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What counts as an acceptable reason for not communicating emotional support?

Colter D. Ray[1] | **Valerie Manusov**[2]

[1]Department of Communication Studies, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

[2]Department of Communication, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA

Correspondence
Colter D. Ray, Department of Communication Studies, Louisiana State University, 136 Coates Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, USA.
Email: colterray@lsu.edu

Abstract

This study investigated assessments of the acceptability of and negative relational implications for the reasons given for someone not providing emotional support. A representative sample of U.S. adults ($N = 1598$) participated in a survey experiment that included thinking of a person from whom they would expect such support, imagining that they did not receive support from this person, and being shown one of 16 reasons to explain the nonsupport. Participants evaluated that reason for its acceptability and its negative relational ramifications. As predicted, some nonsupport reasons were judged as more acceptable than were others, and they generated fewer negative relational ramifications. Participants who experienced nonsupport by a friend viewed their reasons as more acceptable than those experiencing nonsupport from family members. Despite this, greater negative relational ramifications were reported when friends compared to family members did not communicate support. Women's nonsupport was viewed as less acceptable compared to men's; however, there were no gender differences in the negative relational ramifications of nonsupport. When

Statement of relevance: This study advances the literature on supportive communication by considering the attributions and relational consequences that occur when people do not receive the emotional support they expected from others. Our findings, in tandem with other nonsupport studies, challenge the assumption that emotional support will always be communicated during times of need in personal relationships and the ways in which nonsupport may impact relational judgments. This study specifically explores this phenomenon from the unsupported person's perspective.

tested in a mediation model, acceptability mediated the relationship between expectations and negative relational ramifications, but there was also an unexpected direct negative effect between expectations and negative relational ramifications.

1 | WHAT COUNTS AS AN ACCEPTABLE REASON FOR NOT COMMUNICATING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT?

One of the benefits of having social networks is garnering support from friends and family in times of need. Receiving high-quality support or believing that we are supported is linked with myriad benefits, including overcoming adversity and greater academic success for African American youth (Williams & Bryan, 2013), better health for people with stigmatized sexuality identities (Weisz et al., 2016), decreased stress in couples (Cutrona, 1996), and greater psychological health overall (Jones, 2004). To receive social support, however, requires that another person provides it. That is, social support is understood to be a transactional process (Donnellan et al., 2017).

Among the forms of social support that can be provided, *emotional support* is the most consequential for recipients' well-being (Seiger & Wiese, 2011), and people typically expect that others in their lives will offer such support when it is needed (Rook, 1987). Burleson (2003) defines emotional support as the "specific lines of communicative behavior enacted by one party with the intent of helping another cope effectively with emotional distress" (p. 552). This nurturant form of social support can be compared to other types, such as tangible and informational support, which are action-facilitating and aim to resolve a stressor (Cutrona, 1992). The goal of emotional support, on the other hand, is to facilitate affect-focused coping (i.e., lessening emotional distress; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The belief that we will give and receive useful emotional support within relationships can be understood as part of a larger social contract we have with others (Cutrona, 1996; Fuhse, 2022). That social contract consists of expectations people have for others with whom they have ongoing relationships to act in particular ways (Fuhse, 2022), such as the provision of emotional support in times of stress. Even though people are aware that emotional support is not guaranteed (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010), and many people experience less support than is optimal for their well-being (Negron et al., 2012; i.e., there is a support gap Crowley & High, 2020), it can still be surprising when the emotional support received is low quality or someone expected to provide support does not do so. Just as there are benefits to receiving support or believing it is available, researchers have found that both low-quality and no support can be deleterious for individuals and their relationships (e.g., Ray & Veluscek, 2018). Coyne and Downey (1991) called for researchers to more fully investigate when support does not occur in the ways people hoped or expected.

This article works to take up that call. Specifically, because the social contract sets up expectations that emotional support will be provided when people need it, when it does not occur,

the person in need may make judgments about the reason another chose not to offer it. That is, the violation of expectations may lead to attribution-making for another's lack of action, and the nature of those attributions may have relational consequences. This study investigates the unsupported person's judgments of what counts as acceptable reasons for nonsupport—and the implication of those judgments on the relationship they have with the nonsupporter—to provide a more complete understanding of the nonsupport process within, and outcomes for, relationships.

In so doing, we suggest that the relationship between the person in need of emotional support and the nonsupporter (Barbee et al., 1990; Liao & Scholes, 2017), as well as gendered and overall expectations for support provision (Barbee et al., 1990; MacGeorge et al., 2003), will complicate the picture of the nonsupport process and people's response to it. Our goal is to further develop an understanding of the nature and consequences of fissures to the emotional support social contract within close relationships by examining responses to reasons for nonsupport by the unsupported. We begin this process by delineating the concept of nonsupport.

2 | NONSUPPORT

Understanding what counts as more or less effective emotional support has received ample scholarly attention (for a review, see High & Dillard, 2012). *Nonsupport*, which is defined as "the decision not to provide support to someone perceived as needing aid" (Ray & Veluscek, 2018; see also Dakof & Taylor, 1990, who include things such as criticism and pessimism as nonsupport, more consistent with low person-centered support), has, however, only been addressed more recently. The research that has been done reveals some consequences that might arise from nonsupport at both the personal and relational levels and across cultures. For instance, Negron et al. (2012), in an ethnically diverse focus group sample, found that new mothers did not always get the emotional support that they needed, even though they had people in their lives that could provide it. Importantly, some of the mothers in their study expressed that nonsupport increased the depression they experienced. A lack of emotional support has been linked to greater feelings of loneliness in Norway (Dahlberg et al., 2022); it has also been found to increase irritation and decrease satisfaction in Japanese married couples, particularly for wives (Suzuki, 2007).

As a social norm, and one that can be profoundly beneficial (or harmful, if withheld), emotional support provision should be the default action that people in close relationships enact. And yet, sometimes people fail to offer emotional support, even when doing so is an expectation. To better understand why network members choose nonsupport in violation of social expectations, Ray et al. (2019) asked people about their reasons for not communicating emotional support to someone who had been diagnosed with cancer. The authors found four larger-level forms of nonsupport: *source-focused* (e.g., concern with being overwhelmed with emotions when supporting another), *recipient-focused* (e.g., believing that the other does not want support), *relationship-focused* (e.g., their relationship with the potential recipient does not require that they support them), and *context-focused* (e.g., the would-be provider and recipient live too far to be able to offer help).

