

SEX AND THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF SHORT-TERM MATE POACHING ACTS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Schmitt and Buss (2001) investigated acts that would be used in a mate poach. However, during their first phase of research, they failed to ask their participants to nominate acts in a short-term mate poaching context. This current study set out to discover the actions men use during short-term mate poaching and the effectiveness of these actions. Study 1 asked heterosexual men (N = 39) to nominate actions they would use for a short-term mate poach. Men were expected to nominate actions that display emotional support, caring, emotional stability, and dominance. Study 2 (N = 448) investigated which acts were perceived as most effective by both men and women. The five acts that were nominated as most effective were acts that signaled emotional commitment and altruism.

Keywords: *act nomination, mating strategy, error management theory, short-term mate poaching, tactics*

INTRODUCTION

Cuckoldry occurs when a woman becomes impregnated by a man who is not her current long-term partner, but informs her current long-term partner that the offspring is genetically his. This results in the male investing in an offspring that is not genetically his (Platak & Shackelford, 2006). Investing in a child that is not genetically related to him inflicts an evolutionary cost, because the man is wasting time and resources on an individual who will not pass the man's genes into the next generation (Birkhead & Møller, 1998).

A meta-analysis based on 32 studies of paternity certainty, found that 3.1% of children are being reared by a father that is not genetically related to them (Voracek, Haubner, & Fisher, 2008). Another meta-analysis that included 67 studies, found that 29% of men state they have low paternity confidence, while only 1.7% of men reported having high

paternity certainty for their offspring (Anderson, 2006). Due to this uncertainty and the high cost risks of investing in a child that is not genetically their own, men had to solve this problem by creating anti-cuckoldry tactics via mate retention and mate guarding.

Mate retention consists of behaviors that are used to protect the individual's status, reputation, and resources (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997). Mate retention tactics are more frequent when men believe they are at a higher risk of being cheated on. These behaviors range from portraying commitment, such as: providing resources, or asking to get married, to partner violence. Studies show that when men are separated from their partner they will use more mate retention tactics and will perform more semen displacement behaviors (Goetz et al., 2005). These tactics seek to prevent the woman from coming into contact with other men, the sperm of other men, or potential mate poachers.

Another anti-cuckoldry strategy that is used is mate guarding. Men mate guard their partners in different ways. One extreme way is by sequestering the mate, and not allowing her to go to events where other men will be present, or spending all of each other's free time together. Less extreme ways of mate guarding include using "tie signs," such as handholding and wearing wedding rings. The use of "tie signs" portrays closeness, and gives cues to others that neither partner in the relationship is single, which is one way that men can protect their relationships from mate poachers (Buss, 2002). Further evidence suggests that men guard their mates in order to ensure they do not cheat on them, especially during the follicular phase of the woman's ovulatory cycle, because it is during the follicular phase that women are most fertile and the chance of pregnancy is highest (Gangestad, Thornhill, & Garver, 2002). Therefore, men will mate guard their partners most during the follicular phase, so that his partner will not be impregnated by another man, resulting in cuckoldry. Also, when men are away from their partners for long periods of time, they will find their partners more attractive, believe other men will find their partners more attractive, and report a greater interest in having sex with their partner (Shackelford, LeBlanc, Weekes-Shackelford, Bleske-Rechek, Euler, & Hoier, 2002). Mate retention behaviors and a greater desire to have coitus with a partner are just a few examples of how a man in a committed long-term relationship reacts in order to ensure that the child he is raising is genetically his offspring and not a mate poacher's child.

Mate Poaching

Mate poaching is a set of behaviors intended to attract an already mated individual away from their mated partner (Schmitt & Buss, 2001). Davies, Shackelford, and Hass (2007) discovered that about 30% of college aged men and women reported have tried to mate poach. A cross-cultural investigation conducted by the International Sexuality Description Project, using data from 53 nations, researchers representing six continents, 13 islands, and 28 languages, found that mate poaching exists throughout several societies (Schmitt, 2004).

Mate poaching occurs because it is beneficial. Research suggests that both men and women benefit from attempts to mate poach and these individuals end up having more partners as a result (Arnocky, Sunderani, & Vaillancourt, 2013). However, both men and

women perceive the potential costs of mate poaching as outweighing the benefits (Davies, Shackelford, & Hass, 2010).

