



Universidade do Minho
Escola de Psicologia

Tania Correia Perdigão

**Being the third person: personality,
infidelity and self esteem**

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Professora Doutora Joana Arantes

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Por estarem presentes em todos os momentos, sobretudo nos mais difíceis.

Mestrado Integrado em Psicologia da Universidade do Minho

Terceira pessoa: personalidade, infidelidade e auto-estima

Tania Correia Perdigão

Professora Doutora Joana Arantes

Resumo

Nas relações extraconjugais, a literatura tem-se concentrado maioritariamente no vínculo conjugal, e são escassos os estudos que se focam na terceira pessoa, ou seja, na pessoa com quem o infiel se envolve. Assim, o presente estudo tem como principal objetivo avaliar possíveis diferenças entre pessoas que são ou já foram a terceira pessoa e pessoas que nunca foram, nomeadamente ao nível da personalidade, das atitudes face à infidelidade e da autoestima. A nossa amostra consistiu em 743 participantes, 553 (74.4%) do sexo feminino e 190 (25.6%) do sexo masculino, com idades compreendidas entre os 18 e os 63 anos. Os resultados revelaram diferenças estatisticamente significativas entre os dois grupos. Mais especificamente, os indivíduos que são ou já foram a terceira pessoa relataram pontuações mais elevadas na dimensão extroversão e na dimensão abertura à experiência, e atitudes mais positivas face à infidelidade. Por outro lado, na dimensão amabilidade estes indivíduos apresentaram valores significativamente mais baixos. Não se obtiveram diferenças estatisticamente significativas no que diz respeito à autoestima.

Palavras-chave: Terceira pessoa; Personalidade; Atitudes face à infidelidade; auto-estima

Mestrado Integrado em Psicologia da Universidade do Minho

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Abstract

In extramarital affairs, the literature has focused mostly on the perpetrator of infidelity and the victim, and there are not many studies that focus on the third person, a person with whom the perpetrator gets involved. Thus, the main objective of this study is to evaluate possible differences between individuals who were or had been a third person in a relationship and individuals who have never been, namely in terms of their personality, attitudes towards infidelity and self-esteem. Our sample consisted of 743 participants, 553 (74.4%) females and 190 (25.6%) males, aged between 18 and 63 years. Results showed statistically significant differences between the two groups. More specifically, individuals who were or had been a third person reported higher levels of extroversion and openness to experience, and more positive attitudes towards infidelity. On the other hand, significantly lower values were found for these individuals in the agreeableness dimension. No statistically significant differences were found regarding the self-esteem.

Keywords: Third person; Personality; Attitudes toward infidelity; Self-esteem

Being the third person: personality, infidelity and self-esteem

Infidelity is significantly present in romantic relationships and has often severe impact on those involved (Costa & Cenci, 2014). It is important to mention that in an extramarital relationship there are three individuals involved, namely the perpetrator of infidelity, the victim and the person with whom the perpetrator gets involved with, designated in this study as the third person. Infidelity can have serious consequences, such as major disappointment, serious conflicts, domestic violence or the end of the relationship (Brand, Markey, Mills & Hodges, 2007; Daly & Wilson, 1988). In fact, in his study, Zare (2011) showed that 90% of divorces involve infidelity. In addition, infidelity is one of the most challenging reasons in therapies (Whisman et al., 1997).

In western culture, infidelity is considered by most people as immoral, unacceptable and an unethical behavior (Boekhout, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2003). Drigotas, Safstrom and Gentillia (1999) define infidelity as a serious relationship transgression in which one or both partners engage extramarital behaviors that violate the relational rules of monogamy and exclusivity without the prior consent of their partner. Blow and Harnett (2005) defined infidelity as a violation of the expectation of sexual exclusivity. On the other hand, Leal (2005) refers to infidelity as the breach of an implicit or explicit affective contract between partners during marriage or dating. Infidelity is currently defined as sexual or emotional behavior by an individual who is in an exclusive romantic relationship with someone other than the primary partner (Martins, Pereira, Andrade, & Dattilio, 2016).

