

Should I sit or should I stand?

Everyday discrimination and immigrants' socioeconomic status

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Analytical Sociology: Theory and Empirical Applications

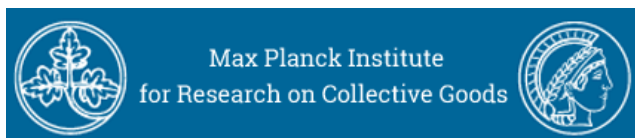
San Servolo, 18 November 2019

1 The Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES)

2 Max Planck Institute for Collective Goods (MPI)

3 Bocconi University

4 New York University



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Bocconi



Motivation

- Despite sharp declines in overt prejudice, still evidence of subtle ethnocracial discrimination in Europe.
- Ethnic discrimination: unequal and adverse treatment of ethnic groups because of their group characteristics (Pager and Shepherd 2008)
- Most research in formal market settings: housing & labor markets (Augspurg et al. 2018; Lancee 2019)
- **Little scientific knowledge about everyday / daily discrimination:** experiences in day-to-day interactions

Examples of everyday discrimination

- Subtle” everyday discrimination remains widespread
[**#MeTwo**]

"Sie sprechen aber gut Deutsch!"



Ali Can, 24, ist der Initiator von #MeTwo. (Foto: REUTERS)

- Examples: norm sanctioning (Winter and Zhang 2018), helping (choi et al. 2019, Zhang et al. 2019), shopping (Bourabain & Verhaeghe 2019), car sharing (Tjaden et al. 2018), racial profiling by the police (Legewie 2016)

Physical distance as everyday discrimination



- Proxy for social distancing, willingness to come into contact
 - **Contact theory**: intergroup contact reduces social distance and generates ethnic tolerance
- > Physical avoidance short-circuits this link

Research Questions

1. **How much** physical distancing do immigrants experience?
2. Are there **differences across immigrant groups**?
3. Are **differences driven by stereotypes of immigrants being low-economic status**?

