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Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe

School Engagement and Early School Leaving in Flemish Urban Secondary Education

Abjoves Conference Barcelona

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Reducing Early
School Leaving
in Europe

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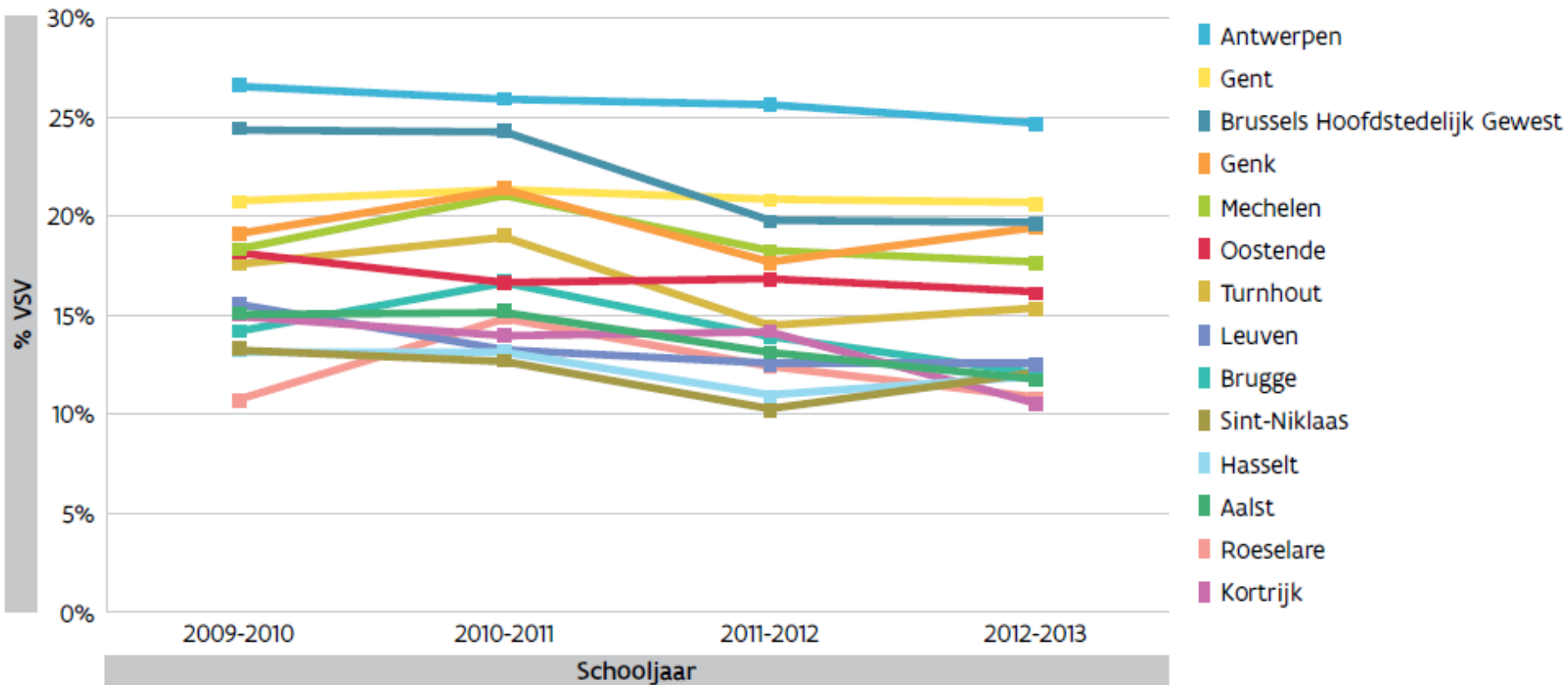
Introduction

- Doctoral Study within RESL.eu Project
 - Comparative study in 9 EU member states (BE, ES, PL, PT, NL, SE, UK, (AU & HU)
 - Financed by EU 7th Framework Program
 - Period: February 2013 – January 2018



