

ZEN-THESIS:

*working and communicating
with your PhD supervisor*

17 November, 2020

Oriana Bertucci, ULiège Research Office

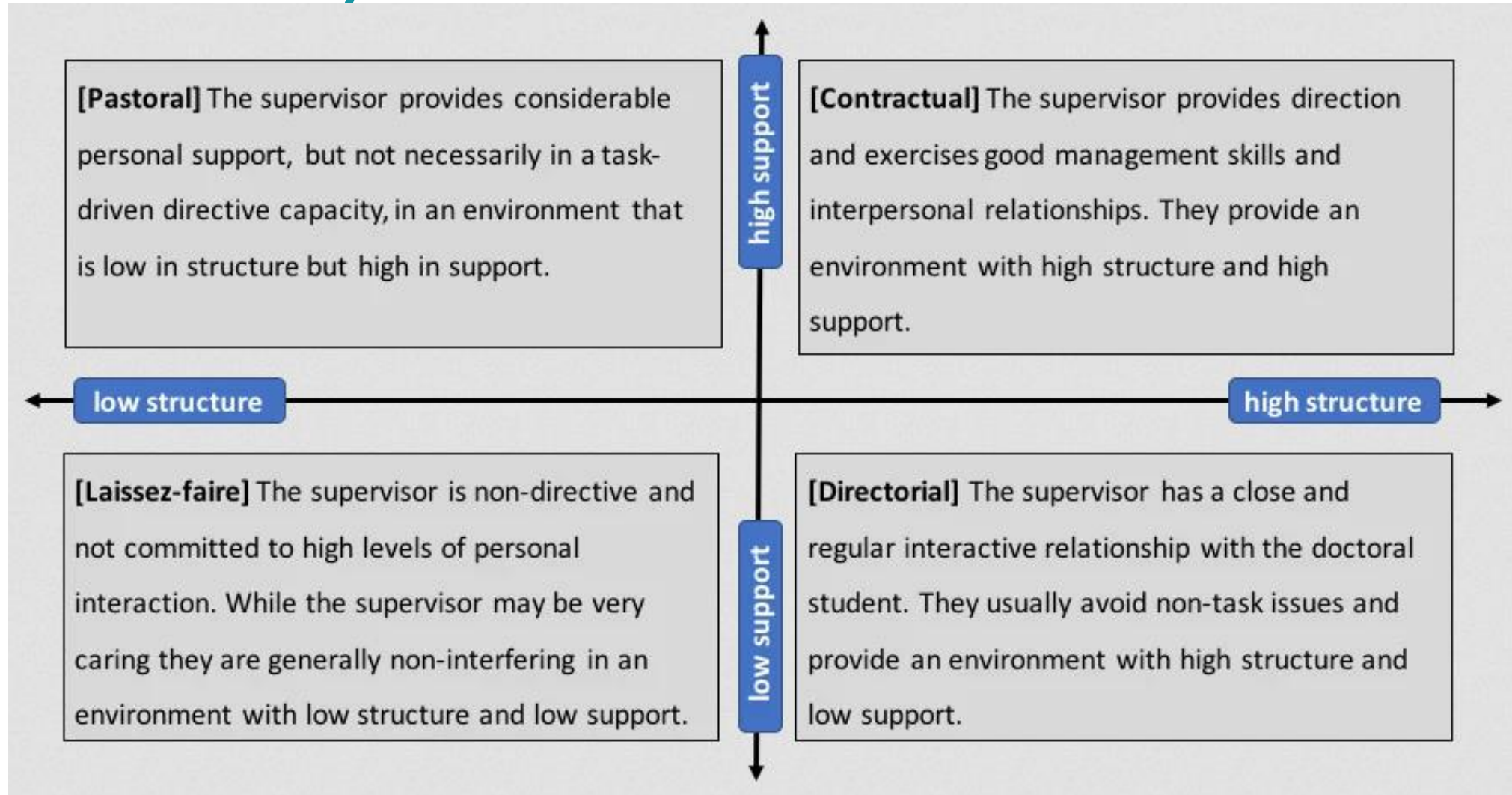
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Supervision styles



Superstar Supervisor

- Are you happy with your current level of supervision?
- What is working well with your supervisor?
- What could be improved?
- What do you need more of from your supervisor? Less?

Remember that supervisors may be experts in their field, but that does not mean that they are well versed in your knowledge and needs. Don't assume they know what you need, talk to them and discuss your needs and expectation.

