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A Revisionist History of Disagreeableness

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A Revisionist History of Disagreeableness

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Class of 2020

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“Exemplary people seek harmony not sameness” – Confucius

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The Dawn of Disagreeableness

I first consciously stumbled upon the concept of disagreeableness in my sophomore year while listening to a podcast called Revisionist History by Malcolm Gladwell. Obnoxious, unpleasant, unkind, and untrusting were words that immediately came to mind when I thought about what the word disagreeableness meant. I was familiar with the concept of agreeableness as I'd taken an introductory psychology course, but I had never given much thought to disagreeableness. I had simply assumed that it was the opposite of agreeableness. Gladwell contended that being a successful entrepreneur, or more broadly, an agent of change, required a certain level of disagreeableness. A disagreeable person does not necessarily require the approval of others in order to do what they believe is right. This is a trait that resides on a spectrum. If you do not care about the approval of others at all, you are essentially a sociopath. However, the ability to stay unfazed about what others think of you is also a precondition for doing things that are extraordinary. It's easier to go against the grain or challenge the status quo if you are prepared to withstand the disapproval of others.

Steve Jobs. Thomas Edison. Donald Trump. What do all these people have in common? They are disagreeable. I was drawn to the concept of disagreeableness because it is simple and yet, highly undertheorized. This project is an attempt to revisit and expand the theoretical conception of disagreeableness. Disagreeableness is usually seen as a negative personality trait and this project challenges this view and aims to provide insight into why

everyone should be a little disagreeable. This project is also focused on highlighting that while disagreeableness is a trait that some are born with a predisposition to more than others, it is not just a matter a temperament – it is also a matter of choice.

This project is organized as follows. The first section undertakes an analysis of the various definitions of disagreeableness, pointing out the pitfalls associated with limiting the scope of the concept of disagreeableness to the opposite of agreeableness. The second section is an informal linguistic analysis of the word “disagreeable” in an attempt to uncover if the concept of disagreeableness exists in various cultures and the explore the connotations attached with it. The third section borrows heavily from the discipline of psychology to highlight the differences between individuals that are agreeable and disagreeable. Building on the ideas from the third section, the fourth section looks at the implications of disagreeableness in the realm of politics. In the fifth section, I turn my focus to cross-cultural studies about disagreeableness in order to analyze how it differs across cultures while the sixth section is a shorter analysis of the role of disagreeableness in the works of two non-Western thinkers. The seventh section is focused on how disagreeableness can be surprisingly beneficial in work-life. Finally, the last section synthesizes the findings of the project, highlighting avenues for further research.

The Difficulty in Defining Disagreeableness

There is some disagreement about how disagreeableness should be defined. In his seminal analysis, Goldberg (1981) argues that “individual differences that are of the most significance in the daily transactions of persons with each other will eventually become encoded in our language” (p. 141-142). This implies that if the individual difference is important enough, different languages and cultures will have a term or symbol for it.

Disagreeableness is usually just defined as the opposite of agreeableness in the realm of psychology. In most other disciplines, disagreeableness is not treated as an important enough concept to warrant its own definition. The fact that it is defined as the “lack” or “absence” of agreeableness immediately attaches a positive connotation to agreeableness. Adopting this method of defining disagreeableness introduces bias as it suggests that agreeableness is the ideal. Agreeableness immediately becomes attractive, it’s a trait one must possess, and one must dissociate from disagreeableness. In order to capture the broader meaning of disagreeableness, it might be helpful to turn our focus to what it is not, i.e. agreeableness.

The Five Factor Model of personality or FFM (Goldberg, 1992) is a widely accepted approach to analyzing personality traits. Five major dimensions of personality have been assumed to be sufficient in encompassing the most important aspects of personality.

Extroverts tend to be social and talkative; agreeable people tend to be warm and cooperative; people who are high on openness to experience tend to have broad interests and

imagination; conscientious people tend to be ethical and dependable; and neurotic people tend to be anxious and insecure. Agreeableness is one of the five main dimensions in this model and most theoretical models of the Big Five further split agreeableness into various dimensions. The Revised NEO Personality Inventory or NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) breaks down agreeableness into the facets of trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The HEXACO model offers another useful alternative theoretical framework for understanding agreeableness by splitting it into honesty-humility (H) and agreeableness (A) factors (Ashton & Lee, 2008). People that are high in H are sincere and modest; people that are low in H are pompous and greedy. Similarly, people that are high in A are patient and tolerant; people that are low in A are critical and quarrelsome. To further clarify the difference between honesty-humility (H) and agreeableness (A), Lee and Ashton (2012) suggest that individuals that are high in H cooperate even if they could get away with exploiting their opponent whereas those that are high in A cooperate even if their opponent is not cooperating with them. Agreeable people tend to be more cooperative and accommodating as they want to maintain smooth interpersonal relationships (Graziano & Tobin, 2013).

Within the psychometric tradition, Fiske (1949) defines agreeableness as “conformity” whereas Hogan (1983) defines it as “likability”. Taking a bio-evolutionary approach, Hogan argues that personality traits had their origins in processes that were

frequently used by groups. His main argument was that some personality traits, such as cooperation, were more important in promoting the survival of the group than others. Therefore, individual differences that were related to the survival of the group must be more encoded in languages. He believed that it was the social consensus about a person's tendencies that lead to the attribution of a personality trait to an individual.

In order to understand the importance of agreeableness, it is essential to understand the functional value of the trait. Tasks that could only be accomplished as a group or could be accomplished more easily as a group required the group to reach a consensus. If there was a deviant in the group and the consensus believes that the deviant would not change their position, the deviant would be eliminated from the group. This outcome was unfavorable for both the individual and the group. From the group's perspective, the resources that the individual provided to the group would be lost. From the individual's perspective, access to the group and the common pool of resources would be lost. If the deviant or disagreeable person was cut off from the group, the individual's survival may become questionable. Even through the group's resources might become smaller due to the loss of the deviant individual, the group may become more cohesive as a unit and would be better at accomplishing goals that the group decided on consensually. Assuming that this line of theoretical speculation has some merit to it, it is not difficult to understand how agreeableness may have evolved as an important dimension in determining the individual's

worth to the group. These definitions of agreeableness can have varying implications. While some may consider agreeable people as those who possess a pleasant and warm disposition, others may view them as those who are quick to conform. This vastly broadens the domains of disagreeableness. Agreeableness is present in almost all theoretical models of personality and is one of the most significant predictors of cooperation in interpersonal relationships which is enough reason to explore the domains of disagreeableness. But most personality theory models have either chosen to view disagreeableness in a negative light or ignored it completely. But has the discipline of psychology been too narrow in its perception of disagreeableness? Is there truly no merit to being disagreeable?

