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# **Gender Equality and Attitudes towards Immigrants in Europe: A Cross-national Analysis**

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# ***Gender Equality and Attitudes towards Immigrants in Europe: A Cross-national Analysis***

Ludovica Maria Chieppa

## ***Abstract***

Although previous research has revealed the impact of individual and contextual elements on attitudes toward immigrants across Europe, a gender-focused study of European anti-immigrant attitudes is still lacking. This study examines the role of individuals' gender and macro structures of gender equality in shaping attitudes toward immigrants through the diffusion of benevolent and universalist human values. Drawing on the European Social Survey 2018 and the 2020 Gender Equality Index for 24 European countries, more gender-equal countries are found to be more tolerant toward immigrants, due to their higher self-transcendent values and lower conservation values. Also, no gender differences in attitudes toward immigrants have been found. These findings open the debate on the relationship between gender, gender equality, basic human values, and attitudes toward immigrants, suggesting new avenues for future research.

## **Introduction**

As the share of immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe peaked in 2015, and extremist attacks against places and people symbols of the western culture shook the continent, public concerns about the compatibility of immigrant minorities' cultural practices and the European way of life were raised. Attitudes toward immigrants (ATI) became a popular topic in academic literature. Anti-immigrant attitudes have been divided into 'economic' and 'cultural': the main drivers of prejudice across Europe have been found to be cultural rather than economic, with citizens, and especially women, being mostly concerned about the impact of foreign cultures and traditions rather than economic and employment considerations (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Malhotra et al., 2013).

Being the majority of immigrants and asylum seekers men (Connor, 2016), the gendered aspect of this 'cultural invasion' has been exploited by some nationalist parties to spread social panics against minorities depicted as sexist and dangerous for women's rights and freedoms, especially in highly gender-equal countries, where sexist incidents have been denounced (Fekete, 2006; Yilmaz, 2015). Feminist scholars also entered the debate on the compatibility of traditional/patriarchal minorities and the European egalitarian norms, concluding that illiberal cultural practices are always inadmissible when in contrast with basic human rights and freedoms for women and men, girls and boys (Kymlicka, 2010; Okin, 2005; Philips and Saharso, 2008). In this context of ideological and symbolic contraposition, gender equality became a separating concept between illiberal 'others', the immigrants, and liberal 'us', the Europeans (Ponce, 2017; Yilmaz, 2015). Yet, no study has considered the effect of national frameworks of gender equality on gendered, country-specific, anti-immigrant attitudes. This thesis aims at addressing the gap by answering the question: to what extent do gender equality structures shape women's and men's attitudes toward immigrants across European countries?

Most existing studies use gender as an individual variable to explain xenophobic attitudes. Generally, men are found to be more xenophobic than women due to their domineering and authoritarian personalities (Feather and McKee, 2012; Lippa and Arad, 1999). Women, on the other hand, have been found to be more concerned than men about the cultural threats posed by immigration, especially when their acquired rights and freedoms seem threatened by specific out-groups such as the Muslims (Ponce, 2017). Since there is no agreement among scholars on the correlation between womanhood and positive attitudes toward immigrants, the impact of individuals' gender on attitudes toward immigrants is worth more investigation.

In addition, several cross-national studies have documented the impact of different contextual factors on public attitudes toward immigrants: economic, social, normative, and cultural frameworks shape anti-immigrant attitudes with different outcomes across countries (Quillian, 1995; Schlueter et al., 2013; Visintin, Green and Sarrasin, 2018, among others). Particularly in the cultural dimension, ATI are influenced by a country's system of values: countries with a prevalence of 'feminine' values such as humanitarianism and egalitarianism have been found to be more tolerant and open to diversity than 'masculine' nations, where power and conservation values prevail (Leong and Ward, 2006).

Values and principles have relevance at the individual level too: they are nested into cultural climates and legal frameworks and transmitted to the population through education, media, and public narratives (Pampel, 2011; Visintin, Green and Sarrasin, 2018). As a consequence, European citizens in countries that promote universalistic and egalitarian values, for example through gender policies, have been found to be more benevolent, and less conservative and less power-oriented (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). On the one hand, more gender-equal European countries have a higher incidence of self-transcendent values associated with tolerance and lower incidence of conservation values associated with xenophobia (Davidov et al., 2014; Davidov and Semyonov, 2017; Ponizovskiy, 2016). On the other hand, the individual incidence of self-transcendent values on women and power values on men is exacerbated by the level of gender equality: in more gender-equal countries, women and men feel free in pursuing the values they 'inherently' care more about: benevolence and universalism for women, power for men (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009).

This master thesis investigates to what extent individuals' gender and one particular country-level element, gender equality, frame attitudes toward immigrants through the enhancement of tolerant universalistic vs. conservation/power intolerant values. This work adopts Schwartz's (1992) classification of basic human values - as reflected in the dedicated items of the European Social Survey - to account for the variation in attitudes toward immigrants across European countries, according to the level of gender equality. Schwartz's framework is widely used in the literature on public attitudes and divides basic human values based on polarly opposite life motivations: self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement, conservation vs. openness to change.

To test my hypotheses, I use data from the 2018 European Social Survey (ESS9) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) 2020 Gender-Equality Index (GEI) for 24 Northern, Western, Southern, and Eastern European countries. The adoption of a cross-sectional approach serves to illustrate within countries and across countries differences in attitudes toward immigrants, explained by gender and gender equality. The corresponding individual and macro controls are included in the analyses. This methodologic approach allows showing, first, that women are more self-transcendent but also value security and tradition more than men, thus are not more tolerant than

men; and that the gender difference in ATI is not enhanced by higher gender equality scores. Second, that national levels of gender equality do reinforce universalist and benevolent values, boosting favourable ATI in more gender-equal and gender-progressive countries. Thus, according to my findings, more gender-equal countries have higher levels of self-transcendence and lower levels of conservation that translate into positive attitudes toward immigrants. These findings bring new evidence to the debate on the micro and macro gendered aspects of attitudes toward immigrants, mediated by basic human values.

In sum, the results display a positive relationship between gender equality/gender-progressiveness, benevolent/universalistic human values, and attitudes toward immigrants across the 24 European countries of interest. Despite this, findings fail to prove that women are more tolerant than men, and that gender equality widens the gender divide in attitudes toward immigrants. This study adds to previous knowledge on the complex relationships between gender, gender equality, human values, and public attitudes toward immigrants in Europe, linking gender policies to an increase in tolerance among men and women. Generating awareness in this regard will contribute to the investigation on the potential for gender policies not just to promote equal rights for men and women, but also to foster social change and cohesion for society in general.

In the following paragraphs, after an overview of the literature on attitudes toward immigrants, human values, gender, and gender equality, the quantitative cross-sectional approach is presented and the findings are discussed. The last sections conclude and pinpoint new avenues for further research.

