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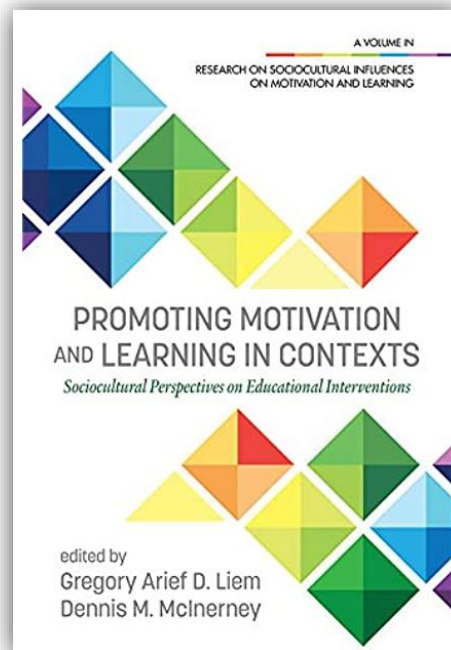
**Liem, G. A. D. & McInerney, D. M. (Eds.). (2020).**  
***Promoting motivation and learning in contexts:  
Sociocultural perspectives on educational  
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As students across the globe return to brick-and-mortar schools in the midst of the racial, economic, cultural, and academic inequities exposed and magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be an increasing need for interventions to support the motivation and learning of all students. It is crucial for educators and researchers to understand the unique sociocultural context of the community they intend to serve with their interventions. As special education scholar Alfredo Artiles (2015) argues, culture “carries considerable historical baggage that permeates policy, professional, and institutional practices that are not always taken into account in research projects” (p. 4). The book *Promoting Motivation and Learning in Contexts: Sociocultural Perspectives on Educational Interventions* places culture at the center of research, offering audiences an excellent resource for using sociocultural lenses to design and implement interventions suited to students’ and communities’ diverse strengths and needs. Audiences that would benefit from the ideas in this book include educators and educational researchers who are interested in designing and/or evaluating interventions for culturally diverse populations.



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Samuelson, C. (2022, March 30). Review of *Promoting motivation and learning in contexts: Sociocultural perspectives on educational interventions* by G. A. D. Liem & D. M. McInerney (Eds.). *Education Review*, 29. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/er.v29.3299>

The editors of this volume, Gregory Arief D. Liem, psychology professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, and Dennis M. McInerney, honorary professor at The Education University of Hong Kong, challenge motivational theory and research that is often grounded in Western perspectives and frame their book as a response to the need for educational interventions to transfer across diverse sociocultural contexts. The editors invited scholars involved in motivational and/or learning intervention research to re-examine their work using a sociocultural lens. They asked contributors to consider how interventions may be transferable across diverse transnational contexts and to examine the challenges and affordances of practicing sociocultural-informed intervention design.

The 13 groups of contributing authors consist primarily of professors, doctoral students, and health professionals specializing in psychology and human development. The group brings international perspectives from their professional appointments in the United States, Canada, Singapore, the Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Germany, Australia, and Tanzania. Each chapter offers a historical and theoretical overview of a specific topic related to motivation and learning interventions, a review of relevant research, and an analysis of the intervention through a sociocultural lens. The book covers wide-ranging topics including self-regulated learning, test anxiety, mindfulness, culturally responsive pedagogy, identity-based interventions, and entrepreneurship education, as well as interventions aimed at increasing students' self-efficacy, autonomy, passion, and hope. Generally, readers who are interested in learning about one specific intervention could pick up this book, open to that particular chapter, and receive a thorough overview and sociocultural analysis of the research and theory surrounding that topic.

While reading isolated portions may be beneficial for some readers, the key strength of this book is the interconnected, overarching themes that offer important implications for a broad audience of researchers or practitioners who design interventions in diverse sociocultural contexts. A significant theme in this volume is that motivational and learning intervention researchers should work to deeply understand the complex community and context of intended participants. In their work with self-regulated learning interventions, Cleary et al. (Chapter 7) challenge hierarchical school structures and research that does not allow participants a "seat at the table," contending that research should begin with listening to the various voices of those who will be affected by an intervention, such as students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Employing Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological model focusing on power, privilege, tensions, and fluidity, the authors propose a model researchers can use (Table 7.1, p. 148) to examine the social validity of intervention implementation by exploring stakeholders' perspectives, analyzing power differentials, and carefully considering the potential effects of an intervention given the unique sociocultural context of a community or space. In a high-quality chapter focusing on mindfulness-based interventions, Bender, Janze & Cathcart

(Chapter 11) argue to determine for whom interventions are effective, researchers should move beyond reporting demographic data and parse out and analyze complex cultural factors impacting student performance.