An Informal Linguistic Analysis of Disagreeableness

A major source of information about personality comes from language. Cattell (1957) found that over the centuries, necessity has caused people to come up with words for every important aspect of an individual's behavior. According to this argument, if agreeableness is an important enough aspect in the natural language of personality, then it would be frequently used in daily vocabulary. Allport and Odbert (1936) conducted a study of trait names where they analyzed words that could be used to describe personality traits or an individual's behavior from the 1925 edition of Webster's New International Dictionary. These words were then separated into four separate columns and the third column pertained to character evaluations. "Amiable", "agreeable", and "appealing" are examples of some of the words that appeared in the third column. This was one of the first and most important Western linguistic analyses of personality related words.

Disagreeableness is not a concept that is found in the exact same form in different cultures. In fact, many cultures do not even have a word for it, or their notion of disagreeableness varies widely. As the conception of disagreeableness primarily comes from the Big Five personality model in the realm of psychology, an informal linguistic analysis has been undertaken to understand how different cultures understand disagreeableness and if this analysis can in any way widen or narrow the scope of defining disagreeableness.

The participants were college students from DePauw University whom I personally interviewed. If they spoke a second language, they were asked to provide a word for the term “disagreeable” in that language. They were then asked for a literal translation of that word in English. If the language did not have a word for disagreeable, participants were asked to come up with a word they thought was closest to disagreeable and then provide an English translation of that word. Many did not understand the term disagreeable and asked for a definition. In this case, similar to studies within the realm of psychology, disagreeable was purposely defined as the opposite of agreeable in order to create ambiguity as the term does not have a formal definition within the discipline. The goal was to allow participants to come up with their own conceptions of disagreeableness so that the scope of this analysis could be widened or commonalities between cultural conceptions of disagreeableness could emerge organically. A table has been shown below to illustrate the varying cultural conceptions of disagreeableness.

Table 1

“Disagreeable” - An Informal Linguistic Analysis

English	Disagreeable
Croatian	Dissatisfied, Unpleasant
Serbian	Offensive, Displeasing, Nasty
Wolof	Not nice to be around, Not easygoing
Bengali	Malice, Annoyance
Hindi	Unpleasant, Obnoxious
German	Discomfort causer
Polish	Not polite
Nepali	Obnoxious, Unpleasant
Thai	Not from the heart
Punjabi	Always in a bad mood
Montenegrin	Unpleasant, Offensive

It is interesting to note that none of the words for disagreeable back-translated directly into the term “disagreeable”. Similar to the realm of psychology, where disagreeable is most commonly defined as the opposite of agreeable, many languages used “not” in front of a positive word, indicating that is often defined as the opposite of a positive trait. None of the languages shown above appear to have a positive connotation associated with disagreeableness. Going by these conceptions of disagreeableness, it is hard to imagine if one would enjoy the company of a disagreeable person at all. The German translation is probably the one that is the least negative. Could discomfort causer just mean someone that likes to disrupt the status quo and push people out of their comfort zone? Is that really a bad thing? Or does it just mean that the person is an innovator, a harbinger of progress? Take the Serbian translation, displeasing, for example. Does displeasing here mean simply mean that the person is not interested in pleasing others? Is this the kind of person who would much rather be honest than be a people pleaser? Wouldn't *you* rather surround yourself with people like these?

Facets of Disagreeableness

In order to provide a holistic view of disagreeableness, some facets of disagreeableness have been reviewed in this section. Most research in psychology has focused on how extreme disagreeableness can be quite dangerous and a project on the subject of disagreeableness would be incomplete without an examination of the aspects of disagreeableness.

Interpersonal conflict is a complex social phenomenon that has been pervasive in human social interaction across cultures and over time. Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, and Hair (1996) hypothesized that differences in agreeableness levels of individuals would be related to patterns of conflict and conflict resolution within relationships. They explored the relationship between agreeableness and the kind of interpersonal conflict tactics used and found that all participants regarded negotiation tactics as effective. But disagreeable individuals differed from more agreeable individuals in that they deemed power assertion tactics to be more effective in conflict resolution. It was also found that disagreeable people have a more complex differentiation among their relationships than more agreeable people. They evaluated power assertion as an effective tactic for sibling relationships but disengagement as a better tactic for parental relationships. This is an interesting finding as it highlights that the effectiveness of a conflict tactic may depend on the agreeableness level of the person with whom one is in conflict. Disagreeable opponents may require more assertive tactics than would agreeable opponents. This study shows that disagreeable individuals treat

each of their relationships as more nuanced and use different conflict resolution tactics depending on the kind of relationship. Agreeable individuals are likely to stick to their chosen method of conflict resolution as they have a tendency to conform. Although these tactics may work when a conflict arises between agreeable individuals, it may fail if their opponent is disagreeable.

On the other hand, agreeable people will likely engage in less conflict as agreeableness is associated with increased self-control (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Agreeable people are greatly motivated to maintain positive relationships with other people, and this induces them to generate positive perceptions from the other through proactive behavior. This in turn leads to an agreeable individual to choose a more constructive pattern of oppositions than a disagreeable individual during conflict. Research has showed that people that are highly agreeable consider the use of compromise more effective and the use of destructive tactics as less effective (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Individuals that reported lower levels of agreeableness are more likely to believe that destructive tactics could lead to conflict resolution. Disagreeable individuals are also quicker to adopt tactics such as using threats and physical force than agreeable individuals. Future research may find that there are individual differences in perceived threat of conflict and thresholds for detecting conflict may also vary widely. As disagreeable individuals may not perceive certain kinds of

coercive behavior as destructive, more insight into disagreeableness may be helping in understanding interpersonal conflict as an aspect of social interaction.

Sindermann et al. (2018) wanted to study the relationship between high neuroticism, low agreeableness, anger, and vengefulness. Vengefulness was defined in this study as the difference in the attitude and motivation to seek revenge between individuals. Different cultural influences were also taken into account as this study compared Chinese participants from a collectivistic culture with German participants who were from a relatively more individualistic culture. In the German sample, men showed a higher tendency for vengefulness compared to women, but no sex differences were observed in the Chinese sample. High neuroticism was a significant predictor of vengefulness in the Chinese sample. The results indicated that agreeable individuals are less likely to seek revenge in order to maintain harmony in the society. Low agreeableness or disagreeableness was a significant predictor of vengefulness in the samples of both nations, especially when the participants also scored high on anger. This study supports the theory that disagreeable people tend to be more vengeful (Graziano & Tobin, 2009).

In another study, Melchers et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between the Big Five model of personality and several commonly used measures of empathy across four different cultures. Agreeableness was found to have the highest correlation with empathic concern and was the most important personality dimension in predicting empathy. It makes

sense that the agreeableness was found to be the best predictor for empathy because it is primarily a dimension of interpersonal behavior. According to Graziano et al. (2007), people that are low in agreeableness do not necessarily report less empathy because they lack empathy or prosocial motivation. Instead, they lack the skills required in shifting the focus of these reactions to other people. Highly agreeable and extraverted individuals are also more likely to forgive compared to individuals who score high on neuroticism and related traits of anger, chronic hostility, anxiety, and depression. Previous research indicates that of the Big Five, agreeableness is the most consistent predictor of forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005). Individuals who are predisposed to maintain harmonious relationships are more likely to forgive others. Agreeableness was also found to mediate the relationship between entitlement and forgiveness which is characteristic of narcissistic individuals (Strelan, 2007).