## **Literature review and hypothesis**

### ***Attitudes toward immigrants***

A comprehensive review of literature on public attitudes toward immigrants (ATI) shows that anti-immigrant fears can be simplified into two categories: economic and cultural (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Building on political economy, some scholars explain anti-immigrant attitudes in the light of the natives' self-interest, and competition against foreigners over employment opportunities and economic resources (Malhotra, Margalit and Mo, 2013, pp. 391-393). Other scholars draw on social psychology to explain anti-immigrant attitudes based on the hostility toward foreign cultures' symbols, practices, lifestyles, and values (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010, pp. 310-318; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014, p.232). Overall, cultural concerns have been found to prevail over pocket-money considerations in shaping attitudes toward immigrants, and often have a 'sociotropic' nature: cultural ATI are generally based on collective unreal panics, alimanted by the media and public narratives rather than facts (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Since cultural concerns are the main drivers of

anti-immigrant attitudes, they deserve more attention: the cultural formation of xenophobic attitudes should be further examined, using the power of cross-national approaches to explain contextual variations (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014, p. 240).

Several authors (for a review, see Ponce, 2017) pinpointed the necessity to consider gender as a key explanator of attitudes toward immigrants. The cultural dimension of ATI is more present among women, whilst men are generally more concerned about the economic threats posed by immigrants (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Malhotra et al., 2013). It should be noted that gender is a cultural construct too (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981), which is crucial to the explanation of cultural ATI: gender brings organizational, experiential, and behavioral elements to the analysis of public attitudes, especially under the cultural umbrella (Hawkesworth, 1994; Lovenduski, 1998). Considering the politicization of gender equality within the debate on attitudes toward immigrants, the inclusion of gendered elements in public opinion studies becomes essential to explain ATI (Ponce, 2017, p. 2). Gender has been mostly used together with other individual characteristics - such as age, education, and skills - in explaining cultural attitudes toward immigrants: younger, more educated, and skilled individuals have been consistently found to be less racist (Borgonovi and Pokropek, 2019; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Mayda, 2006).

A few studies have used gender as the main analytical factor to frame ATI, building on gendered perceptions, experiences, and personality traits, to find that men are more xenophobic than women because of their authoritarian personalities and inclination toward social dominance (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010; Feather and McKee, 2012; Lippa and Arad, 1999; Quillian, 1995). A few other works have found women to be more xenophobic than men, among them, Ponce (2017, p. 9) claims that, even if women are generally less likely to hold anti-immigrant attitudes, they are more diffident toward certain minorities perceived as misogynists, like the Muslim. This finding suggests that gendered anti-immigrants attitudes are increasingly shaped by a fear of patriarchal cultures, so gender equality becomes a significant prejudice-defining element (Moss et al., 2019; Yilmaz, 2015). In the remainder of this section, the impact of different individual and contextual elements on attitudes toward immigrants will be discussed, distinguishing between the macro and micro dimensions.

At the contextual level, different theories explain the interplay of country elements in framing attitudes toward immigrants. According to the 'group threat' theory, larger inflows of immigrants combined with worse economic conditions generate intergroup conflict that results in negative attitudes toward immigrants (Malhotra et al., 2013; Schlueter et al., 2013). The theory of 'social identity' focuses on the formation of prejudice against outgroups: building on Allport's (1954) theory of contact, scholars claim that the presence of larger culturally distinct outgroups in a country generates more xenophobic attitudes (Quillian, 1995). Notwithstanding, scholars argue that public

prejudice can be mitigated by integration policies and inclusive approaches to diversity management (Green and Brock, 2020; Visintin, Green and Sarrasin, 2018).

Less scholarly attention has been devoted to the impact of cultural climates on public attitudes toward immigrants, suggesting that European cultural values and norms have a positive impact on ATI (Datler, 2016; Visintin, Green and Sarrasin, 2018). The ‘openness’ associated with the concept of *Europe* is framed by national normative frameworks: public policies, especially social policies, are key to enhance (or hinder) egalitarian and universalistic narratives that are passed into citizens through socialization, education, media, and the public discourse, improving or weakening social cohesion and tolerance (Visintin, Green and Sarrasin, 2018, p. 21). So, what type of cultural values flourish under gender equality frameworks, that have a favourable effect on attitudes toward immigrants?

### ***Basic human values***

To explain the impact of national frameworks of gender equality on ATI, I adopt Schwartz’s (1992, 2006) frameworks of cultural and human values. Across European countries, gender equality is associated with higher levels of self-transcendent cultural values (benevolence and universalism) and self-direction; and lower conservation values (security and tradition/conformity) and power (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009, p. 176). In addition, benevolence and universalism are associated with more tolerant ATI, whilst conservation predicts negative ATI (Davidov et al., 2014; Ponizovskiy, 2016). Female respondents are more self-transcendent, and men are more driven by power, a value that implies social dominance and conflict over resources (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Further, in more gender-equal countries, women’s benevolence and men’s power exponentially increase, resulting in a wider gender difference in human values (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009, pp. 172-174).

Interestingly, self-direction is higher in gender-egalitarian countries and is a gender-neutral value, equally present among women and men (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Hedonism and stimulation do not predict attitudes toward immigrants nor correlate with gender (Davidov et al., 2014; Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). In brief, benevolence and universalism, self-transcendent values associated with positive ATI, are higher in more gender-equal countries and typically ‘feminine’; whereas conservation and power, negatively associated with ATI, are higher in less gender-equal countries, being conservatism gender-neutral and power prevalent among men.

It is important to appreciate that Schwartz’s (1992) framework follows a circular structure where the dimension of ‘openness to change’ is the opposite of ‘conservation’, and ‘self-transcendence’ is the opposite of ‘self-enhancement’. The separating borders between values are



malleable, so that bordering values have similar underlying motivations and flow one into the other (Schwartz, 2012). For example, power feeds into conservation, suggesting dominance over people and resources to maintain the *status quo* against external threats (Leong and Ward, 2006; Lippa and Arad, 1999; Quillian, 1995); whereas self-direction suggests faith in personal and societal resources to achieve conflict-less welfare for all, natives and immigrants, and lower fear of external threats, including immigration (Messing and Ságvári, 2019, p.11). All in all, basic human values provide motivational direction to people's attitudes: positive toward objects that will help them reach their treasured goals; negative toward whatever hinders their aims (Schwartz, 2006).

### ***Gender equality***

At the macro level, Schwartz's values systematization has been used by several authors to explain variations in ATI across European countries. The most recent cross-national works have shown that basic human values and national cultural climates do vary across countries, depending on the normative and economic context (Davidov et al., 2014; Ponizovskiy, 2016, pp. 257-259), including gender policies (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Societies with higher levels of gender equality have a larger incidence of self-transcendent human values such as benevolence and universalism: increased wealth, education, and self-determination enhance benevolent 'feminine' values vs. 'masculine' values such as power, achievement, security, conformity, tradition, that are predominant in less gender-equal countries (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009, pp.178-180). Empirically, these findings are confirmed by a report based on the 2017 European Social Survey's data that illustrates how values of security and universalism are strongly connected with attitudes toward immigrants. Those who value security have more negative attitudes toward immigrants, while those who give importance to equality and benevolence have more positive attitudes toward immigrants (Messing and Ságvári, 2019, pp. 26-37).

