Conditional Regard in Close Relationships

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Abstract

People in relationships with others often try to influence them by making their regard contingent on other's enactment of specific behaviors. We present findings suggesting that while conditional regard might lead to enactment of expected behaviors, this practice has several psychological costs. We refer to four types of costs: (1) Stressful and conflicted internalization of socializing agent expectations, (2) rigid and low-quality performance, (3) poor well-being, and (4) poor relationship quality with the other. Moreover, our research suggests that in the long run providing more warmth and acceptance contingent on the others compliance with the agent's expectations (i.e. conditional positive regard), is as harmful as withdrawing regard when others do not comply with the agent's expectations (i.e. conditional negative regard).
The concept of Conditional Regard (CR) as a socialization approach was coined by Rogers (1959) a few decades ago. Conditional regard by an agent (e.g. parent, therapist, etc.) involves providing more affection and acceptance than usual when the other displays desired behaviors or attributes and withholding attention and affection when the other displays non-desired behaviors or attributes. Conditional regard as socialization practice is frequently used and widely endorsed, although some researchers and practitioners question its effectiveness (Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Deci, & Ryan, 2009). The purpose of this article is to clarify the concept of conditional regard and present research demonstrating the harmful psychological and relational correlates of this practice.

Conditional positive regard (CPR) is the offering of warmth, respect, acceptance, etc. only when the other fulfils some particular expectation, desire or requirement; it is offered when one person conveys to the other "I will only approve of, like, favor you if you do this, act in this way". Whereas conditional negative regard (CNR) involves withholding affection and esteem when others do not behave according to specific expectation.

From a behaviorist perspective, conditional regard might represent the contingent administration of reinforcements and punishments. These are expected to increase the likelihood of desired behaviors that are emitted (Gewrits & Pelaez-Nogueras, 1991; McDowell, 1988). Indeed, research that examined the consequences of conditional regard found a link between parental conditional regard and children's subsequent enactment of targeted behaviors (Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957). However, other psychological theorists have presented a less desirable view of conditional regard as a socialization approach. Rogers (1951) proposed that conditional regard undermines self-esteem and interferes with personal exploration and self-
regulation. Object relations theorists argued that when children learn that they are not unconditionally loved, their instrumental behavior persist but the satisfaction they experience when they successfully execute the demand is fleeting because meeting the expectations never yield the unconditional love they truly desired (Miller, 1981). More recently, research on constructs related to conditional regard such as love withdrawal (e.g., Elliot & Thrash, 2004) and psychological control (e.g., Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005) indicates that these constructs are associated with depression, maladaptive perfectionism, delinquency and substance abuse. However, conditional regard differs from love withdrawal and psychological control. Conditional regard includes both withdrawing attention and affection when one fails to act as expected (conditional negative regard) and provision of more affection and attention when one does act as expected (conditional positive regard). Moreover, conditional regard as operationalized by Assor et al. (2004) is a domain specific practice whereas love withdrawal is a general practice. Lastly, love withdrawal is just one of three components that constitute the concept of psychological control, so the specific role played by love withdrawal is not clear.

In our research, we examined the correlates and consequences of conditional regard using the conception of internalization that is encorced in Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, we hypothesized that conditional regard leads to a problematic type of internalization, referred to as introjection, which prompts anxiety, rigid and low-quality performance in the domain on which regard was contingent.

SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) is using the concept of internalization in order describes a differentiated account of motivation that begins with the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation involves performing an activity because the activity itself is interesting. This is the prototype of autonomy because the person is willing
to perform the activity volitionally, out of interest. Extrinsic motivation involves performing an activity because it leads to some separable consequence. Thus, activities that are not interesting will require extrinsic consequences to motivate a person. Research has shown that performing activities for external consequence tends to be a controlled rather than autonomous experience (e.g., Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

According to SDT, the degree to which behaviors are experienced as autonomous versus controlled depends on the degree to which those behaviors have been internalized. SDT has suggested that for an extrinsically motivated behavior to become more autonomous, that behavior's underlying regulation and value must be internalized. The theory further suggests that various types of internalization or motivation differ in the degree to which they have been internalized and therefore differ in the degree to which the resulting behaviors will be autonomous rather than controlled (Ryan & Connell, 1989).

