

When a “Poach” Is Not a Poach: Re-Defining Human Mate Poaching and Re-Estimating Its Frequency

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Abstract For a romantic attraction to be considered a mate poach, the pursuer must be aware that, while attempting to attract the targeted individual, the target is already in a nominally exclusive relationship. We investigated a methodological alternative for investigating the frequency of mate poaching. We presented university students with a survey informed by a definition of poaching that, in contrast to that which informed previous surveys, explicitly stated that the poacher must be aware while pursuing the targeted individual that the target was already in an exclusive relationship. Relative to participants in previous research, the current participants reported fewer experiences with poaching. We concluded that the current survey reduced the likelihood of participants reporting experiences with non-poaching forms of romantic attraction as experiences with poaching, and thereby provided more accurate estimates of the frequency of poaching. We also investigated the frequency of a previously uninvestigated form and temporal context of poaching and used a more fine-grained measure of the frequency of poaching than used in previous research. Discussion addresses limitations of the current research and suggests future directions for addressing them.

Keywords Mate poaching · Infidelity · Evolution

Introduction

Schmitt and Buss (2001) conducted the first studies into the psychology of people who have sexual relations with individuals whom they know are currently in exclusive relationships with others. Since these people steal other people's mates, like interlopers or poachers who steal game or fish belonging to others, Schmitt and Buss coined the term “mate poachers.” In addition, they gave the term “poached” to those “taken away from their established relationships” (p. 895), and the term “poachees” to “those whose partners are taken away from them” (p. 895).

The goals of Schmitt and Buss (2001) included determining the percentage of men and women among a sample of American undergraduates who had experience with poaching. Results indicated that 64% of men and 49% of women reported having, at some time, attempted to poach someone as a short-term mate, 86% of men and 85% of women reported someone having, at some time, attempted to poach their partner as a short-term mate, and 43% of men and 49% of women reported someone having successfully poached them for a new exclusive relationship.

In a cross-cultural investigation, Schmitt et al. (2004) attempted to determine the percentage of men and women who had experience with poaching among university students or community members from 53 nations. They found that, for instance, among North American samples from Canada, Mexico, and the United States, 62% of men and 40% of women reported having, at some time, attempted to poach someone as a short-term mate and 63% of men and 52% of women reported having, at some time, attempted to poach someone for a new exclusive relationship. In addition, Schmitt et al. found that similar percentages of samples from nine other world regions reported having some experience of poaching. For instance, 70% of men and 38% of women

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among samples from South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Peru) reported having, at some time, attempted to poach someone as a short-term mate, and 63% of men and 29% of women among samples from Africa (including, Botswana, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe) reported having, at some time, attempted to poach someone for a new exclusive relationship.

In the current study, we extended the findings of Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004) in the following ways: (1) we investigated whether presenting participants with questions based upon a stricter definition of poaching would lead them to report significantly fewer experiences with poaching than did participants in the two earlier studies; (2) we investigated individuals' experiences with a previously uninvestigated form of poaching; (3) we investigated individuals' experiences across a previously uninvestigated temporal context of poaching, that is, a previously uninvestigated length of relationship for which the poacher pursued the poached; and (4) we provided participants with a more fine-grained scale by which to indicate the number of their experiences with poaching than was provided to participants in the previous studies. In the sections that follow, we provide a detailed consideration of each of these extensions of previous research.

A stricter definition of mate poaching

Schmitt and Buss (2001) defined mate poaching as “behavior intended to attract someone who is already in a romantic relationship” (p. 894) and Schmitt et al. (2004) defined it as “romantically attracting someone who is already in a relationship” (p. 560). Neither of these definitions, however, explicitly stated two criteria that are central to poaching and that differentiate poaching from other forms of romantic attraction. One was that to be considered a poacher, the pursuing individual must be aware that the targeted individual is already in a romantic relationship. The second was that the targeted individual's romantic relationship must be considered by all parties (poacher, poached, and poachee) to be exclusive or monogamous, such that sexual relations with people outside of this relationship constitute a violation of the relationship. If either of these two conditions is not present in a particular romantic attraction, then it cannot be considered as an instance of mate poaching.

Since the definitions of mate poaching formulated by Schmitt and Buss (2001) and by Schmitt et al. (2004) informed the construction of the surveys presented to their participants, these surveys did not make the above two criteria of poaching explicit. For instance, instructions for the surveys included the phrase, “Sometimes people attempt to attract someone who is already in a relationship.” *Question 2* of Schmitt and Buss' survey asked, “Have you ever tried to attract someone who was already in a relationship with

someone else for a short-term sexual relationship with you?”, and *Question 1* of Schmitt et al.'s survey asked, “Have you ever tried to attract someone who was already in a romantic relationship with someone else for a short-term sexual relationship with you?”¹ Since the instructions and questions presented to participants in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004) did not explicitly state the two criteria of poaching, participants in each study may have reported experiences with non-poaching forms of romantic attraction as experiences with poaching. As a result, these participants may have over-reported their experiences with poaching.