Infidelity in Different Cultures

However, what constitutes an act of infidelity varies from culture to culture (Baroncelli, 2011). According to Gove and Umberson (1989), for the Inui people (Eskimos), the offering of the wife is an habit and a sign of hospitality, as women offering sex to visitors and foreigners is not considered an act of infidelity. In the cities of the central and southern coast of the Adriatic Sea, most men have a mistress, visiting them regularly (Gove & Umberson, 1989). For the Iozzi tribe of Africa, sexual intercourse has no association with infidelity (Gove & Umberson, 1989). In Nigeria, for the Kofyar people, if one of the dissatisfied spouses does not intend to divorce, they can arrange a lover, with whom they will live openly on their spouse's property (Gove & Umberson, 1989). Other studies have found that African-Americans and Hispanic

Americans are more likely to engage in infidelity than Caucasians (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Treas & Giesen, 2000).

Prevalence of Infidelity

A prevalence of infidelity has been an object of study, but there has not been much consensus at this level, which variates from 1.5% (Smith, 1991) to 75% (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). Much of the literature has revealed a significant number of individuals who reported having engaged in extradyadic behaviors at least once (Spanier & Margolis, 1983, Hansen 1987, Boekhout, Hendrick & Hendrick, 1999, Wiederman & Hurd, 1999; Feldman & Cauffman, 2000). Among serious authors, Greeley (1994) found that 11% of women and 21% of men had extramarital affairs with someone who is not their spouse during marriage; Wiederman and Hurd (1999) reported that infidelity is common in dating relationships in college students, as 49% of males and 31% of females reported that participated in sexual infidelity. More recently, Allen et. al., (2005) revealed that 22-25% of married men and 11-15% of married women have already engaged with someone sexually, other than their husband/wife. In another incidence report, the same author revealed that in American couples, the prevalence of infidelity was 70% (Allen & Baucom, 2006).

Gender Differences in Infidelity

Most of the research indicates that men have more extramarital sex partners (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Spanier & Margolis, 1983; Wiggin & Lederer, 1984), more permissive attitudes toward infidelity (Lieberman, 1988; Thompson, 1984), are less likely to fall in love with an extramarital partner (Glass & Wright, 1985), have a strong desire to engage in sexual behavior with a person other than their spouse (Prins et al., 1993; Wiederman & Hurdd, 1999), are more prone to sexual infidelity (Allen & Baucom, 2004; Atkins, Baucom & Jacobson, 2001) cite more sexual motivations for infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005), including long-term and/or overnight relationships (Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges, 2007). On the other hand, women tend to have a greater emotional connection with the extramarital partner (Spanier & Margolis, 1983) and have indicated greater intimacy and self-esteem as motivations for infidelity (Taspelas, Fisher, & Aron, 2010).

According to a study with heterosexual American couples, 20-40% of men and 20-25% of women will have at least one affair in their lifetime (Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007).

In contrast, there seems to be no coherence in the literature on age differences in infidelity. For example, according to Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson (2001); Choi et al., (1994); Laumann et al., (1994), there are gender differences but infidelity rates are becoming increasingly similar, particularly in young people, and in more developed countries. On the other hand, Leigh, Temple, e Trocki (1993); Treas e Giesen (2000); Wiederman, (1997) did not find gender differences in infidelity between men and women with less than 40 years of age. This decrease in gender differences can be interpreted by the increasing economic and reproductive independence of women (Fisher, 1999).

Men who have been victims of betrayal tend to respond with more distress to sexual infidelity than men who have never been betrayed; yet, in the case of women, involvement in an experience as perpetrator of betrayal in a past romantic relationship causes them to respond more distressed to current sexual infidelity (Sagarina, Beckerb, Guadagnob, Nicastleb, & Millevoi, 2003).

Personality and Infidelity

The literature has shown that there is a relationship between the Big Five model of personality and infidelity. Unfaithful individuals tend to be more extroverted (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987; Orzeck & Lung, 2005), and present higher levels of neuroticism (Judge et al., 1995; Orzeck & Lung, 2005; Whisman et al., 2007). Schmitt (2004) also pointed out that high levels of infidelity are related to low levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness. A meta-analysis of 45 studies examining the personality factors underlying sexual risk behavior found a high correlation between agreeableness and high conscientiousness for low sexual risk behaviors (Hoyle et al., 2000), as individuals with high levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness are more prone to the exclusiveness of the relationship, which means they are less likely to be unfaithful.

Shacklford, Besser and Goetz (2008) found that low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness, as are related to traits such as impulsivity or resistance to reinforcement and being these strong predictors of infidelity (Schmitt, 2004) lead to less satisfaction in marriage, increasing the chance of infidelity behavior. In addition, when both partners have similar degrees of agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness, they are more likely to be unfaithful (Drigotas et al., 1999; Orzeck & Lung, 2005).

