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Faculty and Student Expectations/Perceptions of the Adviser-Advisee Relationship

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Many pedagogical and education researchers have documented the importance of the faculty adviser-advisee relationship. For example, Stickle (1982) notes that "the faculty advising system is one of the principal ways provided for accomplishing improvement in faculty-student interaction" (p. 262). Direct contact with their advisees can benefit students in multiple ways. For instance, Hawkins and White (1991) observe that "frequent, quality contact with professional staff (including academic advisers) has been associated with increased retention among undergraduate university students" (p. 3). Hornbuckle, Mahoney and Borgard (1979) and Kelley and Lynch (1991) similarly report that the presence of a faculty adviser reduces universities' attrition rates. At a time when universities are competing for a shrinking pool of students, retention has become a heightened concern. Students also benefit scholastically and affectively from such contact. As Light (1990) indicates, "the importance of good advising, in particular, and the enormous difference it makes to a student's academic performance and satisfaction with life at college, turns up as crucial" (pp. 5-6).

Faculty and academic institutions also can derive benefits from the adviser-advisee relationship. For faculty, Seldin (1984) states that advising is utilized by 76.8% of liberal arts deans in evaluating faculty service and Kelley and Lynch (1991) found that it was second in importance within the service category to college-wide committees. (While this data represents the dominant approach, it should be noted that advising is placed in the more significant category of teaching at some universities, including our own.) Further, Beasley-Fielstein (1986) asserts that the quality of the advising relationship is a major contributor to institutional holding power.

Unfortunately, while the significance of the adviser-advisee relationship is readily acknowledged, this relationship is often neglected or devalued by many administrators. In fact, Stickle (1982) contends that "a university function as critical as advising is not adequately motivated on most campuses" (p. 262). While teaching and research assume primary importance, advising is perceived in less important terms. In fact, Emmert and Rollman (1997) report that department chairs believe that only 12 percent of an assistant

professor's time in Ph.D. granting communication departments nationwide should be devoted to the service category (and advising is only one dimension of service). Further, Guinn and Mitchell (1986) maintain that administrative support for advising is lacking and non-existent or limited rewards are provided for high quality advising. According to Boyer (1990), "the reality is that on far too many campuses... faculty who spend too much time counseling and advising students may diminish their prospects for tenure and promotion" (p. xii). Faculty, who typically receive no formal training as academic advisors and are often not held accountable for advising, may come to view advising as an added burden with no compensation (Stickle, 1982). As Borisoff (1998) notes, "junior faculty who are repeatedly told that 'you don't get much credit for service' are apt to incorporate this perspective into their own behavior. Why indeed, should they 'bother' to devote their time to activities that receive scant recognition and reward?" (p. 93). As a result, poor advising may occur. Beasley-Fielstein (1986) argues that this problem may worsen because "as the 'new' student of the 1980's becomes the typical student of the 1990's, the advisor's role will become increasingly more demanding" (pp. 116-117).

The demanding nature of the advising role is captured well by considering the functions of academic advising. According to Stickle (1982), effective advising includes delineating a meaningful program of study; providing information about available courses; knowing about and informing students of administrative procedures; recommending study skills; knowing about and being responsive to students' needs/personal academic problems (e.g., adjustment to college); and promoting long-term professional strategy development. Interestingly, theorists differ regarding how these functions can be achieved most effectively. In particular, disagreement exists regarding the manner in which the adviser-advisee relationship should be defined and enacted. For example, Fielstein (1989) notes that either a prescriptive (i.e., authoritarian, academically-based, task-oriented) or developmental (i.e., more personally-oriented, where discussion occurs regarding the student's background, personal attitudes, and concerns/goals) approach can be adopted. While the primary advising function of both approaches entails helping students to pursue their academic program to obtain their degree, the developmental approach embraces Student Development Theory in striving for a student-centered, goal-oriented, caring relationship (Beasley-Fielstein, 1986).

