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Connecting the Intrapersonal to the Interpersonal: Autonomy, Voice, Parents, and  
Romantic Relationships in Emerging Adulthood

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## Abstract

Multiple forms of adolescent autonomy (emotional autonomy, voice, and cognitive autonomy) were examined as correlates of parental and partner relationships. Measures included parental warmth and psychological control, and romantic support and negative interactions. Participants were 206 students (age 17 to 20, age  $M = 18$ ) who had romantic partners. Those who reported more emotional autonomy from parents (e.g., individuation and nondependence) reported less voice with parents and less cognitive autonomy. Adolescents reported less independence from their parents, more voice with parents and more confidence in their own choices when they reported more parental warmth. Adolescents reported less independence from their parents and less voice with their when their parents were more controlling. Participants reported more independence from parents and more voice when they reported more romantic partner support. The results show how necessary it is to consider multiple aspects of autonomy and relationships to understand how the intrapersonal and interpersonal are connected.

## Connecting the Intrapersonal to the Interpersonal: Autonomy, Voice, Parents, and Romantic Relationships in Emerging Adults

In most Western societies gains in autonomy are considered representative of advances in maturity. Moreover, autonomy development is described as one of the developmental tasks of adolescence and emerging adulthood (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Noom, Deković, & Meeus, 2001; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). Children are socialised to gain greater self-sufficiency and to relinquish many dependencies on parents. In some classic theories, this increasing nondependence and individuation from parents is described as normative and a desirable marker of autonomy development (Blos, 1967). Drawing from these writings, classic research focused on the development of *emotional autonomy from parents*, which Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) defined as parental deidealisation, individuation from parents, nondependency on parents, and perceiving parents as people. Such aspects of autonomy may become increasingly typical as adolescents and emerging adults get older (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), but emotional autonomy from parents has also been found to represent greater detachment from parents at any age (Beyers et al., 2003; Ryan & Lynch, 1989).

Many developmentalists have recognised that reliance on others is normative at all ages, and that autonomy need not reflect nondependence (Collins, Laursen, Mortensen, Luebker, & Ferreira, 1997; Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). Autonomy, in all its forms, is expected to arise from and be supported by positive social relationships. More specifically, autonomy and other self-related processes might be promoted by close, supportive connections with family, friends and partners throughout life (e.g., see Beyers & Goossens, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2002). From this perspective, autonomy may be reflected in the capacity to voice one's opinions and beliefs when interacting with parents and others, and to be capable of

greater self-regulation in the domains of cognition, emotion and behavior. In fact, such cognitive and behavioral self-regulation may be reflected in participation in decision-making, which is a frequently named identifying characteristic of adolescent and emerging adult autonomy strivings (e.g., McElhaney & Allen, 2001). Such participation depends on voicing opinions to others, making this an important component of autonomy. *Voice* has been defined as the authentic self-expression that includes voicing one's true opinions (Harter, Waters, Whitesell, & Kastelic, 1998) or the articulation of needs, feelings and experiences when interacting with others (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Although voice has not typically been studied as an aspect of autonomous functioning, it is consistent with some views of autonomy. For example, autonomy recently has been described as including being confident in having a say or "voice" when interacting with others (Beyers et al., 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003).

In other research, the focus has been on *cognitive autonomy*. Some autonomy theorists drawing from cognitive perspectives have used the term to encompass general decision-making capacity and confidence in independent actions (Beyers et al., 2003; Noom et al., 2001). For example, after identifying the many elements of autonomy mentioned in previous theory and research, Noom et al. (2001) defined autonomy to include three elements – attitudinal, emotional, and functional autonomy. Attitudinal autonomy was defined as "the ability to specify several options, to make a decision, and to define a goal" (p. 578). Emotional autonomy was defined as "a feeling of confidence in one's own choices and goals" (p. 581). Functional autonomy was defined as "the ability to develop a strategy to achieve one's goals" (p. 581). In this study, we measured these three aspects of autonomy and, to avoid confusion with emotional autonomy from parents, refer to them as *cognitive autonomy* or more specifically as *attitudinal, socioemotional and functional autonomy*.

