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Abstract

The benefits of high self-efficacy beliefs for student learning is something that is widely acknowledged and supported within educational circles. High self-efficacy beliefs are known to help students set challenging goals, maintain commitment to their goals and persevere in the face of adversity. Hence, having high self-efficacy beliefs is often seen as the preferred state of being for students, resulting in copious amounts of research into how educators can help foster high self-efficacy beliefs.

Consequently, research by social psychologists such as Geert Hofstede and Gabriele Oettingen has addressed how cultural dimensions can impact personal self-efficacy beliefs, with Oettingen noting the benefit of certain cultural dimensions over those of others in regards to promoting self-efficacy. However, seemingly little attention has been paid to how the ways in which educators raise self-efficacy beliefs can impact cultures themselves.

A critical review of Frank Pajares' work on ways to raise self-efficacy beliefs was conducted to highlight the cultural dimensions being promoted via the self-efficacy model, before the work of Vanessa Andreotti and Lynn Souza was used to demonstrate how, in raising self-efficacy as suggested by Pajares, cultures can be undermined or harmed.

Research was conducted to establish how culturally sensitive post 2010 self-efficacy focussed pedagogical research papers from the United States were towards ethnicity and gender. A secondary focus was also made to attempt to determine whether the analysed research demonstrated an awareness of self-efficacy's ability to impact cultures via the use of the qualitative data. Data was collected through the use of a rating template and qualitative summaries for each paper.

Results showed that, although recent research papers demonstrated a moderate awareness of the impacts of ethnicity and gender on their research, no papers explicitly addressed how implementing self-efficacy can impact cultures. Ultimately, research showed a need for increased attention to cultural issues in self-efficacy research, and a culture focussed re-evaluation of methods educators use to attempt to raise self-efficacy in students.

Keywords self-efficacy, cultural dimensions, individualism, collectivism, large/small power distance, strong/weak uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, femininity, cultural sensitivity.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The benefit of high self-efficacy beliefs for academic success is a topic that has received considerable attention from the educational community throughout the years, with multiple research contributions examining the possible ways in which high self-efficacy beliefs can be fostered and maintained by educators. As self-efficacy is a topic of such importance within the educational community, it is the primary objective of this thesis to examine the ways in which self-efficacy effects and is affected by cultural aspects. In order to explore cultural impacts on self-efficacy, and vice versa, my thesis takes the form of 11 main chapters.

First, I shall briefly define self-efficacy as given by Bandura (1994) and elaborate on its beneficial influences for academic success. Afterwards, I shall primarily use the works of Hofstede (1980, 1986) and Oettingen (1995) to deepen my understanding of how cultures can impact the self-efficacy beliefs of their students. Following this, I shall examine the results of Oettingen's (1995) research to highlight the importance of addressing cultural impacts in regards to research concerning self-efficacy beliefs. Using Hofstede and Oettingen's work, I shall explore what cultural dimensions the self-efficacy model promotes, as discussed by Pajares (2012). Consequently, I shall reflect on the ethical dilemma of advocating for promoting certain cultural dimensions over those of their counterparts. To aid us in this endeavour I shall borrow from the work of Andreotti and Souza (2008).

Finally, serving as the main focus of this thesis, I outline the aim of my research: to determine whether recent pedagogical research concerning self-efficacy within the United States takes into consideration possible cultural impacts of ethnicity and gender on its findings. Before exploring and discussing the implications of my results.

Hence, the research contained within this thesis could be considered of value for any educator who interacts with students from different cultural dimensions to their own and those conducting research concerning self-efficacy.

## 2 SELF-EFFICACY

Bandura (1994) gives us a well written basic understanding of what self-efficacy is, as well the beneficial attributes it allows a person when their self-efficacy beliefs are high:

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave...A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their effort in the face of failure. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression... [and] there is a growing body of evidence that human accomplishments and positive well-being require an optimistic sense of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1994. p, 2 – 8).

As stated by Bandura (1994), a person's perceived self-efficacy is his or her own beliefs about his or her ability to achieve goals. These beliefs play an important role in how people conduct themselves in their daily lives, with strong self-efficacy beliefs enhancing accomplishments and personal well-being in a variety of ways. With strong self-efficacy beliefs playing such an important role in helping people set challenging goals, maintain strong commitment to goals, heighten and sustain effort in the face of failure and see failures as things that can be overcome with acquirable knowledge, it does not require a stretch of the imagination to see how strong self-efficacy beliefs could be beneficial for facilitating the academic success of students.

Indeed, as such, it is no surprise that a copious amount of research has been made into evaluating the beneficial role that high academic self-efficacy plays in helping students to learn and achieve their academic goals (Bandura, 1997; Elias & Loomis, 2002; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Hence, if high academic self-efficacy plays such an important role in helping students to achieve academic success,

arguably it is beneficial for educators to understand the means by which high self-efficacy can be fostered and maintained. Serving as the focus of this thesis, my exploration into self-efficacy shall focus on exploring how cultural dimensions impact students self-efficacy beliefs, primarily using the works of Hofstede (1980) and Oettingen (1995) to facilitate understanding.



### 3 CULTURAL IMPACTS ON SELF-EFFICACY

Forming beliefs about self-efficacy is a process of self evaluation in which the individual selects, weighs and integrates information from multiple sources. It is within this process that culture can play a prominent role. For example, culture can affect the type of information the individual receives from their sources, as well as how the information itself is selected and valued in that person's self-efficacy judgements.

We assume that culture reveals its effect on self-efficacy beliefs by affecting the fundamental systems and institutions of virtually all human societies: the family, the school, the workplace and the community. Everyday conduct in these different contexts provides information for one's self-efficacy in different kinds of pursuits (Oettingen, 1995).

Therefore, by understanding how different cultures can affect the self-efficacy evaluations of students, educators can more readily adapt their teaching methods and strategies to help optimise better self-efficacy gains. However, in order to do this, it is important to understand the dimensions of cultural differences that exist and their possible impact on self-efficacy beliefs.

#### 3.1 Cultural Dimensions

Culture has been described by Hofstede(1980) as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. Such a definition implies that value systems can be seen as one major source of difference between cultures. Indeed, the argument that cultures differ in their primary system of values is not a new topic of debate (Inkeles and Levison, 1969). With this in mind Hofstede (1980, 1991) analysed the cultural value systems of employees belonging to the same multinational business in over 40 countries. In doing so Hofstede managed to identify four dimensions of cultural differences through his research, which Oettingen (1995) has nicely summarised.

##### **Individualism/Collectivism**

Collectivist cultures promote the view that people belong to in-groups that

demand lasting loyalty from which members cannot easily free themselves. In return, people receive protection from the in-group. In contrast, individualist cultures promote the view that people look primarily after their own welfare and their immediate family interests. They value an autonomous definition of the self and individual goals more than group goals.

### **Power Distance**

In cultures with large disparity in power, people are expected to accept inequality in power. This is especially true for the less powerful members of the culture. People in cultures with small power distance value a more equal distribution of power.

### **Uncertainty avoidance**

People in cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance are easily distressed by new, unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable situations. They try to avoid such situations by maintaining strict codes of conduct and a belief in absolute truths. Members of such cultures tend to be compulsive, security seeking, intolerant, aggressive, and emotional. In contrast, people in cultures of weak uncertainty avoidance tend to be relaxed, tolerant, risk accepting, contemplative, and unaggressive.

### **Masculinity/Femininity**

A masculine culture strives for a maximal distinction between men and women. Men are expected to strive for material success, to be assertive, ambitious, and competitive, whereas women are expected to be successful in serving the communal side of life, such as caring for children and the weak. Women are not expected to take on professional jobs. In contrast, feminine cultures also value men who care for the non-material aspects of life and women who obtain professional and technical jobs. In higher education men and women tend to pursue studies in the same subjects, whereas in masculine societies different subjects are 'proper' for men and woman (p 151-152).

These dimensions have also been noticed in similar veins within other research on cultural differences (e.g. Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Having established a brief outline of cultural dimensions, Oettingen then goes on to explain how it is possible for these dimensions to impact self-efficacy beliefs.

## **3.2 Cultural Dimensions and Self-Efficacy Implications**

### **3.2.1 Individualism/collectivism**

In individualist cultures, students are expected to learn how to learn and take a prominent role in setting and achieving their goals. "Performance outcomes are seen as instrumental to achieving self-actualization and the realization of one's individual potential" (Oettingen 1995). Oettingen goes on to state that students in individualist

cultures focus their self-appraisals of efficacy on information that concerns their own personal performance outcomes and how those individuals measure up to their own expectancies, for example, improvements or declines (Rosenholtz & Rosenholtz 1981). Attempting to reach one's true potential through the setting and evaluation of one's own personalized goals is where the main focus of self-efficacy building takes place in an individualist culture. The student sets a goal, strives for the goal, and evaluates their own progress at the end of the goal's completion. The student's evaluation of their own performance is the main effector of self-efficacy beliefs.

Conversely, in collectivist cultures, children are taught to love and respect the need of their in-group (Hofstede, 1989, 1991; Triandis, 1989). In school, this translates into students pursuing performance goals that demonstrate the wanted competencies of their in-group, rather than personal learning goals related to their own desires (Ames, 1992). This leads to a reality in which the student's goal settings and performance outcomes can be freely influenced and observed by their in-group. Hence, in collectivist cultures, when performance goals are evaluated, the feedback received from in-group members serves as the main influencer of the student's self efficacy beliefs. The student's own personal evaluation of their performance is less valuable than those of their in-group.

Subsequently, “emotional states should be a more immediate and thereby more prominent source of the self-efficacy appraisals of children raised in individualists systems than in collectivist systems” (Oettingen 1995). Oettingen goes on:

Consider an example. Youth who approach the end of schooling have to assess their self-efficacy for different occupations in making career decisions...if becoming a banker is considered an appropriate action, people will appraise their efficacy for performing the banker role. A youngster in an individualist culture would give heavy weight to past performance in relevant academic domains...images of being a banker might also be considered. [Whereas] in a collectivist culture, the self-appraisal of efficacy would centre on the in-group's belief that the person has the capabilities to become a successful banker, and whether other members of the in-group might have a higher talent for this occupation (p153).

Once again, in a collectivist culture the person's own evaluation of their self-efficacy appraisal for a job would come secondary to the evaluation of their in-group when making a decision. Furthermore, as the person is part of an in-group, they might even

consider how others members of their in-group could fulfil the role better, choosing to instead allow them to take the job in spite of their own personal desires.

In summary, in individualist cultures one's own judgements and evaluations take precedence in influencing self-efficacy beliefs, whereas, conversely, in collectivist cultures a person's in-groups' judgements and evaluations serve as the main source of influence over self-efficacy beliefs.

### 3.2.2 Power Distance

In a culture with a large power distance, children are taught to obey their parents and treat them as superiors (Hofstede, 1986, 1991). Education is teacher focused and teachers are expected to be in full control of educational exercises (Stipek 1988). The “study material [being taught] is supposed to reflect the wisdom of the educational personnel, who are not to be contradicted or criticized...[and] parents are expected to support the teachers” (Oettingen 1995). Therefore, when students make self-efficacy evaluations in a large power distance culture, their appraisals are heavily centred around the teacher's feedback, as the teacher is considered an unquestionable authority with a total mastery over the learning material. Additionally, peers who would serve as social models for self-efficacy beliefs are also influenced in the same way. Under these conditions teachers hold great sway over a student's self-efficacy judgements.

