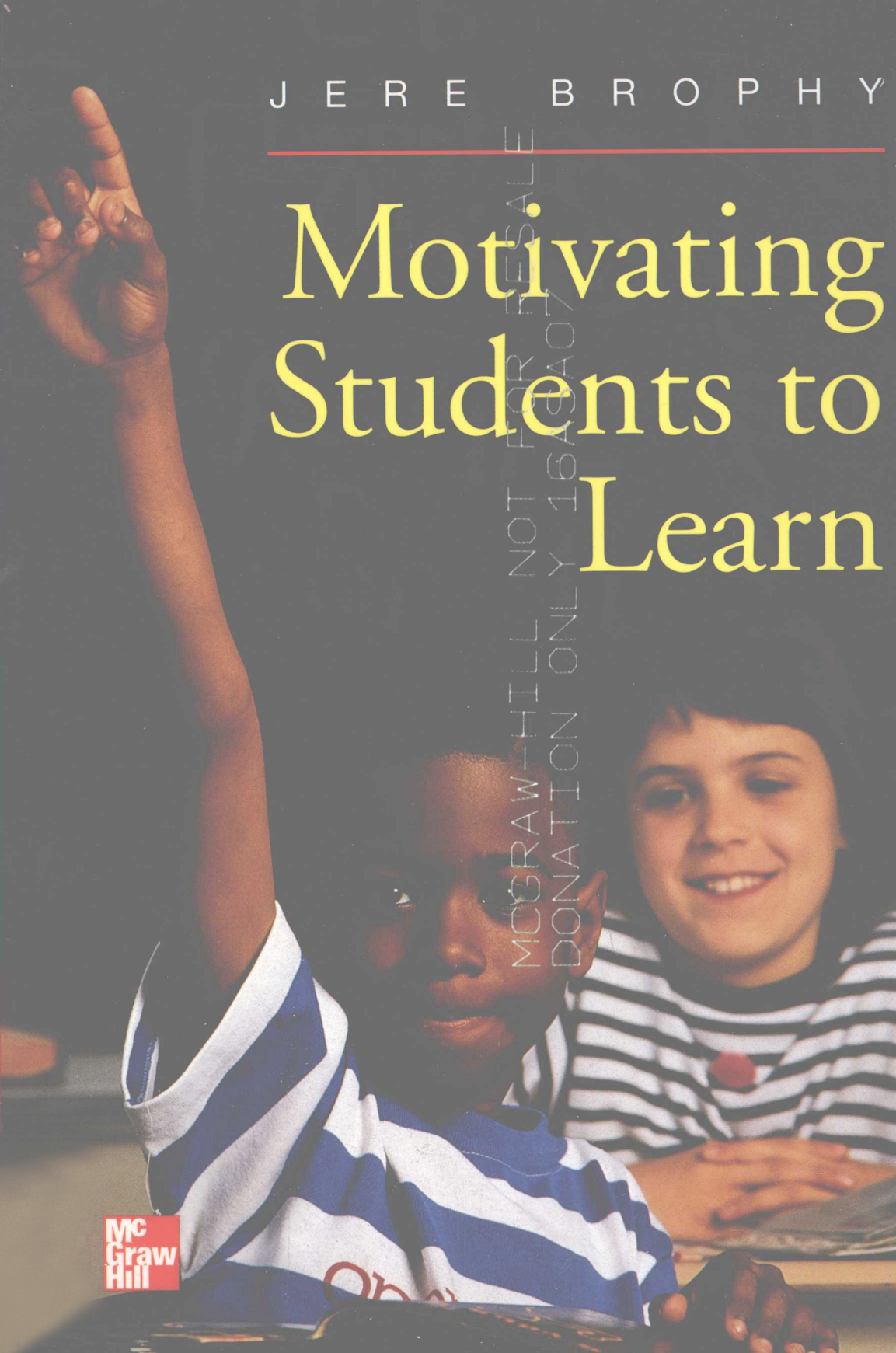

JERE BROPHY

Motivating Students to Learn

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Motivating Students to Learn

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MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO LEARN

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Motivating Students to Learn

For Christian Thomas Speier

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About the Author

JERE BROPHY is University Distinguished Professor of Teacher Education and formerly co-director of the Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University, East Lansing. He earned a Ph.D. in Human Development and Clinical Psychology from the University of Chicago and since has become known for his research on the interpersonal dynamics of teacher-student relationships, teacher expectation effects, classroom management, student motivation, and other topics in educational psychology and research on teaching. He is the author of *Teaching Problem Students* (1996) and co-author with Thomas L. Good of *Contemporary Educational Psychology* (5th edition, 1995), and *Looking in Classrooms* (7th edition, 1997), as well as author or co-author of numerous articles on student motivation and related topics.

