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# On the Benefits of Giving as Well as Receiving Autonomy Support: Mutuality in Close Friendships

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*Two studies examined autonomy support within close friendships. The first showed that receiving autonomy support from a friend predicted the recipient's need satisfaction within the relationship and relationship quality as indexed by emotional reliance, security of attachment, dyadic adjustment, and inclusion of friend in self and that there was significant mutuality of receiving autonomy support and of each other variable. The relations of perceived autonomy support to need satisfaction and relationship quality held for both female-female and male-male pairs across the two studies. The second study replicated and extended the first, showing that receiving autonomy support also predicted psychological health. Furthermore, giving autonomy support to a friend predicted the givers' experience of relationship quality over and above the effects of receiving autonomy support from the friend. When both receiving and giving autonomy support competed for variance in predicting well-being, giving, rather than receiving, autonomy support was the stronger predictor.*

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**T**hroughout the past two decades, research guided by self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000) has shown repeatedly that autonomy support provided by one relational partner enhances the autonomous motivation, quality of performance, and psychological health of the other (e.g., Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Williams, Grow, Freedman, Ryan, & Deci, 1996).

Autonomy support is defined in terms of one relational partner acknowledging the other's perspective, providing choice, encouraging self-initiation, and being responsive to the other. In all of the research, the relationships have involved differentials in authority or expertise, with the partner providing the autonomy support being an authority, such as a teacher, manager, parent, or physician. Thus, the research indicates that when an authority figure provides autonomy support to an individual for whom he or she is responsible, that individual experiences enhanced motivation, performance, and well-being. Within SDT, the positive effects of an authority providing autonomy support are said to result from the subordinate experiencing greater satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In short, as various studies have shown, it is the subordinate's psychological need satisfaction that yields positive effects (e.g., Deci et al., 2001).

One thing that characterizes relationships involving authority differentials is the lack of mutuality. The person in the one-down position is not expected to provide, say, autonomy support to the authority. However, in peer relationships such as close friendships or romantic partnerships, there is a greater expectation of mutuality.

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Thus, for example, one might expect each partner to give as well as receive autonomy support. Of interest, however, there has been no research on the degree of mutuality of autonomy support in close friendships or on the relations between mutuality of autonomy support and relationship quality or well-being.

#### *Autonomy Support in Close Friendships*

The current work examines close friendships, in which each person is likely to count on the other to provide interpersonal nourishment such as that represented by the concept of autonomy support. We expect that when Person A receives a high level of autonomy support from his or her friend (i.e., Person B), Person A would benefit. For example, Person A's experiencing a friend (Person B) as autonomy supportive, as being able to take Person A's perspective and encourage Person A's initiations and choice, should lead Person A to feel more securely attached to Person B and also to be more willing to rely on Person B, that is, to turn to him or her to share emotionally important experiences. Furthermore, this also should work in reverse, that is, when Person B receives a high level of autonomy support, he or she should benefit. Thus, our first hypothesis is that receiving autonomy support from a close friend will lead the recipient to experience the benefits of greater relationship quality with the friend and greater well-being.

The benefits of receiving autonomy support are theorized to accrue because it is expected to provide satisfaction of the basic psychological needs, and numerous studies have drawn a link between need satisfaction and both relationship quality and well-being outcomes. For example, studies have shown that experiencing need satisfaction with a best friend predicted both security of attachment with that friend (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000) and emotional reliance on the friend (Ryan, La Guardia, Solky-Butzel, Chirkov, & Kim, 2005). As well, many studies have linked need satisfaction to psychological health, although these were not done within close friendships (for a review, see Deci & Ryan, 2000). Still, we expect that receiving autonomy support from a friend will relate to relationship quality and well-being because receiving autonomy support from the friend will provide the recipient with basic psychological need satisfaction.

#### *Research on Autonomy and Relationship Quality*

Although no study has examined autonomy support in peer relationships, three have related autonomy to relationship quality. Hodgins, Koestner, and Duncan (1996) found that individuals who scored higher on the autonomy causality orientation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), that is,

who were more autonomous in their own self-regulation, reported more positive, honest relationships than did those who scored lower on the autonomy orientation. That is, being autonomous was associated with warmer, more satisfying interpersonal interactions.

The second study was of romantic relationships among married or cohabiting couples. It showed that each partner's levels of autonomous motivation for being in the relationship, that is, each partner's feelings of volition about staying in the relationship because it has personal importance to him or her rather than feeling pressured to stay by some external or internal control, predicted dyadic adjustment (Blais, Sabourin, Boucher, & Vallerand, 1990). The third study found that when a person felt autonomous in a relationship, that is, he or she felt free to be who he or she is rather than feeling pressured to be a certain way), the person reported greater attachment security with the relational partner and more relationship satisfaction (La Guardia et al., 2000). Together, the Blais et al. and La Guardia et al. studies showed that a person's feeling autonomy within a relationship predicted the person's satisfaction and attachment within that relationship. We suggest that if one person experienced a high level of autonomy, the friend would likely have been highly autonomy supportive (see Ryan, 1995). Thus, we hypothesize a positive relation between receiving autonomy support from a friend and experiencing a high level of relationship quality. Furthermore, because of the reciprocal nature of close friendships, we hypothesize that there will be mutuality of autonomy support within such friendships.

#### *Mutuality and the Giving of Autonomy Support*

On both theoretical and empirical grounds, it seems reasonable to expect that autonomy support from a friend would enhance a person's friendship satisfaction and psychological well-being and that there would be mutuality within close friendships. However, an additional, important question concerns whether the mutuality, which from the perspective of one person in the dyad can be viewed as both the receiving and the giving of autonomy support, would itself contribute to the person's satisfaction and well-being over and above the contribution of receiving autonomy support from the person's friend. That is, if Person A receives autonomy support from Person B, does it matter for Person A's relationship satisfaction and well-being whether Person A believes that Person B is also experiencing autonomy support from Person A, that is, does it matter to Person A if there is mutuality, as viewed from Person A's perspective? If mutuality did contribute to satisfaction and well-being for Person A, over and above the contribution made by his or her receiving autonomy support from

Person B, it would mean that Person A's experience of providing autonomy support would actually be contributing to Person A's (i.e., his or her own) psychological well-being. In short, it would mean that Person A's receiving autonomy support and giving autonomy support would each contribute independent variance to Person A's experience of satisfaction and well-being.

Why might giving autonomy support to a friend affect the giver's relationship satisfaction and well-being? We suggest that giving autonomy support to a friend, similar to getting autonomy support from a friend, is also a source of need satisfaction for the person giving it. If Person A gave something meaningful to a friend (e.g., autonomy support), Person A would be likely to experience a sense of competence in having had the friend receive this offering, a sense of relatedness to the friend because relatedness involves caring for as well as feeling cared for by a friend, and a sense of autonomy because Person A would be freely and volitionally doing something that he or she valued (*viz.*, giving to the friend). Thus, just as receiving autonomy support provides need satisfaction to the receiver, giving autonomy support would provide need satisfaction to the giver. Person A, being both a giver and a receiver in this example, should thus benefit from both the giving and the receiving.

