

Are Catalan secondary schools confronting xenophobia? Discouraging results from a multilevel analysis of adolescent attitudes toward immigration and diversity

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Abstract

Educational approaches and intergroup contact are promising ways to combat xenophobia among European adolescents, especially in those regions where large-scale immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon. This begs the question, however, of to what extent good practices are actually carried out in classrooms to this end. This paper presents the results of multilevel modelling which reveal effects of sub/national identifications, frequency of contact, socioeconomic status, and classroom ethnic composition on xenophobia, appreciation of diversity, and attitudes toward immigrant rights, among secondary students during their last year of compulsory education (10th grade). Surprisingly, although data from 30 schools (82 classrooms) were included in the multi-level analyses, which controlled for numerous factors and levels simultaneously, the role of the school was not relevant in determining lower (or higher) levels of xenophobia, appreciation of diversity, or attitudes toward immigrant rights. This is disconcerting given a side goal of this study was to identify schools and/or social studies teachers, whose best practices might potentially lower xenophobic attitudes in order to carry out targeted qualitative research into these practices across different schools. Since all social studies classes in a given grade-level are typically taught by the same teacher, the findings suggest that there is currently a dearth of best practices in reducing xenophobia, increasing appreciation for diversity and positive attitudes toward immigrant rights within the high schools studied. This study points to the importance of encouraging and studying future potential teaching interventions and school policies aimed a reduction in xenophobic attitudes.

References

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Note. This presentation contains data already published in Wilson, Kimmelmeier, and Prats (2018) but that the authors believe is relevant to the conference and may open interesting debate among those in attendance. The presentation will take an educationally focused point of view not reflected in the article.

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