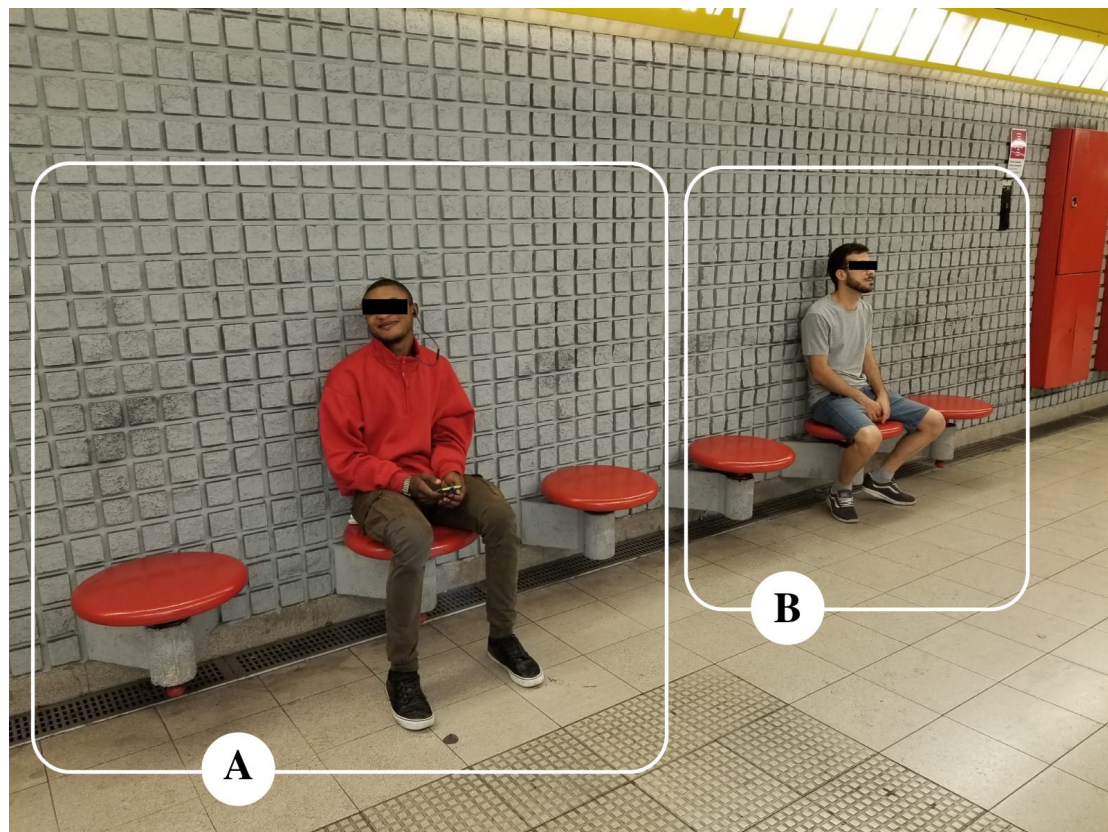
Our Empirical Contributions

- Field experiment documenting “subtle” discrimination in everyday encounters
- **Objective measure** of discriminatory behavior **unaffected by sensitivity to prejudice**
- Hold interaction context constant, **rules out the influence of “exposure”**
- **Unobtrusive measurement free from social desirability**, and cannot be “gamed” by confederates

Research Setting and Design



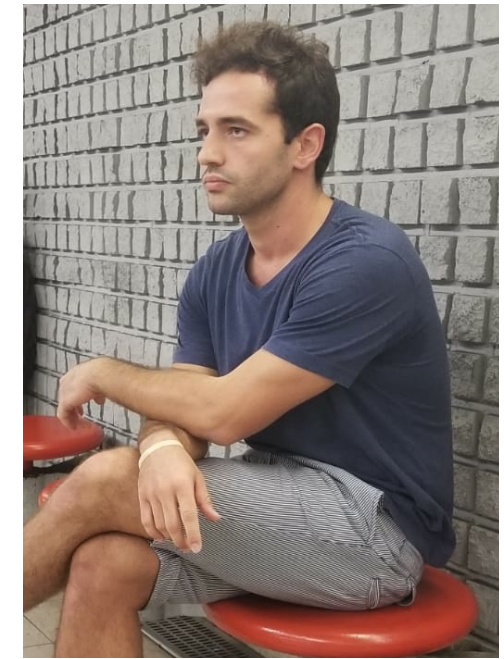
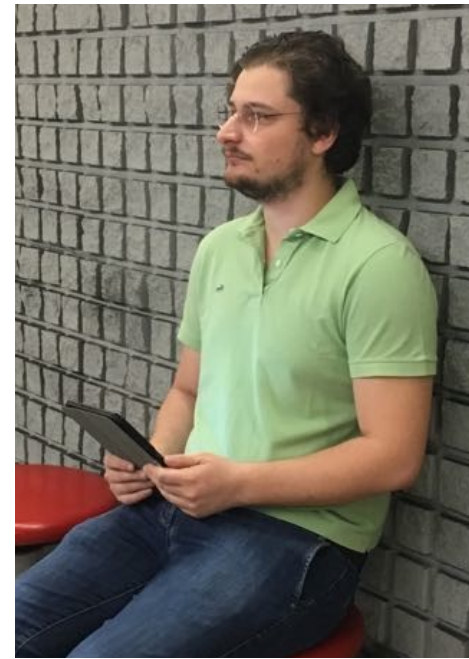
- Commuters enter metro platform containing a row of seats
- Actor sits in the near seat, “blocker” sits in the far seat
- Research assistant codes whether the commuter sits down, and in which seat
- Experimental trial ends when any commuter sits down, or when the train arrives (~ every 5 minutes)
- **Data 2018:** 831 individuals
- **Replication 2019:** 2508 individuals



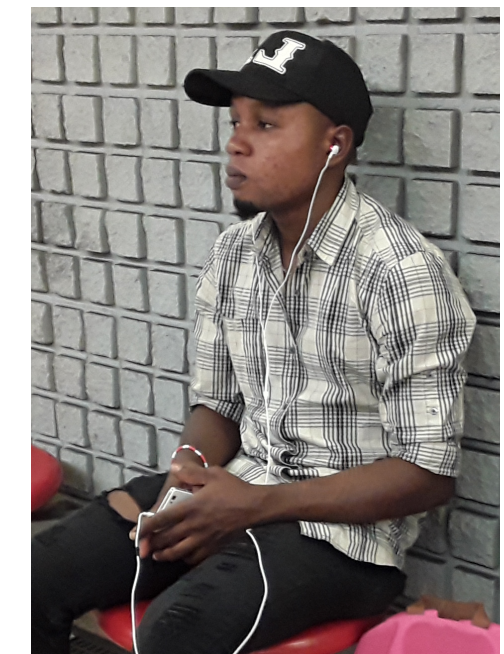
Confederates (2018)



Italian
actors



African actors
(low SES)



Status Treatment (2018)

High SES Treatment

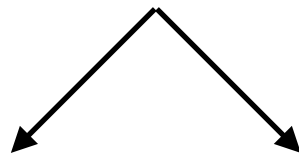


African actors
(low SES)