Attitudes Towards Infidelity

Permissive attitudes toward infidelity are predictors of extramarital behaviors (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007). Research has shown that, in general, people who have already been sexually unfaithful, tend to approve more this type of behavior (Solstad & Mucic, 1999). For example, 90% of American wives who have ever been involved in some form of infidelity have reported that there were situations in which such behavior may be justified (Glass & Wright, 1992).

Widmer and colleagues (1998) conducted a study on attitudes toward infidelity in 24 different countries. In general, participants disagreed with extramarital sex, but in some countries, particularly in Russia, Bulgaria and Czech Republic, participants were more tolerant. Interestingly, in Japan, despite opposing this type of behavior, women reported to be more open to engage sexually with a partner other than their spouse, while American women were more tolerant, but did not accept engaging extramarital relationships (Maykovich, 1976).

Self Esteem

Self-esteem has also been linked to infidelity and is considered a predictor of extramarital behaviors (Eaves & Robertson-Smith, 2007). Sheppard (1995) reports that low self-esteem may be a reason for an individual to engage in extramarital behaviors (Glass & Wright, 1992). However, Eaves and Robertson-Smith (2007) found only differences in males, as men who engage in extramarital behaviors have low self-esteem, compared to men who have never been involved in that kind of situations. Thus, self-esteem seems to play an important role in loving relationships, both in satisfaction or in behaviors that can be harmful.

The Third Person in a Relationship

The literature has focused mostly on the perpetrator of infidelity and the victim and studies that focus on the third person are scarce. In addition, these studies have only analyzed women that were the third person in a relationship, excluding men. For example, Yeniçeri and Kokdemir (2006) found that both men and women attributed the act of infidelity to the third person, as they believe that the reasons why their partners had been unfaithful did not depend on their partner characteristics, but rather on an external agent.

In a study by Schmitt and Buss (2001), with an American group where individuals were single, 60% of men and 53% of women admitted that they had already attempted to attract a committed individual so that they could have a serious relationship with that person. The third person, when female, is stereotyped as a

seductress, who uses sex to destroy marriages (Richardson, 1985; Sands, 1978), and as a woman who is financially supported by men (Herman, 2005), looking for involvement that does not interfere with her life goals (Richardson, 1979). On the other hand, the third person distance herself/himself from stereotypes, developing strategies to coexist in a love triangle. The third person will develop feelings that do not lower them, raising their self-concept, feeling superior in comparison to other women; allowing the pleasure of having someone who meets their personal and sexual needs; and accepting to participate in a love triangle that lead to personal growth (Utley, 2016).

According to Richardson (1979), the female third person can adopt a submissive or dominant style. The submissive style exists when a woman performs entirely the stereotypes of the role woman. More specifically, she spends much of her time waiting for the married man and feels extreme gratitude for any contact. In this case, the married partner has full control over the system of rewards and punishments within the relationship. The dominant style exists when a woman seeks low-level intellectual, financial, and/or emotional involvement that does not interfere with her primary life goals. In this later case, they view their relationships instrumentally and act with independence, assertiveness, and mastery.

It is therefore of utmost importance to study personality, attitudes towards infidelity and self-esteem of the third person of both genders, to fully understand infidelity. In conclusion, the studies reported to the third person only as being female.

Current study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate possible differences between individuals who were or had been the third person and individuals who have never been the third person. More specifically, we pretend to investigate possible differences in terms of personality, attitudes towards infidelity and self-esteem. In addition, it was intended to evaluate differences between men and women.

Based on the objective and existing literature, the following hypotheses were formulated: H₁: Individuals who were or had been the third person will have lower scores of agreeableness, compared to those who has never been the third person; H₂: Individuals who were or had been the third person presents higher scores of openness to experience; H₃: Individuals who were or had been the third person present higher scores of extroversion; H₄: Individuals who were or had been the third person will show lower scores of conscientiousness; H₅: Individuals who were or had been the third person will presents higher scores of neuroticism; H₆: Individuals who were or had been the third

person will display more positive attitudes towards infidelity; H₇: Individuals who were or had been the third person will present lower levels of self-esteem.

It should be noted that this study brings an innovative concept in the field of relationship research, once it looks at personality and the attitudes towards infidelity of the third person. Thus, the present study assumes a pioneering character and aims to contribute to the enrichment of knowledge in this area and to the implementation of programs of a social nature that sensitize to the importance of this theme and the processes underlying the infidelity.

