Academic Advisors' Learning Styles: Establishing a Baseline and Examining Implications

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The influence of students' learning styles has been increasingly recognized as an integral component of effective higher education; therefore, application of learning styles to academic advising is equally relevant. As academic advisors address student learning styles in the hope of promoting greater student success, the contribution of advisors' own learning styles has received little attention. In addition to establishing a critical baseline, analyzing the learning style profiles of 30 academic advisors reveals that, although composite advisor learning style scores show substantial congruence with an a priori model, the disparity between any two individual advisor's contrasting styles was as much as 90%, leaving only a 10% learning style compatibility on which to base the advising process.

KEY WORDS: communication, learning schemes, *Learning Style Inventory*, rapport

Relative Emphasis: research, practice, theory

Introduction

The value and importance of academic advising is well documented (Alexitich, 2002; Brown & Sanstead, 1982; Light, 2001; Nutt, 2000; Strage et al., 2002; Yarbrough, 2002), positively impacting students' persistence in college, development of academic skills, career decisions and educational aspirations, and satisfaction with their college experience (Uhlik, 2004). Beginning in the mid-1990s, academic advising researchers began to reconceptualize academic advising as a postmodern teaching-learning-mentoring developmental process contextualized by each unique advisor-advisee relationship; this stands in contrast to a formulaic, prescriptive artifact of modernism (Stowe, 1996). The distinction between modernism and postmodernism as it applies in the advising context rests on modernism's preference for process efficiency enabled by standardization and uniformity (e.g., advising a rigid curriculum in which an identical method employed among advisors expends the least amount of time). Conversely, postmodernism is based on an understanding that while standardization may produce outcomes that seem efficient on average, uniform processes are increasingly less effective in the many complex and nuanced cases that deviate from the mean.

Partially in response to student dissatisfaction expressed during the past 20 years with respect to academic advising (Habley & Crockett, 1988; Habley & Morales, 1998; Hanson & Huston, 1995), newer methods have emerged. For example, academic advisors have been called on to express certain advising competencies, such as teaching and observational abilities (Fiddler & Alicea, 1996), and more recently, approaches to the advisor-student relationship have embraced "liking" students as interesting people willing to engage in friendly, meaningful conversation (Barnett, Roach, & Smith, 2006; Yudof, 2003). This milieu provides an environment supporting the reemergence of the development-oriented paradigm expressed by Crookston (1972) and is consistent with advising as teaching-learning (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005; Uhlik, 2004).

Fundamental to this approach is a shift in emphasis from the teacher-advisor to the student-advisee and from "what is the topic of instruction [advising] to what the student [advisee] has learned" (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005, p. 75). Furthermore, faculty advisors must "become knowledgeable about how students learn" and be able to "design strategies that promote student learning" (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005, p. 75). To employ a learning paradigm effectively, advisors must be aware of individual advisee learning processes along with individual social contexts and types of advisor-advisee interactions (McClellan, 2005).

Framing advising within this educative context makes it amenable—as well as susceptible—to the same pedagogical influences and techniques normally associated with commonly recognized aspects of the teaching and learning relationship. Among these is a collection of concepts, models, and methods referred to as *learning schemes*, which include multiple intelligences, learning preferences, and other ways of knowing (Dunn & Griggs, 1995; Guild & Garger, 1998; Uhlik, 2005). While students' learning styles have been researched extensively and are perhaps more likely to be assessed and recognized, their advisors' styles have not received much attention. Thus, not only is knowl-

edge of advisor learning styles lacking while awareness of advisees' learning styles is increasing (e.g., through orientation textbooks such as that by Gardner and Jewler, 2001), the matter of "liking" and advisor-advisee compatibility raises a speculative question: Could learning-style congruence influence the communication process on which valued advisor-advisee relationships are established and sustained?

The Problem

Although the distribution of learning styles has been explored among teachers (M. McCarthy, personal communication, March 14, 2002), leisure studies students (Szucs, Hawdon, & McGuire, 2001; Uhlik, 2004), and college students more generally (Matthews, 1995; M. O'Shea, personal communication, August 31, 2000), its manifestation among professional academic advisors apparently has not been examined. Learning style influences an individual's (advisors and advisees) acquisition and processing of information of all types (Alexitich, 2002; Duller, Creamer, & Creamer, 1997; Dunn & Dunn, 1993; Dunn & Griggs, 1995; Entwistle, 2001; Guild & Garger, 1998; Hemwall & Trachte, 1999; McCarthy, 2000), including the curricular and counseling content comprising more traditional prescriptive and developmental advising. It also affects the ability to converse—and to converse pleasurably (Stephenson, 1967)—in an empathetic manner, facilitating the friendly environment espoused by Rawlins and Rawlins (2005) and encompassing the learning paradigm itself.

Awareness of one's own learning style profile, and its relation to the more generalized distribution of learning styles within other postsecondary populations, expands an academic advisor's self-awareness and repertoire of professional competencies. Conversely, being unaware of personal learning style may invite aversion to communication (Stephenson, 1967) and conflict (McClellan, 2005) that adversely affect the contemporary advising process. In our present study, we first sought to establish a baseline describing characteristics of academic advisors' learning styles, and second, we examined the similarities and disparities existing among and between individual advisors that could affect communication during the advising process.

Learning Schemes

Philosophically, the notion that humans learn in different ways is tied to the Western tradition of the mind-body-spirit triad underlying Greek naturalism (Mechikoff & Estes, 2006), from which two major systems eventually evolved: *multiple intelligences* (Gardner, 1983), based on 7 to 11 functional preferences, and *personality types*, which encompass four perceptual preferences. The latter system originated with Jung (1921/1971), thereafter influencing Kolb (1984) and several derivatives such as the *Learning Style Inventory* (LSI) (Silver, Strong, & Hanson, 2006), McCarthy's (2000) *4-MAT*, and Felder and Soloman's (1991) *Index of Learning Styles* (LSI), among others. Soloman had served as Coordinator of Advising for the North Carolina State University First-Year College (see also, Felder & Silverman, 1988).

