

# We found a compelling family dynamic of college students: directing mothers suppress their children’s motivation and cause more career-related stress.

## Potential Effect of Mother’s Occupational Shared Agency on Occupational Goal Stress: The Mediating Role of Selective Secondary Control Strategies

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### INTRODUCTION

#### THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

- Chang et al. (2010)’s **parental shared agency**: youths can be more successful when parents are also motivated to help them accomplish their goals. In contrast, **parental non-shared agency** may evoke youths’ sense of disconnection, insecurity, and discouragement
- Heckhausen et al. (2010)’s **motivational theory of life-span development model**: **motivational thinking** can boost goal engagement behaviors in **difficult** time or under **limited** resources. It helps youths avoid distraction, commit more to life goals, and envision positive imagery of incentives with goal attainment
- We focused on the specific roles of **mothers’** shared agency with their children and the roles of **motivational thinking** on alleviating **career goal stress**

### METHODS

#### PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURES

- 1,710** college students from large public universities in northeastern and western U.S.
- Mostly **females** (66.11%); **aged 18–29** ( $M = 21.40$ ,  $SD = 4.03$ )
- Racially diverse**: 25.99% Asian; 8.15% Black; 19.16% Hispanic; 2.01% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders; 33.28% White; 11.42% Mixed/Other

#### MEASURES

##### Occupational Shared and Non-shared Agency

- Occupational Shared Agency**—support and collaboration (5 items each; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*)
- Occupational Non-shared Agency**—directing and noninvolvement (5 items each; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*)

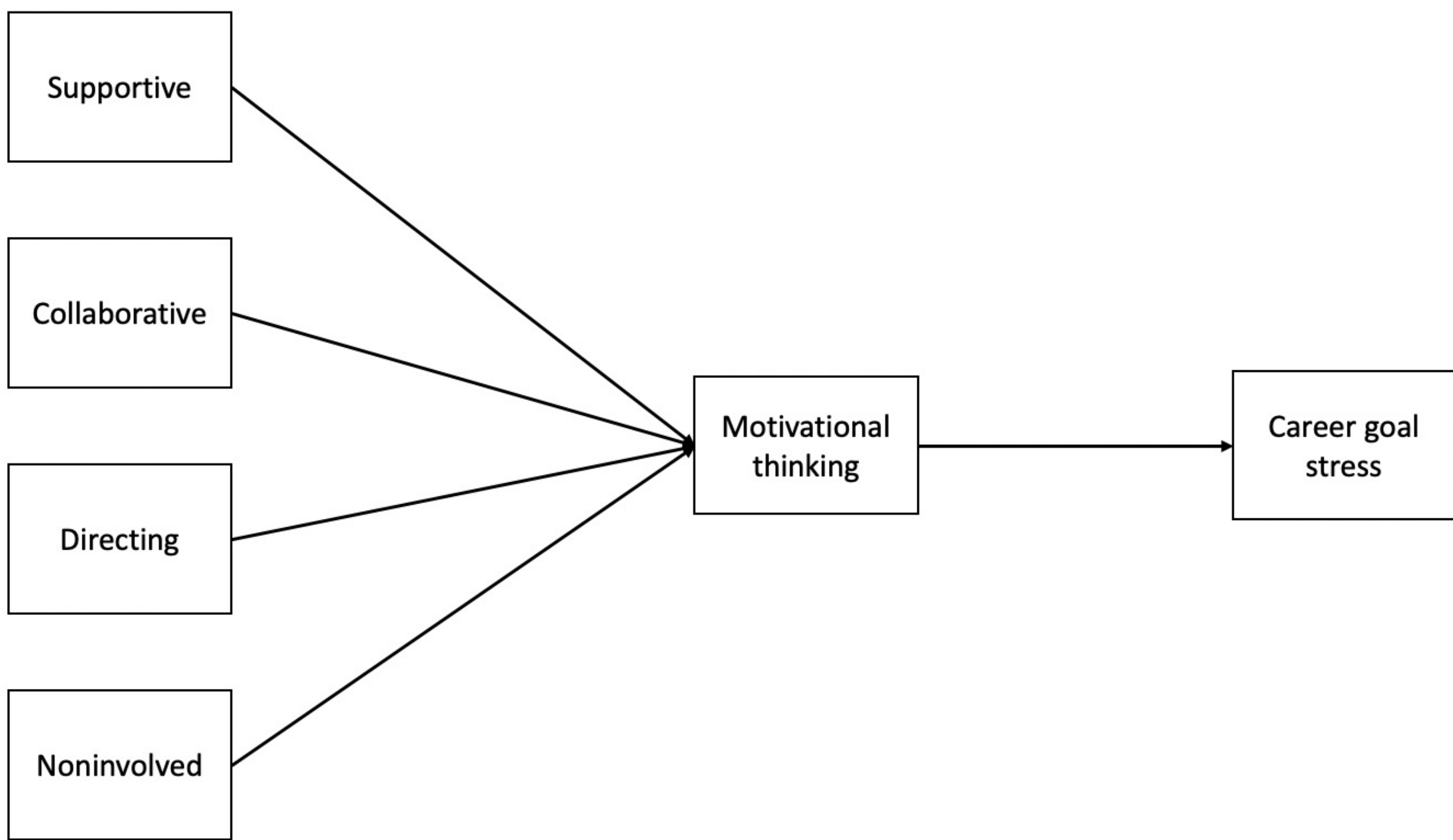
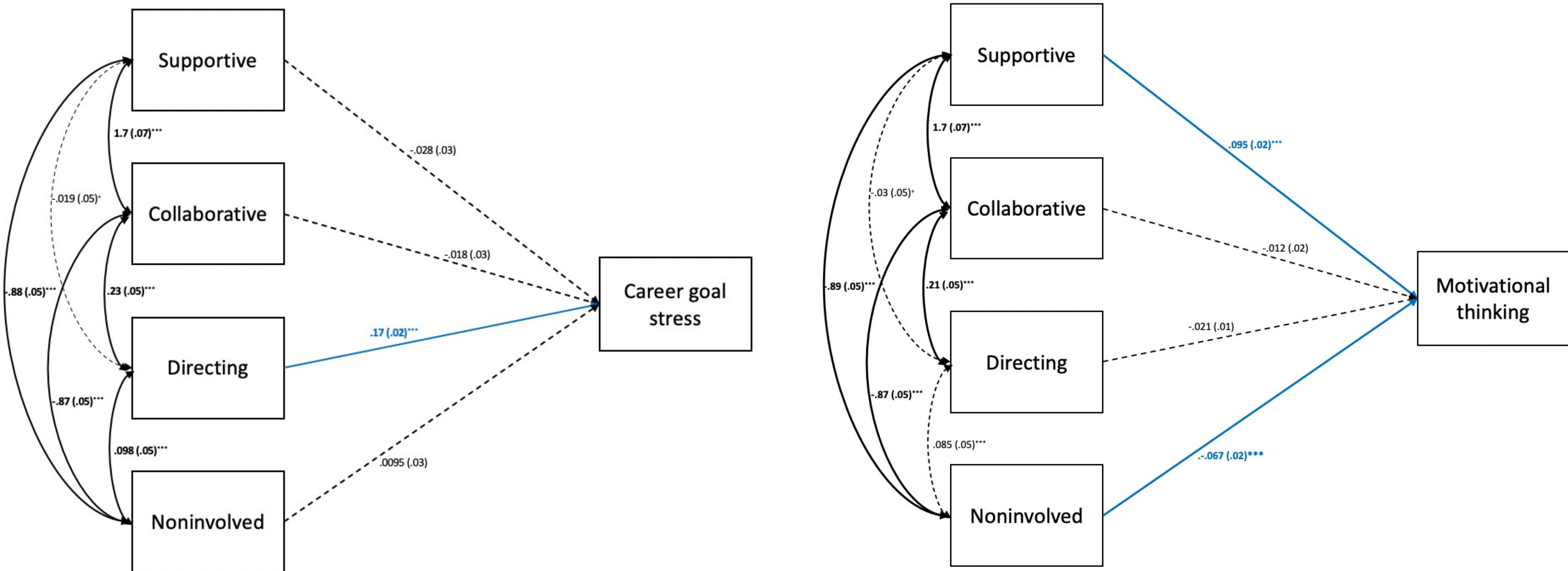
##### Selective Secondary Control Strategies

