

DO NICE GUYS AND GALS REALLY FINISH LAST?

Some Surprising Evidence and Implications for Your Work and Life

September 20, 2013

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TAKE A FEW MINUTES

- Complete self-report survey
- No right or wrong answers
- Compare to norms

FIRST THINGS FIRST

- In Scripture as well as in enlightened society, a good person is one who treats others kindly

[43] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

[44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

[45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

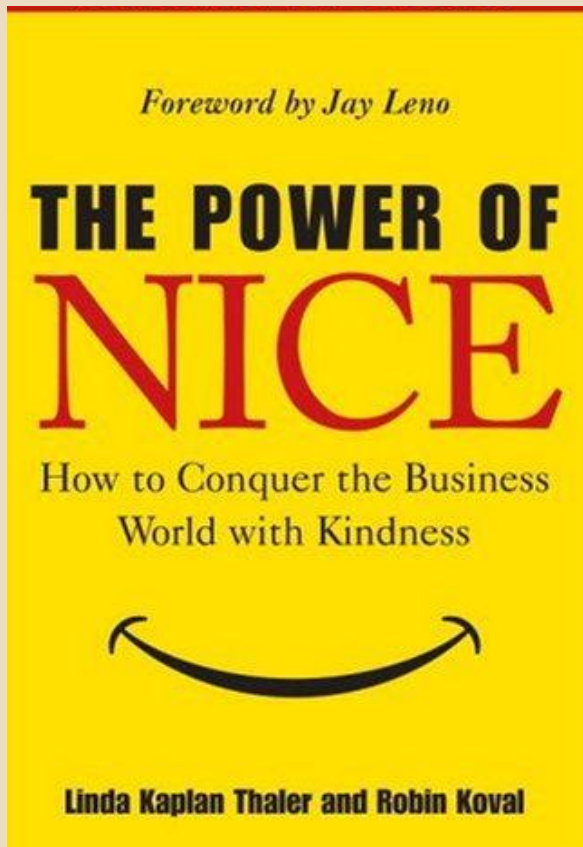
[46] For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

[47] And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

—*Bible, King James Version, Matthew 5:43–47*

- Most of us would think that one central precept of being a good person or a good Christian is to be a nice person
- But what does it mean to be a “nice person”?

THE POWER OF NICE



Time and time again, we have seen the extraordinary power of nice in our business dealings and in our personal lives. It is the patient passenger who politely asks the airline ticket agent to please check one more time who gets the first-class upgrade, rather than the “I’m a triple platinum member” blowhard. It is the driver who is polite and apologetic to the police officer who sometimes is

DEFINING NICE

nice  [nahys]  [Show IPA](#)

adjective, nic·er, nic·est.

1. pleasing; agreeable; delightful: *a nice visit.*
2. amiably pleasant; kind: *They are always nice to strangers.*
3. characterized by, showing, or requiring great accuracy, precision, skill, tact, care, or delicacy: *nice workmanship; a nice shot; a nice handling of a crisis.*
4. showing or indicating very small differences; minutely accurate, as instruments: *a job that requires nice measurements.*
5. minute, fine, or subtle: *a nice distinction.*

NICE = AGREEABLENESS

- So, nearly everyone would agree that being nice is important
- How do we measure “niceness”?
- We can roughly equate being a nice person with a personality trait we call *agreeableness*
- Note that self-report measures – such as the one you just took – have disadvantages

YOUR AGREEABLENESS SURVEY



Absolute

- Midpoint of measure = 27
- 9 – 18 = low
- 19 – 27 = moderately low
- 28 – 36 = moderately high
- 37 – 45 = high

