MEVLANA International Journal of Education (MIJE)
Vol. 4(1), pp. 16-29, 1 April, 2014
Available online at http://mije.mevlana.edu.tr/
http://dx.doi.org/10.13054/mije.13.65.4.1

What they think about democracy? sample of 8th grade American and Turkish students

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Article history
Received:
29.08.2013

Received in revised form:
28.11.2013

Accepted:
17.12.2013

Key words:
Democracy, democracy education, American educational system, Turkish educational system, Social Studies curriculum.

American and Turkish society is governed by a democratic system and also democratic values are taught in their educational systems. However, it would not be surprising that differences exist between American and Turkish 8th grade students' perceptions because students' cultural priorities and life styles and teaching of democratic values in the schools etc. can be very different from country to country. The aim of this research is to determine and compare democracy perceptions of 8th grade American and Turkish students. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study survey which was conducted in twenty-eight countries in 1999 was used for gathering the data. The research sample was created with 422 American and 398 Turkish students, a total of 820 students. The research results showed that whereas American and Turkish students had similar thinking about democratic rights they were not agree with liberty, human rights and justice & equality issues. The research results were discussed in relation to differences in the American and Turkish students' educational, cultural and societal factors.

Introduction

Democracy is a most important value for the welfare of society. In a democratic society the people make the decisions that affect their lives positively. Ayers (2009) states that democracy has been founded on a treasured and tenuous ideal and he defines the citizens who are living in democratic society as "*every human being is of infinite and incalculable value, each a unique intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, moral, and creative force, each born free and equal in dignity and rights, endowed with reason and conscience, and deserving, then, a community of solidarity, a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, recognition and respect" (pp.4).* To nurture democratic values in a society, democratic beliefs must become a natural part of the citizens' lives. Educational institutions can provide the leadership to reach this goal.

All academic researchers agree that democracy education is important for society members and democratic values are gained by the students during the educational process. Democracy education presents different teaching approaches which can be effective in forming student's knowledge and ability. In schools democracy is taught in relation to real life not just from pages in a textbook (Genç, 2008). Students realize their meaningful life experiences are related to democratic life principles and are not just part of a research project placed on a shelf. They know their experiences are going to be a living thing. For this, teachers show students that society needs improving by examining social problems and controversial issues in real life (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003). Students are encouraged to understand how to be in

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tune with and to participate in their immediate society and in the general world culture (Samancı, 2010). Teachers must provide positive experiences in the classroom for civic participation for all students. Students who have positive experiences with civic participation in the classroom reflect their experiences in their society in the future.

However, in the educational context, democracy education has a complex structure. Schools need to teach certain social values and to help students socialize with each other to encourage recognition of communality. In other words, the unity or the common ground that we share now should be rebuilt by directly addressing community needs through non indulgent thinking processes. (Ohn & Wade, 2009). These processes refer to practices which are rooted in temperaments, skills and beliefs that individuals must develop and which are rooted in *social competencies* that require educational cultivation from an early stage. Without these competencies, there will be no global thinking, no active participation, no communication, no responsibility for others — skills of social interaction that are the foundation of democracy (Edelstein, 2011).

Another point, which is emphasized by Dewey, is that producing dutiful citizens is counter-productive for a democratic state; it also can be a potential danger when nationalistic sentiments cause international conflicts. In this situation the creation of fully-developed human beings for a flourishing human community is emphasized as a foundation for a democratic society (Wang, 2009). Teachers who believe democracy is a living and evolving force turn their efforts toward developing well-rounded citizens who are in charge of their own lives rather than focusing on the production of academic citizenship-based postulates. These well-rounded citizens take an active role in their community and national government in a diverse and evolving world.

Democracy Education in U.S.A and Turkey

In America, educational programs that include civics and government teach students to develop the foundation necessary to be educated and responsible citizens. The basic values and beliefs of America's constitutional democracy are internalized, analyzed and used by students in daily life. Educators often teach about citizenship by comparing and contrasting school rules and regulations. For instance, at grades 5-8, the standards demand that students answer these questions (Schell & Fisher, 2007):

- What are civic life, politics, and government?
- What are the basics of the American political system?
- How does the government established by the Constitution highlight the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?
- What is the current relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
- What are the duties of the citizen in American democracy?

