Choosing Your Advisor

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CS 697: Graduate Initiation
2/05/2020

So you want a PhD

Lifecycle of a PhD student:

1) Find a research topic you are interested in
2) Pass your qualifiers: "worthy" of your admittance to the program
3) Form a committee
4) Pass your candidacy exam: outline of dissertation
5) Defend dissertation: earn your PhD
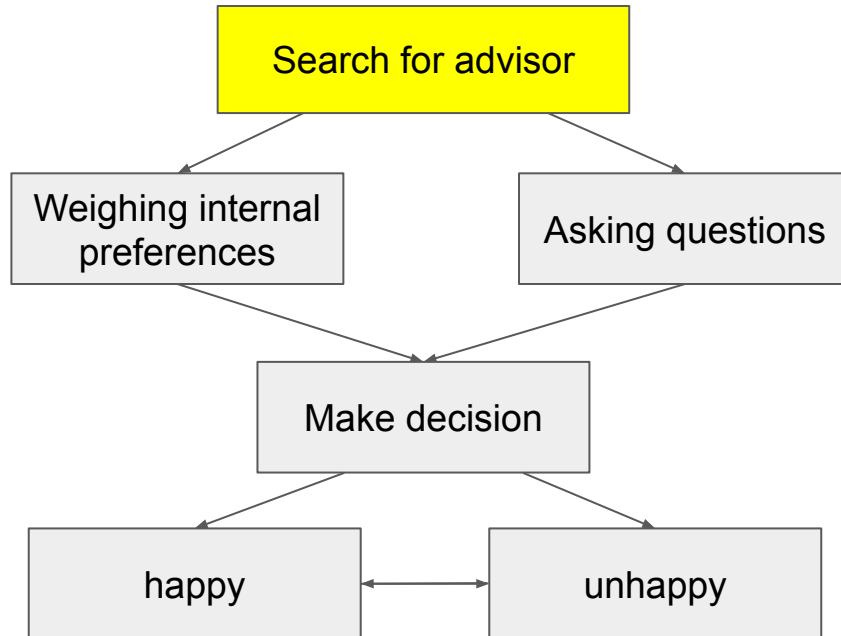6) Graduate!

-Cannot to this alone:

    -Find (a) mentor(s) among faculty, they will help you!

Role of the Advisor (P.I.)

-Advisor(s) are role models

-Share common interests

-Develop your research skills

-Write letters of recommendation, help you network

-Guide you through grad school

-Teach you the "ins-and-outs" of your field

-Funding!

Presentation Overview

When finding an advisor: two pipeline must occur in parallel

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Search for advisor │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                      ↙                 ↘
      ┌──────────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐
      │  Weighing internal   │     │ Asking questions │
      │     preferences      │     │                  │
      └──────────────────────┘     └──────────────────┘
                      ↘                 ↙
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │    Make decision    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                      ↙                 ↘
          ┌──────────────┐         ┌──────────────┐
          │    happy     │ ←─────→ │   unhappy    │
          └──────────────┘         └──────────────┘
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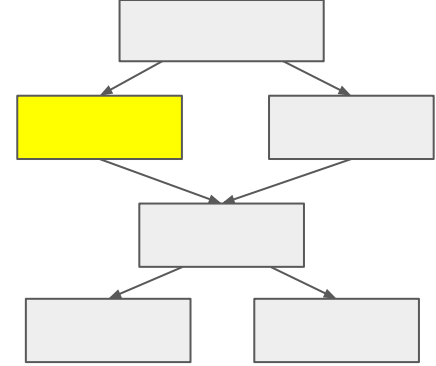
Mental: Choosing An Advisor

-They're people too.

-Imagine you got to choose your parent, what would you look for?
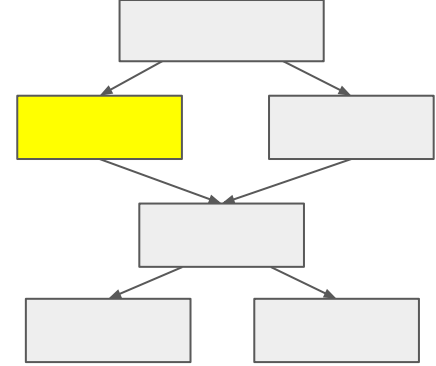
-How involved in your research your advisor should be?

Mental: Choosing An Advisor

-Your advisor does not need to do exactly what you want to do.

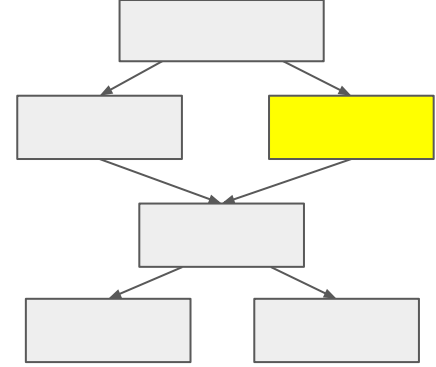-You are not "pigeonholed" into doing what your advisor does once you graduate.

    -Caveat: Pigeonholed into the field, but not the specific topic.
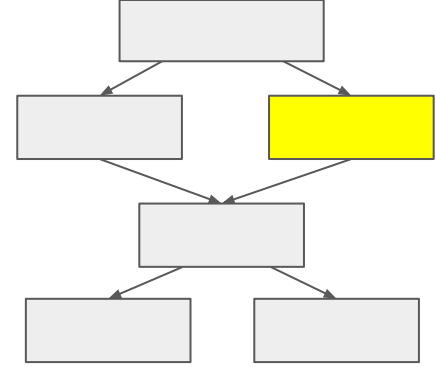
-You can have multiple advisors (if you choose)!