When the motivation for an activity has not been internalized, regulation is said to be external. The behavior is enacted compliantly and is considered controlled. Such behavior is regulated externally by threats of punishment or the offering of material rewards.

SDT describes three types of internalized extrinsic motivation: introjection, identification, and integration. The first type of internalization, introjection, involves "taking in" a value but not accepting it as one’s own. Instead, the individual applies the contingencies of approval or worth to himself or herself that had previously been applied by others. Thus, the individual tends to feel an inner compulsion to behave, with his or her self-esteem being contingent upon the behavior. Behaviors regulated by introjection, although more autonomous than behaviors regulated externally, are still quite controlled and represent the least autonomous form of internalization.
A fuller type of internalization is referred to as identified regulation. Here, the individual has identified with the importance of the activity for himself or herself, and thus performs the behavior quite autonomously even though he or she does not find the activity interesting. Finally, when that identification has been reciprocally assimilated with other aspects of the individual’s self, the regulation is considered integrated. Integration is the most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation.

We posit that employing conditional regard as a socializing or persuasive practice would lead to four types of negative consequences: (1) introjected regulation, (2) rigid and low quality-performance, (3) poor well-being, and (4) negative affect in relation to the conditioning agent.

**Conditional Regard and Introjected Regulation**

When parental attention or affection is contingent on conformity with their expectations, children may feel propelled to behave as parentally expected so as to maintain or even enhance parental regard and affection. Furthermore, such situations entwine a child’s own self regard with parental regard. STD conceptualizes actions motivated by esteem maintenance from others or oneself as being internalized at an introjected level. Therefore parents’ use of conditional regard strategies can be seen as an archetypical socialization method for encouraging introjection. This is because parental conditional self-esteem tends to be converted into a conditional self-esteem that steers introjected regulation (see Assor et al., 2004; Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995). The introjected parental expectations may be experienced as internal pressure due to the potentially incurred emotional cost of loss of parental affection. This feeling of pressure restricts the child’s sense of choice or room for deliberation. Consequently, the driving force behind behaviors that hinge on parental regard is to minimize shame and guilt and/or to
increase self-esteem. As a result it is predicted that conditional regard will result in the introjection of, rather than identification with, parental expectation.

Empirical studies that enquired into the phenomenon found that American college students who experienced their parent’s regard to be contingent on academic achievement, sporting success, helping behaviors or suppression of negative affect, reported on internal pressure to behave in ways that would attain parentally expectations with no sense of identification or choice (Assor et al., 2004). This research was then extend to the domain of religious socialization, finding that in the domain of religious practice, perceived parents’ use of conditional regard to promote child’s observance of religious practices was associated with the introjected internalization of the religious practices by students attending a modern orthodox Jewish school (Assor, Cohen-Melayev, Kaplan, & Friedman, 2005).

Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, and Deci (2009) then differentiated between the effects of conditional positive regard as opposed to conditional negative regard when studying Jewish-Israeli high school students in two domains: regulation of negative emotions and academic achievement. It was found that conditional positive regard was associated with introjected internalization and conditional negative regard was associated with more anger and resistance toward parents and failed to lead to any kind of internalization.

Furthermore, a forth series of studies by Shavit-Miller and Assor (2003) explored the associations between parental conditional regard in three domains (emotional suppression, academic achievement and pro-social behavior) and offspring emotional states among college students in Israel and the USA. A qualitative analysis of open-ended questionnaire pointed that more introjected patterns of parental expectations were indicated by participants whose parents were described as using more conditional regard to encourage internalization of expectations as
opposed to those participants whose parents were described as using less conditional regard. This was especially the case for females, who often described feelings of estrangement from goals on which parents' regard depended. These feelings were nevertheless associated with a sense of obligation to pursue the goals so as to procure parental love. Evidence also suggested that offspring experiencing high levels of parental conditional regard engaged in little reflection on the goals and values parents attempted to promote and transmit to their children.