Regardless of which perspective on autonomy is focal, adolescent and emerging adults' feelings of autonomy and displays of autonomous behaviour typically undergo substantial transformation because of advances in physical, cognitive and social development (Zimmer-Gembeck, Ducat, & Collins, in press). The quality of a young person's relationships with parents also can be an important contributor to the successful negotiation of individual development, especially in the domains of emotional autonomy from parents and voice (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Smetana & Gettman, 2006). Hence, the current study aims were guided by theories emphasizing how an intrapersonal developmental process, such as autonomy, has a foundation in interpersonal relationships, thus linking intrapersonal autonomy to the interpersonal domain. In particular, theorists have highlighted the importance of adolescents remaining connected to significant others (e.g., parents) while developing autonomy (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995), and the possibility that close relationships inside and outside the home are part of the individuation process in that they provide a context in which to enact autonomous attitudes, emotions, and behaviours, and provide support for autonomy development (Blos, 1967; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck, Ducat, & Collins, 2011).

Positive qualities of parent-adolescent relationships, such as warmth and involvement, have been associated with positive outcomes for young people including self-reliance (Barber, 1996; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991), and low parental warmth has been associated with deficits in skills among adolescents (Barber, 2002; Steinberg, 1997). For example, the presence of parental psychological control (i.e., invalidating feelings, inducing guilt, and making acceptance contingent on a young person's behaviour; Barber & Olsen, 1994) has been associated with greater dependence on parents (Ryan & Lynch, study 2, 1989; Soenens,

Vansteenkiste, & Luyten, 2010). The first aim of the current study was to examine associations between three different conceptualisations of autonomy -- emotional autonomy from parents, voice, and cognitive autonomy -- and to test and compare their associations with parent-adolescent relationship qualities of warmth and psychological control. Although there has been empirical support for the role of parent-adolescent relationships, particularly parental warmth and support, in adolescent autonomy when focusing on emotional autonomy (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) and voice (Harter et al., 1998), this has not been studied for cognitive autonomy. Cognitive dimensions of autonomy clearly identify goal selection, seeking, planning, and related regulatory strategies as components of autonomy. These behaviours are what many people have in mind when they discuss autonomy. What is interesting is that it is unclear how these cognitive, goal striving aspects of autonomy relate to emotional autonomy from parents and voice with parents or others. On the one hand, it seems that they may be unrelated. Goal selection and striving to pursue goals may be unrelated to emotional autonomy from parents. Cognitive aspects of autonomy may not depend on individuation from parents and nondependence on parents. Similarly, goal seeking may be unrelated to voice with others. On the other hand, it may be that emotional autonomy from parents and voice may be associated with cognitive autonomy because they make goal setting and goal pursuit more likely. Such associations were tested in the current study.

Theories related to emotional autonomy, voice and cognitive autonomy have each recognised the importance of relationships for understanding adolescent autonomy and autonomy development, but there has been no previous study that has examined how parental warmth and psychological control are associated with emotional autonomy from parents, voice and cognitive autonomy. Taken together, theories suggest that autonomous functioning is more likely when

adults honour and respect the adolescents' capabilities, permit and support autonomous behaviours and decision-making, maintain positive emotional connections, rarely rely on punitive or coercive parenting tactics to gain compliance or exert control, and engage in low levels of psychologically controlling behaviour (Beyers et al., 2003; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Sierens, 2009). Hence, associations would be expected between parent-adolescent relationships and all the forms of autonomy.

