

A shift of focus

Only fun for the competitors?

War
Violence

Are they all?

The Psychology of Competition

Competitions are fun, let's be honest. At one point or another in your life, you probably have enjoyed being part of some kind of competition. Of course, competitions tend to be more fun if you actually win. Competitions have the undesirable quality of being a "zero-sum" game (i.e., in order for you to win, someone else must lose). Nonetheless, throughout human history, people seemed to have enjoyed organizing competitions in one form or another, from the ancient Greek Olympic Games (going back as far as 776 BC) to modern soccer (I would say American Football, but soccer is actually the most popular sport in the world). In fact, when you look closely, you'll notice that competition is everywhere in modern society. Economists tell us that competition is an essential force in maintaining productive and efficient markets (i.e., without basic competition between firms, evil monopolies will form). Competition also plays a major role in domestic politics (e.g., presidential elections), foreign relations (e.g., states compete for power and resources), most sports of course, and even the human quest for love is not free of competition. For most people, there is something inexplicably compelling about the nature of competition. Perhaps that's because, as some scholars argue, "competitiveness" is a biological trait that co-evolved with the basic need for (human) survival.

Given the seemingly powerful role of competition in human society, we might ask whether it is possible to leverage competitions for pro-social causes as well, such as getting people to donate to important charities or save energy to help the environment?

In a recent study, published in the journal Nature Climate Change (link is external), I try to answer this question. As an example, I analyze the behavioral impact of a popular energy conservation competition that is administered yearly at Princeton University (the "Do-it-in-the-Dark" campaign). During the competition period, students across all residential colleges compete to conserve energy and the college that is able to conserve most energy by the end of the competition period wins and usually receives a prize of some sort (e.g., a paid study-break). I have plotted the results below (daily energy consumption across all residential colleges on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal axis). If you look at the behavioral pattern, you'll quickly notice something very peculiar: once the competition starts it seems to have a remarkably positive impact on energy consumption (i.e., people are using less energy; usage steeply slopes down). Yet, here is the kicker: as soon as the competition ends, the trend is reversed and energy consumption bounces right back up to the point at which it started before the competition was launched! This sort of competition is not unique to Princeton, there are well over a hundred universities that yearly take part in the so-called "campus conservation nationals (link is external)."

