DO NICE GUYS AND GALS REALLY FINISH LAST?

And Other Factors of Workplace Inequality Influencing Career Success

June 24, 2014
It is true that career success is built, in part, on “rational” factors

- **Motivation:** Hours worked, continuous work history
- **Investments in human capital:** Education; other forms of training
- **Career choices:** Some people make “better” career decisions than others

But it is equally true that career success depends, in part, on “irrational” factors

- But what is “irrational”? By irrational, I mean factors that either:
  - Do not fit within societal endorsements of legitimacy, whether legally sanctioned (e.g., success based on race, gender, age…) or not (e.g., success based on appearance)
  - Do not fit within model of man/woman as purely rational actor (*homo economicus*), wherein both individual and those making career decisions about individual are guided by principles of utility maximization
People are not only motivated by economic self-interest
- This is why we define career success as consisting of intrinsic (how happy I am with my career) and extrinsic (earnings, job attainment) components

Individuals’ choices and motivations are not always rational
Those who evaluate individuals (i.e., those on whom one’s career success depends) are not always rational, either
From an ethical perspective, my presentation today is more descriptive (the way things are) rather than normative (the one things ought to be)

I do not focus on sociological or economic aspects of inequality
  ▪ A complex and contentious topic!

I do focus on behavioral elements of career success that may be associated with socioeconomic inequality
NON-RATIONAL CAREER SUCCESS FACTORS
AT LEAST ONES I HAVE RECENTLY STUDIED

1. Personality (Agreeableness)
2. Gender
3. Ambition
4. Appearance (height, weight, attractiveness)
Agreeableness is one of the “Big Five” personality traits (others are conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability)

Agreeableness is the tendency to be cooperative, compliant, polite, kind, gentle, and trusting

Agreeableness is not linked to job performance but it is linked to helping behaviors and liking

I have been studying career success for 20 years, and all the studies I’ve conducted, as well as reviews of the literature, show that agreeable individuals are less successful in their careers

- Especially in terms of extrinsic success (pay, promotions, job attainment)
### Agreeableness and Career Success

#### Career Success Assessed 40 Years After Personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait Assessments</th>
<th>Intrinsic Career Success</th>
<th>Extrinsic Career Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Intelligence</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Neuroticism</td>
<td>–.02</td>
<td>–.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Extraversion</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.27*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Openness</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>–.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Agreeableness</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>–.32**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$).

**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
Studied 1,885 executives
Agreeableness negatively impacted career success due to worked fewer hours worked and less ambition to advance
Agreeableness had the strongest negative effect on salary
Agreeableness had the weakest negative effect on career satisfaction

### Effect of Agreeableness on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrinsic Success</th>
<th>Intrinsic Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>−.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job level</td>
<td>−.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to CEO</td>
<td>−.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability rating</td>
<td>−.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>−.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career satisfaction</td>
<td>−.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>−.18**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01

Negotiation effectiveness

Career success depends on negotiating effectively; agreeable individuals tend to negotiate poorer agreements for both themselves and others.

Career choices

We do not have much evidence on this, but some research suggests that agreeable individuals tend to make different career choices.

It is important to remember, however, that the negative effects of agreeableness on earnings persist even when one controls for occupation.

Decisions made by others

Again, there is little data here – but it is possible that others take advantage of agreeable individuals.
“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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Expressed</th>
<th>No Anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9,226</td>
<td>6,032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anger Shown by Counterpart**
It is well known that there is a gender wage gap. Most – but certainly not all – of gap is due to factors that are not directly discriminatory:

- Women, on average, work fewer hours than men
- Women have more career interruptions than men
- Women make different occupational choices than men

This does not mean discrimination does not exist. What interests me are what I would call “double standard” effects – where factors that affect career success work differently for men and women.
GENDER AND AGREEABLENESS

- **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
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

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 2

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 3

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!

"Would You Recommend Candidate for Promotion?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Disagreeable</th>
<th>Agreeable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. AMBITION

- Ambition has long been considered either virtue or vice – mostly the latter
- Surprisingly, little studied in psychology and organizational behavior
- Difficult to obtain a working definition
  - Defined as “one’s overarching desire to aspire toward success and improvement over one’s current condition” leading to “motivational processes at work, orienting toward the attainment of outcomes” and goal-striving performance
- We studied ambition using an unique sample of individuals born in the Bay area in the early 20th century studied over seven decades
- Ambition was measured with observer ratings

## Ambition and Career Success

### Career Success Assessed 40 Years After Personality

**N=717, * p < .05, ** p < .01**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambition and...</th>
<th>Direct Effect</th>
<th>Indirect Effect</th>
<th>Total Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Attainment</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.48**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Prestige</td>
<td></td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Prestige</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.43**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.06**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>.06**</td>
<td>.06**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td></td>
<td>−.01*</td>
<td>−.01*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Observations