Although parents remain important throughout adolescence and early adulthood, there are many changes in their social worlds. One significant social development is increasing attention to forming intimate relationships outside the home including couple or romantic relationships (Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999; Zimmer-Gembeck, 1999). In fact, dating and romantic relationships have been described as arenas where autonomous behaviours can be enacted and supported (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Gray & Steinberg, 1999), but no study has directly examined this. A second aim of this study was to examine associations between autonomy and qualities of romantic relationships, including social support and negative interactions. According to classic writings on individuation from the family of origin (Blos, 1967), seeking relationships outside the family on which to direct dependencies is a normal and healthy part of the adolescent and emerging adult individuation process. As such, classic theories suggest that the development of positive extra-familial relationships would be expected to accompany greater emotional autonomy from parents. However, it is equally possible that positive relationships with romantic partners would be associated with less emotional autonomy from parents because good quality relationships with parents has been associated with both less emotional autonomy from them (Ryan & Lynch, 1989) and better romantic relationships among adolescents and emerging adults (Collins & Sroufe, 1999). Therefore, we were not certain how romantic relationship quality



would be associated with emotional autonomy from parents. In contrast, we did anticipate that those with more positive relationships outside the home would show other markers of autonomy, including reporting more voice with parents and with partners and more cognitive autonomy.

## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

Participants were 206 unmarried students (age 17 to 20,  $M = 18.1$  years,  $SD = .78$ ) who had steady romantic relationships of one month or longer duration. All participants were recruited from a large university in an Australian city during the orientation week prior to the start of the first semester. Following ethical approval participants completed a voluntary and confidential self-report survey at tables in the orientation areas. A small gift (e.g., chocolate) was given for participation. Participants were predominantly white/Caucasian (92%) or reported Asian descent (5%). Most participants lived with one or two parents (72%) with the others living with friends or on their own.

### *Measures*

*Emotional autonomy from parents.* The Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) was used to assess emotional autonomy from parents. The scale originally included four subscales of deidealisation, individuation, nondependency, and perceiving parents as people. Because perceiving parents as people has been shown to be the weakest scale on the EAS (Schmitz & Baer, 2005), this subscale was not used in the current study.

The parental deidealization subscale had 5 items (e.g., “I try to have the same opinions as my parents”, reversed), the individuation subscale had 5 items (e.g., “I wish my parents would understand who I really am”), and the nondependence subscale had 4 items (e.g., “I go to my parents for help before trying to solve a problem myself”, reversed). Response options ranged

from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Some items for each subscale were reversed as required and items were averaged to form subscale scores. Higher scores indicated more emotional autonomy. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ 's were adequate in the current study,  $\alpha = .69$  for parental deidealisation,  $\alpha = .75$  for individuation, and  $\alpha = .68$  for nondependence.

*Voice.* Levels of voice with parents and with romantic partners were assessed using items developed by Harter et al. (1998). Each scale contained five items that assessed the level of authentic expression in a specified relationship. Participants selected which one of two alternative statements was most applicable to them (e.g., "Some people are able to let their partner know what's important to them" or "Other people are *not* able to let their partner know what's important to them"). Participants rated whether the selected statement was "really true for me" or "sort of true for me," yielding a selection from four possible responses. Partner was defined in the instructions as "Your current boyfriend or girlfriend" or "the person you currently go with." "Parent(s)" was substituted for "partner" when the parent relationship was assessed. Items were reversed as needed and averaged to produce two total scores. A higher score indicated more voice. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ 's in the current study were .83 for parent and .78 for partner.

*Cognitive autonomy.* Cognitive autonomy was assessed with a measure developed by Noom et al. (2001). The measures had three subscales with five items each. The first subscale measured attitudinal autonomy. A sample item is "I find it difficult to decide what I want." The second subscale measured socioemotional autonomy. A sample item is "I often agree with others, even when I'm not sure." The third subscale measured functional autonomy. A sample item is "I go straight for my goal." Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). These were changed from the original 1 (*this is a very bad description of me*) to 5 (*this is a very good description of me*) scale to be consistent with the response options

for voice and the EAS. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ 's for subscales were .78, .65, and .84, respectively. To increase participation in the short time available for data collection, the length of the survey was shortened. Hence, this measure (as well as other measures not included in this study) was completed by a randomly selected subgroup of participants ( $n = 117$ ).