- Data used for this study:
 - Data from first wave of the Flemish student survey collected in the cities Antwerp and Ghent

ESL in Flemish Urban Areas



Evolution in % of Early School Leavers according to place of residence for the Flemish main cities and the Brussels Capital Region

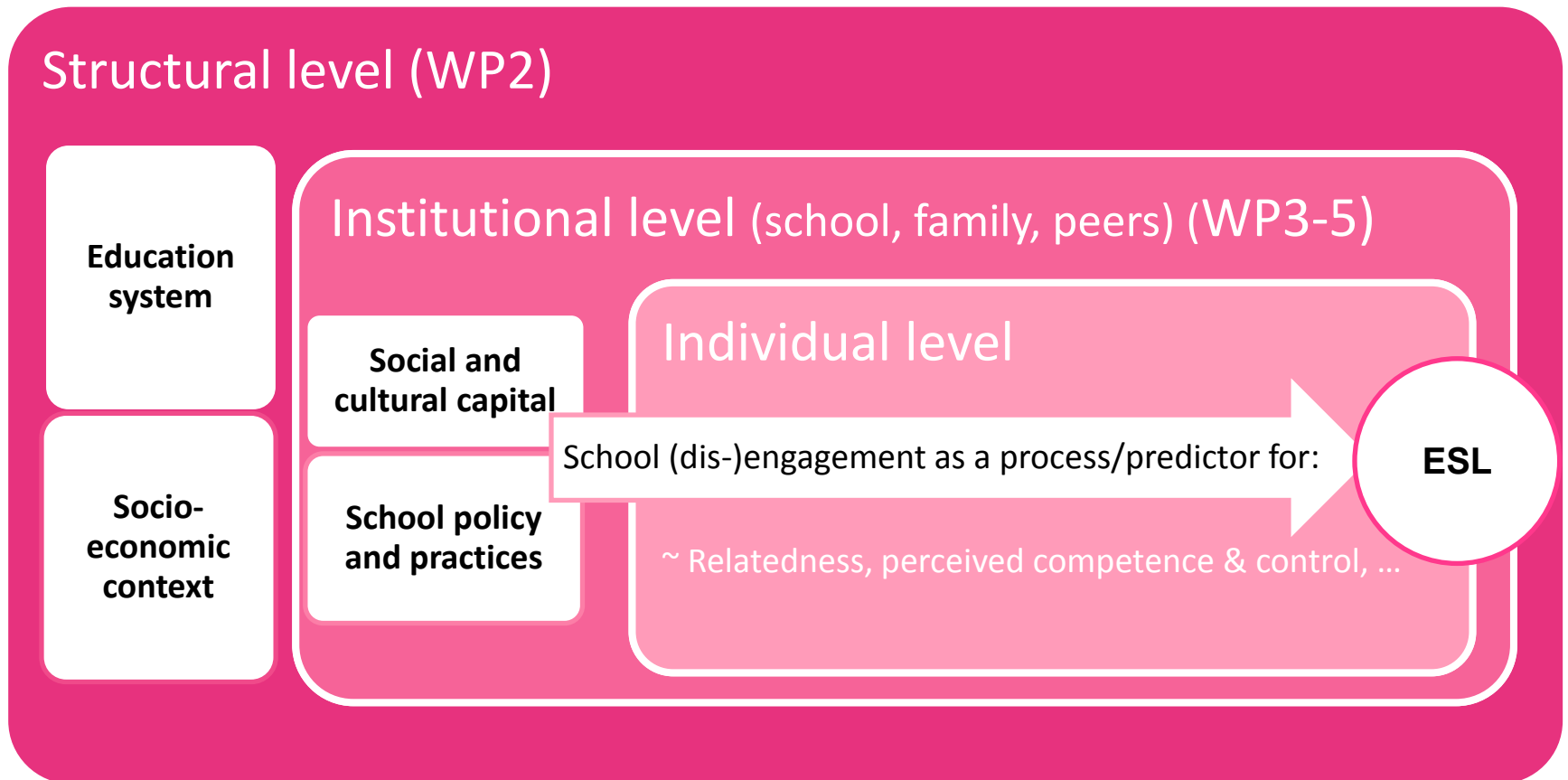
Source: [Vlaams Departement Onderwijs & Vorming, 2014](#)

