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Comparing Undergraduate and Graduate Perspectives of Adviser Interactional Justice, Sociocommunicative Style, and Credibility

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Abstract

The goal of the current study was to further the research findings generated by Wrench and Punyanunt (2004, 2005, 2008), and Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench (2008), which examined the influence of a variety of communication variables in the graduate adviser-advisee interpersonal relationship. The current study examined undergraduate and graduate advisee perceptions of advisers' interactional justice, sociocommunicative style, and credibility. Findings revealed that undergraduate advisees scored higher on adviser assertiveness than did graduate advisees. Moreover, graduate advisees reported higher ratings of adviser trustworthiness and mentoring than did undergraduate advisees.

Background

Wrench and Punyanunt (2004, 2005, 2008) and Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench (2008) initiated a line of research examining the nature of the communicative relationship existing between graduate advisees and their major advisers. While the researchers have examined the graduate adviser-advisee relationship from a traditional instructional communication perspective, they noted that the context of adviser-advisee communication was open to a wide range of possible research topics. While the nature of graduate adviser-advisee relationships was addressed in the first four adviser-advisee projects, no research to date has examined the nature of the undergraduate adviser-advisee relationship.

The purpose of the current project was to initiate a dialogue about the similarities and differences between undergraduate and graduate advisee perceptions of adviser communicative behavior. Specifically, this project examined the perceived differences in advisers' interactional justice, sociocommunicative style (assertiveness and responsiveness), and credibility (competence, caring/goodwill, & trustworthiness). Furthermore, this study examined the differences between undergraduate and graduate advisee perceptions of mentoring, advisee relationship satisfaction, and advisee motivation. Before discussing these areas, a review of the previous research examining advisee-adviser relationships, adviser credibility, sociocommunicative style, and interactional justice will be provided.

Undergraduate Adviser-Advisee Relationships

Gordon & Habley (2000) noted that undergraduate academic advisers are among the first representatives of the campus community to communicate with students and guide them toward valuable resources. Past research reported undergraduate students need effective academic advising to succeed in college (Kramer, 2003; Mastrodicasa, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Tinto (1987) found that interactions with undergraduate advisers have an impact on student satisfaction with the school and the institution's retention rate. Similarly, Ender (1994) discovered a correlation between students with positive undergraduate adviser relationships and higher retention rates. Based on these findings, it appears that undergraduate advisers may have a substantial impact on undergraduate advisees.

Creeden (1990) found that several undergraduate students were significantly dissatisfied with their academic advisers because of contrasting perceptions of the role of advising as held by advisers and their advisees. Looking at responses from both undergraduate students and advisers, he found the top two areas students wanted to discuss with their advisers were career options/goals and life goals. Conversely, advisers reported they did not feel career counseling was part of their responsibilities. It appears obvious that undergraduate advisers' and their advisees' perceptions of what should take place during advising sessions may differ substantially.

Karr-Lilienthal, Lazarowicz, McGill, and Menke (2013) found that many students were neutral in their perceptions of advising. At the same time, advisers felt their relationship with students was important but not rewarding. Most importantly, many of the advisers felt that they needed more training to be effective.

Similarly, Filson and Whittington (2013) discovered many undergraduate students do not further their educational experiences with their advisers. The students felt advisers provided minimal support for their personal development. The authors noted a direct relationship between the amount of advising contact and students' perception of the adviser's effectiveness, revealing that the more students met with their advisers, the higher would be their ratings of satisfaction about the advisers.

Graduate Adviser-Advisee Relationships

Crookston (1972) noted that developmental academic advising tends to happen at the graduate level, where advisers are often viewed as mentors for graduate students. Luna & Cullen (1998) believed the graduate adviser-advisee relationship could be an essential part of graduate education. Additional research indicated the graduate adviser can have a huge influence on the development and outcome of the graduate student's professional and personal goals (Ulku-Steiner, Kinlaw, & Kurtz-Costes, 2000). Overall, mentoring for graduate students is an important and pertinent part of the graduate school experience (Kelly & Schweitzer, 1999). Research found that graduate students who are mentored have a more positive outcome and are more satisfied and encouraged than those with little or no mentoring (Waldeck, Orrego, Plax, & Kearney, 1997). For that reason, it is critical to investigate the adviser-advisee relationship at the graduate level.

