"An invitation to dine"
- Ben Smith

Meeting the expectations?

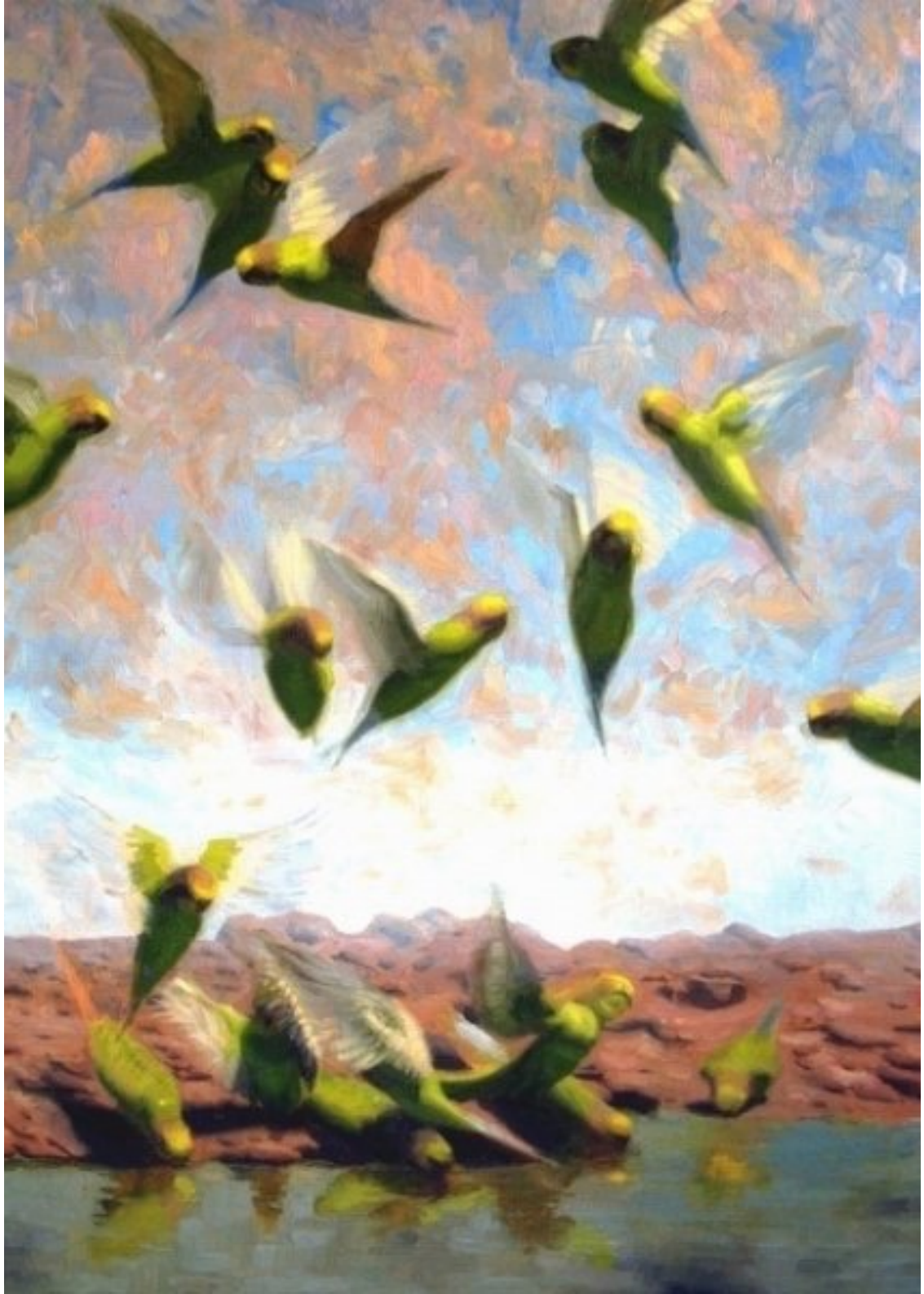
The PhD candidates at UiB assess their supervisors

Jan Fredrik Hovden & Ole-Johan Mjøs
Department of Information Science and Media Studies
jan.hovden@uib.no & ole.mjos@uib.no

The data

- Web survey to UIB PhD-candidates Dec. 2014/15*
- N=337
- Four faculties:
  - Social Science (76)
  - Law (16)
  - Psychology (64)
  - Natural Sciences (178)
  - Unspecified (3)
- Adj. response rate: 49,9%

* 2014 (Dec.)=Faculty of Socal Science, the other faculties in 2015 (Dec.)



