

Abstract

Though studies in the mentoring literature suggest that personality traits affect the quality of mentor-mentee relationships, we could find no studies addressing the role of these traits in advisor-advisee relationships in doctoral education. In a survey of dissertation advisors and advisees we asked them to select from a list the five traits they most valued in the other group. Using these selections, we ranked the traits for each group and provided a cluster analysis of the traits to reveal the broader patterns in the data.

Major Questions

- What range of personality traits are viewed as most desired in mentors and mentees?
- Is there consistency between the expectations of what mentors and mentees expect from each other?

Methodology

In the Fall of 2015, an IRB-approved survey focused on various aspects of mentoring was sent to all members of the Graduate Faculty at NC State as well as to two different student populations:

- 1. Thesis master's students in at least their second year (although some had converted to non-thesis)
- 2. PhD students in at least their third year

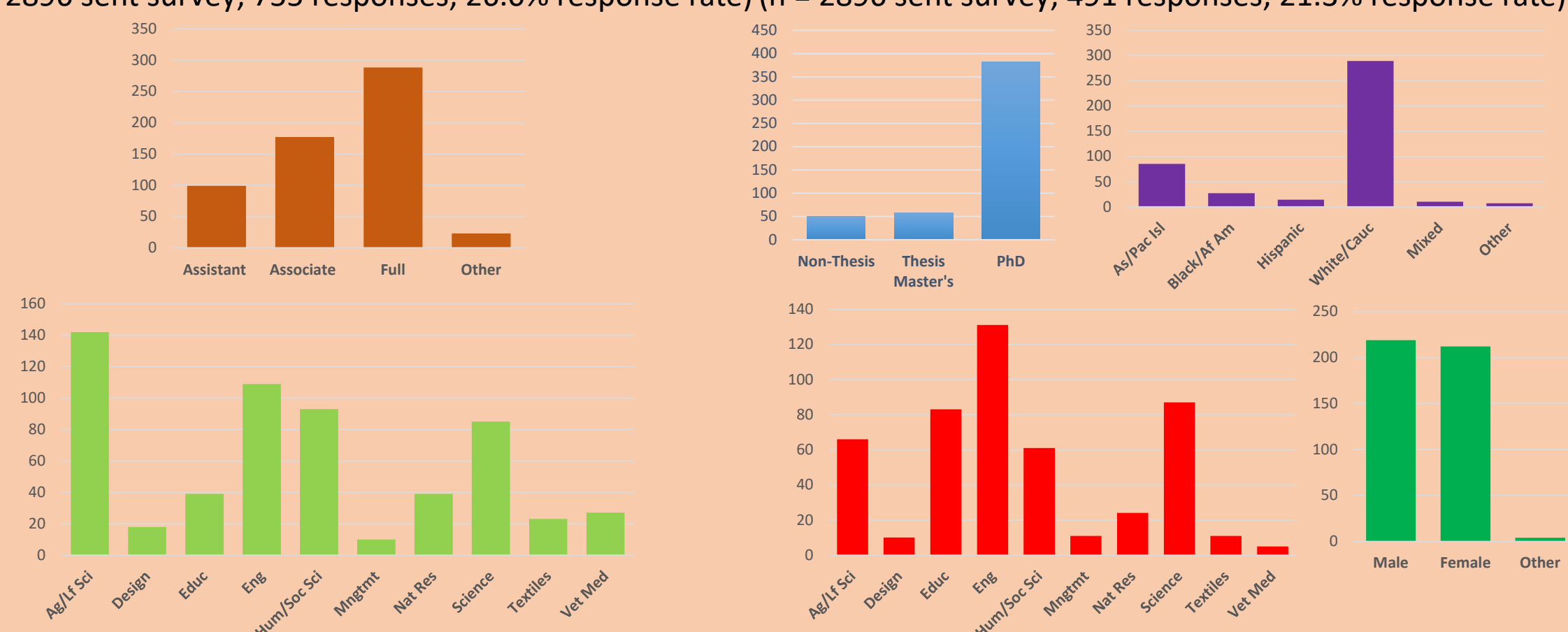
Although the survey focused on a range of different personality traits that advisors and students valued and how they dealt with advisors that did not match their expectations in terms of those traits, it also asked a range of questions related to other aspects of the mentoring relationships, which are beyond the scope of this presentation.