Meier et al. (2006) analyzed the effect of aggression-related cues such as violent media on aggressive behavior in order to understand who engages in aggressive behavior after being exposed to aggressive cues. They examined the role of agreeableness in moderating the effect of aggression related cues on behavior. In their first study they found that priming individuals with aggression-related cues did lead to an increase in aggressive behavior but only among individuals that were high in disagreeableness. This study also showed that participants that were high on agreeableness were able to self-regulate aggression related thoughts. In order to investigate how they were able to do so, a second study was conducted

where they found that showing aggression-related cues led to the activation of prosocial thoughts among individuals that are high in agreeableness. This shows that agreeable individuals are able to almost bypass aggression related cues by using prosocial thoughts in response to aggressive priming effects.

Much of the research on reducing aggression has focused on the removal of aggression-related cues. It does not seem feasible to remove most such cues. The findings of Meier et al. (2006) suggest a novel route to curbing aggression where people can alter automatic mental mechanisms so that aggression-related cues have little to no impact on behavior. The activation of hostile thoughts by disagreeable people shows why they have a greater tendency to be aggressive and that activating prosocial thoughts may be important in curbing aggressive behavior. If people can be encouraged to pair aggression-related cues with prosocial thoughts explicitly, aggressive tendencies could be countered. The link between aggression-related cues and prosocial thoughts among agreeable individuals can be an area of research that can be explored further in order to reduce aggressive tendencies of disagreeable individuals. Resorting to destructive techniques to assert power during a conflict and the motivation to seek revenge are among the most harmful aspects of disagreeableness. But if disagreeable individuals could be taught to activate prosocial thoughts like agreeable individuals do, there might be a significant decrease in aggressive behavior.

Domains of Disagreeableness

Disagreeableness can have far-reaching consequences as it may be a more fundamental part of our personalities than we realize. We are sorely lacking in our understanding of disagreeableness because present models in psychology do not deem disagreeableness as being worthy enough of thorough analysis. Being high in disagreeableness may especially have a crucial impact on political attitudes. With the rise in political polarization, it has never been more important to understand what affects our attitudes towards the other.

There is a growing interest in understanding the psychological factors underlying political behavior. Prior research shows that political beliefs are derived from deeper psychological needs which means that individuals may be predisposed to adopt particular ideological perspectives because of their personalities (Landau et al., 2004). According to moral foundations theory (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009), human morality can be summarized using five main domains and the relative importance of these domains varies between liberals and conservatives. While liberals have a tendency to care about harm and fairness, conservatives are more concerned with ingroup loyalty, respect for authority, and purity. These five facets form the two higher order moral orders of “individualizing” which is the aggregate score on harm and fairness and “binding” which is the aggregate score on ingroup loyalty, authority and purity. Differences in the importance of these underlying

motivations are believed to influence political attitudes. Hirsh et al. (2010) found that an individual's political motivation is influenced by the balance between of motivational needs for order and traditionalism (as reflected by the orderliness aspect of conscientiousness and the politeness aspect of agreeableness) and fairness and equality (as reflected by the compassion aspect of agreeableness). Individuals that rate the need for order higher than that for equality are likely to be more conservative. On the other hand, individuals that rate the need for equality higher than that for order tend to be more liberal. If both of these needs are relatively balanced, the individual is likely to have a more moderate political attitude. A concern for fairness and ensuring that individuals are protected from harm was found to be positively correlated with agreeableness (Lewis & Bates, 2011).

With the world becoming increasingly polarized, a better understanding of factors influencing tolerance towards others differing in racial and ethnic characteristics has perhaps never been more important. Tolerance can be viewed as prosocial in nature, so it is likely that agreeableness plays a crucial role in relating to individuals whose cultural backgrounds differ significantly from one's own. Butrus and Witenberg (2012) found that agreeableness was positively correlated with tolerance in the belief, acts, and speech dimensions. The belief dimension represented holding prejudicial beliefs whereas the speech and acts dimensions represented the likelihood to voice these beliefs to others and acting on these beliefs, respectively. Empathy was found to be a better predictor of tolerance in the speech and acts

dimensions, and their findings also suggest that highly agreeable individuals tend to be higher in empathy. Their overall results imply that the more agreeable individuals are, the more likely they are to be tolerant towards others who may be different from them. An individual with a prosocial disposition like high agreeableness would be more inclined to promote social harmony and would therefore be less likely to engage in discriminatory behavior that may be harmful to others.

With the rise of social media, it has become increasingly easier to share hostile political rumors. Often, these rumors are conspiracy theories or fake news with little to no evidence. Petersen et al. (2018) contend that this is primarily done by those with a “need for chaos” and this group comprises “marginalized status-seekers”. This strategy of disruption is used by these people to undermine political elites, both on the left and right, and create havoc. This theory may help explain the anti-establishment voting that has been on the rise in the last few years. It is not too much of a stretch to argue that people that are anti-establishment to such an extreme that it motivates them to spread misinformation are clearly on the high end of the disagreeable spectrum.

Turner et al. (2013) conducted the first ever study to analyze the role of friendship in predicting outgroup attitude. Disagreeable people are likely to pursue goals to further their own interests, with little concern about any conflict this might create with the interests of others. Their perception of the world is that of a socially competitive place where the most

powerful succeed and they are therefore likely to exhibit a heightened motivation for a group based on dominance. This is likely to be associated with higher levels of prejudice. Intergroup anxiety is a negative feeling that arises when one expects to interact with an outgroup member and agreeableness is the most important mediator of the relationship between cross-group friendship and outgroup attitude (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). This is most likely to arise where there has been little to no contact with the outgroup member and it often leads to a reliance on stereotypes while evaluating an outgroup member. For this reason, Turner et al. (2013) found that cross-group friendship was more effective at generating positive outgroups attitudes for those that were low in agreeableness and extraversion as these people have the most to gain from experiencing intimate contact with an outgroup member. Agreeable individuals are less likely to hold prejudiced views about outgroup members because not only are they more likely to think the best of others, but they also expect to be liked in return. On the other hand, for disagreeable people, cross-group friendship can lead to a significant reduction in intergroup anxiety which in turn can lead to more positive outgroup attitudes. Their work comes at a time when polarization is on the rise across the world and there are implications of this work for the rising anti-immigrant sentiment. Their findings suggest that cross-group friendship can have a significant effect on reducing prejudiced attitudes of disagreeable individuals towards outgroup members.

Disagreeableness – A Strictly Western Construct?

Personality can be conceptualized as the extent to which someone displays a trait.

