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## **Discrimination, Mental Health, and Coping Among Mexican- American Adults: Exploring Gender Differences**

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## Discrimination, Mental Health, and Coping Among Mexican-American Adults: Exploring Gender Differences

### Abstract

In collaboration with the University of California, Davis, we will analyze existing data from the California Families Project, an ongoing longitudinal study of Mexican origin adults living in Northern California ( $N = 674$ ). Our first objective is to investigate associations between ethnic discrimination and distress over time. Second, we explore protective factors or sources of support (ethnic pride, perceived support, neighborhood cohesion) that may moderate the association between discrimination and distress over time. Third, we investigate whether there are significant gender differences in levels of discrimination and distress, as well as the associations between discrimination and distress over time.

Participant data come from home interviews (survey) over a ten-year period. Our statistical analyses include measurement invariance tests and equality constraints between males and females in structural equation models and testing interaction effects between levels of discrimination and the three hypothesized protective factors.

Findings will advance understanding about the mental health outcomes associated with discrimination as well as the factors that promote wellbeing among Mexican origin adults. Data analyses are currently underway and will be completed in early April. Findings may inform future research and theory development, practice, and policy so that the mental health of Mexican origin families can be improved.



# Discrimination, Mental Health, and Coping Among Mexican-American Adults: Exploring Gender Differences

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## INTRODUCTION

In collaboration with the University of California, Davis, we analyzed existing data from the *California Families Project*, an ongoing longitudinal study of Mexican origin adults and their children living in northern California.

Research Objectives:

1. Investigate associations between ethnic discrimination and distress (depression and anxiety) over time.
2. Investigate whether there are significant gender differences in levels of discrimination and distress, as well as the associations between discrimination and distress over time.
3. Explore protective factors (coping, ethnic pride, perceived support, neighborhood cohesion) that may moderate the association between discrimination and distress over time.

## DATA / ANALYSIS

Participant data come from home interviews (survey) with mothers ( $N = 674$ ) and fathers ( $N = 438$ ) over a six-year period (2005 – 2011).

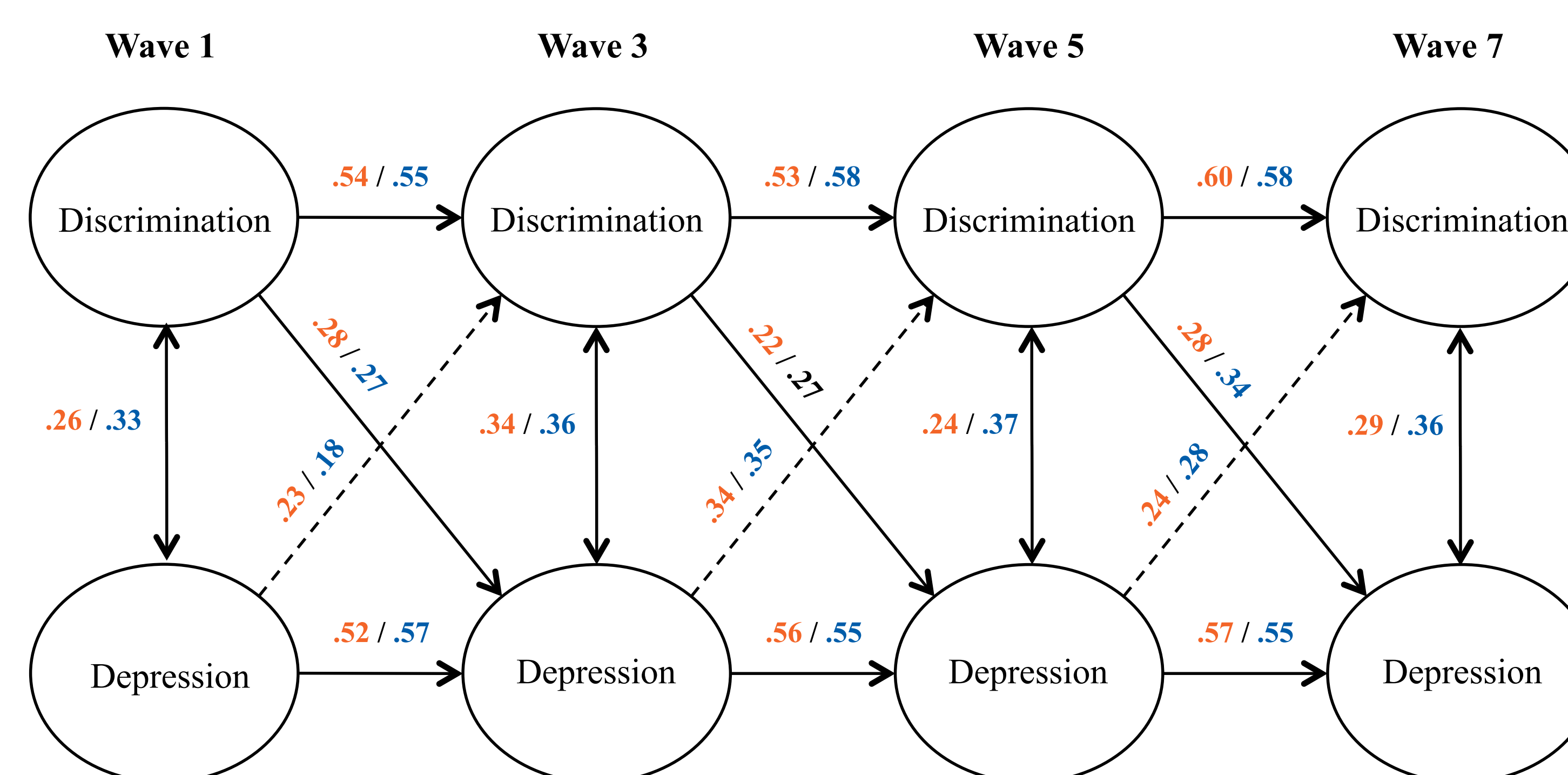
Mother  $M$  age at Wave 1 was 37.26 years and father  $M$  age at Wave 1 was 39.85 years.

