer reported studies have investigated specific therapeutic techniques, as will be done in the present study. Studies which have investigated specific techniques have demonstrated that techniques which are positive in nature (e.g., positive self-involving statements, shared value statements, positive interactions directed toward the client) contribute to a perception of counselors as experts. Many studies have viewed expertness as synonymous with competence and reported results supporting this view. Although it would seem to be the case that these descriptors would in fact be synonymous, the instruments used to measure these traits have not been proven to measure the same constructs. In the studies reviewed, general traits or characteristics of the counselor have been demonstrated to contribute to clients' perceptions of counselor attractiveness and trustworthiness. The use of homework assignments is viewed as a method of intervention which will lead to the counselor being perceived as expert because it is a specific therapeutic technique in the process of counseling, and facilitates the counseling process. In this investigation measures of both expertness and counselor competence were obtained in order to address the relationship between these two constructs.

Attractiveness

Schmidt and Strong (1971) defined attractiveness as the client's positive feelings about the counselor. These authors posit that when clients perceive counselors as attractive, there is a greater chance that clients will like and admire counselors and will desire to be more like the counselors. Strong (1968) proposed that counselors' behaviors during the counseling process serves as a primary determinant of their level of perceived attractiveness. Several studies have shown that counselors who are perceived as sharing an opinion with their clients are generally rated as more attractive (Byrne, 1961; Byrne & Griffit, 1966; Byrne, Griffit, & Golightly, 1966). Studies of communication and attitude change have shown that attractiveness enhances the ability of communicators to influence their audiences (Brock, 1965; Sapolsky, 1960).

Using an analog research design, Strong and Dixon (1971) investigated the relationship between counselor attractiveness and counselor influence. Sixty-two male volunteers were asked to complete an initial self-rating scale which measured their personal needs for achievement. After completing the rating scale, subjects were interviewed by a counselor who was functioning in either a high attractive or low attractive role. The purpose of the interview was described to the subjects as an effort to assist them to more accurately identify their need for achievement. In the high attractive role, the counselor greeted the subjects warmly, shook their hands and responded positively to them throughout the interview. The

interviewer in the low attractive role did not greet the subjects upon entry to the office, did not establish or maintain eye contact with them and presented an affect connoting boredom throughout the interview.

Toward the end of the interview, the counselor made statements to the subjects regarding the level of achievement that they perceived the subjects to present. The counselor noted examples of the subjects' responses during the interview as evidence for their estimations. The subjects were then provided an opportunity to respond to the counselors' estimations, and the interview was terminated.

Following the interview, subjects were asked to go to another room to complete three evaluation instruments: (1) the previously-completed achievement needs rating scale, (2) an interviewer true/false questionnaire concerning reactions to the interview and perceptions of counselor trustworthiness, and (3) an adjective checklist. The adjective checklist contained 75 adjectives, which the authors described as a dichotomous list of descriptors evaluating trustworthiness of the counselor. The subjects were asked to indicate which of the adjectives described the counselor. One week after the interview, subjects completed a third achievement needs rating scale and a second adjective checklist before participating in a debriefing interview.

The results indicated that subjects perceived significant differences in attractiveness between individuals demonstrating the low attractive roles and high attractive roles on the adjective checklist. This study demonstrated that counselors were able to behave so as to be perceived as either attractive or unattractive.

Equally important, those counselors viewed as attractive demonstrated a greater level of influence than those viewed as unattractive.

Anderson and Anderson (1985) provided one of two written transcripts of an interview between a male counselor and a female client to two groups of undergraduate students. The transcripts were identical except for the inclusion of either positive self-involving (PSI) or negative-self involving (NSI) statements. The Counselor Rating Form (Barak & LaCrosse, 1975) was used to assess the subject's perceptions of counselor expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. The results indicated that the counselor who utilized positive self-involving statements were viewed as significantly more attractive than the counselor who used negative self-involving statements.

Other investigators have found that nonverbal behaviors contribute significantly to subjects' perception of counselor attractiveness. Strong, Taylor, Bratton, and Loper (1971) found that counselors who displayed a higher rate of nonverbal behaviors (e.g., changing body positions, facial expressions, and head and eye orientations) were rated by subjects as higher in perceived attractiveness. Barak and LaCrosse (1975) reported similar findings when investigating similar behaviors (e.g., smiles, positive head nods, eye contact, body lean). Counselors displaying these behaviors were viewed as a more attractive than counselors who did not.

Miller (1992) carried out a study to evaluate the effects of counselor note-taking during a career counseling session. In this study, 140 undergraduate students viewed two 14-minute video tapes of a career counseling session in which

note-taking behavior was the independent variable. In one of the tapes, the counselor briefly jotted notes five times throughout the interview; in the other tape, the counselor did not take notes at all during the session. After viewing the video tapes, the subjects completed the Counselor Rating Form (Barak & LaCrosse, 1975) and a rating scale to indicate whether or not they would be willing to participate in counseling with the portrayed counselor. The results indicated that while subjects' perceptions of attractiveness were not influenced significantly by the counselor's note-taking behavior, there was a trend toward a greater level of willingness to see the counselor who had refrained from note-taking.

Redfern, Darcey, and Dryden (1993) investigated the relationship between the counselor's use of empathic responses, counselor's sex/gender, and counselor's race, and the client's perception of the counselor as expert, attractive, and trustworthy. A group of 96 undergraduate students were asked to rate black or white, male or female, and empathic or non-empathic responsive counselors on attractiveness, expertness, and trustworthiness. The results indicated that the sex of the counselor and the sex of the client had no significant effect on the counselor ratings. Ethnicity of the counselor was a highly significant factor in the student's ratings of the counselor. Black counselors were rated significantly higher than white counselors on all three influence factors. Counselors who used empathic statements were not viewed as more attractive, but were viewed as more expert than those who did not use empathic statements.

Stillman and Resnick (1972) investigated the relationship between

counselor attire and client self-disclosure. Fifty male undergraduates completed a counselor attractiveness scale and a disclosure scale after completing a 20 minute interview with either a professionally attired or casually attired male counselor. The disclosure scale measured research subjects' level of comfort in disclosing information to the counselors. The results indicated that the counselor's attire did not have an effect on the perceptions of the counselors' attractiveness or upon the subject's comfort in disclosing information.

Subich (1984) evaluated the effects of a counselor's sex role incongruent behavior upon perceived levels of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. In this study, 80 male and 86 female undergraduate university students listened to one of four audio tapes of a counseling session. In the tapes the male or female counselor behaved in a stereotypic "masculine" or "feminine" manner; male and female counselors were portrayed in both a sex role congruent and sex role incongruent manner.