At the micro-level, the complex interaction between personal positions on gender equality, gender roles attitudes, and attitudes toward immigrants is not a widespread topic in academia. Still, some empirical studies find concerns about gender equality to be associated with higher prejudice, especially against Muslims, perceived as more fundamentalist/extremist (Pedersen and Hartley, 2012, p.21). Other works show differing mechanisms: supporters of gender equality can show either positive attitudes toward foreign cultural practices, or oppose those practices and support the enforcement of gender equality norms over minorities (Sarrasin, 2016, p. 157). Still, there is no agreement on the impact of individual attitudes toward gender equality and gender roles division on attitudes toward immigrants.

Another point is worth analyzing: the impact of gender equality on a country's gender difference in attitudes toward immigrants. Previous empirical studies (for a review, see Ponce, 2017) agree that women are in general more tolerant than men, whose authoritarian traits make more prejudiced against immigrants (Lippa and Arad, 1999). Gender role socialization theory helps to explain gender differences in ATI: women and men interiorize different personality traits that make the former more inclined toward benevolence and universalism, values associated with positive opinions on immigrants (Davidov et al., 2008, 2014), whereas men are more driven by power, a trait associated with social dominance and prejudice (Lippa and Arad, 1999; Quillian, 1995). Women do care more about social justice, tolerance, equality, and welfare for close people, strangers, outgroups, and humanity in general, while men inherently pursue self-enhancement through control over resources and people (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). All in all, women's benevolent and universalistic nature, together with their push to transcend themselves, makes them more sensitive to social justice, cooperation, inclusiveness, factors that suggest lower xenophobia, especially in countries that recognize women's participation and empowerment to a higher degree (Ponizovskiy, 2016; Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009).

Paradoxically, some authors claim that the gender difference in basic human values is larger in more gender-equal countries: the higher the level of gender equality, the more women are tolerant and benevolent, and the more men are power-oriented and domineering (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). According to this strand of literature, gender equality exacerbates feminine vs. masculine values and traits under a mechanism called Gender Equality Personality Paradox (GEPP). The paradox is illustrated in several empirical studies on personal values and personality traits that lead to speculate that gender equality makes women 'more feminine' and men 'more masculine' in values, attitudes, and opinions (Fors Connolly et al., 2020, pp. 102-103; Giolla and Kajonius, 2019; Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009, p. 180). The GEPP's logic can be further justified as follows: favourable wealth, freedom, and equality conditions increase individuals' control over their lives and self-determination (Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2017), so wealth and human development encourage men and women to enhance values they 'inherently' care more about, for women, universalism/benevolence, for men, power/self-enhancement (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). In sum, the greater the social, economic, political empowerment for both genders, the larger the gender gap between masculine anti-immigrants attitudes, and feminine pro-immigrants tendencies (Davidov et al., 2014).

## ***Hypothesis***

First, given their stronger identification with benevolence and universalism, *women are expected to have more positive attitudes toward immigrants than men* (Hypothesis 1.a.). Further, given that the gender divide in human values broadens with higher gender equality, *gender differences in attitudes toward immigrants are expected to be larger in more gender-equal countries* (Hypothesis 1.b.).

Second, given that in more gender-equal countries conservatism and power are lower and universalism, benevolence, and self-direction are higher, *public attitudes toward immigrants are expected to be more positive, for both genders, in European countries with higher gender equality* (Hypothesis 2.a.). Last, given that individual support for gender equality through progressive gender roles opinions is associated with self-transcendent human values, *more progressive attitudes toward gender roles are expected to be positively associated with positive attitudes toward immigrants* (Hypothesis 2.b.).

## **Data and methods**

This study uses data from the ninth round of the European Social Survey (ESS9 2018). I select the responses of 38,538 European native-born women and men from 24 European countries, whose gender equality score is measured by the European Institute for Gender Equality, including: Denmark (DK); Belgium (BE); Bulgaria (BG); Czechia (CZ); Germany (DE); Estonia (EE); Ireland (IE); Spain (ES); France (FR); Croatia (HR); Italy (IT); Cyprus (CY); Latvia (LV); Lithuania (LT); Hungary (HU); Netherlands (NL); Austria (AT); Poland (PL); Portugal (PT); Slovenia (SI); Slovakia (SK); Finland (FI); Sweden (SE); and the UK (GB).

## ***Dependent variable***

To measure attitudes toward immigrants among native Europeans, I select one item that represents *cultural attitudes toward immigration*: ‘The country’s cultural life is undermined or enriched by immigrants’. Responses are coded on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (cultural life undermined) to 10 (cultural life enriched). Higher values correspond to more positive cultural ATI.

## ***Independent variables***

At the individual level, *gender* (men=0, women=1) is used to highlight differences in human values and attitudes toward immigrants within each country and across countries.

At the contextual level, I use the 2020 *Gender Equality Index* (GEI), whose data are mostly from 2018, to measure the level of gender equality in each country. It combines six dimensions of

gender equality using a punctuation system for the areas of work; money; knowledge; time; power; health, which I operationalize separately.

In addition, to illustrate how principles of gender equality are absorbed by the individuals and reflected in their attitudes toward gender roles, I include a variable called *Gender roles attitudes*, derived from the split ballot item ‘Approve if a woman chooses to never have children’, scored on a 5-points Likert scale from 1 (strongly disapprove) to 5 (strongly approve). This selection is intended to measure progressive vs. traditional gender roles orientations as a projection of gender egalitarianism, after acknowledging the eventual conceptual discrepancies in using an element of gender traditionalism to measure gender egalitarianism (Braun, 2008). A higher level of agreement to the statement-item corresponds to more progressive gender roles attitudes and higher gender egalitarianism.

### ***Mediators***

The ESS9 provides 21 Human Values items, each one associated with a specific value and accompanied by a description of someone whose personal characteristics represent the value of interest, gender-matched with the respondent. On the one side, within the realm of *self-transcendence*, *benevolence* is indicated by the item ‘Important to help people and care for others’ well-being’; *universalism* by the item ‘Important that people are treated equally and have equal opportunities’. Also, I measure *openness-to-change/self-direction* through the item ‘Important to make own decisions and be free’. On the opposite dimension, under the domain of *conservation*, *security* is measured by the item ‘Important that government is strong and ensures safety’; *tradition/conformity* is represented by item ‘Important to follow traditions and customs’. Lastly, *self-enhancement/power* corresponds to the item ‘Important to get respect from others’ and is the polar opposite of self-transcendence. The responses are scored on a 6-point scale from 1 (very much like me) to 6 (not like me at all), that has been reverse-coded so that higher values indicate greater value-matching.

Since the values of stimulation, hedonism, and achievement are irrelevant to the relationship between gender, gender equality and attitudes toward immigrants they are not considered in the analyses.

## ***Controls***

Relevant controls are added both at the individual and national levels. At the individual level, age (in full years) and education (years of full education completed) are consistently reported influencing attitudes toward immigrants (Chandler and Tsai, 2001; Mayda, 2006). Also, *egalitarianism* is included as a control variable through the item ‘Society is fair when income and wealth are equally distributed among all people’, reverse coded on a 5-point scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). Higher values indicate higher egalitarian opinions.

