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PARENT–ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS AND ROMANTIC DEVELOPMENT

A review and argument for research on
autonomy-supportive parenting

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Diverse qualities of the parent–adolescent relationships, such as warmth and communication, explain some of the variability in the quality and satisfaction of offspring’s later romantic relationships. In this chapter, we briefly summarize theories and research linking qualities of the parent–adolescent relationship to offspring’s romantic relationship outcomes (e.g., relationship satisfaction). After this section, we focus more precisely on one aspect of parenting, autonomy support, which has been infrequently studied but may be critical to offspring’s positive development of romance. Based on Self-Determination Theory and past research, we define parental autonomy support as parents’ support for volition, open communication, and guidance in coping and decision-making, and identify five intrapersonal and five interpersonal competencies that should develop out of autonomy-supportive parenting. We end by outlining a model of how and why parental autonomy support may foster the development of optimal romantic relationships via offspring’s developing intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies.

Almost everyone would agree that close relationships, feelings of belongingness, and enjoyable interactions with others are important for making life worthwhile and for maintaining positive functioning across emotional, social, cognitive, and physically active domains of life (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Collins and Madsen, 2006; Lucas and Dyrenforth, 2006). Having close connections and positive interactions with family and friends are critical for feelings of belonging and for well-being from the earliest day of life and throughout childhood. Yet, in adolescence (or at least by early adulthood) a new type of relationship—romantic—emerges and can often become the most important source of support, companionship, and intimacy. Because of the important roles of dating and couple relationships in promoting (or undermining) adaptation during adolescence (Furman and Shaffer, 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner, and Collins, 2001) and in later life (Collins and Madsen, 2006; Collins, Welsh, and Furman, 2009), the patterns and processes of romantic development during adolescence and emerging adulthood have become critical areas of study. In this research, studies (described below) focus on the onset of romantic interest and couple formation, as well as changes over time and individual differences in couple relationships. In particular, social-developmental researchers often turn to lifespan views that argue for a role of early social experiences, such as experiences with parents, as a foundation for romantic relationship development.

Although the existing research on parent–adolescent relationships and adolescents’ romantic relationship development is not extensive or consistent, findings tend to suggest that parent–adolescent relationship quality explains some of the variability in the quality and satisfaction of offspring’s romantic relationships in adolescence and early adulthood (Collins et al. 2009; De Goede, Branje, Van Duin, Vander Valk, and Meeus, 2012). For example, there have been multiple studies showing that parental warmth and involvement, usually defined as showing love, care, and positive regard, as well as spending and enjoying time with children (e.g., Davidov and Grusec, 2006), promote healthier and more satisfying **romance** in adolescence and into later life (e.g., Conger, Cui, Bryant, and Elder, 2000; Parade, Supple, and Helms, 2012; Seiffge-Krenke, Overbeek, and Vermulst, 2010). Moreover, when examining features of romantic relationships that explain relationship satisfaction, it is warmth and involvement within couple interactions that can also be critical (Knee, Hadden, Porter, and Rodriguez, 2013; Zimmer-Gembeck and Ducat, 2010). Thus, research suggests a pattern whereby warmth in the parent–adolescent relationship fosters warm and satisfying romantic relationship development, together resulting in greater satisfaction and relationship stability. Yet, satisfying romantic relationships are not only founded in warmth and involvement, they also depend on a capacity for self-regulation and autonomy (Connolly and Goldberg, 1999; La Guardia and Patrick, 2008; Lavy, Mikulincer, Shaver, and Gillath, 2010).

Indeed, there is a growing recognition of the importance of both warmth and autonomy support in the parent–child relationship for later development, including one’s relational functioning in adolescence and later life (La Guardia and Patrick,

2008; Zimmer-Gembeck and Ducat, 2010). For example, parental provision of a safe haven and a secure base for his/her infant, which defines a secure parent-child attachment, has been described as depending on the parents' sensitivity and responsiveness to the infant's cues (i.e., *warmth* rather than hostility and rejection) but also on parental behaviors that support the child's exploration of the environment, offering opportunities to solve problems on his or her own, and providing space to select and initiate activities (i.e., *autonomy support* rather than control and coercion) (Whipple, Bernier, and Mageau, 2011; Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016). We would add that a third component, the provision of clear guidelines, advice, and consistent, constructive guidance (i.e., *structure* rather than chaos), is also important for meeting children's needs for competence and developing competence across many domains of life, including one's romantic functioning (see also Joussemet, Landry, and Koestner, 2008; Skinner, Johnson, and Snyder, 2005; Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner, 2016).

There is evidence that, in general, autonomy-supportive parent-child relationships are associated with offspring's development of autonomous functioning and the capacity for self-regulation (Brenning, Soenens, Van Petegem, and Vansteenkiste, 2015; Grolnick, 2009; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989; Pomerantz, Grolnick, and Price, 2005; Skinner et al., 2005). Given this evidence, autonomy-supportive behaviors of parents should provide the groundwork for personal volition and self-regulatory and other competencies that will assist with optimal romantic relationship development. Yet, autonomy support as an important global aspect of parent-adolescent relationships has rarely been integrated into studies of romantic relationship development.

