

MASTER THESIS

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**Self-esteem, competence and classroom engagement
- a quantitative and qualitative study in Norway and North
America**

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This cross-cultural study explores differences between Norwegian and American 5th-7th graders on self-esteem and school related variables such as academic self-concept (ASC), academic achievement, and classroom engagement. A quantitative survey method was used to access information about these variables. However, a qualitative interview method was also applied to achieve a broader understanding of the student's perception of and experience with the self-esteem concept and certain feedback situations at school. For the interviews, only a selected part of the 6th graders were participating. The American students scored higher than the Norwegian students on both self-esteem and ASC, and the American teachers rated their students higher on classroom engagement. Interestingly, no significant difference was found on student-rated classroom engagement or actual achievement in the two countries. In defining self-esteem the Norwegian students focused more on "belief in self" despite of others criticism, while the American students focused more strongly on "belief in one's abilities" and on "feeling good about self". Throughout the interviews they differed in their concern about "self and others" versus "just self". Both the quantitative and qualitative results were discussed in light of cultural aspects such as equality, individualism, the "Law of Jante", and the "American Dream". Finally, the self-esteem scores in Norway and America were discussed in relation to the cultural differences and similarities in the students' understanding and experience of self-esteem found in the interview analysis.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In today's Western society it is viewed as desirable to be self-confident. It is generally assumed that people who feel good about themselves and believe in themselves live happier lives and are more successful as job applicants, partners and friends. On the other hand, those who have low self-confidence seem to be insecure in most aspects of their lives. They might have problems getting in contact with people whether they are friends or customers and they might also in general be "down" on themselves. Most cultural studies on the self are done on differences between Western and Eastern countries, with a focus on individualism and collectivism (Heine, 2001; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, even though western countries do have a similar cultural influence, it does not mean that they are equal in every aspect. Throughout history Western countries have driven to become closer to each other in areas such as media, fashion and cultural experiences. They have reached this position despite different historical backgrounds and somewhat different political views. This dissertation is looking at cultural differences between students in Norway and the United States of America (America): Norway as a country with a long history, old traditions and mainly inhabitants with Norwegian ancestors, and America as a newer country with a great mixture of people from all over the world.

These two countries differ in size, politics, traditions, and health systems. Norway is well known for the Scandinavian concept "welfare state" where the state finances a great amount of the healthcare, education, pensions, and other economic support such as sick leave, birth leave, as well as "day-money" for people who are unemployed or for some reason cannot work. The thought is that everyone is equal and should have equal opportunities in life no matter what their circumstance might be; which is the ideology of the social democratic politics. This is also reflected in cultural aspects.

Norway is greatly influenced by the "Law of Jante". The concept was first explained by Aksel Sandemose (1933/1967), a Norwegian-Danish author that was writing a fiction story about a little town called Jante. However, the social rules he thought were controlling people's actions in that town are similar to the social "rules" in almost every small town in Scandinavia. The Law of Jante mainly says that everyone is equal, and no one should therefore believe that they

are better than anyone else; “You shall not think that you are better than *us*.” (Sandemose, 1933/1967, p.56). This is somewhat visible in the way people dress and the way people act. It is not very common in Norway to try to look different from the group, and if people do, others would look at them with dislike. This includes acting outstanding, such as being loud in a crowd, or talking about own accomplishments. Modesty is important which makes the individualism more hidden. The cultural “code” is to stay quiet and blend with the crowd as good as possible.

In America this seems to be very different. The country has a great mixture of people from different cultures, and common ground is attained by vigorously campaigning the country’s patriotism. So far, America is among the leading countries in the world when it comes to economical and military power. In addition, there is a great belief in equality of opportunity, a belief which is even stressed in political speeches: “...*It is that promise that always set this country apart; that through hard work and sacrifice, each of us can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as one American family...*” (see Aune, 2008).

Individualism is strong in all western countries, however, today’s American citizens are raised being told how "special" they are and that they are "great"; they are taught that there is no limit as to how far they can reach if they only work for it. This makes a great contrast to the Law of Jante in Norway, which may seem more as a constraint to personal development. Do individuals that are told they are worth more, such as American students, have higher self-esteem than people who are told they are equal, such as Norwegian students? If this is the case, how would they perceive their achievement in school? How do they react to people with different self-perceptions? Do cultural influences affect the way individuals perceive themselves or others?

1.2 Outline of thesis

This master thesis is an explorative study of the possible cultural differences between American and Norwegian 5th to 7th graders in self-esteem, classroom engagement, achievement beliefs (academic self-concept) and actual achievement. The cultural backgrounds in the two countries will be introduced in chapter 2.1, and the different school systems in chapter 2.2. The influence of culture on self-perceptions will be discussed in chapter 2.3. Definitions and theoretical implications for self-esteem will be established in

chapter 2.4, while definitions and theoretical implications for the school variables will be established in chapter 2.5-2.6. The hypotheses will be presented in chapter 2.7. Chapter 3 contains information of methodological issues for both the quantitative and the qualitative part of the study. The quantitative part will be used to assess information of possible cultural differences on self-esteem and the relationship with school related variables, and the results and discussion of this part will be presented in chapter 4 and 5. In chapter 6 the qualitative part will be employed to achieve a more thorough understanding of the importance of self-esteem in the American and Norwegian classrooms. Finally, the self-esteem data; achieved from scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale and through interviews, will be discussed in a general discussion of self-esteem in chapter 7.

2. Theory

2.1 Cultural differences between Norway and America

2.1.1 National character and culture

A nation is an imagined collective; it exists simply because the people within the nation agree that they are a nation (Eriksen, 1993a). Norway is for example not that different from the other Scandinavian countries in many aspects, and some Norwegians in the south-east might have more in common with the Swedes than the northern Norwegians (Eriksen, 1993a). Still they view themselves as Norwegians and not as Swedes, but not only because of physical borders.

The concept of "national character" (the notion that there exist differences between individuals from different nations) is an ambiguous one. It has been widely criticized, however, it can be used based on the facts about learning; it is not only the current circumstance in each nation that differs, but the people differ as a result of learning from previous experience within their nation (Bateson, 2000). However, this does not mean that there is uniformity, but rather a different sort of regularity within a nation (Bateson, 2000). An example is dominance and submission; it is not a matter of either-or, but rather a co-existence where neither can exist without the other. Even deviant behavior will be systematically related to the norms, because the one acting against the society will still be viewed within the regularity of for example "good-bad". Western societies tend to have a similar binary

characteristics, however, America might have a higher focus on "high self-esteem versus low self-esteem", "success versus failure" et cetera, while Norway might have a higher focus on "same versus different", "fair versus unfair" et cetera, as a result of different social values within the cultures. Humans want a meaningful existence where they can make some sense of and somehow predict, understand and control the chaotic world they live in (Jonassen, 1983). Therefore they create belief and value systems, which despite lack of total consistency are somewhat cultural consistent.

The term culture is also a difficult one (Eriksen, 1993b). Norway and America, are two different but at the same time similar cultures. Within each country there are common cultures built on for example gender, education and religious beliefs, and at the same time there are constant changes in human societies which also affect the cultures. The American and Norwegian cultures may also look more similar than they really are (Sirevåg, 1999). The result is that people may look at the American culture as simply an updated version of the European cultures, although this is not true (Sirevåg, 1999). It is difficult to find the line for where a culture begins and ends. With the technology we have today, people in America and people in Norway can watch the same news on satellite TV at the same time, and people can travel faster over longer distances and are therefore culturally also more mobile than before (Eriksen, 1993a).

We now live in some sort of cultural creoles, although we work to hold on to our "own culture". What creates identity is first and foremost what one is not. Therefore; who we are depends on who we compare ourselves with. If Norwegians compare themselves to Americans they have a country with a lot of nature and healthy lifestyle, but compared to the Icelandic they are a large, urbanized European country with a rich public culture life. It is situation and context dependent (Eriksen, 1993b). Despite of the cultural creoles, changes within each single society can be evaluated as systematically related as the new patterns are reactions to the old (Bateson, 2000). Historical events establish values and predispositions which in turn determine later events within its nation (Lipset, 1996). History is therefore important in development of culture.

2.1.2 History and background in Norway and America

The Norwegian history has partly been constructed in order to show a clear difference between Norway and the other Scandinavian countries at a time when it was a rather young nation (Eriksen, 1993b). Norwegians might identify with Vikings and might have "Viking blood", however; that does not mean that the Vikings considered themselves Norwegians or that their culture was similar to the Norwegians. The cultural focus on the farmers is not entirely correct either, as Norway has the longest coastline compared to the citizens and the focus should then be on the fishermen. It was the urban people that defined the "farmer's culture" as the Norwegian national culture they could lay their patriotic pride in, and not the farmers themselves. Norway became an independent nation in 1905 when it was separated from Sweden, and there was a need to find out what was really Norwegian. The country was rural and egalitarian, and since it lacked a city bourgeoisie, the simple ways of life were glorified (op.cit.).

America on the other hand, a much larger and more powerful country than Norway, has a very different history. People from the British Isles settled in the seventeenth- and eighteenth century, and shaped the development of America according to the values and culture they brought with them (Huntington, 2004). Ethnicity, race, religion and culture were important to begin with, but ideology became more vital as they got independence from the country they had left (Huntington, 2004). America was supposed to be a new country with a new beginning. More immigrants searching a new and better life came along in the nineteenth century, including Germans, Irish and Scandinavians. As the immigrants were assimilated into the American society, the American identity was by the 1970s defined in terms of culture and Creed (Huntington, 2004).

The commitment to the political principles of liberty, equality, democracy, individualism, human rights, the rule of law, and private property is what unites the American people and is what we call the American Creed (Huntington, 2004). It was written by William Tyler Page in 1917 (see Page, 1917) and states that:

I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed, a democracy in a republic, a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore

believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.

America can therefore be called an "exceptional" country as it is defined by principles in an ideology instead of an origin. The Creed states that Americans belong to a big national family (Sirevåg, 1999). However, the American Creed is not everything. America was from the beginning expected to grow and become something big, which eventually happened. After 1945, America became a leading world power, and that became even more important than its ideology (Sirevåg, 1999). By the end of World War II, everything big was cherished partly due to Roosevelt's New Deal (Sirevåg, 2000). Big business and big labor were important in building the America we have today, and also the government got an expanded economic role as a result of the war (Sirevåg, 2000). One can question what influence such greatness would have on the people in the nation and their beliefs about themselves.

Norway which once was characterized by hostility and warfare is now one of the most peaceful countries in the world (Jonassen, 1983). It has become a country with weakening of authority and an increase of egalitarianism within the institutional sectors of society. Norway has eventually become one of the most feminine countries, while America is among the most masculine (Hofstede, 1980, 2001, 2009; Oettingen, 1995; Sirevåg, 1999). This value difference may affect people's perception of the self, as masculine cultures have separate spheres for men and women and are characterized by a stronger work orientation, while feminine cultures do not differ in their social expectations for men and women and their focus lies in quality of life and helping others (Sirevåg, 1999). However, it is not a matter of either-or, but has to do with where each culture places themselves on a scale between these two extremes.

It is difficult to characterize what is typical Norwegian or typical American as we are talking about large societies that have enormous individual variations and which are in constant change with the rest of the world (Eriksen, 1993a). Although America is often described as individualistic, it also includes members who on a large scale belong to churches and organizations, and therefore also can be viewed as communitarian (Hewitt, 2007). Human beings in the world are also similar across national borders. There is what we call "globalization of culture"; as a result of modern media without strong national or cultural boundaries (Eriksen, 1993a). Nevertheless, there are some areas where Norway and the United States clearly differ; such as their views about equality and individualism, their

welfare system, their cultural codes of behavior, and their view of child rearing and education. These areas may reflect underlying values in the society that may influence how the children in each of the two nations consider themselves compared to others and how they view their own accomplishments.

2.1.3 Equality and Individualism

Equality and individualism are two concepts that somewhat collide, depending on which qualities of the concepts that are emphasized. Equality is important in every part of the Western world (Gullestad, 1989). Nevertheless, there are cultural differences within the Western civilization where the Norwegian understanding of equality may be different from the American understanding.

In America, they view every person as equal before the law despite of unequal distribution of wealth (Nye, 1993). Taxing the successful has been rejected, as everyone is seen to have the same opportunity to become successful if they only work hard (Lipset, 1996). The focus is on freedom and opportunity to achieve, and achievers are winners with every right to what they achieve (Sirevåg, 1999). No one can be envious as everyone had the same opportunity (although it can be discussed whether it really is "same opportunity"). As a result of the low level of governmental support for the poor, America has the highest amount of people in poverty among the developed countries (Lipset, 1996; Nye, 1993). Equality of opportunity has not led to equality of result; the belief in the possibility to rise in income and standard of living has made it more acceptable that some have high salaries, as oneself might end up being one of them one day (Lipset, 1996).

In Europe the situation is different; it is paid more attention to hereditary disadvantage, and higher taxes for those with higher income are thus more accepted (Lipset, 1996). Norway, following the Scandinavian welfare model, has social insurance benefits for everyone who needs it, and at the same time a high level of work motivation (Repstad, 2005). The system is closely connected to an active employment policy, which means that "full employment" is the goal and therefore those who are unemployed have to participate in education and training schemes (Angell, 2005). This means they can be useful to society and feel a sense of self-worth despite their handicap. In Norway it does not make sense to have equality of opportunity without equality of result: Real equality counts more, as the results has to be

socially acceptable (Sirevåg, 1999). One has to be modest, even if one wins the lottery which may be the safest "achievement" as it is not your own fault that you got rich (Sirevåg, 1999).

In Norway the term equal can mean both similarity and equality, and is sometimes mixed up (Repstad, 2005). When it comes to justice it means; equal treatment and opportunity to acquire the good and avoid the bad things in life (Jonassen, 1983). In Norway it is everyone's duty to make sure that even the weakest in the society receive justice (Jonassen, 1983). Norwegian culture is individualistic, but despite of that there exists a strong focus on equality in the sense of similarity which creates a "conflict" between similarity in one hand and being exceptional in accordance with individualism on the other (Gullestad, 1989). At the same time as similarities are emphasized, differences are avoided instead of confronted: "Peace and quiet" along with conflict avoidance is highly valued (Gullestad, 1989).

There are several explanations for the equality emphasis in Norway. One of them is that the Norwegian nature with its fjords, mountains and small islands has separated the people and throughout history made it difficult for rich farmers to have power over poor farmers by demanding taxes from them, something which was characteristic for the rest of Europe (Aase, 2005). There have been differences between people, but not to the same extent as elsewhere in Europe with its aristocratic upper class. Gullestad (1989) uses the Norwegian expression "fit together" (*passer sammen*) to explain the importance in Norway to be similar to people you surround yourself with.

The focus on similarity makes it problematic to achieve recognition from others, something which is just as important in Norway despite of the "sameness". However, in order to achieve recognition in Norway one would have to be modest and humble, praise others but not oneself. If one asserts high thoughts of oneself in Norway, it is easily viewed as bragging, while in America it is more accepted. This might be why several Norwegians often consider Americans as boastful and showy. Instead Norwegians find it important to adjust to the norms and "act like most other people". This creates a dilemma between showing independency without being so independent that one goes beyond the common set of social rules that does not allow single individuals to view themselves as better than others (Gullestad, 1989). In fact, many Norwegians are so afraid to attract attention to themselves that they do not even respond in situations where they should, as for example in a potentially dangerous situation: "Saying that you are something is a worse 'offence' than not helping someone in need" (Kiel,

1993, p. 65). It is so important to stay anonymous and be alike (equal) that it has stronger sanctioning powers than the value system for what is right and wrong (Kiel, 1993).

In Norway the cultural demands seem to make the achievement and maintenance of self-regard problematic (Jonassen, 1983). There is a general negative evaluation of some parts of self-enhancement in the country, as values such as modesty, moral virtues, responsibility and respect have been the focus: "Violations of these values and norms in self-enhancing behavior, such as boasting and conspicuous presentation of the self, are punished by shaming, ridicule, and rejection" (Jonassen, 1983, p. 243). This does not mean that Norwegians do not have a need for self-regard at a similar level with people from other Western countries. It only suggests that how the individual judges itself depends on the social values of his/hers society (Jonassen, 1983).

The focus on equality is also reflected by the long held politics of the country. The Norwegian Labor Party has reigned the country for the majority of the years since its founding, which goes all the way back to 1887. One of the primary held beliefs of this party is that everyone is equal, which is clearly visible in their political program which first and foremost contains arguments about how to "create and share" (see Arbeiderpartiet, 2009). Also in this program it seems clear that no one is supposed to stand out. Children who are strongly lacking behind the other students are intended to get help, however, support for extra intelligent children are not mentioned. It is likely that they are not to receive special attention in school due to the fear of an inferiority feeling in the average or below average students and the threat it would imply to equality.

It seems difficult to both focus on equality and individualism. However, throughout the Norwegian history, its folktales have emphasized individualism in a more modest and disguised way. One common figure in the Norwegian folktales is Espen Askeladden. Askeladden means the "cinder lad" (Jonassen 1983). Askeladden and his two brothers attempt to win the princess and half of the kingdom (Sirevåg, 1999). Askeladden wins the test because he shows concern for others and interest in small things he passes on the way, while his brothers are too achievement-oriented and let nothing get in their way to reach their goal (Sirevåg, 1999). The message is that modesty and helpfulness are rewarded: "...you will succeed only if you pursue happiness with respect for others and with an open eye for more things in life than just one ultimate objective" (Sirevåg, 1999, p. 148). Instead of boasting

about themselves, many Norwegians rather tend to get into an "Askeladden routine" by pretending to be less than they really are (Jonassen, 1983). In this way the Norwegian can be modest and at the same time meet his/hers need for self-esteem: "He can secretly enjoy a very positive self-attitude without being liable to severe sanctions against self-praise and without displaying it and thereby risking guilt feelings or the envy, hostility, and aggression of others" (Jonassen, 1983, p. 256).

In the American popular culture, individualist thinking is more profound (Ashbee, 2002). The sovereignty of the individual has traditionally been emphasized within the popular culture, but can also be seen today in American literature and films. So called Western movies show an independent individual acting outside the law, as a hero, where the authorities have failed or to confront established order (Ashbee, 2002). This strong belief in the individual is also visible in newer American films, such as Avatar; where the hero dares to stand up and encourage war against a seemingly unbreakable enemy. Following the typical Hollywood plot, the individual hero manages to accomplish victory against all odds.

The manifestation of individualism in America is also visible during the days of election, as there are obvious differences in how American and Norwegian politicians present themselves. The American election is characterized by larger campaigns where the potential presidents and vice presidents praise themselves and their own accomplishments to a large degree. The candidates own views and personality matters (Sirevåg, 1999). The politician has to win the people's trust by focusing on the individuals rights to do what they want to do (follow their dreams), and has to seem like a "nice guy" or someone they can relate to. The American culture has a tendency to see life in individual terms and personify others because of own self-orientation (op.cit.). The Norwegian election however, stays at a more humble level, with no personal political commercials and rather a focus on case than on personality. Politics has to do with what the parties and the politicians stand for, and not about whom they are as persons.

An example of how the countries portray the politics is the political speeches. During the American presidential elections, Obama's speech (where he accepted his nomination as president candidate), was sent on a Norwegian TV show called "Spekter" on NRK. This speech was translated into Norwegian and "performed" by a Norwegian left-wing politician, Lars Sponheim, relating to the Norwegian people and politics instead of the American. When Obama held the speech Norwegians might even have gotten inspired, however, when the

Norwegian politician translated it directly into Norwegian (and talked about Norway instead of America), Norwegians found it funny and awkward. No Norwegian politician would have spoken about the country in that way, would have used such big words, or made it so personal. A Norwegian politician would rather have stayed near the point of the case, instead of talking about "nothing" as the Norwegians would evaluate it. Obama would say things such as: "To the love of my life, our next first lady Michelle Obama and to Malya and Sacha, I love you so much and I'm so proud of you! [My parents]...shared the belief that in America their son could achieve whatever he put his mind to. It is that promise that always set this country apart; that through hard work and sacrifice, each of us can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as one American family; to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams as well...God bless you, and God bless America" (see Aune, 2008). In Norway this would just sound plain ridiculous. If Norwegian politicians would try to "sell" themselves to the voters through praising themselves and their family in speeches or TV commercials, it is likely that the reception from the voters would be rather negative. In accordance with the "Law of Jante" (see chapter 2.1.4) they would have been viewed as "braggers" and it would probably not have been accepted.

There is individualism in both America and Norway; however the question of collectivism and individualism has to do with a matter of degree (Sirevåg, 1999). Norway has more of an individual collectivism as there are individual approaches towards a common goal (Sirevåg, 1999). America on the other hand has a collective individualism as there are common approaches towards private goals. It is important to get along with everyone in the process, but the achiever has right to the end product. In Norway, what is most important is that what you achieve has to be socially acceptable (Sirevåg, 1999).

2.1.4 The Law of Jante versus Exceptionalism and the American Dream

The egalitarian culture of Norway is visible in the socially accepted way of behaving that is based on the "Law of Jante". The way Sandemose (1933/1967) described the fiction town called Jante was meant as a social critique of the Danish town he was currently living in. People lived according to the assumption that no one should think they are better than anyone else, which is the general content of the Law of Jante (see appendix 20). In both Norway and Denmark people recognize their own culture in this law, and it has become common talk to blame people's jealousy or non-acceptance of others achievements on the Law of Jante.

Because of this law there might be a stronger consideration of the reactions of others within the Norwegian culture than what is otherwise viewed as typical for the "Western culture" (Jonassen, 1983). The original and the unusual are condemned, and high achievements are therefore discouraged, something which can be an obstacle to economic growth for individuals and the way people promote themselves (Eriksen, 1993a).

Sandemose (1933/1967) writes his novel about the town Jante through the eyes of the character Espen Arnakke. If one goes against the unwritten Laws of Jante; one might as well break all the Ten Commandments that Moses received on Sinai (Sandemose, 1933/1967). He makes it seem as if one is already damned by crossing that line, then it does not matter what you do cause you are already in trouble with the people in town. "Everyone is just as big, but believes that all the others are bigger. This is the town's foundation. It is impossible for the single being to stand up..." (Sandemose, 1933/1967, p.57). The problem of the Law of Jante is the conscience that sticks like a tag, about everything one should not talk about. The character Espen explains that his insecurity was the same as that of a beaten dog, due to the possibility of envy from the others in town and because he was seen as different. If one was different one would be laughed at: "The official religion was pretty much to do what everyone else did...It is a religion that one chases the divergence from the norm as a plague" (Sandemose, 1933/1967, p. 166). Because of the Jante-fear, no divergence is allowed.

In America, the situation is different: The term "American Exceptionalism" is used to talk about the contrast between America and the European and Asian countries. The word "exceptional" was used by Alexis de Tocqueville, but also later by activists in the communist movement and then during the Cold War as a rationale for America's role as leader for the free world (Ashbee, 2002). According to Lipset (1996), the Americans continue to be more patriotic and believe that their system is superior. Although the term exceptionalism is widely used, Ashbee (2002) comments on two methodological difficulties; the term implies that all other countries share common features, and there is not an agreement about which features of America that makes it exceptional. We have to be aware that there are also differences within a nation such as class, gender, ethnicity and race, and whether a nation can be viewed as exceptional depends on which area in society one is looking at and who one is being compared to (Ashbee, 2002). Other nations also develop and modernize (or Americanize as some will call it), which makes America less exceptional. In addition, exceptionalism does not necessarily mean better; America is as already mentioned on the bottom when it comes to

welfare benefits and equal distribution of income (Lipset, 1996). However, this does not mean that the belief about positive exceptionalism is not alive among the American people and their attitudes toward themselves and the rest of the world.

Realistic or not; there is a phrase that suggests that America is the place to live the good life and make dreams come true. The term "American Dream" suggests; "...that the U.S. is a meritocratic society in which individuals can become prosperous and climb the economic ladder through hard work, self-reliance and the adoption of entrepreneurial attitudes" (Ashbee, 2002, p. 33). It is related to theories of economic individualism, and they rest upon the belief in personal responsibility of the individual as well as the government's role as provider of security to ensure a free-market (Ashbee, 2002). The question is whether this American Dream is still persistent in today's society as it was in the early America. Ashbee (op.cit.) show's that several research of American income and employment mobility points towards an existence of the American dream, while others find that individuals in America do not move up in the hierarchy any more than do individuals in other countries. There are doubts whether the dream captures the realities of American history; nevertheless, it is still real in the popular imagination (op.cit.).

2.2 Child rearing and school systems in Norway and America

The child rearing in Norway used to be strongly influenced by the Lutheran state church, however the post-World War II period brought new ideas about child-rearing that were more liberal, permissive and recognized the special needs of children (Jonassen, 1983). Now, family matters are more public in Norway than other European countries, at the same time as there is a tendency of hiding internal matters behind a polished façade (Holter, 1993). The Law of Jante comes into focus here as well, where being different can mean that you are difficult in the eyes of others. Guilt is still the main sanction centre: "One is punished not primarily by some strong external authority, or by losing face in the community, but rather through an inner feeling of guilt" (Holter, 1993, p. 150). This is strongly connected to a sense of justice, of being equal and just; authority is more subtle in the way that discipline happens in indirect forms through guilt and conscience (Holter, 1993).

A strong direct authority is lacking in America too. When comparing the parent-child relationships in English and American cultures, Bateson (2000) suggests that the American

child does not listen silently, but is rather encouraged by his parents to show off his independence. This may seem boastful to the Englishman although the American is rather looking for approval for his independence and not showing of superiority (Bateson, 2000). Such misunderstandings may be found between Americans and Norwegians as well. The way Americans let their children be uncontrolled can surprise foreigners (Sirevåg, 1999). Parental authority is rejected; "...almost like a symbolic re-enactment of the Declaration of Independence" (Sirevåg, 1999, p. 109).

Norway is a very child centered country, and has as the first country in the world, an "ombudsman" which is a spokesperson for children's rights (Nilsen, 2005). Within education the focus is on teaching the children individual thinking in addition to social adjustment (Nilsen, 2005). However, sameness is also an important matter already before school age. A TV channel called NRK is broadcasting children programs every day at 6 pm, which gives children an early common reference frame (Angell, 2005). Most importantly every child has got the right to the same quality of basic education, and there is not organized difference based on capacity (Hansen, 2005).

In Norwegian primary schools the goals are knowledge, learning and information, as well as moral upbringing. Although the state religion is Christianity, the teaching of this and other religions is to give knowledge and not to be a form of indoctrination (Vormeland, 1993). The state is responsible for all education in Norway, and nearly all students attend public primary and secondary schools (Vormeland, 1993). There are a few private schools and some home schooling though, as it is only education and learning that is obligatory, and not attendance. The societal development influences curriculum priorities, and the importance of equal rights between the sexes is prominent also in the textbooks (Vormeland, 1993).

The Norwegian child usually stays in the same class from 1st grade to 7th grade (6-12 years old), and when starting lower secondary school (junior high school) (13-15 years old) the classes get mixed up often as a result of students from several different primary schools coming together at the same secondary school. After this there is no more obligatory learning, and each individual decide for themselves whether they want to continue higher education. Because of decentralization the aim is that each student can attend school as near home as possible, and the class is kept together as much as possible as an important social and educational unit (Vormeland, 1993). Although this creates diversity between competency

levels in the class, the teaching is still focused on individual differentiation. However, the curriculum is standardized, as a common platform in order to ensure equality (Hansen, 2005). All public education is also free of charge, from primary school to higher education at universities and colleges (Hansen, 2005).

Americans have throughout history used education more purposefully and as a cure to the society (Orr, 1992; Sirevåg, 1994). The aim of American primary and secondary education, in addition for the students to attain general knowledge, is to make the students good Americans. The nation is characterized by its complexity and constant immigration, thus an education that can integrate the newcomers and at the same time hold on to the old groups is needed (Sirevåg, 1994). Sirevåg (op.cit.) calls the classroom the hottest "melting pot" of all, as it has been used in an attempt to melt down racial differences. In addition to this focus on integrating the people, America has been the world leader in business and military which requires an educational system that keeps up with constant modernization. Education has since the early twentieth century been the focus of politics (Orr, 1992). Religion and morality has also played a major role in education, although there is no official American religion. Nevertheless, there is a "civil religion", with a combination of religion and nationalism which can be seen in, for example, the daily classroom pledge of allegiance to their flag. The "American's Creed" as mentioned earlier is also still recited in many public schools.

There is not a single system of education in America, such as in Norway, but it got its Department of Education in 1979 (Sirevåg, 1994). This means that if the states do not need federal money for their schools, federal recommendations can be ignored. The power lies within the education board of each state, and within the committee for each local school district as well as each schools school-board. To some degree, the curriculum reflects the needs and concerns of each community (Sirevåg, 2000). The public schools are expected to serve the community, and parallel the national ideals such as equality of opportunity (Sirevåg, 1994).

The schools in America are built up differently from each other, however, there is a more "typical" pattern; elementary school from 1st to 8th (or 6th) grade, and a secondary school (high school) that finish when the child is 17 or 18 years old (Sirevåg, 1994). Throughout these years the students are tested in order to evaluate if they are capable enough to go up to next grade level, and eventually in junior high (age 13) some schools put their students into classes

with others of same ability level (Nye, 1993). This makes it possible for the best students to achieve more, but at the same time it means the others will fall further and further behind (Nye, 1993). The quality of education may also depend on where you live due to problems of financing, although there have been attempts to redistribute tax money in order to deal with this (Sirevåg, 1994). Because of this variation of quality, and because parents may want a special education for their children, there are also many private schools in America and most of these are religious schools (Nye, 1993). The quality varies here as well, especially since they receive no financial support from the state or federal government (Nye, 1993). Not all American elementary schools grade their students, but they still have to take national tests each year (Orr, 1992). Achievement has to be seen and evaluated as a result of the competition in American society and this makes such measurements important (Sirevåg, 1999). These tests are used to compare students in different parts of the country, but also to look at the effectiveness of the nation's educational system (Orr, 1992).

The ways the students act in a classroom differ between Norway and America. Giving presentations in school is something that has only recently been introduced to the Nordic countries (Sirevåg, 1999). The American students are more used to participate and ask questions (Sirevåg, 1999), while Norwegians are hesitant against standing out in a crowd (Gullestad, 1989), something which speaking loud in a classroom would make you do. This is related to overstatement and exaggeration being more accepted in America as a result of the competitiveness in the culture. Northwest Europeans on the other hand, have problems with overstatements and would view it as boasting (Sirevåg, 1999).

