

Paragraph

Competition and Cooperation

- 1► Once viewed as two disparate behavioral patterns largely independent of one another, explanations of the interrelationship between competition and cooperation have evolved over time. Early research into competition and cooperation defined each of them in terms of the distribution of rewards related to each. Competition was defined as a situation in which rewards are dispensed unequally on the basis of performance; cooperation, on the other hand, was defined as a situation in which rewards are distributed in a primarily equitable manner on the basis of mutual interactive behavior among individuals. By this definition, a competitive situation requires at least one competitor to fail for each competitor that wins, while a cooperative situation offers a reward only if all members of a group receive it.
- 2► Researchers have found definitions of these two conditions based upon rewards inadequate, primarily due to the fact that definitions of these two concepts with reward distribution as the distinctive difference have depicted competition and cooperation as opposites. In current understanding, competition is not viewed as the opposite of cooperation; instead cooperation is perceived as an integral component of competition. Cooperation is necessary among team members, perhaps in a sporting event or in a political race, in order to win the competition. To take the idea a step further, cooperation is of great significance between opposing teams as well, inasmuch as the competing sides need to be in agreement regarding the basic ground rules of the game or election that each are striving to win.
- 3► Interestingly, the word “competition” is derived from a Latin verb which means “to come together.” An understanding of the derivation of the word “competition” further supports the understanding that cooperation, rather than evoking a characteristic at the opposite extreme of human nature from competition, is in reality a necessary factor in competition. If the structure of a competition is analyzed more deeply, it is easily seen that, in fact, virtually all competitions require that two or more parties meet in order to begin the contest. This, in and of itself, requires a sense of cooperation to achieve.
- 4► A societal expectation of social cohesion also influences the state of competition and its connection to cooperation. While the vast majority of people have an inherent sense of individual self-interest, this desire to put one’s own wants and needs ahead of those of others is softened by the desire for social connection and acceptance. In other words, although a person may want to make accomplishing his goals and “winning” his competitions the priority, he realizes that doing so may destroy social connections with friends and family, connections that he values more than achieving his individual goals. For this reason, people often modify their competitive nature to allow for more cooperative actions, so that others in their social circles have the chance to achieve at relatively similar levels of success.
- 5► However, even with the motivation of social cohesion influencing the competitive mindset and moving it more toward a collaborative way of thinking, this does not mean that competitors always become strictly cooperative within their close social circles. Although a competitor may moderate his achievements to remain inside the socially acceptable levels of his circle of family and friends, he may still want to be at the top of that circle. This typically translates to competition within the circle in which a competitor or group of competitors attains the position of “winner” within the social grouping and then maintains a stable level of achievement so as not to outshine the group by too much. Another option is that the “winner” becomes more cooperative with others of his group in order to help them reach his level; subsequently, the competitors can begin a new round of competition to reach higher goals.
- 6► In social groupings where a competitor violates these intrinsic guidelines, whether intentionally or by accident, the competitor can find himself isolated from the rest of the group. In this scenario, the competitor has a few options to choose from: he can alter his behavior to bring him back to a level found suitable by the rest of the group; he can accept the terms of the isolation as a necessary sacrifice for satisfying his individual self-interest;

or he can seek out a new social group that he is more compatible with. However, even within the new group, the competitor has to adjust himself to the balance of cooperation and competition modeled by this group as a whole.

15. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 1? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) Unequal rewards for competition should be distributed equally to achieve cooperation.
 - (B) Earlier definitions of competition and cooperation described them in basically the same way.
 - (C) Competition and cooperation were seen as opposites, with rewards distributed equally to those who competed and unequally to those who cooperated.
 - (D) Competition was defined in terms of unequal distribution of rewards and cooperation in terms of equal distribution of rewards.
16. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 2? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) It does not work well to define competition and cooperation in terms of rewards because definitions of this type incorrectly indicate that the two are opposites.
 - (B) Researchers tend to define competition and cooperation on the basis of rewards because this shows how the two differ.
 - (C) Researchers are looking for ways to define cooperation and competition in terms of rewards but have so far not been able to come up with definitions.
 - (D) Research has shown that the optimal definitions of competition and cooperation are those indicating that the two are opposites.
17. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 3? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) "Competition" and "cooperation" are virtually synonyms due to the origins of each word.
 - (B) Despite the meaning of "competition," research has shown that it is the extreme opposite in meaning to "cooperation."
 - (C) One can recognize that cooperation is closely connected to competition though examining the origins of the word "competition."
 - (D) People with characteristics at the opposite ends of human nature have found an essential connection by understanding the beginnings of the word "competition" and the principle of cooperation.
18. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 4? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) People who show a strong sense of self-interest are more likely to have weak social connections and acceptances.
 - (B) Although it is difficult for inherently selfish people to develop close, accepting social relationships, they manage to connect to others.
 - (C) People who demonstrate less self-interest typically do not connect with those who demonstrate more self-interest.
 - (D) Even though most people want to take care of their own needs first, the desire for a connection to, and acceptance from others helps them to be less selfish.
19. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 5? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) However, social cohesion encourages competitors to move in the direction of more cooperative actions within their social circles.
 - (B) Nevertheless, competitors do not become exclusively cooperative in their actions within their close social group, in spite of the effect of social cohesion on behavior.
 - (C) In contrast, competitors move closer to social cohesion within their circle of friends and family by being strictly cooperative in their actions.
 - (D) Competitors influence the bond of social cohesion within the group through their cooperative behavior, although it is not always strictly collaborative.