Turkey, which is governed by a democratic system, values democratic education and integrates democratic values within curriculums. The understanding of democratic education in this country is stated as "The democratic consciousness, knowledge, understanding and behaviours about the country's governance, the feeling of responsibility and respect for the moral values that the citizens should attain in order to maintain the strong and stable order of society. These principles must be successfully developed in the students. However, political and ideological provocations against Atatürk nationalism as expressed in the Constitution and

participation in daily political affairs and discussions shall never be allowed" (MEB, 2000).

In the country, democracy education takes place in Social Studies curriculum in grades 4 through 7. Democracy content is emphasized in the 4th and 5th grades in statements such as to respect feelings and thoughts of others, to recognize formal and civil organizations and to know their duties and functions in a democracy, to know functions and responsibilities of local government, and to understand the structure and operations of democratic government. In the 6th and 7th grades, the "Power, Authority, and Society" theme includes units which are related to democracy education. In these units, in terms of the basic aims of democracy and human rights, different political systems are compared; individual freedom and women's rights are emphasized; the Turkish political system is reviewed; and effects of political parties, media tools and different organizations are discussed. In addition social participation, making decisions, respect for rights and freedoms are stated as citizenship values in these units (MEB, 2005). In the 8th grades democracy education is infused as a "Citizenship and Democracy Education" lesson. In this curriculum there are four themes about democracy and citizenship. These themes are "Every Human Being is Important", "The Culture of Democracy", "Our Rights and Freedoms", 'Our Duties and Responsibilities". These themes give detailed information about democracy and citizenship (MEB, 2010).

Both American and Turkish education systems emphasize similar democratic context and democratic values. Both countries place importance on the same universal democratic concepts in their educational goals. In this quantitative study, it is expected that students internalize these democratic values at a similar level. However, democratic values are based on the culture specific to the given society and its political system (cited in Howe and Marshall, 1999). Torney-Purta and Richardson (2002) also agree with this. They stated that "most adolescents are part of the political culture of their country" (p.194). The reason for this situation would be that education for democratic citizenship requires the cooperation of school, home, neighborhood, religious institutions, the media, the government, and all the other significant educational agents that are in a different context for each country in children's lives (cited in Martin, 2008). Therefore, democratic citizenship education provides an opportunity for comparative educators to emphasize the role that culture or other factors plays in shaping democracy in different contexts (Kubow, 2008).The purpose of this study is to compare American and Turkish student's perceptions about democracy when different variables are considered. While comparing their perceptions, this study looks at the effect of students' gender. According to these variables, the researcher attempts to define the perceptions of 8th grade American and Turkish students about democracy, to discover the differences of each country's 8th grade students among themselves and to compare significant differences between each country's 8th grade students in terms of students' background characteristics.

Methodology

Model and Sample

The quantitative method was used in this study. A survey which was developed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) was used in the study also. In this way, the study provided numeric descriptions of opinions about democracy of American and Turkish students from the study sample. In the study, 422 American and 398 Turkish 8^{th} grade students were surveyed. They were selected with random method. Among the students, 27.4% (n=225) were American female, 24% (n=197) were

American male, 22.4% (n=183) were Turkish female and 26.2% (n=215) were Turkish male (Table 1). The selected study groups in America and Turkey came from three demographically (lower, middle and upper income levels) different middle schools. American middle schools are located in San Diego, CA, and the Turkish middle schools are located in Ankara. The survey was conducted in these schools in the end of the 2011 spring semester.

Table 1. *Number and percent of respondents by nation and gender*

	Gender		
Study Group	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
American Students	225 (27.4)	197 (24.0)	422 (51.4)
Turkish Students	183 (22.4)	215 (26.2)	398 (48.6)
Total	408 (49.8)	412 (50.2)	820 (100)

Instrument and Measure

The survey used for this study was developed over the period from 1996 through 1998 by the International Steering Committee and the National Research Coordinators of the The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta et al, 2001). As the researcher felt the survey accessed the desired purpose, it was not modified in terms of content and structure. Generally Cronbach's Alpha is selected to calculate internal consistency coefficient. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha value was re-calculated and it's value was founded to be .81 for the present data.

