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Perceived Social Support Buffers the Consequences of Internalized Negativity Among Individuals in Consensual Non-Monogamous Relationships

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Abstract

Departures from monogamy are socially discouraged and met with negative judgments, and being a target of stigmatization has consequences for the way individuals in consensual non-monogamous (CNM) relationships connect to others, including their partner(s). However, social support seems to be an important factor associated with increases in wellbeing and relationship quality. Aligned with this reasoning, results of a cross-sectional study showed that participants in CNM relationships who endorsed more internalized negativity reported less commitment to partner one (P1), less disclosure of their relationship agreement to others, as well as less acceptance and more secrecy toward partners one and two (P2). Results further showed that perceiving more social support was associated with more commitment to P1, less disclosure to people from the extended social circle, and more acceptance of their relationship with P1 and P2 among participants with higher internalized negativity. Perceiving more social support was also associated with more disclosure to people from the close social circle, as well as more acceptance and less secrecy toward their relationship with P1 and P2 among participants with lower internalized negativity. These results demonstrate that relationships embedded in social contexts of support can be a protective factor, even for individuals who report higher internalized negativity. Hence, for individuals in CNM relationships, fostering a positive and supportive social network seems to increase positive personal and relationship outcomes.

Keywords: Consensual non-monogamy; Internalized Negativity; Social Support; Relationship Quality; Disclosure; Acceptance

Perceived Social Support Buffers the Consequences of Internalized Negativity Among Individuals in Consensual Non-Monogamous Relationships

Mononormativity—the belief that two partners in a romantic relationship should be emotionally and sexually exclusive to one another—is shared through socialization in most contemporary societies and is highly embedded in social, political, and religious discourses (Ziegler et al., 2015). This means that most romantic relationships are grounded on the assumption of monogamy, such that individuals tend to expect (often implicitly) sexual and emotional exclusivity from their romantic partner (Badcock et al., 2014). By acting in accordance with what is expected of them, individuals in monogamous relationships are afforded several social benefits, including access to resources (e.g., marriage, healthcare), acceptance from others, and moral righteousness (Ferrer, 2018).

The benefits ascribed to individuals who adhere to the standards of mononormativity contrast with an overall stigma attached to consensual non-monogamy (CNM), an umbrella term for relationships in which all partners give explicit consent to engage in romantic, intimate, and/or sexual relationships with multiple people (e.g., polyamory; open relationships; Moors, 2023; Rodrigues, 2024). Studies with large or nationally representative samples from different countries have shown that up to one in five people have at some point been in a CNM relationship (Fairbrother et al., 2019; Haupert et al., 2017; Rubel & Burleigh, 2020; Træen & Thuen, 2022). Being repeatedly exposed to mononormative exemplars in society is a source of minority stress likely to become internalized by individuals in CNM relationships and this can have consequences for their personal and relational health and wellbeing (Scoats & Campbell, 2022). And yet, some individuals manage to successfully navigate their CNM relationships and report experiencing high relationship quality and sexual satisfaction, particularly with their primary or anchor partner (Mogilski et al., 2023). Past studies have shown that having a strong and supportive network is beneficial for health

(Pietromonaco & Collins, 2017) and helps individuals cope with some of the challenges they face for having a CNM relationship (Füllgrabe & Smith, 2023). Hence, we argue that individuals in CNM relationships may be better equipped to deal with the potential consequences of internalized negativity when they perceive to have more social support from close others. In a cross-sectional study, we examined if internalized negativity was negatively associated with relational and social outcomes among individuals in CNM relationships, and whether these associations change depending on the level of perceived social support.

CNM Stigma and Internalized Negativity

Research has consistently shown that individuals who depart from the socially ascribed monogamous and exclusive dyad norms are heavily stigmatized, and met with negative social views and appraisals. Recent reviews have shown that individuals in CNM (vs. monogamous) relationships are perceived to have lower cognitive (e.g., less intelligent; less likely to pay their taxes on time), relational (e.g., less intimate relationships; poorer sexual satisfaction), parenting (e.g., unsuccessful at raising children), and social skills (e.g. less trustworthy; lonelier), are seen as more promiscuous and careless with their health, and tend to be dehumanized (i.e., perceived to experience less secondary and complex emotions; Rodrigues, 2024). Part of this stigmatization is driven by perceptions that individuals in CNM relationships are less moral and less committed to their (primary) relationship (Rodrigues et al., 2021), and less conservative and more open to change (Rodrigues et al., 2022), particularly from people who have more negative attitudes toward CNM.

This stigmatization has several consequences. For example, individuals in CNM relationships who choose to seek out help report experiencing stigma in the form of discrimination from mental health professionals and healthcare providers (Campbell et al., 2023; Herbitter et al., 2024), as well as in their social interactions. For example, Mahar and colleagues (2024) asked individuals in CNM relationships whether they have ever

experienced stigma based on their relational agreement. Half of the participants experienced social discomfort or disapproval, received threatening behaviors from others, and reported their character and relationship were devalued. The remaining participants did not experience any stigma, because they were careful about self-disclosing to others or had accepting communities (see also Sandbakken et al., 2022).

The minority stress model (Frost & Meyer, 2023) argues that sexually diverse individuals are repeatedly exposed to distal stressors (e.g., discriminatory social policies; microaggressions), which increases the likelihood of experiencing proximal stressors, including internalized negativity (i.e., the degree to which individuals endorse socially shared views about sex and gender as part of their self-image). This has several consequences for health and wellbeing. For example, LGBTQ+ individuals who report more internalized negativity are less comfortable with their sexual and/or gender identity and less likely to come out to their parents and friends (e.g., Torres & Rodrigues, 2022), report worse mental health and wellbeing (e.g., Brown-Beresford & McLaren, 2022), and report poorer relationship quality (e.g., Doyle & Molix, 2021). By having a stigmatized identity, individuals in CNM relationships are also at risk of developing internalized negativity by being constantly exposed to pressures to conform to mononormativity and repercussions for failure to adapt to the gold standard monogamous relationship (Füllgrabe & Smith, 2023; Mahar et al., 2024).