The questionnaire

- **General satisfaction with supervision**
- **Optimism about final quality of thesis**

- **Faculty/institute**
- **Social background of candidate**
  - age, gender, parents´ educational level, foreign student
- **Educational background of candidate**
  - same supervisor, master at UiB
- **PhD situation**
  - monograph/article, year of PhD, co-supervisor, office at UiB, has changed supervisor, part-/full-time

- **Age / gender of supervisor**
- **Supervisors «supervising style»**
  - Preferred (25 items)
  - Experienced (25 items)

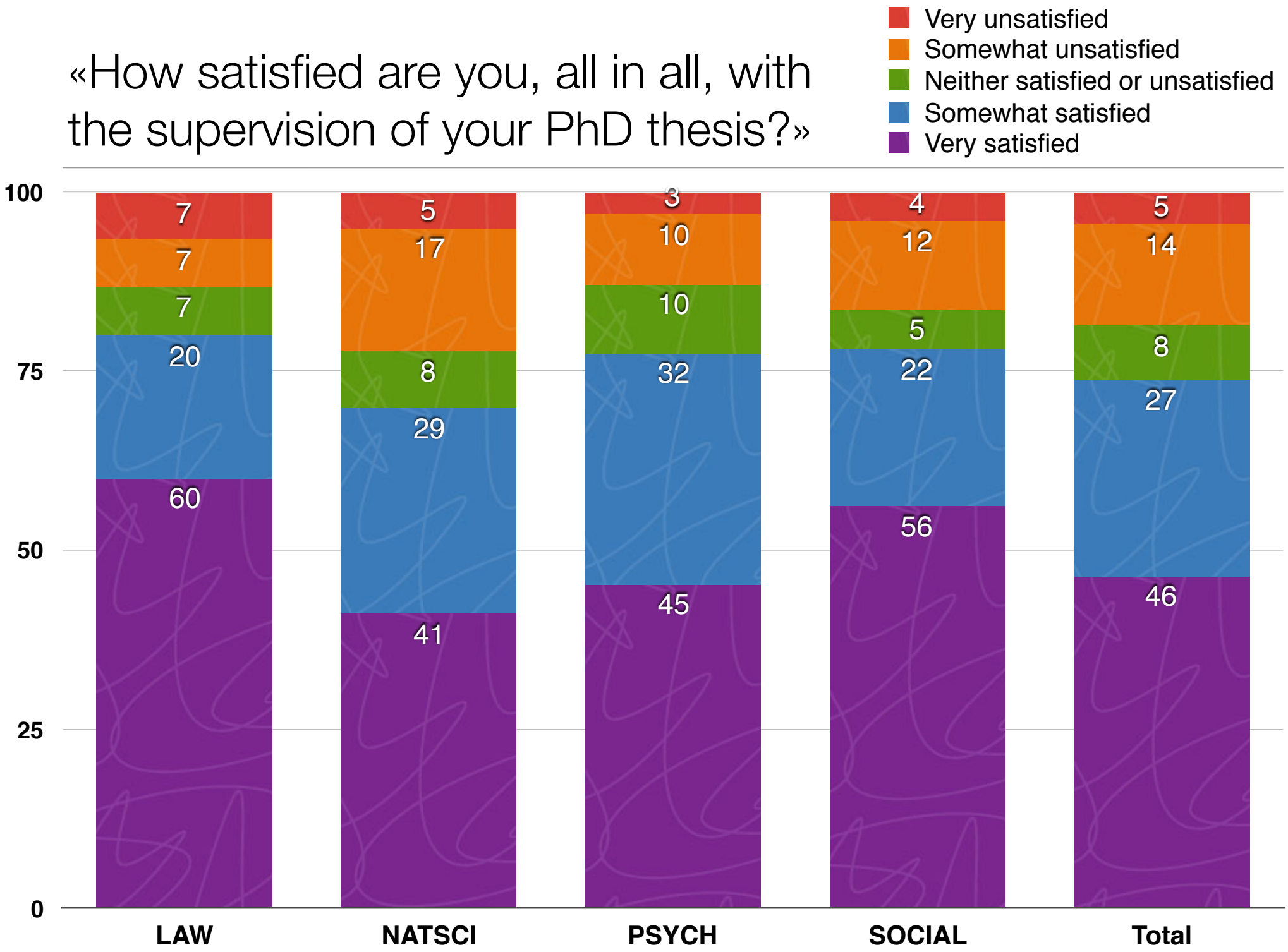
- **Open questions: “What aspects of your working relationship with your main supervisor are you most/least pleased / satisfied with?**