Some of these reasons, particularly certain recipient-focused forms, make sense within the existing literature and in larger cultural discourses. That people may not offer support because they perceive that another person does not want them to—or that doing so will portray the

support recipient as unable to care for themselves (Bolger & Amarel, 2007)—is consistent with research and cultural norms of face and politeness (Ray & Veluscek, 2017). Such reasons also align with the understanding that visible support provision can increase rather than decrease recipients' distress (Guo et al., 2021; Zee & Bolger, 2019). At the same time, Ray et al. (2019) revealed some categories of nonsupport that seem at odds with what people are likely to say is an acceptable reason or excuse (Weiner et al., 1991), particularly when the reason was that the other did not deserve support (for further exploration of this reason, see Ray et al., in press). That is, some of the categories that Ray et al. (2019) found were more likely than others to be "good" reasons for not supporting another in need, a finding that is the basis of the current study.

3 | WHAT MAKES A GOOD REASON?

When people have expectations for another to behave in a certain way, such as giving emotional support when needed, and the other does not do so, the nonsupport can be seen as a form of failure event (Schönbach, 1980). Blumstein et al. (1974) refer to such actions (or inactions, when the failure event involves not acting when expected to do so) as a "fractured sociation" (p. 551) that typically requires remedial action (Goffman, 1971) to repair. This repair often occurs in the form of a verbalized account, whereby the person who engaged in a social infraction offers an explanation (and in some cases, an apology) to the other for their failure (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

According to Schlenker (1980), an "account serves to provide a 'more acceptable' or satisfactory explanation of the event than that contained in a worst-case reading" (p. 136). Excuses, which involve explanations or reasons for why the failure event occurred, are one of the most common kinds of accounts (Schönbach, 1980), and the use of "good" excuses can diminish the degree to which a person is seen as responsible for their action and lead to fewer negative judgments (Riordan et al., 1983). In previous work, Hilton (1990) found that a good explanation must be true and answer the question of why a person acted (or failed to act) in a socially appropriate way.

Researchers have also noted that the excuses people communicate to others have certain features (typically, that the cause of their behavior was external to them, uncontrollable, and/or unstable; i.e., not a permanent situation), whereas they often withhold (i.e., do not communicate) excuses that are internal, controllable, and intentional (Weiner et al., 1987, 1991). Weiner et al. (1991) assert that the distinction between what is communicated and what is withheld reflects a working mental model for what counts as a good excuse. We argue that these working models of what counts as an acceptable excuse will be used as part of sense-making when people learn about the reason that a person in their network did not provide the support that they may have expected from them.

3.1 | Reasons for nonsupport and consequences of failure events

As noted, Ray et al. (2019) investigated the reasons people provided for not offering emotional support. Their data were based on self-reports given by 192 people who had chosen not to offer support to a person who had been diagnosed with cancer. The sixteen coded reasons were organized into four supra-categories. The authors' category of source-focused reasons includes the

nonsupporter opting not to support the other because of their own concerns with their ability to remain emotionally controlled and not believing that they would know what to say. That is, this type of reason centers on beliefs about the nonsupporter's own self-efficacy. Recipient-focused reasons involve concerns with how support might affect the person in need, believing the other does not want support, and as discussed, deciding that the other does not deserve support. Relationship-focused reasons comprise such things as not being relationally close to the other and communicating support creating privacy issues. Context-focused reasons are primarily about pragmatic challenges to offering support, such as physical distance and lack of opportunity.

Ray et al.'s (2019) concern was identifying the reasons nonsupporters gave for their inaction, but, as noted, the social support process is a transactional one. Given that there is also a potential emotional support receiver to whom the account for nonsupport is offered, it is likely that some of these reasons are more or less likely to be acceptable excuses if they were offered to the recipient as an account. Even without an account, the would-be recipient may also make assessments of why their social network member did not provide expected and desired support. Moreover, the reason—and the judgments made about its acceptability—may have interactional and relational consequences, just as do attributions for other actions that can be considered failure events. In their study on the sense-making that occurred when others communicated hurtful messages, for example, McLaren and Sillars (2014) revealed that attributions of intentionality to the other's message predicted greater negativity in subsequent interactions between the one whose message was hurtful and the recipient of that message. Similarly, Weiner et al. (1987) found that people respond more angrily if they believe others acted/failed to act intentionally in an untoward way.

These lines of research regarding the nature and judgment of the explanation attributed for a failure event, and the argument that nonsupport overall can result in negative relational ramifications (Ray & Veluscek, 2018), lead to our first hypotheses:

H1a. : Reasons for nonsupport are judged with different degrees of acceptability.

H1b. : Reasons for nonsupport result in different levels of negative relational ramifications.

3.2 | Relationship type

The basis of this study lies in the belief that people in our social networks are expected to offer emotional support for us when we need it. But people may also delineate between different relationship types in terms of how much support is expected. Earp et al. (2021) contend that there are different expectations for forms of care across relationship types. In their study, the authors found that people have relationship-specific cooperative expectations (i.e., relational norms); those norms help predict the judgments that people make when another violates those expectations.

Dakof and Taylor (1990) noted specifically that there are different cultural expectations for support for different relationship categories, with higher expectations of support from family members than from friends. In particular, "ties of kinship, marriage, and friendship create different constraints, obligations, and interactions" (Dakof & Taylor, 1990, p. 81). Sometimes these expectations can be nuanced: Negron et al. (2012) found that the new mothers they studied had

an expectation that partners and close family members will give support without having to ask for it directly. But they also expected support from friends and family members who were more distant, though their expectations were not as strong for those groups. On the other hand, Donnellan et al. (2017) discerned that people dealing with a spouse's cognitive decline desired support from friends rather than family, preferring "intimacy at a distance," as it was easier to disengage from friends rather than from family caregivers.

Liao and Scholes (2017) assert that, in general, people are likely to expect support from four relationship types: spouse/partner, children, friends, and extended family members. In their study, they asked their participants about what they called "positive social support" (i.e., how much people in each category understand the way they feel about things; how much they can be relied on for help with serious problems; and how much they can open up to them to talk about worries). Whereas Liao and Scholes did not assess how much support their participants received from each type of relationship, they found that men fared better when getting positive support from their wives; women were helped more by positive support from their children and friends.