Adviser Credibility

McCroskey (2001) defined credibility as "the attitude toward a source of communication held at a given time by a receiver" (p. 83). Perloff (2003) referred to credibility as one of the "Big 3" communicator factors along with authority and social attractiveness. Inasmuch as studying the concept of credibility dates back to Aristotle, significant persuasion research has focused on the way in which sources achieve credibility with their audiences (McCroskey, 2001; Perloff, 2003). One important characteristic to keep in mind regarding credibility research is that it is a perception of the audience and often very subjective (Hart, Friedrich, & Brummett, 1983). McCroskey and Teven (1999) proposed that credibility is the combination of three factors: competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill. Competence is the extent to which an individual truly knows what he or she is discussing. The second component of credibility is trustworthiness, which is the degree to which one individual perceives another person as being honest. The final component of credibility, goodwill, is the perceived caring a receiver sees in a source. Of these, goodwill may be the most important aspect of credibility, because it deals with ethical situations and actions reflecting an ethical manner (McCroskey, 1998).

Most of the research studying credibility outside of traditional persuasion research has been in classroom settings examining teacher credibility (McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Teven & McCroskey, 1997; Toale, 2001; Wrench & Richmond, 2004). However, three studies conducted by Wrench and Punyanunt (2004, 2005) and Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench (2008) examined how adviser credibility affects the adviser-advisee interpersonal relationship. Wrench and Punyanunt (2004) found that an advisee's perception of her or his adviser's competence and caring/goodwill accounted for 43 percent of the advisee's perception of cognitive learning from her or his adviser. Furthermore, this study found that about 39 percent of an advisee's perception of the effectiveness of the adviser-advisee relationship could be accounted for by advisee perceptions of his/her advisers' caring/goodwill. Furthermore, Wrench and Punyanunt found that approximately 55 percent of an advisee's perception of the mentoring relationship with her or his graduate adviser could be accounted for by the advisee's perception of adviser credibility (competence, caring/goodwill, and trustworthiness).

Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter (2005) further examined the nature of credibility in the adviser-advisee relationship. In this study, the researchers found advisee perceptions of their advisers' credibility (competence, caring/goodwill, and trustworthiness) were positively related to advisee perceptions of the advisers' use of humor as a communicative tool, negatively related to advisers' verbal aggression, and positively related to advisee affective learning. The relationship between adviser credibility and adviser verbal aggression was further explored in a third study on adviser-advisee relationships (Punyanunt-Carter & Wrench, 2008). In this study, the researchers examined adviser credibility along with verbal aggression and conflict-management styles (nonconfrontational, solution-oriented, and control-oriented). In this study, a structural equation model was used to create two latent variables: credibility (as a function of competence, caring/goodwill, and trustworthiness) and conflict management (as a function of nonconfrontational, solution-oriented, and control-oriented). All three factors of credibility positively related to the latent variable credibility, while nonconfrontational and control strategies positively related and solution-oriented strategies negatively related to the latent variable conflict management. Ultimately, Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench (2008) reported that conflict management strategies negatively related to adviser credibility and positively related to adviser use of verbal aggression. In a replication of the findings of Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter (2005), adviser verbal aggression negatively related to adviser credibility.

Socio-Communicative Orientation and Style

In the mid to late 1970s, Sandra Bem (1974) began examining psychological gender orientation. In her theorizing of psychological gender, Bem measured two constructs, masculinity and femininity, using a scale she created called the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The BSRI was originally constructed by having different groups of participants read a list of adjectives and determining which characteristics on the list seemed more desirable for one biological sex or the other in the United States. After participants rated these lists, BEM computed 400 *t*-tests to determine twenty items ranked by females and males to be more desirable for a man (masculine scale) and twenty items ranked by females and males to be more desirable for a woman (feminine scale) (Bem, 1974).

Ultimately, researchers found the BSRI to not consist of the two factors Bem (1974) originally hypothesized (Gaurdeau, 1977; Waters, Waters, & Pincus, 1977; V. Wheelless & Dierks-Stewart, 1981; L. Wheelless & V. Wheelless, 1981). With the inadequacies noted in the BSRI, a number of researchers attempted to create variations of the scale. In communication, Wheelless and Dierks-Stewart (1981) factor analyzed the BSRI, paring down the BSRI's forty items to twenty, which included ten "feminine" characteristics (gentle, tender, understanding, warm, sensitive to needs of others, compassionate, sincere, helpful, eager to soothe hurt feelings, and friendly) and ten "masculine" characteristics (acts as a leader, has leadership abilities, dominant, aggressive, willing to take a stand, forceful, assertive, strong personality, competitive, and independent). However, even with the Wheelless and Dierks-Stewart (1981) re-factoring of the BSRI, there still remained questions about the validity of the scale itself. Is the BSRI a measurement of innate biological differences between men and women, or is it a measurement of some other characteristic?

