



# *Residential arrangements and children's school engagement*

*The role of the parent-child relationship  
and selection mechanisms*

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Increase in shared residence introduces heterogeneity in group of children with divorced parents

Whereas sole mother custody used to be the default residential arrangement after divorce, there has been an evolution toward more shared residential arrangements

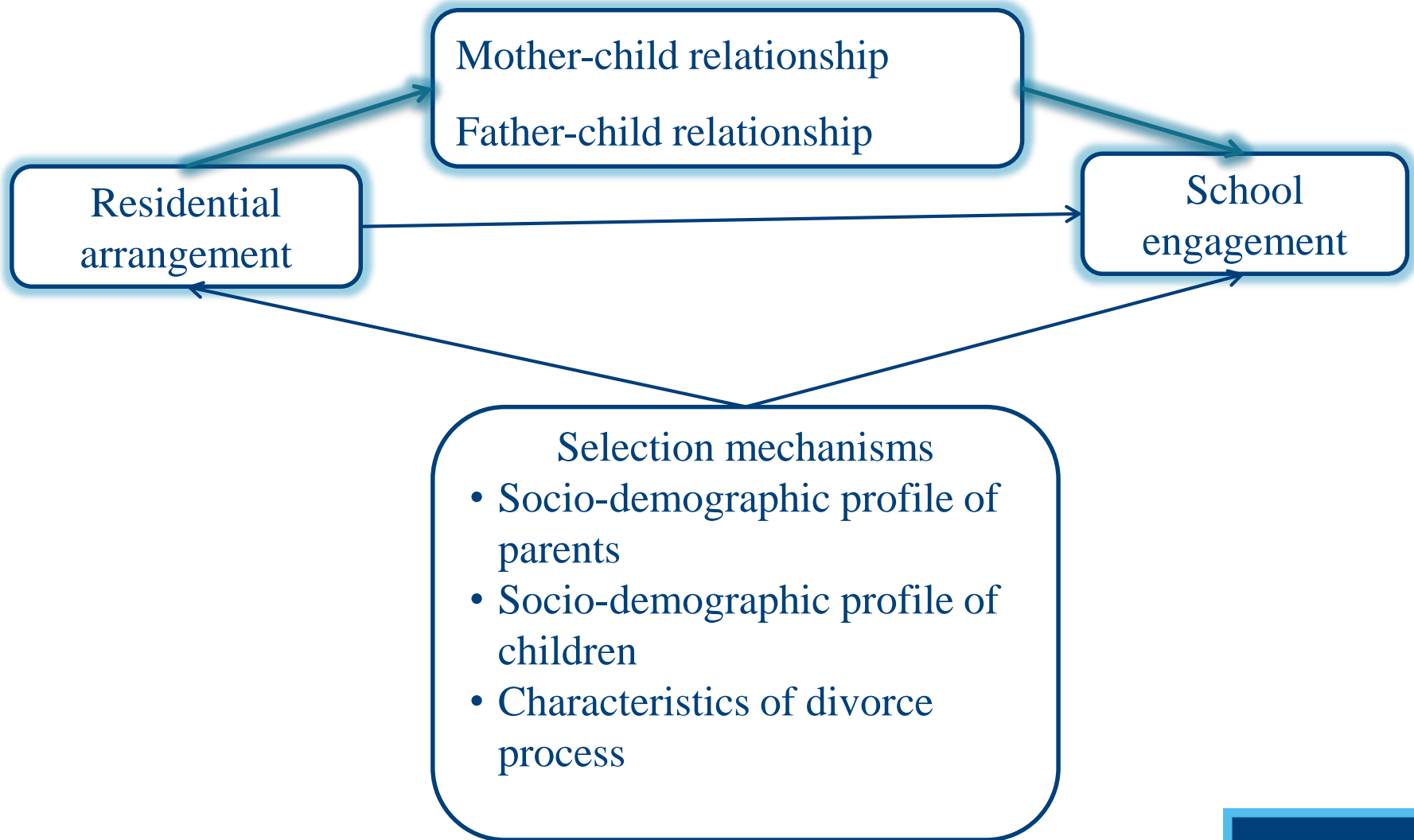
Research literature: Positive, negative and/or spurious relation between residential arrangements and child outcomes?