On the table today

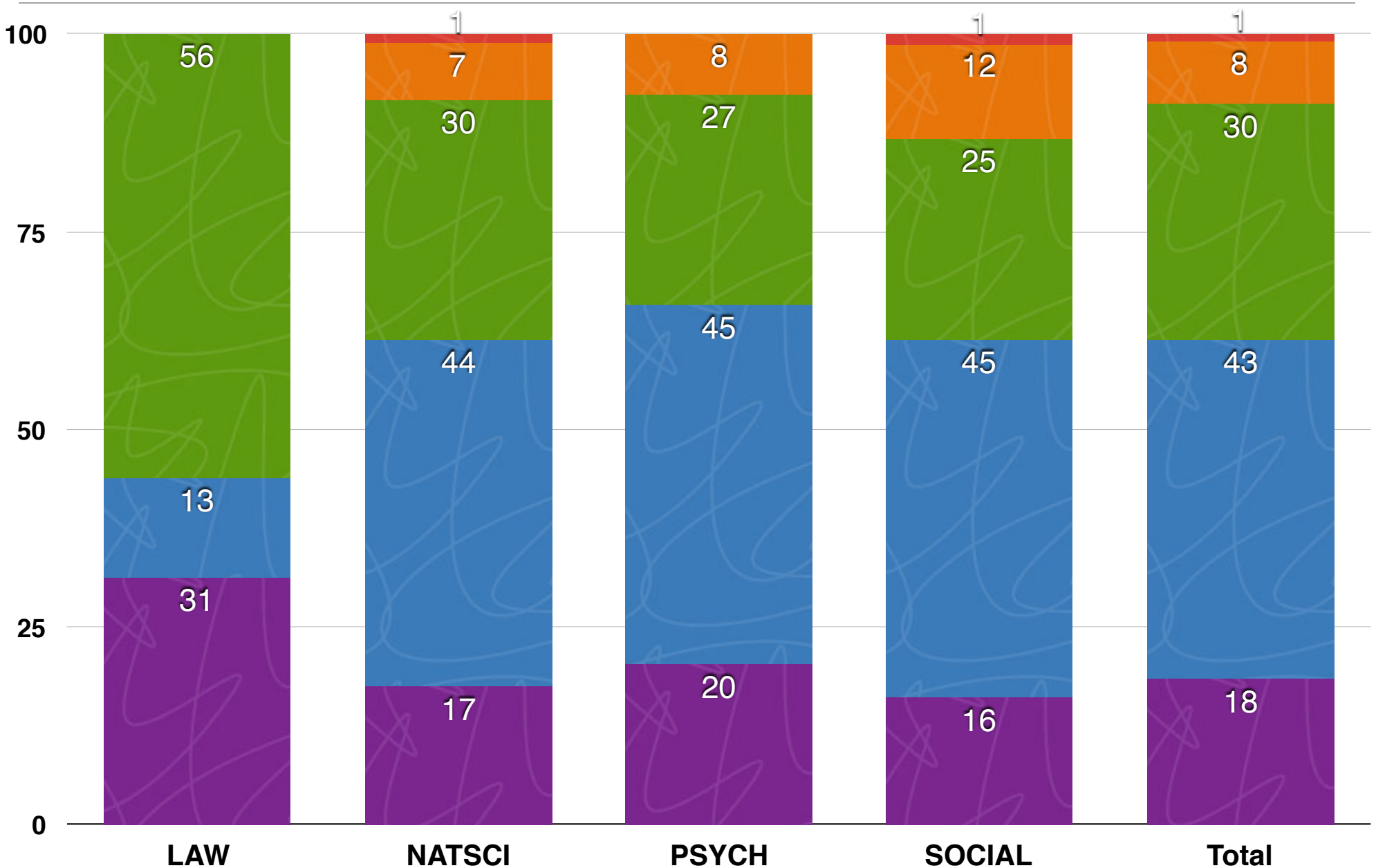
- Are the PhD-candidates **satisfied** with their supervisors?
- Are they **optimistic** about their thesis final quality?
- What **factors** are linked to dissatisfaction and pessimism?
- What do they see as **desirable qualities** in a supervisor?
- How do their own supervisors **live up to** this? Where are the **gaps?**
- How does their ideals - and the perceived gaps - **vary** with **faculty, social characteristics** of the **candidate** and the **supervisor,** and their **PhD situation**?
- Finally: **The Psychology PhD-candidates - in their own words**

"Doubt begins at breakfast"
- Ben Smith

«How satisfied are you, all in all, with the supervision of your PhD thesis?»



