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When do we offer more support than we seek? A behavioral replication and developmental extension

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Abstract

Beck and Clark (2009) found self-report evidence that adults are more likely to offer support to a potential friend than to seek identical support from that potential friend, but that this asymmetry between offering and seeking support weakens among close friends. The present study sought to behaviorally replicate these findings in adults as well as to explore the developmental emergence of this phenomenon by examining when children would display similar patterns of offering and seeking support. Four-year-olds, 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, and adults were given opportunities to offer or request identical support from peers. Sometimes participants were close friends; sometimes they were potential friends. The findings for adults' support behaviors replicated previous self-report findings. Adults were more likely to offer support than to request identical support from potential friends, whereas adults were just as likely to request support as they were to offer support to close friends; 8-year-olds showed a similar pattern of behaviors. However, 4- and 6-year-olds did not distinguish between potential and close friends; they were just as likely to request support as they were to offer support to both potential and close friends. The discussion highlights the importance of understanding how these support processes unfold in new, developing relationships compared to in close, established relationships, as well as of understanding when these processes might emerge during childhood.

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The need to form and maintain close relationships is a central part of human nature (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), yet surprisingly little research has examined how people initiate and develop close relationships. A defining feature of close relationships involves partners' mutual responsiveness to one another's needs (Clark & Mills, 2012; Reis & Shaver, 1988), which helps both partners feel validated, cared for, and understood (Reis & Patrick, 1996; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Partners can promote mutual responsiveness in ongoing close relationships by offering support to one another as well as by seeking support from one another (e.g., Clark & Aragón, 2013; Clark & Mills, 2012). Moreover, offering and seeking support are essential steps in initiating new relationships (Beck & Clark, 2010; Clark & Beck, 2010). Given that offers and requests for support help set close relationships into motion, it is important to understand how these processes unfold in new, developing relationships compared to in close, established relationships, as well as when these processes might emerge during childhood.

When children and adults initiate and develop close relationships with peers, they must balance the need to form and strengthen those relationships against the need to protect themselves from rejection (cf. Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). We propose that, at least among adults, balancing these needs will lead people to be more likely to offer than to request support from a potential partner, because seeking support may seem especially risky when initiating new relationships (Beck & Clark, 2009). Although a potential partner can turn down either a request for or an offer of support, seeking support—unlike offering it—reveals vulnerabilities and needs. Having a potential partner decline one's request for support can indicate that the partner does not care about one's needs (e.g., Beck & Clark, 2009; Murray et al., 2006). In contrast, having a potential partner decline one's offer of support does not indicate a lack of care and, in fact, can be attributed to the partner not wanting to burden or inconvenience the offerer (e.g., Beck & Clark, 2009).

Importantly, understanding the risks and benefits of seeking versus offering support—and especially understanding when one or the other strategy might be more appropriate—may be a difficult task requiring perspective taking and considerable reasoning (cf. Eisenberg, 1986; Eisenberg & Shell, 1986; Eisenberg et al., 1987; Eisenberg-Berg & Hand, 1979). This suggests that whereas adults may show this understanding, it might not be present in early childhood and instead might emerge across development.

Research on offering and seeking support in adult friendships provides initial evidence that adults show these responses. Behavioral and self-report studies (Beck & Clark, 2009) have found that people are more likely to offer support to friends than to request identical support for themselves. Furthermore, in a self-report study (Beck & Clark, 2009, Study 1), the asymmetry between offering and seeking support was attenuated for close friends, such that people indicated that they would be more likely to seek support from close friends than from potential friends (when, presumably, the risk of

rejection was substantially lower). These findings coincide well with the idea that balancing relationship promotion with self-protection will make people more likely to offer support than to request support from friends, particularly early in friendships when people have not established confidence in their friends' care and regard. This research, however, did not examine whether attenuation of the asymmetry between offering and seeking support from close friends would be reflected in actual offers of and requests for support. Doing so represents an important goal for the present research.

Although self-report research on friendships in adulthood suggests that people offer more support than they seek in potential friendships, little research has examined these processes in childhood. Given that offers and requests for support may help foster the development of close friendships (Beck & Clark, 2010; Clark & Beck, 2010), and given that friendships play important roles in childhood (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995) as well as in adulthood, it is important to understand when the asymmetry between offering and seeking support emerges during childhood. At some point, children must learn that offering more support than one seeks is a *strategy* that can help initiate friendships while simultaneously limiting vulnerability to rejection and exploitation.