Despite of dislike of overstatements and reluctance to stand out in the Norwegian classrooms, international tests done by PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) in 2001, show that Norway is one of the countries with most problems regarding discipline and disturbance in the junior high school classrooms (Lie, Kjærnsli, Roe & Turmo, 2001). This may have to do with the lack of competition in Norwegian schools, and the stronger focus on what the students are interested in doing (Telhaug, 2008). This may also be the case in elementary schools, as there is no grading and no consequences for further opportunities in education (Telhaug, 2006). In the recent years, national tests have also been introduced in the Norwegian elementary schools in an attempt to raise achievement levels, however, the results are not official to avoid ranking of schools (Telhaug, 2008).

Both Norway and America been found to score below average in math and science in international tests for member countries of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) (Kjærnsli, Lie, Olsen, Roe & Turmo, 2004). Despite of this, American students seem to be more focused and interested in doing well on such tests than Norwegian students, who seem to be more interested in when they can take toilet breaks or what they can eat during the tests (Telhaug, 2008). Again, this is probably a reflection of a less competitive society and lack of consequences on engagement for further educational opportunities (Telhaug, 2006). Nevertheless, Norwegian students have been found to be very realistic about their own achievement levels in an international perspective (Lie et al., 2001), while accurate information on ones abilities compared to one's peers does not seem to be a major concern in the American school system (Oettingen, 1995), something which might have to do with the focus on individualistic achievement.

As seen here, Norway and America differ on several aspects both within the general culture and within the school systems. In the current study, the possible influence these cultural differences have on self-perceptions (such as self-esteem) along with school related measures will be explored.

2.3 Culture as an influence on self-perceptions

Human beings do not develop in isolation, but in social interaction with others in a society and a culture. The question of how the individual and the society are linked is of main focus within the social interactionistic view, and is therefore a valuable approach to explain the relationship between culture and self-esteem. This approach do recognize that culture is characterized by certain patterns, but that it also includes patterns of change over time, either gradually or sudden (Hewitt, 2007). It can describe both the influence of society and culture on the person as well as how action and interaction between people can reproduce and change society and culture (Hewitt 2007).

Mead (1934/1962) is the most important philosopher of pragmatism that has influenced the work of symbolic interactionism. He talks of a universe of discourse where the gestures and symbols have common meanings for all members of the group participating in that social process (Mead, 1934/1962). Different concepts (objects) can be created through symbolization and have different meaning in different cultures as social processes are

responsible for the rise of new objects in the social situation (Mead, 1934/1962). According to Mead:” No individual has a mind which operates simply in itself...” (1934/1962, p. 222). When one takes the attitudes of others toward oneself and merge these into a single attitude, this attitude can be called one of the "generalized other" which is both the attitude of the whole community and a part of the self (Mead, 1934/1962). The generalized other is the law and the conscience that the individuals are expected to follow; it is the internalized moral system (Charon, 2001). It relates to the concept of ought and value as discussed by Heider (1958); how considerations of justice affects reactions to other people.

The communities with its generalized other and developed perspective changes over time, but it also to some extent retain consistency over generations: “The culture, continuously shared and continuously being redefined, leads those who interact to define one another, self, and the world outside in somewhat the same way as those who interacted earlier” (Charon, 2001, 183). Therefore it is still possible with cultural differences in the western world despite of well developed international media and communication. According to Hofstede (2001) the system is in a self-regulating quasi-equilibrium. He argues that influences such as technological modernization is important for change, but that the already existing norms in each culture will lead the societies to deal with change in different ways which means that new technologies not necessarily make cultures more similar. Although Norway and America are becoming closer in many aspects, the cultural differences are still significant.

Symbolic interactionism views human language as the most important set of symbols, a word can stand for a thing or event that can be both tangible and abstract, and either present or not (Hewitt, 2007). Symbols are therefore cultural, as the meaning rests on the agreement of its users within a community; we learn culture and sub-cultures through our language by learning the names of tools, ideas and other objects our culture(s) exists of (op.cit.). Children also learn the labels of abstract things such as self-esteem. To learn the meaning of objects includes learning how to act toward them. Therefore, the child also learn the meaning of his or her own "self" based on how other people act toward it, and by learning to act toward it the same way themselves. Others have beliefs and attitudes about the child which shapes how they act towards it, whether these beliefs are based on general beliefs about children or on experience with the child.

The view of children in general may differ depending on the culture (Hewitt, 2007). As previously mentioned; in America the child does not listen silently, but is rather encouraged by his parents to show off his independence (Bateson, 2000). The Norwegian child, on the other hand, is made to feel responsible to his parents and to his community, as modesty and respect has been the focus (Jonassen, 1983). However, we must not forget that children are active participants in their socialization process, and active interpreters of their world (Hewitt, 2007). Although children learn what meaning others give them as an object, it does not mean that they will accept that meaning and view themselves the same way. In order to protect themselves, they develop defense mechanisms such as not accepting others definition of their self, or saying no to social demands they do not agree on. Nevertheless, we are surrounded with certain ideas and beliefs from others including mass media, that show us which self-images are possible within the culture.

We make our own self-schema based on categories and generalizations to understand ourselves and know how to act. It is a process of self-appraisal, where culture affects the type of information and knowledge available to the individual, and also the process of selecting, weighing and integrating this information (Hewitt, 2007; Oettingen, 1995). American and Norwegian children grow up in western societies that are somewhat similar, but at the same time different. What is known as being the "truth" about the self and self-esteem in each of the countries, constrains the individuals view of the self. The way we know the world bias us to notice some things and fail to see others, and therefore we only have a certain set of responses to its problems and opportunities that are available within our society and language (Hewitt, 2007). America has created a set of ideas about self-esteem as the most important human goal and the solution to every social problem (op.cit.), but this is a cultural view and does not need to be the same elsewhere (see chapter 2.4.2 Popular views of self-esteem).

The narratives about self that we have learned to tell follow cultural models of self-narration, with cultural ways of interpretation and ways of giving meaning to experience. The cultural models change over time, and are ways of viewing the world whether they are myth or reality (Hewitt, 2007). In the culture of America today, one theme is: "The individual overcomes obstacles, works hard, and in the end reaps the rewards of money, social standing, and professional recognition" (Hewitt, 2007, p. 129). Which narratives we can tell are constrained by the terms of discourse available and what is acceptable within that culture or society, and can therefore be a constraint on the development of self. As mentioned earlier; in Norway this

narrative seems to be influenced by the Law of Jante and the concept of equality and modesty, and in America by the American dream and the belief in individual accomplishment. In each culture human beings have been taught to understand and talk about their world and themselves in it (Hewitt, 2007), some of this "knowledge" is universal, but most of it is not.

2.4 Self-esteem

Here we will take a closer look at the concept of self-esteem and what has made it such an important part of how the western societies, and especially America, perceive the self.

Previous research on the influence of self-esteem on school related variables will also be presented.

2.4.1 Defining self-esteem

In psychology, the term self-confidence has been replaced with other terms such as self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy. These several definitions and variations of self-perceptions create a problem when it comes to comparing research done on the topic, as the measurements are likely to differ in accordance with the definitions. William James is considered the father of American psychology, and as early as in 1890 he defined self-esteem as a person's success divided on the person's pretensions (Branden, 1992). This means that one can increase ones self-esteem either by increasing one's success or by lowering one's pretensions or goals. More importantly, he saw self-esteem as determined by the discrepancy between perceived success in a particular domain and the importance of success in that same domain (Harter, 1999). This means that if one view mathematics as important but succeeds in chemistry instead, one will focus on the "failure" in mathematics, which will influence ones self-esteem negatively instead of allowing the success in chemistry to boost ones self-esteem. James (1890/1931) also views self-esteem as a matter of comparison and feeling good as long as one is "better off" than others. However, James' definition has been criticized as being too simple, and Branden (1992) calls this definition "...not a formula for healthy self-esteem but a prescription for anxiety" (p. XIII). He argues that a person that aims to have no expectations and achieves that goal will not have an equal level of self-esteem compared to a person with high expectations and accomplishments (Branden, 1992).

Since James (1890/1931) first proposed his definition, several other definitions have been put forward. Branden (1992) rules out two main components of self-esteem: "Confidence in our

ability to think and to cope with the basic challenges of life”, and “confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts” (Branden, 1992, p. VII). In other words, self-esteem is comprised of a sense of personal efficacy (self-efficacy) and a sense of personal worth (self-respect) (Branden, 1992). People that exhibit behavior of internal security and happiness qualify as having high self-esteem and people in this category are not driven to appear better than others (Branden, 1992).

Several researchers also note these two components discussed by Branden (1992). They define self-efficacy as the belief in your ability to accomplish and be efficient in what you do (Bandura, 1995; Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Self-concept on the other hand, is defined as a general description of one’s perceived self (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). This includes knowledge of skills and physical attributes, but also one’s occupation or regular activities as well as an evaluative component of self-worth which is defined as self-esteem (Bandura, 1997; Pajares & Schunk, 2001). This definition of self-esteem as an evaluative component is in accordance with Rosenberg’s (1965) definition of self-esteem as a favorable or an unfavorable attitude toward the self.

In this study Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale will be used to assess self-esteem information about the respondents. However, it should still be kept in mind that this is only one of two components as self-efficacy is the competence component.

2.4.2 Popular views of self-esteem

It is important to understand the role of self-esteem in the public precinct. The popular culture produces magazines and books with reference to self-esteem, and people use the term self-esteem to explain their own and other’s failings (Emler, 2001). As a result of this strong public interest, the concept of self-esteem has received a large amount of attention within psychology. In 1969, The California Task Force to Promote Self-esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility was set up by politicians and professionals within psychology and health. It was thought that self-esteem was a sole cure or powerful vaccine for society (Emler, 2001). Raising self-esteem was supposed to protect youngsters from vulnerabilities such as drug abuse, crimes and teenage pregnancy. Therefore self-esteem became an important factor in the curriculum in the American educational sector. As Emler (2001, p. 3) put it;

“Announcing winners meant others were losers. Genuine criticism was far too risky. Consequently, standards got dumbed down and every ego required a merit award just for turning up” (Emler, 2001, p. 3). The introduction of programs to enhance self-esteem among the population should decrease the amount of crimes, drug abuse and other "social diseases and problems" as the basis for the policy and the general understanding is that only people with low self-esteem (LSE) are vulnerable to act in harmful ways. However, this turned out to be an unreliable basis (Emler, 2001).

Emler (2001) criticizes the review of the final report of the Task Force. He claims that key findings are presented as "what we all know to be true", and any evidence opposing these ideas were not considered. Emler (2001) went through a list of several so-called social problems that have been researched in relation to the role of self-esteem. He concluded that no research has shown the impact of LSE on the behavior that contributes to problems such as violent crime and racial prejudice. Instead, the outcome show a different pattern than previously believed; those with LSE are only at higher risk when it comes to negative reactions toward self such as suicide attempts and eating disorders, which suggests that people who have negative feelings about themselves treat themselves badly but do not treat others badly (Emler, 2003). Critics dispute how it is possible that so many researchers could be wrong regarding the influence of self-esteem. Emler (2003) replies that there are several reasons as to why it is convenient to believe that self-esteem is the cure. When lack of self-esteem can be blamed, almost everyone is forgiven. The political perspective argues that responsibility does not need to be taken since the problem lies within the individual, while the person himself does not have to take responsibility either because it is something inside that he cannot control (Emler, 2003).

Branden (1992) also criticizes the view of self-esteem as the number one need and solution to all the problems. Self-esteem does not guarantee fulfillment, but lack of it ensures some anxiety, frustration and despair. He suggests that a well developed sense of self is necessary for our well-being. Branden (1992) agrees that schools should introduce self-esteem principles in their curricula; however, they should not suggest that the students can achieve self-esteem by saying "I am special". Swann (1997), a critic of the self-esteem movement, calls the hunt for self-esteem “something of a modern-day search for the Holy Grail” (Swann, 1997, p. 5). He points out that high self-esteem (HSE) has become part of the American

Dream: "Millions of Americans now believe in their hearts that high self-esteem is right, it is good, and it is something that all Americans are entitled to have" (Swann, 1997, p. 7).

As there are people who have serious problems with LSE it would be a mistake to dismiss opinions associated with raising self-esteem (Swann, 1997). Previously, research and the popular view of self-esteem were collaborative. The problem now lies in including new research on the topic that contradicts the preceding ideas. This has resulted in a much needed "reality check" (Emler, 2003).

2.4.3 Scientific view of self-esteem (theory and research)

Self-esteem has not shown to be the social cure it was expected to be, and the interest of researching self-esteem seems to have declined accordingly. Still, self-esteem has shown to be important in some aspects; it has for example been strongly related to psychological well being (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach & Rosenberg, 1995). In addition, it has been found that most people score average or towards the higher end of self-esteem, as a positive view of self is more common (Baumeister, 1989; Hewitt, 2007). Nevertheless, lack of self-esteem has consequences for those in the lower end of the continuum. People with LSE are often prone to depression and often have a negative outlook on life (Orth, Robins & Meier, 2009; Orvaschel, Beeferman & Kabacoff, 1997). They are also more concerned with how others view them, and avoid self-revelation of failure (Cameron, Holmes & Vorauer, 2009; Nezlek & Leary, 2002). They tend to relate failure with rejection and success with acceptance (Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996). In fact; people with lower levels of self-esteem have been found to be bullied more often (Harter, 1999), and it has been argued that loneliness and peer rejection among children and college students are due to LSE more than the other way around (Jones, Freeman & Goswick, 1981; Nesdale and Lambert, 2007).

According to Bowlby's (1969/1997) attachment theory, are children's self-perceptions developed in early relationship between child and caregiver. The children develop either a secure attachment, an anxious and avoidant attachment or an anxious and resistant attachment, which assist the development and maintenance of "internal working models" or mental representations of self and others. These models continue to influence the children's further understanding of the world and the self in it which means that change in self-perceptions might be easier during childhood than later in life. The development of self-

esteem is also believed to occur more during the time towards early adult age than later. Erikson (1992) for example, argues that the child in the period during elementary school and pre-puberty is found in conflict between industry and inferiority where it either develops to be productive and competent or it develops a feeling of inferiority and worthlessness. Research has supported this "critical period" as a time where self-esteem stability is low, and suggests that if interventions to change self-esteem are going to be efficient, they need to be enforced during this time (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005; Trzesniewski, Donnellan & Robins, 2003).

Despite of the likelihood of changing self-esteem during a period of low stability, few interventions have been found to be useful; not only because of wrong timing, but also because of its focus on enhancing self-esteem to achieve another goal such as higher academic achievement or change behavior and social skills rather than self-esteem in itself (Emler, 2001; Haney & Durlak, 1998). For example, it has been argued that self-esteem interventions that ignore basic learning activities or family relationships are likely to fail at increasing academic achievement (Midgett, Ryan, Adams & Corville-Smith, 2002). If higher academic achievement is the goal, then academic achievement should be worked on instead of self-esteem, or preferably at the same time.

Nevertheless, there are disagreements as to whether enhanced self-esteem is something one should try to accomplish. It has been argued that self-esteem has its dark sides, one example being that people with HSE and not people with LSE react with aggression when the ego is threatened (Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996). However, a distinction has been made for HSE between genuine (authentic) and defensive (fragile) self-esteem, where people with the latter kind of HSE are associated with different types of self-protecting and self-enhancing strategies, and are the ones who react with aggression to ego threats and are more influenced by negative evaluations (Baumeister et al., 1996; Kernis & Paradise, 2002; Sandstrom & Jordan, 2008; Smalley & Stake, 1996). People with "real" or genuine self-esteem do not need to make themselves feel superior to others (Branden, 1992).

As previously mentioned; self-esteem has been thoroughly studied with regards to cultural differences between Western and Eastern countries, mainly focusing on individualism and collectivism (Heine, 2001; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). When it comes to differences on self-esteem between Western countries, research is harder to find. However, one study has been conducted on unrealistic self-

evaluations and self-esteem among Norwegian and American university students, showing that Norwegian students are less self-promoting than American students (Silvera & Seger, 2004). The Norwegian students were found to have a less self-enhancement bias, as well as no association between self-esteem and self-enhancement bias, while the opposite was found for the American sample. Following the same lines, it is expected that the Norwegian students in the current study will score lower on self-esteem than their American counterparts.

Self-esteem has also been thoroughly studied in relation to gender differences and its influence on male and female behavior and achievement in school. However, it has been found that boys only score slightly higher than girls do (Davies & Brember, 1999; Frost & McKelvie, 2004; Kling, Hyde, Showers & Bushwell, 1999), and the genders follow the same pattern in regards to self-esteem stability throughout the lifespan (Trzesniewski et al., 2003). Self-esteem has been found to be relatively high during childhood, drop during adolescence, and raise again throughout adulthood before it declines again towards old age (Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling & Potter, 2002).

HSE has been believed to be essential in school, and especially for academic achievement (see Midgett et al., 2002). However, the direct relationship between self-esteem and achievement has not been found to be as strong as expected and there are disagreements about both strength and direction of the relationship (Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral & Pedro, 2002; Kugle, Clements & Powell, 1983; Midgett et al., 2002; Valås, 1999). Some suggest that locus of control is what influences achievement instead of self-esteem (Stupnisky et al., 2007). However, people with HSE and people with LSE have also been found to differ in their attribution patterns with regards to locus of control. People with HSE tend to attribute failure to external control, and success to internal control, while people with LSE tend to attribute failure to internal control and success to external control (Brewin & Furnham, 1986; Butler-Sweeney, 2007; Marsh, Cairns, Relich, Barnes & Debus, 1984; Weiner, 1992). Therefore a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is expected for the students in the current study.

Self-esteem and Academic Self-Concept (ASC) are also expected to be related to each other in the current study, although the first is a global and the latter is a specific measure of the students' self-perceptions (Marsh & Hattie, 1996). The latter is domain specific as it only represents the academic part of the self-concept. It is also generally perceived as not

evaluative since it presents the persons knowledge of self, however, it has been argued that self-concepts also has an evaluative component similar to self-esteem as "better than" will have connotations to positive evaluations (see Marsh & O'Mara, 2008).

Self-esteem has been suggested to influence the student at school through engagement levels. students with LSE are more likely to give up and engage in self-handicapping strategies (Ames, 1992; Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003; Dweck & Legget, 1988), while students with HSE have been found to participate more in classroom discussions (Baumeister et al., 2003). This may lead students with HSE to receive more positive attention from teachers than the students with LSE, which may influence further engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Thus, a positive correlation is expected between self-esteem and engagement in the current study.

2.5 Classroom engagement

Engagement is often treated as the same concept as motivation, however, it is important to make a distinction between these two. The definition that will be used here is Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary's definition of engagement as "the act of engaging" (2003, p. 420). Engaging is defined as "to hold the interest or attention of" or "to devote or occupy oneself" (2003, p. 420). In other words, classroom engagement is the students' attention and occupation with schoolwork in the classroom. Motivation on the other hand, is defined as a "drive" (Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary, 2003, p. 830), in other words: the students' reasons for behaving the way they do.

There are three types of engagement in the classroom; behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). Emotional engagement includes positive and negative reactions to classmates and teachers as well as the school, and cognitive engagement has to do with including thoughtfulness and willingness to use the effort necessary to master the skills needed. The focus of the current study will be behavioral engagement which has to do with participation and is considered as crucial for academic achievement. However, it should be kept in mind that behavior, emotion and cognition are not isolated processes, although only one of them will be considered here (op.cit.)

Behavioral engagement is according to the work of Fredricks et al. (2004) defined in three ways: The first definition concerns positive conduct such as following rules and not disrupting, the second definition concerns involvement and includes behaviors such as being active in class discussions, paying attention, giving effort, being concentrated, and being persistent when coming across difficulties and challenging tasks. The third definition entails participation in school-related activities outside the classroom. For the current study the behavioral engagement is perceived within the context of the classroom and according to the second of these three definitions.

Both student-rated and teacher-rated classroom engagement will be measured in the current study. Others have found that teacher-ratings of classroom engagement are more stable and less differentiated across motivation dimensions (Givvin, Stipek, Salmon & McGyvers, 2001), however; considering that teachers have been found to treat their students differently depending on the students' behavioral engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), measuring not only how engaged the students feel but also the engagement level actually perceived by teachers seems necessary.

A recurring question in school related research is whether there are differences among boys and girls, and if so, what is causing those differences. The research on achievement differences are ambiguous, some suggesting that boys are lower achievers (Nordahl, 2007), and others suggesting that this is true for language arts but not mathematics where the relationship is turned around with only a slight difference (Lie et al., 2001). This is often blamed on lack of motivation, as it has been argued that gender differences are related to the school structure being less fit to boys' nature and therefore de-motivating (Bredesen, 2004; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Nordahl, 2007), while females are suffering from the stereotypic view saying that they are not good at math which has turned into self-fulfilling prophecies as females identify less with math and become less engaged (Nosek, Banaji & Greenwald, 2002; Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999). Some studies on general student engagement have shown that boys are less engaged and less persistent at tasks than girls (Lee & Smith, 1993; Lie et al., 2001; Marks, 2000). However, boys have been found to have higher self-concept, higher interest and higher intrinsic motivation in mathematics, while girls have higher self-concept, higher interest and higher intrinsic motivation for learning language (Meece, Glienke & Burg, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2004). In the current study, the focus is on general classroom engagement, both teacher-rated and student-rated, and possible cultural differences between

Norway and America in regards to gender differences will be explored. As general classroom engagement is the focus (rather than subject-specific engagement) it is expected that girls score higher than boys in both countries.

Cultural differences between Norway and America in regards to norms of behaviour and reactions to success have been explained previously in relation to self-perceptions. Possible cultural differences in classroom engagement will be expected, based on the same norms and cultural ways of behaviour. As mentioned previously; the American students grow up in an environment where working hard to achieve is expected and encouraged (Ashbee, 2002; Sirevåg, 1999). The Norwegian students on the other hand, are living in a society where the norms of equality lead to social costs of achieving and sticking out in the crowd (Kiel, 1993; Gullestad, 1989; Sirevåg, 1999). It might be that the latter put some constraint on the engagement level compared to what is experienced in America.

2.6 Perceived versus actual competence

Self-concept is a person's self-perceptions that are formed through experience with the environment and which influences further behavior (Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton, 1976). Self-esteem and self-concept seem to be mixed up somewhat throughout the literature, however, as mentioned previously self-esteem has to do with the persons evaluations of self, while self-concept is the persons general knowledge of self (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). It has been argued that self-concept is a multidimensional concept, and following that view a hierarchical model was created in the work of Shavelson et al. (1976) where general self-concept was divided into academically and non-academically self-concept, and academically self-concept was further divided into sub-categories depending on the subject areas such as math and language arts. Academic self-concept (ASC) has shown to be more strongly related to academic achievement than global measures of self-concept or self-esteem (Marsh & O'Mara, 2008; Trautwein, Lüdtke, Köller & Baumert, 2006). More specific ASCs such as math self-concept or reading self-concept have also been found to have a stronger relationship with achievements in the particular subjects than other subjects or the more general academic self-concept (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988; Skaalvik, 1990). In the current study ASC will be used to look at a more general perception of own academic competence among Norwegian and American students.

The emphasis of achievement seems to be somewhat divergent within the American and Norwegian culture. As mentioned previously; the American children are encouraged to show off their independence (Bateson, 2000) and they live in a society where achievers are winners with every right to achieve (Sirevåg, 1999). Achievement is strongly encouraged and the belief that everyone can achieve with hard work is even mentioned in political campaigns (see Aune, 2009). The focus on equality and sameness in Norway, also mentioned earlier, gives a different environment for claiming achievement as no one is supposed to be better than the others (Gullestad, 1989; Sirevåg, 1999). It might be that such different environments and different focus on achievement will influence both actual achievement levels and ASCs. This possibility will be explored in the current study.

The relationship between achievement and ASC has previously been found to be reciprocal (Marsh & O'Mara, 2008; Trautwein et al., 2006). Prior ASC predict academic achievement, while academic achievement predicts later ASC. High ASCs are believed to lead to higher achievement levels probably because higher beliefs about own abilities give hopes for further success which can motivate students to work harder (Graham, 1991; Weiner, 1992). It is suggested that the opposite direction has to do with the feedback the students get from their teachers; if the teachers that rate the achievement levels also are the ones giving feedback to the students there would be expected to be a strong relationship between achievement and ASC (Jussim, 1989).

However, there is an assumption that American children are being "dumbed down" due to a strong focus on enhancing self-esteem instead of giving them accurate knowledge of their achievements (Sykes, 1995). In the current study it will be explored if there is some truth to that assumption, and if American students actually do have a lower correlation between their ASC and academic achievement levels. They will be compared to Norwegian students, who are studying in a cultural environment that is seemingly less focused on both competition and self-esteem than the American cultural environment.

2.7 Hypotheses and qualitative research questions

In accordance with the cultural backgrounds presented here, together with the theoretical implications for self-perception and for certain school related variables, the following hypotheses and qualitative research questions were developed:

Hypotheses:

1. Self-esteem and culture

- a) The American students are expected to score higher on self-esteem than the Norwegian students.
- b) The boys are expected to score higher on self-esteem than the girls in both countries.

2. Classroom engagement

- a) The American students are expected to score higher on student- and teacher- rated classroom engagement than the Norwegian students.
- b) The girls are expected to score higher on classroom engagement (student-rated and teacher-rated) than the boys in both countries.

3. Perceived versus actual academic competence

- a) The American students are expected to score higher on academic self-concept than the Norwegian students.
- b) There is expected to be no difference between how the American and the Norwegian teachers rate their students academic achievement.
- c). The American students are expected to have a lower positive correlation between academic self-concept and academic achievement than the Norwegian students.
- d) There is expected to be no gender difference on academic achievement or academic self-concept in either Norway or America.

4. Self-esteem in the classroom

- a) Self-esteem is expected to correlate positively with classroom engagement (student- and teacher- rated) in both countries.
- b) Self-esteem is expected to correlate positively with academic self-concept in both countries.

c) Self-esteem is expected to correlate positively with academic achievement in both countries.

Qualitative research questions:

How do American and Norwegian students understand and experience the concept of self-esteem? How do they understand classmates' reactions to feedback in school that may be either threatening or enhancing to the classmates' self-esteem level?

3. Method

3.1 Design

The study contains both a quantitative and a qualitative explorative comparative design; both are comparative as they compare Norway and America on school related factors and/or self-esteem; and both can be considered explorative as little previous research doing this comparison has been found. Despite of lacking previous empirical findings, theory on cultural aspects in the two countries suggest that some differences are likely to be found. The quantitative study is a between participant-independent design, as the participants in the two different countries are compared as two independent groups. A survey is used to collect the information. The qualitative interview design explores the 6th graders understanding and experience of self-esteem. However, differences and similarities between the Norwegian and American students understanding and experiences are also being discussed in relation to cultural aspects such as equality and individualism. This is done in order to achieve more in-depth understanding of how cultures might influence the perception and experience of self-esteem.

3.2 Quantitative method

3.2.1 Participants/sample

The questionnaires were distributed to several public schools in Norway (Trondheim) and charter and private schools in North Carolina (The Triangle area; Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill). Charter schools differ from public schools because they follow own regulations set in the schools charter or agenda, but still get public funding. Private schools charge students tuitions instead of receiving public funding and are not administered by the state

government. The schools were contacted through e-mail and telephone or through visits at the schools. The schools participated if the principal gave permission, and the amount of students that participated in each school depended on the teachers permission, parental permission, as well as whether the students themselves wanted to participate. The sampling method was therefore to a certain extent one of convenience sampling. The students were 5th, 6th and 7th graders, and it was attempted to have an equal amount of students from each grade (see Table 1). It was also attempted to have an equal amount of both genders in both countries, but the males ended up being underrepresented which the teachers explained by the boys forgetting to give the letter with parental permission to the parents, or forgetting to bring it back to school. The teachers were also asked to fill out a separate questionnaire about each student participating, which was later compared with the student's questionnaire. In total 6 Norwegian schools participated out of the 26 that was contacted, while 4 out of the 39 American schools participated. Schools explained their non-participation with limited time resources, or participation in other projects.

Table 1
Demographic Information on Participants

Gender	Grade	Country		Total
		Norway	America	
Male	5th	13	4	17
	6th	19	3	22
	7th	7	11	18
	Combined	39	19	57
Female	5th	10	9	19
	6th	12	9	21
	7th	13	18	31
	Combined	35	37	71
Total		74	56	128

Note. Missing values: Grades for 1 male and 1 female American student.

3.2.2 Procedure

Before the questionnaires were handed out to the students, the researcher wrote a list with the names and numbers of all students participating and then marked each of the numbered questionnaires with post-it notes with the students' names on. In this way it would be possible to make sure that the teacher filled out the questionnaire about the right student. The post-it notes were removed when the questionnaires were handed back to the researcher. The list of names was put in a locker for later use in selecting and contacting participants for the qualitative part of the study.

The students who had parental permission and agreed to participate were taken to a different classroom for approximately 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire. The researcher was present the entire time to answer possible questions the students might have. In most of the Norwegian schools the researcher was the only one answering the students' questions, while in America most teachers were not allowed to leave the children unsupervised with the researcher and were for that reason also present during the 20 minutes. Before the students received the questionnaires the researcher made it clear that they did not have to answer every question if they felt uncomfortable with it, and they did not have to participate at all if they did not want to. It was also explained thoroughly what they were supposed to do with each single scale in the questionnaire. The students were not allowed to talk with each other while answering the questionnaire, and they were seated in a manner that they could not see what the others were answering. The students in America received a small gift (a pen, a marker or similar) as thanks for participating. The teachers in America received a modest monetary incentive for filling out questionnaires about the children. This was not done in Norway as it

is not very common, and as participating in research projects is considered to be more of a citizen's duty than anything else.

