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**The Relationship between Religiosity, Opposition to Immigration  
and National Attachment in the Republic of Cyprus**

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## ABSTRACT

Immigrants are making up a continuously growing proportion of the European population and the issue of host country population attitudes towards immigrants is a significant social and political one that it is shaped by a number of factors such as sociodemographic variables (e.g. education, gender, political orientation), personal beliefs, cultural values, national identification and the representation of immigrants by media and politicians (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). This study explores the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards immigrants and the moderating variable of national identity in the Greek Cypriot Community Republic of Cyprus (RoC). This research draws on Social Identity Theory (henceforth SIT) as the foundation for the hypotheses and research questions. The results indicate that Cypriots who hold high level of religiosity, attend to religious services and pray frequently are likely to demonstrate negative attitudes to immigration. On the contrary, the more educated a person is and the more left-orientated politically, the more likely to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Additionally, this study showed that attachment to Cyprus moderates the relationship between the degree of religiosity, frequency of attendance to religious services, frequency of praying and attitudes towards immigration. The direction of the interaction effects suggested that lower attachment to Cyprus was strengthening the religiosity, church attendance and frequency of praying link to xenophobic attitudes.

The information provided by this study, at the regional level, might be useful to policy makers in terms of which changes should be aimed to reinforce, in order to lessen natives' negative attitudes towards immigrants and refugees.

**Keywords:** ESS R9, Cyprus, Immigration, Attitudes, Religion, Religiosity, National Identity

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Immigration and attitudes towards immigrants are among the most significant issues in shaping politics in the Western democracies and have brought matters of identity, intergroup relations and integration to the forefront of academic and political discussions. The question of what are the determinants of different attitudes towards immigration has led to a significant number of studies since attitudes form a complex phenomenon and a multifaceted process. The formation of prejudice, which is an unjustified negative attitude towards an individual or group (Allport, 1954), involves both individual-level and country-level factors such as socio-demographic characteristics, media coverage of immigration, country's integration policies and the economic conditions of a country. Therefore, attitudes differ at a country level and the social/cultural context in which individuals live (Davidov et al., 2020).

Several researches suggest that religiosity is a significant factor in shaping attitudes towards immigrants and for more than 70 years, scholars have been investigating the paradox of why religious people seem to support prejudice upon race, other religions, sex orientation and so on (Allport, 1950; Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). However, even though many scholars argue that religious individuals compared to non-religious possess and show prejudiced attitudes (Allport, 1954/1979; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009; Paloutzian, 2017), there are still conflicting research findings over the role of religiosity (Coebanu & Escandell 2010; Strabac, Aalberg, & Valenta 2014) and limited research concerning the Cypriot context.

The aim of this study is to shed light on the nature of the relationship between Christian Orthodox religion and attitudes toward immigration in the Cypriot context. In particular, this study explores the associations between various forms of religiosity (Independent variables) and attitudes towards immigration (Dependent variable), investigating whether the ethnic identity variable

contributes to shape (i.e. moderate) the above relationship in the Republic of Cyprus, using the theoretical prism of social identity theory.

The relationship between religion and attitudes towards immigration can appear inconsistent, as it varies between countries, so this study seeks to discover under what circumstances is religion associated with concerns about immigration. The objective is, therefore, to reveal the relationship of religion, religiosity and the attitudes towards different group of immigrants by treating national attachment as a moderator and by controlling for the variables that relate to political orientation (left/right wing), age and gender. An understanding of the effects of religion on opinions and behaviors linked to immigration is important, given the essential role of religion in the formation, functioning, and interaction of societies (Durkheim, 1915). Such understanding will help prevent the negative consequences of intergroup conflicts and discrimination and also overcome challenges in political, economic and social level. The results of such an analysis will contribute to the discussion on public immigration policies in RoC. To this end, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1 -What is the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards immigration in the RoC?

RQ2 -When religion impacts attitudes towards immigration in Cyprus?

In line with previous studies on the issue I propose the following hypotheses:

- H1 High levels of affiliation and religiosity increase anti-immigrant sentiments.
- H2 National attachment moderates the link between Religiosity and opposition to immigration.

To explore these questions, the thesis proceeds as follows. First, there is a description of the immigration issue. Second, I review the literature on anti-immigration attitudes and religiosity. Third, I

discuss the research design and methods and fourth, I present and discuss the results of the quantitative study. Finally, I conclude and suggest some avenues for future research.

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## CHAPTER 2: CURRENT MIGRATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Conflict, persecution, violence and human rights abuses in the world have caused high rates of immigration. By in the first half of 2018, asylum applications exceed one million (UNHCR, 2018) worldwide. By 2017, 65.6 million people had been forced to flee their homes, of whom 22.5 million were refugees (UNHCR, 2017). Images of migrants and refugees, mainly from the Middle East and Africa, trying to reach several Mediterranean countries have been in the news across Europe (Niemann and Zaun 2018). In addition, the latest geopolitical developments in Afghanistan have forced more than half a million people to flee their homes, so far this year, with thousands more trying to escape (<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/8/6127a8104/unhcr-receives-largest-private-sector-contribution-afghanistan-crisis-2021.html>).

Regarding Cyprus, in 2020 the applications for asylum in the Republic of Cyprus (henceforth RoC) were 7.094. For 1730 a negative decision was made while only 147 applicants ended up with refugee status. The pending cases from previous years amounted to 18.995 (<http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/asylumservice.nsf>). As of statistics released in 2020 by the same organization, the first five countries of origin of new asylum seeker applicants were Syria, India, Cameroon, Bangladesh and Pakistan, whereas according to the latest census, 20% of the population consists of immigrants from third countries and from Europe (Cyprus Ministry of Finance & Statistical Service, 2015). Further data about immigration indicates that in mid-2019, there were 191,900 international migrants in the RoC, with estimated net migration (between 2014-2019) of 25,000 immigrants (<https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data>).

Beyond the humanitarian crisis, the refugee crisis generated political issues in Europe, such as the absent of a coherent common policy among EU member countries on how to manage the crisis and intervene in a meaningful way (Storm, 2018). This has led different social and political groups (mainly

radical right wing parties), to employ an anti-immigration and an anti-Islam rhetoric agenda promoting realistic and symbolic threats towards immigrants and refugees (Akkermann, de Lange and Rooduijn, 2016; Storm, 2018).

Trimikliniotis and Demetriou (2014), argue that there are plenty of such nationalist discourses in Cyprus, "alarming" about the disruption of ethnic continuity. For example, Cypriot public and media discourses often stereotype immigrants as criminals, as the cause of unemployment or/and as source of destruction of the national culture. Such framing leads to intolerance and discrimination towards immigrants (Avraamidou et al., 2019).

## **CHAPTER 3: THE CYPRIOT CONTEXT**

### **3.1. The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and the National Identity of Greek Cypriots**

Cyprus became an independent country in 1960 with a population of 78% Greek Cypriots (Christian Orthodox) and 18% Turkish Cypriots (Muslims), as well as other smaller minorities. Since then, severe conflicts between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots took place until 1974, where a coup against the island's president Archbishop Makarios was staged by the Greek Junta assisted by a group of Greek Cypriot extremists. The coup was followed by a Turkish military invasion which led to the division of the island, Greek Cypriots to the south and Turkish Cypriots to the north. The segregation of the island led to the internally displacement of around 200,000 Greek Cypriots along with 45,000 Turkish Cypriots. Since 2003 a number of checkpoints opened, allowing individuals to move without restrictions between the northern and southern areas of the island (Nicolaou & Papadakis, 2020; Psaltis & Cakal, 2016).

Taking into consideration the above, the national identity of Greek Cypriots has been shaped according to two forms of identification. On the one hand, there is the superordinate national identity, as being Cypriot and on the other hand there is the ethnic identification of being Greek (Psaltis and Cakal, 2016). The ideologies underpinning these identities are the Hellenocentrism (Greek ethnonationalism) and the Cypriot-centrism.

Hellenocentrism is related to conservative, right-wing political orientation, placing the emphasis on the Greek identity of Cypriots with Greek Orthodox Christianity being an essential part of the identity. Contrary, Cypriot-centrism, is related to left-wing political orientations, giving emphasis to the superordinate Cypriot identity (Peristianis, 2006). On this end, Cypriotists accept the coexistence of different communities, religions, and cultures as a key element of the Cypriot historical experience (Panayiotou, 2011, p. 1). According to Mavratsas (1997, p.8), "it may be argued that the contrast between Greek nationalism and Cypriotism corresponds to the political opposition between right and

left". The Roc has, repeatedly, strengthened the ideological dominance of Greek nationalism, for example through the state-controlled education (Peristianis, 2006).