Although previous work has not examined the developmental emergence of the asymmetry between offering and seeking support, existing research does suggest that children are capable of providing help to others (e.g., Warneken & Tomasello, 2006) and seeking help from others (Goubet, Rochat, Maire-Leblond, & Poss, 2006) by the second year of life. Furthermore, even preschoolers' friendships involve features related to social support, including caring, validation, help, and guidance (Sebanc, 2003), which suggests that children have the minimal abilities to offer and seek support, as well as to understand the need for support, by age 4.

However, research also indicates that young children have difficulty with tasks in which they need to simultaneously weigh different information, such as costs and benefits of providing support (e.g., Birch & Billman, 1986), or with tasks in which they need to tailor their reactions to different support recipients (e.g., Sigelman & Waitzman, 1991). For example, although young children can support others, they may have difficulty doing so when it involves personal costs. In an experiment on food sharing among preschoolers, 3- to 5-year-old children, on average, offered just one piece of food to their classmates at snack time and kept 10 pieces for themselves (Birch & Billman, 1986), although tendencies toward selfishness do abate considerably by middle childhood (Fehr, Bernhard, & Rockenbach, 2008). Furthermore, at age 5, children have more difficulty taking contextual information into account—such as recipients' need for support—when allocating resources than do children at ages 9 and older (Sigelman & Waitzman, 1991). These findings that young children may have difficulty considering the costs, benefits, and social context of support complement other findings that theory of mind—especially second-order theory of mind—continues to develop from ages 4 through 8 (e.g., Miller, 2009). Taken together, this research led us to predict that across this age range, children would show increasingly adult-like tendencies to offer more support than they seek, especially early in friendships.

Research on children's friendships also indicates that important changes occur in the understanding of friendships from preschool through elementary school, which further supports our prediction. During this period, children's social worlds expand from

interactions with their immediate families—in which close relationships are a given—to interactions with their peers in schools and other settings in which friendships must be negotiated (cf. Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). Indeed, although children's friendships show some stability in preschool (Howes, 1988; Sanderson & Siegal, 1995), their friendships become even more stable in elementary school (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). Children's friendships also become more focused on support-related processes from preschool through elementary school. For example, friends assume new roles of conveying knowledge about behavioral norms (Parker & Gottman, 1989), and the importance of cooperation, sharing, and reciprocity among friends also increases (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). In addition, children's use of communal norms in friendships—one of the hallmarks of close relationships in adulthood (Clark & Mills, 2012)—rises from first grade to third grade (Pataki, Shapiro, & Clark, 1994), which further indicates that children experience changes in their understanding of friendships during this period, which, in turn, may have implications for their tendencies to offer more support than they seek.

The present research

We had several goals in conducting the present work. First, we intended to replicate the behavioral finding that adults are more likely to offer support to friends than to request identical support for themselves (Beck & Clark, 2009, Study 2). Second, we intended to behaviorally replicate the self-report finding that the asymmetry between offering and requesting support is attenuated between close—as compared to potential—friends among adults (Beck & Clark, 2009, Study 1). Third, we intended to explore the emergence of the asymmetry between offering and requesting support by examining these processes among children between the ages of 4 and 8.

Examining offers and requests for support

Our behavioral replication involved randomly assigning participants to be in a situation in which they either could offer support or ask for identical support from a potential or close friend. The paradigm was the same as that used by Beck and Clark (2009, Study 2) with the exception of examining a new kind of support that would be appropriate for both children and adults to offer or request. In the original study, participants put in a position to offer support were assigned an enjoyable task and were led to believe that their partner was assigned a boring task. They could offer support by offering to switch tasks. Participants put in a position to request support were assigned a boring task and were led to believe that their partner was assigned an enjoyable task. They could seek support by asking to switch tasks. People were more likely to offer than to seek support. In the present work, we created a conceptually similar task that would be appropriate for both children and adults. Participants put in a position to offer support were given an ample set of paints to complete an assigned painting while their partner was given an insufficient set of paints to do so. Participants with the ample set of paints could offer support by offering to share their paints with their partner, which would require them to temporarily sacrifice any paints they had offered to share. Participants put in a position to

request support were given an insufficient set of paints while their partner was given an ample set of paints. Participants with the insufficient set of paints could seek support by asking to share their partner's paints, which would require their partner to temporarily sacrifice any paints he or she had been asked to share.