3.2.3 Measures

A part of the questionnaire was already used in America for the Youth Identity project (Kurtz-Costes & Rowley, 2008). Of the scales used in that project, the scale measuring Academic Self-Concept (Perceived Competence) was modeled after a scale used by Nicholls (1978), and the Classroom Engagement scale was modeled after two separate scales used by Skinner and Belmont (1993). Their two scales measures student engagement and teacher's perception of student engagement. The Classroom Engagement scale, a shorter version of these two, was in the Youth Identity Project created for both the student and the teacher questionnaire and it will in the current study be used accordingly. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was also used, however, the remaining scales; the Student Attribution scale and the Academic Achievement scale (Student Ability), was created for the Youth Identity Project. However, in the current study the Student Attribution scale was excluded from the analyses due to time constraints. A Social Desirability scale by Carifio (1992) (short form A of the Crandall Social Desirability Scale for Children) was also added to test battery of the current study. However, this was only used to find out whether a response-bias occurred more in one of the two groups than the other (which was not the case) and this scale will not be presented further or used for further analysis. The complete questionnaire was translated into Norwegian by the researcher and then translated back to English by a colleague. No major discrepancies were found (see questionnaires in Appendix 1, 2, 4 and 5).

Classroom Engagement scale

The Classroom Engagement scale consists of 15 items with statements such as "I participate when we discuss new material", "When I run into a difficult question, I try even harder", and "If a problem is really hard, I just quit working on it". These statements were worded somewhat differently for the teacher questionnaire: "This student participate when we discuss new material". In both versions are 7 of the statements positively worded, and 8 negatively worded. The response scale was a 4-point Likert scale ("not at all true", "not very true", "sort of true", "very true"). Total scores ranges from 15 to 60. This scale is as already mentioned used in the Youth Identity Project (Kurtz-Costes & Rowley, 2008), however, the research is not completed and reliability measures from that study is therefore not available. In the

current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .83 for the student rated Classroom Engagement scale, and .96 for the teacher rated Classroom Engagement Scale. Cronbach's alpha should not be much higher than .9 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), as that might suggest item redundancy, however, both of the teacher-rated scales had a Cronbach's alpha above .9 something which will be taken into consideration in the discussion.

Table 2
N, Mean, Standard Deviation, Cronbach's alpha and Range of Scores for the Scales.

Scale	N	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha	Range of scores
1. Rosenberg self-esteem	125	30.86	5.29	.77	10-40
2. Classroom Engagement (student-rated)	116	51.48	6.07	.83	15-60
3. Classroom Engagement (teacher-rated)	124	48.81	9.95	.96	15-60
4. Academic Self-Concept	124	103.33	24.37	.85	6-150
5. Academic Achievement	127	31.56	6.56	.93	6-42

Academic Self-Concept scale

The Academic Self-Concept scale consists of 6 items: math, language arts, science, writing, school grades and intelligence (smart). For each item the participants are asked to circle a stick figure in a column of 25 figures symbolizing where s/he can be ranged in class. The score range is from 1 (top) to 25 (bottom), and the scores were reversed for the analyses so that higher scores indicate higher ASC. Total possible scores range from 6 to 150. This scale is used in the Youth Identity Project (Kurtz-Costes & Rowley, 2008), but then as a Perceived Competence scale with 10 items. That included the six already mentioned (plus a height item to give the children an example of how the scale works), and 3 items for sports, music, and making friends. The Academic Self-Concept scale version was used in a study by Okeke, Howard, Kurtz-Costes and Rowley (2009) on African American 7th and 8th graders and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .78. The Cronbach's alpha on the Academic Self-Concept scale for the current study is .85. All 10 items was included in the questionnaire for the current study, however, the 6 item version, which only focused on academic competence, was

used for the analyses instead of the 10 items Perceived Competence scale which was slightly less fit for the current sample (Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .81).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) consists of 10 items with statements such as "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others" and "I certainly feel useless at times". Half of the items are positively worded, and the other half is negatively worded. The response scale used is a 4-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", "strongly agree"). Total scores range from 10 to 40. RSES is a widely used scale, and has in earlier research shown a high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$) (Thompson & Waltz, 2008). In Marcotte, Fortin, Potvin and Papillon's (2002) study the Cronbach's alpha was .88, while Fleming & Courtney (1984) found a Cronbach's alpha level of .85 after a two-week interval and .82 after a one-week interval. In the current study the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .77.

Academic Achievement scale

As there was no access to school grades for this study (only a few of the American schools and none of the Norwegian schools that participated grade the children's schoolwork), the teachers measure of student ability is the only measurement of academic achievement. However, if there were grades available, the teachers would also have been the ones setting them according to their evaluations of the students. The Academic Achievement scale (Student Ability) included 6 items with statements regarding each student's verbal expression and understanding, view of school, presentations, intelligence, homework preparations and preparations for tests. The response scale was a 7-point Likert scale. Total scores range from 6 to 42. This scale was also created for the Youth Identity Project (Kurtz-Costes & Rowley (2008), and no reliability measures from that study are yet available either. However, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the current study was high (.93), as with the teacher rated Classroom Engagement scale, and will be considered in the discussion of the results.

Demography

The student questionnaire included demographic questions regarding age, gender, nationality and race. The teacher questionnaire included demographic questions regarding number of years he or she had been teaching in total as well as number of years at that particular school. As in the student questionnaire it also included questions regarding gender, nationality and

race. However, for the data analysis only the students' grade and nationality (Norwegian or American) was used, as well as the teachers' nationality (Norwegian or American).

3.2.4 Statistical analyses

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 14.0 was used for the statistical analyses. Independent sample t-tests were used to explore a possible cultural difference between Norwegian participants and American participants on the RSES scale, Academic Self-Concept scale, Classroom Engagement scale (both student-rated and teacher-rated), and the Academic Achievement scale. Gender differences on the scales were also examined using independent sample t-tests with the two countries both separately and together. Cohen's *d* was used as effect size on all the t-tests in this study; .2 is considered a small effect size, .5 as medium, and .8 as large (Cohen, 1988).

Correlation analyses were used to explore possible correlations between self-esteem, classroom engagement (student- and teacher-rated), academic self-concept and academic achievement with the two countries both separately and combined.

3.3 Qualitative method

Since no previous studies directly comparing American and Norwegian student's scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were found, a qualitative part was added to the study to clarify and illustrate the meaning of the quantitative findings as suggested by King (1994). Qualitative interviews can show whether the interview participants' experiences coincide with the ratings on the self-esteem measure. The interview participants' understanding and experience of self-esteem was also considered an important aspect of achieving an in-depth insight on cultural differences between American and Norwegian students.

3.3.1 Participants/sample

When all questionnaires were received, the 6th graders results on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale were checked. It was attempted to only include 6th graders in the qualitative part of the interview since they represented the mean age of the group. It was also attempted to select one male and one female student from each country as low, medium and high score on this scale

to make the interview participants (participants) in both countries more representative for their group. In this way it was possible to avoid ending up with for example only students with high self-esteem score in America and low self-esteem score in Norway. Because of a lack of American 6th graders participating, a boy from 5th grade was also interviewed and one extra girl instead of a boy in order to get students with different RSE score. All together this turned out to be 7 students in America, and 6 students in Norway.

3.3.2 Procedure

The interviews were conducted in separate rooms for privacy reasons, and to be undisturbed. Every interview was done without others present. The students were informed that the interviews were tape recorded, and made aware that they could decide to stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer some or all of the questions. They were also made aware that their anonymity was being respected; only the researcher and supervisor or possible assistants would listen to the tape, and that the tape would be destroyed as soon as the interviews were transcribed.

3.3.3 Interviews

A semi-structured interview guide was used for the interviews, because it allows the researcher to use follow up questions, change the wording of the question and give explanations when needed (Robson, 2002). This was found to be the most appropriate interview style, as the participants were children and some flexibility seemed necessary to make sure they understood the questions and to encourage them to talk. This guide consists of questions regarding the participants understanding of the concept of self-esteem, own self-esteem level and their opinions and understanding of classmates' self-esteem level. It also included three classroom scenarios about students' reactions to feedback on tests. The participants were asked about their understanding and perception regarding these scenarios, in order to investigate how the participants thought classmates' reactions could disclose their self-perceptions. The interview guide was written in Norwegian and translated to English by the researcher, and translated back to English by a colleague to check for discrepancies; however no major changes were needed (see Appendix 3 and 6).

3.3.4 Data analysis

In preparation for the data analysis, all the American interviews were transcribed by the researcher, while four of the Norwegian interviews were transcribed by research assistants after they had signed a letter of confidentiality.

The qualitative analysis was inspired by phenomenology, as the interview participants' experience and understanding of self-esteem was in focus. However, a completely phenomenological method of analysis was not followed, since the qualitative part of the study followed the quantitative part, where the researcher had certain expectations and the participants answered questions regarding self-perceptions that they might also have had in mind during the interviews. Additionally, the participants' answers were discussed following which country the participant was from, and not based on other personal characteristics of the participant. It was also attempted that the participants who were interviewed from each country were diverse from the others in certain aspects, and not homogenous, which is often attempted in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Following IPA as suggested by Smith and Osborn (2003), each transcribed interview was reread thoroughly several times; notes were taken and meaning units were identified. These meaning units were then summarized into themes, which were later clustered together depending on their connections. The interviews consisted of two main sections and the analysis differed somewhat for these. The first one had to do with self-esteem and the participants' understanding of and experience with this concept. Meaning units were identified here which were then coded into four themes based on wording or meaning in the text as well as theoretical considerations and the interview guide. The transcribed interviews were reread several times to ensure that each theme was distinct from the others and that there were themes applicable for all the information retrieved from the interviews. The second section was based on the three scenarios regarding different reactions to positive or negative feedback. The participants' understanding and evaluation of these scenarios were interpreted within these three "themes" already set by the scenarios in the interview guide.

All themes from both sections were then interpreted in light of previous theory and empirical research on self-esteem, as well as self-enhancing or self-defeating behaviour related to self-esteem. Additionally, the Norwegian and American participant's answers on both sections

were compared in light of cultural aspects such as equality, individualism, the Law of Jante and the American Dream.

Each quote was numbered and further discussions around that quote was referred back to that number. Each quote was also marked with the participant number, which country the participant came from, the participant's level of self-esteem (LSE, MSE, HSE), which page the quote can be found in the transcript, and the date the interview was conducted (e.g.: Participant 4, Norway, MSE, p. 26, February 4th, 2008).

3.4 Ethical considerations

As the data collection was conducted at schools during school hours, the principal or director of the schools were contacted first to get permission. As the main research participants of this study are children, they could only participate if they had the consent letter with parent's signature. The teachers also signed a consent letter after being informed about the study and made aware that they were not obliged to participate. In addition, the children were made aware of their right to not participate or to not answer questions they found uncomfortable to answer. The 13 children who were interviewed after finishing the questionnaires were also informed about their right to not participate or end the interview at any time (see script for introducing the interview to children in Appendix 18 and 20).

The ethics around giving "gifts" for participating in research projects can be discussed. In the current study the American teachers received a modest monetary incentive to participate and were informed about that in advance, while the American students received a small ballpoint pen or marker but were not informed in advance. The Norwegian students or teachers did not receive such "gifts" or incentives. In Norway such gifts are not very common, and it is rather considered part of being a citizen to participate in studies if one is available. However, the Triangle area where the American participants were recruited is an area with several larger universities. The schools here are more often being involved in larger research projects where it is common for participants to receive such gifts, which is why this was done in the current study.

The project was accepted by the IRB (Institutional Review Board) of human subject research at UNC-Chapel Hill. The project proposal was also reviewed by a representative of REK (Regional Committee for medical and health related research ethics) in Trondheim.

4. Quantitative results

4. 1. Cultural and gender differences in self-esteem

On average, the American students scored higher on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) scale (M=33.10, SD = 4.89), than the Norwegian students (M=29.31, SD= 5.03), $t(123) = -4.184$, $p = .000$. (See table 3). The effect size was large: $d = .76$. T-tests were also used in order to check for gender differences on the RSE scale; first with samples from both countries together, then the two samples separately. Only the t-test with the two countries separated showed significant results, and only for the Norwegian sample: The Norwegian boys (M=30.59, SD=.68) scored higher on the RSE scale than the Norwegian girls (M=27.89, SD=.95), $t(72) = 2.383$, $p = .02$. Effect size; $d = .55$ (medium). (See Table 3).

Table 3
Cultural and Gender Differences on Self-Esteem, Student-rated (sr) and Teacher-rated (tr) Classroom Engagement, Academic Self-Concept, and Academic Achievement

	<u>Self-esteem</u>			<u>Classroom engagement (sr)</u>			<u>Classroom engagement (tr)</u>			<u>Academic self-concept</u>			<u>Academic achievement</u>		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
NORWAY															
Boys	39	30.59*	.68	36	52.53*	4.28	38	45.74	11.42	37	97.95	25.62	38	29.61	6.97
Girls	35	27.89*	.95	30	49.57*	6.99	33	47.52	11.29	33	97.91	22.78	33	32.45	6.98
Both genders	74	29.31***	5.03	66	51.18	5.82	71	46.56**	11.31	70	97.93**	24.15	71	30.93	7.08
AMERICA															
Boys	18	33.83	4.11	17	51.18	8.84	18	52.61	6.80	18	110.78	23.08	19	33.26	6.13
Girls	33	32.70	5.29	33	52.24	4.89	35	51.40	6.82	36	110.11	23.35	37	31.89	5.68
Both genders	51	33.10***	4.89	50	51.88	6.43	53	51.81**	6.77	54	110.33**	23.04	56	32.36	5.81
BOTH COUNTRIES															
Boys	57	31.61	4.45	53	52.09	6.07	56	47.95	10.61	55	102.15	25.34	57	30.82	6.87
Girls	68	30.22	5.87	63	50.97	6.08	68	49.51	9.40	69	104.28	23.72	70	32.16	6.28
Both genders	125	30.86	5.29	116	51.48	6.07	124	48.81	9.95	124	103.33	24.37	127	31.56	6.56

Note. Total possible scores: Self-esteem (10-40), Classroom engagement (sr and tr) (15-60), Academic self-concept (25-150), Academic achievement (6-42).

*=Significant at a 0.05 level between the groups

**=Significant at a 0.01 level between the groups

***=Significant at a 0.001 level between the groups

4.2 Classroom engagement

4.2.1 Cultural and gender differences on engagement in the classroom

There were no significant differences found on the t-test between American and Norwegian children on the student-rated Classroom Engagement scale. However, the American children ($M= 51.81$, $SD= 6.77$) scored higher on the teacher-rated Classroom Engagement scale than the Norwegian children ($M= 46.56$, $SD= 11.31$), $t(117)=-3.213$, $p =.002$ (equal variances not assumed). Effect size for this result was medium $d= .56$ (see Table 3).

T-tests were also used in order to check for gender differences on both the student-rated and the teacher-rated Classroom Engagement scale; first with the children from both countries together, then the two countries separated. However, only the t-test on the student-rated Classroom Engagement scale with the countries separated came up significant, and only for the Norwegian sample: The Norwegian boys ($M=52.53$, $SD= 4.28$) scored higher on the student-rated Classroom Engagement scale than the Norwegian girls ($M= 49.57$, $SD= 6.99$), $t(64)=2.113$, $p = .038$. The effect size was medium; $d = .51$ (see Table 3).

4.3 Perceived versus actual academic competence

4.3.1 Cultural and gender differences on academic self-concept

On the Academic Self-concept Scale the American participants ($M= 110.33$, $SD= 23.04$) scored higher than the Norwegian participants ($M= 97.93$, $SD= 24.15$), $t(122)=-2.893$, $p = .005$, with a medium effect size $d = .53$. No significant gender differences were detected on ASC (see Table 3).

4.3.2 Cultural and gender differences on academic achievement

There was expected to be no difference on how the teachers in the two countries rated their students' academic achievement. The results on the independent sample t-test supported this hypothesis. Gender differences were also examined; however, no statistically significant differences were detected (see Table 3).

4.3.3 Academic self-concept and academic achievement

The American students were expected to have a lower positive correlation between academic self-concept and academic achievement than the Norwegian students. A positive correlation was found for the two countries together: $r = .470$, $n = 121$, $p = .000$, and as expected this positive correlation was slightly lower for the American students ($r = .359$, $n = 54$, $p = .008$) than for the Norwegian students separately ($r = .520$, $n = 67$, $p = .000$) (see Table 4).

4.4 The importance of self-esteem in the classroom

4.4.1 Self-esteem and classroom engagement (student- and teacher-rated)

Self-esteem is positively correlated with student-rated classroom engagement: $r = .294$, $n = 113$, $p = .002$, however, the strength of the correlation is small. When comparing the two countries, a significant result was only found for the group with Norwegian students ($r = .333$, $n = 66$, $p = .006$) but then with a medium strong correlation (see Table 4).

Self-esteem is also positively correlated with teacher-rated classroom engagement: $r = .349$, $n = 119$, $p = .000$ (medium effect size). When comparing the two countries, significant results for positive correlation were detected within both countries: Norway ($r = .299$, $n = 71$, $p = .011$) and America ($r = .295$, $n = 48$, $p = .042$), both with a medium effect size (see Table 4).

Table 4

Correlations between Self-esteem, Academic self-concept, student-rated (sr) Classroom engagement, teacher-rated (tr) Classroom engagement and Academic achievement in Norway and America

	1.		2.		3.		4.		5.	
	Norway	America	Norway	America	Norway	America	Norway	America	Norway	America
1. Self-esteem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Academic self-concept	.304*	.318*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Classroom engagement (sr)	.333**	.231	.312*	.017	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Classroom engagement (tr)	.299*	.295*	.401***	.139	.444***	.033	-	-	-	-
5. Academic achievement	.192	.304*	.520***	.359***	.316*	-.044	.849***	.681***	-	-

* = Significant correlation at a 0.05 level

** = Significant correlation at a 0.01 level

*** = Significant correlation at a 0.001 level

4.4.2 Self-esteem and academic self-concept

Self-esteem is positively correlated with ASC: $r = .377$, $n = 119$, $p = .000$ (medium effect size). Exploring the two countries separately the positive correlation was still significant for both Norway ($r = .304$, $n = 70$, $p = .011$) and America ($r = .318$, $n = 54$, $p = .026$) (see Table 4).

4.4.3 Self-esteem and academic achievement

Self-esteem is positively correlated with academic achievement: $r = .247$, $n = 122$, $p = .006$, however, the strength of the correlation is small. When comparing the two countries, a significant correlation was detected for the American group only ($r = .304$, $n = 51$, $p = .030$), but with a medium effect size (see Table 4).

5. Quantitative discussion

The main focus for this study was examining cultural differences between Norwegian and American students on self-esteem, academic self-concept, engagement and achievement in school. These factors are being discussed in light of aspects of the Norwegian and American cultures such as individualism, equality, the American Dream, and the Law of Jante.

However, it has to be kept in mind that the differences that are being discussed here are also a matter of degree, and not a complete description of the behavior of every single Norwegian or American child. It is supposed to give a better understanding of the cultural differences between these two Western countries on each their continent; however, we still have to appreciate individual differences within each one of them.

5.1 Cultural and gender differences on self-esteem

It was hypothesized that the American 5th, 6th and 7th graders would have higher self-esteem than the Norwegian students in the same age group. The results supported this hypothesis, and showed similarity to previous studies. A mean value of 30.85 (SD = 4.82) has previously been found in 53 nations across the world, and in the same study American college students had a mean score of 32.21 (SD = 5.01) while several European countries such as Czech Republic (M = 28.47) and Belgium (M = 29.66) scored near the midpoint of the RSES (Schmitt &

Allik, 2005). This shows that a more general positive self-evaluation is common, which was also true for the current study. The American 5th-7th graders with a mean value of 33.10 (SD = 4.89) scored relatively high as did the American college students in Schmitt and Allik's (2005) study, and the Norwegian 5th -7th graders with a mean value of 29.31 (SD = 5.05) scored near the midpoint as some other European countries in the same study. Additionally, a previous study has shown that Norwegian students have less self-enhancement bias than American students, possibly due to a reduced desire to self-promote in Norwegians compared to Americans (Silva & Seger, 2004).

One explanation for the different self-esteem level among Norwegian and American students in the current study might be the larger focus on self-esteem in the American school and the American society overall. As a result of actions such as the Californian Task Force, that viewed self-esteem as the cure for most social problems (Emler, 2001), the American culture has attained a larger vocabulary to discuss the topic of self-esteem. The American public has been made more conscious about self-esteem and it has been included in their everyday understanding of themselves and people around them. Education in America has been used purposefully to serve the society and work as a cure for societal problems (Orr, 1992; Sirevåg, 1999), and as self-esteem was viewed as the cure within the Californian Task Force, it has also been a strong concern within the school system.

The emphasis in the popular view of self-esteem has been that high self-esteem is good, and low self-esteem is bad, a view also shared by the Task Force (Emler, 2001). Since a large emphasis in America has been on the consequences of low self-esteem, one could expect the American schools, the children and their parents to be more conscious of the child's self-esteem and act accordingly in order to make it higher. However, attempts to enhance self-esteem have been criticized for several reasons. First of all, there are disagreements about which methods are better for enhancing students' self-esteem as there are a large number of methods available, and several have shown to be less efficient (Emler, 2001, Haney & Durlak, 1998). Second, change of self-esteem can be rather difficult as people actively resist such changes (Swann, 1997). Following the self-verification theory, people with low self-esteem will resist positive feedback and accept negative feedback to maintain a consistent self-concept, while those with already high self-esteem are more likely to accept positive feedback and reject negative feedback (Swann, 1997). Additionally, Research has shown that positive affirmations (such as having the students say "I am special") might backfire on people with

low self-esteem and make them feel worse, because the affirmations would be discrepant with the already existing self-view (Wood, Perunovic & Lee, 2009). Thus, it is questionable whether the higher levels of self-esteem among the American students are solely due to a focus on enhancing self-esteem or whether there are other factors involved.

Another important explanation for why the American participants scored higher on self-esteem might be that America has a better suited environment for development of high self-esteem. As discussed previously, in America the model of self-narration is characterized by the belief in the American Dream and individual accomplishment, while in Norway it is characterized by the Law of Jante, equality in the sense of both justice and sameness, in addition to a strong sense of modesty. These cultural models of self-narration, how they talk about and view themselves, can work as constraint or allowance to the development of self-esteem (Hewitt, 2007).

America also has a better environment for self-enhancement in the schools systems. There are end of year tests to evaluate who is good enough to go up to the next grade level and a large focus on individual achievement, which makes it "legal" in the social sphere to be proud of one's own achievements and be open about them. Because the children are encouraged to show off independence, as a part of the individualistic and achievement oriented society (Bateson, 2000), they are also allowed to experience their own boundaries and in that way develop confidence in their own abilities and own value. It is "allowed" for the genius children to be just that, genius. In Norway on the other hand, the long held politics of the country show a strong concern about equality. The Norwegian Labor Party has reigned the country for the majority of years since its founding, and its political program includes achieving support for children who are lacking behind in school, while extra intelligent children are not mentioned.

Although Norwegians are not "allowed" to show off independence in the same way as Americans, it does not mean that Norwegians are completely lacking self-esteem. Norwegian's still find ways to enhance their self-esteem, but perhaps in more subtle ways. As mentioned earlier, the so called Askeladden routine of pretending to be less than one is and then surprise by actually being good, is one example. However, one would think that it would still be a constraint as high self-esteem is not allowed out in the open and cannot be lived out and tested.

A third possible explanation for the cultural difference in self-esteem is the level of importance of enhanced self-esteem in each country. Both Norway and America are individualistic countries, but as mentioned earlier, exactly how individualistic is a matter of degree. Norway has a more individual collectivism as there are individual contributes towards a collective goal, while America has a more collective individualism as there are collective contributes towards private goals (Sirevåg, 1999). This is also visible in the level of masculinity and femininity. Norway has been found to score higher on femininity than America, with a focus on interrelatedness and compromises, while America scores high on masculinity with focus on achievement and competition (Hofstede, 1980, 2001, 2009; Oettingen, 1995; Sirevåg, 1999). The difference in children's self-esteem in the two countries might reflect the level of importance of enhanced self-esteem in each country due to both the type of individualism and the level of masculinity and femininity. As the goal in Norway is collectivistic and focuses on compromises, someone with a medium level of self-esteem can still contribute a lot and have a positive attitude about self. However, as the goal in America is more individualistic and achievement oriented, one would expect a higher level of self-esteem to be needed in order to stand strong and remain positive about self in the competitive society.

In addition to culture, gender was expected to influence the students' level of self-esteem. Previous research has showed that boys score only slightly higher on self-esteem scales than girls do among both elementary, high school and college students (Davies & Brember, 1999; Frost & McKelvie, 2004; Kling et al., 1999). Surprisingly there was only a significant gender difference for the Norwegian sample. The Norwegian boys had higher self-esteem than the Norwegian girls as was the case with previous research, while the American students were similar in their self-esteem scores. Even so, the Norwegian boys had lower self-esteem than the American students of both genders. Previous research on American students showed a slight gender difference on self-esteem favoring the boys, and even more so during adolescence (Kling et al., 1999). However, this sample might be a bit too small for dividing it into four groups, which may be the reason why no significant gender difference was found in the American sample since this sample was somewhat smaller than the Norwegian one.

On the other hand, the gender difference among the Norwegian students might also be a reflection of boys being somewhat excused from the Law of Jante in Norway at that age, as it is still accepted that the boys act more extrovert and are being loud. This might reflect a bit of

old gender patterns where boys are allowed to be confident while girls are not. The boys are allowed to show off and show their presence more as “they are just being boys” (Bredesen, 2004). Therefore they might be able to test their boundaries a little more. The girls on the other hand do not have an excuse to not be quiet, calm and behaving appropriately. Dahle (2002) and the illustrator Nyhus received a Norwegian literature price, “Brageprisen”, for their children’s book called *Nice* (“Snill”). This issue was made clear in their book, presenting a girl that was being so nice and acting so good that she became invisible. It might be that the American children are more similar in their self-esteem score as everyone is encouraged to work on and have high self-esteem, which allows a safe environment to raise the girls’ self-esteem too. This is also reflected in adult females’ self-perceptions; most American women have been found to have high self-beliefs, believing that their own talent is the only limit to their ambitions (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2004).

5.2 Classroom engagement

Both the students and the teachers were questioned about the students’ engagement in the classroom. It was hypothesized that the American students would score higher than the Norwegian students on both the teacher-rated and the student-rated classroom engagement scale, as a result of studying in an environment where working hard to “become anything you want” (achieve) is stressed and encouraged (Ashbee, 2002; Sirevåg, 1999). Norwegian students are also encouraged to achieve in school, however, it was expected that the social cost of achieving or sticking out in the crowd (Kiel, 1993; Gullestad, 1989; Sirevåg, 1999), would put some constraint on the engagement in the classroom in comparison to the American students.

The results only partly supported this hypothesis. Surprisingly, the students did not differ across the two countries on the student-rated classroom engagement. It may be that this difference between the cultures is not as strongly experienced as expected. Nevertheless, in accordance with the hypothesis, the American teachers rated their students higher on classroom engagement than the Norwegian teachers did. There is a chance that the American teachers, being a part of a very competitive society, would deliberately give their students high scores in order to compete with the Norwegian sample and show that Americans are “better”, however, that is not very likely. Rather, these results suggest that there may be a difference in the expectations within the classroom in the two countries due to what is being

emphasized in the society. As already mentioned, in America it is expected that anyone who work hard will achieve (Ashbee, 2002), and that might make the teachers more focused on their students effort and persistence as a goal and thus make them score their students higher on classroom engagement.

On the other hand, the different teacher-ratings could also suggest that there is an actual difference in the students' level of engagement clearly visible for the teachers in the two countries. If this is the case, it would mean that the students were not accurate in their self-ratings. However, others have argued that actors are more accurate judges of effort (Jussim, 1989). Accordingly, it is unlikely that the teachers' perceptions of classroom engagement in this study were more accurate than the self-ratings; however, the teachers' and students' standpoint for evaluating classroom engagement is different. Whether the student is actually paying attention or just staring at the blackboard may be hard for the teacher to evaluate. Instead, the teachers have to base engagement on some observable behaviour such as performance (Jussim, 1989), or verbal participation in class. The items on the Classroom Engagement scale may not have varied enough for the teachers, as several items were on persistence and only a few items were on visible engagement such as verbal participation in class.

Previous teacher reports on motivation have also been found to be more stable over time and across topics, and less differentiated across motivation dimensions (Givvin et al., 2001). The teachers in the current did in fact seem to have a less diverse evaluation of the students compared to the students themselves. If they rated the student as engaged in the classroom, they gave their student a relatively high score throughout the measure, which was evident in the high Cronbach's alpha of that scale. This was also true for the other teacher-rated measure; student's academic achievement as general performance and student ability, strengthening the possibility that the teachers had a less diverse view of their students. It seems as if the teachers more easily place their students into definite categories and it thus becomes visible in their answers.

This was also visible in the high correlation between teacher-rated classroom engagement and academic achievement in both countries (see Table 4), which suggests that the teachers may use similar criteria for evaluating both classroom engagement and students' academic achievement. Teachers have previously been found to rate high achievers high on other

student measures too (Carr & Kurt-Costes, 1994) and they may think that the high achievers must be engaged simply because they achieve. However, teachers' perceptions are important with regard to grades (for some of the schools) and how the students are met by the teacher. For example, Skinner and Belmont (1993) suggest that students who are behaviourally disengaged receive teacher responses that further weaken their engagement. It is reasonable to believe that this would be more strongly related to the engagement perceived by teachers than by the students.

Interestingly, a closer look at the results shows that the Norwegian and American students, as well as the American teachers, on average gave a quite similar classroom engagement score. The Norwegian teachers on the other hand, gave their students on average a lower score than the American teachers and the two groups of students. There may be several explanations for this pattern. The first impression would be that the Norwegian teachers answered "wrong" compared to the students and the American teachers, as they were the only group giving lower scores. However, as already discussed, both the teacher- and student-rated classroom engagement are likely to be accurate although they reflect two sides of the same coin. Why then, did the Norwegian students and Norwegian teachers disagree on the students' level of classroom engagement?

The Norwegian students may feel just as engaged as the American students, but they may base themselves on a different standard of engagement. Norwegian students may not be influenced by the American work ethic saying that those who work hard achieve (Ashbee, 2002; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2004), but instead know that everything can work out just fine regardless of the effort they pay. The Norwegian students go from one grade level to the next without tests such as the American end of grade tests to decide who is fit for the next grade level. They will get into the same junior high regardless of performance in elementary and middle school, and are guaranteed free education until university (Hansen, 2005). They may feel engaged in relation to the level of engagement needed to "hang in there". However, as the Norwegian teachers score them lower on engagement, the teachers may have higher expectations of their students. Although the students' future is likely to be safe, it is reasonable to believe that teachers would want their students to be engaged in the classroom and be high achievers, which would make the teachers seem successful. The same standard of engagement that the students are measuring themselves up against may not be acceptable for the teachers.