Academic Advising: A Relational Perspective

In our estimation, the academic adviser-advisee relationship can be understood most productively from a developmental standpoint. In fact, we believe this approach could benefit by applying current knowledge regarding relational development. As Hawkins and White (1991) observe, "communication with faculty and advisers is a special case of interpersonal communication" (p. 5). In this regard, the adviser and advisee are total strangers in their initial encounter. During this initiating stage (Knapp, 1984), the individuals in this role relationship are interacting in prescribed topical areas involving low depth (Altman and Taylor, 1973) and attempting to reduce uncertainty (Berger and Calabrese, 1975). As any relationship progresses, the qualitative nature of communication is likely to change. In the advising relationship, a focus on task-related issues early in the relationship may be expanded at later stages to include broader academic issues (e.g., feelings about one's academic situation, career planning) and personal/social matters. In fact, while little research has examined the progression of advising relationships, Nadler and Nadler (1993) found that class was a significant factor, such that first-year students saw their advisers least often, but were most likely to talk about academic matters with their advisers. Nadler and Nadler note that "this is not surprising, considering that first-year students possess minimal college experience and perhaps the greatest need for information" (p. 126). As Hawkins and White (1991) observe, a faculty member's higher status

can lead to greater formality and fear of evaluation on the student's part. These reactions may be more pronounced for first-year students but might diminish over time with increased contact and greater breadth and depth of interaction with their academic advisers.

Faculty and Student Relational Perceptions: Extant Research

This relational perspective regarding adviser-advisee interaction necessitates a comparative examination of students' and faculty's relational definitions and expectations. Issues such as the quality of and satisfaction with advising can be addressed by exploring the degree of convergence/divergence of these relational perceptions by advisers and advisees. For instance, several studies have examined what students and faculty value or believe should be the functions of academic advising. According to Fielstein (1989), students rated prescriptive activities significantly higher than developmental activities. While some developmental behaviors (e.g., being personally acquainted, knowing the student's background) were valued, other communication behaviors (e.g., talking about problems regarding family or friends, helping the student to improve his/her interpersonal skills, building students' self-esteem) were viewed as unimportant by students. As Fielstein (1989) concludes, "the present study suggests that students do desire a personal relationship with an academic adviser but one that does not include exploration of such personal matters as family problems or relationships with peers" (p. 37). In contrast, Hornbuckle, Mahoney and Borgard (1979) found that students place a heavy emphasis on general social dimensions and that they evaluate advisers based on social/interpersonal dimensions (e.g., liking/disliking) rather than technical competence concerning academic problems. Similarly, Beasley-Fielstein (1986) reported that students identified the following positive qualities of advisers: generosity with their time, accessibility, showing a personal interest, and displaying positive communication behaviors (e.g., asking probing questions, offering friendly greetings).

Not surprisingly, faculty perceptions/expectations differ from students' perceptions/expectations. In fact, Hornbuckle, Mahoney and Borgard (1979) indicate that various factors (e.g., role relevance, link to professional advancement, need for personal contact, salience of advising, advisee load) influence faculty perceptions of advising. They observed that while students view advisers as their personal link with the university, faculty (and administrators) place primary value on offering technical assistance. Guinn and Mitchell (1986) found that 45 percent of students believe that advisers should help them explore life goals, while only 28 percent of faculty held this expectation. Other research has found less pronounced perceptual differences between faculty and students. For example, Bossenmaier (1978) reported that faculty value their own knowledge of the curriculum/university and helping relationship skills (e.g., good listening, being supportive, being approachable and open) and students value advisers who know the curriculum/university and are available. Finally, some research has yielded patterns which run counter to findings reported earlier. For instance, Larsen and Brown (1983) asked faculty and students whether faculty should assist students with personal problems. Seventy-eight percent of faculty and 61 percent of students answered this question affirmatively. Faculty also responded that they should assume a more active role than students recommended in terms of facilitating students' interactions with university bureaucratic procedures and insisting that students take more demanding courses than they are minimally required to take. Still, Larsen and Brown note that, overall, students expect more from their advisers than the advisers are willing to provide.