ESL in Flanders

- Known **risk status** indicators:
 - Socio-demographic characteristics:
 - Males > females
 - Foreign nationality
 - Other home language than Dutch
 - Lower educated mother
 - School career characteristics:
 - Grade retention
 - (Work-based) VET
 - (Downward) educational track mobility

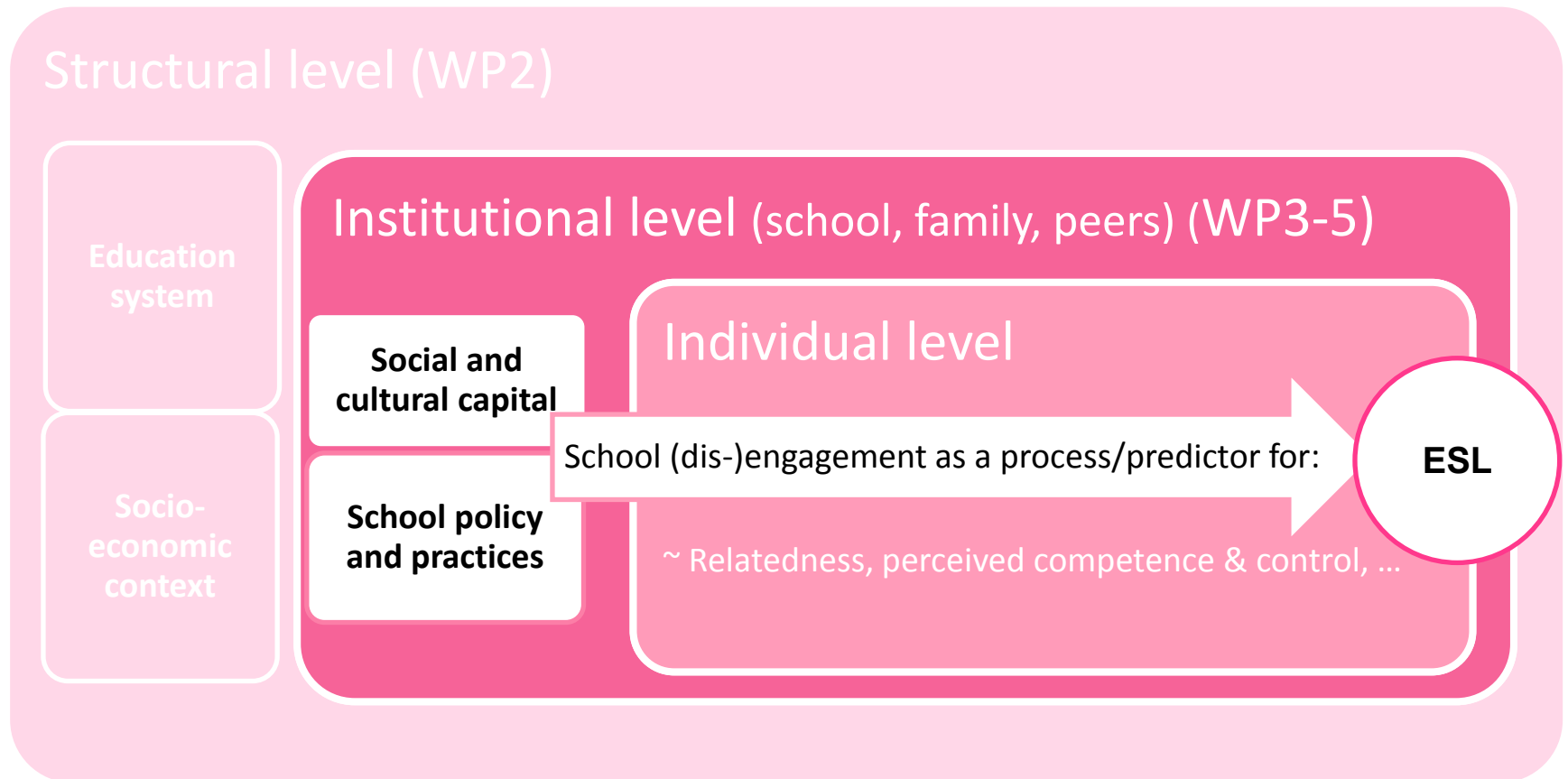
Source: [Vlaams Departement Onderwijs & Vorming, 2014](#)

