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Beyond Gender and Ethnicity: Intersectional Disadvantages in Perceptions of Job Suitability and Pay

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Abstract: This article examines how the intersection of gender and ethnicity shapes public perceptions of appropriate pay and job suitability in Italy. Drawing on intersectional status theory, we investigate whether immigrant women face a compounded disadvantage compared to immigrant men and native Italian women and men. We also explore whether these evaluations vary across population subgroups. We use a factorial survey experiment administered to 2,000 respondents in February 2025, in which candidates' gender and ethnic background are experimentally varied across three high-status occupations. The findings reveal a divergence between evaluations of appropriate pay and job suitability. While no substantial differences emerge in perceived appropriate salaries across candidate groups, gender and ethnicity significantly shape assessments of job suitability. In particular, Latin American women experience a compounded disadvantage, receiving lower suitability evaluations than their counterparts, whereas Middle Eastern/Central Asian women face an ethnic penalty comparable to that experienced by men from the same backgrounds. These patterns suggest that intersectional disadvantages are not uniform across ethnic groups. Furthermore, suitability penalties are particularly pronounced among male respondents and residents of Central Italy. Overall, the findings highlight how culturally shared status beliefs surrounding gender and ethnicity shape public evaluations of labour market candidates, potentially contributing to the legitimation and reproduction of existing inequalities.

Keywords: Intersectionality; Status beliefs; Gender; Ethnicity

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BEYOND GENDER AND ETHNICITY: INTERSECTIONAL DISADVANTAGES IN PERCEPTIONS OF JOB SUITABILITY AND PAY

Abstract in italiano

Questo articolo esamina come l'intersezione tra genere ed etnia influenzi le percezioni della retribuzione appropriata e dell'idoneità professionale in Italia. Basandosi sulla teoria intersezionale dello status, lo studio indaga se le donne immigrate siano soggette a uno svantaggio cumulativo rispetto agli uomini immigrati e alle donne e agli uomini italiani. Esamina inoltre se tali valutazioni varino in funzione delle caratteristiche socio-demografiche dei rispondenti. La ricerca si basa su un esperimento di survey fattoriale condotto su un campione di 2.000 rispondenti nel febbraio 2025, nel quale il genere e l'origine etnica dei candidati sono stati manipolati sperimentalmente in relazione a tre professioni di elevato status. I risultati evidenziano una divergenza tra le valutazioni della retribuzione appropriata e quelle dell'idoneità professionale. Mentre non emergono differenze sostanziali nelle valutazioni salariali tra i gruppi, genere ed etnia influenzano significativamente i giudizi di idoneità. In particolare, le donne latinoamericane subiscono uno svantaggio cumulativo, mentre le donne mediorientali e centroasiatiche sono penalizzate in misura analoga agli uomini appartenenti agli stessi gruppi. Questi risultati mostrano che gli svantaggi intersezionali non sono uniformi tra i diversi gruppi etnici. Inoltre, le penalizzazioni nelle valutazioni di idoneità risultano particolarmente pronunciate tra gli uomini e i residenti nell'Italia centrale. Nel complesso, lo studio evidenzia come le credenze culturali condivise relative allo status di genere ed etnia contribuiscano a plasmare le valutazioni pubbliche dei candidati nel mercato del lavoro, potenzialmente legittimando e riproducendo le disuguaglianze esistenti.

Abstract in English

This article examines how the intersection of gender and ethnicity shapes public perceptions of appropriate pay and job suitability in Italy. Drawing on intersectional status theory, we investigate whether immigrant women face a compounded disadvantage compared to immigrant men and native Italian women and men. We also explore whether these evaluations vary across population subgroups. We use a factorial survey experiment administered to 2,000 respondents in February 2025, in which candidates' gender and ethnic background are experimentally varied across three high-status occupations. The findings reveal a divergence between evaluations of appropriate pay and job suitability. While no substantial differences emerge in perceived appropriate salaries across candidate groups, gender and ethnicity significantly shape assessments of job suitability. In particular, Latin American women experience a compounded disadvantage, receiving lower suitability evaluations than their counterparts, whereas Middle Eastern/Central Asian women face an ethnic penalty comparable to that experienced by men from the same backgrounds. These patterns suggest that intersectional disadvantages are not uniform across ethnic groups. Furthermore, suitability penalties are particularly pronounced among male respondents and residents of Central Italy. Overall, the findings highlight how culturally shared status beliefs surrounding gender and ethnicity shape public evaluations of labour market candidates, potentially contributing to the legitimation and reproduction of existing inequalities.

Keywords: Intersectionality; Status beliefs; Gender; Ethnicity

1. INTRODUCTION

International migration has become increasingly feminized, with women shifting from primarily accompanying family members to participating as autonomous economic migrants. While migration flows were historically male-dominated, women now account for almost 50% of international migrants and nearly half of all labour migrants (Paiewonsky, 2009; Hennebry et al., 2017; UN DESA, 2024). This trend, commonly referred to as the "feminization of migration", reflects both women's growing presence in migration flows and their increasing role as independent economic actors (Paiewonsky, 2009). In Italy, women represented almost 40% of the immigrant population in 2023, compared with an OECD average of 46% (OECD, 2025, p. 55). In 2024, the employment rate among foreign-born women aged 15–64 was approximately 49.4%, compared with 53% among native Italian women (Caroli Casavola, 2026).

Migrant women often experience poorer labour market outcomes than both native women and male migrants, facing a potential "double disadvantage" associated with their gender and migration status. Beyond the well-established gender wage gap, they encounter additional barriers, including limited host-country experience, non-recognition of qualifications, and employer discrimination (Azmat, 2013). Empirical evidence confirms that migrant women are subject to compounded disadvantages arising from both gender and migration status (Anastasiadou et al., 2024). For example, double earnings penalties have been documented for migrant women in several contexts, including the Netherlands (among women of Moroccan and Turkish origin compared to Dutch women), the United States (among highly skilled immigrant women) (Lopez, 2012), and the Gulf States (Alfarhan and Al-Busaidi, 2020). Discrimination may also be shaped by religious markers, such as hijab-wearing Muslim women facing additional labour market penalties (Ahmed and Gorey, 2023). In some cases, the role of ethnicity in explaining wage gaps depends on occupational structure, particularly whether jobs are located in high- or low-wage segments of the labour market. In the Gulf states, ethnicity appears to be more influential in lower segments of the income distribution, whereas gender effects are more pronounced at the upper end (Alfarhan and Al-Busaidi, 2020). It is sometimes assumed that highly skilled migrants are less exposed to discrimination; however, this is not always supported empirically (Alecu, 2020). However, some studies find no ethnic differences in gender gaps, but rather a uniform gender penalty across ethnic groups (Rebhun, 2008, 2010).

In Italy, existing evidence points to the coexistence of an immigrant wage penalty and a gender wage gap among migrant workers. Overall, migrants experience substantial wage disadvantages compared with native workers, with estimates ranging from 39 to 45 per cent (Piazzalunga, 2015; Ghignoni et

al., 2022). While the gender wage gap among workers is estimated at around 15 per cent, the ethnic wage gap approaches 40 per cent. These disadvantages are even more pronounced at the intersection of gender and ethnicity: migrant women earn over 40 per cent less than Italian-born men (Piazzalunga, 2015). Moreover, Di Bello et al. (2025) show that, in Italy, male descendants of immigrants have employment prospects in high-skilled occupations comparable to those of natives, whereas female descendants remain significantly disadvantaged.

Against this backdrop of persistent labour market inequalities, this article focuses on migrant women in Italy and examines whether they are evaluated differently from both native Italian men and native Italian women. In doing so, we design a vignette experiment aimed at testing whether pay and suitability evaluations vary across combinations of gender and ethnicity. In other words, we ask whether the gender gap differs across ethnic groups. In observational studies, it is difficult to isolate the effects of gender and ethnicity, as omitted variables may confound estimates (Gaebler et al., 2022). Experimental designs, however, allow for controlled manipulation of signals (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015), enabling clearer identification of group-based penalties (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004). We focus on two ethnic groups characterised by well-established communities and a significant presence in the Italian labour market: individuals of Middle Eastern/Central Asian and Latin American origin. These groups are also perceived as highly visible by Italian citizens (Kulic et al., 2025).

To implement the survey vignette experiment, we use foreign-sounding male and female names, a common method in labour market discrimination research. Name-based signalling has been widely used in hiring studies. In a landmark experiment, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) showed that applicants with African American-sounding names received significantly fewer interview callbacks than those with White-sounding names, with limited gender variation. This approach has since been widely replicated (Baert, 2017; Zschirnt and Ruedin, 2016; McGinnity and Lunn, 2011; Baert et al., 2015). These studies found that minority candidates were significantly less successful when applying for jobs than 'white natives' with identical qualifications. Hence, although the degree of discrimination detected in these studies varies substantially, these studies spotlighted a systematic differential treatment by either race or foreign origin.