*Parental warmth / involvement.* Warmth and involvement in the parent-child relationship was measured with 10 items from a scale developed by Lamborn et al. (1991; e.g., "I can count on him/her (father/mother) to help me out, if I have some kind of problem"). Response options were *usually false* or *usually true*, but some items were designed to gather the frequency of an event (e.g., "When you get a good grade in school, how often do your parents/guardians praise you?"). Because of the different response options for items, each item was standardised before averaging the 10 items. A higher score on this measure indicated more parental warmth and involvement. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in the current study was .77.

*Parental psychological control.* Psychological control by each parent was measured with an 8-item scale developed by Barber (1996; e.g., "My mother [father] is a person who is always trying to change how I feel or think about things"). Response options ranged from 1 (*not like him/her*) to 3 (*a lot like him/her*). For participants with one parent, the answers for that parent were used. For those with two parents, answers to each item were averaged, and the eight items were averaged to produce a total score. A higher score indicated more parental psychological control. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in the current study was .73.

*Romantic partner support and negative interactions.* The Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992) was used to measure support and negative interactions within current romantic relationships. Six qualities of romantic relationships were measured; each subscale had 3 items (18 items total). Response options ranged from 1 (*little or*

*none*) to 5 (*the most*). The subscales included satisfaction (e.g., “How satisfied are you with your relationship with this person?”), intimacy (e.g., “How much do you tell this person everything?”), affection (e.g., “How much does this person really care about you?”), admiration (e.g., “How much does this person like or approve of the things you do?”), conflict (e.g., “How much do you and this person get upset or mad at each other?”), and antagonism (e.g., “How much do you and this person get on each other’s nerves?”). Items were averaged to produce scores on each subscale. As suggested by Furman and Buhrmester (1992), subscale scores for social support (satisfaction, intimacy, affection, admiration) and negative interactions (conflict, antagonism) were formed by averaging the appropriate subscale scores. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ 's for support and negative interactions were .90 and .91, respectively.

## Results

### *Zero-order Correlations between Emotional Autonomy, Voice and Cognitive Autonomy*

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between measures of autonomy are shown in Table 1. The correlations showed that emotional autonomy from parents was associated with *less* voice with parents and *less* cognitive autonomy. In particular, participants higher in individuation and nondependence reported less voice with parents. Similarly, participants higher in deidealisation and nondependence reported less attitudinal, socioemotional and functional autonomy. Voice with romantic partners was not significantly associated with any other measure of autonomy except voice with parents.

### *Overview of Regression Models*

Eight hierarchical multiple regression models (one for each measure of autonomy) were estimated to investigate whether autonomy covaried with parent-adolescent and romantic relationship qualities. Gender and age were entered in Step 1 of each model. In Step 2, parent-

adolescent relationship quality measures were entered. In Step 3, romantic relationship quality measures were entered. All models were estimated again after adding length of romantic relationship and a measure of time spent with romantic partners. These additional aspects of romantic relationships had no significant association with any dependent variable, nor did they substantially change any results reported below; thus they are not reported.

*Emotional autonomy from parents.* As can be seen in Step 2 of the three models shown in Table 2, parental warmth was negatively associated with all the subscales of emotional autonomy from parents. Participants who reported that their parents were warmer also reported *less* emotional autonomy from them. Moreover, negative associations were found for psychological control; those who reported that their parents were more controlling also reported less emotional autonomy from parents, including less deidealisation and nondependence. When romantic relationship quality measures were entered in Step 3 only social support from romantic partners was associated with only one aspect of emotional autonomy from parents; adolescents who reported more social support from partners also reported that they were higher in nondependence on parents (i.e., they were less dependent on their parents). Finally, relatively older students reported more deidealisation of parents and girls reported more deidealisation and nondependence on their parents than boys.

