Agreeableness

Renée M Tobin, Illinois State University, Normal, IL, USA
Daniel L Gadke, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS, USA

Abstract

Arguably the largest of the dimensions of the five-factor approach to personality, agreeableness is the motive to maintain smooth interpersonal relationships. Longitudinal research suggests stability in agreeableness across the lifespan. It is theorized to have developmental origins in the temperamental process of effortful control and has been linked to positive social behaviors including helping, cooperation, and emotion regulation. It has also been connected inversely to maladaptive social behaviors including aggression, conflict, and prejudice. Application of the Opponent Process Theory is used to explain the relations between agreeableness and social behaviors.

This article focuses on agreeableness as a dimension of personality. In it, we define agreeableness and detail its measurement methods. We also review developmental and theoretical accounts of this individual difference as well as the dimension's relations to adaptive and maladaptive social behaviors. Finally, we provide a theoretical account to aid in understanding the links between agreeableness and diverse social behavior.

Personality is the collection of stable characteristics that constitute an individual. Social scientists, especially psychologists, have long been interested in determining the core individual differences that comprise personality. Although there is some dissent about the structure of personality, the Five-Factor Model of Personality, also known as the Big Five, is widely regarded as the most accurate representation of the dimensions of human personality (McCrae and John, 1991). These five factors include agreeableness (e.g., generous, trustful, giving), extraversion (e.g., active, talkative, gregarious), conscientiousness (e.g., organized, ethical, thorough), neuroticism (e.g., anxious, self-defeating, unstable), and openness to experience (e.g., curious, introspective, intellectual; McCrae and John, 1991).

Based on factor analyses of six major data sets, Digman and Takemoto-Chock (1981) found that "friendly compliance vs. hostile noncompliance" was the first and largest factor of personality to emerge. This factor is labeled agreeableness. Agreeableness is described as the motive to maintain smooth interpersonal relations with others (Graziano and Eisenberg, 1997). "More formally, agreeableness is defined as a superordinate summary term for a set of interrelated dispositions and characteristics, manifested as differences in being likable, pleasant, and harmonious in relations with others" (Graziano and Tobin, 2013: p. 347). Research indicates relative stability in agreeableness, such that individuals who are kind early in development tend to be seen as warm, empathic, and cooperative as adults.

In 1997, Graziano and Eisenberg authored a groundbreaking chapter on agreeableness, linking it to theory and research on altruism, prosocial behavior, and motivation. When the chapter was published, little research had been conducted on this major dimension of personality; however, since its publication, research on agreeableness has increased significantly. A PsycINFO search conducted in October 2013 revealed a total of 459 peer-reviewed papers when agreeableness was entered as the keyword. Of that total, only 11 were published before 1997. These articles about agreeableness range in topic, focus, and method, with the majority reporting correlational outcomes for studies designed to examine something other than this personality dimension. Fortunately, beyond these correlational studies, an empirical literature on agreeableness has also emerged in which scientists have focused explicitly on understanding the processes underlying agreeableness and how this individual difference maps onto overt behavior. The primary goal of this section is to provide readers with a summary of some of the main findings related to individual differences in agreeableness over the last 15 years.

Measuring Agreeableness

Examination of the literature on agreeableness reveals that most studies rely on verbal self-reports of personality. Many different measures of the Big Five are available in many different languages, and these self-reports show remarkable convergence. The most popular commercial product assessing the five-factor approach to personality is the NEO, now on its third edition (Costa and McCrae, 1988). This self-report questionnaire provides five-factor scores with six facets each for individuals between the ages of 12 and 99 years. For agreeableness, the six facets are trust, modesty, compliance, altruism, straightforwardness, and tender-mindedness. Relative to the overall factor of agreeableness, less is known about these smaller facets. In addition to the NEO, a similar measure is available in the public domain through the International Personality Inventory Pool (Goldberg et al., 2006). Other self-report measures with strong psychometric properties are also available to measure the agreeableness dimension (e.g., Big Five Inventory; John and Srivastava, 1999). Beyond self-report, agreeableness (and the other dimensions of the Big Five) has been assessed using ratings from others including spouses (Costa and McCrae, 1988), employment supervisors (Hogan et al., 1996), and teachers/childcare supervisors (e.g., Digman and Takemoto-Chock, 1981; Tobin and Graziano, 2011). It is also possible to measure agreeableness in youth by obtaining

parents' free descriptions of their children (e.g., Kohnstamm et al., 1998) or through parental sorting of statements reflecting the extent to which each describes the child (e.g., Abe, 2005).

