

PERCEIVED POSITIVE CHANGES IN LIFE AMONG INDIVIDUALS INDIRECTLY EXPOSED TO A TRAUMATIC EVENT

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BACKGROUND

On **April 10, 2010** the Polish Air Force airplane Tu-154 crashed when approaching an airfield near Smolensk, Russia. All 96 passengers and crew died, including President of Poland, his wife, members of parliament, the government members, army chief of staff, Poland's Central Bank governor, and other political and social leaders. The crash was considered one of the greatest national tragedies. Two years later, this event is still present in Polish media and political debates. New information about the crash emerges on a regular basis, followed by emotional comments in mass-media.

RESEARCH AIM

To test whether the indirect exposure to the traumatic event may alter perceptions of positive life changes.

PROCEDURES

Three studies were conducted: **Study 1** took place immediately after the crash, during April and May 2010. **Study 2** data were collected around the first anniversary of the crash, in April 2011. Two years later we conducted **Study 3** (April 2013). The studies investigated the predictors of **perceived positive life changes** after being **indirectly exposed** to the widely covered plane crash. Specifically we tested if crash-related **rumination**, **seeking information** about the event, and **self-efficacy beliefs** mediated the effect of **distress** caused by the plane crash on **perceived positive life changes**.

PARTICIPANTS

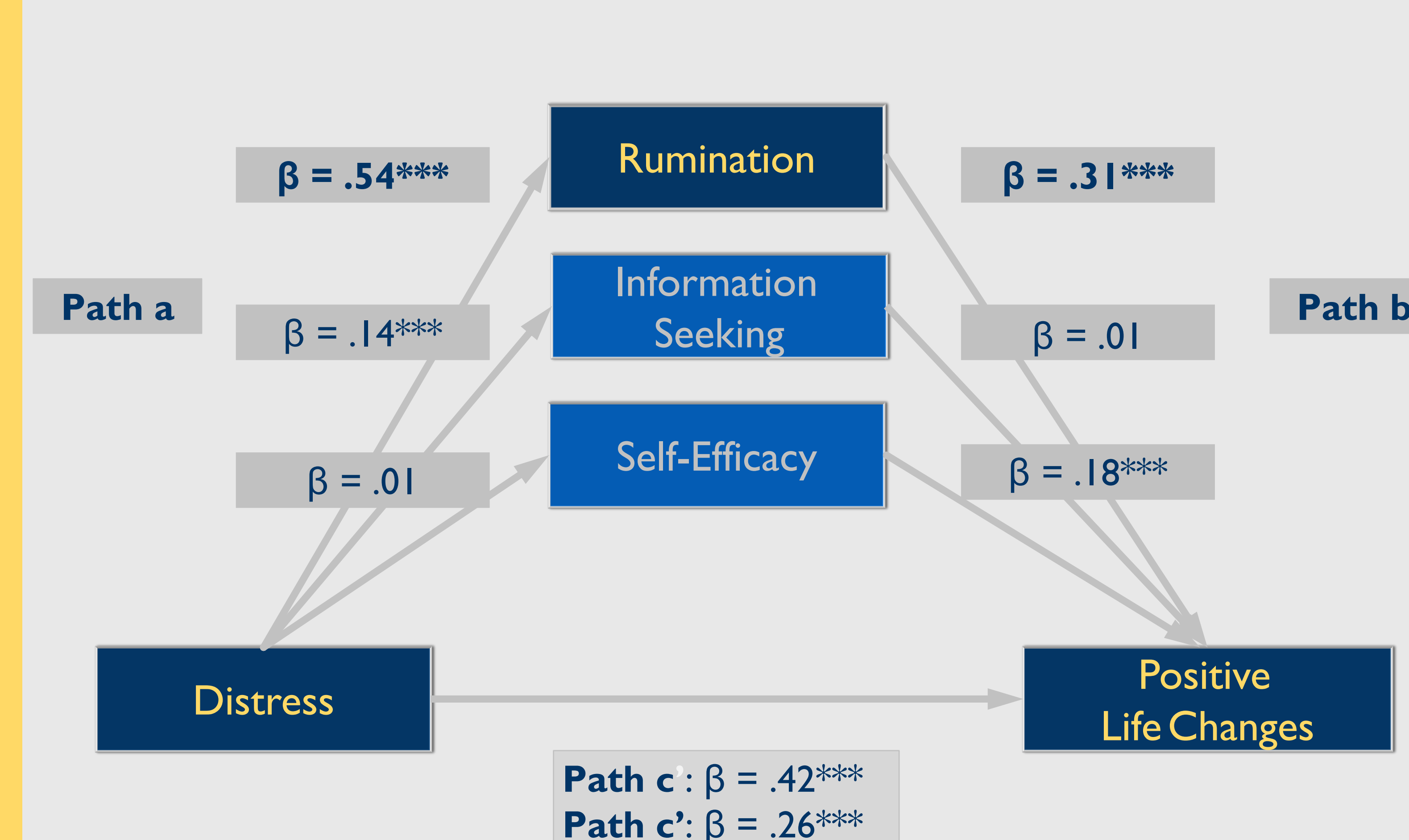
	STUDY 1	STUDY 2	STUDY 3
EVENT	Government aircraft crash at Smolensk	1st Anniversary	3rd Anniversary
SAMPLE SIZE	686	516	581
GENDER: WOMEN MEN	57% 43%	38% 62%	42% 58%
AGE: 18-35 36-50 > 50	60% 26% 12%	26% 19% 15%	62% 23% 13%

