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Integrative Perspectives of Academic Motivation

Jessica Rebecca Chittum

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in
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Doctor of Philosophy
In
Curriculum and Instruction
with a specialization in Educational Psychology

Brett D. Jones, Committee Chair
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Jesse L. Wilkins

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Integrative Perspectives of Academic Motivation

Jessica Rebecca Chittum

ABSTRACT

My overall objective in this dissertation was to develop more integrative perspectives of several aspects of academic motivation. Rarely have researchers and theorists examined a more comprehensive model of academic motivation that pools multiple constructs that interact in a complex and dynamic fashion (Kaplan, Katz, & Flum, 2012; Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano, & Fulmer, 2014). The more common trend in motivation research and theory has been to identify and explain only a few motivation constructs and their linear relationships rather than examine complex relationships involving “continuously emerging systems of dynamically interrelated components” (Kaplan et al., 2014, para. 4). In this dissertation, my co-author and I focused on a more integrative perspective of academic motivation by first reviewing varying characterizations of one motivation construct (Manuscript 1) and then empirically testing dynamic interactions among multiple motivation constructs using a person-centered methodological approach (Manuscript 2). Within the first manuscript (Chapter 2), a theoretical review paper, we summarized multiple perspectives of the need for autonomy and similar constructs in academic motivation, primarily autonomy in self-determination theory, autonomy supports, and choice. We provided an integrative review and extrapolated practical teaching implications. We concluded with recommendations for researchers and instructors, including a call for more integrated perspectives of academic motivation and autonomy that focus on complex and dynamic patterns in individuals’ motivational beliefs. Within the second manuscript (Chapter 3), we empirically investigated students’ motivation in science class as a complex, dynamic, and context-bound phenomenon that incorporates multiple motivation constructs. Following a person-centered approach, we completed cluster analyses of students’ perceptions of 5 well-known motivation constructs (autonomy, utility value, expectancy, interest, and caring) in science class to determine whether or not the students grouped into meaningful “motivation profiles.” 5 stable profiles emerged: (1) low motivation; (2) low value and high support; (3) somewhat high motivation; (4) somewhat high empowerment and values, and high support; and (5) high motivation. As this study serves as a proof of concept, we concluded by describing the 5 clusters. Together, these studies represent a focus on more integrative and person-centered approaches to studying and understanding academic motivation.