Clearly, perceptual differences in relational definitions/expectations between advisers and advisees exist. These differences can obviously lead to variation in the performance of advising duties and the level of satisfaction which results. Several studies (e.g., Bostaph and Moore, 1980; Polson and Jurick, 1981; McLaughlin and Starr, 1982) have

found that students are highly dissatisfied with their academic advising experiences. Biggs, Brodie and Barnhart (1975) found that while advisers are generally satisfied with their advising performance, they are dissatisfied with the amount of recognition received for advising. Further, they discovered that as the number of advisees increases and as the adviser's level of degree attainment increases, faculty satisfaction with advising decreases. Some clear discrepancies between advisees and advisers are evident. According to Creeden (1990), advisers are satisfied with the information and academic guidance they provide, while students feel a need to discuss broader, more substantive educational questions with their advisers. Creeden observes, though, that advisers were not as satisfied with their handling of students' life goals or their helping advisees to develop decision-making skills or self-understanding. Stickle (1982) found adviser-advisee differences on all five functions (i. e., effective program of study; information on courses offered and administrative procedures; study skills/motivation; knowledge of students' needs/personal academic problems; and long-term professional strategy development) of advising. In each case, statistically significant differences were obtained, such that faculty rated themselves higher than did students.

Faculty and Student Relational Perspectives: Perceptual and Behavioral Dimensions

While differing faculty and student expectations have been explored, little attention has been devoted to the convergence/divergence of relational perceptions and behaviors. A key element of relational communication is empathy. According to Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Kim and Sleight (1988), empathy is a multi-dimensional construct. The dimensions which are directly relevant to this study are empathic concern (i.e., genuine caring about another person); perspective taking (i.e., cognitively constructing a view of a situation similar to the other person); and communicative responsiveness (i.e., a behavioral level of empathy). According to Kelley and Lynch (1991), students viewed effective advisers as warm and caring. In fact, these socio-emotional dimensions were more highly correlated with students' perceptions of adviser effectiveness than technical knowledge. Because little research has been done in this area, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: How do advisees and advisers view adviser's empathy in terms of perspective taking, empathic concern, and communicative responsiveness?

Clearly, empathy is a key communication variable which can influence the process and outcomes of academic advising. Specifically, students' perceptions of their advisers' levels of empathy could influence the length and frequency of advising visits, the nature (e.g., breadth and depth) of communication during these visits, and satisfaction levels and perceptions of advising effectiveness. Again, in light of the limited research in this area, the following research questions are posed:

RQ2: How do advisers perceive/evaluate the communication behavior which occurs in advising interactions?

RQ3: How do advisees perceive/evaluate the communication behavior which occurs in advising interactions?

RQ4: Does a relationship exist between adviser perceptions of adviser empathy and adviser perceptions/evaluations of the communication behavior which occurs in advising interactions?

RQ5: Does a relationship exist between advisee perceptions of adviser empathy and advisee perceptions/evaluations of the communication behavior which occurs in advising interactions?

Sex Differences in Advising Communication and Relationships

While receiving appropriate recognition and credit for academic advising is an important issue for all faculty, it may be especially significant for female faculty. According to Sandler (1991), women faculty experience a "chilly climate" such that their efforts, even when they exceed their male counterparts, go unrewarded and may even be denigrated. In terms of advising, a double bind (which exists for all faculty, but is more pronounced) for a female faculty member may occur, such that if she does not fulfill advising responsibilities, sanctions can occur, but if she devotes significant time to these devalued responsibilities, less time is available for teaching, research, and service. For example, Nadler and Nadler (1993) found that female advisers were seen more frequently than male advisers and were viewed as more empathic than male advisers, but they were not rated more favorably than male faculty despite these differences. Further, students may adopt a different relational orientation with male versus female advisers. As Nadler and Nadler (1993) note, "students with male advisers decrease their communication about personal matters over time, but students with female advisers increase their communication about personal matters as their college careers progress" (p. 126).