Correlations between agreeableness and other dimensions of personality vary by method and measure. Adjective marker methods (e.g., Goldberg, 1992) tend to generate stronger correlations between agreeableness and conscientiousness, whereas questionnaires with sentence formats (e.g., Big Five Inventory; John and Srivastava, 1999) tend to yield stronger correlations between agreeableness and extraversion. Agreeableness is typically inversely related to neuroticism. Studies have been mixed in terms of the relation between agreeableness and gender, with some researches finding no evidence of a relation and others finding higher agreeableness in female participants. Non-American samples and samples of young children tend to yield lower internal consistency scores for agreeableness than do American and European samples (e.g., Soto et al., 2008). Some studies also suggest that less satisfactory internal consistency scores are obtained for agreeableness when abbreviated measures are employed.

Social Desirability Artifact?

One of the most challenging issues facing agreeableness researchers is combating claims that this dimension of personality simply reflects socially desirable responding (SDR). SDR is behaving in a manner that makes the respondent appear more favorable (Graziano and Tobin, 2002). Given that items reflecting higher agreeableness tend be more favorable (e.g., 'has a trusting nature'; 'is kind and considerate of others') than those indicating lower agreeableness (e.g., 'tends to find fault with others'; 'is cool and aloof'), social desirability seems a reasonable concern. Perhaps because of the perception of social evaluation, agreeableness is often mistaken simply for social desirability. As previously discussed, agreeableness is most often measured via self-report measures (e.g., NEO, International Personality Item Pool (IPIP), Big Five Inventory (BF)I, etc.), allowing for SDR to influence self-ratings. To address this concern, Graziano and Tobin (2002) designed three studies.

Graziano and Tobin (2002) empirically investigated the potential link between SDR and agreeableness in a multimethod study. In the first study, the researchers explored the zero-order correlations between agreeableness and three different forms of SDR with a sample of 316 participants: impression management, self-deception, and self-monitoring. They found that agreeableness correlated with SDR, particularly impression management; however, correlations were also found across conscientiousness and neuroticism, suggesting that if there is a problem with agreeableness and SDR, it is one that is shared, perhaps to a greater a degree, with other traits of the Big Five.

In the second study, a round-robin approach was used with 348 research participants. Graziano and Tobin (2002) collected self-reports of agreeableness, extraversion, and SDR. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three instruction groups: (1) *desirable-to-be-agreeable*, (2) *undesirable-to-be-agreeable*, and (3) a *control* condition. Depending on their group, participants were provided with different instructions about how best to behave. Triads were then formed containing a member of each group. The triads were expected to complete a group decision-making task and then were asked to rate the other members of their group on agreeableness and extraversion. Their results, in short, indicated no evidence of differences in self- or other-ratings across conditions, despite manipulation checks of the instructions. Furthermore, they found no evidence of significant differences across groups based on the three forms of SDR.

In the final study, groups of three research participants were asked to rate the quality of 11 different conflict resolution tactics across a series of vignettes. After practicing with their group on a vignette, groups were randomly assigned to three different social desirability groups: (1) *bad-to-be-agreeable*, (2) *good-to-be-agreeable*, and (3) *control*. The first two groups were given instructions that mapped onto their group placement; the third group was not provided with any instructions. Research participants were also asked to complete measures of agreeableness and SDR. Results were similar to those found in Study 2. That is, there was no evidence that group membership influenced ratings of agreeableness. Taken together, the data across the three studies lend little evidence to suggest that SDR accounts for ratings of agreeableness. Graziano and Tobin (2002) note that agreeableness is not "easily manipulated or distorted by SDR" (p. 696).

