

Class size, number of rivals fuels competitiveness

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Class size or the number of rivals in any competitive situation matters, according to University of Michigan research showing students are more willing to try hard as the number of competitors decreases.

The psychology research examined the factors that go "beyond winning probabilities" in an article for an upcoming issue of the journal [Psychological Science](#).

"The [motivation](#) to compete increases as the number of competitors decreases," said psychology researcher Stephen Garcia, describing a pattern he and Avishalom Tor of the University of Haifa call "The N-Effect" to explain the influence the number (N) of competitors can have on competitive behavior.

This N-effect can impact competitive behavior in the classroom, the work place and any area when people compete.

Garcia and Tor build on a series of research studies including one showing that [students](#) taking the SAT or other standardized tests in a room with fewer students often believe they have a greater likelihood of success than students who see a larger group of peers taking the same test. In all cases, the smaller the number of competitors they're up against, the better their odds and the more they feel they will do well.

In their latest in a series of studies, they surveyed college students about

how motivated they would be to work hard in a sales competition where those finishing in the top 10 percent would win a \$1,000 scholarship.

Students who were told they were competing against 2,000 students were far more motivated to win than those told they would be competing against 20,000 students, the researchers found, even though that chances of winning were identical.

"Our studies have only begun identifying the N-effect, its causes and boundaries," Tor said.

Provided by University of Michigan

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