*Voice with parents and romantic partners.* In contrast to the findings with emotional autonomy from parents, voice with parents was *higher* when relationships with parents were warmer and less psychologically controlling (see Step 2 in Table 3). Voice with romantic partners was higher for participants who reported warmer parenting relationships and romantic partners who provided more social support. In addition, voice with parents was higher for older students and girls reported more voice with partners than boys.

*Cognitive autonomy.* Only parental warmth was associated with cognitive autonomy and this was found only for socioemotional autonomy (see Table 3 for model of socioemotional autonomy; other models are not shown). Surprisingly, there were negative correlations between age and cognitive autonomy,  $\beta$ 's ranged from -.17 to -.20,  $p < .05$ . All other associations between cognitive autonomy and relationship quality were not significant,  $\beta$ 's ranged from |.03| to |.06|.

### Discussion

We examined associations between multiple measures of autonomy among late adolescents and emerging adults, and tested associations of autonomy with parental and romantic relationship qualities. The multiple measures of autonomy included *emotional autonomy from parents* defined as individuation from parents, deidealisation of parents, and nondependency on parents; *voice* defined as the perceived ability to engage in authentic self-expression with another; and *cognitive autonomy* defined as attitudinal, socioemotional and functional autonomy. Voice with parents was assessed separate from voice with romantic partners, and cognitive autonomy included items that tapped adolescents' capacity for decision-making capacity, ability to maintain values and opinions, personal goal setting, and initiative.

To summarise the first of the four key findings in the current study, there was some overlap between the different measures of autonomy, but this was generally limited to links of emotional autonomy from parents with voice with parents and cognitive autonomy. When young people report greater emotional autonomy from parents they also report that they have *lower* voice with parents and *less* cognitive autonomy. Deidealisation of parents and nondependence on parents clearly are contrary to attitudinal, socioemotional and functional autonomy. Neither voice with parents nor voice with romantic partners is associated with cognitive autonomy.

These findings show that emotional autonomy from parents is in opposition to voice and cognitive autonomy. In other words, more individuation from parents, deidealisation of parents and independence from parents are found among adolescents and emerging adults who perceive that they have less voice with their parents and who report less of their own capacity for decision-making, who have less clear personal values and who have challenges with goal-setting and personal goal-pursuit. Hence, as other researchers have found (Ryan & Lynch, 1989), greater emotional autonomy from parents seems to identify adolescents who are having intrapersonal and interpersonal difficulties. In this study, these difficulties include expressing themselves with parents and lower levels of cognitive autonomy.

The associations of autonomy measures with parental warmth and psychological control were a second set of key findings of the current study. Again, these findings indicate that emotional autonomy from parents as measured here may indicate more deficits than strengths, with adolescents and emerging adults who report more emotional autonomy from parents also reporting less warm relationships with their parents. The converse is true of other forms of autonomy. Young people who report more voice with their parents and who report more socioemotional autonomy also report warmer relationships with their parents. The findings for psychological control by parents provide an even more interesting picture of the role of parents in dependence and autonomy formation. Psychological control seems to accompany less deidealisation and nondependence (i.e., more idealisation of parents and more dependence on parents), as does warmth. Yet, greater psychological control by parents also is associated with *less* voice with their parents, whereas parental warmth is associated with *more* voice. Parental psychological control does seem to serve the purpose of maintaining adolescent dependence on their parents, as others have reported (Soenens et al., 2010), but this dependency may not be a

positive outcome given that higher psychological control also accompanies less perceived ability to express personal views and opinions with parents. Psychological control has been described as an "insidious and manipulative" behaviour that is found more frequently among parents who anxiously want to avoid separation from their children (Soenens et al. 2010, p. 217). In the current study, parental psychological control does seem to have this desired outcome of greater adolescent dependence but it also may come at the expense of adolescents' voice with their parents. Taken together, the pattern of associations between parental warmth, parental psychological control, emotional autonomy from parents, voice and cognitive autonomy suggests that it would be difficult to identify whether less dependence on parents is positive or negative without also considering multiple dimensions of the parent-adolescent relationship and other measures of adolescents' autonomous behaviour and cognition.