In the first section of this chapter, we provide a brief summary of theories that support a focus on the association of parent-adolescent relationships with romantic relationship development during adolescence and into early adulthood. Following this summary, in the second section we argue that a greater focus on parental autonomy support, especially when defined as the support for volition (defined as supporting children's and adolescents' "enactment upon their true personal interests and values"; Soenens et al., 2007, p. 633), might add to what is known about the role of parent-adolescent relationships in romantic development. Thereby, we also build upon research drawing from Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and on autonomy support within romantic relationships to consider the mechanisms that might explain why autonomy-supportive parenting could promote the development of more satisfying romantic relationships. In particular, we argue that parental autonomy support would lay down a foundation for adolescents' development of a number of intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies that provide critical scaffolds for the development of warm *and* autonomy-supportive (i.e., positive, healthy and growth-promoting) relationships outside the family. In the final section of the chapter, we propose an overarching framework and sketch out a model of how and why parental autonomy support may foster the development of optimal romantic relationships, in order to move the field further forward and to give direction for future research.

Theory: Parent–adolescent relationships and the development of romantic relationships

Attachment and related theories. Many developmental theorists (e.g., Brown and Bakken, 2011; Collins and Sroufe, 1999; Erikson, 1968; Simpson, Collins, and Salvatore, 2011) have argued that the development of a capacity for genuine intimacy with friends and romantic partners is a primary developmental task for adolescents and young adults. This task is often understood as a process that emerges, at least partially, from a history of experiences within the family. For example, in Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Sroufe, 1983), children's experiences with parents are described as foundations for later relationships via the development of internal working models of interpersonal relationships. These working models are the groundwork or the underpinning of the future of relationships; they are carried forward into and provide a web of beliefs and expectations about the self in relationships, about other people generally, and of interactions with others. These working models play out in interpersonal interactions and functioning via directing attention, stimulating emotional reactions and memory, playing a role in emotion regulation and coping with stress, forming attributions for personal and others' behaviors, and, ultimately, motivating behavior (Collins and Allard, 2001; Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner, 2016).

Attachment theory is not the only theory that has detailed the foundational elements of early experiences in relationships for later relationship development. For example, Collins and his colleagues (e.g., Collins and Sroufe, 1999; Collins and Van Dulmen, 2006) describe how relationship skills develop from early close relationships, within which the necessary first interactions with others take place. These are the building blocks for learning about a myriad of important features of relationships—such as sharing, warm responding, managing conflict, empathy, social perspective-taking, and asking for and providing social support. Thus, parents not only impact their children's later relationships through the somewhat abstract notion of working models; modeling dynamics also may play a significant role, as parents' observed behaviors may provide children with information about strategies that they can practice in their own lives, and it may help them to understand how they could or should interact in the day-to-day of a friendship or a partner relationship (Capaldi and Clark, 1998; Kim, Conger, Lorenz, and Elder, 2001; Masarik et al., 2013; Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2015). Similarly, parents might offer structure through the provision of direct information and help, and by teaching and advising children on their friendship and partner choices and interactions (Shulman, Scharf, and Shachar-Shapira, 2012).

The DEARR model. Perhaps the most comprehensive theoretical model that is specifically focused on the development of romantic (i.e., couple) relationships is the DEARR (Development of Early Adult Romantic Relationships) Model (Bryant, 2006). In this model, experiences within the family of origin are proposed as a key determinant of relationship success, but this influence comes from many

specific features of the family and interactions between parents and children (or, perhaps between siblings; Conger et al., 2000). Of particular relevance are two features of early relationships: (1) the general pattern of relationships within the family provide a model (or models) of what relationships should be like—yielding expectations of others' support, availability, trust or similar relationship processes (similar to attachment working models), and (2) the specific ways that family members interact are learned and give rise to the same or similar patterns of interactions in romantic relationships. Also having an impact on relationship development in this model are social structures such as family demographics and stability, and family socioeconomic status.

Other aspects of parenting and romantic development. Until this century, there had been very little research on the role of parent–adolescent relationships in romantic relationship development, with very little available prior to 1999 (Collins et al., 2009). In particular, the research on parental autonomy support is quite limited in scope. Instead, the most common aspects of parenting studied have included closeness, support, warmth; negative emotionality, hostility or rejection; and conflict resolution and management. Studies have examined multiple features of the parent–child relationship and multiple romantic relationship outcomes, with little direct replication across studies. In addition, many studies now test parenting as a unique contributor to later romantic relationship functioning, after accounting for parents' relationships with each other and individual temperament or other characteristics of children or adolescents.

In some classic studies, researchers investigated parents' closeness with and support of their offspring (and/or hostility and rejection of offspring) as precursors of romantic relationship functioning. For example, in a 36-year longitudinal study, closeness in the parent–child relationship at age five was associated with greater marital stability measured in the early 40s (Franz, McClelland, and Weinberger, 1991). Since the year 2000, we estimate that about a dozen prospective studies have been published that rely on reports of parenting or parent–child relationships in childhood (e.g., Conger et al., 2000; Parade et al., 2012; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, and Collins, 2005) or adolescence (e.g., Johnson and Galambos, 2014; Masarik et al., 2013; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2010) as predictors of romantic relationship satisfaction or other aspects of romantic functioning in adolescence or young adulthood. Summarizing across studies, it seems that about 10% of the variance in relationship satisfaction or quality in young adulthood can be accounted for by warmth and support in early parent–child relationships.