Guild and Garger (1998) analyzed seven extant learning style systems, including several of those listed above, distilling four style aspects: cognition, conceptualization, affect, and behavior. Jung's scheme, on which the LSI employed in our study is founded, generally corresponds to these aspects:

> Any learning process requires both *perception*—how we find out about people, places, and things—and *judgment*—how we process or make decisions about what we perceive. Perception occurs in one of two ways (called functions), either through *sensing* or *intuition*. Judgment also occurs in one of two ways, either through *thinking* or *feeling*….The preference for sensing or intuition is independent of the preference for thinking or feeling. As a result, four distinct combinations occur….Each of these combinations produces a different kind of learning style characterized by particular interests, habits of mind, and learning behaviors. (Silver et al., 2006, p. 3)

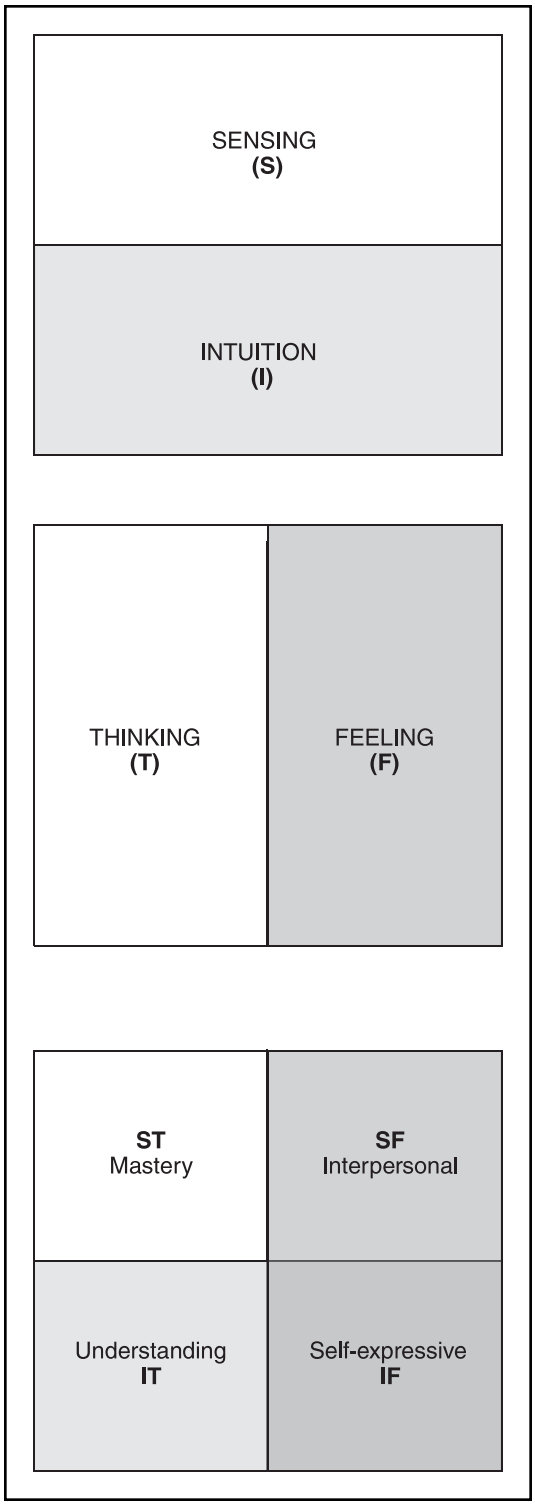
Figure 1 depicts Jung's (1921/1971) four perceptual functions revealed through the LSI.

The Learning Style Inventory

The philosophy underlying the original *Learning Style Inventory for Students* (LSIS) is embodied in the declaration: "How we experience a student should…not be assumed to be definitive until we have learned a lot more about both the student, and about ourselves" (Silver & Hanson, 1996, p. 3).

The precursor to the current LSI was the first *Learning Preference Inventory* constructed by Jung in 1921. It was further developed in conjunction with the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Myers & Briggs, 1962) in 1962. Working together, Hanson and Silver expanded the *Learning Preference*

Figure 1 The four Learning Style Inventory functions and their combinations forming the four learning styles



Inventory in 1980, which eventually led to the development of the LSI in 1987: one version for students (LSIS) and another for adults (LSIA).[1]

According to its most recent developers, the ultimate purpose of administering the current LSI is to develop thoughtful educators who are aware of both cognitive/thinking and affect/feeling dimensions related to all learning styles and learning tasks. Developing a balance between the cognitive/thinking and affect/feeling is essential for effective teaching and learning (Silver et al., 2006).

The four fundamental functions of the LSI are divided into two distinct (although not necessarily opposing) pairs. *Sensing* and *intuition* contrast action and wonder, standardization and customization, practicality and potential, gradualism and punctuation, and concrete and abstract. *Thinking* and *feeling* contrast logic and instinct, deliberation and spontaneity, independence and consensus, righteousness and acceptance, and reason and relativism. By combining adjacent functions, four learning styles are defined (Silver et al., 2006):

1. Sensing and feeling produces *interpersonal* learners who "are sensitive to people's feelings—their own and others. They prefer to learn about things that directly affect people's lives rather than impersonal facts or theories" (p. 5).
2. Intuition and feeling produces *self-expressive* learners who "dare to dream, are committed to their values, are open to alternatives, and are constantly searching for new and unusual ways to express themselves" (p. 5).
3. Intuition and thinking produces *understanding* learners who "prefer to be challenged intellectually and to think things through for themselves. They are curious about ideas, have a high tolerance for theory and abstraction, a taste for complex problems, and a concern for long-range consequences" (p. 4).
4. Sensing and thinking produces *mastery* learners who "are efficient and results-oriented, preferring action to words and involvement to theory. They have a high energy level for doing things that are pragmatic, detailed, and

[1] Both the LSIS and LSIA are available for purchase from the publisher, Thoughtful Education Press, LLC, at a list price of $5.00 per 8-page instrument. Quantity or research discounts may be available in dialog with a representative, who can be contacted at www.thoughtfuled.com.

useful" (p. 4).

Methods

Although we intend to produce immediately useful results, the study design is consistent with basic research, which "is driven by an anchoring with theory and a desire to add to the knowledge base of a substantive area" (Riddick & Russell, 1999, p. 8). Thus, establishing an academic advisor profile baseline within a learning style theoretical context contributes to the discovery of approaches and techniques that may enhance the advisor-advisee relationship that ultimately leads to student success.

The study participants were 30 full-time professional academic advisors employed by a state university located in the midwestern United States. Individually, these advisors scheduled formal sessions with between 20 and 40 students per week who are enrolled in several of the university schools and colleges and who had not yet been assigned to faculty advisors within particular academic majors. In addition to arranged meetings, advisors accommodated walk-in meetings, E-mail contacts, and phone conversations with advisees. Most school and college advising units did not assign advisees to a specific advisor; the majority of advising offices had adopted a walk-in advising structure. However, scheduling an appointment with a specific academic advisor remained an option for all advisees.