In contrast, small power distance cultures encourage children to express their views freely in family settings and view parents as equals. Education is also student focused rather than teacher focused (Stipek 1988, 1991). “Teachers expect students to initiate communication, speak up and criticize, and to find their own direction and pace of learning. The study material can, in principle, be obtained from any competent person. Parents are expected to side with the students” (Oettingen 1995). As students are given more control over the direction and content of their learning, they play a greater role in helping to shape their performance history. Hence, when evaluating self-efficacy beliefs, students are comparatively free of teacher influences when making their judgements. Additionally, even when teacher evaluations are negative, the evaluations do not hold as much influence when compared to those of a large power distance culture.

In summary, the smaller the power distance, the more students are allowed to direct and control their own learning. By allowing students to set self-prescribed personal goals, students may feel more motivated and consider the goals to be more attainable, which results in more mastery experiences boosting self-efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, as authority evaluations are not seen as being unquestionable or absolute in small power distance cultures, even negative feedback from authorities would have less of an effect on the lowering of student self-efficacy beliefs. Conversely, in large power distance cultures, striving to reach a standardized goal set by the authorities (e.g. getting the highest grade in class) could be seen as unobtainable and demotivating, which would result in failure experiences harming self-efficacy beliefs. Also, as authority evaluations have a considerable impact on self-efficacy beliefs, negative evaluations would be much more damaging to self-efficacy beliefs than those in a small power distance culture.

### 3.2.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

In cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance foreign influences are seen as a high source of threat and stress, whilst predictability and familiarity are seen as calming (Hofstede, 1986, 1991).

In both family and school settings, emotional reactions are accepted and self-righteousness is prevalent. Teachers are expected to have all the right answers... [and] intellectual disagreement is interpreted as a personal offence. Students adapt to highly structured, unidimensional teaching strategies, where materials and assignments are predefined and instructions are detailed. Students and teachers desire [these] rules and readily embrace them (Oettingen, 1995. p155).

Due to the highly structured way of learning in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, students are able to observe a fully detailed collection of their performance history. All students receive regular performance feedback on their assignments, which allows them to know their precise ranking in ability amongst the other students. “The monolithic structure and social ranking serve as powerful influences in facilitating a precise appraisal of one's performance-based self efficacy. Students know exactly where they stand in the social comparative judgement of their own efficacy” (Oettingen, 1995). Additionally, evaluations from teachers, parents and other students are given bluntly and directly, reflecting a strong sense of social consensus. The “experience of negative emotional states arising from unfavourable peer comparisons provide further reminders

of personal inefficacy. Surpassing one's peers in the social ranking generated positive emotional states that tend to enhance self-appraisals of efficacy” (Oettingen 1995).

Contrariwise, cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance are open to and accepting of foreign experiences and undisturbed when it comes to facing new problems, responding reflectively rather than emotionally to ambiguities (Sorrentino, Raynor, Subek & Short, 1990).

Teachers are not expected to know all things. They use plain language, take intellectual disagreements as challenges, and seek parents' opinions and ideas. Students deal effectively with multidimensional teaching strategies, which entail only partially structured learning materials, general instructions, and flexible, individualized pacing (Oettingen, 1995. p155).

In such a culture students have more ambiguity when it comes to evaluating their efficacy as performance feedback and social rankings are less clear due to the nature of individualized instruction. Hence, “inferences from performance attainments as well as from vicarious experiences provide [some] leeway for personal self-evaluation” (Oettingen 1995). This allows students to make more self enhancing attributions and judgements of capability (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, emotional states also become a less influential source of self-efficacy judgements as ambiguity is seen as more of a challenge than a threat.

In summary, strong uncertainty avoidance cultures have rigid learning structures designed by teachers who are considered to be flawless in their knowledge. In such learning structures performance feedback is frequent and social rankings are easily able to be seen. Due to this students are constantly able to make comparative performance evaluations with their peers. For students that place in the top of the learning group in performance rankings this structure serves to enhance their self-efficacy beliefs (e.g. “I am better than all these students, the rankings say so”). However, for students that place in the lower half of the performance rankings, this structure serves to damage self-efficacy beliefs (e.g. “I am worse than the average student”). This can be very detrimental towards constructing positive and accurate self-efficacy beliefs under certain circumstances. For example, a group might be particularly gifted in a certain subject making performance rankings high over all, but the learning structure would still

lead to having some students ranking lower than others, meaning that even if a student's performance would be adequate or above average in general, it would still lead to a negative influence on self-efficacy beliefs after ascertaining their lower place in the social rankings. Conversely, weak uncertainty avoidance cultures avoid this problem through the use of individualized instruction. Group comparisons are not a readily/easily attainable source of information for self-efficacy appraisals. Instead, reflection on one's own progress in self set goals serves as the main source for self-efficacy appraisals. This leads to fewer negative self-efficacy evaluations as the student has more freedom in how they interpret their performance data.

### 3.2.4 Masculinity-Femininity

In masculine societies families stress achievement and competition. In school, teachers single out high-achieving students as the ideal and highlight students' academic successes. Students are competitive, publicize their success, and regard failures as calamities...studying academic subjects that in sex-typed societies are labelled feminine is seen as irrelevant for men...In societies that are more feminine...the norm is set by the average student, students' social adaptation is valued, and academic failure is not taken too seriously. The choice of academic subjects is determined by intrinsic interests, and men feel free to pursue subjects traditionally regarded as feminine (Oettingen, 1995. p156-157).

In masculine cultures competition makes male children consider how they are performing in relation to other students when it comes to appraising their self-efficacy. Performances and praise exceeding those of the competition serve to increase self-efficacy beliefs. Emotional states stemming from these comparisons also influence self-efficacy appraisals greatly. Contrariwise, in feminine cultures successful performance positively affects self-efficacy appraisals regardless of whether students outperform their peers or not (Oettingen 1995). Finally, it is important to note that choices of academic interest and following efficacy appraisals can also be affected depending on whether the culture is masculine or feminine. For example, a female wishing to study sciences in a masculine culture could receive negative feedback on their interest to do so, thus lowering their self-efficacy beliefs for being capable of studying in that field, whereas, within a feminine culture, males and females would be free to pursue whatever interests they wish without negative feedback.

### 3.3 Concluding Cultural Dimensions

In the prior pages I have established possible cultural dimensions and elaborated on how such dimensions are capable of affecting one's self-efficacy beliefs. The discussion primarily relies on Hofstede's (1980, 1991) theories regarding cultural dimensions and how they present themselves within a culture's social systems (family and education). Expanding upon these theories I have borrowed heavily from Oettingen's (1995) work to deepen my understanding of cultural dimensions impacts on self-efficacy beliefs in educational systems. It is important to note that the cultural dimensions discussed are not always separate from each other, nor do they always work in unison. Furthermore, the intensity of a cultural dimension need not always be totalitarian in degree of influence. For example, a culture might have a collectivist influence, yet still have somewhat low uncertainty avoidance. Hence, the cultural dimensions themselves should be considered as "continuous variables operating in concert" (Oettingen 1995) rather than rigid predefined variables.

Oettingen (1995) goes on to suggest that, in order to accurately test the dimensional impacts of culture on self efficacy beliefs, one would need to thoroughly observe social transactions within family and educational settings to verify that the cultures being examined differ in the expected ways. Only afterwards would the data be more reliable in determining cultural impacts on self-efficacy beliefs.

Unfortunately, as Oettingen herself realized, conducting such a thorough study would require a large amount of resources and time, which were unavailable for Oettingen's research at the time. To work around this problem, Oettingen selected several cultures that varied in their cultural orientations and were known to have created school systems differing in their respective features. Assessing self-efficacy beliefs in academic capabilities, Oettingen compared the results between schools in East Berlin and West Berlin shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Later, comparisons with Moscow and Los Angeles schools were also included in the research. In the following chapter I will examine whether Oettingen's (1995) research supports the theories laid forth by Hofstede (1980, 1991), before using the findings as the basis for my own research aims.



## 4 OETTINGEN: ANALYSING THE LINK BETWEEN CULTURE AND SELF-EFFICACY

### 4.1 Cultural Dimensions of East and West Berlin

Before the fall of the Berlin wall, the school systems in East Berlin and West Berlin differed in four major ways...They included: (a) the role of the in-group, (b) respect for and power of teachers, (c) standardization of learning and teaching strategies, and (d) degree of social comparison (Oettingen, 1995. p158).

In East Berlin there were frequent teacher and peer evaluations on performance conducted in front of the class (Weck 1981; Witzlack 1986). Teachers also evaluated students publicly at other various assemblies. Additionally, teaching strategies in East Berlin were group orientated and one dimensional: “children received exactly the same materials, class assignments, and pace of studying...teachers were expected to adhere strictly to the prescribed curriculum [and] assignments...[teachers] were discouraged to accommodate the specific interests and needs of the individual children” (Oettingen 1995). Quietness and honesty were preferable characteristics compared to “knowing better” and “superiority” (Weck, 1981).

From time to time, students had to undergo “learning conferences,” in which, after being required to publicly evaluate themselves, good students were praised by the teacher and the class-collective, whereas weak students had to explain remorsefully why they had failed and how they planned to avoid future failure. Such revelations were then evaluated by both teachers and the class collective. Moreover, every student was expected to feel responsible for the successes and failures of his or her in-group or class collective (Oettingen, 1995. p159).

Considering the cultural dimensions discussed in the previous chapter, we can clearly see how the East Berlin school exhibited: collectivist (group evaluations), large power differential (public teacher evaluations), strong uncertainty avoidance (one dimensional teaching structures) and masculine (praising good students) values in the school culture.

Conversely, the West Berlin school had no public self-evaluations on performance or frequent performance feedback. Privacy concerning grades was emphasized and

performance records were not to be discussed in public. Teaching strategies were less one dimensional in structure and teachers were allowed to cater to individual students in regards to their academic needs. The “educational philosophy focused on conveying factual knowledge to the [students], and avoided influencing children to adopt an absolute truth or any other state-defined value system” (Oettingen, 1995). Due to this, we can see how the West Berlin school seemed to culturally value: individualist (private evaluations), small power differential (individual instruction), weak uncertainty avoidance (no rigid teaching structure) and feminine (focus on personal performance goals) values more than their Eastern counterpart.

#### **4.2 Predicted Outcomes of Self Efficacy**

Due to the cultural dimensions discussed previously, Oettingen (1995) theorized that East Berlin students would exhibit a lower sense of personal self-efficacy and be more in concurrence with their teachers' evaluations of themselves in comparison to West Berlin students. This difference would be affected by the intelligence of students and the manner in which each school treats failure to meet performance goals.

It is important to note that intelligence has become something of a controversial and challenged topic since Oettingen conducted her research. Scholars such as Sternberg and Grigorenko (2007) have argued about what constitutes intelligence and the variations in which intelligence can manifest itself (e.g. componential intelligence, experiential intelligence, contextual intelligence). So, surprisingly, it was interesting to discover that Oettingen (1995) never clearly defined or discussed intelligence parameters within her work. However, within the data itself Oettingen eventually, albeit briefly, mentions that intelligence was assessed with the Raven matrices (Oettingen & Little 1993) which are based around the concept of “fluid intelligence” (Cattell, 1963): the ability to solve and reason through novel problems (such as those found in science and maths). As such, we can suggest that students possessing high levels of fluid intelligence (high intelligence) should be better able to succeed in their academic performances, as they possess a high ability to solve novel problems. This definition of intelligence should be kept in mind as we analyse the forthcoming data.