A particular area of interest has been the conflict resolution and management skills socialized or modeled in the home, as there does seem to be a cascade from conflict resolution in the home to conflict resolution tactics used with romantic partners (Reese-Weber and Marchand, 2002). Observed parent–child conflict resolution at age 13 has been found to be a predictor of observed conflict resolution and overall quality of romantic relationships at ages 20–21 (Collins and Sroufe, 1999). Moreover, other longitudinal research studies relying on multiple methods

(including observations and survey data) have found similar associations, with more adaptive and effective parent–adolescent conflict resolution associated with better conflict resolution of offspring with their romantic partners (Conger et al., 2000; Cui and Conger, 2008).

Summary. Taken together, theory and recent research increasingly indicate that the parent–child relationship can be either beneficial or problematic for adolescents’ later intimate functioning. In particular, experiences within the early parent–child relationships can result in children’s development of working models that may be a general guide to understanding relationships, but specific skills can also be learned (or modeled) from parents at the same time that relationships outside the family are formed, maintained and change over time (also see social psychological theory; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). Moreover, later and successive experience with relationships throughout each age period can provide novel opportunities that can result in adaptation and change in attachment-related working models over time. As described by Florsheim (2003, p. 377) romantic relationships can be transformative “by challenging precedents set by the individual’s attachment history and providing opportunities to try out new interpersonal behaviors,” and we cannot underscore more the importance of these opportunities and the role of each particular relationship, whether it is a friend, a partner, with a child, with coworkers, with those in your care or even a casual encounter that is novel and memorable, in shaping the current state of relationships found among any one individual. However, as is outlined below, we argue that it is also important to specifically consider the degree to which this relationship is an autonomy-supportive one.

Self-determination theory: Autonomy support and the need for autonomy

Parental autonomy support defined. Autonomy support from parents has been described as an important foundational element for children’s and adolescents’ well-being and autonomous functioning (Grolnick, 2009; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989; Pomerantz et al., 2005; Skinner et al., 2005), as well as for their growing capacity for intimacy in close relationships (Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006). However, the term *autonomy support* has been defined in multiple ways (Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins, 2003). Of most relevance to the current chapter, autonomy support has been defined as the degree to which parents (or others) support and encourage volitional functioning and the capacity to take actions based on personally endorsed values and interests, including providing opportunities for children to develop and voice their own beliefs, opinions, and attitudes; which includes expressing and being supported for their own unique feelings (Soenens et al., 2007; Van der Giessen, Branje, and Meeus, 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck, Ducat, and Collins, 2011). This form of autonomy support is focused on providing support for volition, and can be contrasted with support for independence, defined as allowing or supporting offspring to be increasingly responsible for themselves as they decrease

dependence and increase physical and emotional distance from parents (Soenens et al., 2007). Such views of two divergent dimensions of what has been considered as parental autonomy support align with evidence that adolescent autonomy in the family can also be related to volition (versus pressure to conform) or distance (versus proximity to parents) (Van Petegem, Vansteenkiste, and Beyers, 2013).

When the focus is on volition and parental support for volition, autonomy support also has been defined as active attempts to understand the interests, preferences, and perceptions of another (La Guardia and Patrick, 2008), and as an awareness and sensitivity to offspring's perspectives and choices, and assistance with exploration of values and interests, while minimizing use of external controls and power assertion (Grolnick, 2003; Ryan, La Guardia, Solky-Botzel, Chirkov, and Kim, 2005; Skinner et al., 2005; Soenens et al., 2007). Autonomy-supportive parents are more empathic towards their children, offer relevant choice whenever possible and provide a meaningful explanation when choice is limited (Grolnick, 2003; Joussemet, Vitaro et al., 2008). Autonomy support in this form is the conceptual opposite of controlling (or coercive; see Skinner et al., 2005) parenting (Pomerantz et al., 2005; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, and Sierens, 2009; Skinner et al., 2005; Zimmer-Gembeck, Webb, Thomas, and Klag, 2015), which involves using overt or covert pressure tactics to manipulate children's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in particular ways consistent with the parents' desires, for instance through guilt induction or love withdrawal (Barber, 1996, 2002; Grolnick and Pomerantz, 2009; Soenens and Vansteenkiste, 2010).

Implications of parental autonomy support for offspring's functioning. There is an expanding literature indicating that parents' autonomy support (i.e., support for volition) would promote their offspring's overall well-being and interpersonal functioning (whereas low autonomy support, such as psychological control or coercive parenting, would undermine their functioning). Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have documented the interrelation between perceived autonomy-supportive parenting and greater subjective well-being among adolescents (e.g., Brenning et al., 2015; Rowe, Zimmer-Gembeck, Rudolph and Nesdale, 2015; Wang, Pomerantz, and Chen, 2007). In addition, research has identified the significant role of autonomy-supportive parenting in adolescents' enhanced and adaptive interpersonal functioning, including greater social competence (e.g., Cook, Buehler and Fletcher, 2012; Soenens and Vansteenkiste, 2005), and reduced aggressive behavior (Joussemet, Vitaro, et al., 2008; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Duriez, and Niemiec, 2008).