Because we have argued that a person's giving and receiving autonomy support to a close friend would provide the person need satisfaction, we tested whether both giving and receiving autonomy support was positively related to satisfaction of the basic psychological needs.

#### *Autonomy and Gender*

Not all psychologists agree about the importance of autonomy within close relationships. Some have suggested or implied that autonomy and relatedness within close relationships represent an ongoing tension or conflict, such that the experience of autonomy within a relationship is likely to signal relationship problems. Furthermore, writers such as Gilligan (1982) and Jordan (1997) have maintained that autonomy is a male-oriented concept. Women, they suggest, define themselves in terms of relationships and do not experience an autonomous self. Thus, autonomy is alien to women's experience of self. Men, in contrast, are said to view themselves as separate and independent, so they do experience an autonomous self and tend to view relationships as impinging on their individualism (Jordan, 1997). For both genders, then, autonomy and relatedness are considered antagonistic, with women orienting toward relatedness and men orienting toward autonomy.

SDT maintains, however, that well-being and high-quality relationships require individuals, regardless of gender, to experience satisfaction of both the autonomy and relatedness needs within their important relationships, that is, they need to feel both volitional and connected with their partners to be satisfied in the relationships and to evidence a high level of psychological adjustment (e.g., Ryan, 1995). Of interest, this SDT view is consistent with the thinking of other feminist writers such as Friedman (2003), which allows for autonomy within relationships. Furthermore, it is worth noting that to view autonomy as a male-oriented characteristic runs the risk of denying the importance of volition for women and thus represents a disempowering stance (e.g., Lerner, 1988; Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000; Ryan, 1995).

#### *INDEPENDENCE OR VOLITION?*

The seeming disparity in thinking about autonomy in relationships may stem from the fact that Jordan (1997) portrays the concept of autonomy differently from how it is understood in SDT. Jordan's use of the term "autonomy" is essentially interchangeable with the terms "independence" and "individualism." To have an autonomous self is to see one's self as independent from the others with whom one is in close relationships.

The concept of autonomy within SDT refers not to independence but to volition. One is autonomous to the degree that one experiences choice, willingness, and personal endorsement of one's actions. Within SDT, people could as easily be autonomously interdependent as autonomously independent, that is, to freely choose to depend on others or to be independent of them. To have an autonomous self would mean to have a well-integrated self (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and people can experience significant others as being part of their integrated self, that is, of their autonomous self. Indeed, Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992) suggested that both men and women experience their relational partners, to some degree, as being part of their own self. The researchers developed a measure to assess the degree to which people experience close friends (whether male or female) as being included within the self. We agree and expect that, for both genders, receiving autonomy support from a friend will be related to experiencing the friend as part of the self.

#### *The Present Research*

We examined whether, in close friendships, when a person perceives autonomy support from a friend, the person experiences greater need satisfaction, relationship quality, and well-being. We expected this effect to work in both directions, with each member benefiting from being provided with autonomy support by the

other. We also examined whether there is mutuality of autonomy support—in other words, whether when one dyad member tends to be high on perceived autonomy support the other also tends to be. We then examined whether the relation between perceived autonomy support and relationship quality is primarily a function of dyad-level variance or individual-level variance. Finally, in Study 2, we tested whether a person's giving autonomy support to a friend contributes to the person's need satisfaction, relationship quality, and well-being over and above the contribution made by receiving autonomy support from the friend.

#### STUDY 1

We tested the hypotheses that a person's experience of autonomy support from a friend would predict the person's need satisfaction and relationship quality and also that there would be significant mutuality of autonomy support between the dyadic partners. We then examined the degree to which the relations of perceived autonomy support to need satisfaction and relationship quality would be accounted for by dyad-level (as opposed to unique, individual-level) variance.

#### Method

##### PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Participants were 98 University of Rochester, undergraduate, close-friend dyads (22 male-male, 43 female-female, and 33 male-female). When one partner signed up to participate, he or she agreed to bring a close friend to the study as a fellow participant. Both dyad members received extra course credit in a psychology course and both completed the same questionnaires, which were administered in group sessions. Participants were told that all questions about a friend should be answered with respect to the friend who accompanied them.

##### MEASURES

The degree to which a person perceived that his or her friend provided autonomy support was considered to be the independent variable in this study. Also assessed were psychological need satisfaction, emotional reliance on the friend, attachment security, dyadic adjustment, and inclusion of other in the self.

*Friendship Autonomy Support Questionnaire (FASQ).* This 10-item scale was adapted from the Health Care Climate Questionnaire (Williams et al., 1996). The adapted version assesses an individual's perception of the degree to which a close friend is generally autonomy supportive within the relationship. Participants responded to the items on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. Sample items are as follows: "I feel that my friend provides me with choices and options," "My friend tries to

understand how I see things," and "My friend listens to my thoughts and ideas." In this study, the 10 items were averaged to create the perceived autonomy support score. The scale had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

*Basic psychological needs satisfaction.* This nine-item measure was developed by La Guardia et al. (2000, Study 2), with three items each to assess the degree to which participants experience satisfaction of the autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs within the target friendship. Participants responded to the Likert-type items on a 7-point scale ranging from *not at all true* to *very true*. Total need satisfaction is the mean of the nine items (after reversing negatively worded items). All reliabilities were greater than .85, and a confirmatory factor analysis indicated that all items loaded as expected. Sample items are as follows: "When I am with my friend I feel free to be who I am" (autonomy), "When I am with my friend I feel like a competent person" (competence), and "When I am with my friend I feel loved and cared about" (relatedness).

*Emotional reliance.* This seven-item scale assesses participants' willingness to turn to or rely on their friend in emotionally salient situations (Ryan et al., 2005). Items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In the validation studies, the internal consistency was very good, with all alphas being greater than .90. In previous studies, emotional reliance has related to security of attachment and women have tended to score higher than men on the scale. Sample items are as follows: "If I were feeling alone or depressed, I would be willing to turn to my friend" and "If I felt proud of my accomplishments, I would be willing to turn to my friend."

*Relationship-specific attachment security.* This frequently used relationship questionnaire assesses adult attachment by asking participants to rate themselves on four mutually exclusive descriptions of how they feel in this friendship (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The descriptions reflect secure, dismissive, preoccupied, and fearful styles of attachment. Participants used a 7-point Likert-type scale to rate how well each attachment style describes the friendship. From these ratings, we created overall security of attachment score by subtracting the three insecure scores from 3 times the secure score. Although we have used the dimension of model of self and model of other in previous research, we used only overall security here because there are so many variables, especially in Study 2.