Change of focus

When thinking of competition

HUMAN NATURE

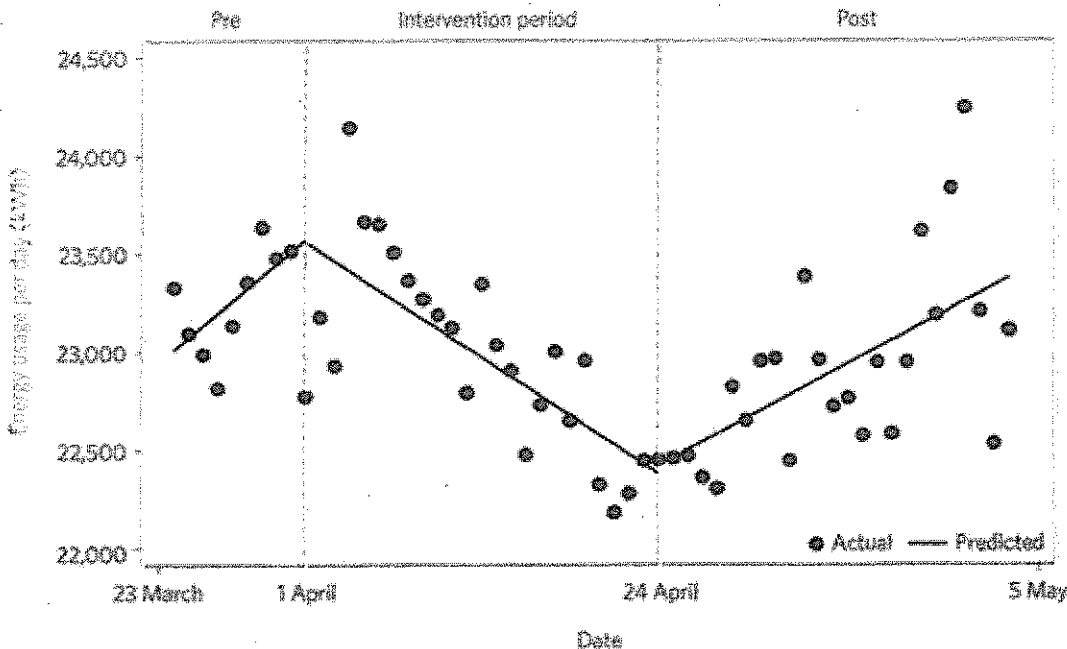
We don't know why we love it so much

The necessity of winning something

Change of focus

Change of focus

Humboldt Strong
The only positive outcome we receive is the feeling of competing
won't attempt to use it like this



So much good comes out of competition (positive outcome)
 Revert back to the way things were
 All focus was shifted towards the prize and not the real meaning of the competition
 Exchange of Focus.

Source: van der Linden, S. (2015)

Is this nature of decision?

A "competition," by its very nature, is what psychologists call an "extrinsic incentive." Extrinsic simply means that the motivation to adopt a behavior or decision is sourced externally rather than internally (e.g., when you do something because you get a reward for it). A fundamental characteristic (and downside) of nearly all extrinsic incentives is that they only tend to work for as long as the incentive is maintained! In our example, students stopped saving energy as soon as the competition ended.

Change of Focus

The opposite of extrinsic is what we call "intrinsic" motivation. When we are intrinsically motivated to do something (e.g., helping others, save energy) we do it not because of an external reward, but simply because we are personally convinced that it is the right thing to do. By "right" I don't refer to vague cultural conceptions of good and evil, but rather to morality as an evolved capacity. Long-standing research (link is external) has shown that the ability to be compassionate, empathize with others and to care about the natural world are evolutionarily adaptive behavioral traits. In fact, a psychological concept known as the "helper's high (link is external)" suggests that "doing good" actually makes people "feel good" both psychologically as well as physically (helping behavior often releases "feel-good" neurotransmitters such as oxytocin, a process which economists refer to as "warm-glow"). For example, an interesting recent study (link is external) showed that people's body temperature goes up when they are acting "green" (a literal warm-glow!).

Doing things for the goal.
 Once competition shows up it's all about winning without competition it's all about bettering something.
 when there is the "good" and "prize" together it's attractive

Unfortunately, lots of psychological research (link is external) has also shown that external incentives "crowd out" (i.e., undermine) people's intrinsic motivation to do good. For example, highlighting (link is external) the monetary benefits of saving energy actually makes people less

As humans were not naturally attracted to only performing for a prize. Prizes may be mesmerizing but plenty of people do treat things without receiving a prize.
 without a secondary reason we lack the ability to become intrinsically motivated because it's an inconvenience for us to go out of our way.

A personal inconvenience.

How so?
 Is this just speaking upon the idea of short term positive outcome long term negative outcome?

Technically since getting prices for doing good things is a norm, it's expected.

Is giving out prizes a good idea? Very few people live for the feeling of "good"

Does competitions short term effect negative long term? Is competition a positive thing? positive trump over outcome?

CHANGE OF FOCUS

My father was a heavy smoker and he competed for him to quit because what was the point of a will if there wasn't a price to win.

likely to do so. This is related to what we call negative "goal-replacement." Consider that if you were originally intending to save energy because you strongly care about the environment but instead, now simply do so to win a competition, your pro-social motivation for caring about the environment has been "replaced" with a self-serving goal (i.e., winning). Think about other goals such as quitting smoking or losing weight. Are you more likely to achieve either of these goals as a result of a temporary competition or because you are internally convinced that it is the right thing to do? You might ask what the difference is if they both have the same outcome.

Short term vs Long term
One outcome changes your belief

There is a difference. Let's say that you do end up saving energy (temporarily) because it helps you lower your monthly bills. Will you still save energy when your income suddenly goes up?