Nineteen advisors completed the adult version of the LSI (LSIA) during a single group session convened for that purpose, while the remaining 11 completed the inventory during individual sessions arranged with one of us. The LSIA was acquired directly from the publisher and administered in the original form without modification.

At the beginning of the assessment sessions, participants were given a brief introduction followed by an orientation in which we generally explained how to rate LSIA items. The LSIA is structured according to the generalized format shown in Table 1. It is a matrix containing four columns of 25 items per column. Participants read horizontally, in turn, a series of four descriptors, ranking each using the numerals 5, 3, 1, or 0 according to the statement, "Give the word or phrase that **best** [then, **second best**, then, **third best**, and finally, **least**] describes your preference as a learner" (Silver et al., 2006, p. 2).

Upon completion, we coded each LSIA instrument in accordance with the publisher's instructions and calculated column totals for each of the four LSIA learning styles: interpersonal, self-expression, understanding, and mastery. We scored (or verified, if subject-scored) completed instruments, and those scores are classified by numeric value as dominant (5), secondary (3), tertiary (1), and least preferred (0).

In addition to LSIA data, demographic information from each participant was collected on a separate instrument. Participants marked their instruments with anonymous identifiers to allow the authors to pair each set of data. All data were entered into the SPSS 14.0 software (2005) application, which generated descriptive statistics and correlations. Because the majority of the data were ordinal, Spearman's ρ was the correlation formula selected.

To supplement the numerical data, the general LSI design permits construction of a visual representation of an individual's learning-style profile. For comparative purposes, Figure 2 depicts the graph of LSI scores distributed such that the four learning styles exist in equal proportion. It was employed as an a priori standard against which variations in participants' results were analyzed. To construct the graph, column totals derived from the item scores were plotted along the four (roughly) orthogonal axes, each originating at a common focus—valued 0.0—and radiating outward along an

Table 1 Example of the LSIA general format

Example of LSIA general format:			
Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
1. Rank Descriptor	1. Rank Descriptor	1. Rank Descriptor	1. Rank Descriptor
Example of LSIA as completed by a recipient:			
Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
1. __0__ re-frame	1. __1__ challenge	1. __3__ accept	1. __5__ change

arithmetically scaled continuum and ending with a value of 125. (The 125 value represents the highest possible score if all the highest item values [5] are loaded onto a single style: 25 items × 5 = 125.) The four continua are demarcated at the 25 and 56.25 intervals. The value 25 represents the lowest possible non-zero column total (25 × 1 = 25), and the value 56.25 represents the average score per axis when the idealized equal distribution of learning styles is assumed (column totals of 125, 75, 25, and 0.0 = 225 / 4 = 56.25).

Results

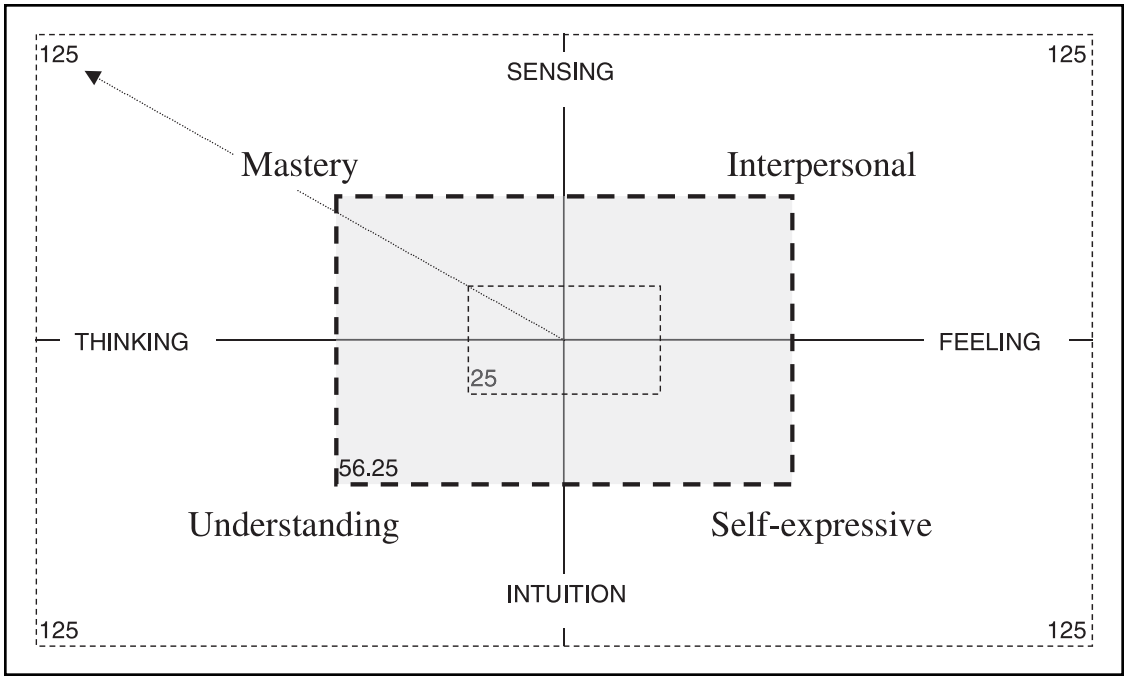
Twenty-three (76.6%) of the participants were self-identified as female, while seven (23.4%) were male. The participant ages ranged from 25 to 62 (mean = 38.7, n = 28) with a median of 36 years. In comparison, the university student population is 59% female and 41% male. The number of years each person was employed in a university advising capacity ranged from less than 1 year to over 30 years, with a median of 7 years in the profession (mean = 10.12, n = 29).

By frequency, understanding was the dominant learning style, exhibited by 12 of the 30 participants (40%), followed in declining sequence by interpersonal (9 participants, 30%), self-expressive (5 participants, 17%), and mastery (4 participants, 13%) styles. Among the four perceptual factors underlying the LSI, the participant traits were distributed as follows: sensing (7 participants, 23%), feeling (7 participants, 23%), intuition (3 participants, 10%), and thinking (8 participants, 27%). In addition, five participants (17%) exhibited opposing perceptual factors between the sensing/feeling and intuition/thinking quadrants.

