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Effect of Media Literacy on Prospective Social Studies Teachers' Multicultural Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

A central concern for teacher education programs is to prepare future teachers to practice democratic education. It could be asserted that democratic education is almost impossible without a multicultural attitude of the teacher. The purpose of this study was to identify prospective social studies teachers' multicultural attitude and if taking a Media Literacy course has an effect on their multicultural attitude scores. In this Quasi-Experimental research study, participants were comprised of 102 third-year prospective Social Studies teachers. The experimental group (N=51) received Media Literacy training in which a wide range of issues and media representations were investigated from a multicultural point of view. The other group (N=51) were comprised of students taking the Development and Environment Issues Geography course in which no issues were investigated from a media or multicultural literacy point of view. It was made sure that both gropus were equal except for the treatment variable. A Multicultural Attitude Scale for Teachers has been administered to the participants in both groups before and after the treatment. Means scores were used to give a description of participants' multicultural attitude. Obtained pretest and posttest scores were also compared by using Paired Samples t Test at 0.05 confidence level. Findings demonstrated that mean scores remained stable in the control group contrary to the falling scores in the experimental group. Although there are several ways to interpret this finding, most important of all is that participants who took the media literacy course might feel a need to approach multicultural issues with a greater care and attention.

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Keywords:
Media literacy, multicultural attitudes, social studies, teacher education

Introduction

Preparing teachers to practice democratic education has become a key concern for teacher education programs in the 21st century. Although the factors qualifying democratic education are multiple, researchers and practitioners agree that a true democratic education can hardly be achieved without a multicultural perspective of the teacher (Başbay & Bektaş, 2009; Boyer & Baptiste, 1996; Kincheloe, Slattery, & Steinberg, 2000; Nieto, 2004; Parker, 2003). Therefore, scholars in the field of multicultural education have often called for the integration of multicultural principles into the practices at teacher education programs (Banks, 1997; Bennett, 1999; Cırık, 2008; Gay, 2002; Grant & Secada, 1990; Nieto, 2004; Wasonga & Piveral, 2004; Valentin, 2006). Hence many teacher education programs responded to this call by alligning their curricula with theories and principles of multicultural education. This response is important for several key reasons. First of all, it is known from past research that preservice teachers join teacher education programs with a superficial view of multicultural education. Upon investigating 103 preservice early childhood education students' perceptions of multicultural education, Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff and Pearson (2001) revealed that participants' definitions of multicultural education illustrated a limited understanding, which is restricted by race and ethnicity. Such an understanding, if not challenged in teacher education programs, is likely to lead

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prospective teachers to be blind to other domains of the multicultural field (*e.g.,* gender, language, socioeconomic status, culture, age, learning styles, and disability status) at their future practices. This blindness might result in alienation and, therefore, poor achievement of the students coming from the disadvantaged segments of the society. More importantly, preservice teachers come to teacher education programs with some prejudices and discriminatory attitudes. In their study, Akar-Vural and Gömleksiz (2010) revealed some degree of discriminatory attitude of prospective classroom teachers. They further revealed that discriminatory attitude relates to gender—females demonstrate significantly lower discriminatory attitude scores than do males. In addition to those issues, studies point out that school textbooks as well as students at schools reflect some sort of social or cultural stereotypes which must be challenged by multicultural democratic educators. Depending on an ethnographic fieldwork carried out with Greek Cypriot elementary school children, Spyrou (2002) portrayed that students construct their national identity in the classroom through their use of an 'us' versus 'them' frame of reference, a process that not only essentializes identity but also gives rise to an eternal and primordial enemy. The study further demonstrates that children's stereotypical constructions of 'them' are not only basically informed by their school learning but also more complicated constructions than the stereotypes themselves put forward. Several other studies (Bigelow, 1989; Ferro, 1984; Helvacıoğlu, 1996; Kabapınar, 2009; Lintner, 2004) pointed out the ideological and stereotypical representations taking place in school textbooks, Social Studies and History textbooks in particular. It is not new that by omission or other ways, school textbooks have been manipulating students to a certain extent. Bigelow states, "As the year opens, my students may not know when the Civil War was fought, what James Madison or Frederick Douglass did…but they do know that a brave fellow named Christopher Columbus discovered America" (p. 635). With Bigelow's statements,

