



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

Comparisons of the effectiveness of mate-attraction tactics across mate poaching and general attraction and across types of romantic relationships



Alastair P.C. Davies*, Todd K. Shackelford

Regent's University London, United Kingdom
Oakland University, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 February 2015
Received in revised form 27 April 2015
Accepted 2 May 2015

Keywords:

Mate poaching
Tactics
Wealth
Physical attractiveness
Sociosexual orientation inventory
Investment model scale

ABSTRACT

Mate poaching occurs when individuals knowingly steal someone else's mate for sex. Attempts to poach present challenges additional to those associated with non-poaching or general attraction. However, of Schmitt and Buss' (2001) 24 comparisons of the effectiveness of mate-attraction tactics, only one indicated tactics to be less effective in poaching than in general attraction. In the current research, 215 participants (125 men and 90 women) were instructed to imagine they were in different relationship contexts. For the poaching context, participants imagined they were dating, living with a mate, or married. For the general attraction context, participants imagined they were not in a monogamous relationship. They reported how wealthy or attractive an individual would need to be to attract them as a short-mate sexual partner, long-term sexual partner, and monogamous relationship. As hypothesized, for all contexts, participants reported that the wealth and attractiveness required was greater if they were dating, living with a mate, and married than if they were not in a monogamous relationship. Comparisons across dating, living with a mate, and married indicated that the greater the level of commitment, the greater the wealth and attractiveness required to attract participants from it.

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In romantic attraction, an individual may attempt to secure as a mate, someone who is unattached or who is already mated to someone else. When individuals are aware that the person with whom they are attempting to mate is already in a nominally exclusive relationship with someone else, they are said to be 'mate poaching' (Davies, Shackelford, & Hass, 2007). Research indicates that, across the world, poaching is a prevalent means by which men and women secure mates (Schmitt et al., 2004).

In both poaching and non-poaching contexts of attraction or general attraction, tactics used to attract mates involve presenting targeted individuals with benefits desired from a mate. Although many of these benefits, such as economic resources and physical attractiveness, are the same in both contexts (Schmitt & Buss, 2001), there may be differences in the effectiveness of presenting these benefits in poaching versus in general attraction. To date, the only study to have investigated this is Schmitt and Buss (2001). They considered the following tactics: enhance physical attractiveness; display (economic) resources; act helpful; suggest

easy sexual access; develop an emotional connection; and display social dominance over rivals. These were compared across poaching and general attraction within sex and temporal context (short-term or long-term matings). Of these 24 comparisons, Schmitt and Buss found only four differences and, for three of these, tactics were judged *more* effective in poaching.

Given the additional challenges of attracting already-mated individuals compared with attracting unattached individuals, it might be expected that Schmitt and Buss (2001) would find tactics to be judged less effective in poaching in an overwhelming number of comparisons. One of the additional challenges of poaching is that, whereas in general attraction an individual attempting to secure a mate may not have rivals whom the targeted individual views as a viable mate, a poacher is always in competition with the targeted individual's current partner. Also, poachers are likely to have to overcome any emotional attachment the potential poached may have for their current mate. Moreover, if the potential poached are married to or living with their current partner, they may be reluctant to succumb to a poacher due to financial costs incurred from violating or abandoning their current relationship.

Further indication of the effectiveness of mate-attraction tactics in poaching might be gained from individuals' perceptions of

* Corresponding author at: School of Psychotherapy and Psychology, Regent's University London, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS, United Kingdom.
E-mail address: daviesal@regents.ac.uk (A.P.C. Davies).

benefits and costs of engaging in sex with a poacher. However, no research has addressed this. Nevertheless, an insight into it may be gained from Davies et al.'s (2010) investigation into individuals' perceptions of benefits and costs of poaching someone. This is because several of these benefits and costs may also be experienced by individuals who are poached from their partner. For instance, Davies et al. found the costs "stress of concealment and deception", "guilt and ethical concerns", "suffer shame and gain a bad reputation", "being physically harmed by the partner of the poached", and "more bother" would deter men and women from poaching. As these costs are likely to be also incurred by individuals who are poached, Davies et al.'s findings indicate that there are several factors which militate against individuals deciding to have sex with poachers and which, therefore, are likely to impair the effectiveness of mate-attraction tactics in poaching.