The correlation analysis showed that none of the learning style pairs were positively correlated at the significance level (p = .05). Table 2 indicates that four of the pairs were negatively (inversely) correlated at a .05 (or higher) level of significance. The learning styles located diagonally across from each other in Figure 1 (mastery and self-expressive, and interpersonal and understanding) had the strongest and most significant negative correlations. No significant correlations were found involving age, sex, or years of service.

Figures 3 through 7 display the graphed distributions (visual representations) created by isolating the lowest reported individual score from each

Figure 2 A visual representation of the a priori model depicting a completely balanced learning style profile



Note. Each of the four (interpersonal, mastery, understanding, and self-expressive) learning style scores = 56.25.

Table 2 Correlations between pairs of learning styles

	1	2	3	4
1. Interpersonal	1.00	–.425*	–.682**	.346
2. Mastery		1.00	.180	–.735**
3. Understanding			1.00	–.547**
4. Self-expressive				1.00

Note. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

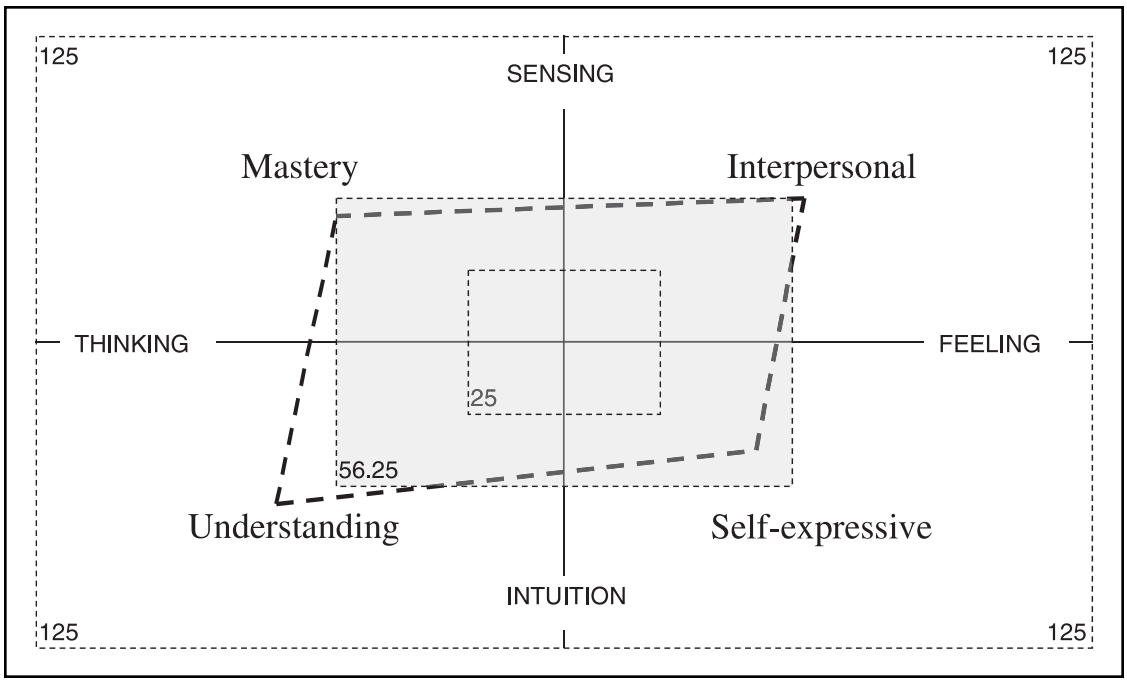
of the LSIA item total columns: interpersonal = 18, mastery = 08, understanding = 27, and self-expression = 17, respectively. Each of these four scores represents the extreme low manifestation for its associated learning style for these participants. Figure 3 indicates that advisors generally tended to exhibit the understanding learning style without too much emphasis on any one of the four perceptual functions. Figure 4 shows that the thinking function dominated, while Figures 5 and 6 depict a feeling function preference. Figure 7 displays a cross-function relationship between the sensing/feeling and intuition/thinking quadrants. Figure 8 depicts the profile of the individual participant whose scores most closely matched those of the a priori mode, while Figure 9 depicts the two most disparate learning styles/perceptual functions manifested among the participants. Finally, a grid analysis of Figure 9, shown in Figure 10, revealed an overlap of approximately 10% (shared cells = 26; $n = 280$).

Discussion

Correlation coefficients calculated between pairs of styles verified the validity of the LSIA instrument. The significant negative correlations found between diagonally opposed styles lend credence to the assertion that "the preference for sensing or intuition is independent of the preference for thinking or feeling" (Silver et al., 2006, p. 3). The lack of significant positive correlations is an indication that the four styles are, indeed, statistically distinct from one another. (In contrast, a significant positive correlation would indicate that a given pair of styles were one and the same.)

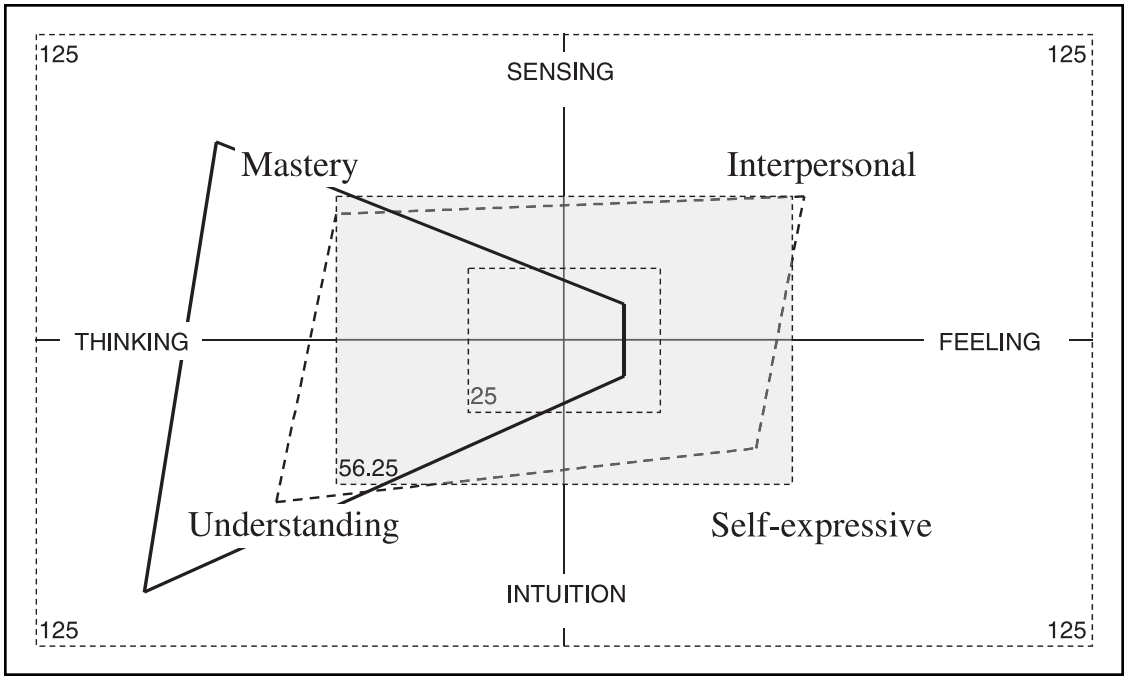
The distribution of participants' composite scores