Stipek (1984, 1988) talks of “illusory optimism” - a state of mind with which children

may enter school – in which a person has high and perhaps unrealistic expectations of their abilities. Oettingen (1995) considers how this state of mind would end up impacting self-efficacy beliefs in a school culture such as East Berlin:

Less intelligent students are more frequently confronted with performance feedback that contradicts their naïve optimism. Accordingly, entering school implies for children with low intelligence that they will have to discard their initial positive self-views and adopt a critical self-evaluation reflecting their inefficacy. In the course of acknowledging a sense of personal inefficacy, failure feedbacks will more readily be accepted as accurate (p 160).

Essentially, Oettingen suggests that due to the frequency and quantity of feedback, from the authoritative and unquestionable teachers in East Berlin, less intelligent students will receive more negative evaluations that will damage their self-efficacy beliefs.

Consequently, due to the collectivist, large power distance and one dimensional structure of the school culture, students aren't able to contest these negative evaluations – instead students come to accept them as being true and accurate depictions of their self-efficacy, which, in turn, leads to lower self-efficacy beliefs as time goes on.

Intelligent students, on the other hand, would receive performance feedback that is congruent with their illusory optimism. Hence, their self views do not need to change. Instead, their self-efficacy beliefs will be reinforced by the positive feedback. Furthermore, in the event of receiving rare negative feedback, intelligent students would simply dismiss it as an abnormality that can be corrected, due to high self-efficacy beliefs, (Oettingen, 1995).

Conversely, “in school contexts that practice delayed, undifferentiated, ambiguous, and private performance feedback on multidimensional teaching activities” (1995), lower intelligence students are able to evade having to completely correct their illusionary optimism, allowing us to assume that the less intelligent students of West Berlin should have higher self-efficacy beliefs than those of their East counterparts. Finally, high intelligence students in West Berlin should not differ too much in their self-efficacy beliefs when compared to East Berlin students, as both would receive positive self-efficacy feedback regardless of the culture.

### 4.3 Self-efficacy Results from East and West Berlin

#### 4.3.1 The CAMI Test

In June 1990, before the two Germanies were unified, 313 East Berlin children had their self-efficacy beliefs assessed by Oettingen, Little, Lindenberger, and Baltes (1994). Samples were taken from students ages 8 to 12 years old. One year later the data was compared to 527 children from West Berlin of the same age. Control, Agency and Means-Ends Interview (CAMI) was the tool used to gather the data:

Fifty-eight items assess causality beliefs reflecting (1) children's judgements on what causes good or poor school performance, (2) control beliefs, which measure children's evaluation of the extent to which they can influence their school performance, and (3) efficacy (agency) beliefs, which concern [students] judgements as to whether they have access to the means that influence academic performance...The 4-point response scale for all items ranged from "never" to "always." Efficacy beliefs items include: "I can really pay attention in class" (effort); "I'm pretty smart at school even without working very hard" (ability). These efficacy beliefs (also called agency beliefs) combine beliefs about means concerning effort, ability, and luck as a second-order factor and teachers' assistance as a first-order factor (Oettingen, 1995. p161).

In comparison to the flexible notion of efficacy beliefs, which are applicable to any kind of performance (Bandura, 1995), "agency beliefs refer to discrete a priori defined means (e.g. access to effort, ability...luck) relevant in the school performance domain" (Oettingen, 1995). Meaning the recorded results are more applicable towards discerning self-efficacy beliefs in an educational context.

## 4.3.2 The Results

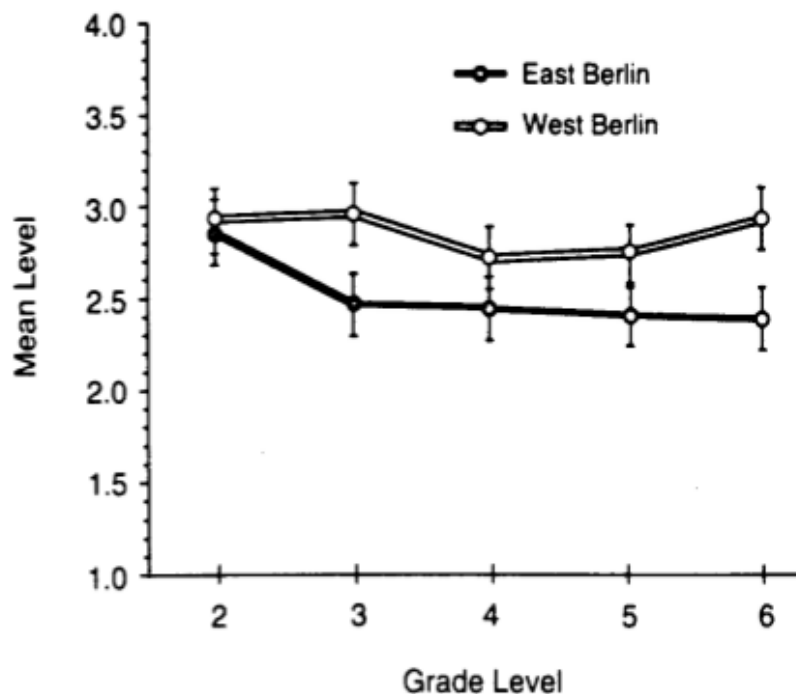


Chart 1: Mean differences of efficacy beliefs by grade level in East and West Berlin students. From Oettingen, G. (1995). Cross-cultural perspectives on self-efficacy.

As theorized by Oettingen (1995) the results did indeed show that East Berlin students displayed a lower sense of academic self-efficacy than those of their West Berlin counterparts. This was true across all the aspects of personal agency within the CAMI test. Self-efficacy beliefs between East and West Berlin are comparatively equal starting in grade 2, before noticeable differences in self-efficacy beliefs occur in all the following grades, arguably reflecting the impact of East Berlin's school culture on self-efficacy beliefs as students spend more time in the school.

Additionally, the differences in intelligence scores (as defined by the Raven matrices) were also seen to have an affect on self-efficacy beliefs.

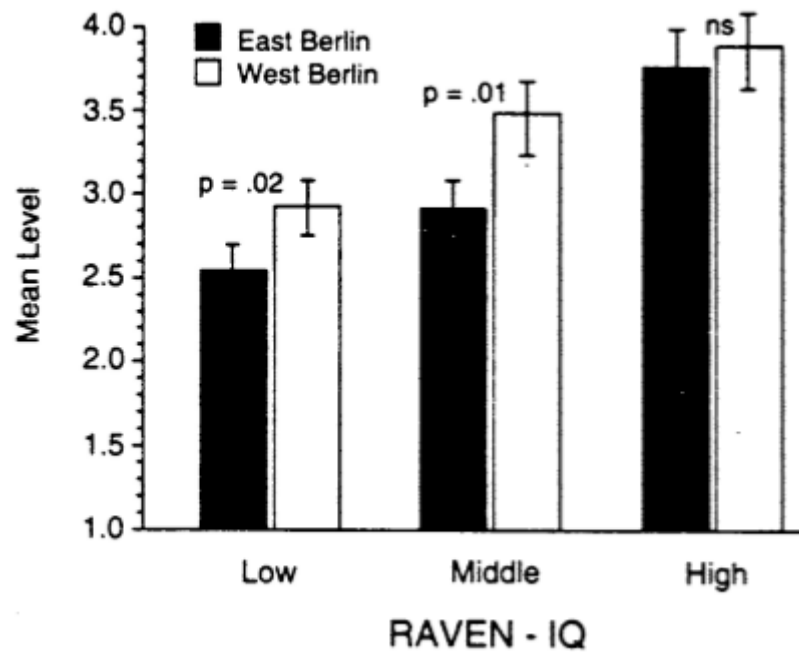


Chart 2: Mean differences of efficacy beliefs by RAVEN-IQ in East and West Berlin students. From Oettingen, G. (1995). Cross-cultural perspectives on self-efficacy.

Again, as speculated by Oettingen, there was a discernible difference in Raven test scores and self-efficacy beliefs within the two schools. As predicted, high intelligence students did not seem to differ significantly in their self-efficacy judgements between the two schools; as performance feedback was in congruence with their illusionary optimism, whereas low and middle intelligence students in East Berlin displayed noticeable differences in self-efficacy beliefs compared to their West Berlin counterparts, arguably due to the negative frequent peer comparisons made in East Berlin's school culture, forcing under achieving students to correct their beliefs stemming from illusionary optimism. Finally, correlations drawn between self-efficacy beliefs and course grades were also found.

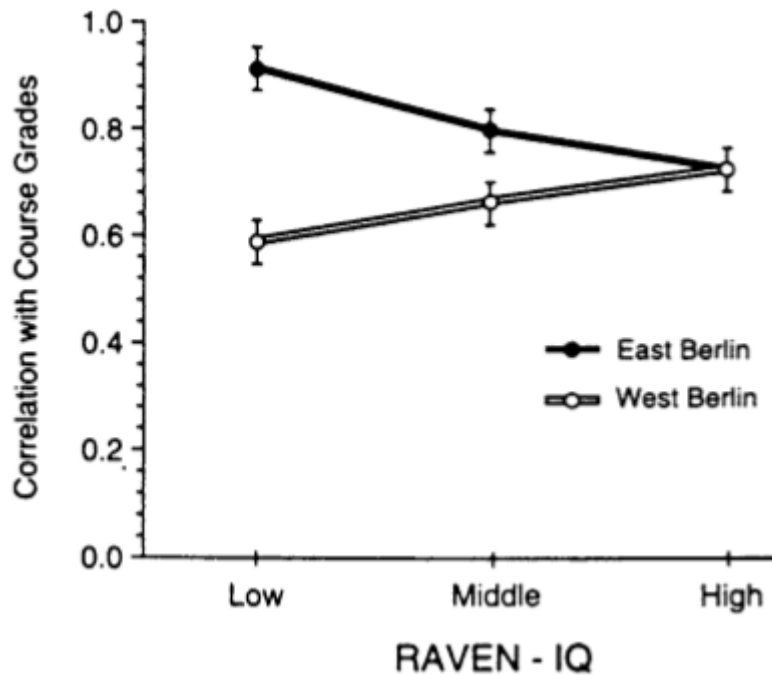


Chart 3: Correlations of efficacy beliefs with course grades by RAVEN-IQ in East and West Berlin students. From Oettingen, G. (1995). Cross-cultural perspectives on self-efficacy.

Chart 3 essentially shows how willing the students were to conform with their teachers' evaluations of themselves. This is measured by the correlation of student self-efficacy beliefs and the grades given out by the teachers (e.g. low self-efficacy beliefs supported by and in accordance with low performance). As we can see, East Berlin children considered low and middle on the Raven matrices test were more in congruence with their teachers' evaluations, perhaps reflecting the collectivist and large power distance cultural dimensions that were present within the East Berlin school (e.g. teachers seen as indisputable masters, disagreeing with teachers seen as undesirable behaviour). On the other hand, West Berlin students ranked low to middle in intelligence displayed the most conflicting self-efficacy beliefs in relation to their grades, showing that, despite negative performance feedback, self-efficacy beliefs still insinuated that they could perform better than their grades suggest. Again, this can be seen to reflect the more individualist and small power distance culture of the West Berlin school (e.g. students free to express views, self-evaluation of goals main factor in determining self-efficacy beliefs). High intelligence students showed no noticeably disparate results. Finally, Oettingen (1995) notes, that these results also support findings in a meta-analysis by Mabe and West (1982) and the observation that positive performance feedback is more

readily accepted than negative performance feedback (Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988).

