

A Cool, *Awesome*, **Great**  
Sociolinguistic Analysis of  
Adjectival Word Choice

Presented by Caitlin Arthur

# Purpose of Study

- Analyze the adjectival lexical choices of individuals of different genders, ages and occupations, in formal and informal social situations.
- Adjectives in question: **Cool, sweet, nice, great,** and **awesome**

# Background Study

*So different and pretty cool! Recycling intensifiers in Toronto, Canada* by Sali A. Tagliamonte

- Purpose: Study intensifier usage in apparent time as related to age, gender, and emotionality of content
  - Main intensifiers studied were *very, really, so* and *pretty*
    - Ex: I'm **very** independent. / That's **really** surprising.
- Methodology: Randomly sampled quotations of informal conversation from the *Toronto English Corpus*

# Background Study

*So different and pretty cool! Recycling intensifiers in Toronto, Canada by Sali A. Tagliamonte*

- Findings:
  - **Age-** Different intensifiers favored by different age groups
  - **Gender-** “Very” and “so” favored by women
  - **Emotionality-** Use of “so” tied to emotional adjectives especially among women

# Hypotheses

- Gender

Women will use a **wider variety of adjectives** than men.

- Age

Youth will favor adjectives, **cool** and **sweet** while older generations will favor **nice**, **awesome** and **great**.

# Hypotheses

- Occupation/Focus of Study

Educators and students of language will use **cool** and **sweet** less than those in other fields.

- Formality of Social Situation

**Cool** and **sweet** will be favored in informal social situations, while **nice**, **awesome** and **great** will be favored in formal social situations.



# Methodology

- Written survey
  - Demographic questions
  - 6 questions simulating formal social situations
  - 6 questions simulating informal social situations
- Online survey posted on Facebook
- Paper copies distributed to family, friends and colleagues

# Methodology

## Question Format

Your employer informs you that sales are up 10% this month. You say "That's \_\_\_\_\_."