At the macro-level, I control for the 2020 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), an interesting reference indicator for migration and integration policies across Europe. Also, the share of the extra-EU immigrant population in each country, elaborated from the UN/DESA immigrant stock datasets, is included, since the number of resident immigrants in a country is a powerful predictor of ATI based on contact theories (Allport, 1954; Green and Brock, 2020). Also, besides this being an essentially cultural/normative study, the GDP per capita measure (in current international \$) is included as an indicator of the economic situation. This choice is justified by the widespread use of the ‘group threat’ theory, which associates negative attitudes toward immigrants to worse economic conditions and higher immigrants share (Quillian, 1995; Schlueter et al., 2013).

## **Results**

After summarizing the dependent and independent variables of interest - in total (Appendix 1a) and by gender (Appendix 1b) - I run the bivariate statistics displayed in Table 1 to investigate the correlation between the variables of interest and attitudes toward immigrants. The results anticipate a statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) positive effect of the GEI score on attitudes toward immigrants. Gender roles attitudes (GRA) also seem to have a positive and significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) impact on ATI, but both should be checked against control variables. On the other hand, gender has a weak ( $p < 0.1$ ) positive effect on ATI, most likely to be hampered when introducing individual controls. Finally, preliminary findings confirm an overall positive effect of self-transcendence (benevolence and universalism) and self-direction, and a negative effect of conservatism (security and tradition/conservation) and power on ATI. All the human values correlation coefficients are statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 1. Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. ATI	1.000									
2. GEI	0.280***	1.000								
3. GRA	0.213***	0.388***	1.000							
4. Gender	0.008*	-0.060***	-0.007	1.000						
5. Benevolence	0.114***	0.221***	0.103***	0.095***	1.000					
6. Universalism	0.161***	0.173***	0.115***	0.045***	0.368***	1.000				
7. Self-direction	0.072***	0.100***	0.129***	-0.017***	0.299***	0.236***	1.000			
8. Security	-0.105***	-0.100***	-0.085***	0.046***	0.261***	0.224***	0.180***	1.000		
9. Tradition	-0.151***	-0.127***	-0.178***	0.081***	0.206***	0.085***	0.030***	0.303***	1.000	
10. Power	-0.078***	-0.110***	-0.038***	-0.028***	0.109***	0.045***	0.149***	0.196***	0.221***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Before proceeding to test the hypotheses, Appendix 2 displays the process of testing the effect on ATI of the total GEI score (model 1) and its six dimensions separately (model 2), with the corresponding macro controls (MIPEX, GDP per capita and immigrants share). According to the results, the total GEI does not have a statistically significant effect on ATI nor do the subdimensions of money, time, power, health. The *knowledge* dimension has a weak ( $p < 0.1$ ) negative correlation with ATI; and the *work* dimension shows a positive association with ATI, with high statistical significance ( $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, gender equality in work is used as the macro independent variable in the next analytical steps. The implications of this choice are discussed in the next section of this thesis.

To test the hypotheses, I run three main linear regression models, clustered by country. According to Model 1, gender has a positive but not statistically significant impact on ATI when controlled by age, education, and egalitarian opinions, even if the ‘feminine’ human values of benevolence, and especially universalism, have a positive, very significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) effect on ATI. As expected, tradition/conformity, and especially security, do have a negative, significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) effect on ATI. Interestingly, self-direction and power do not have a statistically significant impact on ATI, even if they show respectively positive and negative coefficients.

Even after adding the GEI *work* score (model 2) or gender roles attitudes (model 3) to the first regression, the coefficient for gender increases but does not reach statistical significance, which leads to infirm hypotheses 1a and 1b. In other words, being a woman does not conclusively predict more tolerant attitudes toward immigrants and there are no significant gender differences in ATI, even after considering the contextual gender equality levels and progressive gender roles attitudes. The individual-level background variables contributed significantly to the variations, as expected, with

education being the stronger positive predictor of ATI, and age predicting a weak decrease in ATI. Surprisingly, egalitarian opinions are negatively associated with ATI, although with a low statistical significance.

Model 2 confirms the positive effect of gender equality in work on ATI, although with a low coefficient and medium statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), controlled by migration policies level (MIPEX), the share of immigrants, and GDP per capita. So, hypothesis 2a is confirmed with an important caveat: national-level gender equality has a positive effect on ATI, but only within the work dimension. Also, model 3 displays that progressive gender roles attitudes are the best predictors of positive ATI with a positive coefficient of high statistical significance ( $p < 0.01$ ), confirming hypothesis 2b: progressive gender roles attitudes are positively associated with ATI. It is important to highlight that the three main regression models have a medium explanatory power between 13% and 15% (Cohen, 1992): variations in ATI are explained to a 13% by human values and individual variables (Model 1); to a 15% after adding GEI-work scores (Model 2); and, alternatively, to a 15% with the addition of progressive gender roles attitudes (Model 3). Among the contextual variables, gender roles attitudes and GEI-work are the best explainers for ATI, even after controlling by statistically significant MIPEX score. The lack of statistical significance for GDP and immigrants share variables suggests that the 'group threat' theory does not nullify the explanatory power of gender equality.

Lastly, Models 4a and 4b respectively display the impact of the interactions between gender and GEI-work score (gender\*GEIwork), and gender and gender roles attitudes (gender\*GRA) on ATI. The interactions models include the human values variables as mediators and the individual and contextual controls. The interactions are significant ( $p < 0.05$  for gender\*GEIwork and  $p < 0.01$  for gender\*GRA). The explanatory power at 15% stays medium (Cohen, 1992).

Table 2. Linear regressions

	Attitudes toward immigrants				
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4a</i>	<i>Model 4b</i>
<b><i>Micro</i></b>					
Gender	0.045 (0.07)	0.065 (0.07)	0.053 (0.08)	-3.047** (0.87)	-0.709*** (0.18)
Egalitarianism	-0.080* (0.03)	-0.054 (0.04)	-0.077* (0.03)	-0.072* (0.03)	-0.083* (0.03)
Age of respondent	-0.005** (0.00)	-0.006** (0.00)	-0.004* (0.00)	-0.006** (0.00)	-0.005** (0.00)
Years of education	0.117*** (0.02)	0.116*** (0.01)	0.115*** (0.01)	0.118*** (0.01)	0.116*** (0.01)
<b><i>Human values</i></b>					
Benevolence	0.229*** (0.06)	0.162*** (0.04)	0.182** (0.06)	0.175** (0.05)	0.185** (0.06)
Universalism	0.441*** (0.03)	0.412*** (0.04)	0.415*** (0.03)	0.422*** (0.03)	0.421*** (0.03)
Self-direction	0.017 (0.03)	0.011 (0.03)	0.002 (0.03)	0.009 (0.03)	0.004 (0.03)
Security	-0.278*** (0.04)	-0.252*** (0.04)	-0.265*** (0.04)	-0.259*** (0.04)	-0.266*** (0.04)
Tradition	-0.213*** (0.02)	-0.184*** (0.02)	-0.180*** (0.02)	-0.193*** (0.01)	-0.189*** (0.02)
Power	-0.053 (0.03)	-0.018 (0.02)	-0.032 (0.03)	-0.028 (0.02)	-0.035 (0.03)
<b><i>Macro</i></b>					
GEI work		0.051** (0.02)			
MIPEX		0.024* (0.01)	0.025* (0.01)	0.026* (0.01)	0.026* (0.01)
Immigrant share		0.003 (0.01)	0.007 (0.01)	0.005 (0.01)	0.007 (0.01)
GDP per capita		-0.000 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)
Gender attitudes			0.221*** (0.03)		
<b><i>Interactions</i></b>					
Gender*GEIwork				0.043** (0.01)	
Gender*GRA					0.229*** (0.04)
Constant	3.557*** (0.28)	-0.767 (1.55)	1.827 (1.00)	2.567* (1.05)	2.486* (1.04)
r <sup>2</sup>	0.134	0.148	0.149	0.145	0.146
N	34619.00	34619.000	34175.000	34619.000	34175.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

Note: All models were estimated using weights provided in the ESS 2018. All models are clustered by country. Standard errors are in parentheses.