> What is also true is that Columbus took hundreds of Indians slaves and sent them back to Spain where most of them were sold and subsequently died. What is also true is that in his quest for gold Columbus had the hands cut off any Indian who did not return with his or her three-month quota. And what is also true is that on one island alone, Hispaniola, an entire race of people were wiped off the face of the earth in a mere forty years of Spanish administration. (p. 635)

To pose this problem to the class with a stolen purse analogy, Bigelow had arranged a scenario in which he would pretend to steal a student's purse and would claim it to be his own. When done as planned, he reports, students were outraged in some degree due to his prying into someone's possession with such indifference to her privacy. To better let students think about how language could manipulate the message and thus the mind, he claimed he had "discovered" the purse, which opened up the debate on the actual meaning of the verb "discover", the way the verb "discover" is used in textbooks, as well as some alternative words that might have also been used in the regarded context. Paying attention to such hidden or alternative views and critically interrogating the dominant view entails a multicultural perspective or attitude of the teacher.

Studies also point out that the teacher education process promotes teacher candidates' multicultural qualities (*e.g.*, awareness, knowledge, view, attitude, skill, perception) to a certain extent. Akar-Vural and Gömleksiz (2010), for instance, found that discriminatory attitudes tend to decline as teacher candidates approach graduation from a teacher education program. Other studies also point out that teachers who are prepared in a multicultural teacher education program are more capable of teaching diverse populations of students than those who do not receive such preparation (Cwick, Wooldridge, & Petch-Hogan, 2001; Gonzalez & Picciano, 1993; Grant, 1981; McNeal, 2005). Multicultural teacher education programs obviously provide teacher candidates with knowledge of multicultural principles and experiences needed to deal with students of diverse backgrounds (Wasonga, 2005). Multicultural education courses are the key instrument in order to enhance multicultural awareness, and several approaches have been offered or used at teacher education programs to enhance multicultural sensitivity. Among those are the use of photography (Brown, 2005), multicultural literature (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005), movies and other films (Rorrer & Furr, 2009), reflective journal entries (Townsend, 2002), field experiences (Gayle-Evans & Michael, 2006; Valentin, 2006), life-based literary narratives (Phillion & He, 2004, and cross-cultural simulations (Cruz & Patternson, 2005). Those various approaches are likely to influence preservice teachers' multicultural sensitivity in a positive way.

Although it is known that multicultural education courses at teacher education programs are effective in enhancing prospective teachers' multicultural view and skills, several other courses (*e.g.*, Science Teaching, Social Studies Teaching, Mathematics Teaching, Instructional Methods) might also contribute to multicultural awareness through multicultural connections and components. Multicultural Literacy, which is often addressed in teaching Media Literacy subjects at teacher education programs, might be an important instrument to enhance multicultural awareness and attitude at teacher education programs, because Media Literacy courses include critical analysis of how various social groups are represented or stereotyped in the media (Şahin, 2011). Changing attitudes at teacher education is, however, a challenging task. As demonstrated by Grant and Secada (1990), changes made on teacher attitudes are often modest and require long and intense exposure.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to identify the degree of preservice social studies teachers' multicultural attitude and to investigate the effects of taking Media Literacy course on their multicultural attitude. Based on this purpose, attempts were made to answer the following specific questions. (1) What can be said about the degree of preservice social studies teachers' multicultural attitude? (2) Does taking a media literacy course significantly change preservice social studies teachers' multicultural attitude scores? (3) How do the preservice social studies teachers' multicultural attitude scores in the control group change during the experiment? (4) What implications can be drawn from the findings in regard to the impact of taking a media literacy course on preservice social studies teachers' multicultural attitude and to the future of multicultural teacher education?

