

Solidarity breeds prosperity?

Comparing independent versus interdependent initiative interventions on women's economic development in Niger

Catherine Thomas, Hazel Markus, Gregory Walton, Soumaila Abdoulaye Sambo, Thomas Bossuroy, Patrick Premand

PEP Convening
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Context



West Africa



Aerial view of the Niger River



Woman selling pre-prepared food around the village



Context

“On est ensemble”
“We are together”

Study population: Low-income women in rural areas of Niger

- Predominantly Muslim
- Hausa & Djerma ethnic groups
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ in polygamous households
- High fertility rate (7 births/woman)
- Low formal education (0-1 yrs)
- Low mobile phone saturation (~16%)
- Interdependent, normatively tight sociocultural context (Gelfand et al., 2011; Hofstede, 2001)

A women's collective garden

Research questions

1. What are the impacts of psychosocial interventions in a multi-component poverty reduction program?
2. What are mechanisms driving impacts of the psychosocial interventions?

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Randomized evaluation of an augmented multi-faceted poverty reduction program

Control and Treatment Arms

	<i>C</i>	<i>T_c</i>	<i>T_p</i>	<i>T_f</i>
	<i>CONTROL</i>	<i>CAPITAL</i>	<i>PSYCHOSOCIAL</i>	<i>FULL</i>
Regular cash transfer program	•	•	•	•
Group formation and coaching		•	•	•
Savings groups		•	•	•
Micro-entrepreneurship training		•	•	•
Market access facilitation		•	•	•
Community sensitization on aspirations and social norms			•	•
Life-skills training			•	•
Lump-sum cash grant		•		•
Number of villages (322)	81	80	78	83
Number of sampled households (4712)	1206	1191	1112	1203

Note: 329 villages were drawn into the sample. After combining small neighboring villages with under 8 beneficiaries for ease of program operations, 322 villages entered the randomization.

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Multi-level psychosocial intervention

1. Community sensitization

- Film (**story of Amina**) + guided group discussion
- Designed to shift community norms and aspirations through role models and social consensus techniques (Bandura, 2001; Lewin, 1952)
- Conveyed both independent and interdependent models of agency (Markus & Conner, 2014; Markus & Kitayama, 1991)



Film en plein air © Andrea Borgarello

2. Life-skills training

- 1 week of group-based trainings
- Designed to teach skills (problem solving, decision making, leadership) and build self-worth, self- and collective-efficacy (e.g., Acevedo et al., 2017)



Film clip: <https://vimeo.com/251731247/a94aa34d87>

Table 1: Primary Outcomes

	(1) Gross consumption (daily, USD/adult eq.)	(2) Food security (raw sum)
Followup 1 (6 months after cash grants)		
Capital	0.15*** (0.05)	0.52*** (0.12)
Psychosocial	0.09* (0.05)	0.21* (0.11)
Full	0.25*** (0.06)	0.66*** (0.11)
Observations	4405	4476
Followup 2 (18 months after cash grants)		
Capital	0.12*** (0.04)	0.50*** (0.12)
Psychosocial	0.18*** (0.05)	0.47*** (0.12)
Full	0.25*** (0.05)	0.63*** (0.13)
Observations	4238	4303

Benefit-cost ratios at 18 months
Psychosocial: 126%
Full: 95%
Capital: 58%

Bossuroy, T., Goldstein, M., Karlan, D., Kazianga, H., Parienté, W., Premand, P., Thomas, C., Udry, C., Vaillant, J., Wright, K. (2021). *Pathways out of Extreme Poverty: Tackling psychosocial and capital constraints with a multi-faceted social protection program in Niger* (Policy Research Working Paper No. 9562). World Bank, Washington D.C.

2. What are mechanisms driving impacts of the psychosocial interventions?

Examining two models of economic agency

Reinforcing one of two models of economic agency in Amina's story

Independent, entrepreneurial model

- Personal goals and self-advancement
- Self-direction and ambition

More associated with WEIRD, middle-income, and masculine ways of being

Interdependent, solidarity model

- Social coordination and collective growth
- Collaboration and social harmony

More associated with non-WEIRD, lower-income, and feminine ways of being

RESEARCH

ECONOMICS

Teaching personal initiative beats traditional training in boosting small business in West Africa

Francisco Campos,^{1*} Michael Frese,^{2,3*} Markus Goldstein,^{1*} Leonardo Iacovone,^{1*} Hillary C. Johnson,^{1*} David McKenzie,^{1*,†} Mona Mensmann^{3*}

Unseen Disadvantage: How American Universities' Focus on Independence Undermines the Academic Performance of First-Generation College Students