Research is only starting to unveil the downstream consequences of internalized negativity for the lives and relationships of individuals in CNM relationships. Available evidence shows that internalized negativity towards CNM is associated with less commitment to the primary partner, less satisfaction with primary and secondary partners, and less satisfaction with the relationship agreements (Moors et al., 2021). Individuals in CNM relationships who report more internalized negativity also endorse more mononormative

beliefs, attribute more negative (and less positive) emotions to themselves, and are more likely to dehumanize their partners (e.g., perceive them as more immature; Rodrigues et al., 2024). These studies clearly show that internalized negativity shapes how individuals in CNM relationships perceive themselves and construe their relationships, even though there is evidence that positive relational experiences can emerge despite the pressures toward mononormativity.

Social Support in CNM Relationships

Having support from other people (especially within the close social network) can have a protective role against the consequences fostered by threatening contexts and have benefits for physical and psychological wellbeing (Pietromonaco & Collins, 2017; Uchino et al., 2018). For example, perceived social support has been found to buffer the depression levels of sexual minority individuals who were victimized by their families (Parra et al., 2018), the psychological distress of sexual minority individuals exposed to negative media messages about same-sex marriage (Verrelli et al., 2019), and the suicidal ideations of gender diverse individuals who experienced discrimination because of their sexual identity (Trujillo et al., 2017).

Extending this reasoning to relational diversity, research has shown that being part of a supportive community (e.g., chosen family) can help people in CNM relationships cope with the experienced stigma and become more resilient against adversities (Füllgrabe & Smith, 2023). Directly related to our reasoning, being part of a supportive CNM community was found to buffer the negative association between internalized negativity and psychological distress among polyamorous individuals (Witherspoon & Theodore, 2021). Building upon this evidence, we argue that social support can help individuals in CNM relationships cope with their internalized negativity and successfully navigate the stigma they face from society. The potential benefits of social support might be particularly evident in the relationship they

have with the primary partner. Indeed, differences between primary and non-primary partners in CNM relationships have been reported. For example, relationships with primary partners have higher quality (e.g., more commitment, better communication), more nurturance, and tend to be more accepted by friends and family, whereas relationships with secondary partners have more eroticism and sexual activity but also tend to be more secretive (Balzarini, Dharma, Kohut, et al., 2019; Balzarini, Dharma, Muise, et al., 2019; Flicker et al., 2021; Mogilski et al., 2017).

Current Study and Hypotheses

We conducted a multi-national, cross-sectional study to examine if internalized negativity was associated with poorer relational and social functioning among individuals in CNM relationships, and whether the level of perceived social support shaped these associations. More specifically, we predicted that participants with more internalized negativity would report lower commitment (H1); be less likely to have disclosed the relational agreement to people from their close (H2a) and extended social circles (H2b); perceive to be less accepted for their relationship P1 (H3a) and P2 (H3b); and be more secretive about P1 (H4a) and P2 (H4b). Among participants who perceive to have more (vs. less) social support, however, we expected less negative relational and social associations of internalized negativity (H5a), particularly in relationships with P1 (vs. P2; H5b).

Method

Participants

A total of 761 individuals accessed the online survey, from which we excluded those who failed to give consent (n = 3), failed to complete both predictor variables (n = 245) and at least one of the outcome variables (n = 19), and had no romantic partner (n = 55). The final sample included 439 participants who identified as CNM from 35 countries worldwide. A

detailed description of the demographic characteristics can be found in Table 1[1]. Most participants were from the American continent (64.5%), identified as White (82.2%), and were employed (71.1%). Over half of the sample identified as female (56.0%). Less than half of the sample identified as heterosexual (41.2%), had a university degree (37.4%), resided in urban areas (46.2%), and were living comfortably on their current income (43.3%).

Measures

Relationship Structure

Using the procedure described by Balzarini Dharma, Kohut, and colleagues (2019), we asked participants "Do you consider your relationship with [*partner initials*] to be primary?" and gave five response options: "Yes, [*partner initials*] is my primary relationship", "Yes, [*partner initials*] is my primary relationship, but I also have others that are considered primary", "No, [*partner initials*] is not a primary relationship", "No, I do not believe in considering one relationship to be primary", and "None of the above (please explain)". Participants with more than one partner answered this question for partners one (P1) and two (P2). We then categorized relationships as having (a) a primary-secondary structure if only one partner was considered primary, (b) a co-primary structure if both partners were considered primary, or (c) a non-primary structure if none of the partners were considered primary or if participants did not believe in such label.

Internalized Consensual Non-Monogamy Negativity

We used the measure developed by Moors and colleagues (2021) to assess personal discomfort (three items; e.g., "I feel comfortable having a consensual non-monogamy lifestyle"), social discomfort (two items; e.g., "Social situations with consensual non-monogamous individuals make me feel uncomfortable"), and public identification with CNM (e.g., "I feel comfortable being seen in public with consensually non-monogamous

[1] We were unable to collect participants' age due to a technical problem.

individuals"). Responses were given on 7-point rating scales (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*). Items were mean averaged (α = .80), with higher scores indicating more internalized negativity.

Perceived Social Support

We used four items from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support scale (Zimet et al., 1990) to assess perceived support from family (two items; e.g., "I get the emotional help and support I needed from my family") and friends (two items; e.g., "I can count on my friends when things went wrong"). Responses were given on 7-point rating scales (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*). Items were mean averaged (α = .75), with higher scores indicating more perceived social support.

Relationship Commitment

We used four items from the shortened Investment Model scale (Rusbult et al., 1998; short version by Rodrigues & Lopes, 2013) to assess how committed participants were to P1 (e.g., "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner"). Responses were given on 7-point rating scales (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*). Items were mean averaged, with higher scores indicating more commitment to P1 (α = .92).