RESL.eu Conceptual model



[RESL.eu Project Paper 2: Theoretical and methodological framework](#)

RESL.eu Conceptual model

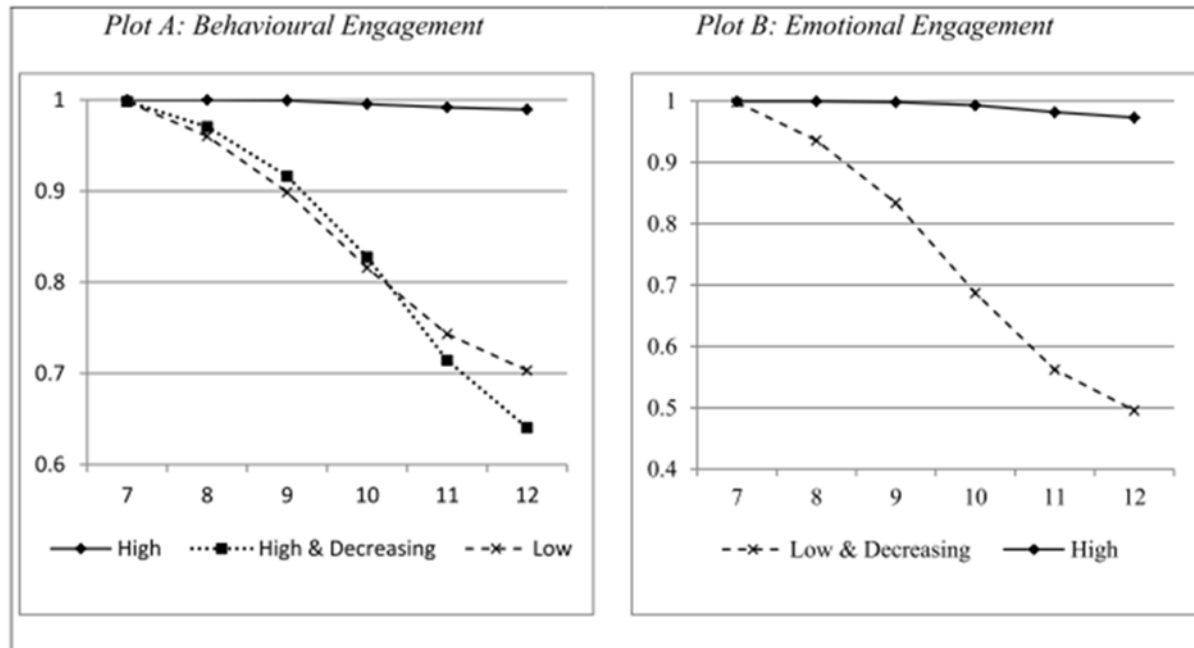


[RESL.eu Project Paper 2: Theoretical and methodological framework](#)

School Engagement as a Predictor for ESL (in Flanders)