Traits can be defined as the consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, motives, and behaviors that a person exhibits across a number of situations over a period of time (Fleeson & Gallagher, 2009). A sampling of cultural case studies has been presented below to show the varying role of agreeableness in different cultures. It is to be noted that cultures are dynamic and as they continue to evolve, so does the role of agreeableness within them.

According to Triandis (1989), the larger the universe of traits to be sampled, the more complex the culture. Due to increased complexity, an individual has more potential ingroups to which they may belong. As the number of potential ingroups increases, the loyalty of individuals to any one ingroup decreases as they have the option of prioritizing their personal goals compared to the collective goals of the group. The affluence of a society leads to greater financial independence which in turn leads to greater social and emotional independence. This causes the individual to prioritize their own goals instead of the group's. Thus, as societies grow increasingly complex and affluent, they become more individualistic. This lends to the idea that as individualism grows, so does the tendency to be disagreeable as the individual can afford to be less dependent on the group for their survival and well-being. If the ingroup makes excessive demands, the individual has the opportunity to be

disagreeable and even leave the group. They can not only join a new group but also form another which has been found to be more difficult in collectivist societies.

The terms individualism and collectivism are used to characterize cultures and societies whereas the terms idiocentric and allocentric have been used for individuals. In cultures where survival is possible through hunting and people are more likely to survive if they work alone or in small groups, individualism emerges as the ideal way of living. On the other hand, in agricultural societies in which cooperation is necessary for the building of irrigation and food storage systems, collectivism designs for living emerge. Allocentric individuals tend to be more agreeable than idiocentric individuals (Realo et al., 1997). Allocentric individuals live in collectivist cultures where there are big differences between one's group and other groups whereas idiocentric individuals live in individualistic cultures in which big differences exist between one's self and others. This might be explained by the function of agreeableness. Agreeableness will likely be more important in a collectivistic society to sustain the homogeneity and harmony of a group than in an individualistic society. Agreeable individuals who are more altruistic, sympathetic, eager to help, and tend to believe that others will be equally helpful in turn, have a tendency to be more collectivistic in their relations with other people. On the other hand, there are clear benefits to being slightly disagreeable in an individualistic society as one is no longer as reliant on the

group. Over time as societies become more complex and therefore individualistic, we should expect individuals to become more disagreeable. But is that always the case?

According to Altran and Ginges (2012), religion addresses the problems of cooperation in large complex societies with the introduction of supernatural agents to punish those who do not cooperate. Disagreeable people fall under this umbrella of those who are less likely to cooperate. Religious rituals build ingroup solidarity which may translate into a greater willingness to kill and die for a cause in ingroup-outgroup conflict (Ginges et al., 2013). Evolutionary theory suggests that as groups grow larger in resource-rich environments, it leads to greater opportunity for individuals to leave the group or to be forced out of the group, if they do not comply with the group's collective goals.

Omnipresent supernatural agents help solve this problem by being a source of moral authority to promote cooperation among individuals (Atran & Henrich, 2010). In the field of economics, disagreeable people are studied as subjects in the Prisoner's Dilemma games as economists are becoming increasingly concerned with the effect of personality traits on economic outcomes. Traditional economic theory predicts that rational players will never cooperate in these games. However, experimental research consistently shows that this is not the case. Although defection could result in better payoffs for a rational player, the games often have cooperative outcomes. Agreeableness, which is the trait associated with trust and

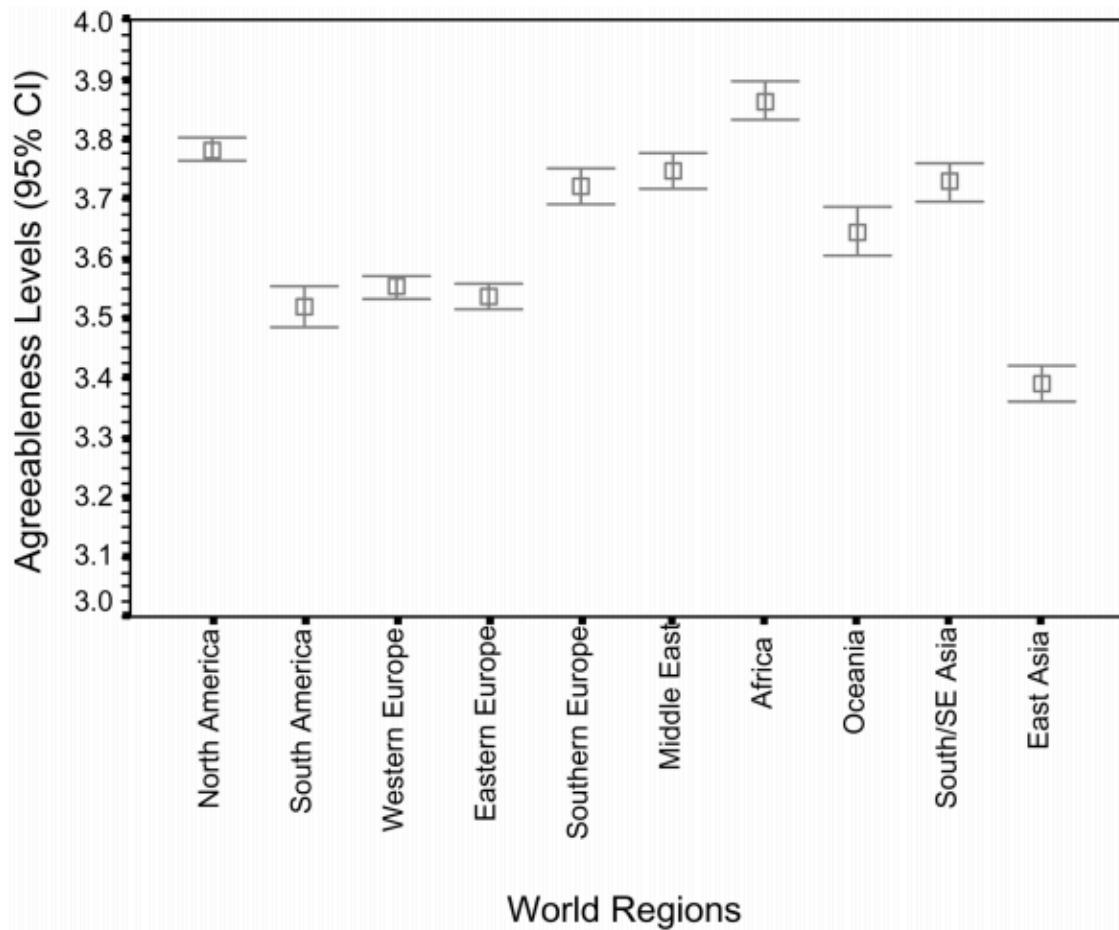
cooperation is one of the reasons for cooperative outcomes in finitely repeated Prisoner's Dilemma games (Kagel & McGee, 2014).

The NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) is one of the most widely used instruments for measuring the personality traits related to the Big Five, but another brief measure of the five dimensions is the Big Five Inventory or BFI (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John & Srivastava, 1999). Schmitt et al. (2007) conducted a cross-cultural study to examine whether the structure of the English BFI was fully generalized across various cultures. The BFI was translated into 29 different languages and administered to college students across 56 nations and the five-dimensional structure of the BFI was replicated. These findings provided the first cross-cultural validity evidence for the personality dimensions of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. The authors also aimed to study the distribution of personality traits as measured by the BFI and they found that the most agreeable nations were the Democratic Republic of Congo and Jordan and the most disagreeable nations were Japan and Lithuania. Findings of the paper also showed that people from African nations scored much higher on agreeableness than people from East Asian countries. Based on the theory of individualism and collectivism, we would expect to see the United States on top of the leaderboard for one of the most disagreeable nations as it is a highly developed and individualistic nation. But the agreeableness levels in North America were found to be quite high. This suggests that there may be more to what affects

the levels of agreeableness and disagreeableness and it is clearly a topic that merits further research, possibly beyond the realm of psychology. Figure 1 shown below illustrates varying agreeableness levels for different world regions.

Figure 1

Agreeableness Levels (with 95% confidence intervals) across world regions



Schmitt et al. (2007)

One of the most pertinent questions about the agreeableness dimension from a cross-cultural perspective is to what extent this dimension sufficiently captures the main personality concepts in the area of interpersonal relatedness in non-Western collectivistic cultures. More attention is usually paid to interpersonal relationships and societal relationships in collectivistic cultures compared to individualistic ones (Triandis, 1995).

Valchev et al. (2013) conducted a study on social-relational concepts in South Africa which is a multicultural society comprising eleven official languages and four distinct ethnic groups. Using the South African Personality Inventory (SAPI) social-relational scales developed by Nel et al. (2012), the authors found that social-relational concepts not only had significant correlations with agreeableness, but also with conscientiousness and openness to experience. The SAPI social-relational scales also showed high correlations with interpersonal relatedness. The main cultural differences referred to the strong links between relational and tradition-focused concepts in Blacks as compared to Whites. This study was replicated in a Western country, the Netherlands, and a similar overall pattern of associations with the Big Five was observed which suggests that these concepts are not unique to South Africa. It is important to note that social-relational concepts in South Africa were much more strongly linked to interpersonal relatedness than to the Big Five and that these concepts made a larger contribution than the Big Five in the predictability of relevant outcomes. This demonstrates that although the Big Five does a *sufficiently* good job of explaining most personality

dimensions, it might not be enough to fully capture all relevant personality traits. The very nature of an overarching model such as the Big Five means that it will be simplistic and reductive to a certain degree.

There is a general consensus that a set of five personality factors corresponding to the Big Five or Five-Factor Model are present cross-culturally. But the question of whether more personality factors are needed beyond the Big Five for an accurate representation has received more attention recently. One of the lines of research has focused on the comprehensiveness of the Big Five model in non-Western cultural contexts. Interpersonal relatedness as measured by the Cross-Cultural (Chinese) Personality Assessment Inventory (CPAI-2) developed by Cheung et al. (2001) is one such personality dimension that has been identified as relevant beyond the Big Five. According to Valchev et al. (2013), interpersonal relatedness centers around “relationships and social functioning in a normative context and is defined by concepts such as harmony, discipline, relational orientation, social sensitivity, thrift, and tradition” (p. 18). This dimension has proved to be valuable in behavior prediction in China (Zhang & Bond, 1998) and has been replicated in non-Chinese groups as well but was found to be a less important predictor of behavior for European Americans (Cheung et al., 2006). Interpersonal relationships are most represented by agreeableness in the Big Five model. Agreeableness appears to be the largest and yet, the least understood personality dimension.

Western theoretical constructs that were generated in Western contexts, based on Western concepts, and were used by Western scholars have been applied to studying individuals and their psyches from other cultures. There is an inherent bias in this method of analysis as it presumes that individuals across various cultures are similar in the way they think and behave. This suggests that much of our understanding of human reasoning is incomplete and culturally biased. Peng et al. (2006) suggest that the “Chinese are naïve Taoists in spirit and that Chinese thinking and reasoning are guided by folk versions of Taoism” (p. 249) which is defined as naïve dialecticism. Just as Confucianism largely guides Chinese social life, Taoism presides over Chinese mental life. Peng et al. (2006) argue that the Chinese way of thinking is more flexible, holistic, and dialectical compared to the Western way of thinking due to the influence of Taoism. Taoism is one of the three main teachings in Chinese culture with the others being Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The closest English translation of the word Tao is “the way”. At the heart of Chinese naïve dialecticism is the idea that true contradiction does not exist and that contradictions are not logically opposite. Taoism is more accepting of the unity of fundamentally opposing concepts and is comfortable with the coexistence of opposites. This was reflected in a study where the Chinese participants used more contradictory statements to describe themselves compared to European and American participants (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2004). Hofstede’s (1980) theory of individualism-collectivism is a Western model of explanation. This is based

on the very concept of a dichotomy which treats individualism and collectivism as two opposing entities. It does not leave much room for both of these identities to coexist. This polarized dichotomy is a reflection of Western logic that cannot tolerate the idea of contradiction even at the risk of providing an incomplete or incorrect explanation of a culture. The emergence of the theory of naïve dialecticism shows that it may be more effective in expanding our understanding of Chinese thinking and reasoning than Western theories in psychology.

The theory of naïve dialecticism is critical as it may provide an avenue for the coexistence of agreeableness and disagreeableness at the same time. This is essential for expanding the domain of disagreeableness. Most studies within the discipline of psychology adopt a polarized dichotomy, treating individuals as either high or low in agreeableness. The idea that an individual can be both at the same time may imply that the way disagreeableness is measured may be fundamentally flawed for certain cultural contexts. It is also worth looking at historical examples to see how agreeableness and disagreeableness can coexist. In the next section, we turn our focus to thinkers that have not really been considered disagreeable to reconsider if their works can be read through the lens of critical inquiry.

Unexpected Champions of Disagreeableness

A lens of disagreeableness has been applied to two famous non-Western thinkers to further expand the scope of this project. Neither of these thinkers have been perceived as particularly disagreeable. In fact, their theories are often perceived as rigid and conformist. I argue that both thinkers actually advocated for the space to dissent. The space to disagree is actually one of the core tenets of their ideologies but it has been largely overshadowed by some of their other teachings. This is a revisionist history of the works of Sayyid Qutb and Confucius.

Sayyid Qutb

Berman (2003) famously labeled Sayyid Qutb as “the philosopher of terror” following the 9/11 attack. Qutb is known for being one of the most influential advocates of jihad in the modern times but he was a lot more than that. He was an Egyptian author, educator, poet, and an Islamic theorist. On the topic of Islam, Qutb (2001) argues that “...this religion must defend itself against its aggressors” (p. 73). He explains the concept of Jahiliya as “one man’s lordship over another” (p. 46). This served as his basis for calling for jihad as he believed that Islam needed a revival. Jihad was defined as an eternal “striving” by Qutb as a defense against anything that inhibited freedom. Jihad was not based on transient conditions or concerned merely with the defense of borders. In fact, Qutb has repeatedly stated that jihad was not geographically bound for him. He argued that an organized movement such as jihad was

necessary to fight the Jahili or corrupt system. Any man-made system, regardless of if it was political or social, was treated as ignorant by Qutb as it did not proclaim the sovereignty of God.