Figure 3 The visual representation of the average learning-style profile for all participants combined



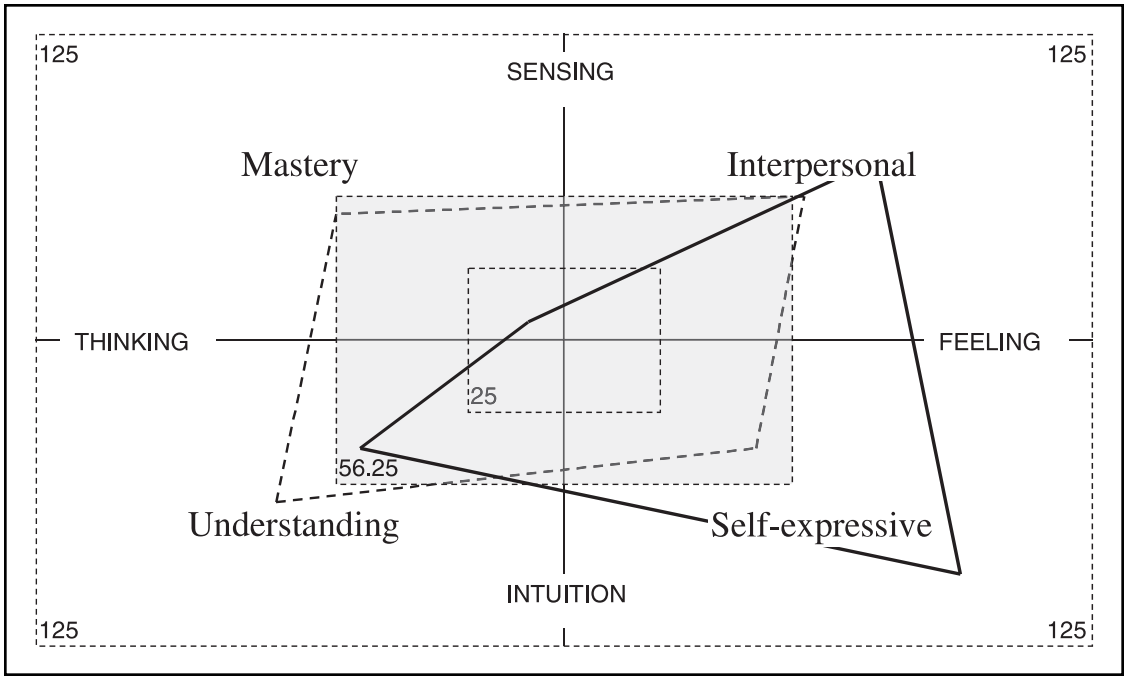
Note. Interpersonal = 58.8; mastery = 53.8; understanding = 64.2; and self-expressive = 48.1.

Figure 4 The visual representation of the learning style profile derived from the single participant recording the the lowest interperonal score



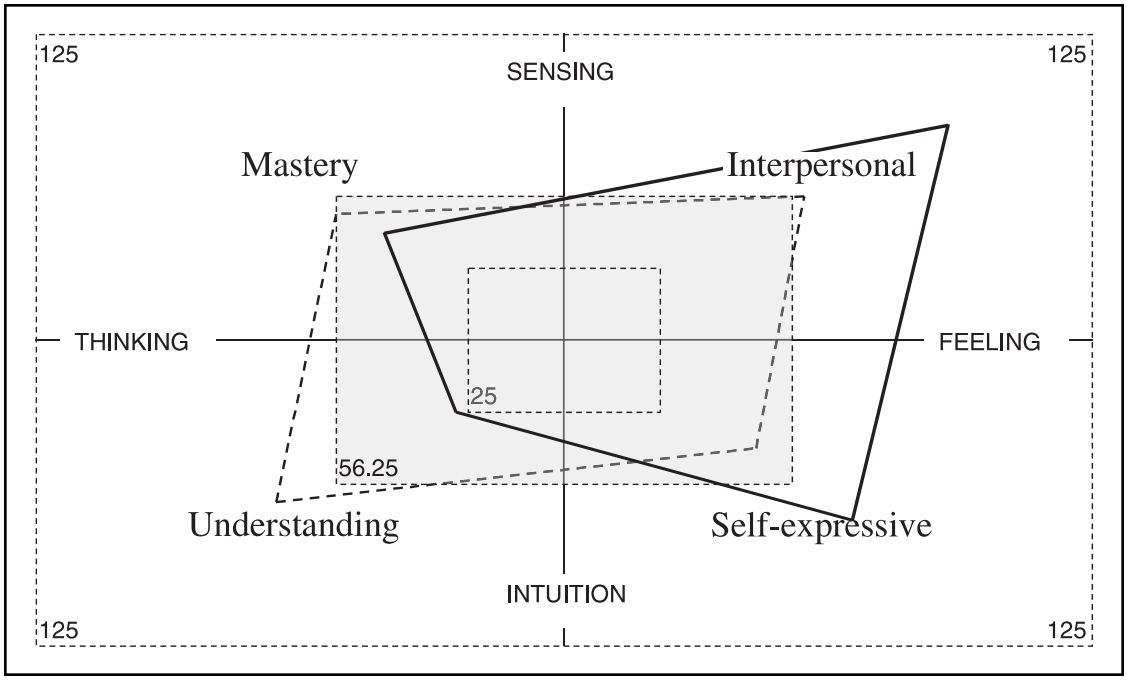
Note. Interpersonal = 18; master = 81; understanding = 107; and self-expressive = 19.