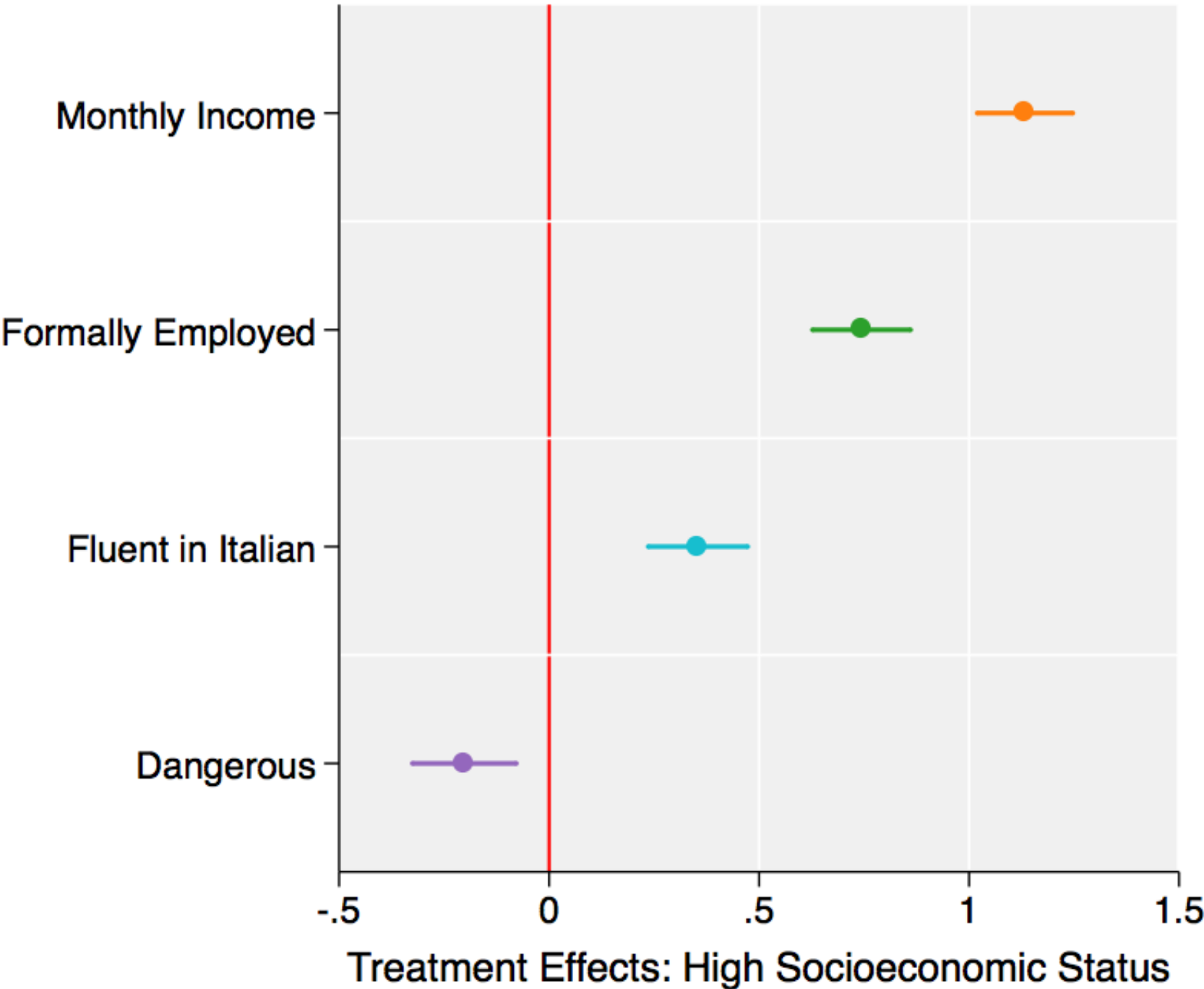
Manipulation Check

Manipulation Check (Survey 2018)



- Respondents view high-status or low-status picture
- Estimate monthly income, formal employment, linguistic fluency, and dangerousness
- Data 2018: 1046 native Italian residents of Milan recruited through an online panel

Manipulation Check (Survey 2018)