Nicole M. Stephens
Northwestern University

Hazel Rose Markus
Stanford University

Rebecca Covarrubias
University of Arizona

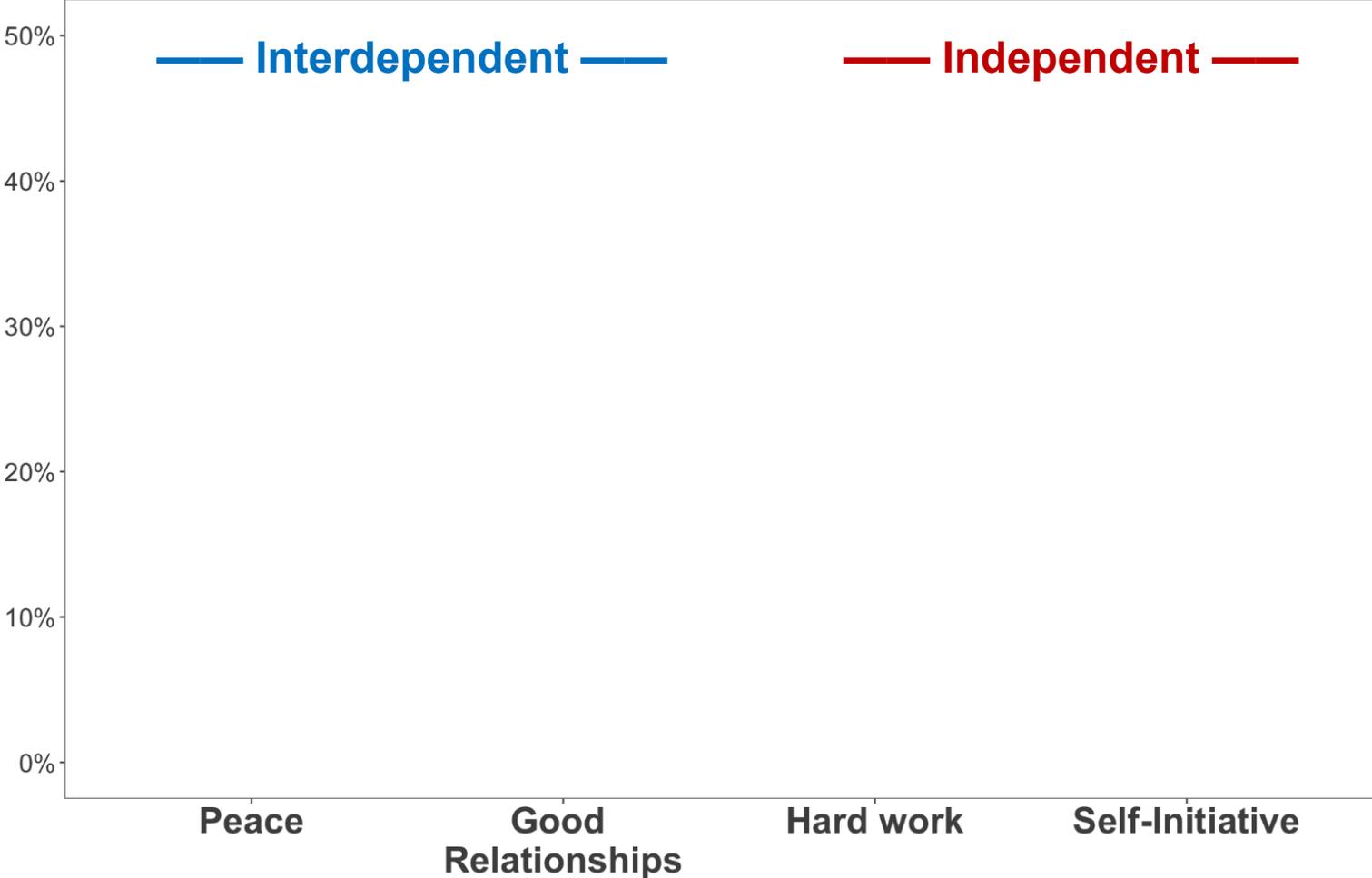
American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 2016, 8(2): 125–153
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/pol.20140215>

Friendship at Work: Can Peer Effects Catalyze Female Entrepreneurship?[†]