Although these studies do not speak directly to how people may judge the acceptability of nonsupport reasons, they suggest that people have different support expectations based on the type of relationship they have with others and that violations of those expectations (i.e., nonsupport) may lead to different outcomes. As well, they imply that, overall, the most notable differences are between family relationships and friendship, a distinction we also make in this article. As such, we propose our second set of hypotheses:

> **H2a.** : People judge reasons for nonsupport with different degrees of acceptability depending on the relationship type (friend/family) that they have with the nonsupporter.

> **H2b.** : People assess negative relational ramifications of nonsupport reasons depending on the relationship type (friend/family) that they have with the nonsupporter.

3.3 | Gender

Some of the studies just cited suggest that relationship type, expectations, and impact from support differ for men and women. Dakof and Taylor (1990) noted that, for men, positive support from a spouse/partner was particularly important to them. For women, positive social support from children and friends was more beneficial than what they received from their romantic partners. That finding underlies a general call that Dakof and Taylor noted for more research on demographic variables—particularly gender—in the support process. Those who have taken up that call have found that women are more likely than men to expect others in their networks to serve a function of care (Earp et al., 2021) and that people tend to prefer to get emotional support from others of the same gender (Barbee et al., 1990). Overall, "there is ample evidence that helping intentions and behaviors are influenced by gender" (MacGeorge, 2003, p. 175), with women providing more (and better) emotional support than men and men receiving less (and lower quality) support than women.

Gender may also play a role in nonsupport, a contention based on Kunkel and Burleson's (1998) assertion that men tend to be (or at least are seen to be) less capable than women of producing emotional support that others find acceptable. Even though studies have not always

found evidence supporting this argument, there appears to at least be a cultural belief that men are not as skilled in communicating emotional support and have fewer expectations regarding providing emotional support (MacGeorge et al., 2004). Men and women may also differ in the role that their own attributions as potential support providers play in the support process (George et al., 1998). For instance, MacGeorge et al. (2003) found that men were more likely to make responsibility judgments for the stressor that led to the need for emotional support for other men than they did for women or women did for others. Men were also angrier at those men who were responsible for the condition they were in, leading MacGeorge et al. (2003) to state that men are more likely "to take a 'blaming' perspective in helping contexts" (p. 179), though she was careful to note that the differences she found were small.

Indeed, MacGeorge et al. (2004) make the case that, whereas there are some differences in how men and women engage with the support process, there are more similarities than there are differences. Nonetheless, there is a cultural discourse that may mean that men and women may be judged differently (i.e., that men are less capable of providing emotional support and that women are expected to provide support) in the support process. As such, deviations from those social norms, such as engaging in nonsupport and the reasons for doing so, may be assessed differently depending on the gender of the nonsupporter. Specifically, given the greater expectations placed on women to be emotionally supportive, their nonsupport will be judged more negatively than nonsupport from men, leading to two additional hypotheses:

> **H3a.** : Women's nonsupport reasons are perceived as less acceptable than men's nonsupport reasons.

> **H3b.** : Women's nonsupport reasons have greater negative relational ramifications than men's nonsupport reasons.

3.4 | Expectations

The cultural myth to which MacGeorge et al. (2004) refer takes us back to the premise on which this article is based: that nonsupport from others in our social network is a violation of the social contract that we have with them and the expectations that arise from it (Cutrona, 1996; Fuhse, 2022). Those expectations are the reason that nonsupport is considered to be a "failure event" that requires explanation. Without those expectations, we may judge the acceptability of a reason differently, and they may believe there would be fewer relational implications. To test this contention, our final hypothesis proposes that:

> **H4.** : The relationship between support expectations and negative relational ramifications is mediated by the acceptability of nonsupport reasons.

4 | METHODS

4.1 | Participants

All recruitment and study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the first author's university. The company Prolific was contracted to recruit participants who were nationally representative of the U.S. adult population based on age, sex, and race. This was

accomplished between March and June of 2022 as part of a broader data collection on social support and communication that recruited two different nationally representative samples who answered the same set of questions. Across the combined data sets, 1726 people started the questionnaires; however, 128 individuals were removed from the study because they left the questionnaire before providing adequate data for the forthcoming analyses, or they failed at least one attention check. The final sample consisted of 1598 adults living in the United States. Their demographic data appear in Table 1.

4.2 | Procedures

The participants completed an online questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics. After consenting to participate, participants were asked to think about a recent time they had experienced a problem and think of someone who would likely support them during this time. They provided information regarding this potential supporter's gender, relationship to the participant, and the level of expectation they had that this person would provide support. Next, participants were asked to imagine the person had not communicated emotional support to them. Qualtrics then randomly assigned each participant to be shown one of the 16 reasons for not communicating support (Ray et al., 2019). After reading the nonsupport reason, participants completed scales measuring the acceptability of the nonsupport reason and the negative relational ramifications that would occur if the identified supporter had this reason for not communicating support. The median time spent participating in the study was 15 min and 12 sec. Participants were compensated $3.00US via a deposit into their Prolific account.

4.3 | Measures

Means, standard deviations, reliability scores, range of observed scores, and intercorrelations among the following scales appear in Table 2.

4.3.1 | Acceptability of nonsupport reasons

The acceptability of nonsupport reasons was measured using five 11-point semantic differential items created by the first author. The scale presented the question stem, "This reason for not providing you with emotional support is…" then presented five items anchored by the following adjective pairs: unacceptable/acceptable, not valid/valid, inappropriate/appropriate, not okay/okay, inadmissible/admissible. Results of an exploratory factor analysis showed the five items loaded on one factor. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy was 0.92, and the Bartlett test for sphericity was significant ($p < .001$). Factor loadings ranged from 0.95 to 0.97, and the internal consistency was $omega = 0.98$. The average score of these five items was used in the analyses.