Our study similarly asks whether two otherwise identical profiles receive different evaluations depending solely on the candidate's name. However, our focus is not limited to a single dimension such as gender or ethnicity in isolation. Following intersectional approaches, we argue that gender alone is insufficient to explain inequality (McCall, 2005; Ridgeway, 2019), and that social categories

must be studied in relation to one another. Moreover, we evaluate generalized bias that is present in common population rather than bias due to employers' prejudices. We contribute to a well-established sociological literature that examines how ordinary citizens evaluate wages and earnings using large scale survey data (Kelley and Evans 1993, Osberg and Smeeding, 2006; Kalleitner and Bohmann, 2023), rather than relying on the assessments of professionals or other specialists (Deshpande and Schoderbek, 1993). However, perceptions of pay are not merely subjective assessments of economic outcomes; they also reflect broader social understandings of the value of work, deservingness and distributive justice. Individuals' evaluations of earnings are influenced by socially constructed notions of merit, occupational value and fairness (Kelley and Evans, 1993; Roth, 2006; Hecht, 2022). Examining perceived evaluations of pay therefore provides insights into how individuals understand and legitimise wage differences, as well as the social norms and inequalities underpinning remuneration. In particular, processes of job evaluation can reproduce existing gender (or ethnic) inequalities in remuneration (Steinberg,1990). Our experiment is embedded in a wide quota-based population survey, and was administered in February 2025 (Kulic et al., 2025). The presence of detailed information about respondents enables us to see whether and how these characteristics may moderate such evaluations.

The article builds on status related theories and their application within intersectional research. According to these perspectives, individuals occupy different positions in social hierarchies, and these hierarchies are often shaped by multiple, overlapping systems of inequality. Gender is typically a primary status marker used in social categorization, while ethnicity or race often functions as a secondary but still powerful classification framework (Ridgeway, 2019). The intersectional perspective highlights how these categories interact, producing distinct patterns of (dis)advantage. While some groups may be partially protected from discrimination, others are especially vulnerable to cumulative negative evaluations (Ridgeway, 2019; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz, 2013).

The article is organized as follows. The first section reviews the literature on the social construction of remuneration and occupational worth. The second section outlines the status related theories and the related hypotheses. The third section describes the methodology, including the construction of the vignette and the post-experimental analyses. The fourth section reports the results. Finally, the concluding section summarizes the main findings and outlines directions for future research.

2. THE SOCIAL EVALUATION OF WAGES: OCCUPATIONAL WORTH AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES

Wages and wage setting are not simply economic outcomes determined by market forces. Sociological research has shown that wage determination is shaped by institutional arrangements, bargaining power, and organisational practices (Kaufman, 2013; Jasso, 1978). From a broader sociological perspective, wages can also be understood as social institutions, shaped by shared norms, cultural beliefs, and social hierarchies both within and beyond the workplace. Evaluations of pay, similarly, are not confined to the workplace or to the perspectives of those directly involved in wage-setting. A substantial body of sociological research has examined how ordinary citizens assess the appropriate remuneration of different occupational groups and evaluate the legitimacy of existing wage differentials (Kelley and Evans, 1993; Osberg and Smeeding, 2006). Research based on general-population surveys has shown that individuals distinguish between real actual earnings and their perception of what should be earned based on occupational groups, thereby revealing shared normative expectations about appropriate remuneration (Kelley and Evans, 1993; Osberg and Smeeding, 2006). Examining public perceptions of occupational earnings across nine countries, Kelley and Evans (1993) find that individuals generally agree on the relative remuneration that different occupations should receive, but disagree considerably about the magnitude of legitimate income differences. Similarly, Osberg and Smeeding (2006), using International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data, examine respondents' perceptions of both actual and appropriate earnings across occupations. Their work is particularly useful for understanding public preferences regarding the size of wage differentials and the legitimacy of income inequality.

The social construction of occupational worth also raises questions about how the characteristics and skills associated with different types of work are recognised and rewarded. Steinberg (1990), for instance, argues that the definition and valuation of skills are socially constructed and shaped by gender relations and power structures. Historically established gender hierarchies influence which skills are recognised, how they are valued, and ultimately how they are rewarded. This perspective highlights that evaluations of remuneration may reflect broader social beliefs about the worth of particular occupations and the people who perform them, rather than simply their perceived economic contribution.

Importantly, research has also examined differences in attitudes towards appropriate remuneration, rather than assuming that such evaluations are homogeneous across individuals and societies. Evaluations of occupational earnings and legitimate pay differentials have been associated with individuals' political orientations and socioeconomic positions, including both objective and subjective social status (Kelley and Evans, 1993; Büchel et al., 2021). Research suggests that individuals occupying different social positions may differ in their propensity to justify existing

inequalities, with objective social position potentially playing an important role in these evaluations (Büchel et al., 2021). Furthermore, comparative research demonstrates that attitudes towards legitimate earnings are shaped by broader national institutional contexts. Kelley and Evans (2021), for example, examine how perceptions of legitimate earnings differences relate to welfare-state institutions, finding that stronger welfare-state commitments are associated particularly with lower legitimate earnings for elite occupations. More recent comparative research also suggests that citizens tend to favour substantially narrower pay differentials than those observed in practice (Bechert and Osberg, 2023). Taken together, this literature suggests that evaluations of workers' economic worth cannot be understood exclusively in terms of objective productivity or occupational characteristics. Rather, they must also be considered in relation to broader social norms, individual social positions, and institutional contexts that shape beliefs about deservingness, occupational worth, and the legitimacy of wage inequality.

The existing research on general public has primarily examined how occupational characteristics, individual social positions, and national institutional contexts shape evaluations of appropriate remuneration. Less attention has been paid to whether, and to what extent, the social characteristics attributed to workers also influence these evaluations. In particular, gender and ethnicity may shape perceptions of workers' economic worth and deservingness, potentially affecting the remuneration considered appropriate for individuals performing the same occupation. While previous research has highlighted how gender relations influence the recognition and valuation of skills (Sauer, 2020), the role of ethnicity in shaping evaluations of appropriate pay remains comparatively less explored, with only recent attempts to study evaluated differences between immigrants and native workers (Semyonov et al., 2024). Moreover, considering gender and ethnicity jointly makes it possible to investigate whether these characteristics have independent or intersecting effects on perceptions of appropriate remuneration. Addressing these questions allows us to examine whether social inequalities are reflected not only in actual wage-setting practices but also in the normative evaluations through which differences in remuneration are considered legitimate.

3. GENDER AND ETHNICITY AS STATUS CUES

Gender and ethnicity have been recognized as status cues in producing enduring inequalities in the labour market. Several theories stipulate how social characteristics influence evaluations of individuals, particularly judgments about their competence, suitability, status, and performance.

The expectation states theory (Berger et al., 1974) explains how socially significant characteristics

such as gender, race, or age shape performance expectations. These characteristics serve as cues from which people infer others' competence, and these expectations in turn affect who participates, who is influential, and who is positively evaluated. The theory belongs to a larger framework of status characteristics theory (Ridgeway, 2011; Ridgeway, 2019; Ridgeway et al., 2022) which posits that gender and ethnic background function as some of many status characteristics that shape performance expectations and reward allocation. Because the distribution of rewards tends to align with status hierarchies, individuals occupying lower-status positions, such as women or immigrants, are perceived as deserving lower earnings than equally qualified higher-status individuals (Auspurg et al., 2017). Other theories , such as the role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002), or Heilman's (1983, 2001, 2012) lack-of-fit model are particularly useful to explain how gender and ethnicity may influence occupational suitability. The former posits that societal expectations assign distinct social and career roles to men and women, and that such expectations drive others' evaluations (Eagly and Karau, 2002), while Heilman's (1983, 2001, 2012) lack-of-fit model addresses the formation of expectations and competence evaluations in the workplace. In both these approaches, there is an implicit overlap between gender and race (or ethnicity) that determines who is considered most prototypical of gender or racial stereotypes. Although these theories explain part of the mechanisms, they do not explain how the meaning of category membership shifts across contexts and occupational sectors, as they assume that gendered stereotype content is universal. However, Di Stasio and Larsen (2020), for instance, show that the gender premium in employers' callbacks is concentrated in gender-congruent occupations and nearly disappears for non-white female candidates, and that the ethnic penalty varies systematically with the gender composition of the occupation.

Widely shared cultural beliefs play a central role in shaping how systems of inequality are reproduced, particularly through the interaction of gender, race, and class (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz, 2013). These categories do not operate independently; rather, they function as interconnected systems that structure both social hierarchies and everyday perceptions. On the one hand, they influence how individuals perceive and categorise others in interactional settings; on the other, they operate as broader institutionalised systems of inequality that shape access to resources and opportunities. This intersection becomes especially salient in contexts characterised by both gender and ethnic diversity, where multiple forms of difference are simultaneously visible and socially meaningful.

This framework is particularly relevant in societies such as Italy, where both gender and ethnicity tend to be strongly essentialised in public discourse and everyday cognition, partly as a result of relatively recent immigration and persistent cultural biases (Nese, 2023). These beliefs often take on a hegemonic character, in which dominant social representations implicitly centre whiteness as the

norm, typically embodied in the figures of white men and white women. Within this symbolic order, stereotypes linked to gender and ethnicity are not only co-existing but frequently overlapping and mutually reinforcing (Berdahl and Moore, 2006; Nelson and Probst, 2004). As a result, evaluations of individuals are shaped by intersecting assumptions about both their gender and their perceived ethnic background, rather than by either dimension in isolation.

