

# Perceived discrimination and academic resilience: A study of Albanian immigrant adolescents in Greece

Frosso Motti-Stefanidi, Vassilis Pavlopoulos

*Department of Psychology, University of Athens, Greece*

Jelena Obradović, Ann S. Masten

*Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, USA*

✉ [vpavlop@psych.uoa.gr](mailto:vpavlop@psych.uoa.gr)

Paper presented at the symposium *Ethnic and Racial Minority Adolescents: The Challenges of Being Different*, convened by P. F. Titzmann & D. Strohmeier, **10th EARA Conference**, Antalya, Turkey, May 2-6, 2006.

# Resilience: Risk and protective factors

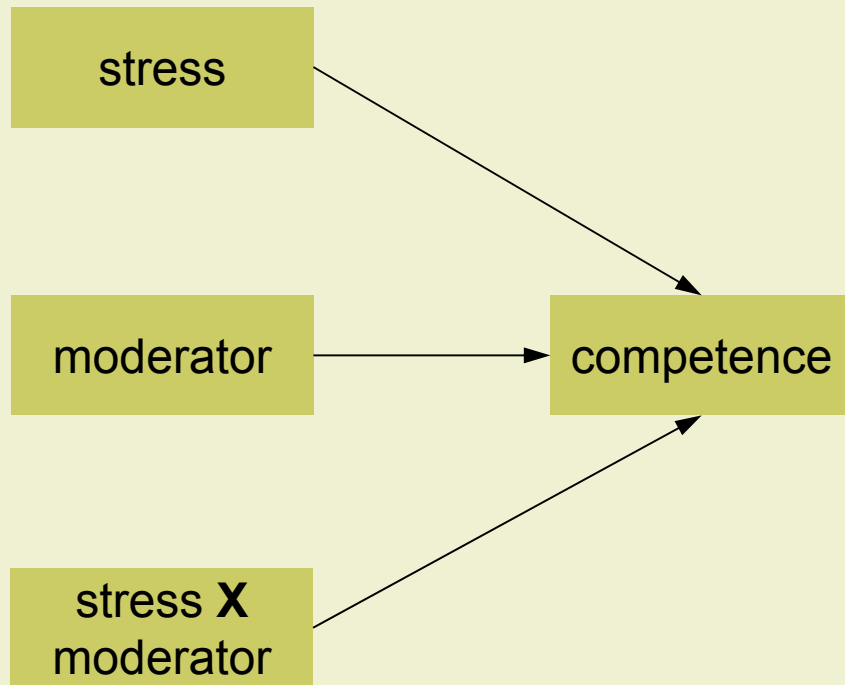
---

Resilience (i.e., successful adaptation under high adversity) is **not** viewed as a personality trait but rather as a dynamic process where resources and/or assets are organized on the basis of multi-level, ecological models (e.g., Bronferbrenner, 1977; Garmezy, 1985):

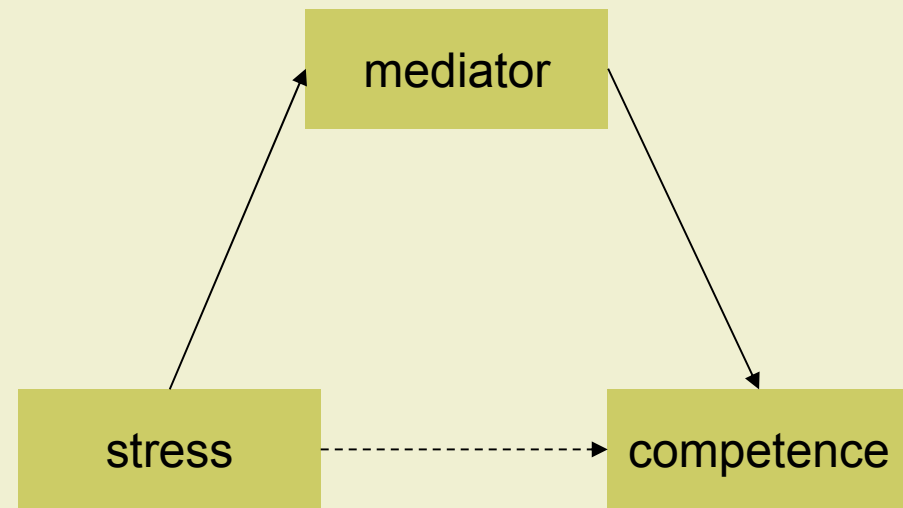
<b>Personal</b>	locus of control, self-efficacy beliefs, intelligence, social skills
<b>Family</b>	social-economic status of parents, quality of parent-child relationship
<b>Community</b>	supportive networks, state policies, minority status, perceived discrimination

# The moderator-mediator variable distinction (Baron & Kenny, 1986) in the research on resilience

---



Moderator model



Mediator model

# Perceived discrimination as a possible mediator for adaptation of immigrants

---

- ❑ **Stereotype threat.** The awareness of being judged in terms of a stereotype poses a self-threat that affects performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995).
- ❑ **Coping strategies.** Downward social comparisons (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) or psychological disengagement (Shih, 2004) may undermine intrinsic motivation.
- ❑ **Acculturation.** Perceived discrimination is associated with increased stress and less willingness to adopt host culture identity (Ward et al., 2001).

# Two dimensions of perceived discrimination

---

- ❑ **Perceived personal discrimination** is attributed directly to the self.
- ❑ **Group discrimination** is attributed to social groups to which the perceiver belongs, e.g., ethnic group, race, gender.
- ☞ The tendency to recognize greater discrimination against group, rather than against self, is protective for self-esteem (Crocker et al., 1998).