- Occupational-Specific Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control Scale (OPS)** – *Selective Secondary Control* (2 items; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*)
- “I often remind myself how important it is for my future to have a good career”; & “When I think about my career, I try to be confident that I will be successful”

##### Occupational Stress

- Occupational Goal Attitudes** (1 item; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*)
- “My occupational goal is very stressful for me to pursue”

### RESULTS



Variables		Corr.	Effects		
Dependent	Independent		Direct	Indirect	Total
Motivational Thinking	Supportive	.202***	.097***	–	.097***
	Collaborative	.152***	-.015	–	-.015
	Directing	-.043	-.021	–	-.021
	Noninvolved	-.180***	-.067	–	-.067***
Career Stress	Motivational Thinking	.096***	.178***	–	.178***
	Supportive	-.056*	-.042	.017***	-.025
	Collaborative	-.032	-.013	-.003	-.015
	Directing	.193***	.185***	-.004	.181***
	Noninvolved	.042	.031	-.012**	.019

Notes. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 1. Summary of Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect and Correlation Coefficients ( $N = 1,710$ )

### DISCUSSION

- Both **supportive** and **noninvolved** mothers could directly influence their children’s level of **career-related stress** through stimulating more or less **motivational thinking**.
- While **directing** mothers have no impact on motivational thinking, they can directly cause **more stress** to their children’s career goal pursuit.
- However, the direction between **motivational thinking** and **career-related stress** is not clear. Should career-related stress lead to more motivational thinking?
- Future **longitudinal studies** would help examine better effects of motivational thinking on reducing career-related stress and investigate why collaborative mothers may not significantly lower levels of career-goal stress or may reduce/increase motivational thinking.



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### REFERENCES

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- Heckhausen, J., Wrosch, C., & Schulz, R. (2010). A motivational theory of life-span development. *Psychological Review*, 117(1), 32–60. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017668>

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