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Winning and Losing

May the Best Person Not Lose

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Abstract

Whereas previous research has investigated emotional reactions to positive and negative events and feedback, there is little evidence indicating which has a greater effect on individuals. The current research examined whether winning or losing has a stronger impact on individuals, focusing on if being labeled a “winner” or “loser” could enhance differences in emotion. Participants were randomly assigned to win or lose word search tasks, and were also randomly assigned to receive a “winner” or “loser” label after each task. Then, they completed a questionnaire that measured their current levels of positive and negative affect. Results indicated that people experienced more positive affect after winning than negative affect after losing. Although not to a significant degree, when individuals were labeled a “loser”, they experienced a greater difference in positive and negative affect than receiving no label. This research therefore provides insight into an important field of study: if people are more concerned with being a “winner” or merely not being a “loser”.

May the Best Person Not Lose

As competition continues to grow in the world, it may be hard to differentiate what is more important to people: the love of winning or the hatred of losing. Common quotations such as “Winning is everything” and “Refuse to lose” have captured the competitive nature in humans, but little evidence has distinguished which has a greater impact. Ranging anywhere from athletics to the classroom, people are taught at a young age to aim to be the best, instilling to some degree, the fear of failure (Sagar and Stoeber, 2009). Furthermore, such a labeling of winning or failing may also differ in the impact it may have on individuals. More specifically, is it just winning and losing that affects people, or is it the label of being a “winner” or a “loser” that fuels competitiveness today?

Previous research has investigated the psychological impacts that winning and losing can have on individuals. Sagar and Stoeber (2009) examined the affective responses to success and failure, and their connections to perfectionism and one’s fear of failure. Researchers recruited 388 athletes of various sports from a British university, and measured each athlete’s perfectionism, fear of failure, and affect. One’s perfectionism was calculated based on personal standards, concern over mistakes, perceived parental pressure, and perceived coach pressure, all of which were measured on scales. Fear of failure was recorded on a scale that consisted of 25 items used to measure one’s beliefs connected to the negative consequences of failing. Participants were asked to imagine their reactions to winning and losing scenarios, and then positive and negative affect was measured on a scale of 10 negative and 10 positive affect items. Results indicated that perfectionistic standards positively correlated with positive affect after success, while perfectionistic concern over mistakes positively correlated with one’s fear

of shame and embarrassment and negative affect after a failure. This research therefore illustrates society's growing mindset of the need to win and high level of perfectionism, but perhaps more importantly it reveals people's developed fear of shame and embarrassment that come with losing.

Branching from idea that success leads to positive affect while failure leads to negative affect, further research investigated how receiving positive and negative feedback can affect mood as well. Kluger, Lewinsohn, and Aiello (1994) investigated how feedback (in form of midterm grades) can influence mood, specifically in its dimensions of pleasantness and arousal. In their study, 157 students were given back their graded midterms and immediately were asked to complete a mood questionnaire, first indicating the grade that they had just received. In order to eliminate the variable of feedback for the control group of 124 students, midterms were returned a week or 2 prior to receiving the mood questionnaire. The control group reported their midterm grades after completing the questionnaire.

Results showed a linear effect of feedback score on one's level of pleasantness, demonstrating that negative feedback elicited low levels of pleasantness while positive feedback elicited greater levels of pleasantness. Subjects who received feedback also had significantly higher arousal levels than those in the control group, particularly after receiving more extreme grades. Those who received feedback also had a greater variance in their levels of pleasantness than those in the control group. These results therefore suggest that receiving feedback influences one's level of arousal and provides for greater differences in pleasantness—2 dimensions that contribute to one's mood.

