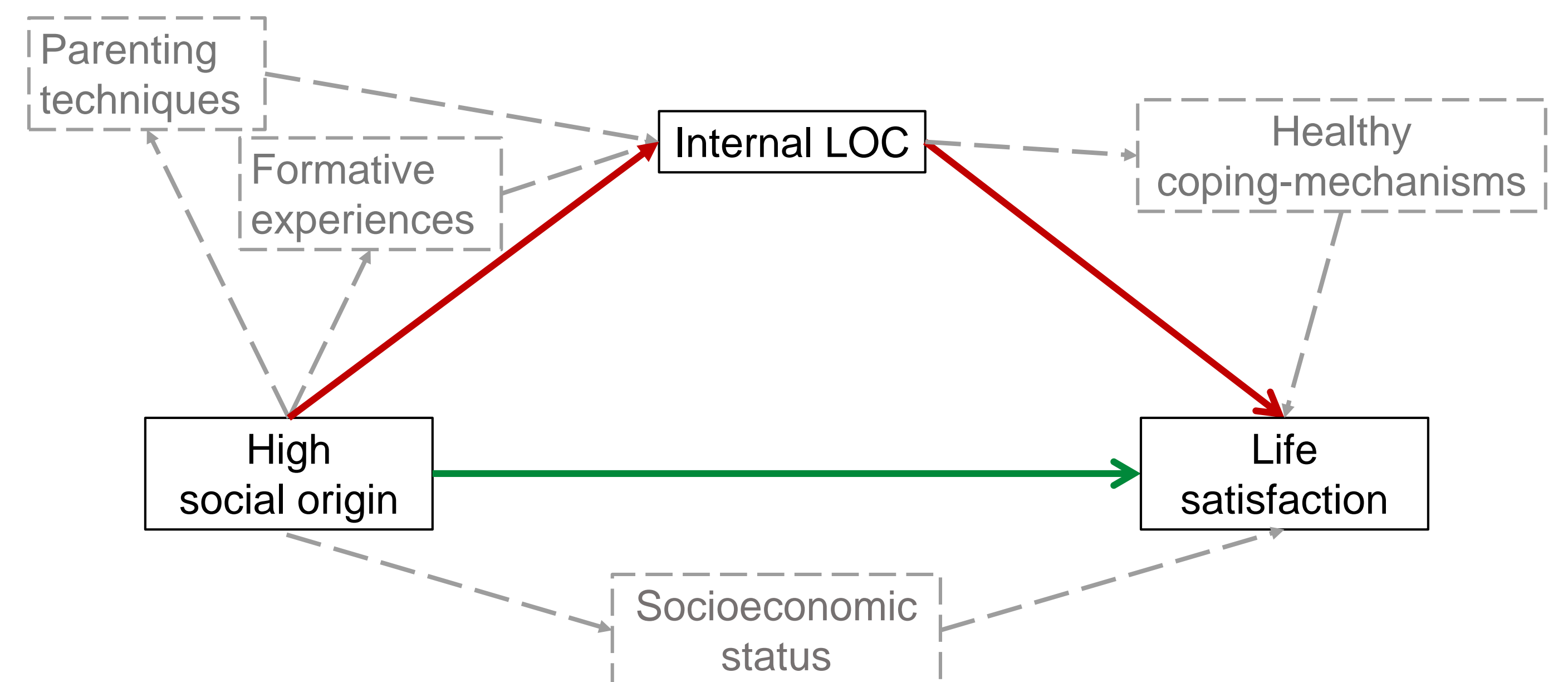


### BACKGROUND

- People from a high social origin tend to have higher life satisfaction (Brüderl et al. 2018) – can this be explained by **differences in psychological functioning?**
- If so → Opportunity for intervention (Heckman 2006)
- Possible mechanism – Internal locus of control (LOC):** People believe they are in control over what happens in their lives
- LOC has been shown to be linked to growing up in households of higher social status and to healthier coping mechanisms (Ahlin/Antunes 2015; Gianakos 2002)