The finding for female advisers is consistent with the relational perspective described earlier, while the results involving male advisers are incongruent with this perspective and suggest the operation of a different relational trajectory. Interestingly, Nadler and Nadler (1993) also discovered that while male students did not vary their behavior with male and female advisers, female students saw their female advisers more often than their male advisers. Similarly, Light (1990) reports that whereas men want an adviser who possesses technical knowledge or who makes directive suggestions which can be accepted or rejected, women students desire an adviser who will take the time to get to know them personally and is a good listener. As Light (1990) observes, "the women's responses focus far more on the importance of a personal relationship" (p. 18). In fact, women's overall satisfaction with college is tied less to grades than men's satisfaction and more to personal relationships and informal meetings with faculty and advisers. Based on limited research regarding adviser sex, the following research questions are advanced:

RQ6: How do advisers and advisees view male versus female advisers in terms of perspective taking, empathic concern, and communicative responsiveness?

RQ7: How do advisers and advisees perceive/evaluate the communication behavior which occurs in advising interactions with male versus female advisers?

METHOD

Two sets of data were collected. Set one involved student perceptions of advising while set two entailed faculty perceptions of advising.

Set One

The sample consisted of 74 undergraduate students (36 males, 38 females) enrolled in introductory communication classes (public speaking and interpersonal communication) at a Midwestern university who had met previously with their academic adviser.

These students represented a broad cross section of academic programs across the campus. Students were solicited to sign up outside of class time as an option to meet a research participation requirement. Participants were told that the researchers were interested in studying student perceptions of and experiences with their academic advisers. Respondents also were told that no advisers' names would be requested and that no attempts would be made to discover who their advisers were. The students were asked to complete questionnaires and were then debriefed as to the purpose of the study. They were asked not to discuss the research with their classmates.

Respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire about their academic adviser. The questionnaire employed the Empathy Scale of Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Kim, and Sleight (1988), composed of 17 statements that represented the dimensions of empathic concern, communicative responsiveness, and perspective taking. Each statement was followed by a 5-point scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

The questionnaire also included five items which were combined for an overall evaluation of their adviser. These questions included asking respondents how likely they would be to recommend their adviser to a friend and to talk to their adviser about academic and personal matters, as well as to rate their adviser's accessibility and overall effectiveness as an adviser. For all items, seven point bipolar scales were utilized.

The final section of the questionnaire collected information about the number of times the respondent had met with the adviser; the average length of interactions; the adviser's sex and department; and the respondent's sex, major, and class year.

Reliability indices were computed for the three empathy dimensions (empathic concern $\alpha = .84$, communicative responsiveness $\alpha = .86$, perspective taking $\alpha = .79$) and the five adviser rating items combined ($\alpha = .85$). Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha, which measures the level of interrelation among the items making up each scale. Overall, the reliability estimates lent support to the use of these measures in answering the research questions.

Set Two

Questionnaires were sent out to approximately 210 faculty members at the same Midwestern university. The survey was sent to faculty members who held a tenurable rank (and thus performed academic advising duties) on the main campus, and it did not include administrators. Thus, as faculty at this institution served as academic advisors for students and represented a broad cross section of academic programs, the student and faculty samples evaluated the same population of faculty advisors. A total of 83 useable questionnaires were returned from 44 males and 39 females for a response rate of approximately 40%.

The questionnaire asked respondents to answer the items with regard to their academic advising interactions. The 17 item Empathy Scale of Stiff et al. (1988) that was employed in set one was also used here. Additionally, respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of the quality of and their satisfaction with their advising on 7-point scales. These two items were combined for an advising evaluation score.

Information was also gathered about how likely advisees are to talk about academic matters, how likely advisees are to talk about personal non-academic matters, the average number of times they meet with advisees in a single academic year, the average length of these interactions, the number of advisees, the amount of time set aside each week for academic advising availability, and the average amount of time per week spent on academic advising.

The final section of the questionnaire asked about the respondent's sex, years of teaching experience, years of academic advising experience, and the school or college of his/her department.

Using Cronbach's alpha, reliability indices were computed for the three empathy dimensions (empathic concern $\alpha = .73$, communicative responsiveness $\alpha = .77$,

perspective taking $\alpha = .81$) and two adviser rating items combined ($\alpha = .84$). Overall, the reliability estimates lent support to the use of these measures in answering the research questions.