Much of this research showing the positive role of parents' autonomy support has been founded in SDT (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2000; Skinner et al., 2005; Soenens et al., 2007; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, and Niemiec, 2009; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, and Sierens, 2009). At its core, SDT is a motivational theory identifying three universal psychological needs; that is, the need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Just this portion of the theory has stimulated a great deal of research on how social contexts and relationships can be foundations for the fulfillment of individuals'

psychological needs, and how these contextual experiences and need fulfillment help account for well-being, as well as individual and social development, across many domains and across the lifespan (Ryan and Deci, 2000). In addition, researchers have drawn from SDT to identify need fulfillment as a mechanism that could account for why particular features of relationships can have positive, as well as detrimental, effects on individual health and happiness (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2000; Skinner et al., 2005).

Researchers guided by SDT have consistently found positive relations between the quality of the social context in terms of parents' (but also teachers') autonomy support and adolescent autonomy and well-being (Sheldon, Abad, and Omoile, 2009; Soenens et al., 2007; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, and Sierens, 2009). Similarly, associations have often been found between autonomy-supportive interactions with classmates, romantic partners, and other peers and adolescent (or young adult) autonomy and well-being (for a review see Knee, Lonsbary, Canevello, and Patrick, 2005; also see Patrick, Knee, Canevello, and Lonsbary, 2007; Ryan et al., 2005; Zimmer-Gembeck and Ducat, 2010). Given that autonomy-supportive parenting is promotive of adolescents' autonomy development, it is also relevant that adolescent or young adults' own autonomous functioning has been associated with better personal and social well-being across a number of domains (e.g., Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, and Ryan, 2000). In one particularly compelling daily diary study (Reis et al., 2000), autonomy fluctuated day-to-day and these fluctuations were associated with well-being, with higher autonomy associated with better well-being.

Summary. The degree to which parents support their offspring to develop and pursue their own beliefs, values, and goals has been found in both cross-sectional and longitudinal research to be associated with young people's well-being and adaptive functioning. Parents who exhibit greater autonomy support provide their child with both the space and encouragement to pursue interests and preferences that are self-endorsed, and this type of parenting sets a foundation for more adaptive relationships and greater well-being. Such parenting assists their developing child to seek out and form relationships with others that provide contexts in which their basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be fulfilled. Research across the adolescent and emerging adult period supports this trajectory of autonomy-supportive parenting, fostering autonomous functioning and positive interactions and relationships with peers and romantic partners, and subsequent socioemotional well-being.

Research on ~~the~~ parent autonomy support and romantic development

Autonomy support and romantic development. Despite the focus of SDT on the universal psychological need for autonomy, the growing awareness of the importance of autonomy-supportive parenting, and the availability of new definitions and assessments of autonomy support, these ideas have been infrequently

integrated into research on adolescent and early adult romantic relationship development. Yet, autonomous functioning of individuals in relationships is an important component of healthy relationship functioning. This is reflected in research that has focused on both autonomy and relatedness for the establishment and continuation of positive and satisfying relationships, with the combination of both autonomy and relatedness sometimes referred to as interdependence (Connolly and Goldberg, 1999; Lavy et al., 2010; La Guardia and Patrick, 2008; Prager and Roberts, 2004; Shulman, 2003) or mutual autonomy (Kerig, Swanson, and Ward, 2012; Neff and Harter, 2002, 2003). Taking this approach to studying romantic relationship outcomes, parenting behaviors that have been proposed to be influential are those that are “autonomy-relevant” —which includes parenting strategies that may stimulate adolescents’ autonomy in direct, but also more indirect, ways. Studies have spanned a number of areas, including, for example, investigation of support for volitional functioning, parent–adolescent conflict management, and parental psychological control and intrusive parenting. In reviewing this literature, it was sometimes difficult to identify whether the measure (or measures) used to assess “autonomy-relevant parenting” was consistent with autonomy support of volitional functioning or was more tipped toward tapping parents’ provision of independence (for more information, see Soenens et al., 2007). Nevertheless, we summarize the research here that we believe focused more on autonomy support as support for volition than support for independence.

We could locate only one study that explicitly used an SDT formulation to guide an investigation of autonomy-supportive parenting and romantic development (Van Petegem, Brenning, Beyers, Baudat, and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016). In this two-wave longitudinal study, adolescents’ (age 15 to 22 years) reports of parental autonomy support was expected to be important for their functioning in romantic relationships 1.5 years later, as indicated by greater capacity for intimacy, and less unmitigated agency and less unmitigated communion. Unmitigated agency and unmitigated communion (Helgeson and Fritz, 1999) entail different forms of maladaptive relationship functioning. *Unmitigated agency* is an excessive focus on the self to the exclusion of others, and is characterized by arrogance, hostility, cynicism, and a negative view of others. *Unmitigated communion* is a focus on others to the exclusion of the self, and is characterized by self-neglect and an overinvolvement with others’ problems. Autonomy support was measured as perceived parental support of volitional functioning (Grolnick, Ryan, and Deci, 1991), and was contrasted with psychological control (Barber, 1996). Despite very high stability in all constructs over time, adolescents who reported that they received more autonomy-supportive parenting decreased in unmitigated communion and unmitigated agency in their intimate relationships over time; the association with capacity for intimacy was not significant. In addition, higher self-esteem and fewer depressive symptoms also predicted increases in adolescents’ capacity for closeness as well as declines in unmitigated communion and agency across time, suggesting mental and positive self-perceptions as mediators of the cascade of behaviors from the parent–child to the romantic relationship.