4.3.2 | Negative relational ramifications

Negative relational ramifications were measured by modifying three items from Leary et al.'s (1998) Consequences of Hurtful Episodes Scale. These items consist of three 7-point Likert-style questions with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The

TABLE 1 Participant demographics ($N = 1598$)

	n (%)
Gender	
Woman	801 (50.1)
Man	756 (47.3)
Non-binary/third gender	20 (1.3)
Transgender man	7 (0.4)
Transgender woman	3 (0.2)
Prefer not to answer/no answer	11 (0.7)
Race/Ethnicity	
White	1168 (73.1)
Black/African American	183 (11.5)
Asian	103 (6.4)
Latinx/Hispanic	67 (4.2)
Native American/Alaskan Native	4 (0.3)
Multiple Races/Ethnicities Reported	66 (4.1)
Prefer not to answer	7 (0.4)
Sexual orientation	
Straight	1313 (82.2)
Bisexual	157 (9.8)
Gay/Lesbian	68 (4.3)
Asexual	12 (0.8)
Queer	15 (1.0)
Pansexual	9 (0.6)
Questioning/Unlabeled	4 (0.3)
Prefer not to answer/no answer	5 (0.3)
Romantic relationship status	
Married	580 (36.2)
Single/not in a committed relationship	520 (32.5)
Committed dating relationship	280 (17.5)
Divorced/separated	135 (8.4)
Engaged	38 (2.4)
Widowed	28 (1.8)
Prefer not to answer/no answer	19 (0.12)
Education[a]	
Did not complete high school	12 (0.8)
High school or equivalent	183 (11.5)
Technical, trade, or vocational school	48 (3.0)
Some college but no degree	298 (18.6)
Associate's degree	155 (9.7)
Bachelor's degree	582 (36.4)

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	n (%)
Master's degree	242 (15.1)
Doctoral degree (PhD)	33 (2.1)
Professional degree (e.g., JD, MD, DDS)	43 (2.7)
Prefer not to answer	2 (0.1)
Household income[b]	
$0	9 (0.6)
$1–9,999	73 (4.6)
$10,000–24,999	197 (12.3)
$25,000–49,999	391 (24.5)
$50,000–74,999	286 (17.9)
$75,000–99,999	251 (15.7)
$100,000–149,999	219 (13.7)
$150,000 or more	140 (8.8)
Prefer not to answer/no answer/unsure	30 (2.0)

Note: Percentages for each attribute may not equal 100% due to rounding. Geographically, every U.S. state, except for Alaska and South Dakota, was represented by at least one participant. No participants reported living in Washington D.C. or any U.S. territories.
[a]Highest level of education completed unless otherwise noted.
[b]Income reported in USD.

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the study's variables

Variable	1	2	3	M	SD	ω	Range
1. Acceptability of nonsupport reasons	–	−.07*	−.54**	5.90	3.36	0.98	1–11
2. Expectation to provide support	–	–	−.13**	8.88	2.22	–	1–11
3. Negative relational ramifications	–	–	–	3.23	1.59	0.87	1–7

Note: *$p < .01$. **$p < .001$ (two-tailed). ω = the internal reliability statistic of McDonald's omega, which has statistical advantages over the more frequently reported Cronbach's alpha (see Hayes & Coutts, 2020). Omega was not calculated for expectation to provide support as it was measured by a single item. For all variables, the observed data spanned the entire range of potential responses.

prompt stated, "If this person told you this reason for not communicating support, would you..." (1) trust this person less?; (2) dislike this person?; and (3) view your relationship with the person as weakening? The internal consistency was omega = 0.87. The average score of these three items was used in our analyses.

4.3.3 | Potential supporter gender, relationship type, and expectation to provide support

We asked each participant to indicate the type of relationship that they had with the person they thought about while completing this study. The majority of participants reported that the potential supporter they identified was a woman ($n = 957$; 59.9%) or a man ($n = 622$; 38.9%).

Participants also reported identifying supporters who are non-binary/third gender ($n = 10$, 0.6%) or a transgender man ($n = 2$, 0.1%). Seven participants (0.4%) did not report the potential supporter's gender. For our analyses, those who responded that the potential supporter they were thinking of was a "man" or "transgender man" were combined into one group. Analyses based on nonsupporter gender were conducted as a comparison between women and men as there were not enough participants identifying as any other gender identity across each of the 16 nonsupport reasons to allow for their inclusion in the gender analyses.

Most participants identified a friend as their potential supporter ($n = 839$; 52.5%). Others reported their potential supporter was a family member ($n = 503$; 31.5%), co-worker ($n = 106$, 6.6%), romantic partner or spouse ($n = 90$; 5.6%), or a variety of other relationship types ($n = 60$; 3.8%), such as a pastor, professional mentor, counselor, or neighbor. We did not include the other relationship types in the analyses of the relationship-difference hypotheses, as they were not included in our hypotheses.

Participants also reported the level of expectation they had for the potential supporter they identified to provide support on a single item ranging from 1 (no expectation) to 11 (high expectation). The results of a one-sample t-test showed that the level of expectation for receiving support from the identified potential supporter ($M = 8.88$, $SD = 2.22$) was significantly greater than the midpoint (6) of the scale, $t(1593) = 51.77$, $p < .001$. This finding helps to confirm the premise that emotional support is expected from those in our social networks.

4.4 | Data preparation and analyses

All data preparation and analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 26. The first author reversed the scoring of items as needed. Instances of missing data were rare, with only 13 missing data points out of 14,382 data points (0.09%). In these cases, missing data were addressed by imputing the mean. Continuous variables used in the moderated mediation models (H_{4a} and H_{4b}) were mean-centered.

5 | RESULTS

5.1 | Acceptability of reasons for not communicating support

H_{1a} explored the acceptability of 16 previously identified reasons for not communicating support to others. An ANOVA, comparing the acceptability ratings for each of the reasons across the sample, produced significant results, $F(15, 1582) = 14.40$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.12$, observed power $= 1.00$, and the hypothesis was supported. The acceptability scores of the 16 reasons are in Table 3, but, notably, creating privacy issues (relational reason), and the potential for the nonsupporter to lose emotional control, not having yet had an opportunity, and not knowing what to say (all source-reasons) had the highest acceptability means.

5.2 | Negative relational ramifications of reasons for not communicating support

H_{1b} explored the reported negative relational ramifications of nonsupport for the 16 reasons for not communicating support. An ANOVA, comparing the judgments of negative relational

TABLE 3 Detailed analysis of nonsupport acceptability for each nonsupport reason

Reason	Acceptability *M* (*SD*)
Communicating support would create a privacy issue	8.14 (2.79)
The supporter would lose control of their own emotions	7.45 (3.05)
Has not had an opportunity to provide support yet	7.14 (3.00)
Did not know what to say	7.13 (3.09)
The supporter had other priorities/their own issues to focus on	6.80 (3.05)
Support was not desired	6.25 (3.09)
Communicating support would generate negative emotions	6.04 (3.15)
The supporter would feel uncomfortable providing support	5.90 (3.23)
Overall average across all reasons	**5.90 (3.36)**
No way to contact the person in need to provide support	5.89 (3.59)
Providing support would come off as self-serving or insincere	5.53 (3.45)
Other people have already provided enough support	5.29 (2.88)
The supporter is not relationally close with the person in need	4.97 (3.37)
The supporter is physically too far away to provide support	4.71 (3.27)
Providing support is not viewed as a helpful	4.57 (3.03)
Providing support would violate relationship norms	4.52 (3.25)
The person in need does not deserve support	3.94 (3.25)

Note: Reasons are listed from most acceptable to least acceptable.

ramifications across the reasons, was significant, $F(15, 1582) = 13.19$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.11$, observed power $= 1.00$. As with the previous hypothesis, the fewest negative relational ramifications would result from creating a privacy issue, the supporter losing control of their emotions, having negative emotions, and not knowing what to say in addition to support not being desired as the reason. The reasons generating the greatest negative relational ramifications included believing that the person did not deserve support, that they were not relationally close, and that providing support would violate relationship norms. The hypothesis was supported. The negative relational ramification scores across the 16 reasons are provided in Table 4.