Research Method

Research Design

Random sampling could not be utilized for this study because of the organizatonal system of the teacher education program. Therefore, the quasi-experimental research design (nonequivalent groups, pretest-posttest) was used in the study to achieve the research purpose. Although true experimental designs are of the first priority in scientific research, researchers in social sciences, or the field of education in particular, seldom have the chance to randomly assign the subjects into groups or to adjust the groups based on their research requirements (Baştürk, 2009). Because of this reason, the quasi-experimental design is often appropriate for educational research purposes. An advantage of such design is that the subjects, in many cases, might not be aware that they are involved in a study. Since classes are used *as is*, the potential influences from reactive arrangements are minimized (Hsiao & Chang, 2003). The design of the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Design of the study

Groups	Pretest	Application	Posttest
Experimental Group (N=51)	X	Media Literacy Course	X
Control Group (N=51)	X	---	X

Two different groups participated in the study. Experimental group (N=51) was comprised of the third-year students who opted to take the elective *Media Literacy* course, which includes multicultural literacy as an integral part. To manipulate the independent variable, "prescence or absence" technique was used. In this technique, one group of participants received a treatment condition (media literacy training) that the other group did not (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Therefore, students in the control group (N=51) were not given anything in regard to media or multicultural literacy. The control group was comprised of third-year students taking the *Development and Environment Issues Geography* course in which the instructor was guided not to address any topics from a media or multicultural literacypoint of view. Those two courses are offered to students who are in the third year (at the fifth semester) at the Social Studies Teacher Education Program. Other than those elective courses, third year students follow the same track of courses. It is also important to note that teacher education programs in Turkey have a very rigid and standardized curriculum offering certain courses at a certain time.

Context and Study Group

This quasi-experimental study has been carried out at Pamukkale University, School of Education. The School of Education currently has about 4,500 registered students and about a thousand teacher candidates graduate each year. Among the graduates, more than a hundred are from the Social Studies Teaching Program in the Department of Elementary Education. Study groups were comprised of 102 third-year pre-service social studies teachers, since the program offers the *Media Literacy* course (as well as its elective equivalent *Development and Environment Issues Geography* course) to those in their third year in the program. Although all students follow the same track of courses, several other elective courses other than *Media Literacy* and *Development and Environment Issues Geography* are available for students who are at various stages of the program. Initially 127 students were registered for those two classes. The number of the participants, however, fell down to 102 because of several reasons, such as declining to participate in the study, dropping the course, not attending, and missing one of the pre- and post-tests. In total, 102 students participated in the study. Among those, 51 (16 males and 35 females) took place in the experimental group and the other 51 students (32 males and 19 females) were in the control group. Those groups were shaped depending on the students' preferences between two elective courses.

Data Collection Instrument

The Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS) was used for gathering the research data. Joseph G. Ponterotto, Suraiya Baluch, Tamasine Greig and Lourdes Rivera (1998) developed the original scale. They demonstrated, in their work, that construct and criterion validity as well as the reliability of the scale were supported. In order to translate and adapt the scale to Turkish, Toprak (2008) initially obtained the aid of two academicians who knew both Turkish and American cultures very well. After translating the scale to Turkish and providing the translation and language validity, the scale was administered to 415 randomly selected teachers from various disciplines. Then, the required analysis procedures were followed and the final 20-item scale emerged. Items in the scale include positive and negative statements aiming to elicit participants' multicultural attitude. An example statement for each (positive and negative respectively) was the following. "I can learn a lot from students who have culturally diverse backgrounds" (Item 11). "Students must learn to communicate only in Turkish" (Item 15). The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale is reported as 0.74, and additionally factor analysis results demonstrate that the scale is one-dimensional. At this five-point Likert type scale, points range from "strongly disagree" through "strongly agree".

Experimental Procedures

After preparing the data collection instrument, students in the experimental and control groups were pre-tested. Following the pretest administration, instructional procedures were carried out over a 16-week-long semester. The experimental group was subjected to *Media Literacy* topics and activities that focus the attention on the issues tied to multicultural literacy. In the course of the study, the researchers themselves conducted the experimental procedures for the *Media Literacy* course. The students in the control group studied *Development and Environment Issues Geography* topics. A specialist who had been giving the *Development and Environment Issues Geography* course for several years in the program delivered instructions to the control group. All necessary steps were taken so that the instructor along with his students in the control group would not explore or evaluate any issue from a multicultural point of view (absence of treatment condition).