I am not suggesting that fun challenges or competitions are not useful for raising awareness and achieving short-term goals. For example, take the ALS ice bucket (link is external) challenge that went viral last year on social media: the campaign ended up raising millions of dollars (which is good). Yet, do we honestly expect that by pouring a bucket of ice over our heads people have come to care deeply about ALS as a cause? Of course not. Yet, this is important because, although sometimes a challenging competition can be a useful mechanism to achieve one-off, short-term pro-social goals, many urgent societal problems, from social inequality and poverty to global climate change, require long-term motivators of positive behavior change. Psychological research suggests that intrinsically-motivated behavior change is much more likely to be sustained in the long-term.

Bad connection
This was used to raise awareness / this brought in a monetary amount of money
Short term positive
Now no one cares as much.

Rare to find in nature. Let's not forget that competition is not the only dominant force in nature, it is rivaled only by its better half: cooperation. Indeed, humans not only survived by competing but perhaps more importantly, we survived by cooperating with one another. In the words of Bertrand Russell,

"the only thing that will redeem mankind is cooperation."

Minimal effect on us
So much more could be extracted via unity.

It's time we start doing the right thing, for the right reasons.

Why do we struggle to come together to defeat world issues?
Lack of intrinsically-motivation

2. Humans Are Competitive Beings

Because we still compete even when there are no prizes.
The only reason we can see to be true survive as in they stay alive: metaphorically for certain cases. animal based need death

The first to come to mind

..., no doubt about it! Just think of sports, school, politics, business, economics... Apparently, competition is deeply rooted in our evolutionary heritage. Or, as one social scientist recently wrote, "Competition is one of the most basic functions of nature. Those best able to compete within an environmental niche survive. Those least well adapted die out. Competition remains a powerful instinctual drive in human nature. We compete for resources in the forms of food, jobs, living quarters and general status in society. We compete against each other, we compete against ourselves, and we compete as groups against other groups." No chance at all of evading this instinct, it seems. So, what about science? In the early days there was almost no competition at all. People practising basic science were so rare and they followed such unique lines of questions that competition just couldn't possibly exist. Or do you know of any competitor to Mendel? Admittedly, there were people trying to solve similar problems, but were they real competitors? Even Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace, who indeed

very clear connections between this text, and the psychology of competition
Not here, 3rd world countries
Working in unity = major positive outcome.

Certain places competition is simply ethically wrong
Finding a cure for cancer
Most scientific breakthroughs came from a combination of many people's research.