The survey questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section comprised questions about the students' backgrounds. Students' gender were surveyed in the first section. The second section of the survey consisted of items which determined students' perceptions about democracy. These items are based on a 4 point likert scale, ranging from 1 "very bad for democracy" to 4 "very good for democracy". Items with negative statements had reversed coding from 1= very good for democracy to 4=very bad for democracy. Generally, the score range for each item is considered to be 0.75 on the four- point Likert scale. Thus, scores of 1.00-1.75 are considered bad for democracy, 1.76-2.50 somewhat bad for democracy, 2.51-3.25 somewhat good for democracy, and 3.26-4.00 very good for democracy.

To explore the answers on both sections of the questionnaire, mean and standard deviation were used. To determine associations and differences between American and Turkish students regarding democratic perspectives an independent sample *t*-test was used. In addition, the differences in total democracy scores based on nationality and gender scores were analyzed by means of a 2x2 nation x gender factorial analysis of variance. All of statistical procedures were evaluated in the SPSS program.

Results

The findings of the research aim to explain the comparison between American and Turkish students' perceptions about democracy and sub-factors affecting these perceptions. For this purpose some tables are presented below.

Table 2: *Comparison of mean scores of perceptions of democracy between American and Turkish students*

Groups	N	M/4.0	S	t	df	p
American Students	422	2.71	.390	-610	818	.542
Turkish Students	398	2.73	.574			

*p<0.05

In Table 2, it is seen that the students' perception of democracy is not significantly different in terms of nationality (t=-610, p>.05). The table shows that the average scores of American students' perceptions (2.71) about democracy were very close to those of the Turkish students (2.73). This result shows that American and Turkish students have similar perceptions about democracy.

In order to determine the differences in total democracy scores based on nationality and gender , a 2x2 nation x gender factorial analysis of variance was used. Significant differences were not found for nationality [F (1, 816) = .42, p = .518]. In contrast significant differences were found for gender [F (1, 816) = 8.18, p = .004]. The nationality gender interaction was significant [F (1, 816) = 4.08, p = .044] making the interpretation of differences difficult. American females had a mean of 2.74 (SD=.41), while American males had a mean of 2.71 (SD=.40). Turkish females had a mean of 2.83 (SD=.49), while Turkish males had the lowest mean of 2.67 (SD=.62).

In comparing American and Turkish students' perceptions about democratic principles such as democratic rights, liberty, human rights, justice and equality, some scores show similarities but also show significant differences (Table 3).

Table 3.*Comparison of mean scores of perceptions of some democracy sub-factors between American and Turkish students*

		American Students		Turkish Students				
Sub-factors	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Dif.	t	p
Democratic Rights	820	3.05	.600	2.97	.784	.08	1.684	.093
Liberty	820	2.76	.519	2.66	.662	.10	2.479	.013*
Human Rights	820	2.45	.735	2.62	1.052	.17	-2.620	.009*
Justice & Equality	820	2.55	.511	2.67	.669	.12	-2.961	.003*

*p<0.05

According to Table 3, the perception of democratic rights is not significantly different between American and Turkish students. The average score of American students' perceptions (3.05) are a little higher than the average score of Turkish students' perceptions (2.97). In contrast, one of the differences is related to liberty. The average score of American students' perceptions regarding liberty (2.76) is higher than the average score of Turkish students' perceptions (2.66). Another difference is seen in the human rights factor. This factor is in favor of Turkish students. The average score of Turkish students' perceptions (2.62) regarding human rights is higher than the average score of American students' perceptions (2.45). Justice and equality is also shows significant difference between American and Turkish students. The average score of Turkish students' perceptions (2.67) about this issue is higher than the average score of American students' perceptions (2.55). These results show that American and Turkish students' perceptions differ-especially in some sub-factors.
On the other hand, sub-factors were detailed according to various perspectives which are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *The Result of the t Test on the American and Turkish Students' Opinions about Some Democratic Sub-factors*

			American Students		Turkish Students				
	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Dif.	t	p
Democratic Rights	Political parties having rules that support women to become political leaders	820	3.22	1.065	3.04	1.409	18	2.055	.040*
	People demanding their political and social rights	820	2.86	1.217	3.27	1.273	41	-4.704	.000*

