Chapter 4

Influence of Teacher, Student and School Characteristics on Students' Attitudes Toward Diversity

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Abstract Schools are increasingly seen as a potential vehicle for promoting positive attitudes toward diversity and equality in different countries. However, the debate regarding the actual capacity of schools to fulfill this task, set against the role of families and individual preferences, is still open. To analyze how the characteristics of schools may shape student attitudes toward diversity in terms of gender, immigration and ethnic groups, a multilevel model that takes into consideration the characteristics of the school, such as the composition of diversity, school climate and teacher practices, and individual characteristics, such as socioeconomic background and civic interest, was used. Schools seem to have a limited leverage in promoting attitudes toward diversity, due to the fact that variance in attitudes occurs mainly within schools. The main findings are discussed in terms of research, policy and practice.

Keywords Attitudes toward diversity • International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) • International large-scale assessments
School climate • School composition

4.1 Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, issues of equality and the inclusion of diverse populations within societies represent a constant challenge for schools and societies. There is a widespread notion that schools should promote student development, not only in terms of academic outcomes but also in relation to

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attitudes that enhance respect and inclusion, and favor equality among diverse societal groups (Pfeifer et al. 2007; Shafiq and Myers 2014). However, there are open questions regarding both the capacity of schools to promote such values and the relative weight of individual, family and school factors that explain differences in student attitudes toward diversity.

The idea that schools are vehicles for promoting positive attitudes toward diversity and equality is a matter of academic debate. Promoting positive attitudes toward diversity entails the pedagogical challenge of transmitting the culture and traditions of a society while, simultaneously, embracing diversity (van Vuuren et al. 2012). Furthermore, this challenge has long been seen as a political dispute regarding the notion that schools should comply with the mission of shaping the way of life of future generations (Palmer 1957). In order to address this challenge, it is necessary that schools create institutional and instructional strategies that allow for students from different backgrounds to respectfully share their perspectives and understand those of others (Richards et al. 2007). Empirical evidence on the capacity of the school system to promote positive attitudes toward diversity may be of vital importance to inform this debate.

In this chapter, we analyze how the characteristics of schools and families shape student attitudes toward diversity in terms of gender, immigration and ethnic minorities.

4.2 Conceptual Framework

In order to explain differences in student attitudes toward diversity, this section presents a conceptual framework that distinguishes factors related to student and school characteristics. Among the school features, the conceptual model considers the dimensions of contextual structural characteristics of the school, the levels of diversity in the composition of the student body of the school, the school climate, and teacher practices and attitudes. The student variables include socioeconomic background factors, and student civic interest and participation (Fig. 4.1).

4.2.1 *Structural Characteristics of the School*

Structural characteristics of schools represent a key dimension to explain differences in student outcomes. These structural features capture elements related to the organization of school systems that cannot necessarily be attributed to the actions of the school and its personnel. For example, the way in which countries organize the provision of schooling through public, private-subsidized and private schools is a relevant feature that affects student educational outcomes (Bellei 2009; Carrasco and San Martín 2012; Epple and Romano 1998). However, the way in which students from different socioeconomic backgrounds are distributed through

Fig. 4.1 Conceptual framework of school and student variables that explain student attitudes toward diversity

different schools is also an important structural characteristic of the school, which depends mainly on the geographical distribution of the population and the regulations that shape the admission processes of schools (Contreras et al. 2010; Valenzuela et al. 2014). In sum, the type of school administration and the socioeconomic composition of the school are two structural characteristics that should be considered in the analyses on student outcomes as a way of controlling for variables that respond to the social and regulatory context.

In the case of civic attitudes, research has shown that the structural characteristics of the school, such as the average socioeconomic background and the type of school administration, are important predictors of civic attitudes (Schulz et al. 2010; Treviño et al. 2016). The analyses performed in this chapter consider as structural characteristics the type of school management and the socioeconomic composition of the student body of the school.

4.2.2 Diversity of Students Within Schools and Intergroup Contact Theory

Demographic diversity in the composition of the student body in a school represents an important dimension for the development of attitudes toward others. Diversity within a school's student body offers a measure of the opportunity that

different social groups (for example, groups of different socioeconomic or immigration status) have to encounter each other in the school. In culturally and socially diverse schools, it is expected that students from different groups can build relationships with students from other backgrounds. Conversely, in homogeneous schools, students do not have the opportunity to learn, through the experience of knowing people from different societal groups, about the commonalities and differences of such human groupings. It is expected that the experience of sharing in student bodies with demographic diversity can have a positive influence on the attitudes toward different groups.

The development of intergroup attitudes has been explained widely through the intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), which proposes that contact with members of different groups will reduce prejudice and promote positive relationships and attitudes among them (Beelmann and Heinemann 2014). Other theories about intergroup relationships highlight both the role of learning, whether by socialization and experience or by the acquisition of new information, and the role of the cognitive development stage of children in promoting positive intergroup attitudes (Beelmann and Heinemann 2014).

Intergroup contact theory states that the reduction of intergroup prejudice is higher when contact takes place under the condition of equal status between groups (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Moreover, cross-group interactions that can be considered as active friendship have shown to be especially effective in promoting positive intergroup attitudes (Davies et al. 2011). The three main factors that have been identified through which intergroup contact reduces prejudice are: increasing knowledge about a different group; reducing the feeling of threat and anxiety; and allowing perspective taking and empathy (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008).