In the experimental group, the focus was on media literacy topics, issues and skills. Media literacy has become increasingly important not only for the consumers of the media but also for the teachers working in various fields, such as Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts, and Science. The purpose of the course then was to improve participants' media literacy skills in locating, analyzing, critiquing, and evaluating the thousands of media messages available for the consumers of print and digital media. Teachers definitely need a thorough understanding of how the media works, manipulates information, influences humans' perception of the self and the world, distorts the reality, affects the way people see others, manipulates

people's behaviors toward others, and eventually shapes the world. While focusing on television, advertising industry, the internet, mass culture, the news industry, and the emotional aspect of the media, a particular emphasis was given to social stereotypes, stereotypical representations promoted in various content including movies, advertisements, commercials, music video clips, news, and so on. Deconstructions focused on the representation of people from various, and often disadvantaged, segments of the society (*e.g.*, cultural, racial and ethnic representations; representation of the elderly; representation of people with various disabilities, etc.). The researchers also used the movie *Spinning into Butter* as a material to introduce the subtle nature of prejudices towards others. The course also includes key skills to produce media messages to shape the world. Therefore, students in groups produced and shared video materials addressing particular topics (*e.g.*, video games, TV ads, hidden ads, TV news, music videos, cartoons, soap operas, political campaigns, billboards, mobile advertising, package design, propaganda techniques) and issues (*e.g.*, commercialization of news, the use of extreme or high-profile violence, explicit sexuality, distorted images of man and woman, images of people with disabilities, racial representations, stereotypes, discrimination, obesity, vulgar language).

Students in the control group took the *Development and Environment Issues Geography* course. The content of the course has nothing to do with the research purpose. The purpose of the course was to develop students' awareness of environmental resources and to enhance their sensitivity toward those resources and their preservation. Attention, therefore, was focused on environmental issues as the requirements of the course. Those issues include pollution of resources, such as water (sea, lakes, rivers, and underground water resources), soil, air, food, noise, light, and sight. Beyond pollution, several other issues were also studied. Those are desertification, depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, disruption of the food chain, the world's water potentials, water management, water potential in Turkey and its management, energy and environment, legal foundation of renewable energy, hydroelectric, solar energy technologies, wind energy, geothermal energy, bioenergy, sea-based renewable energy, and hydrogen energy. Although lectures were used at times, various instructional methods, such as research, seminar, inquiry and discussion were used throughout the semester. No issues were, however, studied from the media or multicultural literacy point of view in order to ensure the absence of the treatment condition (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The introduction of this content was essential to inform the reader that the causal agent was not placed in the control group. In short, it could be said that the experimental and control groups were identical in all relevant ways except for the introduction of the independent variable (Baştürk, 2009).

The experimental procedures lasted 16 weeks in length. After the implementation of the experimental procedures, TMAS was administered again as post-tests. The lowest and highest scores that might be taken in the five-point Likert-type attitude scale were 20 and 100, respectively.

Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Initially pre-test and post-test data from all participants were recorded by using the SPSS software. Then the scores from negative statements were reversed (1 to 5, 2 to 4 and so on) to obtain consistency among all items. In order to evaluate the mean scores based on a five-point scale, the researchers set a criterion. To this end, interval of one through five, which is four, was divided into five [(5-1)/5=0.80]. Each choice in the scale was labeled as the following: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree, 1.81-2.60=Disagree, 2.61-3.40=Undecided, 3.41-4.20=Agree, 4.21-5.00=Strongly Agree. Obtained intervals were used in order to identify participants' overall degree of attitude, depending on the interval to which overall mean scores fall. For the group comparisons, Independent and Paired Sample *t*-tests were conducted. Independent *t*-test was employed to find out if the difference between mean scores of two independent groups was significant. A Paired Sample *t*-test was employed to compare each group's pretest and posttest scores, to figure out if the difference between mean scores was significant. Since *Levene* test result demonstrates that group variances are equal ($F=2.599$, $p>0.05$), pooled variance estimates were used. The findings were presented in the form of mean scores, the standard deviation, and the results of *t*- tests.