Mate poaching involves a complex set of behaviors, because if someone was interested in poaching a couple, they need to consider several factors about the targeted couple. For example, the relationship duration of the couple has an effect on poaching decisions. Research suggests that mate poachers who target couples who are in highly committed, long-term relationships will be less successful compared to mate poachers who target relationships that have just formed (Schmitt & Buss, 2001). When participants are asked to imagine being a target of a mate poach, they report being more resistant if they are in a scenario where they are married, and when they are in long-term relationships they report wanting a mate poacher who possesses greater qualities like wealth and attractiveness (Davies & Shackelford, 2015, 2017).

Besides examining the length of the couple's relationship duration, mate poachers may also tend to their own relationship with the targeted couple. For example, mate poachers can also exploit same-sex friendships (Bleske & Shackelford, 2001) and opposite-sex friendships (Mogilski & Wade, 2013) as a way to gain potential mates. Specifically, participants perceive being in opposite-sex friendship as a successful strategy for mate poaching (Mogilski & Wade, 2013). But, these strategies can be costly. The same-sex friendship situation can cause mate rivalry to form and ultimately lead to friendship dissolution (Bleske & Shackelford, 2001). The opposite-sex friendship strategy can also be costly as the use of this strategy leads to reputational damage for the poacher (Mogilski & Wade, 2013). Poaching also has costs for the partner of the poached individual.

Men whose partners are poached are at risk of resource depletion, increased risk of disease, and the risk of cuckoldry, or raising a child that is not genetically theirs (Schmitt & Buss, 2001). Nevertheless, poaching can be an adaptive strategy, in that it can lead to partner acquisition. This current project sets out to further understand short-term mate poaching behaviors.

PRESENT STUDY

The current purpose of this study is to examine and discover a catalog of behaviors that heterosexual men use to poach an already mated woman for a one-time sexual experience. There are very few studies that have investigated short-term poaching, and several of these investigations have focused on attempts to acquire a long-term partner (Schmitt & Buss, 2001; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2003; Davies et al., 2007; Kardum, Hudek-Knezevic, Schmitt, & Grundler, 2015). Since individuals also desire to form short-term relationships, mate poaching should also occur for short-term partner acquisition, and there should be effective tactics associated with that. The current research sought to ascertain the tactics commonly used for short-term mate poaching and which of said tactics are perceived as being most effective. Two studies were conducted which involved an act nomination methodology. Act nomination methodology includes two studies. In the first study, participants are asked to report specific behaviors that they have done, someone of their same sex has done, or someone of their same sex would do. Then researchers compile the acts into a smaller list, which is then presented to another group of participants in a second study. Typically, only acts

that received three or more nominations from study 1 are included in this second phase of the research. In study the second study, participants' rate how effective those specific acts would be for the specific behavior that is being investigated. Act nomination procedures have been successfully implemented in several empirical studies examining personality characteristics, flirting, and love acts (Buss & Craik, 1983; Wade, Auer, & Roth, 2009; Wade & Slemph, 2015; Wade & Vanartsdalen, 2013). Act nomination research is beneficial because it allows researchers to identify certain behaviors that would be utilized in specific behavioral scenarios. Furthermore, this methodology allows researchers to discover behavioral regularities (Buss & Craik, 1983).

The present research systematically replicates and extends Schmitt and Buss' (2001) seminal research on mate poaching. The replication is systematic rather than direct since it differs from Schmitt and Buss's (2001) work in two distinct ways (Dunn, 2013). In study 1, Schmitt and Buss (2001) had their male and female participants report up to five acts that men and women would perform in a mate poaching scenario. In this current study, only men were asked to report acts that men would use to poach a short-term mate. Thus, women were excluded from Study 1. This was done because men and women have different evolved mating psychologies, and men tend to overestimate their behaviors used to acquire sexual access (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Haselton & Buss, 2000).

Second, this current study specifies a short-term hookup, as a one-time, commitment-free sexual encounter. Although Schmitt and Buss (2001) specify a "short-term affair" and "long-term affair" in their research examining the effectiveness of the acts that were nominated (Study 2), they did not specify short-term mating in the act nomination phase of their research (Study 1). Therefore, some acts that could be effective for short-term mate poaching may not have been nominated, and consequently the effectiveness of the acts that were nominated may have received lower effectiveness ratings for short-term mate poaching.