Disclosure of Relationship Agreement

We developed four items informed by past research (Lingiardi et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2001), to assess the extent to which participants disclosed their relationship agreement to people from their close (four items; e.g., close family members) and extended social circle (three items; e.g., co-workers). Responses were given on 4-point rating scales (1 = *They don't know and don't suspect* to 4 = *They know, and we talked about* it). Items were mean averaged, with higher scores indicating more disclosure to people from close (α = .77) and extended social circles (α = .80).

Relationship Acceptance

Based on past research (Lehmiller, 2012), we developed two items to assess how accepting family and friends were of participants' relationship(s) (e.g., "My family is accepting of my relationship with [*partner initials*]"). Participants with more than one partner answered this question for each partner. Responses were given on 7-point rating scales (1 = *Do not agree at all* to 9 = *Agree completely*). Items were mean averaged, with higher scores indicating more acceptance of the relationship with P1, $r(431) = .65$, $p < .001$, and P2, $r(237) = .42$, $p < .001$.

Relationship Secrecy

We developed two items informed by past research (Foster et al., 2010), to assess the extent to which participants kept their relationship(s) a secret (e.g., "I've been hiding some things about my involvement with [*partner initials*] from some people"). Again, participants with more than one partner answered this question for each partner. Responses were given on 7-point rating scales (1 = *Do not agree at all* to 9 = *Agree completely*). Items were mean averaged, with higher scores indicating more secrecy with P1, $r(435) = .70$, $p < .001$, and P2, $r(240) = .74$, $p < .001$.

Procedure

This study followed the guidelines issued by the Ethics Council of Iscte-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. Data were collected between April and July 2021, by recruiting prospective participants from consensual non-monogamy online communities on Facebook (e.g., social networking groups) and Reddit. Prospective participants were invited to take part in a study to understand how people who identify as CNM perceive themselves and their partners, and how they behave in their relationships. After giving their consent, participants were asked to complete the survey. At the end, participants were asked, "How much attention did you pay to this questionnaire while you were completing it?" (1 = *No attention*, 2 = *Very little attention*, 3 = *Moderate amount of attention*, 4 = *Very close attention*). We retained only

participants who were moderately or very attentive while completing the survey. Upon completion of the survey, participants were thanked and debriefed. Participation in this study was voluntary and no compensation was offered. This study was part of a larger project examining dynamics and processes within CNM relationships. Apart from the internalized negativity measure, none of the measures herein reported have been examined in our prior research.

Data Analytic Plan

We examined the characteristics of the relationships with P1 in the overall sample (N = 439) in terms of relationship structure, configuration, status, living arrangement, and length. For participants with at least two partners (n = 258), we also compared P1 and P2 relationship status, living arrangement, and length using χ^2 and t-tests. Then, we computed the overall pattern of correlations between the main variables and compared relationship secrecy and acceptance between P1 and P2 using paired-samples t-tests. Lastly, we computed moderation models using the PROCESS macro with 10,000 bootstrap samples (Model 1; Hayes, 2018). In all models, internalized negativity, perceived social support, and their interaction were the predictor variables. Variables were mean centered before computing the interaction. Outcome variables were relationship commitment with P1, disclosure to people from close and extended social circles, acceptance of the relationship with P1 and P2, and relationship secrecy with P1 and P2. When significant interactions were found, we examined participants with higher (+1 *SD*) and lower (-1 *SD*) internalized negativity by comparing the simple slopes of more (+1 *SD*) and less (-1 *SD*) perceived social support. Lastly, we explored differences in our main variables according to relationship structure and configuration, and then re-tested the moderation models controlling for these variables (dummy coded). Sensitivity power analyses using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) indicated that we had at least 92% statistical power to detect effects of the smallest observed size in our moderation models

(i.e., R^2 = .057, n = 257). Materials, anonymized data, and syntaxes that support our findings are available on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/r87ej/).

Results

Relationship Characteristics

As shown in Table 2, participants were in a relationship with P1 for an average of 8 years (M = 7.94, SD = 8.42), and most had a primary-secondary structure (56.9%), a polyamory configuration (54.4%), were married/in registered partnerships (41.2%), and were cohabiting with P1 (61.9%). For participants with at least two partners, comparisons between partners showed that the relationship with P1 was longer, $t(249) = 10.76$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.68$, participants were more likely to be engaged, $Z = 2.38$, $p = .017$, or married with P1, $Z = 12.45$, $p < .001$, and more likely to cohabit with P1, $Z = 14.32$, $p < .001$. In contrast, participants were more likely to be casually dating with P2, $Z = 10.64$, $p < .001$, and more likely to have never lived together with P2 (21.6%), $Z = 15.35$, $p < .001$. No other differences reached significance, all $p \geq .057$.

Relationship Dynamics

Overall descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 3. As expected, internalized negativity was associated with worse relational (e.g., commitment) and social outcomes (e.g., disclosure of relationship agreement). The opposite pattern emerged for perceived social support. For participants with at least two partners, results also showed less relationship acceptance, $t(237) = 10.94$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.71$, and more relationship secrecy for P2 (vs. P1), $t(238) = 10.96$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.71$.

Internalized Negativity and Perceived Social Support

The results of the moderation analyses are summarized in Table 4. Internalized negativity was associated with less commitment to P1 and less disclosure to people from both social circles. Internalized CNM negativity was also associated with less relationship

acceptance and more relationship secrecy (stronger associations for P2 in both cases). In contrast, perceived social support was associated with more commitment to P1 and more disclosure to people from the close social circle. Perceived social support was also associated with more relationship acceptance (stronger association for P1) and less secrecy (but only for P1).