Findings

This study was an attempt to investigate pre-service social studies teachers' multicultural attitude and if taking a Media Literacy course demonstrates an impact upon their multicultural attitude scores. Findings were provided through the analysis of the data gathered by the administration of the TMAS as pretest and posttest. Figure 1 demonstrates the degree of multicultural attitude before any procedures take place for both groups. Obtained mean scores of multicultural attitude show that pre-service social studies teachers' responses for pretest (experimental group = 3.78; control group = 3.66) fall into the interval of "agree" (3.41-4.20), which demonstrates agreement with the statements on the survey (See: Table 2 for mean scores of both groups). This finding is important because, based on this finding, it could be stated that the overall mean of attitudes falls into the positive side of the response intervals. While this makes the credit for the participants and the process of teacher education clear, it might also demonstrate the presence of some gaps to be filled by teacher education programs.

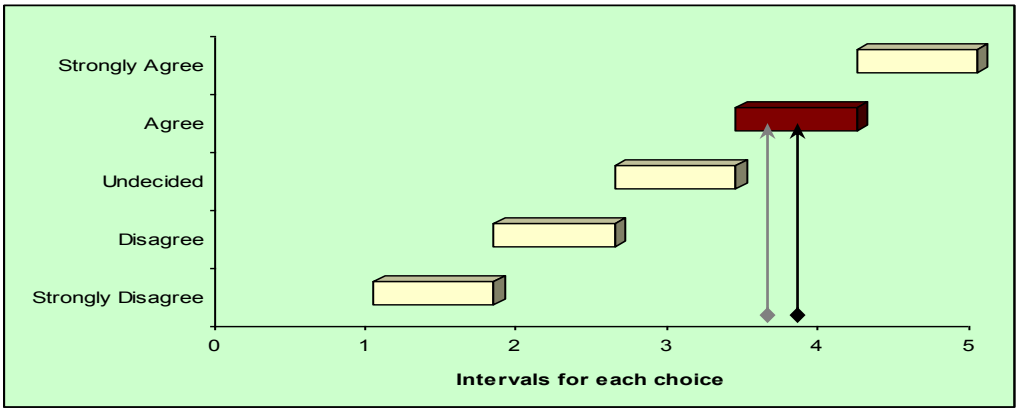


Figure 1. The interval pretest mean scores fall into

Several other tests were conducted in order to evaluate the effect of experimental procedures on participants' multicultural attitude. Table 2 contains the summary of Independent *t*-test results comparing the mean scores of students' performances in both the experimental and the control groups regarding the pre-TMAS and post-TMAS scores.

Table 2. Independent *t*-test results of the data gathered by the TMAS

Tests	Groups	n	Mean	SD	*t*	p
Pre-TMAS	Experimental	51	3.78	0.30	1.638	0.105
	Control	51	3.66	0.44		
Post-TMAS	Experimental	51	3.59	0.26	1.098	0.275
	Control	51	3.53	0.28		

*Significant at $p<0.05$ (Sig. 2-tailed)

Comparing the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups using an independent samples *t*-test analysis revealed that there was no significant difference in terms of multicultural attitude scores ($t_{(100)}=1.638$, $p>0.05$). This is an expected finding, since standardized entrance examinations are used to screen students and channel them to certain fields in Turkey. Additionally, the attributes of students in the same program are expected to be very homogeneous because of going through the same, or similar, educational experiences and the same curriculum. Comparison results of groups' post-TMAS mean scores similarly indicate that the mean of the post-test scores for the participants in the experimental group that studied media literacy are not statistically different from the scores of the control group that took the *Development and Environment Issues Geography* course ($t_{(100)}=1.098$, $p>0.05$). This finding indicates that the Media Literacy course did not significantly differentiate the scores of experimental group students as compared to control

group students. Mean scores in both groups, however, demonstrate a slight decline from pre-TMAS to post-TMAS. A Paired Samples *t*-test was conducted in order to better investigate this decline.

Table 3 contains the summary of Paired Samples *t*-test comparing the pre-TMAS and post-TMAS mean scores for both the experimental and the control groups. Comparing the pre-TMAS and post-TMAS scores of each group through a paired samples *t*-test analysis revealed a significant difference between the pre-TMAS and post-TMAS scores of the experimental group students ($t_{(100)}$=3.552, p<0.05). Mean scores demonstrate that multicultural attitude scores tend to decline after taking the *Media Literacy* course. This is not an expected finding, since one normally expects participants to develop a multicultural sensitivity after deconstructing and evaluating myriads of distorted or biased media images. Comparing the control-group students' pre-TMAS and post-TMAS mean scores revealed no significant difference between the pre-TMAS and post-TMAS means ($t_{(100)}$=1.840, p>0.05).