# Research hypotheses

---

- ❑ It is expected that immigrant adolescents will perceive higher level of discrimination against their ethnic group, rather than against self.
- ❑ Perceived personal discrimination will mediate the effect of stress on competence of immigrant adolescents.
- ❑ However, perceived group discrimination may not prove to be a vulnerability factor, at least to a lesser extent than perceived personal discrimination.

# Characteristics of the sample

(*N* = 174 immigrant adolescents)

---

Country of birth      138 (79%) Albania (1st generation)  
                                 36 (21%) Greece (2nd generation)

Gender                      101 (58%) boys  
                                 73 (42%) girls

Age (yrs)                      Mean = 13.0, Std.Dev. = .8  
                                 min = 12.0, max = 14.6

Length of stay  
in Greece (yrs)<sup>a</sup>              Mean = 5.0, Std.Dev. = 2.5  
                                 min = 1.0, max = 12.2

<sup>a</sup> *1st generation only*

# Measures

---

Stress	Negative life events (25 items) (adapted from Fthenakis & Minsel, 2002)
Competence	School grades (Mean of 5 subjects) Popularity (sociometric test; Coie et al., 1982)
Perceived discrimination	Group discrimination (4 items, $\alpha = .87$ ) Personal discrimination (4 items, $\alpha = .76$ ) (based on Phinney et al., 1998; Verkuyten, 1998)



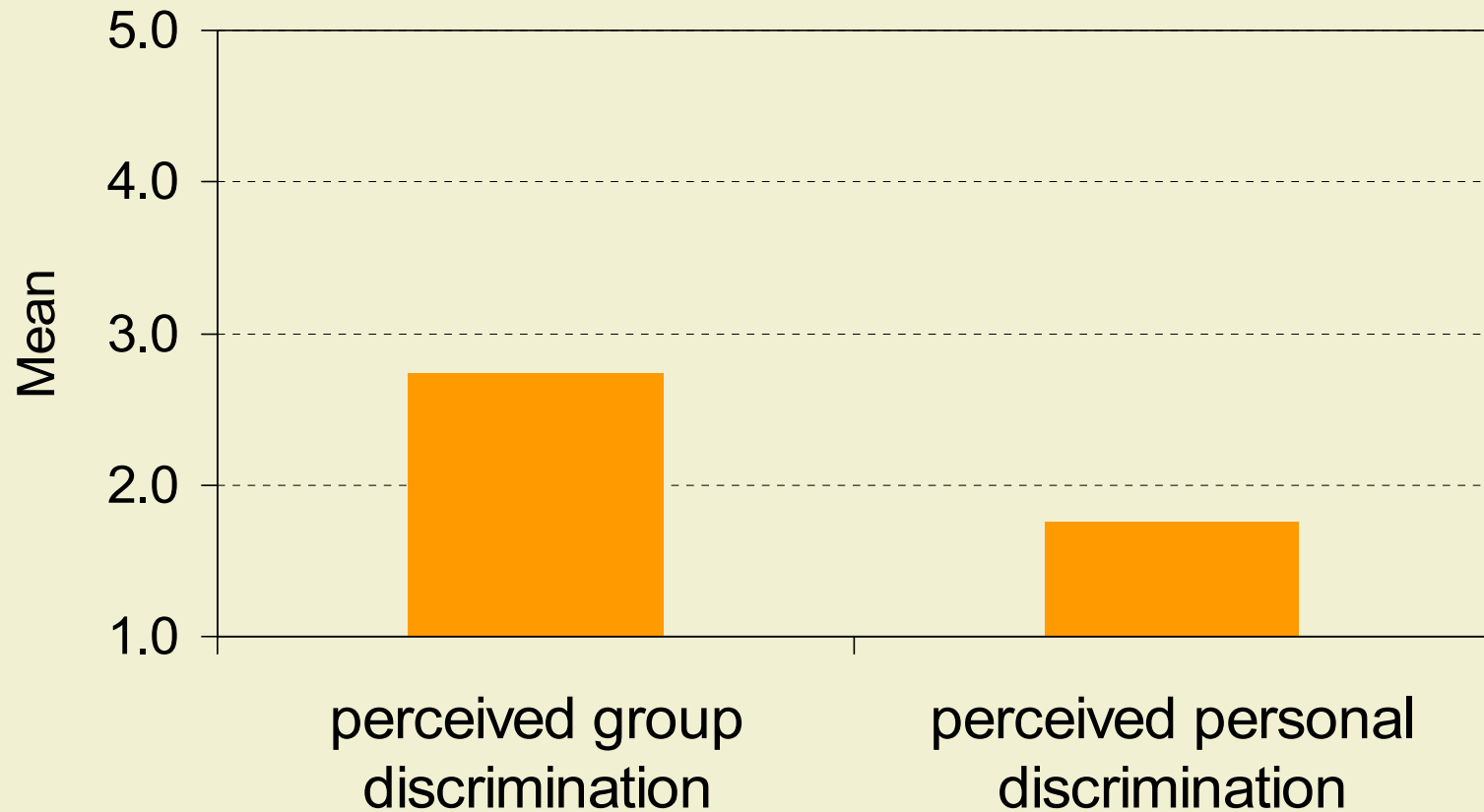
# Analyses for Research Hypothesis 1

---

- *It is expected that immigrant adolescents will perceive higher level of discrimination against their ethnic group, rather than against self*
- ⇒ Paired samples T-test  
(perceived group vs. personal discrimination)
- Furthermore:
- ⇒ 2-way (country of birth X gender) analysis of variance