Figure 5 The visual representation of the learning style profile derived from the single participant recording the lowest mastery score



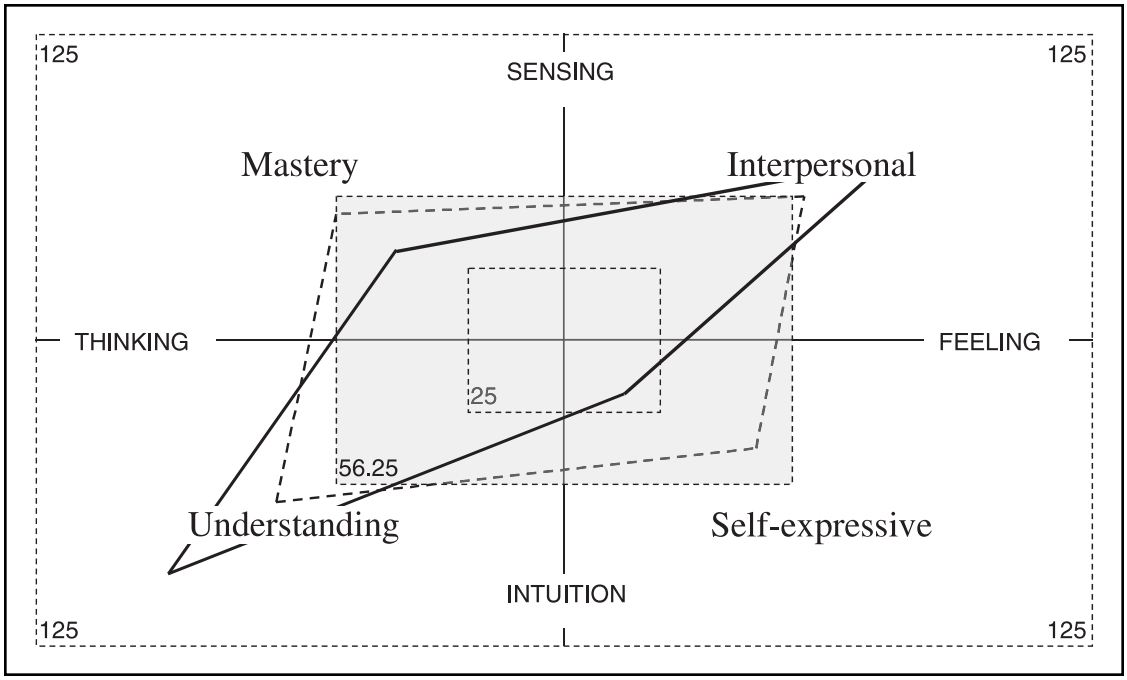
Note. Interpersonal = 72; mastery = 7; understanding = 49; and self-expressive = 97.

Figure 6 The visual representation of the learning style profile derived from the single participant recording the lowest understanding score



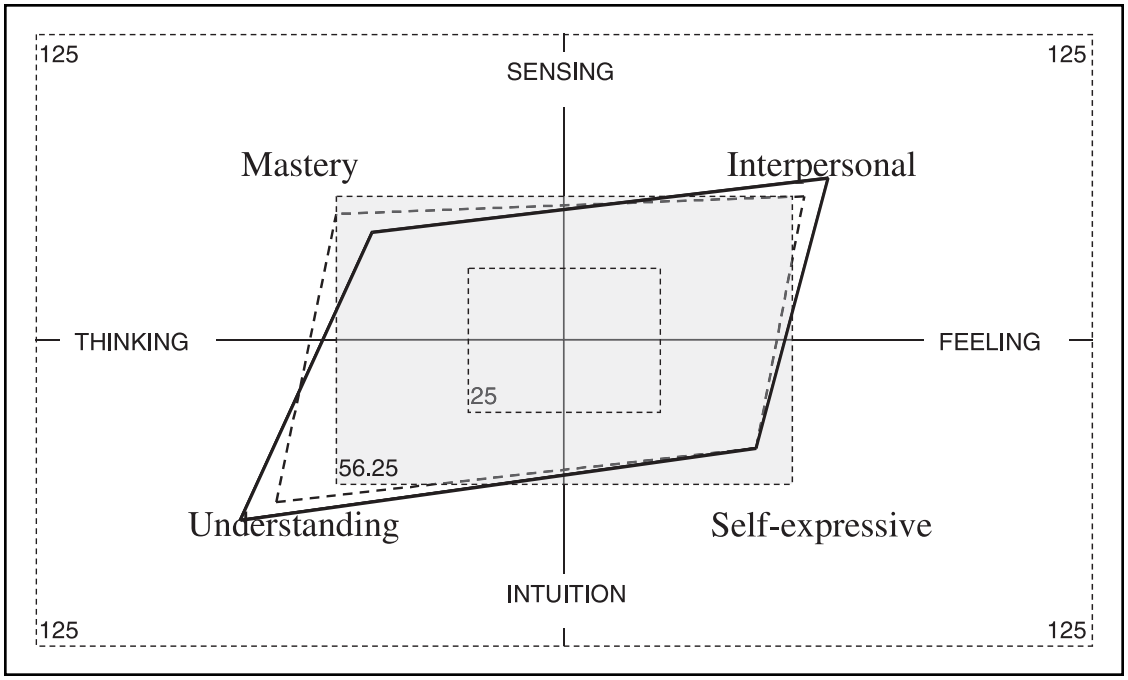
Note. Interpersonal = 87; mastery = 42; understanding = 25; and self-expressive = 71.

Figure 7 The visual representation of the learning style profile derived from the single participant recording the lowest self-expressive score



Note. Interpersonal = 76; mastery = 40; understanding = 92; and self-expressive = 17.

Figure 8 The visual representation of the learning style profile derived from the single participant whose scores most closely matched the a priori model



Note. Interpersonal = 64, mastery = 43, understanding = 72, and self-expressive = 46.