# Topic of this study: residential arrangements and school engagement

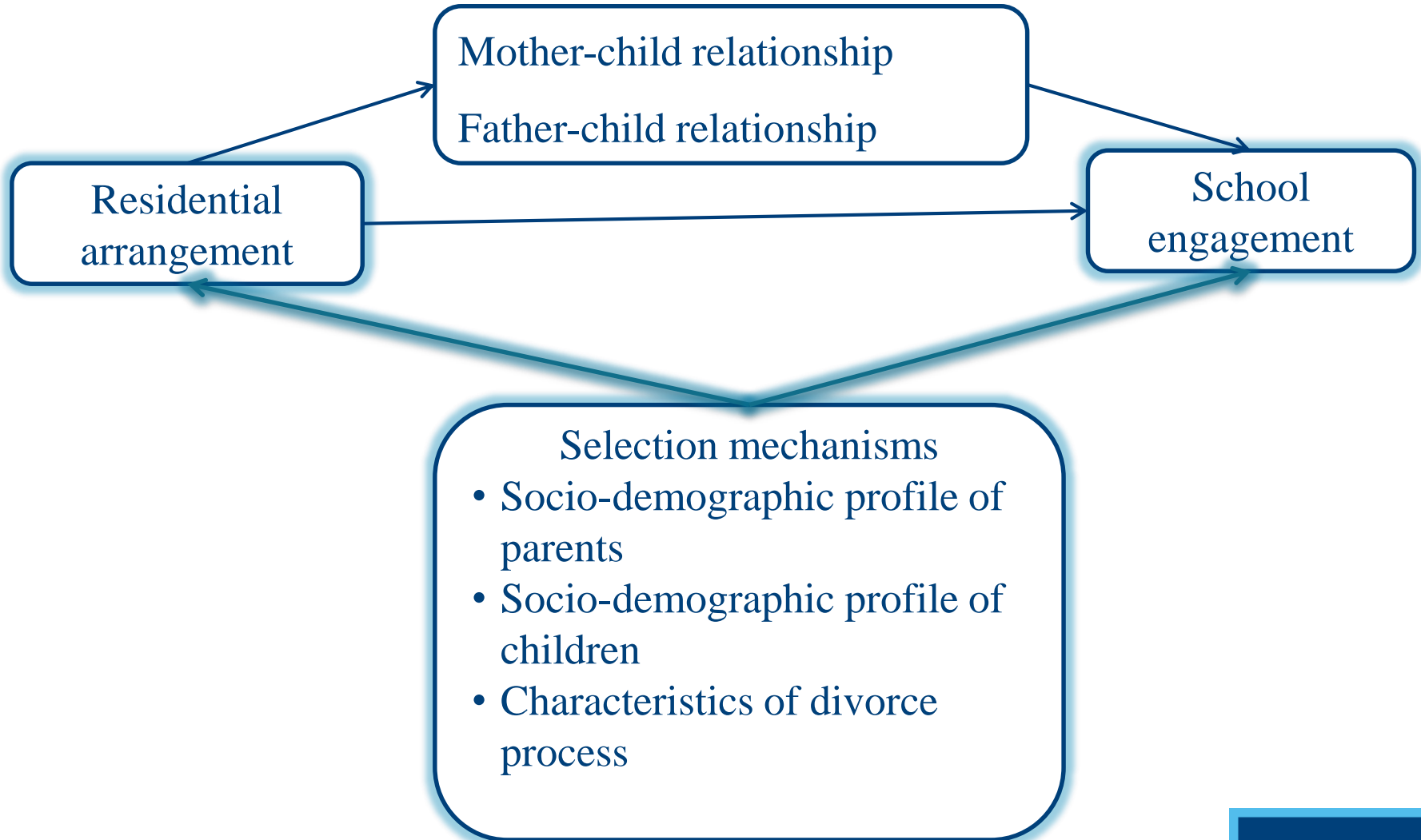
Different from previous research efforts:

1. School engagement
2. Belgian context
3. Classification of arrangements with sequence analyses
4. Structural equation modelling

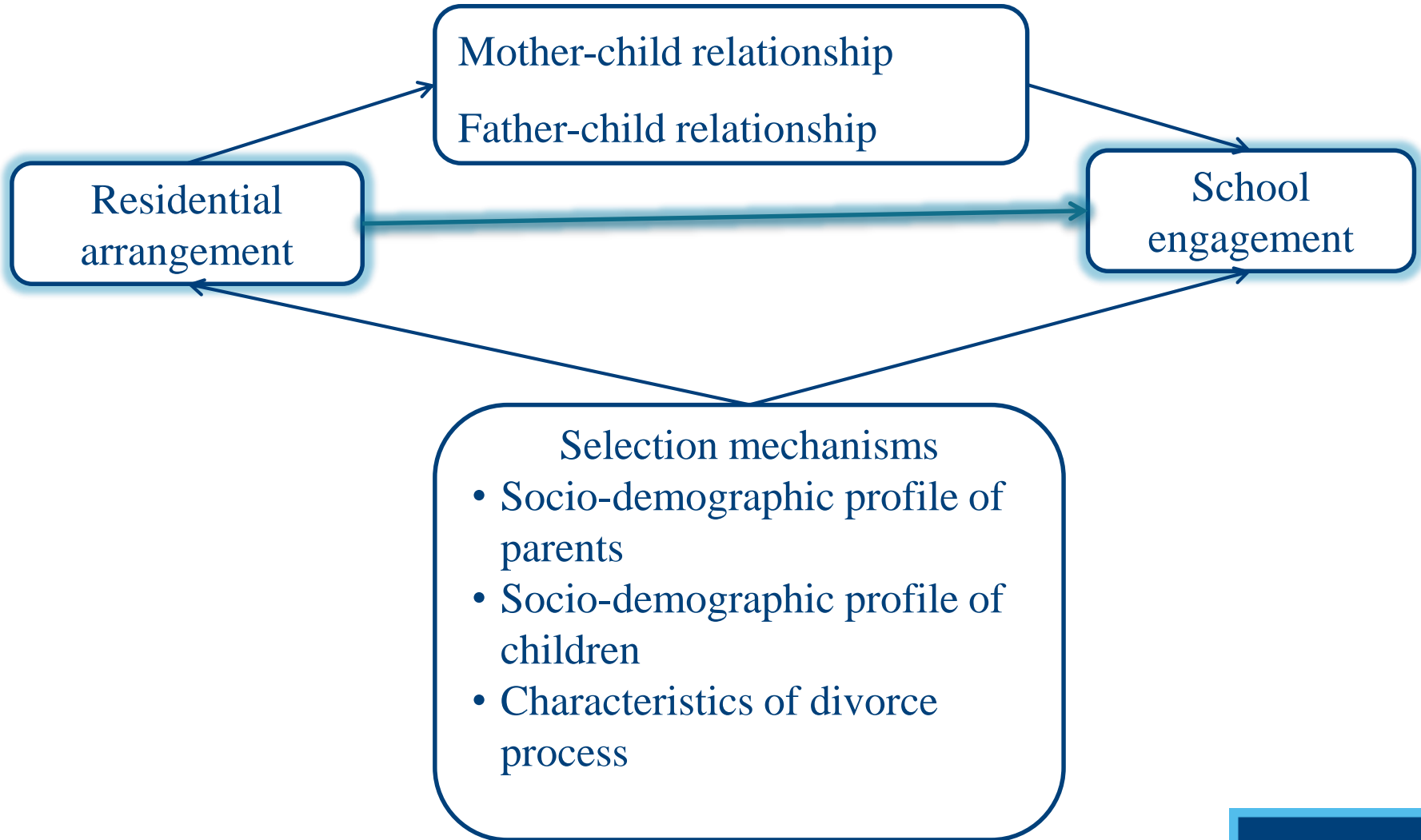
# Hypothesis 1 : Parent-child relationship as a mediator