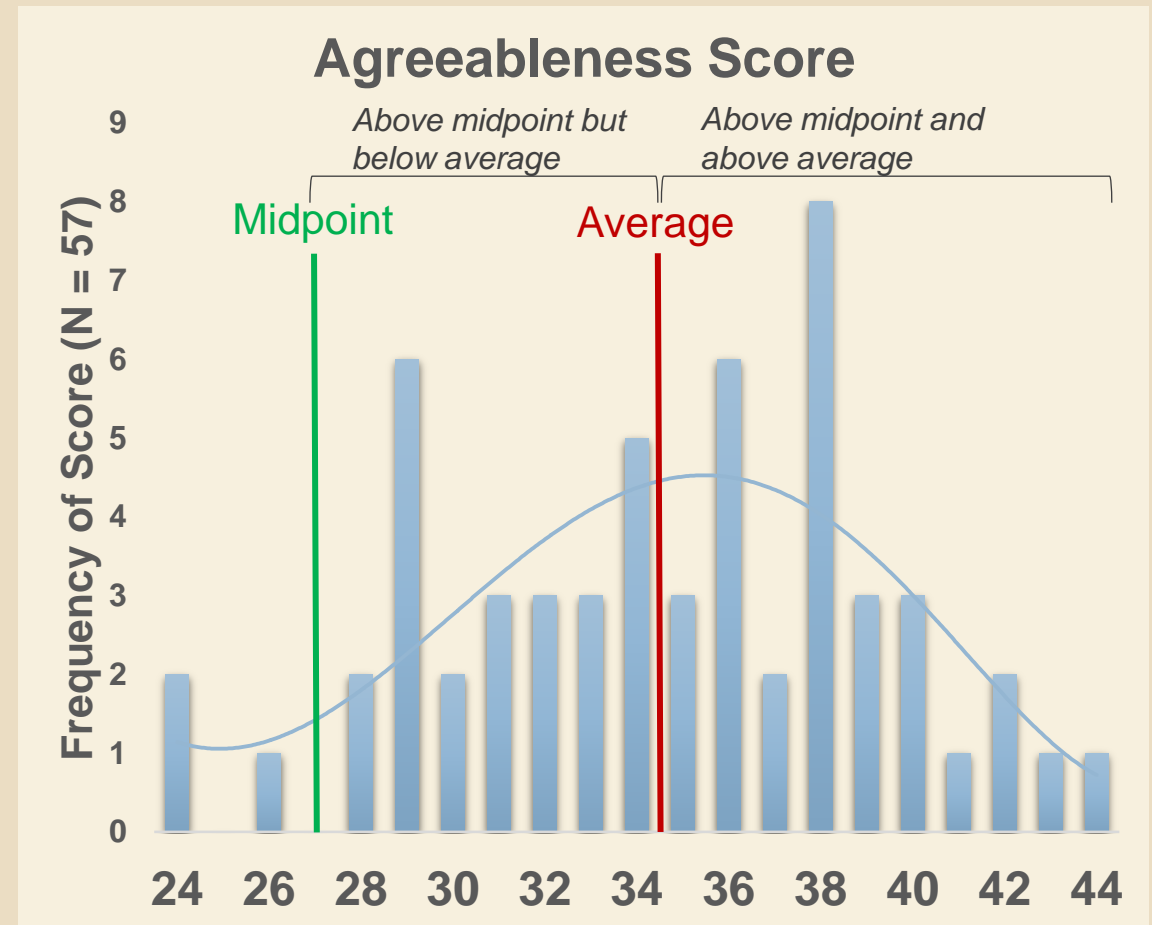


Relative

- Average score in pop. = 34
- 9 – 25 = well below average
- 26 – 31 = below average
- 32 – 36 = average
- 37 – 41 = above average
- 42 – 45 = well above average

YOUR AGREEABLENESS SCORE

- Data to right are from Executive MBA Class (Fall, 2013)
 - Mean = 34.56; SD = 4.74; N = 57
- While midpoint = 27, no one scored below 24
- This is why both absolute scores and relative scores are important to keep in mind



WHAT IS AGREEABLENESS?

- Tendency to be described as cooperative, warm, gentle, conforming, trusting, modest, tender-minded
- Opposite: Direct, argumentative, blunt, suspicious, hard-headed, outspoken
- One of the “Big Five” personality traits – five main ways of describing how our personalities differ
 - Other Four: extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness
- Like the other Big Five traits, roughly 50–60% genetic
- Nurture (upbringing) has little effect on development of agreeableness (nature beats nurture)

AGREEABLENESS

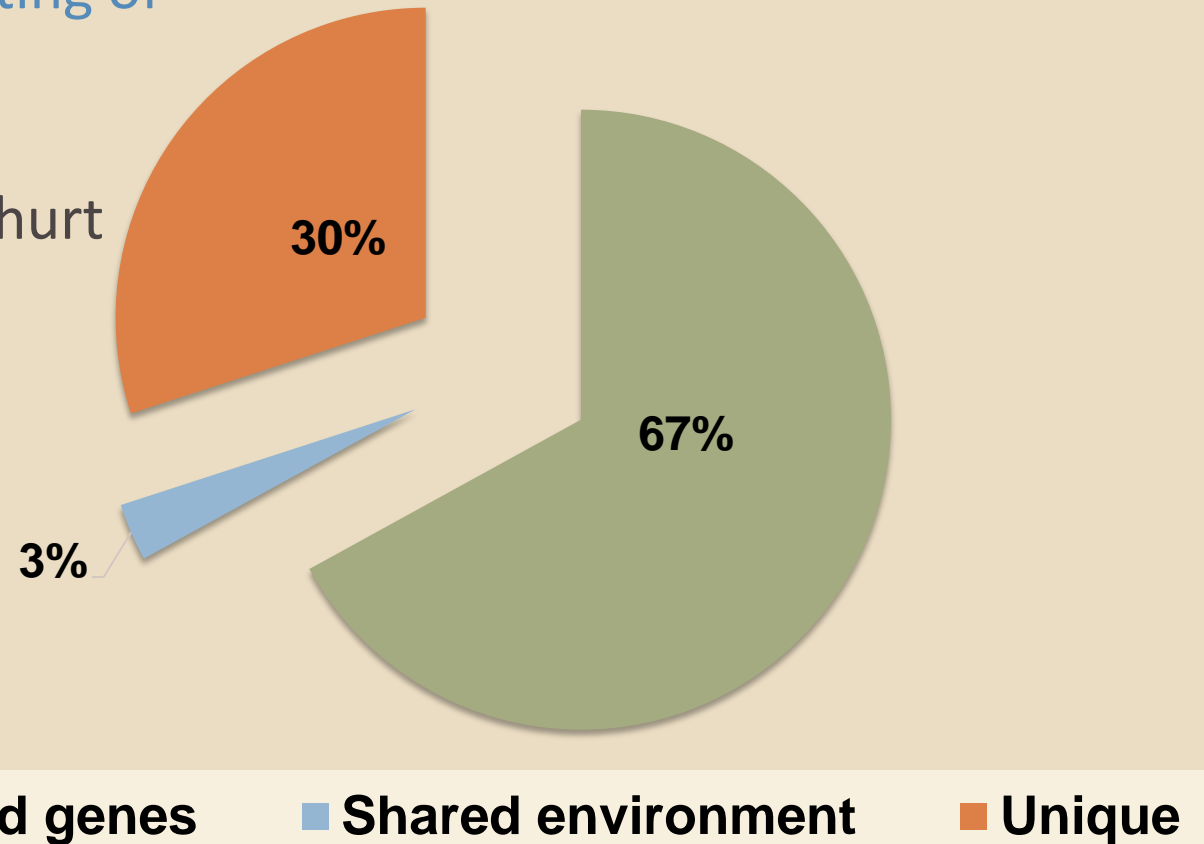
- Agreeable people are “nice” in that they prefer cooperation to conflict, harmony to strife, agreement to argument
- BUT
- Agreeableness is not the same as morality (“nice” is not always “good”)
 - Great acts often require diverging from the crowd
 - There may be times to fight, or at least resist
 - Social harmony is not the only virtue