As graded feedback has been suggested to elicit either positive or negative emotion, further research has assessed how verbal feedback can influence mood as well. Belschak and Hartog (2009) explored how employees react to positive and negative performance feedback given by their supervisors, examining emotion, attitude, and behavioral intentions. In their study, the researchers collected a sample of 170 employees from different companies who were asked to answer a questionnaire measuring their current emotional state. Next, they were asked to imagine being a member of a department in a large organization, and were then randomly assigned to receive 1 of 4 feedback scenarios in which they were told to envision themselves in each specific situation. In the positive feedback condition, subjects were told to imagine their supervisor telling them that they did excellent work, that they were one of the top performers, and that he was happy with their performance. In the negative condition, subjects envisioned their supervisor telling them that their work had not been up to standard, that they were one of the worst performers, and that he was disappointed in their performance. The environment in which feedback was received was also manipulated, as participants were randomly assigned to imagine these situations either in public with co-workers present or in private as a personal email.

After imagining a scenario, participants answered surveys that measured their positive and negative emotions and their intentions to act in positive work behavior, counter-productive behaviors, or leave the company. Results showed that participants experienced more positive emotions after receiving positive feedback than after negative feedback, and negative emotions were experienced more after receiving negative feedback compared to positive feedback. A stronger intensity of emotion was also found

in public settings compared to private settings, but only after negative feedback. Furthermore, counter-productive behaviors were highest and positive organizationally committed behaviors were lowest when individuals received negative feedback in public. This study therefore provides further evidence that positive feedback elicits positive emotion, while negative feedback elicits negative emotion. It can also spark thought into the idea that negative feedback may have a greater impact than positive feedback, as the intensity of emotion was at its highest following negative feedback in public.

Stemming from prior research indicating that negative feedback elicits negative mood and positive feedback elicits positive mood, other research has tapped into discovering why negative events and feedback may have a greater impact on people than positive events and feedback. An interesting point in examining the differences between positive and negative in regard to emotion is the difference in the frequency at which people may think about them. Goozen and Frijda (1993) examined the extent to which people think of and use emotion words. Participants consisted of college students in 6 Western European countries who were asked to write down as many words as possible that indicated emotions in 5 minutes. Results showed that the words “joy”, “sadness”, “fear”, and “anger” were the only 4 words that were among the 12 most frequently used words in all countries. Similarly, in all countries except England, “joy”, “sadness”, and “fear” were the top 3 most frequent words used. This is interesting because 3 out of the 4 words that made every country’s top 12 most frequently used words described negative emotions. Furthermore, in all countries except England, 2 of the top 3 most frequent words were also negative. This therefore suggests that even without an event leading to an emotional reaction, individuals may already be more familiar with and focused on

negative emotions than positive ones. With the notion that people think of negative emotions more often than positive emotions, it can lead to the idea that people will have stronger reactions towards negative events and feedback as well.

Building on the idea that people may focus more on negative emotions, research has explored if individuals are more satisfied in life when they avoid negative outcomes or achieve positive outcomes. Ogilvie (1987) examined the “undesired self”, researching if individuals were more concerned with being their positive ideal self or *not* being their negative unwanted self. Participants consisted of 45 college students who completed “Identities x Features Matrices” and a “Life Satisfaction Questionnaire”. The matrices recorded all of the identities that each participant had (friend, daughter, employee, etc.) and also characteristics that they both liked and disliked in themselves and others applying to each identity. Researchers then calculated which characteristics people thought matched their ideal self, true self, and undesired self. Life satisfaction questionnaires aimed to measure social satisfaction, academic satisfaction, mood states, and general satisfaction for each individual.

Although 89% of surveyed participants believed that satisfaction in life is how close one is to his or her ideal self, results indicated that the difference between one’s undesired self from their real self was a better predictor of life satisfaction. In other words, people were more satisfied in life when they were further away from their undesired self rather than being closer to their ideal self. This evidence therefore suggests that individuals may be more motivated to *not* be what they consider a failure rather than striving to be what they consider a success. Because individuals are more

concerned with straying from failure, it is likely that they may be more upset after losing than happy after winning.