Regarding benefits that individuals may gain from poaching that may also be gained by individuals who are poached, Davies et al. found "excitement of an illicit affair" would not motivate men or women to poach. Another benefit that attached individuals may secure from having sex with poachers is gaining revenge on their current partner for a perceived wrong inflicted on them. Davies et al. found, however, that the benefit "gaining revenge" by poaching the partner of someone who had wronged them would not motivate men and women to poach. These findings suggest the aforementioned benefits are unlikely to motivate individuals to succumb to the mate-attraction tactics of poachers.

The current study follows Schmitt and Buss (2001) in comparing mate-attraction tactics across poaching and general attraction but differs methodologically. First, Schmitt and Buss compared ratings of the effectiveness of tactics in poaching given by their participants with ratings of the effectiveness of tactics in general attraction given by participants in Schmitt and Buss (1996). As each sample considered the tactics in only one type of attraction, they were not able to contrast the dynamics intrinsic to each type. In the current research, therefore, each question presents a tactic in the context of general attraction juxtaposed with the tactic in the context of poaching and asks participants to provide a rating for each.

Second, Schmitt and Buss (2001) asked participants to rate "how effective" tactics are likely to be. There is, however, ambiguity associated with the term "effective". For instance, it is unclear whether a tactic judged as more effective means that, to be successful, individuals have to provide more or less of the benefit associated with it. For instance, Schmitt and Buss's finding that the tactic "demonstrate resources" was rated more effective in poaching than in general attraction might suggest that, for a given amount of resources, individuals would have a greater likelihood of success in poaching. Schmitt and Buss, however, stated that the finding indicates that the poacher has to provide "enough of an inducement to overcome the associated costs of leaving a current relationship" (p. 909). This suggests that resources are more needed by individuals who are the targets of poachers than they are by unattached individuals. However, it is unclear whether this means that, to attract an already-mated compared with an unattached individual, a poacher would have to provide more resources because the already-mated individual needs a greater amount of it or less resources because each particular amount of resources would be more appreciated by the already-mated individual. To avoid such ambiguity, the current research does not use the term "effective". Instead, participants are asked to report the minimum degree to which an individual must embody the benefit associated with a particular tactic if they are to be successfully attracted.

Third, Schmitt and Buss (1996, 2001) asked participants of each sex to rate the effectiveness of each tactic when used by a man and

a woman. Although both studies found agreement between men's and women's ratings for each sex, the current study asks participants to report the degree to which a potential mate must embody a benefit if *they themselves* are to be successfully attracted. By placing participants psychologically in the question scenarios, the current research aims to secure reports more representative of actual mating attempts.

Fourth, Schmitt and Buss (2001) investigated the effectiveness of poaching tactics across the following relationship contexts: marital; dating; living together; long-distance; highly-committed; not committed; just beginning; and about to end. Inherent in some of these labels, however, are the different strengths of the relationships. They, therefore, suggest to participants the likely effectiveness of tactics in each relationship context. For instance, it would be expected that all tactics would be judged less effective in poaching individuals in highly-committed relationships than individuals in not-committed relationships, and more effective in poaching individuals in relationships about to end than individuals in the other relationship contexts. The current survey, therefore, avoids relationship labels that explicitly indicate the strength of the relationships. As such, it considers the following relationship contexts: dating; living with a mate; and married.

The current participants were asked to imagine they were in one of the aforementioned relationship contexts versus not in a monogamous romantic relationship, and to report how wealthy or physically attractive an individual would need to be to successfully attract them for each of the following temporal contexts: short-term sexual partner; long-term sexual partner; and monogamous romantic relationship. Given the additional challenges associated with poaching compared to general attraction and the findings of Davies et al. (2010), the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1. Participants will report that, for all temporal contexts (short-term sexual partner, long-term sexual partner, and monogamous romantic relationship), the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them will be greater if they are dating than if they are not in a monogamous relationship.

Hypothesis 2. Participants will report that, for all temporal contexts, the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them will be greater if they are living with a mate than if they are not in a monogamous relationship.