NATURE VS. NURTURE

Heritability of Altruistic Behavior

As measured by parents' and teachers' rating of degree to which child*:

- Often volunteers to help others
- Will try to help someone who has been hurt
- Shares treats with friends



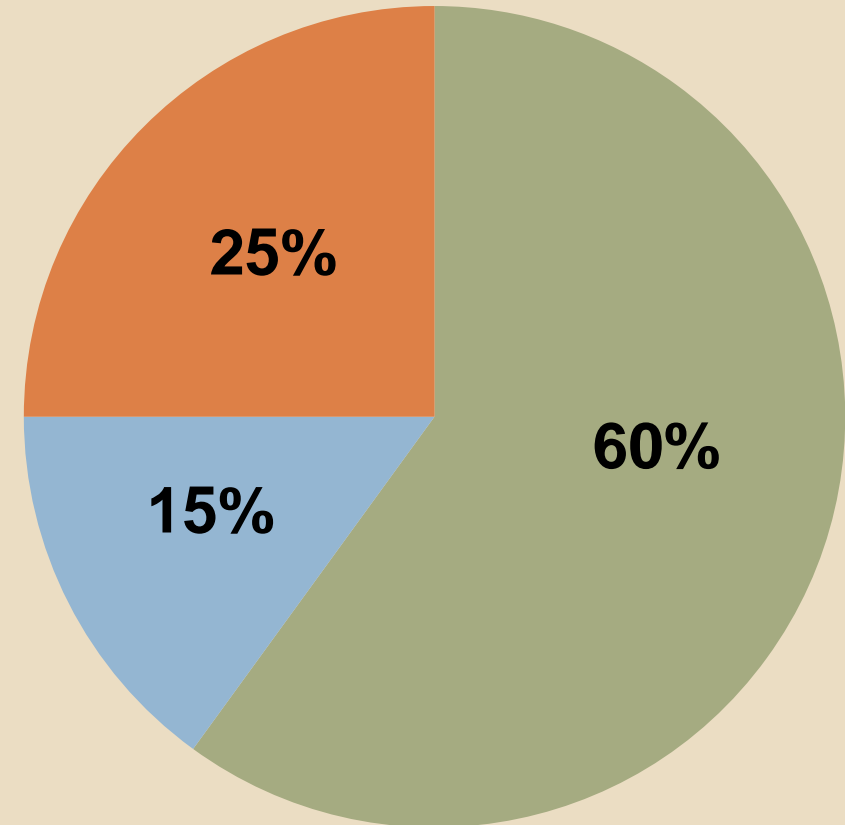
NATURE VS. NURTURE

Heritability of Antisocial Behavior

Aggressive antisocial behavior was rated by parents using items such as:

- destroys one's own and others' belongings
- fights with other children
- attacks others
- threatens others

Sample:
1,480 pairs of
Swedish twins



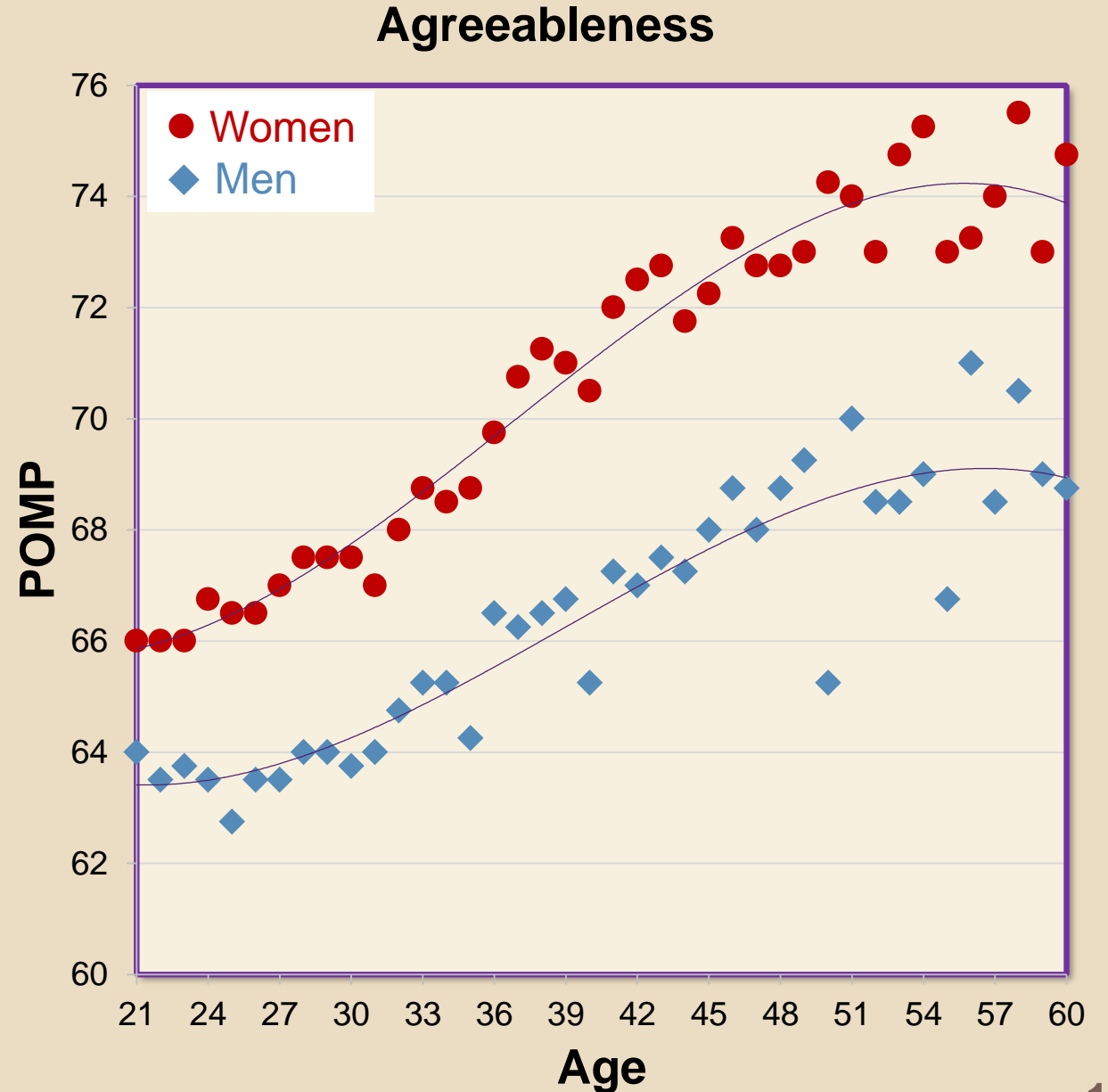
■ Shared genes ■ Shared environment ■ Unique