Adding to the idea that individuals are more concerned with avoiding the undesirable, further research has investigated how people experience more intense emotion after failure than after success. Brown and Dutton (1995) examined how people with high and low self-esteem differ in feelings of self worth and general emotions after succeeding or failing in a task. In their experiment, 172 participants completed a self-esteem questionnaire and were separated into high and low self esteem groups. Subjects were then given a task in which they were shown 3 words and were asked to think of a fourth word that corresponded to the first 3, completing 10 problems in 5 minutes. Problems were also staged so that one condition had problems designed to be very difficult in order to have subjects fail, while the other condition incorporated easy questions designed to allow individuals to succeed. Afterwards, participants evaluated their performance and completed an 8-item emotional scale, measuring “outcome-dependent emotions” (glad, happy, sad, unhappy), and “feelings of self-worth” (proud, pleased with self, ashamed, humiliated).

Results indicated that although winning or losing did not have a significant effect on general emotion, it did have a significant effect on feelings of self worth. More specifically, when subjects lost, feelings of self worth were significantly lower among people with low self-esteem, while there was no change for individuals with already high self-esteem. Furthermore, there was no increase in feelings of self-worth after success for the two self-esteem groups. This therefore suggests that while winning did not have

any effect, losing may be more powerful, as it exacerbated a low self-esteem individual's feelings of self worth.

As research suggested that losing may elicit greater impacts on mood and self-worth than winning, further research has investigated how negative feedback can provide for greater changes in self-efficacy than positive feedback as well. Daniels and Larson (2001) collected 45 graduate students enrolled in counseling psychology, school counseling, clinical psychology, or marriage and family therapy. These students first filled out the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory, where they recorded their perceptions of counseling self-efficacy. After receiving a brief description of a mock client demonstrating signs of loneliness and depression, each participant conducted a 10 minute mock counseling session with the client, with researchers watching from a television or two-way mirror. Following the session, the researcher entered the room and provided the counselor with either a verbal positive or negative performance feedback. In the positive feedback condition, the researcher told the participant that he or she received a score of 85 out of 100, which was very high and impressive. The negative feedback was presented in the same manner, however with a score of 15 out of 100, stating that it was low and disappointing. After receiving the feedback, participants completed a posttest Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory.

Results showed that those who received positive feedback reported significant increases in self-efficacy, and those who received negative feedback decreased in self-efficacy. What was particularly interesting however was that positive feedback increased self-efficacy by almost one third of the standard deviation, while negative feedback decreased self-efficacy scores by almost two thirds of the standard deviation. In other

words, negative feedback had an impact which was nearly twice as strong as positive impact for one's perceived self-efficacy. This research therefore suggests that people may experience a greater intensity of incompetence after negative feedback than confidence after positive feedback.

Tying in with prior research suggesting that negative events and feedback produces stronger effects on mood, self-worth, and self-efficacy than positive feedback, further research has explored how receiving a specific label can enhance this effect. Gladue, Boechler, and McCaul (1989) measured levels of depression, anxiety, and hostility when labels were presented during competition. Researchers collected 40 subjects who believed that they were competing head-to-head against another participant in computer-driven reaction time tasks. Subjects were told to try to be the first to press a target button on their keyboard when a particular signal on their computer screen was presented. Subjects completed 50 reaction time trials, with the "winner" being labeled after each trial. However, the tasks were manipulated, so that individuals believed that they either won closely (52% of the time) or decisively (80% of the time). Participants then completed a questionnaire assessing anxiety, depression, and hostility.

While there were no significant differences in anxiety or hostility, results indicated that those who believed they lost 80% of the time experienced significantly higher levels of depression than the other conditions. In other words, after constantly witnessing their competition being labeled a "winner", participants experienced the highest levels of depression. Furthermore, those who were labeled "winner" 80% of the time actually had slightly greater levels of depression than those who believed they lost 52% of the time, suggesting that constantly being labeled a "winner" did not lower levels

of depression. Therefore, since individuals were most upset after constantly being shown that their competition is labeled the “winner”, this leads to the idea that constantly being labeled a “loser” may elicit even greater degrees of negative affect.