Method Participants

Initially the sample consisted of 1249 participants, but 506 were then eliminated because they did not answer to at least 30% of the questionnaire. Therefore, the final sample was composed of 743 participants, 553 females and 190 males. Participants were aged between 18 and 63 years, with a mean age of 25.45 (SD = 8.45).

Regarding sexual orientation, 679 (91.4%) were heterosexual, 24 (3.2%) homosexual, 35 (4.7%) bisexual and 5 (0.7%) referred to their sexual orientation as pansexual or demisexual. Most of the participants were currently in a relationship ($n = 476$; 64.1%).

Regarding marital status, 614 (82.6%) were single, 99 (13.3%) married / consensual union, 29 (3.9%) divorced and 1 (.1%) widowed.

Two hundred and forty-six participants (33.1%) were or had been involved with someone who had a primary partner, where 497 (66.9%) had never been the third person in a relationship. Of the participants who answered affirmatively, 181 (73.6%) mentioned that when they got involved with that person, they already knew he/she had a partner, while 65 (26.4%) were initially unaware. Those that were initially unaware when they discovered that the person they got involved had a primary partner, 25 (38.5%) continued their relationship, 29 (44.6%) ended the relationship.

Of the 246 participants who were or had been the third person in a relationship, 37 (15.0%) are still involved in that relationship, 25 (10.2%) ended it less than 6 months ago, 27 (11.0%) ended it 6 - 12 months ago, 22 (8.9%) ended it 12 - 24 months ago and 135 (54.9%) ended it more than 2 years ago.

Measures

Sociodemographic data and relational information. Participants answered sociodemographic questions (e.g., age, marital status, gender, sexual orientation) and relational information. Regarding the latest, the participants were evaluated with the

following questions: a) "Have you ever been/are involved with someone who has/had a partner/spouse?"; b) "When you got involved with this person did you already know that he/she had a partner/spouse?"; c) "What did you do when you discovered that this person had someone?" and d) "How long ago did your involvement with this person end?". Additionally, participants were asked in questions (b), (c) and (d) to think about the most important person they have ever been engaged that had a partner/spouse.

Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS). This scale was developed by Whatley (2008), and later translated and validated to Portuguese by Silva, Saraiva, Albuquerque and Arantes (in press). It is a self-assessment scale that evaluates attitudes and beliefs regarding infidelity. Participants respond to 12 items, some of them portraying positive and some negative attitudes towards infidelity (e.g., "It is natural for people to be unfaithful and infidelity in a marital relationship is grounds for divorce. Therefore, some of the items (2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12) are reversed. Items are rated on a scale from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 7 "Strongly Agree". The total score varies between 12 and 84, and higher scores are associated with more positive attitudes towards infidelity. The scale shows good reliability ($\alpha = 0.80$) (Whatley, 2008).

Five-Factor Personality Inventory (NEO-FFI) This scale was developed by McCrae and Costa (1985), and the reduced version of NEO PI-R by Costa and McCrae, (1992). It was then translated and validates to Portuguese by Lima and Simões (2000). It consists of 60 items, 12 for each dimension, which the subject must evaluate on a Lickert scale of 5 points, from 1, "Strongly Disagree" to 5, "Strongly Agree". The NEO-FFI promotes the understanding of personality measures that are distinguished in the five main domains: Openness (O) that corresponds to the items 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38, 43, 48, 53 and 58; Conscientiousness (C) that corresponds to the items 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55 and 60; Extroversion (E) corresponding to the items 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37, 42, 47, 52 and 57; Agreeableness (A) corresponding to the items 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39, 44, 49, 54 and 59; and Neuroticism (N), which corresponds to the items: 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51 and 56. The NEO-FFI scale reveals good levels of internal consistency presenting a Cronbach's alpha that varies according to its dimensions: .74 a .89 in the original American sample, and .56 to .81, in the Portuguese sample (Lima & Simões, 2000).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). This scale was developed by Rosenberg (1965) and translated and validated to Portuguese by Santos and Maia (1999). It consists of ten items that relate to feelings of self-respect and self-acceptance. Half of

the items were formulated positively (e.g., “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”) and the other half negatively (e.g., “I feel I do not have much to be proud of”). Subjects were asked to select the answer that best characterizes each item, on a *Likert Scale* with four response alternatives, from 1 "Strongly Disagree", to 4, "Strongly Agree". The total score varies between 10 and 40. According to Santos and Maia (2003), a high score, that is, a high self-esteem, indicates that individuals consider themselves worthy people, respectful of themselves for who they are and did not necessarily feel superior to others. By contrast, a low score, that is, a low self-esteem, translates devaluation, dissatisfaction and lack of respect towards themselves. The psychometric characteristics of the RSES revealed good levels of internal consistence, with α between 0.77 and 0.88 in the original sample (Rosenberg, 1965), and α between 0.86 and 0.92 in the Portuguese validation (Santos & Maia, 2003).