# Hypothesis 2: Selectivity



# Hypothesis 3: Negative direct effect



# Data: Leuven Adolescent and Family Study

- Repeated cross-sectional study in secondary schools (12-18 years old)
- Two-stage sample design:
  - School selection
  - Pupil selection: random classes of pupils

## **Total sample (LAFS 2008-2011)**

- 7141 completed questionnaires (in 44 schools)
- The combined distribution of sex, age and educational tracks resembles closely those of the entire Flemish secondary school population

# Research sample

1753 children (25%) that experienced a divorce or separation

↳ 1137 correctly filled residential calendars

↳ 973 calendars that showed a regular pattern over a 14-day period



# Variables

## **Dependent variable**

School engagement

## **Independent variables**

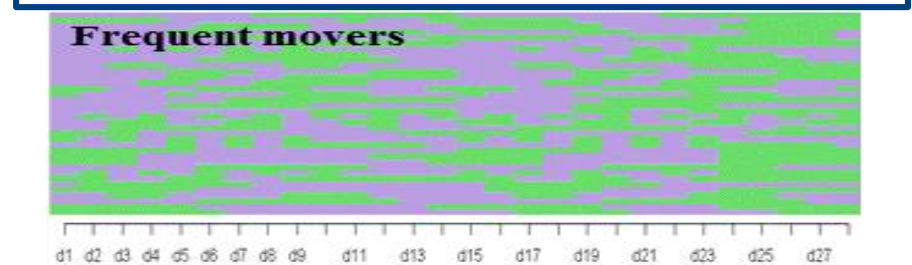
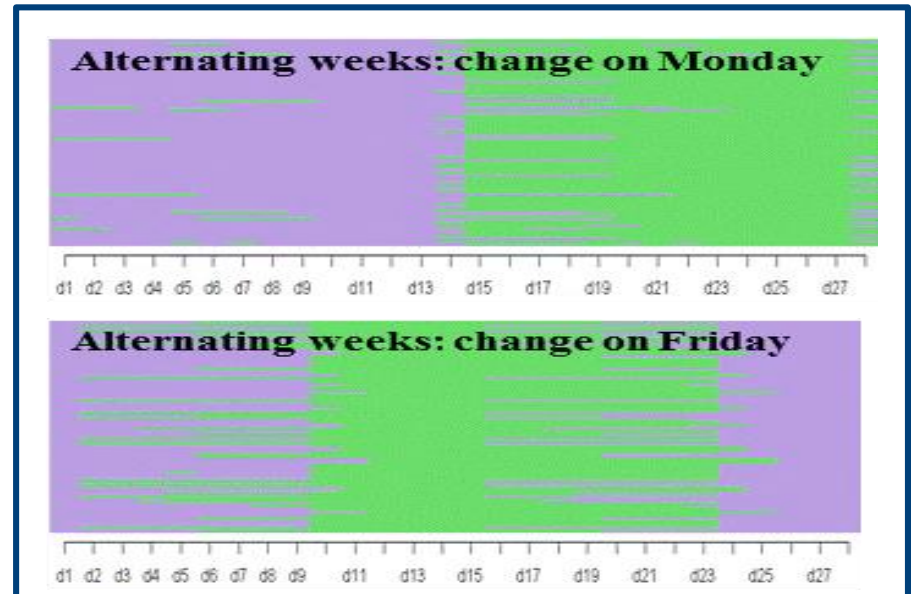
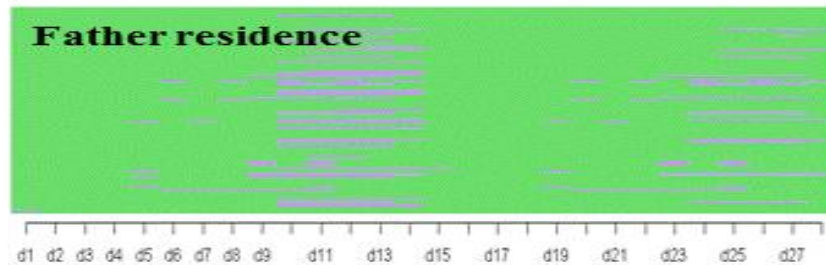
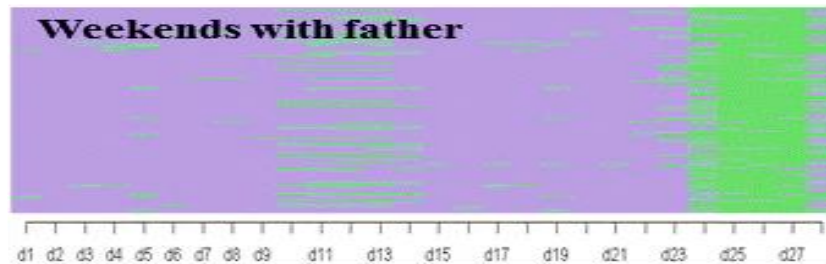
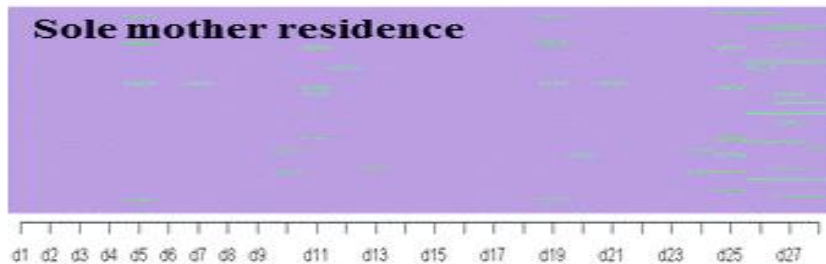
Residential arrangements