Further research can be utilized to explain why individuals may have stronger reactions towards negative labels than positive labels. Rothbart and Park (1986) examined how trait adjectives vary in how easily they can be confirmed or disconfirmed in people. Participants consisted of 92 students who rated 160 trait adjectives based on how easy it was to imagine specific observable behaviors that would either confirm or disconfirm each trait. Results indicated that subjects needed to imagine more instances in order to confirm a positive trait in a person, and fewer instances to disconfirm than a negative trait. Furthermore, negative traits required fewer instances to confirm and more instances to disconfirm in a person. In other words, favorable traits are hard to acquire and easy to lose, while negative traits are easy to acquire and difficult to lose. This evidence therefore suggests that individuals may more easily internalize negative traits in themselves after receiving a negative label. Similarly, it may be more difficult for individuals to confirm positive traits in themselves after receiving positive labels. This then leads to the idea that individuals may internalize the idea that they are a “loser” after continuously receiving that label, while they may require more instances of being labeled a “winner” in order to confirm that title in themselves.

More specific examples of labeling can also be examined to understand why negative labels may have stronger impacts on people than positive ones. Winick (1995) observed how labeling someone as being mentally incompetent can lead to adverse psychological effects. In particular, he discussed the concept of learned helplessness,

where continuous negative consequences are presented to subjects regardless of behavior, leading them to have generalized feelings of hopelessness. Individuals experiencing learned helplessness therefore begin to believe that their actions are doomed for failure. Furthermore, Winick mentioned that when individuals blame failure on themselves, it can lead to negative effects such as guilt, lowered self-esteem, resignation, lowered intrinsic motivation, and depressed mood, among several others.

Winick further discussed why negative labeling can lead to individuals attributing failure internally, which then strengthens the likelihood of learned helplessness. He cited Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale (1978) who postulated that people attribute their lack of control and helplessness to three factors: seeing the reason for failure internally rather than externally, viewing failure globally rather than specifically, and perceiving failure as stable rather than unstable. Winick therefore argued that an incompetence label would force an individual to view their failure internally (believing they lack intelligence), globally (believing that their failure applies to all situations), and stably (believing that their abilities cannot change). This argument can lead to the idea that the continuous labeling of “loser” can lead to some degree of learned helplessness. While being labeled “loser” after failing word searches tasks is certainly a less severe label than “mentally incompetent”, it can nevertheless lead to individuals attributing their failure internally, globally, and stably, thereby lowering positive affect and self-esteem.

Building upon previous research exploring how negative feedback can elicit stronger intensities of emotion than positive feedback, the present research examined if losing would have a greater emotional impact on individuals than winning, and whether receiving the label of “loser” would enhance this effect. To manipulate winning and

losing, word searches were created in which finding the needed amount of words to win in a task was either simple or impossible. As Ogilvie (1987) suggested that individuals are more concerned with avoiding failure rather than succeeding, I hypothesize that individuals will experience negative affect to a greater degree after losing than they will experience positive affect after winning. Research by Belschak and Hartog (2009) and Daniels and Larson (2001) suggested that negative feedback has a greater emotional impact on individuals than positive feedback. Furthermore, studies have suggested that negative labels may have greater impacts on people than positive labels, (Gladue, Boechler, and McCaul, 1989; Rothbart and Park, 1986). Therefore, I also hypothesize that individuals will experience an even greater disparity between their levels of positive affect and negative affect after being labeled a “loser”, while the label of a “winner” will have no effect for changing one’s difference in their levels of positive and negative affect.

Method

Participants

94 students enrolled at Union College took part in the study to fulfill course requirement or for monetary compensation.