Psychological control and intrusive parenting, and romantic development. Psychological control and other coercive (or controlling) parenting behaviors have also been investigated as correlates of romantic development. This research is very much consistent with the SDT formulation of autonomy support, but focuses more so on behaviors that can thwart the fulfillment of the need for autonomy. There have been at least five studies published on this topic in recent years (Kerig et al., 2012; Manzi, Parise, Iafrate, Sedikides, and Vignoles, 2015; Oudekerk, Allen, Hessel, and Molloy, 2015; Pittman, Kerpelman, Soto, and Adler-Baeder, 2012; Tuggle, Kerpelman, and Pittman, 2014). In this research, psychologically controlling parenting has been described as the practice of intrusive control of children's thoughts and feelings. Items on the most commonly used measure (Barber, 1996) assess parents' use of manipulation, guilt induction, and love withdrawal to influence children's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as beliefs by adolescents that their parents want to change who they are. This same definition has also been used to describe intrusive parenting (Manzi et al., 2015). In one publication (Pittman et al., 2012), which reported on two cross-sectional studies, girls' elevated dating attachment anxiety and avoidance were each predicted by parents' greater use of psychological control at age 16–17 (Study 1), and among high school-age boys and girls involved in dating relationships (Study 2). These associations were found even after accounting for parents' provision of warmth and support. In a separate publication that reported on two studies with Italian adolescents and young adults (Manzi et al., 2015), parental intrusiveness was associated with lowered satisfaction, commitment, and a lesser sense of a "couple identity" in later romantic relationships even after accounting for romantic attachment style (Study 2). The negative association between intrusive parenting and couple identity was fully mediated by reduced self-concept clarity (Study 2). Such results are further supported by the negative association between parental psychological control and relationship satisfaction in romance, reported by Tuggle et al. (2014) in their study of a large number of students aged 12 to 14 years old (grades 5, 6, and 7).

Research by Kerig et al. (2012) examined psychological control to explain why some young people seem to gravitate towards either being overly accommodating or overly controlling in their peer relationships. Parental psychological control was assessed in 365 older teens and young adults (average age 18.5 years) residing in the USA. The relationship outcome of interest was "non-mutual autonomy" (either other-focused connection or independence, which the authors referred to as self-focused autonomy) in their close interpersonal relationship with a peer (friend or romantic partner, with 36% reporting about a partner). Other-focused connection included indicators of over-accommodation, self-sacrificing, and self-silencing, whereas self-focused autonomy was indicated by domineering/controlling behavior, and vindictive/self-centered behavior. Overall, results indicated that parental psychological control was associated with both an increased risk of other-focused connection and self-focused autonomy. Interestingly, parental acceptance (versus rejection) helped to explain under which conditions psychological control was associated with which aspect of non-mutual autonomy in peer relationships.

Specifically, as was predicted, high control in combination with high parental acceptance and warmth was associated with other-focused connection, whereas high control in combination with high parental rejection was associated with self-focused autonomy. Finally, the links between psychological control and self-focused autonomy were stronger for friend than for partner, but the association between psychological control and other-focused connection was stronger for romantic relationships.

Two cross-sectional studies of university students provide further insight into how the interplay between parental warmth and coercive or controlling parenting is related to one's romantic development. In the first study of 56 young couples (Kanat-Maymon and Assor, 2010, Study 2), findings showed that maternal control and conditional regard undermined empathic support of a partner. Further, maternal responsiveness and control had an interactive effect on empathic support of a partner, whereby the negative association between control and empathic support was stronger under the condition of high maternal responsiveness than under the condition of low responsiveness. In a second study of 174 undergraduate students (Roth and Assor, 2012), parents' conditional regard (specifically related to the expression of emotion) was associated with more difficulties with disclosure and lesser ability to provide support to partners. In contrast, parental autonomy support (specifically related to the expression of emotion) was associated with just the opposite—fewer difficulties with disclosure and a greater ability to provide support.

Taken together, findings show that parental psychological control and conditional regard not only have implications for children's autonomous self-development, putting them at risk for internalizing and externalizing problems (Barber, 2002; Kerig, 2005; Morris et al., 2002; Nelson and Crick, 2002; Olsen et al., 2002; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, and Criss, 2001), less firm and established sense of self-identities (Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, and Berzonsky, 2007), and lower capacity for self-reliance (Shulman, Collins, and Dital, 1993); it also seems to affect the children's development of relationships outside the home in adolescence and young adulthood. Possibly, impaired adjustment, and identity and self-reliance deficits may mediate these associations between parental psychological control and later romance difficulties. Another possible mediator, as proposed by Kerig et al. (2012), may be relational aggression. In previous studies, parental psychological control has been associated with adolescents' engagement in relational aggression (Kerig and Swanson, 2010; Nelson and Crick, 2002; Werner and Crick, 1999), which includes engaging in behaviors that aim at harming others' relationships (Leadbeater, Banister, Ellis, and Yeung, 2008). Often these behaviors are used to gain relationship exclusivity and compliance and, certainly when used in the context of a romantic relationship, seem to be motivated by the desire for acceptance and love (Linder, Crick, and Collins, 2002). Thus, relational aggression may emerge in the peer relationships of adolescents with a more extensive history of parental psychological control and might explain their lower relationship stability, satisfaction and quality in their romantic interactions. It may also be the case that parents'

own relational aggression may be the culprit here; parents who are psychologically controlling are engaging in a form of relational aggression and could be models of these behaviors for their children.