By ERICA FIELD, SEEMA JAYACHANDRAN, ROHINI PANDE, AND NATALIA RIGOL*

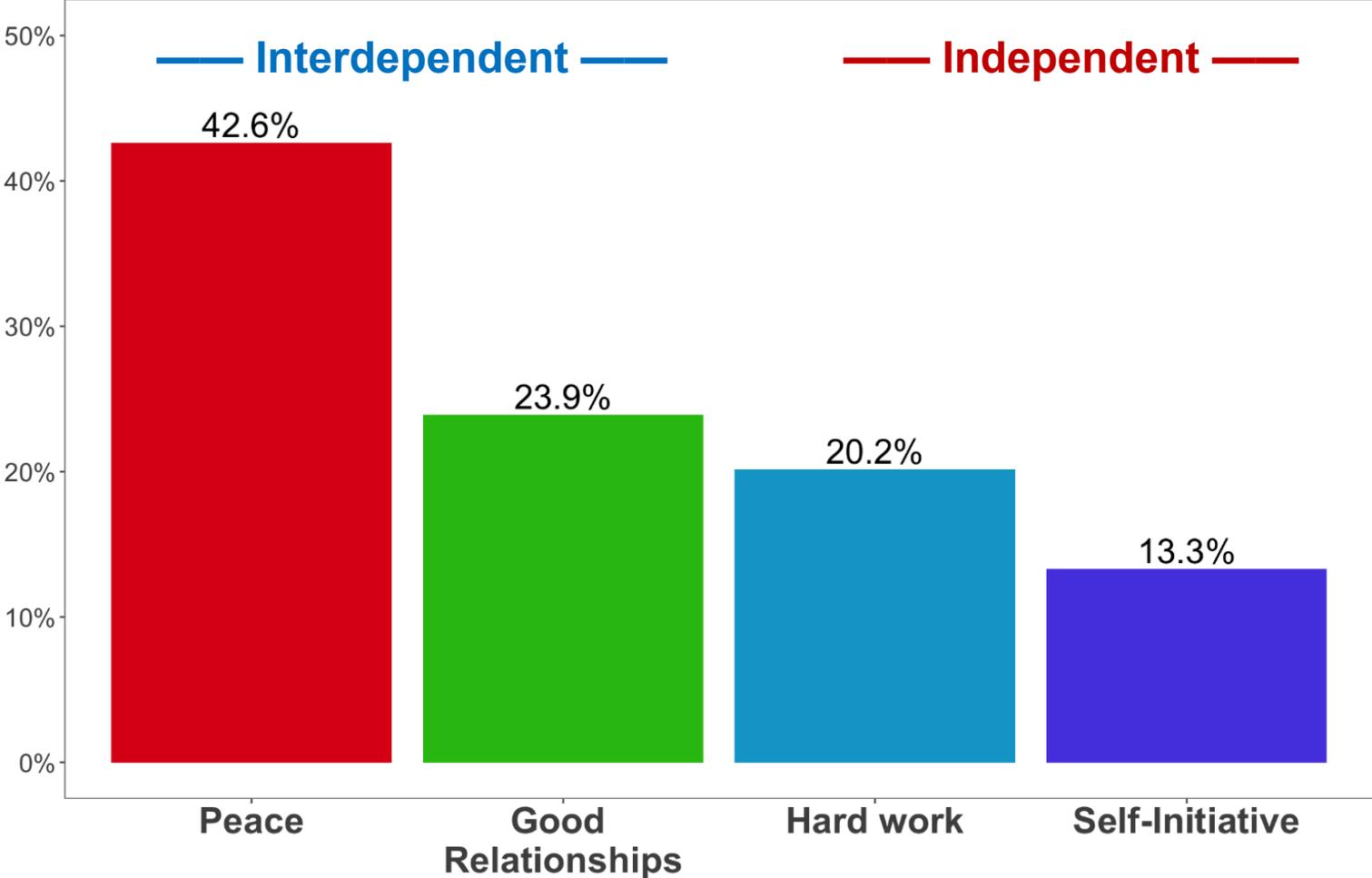
Local model of economic agency

Of these four qualities, which is the most important for women's economic success?



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$\chi^2 (3, N = 1216) = 232.4, p = <.001$

Mechanisms experiment



Participants enrolled
N = 2,628
from subsample of villages receiving psychosocial interventions

Community sensitization
(Amina's story)

Block randomization

Control
(n = 1,296)

Independent Initiative
(n = 666)

Interdependent Initiative
(n = 666)

Multi-component program

- Business trainings
- Life skills trainings
- Market access
- Coaching
- Cash transfer
- Savings groups

Follow up survey at 1yr
(post psych intervention)

*Wise intervention format
(Walton & Wilson, 2018):
4-min video + 10-15 min
exercise*

Independent Initiative: Economic activity as personal initiative and advancement

Video



20 sec clip of 4 min video
Drawings by Constant Tonakpa

Guided exercise

- Identify effective entrepreneurial strategies
- Visualize and set personal goals
- Problem solve around possible obstacles to goals

Based on Wish-Outcome-Obstacle-Plan exercise tested in the West (Oettingen, 2014) and personal initiative training (Campos et al., 2017)

Interdependent Initiative: Economic activity as social collaboration and community advancement

Video



20 sec clip of 4 min video
Drawings by Constant Tonakpa

Guided exercise

- Identify effective social strategies
- Visualize and set collective goals
- Problem solve around possible social obstacles

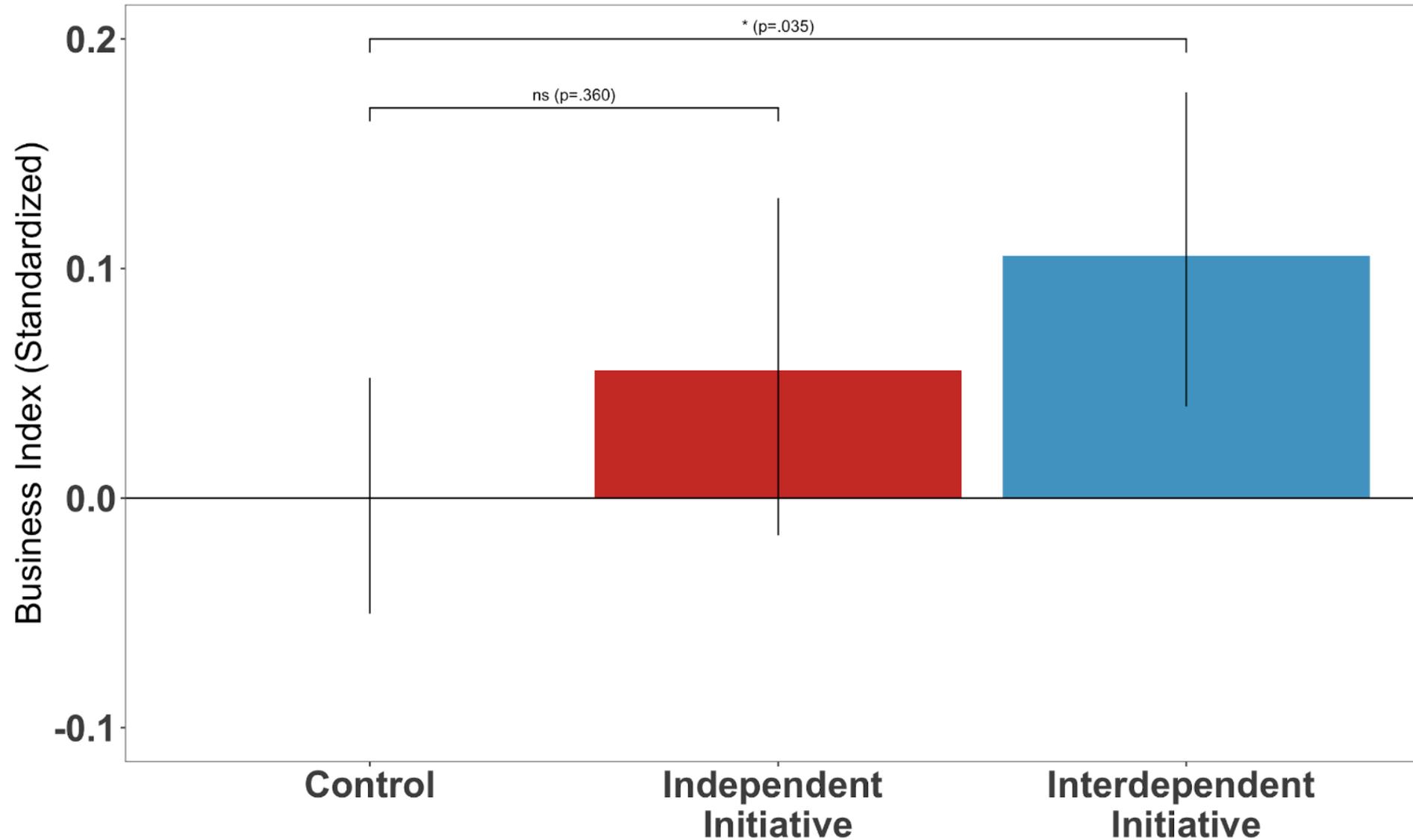
Adaptation of Independent Initiative exercise to reflect interdependent agency (Markus & Conner, 2014; Stephens et al., 2012; Thomas, Otis, et al., 2020)