Qutb wrote his treatise called *Milestones* at a time when he was imprisoned for his involvement in the assassination plot for the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser and Qutb did not see eye to eye when it came to political ideology. Nasser's secular nationalist ideology was incompatible with Qutb's Islamist ideology. It is important to keep that in mind as there are three varying interpretations of Qutb's work. It is treated as a criticism of the West as he openly denounces systems like capitalism and communism. But Qutb goes beyond that. His work is also treated as a criticism of the Egyptian regime and the Muslim scholars and thinkers in Egypt of that time because "...they regard every verse of the Qur'an as if it were the final principal of this religion" (p. 56). He calls for an abolishment of "oppressive political systems under which people are prevented from expressing their freedom to choose whatever beliefs they want, and after that it gives them complete freedom to decide whether they will accept Islam or not" (p. 56). Finally, his work is also treated as a criticism of the self by many scholars. *Ijtihad* is defined in Islamic legal theory as independent reasoning (Esposito, 2003). It is often contrasted with the legal term *taqlid* which means imitation or conformity (Esposito, 2003). Many Islamic theorists have argued that Qutb is actually suggesting *ijtihad* and not political violence, as is often believed, when

he proposes jihad. Qutb heavily criticized Egyptian Muslim thinkers who would not use *ijtihad* in their reading of the Qur'an.

It is not too big of a stretch to think that Qutb was simply asking for the space for critical inquiry and disagreement at a time when people were being imprisoned in Egypt if they criticized Nasser's regime. His works often get misread as he was executed for his role in the assassination of the Egyptian president. His legacy as a martyr for the Muslim Brotherhood was what led to his notoriety as an Islamic fundamentalist. While one can see why Qutb's texts earned him the title of al-Qaeda's philosopher as strains of Islamic fundamentalism are far from absent from his texts, it can also be argued that his work should not be reduced to just that. The concept of disagreeableness is far from being a modern phenomenon and Qutb clearly understood the need for it, especially as he was imprisoned for his political ideology. Calvert (2009) has argued that the al-Qaeda has "monopolized our understanding" of Qutb's "real contribution to contemporary Islamism" (p. 7) as Qutb was one of the most important Muslim thinkers of his time who wanted to broaden the scope of critical inquiry.

Confucius

Confucius's emphasis on ritual propriety as an essential element of virtue leads many to think that there is very little room for disagreement in the Confucian model. Confucius's claim that, "Following the proper way, I do not forge new paths; with confidence I cherish

the ancients – in these respects I am comparable to our Old Peng” (Analects, 7.1) could easily be misinterpreted to conclude that Confucius believed that one must not deviate from the norm. But this would be a flawed understanding of Confucianism as although Confucius strongly believed that his followers must develop a deep respect for Chinese culture and history, he also wanted them to think critically about an action before doing it. Confucius even says that it is one’s duty to dissuade one’s parents from doing an immoral act as long as one remains respectful towards them.

Hourdequin (2010) contends that the Confucian model actually provides some guidance on how to deal with corrupt institutions (p. 385). Confucius likely left it up to his followers to decide how and when to implement change because he expected yi, or appropriateness, to serve as their guiding principle which itself shows that Confucius saw some value in disagreeableness. It could also be argued that following “the way” would make it morally obligatory for Confucius’s followers to criticize and reform corrupt institutions that have the capacity to change and possibly even develop new institutions if none such exist. This illustrates that Confucius not only encouraged his followers to be brave enough to dissent when necessary but also expected them to be entrepreneurial when the need arose so he clearly understood the value of disagreeableness.

The Desirability of Disagreeableness

Gender differences in personality traits are characterized in terms of which gender has higher scores on that specific trait on an average. With regards to agreeableness, women are more agreeable than men (Feingold, 1994; Costa et al., 2001). Women also tend to exhibit more compassion and politeness than men, both of which are associated with agreeableness. Compassion represents the tendency to invest in others emotionally and treat them with warmth whereas politeness describes the tendency to show respect to others and refrain from taking advantage of them while also being related to cooperation and compliance. A lot of research has been done on the gender pay gap. It is now common knowledge that women tend to earn less than their male counterparts, but the effect of disagreeableness on income is only beginning to be explored. It is important to note that being disagreeable does not necessarily imply hostility, but instead reflects one's tendency to be assertive during a disagreement. According to a study by Judge, Livingston, & Hurst (2012), disagreeableness has differing effects on income based on sex. For instance, women who are expected to be more agreeable than their male colleagues receive backlash for displaying disagreeableness in the workplace and not conforming to their prescribed gender role (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). This study had some very interesting results. Agreeableness is associated with a lower income, especially for men, as they are perceived as deviants for not conforming to the gender stereotype of being disagreeable. The effect of

agreeableness on men's incomes is larger than the effect on women's incomes. The wage differences between agreeable and disagreeable workers is also larger for men than for women. Men who are disagreeable not only earn more but also see their salaries increase at a faster rate. Disagreeableness is also associated with strong leadership as disagreeable people are often more dominant and therefore, disagreeable people are more likely to be promoted.

Disagreeableness certainly exacerbates the gender wage gap. Agreeable men earn more than agreeable women, but disagreeable men earn almost twice as much as disagreeable women. This is helpful in understanding the determinants of gender wage gap which is essential so that organizations can focus on traits they want to encourage in their employees, regardless of gender. This study is also insightful as more wage gap studies in recent times have focused on why women earn less than men than on why men might earn more than women.

It might seem counterintuitive that agreeableness is linked negatively with professional success as most people believe that the ability to work in a team is paramount for promotions. It is essential for workers in managerial or entrepreneurial jobs to be comfortable with disturbing the status quo in order to promote their vision. They need to be "thick-skinned" to a certain degree so that they can occasionally tell people things that they might not want to hear. A manager or entrepreneur who is very agreeable may end up making decisions that are harmful for the firm in order to please their colleagues.

Much of the research on creativity has focused on the cognitive and behavioral aspects of personality. A lot less attention has been paid to agreeableness as it captures an interpersonal aspect of creativity as research has found inconsistent effects for agreeableness. Burch et al. (2006) found that artists were less agreeable than those that were not artists. A study of young adults found that people high in agreeableness have fewer creative accomplishments (King et al., 1996). Feist (1998) found that hostility, which is often associated with disagreeableness, was a good predictor of creative achievement among scientists and artists.