Next, the analysis of marginal effects is displayed in figures 1a and 1b: figure 1a predicts ATI by gender according to increasing levels of occupational gender equality (GEI work); figure 1b shows the gender difference in ATI with increasingly progressive mean gender roles attitudes. First, considered the confidence intervals, women and men do not differ in cultural attitudes toward immigrants, which restates that hypothesis 1a is rejected. Consequently, the gender divide in ATI is unsubstantial and does not increase with higher levels of gender equality/progressive gender roles opinions: hypothesis 1b is rejected too. Second, the figures show that attitudes toward immigrants are positively correlated with gender equality levels (in the work dimension) and progressive gender roles opinions, confirming hypotheses 2a and 2b. Mean ATI register an improvement of 3 points (from 4 to 7 on a 1 to 10-points scale) between least gender-equal and most gender-equal countries and an improvement of around 2 points between least progressive and most progressive mean gender roles attitudes.

To further explain the gender differences in ATI (or their lack thereof), Appendix 3 displays the gender divide in human values across levels of gender equality. Only the four statistically significant human values are considered. As anticipated, benevolence and universalism increase with gender equality levels, and security and tradition/conformity decrease with higher GEI-work score, by 1 to 1.5 points. As a consequence, gender-equal countries are more tolerant (H2a). Remarkably, women have a higher incidence in all these values, being them positively (benevolence, universalism) or negatively (security, tradition/conservatism) correlated with ATI. These findings justify the impossibility to prove a correlation between women and positive ATI, infirming hypotheses 1a and 1b. Perhaps the statistical insignificance of power, essentially masculine value, justifies the impossibility to trace gender differences in ATI along with gender equality scores.

Figure 1a.

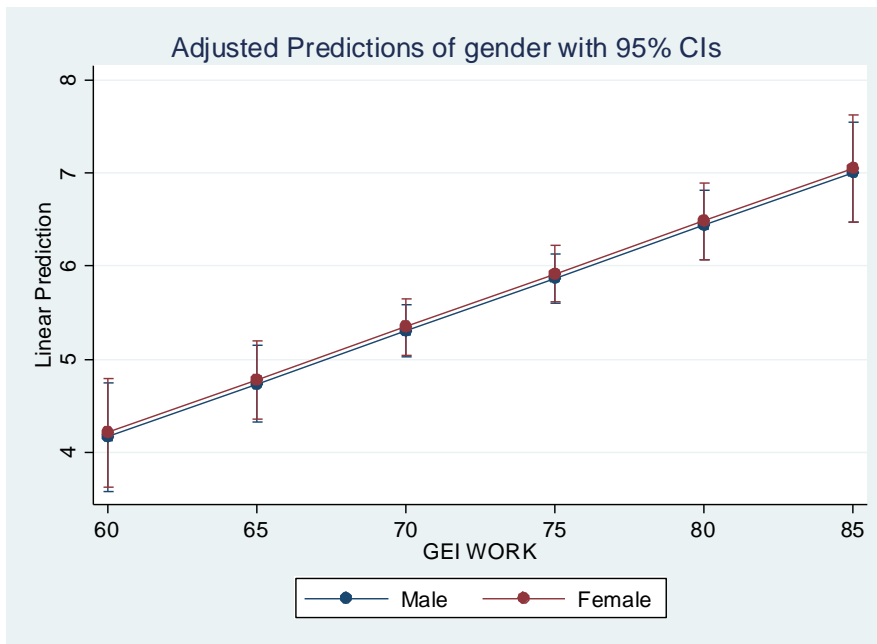
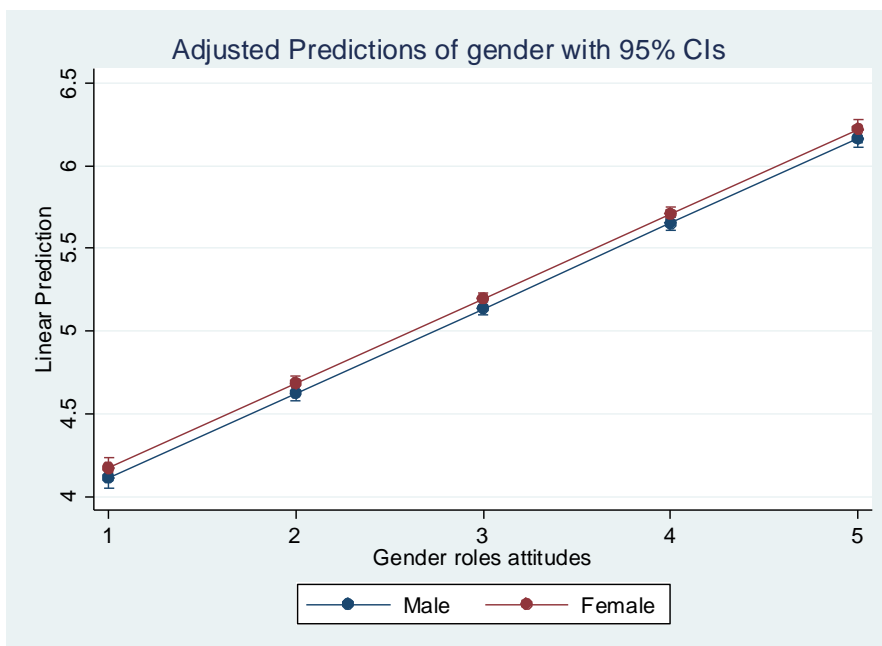


Figure 1b.