Study 1

Hypothesis

For Study 1, men are expected to nominate two types of actions. First, acts that display emotional support, (i.e. behaviors that display caring, emotional commitment, and emotionally stability) are expected. Since women tend to prioritize emotional stability (Buss, 1989; Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001), men should use these behaviors as tactics to attract women. Second, acts that show off a man's dominance and power should be common nominations since women use such actions to make inferences about a man's genetic parental investment potential. Also women prefer men with such characteristics for short-term mating (Buss & Shackelford, 2008). Additionally, behaviors such as derogating a the woman's partner may also be nominated since men could use such actions to deceive a woman into thinking that the poacher is better than her current mate, via intrasexual competition as Buss and Dedden (1990) found.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 41 heterosexual men, ranging in age from 18-52, $M=20.1$, $SD= 5.33$. However, two men asked for their data to not be included in the research ($N=39$). Some participants were from the introductory psychology course and were awarded research participation credit towards research participation requirement. Ninety percent of the participants identified as White, 5% identified as Black, 2% of the participants identified as Asian, and 2% identified as other. All participants reported their sexual orientation via the categorical response options, heterosexual, homosexual or other.

Procedure

Participants received an online survey that included a questionnaire requesting demographic information regarding their age, sex, race, and relationship status. Consistent with previous act nomination research (Buss, 1988a, 1988b; Buss & Craik, 1983; Wade et al., 2009; Wade & Feldman, 2016; Wade & Slemm 2015), participants received instructions asking them to list behaviors that someone has performed or could perform. These instructions are from prior research (Schmitt & Buss, 2001; Wade et al., 2009). The specific instructions were as follows:

In this study, we are interested in the things men do in order to obtain sexual access from a woman who is in a committed relationship with another man. Please think of people you know of your own gender (sex) who have infiltrated a heterosexual relationship and hooked-up (had sexual intercourse) with the woman for a short-term period, and no commitment was formed. With these individuals in mind, write down five acts or behaviors that they have performed (or might perform) that reflect or exemplify their plan to gain sexual access to a woman who is already in a committed relationship. Be sure to write down acts or behaviors. An act is something that a person does or did, not something that they are. Do not say "he is smooth" or "she is love-struck." These are not behaviors. You should describe acts or behaviors that someone could read and answer the questions: "Did you ever do this?" and "How often have you done this?"

Results

A total of 205 acts were nominated. Acts that were similar were combined and the initial list was narrowed down to 45 acts, and the most frequent acts were retained. Following previous act nomination research (Buss, 1988a, 1988b; Buss & Craik, 1983; Wade et al., 2009; Wade & Feldman, 2016; Wade & Slemm, 2015), an act was considered frequent if it had been nominated three times or more, which led to 18 final acts (see Table 1).

Table 1: Frequencies of Short-term mate poaching acts nominated

Mate Poaching act	Frequency
Drinking & getting drunk together	19
Talking badly about her boyfriend openly	16
Touched/Touching her, in general	12
Texted/Texting her	9
Going to parties together	8
Being attentive to her	8
Flirting with her	7
Complimented/Complimenting her	7
Secretly meeting up with her	6
Snapchat/Social Media	6
Touching her sexually	6
Spending time together	5
Dancing with her	5
Smiling at her	4
Being compassionate	3
Doing school work together	3
Offering to help her with her problems	3
Hanging out with her friends/Getting close with her friends	3

Note: Higher numbers mean higher frequency of nomination

Discussion

Study 1 generated 18 consensus acts that men use for short-term mate poaching. Acts that suggests the man is caring, emotionally available, and powerful were hypothesized to be among the consensus actions nominated. This hypothesis was only partially supported. The most frequently nominated act was “Drinking & getting drunk with her.” This act is more consistent with actions suggesting sexual exploitability (Goetz, Easton, Lewis, & Buss, 2012) and is not consistent with Schmitt and Buss (2001), who found that getting the person drunk would be an ineffective action for male poachers. This act may have been the most nominated action because the sample was composed primarily of college-aged men, and college aged men participate in high levels of alcohol consumption (Flack, Hansen, Hopper, Bryant, Lang, Massa, & Whalen, 2015).