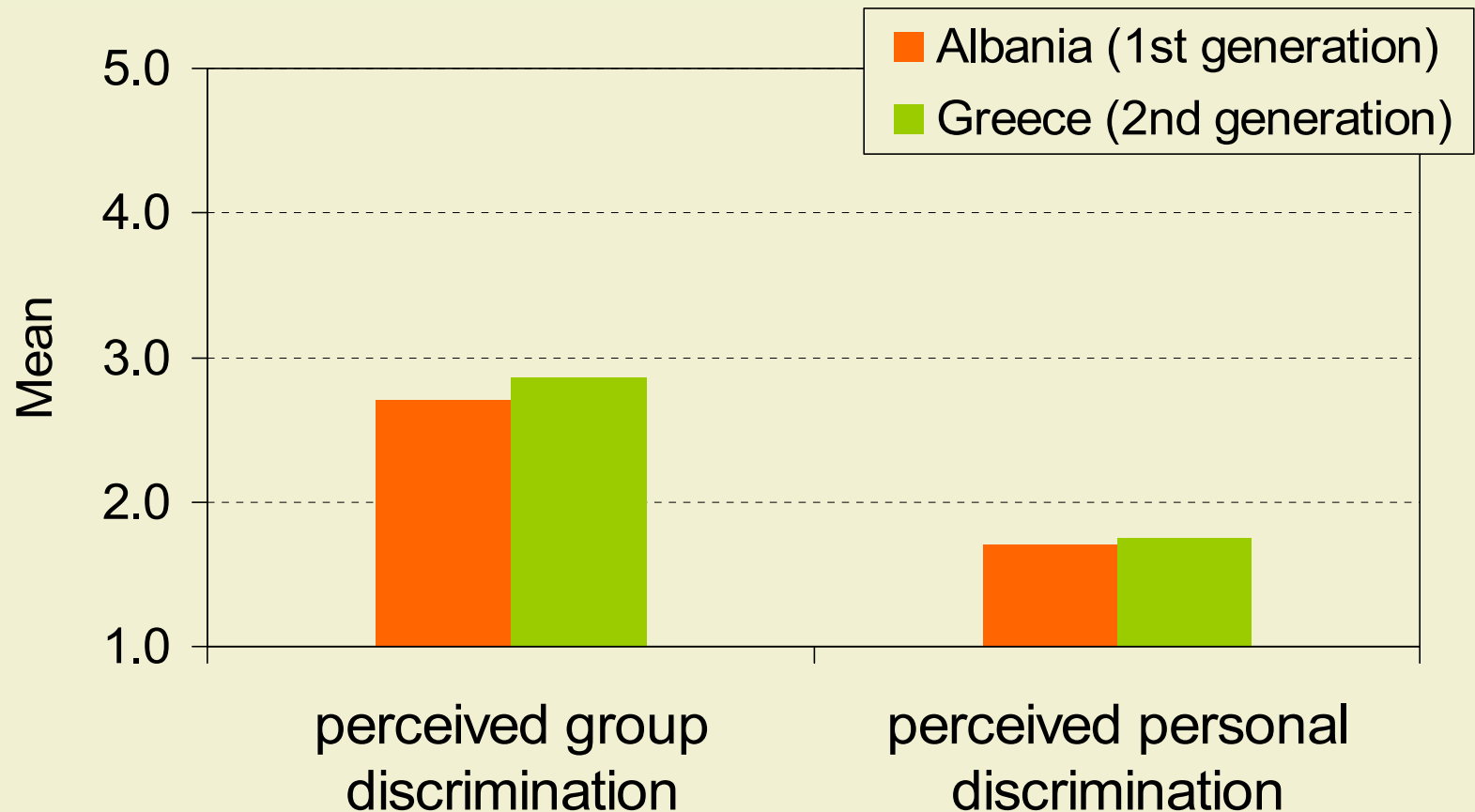
# Means of perceived group and personal discrimination for the whole sample ( $N = 174$ Albanian immigrants)