DATA ANALYSIS

For both data sets, analysis of variance procedures was employed. For the student data, ANOVAs were performed on the three empathy dimensions and the five adviser ratings involving student sex and adviser sex. For the faculty data, ANOVAs were performed on the three empathy dimensions, the quality of advising dimension, and the seven behavioral items involving adviser sex.

Additionally, correlations were computed for the student data involving the empathy dimensions with the evaluation of advisers and behavioral items. For the faculty data, correlations were computed regarding the empathy dimensions with the adviser ratings of effectiveness and with the behavioral items.

RESULTS

Research question one asked how advisees and advisers view adviser empathy in terms of perspective taking, empathic concern, and communicative responsiveness. The faculty saw themselves more favorably than the students along all three dimensions. For empathic concern, the faculty mean was 12.54 while the student mean was 15.99. For perspective taking, the faculty mean was 12.53 while the student mean was 15.27. Similarly, for communicative responsiveness, the faculty mean was 11.13, and the student mean was 12.96.

Research question two examined adviser perceptions/evaluations of communication behaviors in advising interactions, while research question three examined advisee perceptions/evaluations. Again, faculty and students did not seem to share the same views about this area. For example, students reported seeing advisors an average of 1.75 times in total, while faculty reported an average of 2.5 visits with each advisee per year. Faculty also perceived the average length of the interaction to be slightly longer at 25.19 minutes than the 23.73 minutes estimated by students. Faculty reported making an average of 5.69 hours per week available for advising, and estimated an average of 2.75 hours per week actually being spent on advising. Students did not estimate the number of hours faculty were available, but they did rate faculty accessibility for advising as 2.88 on a 7-point scale.

Faculty also rated the quality of their advising ($m=2.23$) more positively than did students ($m=3.07$). Similarly, faculty estimated student likelihood of talking about both academic and personal non-academic matters higher than students. Faculty mean scores for the likelihood of students to talk with them about academic matters was 2.24 while the student mean score was 2.46. The gap was larger with regard to talking about personal matters as the faculty mean score was 3.61 and the student mean score was 5.54. Thus, the pattern of faculty rating themselves more positively than students carried over into all the communication behaviors examined in this study.

Research question four examined the relationship between adviser perceptions of adviser empathy and adviser perceptions/evaluations of communication behavior in advising interactions, while research question five examined this relationship from the perspective of advisees. In this regard, faculty ratings on two of the three empathy dimensions were significantly correlated with self-reported ratings of advising effectiveness (communicative responsiveness $r=.22$, $p<.05$; perspective taking $r=.24$, $p<.05$). All three of the empathy dimensions as perceived by students were strongly correlated with student ratings of advising effectiveness (communicative responsiveness $r=.73$, $p<.01$; perspective

taking $r=.64$, $p<.01$; empathic concern $r=.47$, $p<.01$). Thus data from both faculty and student respondents indicate a relationship between empathy and perceived advising effectiveness. Clearly, for both students and faculty, as perceived empathy increased, so did perceptions of adviser effectiveness.

Similarly, both faculty and student data resulted in correlations between all three of the empathy dimensions and student willingness/likelihood to talk about personal non-academic matters with advisers. Again, the student data (communicative responsiveness $r=.55$, $p<.01$; empathic concern $r=.43$, $p<.01$; perspective taking $r=.46$, $p<.01$) showed somewhat stronger relationships than did the faculty data (communicative responsiveness $r=.32$, $p<.01$; empathic concern $r=.26$, $p<.05$; perspective taking $r=.45$, $p<.01$), such that as perceived empathy increased so did the likelihood of discussing personal matters.

Both the faculty and student data sets were consistent in lacking any significant correlations between any of the empathy dimensions and the length of time spent in advising visits, but only the student sample resulted in correlations between two of the empathy dimensions and the number of times the adviser is visited (communicative responsiveness $r=.28$, $p<.05$; empathic concern $r=.25$, $p<.05$). Thus, as advisee perceptions of communicative responsiveness and empathic concern increased, so did reported frequency of visits. Neither the faculty nor student data resulted in significant correlations between perspective taking and the number of times the adviser is visited by the student.