- Ambitious children led significantly more successful lives
  - Higher and more prestigious degrees
  - Earned significantly more money
  - More prestigious occupations

- Success, however, was limited to extrinsics
  - Lived no longer and were no happier
  - Happiness and longevity only for those who translated their ambitions into success
Gender negatively predicted ambition and positively predicted life satisfaction (women had less ambition and higher life satisfaction)

The links from gender to income and mortality were both negative (women earned less but lived longer)

Many of the gender effects were mediated by other variables (ambition and education)

One way to look at this is that motivation is both effect and direction

- We often say someone isn’t motivated, but often what we mean is that they are motivated by things other than what we want them to be
4. APPEARANCE

HEIGHT

- Meta-analysis of all available studies in literature (N=7,691)
- Height was strongly related to social esteem
- Height was positively related to leader emergence
- Height was positively related to performance
- Height was more related to subjective than objective outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height—Success Relationship</th>
<th>Estimated True Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social esteem</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader emergence</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective outcomes</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective outcomes</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall height effect is somewhat stronger for men than women, but it is significant for both (i.e., being taller than average predicts career success for both men and women)

Meta-analysis (N=8,590)
- Height was positively related to income after controlling for gender, age, and weight
- Over four studies, height was consistently significantly correlated with earnings
- Age also positively predicted earnings
- Gender negatively predicted earnings (women earn less than men)
- Weight negatively predicted earnings

Every inch increase in height = $789.33 additional annual earnings.
Results were relatively linear (very tall people continued to earn more)

Results did not appear to be due to self-esteem (though height does have some correlation with self-esteem)

One piece of good news...you may be relatively taller than you think

Average height

- U.S. males 68.5 inches (5’8½”)
- U.S. females 63.5 inches (5’3½”)

APPEARANCE
HEIGHT AND INCOME
Weight positively predicts earnings for men but negatively predicts earnings for women.

- Found in both U.S. and German samples.
- Found both between people and analyzing same people of time (change in weight).
- Weight effect for men is positive except at very high end of weight spectrum.
- Results control for job type, hours worked, and other job inputs.

*Figure 2.* Multilevel effect of gender on the weight–earnings relationship (Study 2).

Active study (N=191)
Physical attractiveness was measured by ratings of photographs
Physical attractiveness showed both direct and indirect effects on income
The effect was mediated by educational attainment and core self-evaluations
Did not predict significantly differently for men and women
General mental ability predicts income more strongly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attractiveness Effect on Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
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**p < .01

Physical attractiveness itself may not enable success as much as it helps open doors along the way.

Research by Daniel Hamermesh shows that beauty predicts earnings.

He notes, “the effect of differences in looks on earnings were larger among men than among women.”

He has even found that good-looking economists have their work cited more often.

He also notes:

- To me the crucial question is whether we should think of beauty as productive, or as reflecting discrimination. This is a very tough question, since there’s no doubt that hiring a beautiful person raises a company’s sales. I would argue that beauty’s effects reflect societal discrimination, and that it is not inherently productive.
CONCLUSIONS

- Hard work and investments in human capital matter, BUT...
- Career success is less logical than we often think
  - Questions about the value of education
  - Non-job-related factors (height, weight, attractiveness) matter
  - Personality is important
- Lest you think these biases are unimportant...
  - When have we elected as U.S. President someone who is:
    - Shorter than average
    - Has glasses
    - Has facial hair
    - Is bald
    - Is overweight
    - Is very unattractive
    - Is a woman
  - McKinley (1900)
  - Truman (1948)
  - Taft (1908)
  - Eisenhower (1952)
  - Taft (1908)
  - Lincoln (1860)
- Not in the past 60 years have we elected someone who has any of these qualities!

Every trait that I’ve studied has an upside and a downside.

Disagreeable people are not “bad” people.

There are all times when we should be more agreeable, and more disagreeable.

- Negotiators get the outcomes they expect (and are willing to ask for)

Remember, **how** you say something is as important as **what** you say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“I disagree…”</th>
<th>becomes</th>
<th>“My take was…”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“My pay is not fair”</td>
<td>becomes</td>
<td>“I think I can show how we both win from paying me more”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m entitled to more”</td>
<td>becomes</td>
<td>“This is how I see it; I’m interested in your reaction”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Used Car” exercise to negotiate the price of a fictional used car

The effect of who makes the first offer is consistently telling

When the buyer makes the first offer, the settlement price is lower

When the seller makes the first offer, the settlement price is higher
MORE IMPLICATIONS FOR YOU

- Advocate for objectivity in decision-making
  - One way to do this is through testing
  - Another way is to insist on objective standards for performance
  - Or at least multidimensional (objective and subjective)

- Remember serenity prayer (Reinhold Niebuhr)
  - God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
    The courage to change the things I can,
    And wisdom to know the difference.

- We can change some things, but not others
THANK YOU!

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

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