«How optimistic or pessimistic are you about the quality of your completed thesis?»



Who are dissatisfied and pessimistic? (odds ratios)

- **Beeing unsatisfied with supervision is more likely if …**
  - …the candidate is late (1,6) or writing a monograph (1,2)
  - …the candidate is 30**+** years old (1,3) or female (1,2)
  - …the candidate do not have a co-supervisor (1,3)
  - …the superivisor is **another** gender (1,3)
  - …the supervisor did **not** supervise their master thesis (1,3)

- **Pessimism for the thesis is more likely if …**
  - …the candidate is late (1,3) or writing a monograph (1,6)
  - …the candidate is **<** 30 years old (1,6)
  - …the candidate do not have a co-supervisor (2,3**)
  - …the superivisor is **the same** gender (1,6)
  - …the supervisor supervised their master thesis (1,3)

And of course, dissatisfaction and pessimism are closely linked (OR: 4,1)

"Types of Mankind", Nott and Gliddon, 1854

What kind of supervisor do the PhD-candidates want?

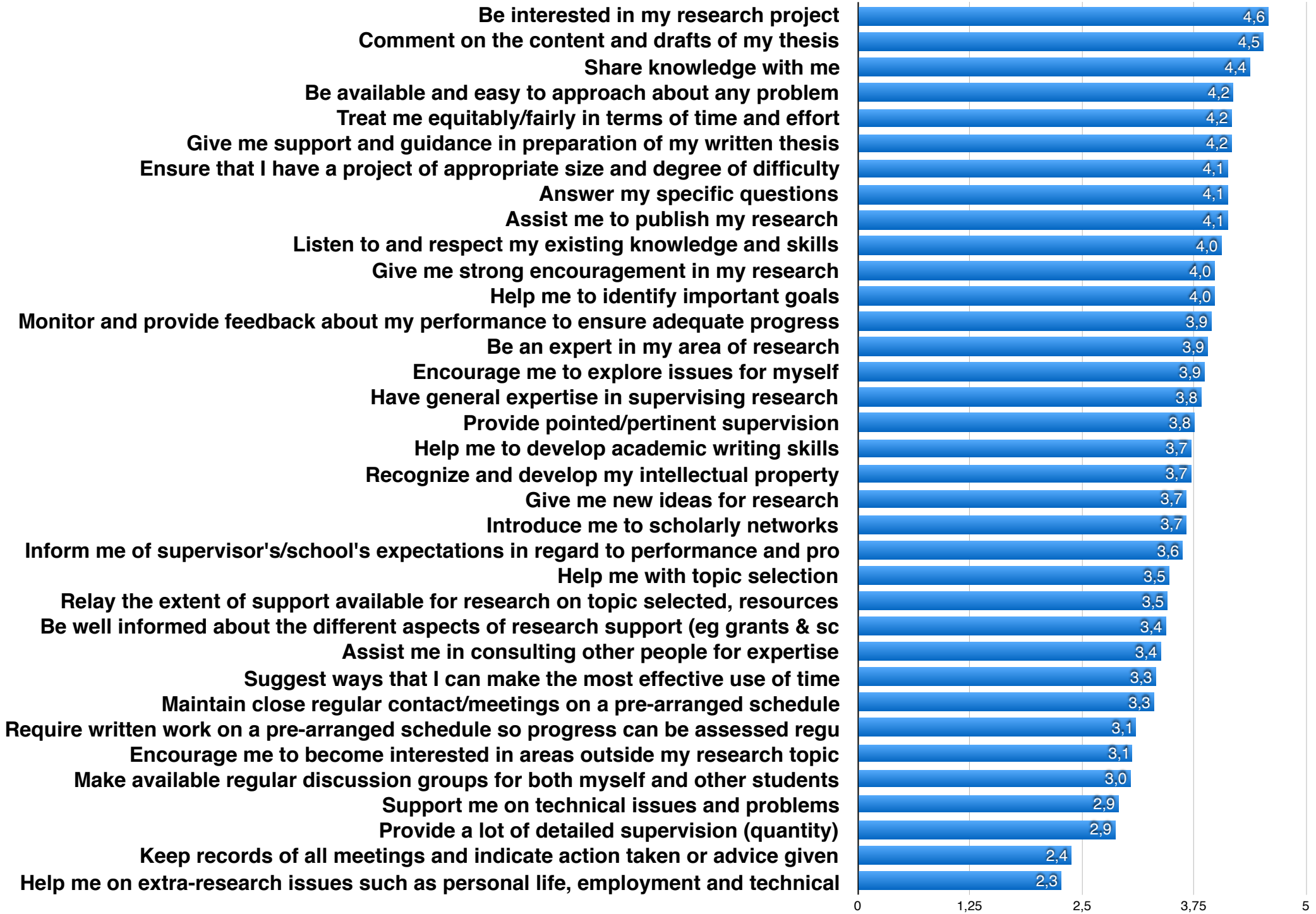
Univ. of Western Australia (1994). "Student Perceptions of Research Supervision (SPORS)". Questionnaire. http://http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/supervision/files/spors.pdf