---



Paired samples T-test:  $t(173) = 14.63, p < .001$

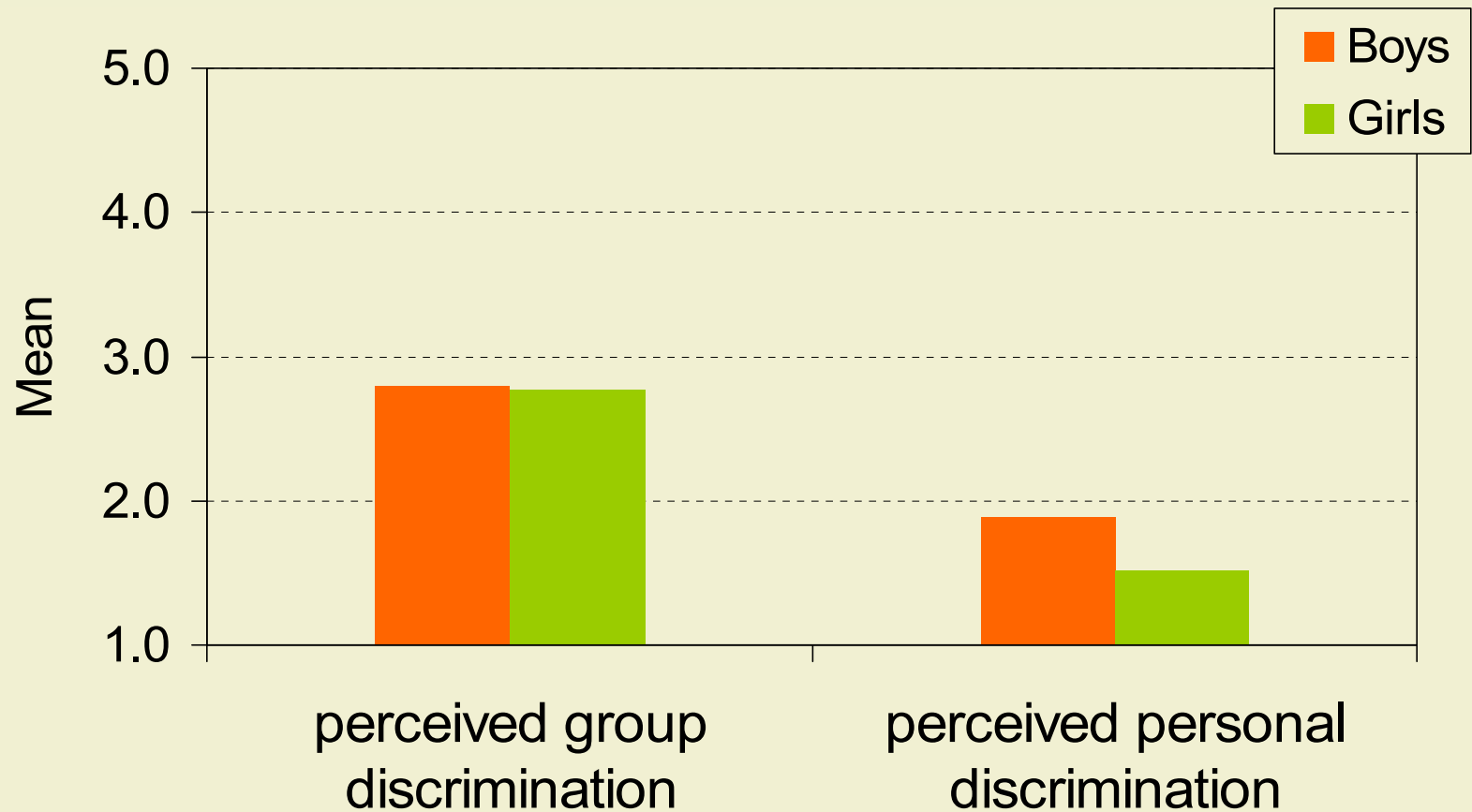
# Means of perceived group and personal discrimination as a function of country of birth (1<sup>st</sup> vs. 2<sup>nd</sup> generation)



Perceived group discrimination:  $F(1, 170) = .75, p = .389$

Perceived personal discrimination:  $F(1, 170) = .07, p = .787$

# Means of perceived group and personal discrimination as a function of adolescents' gender



Perceived group discrimination:  $F(1, 170) = .04, p = .847$

Perceived personal discrimination:  $F(1, 170) = 4.01, p = .047$

## Analyses for Research Hypotheses 2 and 3

---

- *Exploring the mediating role of perceived discrimination in the resilience of Albanian adolescents*

A series of regression analyses were performed, as suggested by Baron & Kenny (1986).

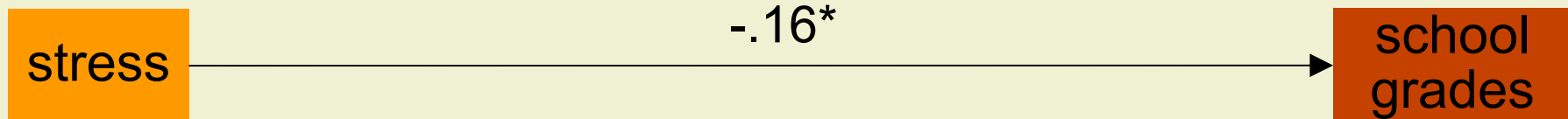
- ⇒ Independent variable: Stress (negative life events)
- ⇒ Dependent variables: Measures of competence (school grades, popularity)
- ⇒ Mediator variables: perceived group and personal discrimination
- ⇒ Covariates (to appear first in the analyses): gender, country of birth

# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

## 1. *Regression of school grades on stress*

---

perceived  
personal  
discrimination



Block 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F(1, 172) = 18.91$ ,  $p < .001$