Business index at 1 year follow up

Business performance index

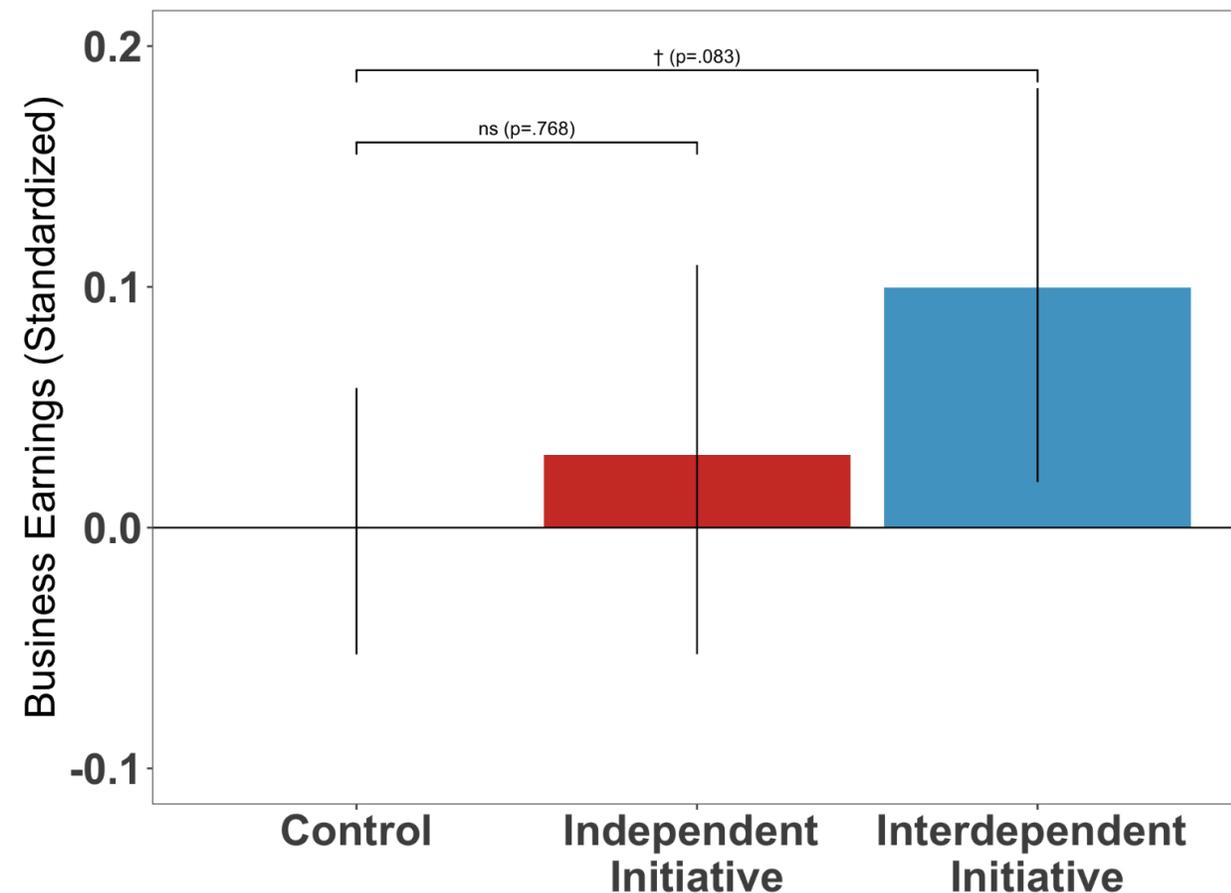
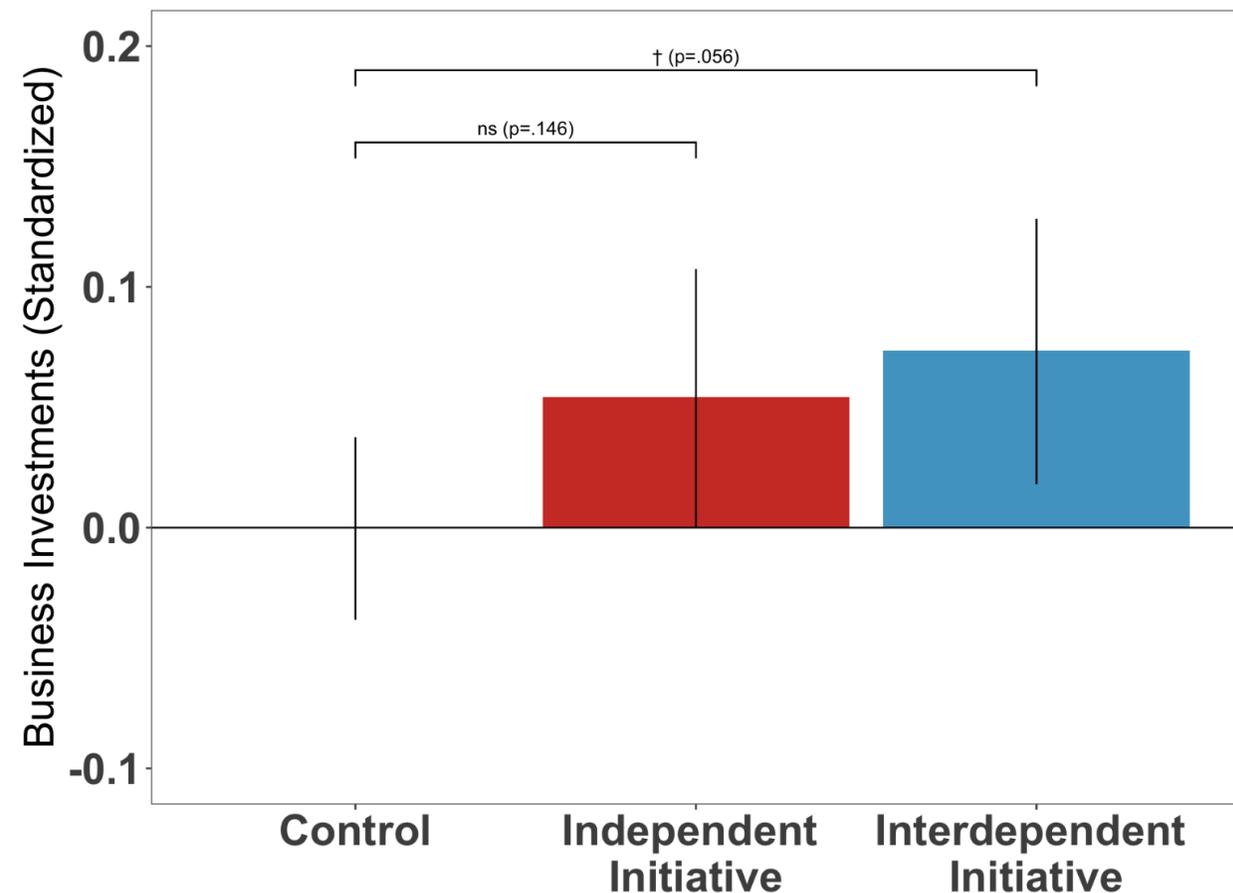
1. Business investments (reported assets, investments, no. businesses, businesses started in past year, projected investment/divestment)
2. Business earnings (reported profits, revenues)