Many of the book's interventions occur in educational contexts, and investing in and empowering teachers is a second emergent theme across some chapters. Zusho and Prieto (Chapter 4) argue practitioners should focus on redesigning classroom environments to promote student motivation using culturally responsive pedagogy. They argue this begins with raising the critical consciousness of teachers, who they believe are "major change agents" (p. 70). In order to empower students, educators must themselves be empowered to view education as a tool for "social justice and self-advocacy for all, especially our most vulnerable students" (p. 78). Reeve and Cheon (Chapter 2) also practice teacher investment in their intervention focused on helping educators to become more autonomy supportive. In their ten-year intervention work bringing professional development programs to teachers across the globe, the authors learned it is not enough to examine sociocultural moderation effects after PD is implemented. Rather, when they introduce their model in each new context, the researchers modify the PD design and implementation to accommodate teachers' sociocultural differences and particular needs. Thus, by designing an intervention with the goal of helping students become more autonomous, the researchers "walk the walk" by taking into consideration the autonomy of teachers themselves.

Finally, several contributors argue the importance of understanding the role *systems* play in educational outcomes and intervention implementation. One of the higher-quality chapters by Ong and Yeo (Chapter 10) includes a sociocultural analysis of contextually appropriate interventions to decrease test anxiety. The authors argue test anxiety is far more complex than can be explained by within-person individual traits, and they provide an analysis of wider cultural contexts and systems that can contribute to test anxiety in people of all ages and backgrounds, demonstrating that characteristics and mechanisms of systems within an educational space should be accounted for when designing interventions to treat test anxiety. Additionally, in a comprehensive analysis of identity-based motivational theory and interventions, Kaplan, Bridgell, and Garner (Chapter 5) offer a dynamic systems model of role identity (Figure 5.1, page 102), arguing that identity-based motivational interventions should account for the role of social context and culture and how these broader systems interact with participants' beliefs, purpose, goals, emotions, actions, and self-perception. Zusho & Prieto (Chapter 4) name problematic systems within "racially hostile" schools in the United States, arguing that intervention researchers should target structural factors that affect learning environments, bearing in mind that sometimes "lessons are disabled—not our students" (p. 69).

The final two chapters of the book offer explicit, narrowed-in examples of what it may look like to apply these sociocultural considerations to specific interventions. The contribution by Pacheco and Malewitz exemplifies

culturally responsive teaching and uses Latino literature to address themes of isolationism immigrant students often face. Yet in my opinion, Weiss Rhodes' two-year ethnographic case study of youth entrepreneurship initiatives in Tanzania, offers the best example in the book of what it looks like to deeply analyze the sociocultural-historical and systemic contexts of a learning intervention. Her implications for entrepreneurship initiatives could be helpful to anyone designing intervention research, such as understanding how historical factors can subjugate certain populations within local education systems, recognizing how economic or gendered vulnerability can exacerbate risks young people face, and addressing the lack of accountability under which many education initiatives operate.

Though most contributions were excellent, this volume was not without some contradictions and missed opportunities. Ong and Yeo (Chapter 10) argue race, ethnicity and monolithic dichotomies of Western individualism and Eastern collectivism cannot account for variability within cultural groups, yet the authors of several different contributions do in fact make dichotomous claims about Western individual cultures and Eastern collectivist cultures (e.g. Chapters 2, 3, and 14). Furthermore, Sevincer and Oettingen (Chapter 9) cite empirical studies to make statements about students from low socioeconomic backgrounds as having “more problems at school,” “lower grades,” and “less parental support,” missing an opportunity to account for any of the systemic factors that lead to these challenges, as other authors in the volume highlight. Finally, for a book on sociocultural perspectives on intervention research, discussion of researchers' sociocultural positionalities is notably absent. One exception is Ong and Yeo's thoughtful reflection of their own experiences suffering from test anxiety in their schooling experience, but otherwise there is hardly any reflection of how the researchers' own sociocultural identities and subjectivities affected the questions they ask, the data they collect, and their analytic lenses.

Despite these few shortcomings, the volume fulfills its promise of offering a comprehensive analysis of what it looks like to take sociocultural considerations into account when intervening to improve students' learning and motivation. As a white, monolingual doctoral candidate beginning to conduct research with students from historically marginalized cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds, I found the book to be a helpful resource for understanding the complex cultural contexts of intended intervention spaces. This book offers educators and researchers tangible ways to “safeguard [our] intended beneficiaries” (Rhodes, p. 336) by partnering with communities toward shared goals for student success.

## References

Artiles, A. J. (2015). Beyond responsiveness to identity badges: Future research on culture in disability and implications for response to intervention. *Educational Review*, 67(1), 1-22.

### About the Reviewer

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