Figure 9 The visual representation comparing the two most extreme participant learning-style profiles

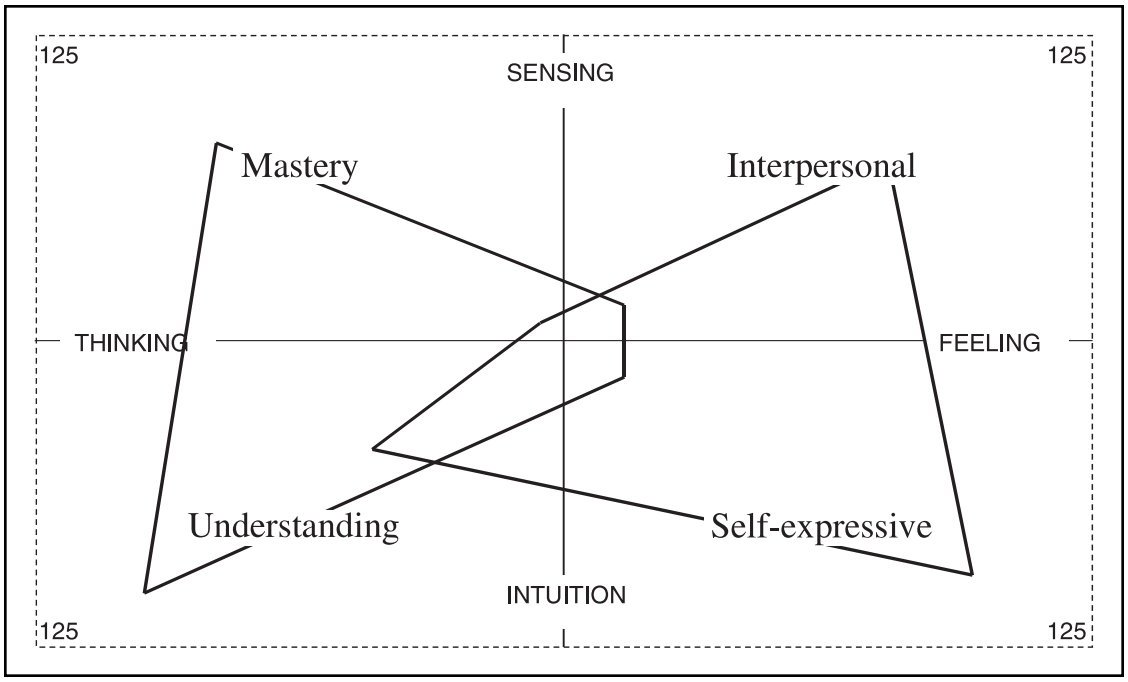
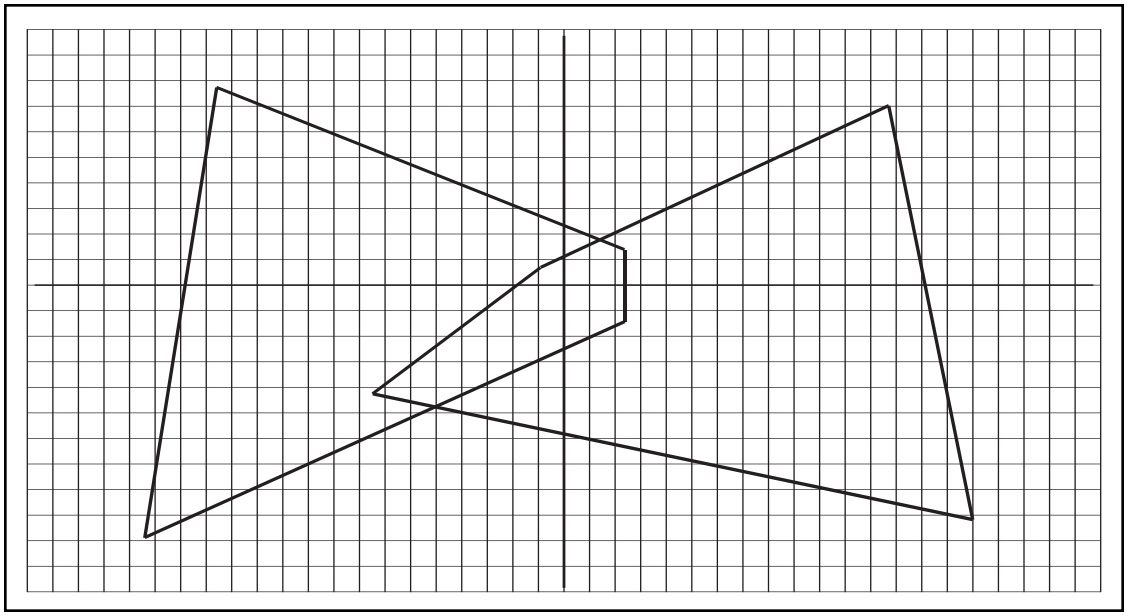


Figure 10 The juxtaposition of the two most extreme participant learning-style profiles on a counting grid



Note. Approximately 10% of the profile area is shared between the two participants depicted.

(Figure 3) provides two bits of useful information. First, a mutually reinforcing validity exists between the participants and the a priori model. The participants' averaged scores produced the nearly ideal distribution as graphed in Figure 2. Thus, the 30 participants' collective mirroring of the a priori model reflects the balancing effect of representativeness. Concomitantly, this same overall representativeness of the sample bolsters the proposition that the notable individual learning-style distinctions that do exist among participants (see Figure 9) also may be manifested generally by academic advisors. Second, taken as a group, the resultant composite scores reflect an ideal balance among the four learning styles. However, although one individual advisor's scores mimicked the a priori model, the remaining 29 advisor scores progressively deviated away from the model until the extremes depicted in Figures 4 through 7 were seen.

Understanding was the dominant style, reflected in the skewing of the composite advisors' scores toward that quadrant and producing the same effect in Figures 4, 7, and 8. This pattern shows that even though sensing/intuition is independent of thinking/feeling (Silver et al., 2006), the two are not incompatible in practice.

Direct comparisons among learning style distributions derived from competing instruments is problematic. The difficulty arises in relation to the learning style descriptors themselves. For example, based on their respective inventory criteria, is the LSIA interpersonal learner equivalent to McCarthy's (2000) *Learning Type Measure* experiential/concrete learner? One can say with more certainty that four separate styles exist—regardless of their descriptors—and that they are distributed unequally (imbalanced) among the sample.

Demonstrating this imbalance, researchers utilizing McCarthy's 4MAT-oriented *Learning Type Measure* instrument (M. McCarthy, personal communication, March 14, 2002) to analyze educators reported the array shown in Table 3. In another study (Uhlik, 2004), 50 of 72 students ranked "doing" as their primary method of learning, and 26 out of 66 respondents designated the visual style as their second learning preference. These statistics are consistent with Szucs et al. (2001) one-way ANOVA mean sums, which indicated that parks, recreation, and tourism management majors exhibited strong "doing" preferences, followed in turn by "observing," and then either "feeling" or "thinking."

