Identifying Structural and Relational Components in a Family-School Intervention Program: Family School Connections Among Latina/o Immigrant Families

A Dissertation Proposal Defense

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BACKGROUND

Significance

- Public schools are more racially and ethnically diverse than 20 years ago (Hussar et al., 2020)

- Opportunity gaps in educational attainment for students of color persist (Irwin et al., 2021)

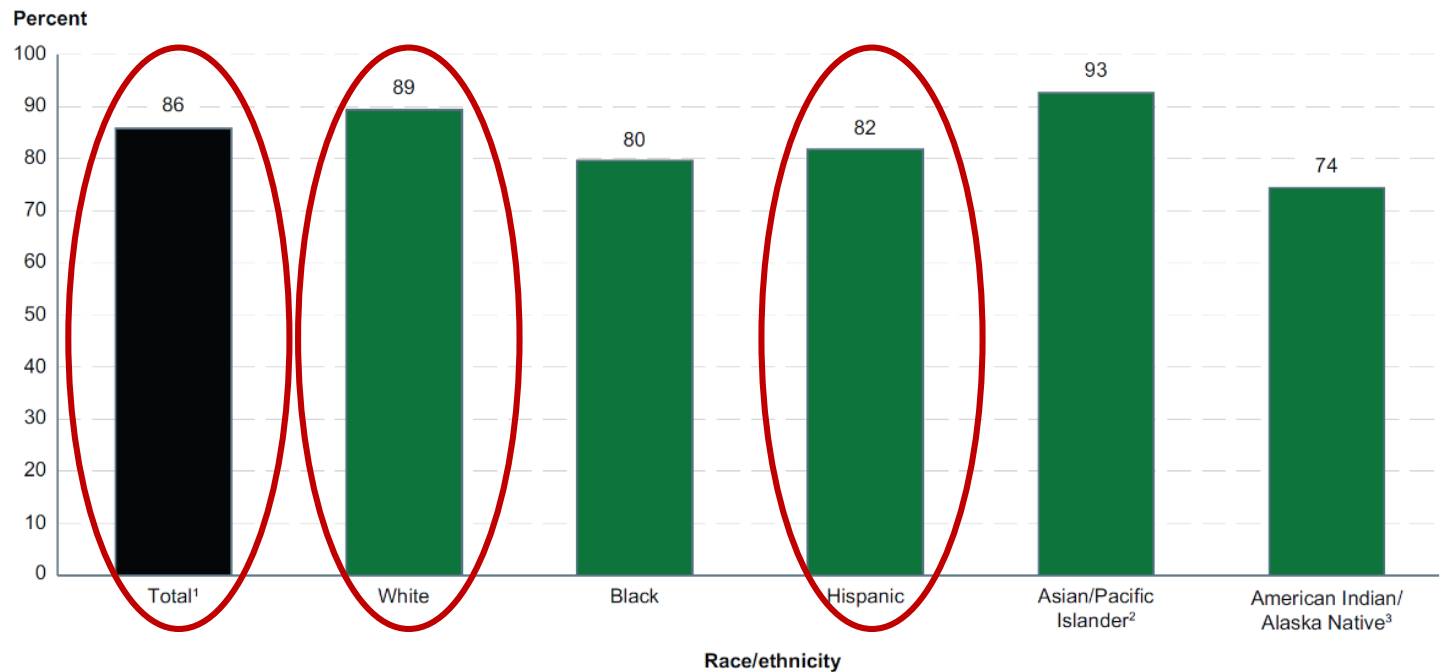Figure 11. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students, by race/ethnicity: 2018–19
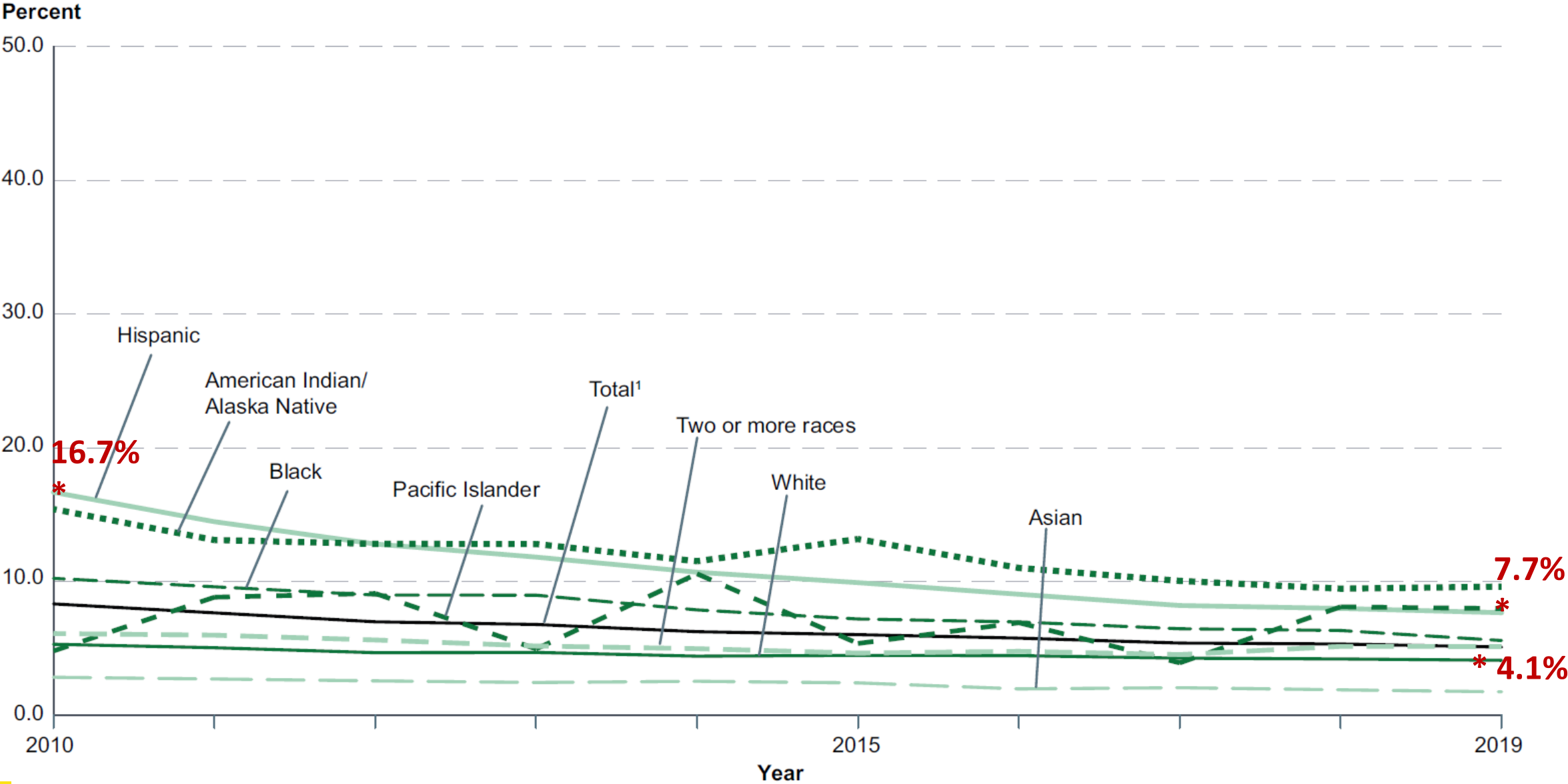
Figure 12. Status dropout rates of 16- to 24-year-olds, by race/ethnicity: 2010 through 2019