Conflict management and resolution. Parental autonomy support also may foster adolescents' healthy romantic functioning through parents' socialization of adaptive conflict management and resolution strategies. Overall, conflict is one very good example of a type of interpersonal interaction that is almost impossible to avoid in close relationships and depends to a great extent on both relatedness and autonomy. In conflict, it is important to declare one's position in a way that is autonomous, thus asserting one's personal goals, preferences, or interests, while also considering the other's needs and doing it in a way that does not provoke relationship damage (McIsaac, Connolly, McKenney, Pepler, and Craig, 2008; Shulman, 2003). Negotiation is critical and sometimes this can mean changing one's goals or desires to accommodate another. When parents support their adolescents' volition (i.e., autonomy), especially in conflict but also when outside of it, parents can foster their offspring's capacity to exhibit both autonomous behavior and relatedness via two potential pathways—by fulfilling adolescents' need for autonomy and providing assistance with the development of children's capacity for negotiation (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, and O'Connor, 1994).

Much of the research on conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship and romantic development seems to operationalize autonomy-supportive parenting to include both support for volition and support for independence in adolescents. Nevertheless, it does tend to reveal the anticipated positive effects of better conflict management and resolution for later good romantic relationships. In a classic study, Hauser et al. (1984) found that parents who used what they called "facilitating" approaches to conflict with offspring, such as allowing all views to be shared and discussed openly, had adolescents who were better able to express their own views in a complex, mutual, and tolerant manner. In contrast, parents who were more frequently observed to use a "restrictive" conflict style (i.e., not allowing opinions to differ or stopping discussion prematurely) had adolescents who were more self-focused and demanding. Allen and colleagues (Allen, Hauser, Bell, Boykin, and Tate, 1994, Allen, Hauser, Eickholt et al., 1994; Allen et al., 2006) have found empirical support for a similar process. In their studies of adolescents who are asked to discuss areas of disagreement with their parents, adolescents were better adjusted when the observed interactions with their parents were characterized by autonomy-exhibiting behaviors (i.e., negotiating a difference of opinions, reflecting independence of thought and self-determination in social interaction) as well as relatedness-exhibiting behaviors (i.e., behaviors that promoted interest and involvement in the interaction, and validation of thoughts and feelings). Inhibiting autonomy included behaviors that made it difficult for parents or adolescents to discuss their own reasons for their position within the conflict, such as overpersonalizing a disagreement, recanting a position before agreeing that it was wrong, or pressuring without making rational arguments. Inhibiting relatedness consisted of hostile

behavior toward a family member, or rude interruptions (which have been considered as part of psychological control; Barber, 1996; 2002).

Conflict experiences and their successful management, therefore, seem to provide direct opportunities for adolescents to learn conflict negotiation skills and to practice considering how to express personal views, while also maintaining closeness and displaying sensitivity towards another. Yet, parent–adolescent conflict and its adaptive management may play a role in later romance in other, less direct ways. For instance, situations of conflict may provide opportunities for building views about the support available in relationships or may foster one’s competence in managing emotional reactivity. Indeed, relationships are also known to be contexts where managing emotional reactions to conflicts can be encountered and refined (Cook, Buehler, and Blair, 2013). Unfortunately, a higher frequency of interpersonal conflict (Cook et al., 2013) or negative conflict (Amato and Booth, 2001; Walper and Wendt, 2015) (without a consideration of how it is resolved or negotiated) seems also to be carried forward into romantic relationships, predicting higher emotional reactivity to conflict or more negative conflict in romantic relationships in the later teenage years or beyond.

Summary. In summary, parenting practices that may promote or inhibit autonomy have been studied in a variety of ways, including as the support for volition from a SDT perspective, as parental control and coercion, and as specific ways of engaging in and resolving conflict. Moreover, all of these manifestations of autonomy support (or the lack of it) within the parent–adolescent relationship have been linked to romantic relationship outcomes—sometimes directly but also indirectly via multiple intrapersonal and interpersonal developmental mediators and mechanisms. Given the amassing evidence and views that autonomy and relatedness are necessary elements for optimal relationship functioning, there are ample reasons and evidence pointing to autonomy-supportive parenting and its very important role in adolescent and young adult romantic development. So what are the necessary next steps to understand the more specific role of autonomy support as an influence on romantic development? We summarize our recommendations for future research in the form of a model, shown in Figure 8.1, and describe this model in more detail below.