Physical: "Interviewing" Advisors

-Are they clear about their expectations?

-Supervision Style

-Personality. Ask them questions about themselves!

Physical: Talk to current Grad Students

-Current grad students have experience with their advisor(s)

-Can provide extra insight. Worst case: an extra opinion
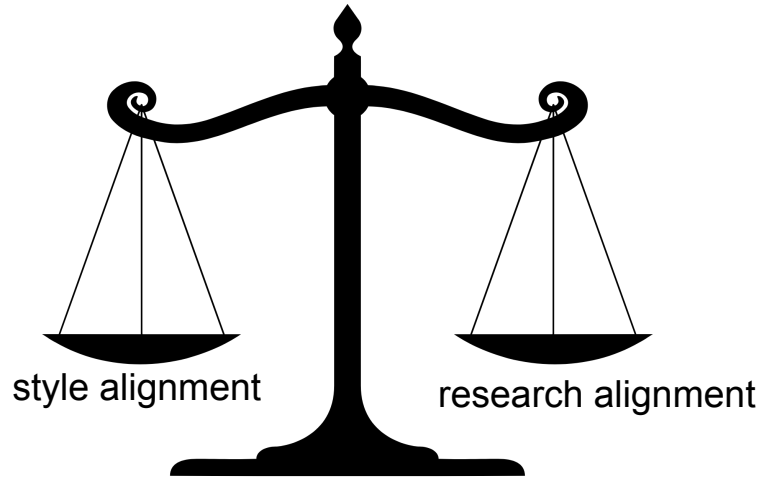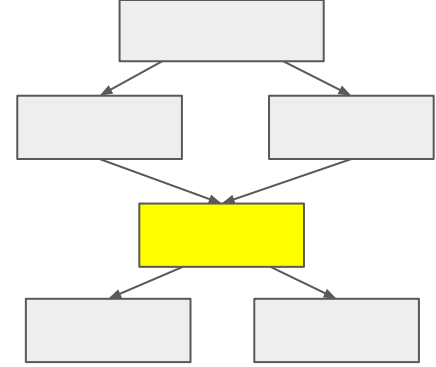
-Bonus: interacting with your future labmates!
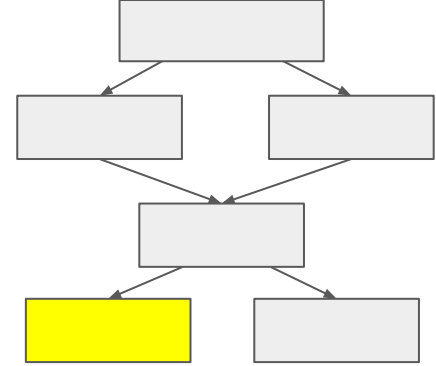
Making a Decision

-Highly personal decision

-Typically comes down to "style alignment" vs "research interest alignment"

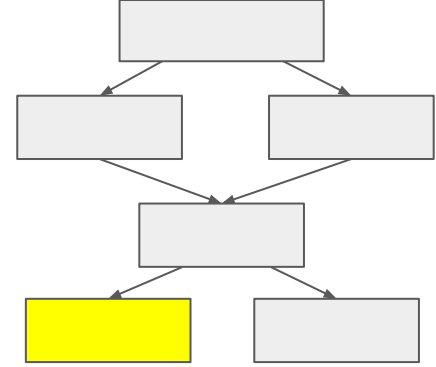style alignment   research alignment

-Which one will you go with?

An Ideal Relationship

-Both you and your advisor(s) communicate appropriately

-You are satisfied with your research

-Your advisor is happy with your progress
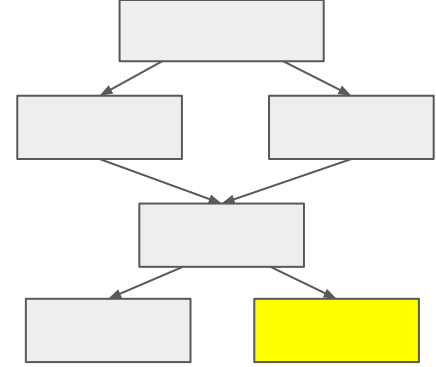
-You have a plan for your PhD (IMPORTANT)

Maintaining Your Relationship

-Communication is KEY

-Keep your advisor in the loop!

-Learn each other's styles, build trust

-Meetings at least twice a month (rule of thumb)

-Keep **records** of your meetings

So you aren't happy with your decision

-Again, communication is key

-Your advisor wants the best for you, they can help!

-What are you unhappy with?

   -Research topic?

   -Job prospects?

   -Personal reasons?

-Worst comes to worst: **you can leave**

Things to remember

-This is just a job

-Chances are, you and your advisor want the same things and will react similarly.

    - Put yourself in their shoes. If you were the advisor and someone was not happy, how would you react?

My Experiences: Andrew

Bachelor program

+ Research area
+ Relationship in general
+ Recommendations
- Open communication
- Mentorship

Master program

+ Relationship in general
+ Recommendations
+ Open communication
+ Mentorship
- Research are

PhD program

+ Relationship in general
+ Open communication
+ Research Area
- Mentorship

My Experiences: Nadya

Bachelor program

- \+ Mentorship
- \+ Research area
- \- Relationship in general
- \- Recommendations
- \- Open communication

Master program

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- \+ Recommendations
- \+ Open communication
- \+ Research area
- \- Mentorship

PhD program

- \+ Relationship in general
- \+ Recommendations
- \+ Open communication
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? Research area