Table 3. Paired samples *t*-test results of the data gathered by TMAS

Groups	Tests	n	Mean	SD	*t*	p
Experimental	Pre-TMAS	51	3.78	0.30	3.552	0.001*
	Post-TMAS	51	3.59	0.26		
Control	Pre-TMAS	51	3.66	0.44	1.840	0.072
	Post-TMAS	51	3.53	0.28		

*Significant at p<0.05 (Sig. 2-tailed)

Although results demonstrate a relative decline from pre-TMAS to post-TMAS for both group scores, the decline in the experimental group's mean is significant and also higher than the decline of control group's mean score (Figure 1). The decline in the experimental group can be attributed to some adverse effects of the experimental procedures on the attitude of participants. Why the study reveals such paradoxical findings will be discussed in the following section.

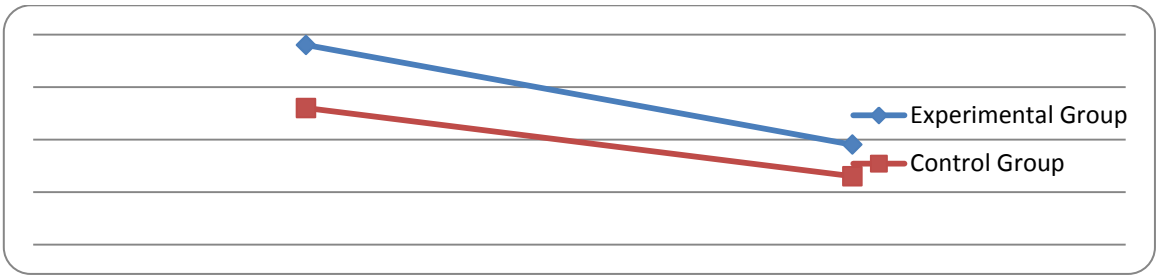


Figure 1. Change in pre- and post-TMAS mean scores

Discussion and Conclusions

By using a Turkish urban university context, this study aimed to investigate prospective social studies teachers' multicultural attitude and to identify if taking a Media Literacy course enhances their multicultural attitude scores. Taking into account the findings concerning the initial multicultural attitude scores, it could be said that prospective teachers' overall mean scores demonstrate a moderately positive multicultural attitude. This is in line with the finding from another study (Çoban, Karaman, & Doğan, 2010) that pre-service teachers in secondary schools already have a positive view of cultural diversity. Some credit might go to the teacher education program for this result, since the participants have already spent two years in the program and, more importantly, a positive multicultural attitude is the foundation of democratic and multicultural educational practices. It must further be noted that, depending on the specific focus of the social studies field, many of the courses offered in the program (*e.g.*, Sociology, Citizenship Education, Anthropology, Human Rights and Democracy, Special Education) directly or indirectly touch on multicultural topics and issues (*e.g.*, human rights, democracy, discrimination, identity, social class, gender issues). Since most of those courses are offered to those who are in the initial years of the program, a part of

the positive multicultural attitude might be attributed to the effect of those particular courses. In other words, taking those courses might have nourished prospective teachers' positive multicultural attitude to a certain extent. Since pre-service teachers of social studies—due to their specific field of study—are advantageous as compared to those of other fields, the finding opens the way to further and deeper discussion of pre-service teachers' multicultural attitude. Would there be a different finding if the study were carried out in the context of a different field, such as Science, Language Arts, or Visual Arts? Would similar findings emerge in other cultures, other countries, and other levels of teacher education, such as preschool teacher education? Those questions surely open the way for new research and investigations in the field. In the meantime, teacher educators must pay attention to the previous research (*e.g.,* Akar-Vural & Gömleksiz, 2010; Grant, 1990; Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff, & Pearson, 2001) revealing the new-coming pre-service teachers' limited understanding of multicultural education or other discursive thoughts or attitudes that are at odds with democratic and multicultural practice. Those findings draw attention to how prospective teachers' multicultural attitude change as they go through the teacher education program.