Drawing on status characteristics theory and role congruity and lack of fit theory, this study focuses on how the general population considers appropriate pay and suitability for workers of different gender and ethnic backgrounds. This matters because ordinary people's judgments of appropriate pay and suitability may contribute to legitimising the current unequal situation in the Italian labour market.

The study expects that migrant women in Italy face the greatest degree of bias relative to migrant men and to both men and women from the majority (white) group. Hence, the study hypothesizes that[1]:

Hypothesis 1: Respondents will assign lower rewards to women with foreign-sounding names compared to men with foreign-sounding names and native women and men.

Similarly, gender and ethnicity influence perceptions of candidate suitability. As with salary attributions, this effect is expected to interact with ethnicity. Consistent with the framework outlined above, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Respondents will consider women with foreign-sounding names less suitable than men with foreign-sounding names and native women and men.

The theory also predicts nuances across different groups and, therefore, nationalities. Within immigrant populations, some women and men may be perceived as more stereotypical in gender terms, while others may not closely match dominant gender prototypes. This can create the “binds and freedoms” experienced by “off-diagonal” individuals, that is, people whose combination of characteristics deviates from typical stereotypes (e.g. Black women or Asian men) (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz, 2013). Consequently, some groups of men and women may be perceived more positively than others and therefore experience lower levels of bias.

In Italians’ perceptions, Middle Eastern/Central Asians and Latin Americans are among the most visible groups in Italy (Kulic et al., 2025). These are also groups whose names are more easily

[1] The hypotheses are pre-registered on the OSF platform.

distinguishable from those of the native population and can therefore serve as markers of ethnic background (Martiniello and Verhaeghe, 2022). Without formulating specific expectations for particular groups, the inclusion of these two distinct ethnic groups enables us to identify potential differences and to assess the empirical existence of off-diagonality in Italy.

Moreover, the origin of differences in evaluations, and how they differ according to the socio-demographic characteristics of population, or may vary with the actual occupation of workers are further investigated in an exploratory analysis.

4. METHODOLOGY

Our experiment was embedded in an online cross-sectional survey (Computer Assisted online survey, CAWI) that was administered to 12000 respondents, targeting the population aged 18-70 and representing the entire Italian population according to quota sampling, with quotas related to gender, employment status, macro-region, age and level of education (Kulic et al., 2025). However, the total sample size of the experiment is 2000 participants as only some respondents were randomly selected to participate in this experiment. Sample size calculation was performed prior to the survey using G-Power showing that 2000 respondents are sufficient to generalize the results of the study to the Italian population, as well as to conduct group comparisons and multivariate data analysis (Erdfelder et al., 1996).

The current study involves a factorial (vignette) survey experiment. Vignette descriptions are made based on the combination of the eight features described below. Total of 1296 combinations of vignettes were generated and administered to participants. Each respondent randomly receives six vignettes as a hypothetical CV of a candidate with randomized characteristics for three randomized occupations (i.e., random allocation with replacement). As a result, the total pool of observations is 12.000 (2000 respondents per 6 vignettes).

The main advantage of using vignettes for this type of research is that we can directly estimate what respondents perceive to be the right salary or suitability on the basis of various characteristics found on the cv (Steiner et al., 2016). More specifically, these are gender, migration status, age, parental status, field of study, occupation, and social class.

4.1 Vignette design

An experimental vignette design was developed to examine how various characteristics influence

wage evaluations and candidate suitability for different job occupations (Table 1).

Table 1. Vignette's dimensions and attributes

Dimensions	***Attributes***
Gender	Male
	Female
Ethnicity	Italian
	Latin
	Middle Eastern/Central Asian
Age	35
	45
Parental status	Without children
	With two children
Field of study	Economics (gender neutral)
	Engineering (male dominated)
	Psychology (female dominated)
Previous experience	1 year
	5 years
	10 years
Hobbies	Sailing (high social class)
	Cooking (low social class)
Occupations	High school professor (female dominated)
	Product manager (gender-less)
	Business consultant (male dominated)

The study grouped the several aspects that might influence the evaluation of a CV into three categories: (a) variables related to the individual characteristics of a candidate; (b) variables related to the specific qualities and competencies of a candidate; and (c) variables related to their socio-economic status. Also, another key element is the occupation (advertised job position).

This article however focuses exclusively on two individual characteristics of candidates, and these are gender and ethnicity. *Gender* was operationalised as male or female, while *ethnicity* was categorised as Italian, Latin, or Middle Eastern/Central Asian. These two characteristics were conveyed through the candidates' first and last names. Examples of Italian names include Marco Rossi, Sofia Rossi, Leonardo Bianchi, and Chiara Verdi; Latin names include Carlos Rivera-González, Isabel López-Hernández, Gabriela Lopez-Hernandez, and Enrique García-Rodríguez; and Middle Eastern/Central Asian names include Samir Khan, Aaliyah Rafiq, Samir Abdullah, and Maryam Khan. People infer national origin through names, and particularly through names in combination with surnames (Martiniello and Verhaeghe, 2022). In the experiment, we rely on most common names and surnames to exclude some other association of names, for instance social origin. The names are not geographically specific, while we also acknowledge that some names sometimes

may hide specific national origins (e.g., Peruvian rather than Argentinian or Spanish, Pakistani rather than Bangladeshi or Saudi Arabic). Overall, the evaluations refer to men and women of different ethnic groups across three distinct high status *occupations* (high school professor, product manager and business consultant), under the assumption that everyone has tertiary-level education, and that positions are full-time with a permanent contract (see examples of vignettes in the Appendix).

4.2 Measures

The *adequate salary* and *suitability* of the candidate are tested through two questions posed after each vignette. The first question asks respondents to evaluate the CV and indicate what they consider to be an appropriate salary. The salary range was intentionally limited to help orient the respondents. Specifically, the experiment asks: "*On a net salary range 1500-3500 per month (40 hours per week), how much do you think it is the appropriate salary for this profile? ____ EUR".* Hence, the values of the variable "Adequate salary" range from 1500 to 3500 euros, as a continuous variable. The second question regards the suitability of the candidate. Specifically, it asks whether the candidate's CV demonstrates the characteristics best suited to the proposed position. Specifically, the study asks: "*On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means unsuitable and 10 suitable, how suitable do you think the candidate is for the vacant position?*".

Both measures capture subjective judgment. In each vignette's introduction, respondents were asked to evaluate candidates for various positions 'based on your personal judgment.' Accordingly, the study focuses on respondents' perceptions of deserved pay and suitability given the role and CV characteristics, interpreting these evaluations as expressions of broader population beliefs.

This article focuses on differences in these evaluations across multiple high-status occupations in relation to the intersection of gender and ethnicity as characteristics presented on CVs. Furthermore, the evaluations are studied by different groups of respondents in relation to their gender (male and female respondents), education level of the respondents (low, medium, and high level) and the area of the country (Northeast, North-West, Center, South and Islands) to investigate whether population from different backgrounds make different judgements. Gender and education are individual-level characteristics, while the Italian North, Centre, and South are considered contextual factors. These macro-regions also differ in several respects, including their degree of exposure to migration. (e.g. approximately 5 % of immigrants in the South and 10-12% in the North and Center, Istat, 2024).

4.3 Post-experimental Analyses

Because each respondent evaluates several vignettes and the observational unit is the individual vignette-response, we employ multilevel linear models to assess how vignette attributes influence the two outcome variables (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015). This modelling strategy is necessary given the hierarchical structure of the data, which combines predictors measured at the respondent level with characteristics that vary across vignettes. Therefore, we analyse the data by relying on the multi-level random intercept models as follows:

$$y_{i,v} = \alpha + \beta X_{i,v} + \eta_i + \varepsilon_{i,v}$$

where $y_{i,v}$ is the dependent variable, corresponding to individual i response to vignette v in relation to the adequate salary question, and suitability for the position; $X_{i,v}$ is a vector of vignette-level characteristics, namely gender and ethnicity as the main focus of this article, and the interaction between gender and ethnicity to capture the intersectionality between these characteristics; η_i represents the random intercept for respondent i (which captures the variability in mean response levels between participants); ε_ij is the vignette-level error (i.e., level-1 residual). The model is repeated across different groups of population, for men and women, across respondents of low, medium and high education and region of residence as North-East, North-West, Center, South and Islands.

5. DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Table 2 first presents the descriptive statistics for the dependent variables used in this study. The mean adequate salary is approximately €2,236, with a standard deviation of €554. The mean score for perceived suitability is 7.15, with a standard deviation of 2.04. The means vary across respondent groups, ranging from an average salary evaluation of €2,198 among women to €2,276 among men. Differences in evaluated pay by respondents' educational level and region of residence in Italy are relatively small. However, larger differences emerge in evaluations of suitability. On average, women tend to evaluate suitability more positively (mean = 7.3) than men (mean = 6.9). Highly educated individuals also tend to assign higher suitability scores (mean = 7.3) compared to respondents with medium levels of education (mean = 7.1) and low levels of education (mean = 7.0). The highest evaluations of suitability are found in the South (mean=7.3) and the lowest are recorded in the North-East of Italy (mean=7).