Survey Demographics

Faculty

Students

(n = 2896 sent survey; 755 responses; 26.0% response rate) (n = 2896 sent survey; 491 responses; 21.3% response rate)



Evaluation of the Importance of Traits Displayed by Advisors

Group Making the Evaluation

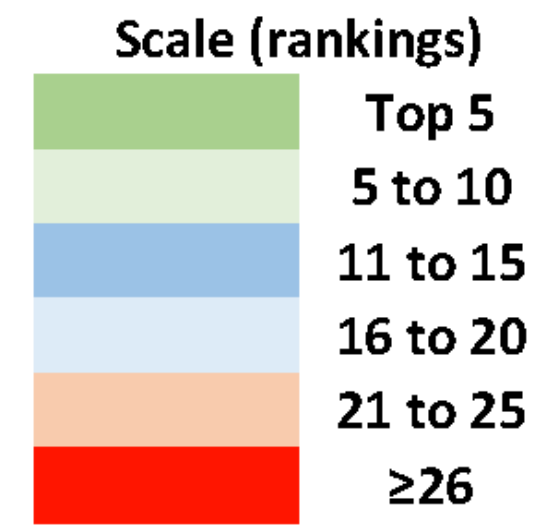
Attributes of Advisors	Advisees		Advisors	
	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Effective communicator/listener	7.02%	171	7.22%	212
Approachable	6.69%	163	7.26%	213
Encouraging	6.65%	162	7.60%	223
Aware of advisee's goals	6.37%	155	4.46%	131
Willing to share expertise	6.08%	148	5.01%	147
Accessible	5.83%	142	5.32%	156
Responsive	5.34%	130	4.33%	127
Clear expectation setter	5.05%	123	6.95%	204
Constructive	4.93%	120	5.96%	175
Meets regularly with students	4.39%	107	6.30%	185
Professional	4.23%	103	5.25%	154
Willing to assist	3.53%	86	5.01%	147
Available	3.53%	86	3.41%	100
Goal-oriented	3.37%	82	2.15%	63
Open-minded	3.00%	73	2.56%	75
Organized	2.75%	67	2.45%	72
Good follow through	2.22%	54	2.04%	60
Good time management	2.05%	50	1.09%	32
Good understanding of policies	1.85%	45	1.53%	45
Patient	1.60%	39	2.79%	82
Good sounding board	1.56%	38	1.70%	50
Credible	1.56%	38	1.29%	38
Attentive	1.48%	36	1.36%	40
Empathetic	1.36%	33	1.33%	39
Honorable	1.31%	32	1.23%	36
Understanding	1.27%	31	0.85%	25
Humble	1.19%	29	0.48%	14
Balanced	1.15%	28	0.68%	20
Compassionate	1.11%	27	0.85%	25
Diligent	0.82%	20	0.48%	14
Firm	0.41%	10	0.78%	23
Ability to compartmentalize	0.29%	7	0.27%	8

Results

Evaluation of the Importance of Traits Displayed by Advisees

Group Making the Evaluation

Attributes of Advisees	Advisors		Advisees	
	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
Self-motivated	11.66%	341	7.81%	198
Curious/Inquisitive	10.32%	302	3.04%	77
Effective communicator	6.36%	186	4.30%	109
Analytical	6.22%	182	2.52%	64
Show initiative	5.30%	155	2.44%	62
Committed	4.99%	146	5.56%	141
Responsible	4.92%	144	7.81%	198
Disciplined	4.58%	134	3.75%	95
Aware of expectations, requirements, and responsibilities	4.41%	129	9.03%	229
Enthusiastic	4.41%	129	1.77%	45
Driven/goal-oriented	4.38%	128	5.40%	137
Organized	4.34%	127	4.46%	113
Good time management	4.07%	119	6.35%	161
Willingness to accept criticism	3.93%	115	7.57%	192
Proactive	2.91%	85	3.23%	82
Diligent	2.87%	84	2.64%	67
Adaptive	2.67%	78	3.47%	88
Professional	2.67%	78	3.19%	81
Ambitious	2.22%	65	2.76%	70
In regular contact	1.98%	58	2.21%	56
Reflective	1.44%	42	0.95%	24
Balanced	1.06%	31	0.04%	1
Cognizant of strengths/weaknesses	1.03%	30	3.59%	91
Advocate for themselves	0.92%	27	4.73%	120
Assertive	0.34%	10	1.38%	35



Conclusions

- With a few notable exceptions, the ranking of advisor traits is remarkably similar between advisees and advisors
 - Advisees ranked awareness of advisee's goals much higher than did advisors.
 - Advisors ranked being a clear expectation setter and having regular meetings with students as critical elements, whereas those were ranked somewhat lower by advisees.
- The ranking of advisee traits, however, suggests that the expectations of advisors differ substantially from students' views of what they believe advisors favor.
 - Advisors ranked various aspects closely related to research and independence much higher than advisees did.
 - Advisees ranked more 'functional' aspects as traits advisors favored.
- The noted differences in expectations between what advisors and what advisees feel they expect likely leads to significant issues that impact graduate student success in research programs.