Significance cont'd

- Educational attainment is a social determinant for health, housing, income, and employment (Belfield & Levin, 2007).

- By 2055 people of color will become the new majority in the US

- Increasing higher education graduation rates for students of color should be of national interest

- It is imperative to focus on high school dropout prevention and direct efforts in increasing school engagement - a strong predictor of high school completion (Bilge et al. 2014)

The Key?

- Policy endorses family-school relationships as a key disruptor of educational inequities in students learning & success (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2002)

- Research suggests that interventions & programs that target the family-school interface have positive effects on students' academic outcomes (Jeynes, 2007; Wilder, 2014; Smith et al., 2020)

- But – traditional operationalization of family-school relationships models promote an inequitable participation of parents in children's education

Issues of Traditional Family-School Relationships Models in Public Schools

- Biased towards middle-class, European-American norms (Bower & Griffin, 2011)
- Promote a *plug-in school involvement* (Terriquez, 2011)
- Effectiveness to improve students' academic outcomes is inconclusive
  - Samples are mostly K-5th grade

- Most US Public Schools populations are students from **HEGs**
- Parents from **HEGs** experience multiple barriers to *plug-in school involvement*
- Effectiveness of some practices vary by students' race/ethnicity & age

An Alternative Framework

Kim and Sheridan's (2015) specify that Family-Schools Connections (FSC) share two core features:

   (1) Parents and educators are mutually engaged in the educational process

   (2) Their efforts are aimed at supporting children's learning and positive development

- Kim and Sheridan's (2015) propose a *Meta Model of Family-School Partnerships* that integrates
  - A structural approach to FSC
  - A relational approach to FSC

Meta Model of Family-School Partnerships
(Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Smith et al., 2020)

Intervention components	
Structural	**Examples**
Homework involvement	Monitoring
	Direct aid
School-based involvement	Volunteering in the school or classroom
	Involvement in the PTA or governance
Home-based involvement	Reading together
	Talking with children about school
Behavioral support	Delivery of concrete reinforcement
	Modeling
Relational	**Examples**
Cross-site communication	Contact from home to school *or* school to home
	Newsletters
Bi-directional communication	Contact from home to school *and* school to home
	Home-school note
Parent-teacher relationship	Trust building
	Creating joint perspectives
Collaboration	Planning
	Problem solving

Conclusions

- Larger evidence base documenting the effectiveness of FSC practices among elementary school-aged children than among secondary school-aged children.