Characteristics of an ideal supervisor

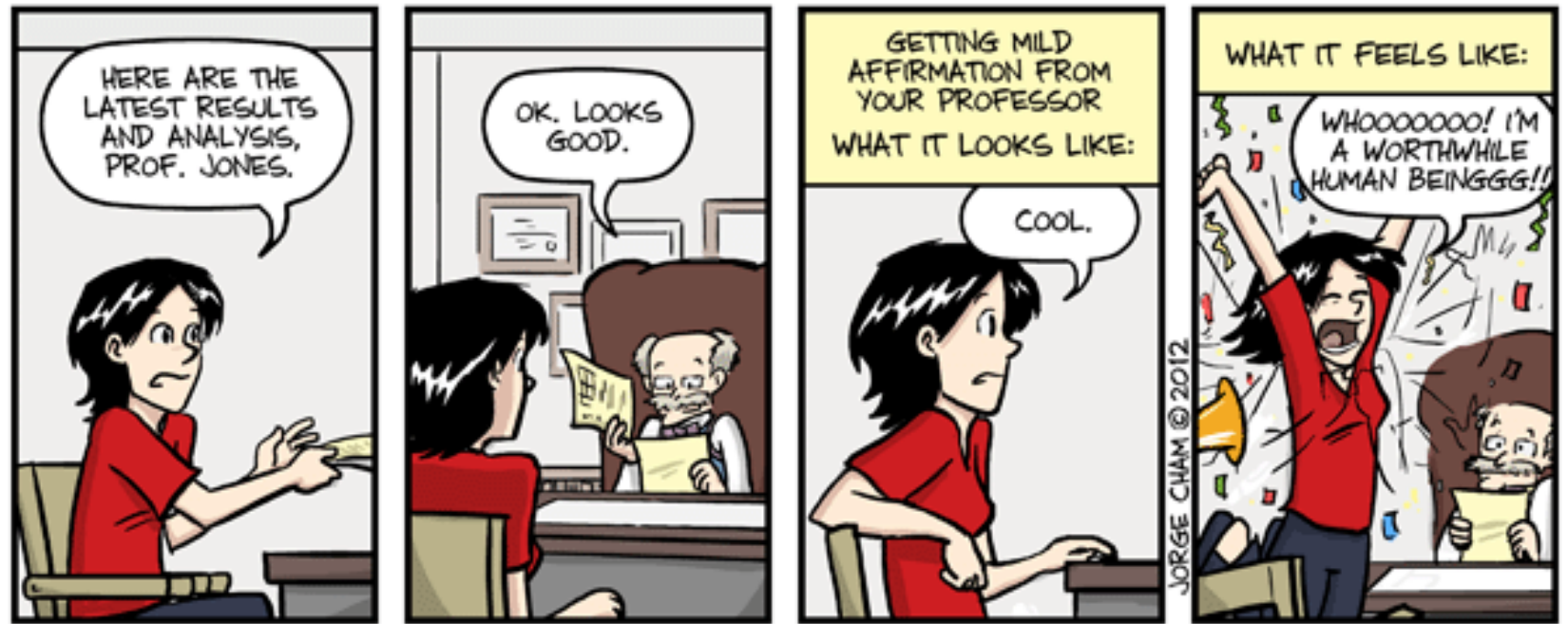
- Availability
- Support
- Knowledge and expertise
- Provides direction and structure
- Constructive feedback
- Networking/ connections
- Publications
- Regular communication
- ...

Characteristics of an ideal PhD candidate

- Motivation/enthusiasm
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving skills
- Creativity & curiosity
- Autonomy
- Determination/persistence
- Resilience
- Dedication
- ...

Knowing yourself & understanding your supervisor

- Take the time to figure out what you need to be successful.
- Get to know your supervisor and their supervision style.
- Discuss your expectations, be explicit with your needs vs. wants.
- Take initiative.
- Be responsible.



Supervisor communication

- How often do you interact/communicate with your supervisor?
- Schedule in person meetings if possible as you can accomplish a lot more in a face-to-face meeting than over email
- How will you communicate outside of meetings?
- Response time? 48 hours? Agree upon a suitable response time.
- Levels of supervision: is your supervisor your main point of contact?
 - Who will you approach when you need help with...
 - Extended absences: who will be your point of contact?

Remember that supervisors have many different responsibilities and their time is often limited. Maximize the time you spend with them by establishing guidelines and expectations early on.