Nevertheless, the students' own scores on classroom engagement in Norway correlated positively with the scores given by their teachers (see Table 4). A higher score in the student-rated classroom engagement would mean a higher (although somewhat lower) score on the teacher-rated classroom engagement. This was not the case for the American sample. No correlation was detected between student-rated and teacher-rated classroom engagement despite of a similar average score, which suggests that although the Norwegian teachers rated their students lower than the students did themselves, they may be more accurate in their evaluation of their students' classroom engagement than the American teachers.

There are several possible explanations for the lack of correlation. As with the Norwegian sample, the American students and the teachers were likely to perceive classroom engagement from each their standpoint. The students would for example evaluate whether they feel like giving up quickly on a task, whether they are daydreaming in class, or whether they try hard according to their own standards. The teacher on the other hand, would only be able to see behavioural aspects such as whether the students seem to pay attention, participate verbally or ask for help quickly without trying themselves. The lack of correlation between these two shows that there was a disagreement as to who was actually engaged in the classroom. This may suggest that the American teachers were trying to portray a better picture of their students, however, that is rather unlikely as some of the students who rated themselves high must have been rated lower by their teacher as there was no correlation between the two despite of a similar average score. The safest interpretation is that there is simply a disagreement between the American students and their teachers, and that further study is needed to detect what lies behind the decision for each of the groups. However, the relationship between both student-rated and teacher-rated classroom engagement and other student measures will be discussed later, and may shed light on the subject (see subheadings 5.2.1 and 5.4.1).

Differences between the genders in classroom engagement were also explored. Since general classroom engagement (rather than subject specific classroom engagement) was used, girls were expected to score higher than boys. Previous studies in both Norway and America have showed that boys are often less engaged and expect less success in school although there are disagreements as to whether this affects actual achievement (Lee & Smith, 1993; Marks, 2000; Skaalvik, 1990). Interestingly, this contradicts the results for both the Norwegian and

the American students. There was no significant gender difference in teacher-rated classroom engagement for either the two countries separately or combined. Only the student-rated classroom engagement showed significant results, and only for the Norwegian sample. The lack of gender difference among the American students in classroom engagement may reflect the American focus on achievement (Ashbee, 2002). Everybody is encouraged to achieve regardless of gender and making an effort is perceived as the best way. However, this should be interpreted with caution as previous research did find a gender difference. It might be that the American sample in the current study was too small to be further divided into two separate groups, especially considering the low number of male participants. A larger sample might have shown a significant difference.

Surprisingly, the Norwegian boys in the current study scored *higher* than the girls on classroom engagement. As the teacher-ratings showed no gender difference, it suggests that this is something not clearly visible to others in the classroom but only something the students themselves are experiencing. The Norwegian boys felt higher in engagement than the girls; they felt more strongly that they participated and were persistent in their schoolwork. However, in the current study this was not reflected in their academic achievement. Previous research on college students has also shown that engagement (effort) does not necessarily predict achievement as much as expected (Shuman, Walsh, Olson & Etheridge, 1985). There is a chance that other factors such as memory, ability to concentrate or other personal skills influence (op. cit.). That might be the case in the current study as well.

For the Norwegian sample there was, as previously discussed, also a gender difference in self-esteem where the boys scored higher than the girls. As there was a correlation between level of self-esteem and classroom engagement among the Norwegian students, this might be the reason behind why the boys scored higher than the girls on classroom engagement as well. It may be that since more girls had low self-esteem, those girls may have felt it was pointless to be engaged and showing effort. They might have felt it would not make a difference as people with low self-esteem tend to have an attribution style similar to that of people with learned helplessness (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978).

Those who have low self-esteem may also attempt to use self-handicapping and not be as persistent in doing their schoolwork so that lack of effort can be blamed instead of lack of ability (Martin, Marsh & Debus, 2001a, 2001b). However, previous research has shown that

boys are in fact more likely to use self-handicapping than girls are (Martin, 2003; Urdan & Midgley, 2001), and self-handicapping is affecting students' abilities at school (Martin et al., 2001a, 2001b). In the current study both boys and girls (in both countries) scored similarly on both academic self-concept and academic achievement, which suggests that the difference in classroom engagement did not have an effect on achievement. If self-handicapping was the reason for lower engagement level, one would expect that it would also be reflected in the girls achievement.

Another possible explanation of the gender difference in student-rated classroom engagement is the perception of boys in Norway as "just being boys" (Bredesen, 2004), which might be used as an excuse and present different expectations for the genders. There might be higher expectations of the girls that could lead them to think they are less engaged than they could be, as they can always try harder, and that they are measuring themselves up against a higher standard than the boys. That might explain why the teachers did not perceive the same difference as the students experienced.

Regardless of the interpretation of the results it is important to be aware of differences within each gender as well. What the average score here is implying is a strong tendency for the Norwegian boys to score higher than the girls. There is a large standard deviation for boys (4.28) and even larger for girls (6.99) which shows that there is not homogeneity within these groups. Some girls may be very engaged in the classroom, and some boys may be less engaged despite of the average score.

During data collection some of the teachers stressed that it was difficult for them to get the boys to deliver the consent form to the parents and return it to the teacher. They boys would say they either forgot about it or could not find it. This may imply that a certain kind of boys were participating in the study, which may be the best explanation of why these boys scored higher than girls on classroom engagement despite previous studies showing the opposite (Lee & Smith, 1993; Marks, 2000). They may have been more engaged at school than the boys who did not manage to deliver the consent forms on time. Also, the classroom engagement was not domain specific. With regards to ASC specificity of domains have shown to be crucial for gender differences (Skaalvik, 1990), and one can question if the same results would have been found for classroom engagement in either of the two countries if domain specific statements were included.

5.3 Cultural differences on perceived versus actual competence

The American students were expected to have a higher ASC, due to the encouragement of children to show off their independence and competence (Bateson, 2000), together with the American belief also expressed in political speeches: "...you can achieve whatever you put your mind to" (see Aune, 2008). The Norwegian students were thought to score lower on ASC due to a different environment for claiming achievement, where sameness is stressed (Gullestad, 1989), together with modesty (Sirevåg, 1999). However, no difference between actual academic achievements in the two countries was expected. Additionally, there is an assumption that American children are being "dumbed down" due to a strong focus on enhancing self-esteem instead of giving them accurate knowledge of their achievements (Sykes, 1995), which would give them an ASC that would be higher than their actual achievement levels. In order to check if there is some truth to this assumption, in addition to checking for cultural differences on average scores, a correlation between ASC and academic achievement was explored. A lower positive correlation between achievement and academic self-concept was expected for the American students than the Norwegian students.

As expected, the American students scored higher than the Norwegian students on ASC, while the teachers' ratings of achievement showed no significant difference between the two countries. This suggests that the cultural difference lies in the children's beliefs about their own competence and not so much in what they are able to do. A correlation analysis between ASC and academic achievement detected a positive correlation, also when examining the two countries separately. This is in accordance with previous studies detecting a relationship between ASC and achievement; however, the direction of relationship was not examined in the current study, and has in previous research shown to be somewhat ambivalent.

Previous research in America has shown that teachers' perceptions of the students' performance (achievement) had a self-fulfilling effect on students' self-concept of ability (Jussim, 1989). It was argued that teachers frequently communicate performance evaluations to the students through grades where that is applicable, but also through written and verbal comments which would affect the students' self-concept of academic ability (op. cit.). Others have also found a correlation between Norwegian 6th graders achievements in math and language arts and their academic self-concept (Skaalvik, 1990). Achievement in grade four

has also been found to predict academic self-concept in grade five, but not the other way around, while between 7th and 8th grade a reciprocal relationship has been found suggesting a development over time (Skaalvik & Hagtvet, 1990). More recent studies in other countries have detected a reciprocal relationship between academic self-concept and achievement among both elementary school and high school students (Guay, Marsh & Boivin, 2003; Marsh & Yeung, 1997). Regardless of the direction of the relationship, there was a somewhat higher correlation for the Norwegian students in the current study, however, not by much. Still, the lower correlation for the American sample might explain their higher ASC level; it suggests that they are somewhat less realistic about their own academic abilities than the Norwegian students. As with self-esteem, the culture seem to influence the beliefs the students hold about themselves and their abilities.

As previously mentioned, no gender differences on academic achievement or ASC was found in either of the two countries. This suggests that neither gender is higher achievers in school in general. However, subject-specific academic achievement or ASC might give different results as previous research has found a gender difference with regards to math and language arts, math in favor of boys and language art in favor of girls (Lie et al., 2001; Meece, Glienke & Burg, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2004).

5.4 The importance of self-esteem in the Norwegian and American classrooms

5.4.1 Self-esteem and classroom engagement (student- and teacher-rated)

There was expected to be a positive correlation between classroom engagement (both student- and teacher-rated) and self-esteem for both countries. In meeting with difficult tasks are students with negative self-perceptions found to be less persistent, and instead give up or engage in self handicapping strategies (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Legget, 1988). It was therefore expected that the level of engagement would be low for LSE students, but gradually increase with higher levels of self-esteem. This was true for the teacher-rated classroom engagement in both the two countries. The teachers rated those with HSE higher on the classroom engagement scale. This suggests that in both countries, the higher self-esteem levels the students have, the more visibly engaged they are. In addition to students with LSE using more self-handicapping strategies than students with HSE, the students with HSE also dare to participate more in discussions (Baumeister et al., 2003), one aspect of engagement clearly

visible to teachers. This influence of self-esteem found on teacher-rated classroom engagement is important, as it might influence the teachers' general perception of the student. If students with HSE seem more engaged, they may also receive more positive attention from the teachers which may lead to further engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Student-rated classroom engagement was also found to correlate positively with self-esteem, but only for the Norwegian students. There are several possible explanations for this relationship. In order to verbally participate in class and try to succeed, a higher level of self-esteem might be needed in a country where exceptional achievement is discouraged because of its threat to equality (Eriksen, 1993a). Students with higher self-esteem levels might also feel more engaged as they are more likely to not give up than students with LSE (Ames, 1992; Baumeister, et al., 2003; Dweck & Legget, 1988). As this showed to not be the case for the American sample, students with lower self-esteem levels in America may also be more strongly encouraged to make an effort than they would in Norway. As previously mentioned, there seems to be a norm that includes everyone and is not affected by people's evaluation of self: "The virtues of hard work have long been extolled in America. Nowhere is this truer than in our schools, where it is widely held among educators and parents alike that while not all students are brilliant, at least everyone can try" (Covington & Omelich, 1979, p. 169).

There is a possibility that the direction of the relationship can be turned around: Making an effort and being persistent might build HSE and make the students feel good. Following James' (1890/1931) theory that self-esteem equals success divided on pretensions, it means that if engagement is the pretension (expectation) and the student succeed at that and feel s/he is doing a good job participating in class, this may lead to higher self-esteem levels. Engaged students may feel as if they are doing what is being expected of them, and therefore feel more positive about themselves. There are general expectations that behaviourally engaged students will achieve, and regardless of whether that is true (Schuman et al., 1985), that expectation might influence the perception engaged students have of themselves. There might also be some qualities that differentiate engaged students from less engaged students. This scale did not check for disruptive behaviour, but there is a chance that students who were not engaged were disruptive instead. In Norway "peace and quiet" is emphasized in accordance with modesty, and so called troublemakers may be more sanctioned than they would have in America where expressions of individuality is more allowed. This can explain why lower engagement levels meant lower self-esteem levels for the Norwegian sample.

What is interesting is why self-esteem did not relate to student-rated classroom engagement in the American sample. It seems contradicting that how worthy the students feel is not influenced by the amount of effort and persistence they put in, as these are highly valued qualities in the American society (Ashbee, 2002). However, their beliefs about actual outcome may be more important for their self-esteem than beliefs about effort. In America achievers are winners (Sirevåg, 1999), and behavioural engagement without achieving accordingly may not influence self-esteem. It might also be that American students with lower self-esteem levels are just as engaged as those with higher levels, as the "cultural code" in America is to work hard in order to achieve (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2004). People might follow that code regardless of their sense of self-worth. It is just the right thing to do. Other factors than self-esteem may be more important for how engaged the American students feel.

5.4.2 Self-esteem and academic self-concept

It was hypothesized that self-esteem would correlate positively with ASC in both countries. Although ASC is a specific and self-esteem is a global measure of the students' self-perceptions, they are expected to be related to each other (Marsh & Hattie, 1996). This was true for both the Norwegian and the American sample. Students with higher levels of self-esteem also had higher levels of ASC, while students with lower self-esteem levels had a lower ASC. The results may simply reflect that both self-esteem and academic self-concept are perceptions of self, either evaluative (self-esteem) or not (ASC). There have also been theorists arguing that measurements of self-concepts such as stating "I am better than my classmates in language arts" do have an evaluative component in it similar to self-esteem as "better than" will have connotations to positive evaluations (see Marsh & O'Mara, 2008). Despite of their similarities; self-esteem has been found to relate more to measures of psychological well being, while academic self-concept is found to better predict performance (Rosenberg et al., 1995). The most probable explanation for the results is that people who feel more capable also feel more worthy, however, in the work of Rosenberg et al. (1995) it was found that how strongly ASC affects self-esteem depends on how highly academic performance is valued. This was not measured in the current study; still, if the finding in Rosenberg et al.'s (1995) study is correct, the high correlation between the two variables in

both the Norwegian and American sample may suggest that academic performance is highly valued in both countries.

5.4.3 Self-esteem and academic achievement

Self-esteem has previously been believed to enhance achievement (Emler, 2001). Some research has shown a relationship between these two (Trautwein et al., 2006) although the effect might not have been as strong as previously expected (Emler, 2001). This relationship was explored in the current study as well, and a positive correlation was expected. However, as has been the case with previous research, in both countries ASC was found to be a better predictor of achievement than self-esteem (Marsh & O'Mara, 2008). For the American students, a positive correlation was found between self-esteem and achievement, but the correlation was lower than the one found between ASC and achievement. This probably has to do with both ASC and achievement measuring aspects related to school, while self-esteem is a more general measure. In Norway, no correlation was found between self-esteem and achievement, although ASC also here correlated with self-esteem. It might be that since America is a very individualistic and achievement oriented society (Hofstede, 2001), American teachers may perceive students with HSE (who are likely to participate more in discussions) as high achievers, more than Norwegian teachers would in a country that emphasises peace and quiet, sameness and equality (Gullestad, 1989). Students that have HSE and are talkative may not represent students that are highly academically able in a country as Norway, where such values are emphasized. At the same time, the correlation between self-esteem and achievement only for the American sample may be due to actual achievement being better communicated to the American students through end-of-grade tests and in some cases through actual grading cards.

5.5 Concluding remarks

Several differences were detected between the Norwegian and American students' self-perceptions and engagement in the classroom. As expected, the American students scored higher on self-esteem than the Norwegian students. The larger focus on self-esteem in the American culture, the better suited environment for development of self-esteem, along with the importance of enhanced self-esteem in the individualistic and achievement oriented American society may explain these differences. Norway on the other hand, is a more

feminine country that emphasize interrelatedness and equality of outcome; one is not supposed to differ, and self-enhancing behaviour is somewhat violating these cultural norms. It is clear that the detected differences on self-esteem scores are reasonable considering these cultural differences. Self-esteem has previously been found important for the students psychological well being (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Keeping that in mind, finding ways to create a more "friendly" environment for development of self-esteem in Norwegian classrooms seems desirable, especially during the elementary school and pre-adolescence period of unstable self-esteem (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005; Trzesniewski et al., 2003) where chances for influencing a more positive development of healthy self-esteem are higher.

The students in Norway and America did not differ as to how engaged they felt in the classroom. Their engagement levels therefore seemed to be uninfluenced by the different achievement orientations in the countries (Ashbee, 2002; Gullestad, 1989; Kiel, 1993; Sirevåg, 1999). However, the Norwegian teachers were found to be more critical of their students engagement levels, which either suggests that they focused on different aspects of engagement such as observable behaviour (Jussim, 1989), or that they had different standards or expectations of how engaged the students should be. As a positive correlation was found between student-and teacher-rated classroom engagement in Norway, the latter is more likely. These results suggest that the Norwegian students might need some changes in their classroom situation. As teachers' perception of the students have been suggested to influence how they act toward the students which then influences further engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), the lower engagement levels rated by Norwegian teachers are important. If it really is so that Norwegian students are less engaged because they do not need to be engaged in order to progress to the next grade or to get higher education, changes in the school system to strengthen the students feeling of responsibility and engagement in school might be desirable. When it comes to classroom engagement in America, the agreement of engagement level rated by student and teachers but lack of correlation between the two, suggest that there is a disagreement between teachers and students concerning which students are engaged or not. Further research would be needed to clarify this discrepancy.

Gender differences were explored for self-esteem, classroom engagement (student-and teacher rated), ASC and academic achievement. However, differences were only found for the Norwegian sample, and only for self-esteem and student-rated classroom engagement. Boys scored higher than girls on both variables; still, the Norwegian boys scored lower on self-

esteem than both genders in the American sample. This gender difference in the Norwegian sample on self-esteem might have to do with somewhat older gender patterns where boys are allowed to show off more and just be boys (Bredesen, 2004), while Norwegian girls are expected to be "good girls" (see Dahle, 2002). There was a correlation between self-esteem and classroom engagement for the Norwegian sample, which may explain why the gender difference was found in both variables. Those who have low self-esteem may attempt to use self-handicapping strategies for example, and be less engaged because of that (Martin, Marsh & Debus, 2001a, 2001b). The Norwegian girls may also feel higher expectations to their engagement as a part of being "good girls" compared to the boys, and rate themselves after a higher standard of engagement. However, these results are rather surprising considering that Norway was ranked as the world leader in gender equality in 2001 (Vikan, 2003). Clearly there is still some work to do. Nevertheless, the large standard deviation for both genders and the difficulty to get boys to remember their consent forms to participate makes it necessary to interpret these results with caution.

A cultural difference was also found on ASC levels; the American students perceived themselves as more competent, although there was no cultural difference on actual academic achievement rated by teachers. This suggests that the difference in ASC lies more in the students belief about own competence rather than actual achievements. A positive correlation was found between ASC and achievement in both countries, however, the correlation was stronger in Norway which suggests that the Norwegian students have a more realistic picture of their own academic abilities. Thus, there might be some truth to the assumption that American children are receiving less accurate knowledge of their achievements due to a strong focus on enhancing self-esteem (Sykes, 1995). These results could lead to a conclusion that American teachers should give more accurate feedback about achievement to their students (although one would think end-of-grade tests and similar national tests would give the students an accurate perception of their achievement levels). On the other hand, considering that ASC and self-esteem was rather highly correlated, whether one would want to make the students more realistic about their achievement levels would of course depend on whether the "sought out" end result is students with HSE or students that are high achievers.

In the two countries, self-esteem showed to influence the students in the classroom similarly in some areas and somewhat differently in others. The teachers in both countries seemed to notice level of self-esteem when evaluating the students' engagement levels. This is

important, considering that if those with higher self-esteem seem engaged, they may also receive more attention from the teachers which could lead to further engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Self-esteem also correlated positively with ASC in both countries, which is reasonable as both are perceptions of self. However, it may also suggest that academic achievement is valued in both countries, as how strongly ASC affects self-esteem has been found to depend on how highly academic achievement is valued (Rosenberg et al., 1995). In regards to self-esteem the two countries differed when it came to its relevance for academic achievement and student-rated classroom engagement. In America self-esteem was related to academic achievement, although ASC showed a stronger relationship. America is a very achievement oriented society, while Norway focuses more on equality of outcome, which can explain why the American students' self-esteem was related to academic achievement while the Norwegian students' self-esteem was not. Instead, the Norwegian students' self-esteem was related to student-rated classroom engagement. These results show that self-esteem manifests itself differently in the Norwegian and American classrooms.

Both Norway and America are so called Western countries, and research done with students in one country is likely to be used in the understanding of educational aspects in the other. However, viewing the countries as a part of the Western world and participants of globalisation (or so called Americanisation) may bring them closer and make us perceive them as more similar than they really are. We have to keep in mind that each country has its distinct history and particular norms of behaviour that are somewhat distinctive. As seen here, Norwegian and American students may be similar on some aspects, but still differ on important classroom related factors which influences students everyday life.

6. Qualitative analysis and discussion

A few of the sixth graders in Norway and America were asked to define the concept of self-esteem, talk about their own self-esteem, give their opinion on high and low self-esteem, as well as to evaluate three different scenarios that could happen in a classroom after feedback from the teacher. A reoccurring pattern in the answers of the American interview participants was a wider understanding of the concepts and a better ability to express themselves. The length of their interviews was considerably longer than that of the interviews with the Norwegian participants. This can be related to the American view of children: Children in America are treated more like adults, and it is expected that they talk for themselves and give

their opinion (Bateson, 2000). In Norway on the other hand, it is valued more to be modest and have more respect for adults (Jonassen, 1983) who should not be interrupted when speaking compared to what would be accepted in America. Silence in schools is also normal in Norway compared to in America where they are more strongly encouraged to answer questions in the classrooms (Sirevåg, 1999). This explains why the American participants seemed more experienced with expressing themselves during the interviews.

The interview participants were divided into three groups based on their score on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and it was in each country attempted to find one of each gender for the three groups: Low self-esteem (LSE), Medium self-esteem (MSE) and High self-esteem (HSE). This was to avoid to for example ending up with only participants with HSE from America and only participants with LSE from Norway. In both countries it was clearly visible which of the interview participants belonged to the LSE group. All of them replied with "I don't know" more often than the MSE and HSE groups. They also finished their sentences as a question, as if they did not want to make their own standpoint or thought there was a right answer they could possibly make a wrong answer to. The Norwegian participants with LSE replied in very short sentences or said as "little as possible". One of the American participants with LSE was sort of laughing nervously, while the other was almost asking more questions than the interviewer, but both of them were still talking more than the Norwegian participants with LSE. Why the American participants had more lengthy interviews is previously discussed. However, the reason why only the participants with LSE clearly differed from the other two groups, and not those with MSE and HSE from each other, might have to do with people usually not scoring below average on self-esteem and being that negative about self (Baumeister, 1989) although it can be a serious problem for those who do.

6.1 Defining the concept of self-esteem

During the interviews in America the more general term "self-confidence" was used instead of the term "self-esteem", this because self-confidence is a more everyday term which the children would be more likely to recognize. As expected, the participants in America defined self-confidence in similar terms to the theoretical definitions on self-esteem discussed previously. In Norway the term "selvtillit" (self-trust) was used, which is the more common

everyday term among Norwegians. Norwegian researchers claim that “selvtillit” (self-trust) equals self-efficacy, and that “selvfølelse” (self-feeling) equals self-esteem (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 1988). However, the Norwegian participants defined “selvtillit” (self-trust) in accordance with theoretical definitions of self-esteem more than self-efficacy. The definition of "trust" according to Webster's Dictionary is: “A confident reliance on the integrity, veracity, or justice of another; confidence; faith; also, the person or thing so trusted” (p. 1349, Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary, 2003). The definition of “confidence” is: “Trust in or reliance upon something or someone; belief in a person or thing” (p. 274, Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary, 2003). This shows that “selvtillit” (self-trust) can be translated to self-confidence and can be treated as the same concept. Although the term self-esteem will continue to be used in the analysis and discussion of this study, the term self-confidence will be kept in the quotes.

Most of the participants in both Norway and America could give a definition on self-esteem, and the only one that was in doubt could give an example and showed understanding when a definition was suggested:

- (1) *Yes, it is a little bit like that I manage [!] to do this!*
(Participant 4, Norway, MSE, p. 26, February 4th, 2008).

Especially three definitions came through in the interviews; “belief in self”, “belief in one's abilities” and “feeling good about oneself”. However, the definitions that were emphasised in the two countries differed somewhat. These three definitions and their importance stressed by the American and the Norwegian participants will be discussed further.

6.1.1 Belief in self

While only one of the American participants mentioned “belief in self” explicitly as a definition, most of the Norwegian participants mentioned it directly as “belief in self” or explained how those who are confident can stand up for themselves and their opinions:

- (2) *That [self-confidence] is that you believe in yourself, that you manage to do that, that you are not afraid that anyone else is going to laugh at you and stuff.*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 21, October 7th, 2007).
- (3) *[Self-confidence is...] when you believe in yourself.*
(Participant 4, America, LSE, p.9, December 13th, 2007).

It seems like “belief in self” was experienced as a part of being strong in social interaction with others, and being able to believe in own worthiness despite of others` criticism:

- (4) *Eh, self-confidence is that, it's almost like you trust yourself, or that you're not afraid of the others, what they say about you. So that you're not afraid of anything kind of. That you dare to say your own opinion. That's at least what I think.*
(Participant 1, Norway, MSE, p. 18, October 7th, 2007).
- (5) *(...) the most self-confident person (...) is not afraid to speak her mind or anything. And she just says things (...).*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 4, December 10th, 2007).

The phrases from participants from both countries (2, 4, 5) show that when you have developed a certain level of self-esteem others cannot influence it that directly anymore as you would not watch your back when you express personal opinions or act the way you want to. This has to do with people developing a certain “set point” of self-esteem, and that how low or high your self-esteem can get depends on this set point (Hewitt, 2007). According to Bowlby’s (1969/1997) attachment theory, the child constructs a model called “internal working model” of the world and itself through interpersonal interactions. Through the early relationship between child and caregiver, the child develops an internal working model of self as valued and reliable or self as unworthy and incompetent. The child’s further understanding of the world is structured through these internal working models (Bowlby, 1969/1997). This includes the continuous understanding of self and the child’s self-esteem, which is similar to that “set point” Hewitt (2007) suggested. Participants from both countries showed an awareness of how self-esteem could be constant despite of others influence, which is consistent with “the internal working model” (see Bowlby, 1969/1997) and the “set point” suggested by Hewitt (2007). The parents’ behaviour during the child’s infancy has made a pattern for further interpretations of the self in the world.

In addition to have developed internal working models that plan their further actions, people tend to resist changes to the self-concepts actively. The self-verification theory suggests that people with LSE will reject positive feedback and accept negative feedback in order to keep a consistent self-concept (Swann, 1997). Those with HSE on the other hand will be more likely to accept positive feedback and reject negative feedback to be consistent with the pre-existing view of self. In defining self-esteem, the participants seem to only mention HSE, and not LSE. The Norwegian participants (2, 4) make it clear that people with HSE will not fear others, fear what others say about them, or be afraid of being ridiculed by others. Their

definition is in accordance with the self-verification theory (Swann, 1997) that HSE people will resist negative feedback in order to keep a constant HSE.

Only one of the American participants (5) mentioned the relationship between HSE and concern about others opinions compared to most of the Norwegian participants (2, 4). She described a classmate with HSE (5), but also gave an insight in how she herself experienced being a confident person:

- (6) *Well, most of the time I don't really care what people think of me if I don't know them very well, and that probably makes me pretty confident 'cause I'm not always watching my actions.*
(Participant 2, American, HSE, p. 4, December 10th, 2007).

This participant thinks she is confident because she does not care about what other people think and is “not always watching my actions” (6), which suggest that this student has a pretty high self-esteem as there is no need to be ready to defend the self at any time. However, everything is a matter of degree, and it does not mean that people with HSE are never influenced by negative reactions towards them. As the American participant (6) pointed out; *most of the time* she does not care what people think of her *if she does not know them*. This means that significant others might still have an influence. Nevertheless, people with HSE are less influenced by negative evaluations than those with LSE, since disconfirming feedback is rejected (Swann, 1997).

Generally the participants showed an understanding of the importance of self-esteem. They found it important in order to express their own opinions and daring to be themselves in relation with others who might have other opinions (2, 4, 5, 6). Especially the Norwegian participants, and one American participant, emphasised the importance of “belief in self” despite of possible criticism from others. A stronger focus on “belief in self” in Norway may be due to the “belief in self” constantly being challenged as a result of the emphasis on equality in the sense of sameness (Gullestad, 1989). The Law of Jante (Sandemose, 1933/1967) is also likely to influence with its warnings about not believing you are better than anyone else. Differences are avoided, and recognition is achieved by adjusting to the norms and acting like “most people” (Gullestad, 1989). As a consequence it might be a stronger awareness of reactions from others within the Norwegian culture (Jonassen, 1983). This can make the achievement and maintenance of self-regard problematic in Norway as violations of

values such as modesty may be punished by ridicule and rejection (Jonassen, 1983). It is likely that the Norwegian participants' emphasis on "not [being] afraid of others" (4) and "not being afraid that anyone is going to laugh at you" (2) can be related to this. It seems as a righteous fear that you might get laughed at if you stand out and say your own opinion, but if you have HSE you might be able to stand up against that. It is likely that there is a little bit of the Law of Jante in every small town elsewhere in the world, however, the strong emphasis on equality in the sense of similarity in Norway is likely to make it more evident among the Norwegian participants than the American participants. Nevertheless, that HSE people seem less concerned about what other people might think of them was not a totally unknown aspect in America either, as it was mentioned by one American girl (6). We have to keep in mind that although one studies cultural differences, there are also nuances as to how strong these differences are, considering that Norway and America are both similar and different cultures at once (Eriksen, 1993b).

6.1.2. Belief in one's abilities

A second concept mentioned by the participants was "belief in one's abilities". A couple of the Norwegian participants mentioned this briefly in addition to "belief in self":

- (7) *It is that one believes in oneself, and try to manage it and stuff.*
(Participant 6, Norway, LSE, p. 31, February 4th, 2008).

The American participants however, seemed to have a better understanding or a larger vocabulary to talk about this concept:

- (8) *(...) self-confidence is when you believe in how well you can do, what your strengths are, and what your not strengths are [sic](...).*
(Participant 5, America, HSE, p. 11, December 13th, 2007).