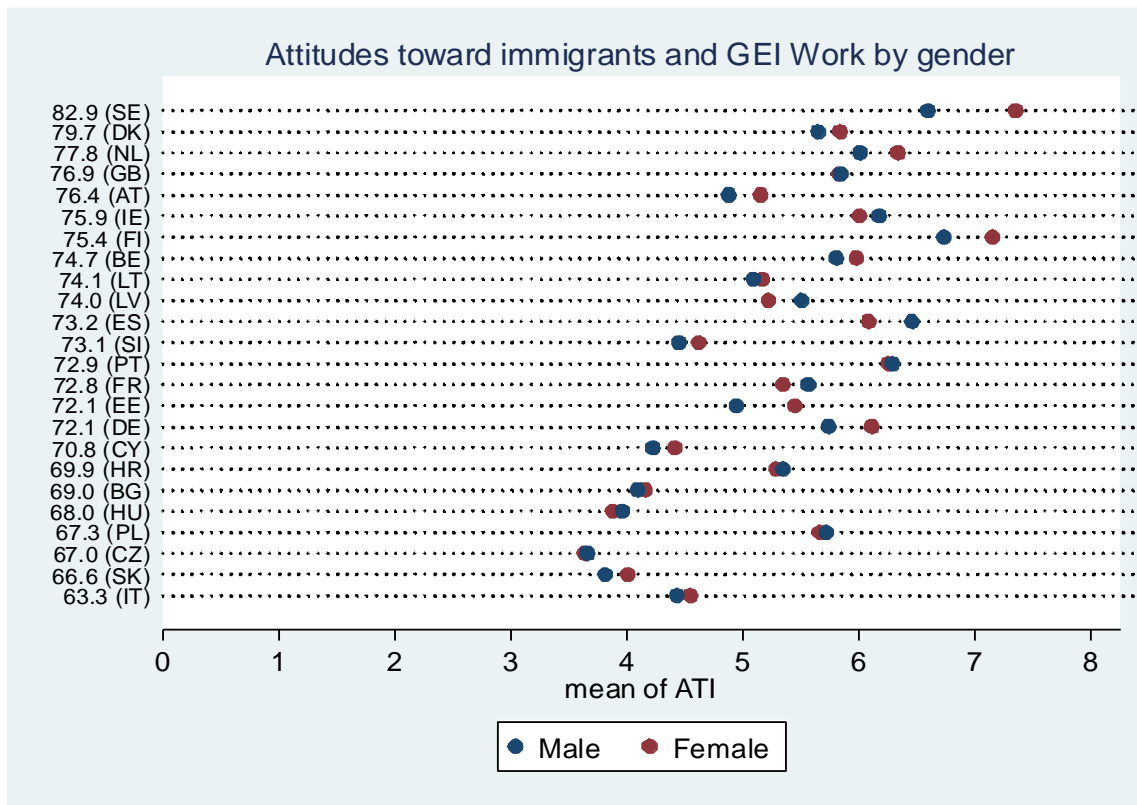
Last, Figure 2 illustrates mean ATI in each EU country divided by gender, sorted by increasing levels of work gender equality. Three patterns can be distinguished: first, women have more positive ATI than men in 14 out of 24 countries; second, gender differences seem to be wider in more gender-equal countries, but numerous exceptions make this finding dubious; third, mean ATI improve with higher levels of work gender equality. The first two observations have been discarded by the linear

regressions and margins analyses, while the third has been confirmed. The presence of several outliers and exceptions, displayed in figure 2, makes it impossible to claim that gender explains ATI, and that gender differences in ATI are consistently wider in more gender-equal countries. Nevertheless, figure 2 offers interesting insights into the relationship between ATI and GEI-work score in each European country, highlighted in the next section.

Remarkably, if taking Castles and Obinger's (2008) country clustering scheme as a reference, it is possible to trace two trends: Northern and Western European countries are generally more gender-equal and more tolerant; Eastern and Southern European countries less gender-equal and less tolerant toward immigrants. Sweden has the higher levels of work gender equality and the most positive ATI. It also displays a wider gender divide in ATI. It is followed by other highly gender-equal Northern and Western-Eu countries with very different levels of anti-immigrant attitudes, including: Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom; Austria (with particularly negative ATI); Ireland; Finland (with more positive ATI and a considerable gender difference in ATI); and Belgium. On a lower level of work gender equality and lower acceptance of immigrants, there are four Eastern (Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Estonia), two Western (France, Germany), and two Southern-Eu countries (Spain, Portugal). Their mean ATI varies from exceptionally negative, in Slovenia, to quite positive, in Spain and Portugal.

The last countries on the list, with the lowest levels of gender equality and worse ATI are Southern (Italy and Cyprus) and mostly Eastern European (Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia). In these countries, women's and men's attitudes seem to overlap to a greater extent. Among them, Czechia registers the worst attitudes toward immigrants, whilst Croatia and Poland have more positive ATI compared to other Eastern-Eu countries with similar levels of gender equality. Besides the suggestive geographical clustering, these results remain inconclusive for the presence of several outliers. Also, single cases require specific contextual explanations that will be left to future research.

Figure 2.



To sum up, the statistical results show that conservation values are associated with lower levels of approval of immigrants, whereas prioritizing benevolence and universalism is associated with higher levels of acceptance toward immigrants across 24 European countries. At the individual level, both conservation and self-transcendent values have more incidence among women, who cannot be considered more tolerant than men. Also, gender equality does not influence the gender differences in ATI. At the country level, more progressive mean gender roles attitudes and higher levels of gender equality in the work dimension are associated with more positive ATI, even if controlled by the quality of migrants' integration policies. Moreover, self-transcendence increases and conservation decreases with growing levels of gender equality. Power and self-transcendence do not correlate with ATI. Last, the 24 European countries display interesting geographical clustering patterns, where northern and western European countries tend to be more tolerant and gender-equal, and southern and eastern-Eu countries less tolerant and less gender-equal, with several exceptions for further analysis.

## Discussion

### *Theoretical contributions*

The theoretical insights offered by this master dissertation are disclosed in the following lines: the gender differences in attitudes toward immigrants are commented on; the positive effect of macro

structures of gender equality on attitudes toward immigrants is described; the moderating effect of the interaction between gender and gender equality is explained; the mediating role of human values on ATI is highlighted. First, regardless of women being more tolerant than men in the majority of the 24 European countries of interest because more inclined toward self-transcendence, the correlation between gender and ATI does not pass the linear regression test, leading to reject hypothesis 1a. Interestingly, conservation has been found to prevail among women too, plus, even if power is a prevalently masculine value, it is unrelated to attitudes toward immigrants. These findings blur the gender differences in ATI.

In addition, the Gender Gap Personality Paradox (GEPP) hypothesis does not apply to human values correlated with ATI, so, hypothesis 1b is infirmed too. On the one hand, men and women react in a similar way to immigration, and higher levels of gender equality do not correspond to a steady increase in the gender divide in attitudes toward immigrants. On the other hand, even if several exceptions make it impossible to trace a pattern, more gender-equal countries seem to display larger gender gaps in ATI than low gender-equality countries. A case study approach would help to clarify these trends and exceptions.

Second, after testing hypotheses 2a and 2b, it emerges that the total GEI score, controlled by migrants' integration policies, the share of the immigrant population, and GDP per capita, has no statistically significant effect on ATI. To address the Gender Equality Index's complexity, each of its sub-dimension is tested separately, with interesting outcomes: gender equality in the *work* dimension is positively associated with ATI; while in the field of *knowledge*, there is a weak negative correlation. Besides confirming hypothesis 2a with the necessary adjustments, these findings offer new insights into the relationship between ATI and specific areas of gender equality that require further examination.

The GEI work domain measures equal access to employment in terms of participation (full-time employment, and duration of working life); gender segregation and work conditions (employment in the sectors of education, health and social work; quality of work, and career prospects). The knowledge domain measures gender inequalities in educational attainment (participation in formal and non-formal education, life-long training), and gender segregation in some educational areas (health, education, welfare, humanities, and arts). For the moment, results suggest that the more women gain access to fair employment, the less threatened they feel by immigrants; but the more they access education and skills, the more concerned are about immigration.