#### 4.3.3 The Implications

As previously discussed in my chapter on self-efficacy, low self-efficacy beliefs lessen motivation, negatively impact learning and harm effective cognition (Bandura, 1994).

As Oettingen (1995) adequately states:

People with low self-efficacy beliefs give up more readily in the face of difficulties, experience more anxiety, are less effective in using problem-solving strategies, and have lower aspirations (p 165).

Applying self-efficacy beliefs to her research Oettingen continues:

Accordingly, East Berlin children should be more handicapped by motivational and affective problems linked to a low sense of efficacy than their West Berlin peers. The high correlations between efficacy beliefs and course grades in East Berlin also suggest negative consequences of having to judge one's capabilities in accordance with teacher and group evaluations. From the beginning of their schooling, East Berlin children believe they are capable of achieving only as much as their teachers' opinions suggest (p 165).

This handicap is especially true for the students who scored at the lower end of the Raven matrices (less intelligent students), which is unfortunate as they are the ones who would need the positive benefits of high self-efficacy beliefs in order to produce better academic achievements. Continued low-self efficacy beliefs would theoretically stunt future student development and cause problems in achieving performance goals. As such, it is easy to see how certain cultural dimensions can be harmful to student learning.

However, it is important to acknowledge that within Eastern Berlin culture, being able to evaluate oneself adequately was awarded in the class-collective with positions of leadership. Conversely, voicing socially unfounded optimistic views of self-efficacy produced social disapproval (Oettingen, 1995). Hence, self-efficacy beliefs that were not shared by the collective were capable of incurring social costs. It is this notion of "self-efficacy incurring social costs" that forms the crux of my thesis.



## 4.4 Summary

Throughout the course of this chapter I have explored how cultural dimensions are capable of affecting self-efficacy beliefs. Based primarily on the work of Hofstede (1980, 1986, 1989, 1991) I have explored Oettingen's (1993, 1994, 1995) subsequent work into cultural dimensions within an educational context. The results found seem to indicate that cultural dimensions are indeed capable of having a profound impact on self-efficacy beliefs.

As self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in self regulated learning, a process considered vital in being able to produce academic success and development, it is beneficial for students if such beliefs are high. This is true even if high self-efficacy beliefs are unfounded or optimistic (Bandura, 1994), because high self-efficacy beliefs are capable of helping a person to persevere even in the face of failure or uncertainty, hence increasing chances of attaining mastery experiences and reaching goals.

However, within certain cultural dimensions unfounded high self-efficacy beliefs are capable of leading to negative social costs (Oettingen, 1995), which, in turn, could lead to negative effects on one's learning. Hence, it is important to be mindful of the cultural domains at play when raising self-efficacy beliefs, otherwise one might incur harm on a student's academic development.

The notion of self-efficacy harming one's learning due to possible cultural dimensions is what led to the research focus of this thesis. If cultural dimensions can play such an important role in how self-efficacy beliefs are not only affected, but also accepted by different cultures – then what are the cultural dimensions of self-efficacy itself? Does our model of self-efficacy promote certain cultural dimensions over others? If so, what are the cultural dimensions being promoted by self-efficacy? In order to examine this I feel it would be appropriate to briefly explore how common pedagogical ways of raising self-efficacy beliefs, as discussed by Pajares (2012), can be seen as being oblivious to the effect of cultural dimensions as stated by Oettingen (1995).

## **5 EXPLORING THE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY**

To begin with, Pajares (2012) describes how Zimmerman et al.'s (1996) cyclic model of self-regulated learning functions, before discussing how it interacts with and influences students' own self-efficacy beliefs.

First, students examine their potential effectiveness to complete the task successfully by assessing and evaluating the results of previous performances on related tasks and domains. Second, they set learning goals and plan appropriate self-regulatory strategies that will aid them in completing the task. Third, they implement the strategies selected and monitor performance on the task to again examine their potential effectiveness to conquer subsequent tasks. At this point, students re-initiate the cycle as they contemplate a new task (Pajares 2012 p125).

Pajares (2012) then states that students' assessments of their self-efficacy beliefs are central to this cyclic process and that these assessments have a number of benefits:

First, of course, if students are to accurately judge their capability to complete a task successfully, they must proactively make judgements of this capability, which is to say that they must assess their own self-efficacy beliefs about the task and in the domain under consideration...It is for this reason that self-efficacy researchers encourage teachers to introduce the concept of self-efficacy to their students and teach them how to calculate it. Such a judgement requires focusing attention on the beliefs that accompany the learning methods that students employ and the strategies they use to maximize their learning (p125 – 126).

It is here that we can first start to deduce the cultural dimensions, as discussed by Oettingen (1995), that self-efficacy seems to represent and function in. Examining the above sample text, we can see that the student's own personal judgement of their capability to engage in the self-regulatory process is paramount in determining their self-efficacy beliefs; the possible judgements made by teachers or peers are not mentioned. Hence, one can argue that the text seemingly assumes that the student belongs to an individualist culture, rather than a collectivist culture, as the individuals own judgements and evaluations seem to take precedence in influencing self-efficacy beliefs. Additionally, as the text indicates it's beneficial for teachers to introduce this concept of self-efficacy to their students, an aspect of a weak uncertainty avoidance

culture is also shown, as introducing new concepts shows that the learning structure is not considered to be rigid. Interestingly, I feel it is important to note that the cyclic model of self-regulated learning is also based heavily on the idea that a student is within a small power distance culture as it promotes students directing and controlling of their own learning.

Pajares (2012) then moves on to explicitly addressing the ways in which one can raise a student's self-efficacy beliefs in regards to the four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and physiological indexes, as posited by Bandura (1997).

### **5.1 Mastery Experience**

Regarding master experience, it is important to keep in mind that the impact that such experiences have on self-efficacy beliefs depends on what a student makes of the experience themselves...For this reason, teachers should help ensure that success experiences are neither forgotten nor minimized. Writing assignments that ask students to reflect on their academic successes...help students maintain a focus on their previous mastery experiences (Pajares, 2012. p126).

Once again, we can see clear dimensions of individualist and weak uncertainty avoidance cultures being attributed to self-efficacy within the text, as Pajares states that what a student makes of their mastery experiences is what is most important and suggests the interjection of writing assignments by teachers to help record these experiences. Furthermore, aspects of a small power distance culture are shown via Pajares suggesting that teachers themselves help students engage in this self management and recording process instead of striving to reach standardized goals set by teachers in a large power distance culture.

### **5.2 Vicarious Experience**

A second source of self-efficacy information lies in the vicarious experience of observing others...children learn much from models, and different modelling practices can differently affect students' self-beliefs. Consequently, it is critical that teachers engage in effective modelling practices. *Coping models* - those who

good naturedly admit their errors when they make them or when their students point them out...help their students understand missteps are inevitable, that they can be overcome, and that even authority figures can make them. Conversely, *mastery models*...show that they are incapable of making [errors]. Such teaching models run the risk of imbuing in their students the idea that making errors is unacceptable and just plain dumb (Pajares, 2012. p 127).

The notion of teachers demonstrating coping modelling is in direct opposition to how Oettingen (1995) highlights teachers are meant to behave in large power distance cultures. Within large power distance cultures teachers are meant to display themselves as mastery models, who are not to be questioned or make errors. Again, due to this, we can see how raising self-efficacy beliefs in this manner relies on the premise that teaching is being done within a small power distance culture. Indeed, as Pajares (2012) implicitly states that mastery models run the risk of negative impacts regarding a student's self-efficacy, it is implied that such modelling should not be done by teachers, thus indirectly critiquing behaviour common in large power distance cultures.

### 5.3 Social Persuasions

Students are also attentive, and often quite vulnerable, to the social persuasions they receive from others...The verbal and nonverbal judgements of others can play a critical role in the development of a young person's self confidence, and these judgements often become the self-talk that students repeat covertly further down the road. Successful persuaders cultivate young people's beliefs in their capabilities while ensuring that the envisioned success is attainable. Positive persuasions encourage and empower; negative persuasions defeat and weaken self-beliefs...Praise and encouragement should be delivered honestly and in their proper measure when they are deserved...As teachers and parents hone their persuasive skills, they do well to foster in young people the belief that competence or ability is a changeable, controllable aspect of development. This means that they should encourage effort, perseverance, and persistence as ways to overcome obstacles...it is wise practice to praise the genuine effort and persistence a student puts forth (Pajares, 2012. p 128-130).

Within the text Pajares talks about the benefit of teacher involvement in providing positive social persuasions in order to raise student self-efficacy beliefs, stating that it is wise to praise the genuine effort and persistence of students. These social persuasions, advised to be given to each student, can be seen to show aspects of a weak uncertainty avoidance culture. As persuasions need to be “delivered honestly” and “in proper

measure” it implies that teachers will address each student individually, which exhibits a teaching method that promotes individualised instruction: an aspect of weak uncertainty avoidance cultures which is not present in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures.

#### 5.4 Physiological indexes

Students appraise their self-efficacy in part by the emotional feelings they experience as they contemplate an action. Teachers can help students read their own emotional feelings and teach them that, if they find themselves experiencing undue anxiety when faced with a task, this is an appropriate time to discuss their feelings with a teacher, parent, or counsellor...When students fear failure, they can engage in all sorts of self-handicapping strategies to avoid feeling the anxiety that accompanies this fear...Making students aware of the self-handicapping strategies they regularly use to decrease anxiety is a critical first step in teaching them how to circumvent such strategies (p 131).

Once again, as with social persuasions, Pajares advocates teacher involvement with individual students. In order to help mediate possible self-handicapping strategies students might employ, when feeling anxiety or fear, Pajares suggests that teachers teach their struggling students how to circumvent these feelings. Again, this individual involvement with students demonstrates aspects of a weak uncertainty avoidance culture. Additionally, Pajares even address possible impacts of gender on self-efficacy beliefs in regards to physiological indexes:

Self-efficacy beliefs can differ as a function of gender, sometimes to the detriment of girls in some areas of mathematics, science, and technology and other times to the detriment of boys in some areas of language arts...One challenge before educators is to alter students' views of academic subjects so that they are perceived as relevant to both girls and boys...There are a number of strategies that teachers can use to help alter stereotypical gender views of academic subjects and careers. One often used and effective strategy is to arrange for professional men and women to speak to students about academic fields and careers. For example, successful female computer programmers, mathematicians, physicists...serve as wonder models that help girls and young women appreciate that success in these fields is not a masculine imperative (p 131-132).

Interestingly, given the focus of my thesis research, Pajares is found to directly state an opposition towards masculine orientated cultures within his text. Encouraging a dismantlement of gender stereotypes as a challenge for all educators and suggesting a

strategy with which to do so, as such stereotypes can be harmful to students self-efficacy beliefs. Hence, clearly, this demonstrates Pajares' attitude that feminine cultures – where males and females are free from stereotypes to pursue their interests – are far more optimal than masculine cultures in producing positive self-efficacy beliefs.