independently developed and explained the theory of natural selection, have never been perceived as competitors. Those were the good old days. Since then, things have significantly changed – for two main reasons. Firstly, science has grown into an enterprise-like endeavour, the consequence being that an increasing number of scientists are, in principle, working on ever more confined topics and purchasing a scientific career has become much more difficult. And secondly, national political interests in scientific results (and their applications) have risen tremendously. Take, for example, the race to the moon, which clearly was a scientific “race” between the USA and the former Soviet Union. Or, more recently, deciphering the human genome sequence, which finally culminated in the famous “draw” between the worldwide publicly funded Human Genome Project and Craig Venter’s private company Celera Genomics. Even the latest Nobel Prize for Medicine tells another story of scientific competition. For years, there had been harsh disputes about who had really discovered the ‘AIDS virus’ HIV – the Parisians Luc Montagnier and Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, or Robert Gallo from the US. Since the dispute also involved the validity of powerful patents for AIDS blood tests, the case also turned into a major political issue. In 1987, US President Reagan and French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac finally agreed to share the patents and divide the royalties, proclaiming Gallo and Montagnier “codiscoverers” of the virus. The two researchers accepted the compromise. Not so the members of the Nobel Assembly. They clearly judged the French researchers as the only HIV discoverers. In a statement they wrote, “What mattered most to the decision was the first discovery of the virus, not proving what caused AIDS or later agreements between the rival labs to share the credit and benefits.” Priority, therefore, appears to be the name of the game. Whoever presents the results first can expect to get all the glory. The winner takes it all, the second goes to the wall. And it’s not just the minority who think that scientific progress would have advanced at a much slower rate, if it weren’t for this kind of competition. Of course, every now and then there are examples where, ultimately, two competing teams intentionally share priority. Sometimes the “slightly faster” team even waits a couple of weeks in order to publish the results “back to back” with the competitor in the same journal. However, these cases – as preferable as they may be – remain the exception. All in all, there is no doubt that in recent decades the structures and demands for practising science have changed in a way that advocates competitive behaviour. However, this is obviously only one side of the coin. The flip side may well be embodied in the following memorable thoughts of Marshall Nirenberg, Nobel Prize winner in 1968, which he related at a recent meeting and which date way back to the early days of molecular biology. Nirenberg recalled: while he was working on deciphering the genetic triplet code, he one day found out that Nobel prize winner Severo Ochoa had, meanwhile, also turned his efforts to solving the same problem. Nirenberg decided to propose a collaboration to Ochoa and visited him at his lab in New York. Ochoa took the whole day showing the young researcher around his lab, introducing him to his group and discussing research topics. Nirenberg didn’t reveal why, but for some reason a collaboration never materialised. However, from that day on, it was undoubtedly clear to Nirenberg that he indeed had a mighty competitor. And he admitted, “Only a couple of days later I realised, to my own

do not directly support my topic, they are all prime examples of a change of focus. Each time the competitors were extremely focused on who was better than the other one got away from the main thing they were doing.

Something was should stop getting away from.
 Priority = positive outcome
 They worked together and found that they were able to come to a proper conclusion faster.

It is to believe it is these small disputes and washes of time that is causing us to not be as advanced as we thought we would be back in the 1980's.

Focus on what matters most for humanity. Not just what matters individually.

This brought upon many things I both agree, disagree, question, and am surprised about. However, much of it falls off topic of my focus.

sciences are a fait accompli. I found it comical how it is so competitive to get into a competitive field.

I also really enjoyed the relation this text has to human nature because that is inevitably the only logical reason that we enter competition so much.

surprise, that I really liked the competition." So it seems that even scientists are unable to elude the hidden powers of human nature

3.

Impact of Competition on the Quality, Quantity & Price of Goods

Competition and Economics

→ Through out this text in looking specifically at competition that is not individual and also competition without prices.

One of the central questions in economics is the effect of competition on prices. Many studies have been devoted to this very topic in the hopes of explaining the impact on consumer goods. When discussing economics, competition can be defined as the rivalry among the producers to achieve increasing profits, higher sales numbers, etc. In other words, companies wish to sell as much as possible while making the most money.

Change of focus. Profit Quality

no longer competition to have the best product but only to make the most profits.

→ Same as profits. Also for advertisement purposes

How Does Competition Among Buyers and Sellers Affect Market Price?

The theme throughout economics can be defined very easily: 'Buyers and sellers interact, and at the right price all products are sold.' In the perfect world, this would happen every day without issues. As you know, we do not live in a perfect world and many factors can affect this. In the consumer world, the price of a good or service is determined by supply, demand, and competition among producers.

→ this includes price drops and price modification.

Competition Among Buyers

Buyers compete with one another. If you think about the most recent holiday shopping season, I am sure you can remember one popular toy every child wanted to have. The producers of that toy were aware that their product was in high demand, and they used this knowledge to set the price of the toy for consumers. Competition determines market price because the more that toy is in demand (which is the competition among the buyers), the higher price the consumer will pay and the more money a producer stands to make.

This finds interesting to see how this is a competition between buyers that you really may not want to win because of the overpriced goods.

Competition of Sellers

Thought the idea of change of focus can be found in this text, it is not ideal for the direction in reading it.