Hypothesis 3. Participants will report that, for all temporal contexts, the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them will be greater if they are married than if they are not in a monogamous relationship.

Further hypotheses were formulated comparing the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract participants in each of the relationship contexts. The degree of commitment in a relationship is considered to be a key factor in determining whether the relationship will persist (e.g., Rusbult, 1980). It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the more committed a relationship is, the less successful will be attempts to poach an individual from it. As dating typically precedes couples living together, dating appears to be a step on the way to the greater commitment of living together. The following hypothesis was, therefore, formulated:

Hypothesis 4. Participants will report that, for all temporal contexts, the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them will be greater if they are living with a mate than if they are dating.

As the majority of couples live together before marrying (Goodwin, Mosher, & Chandra, 2010), cohabitation appears to be a step on the way to the greater commitment of marriage. The following hypotheses were, therefore, formulated:

Hypothesis 5. Participants will report that, for all temporal contexts, the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them will be greater if they are married than if they are dating.

Hypothesis 6. Participants will report that, for all temporal contexts, the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them will be greater if they are married than if they are living with a mate.

1. Method

1.1. Participants

Participants were 215 heterosexual undergraduates in psychology courses at a university in the southeastern United States (125 men, M age = 19.9 years, SD = 3.2; 90 women, M age = 19.8 years, SD = 4.2). Participants self-recruited by signing-up for a stated appointment time.

1.2. Materials and procedure

Each question of the survey juxtaposed two scenarios. In the first, to represent a general attraction, participants were asked to imagine they were not in a monogamous relationship. In the second, to represent a poaching, they were asked to imagine they were dating, living with a mate, or married. For each question, in each scenario participants were asked to rate how wealthy or physically attractive an individual would need to be if they were to be successfully attracted as a short-term sexual partner, long-term sexual partner, or for a monogamous romantic relationship. For example, in *Question 1*, the first scenario asked, “If you were not in a monogamous romantic relationship at the time, how physically attractive would an individual have to be to successfully attract you as a short-term sexual partner.” Whereas the second scenario asked, “If you were married, how physically attractive would an individual have to be to successfully attract you as a short-term sexual partner?”

Ratings were given on a 7-point scale, with 1 = “not at all” and 7 = “extremely”. To encourage participants to consider the dynamics of general attraction versus poaching, preceding the questions was the statement, “The following questions occur in pairs. Please read both questions of the pair before you answer either one of them.”

2. Results

Paired-samples t -tests were conducted to compare mean ratings. Because multiple tests were conducted and because the Bonferroni correction may be overly conservative (e.g., Nakagawa, 2004), alpha was reduced from .05 to .01.

In accordance with [Hypothesis 1](#), for all temporal contexts, participants reported that the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them was greater if they were dating than if they were not in a monogamous relationship ($ps < .001$). In accordance with [Hypothesis 2](#), for all temporal contexts, participants reported that the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them was greater if they were living with a mate than if they were not in a monogamous relationship ($ps < .001$). In accordance with [Hypothesis 3](#), for all temporal

contexts, participants reported that the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them was greater if they were married than if they were not in a monogamous relationship ($ps < .001$). [Table 1](#) shows the means, t -statistics, and p -values relating to [Hypotheses 1–3](#).

2.1. General: general attraction

Further paired t -tests were conducted to compare mean ratings within sex. Also in accordance with [Hypotheses 1–3](#), within men and women, for all temporal contexts, participants reported that the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them was greater if they were dating, living with a mate, and married than if they were not in a monogamous relationship. All these differences reached statistical significance ($ps < .001$) except within women for the single combination of dating, physical attractiveness, and short-term sexual partner ($p > .01$). The means, t -statistics, and p -values for [Hypotheses 1–3](#) can be seen in [Table 2](#) for men and [Table 3](#) for women.