### **5.5 Concluding Cultural Dimensions of Self-Efficacy**

As deduced from my close analysis of Pajares' (2012) work on self-efficacy, I can suggest that the cultural dimensions, as discussed by Oettingen (1995), represented and needed for self-efficacy to function optimally are those of an individualist, small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and feminine culture. Indeed, Pajares even directly opposes strong power distance and masculine cultures in his writing in regards to vicarious experiences and physiological indexes. This poses an interesting realization when it comes to the concept of self-efficacy: if self-efficacy is so beneficial to student learning (as previous research within my thesis supports) and promotes and thrives in individualist, small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and feminine cultures – then what are the implications of applying this model of self-efficacy in cultures that demonstrate the contrasting cultural dimensions?

If, as Pajares (2012) and Oettingen (1995) suggest in their work, collectivist, large power distance, strong uncertainty avoidance and masculine cultural dimensions are damaging to student learning, as they can negatively impact self-efficacy, does the Western model of self-efficacy not seemingly advocate for the removal or change of these contrasting cultural dimensions? In removing negative cultural dimensions, the overall benefit for students would be potentially higher self-efficacy beliefs – resulting in learning improvements. Hence, logically, it makes sense to remove and change any negative cultural dimensions that affect learning. However, this idea itself serves as being quite a philosophical and ethical dilemma.

Even though research and deductive reasoning indicates that these negative impacts on learning should be removed or changed, expecting whole cultures to change their beliefs to fit this model of self-efficacy can be considered unrealistic. Furthermore, by advocating for the change/removal of negative cultural dimensions, we are also implicitly stating that the cultural dimensions represented by our chosen self-efficacy

model are superior to others, at least in regards to student learning. Whilst research implies that this notion is true, ethically it is a very ambiguous statement to make. It is within the next chapter of this thesis that I shall examine the ethical dilemma of advocating for a global usage of the self-efficacy model.

## 6 THROUGH OTHER EYES

In order to examine the ethical dilemma of globally implementing the previously discussed self-efficacy model, I shall be referencing Andreotti and Souza's (2008) work which explores how “very often, approaches to global citizenship education in Europe address the agenda for international development in a manner that leaves assumptions unexamined and ignores how this agenda is re-interpreted in other contexts.” As I have suggested previously, the self-efficacy model as described by Pajares (2012) can also be seen to not consider how it could be re-interpreted or function in other cultural contexts. Due to this, Andreotti and Souza's (2008) work on global education can be seen to implicitly examine the problems that arise from this arguably culturally insensitive model of self-efficacy, namely that: “not addressing these different readings may result in the uncritical reinforcement of notions of the supremacy and universality of our (Western) ways of seeing, which can reproduce unequal relations of dialogue and power and undervalue other knowledge systems”. The aim of Andreotti and Souza's work is to address this perceived gap. To do so, they developed “a free online programme of study which was designed to enable educators to develop a set of tools to reflect on their own knowledge systems and engage with other knowledge systems in different ways” (2008).

In the following segments I shall first briefly examine the conceptual framework on which the programme is based, before discussing how the case studies contained within demonstrate the possible negative repercussions that can occur when cultural beliefs are not taken into account regarding education. Finally, I shall discuss how these findings relate to the ethical dilemma that imposing a globalist view of self-efficacy could incur.



## 6.1 Through Other Eyes Conceptual Framework

Within their work Andreotti and Souza (2008) challenge educators to critically reflect on their personal beliefs and acknowledge their biases, whilst taking into consideration the beliefs of other social groups. To assist in this Through Other Eyes (TOE) presents a conceptual framework to serve as the basis for the pedagogic organization and orientation for each part of the program.



Figure 1: TOE Conceptual Framework. From Andreotti, V., & Souza, L. M. T. M. (2008). *Learning to Read the World Through Other Eyes*.

As shown in figure X, the first step in the programme is learning to unlearn. Being able to realize that one's own beliefs are always in some way shaped by social, historical and cultural aspects, one can more objectively evaluate one's own beliefs and realize one's biases. Following this, the educator is introduced to new conceptual methods and guided in comparing and contrasting his or her beliefs against other conceptual models. Finally, the educator is assisted in learning to apply his or her new knowledge in re-arranging his or her own personal beliefs, perhaps coming to a new consensus – or at

least hopefully becoming aware of personal biases. Andreotti and Souza (2008) apply this conceptual framework to the notions of development, education, equality and poverty within their programme. However, I shall be choosing to focus on the educational aspect of the programme in order to maintain the pedagogical focus of this thesis.

## **6.2 Notions of Education**

After encouraging the reader to consider their definition of education with numerous question prompts and giving some different cultural perspectives to compare to personal beliefs, TOE provides some case study examples dated from 1867 to 1969 regarding the government of New Zealand and its native boarding schools designed for Maori children. Below are the comments and thoughts on the system by involved individuals:

**Some Maori elders:**

“We want our children to have access to all bodies of knowledge including the one of the colonisers. We gifted the land to the colonists so that our children could go to school and have the advantage of this other opening out, but not by cancelling out who we were first in order to get that. We did not say ‘by all means take this land because we are too dumb to think for ourselves and we need your schooling otherwise we will be eternally dumb’. We said: ‘we are clear about who we are and we also want to understand what you have brought as a resource. We might want to use it, we might not – we will decide’.”

**An inspector of native schools in 1888:**

“The work of teaching the Maoris to speak, write and understand English is in importance second only to that of making them acquainted with European customs and ways of thinking, and so fitting them for becoming orderly and law abiding citizens.”

**An inspector of native schools in 1908:**

“It will be of greater use to the Maori boy to know the principles and practices of agriculture, the elements of dairy farming, wool classing and the management of stock, than the declension of Latin nouns and verbs.”

**A director of education in 1929:**

“We should provide fully a type of education that would lead the Maori lad to become a good farmer and the Maori girl to become a good farmer’s wife.”

**Government report of 1961:**

“Urban migration is the best way to integrate the two species of New Zealanders. Education of Maori children will pave the way to further progress in housing, health, employment and acculturation. Children mix naturally so race relations are best served by absorbing as many Maori children as possible into Boarding schools.”

**A Maori activist in 2003:**

“Maori embraced schooling as a means to maintain their sovereignty and enhance their life-chances. The government, on the other hand, sought control over Maori and their resources through schooling. Maori wanted to extend their existing body of knowledge. The government, with its assimilation policy, intended to replace Maori culture with that of the European.”

**A Maori young person in a mainstream school in Christchurch in 2007:**

“School is boring and family sucks. It is your mates and rap that teach you what is important in life. I don’t think much about the future. I will end up working as a driver or in construction work. I don’t really care.”

Figure 2: Perspectives on New Zealand native boarding schools. From Andreotti, V., & Souza, L. M. T. M. (2008). *Learning to Read the World Through Other Eyes*.

As we can see from the text, the Maori elders state that they gave land to colonists in order to allow their children the opportunity to learn from them. Whether the Maori people wished to learn and whether they would use what they learned would be decided by the Maori people themselves. Conversely, when you contrast this to the perspectives

of the inspectors, director and government you can see some arguably shocking differences in how they perceived the situation.

From the year 1888, we can see that teaching the Maori people English was considered only second to making them acquainted with European customs and ways of thinking in order to become orderly, law abiding citizens, implying that they should be integrated into the European culture and were expected to abide by European laws. Additionally, from 1908 to 1929, the inspector and director advocate for teaching the Maori people how to become good farmers, as if any other profession or academic development would be of no use to the Maori people. Finally, from 1961, a government report eerily suggests “absorbing” as many of the Maori children as possible into the education system in order to pave the way for further progress; arguably, this can be seen as suggesting assimilation as the only logical step for the Maori people to take, perhaps indicating that the Maori culture itself has no value and is not worth preserving. The validity of these beliefs are echoed in more recent perspectives given by the Maori people. From 2003, we can see how a Maori activist does in fact regard the governments intervention in Maori culture as being due to their desire to control the Maori and their resources through schooling and assimilation, hence supporting my interpretation of the case studies. Finally, sadly, the perspective of the Maori youth from 2007 can be seen to display the outcome of this struggle between the Maori people and the government, as the youth shows no interest in his academic future (regarding school as boring), or his family.

It is from these comparative cases studies that we can see how easily one's beliefs and actions, perhaps made with the best intentions in mind are capable, of causing such ethical issues due to social, historic and cultural biases. Indeed, arguably the colonisers of New Zealand probably saw their educating and integrating of the Maori people as a somewhat altruistic endeavour, regarding the Maori culture as being undeveloped or backwards compared to their own. However, as we can see from the given perspectives, there were negative consequences for the Maori people that stemmed from these actions. It is within a similar vein that we can regard the application of self-efficacy on a global scale as being an ethical dilemma.

### **6.3 Self-Efficacy: The Ethical Dilemma**

As the Western model of self-efficacy, as discussed by Oettingen (1995) and Parajes (2012), seemingly states the superiority of individualist, small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and feminine cultural dimensions over those of their counterparts, we can draw a comparison between the New Zealand government's perceived cultural superiority to that of the indigenous Maori people. Additionally, in the same way this perceived cultural superiority led to a cultural cleansing of the Maori people, so too could rigorous application of our own self-efficacy model cause similar cultural damages if left unchecked. By introducing self-efficacy beliefs we might undermine the culture and community of a people, or even cause harm to the youth of a culture.

The ethical dilemma, then, is whether these cultural damages should even be considered when applying our self-efficacy model in contrasting cultural dimensions. If, as my research within this thesis suggests, self-efficacy positively benefits learning, should we not advocate for the change or removal of what are considered harmful cultural dimensions? Is it not beneficial for humanity as a whole to facilitate our ability to learn, regardless of the impact on cultures? Ironically, as Andreotti and Souza (2008) demonstrate in their programme, any answer to these questions will be afflicted by one's own personal beliefs in regards to one's own social, historical and cultural backgrounds. For example, although I personally believe in the promotion of equality and equal opportunities for the individual regardless of their culture, I cannot but help feel that the cultures of indigenous people who live in harmony with nature are worth preserving. Arguably, in promoting self-efficacy, we also inadvertently promote the aspects of an individualist culture via the focusing of one's inner goals on one's own personal desires, teaching the individual to measure their progress by their own standards and to disregard or omit the negative comparisons and critiques of others. These individualist culture aspects being promoted by self-efficacy can be seen as being in opposition to the way of life present within certain cultures, an example of which is found within the reflections of TOE as presented in figure 3.

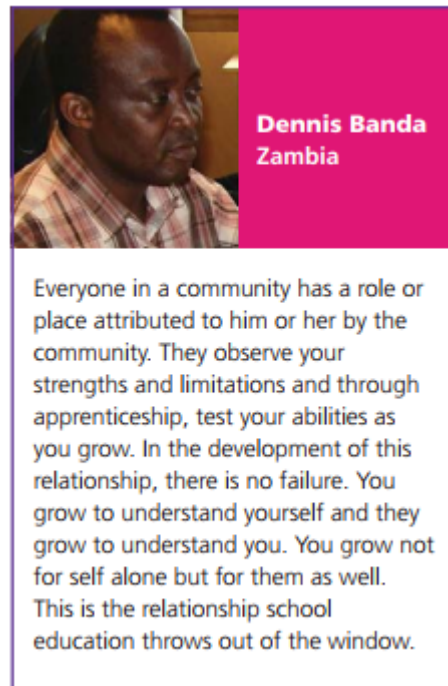


Figure 3: Reflection on equality.  
From Andreotti, V., & Souza, L. M. T. M. (2008). *Learning to Read the World Through Other Eyes*.