### **3.2. The Cypriot Religious Context**

Social environments affect intergroup relations and particularly attitudes toward immigrants, refugees and other minorities. Similarly, the association between religiosity and out-group attitudes changes in different social and religious contexts. The RoC offers an interesting social and cultural context since it is a highly religious and homogeneous in terms of the religious affiliation (Christian Orthodox), with the religion having an important role in shaping the national and social identity of the Greek Cypriots (Besic, 2019; Mora, Stavrinides & McDermut, 2013).

According to Besic (2019), in South- East Europe, religion became a strong component of forming the national identity of the population, while the role of the Church has been of high importance in defining national goals and ethnic-state relationships. The above are evidenced in surveys, which illustrate a high percentage of religious population in the RoC. Besic's research (2019), showed that the majority of Cypriots (96.8%) were Christian Orthodox, while only 0.4% answered that they don't belong in any denomination.

Besic (2019), suggests that religiosity in South – East Europe region could be better understood as a combination of religious belief, relation to God, relation to the church and religious practice. Each dimension consists specific items. "Religious belief" consists of four items measuring belief in hell, heaven, life after death, and sin. The second dimension, which is "relation to God", consists of four items: Perceiving him/herself as religious person, believe in God, seeing God as "very important" and getting comfort and strength from religion. The third dimension of religiosity is the "relation to the church" which captures how strongly people believe that the Church answers to moral problems, problems of family life, and social problems. The fourth dimension of religiousness is defined as

"religious practice". This dimension consists of three items: claiming that religious services are important at the moments of birth, marriage, and death. According to Besic (2019), Cyprus is among the countries with the highest level of religious belief, relation to God and religious practices.

Furthermore, the role of the institutional church is important in shaping people's attitudes. Even though in Western Europe the priesthood holds a positive attitude towards immigrants and multiculturalism, some Christian Churches in East-Central Europe, like the Catholic Church in Poland stand for nationalism and racism (Markowski, 2016). In the Cypriot context, Greek Orthodoxy is the major religious denomination among the Greek-Cypriots with the Orthodox Church being a wealthy and influential power system, playing a crucial role in educational, political and national decisions (Mora, Stavrinides & McDermut, 2013). In Greek-Cypriot schools, "religious education" is a mandatory lesson for all classes of primary and secondary education, promoting an idealistic view of the Greek Orthodox religion as the one-and-only true belief which is strongly linked to the Greek Cypriot national identity (Mora, Stavrinides & McDermut, 2013; Nicolaou & Papadakis, 2020).

In line with the above, it is argued that religion and attitudes towards immigrants and refugees are related, primarily through their mutual relationship with national identities (Storm, 2011). This relationship is often cultivated by political and religious stakeholders. As Karyotis & Patrikios (2010), suggest in their research on anti-immigration attitudes, based on Greece ESS data, that religious leaders can be important actors in shaping anti-immigration-attitudes, through merging national and religious identity. Their results suggested that religiosity is one of the strongest predictors of anti-immigration attitudes in Greece. According to the researchers, similar results might be observed in other countries where ethnicity and religion overlap, such as Cyprus, Serbia, Israel, and Poland.

Hence, it is important to explore what is actually happening in a country such as Cyprus, where religion is strongly embedded in Greek Cypriot's national identity and it seems that the Greek Cypriot society is more of a religious than a secular one. Taking into consideration the fact that the number of



immigrants is rising (Eurostat, 2019), there is the need for a better understanding of the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards immigrants in a context such as Cyprus, a highly religious and culturally homogeneous society. To the best of our knowledge and our surprise, no study has yet investigated this links in Cyprus.

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## CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL CONTEXT

### 4.1. Religion and Religiosity

For some people, religious denomination is just an identifier to differentiate themselves from adherents of other religious affiliations. For others though, religion is a strong private commitment. Thus, studies usually measure both religious affiliation and the level of religious commitment, or religiosity. Religiosity concerns attitudes, behaviour and values, whereas religious affiliation is something that is rooted in the cultural heritage and it resembles ethnicity (McAndrew & Voas, 2011).

A broad definition of religiosity is the degree to which individuals are involved in their affiliation and how the values of one's religion is incorporated into in his/her daily live (Saroglou, 2009). It can also be defined as participation in events that include particular denominational, behavioral and social characteristics such as prayer, baptism, fasting, weddings etc. (Singh, 2014). Other scholars define religiosity as “the formal, institutional, and outward expression of the sacred” (Cotton et al., 2006, p. 472), positively correlated with in-group favoritism and conservative values (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

Allport and Ross (1967), identified two distinct types of religious orientations, the intrinsic and the extrinsic, that are differently related to prejudice and values. According to the authors, people with an extrinsic religious orientation are moderately religious, viewing religion as a mean that promotes in-group membership, high social status and social support. Thus, extrinsically religious individuals follow religion for self-serving advantages and tend to hold prejudicial beliefs that support in-group benefits (Allport & Ross, 1967). Noting the strong relation between extrinsic religiosity and prejudice, Allport and Ross (1967, p. 441), further stated “a person with an extrinsic religious orientation is using his religious views to provide security, comfort, status, or social support for himself—religion is not a value in its own right, it serves other needs, and it is a purely a utilitarian formation. Prejudice too is a ‘useful’ formation; it too provides security, comfort, status and social support.” On the other hand,

intrinsic believers are religious individuals who are motivated by spiritual objectives and view religion as a deeply personal issue, internalizing values such as benevolence, modesty and love. Another dissimilarity, noted by the authors, is that intrinsic religiosity is linked with less prejudice, while extrinsic religiosity leads to prejudice.

In line with the above, Hall, Matz & Wood (2010), in their meta-analysis of the relationship between religion and prejudice, confirmed the link between extrinsic religiosity and prejudice but with a weakened significance in current Western societies. The link between religion and prejudice/racism might be due to the fact that religion is likely to be practiced within race, therefore people of different ethnic identity appear as religious out-groups (Altemeyer, 2003). According to Richerson et al (2016), religion is regarded to promote in-group cooperation and conflict with out-groups.

A social identity perspective advocates that religion is a central source of social identity (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2009) and according to the Social Identity Theory (SIT), when individuals identify themselves with a particular group, the shared values and beliefs of the group become part of their personal values (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is, in fact, a system of shared values and common worldview, which leads to a strong group membership that forms people's responses to various social and political circumstances (Hall et al., 2010). Therefore, religion is considered to have a dual function, as a system of beliefs and as a social identity which might intertwine with other identities, for instance the national identity (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Consequently, if religious group identity shapes social perceptions in a similar manner as national and other social identities, then religious individuals are expected to respond to others based on their in-group or out-group identity (Jackson & Hunsberger, 1999; Tajfel, 1981).

A simple, but very effective approach to analyze the multifaceted effect of religiosity was employed by Allport and Ross (1967), who adopted a combination of religious affiliation and church attendance. Their seminal work showed that, on average, affiliated individuals were more prejudiced

than nonaffiliated ones. Moreover, among the affiliated, those who attended religious services less frequently proved to be more prejudiced than those attending regularly. In other words, religious affiliation without intrinsic moral values could strengthen national and cultural identity which leads to more negative attitudes toward immigration. On the other hand, in line with religious teachings, religiosity might increase the values of compassion and benevolence, which leads to acceptance of immigrants.

## **4.2. Theoretical framework**

There are two intertwined theories explaining religious individuals' negative attitudes towards immigrants, Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Integrated Threat Theory (ITT). In few words, religious individuals of the host society perceive immigrants (with their unfamiliar culture, religion etc.) as a threat to their identity and a threat to the conventional societal and cultural order (Stephan & Stephan, 2017; Tajfel, 1978).

### **4.2.1. Social Identity Theory**

The assessment of the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards immigrants invites many social psychology theories to explain the dynamics of the inter-cultural, cross-ethnic, and cross-religious group interactions and how the social context affects intergroup relations. In this regard, social identity theory is among the most significant theories in providing an understanding of the relation between the self-identification and the different social groups to which one belongs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

SIT offers a clear understanding of the multidimensional construct of people's identity. According to Tajfel (1978: 63), social identity is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". Identification with groups offers to people

support and a sense of belonging, which are strong benefits for well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009). Hence, groups are sources of pride, prestige, self-esteem, and social support (Spinner-Halev & Theiss-Morse, 2015). Over time, people adopt the beliefs, values and norms of their group and they are motivated to preserve a positive sense of group uniqueness and a positive social identity.

The positive social identity is strengthened by favorable comparisons and evaluations between the in-group and the out-group. This, often leads to differentiation from the out-group through discrimination or prejudicial attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Additionally, a strong group identity might lead to prejudice against out-groups, especially if there is a threat to in-group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Immigrants can be identified as a group of people immigrating into the host country holding diverse culture, values and traditions than people of the host country. From this perspective, minority social groups, seen as out-groups, are likely to be regarded as intruders, especially if they advance principles, beliefs, and norms that contradict the dominant group (Reynolds et al., 2017).