Theoretical Accounts of Agreeableness

Conceptually, agreeableness is often defined in terms of social motivation (i.e., the desire to maintain smooth interpersonal relations with others; Graziano and Tobin, 2013). It has also been theorized that agreeableness has developmental roots in the regulatory process of effortful control (Ahadi and Rothbart, 1994). As defined by Ahadi and Rothbart (1994), the temperamental process of effortful control is the ability to suppress a dominant response in favor of a subdominant one. This temperamental process is considered the foundation of regulation within adult personality, particularly individual differences in agreeableness in dealing with persons and conscientiousness in dealing with tasks or objects.

The theoretical foundation of effortful control has been substantiated in the empirical literature from preschool through emerging adulthood. In general, research indicates that effortful control is positively related to agreeableness (Abe, 2005; Cumberland-Li et al., 2004; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002). Cumberland-Li et al. (2004) found that teacher and parent ratings of effortful control were related to teacher ratings of agreeableness in preschool-aged children. In a longitudinal study, Abe (2005) found that parental Q-sorts (i.e., sorting of descriptive terms into piles that apply more or less to the child) of agreeableness at age 3.5 years was related inversely to displays of negative affect at age 5, and to parent ratings of impulsive-hyperactive and conduct problems in adolescence, suggesting that early ratings of children's motives to maintain positive interpersonal relationships map onto immediate and distal regulation. Tobin and Graziano (2011) found that school-aged children high in agreeableness regulated their negative emotional reactions to disappointment more than their peers did.

Similar relations are found later in development. For example, Tobin et al. (2000) found that college students who were higher in agreeableness experienced stronger negative emotions, but they also made greater efforts to regulate these emotions when presented with emotionally evocative, negatively valenced images. Similiarly, Jensen-Campbell et al. (2002) found that college students who were high in agreeableness performed better than their peers on neurological tests associated with control behavior (e.g., Stroop test and Wisconsin Card Sorting Task), suggesting that effortful control is a common developmental substrate of agreeableness. Haas et al. (2007) examined self-reports of agreeableness as a predictor of right lateral prefrontal cortex activation, the part of the area in the brain thought to control the conscious regulation of negative affect. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging, these researchers found a direct positive relation between agreeableness and the activation of the right lateral prefrontal cortex, suggesting that individuals who are high in agreeableness are wired to regulate emotion more effectively than their peers when presented with certain emotionally evocative stimuli (i.e., fearful faces).

In a longitudinal study, Laursen et al. (2002) examined the relations between agreeableness and regulation-related behaviors. Specifically, they collected teacher and peer reports of aggression, compliance, and self-control beginning at age 8. They found that these same variables distinguished adults as high and low in agreeableness at age 33. Based on profile analysis, these researchers found two behavioral types in childhood and two personality types in adulthood, with considerable continuity in the composition of these groups over time. Fewer disobedience and concentration problems were present in high-agreeable childhood types than low-agreeable childhood types. Among boys, better school grades and fewer behavior problems were present in high-agreeable childhood types than their low-agreeable counterparts. Less alcoholism and depression, fewer arrests, and more career stability characterized the high-agreeable adulthood types relative to the low-agreeable adulthood types. From these patterns, Laursen et al. concluded that these differences in agreeableness are stable from childhood to adulthood, and are linked to important regulatory processes that lead to advantages to those children, relative to their peers, over time.

Linking Agreeableness to Social Behaviors

The literature is rich with examples of the predictive utility of agreeableness. As mentioned previously, it is arguably the largest of the five factors (i.e., Digman and Takemoto-Chock, 1981), and it is directly related to an individual's ability to control his or her emotions and related behaviors across development (e.g., Cumberland-Li et al., 2004; Tobin and Graziano, 2011; Tobin et al., 2000). Additionally, the empirical support for agreeableness as a predictor variable for overt behavior extends to include, but is not limited to, behaviors such as cooperation, helping, and conflict resolution. This section is not intended to be an exhaustive review of the literature linking agreeableness to overt behavior; rather, it provides a survey of selected behaviors with considerable research support.