The emphasis was on evaluation of own competence, what they feel they can manage or not. Erikson (1992) argued that competence is the sought after result of the fourth out of eight psychosocial phases (critical periods) in human development. During elementary school age and before puberty, the child is found in conflict between industry and inferiority. Either the child develops to be productive and competent, or it develops a feeling of inferiority and worthlessness (Erikson, 1992). The participants also viewed this feeling of competence as a part of self-esteem (7, 8). One American participant stressed that the belief in own abilities

did not necessarily come from experience with that particular ability but with a general feeling of self-efficacy:

- (9) *It's like the feeling that you know that you CAN do something, or that...maybe you don't know that you can do something but you aren't saying "nooo I'll never do this", you are like pretty sure you might be able to and if you aren't you aren't saying "oh, I'm so bad at everything", just knowing that you are good.*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 4, December 10th, 2007).

The research focus of self-efficacy has mostly been on task specific self-efficacy following the earlier definitions on perceived self-efficacy: "...people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with the judgment of what one can do with whatever skill one possesses" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). However, more recent research has also explored the notion of general self-efficacy, which is more related to trait instead of task specific self-efficacy (Dahlbeck & Lightsey Jr., 2008; Lee & Bobko, 1994). As the American participant here stresses, this has more to do with "knowing that you are good" (8) even if you do not necessarily have experience with that particular task. According to Bandura (1995) one's self-efficacy is based on experiences throughout life related to success and failures in different tasks. This shows that people become motivated to attempt accomplishing a task despite lack of experience at that particular task, and that a certain level of general self-efficacy can make one feel good about oneself.

According to Bandura (1995, 1997) and Pajares and Schunk (2001), there is a major difference between self-esteem and self-efficacy. As mentioned earlier, they think that the first has to do with judgment of personal worth and the latter with judgment of confidence in own abilities. Interestingly, it seems like the students' experience of it is that it is strongly related and maybe even as two sides of the same coin (2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9). This is in accordance with Branden's (1992) definition which includes both sense of personal efficacy and sense of personal worth under the term self-esteem. It is likely that the American students showed better understanding of this self-efficacy component (8, 9) as there is a larger focus on personal success and accomplishment in their culture. In America the pursuit of individual dreams is even brought up in political campaigns (see Aune, 2008), while in Norway on the other hand, high achievements are to some extent discouraged (Eriksen, 1993a). In Norway this is visible in the reign party's program; they emphasize extra attention to weak students

for them to reach the average level, while the strong students are not even mentioned (see Arbeiderpartiet, 2009).

6.1.3 Feeling good about yourself

Nevertheless, the main focus within the American group was a third more general concept which was not at all mentioned by the Norwegian participants:

- (10) (...) *how you feel about yourself* (...).
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 16, December 13th, 2007).

Especially a positive feeling of one's self was emphasized in defining self-esteem:

- (11) (...) *what you think of yourself, in ehm, good ways* (...)
(Participant 3, America, MSE, p. 7, December 10th, 2007).
- (12) *It [self-confidence] is sort of like when you have confidence in yourself and you don't think that you are bad or anything and it is kinda [sic] when you don't hate yourself for whatever, like that.*
(Participant 6, America, HSE, p. 14, December 13th, 2007).

This is in accordance with Bandura's (1997) definition of self-esteem as judgment of personal worth, as well as Rosenberg's (1965) definition which includes favourable and unfavourable attitudes towards self. Although the term "self-confidence" was used in the interviews with American participants, all their definitions seem, as expected, to be in accordance with definitions given by theorists to self-esteem.

"To feel good about yourself" is the only definition given by the American participants (10, 11, 12) which is not mentioned by the Norwegian participants. This is in accordance with a previous study suggesting that Norwegians have a less need than Americans to "feel good about themselves" as the Norwegians were found to self-enhance less (Silvera & Seger, 2004). This might have to do with the strong American focus on individualism (Sirevåg, 1999) and pursuit of individual dreams (Aune, 2008) as already mentioned. In order to pursue those dreams you might have to do what makes you feel good. This does not mean that the definition more emphasized by Norwegian students (2, 4) was not related to the individual. "Belief in self" has everything to do with the individual, but at the same time it has to do with the individual *in relation* with others. It has a more social focus as the emphasis was on not being afraid of others and their opinions (2, 4), which means to be strong in social situations.

As discussed earlier, the Law of Jante is rather dominant in Norway, and following that law everyone seems to have an opinion of the person who dares to stick out in the crowd (Sandemose, 1933/1967). Equality and similarity is strongly highlighted (Gullestad, 1989), and going against this has consequences (Jonassen, 1983). The Norwegian participants' strong focus on "belief in self" can be viewed as believing in self despite of such reactions. "How you feel about yourself" as the American participants (9, 10, 11) emphasised more strongly, has more to do with an individual feeling regardless of others influence and shows a stronger egocentric focus compared to a social one.

As previously mentioned; defining self-esteem can be a challenge. The definition used in the current study is in accordance with Rosenberg's (1965) definition that self-esteem is a favorable or an unfavorable attitude toward the self. However, several researchers (Bandura, 1995, 1997; Branden, 1992; Pajares & Schunk, 2001) are aware of another component that may or may not be a part of self-esteem depending on how you define it. Self-efficacy is a term that is close to self-esteem in a way that it is evaluative of the self; however, it is more evaluative of one's abilities rather of one's general self-concept. As there are two such "similar concepts" as self-esteem and self-efficacy, it makes sense that the participants are stressing both concepts when they are asked about one of them. Or is it so that the term self-confidence is wide enough to cover confidence in both self-esteem and self-efficacy? The participants' different levels of focus on each of these concepts show that it might also depend on what we have been socialized to focus on in regards to self-esteem within the particular culture we belong to.

6.1.4 Development and change of self-esteem

Regarding the "how you feel about yourself" component there was also an understanding of how one could enhance own self-esteem to feel better about self. Several of the American participants (and none of the Norwegians) seemed to be aware of both the development of self-esteem and how self-esteem can be raised or damaged although it was not asked about that directly:

- (13) (...) *you can build up self-confidence by doing good things to make yourself feel better or something.*
(Participant 3, America, MSE, p. 7, December 10th, 2007).

Other people were also seen as a possible influence on self-esteem:

- (14) *I wasn't very confident before I came to this school, but once I came here everyone was so friendly. When people are nice to you and sort of don't make fun of you it makes you confident so, I guess that's at least part of it.*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 4, December 10th, 2007).

Some teachers may be able to eliminate the feeling of inferiority as they can highlight what the student is good at (Erikson, 1992). This girl (14) makes it clear that self-esteem can change depending on the surroundings. Her focus is on people at school. She is pointing out that whether people make fun of you it can influence your self-esteem. However, a few of the Norwegian participants pointed out that this was exactly what would not influence a self-confident person (someone with HSE), because of what it includes:

- (15) *(...) that you are not afraid that anyone else is going to laugh at you and stuff.*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 21, October 7th, 2007).

As discussed previously, Bowlby (1969/1997) suggests that children have internal working models developed in early childhood through which further experiences are understood. Following this it might be that a student that expects to be bullied will receive that treatment, while one that does not expect it will not. According to Harter (1999) the student's self-esteem will affect how the peers respond to him. However, as one of the American participants (14) experienced, starting a new school where people were friendly helped her self-esteem. It might be that she expected a different experience at that school, or simply that being at a vulnerable position (new in class) made her easier to influence. Additionally, self-esteem levels have been found to be more unstable during elementary school and pre-adolescence (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005; Trzesniewski et al., 2003), which may suggest that this girl (14), regardless of previous self-esteem level, would be more "open" to influence on her self-esteem during this period than she would later in life.

However, one can question whether this is a matter of degree of bullying one is talking about in this girls situation. As already mentioned, Hewitt (2007) suggests that people have a certain "set point" of self-esteem, and that they can develop high and low self-esteem within a certain range of that. Someone who gets bullied every day may lose self-esteem eventually whether they have high or low self-esteem to begin with, but following Hewitt (2007); how low it gets will depend on their set point. However, it might be worse if they are not particularly self-

confident beforehand as they are more likely to get bullied or rejected by peers (Harter, 1999), while someone who has already developed an adequate level of self-esteem may not allow anyone to bully them or to let that influence their feeling of themselves. How strongly it affects one's self-esteem also depends on how important that other person is to us, as someone less important would less likely mean anything for our evaluation of self (Hewitt, 2007).

Many American participants also believed that their own actions, success and failures, could influence their level of self-esteem. One girl referred to accomplishment and good behaviour when explaining why she felt self-confident:

- (16) *Because I get my work done and I'm really happy about that when I do it and then get to do other stuff and then I feel that I've really accomplished something with that [and] because I'm really nice to my brothers and sister, and that just makes me feel really good.*
(Participant 6, America, HSE, p. 14, December 13th, 2007).

This reflects an understanding of what she herself can do in order to raise her self-esteem and self-efficacy. Ross and Broh's (2000) research showed that academic achievement boosts self-esteem, but not as much as it influences "locus of control" which they also define as "the perception of oneself as an effective person" (Ross & Broh, 2000, p. 271). However, it can also go the other way; one's self-esteem becomes hurt by lack of accomplishment which then influences further progress:

- (17) *(...) if you are not doing very well you sort of lose self-confidence, and you don't progress well.*
(Participant 5, America, HSE, p. 11, December 13th, 2007).

The children will be unhappy if they do not feel like they can accomplish something well and may even feel like a stranger to the self as s/he feels inferior (Erikson, 1992). This American participant showed an understanding of the "vicious circle" that might appear between LSE and low achievement (Trautwein et al., 2006), although this relationship has in other research shown to be ambiguous (Alves-Martins et al., 2002; Kugle et al., 1983; Midgett et al., 2002; Valås, 1999). Whether low achievement levels are related to self-esteem may also depend on how one reacts to or perceives failures:

- (18) *When I like do something bad or like wrong, even a mistake or something, then...I might say bad things about myself.*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 16, December 13th, 2007).

This participant (18) scored low on the RSE scale which might explain why she would talk negatively about herself in response of a failure instead of trying to encourage herself to do better next time. She seems to have an internal attribution of failure which has been related to LSE (Chandler, Lee & Pengilly, 1997; Fitch, 1970; Weiner, 1992). However, this will be discussed further in the section regarding understanding and evaluation of low self-esteem (see subheading, 6.3.2).

Only the American participants (13, 14, 16, 17, 18) talked about how their self-esteem could be raised or what would influence it negatively. This might be because it was not directly asked about and the American participants in general talked more freely during the interviews than the Norwegian participants. It might also have to do with actual “knowledge”. As mentioned earlier; the American citizens have been subject to a stronger emphasis of the “self-esteem movement” through for example the Californian Task Force of Self-esteem and the following actions that were taken both privately and within the school system (Emler, 2001). It might be that this has created a better awareness and understanding of both inner and outer influences as it has created tools for enhancing self-esteem. Whether these tools work or not may not matter in regards to how it influences the general belief in them.

6.2 Awareness of own self-esteem

The students were chosen as participants depending on their score on the RSE scale; low, medium or high score compared to the other participants from the same country. They were asked whether they considered themselves to have HSE (be a self-confident person) in an attempt to see if their awareness of self were in accordance with the scores they got on the RSE scale. However, all of the participants from both Norway and America answered that they had HSE except from the two students with the absolute lowest score. They were hesitating, but replied:

- (19) *Usually - sometimes.*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 16, December 13th, 2007).
- (20) *It depends...Sometimes.*
(Participant 5, Norway, LSE, p. 29, February 4th, 2008).

This shows that it is not very common to admit to or be aware of having LSE even if that might be the case. Due to regression toward the mean are most people average in their level of

self-esteem (Hewitt, 2007), and it is not common to more often be negative than positive about self (Baumeister, 1989). This does not mean that no people have LSE, or that it does not have consequences for those who do (Swann, 1997). However, even those students who might suffer because of LSE seem to have a sense of self-preservation and might not be aware of or might not want to say that they have LSE.

Nevertheless, independent of their score, the major part of the participants in both countries showed an awareness of context dependency when asked if they had HSE (were self-confident):

- (21) *Yeah, I think so, sometimes yeah, and sometimes not.*
(Participant 1, America, MSE, p. 1, December 10th, 2007).
- (22) *Yeeah..... [hesitating], I do! [sounding sure]. But it can be some times when I don't have it though, but, I can handle it, it's going fine.*
(Participant 1, Norway, MSE, p. 18, October 7th, 2007).

One American participant felt that it depended on which classes he was taking or whether he was at home or at school:

- (23) *(...) In a few things I'm not as strong. And if...I'm just not as self-confident in those subjects as I am in other subjects. (...) I'm ok then [when not at school].*
(Participant 5, America, HSE, p. 11, December 13th, 2007).

These participants (21, 22, 23) show to understand that self-esteem levels might differ somewhat depending on the context. One might have HSE in certain subjects, at home, but less at school or at after school activities. This is related to what Hewitt (2007) calls situated identities. He suggests that some roles energize us more following the perspective we have within that role, and that this is how self-esteem and identity influences action without being the sole influence (Hewitt, 2007). A Norwegian participant (who scored high on the RSE scale) felt that his level of self-esteem depended on feeling of self-efficacy:

- (24) *(...) I do think that I can manage whatever I try, for the most part. Sometimes it doesn't go that well but....*
(Participant 3, Norway, HSE, p. 23, February 4th, 2008).

He felt that he had HSE despite of occasional failure (24). As already discussed, daily negative events (such as failure) are by those with genuine HSE not perceived as a threat to ego and will therefore not influence how they value themselves (Smalley & Stake, 1996).

Overall there was no cultural difference in awareness of own self-esteem. Most participants in both countries showed awareness of context dependency either generally, related to different times (21, 22), related to school subjects or locations (23), or related to feeling of competence (24). Only those with the lowest RSE scores in both countries would not say directly that they were self-confident.

6.3 Students' opinions on high and low self-esteem

In order to look for cultural differences and similarities in the perception of high and low self-esteem, the participants were asked to describe the most self-confident and the least self-confident person in their class. In addition, some also expressed their opinions on self-esteem in general when asked if they had further comments.

6.3.1 Evaluation and understanding of high self-esteem

High self-esteem seemed to be a somewhat ambiguous concept for the 6th graders in both Norway and America. Nevertheless, most of them evaluated it as something positive, as expressed by this Norwegian participant:

- (25) *Those that have a lot of high self-confidence are probably going to manage well actually, because they are not so very afraid of so very much and they dare to do more so they probably get more friends as well.*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 23, October 7th, 2007).

Security and belief in self was again pointed out as essential for high self-esteem, and the girl was aware that the outcome of such security could be popularity and a better social life. Some of the American participants pointed out more direct positive qualities that they associated with high self-esteem:

- (26) *Talk a lot, very social, ehm..., kinda [sic] funny.*
(Participant 4, America, LSE, p. 10, December 13th, 2007).
- (27) *Ehm...I think they are pretty...they are pretty good people too, they don't act out or anything. And they are always self-controlled and stuff.*
(Participant 6, America, HSE, p. 14, December 13th, 2007).

Again the associated feeling of security comes through, as the children with high self-esteem are expected to not act out compared to someone with low self-esteem who:

(28) *(...) makes a big fuss (...)*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p.5, December 10th, 2007).

Those with HSE are instead perceived to have the ability to control themselves. This perceived self-control may be related to them being happy with themselves and not have a need to compare with others to feel valuable (Branden, 1992).

Although students from both countries evaluate self-esteem as something positive, it is clear that their perceptions of what is positive about it differ somewhat. The Norwegian participant here (25) talked about the students being “not so very afraid” and “dare to do more” which she thinks would result in achieving more friendships. The examples of American participants (26, 27) are more focused on qualities such as “talk a lot”, “very social”, “kinda funny”, “don’t act out”, and “always self-controlled”. As already mentioned, this expresses a focus on the feeling of security, although the angle it is viewed from differs. The Norwegian participant (25) is focused on aspects that have to do with not being shy and daring to face criticism and others opinion as well as believing in self. On the other hand, the American participants (26, 27) here focus on being outgoing but in a positive and self-controlled way without letting feelings take overhand. In America overstatement and exaggeration is more culturally allowed than in Norway (Sirevåg, 1999), as a consequence of the strong individualism. However, everything is within its limits, of course. The reaction of the Norwegian participant (25) makes sense following the Law of Jante (Sandemose, 1933/1967), where the greatest challenge for the self is to dare stand out or differ in a crowd. Although it is not socially acceptable to stand out too much, it seems as if those who dare to do so in a positive way would still become popular among other children. It is likely that a certain balance is more accepted, as in showing not too much and not too little self-esteem, as both would be divergence from the norm. Modesty is encouraged in Norway (Sirevåg, 1999), but that does not mean total absence of self-esteem or self-enhancing behaviors.

Some of the students in both countries, although of a lesser extent, made it clear that there were indeed negative aspects associated with high self-esteem, as expressed by this American participant:

(29) *She is usually nice some of the time, she is a little bossy usually, and she thinks like really highly of herself and kinda [sic] pushes people out of her way sometimes.*
(Participant 3, America, MSE, p. 7, December 10th, 2007).

A Norwegian participant also mentioned that being inconsiderate to others could be related to HSE:

- (30) *It [self-confidence] is good, but sometimes it might happen that feelings gets hurt if you are a little like, if you are a little mean then it might happen that you hurt.*
(Participant 1, Norway, MSE, p. 19, October 7th, 2007).

This experience does not necessarily suggest that all children with HSE are likely to be inconsiderate to others. The kind of behavior referred to by the participants (29, 30) is not necessarily a behavior by someone with genuine (real) self-esteem, but defensive (fragile) self-esteem (Kernis & Paradise, 2002), with a need to push others down in order to get attention to oneself. Defensive self-esteem is associated with different types of self-protecting and self-enhancing strategies (Kernis & Paradise, 2002). Research has shown that children with this kind of self-esteem are more likely to react with aggression in the classroom (Sandstrom & Jordan, 2008), and that people with defensive self-esteem view negative feedback as a threat to the ego and have hostile affect to the person giving the feedback (Smalley & Stake, 1996). The distinction between true (genuine) and defensive self-esteem is old (Schneider & Turkat, 1975), however, it has only recently been included in some research, and the vocabulary is not common in everyday communication. The children participating are referring to defensive self-esteem with their own words. As the American participant who thought her classmate “thinks...really highly of herself” (29), a Norwegian participant refers to this as someone with “too much” self-esteem:

- (31) *They might be a little, ehm..., they might have a little toooo [sic] much self-esteem because they become a little, ehm...think that they themselves are so much cooler than the others. That you are not allowed to laugh at them because they kinda [sic] manage things no matter what.*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 21, October 7th, 2007).

The participant associates high self-esteem with feeling of superiority and power as others are not allowed to laugh at them. Again this sounds like an example of someone with defensive self-esteem and not genuine self-esteem.

As with positive aspects of self-esteem, which negative aspects of self-esteem they emphasize in the two countries differ. In the American example the participant (29) focuses on the classmate with high self-esteem being “bossy” and “pushing people out of her way”, which may seem like means for competition. The Norwegian participants (30, 31) however, mention “being mean”, “hurting others” and expressing “superiority” because “they think they are so

much cooler”. It might be that the American participant view the same kind of conduct as more acceptable as a result of competition and individual achievement being encouraged (Sirevåg, 1999) and therefore uses other terms to describe it. In Norway direct competition is somewhat discouraged (Eriksen, 1993a) and it would make sense for the children to view that kind of conduct in more negative terms. Additionally, the reason why the Norwegian participant (31) focuses on the feeling of superiority by describing how those with HSE “think that they themselves are so much cooler” might be because of the emphasis of equality in the sense of sameness (Gullestad, 1989) and the Law of Jante (Sandemose, 1933/1967), which means that such behavior are not culturally accepted.

Along the same line; a Norwegian participant perceived bragging as negative and associated it with HSE:

(32) *Stop bragging, I say (...) because he’s got high self-confidence.*
(Participant 5, Norway, LSE, p. 29, February 4th, 2008).

Emler (2001) points out that very HSE is viewed as negative, and that the words we use to describe such people are not very pleasant; narcissistic, boastful, arrogant and vain. This so called very HSE is another example of defensive self-esteem. As pointed out earlier is the division between genuine and defensive high self-esteem rather new within research, and it is clearly difficult for the participants to make a clear distinction as well. However, one of the American participants did in fact show awareness of this problem of understanding what an expression of defensive high self-esteem is compared to an expression of genuine high self-esteem:

(33) *(...) how do you tell the difference between gloating and self-confidence?*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 17, December 13th, 2007).

As seen here, there is a rather similar understanding of HSE within both countries. Most of them evaluated it as something positive (25, 26, 27, 29, 30), but participants from both countries also mentioned negative aspects (29, 30, 31) (although, it can also be discussed whether the negative view of HSE is actually related to genuine self-esteem, or if it is just an evaluation of defensive self-esteem as genuine self-esteem). The cultural difference lies within which positive and which negative aspects they emphasize. For the positive aspects of self-esteem a Norwegian participant (25) focuses on managing to stand up against negative reactions from others, while the American participants (26, 27) are focused on purely a

positive way of being such as being outgoing and self-controlled. There is no explicit concern for others opinions or reactions, only for the self. For the negative aspects of self-esteem (or the qualities of defensive self-esteem) the answers are similar: The Norwegian participants (30, 31) focus on negative conduct towards others or emphasis of own superiority which is not accepted, while an American participant (28) focuses on means for individual competition such as being bossy and pushing people out of the way. There is a clear difference between emphasis on “self in relation to others” as compared to “just self”.

6.3.2 Evaluation and understanding of low self-esteem

The participants were also asked to describe the least self-confident person in their class. Contrary to HSE, the participants in both countries viewed LSE as purely negative: However, as with HSE they differed in which negative aspects they mentioned.

The main focus of the Norwegian participants once again has to do with daring to stand up against others or among others:

(34) *(...) they don't always dare to do so much by themselves.*
(Participant 3, Norway, HSE, p. 24, February 4th, 2008).

This can be related to insecurity and lack of belief in self. In the section of defining self-esteem it was made clear how the Norwegian participants focused on "belief in self" as an aspect in their definitions. In accordance with this definition they also view people with LSE as “not daring” in the sense that they do not find confirmation of self from within to act according to own opinions but rather need that from others. Another Norwegian participant says that this also includes not daring to admit if one is wrong about something or has a different view than the others:

(35) *(...) he doesn't dare completely, he kind of says; “yes, I know that”, I knew that kind of (...), then we realize that he didn't really, that he didn't know it though. But kind of says that.*
(Participant 1, Norway, MSE, p. 19, October 7th, 2007).

The perception of these Norwegian participants (34, 35) goes back to the previous discussion on how “belief in self” is challenged by the emphasis on equality in the sense of sameness or similarity (Gullestad, 1989). Maintenance of self-regard can therefore be problematic in Norway, and not daring to have a different view or admit to be less knowledgeable could be a

reflection of that. This could mean that this person then would risk standing out in the crowd and appear different, something which is not acceptable. It might be that it would demand a lot of effort and strength in self in order to stand up against the crowd, and that someone with LSE would not be expected to do that.

While the Norwegian participants (34, 35) talk about classmates with LSE “not daring” to do things, lack of social life (loneliness) seems to be a major concern regarding LSE among the American participants:

(36) *[They are] shy! Quiet, anti-social, ehm..., doesn't have many friends (...) because they don't talk much.*
(Participant 4, America, MSE, p. 10, December 13th, 2007).

This view is consistent with research showing that lonely people rate themselves more negatively. Jones et al. (1981) argues that lonely people anticipate rejection from others due to low self-regard. They suggest that these people devalue others in order to rationalize the discomfort they feel about believing that others do not like them. Because of this it may be that LSE comes before peer rejection and not the other way around. A study by Nesdale and Lambert (2007) revealed that peer rejection among children resulted in increased negative affect, but not LSE, which strengthens this view. Although Jones et al.'s (1981) study is related to college students, it may be that a similar pattern would be found among elementary and middle school children.

One Norwegian participant (25) mentioned a link between daring to do more and having more friends when she was talking about people with HSE (see previous discussion, under subheading 6.3.1). Except from that, loneliness and LSE was not mentioned by the Norwegian participants. It might be shown that “not daring” is so important that it overshadows the rest, however, the American participant (36) emphasizes that they are lonely because they do not talk much. As being very outward and exaggerating is accepted in America (Sirevåg, 1999), it might be that people who do not talk much are more uncommon than it would be in Norway where “peace and quiet” (Gullestad, 1989) is appreciated more. Being quiet and not talking much in Norway does not necessarily signify a lack of friends.

Another concern among the American participants is that students with LSE have a general negative outlook on life:

- (37) *In my class the person is really sad all the time and doesn't really have a lot of friends. And has a lot of problems with the grades and stuff and never really is present with things and always think about the downside rather than the upside.*
(Participant 3, America, HSE, p. 7, December 10th, 2007).

The classmate this participant is referring to might be a low-achievement (LA) student as the participant mentions problems with grades. People with LSE are not necessarily LA students as will be discussed further, however, LA students have been found to be low in self-esteem, more depressed and less accepted compared to people who achieve more (Valås, 1999). The participant (37) refers to the classmate with LSE as sad and negative, which shows that he knows how LSE can manifest itself, as studies have showed that LSE is a risk factor for depression (Orth et al., 2009) and that children with greater depression score lower on self-esteem (Orvaschel et al., 1997).

The negative outlook people with LSE have on life is by another American participant reflected upon in relation to self-efficacy:

- (38) *(...) they get their work done and stuff but...they don't really feel good about that.*
(Participant 6, America, LSE, p. 14, December 13th, 2007).

This American participant (38) does not necessarily perceive students with LSE as low achievers, but rather as students who think negatively about themselves and their own abilities. The correlation between self-esteem and achievement has turned out to be an ambiguous one. Researchers and theorists do not agree on the strength or direction of the correlation (Alves-Martins et al., 2002; Kobal & Musek 2001; Kugle et al., 1983; Midgett et al., 2001; Trautwein et al., 2006). Some even suggest that locus of control is what influences achievement, and not self-esteem (Stupnisky et al., 2007). Students with LSE have been related to an attribution pattern with internal locus of control for failures and external locus of control for success (Chandler et al., 1997; Fitch, 1970; Weiner, 1992). Accordingly, the participants here focus on the *perception* of own achievement rather than actual achievement. According to Branden (1992), students with LSE may achieve much because they try to get much done as they would feel worthless otherwise, but they will still not feel content with themselves or be as effective as they could have been. It might also be that the students have a consistent negative view of self as “not smart” for example, and does not change this view of self despite of recent achievements suggesting the opposite:

(39) (...) *I think that she is actually really good, at the same time as she doesn't have a good enough confidence in herself so she makes a big fuss and then she gets like a math problem right or whatever and then she's like: "oh, I got it right, yay!?!"* [sounding surprised].

(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 5, December 10th, 2007).

Success is by this student with LSE perceived as something unusual. She cannot believe she got it right although it was no surprise for her classmate. This suggests a view of self that is not necessarily accurate. This student is viewed as "making a big fuss" compared to those with HSE who are secure and do not feel like they have to compare with others (Branden 1992). It may be that she has an inaccurate view of self, as people with LSE have been found to resist positive feedback (Swann, 1997), but it might also be a way of getting attention and reassurance from classmates.

Self-efficacy and doubting own abilities were also mentioned by a Norwegian participant:

(40) (...) *he should have a little better self-confidence. He's kind of a little: "oh, I can't do it!"* [making a whiny voice].

(Participant 4, Norway, MSE, p. 26, February 4th, 2008).

This Norwegian participant (40), as the American participant (39) talking about the classmate with LSE "making a big fuss", gives the impression that this kind of insecurity annoys or bothers the classmates. (This will later be discussed more under subheading 6.4.2, in connection with students' perception of such claims as attempts to receive attention from peers).

As showed here in relation to LSE, the American participants were more concerned with loneliness and negative outlook on life, while the Norwegian participants were more concerned about not daring to stand out or be secure enough to be independent. America is known for its emphasis on the American Dream where the self-reliance and belief in personal responsibility for own success and happiness is evident (Ashbee, 2002). This may be why the American participants (37, 38) focus on their classmates with LSE having a negative outlook, since that goes against "what one is supposed to do". One is supposed to be happy, self-reliant and work for own happiness, while people who have LSE seem to do the opposite. Although lack of self-efficacy and belief in one's abilities was mentioned as a part of LSE by one of the Norwegian participants (40), this was mostly emphasized by the American participants (38, 39). This may also be related to the focus on competition in the American schools as in the rest of the American society (Orr, 1992). The only Norwegian participant who did mention

lack of self-efficacy was mostly showing that the behavior of his classmates with LSE was being annoying and something that should be dealt with (see subheading 6.4.2).

However, other reactions towards those with LSE were also expressed, either as how the participants thought they would react towards them in class, or how they thought about them in general. One American participant said the reaction from classmates would be to encourage:

- (41) *(...) he thinks he's not good at anything, but we keep on trying telling [sic] him that he's good at anything. But he says; "no, I don't have a talent".*
(Participant 5, America, HSE, p. 12, December 13th, 2007).

However, the participant stressed that not even their attempts of doing that would help. In this case mentioned by the American participant (41), his classmate is being self-confirming in the sense that he does not listen to disconfirming information about himself (Emler, 2001).

According to Emler (2001) the parents are the main source of self-esteem and information received later in life which disconfirms this attitude of oneself is hard to accept. As discussed previously, the internal working model is developed through the child's first interactions with the parents and the view of self is attained in that process (Bowlby, 1968/1997). However, children are active participants and active interpreters in their own lives, and after the development of a sense of self they do not necessarily accept others definition of self as a defense mechanism (Hewitt, 2007). It might be that preserving a stable self becomes more important than accepting positive but disconfirming information, which makes it difficult for classmates to succeed on their attempts on raising their friend's self-esteem.

Some of the Norwegian participants were more likely to emphasize pity for those with LSE:

- (42) *Those I feel a little sorry for because they are so afraid all the time, for making a fool out of themselves and stuff.*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 22, October 7th, 2007).

However, none of the American participants expressed pity towards their classmates with LSE. This may have to do with the belief in equality of opportunity and not outcome (Lipset, 1996) and the belief in responsibility of own life which is clearly visible in the welfare politics in the country (Nye, 1993). People are responsible for their own fortune or misfortune. However, it is not necessarily a clear distinction as one American participant (41) did try to encourage and showed concern that way. The American participants also showed an

understanding of the LSE classmates' experience, along with reasons for why they might have LSE:

- (43) *(...) they aren't really happy that much, and that some people pick on them sometimes (...)* because they just don't really like them because they are really quiet and stuff...so...nobody really compliments them that much.
(Participant 6, America, HSE, p. 14, December 13th, 2007).