Results further showed significant interactions between both variables in most outcomes (except relationship acceptance for P2). For participants with higher internalized negativity, more (vs. less) perceived social support was associated with more commitment to P1 (Figure 1), less disclosure to people from the extended social circle (Figure 2), and more acceptance of the relationship with P1 and P2 (Figure 3; steeper slope for P1). For participants with lower internalized negativity, more (vs. less) perceived social support was associated with more disclosure to people from the close social circle (Figure 2), more acceptance of the relationship with P1 and P2 (Figure 3; similar slopes), and less secrecy with P1 and P2 (Figure 4; steeper slope for P1).

Exploratory Analyses

Exploratory analyses showed some differences in our variables according to relationship structure and configuration (see Supplementary Materials and https://osf.io/r87ej/). More specifically, results (Table S1) showed that participants in primary-secondary configurations reported better P1 relationship outcomes (e.g., most committed) and worse P2 relationship outcomes (e.g., least acceptance). In contrast, participants in non-primary configurations reported better personal outcomes (i.e., least internalized negativity). Results (Table S2) also showed that participants with a monogamous configuration tended to report worse personal (e.g., most internalized negativity) and P1 relationship outcomes (e.g., least committed). Despite these differences, the results of the

moderation analyses did not change when relationship structure and relationship configuration were entered as covariates.

Discussion

The present cross-sectional study utilized a multi-national sample to examine the potential consequences of internalized negativity on relational and social outcomes among individuals in CNM relationships. As expected, our results showed the negative outcomes of internalized negativity. We found that individuals in CNM relationships who endorsed more internalized negativity also reported less commitment to P1, less disclosure to people from their social circles, as well as less relationship acceptance and relationship secrecy toward their partners (although stronger associations emerged toward P2). These findings are directly aligned with past studies documenting the consequences of internalized negativity for CNM individuals and their relationships (Moors et al., 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2024). More broadly, our findings extend the minority stress model (Frost & Meyer, 2023) to relationship diverse people, such that exposure to a significant amount of social and institutional pressure towards mononormativity can increase internalized negativity and shape how people approach their CNM relationships.

Generally aligned with our hypotheses, we also found that the detrimental associations of internalized negativity with relational and social outcomes were attenuated for participants who perceived to have more social support. Specifically, our findings showed that even when participants held strong, internalized negative beliefs about CNM, perceiving they were supported by their social circle was associated with *higher* commitment and *more* relationship acceptance for their relationships with P1 and P2. For individuals who endorsed less internalized negativity, in contrast, perceiving more support from the social circle was associated with *more* disclosure to the close social circle, as well as *more* relationship acceptance and *less* relationship secrecy for their relationships with P1 and P2. These

findings suggest that perceived social support can play a critical role not only in buffering the implications of internalized negativity associated with one's relationship agreement but also in enhancing relational and social benefits, thus aligning with past studies (Füllgrabe & Smith, 2023; Mahar et al., 2024; Witherspoon & Theodore, 2021). More broadly, our results extend past research on marginalized relationships (e.g., Blair et al., 2023; Gillian et al., 2022) by showing that social support can also contribute to the overall wellbeing of individuals in CNM relationships. Surprisingly, we also found that perceptions of social support were associated with *lower* relationship disclosure to the extended social circle among participants who endorsed more internalized negativity. For people who struggle to cope with mononormativity pressures, then, having a supportive close network may benefit relational and coming-out processes within the confinements of this network (e.g., commitment with the partner; acceptance from friends), while at the same time potentially increasing worry or fear of repercussions from more distant people (e.g., anticipate being stigmatized by co-workers).

The present study additionally contributed to further understanding the dynamics between partners within a multi-partner context. For example, the relationship with P1 was longer, more likely to have a legal bond, more committed, and more accepted by other people, whereas the relationship with P2 was more casual and more secretive. These findings are aligned with past evidence reporting higher relationship quality and social support with primary partners, and more secrecy with secondary partners (e.g., Balzarini, Dharma, Kohut, et al., 2019; Balzarini, Dharma, Muise, et al., 2019). Importantly, our main findings were consistent after controlling for *a priori* differences in relationship structure and configuration. This suggests the robustness of the interplay between internalized negativity and perceived social support for different relational and social outcomes, regardless of how the CNM relationship is organized.

Limitations and Future Research

There are important limitations to acknowledge. We are unable to infer causality given the cross-sectional nature of our data. For example, our theoretical assumption was that internalized negativity has consequences for the acceptance and disclosure of a CNM relationship, but it may also be that experiencing rejection based on the relationship agreement can increase internalized negativity and have consequences for relationship dynamics. We were also unable to examine the unique contribution of different types of social support (e.g., emotional or instrumental support offered by family members or chosen family to the CNM partner; being part of a CNM community) or the importance of having inclusive policies at the contextual level (e.g., inclusive language and medical leave policies in the workplace for people in CNM relationships). Building upon these limitations, future studies could employ a mixed-methods longitudinal approach and include different measures of personal and relational health and wellbeing, to better understand the perceived impact of social pressures toward normativity, when (and where) are people more (or less) likely to experience stigma based to their relationship agreement, and if different types of social support and inclusive policies buffer against the multiple consequences of internalized negativity over time. To address interdependency in relationship processes, researchers could also consider collecting dyadic data (or data from all members within the CNM relationship).