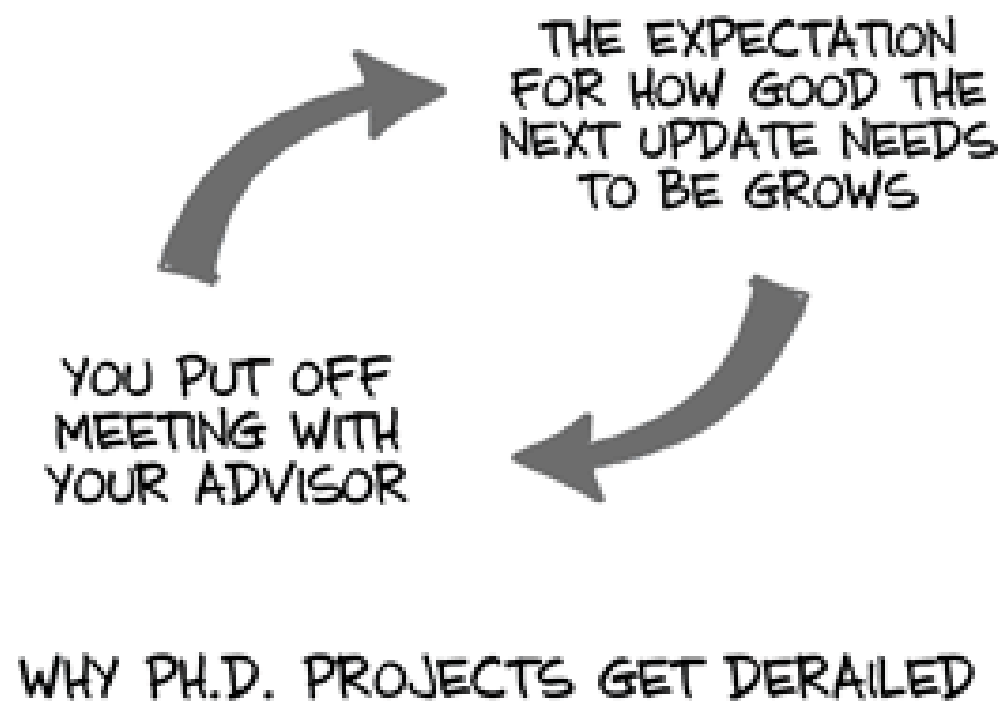
Supervisor meetings

- Establish a regular schedule for meetings
- Outline what will be discussed (will there be an agenda and who will set the agenda items?)
- Take notes, include action items, goals, needs
- Can meetings be cancelled/changed?
- Where will your meeting take place? (in person, skype, email)

Establish a meeting schedule early on!



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Setting expectations

- What do you expect from your supervisor?
- What is expected of you?

Discuss expectations... Make a list of items and be prepared for the meeting!

- Be specific about your needs.
 - Be flexible and be ready to adapt.
 - Be realistic about what is feasible for your supervisor and your project timeline.
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- Is your “*need*” a “*want*”? Is your expectation critical to the success of your project?

Charting the course...

Elements to discuss with your supervisor early on in your doctoral project:

- Meetings- frequency, location, etc
- Research ethics
- Intellectual Property
- Resource needs (budgets)
- Work schedule/ time requirements
- Goals and timeline for expected completion
- Feedback and constructive criticism
- What else?

Written supervision agreements may be useful to ensure the PhD candidate and supervisor are on the same page.

Other resources and support networks

- Who else can/should you be meeting with regularly?
 - Post-docs in your research lab or unit
 - Co-supervisor
 - Thesis committee (at least once a year)
 - Fellow PhD candidates (journal clubs, reading circles, revision and edit teams, etc)

SUPPORT NETWORKS

External Support

- Colleagues
- ReD (red@uliege.be) and the ReD representatives in your college
- CCS - ccs@ulg.ac.be

Direct support

- Your supervisor
- Members of your thesis committee

PhD candidate
ULiège Rules and Regulations
EU Charter for Researchers

Faculty support

- The President of your doctoral college
- Your Doctoral College
- Faculty appointed to your doctoral programme

Institutional support

- Research Office (ARD) doctorat@uliege.be
- Wellbeing Unit (Cellule bien-être) Emilie.Hirt@uliege.be
- CUFDD Doctoral College Council (Appeals) Dominique.Longree@uliege.be

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