a. cool

b. nice

c. sweet

d. awesome

e. great

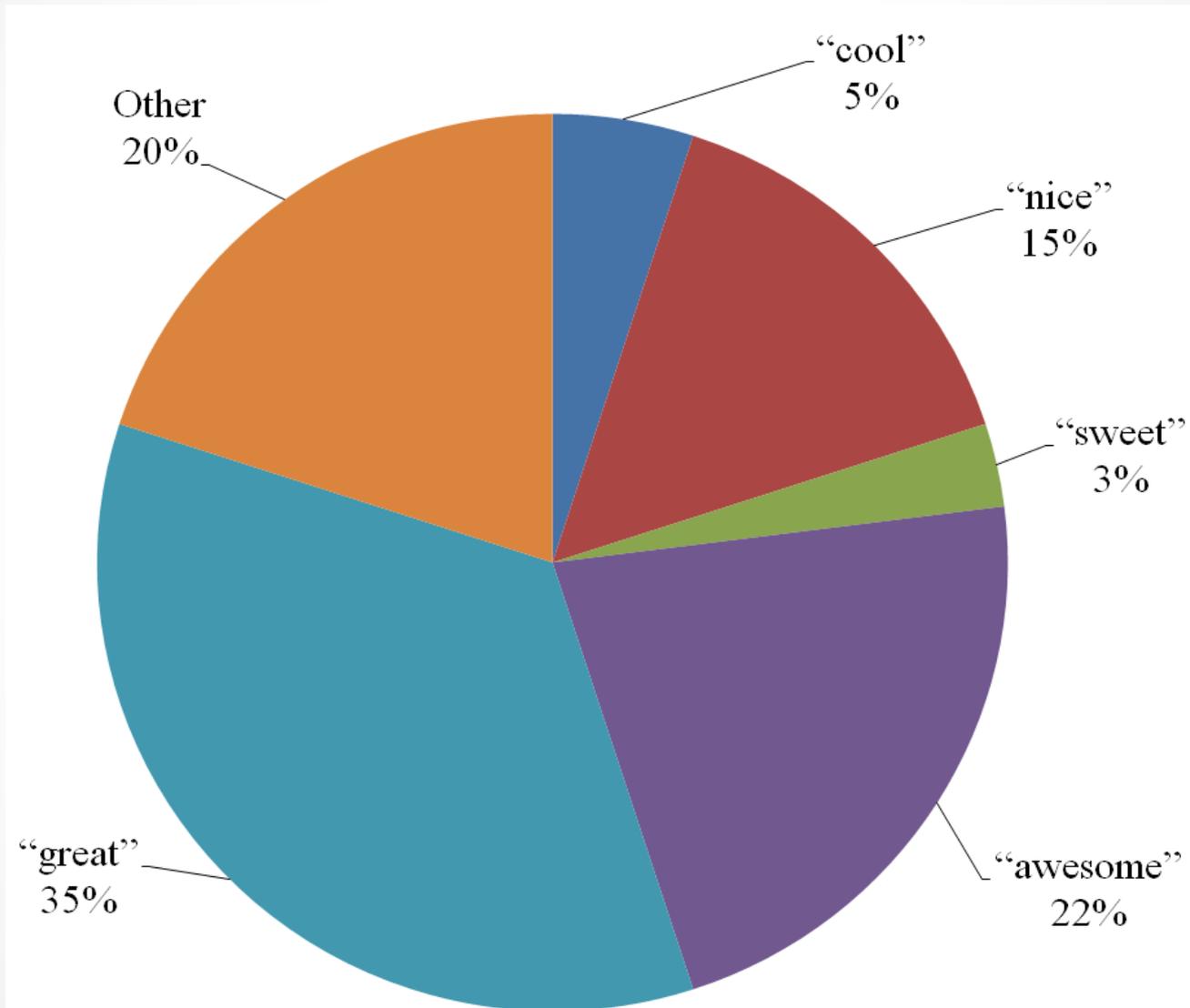
f. other \_\_\_\_\_

# Findings

## Overall Pattern

“cool”	“nice”	“sweet”	“awesome”	“great”	other
5% (122/2334)	15% (348/2334)	3% (68/2334)	22% (520/2334)	35% (809/2334)	20% (467/2334)