Friendship

Not surprisingly, agreeableness has been directly linked to peer acceptance and friendship. In a multicomponent study, Jensen-Campbell et al. (2002) investigated agreeableness as a predictor of initiating and maintaining friendships in groups of fifth and sixth grade participants. In their initial study, participants were asked to complete measures of personality and self-esteem. Additionally, the researchers used peer nominations, asking the participants to list their five best same-sex friends in their grade and school. These reports were used to generate composite peer acceptance and friendship scores. As expected, agreeableness was directly related to higher composite scores for both peer acceptance and friendship such that participants high in agreeableness had higher composite scores of both.

The second study built on the first using a modified version of the peer nomination form. On the new peer assessment form, participants rated their classmates across several questions that mapped on to the superordinate domains of victimization, physical strength, externalizing behaviors, internalizing behaviors, and prosocial skills. Participants completed this measure in both the fall and spring to allow for the calculation of change in ratings over time as they related to personality. The results revealed that participants rated as high in agreeableness were initially given lower ratings of victimization. This remained true when reevaluated in the spring. Additionally, high agreeableness scores were associated with lower behavioral risk factors over the course of the year (e.g., weakness, internalizing behaviors). Taken together, these studies suggest that high-agreeable students are more likely to be identified as friends (i.e., higher friendship ratings), be less victimized, and overall have less behavioral risk factors as identified by their peers. This comes as no surprise given Graziano and Eisenberg's (1997) hypothesis that agreeableness evolved out of a need for groups to get along and survive together.

Cooperation and Competition

Agreeableness has been linked to differential responding to cooperative and competitive tasks. In a multicomponent study, Graziano et al. (1997) explored the relations among agreeableness, competitiveness, and behavior during games with different goal structures. In the initial study examining expectations, Graziano and his colleagues found that individuals high in agreeableness anticipated problems associated with goal-oriented competitive situations relative to their peers. In a follow-up study, the researchers placed participants in same-sex triads to examine their behavioral responses to a tower-building task. The triads were comprised either two individuals rated as high in agreeableness and one individual rated low in agreeableness, or of two individuals low in agreeableness and one individual high in agreeableness (i.e., A+A+A− or A−A−A+). The triads completed 12 trials of a tower-building task as a group and behavior was examined at the individual and group level. Triads were randomly assigned to complete the task in either a promotive or contrient goal structure condition. In the promotive condition, participants equally benefited from the triad's collective performance. In

contrast, triads in the contrient condition competed with one another, with only one member of the triad receiving a reward for each trial. At the study's conclusion, each member was asked to evaluate him- or herself and the other group members. Results of the second study indicated that individuals low in agreeableness display more competitive behaviors than individuals high in agreeableness. Further, the researchers found that competitiveness acts a mediator between agreeableness and group cooperation, such that low-agreeable individuals do not view themselves as interdependent with the group and are more competitive in response to goal structures relative to high-agreeable individuals. Additionally, overall results of Graziano et al.'s (1997) studies suggest that agreeableness is related to individual differences in competitive group behavior.

Building on this work, Tobin et al. (2002) conducted a similar study with school-aged children and found consistent results. Using a within-subjects design, Tobin and colleagues found individuals high in agreeableness foster cooperation among the group even in competitive situations. They also found greater cooperation in groups as group-level agreeableness increased. In a web-based study of adults, Hilbig et al. (2013) also found that agreeableness was related to nonretaliatory cooperation. Taken together, these studies provide evidence of the connection between agreeableness and cooperative behaviors across age groups.

Helping

Agreeableness has been linked to prosocial behaviors such as helping and empathy. Across a series of four studies, Graziano et al. (2007a) explored the links between prosocial motives, helping, empathy, and personality. In the first study, participants provide ratings of their likelihood of helping in two situations: everyday helping (i.e., being late for work to help a person whose car had broken down on the side of the road) and extraordinary helping (i.e., entering a burning house to save an individual trapped inside), depending on whether the person in need of help was a sibling, friend, or a stranger. Results indicated that individuals high in agreeableness are generally more likely to help others than their peers are. When relationships are taken into consideration, individuals high in agreeableness are more likely to help a friend or a sibling than their peers are in everyday helping situations. In extraordinary helping situations (i.e., entering a burning building), high-agreeable individuals were more likely to help a stranger than their low-agreeable peers, but there was no difference between the two groups regarding their likelihood in saving a friend or a sibling. Thus, in everyday situations high-agreeable individuals may be more likely to help people they know, but in extreme circumstances, high-agreeable individuals are also more likely to potentially risk their life to save a complete stranger.