Relationship with mother

Relationship with father

Selection variables (educational level of parents, child's sex and age, time since divorce, pre-divorce conflict)

# Sequence analysis

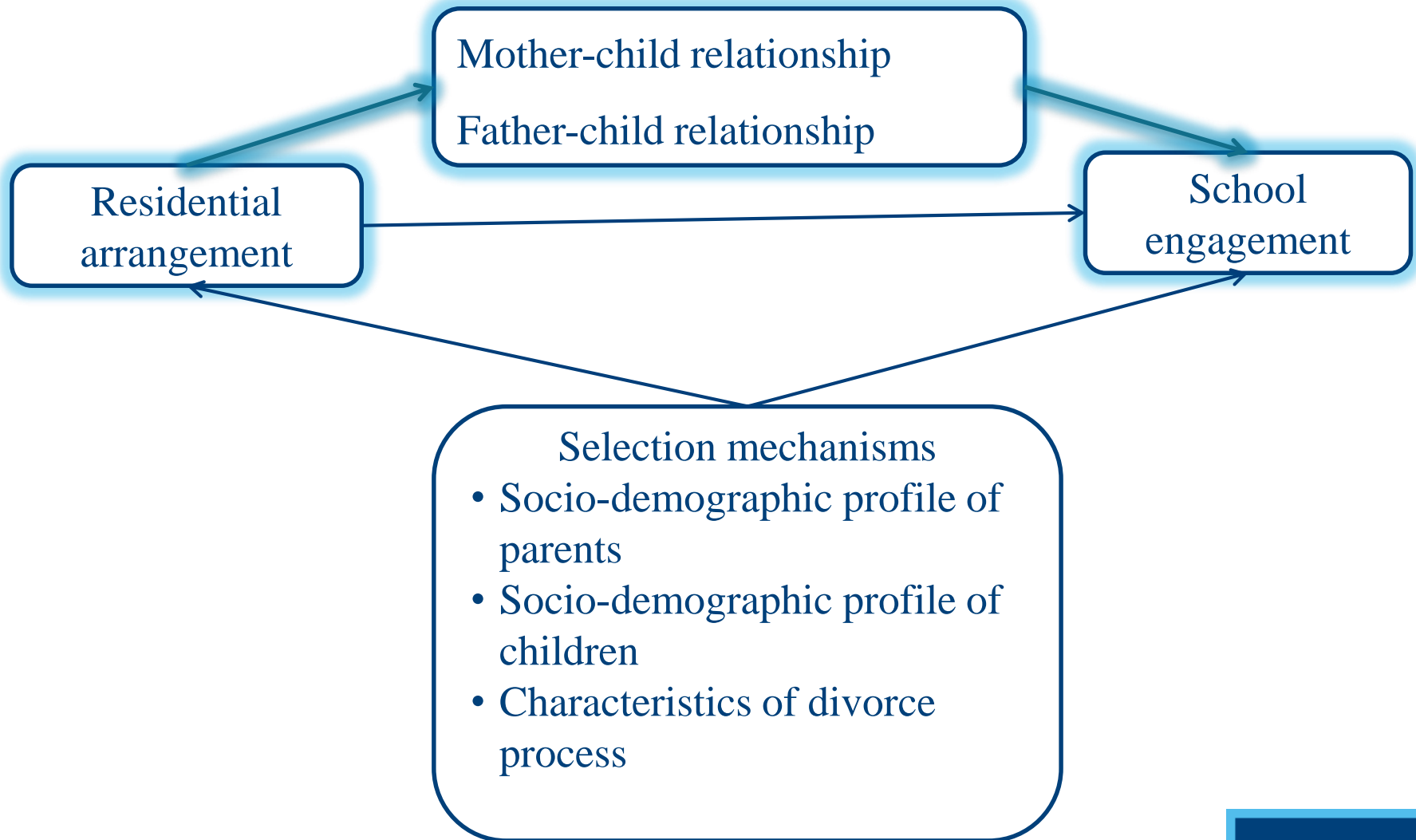


 **Residence with mother**  
 **Residence with father**

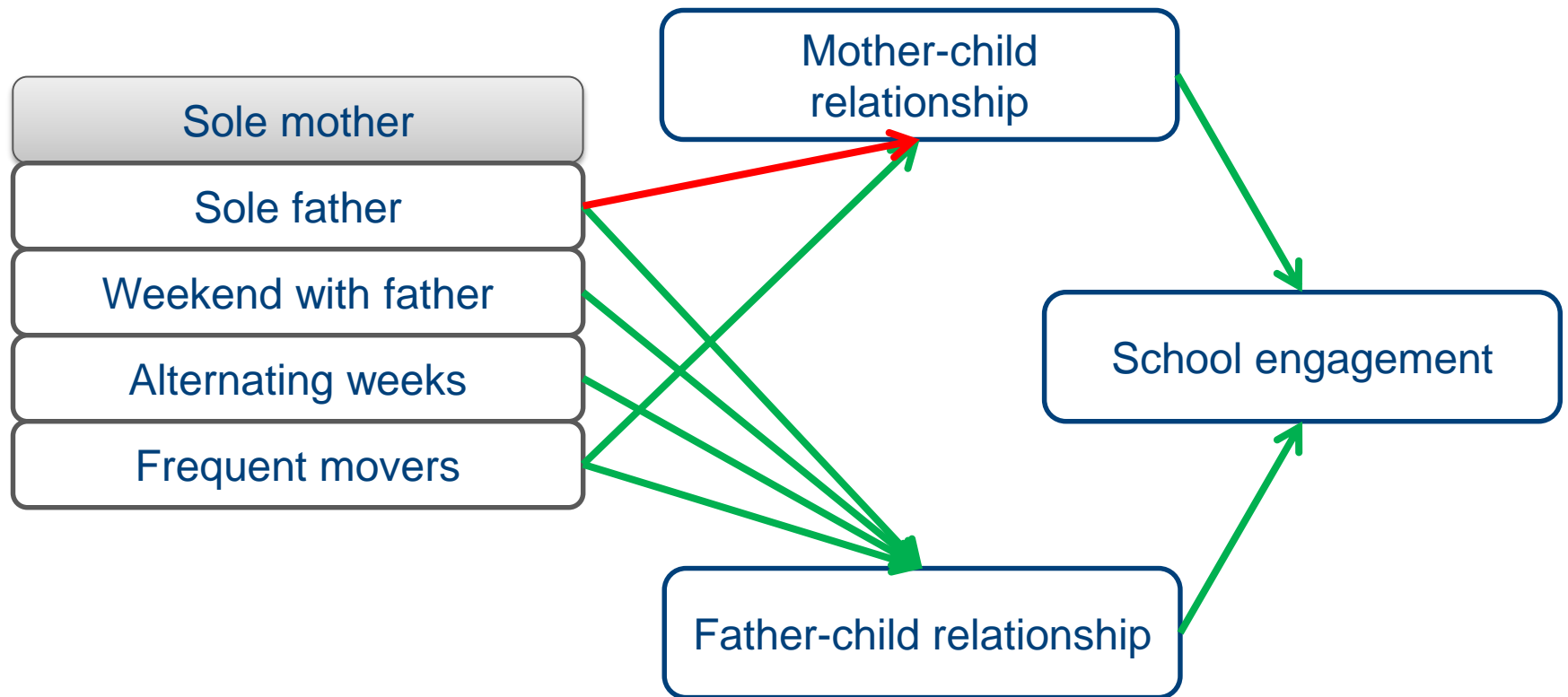
# Structural equation models

- Modelling of direct and indirect relations → testing