Explanations for these findings suggest that significant female vulnerability of parental conditional regard may be due to early processes of gender socialization, with women's sense of self-worth and well-being being heavily based on the satisfaction of relatedness needs. Consequently women might be less able to tolerate withdrawal of parental love and feel more responsible for parental suffering upon rejection of parental goals. As a result, it is suggested that women are more likely to introject parental expectations that they do not necessarily identify with, while at the same time feeling angrier and more conflicted concerning the introjected parental expectations (Assor, Kaplan, Roth & Kanat-Maymon, 2005).

Together, then, the findings suggest that conditional regard as a socializing practice might lead to a pressured introjected pattern of behavioral regulation. Advocates of the use of conditional regard might argue that the process of introjection is simply a step toward a more integrated regulation. However, the results surveyed here provide no support for this position. Specifically, participants in the above mentioned studies were university students who recalled conditional regard experiences from their years as children and adolescents. Yet, they displayed a pressured introjected regulation many years after. Moreover, the effects of conditional regard on behaviors were always accompanied by negative emotional states, suggesting that such behaviors have not been integrated in a growth-enhancing way.
Rigid and Low-Quality Performance

SDT assumes that parental conditional regard leads to introjected motivation to enact the behavior on which the parental approval hinges. For example, if a child perceives that parental approval depends on success in sports then it is predicted to introject the goal of sporting success which in turn pushes here to invest great efforts in sports. Ultimately though, because investment in sports functions as a means of for acquiring or maintaining self esteem, the child engagement in sports is accompanied by a great deal of anxiety, and fear of failing. These fears are likely to lead to a more constricted and less creative mode of engagement (e.g., Roth et al., 2009).

The concern with attaining positive regard through sport is assumed to cause the child to focus exclusively on winning and neglect sideline interest or enjoyment from other aspects of the game that do not necessarily facilitate winning. Likewise, a child might stick to known methods rather than taking a chance by using creative methods. In addition, the weight given to sporting success may cause needless practice (repeated training even though one knows the drill), as expressed by Covington (1992) as over-striving patterns. The relations between parental conditional regard and rigid, low-quality, performance was examined in several domains that will be discussed in the next sections.

Academic achievement domain. In the academic domain studies have shown evidence for the association between parental conditional regard and inflexible, low-quality performance. In two studies on Israeli high school students, Roth et al., (2009) found that those students who described their parents as encouraging academic success by conditional positive regard were perceived by teachers as exhibiting grade focused engagement. This type of engagement is characterized by studying only material that may appear in the test, feeling hurt and distressed if one fails in an assignment or a test, and arguing with the teacher forcefully about grades. Teacher
ratings also showed that there was a negative association between positive parental conditional regard and interest focused engagement. This type of engagement refers to an inclination to study and spend time and effort on topics and materials that are not being examined in a test. As would be expected, feeling internally compelled to study hard (i.e. introjected internalization of the importance of academic work) mediated the effect of positive parental conditional regard on grade-focused studying. The narrow and rigid engagement associated with positive parental conditional regard on academic effort among high school students was shown by Assor and Tal (2011). Narrow over-striving is characterized by a tendency to invest a lot of time is studying what is already known about the subject, which causes those students unnecessarily give up activities which they really enjoy. Narrow over-striving was predicted by positive parental conditional regard, in addition, this association was mediated by grandiose and narcissistic feelings following success and to a lesser degree also by shame following failure.

Parental negative conditional regard in the academic domain was associated with lack of academic achievement and was unrelated to grade-focused engagement and interest-focused engagement (Roth et al., 2009). Thus, this type of parental practice appears to be particularly problematic since it does not promote any kind of investment.