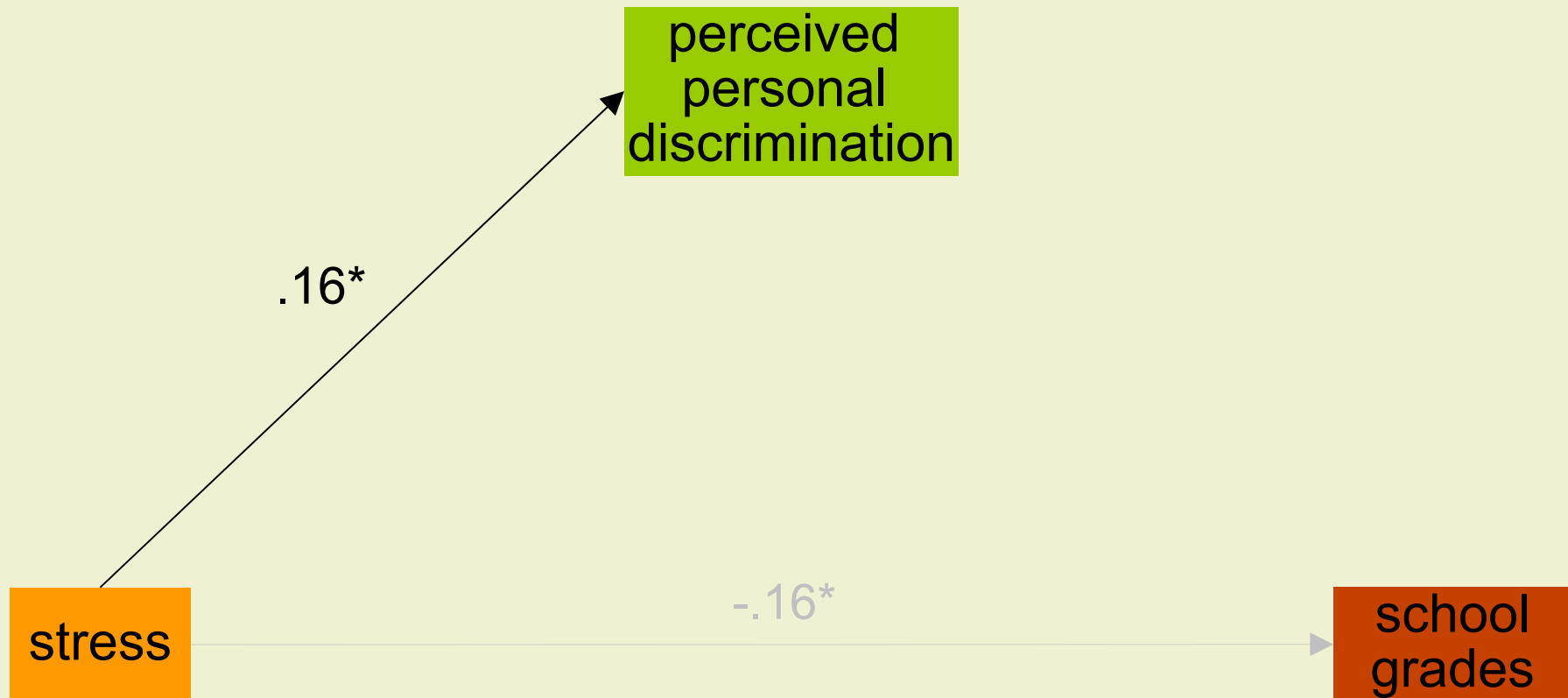
Block 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1, 171) = 12.51$ ,  $p = .001$

**Block 3 stress:  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 5.48$ ,  $p = .020$**

# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

## 2. Regression of perceived personal discrimination on stress

---



Block 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(1, 172) = 4.16$ ,  $p = .043$

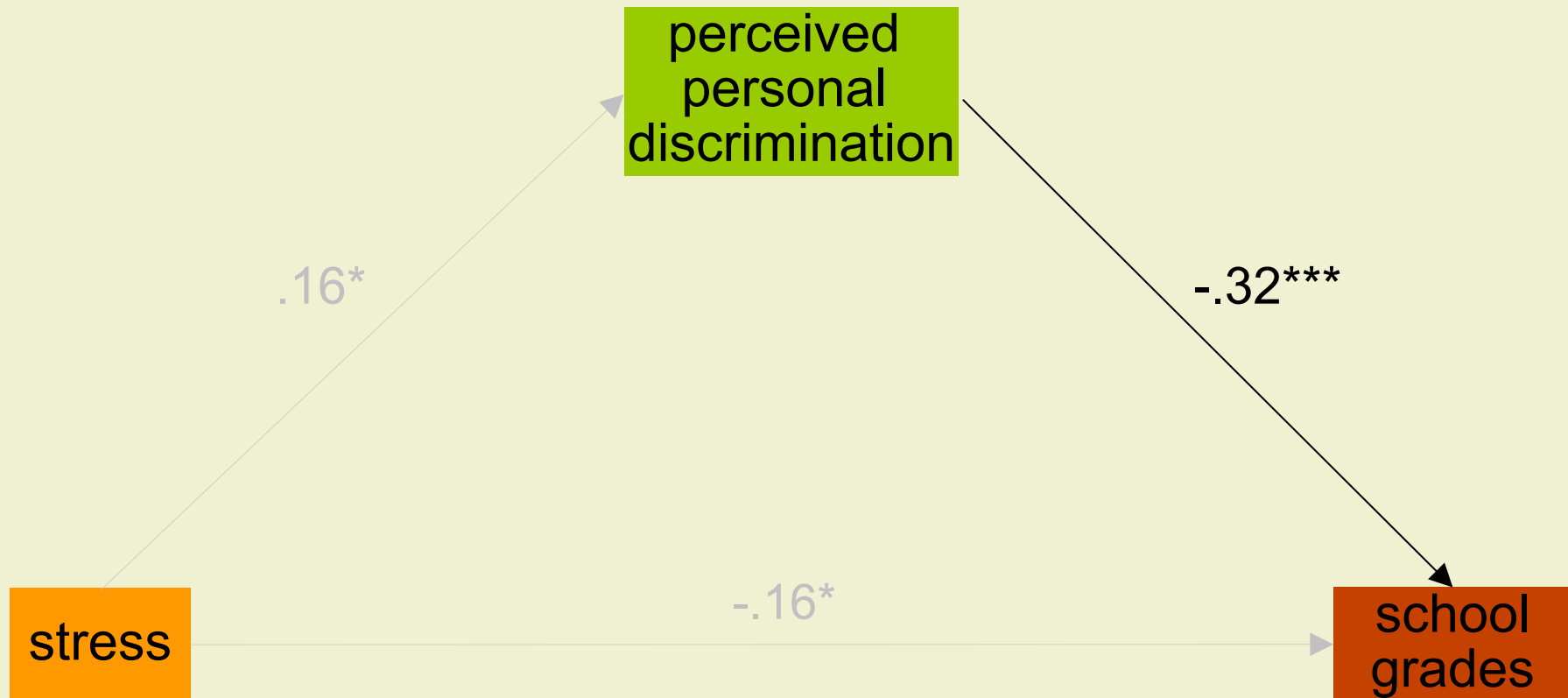
Block 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(2, 171) = .02$ ,  $p = .899$