Monitor and provide feedback about my performance to ensure adequate progress
Introduce me to scholarly networks
Assist me to publish my research
Inform me of supervisor's/school's expectations in regard to performance and progress
Ensure that I have a project of appropriate size and degree of difficulty
Require written work on a pre-arranged schedule so progress can be assessed regularly
Give me support and guidance in preparation of my written thesis
Comment on the content and drafts of my thesis
Share knowledge with me
Maintain close regular contact/meetings on a pre-arranged schedule
Be interested in my research project
Help me to identify important goals
Provide pointed/pertinent supervision
Suggest ways that I can make the most effective use of time
Help me to develop academic writing skills
Recognize and develop my intellectual property
Relay the extent of support available for research on topic selected, resources
Make available regular discussion groups for both myself and other students
Treat me equitably/fairly in terms of time and effort
Give me new ideas for research
Support me on technical issues and problems
Keep records of all meetings and indicate action taken or advice given
Assist me in consulting other people for expertise
Give me strong encouragement in my research
Answer my specific questions
Be well informed about the different aspects of research support (eg grants & sc
Be an expert in my area of research
Be available and easy to approach about any problem
Listen to and respect my existing knowledge and skills
Have general expertise in supervising research
Encourage me to become interested in areas outside my research topic
Encourage me to explore issues for myself
Help me with topic selection
Provide a lot of detailed supervision (quantity)
Help me on extra-research issues such as personal life, employment and technical training

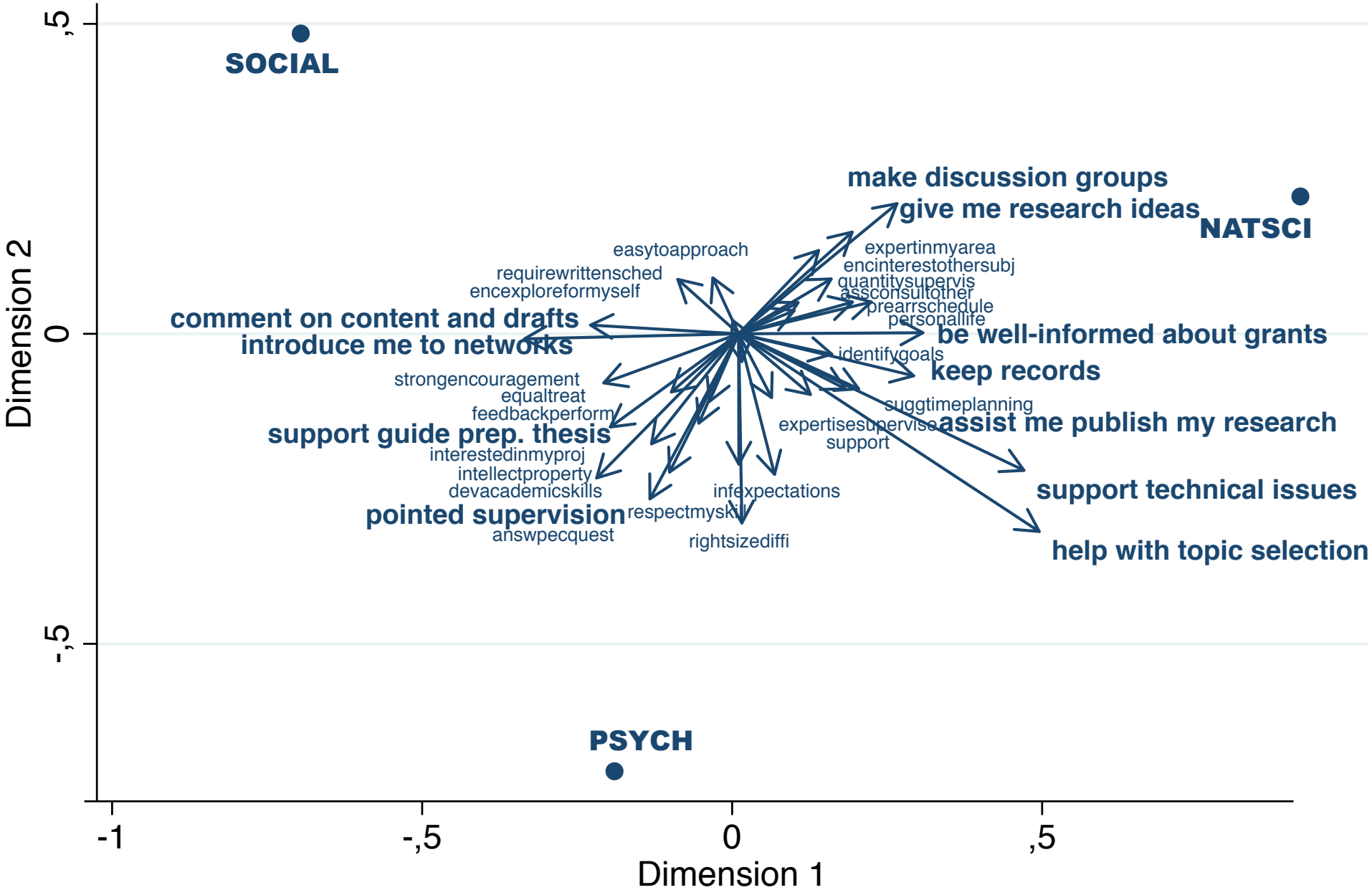
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Low High