*Dyadic Adjustment Scale.* This scale included 25 items comprising three subscales that assess aspects of dyadic adjustment (Spanier, 1976). The subscales are as follows: consensus, which indexes the level of agreement about aspects of the relationship; cohesion, which measures



perceptions of how often the friends spend time together having stimulating conversations, laughing together, or working on some project; and satisfaction, which assesses the degree to which participants are content and happy in their friendship. Participants respond on 7-point Likert-type scales. The original scale had 32 items; however, because it was developed for romantic relationships, we omitted the 7 items that are not relevant to close friendships in college students. The validation study by Spanier reported the overall alpha to be .96.

*Inclusion of other in the self.* This is a single-item pictorial measure of relationship closeness in which participants are presented with seven Venn-like diagrams made up of two circles with varying degrees of overlap (Aron et al., 1992). One circle represents the self and the other represents the friend. The greater the overlap between the two circles, the more the friend is considered to be included within the participant's self.

#### ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Griffin and Gonzales (1995) presented a means of analyzing dyadic data to separate individual-level relations from dyad-level relations. The method includes four sets of analyses. To test the hypothesis that perceived autonomy support from a close friend will relate to experienced need satisfaction and relationship quality for the person experiencing the support, we used the individual-level analyses, which determine the relations of the independent variable (*viz.*, perceived autonomy support from friend) to the dependent variables of need satisfaction and the quality-of-friendship variables, with both partners included.

The second issue concerns the degree to which scores on each variable covary within dyads. This provides an indication of which variables (with perceived autonomy support being of most interest) evidence a significant degree of mutuality within dyads. The third calculates the relations between variables at the dyad level using shared variance. This answers the question of whether when there is mutuality in one variable (*e.g.*, perceived autonomy support) there is also mutuality in another (*e.g.*, security of attachment). This third analysis is not, in its own right, of interest for the current study; however, it is a step toward the fourth analysis, which examines whether the individual-level relations found in the first set of analyses remain significant after controlling for dyad-level variability. This addresses whether the individual-level correlations are primarily a function of covariation of mutuality on the variables or are unique individual-level relations after the dyad-level variance has been controlled for. It answers the question of whether the partner who perceived more autonomy sup-

**TABLE 1: Means on Each Variable in Study 1 for Each of the Three Types of Dyads as Well as the Results of the ANOVA and Tukey Tests for Determining Whether the Dyad Types Differ on These Variables**

Dependent Variable	df	F	F-F	M-F	M-M
			M	M	M
Perceived autonomy support	2, 192	12.05***	6.59 <sub>a,b</sub>	6.14 <sub>a</sub>	5.99 <sub>b</sub>
Need satisfaction	2, 191	6.05**	6.03 <sub>a</sub>	5.86	5.51 <sub>a</sub>
Emotional reliance	2, 191	13.11***	6.24 <sub>a</sub>	6.03 <sub>b</sub>	5.33 <sub>a,b</sub>
Attachment security	2, 190	6.98***	8.80 <sub>a</sub>	8.67 <sub>b</sub>	4.70 <sub>a,b</sub>
Dyadic adjustment	2, 188	1.75	4.56	4.42	4.39
Inclusion of friend in self	2, 180	2.42	4.64	4.45	4.00

NOTE: F-F = female-female dyads; M-F = male-female dyads; M-M = male-male dyads. Means that share a subscript within a row are significantly different at  $p < .05$  or greater.

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

port also expressed greater need satisfaction, relationship quality, and well-being.

#### Results

##### PRELIMINARY ANALYSES

Table 1 presents the means on each variable for each of the three types of dyads: male-male (M-M), female-female (F-F), and male-female (M-F). An ANOVA determined whether there were significant differences among the three dyad types. For variables where there was a significant ANOVA, Tukey tests were done to determine which pairs of means differed. Results indicated that F-F pairs showed higher mean levels of perceived autonomy support from their partners than did both the M-F and M-M pairs. F-F pairs were significantly higher on need satisfaction than were M-M pairs. M-M pairs were significantly lower than both F-F pairs and M-F pairs on both emotional reliance and attachment security. The types of dyads did not differ on dyadic adjustment or inclusion of the friend in the self.

##### PRIMARY ANALYSES

Using the Griffin and Gonzales (1995) method, we calculated the relations between perceived autonomy support from a person's friend and the person's experience of relationship quality across all 196 participants in the study. We also tested the relation of perceived autonomy support to need satisfaction while with the friend because we theorized that perceived autonomy support yields its positive effects by providing satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. We then examined the relations between perceived autonomy support and emotional reliance on the friend, attachment security, dyadic adjustment within the friendship, and inclusion of the friend in one's self. Table 2 presents the results. At the

**TABLE 2: Individual-Level Correlations Across All Individuals Using the Griffin and Gonzales (1995) Method, Showing the Relations of Perceived Autonomy Support From Friend to Need Satisfaction and Each of the Relationship Quality Variables of Study 1 (N = 196)**

PAS by [Variable]	Correlation	Adjusted N	z
Need satisfaction	.35	181.15	4.77***
Emotional reliance	.34	174.11	4.54***
Attachment security	.33	174.39	4.34***
Dyadic adjustment	.24	175.80	3.18**
Inclusion of other in self	.28	168.43	3.59***

NOTE: PAS = perceived autonomy support from friend.  
 \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

**TABLE 3: Results Indicating the Degree to Which the Two Dyad Partners Displayed Significant Mutuality on Each of the Variables in Study 1 (98 Dyads)**

Variable	Correlation	z
Perceived autonomy support	.22	2.13*
Need satisfaction	.24	2.39*
Emotional reliance	.30	2.96**
Attachment security	.33	3.23**
Dyadic adjustment	.44	4.31***
Inclusion of other in self	.40	3.97***

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

level of the individual, a person’s perceived autonomy support from the close friend was significantly positively related to need satisfaction and also to the four indicators of the person’s experience of relationship quality. Thus, this analysis confirmed the importance of receiving autonomy support from a close friend to experience the friendship as being of high quality.

Table 3 shows that on perceived autonomy support as well as the other variables, there was a considerable amount of mutuality, that is, there were significant correlations between the dyad members on each of the variables in Study 1. When one partner was high on perceived autonomy support, the other partner also tended to be high on that variable, and so on.

Analyses also showed that at the dyad level, the degree of mutuality of perceived autonomy support from one’s friend related significantly to the degree of mutuality of all the other variables except dyadic adjustment. Because these analyses are not directly germane to the current study’s hypotheses, they are not presented in greater detail.