Within the image Dennis describes how a person's role within his community is attributed to them by the community. There is no perceived failure to be found in fulfilling this role; instead one simply grows to understand oneself. The individual grows not only for themselves alone, but for their community as a whole. Hence the focus is not the individual's wants and needs, but the community's wants and needs. Finally, Dennis even directly states that he believes the school education removes this relationship. Therefore, we can see how raising self-efficacy beliefs, as discussed within this thesis by Pajares (2012), may negatively impact Dennis' community.

Hence, if we cannot address this ethical dilemma of applying our self-efficacy model globally, we then have to ask ourselves: have we even considered adapting our model of self-efficacy? Is it possible to somehow achieve the same self-efficacy gains, regardless of the cultural dimensions, by changing the way in which we interact with and develop self-efficacy? Furthermore, has there been any research made that attempts to do such a thing?

## **7 CONCLUDING MY LITERARY REVIEW**

Thus far, primarily referencing the works of Oettingen (1995) and Hofstede (1980, 1986), I have attempted to demonstrate the positive and negative impacts that cultural dimensions can have on self-efficacy beliefs in a pedagogical setting. Following this, I used the cultural dimensions outlined by Hofstede and Oettingen to examine the self-efficacy model, as discussed by Pajares (2012), in order to highlight the cultural dimensions that our model of self-efficacy seems to promote and oppose. Finally, I discussed how by using the self-efficacy model itself we are capable of inadvertently undermining or harming a culture or community, drawing a comparative example from the work of Andreotti and Souza (2008). From this literature review, I hope to have drawn attention to the importance of acknowledging the impacts of not only cultural dimensions on self-efficacy, but also the need to be mindful of the cultures in which one wants to implement self-efficacy beliefs (less one inadvertently brings harm). Hence, with these considerations in mind, I set out to examine whether recent research into self-efficacy addresses the potential issue of cultural dimensions, whilst, as a secondary focus, attempting to use my data to determine whether the possible impacts on culture that may arise from the implementation of self-efficacy are acknowledged and/or discussed within recent self-efficacy research.

## 8 AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As stated previously, the main aim of my research is to attempt to assess whether recent research into self-efficacy accounts for the impact of cultural dimensions in its findings. However, as this is a very broad topic to analyse due to the variety of research concerning self-efficacy and the nature of cultural dimensions, it was necessary to narrow the focus. This was done in two ways: first, by limiting the examination of research to pedagogical self-efficacy studies stemming from the United States (US), and, second, by selecting the easily identifiable cultural aspects of ethnicity and gender, as they represent different cultural dimensions. It should be noted here that the need to determine which cultural dimensions are being addressed within the research is irrelevant to my study, as I am simply determining whether known cultural impacts of ethnicity and gender are accounted for. Thus, in narrowing my research focus, I was able to examine how US education in particular accounts for the cultural aspects of ethnicity and gender on self-efficacy findings, whilst also lessening the potential impact of personal interpretations in conducting my analysis.

Hence, a more focused aim for this research was formed: to discover whether recent pedagogical research in the United States of America accounts for the impact of ethnicity and gender when assessing its findings.

With this aim as the foundation of my research, three research questions (RQ) were devised to be applied to each research paper examined:

**RQ1:** Does the research identify and account for the ethnic background of its participants?

**RQ2:** Does the research identify and account for gender culture?

**RQ3:** To what extent are ethnicity and gender addressed in the research?



Finally, my secondary aim of examining whether recent research papers address possible problems that may arise from how self-efficacy is implemented, was determined via the qualitative data of RQ3. However, as stated previously, given the scope of my research and the need to narrow my focus, this aim comes as a secondary focus; yet is still perceived as being important enough to discuss within my findings (as I have established within my literature review).

## 9 METHOD

In order to conduct my research I obtained a sample of pedagogical research papers from the US that had self-efficacy as their focus. Papers were then analysed to discover whether they addressed ethnicity or gender impacts within their findings. Finally, the extent to which ethnicity and gender were addressed was recorded.

### 9.1 Selection Process

Papers selected for this research were found through Proquest's Humanities, Education and Social Sciences database. A basic search for self-efficacy was entered and results were filtered out via three specific criteria: date (year 2010-2017), location (United States) and database (education collection). Diligence was made to ensure the analysed data adhered to pedagogical research conducted post 2010 in the US concerning self-efficacy. The first 20 papers that met the prescribed criteria and were easily accessible in pdf format were then selected to be part of the research.

### 9.2 Data Collection and Analysis Method

In order to answer the first research question a simple self-designed quantitative rating template was constructed to measure each research paper's cultural sensitivity to ethnicity (table 1).

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Yes = 1</b>	<b>No = 0</b>
Is Ethnicity of Participants Given?		
Are Possible Impacts of Ethnic Culture Identified?		
Are Possible Impacts of Ethnic Culture on Results Addressed?		
<b>Total Score</b>		

*Table 1: Self-designed rating template to measure ethnic sensitivity of paper.*

A similar rating template for research question two was also constructed to measure the cultural sensitivity of gender for each research paper (table 2).

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Yes = 1</b>	<b>No = 0</b>
Is Gender of Participants Given?		
Are Possible Impacts of Gender Culture Identified?		
Are Possible Impacts of Gender Culture on Results Addressed?		
<b>Total Score</b>		

*Table 2: Self-designed rating template to measure gender sensitivity of paper.*

These rating templates were filled out as each paper was read. Each template consisted of three separate questions in order to measure ethnic and gender cultural sensitivity. First, I asked whether the ethnicity or gender of participants was given. Second, I asked whether the paper identified possible impacts of ethnicity or gender. Finally, I asked if the impacts of ethnicity or gender on the paper's results were addressed. The questions were answered via means of a simple yes or no check box. If the answer was yes the paper was awarded one point; no resulted in zero points being awarded to the paper. Length or depth to which each paper identified and addressed ethnicity and gender was not taken into consideration during this process. After each template was completed a total score (zero to three) was calculated separately for both ethnicity and gender template to avoid convolution of results. This score showed the perceived ethnic and gender cultural sensitivity of the paper. Cultural sensitivity itself was measured on a simple scale from zero to three according to the paper's total score:

0 = paper shows extreme lack of ethnic/gender cultural sensitivity. Ethnicity/gender not given, identified or addressed.

1 = paper shows minimal acknowledgement of ethnic/gender culture. Ethnicity/gender is stated but not explored.

2 = paper shows moderate acknowledgement. Ethnicity/gender has been stated and either identified or addressed within the paper.

3 = paper shows a deep acknowledgement of possible ethnic/gender impacts on its findings. Ethnicity/gender is not only stated – but both identified and then addressed within the results.

Results of the templates were entered into an overall table showing each paper's score individually. Each paper was then to be categorised and sorted according to its place on the cultural sensitivity scale together with the other papers after all data had been collected (table 3).

<b>Research Paper Cultural Sensitivity Score</b>	<b>Ethnicity: number of papers</b>	<b>Gender: numbers of papers</b>
0		
1		
2		
3		

*Table 3: Number of papers sorted according to cultural sensitivity.*

Following this process the combined total score of all papers was calculated for both ethnicity and gender and entered into a short summary table showing the score of all combined papers out of a total sixty points (table 4).

<b>Cultural Sensitivity</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>
<b>Total score of all papers:</b>	X/60	X/60

*Table 4: Total combined cultural sensitivity score of papers out of a possible 60 points.*

Finally, after both templates were filled out, recorded, sorted according to cultural sensitivity score and the total amount of points tallied, I asked a simple qualitative question to assist in interpreting the findings of my research. This took the form of a brief summary (a sentence/short paragraph) ascribed to each paper highlighting the degree to which ethnicity/gender were discussed and stating any noticeable attributes of the paper regarding culture and the self-efficacy model (e.g. “Although paper gave, identified and addressed ethnicity and gender it was very brief in doing so, considering the impacts to be inconsequential on its results”). In doing this I was able to add a deeper layer of meaning to my quantitative results.

## 10 RESULTS

### 10.1 Research Questions 1 and 2

Results for RQ 1 and 2 were first collected individually for each paper, before being sorted according to their cultural sensitivity score and having the total combined cultural sensitivity scores calculated.

No.	Research Paper	Date	Ethnicity	Gender
1	Jan.	2015	0	3
2	George, <u>Locasto</u> , <u>Pyo</u> & Cline.	2017	1	1
3	<u>Harthy</u> & Was.	2013	0	1
4	<u>Efrat</u>	2016	1	1
5	<u>Steca</u> , <u>Abela</u> , <u>Monzani</u> , <u>Greco</u> , <u>Hazel</u> & <u>Hankin</u> .	2014	0	3
6	<u>Meissner</u> , <u>Kowalski</u> & <u>Gassman</u> .	2013	0	3
7	<u>Durkin</u> & <u>Feinn</u> .	2017	2	2
8	<u>Marr</u> & <u>Wilcox</u> .	2015	3	2
9	<u>Lim</u> , <u>Heckman</u> , <u>Letkiewicz</u> & <u>Montalto</u> .	2014	3	3
10	Brown, <u>Concannon</u> , Marx, Donaldson, & Black.	2016	0	3
11	Edwards-Joseph & Baker.	2014	3	1
12	<u>Fahlman</u> & <u>Gutuskey</u> .	2015	3	3
13	Miller, Russell, Cheng & <u>Skarbek</u> .	2015	3	1
14	<u>Mee</u> .	2014	1	1
15	Jamil, Downer & <u>Pianta</u> .	2012	3	3
16	Johnson, <u>Ziomek-Daigle</u> , Haskins & Paisley.	2016	3	1
17	<u>Almedia</u> , Jameson, <u>Riesen</u> & McDonnell.	2016	0	1
18	<u>Fantz</u> , <u>Siller</u> & <u>DeMiranda</u> .	2011	1	1
19	Tan & Alpert.	2013	3	1
20	<u>Cubillos</u> & <u>Ilvento</u> .	2012	0	1

*Table 5: Individual scores for ethnicity and gender of the 20 analysed papers.*

The above table shows, in order of paper analysis from 1-20, the individual author of each paper, the date the paper was published and the total ethnicity and gender cultural sensitivity scores for each paper. Research paper titles were not included in the table due to possible title length cluttering table presentation. In order to better understand the above data, papers were then sorted according to overall cultural sensitivity score for both ethnicity and gender (table 6).

<b>Cultural Sensitivity Score</b>	<b>Ethnicity Research</b>	<b>Gender Research</b>
<b>0</b>	7	0
<b>1</b>	4	11
<b>2</b>	1	2
<b>3</b>	8	7

*Table 6: Papers sorted according to cultural sensitivity score.*

Results showed some discrepancies in cultural sensitivity scores between ethnicity and gender within the papers. In order to keep the explanation of results clear, I will explain both ethnicity and gender scores separately.

#### 10.1.1 RQ1: Ethnicity Papers by Score

First, for ethnicity, out of the 20 papers examined:

7 papers neither gave, identified or addressed potential ethnicity impacts within their research (0 cultural sensitivity score).

4 papers gave the ethnicity of their participants, but did not identify or address possible impacts (1 cultural sensitivity score).