Procedure

The study was first approved by the Ethics Subcommittee to Social and Human Sciences (SECSH). The questionnaires were then made available and participants responses were recorded anonymously on an internet webpage using Qualtrics software, Version 2013 of the Qualtrics Research Suite (www.qualtrics.com). Demographic questions were presented first, followed by the ATIS, NEO-FFI and RSES in counterbalanced order.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected, it was placed in *Excel*® and later imported into *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS; version 23.0), with the aim of studying possible differences between those that were or had been the third person in a relationship and those that had never been, namely in terms of personality traits, attitudes towards infidelity and self-esteem.

In order to analyze this, as well as possible sex differences, *t-tests* for independent samples were performed. In addition, correlational analyses were conducted to evaluate the associations among variables. The same *t-tests* were performed too analyze differences between genders.

Results

Differences between participants who were or had been the third person and participants who never were the third person

In order to analyze possible differences between participants who were or had been the third person and participants who had never been, *t-tests* for independent samples were performed.

Statistically significant differences between both groups were found at the following dimensions: extroversion, $t(682) = 2.08, p = .04$, openness, $t(682) = 2.36, p = .02$ and agreeableness $t(682) = -3.01, p = .003$. By one hand, participants who were or had been the third person reported higher values in the extraversion dimensions ($M_E = 3.45; DP_E = .51$), and openness ($M_O = 3.51; DP_O = .52$), in comparison to the participants who had never been the third person $M_E = 3.36; DP_E = .52$.

In the other hand, participants who were or had been the third person reported lower values in the dimension of agreeableness ($M_A = 3.51; DP_A = .52$) when compared to participants who had never been the third person ($M_A = 3.63; DP_A = .46$).

No statistically significant differences were obtained between participants who were or had been the third person and those who had not at the level of dimensions neuroticism $t(682) = -.94, p = .35$ and conscientiousness $t(682) = -1.37, p = .17$.

Regarding attitudes towards infidelity, results revealed significant differences among the participants, $t(722) = 6.55, p < .001$. Individuals who were or had been the third person reported greater acceptance of unfaithful behavior ($M_{ATIS} = 2.38; DP_{ATIS} = .88$), than those who had never been the third person ($M_{ATIS} = 1.97; DP_{ATIS} = 0.73$).

There were also significant differences between groups, in terms of age $t(573) = 6.41, p < .001$. Participants who were or had been the third person tended to be older, ($M_{age} = 28.71; DP_{age} = 10.11$), than participants who never were the third person ($M_{age} = 23.99; DP_{age} = 7.14$).

Finally, a *t-test* for independent samples revealed no significant differences between the groups on the self-esteem level reported by the participants, $t(722) = -.03, p = .98$.

Differences between men and women

T-tests for independent samples were performed in order to analyze possible differences between men and women, namely regarding age, personality, attitudes towards infidelity and self-esteem.

Statistically significant differences were found at the level of neuroticism $t(682) = -5.01, p < .001$, agreeableness $t(682) = -4.60, p < .001$ and conscientiousness $t(682) = -3.88, p < .001$. Women reported higher values in the dimensions of neuroticism ($M_N = 3.20, DP_N = .69$), agreeableness ($M_A = 3.64, DP_A = .49$) and conscientiousness ($M_C = 3.79, DP_C = .53$), compared to men ($M_N = 2.90, DP_N = .67$; $M_A = 3.45, DP_A = .45$; $M_C = 3.60, DP_C = .61$).

However, there are no significant differences between men and women at the level of extraversion, $t(682) = -.45, p = .65$ and openness, $t(682) = .21, p = .83$.

Regarding attitudes towards infidelity, statistically significant differences were found between males and females $t(722) = 7.04, p < .001$. Men reported more positive attitudes towards infidelity ($M_{ATIS} = 2.45; DP_{ATIS} = .90$), than women ($M_{ATIS} = 1.98; DP_{ATIS} = .74$)

A *t-test* for independent samples revealed no significant differences between men and women regarding their self-esteem, $t(722) = .39, p = .69$.