*Emotion regulation domain.* The idea that parental conditional regard may lead to controlling behaviors applies to more than just the academic domain. Children, who perceive parental regard as contingent on suppressing or hiding negative emotions, are inclined to demonstrate controlling and suppressive methods of emotion regulation. In addition it is suggested that the emphasis on avoiding feeling negative emotions will restrict their ability to identify emotions in other people. Moreover, their ability to listen and show empathy in the face of painful emotional disclosures in close relationships may be compromised. Roth et al. (2009)
found that children, who perceived their parent as linking their positive regard to the child's successful suppression of fear or anger, reported that they often felt flooded and overwhelmed by their negative emotions, which made it difficult for them to engage in daily tasks when feeling angry or fearful. This style of emotion regulation was coined “dis-regulation”. Parental conditional positive regard was also associated with a suppressive regulatory style which refers to the tendency to suppress and conceal one's negative emotions. Another study by Roth and Assor (2003) found similar results. Although they didn’t separate conditional positive and negative regard, they still showed that in both genders perceived parental conditional regard was associated with a non-optimal emotion regulation style.

Eilot, Assor, and Roth (2006) found similar results among Israeli high school students while studying styles of anger regulation, reporting a positive association between parental conditional positive regard and suppressive and dis-regulation styles, and a positive association for parental conditional negative regard and dis-regulation.

In addition, Roth and Assor (2003) also displayed findings associated with emotion recognition. Parental conditional regard had a negative association with the ability to recognize facial emotions and feelings in stories for both males and females. Furthermore, parental conditional regard was a good predictor of low capabilities in supporting a romantic partner, and this association was mediated by poor emotion recognition. In another study, Roth & Assor (2010) explored the association between parental conditional regard and empathy among kindergarten children. This study was based on parental reports on their own practice of conditional regard toward their child and an emotion regulation task completed by the children, as opposed to retrospective self-reports by the offspring used in previous studies. The findings demonstrated that both negative and positive parental conditional regard had a negative
association with a child’s capacity to feel sadness, their ability to recognize sadness in other and their tendency to empathize and to assist a child that looks sad.

Prosocial domain. The final domain to be discussed in this section is parental conditional regard in the domain of prosocial behavior, where it is predicted that children who perceive parental love as contingent on assisting other, would be disposed to help but would have a tendency to show little empathy and sensitivity to those which they assist. Assor, Roth & Deci (2004) found that Offspring perceptions' of parents regard as contingent upon helping others, predicted introjected motivation to help others (indicated mainly be a sense of internal compulsion to help), which in turn, predicted frequent helping (self reported). Roth (2008) studied the association between parental conditional regard and self- versus other-oriented prosocial tendencies among Israeli college students. Self-oriented prosocial helping was defined as a helping behavior enacted for the sake of other's approval and appreciation, whereas other-oriented prosocial helping concerned with behaviors that are preformed while focusing on the other's needs and inclinations.

Self-report data demonstrated that parental conditional regard was related to introjected internalization of prosocial behaviors, with parental conditional regard showing positive association with self-oriented prosocial helping but not with other-oriented prosocial helping.

Therefore, although parental conditional regard may be a propelling force in the initiation of helping behavior in children the caliber of assistance may be low due to the little empathy and sensitivity of the helper towards the person they felt obligated to assist. A more comprehensive account of the role of conditional regard and controlling parenting in general, as a determinant of pro-social and moral behavior can be found in Assor (2011).
Overall, the cumulative research findings suggest that conditional regard lead to restricted and impaired performance in the domains in which parental regard is experienced; demonstrating that although parental conditional regard encourages the fulfillment of parental expectations the child’s performance may be maladaptive and have negative consequences.