Preface

This book offers teachers principles and strategies to use in motivating their students to learn. It is written explicitly for teachers: addressing them directly, focusing on concepts and principles that are the most feasible for use in the classroom, and presenting these with a minimum of jargon and an emphasis on applications. It is not a "bag of tricks" developed from my own personal philosophy or culled randomly from everywhere. Instead, it is the product of a systematic review of the motivational literature followed by synthesizing efforts that involved: (1) identifying those portions of this vast literature that are most relevant to teachers, (2) summarizing this relevant material using a basic vocabulary to counteract the proliferation of multiple terms for the same basic concept, and (3) organizing the material within a few categories that are rooted in motivational theory and research but also supportive of teachers' efforts to incorporate motivational principles into their instructional planning.

My treatment of relatively obvious principles (e.g., warm, caring teachers are more likely to be successful motivators than indifferent or rejecting teachers) emphasizes their fundamental importance but does not go on to include unnecessarily detailed explanation or documentation. More detail is provided for less obvious and familiar principles, although even here I have focused on what teachers need to know rather than providing broad coverage of the history and development of related theory and research. Similar concepts are treated together with emphasis on their common implications, avoiding "distinctions without difference."

Much of the scholarly literature on motivation is not relevant to teachers because it deals with animals rather than humans. Furthermore, much of the human motivation literature is only tangentially relevant to teachers because it focuses on individual differences in motivational systems as predictors of

differences in behavior (e.g., students who value success and do not fear failure are more likely to prefer challenging tasks than students with the opposite motivational pattern).

Concepts such as success seeking or failure avoidance can help teachers to understand their students' current motivational orientations and related behavior. However, teachers mostly need to learn strategies for socializing their students' motivational orientations toward optimal patterns (in this example, strategies for helping students to reduce their fear of failure and become more persistent in their efforts to achieve success). Consequently, although the book explains concepts needed to understand students' motivational orientations, it focuses on teachers' strategies for optimizing those orientations.

Furthermore, it does so with an eye toward the realities of classroom teaching. First, it recognizes that schools are not day camps or recreational centers; they feature an instructional agenda that teachers and students are expected to accomplish. Consequently, teachers' motivational strategies need to focus on motivating their students to learn—to achieve the intended curricular outcomes—not merely to enjoy their time in school. Learning should be experienced as meaningful and worthwhile, but it requires sustained goal-oriented efforts to construct understandings.

Second, the classroom setting complicates the motivational challenges facing teachers. Instruction can be individualized only to an extent, so some students may often be bored and others may often be confused or frustrated. Also, students' concentration on learning may be impaired by worries about getting bad grades or embarrassing themselves in front of their classmates.

These and other constraints on teachers' options underscore the need for an emphasis on motivational goals and strategies that are realistic and feasible for use in the classroom. Consequently, although I draw on the intrinsic motivation literature to describe the ideal forms of motivation that may be observed when people are engaged in activities of their own choosing without any felt pressure to respond to external constraints, I emphasize that such conditions of self-determination can only be achieved partially and occasionally in classrooms. Thus, the motivational challenge facing teachers is to find ways to encourage their students to accept the goals of classroom activities and seek to develop the intended knowledge and skills that these activities were designed to develop, regardless of whether or not the students enjoy the activities or would choose to engage in them if other alternatives were available. This is what I mean by motivating students to learn, and much of the book is devoted to presentation of strategies for doing so.

The book also presents strategies for capitalizing on students' existing intrinsic motivation and for reinforcing their learning efforts using rewards and other extrinsic incentives. In the process, I review and critique the often-contentious literature on these topics and develop principles for using intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies compatibly. An eclectic approach to motivation that incorporates both sets of strategies (as well as strategies for motivating students to learn) is likely to be much more powerful than a more limited approach.

Finally, the book offers guidelines for adapting motivational principles to group and individual differences in students and for doing "repair work" with students who have become discouraged or disaffected learners. These adaptation and problem-solving suggestions are embedded within the overall approach developed throughout the book. They are extensions of it, compatible with its basic principles.

To reduce the verbiage and passive-voice sentence constructions that accompany third-person language, I have written much of the book in second-person language addressed directly to the reader, who is construed as a teacher. Readers who currently work as inservice teachers or student teachers can respond to this directly; preservice teacher education majors or other readers who are not currently teaching can respond by projecting themselves into the teacher role.

I have eliminated most gender-specific language by pluralizing. Where this was not feasible (most notably in many of the examples involving individual students), I have standardized the format by routinely referring to the teacher as female and the student as male. Finally, in sections on gender differences, I have referred to teachers as male or female and to students as boys or girls.

Brief Contents

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