In this study, the significant decline in multicultural attitude scores upon taking the *Media Literacy* course represents a paradoxical finding and opens the way for new discussions not only for the effect of the *Media Literacy* course on multicultural attitude but also what the declining scores might mean for the context of teacher education. It is already known from previous research that the teacher education process tends to decline discriminatory attitude (Akar-Vural & Gömleksiz, 2010) and further nourishes skills to teach in culturally diverse settings (Cwick, Wooldridge, & Petch-Hogan, 2001; Gonzalez & Picciano, 1993; Grant, 1981; McNeal, 2005). Although those contributions are important for the teacher education process, the declining multicultural attitude that seems to contradict with the findings of previous research points out several important issues that one must take into account. To read this finding, one might take into account that knowledge does not necessarily change attitudes (Sleeter & Grant, 1999) and that a significant correlation does not always exists between multicultural knowledge and multicultural attitude (See: Wasonga, 2005). Therefore, learning about multicultural issues does not necessarily mean that it will straightforwardly improve multicultural attitude scores.

Participants might have gained vast amount of knowledge and skills upon deconstructing and evaluating media representations of people from various groups. Despite the gained knowledge and perspective, the declining score might give several important messages. First, the course might have increased the inner tension through broadening participants' understanding of multiculturalism or multicultural view from a limited angle to a wider perspective. Then the participants might have realized that multicultural action requires not only the participation of the people from the disadvantaged or oppressed segments of the society but also the integration of those for whom they do not necessarily feel affection. Second, pre-service teachers might have realized that acting in a multicultural environment requires not only the disintegration of one's own prejudices but also a great care, attention, sensitivity, and challenge. This sensitivity and challenge was often evident for the experimental group through the actual message of the movie *Spinning into Butter*. The challenging nature of teaching and dealing with diverse populations might have pushed down the participants' multicultural attitude scores. Declining scores also draw attention to what Weber called "meaningful action", which refers to the fact that human action, different from the reaction or response of the substance, is surrounded by intentions and expectations (Benton & Craib, 2008). Therefore, future research must integrate qualitative data in order to investigate the subjective aspects that remain hidden behind the falling scores, if it ever happens again.

Investigations of the findings reveal that declining scores is an issue not only for the experimental group but also for the control group. Although the effect is not statistically significant in the control group, the gradual decline of attitude scores in the control group draws attention to some external variables adversely affecting the multicultural attitude scores. One of those possible factors is the increasing terror attacks following the government's democratization movement for the citizens of Kurdish origin, which also invited oppositions from various political groups. Terror attacks, which coincided with the experimental procedures, came to such a point that the Media Tracing Center (2010) reported those incidents to be the most attention-paid topic of the year. In particular, the media in total produced about 257 thousand media messages about terror incidents and the incidents increased 26 percent as compared to previous year. Those attacks, which were aimed at innocent civilians as well as military forces, increased the tension between two

groups of people and often inhibited a healthy investigation of the issue. Although particular attention was given in the *Media Literacy* course to the limited and emotional representations of the victims and their loved ones, the emotional representations as well as the political conflict might have trimmed the sprouting multicultural tolerance and attitude, at least temporarily. It must also be noted that multicultural attitude relates to several variables (Yazıcı, Başol & Toprak, 2009).

To conclude, findings from this study draw attention to the third-year participants' positive multicultural attitude. The good news with this finding is that positive multicultural attitude is, in many cases, the bottom line for democratic educational practice and might be an instrument to eliminate and transform the anti-democratic elements in the educational system. The paradoxical decline of the multicultural attitude scores upon taking the *Media Literacy* course, however, invites doubt about the positive effect of the course while opening ways to interpret the conflicting finding. Most important of all, the falling attitude might mean that the participants assume a more cautious position for the challenges of entering into a multicultural terrain and the potential risks to be faced in the field. The gradual yet non-significant decline of attitude in the control group points to an external variable shaping the participants' attitude scores. Future research must integrate qualitative data in order to better illuminate the effect of the course on multicultural attitude.

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