Finally, Table 4 shows the relations of a person’s perceived autonomy support to his or her experience of need satisfaction and relationship quality, after controlling for the dyad-level variance. The relation of perceived autonomy support and need satisfaction remained significant after controlling for covariation of

**TABLE 4: Individual-Level Analyses Across All Individuals, Showing the Relations of Perceived Autonomy Support From Friend to Need Satisfaction and Relationship Quality After Controlling for Dyad-Level Variance: Study 1**

PAS by [Variable]	Correlation	t
Need satisfaction	.23	2.38*
Emotional reliance	.13	1.33
Attachment security	.13	1.29
Dyadic adjustment	.14	1.41
Inclusion of other in self	.00	0.02

NOTE: PAS = perceived autonomy support from friend.  
 \**p* < .05.

mutuality on these variables, but the relations of perceived autonomy support with the four relationship-quality variables did not, suggesting that much of the positive relation between autonomy support from a friend and one’s experience of relationship quality with that friend was a function of shared relationship-level variance.

*Discussion*

This study showed that a person’s perceived autonomy support from a close friend predicted the person’s experiences of need satisfaction and of emotional reliance, attachment security, dyadic adjustment, and inclusion of friend in the self. This is the first study in which autonomy support provided by a peer (viz., the close friend) has been associated with positive relationship-quality variables. Thus, it is an important advance beyond the many studies showing that people benefit from experiencing autonomy support from authority figures.

The study also showed a significant amount of mutuality between the close-friend partners in perceived autonomy support, psychological need satisfaction, emotional reliance, attachment security, dyadic adjustment, and inclusion of friend in self. If one partner were high on any of these variables, the other partner also tended to be. Thus, there does tend to be mutuality in perceived autonomy support and other affective variables within close-friendship dyads. Finally, results showed that when the dyad level was controlled for, only the relation of receiving autonomy support and need satisfaction remained significant, suggesting that covariation in mutuality of perceived autonomy support and the outcome variables accounted for much of the variance in the individual-level relation between perceived autonomy support and relationship quality.

STUDY 2

The results of Study 1 were very encouraging and prompted us to replicate and expand the research. First,

we examined whether autonomy support from a friend would relate to the recipient's psychological well-being. Because autonomy support from an authority predicted greater psychological well-being in the recipient (e.g., Baard et al., 2004), we hypothesized that a person's receiving autonomy support from a friend would help the person thrive psychologically. As with relationship quality, we expected the relation between autonomy support and well-being because we expected autonomy support to relate to need satisfaction.

Second, we examined whether a person's experience and expression of emotions in a friendship would be predicted by the degree of autonomy support the person experiences from the friend in the relationship. The nature of the emotions a person experiences with a friend and especially whether the person feels able to share those emotions with the friend is an important aspect of a satisfying relationship and is likely to relate to the person's well-being. We expected a person's receiving autonomy support from the friend would be related (a) positively to the amount of positive affect experienced and negatively to the amount of negative affect experienced by the person within the friendship and (b) to the person's being able to express more feelings to the friend whether those feelings were positive or negative.

Third, and most important, we examined whether a person's giving autonomy support to a friend would be positively related to the person's (i.e., the giver's) need satisfaction, relationship quality, and well-being, after controlling for the autonomy support the person receives from the friend. To examine this we added a measure of whether each person believes he or she is successful in providing autonomy support to the friend. We expected significant covariation among the perceptions of giving and receiving autonomy support, and we also hypothesized that the person's perceptions of both how much autonomy support he or she gives to the friend and how much he or she receives from the friend would predict independent variance in the person's experience of need satisfaction, relationship quality, and well-being.

In Study 1, we found that there was mutuality in the autonomy support that each person received within a friendship dyad by correlating the amount that each partner says he or she receives. An alternative way of examining mutuality is to examine the relation between one person's perceptions of the amount of autonomy support he or she gives to and receives from the friend. Thus, the relation between giving and receiving can be thought of as an index of mutuality of autonomy support in the friendship, as perceived by one person, and the hypothesis that mutuality of autonomy support would contribute to a person's relationship satisfaction and well-being would be confirmed if giving autonomy sup-

port to a friend contributed to the person's (i.e., the giver's) satisfaction and well-being after controlling for the effects of receiving autonomy support from the friend.

Finally, we added two other relationship-quality variables, namely, vitality when with one's friend and the level of overall satisfaction with the relationship. Vitality refers to feeling alive, energetic, and vital, so if a person feels a high level of vitality when with a friend, it suggests that the person feels close to, vitalized by, and satisfied with the friend.

### *Method*

#### *PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE*

Participants were 124 close-friend dyads who were University of Rochester undergraduates (36 M-M, 44 F-F; and 44 M-F). All of the procedures for the study were the same as in Study 1.

#### *MEASURES*

All of the measures used in Study 1 (the Friendship Autonomy Support Questionnaire, the Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale, the Relationship Questionnaire to measure relationship-specific security of attachment, the Emotional Reliance Questionnaire, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale) were used in this study. Additional measures are as follows.

*Background information.* Participants were asked how long they had been friends and how much time they spend together each week. The items were answered on 7-point scales with answers to these items being intervals of time (viz., 0-1 year, 1-2 years, etc., in response to how long they had been friends and correspondingly for how much time they spend together).

*Autonomy support provided to friend.* This measure is essentially the same 10-item measure used to assess perceived autonomy support provided by the friend but the items were reworded slightly to address the respondent's providing autonomy support to his or her friend. A sample item is as follows: "My friend believes that I provide him/her with choices and options." These items were included close to the end of the questionnaire packet, whereas the items related to the respondent's perceptions of receiving autonomy support from the friend were at the beginning of the packet to diminish the likelihood that the respondent's ratings for the set of items about receiving autonomy support would affect how he or she responded to the set of questions about giving autonomy support. The alpha coefficient for this scale was .90. It is worth noting that this measure does not assess whether the person believes he or she gives autonomy support but rather whether he or she believes the

friend experiences him or her as giving autonomy support. We worded the items this way because we expected that for the person to experience need satisfaction from giving autonomy support, he or she would have to believe that the friend experienced it. For example, the person would not feel competent about giving autonomy support if he or she believed the friend did not experience the autonomy support.

*Psychological well-being.* Scores for well-being were a composite created with items from four well-validated instruments. Participants were asked to respond to items from all four scales in terms of how they had felt over the past month using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not at all true* to *very true*. Risk for depression was assessed with six items from the Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression Scale (CES-D) (Radloff, 1977). Items included “I have been feeling depressed” and “I feel that people dislike me.” The mean of the six items constituted the risk for depression score. The anxiety subscale from the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979) also was utilized. It included seven items, such as, “I have been feeling constantly under strain” and “I have been feeling nervous and uptight all the time.” Means of the seven items served as the anxiety score. Participants’ level of self-esteem was measured with the 10 “general” items from the Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory (O’Brien & Epstein, 1988). Items include “I nearly always have a highly positive opinion of myself” and “I frequently feel really good about myself.” The mean of the 10 items was the self-esteem score. Vitality (Ryan & Frederick, 1997) was assessed with a seven-item scale focused on general feelings of physical and mental aliveness and vigor. The scale includes items such as, “I nearly always feel alert and awake” and “In general, I do not feel very energetic” (reversed). The vitality score was calculated as the mean of the seven items.