**Block 3 stress:  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 4.32$ ,  $p = .039$**

# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

## 3. Regression of school grades on perceived personal discrimination

---



Block 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F(1, 172) = 17.68$ ,  $p < .001$

Block 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1, 171) = 11.69$ ,  $p = .001$

**Block 3 perceived personal discrimination:  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 21.52$ ,  $p < .001$**



# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

## 4. Regression of school grades on personal discrimination and stress



Step 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F(1, 172) = 17.46$ ,  $p < .001$

Step 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1, 171) = 11.54$ ,  $p = .001$

Step 3 perceived personal discrimination:  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 21.24$ ,  $p < .001$

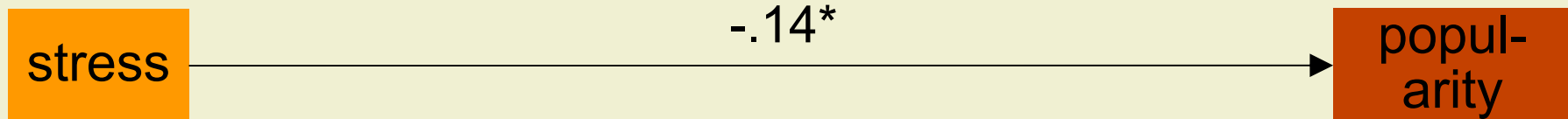
Step 4 stress:  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(1, 169) = 2.66$ ,  $p = .105$

# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

## 1. *Regression of popularity on stress*

---

perceived  
personal  
discrimination



Block 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(1, 172) = .25$ ,  $p = .616$

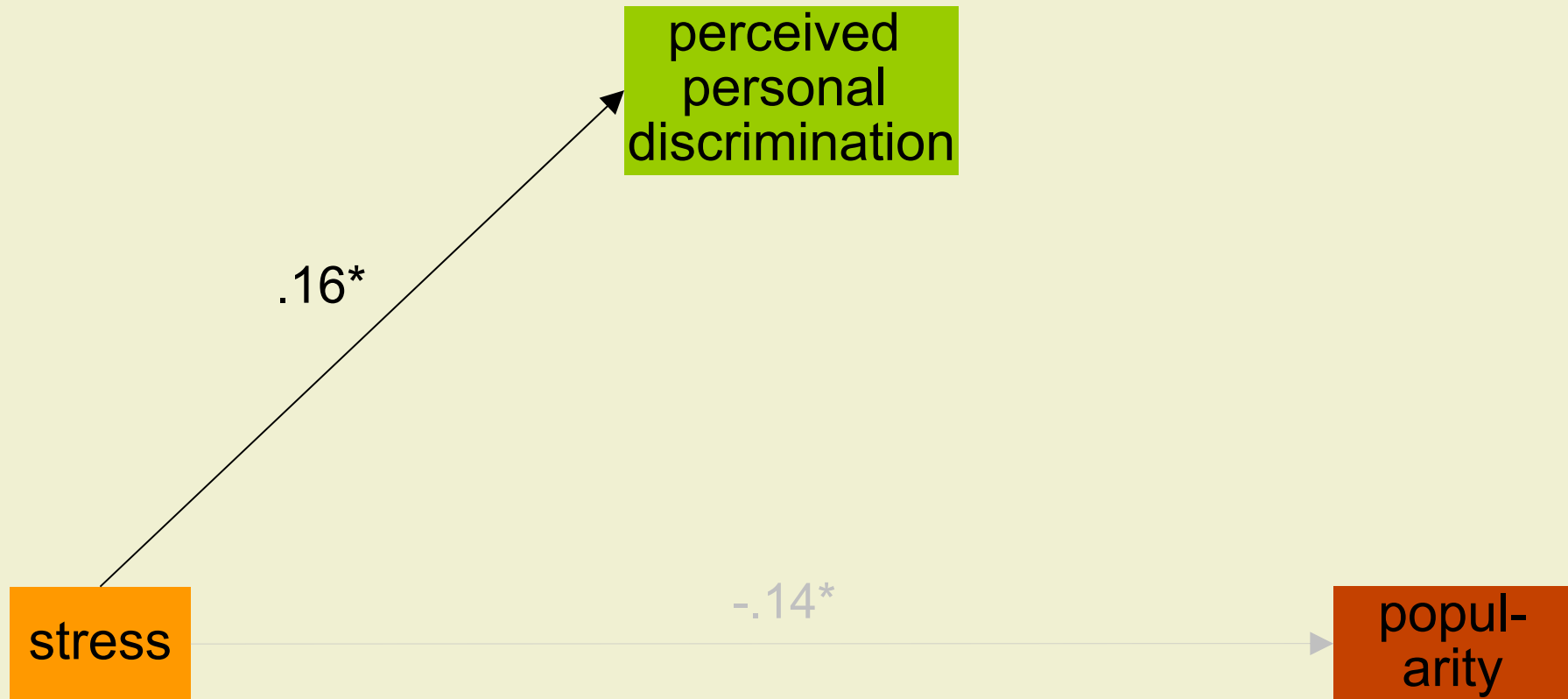
Block 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(1, 171) = 6.50$ ,  $p = .011$