Confederates of Replication

Same Italian “Blocker” 2018 and 2019



2018

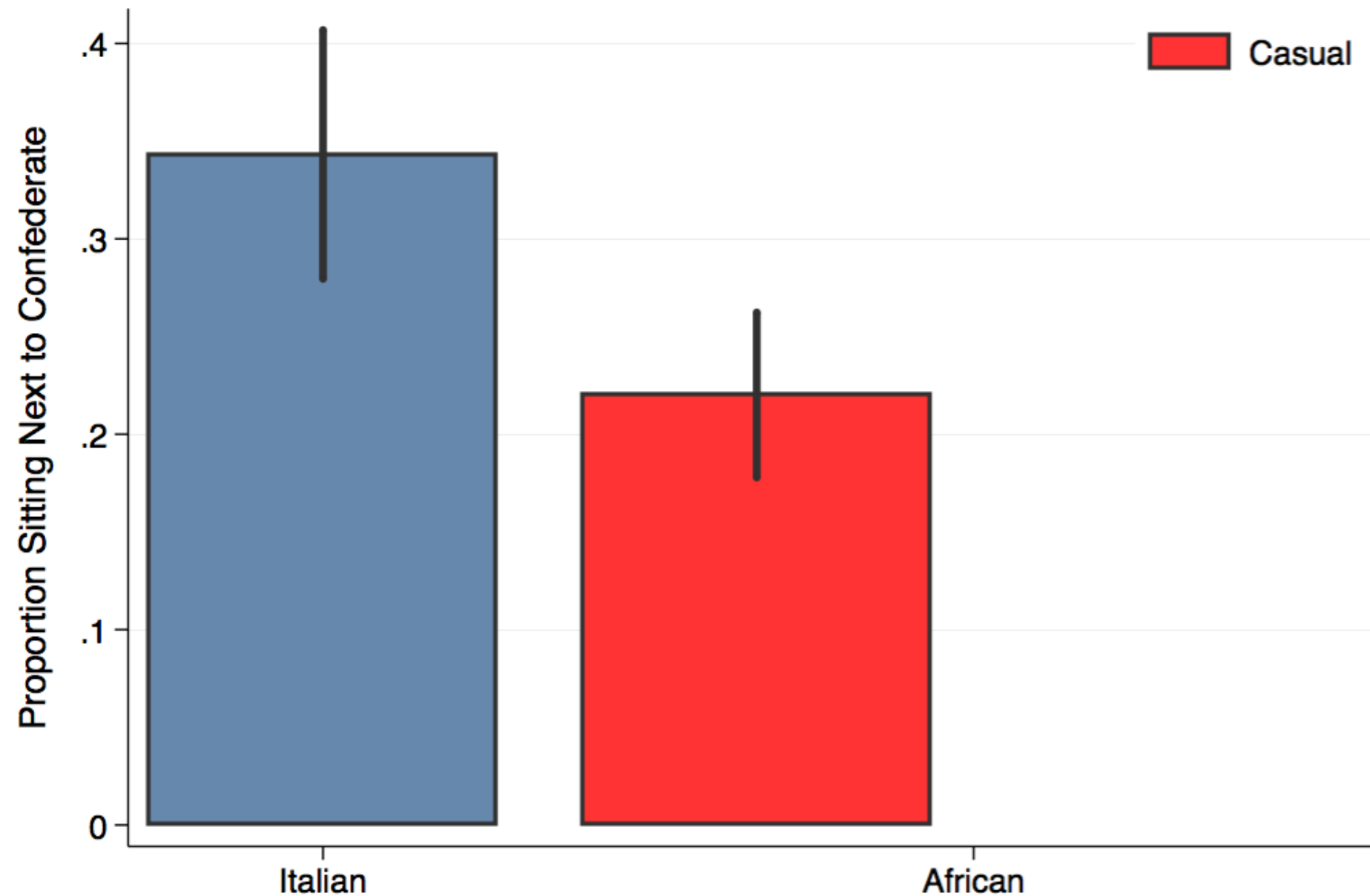


2019



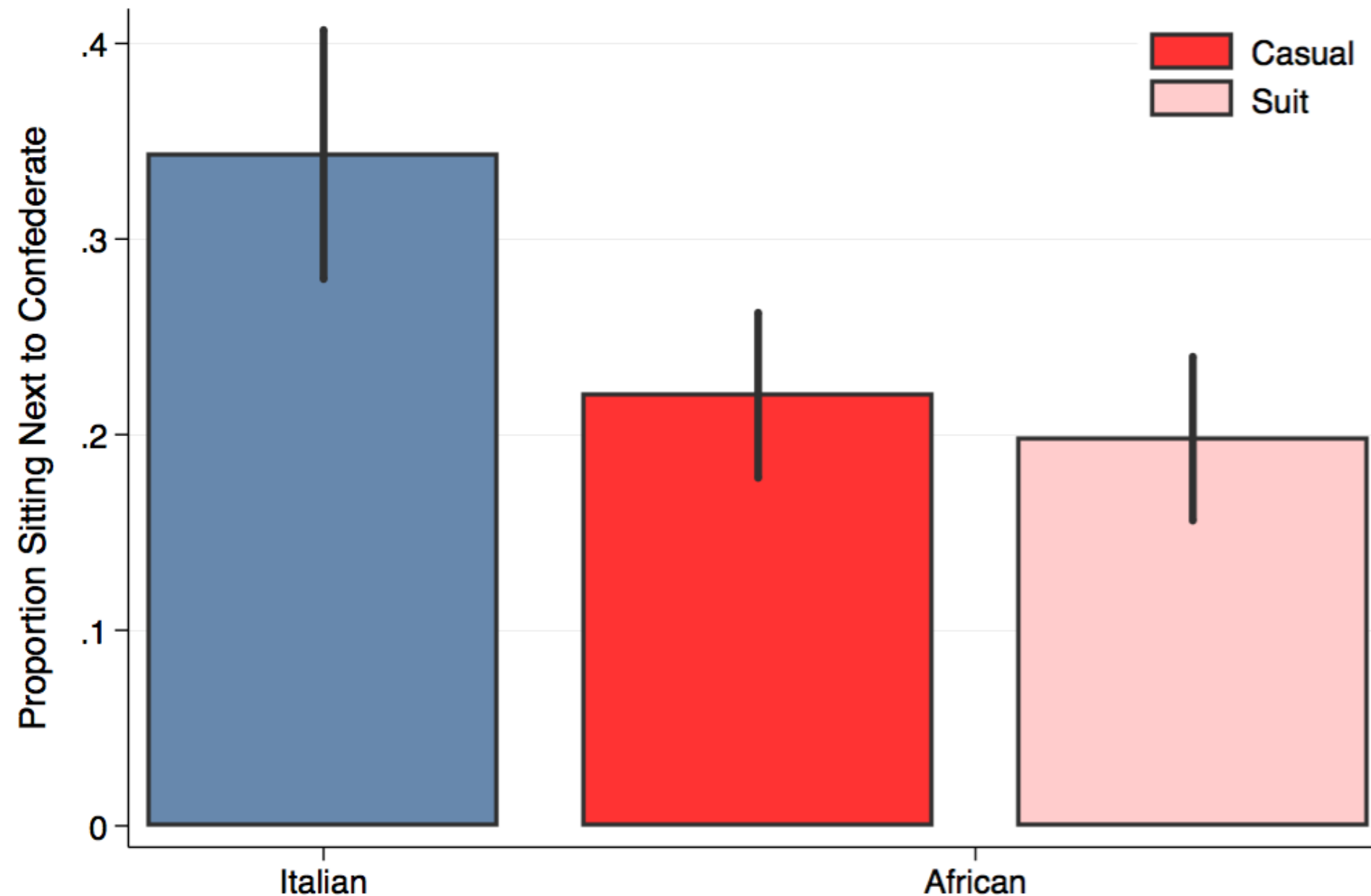
Experimental Results

Main Results 2018



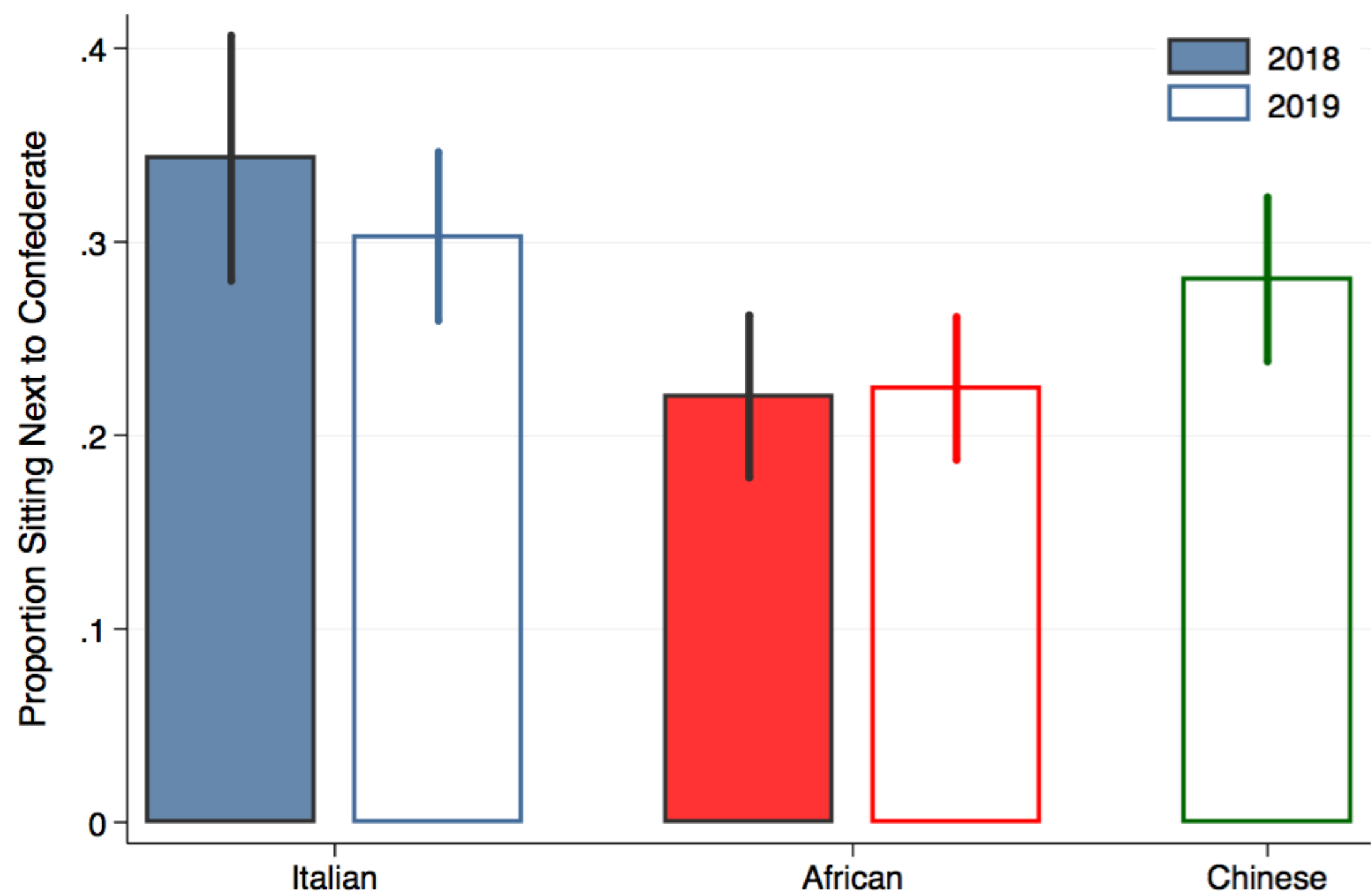
-> Significant discrimination against African actors:
35% sit next to Italian actor vs. 20% next to immigrant actor

Status Treatment 2018



- ➔ **Does not support hypothesis that discrimination is driven by stereotypes of immigrants being low-economic status**

Main Results, Casual Dress: 2018 vs. 2019



Interpreting the SES Null-Effect

	2018		2019		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Suit	-0.024 (0.030)	-0.021 (0.030)	-0.020 (0.017)	-0.018 (0.017)	0.016 (0.029)
Italian Confed.					0.071* (0.029)
Italian \times Suit					-0.056 (0.043)
Chinese Confed.					0.058* (0.028)
Chinese \times Suit					-0.054 (0.042)
Constant	0.217*** (0.038)	0.210*** (0.045)	0.288*** (0.021)	0.320*** (0.031)	0.246*** (0.026)
<i>N</i>	660	660	2501	2501	2501
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Actor FEs	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Models with controls for age and gender

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Models with controls for age and gender; baseline (5) is African actor