The next analyses compared the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract participants from each of the relationship contexts. For each benefit and temporal context combination (e.g., wealth and short-term sexual partner), the difference between the mean for general attraction and the mean for each of the relationship contexts was calculated.¹ These differences in means within each combination of benefit and temporal context were compared through paired t -tests. For all combinations of benefit and temporal context, except for physical attractiveness for a short-term sexual partner, the difference between the means for general attraction and poaching an individual living with a mate was greater than the difference between the means for general attraction and poaching an individual dating someone. However, contrary to [Hypothesis 4](#), none of these differences reached statistical significance ($ps > .01$). In accordance with [Hypothesis 5](#), for all combinations of benefit and temporal context, the difference between the means for general attraction and poaching a married individual was significantly greater than the difference between the means for general attraction and poaching an individual dating someone ($ps < .01$). For all combinations of benefit and temporal context, the difference between the means for general attraction and poaching a married individual was greater than the difference between the means for general attraction and poaching an individual living with a mate. In accordance with [Hypothesis 6](#), all these comparisons reached statistical significance ($ps < .01$) except for the combinations of physical attractiveness for a long-term sexual partner ($p > .05$) and wealth for a monogamous relationship ($p > .01$). [Table 4](#) shows the differences in means, t -statistics, and p -values relating to [Hypotheses 4–6](#).

3. Discussion

The current study asked participants to report the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them for the temporal contexts of short-term sexual partner, long-term sexual partner, and monogamous relationship if they were unattached versus if they were in the relationship contexts of dating, living with a mate, and married. In accordance with [Hypotheses 1–3](#), for all temporal contexts, male and female participants reported that the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract them was greater if they were dating, living with a mate, and married than if they were not in a monogamous relationship. These results indicate that, contrary to the only previous study to

¹ Paired-samples t -tests indicated mean ratings for general attraction did not differ significantly across benefit and temporal context combinations ($ps > .001$).

Table 1

Means and *t*-statistics and *p*-values generated by paired *t*-tests for wealth and physical attractiveness relating to [Hypotheses 1–3](#). Degrees of freedom for all comparisons were 214.

	General dating				General living with				General married			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Wealth</i>												
ST	3.6 (1.9)	4.9 (2.0)	−6.03	.000	3.6 (1.9)	5.1 (2.0)	−6.75	.000	3.5 (1.8)	5.7 (1.8)	−9.31	.000
LT	3.9 (1.9)	5.3 (1.8)	−6.69	.000	3.9 (1.9)	5.3 (1.9)	−6.60	.000	3.6 (1.9)	5.7 (1.8)	−8.23	.000
MR	3.5 (1.6)	5.5 (1.6)	−9.23	.000	3.5 (1.6)	5.7 (1.6)	−9.86	.000	3.5 (1.6)	6.0 (1.6)	−11.43	.000
<i>Physical attractiveness</i>												
ST	5.1 (1.3)	5.9 (1.0)	−5.53	.000	5.2 (1.3)	6.0 (1.0)	−5.76	.000	5.1 (1.1)	6.6 (0.7)	−12.79	.000
LT	5.3 (1.1)	6.2 (0.9)	−7.16	.000	5.3 (1.1)	6.4 (0.9)	−8.61	.000	5.3 (1.1)	6.7 (0.8)	−11.08	.000
MR	5.0 (0.9)	6.2 (0.9)	−9.32	.000	5.0 (1.0)	6.5 (0.9)	−11.56	.000	5.0 (0.9)	6.7 (0.8)	−13.83	.000

Note. ST: short-term sexual partner. LT: long-term sexual partner. MR: monogamous relationship.

Table 2

Means and *t*-statistics and *p*-values generated by paired *t*-tests for wealth and physical attractiveness relating to [Hypotheses 1–3](#) for male participants. Degrees of freedom for all comparisons were 124.