A proposed model of autonomy support and romantic development

Autonomy-supportive parenting practices that may foster romantic development. In Figure 8.1, we first show (on the left) three aspects of parental autonomy support that are consistent with definitions of autonomy support as support for volition (Grolnick, 2009; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989; Pomerantz et al., 2005; Ryan et al., 2005; Skinner et al., 2005; Soenens et al., 2007; Van der Giessen et al., 2014; Van Petegem et al., 2013; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2011). These three aspects of parental autonomy support include: (1) support for volition, personal choice,

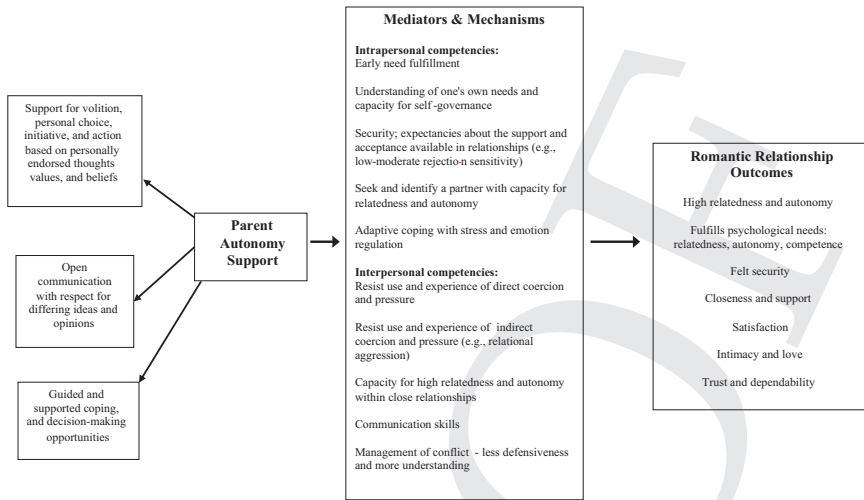


FIGURE 8.1 A proposed framework for research on parental autonomy support and romantic relationship development into adolescence and adulthood

initiative, and action based on personally endorsed thoughts, values, and beliefs; (2) open communication with respect for differing beliefs, ideas, and opinions; and (3) guided and supported coping and decision-making opportunities. Although these aspects are likely to covary positively with each other, we list these three aspects as separate as they tend to have been drawn from different bodies of literature on autonomy-relevant parenting practices.

We anticipate that all three aspects of autonomy support will also reflect parents' structuring of interactions with their adolescents, which will assist in the promotion of their competence (and meet the need for competence) in interpersonal and goal-directed behaviors (e.g., educational and vocational pursuits). Thus, the aspects of parental autonomy support we highlight in Figure 8.1 will meet adolescents' psychological need for autonomy, but may also facilitate competence and meet the need for competence.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies as mediators. Second, we show pathways from autonomy support to intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. We propose these competencies as mediators (or mechanisms) involved in numerous romantic relationship outcomes. These are the multiple pathways and processes that potentially explain why parental autonomy support influences romantic relationship outcomes. We argue that cascading parent-to-partner effects would be likely to flow through ten intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies (which are also likely to be interrelated and overlapping with each other). The five intrapersonal competencies we identify include early life need fulfillment; a greater self-understanding of one's own needs and capacity for self-governance (see Farley and Kim-Spoon, 2014; Kelly, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Boislard, 2012; Knee

et al., 2005; La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, and Deci, 2000; Neff and Harter, 2002; Ryan et al., 2005); positive expectancies about the support and acceptance available in relationships (e.g., felt security; low-moderate rejection sensitivity) (see Bryant, 2006; Collins and Sroufe, 1999; Downey, Frietas, Michaelis, and Khouri, 1998; Furman and Wehner, 1994; Joyner and Campa, 2006; Rowe et al., 2015); a greater capacity to seek and identify a similar partner with capacity for both relatedness and autonomy (see Knee et al., 2005; Sanderson, Keiter, Miles, and Yopyk, 2007; Shulman, 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck and Ducat, 2010); and more adaptive coping with stress and emotion regulation (see Collins and Allard, 2001; Cook et al., 2013; Roth and Assor, 2012; Seiffge-Krenke and Pakalniskiene, 2011; Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner, 2016).

The five interpersonal competencies we illustrate include an enhanced capacity to resist the use and experience of *direct* coercion and pressure (see Exner-Cortens, 2014; Kerig et al., 2012; Sanderson and Evans, 2001); an enhanced capacity to resist use and experience of *indirect* coercion and pressure (e.g., relational aggression; Kerig et al., 2012; Linder et al., 2002); greater capacity for warmth, closeness, and autonomy support within close relationships (see Connolly and Goldberg, 1999; Lavy et al., 2010; Taradash, Connolly, Pepler, Craig, and Costa, 2001); better communication skills (Allen et al., 2006; Bryant, 2006); and more optimal management of conflict (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt et al., 1994; Cook et al., 2013; Reese-Weber and Marchand, 2002; Shulman, 2003; Walper and Wendt, 2015), particularly less defensiveness and more understanding (Knee et al., 2005).

We only highlight here the ten mediators that have emerged from our overview of this area of research; we do not expect this is a complete set of possibilities, and we also do not expect that all are necessarily equally relevant in different cultures, settings, socioeconomic conditions, or other differences between social contexts. We also expect that they are not all equally important mediators, and that the pathways and processes may be more complex than illustrated here. For example, it is likely that the intrapersonal competencies may mediate between parental autonomy support and the listed interpersonal competencies, whereby it is the intrapersonal competencies that are the direct outcomes of parental autonomy support, which then promote interpersonal competencies both inside and outside the home. Finally, some of the competencies we list may be relevant for only some of the different romantic outcomes.

