

## Comparison of 8th grade American and Turkish Students' Perceptions about Citizenship

### 8. Sınıf Amerikan ve Türk Öğrencilerinin Vatandaşlık ile İlgili Algılarının Karşılaştırılması

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#### *Abstract*

The main focus of this study is to compare the perceptions of 8th grade American and Turkish students about citizenship. The IEA Civic Education Study provides a resource for such an investigation. The research sample was composed of 423 American and 414 Turkish students. According to the research results, American and Turkish students have the highest difference of opinion in the category of "Would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country." In contrast, they have the lowest difference of opinion in the area of "working hard". At the end of the study, the researcher discussed the factors which might have had the effect on students' perceptions about citizenship.

*Keywords:* Citizenship, American Citizenship Education, Turkish Citizenship Education, Social Studies Curriculum.

#### *Öz*

Arařtırmada IEA Civic Education Study tarafından hazırlanan bir vatandaşlık tutum ölçeđi uygulanmıřtır. Arařtırma grubu ise 423'ü Amerikan ve 414'ü Türk olmak üzere toplam 837 öğrenciden oluřmaktadır. Arařtırma sonucuna göre Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerinin vatandaşlık tutum puanlarında anlamlı bir farklılık vardır. Amerikan ve Türk öğrencilerinin en fazla fikir ayrılıđına düřtükleri konu "ülkeyi savunmak için silahlı kuvvetlerde hizmet etmeye istekli olma"dır. Buna karşı "çok çalışmak" konusunda her iki ulusun öğrencileri de birbirlerine yakın görüřtedirler. Çalışma sonunda arařtırma grubunun vatandaşlık algıları üzerinde etkili olabilecek faktörler tartıřılmıřtır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Vatandaşlık, Amerikan Vatandaşlık Eđitimi, Türk Vatandaşlık Eđitimi, Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretim Programı.

#### Introduction

Citizenship education is important for every country. If societies wish democracy to continue and flourish and wish their members to live together peacefully they need to infuse values of citizenship in their students during the school years. Citizenship education promotes the knowledge, skills and values that prepare students to be informed and active citizens of a democracy. These values include freedom, tolerance, mutual respect and responsibility. Citizenship education also emphasizes participation in social life and learning of skills needed for communication in society (Tudball, 2009). In this way citizenship education must lead students toward a concern for the common good, to make active and responsible choices and acceptance of consequences of their actions (Brookes & Holford, 2009).

Citizenship education is perceived differently from the viewpoint of conservative thinkers and progressive education scholars. Conservative thinkers prioritize clear and articulate coverage of content and development of particular values such as unity, patriotism and consent to the status quo. Thus young people are prepared as citizens who vote and support their nation. In contrast progressive education scholars lead individual students to research, analyze, and discuss controversial public issues, and engage in simulations, debates, and decision-making. The ultimate purpose is to prepare

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citizens who will actively and thoughtfully participate in the social and political arena in their daily lives (Bixby and Pace, 2008).

Currently, many trends point to citizenship as a post-national model which is defined as “citizens of any country are united not only by a common culture or history, but also by civic values, educational skills, and a shared future” (Keating, 2009, pp.135). Hopes to raise children with the knowledge, skills and temperaments which will enable them to look at issues on a broader scope connect with desires to promote social involvement and tolerance on all levels whether local, national or international. Proponents of citizenship education declare that it provides an appropriate venue for the multilevel identities of today’s youth (Marshall, 2009).

*Citizenship Education in the US and Turkey*

Citizenship education in the United States has been assigned to social studies programs since the publication of the 1916 report by the Committee on Social Studies of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association. By the time citizenship education came into the school curriculum, there was considerable argument over its place in a history curriculum. Up to that point, history had been the focal point of the school curriculum and had been designed, as the American Historical Association stated in 1899, as a general education curriculum to “prepare boys and girls for the duties of daily life and intelligent citizenship”. The argument over citizenship education has continued in today’s debate between the proponents of history-centered education and advocates of the interdisciplinary study of daily social issues (Ohn & Wade, 2009).