Our sample consisted of predominantly white, North Americans who were currently employed, thus limiting the generalizability of the present findings to an international context. For example, both spatial location and class play significant roles in determining how individuals understand and engage in sexuality, gender, and relationships (Karney, 2021; McDermott, 2011). Different regions and countries also vary widely in the content and reinforcement of their sexual and relationship norms (Karandashev, 2017). Thus, caution must be taken when interpreting the results of the present study to not overgeneralize Western

experiences of CNM relationship to less represented peoples or socio-cultural contexts. It is also important to recognize the diversity of CNM agreements when interpreting the results of the present study, especially because not all CNM relationships have similar relationship outcomes. For example, individuals who are polyamorous or swingers tend to have similarly high relationship outcomes, whereas couples who practice open relationships tend to be much lower, even when controlling for variables such as contact with the primary partner, positive beliefs about monogamy, communication style, and motivation to be CNM (Conley & Piemonte, 2021). Because our sample was primarily composed of people in polyamorous and open relationships, caution is needed when interpreting our results. Based on these limitations, researchers could seek to conduct a large-scale study with people from different relationship agreements and countries that are typically underrepresented in the literature, to explore intersections between demographic (e.g., age; sexual orientation; area of residence) and relationship characteristics on the measures we analyzed, and determine the generalizability of our current findings to different sociocultural contexts.

More broadly, future research could seek to explore the implications of our findings, namely the associations between stigma and relationship health in CNM relationships. Firstly, because past research has indicated that stigma about CNM can take the form of public health concerns, future research could consider how mononormativity is expressed in public policy about contagious diseases, such as COVID-19 and sexually transmitted infections (Conley et al., 2022). Secondly, there is much-needed work on family dynamics associated with parents in CNM relationships and how these alternative familyhoods engage with social structures (e.g., health, education, law; Klesse et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study contributes to the extant literature by reinforcing the importance of social support as a protective factor against mononormative social expectations for individuals in

CNM relationships. While expectations of monogamy can be reinforced through mundane social interactions between families, peers, and strangers, mononormativity is also baked into the cake of social institutions of power. Social pressures to be monogamous can compile and become internalized in the psyche of individuals who deviate from cultural expectations, which negatively affect their personal, relational, and sexual outcomes. However, from the present findings, social support seems to be of critical importance in regulating these effects, even for individuals who report high internalized negativity.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

	n (%)
Continent	
African	2 (0.5)
American	283 (64.5)
Asian	3 (0.7)
European	131 (29.8)
Oceania	20 (4.6)
Gender	
Agender, gender fluid, or gender nonconforming	11 (2.5)
Female	246 (56.0)
Male	140 (31.9)
Non-binary	42 (9.6)
Sexual orientation	
Ace spectrum (e.g., asexual; demisexual)	12 (2.7)
Bisexual	166 (37.8)
Heterosexual	181 (41.2)
Lesbian/Gay	32 (7.3)
Pansexual	33 (7.5)
Other (e.g., queer; fluid; questioning)	15 (3.4)
Race/Ethnicity	
Arab or Middle Eastern	2 (0.5)
Asian	10 (2.3)
Black or African American	6 (0.7)
Hispanic or Latinx	21 (4.8)
Mixed race/ethnicity	33 (7.5)
Other (e.g., Native American; Aboriginal; Métis)	5 (82.2)
White	361 (82.2)
Prefer not to answer	1 (0.5)
Education level	
Less than 12 years	5 (1.1)
High school graduate	32 (7.3)
Some university	106 (24.1)
University graduate	164 (37.4)
Master level degree	105 (23.9)
Doctoral degree	26 (5.9)
Prefer not to answer	1 (0.2)
Occupation	
Primarily student	68 (15.5)
Employed	312 (71.1)
Unemployed	47 (10.7)
Retired	12 (2.7)
Area of residence	
Urban area	203 (46.2)
Suburban area	178 (40.5)
Rural area	58 (13.2)
Socioeconomic status	
Struggling with the current income	86 (19.6)
Coping on the current income	163 (37.1)
Living comfortably on the current income	190 (43.3)

Table 2

Relationship Characteristics

	All participants (n = 439)	Participants with at least two partners (n = 258)	
	P1	P1	P2
	n (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)
Structure			
Primary-Secondary	250 (56.9)	-	-
Co-Primary	85 (19.4)		
Non-Primary	104 (23.7)	-	-
Configuration			
Monogamous	51 (11.6)	-	-
Open relationship	66 (15.0)	-	-
Swinging	40 (9.1)	-	-
Solo polyamory	43 (9.8)	-	-
Polyamory	239 (54.4)	-	-
Status			
Casually dating	39 (8.9)	26 (10.1)	112 (43.4)
Seriously dating	166 (37.8)	86 (33.3)	107 (41.5)
Intimate partnership	29 (6.6)	16 (6.2)	25 (9.7)
Engaged	24 (5.5)	15 (5.8)	5 (1.9)
Married/Registered partnership	181 (41.2)	115 (44.6)	9 (3.5)
Living arrangement			
Never lived together	116 (26.6)	55 (21.6)	187 (72.5)
Living together apart	50 (11.5)	26 (10.2)	27 (10.5)
Cohabiting	270 (61.9)	174 (68.2)	44 (17.1)
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Relationship length (years)	7.94 (8.42)	8.57 (8.73)	2.63 (4.13)

Note. P1 = Primary partner. P2 = Secondary partner.

Table 3

Overall Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M (*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Internalized negativity	2.30 (1.11)	-								
2. Perceived social support	4.73 (1.40)	-.20***	-							
3. Relationship commitment (P1)	6.20 (1.34)	-.39***	.24***	-						
4. Disclosure to the close social circle	2.62 (0.83)	-.33***	.15**	.06	-					
5. Disclosure to the extended social circle	1.82 (0.86)	-.11*	-.07	-.14**	.63***	-				
6. Relationship acceptance (P1)	7.64 (1.99)	-.30***	.31***	.54***	.07	-.10*	-			
7. Relationship secrecy (P1)	2.28 (2.06)	.22***	-.18***	-.34***	-.17***	-.08	-.47***	-		
8. Relationship acceptance (P2)	5.91 (2.23)	-.38***	.25***	.23***	.60***	.32***	.24***	-.13*	-	
9. Relationship secrecy (P2)	4.27 (2.66)	.32***	-.09	-.12	-.50***	-.38***	-.05	.21***	-.52***	-

Note: P1 = Primary partner. P2 = Secondary partner. Degrees of freedom vary between 439 and 236.
*$p \leq .050$. **$p \leq .010$. ***$p \leq .010$.