indirect via parent-child relationship, selection mechanisms and direct effect simultaneously
- Robust standard errors → correcting for clustering in schools and non-normality of variable distribution
- Unexplained variance of endogeneous variables are correlated in model → taking into account endogeneity

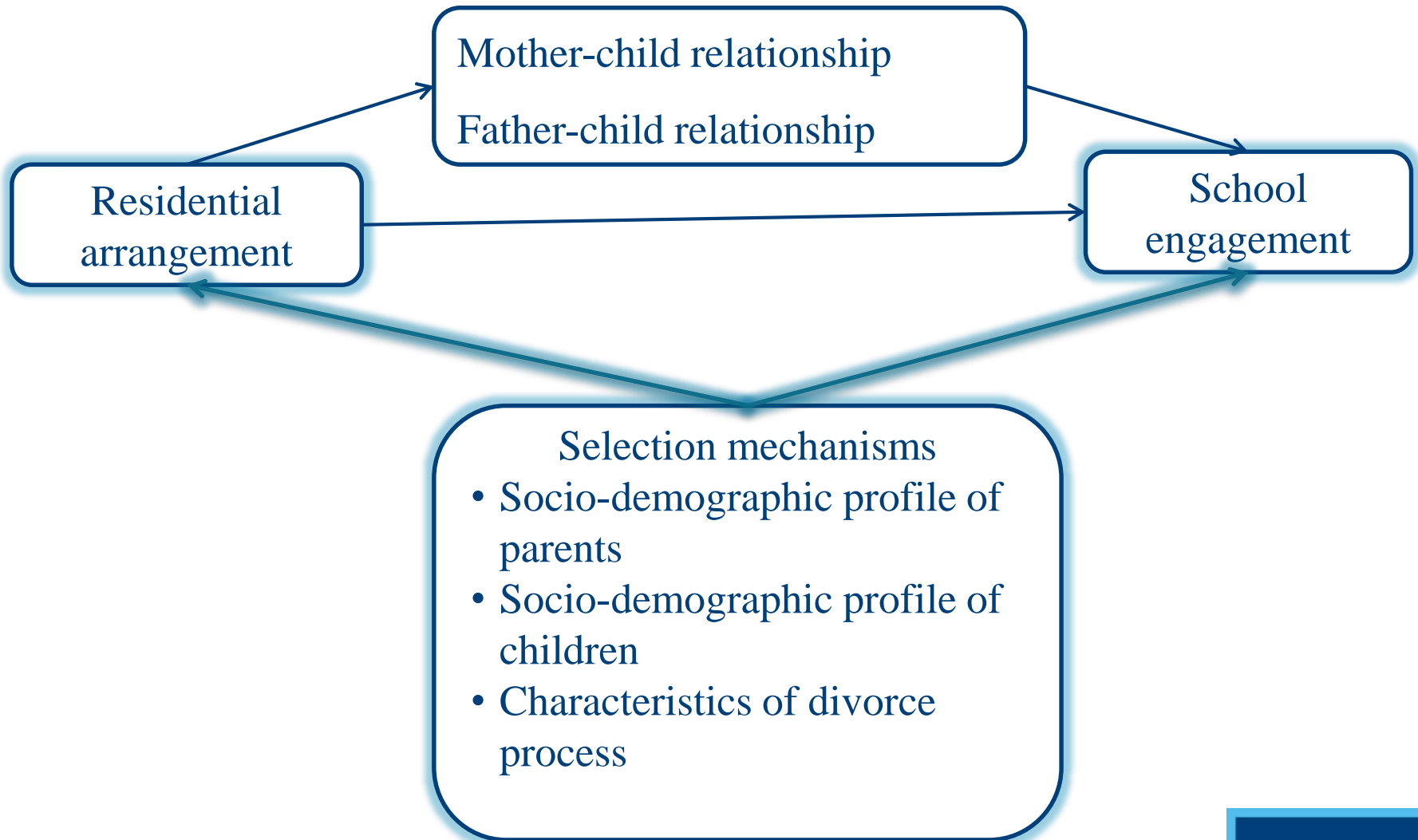
# Results: Parent-child relationship as a mediator (*Hypothesis 1*)