The behavior of dominant social groups towards minority groups is motivated by two factors. Firstly, they need to maintain the status quo. In other words, they need to maintain their influence on socio-political and economic environments. Minority groups are threatful because they can grow and provide alternative ways of perceiving and doing things in society. Secondly, they need to maintain the existing social hierarchy, in which the dominant group stays at the top and influences many things. These factors lead to negative attitudes and subjugation of minority social groups, especially those perceived to present significant threats to dominant groups (Reynolds et al., 2017). These negative behaviors stem from the fear that minority groups can disrupt the social order and topple the majority group from dominance.

While examining how immigrants are perceived in Europe, Davidov and Semyonov (2017), observed that country-level attributes lead cross-country variations in how people perceive immigrants

in Europe. Country-level attributes include religion and immigration policies, among others. This study does not deeply discuss how religion, as one of the country-level attributes, mediate cross-country characteristics of individuals, but it indicates that religious practices shape people's attitudes towards immigrants in Europe. Klein et al. (2018) offers explanation regarding how religious practices shape cross-country characteristics of people and their attitudes towards immigrants. The researchers explain that prejudice occurs in three processes, including categorization, stereotyping, and evaluation. Religion facilitates categorization and stereotyping (us vs. them point of view). This process leads to a positive or negative perception of immigrants, depending on how people evaluate them and their representatives.

#### **4.2.2. Integrated Threat Theory**

Many studies examine religiously-motivated xenophobia in the context of the Intergrated Threat Theory (ITT). The theory is commonly used in psychology and sociology to explain that perceived threats fuel prejudice between two or many groups existing in a specific place (Stephan & Stephan, 2017). The theory proposed four components that lead to prejudice against out-groups, the realistic threats, the symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. Realistic threats are the perceived threats that pose a significant danger to groups' survival, such as threats about the economic well-being, threats to the political power, and threats to the survival of the group. Symbolic threats arise from the differences or conflicts in values, beliefs, norms, and worldviews of diverse groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2017). Because cultural elements are integral in people's identities, individuals tend to reject other people with contradicting identities.

Intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes impeded cross-cultural and religious interactions, leading to high tension and intolerance. The integrated threat theory framework posits that cross-cultural interactions are impeded by expectations of embarrassment, judgment, lack of safety, and lack of comfort (Stephan, 2014). According to aversive race theory, consistent avoidance of interaction with

non-familiar groups lead to a negative evaluation of such groups. Aversive racism stems from complex, ambivalent attitudes reinforced by intergroup anxiety (Murrell, 2020). In other words, intergroup anxiety prevents people from understanding the members of other groups, leading to negative evaluations of non-familiar groups. People's attitudes are likely to be formed through narratives formed within their groups, even if such narratives are biased or motivated by unreasonable fear (Stephan, 2014). Negative stereotypes emanate from pre-set judgments or frameworks used to evaluate other groups. These pre-set judgments often arise from religious descriptions of people who do not adhere to their principles and lifestyle frameworks (Reynolds et al., 2017).

Rowatt (2019) studied the connection between religiosity, political ideology, and people's attitudes towards immigrants. The researcher used a nationally representative sample to assess religiosity, political ideology, and prejudice towards immigrants in study 1 and 2. The researcher also assessed the degree of religious fundamentalism, political ideology, and symbolic threats associated with immigrants in university students in study 2 and 3. These four studies indicated a strong relationship between religiosity and prejudice towards immigrants through political ideology. A study conducted by Piumatti and Russo (2019), examining the relationship between religiosity, xenophobia, and tolerance towards immigrants in Italy exposes the moderators of this relationship. It reveals that religious individuals are restricted from inter-group contact by pre-existing negative perceptions of other groups. These negative perceptions arise from various forms of threat perception and social insecurity. These factors are widespread in the Italian immigration discourse and are central in norming processes. These two studies demonstrate a strong relationship between religiosity and xenophobic attitudes.

According to Allport (1954/1979), prejudice can be contextualized as a hostile attitude towards a person who belongs to a particular group, just because she/he belongs to that group and is therefore supposed to have the disagreeable qualities ascribed to that group (p. 7). As a result, individuals are

being categorized according to their perceived group identity, regardless of existing experience or knowledge about the individual, which is considered to be different and often hostile (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013).

Immigrant prejudice measures evaluate negative stereotypes, perceived threats to economic well-being, or perceived competition for limited resources. Perceived symbolic threats, such as perceived dissimilarity in morals, values, beliefs, or worldview, also contribute to negative attitudes toward immigrants (Stephan et al., 1999). Incomers question the cultural homogeneity and social stability, which it has frequently been shown to be perceived as more disruptive than realistic threats (Cowling, et al., 2020).

### **4.3. Religion and Attitudes towards Immigration**

The relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards immigrants is characterized as vague and despite considerable research in this area, the academic debate still continues. It seems that religion can, paradoxically, facilitate either tolerance or intolerance toward the specific group. So, the question of what are the reasons that link religiosity with negative attitudes toward immigrants is still current.

The question is partially answered by Allport (1954), who correlates religiosity with racial prejudice since immigrants are often racially diverse. In addition, immigrants who identify themselves with a religion that is different from the majority in a host country could also trigger religious intergroup biases (Johnson, Labouff, et al., 2012; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Immigrants could also be targets of stereotypes or negative prejudices based on other aspects of their identity, group membership, or reason for immigrating like economic or political reasons. For instance, asylum seekers who are Muslim are less likely to be accepted relative to Christians, as are people immigrating for economic reasons relative to political persecution (Bansak, Hainmueller, & Hangartner, 2016).

A meta-analysis of the association between general religiosity and racism conducted by Hall, Matz and Wood (2010), found a minor, but noteworthy mean correlation of  $r = .10$  across all studies



where religiosity has been assessed in terms of self-rated degree of religiosity or ratings of the subjective importance of religion in one's life. However, the evidence has been mixed. Some studies suggest that religiosity is negatively related with anti-immigration sentiments. For example, in a study using samples from 11 European countries (Scheepers, Gijssels, & Hellemans, 2002), the researchers found that higher rates of attendance to church and religious affiliation were related with higher levels of prejudice toward ethnic minorities whereas salience of religiosity and belief in God were associated with less prejudice.

Hence, associations between religiosity and prejudice seem to change over time and to differ to some degree depending on certain types of religiosity or religious orientations. In a research that compared associations between several religious variables and eight types of prejudice across eight European countries Küpper and Zick (2010), concluded that religious affiliation, church attendance, and the belief in the superiority of the own religious tradition are associated with higher rates of Islamophobia, xenophobic prejudice toward immigrants, racism, and prejudice toward the homeless. An interesting finding though was that, in the more secular countries, respondents that described themselves as "quite religious" often displayed higher levels of prejudice than respondents who described themselves as "very religious".

Research on the relationship between religiosity and prejudice is often focused on the different dimensions of religiosity. There are, as mentioned above, the intrinsic, the extrinsic and the fundamentalist approaches of religion, initially discussed by Allport and Ross, (1967). Other researchers acknowledged religious affiliation and religiosity as distinct dimensions and suggest that there is a need of investigate the differences of religious attitudes and beliefs between the religiously affiliated and unaffiliated groups (Hill, 2013).

Past studies also define the link between individual religiosity and prejudice concerning four critical forms of personal religiosity in association with religious motivations. There is the

fundamentalist approach to religion, and the intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity. In particular, religious fundamentalists have a negative outlook towards other religious sects, which manifests into negative views towards various minorities (Allport & Ross, 1967; Bohmn & Hjerm, 2014). Similarly, extrinsic believers, with an instrumental system to religious belief, have a positive connection with discriminatory behaviors. On the contrary, intrinsic believers are usually depicted as more experienced in their religiosity, in the sense that faith is supported as a core philosophy in daily life through practice and as an end. They appear to be less blatantly biased, but like other adherents, they show comparable rates of implicit bias (Croucamp et al., 2017).

A review of the research on extrinsic/intrinsic religiosity and prejudice, conducted by Gorsuch (1988), indicates that religious people with an intrinsic orientation are quite unprejudiced, while those with an extrinsic orientation are relatively prejudiced. Similarly, Hunsberger and Jackson (2005), in a review of the literature on the relationship between extrinsic religiosity and prejudice, stated that most research has shown a positive relationship between extrinsic religiosity and prejudice towards various out-groups such as racial/ethnic out-groups, gay/lesbian individuals and religious out-groups. As Hood et al. (2018), noted in their current review of research on religiosity and prejudice, the positive link between extrinsic religiosity and prejudice, as far as the negative association between intrinsic religiosity is well established in the literature. Yet, many of these dimensions have undergone several rounds of critique because it is difficult to know precisely what they are measuring (Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990).