Table 4

Role of Perceived Social Support for Participants with Lower and Higher Internalized Negativity

	Internalized negativity		Perceived social support		Internalized negativity x Perceived support		Higher negativity (-1 *SD*)		Lower negativity (+1 *SD*)	
	b (*SE*)	*p*	*b* (*SE*)	*p*	*b* (*SE*)	*p*	*b* (*SE*)	*p*	*b* (*SE*)	*p*
Relationship commitment (P1)	-0.37 (.05)	< .001	0.15 (.04)	.001	0.18 (.03)	< .001	0.35 (.05)	< .001	-0.05 (.06)	.369
Disclosure to the close social circle	-0.26 (.04)	< .001	0.06 (.03)	.038	-0.05 (.02)	.013	-0.00 (.04)	.947	0.12 (.04)	.002
Disclosure to the extended social circle	-0.13 (.04)	< .001	-0.05 (.03)	.070	-0.09 (.02)	< .001	-0.16 (.04)	< .001	0.05 (.04)	.239
Relationship acceptance (P1)	-0.40 (.08)	< .001	0.36 (.06)	< .001	0.16 (.05)	.001	0.54 (.08)	< .001	0.18 (.09)	.040
Relationship secrecy (P1)	0.41 (.09)	< .001	-0.23 (.07)	.001	0.16 (.05)	.003	-0.05 (.09)	.600	-0.41 (.09)	.001
Relationship acceptance (P2)	-0.73 (.13)	< .001	0.28 (.09)	.003	0.05 (.07)	.843	0.30 (.12)	.011	0.27 (.13)	.036
Relationship secrecy (P2)	0.87 (.16)	< .001	-0.09 (.12)	.423	0.23 (.09)	.010	0.15 (.14)	.277	-0.34 (.15)	.029

Figure 1

Simple Slopes for Relationship Commitment with P1

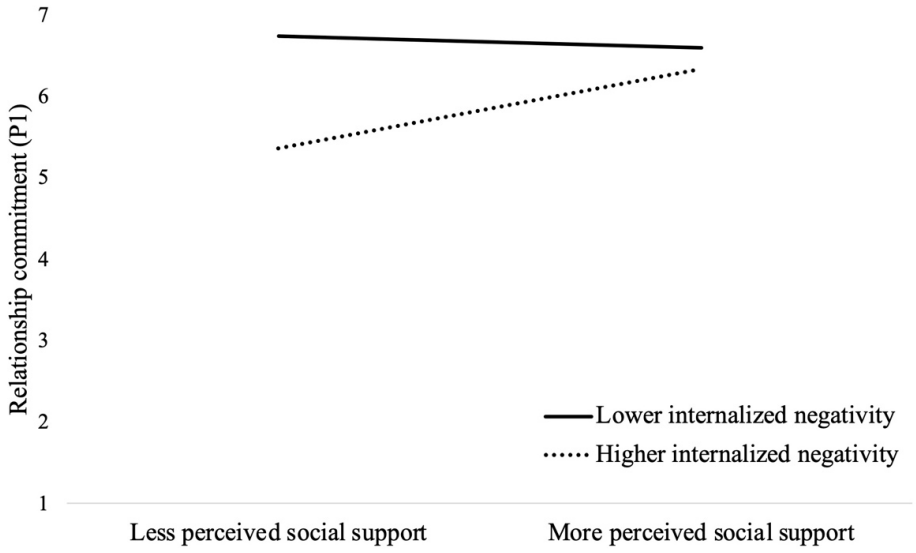


Figure 2

Simple Slopes for Disclosure to People from the Close (Upper) and Extended (Lower) Social Circles