- Most studies assessing the effectiveness of FSC practices in improving academic outcomes among secondary school-aged children focus on structural over relational FSC practices

- Large knowledge gaps in the family-school relationships field in regards to secondary school-aged children and relational FSC practices

METHODS

Data Source

- This dissertation uses data from *Juntos*, a three-year intervention development study led by the University of Oregon's Center for Equity Promotion (CEQP).
- *Conexiones* is a family-school intervention program developed in the *Juntos* Project

Juntos Project

- Longitudinal small-scale randomized controlled trial design with random assignment at the school level
- Samples of educators ($n = 43$), Latina/o immigrant parents ($n = 125$) and their middle school students ($n = 94$) were recruited
- Study participants completed assessments at **baseline**, immediately post-intervention, and 12-months post-baseline
- This dissertation will use the **parents' and students' baseline assessments**, exploratory factor analysis, and regression analyses to answer the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. Can both structural and relational components of family-school connections be identified using exploratory factor analysis approaches in the Conexiones parents' assessment data?

2. What specific structural and relational components of family-school connections in the Conexiones parents' assessment data are significantly and positively associated with positive students' school engagement?

Research Questions cont'd

3. Does parent educational level and comfort with English language moderate the relationship between structural and relational family-school connections components and student's school engagement?

4. What model best predicts positive students' school engagement, a structural components only model or a combined structural plus relational components model?

Measures

Predictors

Parents' practices	
Component	**Number of Items**
Homework involvement	17
School-based involvement	10
Structure at home	8
Parent-child conversations	14
Monitoring	5
Appropriate discipline	7

Parents' relationship with schools	
Component	**Number of Items**
Family-School communication	6
Parent-Teacher relationship	4
Parent's value & support of Ed.	6
Problem Solving with educators	4
Parent endorsement of school	4
Parent belongingness in school	7

Outcome

School Engagement

Item
I pay attention in class.
When I am in class, I just act like I'm working. R
I follow the rules at school.
I get in trouble in school. R
I feel bored in school. R
I feel excited about what I am learning at school.
I like being at school.
I am interested in the work at school.
My classroom is a fun place to be.

Students' Academic Outcomes in the Lit

FSC are positively related to students' academic outcomes, however…

- This relationship varies based on definition & operationalization of FSC (Wilder, 2014)

- This relationship varies based on how students' academic outcomes are measured (Wilder, 2014)

- Great variability among measures of academic outcomes used in the literature
  - GPA
  - Standardized testing
  - Subject area grades/Test scores
  - Teacher's ratings of students' academic behaviors & attitudes
  - Parents report & students' self-report

School Engagement & School Dropout

- Students' self-report --- pros/cons
- Captures:
  - Behavioral engagement
  - Emotional engagement
- *Behavioral engagement* positively related with academic performance (Fredrick et al., 2005; Wang & Holcombe, 2010) and negatively related with school drop out (Fredrick et al., 2005).
- *Emotional engagement* negatively related to school drop out, but not as strong.
  - Emotional connection to teachers & peers, helps prevent school drop out, esp. for students of HEGs.

| 83 | I pay attention in class. |
84	When I am in class, I just act like I'm working. **R**
85	I follow the rules at school.
86	I get in trouble in school. **R**
87	I feel bored in school. **R**
88	I feel excited about what I am learning at school.
89	I like being at school.
90	I am interested in the work at school.
91	My classroom is a fun place to be.

Research Questions & Hypotheses

Research Question 1

Can both structural and relational components of family-school connections be identified using exploratory factor analysis approaches in the Conexiones parents' assessment data?