	People participating in political parties in order to influence government	820	2.67	1.122	1.93	1.413	70	8.204	.000*
Liberty	Newspaper are free of all government [state, political] control	820	2.55	1.182	1.75	1.196	80	9.524	.000*
Human Rights	Immigrants are expected to give up the language and customs of their former countries	820	3.03	1.167	2.79	1.445	24	2.598	.010*
	People refuse to obey a law which violates human rights	818	1.91	1.241	2.62	1.555	71	-7.227	.000*
Justice and Equality	Differences in income and wealth between the rich and the poor are small	820	2.22	1.273	2.71	1.493	49	-5.075	.000*
	A minimum income [living standard] is assured for everyone	820	2.58	1.205	2.92	1.380	34	-3.847	.000*
	Wealthy business people have more influence on government than others	805	3.06	1.179	2.81	1.505	25	2.544	.011*
	Courts and judges are influenced by politicians	820	2.66	1.243	2.97	1.444	31	-3.301	.001*
	Laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed	820	2.82	1.194	3.22	1.360	40	-4.451	.000*
	There is a separation [segregation] between the church [institutional church] and the state [government]	820	2.20	1.213	2.52	1.532	32	-3.315	.001*

*$p<0.05$

Democratic rights were seen as an important part of democracy. In comparing perspectives of American and Turkish students, American students (M=3.22) were more positive about "political parties have rules that support women to become political leaders" than Turkish students (M=3.04). Also, the mean score of American students' perceptions about "people participate in political parties in order to influence government" were higher (M=2.67) than Turkish students (1.93). On the other hand, Turkish students' ideas about "people demand their political and social rights" were much higher (M=3.27) than American students (M=2.86) (Table 4).

The "Liberty" sub-factor which is another part of the democracy concept is quite different for both countries' students. The "freedom of the press" issue was perceived in a different way for each country's students. American students were more positive (M=2.55) than Turkish students (M=1.75) when they were questioned regarding "newspapers are free of all government [state, political] control" (Table 4).

Under the "Human Rights" title, the research showed that while American students (M=3.03) were more positive than Turkish students (M=2.79) regarding the contention that "immigrants are expected to give up the language and customs of their former countries", Turkish students (2.62) were more positive than American students (1.91) regarding the premise that "people refuse to obey a law which violates human rights"(Table 4).

"Justice and Equality" is another category, which is reviewed as a democratic concept. Turkish students were more positive than American students when it came to "differences in income and wealth between the rich and the poor are small" (American means=2.22, Turkish means=2.71), "a minimum income [living standard] is assured for everyone" (American means=2.58, Turkish means=2.92), "courts and judges are influenced by politicians" (American means=2.66, Turkish means=2.97), "laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed" (American means=2.82, Turkish means=3.22), "there is a separation [segregation] between the church [institutional church] and the state [government]" (American means=2.20,

Turkish means=2.52). In contrast, American students were more positive than Turkish students about "wealthy business people have more influence on government than others" (American Mean=3.06, Turkish mean=2.81) (Table 4).

Discussion and Conclusion

In the study, there is no difference between American and Turkish students' democratic perceptions. This result may be expected for readers who are familiar with these societies. Each country is a democracy and each country's people support democratic systems in their countries. Much data (surveys, campaign platforms, Fourth of July speeches etc.) shows that most Americans believe democracy is the best form of government (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2002). This situation is the same for Turkish people. Support for democracy as a political system is held by substantial portion of ordinary Turkish people (Tessler & Altınoğlu, 2004). Girdner et. al. (1995) also determined in their study that while 68% of American university students believed that democracy is the *best* form of government, 70% of Turkish students believed the same, which is very close to their American counterparts.