For the purpose of this research and based on previous research, religious affiliation represents the identification with a majority ethno-national group (one could say, extrinsic religious orientation). Storm (2011) suggests that in Britain and Denmark religious affiliation without practice, is positively linked with national pride and negative attitudes towards immigration. In the same way, Demerath (2000) found that Christian denomination is often no more than an indicator of national and cultural

heritage rather than belief. These social identity point of view leads to hypothesize that those high in Greek Orthodox Christian identification should have negative immigration attitudes because of the threat they perceive by outgroups' beliefs, values and cultural characteristics.

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## **CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1. Data**

For the purpose of this study, data from the ninth round of the European Social Survey (ESS) were used ([http:// www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)). The ESS project is a scientific social research mapping attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour patterns of various populations in Europe. The project is a multinational partnership, and it is characterizing by high methodological standards of questionnaire construction, sampling techniques, data collection and translation. Thus, it offers cross-national comparability of data collected in all participant countries. Nine waves are available so far and it is intended to carry on collecting data using personal interviews, every two years (Mcandrew & Voas, 2011).

The survey consists of representative samples of all people aged 15 and over, residing in private homes in each country, regardless of their nationality, citizenship, or language. Individuals are selected with demanding random probability methods at each ESS round. All countries involved in the survey provide a sample size of at least 1,500 people, or 800 in countries with populations of less than 2 million (<https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data>).

The survey instrument of each round includes a core set of questions and two or three rotating modules on diverse topics (<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>). As far as the religion module, according to Mcandrew & Voas (2011), the ESS offers an enhanced analysis of religion than most general purpose studies, because it covers the three main parts of religious practice which are affiliation, practice and belief.

### **5.2. Participants**

The data used in this research are from a representative sample (735 individuals) of the Greek Cypriot population using the European Social Survey 9 (ESS Round 9, 2018). Since the focus of this

study is on attitudes of natives towards immigrants, respondents of a foreign nationality or who are part of an ethnic minority are not included in this analysis. Data were analysed using IBM.SPSS Statistics 25 for Windows. From the 735 participants, the majority were women (52.7%). Participants had a mean age of 55.16 years (min = 15 and max = 90), and their mean years of education were 12.00 (min = 1 and max = 40).

### **5.3. Ethical Considerations**

Participation in ESS surveys requires the informed and voluntary consent of all the respondents, whom their identities remain anonymous (<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>). The data used for this study are secondary, provided to me by the University of Cyprus Centre for Field Studies that collected the data, and therefore no direct contact has been made with any of the participant.

### **5.4. Measurements**

#### **5.4.1. Attitudes toward Immigrants**

For the variable, “anti-immigration attitudes,” a generic operationalization of the concept — namely, the answer to the question: do immigrants make the country a better or worse place to live in? is used. A broad measurement of attitudes toward immigration is frequently used in the academic literature for measuring anti-immigrant sentiment (Tillman 2013; Yavcan 2013) because it covers the different dimensions of threats (economic and cultural) from which anti-immigrant attitudes can arise. The scale of our immigration proxy ranges from 0 (“a worse place to live in”) to 10 (“a better place to live in”).

However, such a broad operationalization has the disadvantage that it cannot investigate attitudes toward different ethnic groups, thus three more items referring to attitudes toward immigration are included in the current research design. These items are designed to measure opposition to allowing

immigrants into the country. Each of the items of this scale inquires whether respondents prefer their country to grant access to many or few immigrants of a certain group. Respondents indicated their responses on 4-point scales (1 - allow many, 2 – allow some, 3 – allow few, 4 - allow none).

To measure attitudes toward immigrants, it is essential to identify the different group of immigrants since immigrants are not a homogeneous group. The first two items measure the extent to which one thinks his or her country should allow people of the same or of a different ethnic group to come and live there. The third question specifically refers to potential immigrants from the poorer countries outside Europe (<https://www.use.europesocialsurvey.org>). So, the above measures investigate anti-immigration attitudes through two scopes: one relating to a general view of immigration as something negative or positive for the host country and another associated to a negative or positive position about the arrival of new immigrants in the host country.

#### **5.4.2. Religion and Religiosity**

According to McAndrew & Voas (2011), the ESS section about religion provides a balance coverage of the issue of religion, which is better than most general social surveys. It covers the three key areas of affiliation which are the current or past identification, practice and belief (McAndrew & Voas, 2011). More specifically, the ESS measures Religion and Religiosity, using questions on religious' denomination, a self-evaluation question, the frequency of attendance of religious services apart from special occasions and the frequency of praying apart from religious services (<https://www.use.europesocialsurvey.org>).

Self-rating of religiosity is measured using question: “Using this card, how religious would you say you are?”, where 0 meant “Not at all religious”, while 10 meant “Very religious”. Participation in religious services, which indicates the level of interaction with a religious community, is measured using question: “Apart from religious activities at the occasion of social events as weddings, funerals, christenings, and circumcisions, about how often do you attend religious services these days?”, where 1

meant “More than once a week”, while 7 meant “Never”. Frequency of praying is measured using question: “About how often do you pray?” and the answers were the same as for participation in religious services (<https://www.use.europeansocialsurvey.org>).

Such operationalization of religiosity is aligned to previous psychological research according to which religiosity is most commonly measured in terms of frequency of attendance at religious services (assuming that more religious people attend services more often) and self-ratings of religiosity, namely asking people to rate how important religion is in their life or how religious they are (Allport & Ross, 1967; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Koenig & Büsing, 2010)

### **5.4.3. Moderator - Emotional Attachment to Country of Residence (The Republic of Cyprus)**

In general terms, national identity describes the intensity of feelings and closeness toward one’s own nation. In other words, it is a multi-dimensional concept that reflects different facets of an individual’s relationship with or attachment to his/her nation (Blank et al., 2001). National attachment has been shown to relate to attitudes towards immigrants, however whether the relationship is positive or negative depends on the nature of national attachment. Two forms of national attachment—nationalism and patriotism—are generally distinguished (e.g., Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Davidov, 2009; Wagner, Becker, Christ, Pettigrew, & Schmidt, 2012). Nationalism refers to an uncritical attachment and idealization of the nation as well as a sense of national superiority with respect to other countries. This form of national attachment has consistently been associated with anti-immigration attitudes (Blank & Schmidt, 2003). Patriotism, in turn, reflects pride in one’s country, particularly in its democratic political institutions and does not involve comparisons with other countries (e.g., Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001). This form of attachment reflects a constructive and critical view of the nation. It is congruent with tolerance towards immigrants and frequently unrelated to

immigration attitudes (e.g., de Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003) or even linked to positive immigration attitudes (e.g., Blank & Schmidt, 2003; see also Green, Sarrasin, Fasel, & Staerklé, 2011).

In the ESS survey, the variable that measures emotional attachment is: "How emotionally attached do you feel to Cyprus? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all emotionally attached and 10 means very emotionally attached". This is a concept that has been introduced in ESS core questionnaire on round 8 in 2016 and emphasizes on the emotional dimension of national identity, that is attachment to or sense of belonging to the collective (<https://www.use.europesocialsurvey.org/data>).

#### **5.4.4. Control Variables Socio-demographic determinants of anti-immigration attitudes**

It is suggested that, low level of education is quite systematically related to increased expressions of anti-immigration attitudes (Semyonov, Rajzman, and Gorodzeisky 2008). In addition, right-wing ideology and political conservatism are significant variables related to negative attitudes towards immigrants via the perception of symbolic threat (Semyonov, Rajzman & Gorodzeisky, 2008). According to the authors, two other individual-level factors affect attitudes, age and gender. Elder individuals might hold more a conservative ideology and worldview, which could lead to negative attitudes towards newcomers. Men, also, seem to hold more negative attitudes than women (Semyonov, Rajzman & Gorodzeisky, 2008).



## CHAPTER 6: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

### 6.1. Sample Characteristics

In the present study 735 Greek Cypriots participated, of which 47.3% were males and 52.7% females. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution for the nominal and ordinal variables of the participant characteristics. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 90 years with mean age 55.16 years and standard deviation 18.70 years. Regarding the level of education, it is noteworthy that 62.3% had a level of education up to High school or post-high education. More specifically, 6.70% did not finish primary school, 18.40% had an elementary school diploma, 8.20% had a Gymnasium school diploma and 28.70% had a high school/technical school diploma. The remaining 37.9% had a degree in a college or university or master or PhD diploma. The mean of Years of full-time education completed was 12.00 with a standard deviation of 4.98.

Regarding "Placement on left right scale", 541 respondents answered the question. It is found that about half (50.1%) declare "center (4, 5, 6)", 18.70% scales "Left" to 3, while 3.4% the scales 7 to "Right".