CHANGE OVER TIME

- **Women** are more agreeable than **Men**
- People are most disagreeable when **young**
- Agreeableness increases for both **men** and **women** with age
- Up to a point...

POMP

Average score for each age group as
Percentage Of Maximum Possible
Range = 0–100



NATURE OF AGREEABLENESS

- Agreeableness is a fundamental trait on which we all differ
- Agreeableness, and thus the behaviors that flow from it, has a strong genetic component
- Does this mean that agreeableness is “set in stone” and never changes?
- Let’s discuss the consequences of agreeableness in more detail

BENEFITS OF AGREEABLENESS

- Of the Big Five traits, the **most desired by others**
 - Spouses, friends, team members
- **Better liked** by others
- Experience **less interpersonal conflict** at work and in relationships
- More likely to engage in **helping (prosocial) behaviors**
- Less likely to engage in **socially deviant or counterproductive behaviors**

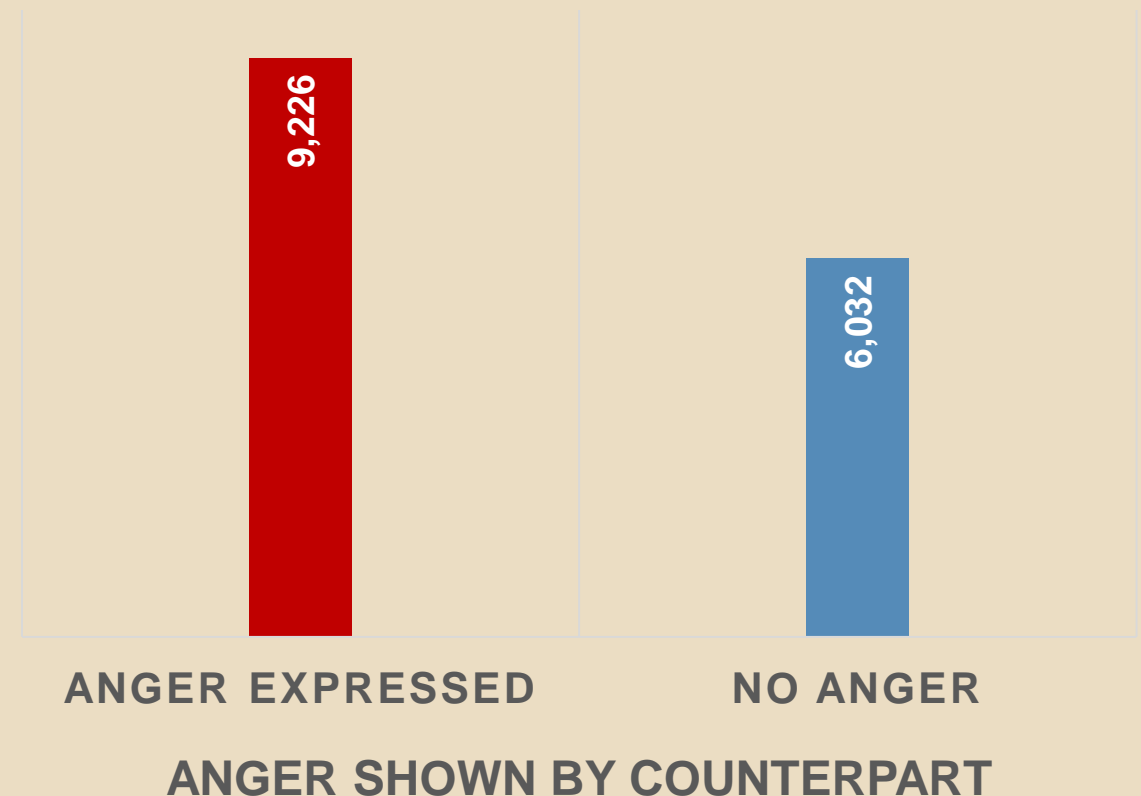
COSTS OF AGREEABLENESS

- **Does not predict job performance, creativity, or leader emergence**
- **Lower work motivation** (lessened desire to excel)
- **Negotiate less well** in both distributive and integrative bargaining
- Of the five Big Five traits, **2nd least important to job and life satisfaction**
 - Most important: Neuroticism (low), extraversion (high), conscientiousness (high)
- **Negatively related to extrinsic career success**

