



# Community Involvement at Midlife: Collaboration in Education between CASAs and their Foster Youth

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# CASA: COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

- CASAs are trained community volunteers
- **Advocate** for the placement of foster children in safe and permanent homes
- Committed for the duration of child's involvement with child welfare systems (Litzelfelner, 2008)
- Presence is linked to adoption or reunification with relatives (Pilkay & Lee, 2015)
- Not formal mentors



# POSITIVE VIPS

VIPS; Important nonparental adults (Greenberger & Chen, 1998)

- Naturally occurring: Siblings, aunts, coaches teachers
- For better and for worse (Chang, Greenberger, et al., 2010)

CASAs volunteer to make a positive difference

- **Generativity**- the well-being of future generations and involved in various life projects (e.g., parenting, mentoring, community involvement, & political action)
- **Goals to create a positive legacy that will outlive the self** (McAdams, 2001)



# FOSTER YOUTH'S EDUCATION

Many more educational challenges and poor life outcomes compared to non-FY (Zetlin, 2012)

- Repeat grade
- School transitions
- Low grades
- Disciplinary records
- Less likely to go to college

FY may benefit more from educational attainment compared to non-foster care youth (Cox, 2013; Okpych & Courtney, 2014)



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the mentoring strategies that CASAs use with FY in education?
2. Which strategies are positively correlated to indicators of community development?
3. Does generativity promote best practices?



# PARENTING

**Least** effective when parents are overly directive and psychologically controlling (e.g., *guilt induction, love withdrawal, and authority assertive*)

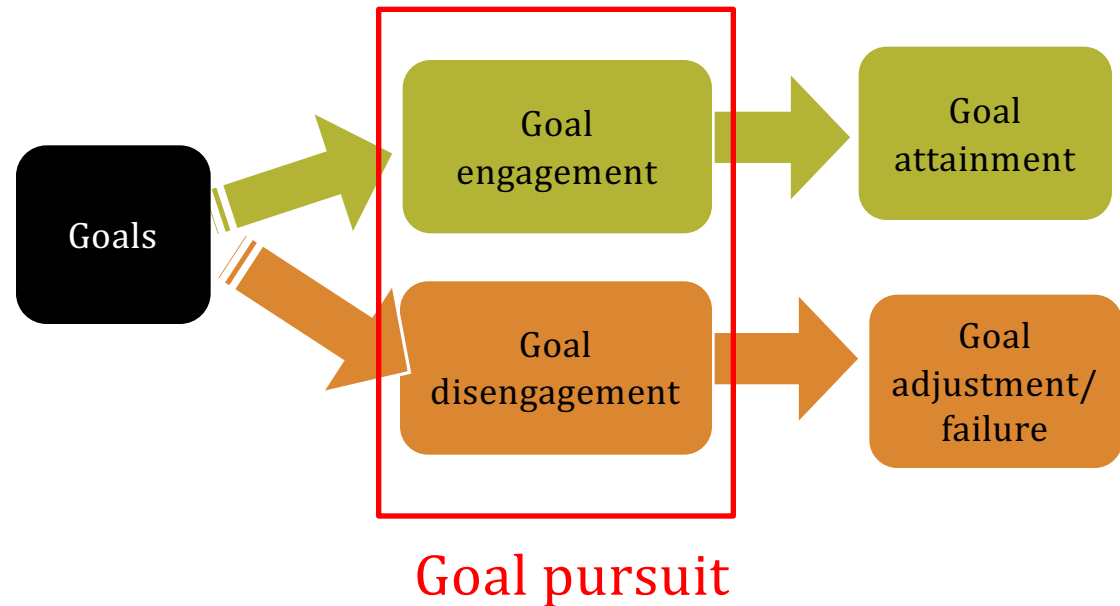
**Most** effective when parents encourage youth autonomy and provide an appropriate balance of structure, challenge, enjoyment, and support (US>China)

(Chao 1994; Steinberg et al., 1992; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2007)