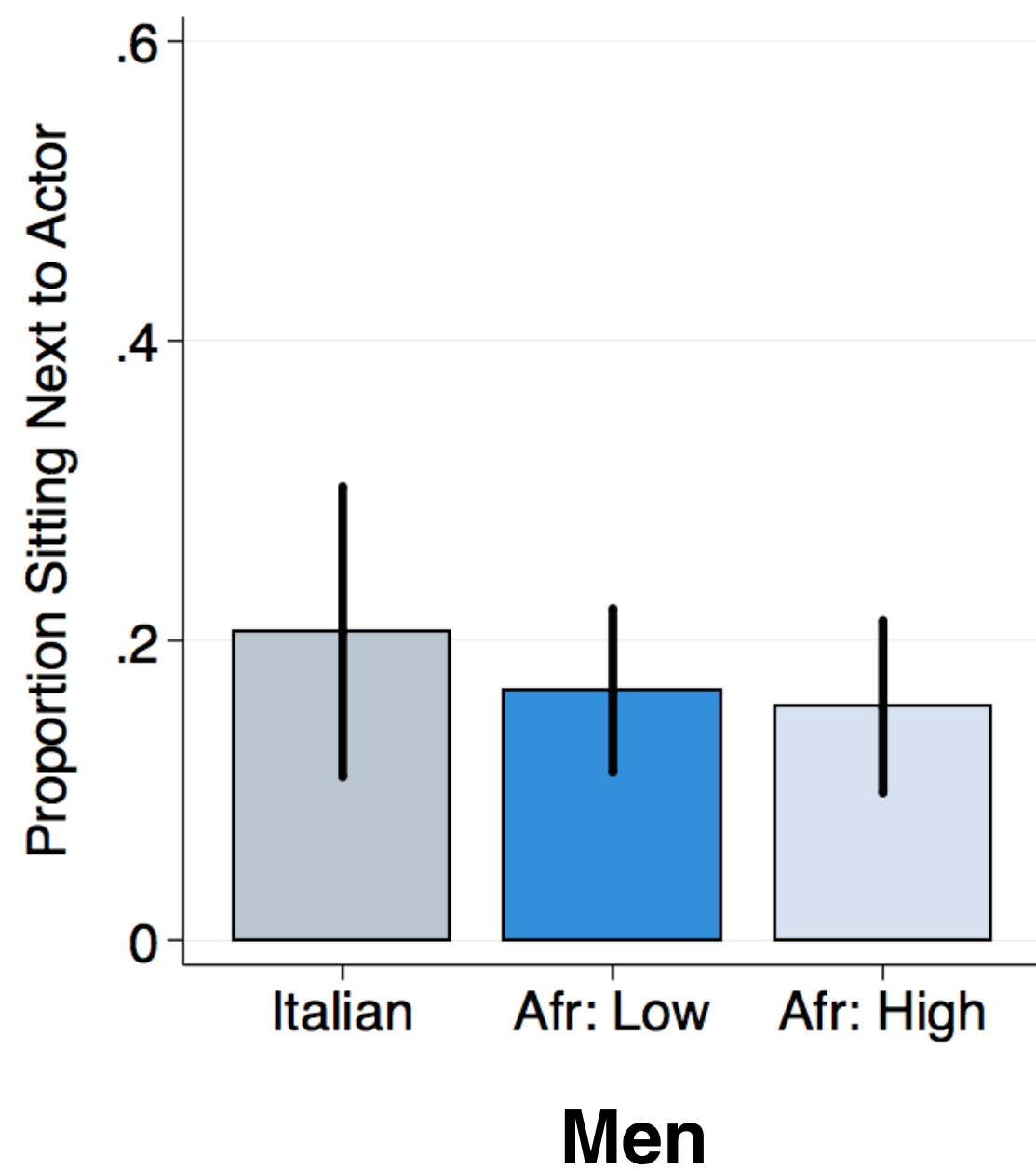
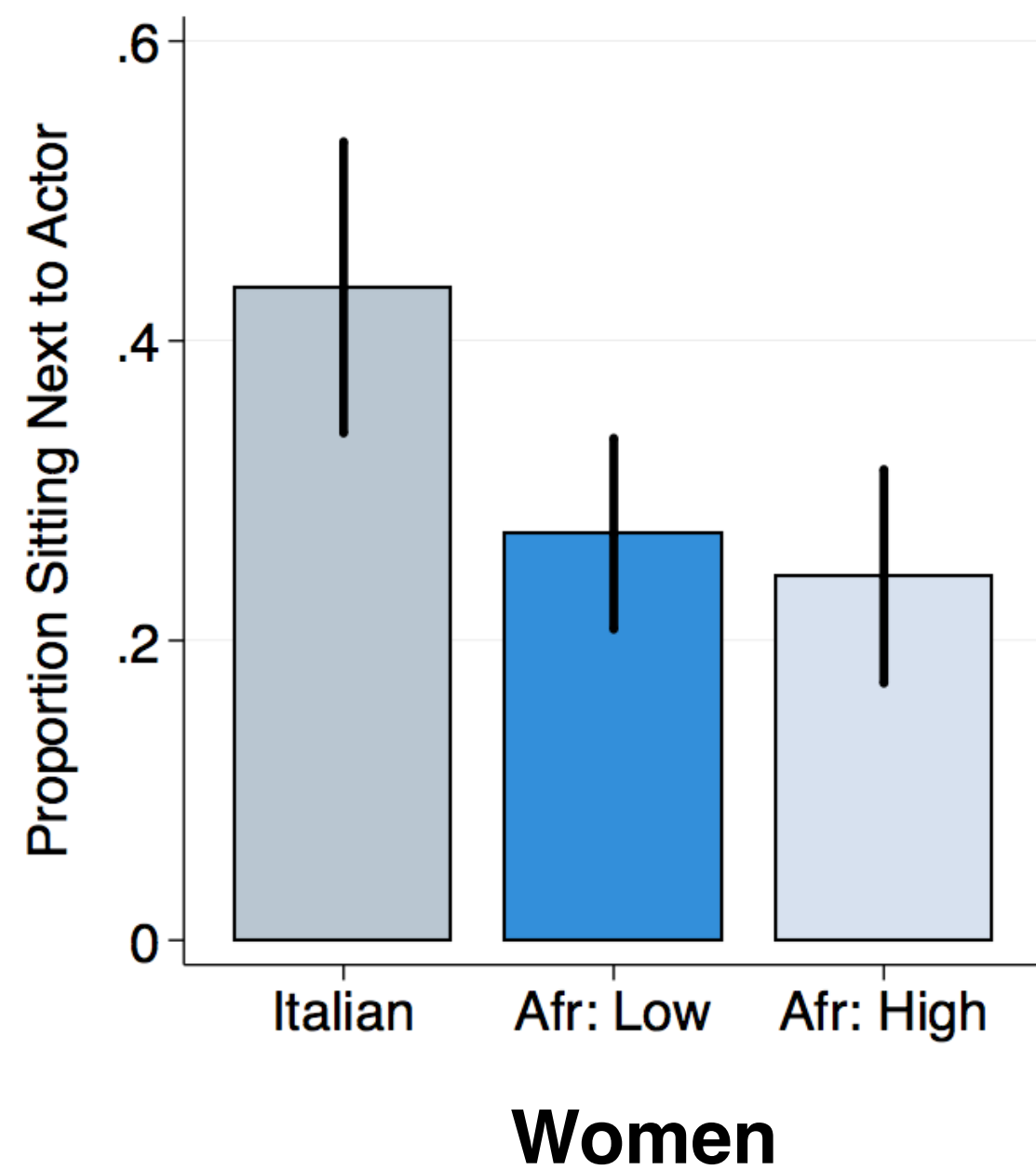
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Models with controls for age and gender; baseline (5) is African actor