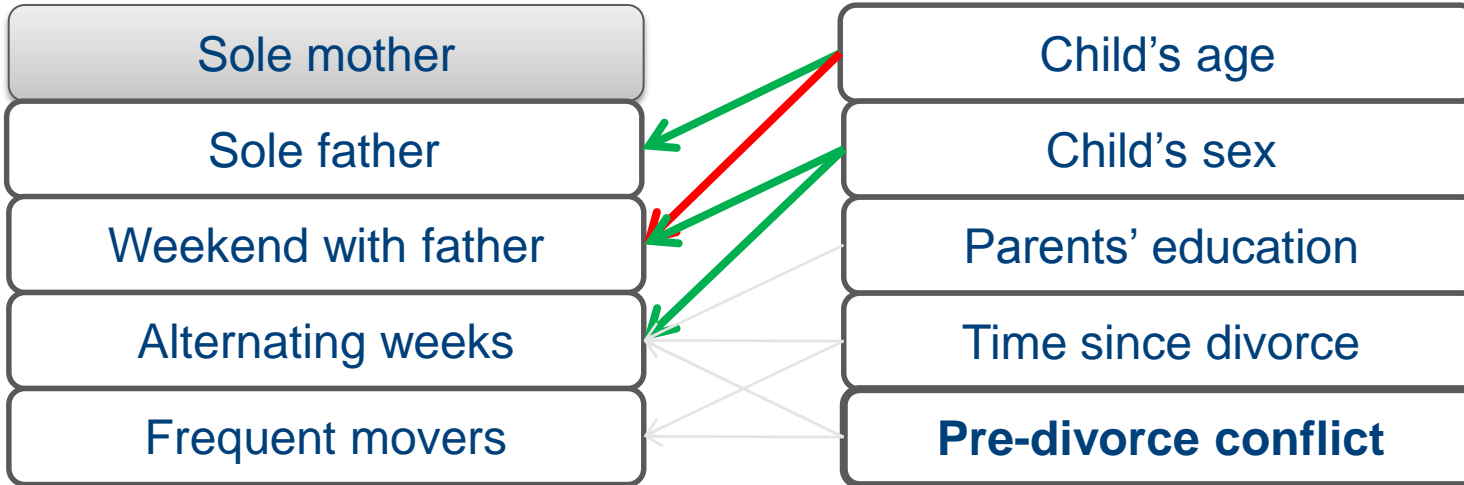
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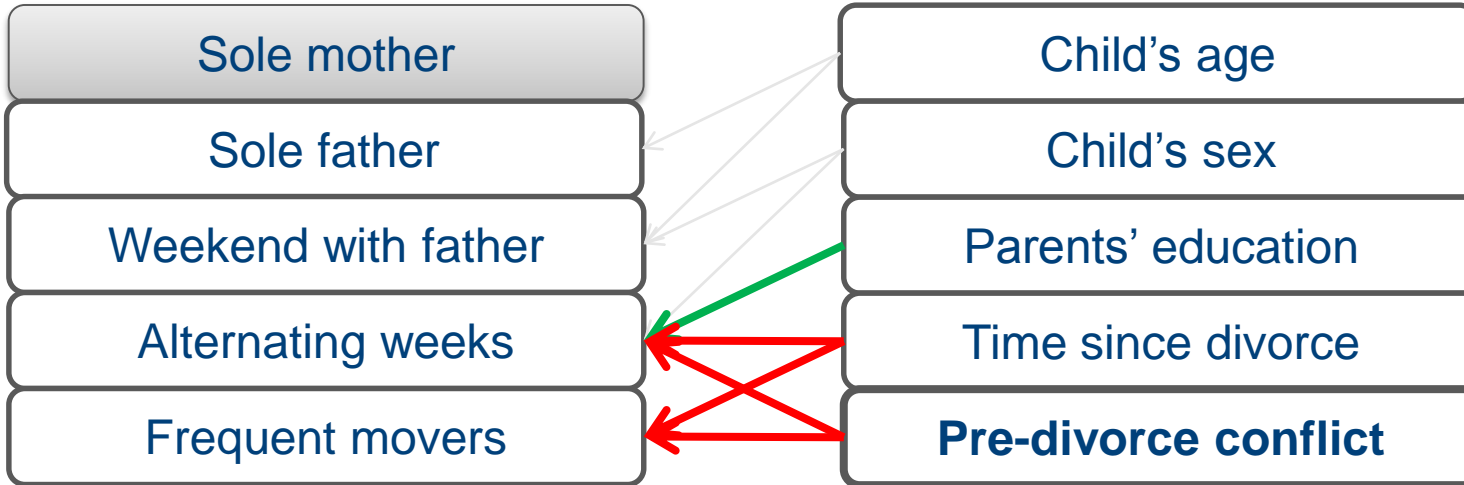
# Results: Selectivity (*hypothesis 2*)