Procedure

Participants entered the research laboratory and were first given an informed consent form to complete. Next, participants were told that the goal of the research was to assess how reading and puzzle experience as well as comfort with computers can affect one’s ability to complete cognitive tasks on a computer screen compared to on paper. They were then told that they would be presented with 5 word search tasks on a

computer, and that they would also be asked to complete 3 questionnaires afterwards. Upon sitting at a computer, participants were given further instructions for the word searches, stating that they had 60 seconds to complete each task (i.e. “Find at least 4 words in this word search) by typing in words comprised of at least 3 letters. They were also instructed that word search tasks would transition automatically after 60 seconds, and that words can be found in any direction. Following the word search tasks, participants completed the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule, the Cognitive Activities Scale, and the Computer Anxiety Scale, the latter 2 being used as deception. Finally, participants were debriefed and dismissed

There were 2 independent variables in this experiment: Outcome and Label. Participants were randomly assigned to computers in which 4 out of the 5 word search tasks were designed to be either simple (for success) or impossible (for failure). Further, participants were also randomly assigned to either receive or not receive the label of “winner” or “loser”. For those who received a label, a screen displaying the word “Winner” or “Loser” was presented for 2 seconds until the next task was presented. For those who did not receive a label, tasks transitioned automatically after 60 seconds.

Measurements

To assess how individuals differ in how they experience emotion after winning or losing and being labeled, participants completed the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). This scale is comprised of 2 lists of 10 negative and positive emotions words, asking participants to rate how much they are currently experiencing such feelings. To eliminate emotions that were not likely to be significantly experienced such as “afraid” and “scared”, each participant’s positive affect

score was comprised of the following emotions: “excited”, “strong”, “enthusiastic”, “proud”, and “inspired”. Negative affect scores were comprised of: “distressed”, “upset”, “irritable”, “ashamed”, and “nervous”. Participants indicated how much they were experiencing each emotion on a 9-point scale Likert scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 9 = *extremely*.

Results

I first assessed the extent to which individuals experienced positive and negative affect. To assess negative affect, scores for negative emotions on the PANAS were summed. These scores were then submitted to a 2 (winning/losing) x 2 (label/no label) analysis of variance. Results revealed that there was a significant effect of outcome on negative affect, $F(1,90) = 14.50, p < .001$, such that those who lost word search tasks experienced more negative affect ($M = 3.28$) than those who won ($M = 2.16$). There was no effect of label on negative affect, $F(1,90) = .06, p = .81$, such that those who received a label of “winner” or “loser” ($M = 2.76$) experienced no more negative affect than those who did not receive a label ($M = 2.67$). These results showed no interaction, $F(1,90) = .09, p = .76$.

To assess positive affect, scores for positive emotions on the PANAS were summed. These scores were also submitted to a 2 x 2 analysis of variance. Results indicated that there was a significant effect of outcome on positive affect, $F(1,90) = 11.40, p = .001$, such that those who won word search tasks experienced more positive affect ($M = 4.50$) than those who lost ($M = 3.34$). There was no effect of label, $F(1,90) = .03, p = .87$, as those who received a label ($M = 3.89$) experienced no more positive affect

than those who did not receive a label ($M = 3.95$). These results showed no interaction, $F(1,90) = .71, p = .40$.

To assess if individuals experienced more negative affect after losing than they experienced positive affect after winning, I analyzed their target affect. More specifically, for those in losing conditions, target affect is their negative affect score (as described above). For those in winning conditions, target affect is their positive affect score. I then submitted all of these scores into a 2 x 2 analysis of variance. Results opposed predictions, as there was a main effect of outcome, $F(1, 90) = 11.16, p = .001$, such that participants experienced significantly more positive affect after winning ($M = 4.50$) than they experienced negative affect after losing ($M = 3.28$). There was no effect of label, $F(1,90) = .09, p = .77$, as those who received a label did not experience more intense emotion ($M = 3.94$) than those who did not receive a label ($M = 3.84$). These results showed no interaction, $F(1,90) = .12, p = .73$.

Lastly, I examined the how outcome and label can influence the difference in one's levels of positive and negative affect. To assess difference in affect, the sum of negative emotion scores was subtracted from the sum of positive emotion scores. These scores were then submitted into a 2 x 2 analysis of variance. Results indicated that there was an effect of outcome on difference in affect, $F(1,90) = 26.59, p < .001$, such that those in winning conditions experienced a greater difference in positive and negative affect ($M = 2.35$) than those in losing conditions ($M = .06$). There was no effect of label on difference in affect, $F(1,90) = .08, p = .78$, as those who received a label ($M = 1.27$) experienced a difference in affect no greater than those who did not receive a label ($M = 1.14$). These results also showed no interaction, $F(1, 90) = .20, p = .65$.