Hypothesis 1a & 1b
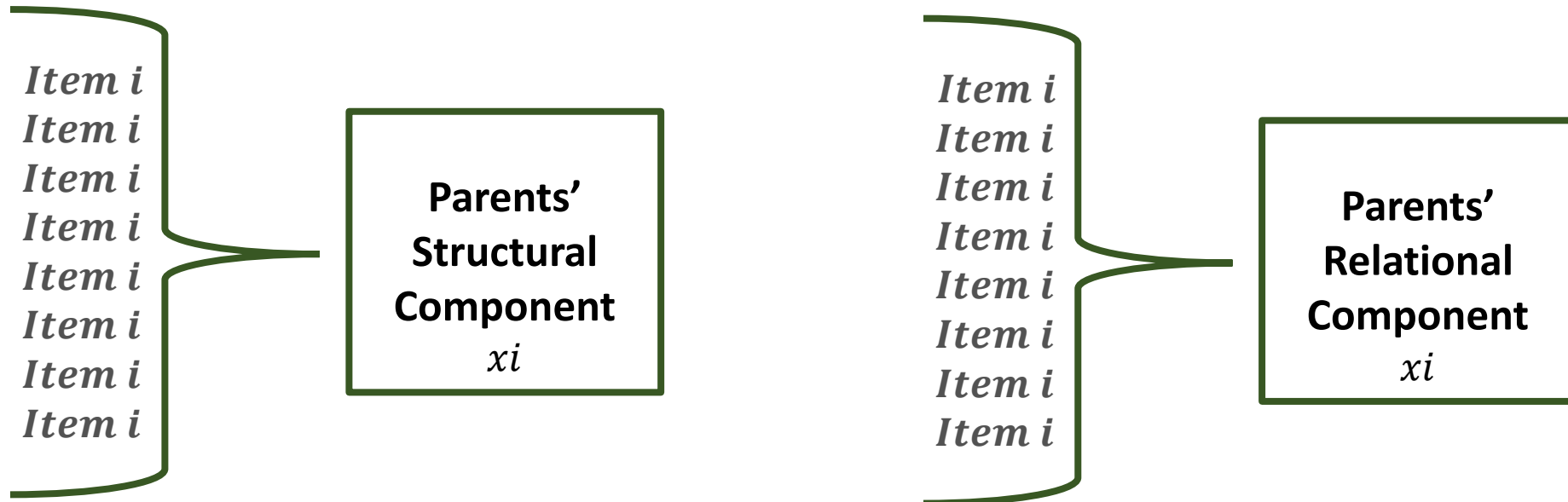
Structural Approach to FSC

Structural
Homework involvement
School-based involvement
Home-based involvement
Behavioral support

Component		Number of Items
Homework involvement	(HWI)	17
School-based involvement	(SBI)	10
Structure at home		8
Parent-child conversations	(HBI)	14
Monitoring		5
Appropriate discipline	(BSI)	7

Relational Approach to FSC

Relational
Cross-site communication
Bi-directional communication
Parent-teacher relationship
Collaboration

Component		Number of Items
Family-School communication	(COM)	6
Parent-Teacher relationship		4
Parent's value & support of Ed.	(REL-T)	6
Problem Solving with educators	(COL)	4
Parent endorsement of school		4
Parent belongingness in school	(REL-S)	7