# Individuals influence their own development across the lifespan (Brandtstädter, 2006; Larson, 2006; Piaget, 1967).

79% of life goals among foster youth are related to education

58% of foster youth ranked education their #1 life goal (Lemus et al., in press)



Motivational theory of lifespan development Haase et al., 2012; Heckhausen et al., 2010

# GOALS ARE PURSUED IN SOCIAL CONTEXT



CASA  
goal  
engagement

CASA  
goal  
disengagement

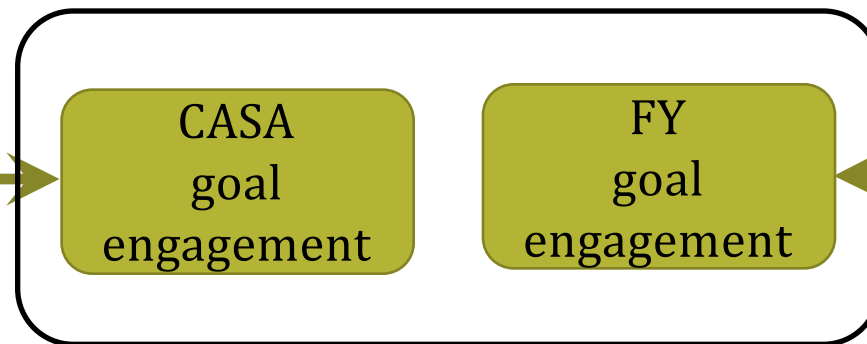
FY  
goal  
engagement

FY  
goal  
disengagement



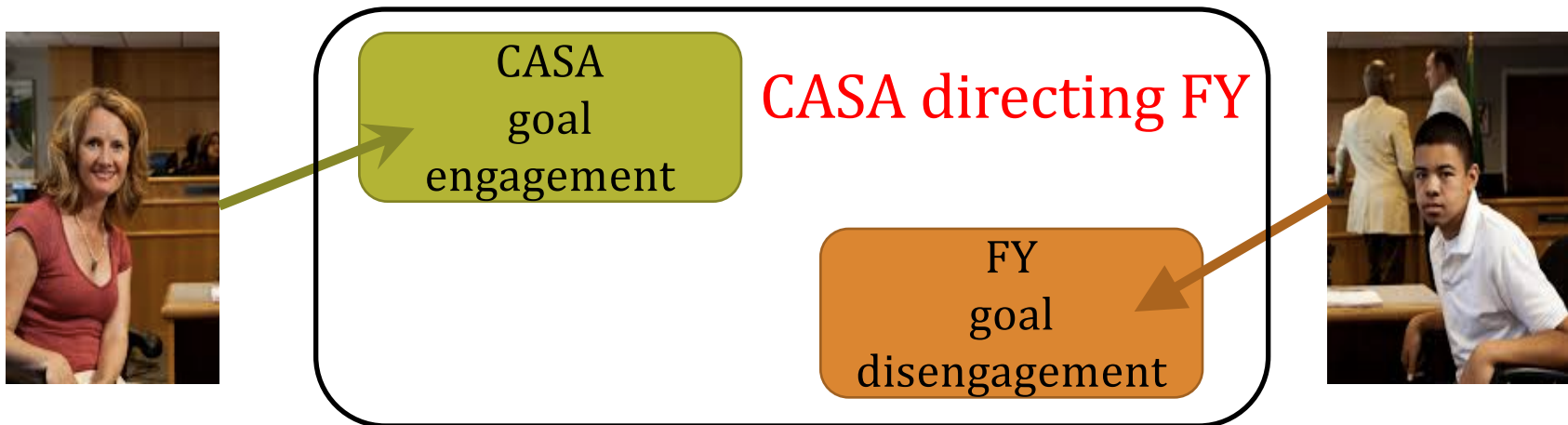


# SHARED AGENCY IN EDUCATION



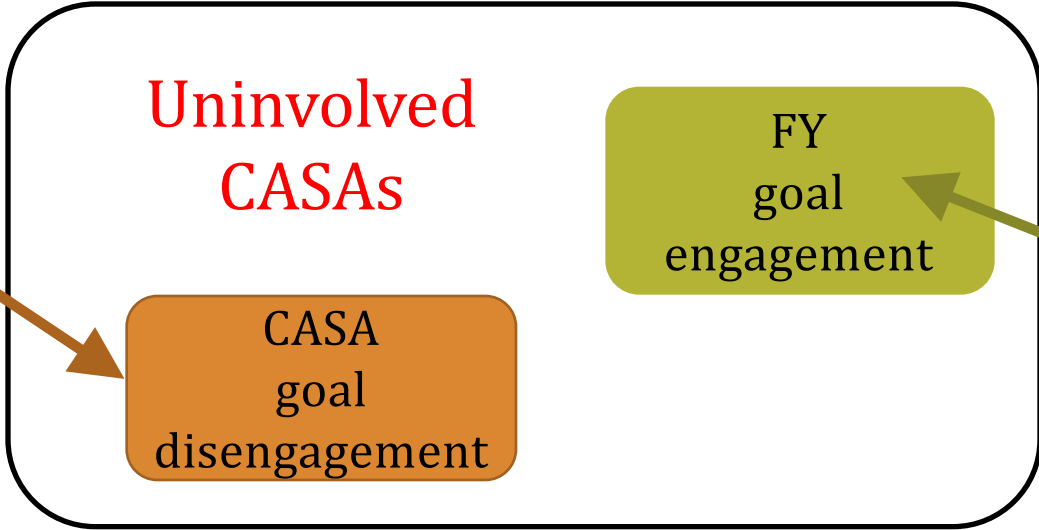
**Shared agency** is felt when individuals in a dyad are both goal engaged and is most conducive to goal attainment (Chang, 2008; Chang, Heckhausen et al., 2010; Chang 2013; Chang & Lee, 2016).