The second most nominated act was “Talking badly about her boyfriend.” This act was consistent with our hypothesis regarding derogating the woman’s partner, as it displays dominance. This is also consistent with Schmitt and Buss’s (2001) findings. Men may talk badly about the woman’s partner because it could improve their perceived fitness by contrast.

Consistent with the hypothesis, of the eighteen consensus acts, five of the acts can be considered acts that suggest the man is emotionally available 1). “Being attentive” 2). “Complimenting her” 3). “Spending time together” 4). “Being compassionate” and 5). “Offering her help with her problems.” This is consistent with research showing that women prefer men who are emotionally accessible (Buss, & Schmitt, 1993; Wade & Brown, 2012).

“Touching her” was also nominated, and supports the research hypothesis regarding dominant actions and is consistent with Guéguen (2007), who found that when a man touches a woman, it is perceived as a dominant act. However, surprisingly, “touching her sexually” was also nominated. This may be related to the primarily college-aged sample. Prior research shows that women are often the targets of unwanted sexual advances from college-aged men, such as inappropriate sexual touching (Flack, Daubman, Caron, Asadorian, D’Aureli, Gigliotti, Hall, Kiser, & Stine, 2007).

The act of “Dancing with her” was also nominated. Men who can dance are perceived as being more attractive (Wade, Weinstein, Dalal, & Salerno, 2015), and women prefer attractive men as short-term mates (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). There is also research that suggests that attractive men have more extra-pair copulations (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997), further indicating that male attractiveness is associated with short term mating.

Study 1 also found that no acts suggesting that the men have resources were nominated. This was not surprising since the research asked for acts used to secure a one-time, commitment-free sexual liaison. This suggests that short-term mate poaching tactics differs from long-term mate poaching tactics.

These findings provide researchers with an inventory of behaviors that are used to infiltrate a relationship for a short-term sexual hookup. While these results are interesting, one is unable to determine how effective these actions would be perceived by men and women. Therefore, Study 2 was conducted.

Study 2

Hypothesis

Based on the costs associated with reproduction and with raising offspring men and women have evolved different long and short term mating psychologies (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Based on these differing psychologies men and women have evolved for long and short term mating, Study 2 was hypothesized to show sex differences. Women should have rated the acts “Being attentive”, “Being compassionate” and “Complimenting her” as most effective while actions that are seen as aggressive or suggest sexual exploitability like “Touching her sexually” or “Drinking/ getting drunk” should be rated as less effective. Women tend to prefer men who invest emotionally and portray emotional commitment (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Buss &

Shackelford, 2008). When looking for a long-term mate, women tend to prioritize physical strength as a form of protection from aggressors (Buss, 1994). Therefore, aggressive advances would not have been rated as effective in a short-term mate poaching behavior.

Men, however, should have rated “Talking badly about her boyfriend”, “Dancing”, and “Touching her” as most effective, because such actions are indicative of dominance, and dominant men have more sexual conquests (Mazur, Halpern, & Udry, 1994). Women also prefer dominant men for short-term mating (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), and Schmitt and Buss (2001) found that displaying dominance is also an effective tactic for short-term mate poaching.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 448 heterosexual men and women (168 men and 280 women) from a private University in the northeastern United States and *Facebook* ranging in age from 18-38, $M=20.29$, $SD= 1.88$. Eighty-nine percent of the participants identified as White, 2% identified as Black, 4% of the participants identified as Asian, 2% identified as Hispanic and 3% identified as other. All participants reported their sexual orientation via the categorical response options, heterosexual, homosexual or other. The 39 men who participated in Study 1 did not take part in Study 2.

Procedure

Participants received an online survey link that included a demographic questionnaire assessing age, sex, race, sexual orientation, and relationship status. Next, they were directed to a page that asked them to rate how effective the 18 acts from Study 1 were, using a 1= ineffective to 7=effective Likert scale. The female participants received the following instructions:

On the next page are listed acts that a man might perform to get a woman to leave her partner and “hook-up” with him. We are interested in how effective you think each act would be at achieving this goal. Please read each action carefully and rate it in terms of how successful it would be in attracting you (indicating that they are interested in you). Use the 7-point scale below each action to indicate the effectiveness of the action. A 7 means it is highly effective. A 4 means it is moderately effective and a 1 means it is ineffective.