5.3 | Relationship type differences in acceptability of reasons for not communicating support

H$_{2a}$ tested whether nonsupport was more acceptable in friendships or family relationships, regardless of the nonsupport reason provided. We ran a Welch's *t*-test, and the results confirmed this hypothesis, $t(1007.57) = 4.81$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.27$. Results showed that nonsupport from a friend ($M = 6.24$, $SD = 3.26$) was viewed as more acceptable than nonsupport from a family member ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 3.46$), supporting the hypothesis. A series of Welch's *t*-tests were conducted to determine which specific nonsupport reasons significantly differed between friendships and family relationships. There were five reasons that differentiated friends and family, with unacceptability always greater for family: (1) support would create privacy issues;

TABLE 4 Detailed analysis of negative relational ramifications for each nonsupport reason

Reason	Negative relational ramifications M (SD)
Communicating support would create a privacy issue	2.27 (1.12)
The supporter would lose control of their own emotions	2.68 (1.50)
Did not know what to say	2.80 (1.46)
Support was not desired	2.86 (1.45)
Communicating support would generate negative emotions	2.89 (1.47)
No way to contact the person in need to provide support	2.99 (1.48)
Has not had an opportunity to provide support yet	3.04 (1.55)
Providing support would come off as self-serving or insincere	3.14 (1.60)
The supporter had other priorities/their own issues to focus on	3.20 (1.57)
Overall average across all reasons	**3.23 (1.59)**
Other people have already provided enough support	3.28 (1.57)
The supporter would feel uncomfortable providing support	3.34 (1.48)
Providing support is not viewed as a helpful	3.46 (1.47)
The supporter is physically too far away to provide support	3.49 (1.37)
Providing support would violate relationship norms	3.66 (1.55)
The supporter is not relationally close with the person in need	4.00 (1.71)
The person in need does not deserve support	4.59 (1.62)

Note: Reasons are listed in order from creating the least to the greatest negative relational ramifications.

(2) the supporter would lose control of their emotions; (3) support was not desired; (4) support would come across as self-serving or insincere; and (5) support would violate relationship norms. The full results of these analyses are in Table 5.

5.4 | Relationship differences in negative relationship ramifications of nonsupport reasons

H_{2b} explored whether relationship type differentiated assessments of negative relational ramifications. A Welch's *t*-test showed a significant difference between friendships and family relationships, $t(1069.24) = 3.97$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.22$. Greater negative relational ramifications were reported when friends engaged in nonsupport ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.58$) compared to when family members did so ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.56$). H_{2b} was supported. Using Welch's *t*-tests, within the 16 reasons, there were four that differed between relationship types, with the negative ramifications all being higher for friends than for family. These were (1) they (the non-supporters) had other priorities/their own issues; (2) they would feel uncomfortable providing support; (3) they were too far away physically to provide support; and (4) the person in need does not deserve support. The full set of analyses are provided in Table 6.

TABLE 5 Reason-specific analyses investigating acceptability of nonsupport between friends and family

Reason	t	df	p	Friends M (SD)	Family M (SD)	d
Communicating support would create a privacy issue	**1.87**	**46.08**	**.034***	**8.50 (2.37)**	**7.21 (3.42)**	**0.44**
The supporter would lose control of their own emotions	**2.03**	**71.76**	**.023***	**8.11 (2.53)**	**6.78 (3.50)**	**0.44**
Has not had an opportunity to provide support yet	0.968	66.26	.169	7.29 (2.80)	6.63 (3.40)	–
Did not know what to say	0.639	51.23	.263	7.08 (2.92)	6.62 (3.40)	–
The supporter had other priorities/their own issues to focus on	−0.826	63.78	.206	6.50 (2.71)	7.04 (3.00)	–
Support was not desired	**1.71**	**65.91**	**.047***	**6.82 (2.84)**	**5.65 (3.19)**	**0.39**
Communicating support would generate negative emotions	1.66	58.58	.051	6.74 (3.18)	5.50 (3.30)	–
The supporter would feel uncomfortable providing support	.438	54.80	.332	5.99 (3.06)	5.66 (3.35)	–
No way to contact the person in need to provide support	1.37	46.41	.089	6.43 (3.54)	5.28 (3.64)	–
Providing support would come off as self-serving or insincere	**2.04**	**65.00**	**.023***	**6.05 (3.23)**	**4.47 (3.66)**	**0.46**
Other people have already provided enough support	−.263	78.09	.397	5.13 (2.89)	5.31 (2.91)	–
The supporter is not relationally close with the person in need	1.49	47.81	.072	5.23 (3.09)	4.00 (3.84)	–
The supporter is physically too far away to provide support	1.11	56.47	.136	5.04 (3.56)	4.23 (2.72)	–
Providing support is not viewed as a helpful	1.52	67.68	.067	4.96 (3.16)	3.94 (2.88)	–
Providing support would violate relationship norms	**2.41**	**48.00**	**.010***	**5.07 (3.13)**	**3.30 (3.24)**	**0.56**
The person in need does not deserve support	1.53	76.23	.065	4.31 (3.40)	3.22 (2.96)	–

Note: Reasons are listed in order from creating the least to the greatest negative relational ramifications, regardless of relationship type. All *t*-tests are Welch's *t*-tests, which often result in non-integer values for degrees of freedom. All *p*-values are one-tailed. Reasons with significant differences in acceptability between friends and family are bolded. In all instances when friends and family significantly differed, acceptability was higher for friends than family. *$p < .05$. $d =$ the effect size Cohen's *d*, which was only reported for significant differences.