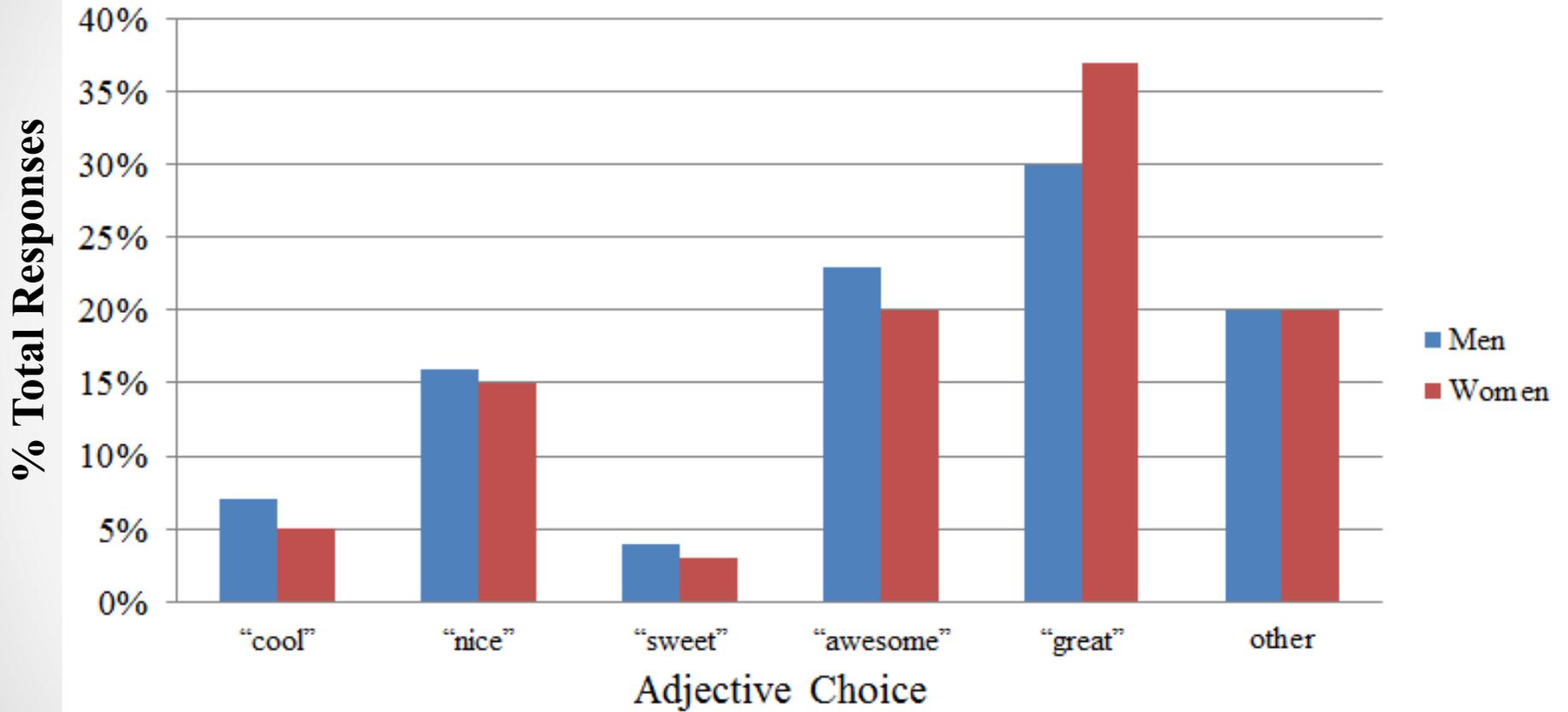
# Overall Pattern



## Gender

	“cool”	“nice”	“sweet”	“awesome”	“great”	other
Men	7% (41/615)	16% (100/615)	4% (24/615)	23% (139/615)	30% (187/615)	20% (124/615)
Women	5% (80/1641)	15% (245/1641)	3% (44/1641)	20% (334/1641)	37% (607/1641)	20% (331/1641)