1 paper gave the ethnicity of its participants, and either identified or addressed the potential impacts (2 cultural sensitivity score).

8 papers gave, identified and addressed the potential impacts of ethnicity (3 cultural sensitivity score).

#### 10.1.2 RQ2: Gender Papers by Score

Comparatively, for gender, out of the 20 papers examined:

0 papers failed to either give, identify or address impacts of gender within their research.

11 papers gave the gender of their participants, but did not identify or address possible impacts.

2 papers gave the gender of participants, and either identified or addressed potential impacts.

7 papers gave, identified and addressed the potential impacts of gender.

### 10.1.3 RQ 1 and 2: Total Combined Cultural Sensitivity Scores

Finally, the total cultural sensitivity scores for the papers were calculated (table 7).

<b>Cultural Sensitivity</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>
<b>Total score of all papers:</b>	30/60	36/60

*Table 7: Total combined cultural sensitivity scores of ethnicity and gender out of 60 possible points.*

For ethnicity a total of 30 points out of a possible 60 were recorded. Conversely, gender had a total of 36 points out of a possible 60. Results were not given in percentages due to the sample size of the research as it may be misleading.

### 10.2 RQ3: Extent to Which Ethnicity and Gender are Addressed

Extent of address for ethnicity and gender was examined exclusively for each paper. Examinations were then organised into table 8 in the order in which each paper was analysed. These order numbers correspond with those of table 5. Again, research paper titles are not included in the table in order to keep data more presentable and clear. However, each paper's cultural sensitivity score has been included for clarity (E = ethnicity score, G = gender score).



No.	Research Paper	Date	Score	Extent to Which Ethnicity and Gender are Addressed
1	Jan.	2015	E:0 G:3	Research doesn't give, identify or address ethnic impacts. However, research gives and identifies gender culture quite significantly, referencing previous works that address gender within the same field as the research. Although possible gender impacts on results are addressed, no explanation is given as to why/how the impacts themselves occur.
2	George, Locasto, Pyo & Cline.	2017	E:1 G:1	Research mentions ethnicity and gender very briefly as “predominately white and female”. No further explanations are given as to what this might entail or possible effects on the research.
3	Harthy & Was.	2013	E:0 G:1	Research gives numerical number for % of female participants. No number or mention of ethnicity is given. No further identification or discussion of ethnicity or gender is found.
4	Efrat.	2016	E:1 G:1	Research gives very detailed statistical data on gender of participants and their ethnicity. However, does not clearly identify or address issues of gender and ethnicity. One reference is made to age and gender in bibliography – but not explored upon in the research itself.
5	Steca, Abela, Monzani, Greco, Hazel & Hankin.	2014	E:0 G:3	Ethnicity not given, identified or addressed. Gender of participants is given, discrepancies between sexes are identified in the data – discrepancies are addressed briefly in ending discussion as not confirming previous results from other research, but are not explored further.
6	Meissner, Kowalski & Gassman.	2013	E:0 G:3	Ethnicity not given, identified or addressed. Gender of participants was given. However, although gender was identified as a possible factor of influence on results, researchers chose to omit analysing data as the male to female ratio was skewed. Researchers identified gender as something to be explored in future research.
7	Durkin & Feinn.	2017	E:2 G:2	Ethnicity and gender of participants were given. Research did not identify possible impacts of ethnicity/gender on

				research. However, research did very briefly address potential differences in results as being due to other factors than ethnicity or gender.
8	Marr & Wilcox.	2015	E:3 G:2	Ethnicity and gender of participants was given. Gender was not identified as having a possible impact on results, but was addressed in discussion comments as being unable to be evaluated due to skewed male to female ratio of participants. Ethnicity was identified as having a possible effect on results via social groups and highlighted as a topic for further research, but not explored further.
9	Lim, Heckman, Letkiewicz & Montalto.	2014	E:3 G:3	Research gave both gender and ethnicity of its participants. Ethnic and gender impacts were strongly identified in the data as variables of influence. Both gender and ethnicity were addressed in the results and discussion areas of the paper. Due to topic of research this focus on ethnicity and gender was expected: Financial stress, self-efficacy and financial help-seeking behaviour of college students.
10	Brown, Concannon, Marx, Donaldson, & Black.	2016	E:0 G:3	Ethnicity was not given, identified or addressed. Gender was given and identified in depth with references to previous studies on gender within a similar field. Gender was addressed in the results, but was shown to have no impact. Topic of research: Examination of middle school students' STEM self-efficacy.
11	Edwards-Joseph & Baker.	2014	E:3 G:1	Research gave both ethnicity and gender of its participants. Gender differences were not identified or addressed. However, due to the nature of the research (a focus on Caribbean students in the US education system), it is no surprise to find that ethnic cultural dimensions were both heavily identified and addressed in great detail within the paper, with plenty of references to earlier studies.
12	Fahlman & Gutuskey.	2015	E:3 G:3	Ethnicity and gender of participants is given. Both gender and ethnicity are identified as factors of importance and are summarily addressed in the results, with ethnicity receiving more of a focus within the research. Again, due to the

				nature of the research (minority youth), it is not surprising to find that Hahlman and Gutuskey gave considerable attention to these cultural dimensions.
13	Miller, Russell, Cheng & Skarbek.	2015	E:3 G:1	Ethnicity and gender of participants are given. Gender is not identified or addressed. However, ethnicity is briefly identified and addressed within the research discussion; acknowledging the need for a more diverse sample size and highlighting basic issues that “non-native English speakers” and “at-risk racial groups” might encounter.
14	Mee.	2014	E:1 G:1	Both gender and ethnicity are given. However, neither gender nor ethnicity are identified as factors of influence or addressed within the research.
15	Jamil, Downer & Pianta.	2012	E:3 G:3	Gender and ethnicity were both given, yet researchers identified gender and ethnicity as factors with no impact on their results, stating that due to this they would not address them within their findings. Hence paper receives full marks, despite not exploring possible impacts that gender/ethnicity may have on findings.
16	Johnson, Ziomek-Daigle, Haskins & Paisley.	2016	E:3 G:1	Gender and ethnicity of participants given. Gender is not identified or addressed. Ethnic impacts are strongly identified and addressed as one of the main focuses within the research. Research acknowledges the need for a larger sample cell size in confirming its findings on ethnic impacts. Again, due to focus of the research this is not unexpected (school counsellor self-efficacy with English language learners).
17	Almedia, Jameson, Riesen & McDonnell.	2016	E:0 G:1	Ethnicity not given, identified or addressed. Gender of participants was given, but not identified as a factor on results or addressed.
18	Fantz, Siller & DeMiranda.	2011	E:1 G:1	Gender and ethnicity of participants is given – but neither are identified or addressed as important factors within the research.
19	Tan & Alpert.	2013	E:3 G:1	Both gender and ethnicity of participants was given. Ethnicity was identified and addressed greatly within the

				research. Again, this is unsurprising due to the nature of the research (focus on internationally educated nurses). Gender was not identified or addressed.
20	Cubillos & Ilvento.	2012	E:0 G:1	Ethnicity of participants was not given. Although the research identified and addressed the impact of studying abroad on students – it did not consider the role a student's ethnicity may have played in their findings, for example, did someone with French heritage go to France? This is something that could possibly impact motivation/self efficacy beliefs and have effected the results. Hence, due to not measuring, identifying or addressing ethnic culture from the participants standpoint, I have elected not to award points for ethnicity in my evaluation of this paper. Finally, gender was given, but not identified or addressed.

*Table 8: Raw data for RQ3 addressing extent to which ethnicity and gender are addressed.*

Within these simple qualitative conclusions for each paper I attempted to highlight not only the extent to which each paper addressed ethnicity and gender, but also stated other factors that I considered to be of interest (e.g. papers that explicitly had a focus on discussing ethnicity or gender); attention was also paid to how self-efficacy itself was presented within the paper when formulating these conclusions. After this raw data had been collected I then categorised the data into 3 thematically different categories.

<b>Thematic Group</b>	<b>Number of Papers</b>
Explicitly concerned with ethnicity/gender or focused on a topic in which ethnicity and gender have known impacts.	6
Explicitly dismissed ethnicity or gender as having no impact on results.	2
Explicitly stated that ethnicity or gender could not be examined due to skewed samples.	2

*Table 9: Thematic grouping of qualitative data.*

The above table shows that 6 out of the 20 analysed papers either had ethnicity/gender as their research focus or were concerned with examining a subject area in which

ethnic/gender impacts are well known (e.g. STEM sciences where women are a minority). Furthermore, 2 papers out of 20 explicitly dismissed ethnicity/gender as having no perceived impact on results; and 2 papers out of 20 explicitly stated that ethnicity/gender impacts could not be examined due to skewed samples.

Finally, no papers were found to mention possible cultural impacts from how they implemented self-efficacy or used self-efficacy data gathering tools (hence no thematic grouping was necessary). Instead, when regarding the raw data, we can see that research generally seems focused around how the impacts of ethnicity and gender affect self-efficacy beliefs (e.g. focus on internationally educated nurses self-efficacy), rather than how the way one raises self-efficacy itself might negatively impact the culture of the participants. Indeed, no pedagogical papers were found within my sample that explicitly examined how implementing ways to raise self-efficacy beliefs may cause any sort of negative consequence. However, it is important to note that as this topic came as a secondary focus in my research I should take this interpretation of my qualitative data critically.

### **10.3 Limitations**

Before discussing the results of my research, it is important to note the limitations of this study. First, a higher sample size would be needed to discover if results are conclusive across all US research. Preliminary search results in Proquest returned a total of 277 research papers out of which only 20 were analysed; this number may be even higher if multiple databases were also included in data collection. Second, as my research was conducted by a single person, the inclusion of more analysts would make it possible to avoid potential bias or human error in the collection of data and results; this is especially true for the gathering of my qualitative data. Third, no contact was made with the researchers of the papers being analysed. Contact with researchers would allow for a deeper insight in evaluating research data; again, this is especially true for my qualitative data concerning the possible negative cultural impacts of implementing self-efficacy. Fourth, more cultural dimensions could have been analysed in an attempt to reveal more valuable data, thereby creating a more valid analysis of the overall cultural sensitivity of my sample.

Finally, in hindsight, a fourth qualitative research question directly examining how self-

efficacy beliefs are addressed within the papers would have also lent more validity in determining whether the papers were/are aware of the possible cultural impacts in how one attempts to raise self-efficacy. These limitations should be kept in mind when discussing the results of my research.

## 11 DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of my research I can deduce that there is certainly some attention paid to the possible cultural impacts of ethnicity and gender within pedagogical US self-efficacy research. Again, for clarity's sake, I would like to discuss the results for both research questions one and two, before reflecting on how the data I obtained from the third research question deepens understanding of quantitative data results (from RQ1 and RQ2).

### 11.1 RQ1 and RQ2: Does the Research Identify and Account for the Ethnic Background/Gender of its Participants?

Achieving a total score of 30 out of 60, ethnicity was the least represented of the two examined cultural impactors within my sample data. Additionally, ethnicity was the only cultural impactor to receive multiple cultural sensitivity scores of 0 within all the analysed papers (7 papers failed to give, identify or account for ethnicity at all). Conversely, gender always received a minimum cultural sensitivity score of 1, meaning the gender of participants was at least always given within each paper, indicating gender was seen as a factor of more importance to record than ethnicity. This initial interpretation of the results would lead us to believe that, to researchers located in the US, ethnicity does not hold as much importance as gender when it comes to accounting for cultural impacts in recent pedagogical self-efficacy research. However, this is not necessarily the case.