Students' perceptions about democracy were divided into four parts. One of these parts, the democratic rights sub-factor, was perceived in the same way for each country's students according to the average total score. In this context, social commentators for the U.S. society sadly lament the growing apathy of today's adult citizens, describing the nation as being comprised of "civic couch potatoes". Submerged in public apathy, they reject such basic citizenship responsibilities as volunteering in civic or public arenas; helping solve such real problems like eliminating drug abuse and homelessness; writing letters to the editor; deliberating and debating public policy; working for public interest groups; and voting (Maxim, 2010). The survey results show that this situation can be generalized for both U.S. and Turkish society at the present time. Unfortunately, Turkish students had a lower score which also showed a significant difference from American students about "organize the political parties' rules for supporting women to become political leaders" or "participate in political parties in order to influence government". The common point for each statement is "political parties". Doggart (2006) stated this point for Turkish youths in his qualitative study. His thinking which was supported by conversations with Turkish university students is "*Turkish students seem to view active political participation as dangerous, distasteful, and ineffective*" (p.121). In regards to the political parties' topic doesn't have a large place in each grade of Turkish Social Studies curriculums or Citizenship and Democracy Education curriculum. In contrast, American students have lower scores than Turkish students about "people demand their political and social rights". The reason for this situation is that most Americans are convinced that they live in a profoundly democratic society. Indeed, many believe that the United States is the most democratic society on earth. There are some truths lurking behind these claims: the United States has fairly competitive elections for many public offices; civil liberties are at least loosely protected; public officials are generally constrained by the rule of law and prevented from exercising their power in an arbitrary manner (Wright & Rogers, 2010). Therefore they would not demand any provisions which relate to political or social rights.

Liberty, which is an important point for democracy, is a more positive total score for American students than Turkish students. However, statements which belong to the factor of liberty don't have meaningful differences between American and Turkish students. Hahn (2002) expressed this point in her study. She asked 14 and 15-year-old students what it meant to be an American to them. All students said "freedom" or "being free". One young women in

her sample explained "*We have a lot more freedom to express our beliefs than (people in) other countries*"(quoted, Hahn, 2002, pp.77). They also thought that if they don't participate, they risk losing their freedom. Hochschild & Scovronick (2002) emphasized the importance of public education in the U.S. They stated that education is no using in promoting a free society if you do not know how to participate in and preserve your freedom and freedom for future generations. Public schools particularly hold a special responsibility in preparing people. Puriefoy (2003) also supports this view with her words. According to her, public schools bear a greater burden than any other public institution for overseeing, managing, and balancing the "freedom" challenge embedded in the nation's abacus of intent to provide a good education for every child that will accrue to benefit both the individual and our society. Liberty is a vital value for Turkish society, too. Atatürk's statements which are "Every Turk is born free and lives free" and "Turks are democratic, free, and responsible citizens" are references to this. So, this value is reflected in Turkish educational policy. Turkish Citizenship and Democracy Education curriculum is in itself a course which aims to showcase a democratic culture which includes freedom in the Turkish society. In the course curriculum, the importance of democracy for Turkish society, its rights and freedoms are related to the basics of democracy. The curriculum states that "if individuals who use their rights and freedoms or perform their responsibilities were grown, democracy education would access it's aim "(MEB, 2012). However, there is an argument that because curriculum, textbooks and teaching activities are usually designed to provide core principles of democracy, functional democratic values are often ignored in the Turkish democracy education system (Doğanay, 2010). For example, the scores about Turkish students' opinions about freedom of the press issue are substantially lower than American students'. Forty-eight percent (48%) of Turkish students think that "when newspapers are free of all government [state, political] control", it is very bad for democracy. This rate is just 8.5% for American students (Appendix 1). However, it does not negate this result for Turkish students. It means that the Turkish constitutional structure was organized with this limitation. The 28th article of the constitution states that "the press is free of law enforcement". If the press breaks national security, public peace or safety, it is censored by the national government (TBMM, 2012). In contrast, freedom of the press is among the specific rights guaranteed by the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Sunal & Haas, 2008).