After listening to the tapes, the subjects rated the counselors' levels of perceived expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. The results indicated no significant differences in the ratings of the counselors as a function of their role-congruent or role-incongruent behavior. However, the counselors who were portrayed in the feminine counselor role were rated as more attractive and trustworthy than those portrayed in the masculine counselor role. There were no significant differences in the perceived level of expertness of the two groups. The counselors who were portrayed in the feminine role were not perceived as

significantly more or less expert than those portrayed in the masculine role. However, the subjects did not rate the perceived levels of masculinity or femininity traits presented by the experimenters. Specific traits of masculinity or femininity presented by the experimenters were also not identified. The feminine and masculine roles were described as global constructs rather than specific behaviors in this study. Correlations between specific masculine or feminine traits presented by the experimenters, and perceived levels of either trustworthiness or attractiveness as separate measures were also not reported

Researchers have also investigated relationships between perceived counselor attractiveness and physical attributes (Carter, 1978; Helms & Rode, 1982). Carter (1978) explored the relationship between perceived counselor attractiveness and the counselors perceived degree of physical attractiveness. A group of undergraduate university students were presented eight photographs of both male and female counselors who, according to the author, varied in their degree of physical attractiveness. Research subjects listened to counselors' brief audio taped self-introductions, which were similar for each counselor. After observing the photographs and listening to the introductions of the counselors, the subjects completed two rating scales: (1) a bi-polar eight-point Likert scale of the counselors' physical attractiveness as depicted in the photographs, and (2) a bi-polar six-point rating scale measuring the degree of confidence the subjects placed in the counselors effectiveness. The results indicated a relationship between the subjects' perceptions of counselors' physical attractiveness and confidence ratings of

the counselors' effectiveness. Male subjects rated the reportedly physically attractive male counselors as less warm and less friendly than did female subjects. Female counselors reported as physically attractive received the highest ratings of confidence in counselor attractiveness from both male and female subjects.

Helms and Rode (1982) explored the effects of age and physical attractiveness as they influence clients' perceptions of counselor attractiveness. Sixty-four female and 72 male undergraduate students were asked to evaluate slides of facial views of 12 female counselors that varied along the dimension of attractiveness (unattractive, average and attractive) and age (25-35, 35-45, 45-55 and 55-65). Attractiveness was defined by the experimenters. After viewing the slides, the subjects completed a counselor evaluation inventory, a counseling reaction inventory and a debriefing questionnaire.

The counselors' age influenced anticipated reactions to them. Female subjects rated counselors in the 35-45 age group as higher in counselor comfort than counselors in other age groups. Male subjects also rated counselors in the 35-45 age group as higher in counselor comfort. The extent to which the counselor was perceived as attractive was reported as more of an issue for female than male subjects, with the most notable differences occurring in the comparison between counselors who were physically unattractive and counselors who were described as being average in their level of physical attractiveness. Female subjects expected to be less understood, more uncomfortable, and more inhibited with physically unattractive counselors. These differences were not noted in the male

portion of the sample. Counselors described as physically attractive were not rated as significantly more attractive by either the male or female subjects.

These data indicate that a counselor's level of physical attractiveness may play an important role in the client's initial perceptions of the counselor's attractiveness. Physical characteristics of female counselors appear to be more salient to research subjects than the attributes of male counselors, and physical characteristics of counselors seem more influential to female than male subjects. Both verbal and non-verbal behaviors can serve to influence the perceived levels of attractiveness and physical attributes appear more influential for female counselors than male counselors, and female subjects than male subjects. Several counselor characteristics and behaviors have been found to influence subjects' perceptions of counselor attractiveness. Congruence between counselors' stated world view and subjects' own points of view (Byrne & Griffit, 1966; Byrne, Griffit, & Golightly, 1966); counselors' use of positive statements (Anderson & Anderson, 1985); counselor's age (Helms and Rode, 1982) and counselor's physical posture or body movements (Strong, Bratton, Taylor, & Loper, 1971) have been associated with perceived counselors attractiveness. Fewer studies have focused upon the use of specific counseling techniques which occur during the counseling process.

This study investigated the relationship between the use of homework assignments during the counseling process and subjects' perceptions of effectiveness variables. It was hypothesized that the use of homework assignments during the counseling process would not contribute significantly to perceived levels of

attractiveness. Previous research has indicated that factors most likely to influence initial perceptions of counselor attractiveness are based upon observable traits and characteristics. It has not been demonstrated that therapeutic techniques early in the counseling process serve to influence perceptions of counselor attractiveness. This study provided subjects with a brief vignette of a counseling session, during which the use of therapeutic homework was discussed. It was anticipated that this would not influence subjects' perceptions of counselor attractiveness.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was defined as the client's belief that the counselor maintains confidentiality and communicates the assertions that they consider most valid to the client's needs. Strong and Schmidt (1970) proposed that trustworthiness may have at least two functions in counseling: (1) to enhance the client's divulgence of personally painful material; and (2) to enhance the extent of a counselor's influence upon a client's thinking. These authors equated the concept of trustworthiness with credibility. They further proposed that counselors who are perceived as trustworthy are also perceived by clients as presenting more assertions that are valid and meaningful.

Strong and Schmidt (1970) examined the relationship between subjects' perceptions of interviewer trustworthiness and interviewer influence. Two individuals were trained to portray the role of either a trustworthy or an

untrustworthy interviewer. The untrustworthy interviewer was boastful, displayed a lack of self-confidence, appeared to breach confidentiality, and reflected ulterior motives to the subjects. The trustworthy interviewer did not display these behaviors and conveyed a sense of genuine interest in the client. Following a 20-minute interview in which the interviewers attempted to influence the subjects' estimation of their need for achievement, the subjects rated the interviewers' level of trustworthiness. The mean ratings for the interviewers in the trustworthy role were significantly higher than their counterpart in the untrustworthy role.

Kaul and Schmidt (1971) investigated the relationship between a counselor's content and manner during a counseling session and a research participant's perception of counselor trustworthiness. Content was defined by the authors as counselors' statements while manner was defined as counselors' intonation, emphasis, position and gestures. Six basic scripts were developed to represent interview excerpts during the initial, middle and terminal segments of interviews. A trustworthy and untrustworthy version was developed for each script. The two versions of the script were written so that their content and manner could be interchangeable. For each script, four variations were composed: (1) Trustworthy Content-Trustworthy Manner, (2) Trustworthy Content-Untrustworthy Manner, (3) Untrustworthy Content-Trustworthy Manner, and (4) Untrustworthy Content-Untrustworthy Manner. Five upper division male psychology students were provided the scripts and trained to enact the scripts until the experimenters judged them comfortable in each of their roles. After the training,

the scenes were video taped in a randomized sequence.