Revisiting Gender Effects

Gender Results (2018)



2018 and 2019 Data: No Gender Effects

	2018		2019	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Male Subject	-0.136*** (0.038)	-0.219** (0.076)	-0.091*** (0.024)	-0.081 (0.043)
African Confed.	-0.102* (0.040)	-0.153* (0.061)	-0.067* (0.029)	-0.084* (0.041)
Male × African		0.121 (0.090)		0.036 (0.057)
Chinese Confed.			-0.006 (0.031)	0.025 (0.044)
Male × Chinese				-0.067 (0.060)
Constant	0.340*** (0.050)	0.373*** (0.059)	0.306*** (0.033)	0.301*** (0.037)
<i>N</i>	537	537	1318	1318
Age Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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Gender x SES Interaction Effects

	2018			2019		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Suit	-0.024 (0.030)	-0.034 (0.047)	-0.031 (0.047)	-0.020 (0.017)	-0.023 (0.025)	-0.020 (0.025)
Male Subject	-0.093** (0.034)	-0.102* (0.045)	-0.102* (0.045)	-0.089*** (0.017)	-0.092*** (0.024)	-0.092*** (0.024)
Male × Suit		0.020 (0.061)	0.020 (0.061)		0.006 (0.034)	0.005 (0.034)
Constant	0.217*** (0.038)	0.221*** (0.042)	0.214*** (0.048)	0.288*** (0.021)	0.290*** (0.023)	0.321*** (0.032)
<i>N</i>	660	660	660	2501	2501	2501
Age Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Actor FEs	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

→ **No evidence that men and women respond differently to SES treatment**

Summary

We gained new insights from our own replication!

1. Robust evidence of physical avoidance of African men (though smaller effect sizes)
2. No discrimination against Chinese men
3. No evidence that higher SES affects physical distancing for any ethnic group
4. No gender effects

NEXT STEPS

WHY?

- Survey experiment to measure **explicit attitudes** and **implicit bias (IAT)**
- Measuring attitudes (e.g. Bogardus social distance) towards our specific actors and generic African and Chinese immigrants

Longer-term research agenda

- Studying **intersectionality** (female confederates)
- Studying **variation in response to political events**
- Studying **variation in the context** (neighbourhood characteristics, other ethnic groups)

Thank you

NEW Working Paper soon!

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