From the 733 participants who answered the question of belonging to particular religion or denomination, only 31 (4.20%) replied that they did not belong to a particular religion or denomination, whereas 702 (95.8%) answered positively.

From the 702 participants who answered the question of which Religion or denomination they belong to at present, the majority 687 (97.9%) declared that they are Greek Orthodox. It is found that among 734 respondents regarding the question "How religious are you?". 62.3% declares the scales from 7 to "Very religious", while 28.20% declare the scales 4, 5 and 6. Also, 9.50% position themselves on the scale as from "Not at all religious" to 3.

As far as the frequencies and percentages of the 735 answers to the question "How often do you attend religious services apart from special occasions?", it found that, 1,1% of the participants replied "Every day", 6.9% "More than once a week", 24.4% "Once a week", 23.5% "At least once a month", 34.4% "Only on special holy days", 6.3% "Less often" and 3.4% "Never".

The percentages of the answers to the question "How often do you pray apart from religious services", for 733 responders are the follow. Half of the participants (50.5%) replied "Every day", 12.4% "More than once a week", 10% "Once a week", 7.8% "At least once a month", while 6%, replied "Only on special holy days", 7.9% "Less often" and 5.3% "Never".

*Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution for the nominal and ordinal variables of the Participant characteristics.*

		N	Percentage
Gender	Male	348	47.3%
	Female	387	52.7%
	Total	735	100.0%
Placement on left right scale	Left	46	8.5%
	1	13	2.4%
	2	19	3.5%
	3	23	4.3%
	4	27	5.0%
	5	206	38.1%
	6	38	7.0%
	7	49	9.1%
	8	42	7.8%
	9	22	4.1%
	Right	56	10.4%
Total	541	100.0%	
Religion or denomination belonging to at present, Cyprus	Roman Catholic	3	0.4%
	Maronites	0	0.0%
	Other Roman Catholic	0	0.0%
	Protestant	0	0.0%
	Greek Orthodox	687	97.9%
	Russian Orthodox	3	0.4%
	Other Orthodox	3	0.4%
	Other Christian denomination	1	0.1%
	Jewish	1	0.1%
	Islamic	1	0.1%
	Eastern religions	0	0.0%
	Other non-Christian religions	3	0.4%
Total	702	100.0%	
Highest level of education, Cyprus	Did not graduate from Elementary school	49	6.7%
	Elementary school diploma	135	18.4%
	Gymnasium diploma	60	8.2%
	Lyceum diploma	193	26.3%
	Vocational education	2	0.3%
	Technical education diploma	18	2.4%
	College diploma (one year attendance)	13	1.8%
	College diploma (two – three years attendance)	45	6.1%

	College degree (four years attendance)	24	3.3%
	University degree	126	17.1%
	Master's degree (college)	11	1.5%
	Polytechnic degree - medical/master's degree (university)	52	7.1%
	PhD	7	1.0%
	Other	0	0.0%
	Total	735	100.0%
Belonging to particular religion or denomination	Yes	702	95.8%
	No	31	4.2%
	Total	733	100.0%
How religious are you	Not at all religious	26	3.5%
	1	7	1.0%
	2	17	2.3%
	3	20	2.7%
	4	25	3.4%
	5	107	14.6%
	6	75	10.2%
	7	118	16.1%
	8	121	16.5%
	9	79	10.8%
	Very religious	139	18.9%
	Total	734	100.0%
How often attend religious services apart from special occasions	Every day	8	1.1%
	More than once a week	51	6.9%
	Once a week	179	24.4%
	At least once a month	173	23.5%
	Only on special holy days	253	34.4%
	Less often	46	6.3%
	Never	25	3.4%
	Total	735	100.0%
How often pray apart from at religious services	Every day	369	50.5%
	More than once a week	91	12.4%
	Once a week	73	10.0%
	At least once a month	57	7.8%
	Only on special holy days	44	6.0%
	Less often	58	7.9%
	Never	39	5.3%
Total	731	100.0%	

Follow Table 2 present descriptive statistics for the continuous variables of the Participant characteristics.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the continuous variables of the Participant characteristics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age of respondent, calculated	724	15	90	55.16	18.707
Years of full-time education completed	734	1	40	12.00	4.989

## 6.2. Correlation to test relationships

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used, to investigate possible significant relationships between the dependent variables and the independent variables (Table 3).

It can be observed that there is a weak positive significant linear correlation between the age of respondent with attitudes towards allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $r=.166$ ,  $n=717$ ,  $p<.01$ ), allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $r=.204$ ,  $n=718$ ,  $p<.01$ ) allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $r=.184$ ,  $n=719$ ,  $p<.01$ ). On the other hand, there is a statistically significant negative linear weak correlation between the age of respondent with the item "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in" ( $r=-.119$ ,  $n=706$ ,  $p<.01$ ). These findings suggest that the older a participant the less open is to allow more immigrants of any characteristic (same, different and poorer race/ethnic group) into the country. Furthermore, the older the participant, the more he/she believes that immigrants make the country a worse place to live.

Additionally, there is a weak negative significant linear correlation between the years of full-time education completed with attitudes towards allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $r=-.180$ ,  $n=727$ ,  $p<.01$ ), allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $r=-.241$ ,  $n=727$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $r=-.169$ ,  $n=728$ ,  $p<.01$ ). On the other hand, there is a statistically significant positive linear weak correlation between the years of full-time education completed with the item

"immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in" ( $r = .158$ ,  $n = 723$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that the more the years of full-time education completed, the more the acceptance for immigrants of any characteristic (same, different and poorer race/ethnic group) and the more he/she believes that immigrants make the country better.

Moreover, there is a weak positive significant linear correlation between the placement on left right scale with the stance towards allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $r = .121$ ,  $n = 537$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $r = .138$ ,  $n = 537$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not significant with the item asking about allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $r = .046$ ,  $n = 537$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On the other hand, there is a statistically significant negative linear weak correlation between the placement on left right scale with the item "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in" ( $r = -.016$ ,  $n = 525$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that the more the right placement, the less the acceptance for immigrants of different and poorer race/ethnic group and the more they believe that immigrants make the country worse. In other words, the more right - leaning political ideology individuals hold, the less open are to allow more ethnically different immigrants and immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe and the more they believe that immigrants make the country a worse place to live in.

There was also a weak positive significant linear correlation between belonging to a particular religion or denomination with attitudes towards allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $r = .141$ ,  $n = 726$ ,  $p < .01$ ), allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $r = .190$ ,  $n = 726$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $r = .208$ ,  $n = 727$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Also, there was a statistically significant negative linear weak correlation between belonging to a particular religion or denomination with the item "immigrants make the country worse or better place to live in" ( $r = -.153$ ,  $n = 714$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that belong to a particular religion or denomination (Greek Orthodox), leads to less

acceptance for immigrants of any characteristic (same, different and poorer race/ethnic group) and leads to believe that immigrants make the country a worse place to live in.

In addition, there was a weak positive significant linear correlation between the variable measuring how religious the participants were with the item measuring their stance on allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $r=.206$ ,  $n=727$ ,  $p< .01$ ), allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $r= .253$ ,  $n=727$ ,  $p< .01$ ) and allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $r= .253$ ,  $n=728$ ,  $p< .01$ ). Also, there was a statistically significant negative linear weak correlation between belonging to particular religion or denomination with the idea that immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in ( $r= -.132$ ,  $n=715$ ,  $p< .01$ ). These findings suggest that the more religious one was, the less the acceptance he/she demonstrates for immigrants of any characteristic (same, different and poorer race/ethnic group) and the more he/she believes that immigrants make the country a worse place to live in.

Moreover, there is a weak negative significant linear correlation between the item measuring how often they attend religious services apart from special occasions with the item measuring stance towards allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $r=-.180$ ,  $n=728$ ,  $p< .01$ ), allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $r= -.217$ ,  $n=728$ ,  $p< .01$ ) and allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $r= -.185$ ,  $n=728$ ,  $p< .01$ ). Also, there is a statistically significant positive linear correlation between how often they attend religious services apart from special occasions with the with the item measuring agreement or disagreement with the statements that "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in" ( $r= .091$ ,  $n=715$ ,  $p< .01$ ). These findings suggest that the more often one attends religious services apart from special occasions, the less the acceptance for immigrants of any characteristic (same, different and

poorer race/ethnic group) and the more he/she believes that immigrants make the country a worse place to live in.

Lastly, there is a weak negative significant linear correlation between how often they pray apart from religious services with allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $r = -.161$ ,  $n = 724$ ,  $p < .01$ ), allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $r = -.217$ ,  $n = 724$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $r = -.185$ ,  $n = 725$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Also, there is a statistically significant positive linear weak correlation between how often they pray apart from religious services with the item measuring agreement or disagreement with the statements that with "immigrants make country worse or better place to live in" ( $r = .167$ ,  $n = 712$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that the more often they pray apart from religious services, the less the acceptance for immigrants of any characteristic (same, different and poorer race/ethnic group).