Currently, one of the basic goals of civics education in the United States has been to teach students to be “good citizens” in a democracy. While the profile of a “good citizen” is often connected to such behaviors as voting or obeying the law, a simple exercise is to pinpoint, discuss, and debate the various understandings of citizenship held by a diverse people, and the methods of political involvement demanded of a good citizen. A discussion might focus on students’ attention to the questions such as “what does good citizenship mean to different people?” and “what do different people think are individuals’ rights and responsibilities as citizens?” (Avery et. al, 1996).

In the United States, instruction about civics differs widely from one school to another. There exists in many schools some primary courses which are usually called “American Government,” “Civics” or the “U.S. Political System” or even sometimes “Contemporary Issues,” “Economic, Legal and Political System in Action”. Elective courses are even more diverse. Most states usually have a requirement for some form of study of civics in high schools: more than one fourth of all state constitutions require a system of public instruction, and about half have adopted laws addressing the topic in various ways. Twenty-three states have an explicit section relating to civics while 18 civics topics are dispersed throughout their social studies standards. High school students are obliged to take a course which relates to civics or government in 29 states (Ruget, 2006).

California, which is used in this research as the US sample, assigns citizenship education to its social studies curriculum. In this curriculum (CDE, 2005) students:

- learn their rights and responsibilities as American citizens,
- study the meaning of the Constitution as a social contract that defines democratic government and solidifies individual rights,
- respect the rights of others to disagree with them,
- take an active role as citizens and know how to productively work for positive change in a democratic society,
- understand the value, the importance, and the ever-changing fragility of democratic institutions,
- understand the positive conditions that encourage democracy to develop and grow

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- develop a keen inner sense of their own ethics and citizenship,
- care deeply about the quality of life for themselves and others in their community, their nation, and their world.

Citizenship education in Turkey gained importance in the early years when the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. By the time of the development of the first curriculum in 1926, citizenship was emphasized in educational programs with the nationalist perspective. Similar to present day, at that time citizenship education had both a separate curriculum and a spot in the history and social studies curriculum. Now, while citizenship education topics are infused into social studies courses in 5th, 6th grade and 7th, these topics are taught as a course which is named "Citizenship and Democracy Education" for 8th grade students. In this course citizenship issues are presented using the following four themes: (MEB, 2012):

*Value of individuals* - this theme emphasizes the value of individuals, the priority of maintaining and improving the values of these individuals, and respect for ethnic differences.

*Democracy* - this theme emphasizes democratic attitudes and beliefs. The responsibility of democratic citizenship, the struggle against discrimination and pursuance of effective communication are some aspects of this theme content.

*Human rights* - this theme prioritizes the importance of human rights and freedom, the roles of non-government organizations which support human rights, the relationship between human rights and democracy, and the importance of positive problem solving when human rights are violated.

*Duty and responsibilities* - this theme emphasizes individuals' duties and responsibilities for maintaining and propagating the democratic process. Participation in the democratic process, and obeying the laws, and supporting equality are some aspects of this theme.

The above issues are integrated in the school's formal teaching process. In addition some educational projects which also enhance students' citizenship comprehension are included to keep them involved. The Project of Democracy Education and School Councils is a good example of these applications. The aim of this project is the teaching of democratic culture to students. Thus, students can show democratic behaviors in their society (<http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/okulmeclisleri/index.html>). Another related project is the Project of Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. With this project, which relates to Citizenship, Democracy and Human Rights issues, teaching materials and performance of educational staff will be reviewed. Then it will be revised and developed for a new effective democratic educational curriculum to be implemented in the schools (<http://www.edchreturkey-eu.coe.int>).