Interdependent Initiative intervention increases business index at 1 yr



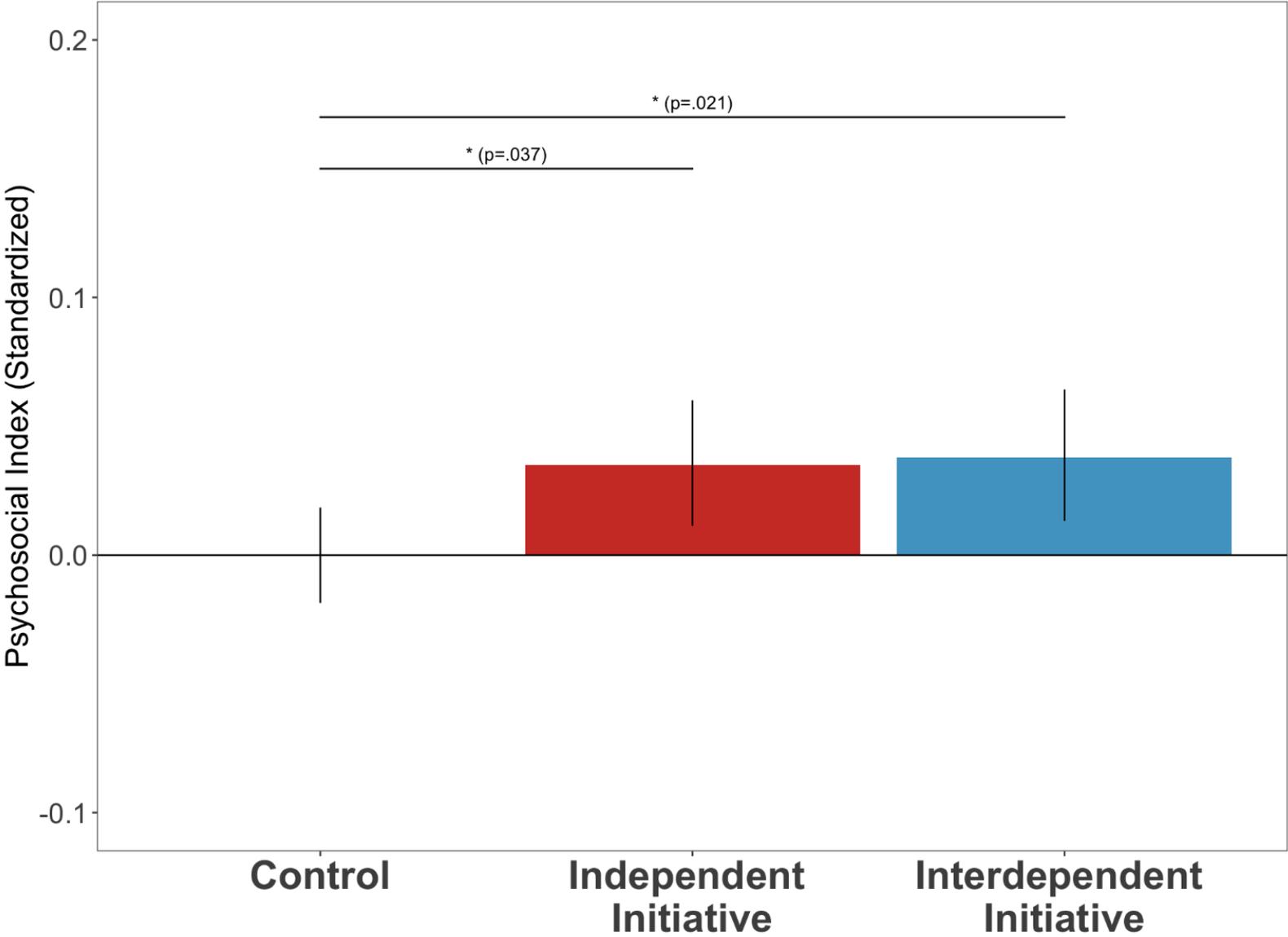
Error bars: 95% CI
Cluster robust SE
Model controls for
randomization strata