Research Question 2

What specific structural and relational components of family-school connections in the Conexiones parents' assessment data are significantly and positively associated with positive students' school engagement?
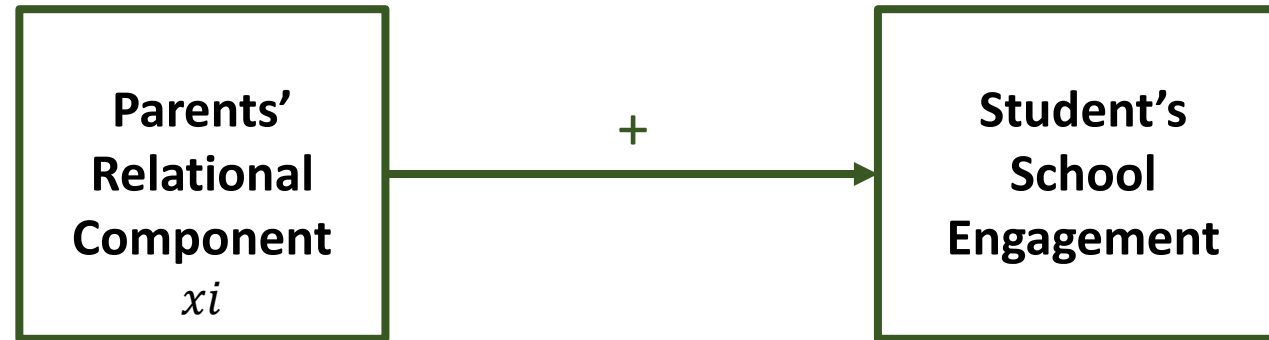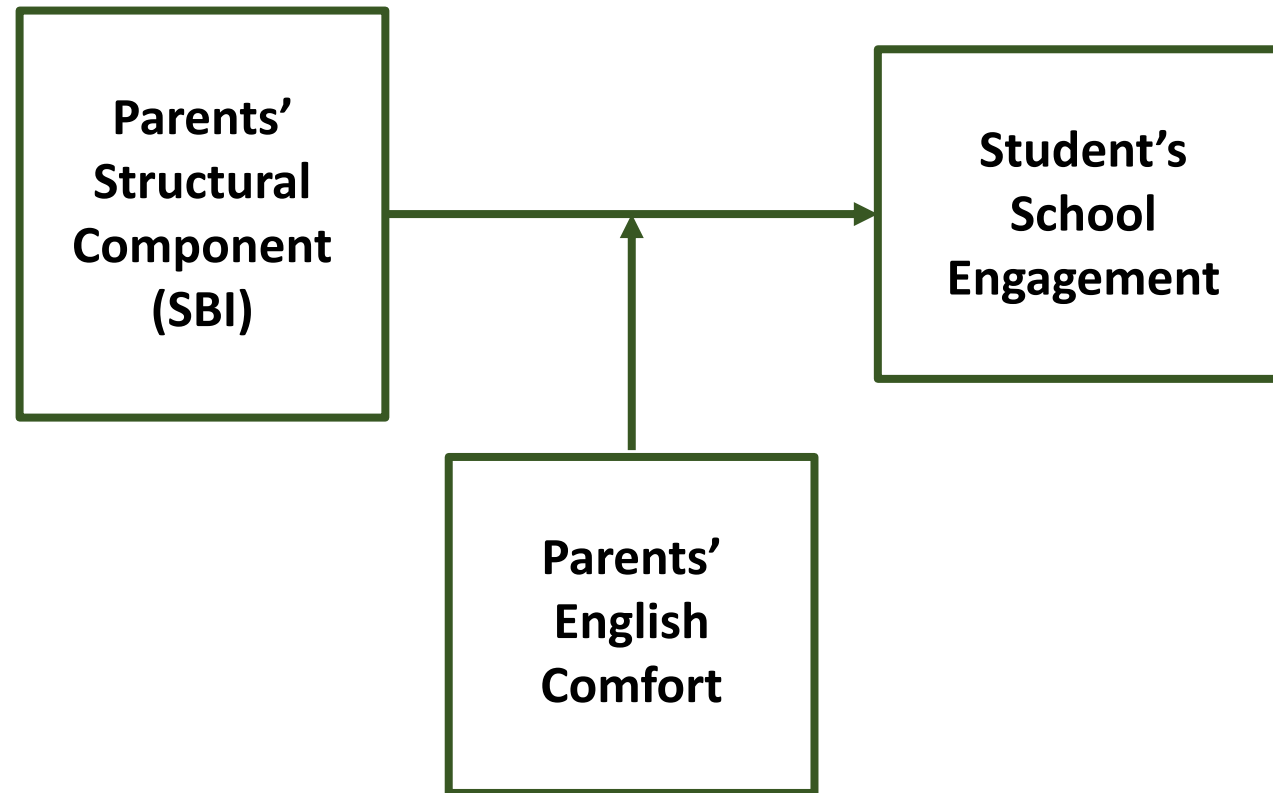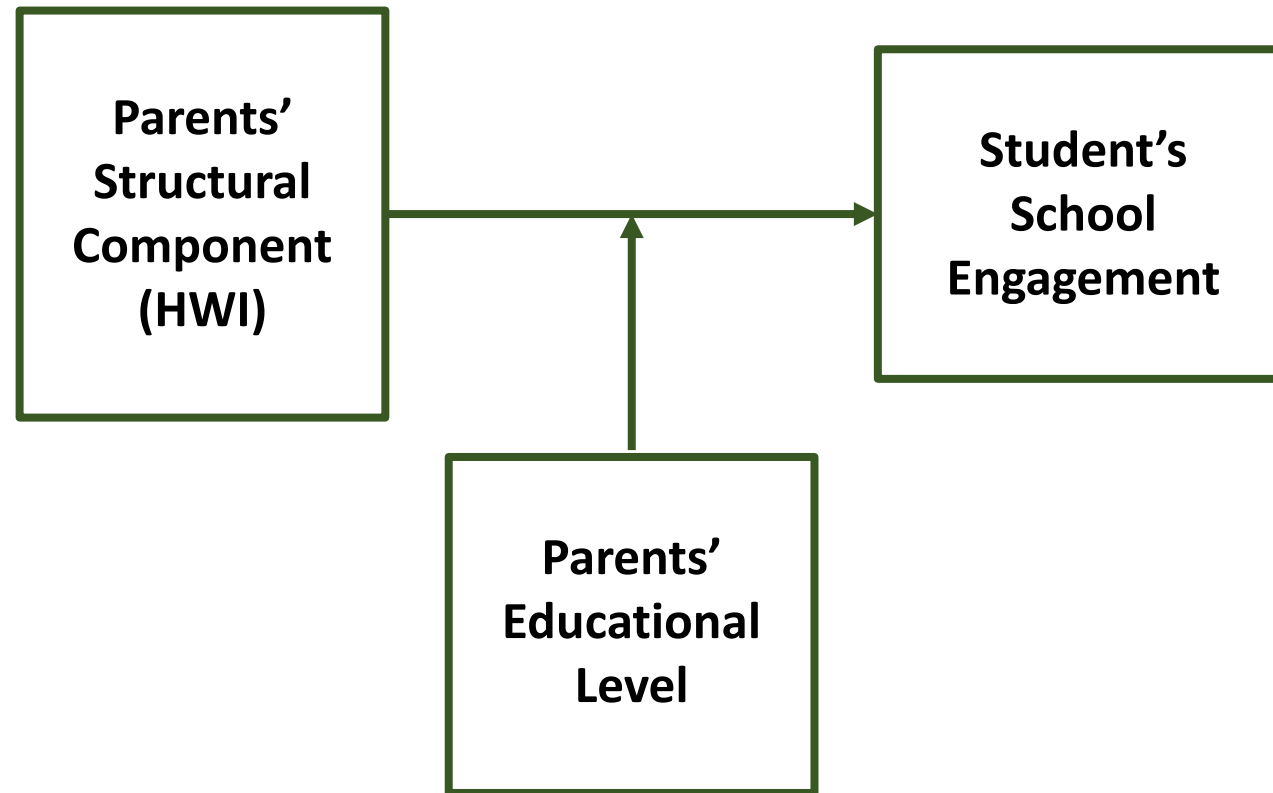
Hypothesis 2a
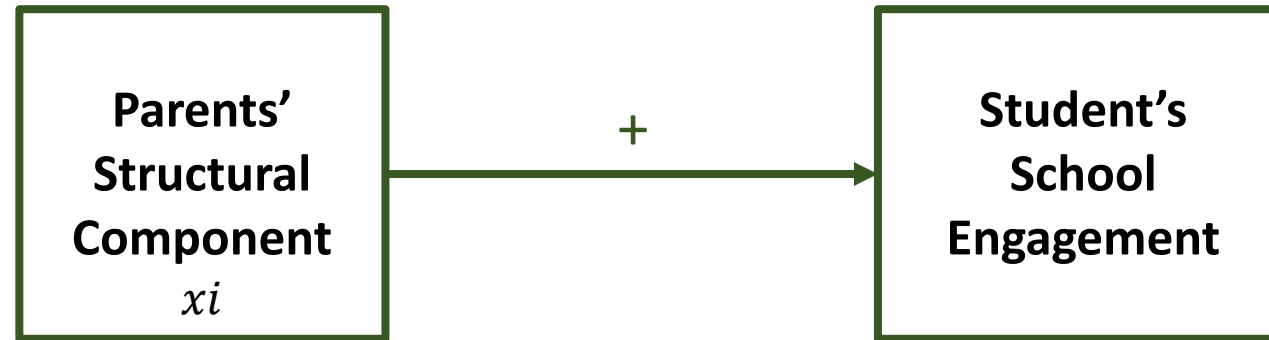
Hypothesis 2b