In the second study, participants listened to a radio broadcast featuring a female college student who had recently lost her parents and was struggling to take care of her younger siblings. Prior to listening to the broadcast, participants were randomly assigned to adapt one of two listening perspectives, empathetic (i.e., focusing on the emotional aspects of the broadcast) or technical (i.e., focusing on the production aspects of the broadcast) perspective. Participants were also randomly assigned to an in-group versus out-group condition: the student attended the same university or a different university as the participant. Following the broadcast, researchers informed the participants that the broadcast would not be shared with the public and then provided an opportunity to help the student. Results indicated that participants high in agreeableness were more likely to help the girl when she was part of the out-group (i.e., attended a different university) than were low-agreeable peers; however, there was evidence of a difference in willingness to help when the girl was part of the in-group. Additionally, individuals high in agreeableness in the technical perspective condition were more likely to provide help to the girl than individuals low in agreeableness in that condition. Finally, consistent with other studies, participants high in agreeableness were more likely to rate the student as similar to themselves than their peers were. Together, these results suggest that high-agreeable individuals may be likely to help members of different groups than their own, express empathy and helping, and are more likely to take a similar perspective and identify individuals in need than low-agreeable individuals are.

Graziano et al.'s (2007b) third study used an identical paradigm to that of Study 2, with the addition of an emotional reaction questionnaire. The questionnaire asked participants to rate their own emotions, empathic concern, and personal distress after hearing the broadcast, but prior to knowing they would be able to offer help. Results indicated that the effects of agreeableness were only noteworthy on willingness to help for those who expressed empathic concern, but this difference was only detected in the technical perspective condition.

In a fourth and final study, Graziano et al. (2007b) used this paradigm again, with the addition of a cost-of-helping variable. Participants were randomly assigned to a high cost of helping or a low cost of helping condition. In the high cost of helping, participants were told that if they volunteered it had to be for a minimum of 5 h and they could only increase their amount of time in 5-h increments. In the low cost of helping condition, individuals were able to choose to volunteer anywhere between 1 and 20 h. Results indicated that individuals high in agreeableness did not differ in their willingness to help regardless of the cost to their time. There was, in contrast, a notable difference in the helping behavior for individuals low in agreeableness. In the empathy-focused condition, when the cost of helping was low, low-agreeable individuals helped more than when the cost was high. Furthermore, low-agreeable individuals helped less in the empathy perspective condition in comparison to those in the technical perspective condition when costs were high. Finally, in the technical perspective condition only, individuals low in agreeableness helped more when the cost was high than when the cost was low. Although the results may be surprising, they suggest that individuals low in agreeableness are willing to help less when cued to empathetic concerns or markers, particularly if the cost is high. Graziano and colleagues (Graziano and Habashi, 2010; Graziano and Tobin, 2009, 2013) explain this pattern of findings by connecting it to the Opponent Process Theory detailed later in this article. Overall, this collection of studies suggested that the foundation of prosocial motivation underlying agreeableness is related to the experience of empathy, and in turn, to the expression of helping behaviors.

Conflict resolution

Agreeableness has also been linked to conflict resolution. In a multimethod study, Graziano et al. (1996) evaluated the use of 11 different conflict resolution tactics across five different types of relationships (i.e., parents, siblings, roommates, significant others, and friends) using college-aged research participants. The 11 different tactics mapped on 3 primary categories: power assertion, negotiation, and disengagement. Results from the initial study indicated that regardless of a participant's level of agreeableness (i.e., high vs low), the use of negotiation tactics was rated as the most effective means of resolving conflict. Additionally, individuals low in agreeableness endorsed power assertion tactics as more effective at resolving conflict than did their high-agreeable peers. Finally, individuals low in agreeableness were more likely to respond differentially about the appropriateness of specific conflict resolution tactics based on the relationship (e.g., parents, siblings) than were individuals high in agreeableness. For example, individuals low in agreeableness endorsed power assertion tactics when dealing with siblings and friends, but endorsed negotiation for parents and significant others. In contrast, individuals high in agreeableness endorsed negotiation as best across all relationship types.