The scenes were shown to groups of subjects ranging in size from three to eight. Two samples were drawn: (1) composed of 16 juniors and seniors enrolled in an introductory psychology course, and (2) composed of 16 graduate students in counseling psychology who were completing an interviewing skills laboratory class. Subjects were asked to rate the interviewers' level of trustworthiness using an eight-point scale, with descriptors ranging from very untrustworthy to very trustworthy. The results indicated that the interviewers expressing trustworthy content in a trustworthy manner received the highest ratings. Interviewers displaying untrustworthy content in an untrustworthy manner received the lowest ratings. Under conditions in which the interviewers' content and manner were inconsistent, their manner appeared to be the more critical factor.

Littrell, Caffrey, and Hopper (1987) conducted a study with 485 high school students to examine the relationship between reputational information about a counselor and perceptions of counselor attractiveness, expertness and trustworthiness. Three video tapes conditions were developed by the researchers. Each of the subjects were shown all three of the video tapes. In the first tape, student peers made either positive, neutral or negative statements about a counselor. In the second tape, the subject group was shown a tape with the same student verbal cues as well as a brief vignette of a counselor interacting with a student. In the third tape, the subjects were shown a counselor interacting with a student without any accompanying student verbal cues. The students were asked

to rate each of the counselors in the three conditions. The results showed that pre-counseling information had a significant effect upon perceived counselor trustworthiness. The counselor who was portrayed in a counseling session in addition to having information provided about them received higher trustworthiness ratings than when only informational cues were available to the subjects. The addition of the counseling session following negative reputational cues resulted in much more positive perceptions of the counselor about whom negative cues had been provided.

A similar study (Reed & Holmes, 1989) investigated the relationship between counselors' titles and client perceptions of counselor trustworthiness and expertness. A group of 58 males and 24 females receiving inpatient psychiatric services were shown one of four video taped sessions of a male counselor and a male client. The counselor was introduced as: (1) Doctor, (2) Mister, (3) his first name, or (4) no formal introduction at all. The subjects rated the counselors on 11 qualities of trustworthiness and expertness. The results indicated that the introduction of the counselor did not have a significant effect upon subjects' initial perceptions of the counselor with regard to trustworthiness or expertness.

Rothmeier and Dixon (1980) conducted one of the few studies of counselor influence variables in which subjects have more than one contact with counselors. The authors explored the relationship between specific interviewer behaviors and 34 undergraduate subjects' perceptions of counselor trustworthiness. Two graduate students were trained to portray the role of either a trustworthy or

untrustworthy interviewer. Interviewers in the trustworthy role displayed sustained eye contact, an erect posture during the interviews, accurate paraphrasing during the interview and consistent interest and mood. Interviewers in the untrustworthy role verbally and nonverbally displayed inconsistent and inattentive behavior. The untrustworthy interviewer also displayed a breach in confidentiality by talking about a previous client during the interview.

Subjects were told that they were likely to increase the accuracy of their achievement motivation ratings by participation in two 20-minute interviews. An achievement motivation scale (AMS) which used stannine ratings of subject's level of achievement motivation compared to other college students was completed by the subjects prior to the interview process. Following an initial interview, the subjects were provided a brief period of feedback regarding their achievement motivation and asked to attend a second interview to allow the interviewer to collect additional information. The process of providing feedback concerning achievement motivation was repeated during the second interview. The interviewer showed the subject's their determined level of achievement motivation plotted on the scale. The subjects were then asked to complete the AMS again. One week after the second interview, the interviewers attended the subjects' classes and asked them to complete the AMS a third time and provided a debriefing of the study.

Subjects who were interviewed and provided feedback by the interviewer in the trustworthy role obtained increased ratings on the achievement motivation

scale from pre-test to post-test conditions, and they rated the interviewer in the trustworthy higher at the follow-up rating. Those subjects who met with the interviewer in the untrustworthy role obtained decreasing scores from pre-test to post-test conditions. The results also indicated that the effects of the trustworthy interviewer sustained over the two session time frame, and at the follow up period as measured by the subjects completing a second rating of the interviewer at the second interview and again one week later during the follow-up and de-briefing session. The authors hypothesized that when counselors are initially perceived as trustworthy by subjects the level of perceived trustworthiness increases over time unless counselors behave in such a manner as to change the subjects' perception of them. This could serve to increase the client's level of comfort with the therapist, and increase the effectiveness of the therapeutic process. The therapist who is viewed as more trustworthy appears to also have the opportunity to exert a positive influence over time. In the literature reviewed the factors which have been identified as increasing clients' perceptions of counselor trustworthiness (e.g., positive interactions, a posture toward the client, attentiveness, and accurate paraphrasing) are similar in nature to those behaviors which contribute to the counselor being perceived as attractive. This supports the premise of the social influence factors being inter-related. As a result, it appears to be the case that behaviors which serve to increase perceived attractiveness will also lead to a increased perception of trustworthiness.

Summary

Significant research has been carried out to evaluate the relationship between counselor characteristics or behaviors and clients' perceptions of expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness social influence factors. Strong (1968) hypothesized that these three factors were separate entities, which could be manipulated in experimental conditions to provide information concerning improvement the counseling process. Subsequent research has supported his hypothesis (Kaul & Schmidt, 1971; Siegel, 1980; Strong & Schmidt, 1970; Subich, 1984). Various studies have provided information regarding clients' development of perceptions of therapists or counselors. The relationship between these perceptions and change on the part of the client was studied by many of the early investigators. It has been demonstrated that subject's who perceive counselors positively, and who initially have opinions different than those of the counselor are likely to bring their opinion closer to that the counselor (Aronson et al., 1963; Bockner & Insko, 1966; Browning, 1966). Conversely, other investigations have demonstrated that subject's who perceive counselors in a negative manner are likely to discredit the opinion of the counselor, and are not likely to change their opinion to bring it closer to the opinion of the counselor (Lewis & Walsh, 1980; Remer, et al., 1983).

The majority of the research reviewed has focused on specific counselor characteristics or behaviors that influence clients' perceptions of counselors.