This suggests that unhappiness and loneliness might be justified feelings as this American participant implies that it is their peer's fault that some children have LSE. Despite of this "justification", evidence shows that the chance of being victimized is higher if one already has LSE, and victimization leads to a further loss of self-esteem, which means that it might turn out to be a vicious circle (Egan & Perry, 1998). As with the Norwegian participant (40) who thought that his classmate should "have a little better self-confidence", one American girl has the same opinion:

- (44) *They need to get more self-confidence, 'cause...I mean they...How do you go through life not liking who you are and stuff?*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 17, December 13th, 2007).

It is pretty clear that the participants from both Norway and America "disapprove" of LSE in one way or another whether they think it is others fault or the persons own responsibility to do something about it. Nevertheless, their understanding of LSE is, as discussed here, in accordance with research on the subject. None of the participants in either country talk about low self-esteem students as "mean" or aggressive. This is consistent with research showing that the earlier popular view of LSE as a "cause" of aggression is wrong (Baumeister et al., 1996).

6.4 Students' evaluations of three different scenarios in the classroom

The participants were presented to three different scenarios showing feedback in the classroom. The first scenario showed a student receiving positive feedback and telling the other students about that. In the second scenario the student also received positive feedback, but did not seem to be very receptive of it. The last scenario showed a situation where a student received negative feedback but told his classmates otherwise. The participants understanding and reactions to these scenarios will be discussed.

6.4.1 Evaluation and understanding of why someone would praise their own success

The participants from both countries were presented to the following situation with “self-praise of success”:

[Interviewer] “A student is sitting in a group with some classmates. They all get their written assignments back, and this student gets a very good grade/comment from the teacher. The student says; ‘Look here, I did great! I knew I would!’”

Most of the participants from both countries defined this student’s behaviour as:

- (45) *(...) he wants to brag!!*
(Participant 6, Norway, LSE, p. 31, February 4th, 2008).

The reactions to this behaviour from classmates would, according to participants in both countries, depend on their own grades:

- (46) *Well, it really depends on what grades they got (themselves). If I was in that class I would just say: “Great! Awesome!” I don’t really get resentful like that, most of the time I don’t think. But other peop [sic]...lots of people react in different ways, I think some people would really freak out and would be like: “Gosh you don’t have to say that, you don’t know what other grades we’ve had” and stuff that could be like really bad for them. And other people that got good grades of course could just be happy with themselves.*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p.5, December 10th, 2007).
- (47) *I think they would have reacted to that he was bragging a little, almost (...)then if the others didn’t do that well they probably does not think that it is that ok.*
(Participant 3, Norway, HSE, p. 24, February 4th, 2008).

The participant stresses that if one self succeeded, someone else’s “bragging” would not be felt like a personal critique, which however would be the case if they got a low grade or a bad comment themselves. This can be seen in relation to the review of Baumeister et al. (1996) where people with unstable or inflated self-esteem (defensive self-esteem) were more likely to react with aggression if their ego was threatened. Smith (2000) explains such resentment as a result of negative upward comparison in focusing on the other person and the feeling that the other person does not deserve his or hers success.

The negative reaction mentioned by the participants would according to a Norwegian participant be enhanced by the “bragger” pointing out the difference between them:

- (48) *They might think that it becomes bad that she brags very much, it might be. That she kind of, that if she kind of said that; “you did a lot worse than me”, then it can be a little,-be pretty bad.*

(Participant 1, Norway, MSE, p. 20, October 7th, 2007).

Brigham, Kelso, Jackson and Smith (1997) use the term “Schadenfreude” to describe this kind of pleasure from other’s misfortune, a term which Smith (2000) also uses to explain negative feelings related to downward comparison. The participant implies that if the student is explicitly using downward comparison to enhance self in addition to already accomplished success, then the reactions are even worse. In Norway this would also be totally against the “social rule” of equality as well as the Law of Jante (Sandemose, 1933/1967). If a student points out that others are worse off, he is at the same time pointing out his superiority which is not accepted.

However, according to an American participant, it did not have to be the “bragger” that compared directly, it could even be that other students compared themselves to the bragger and felt bad although no one else had commented on it:

(49) *They wouldn’t really like it that much, because then they wouldn’t feel that good. Because they would compare it to theirs, compare it to theirs that wasn’t that good.*
(Participant 6, America, HSE, p. 15, December 13th, 2007).

In a competitive culture as the American one, comparison with others might be more evident. However, this example can also be related to negative emotions with upward comparison. Smith (2000) suggests a dual focus in the upward comparison; a focus on self which creates depressive feelings and a focus on other’s which creates resentment. Together this creates envy (Smith, 2000). It might have to do with a feeling of unfairness; that the student is not more deserving of the success than the classmates, or that s/he does not have the “right to” that experience (Heider, 1958). As previously mentioned, James (1890/1931) argued that comparison was important for self-esteem and that one would feel good as long as one was better off than others. However, according to Branden (1992); those with high authentic (genuine) self-esteem would not feel the need to compare with others to prove their value, which suggests that only people with low or defensive self-esteem would react negatively in a situation as the one in the suggested scenario.

One of the American participants mentioned the relationship to the person bragging, or the overall feeling of that person, to explain different reactions:

(50) *Ehm, I guess they would feel bad but, ehm, if it was like a really nice person who is ok for people to brag...they would be like: “oh, good job” or something. But ehm, or if it*

was...if “someone speak their feelings” [making a funny voice] they would say like: “I rather you didn’t do that” or: “I rather not you say something like that”.
(Participant 1, America, MSE, p. 2, December 10th, 2007).

The girl thinks it is ok that the classmate brags as long as it is a nice person, which might suggest that one would not think this person was trying to make other people feel bad but rather expressed genuine happiness over his or her accomplishments. As said previously, those with genuine self-esteem do not need to make others feel bad to feel better about themselves (Branden, 1992), which may be the reason why it would be ok if a “nice person” was bragging as s/he would not be expected to have negative intentions. This is in accordance with Smith’s (2000) suggestion that emotions related to either downward or upward social comparisons will be modified by whether the other person is liked or disliked, as it might be harder to have harsh feelings toward a friend.

However, the American and Norwegian participants differed somewhat in their understanding of *why* someone would “praise themselves”, although their reactions to it seemed somewhat similar. Several of the Norwegian participants pointed out that the reason for what most participants called “bragging” must have been an attempt to make others feel bad or inferior;

(51) *To make the others jealous,*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 22, October 7th, 2007).

And to make sure others noticed the success:

(52) *(...) he was bragging a little, or was kind of showing it to the others.*
(Participant 3, Norway, HSE, p. 24, February 4th, 2008).

These participants here show an understanding of the braggers need for approval, but view this as having negative intentions. This can be related to “boasting” or bragging not being approved of in Norway (Sirevåg, 1999). However, following Kernis and Paradise’s (2002) view of genuine versus defensive high self-esteem; this can be viewed as defensive self-esteem. One American participant did in fact question whether this “scenario” could be considered genuine self-esteem:

(53) *(...) it seems like it’d be more like gloating than being self-confident in yourself, so ehm...the others would be like “yeah, good job” [sounding careless], and kind of go to their own business.*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 17, December 13th, 2007).

However, she made it seem as this behaviour did not deserve any attention from the classmates. This goes back to the concept of ought and value as previously mentioned (Heider, 1958). There are some ways people are ought to act, and according to the participant (53) this seems to be one of them. Gloating is not accepted, and is therefore offered little attention. Some Norwegian participants also altered between putting the bragger back in his or her place, or carelessly agreeing that it was well done as to show that it did not affect them:

- (54) *Ehm, think that they are a little: "oh my God there is no point in you saying that, it might be that the others did great as well!" [Sounding annoyed] Or then it might be: "yeah, good for you! Good that you managed it!" [Sounding careless].*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 22, October 7th, 2007).

Interestingly, it seemed like this attempt of making self feel good at the cost of others, which according to Bowlby (1969/1997) is most likely a sign of defensive self-esteem, was interpreted by some Norwegian participants as genuine high self-esteem. They did this despite the fact that they gave the impression that the student was making the others feel bad:

- (55) *I think they would have reacted to that he was bragging a little, almost. Or that he has very high self-confidence then, but kind of because he behaves like that, then if the others didn't do that well they probably don't think that it is ok.*
(Participant 3, Norway, HSE, p. 24, February 4th, 2008).

One of the Norwegian participants pointed out what he thought correct behaviour should have been:

- (56) *(...) it was a little mean then, because, it was kind of...It would have been smarter to just...,it was smartest to just keep it to oneself or something like that. Instead of just saying like; "look here, I did it!"*
(Participant 4, Norway, MSE, p. 27, February 4th, 2008).

This could be an expression of the Law of Jante that you are not supposed to make others aware of your own success (Sandemose, 1933/1967) and that it would be socially smarter to just keep quiet. In Norway it is more common to pretend to be less than they are instead of boasting (Jonassen, 1983). However, the reactions to bragging among the American participants did seem to be similar as the reactions to it was also expected to be negative. Despite of this, their understanding of why someone would brag was among most of the American participants related to genuine happiness rather than an attempt of comparing to bring others down:

- (57) *Probably because they like, the assignment was really easy for them and they thought: “oh, I know exactly what I’m doing here” so if they got a good grade, like they did, they would be like they’d probably brag a bit because they were happy because it is hard to hold that inside you sometimes.*
(Participant 3, America, MSE, p. 9, December 10th, 2007).

It seems like the American students expected negative reaction to be because of the classmates feeling of inferiority rather than the braggers attempt of creating that feeling. One participant even justified this by explaining greater pleasure in showing success to peers than parents:

- (58) *Well, it could just be a bragging person who likes to brag, but I don’t know if that is very likely. Ehm...they probably just sort of wanna [sic] be happy and it is a great way of expressing happiness and it makes it better saying that to other people like other than your parents or your little brother or whatever.*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 5, December 10th, 2007).

When you get to a certain age you look more to your peers than to your parents as information source in general life issues (Gould & Mazzeo, 1982). This might be why telling peers about own success would create more pleasure than telling the parents would. These students were mostly 6th graders and at a time in their lives where they are about to become teenagers and peers become extra important. They gradually spend more time with peers than parents and get closer to them than before (Larson & Richards, 1991). Family might give you praise either way, but if your peers agree that might give a stronger satisfaction as their opinion is more important for your social acceptance in school. People who rate themselves as successful in a domain they find important for social approval have higher self-esteem (MacDonald, Saltzman & Leary, 2003).

Considering the American culture of “pursuit your dreams”, where it is allowed to succeed and work to promote your own private goals (Sirevåg, 1999), along with an expectation in America that achievement is to be rewarded (Lipset, 1996), it would be reasonable to think that self-praise of own success would be accepted. Others cannot be envious as there is a focus on equality of opportunity which means that they all had the same opportunity to begin with (Sirevåg, 1999). In Norway on the other hand, high achievement is not accepted due to the Law of Jante and the focus on modesty and equality (Sirevåg, 1999), and self-praise of own success might therefore be found unacceptable along the same lines. However, both the American participants and the Norwegian participants showed disapproval of “bragging”,

especially if they did badly themselves and felt criticised or the bragger was not perceived as a nice person. Nevertheless, several of the American participants (57, 58) related the behaviour to an expression of genuine happiness which might show a slightly more acceptance of self-praise. They argued that it was only people who felt inferior who would not accept it (46, 47). They do not necessarily view it as a way of showing off or attempting to make others jealous as some of the Norwegian participants did (48, 51, 52). The level of acceptance was somewhat context dependent as previously discussed.

6.4.2 Evaluation and understanding of why someone would downplay their own success

The participants were introduced to a second scenario that they were to talk about:

[Interviewer] “Imagine a student sitting in a group with some classmates. They all get their written assignments back, and this student gets a good grade/comment from the teacher. The student says; ‘Oh, I didn’t really do that well...’”

Both countries showed a similar view and understanding of this scenario. When asked why the student would say that he did not do well, participants from both countries characterized this behaviour as a sign of having too high standards for themselves:

- (59) *Because he’s got too (...) high self-confidence. He thought he would have done it better.*
(Participant 6, Norway, LSE, p. 32, February 4th, 2008).
- (60) *Because I think that their standards would be too high for themselves. And if they didn’t meet that then they wouldn’t feel that good.*
(Participant 6, America, HSE, p. 15, December 13th, 2007).

Although the Norwegian participant (59) evaluates high expectations to achievement as HSE, it is more likely that too high expectations result in a rather negative and dissatisfied view of self. James (1890/1931) defined self-esteem as; success divided on pretensions; so that if you expect to do really well and only do ok you will not be as satisfied as you would have been with a lower expectation. Both the Norwegian and the American participant (59, 60) thought the student in the scenario said he did not do well due to higher expectations of self, however, the American participant (60) shows a better understanding of this. She (60) mentions that not being able to meet own standards would result in negative feelings about self. This is in accordance with James definition as mentioned (1890/1931). One can question whether the

American participant here (60) shows better understanding of this due to education in such issues either at school or elsewhere, or if it has more to do with better communication skills.

Nevertheless, not all of the participants saw the student in the scenario as someone with too high standards. Both a Norwegian and an American participant found the students behaviour to be related to modesty. They also found it to be the most appropriate way of acting and not necessarily a sign of LSE. The Norwegian participant even implied that the reason for downgrading own success is to avoid bragging:

(61) *Because then he does not brag so much” [Is that better or?] yeah, that they don’t brag?!? About themselves!*
(Participant 4, Norway, MSE, p. 27, February 4th, 2008).

(62) *[Others] think that they are a modest person, not really mean. And don’t wanna [sic] brag. So [others would react] pretty well.*
(Participant 4, America, LSE, p. 10, December 13th, 2007).

The comment from the Norwegian participant (61) gives the impression that one can praise others, but not oneself, which is already mentioned as a way to achieve recognition in Norway (Gullestad, 1989). Modesty is as previously mentioned a sought after quality in Norway (Gullestad, 1989; Sirevåg, 1999), but one of the American participants seemed to appreciate that behaviour as well. Although Norwegians may be more tied down by the emphasis on modesty, it does not mean that the appreciation of modesty is absent in the American culture. To achieve individual success is more strongly emphasised (Ashbee, 2002; Lipset, 1996; Sirevåg, 1999), but everything is a matter of degree.

On the other hand, one participant from each country also thought that downplaying own success rather had to do with an attempt to get praise from classmates:

(63) *They [classmates] might say: “no you did great!” I think lots of kids sometimes say: “oh no, I did so baaad” Just to get kids to say it looks better more. Cause I see a lot of people doing that sometimes (...).*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 6, December 10th, 2007).

(64) *They [classmates] would have said that: “yes, it was great”. Then he’s just saying that so that he will get attention and so the others will know he did really well.*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p.22, October 7th, 2007).

They (63, 64) viewed it as a hidden way of bragging or showing off results, a sort of “fake modesty”. This way of “fishing for compliments” might be an attempt of enhancing self-

esteem and make oneself feel better, but it might also simply be a reflection of how they perceive themselves as implied by one of the American participants:

(65) *[They do it] because they don't like themselves...have low self-confidence maybe? (...).*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 17, December 13th, 2007).

Only one American participant (65) thought this could be related to LSE. This participant's understanding is in accordance with Swann's (1997) self-verification theory, suggesting that people with LSE reject positive feedback in order to keep a stable self-esteem. Verifying the beliefs about self might be easier than challenging those views.

Although some participants were aware that the person in the scenario is downplaying own success in order to make the classmates give them praise, a significant proportion of the participants in both countries thought that the common way of responding would be to correct positively and reassure (63):

(66) *Well, I think usually what happens when that happens in my class is that the person next to her that sees her grade says: "well, that was actually really good, I think that was really good", or something like that.*
(Participant 3, America, MSE, p. 8, December 10th, 2007).

(67) *If they had seen the answer then they probably would have, well, helped him and said: "That is [!] good though", and then you can say that: "it is not really a competition really, as long as you overcome your own [previous] results!"(...). Then it is nice done!*
(Participant 1, Norway, MSE, p. 20, October 7th, 2007).

It is not only believed that this is the most common way of responding to someone downplaying own success (66, 67), but that this is the right way of acting too (67) as an unwritten social rule. The Norwegian participant (67) adds comfort after the praise, implying that the student might not have done as well as s/he expected despite of a rather good result. This refers back to "having too high standards" for themselves. The participants seemed to be aware that the student only felt bad about self and was fishing for compliments (63, 67), but despite of that they saw positive confirmation and reassuring as the right response. One can question whether this is due to empathy with the student who feels bad about him- or herself, or if they act this way in order to avoid confrontations and embarrassment and rather play along.

For the current scenario, both American and Norwegian participants implied that showing modesty was the right thing to do. One participant from each country also pointed out seeking

attention and showing false modesty as a way of explaining the behaviour in the scenario. The rest of the participants did not show understanding for why someone would downplay own success, however, most participants in both countries agreed that it is “the right thing” or “expected thing” to reassure and correct positively (give what he or she wants). In general, both countries seemed to have a similar perception of the scenario, and a similar understanding of what the student might have been trying to achieve with his/her behaviour. The results showed an area where the American and Norwegian culture seem to be similar, and can enrich the understanding of how the children in these two countries experience a situation as such and what the unwritten social rules means for their own conduct in it.

6.4.3 Evaluation and understanding of why someone would pretend to have succeeded

In the last scenario the participants were asked questions regarding someone who were pretending to have succeeded when s/he did not do well:

[Interviewer] Imagine another student talking to some classmates about how well the last test went. This student seems to be really proud, and confident in having done a really good job, but then the others realise that this student actually got a rather poor grade/got criticism from the teacher.

Although this scenario shows someone bragging about something which was not a real success, it is supposed to give others the impression of success. Here the participants’ understanding of false impression, either due to comparison or impression management, will be discussed at first. Next, the discussion will be focused on the participants’ perception of how the student in the scenario was feeling about him- or herself. Thereafter, the expected reactions from classmates will be discussed. At last, the tendency of the American participants to emphasise avoidance in meeting with a situation as the one in this scenario will be discussed.

Regarding this scenario some of the Norwegian participants were talking about comparison with other classmates:

- (68) (...) *the student thought he was going to get a good grade, but then he did not, and then he just says so, because he thinks everyone else did so well. So that he kind of isn’t going to look so bad.*
(Participant 3, Norway, HSE, p. 25, February 4th, 2008).

(69) *[The student would have been thinking]: (...) "I have to get better because I at least have to get something near what the others got".*
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 23, October 7th, 2007).

According to the social comparison theory, people look outside of themselves to evaluate their own abilities (Festinger, 1954). One of the Norwegian participants (68) here mentioned that the “fiction student” compared himself with the others; however, this was not interpreted as a downward comparison to find someone to feel superior to (Suls, Martin & Wheeler, 2002). Instead the participant (68) suggested that the student is lying in order to give a better impression.

Fine (2006) argues that children also master impression-management skills. These are methods to “act” and present a more favourably picture of the self than what is real (Goffman, 1959/1990). Lying to look good among his peers might be related to the “looking glass self”; a term used to describe how the imagination of our appearance to others and others judgment of that are connected with self-feelings (Cooley, 1922). Other’s function as mirrors, so other’s views of the student is likely to influence his own feelings about self. One of the Norwegian participants (68) suggests that this attempt to give a better impression is done because “everyone else did so well”, and another Norwegian participant (69) says the “fiction student” would at least want to achieve something near what the others got. This relates to the concept of being equal in the sense of “sameness”, which as previously mentioned is an important aspect of the Norwegian culture (Gullestad, 1989).

Giving a good impression (although false) among ones classmates might have to do with a belief that it will also give other benefits:

(70) *I would have thought: “oh, he lied!” [... to] try to get more friends and...,[become] popular or something.*
(Participant 5, Norway, LSE, p. 30, February 4th, 2008).

Research has shown that people with LSE avoid self-revelations in failure (Cameron et al., 2009). A study of Baldwin and Sinclair (1996) revealed that people low in self-esteem also associate failure with rejection and success with acceptance. This explains why one of the Norwegian participants (70) who scored low on self-esteem expected the “fiction student” to be lying about failure in order to get accepted and popular, while the Norwegian participants with HSE (68, 69) pointed out equality in the sense of similarity as the reason.

One of the American participants also pointed out that the student would want to give a better impression of himself:

- (71) *He might want to look better in front of his classmates, or he just...it might be a better average for him or her, than it was before (...).*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 6, December 10th, 2007).

However, the American participant's focus on impression management here has to do with giving a better impression in general and not necessarily be "the same" as the others. The Norwegian participants who commented on impression management focused on getting "something near what the others got" (69) and that "everyone else did so well" (68). This has to do with the Norwegian emphasis on equality and sameness (Gullestad, 1989). Everyone is supposed to be equal and not show exceptional achievement, however, being different by being worse off is not sought after either as one would not be "the same" as everyone else.

Moreover, there was a clear diversity on the participant's understanding of how the student in the scenario was feeling about himself. One of the Norwegian participants commented that this scenario was most likely a sign of LSE:

- (72) *They probably would have reacted a little to him not daring to admit he had done wrong, but then they got to see the answers and it became a little bad then that they don't have self-confidence enough to say what they got.*
(Participant 1, Norway, MSE, p. 21, October 7th, 2007).

This negative view is in accordance with the work of Cameron et al. (2009) where people were found to rate those who did not disclose their failures more negatively than those who did disclose their failures. The same study revealed that people with LSE underestimated their partner's regard after disclosure of failure. It might also be that students with LSE will react the same way and underestimate their friend's regard after admitting failure and not "...dare to admit he had done wrong..." as suggested by this Norwegian participant (72). Research has in fact shown that people with negative self-evaluations are more concerned about other's evaluations of them (Nezlek & Leary, 2002).

Interestingly, some of the American participants thought that the person in the scenario was someone who was thinking too highly of him or herself or were self-confident:

- (73) *I would say that he thinks of himself as a lot (...).*
(Participant 5, America, HSE, p. 13, December 13th, 2007).

According to research done by Kilianski (2008), people tend to overestimate other's level of self-esteem. That might have been the case in some of the American participants evaluating this scenario, as the "fiction student" was trying to hide his failure which is found to be related to people with LSE (Cameron et al., 2009). However, one of the American participants seemed to base the evaluation of self-esteem on how the student in the scenario appeared to believe in his own ability despite criticism from others:

- (74) *Well, that is more self-confidence even though someone says it is not as good as you thought it was.*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 18, December 13th, 2007).

This can also be related to the self-verification theory, suggesting that people with HSE are more likely to accept positive feedback and reject negative feedback (Swann, 1997).

Another American participant also perceived this as a genuine positive view of own abilities instead of lying or not admitting own fault. However, the participant suggested that higher goals should be set to be in accordance with other's expectations:

- (75) *They would think that the standards are actually pretty low for themselves and that he needs to set more higher goals.*
(Participant 6, America, HSE, p. 16, December 13th, 2007).

Some of the American participants explained that this might be due to doing better than on previous tests or having a general positive outlook:

- (76) *(...) it might be a better average for him or her, than it was before (...).*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 6, December 10th, 2007).
- (77) *Well, at least they are being positive (...).*
(Participant 7, America, LSE, p. 18, December 13th, 2007).

As seen here, the perception of one Norwegian participant (72) was that the student in the scenario had LSE, while the American participants (73, 74) perceived it as self-confidence and a belief in own achievements despite of the "standard" of achievement in class being higher. This reflects how individualism manifests itself differently in the two countries. In Norway there is a focus on egalitarian individualism (Eriksen, 1993a) where the emphasis on sameness is very strong (Gullestad, 1989). From the statement of the Norwegian participant (72) it is made clear that lying about own achievement may be the last way out for someone with LSE who does not dare to differ. In America the focus is on collective individualism, where private goals are most important (Sirevåg, 1999). It is a competitive society where

achievement is measured (Sirevåg, 1999), however, it seems as if being proud of own achievement independent of others achievement level may be a way of sticking with the competition in a situation of failure (74, 75).

Probably due to the various opinions on why the student in the scenario said s/he had succeeded despite “failure”, the expected reactions from classmates in both countries also varied. In both countries some of the participants varied between being upset at someone “lying” to showing pity:

(78) *I wouldn't really, if I was one of those others then I would probably be kind of a little mad at that person almost, in a way, but I would also feel a little sorry for the person.* (Participant 3, America, MSE, p. 9, December 10th, 2007).

Or as previously mentioned by a Norwegian participant (72): “it became a little bad then that they don't have self-confidence enough to say what they got”. Again these reactions can be viewed in connection to the work of Cameron et al. (2009) about people's reactions to disclosing failure; those who disclosed failure were appraised more positively than those who did not. The American participant (78) thought he would feel anger if a classmate did as the student in the scenario and deceived her. At the same time she expressed pity, as the student did not feel like s/he could be forward about which grade was given. In addition, the Norwegian participant (72) suggests that LSE explains why the student would not admit getting a low grade. This is also in accordance with the work of Cameron et al. (2009) which shows that people with LSE would not admit failure because they expected to be viewed more negatively by their partner if they did. This had nothing to do with their partner's actual regard for them which was higher than they expected when disclosing failure. Although the work of Cameron et al. (2009) had to do with adult relationships, the participants' reactions in this study suggests that 6th graders with LSE would act accordingly.

It was made clear by participants from both countries that lying was not accepted, not even as a mean for impression management:

(79) *[The others] would think that they are a liar. Probably wouldn't trust them anymore.* (Participant 4, America, LSE, p. 11, December 13th, 2007).

(80) *(...) it didn't go so well...But it is no point in lying just for that...* (Participant 3, Norway, HSE, p. 25, February 4th, 2008).

Despite of the American participants (73, 74, 77) viewing the student in the scenario as someone who is positive or thinks highly of self, some of them (79) also viewed it as lying or would get mad at the student in the scenario, probably also because s/he had been misleading them. Again the participant's reactions are in accordance with the work of Cameron et al. (2009) regarding more negative appraisal toward people who do not disclose their failures. A Norwegian participant (80) also showed disapproval of lying.

However, despite of some negative reactions, participants from both countries also said that some classmates would try to comfort the person, and encourage for future motivation:

- (81) (...) *for example, either they would have said that: "ha-ha, I got better than you" or: "it will probably go better next time"*.
(Participant 2, Norway, HSE, p. 22, October 7th, 2007).
- (82) *They would probably say that, if he is, if he thinks of himself as a very strong person at school and feels like he is the best...and even though he got a bad grade doesn't mean he is bad at everything.*
(Participant 5, America, HSE, p. 13, December 13th, 2007).

It seemed like they would try to help their classmate feel better by encouraging him to focus on his general self-esteem in school rather than specific (or state related) self-esteem in relation to one subject, and avoiding one single failure to influence the general feeling of self. Although they did not necessarily have the terms to explain it, they showed an understanding of how success and failures can be related to one's self-esteem.

However, many of the American participants implied that they would not get involved in a situation such as this one, and some even seemed uncomfortable with the situation as they thought the "fiction student" was not telling the truth:

- (83) *I don't know, maybe they [classmates] would play along or something or?(...) Well, if it was me, I would kinda [sic]be like(...)I wouldn't really say anything...(...)Or I would smile or something like that, or just say you did great or something like that...*
(Participant 1, America, MSE, p. 3, December 10th, 2007).

This could also be avoidance of a possible conflict, as a person that thinks there is a need to defending oneself might get aggressive (Baumeister et al., 1996). One participant also implied that it was not really the classmates' job to do anything about it, and therefore avoiding confrontation would be the most appropriate thing to do:

- (84) *Well, it depends if they knew their graders I would probably stay quiet, because someone will ending up bursting their bubble eventually. And...It is not exactly your place. Though the best of me would probably not do that, but I like to correct people a lot(...).I don't know what I'd do, I might stay quiet and I might correct, it would depend on the person.*
(Participant 2, America, HSE, p. 6, December 10th, 2007).

This shows an individualistic modernistic view, where everyone focuses on their own business, and seem to reflect the American belief in equality for opportunity (Lipset, 1996). Everyone is responsible for their own happiness, and people are more concerned with success rather than the appropriate means to get there (Lipset, 1996). If acting that way is what the student in the scenario needs to do in order to be happy, it is no one else's business to get involved in that.

The participant's answers regarding this scenario in both countries showed a concern with impression management, although the American participant (71) who mentioned this talked about "looking better" in general, while the Norwegian participants (68, 69) were more concerned with being equal or "the same" as their classmates. Interestingly, the American participants (73, 74, 76, 77) viewed the student in the scenario as someone who thinks highly of himself and someone who is being positive despite criticism, while a Norwegian participant (72) pointed out that he probably had LSE. This could imply that the American participants were more accepting. However, despite of this did participants from both countries (70, 79, 80) perceive the conduct as lying, which implies that neither really showed acceptance for what happened in the scenario. One participant from each country expressed pity (78, 79), while one from each also suggested that they would try to comfort the student (81, 82). Some of the American participants (83, 84) expressed avoidance and said that it was none of their business to get involved or correct the person. This makes it more likely that although the American participant did not accept it more, they would rather ignore it as how others try to achieve happiness is up to themselves.

6.5 Summary of interview analysis

The interviews demonstrated cultural differences and similarities between the American and Norwegian students on a completely different level than the questionnaires. For a start, the length of the interviews in the two countries differed, which shows that the American participants were more comfortable at talking and expressing themselves than the Norwegian

participants. This can be explained by the American view of children as “little adults” who should talk for themselves and give their own opinion (Bateson, 2000).

When it came to the content of the interviews, their definitions of self-esteem differed somewhat. The Norwegians focused on “belief in self”, especially in the sense of daring to do something, which points toward the emphasis on being equal and “same” and the challenges of being different. The American participants focused on “feeling good about self”, which points more toward pursuit of individual dreams. They also seemed to know more about “belief in one’s abilities” which reflects their competitive culture. These definitions show a divergence in what is emphasized within the two countries; “self among others” versus “just self”. This seems to be a reoccurring pattern in their answers to several questions. However, regardless of how they defined self-esteem, the definitions they used were in accordance with previous definitions given on the concept. In general they showed a good understanding of self-esteem. However, only the American participants talked about development and change of self-esteem, which can be related to the “self-esteem movement” through projects such as the Californian Task Force of Self-Esteem (Emler, 2001). It is likely that such programs have educated the American people more on the subject, also children in schools.