AGREEABLENESS AND NEGOTIATION

- “Expressing anger typically elicits larger concessions” (Adam & Shirako, 2013)
- Negotiators who yield easily negotiate less for themselves, but also the total for the pair
- Why?
 - Truly integrative (“win-win”) agreements require creative problem-solving; if one side yields easily or quickly, it doesn’t force the negotiating pair to be creative

VALUE OF CONCESSIONS



AGREEABLENESS AND CAREER SUCCESS

Career Success Assessed 40 Years After Personality

	Intrinsic Career Success	Extrinsic Career Success
Childhood Intelligence	.11	.41**
Childhood Conscientiousness	.34**	.44**
Childhood Neuroticism	-.02	-.21*
Childhood Extraversion	.00	.27*
Childhood Openness	.12	-.02
Childhood Agreeableness	.05	-.32**

Numbers are regression coefficients, where strength spans from -1.00 to +1.00. In behavioral sciences, above .20 is considered moderate, above .30 relatively strong. Asterisks denote statistical significance.

9/20/2013

Intrinsic career success

Composite of satisfaction with income, coworkers, job security respect of others, supervision, chance to develop skills, work revolves around interests

Extrinsic career success

Composite of income and occupational prestige

AGREEABLENESS AND CAREER SUCCESS

- Studied 1,885 executives
 - Numbers are regression coefficients, where strength spans from -1.00 to +1.00.
 - In behavioral sciences, above .20 is considered moderate, above .30 relatively strong. Asterisks denote statistical significance.
 - Agreeableness negatively impacted career success due to worked fewer hours worked and less ambition to advance

Effect of Agreeableness on:	
Extrinsic Success	
Salary	-.32**
Job level	-.19**
Proximity to CEO	-.17**
Employability rating	-.16**
Intrinsic Success	
Job satisfaction	-.19**
Career satisfaction	-.06
Life satisfaction	-.18**

DOES THIS WORK THE SAME FOR EVERYONE?

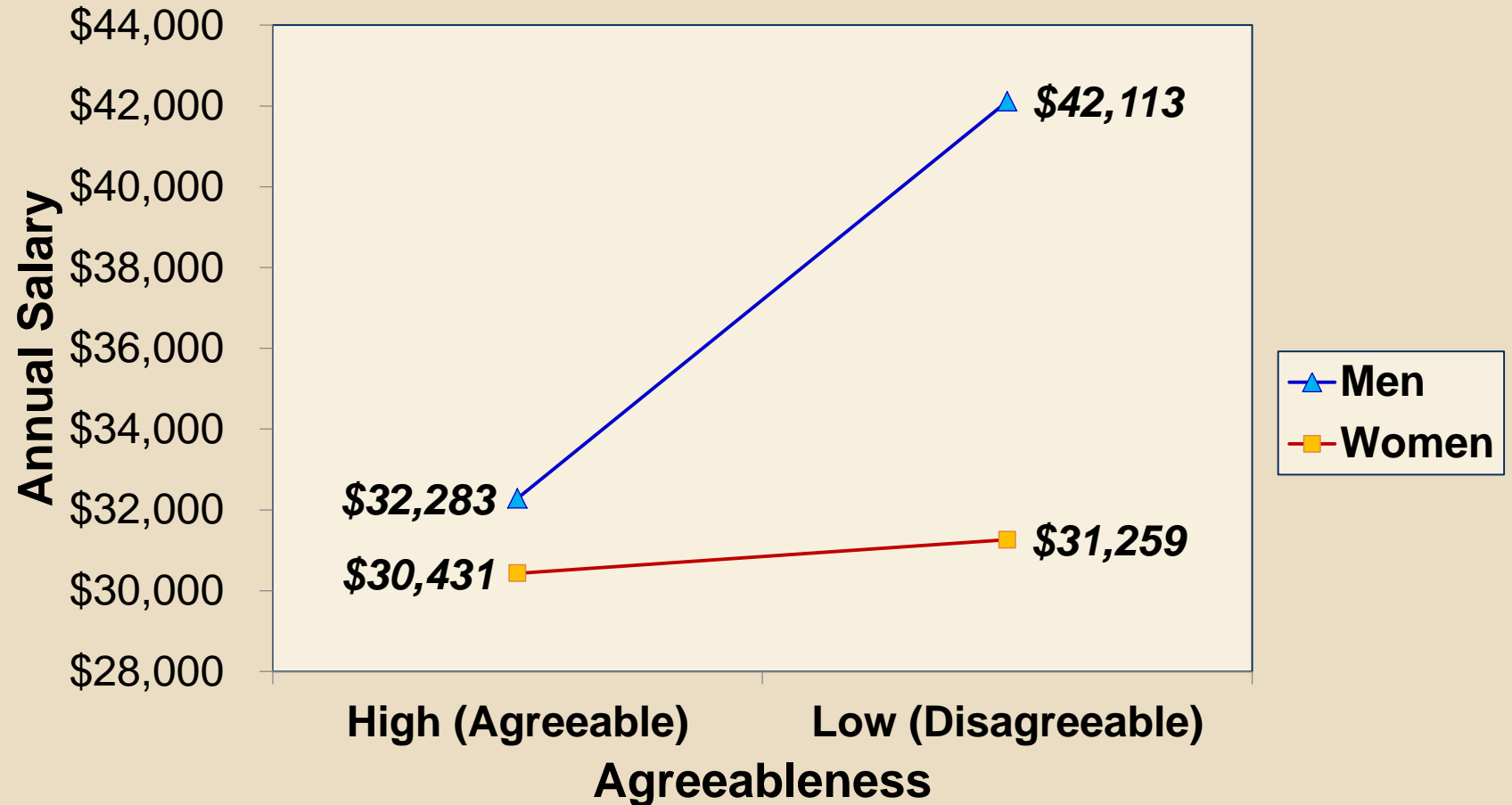
- If agreeableness challenges the progress of career success, does it do so equally for everyone?
- Probably not
 - There may be other traits that offset the negative effect of agreeableness on career success
 - We need to know more about this in future research
- One area where I have discovered major differences is...