In the second Graziano et al.'s (1996) study, participants were placed in dyads to resolve social conflicts. Findings suggest that individuals high in agreeableness perceived less conflict, liked others more, and were more likely to give their partners positive ratings following the interaction. In contrast, individuals low in agreeableness actually elicited more conflict from partners than their peers did. This finding was particularly strong for male participants who were low in agreeableness, as they were more likely to perceive, engage in, and elicit conflict from their partners than were males who were high in agreeableness.

These relations are also found earlier in development. Building on their previous work, Jensen-Campbell and Graziano (2001) used a similar paradigm with children in middle school. Importantly, they also examined these relations using a diary methodology that allowed for a more complete understanding of these processes in daily life. In this study, school-aged participants were trained to record their interactions throughout the day using a standardized recording instrument. Participants rated every interaction that lasted more than 10 min and every conflict, regardless of length, on a specified day. Conflicts included everything from a simple disagreement to physical altercations. These interactions were rated by the participants on a scale of 1 ('not angry at all') to 7 ('very angry'). Their responses were categorized by researchers as constructive tactics, destructive tactics, negative affect, and outcomes (i.e., problem solved and continue to interact with conflict partner). Overall, children rated as higher in agreeableness on self and teacher reports were more likely to endorse the use of negotiation than their peers low in agreeableness, who were more likely to endorse power assertion tactics. Specific outcomes from the diary collection indicated an inverse relation between agreeableness and anger and hurt feelings. Agreeableness was also positively related to interpersonal adjustment, as measured by the diary data.

Finally, Jensen-Campbell et al. (2003) examined the relation between agreeableness and conflict in a multimethod study. The first study involved the use of questionnaires, including one on which participants rated the appropriateness of similar conflictresolution tactics. Consistent with earlier findings, agreeableness was positively related to the use of constructive tactics and inversely related to destructive tactics. In the second study, Jensen-Campbell and her colleagues placed children in dyads to play a board game together. In these dyads, each member was supplied with a conflicting set of rules to promote a conflict interaction between the two. After the game, participants rated their perception of the game and their partner in efforts to measure their perception of conflict. Consistent with previous studies, children high in agreeableness, regardless of the rules they were given or with whom they were partnered, were less likely to perceive conflict and endorse destructive tactics than their low-agreeable peers.

Aggression

The link between agreeableness and aggression has also been explored in recent years. Gleason et al. (2004) investigated agreeableness as a predictor of aggression in middle school children using a multimethod study. In their first study, the researchers measured self-reported direct and indirect aggression. In the second study, they examined the relation between social cognitions associated with aggression and peer reports of direct aggression. Results from the first study revealed an inverse relation between agreeableness and aggression. Specifically, adolescents rated as high in agreeableness reported lower rates of both direct and indirect aggression. They found the strongest relation between agreeableness and direct aggression, suggesting that individuals high in agreeableness try to avoid acts of direct aggression. The second study substantiated these findings further, replicating that agreeableness was indirectly related to direct aggression as reported by peers. Finally, the second study also found that agreeableness was indirectly related to aggressive social cognitions. That is, participants rated as high in agreeableness were more concerned about the use of aggressive tactics than were their peers low in agreeableness.

Consistent with these findings, Tremblay and Ewart (2004) found a significant inverse relation between agreeableness and both physical and verbal aggression in a correlational study of 246 undergraduate students. Using a different approach, Ode et al. (2008) conducted three studies to systematically examine agreeableness as a moderator of the relation between neuroticism and aggression. Across these three experimental studies, these researchers found that the neuroticism-aggression link was reduced at higher levels of agreeableness. Overall, research indicates that agreeableness is inversely related to aggressive thoughts and behaviors.