Because I hypothesized that those presented with a “loser” label would experience a greater difference in affect than those who did not receive a label after losing, I compared differences in affect for those in the losing condition using an Independent Samples T-Test. Although there was no significant effect of label for affect difference, $t(45) = .49, p = .63$, results followed expected trends. More specifically, individuals who were labeled a “loser” experienced more negative affect than positive affect ($M = -.10$) compared to those who received no label ($M = .23$). (See Appendix A for Tables of Means for Negative Affect, Positive Affect, and Difference Affect; Appendix B for graphs of Target Affect and Difference Affect).

Discussion

In competition, one might be known as a “sore loser” because of his or her display of negative emotion after suffering a defeat. Similarly, one can become a “bad winner” by displaying too much positive emotion following a victory. Furthermore, receiving the title of “winner” or “loser” can certainly amplify each individual’s mood. The current research investigated which has a greater impact on individuals—winning or losing, and whether being labeled a “winner” or “loser” can enhance one’s intensity of emotion.

Previous research has shown that positive events elicit positive emotion, while negative events elicit negative emotion (Sagar and Stoeber, 2009). Furthermore, individuals experience positive emotion after receiving positive feedback, and experience negative emotion after receiving negative feedback (Kluger, Lewinsohn, and Aiello, 1994; Belschak and Hartog, 2009). To understand if people are more focused on gaining positive feedback or avoiding negative feedback, research has found that individuals are

more satisfied in life when they stray further from their unwanted self than being close to their ideal self (Ogilvie (1987).

Looking into what type of feedback might be stronger, other studies have shown that negative feedback has a greater impact on one's level of self-efficacy than positive feedback (Daniels and Larson, 2001). To understand how receiving a label can further impact one's emotions, research has shown that people experience highest levels of depression after constantly viewing their opposition being labeled a "winner" (Gladue, Boechler, and McCaul, 1989). People have also been shown to be able to confirm negative traits in themselves after fewer instances than it takes to confirm positive traits (Rothbart and Park, 1986). Furthermore, after continuously receiving negative labels after one's actions, an individual can experience a degree of learned helplessness, blaming their failures inwardly, thereby causing aversive psychological effects (Winick, 1995).

The current research examined how winning, losing, and labeling can affect one's emotions. I hypothesized that people will experience more negative affect after losing than they will experience positive affect after winning. In addition, I hypothesized that being labeled a "loser" will lead to individuals to experience a greater difference in their positive and negative affect levels. Although neither hypothesis was supported by significant results, being labeled a "loser" followed expected trends in differences between positive and negative affect.

Our research provides more insight into how individuals react to competition. Furthermore, results indicated a trend that illustrates the power that labeling may have on people, particularly when they are named a "loser". This information could be especially

useful for those in leadership roles who have the opportunity to announce people as “winners” or “losers” (i.e. parents, teachers, coaches). Understanding that their children may have stronger reactions towards losing than winning and that receiving a negative label may exacerbate their response, these authority figures should aim to prevent negative labeling in competition.

Limitations

Perhaps the most notable limitation of the current research was that word search tasks, whether individuals won or lost, did not elicit very strong emotional reactions. While word search tasks were useful in that they were easy to manipulate for success or failure and were difficult to identify as being fixed because of the 60-second time frame, they may not have been the most effective example of competition. Furthermore, with most participants likely entering the study with generally high levels of positive affect, it is not likely winning word searches was responsible for their high levels of positive affect. Similarly, with most subjects likely entering the study with low levels of negative affect, it would have required much stronger events and feedback to elicit significantly more negative affect than their already high positive affect. Perhaps by making the tasks more competitive by presenting subjects with false statistics illustrating how they compare to the average college student, they may have experienced greater degrees of positive or negative affect.