Often conceptualized as being in antagonism with the concept of tolerance, prejudice can be understood as an explicit or implicit negative attitude or behavior directed toward members of an out-group (see (Beelmann and Heinemann 2014). Both individual and social factors have been used to explain the development of different attitudes toward groups of people, from prejudice to tolerance.

For analytical purposes, this study defines diversity, as it applies to a student body, as the percentage of immigrant, ethnic minority and female students in a school. Such a definition is aligned with contact theories and the evidence suggesting that schools are crucial settings that can influence intergroup relations and attitudes (Pfeifer et al. 2007) through student and teacher characteristics, as well as via school practices and policies. Additionally, behavior modeling in school has been stated as a strategy that develops positive intergroup attitudes. However, besides these school factors, it is important to underscore that individual features related to the developmental stages of students, such as perspective-taking and empathy, are crucial to counteract prejudice and have to be taken into account when assessing intergroup attitudes (Pfeifer et al. 2007). Furthermore, diversity in the composition of the student body within a school has been linked to civic attitudes (Janmaat 2015).

4.2.3 School Climate

School climate has been identified as an essential factor related to students' social, emotional and academic development, as well as a key factor in explaining the development of pro-social behavior and support for democratic values (Cohen 2014) and educational outcomes (Cohen et al. 2009; Thapa et al. 2013; Treviño et al. 2010, 2015). According to Cohen et al. (2009, p. 182) "school climate refers to the quality and character of school life" and is represented by the norms, values and relationships that characterize the social and learning environment of the school (Cohen 2014; Cohen et al. 2009).

School climate has gained relevance as a predictive variable for a wide range of student developmental outcomes, such as student mental and physical health, self-concept, and school retention (Thapa et al. 2013). For example, a positive school climate is directly related to student motivation to learn; it mitigates the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on academic results; it reduces aggression, violence and harassment; it is a protective factor for general well-being (Berkowitz et al. 2016; Thapa et al. 2013). School climate is also a relevant factor in the development of civic attitudes, as a school that promotes democratic practices and policies provides students with wider civic learning opportunities, which give students the chance to learn through the embodiment of the democratic processes (Wilkenfeld 2009). A democratic school climate will prepare students to act as responsible citizens in society, following democratic principles (Biesta et al. 2009). In this regard, a violent school climate has been associated with biased beliefs and attitudes of intolerance toward other groups upon the basis of race, ethnicity, class and gender among the students. Furthermore, negative and violent school climates are the expression of prejudicial attitudes in students (Cobia and Carney 2002).

Yet, school climate is a complex concept that may comprise a wide variety of dimensions, such as feelings of safety, positive interpersonal relationships, quality of teaching and learning, and the environment (Cohen et al. 2009). This study covers some of these aspects by using two proxy variables as a measure of climate: the perceptions of the students about their influence on school decisions and, teachers' perceptions of the social problems in the school.

4.2.4 Teacher Practices and Attitudes

Teacher practices and attitudes represent the final link in the complex chain of educational systems. It is through the daily display of teacher practices and attitudes within the classroom that the curricular and societal purposes expected from education take shape. Practices represent the materialization of educational aims, and teacher attitudes may also shape student attitudes in a variety of domains.

Effective teacher practices can be regarded as a complex construct, composed of three independent domains: (a) the use of strategies to support the emotional

development of students in the classroom, (b) the use of strategies to make productive use of classroom time, (c) the use of teaching strategies of instructional support to assist students to reach deeper levels of both understanding and metacognition (Pianta et al. 2011). Active learning strategies that allow students to build their own understanding and motivate them to deepen their learning processes offer more opportunities to develop profound understanding (Campbell 2008; Hattie 2009; Quintelier 2010). A broad approach to teacher practices suggests that promoting learning requires that teachers use diverse teaching strategies in the classroom, provide direction and redirection for students to understand content, and use evaluation to monitor student learning (Hattie 2009).

Besides instructional practices, the embodiment of democratic values by teachers is regarded as a relevant factor in promoting democratic values and attitudes in students, since civic education is a contextual process where both student participation and experiences at school are key in fostering democratic attitudes and practices (Biesta et al. 2009). Moreover, role modeling by teachers in the classroom and the school is an important factor for the learning of democratic values by students; through teacher attitudes and the relationships between students and teachers, important lessons are being experienced by students (Sanderse 2013; Veugelers and Vedder 2003).

This study considers, as predictors of attitudes toward diversity, the teachers' confidence in teaching methods, teachers' reports of student participation in class activities, and student perceptions about the openness for discussions in classrooms. Also, the study tests the relationship between student attitudes toward diversity and teacher attitudes such as teacher participation in school governance and the personal participation by teachers in activities outside school.

The evidence available has highlighted the relevance of teachers as a key factor for student learning and academic achievement (Akiba and LeTendre 2009; Hanushek and Rivkin 2006). Furthermore, teachers, through their practices, influence not only academic achievement but also other outcomes related to attitudes and behaviors, as is the case with civic participation or engagement (Dassonneville et al. 2012; Gainous and Martens 2011; Quintelier 2010) and civic attitudes (Campbell 2008; Quintelier 2010).