Preferred qualities in a PhD supervisor (all faculties)



Differences between faculties
- **preferred** supervision styles



Preferred supervision styles: 3 components (PCA)

Only top six variables for each component is shown

1. "The research leader"

- Support me on technical issues and problems
- Assist me to publish my research
- Help me on extra-research issues such as personal life, employment and technical
- Help me with topic selection
- Give me new ideas for research
- Make available regular discussion groups for both myself and other students
- Relay the extent of support available for research on topic selected, resources

2. "The patron-collegue"

- Listen to and respect my existing knowledge and skills
- Be interested in my research project
- Treat me equitably/fairly in terms of time and effort
- Comment on the content and drafts of my thesis
- Give me strong encouragement in my research
- Encourage me to explore issues for myself

3. "The schoolteacher"

- Require written work on a pre-arranged schedule so progress can be assessed regularly
- Maintain close regular contact/meetings on a pre-arranged schedule
- Provide a lot of detailed supervision (quantity)
- Monitor and provide feedback about my performance to ensure adequate progress
- Suggest ways that I can make the most effective use of time
- Ensure that I have a project of appropriate size and degree of difficulty

Preferred supervision styles: 3 components (PCA)

Factors that correlate this style of supervision (correlations)

1. "The research leader"

- Being satisfied with the supervision (.15) and optimistic (.16)
- Writing an article-based PhD (.15)
- Being in the first or second year of PhD. work (.13)
- Being female (.12) or a foreign student (.11)