When we compare the Turkish and California curriculums in terms of teaching citizenship values, we can see many common values. However different ways of presenting citizenship education in different countries and diverse student backgrounds in these countries may bring about varied perspectives on citizenship. Young people's development of civic knowledge and beliefs is influenced by a variety of sources--the family, peer group, school, extracurricular and out-of school activities, the media, and the micro and macro cultures of which children and youth are a part (Hahn, 2008). In addition citizenship challenges touch on complex issues concerning pluralism, multiculturalism, ethnic and cultural heritage and diversity, tolerance, social cohesion, collective and individual rights and responsibilities, social justice, national identity and consciousness, and freedom. The education system is a vital part of the response to these challenges. Although countries have similar sets of national aims in dealing with these challenges, including the aim of promoting citizenship, they approach those aims in many different ways (Kerr, 1999).

These reasons present differences between Turkish and American students' perceptions about citizenship. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) which surveyed many countries' 14 year-old students' perceptions about citizenship and democracy determined some differences in these issues among surveyed countries. While Turkish students take some international tests such as TIMMS or PISA, which include basic science concepts, reading and problem-solving abilities are examined. They are out of this survey scope. Given the importance of citizenship education in the international arena, researchers are encouraged to investigate and present Turkish students' perceptions about citizenship in relation to another country's perception.

Therefore the goal of this study is to present a comparative research which reveals two different countries' (The US and Turkey) students' opinions about citizenship. In the literature, there are some comparative research studies which focused on democratic conceptions of Turkish and another country's students (Doğanay, 2010; Kincal, et. al, 2010; Girdner, et. al, 1995). These studies have some differences about both surveyed conception and surveyed study samples. *Doğanay (2010) preferred to compare the democratic conception of 14 year-old Turkish students with 28 countries' students who were included in the IEA Civic Education Study.* Kincal et. al. (2010) surveyed democracy perceptions of Turkish, Italian and German University Students. Girdner et. al. (1995) also surveyed political attitudes of Turkish, American and North Cyprus University Students.

In this study the following questions are addressed:

- What are American and Turkish students' perceptions about citizenship?
- Are there significant differences between the American and Turkish students' perceptions about citizenship?
- Is there an interaction between nationality and gender?

#### Methodology

##### *Model and Sample*

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 citizenship of American and Turkish students from the study sample. The participants in this study were 423 American and 414 Turkish 8th grade students, totaling 837. Among the students, 24% (n=198) were American female, 27% (n=225) were American male, 22% (n=190) Turkish female and 27% (n=224) Turkish male. The selected study group in America was from three different middle schools located in San Diego, California. The Turkish study group was from three different middle schools located in Ankara. When these schools were selected the researcher was mindful about their socio-economic levels. Each country's school students' socio-economic levels ranged from low to middle to high. All respondents were promised full confidentiality; no names, either of individuals or school districts, are attached to scores. The survey was conducted in these schools at the end of the 2011 spring semester.

Table 1.

##### *Descriptive Statistics of Sample Group*

Nationality	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
American	198 (24%)	225 (27%)	423
Turkish	190 (22%)	224 (27%)	414
Total	388 (46%)	449 (54%)	837

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### *Instrument and Measure*

The survey used for this study was developed over the period from 1996 through 1998 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study. The IEA Civic Education Study began in 1993 with the preparation of twenty four national case studies. The beliefs and knowledge of 14 year olds in relation to citizenship education were noted, leading the way to the development of a content structure on which a test and survey can be built (Torney-Purta & Richardson, 2002). Because the researcher believed the survey would fulfill the desired purpose, it was not modified in terms of content and structure.

However, the researcher conducted the survey with a sample which was created with 117 students. In conducting the survey the Cronbach's Alpha value was re-calculated and its value was found to be .87.

The survey questionnaire consisted of items which determined students' perceptions about citizenship. These items are based on a 4 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 "not important" to 4 "very important". "I do not know" was accepted as neutral and it was coded as "0".

To interpret the answers on the questionnaire, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used. In this way, the levels of both American and Turkish students' opinions about citizenship were learned. To determine associations and differences between the nation's variables, the "t" test was used in the study. In addition, to determine the differences in total citizenship scores based on nationality (Turkish and American) and gender, scores were analyzed by means of a 2x2 (nation x gender) factorial analysis of variance. The statistical procedures were evaluated in the SPSS program.