The human rights issue which is another important point for democracy is more positive for Turkish students than American students. Mutlu et. al. (2010) study is a reference to this finding. They compared Turkish and European Union Members countries students' opinions in terms of social, political and religious attitudes and in this context they asked them "Would you describe yourself as ……" option. Forty percent (40%) of Turkish students described themselves as "humanist". This option was the highest score among other choices such as "nationalist, patriotic, individualist, revolutionary etc." On the other hand, the rating of Turkish students as "humanist" was higher than European Union member countries' students who had a 27.3% rating regarding humanism. Hochschild and Scovronick (2002) cited in from Phi Delta Kappa (1992) relating to this situation. More than seven in ten American respondents agree with survey questions asking if schools should "increase the amount of coursework, counseling, and school activities… to promote understanding and tolerance among students of different races and ethnic backgrounds". However such an education which gives importance to every ethnic culture or race is difficult to implement successfully especially in America which is a more pluralistic society than Turkey. Hochschild and Scovronick (2002) mentioned such difficulties in their studies. According to them, schools do not have time to do everything; if they teach the history of African Americans and Hispanics as well as that of European immigrants, they are leaving out Asian

Americans and Native Americans (not to speak of variations within each category). The more inclusive school curricula and activities become, the sharper the exclusion of those remaining outside the fold. And the absence of a lot of pointed intellectual work, the more inclusive the curriculum becomes; the more superficially it treats all subjects. Finally, the more inclusive it becomes, in the usual sense of adding another cultural dimension to those already taught, the more difficult it is for teachers and students to retain any focus on the culture that was traditionally considered American or any other common core.

The last sub-category, Justice and Equality, is also considered a basic fundamental of democracy education. Social justice is based in diversity which has to do with differences and variety. Diversity poses serious challenges to American society, to schools, and to social studies teachers. Many researches indicates that students come to school with many stereotypes, misconceptions, and negative attitudes toward other racial, ethnic, and social-class groups (Aboud, 1988; Banks, 2001; Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Tajfel, 1970; cited in Banks, 2002). In this context, everyone accepts the fact that schools are the ideal vehicle for teaching diversity. Because they admit all students, the schools can offer them an opportunity to experience democracy as an interaction with a diverse, inclusive student body--not just students of one particular group or socio-economic class (Resnick & Bryant, 2008). Despite widespread acceptance of this perspective in the American society, two essential democratic values, freedom and equality, have been in conflict constantly. Freedom and equality are accepted as essential elements in social justice. Therefore, income distribution, which is one of the dimensions of social justice, should be according to merit. The problem is that the attitude of one person related to freedom can take form as the disapproval of equality for another. Today, there are many violations of the rights of individuals just in this pluralistic nation (Ochoa-Becker, 2007). This mean is reflected in this research's survey results. The statements "differences in income and wealth between the rich and the poor are small" or "a minimum income [living standard] is assured for everyone" have meaningful differences, that is they are more positive for Turkish students than American students. While 65% of Turkish students thought that the lack of differences in income and wealth between the rich and the poor is very good or good for democracy, this proportion is 47% for American students (Appendix 1). These results also parallel with the World Values Survey (2007) which surveyed opinions about democracy, economy, social life in at least 50 countries. According to the research findings, while 56% of Turkish people are content with "incomes should be made more equal" this rate is only 34% for American people. Another striking result for this survey is the number of participants who indicate that "if it is assured a minimum income [living standard] for everyone, this is very good for democracy" is 51% for Turkish students. This rate is also lower for American students (25%) than Turkish students. Another perspective which is stated in the survey is "independence of courts and judges from politicians". This is more positive for Turkish students than American students. This situation is negative at the rate of 57% for Turkish students. This rate is valid for American students at 32%. This is an expected result for the survey sample because American people suffer in the courts. They don't trust courts very much (Warren, (2000); WVS, (2007). One of the reasons for this trend may be people's thoughts about political pressure in the courts. Warren (2000) indicated in his study that more than 81% of American people felt that judges' decisions are influenced by political consideration and 78% agreed that elected judges are influenced by having to raise campaign funds. And then Warren stated that *"in short, we can conclude from these findings that a substantial majority of Americans feel that the actual performance of the courts does not live up to the courts' own goals and values"*(pp. 13). This belief may be affected by two factors. The first is the performance of government. If people don't see government as successful and they are not satisfied with government procedures, they are