MEASURES

VARIABLES	STUDY 1	STUDY 2	STUDY 3
DISTRESS	3 ITEMS ("I am sad or depressed", "I am full of fear", "I am irritated or angry")	3 ITEMS ("I am sad or depressed", "I am full of fear", "I am irritated or angry")	21 ITEMS <i>Impact of Event Scale Revised</i> , (Weiss & Marmar, 1997)
RUMINATION	1 ITEM ("I am still thinking about what has happened").	6 ITEMS from <i>Event Related Rumination Inventory</i> (Cann et.al., 2011)	10 ITEMS <i>Event Related Rumination Inventory</i> (Cann et.al., 2011)
INFORMATION SEEKING	1 ITEM ("I am trying to avoid further information about that event")	1 ITEM ("I am trying to avoid further information about that event")	-
SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS	1 ITEM ("I am certain that I would handle a difficult situation")	1 ITEM ("I am certain that I would handle a difficult situation")	7 ITEMS <i>Secondary Trauma Self-Efficacy Scale</i> (Cieslak et.al., 2012)
POSITIVE LIFE CHANGES	5 ITEMS from <i>Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory</i> (Cann et.al., 2010)	5 ITEMS from <i>Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory</i> (Cann et.al., 2010)	10 ITEMS <i>Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory</i> (Cann et.al., 2010)