Prejudice

Agreeableness is also related to differential reactions to others. In a multistudy article, Graziano et al. (2007a) investigated the relation between agreeableness and prejudice toward a female who is overweight. First, these researchers examined agreeableness as a predictor of reactions toward over 100 potential targets of prejudice, finding that agreeableness was related

inversely to personal endorsements of prejudice. Importantly, they found no evidence that agreeableness was related to perceived social norms. That is, individuals high in agreeableness did not differ from their peers in terms of understanding the social norms about the acceptability of holding prejudiced feelings toward these groups, but they did differ in their personal endorsement of such prejudice. Specifically, individuals high in agreeableness reported less negative reactions to most groups, including traditional targets of prejudice (e.g., homosexuals, Jews, Hispanics) relative to their peers.

In subsequent studies, these researchers examined potentially prejudicial reactions to specific interaction partners. In the second study, participants were randomly assigned to view the photograph of either a typical or overweight female partner with whom they were scheduled to interact over the telephone. Following conversations, participants completed a social distance measure about their partners. Results indicated that male participants low in agreeableness responded with the most prejudicial reactions, but only when partnered with an overweight woman. In the third study, the researchers replicated and extended these findings by showing that these prejudicial reactions also led to discriminatory behaviors. That is, when given an opportunity to change interaction partners, only men low in agreeableness wanted to switch partners, and they only did so when paired with an overweight female partner.

Graziano et al. (2007a) then examined whether situational differences would influence the prejudicial behavior of individuals high in agreeableness. They found that overall individuals low in agreeableness expressed more prejudice than those high in agreeableness, but that some conditions seemed to elicit these types of reactions from individuals high in agreeableness as well. Specifically, they found that individuals high in agreeableness would express prejudice toward a woman who is overweight when she is thought to have engaged in counter-normative behavior (e.g., expressing negative views of the university) or she creates more work for the participant. In contrast, individuals low in agreeableness expressed more negative reactions to their partners regardless of her expressed beliefs or the cause of additional work. Taken together, these findings suggest that agreeableness is linked to more positive reactions to others, including those who are considered targets of prejudice.

Opponent Process Theory

Graziano and colleagues (Graziano and Habashi, 2010; Graziano and Tobin, 2009, 2013) have used the Opponent Process Theory (Solomon, 1980) to help explain the processes underlying agreeableness. This model, shown in **Figure 1**,