Consistent with Beck and Clark (2009), we predicted that people would be more likely to offer support than to request identical support from potential friends. Offering support allows people to initiate friendships without risking much hurt should the offer be declined, whereas requesting support makes people vulnerable to having their needs ignored or rejected. We further predicted that the asymmetry between offering and requesting support would weaken or disappear with close friends, such that people would be as likely to request support as to offer identical support to close friends. At this point in the friendship, both partners should feel confident in one another's care and regard and should no longer be concerned about risking rejection.

Examining the developmental emergence of the asymmetry between offering and requesting support

The final goal of the present research was to explore the developmental emergence of the asymmetry between offering and seeking support by examining these processes among 4-year-old, 6-year-old, and 8-year-old children, as well as among adults. Prior research has not examined the emergence of this asymmetry, although the related developmental research reviewed above informed our predictions. Specifically, we predicted that 4-year-olds would not distinguish between potential and close friends when offering and requesting identical support and, indeed, might be relatively unlikely to offer support in the first place (see Birch & Billman, 1986; Fehr et al., 2008). In contrast, we predicted that 6-year-olds, and especially 8-year-olds, would differentiate between potential and close friends when offering and requesting support by being more likely to offer support than to request identical support from potential—but not close—friends.

Method

Participants

We tested 40 4-year-olds (23 female; 20 potential friends, 20 close friends; 15 same-sex pairs), 42 6-year-olds (22 female; 22 potential friends, 20 close friends; 17 same-sex pairs), 40 8-year-olds (28 female; 20 potential friends, 20 close friends; 14 same-sex pairs), and 56 college undergraduates (31 female; 28 potential friends, 28 close friends; 19 same-sex pairs). We recruited 4-year-old, 6-year-old, and 8-year-old participants through principals at local preschools and elementary schools in the Northeastern United States. If principals were interested in having their students participate, students' parents or guardians were given consent forms to give permission for participation if they so chose. We recruited undergraduate participants through the psychology participant pool at a mid-sized national university in the Northeastern United States and through flyers posted around the university campus. Two undergraduate participants (one pair of

potential friends) yielded no useable data due to an inadvertant failure to capture audio in their videotape.

Procedure

Children. We used teachers' reports to identify potential friend and close friend pairs. We gave teachers a list of their students who had been given permission to participate in our study and asked them to indicate which students were friendly with one another, but were not yet close friends (i.e., potential friends), which students were close friends with one another (i.e., close friends), and which students did not get along well with one another. We used this information to randomly assign participants to work with a potential friend or a close friend within the same age group. Research assistants determined the potential friend and close friend pairs, which allowed the primary experimenter to remain unaware of the friendship condition to which participants had been assigned.

After participants had been assigned to work with a potential friend or a close friend, they participated with one another on a painting task in which they were given an opportunity to offer or request support from one another. The experimenter seated participants across from one another at a table and explained that they each would paint a picture. The pictures were age-appropriate scenes selected from children's coloring books. The experimenter gave each participant an identical picture and explained that she had color-coded each picture with different-colored dots so that participants would know which colors to use for which parts of the picture. She also gave participants an example of how to paint the parts of the picture with light green dots using light green paint to make sure that participants understood the instructions.

Next, the experimenter randomly assigned one participant to be in a position to offer support and one participant to be in a position to request support. The experimenter put participants in a position to offer or request identical types of support by first giving the participant in the position to offer support a set of 10 full pots of different-colored paint, including all colors needed to paint the picture. She then gave the participant in the position to request support a set of almost empty pots of different-colored paint, including nine pots with dried-up paint in them and one pot with fresh paint in it. At this point she remarked:

> Oops! [Participant's name], it looks like you don't have too much paint left. I'm going to go see if we have any more paint, but I'm not sure that we do. It might take me awhile, so while I go check you both can get started painting. In the meantime, you can use whatever you need that's here.