**Block 3 stress:  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 4.40$ ,  $p = .037$**

# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

## 2. Regression of perceived personal discrimination on stress

---



Block 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(1, 172) = 4.16$ ,  $p = .043$

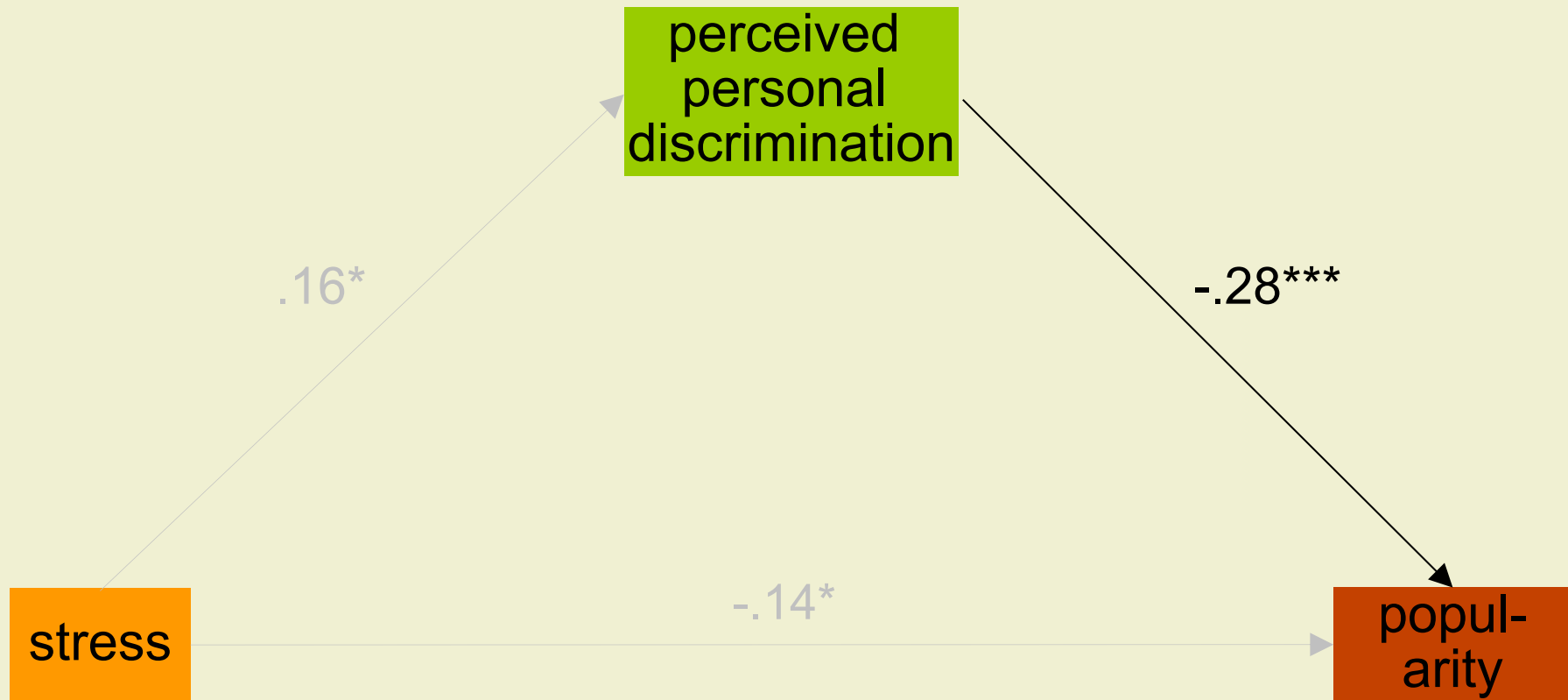
Block 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(1, 171) = .02$ ,  $p < .899$