5.5 | Gender differences in nonsupport reason acceptability

H_{3a} stated that, in general, women's reasons for nonsupport would be viewed as less acceptable than men's reasons for nonsupport. Results of Welch's *t*-tests confirmed that there is a significant main effect of gender on nonsupport reason acceptability, $t(1554.49) = 3.95$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.20$. The average acceptability of nonsupport was significantly lower for women ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 3.46$) than for men ($M = 6.24$, $SD = 3.21$). Hypothesis H_{3a} is confirmed.

TABLE 6 Reason-specific analyses investigating negative relational ramifications between friends and family

Reason	t	Df	p	Friends M (SD)	Family M (SD)	d
Communicating support would create a privacy issue	−0.300	55.29	.383	2.22 (1.08)	2.30 (1.23)	–
The supporter would lose control of their own emotions	−0.067	82.50	.473	2.60 (1.50)	2.62 (1.60)	–
Did not know what to say	−0.659	53.88	.256	2.77 (1.47)	3.00 (1.61)	–
Support was not desired	1.17	78.31	.122	2.84 (1.40)	2.51 (1.14)	–
Communicating support would generate negative emotions	1.02	56.81	.155	2.93 (1.40)	2.59 (1.50)	–
No way to contact the person in need to provide support	−.573	41.70	.285	2.92 (1.39)	3.13 (1.62)	–
Has not had an opportunity to provide support yet	1.27	81.04	.104	3.18 (1.64)	2.76 (1.42)	–
Providing support would come off as self-serving or insincere	−0.106	57.97	.458	3.13 (1.41)	3.16 (1.86)	–
The supporter had other priorities/their own issues to focus on	**2.22**	**68.76**	**.015***	**3.42 (1.62)**	**2.68 (1.31)**	**0.50**
Other people have already provided enough support	1.62	79.34	.054	3.50 (1.61)	2.94 (1.52)	–
The supporter would feel uncomfortable providing support	**2.54**	**61.60**	**.007***	**3.56 (1.44)**	**2.74 (1.36)**	**0.59**
Providing support is not viewed as a helpful	1.56	69.19	.062	3.52 (1.48)	3.04 (1.31)	–
The supporter is physically too far away to provide support	**2.59**	**52.09**	**.006***	**3.63 (1.38)**	**2.86 (1.14)**	**0.61**
Providing support would violate relationship norms	1.46	46.84	.075	3.82 (1.51)	3.30 (1.60)	–
The supporter is not relationally close to the person in need	1.41	46.33	.083	4.20 (1.57)	3.59 (2.04)	–
The person in need does not deserve support	**1.91**	**70.77**	**.031***	**4.92 (1.52)**	**4.26 (1.54)**	**0.43**

Note: Reasons are listed in order from creating the least to the greatest negative relational ramifications, regardless of relationship type. All *t*-tests are Welch's *t*-tests, which often result in non-integer values for degrees of freedom. All *p*-values are one-tailed. Reasons with significant differences in acceptability between friends and family are bolded. In all instances when friends and family significantly differed, negative relational ramifications were higher for friends than family. *$p < .05$. d = the effect size Cohen's *d*, which was only reported for significant differences.

Results of the 16 Welch's *t*-tests to determine which nonsupport reasons were viewed as more or less acceptable based on gender showed that there were five reasons reflecting this difference, with women's reasons always being less acceptable: (1) privacy concerns; (2) not knowing what to say; (3) the supporter feeling uncomfortable; (4) the supporter coming off as self-serving; and (5) the supporter being too far away physically. Results of these analyses are in Table 7.

TABLE 7 Reason-specific analyses investigating acceptability of nonsupport between men and women

Reason	t	df	p	Men M (SD)	Women M (SD)	d
Communicating support would create a privacy issue	**2.14**	**99.99**	**.014**[*]	**8.82 (2.24)**	**7.64 (3.05)**	**0.52**
The supporter would lose control of their own emotions	−0.004	84.44	.997	7.43 (3.07)	7.43 (3.09)	--
Has not had an opportunity to provide support yet	−0.316	94.23	.376	6.99 (2.91)	7.18 (3.07)	–
Did not know what to say	**1.87**	**84.76**	**.037**[*]	**7.84 (2.79)**	**6.69 (3.23)**	**0.38**
The supporter had other priorities/their own issues to focus on	1.54	71.40	.064	7.43 (2.81)	6.47 (3.14)	–
Support was not desired	0.228	94.10	.411	6.32 (3.25)	6.18 (2.99)	–
Communicating support would generate negative emotions	0.048	87.95	.481	6.07 (3.20)	6.04 (3.16)	–
The supporter would feel uncomfortable providing support	**1.80**	**60.43**	**.039**[*]	**6.73 (3.33)**	**5.48 (3.12)**	**0.39**
No way to contact the person in need to provide support	−0.098	93.68	.461	5.86 (3.57)	5.93 (3.66)	–
Providing support would come off as self-serving or insincere	**1.86**	**72.05**	**.033**[*]	**6.33 (3.43)**	**5.01 (3.38)**	**0.39**
Other people have already provided enough support	0.699	86.16	.243	5.54 (2.89)	5.12 (2.89)	–
The supporter is not relationally close with the person in need	0.112	88.09	.454	5.05 (3.05)	4.97 (3.59)	–
The supporter is physically too far away to provide support	**1.69**	**77.28**	**.048**[*]	**5.38 (3.44)**	**4.24 (3.07)**	**0.35**
Providing support is not viewed as a helpful	1.27	51.01	.100	5.16 (3.49)	4.26 (2.82)	–
Providing support would violate relationship norms	.063	85.24	.475	4.55 (3.15)	4.51 (3.36)	–
The person in need does not deserve support	.940	69.46	.175	4.39 (3.31)	3.73 (3.21)	–

Note: Reasons are listed in order of acceptability regardless of gender. All *t*-tests are Welch's *t*-tests, which often result in non-integer values for degrees of freedom. All *p*-values are one-tailed. Reasons with significant differences in acceptability between men and women are bolded. In all instances when men and women significantly differed, acceptability was higher for men than women. [*]$p < .05$. $d =$ the effect size Cohen's *d*, reported only for significant differences.

5.6 | Gender differences in negative relational ramifications of nonsupport reasons

H$_{3b}$ stated that nonsupport from women would generate greater negative relational ramifications than when men engage in nonsupport. The results of Welch's *t*-test showed that this was not the case, $t(1554.97) = −0.89$, $p = .186$. There were no nonsupporter gender differences on assessment of negative relational ramifications (women $M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.53$; men $M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.63$). The hypothesis was not supported.