Correlational Analysis: Age, Personality Dimensions (Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Kindness and Conscientiousness), Attitudes to Infidelity and Self-Esteem

The results from Pearson's correlations showed a significant positive correlation between age and the following variables: openness to experience, $r = .11, p = .01$, agreeableness, $r = .11, p < .01$, conscientiousness, $r = .11, p = .11$, attitudes towards infidelity, $r = .31, p < .001$ and self-esteem, $r = .21, p < .001$. On the other hand, results showed a significant negative correlation between age and neuroticism $r = -.1, p < .001$. Thus, older participants tend to have higher scores in the dimensions of openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness, and tend to score lower in the dimension neuroticism. They also tend to show greater acceptance of infidelity behaviors and higher self-esteem.

Regarding openness to experience, a significant positive relationship was found between this variable and conscientiousness, $r = .31, p < .001$, extraversion, $r = .29, p < .001$, agreeableness, $r = .18, p < .001$; self-esteem, $r = .11, p < .003$ and attitudes towards infidelity, $r = .11, p < .003$. This means that participants who reported higher scores in openness also tended to score higher in the dimensions of conscientiousness, extraversion and extraversion, and reported greater acceptance of unfaithful behaviors and higher self-esteem.

Results also showed a significant positive correlation between conscientiousness and the following variables: extroversion, $r = .35, p < .001$, agreeableness, $r = .31, p < .001$ and self-esteem $r = .50, p < .001$. Conversely, there is a significant negative correlation between conscientiousness and neuroticism, $r = -.36, p < .001$, as well as between conscientiousness and attitudes toward infidelity, $r = -.18, p < .001$.

Participants with higher scores in the conscientiousness dimension were participants who scored higher on extroversion, agreeableness and self-esteem, and who scored lower on neuroticism. Also, participants with higher scores in the extraversion dimension were participants who scored higher on openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness, and who reported higher self-esteem and a lower acceptance of infidelity behaviors.

Results also showed a significant positive correlation between the extroversion and the agreeableness, $r = .29, p < .001$, extraversion and self-esteem, $r = .51, p < .001$ and a significant negative correlation between extraversion and neuroticism, $r = -.47, p < .001$. So, participants with higher scores in the extraversion dimension were participants who scored higher on agreeableness and lower on neuroticism, and who reported higher self-esteem.

There was also a significant positive correlation between the dimension of agreeableness and self-esteem, $r = .25, p < .001$. On the other hand, there was a negative correlation between agreeableness and neuroticism, $r = -.22, p < .001$ and between agreeableness and attitudes towards infidelity, $r = -.17, p < .001$. Thus, participants who scored higher in the agreeableness dimension also reported a higher self-esteem, scored lower on the neuroticism dimension and showed a lower acceptance of infidelity behaviors.

A significant negative correlation was identified between the neuroticism dimension and self-esteem, $r = -.74, p < .001$. In this way, participants who scored lower in the neuroticism dimension were the ones that had a higher self-esteem.

Finally, there was a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and attitudes toward infidelity, $r = -.09, p = .02$. Participants who reportedly have lower self-esteem revealed greater acceptance of infidelity behaviors. (Table 1)

Table 1

*Correlation between age, dimensions of Personality (extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness), attitudes toward infidelity and self-esteem (n = 743). Note: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	-							
2. N	-.214**	-						
3. E	-.060	-.465**	-					
4. O	.109*	-.071	.162**	-				
5. A	.127**	-.221**	.293**	.180**	-			
6. C	.108*	-.361**	.351**	.156**	.307**	-		
7. SE	.210**	-.739**	.512**	.115**	.253**	.498**	-	
8. ATIS	.307**	-.064	-.071	.114**	-.166**	-.183**	-.086*	-

Discussion

The present study had as main objective the investigation of the differences between personality, attitudes towards infidelity and self-esteem of people who are already with a third person. Regarding personality, the data demonstrates that people who are or were already the third person have reported lower scores in the dimension of agreeableness. This result is consistent with the first hypothesis of our study where it was expected that the third person would present lower scores in the agreeableness dimension, compared to people who never were. Passos and Laros (2014), reveal that higher scores in this dimension indicate the possibility that a person has to build pleasant and harmonious relationships. Thus, on the assumption that extramarital relationships are generally considered unacceptable and unethical behaviors (Boekhout, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2003), those are not cordial, demonstrating on the part of the perpetrator (Schmitt, 2004), victim (Shackelford, Besser, & Goetz, 2008), and the third person, a tendency to report lower scores in the dimension of agreeableness. Another possible explanation for this result is that this dimension is significantly related to sexual satisfaction. Costa et al., (1992); Heaven, Ciarrochi, and Leeson (2009); and McNulty and Widman (2013) found a positive relationship between the dimension of agreeableness and sexual satisfaction. Although the sexual satisfaction of the