The male participants received the following instructions:

On the next page are listed acts that a man might perform to get a woman to leave her partner and “hook-up” with him. We are interested in how effective you think each act would be at achieving this goal. Please read each action carefully and rate it in terms of how successful it would be in attracting a female. Use the 7-point scale below each action to indicate the effectiveness of the action. A 7 means it is highly effective. A 4 means it is moderately effective and a 1 means it is ineffective.

Results

Cronbach's alpha (1951) revealed that the 18 poaching acts were reliable, $\alpha = .93$. A 2 (Sex of Participant) x 18 (poaching acts) Mixed Model Repeated Measures ANOVA was performed. A significant interaction of sex and poaching acts occurred, $F(17, 411) = 7.96$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .25$ (see Table 2). Independent samples t-tests with Bonferroni corrections revealed that men rated eleven acts higher than women did. For example, "Drinking/Getting Drunk" $t(445) = 7.55$, $p < .0001$, $d = .73$ ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.48$, and $M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.73$ for men and women, respectively) and "Talking badly about her boyfriend" $t(444) = 5.17$, $p < .0001$, $d = .49$ ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.37$, and $M = 1.76$, $SD = 1.15$ for men and women, respectively) (see Table 3). Table 3 also shows the t values associated with the differences among the means for the 18 acts.

A significant main effect was also obtained for poaching acts, $F(17, 411) = 97.11$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .80$, see Table 4. Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni corrections revealed, in general, the following acts were rated as most effective: "Spending time together" "Being attentive" "Being compassionate" "Helping her with her problems" and "Complimenting her."

Table 2: Mean Perceived Effectiveness of short-term mate poaching actions across sex of participant

Mate Poaching act	Males M(SD)	Females M(SD)
Drinking & getting drunk together	5.18 (1.48)***	4.01 (1.73)
Talking badly about her boyfriend openly	2.38 (1.37)***	1.76 (1.15)
Touched/Touching her, in general	4.59 (1.62)***	3.83 (1.73)
Texted/Texting her	4.78 (1.51)*	4.39 (1.64)
Going to parties together	4.89 (1.54)***	3.97 (1.69)
Being attentive to her	5.11 (1.47)	5.24 (1.57)
Flirting with her	5.11 (1.32)***	4.58 (1.62)
Complimented/Complimenting her	4.78 (1.61)	4.77 (1.54)
Secretly meeting up with her	4.85 (1.62)***	3.22 (1.82)
Snapchat/Social Media	4.69 (1.54)***	3.93 (1.70)
Touching her sexually	3.96 (1.83)***	3.29 (1.98)
Spending time together	5.59 (1.38)	5.33 (1.52)
Dancing with her	5.05 (1.47)***	4.09 (1.74)
Smiling at her	4.66 (1.66)*	4.29 (1.79)
Being compassionate	5.07 (1.51)	5.25 (1.51)
Doing school work together	4.45 (1.56)	4.35 (1.71)
Offering to help her with her problems	4.80 (1.69)	4.78 (1.56)
Hanging out with her friends/Getting close with her friends	4.20 (1.71)	4.01 (1.71)

Note: higher numbers mean more effective, standard deviations are parentheses,

***= $p < .001$, ** = $p < .005$, * = $p < .05$

Table 3: Means, T values, significance levels, and effect sizes for mate poaching acts for men and women.