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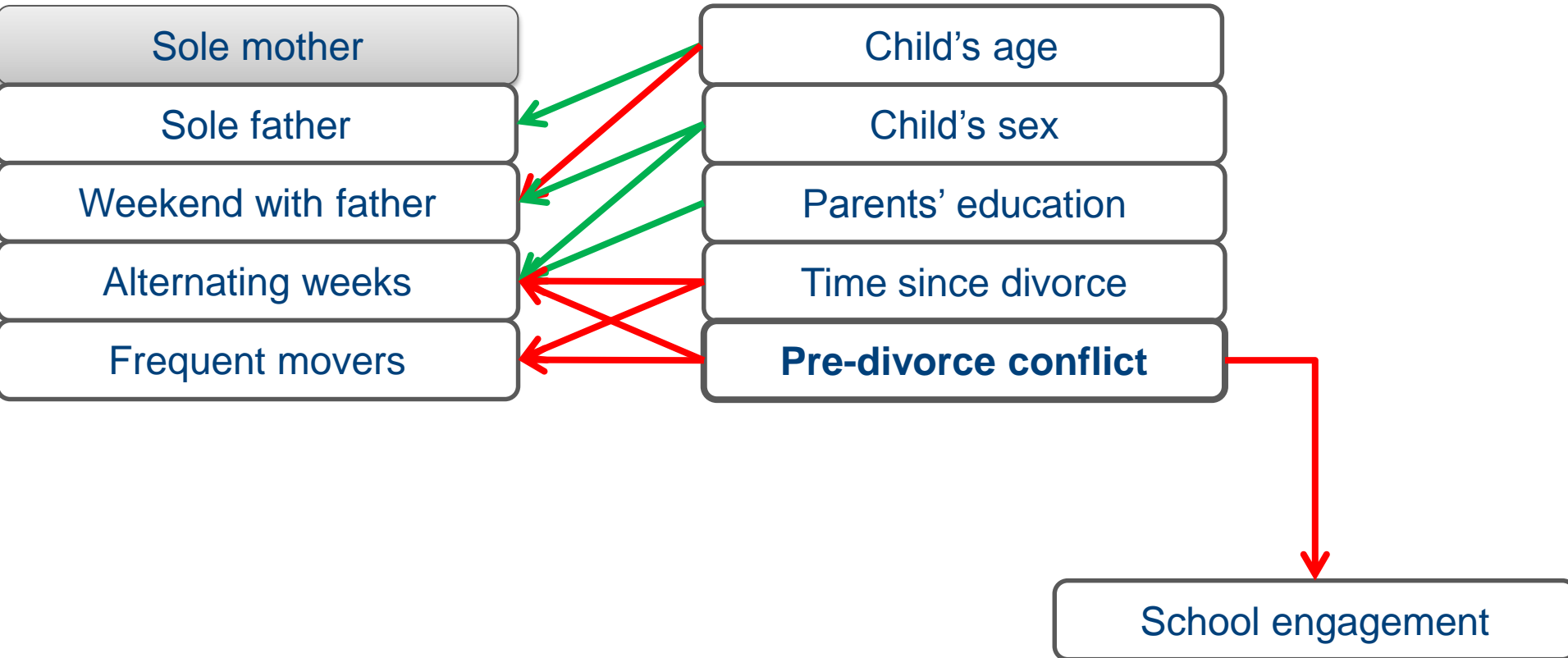