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of the dependent variables by respondents' gender, education level, and macro-regions of residence, and overall (n = 12 000)

Variable	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Min*	*Max*

Adequate salary	2236.62	554.77	1500	3500
Suitability	7.15	2.04	1	10
Adequate salary # gender				
Woman	2198.70	541.15	1500	3500
Man	2276.14	565.77	1500	3500
Suitability # gender				
Woman	7.34	2.03	1	10
Man	6.98	2.03	1	10
Adequate salary # education				
Low				
Medium	2210.52	566.03	1500	3500
High	2243.58	544.15	1500	3500
	2274.62	548.78	1500	3500
Suitability # education				
Low	7.03	2.19	1	10
Medium	7.20	1.94	1	10
High	7.33	1.89	1	10
Adequate salary # macro-region				
North-West				
North-East	2215.15	534.76	1500	3500
Center	2210.70	525.65	1500	3500
South and Islands	2234.59	554.89	1500	3500
	2269.47	584.03	1500	3500
Suitability # macro-region				
North-West	7.19	2.07	1	10
North-East	7.00	2.00	1	10
Center	7.04	1.98	1	10
South and Islands	7.28	2.06	1	10

5.1 Are Middle Eastern/Central Asian and Latin American women penalized in evaluations?

The second part of the analysis includes three regression models (Table 3). We first regress the gender and ethnic origin of the vignette characteristics, on evaluations of appropriate pay and suitability in the full sample of respondents followed by a model with their interaction, without controlling for respondent characteristics (Table 3, column 1,4 and column 2,5).

Table 3. Multilevel regression for the variables "Adequate salary" and "Suitability" including vignette characteristics: main effects (M1, M4), gender × ethnic origin interaction (M2, M5), and combined gender–ethnic origin groups (M3, M6) (n = 12,000)

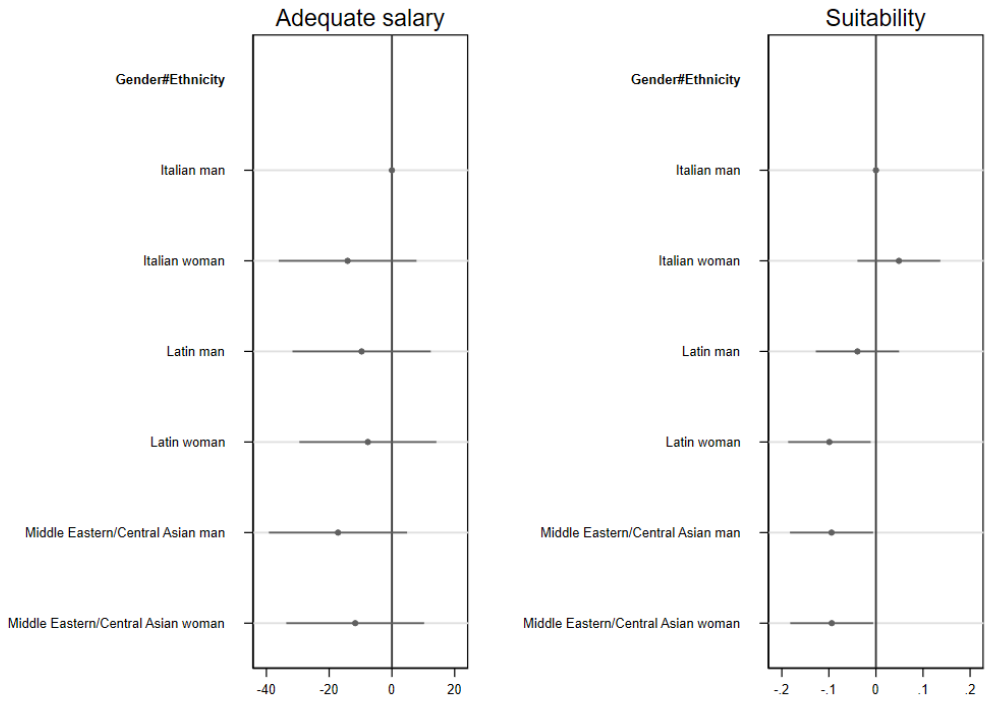
DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Latin (Ref: Italian)	-1.632	-9.651		-0.0936***	-0.0393	

	(7.959)	(11.24)		(0.0319)	(0.0451)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian (Ref: Italian)	-7.374	-17.18		-0.118***	-0.0943**	
	(7.952)	(11.24)		(0.0319)	(0.0451)	
Woman (Ref: Man)	-2.255	-14.11		-0.00360	0.0487	
	(6.464)	(11.20)		(0.0260)	(0.0450)	
Woman (Ref: Man) # Latin (Ref: Italian)		16.10			-0.108*	
		(15.86)			(0.0637)	
Woman (Ref: Man) # Middle Eastern/Central Asian (Ref: Italian)		19.60			-0.0484	
		(15.87)			(0.0637)	
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)			-14.11			0.0487
			(11.20)			(0.0450)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)			-9.651			-0.0393
			(11.24)			(0.0451)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)			-7.660			-0.0989**
			(11.15)			(0.0447)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)			-17.18			-0.0943**
			(11.24)			(0.0451)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)			-11.69			-0.0940**
			(11.21)			(0.0450)
Constant	2,004***	2,010***	2,010***	6.973***	6.947***	6.947***
	(15.17)	(15.84)	(15.84)	(0.0579)	(0.0607)	(0.0607)
Observations	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Number of groups	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

In a third step, we present a model with total group effects by regressing the combined gender and ethnic origin (Italian men, Italian women, Middle-Eastern/Central Asian men, Middle-Eastern/Central Asian women, Latin American men and Latin American women, column 3 and 6). The graphical presentation of the letter is given by Figure 1 that displays the linear combination of the regression coefficients for each combination of gender and ethnicity, along with their 95% confidence intervals (see Table 3).

Figure 1. Multilevel regression with random intercept of adequate salary and of suitability along with their 95% confidence (n = 12,000)



For adequate pay (Table 3), we observe no statistically significant differences by candidate gender, ethnicity, or their interaction. As shown in Model 3 (Table 3), pay evaluations do not differ significantly between Latin American or Middle Eastern/Central Asian women and native Italian men or women, nor is there a significant gender gap within foreign-origin groups. In contrast, clear disparities emerge for suitability. While baseline gender differences are statistically indistinguishable from zero, having a Latin American or Middle Eastern/Central Asian background reduces overall suitability ratings by 0.09 ($p < 0.01$) and 0.11 points ($p < 0.01$), respectively. Introducing the interaction between gender and ethnicity reveals a marginally significant negative interaction for Latin American women (beta = -0.11, $p < 0.10$), indicating that the gender gap is substantially more unfavourable for Latin American candidates than for native Italians—evidence of a compound disadvantage. Conversely, the interaction term for Middle Eastern/Central Asian women is not statistically significant, meaning their penalty does not compound across gender and ethnicity. Consistent with these estimates, Figure 1 shows that relative to Italian men, suitability ratings are significantly lower for Latin American women (−0.10 points, $p < 0.05$), Middle Eastern/Central Asian men (−0.09 points, $p < 0.05$), and Middle Eastern/Central Asian women (−0.09 points, $p < 0.05$), corresponding to an effect size of approximately 0.05 standard deviations. Because occupations were randomly assigned in the vignettes, these main estimates represent effects pooled across all three roles. Supplementary models interacting gender and ethnicity with occupation (Table A5 in the Appendix) confirm that evaluation patterns do not differ significantly across high school professors,

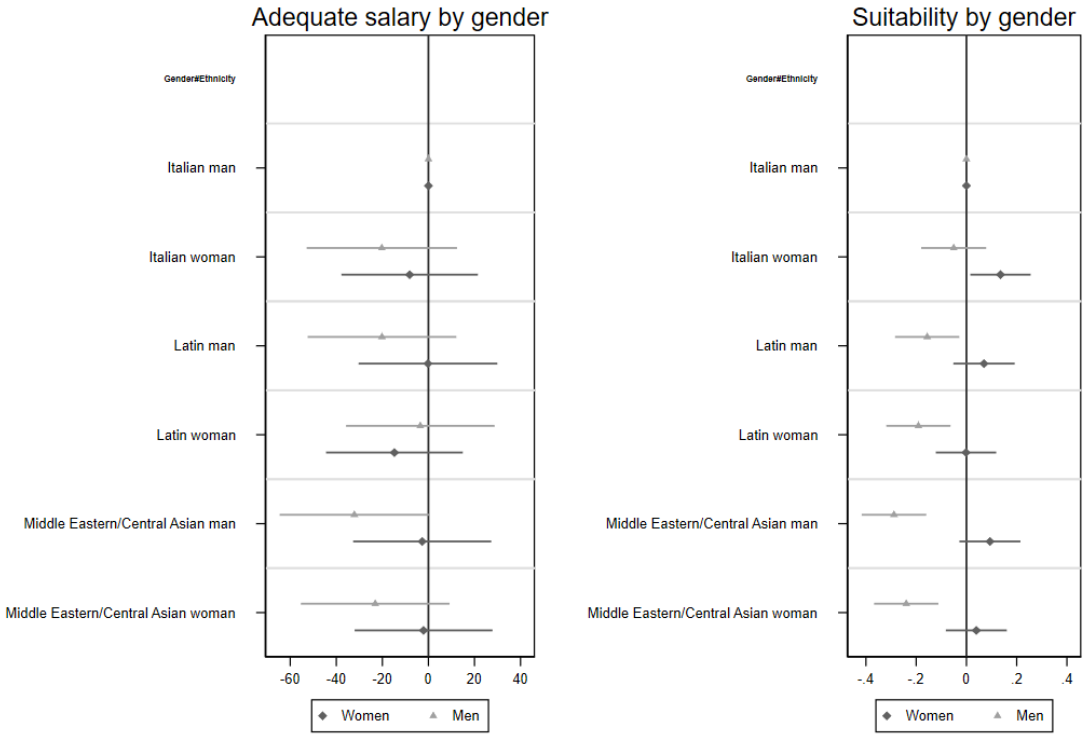
product managers, and business consultants.