Hunter and Cushenbery (2014) conducted two studies about the relationship between disagreeableness and idea generation and utilization. Using a sample of 201 college students, they divided them into groups of three and asked them to develop a marketing campaign for the online campus of their university. They were asked to generate their ideas individually initially and work with their group on the final campaign solution after that. The authors found that disagreeableness was unrelated to the originality of the idea generated but disagreeable individuals were more likely to get their ideas utilized in a group setting. Disagreeable individuals were more willing to share original ideas when there was a possibility of receiving criticism from their peers. Groups that were comprised of more disagreeable individuals on an average were required to promote their ideas more aggressively which was more likely to emerge from those individuals that were already

disagreeable. It is important to note these results are most applicable to teams composed of three or four members who are not very familiar with each other and are working on a fairly ambiguous problem.

In their second study, they used a sample of 292 college students and found that disagreeableness was actually positively linked to the originality of ideas generated but only when the social context was critical of new ideas, but peers offered creative solutions themselves (Hunter & Cushenbery, 2014). In this study, participants were told to design a novel senior gift for the university. They were then told that they would have to share their ideas in an online chat with two other people and evaluate their ideas as well. The participants were then given another task to help design a new dorm but, in this case, they were told beforehand that they would be sharing their ideas in a group. The authors found that disagreeableness may be helpful in unsupportive contexts but only peers provide a cue that originality was a possible solution. The results also indicate that higher levels of agreeableness may be beneficial in supportive environments. The authors speculate that this might be the case as agreeable individuals are more receptive to positive feedback and respond well to it by providing positive input themselves.

This illustrates that disagreeableness might be a helpful trait to possess for innovative processes but that the social situation has an impact on the usefulness of the trait. If the environment is supportive of novel ideas, it may even negate the utility of disagreeableness.

Creative individuals tend to prefer autonomy and independence and are often less socialized than less creative individuals. They tend to be disagreeable and may even be aggressive. They are also less concerned with convention usually. Less structured job environments such as startups may be able to offer an environment like this more easily whereas this might be difficult to replicate in a corporate job setting. An environment might need to intentionally be created in order to foster originality and creativity.

Ellis et al. (2003) conducted a study whose findings revealed that teams that were high in agreeableness demonstrated lower levels of team learning than teams that were low in agreeableness. This could be particularly detrimental to team performance as compliant individuals are likely to avoid interpersonal conflict and to defer decisions to others. They also found that teams that were high in agreeableness were less adept at critically analyzing information. However, composing a team with only disagreeable individuals might mean that the team will struggle to reach a consensus. Agreeableness is arguably the single most important trait that has sustained humans throughout the course of history as it helps facilitate cooperation. Agreeableness is considered necessary for maintaining positive relationships (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). Group tasks are easier to accomplish if the group can reach a consensus. Disagreeable people have been showed to be less empathic and less helpful (Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, & Tobin, 2007). Anyone who challenges this harmony is punished through social exclusion. This social rejection not only leads to further

antisocial behavior but also decreases prosocial behavior (Hales, Kassner, Williams, & Graziano, 2016). Disagreeableness causes ostracization which further leads to more disagreeableness and more ostracization. The frequency of ostracization experiences can lead to a lasting personality change as a person can become more disagreeable permanently (Hales et al., 2016).

One possible solution could be to assign the role of the devil's advocate to an agreeable member of the team. This means that they would be assigned the task of being disagreeable. Doing this would enable an agreeable team to evaluate ideas more critically. The team members would also not have to worry about the cohesiveness of the team because the disagreeable team member is only performing their assigned role. This may also be helpful in encouraging the group to come up with original ideas. Group morale would also remain high as the disagreeable member would not face the threat of ostracization because of the assigned nature of their disagreeable role. This would in turn enable the disagreeable member to play devil's advocate more effectively which would benefit team learning while ensuring that the level of cohesiveness is maintained.

Van Kleef et al. (2010) also found that a leader's emotional expression has an effect on the followers' performance. Followers that were more disagreeable were more motivated and performed better when their leader expressed anger compared to no emotion or happiness, whereas followers that were more agreeable performed worse when their leader expressed

anger rather than no emotion or happiness. This suggests that leaders who are able to judge their followers' personalities and are capable of regulating their own emotional expressions accordingly will be more successful in managing team performance. The conclusion that the consequences of emotional expressions depend on the target's personality has crucial implications for theorizing about the social function of emotions. This conclusion may be generalizable to other domains, such as intimate and parental relationships, but this study only used four person teams so the findings may not be as effectively generalizable for a leader of a larger group of people such as a political leader.

Bridgewater Associates, the world's largest hedge fund, run by billionaire Ray Dalio, is known for its culture of "radical transparency". Not only does the leader, Dalio, express his views and emotions but also the employees routinely critique each other's performance. Dalio says that 30% of new employees leave the firm in the first 18 months because of Bridgewater's culture. According to Stevenson and Goldstein (2017), many former employees have blamed the constant harsh feedback, lack of privacy, and the need to adhere to Dalio's rules as the motivation to leave. Dalio has repeatedly talked about the absence of office politics at his firm. However, some former employees argue that Dalio has simply created a culture that has a different kind of office politics where those that play by his rules get rewarded. Dalio says that he wants his firm to be an "idea meritocracy" where the best idea wins as opposed to the most popular idea. The firm's website says that it wants

employees “to be extremely open, air disagreement, test each other’s logic, and view discovering mistakes and weaknesses as a good thing that leads to improvement and innovation” (“Principles & Culture,” n.d.). Dalio says that “in order to be successful, we have to be independent thinkers – so independent that they’ll bet against the consensus,” (Montag, 2017).

One could argue that Ray Dalio clearly encourages disagreeableness and independent thinking. He credits his concept of an idea meritocracy as the reason for his fund to have consistently outperformed the Standard and Poor 500 Index. But does Dalio go too far? Employees get frequently tested on their knowledge of the “Principles” which form the ethos of Bridgewater. There are “captains” that are responsible for enforcing these rules and “overseers” who directly report to Dalio. Video cameras record interactions between employees and serve as case studies, a practice that many critics liken to Big Brother. Dalio argues that consensus is unnecessary for an idea meritocracy which is what is precisely responsible for his firm’s success. Is the firm a mecca for the disagreeable or is it dictatorial? Bridgewater is often branded as a cult in popular media with Dalio as its totalitarian leader. The larger question is if Bridgewater’s controlled environment of mostly self-selecting individuals who either embrace the culture or leave in the first two years can exist elsewhere. As a billionaire, Dalio has the privilege of being able to foster a culture such as Bridgewater’s because the firm has the resources to spend time on the social management and dissent.

Could a similar practice be followed at a smaller automobile company in Detroit? If NASA was an idea meritocracy, would Challenger still have crashed, or would an employee have caught the mistake they were making at a nascent stage? It is difficult to imagine how criticism of the sort offered at Bridgewater would work in most organizations in today's polarized world. People are increasingly seeking out "safe spaces" and those who are offended are often referred to as "fragile snowflakes". Although Dalio values independent thinking, his employees are required to follow the "principles". That is the one place Dalio seems to draw a line on criticism. This begs the question about the extent to which disagreeing is actually permitted. Is it simply "managed" disagreement where employees must agree on some baseline rules?