These first two key study findings highlight how contradictions can be found when drawing from both classic and contemporary theories concerning adolescent autonomy, and show that there is still a need to consider how to best conceptualise and operationalise autonomous functioning during adolescence and beyond. Most recently, researchers have argued that autonomy should include agency and volition, with an autonomous orientation defined as intrinsic motivation and personal commitments that depend on "a sense of volition and an awareness...of personal standards and goals" (Soenens, Berzonsky, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, & Goossens, 2005, p. 430). Recent studies in this area have examined parents' promotion of volitional functioning separate from their promotion of independence (Soenens et al., 2007) or have studied specific forms of behaviour and its motivational basis (such as leaving home or managing one's health; see Zimmer-Gembeck, Ducat, & Collins, in press, for a review). A common theme to take away from the current and these previous studies is how productive it can



be to consider multiple components within both the intrapersonal and interpersonal domains to understand adolescent and emerging adult autonomy and relationships.

The third key finding of the current study is related to cognitive autonomy. In general, although young people who report greater cognitive autonomy also report less emotional autonomy from their parents, there are very few associations of cognitive autonomy and parent-adolescent relationship qualities. Of the three aspects of cognitive autonomy measured, only one (socioemotional autonomy) was higher when parents were higher in warmth/involvement. We expected this measure to clearly identify individuals who had made more progress in autonomy development and to find that a good parent-adolescent relationship is a correlate of greater cognitive autonomy. Given the weak support for this hypothesis and the negative associations between age and cognitive autonomy, we encourage further consideration of the associations between cognitive autonomy and interpersonal relationships. In particular, the aspects of cognitive autonomy seem quite relevant to adolescent and emerging adult development but the measure may need further development just as has been found for the measure of emotional autonomy from parents (Anderson, LaVoie, & Dunkel, 2007; Schmitz & Baer, 2001). Alternatively, the measure may not be the problem. Instead, it may be that warmth/involvement and psychological control are not the aspects of parenting most relevant to the development of cognitive autonomy. For example, we did not directly measure support for autonomy (McElhaney & Allen, 2001; Skinner, Johnson, & Snyder, 2005) or structure (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Skinner et al., 2005). In one study, autonomy granting as a parenting quality was found to be facilitative of autonomous behaviour (Barber & Olsen, 1994), and in another study, parents promotion of volitional functioning was associated with adolescents' better psychosocial functioning, defined as lower levels of depressive symptoms, higher self-esteem

and better social well-being (Soenens et al., 2007). However, other evidence shows that observed autonomy support may not be as important as psychological control. In an observational study of mothers' undermining of their adolescents' (grade 9 and 10 students) autonomy while discussing an issue about which they disagreed, the association between mothers' undermining of autonomy and adolescent autonomous behaviours was not significant (McElhaney & Allen, 2001). There was a significant negative association between parents' psychological control and adolescents' observed autonomous behaviours.

The fourth and final purpose of the current study was to test associations between autonomy and romantic relationship qualities. Overall, there were few associations between autonomy and romantic relationship qualities of social support and negative interactions, except when the measure of autonomy was voice with romantic partners or nondependence on parents. In these cases, young people who report more voice and less dependence on their parents also have more support from their partners. Again, this limited number of associations was a surprise given theory that would suggest that romantic development should produce or at least develop parallel to autonomy (Furman et al., 1999; Gray & Steinberg, 1999). It may be a problem with measurement of autonomy or it may be that other aspects of romantic relationships are the important ones for promoting or undermining autonomy. It also could be that romantic relationships in late adolescence and the first years of emerging adulthood are not yet advanced enough to have become secure resources for autonomous behaviour. Future research could consider and examine these possibilities.