**Block 3 stress:  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 4.32$ ,  $p = .039$**

# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

## 3. Regression of popularity on perceived personal discrimination

---



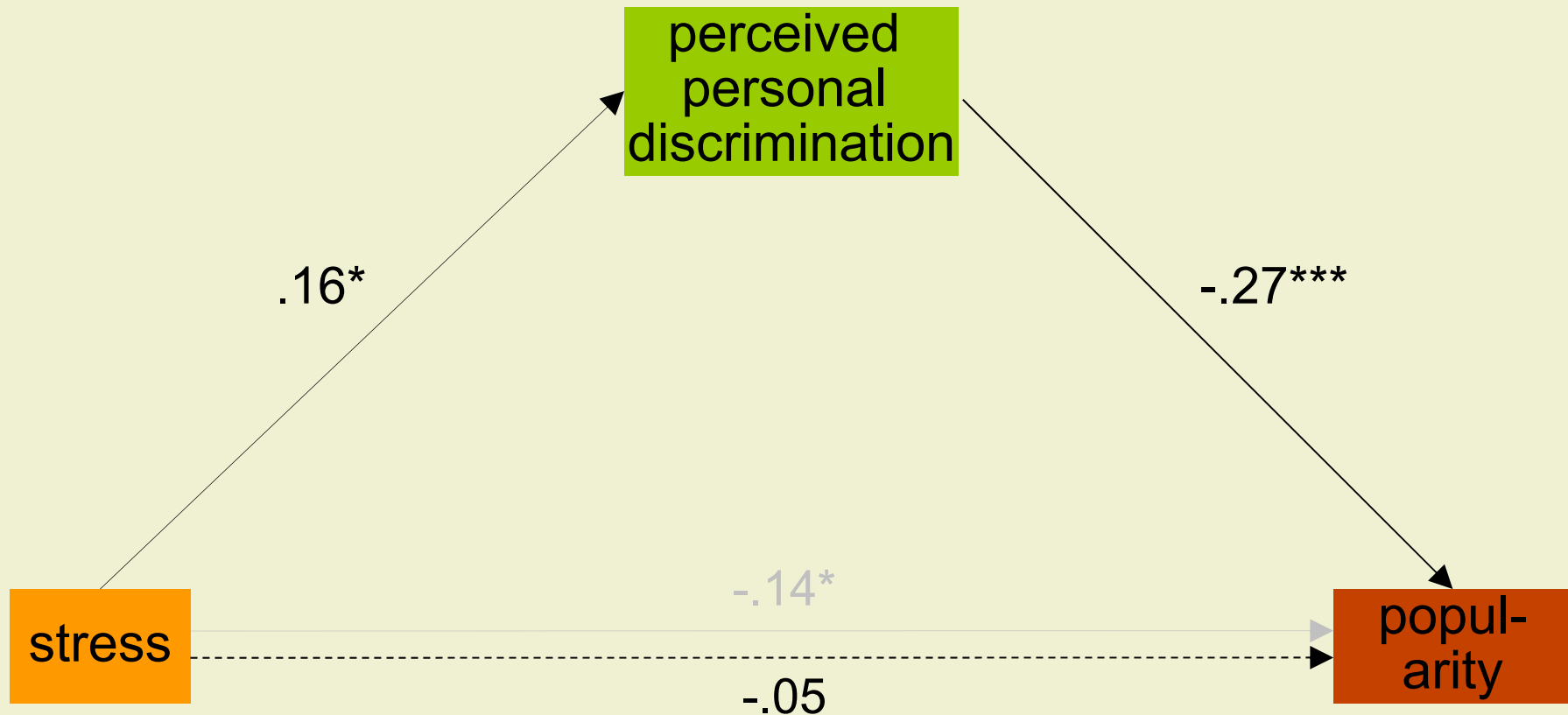
Block 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(1, 172) = 1.40$ ,  $p = .238$

Block 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1, 171) = 9.50$ ,  $p = .002$

**Block 3 perceived personal discrimination:  $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 13.58$ ,  $p < .001$**

# Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

## 4. Regression of popularity on personal discrimination and stress



Step 1 gender:  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(1, 172) = 1.39$ ,  $p = .241$

Step 2 country of birth:  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1, 171) = 9.38$ ,  $p = .003$

**Step 3 perceived personal discrimination:  $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 13.41$ ,  $p < .001$**

**Step 4 stress:  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(1, 170) = .37$ ,  $p = .543$**

## Testing the mediation of perceived group discrimination on resilience

---

- ❑ Perceived discrimination against ethnic group **failed** to significantly predict either domain of competence (i.e. school grades or popularity) in the first steps of the analyses, before taking stress into account.
- ❑ Furthermore, perceived discrimination against ethnic group was **not** found to mediate the effect of stress on either domain of school competence.

## Summary of findings and discussion

---

- ❑ Perceived personal discrimination **fully mediated** the effect of stress on both school grades and popularity, over and above gender and generation status...
- ❑ ...therefore, perceived personal discrimination can be considered as a **risk factor** for school competence of immigrant Albanian adolescents in Greece.
- ❑ On the contrary, **neither** direct **nor** indirect relationships of perceived group discrimination with the two domains of competence were established...
- ❑ ...although adolescents reported essentially **higher levels** of group, compared to personal, discrimination.

# Summary of findings and discussion

---

- ❑ The findings suggest that the predicament of social discrimination is considerably more important if it is perceived as a self-threat.
- ❑ Further research is needed in order to test if the mediating role of perceived discrimination is valid for other immigrant groups as well, and to study the prerequisites for differentiating between personal and group attributions.



# References

---

- Baron, R., & Kenny, D. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(6), 1173-1182.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist, 32*, 513-531.
- Coie, J., Dodge, K., & Coppotelli, H. (1982). Dimensions and types of social status: A cross-age perspective. *Developmental Psychology, 18*(4), 557-570.
- Crocker, J., Major, B., & Steele, C. (1998). Social stigma. In D. Gilbert, S. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., Vol. 2, pp. 504-553). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Phinney, J., Madden, T., & Santos, L. (1998). Psychological variables as predictors of perceived ethnic discrimination among minority and immigrant adolescents. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 28*, 937-953.
- Fthenakis, W., & Minsel, B. (2002). *Die rolle des vaters in der familie*. Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag W. Kohlhammer.
- Garnezy, N. (1985). Stress-resistant children: The search for protective factors. In J. E. Stevenson (Ed.), *Recent research in developmental psychopathology: Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* (pp. 213-233). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Luthar, S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543-562.
- Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic. Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 227-238.
- Shih, M. (2004). Positive Stigma: Examining Resilience and Empowerment in Overcoming Stigma. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 591*(1), 175-185.
- Steele, C., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*, 797-811.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel, & W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (2nd ed., pp. 7-24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.
- Verkuyten, M. (1998). Perceived discrimination and self-esteem among ethnic minority adolescents. *Journal of Social Psychology, 138*(4), 479-493.
- Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Hove, UK: Routledge.