GENDER

GENDER AND THE “DISAGREEABLE DIVIDEND”

Study 1

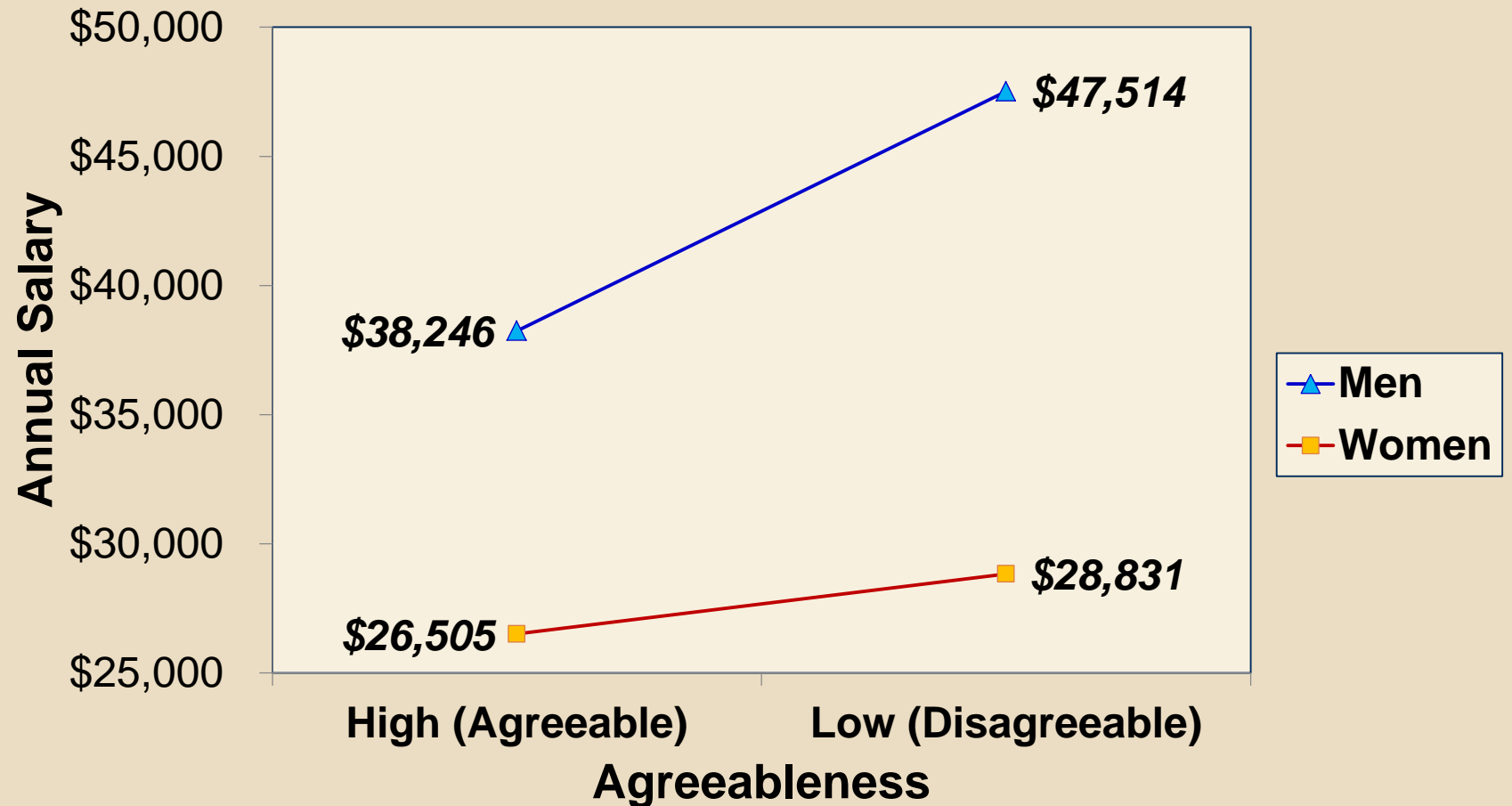
- National random sample of people employed 1,000+ hours/year
- N=560
- Agreeableness self-reported; earnings average 2004-2008
- Being disagreeable paid off much more for men than women



GENDER AND THE “DISAGREEABLE DIVIDEND”