**Conditional Regard and Poor Well-Being**

Parental conditional regard links children’s sense of self-esteem and worth to the fulfillment of parental expectations. Thus, experiencing this form of socializing approach tends to induce feeling of anxiousness and pressure. The dependence of self-esteem on the manifestation of desired behaviors may result in fluctuations in self-esteem and unstable self-esteem (Kernis & Paradise, 2002). To the extent that this notion is valid, successful attainment of the specific outcome or behavior is inclined to lead to satisfaction that is short lived. That is, satisfaction that exists only until the pressure of the next demand (actual or imagined) already begins to exert itself. Alternatively failure to attain a specific outcome or behavior may lead to feelings of guilt and shame due to the implication that failure equals unworthiness. Furthermore, conditional regard by parents, for example, may undermine the self-worth of a child due to its implications that acceptance is not of whom the child is, but rather of the way he or she behaves. This practice may also be experienced by children as implying that their parents do not trust them to act in desirable ways of their own volition.

Four studies have supported the notion that conditional regard associates with negative affect and poor well-being. Assor et al. (2004) found that successful achievement of parental expectations in the domains of academic achievement, sports and negative emotion suppression was followed by short lived satisfaction and subsequently followed by feelings of
disappointment or emptiness. Furthermore, when participants did not achieve sporting success or were unable to suppress negative affect, feelings of guilt and shame raised.

This idea that fluctuating self-worth may result from parental conditional regard was evidenced by Assor et al. (2004) in four different domains and found that parental conditional regard in those domains was associated with fluctuations in self-esteem. Furthermore, in a study which focused on the academic domain Assor et al. (2004) found that parental conditional regard was related to poor self-esteem.

Tal and Assor (2006; 2011, under review) showed that shame following academic failure is linked to both positive and negative parental conditional regard in the academic domain. Shame also mediated the effects of conditional positive and negative regard on less adaptive modes of academic coping. In an unpublished lexical decision study, Kanat-maymon and Roth found that participants who perceived their mothers as high, compared to low, on academic conditional regard recognized more quickly stress related words (e.g. anxiety, shame). The groups did not differ in their recognition reaction time when presented with non-stressed negative words (e.g. pain, disgust). This suggests that when facing academic achievement task, children who experienced conditional regard are already more anxious and perturbed with the thought of shame of failing.

A fourth study by Shavit-Miller and Assor (2003), focusing on the association between parental conditional regard and emotional state of offspring found that confusion, guilt, low self-worth, meaninglessness and confusion about ones purpose in life are often felt by students whose parents practice conditional regard.

*Conditional Regard and Relationship Quality*
Agents' usage of conditional regard to pressure others to behave in a specific way can arouse negative feelings toward the agent and undermine relationship quality. Specifically, the use of conditional regard may cause anger and resentment toward the agent, because it undermines the sense of autonomy and because it indicates that the agent does not trust or does not believe that one will behave in a desired way out of his or her own volition.

Empirical evidence concerning parent-child relationship supported this notion. Assor et al., (2004) have found that American college students' perception of parental conditional regard in four different domains is related to perception of their parents as disapproving and to resentment toward their parents. In a subsequent Study, Roth et al., (2009) studied Jewish Israeli high school students and found that perceptions of parental conditional negative regard in the domains of academic achievement and emotion regulation were associated with resentment towards the parent.

In a recent project Kanat-Maymon, Roth, Assor, and Reizer (2011) extended the previous findings by testing the consequences of conditional regard in egalitarian types of relationships such as relationship with peers and romantic relationships, and by using variety of measures of relationship quality.

In one such study, we (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2011) examined the effect of conditional negative regard on romantic relationship quality among married participants (N=144). The findings indicated that perceived conditional negative regard was associated with relationship dissatisfaction as was indicated by lower levels of relationship satisfaction, inclusion of other in the self and higher levels of doubts regarding the relationship, and greater sense of entrapment. Moreover, participants who perceived their partners as conditioning their affection reported that they were less inclined to display intimacy promoting behaviors such as disclosing personal
information and listen empathically to their partner, and more inclined to take measures to avoid conflicts with their partner.