Table 3: Correlation matrix between the variables of this study.

	1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	6)	7)	8)	9)	10)	11)
1) Age	1	-.517**	-0.064	.128**	.285**	-.312**	-.306**	.166**	.204**	.184**	-.119**
2) Years of full-time education completed	723	1	.093*	-.120**	-.349**	.290**	.300**	-.180**	-.241**	-.169**	.158**
3) Placement on left right scale	535	541	1	.138**	.086*	-.106*	-0.003	-0.046	.121**	.138**	-0.016
4) Belonging to particular religion or denomination	722	732	540	1	.411**	-.279**	-.336**	.141**	.190**	.208**	-.153**
5) How religious are you	723	733	540	732	1	-.549**	-.650**	.206**	.253**	.253**	-.132**
6) How often attend religious services apart from special occasions	724	734	541	733	734	1	.522**	-.180**	-.217**	-.185**	.091*
7) How often pray apart from religious services	720	730	538	729	730	731	1	-.161**	-.270**	-.245**	.167**
8) Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority	717	727	537	726	727	728	724	1	.509**	.457**	-.174**
9) Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority	718	727	537	726	727	728	724	726	1	.796**	-.358**
10) Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	719	728	537	727	728	728	725	724	725	1	-.350**
11) Immigrants make country worse or better place to live	706	715	525	714	715	715	712	711	711	713	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### 6.3. Descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test

Basic descriptive statistics for the four dependent variables of this study are presented into Table 4. Specifically, the number of observations, the minimum and the maximum value, the mean and the standard deviation are shown below.

*Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the dependent variables of this study.*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority	728	1	4	2.50	0.744
Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority	728	1	4	2.93	0.640
Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	729	1	4	2.99	0.643
Immigrants make country worse or better place to live	716	0	10	4.29	2.343

The independent samples t-test conducted to compare possible differences for the dependent variables of this study, between gender categories. Basic results of this test are presented in Table 5.

*Table 5: Independent samples t-test, for gender differences on the dependent variables.*

	Male			Female			t	d.f.	P
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.			
Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority	347	2.44	0.76	381	2.55	0.73	-2.01	726	0.045
Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority	346	2.89	0.67	382	2.96	0.61	-1.47	699.75	0.141
Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	345	2.96	0.67	384	3.02	0.62	-1.12	727	0.264
Immigrants make country worse or better place to live	345	4.40	2.38	371	4.18	2.31	1.24	714	0.217

There is a statistically significant difference in the item that concerns allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority between males ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) and females ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD=0.73$ ;  $t(726) = -2.01$ ,  $p < .05$ , two-tailed). Men are slightly more open to allow ethnically similar immigrants into country. However, there are no statistically significant differences on

allowing immigrants of different race/ethnic group as majority ( $t(699.75) = -1.47$ , n.s.), immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $t(727) = -1.12$ , n.s.) and the belief that immigrants make the country worse or better place to live in ( $t(714) = 1.24$ , n.s.).

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## 6.4. Hierarchical linear regression analyses

A hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of the four dependent variables separately from socio - demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right political orientation), religion or denomination belonging to at present, religiosity, frequency of attending religious services apart from special occasions and frequency of praying apart from religious services (Table 6).

On the use of the item measuring to what extend the participant would “allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as the majority”, initial analyses indicated that the assumptions of linear relationship, multivariate normality, no or little multicollinearity, no auto-correlation and homoscedasticity were met.

For the first block the socio - demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right scale) were entered as block. The results of the first block revealed a significant model ( $F(4, 521) = 7.014, p < .001$ ) which explained 5.1% of the variance in *allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority*. In particular, the bigger the age, respondents tended to allow fewer immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $\beta = .115, p < .05$ ). In addition, the more the years of full-time education completed, respondents tended to allow more immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $\beta = -.019, p < .05$ ).

Furthermore, concerning the second block, (religion or denomination belonging to at present, degree of religiosity, frequency of attendance at religious services apart from special occasions and frequency of praying apart from religious services) its results revealed a significant model ( $F(8, 517) = 6.257, p < .001$ ), which explained 8.8% of the variance. It appeared that belonging to particular religion or denomination was significantly and positively correlated with allowing many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority ( $\beta = .104, p < .05$ ). More precisely, it appeared that those that belong

to a particular religion or denomination, allow fewer immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority than those that do not belong to a particular religion or denomination. Concluding, belonging to particular religion or denomination is the only significant variable in the final model.

Table 6: Hierarchical Regression Models Estimating Effects of Variables on Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority.

	Block 1			Block 2		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
(Constant)	2.436	0.204		2.988	0.376	
Gender	0.092	0.066	0.060	0.037	0.067	0.024
Age of respondent, calculated	0.005	0.002	0.115*	0.003	0.002	0.069
Years of full-time education completed	-0.019	0.008	-0.125*	-0.012	0.008	-0.077
Placement on left right scale	-0.007	0.012	-0.024	-0.017	0.012	-0.062
Belonging to particular religion or denomination				0.360	0.164	0.104*
How religious are you				0.021	0.019	0.073
How often attend religious services apart from special occasions				-0.048	0.033	-0.079
How often pray apart from religious services				-0.008	0.023	-0.021
F		7.014***			6.257***	
$R^2$		0.051			0.088	
$\Delta R^2$		0.051			0.037	
F for change in $R^2$		7.014***			5.271***	

\*p < .05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Once again, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of the item "allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority" from socio-demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right scale), religion or denomination belonging to at present, self-description as religious, attendance of religious services apart from special occasions and how often the participant prays apart from religious services (Table 7).

Initial analyses indicated that the assumptions of linear relationship, multivariate normality, no or little multicollinearity, no auto-correlation and homoscedasticity were met.

For the first block the socio - demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right scale) were analyzed. The results of the first block revealed a significant model ( $F(4, 521) = 16.649, p < .001$ ) which explained 11.3% of the variance in *Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority*. In particular, the bigger the age, respondents tended to allow fewer immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $\beta = .137, p < .01$ ) to enter the country. In addition, the more the years of full-time education completed, the more open they were to allow more immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $\beta = -.217, p < .001$ ). Furthermore, the more the placement on left right political orientation, respondents tended to allow fewer immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $\beta = .139, p < .001$ ).

Furthermore, concerning the second block, (religion or denomination belonging to at present, degree of religiosity, attendance at religious services apart from special occasions and frequency of praying apart from religious services) the results revealed a significant model ( $F(8, 517) = 13.400, p < .001$ ), which explained 17.2% of the variance. It appeared that belonging to particular religion or denomination was significantly and positively correlated with allowing many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $\beta = .110, p < .05$ ). More precisely, it appeared that those that belong to a particular religion or denomination, allow fewer immigrants of different race/ethnic group

from majority than those that do not belong to a particular religion or denomination. In addition, the more often they pray apart from religious services, the fewer they allow immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority ( $\beta = -.178, p < .01$ ).

In the final model, years of education, placement on left right political orientation, belonging to particular religion or denomination and frequency of praying apart from religious services are the significant variables.

*Table 7: Hierarchical Regression Models Estimating Effects of Variables on Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority.*

	Block 1			Block 2		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
(Constant)	2.758	0.173		2.862	0.289	
Gender	0.065	0.056	0.049	-0.006	0.056	-0.005
Age of respondent, calculated	0.005	0.002	0.137**	0.003	0.002	0.073
Years of full-time education completed	-0.029	0.007	-0.217***	-0.023	0.007	-0.170**
Placement on left right scale	0.035	0.010	0.139**	0.027	0.010	0.110**
Belonging to particular religion or denomination				0.333	0.137	0.110*
How religious are you				-0.003	0.016	-0.010
How often attend religious services apart from special occasions				-0.029	0.027	-0.054
How often pray apart from religious services				-0.059	0.020	-0.178**
F		16.649***			13.400***	
$R^2$		0.113			0.172	
$\Delta R^2$		0.113			0.058	
<i>F for change in <math>R^2</math></i>		16.649***			9.114***	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Once more, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of "allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe" from socio-demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right political orientation), religion or denomination belonging to at present, degree of religiosity, frequency of attending religious services apart from special occasions and How often pray apart from religious services (Table 8). Initial analyses indicated that the assumptions of linear relationship, multivariate normality, no or little multicollinearity, no auto-correlation and homoscedasticity were met.

For the first block the socio - demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right political orientation) were analyzed. The results of the first block revealed a significant model ( $F(4, 521) = 12.355, p < .001$ ) which explained 8.7% of the variance in allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe. In particular, the bigger the age, respondents tended to allow fewer immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $\beta = .161, p < .05$ ). In addition, the more the years of full-time education completed, respondents tended to allow more immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $\beta = -.134, p < .05$ ). Furthermore, the more right the placement on left right political orientation, respondents tended to allow fewer immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $\beta = .156, p < .001$ ).