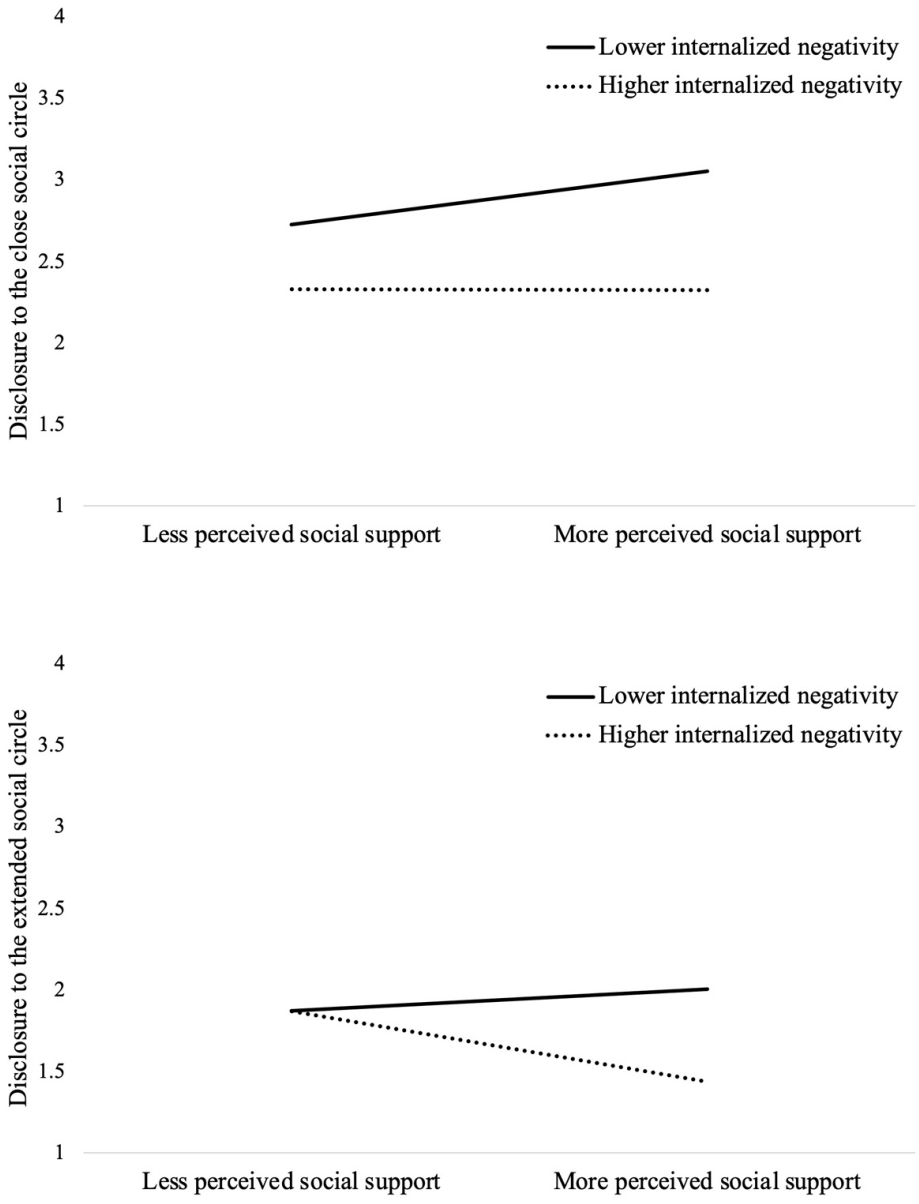
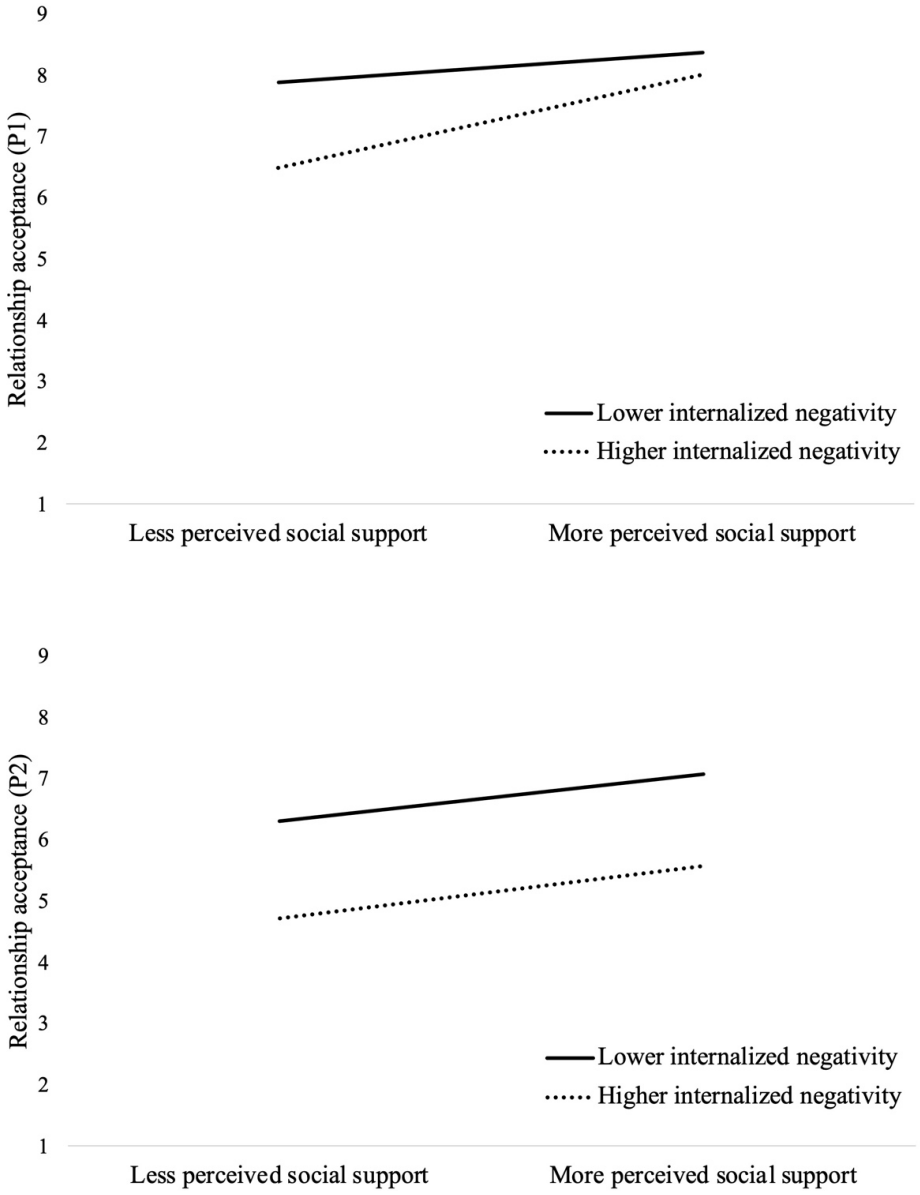