The students who were interviewed had very different scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. However, only those with the absolute lowest score in both countries would not say directly that they felt self-confident, and the same participants replied “I don’t know” to several questions throughout the interviews. Regarding their perception of self-esteem participants in both countries mentioned positive and negative aspects of HSE, however, which aspects they talked about differed. Again the divergence was between the emphasis on “self and others” versus “just self”. The Norwegian participants focused on positive factors such as managing to stand up against others, and negative factors such as emphasis of own superiority. The American participants focused on other positive factors such as being outgoing, and negative factors such as pushing others out of the way. Regarding negative perceptions of HSE, the participants emphasized that it had to do with “too much” self-esteem. Their description of this kind of self-esteem is more in accordance with definitions of defensive rather than genuine self-esteem. When it came to LSE, however, the participants from both countries had a clear negative perception of it. In addition, their perception was in accordance with research on the subject as none of them talked about people with LSE as “mean” or aggressive.

For the three scenarios presented, the participants differed in their perceptions regarding the two where the student could be viewed as “bragging”. However, when it came to the scenario about downplaying own success participants from both countries perceived it as either modesty or an attempt of achieving attention from peers. Participants from both Norway and America agreed that the right thing to do for peers was to reassure or correct positively, as they seemed to believe that this might be someone who needed it. As for the two scenarios where their opinions differed, there was a clear difference between a concern about “self and others” versus “just self”. In the scenario with self-praise of own success some participants from both countries showed disapproval of “bragging”, especially if the person was perceived as being mean. However, several of the American participants perceived the conduct as a way of expressing genuine happiness that could not be held back. They thought the student had acted only based on feelings about self, without thinking about others perception of it. Some of the Norwegian participants, however, perceived the same conduct as a way to make classmates jealous. They did not perceive it only from the students’ perspective, but were more concerned about how others would feel about it.

This divergence was similar for the last scenario where the student pretended to have succeeded. The American focus was on just self, as “looking better” was mentioned. The Norwegian participants, however, were concerned about being “equal” with their classmates, and were therefore concerned about self in relation to or in comparison with others. It was not about being better than others or achieving better themselves but about being at least as good as the peers. Interestingly, the American participants found the student in the scenario to be someone who thought highly of self and was positive, while a Norwegian participant perceived the student as someone with LSE. Despite of this, participants from both countries perceived the behaviour as lying, felt sorry for the student, and suggested that they would try to comfort him or her. Interestingly, some of the American participants expressed avoidance in the sense that it was none of their business what this student was doing, as everyone is responsible for their own success and happiness.

There has shown to be both cultural differences and cultural similarities between the Norwegian and American participants in this study. Both countries have similar cultures within that are built on for example religious beliefs and education, and we are all a part of constant changes within human societies (Eriksen, 1993b). Both are so called Western

countries with a somewhat similar culture. Despite of this, there are cultural differences that may influence how people in the two countries perceive each other and how they act in certain situations. How large these differences are may be constantly changing and may depend on the similarities in the sample. Students in Norway may have more in common with students in America than with their own parents or grandparents. Nevertheless, there are some important differences in their perception of their classroom environment as shown in this study.

7. General Discussion

The results in the current study have shed light on two very different aspects of self-perceptions and classroom situations in Norway and America. The first part of the study showed quantitative differences in the student's levels of self-esteem, academic self-concept, classroom engagement and academic achievement as well as the relationships between some of these variables. The second part of the study showed qualitative differences in how some of the students experienced and understood the concept of self-esteem, their own and other's self-esteem levels, as well as reactions in response to different feedback situations in the classroom that may be either threatening or enhancing to the classmate's self-esteem level. Here it will be discussed further how the significantly larger self-esteem and academic self-concept scores in America may be related to the qualitatively experience with and understanding of self-esteem and success or failure situations in the two countries.

In both countries, students with HSE were perceived by their classmates as social children (25, 26). Except from that the American and Norwegian participants' perception of HSE and LSE differed. The Norwegian participants' experiences of classmates with HSE and LSE seemed to be in consistence with the suggestions that the Law of Jante influences the possibilities for development of self-esteem. Their main focus was related to fear; they seemed more concerned about what others might think of them, and they made a distinction between students with HSE and LSE based on who dares to not worry about others opinion. Those with HSE were thought to not be afraid of others view of them (25), while those who had LSE were thought to be afraid of admitting mistakes or making a fool out of themselves (34, 35). At the same time the Norwegian participants had a somewhat negative perspective of people with HSE and were concerned about people with HSE hurting others, having "too much" self-esteem, and bragging too much (30, 31, 32), while only one of the American

participants talked negatively about people with HSE as someone who would push others out of the way (29).

The American participants seemed more concerned about students with LSE being pessimistic and rejecting positive feedback (37, 38, 39, 41). This behaviour goes against the strong American belief in individualism and the optimistic belief that “you can do anything you put your mind into” (see Aune, 2008); instead the classmates with LSE are negative and refuse to believe in their own abilities and this becomes noticed among the other students. They were perceived as deviant of the individualistic and achievement oriented society and therefore as more problematic than those with HSE. It might be easier to develop a higher self-esteem level in the American society, where positive beliefs about self and own abilities seem to be the norm. In Norway this seems more difficult due to a strong concern of others opinions, especially as others opinions are likely to be based on a belief that you are not supposed to think you are any better than anyone else (Sandemose, 1933/1967). It seems reasonable that the Norwegian students scored lower on self-esteem considering this emphasis, in addition to an emphasis on modesty. Especially considering that the Norwegian interview participants in addition seemed strongly concerned with other people’s opinions, while the American participants did not.

The interview participants in the two countries also differed when it came to reactions to self-praise. Participants from both countries thought the reaction to a classmate’s self-praise would depend on what grades the other classmates got (46, 47, 48, 49, 55). Those who got good grades would be ok with it, but the others would get upset and feel threatened. A Norwegian participant suggested that: “...the smartest thing would be to keep the success to oneself” (56), however; several American participants emphasized how hard it could be to hold this kind of happiness inside and that expressing it would be a good thing to do (57, 58). This suggests that there is a more open environment in America to express ones feelings toward self, while in Norway positive self-feelings should be kept under control. American students have in fact been found to self-enhance more than Norwegian students (Silvera & Seger, 2004). As discussed previously; to be modest and humble about own achievements is recognized in Norway, one can praise others but not self (Gullestad, 1989). One is perceived as a good person if one follows the “social rule” about self-enhancing behaviour, but if one violates it one may be met with ridicule and rejection (Jonassen, 1983). In other words, the Norwegian participants’ belief that one would need to have HSE in order to not be afraid of others might

be righteous. As happiness over own accomplishments are allowed to be expressed in America (Sirevåg, 1999), the students might become more aware of their own positive sides, be able to test out if others agree, and be able to achieve a better perception of self.

When it came to the scenario of a student downplaying own success, participants from both countries seemed to agree on the possible explanations; the student in the scenario must have had too high standards for himself (59, 60), been modest by avoiding to brag (61, 62) or did it to get praise from classmates (63, 64). They also agreed with regards to the “best” reaction from classmates; to reassure and comfort (66, 67). However, when discussing a scenario where a student pretended to succeed, the reactions differed again. It seemed as if behaviour related to praising self, whether that was just or not, caused stronger cultural differences than negative expressions of self. In other words; the cultural environment for showing enhanced perception of self and own abilities showed to differ in Norway and America. That might be part of the explanation of why there were statistically significant differences in self-esteem and ASC levels between the two countries.

In regards to the student pretending to succeed, the Norwegian participants focused on the student’s comparison with and need to be similar to classmates (68, 69), while one American participant mentioned that s/he must have done it to try to “look better” in front of the classmates (71). The Norwegian focus here has to do with equality, while the American participant is focusing more on success in general. The main emphasis for the American participants was that the student in the scenario must have thought highly of self and had HSE despite of negative feedback (72, 73, 75, 76, 77), and that the best thing would be to not correct (84). Despite of this, some participants from both countries perceived it as lying (70, 79, 80) and felt pity for the student (70, 74, 78), nevertheless, the American participants gave more an impression that s/he should be allowed to express whatever s/he wants without them getting involved (83, 84). If anyone were to correct, it was suggested that the teacher should be doing that. So although none of the participants seemed to approve of the student who pretended to succeed, they seemed to accept it.

The ideas of the welfare society in Norway seem to come through in the Norwegian participants understanding of why someone would pretend to succeed; it is important that everyone is equal (Gullestad, 1989; Sirevåg, 1999). Being good in itself, on the other hand, is not necessarily as important as being equal in the sense of similarity. Enhanced perception of

self then might mean enhanced up to a certain acceptable level (similar to that of others). The views of the American participants however, seemed to be in accordance with strong individualism. Although they were presented to a scenario where a student said s/he did great on a test s/he actually did very badly on, they focused on this student's "right" to act self-enhancing without any involvement. Whether the American participants thought the student was lying or simply someone who perceived his or her work as great despite of negative feedback, they thought it would be better to not correct or perceived it as a genuine expression of happiness (although probably based on an illusionary success). This shows that it probably would be easier to develop a high level of self-esteem in America without being "held back" by cultural norms such as the Law of Jante or the focus on equality in Norway. In America they are allowed to have high beliefs about self, regardless of whether other thinks these beliefs are based on reality.

In the quantitative part of the study, self-esteem correlated with several school related constructs in both countries. All of these will not be discussed here, but as "belief in one's abilities" was mentioned in both countries as a part of the interview participants' self-esteem definitions, the achievement related constructs will be looked at. Self-esteem and ASC correlated positively for both countries in accordance with definitions by the participants saying that self-esteem means "belief in one's abilities". They thought self-esteem had to do with trying to achieve and believing in own abilities whether they had previous experience with the task or not (7, 8, 9), but it was also perceived as knowledge of what your abilities are (8). As this was perceived as important for self-esteem in both countries, it is does not seem likely that these beliefs could have caused the differences on their self-esteem scores.

Nevertheless, the belief in own abilities seem to have influenced the American students more strongly. They not only had a larger vocabulary and seemed to know more about the "belief in one's abilities" in relation to self-esteem, but they also had a lower correlation between ASC and actual academic achievement than the Norwegian students. Additionally, a significant difference on ASC scores was found between the two countries, while their actual academic achievement did not differ. As previously mentioned, this suggests that the American students were less realistic than the Norwegian students about their own academic abilities. However, actual academic achievement correlated with self-esteem for the American sample only. Since the students' ASC correlated with self-esteem in both countries, the correlation with achievement for the American students only might be due to actual achievement being better

communicated to the American students' through e.g. end-of-grade tests or comments from teacher and in some cases through actual grading cards. In Norway on the other hand, the only achievement information available to the students are comments from teachers.

However, interview participants from both countries also suggested aspects of self-esteem that does not directly influence academic beliefs: The Norwegian participants emphasized "belief in self", while the American participants emphasized "feeling good about self". Since both groups thought "belief in one's abilities" was a part of self-esteem, and such beliefs (ASC) correlated with self-esteem in both countries, it is likely that the cultural difference in self-esteem scores has more to do with these non-academic definitions of self-esteem suggested by the participants.

What we have seen here is that positive beliefs about self seem to be the norm for the American participants; they become concerned and try to help when fellow students are negative and reject positive feedback. The Norwegian participants, on the other hand, are more concerned with what other people might think, which most likely is a result of the cultural norm that you should be modest and humble, praise others but not self, where those who go against that will be met with ridicule and rejection (Gullestad, 1989; Jonassen, 1983). These concerns may explain why the American students had developed a higher level of self-esteem and ASC. This can probably also be related to how the interview participants reacted to different feedback scenarios: In regards to self-praise, some American participants thought that it was positive and a good way of showing happiness, while a Norwegian participant expressed that it would have been better to keep it to oneself. This seems to reflect the same cultural norm about modesty in Norway, and show that in America it is allowed to achieve, express happiness, and be a winner (Ashbee, 2002; Sirevåg, 1999).

In the scenario where a student pretended to succeed, the Norwegian participants emphasized the need to be similar or equal to the classmates, while an American participant thought the student would act that way to simply "look better". Achievement seemed important in both countries, however, achievement in general in America and achievement in the same line with others in Norway. Considering the participants' understanding and explanations of self-esteem, it seems as if the American students live in an environment that is more open for self-enhancement and positive expressions of self than the Norwegian students. They are not as concerned with others opinions of them, they feel allowed to be a winner as they can express

happiness over achievement and there is not such an emphasis on being similar to others which makes it possible to develop oneself as much as one is capable of independent of others.

However, these studies have been done in a school setting, and one needs to be aware that there are individual differences within the countries and that other arenas of their lives might be influencing their individual self-esteem e.g. influence from parents. Although “belief in one’s abilities” was a part of the students’ self-esteem definitions and ASC also correlated with self-esteem in the quantitative study, others have found that self-esteem influences psychological well-being more than achievement (Rosenberg et al., 1995), and the participants in the current study also emphasized other parts of self-esteem such as “believing in self” and “feeling good about self”. To get a more complete picture of the cultural differences between Norway and America, such aspects of self-esteem could be explored.

8. Limitations and further research

In the current study the amount of participants was somewhat low, especially for the American sample, and especially for boys. Gender differences were found within Norway for both self-esteem and classroom engagement, whereas no gender differences were found in America. These findings need to be interpreted with caution, as the American sample might have been too small to be further divided into two groups and particularly in regards to gender as fewer American boys participated. More time spent collecting the data might have solved that issue. However, the teachers pointed out that it was difficult to get boys to return their consent forms; not because they did not want to or did not get permission to participate, but because they forgot to bring the consent form to parents or teacher on time.

In regards to the scales used, the Cronbach’s alpha for both the teacher-rated Classroom Engagement (.96) and the teacher-rated Academic Achievement (.93) was relatively high. The first scale consisted of reversed questions which should enhance scale validity, while the other did not contain reversed questions as the 6 items consisted of quite different statements such as “This student finds school...”, and questions such as “How prepared is this student normally for tests at school?”. Despite of the reversed questions in the first scale, the teachers tended to answer in a regular pattern. If they found the student little engaged in some areas in the classroom, they would rate the student as low in classroom engagement in the other areas.

It might be that this scale that was used for both students and teachers was not appropriate or nuanced enough for the teachers. A major part of the statements had to do with the students' feelings related to persistence, which might have been difficult for the teachers to answer compared to statements regarding observable engagement such as participation in verbal discussion. However, others have found that teachers who rate their students high on achievement rate them high on other measures as well (Carr & Kurtz-Costes, 1994). There is a chance of such an "halo"-effect in the current study too; if the teacher has a positive view of the student in some aspects, the teacher would "add" such positive qualities in their perception of that student in other areas as well.

One solution to the high Cronbach's alpha on these two scales could be to remove some items. However, it seemed as if the Norwegian teachers were more prone to the "halo-effect" and therefore removing items might strengthen the Cronbach's alpha for the Norwegian part in a split file analysis, but not for the American part. (One can question whether the American teachers spent more time on each questionnaire and therefore was able to look more at nuances as they were paid to do the questionnaire). According to the reliability analysis when the data file was divided by country, totally different items should be removed for each of the countries. Therefore it was decided to keep the full teacher scales despite of high Cronbach's alpha levels, however, more diverse teacher scales are suggested for further studies.

A different academic achievement measure might also have detected different results; however, grades are not applicable at Norwegian elementary schools, and only at some American elementary schools. Achievement tests might be a better measure for future studies as teachers might have been biased in their ratings, but as noted earlier; American students seem to be more enthusiastic in test situations, and this needs to be considered when including such tests.

It could be argued that a Bonferroni correction should be used in the current study due to the large amount of t-tests. This kind of correction would control the probability of a Type I error (the probability of rejecting a null hypothesis when it is actually true). However, this also means increasing the probability of a Type II error (the probability of accepting a false null hypothesis). In the current study, a Bonferroni correction means a new alpha level of: $.05/45 = .001$, which means that the only significant difference left would be the one between the American and Norwegian students on self-esteem. Despite of this, the gender differences

found in the Norwegian sample on both self-esteem and student-rated classroom engagement are both in accordance with previous research (e.g. Frost & McKelvie, 2004; Kling et al., 1999; Marks, 2000; Skaalvik, 1990) which suggests that these findings are likely to be true. As mentioned earlier, the amount of boys participating in America was rather low, which may explain why a similar gender difference was not found in that sample, and a Bonferroni correction might thus not be the right thing to do. A small sample is already increasing the chance of a Type II error, and applying a Bonferroni correction might make matters worse. This is true for the entire study, as it is of a rather small scale. Thus, it was decided not to use a Bonferroni correction for the results discussed in this study.

When it came to the interviews, the main limitation was that the Norwegian interview participants were rather short in their answers compared to the American participants. This is probably a reflection of cultural differences as well; American students are raised in a more strongly individualistic society and are taught to speak for themselves, while Norwegian students are a little less likely to express their opinion. It can be questioned whether the latter is due to the fear of others evaluation as some of the students mentioned, or if it has more to do with Norwegians being quieter and less talkative than the Americans. In that way it supports suggestions about cultural differences between the two countries, but at the same time this makes the amount of information retrieved from each country somewhat skewed. For future reference it might be helpful to include more follow up questions for Norwegian students to encourage them to talk more. This is not considered necessary for American students as they seemed more than willing (and able) to express their opinions and interpretations.

The current study has been more of an explorative study. However, for the cultural differences found in the quantitative part, it might be interesting for further research to focus on longitudinal methods to achieve a clear picture of the directionality of the relationships. The parental influence on the students in the two countries could also be interesting for further studies, both through parenting styles and socioeconomic status. A distinction between defensive and genuine self-esteem could in addition give valuable information. For qualitative analysis it might also be interesting to interview the students about concepts that are more directly related to their school work and achievements and what meaning this has to them.

Throughout this thesis, the focus has been on two cultural factors; the Law of Jante (with its rejection of exceptionalism), and the American Dream (with its individualistic view of achievement). These have been considered as explanations for the cultural differences found in self-perceptions and perceptions of classmates. As no previous studies directly comparing American and Norwegian students on such perceptions were found, these two distinctive factors were considered a necessary focus due to their importance in their respective countries. The children today may not be as strongly influenced by the Law of Jante or the American Dream as previous generations. However, such an interpretation of the data still seems to make sense. Nevertheless, it is possible that too much focus has been granted to these factors, and that a more thorough exploration of other possible influences within the cultures could be reasonable in future studies.

9. Final Remarks

The quantitative and qualitative exploration of self-esteem and school related variables in Norway and America has demonstrated important cultural differences that could be considered in further studies. For example, the American students scored higher on self-esteem and ASC and it has in the current study been argued that higher self-perceptions are allowed to be held and developed in the more achievement oriented America than in the equality oriented Norway. This also seemed related to some of the students' own experience with and understanding of self-esteem and feedback in success or failure situations. Norway and America both belong to the so called Western culture, however, as the current study has shown a difference between the students in the two countries, studies conducted in one country should be interpreted with care when applying its results to students in the other.

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12. Appendix

12.1 Appendix 1: Norwegian student questionnaire

Engasjement i klasserommet

	Ikke sant	Lite sant	Noe sant	Veldig sant
1. Jeg deltar når vi diskuterer nytt stoff.	1	2	3	4
2. Jeg jobber hardt når vi begynner på noe nytt i klassen.	1	2	3	4
3. Første gangen læreren min snakker om et nytt emne hører jeg godt etter.	1	2	3	4
4. Når vi starter noe nytt, sovner jeg rett og slett.	1	2	3	4
5. Tankene mine vandrer når læreren begynner på et nytt emne.	1	2	3	4
6. Jeg ser aldri ut til å følge med når vi begynner på et nytt tema.	1	2	3	4
7. Om et problem er virkelig vanskelig, så fortsetter jeg å jobbe med det.	1	2	3	4
8. Når jeg støter på et vanskelig spørsmål, så prøver jeg enda hardere.	1	2	3	4
9. Om jeg ikke kan løse problemet rett første gangen, så bare fortsetter jeg å prøve.	1	2	3	4
10. Når jeg gjør dårlig på en prøve, jobber jeg hardere neste gang.	1	2	3	4
11. Når jeg har et vanskelig spørsmål eller problem i klassen, så prøver jeg ikke engang.	1	2	3	4
12. Når jeg kommer til et problem jeg ikke kan løse med en gang, bare gir jeg opp.	1	2	3	4
13. Om et problem er virkelig hardt, bare slutter jeg å jobbe med det.	1	2	3	4
14. Om jeg ikke forstår noe med en gang, slutter jeg å prøve.	1	2	3	4
15. Når jeg har problemer med å forstå noe, gir jeg opp.	1	2	3	4

RSES

	Veldig Uenig	Uenig	Enig	Veldig Enig
1. Jeg føler at jeg er en person som er verdt noe, I hvert fall like mye som andre.	1	2	3	4
2. Jeg føler at jeg har mange gode egenskaper.	1	2	3	4
3. Alt i alt, er jeg tilbøyelig til å føle at jeg er mislykket.	1	2	3	4
4. Jeg er i stand til å gjøre ting like bra som de fleste andre.	1	2	3	4
5. Jeg føler at jeg ikke har mye å være stolt av.	1	2	3	4
6. Jeg har en positiv innstilling til meg selv.	1	2	3	4
7. I det store og det hele, er jeg fornøyd med meg selv.	1	2	3	4
8. Jeg skulle ønske jeg kunne ha mer respekt for meg selv.	1	2	3	4
9. Det er sikkert og visst at jeg føler meg ubrukelig til tider.	1	2	3	4
10. Til tider tenker jeg at jeg ikke duger til noe i det hele tatt.	1	2	3	4

Elev Attribusjons Skala

Det er mange grunner til at elever lykkes eller mislykkes med skolearbeidet. For hvert av utsagnene nedenfor, tenk på hvor sannsynlig det er på 1 til 4 skalaen at hver grunn vil forklare hvor bra du gjorde det.

	Ikke sannsynlig i det hele tatt	Litt sannsynlig	Veldig sannsynlig	Ekstremt sannsynlig
1. Når jeg gjør det bra i matte, er det fordi jeg er veldig flink i matte.	1	2	3	4
2. Når jeg gjør det bra i matte, er det fordi jeg leste mye til prøven.	1	2	3	4
3. Når jeg gjør det bra i matte, er det fordi læreren min er en bra og rettferdig lærer.	1	2	3	4
4. Når det går dårlig på en skriftlig prøve, er det fordi læreren min var streng når han/hun rettet prøven.	1	2	3	4
5. Når det går dårlig på en skriftlig prøve, er det fordi jeg ikke er flink til å skrive.	1	2	3	4
6. Når det går dårlig på en skriftlig prøve, er det fordi jeg ikke jobbet hardt nok.	1	2	3	4
7. Når et naturfagprosjekt går veldig bra, er det fordi jeg jobbet veldig hardt med det.	1	2	3	4
8. Når et naturfagprosjekt går veldig bra, er det fordi læreren min er en bra lærer og er rettferdig når han/hun retter prosjektet.	1	2	3	4
9. Når et naturfagprosjekt går veldig bra, er det fordi jeg er flink i naturfag.	1	2	3	4
10. Når det går dårlig på en matteprøve, er det fordi læreren min ikke synes jeg er flink i matte.	1	2	3	4
11. Når det går dårlig på en matteprøve, er det fordi jeg ikke er flink i matte.	1	2	3	4
12. Når det går dårlig på en matteprøve, er det fordi jeg ikke forberedte meg bra nok.	1	2	3	4

	Ikke sannsynlig i det hele tatt	Litt sannsynlig	Veldig sannsynlig	Ekstremt sannsynlig
13. Når jeg gjør det eksepsjonelt bra i språk, er det fordi jeg er veldig smart på verbale områder.	1	2	3	4
14. Når jeg gjør det eksepsjonelt bra i språk, er det fordi jeg jobbet veldig hardt.	1	2	3	4
15. Når jeg gjør det eksepsjonelt bra i språk, er det fordi læreren min har gjort en bra jobb med å lære oss og vurdere hvor bra vi har gjort oppgaven.	1	2	3	4
16. Når jeg ikke gjør det bra på en naturfagsprøve, er det fordi jeg ikke jobbet hardt nok.	1	2	3	4
17. Når jeg ikke gjør det bra på en naturfagsprøve, er det fordi læreren min ikke forklarte ting klart nok.	1	2	3	4
18. Når jeg ikke gjør det bra på en naturfagsprøve, er det fordi jeg ikke er flink til naturfag.	1	2	3	4
19. Når jeg gjør det veldig bra på en skriftlig oppgave, er det fordi læreren har gjort en kjempebra jobb med å lære meg hvordan jeg skal skrive.	1	2	3	4
20. Når jeg gjør det veldig bra på en skriftlig oppgave, er det fordi jeg skriver bra.	1	2	3	4
21. Når jeg gjør det veldig bra på en skriftlig oppgave, er det fordi jeg har jobbet veldig hardt med oppgaven.	1	2	3	4
22. Når det går dårlig i språk, er det fordi språk er vanskelig for meg.	1	2	3	4
23. Når det går dårlig i språk, er det fordi jeg ikke har jobbet hardt nok.	1	2	3	4
24. Når det går dårlig i språk, er det fordi læreren min var ekstra streng når han/hun rettet prøven min.	1	2	3	4

Den Høyeste

**Den flinkeste i
matte**

Den Beste i Lesing

Den Beste i Gym

**Den Beste i
Naturfag**



Den Laveste

**Den dårligste i
Matte**

**Den Dårligste i
Lesing**

Dårligste i Gym

**Den Verste i
Naturfag**

**Den Beste i
Skriving**

**Den beste i å få
Venner**

**Får Best
Karakterer / Gjør
Det Best på Prøver**

**Den Beste i
Musikk**

Den smarteste



**Dårligste i
Skriving**

**Dårligste til å få
Venner**

**Dårligst
Karakter/Den
Dårligste på
Prøver**

Dårligste i Musikk

Minst Smarte

12.2 Appendix 2: Norwegian teacher questionnaire

Master Oppgave i Psykologi
2007/2008

Kjære Lærer,

Vedlagt finner du et lærer spørreskjema for prosjektet. Vennligst fyll ut et skjema for hver elev som deltar i prosjektet. På toppen av hvert spørreskjema vil du se et elev ID nummer. Barnets navn er notert på en Post-it lapp festet til spørreskjemaet. Når du fyller ut hvert skjema, vennligst ta bort Post-it lappen og kast den.

Vennligst også ta et minutt til å fullføre Lærer Demografi spørsmålene på bunnen av dette brevet. Pass på at du legger ved dette brevet når du leverer tilbake de utfylte spørreskjemaene.

Om du har noen spørsmål, bare kontakt meg på mobil nr 97 52 14 47 eller e-mail: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no. Jeg er takknemlig for at du tar deg tid til å skaffe meg denne informasjonen om studentene dine. Din deltagelse er uunnværlig for en vellykket fullføring av prosjektet.

Med Vennlig Hilsen

Maria Drabløs
Master Student, NTNU

Lærer ID# _____

Lærers Demografiske Informasjon

_____ Vennligst noter antall år du har undervist

_____ Vennligst noter antall år du har undervist på denne skolen.

Kjønn: _____

Nasjonalitet: _____

Hvilke av disse beskriver best rasen din?

- _____ 1) Afrikansk/Afro Amerikansk
- _____ 2) Kausisk /Hvit
- _____ 3) Samisk
- _____ 4) Latinsk/Søramerikansk
- _____ 5) Asiatisk
- _____ 6) Annet (SPESIFISER _____)

Master Oppgave i Menneskelig Utvikling

Klasseroms Engasjement

	Ikke sant	Lite sant	Noe sant	Veldig sant
1. Denne eleven deltar når vi diskuterer nytt stoff.	1	2	3	4
2. Denne eleven jobber hardt når vi begynner på noe nytt i klassen.	1	2	3	4
3. Første gangen jeg snakker om et nytt tema, hører denne eleven veldig godt etter.	1	2	3	4
4. Når vi begynner på noe nytt, sovner han/hun rett og slett.	1	2	3	4
5. Tankene til denne eleven vandrer når jeg starter på et nytt tema.	1	2	3	4
6. Denne eleven ser aldri ut til å følge med når vi begynner på et nytt tema.	1	2	3	4
7. Om et problem er virkelig hardt, fortsetter han/hun å jobbe med det.	1	2	3	4
8. Når denne eleven kommer over et vanskelig spørsmål, prøver han/hun enda hardere.	1	2	3	4
9. Om denne eleven ikke får til et problem første gangen, fortsetter han/hun å prøve.	1	2	3	4
10. Når denne eleven gjør det dårlig på en prøve, jobber han/hun hardere neste gang.	1	2	3	4
11. Når denne eleven får et vanskelig spørsmål eller problem i klassen, prøver han/hun ikke engang.	1	2	3	4
12. Når denne eleven kommer til et problem som han/hun ikke kan løse med en gang, bare gir han/hun opp.	1	2	3	4
13. Om et problem er virkelig hardt, slutter han/hun å jobbe med det.	1	2	3	4
14. Om denne eleven ikke forstår noe med en gang, slutter han/hun å prøve.	1	2	3	4
15. Når denne eleven har problemer med å forstå noe, gir han/hun opp.	1	2	3	4

Hvor langt forventer du at denne eleven kommer i skolegang? (Vennligst kryss av alt som gjelder).

_____ Litt videregående

_____ Fullført videregående

_____ Litt høyskole/universitet

_____ Ferdig høyskole/universitet

_____ Ferdig med 4års høyskole

_____ Master grad

_____ Doktorgrad

Vi har bedt deg om å svare på dette spørreskjemaet fordi du underviser denne eleven på skolen.
Vennligst svar på spørsmålene nedenfor om denne elevens generelle evner/utførelser på skolen.