Counselors' title, reputations, fees, and other factors have been shown to contribute to initial perceptions of counselors by clients. Counselors' behaviors during their interactions with their clients serves a meaningful function over time. The extent of counselors influence on clients has been related to clients' perceptions of counselors' expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. The information that clients might obtain prior to meeting counselors also contributes to their expectations of the counseling process. Clients' initial perceptions of counselors may lead to either more positive or negative expectations of the counseling process. However, it is the behavior of the counselor over time which plays a primary role in the relationship between the counselor and the client. Their ability to serve as a positive influence for the client, to provide support, and to promote change may be facilitated by positive initial perceptions, but they are maintained by the therapist and their actions over time.

Counselor Effectiveness as a Unitary Measure

Researchers who have concluded that expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness are not independent factors have typically suggested that counselor effectiveness is a unitary measure and should be measured in this manner. The Counselor Effectiveness Scale(CES; Ivey & Authier, 1978) has been frequently used to evaluate perceived counselor effectiveness as a unitary construct. Like the CRF, the CES is based upon the premise that clients' perceptions of counselors play a significant role in the process of therapy. In developing this scale, Ivey

(1971) initially presented 93 adjectives in a semantic differential format to 30 graduate psychology students for evaluation of two video tapes of a counseling session. One video tape was developed to portray reportedly desirable counselor characteristics, while the second video tape was developed to portray obviously undesirable counselor characteristics. The final item pool used in formulating the scale were those items with low standard error of measurement (e.g., high inter-rater agreement) and large confidence limits differences between the effective and ineffective counselor characteristics. Following this procedure, two parallel forms of the instrument, consisting of 25 7-point semantic differential items were constructed, producing a score range of 25 to 175 for each form. The scale yields an overall score which was reported by the authors to be a measure of perceived counselor effectiveness as a global construct.

An investigation was conducted by Ivey and Authier (1978) to obtain reliability measures on the CES. Two reliability measures were completed. A parallel form reliability (coefficient of equivalence) was computed, and inter-rater reliability was determined. After 18 college students viewed a video tape of a counseling session they were asked to complete one of two forms of the CES, with each form consisting of one half of the scale items to obtain a coefficient of equivalence. The resulting parallel reliability was very high (.98). High inter-rater reliability measures were reported after having seven undergraduate judges make 50 observations of a video taped model using both CES forms to evaluate inter-rater reliability.

In a review of rating scale instruments, Ponterroto and Furlong (1985) reported the CES to be an effective measure of counselor effectiveness as a unitary concept. The limited use of the CES in clinical research studies was noted, and additional investigations to evaluate the CES in comparison to the CRF, and CRF-S were suggested. There have been very few studies completed evaluating the relationship between specific counseling techniques and perceived counselor effectiveness using the CES as an outcome measure. Scofield and Yoxtheimer (1983) completed a review of rating scale instruments presented in research articles in a 5 year period in four different professional journals. This review also supported the use of the CES as a measure of overall effectiveness, and further encouraged the completion of additional research to evaluate the correlation between perceived levels of the social influence variables, and overall perceived counselor effectiveness.

In the present investigation the CES was used as a measure of overall effectiveness, and the obtained data were compared to the data obtained with the CRF-S. This allowed for an estimate of overall perceived counselor effectiveness to be compared to the change in perceived levels of expertness, attractiveness or trustworthiness as measured with the CRF-S, as a function of the discussion of homework assignments in an analogue counseling session.

Measures of Counselor Influence and Counselor Effectiveness

The studies which have been reviewed have utilized two primary

measurement procedures to assess perceived counselor effectiveness. The Counselor Rating Form (CRF; Barak & LaCrosse, 1975) has been the most frequently used measurement tool when counselor effectiveness been conceptually measured as the influence of expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness (Anderson & Anderson 1985; Conoley & Bonner, 1991; Miller, 1992; Remer, Roffey, & Buckholz, 1983; Schmidt & Strong, 1970;).

The Counselor Effectiveness Scale (CES; Ivey & Authier, 1978) has been used frequently when counselor effectiveness has been evaluated as an independent global outcome measure (Atkinson & Wampold, 1982; Bergin, 1971; Epperson and Pencik, 1985). Other investigators have utilized author developed measures, with little support of validity and reliability measures. There are also other published instruments to evaluate counselor effectiveness. However, the CRF-S, and the CES were selected for this investigation in order to evaluate the relationship between homework assignments and the three social influence factors, as well as the relationship between homework assignments and perceived counselor effectiveness as a global measure.

In evaluating the scale items of the CRF, Barak and LaCrosse (1975) carried out a factor analysis procedure and found good support for a three factor orthogonal (independent) model of the structure of the scales and scale items. These results were further supported in research carried out by Corrigan and Schmidt (1983), in the development of the Counselor Rating Form-Short version (CRF-S). The CRF-S was shown to correspond satisfactorily to the CRF in

measuring the factors of expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness. LaCrosse (1980) reported that client ratings after the first session of counseling on the dimensions of expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness, as measured with the CRF-S were significantly related to counseling outcomes, as later measured by Goal Attainment Scaling (Kirseuk & Sherman, 1968).

Other investigators have obtained conflicting results when investigating perceived counselor effectiveness as independent variables of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. LaCrosse (1977) conducted an exploratory factor analysis of the CRF scale items and found support for a correlated three factor model. This three factor oblique model identifies the three constructs as being inter-related with distinct dimensions. This view was also supported by other investigators (Atkinson & Wampold, 1982; Bergin, 1971; Epperson & Pencik, 1985). Because there are data supporting the three factors as being inter-related, it is important to obtain measures of perceived levels of each of the factors as well as measures of perceived overall effectiveness when evaluating counselor effectiveness.

Corrigan and Schmidt (1983) utilized a factor analysis procedure to examine the item selection procedures of the CRF-S and found support for a two factor oblique model of social influence variables. These authors reported that when expertness and trustworthiness were combined as one factor, and attractiveness and trustworthiness as a second factor, that a goodness of fit criterion or .896 was reached. They hypothesized that a three factor model does not

unambiguously describe the factor structure of the CRF or the CRF-S.

Ponterroto and Furlong (1985) carried out an analysis of the CRF-S scale items and reported that expertness was the only factor to demonstrate high inter-scale and intra-scale correlations. Tryon (1987) reported factor analytic results of the CRF-S which yielded two factors. The first was composed of attractiveness and trustworthiness items combined, and the second was composed of expertness and trustworthiness items combined.

