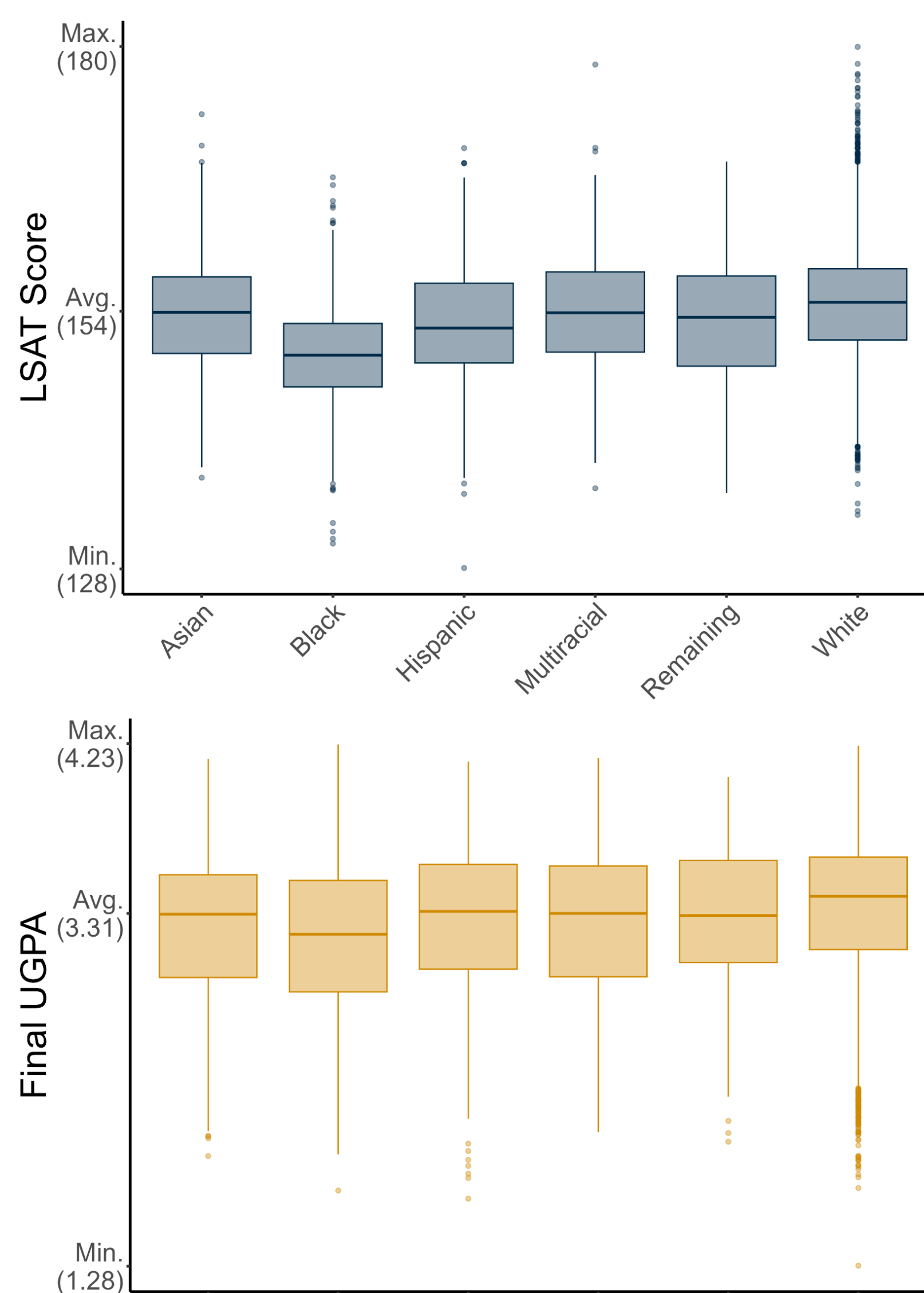


## BACKGROUND

Most law schools use final undergraduate GPA (UGPA) and Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores to evaluate candidates for admission. ABA Standards (316 and 503) can make it tempting to use these static preadmission metrics to predict the potential **bar success** of law school applicants. There are a few reasons to avoid doing so:

1. LSAC recommends only using LSAT to predict early law school performance.
2. Prior literature suggests that traditional admissions metrics have limited utility for predicting bar passage.
3. The metrics are static and do not give students credit for any academic or personal growth they experienced during their undergraduate degree.
4. Several studies find racial and ethnic score disparities associated with the LSAT and UGPA (see figure to right).



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To what extent does 1L LGPA mediate/explain the relationship between LSAT Score and first-time bar passage?

To what extent does 1L LGPA mediate/explain the relationship between UGPA and first-time bar passage?