These findings are in line with previous research focusing on parent-child relationship. Roth et al., (2009) found that negative conditional regard was associated with resentment toward the parent and Chapman and Zahn-Waxler (1982) found that love withdrawal was related to avoidance of the socializing agents. Conditional negative regard involves withdrawal of affection and attention when other does not comply with external expectations. This practice is experienced as highly controlling and punitive and thus uncaring, disaffirming, and coercive. These feelings of rejection are expected to lead to relationship dissatisfaction. Thus, The study by Kanat-Maymon et al. (2011) demonstrate the harmful effects of conditional negative regard on relationship quality also in the context of adult egalitarian relationships. They also stress that these harmful effects go beyond specific feelings of anger and resentment towards the conditioning agent, to effect the perception of the relationship itself as less satisfying and intimate, as well as less relationship-promoting behaviors towards partner.

The harmful effect of conditional negative regard on relationship quality is less controversial and well studied. However, the effects of conditional positive regard on relationship quality are less clear and were less studied so far. Roth et al., (2009) argued that conditional positive regard is less threatening and intrusive practice than conditional negative regard since it's incorporates an implicit promise of affection and attention. Thus, to some extent, conditional positive regard is likely to be experienced as somewhat supportive. However the contingency of affection on compliance with external expectations is likely to thwarting the need for autonomy thus leaving the person feeling that it is the behavior that is acceptable not the self. This thwarting of autonomy is expected to impair relationship quality (Knee, Lonsbary,
Canevello, and Patrick, 2005). These negative consequences of conditional positive regard contradict recommendations found in parenting books (e.g., Latham, 1994; Steinberg, 2004), as well as parents’ expectations that their children would benefit from receiving more attention and affection when they live up to parental standards. Accordingly, empirical data concerning the unique consequences of conditional positive regard is scarce and yielded inconsistent results. For example, Roth et al. (2009) found that both conditional positive and negative regard, as separate constructs, were negatively associated with relationship with parents. However, perceptions of parental conditional positive regard did not predict resentment toward the parents above and beyond perceptions of conditional negative regard.

To systematically explore the effect of conditional positive regard on relationship quality with significant others the authors conducted two studies. The first study assessed the effects of conditional positive regard in four different relationships (mother, father, romantic partner and best friend; N=123) whereas the second study employed a diary methodology.

In the first study the data are hierarchically nested because participants rate multiple relationship partners on various measures. Thus, relationships are not independent and shared variance across relationships on the various measures is expected. Therefore, it is important and necessary to account for this nonindependence in conceptualization and analysis by considering and simultaneously controlling for both the between and within person variance. Between-person variance concerns individual differences in the various measures whereas within-person variance concerns the relationship level differences.

The important questions for us in this study are, first, to what extent this within-person variance is systematic, and second, can it explains relationship quality across relationship types. To answer the first question, we estimated, using HLM, the degree of within-person variance in
perceived conditional positive regard relative to the between-person variance. The results indicated that 57% of the variance in conditional positive regard was at the within-person level, whereas 43% of the variance was at the between-person level. These data indicate that a substantial amount of the variance was embedded within persons (i.e. across relationships).

To examine the second question whether within-person conditional positive regard can predict relationship quality, we constructed a relationship-level HLM equation. The equation predicts relationship quality within each relationship from perceived conditional positive regard within the corresponding relationship, controlling for the effects of relationship type.

Results of the within-person HLM analyses indicated a significant effect of perceived conditional positive regard. Thus, a greater experience of perceived positive regard predicted a decrease in (a) relationship satisfaction, (b) feeling of closeness, and (c) experience of secure attachment to the relationship partner. These findings supported the SDT notion regarding the harmful consequences of perceived conditional positive regard and demonstrated that to some extent relationship quality is a function of the amount of perceived conditional positive regard.