4.2.5 *Student Characteristics*

Student characteristics represent important inputs when trying to measure the effects of schooling on different educational outcomes (Scheerens 2000) for two reasons. First, it is necessary to remove the influence of student background variables when estimating the effects of school variables on student outcomes. For example, the socioeconomic status of the students is a variable that usually influences education results, and removing the variance in student achievement that is attributed to this background variable is important in the estimation of school effects. Second, student characteristics can also be considered as main predictors of educational results,

as in the case of this analysis, where it is relevant to identify whether there are differences in attitudes by gender, ethnic background and immigrant status.

In this chapter, student characteristics are considered in two different ways. First, and in relation to contact theories, it is expected that members of the same social group show more positive attitudes toward other members of the same group. This implies that immigrant students may have more positive attitudes toward other immigrant students. The same hypothesis can be stated for students from ethnic groups. In the case of gender, it is expected not only that female students have better attitudes toward gender equality but also that they have more positive attitudes toward non-mainstream groups.

Student demographic characteristics represent important predictors for student outcomes, as evidence has extensively shown for the case of socioeconomic status and family background (Borman and Dowling 2010). Regarding civic outcomes, evidence has also shown that factors related to sociodemographic characteristics of students have predictive power in relation to student achievement and other civic outcomes (Isac et al. 2014).

4.2.6 Civic Interest and Participation

Adolescence is a crucial age for the development of support for democratic values, including tolerance, which is one of the central principles of democracy in a globalized and diverse society (Sherrod et al. 2002). Essential to democracy, as well, is the development of active citizens who can fully participate in society. Civic participation can be defined in relation to an ample range of activities and types of participation.

According to Ekman and Amnå (2012), there are four types of participation, two corresponding to civil participation and two corresponding to manifest political participation. Civil participation is based on interest in political and social issues, which can be materialized as involvement (paying attention to political issues) and as civic engagement (taking action). Political participation can be exerted through formal political participation (electoral and contact activities) and as activism (extra-parliamentary participation). Non-participation or disengagement can take active forms (as anti-political) or passive forms (as apolitical) (Ekman and Amnå 2012). All of these forms of participation represent ways in which young people can enhance social capital and develop citizenship and democratic values. The school can be regarded as a crucial source for socialization on civic participation and promotion of civic engagement.

In the present study, civic attitudes and behaviors have been operationalized through two constructs. First, civic participation includes student civic participation in the wider community and student civic participation at school. Second, regarding the variables of civic interest, the study includes student interest in politics and social issues, student discussion of political and social issues outside the school, student support for democratic values and student attitudes toward their country.

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Data

The data used for the analyses were from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009 (for a description of this dataset see Chap. 2). The final sample used for the analyses included in this chapter varied slightly from the original dataset, as the set of variables involved in these analyses have specific missing patterns. Liechtenstein was not included in the analyses because the types of models adjusted did not converge due to the small number of schools in this country. There are two types of caveats in the data that should be taken into consideration in the present analyses. First, there is a limited number of immigrant and ethnic minority students in several countries, and the percentage of immigrant and ethnic minority students may not resemble country averages since the samples have not necessarily been stratified to be statistically representative of these groups. Furthermore, it is often the case that immigrant and ethnic groups are geographically concentrated in specific areas, thus performing analyses at country level with census data, for example, may be a way of studying this phenomenon of attitudes toward diversity in relation to these population groups in more depth. Second, there may be some caveats derived from the participation rates of teachers and the use of replacement schools; further details may be found in the ICCS 2009 technical report (Schulz et al. 2011).

4.3.2 Variables

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were student attitudes toward equal rights for women, all ethnic groups and immigrants. There is one variable corresponding to each group, which was estimated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and with invariance testing (for the specific description of the procedures followed to construct these variables see Chap. 3).

Independent Variables

The independent variables included in the analyses performed in this chapter are organized into school and student level variables, for a better understanding of the analytical strategy (Table 4.1). However, the description of the variables in the following paragraphs follows the organization of the conceptual framework.

The structural characteristics of the school are represented by the school mean of the national index of socioeconomic background and a dummy variable to differentiate privately managed schools from public schools. The diversity composition of the school is considered in the variables as the proportion of female, ethnic

Table 4.1 Variables included in the multilevel regression analyses

Variable name	Description	Scale
<i>School level independent variables</i>		
SCGENDER	Proportion of female students at school	Continuous variable with values between 0 to 1
SCETHNIC	Proportion of ethnic minority students at school	Continuous variable with values between 0 to 1
SCIMMIG	Proportion of immigrant students at school	Continuous variable with values between 0 to 1
NISB_GM	School average of the National index of socioeconomic background	School average of the factor scores with mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1
PRIVATE	Private school management ^a	Dummy variable with 1 = private and 0 = other
TSCPRO_C	Teachers' perceptions of social problems at school ^a	School average of the IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
TSTUD_C	Teachers' perceptions of student influence on decisions about school ^a	School average of the IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
TCHPART_C	Teachers' participation in school governance ^a	School average of the IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
TCHACT_C	Teachers' personal participation in activities outside school ^a	School average of the IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
CONFTE_C	Confidence in teaching methods ^a	School average of the IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
TSTCLA_C	Teacher reports of student participation in class activities	School average of the IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
PAR_GM	School average of students' civic participation at school	School average of the IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
<i>Student level independent variables</i>		
SGENDER	Gender of the student	Dummy variable with 1 = female and 0 = male
SETHNIC	Ethnic background	Dummy variable with 1 = ethnic minority and 0 = non ethnic minority
SIMMIG	Immigrant	Dummy variable with 1 = immigrant condition and 0 = non-immigrant condition
NISB_M	National index of socioeconomic background	Individual factor scores