Analog Methodology for Studying Counselor Effectiveness

Clinical judgment and subject behavior can be researched from a naturalistic approach (designs which study the clinical judgment process and subject behavior in vivo), or from an analog approach (designs which simulate various aspects of the clinical situation, and individuals' behavior in that situation). Heverly, Fitt and Newman (1984) identified analog procedures as an effective methodology, and reported that the generalizability afforded by the naturalistic approach is achieved at the expense of internal validity. Shortcomings to the naturalistic approach include the fact that factors studied in naturalistic setting can not be manipulated by the experimenter; they occur naturally in some clients but not in others and the effects that may be observed in a naturalistic settings may not be due solely to the factors being studied, but also to extraneous factors. In analog research, the factors under study are varied by the experimenter. Extraneous factors can be held constant or omitted. Also, the use of artificial subjects to elicit

clinical judgments increases the likelihood of high internal validity. External validity from data obtained in analog research can be evaluated through follow-up studies investigating similar issues and variables under similar circumstances.

Analog research methodology has consistently been used to investigate how a variety of factors, influence client perceptions of counselor effectiveness and the social influence variables. Factors which have been investigated using an analog design include perceived counselor expertness as it relates to counselors' age (Strong & Schmidt, 1970), physical evidence of expertness and perceived counselor expertness (Siegel, 1980), counselor's verbal interactions with subjects and perceived counselor expertness (Lewis & Walsh, 1980), and the relationship between counselor self-disclosure and perceived counselor expertness (Loeb & Curtis, 1984; Mallinckrodt & Helms, 1986). Studies examining the relationship of various factors to perceived counselor attractiveness have been frequently utilized analog designs (Barak & LaCrosse, 1975; Carter, 1978; Redfern, Darcy & Dryden, 1993; Stillman & Resnick, 1972;). A number of investigators have used analog procedures to investigate perceived counselor trustworthiness (Kaul & Schmidt, 1971; Littrel, Caffrey & Hopper, 1987; Reed & Holmes, 1989; Rothmeir & Dixon, 1980; Strong & Schmidt, 1970). The extended use of an analog methodology to investigate the relationship between perceived counselor expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness has led to the acceptance of this method of investigation as an appropriate and clinically useful methodology for research purposes.

Homework as a Therapy Tool

The use of between session assignments, or homework, is a common practice in the counseling field. Theoretical support for the utilization of homework has been published, but empirical research has been limited. Research studies which have examined the effects of homework assignments focus on measures of counseling outcome (e.g., the reduction of depressive symptoms) rather than the counseling process (e.g., client perceptions of counselors). Haley (1977) noted the importance of using homework assignments. He proposed that the use of homework assignments keeps the client involved with the counselor between visits and facilitates a positive outcome in the counseling process. The use of homework in counseling has been described by deShazer (1988) as a method to assist clients in constructing their experiences differently and transforming their depiction of the situation during counseling sessions. Borden (1994) contended that when homework assignments are consistent with therapeutic goals, and defined to the clients they are useful in the family therapy process. In this context, homework is viewed as a outgrowth to the counseling session.

The clinical application of homework assignments has been well documented. Craig (1985) reported that the use of behavioral assignments in outpatient counseling is important to the outcome of the counseling process. He noted that since clients spend the large majority of their time outside of the counseling office it is important to assist clients in using this time in a manner which

is more productive, and beneficial to the counseling process.

Primacoff, Epstein and Covi (1986) reported the use of homework assignments as a common practice in the field of cognitive behavior therapy. An important component of cognitive behavior therapy is the development of patterns to disconfirm dysfunctional thought patterns. Within the cognitive behavioral model, the use of homework assignments constitutes the major method for data collection to disconfirm dysfunctional cognitive patterns. Sackett (1979) identified the use of homework as important in the follow-up period after counseling is completed to increase clients' abilities to maintain skills acquired in the counseling process. The author identified the need for additional research to evaluate the specific role of homework in counseling and the extent that it serves to facilitate progress was identified.

The use of homework has been hypothesized to be an effective component of the counseling process in addressing a variety of client concerns (Ellis, 1963; Gasman, 1992; Kornblith, Rehm, O'Hara & Lamparski, 1983; Niemeyer & Felixis, 1990).

Empirical study of the influence of homework assignments on counseling processes and outcome has been limited in relationship to the practice of this technique in the profession. In addition, the literature available in this area measures counseling outcome rather than process variables. Burns and Nolen-Hoeksema (1992) investigated the relationship between compliance to homework assignments and treatment outcomes for 185 volunteer outpatient clients at a

private mental health clinic. At the time of admission to the clinic all subjects were asked to complete the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI: Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock & Erbaugh, 1961) in addition to other self-assessment questionnaires, which were not identified. All subjects were provided weekly counseling sessions, and homework assignments on a session to session basis over a 12 week period. The counseling was presented as either cognitive-behavior therapy only, or cognitive-behavior therapy augmented by the use of antidepressant medications. At the end of the 12 week period the subjects completed another series of self-report instruments, the BDI and The Empathy Scale (Persons and Burns, 1985). The Empathy scale is a 10 item questionnaire that asks subjects to rate how warm, empathic, and caring their counselors are. Subjects also completed a self-report questionnaire indicating their level of completion of homework assignments. The subjects' therapists were also contacted and asked to report the subjects' level of completion of homework assignments during the 12 week period.

The results indicated that the subjects who met with counselors who were rated as the warmest and most empathic improved more during the 12 week period than subjects who met with counselors who were rated as less warm and empathic. Additionally, subjects who consistently completed homework assignments improved more than subjects who did not consistently complete homework assignments. It is possible that the homework assignments in this case allowed patients to develop skills between sessions to more effectively meet their therapeutic

needs. It is also possible that patients who met with counselors perceived as warm and empathic improved more significantly and as a result were able to more effectively complete homework assignments. Clinical improvement itself may serve to motivate subjects to complete homework assignments.

Kornblith, Rehm, O'Hara and Laparski (1983) reported the use of homework in the treatment of depression. In this study, 49 female volunteer subjects at a community mental health clinic served as subjects. After being screened for depressive symptoms using the Beck Depression Inventory and other diagnostic instruments, the subjects were assigned to one of four treatment groups: (1) self monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement homework assignments including instruction in cognitive behavioral principles; (2) self-monitoring and self-evaluation, including training in cognitive behavioral principles; (3) training of cognitive behavioral principles without homework assignments; or (4) a control treatment group which included a problem-oriented, psychodynamic therapy group.