Sub-indices: Interdependent Initiative intervention marginally increases business investments and earnings



Error bars: 95% CI
Cluster robust SE
Model controls for
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Interventions had similar, small effects on psychosocial outcomes at 1 yr



Error bars: 95% CI
Cluster robust SE
Model controls for
randomization strata

Conclusion

- Brief psychosocial interventions, if appropriate timely and tailored, can improve the **cost-effectiveness** of anti-poverty programs
- **Solidarity breeds prosperity**: the [interdependent initiative](#) intervention improves women's business outcomes and suggests a better fit with the context
- **Culturally-tuned behavioral science** has the potential to accelerate poverty reduction while being attuned to and preserving more interdependent ways of being

More examples: Thomas, Catherine C., and Markus, Hazel Rose. Forthcoming. "Enculturating Development Science: Beyond the WEIRD Independent Paradigm."

Thank you!

**Contact: Catherine Thomas,
ccthomas@stanford.edu**

Thank you to

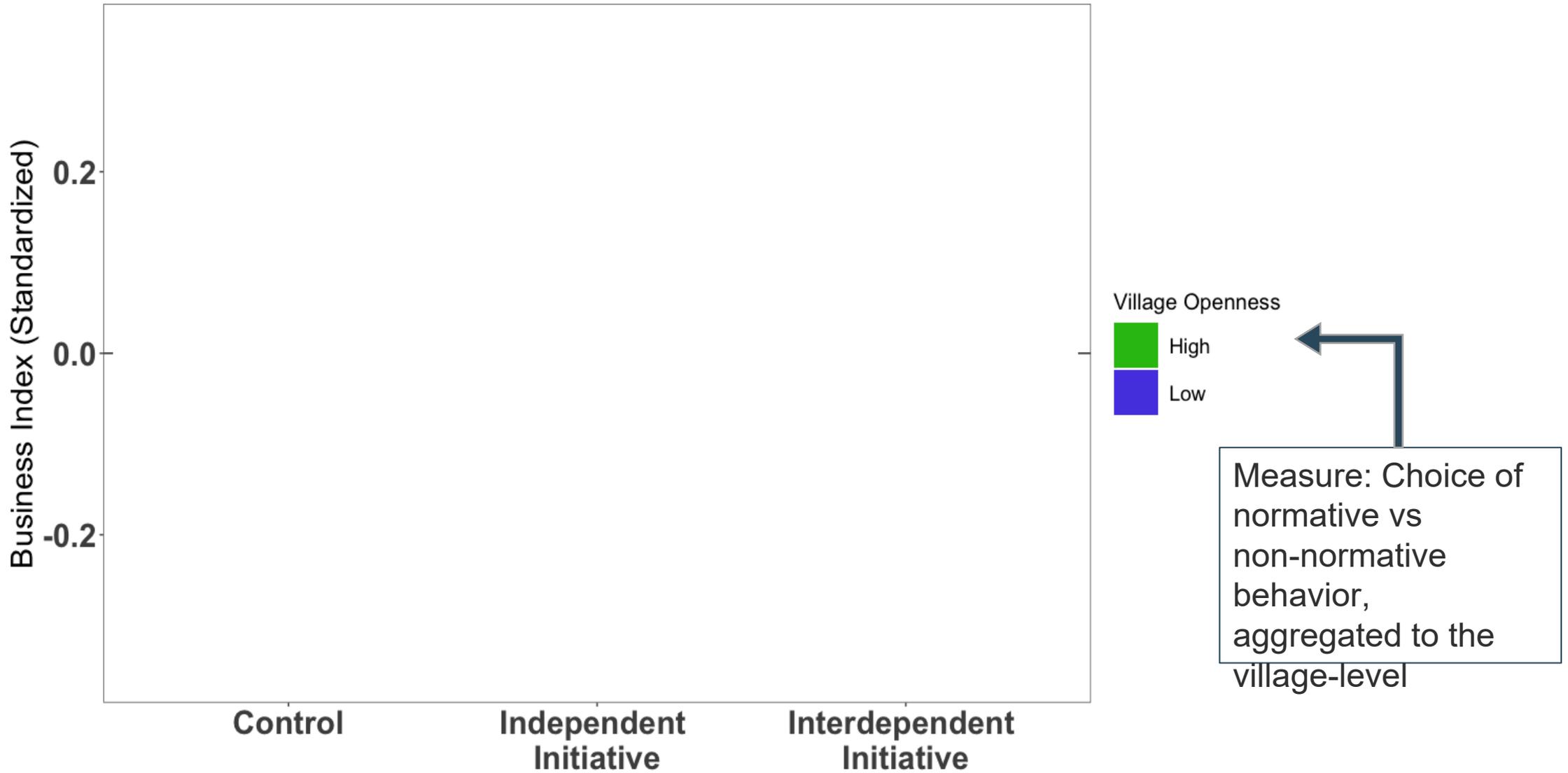
- My collaborators: Hazel Markus and Greg Walton (Stanford Psychology), Soumaila Abdoulaye Sambo (Niger World Bank consultant), Thomas Bossuroy and Patrick Premand (World Bank) and many others
- Research participants in Niger
- Survey partner Sahel Consulting, led by Adamou Hamadou
- Funders Stanford King Center on Global Development, Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program, and others
- Research assistance from Ellen Reinhart, Karim Paré