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Variable name	Description	Scale
PARTC_C	Students' civic participation in the wider community	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
PAR_M	Students' civic participation at school	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
OPDISC_C	Students' perception of classroom discussion	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
POLDI_C	Students' discussion of political and social issues outside of school	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
VALP_C	Students' perceptions of the value of participation at school	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
DEM_C	Students' support for democratic values	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
INTP_C	Students' Interest in politics and social issues	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10
ATTCNT_C	Students' attitudes toward their country	IRT WLE scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10

IRT item response theory; *WLE* weighted likelihood estimator

^aThese variables were not included in the multilevel regression models for Cyprus, England, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia. This decision was based on the capacity of prediction of models for these countries

minority and immigrant students in the school, which measure the level of exposure of the students to diversity. It is important to recall the caveats of the sample (see Sect. 4.3.1) regarding the proportion of immigrant and ethnic minority students. The more balanced the proportion of students from different groups in the school, the higher the likelihood that they have opportunities for intergroup contacts and interactions. Conversely, in schools with more homogeneous groups, either very high or very low proportions of female, ethnic minority and immigrant students, there is a lower probability of intergroup contact. Student perceptions of the value of participation at school and teacher perceptions of social problems at school represent the two proxy variables for school climate. The independent variables measuring teacher practices and attitudes include teacher confidence in teaching methods, teacher reports of student participation in activities in class, student perceptions about the openness for discussions in the classroom, teacher participation in school governance and teacher personal participation in activities outside school. In terms of student characteristics, the analyses consider student gender, ethnic background and immigrant status, as well as the national index of socioeconomic background, as predictors at the student level. Finally, regarding civic attitudes and behaviors, the independent variables include student participation in the wider community and at school, student interest in politics and social

issues, student discussion of political and social issues outside the school, student support for democratic values and student attitudes toward their country.

4.3.3 Analytical Strategy

To analyze the data, we first estimated the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) of the attitudes toward equal rights for women, all ethnic groups and immigrants. This was done in order to disentangle the percentage of variance in these dependent variables that occurs within and between schools. The analysis was applied separately to ICCS 2009 data from each of the 37 countries. The second step in the analysis strategy implied the fitting of one multilevel model per country for each of the 37 countries under analysis. As anticipated in the previous chapters, multilevel modelling is appropriate for this analysis because it considers the nesting of students within schools. The general specification of the model is presented in Eqs. (4.1) and (4.2):

$$Y_{ijk} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X_{ij} + r_{ij} \quad (4.1)$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_j + v_{0j} \quad (4.2)$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{01} \quad (4.3)$$

Where Y are the different outcome variables and X represents a set of student-level variables (Eq. 4.1), while W represents school-level variables (Eq. 4.2), and Eq. (4.3) indicates that no random slopes are included in the estimated model. This method has been used in recent studies to analyze the effect of school on different outcomes (Leckie et al. 2011), as well as the compositional effect of the school in different outcomes (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002).

4.4 Results

We present our analysis of attitudes toward diversity by first providing a general overview of the decomposition of variance analysis, and then subsequently separating the variables that explain differences in attitudes toward diversity into the three categories, namely attitudes toward equal rights for women, all ethnic groups, and immigrants.

The analysis of variance demonstrates that schools seem to have limited influence in promoting attitudes toward diversity because almost all the variance in student attitudes toward diversity occurs between students grouped in the same school. The within-school variance of the index of attitudes toward equal rights for women ranged from 82.5 to 98.3 (Table 4.2). The within-school variance of the

Table 4.2 Percentage of variance between schools (intra-class correlation coefficient)

Country	Attitudes toward equal rights for women (% variance)	Attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups (% variance)	Attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants (% variance)
Austria	7.54	6.75	7.66
Belgium (Flemish)	5.46	5.76	8.11
Bulgaria	8.43	5.10	5.34
Chile	9.20	8.67	5.41
Chinese Taipei	3.05	3.07	2.17
Colombia	5.54	4.55	3.29
Cyprus	2.00	2.34	1.36
Czech Republic	4.00	3.51	3.75
Denmark	5.35	9.23	8.75
Dominican Republic	3.53	2.95	2.58
England	8.52	12.07	10.70
Estonia	5.38	4.04	5.34
Finland	2.85	2.46	3.63
Greece	5.18	4.78	4.36
Guatemala	5.54	5.70	2.20
Hong Kong, SAR	5.87	5.82	3.83
Indonesia	7.89	9.03	4.45
Ireland	10.70	7.32	6.16
Italy	4.94	7.81	9.28
Korea, Republic of	1.70	1.69	1.59
Latvia	6.36	6.39	5.86
Lithuania	8.44	5.98	5.40
Luxembourg	3.17	3.98	3.80
Malta	17.18	5.96	6.24
Mexico	7.37	7.01	5.06
Netherlands	17.46	9.81	8.15
New Zealand	12.38	10.41	8.03
Norway	2.27	2.86	4.84
Paraguay	6.45	5.40	5.24
Poland	5.39	6.93	6.09
Russian Federation	4.31	6.13	5.17
Slovakia	4.90	4.91	5.48