## DATA AND METHOD



39  
Law Schools



15,068  
Law Students



Graduated  
2014 – 2023

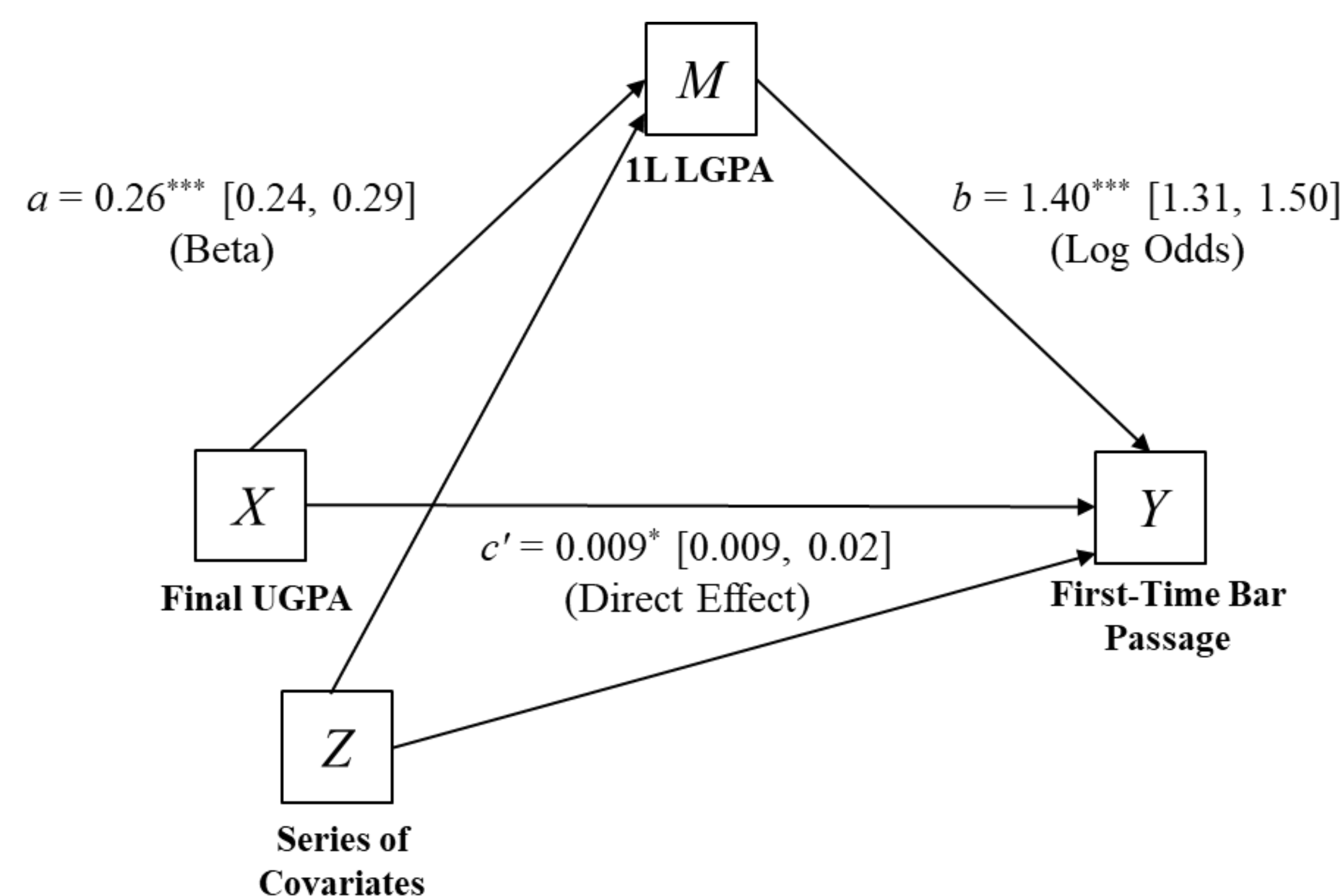
**Variables of Interest:** Final UGPA and LSAT Score (Predictors), 1L LGPA (Mediator), First-time Bar Passage (Outcome).

**Control Variables:** Undergraduate college acceptance rate, race, and gender.

**Technique:** Statistical mediation is a method that attempts to explain the relationship between two variables (LSAT/UGPA and first-time bar passage) via a third variable (1L LGPA). This process helps us explain how the original bivariate relationship works.