A principal components factor analysis showed that the four scale scores loaded on a single well-being factor, accounting for 73% of the variance and with each factor loading having an absolute value greater than .83. The absolute value of the correlations between each pair of well-being indicators ranged from .56 to .71. An overall well-being index was created by combining standardized scores for the four scales after reverse-scoring the depression and anxiety scales.

*Vitality when with my friend.* The seven items from the state version of Ryan and Frederick’s (1997) Subjective Vitality Scale was used to assess the level of energy and vigor experienced when with the friend. Sample items are as follows: “When I am with my friend I feel energetic and spirited” and “When I am with my friend I feel alive

and vital.” The mean of the seven items was used as another indicator of relationship quality.

*Relationship satisfaction.* Participants responded to one item, namely, “In general, how satisfied would you say you are about this friendship?” on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *very unsatisfied* to *very satisfied*.

*Experience of positive and negative emotions.* The PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) includes 10 positive and 10 negative items that were used to assess how much the person experiences each of the feelings when with his or her friend. Responses were on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not at all* to *very much*.

*Expression of positive and negative emotions.* The same 20 items from the PANAS were given to participants a second time and the instructions stated, “Regardless of how much you actually experience each of these feelings when you are with your friend, how much do you feel that you can express each emotion to your friend when you do have it?”

#### ANALYTIC STRATEGY

The primary analyses began with the Griffin and Gonzales (1995) method as in Study 1 and then used structural equation modeling to address whether each person’s giving autonomy support to a friend related to the giver’s need satisfaction, relationship quality, and well-being after controlling for how much autonomy support the giver receives from the friend.

#### Results

##### PRELIMINARY ANALYSES

The vast majority of participants indicated that they had been friends with their relational partner for 1 to 2 years. As for time spent together each week, most fell between 3 and 9 hours per week, although the distribution was bimodal, with some indicating they spent more than 18 hours a week together, presumably because they lived together.

Table 5 shows the means for each study variable within the three types of dyads: F-F, M-F, and M-M. There was a tendency for the M-M pairs, relative to F-F pairs, to score lower on the relationship variables, specifically, on receiving autonomy support, giving autonomy support, need satisfaction in the friendship, emotional reliance, attachment security, and expression of positive affect. The findings for receiving autonomy support, need satisfaction, attachment security, and emotional reliance replicated the results from Study 1. Furthermore, on dyadic adjustment, the M-M pairs were lower than the M-F pairs. On inclusion of friend in the self, the F-F pairs were the lowest of the three types of dyads. Finally, on experience of negative emotions in the friendship, M-M pairs were the highest.



**TABLE 5: Means on Each Variable in Study 2 for Each of the Three Types of Dyads as Well as the Results of the ANOVA and Tukey Tests for Determining Whether the Dyad Types Differ on These Variables**

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	df	F	<i>F-F</i> M	<i>M-F</i> M	<i>M-M</i> M
Autonomy support from friend	2, 241	3.54*	6.19 <sub>a</sub>	6.07	5.86 <sub>a</sub>
Autonomy support to friend	2, 241	3.97*	5.86 <sub>a</sub>	5.75	5.46 <sub>a</sub>
Need satisfaction	2, 241	4.06*	5.76 <sub>a</sub>	5.64	5.35 <sub>a</sub>
Emotional reliance	2, 241	3.94*	5.82 <sub>a</sub>	5.75	5.36 <sub>a</sub>
Attachment security	2, 239	3.66*	8.90 <sub>a</sub>	7.50	6.22 <sub>a</sub>
Dyadic adjustment	2, 238	3.41*	4.32	4.41 <sub>a</sub>	4.16 <sub>a</sub>
Inclusion of friend in self	2, 235	3.66*	3.77 <sub>a</sub>	4.39 <sub>a</sub>	4.06
Vitality in friendship	2, 241	0.15	5.20	5.10	4.97
Relationship satisfaction	2, 241	0.05	5.81	5.85	5.81
Well-being composite	2, 241	0.96	-0.03	-0.06	0.12
Positive affect experience	2, 235	1.73	5.04	5.03	4.77
Negative affect experience	2, 235	5.86**	1.74 <sub>a</sub>	2.03	2.18 <sub>a</sub>
Positive affect expression	2, 229	6.15**	6.01 <sub>a</sub>	5.70	5.46 <sub>a</sub>
Negative affect expression	2, 229	2.51	4.70	4.32	4.15

NOTE: F-F = female-female dyads; M-F = male-female dyads; M-M = male-male dyads. Means that share a subscript within a row are significantly different at  $p < .05$  or greater.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

*PRIMARY ANALYSES*

Using the Griffin and Gonzales (1995) method, we first calculated whether perceived autonomy support from a person’s friend relates to the person’s experience of giving autonomy support to the friend, need satisfaction with the friend, relationship quality (i.e., emotional reliance on the friend, attachment security, dyadic adjustment within the friendship, inclusion of friend in the self, vitality with the friend, overall satisfaction with the relationship), well-being, positive and negative emotional experience, and positive and negative emotional expression, across all 248 participants in the study.

As shown in Table 6, at the level of the individual, a person’s perceived autonomy support from his or her close friend is significantly positively related to the person’s experience of giving autonomy support, need satisfaction, emotional reliance, security of attachment, dyadic adjustment, inclusion of friend in self, vitality with the friend, overall relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, experience of positive affect, and expression of both positive and negative affect. Perceived autonomy support was related negatively to the amount of negative affect experienced. In sum, when people

**TABLE 6: The Relations Between a Person’s Perceptions of Autonomy Support Received From the Friend and the Person’s Experience of Giving Autonomy Support, Need Satisfaction, Relationship Quality, and Well-Being at the Individual Level of Analysis: Study 2 (N = 248)**

<i>Perceived Autonomy Support Received From Friend by [Variable]</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Adjusted N</i>	<i>z</i>
Perceived autonomy support given to friend	.62	206.43	8.91***
Need satisfaction with friend	.67	212.73	9.71***
Emotional reliance on friend	.62	218.18	9.13***
Attachment security with friend	.56	220.17	8.25***
Dyadic adjustment	.55	215.58	8.02***
Inclusion of friend in self	.43	215.50	6.34***
Vitality with friend	.59	226.28	8.25***
Relationship satisfaction	.68	197.83	9.49***
Well-being composite	.18	238.00	2.73**
Positive affect experienced	.62	239.91	9.62***
Negative affect experienced	-.16	230.89	-2.48*
Positive affect expressed	.57	224.50	8.50***
Negative affect expressed	.38	245.47	5.99***

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

**TABLE 7: Results Indicating the Degree to Which the Two Dyad Partners Displayed Significant Mutuality on Each of the Variables in Study 2 (124 Dyads)**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>z</i>
Perceived autonomy support received	.34	3.79***
Perceived autonomy support given	.26	2.94**
Need satisfaction	.21	2.38*
Emotional reliance	.19	2.07*
Attachment security	.23	2.58**
Dyadic adjustment	.27	3.01**
Inclusion of friend in self	.39	4.34***
Vitality with friend	.15	1.67
Overall relationship satisfaction	.41	4.57***
Well-being composite	.11	1.19
Positive affect experience	-.01	-0.07
Negative affect experience	.21	2.31*
Positive affect expression	.16	1.82
Negative affect expression	-.01	0.11

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

experienced autonomy support from a close friend, they also tended to give more autonomy support to the friend, to feel greater need satisfaction, to experience the relationship to be of higher quality, to report higher well-being, to have more positive and less negative affect, and to feel more able to express the emotions whatever they were. These results replicated those of Study 1 with respect to need satisfaction and the four relationship-quality variables that were included in both studies.