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Country	Attitudes toward equal rights for women (% variance)	Attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups (% variance)	Attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants (% variance)
Slovenia	4.31	3.59	5.87
Spain	4.92	5.12	5.49
Sweden	5.96	8.39	13.61
Switzerland	6.36	6.14	4.99
Thailand	11.33	9.49	3.21

index of attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups ranged from 87.9 to 97.7. Finally, the within school variance of the index of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants ranged from 86.4 to 99.0. This means that attitudes toward diversity are rather heterogeneous among students that share the same school, suggesting that differences among schools may not be the main factor creating positive attitudes toward diversity. This finding may help to limit the expectations of policymakers and societal groups about the relative influence of the school system in creating positive attitudes toward diversity.

4.4.1 Attitudes Toward Equal Rights for Women

Positive attitudes toward equal rights for women were positively related to student characteristics. First, as was anticipated, female students consistently showed higher levels of attitudes toward equal rights for women in almost all the countries analyzed, with the exception of the Dominican Republic and Paraguay. Female students held more positive attitudes toward gender equality in comparison to male students, with the size of this coefficient ranging from 0.66 to 7.65 across countries (Fig. 4.2).

The intergroup contact theory has not proven to be robust across countries in the case of attitudes toward equal rights for women. The variable used to test this hypothesis, the percentage of female students in the school, was only significantly related to attitudes toward equal rights for women in five countries. In Hong Kong, Chile, the Dominican Republic and Poland there was a positive relationship between the percentage of female students in the school and attitudes toward gender; the higher the percentage of female students in the schools of these countries, the higher the general level of positive attitudes toward equal rights for women among students. However, in Indonesia there was a negative relationship between the percentage of female students in the school and the attitudes toward equal rights for women.

Second, there are variables describing the experience of students at school that are also positively related to attitudes toward equal rights for women. The variable

concerning student perceptions of the value of participation at school was directly related to the attitudes toward gender in most of the countries, with model coefficients showing a range of values from 0.06 to 0.29 for this relationship. Latvia, the Netherlands and Norway were the only three countries where this variable was not related to attitudes toward gender equality. The perception of students that the classroom offers an open space for discussion is also directly linked to students' attitudes toward gender in most countries, with the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Korea, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, and Thailand being the exceptions. The coefficients across countries showed that a change of one unit in the index of perception of openness for discussion in classrooms produces a change of 0.03–0.18 in the index of attitudes toward equal rights for women.

Student support for democratic values is the most robust predictor of positive attitudes toward equal rights for women. The coefficients across countries indicate that a change of one unit in the index of support for democratic values was statistically related to a change of 0.18–0.39 in attitudes toward equal rights for women (Fig. 4.3). This finding suggests that promoting democratic values in families, schools and societies as a whole may also help to shape positive attitudes toward equal rights for women. However, it is important to recall that these findings come from observational rather than causal analyses.

The socioeconomic composition of the student body of the school was positively associated with attitudes toward equal rights for women in 22 of the 37 countries analyzed. The statistically significant coefficients found fall within the range between 0.99 and 4.44 across countries, suggesting that as the level of socioeconomic status of the school population increases, positive attitudes toward equal rights for women among students sharing the same school also increase.

Finally, it is also important to note that in five countries, namely Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Russian Federation, the Dominican Republic and Finland, students attending private schools showed systematically less positive attitudes toward equal rights for women.

4.4.2 Attitudes Toward Equal Rights for All Ethnic Groups

When studying attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups, recall that some countries may have low levels of ethnic diversity, a characteristic that may lead to limitations in the statistical analyses because of the low proportions of students from different ethnic groups captured in the sample. In Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark and Korea <1% of the students in the sample defined themselves as part of a non-mainstream ethnic group (see Table 4.3).

We found that female students generally had more positive attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups across countries than male students. This relationship holds for almost all sampled countries, with the exception of the Dominican Republic, Hong Kong, Malta and Paraguay. The magnitude of this

Fig. 4.2 Differences in attitudes toward equal rights for women between female and male students across countries. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

relationship ranged from 0.73 to 6.21, demonstrating that attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups varied substantially between female and male students.