As my cultural sensitivity scale stated earlier, papers with cultural sensitivity scores below 2 show either a total lack of cultural sensitivity or a minimal amount of cultural sensitivity. Hence, papers scoring  $<2$  can be considered to fail in properly acknowledging ethnic/gender cultural impacts, as the papers give ethnicity/gender, but do not identify or address possible impacts on results. Due to this, I can dismiss papers scoring  $<2$  as being culturally insensitive. In doing so, the results of my data become much clearer to interpret.

As both ethnicity and gender have a total of 9 papers each scoring >1 on the cultural sensitivity scale, those 9 papers not only give, but also identify and/or address ethnic/gender cultural impacts. Hence, they are seen as being moderately to highly culturally sensitive according to my self devised scale. Thus, as both ethnicity and gender have 9 papers scoring >1 on the sensitivity scale, I can suggest that ethnicity and gender are of equal importance within pedagogical US self-efficacy research.

Following this same logic (papers scoring <2 being dismissed), only a total of 9 papers for both ethnicity and gender identified and/or addressed cultural impacts in a meaningful way: less than half of the sample. Due to this I can argue that ethnicity and gender are not identified or/and addressed as much as they should be. Given the potential importance of cultural dimension impacts on self-efficacy (as discussed within the literary review), I can argue that ideally each paper should achieve a cultural sensitivity score of 3 in order to address possible impacts of ethnicity/gender on the paper's results (increasing the validity of the paper). However, when reviewing my data from RQ3, a clearer picture as to why research does not always addresses impacts of ethnicity and gender arises.

### **11.2 RQ3: To What Extent are Ethnicity and Gender Addressed in the Research?**

When reviewing the summaries for RQ3, three noticeable points become quite clear that expand understanding of results for RQ1 and RQ2.

First, only three papers received a cultural sensitivity score of 3 for both ethnicity and gender. Out of these three papers, one dismissed possible impacts of ethnicity and gender as having no consequences on their findings (stating they would not address them within their research); so, even though ethnicity/gender was given, identified and addressed, the paper did not actually explore possible impacts. Furthermore, out of the remaining two papers, one focused more on ethnicity than gender when discussing its findings, meaning that out of all 20 papers from my sample, only one paper gave an equal amount of attention to addressing the impacts of both ethnicity and gender within its research. On noticing this, it became clear that research leaned more towards either ethnicity or gender when identifying and addressing potential impacts.



Second, in noticing the predisposition of papers to focus on either ethnicity or gender, it became apparent that papers with a cultural sensitivity score of 3 for ethnicity/gender either had those topics as the central focus of their research (e.g. research concerning minority youth), or the research itself was focused around a topic in which ethnicity or gender differences were readily apparent (e.g. research concerning middle school students' interest in STEM sciences where women are a minority); 6 out of the 20 papers were seen to have an explicit focus on either ethnicity or gender impacts as noted via my thematic grouping.

Finally, this predisposition to focus on and have either ethnicity or gender as a central factor examined in the research was supported by the lack of papers achieving a moderate cultural sensitivity score of 2. As it would be very strange for a paper to identify possible cultural impacts of ethnicity or gender, but not address them in results, it is no surprise to see that the two papers awarded a cultural sensitivity score of 2 did not initially identify the possible impacts of ethnicity and gender on their results, but instead noticed the ethnic/gender impacts within their own results and then addressed them. This means that papers that were measured as being highly culturally sensitive were often focused on exploring the impacts of ethnicity and/or gender to begin with.

Regarding self-efficacy itself, no papers were found to explicitly address possible cultural impacts from the ways one attempts to raise or implement self-efficacy. This comes as no surprise given the nuanced dimension of the topic itself and the location in which the research was being conducted (US being a Western society promoting the benefit of high self-efficacy beliefs as evidenced by the papers in my sample). However, once again, it is important to note the limitations of this conclusion due to lack of a more refined research question addressing the topic.

### **11.3 Research Conclusion**

When combining and evaluating the results of my research questions I can argue that pedagogical self-efficacy research in the US post 2010 does pay a somewhat moderate amount of attention to ethnicity and gender impacts when assessing its findings (9/20 papers for both ethnicity and gender being considered culturally sensitive). However, as 11 papers out of a possible 20 were considered to be culturally insensitive towards

either ethnicity or gender, I can argue that there is certainly room for improvement when it comes to identifying and addressing the potential impacts for both ethnic and gender culture. As the possible impacts of cultural dimensions on self-efficacy can greatly affect self-efficacy beliefs (Oettingen, 1995), I can suggest that it should be considered a substantial problem if even a few papers fail to account for possible cultural dimensions that might impact their research. However, expecting every research paper to accurately account for all cultural dimensions can be considered unrealistically ideal, due to the difficulty of measuring and understanding what cultural dimensions are at play. Hence, it is no surprise to find that papers generally choose to focus or address specific cultural dimensions within their research.

In total, 13/20 papers examined in my sample are considered to be culturally sensitive towards either ethnicity or gender, with seven papers failing to be culturally sensitive towards either of the two. These 13 papers largely tended to focus on explicitly identifying and addressing either ethnicity or gender impacts, but not both. Furthermore, it should be noted that research, in general, did not tend to explore the potential impacts of ethnicity and gender unless it was a central focus of the research. A possible explanation for this could be due to the complexity of accurately measuring and assessing the impact of ethnicity/gender. By focusing research on either ethnicity or gender more time is able to be devoted to accurately addressing and understanding their possible impacts, helping focus the research and improve its validity.

Finally, no papers in my sample seemed to demonstrate an awareness of possible cultural impacts arising from how one attempted to implement self-efficacy. However, this is not to say that there is no research relating to the topic itself. Earley (1994), for instance, has conducted research into the cultural effects of training on self-efficacy and performance regarding managers from Hong Kong and the United States. Earley discovered that self-focused training for individuals coming from an individualist culture (US managers) had a stronger impact on self-efficacy beliefs and performance than those coming from a collectivist culture (Hong Kong managers). Conversely, the managers from Hong Kong benefited more from group focused training than self-focused training in relation to effects on their self-efficacy beliefs and performance. Although no note of negative cultural impacts was explicitly given in Earley's work, his research still validates the importance of considering how we implement ways of raising

self-efficacy depending on the cultural dimensions that may be present. As Earley (1994) states himself: “Whilst scholars have increasingly emphasized the important role in work performance of a person's cognitive estimate of his or her capability to perform a task, or his or her self-efficacy, scant attention has been paid to how self-efficacy functions across national and cultural work contexts.” Arguably, it can be suggested that this statement rings true even today given the findings of my research.

However, as stated previously, the interpretation of my results needs to be taken critically due to the small sample size of the research and the potential of bias due to human error and my data collection method.

#### **11.4 Future Directions for Research**

Further analysis of more papers, through multiple databases, could be made in order to achieve a more valid understanding of how US research addresses ethnicity and gender within its scope. Additionally, similar research could be made into understanding how other countries address potential cultural dimensions within their work. This would allow the exploration of potential differences in the way in which each country approaches the possible impacts of ethnicity and gender.

Finally, subsequent research could focus on understanding how exactly US researchers account for cultural dimensions within their research regarding self-efficacy. For example, in research conducted to raise self-efficacy beliefs, do researchers simply apply common concepts to raise self-efficacy (e.g. coping models, persuasions) regardless of a student's cultural background? Such research could prove very enlightening in addressing the possible ways in which cultures might react to Western notions about the importance and benefit of certain self-efficacy beliefs.

## 12 FINAL CONCLUSION

Throughout the course of this thesis I have turned a critical pedagogical lens on examining cultural dimensions and their impacts on self-efficacy, as well as examining the cultural dimensions promoted by the Western self-efficacy model itself.

First, I briefly determined self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994) and highlighted high self-efficacy's ability to assist students in achieving academic success. Afterwards, I explored how cultural dimensions are capable of negatively impacting the self-efficacy beliefs of students, primarily referencing the works of Hofstede (1980, 1986) and Oettingen (1995) in order to do so. Following this I highlighted the cultural dimensions that the self-efficacy model, as discussed by Pajares (2012), promotes. Closely analysing Pajares' instructions on how to raise student self-efficacy beliefs, I determined that my self-efficacy model promotes individualist, small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and feminine cultures via its usage and implementation. Additionally, these same cultural dimensions were also discussed as being beneficial to self-efficacy within Oettingen's (1995) work as well.

I then considered the ethical dilemma in promoting the suggested superior cultural dimensions of individualism, small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and femininity over those of their counterparts. Borrowing from the work of Andreotti and Souza (2008) I drew a comparison between how the New Zealand government inadvertently undermined and subverted the culture of the Maori people via their education system, and how implementing our self-efficacy model globally may lead to similar consequences.

Using the work of Hofstede (1980, 1986) and Oettingen (1995) I highlighted the need to explore whether recent pedagogical research concerning self-efficacy addressed the impact of cultural dimensions given the importance of cultural dimension influence on self-efficacy (and therefore student learning). As a secondary focus, I also attempted to determine whether recent pedagogical research was aware of the possible cultural impacts stemming from ways in which one attempts to raise self-efficacy.

In formulating my research aims I realized the need to revise my research aim to a more achievable goal: to discover whether recent pedagogical research in the United States of America accounts for the impact of possible cultural aspects, specifically those of ethnicity and gender, when assessing its findings, my secondary focus being to use my results in determining whether research demonstrated an awareness of possible cultural impacts arising from how one attempts to implement or introduce self-efficacy.

Finally, my research results determined that although ethnicity and gender impacts are somewhat addressed within US self-efficacy research (9/20 papers addressing both ethnicity and gender), there is certainly room for improvement given how impactful cultural dimensions can be on self-efficacy. Additionally, I concluded through the use of my qualitative research data that ways in which self-efficacy can impact culture were not addressed within any of the research papers within my sample. Referencing Earley (1994), I highlighted the genuine lack of research concerning this topic and argued that my results still validate his statement. However, I noted the limitations of my own research for this interpretation, suggesting I take this interpretation critically.

Overall, the research of this thesis demonstrates that as self-efficacy beliefs can play such an important role in student academic success, it is beneficial if educators are aware of the possible cultural influences that may negatively impact student self-efficacy beliefs. In being aware of these influences, educators can hopefully be more successful in developing high self-efficacy beliefs within their students, enhancing student learning. However, as educators are also in a position of power, they need to be mindful of the cultural dimensions they promote through their implementation of self-efficacy, lest educators inadvertently undermine or alienate students with different cultural value systems to themselves. As Earley (1994) states himself:

Training should be congruent with a person's cultural background as well as with individual experiences. This does not mean that a manager must rely on a person's cultural background alone; rather, it requires a manager to recognize intracultural variation as well. Within any given national boundary, there are many subcultures and many individual deviations within a given subculture. The managerial challenge arises from getting to know each employee's values and beliefs as they are shaped by culture and by individual experiences. (Earley, 1994. p, 26).

Hence, in line with Earley's (1994) work, it is wise if educators also consider what

cultural dimensions are at play with each student and adapt the way they attempt to influence self-efficacy beliefs accordingly. Although this balancing act may be difficult and time consuming to manage, given the proposed benefits, educators should not shy away from the challenge.

## 13 REFERENCES

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