5.7 | Acceptability as a mediator of the relationship between support expectations and negative relational ramifications

H4 proposed a mediation model in which support expectations predicted nonsupport reason acceptability, which in turn predicted negative relational ramifications. The proposed model was tested using Model No. 4 of Hayes's PROCESS macro for SPSS. The results showed partial mediation. There was a significant indirect effect in which support expectation predicted non-support reason acceptability, which in turn predicted negative relational ramifications. There was also a significant direct effect between support expectation and negative relational ramifications (see Figure 1). The indirect effect was relatively small ($\beta = 0.04$), whereas the direct effect was more sizable ($\beta = -0.17$). H4 was partially supported.

6 | DISCUSSION

Receiving emotional support from others during times of need is an expectation in close relationships (Rook, 1987). Research has shown, however, that potential supporters sometimes choose not to communicate emotional support to those who may desire and expect it, and they have a variety of reasons for doing so (Ray et al., 2019; Ray et al., in press). This study used a survey experiment to explore the acceptability of nonsupport reasons and negative relational consequences based on the reasons for nonsupport after being asked to think of a specific stressor and potential supporter. We also explored differences in expectations, attributions of reason acceptability, and negative relational ramifications based on relationship type (friend versus family member) and the gender of the nonsupporter. Finally, we modeled the relationships between expectations for support, acceptability of the nonsupport reason, and negative relational ramifications.

In answering the question "are there good reasons for nonsupport," our data show that, for our participants, the most acceptable reason for nonsupport had to do with privacy issues, one of Ray et al.'s (2019) relationship-oriented reasons for nonsupport. This reason shows sensitivity to the person with the stressor (e.g., it could violate the would-be recipient's privacy) or to another person (i.e., a third person who disclosed about the stressor), both of which could be seen to "strain the relationship" (Ray et al., 2019) and might thus supersede the violation of expectations for receiving emotional support. In terminology from the accounting literature, this reason would be less of an excuse than a justification (that is, it minimizes the nature of
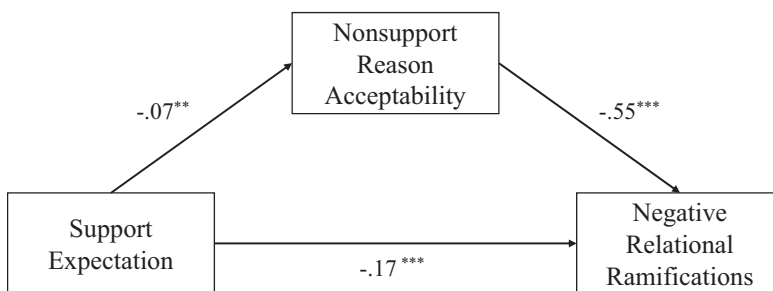

FIGURE 1 Hypothesis 4 Model. $R^2 = 0.32.$, $F(2, 1591) = 377.12$, $p < .001$. All values are standardized coefficients. **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

the offense by showing concern for the other; Blumstein et al., 1974; Scott & Lyman, 1968), confirming previous research and applying it to the internal attributions that can be given for nonsupport.

The next most acceptable reasons were source-based and dealt with the nonsupporter's self-efficacy, opportunities to communicate support, and having other priorities or issues to address in their lives. That is, the participants in our study reflected some empathy for the challenges that the nonsupporters were facing and judged them more benignly than might be expected. This tempers the more negative expectations that are suggested in the accounting literature on what counts as a good excuse. It also shows an awareness of the face threats that can accompany support provision (Floyd & Ray, 2017; Mason et al., 2022).

More consistent with the research on accounts and attributions, the perceived intentionality of nonsupporters' reasons for withholding support may provide an alternative explanation of these particular reasons being evaluated as relatively more acceptable. Having other priorities, for instance, might be viewed as somewhat acceptable, because the nonsupporter was not withholding support intentionally. Instead, the unsupported might have made sense of the violation by thinking that the person would have provided support if their efforts were not obstructed by forces beyond their control. Those not receiving support might be particularly primed to experience empathy for those experiencing crises like their own. Thus, they might view nonsupport as acceptable if they know the nonsupporter is occupied with addressing their own issues, such as a cancer diagnosis, marital conflict, or financial issues. People in this study did not judge relational distance or norms to be good reasons for not supporting them, however. But this may be a function of participants reporting on potential supporters who were expected to provide support and therefore may be relationally close. Thus, these reasons would make less sense to the unsupported and therefore not count as a "good reason."

When looking at the differences between reactions to friends and family members, our results showed that not receiving support was more acceptable when it was done by a friend rather than by a family member. At the same time, nonsupport was judged to have more negative relational ramifications for friends. This mixed set of results suggests a complex situation in which the expectation for support is greater for family members compared to friends, but not having these expectations met due to nonsupport is less likely to have a long-term impact on family relationships. One explanation for this pattern of results is that families are more stable and structured as compared to friendships, which are voluntary and generally more malleable than family relationships. As such, whereas people may find nonsupport from family members to be surprising, it will be less disruptive to the family system. Friends—who may come and go in people's lives—are less likely to get this benefit.

The acceptability of nonsupport reasons partially mediated the relationship between support expectations and negative relational ramifications overall, however. As expected, a significant indirect effect occurred in which greater support expectations predicted lower nonsupport reason acceptability. That is, when people expected to receive support, they had higher standards about what counted as a good excuse. In turn, lower nonsupport reason acceptability predicted greater negative relational ramifications. This aligns with prior research that the quality of support can have consequences for relational well-being (Ray et al., 2021) and that not meeting expectations for communicating in a given context (e.g., not communicating emotional support) can influence perceptions of communication competence (Spitzberg, 2010).

Unexpectedly, however, there was also a significant, negative *direct* effect between support expectation and negative relational ramifications. One potential explanation for this result is that higher support expectations occur when people think of those to whom they are

relationally close (a variable we did not measure). When interpreting this finding, however, it is important to note the relatively small effect size of the standardized coefficient. That is, although there was a statistically significant association, it was quite minimal. An instance of nonsupport may not be enough to generate notable negative relational ramifications given the broader history of the relationship. Indeed, the results of a post-hoc one-sample t-test showed that the average score for negative relational ramifications ($M = 3.23$) was significantly below the midpoint (4) for the scale, $t(1597) = -19.50$, $p < .001$. Future studies should explore additional contextual factors that would predict the magnitude of negative relational ramifications when support expectations are not met, including relational closeness and the supporter's history of providing support throughout the relationship.