These findings suggest the necessity to move the focus from the cultural dimension to the economic dimension of public attitudes toward immigrants (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Pocket money, employment, and vocational considerations seem to drive the European public opinion on

attitudes toward immigrants. I suggest to re-design the research object, focusing on the economic threats posed by immigration to address a new question: to what extent equal access to employment shapes gender differences in attitudes toward immigrants? Future research should investigate how the growing participation of women in public and economic life explains positive ATI and gather on the literature about economic anti-immigrant attitudes, 'group threat' theory, and the prevalence of economic explanations for attitudes toward immigrants (Malhotra et al., 2013; Schlueter et al., 2013).

Next, in line with hypothesis 2b, progressive gender roles orientations are found to be the best predictors of positive ATI, even if controlled for age, education and egalitarian opinions. Yet, the choice of a gender roles-related item to measure gender egalitarianism can be deemed to be inaccurate. There is no agreement in the literature on the use of gender roles opinions to measure gender-egalitarianism (Braun, 2008). Besides the conceptual and operational cavils, it would be interesting to expand more on the associations between personal gender-equalitarian attitudes and positive ATI, to ascertain to what extent individual progressive orientations are linked to inclusiveness, social cohesion, anti-racism. Surprisingly, egalitarianism results negatively correlated with ATI. More research is needed: egalitarian orientations in different domains can be included as independent variables, mediators, moderators, controls.

Third, the interactions between gender and macro structures of gender equality do not yield important moderating effects on the relationship between gender and attitudes toward immigrants. Again, not only women are not found to be more tolerant than men, and gender differences in ATI do not increase in more gender-equal countries, but the opposite claim can be true. Gender differences in human values and ATI could decrease with growing gender equality, leading to convergence, as suggested by the literature on women's and men's gender-egalitarian attitudes across levels of gender equality (McDaniel, 2008). Under this perspective, gender equality can generate allineation rather than division in women's and men's values and opinions.

Fourth, human values are very significant mediators in the relationship between gender and ATI, and gender equality and ATI. As expected, self-transcendent values predict positive attitudes toward immigrants, conservation values negative. Still, this study ignores the interactions between gender and human values, and between gender equality and human values in framing ATI. Further research should observe how each human value interacts, at the individual level, with gender; and at the national level, with gender equality score, to shape ATI.

Also, it would be interesting to include other mediators in the correlation mechanism: economic, social, and political individual characteristics can be investigated in the relationship between gender and ATI. For example, political opinions, left-right orientations; attitudes toward other discriminated categories (LGBT+, for example) can predict ATI. Plus, human and social capital,

personality traits, psychological elements, and moral stances can be relevant to the study of the gender-ATI correlation. At the contextual level, moderating factors that may affect the normative/cultural environment should be taken into consideration too, for example, the portrayals of immigrants in public discourses and the media; the type of integration policies in place; the prevalence of populist parties in the political debate. In the broader sense, I invite scholars to investigate how micro and macro cultural, normative, and socio-economic elements play into the mechanisms between gender, gender equality, and ATI.

Last, the country-specific results display patterns of higher work gender equality and more positive ATI in Western and Northern-Eu countries vs. lower work gender equality and less positive ATI in Southern and Eastern-Eu countries. The numerous exceptions jeopardize these findings and suggest that other context-specific elements should be considered: the normative, political, socio-economic conjunctures affect ATI in each country. In particular, the quality of national integration policies measured by the MIPEX index explains some of the outliers, even if there is no one-fits-all explanation for cross-countries differences in ATI: more economic, normative, social, and cultural factors should be taken into consideration.

### ***Policy implications***

This thesis's findings hope to encourage the debate among policymakers and practitioners about the relationship between gender equality and xenophobia. Gender mainstreaming and intersectional approaches in politics, policies, and political science, already recognize the interdependencies between race and gender in policy-making (Crenshaw, 2005; Lovenduski, 1998). In particular, instances for gender equality and women's rights vindication frequently engage with discourses of ethnic recognition and redistribution: the common ground for feminist and anti-racist institutional and non-institutional change is reclamation against the patriarchal white state (Alcoff, 2007; Thompson, 2002). The association between gender equality policies, progressive gender roles, and tolerance toward out-groups feeds into the debate on institutional and societal change toward more inclusive and egalitarian societies (Mackay, 2014).

Precisely, the change brought by intersectionality and gender mainstreaming operates at least at three levels: institutional (meso); individual (micro); national and supranational (macro). At the institutional level, the adoption of gender mainstreaming and intersectionality triggers change toward universal rights recognition. Gender-sensitive and anti-discrimination measures are thoughtfully incorporated into formal and informal institutions (Waylen, 2014), generating a climate of recognition for disadvantaged categories of the population such as women, girls, and minorities. At the individual level, policies and politics that promote gender equality for all the citizens, including racial minorities,

alment inclusive societies where egalitarian principles invade the citizens' opinions: progressive attitudes toward gender equality gradually spread into the population (Pampel, 2011), together with beliefs of tolerance, inclusion, social justice, and ultimately anti-racism.

At the national level, gender equality is an indicator of positive attitudes toward immigrants, as this work demonstrates. Gender policies should be designed and implemented to aim at a general improvement in social cohesion, that goes beyond gender equality and women's empowerment. At the supernational level, gender equality can be considered as a positive marker of European identity. Europeanization, if driven by principles of gender equality (Forest and Lombardo, 2012), would result in the creation of a European identity based on tolerance, anti-racism, and inclusiveness, rather than securitization and cultural supremacism. All in all, the universalistic and egalitarian essence of gender policies should be emphasized and used by illuminated policy-makers to create narratives of inclusion and equal rights not just for women and men, but also across races and cultures.

### ***Methodological notes***

The chosen cross-sectional approach does not exclude endogeneity, which can be addressed only by panel studies which would trace the unfolding of the correlation mechanisms over time allowing to acknowledge the economic, social, political changes. In this study, human values do precede public attitudes because are formed much earlier in the life span of people (Stern et al., 1995). Also, gender precedes human values: the socialization of human values in an environment that promotes self-transcendence should strengthen benevolence and universalism through childhood and adulthood, especially among women. At the contextual level, the problem is more complex: the 'feedback mechanism' theories argue that public attitudes and policies have mutual causal effects (Pierson, 1993): gender equality frameworks promote positive attitudes toward immigrants, which provide feedback for egalitarian norms. To the ends of this work, the ambiguous direction of the gender equality-ATI causal mechanism does not invalidate the entire logical sequence since effectively mediated by basic human values.

### **Conclusions**

This master dissertation was aimed at exploring the gendered dimension of attitudes toward immigrants in Europe, with a special focus on the impact of gender and macro structures of gender equality. Previous studies on gender and attitudes toward immigrants are not conclusive in associating women with positive attitudes toward immigrants. Moreover, several individual and contextual factors have already been tested, but the effect of macro gendered structures on attitudes toward



immigrants has been ignored. This study uses high-quality data from the 2018 European Social Survey and the 2020 Gender Equality Index to determine to what extent gender equality shapes anti-immigrant attitudes. The clarity of the analytical steps based on clustered linear regression and margins analyses facilitates replicability and checks for robustness.

