

Foreword

For more than six years, members of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and Educational Testing Service (ETS) have worked successfully together within the IEA-ETS Research Institute (IERI) on projects designed to improve the science of large-scale assessments of educational achievement. IERI covers three broad areas of activities: (1) research studies related to the methodology, development, and implementation of large-scale assessments, (2) professional development and training, and (3) dissemination of research findings and information gathered through large-scale assessments.

IERI has published five volumes of the periodical *Issues and Methodologies in Large-Scale Assessments*, each containing six to seven peer-reviewed papers. The current publication is the second special issue—special because it contains only one (extended) paper. The first special issue addressed a matter highly relevant for researchers planning international large-scale studies, namely the relationship between the sample sizes at each level of a hierarchical model and the precision of the outcome model. Having received very positive feedback on this report issue, we decided to publish another special issue. It addresses a topic also highly relevant to international large-scale assessments—the measurement of students’ family background in international large-scale assessments.

Good measures of students’ family background are critically important when analyzing large-scale assessment data so as to find which factors are associated with positive outcomes. Various research projects remind us of the high association between family background and students’ achievement and also with attitudes and other outcome variables. Researchers therefore try to control for the effect of students’ family background when investigating teacher and school effects that may contribute to outcome measures. But finding good measures for family background—especially in an international survey—remains a challenge. We trust you will find this special issue informative and that it help those of you designing studies to develop better measures of family background.

This report is also special because it is the last volume of the IERI monograph series. We decided to convert the series into a SpringerOpen journal called *Large-Scale Assessments in Education: A SpringerOpen Journal* in order to increase visibility and dissemination of the submitted articles. We hope you will consider submitting papers presenting your own research on international large-scale assessments to our now even more attractive new journal. For further information, please refer to <http://www.largescaleassessmentsineducation.com/>. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for the generous support of the research that resulted in this report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the United States.

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Editors of the IERI periodical *Issues and Methodologies in Large-Scale Assessments*