Similarly, the student data resulted in correlations between all three of the empathy dimensions and willingness/likelihood of talking to advisers about academic matters (communicative responsiveness $r=.60$, $p<.01$; empathic concern $r=.43$, $p<.01$; perspective taking $r=.52$, $p<.01$), while the faculty data generated a significant correlation for talking about academic matters only for the perspective taking dimension ($r=.45$, $p<.01$).

The student data resulted in significant correlations between all three empathy dimensions and recommending an adviser to a friend (communicative responsiveness $r=.66$, $p<.01$; empathic concern $r=.43$, $p<.01$; perspective taking $r=.56$, $p<.01$) and between all three empathy dimensions and ratings of adviser accessibility (communicative responsiveness $r=.41$, $p<.01$; empathic concern $r=.22$, $p<.05$; perspective taking $r=.41$, $p<.01$). These items were not included in the faculty questionnaires. Other behavioral items that appeared only on the faculty questionnaire, such as hours available for advising and time spent advising, did not result in any significant correlations with the empathy dimensions.

Research question six examined adviser and advisee views of male versus female advisers in terms of the empathy dimensions. In the faculty sample, there were no sex of adviser differences reported for any of the empathy dimensions. In the student sample, a main effect was found for empathic concern. Female advisers ($m=14.88$) were rated as possessing more empathic concern than were male advisers ($m=16.52$, $df=1$, $F=4.51$, $p=.037$). For perspective taking and communicative responsiveness in the student sample, no significant effects based on adviser sex were found.

Research question seven explored adviser and advisee perceptions/evaluations of communication behavior in advising interactions with male versus female advisers. A number of significant differences were found. In the student sample, female advisers ($m=2.31$) were reported as being seen more often than male advisers ($m=1.75$, $df=1$, $F=6.62$, $p=.01$). In the faculty sample, however, female advisers ($m=2.62$) did not report seeing advisees statistically significantly more often than did male advisers ($m=2.46$). It should be noted that the overall faculty mean of seeing advisees an average of 2.54 times per year exceeded the student mean of 1.75 times seeing their adviser in total. That gap was greater for male advisers than female advisers since students reported seeing female advisers significantly more often.

In the student sample, an interaction occurred between student sex and adviser sex. Although male students did not vary their behavior with male ($m=1.86$) and female ($m=1.86$)

advisers, female students saw their female advisers ($m=2.06$) more often than their male advisers ($m=1.46$, $df=1$, $F=4.30$, $p=.04$).

There was no statistically significant difference in the length of advising visits reported between male and female students. There was, however, a statistically significant difference in length of advising visits reported by male advisers ($m=21.03$) and female advisers ($m=29.76$, $df=1$, $F=3.886$, $p=.05$), such that female advisers reported longer advising sessions than their male counterparts. Again, the variation in student estimates of length ($m=23.73$) and faculty estimates of length ($m=25.21$) should be noted.

Male advisers ($m=3.32$) reported spending more hours per week in advising than did female advisers ($m=2.19$, $df=1$, $F=5.777$, $p=.02$). Male and female advisers did not differ statistically significantly in the hours that were set aside for being available for advising each week, and the student sample reported no significant differences for adviser accessibility.

There were no significant sex differences for quality of advising in the faculty or student sample. However, faculty advisers ($m=2.23$) rated themselves more positively than did their student advisees ($m=3.07$). Nor were there any significant sex differences in faculty ratings of satisfaction with advising. In the student sample, however, while the overall set of adviser ratings produced no significant results, the individual items yielded some significant findings. For recommending the adviser to a friend, two main effects occurred: (a) Male students ($m=3.14$) were more likely than female students ($m=3.33$, $df=1$, $F=4.24$, $p=.04$) to make such a recommendation; and (b) female advisers ($m=2.74$) were more likely to be recommended to friends than were male advisers ($m=3.45$, $df=1$, $F=4.01$, $p=.05$).