hopeless about their future and they don't trust political associations. Another factor would be that if people think there are many inequalities in the society and their opinions are not important for current events, they don't have positive attitudes. They also interact with others on political issues and can see negative associations (Akgün, 2001). In the survey, women's rights are emphasized with the statement "When laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed that is very bad/good". Gender equality is one of the vital characteristics of democracy. American and Turkish perspectives about this issue are also striking for this research. About 71% of Turkish students are *positive* about women's rights as based in law; 36% of American students defended women's rights the same way. However, each country's students think that gender equality should be protected in their society (Appendix 1). American literature has underlined this topic frequently with different perspectives (for curriculum and textbooks, students' knowledge, skill or attitudes or classroom practices) in the last years. Researchers believe that gender equality has not been emphasized very well in the educational system. In the American curriculum women are ignored in the written history. Whereas most books emphasize the work of men or organizations headed by men, they explicitly ignore works of women. (Banks, 1994, cited in Maxim, 2010). Avery and Simmons (2001) also show in their studies that women receive significantly less coverage in both civics and U.S. history textbooks for grade seven through nine. (cited in Crocco, 2008). The world history curriculum also presents a situation which relates gender, world history standards and human rights in a gloomy picture about women's place in world history (Crocco, 2008). Thus, women, who are a majority of the world's population, are not an integral part of the curriculum (Maxim, 2010). Maxim has a suggestion about this issue. He pointed out that women's contributions, as well as those of males throughout history, should be presented to all students. The California State Board of Education recognized that this research's American sample group has its content based according to Maxim's suggestion. History–Social Science for California Public Schools curriculum often emphasized women's rights in the historical process (CDE, 2000, pp.19, 36, 47, 49, 51, 53). The Turkish textbooks are also making similar inroads about this issue. While there are not arguments about women's roles in the historical process in the Turkish educational literature, there are some indicators which show a lack of contextualized pictures of women's rights or roles in the society. (Çayır, 2011, Müftüler-Bac, 1999). However, current Citizenship and Democracy Education textbooks indicate the elimination of gender inequality and highlight women's contributions to social life. They also cite Atatürk's statements relating women's importance within the societal perspective (MEB, 2012, pp. 53).

The secularism issue which shows up in the survey as "when there is a separation [segregation] between the church [institutional church] and the state [government] it is good/bad for democracy" indicates a meaningful difference between American and Turkish students. Meanwhile, both American and Turkish students are informed about "church" as a religious organization. It was emphasized that religious organizations could be different from society to society. Forty-one percent (41%) of Turkish students think that when there is a separation [segregation] between the church [institutional church] and the state [government] it is *very good* whereas this rate is 19.4% for American students. This result correlates with the Girdner et al. survey (1995). They asked both American and Turkish students whether it is acceptable to use religious beliefs as a basis for political office. In the result, 43% of the American students thought so, while only 18 % of the Turkish students agreed. It would be interpreted as Turkish students see religion as having a negative effect on politics, while the American students are more positive that religion could have a desirable effect on politics. Another survey which is World Values Survey (2007) also explored American and Turkish people's views about whether or not religious leaders should influence government.

According to results, 62% of Turkish people agree strongly that "religious leaders should not influence government" whereas this proportion is 48% for American people. McClay (2007) supported this in his research as *"The American approach to secularism is distinctive, differing from the laicize of the French or the Turks in its greater friendliness to the public expression of religious beliefs and sentiments. Such arrangements are challenging to sustain, requiring constant renegotiation of acceptable boundaries, but may also provide a more fruitful way of drawing on the moral energies and insights of religion while keeping them contained within appropriate limits"(pp. 160). A*lso, it is necessary to show that the Turkish national education system aims for this difference. Whereas there is not a statement which relates to secularism in the American Social Studies Curriculum standards (NCSS, 2010), the aim of the Turkish National Education system is "to grow citizens to know their duties and responsibilities to the Turkish Republic which is democratic, *laic* and a social law state"(MEB, 2010).

In the final results, democracy education shapes students' experiences both in their cultural communities and their nation. However, it also affects global identification and thinking about individual roles in the world community. If national education systems give global education importance they would facilitate the understanding of students regarding interdependence among nations, clarify students' attitudes toward other nations, and reflect identifications with the world community (Banks, 2002). This research has supported this result. Even though there were some differences between American and Turkish students' understanding regarding democracy, they reported their opinions as world citizens who adopt a perception of global democracy.