Furthermore, concerning the second block, (religion or denomination belonging to at present, how religious are you, how often attend religious services apart from special occasions and how often pray apart from religious services) its results revealed a significant model ( $F(8, 517) = 12.183, p < .001$ ), which explained 15.9% of the variance. It appeared that belonging to particular religion or denomination was significantly and positively correlated with allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $\beta = .160, p < .001$ ). More precisely, it appeared that those who belong to a particular religion or denomination, allow less immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe



than those that do not belong to a particular religion or denomination. In addition, the more often they pray apart from religious services, the fewer they allow immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe ( $\beta = -.164, p < .01$ ).

Concluding, age, placement on left right political orientation, belonging to particular religion or denomination and frequency of praying apart from religious services are the significant variables in the final model to explain allowing many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe.

*Table 8: Hierarchical Regression Models Estimating Effects of Variables on Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe.*

	Block 1			Block 2		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
(Constant)	2.623	0.173		2.360	0.288	
Gender	0.058	0.056	0.044	-0.013	0.056	-0.010
Age of respondent, calculated	0.006	0.002	0.161**	0.004	0.002	0.103**
Years of full-time education completed	-0.018	0.007	-0.134**	-0.010	0.007	-0.079
Placement on left right scale	0.038	0.010	0.156***	0.030	0.010	0.122**
Belonging to particular religion or denomination				0.479	0.137	0.160***
How religious are you				0.009	0.016	0.035
How often attend religious services apart from special occasions				-0.001	0.027	-0.001
How often pray apart from at religious services				-0.054	0.020	-0.164**
F		12.355***			12.183***	
$R^2$		0.087			0.159	
$\Delta R^2$		0.087			0.072	
F for change in $R^2$		12.355***			11.057***	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Lastly, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in" from socio-demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right political orientation), religion or denomination belonging to at present, degree of religiosity, frequency of attendance to religious services apart from special occasions and frequency of praying apart from religious services (Table 9). Initial analyses indicated that the assumptions of linear relationship, multivariate normality, no or little multicollinearity, no auto-correlation and homoscedasticity were met.

For the first block the socio - demographic variables (age, gender, years of education and placement on left right political orientation) were analyzed. The results of the first block revealed a significant model ( $F(4, 509) = 4.569, p < .011$ ) which explained 3.5% of the variance in variable "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in". In particular, the more the years of full-time education completed, respondents tended to believe that immigrants make the country a better place to live in ( $\beta = .122, p < .05$ ).

Furthermore, concerning the second block, (religion or denomination belonging to at present, degree of religiosity, frequency of attendance to religious services apart from special occasions and frequency of praying apart from religious services) its results revealed a significant model ( $F(8, 505) = 4.017, p < .001$ ), which explained 6,0% of the variance. It appeared that belonging to particular religion or denomination was significantly and negatively correlated with the item "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live" ( $\beta = -.116, p < .05$ ). More precisely, it appeared that those who belong to a particular religion or denomination, believe less than those that do not belong to a particular religion or denomination, that immigrants make country a better place to live.

Concluding, only belonging to particular religion or denomination is a significant variable in the final model to explain the variable "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in".

Table 9: Hierarchical Regression Models Estimating Effects of Variables on Immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live in.

	Block 1			Block 2		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
(Constant)	4.496	0.641		4.837	1.103	
Gender	-0.196	0.209	-0.041	-0.067	0.213	-0.014
Age of respondent, calculated	-0.011	0.007	-0.083	-0.007	0.007	-0.051
Years of full-time education completed	0.059	0.025	0.122*	0.047	0.025	0.096
Placement on left right scale	-0.024	0.038	-0.027	-0.007	0.039	-0.008
Belonging to particular religion or denomination				-1.247	0.523	-0.116*
How religious are you				0.028	0.059	0.031
How often attend religious services apart from special occasions				0.021	0.105	0.011
How often pray apart from at religious services				0.125	0.074	0.106
F		4.569***			4.017***	
$R^2$		0.035			0.060	
$\Delta R^2$		0.035			0.025	
F for change in $R^2$		4.569***			3.379***	

\*p < .05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

## **6.5. Moderation analysis with national identification via the use of Process v4.0**

A number of moderation models were tested with the degree of emotional attachment to the Country as a moderator of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of our study. The results are presented in Tables 10,11, 12, 13. The findings of Table 10 suggest that the effect of belonging to a religious denomination on all dependent variables suggesting xenophobic variables was not moderated by attachment to the country. However, the findings reported in Table 11 for the effects of degree of religiosity on all dependent variables revealed a consistent moderation effect on three out of the four dependent variables measuring xenophobic attitudes. The moderation effects suggested that those lower on attachment to Cyprus were more likely to have religiosity linked to xenophobic attitudes. Similarly, in Table 12 the same trend was revealed in one out of four dependent variables for attendance in religious practices. Finally, in Table 13 the same trend was revealed in two out of four dependent variables for frequency of praying.

Table 10: Moderated Results from the Process Output for Estimating Effects of Variables based on Belonging to particular religion or denomination \* How emotionally attached to country.

		Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority			Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority			Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe			Immigrants make country worse or better place to live		
		Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p
X	Belonging to particular religion or denomination	0.599	0.544	0.271	1.373	0.456	0.003	0.991	0.462	0.033	-1,737	1,713	0,311
W	How emotionally attached to country	0.015	0.063	0.817	0.142	0.053	0.007	0.070	0.054	0.193	-0,075	0,200	0,708
X*W	Belonging to particular religion or denomination * How emotionally attached to country	-0.010	0.065	0.873	-0.098	0.054	0.071	-0.042	0.055	0.441	0,000	0,205	0,999
	(Constant)	1.882	0.529	<0.001	1.197	0.443	0.007	1.788	0.449	<0.001	6,603	1,665	<0,001
F		F(3,722)=4.9172***			F(3,722)=16.196***			F(3,723)= 13.266***			F(3,710)= 6,6928***		
R <sup>2</sup>		0.020			0.063			0.052			0,028		

Table 11: Moderated Results from the Process Output for Estimating Effects of Variables based on Degree of Religiosity \* How emotionally attached to country.

		Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority			Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority			Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe			Immigrants make country worse or better place to live		
		Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p
X	How religious are you	0.178	0.043	<0.001	0.153	0.037	<0.001	0.138	0.037	<0.001	-0.325	0.140	0.020
W	How emotionally attached to country	0.064	0.033	0.054	0.098	0.033	0.001	0.063	0.029	0.026	-0.193	0.107	0.072
X*W	How religious are you * How Emotionally attached to country	-0.013	0.005	0.007	-0.011	0.028	0.007	-0.009	0.004	0.034	0.025	0.016	0.118
	(Constant)	1.532	0.278	<0.001	1.715	0.004	<0.001	2.034	0.238	<0.001	6.669	0.893	0.000
F		F(3,723)=13.7305***			F(3,723)=21.202***			F(3,724)= 16.1957***			F(3,711)= 5.320***		
R <sup>2</sup>		0.054			0.081			0.071			0.022		

Table 12: Moderated Results from the Process Output for Estimating Effects of Variables based on How often attend religious services apart from special occasions \* How emotionally attached to country.

		Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority			Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority			Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe			Immigrants make country worse or better place to live		
		Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p
X	How often attend religious services apart from special occasions	-0.394	0.099	<0.001	-0.241	0.084	0.004	-0.244	0.086	0,005	0.483	0.318	0.129
W	How emotionally attached to country	-0.143	0.050	0.004	-0.025	0.042	0.548	-0.051	0,043	0,236	0.091	0.160	0.571
X*W	How often attend religious services apart from special occasions * How emotionally attached to	0.033	0.011	0.003	0.016	0.009	0.095	0.018	0.010	0.068	-0.037	0.036	0.298
	(Constant)	4.203	0.449	<0.001	3.586	0.381	<0.001	3.817	0,388	<0.001	2.822	1.439	0.050
F		F(3,724)=11.067***			F(3,724)=17.372***			F(3,725)= 11.085**			F(3,712)= 3.165***		
R <sup>2</sup>		0.043			0.067			0.044			0.013		

Table 13: Moderated Results from the Process Output for Estimating Effects of Variables based on How often pray apart from at religious services \* How emotionally attached to.

		Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority			Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority			Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe			Immigrants make country worse or better place to live		
		Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p
X	How often pray apart from religious services	-0.159	0.061	0.009	-0.198	0.051	<0.001	-0.205	0.051	<0.001	0.126	0.191	0.510
W	How emotionally attached to country	-0.049	0.027	0.067	-0.019	0.022	0.388	-0.041	0.023	0.067	-0.049	0.084	0.559
X*W	How often pray apart from special occasions * How emotionally attached to	0.011	0.007	0.113	0.014	0.006	0.017	0.015	0.006	0.011	0.008	0.022	0.719
	(Constant)	3.093	0.245	<0.001	3.307	0.204	<0.001	3.555	0.207	<0.001	4.227	0.770	<0.001
F		F(3,720)=7.513***			F(3,720)= 22.329***			F(3,721)= 17.685**			F(3,708)= 6.922***		
R <sup>2</sup>		0.030			0,067			0.069			0.029		

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

Political debates about immigration and the attitudes that natives hold for immigrants and refugees are likely to continue for the years to come, especially in states like the RoC where both the President and the Minister of Interior continuously use anti-immigration rhetoric and practices (Nicolaou & Papadakis, 2020). Throughout the present study, religion, national identity and sociodemographic determinants have been studied in relation to the influence they have on attitudes towards immigrants and refugees in the Republic of Cyprus. Data from the 9th round of ESS were used to analyse how these determining factors shape attitudes towards immigration, in the RoC during 2018.

To begin with, despite the fact that in most of the European countries self-identification as ‘not religious’ has increased and church attendance has declined (Grzymala-Busse, 2012), in the RoC the vast majority of the responders (95,8%) answered that they do belong to a religion or denomination, namely the Greek Orthodox religion and for the question "how religious are you", 62,3% declare from the scales from 7 to "very religious". As far as the church attendance 24,4% of the participants replied that they go to church once a week, 23,5% at least once a month and 34,4% only on special holy days. In addition, half of the participants (50,5%) replied that they do pray every day.

This research provided, also, a general picture of the average level of opposition to immigration in the RoC. As described already, the participants were asked independently about their views regarding people of the same or different race/ethnicity and people from poorer countries outside Europe. It is clear that most respondents are not open to allow many ethnically same or different immigrants into the country (mean: 2.5 and 2.93) nor immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe (mean: 2.99). As far as the perception of if "immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live

in", it seems that respondents' beliefs are not in favor of the notion that immigrants make the country a better place to live in (mean: 4.29).

The study also showed that religious identification, high levels of self-reported religiosity, frequency of service attendance and frequency of praying lead to opposition to immigration, for the three categories of immigrants. Our findings suggest that there is no evidence for the curvilinear nature of the relationship between church attendance and prejudice, as proposed by some researches, who suggested that frequent attenders are less prejudiced than infrequent attenders (Adomo et al., 1950; Allport & Ross, 1967; Smith & Woodberry, 2000, Ladini et al., 2021). In particular, Allport and Ross, (1967), found that even though all religious people are more prejudiced than non-religious individuals, believers that attend to religious services more often are less prejudiced than those who attend to religious services less often.

However, analyzing data from seven waves (2002–2014) of the ESS, Storm (2018), concluded that Catholic and Orthodox countries with higher levels of religious attendance (such as Poland and Greece) usually have more opposition to immigration than more secular and protestant countries like Great Britain and Sweden. Maybe the case of the RoC is more similar to countries such as Greece and Poland. In addition, findings from previous cross-national researches confirm that the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards immigration differs between countries, depending on their specific religious contexts (Bohman & Hjerm, 2014; Storm, 2018). Bohman and Hjerm (2014), concluded that religious individuals are more tolerant towards immigrants in countries where the government does not favour one religion. In contrast, when religious individuals conformed to the national religious norms, they had more negative attitudes towards immigrants. To this end, as mentioned before, the government of the RoC clearly favors the Greek Orthodox religion.

It is also clear, from the analysis that the more educated natives tended to score higher on their willingness to accept immigrants. This results have been illustrated in many previous studies (Cowling,



Anderson & Ferguson, 2019; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Storm, 2018). Cowling, Anderson & Ferguson, 2019, in their meta-analysis research about prejudice-relevant correlates of attitudes towards refugees, clearly concluded that there is a small but significant negative correlation between levels of education and attitudes, which suggests that lower levels of education are associated with increases in prejudice. This finding is also in line with Hainmueller and Hiscox (2005) who interpret this relationship as a result of increasing ethnical and racial tolerance with education.

A rather mixed picture was found with respect to gender. Surprisingly, women display a more negative attitude towards immigrants of same ethnicity but on average there are no different attitudes than men for the two other categories of immigrants. While the research of Bohman and Hjerm, (2014) using data from the European Social Survey (ESS), indicates that men are slightly more likely to have more positive attitudes towards immigration compared to women, other authors using Cross-Country ESS research, such as Brenner & Fertig, 2006, concluded that socio-demographic determinants such as gender or marital status do not have a systematic role across countries.

The findings of the current study about left right political orientation and age display the expected pattern of influence. Right-wing supporters are more intolerant to immigration than left-wing supporters whereas attitudes towards immigration are more positive among younger individuals than older respondents. These findings are in line with previous researches (e.g. Ladini et al., (2021); Semyonov, Rajjman & Gorodzeisky, 2008).

The findings generally supported the first hypothesis that religious affiliation and religiosity is linked to negative attitudes towards immigration.

Another contribution of this study is that we identify that attachment to Cyprus moderates the relationship between religiosity, attitudes towards immigration and frequency of praying. The direction of the interaction effects suggested that lower attachment to Cyprus was strengthening the religiosity, church attendance and frequency of praying link to xenophobic attitudes. This finding doesn't support

the second hypothesis of the research. One possible explanation is that probably the participants with lower attachment to Cyprus, are closer to more Greek centric views on identity (Psaltis and Cakal, 2016) that are well known for the close connection between religiosity and nationalism, known as adhering to the hellenochristian ideals, tied to Greek culture and politically attached to the Greek state (Peristianis, 2006; Mavratsas, 1997). According to Mavratsas (1997, p. 14), the Greek-Cypriot nationalism is linked to nationalist ideology, which emphasize the superiority of Greek culture, the "long history of the Greeks of Cyprus", the superiority of Greek education, and the Hellenochristian ideas.

As noted, immigration is an important topic in the public policy debate throughout the world. Since people's views and attitudes towards immigration and immigrant-related issues are extremely important for shaping migration policies, the key question about how such attitudes are formed will always be relevant. The current study contributes to shed light on the individual determinants of opposition to immigration and the role of religiosity in a context such as the Cypriot, one in which there are many challenges regarding immigration issues. Attitudes toward immigration are, indeed, linked to religious identity, political orientation, age, education and interact with the social identity of the native population. Belonging to the dominant religion of the country is considered more culturally conformist than non-religiosity (Storm 2011a).

However, the optimistic message of this study is that progress toward more positive attitudes towards immigration might be achieved by shifting towards a more secular education and a state, in general. The present research findings have some important policy suggestions such as state policies on religion. A key facet of the state - religion relationship is whether the state "favors" one religion over others. If so, state actions and policies could strengthen the identity within the favorable religious group and increase the perceived differences between other religious groups, both of which contribute to the development of prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Bohman & Hjerm, 2014).

Discriminative and negative attitudes towards different groups, such as immigrants, arise when there are boundaries between groups, with limited inter-group contact, along with the sense of superiority of one's own group (Allport, 1966; Tajfel, 1978). When state strategies support religious hierarchies and group differences it is expected that the antipathy towards immigrants among the religious natives would be greater (Bohman & Hjerm, 2014). Therefore, the state and policy stakeholders should strongly support secular education and the halt of the involvement of the Greek Cypriot priesthood in state decisions.

## **7.1. Limitations**

A potential limitation of the present research might be the employed quantitative research approach. A mixed-method research could be very valuable in producing results that are both rich and deep (Muijs, 2011). However, the use of secondary data couldn't make this possible. Another limitation is the lack of consideration of the effect of the immigration policy of the RoC on attitudes towards immigrants and other minorities, since national policies do have an impact on native's population attitudes (Brenner & Fertig, 2006). In other words, investigating the link between factors such as national policies and social representations, and individual characteristics such as religion, identities and political orientation would have given a broader perspective of the determinants of attitudes (Esses, Deaux, Lalonde, & Brown, 2010).

It would be more expounding, also, to examine what meanings Greek Cypriots attribute to the multidimensional concept of national identity. According to Card, Dustmann & Preston (2005), even though strong identification with a specific social/national identity could lead to negative attitudes toward immigrants, it could also reinforce more positive attitudes if the identity is strongly associated to concepts such as egalitarianism, fairness and social justice.

Furthermore, considering the complex nature of religiosity as self-reported psychological concept, results may change if adopt different measures of this construct. The last limitation of this

study is that the questionnaire does not include information on participants' level of contact with immigrants in their daily interactions. Therefore, it wasn't possible to measure the impact of contact with immigrants on attitudes.

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