This manipulation put participants in a position to offer or request the same type of support in the form of pots of paint. The experimenter then left the room—supposedly to look for more paint—while participants' interactions were videotaped. The videotapes allowed trained observers to code participants' offering and requesting behaviors; observers were unaware of the hypotheses and the friendship condition to which participants had been assigned. After 5 min, the experimenter returned to the room, explained that she had found more paint, shared the paint with participants, and let them finish their

paintings. Children were compensated with the painting they had made; schools were compensated with a gift card.

Adults. We followed identical procedures with adult participants, with three exceptions. First, we explained to participants that they would pretest materials for a developmental psychology study on children to reduce suspicion about the nature of the painting task. Second, we identified potential friend and close friend pairs through participants' own reports, not through their teachers' reports. We required participants to sign up for the study with a close friend who also was a fellow undergraduate and scheduled two pairs of friends to participate at a time. Once all four participants had arrived at the laboratory, research assistants randomly assigned each participant to work with the close friend with whom he or she had signed up for the study (the close friend condition) or to work with one of the participants from the other pair of friends (the potential friend condition). The experimenter, who remained unaware of the friendship condition to which participants had been assigned, then led each pair to a different room within the laboratory. Third, at the end of the study, the experimenter checked participants for suspicion, debriefed them, and compensated them with either course credit or payment.

Measures

Observer-rated offering and requesting behaviors. Two trained observers independently coded all videotapes for participants' offering and requesting behaviors during the 5-min painting task. To create a behavioral replication that was conceptually similar to previous work (Beck & Clark, 2009), we had observers code which behavior happened first: Did the participant with the set of full pots of paint offer any to the other participant or did the participant with the set of almost empty pots of paint request any from the other participant? Or alternatively, did neither participant act? Examples of offers included verbal statements such as "Do you want to use mine?" and "I have lots of paint if you need it," as well as non-verbal actions such as passing full pots of paint toward the other participant. Examples of requests included verbal statements such as "Can I share?" and "I need some of your paint," as well as non-verbal actions such as gesturing toward the other participant's full pots of paint. We assessed inter-rater reliability using the κ statistic (Cohen, 1960; Landis & Koch, 1977), which indicated excellent agreement between observers, $\kappa = .93$, $p < .001$. When the two trained observers disagreed on which behavior happened first, a third trained observer resolved the disagreements.

Observer-rated liking and friendliness. The same two trained observers also independently coded all videotapes for participants' liking and friendliness toward one another during the 5-min painting task. This information allowed us to test whether adults were as open to friendships (as indicated by their liking and friendliness toward one another) with potential friends as were children, which was especially important because adults in the potential friend condition might not have known one another prior to the study, whereas children in the potential friend condition did know one another prior to the study (i.e., they were in the same class at school). Observers rated how much each pair of participants seemed to like one another using a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*quite a bit*);

Table 1. Log-linear analysis for participants' age group, friendship type, and first behavior within friendship pairs.

Variable	G^2	*df*	*p*
Age Group × Friendship Type × Behavior	49.68	17	<.001
Age Group × Behavior	19.62	6	.003
Age Group × Friendship Type	0.10	3	.992
Friendship Type × Behavior	13.72	2	.001
Age Group × Behavior (Controlling for Friendship Type)	35.86	12	<.001
Age Group × Friendship Type (Controlling for Behavior)	16.34	9	.060
Friendship Type × Behavior (Controlling for Age Group)	29.96	8	<.001

observers also rated how friendly each participant seemed to feel toward the other participant using a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very*). We assessed inter-rater reliability using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979), which indicated excellent agreement between observers for participants' liking and friendliness toward one another, $ICC_{liking} = .88$, $p < .001$, $ICC_{friendliness} = .85$, $p < .001$.

Results

Observer-rated offering and requesting behaviors

We used log-linear analysis to test our predictions (see Table 1). As expected, the analysis showed a significant three-way interaction among participants' age group, friendship type, and offering versus requesting behaviors, indicating that participants' offering and requesting behaviors differed based on their age group and friendship type. Figure 1 shows the proportions of which behavior happened first during the painting task—requesting support or offering support—within pairs of friends, displayed by participants' age group (4-year-old, 6-year-old, 8-year-old, or adult) and friendship type (potential or close).

