

PREFACE

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I felt so honoured when I was asked to write this preface. I looked forward to reading the papers. I felt doubly honoured as soon as I received and read the papers. The papers in this special issue are outstanding on many dimensions and readers will be well rewarded for the time they spend absorbing them. They provide a comprehensive overview of all of the currently popular theories of academic achievement motivation, as well as a very impressive collection of empirical studies focused on the nuances that differentiate these theories. A reader will come away from this issue with a firm understanding of the debates within this field of student motivation, as well as a rich knowledge of the designs and statistical methods used as well as major empirical trends across four different cultural groups. The theoretical perspectives covered include: Achievement Goal Theory; Eccles' Expectancy-Value Theory of Achievement-related Activity Choices; Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory; various theories of Learning Strategy; Dweck's Implicit Theories of Intelligence; Marsh's theories regarding the multi-dimensional nature of self concepts and self esteem, the reciprocal nature of performance and self concepts, and the internal/external comparisons processes underlying the development of self concepts; Weiner's Attribution Theory; Tinto's Theory of Student Integration; and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. The papers also consider issues related to Gender Theory, and the social influences of parents, peers, and classroom environments. Outcomes include school grades, test scores, school engagement, interest, and learning strategies. Designs include both cross sectional and longitudinal approaches. Methods include standard regression, Structural Equation Modeling with both cross-sectional and longitudinal data, and Longitudinal Hierarchical Linear Modeling, as well as both variable- and person-centred analytic strategies. Finally, age groups include both adolescents in secondary school and young adults in college. Evidence is provided regarding the reciprocal nature of the relations across time among ability self perceptions and performance; and among motivation, learning strategies, and performance. Complex mod-

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els that include the influences of both social experiences and motivational beliefs on school engagement and then performance are tested and, in some cases, competing models based on different theoretical systems are compared.

At the level of deep structure, these articles provide several clear, consistent and strong messages: First, **MOTIVATION MATTERS**. Not a surprise to many of us but something worth reminding educators and learning specialists of every so often. Educational reform efforts in the USA often ignore this fundamental fact. Second, there is substantial overlap across various theoretical perspectives on motivational processes – an overlap that suggests we are getting closer to some very fundamental principles of motivation and its impact on engagement, learning strategies, academic choices, persistence, and performance. Most importantly there are very fundamental reciprocal influences among motivational constructs and behavioural “outcomes” over time and there are quite interesting developmental changes in these reciprocal relations. Third, **CONTEXTS MATTER**. Motivational beliefs and processes are influenced by the experiences at home, with friends, in classrooms, and on college campuses. The consequence of this last message is that we can design interventions that change educational and family contexts in ways that will facilitate positive motivational orientations and that ameliorate the negative consequences of cultural belief systems linked to gender, ethnicity, nationality, and religion on both motivational orientations and academic performance.

I encourage both developmental and educational scientists and educational policy makers to delve deeply into these studies. Students of both educational motivation and human development will also be well served by reading these papers. I congratulate the editors and writers of these papers. Kudos to you all for a job very well done.