## RESULTS

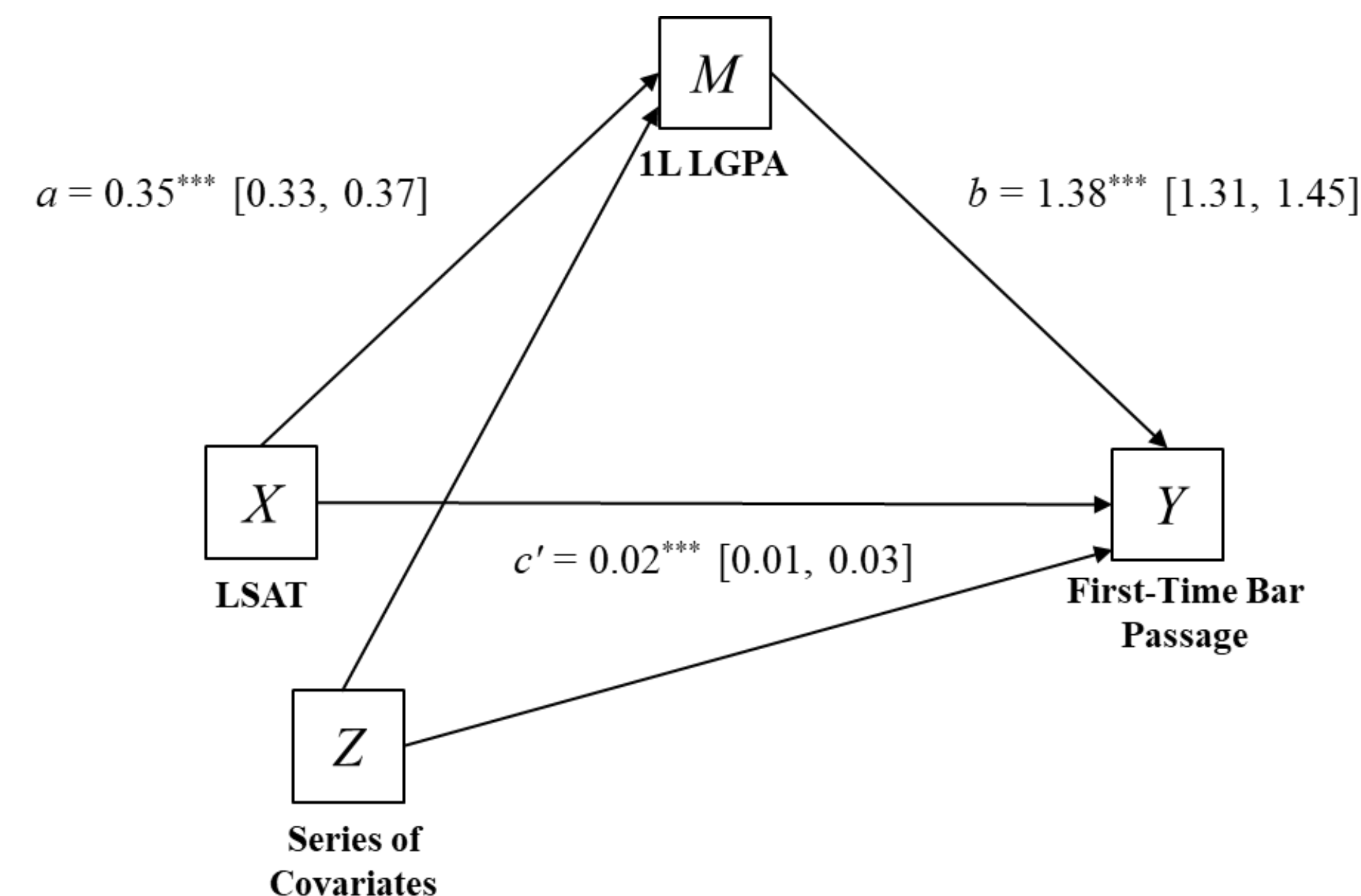
1L LGPA mediates 81 percent of the effect of final UGPA on first-time bar passage.



Overall, final UGPA and LSAT score *directly* predict very little in the way of bar passage.

1L LGPA explains nearly *all* of the statistical relationship between final UGPA, LSAT score, and first-time bar passage.

1L LGPA mediates 73 percent of the effect of LSAT score on first-time bar passage.



## IMPLICATIONS



The interrelationships tested here contribute to the field of legal education by confirming that **first-time bar passage odds are more directly attributable to law school experiences than to LSAT score or final UGPA.**



Although LSAT score and final UGPA are useful admissions tools that can help predict 1L LGPA, their ability to predict first-time bar passage is limited.



Assuming a direct relationship between these preadmission factors and bar passage suggests that students are predestined for success or failure before they even step foot on campus.

## NOW WHAT?

These findings emphasize the importance of the law school experience in developing and preparing students for the bar exam and the profession—**bar passage potential is chiefly developed during law school.** Framing the use of LSAT scores and final UGPA to predict early law school performance rather than bar passage may open the door for more racially equitable admissions metrics focused on predicting early law school outcomes.

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