Research Question 3

Does parent educational level and comfort with English language moderate the relationship between structural and relational family-school connections components and student's school engagement?
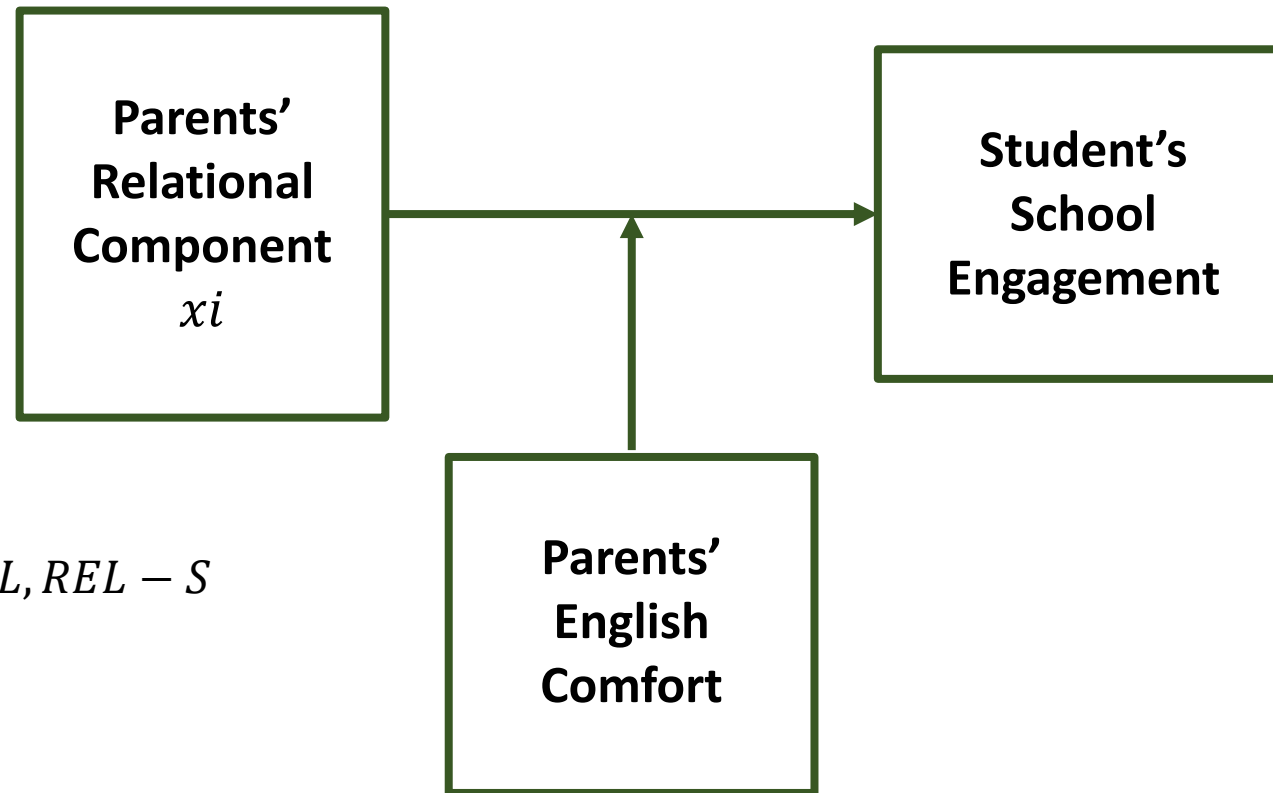
Hypothesis 3aa