### Result

In the study, American and Turkish students' citizenship perceptions are compared in terms of their respective nationalities. First, both American and Turkish students' responses relating to citizenship were summarized quantitatively. Next, their perceptions were evaluated based on nationality and the impact these have on the citizenship perceptions.

American and Turkish students' perceptions about citizenship do differ significantly (Table 2). According to t test result, American students average score of citizenship perceptions is lower than Turkish students ( $t=10.596$ ,  $p<.05$ ). According to this result, the average score of American students is 2.90 and the average score of Turkish student is 3.35.

Table 2.

*The Results of the t Test on the American and Turkish Students' Average Score of Citizenship Perception Depending on Their Nationality and Gender*

Groups	Gender	N	M/4.0	S	t	sf	p
American Students	Female	198	2.94				
	Male	225	2.87	.531			
	Total	423	2.90		10.596	835	.000*
Turkish Students	Female	190	3.42				
	Male	224	3.29	.688			
	Total	414	3.35				

\*  $p < .05$

In addition, result of 2x2 (nation x gender) factorial analysis of variance, significant main effects were found for both nation [ $F = 114.54, p = .000$ ] and gender [ $F = 6.02, p = .014$ ]. The nation x gender interaction was not significant [ $F = .56, p = .455$ ] (Table 3). Turkish females had a mean of 3.42 ( $SD=.57$ ), while American males had the lowest mean of 2.87 ( $SD=.55$ ). Overall, Turkish students had a statistically significant higher mean ( $M=3.35, SD=.69$ ) than American students ( $M=2.90, SD=.53$ ).

Table 3.

*The Results of the 2x2 Factorial Analyses of Variance Test on the American and Turkish Students' Average Score of Citizenship Perception Depending on Their Nationality and Gender*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Nation	42.918	1	42.918	114.538	.000
Gender	2.254	1	2.254	6.017	.014
Nation * gender	.210	1	.210	.560	.455
Error	312.129	833	.375		
Total	8520.395	837			

According to Table 4, the highest points of citizenship responsibilities for American students are "obey the laws" ( $M=3.58$ ), "work hard" ( $M=3.46$ ) and "show respect for government representatives" ( $M=3.13$ ). In contrast they see that "join a political party" ( $M=2.38$ ), "engages in political discussions" ( $M=2.47$ ) and "follows political issues in the newspaper, on the radio or on TV" (2.55) are not important for them. The highest point of citizenship responsibilities for Turkish students are "vote in every election" ( $M=3.71$ ), "obey the laws" ( $M=3.70$ ) and "would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country" ( $M=3.64$ ). Not important citizenship responsibilities for Turkish students are "join a political party" ( $M=2.76$ ), "engage in political discussions" ( $M=2.82$ ), "participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust" ( $M=3.00$ ). American and Turkish students' opinions on most important citizenship responsibilities indicate the widest difference in "would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country" ( $M.D=79$ ) "know about the country's history" ( $M.D=76$ ) and "follows political issues in the newspaper, on the radio or on TV" ( $M.D=73$ ). Each country's students' opinions about "work hard" ( $M.D=08$ ) "obey the laws" ( $M.D=12$ ) and "participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust" ( $M. D=30$ ) are very close to each other.

Table 4.