Romantic outcomes. The ten intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies shown in Figure 8.1 are, generally, expected to provide advantages for a number of positive romantic relationship outcomes. We have done little to critically evaluate the romantic outcomes we have identified, but studies reviewed here generally allude to positive outcomes as the experience of *romantic relationships* that provide fulfillment of the needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence; are capable of providing both autonomy support and relatedness (i.e., warmth, closeness, intimacy); provide opportunities for closeness and support; are satisfying; involve intimacy and love; and are trustworthy and dependable. These views of optimal romantic

relationship outcomes also emerged from theory that describes the development of a capacity for intimacy as an important element of maturity, and this capacity for intimacy involves a close dyadic partnership with another that enjoys reciprocal feelings of trust, connectedness, felt security, and self-disclosure (e.g., Collins and Steinberg, 2006; Zimmer-Gembeck and Ducat, 2010). Thus, one deficit in the development of intimacy may be a low capacity to develop close relationships with others. Other deficits may emerge within relationship (Kins, Beyers, and Soenens, 2013), where relationships are either overabsorbing or overly disconnected (La Guardia and Patrick, 2008; Neff and Harter, 2002; Shulman, 2003; Van Petegem et al., 2016).

To make the model easier to apply across adolescence and early adulthood, we have left out the relationship outcomes of commitment and longevity. Even when the focus is on adult relationships, it has not been clear whether high commitment and lengthier relationships always indicate that these are the most beneficial for personal well-being (La Guardia and Patrick, 2008). Thus, a focus on commitment and relationship length as positive outcomes can be particularly unclear when considering teenage relationships (Furman and Hand, 2006; Schwartz, 2006; Smetana and Gettman, 2006).

Caveats regarding the proposed model. Although there are many testable links in the model we propose (see Figure 8.1), we have two caveats to raise. First, we have described parental autonomy support as a relatively general parenting behavior that is exhibited in day-to-day parent-child interactions. We gave relatively little attention to particular domains of communication or decision-making. We expect that the way in which autonomy support is provided and negotiated may differ by domain in many families, and the domain as such may have some importance for understanding the influence of autonomy support. For example, whereas discussions about value-laden themes (such as politics or war) or about future goals (such as in academics or work pursuits) are critical domains in which autonomy-supportive interactions may occur, personal domains may be even more directly relevant for romantic developmental outcomes. For example, direct discussions about love, attachment, conflict, and sex may be particularly important domains of impact—with support for individuality, open communication, guided and supported decision-making, and support for personal choice, volition, and emotions most relevant to romantic outcomes when they are provided in the domains of relationships within the family and with peers or others outside the family (e.g., see Mastro and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2015; Murras, Grolnick, and Friendly, 2013).

Our second caveat is our specification of autonomy-supportive parenting behaviors in the model. It could be that the aspects of autonomy-supportive parenting we highlight are likely to fulfill adolescents' needs for autonomy and competence, and thus be both autonomy- and competence-promoting. In addition, the need for relatedness cannot be overlooked, which depends on warmth, connection, and positive regard from others. In other words, in future research it will be important

to continue to assess parental warmth and involvement, as well as parents' structure and competence support. For example, as discussed earlier, researchers have been addressing "interactions" between parental autonomy support and warmth (or involvement) by measuring multiple aspects of parenting (Kerig et al., 2012). Also important are the more fine-grained distinctions in the understanding of autonomy support that are emerging and drawing increasing research attention, such as the differentiation of parental support for independence from parental support for volition (Soenens et al., 2007).

Conclusion

There has been a long history of viewing the optimal outcomes in romance as more than simply relatedness, intimacy, or commitment, by focusing also on how individuals come to develop relationships that meet their needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence, and to establish relationships that are interdependent without being overly dependent or too detached—in other words, establishing relationships that have high levels of autonomy and relatedness (e.g., La Guardia and Patrick, 2008; Van Petegem et al., 2016). Multiple theories and amassing evidence support the role of parenting during childhood and adolescence in such romantic developmental pathways and outcomes. Nevertheless, less attention has been given to the role of parental autonomy support when defined within a SDT framework (Deci and Ryan, 1985), than has been given to parental security and warmth or autonomy-relevant parenting defined more broadly. We have provided a framework here that identifies the autonomy-supportive parenting behaviors of supporting offspring's personal values and volition, and providing opportunities for open communication and for the practice of adaptive coping, emotion regulation and decision-making, which we argue are just as important as secure and warm relationships with parents for optimal romantic pathways and outcomes later in life. Future research could use the framework proposed here to more specifically address these possibilities, while also considering other aspects of parenting. In addition, we encourage a focus on friendships as a bridge (and as another important relationship outcome) in this framework (Furman and Wehner, 1994) and the consideration of the dyadic nature of relationships, where relationship outcomes may be related to both self and partner competencies, beliefs, attitudes, and motivations (Collins and Van Dulmen, 2006; Zimmer-Gembeck and Ducat, 2010). Finally, as Furman and Shaffer (2003) also argued, understanding the quality of romantic relationships may involve considering how it assists development in other arenas of life to even further meet needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy, such as supporting friendships, personal achievement, sexuality development, caregiving, or civic involvement. Such a view could extend our proposed framework to consider how romantic outcomes might be linked with other developmental intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies and trajectories of satisfaction throughout the lifespan.

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