# NON-SHARED AGENCY IN EDUCATION

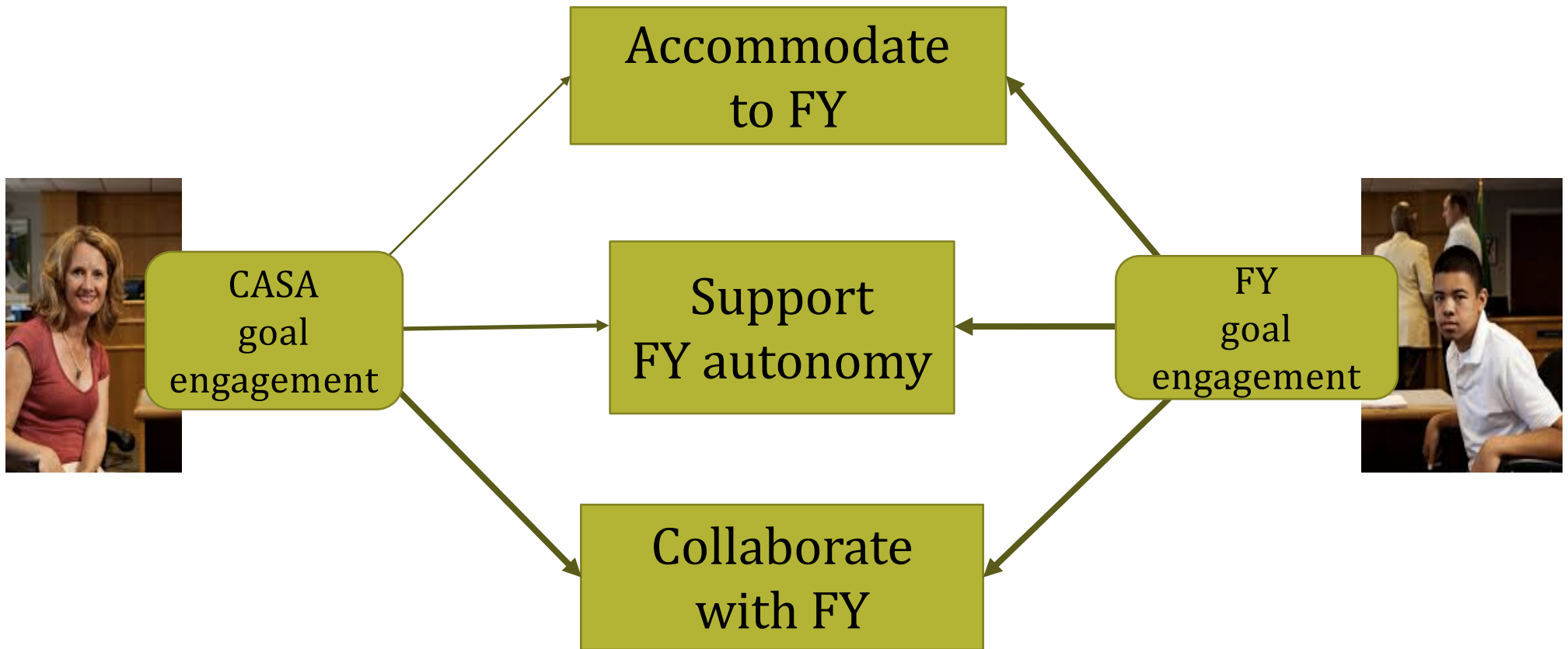


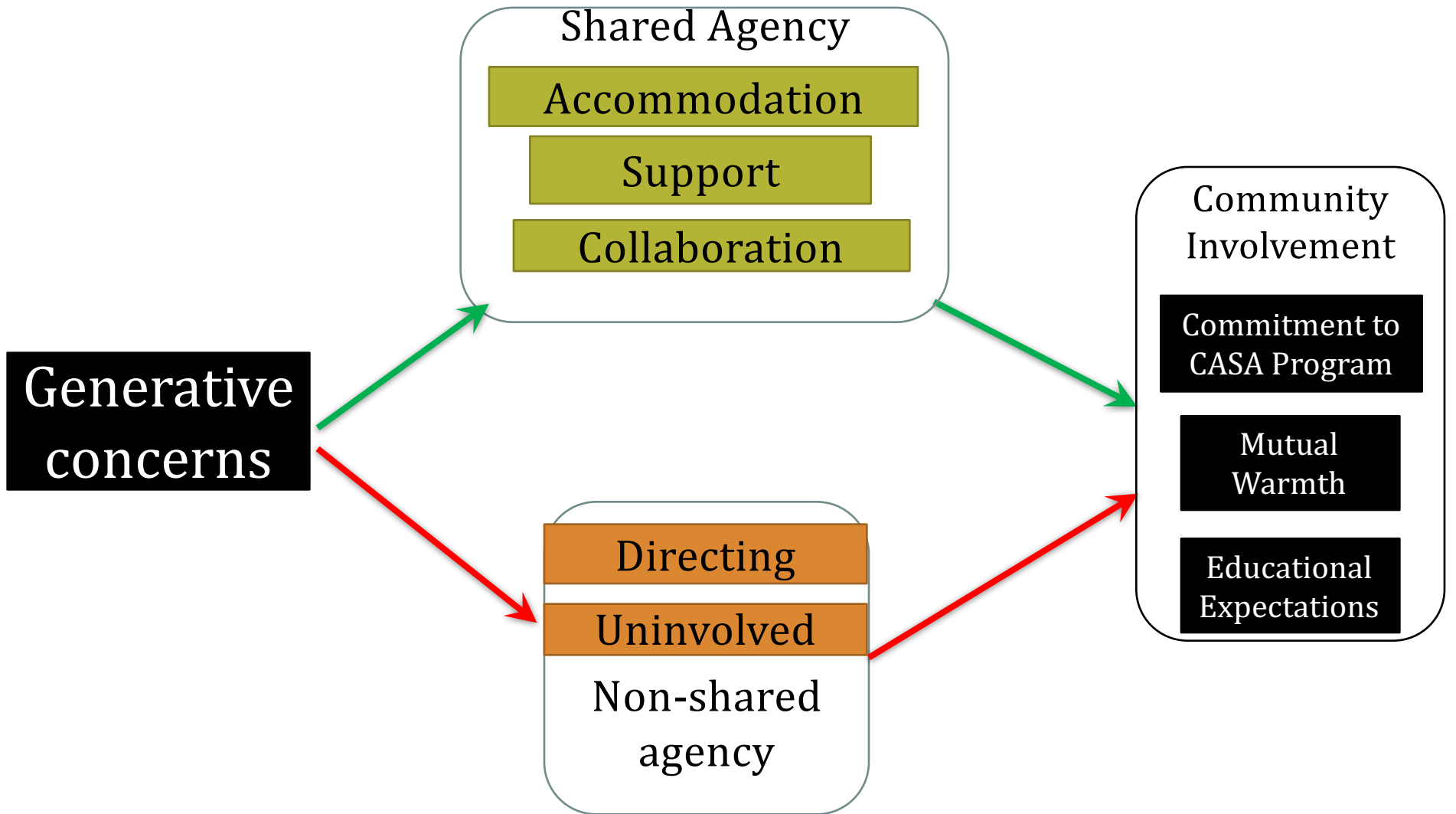
**Non-shared agency** is felt when one is goal engaged and the other is not; can be a burden on goal attainment (Chang, 2008).