*The Result of the t Test on the American and Turkish Students' Opinions about Survey's Values*

Some Core Values	N	American Students		Turkish Students		Mean Dif.	t	p
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.			
Would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country	837	2.85	1.047	3.64	.942	79	-11.485	.000*
Know about the country's history	837	2.76	1.056	3.52	1.050	76	-10.478	.000*
Follows political issues in the newspaper, on the radio or on TV	837	2.55	1.065	3.28	1.071	73	-9.943	.000*
Vote in every election	837	3.04	.981	3.71	.792	68	-11.035	.000*
Would be willing to pay tax to improve his/her country's economy	837	3.00	1.137	3.49	1.126	49	-6.297	.000*
Patriotic and loyal to the country	837	3.06	1.121	3.50	1.091	45	-5.858	.000*
Join a political party	837	2.38	1.126	2.76	1.373	38	-4.418	.000*
Show respect for government representatives	837	3.13	.984	3.50	1.073	37	-5.200	.000*
Take part in activities promoting human rights	837	2.98	.945	3.34	1.156	36	-4.896	.000*

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Engage in political discussions	837	2.47	1.068	2.82	1.367	35	-4.114	.000*
Take part in activities to protect the environment	837	3.04	.990	3.35	1.131	31	-4.255	.000*
Participate in activities to benefit people in the community	837	3.05	.954	3.36	1.052	30	-4.335	.000*
Participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust	837	2.70	1.180	3.00	1.390	30	-3.424	.000*
Obey the laws	837	3.58	.768	3.70	.836	12	-2.230	.026
Work hard	837	3.46	.819	3.38	1.164	08	1.176	.242

\* p <.05

### Discussion and Conclus

The most important citizenship responsibilities for American students were “obey the laws”, “work hard” and “show respect for government representatives”. Up to 90% of American students have positive attitudes about “work hard” and “obey the laws”. In addition, about 80% of American students think that they should show respect for government representatives (Appendix 1). Higher level thinking about obey the laws and show respect for government representatives are positive results for American students in terms of their learning of citizenship attitudes. These items are important for a society which has multicultural diversity like the US. American society has people who belong to different cultural structures. Therefore, some common purposes of this society are obey the laws, work hard and show respect for government representatives. Resnick and Bryan (2008) also interpret the thinking of American students about the democratic process relating to obey the laws and respect for government in the same way. They emphasize that *“we Americans have an abiding belief in and commitment to the principles of democracy. Those principles are exhibited in our relationship with government and in our daily interactions with one another. The shared knowledge of those democratic principles is necessary for our society to function, and so is their practice. Simply put, the engagement of the citizenry gives life and meaning to civil society and to our democracy.”* (pp. 161) However Hibbing and Rosenthal (2008) relate this perspective to another point. They propose that people do not believe that government works in their interest. According to public opinion polls, the general public feels that public officials do not care much about what “people like them” think. When queried with this statement, “Would you say the government is generally run by a few self-seeking people or that it is run for the benefit of all who are governed,” only one third would answer the latter.

In contrast, patriotism and loyalty to the country is looked at differently by some educators. One of these educators is Martha Nussbaum who stated that too much extreme patriotism which is denigrated as “My country, right or wrong” is harmful to a society and to the humanness of its people. Rather people should see themselves as part of a bigger world view where all people are regarded as having the same human characteristics which benefit the world’s population. When American citizens consider themselves as part of the world culture rather than the culture of the United States they begin to see the sameness they share with all peoples and can better look at themselves in these terms. In extreme patriotism the United States is seen as being right in all areas of morality no matter if this morality and ethical system is shared by the other countries of the world or not. Educators must teach students that they must see themselves as part of a more global humanness which is the intrinsic value they share about themselves regardless of what country they live in. All people are human beings and their sense of what is right and wrong is universal in the global and developing world culture that we are striving to become a part of (cited in Damon, 2001).

Turkish students indicate that to vote in every election and obey the laws are the most important responsibilities for them. Ninety four percent of Turkish students recognize these as realities of good citizenship (Appendix 1). Torney, Oppenheim and Farnen's (1975) works attest to this. In an international study of civic education in ten democratic countries, they note that in countries where schools prioritized nationalistic and patriotic ritual or traditional recitation, students showed a higher interest in participation in political events (cited in Hepburn, 1983). When we think of Turkish social and political structures, it is clear that Turkey is a small country and that one of the Turkish educational goals is strict loyalty to Atatürk's (founder of Turkish Republic) nationalism (MEB, 2012). This situation affects Turkish students' positive attitudes about voting in elections or obeying the laws.