Richmond and McCroskey (1985, 1990) believed the BSRI's conceptualizations of "feminine" and "masculine" were really just poorly labeled conceptualizations of actual communicative behavior. Instead of being marginalized with one biological sex, Richmond and McCroskey (1985, 1990) believed the more descriptive terms "responsive" (for feminine) and "assertive" (for masculine) communication styles more accurately reflected what the BSRI measured. Ultimately, what came of Richmond and McCroskey's theorizing were two new scales called the Sociocommunicative Orientation (an individual's innate tendency to communicate responsively or assertively) and Sociocommunicative Style Scales (an individual's perception of another person's communicative behavior as either responsive or assertive).

According to Richmond and Martin (1998), responsiveness refers to the degree to which an individual "considers other's feelings, listens to what others have to say, and recognizes the needs of others" (Richmond & Martin, 1998, 136–37). The ten characteristics used by Richmond and McCroskey (1985, p. 135) to measure assertiveness were "helpful, responsive to others, sympathetic, compassionate, sensitive to the needs of others, sincere, gentle, warm, tender, and friendly." Conversely, assertive communicators were found to be "able to initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations, according to their interpersonal goals" (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985, p. 136); and the ten items they used to measure assertiveness were "defends own beliefs, independent, forceful, has strong personality, assertive, dominant, willing to take a stand, acts as a leader, aggressive, and competitive."

Interactional Justice

Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004) defined communication justice as "perceptions of fairness regarding outcomes or processes that occur in the instructional context" (pg. 98). Interactional justice is a type of communication justice. Interactional justice refers to the perceptions of fairness concerning interpersonal treatment received when policies and procedures are implemented (Bies & Moag, 1986). In the adviser-advisee relationship, interactional justice refers to the quality and fairness of interpersonal treatment advisees receive when procedures are implemented. These evaluations and perceptions of interpersonal treatment can affect how the adviser and advisee communicate with each other. For that reason, interactional justice may be an important consideration in the adviser-advisee relationship because of students' perceptions of fair treatment by their advisers compared to their expectations of fair treatment by an adviser.

The educational and organizational/business research literature (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004; Colquitt, 2001) has largely ignored interactional justice. Chory-Assad (2002) reported that students' perceptions of procedural injustice were associated with a greater likelihood of indirect aggression and hostility toward instructors and resisting instructors' requests through revenge and deception. Similarly, Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004) found that students' perceptions of low levels of procedural injustice reported a higher likelihood of engaging in indirect aggression toward the instructor. All in all, it seems apparent that interactional justice is an important variable to consider in the adviser-advisee relationship.

Past research by Wrench and Punyanunt (2004) showed certain advisers' communication behaviors can have significant impact on advisees' perceptions of their advisers. In line with this research, Wrench and Punyanunt (2004) proposed the following hypothesis concerning adviser-advisee relationships:

There is a relationship among undergraduate and graduate advisees' perceptions of their advisers' interactional justice, sociocommunicative styles (assertiveness and responsiveness), credibility (competence, caring/goodwill, and trustworthiness) on mentoring, advisee relationship satisfaction, and advisee motivation. (p. 234)

Method

Procedures and Participants

Undergraduate and graduate students were invited to participate in this project via email solicitations to various academic listservs hosted by the National Communication Association, Kent State University, Kent State Graduate Student Association, and Texas Tech University. Within the email call was a link to the survey website. When participants reached the index page of the survey website, they viewed a standard IRB letter approved by the project researchers' institutions. Participants who consented to participate in the study then proceeded to either the undergraduate or graduate survey.

This method yielded 214 (58.3 percent) undergraduate student participants and 153 (41.7 percent) graduate student participants for a total of 367 participants. To explain the nature of the sample in the current study, demographic characteristics for both samples follow:

Undergraduate Sample. The undergraduate sample consisted of 124 (57.6 percent) females, 86 (40.2 percent) males, and 4 (1.9 percent) participants who did not respond to the biological sex question. The study also consisted of 17 (7.9 percent) first-year students, 37 (17.3 percent) sophomores, 45 (21 percent) juniors, 107 (50 percent) seniors, and 8 (3.7 percent) participants who did not respond to the year-in-school classification question. The mean age of the undergraduate participants was 22.17 (*SD* = 5.93).