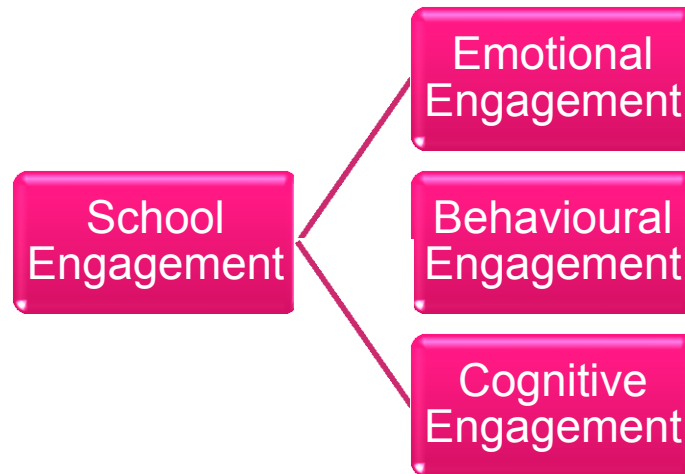
➤ Low school engagement predicts ESL, also in Flanders

Figure 1: estimated survival probability of (a) behavioural engagement and (b) emotional engagement by grade.



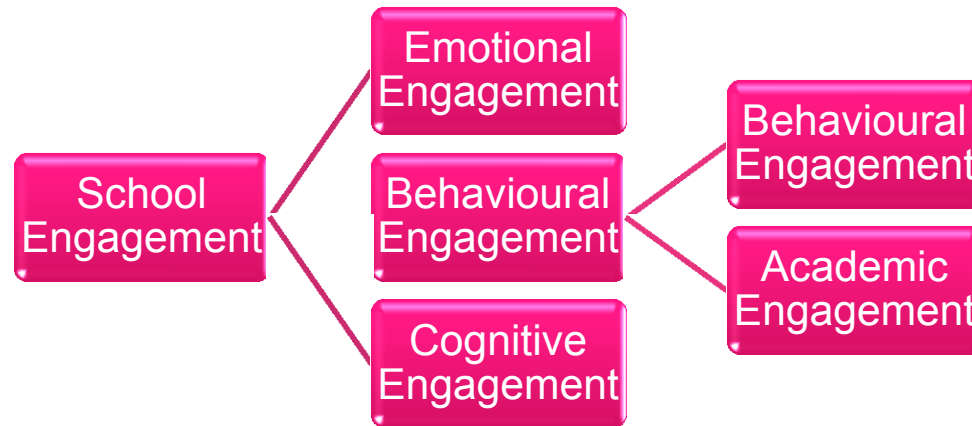
Source: Lamote et al., 2013;
Based on Longitudinal Research in Flemish Secondary Education

School Engagement as a Multidimensional Concept



- **Fredricks** et al. (2004) proposed a 3-dimensional concept
 - **Emotional** component: identification with ‘the school’/‘education’
 - **Cognitive** component: self-regulated/strategic learning approach
 - **Behavioural** component: participation in school-related activities
- ➔ **Dynamic and reciprocal** interaction between components
- ➔ **Process** approach to understanding ESL

School Engagement as a Multidimensional Concept



- Recently scholars made distinction between:
- **Behavioural engagement:** both positive (e.g. participation in extra-curricular activities) as well as negative (e.g. non-compliance)
 - **Academic engagement:** more specific study related behaviour like paying attention in class and putting time and in effort in study work
- ➔ Our data supported this distinction using CFA

A Theoretical Model for Motivational Development

- From a theory on **school engagement**...
 - Lacks theory on the external relations of the different school engagement components
- ... to a theory on **motivational development**
 - Distinguishes between emotional/cognitive (internal) factors and behavioural (externalised) factors