Not only does the demand of consumers for the product affect price, but so does the relationship among the different producers of the product. Competition among sellers usually deals with who has the best price. This will also help determine the price parents will have to pay for that toy from earlier. Greater competition among sellers results in a lower product market price. If the same popular toy had numerous producers instead of only one, the price would be lower because the producer knows the consumer could get the toy somewhere else.

that leads me to ask, is it ridiculous to over pay for products even though the price may be the best price you could get?

The cycle of competition between sellers never ends. People are always battling for goods that the sellers have, and people's wants are endless. As long as there are buyers wanting things, then there will be competition between sellers.

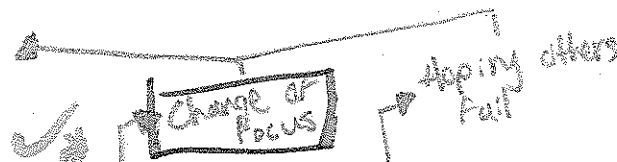
connecting back who is having the greatest positive effect? those buying the toys or those selling them? the price drops for competition among buyers, those selling them?

4. → so as the price goes up due to consumer demand the price drops due to competitors price.

Why We Compete

stepping away from reality are seeing where they can produce more profit.

These are two very important topics when speaking upon competition



IT'S SAID THAT when chased by a bear, you don't need to outrun the bear; you just need to outrun your friend. Similarly, to win a championship, a promotion, or a date, you need only to beat the immediate competition, whether a team, a colleague, or a fellow suitor.

Found with almost every sport.

No wonder we constantly measure ourselves against our peers. In a survey of faculty, students, and staff at the Harvard School of Public Health, nearly half of the respondents said they'd prefer to live in a world where the average salary was \$25,000 and they earned \$50,000 than one where they earned \$100,000 but the average was \$200,000. Similarly, a majority favored relative over absolute advantage when it came to their own intelligence and attractiveness, their child's intelligence and attractiveness, or praise from a superior. Apparently, the survey respondents would rather the planet be filled with stupid, ugly children than have their own child left behind [1].

EXTREMELY INTERESTING!!

H. L. Mencken was on to something when he defined wealth as "any income that is at least \$100 more a year than the income of one's wife's sister's husband." According to one analysis of labor statistics, sisterly competition may have contributed to rising female employment after World War II. Among grown sisters not in the workforce, a woman was more likely to get a job if her brother-in-law outearned her husband [2].

People also suffer from a phenomenon known as "last-place aversion." Although players in an economics game tended to give money to those with fewer assets, this tendency waned when a player was ranked second-to-last. The researchers who ran the game also found that in real life, people making just above the minimum wage were among the least supportive of a minimum-wage hike [3].

And yet, competitive though we clearly are, we underestimate the influence of social comparison. In one study, call-center employees said that achieving mastery at their job was more important than achieving superiority (ranking better than peers). But in reality, relative rankings affected their self-evaluations, and mastery did not [4].

Our desire for relative advantages is not irrational: Such advantages may make us happier. In 1974, Richard Easterlin, an economist, found that although a country's richer citizens are happier than its poorer ones, as countries become richer, their citizens do not become happier—a contradiction known as the Easterlin paradox. Happiness, Easterlin reasoned, must depend on one's wealth relative to one's compatriots. When everyone gets richer, no one gets happier [5]. A study of 12,000 British citizens would seem to support Easterlin's conclusion, revealing that increased income boosted life satisfaction only when income rose relative to peers of a similar age, educational level, or region [6].

And so it goes. We decry the goal of keeping up with the Joneses, even as we struggle ferociously to keep one step ahead of them. Perhaps this is with good reason. If we don't, our rivals will win all the glory, and we'll become bear food.

5.

Work together and fight off

Is it really with good reason? He bear?

Change of focus
Not worried about what you want but about having more than what others have

The first look at focusing at doing your best and not at being better than others.

Essentially you do not have to win the other party just has to lose

The issue with this survey is that the average salary was 200,000. Everything would be much more price we had information therefore its basically asking if you would rather live in a world where your living higher class or lower class. Quite an obvious answer.

Handwritten scribbles in a box.