To start, I tested the relationship between gender and anti-immigrant attitudes, which resulted in the impossibility to prove that women have more positive attitudes toward immigrants than men: hypothesis 1a was rejected. Also, the gender difference in ATI does not change with varying levels of gender equality, as claimed in hypothesis 1b. These findings are justified by the distribution of human values associated with pro-immigrants and anti-immigrants attitudes across genders: even if women are more benevolent and universalistic than men, they also care more about security and tradition, values that are associated with fear of out-groups.

However, macro structures of gender equality, especially equal access to occupation, have been found to have a positive impact on attitudes toward immigrants, in line with hypothesis 2a. Progressive gender roles attitudes are positively associated with tolerance too, as anticipated by hypothesis 2b. From the cross-countries examination emerged that more gender-equal countries have higher levels of self-transcendent values (benevolence and universalism), that justify more positive attitudes toward immigrants; and lower levels of conservation values (security and conservation/tradition), detrimental to attitudes toward immigrants. Power and self-direction do not explain attitudes toward immigrants, nor change across genders and levels of gender equality.

Probably the most interesting finding is that not all the dimensions of the Gender Equality Index influence public opinions on immigrants, but just the work dimension. This evidence pinpoints the necessity for future research to take an economic perspective and investigate to what extent equal access to fair employment reduces competition between natives and immigrants over economic resources, resulting in more social cohesion and less xenophobia for both genders. The explanatory power of other dimensions of gender equality, for example, knowledge, should be investigated too.

In conclusion, this work contributes to our understanding of how attitudes toward immigrants operate in the dimension of human values, and to what extent are framed by individuals' gender and macro structures of gender equality. The results show how implementing strong gender equality frameworks in different dimensions is beneficial for women's and men's empowerment and control over their xenophobic impulses, and to mitigate 'sociotropic' panics with benevolent inclinations. Gender policies are found to reinforce cultural climates based on tolerance, equity, and universalism for all, men and women, natives and immigrants.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1a. Descriptive statistics, total

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
ATI	36994	5.27	2.645	0	10
GEI Work	24	72.47	4.58	63.34	82.89
Gender roles attitudes	37740	3.212	1.17	1	5
Benevolence	37768	4.79	1.005	1	6
Universalism	37678	4.768	1.086	1	6
Self-direction	37771	4.754	1.117	1	6
Security	37548	4.674	1.183	1	6
Tradition	37844	4.311	1.352	1	6
Power	37572	3.764	1.368	1	6

### Appendix 1b. Descriptive statistics, by gender

#### Female

	N	mean	sd	min	max
ATI	746	7.19	2.198	0	10
GRA	750	3.94	.957	1	5
Benevolence	753	5.106	.899	1	6
Universalism	753	5.121	.944	1	6
Self-direction	751	4.826	1.141	1	6
Security	738	4.152	1.258	1	6
Tradition	753	3.991	1.392	1	6
Power	749	3.489	1.31	1	6

#### Male

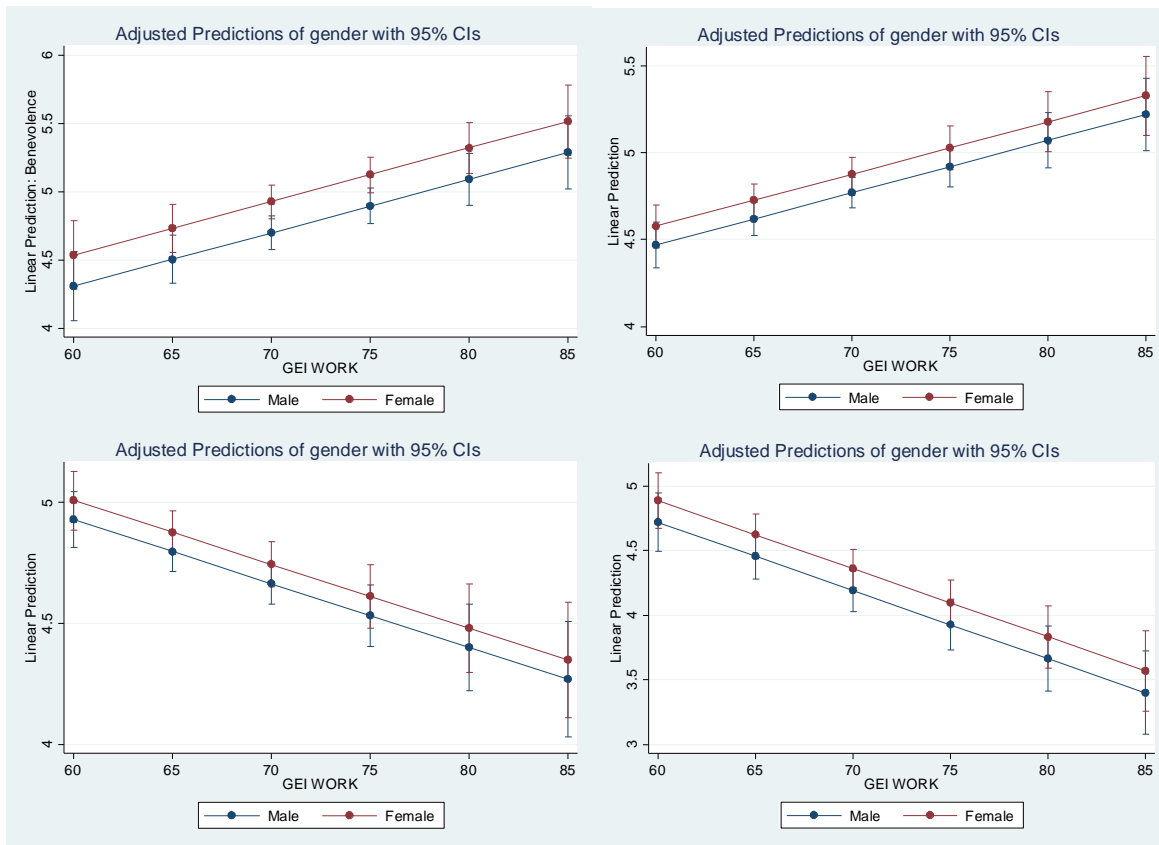
ATI	777	6.647	2.353	0	10
GRA	773	3.686	.938	1	5
Benevolence	763	4.75	.906	1	6
Universalism	760	4.966	.981	1	6
Self-direction	765	4.765	1.006	2	6
Security	758	4.231	1.289	1	6
Tradition	765	3.667	1.425	1	6
Power	762	3.598	1.237	1	6

## Appendix 2. Linear regression

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
	ATI	ATI
Gender Equality Index	0.047 (0.03)	
MIPEX	0.017 (0.02)	0.021** (0.01)
Immigrants share	0.012 (0.02)	0.001 (0.01)
GDP per capita	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)
GEI WORK		0.117*** (0.02)
GEI MONEY		0.020 (0.04)
GEI KNOWLEDGE		-0.035** (0.01)
GEI TIME		-0.003 (0.01)
GEI POWER		0.004 (0.01)
GEI HEALTH		0.009 (0.04)
Constant	1.316 (1.90)	-3.775 (3.37)
r2	0.031	0.049
N	36994.000	36994.000



### Appendix 3. Linear predictions: benevolence, universalism, security, tradition/conformity





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