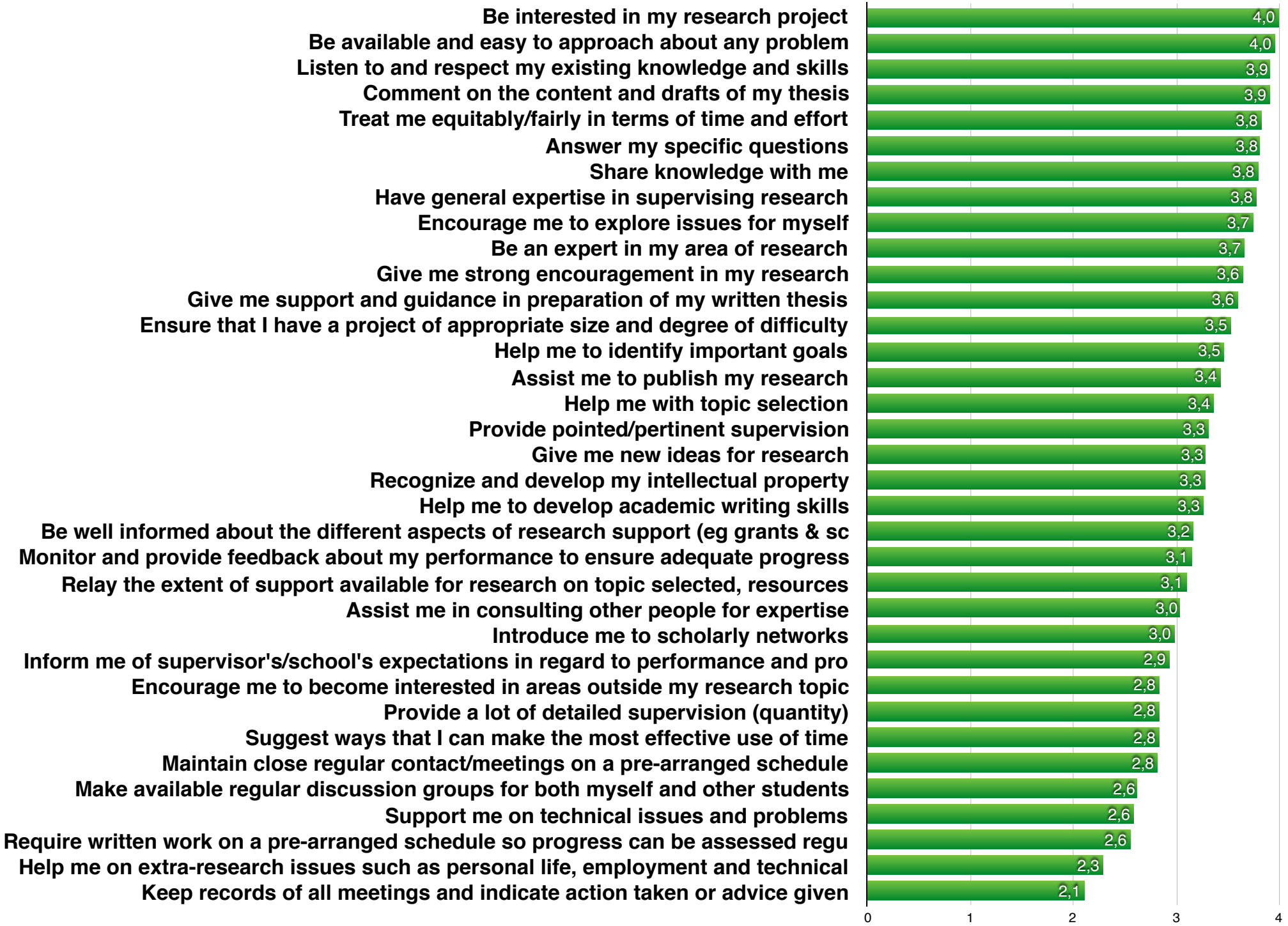
2. "The patron-collegue"

- Is a candidate at the faculty of Law (.18), Psychology (.20) or Social Sci. (.25) (NatSci= -.44)
- Being female (.25) or >30 years of age (.17) or NOT a foreign student (-.28)
- Writing a monograph (.24)
- Supervisor is another gender (.16)
- Having taken the master at UiB (.14)
- Being satisfied with the supervision (.11) and optimistic (.13)