The intergroup contact theory is not generally proven in these analyses because the relationships between attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups and the

Fig. 4.3 Coefficients of students’ support of democratic values as predictor of attitudes toward equal rights for women. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

percentage of students from ethnic groups in the school were not statistically significant in the majority of the countries. This relationship is significant in eight countries, but associations differ. For example, in Indonesia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands there was a negative relationship between the

Table 4.3 Percentage of students defining themselves as being from non-mainstream ethnic groups in ICCS 2009

Country	% of students from non-mainstream ethnic groups	Country	% of students from non-mainstream ethnic groups
Austria	1.70	Korea, Republic of	0.40
Belgium (Flemish)	3.80	Latvia	8.30
Bulgaria	10.80	Liechtenstein	1.50
Chile	0.70	Lithuania	3.60
Chinese Taipei	17.00	Luxembourg	54.30
Colombia	0.80	Malta	14.30
Cyprus	3.70	Mexico	2.40
Czech Republic	0.70	Netherlands	4.30
Denmark	0.70	New Zealand	1.20
Dominican Republic	1.90	Norway	1.40
England	1.10	Paraguay	36.10
Estonia	2.60	Poland	1.40
Finland	2.00	Russian Federation	7.30
Greece	0.80	Slovakia	4.30
Guatemala	5.20	Slovenia	1.60
Hong Kong, SAR	1.20	Spain	13.40
Indonesia	61.40	Sweden	1.00
Ireland	2.80	Switzerland	5.10
Italy	0.80	Thailand	4.20

Note Across all countries, 18.40% of students defined themselves as part of a non-mainstream ethnic group

percentage of students from ethnic groups and the attitudes of students toward them. Conversely, in Korea, Switzerland, the Dominican Republic, and the Czech Republic there was a positive relationship between these two variables, indicating that the higher the percentage of students from ethnic groups, the more positive the attitudes toward them. It is important to consider two elements in interpreting these results. First, the proportion of students from a non-mainstream ethnic background in the sample was rather low in several countries, and this may be biasing some results. Second, countries may consist of pluri-ethnic societies, meaning that they are composed of a multiplicity of different ethnic groups, and the conceptions of students from different ethnic and mainstream groups may be shaped by relationships between specific groups within the wider social context, at the national level.

This situation may require further investigation if attitudes toward ethnic groups are assumed to be shaped by student notions about the groups that integrate into their societies.

There are two variables related to student experiences in the school that demonstrated a robust relationship with attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups. Student perceptions that there is a classroom environment open to classroom discussions were generally related to positive attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups. Bulgaria and Korea were the only countries where the relationship between these two variables was not statistically significant. The lack of significant associations in these two countries may be due to the low levels of ethnic diversity in these countries. The statistical significance of this variable across countries was 0.041–0.132.

Student perceptions of the value of participation at school was the other variable directly related to positive attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups (Fig. 4.4). This variable was significantly related to attitudes in all the countries, with a range of 0.07–0.28 across all countries.

Civic interest variables were positively associated with attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups. Student support for democratic values was the most robust predictor of positive attitudes toward ethnic groups (Fig. 4.5), and was statistically significant in all the sampled countries. This relationship had values that ranged from 0.15 to 0.39, meaning that within these values is the observed rate of change on attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups for a one unit change in the index of support for democratic values. Student interest in politics and social issues maintained a positive and significant relationship with attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups in 27 out of the 37 countries analyzed, with coefficients ranged between 0.05 and 0.21 (Fig. 4.6). Instead, in Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Estonia, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Paraguay, Slovakia and Slovenia the effect was not significant.

When we examined the structural characteristics of the school, the average socioeconomic status of the school was the best predictor of attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups; this variable was statistically significant in 19 countries. In those countries where the relationship between the school average socioeconomic status and attitudes toward ethnic groups was statistically significant, the coefficient values varied from 0.77 to 3.06 on the scale of support for equal rights for all ethnic groups.

4.4.3 Attitudes Toward Equal Rights for Immigrants

When analyzing attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants, users need to understand the limitations of the data. The ICCS data reports rather small proportions of immigrant students in each country. Bulgaria, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Korea and Slovenia reported proportions of immigrant students below 1% at national level. This is a caveat for the analyses, since some of the coefficients

Fig. 4.4 Coefficients of students' perceptions of the value of participation at school as predictor of attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

may be biased due to the low percentages of immigrant students in some of the countries (Table 4.4).

The models for the analysis of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants show, again, that female students had more positive attitudes toward these

Fig. 4.5 Coefficients of students' support of democratic values as predictors of attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

population groups. Results showed that girls held more positive attitudes toward immigrants, with values ranging between 0.79 and 6.61 points in 30 countries on the scale of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. In the Dominican

Fig. 4.6 Coefficients of students’ interest in politics and social issues as predictors of attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

Republic, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malta, Paraguay and Thailand there were no statistically significant differences between female and male students.

In 20 countries, as expected, immigrant students showed higher levels of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants than non-immigrant students. The magnitude of

Table 4.4 Percentage of immigrant students in ICCS 2009 by country

Country	% immigrant students	Country	% immigrant students
Austria	19.38	Korea, Republic of	0.05
Belgium (Flemish)	10.72	Latvia	4.91
Bulgaria	0.73	Liechtenstein	34.34
Chile	0.73	Lithuania	1.68
Chinese Taipei	0.78	Luxembourg	43.14
Colombia	0.51	Malta	1.87
Cyprus	7.12	Mexico	1.77
Czech Republic	2.47	Netherlands	13.27
Denmark	8.65	New Zealand	23.26
Dominican Republic	2.03	Norway	10.20
England	14.91	Paraguay	1.96
Estonia	6.86	Poland	1.45
Finland	2.36	Russian Federation	5.66
Greece	11.32	Slovak Republic	0.73
Guatemala	1.74	Slovenia	10.16
Hong Kong, SAR	35.87	Spain	11.13
Indonesia	1.28	Sweden	13.86
Ireland	12.08	Switzerland	24.01
Italy	7.26	Thailand	1.39

Note Across all countries, on average 4.01% of students were defined as immigrants

such relationships varied between 1.27 and 8.97 points on the scale of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. In Chinese Taipei, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Paraguay, Poland and Thailand, immigrant and non-immigrant students showed no differences in their attitudes toward immigrants, after controlling for all the variables included in the model.