participants was not analyzed in this study, it was expected that the third person, given that has significantly lower levels in this dimension, may be more likely to try to find a partner that satisfies on a sexual level. Another fact that may explain this result is that people with high levels in this dimension have a greater ability to regulate emotions during interpersonal conflicts (Eisenberg, 2006). Thus, the third person may have difficulty solving this interpersonal conflict (being involved with a person who is already in a relationship with another person). Likewise, people with low levels of agreeableness, such as the third person, are easily suspicious of and indifferent to others (McCrae & John, 1992). Therefore, given the difficulty of the third person in trusting people, he/she may choose not to engage in a serious relationship, and given his indifference to others, cannot empathize with the victim.

In the second hypothesis presented, it was expected that whoever is or was already been the third person presented higher scores in the dimension of openness to experience, compared to people who never were. The results of this study showed significant differences in this dimension, as people who are or were already been third person presented higher scores in openness to experience, compared to the other group. This result is consistent with some research in literature. For example, according to McCrae and Sutin (2009), people with higher scores in this dimension are more curious and more liberal. Thus, the third person, since he/she reports higher levels in the openness dimension to experience, can facilitate his/her involvement in sexual and emotional behaviors with a committed partner. Another explanation for the result obtained in this dimension may be that even the third person knowing that the behavior of engaging with someone who is already in a relationship is immoral and unethical (Boekhout, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2003). However, the third person is more likely to incur in this type of behavior, because according to Palma (2012); Silva et al., (2007), people with high scores in the openness to experience dimension reveal a greater capacity for risk. From another point of view, cognitively, people with high levels of openness to experience, such as the third person, have an interest in a wider range of experiences (McCrae & Costa 1997) and can more easily deal with the implications of being involved in a love triangle.

Another hypothesis on which it is elaborated is that the third person presents high scores in the extraversion dimension, comparatively to the person who never were. The results showed significant differences between someone who is or were already been the third person and who has never been, meaning the first ones presented higher

scores in this dimension. Palma (2012) defends this result, emphasizing that the subjects with a high classification in this factor tend to be more sociable, as the more extroverted a person is, the more likely to have a wider circle of friends, increasing the probability of encounter an individual who may present a motivation for involvement in an extramarital affair. Other authors, Widiger and Costa (1994); Lima and Simões (2000) corroborate this result, since they argue that people whose tendency is to score higher in this dimension tend to seek more stimulation and the company of others. By contrast, no significant differences were found in the neuroticism dimension, not corroborating the hypothesis that who is or were already been the third person had higher scores in the dimension neuroticism, compared to the other group. This dimension is associated with the feeling of stress and a negative self-concept (Palma, 2012). According to Whisman et al. (2007), individuals who have already been infidel have higher levels in the neuroticism dimension, which reflects feelings of stress toward involvement with a third person. Thus, it was expected that an individual who is or were already been the third person presented high scores in this dimension, since this is not an acceptable behavior (Boekhout, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2003), and if discovered, could cause high levels of stress. In contrast, as mentioned before, no significant differences were found, and a possible explanation can be found in Vieira's (2014) studies, which affirm that people who report high scores in the neuroticism dimension tend to manifest more feelings of guilt by the possibility of being cheated on. Thus, since the third person does not have an established commitment with any of the involved, nor an exclusive relationship with the partner, it may not exhibit the same self-deprecating feelings as the individuals who are or already were betrayed.

Finally, with respect to the dimension of personality, it was expected that who is or who were already the third person, would present lower scores in the conscientiousness dimension, compared to people who never were. This hypothesis was formulated considering various studies such as Hoyle et al. (2000), who reported that individuals with low levels of conscientiousness are more prone to the exclusiveness of the relationship, as it was expected that the third person, not belonging to an exclusive relationship, would have lower scores in this dimension. In addition, other authors have shown that people with low scores in this dimension are careless (Lima & Simões, 2000; Burger, 2008), less responsible and more relaxed (Silva et al., 2007). This hypothesis was expected because the third person belonging to this "triangle", even without any commitment to those involved, is less responsible, careless and more

relaxed about the implications of this kind of relationship. However, this hypothesis has been disproved. A possible explanation for this phenomenon can be achieved after a reflection on the instrument used to measure these dimensions (NEO-FFI). This instrument does not focus exclusively on the affective dimension, which implies that the third person can be conscientious, for example, in the professional field (Costa and McCrae, 2007). Another possible explanation is the definition of the conscientious dimension, which refers to individuals with high levels of conscientiousness, that focus on actions that contribute to the fulfillment of life goals (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmon, & Meints, 2009). Thus, the third person may have the intention of becoming sexually involved with another individual who is already in a relationship, and this may be their goal - being in a relationship without any commitment.