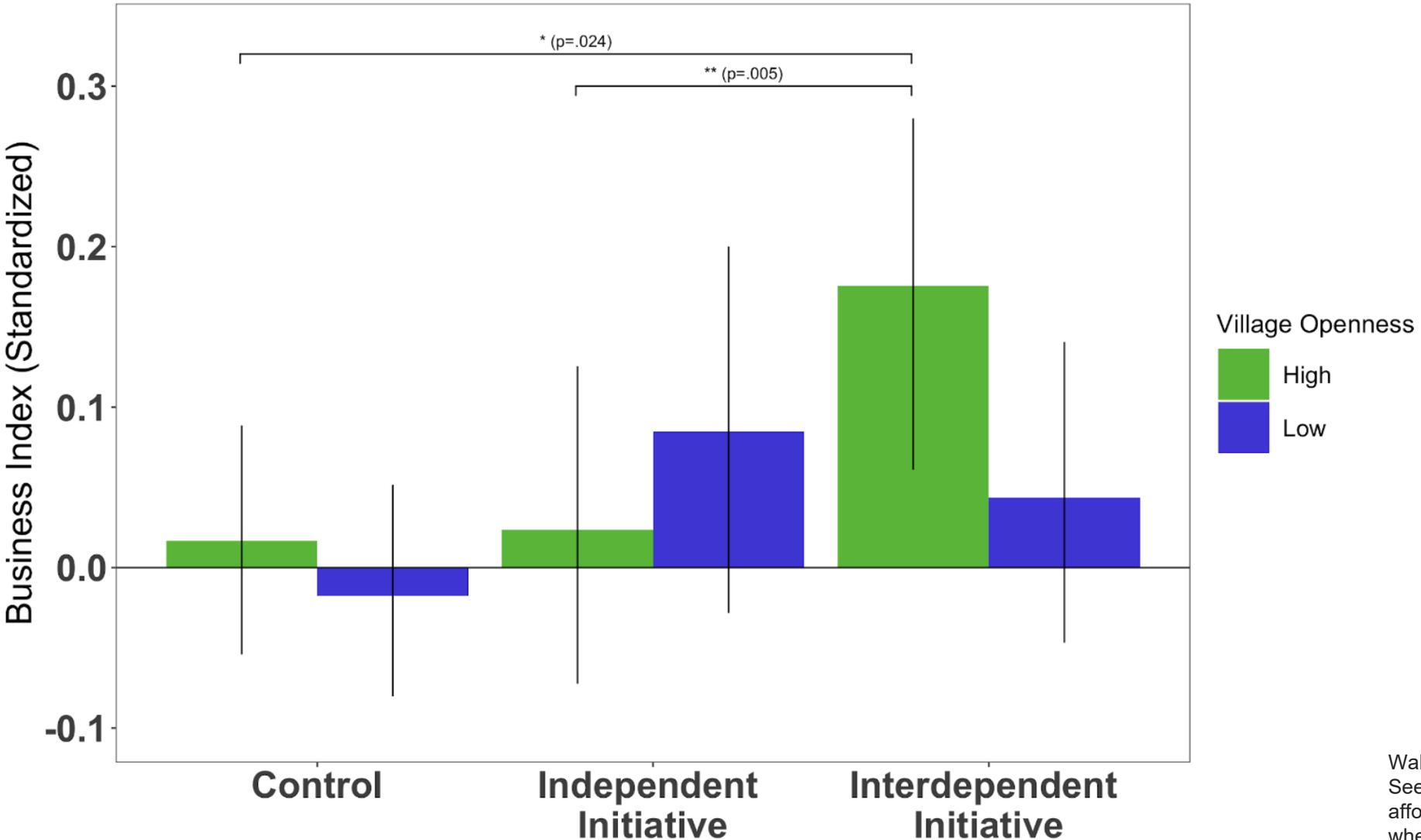
**SAHEL ADAPTIVE
SOCIAL PROTECTION
PROGRAM**

Stanford | King Center on
Global Development

How might the psychosocial intervention effects vary across villages?