In this study, undergraduate participants were asked to give some basic demographic characteristics of their major advisers, 149 (69.6 percent) had female advisers, 35 (16.4 percent) had male advisers, and 30 participants did not respond to this question. Participants were also asked how old they believed their advisers were: 38 (17.8 percent) had advisers under 25, 84 (38.3 percent) had advisers between the ages of 25 and 30, 37 (17.3 percent) had advisers between the ages of 31 and 40, 29 (13.6 percent) had advisers between the ages of 41 and 50, 17 (7.9 percent) had advisers between the ages of 51 and 60, 1 (.5 percent) had an adviser over the age of 60, and 8 (3.7 percent) did not respond to this question. The average time an undergraduate student spent pursuing her or his degree ranged from 0 to 18 years with a mean of 3.41 (*SD* = 1.92). Of this time in school, the undergraduate participants reported spending a range from 0 to 5 years with their current adviser (*M* = 1.55, *SD* = .94).

Graduate Sample. The graduate sample consisted of 111 (72.5 percent) females, 34 (22.2 percent) males, and 8 (1.9 percent) participants who did not respond to the biological sex question. The study consisted of 10 (6.5 percent) graduate students in the first year of a two-year master's program, 2 (1.3 percent) were in a one-year master's program, 31 (20.3 percent) were in the second year of a two-year master's program, 10 (6.5 percent) were first-year doctoral students, 24 (15.17 percent) were second-year doctoral students, 18 (11.8 percent) were third-year doctoral students, 7 (4.6 percent) were fourth-year doctoral students, 43 (28.1 percent) were All But Dissertation, and 8 (5.2 percent) did not respond to the question. The mean age of the undergraduate participants was 29.97 (*SD* = 11.78).

In this study, graduate participants were asked to give some basic demographic characteristics of their major advisers as well, 68 (44.4 percent) had female advisers, 63 (41.2 percent) had male advisers, and 22 (14.4 percent) participants did not respond to this question. Participants were also asked how old they believed their advisers were: 2 (1.3 percent) had advisers under 25, 14 (9.2 percent) had advisers between the ages of 25 and 30, 37 (24.2 percent) had advisers between the ages of 31 and 40, 45 (29.4 percent) had advisers between the ages of 41 and 50, 33 (21.6 percent) had advisers between the ages of 51 and 60, 16 (10.5 percent) had an adviser over the age of 60, and 6 (3.9 percent) did not respond to this question. The average time a graduate student spent pursuing her or his degree ranged from 0 to 8 years with a mean of 2.69 (*SD* = 1.58). Of this time in school, the graduate participants reported spending a range from 0 to 8 years with their current adviser (*M* = 2.53, *SD* = 1.62).

Instrumentation

Interactional Justice. The Interactional Justice scale was created by Chory-Assad & Pausal (2004) to examine the degree to which students perceive their teachers as being just in their classroom interactions. The scale consists of nine statements measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. The scale was re-tooled in this study to measure advisee perceptions instead of student perceptions of interactional justice. Alpha reliabilities for the undergraduate sample, graduate sample, and total sample can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Alpha reliabilities
Undergraduate Graduate Total

	M	SD	α	M	SD	A	M	SD	α
Interactional Justice	37.44	7.43	.96	36.89	8.96	.96	37.20	8.10	.96
Sociocommunicative Style									
Assertiveness	37.11	6.08	.82	34.76	6.43	.83	36.13	6.33	.83
Responsiveness	41.18	5.71	.89	40.18	5.61	.87	40.76	5.68	.88
Credibility									
Competence	34.86	7.09	.93	39.04	4.89	.90	36.61	6.59	.93
Trustworthiness	34.77	6.71	.92	37.01	6.44	.92	35.69	6.68	.92

Caring/Goodwill	32.45	7.40	.89	32.28	8.88	.92	32.38	8.03	.91
Mentoring	32.64	8.80	.93	38.19	10.54	.93	35.26	10.04	.93
Relational Satisfaction	26.60	6.62	.96	26.72	7.18	.96	26.66	6.84	.96
Advisee Motivation	27.67	5.63	.85	27.39	6.67	.92	27.96	6.07	.89

Sociocommunicative Style. Richmond and McCroskey (1985) created the Sociocommunicative Style scale as an instructional tool to examine the extent to which individuals use assertive or responsive communication. The sociocommunicative orientation scale consisted of ten items on each factor for a total of twenty items. Participants were asked to respond to short descriptive phrases ranging from one to five words in length and indicating ways in which respondents perceived their advisers communicating. The measure asked each participant to respond in terms of how well the items applied to her or him using a Likert scale from (1) *strongly disagree that it applies* to (5) *strongly agree that it applies*. Alpha reliabilities for the undergraduate sample, graduate sample, and total sample can be seen in Table 1.