After meeting for 12 consecutive weeks, the subjects were again evaluated for depressive symptoms using the same instruments as they were initially evaluated with. They were also asked to self-report their own perceived level of clinical progress over the 12 week period. Ratings of the subjects' levels of clinical improvement and compliance with homework assignments were also obtained from each of the subjects' group leaders. The results indicated that the subjects who were provided, and completed homework assignments were evaluated by

their group leaders as demonstrating the most progress. This data was also supported by the subjects' self-report information. Subjects who reported subjective ratings of improvement were rated as compliant in completing homework assignments.

The relationship between clients' completion of homework assignments and reduction of depressive symptoms was also found by Startup and Edmonds (1994). Data were drawn from 235 sessions of counseling received by 13 male and 12 female clients in a psychotherapy project evaluating psycho dynamic/interpersonal and cognitive-behavioral therapy methods. The 25 subjects had all been independently evaluated and diagnosed as experiencing depressive symptoms. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) was used as a pre-counseling and post-counseling measure for each of the subjects. Data were collected prior to, following a 12 week period of counseling, and again 3 months following treatment. While homework was routinely provided in the cognitive behavior therapy sessions, it was not included in the psycho dynamic/ interpersonal sessions. Ratings were also obtained from the counselors for each of the subjects to indicate the subjects' level of compliance to homework assignments. The results indicated that the subjects who received and completed homework assignments demonstrated the most improvement, and maintained the improvement over the three week follow-up period. This investigation supported the use of homework assignments as a therapeutic technique and is consistent with previously reported data (Kornblith et al., 1983).

Maltsby (1971) evaluated the effectiveness of homework assignments, in conjunction with rational emotive therapy techniques, in treating a group of 87 subjects diagnosed with organic personality disorder. The author reported that techniques of rational emotive therapy were the only ones utilized, and that homework assignments were the primary counseling tools used. Homework assignments were provided to clients at the completion of each of 10 counseling sessions, and the subjects were instructed to complete the assignments prior to the next session. At the end of the tenth session, subjects ratings scales to estimate their progress as a result of the counseling, and their level of compliance in completing the homework assignments. The results indicated that subjects who reported completing the homework assignments on a more consistent basis also reported the most significant progress. This provides some support for the authors premise that homework may serve a useful role in the counseling process.

Niemeyer and Felixis (1990) investigated the relationship between the use of homework assignments and symptomatic improvement among 64 subjects diagnosed with unipolar depression. The subjects were assigned to one of two treatment groups; the authors described the two group counseling programs as identical, with the exception that one group was assigned homework assignments and one group was not assigned homework assignments. Cognitive therapy techniques were used in providing counseling to both groups over the 10 week period. The Beck Depression Inventory was used as a pre-therapy, post-therapy and follow-up measure to evaluate the subjects' self-reported levels of depressive symptoms.

The homework group was assigned between session activities beginning with introductory readings on the goals of cognitive therapy, progressing through standardized activity scheduling and cognitive restructuring, eventuating in individualized assignment for group members in later sessions. The subjects participating in the no homework group received identical therapy with the exception that homework assignments were not provided. At the end of the 10 week counseling period, and again at a 6 month follow-up, the subjects again completed the Beck Depression Inventory to report depressive symptoms. Additionally, each time the Beck Depression Inventory was completed the subjects' counselors provided subjective ratings of the subjects' levels of depression. Results from subjects' self-report data and data from the subjects' counselors indicated that the subjects in the homework group reported more significant reduction of depressive symptoms than the subjects in the no homework group.

Cox, Tisdale, and Culbert (1988) investigated the relationship between the manner of homework assignment presentation (verbal or written), and the level of compliance in completing homework assignments. Thirty volunteer clients from two outpatient behavioral medicine clinics were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups. Homework assignments were verbally presented in one group, and written assignments were provided to the second group. At least three therapeutic behaviors were prescribed at any one time. The homework assignments were presented in an alternating manner on a weekly basis written or verbal homework. Prior to each counseling session, the clinic receptionists provided

each client a questionnaire which yielded two dependent measures to evaluate the level of compliance to the homework assignments: the recall of prescribed behaviors, and self-report of adherence to the assigned tasks. The results indicated that the subjects who were presented homework assignments in the written format demonstrated a higher level of both recall for information presented, and an higher level of compliance.

Homework assignments have been demonstrated to be an effective therapeutic methodology in addressing a variety of clinical concerns. It has been demonstrated that compliance to homework may lead to improved symptoms of depressed subjects (Niemeyer & Felixis, 1990; Startup & Edmonds, 1994). Subjects who report improved functioning as a result of completing homework assignments are often rated by their counselor as demonstrating improvement as well (Burns & Nolen-Hoeksma, 1992; Kornblith, Rehm, O'Hara & Laparski, 1983). The literature reviewed supports the use of homework assignment as a therapeutic intervention. The investigations reviewed each reported the use of homework assignments as a component of the clinical intervention. Data was also frequently obtained to evaluate the level of compliance to the homework assignments. However, the relationship between homework assignments and clients' perceptions of counselors as expert, attractive, or trustworthy has not been evaluated using homework as an independent variable. This investigation evaluated subjects' perceptions of counselors based upon the use of homework assignments.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

This chapter describes the statistical design and procedures which were employed in this study. For clarity of reading the chapter is divided into sections: (a) method and research design, (b) data collection and instrumentation, (c) description of the subjects, (d) description of the treatments, (e) logistical procedures, and (f) data analysis.

Description of the Subjects

The subjects ($N=60$) in this study were recruited from four introductory psychology classes at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. The subjects ranged in age from 17-49 with a mean age of 21. Both male ($n=23$) and female ($n=37$) subjects were included in the sample. All subjects in the study participated on a volunteer basis, and were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group. A representative sample of both male and female subjects were included as subjects.

Method and Research Design

This study employed an analog quasi-experimental, randomized groups, post-test only design. Both the experimental and the treatment control groups

were presumed to be equal on the basis of random assignment. Because the subjects were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group, the perceived differences, if any, in counselor effectiveness, expertness, attractiveness, or trustworthiness would be attributable to the presentation of homework in the taped vignette provided to the treatment group, or the absence of homework being presented in the taped vignette provided to the control group.