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Appendix 1. Percentage and frequencies of pupils' responses about democracy

Sub-factors	Statements		*very bad for democracy*		*somewhat bad for democracy*		*somewhat good for democracy*		*very good for democracy*	
			N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Democratic Rights	When citizens have the right to elect political leaders freely	**America**	19	4.5	33	7.8	90	21.3	273	64.7
		Turkey	15	3.8	14	3.5	29	7.3	312	78.4
	When people peacefully protest against a law they believe to be unjust	**America**	24	5.7	41	9.7	135	32.0	192	45.5
		Turkey	36	9.0	24	6.0	57	14.3	238	59.8
	When political parties have rules that support women to become political leaders	**America**	23	5.5	31	7.3	129	30.6	222	52.6
		Turkey	31	7.8	23	5.8	62	15.6	237	59.5
	When people demand their political and social rights	**America**	34	8.1	44	10.4	157	37.2	154	36.5
		Turkey	9	2.3	21	5.3	64	16.1	265	66.5
	When people participate in political parties in order to influence government	**America**	36	8.5	76	18.0	186	44.1	95	22.5
		Turkey	95	23.9	81	20.4	63	15.8	81	20.4
Liberty	When everyone has the right to express their opinions freely that is	**America**	3	0.7	25	5.9	126	29.9	260	61.6
		Turkey	8	2.0	17	4.3	62	15.6	298	74.9
	When many different organizations [associations] are available [exist] for people who wish to belong to them	**America**	16	3.8	43	10.2	131	31.0	185	43.8
		Turkey	22	5.5	21	5.3	86	21.6	211	53.0
	When newspaper are free of all government [state, political] control	**America**	36	8.5	92	21.8	166	39.3	89	21.1
		Turkey	191	48.0	76	19.1	41	10.3	58	14.6
	When private businesses have no restrictions from government	**America**	92	21.8	169	40.0	95	22.5	32	7.6
		Turkey	71	17.8	68	17.1	96	24.1	88	22.1
	When all the television stations present the same opinion about politics	**America**	138	32.7	149	35.3	72	17.1	30	7.1
		Turkey	180	45.2	82	20.6	38	9.5	46	11.6
	When government leaders are trusted without question	**America**	155	36.7	129	30.6	65	15.4	42	10.0
		Turkey	189	47.5	77	19.3	32	8.0	45	11.3
Human Rights	When immigrants are expected to give up the language and customs of their former countries	**America**	199	47.2	111	26.3	61	14.5	29	6.9
		Turkey	185	46.5	89	22.4	35	8.8	35	8.8
	When people refuse to obey a law which violates human rights	**America**	205	48.6	58	13.7	63	14.9	74	17.5
		Turkey	82	20.6	34	8.5	31	7.8	199	50.0
	When newspapers are forbidden to publish stories that might offend ethnic groups [immigrant groups, racial groups, national groups]	**America**	199	47.2	122	28.9	48	11.4	23	5.5
		Turkey	195	49.0	76	19.1	23	5.8	32	8.0
Justice and Equality	When differences in income and wealth between the rich and the poor are small	**America**	60	14.2	106	25.1	127	30.1	71	16.8
		Turkey	51	12.8	33	8.3	73	18.3	186	46.7
	When a minimum income [living standard] is assured for everyone	**America**	65	15.4	70	16.6	154	36.5	105	24.9
		Turkey	35	8.8	37	9.3	81	20.4	203	51.0
	When wealthy business people have more influence on government than others	**America**	30	7.1	72	17.1	149	35.3	138	32.7
		Turkey	46	11.6	38	9.5	82	20.6	180	45.2
	When courts and judges are influenced by politicians	**America**	136	32.2	112	26.5	108	25.6	28	6.6
		Turkey	228	57.3	61	15.3	32	8.0	25	6.3
	When laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed	**America**	45	10.7	66	15.6	135	32.0	152	36.0
		Turkey	40	10.1	15	3.8	29	7.3	281	70.6
	When one company owns all the newspapers	**America**	163	38.6	130	30.8	63	14.9	24	5.7
		Turkey	199	50	84	21.1	33	8.3	27	6.8
	When there is a separation [segregation] between the church [institutional church] and the state [government]	**America**	110	26.1	116	27.5	86	20.4	82	19.4