	General dating				General living with				General married			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Wealth</i>												
ST	2.5 (1.7)	4.1 (2.2)	−4.55	.000	2.5 (1.7)	4.1 (2.2)	−4.47	.000	2.5 (1.6)	5.3 (2.1)	−7.30	.000
LT	2.8 (1.7)	4.5 (2.0)	−5.28	.000	2.9 (1.8)	4.4 (2.1)	−4.49	.000	2.8 (1.8)	5.2 (2.2)	−6.08	.000
MR	2.8 (1.7)	5.2 (1.9)	−6.83	.000	2.8 (1.7)	5.2 (1.9)	−6.35	.000	2.8 (1.6)	5.7 (1.9)	−8.21	.000
<i>Physical attractiveness</i>												
ST	4.5 (1.0)	5.7 (1.0)	−5.69	.000	4.6 (1.1)	5.6 (1.0)	−4.66	.000	4.6 (1.0)	6.5 (0.8)	−12.00	.000
LT	4.9 (1.1)	6.1 (0.9)	−6.46	.000	4.9 (0.9)	6.1 (1.0)	−5.91	.000	5.1 (1.0)	6.7 (0.8)	−10.25	.000
MR	4.9 (0.8)	6.3 (0.9)	−9.12	.000	5.0 (0.9)	6.4 (0.9)	−8.32	.000	5.0 (0.9)	6.8 (0.8)	−11.06	.000

Notes. ST: short-term sexual partner. LT: long-term sexual partner. MR: monogamous relationship. General: general attraction.

Table 3

Means and *t*-statistics and *p*-values generated by paired *t*-tests for wealth and physical attractiveness relating to [Hypotheses 1–3](#) for female participants. Degrees of freedom for all comparisons were 89.

	General dating				General living with				General married			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Wealth</i>												
ST	4.7 (1.5)	5.7 (1.4)	−4.35	.000	4.7 (1.5)	6.2 (1.2)	−5.50	.000	4.5 (1.4)	6.1 (1.2)	−6.62	.000
LT	5.0 (1.4)	6.1 (1.1)	−4.17	.000	4.9 (1.4)	6.2 (1.1)	−5.02	.000	4.6 (1.5)	6.3 (1.1)	−5.80	.000
MR	4.3 (1.2)	5.9 (1.1)	−6.66	.000	4.3 (1.2)	6.4 (0.9)	−8.58	.000	4.2 (1.2)	6.4 (1.0)	−8.67	.000
<i>Physical attractiveness</i>												
ST	5.7 (1.2)	6.1 (0.9)	−2.17	.036	5.9 (1.1)	6.5 (0.9)	−3.45	.001	5.7 (0.9)	6.7 (0.6)	−7.83	.000
LT	6.0 (1.1)	6.3 (0.9)	−3.75	.001	5.6 (1.1)	6.7 (0.7)	−6.34	.000	5.6 (1.2)	6.7 (0.8)	−5.91	.000
MR	5.0 (1.0)	6.0 (0.9)	−4.74	.000	5.0 (1.1)	6.5 (0.8)	−7.94	.000	5.0 (1.0)	6.0 (0.8)	−8.52	.000

Note. ST: short-term sexual partner. LT: long-term sexual partner. MR: monogamous relationship. General: general attraction.

Table 4

Differences (*d*) for each poaching context between general attraction and poaching context in means for wealth and physical attractiveness, and *t*-statistics and *p*-values generated by paired *t*-tests relating to [Hypotheses 4–6](#). Degrees of freedom for all comparisons were 214.

	Dating living				Dating married				Living married			
	<i>d</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Wealth</i>												
ST	1.27	1.52	−1.44	.153	1.27	2.21	−4.44	.000	1.52	2.21	−3.25	.002
LT	1.43	1.44	−.08	.940	1.43	2.06	−3.19	.002	1.44	2.06	−3.38	.001
MR	2.00	2.23	−1.24	.217	2.00	2.59	−2.93	.004	2.23	2.59	−2.11	.038
<i>Physical attractiveness</i>												
ST	.83	.83	.00	1.00	.83	1.48	−4.47	.000	.83	1.48	−4.83	.000
LT	.91	1.12	−1.83	.071	.91	1.37	−3.17	.002	1.12	1.37	−1.74	.086
MR	1.21	1.46	−2.82	.025	1.21	1.76	−4.15	.000	1.46	1.76	−2.68	.009

compare the effectiveness of mate-attraction tactics in poaching versus in general attraction, namely [Schmitt and Buss \(2001\)](#), tactics used to attract mates were overwhelmingly judged to be less effective when the targeted individuals were in a relationship of some degree of commitment than when they were unattached.