For the purposes of the present study, and for advising practice, confirmation of the learning style imbalance provides useful information. While those with a modernist perspective would prefer to work

Table 3 Examples of the distribution of learning styles among advisors revealed in the present study, and learning types among educators as reported by McCarthy (personal communication, 2002)

Academic Advisors	*N* = 30 Advisors	*N* = 1,513 Educators	Learning Types
Interpersonal	9 (30.0%)	331 (21.9%)	Type 1 Learner Experiential/ concrete
Self-expressive	5 (16.7%)	491 (32.5%)	Type 2 Learner Analytical/ reflective
Understanding	12 (40.0%)	281 (18.6%)	Type 3 Learner Cognitive/ abstract
Mastery	4 (13.3%)	410 (27.1%)	Type 4 Learner Kinesthetic/ active

under a reliable predictable structure (in this case, either a single, predominant learning style or a completely balanced distribution: 25% for each of the four styles), the results reveal the notable variability acknowledged, embraced, and perhaps more effectively accommodated by a postmodern approach.

Academic advisors are expected to act as conduits, providing students with the tools to take control of their individual lifelong learning and personal development (Chickering, 1994), and also to "listen and communicate with their advisees [as such] behavior builds rapport and makes advisees aware that their advisors care about them" (Barnett et al., 2006, p. 6). A plethora of techniques and methods have long been available to advisors, but the matter of rapport is complicated.

Rapport is defined as more than simply being civil to or respectful of one another. To like students as interesting people and be willing to engage in friendly, meaningful conversation, as advocated by Barnett et al. (2006) and Yudof (2003), a deeper relationship must develop between advisor and advisee over the course of their advising conversations. The building of rapport in this context is likely influenced by the affective aspects of their communication.

Seminal communications theorist William Stephenson (1967) distinguished between *communication-pain* and *communication-pleasure*, the former being associated with work-like activities (e.g., prescriptive advising) and the latter referring to the satisfaction gained from stimulating exchanges between people on topics of mutual interest (e.g., developmental advising). If the degree of advising success is influenced by the degree to which the advisor and advisee like each other, is it also possible that this outcome is influenced by advisor-advisee learning style compatibility? Although the present study was not designed specifically to resolve this question, the issue nonetheless invites informed speculation.

Imagine the condition depicted in Figure 9 being used as the basis for the following scenario. If the academic advisor predominantly exhibits a thinking orientation and the advisee predominantly manifests a feeling orientation, then only about 10% of their respective styles is shared. If *understanding* was the dominant learning style exhibited by the sampled advisors; that advisor would "approach learning in a logical and systematic fashion, bringing organization and structure to people and things" (Silver et al., 2006, p. 4): all quite useful in an advising context, especially one that favors prescription.

Conversely, a *self-expressive* advisee's interests "are varied and unpredictable….They are turned off by routine or rote assignments and look for open-ended questions. . ." (Silver et al., 2006, p. 5). Learning style theory suggests that this degree of disconnection could be problematic; the advisor is using her head, while the advisee is following her heart. One can imagine the growing frustration (communication-pain) as the advisor insists on plotting a perfectly rational career path (even as the advisee seems indecisive and overly emotional). In contrast, the advisee perceives the advisor as being insensitive and overly directive. Clearly, they have not developed rapport and may even begin to not like each other very much.

Fortunately, Figure 7 contains a solution. While the advisor and advisee share only 10% of their respective learning style preferences, this overlap provides the very commonality on which communication-pleasure can be based and then developed, per Kolb (1984) and McCarthy (2000): Relationships start where both parties currently stand and are built from there. The visual representations indicate, first, that the understanding function should be employed as the foundation on which advising sessions should begin, and second, that both parties will need to recognize, respect, and accommodate each other's style differences. A third

option, of course, is to reassign the advisee to an advisor who exhibits a more compatible style, which first requires pre-assessing all parties' learning styles.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

At minimum, we have created the first learning-style baseline for academic advisors. Because the LSIA has well-established levels of validity and reliability (which have been reaffirmed in this study), the results reported herein allow subsequent researchers to confidently compare and contrast their conclusions to the baseline. In addition, individual advisors who may wish to self-administer the LSIA can compare their degree of learning style congruence to both the sampled advisors and to the a priori model derived from the general LSI framework.

Collectively, the sample of 30 participants in our study conform almost perfectly to the a priori model in which the four styles are distributed evenly within the larger population of all academic advisors. This result is reassuring because it lends validity to both the sample and the existence of individual learning style profiles that diverge markedly from the model. Deviations from the mean, of course, are characteristic of most distributions, reflecting the personal preferences, strengths, and weaknesses that individual advisors (and their advisees) bring to advising sessions (Crockett, 1982; Duller et al., 1997; Petress, 2000). Nevertheless, the sample was comprised of volunteers recruited from within the university professional advising community, and this convenience sample may not be statistically representative of the general academic-advisor population. A comparison of results of a true random sample of advisors to the baseline we obtained would be interesting and instructive.

The figures demonstrate that individual advisors can manifest an almost 100% congruence with the balanced profile represented by the a priori model, and as little as 10% learning style compatibility between any two individuals. This condition suggests that, just as previously reported learning style differences exist among learners (M. O'Shea, personal communication, August 31, 2000; Szucs et al., 2001; Uhlik, 2004), differences likely exist among academic advisors as well; cognitive skills in academe are not identical (Anderson & Adams, 1992; Grites, 1982; Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, 2005; McClellan, 2005). Therefore, as they continue to learn as much as they can about their advisees (Nutt, 2000), advisors also must learn more about themselves (Anderson & Adams, 1992; Dunn & Dunn 1993; Dunn & Griggs, 1995; Hemwall & Trachte, 2005).

"Style traits are easier to recognize in others if we personally understand those characteristics" (Guild & Garger, 1998, p. 26), but the danger of ignoring or disregarding difficulties involving learning style also is substantial (Alexitich, 2002; Dunn & Griggs, 1995; Guild & Garger, 1998; Nilson, 1998; Petress, 2000). Advisors who possess an awareness of how they view their world, collect information about their world, and then make sense (judgments) about the information collected will gain greater insight into the learning style of their advisees. A baseline and model now exist to permit objective comparisons and to provide a structure on which to build more effective advising communication in harmony with everyone's learning styles.

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