Act	Sex of Participant	Mean (SD)	t value	p- value	Cohen's d
Drinking & getting drunk together	Men	5.18 (1.48)	7.55	.0001	.73
	Women	4.01 (1.73)			
Talking Badly about her boyfriend openly	Men	2.38 (1.37)	5.71	.0001	.49
	Women	1.76 (1.15)			
Touched/Touching her, in general	Men	4.59 (1.62)	4.60	.0001	.45
	Women	3.83 (1.73)			
Texted/Texting her	Men	4.78 (1.51)	2.50	.012	.25
	Women	4.39 (1.64)			
Going to parties together	Men	4.89 (1.54)	5.77	.0001	.57
	Women	3.97 (1.69)			
Being attentive to her	Men	5.11 (1.47)	-.864	.388	.09
	Women	5.24 (1.57)			
Flirting with her	Men	5.11 (1.32)	3.61	.0001	.36
	Women	4.58 (1.62)			
Complimented/ Complimenting her	Men	4.78 (1.61)	.107	.915	.01
	Women	4.77 (1.54)			
Secretly meeting up with her	Men	4.85 (1.62)	9.55	.0001	.95
	Women	3.22 (1.82)			
Snapchat/Social Media	Men	4.69 (1.54)	4.72	.0001	.47
	Women	3.93 (1.70)			
Touching her sexually	Men	3.96 (1.83)	3.56	.0001	.35
	Women	3.29 (1.98)			
Spending time together	Men	5.59 (1.38)	1.81	.071	.08
	Women	5.33 (1.51)			
Dancing with her	Men	5.05 (1.47)	5.99	.0001	.60
	Women	4.09 (1.74)			
Smiling at her	Men	4.66 (1.66)	2.24	.024	.25
	Women	4.29 (1.79)			
Being compassionate	Men	5.07 (1.51)	-1.22	.222	.12
	Women	5.25 (1.51)			
Doing school work together	Men	4.45 (1.56)	.593	.551	.06
	Women	4.35 (1.56)			
Offering to help her with her problems	Men	4.80 (1.69)	.096	.924	.01
	Women	4.78 (1.56)			
Hanging out with her friends/Getting close to her friends	Men	4.20 (1.71)	1.33	.258	.11
	Women	4.01 (1.71)			

Note: scale was 1 = ineffective to 7 = effective. Thus, higher numbers mean more effective, standard deviations are parentheses.

Table 4: Mean Perceived Effectiveness of Short-term mate Poaching Acts ins general

Mate Poaching act	Mean (SD)
Drinking & getting drunk together	5.46 (1.44)
Talking badly about her boyfriend openly	5.22 (1.51)
Touched/Touching her, in general	5.21 (1.45)
Texted/Texting her	4.80 (1.60)
Going to parties together	4.80 (1.54)
Being attentive to her	4.76 (1.53)
Flirting with her	4.55 (1.60)
Complimented/Complimenting her	4.46 (1.73)
Secretly meeting up with her	4.45 (1.74)
Snapchat/Social Media	4.43 (1.71)
Touching her sexually	4.40 (1.65)
Spending time together	4.33 (1.68)
Dancing with her	4.22 (1.68)
Smiling at her	4.11 (1.74)
Being compassionate	4.07 (1.70)
Doing school work together	3.84 (1.92)
Offering to help her with her problems	3.53 (1.93)
Hanging out with her friends/Getting close with her friends	1.99 (1.27)

Note: Higher numbers mean the mate poaching act was perceived as more effective. Superscripts denote significant differences, $p < .05$, e.g. mean for row a, "spending time together," is significantly different from means for rows that have an 'a' in their superscript, etc.

Comparisons were Bonferroni corrected based on the number of comparisons computed, standard deviations are in parentheses. Comparisons of all 18 means are not presented in this table

Discussion

The results obtained were only partially consistent with the hypotheses. Men rated the acts “Drinking or getting drunk,” “Talking badly about her boyfriend,” “Touching her,” “Texting her,” “Going to parties,” “Flirting,” “Snapchatting her,” “Touching her sexually,” “Secretly meeting up,” “Smiling at her” and “Dancing with her” as more effective actions than women did. Men may have rated these 11 of the 18 acts as more effective than women did due to Error Management Theory (Haselton & Buss, 2000). From this theoretical perspective it behooves men to overestimate the effectiveness of their actions in order to not miss out on a sexual opportunity. This may be especially true for the actions of touching and touching sexually.

Men may have rated “Touching her in general” and “Touching her sexually” as an effective act because, as Guéguen (2007) points out, touching a woman portrays dominance. This finding is consistent with Schmitt and Buss (2001) who report that displays of physical dominance are judged to be effective for mate poaching in short-term contexts.

“Being attentive,” “complimenting her,” “spending time together,” “being compassionate,” “doing school work together,” “offering her help with problems,” and “hanging out with her friends or getting close with her friends” were acts that the sexes agreed upon. These behaviors may be viewed as equally effective by both sexes because they convey a desire to: establish an emotional connection; to be polite; or to be altruistic. This may be because both men and women agree that actions that show emotional commitment, emotional connection, and emotional accessibility are effective love acts (Wade, et al., 2009), and because altruism predicts mating success in humans (Arnocky, Piché, Albert, Ouellette, & Barclay, 2016; Phillips, Ferguson, & Fruhling, 2010).