# NON-SHARED AGENCY IN EDUCATION



# SHARED AGENCY





# PARTICIPANTS



*N* = 136 Advocates from CASA Orange County, CA

- 52.17 years (24 to 82 years)
- 36% without child (*n* = 48)
- Oldest child = 29.83 years
- 76% had 4 year degree or higher
- Mostly White (75%; *n* = 101)
- Mostly women (85%; *n* = 115)
- 27% retired (*n* = 37)

## Target youth

- 15.63 years, 11 to 20 years
- Mostly Latino (60%)
- White (16%)
- AfAm (11%)
- Mostly female (53%)

# MEASURES

Loyola Generativity Scale (20 items; McAdams, 1992)

- *I feel as though I have made a difference to many people.*

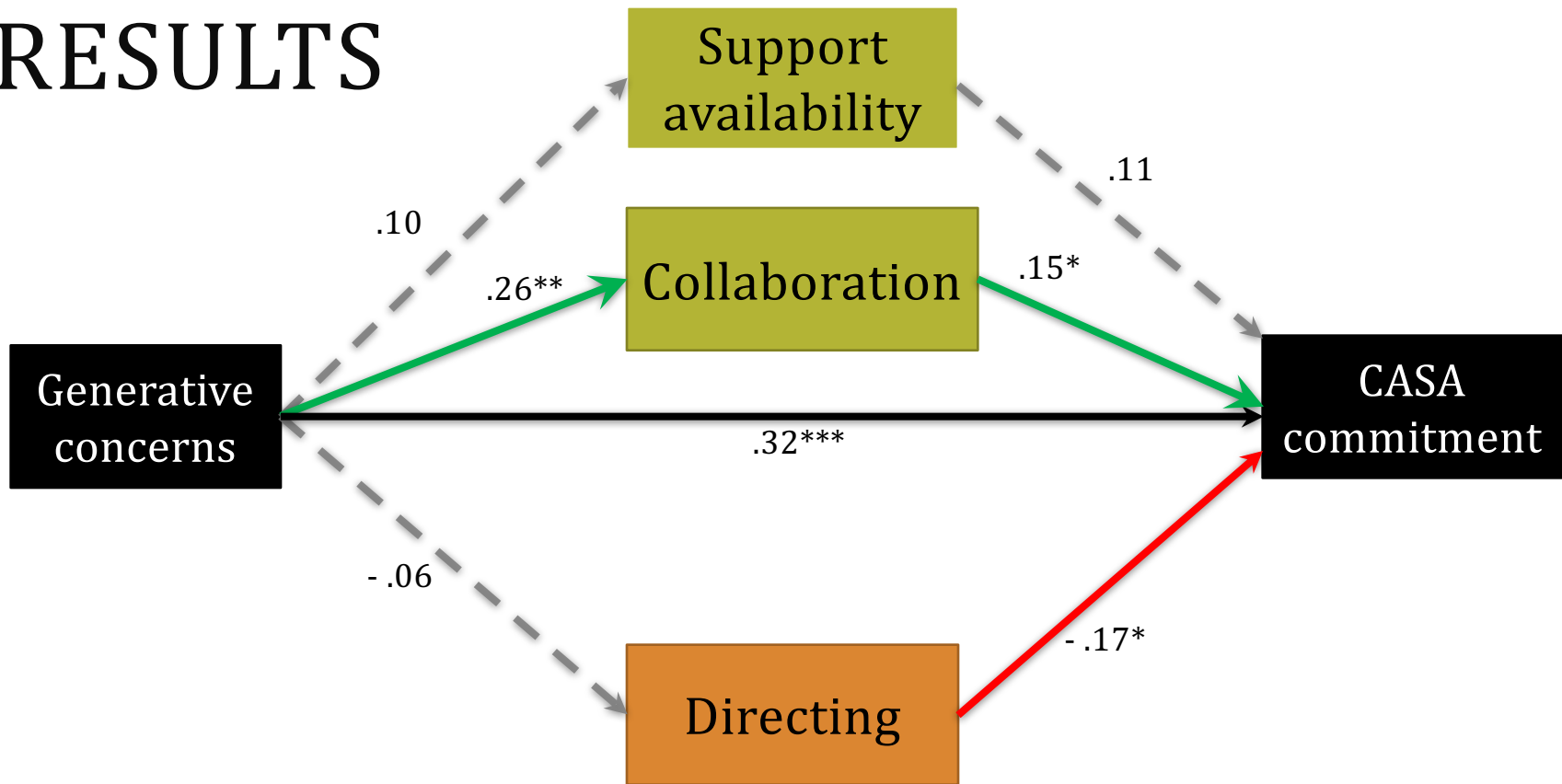
Shared and non-shared agency for educational goals (Chang et al., 2010)

- 2 factors of shared agency: *Support availability* and *Collaboration*
- 2 factors of non-shared agency: *Uninvolved* and *Directing*

Community Involvement

- CASA Program commitment (4 items; Allen & Eby, 2008)
- Mutual warmth (10 items; Himsel, 2006; “We understand each other”)
- Educational expectations for youth (“What do you think will be the highest level of education that your CASA youth will attain?”; 1=*Some HS*; 5=*Graduate degree*)