Study 2

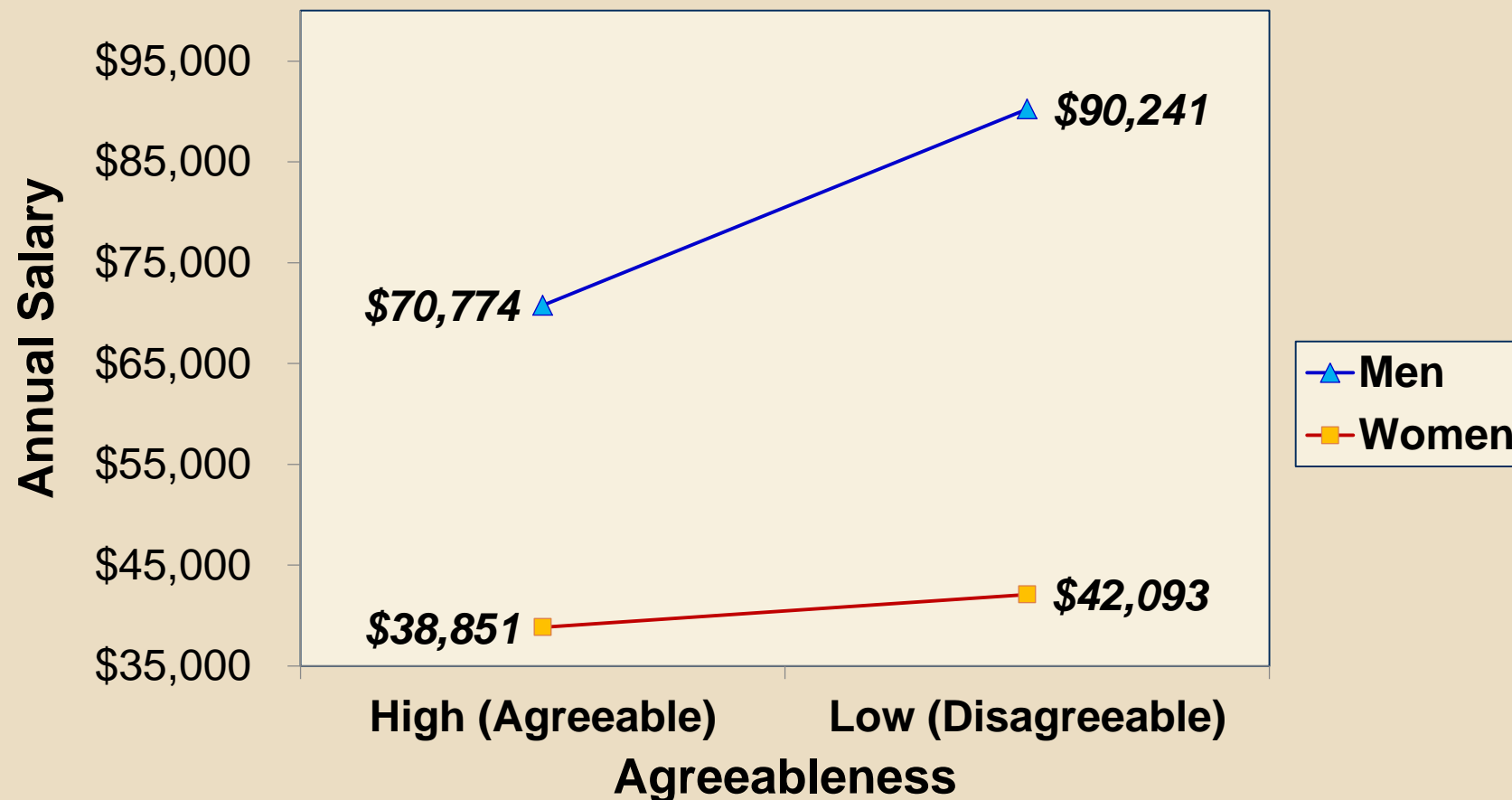
- Participants (N=1,827) National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States
- Controlled for prior income, hours worked, marital status, education, job type
- Again, disagreeableness paid more for men than women



GENDER AND THE “DISAGREEABLE DIVIDEND”