1. På **SKOLEN** er denne eleven:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Langt under gjennomsnittet			Gjennomsnittlig			Langt over gjennomsnittet

2. Denne eleven synes at **SKOLE** er:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Veldig vanskelig			Gjennomsnittlig			Veldig lett

3. Denne elevens **KARAKTERER** er:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Langt under gjennomsnittet			Gjennomsnittlige			Langt over gjennomsnittet

4. Når deg gjelder general **intelligens (hvor SMART studenten er)**, er eleven:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Langt under gjennomsnittet			Gjennomsnittlig			Langt over gjennomsnittet

5. Hvor forberedt er denne eleven vanligvis med **HJEMMELEKSE?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ikke forberedt i det hele tatt			Litt forberedt			Veldig bra forberedt

6. Hvor forberedt er denne eleven vanligvis til **PRØVER** på skolen?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ikke forberedt i det hele tatt			Litt forberedt			Veldig bra forberedt

12.3 Appendix 3: Norwegian interview guide

Intervju av norske 6.klassinger:

1. Hva er selvtillit?
2. a) Vil du si at du har god selvtillit?
b) Hvorfor?
3. Hva synes du om den personen i klassen din som har best selvtillit?
4. Hva synes du om den personen i klassen din som har dårligst selvtillit?
5. Prøv å se for deg en student som sitter i en gruppe sammen med klassekamerater. De får tilbake en stil de har skrevet, og denne eleven får en veldig god karakter/kommentar fra læreren. Eleven sier; "Se her, jeg gjorde det kjempebra! Jeg visste jeg ville gjøre det!" Hvordan tror du de andre ville reagert? Hva ville de si? Hvorfor tror du eleven sa det som han/hun gjorde?
6. Prøv å se for deg en elev som sitter i en gruppe sammen med noen klassekamerater. De får tilbake en stil som de har skrevet, og denne eleven får en god karakter/kommentar fra læreren. Eleven sier; "Åh, det gikk egentlig ikke SÅ bra..." Hvordan ville de andre reagert? Hva ville de sagt? Hvorfor tror du eleven sa det han/hun gjorde?
7. Prøv å se for deg en elev som sitter sammen med noen klassekamerater og snakker om hvor bra den forrige prøven hans/hennes gikk. Denne studenten ser ut til å være virkelig stolt, og sikker på å ha gjort en veldig god jobb. Så innser de andre at denne eleven faktisk fikk en heller dårlig karakter/kritikk fra læreren. Hvordan tror du de ville reagere? Hva ville de sagt? Hva ville du ha tenkt?

12.4 Appendix 4: English student questionnaire

Classroom Engagement

	Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true
1. I participate when we discuss new material.	1	2	3	4
2. I work hard when we start something new in class.	1	2	3	4
3. The first time my teacher talks about a new topic I listen carefully.	1	2	3	4
4. When we start something new, I practically fall asleep.	1	2	3	4
5. My mind wanders when my teacher starts a new topic.	1	2	3	4
6. I never seem to pay attention when we begin a new subject.	1	2	3	4
7. If a problem is really hard, I keep working at it.	1	2	3	4
8. When I run into a difficult question, I try even harder.	1	2	3	4
9. If I can't get a problem right the first time, I just keep trying.	1	2	3	4
10. When I do badly on a test, I work harder next time.	1	2	3	4
11. When I have a hard question or problem in class, I don't even try.	1	2	3	4
12. When I come to a problem that I can't solve right away, I just give up.	1	2	3	4
13. If a problem is really hard, I just quit working on it.	1	2	3	4
14. If I don't understand something right away, I stop trying.	1	2	3	4
15. When I have trouble understanding something, I give up.	1	2	3	4

RSES

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	2	3	4
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9. I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
10. At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4

Student Attribution Scale

There are many reasons that students succeed and fail at their schoolwork. For the items below, please think about how likely it is on the 1 to 4 scale that each reason would explain how well you did.

	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Extremely likely
1. When I do well in math, it is because I am really good at math.	1	2	3	4
2. When I do well in math, it is because I studied hard for the test.	1	2	3	4
3. When I do well in math, it is because my teacher is a good teacher and is fair.	1	2	3	4
4. When I get a poor grade on a written assignment, it is because my teacher graded my paper really hard (strict).	1	2	3	4
5. When I get a poor grade on a written assignment, it is because I am not good at writing.	1	2	3	4
6. When I get a poor grade on a written assignment, it is because I didn't work hard enough.	1	2	3	4
7. When I get an excellent grade on a science project, it is because I worked very hard at it.	1	2	3	4
8. When I get an excellent grade on a science project, it is because my teacher is a good teacher and is a fair grader.	1	2	3	4
9. When I get an excellent grade on a science project, it is because I am talented in science.	1	2	3	4
10. When I receive a poor grade in math, it is because my teacher thinks I am not good at math.	1	2	3	4
11. When I receive a poor grade in math, it is because I am not good at math.	1	2	3	4
12. When I receive a poor grade in math, it is because I didn't study hard enough.	1	2	3	4

	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Extremely likely
13. When I do exceptionally well in language arts, it is because I am very smart in verbal areas.	1	2	3	4
14. When I do exceptionally well in language arts, it is because I worked really hard.	1	2	3	4
15. When I do exceptionally well in language arts, it is because my teacher has done a good job teaching and grading this assignment.	1	2	3	4
16. When I do not do well on a science test, it is because I didn't study hard enough.	1	2	3	4
17. When I do not do well on a science test, it is because my teacher did not explain things clearly.	1	2	3	4
18. When I do not do well on a science test, it is because I am not good at science.	1	2	3	4
19. When I do very well on a writing assignment, it is because the teacher has done an excellent job of teaching me how to write.	1	2	3	4
20. When I do very well on a writing assignment, it is because I write well.	1	2	3	4
21. When I do very well on a writing assignment, it is because I have worked very hard on the assignment.	1	2	3	4
22. When I receive a low grade in language arts, it is because language arts is hard for me.	1	2	3	4
23. When I receive a low grade in language arts, it is because I haven't worked hard enough.	1	2	3	4
24. When I receive a low grade in language arts, it is because my teacher was extra strict when she graded my paper.	1	2	3	4

The Tallest

The Best in Math

The Best in Reading

The Best in Sports

The Best in Science



The Shortest

The Worst in Math

The Worst in Reading

The Worst in Sports

The Worst in Science

The Best in Writing

The Best at Making Friends

The Best Grades

The Best in Music

The Smartest



The Worst in Writing

The Worst at Making Friends

The Worst Grades

The Worst in Music

The Least Smart

12.5 Appendix 5: English teacher questionnaire

Master Thesis in Psychology
2007/2008

Dear Teacher,

Attached you will find the teacher questionnaire for the project. Please complete one form for each student who is participating in the project. At the top of each questionnaire you will see a child ID number. The child's name is noted on a Post-it note affixed to the questionnaire. As you complete each form, please remove the Post-it and destroy it.

Please also take a moment to complete the Teacher Demographic questions located at the bottom of this letter. Be sure to attach this letter to the completed questionnaires before returning them.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via e-mail: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no . You can also contact Professor Beth Kurtz-Costes, my U.S. supervisor, via e-mail: bkcostes@email.unc.edu or phone: 919-962-4137. I greatly appreciate your time in providing this information about your students. Your thoughtful input is invaluable to the successful completion of the project.

Sincerely,

Maria Drabløs

teacher ID# _____

Teacher Demographic Information

_____ Please list the total number of years you have taught.

_____ Please list the total number of years you have taught at this school.

Which of these best describes your race?

- _____ 1) African American/Black
- _____ 2) Caucasian/White
- _____ 3) Hispanic/Latino(a)
- _____ 4) Asian American
- _____ 5) Native American/ Indian
- _____ 6) Other (SPECIFY _____)

Classroom Engagement

	Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true
1. This student participates when we discuss new material.	1	2	3	4
2. This student works hard when we start something new in class.	1	2	3	4
3. The first time I talk about a new topic, this student listens very carefully.	1	2	3	4
4. When we start something new, this student practically falls asleep.	1	2	3	4
5. This student's mind wanders when I start a new topic.	1	2	3	4
6. This student never seems to pay attention when we begin a new topic.	1	2	3	4
7. If a problem is really hard, s/he keeps working on it.	1	2	3	4
8. When this student runs into a difficult question, s/he tries even harder.	1	2	3	4
9. If this student can't get a problem right the first time, s/he keeps trying.	1	2	3	4
10. When this student does badly on a test, s/he works harder next time.	1	2	3	4
11. When this student has a hard question or problem in class, s/he doesn't even try.	1	2	3	4
12. When this student comes to a problem that s/he can't solve right away, s/he just gives up.	1	2	3	4
13. If a problem is really hard, this student just quits working on it.	1	2	3	4
14. If this student doesn't understand something right away, s/he stops trying.	1	2	3	4
15. When this student has trouble understanding something, s/he gives up.	1	2	3	4

How far do you expect this child to go in school? (Please mark all that apply.)

_____ Some high school

_____ Finish high school

_____ Some college

_____ Finish community college

_____ Finish a 4-year college

_____ Masters degree

_____ Doctoral degree

We have asked you to respond to this questionnaire because you teach this student. Please respond to the questions below regarding this child's general school ability/performance.

1. At **SCHOOL** this student is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Far below average			Average			Far above average

2. This student finds **SCHOOL**:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very difficult			Average			Very easy

3. This student's **GRADES** are:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Far below average			Average			Far above average

4. In terms of general **SMARTness/intelligence**, this student is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Far below average			Average			Far above average

5. How prepared is this student, typically, with **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all prepared			Somewhat prepared			Very well prepared

6. How prepared is this student, usually, for **TESTS** at school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all prepared			Somewhat prepared			Very well prepared

12.6 Appendix 6: English interview guide

Interview of American 6th graders:

1. What is self-confidence? (self-esteem)
2. a) Would you say that you are a self-confident person?
b) Why?
3. What do you feel about the most self-confident person in your class?
4. What do you feel about the least self-confident person in your class?
5. Try to imagine a student sitting in a group with some classmates. They all get their written assignments back, and this student gets a very good grade/comment from the teacher. The student says; “Look here, I did great! I knew I would!”. How do you think the others would react to that? What would they say? Why do you think the student said what he/she did?
6. Try to imagine a student sitting in a group with some classmates. They all get their written assignments back, and this student gets a good grade/comment from the teacher. The student says; “ Oh, I didn’t really do that well....” How would the others react? What would they say? Why do you think the student said what he/she did?
7. Try to imagine another student talking to some classmates about how well the last test went. This student seems to be really proud, and confident in having done a really good job. Then the others realise that this student actually got a rather poor grade/got criticism from the teacher. How do you think they would react? What would they say? What would you think?

12.7 Appendix 7: Norwegian request letter to schools

Forskningsprosjekt i Psykologi

Jeg sender herved en forespørsel til dere om tillatelse til å bruke 5., 6. og 7.klassingene og lærerne deres i et forskningsprosjekt i psykologi ved NTNU. Prosjektet handler om kulturelle forskjeller mellom amerikanske og norske barn på selvtillit i forhold til faktisk kompetanse. Barna vil få utdelt et spørreskjema i skoletiden som tar ca 30 minutter å svare på, i tillegg til at 4-6 elever av de totalt 50 vil bli kontaktet igjen senere til et kort intervju. Læreren til elevene vil bli bedt om å svare på et spørreskjema for hver enkelt elev som deltar. Både spørreskjema og intervju vil være anonymt i forskningsrapporten.

Jeg sender med brev om samtykke fra foreldrene som jeg håper dere vil dele ut til elevene så de kan ta med seg hjem og få underskrift.

Deres hjelp er absolutt uunnværlig for at dette prosjektet skal realiseres, og det blir satt høy pris på. Om dere har noen spørsmål angående prosjektet kan dere kontakte meg på e-mail: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no eller telefon: 97 52 14 47.

På forhånd takk!

Med vennlig hilsen

Maria Drabløs

12.8 Appendix 8: Norwegian request letter to teachers

Forskningsprosjekt i Psykologi

Jeg jobber med et prosjekt i psykologi ved NTNU om kulturelle forskjeller mellom amerikanske og norske skolebarn i selvtillitt i forhold til faktisk kompetanse. For å få dette realisert trenger jeg utfylte spørreskjema fra totalt 50 norske skolebarn mellom 10-12 år. Barna vil få utdelt et spørreskjema å fylle ut i skoletiden, og 4-6 barn av de totalt 50 barna vil bli kontaktet igjen senere for et kort intervju. Spørreskjemaet vil ta ca 30 minutter å fylle ut. I tillegg vil læreren til elevene svare på et kortere spørreskjema om hver enkelt elev. Dette skjemaet vil ta ca 3 minutter å fylle ut per elev. Spørreskjemaene og intervjuene vil være anonyme i forskningsrapporten. Når prosjektet er ferdig vil forskningsrapporten bli gjort tilgjengelig for de som deltar.

Det blir satt stor pris på om du vil gi tillatelse til at vi bruker tid til dette i skoletimen, og om du er villig til å svare på spørreskjemaene. Om det er noe du lurer på kan dere kontakte meg på e-mail: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no , eller telefon: 97 52 14 47. Datainnsamlingen i Amerika starter i begynnelsen av oktober, så derfor vil jeg gjerne ha tilbakemelding på om du kan delta innen 13.september.

På forhånd takk!

Med vennlig hilsen

Maria Drabløs

12.9 Appendix 9: Norwegian request letter to parents

Forskningsprosjekt i Psykologi

Jeg jobber med et prosjekt i psykologi ved NTNU om kulturelle forskjeller mellom amerikanske og norske skolebarn i selvtillitt i forhold til faktisk kompetanse. For å få dette realisert trenger jeg totalt 50 norske skolebarn mellom 10-12 år.. Barna vil få utdelt et spørreskjema å fylle ut i skoletiden, og 4-6 barn av de totalt 50 barna vil bli kontaktet igjen senere for et kort intervju. I tillegg vil læreren til elevene svare på et lignende spørreskjema om hver enkelt elev. Spørreskjemaene og intervjuene vil være anonyme i forskningsrapporten. Det blir satt stor pris på om du vil gi tillatelse til at ditt barn deltar, og sender dette skrivet tilbake til skolen så snart som mulig. Om det er noe dere lurer på kan dere kontakte meg på e-mail: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no .

På forhånd takk!

Med vennlig hilsen

Maria Drabløs

12.10 Appendix 10: English request letter to schools/principal



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Department of Psychology
Campus Box 3270, Davie Hall

College of Arts and Sciences
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3270

October 2007

(Name and school address)

Dear *(name of principal)*

I am writing to introduce myself and to request permission to conduct a research project in your school with the participation of 5th, 6th and 7th graders and their teachers. I am conducting this research as a Masters project in psychology at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science, and my U.S. supervisor is Professor Beth Kurtz-Costes at UNC, Chapel Hill. The purpose of this research study is to understand differences in identity and motivation between children in the United States and children in Norway. If you agree, students at your school will complete a survey at a time that is convenient for teachers and children. We hope that about 50 children will participate. This session will last about 20 minutes. Afterwards, 4 to 6 students will be contacted again to complete a 15 minute individual interview. The students' teacher will also be asked to complete a brief form for each student in the study. All responses will be treated confidentially. All reports of the survey project will be of group data averages, and no identifying information will be included in reports of the individual interviews. Children who participate will be given small gifts, and teachers will be given incentives (either a check or a gift card to Barnes and Noble) in an amount based on the number of forms they complete.

Enclosed here is a copy of the consent form that will be sent to parents. If you agree to allow me to conduct this research at your school, I will provide enough copies of this consent form to be distributed to children at your school. Only children for whom we have parental consent will participate in the study. I am also sending a copy of the consent document for teachers.

Your help is invaluable to the successful completion of the project. I would be pleased to meet with you at your convenience to discuss this research further. I will telephone your office in the next few days to make an appointment. Alternatively, please contact me via e-mail: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no. You can also contact Professor Beth Kurtz-Costes via e-mail: bkcostes@email.unc.edu or phone: 919-962-4137.

This research has been approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board. If you wish, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email at IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Thank you!
Sincerely,
Maria Drabløs

12.11 Appendix 11: English request letter to teachers



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Department of Psychology
Campus Box 3270, Davie Hall

College of Arts and Sciences
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3270

October 2007

Dear teacher,

I am working on a project in psychology at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science about cultural differences between American and Norwegian school children. To complete this project I am seeking 50 American school children who are 10-12 years old to complete surveys. The children will be given a questionnaire to fill out during school hours, and 4-6 of the total of 50 American school children will be contacted later for a 15-minute interview. I am asking the children's teachers to complete a shorter questionnaire about each student. This questionnaire will take less than 5 minutes to fill out for each student who participates, and I am offering modest monetary incentives to participating teachers. All data will be treated privately. When the project is finished, I would be glad to share the results with you.

Attached to this letter is the consent form giving more information about the study. Your school principal has agreed that I may contact you. However, you are under no obligation to participate. I would be most grateful for your cooperation. I will work with you and your school principal to arrange interview times for the children that are not disruptive. Please see additional information about the study in the attached consent document. If you have any questions, please e-mail me at: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no. You can also contact Professor Beth Kurtz-Costes, my research sponsor here in the United States, via e-mail (bkcostes@email.unc.edu) or phone: 919-962-4137.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Maria Drabløs

12.12 Appendix 12: English request letter to parents



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Department of Psychology
Campus Box 3270, Davie Hall

College of Arts and Sciences
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3270

October 2007

Dear parents,

I am a student from Norway who lived in Cary last year. Now I am working on a project in psychology at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science about cultural differences between American and Norwegian school children. I am writing to ask if your child will participate in the project. As you will see in the attached consent form, this project will take about 20 minutes of your child's time.

I will be most grateful if you give permission for your child to participate in this study. If you have any questions you can contact me via e-mail: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no. You can also contact Professor Beth Kurtz-Costes, my U.S. supervisor, via e-mail: bkcostes@email.unc.edu or phone: 919-962-4137.

Thank you for considering this request!

Sincerely,

Maria Drabløs

12.13 Appendix 13: English letter of consent for teachers

**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB Study #07-1512

Consent Form Version Date: 10/3/07

Title of Study: Achievement beliefs and motivation in American and Norwegian children

Principal Investigator: Beth Kurtz-Costes
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Psychology
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-4137
Email Address: bkcoster@email.unc.edu

Project Director: Ms. Maria Drabløs
Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-4303
Study Contact email: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Even if you agree to participate, you can decide later not to be in the study or to leave the study early.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this permission form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to understand differences in identity and motivation between children in the United States and children in Norway. This project is being conducted by Maria Drabløs for her Masters thesis in psychology at NTNU (The Norwegian University of Technology and Science), and by Dr. Beth Kurtz-Costes, a faculty member at the University of North Carolina.

How many people will take part in this study?

Fifty children in Norway have already participated in the project, and we are now seeking approximately 50 children (ages 10-12 years) in the United States. In addition, the teachers of those children are participating in the study.

How long will your part in this study last?

If you agree to participate, you will complete a questionnaire for each child in your class who is in the study. Teachers report to us that it takes less than 5 minutes to complete a form for each child.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate, you will complete a brief questionnaire for each of your students who is in the project. These questionnaires include items about the student’s classroom engagements (e.g., “This child works hard when we discuss something new in class”), your expectations for the level of education the child will complete (e.g., high school degree; college degree), and your perceptions of the child’s academic ability compared to peers. We will also ask you a few questions about yourself (e.g., how many years you have taught at this grade level). You may complete these questionnaires at any time or location that is convenient for you, and return the forms to us by mail.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal. The primary risk for you concerns confidentiality. Steps that we will take to protect confidentiality are described below.

How will your privacy be protected?

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Each questionnaire that we give you will have an identification code written on it corresponding to the child. The child’s name will appear on a post-it on the questionnaire. We encourage you to remove and destroy the post-it as soon as you have completed the questionnaire. All project materials will be stored in locked laboratory space in the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Only the Principal Investigator, the Project Director, and a few research assistants will have access to the data. Reports of the research will involve group data, not the responses of individuals.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will receive a modest monetary incentive (i.e., either a check or a Barnes and Noble gift card) for being in this study. The amount to be paid will depend upon the number of children that you evaluate. The following incentive schedule will be used:

<u>1 to 8 assessments:</u>	<u>\$10</u>
<u>9 to 15 assessments:</u>	<u>\$15</u>
<u>16 to 21 assessments:</u>	<u>\$20</u>
<u>22 or more:</u>	<u>\$25</u>

Will it cost you anything for you to be in this study?

The only cost you will incur is your time.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions or concerns, you should contact Dr. Beth Kurtz-Costes or Ms. Maria Drabløs (see contact information on the first and last pages of this form).

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Title of Study: Achievement beliefs and motivation in American and Norwegian children

Principal Investigator: Beth Kurtz-Costes
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Psychology
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-4137
Email Address: bkcostes@email.unc.edu

Project Director: Ms. Maria Drabløs
Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-4303
Study Contact email: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

12.14 Appendix 14: English letter of consent for parents regarding questionnaire

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Parental Permission for a Minor Child to Participate in a Research Study Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study #07-1512

Consent Form Version Date: 10/3/07

Title of Study: Achievement beliefs and motivation in American and Norwegian children

Principal Investigator: Beth Kurtz-Costes

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Psychology

UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-4137

Email Address: bkcoster@email.unc.edu

Project Director: Ms. Maria Drabløs

Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-4303

Study Contact email: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to allow your child to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw your permission for your child to be in the study, for any reason. Even if you give your permission, your child can decide not to be in the study or to leave the study early.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. Your child may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you and your child can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this permission form. You and your child should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to understand differences in identity and motivation between children in the United States and children in Norway. This project is being conducted by Maria Drabløs for her Masters thesis in psychology at NTNU (The Norwegian University of Technology and Science), and by Dr. Beth Kurtz-Costes, a faculty member at the University of North Carolina.

How many people will take part in this study?

Fifty children in Norway have already participated in the project, and we are now seeking approximately 50 children (ages 10-12 years) in the United States.

How long will your child’s part in this study last?

If you and your child agree to participate, your child will complete a questionnaire at school with classmates. This session will last about 20 minutes.

What will happen if your child takes part in the study?

Written parental and student consent will be required for study participation. Students who participate will complete a questionnaire at school either during school hours or during afterschool programs. The questionnaire includes items about the children’s classroom behaviour (e.g., “I work hard when we discuss something new in class”), children’s beliefs about the reasons for success and failure (e.g., “When I do well in math, it is because I studied really hard for the test”) and children’s self-esteem and perceptions of their academic abilities. Because we are interested in the relationship between children’s beliefs and their academic success, we are also requesting permission to obtain children’s grades from school records. If you give your permission, we will obtain a copy of your child’s grades and state test scores (i.e., EOG) at the end of the current school year. In order to learn more in depth about children’s beliefs, we will ask 4 to 6 students from the total of 50 to participate in a short individual interview. If your child is selected to be interviewed, we will send you a letter within the next month asking for your permission for your child to be in that part of the study.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

There are no direct benefits to your child for being in this study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal. All students will be reminded that they can skip questions if any questions make them uncomfortable.

How will your child’s privacy be protected?

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

During the group testing, students will be seated in a way that they cannot see what others write. Identification codes rather than names will be recorded on all data sheets. All project materials will be stored in locked laboratory space in the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Only the Principal Investigator, the Project Director, and a few research assistants will have access to the data. Reports of the research will involve group data, not the responses of individuals.

Will your child receive anything for being in this study?

Your child will receive a small gift (e.g., highlighter, small flashlight).

Will it cost you anything for your child to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you or your child has questions about this study?

You and your child have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions or concerns, you should contact Dr. Beth Kurtz-Costes or Ms. Maria Drabløs (see contact information on the first and last pages of this form).

What if you or your child has questions about your child’s rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your child’s rights and welfare. If you or your child has questions or concerns about your child’s rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Title of Study: Achievement beliefs and motivation in American and Norwegian children

Principal Investigator: Beth Kurtz-Costes
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Psychology
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-4137
Email Address: bkcoster@email.unc.edu

Project Director: Ms. Maria Drabløs
Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-4303
Study Contact email: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no

Parent’s Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily give permission to allow my child to participate in this research study.

____ Yes, my child’s school grades and EOG scores can be released to Dr. Kurtz-Costes and Ms. Drabløs. I understand that this information will be kept private.

____ No, I do not give permission for my child’s grades to be given to Dr. Kurtz-Costes and Ms. Drabløs.

Printed Name of Research Participant (Child)

Signature of Parent

Date

Printed Name of Parent

12.15 Appendix 15: English letter of consent for parents regarding interview

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Parental Permission for a Minor Child to Participate in a Research Study Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study #07-1512

Consent Form Version Date: 10/3/07

Title of Study: Achievement beliefs and motivation in American and Norwegian children

Principal Investigator: Beth Kurtz-Costes

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Psychology

UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-4137

Email Address: bkcoster@email.unc.edu

Project Director: Ms. Maria Drabløs

Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-4303

Study Contact email: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to allow your child to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw your permission for your child to be in the study, for any reason. Even if you give your permission, your child can decide not to be in the study or to leave the study early.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. Your child may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you and your child can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this permission form. You and your child should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to understand differences in identity and motivation between children in the United States and children in Norway. This project is being conducted by Maria Drabløs for her Masters thesis in psychology at NTNU (The Norwegian University of Technology and Science), and by Dr. Beth Kurtz-Costes, a faculty member at the University of North Carolina.

How many people will take part in this study?

Fifty children in Norway and 50 U. S. children have already participated in the project, including your child. We are now asking 4-6 of the original children in the U.S. to participate in individual interviews to help us better understand children's beliefs.

How long will your child's part in this study last?

If you and your child agree to participate, your child will be interviewed by Ms. Drabløs at school at a time and location that are convenient for your child and his or her teacher. This session will last about 15 minutes.

What will happen if your child takes part in the study?

If you and your child agree to participate, your child will be interviewed by Ms. Drabløs at school at a time and location that are convenient for your child and his or her teacher. This session will last about 15 minutes. Ms. Drabløs will ask your child questions about confidence and school performance. This session will be tape recorded. Your child may refuse to answer any questions and is free to withdraw from the study at any time. Examples of these questions are:

1. a) Would you say that you are a self-confident person?
b) Why?
2. Try to imagine a student sitting in a group with some classmates. They all get their written assignments back, and this student gets a very good grade/comment from the teacher. The student says; "Look here, I did great! I knew I would!". How do you think the others would react to that? What would they say? Why do you think the student said what he/she did?

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

There are no direct benefits to your child for being in this study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal. All students will be reminded that they can skip questions if any questions make them uncomfortable.

How will your child's privacy be protected?

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Interviews will occur at a location where the child's responses cannot be overheard by others. Once the audiotapes have been transcribed, the original tapes will be destroyed. Identification codes rather than names will be recorded on all tapes and all data sheets. All project materials will be stored in locked laboratory space in the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Only the Principal Investigator, the Project Director, and a few research assistants will have access to the data. Reports of the research will involve group data, not the responses of individuals.

Will your child receive anything for being in this study?

Your child will receive a small gift (e.g., highlighter, small flashlight).

Will it cost you anything for your child to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you or your child has questions about this study?

You and your child have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions or concerns, you should contact Dr. Beth Kurtz-Costes or Ms. Maria Drabløs (see contact information on the first and last pages of this form).

What if you or your child has questions about your child's rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your child's rights and welfare. If you or your child has questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Title of Study: Achievement beliefs and motivation in American and Norwegian children

Principal Investigator: Beth Kurtz-Costes
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UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-4137
Email Address: bkcoster@email.unc.edu

Project Director: Ms. Maria Drabløs
Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-4303
Study Contact email: mariadr@stud.ntnu.no

Parent's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily give permission to allow my child to participate in this research study.

Printed Name of Research Participant (Child)

Signature of Parent

Date

Printed Name of Parent

12.16 Appendix 16: Norwegian script for introducing questionnaire to the children

“Hei! Jeg heter Maria og er student i psykologi ved NTNU. Jeg holder på med et prosjekt om Amerikanske og Norske skoleelever, og ønsker at dere skal svare på noen spørsmål. Du må ikke være med i studiet visst du ikke vil, og du må ikke svare på alle spørsmålene om der er noen du ikke ønsker å svare på. All informasjon er anonym; det vil si at det bare er jeg og læreren min som vil se det. Er det noen som lurere på noe før vi begynner? Bare rekk opp hånda om dere har noen spørsmål underveis. Tusen takk for hjelpen!”

12.17 Appendix 17: Norwegian script for introducing interview to the children

“Hei! Maria heter jeg. Du husker meg kanskje fra tidligere da jeg var her og delte ut spørreskjema. Denne gangen ønsker jeg å intervjuer deg om det er greit for deg. Du behøver ikke å svare på alle spørsmålene om du ikke ønsker det, og du kan spørre meg om det er noe du ikke forstår. Er det greit for deg om jeg tar opp intervjuet på kassett? Jeg sletter opptaket så snart jeg har skrevet ned alt. Intervjuet er anonymt; det vil si at det kun er jeg, læreren min og et par assistenter som kommer til å se at svarene er dine. Er det noe du lurere på før vi begynner? Husk at du kan avslutte intervjuet når du vil, bare si ifra om du ikke vil mer”.

12.18 Appendix 18: English script for introducing questionnaire to the children

“Hi! My name is Maria. I'm from Norway, and I'm doing a study with American and Norwegian children about what they think about their schoolwork. I'd like you to answer questions for me. You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to, and you don't have to answer all the questions if there are some questions that make you uncomfortable. All the information you give will be treated privately, which means that only my teachers and I will see it. Do any of you have any questions before we start? I will be here while you fill out the questionnaire in case you have any questions about it. I appreciate that you wanted to be in this study. Thank you very much for your help!”

12.19 Appendix 19: English script for introducing interview to the children

“Hi! My name is Maria. Maybe you remember me from when I asked you to answer questionnaires a few weeks ago. I'm from Norway, and I'm doing a study with American and Norwegian children about what they think about their schoolwork. This time I'd like to interview you if that is ok with you. You don't have to answer all the questions if you don't want to, and you can ask me if there is something you don't understand. I will be tape recording the interview, but I will delete the tapes/tracks as soon as I have written everything down. The things you tell me will be treated privately, which means that only my teacher and I will see your answers. Do you have any questions before we start? Remember that you can stop any time you want—just tell me if you want to stop”.

12.20 Appendix 20: The ten commandments of the Law of Jante

The ten commandments of the “Law of Jante”:

1. You shall not believe that you *are* anything.
2. You shall not believe that you are just as much as *us*.
3. You shall not believe that you are wiser than *us*.
4. You shall not think that you are better than *us*.
5. You shall not believe that you know more than *us*.
6. You shall not believe that you are more than *us*.
7. You shall not believe that *you* are good for anything.
8. You shall not laugh of *us*.
9. You shall not believe that anyone cares about *you*.
10. You shall not believe that you can teach *us* anything.

(Sandemose, 1933/1967, p.56; translated by the author of the thesis).