# Gender



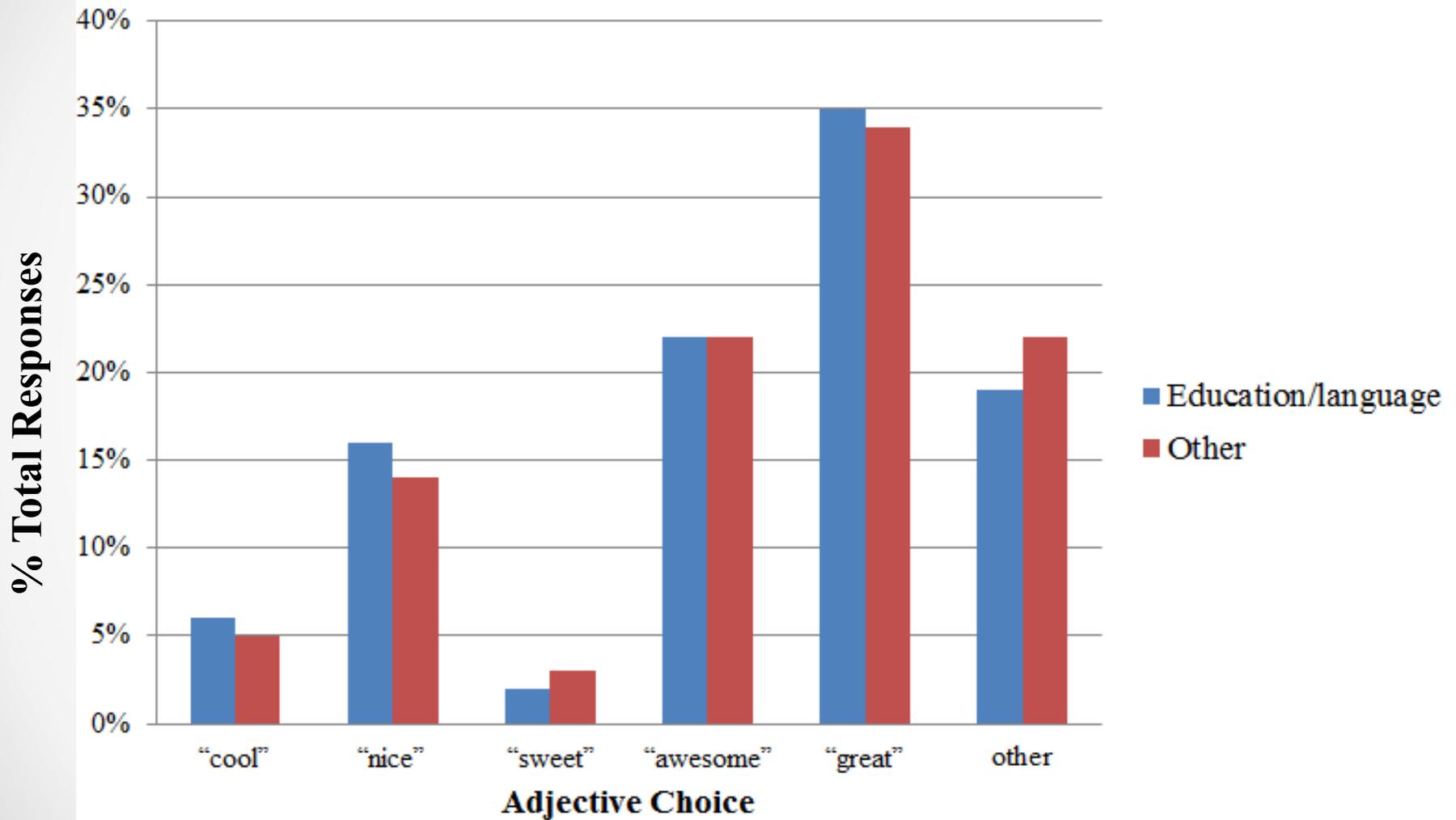
# Age

	“cool”	“nice”	“sweet”	“awesome”	“great”	other
≤18 yrs	7% (36/517)	20% (102/517)	3% (16/517)	20% (105/517)	32% (165/517)	18% (93/517)
19-25 yrs	5% (74/1337)	14% (193/1337)	3% (45/1337)	23% (307/1337)	36% (475/1337)	18% (243/1337)
26-35 yrs	4% (4/180)	16% (28/180)	4% (7/180)	22% (40/180)	36% (65/180)	20% (36/180)
36-45 yrs	4% (3/73)	8% (6/73)	3% (2/73)	18% (13/73)	33% (24/73)	34% (25/73)
46-54 yrs	0% (0/61)	15% (9/61)	0% (0/61)	26% (16/61)	31% (19/61)	28% (17/61)
≥ 55 yrs	2% (4/145)	8% (12/145)	0% (0/145)	21% (30/145)	31% (45/145)	37% (54/145)

## Occupation/Focus of Study

	“cool”	“nice”	“sweet”	“awesome”	“great”	other
Education/ language	6% (29/507)	16% (81/507)	2% (11/507)	22% (112/507)	35% (177/507)	19% (97/507)
Other	5% (91/1867)	14% (266/1867)	3% (58/1867)	22% (405/1867)	34% (629/1867)	22% (418/1867)