5.2 Heterogeneity of results across socio-demographic groups

In the second part of the article, we aim to explore whether these conclusions are stable across subgroups. Results are presented graphically, while the tables with formal tests of respective interactions between socio-demographic groups and the combination of gender and ethnicity are available in the appendix (see Tables A12 and A13).

Figure 2 displays the regression coefficients of the appropriate salary and position suitability for each combination of gender and ethnicity, along with their 95% confidence intervals by the gender of the respondents (for more details, see Tables A6 and A7 in the Appendix).

Figure 2. Multi-level regression with random intercept of adequate salary and of suitability along with their 95% confidence intervals by the gender of the respondents (n=6,084; n=5,880).

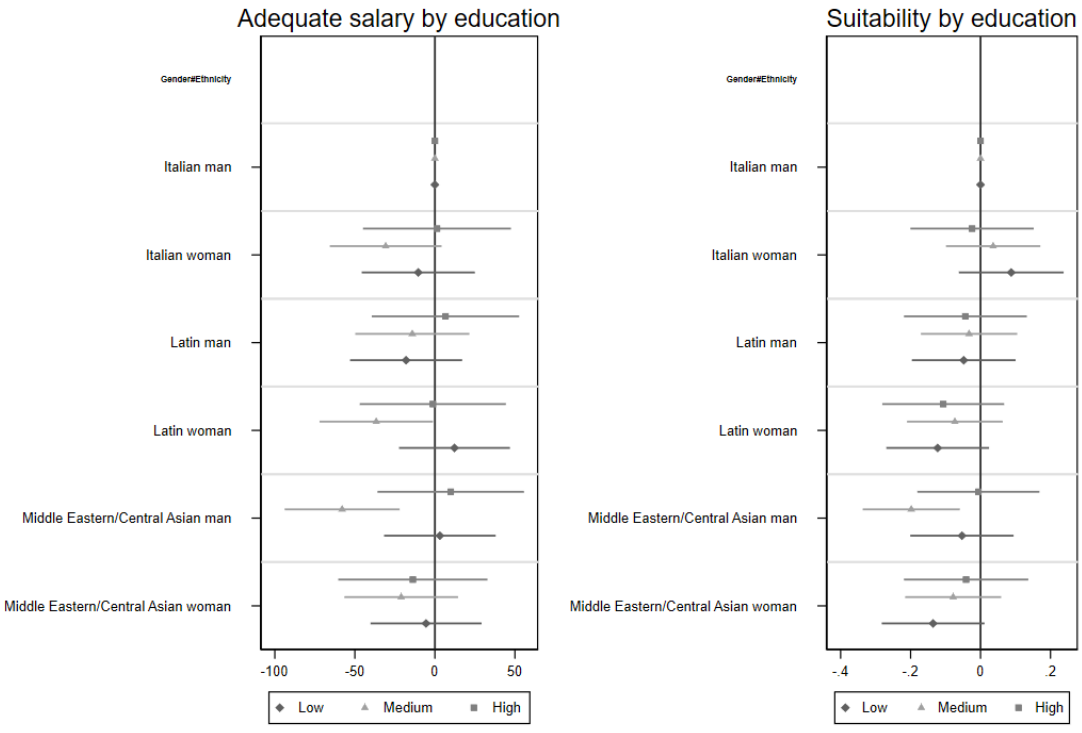


Regarding adequate salary (Figure 2, left panel), male and female respondents exhibit broadly similar evaluation patterns. Combined gender and ethnicity profiles do not significantly affect salary assessments among female respondents, whereas male respondents assigned slightly lower adequate salaries only to Middle Eastern/Central Asian men compared to Italian men (−€32.16, $p < 0.10$). More pronounced differences by respondent gender emerge for suitability (Figure 2, right panel). Among

female respondents, Italian women were rated modestly more suitable than Italian men (+0.14 points, $p < 0.05$), with no statistically significant differences observed across the remaining candidate groups. Among male respondents, by contrast, candidate ethnicity strongly shaped suitability ratings: relative to Italian men, male respondents rated all ethnic minority profiles lower, specifically Latin men (−0.16 points, $p < 0.05$), Latin women (−0.19 points, $p < 0.01$), Middle Eastern/Central Asian men (−0.29 points, $p < 0.01$), and Middle Eastern/Central Asian women (−0.24 points, $p < 0.01$)—while rating Italian women no differently from Italian men. The results point to the same ethnic penalty for both men and women, without clear indication of double (compound) disadvantage for Latin American women nor for Middle Eastern/Central Asian women). Formal cross-group tests confirm that these evaluation patterns differ significantly between male and female respondents, indicating that the aggregate suitability penalties are largely driven by men.

Figure 3 displays regression coefficients for each attribute, along with their 95% confidence intervals by the level of education of the respondents (for more details, see Tables A8 and A9 in the Appendix).

Figure 3. Multi-level regression with random intercept of adequate salary and of suitability along with their 95% confidence intervals by the level of education of the respondents (n=4,950; n=4,470; n=2,580)

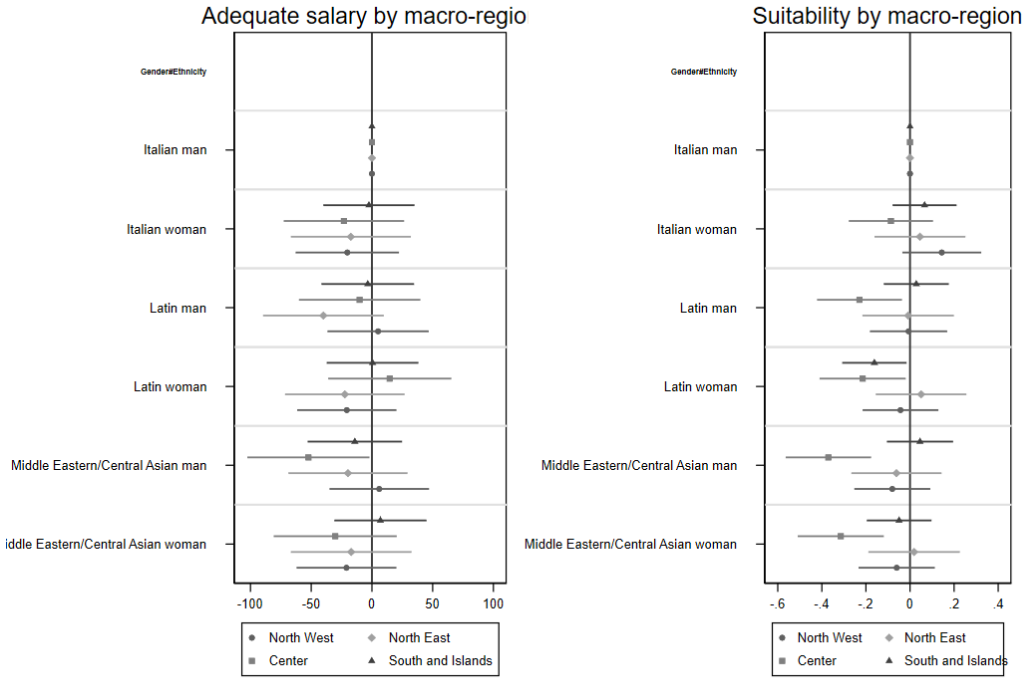


Regarding adequate salary (Figure 3, left panel), statistically significant differences across combined

gender and ethnicity groups emerge only among medium-educated respondents, whereas estimates for low- and highly educated respondents do not reach statistical significance. Specifically, medium-educated respondents assigned lower adequate salaries-relative to Italian men-to Italian women (−€30.73, $p < 0.10$), Latin women (−€36.65, $p < 0.05$), and Middle Eastern/Central Asian men (−€57.94, $p < 0.01$). Formal cross-group tests (Table A12 in the Appendix) show that the penalty for Middle Eastern/Central Asian men is significantly larger among medium-educated than among low-educated respondents (−€60.66, $p < 0.05$), with a marginally significant difference also for Latin women (−€48.68, $p < 0.10$). A similar pattern appears for suitability (Figure 3, right panel), where significant differences are observed among medium-educated respondents, who rated Middle Eastern/Central Asian men lower than Italian men (−0.20 points, $p < 0.01$) and among low-educated respondents, who rated Middle Eastern/Central Asian women lower than Italian men (−0.14 points, $p < 0.10$). However, formal cross-group tests (Table A13 in the Appendix) indicate that none of these differences across education levels is statistically significant; thus, we cannot conclude that suitability evaluation patterns differ systematically by respondent education.