# RESULTS

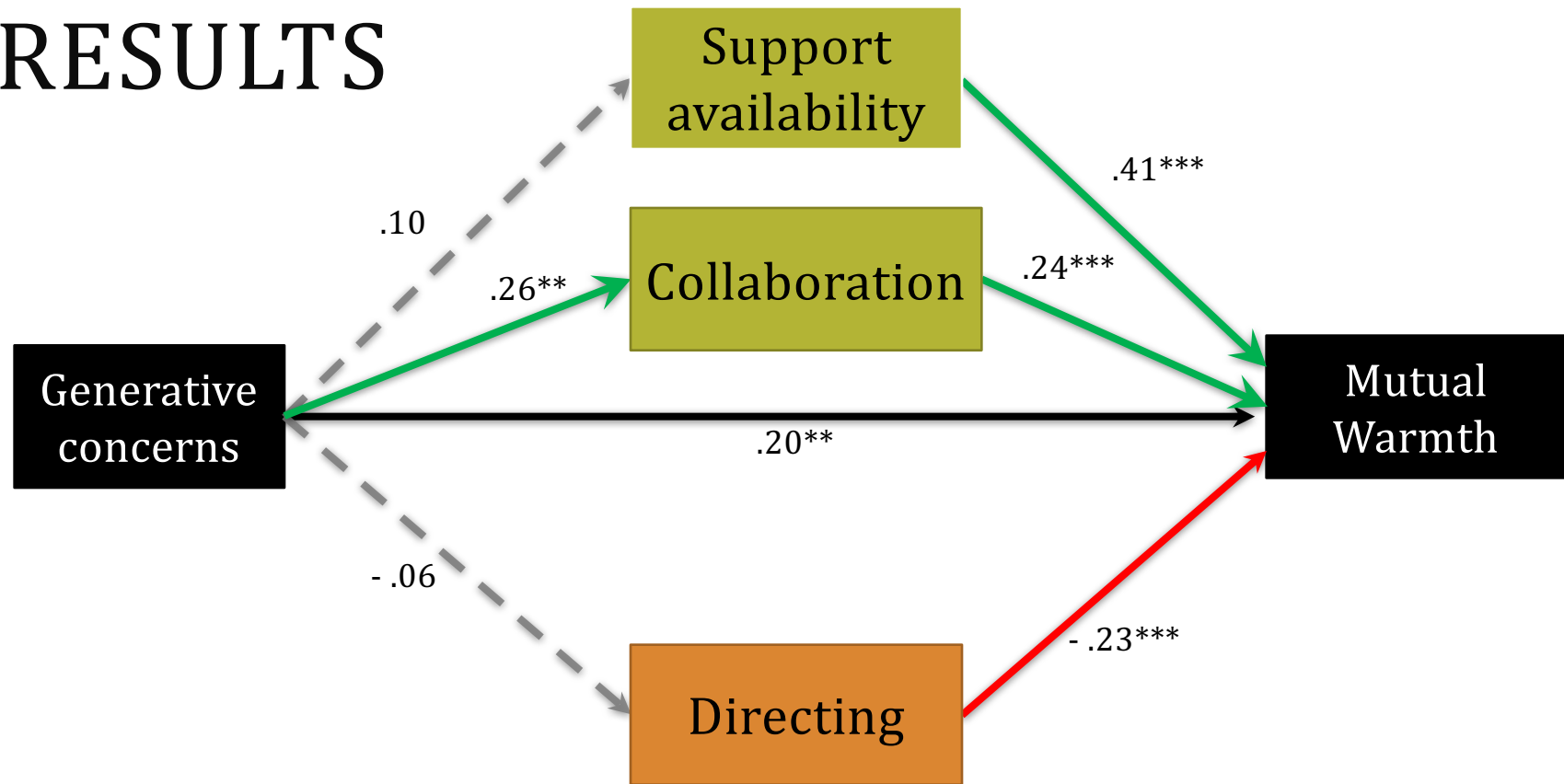


*Beta Coefficients shown for direct effects.*

$X^2 = 4.91$ , CFI=.950, TLI=.833, RMSEA=.067 (.000-.174)