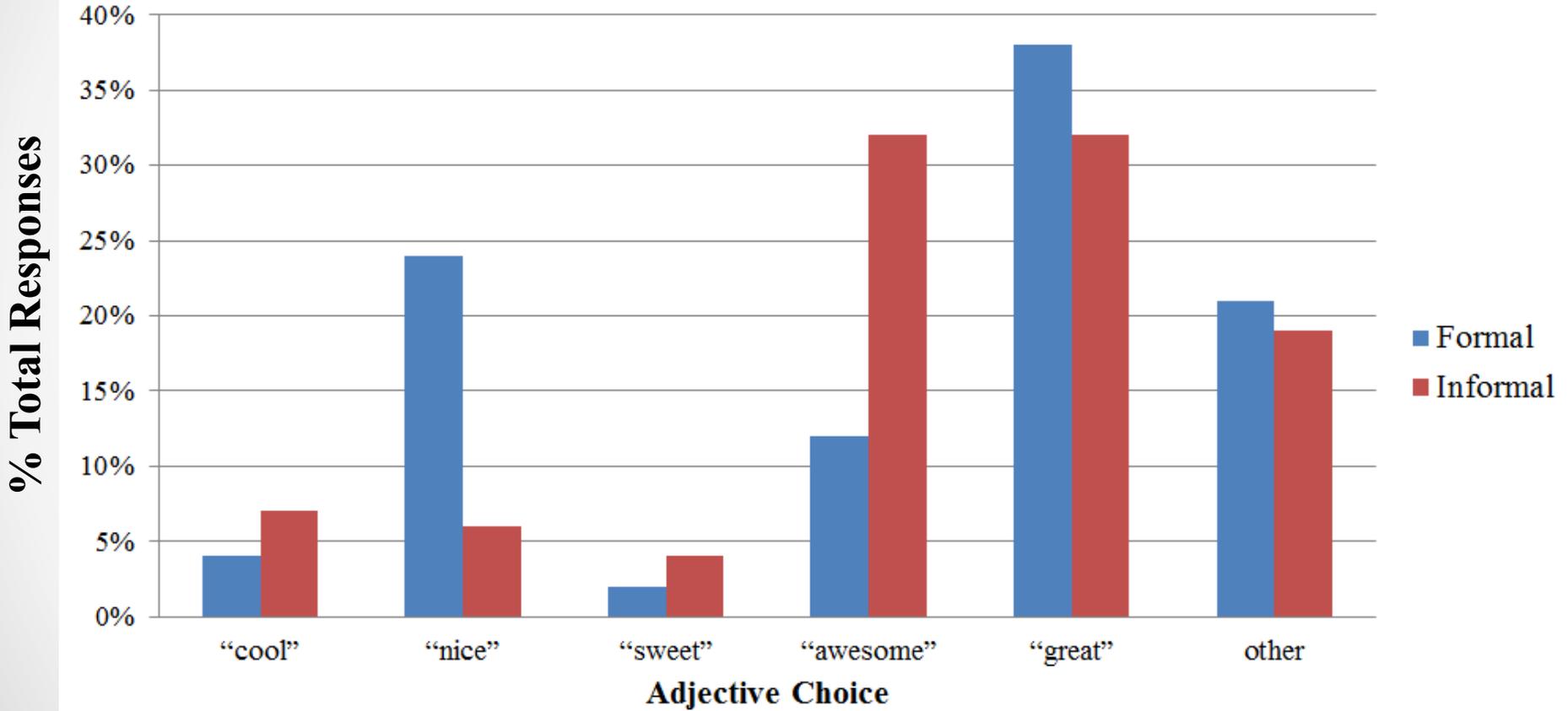
# Occupation/Focus of Study



## Formality of Social Situation

	“cool”	“nice”	“sweet”	“awesome”	“great”	other
Formal	4% (42/1136)	24% (271/1136)	2% (19/1136)	12% (139/1136)	38% (430/1136)	21% (235/1136)
Informal	7% (80/1198)	6% (77/1198)	4% (49/1198)	32% (381/1198)	32% (379/1198)	19% (232/1198)

# Formality of Social Situation



# Conclusions

- **Great** is the overall preferred adjective choice
- Gender  
Women do not necessarily use a wider variety of adjectives than men.
- Age  
Younger generations use the adjectives **cool** and **sweet** more than older generations.

# Conclusions

- Occupation/Focus of Study

Educators and students of language use **cool** and **sweet** nearly as much as those in other fields.

- Formality of Social Situation

**Cool**, **sweet** and **awesome** are favored in informal social situations, while **nice**, and **great** are favored in formal social situations.



Thank you!



# Works Cited

Tagliamonte, Sali A. "So different and pretty cool!  
Recycling intensifiers in Toronto, Canada." *English  
Language and Linguistics* 12.2 (2008): 361-394. Print.