Table 7 shows that for the variables of Study 2, there was a considerable amount of mutuality within the dyads, that is, there were significant relations between

the members of the dyads on perceived autonomy support from friend, perceived autonomy support given to friend, need satisfaction, emotional reliance, attachment security, dyadic adjustment, inclusion of friend in self, overall relationship satisfaction, and the experience of negative emotions. These results replicated those of Study 1 for all six variables that were in both studies.

We then examined whether at the dyad level of analysis, the degree of mutuality of perceived autonomy support from one's relational partner related significantly to the degree of mutuality of the other variables in the study. The results show that mutuality in the level of autonomy support received related significantly and interpretably only to mutuality in level of autonomy support given, emotional reliance, security of attachment, dyadic adjustment, and overall relationship satisfaction. As in Study 1, this analysis will not be discussed further.

As the final step using the Griffin and Gonzalez method for Study 2, we examined the individual-level relations between autonomy support and each other variable after controlling for dyad-level variance. These results are shown in Table 8. The relations between autonomy support received and all other variables had been significant before the variance explained by mutuality between friends was controlled for, and after this variance was removed, the significant relations remained for all variables except well-being and negative affect experienced.

#### THE RELEVANCE OF AUTONOMY FOR MEN AND WOMEN

As mentioned in the introduction, several writers have suggested that men and women differ in that men define the self as autonomous, whereas women define it as relational. Within SDT, autonomy support is considered as important for women as it is for men, so we hypothesized that autonomy support would positively predict relationship quality for both women and men. To test this, we analyzed the F-F pairs by themselves and then analyzed the M-M pairs by themselves. We combined data from the two studies to create larger sample sizes for the two groups. However, that allowed us to examine the relations of perceived autonomy support only to the variables used in both studies, namely, psychological need satisfaction, emotional reliance, attachment security, dyadic adjustment, and inclusion of friend in the self. We used the Griffin and Gonzales (1995) method, focusing on the individual-level analyses first without controlling for dyad-level mutuality and then controlling for dyad-level mutuality because those analyses provide a direct test of our hypothesis. The results are presented in Tables 9 and 10.

As can be seen in the Table 9, perceived autonomy support was a significant predictor of need satisfaction within the F-F dyads just as it was within the M-M dyads.

**TABLE 8: The Relation Between a Person's Perceptions of Autonomy Support Received From the Friend and the Person's Experience of Need Satisfaction, Relationship Quality, and Well-Being at the Individual Level, After Controlling for Dyad-Level Variance: Study 2**

<i>Perceived Autonomy Support Received From Friend by [Variable]</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>t</i>
Perceived autonomy support given	.41	4.96***
Need satisfaction	.50	6.32***
Emotional reliance	.48	6.00***
Attachment security	.48	6.00***
Dyadic adjustment	.44	5.38***
Inclusion of friend in self	.47	5.88***
Vitality with friend	.50	6.32***
Overall relationship satisfaction	.54	7.07***
Well-being composite	.13	1.44
Positive affect experience	.53	6.86***
Negative affect experience	-.14	-1.56
Positive affect expression	.47	5.88***
Negative affect expression	.22	3.86***

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Furthermore, perceived autonomy support was also a significant predictor of emotional reliance, attachment security, dyadic adjustment, and inclusion of friend in self for the female dyads just as it was for the male dyads. Then, as shown in Table 10, even after controlling for dyad-level shared variance, autonomy support still significantly predicted need satisfaction and relationship quality for women as well as men. Thus, there is no evidence that autonomy is important in predicting relationship quality only for men. Indeed, women are positively affected by autonomy support from their close-friend partners at least as much as are men. Furthermore, examining the results for inclusion of other in self in Tables 1 and 5, we see that there were no differences between the F-F and M-M pairs in the degree to which they included their friend in the self. Together, these results are in line with the suggestion by Lerner (1988) that the dichotomy between an autonomous self for men and a relational self for women is a false polarization of the sexes.

#### THE BENEFITS OF GIVING AUTONOMY SUPPORT

The question of primary interest in this study was whether a person's giving autonomy support to a friend (or more precisely, the person's believing that the friend feels autonomy support from him or her) would relate to the person's need satisfaction, relationship quality, well-being, and emotional experience and expression. Structural equation modeling (SEM), with observed variables, were used to test whether the variables of a person's perceptions of the amount of autonomy support received from the friend and the amount of autonomy support given to the friend predicted the person's out-

**TABLE 9: Individual-Level Results Using the Griffin and Gonzales (1995) Method, Showing the Relations of a Person’s Perceptions of Autonomy Support Received From the Friend to the Person’s Experience of Need Satisfaction and Relationship Quality, Analyzed Separately for Female-Female and Male-Male Dyads, With Data Combined for Studies 1 and 2 (86 Dyads for Women and 55 Dyads for Men)**

PAS by [Variable]	Female Dyads			Male Dyads		
	Correlation	Adjusted N	z	Correlation	Adjusted N	z
Need satisfaction	.59	149.41	7.19***	.60	103.50	6.08***
Emotional reliance	.52	155.79	6.45***	.59	111.94	6.26***
Attachment security	.46	159.15	5.76***	.44	97.47	4.31***
Dyadic satisfaction	.28	149.23	3.42***	.23	98.80	2.29***
Inclusion in self	.46	91.98	4.43***	.35	102.62	3.55***

\*\*\**p* < .001.