Consistent with our hypotheses and with previous research (Beck & Clark, 2009), adults were more likely to offer support first than to request support first from potential friends, follow-up test: $\chi^2(1, N = 10) = 10.00$, $p < .01$, whereas adults were just as likely to request support first as they were to offer support first to close friends, follow-up test: $\chi^2(1, N = 14) = 1.14$, $p = .285$. Eight-year-olds showed a similar pattern of behaviors; they tended to be more likely to offer support first than to request support first from potential friends, follow-up tests: $\chi^2(1, N = 7) = 3.57$, $p = .059$; Yates' $\chi^2(1, N = 7) = 2.29$, $p = .131$,[1] whereas they were just as likely to request support first as they were to offer support first to close friends, follow-up test: $\chi^2(1, N = 10) = 0.00$, $p = 1.000$.

Also as expected, younger participants did not differentiate between potential and close friends to the same extent as did 8-year-olds and adults. Unlike 8-year-olds and adults, 6-year-olds were just as likely to request support first as they were to offer support first to both potential friends, follow-up tests: $\chi^2(1, N = 8) = 0.00$, $p = 1.000$; Yates' $\chi^2(1, N = 8) = 0.13$, $p = .724$, and to close friends, follow-up test: $\chi^2(1, N = 10) = 0.40$, $p = .527$. Four-year-olds also were just as likely to request support first as they were to offer support first to both potential friends, follow-up tests: $\chi^2(1, N = 4) = 1.00$,

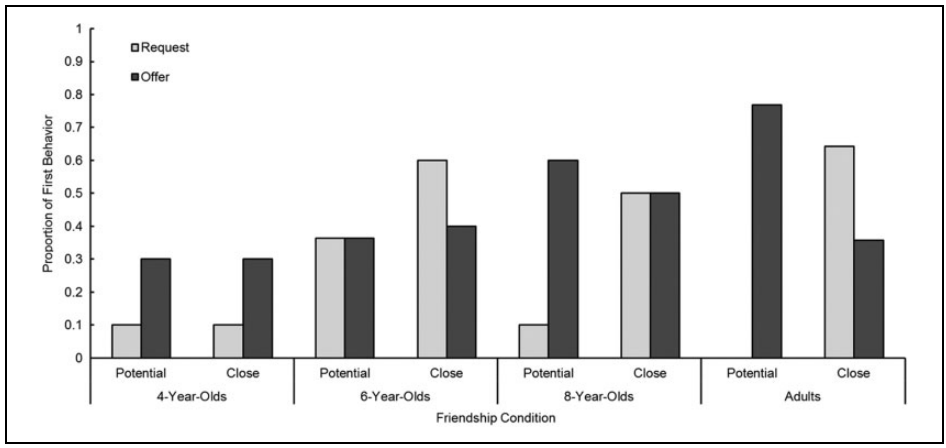

Figure 1. Proportion of first behavior (requesting or offering support) within friendship pairs, displayed by participants' age group (4-year-olds, 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, or adults) and friendship type (potential or close). (Please note that no adults requested support first in the potential friend condition.)

$p = .317$; Yates' $\chi^2(1, N = 4) = 0.25$, $p = .617$, and to close friends, follow-up tests: $\chi^2(1, N = 4) = 1.00$, $p = .317$; Yates' $\chi^2(1, N = 4) = 0.25$, $p = .617$.

One unpredicted effect emerged. Unlike 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, and adults, 4-year-olds tended to be especially likely to take no action. That is, they were just as likely to take no action as they were to offer support first to potential friends, follow-up tests: $\chi^2(1, N = 9) = 1.00$, $p = .317$; Yates' $\chi^2(1, N = 9) = 0.44$, $p = .505$, and they tended to be more likely to take no action than to request support first from potential friends, follow-up tests: $\chi^2(1, N = 7) = 3.57$, $p = .059$; Yates' $\chi^2(1, N = 7) = 2.29$, $p = .131$. Four-year-olds also showed an identical pattern of behaviors with close friends in terms of taking no action (see Figure 1).

