

Thinking Beyond Competition

August 8, 2009

Weblinks for August 8

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Since I don't get much time to write longer posts, I've decided to put regular weblinks to blog posts, news articles, and new papers that I found interesting, with short commentary. Not all of these will be recent; some might be very old things that I've found recently.

- [Samantha Power on a complicated hero](#): A [TED](#) talk by Samantha Power, head of Harvard's Carr Center for Public Policy. She studies US international relations in the context of human rights, genocide, and war. Her talk, like her most recent book, is about Sergio Vieira de Mello, a UN diplomat who worked with the world's worst dictators to help protect human rights. Power claims that in order to get national governments to speak out against genocide in other countries, the people of the nation must be sufficiently aware and make it a political issue. A particularly fascinating incident she narrates is of a genocide in the 1990s where people were more concerned about the extinction of gorillas due to the violence than about the death of people therein.
- [Amartya Sen in an interview with Barkha Dutt on "My Idea of Justice"](#) for NDTV, an Indian television-based news network (pointed out by [Anirbit](#)): I was very confused by the interview. Amartya Sen talks about the importance of "public reason" and "public argumentation" and public conceptions of morality and justice, and how this influences political action. Sen was the person who came up with the observation that democracies hardly ever have famines, regardless of their level of poverty. But, extreme situations apart, I see little evidence that public debate or public conceptions of ideas play a significant role in the sausage factory of political decision-making.
- [The Boys Who Cried Racist](#), a blog post by a Cato Institute fellow in response to [Paul Krugman's piece in the New York Times](#) making the bold assertion that the opposition to President Obama's health care plan was disguised racism.
- [Megan McArdle's interview-cum-blog post on obesity](#) seems to have attracted a lot of attention. Among other things, [Mike The Mad Biologist pointed out](#) that her way of bandying about heritability numbers was confusing and showed her ignorance (McArdle countered the second charge in a comment).
- [An interesting article/blog post about competent elites](#). I think the author makes a lot of valid points, though I think the real question isn't whether the elites are smarter than most other people (whether they are) but whether such smartness implies that more power in their hands would be better. After all, some things are just so complex (like: will this coin come heads or tails?) that the smartest people will do no better on them than the dumbest person who tosses another coin to get the answer.
- [The White House's "snitch" email](#). [Reason TV](#) has a [response video](#).
- [A fascinating Washington Post piece on the folks down on Main Street who're getting hit by the recession](#) (I learned about this from a [Freakonomics blog post](#)).
- [The Getting Things Done President](#): The Big Money takes stock of President Obama. Is he falling prey to the trap of too much delegation to Congress in his hurry to get things done?

- [Scholars take inspiration in discrimination](#): This article in the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) talks about the pros and cons of scholars using their personal negative experiences (being at the receiving end of discrimination) to guide classroom discussions on the subject.
 - [Change? No change](#): [The Hill](#) reports that lobbying dollars in the United States have seen a boost with all the new dramatic legislation on ~~health care reform~~ health insurance reform and climate change legislation.
 - [The Opinionator Blog on the New York Times reports](#) on yet another of the old media-new media stealing-attribution debate: Ian Shapira's [article on business coach Anne Loehr](#) is [liberally copied by gawker.com](#), and [Shapira isn't happy about it](#).
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Possibly related posts: (automatically generated)

- [The Debate That She Refused \(Part 4\)](#)
- [Somewhat disconnected?](#)
- [Looking Back at June 2009, Looking Forward](#)
- [Riverfront Times Has Credentials Revoked After Publishing Players' Addresses](#)

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