Figure 4 displays regression coefficients for each attribute, along with their 95% confidence intervals by four Italian macro-regions (for more detail, see Tables A10 and A11 in the Appendix).

Figure 4. Multi-level regression with random intercept of adequate salary and suitability by macro-regions (n=3,258, n=2,280, n=2,388, n=4,074)



Regarding adequate salary (Figure 4, left panel), combined gender and ethnicity generally do not elicit statistically significant pay penalties across Italian macro-regions. The sole exception occurs among respondents residing in the Centre, who assigned lower adequate salaries to Middle Eastern/Central Asian men compared to Italian men (−€52.32, $p < 0.05$). A more pronounced regional pattern emerges for suitability (Figure 4, right panel): respondents in the Centre rated all ethnic minority profiles lower than Italian men-specifically Latin men (−0.23 points, $p < 0.05$), Latin women (−0.21 points, $p < 0.05$), Middle Eastern/Central Asian men (−0.37 points, $p < 0.01$), and Middle Eastern/Central Asian women (−0.31 points, $p < 0.01$)—while showing no significant difference between Italian women and Italian men. This signals a clear ethnic penalty whereas there are no signs of compounded bias for ethnic women. Formal cross-group tests confirm that evaluations in the Centre differ significantly from those in the rest of Italy for Middle Eastern/Central Asian men and women.

To sum up, subgroup analyses show that adequate salary evaluations are largely consistent across respondent groups. The only penalties concern Middle Eastern/Central Asian men, who were assigned lower salaries by male, medium-educated and Centre-residing respondents. By contrast, subgroup analyses reveal statistically significant heterogeneity in suitability evaluations by respondent gender and macro-region, whereas the main findings generalize across the educational groups examined. The estimated effects across all analyses range from 0.05 to 0.1 standard deviations and can be considered modest; however, they are broadly in line with findings from the evaluation literature showing that behavioural and evaluative biases are typically small in size yet systematically observed across contexts (Pager and Shepherd, 2008).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article investigates how the intersection of gender and ethnicity shapes perceptions of appropriate pay and job suitability in Italy, as well as how these evaluations vary across population subgroups. Contributing to sociological debates on wage inequality and the social construction of remuneration, we draw on intersectional status-related theories (Berger et al., 1974; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983, 2001, 2012; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz, 2013), which posit that culturally shared status beliefs rank men above women and native majority groups above ethnic minorities. Within this broader perspective, Role Congruity Theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002) and the Lack-of-Fit Model (Heilman, 1983, 2001) offer complementary insights into the mechanisms through which such beliefs may translate into individual evaluations (e.g. perceived incongruence with roles). Rather than focusing on employers and hiring decisions like most prior research, our study examines the

general population. This novel perspective allows us to capture shared cultural beliefs directly and explore how broader public perceptions evaluate and legitimise wage inequalities.

Specifically, we compare evaluations of immigrant women and men against those of native Italian women and men to test whether intersecting gender and ethnic identities create compounding "binds" or relative "freedoms" in the labour market (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz, 2013). Examining these dynamics is particularly relevant in Italy, where strong gender and ethnic occupational segregation severely limits migrant women's access to high-skilled careers (Cantalini et al., 2022). Among first-generation immigrants, these disparities are stark: non-Italian women earned, on average, nearly 50 per cent less per hour than native Italian men in 2020 (Ghignoni et al., 2022).

To this end, the article relies on a factorial survey (vignette) experiment administered to 2000 participants in February 2025. Although survey experiments have frequently been used to study gender inequality and ethnic biases separately, relatively few studies have examined the intersection of these two dimensions simultaneously. The study focuses on two large immigrant communities in Italy, individuals of Middle Eastern/Central Asian and Latin American origin, and signals applicants' ethnic background through ethnically distinctive names. This design produces six experimentally varied groups: Italian men, Italian women, Middle Eastern/Central Asian men, Middle Eastern/Central Asian women, Latin American men, and Latin American women.

We expected immigrant women to receive consistently lower evaluations in terms of both appropriate pay (H1) and job suitability (H2) compared to native Italian women and men. However, our findings only partially support these expectations. While evaluations of appropriate pay show no substantial differences across groups, candidate gender and ethnicity significantly affect assessments of suitability. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 is not supported, whereas Hypothesis 2 is only partially confirmed. Indeed, the suitability results (H2) are more nuanced than initially anticipated: a compound (double) disadvantage emerges exclusively for women with Latin American names, whereas Latin American men face no significant penalty. By contrast, both women and men with Middle Eastern/Central Asian names experience a comparable ethnic penalty relative to native Italians, rather than an additional gender-based disadvantage. These estimates are averaged across all three high status occupations in the experimental design, while additional analyses confirm that the combined effects of gender and ethnicity remain stable across high school professor, product manager, and business consultant roles, with no statistically significant differences by occupation.

Because we observe suitability penalties for migrant women, status characteristics theory and its intersectional extensions (Ridgeway, 2011; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz, 2013; Ridgeway et al.,

2022) help explain these evaluations, albeit incompletely. While the framework accounts for why lower-status minority women face penalties, it is less successful in explaining the absence of a gender gap between native Italian women and men. Moreover, our findings offer a nuanced qualification to Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz's (2013) concept of intersectional "binds" and "freedoms." Rather than both groups experiencing uniform compound penalties, only Latin American women exhibit a clear intersectional "bind"—facing a significant negative interaction penalty that Latin American men do not. By contrast, Middle Eastern/Central Asian women experience no additional gender-based compounding beyond the baseline ethnic penalty shared equally with their male counterparts. Although this does not leave Middle Eastern/Central Asian women protected in absolute terms—as both groups of migrant women receive comparable overall penalties relative to native Italians—it suggests that stereotypes surrounding Middle Eastern/Central Asian origin may be strongly masculine-coded or driven by perceived threat and competition (Stephan et al. 2016, Nese, 2023) thereby shielding women from a multiplicative penalty without eliminating ethnic bias.

The compound penalty observed for Latin American women may reflect the deeply gendered occupational segregation of the Italian labour market. Migration from Latin America to Italy has been historically feminised and heavily concentrated in domestic and elderly care (Boccagni and Ambrosini, 2012; Bonizzoni, 2014). Consequently, widespread cultural stereotypes associate Latin American women with low-status caregiving roles rather than white-collar authority or technical leadership (Ambrosini, 2013). When evaluating candidates for tertiary-educated positions, respondents may therefore perceive a sharper status incongruity for Latin American women than for Latin American men, who are less strongly tied to a stigmatised occupational niche.

Another notable finding is the divergence between evaluations of appropriate salary and job suitability. We observe bias in suitability ratings and not in pay assessments—a pattern consistent with prior research showing that bias dominates in subjective, less institutionally constrained judgments (such as perceived competence or job fit) than in monetary evaluations that are more normatively anchored (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004; Pager and Shepherd, 2008; Ridgeway, 2011).

Although status theory generally assumes that cultural status beliefs are broadly shared across the population, we move beyond our pre-registered hypotheses to explore heterogeneity across respondent subgroups. While adequate salary assessments remain largely consistent across subgroups—showing only isolated penalties against Middle Eastern/Central Asian men among male, medium-educated, and Centre-residing respondents—suitability evaluations exhibit pronounced

subgroup variation. Specifically, the aggregate suitability penalties against Latin and Middle Eastern/Central Asian candidates are driven primarily by male respondents and residents of the Centre of Italy. Regarding respondent education, unequal evaluations in both salary and suitability appear concentrated among medium-educated respondents. However, formal tests confirm a significant difference only for the salary penalty against Middle Eastern/Central Asian men, while suitability judgements do not differ significantly by education. Taken together, these findings suggest that while status beliefs regarding pay are relatively uniform, suitability judgments vary along gender and regional lines.