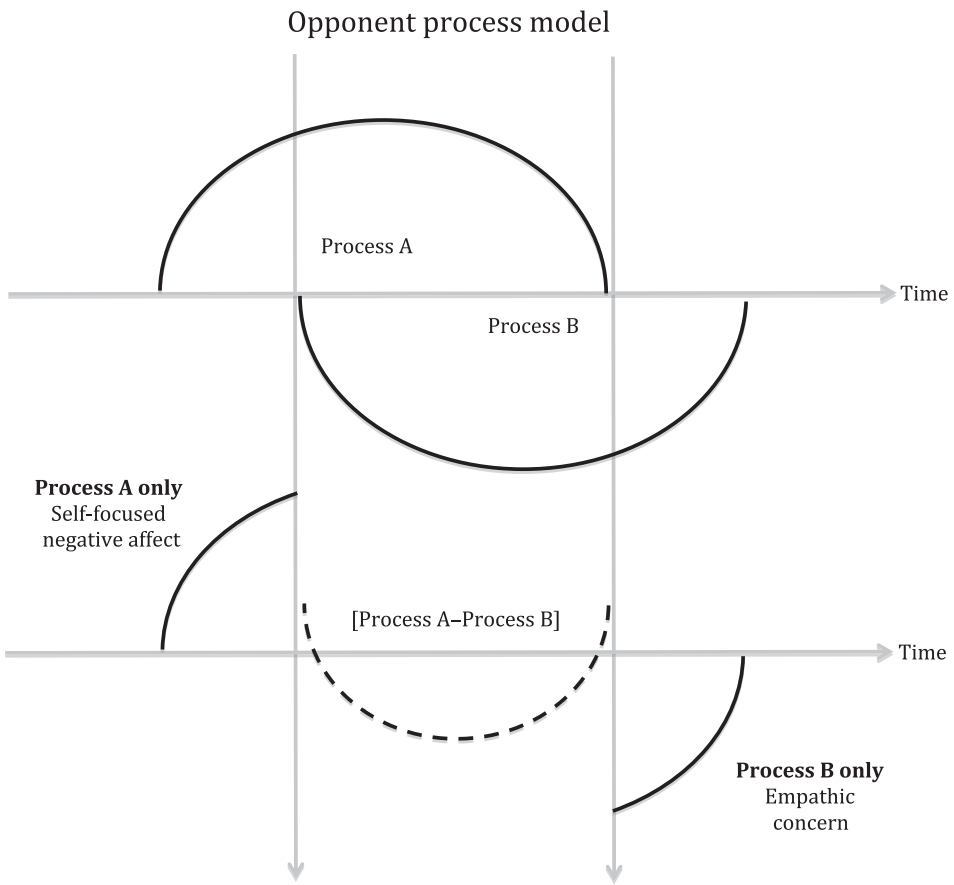

Figure 1 Opponent process model of motivation. Adapted from Solomon, R.L., Corbit, J.D., 1974. An Opponent-Process Theory of motivation: I. Temporal dynamics of affect. Psychological Review 57, 119–145.

specifically describes how two processes are activated and unfold over time. In this model, Process A is considered dominant and is characterized by almost automatic responding. Process B, although less dominant than the automatic Process A, activates shortly after and persists beyond Process A. The persistence of process B beyond A leads to the behavioral manifestation of Process B. Although Solomon (1980) used this model to describe cycles of addictive behavior, it also works well in explaining the behavioral manifestations of agreeableness, such as helping and prejudicial behaviors (Graziano and Habashi, 2010; Graziano and Tobin, 2009, 2013). For example, in the case of helping behavior, Process A is distress or self-focused negative affect and Process B is empathy. When confronted with a person in need of help, Process A (self-focused negative affect) is immediately activated, leading to the desire to escape (identified by Dijker and Koomen, 2007, and others, as the *flight-fight system*). If the individual does not escape the situation, Process B (empathy) will be activated (mapping onto the *care system*; Dijker and Koomen, 2007). Graziano and colleagues hypothesize that for individuals high in agreeableness, the onset of Process B is faster than it is for those low in agreeableness; thus, they more readily engage in empathic concern, and helping behavior follows. It appears that Process B is slower to initiate in individuals low in agreeableness relative to those high in agreeableness, leading to less helping behavior.

As mentioned earlier, these authors have also applied this model to prejudicial behavior, suggesting its usefulness in explaining a range of behaviors. Given the nature of agreeableness, it is not surprising that the motive of social accommodation would take on many forms. Metaphorically, rather than a single switchblade, agreeableness is more like a Swiss Army knife with multiple components available to handle any social situation as needed to maintain good relations. Future research on agreeableness would benefit from explorations of these relations in controlled studies that manipulate (or at least measure) aspects of these processes in fine-grained detail over time.

See also: Aggression, Social Psychology of; Big Five Factor Model, Theory and Structure; Conscientiousness; Cooperation and Competition; Emotional Regulation; Emotions and Intergroup Relations; Empathy During Early Childhood Across Cultures, Development of; Extraversion; Five Factor Model of Personality, Assessment of; Five Factor Model of Personality, Facets of; Gender Differences in Personality and Social Behavior; Helping Intergroup Relations; Longitudinal Analyses of Sexual Development through Early Adulthood; Negotiation and Conflict, The Psychology of; Personality Assessment: Overview; Personality Changes During Adolescence Across Cultures; Personality Development: Systems Theories; Personality and Adaptive Behaviors; Personality, Evolutionary Models of; Personality, Trait Models of; Personality: Historical and Conceptual Perspectives; Prejudice and Discrimination; Prosocial Behavior During Adolescence; Self-Regulated Learning; Self-Regulation During Adolescence: Variations Associated with Individual–Context Relations; Self-Regulation During Early Childhood Across Cultures, Development of; Social Competence During Adolescence Across Cultures; Temperament Development, Theories of; Temperament and Human Development; Temperament.

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