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Self-disclosure of affairs through online support groups:

The case of the “other” partner

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The ubiquitous presence of Internet has transformed interpersonal relationships, contributing to the creation of new forms of social interaction and new means of public presence. This is reflected in the appeal of online spaces, such as support groups, where members narrate about experiences of intimate relationships. Based on the notion of “media multiplexity” of contemporary relationships, the aim of the present study was to examine how individuals -who have been engaged in extradyadic relationships, being in the position of the “third person”- narrate about their experiences through self-disclosure in online support groups. The study analyzed the content of 35 posts, published during 3 months in a popular online support group about romantic relationships. The themes that emerged-through thematic analysis- were classified into the following categories: (a) The wounded self, (b) Ambivalence toward approach/avoidance of the relationship, (c) The relationship as a “holding” environment, (d) The desire for exclusivity and (e) Lessons learned. The narratives in this group reveal that the “third person” is motivated by the desire to satisfy needs, linked to any form of romantic relationships. However, what differentiates the present relationships is the lack of social acceptance, the

unpredictable course of these relationships and the absence of commitment, creating a complex relational environment. The results highlight that the meaning making processes and the attempt to re-negotiate unpleasant situations are relational processes that are often refined and fortified through online channels.