Overall, our findings point to a pattern of evaluative bias against migrant women particularly in assessments of job suitability although not necessarily a double disadvantage, aligning with prior literature on labour market discrimination (Lopez, 2012; Alfarhan and Al-Busaidi, 2020). To our knowledge, this is the first study to explicitly show that general population biases surrounding gender and ethnicity mirror broader labour market inequalities in Italy, albeit with a relatively modest magnitude. However, the size of biases is broadly consistent with findings from the literature on behavioural and evaluative discrimination, which has repeatedly documented effects that, while often small in magnitude, are systematic and persistent across different contexts and settings (Pager and Shepherd, 2008). Even relatively modest differences in individual evaluations can contribute to the reproduction of broader inequalities when they operate cumulatively across repeated decisions and affect access to employment opportunities. Nevertheless, our study is not without limitations. First, from a theoretical standpoint, our design focuses on status characteristics theory, leaving alternative explanatory mechanisms outside the scope of our analysis. Second, our measures of subjective judgment cannot fully disentangle normative beliefs about deserved pay from respondents' estimates of realistic market wages. Third, because ethnicity was signalled through candidates' names, we cannot isolate whether respondents also applied a religious filter—particularly when evaluating Middle Eastern/Central Asian names. Fourth, the vignettes focused on medium- to high-status roles; future research should examine how gender and ethnicity intersect in lower-skilled or more heavily gender-segregated occupations. Finally, evaluations by the general population cannot be equated directly with actual employer behaviour. Future experimental research comparing employers and the general public side by side would therefore provide a valuable complement to our findings. Several avenues for future research also emerge from the limitations of our study. Future studies could incorporate richer identity signals, including visual and racial cues, to better disentangle migrant background, race, and religion. As noted earlier, respondents may associate Middle Eastern and Central Asian names with Islam, making it difficult to isolate ethnic and religious biases. Distinguishing between these dimensions is important, as previous research suggests that religious

identity can carry greater weight than other identity characteristics in hiring decisions involving Muslim women (Dale et al., 2002; Ghumman and Ryan, 2013; Blommaert et al., 2014).

Also, while our vignettes examined tertiary-educated candidates across three occupations characterised by different gender compositions—high school professor, product manager, and business consultant—intersectional disadvantages may vary across occupational contexts, particularly in lower-status positions that do not require a university degree. In Italy, migrants from developing countries are disproportionately concentrated in precarious, low-wage sectors such as agriculture, construction, and domestic and elderly care (Corrado et al., 2017; Avola, 2022; Dimitriadis, 2023; Meardi, 2024). Investigating whether and how similar evaluation biases operate in these labour market segments represents an important avenue for future research.

Addressing these limitations and pursuing these research directions would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how intersectional inequalities are socially evaluated and reproduced in the labour market.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Vignette description

VIGNETTE

Before the vignette:

Below, we are interested in your evaluation of candidates for various job positions, based on your personal judgment. There are no right or wrong answers. For each candidate, please provide the monthly salary you would consider adequate and your opinion on their suitability for the position. All candidates have completed their tertiary education in Italy. This position is advertised as full-time with a permanent contract.

Vignette example:
Vacant Position: High school professor

CV
Name: Leonardo Rossi
Age: 35
Children: With two children
Education: Bachelor's degree in economics
Work experience: 5 years
Licence: B
Computer skills: Proficient with the Office package
Hobbies: Cooking

After each vignette:

1. On a salary range of 1500-3500 EUR per month (40 hours per week), how much do you think the appropriate net salary for this profile is? ____ EUR
2. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "Not suitable" and 10 means "Suitable," how suitable do you think this candidate is for the vacant position?

1 – Not suitable	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Suitable

Table A2. Correlation matrix of the vignette dimensions (Characteristics of the candidate)

	Gender	*Ethnicity*	*Job position*	*Age*	*Parental status*	*Field of study*	*Previous experience*	*Hobby*
Gender	1.0000							
Ethnicity	0.0003	1.0000						
Job position	-0.0028	0.0023	1.0000					
Age	-0.0005	0.0015	0.0003	1.0000				
Parental status	-0.0003	0.0009	0.0003	-0.0022	1.0000			
Field of study	0.0013	-0.0014	-0.0025	0.0005	0.0005	1.0000		
Previous experience	0.0016	-0.0007	0.0010	0.0010	0.0006	0.0008	1.0000	
Hobby	0.0002	-0.0009	-0.0015	0.0007	0.0005	0.0009	-0.0012	1.0000

Table A3. Distributions of all vignette levels (n = 12,000)

Dimension	*Levels*	*n*	*%*
Gender of the candidate	Man	6006	50.05
	Woman	5994	49.95

Ethnicity of the candidate	Italian	4000	33.33
	Latin	4009	33.41
	Middle Eastern/Central Asian	3991	33.26
Job position of the application	High school professor	3995	33.29
	Product manager	3993	33.27
	Business consultant	4012	33.43
Age of the candidate	35	6003	50.02
	45	5997	49.98
Parental status of the candidate	Without children	5986	49.88
	With two children	6014	50.12
Field of study of the candidate	Economics	4011	33.42
	Engineering	3997	33.31
	Psychology	3992	33.27
Previous experience of the candidate	1 year	3993	33.27
	5 years	4006	33.38
	10 years	4001	33.34
Hobby of the candidate	Sailing	6017	50.14
	Cooking	5983	49.86

Table A4. Descriptive analysis of the sample (N = 2,000)

Variable	*Freq.*	*Percent*	*Variable*	*Freq.*	*Percent*
Gender			*Education*		
Woman	1,014	50.70	Low	825	41.25
Man	980	49.00	Medium	745	37.25
Other	6	0.30	High	430	21.50
Age			*Employment status*	1,140	57.00
18-24	200	10.00	Employed	170	8.50
25-34	319	15.95	Unemployed	607	30.35
35-44	377	18.85	Inactive	83	4.15
45-54	475	23.75	Other		
55-64	430	21.50			
65-70	199	9.95			
Macro-region					
North-West	543	27.15			
North-East	380	19.00			
Center	398	19.90			
South and Islands	679	33.95			

Table A5. Multilevel regression for the variables "Adequate salary" and "Suitability" including vignette characteristics and their interactions with the vignette's occupation: ethnic origin × occupation (M1, M4), gender × occupation (M2, M5), and combined gender–ethnic origin groups × occupation (M3, M6) (n=12,000)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*
	M1	*M2*	*M3*	*M4*	*M5*	*M6*
Woman (Ref: Man)	-2.358	4.679		-0.00384	-0.000649	
	(6.464)	(11.22)		(0.0259)	(0.0451)	
Latin (Ref: Italian)					-0.0936***	
	8.458	-1.690		-0.0692		
	(13.78)	(7.958)		(0.0553)	(0.0319)	

Middle Eastern/Central Asian (Ref: Italian)	3.041	-7.392		-0.178***	-0.119***	
	(13.85)	(7.951)		(0.0556)	(0.0319)	
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)			-23.25			0.00523
			(19.51)			(0.0783)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)			-11.99			-0.0653
			(19.50)			(0.0782)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)			5.435			-0.0673
			(19.31)			(0.0775)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)			-18.21			-0.172**
			(19.56)			(0.0785)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)			0.977			-0.178**
			(19.45)			(0.0781)
Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	146.9***	142.8***	147.1***	-0.105*	-0.0643	-0.113
	(13.71)	(11.26)	(19.47)	(0.0550)	(0.0452)	(0.0781)
Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	99.33***	93.64***	85.63***	-0.0374	-0.0395	-0.0940
	(13.75)	(11.16)	(19.36)	(0.0552)	(0.0448)	(0.0777)
Woman (Ref: Man) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)		-16.87			-0.0254	
		(15.96)			(0.0641)	
Woman (Ref: Man) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)		-4.024			0.0163	
		(15.83)			(0.0636)	
Latin (Ref: Italian) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	-25.97			-0.0417		
	(19.45)			(0.0781)		
Latin (Ref: Italian) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	-4.478			-0.0320		
	(19.43)			(0.0780)		
Middle Eastern/Central Asian (Ref: Italian) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	-12.17			0.127		
	(19.57)			(0.0785)		
Middle Eastern/Central Asian (Ref: Italian) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	-19.13			0.0506		

	(19.55)	(0.0784)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	-0.367	0.0151
	(27.70)	(0.111)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	27.61	0.114
	(27.53)	(0.110)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	-14.71	0.0265
	(27.49)	(0.110)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	21.24	0.0502
	(27.45)	(0.110)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	-37.40	-0.0960
	(27.49)	(0.110)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	-2.663	-0.00124
	(27.36)	(0.110)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	0.955	0.117
	(27.64)	(0.111)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	2.184	0.115
	(27.63)	(0.111)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Product Manager (Ref: High-school professor)	-25.77	0.150
	(27.67)	(0.111)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Business consultant (Ref: High-school professor)	-12.96	0.100
	(27.43)	(0.110)

Constant	1,997***	2,001***	2,008***	6.984***	6.971***	6.980***
	(16.48)	(15.84)	(18.85)	(0.0634)	(0.0607)	(0.0733)
Observations	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Number of groups	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A6. Regressions for the variable "Adequate salary" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics by the gender of the respondents (n = 6,084; n = 5,880)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*
Gender of the respondent	*Woman*	*Man*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-8.151	-20.23
	(15.11)	(16.65)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	-0.205	-20.16
	(15.37)	(16.46)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	-14.76	-3.515
	(15.14)	(16.46)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	-2.704	-32.16*
	(15.30)	(16.55)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-2.105	-23.10
	(15.28)	(16.47)
Constant	1,949***	2,073***
	(21.63)	(23.20)
Observations	6,084	5,880
Number of groups	1,014	980

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A7. Regressions for the variable "Suitability" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics by the gender of the respondents (n = 6,084; n = 5,880)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Suitability*	*Suitability*
Gender of the respondent	*Woman*	*Man*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	0.136**	-0.0506
	(0.0612)	(0.0660)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	0.0699	-0.156**
	(0.0623)	(0.0652)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	-0.00163	-0.191***
	(0.0614)	(0.0652)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	0.0935	-0.288***