Study 3

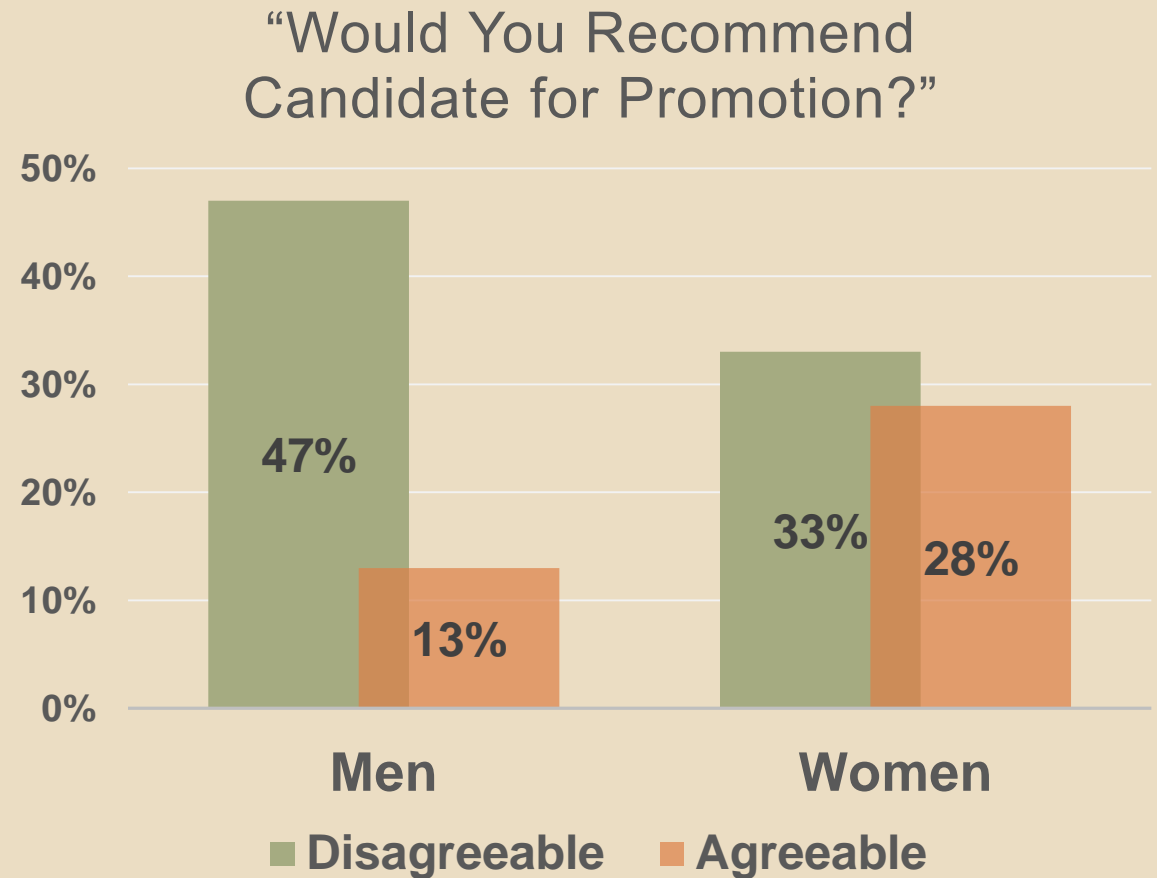
- Participants (N=1,691) in Wisconsin Longitudinal Study
- Controlled for hours worked, marital status, education, job responsibility, occupational status
- Same pattern as before...



GENDER AND THE “DISAGREEABLE DIVIDEND”

Study 4 (Experimental Study)

- College students evaluated whether hypothetical candidates for a management consulting job should be recommended for promotion
- Hypothetical candidates were described by observers, which also included (dis)agreeable behaviors
- Controlled for evaluator gender and agreeableness (neither of which mattered)
- Upshot: Even college undergraduates are biased!



WHY THE GENDER EFFECT?

- We have different expectations – and thus attributions – of the “proper” behavior of men and women
 - Gender roles
- Women who behave assertively, for example, are often described more negatively (by men **and** women), than men who behave equally assertively
- The double standard is alive and well
 - I’ve found in other research, for example, that being overweight hurts women’s careers more than it does men’s
 - In other research, I have found that height benefits both genders in terms of career success, but especially men

A TALE OF TWO SINS



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Trangression:
Gave false
statement under
oath (deposition:
2/4/02)

Punishment:
Five-month term
in federal prison;
two-year period
of supervised
release
(including five
months of
electronic
monitoring)



Trangression:
Gave false
statement under
oath (deposition:
1/17/98)

Punishment:
No criminal
punishment

U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF JUSTICE



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SUMMARY

- Niceness is valued in society and faith-based value systems
 - Agreeableness is a trait that assesses being a nice person
- Yet agreeableness, while having many positive effects, has surprisingly negative effects on some important work/life outcomes
 - This seems especially true for economic outcomes (negotiations, income)
- There appears to be a gender double-standard as far as disagreeableness and earnings are concerned
 - We expect women to be agreeable

IMPLICATIONS

For Employers

- Choose your employees carefully
 - We vastly over-estimate the benefits of subjective ways of hiring (interview, references) and vastly under-estimate the benefits of more objective ways (personality and ability testing; work samples)
- So am I suggesting only the disagreeable be hired?
- No! It depends on the job and it should be one of many data points
 - We found agreeable employees did have an **advantage** performing jobs that involved dealing with angry customers or clients (flight attendant, bailiff)
 - We also found agreeable employees had a **disadvantage** in performing jobs that were competitive in nature (athlete, sales manager, reporter)
- Upshot: Fit matters
 - Organizations and society need all types of people – match personality to the job

IMPLICATIONS

For Your Work Life

- Choose your occupation and organization carefully
 - There is no job that fits everyone's personality
 - Know thyself, and choose your profession and organization accordingly
- On a daily basis, choose your environments carefully
 - In a recent study, we found that if people had a conflict the day before, they were less agreeable in general the next day (this effect lasted only one day)
 - Similarly, people who helped others the day before were more agreeable themselves the next day (this effect lasted only one day)
 - Therefore, if you want to be more (dis)agreeable, put yourself in environments that foster (dis)agreeableness

IMPLICATIONS

For Parents and Parenting

- Recognize that, in general, the environment we create as parents has a small effect on the personality development of our children
 - Question: If we do not have a strong influence on the agreeableness of our children, how does that change our approach to parenting?
- Fit applies here too
 - There is no one size fits all and little in the way of generalized parenting practices that appear to work across children
 - Different children will do best in different environments, based on their personality

CONCLUSIONS

- Niceness, in the form of agreeableness, has upsides – and downsides
- The benefits of disagreeableness appear to benefit men more than women
- Agreeableness, like nearly every individual difference, is substantially heritable
- While agreeableness does tend to increase over time, planned long-term personality change is difficult
- We'd be better off focusing on fit
- And on locating short-term experiences that bring out the best in us

THANK YOU!

For copy of this presentation, and articles
from my research: www.timothy-judge.com

September 20, 2013

<http://www.timothy-judge.com/colloquia.htm>

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