Future studies might, however, consider evidence suggesting tactics used in poaching may vary in effectiveness depending on the attached individuals targeted. [Foster et al. \(2014\)](#) found that individuals who are successfully poached have a relatively unrestricted sociosexual orientation, meaning they have a relatively

great desire for and engagement in sex outside of a committed relationship. As such an orientation is opposed to long-term commitment, the effectiveness of tactics when used on such attached individuals may be as effective as when used on unattached individuals. Future studies investigating the effectiveness of tactics across poaching and general attraction may, therefore, benefit from considering participants' scores on the sociosexual orientation inventory (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008).

The current study went beyond Schmitt and Buss (2001) by being the first to investigate if the effectiveness of tactics used to attract an individual from a relationship depends on the degree of commitment in the relationship. The effectiveness of tactics was compared across the differing degrees of commitment associated with the aforementioned relationship contexts, namely increasing from dating, to living with a mate, to married. Contrary to Hypothesis 4, participants reported that, for all combinations of benefit and temporal context, the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to poach them if they were living with a mate was not significantly greater than if they were dating. However, for all but one comparison, the differences were in the hypothesized direction. In accordance with Hypothesis 5, participants reported that, for all combinations of benefit and temporal context, the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to poach them if they were married was significantly greater than if they were dating. In accordance with Hypothesis 6, participants reported that, for all but two combinations of benefit and temporal context, the mean wealth and physical attractiveness required to poach them was significantly greater if they were married than if they were living with a mate. For the two comparisons that did not reach statistical significance, the differences were in the hypothesized direction. These results indicate that the greater the level of commitment in a relationship, the less effective will be tactics used to attract an individual from it. They also suggest that tactics were found to be less effective in poaching than in general attraction because in general attraction individuals are considered to not be in a relationship of any kind.

It follows that future studies into the effectiveness of mate-attraction tactics in poaching may benefit from measuring the level of commitment in participants' relationships through the *Investment Model Scale* (IMS) (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). If participants scoring low on the IMS are more susceptible to poachers, it would lend support for a key role played by the targeted individuals' relationship commitment in determining the success of poachers.

The current study also went beyond Schmitt and Buss (2001) by being the first to operationalize the term "effective" in relation to mate-attraction tactics. Rather than securing participants' ratings of the abstract term "effectiveness", the current study secured measurements of "effectiveness" in terms of the amount of wealth and physical attractiveness required to attract participants. The current survey might, therefore, serve as a predictive tool. By finding the mean amount of an attribute required to attract members of a particular sex and measuring an individual of the opposite sex along the attribute, the likelihood of the individual successfully attracting a mate may be predicted.

The current study is limited by not collecting data on participants' current relationship status and their perception of its quality, for these may have influenced their responses. For instance, individuals relatively happy in their relationships may require a greater amount of a particular benefit if they are to be successfully poached. Similarly, individuals relatively happy being single may require a greater amount of a particular benefit if they are to be

secured as a mate. It, therefore, may not be appropriate to generalize based on relationship status about the effectiveness of mate-attraction tactics.

Another limitation of the current study is that the results were secured from ratings for hypothetical situations. This limitation is typical of questionnaire-based research and suggests the need for investigations that are more naturalistic. However, given the nature of poaching, ethical considerations may make such investigations problematic. Therefore, especially given the contradictory results of Schmitt and Buss (2001) and the current study, there would be value in further questionnaire-based research into the current topic.

The current study is also limited by the questionnaire considering only the benefits wealth and physical attractiveness. Future studies might use the current methodology to consider other benefits that individuals desire in a mate. Such benefits might include ambition, industriousness and social status (Buss, 1989), generosity, altruism and kindness (Barclay, 2010) and humor (Miller, 2000).

Given the psychological distress due to the rupturing of relationships caused by successful poachers, the current study's finding that tactics used to attract mates are less effective in poaching than in general attraction may be seen as positive. Moreover, the current finding that the degree of commitment in a relationship determines the relationship's susceptibility to poachers suggests that the *Investment Model Scale* (Rusbult et al., 1998) may be used to identify couples that are especially susceptible so that they may receive appropriate counselling.

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