Non-immigrant students demonstrate that the intergroup contact hypothesis for immigration held only for 10 out of the 37 participating countries, but with important differences. In seven countries, there was a positive relationship between the percentage of immigrants in the school and the attitudes toward this population, in accordance with the intergroup contact theory. These countries (with the magnitude of the effects in parentheses) were Thailand (2.71), Lithuania (5.01), Switzerland (5.03), Sweden (5.79), Denmark (5.84), Estonia (9.46), and Latvia (12.20). Conversely, in Korea (−65.39), Luxembourg (−49.02) and Indonesia (−4.33) there were negative associations between the percentage of immigrants in the school and the attitudes toward this population group. The coefficient of Korea may be a statistical artifact created by the low levels of immigration in this particular country.

Fig. 4.7 Coefficients of students' perceptions of open classroom climate for discussion as predictor of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

There are two variables related to the students' experience in school that are directly associated with attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. Firstly, student perceptions of a more open classroom climate were significantly related to attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in 30 countries (Fig. 4.7). The magnitude of this

association varies between 0.03 and 0.18 across countries. It is important to note that an open classroom climate is not significantly related to attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Korea, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands and Thailand. Secondly, student perceptions of the value of student participation in civic-related activities at school also positively predicted attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in 34 countries, with a magnitude ranging from 0.06 to 0.24. Latvia, the Netherlands and Norway were the only countries where the relationship between these two variables was not statistically significant (Fig. 4.8).

In the area of civic interest, there were also three variables that were related to attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. First, student support for democratic values was the variable that most robustly predicted attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants across all the countries. The magnitude of this association ranged from 0.12 to 0.37 (Fig. 4.9). Second, student interest in politics and social issues also predicted attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in 25 countries (Fig. 4.10), with a range of effects starting at 0.04 with a maximum of 0.20. In Bulgaria, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Hong Kong, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain there was no significant relationship between these two variables. Finally, student attitudes toward their country also predicted attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in 25 countries, although relationships differed. There was a negative relationship between student attitudes toward their country and attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in Sweden (-0.15), Switzerland (-0.14) and Austria (-0.09). In the other 22 countries, there were positive relations between attitudes toward the country and attitudes toward immigrants with a range of magnitude of 0.06–0.22. In Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain there were no statistically significant relationships between these two variables.

In relation to structural features of the school, there are two variables that deserve attention. Firstly, there was a significant relationship between the average socioeconomic status of the school and attitudes toward immigrants in 15 countries. In 14 of them, the association was positive, with a magnitude that ranged between 0.92 and 3.10 across countries. Latvia was the only country where there was a negative association between the average socioeconomic status of the school and attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants, with a coefficient of 0.97.

Secondly, in nine countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia, Finland, Ireland, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Luxembourg and Lithuania), private school students had significantly lower attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants than public school students. In the Czech Republic, private school students showed more positive attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants than public school students. It is important to remember that these findings were derived from multivariate models that control for a set of student and school-level variables.

Fig. 4.8 Coefficients of students' perceptions of the value of student participation in civic-related activities at school as predictor of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

Fig. 4.9 Coefficients of students’ support of democratic values as predictors of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

4.5 Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this chapter suggest that attitudes toward equality in diverse settings have both commonalities and differences across countries.

Fig. 4.10 Coefficients of students' interest in politics and social issues as predictor of attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. The estimated effect for each country is indicated by a point on the scale of the dependent variable. The lines represent the confidence interval of each estimate. The dotted line indicates the country average

The first conclusion of these analyses is that female students, in general, hold more positive attitudes toward diversity than male students. This implies that girls may be crucial actors in leading the conversations on equal rights for diverse groups in schools.

The intergroup contact theory was only partially confirmed. The analyses showed that there was a positive relationship between students' attitudes toward equal rights for women and the percentage of females in the school in only four countries, meaning that the higher the proportion of female students in the school the more positive the attitudes toward gender equality. However, the lack of a positive association between attitudes toward equal rights for women and the percentage of female students in the school may be a consequence of the configuration of school systems, which tend either to have similar percentages of girls and boys in the same school or single-sex schools for boys and girls. In either of these two cases, it may be difficult to find significant associations because the percentages of girls and boys across school may be almost constant.

Looking at attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups, intergroup contact theory provided contradictory findings in eight countries. In four countries (Indonesia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) there was a negative relationship between the percentage of students from ethnic groups and student attitudes toward them, while in four other countries (Korea, Switzerland, Dominican Republic and the Czech Republic) the association was positive. However, it is important to consider both that the proportion of ethnic minorities in school in several countries was low and that it was not clear if there was a threshold of diversity in the school that may be associated with more positive attitudes toward equality among ethnic groups. Also, in pluri-ethnic societies, the attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups may be shaped by relationships between specific groups within the country.