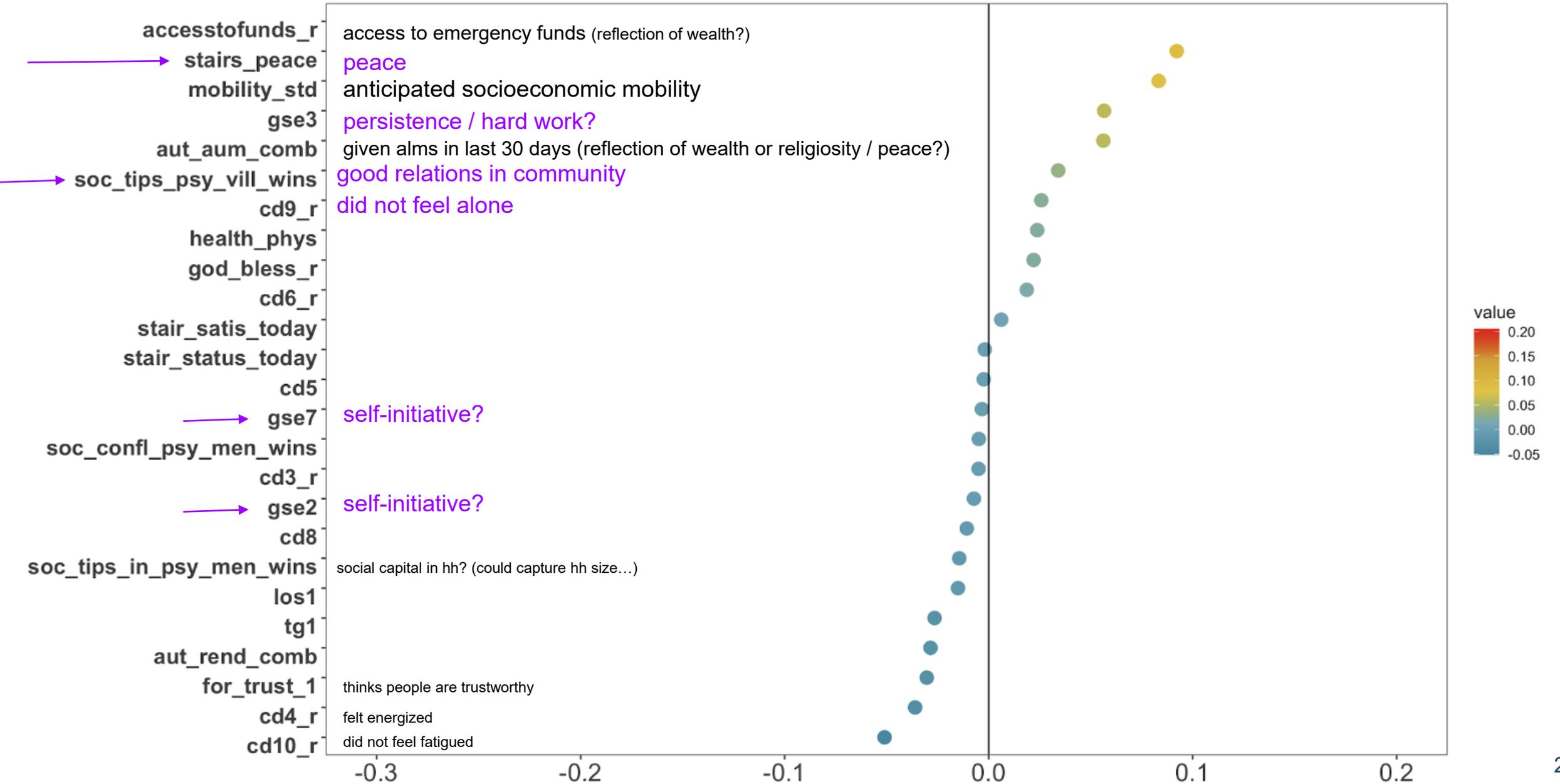


Outcomes are best for women in more open villages who receive the Interdependent Initiative intervention

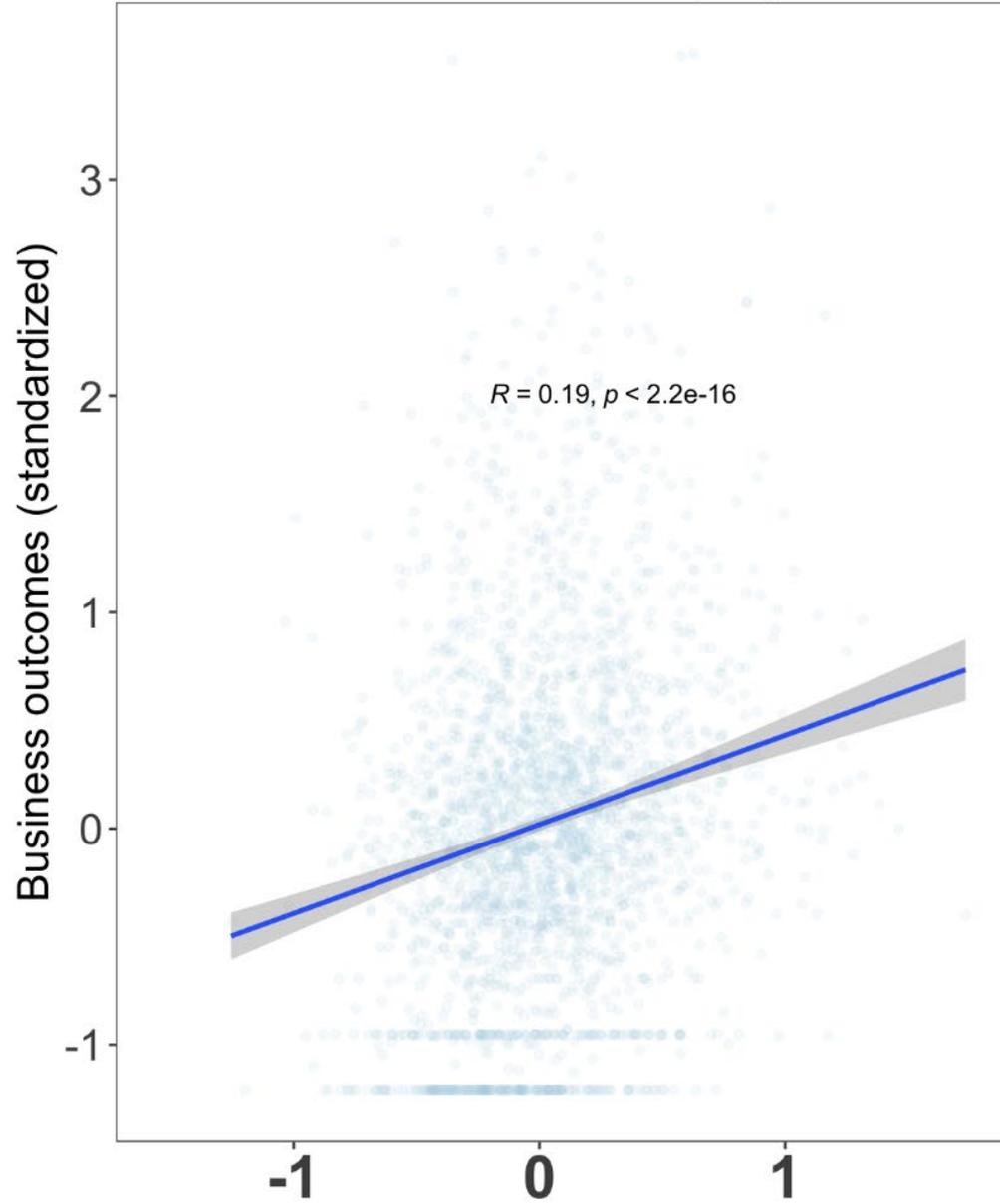


Walton, G. M., & Yeager, D. S. (2020). Seed and soil: Psychological affordances in contexts help to explain where wise interventions succeed or fail. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 29(3), 219-226.

Largest coefficients predicting business outcomes from elastic net regression (control group at endline)



Social outcomes (std)



Psychological outcomes (std)