And includes contextual facilitators

A Theoretical Model for Motivational Development

- **Self-System Model of Motivational Development**
(SSMMD; e.g. Connell & Welborn, 1991; Skinner et al., 2009)
- Central role for the **'self-system'** and satisfying the human needs of **relatedness**, perceived **competence** and **control**
 - **Contextual facilitators** for satisfying these needs at the self-system level (e.g. parental, teacher and peer support)
 - Internalised perceptions on relatedness, perceived competence and control are externalised through **behavioural engagement**
 - Behavioural engagement predicts **educational outcomes** like educational attainment and early school leaving

A Theoretical Model for Motivational Development

➤ Self-System Model of Motivational Development (Operationalised by Fall & Roberts, 2012)

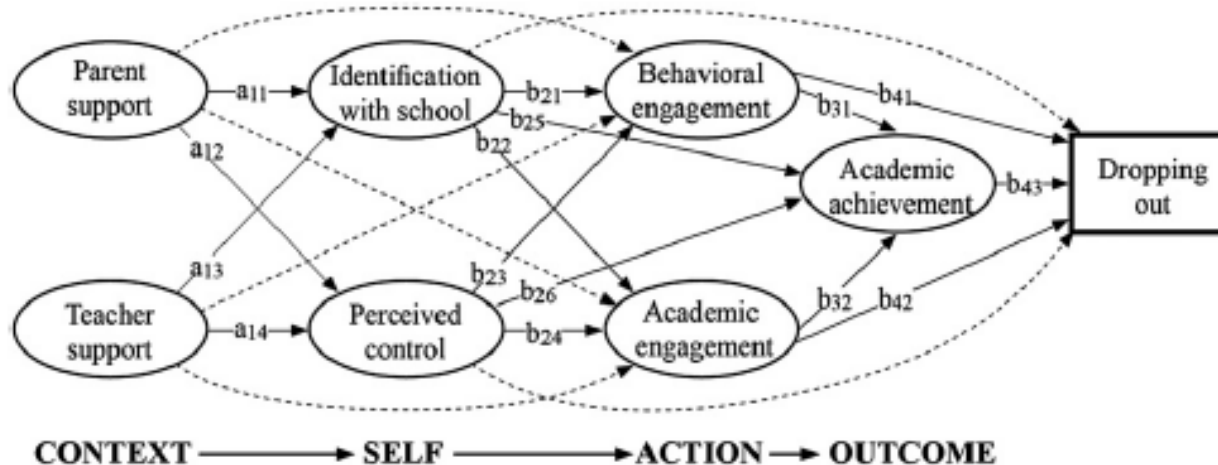


Fig. 1. Self-system model of motivational development applied to dropping out of high school. Dotted lines represent significant indirect effects, and solid lines indicate significant direct effects. Adapted from Connell and Wellborn (1991); Skinner et al. (2008); and Skinner et al. (2009).

Operationalisation (w./ SEM)

Risk Status

- **Socio-demographics** (gender, ethnicity and SES by parental occupational groups)
- **School career variables** (track, grade retention, school mobility, prior achievement)

Context

- **Parental support** (socio-emotional, school, formal involvement and parental control)
- **Peer support** (socio-emotional support and peers valuing education)
- **Teacher support**

Self-system

- **Relatedness** (sense of school belonging and valuing school education)
- Perceived **competence** and **control** (academic self-concept and self-regulated learning)

Engagement

- **Behavioural engagement** (school compliance; *no positive operationalisation*)
- **Academic engagement** (attentiveness in class and study behaviour)

ESL

- To be continued in summer 2016 (second wave of student survey)

Sample

➤ Student survey:

- 41 *urban* schools in Antwerp and Ghent
 - 3640 students in the 4th and 6th year of secondary education (VET and general)
 - Online or paper-and-pencil questionnaire in class context with researcher present
 - 1st wave: Spring 2014
- => 2nd wave: Spring 2016