Credibility Measurement. To test for credibility, an eighteen-item scale was created by McCroskey and Teven (1999) to study students' feelings and perceptions of a teacher's competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill. The scale consisted of eighteen oppositely worded adjective pairs with seven steps. Alpha reliabilities for the undergraduate sample, graduate sample, and total sample can be seen in Table 1.

Adviser Mentoring Scale. The Advisor Mentoring Scale was created by Wrench and Punyanunt (2004) to measure the degree to which an advisee feels mentored by her or his adviser. The scale consisted of eleven statements measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. Alpha reliabilities for the undergraduate sample, graduate sample, and total sample can be seen in Table 1.

Relational Satisfaction Scale. The Relational Satisfaction Scale was created by Beatty and Dobos (1992) to measure the extent to which an individual is satisfied with her or his interpersonal relationship with another individual. The scale consisted of six oppositely worded adjective pairs with seven steps. For this study, advisees were asked to rate their relational satisfaction with their advisers. Alpha reliabilities for the undergraduate sample, graduate sample, and total sample can be seen in Table 1.

Advisee Motivation. The Student Motivation Scale was created by Richmond (1990) to measure the degree to which students are motivated to succeed within a specific class. The scale consisted of five oppositely worded adjective pairs with seven steps. In this study, advisees were asked how motivated they were about school as a whole. Alpha reliabilities for the undergraduate sample, graduate sample, and total sample can be seen in Table 1.

Results

The hypothesis predicted there would be a significant difference between undergraduate and graduate advisee perceptions of their advisers' interactional justice, sociocommunicative style (assertiveness and responsiveness), and credibility (competence, caring/goodwill, and trustworthiness). Furthermore, the hypothesis suggested differences between undergraduate and graduate advisee perceptions of mentoring, advisee relationship satisfaction, and advisee motivation should be examined. To analyze this hypothesis, a series of independent t-tests were calculated using the sample (undergraduate vs. graduate) as the independent variable and the nine other variables discussed above as the dependent variables. The results of the independent t-tests can be seen in Table 2. Overall, differences between undergraduate and graduate student perceptions were only seen in adviser assertiveness (undergraduate sample scoring higher), adviser trustworthiness (graduate sample scoring higher), and mentoring (graduate sample scoring higher). However, it should be mentioned that while there were significant differences noted in this study, the effect size was minimal to non-existent. To examine effect sizes, eta-square was calculated for each t-test. Of the three significant t-tests, only mentoring ($\eta^2 = .01$) had an eta-square above .00, which is still considered a very minimal effect size (Green & Salkind, 2004).

Table 2
Difference Testing

Variable Names	Classification	N	M	SD	Df	t	Sig.	η^2
Interactional Justice	Undergraduate	204	37.43	7.43	279.96	.61	.54	.00
	Graduate	148	36.89	8.96				

Variable Names	Classification	N	M	SD	Df	t	Sig.	η^2
Advisor Assertiveness	Undergraduate	206	37.11	6.08	352	3.50	.001	.00
	Graduate	148	34.76	6.43				
Adviser Responsiveness	Undergraduate	204	41.18	5.71	348	1.62	.11	.00
	Graduate	146	40.18	5.61				
Competence	Undergraduate	196	34.86	7.09	334.43	-.16	.87	.00
	Graduate	141	39.04	4.89				
Trustworthiness	Undergraduate	197	34.77	6.71	331	-3.05	.002	.00
	Graduate	136	37.01	6.44				
Caring/ Goodwill	Undergraduate	197	32.45	7.40	260.51	.19	.85	.00
	Graduate	136	32.28	8.88				
Mentoring	Undergraduate	198	32.64	8.80	245.70	-5.90	.0005	.01
	Graduate	132	39.19	10.54				
Relationship Satisfaction	Undergraduate	198	26.61	6.62	336	-.16	.87	.00
	Graduate	140	26.72	7.18				
Advisee Motivation	Undergraduate	199	27.67	5.63	330	-1.06	.29	.00
	Graduate	133	28.39	6.67				

Since there were only three differences noted and those three differences had minimal effect sizes, a post-hoc analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the study variables. Looking at the relationships among the study variables from both samples combined enables a clearer perspective of the study's relationships. A series of Pearson product moment correlations were calculated among all of the study variables and can be found in Table 3.