Observer-rated liking and friendliness

We used 4 (age group: 4-year-old, 6-year-old, 8-year-old, or adult) × 2 (friendship type: potential or close) analyses of variance to test whether adults were as open to friendships (as indicated by their liking and friendliness toward one another) with potential friends as were children. Figure 2 shows the mean observer ratings of how much each pair of participants seemed to like one another and the mean observer ratings of how friendly each participant seemed to feel toward the other participant, displayed by participants' age group (4-year-old, 6-year-old, 8-year-old, or adult) and friendship type (potential or close).

The analyses showed that participants' liking and friendliness toward one another did not differ as a function of the interaction between age group and friendship type, $F_{\text{liking}}(3, 80) = 1.07$, $p = .369$, $F_{\text{friendliness}}(3, 166) = 1.10$, $p = .350$, which indicates that adults' levels of liking and friendliness were similar to those of children in both the

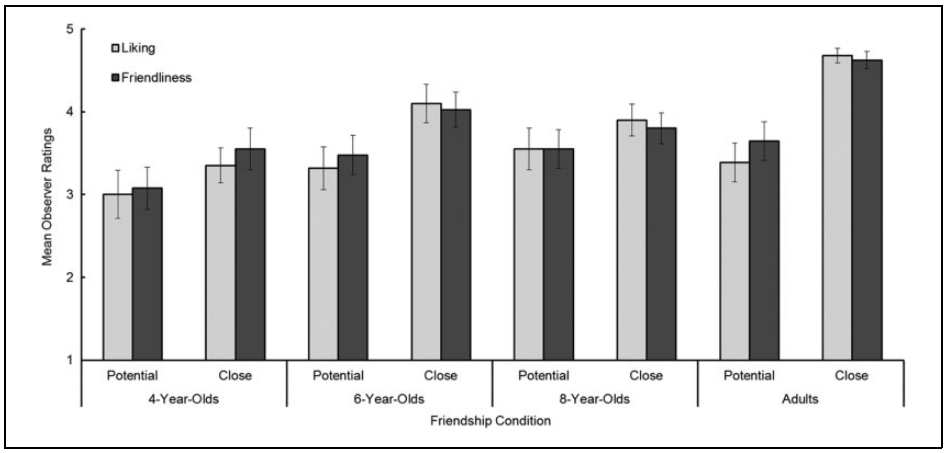

Figure 2. Mean observer-rated liking within friendship pairs and mean observer-rated friendliness within participants, displayed by participants' age group (4-year-olds, 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, or adults) and friendship type (potential or close).

potential and close friend conditions. That is, adults seemed to be as open to friendships (as indicated by their liking and friendliness) with both potential and close friends as did children, despite the fact that adults in the potential friend condition might not have known one another prior to the study, whereas children in the potential friend condition did know one another prior to the study (i.e., they were in the same class at school). The analyses also showed marginally significant or significant main effects of age group, $F_{\text{liking}}(3, 80) = 2.51, p = .064$, $F_{\text{friendliness}}(3, 166) = 5.26, p < .01$, and of friendship type, $F_{\text{liking}}(1, 80) = 9.26, p < .01$, $F_{\text{friendliness}}(1, 166) = 13.79, p < .001$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's honest significant difference tests indicated that adults had higher levels of liking and friendliness toward one another than did 4-year-olds, $p_{\text{liking}} < .05$, $p_{\text{friendliness}} < .001$, although no other age groups differed. Participants also had higher levels of liking and friendliness toward one another in the close friend condition than did participants in the potential friend condition (see Figure 2).

Discussion

Offering and seeking support not only plays a central role in ongoing close relationships (Clark & Aragón, 2013; Clark & Mills, 2012) by helping partners feel validated, cared for, and understood (Reis & Patrick, 1996; Reis & Shaver, 1988), but it also may help initiate new close relationships (Beck & Clark, 2010; Clark & Beck, 2010). Therefore, it is important to examine how these support processes unfold in new, developing relationships compared to in close, established relationships. Furthermore, given that friendships are meaningful in childhood (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995) as well as in adulthood, it is equally important to examine when these processes might emerge during childhood. The present work extends our understanding of this topic in a number of ways. First, it provides a behavioral replication of self-report findings (Beck & Clark,

2009, Study 1) of the asymmetry between offering versus seeking support from potential—as compared to close—friends in adulthood. Second, it explores the novel question of when this asymmetry might emerge in childhood.