The results of this study revealed that people who are or were already been the third person tend to have more permissive attitudes towards infidelity, compared to who was never third person, corroborating hypothesis 6 of this study. These results are consistent with the study by McAnulty and Brineman (2007), who report that permissive attitudes toward infidelity are predictors of extradyadic behaviors. Thus, the third person, even though not the perpetrator of betrayal, presents more permissive attitudes toward infidelity. Results from another study by Whatley (2008) are also consistent, which refers that individuals with more positive attitudes towards infidelity are more likely to participate in unfaithfulness, and these individuals may be considered as the third person in this study.

Finally, the last hypothesis on this study is that whoever is or who were already the third person, had lower self-esteem, compared to people who were never the third person. This hypothesis was presented due to the fact that according to the literature, self-esteem is considered a predictor for extradyadic behaviors (Eaves & Robertson-Smith, 2007; Glass & Wright, 1992). Thus, it was expected that the third person also had lower levels of self-esteem.

However, there were no significant differences at this level. In fact, according to the results of the study conducted by Sheppard, Nelso, and Andreoli-mathie (1995), individuals who did not engage in infidelity behaviors revealed a higher self-esteem.

In this study, it was found that 33% of people are or were already been the third person. These results are consistent to infidelity rates in Portugal. Barros, Oliveira, and Arantes (in press), reported that approximately 30% of the inquired people were already been involved in an extramarital relationship. Since in order to have a betrayal, three

individuals are involved - the perpetrator, the victim and the third person – these are consistent results.

Limitations and Future Research

As already mentioned, the first limitation was the lack of literature that focus on the third person.

The second limitation was due to the fact that the results of this study are correlational, one cannot infer a casual relation and consequently it is not possible to make strong inferences. It is possible for the third person either to score higher on the extroversion and openness to experience dimensions, and lower on the agreeableness dimension, or it is possible that people who have scores similar to those described above, are or were already been the third person. Thus, it is extremely important to carry out, in the future, a longitudinal study in order to understand the causal relationship.

Another limitation is that the mean age of participants in this study is 25.45 years. It would be interesting to investigate if the same pattern of results would be obtained with a sample with older inquiries.

The fourth limitation of this study is due to the similarity of most self-report instruments, and despite the good psychometric qualities that were reported in the method, self-report scales are not free of limitations. There is also a difficulty in accessing intimate subjects, since participants may not feel comfortable in what refers to personal matters and there is no guarantee that they will respond in a true way (MacDonald Jr. et al., 1972).

Another limitation points to the Five-Factor Personality Inventory (NEO-FFI), which measures the five personality dimensions, not focusing only on the affective plane (Costa & McCrae, 2007).

Based on the above limitations, some recommendations were made for future studies in this area of research. It would be interesting to extend this study to "third-age" people at intervals, in order to explore other types of situations relevant to this area of research, such as identifying differences in the third person, with different age groups, level of personality, attitudes towards infidelity and self-esteem. The results of this study revealed that older individuals report more permissive attitudes towards infidelity, and this result may be due to the fact that older individuals are more likely to have more relational experience, and consequently to have more extramarital experiences.

Another interesting study would be to analyze the same variables studied in this research, distinguishing between the types of third persons: submissive or dominant (Richardson, 1979).

Conclusions and Implications

The present study assumed an innovative role and contributed to the enrichment of knowledge in this area, because this is the first study that focuses on the third person. One possible suggestion is the implementation of social programs that sensitize the importance of this theme and the processes underlying infidelity. Another implication of this study is linked to the clinical area and possible intervention in individuals who were or had been the third person. Once the knowledge of some of the personality traits associated with these behaviors allows a better understanding of the perception, cognitions and difficulties of being the third person. For example, one of the dimension in which the third person got low scores it was the agreeableness, so it seems important to explore this aspect in way to increase agreeableness.

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