The way in which labels were presented to individuals is also a possible limitation, as they may also not have been strong enough to elicit significant differences in emotion. With a simple screen display of “Winner” or “Loser” appearing to subjects for 2 seconds, individuals may have not felt that their labels were personal or important.

A possible solution to this would be for subjects to be required to take the word search tasks in a more public environment such as a computer lab with no walls or dividers rather than in separate rooms. Furthermore, if labels were presented both visually and with sound in a public environment, it could make the labeling more personal and could provide for a greater sense of competition, thereby eliciting more powerful emotions.

Directions for Future Research

One interesting idea for further research would be to assess how people react to one on one competition where labeling is incorporated. Wrestling would be an ideal environment, as people compete physically with each other, and labeling is public at the end of each match, as winners are announced with their hand raised, while the losers have their hand held down. Although it might be difficult to find wrestlers who would be willing to complete a similar positive and negative affect questionnaire immediately after a match, it would provide for a much more effective means of understanding true emotional reactions to intense competition. If the study were conducted, I would expect to see that individuals who lost would experience negative affect to a greater degree than winners experience positive affect.

Another fascinating road for future research would be to examine how individuals may differ in how they react to winning, losing, and labeling if they have grown to be accustomed to such outcomes. Again, it may be difficult to find sport teams or coaches who would be willing to complete questionnaires after games. However, if teams were willing, researchers could find several of the highest and lowest ranked teams in sports that play many games in a season (ensuring that they would eventually win or lose). Positive and negative affect questionnaires would have to be completed after events, with

“Winner Questionnaire” or “Loser Questionnaire” being presented on the top of surveys as a label. I expect that individuals who have top records in athletics may experience very little positive affect after winning because they merely expect to win more than a typical person. It is also likely that they would experience far more negative affect after losing, and even more negative affect after being labeled a “loser” because such a title may oppose their self-image. Opposite results would be expected for individuals who have been accustomed to losing, as they would likely experience little negative affect after losing, but much more positive affect after winning and being labeled a “winner”.

Conclusion

There is a wealth of research that investigates people’s emotional reactions to success, failure, and labeling. The current research added to these lines of work and demonstrated trends pointing to the idea that being labeled a “loser” may exacerbate one’s negative emotions after a loss. Our findings suggest that if labeling after simple word search tasks can lead individuals to experience more negative affect than positive affect, labeling in a more intense, competitive setting could reveal that individuals focus more on not being the “loser” rather than being the “winner”.

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Appendix A

Tables of Means for Negative Affect, Positive Affect, and Difference Affect.

Dependent Variable: PositiveAffect

Condition	Label	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Win	No Label	4.3833	2.27952	24
	With Label	4.6174	1.28899	23
	Total	4.4979	1.84573	47
Lose	No Label	3.5130	1.38934	23
	With Label	3.1667	1.49395	24
	Total	3.3362	1.43866	47
Total	No Label	3.9574	1.92735	47
	With Label	3.8766	1.56458	47
	Total	3.9170	1.74637	94

Dependent Variable: Negative Affect

Condition	Label	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Win	No Label	2.0750	.81039	24
	With Label	2.2348	1.36269	23
	Total	2.1532	1.10588	47
Lose	No Label	3.2870	1.67747	23
	With Label	3.2667	1.68952	24
	Total	3.2766	1.66527	47
Total	No Label	2.6681	1.43149	47
	With Label	2.7617	1.60848	47
	Total	2.7149	1.51508	94

Dependent Variable: Difference Affect

Condition	Label	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Win	No Label	2.3083	2.34649	24
	With Label	2.3826	1.58161	23
	Total	2.3447	1.98766	47
Lose	No Label	.2261	2.00209	23
	With Label	-.1000	2.50565	24
	Total	.0596	2.25462	47
Total	No Label	1.2894	2.40355	47
	With Label	1.1149	2.43087	47
	Total	1.2021	2.40582	94

Appendix B

Graphs of Target Affect (positive affect for winning conditions; negative affect for losing conditions) and Difference Affect (positive affect – negative affect).