The present results complement prior self-report evidence (Beck & Clark, 2009, Study 1) by providing new behavioral evidence that adults were more likely to offer support to potential friends than they were to seek identical support from potential friends. Importantly, adults seemed just as open to potential friendships—as shown by their liking and friendliness toward one another—as did children, despite the fact that adults who were potential friends might not have known one another beforehand, whereas children who were potential friends did know one another beforehand (i.e., they were in the same class at school). Furthermore, this asymmetry between offering and seeking support disappeared among close friends; adults were just as likely to request support as they were to offer support to close friends. We propose that balancing the need to form and strengthen close relationships against the need to protect the self from rejection (Murray et al., 2006) leads to the observed asymmetry among potential friends, because offering support may seem like a safer strategy than seeking support when developing new friendships (Beck & Clark, 2009). First, offering support promotes close friendships without requiring people to reveal their needs or to open themselves up to possible rejection. Second, having an offer of support declined does not suggest that the potential friend does not care, whereas having a request for support declined does (Beck & Clark, 2009).

The present research also provides the first evidence of when the asymmetry in support processes with potential friends—and its disappearance or attenuation with close friends—emerges. Eight-year-olds behaved similarly to adults; they tended to be more likely to offer support than to request support from potential friends, but they were just as likely to request support as they were to offer support to close friends. These patterns of behavior may reflect broader developmental changes in children's conceptions of friendship, as well as in children's conceptions of the best ways to initiate new friendships. For example, children's friendships become more stable from early childhood to later childhood (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995), which may lead children to develop new ideas about what it means to be potential or close friends and what it takes to successfully initiate friendships. As another example, children have been shown to increasingly use communal norms in friendships—but not in acquaintanceships—from first grade to third grade (Pataki et al., 1994), which may lead children to differentiate between potential and close friends when requesting and offering support.

Limitations and future directions

This work also suggests several limitations and important directions for future research. First, we propose that the observed asymmetry in offering and seeking support among potential friends reflects concerns about revealing one's needs and thereby opening oneself up to possible rejection. Although this assumption is consistent with prior work (e.g., Beck & Clark, 2009, 2010; Clark & Beck, 2010), future research should continue to explore these ideas by directly measuring or manipulating concerns about potential

rejection and testing whether they drive the asymmetry in offering and seeking support among potential friends.

Second, the present research explores the developmental emergence of this asymmetry during childhood, but future research should examine the developmental changes underlying this asymmetry. For example, the realization that asking for support leaves one more vulnerable than does offering support might require age-related increases in perspective-taking abilities (e.g., Kurdek & Rodgon, 1975; Miller, 2009). So, too, might age-related increases in perspective-taking abilities lead to parallel increases in understanding that new friendships may be fostered more effectively by offering support (which partners may value) than by asking for support (which may burden partners; Pataki et al., 1994).

Third, the present work focuses on children and adults' initial offers and requests for support to create a behavioral replication that is conceptually similar to previous work (Beck & Clark, 2009). However, future work should examine how potential and close friends respond to offers and requests for support, as well as how their responses lead to patterns of interaction (or lack thereof) across time. For instance, future studies could investigate whether potential friends' initial offers of support set into motion a chain of supportive behaviors, such that potential friends continue to offer support based on one another's needs, as well as begin to request support based on their own needs.

Conclusions

The present work contributes to a relatively understudied area of research on close relationships: How people go about initiating close relationships with potential friends. Giving and seeking support when one's partner or oneself needs and desires such support are important and defining features of close relationships (Clark & Aragón, 2013; Clark & Mills, 2012) that allow both partners to feel validated, cared for, and understood (Reis & Patrick, 1996; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Our research reveals that adults are more likely to offer support than to seek it in new, developing friendships, but not in close, established friendships, and provides the first evidence of approximately when these patterns might emerge among children.

Authors' Note

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Note

1. We also applied Yates' correction for continuity (Yates, 1934) when there were frequencies of less than 5 in more than 20% of our contingency table cells, following Preacher (2001).

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