Figure 3

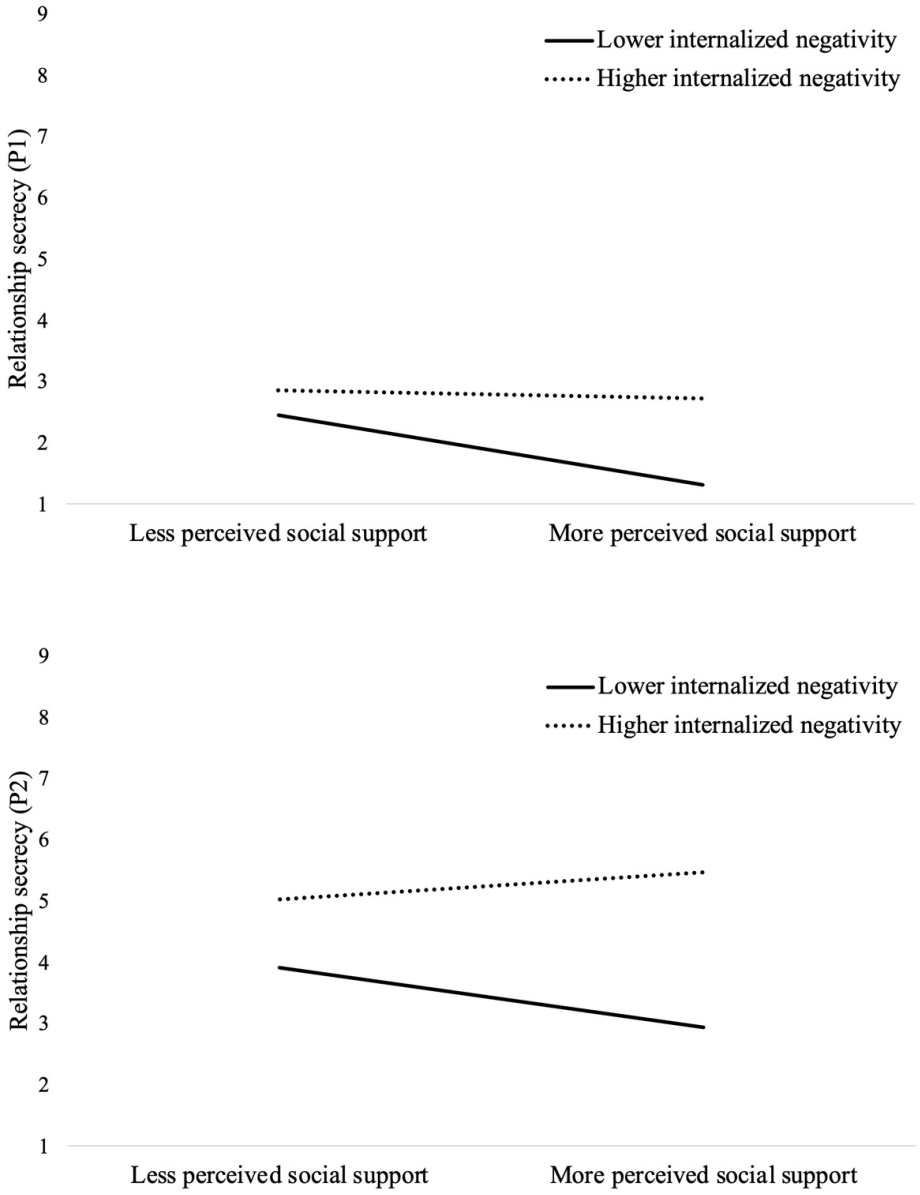
Simple Slopes for Acceptance of the Relationship with P1 (Upper) and P2 (Lower)



Note: P1 = Primary partner. P2 = Secondary partner.

Figure 4

Simple Slopes for Relationship Secrecy with P1 (Upper) and P2 (Lower)



Note: P1 = Primary partner. P2 = Secondary partner.

Supplementary Materials

Table S1

Descriptive Statistics According Relationship Structure

	Primary-Secondary	Co-Primary	Non-Primary
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Internalized negativity	2.43 (1.08)	2.48 (1.37)	1.87 (0.77)
Perceived social support	4.88 (1.36)	4.34 (1.53)	4.70 (1.34)
Relationship commitment (P1)	6.39 (1.19)	5.90 (1.48)	5.99 (1.48)
Disclosure to the close social circle	2.45 (0.83)	2.73 (0.73)	2.94 (0.82)
Disclosure to the extended social circle	1.64 (0.79)	2.09 (0.87)	2.03 (0.93)
Relationship acceptance (P1)	7.96 (1.85)	7.11 (2.32)	7.32 (1.91)
Relationship secrecy (P1)	2.03 (1.87)	2.83 (2.20)	2.46 (2.27)
Relationship acceptance (P2)	5.04 (2.12)	6.25 (2.18)	6.84 (1.97)
Relationship secrecy (P2)	5.08 (2.47)	4.17 (2.47)	3.16 (2.76)

Note: P1 = Primary partner. P2 = Secondary partner.

Table S2

Descriptive Statistics According Relationship Configuration

	Monogamous	Open relationship	Swinging	Solo polyamory	Polyamory
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Internalized negativity	3.98 (0.95)	2.60 (1.21)	2.39 (0.88)	2.15 (1.02)	1.88 (0.73)
Perceived social support	4.17 (1.43)	4.84 (1.46)	4.98 (1.29)	4.67 (1.34)	4.79 (1.39)
Relationship commitment (P1)	4.63 (1.69)	6.42 (1.14)	6.73 (0.72)	5.19 (1.61)	6.57 (0.94)
Disclosure to the close social circle	2.63 (0.75)	2.41 (0.80)	1.71 (0.72)	2.76 (0.69)	2.80 (0.79)
Disclosure to the extended social circle	2.33 (0.87)	1.64 (0.76)	1.32 (0.62)	1.83 (0.77)	1.85 (0.88)
Relationship acceptance (P1)	5.83 (2.42)	8.04 (1.70)	8.32 (2.04)	6.84 (2.01)	7.94 (1.70)
Relationship secrecy (P1)	3.32 (1.89)	2.01 (1.71)	1.40 (1.38)	3.73 (2.64)	2.03 (1.97)
Relationship acceptance (P2)	5.14 (2.13)	4.55 (1.95)	3.78 (2.64)	6.52 (1.98)	6.28 (2.13)
Relationship secrecy (P2)	4.47 (1.49)	5.52 (2.25)	5.73 (2.66)	3.98 (2.98)	3.98 (2.70)

Note: P1 = Primary partner. P2 = Secondary partner.