There are two limitations of this study that may impact the interpretation and generalisation of the findings. First, part of answering the question, "what is autonomy?" has centred on the expectation that autonomous functioning should be a marker of increasing

competence, and a reflection of well-being and adaptive functioning. Such outcomes were not measured in the current study, so we cannot fully address this issue. Previous research has shown that adolescents' emotional autonomy from parents is linked with mental health or other problems (Beyers et al., 2003; Garber & Little, 2001; Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986.). Second, the use of a cross-sectional study design precludes investigation of whether it is relationships that precede autonomy development or whether autonomy development changes the nature of relationships. It is possible that autonomy is a mediator linking positive parent-adolescent relationships with positive romantic relationship development. We did not test this because of the cross-sectional design of our study. Longitudinal or experimental research is needed to examine such directional associations. We expect that there are bi-directional or transactional associations between the intrapersonal domain of autonomy and the interpersonal.

Studies of emotional autonomy with older adolescent and emerging adult participants are scarce (see Beyers et al., 2003 for an exception). To our knowledge, the current study is the first to report associations of multiple measures of autonomy and relationships with parents and with romantic partners. Our findings show that parental warmth is associated with maintaining connection to parents and also feeling more voice with parents and having greater cognitive autonomy. In contrast, psychological control may also maintain connection to parents in the form of dependence but also undermines voice. Romantic relationship quality seems to play only a minor role in autonomy at this time of life, but it is possible that this might change as these relationships become more central with age. Because young people are embedded in constellations of social relationships, one next step it to examine the impact multiple relationships have on each other, and how they combine to promote or undermine the

development of autonomy and self-expression. The liabilities associated with deficits in these areas can include the construction of a false-self, low or unstable self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Harter, 1999; Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993; Ryan et al., 1995). The possibilities of these negative outcomes highlight the need to continue the study of autonomy and initiative as developmental processes linked to social relationships during adolescence and emerging adulthood.

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Autonomy Measures (N = 206)*

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Emotional autonomy from parents								
1 Individuation from parents	--							
2 Deidealisation of parents	.50**	--						
3 Nondependence on parents	.52**	.53**	--					
4 Voice with parents	-.17*	-.10	-.15*	--				
5 Voice with partner	.02	.11	.04	.33**	--			
6 Attitudinal autonomy <sup>a</sup>	-.11	-.28**	-.19*	.13	.01	--		
7 Socioemotional autonomy <sup>a</sup>	-.14	-.38**	-.28**	-.07	-.06	.56**	--	
8 Functional autonomy <sup>a</sup>	-.15	-.27**	-.17*	.04	-.17	.53**	.36**	
<i>M (SD)</i>	2.59 (.52)	2.65 (.51)	2.57 (.51)	3.05 (.67)	3.38 (.55)	2.57 (.52)	2.46 (.43)	2.52 (.59)

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .<sup>a</sup> $n = 117$ .

Table 2

*Results of Regressing Emotional Autonomy from Parents (EA) on Qualities of Relationships (N = 206)*