# Results: Selectivity (*hypothesis 2*)

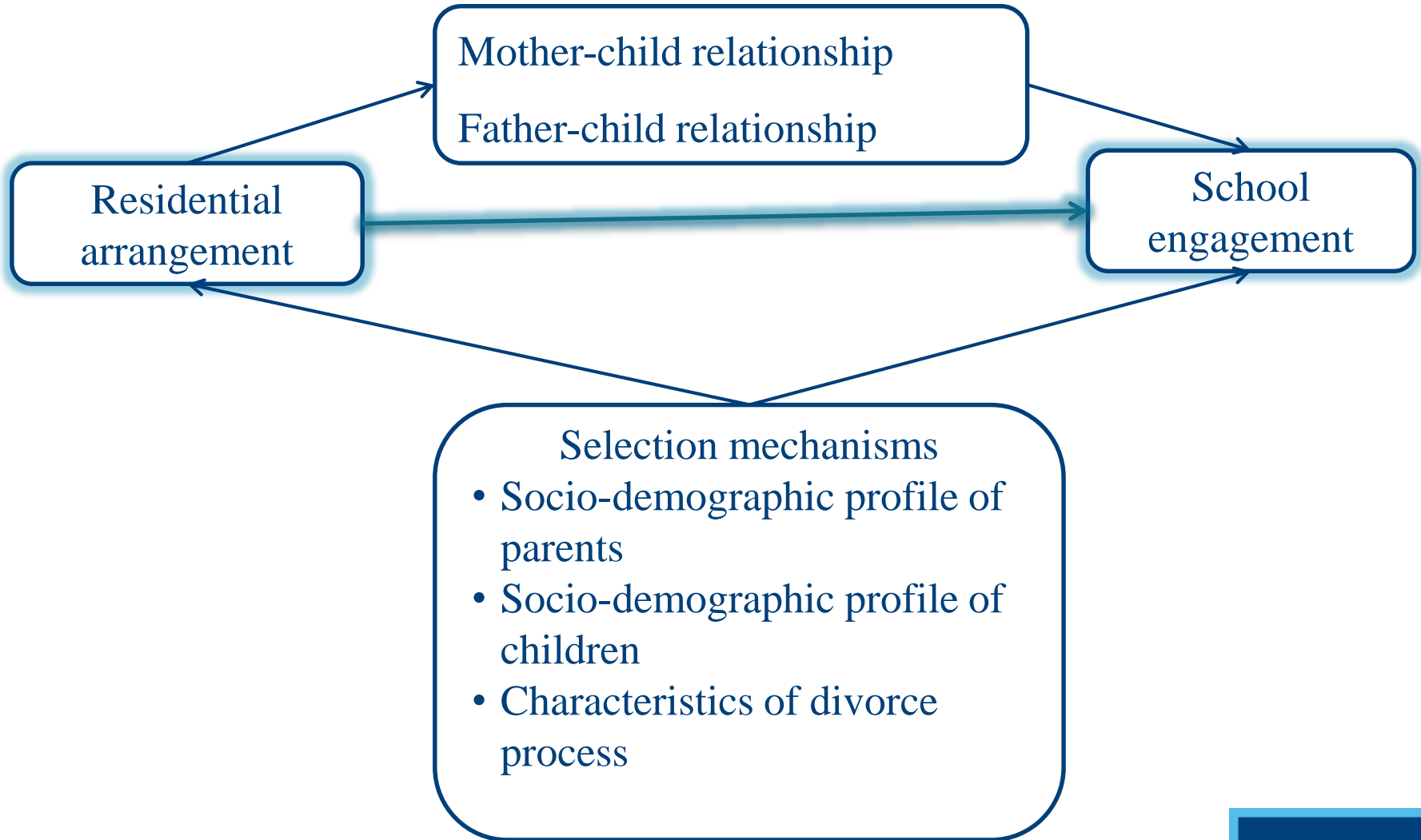




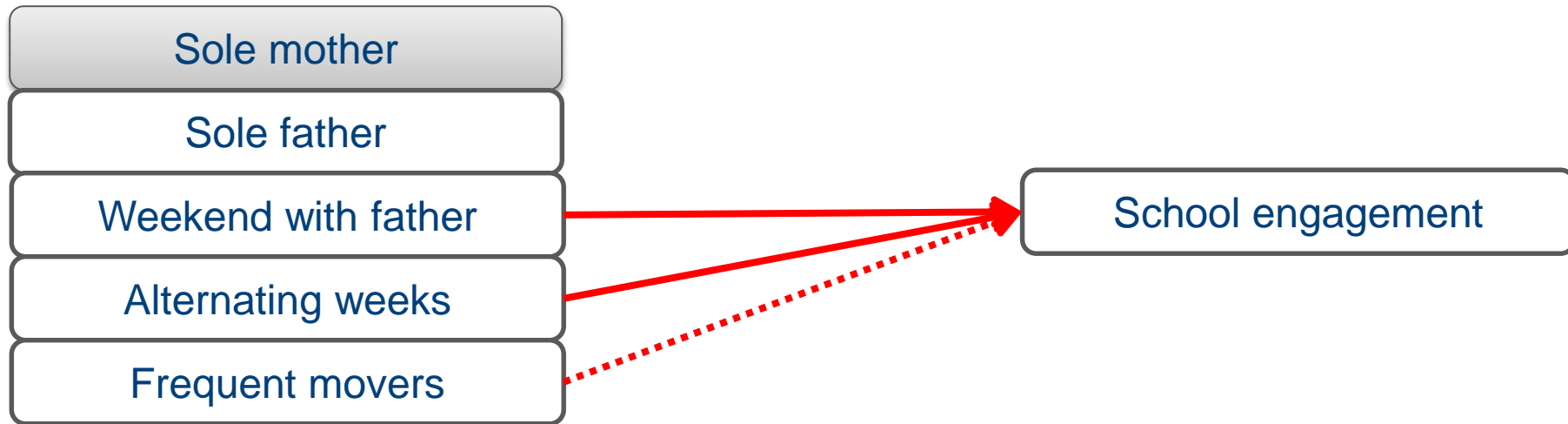
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# Results: Negative direct effect (*hypothesis 3*)



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Negative direct effect  $\approx$  Total indirect effect

→ Counterbalancing of negative direct effect by the indirect effects via the parent-child relationship

# Conclusion

- Children in arrangements with *residential contact* with both parents have a better father-child relationship which can mitigate some of the negative consequences of divorce
- Controlling for selectivity and parent-child relationship, these arrangements have a direct negative effect
  - Potential explanations: instability, moving, lack of primary caregiver, ...
- Practical implications
  - Shared residence is not the only way to improve parent-child relationships
  - Decrease disadvantages of shared residence

# Questions / suggestions ?

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