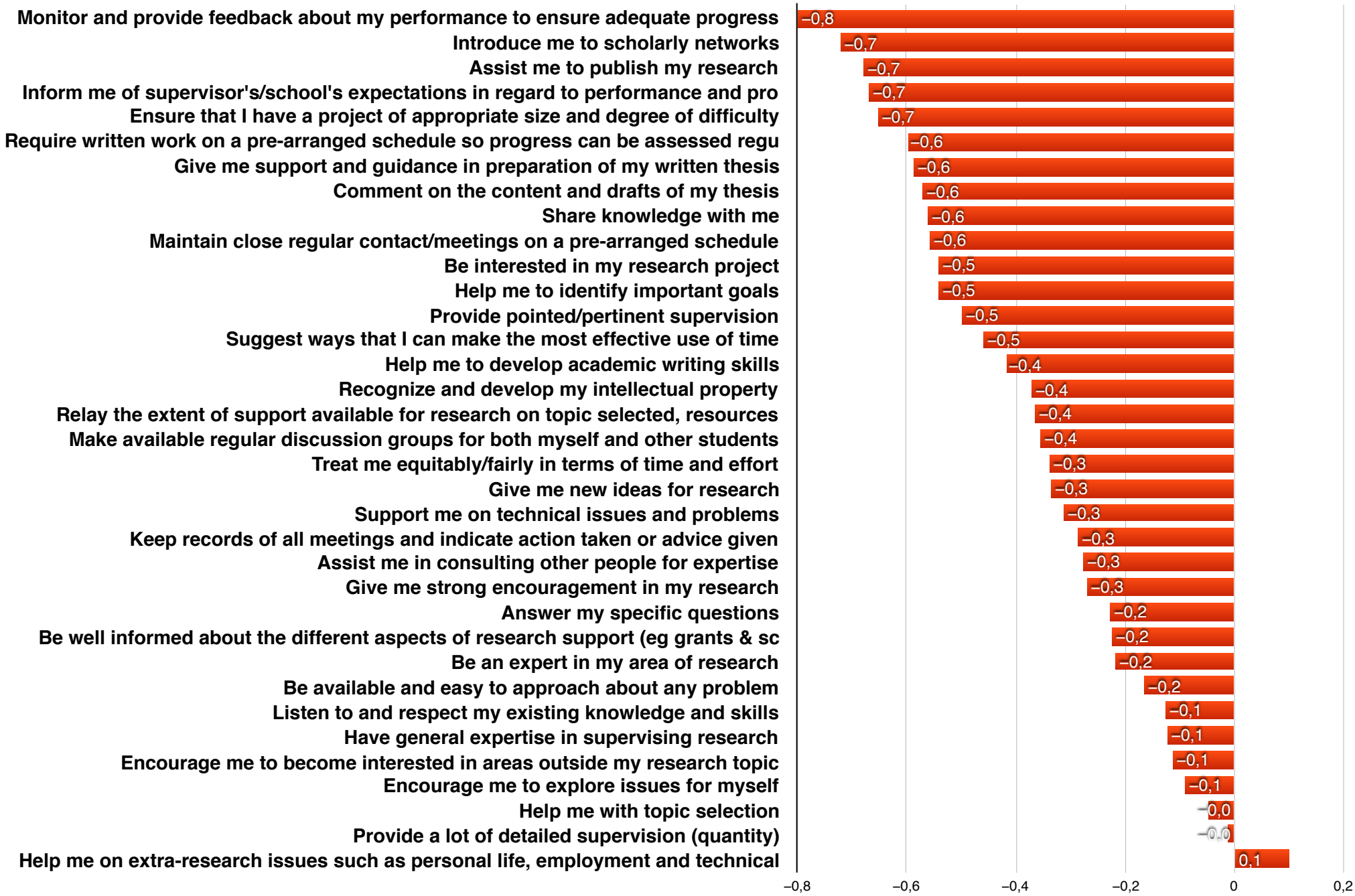
3. "The schoolteacher"

- Being a candidate at the Faculty of Law (.22) but not Natural Sciences (-.21)
- Being pessimistic about the quality of thesis (.17)
- Writing a monograph (.14)

Experienced qualities in their PhD supervisor (all faculties)



The gap: Differerence between preferred and experienced qualities in their PhD supervisor (all faculties)



Gaps between preferred and experienced supervision style: 4 components (PCA)

Only top four variables for each component is shown

1. Lack of support, time, feedback, encouragement

- Give me support and guidance in preparation of my written thesis
- Treat me equitably/fairly in terms of time and effort
- Help me to develop academic writing skills
- Comment on the content and drafts of my thesis

2. Lack of specific academic expertise

- Give me new ideas for research
- Help me with topic selection
- Relay the extent of support available for research on topic selected
- Be an expert in my area of research

3. Lack of freedom

- Encourage me to become interested in areas outside my research topic
- Encourage me to explore issues for myself
- Help me on extra-research issues such as personal life, employment …
- Introduce me to scholarly networks

4. Lack of regular meetings, monitoring of progress etc.

- Require written work on a pre-arranged schedule so progress can be assessed regularly
- Maintain close regular contact/meetings on a pre-arranged schedule
- Monitor and provide feedback about my performance to ensure adequate progress
- Provide a lot of detailed supervision (quantity)

Gaps between preferred and experienced supervision style: 4 components (PCA)

Factors that correlate with these gaps (correlations)

1. Lack of support, time, feedback, encouragement

- Being unsatisfied with supervision (.53) and pessimistic (.14)
- Being female (.13), supervisor is another gender (.15), NOT master at UIB (-.16)
- Writing an article-based PhD (.15)
- NOT being a Law student (-.15)

2. Lack of specific academic expertise

- Being unsatisfied with supervision (.51) and pessimistic (.21)
- Not being a foreign student (-.13)

3. Lack of freedom

- Being unsatisfied with supervision (.51) and pessimistic (.28)
- Being male (.19), supervisor is another gender (.13)
- Not being a foreign student (-.17)

4. Lack of regular meetings, monitoring of progress etc.

- Being unsatisfied with supervision (.49) and pessimistic (.31)
- Being late in the PhD cycle (.14)
- Not being a foreign student (-.14)