For this research, the independent variable was the discussion of homework assignments in the taped vignettes shown to the treatment group, and the absence of homework assignments in the taped vignette shown to the control group. There were four dependent variables in this study. These included the scores obtained on the Counselor Effectiveness Scale, and the obtained ratings of expertness, attractiveness, and attractiveness which were obtained using the Counselor Rating Form-Short Version.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to collect data in this study. The Counselor Effectiveness Scale (CES: Ivey, 1971; Ivey and Authier, 1978) was used by both the treatment and control groups to obtain an overall rating of perceived counselor effectiveness. This scale has been used primarily to measure client attitudes toward the counselor. It is comprised of two parallel forms consisting of 25 semantic 7-point differential items, which produce a score range of 25 to 175 for each item.

Two reliability measures were reported by Ivey and Authier (1978) for the CES. A parallel form reliability (coefficient of equivalence) was computed for the two forms by having a group of psychology students rate a video tape model of a counseling session. The resulting parallel form reliability was very high (.98). Interrater reliability was also reported as satisfactory. Because two very different counseling models (one effective and one ineffective) were used, Ivey and Authier (1978) were able to assess the discriminative validity of the CES. Both counselor models (effective and ineffective) were rated by a group of undergraduate students using both forms of the CES. Two *t*-tests yielded highly significant ($p < .001$) differences between the counselors depicted in the effective and ineffective roles, indicating that the scale effectively discriminates counselors perceived as effective in contrast to counselors perceived as ineffective. In a review of rating scales measuring counselor effectiveness Ponterroto and Furlong (1985) reported the CES as one of the few counselor rating scales which have been validated against models of good and bad counselor behavior, increasing the validity value of the scale. The CES was reported as being an effective measure of counselor effectiveness as a global or unitary measure.

The Counselor Rating Form-Short Version was developed by Corrigan and Schmidt (1983) by selecting 12 of the 36 adjectives initially used in the CRF based upon factor analytic results and level of education required for item comprehension. In developing the CRF-S the item structure of the original CRF was changed by dropping the use of negative adjectives. In the revised version,

respondents are asked to rate the extent to which a counselor demonstrates the characteristic of the positive adjective on a 7 point Likert scale anchored by the words "very" and "not very."

To validate the CRF-S, a sample of 133 college students and a sample of 155 clients from several outpatient community mental health centers provided ratings of counselors. The CRF-S mean split-half reliabilities across student and client populations were .90 for expertness, .91 for attractiveness and .87 for trustworthiness.

Corrigan and Schmidt (1983) carried out a confirmatory factor analysis procedure with simultaneous groups to examine the underlying factor structure of the CRF-S. Factor loadings were reported to be generally high, exceeding .75, supporting the premise that the three social influence factors can be independently evaluated.

In this investigation the subjects were each provided one copy of the Counselor Effectiveness Scale and one copy of the Counselor Rating Form-Short Version with a brief introduction regarding the purpose of the scales. After viewing one of the two video tapes they responded to each of the scale items and returned them to the investigator. The scales were retained by the investigator and used for data collection and analysis. The obtained data remained confidential and all completed rating scale instruments were kept by the evaluator in a locked desk until the completion of the study, and then destroyed.

Description of the Treatment

Subjects in both groups were shown a videotaped counseling vignette depicting a female counselor and a male client. The vignette depicted an initial intake session with the client requesting assistance in addressing anxiety concerns. In the control tape, the counselor gathered basic information regarding the history of the client and the occurrence of the anxiety feelings. The client was provided a follow-up appointment and the session was terminated.

The tape shown to the subjects in the treatment group depicted the same counseling session shown to the control group. The same female counselor and male client were presented. An additional 4 minutes of discussion regarding the rationale for collecting information outside of the counseling session and the presentation of a homework assignment was also included. The client was directed to maintain a daily journal recording data whenever they felt anxious, including physical symptoms and emotional feelings. The client was told that he and the counselor would review the data at the next scheduled session.

Logistical Procedures

The study was carried out at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Instructors who were teaching introductory psychology classes were contacted to request permission to present the study to students in their classes. Upon receiving permission from the instructors the study was presented to the students in each

class as a group. Students were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and would not affect their course grade. They were also informed that the responses which they provided on the rating scales would be maintained in a confidential manner. After the purpose general procedures of the study were verbally presented to class members, those students who agree to participate were provided a consent form, and a copy of each of the two scales. Students who elected not to participate were provided a brief break period to allow other participants an opportunity to complete their activities. This research complied with all regulations of, as well as approval of, the Western Michigan University's Human Subjects Review Board.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The findings of the hypotheses specified are presented and followed by the results of the research question. Finally, the study is summarized.

Results of the Hypotheses Testing

Null Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant differences between control group and treatment group scores on the Counselor Evaluation Scale (CES) which is a measure of overall perceived counselor effectiveness. The control group mean score on the CES was 132.03 and the treatment group mean score was 133.40. The differences were evaluated at the .05 level of significance using an independent sample t -test, ($t_{\text{obt}} (df=58) = -.3106; p = .75$). The mean differences were not statistically significant.

Null Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant differences between control and treatment group mean scores on the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S) on the dimension of expertness. The control group mean score on the dimension of expertness was 21.73, and the treatment group mean score was 21.10. The differences were evaluated at the .05 level of significance using an independent sample t -test ($t_{\text{obt}} (df=58) = .5704; p = .57$). The mean differences were not statistically significant.

Null Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant differences between control group and treatment group mean scores on the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S) on the dimension of attractiveness. The control group mean score on the dimension of attractiveness was 20.63, and the treatment group score was 18.66. The differences were evaluated at the .05 level of significance using an independent sample *t*-tests ($t_{\text{obt}} (df=58) = 1.59; p = .12$). The mean differences were not statistically significant.

Null Hypothesis 4: There will be no significant difference in control group and treatment group mean scores on the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S) on the dimension of trustworthiness. The control group mean score on the CRF-S on the dimension of trustworthiness was 22.26 and the treatment group mean score was 20.96. These differences were evaluated at the .05 level of significance using an independent sample *t*-tests ($t_{\text{obt}} (df=58) = 1.23; p = .22$). The mean differences were not statistically significant.

After evaluation of the obtained rating scores all four null hypotheses were retained. Table 1 provides a summary of the obtained data.