While it may be debatable if Bridgewater's culture with its strong emphasis on disagreeableness is responsible for its success, one company that certainly benefitted from creating the space for disagreement is Korean Air. Gladwell (2008) argues that the loss rate for United Airlines from 1988 to 1998 was .27 per million departures which means that they lost one plane every four million flights. Compared to that, the loss rate for Korean Air from 1988 to 1998 was 4.79 per million departures, which is more than seventeen times higher. Delta Air Lines and Air France suspended their partnership with Korean Air in April 1999 and the US Army forbade its personnel from flying on the airline. Korean Air's safety rating was downgraded by the U.S. Federal Aviation Authority and the airline was banned from

landing in the Canadian airspace. But Korean Air turned itself around shortly after that and its record has been flawless since 1999. In order to understand what caused the Korean Air flights to crash and how it turned itself around, it is essential to understand Hofstede's (1980) work on power distance.

Hofstede's (1980) work focused on developing a database for analyzing the ways in which cultures differ from one another. This paper was primarily concerned with the cultural emphasis on authority and hierarchy. Hofstede analyzed four dimensions of culture for his work and two of these are particularly relevant for this analysis. They are power distance and individualism-collectivism. The power distance index is a measure of the difference between those in power and those without it. Cultures that are high in power distance perceive large distances between leaders and subordinates and are less likely to question the actions of superiors. Collectivistic societies that value in-group harmony also tend to be higher in power distance than individualistic societies. South Korea is strongly collectivistic and is also high in power distance. The reason Korean Air had so many crashes was the lack of communication between the captain and the first officers. Often times, the first officers would spot errors that the captains were making but they would feel uncomfortable correcting them because they felt like they were stepping outside their bounds.

Gladwell (2008) notes that one of the questions that Hofstede (1980) asks in his analysis is concerned with how comfortable employees felt with disagreeing with their managers (p. 205). Hofstede's analysis proved to be critical in transforming the aviation industry. For the first time, aviation experts were analyzing the relationship between the captain and the first officer with the context of the culture's power distance rating in mind. Nobody had considered that the likelihood that a first officer would be assertive depended on a culture's power distance rating. Gladwell mentions how Korean Air brought in an outsider, David Greenberg from Delta Air Lines, to run their flight operations in 2000. One of the first things that Greenberg did was to change the language of Korean Air to English. This gave pilots the opportunity to cross the hierarchical boundaries of the Korean language which has six difference levels of conversational address, depending upon the relationship of the people that are conversing. Formal deference, informal deference, blunt, familiar, intimate and plain are the six different kinds. The first and second officers would usually use formal or informal deference to talk to the captains which would be insufficient for signaling the severity of the error the captain was making. The number of plane crashes by country closely mirrors the list of countries that have the highest power-distance ratings.

It should be noted that these airplane crashes must not be reduced to a mere cultural issue, but the Korean Air case demonstrates how much cultural legacies matter.

Acknowledging that each of us comes from a culture with different strengths and weaknesses

is essential because although cultural legacies might be persistent, they are not an indelible part of who we are. The level of agreeableness largely varies across cultures and it is not difficult to understand why cultures value agreeableness. But cases like that of Korean Air highlight how important it is to reevaluate how cultures perceive disagreeableness. The space to disagree can be intentionally created as was done in the case of Korean Air. There might even be some merit in teaching how to be disagreeable at a broader cultural level. In fact, it may even be essential.

Disagreeableness, Thus Far

This project has been an attempt at reexamining and expanding the concept of disagreeableness which has been either dismissed or treated as a less than ideal trait to possess. This analysis has showed that some form of disagreeableness is present across cultures and although most cultures value agreeableness, many cultures place a larger emphasis on agreeableness than the emphasis placed by Western cultures. This project also aimed to demonstrate that being disagreeable is not always easy as disagreeing with the consensus often carries a risk – the risk of possible social exclusion or ostracization. Disruption may not be looked upon kindly, but disagreeableness serves an important purpose. Only if there is pushback against the group consensus, can society grow. Disagreeableness is essential for progress.

The very construction and the varying definitions of the word “disagreeable” revealed that there is a negative connotation attached to it. The linguistic analysis was undertaken in order to broaden the scope of the definition of disagreeableness, and the analysis revealed that almost all cultures also view this trait negatively. This negative interpretation lends itself to the frameworks used in personality theory models of psychology which mostly treat disagreeableness as the opposite of agreeableness, further reducing the importance of the trait. One limitation of this project was that in order to further the understanding of disagreeableness, analyzing theories of agreeableness was almost essential. The methodology

of analyzing disagreeableness, by exploring what it is not – agreeableness, was undertaken as most theories in psychology do not treat disagreeableness as a separate trait so there is a lack of research on the subject. Most studies do not even use the term “disagreeableness” and instead refer to individuals as being “low in agreeableness”. This choice of words negates the importance of disagreeableness and may dissuade researchers further from choosing disagreeableness as their arena of research.

But this means that there is a lot of room for research on the topic of disagreeableness. Further analysis of disagreeableness, on its own merit, instead of as the opposite of agreeableness, will be beneficial in discovering the extent of its impact on and relationship with politics, religion, and economics. Research on personality and creativity would certainly benefit if a larger range of personality variables were taken into account. A lot of studies on creativity and innovation have focused on openness to experience as it is probably the most important trait for creativity but focusing on just this variable overshadows the role that other aspects of personality, such as disagreeableness, play in creativity.

An attempt was made at broadening the conception of disagreeableness as it has mostly only been examined within the realm of psychology. The implications of being disagreeable can be much larger than has been captured in most studies. Since this project began with a podcast episode by Malcolm Gladwell, it is only fitting that it ends with an

interesting implication of being disagreeable that he highlights. Gladwell (2018) contends that there is a principal called duty to retreat in common law which states that a person has the duty to retreat to a safe place before they can use self-defense. In the past few years, 25 U.S. states have passed a law known as the stand-your-ground law which gives a person the right of self-defense against threats even if they could retreat to a safe place. The duty to retreat law allows people to act disagreeably, as it allows them to not be labeled as cowards for choosing to retreat to a safe space instead of fighting their attacker. On the other hand, stand-your-ground laws sanction the socially agreeable option by encouraging people to protect their honor and fight even if they if its unnecessary. There are grave implications for this. According to McClellan and Tekin (2016), states that have passed stand-your-ground laws saw an increase in homicides by 30 per month. This project has highlighted that disagreeableness is not just a matter of temperament and that there is some element of choice associated with being disagreeable. Being disagreeable when it is necessary to be disagreeable may be difficult as the world often incentivizes the easier and sometimes lethal, socially agreeable option. But remember, you can still choose to be disagreeable. It may even be crucial.

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