6.1 | Practical implications

This study has practical implications for those who are deciding whether to communicate support to someone in need or those who have yet to provide support but may still do so. First, nonsupporters should consider that forgoing communicating support, particularly when it is expected, may create an additional layer of relational stress for the unsupported. In not receiving support, a person is still left with the stress-provoking issue they are facing, but nonsupport can create a new relational stressor with which the unsupported person must contend. For example, recently collected data showed that the majority of young adult cancer patients reported experiencing nonsupport following their diagnosis (Ray, under review). By not receiving support, the patient still must cope with the stressors of a cancer diagnosis while also experiencing the stress of losing friends or confronting friends who have chosen to avoid them.

Second, regardless of whether support is communicated, the person in need is likely engaging in some level of attribution- or sense-making for why emotional support has *not* been given. Those who have refrained from communicating support should realize that the unsupported may have formulated a story for why their nonsupport occurred as part of this sense-making process and that this story is possibly a "worst case" reading (Schlenker, 1980). Their relationship may therefore be at some risk. Nonsupporters have options moving forward, however. They may find that they are now ready to provide support, and if that is the case, we recommend they communicate or provide that support, following the guidelines for effective support. They might also want to provide an account to the person who needs support about why they delayed support during the subsequent supportive interaction and can use this research to understand how they may be perceived during this accounting for their inaction. Following Hilton (1990), that explanation must be "true and answer the question" about why the nonsupporter failed to act. The most likely account to be accepted would include a full apology for their breach of the social contract. They can also use our findings to prepare themselves for how people may react during this conversation and use the conversation to repair any consequences of the failure itself and the reason for it.

Our findings regarding relationship type and gender can also set expectations for how a supportive interaction might occur if it happens after a period of nonsupport, with the understanding that friends, generally, and women, specifically, could have to work harder to repair relational damage. Of course, nonsupporters can continue to forgo communicating support. A consequence of this (in)action is, however, that they relinquish control of the narrative regarding their nonsupport to the other person by not offering an account, and the narrative created by the unsupported about not receiving support may not portray the situation accurately or fairly. This is particularly likely to be consequential for nonsupportive friends.

6.2 | Limitations and future directions

These conclusions and applications are important, but there are some limitations—and opportunities—related to our study that temper them. Our research design, as an experiment, provided only one reason per person to assess. As such, it did not provide information on the most likely attributions to be made for nonsupport nor did it seek to find any additional forms that could occur outside of the cancer-diagnosis context in which Ray et al. (2019) collected their data. That is, we have judgments of the acceptability and relational impact of these empirically derived reasons, but our data did not speak to the commonness of their occurrence (although Ray et al., 2019, provide a table with the frequency of each reason for their participants). As such, future research should look to see if and how often the reasons and the judgments occur in everyday life.

Our study design also created issues of ecological validity. Although we asked participants to share a real-life stressor and to imagine a specific person in their life who they thought would support them, there were several aspects of this relationship and situation that we did not measure. For example, we did not assess participants' actual support experiences regarding the stressor they shared when participating. Future studies should include questions that inquire about whether the participant felt generally supported when facing the stressor they shared or if they desired more support than they received. When sharing the stressor they had experienced, participants also did not report whether they had actually received support from the supporter they selected, nor did we measure the relational closeness between the participant and the person they selected. Future studies should explore relational closeness as another factor that may influence support expectations and outcomes tied to nonsupport.

Although our between-subjects design in which participants were randomly assigned to a nonsupport reason allows us a level of control to adjudicate what counts as an acceptable nonsupport reason, investigating this sense-making process based on actual nonsupport that occurred would be more true-to-life. For instance, we did not measure how realistic it would be for a participant's nonsupporter to provide the specific nonsupport reason they were shown. Thus, acceptability scores in this study could, in part, have been a function of viewing the nonsupport reason given as unrealistic. Capturing narratives that include attributed reasons for nonsupport—as well as discussions between dyads regarding why support was not given in past instances—could be more ecologically valid research designs in future research.

Researchers should also consider exploring nonsupport longitudinally to investigate the relational and psychological effects of nonsupport over time. The severity or magnitude of negative relational ramifications stemming from nonsupport may fade or persist, depending on how memorable these instances of nonsupport are. Recent research (e.g., Ray, 2022) suggests that negative statements that are communicated within otherwise positive emotional support messages are more likely to be recalled and to predict supporter outcomes in the days after the message is communicated. It is possible, then, that nonsupport (as a type of negative experience related to support) may generate lasting negative relational ramifications that could be conceptualized as a form of "memorable non-message."

Future nonsupport studies could also explore if the characteristics of the various stressors affect the acceptability of certain nonsupport reasons. Prior research has shown that people may desire support from certain relationship types depending on the stressor. For example, caregivers of spouses experiencing dementia at times preferred support from friends as opposed to family, as familial support sometimes led to feelings of overdependence (Donnellan et al., 2017). The severity of the stressor may also matter. Severe stressors, such as a cancer

diagnosis, likely elicit greater expectations for support from a variety of relationship types (Pennant et al., 2020). Less severe stressors would probably not generate the same level of support expectations.

Another characteristic of stressors that may affect the acceptability of nonsupport is if the stressor invokes gender stereotypes, particularly because women's nonsupport reasons were viewed as less acceptable than men's. For example, women are viewed as responsible for most domestic tasks, such as parenting, and mothers' not meeting parenting expectations may face more repercussions than fathers (Villicana et al., 2017); thus, when women do not provide support around parenting stressors, their inaction may be perceived as less acceptable than if men did not offer support in this context.

Additionally, the sample's demographics were both a strength and a weakness of this study. Whereas using a nationally representative sample is preferable to college student samples, which are commonly used in interpersonal communication research (Afifi & Cornejo, 2020), we also recognize that our results may not apply across other cultures and are geographically bound to the U.S. and similar cultures. With these limitations—and aspirations in mind—our study works to suggest that, in general, emotional support is something that people expect from their networks. When it does not occur, people may be given and/or imagine reasons for why it did not. Depending on the attribution for another's failure to offer expected support, people may be more or less likely to think the reason was acceptable; overall, the more acceptable, the less likely it will be to harm their relationship with the nonsupporter.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Colter D. Ray https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0491-1517
Valerie Manusov https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1610-5478

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Colter D. Ray is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Louisiana State University.

Valerie Manusov is a professor in the Department of Communication at University of Washington.

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