Hypothesis 3ab

Hypothesis 3b

Parents' Relational Component xi

Parents' English Comfort

Student's School Engagement

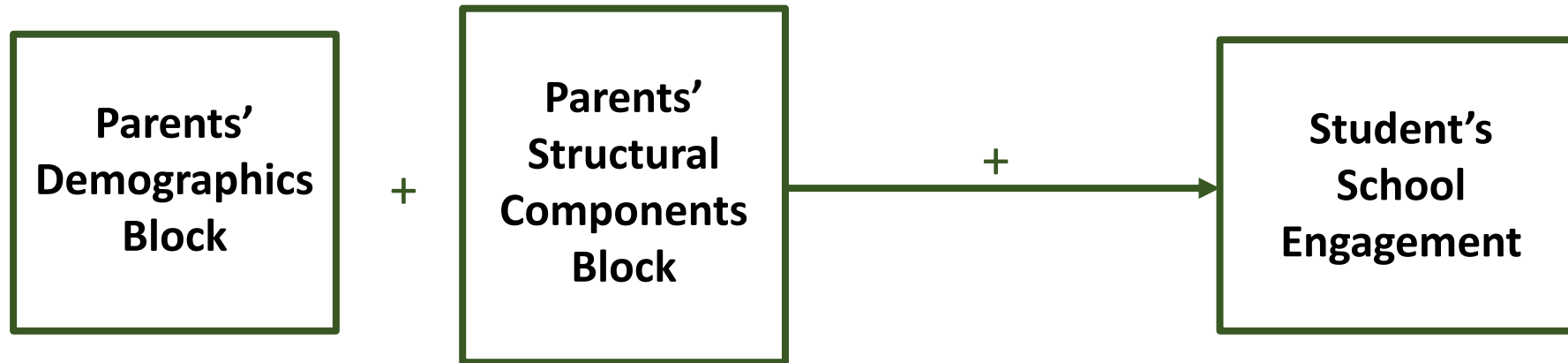$i = COM, REL - T, COL, REL - S$

Research Question 4

What model best predicts positive students' school engagement, a structural components only model or a combined structural plus relational components model?
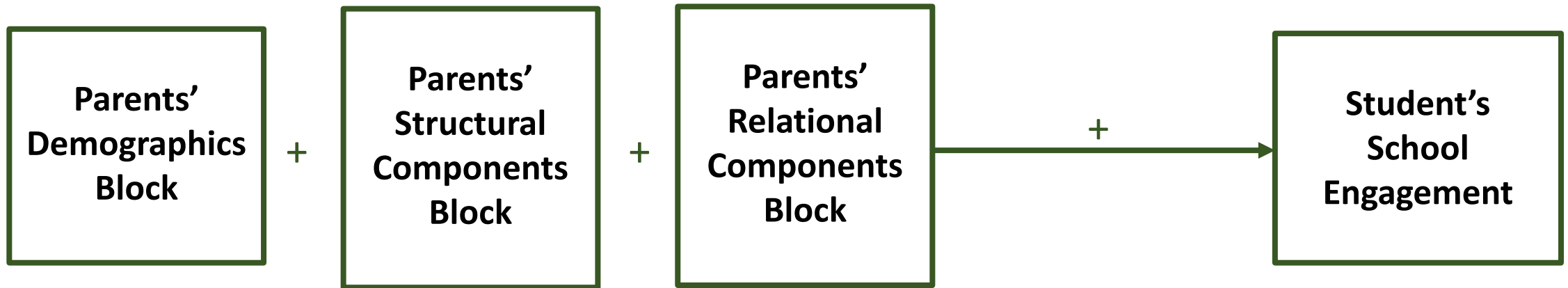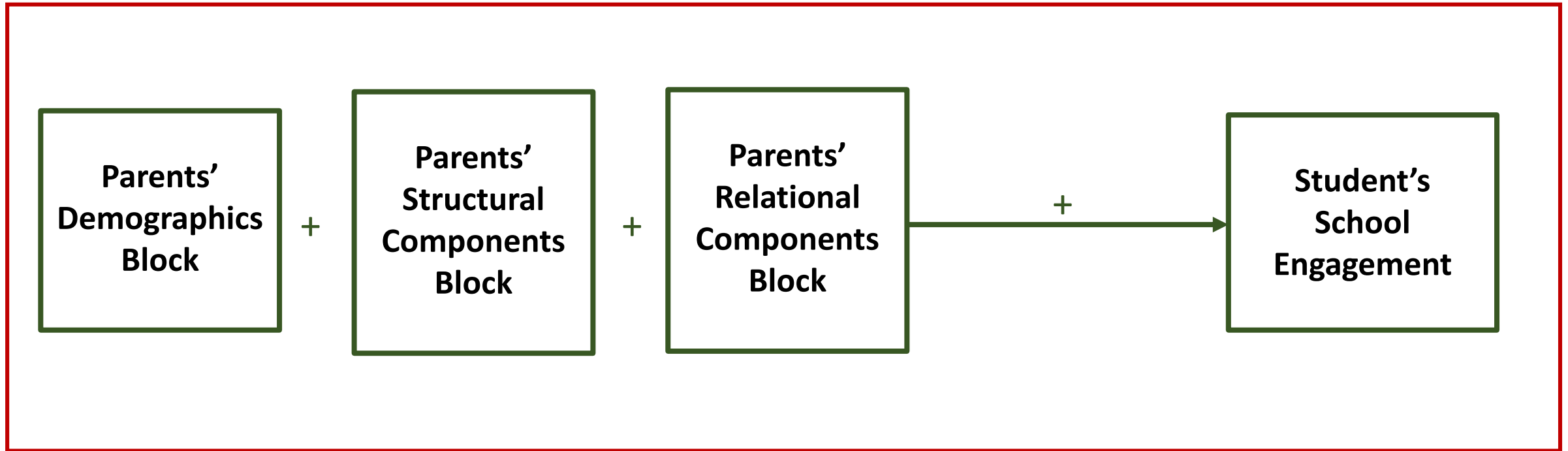
Model 0

Model 1

Model 2

Hypotheses 4

QUESTIONS FOR COMMITTEE

Outcome Variable

- Measure has 2 scales (incomplete):
  - Behavioral engagement
  - Emotional engagement

- Should I

- Alternative 1: test each of my models with the scale as if it were a unidimensional construct?

- Alternative 2: test each of my models with the scale as multi-dimensional construct? – doubling the number of models

- Alternative 3: use only the behavioral engagement scale

Behavioral engagement

83	I pay attention in class.
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88	I feel excited about what I am learning at school.
89	I like being at school.
90	I am interested in the work at school.
91	My classroom is a fun place to be.

Emotional engagement

Sample Size

- A total of $n = 95$ primary parents, $n = 94$ students
  - No ids 106 & 504 in the students' dataset, but there are parents with these ids in the parent dataset
  - No id 623 in parents' dataset, but a student has this id in the students' dataset
- Should I just use data for parents who are linked with their student?
  - That would entail reducing the sample to 93 primary caregivers with their 93 youth.

Your suggestions…

TIMELINE

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June 10, 2022: Full LL-approved Dissertation to Committee (Finals Week)
June 13, 2022: Commencement Ceremony
July 6-8th 2022: Oral Defense
July 10-20, 2022: Work on Committee's feedback
July 22, 2022: Final committee-approved dissertation
--- 2-3 weeks that Graduate School does their part ---
Aug 12, 2022: 1st Summer term session ends (OPT, Visa)
Sep 1st 2022: Post Doc at UT, Austin Begins