Results of the Research Question

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the use of homework during counseling and subject's perceptions of counselor characteristics, measured by evaluating the subjects' perceptions of the counselor's degree of effectiveness, expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness. Ratings

Table 1

Control Group and Treatment Group Mean Scores on the Counselor Effectiveness Scale, and the Counselor Rating Form-Short on the Dimensions of Expertness (E), Attractiveness (A), and Trustworthiness (T)

| | <u>n</u> | CES | E | CRF-S A | T |
|-----------------|----------|--------|-------|------------|-------|
| Control Group | 30 | 132.03 | 21.73 | 20.63 | 22.26 |
| Treatment Group | 30 | 133.40 | 21.10 | 18.66 | 20.96 |

were obtained with the Counselor Effectiveness Scale (CES) and the Counselor Rating Form-Short (CRF-S). The group mean differences on the dimensions of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness were evaluated. The group mean differences on the ratings of the counselor as an effective counselor were also evaluated. Independent sample *t*-tests were completed and the differences between control group and treatment group ratings were not found to be statistically significant.

The subjects in this sample did not view the counselor who utilized homework assignments as more effective, expert, attractive or trustworthy than the counselor who did not discuss or assign homework assignments.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of homework assignments being provided during a counseling session upon subjects' perceptions of perceived counselor effectiveness. Mean differences across the groups on the four rated dimensions of counselor effectiveness were not found to be statistically significant. Because the differences in the perceptions of the counselor were not found to be significant, consideration must be given to examining possible reasons for the obtained rating scores, and the implications of the counselors being perceived as equally effective.

The students in the subject sample were enrolled in an introductory psychology class. Their knowledge of therapeutic techniques was likely to have been limited. The use of homework is a generally accepted component of counseling by many practitioners. The subjects may have not been aware of the use of between session assignments as a commonly accepted practice, and the potential benefits of the use of homework assignments. The subjects in the treatment group did not view the counselor as being more able to effectively address the needs of the client. Within the clinical literature it has been demonstrated that the use and completion of homework assignments by clients has also been associated with positive outcomes. Because of their limited exposure to the practice of

counseling, and based on literature in this area, the subjects in the treatment group may have not recognized the utility of homework assignments, and as a result, did not rate the counselor depicted in the treatment group tape as more effective when homework assignments were presented.

This study used an analog design in which the subjects observed the counselor during only a single counseling session. By observing only this single session the subjects were not able to observe the use of homework assignments as a method to promote change over multiple sessions. If the subjects were able to observe the use of homework assignments over multiple sessions the utility of homework assignments may have been more apparent. The subjects may have viewed the counselor more favorably if they had been able to observe homework assignments as an opportunity for the client to practice new techniques outside of the counseling session and to obtain feedback from the counselor regarding their efforts at behavior change, thereby developing a new pattern of behavior the subjects may have viewed the counselor more favorably.

The subjects in this study also did not evaluate the content of the homework assignments provided in the counseling vignette. It has been demonstrated in the clinical literature (Cox, Tisdale, & Culbert, 1988; Startup & Edmonds, 1994) that the use of homework assignments is most effective when the assignments, as directly related to the counseling issue, are achievable by the client. The extent to which the subjects perceived the depicted homework assignment as appropriate to the issues being discussed during the counseling session and as

attainable by the client was not evaluated. It may have been the case that the subject sample did not view the assignments as appropriate, or that the assignments were viewed as too difficult for the client to attain successfully. This is a question for future research.

The history of the subjects in this study was also not evaluated. It may have been the case that the members of the sample had a prior history of participating in counseling. Although the random assignment of subjects to either the treatment or control group should have controlled for this factor, their individual prior experiences may have affected their perceptions of the counselor and the methodology employed by the counselor in the depicted vignette. Lastly, the subjects in this study were students in an introductory psychology class. The data were collected two weeks prior to the end of the academic semester. It may have been the case that the presentation of the homework assignments was not viewed favorably because the students were preparing for final examinations, and the concept of homework assignment was viewed negatively as a result.

Implications for Future Research

The first suggestion for future research would be to secure the subject sample from a clinical population. Because of the widespread acceptance of the use of homework assignments in the counseling field, it would be appropriate to have actual clients evaluate the use of homework assignments as a method to facilitate positive growth and the impact this may have on their perceptions of the counselor.

It would also be appropriate for the use of homework assignments to be evaluated over multiple counseling sessions. The process of change occurs over time, and the opportunity to evaluate the relationship between the completion of extra session assignments and client progress may result in the subjects being able to recognize the utility of homework assignments. This may lead to the counselor providing the assignments being viewed as more effective. The opportunity to view and evaluate the use of homework assignments over multiple sessions would address this need.

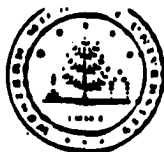
It would also be beneficial to have the subject sample evaluate the content of the homework assignments. It would be important to identify the subjects' perceptions of the homework as it relates to the issues depicted in the counseling session. This would provide information regarding what type of extra session activity is viewed as beneficial and likely to promote positive growth. This would also allow for the identification of activities which lead to positive perceptions of the counselor as an effective change agent and, as a result, perceived as being more effective.

Lastly, it would be beneficial for the subject sample to evaluate the use of homework assignments when the assignment are demonstrated to facilitate the positive outcomes in the counselor process. It would be anticipated that the counselor who facilitates positive growth would be viewed as more effective, and that the use of homework assignments would contribute to a more positive perception of the counselor as an effective agent of change.

Appendix A

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Approval

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-3899
516 387-8293

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Date: October 25, 1995

To: George Starrett

From: Richard Wright, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 95-10-19

Richard A. Wright

This letter will serve as confirmation that upon receipt of the instruments to be used in your research your research project entitled 'An investigation of the relationship between homework assignments in counseling and perceptions of specific counselor characteristics' has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you must seek specific approval for any changes in this design. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: October 25, 1996

cc: John Geisler, CECP

Appendix B
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form
Western Michigan University, Department of
Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a dissertation project entitled "The Relationship Between Homework Assignments in Counseling and Perceptions of Counselor Characteristics." The purpose of this research is to evaluate the relationship between the use of homework assignments in counseling and perceptions of specific counselor characteristics. Participation in this study will require approximately 30-40 minutes.

I understand that if I agree, I will be chosen to participate in one of two groups. I will be asked to watch a brief video vignette of a counseling session and complete two short rating scales.

I understand that my name and any identifying information will not be used on any of the forms and that you will use a code number instead. You will keep a list of code numbers and names which will be destroyed after the research is complete.

If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may contact George Starrett at 382-4086. Should difficulties be encountered that I believe not adequately addressed by George Starrett I may contact Dr. John Geisler, Chairman of Mr. Starrett's dissertation committee at 387-5112.

My signature below indicates that I have read the informed consent form and agree to the stated terms.

Print Name Here _____

Sign Name Here _____

Today's Date _____

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