We focused on three measures here: perceived ethnic discrimination (17 items); anxiety (26 items); and depression (10 items).

The first analytic step was to estimate zero-order correlations between discrimination and distress over time for mothers and fathers (Figures 1 and 2).

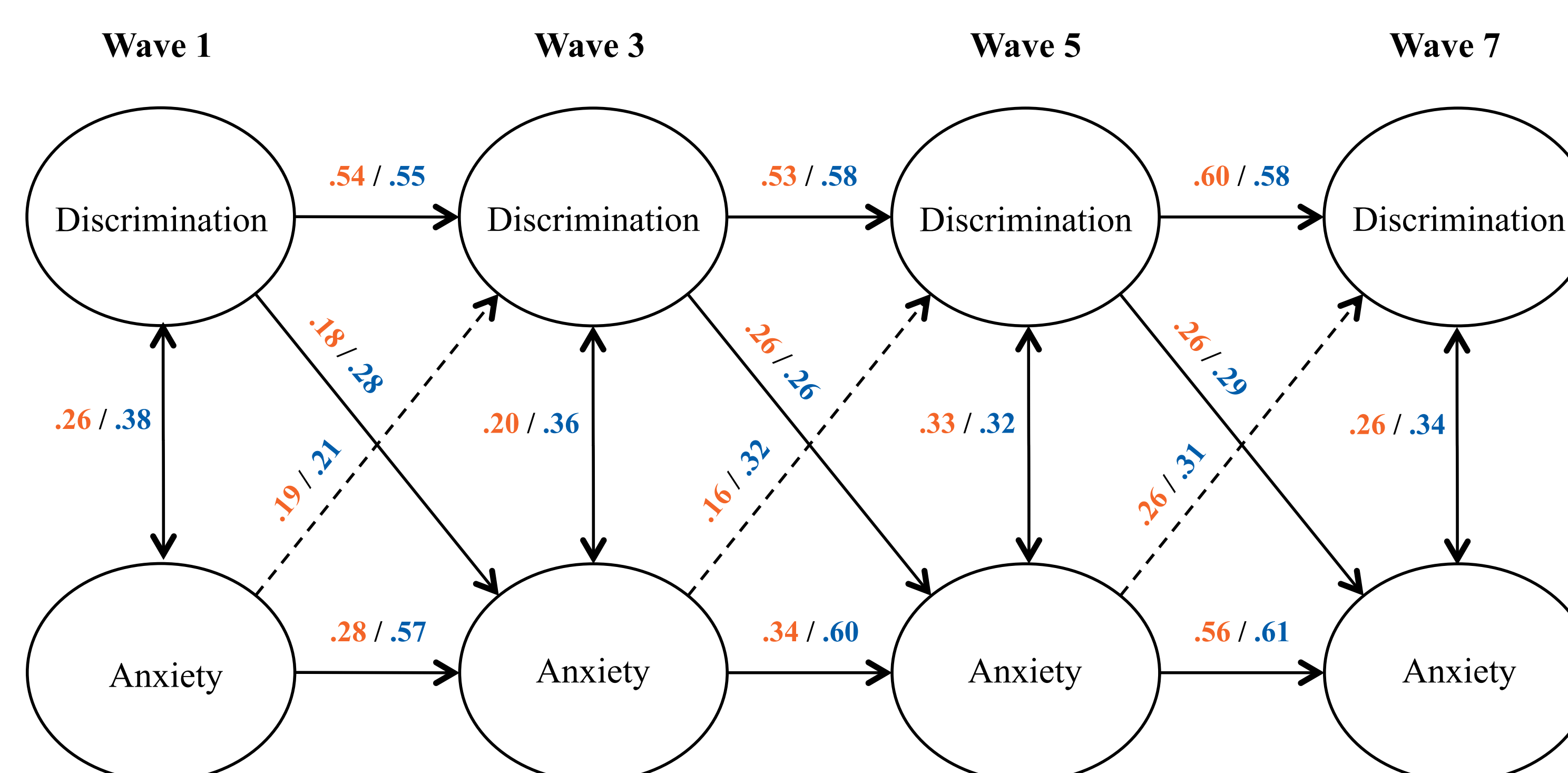
## RESULTS

Figure 1. Discrimination and depression among **mothers** (before the slash;  $N = 674$ ) and **fathers** (after the slash;  $N = 438$ ).

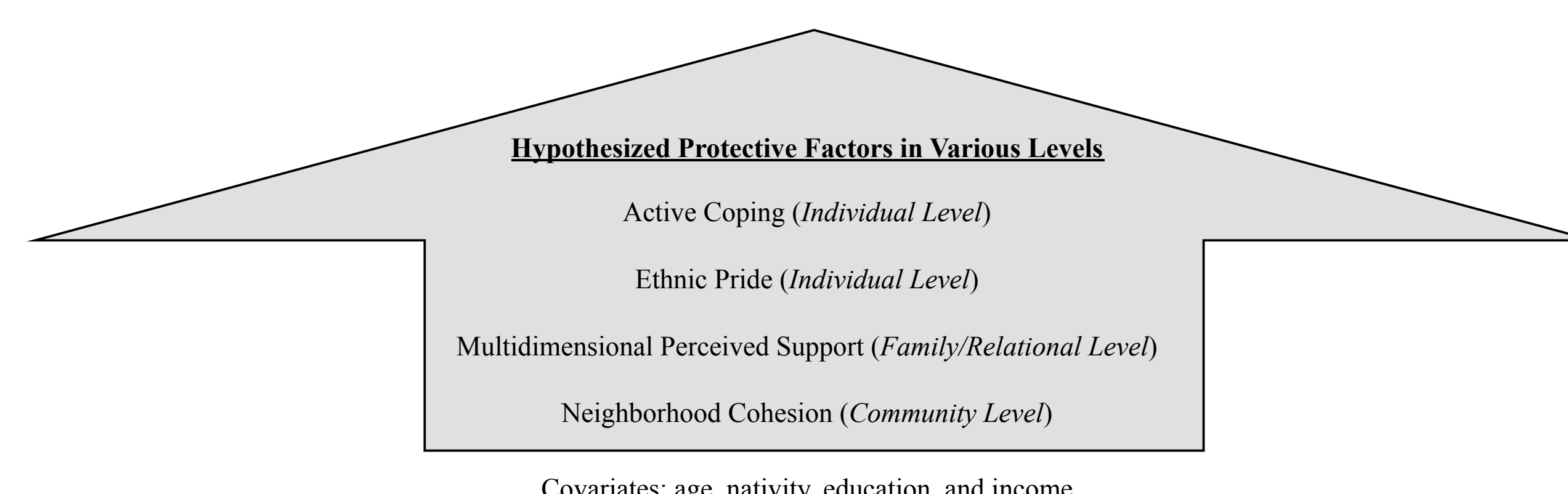


Note. Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficients are all statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )

Figure 2. Discrimination and anxiety among **mothers** (before the slash;  $N = 674$ ) and **fathers** (after the slash;  $N = 438$ ).



Note. Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficients are all statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )



## CONCLUSION

Higher levels of perceived ethnic discrimination is correlated with higher levels of anxiety and depression, both concurrently and over time.

Correlation coefficients are similar between mothers and fathers, although there were some notable differences in the anxiety model (Figure 2).

Cross-lagged coefficients were similar in magnitude from discrimination  $\rightarrow$  distress and from distress  $\rightarrow$  discrimination.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Next, the data from SPSS will be transferred into MPlus software for structural equation modeling.

We will conduct a more stringent analysis of causality by simultaneously estimating concurrent associations, stability pathways, and cross-lagged pathways between discrimination and distress over time.

Our statistical analyses will also include measurement invariance tests and equality constraints between fathers (males) and mothers (females).

We will also test interaction effects between levels of discrimination and hypothesized protective factors (Objective 3).

Findings may inform future research and theory development, practice, and policy so that the mental health of Mexican origin families can be improved.