In the study, *the most inconsistent* result between American and Turkish students was the item of "would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country". In the survey 84% of Turkish students state that "to serve in the military" is the third most important responsibility for them in regards to citizenship. This rate drops to 32% for American students (Appendix 1). According to this result, Turkish students are more positive about "to serve in the military" than American students about this issue. Hahn's (2008) study is a reference with this conclusion who mentioned in her survey results that students noted jury duty and "in case of war, to serve in the military" as responsibilities. Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer (1998) indicated that military takeover of government is a nondemocratic attribute and according to them few adults endorsed these attributes (cited in Richardson & Torney-Purta, 2008). The fact that military service isn't a compulsory duty for American citizens would have an effect on the American students' attitude about service in the military. Therefore many American students would not be willing to accept this duty. In contrast to this, all male citizens of Turkey must serve in the military as a compulsory duty for a specific time period. When the Turkish educational system is reviewed in this perspective, in the 1980's the Turkish curriculum and textbooks were geared toward developing a militant who was a defender of his country. However, the human rights factors were added to the curriculum from the 1990's to the present. An "understanding of national security" is still predominate in the educational system. (Üstel, 2005, cited in Güven, 2011). Consequently, military service is considered a duty and responsibility in Turkey's Social Studies curriculums and textbooks. In these documents military service is emphasized as a holy duty. Atatürk's statements are also referred to regarding this duty. (MEB, 2011, pp.73, pp.115) Therefore, Turkish people don't consider military service as a nondemocratic behavior but instead they see it as an honor to serve their country in war or in peace.

This study also discusses the second most inconsistent result which is related to the item "know about the country's history". Seventy-seven percent of Turkish students realize that learning Turkish history is very important, but only 27% of American students feel the same way (Appendix 1). History is critical for students to learn ideals and goals of good citizenship but the American students in general do not recognize this. According to a report from Public Agenda (A Lot to Be Thankful For, 1999) in America, many U.S. parents feel the schools should teach their children the ideals and history of the country (cited in Damon, 2001). In addition, teachers in the IEA Civic Education Study were asked to choose qualities of good citizenship that they believed they should teach their students from a list of 15 qualities. Across country lines they named "knowing about the country's national history" as one of the two most important qualities (Richardson & Torney-Purta, 2008). There is an agreement between teachers and families about the learning and handing down of the country's history. However in the U.S., just 18 percent of eighth graders who were tested on the 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress — called the Nation's Report Card — showed solid academic performance in American history. "The history scores released today show that student performance is still too low," said Education Secretary Arne Duncan in a prepared statement. "These results tell us that, as a country, we are failing to provide children with a high-quality, wellrounded education." (quote, Armario&Turner, 2012). History can be seen in a more favorable light for Turkish students. Alkış and Güleç's (2006) study serves as a reference for this statement. They surveyed 8th grade students' opinions about Social Studies courses. According to them, students liked history topics in the social studies course the most. Students explained the reason for their statements as "I like history" and "I am willing to learn about what



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happened in the past/history". In addition the Turkish educational system inter-relates historical issues with human rights and citizenship concepts. Citizenship and Democratic Education curriculum highlights the history of the human rights development process past to present. Atatürk's opinion about human rights in the past is emphasized. In addition this curriculum mentions other leaders of democracy who lived in the past regarding activities for creating a democratic environment (MEB, 2012a). Social Studies 6th and 7th grade curriculums also give importance to history while reviewing the past policies of post democratic governments (MEB, 2012b, MEB 2012c).