The intergroup contact hypothesis for immigration held in 10 countries, but we observed differing relationships between the percentage of immigrants in school and student attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. In seven countries (Thailand, Lithuania, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, and Latvia) there was a positive relationship, while in three countries (Korea, Luxembourg and Indonesia) there was a negative association. Again, the results may be shaped by local particularities regarding the relationship of society with immigrants, as well as with the distribution of immigrants across schools.

An open classroom climate for discussion and the value that students place on their participation in civic activities at school were the two school variables with a general relationship with attitudes toward equality. An open classroom climate for discussion was directly linked to student attitudes toward equal rights for women in 30 countries (the exceptions were the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Korea, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, and Thailand), was associated with attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups in 35 countries (the exceptions being Bulgaria and Korea), and was significantly linked to attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in 30 countries (with the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Korea, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands and Thailand being the exceptions to this trend). Student perceptions of the value of their participation in civic related activities at school were also generally linked to attitudes toward diversity. This variable was positively associated with attitudes toward equal rights for women in 34 countries (the exceptions being Latvia, the Netherlands and Norway), was linked to positive

attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups in all the countries, and was positively associated with attitudes toward immigrants in 34 countries (the exceptions being again Latvia, the Netherlands and Norway).

Student support for democratic values and their interest in social and political issues are two elements that generally positively predicted attitudes toward diversity. Student support for democratic values was positively associated with attitudes toward equal rights for women, for all ethnic groups and for immigrants in all the countries analyzed. Student interest in social and political issues also predicted attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups and for immigrants, but did not robustly predict attitudes toward equal rights for women. This variable was positively associated with attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups in 27 countries (with the exceptions being Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Estonia, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Paraguay, Slovakia and Slovenia) and significantly associated with attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in 25 countries (with the exception of Bulgaria, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Hong Kong, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain). This means that, in most cases, students' civic attitudes play a role in promoting more positive attitudes toward equality of different population groups.

The average socioeconomic background of the school was related to attitudes toward diversity, although the relationship was less robust than those associated with civic interest (support for democratic values and interest in social and political issues). The socioeconomic composition of the school was positively associated with attitudes toward equal rights for women in 22 countries, linked to attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups in 19 countries, and associated with attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in 14 countries; in this last case, there was a negative association between socioeconomic background and attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants in Latvia.

Attending a private school is also related to attitudes toward diversity in several countries. In Bulgaria, the Slovakia, the Russian Federation, the Dominican Republic and Finland students attending private schools showed less positive attitudes toward equal rights for women than students attending public schools. Private school students in the Dominican Republic and Finland showed less positive attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups, while, in the Czech Republic, private school students showed more positive attitudes toward these groups. In nine countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia, Finland, Ireland, Dominican Republic, Chile, Luxembourg and Lithuania), private school students had significantly less positive attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants than public school students, while, in the Czech Republic, private school students showed more positive attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants than public school students.

The findings suggest several implications for research, policy and practice. From a research perspective, individual country analyses may provide more specific contextual explanations, revealing information on the organization of school systems, the policies and curriculum in place in each country, the distribution of students across schools and the societal trends in terms of attitudes toward diversity. It may also be interesting to research whether there are thresholds of diversity in schools that

are linked to more positive student attitudes. In this regard, it is possible that there might be thresholds associated with more positive attitudes for the percentages of female, ethnic minority and immigrant students in schools, or, put in a different way, segregation of students by ethnic or immigrant background or by gender across schools may lead to differences in attitudes toward diversity.

Policy implications include the educational system but extend to the wider society. First, an open climate for classroom discussions and genuine student participation in civic related activities at school show consistent associations with attitudes toward diversity. It seems, therefore, that schools have an influence on attitudes through their specific democratic and teaching practices. Second, it is important to note that the school system does not necessarily cluster students by their types of attitudes toward diversity, as it may occur, for example, with the case of socioeconomic status. This is clear because $\geq 90\%$ of the variation in attitudes occurs within schools. Such a situation poses an important question for further research into the relative weights that schools, families, friendships and media play in shaping attitudes toward diversity among students. Third, at a societal level, it is important to establish channels of genuine participation and influence in decision making, following democratic procedures, in a way that families and students can foresee the importance of developing participatory procedures in the school and interest in democracy and social issues. Furthermore, fostering an interest in political and social issues, and democratic values must be accompanied by concrete ways of applying such skills in the communities where families live in order for students to appreciate the value of any socialization effort in this direction.

There are some implications for practice that should be noted with care, since they are derived from an observational and not a causal inference study. On the one hand, it seems necessary to develop pre-service and in-service teacher training programs that provide teachers with the necessary tools to design and productively manage open classroom discussions. Furthermore, such programs should not be confined to a specific discipline, but can foster the notion of an open climate for classroom discussion across disciplines. On the other hand, schools need to develop appropriate practices to allow and foster open classroom discussions, besides designing and implementing genuine forms of participation for students. These forms of participation may entail students working together with others, respecting both the points of view of others and the results of democratic processes.

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