In general, the five acts rated as most effective for short-term mate poaching were 1). “Spending time together” 2). “Being attentive” 3). “Being compassionate” 4). “Helping her with her problems” and 5). “Complimenting her.” These acts may have been perceived as most effective overall because they suggest emotional commitment, and altruism and women find altruistic males appealing (Arnocky et al., 2016; Phillips et al., 2010).

Limitations and future direction

The sample used in the current research was composed primarily of college students. Although research shows that 40% of undergraduate men and 30% of undergraduate women reported leaving their partner for another partner for a short-term hookup (Schmitt & Buss, 2001), these findings may not apply to older populations. Furthermore, in this current project, the participants were college-aged men and women from a wealthy northeastern university. Although research has not examined whether or not participants’ socioeconomic class affects their perception of the effectiveness of mate poaching decisions, results may be different across other university populations and in different age groups. Thus, additional research with an older populations and populations of varying socioeconomic class is warranted.

Additionally, the samples in Studies 1 and 2 were mostly White and from the U.S. Thus, additional research should be conducted with more diverse samples. Schmitt (2004) report that mate poaching is a universal mating strategy. However, Schmitt (2004) did not investigate tactics used for short-term mate poaching.

Consistent with prior mate poaching research (Schmitt & Buss, 2001) social desirability measures were not included in the present research. So, socially desirable responding biases could be a limitation in the present research. It is possible that women in Study 2, may not have answered honestly due to a desire to appear to be un-poachable. This form of social desirability bias can be common among surveys regarding sexual behavior (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954) and among self-report research examining behavior (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although the directions of the second study specified, “attracting you,” they also specified before that that these acts were used for a “woman to leave her partner and hook-up with him (the poacher).” There is a possibility that the women, who believe they cannot be poached, may have thought of other women during their ratings. Future research incorporating social desirability measures is also warranted.

This research examined the perceived effectiveness of short-term mate poaching actions rather than the actual effectiveness of such actions. If possible, future research should examine the actual effectiveness of such actions. This could possibly be done in an ethical manner by surveying individuals who have engaged in short-term mate poaching or have been poached for a short-term liaison.

Mating-Relevant Acts that are Specific to Short-Term Mate Poaching

Short-term mate poaching involves a specific suite of behaviors. The current research set out to investigate actions that men would use to acquire a one-time, commitment-free hookup. Schmitt and Buss’s (2001) research and the current study are the only two studies that, to the best of our knowledge, have investigated mating-relevant acts for a short-term mate poach. There were four types of mate poaching actions common in the two studies, and there were two types of mate poaching actions that were not common in the two studies.

Agreement 1: Emotional Investment and Emotional Manipulation

Schmitt and Buss (2001) report that the manipulation of emotional commitment in the actions such as: “Manipulate Emotional Commitment of Rival” and “Develop Emotional Connection” was significant for men. The current study also found that when a man displays emotional commitment or suggests that he would provide emotional support, such as “Being attentive,” “complimenting her,” “spending time together,” “being compassionate,” “doing school work together,” “offering her help with problems,” and “hanging out with her friends or getting close with her friends” is also rated as effective by both men and women. Therefore, the manipulation of emotional attachment is seen as an act that would be most effective for infiltrating a couple for a short-term affair. This could be effective because women use short-term mating to test for long-term mate potential (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Following this logic, women may see this emotional support as an indicator that the man that is trying to poach her may be able to provide future emotional support.

Agreement 2: Displaying Dominance

Schmitt and Buss (2001) found that displays of dominance were judged as most effective for men in short-term mate poaching, but the extent of the ratings was quite low. Schmitt and Buss (2001) compared their mate poaching tactics with general attraction tactics (Schmitt & Buss, 1996) and found that it is less effective for poaching compared to general attraction.

The current study also found that men rate dominance as an effective act. Previous research argues that women prefer dominant men as an adaptive strategy to gain protection from other suitors (Smuts, 1991). Therefore, touching as a mate poaching act could be seen as an effective for a short-term mate poach.