"Following political issues in the newspaper, on the radio or on TV" is the *third most inconsistent* result. While 57% of Turkish students follow political issues in the media quite extensively according to their responses on the survey, only 18% of American students do the same. In addition, for 17% of American students the media is *not important* in the role of providing political information necessary for them to become informed citizens (Appendix 1). This result refers to Battistoni's (2008) research. According to him, over the past decade lawmakers, researchers, and teachers have been aware of, and concerned about, the decline in political engagement among today's young people. He referred to the works of Galston, (2001) and Keeter, Zukin, Andolina and Jenkins, (2002) which conclude that this current generation of young citizens is less interested in public affairs and sees civic responsibilities as being less important than their similar-age counterparts in previous generations. Damon (2001) also emphasized that young people showed little interest in people outside their immediate circle of friends and relatives (other than fictional media characters and entertainment or sports figures); little awareness of current events; and virtually no expressions of social concern, political opinion, civic duty, patriotic emotion, or sense of citizenship in any form. There are many reasons for this conclusion. Elma and et al.(2009) referred to one of them. These authors emphasized in their works that the Turkish teenager doesn't recognize media tools as a news and information source, but they could follow political issues from other resources.

The survey results show that American and Turkish students' opinions about voting are quite different. In this survey the results indicated that while 35% of American students think voting is a "very important" responsibility, the rate for Turkish students is 84% (Appendix 1). Carole Hahn(2008) emphasized in her quantitative study that in regard to citizens' rights and responsibilities, most students mentioned voting either as a right that people in some "other countries don't have" or as an important responsibility. We can interpret the results of both surveys that American students see voting as a democratic right in America but that voting is not a right for non-democratic countries. However American students do not see voting as a very important responsibility for the actual practice of this right in daily life. Katz's (1994) comments are also valuable in this regard. According to him, elected representatives become an impersonal part of a government machine which is often far removed from the desires and goals of the people. He says that "*The United States is a pluralistic society – one consisting of several distinct cultures and groups... still, there is a broad consensus – a general agreement among various groups – on fundamental matters*"; and later, "*The nation has not been regularly plagued by sharp cleavages in politics*" (pp.166, quote, Hibbing and Rosenthal, 2008). Rubin (2008) also addressed the concept of poor voting rates among young people and their lack of engagement with civic issues at both school and national levels. He cited in Bennett (2000) who indicated that young people did not have enough core knowledge to act intelligently as voters, and were "profoundly disconnected from public affairs". If students are immediately rewarded and given positive feedback for activities which encourage civic participation, they will then be more inclined toward political participation in the future as their opportunities increase. This logic seems reasonable and, in many respects, the data from our current study supports these conclusions. From the Turkish perspective, voting is an important responsibility for its citizens. In the Citizenship and Democracy Education textbook which is published by Ministry

of National Education, voting is at the top of the list of essential citizenship responsibilities. However it could be argued that “*citizens are encouraged not to be a part of the democratic process but just to vote in times of elections*”(Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2008, p. 55).

Survey results show that “work hard” and “obey the laws” were concepts of good citizenship that were endorsed in each country. Sixty percent of American students and 70% of Turkish students certainly agree about “work hard” which is necessary for good citizenship (Appendix 1). This result indicates that each country’s students are aware that hard work is necessary to develop their countries. Kerr’s work (1999) also supports this result. He studied comparisons about citizenship education in 16 countries. He emphasized that preparing young people for work is the most commonly articulated aim across the 16 countries. In addition 69% of American students and 83% of Turkish students certainly agree about “obey the laws”. This issue is a mandatory responsibility for each country. People who do not obey the laws get some kind of punishment from the courts. Both American and Turkish students have positive awareness of this responsibility. Martin (2008)’s work also serves as a reference discussing this result “obey the laws” in greater detail. She emphasizes that “obey the laws” is an indicator of a solid democracy. According to her, the individual’s relationship to the law is perhaps an even more elemental aspect whereby democracy differs from authoritarian systems of government. In an authoritarian system, the individual is supposed to obey laws produced by others. In a democracy, the individuals are both the subjects and the authors of the law. Furthermore and very importantly, in a democracy, as opposed to a dictatorship, everyone is subject to the law. No individual or group is above it. She also indicates another important point. According to her, school is not the sole educational agent responsible for instilling the democratic ideals and values in the next generation. Home, the national and local government, religious institutions, corporations, the military, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and neighborhood gangs all have hidden ideals that preach belief in the sanctity of hierarchical structures and unflinching obedience to authority (Martin, 2008). American and Turkish students, though they live in different kinds of democratic systems, have positive perceptions about democratic life. They are each affected by various factors of their society. However, the cohesion of their beliefs in the democratic process affects their opinions about positive and unquestioning compliance with the laws.