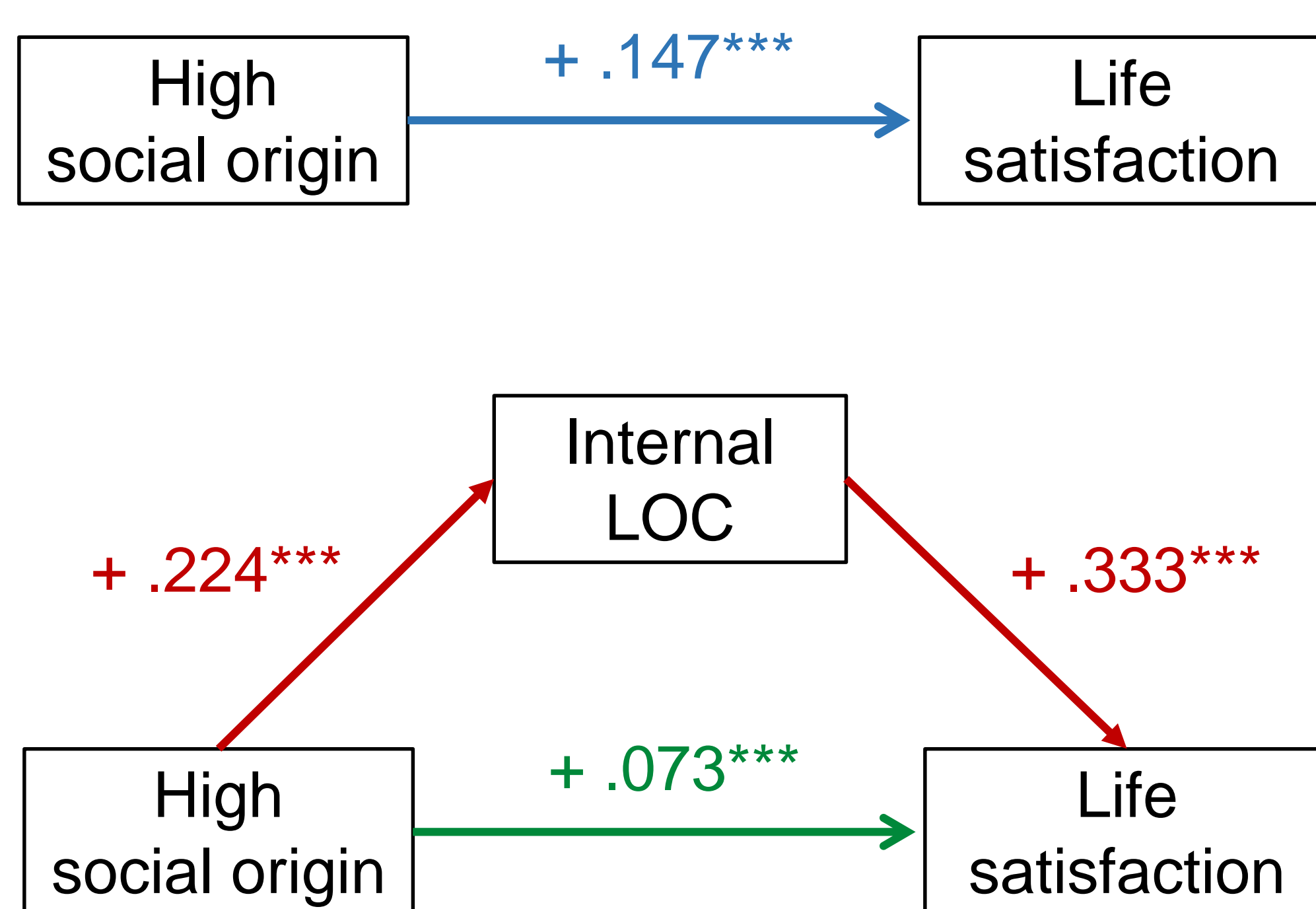
#### Research Question:

**Does generalized locus of control mediate the link between social origin and life satisfaction?**



### FINDINGS

#### Step 1: Separate RE regressions

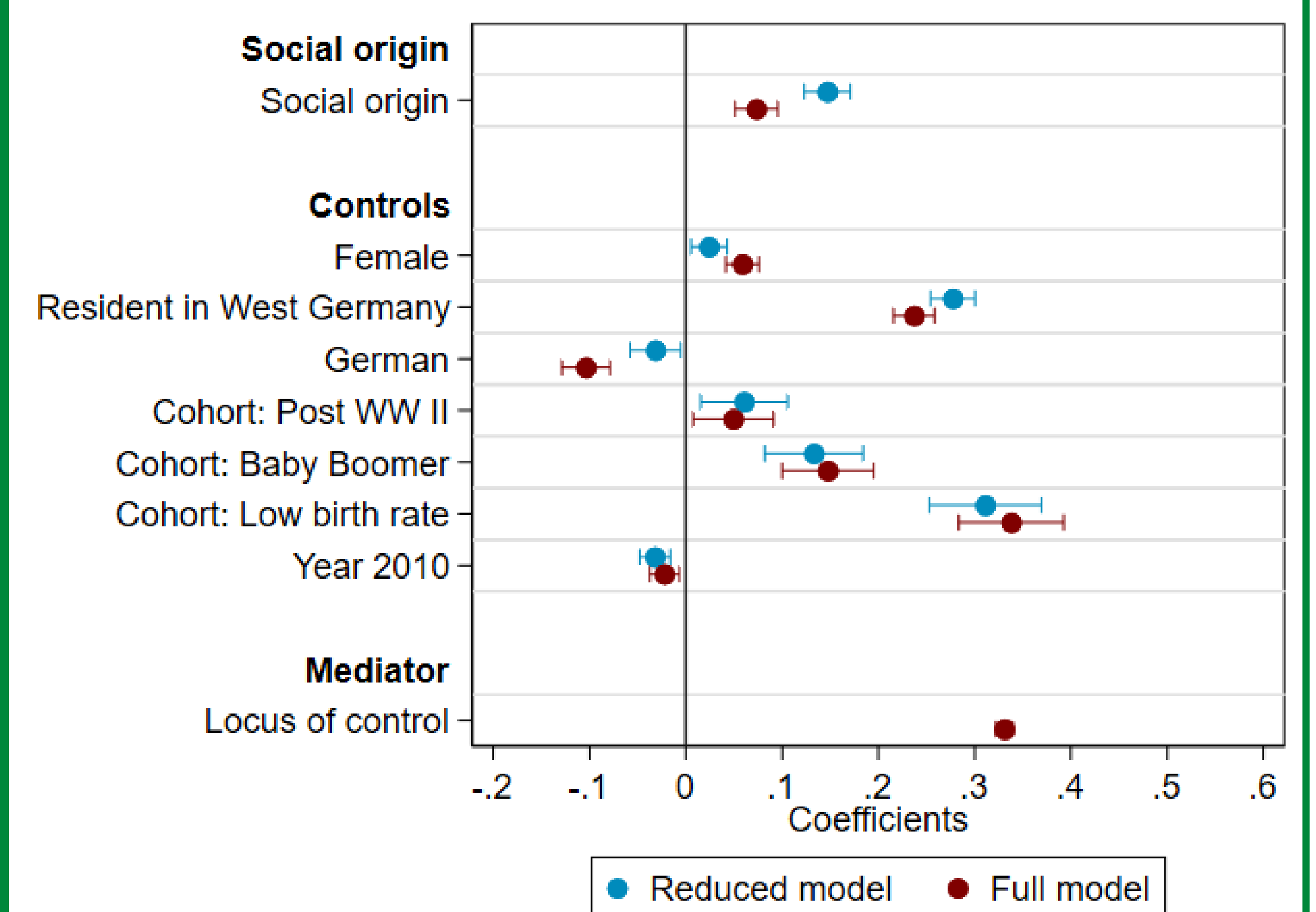


- Total effect:  $\beta = 0.147^{***}$  (0.012)
- Direct effect:  $\beta = 0.073^{***}$  (0.011)
- Indirect effect:  $\beta = 0.074^{***}$  (0.011)

**People from a high social origin tend to be more satisfied with their lives.**

**~ 50% of that effect is explained by internal locus of control.**

#### Step 2: Comparing reduced & full model



- Significant partial mediation by LOC
- Results remain robust for several operationalizations of LOC
- In a control period (1994-1996), the direct effect is zero

### DATA & METHOD

**Data:** Socioeconomic Panel (SOEP), Version 34

- Waves: 1999, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2016
- Social Origin: At least 1 parent with university degree (0/1)
- Life Satisfaction: Single item, standardized
- LOC: Factor Score (7 items), standardized
- Controls: Gender, German, West-Germany, birth cohort, age, period

#### Method:

- Hierarchical Random Effects Regression
- Sobel Test

### CONCLUSION

- Promising result for **social policy** makers: Pedagogical measures to promote internal LOC might help to **reduce inequality** in life satisfaction
- Counterfactual** perspective needed
- Still unclear: What are the **mechanisms** behind each effect?

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- Heckman, J. J. (2006): Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children, *Science*, 312(5782): 1900-1902.