A notable limitation of the first study we conducted is that it explored the association between conditional positive regard and relationship quality exclusively without accounting for the potential effect of conditional negative regard. Thus, in a second study we sought to examine the association between both forms of conditional regard and relationship quality in a daily life. This study allowed us to capture the spontaneous day-to-day fluctuations of conditional regard and relationship satisfaction at the between- and within-person levels simultaneously and therefore may provide new insights into linkage between these constructs and relationship quality. The between-person level analysis explored the qualities of conditional regard that vary
between persons whereas the within-person or day-level effect assessed fluctuations around one's baseline. These two paths may be conceptually different and statistically independent.

Based on previous studies demonstrating the harmful effects of conditional negative regard to relationship quality, we expected that conditional negative regard would be associated with poor relationship satisfaction at both between- and within-person levels. However, because conditional positive regard is less harmful than conditional negative regard we expected it to be a weaker predictor of relationship quality while controlling the two types of conditional regard one for the other.

A sample of 50 undergraduate students completed questionnaires that consist of the trait-level measures of conditional positive and negative regard. During the following week participants began reporting the daily records for exactly 14 days of perceiving partners conditional positive and negative regard as well as daily relationship satisfaction via a website.

To examine the association between relationship satisfaction and conditional regard, we constructed a daily-level HLM equation. The equation predicted relationship satisfaction within each day by the perceived conditional negative regard and conditional positive regard within the corresponding day while controlling for the effects of weekends and relationship satisfaction of the previous day. Weekends were controlled since several investigators have noted that people tend to engage in different types of relational activities on weekdays and weekends, and as a result experience different levels of relational satisfaction (e.g. Reis, Sheldon Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). Relationship satisfaction of the previous day was controlled for its potential carry over effect. Between-person relationship satisfaction was measured as the aggregated day-to-day reports on relationship satisfaction and this measure was predicted by the trait-level measures of perceived conditional positive and negative regard.
Results of the between-person HLM analyses indicated significant unique effects for both perceived conditional negative and positive regard on relationship satisfaction. In line with Roth and his colleagues (2009), conditional negative and positive regard predicted relationship dissatisfaction.

Results of the within-person HLM analyses indicated significant effects of perceived conditional negative regard. As expected, on days that greater conditional negative was experienced relationship satisfaction decreased. However, conditional positive regard was positively related to relationship satisfaction. Thus, relationship satisfaction increased on days that conditional positive regard was above one's average.

The unexpected positive effect of conditional positive regard on relationship quality at the within-person levels may suggest that receiving more affection from one's romantic partner as a result of complying with partner's demands may temporarily contributes to relationship satisfaction also when this affection is perceived as conditional. This finding is consistent with previous findings showing that conditional positive regard is harmful than conditional negative regard and that achieving external expectations might be accompanied by short lived satisfaction (Assor, et al., 2004; Assor, Kaplan & Vansteenkiste, 2009; Roth et al., 2009). However, in the long run, the trait effect of this practice is harmful to relationship satisfaction as was indicated by the negative effect of conditional positive regard at the between-person level.

Conclusion

In summary, the findings presented in this chapter suggest that while the use of conditional regard as a socializing practice might sometimes lead to the enactment of desired behavior, this practice has great psychological costs. Studies surveyed in this chapter suggest that employing conditional regard as a persuasive technique leads to a pressured introjected pattern of
behavioral regulation which accompanied by negative emotional state. Moreover, conditional regard, especially conditional negative regard, bears negative consequences to relationship quality with the socializing agent. Thus, although the use of conditional regard may be an effortless, relatively convenient and behaviorally effective socialization approach, the negative psychological and relational consequences associated with it argue for the use of less controlling methods.

Most studies reported in this chapter assessed conditional regard in parent-child relationship and heavily based on offspring’s reports, although some studies examined conditional regard in egalitarian relationship. In addition, we have no prospective longitudinal data which can support more reliable causal inferences. Future research might assess conditional regard using other method than self-report and employ prospective longitudinal designs and experimental designs.
**References**


biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), Tampa, Florida.