Agreement 3: Derogation

Schmitt and Buss (2001) found that derogating the rivals is effective for both men and women in a short-term compared to long-term poach but it was seen as more effective for women. The current study only investigated acts that men would use. Men than women rated the act of "Talk badly about her boyfriend" as more effective. Previous research suggests that derogating competitors is an effective act for men as well. Research suggests attacking the sexual rival, gossiping, and insulting the person are ways that derogation can be successful (Fisher & Cox, 2011).

Agreement 4: Resource Display

Schmitt and Buss' (2001) results suggest that when men are displaying acts that are perceived to be displaying resources and generous, they are rated as effective for mate poaching, specifically, in a long-term mating context. This research aligns well with men's acts of self-promotion and displaying of resources to gain a long-term mate (Schmitt & Buss 1996). The displaying of resources was not nominated as an act in the current study, and that could be due to the fact that our sample was college-aged men and women who may not have wealth to display at this point or to provide. Research on wealth and attraction on mate poaching found the greater level of commitment in a relationship (i.e. married compared to dating) requires a more attractive and wealthier mate poacher (Davies & Shackelford, 2015). When the participants were informed that the mate poaches would be a short-term mate poach, they rated wealth less important than when it was a long-term mate poach or monogamous sexual partner. This research is consistent with the findings in the current the current study, which had no acts about resource display nominated, and with the findings of Schmitt and Buss (2001), who did not find resource displays as an effective act for a short-term mate poach.

Disagreement 1: Alcohol

Schmitt and Buss (2001) found that alcohol was successful for a mate poach when a woman uses it as short-term poaching tactic rather than a long-term poaching tactic; however, the current study found that getting the person drunk was the most nominated act and was rated as more effective by men than by women. Although the percentage of college students who engage in binge-drinking has been relatively stable throughout the 2000's (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002), there can be differences regarding why alcohol was rated as effective for men and not for women across the two studies. Research suggests that 89% of individuals who participate in Greek life report

binge drinking on the weekends compared to individuals who are not involved in Greek life (White & Hingson, 2014). The current study was conducted on a campus where over 60% of individuals are involved in either a fraternity or sorority. Although participants were not asked if they partook in Greek life, the majority of the sample most likely did. Therefore, they are most likely participants in the binge-drinking culture.

Binge-drinking and alcohol intoxication can open women up to different sexual experiences, whether unwanted or wanted. Researchers suggest that about 30% of women state that unwanted sexual advances occur when they are intoxicated (Flack et al., 2008) and when sex is not unwanted, the majority of college women report that casual sex occurs during periods of intoxication (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006).

Disagreement 2: Displaying Good Genes: Humor and Creativity

Schmitt and Buss (2001) found that humor was rated to be more effective for men in both long-term and short-term mate poaching. This finding is consistent with Haselton and Miller's (2006) research, which suggests that women in the follicular phase of their ovulatory cycle favor creative men as a short-term mate partner. Creativity, such as the ability to play music and the ability to be artistic is a way that men can showcase the quality of their genes. When men behave creatively, they are ultimately displaying their intelligence. Thus, being creative, or humorous, signifies that you are an intelligent individual, which indicates good-genes (Miller, 2000). Miller (2000) hypothesizes that humor and creativity are sexually dimorphic, i.e., men can display their creativity through art, music, and their humor to indicate how intelligent they are to potential mates.

The current study did not have any acts nominated that indicate humor, creativity, or intelligence. This disagreement could be due to the aforementioned different methodologies utilized in the research. Humor, creativity, and intelligence may be desirable characteristics for short-term mating, but may not be useful for short-term mate poaching. Although women prefer good genes for extra-pair copulations, placing greater importance on physical attractiveness and other positive qualities like creativity and humor from potential mates (Gangestad & Simpson, 1990), displaying one's good genes is not beneficial for poaching. Davies, Shackelford, and Hass (2010) suggest that when men engage in mate poaching, they do not rate impregnating a woman as a benefit. This research corresponds with our findings because men did not nominate any tactics that signal good-genes. Therefore, there is a difference between general mate attraction and mate poaching. The displaying of one's good genes is useful for mate attraction not poaching. Mate poaching may be a useful mating strategy to gain and acquire novel sexual partners, rather than a useful strategy for cuckoldry (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

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