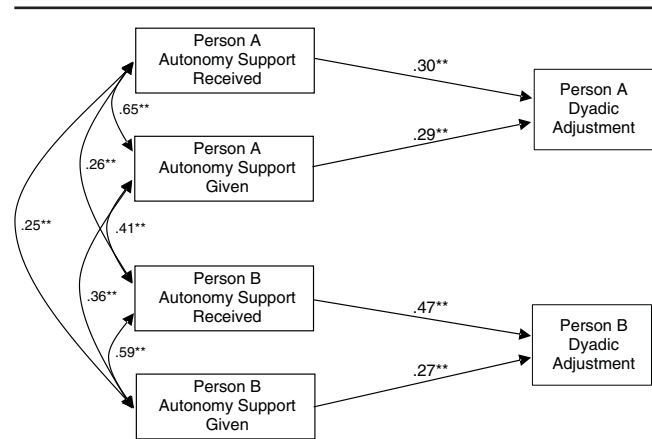
**TABLE 10: Individual-Level Results Showing the Relations of a Person’s Perceived Autonomy Support Received From the Friend to Need Satisfaction and Relationship Quality After Removing the Variance Attributable to Mutuality on the Variables, Done Separately for Female-Female and Male-Male Dyads With Data From Studies 1 and 2 Combined**

PAS by [Variable]	Female Dyads		Male Dyads	
	Correlation	t	Correlation	t
Need satisfaction	.39	3.91***	.54	4.73***
Emotional reliance	.36	3.57***	.59	5.36***
Attachment security	.36	3.57***	.47	3.92***
Dyadic satisfaction	.22	2.07*	.42	3.40***
Inclusion in self	.40	4.01***	.37	2.92**

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

come variables, taken one at a time. Thus, each model being tested involved the autonomy support received by Person A and the autonomy support given by Person A, predicting a Person A outcome variable, and also the autonomy support received by Person B and the autonomy support given by Person B, predicting the same outcome variable for Person B, with the predictor variables being allowed to correlate within and across the two partners. Persons A and B within each dyad were randomly determined. The model appears in Figure 1, with the results for dyadic adjustment as the dependent variable.

If the paths from perceptions of autonomy support received to the outcomes were significant for each dyad member, it would represent a conceptual confirmation of what was found in the Griffin and Gonzales analyses at the individual level (Tables 2 and 6), although it would be a more stringent test because autonomy support received would be competing for variance with autonomy support given. Then, if the paths from perceptions of autonomy support given to the outcomes were significant for each dyad member, it would mean that the giving of autonomy support accounts for independent variance in the prediction of the outcomes over and above



**Figure 1 The structural equation model showing how the perceptions of each partner in a dyad receiving autonomy support from and giving autonomy support to his or her close friend relate to each partner’s experience of dyadic adjustment: Study 2.**

\*\*\**p* < .01.

the contribution made by receiving autonomy support. We argue that this would support the expectation that giving autonomy support to a close friend would contribute to the givers’ need satisfaction, relationship quality, and psychological health, over and above the contribution made by receiving autonomy support from the close friend. This would essentially mean that mutuality of autonomy support is important for these outcome variables.

Results for the SEM analyses are presented in Table 11 in the form of path coefficients from each of the two independent variables to the outcomes for each partner. First, consider need satisfaction and relationship quality. As can be seen in Table 11, when either person received autonomy support from the friend, that person experienced more need satisfaction in the relationship and a higher quality relationship, as indexed by emotional reliance, security of attachment, dyadic adjustment, inclusion of friend in self, vitality with the friend, and relationship satisfaction. In each case, for each partner, these

**TABLE 11: Parameter Estimates for the Paths Within the SEM in Which Each Partner's Receiving Autonomy Support and Giving Autonomy Support Predict That Partner's Need Satisfaction, Relationship Quality, Well-Being, and Emotions**

<i>Outcome Variable</i>	<i>Person A Receiving Autonomy Support</i>	<i>Person A Giving Autonomy Support</i>	<i>Person B Receiving Autonomy Support</i>	<i>Person B Giving Autonomy Support</i>
Need satisfaction	.51***	.30***	.59***	.28***
Emotional reliance	.37***	.29**	.61***	.15†
Attachment security	.38***	.28**	.46***	.16†
Dyadic adjustment	.30**	.29**	.47***	.27**
Inclusion of friend in self	.20*	.37***	.29**	.18†
Vitality with friend	.35***	.31***	.37***	.43***
Relationship satisfaction	.54***	.25**	.51***	.22*
Well-being composite	.02	.27**	.01	.30**
Positive affect experienced	.39***	.36***	.38***	.40***
Negative affect experienced	.00	-.26**	-.04	-.16†
Positive affect expressed	.39***	.27**	.36***	.31***
Negative affect expressed	.28**	.08	.38***	.13

† $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

relations were significant. Then, each person's giving autonomy support to his or her friend predicted additional variance on each variable for each person. In four of the cases, these effects were significant at the .05 level or greater, whereas for emotional reliance, attachment security, and inclusion of friend in self, the relations were marginally significant. Thus, it appears that giving autonomy support predicts need satisfaction and relationship quality over and above the contribution to these outcomes made by receiving autonomy support.

Next, consider well-being. These results were somewhat more mixed. We know from the Griffin and Gonzales analyses that at the individual level, a person's perceptions of the autonomy support received from a friend were a significant predictor of the well-being composite for the person, although additional analyses showed that dyad-level variance accounted for much of this effect. Furthermore, when autonomy support received and autonomy support given competed for variance in the SEM analyses, the autonomy support given was a significant independent predictor of well-being for both partners, but the autonomy support received did not predict independent variance in well-being. In other words, the relation between the autonomy support received and well-being was primarily a function of mutuality in these variables between the two friends. Furthermore, the amount of autonomy support a person gives to a friend was more strongly related to the person's well-being than was the amount of autonomy support received from that friend.

Concerning positive emotions, we know from the Griffin and Gonzales analyses that autonomy support received predicted both the experience and expression of positive emotions (even after controlling for dyad-level variance). The relations were replicated in the SEM analyses, and furthermore, the amount of autonomy

support given significantly predicted the amount of positive affect experienced and expressed in the relationship. Thus, giving autonomy support to a friend was related to feeling positively and being able to express positive emotions to the friend (over and above the contribution made by receiving autonomy support from the friend).

Concerning negative emotions, the predictions were more complex. Specifically, at the individual level, receiving autonomy support from a friend was negatively related to the amount of negative emotions experienced, but when dyad-level variance was controlled for, this relation became nonsignificant. Furthermore, when giving and receiving autonomy support competed for variance in the experience of negative affect, giving autonomy support, but not receiving it, explained variance in experiencing negative affect. Thus, the experience of negative affect showed the very same pattern of relations, with giving and receiving autonomy support at the individual and dyad level, as was the case for well-being. As for expressing the negative affect that one feels, receiving autonomy support, but not giving it, was significantly related. In short, giving autonomy support was the stronger predictor of experiencing negative affect, but receiving autonomy support was the stronger predictor of expressing negative affect.

### *Discussion*

At the individual level in the Griffin and Gonzales analyses, all of the relations found in Study 1 were replicated in Study 2, and autonomy support received also was related to vitality with the friend, overall relationship satisfaction, well-being, the experience of more positive affect and less negative affect, and the expression to the friend of both types of affect. The analyses further showed that need satisfaction and the relationship qual-



ity variables displayed significant mutuality within the dyads. Then, when the individual analyses were run controlling for dyad-level variance, the results continued to be significant for all variables except well-being and negative affect.