Findings: Risk Status

- Sociodemographic risk status characteristics
 - **Gender: male vs. female**
 - (--) School compliance (-0,204); -0,282
 - (--) Study behaviour (-0,104); -0,169
 - **Ethnic origin: non-EU vs. native**
 - (-) School compliance (*native 0,08*)
 - (++) Attentiveness in class (0,14); 0,184
 - (++) Study behaviour (0,118); 0,191
 - **SES parents (continuous)**
 - (+) School compliance (0,046); 0,035
 - (-) Attentiveness in class (-0,064); -0,079
 - (-) Study behaviour (-0,061); -0,041

*(Direct) and total effects are presented;
Significant effects ($p < ,05$) only.*

Findings: risk status

- Risk status linked to school career characteristics:
 - **Track:** compared to students in general education
 - (-) **School compliance (VET school-/work-based)**
 - **Grade retention:** at least one year vs. none
 - (-) **Attentiveness in class** (-0,045); -0,038
 - (-) **Study behaviour** (-0,056); -0,07
 - **School mobility** in SE: at least once vs. none
 - (-) **School compliance** (-0,043); -0,052
 - (-) **Attentiveness in class** (-0,042); -0,046
 - (-) **Study behaviour** (-0,074); -0,096
 - **Prior achievement** (continuous)
 - (++) **Attentiveness in class** (0,052); 0,203*
 - (+) **Study behaviour** (0,025); 0,132*

*(Direct) and total effects are presented;
Significant effects ($p < ,05$) only.*

Findings: Contextual factors

➤ Parental support:

- Socio-emotional support:
 - (+) Attentiveness in class (0,083); 0,087
 - (+) Study behaviour (0,075); 0,087
- School support:
 - (+) Attentiveness in class (-0,098); 0,036
- Formal school involvement:
 - (-) School compliance (-0,048); -0,067
 - (++) Study behaviour (0,124); 0,123
- Parental control:
 - (+) School compliance (0,045); 0,061
 - (-) Attentiveness in class (-0,05); -0,034
 - (+) Study behaviour (0,065); 0,08

*(Direct) and total effects are presented;
Significant effects ($p < ,05$) only.*

Findings: Contextual factors

➤ Peer support:

- Socioemotional peer support:
 - (-) Attentiveness in class* (-0,091); -0,031
 - (-) Study behaviour* (-0,057); -0,028
- Peers valuing school education:
 - (+) School compliance (0,046); 0,092
 - (++) Study behaviour (0,159); 0,207

➤ Teacher support:

- (++) School compliance (0,169); 0,191
- (++) Attentiveness in class (0,033); 0,209
- (++) Study behaviour (0,074); 0,203

*(Direct) and total effects are presented;
Significant effects ($p < ,05$) only.*

Findings: Self-system factors

- Perceived academic competence:
 - **(-) School compliance** -0,082
 - **(++) Attentiveness in class** 0,26
 - **(+) Study behaviour** 0,049
- Perceived control over academic performances:
 - **(+) Attentiveness in class** 0,088
 - **(+) Study behaviour** 0,09
- School belonging
 - **(--) School compliance** -0,11
 - **(-) Attentiveness in class** -0,052
- Valuing school education
 - **(++) School compliance** 0,204
 - **(++) Attentiveness in class** 0,29
 - **(++) Study behaviour** 0,236

*(Direct) and total effects are presented;
Significant effects ($p < ,05$) only.*

Conclusion

- Theory on motivational development theoretically/ empirically **complements** school engagement theory
- Theoretical hypotheses of SSMMD **largely confirmed** by data from Flemish urban secondary education
- Explained variance more than doubled by **adding the more ‘malleable’ contextual and self-system factors** on top of risk status characteristics

However:

- Explanatory power towards actual ESL not yet tested
- Hypotheses about the role of socio-emotional peer support and sense of school belonging were contradicted
- ➔ Testing of mediation by peers valuing school education
- ➔ Testing for effects of +/- shared school culture

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