Table 3
Variable Relationships

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
(1) Interactional Justice								
(2) Adviser Assertiveness	-.03							
(3) Adviser Responsiveness	.32***	-.13						
(4) Competence	.51***	.17*	.15					

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
(5) Trustworthiness	.64***	.08	.12	.79***				
(6) Caring/Goodwill	.76***	.04	.26**	.59***	.76***			
(7) Mentoring	.57***	.06	.25**	.34***	.38***	.68***		
(8) Relationship Satisfaction	.69***	.08	.32***	.53***	.64***	.85***	.72***	
(9) Advisee Motivation	.57***	.15	.15	.51***	.55***	.48***	.40***	.59***

$p < .05$ *, $p < .005$ **, $p < .0005$ ***

Discussion

Undergraduate advisees rated adviser assertiveness higher than graduate advisees did. Undergraduate advisers may be more likely to use a prescriptive approach because they feel their role is to provide answers and insights in a timely fashion. This information would include scheduling, educational resources, internships, and scholarships. As suggested by Tuttle (2000), advisers may appear to be very forward and forceful because of the information they need to provide to students and gather for students. Graduate advisees provided higher ratings of adviser trustworthiness than did undergraduate advisees. This finding indicates a relationship develops naturally between the student and the adviser. These types of relationships are built on trust and openness, which allows interactions that foster student personal and professional development.

In addition, graduate advisees provided higher ratings of mentoring than did undergraduate advisees. After all, the mentoring process is typically associated with graduate education (Kelly & Schweiter, 1999). Tuttle (2000) believed that advising is viewed differently at the graduate and undergraduate level. At the undergraduate level, students are advised about academic decisions rather than career/life objectives (Creeden, 1990). On the other hand, at the graduate level, students are advised about their professional and personal goals (Ulku-Steiner, Kinlaw, & Kurtz-Costes, 2000). Hence, it would seem logical that graduate students would rate perceptions of mentoring from their advisers higher than would undergraduate students.

Based on these findings, practical implications for the advisee-adviser relationship appeared. It is evident that undergraduate and graduate students may view advising. Specifically, efforts to improve the advisee-adviser relationship for undergraduate students might involve more developmental advising approaches. Also, efforts to improve the advisee-adviser relationship for both undergraduate and graduate students might involve more activities to promote caring/goodwill toward advisees, which appeared to be highly related to relationship satisfaction. Correspondingly, the study contributes to the understanding of advisee-adviser relationships and some of the variables that may affect perceptions of these relationships.

Limitations

There are a few limitations concerning the current study. First, the method used to recruit research participants was not random and could have influenced the results. It is entirely possible this study did not yield a representative sample of the entire population of undergraduate and graduate students.

Another limitation was the overall sample size that was collected. While the sample only consisted of 153 graduate students, the overall data points per predictor variables examined in this study was within reason. While clearly the results of this study would have been stronger with a larger sample, our sample size was within statistical reason. The last major limitation to this study concerns the measures used in this study. The measures used in this study have been used in other contexts rather than specifically in instructional contexts.

Conclusion

This investigation furthers a research program that examines adviser-advisee communicative relationships. Results from this study indicated that undergraduate and graduate advisees have similar overall perceptions concerning their advisers. Moreover, undergraduate advisees scored higher on adviser assertiveness than did graduate advisees. Graduate advisees provided higher ratings of adviser trustworthiness and mentoring than did undergraduate advisees.

The advisee-adviser relationship is an untapped and needed line of communication research that should be further examined. Future possible avenues of research should include areas such as organizational identification and assimilation, conflict management, and further interpersonal communication variables that could possibly impact the adviser-advisee relationship. By further studying variables

within the advisee-adviser relationship, advisers can learn how to communicate better in order to have a satisfying and beneficial relationship with their advisees. Additionally, advisees can learn what to expect from advising and how to attain satisfying relationships with their advisers.

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