There were no significant sex differences in the faculty sample's report of the likelihood of advisees to talk to faculty about academic matters or personal matters. Similarly, there were no significant sex differences in the student sample regarding talking with one's adviser about academic or personal matters.

DISCUSSION

A clear pattern, which has significant relational implications, emerged from the data which compared student and faculty perceptions. Specifically, advisers rated themselves more favorably than did advisees on all three dimensions of empathy and on most of the communication behavior-related items (i.e., reported frequency of visits to one's adviser, length of advising visits, quality of advising, frequency of discussing personal matters, and frequency of talking about personal, non-academic matters). These discrepancies, which easily could influence key outcomes such as the quality of and satisfaction with the advising relationship (which, as noted earlier, could in turn influence academic performance and retention) warrant consideration. For example, students' expectations/preferences regarding the communication availability and style of their academic advisers are not being fulfilled, which could result in greater dissatisfaction with the advising process. Further, faculty, in perhaps overrating their advising performance, may be unaware of students' concerns. As a result, the communication and relational development which are important for advising effectiveness may be hindered.

Another pattern which is apparent in the study's findings is that faculty and students both recognize a definite link between the relational dimension of empathy and communication-related behaviors. Student perceptions of advising effectiveness, advisee comfort with seeing advisers more often, and advisees' willingness to discuss academic and personal matters with their advisers were correlated with perceptions of all three dimensions of adviser empathy. While faculty did not share these perceptions as strongly or as consistently as did advisees, they did make several connections between empathy and

communication-related behaviors (i.e., advising effectiveness, discussing personal matters, talking about academic matters). These findings demonstrate the key relational significance of empathy for advisers and advisees. More empathic advisers may well be more effective advisers, especially as prior research has shown that students highly value the socio-emotional dimension of advising interactions. As students rate faculty lower on empathy than faculty rate themselves, greater efforts by advisers to display empathy might help. Specifically, advisers could benefit from utilizing communication behaviors which display greater empathic concern, perspective taking, and communicative responsiveness.

Of course, as noted earlier, barriers to effective advising exist. As advising is often an unrecognized and unrewarded activity, many advisers may be reluctant to invest the time and energy needed to show greater empathy or develop a better relationship with their advisees. This reluctance, however, runs counter to another trend in the data. Specifically, empathy was more often correlated with qualitative (i.e., advising effectiveness, discussing personal matters, talking about academic concerns, recommending one's adviser to a friend) aspects of advising than with quantitative (i.e., frequency of advising visits, time spent advising, hours made available for advising) for students and faculty. While one exception (i.e., only students linked communicative responsiveness and empathic concern to frequency of visits) to this pattern exists, this overall trend is quite consistent and can shed considerable light on the advising relationship.

For instance, as universities require faculty to establish office hours to meet with students, and as students may require their advisers' assistance at times (e.g., to file a program plan, to ensure that all requirements for graduation are met), it is not surprising that at least a minimal level of adviser-advisee interaction will occur. In fact, such transactions will take place regardless of the nature of the adviser-advisee relationship. The quality of the communication, and ultimately the quality of the advising experience, though, appear to be linked to the adviser's relational behavior (e.g., empathy).

Another key consideration involves sex differences in the advising relationship. Interestingly, with only one exception (i.e., students rated female advisers higher on empathic concern than male advisers), no sex differences were found in either the student or faculty sample regarding adviser empathy for any of the three dimensions of empathy examined in the study.

Some sex differences were obtained, though, regarding reports of communication-related behaviors. Students reported seeing female advisers more often than male advisers, with this pattern being more pronounced for female versus male students. This interaction of adviser sex and advisee sex is important in the current educational context, as considerable attention is being devoted to whether the educational system is adequately serving the needs of female students. As much prior research indicates that women are more relationally attuned than men, it is possible that the nature of the advising relationship is more salient for women than for men. This pattern may account for female advisees seeking out female advisers more often than male advisers, with male students exhibiting little variation based on adviser sex.

These results possess significance for faculty as well. Students reported visiting female versus male faculty for advising more often and female faculty reported having longer advising sessions than their male counterparts. Despite these findings, male faculty reported devoting more hours per week to advising responsibilities. This pattern could be due to several factors.