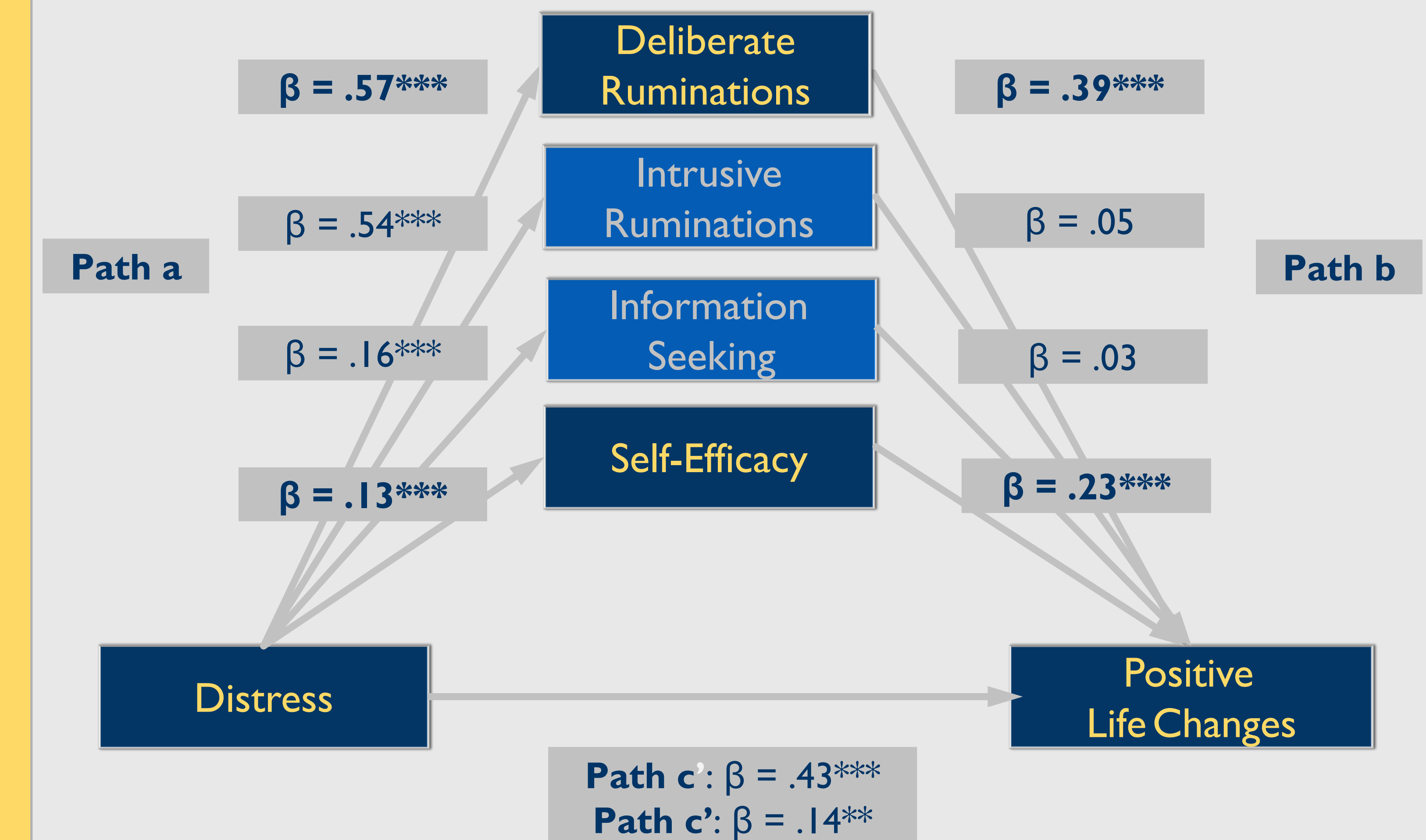
RESULTS

STUDY 1



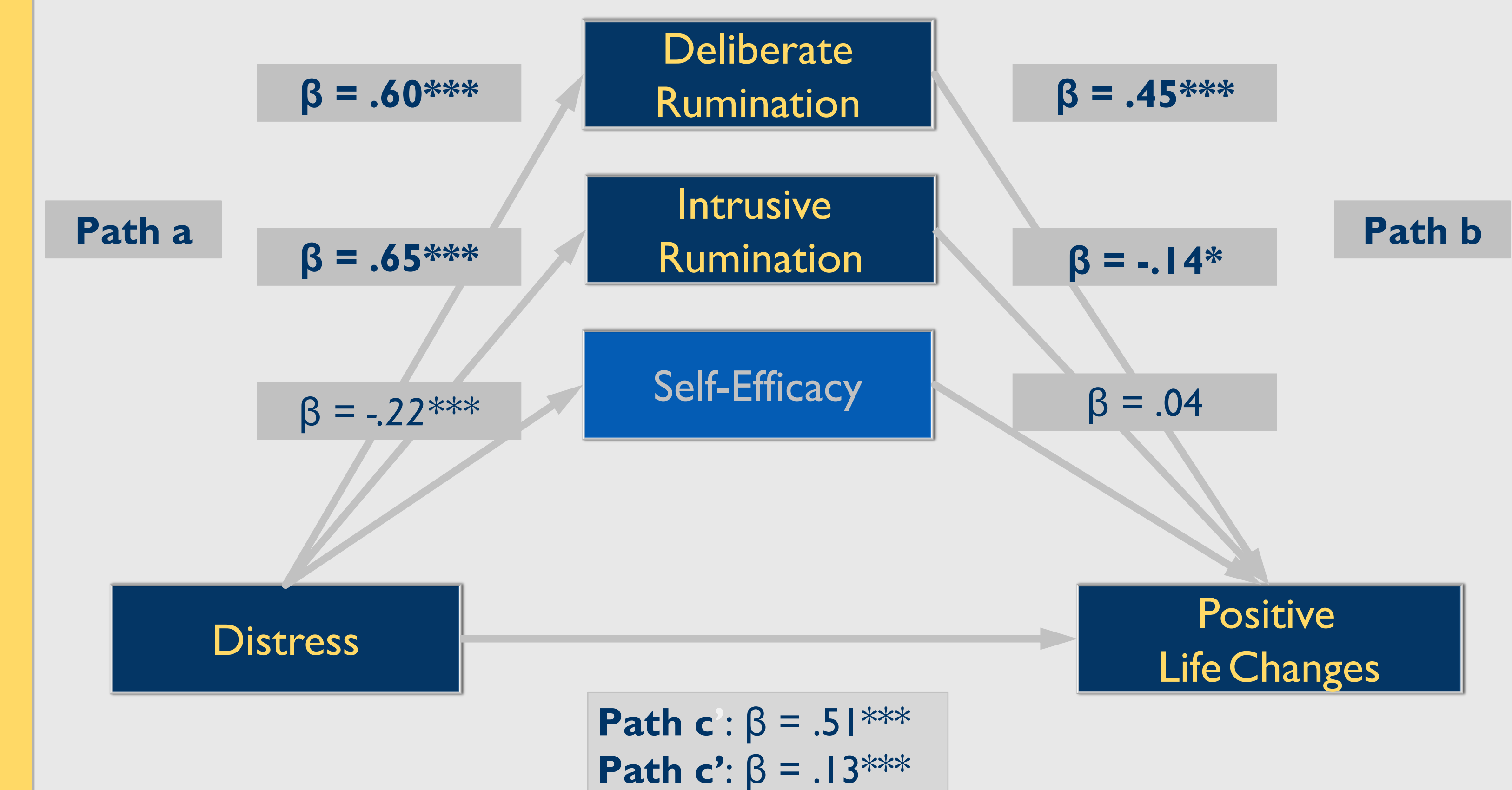
RESULTS

STUDY 2



RESULTS

STUDY 3



DISCUSSION

Results of the studies indicated the indirect effect of distress on perceived positive life changes through rumination. High levels of distress predicted stronger rumination; in turn, high levels of rumination (in particular, deliberate rumination) predicted higher levels of perceived positive changes in life. This indirect effect was significantly stronger than the indirect effects of other mediators, such as information seeking or self-efficacy.