As a result, educational programs or schools are effective in educating students about citizenship. However students’ attitudes towards active citizenship are influenced quite as much by values and attitudes in schools as by many factors other than schooling: by family, the immediate environment, the media and the example of those in public life. Sometimes these are positive factors, sometimes not. Schools which develop students to participate in society effectively as active, informed, critical and responsible citizens should be also active about citizenship education throughout their curriculum. Citizenship education should include the learning of the skills, values, attitudes, understanding and knowledge needed for both community involvement and preparation for involvement as citizens of our parliamentary democracy and the wider political world. Experiential learning, discussion of social and political issues, as well as formal, taught learning should be part of this process, both inside and outside the school as appropriate.

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

Statements		Not		Somewhat		Somewhat		Very	
		Important		Unimportant		Important		Important	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country	America	50	11.8	75	17.7	157	37.1	134	31.7
	Turkey	14	3.4	10	2.4	29	7	347	83.8
Know about the country's history	America	60	14.2	70	16.5	172	40.7	113	26.7
	Turkey	12	2.9	14	3.4	49	11.8	318	76.8
Vote in every election	America	35	8.3	42	9.9	188	44.4	149	35.2
	Turkey	9	2.2	6	1.4	44	10.6	346	83.6
Would be willing to ignore [disregard] a law that violated human rights	America	82	19.4	50	11.8	135	31.9	104	24.6
	Turkey	21	5.1	18	4.3	58	14	280	67.6
Follows political issues in the newspaper, on the radio or on TV	America	76	18	79	18.7	181	42.8	75	17.7
	Turkey	24	5.8	21	5.1	116	28	236	57
Would be willing to pay tax for improve his/her country economy	America	34	8	40	9.5	155	36.6	172	40.7
	Turkey	19	4.6	9	2.2	41	9.9	321	77.5
Takes part in activities promoting human rights	America	20	4.7	67	15.8	194	45.9	131	31
	Turkey	15	3.6	23	5.6	76	18.4	273	65.9
Patriotic and loyal [devoted] to the country	America	28	6.6	38	9.0	151	35.7	184	43.5
	Turkey	13	3.1	11	2.7	48	11.6	318	76.8
Show respect for government representatives (leaders, officials)	America	31	7.3	52	12.3	149	35.2	185	43.7
	Turkey	16	3.9	18	4.3	45	10.9	315	76.1
Takes part in activities to protect the environment	America	28	6.6	55	13	173	40.9	157	37.1
	Turkey	13	3.1	22	5.3	82	19.8	271	65.5
Participates in activities to benefit people in the community (society)	America	18	4.3	55	13	188	44.4	150	35.5
	Turkey	18	4.3	25	6	95	22.9	259	62.6
Engages in political discussions	America	60	14.2	112	26.5	163	38.5	68	16.1
	Turkey	31	7.5	37	8.9	122	29.5	174	42
Participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust	America	48	11.3	66	15.6	164	38.8	117	27.7
	Turkey	24	5.8	21	5.1	96	23.2	222	53.6
Join a political party	America	72	17	97	22.9	166	39.2	59	13.9
	Turkey	38	9.2	38	9.2	125	30.2	163	39.4
Obey the laws	America	6	1.4	13	3.1	106	25.1	291	68.8
	Turkey	10	2.4	5	1.2	39	9.4	349	84.3
Work hard	America	11	2.6	20	4.7	130	30.7	256	60.5
	Turkey	16	3.9	21	5.1	58	14	292	70.5