Finally, the SEM analyses showed that a person's perceptions of how much autonomy support he or she received from the friend and how much he or she gave to the friend both predicted significant independent variance in need satisfaction, the six relationship-quality variables, and the experience and expression of positive emotions. In all 18 of these cases (these nine variables  $\times$  two partners), the autonomy support received was a significant predictor. Furthermore, in 15 of the 18 cases, the autonomy support given was a significant predictor, and in the other 3 cases, the amount of autonomy support given was a marginally significant predictor.

Although the amount of autonomy support received from the friend predicted the person's well-being in the individual analyses, when it competed for variance with the amount of autonomy support given, the amount given predicted the well-being composite but the amount received did not. Psychological well-being thus appears to be more strongly related to being able to give autonomy support to a close friend than to getting autonomy support from the friend.

It is likely that the general differences in the results between the relationship-quality variables (where both receiving and giving were significant predictors) and well-being (where only giving was a significant predictor) is a function of the fact that the two types of variables are at different levels of generality. The relationship-quality variables are relationship specific, that is, they concern emotional reliance on the friend, security of attachment to the friend, adjustment within this dyad, and so on, but the well-being composite is a more general between-person concept and does not reference the particular relationship. Thus, whereas getting autonomy support from a friend was a strong, independent predictor of the person's experience of that friendship, it was a less strong predictor of the person's psychological well-being. In contrast, giving autonomy support is likely to be more stable across relationships (because it is the same person giving) than is getting autonomy support (because it comes from several different relationship partners), so it makes sense that giving autonomy support would relate more strongly to general well-being than would the more relationship-specific variable of getting autonomy support.

It is interesting to note that the experience of negative affect functioned more like well-being than like the other emotion variables, suggesting that the experience of negative affect within friendships may, to a substan-

tially greater degree, be determined by between-person factors related to well-being.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

Previous studies of the relations of autonomy support to psychological experience and well-being have involved relational partners with differentials in authority or expertise, such as parent-child, teacher-student, manager-subordinate, or doctor-patient. The current studies are the first to examine the importance of autonomy support in close friendships. The first important finding was that at the individual level of analysis, a person's perceived autonomy support from a friend had a positive relation to the person's experience of need satisfaction, relationship quality (emotional reliance, security of attachment, dyadic adjustment, inclusion of friend in self, vitality with the friend, and overall relationship satisfaction). Furthermore, in Study 2, perceived autonomy support from the friend also predicted the person's psychological health as well as greater experience of positive affect, lesser experience of negative affect, and greater willingness to express both types of affect within the relationship. These findings applied to both members of the dyads. Thus, there is clear evidence that the frequently replicated finding of positive relations between autonomy support and both psychological experience and well-being also apply to close-friend peer relations.

Analyses indicated that level of autonomy support did tend to be mutual in close-friend relationships. Both studies showed significant relations between the level of autonomy support that each partner perceives from the other. Parenthetically, there was also mutuality in nearly all the quality of relationship variables.

When dyad-level variance was controlled for in the individual-level analyses of relationship quality, there was a discrepancy in the two studies. In Study 1, the dyad-level explained most of the variance in the relations between the autonomy support received and the experience of relationship quality, whereas in Study 2, although there were significant dyad-level relations, the unique individual-level variances also were significantly related to outcomes. Taken together, it suggests that some of the relation between autonomy support received and relationship quality is manifest at the level of the relationship itself (i.e., in covariation of mutuality), but it is likely that there are unique individual-level relations as well. Specifically, the unique individual relations were very strong in Study 2, and when the data from the two studies were combined for male-male and for female-female pairs, the unique relations of autonomy support received and the relationship quality variables were all significant.

The fact of the significant dyad-level variation fits with our view that the dynamics of close relationships are important determinants of the partners' experiences and the relations among their experiences because the idea of mutual autonomy support involves each partner being able to take the other's perspective as each is relating to the other. It is also interesting that there appears to be significant unique individual-level variance in the relation between perceived autonomy support and the other variables, suggesting that receiving autonomy support is a powerful support for individuals' experiences.

The combined data for male-male and female-female dyads were used to examine whether receiving autonomy support is important for women as well as for men. Jordan (1997) and others have argued that it is not. However, analyses on the two data sets showed that receiving autonomy support from a friend was every bit as important in female-female pairs as in male-male pairs, indicating that autonomy is indeed critical for high quality relationships for women as well as for men. Furthermore, the evidence from both studies suggested that the relational self is as important for men as it is for women in that, across the two studies, the men's reports of inclusion of other in the self were as high as women's reports of inclusion of other in the self.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the gender-based dichotomy between autonomy and relatedness emphasized by Jordan received no support from this study.

A central question in the current research was whether giving autonomy support within close friendships relates to the level of relationship quality and well-being of the giver after controlling for the autonomy support he or she receives. This question was examined using SEM. The analyses confirmed that the autonomy support a person gives to his or her friend contributes to the person's own experience of relationship quality over and above the contribution made by the autonomy support the person receives from the friend. When viewed from the perspective of one partner, these results support the view that mutuality of autonomy support does contribute to that partner's experience of relationship quality. Of interest, the provision of autonomy support to the partner predicted significant variance in the well-being composite and the reverse of the amount of negative affect experienced, but the receipt of autonomy support did not predict those variables independently when it competed for variance with the amount of autonomy support given. This finding was not expected but it is interesting to consider the possibility that giving to a friend is an even more powerful contributor to one's psychological health than is receiving from the friend. One could argue that this provides some support for the idea that people have an inherent tendency toward prosocial behavior as a means of satisfying their basic psychological needs. However, there is an alternative possibility,

namely, that people who are more psychologically healthy are more able to give autonomy support to their friends. Future work will need to examine this issue.

A final point concerns our theoretical suggestion that the positive effects of receiving and giving autonomy support accrue because they provide satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. Numerous studies have related need satisfaction to well-being and relationship quality (e.g., LaGuardia et al., 2000). The current study showed that both receiving and giving autonomy support relate to need satisfaction, thus supporting our theoretical suggestion.

### Conclusion

This is the first research to investigate the importance of mutuality of autonomy support in close friendships. Evidence indicates that the quality of the friendship, as perceived by both partners, is greatest when there is mutually high support for each other's autonomy. Furthermore, mutuality of autonomy support also appears to bode well for each partner's healthy psychological functioning.

### NOTE

1. Although in Study 2 men's reports of inclusion of the friend were nonsignificantly higher than women's reports, when the data on this variable were combined across the two studies, men's and women's reports were very similar ( $M=4.20$  for women and  $M=4.04$  for men).

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