	(0.0620)	(0.0656)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	0.0393	-0.240***
	(0.0619)	(0.0653)
Constant	7.016***	6.889***
	(0.0839)	(0.0871)
Observations	6,084	5,880
Number of groups	1,014	980

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A8. Regressions for the variable "Adequate salary" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics by the level of education of the respondents (n = 4,950; N = 4,470; n= 2,580)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*
Level of education of the respondent	*Low*	*Medium*	*High*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-10.35	-30.73*	1.312
	(18.04)	(17.81)	(23.58)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	-17.99	-14.11	6.616
	(17.86)	(18.19)	(23.49)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	12.25	-36.65**	-1.292
	(17.68)	(18.07)	(23.30)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	3.111	-57.94***	9.908
	(17.79)	(18.33)	(23.35)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-5.508	-21.04	-13.77
	(17.69)	(18.12)	(23.78)
Constant	1,980***	2,053***	1,992***
	(25.28)	(25.42)	(33.38)
Observations	4,950	4,470	2,580
Number of groups	825	745	430

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A9. Regressions for the variable "Suitability" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics by the level of education of the respondents (n = 4,950; n = 4,470; n = 2,580)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Suitability*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*
Level of education of the respondent	*Low*	*Medium*	*High*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	0.0878	0.0361	-0.0242
	(0.0764)	(0.0689)	(0.0900)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	-0.0480	-0.0328	-0.0433
	(0.0757)	(0.0703)	(0.0896)

Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	-0.122	-0.0734	-0.107
	(0.0749)	(0.0698)	(0.0889)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	-0.0531	-0.198***	-0.00617
	(0.0754)	(0.0708)	(0.0891)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-0.136*	-0.0782	-0.0412
	(0.0750)	(0.0700)	(0.0907)
Constant	6.785***	7.102***	6.975***
	(0.102)	(0.0941)	(0.121)
Observations	4,950	4,470	2,580
Number of groups	825	745	430

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A10. Regressions for the variable "Adequate salary" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics by the macro-regions (n=3,258, n=2,280, n=2,388, n=4,074)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*
Macro-region	*North-West*	*North-East*	*Center*	*South and Islands*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-20.29	-17.37	-23.07	-2.492
	(21.71)	(25.21)	(25.29)	(19.15)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	5.058	-39.95	-10.12	-3.451
	(21.27)	(25.36)	(25.51)	(19.46)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	-20.67	-22.35	14.68	0.523
	(20.84)	(25.12)	(25.87)	(19.27)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	6.034	-19.74	-52.32**	-14.08
	(20.92)	(25.03)	(25.65)	(19.84)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-20.96	-17.09	-30.23	6.982
	(20.98)	(25.36)	(25.85)	(19.38)
Constant	1,976***	1,970***	2,035***	2,045***
	(29.42)	(35.12)	(35.91)	(28.12)
Observations	3,258	2,280	2,388	4,074
Number of groups	543	380	398	679

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A11. Regressions for the variable "Suitability" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics by the macro-regions (n=3,258, n=2,280, n=2,388, n=4,074)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Suitability*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*
Macro-region	*North-West*	*North-East*	*Center*	*South and Islands*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*

Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	0.144	0.0451	-0.0867	0.0662
	(0.0913)	(0.105)	(0.0975)	(0.0741)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	-0.00660	-0.00846	-0.229**	0.0284
	(0.0895)	(0.106)	(0.0983)	(0.0753)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	-0.0432	0.0502	-0.215**	-0.162**
	(0.0877)	(0.105)	(0.0997)	(0.0745)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	-0.0804	-0.0616	-0.370***	0.0453
	(0.0880)	(0.104)	(0.0989)	(0.0767)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-0.0604	0.0186	-0.314***	-0.0495
	(0.0882)	(0.106)	(0.0996)	(0.0750)
Constant	7.034***	6.569***	7.030***	7.038***
	(0.118)	(0.141)	(0.133)	(0.103)
Observations	3,258	2,280	2,388	4,074
Number of groups	543	380	398	679

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A12. Regressions for the variable "Adequate salary" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics and the interactions between gender and ethnicity of the candidates and respondents' gender (N=11,964), education level and macro-region of residence (n = 12,000)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*	*Adequate salary*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-8.223	-11.22	-20.73
	(15.63)	(17.70)	(22.05)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	-0.609	-17.76	5.055
	(15.90)	(17.53)	(21.60)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	-14.77	12.06	-21.05
	(15.67)	(17.35)	(21.16)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	-2.948	2.591	5.452
	(15.82)	(17.45)	(21.24)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-2.106	-5.906	-20.71
	(15.80)	(17.36)	(21.30)
Gender resp: Man (Ref: Woman)	88.15***		
	(24.99)		
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-11.91		
	(22.46)		
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-19.46		
	(22.52)		
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	11.58		
	(22.35)		
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-29.10		
	(22.52)		
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	-20.72		

# Man (Ref: Woman)			
	(22.45)		
Edu resp: Medium (Ref: Low)		60.55**	
		(28.29)	
Edu resp: High (Ref: Low)		54.90*	
		(33.12)	
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		-19.45	
		(25.32)	
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		19.55	
		(29.85)	
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		3.733	
		(25.48)	
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		29.70	
		(29.68)	
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		-48.68*	
		(25.27)	
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		-8.945	
		(29.42)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		-60.66**	
		(25.53)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		9.981	
		(29.53)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		-14.89	
		(25.31)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		-1.452	
		(29.83)	
Macro-region resp: North-East (Ref: North-West)			0.139
			(37.81)
Macro-region resp: Center (Ref: North-West)			26.36
			(36.73)
Macro-region resp: South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			47.04
			(32.06)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			4.355
			(34.30)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-2.010
			(33.06)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			16.90
			(29.01)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			-43.67
			(34.15)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-16.10
			(32.92)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref:			-9.359

North-West)			
			(28.87)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			-1.130
			(33.67)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			35.25
			(32.90)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			20.11
			(28.42)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			-24.82
			(33.65)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-57.83*
			(32.78)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			-20.25
			(28.85)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			5.150
			(33.95)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-7.553
			(32.96)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			28.02
			(28.60)
Constant	1,967***	1,975***	1,989***
	(20.07)	(21.81)	(25.81)
Observations	11,964	12,000	12,000
Number of groups	1,994	2,000	2,000

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A13. Regressions for the variable "Suitability" from the multilevel regression including only vignette characteristics and the interactions between gender and ethnicity of the candidates and respondents' gender (N=11,964), education level and macro-region of residence (N = 12,000)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	*Suitability*	*Suitability*	*Suitability*
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*	*Vignette dimensions*
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man)	0.136**	0.0915	0.140
	(0.0627)	(0.0710)	(0.0885)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man)	0.0683	-0.0482	-0.00639
	(0.0637)	(0.0704)	(0.0867)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man)	-0.00271	-0.122*	-0.0424
	(0.0628)	(0.0697)	(0.0849)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man)	0.0902	-0.0519	-0.0788
	(0.0634)	(0.0701)	(0.0852)

Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man)	0.0415	-0.137**	-0.0622
	(0.0633)	(0.0697)	(0.0855)
Gender resp: Man (Ref: Woman)	-0.150		
	(0.0925)		
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-0.186**		
	(0.0900)		
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-0.225**		
	(0.0902)		
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-0.189**		
	(0.0896)		
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-0.380***		
	(0.0902)		
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Man (Ref: Woman)	-0.280***		
	(0.0900)		
Edu resp: Medium (Ref: Low)		0.188*	
		(0.105)	
Edu resp: High (Ref: Low)		0.285**	
		(0.123)	
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		-0.0570	
		(0.102)	
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		-0.100	
		(0.120)	
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		0.0139	
		(0.102)	
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		0.0182	
		(0.119)	
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		0.0477	
		(0.101)	
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		0.0226	
		(0.118)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		-0.149	
		(0.102)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		0.0549	
		(0.119)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Medium (Ref: Low)		0.0583	
		(0.102)	
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # High (Ref: Low)		0.104	
		(0.120)	
Macro-region resp: North-East (Ref: North-West)			-0.228
			(0.141)
Macro-region resp: Center (Ref: North-West)			0.0302
			(0.136)
Macro-region resp: South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			0.0808
			(0.119)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			-0.0961

			(0.138)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-0.216
			(0.133)
Italian woman (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			-0.0739
			(0.116)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			-0.000730
			(0.137)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-0.217
			(0.132)
Latin man (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			0.0385
			(0.116)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			0.0950
			(0.135)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-0.163
			(0.132)
Latin woman (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			-0.117
			(0.114)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			0.0217
			(0.135)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-0.287**
			(0.132)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian man (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			0.128
			(0.116)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # North-East (Ref: North-West)			0.0775
			(0.136)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # Center (Ref: North-West)			-0.251*
			(0.132)
Middle Eastern/Central Asian woman (Ref: Italian man) # South and Islands (Ref: North-West)			0.0161
			(0.115)
Constant	7.028***	6.814***	6.954***
	(0.0758)	(0.0824)	(0.0969)
Observations	11,964	12,000	12,000
Number of groups	1,994	2,000	2,000

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1