Independent variables	Dependent Variables					
	Model 1: EA: Individuation		Model 2: EA: Deidealisation		Model 3: EA: Nondependence	
	<i>B (SE B)</i>	$\beta$	<i>B (SE B)</i>	$\beta$	<i>B (SE B)</i>	$\beta$
Step 1						
Age	-.03 (.05)	-.05	.09 (.05)	.13*	-.01 (.05)	-.01
Gender	.12 (.08)	.10	.16 (.07)	.15*	.18 (.07)	.16*
Step 2						
Age	-.03 (.05)	-.04	.09 (.05)	.14*	.00 (.05)	.00
Gender	.13 (.08)	.11	.17 (.07)	.16*	.19 (.07)	.18*
Parent: Warmth/involvement	-.20 (.10)	-.15*	-.32 (.09)	-.27**	-.36 (.09)	-.30**
Parent: Psychological control	-.09 (.13)	-.06	-.29 (.12)	-.18*	-.28 (.12)	-.17*
Step 3						
Age	-.03 (.05)	-.04	.09 (.05)	.13	-.01 (.05)	-.01
Gender	.10 (.08)	.09	.16 (.07)	.15*	.17 (.07)	.16*
Parent: Warmth/involvement	-.20 (.10)	-.16*	-.33 (.09)	-.27**	-.38 (.09)	-.13**
Parent: Psychological control	-.09 (.13)	-.05	-.28 (.12)	-.17*	-.27 (.12)	-.16*
Romantic Partner social support	.03 (.05)	.04	.06 (.05)	.09	.10 (.05)	.15*
Romantic Partner negative interactions	-.09 (.05)	-.13	-.02 (.05)	-.02	-.03 (.05)	-.05

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

*Note.* Model 1: Step 1  $R^2 = .00$ , Step 2  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ , Step 3  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ , Final  $R^2 = .04$ . Model 2: Step 1  $R^2 = .04^*$ , Step 2  $\Delta R^2 = .06^{**}$ , Step 3  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ , Final  $R^2 = .11^{**}$ . Model 3: Step 1  $R^2 = .03^*$ , Step 2  $\Delta R^2 = .08^{**}$ , Step 3  $\Delta R^2 = .03^*$ , Final  $R^2 = .14^{**}$ .

Table 3

*Results of Regressing Voice and Socioemotional Autonomy on Qualities of Relationships (N = 206)*

Independent variables	Dependent Variables					
	Model 1: Voice with Parents		Model 2: Voice with Partners		Model 3: Agency: Sociomotional autonomy <sup>a</sup>	
	<i>B (SE B)</i>	$\beta$	<i>B (SE B)</i>	$\beta$	<i>B (SE B)</i>	$\beta$
Step 1						
Age	.26 (.06)	.29**	.04 (.05)	.06	-.10 (.06)	-.16
Gender	.11 (.10)	.08	.24 (.08)	.21**	-.11 (.08)	-.12
Step 2						
Age	.19 (.06)	.22**	.03 (.05)	.04	-.10 (.06)	-.16
Gender	.09 (.09)	.07	.23 (.08)	.21**	-.11 (.08)	-.12
Parent: Warmth/involvement	.41 (.11)	.26**	.22 (.09)	.18*	.20 (.10)	.19*
Parent: Psychological control	-.30 (.15)	-.14*	.05 (.13)	.03	.16 (.13)	.13
Step 3						
Age	.19 (.06)	.21**	.00 (.04)	.00	-.10 (.06)	-.17
Gender	.07 (.09)	.05	.19 (.08)	.17**	-.13 (.08)	-.14
Parent: Warmth/involvement	.40 (.11)	.25**	.19 (.08)	.15*	.20 (.11)	.19*
Parent: Psychological control	-.29 (.15)	-.14*	.10 (.11)	.06	.17 (.13)	.13
Romantic Partner social support	.07 (.06)	.08	.32 (.04)	.45**	.01 (.06)	.02
Romantic Partner negative interactions	-.07 (.06)	-.08	-.04 (.04)	-.06	.04 (.06)	.06

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .<sup>a</sup> $n = 117$ .

Note. Model 1: Step 1  $R^2 = .09^{**}$ , Step 2  $\Delta R^2 = .11^{**}$ , Step 3  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ , Final  $R^2 = .22^{**}$ . Model 2: Step 1  $R^2 = .05^{**}$ , Step 2  $\Delta R^2 = .03^*$ , Step 3  $\Delta R^2 = .21^{**}$ , Final  $R^2 = .29^{**}$ . Model 3: Step 1  $R^2 = .04$ , Step 2  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ , Step 3  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ , Final  $R^2 = .08$ .