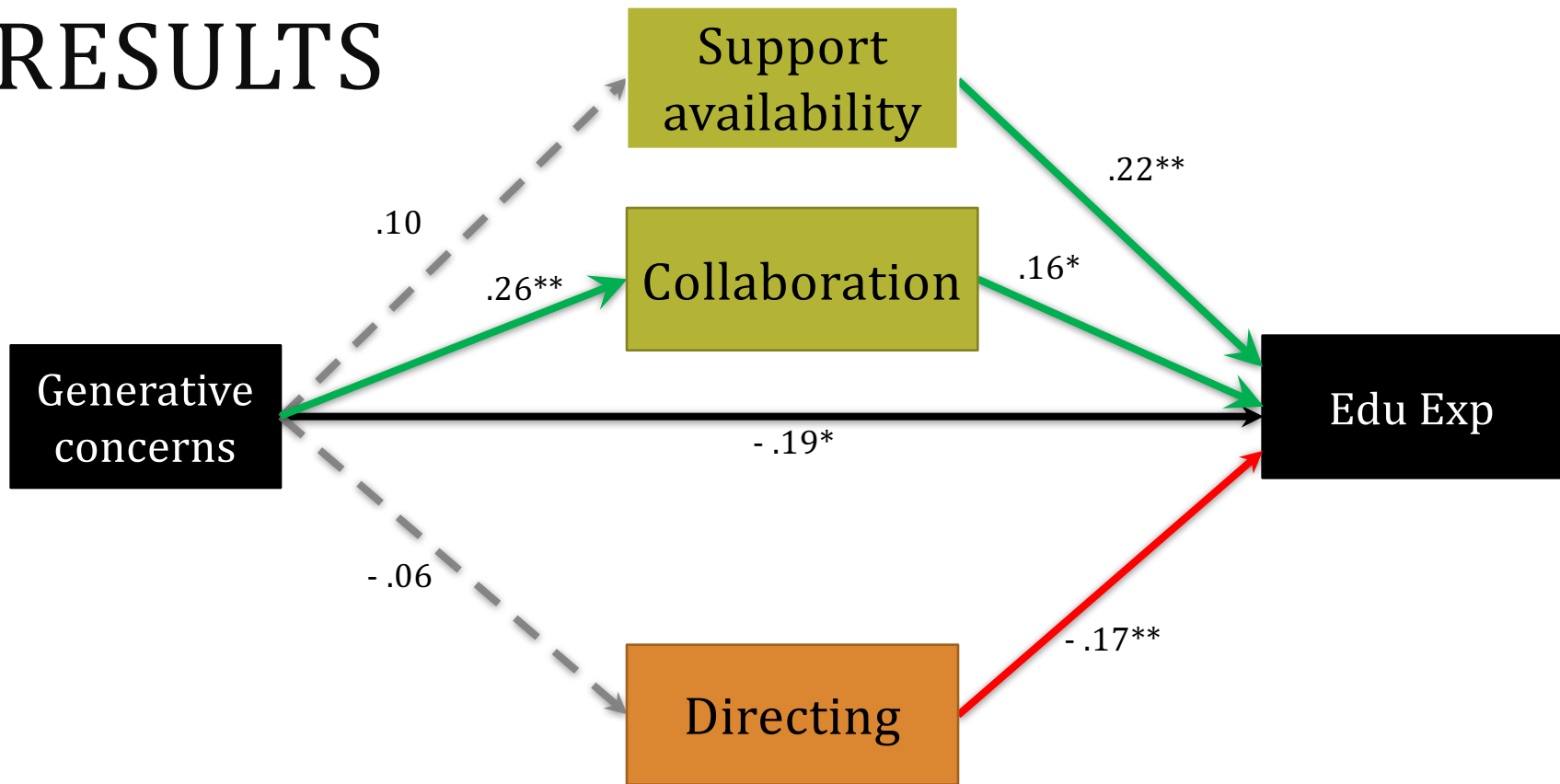
# RESULTS



*Beta Coefficients shown.*

$X^2 = 4.91$ , CFI=.974, TLI=.914, RMSEA=.069 (.000-.174)

# RESULTS



*Beta Coefficients shown for direct effects.*

$X^2 = 4.91$ , CFI=.922, TLI=.740, RMSEA=.069 (.000-.174)

# CONCLUSIONS

## Mentoring vs. parenting

- **SIMILAR:** CASAs high in **directing** were less committed to CASA, lacked mutual warmth with FY, and had lower educational expectations (→ instructing CASAs to avoid)
- **DIFFERENT:** Collaborative mentoring may benefit CASA and relationships with FY (cf. Parental accommodation > collaboration; Chang et al., 2010; Chang & Lee, 2016)

Collaboration consistently reinforced the link between  
Generativity and study outcomes

- Give and take with FY may be necessary due to cultural and economic differences between CASAs and FY

Does any of this really matter to FY's educational progress?

- Model for CASAs' educational expectations of foster youth was relatively weak.
- Future research should test how CASA-perceived independent variables associate with youth outcomes (school grades, educational achievement, etc.)

# THANK YOU!

CASA OC staff and administration

CASA participants

Research assistants Jianmin Shao, Yubin Kim, and  
Viki Mokouria

### CASA-FY Shared and Non-shared Agency