First, male advisers may be overrepresenting their advising efforts and/or female advisers may be underrepresenting their advising efforts. This pattern would be consistent with trends in other arenas (e.g., the organizational setting) in which women may display more modesty about their work while men may more readily take credit for their achievements.

Alternatively, men may have more advisees and/or advising responsibilities than women. In the faculty sample, male advisers reported having an average of 36.24 advisees while female advisers reported an average of 25.15 advisees. Thus, the finding that male faculty reported spending more hours per week advising than did their female counterparts may be due more to having more advisees than having a stronger commitment to advising.

Finally, it is possible that male advisers consciously or subconsciously limit their advising interactions with female students to avert claims of sexual harassment. Male advisers may be very task-oriented and avoid either personal topics or overtly empathic communicative behavior so that relational misunderstandings do not occur. As a result, they may be viewed as less empathic and sought out less frequently, especially by female advisees. Thus, male faculty may experience a double bind, such that overtly empathic behavior could be misconstrued as a sexual overture, while a high task orientation could lead to less favorable reactions on the part of female students.

These findings point to possible problems for female faculty as well. Female faculty may also experience a double bind, such that making a greater investment in advising activities has no practical payoff, while failing to fulfill advising expectations can lead to negative outcomes.

In light of the many advisee-adviser perceptual discrepancies regarding communication and relational dimensions, as well as some additional concerns regarding the sex differences just described, the following sections explore recommendations for addressing these concerns and offer directions for future research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A major limitation of academic advising is that advisers often receive little or no training concerning this important function. In fact, Hornbuckle et al. (1979) advocate that faculty receive not only technical training in advising, but interpersonal skill training as well. As this study suggests, faculty can benefit from recognizing that students desire certain relational behaviors (e.g., displaying empathy) and such communication training could enhance advising effectiveness.

Since even potentially effective advisers may limit their advising activities due to other professional demands, universities must create reward structures for effective advising. Bossenmaier (1978) notes that most faculty are willing to advise if this activity is counted as part of their workload. Similarly, Beasley-Fielstein (1986) recommends that class load be reduced for effective faculty advisers. Biggs et al. (1975) also observe that "universities which are serious about improving their academic advising programs may wish to experiment with various forms of recognition for advisers" (p. 356).

Of course, universities are more likely to recognize and reward faculty advising if suitable measures of advising can be developed and employed. While this measurement problem is common for many institutions, Kelley and Lynch (1991) argue that "...student's expectations of what advisers should be can enter into the evaluation of what advisers do and how effectively they do it" (p. 26). Thus, efforts, such as this study, to delineate students' expectations could lead to the development of more satisfactory measures of advising performance and effectiveness. Further, Fielstein (1989) even notes that student needs could be matched to adviser styles. For example, students who desire a broader, deeper relationship could be matched with empathic, developmentally-oriented advisers.

Directions for Future Research

The enhancement of academic advising will also be facilitated through the conduct of future research in this area. As suggested above, additional research is needed to understand student needs/expectations. In this regard, the relational perspective advanced in

this paper could provide a meaningful and coherent framework for studying these expectations. While the importance of empathy has been documented, other relational variables (e.g., task-social orientation, formality-informality, dominance-submissiveness, intimacy) warrant attention. Further, once these relational expectations are understood in the advising context, additional data will be needed to ascertain what actually occurs in academic advising transactions. While this study employed self-report survey procedures (like most other research in this area), other forms of data (e.g., behavioral) are needed. Similarly, valid and reliable measures of advising effectiveness must be developed and applied to this behavioral data. Ideally, direct observations of advising sessions with the permission of students and faculty could occur. While this approach involves barriers such as privacy issues for students and possible evaluation apprehension for faculty, some non-threatening measures could be developed. For example, faculty could keep logs of their advising interactions. Further, the fairly recent trends of utilizing teaching portfolios could be expanded to the advising realm. In this manner, a win-win situation could occur such that students would benefit from better advising, faculty would receive appropriate recognition for quality advising, and universities would enhance student satisfaction and retention rates.

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