In the current study, therefore, the construction of the survey was informed by a definition of poaching that explicitly stated the two aforementioned criteria of poaching: “Mate poaching occurs when an individual has, or attempts to have, sexual relations with a person that the former individual knows is already in an exclusive relationship with someone else.” As a result, participants in the current study were presented with instructions and questions in which the two poaching criteria were explicit. In so doing, we expected to reduce the number of instances in which participants would erroneously report experiences with non-poaching romantic attractions as experiences with poaching. We, therefore, expected the percentages of participants in the current study reporting some experience with the various categories of poaching to be smaller than the percentages reporting some experience with the corresponding categories in both Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004).

Although the response scales used in the current study differed in several aspects from those used in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004), “some” experience was indicated in all three studies by any rating other than the lowest anchor on the respective scales. Thus, in all three studies, “some” experience with poaching was indicated by a response other than “Never.” Similarly, “some” experience with a *successful* poaching was indicated by a response other than “Not at all Successful” in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004), and by a response other than “Never” in current study. We contend, therefore, that it is valid to make direct comparisons across studies of the percentages of participants reporting “some” experience with poaching. As such, the only methodological difference between the survey used in the current study and those used in the earlier studies was in the manipulation of the definition of poaching.

An additional form of mate poaching: “Did not initially know” poaches

To be considered a poacher according to the definition used in the current study, a pursuer must know while attempting

¹ Keywords were italicized.

to attract the targeted individual that the target was already in an exclusive relationship. Nevertheless, even if the pursuer was not *initially* aware that the targeted individual was already in an exclusive relationship, that pursuer may later become aware of this and continue to attempt to attract the targeted person. From this point onwards, the pursuer would be considered to be a poacher. Accordingly, the current study further extended the research of Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004) by investigating the frequency of individuals' experiences with poaches in which the poacher did not initially know that the poached was already in an exclusive relationship. Henceforth, we refer to poaches conducted in this way as "did not initially know" poaches, and poaches in which the poacher did know from the start that the poached was already in an exclusive relationship as "knew from the start" poaches.

An additional temporal context of mate poaching:
Poaches for "long-term sexual affairs"

Both Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004) investigated the frequency of poaching experiences across a dichotomy of temporal contexts. One context was *short-term* poaches, or "temporary sexual desertions by the already-mated partner," including "one night stands" and "brief affairs." The second context was *long-term* poaches or "permanent relationship defection [by the poached] and the eventual formation of a new long-term mating alliance," including "potential marriage partners" (Schmitt & Buss, 2001, pp. 894–895; see also Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000).

In the current study, we investigated the frequency of poaching experiences across three temporal contexts. One context was "short-term sexual partner," which corresponded to "short-term" poaches in the earlier studies. A second context "was new exclusive relationship," which corresponded to "long-term" poaches in the earlier studies. In addition, there might exist a formerly uninvestigated temporal context, in which poachers maintained long-lasting sexual relationships with the poached, but the poached never permanently abandoned their initial relationship. Accordingly, in the current study, we investigated the frequency of such poaches as a third temporal context: "long-term sexual affair."

A more fine-grained measure of the frequency
of mate poaching

Participants in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004) rated the frequency of their poaching experiences on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*), with intermediate values labeled *rarely*, *seldom*, *sometimes*, *frequently*, and *almost always*. In addition to investigating the percentages of individuals who had some experience with poaching, both studies considered ratings other than "never." Thus, Schmitt

and Buss investigated the percentages with "frequent" experiences, which they considered to be indicated by ratings of *frequently*, *almost always*, and *always* (i.e., ratings of 5 and above). It is not clear, however, what was signified by these three ratings. For instance, does the rating *always* indicate that the participant attempts to poach *every* individual in an exclusive romantic relationship whom he or she comes across? Does the rating *always* mean that the participant attempts to poach *only* those individuals who were in exclusive romantic relationships? Does the rating *frequently* indicate that the participant has experienced two or a thousand instances of a particular poaching category? Schmitt et al. (2004) investigated the frequency with which individuals experienced each category of poaching by examining the mean ratings for men and women along the 7-point scale. Thus, for instance, a mean rating of 2.42 for men was interpreted to indicate that men "rarely to seldom" experience the rated type of poaching. As with the other points on the 7-point scale, it is unclear what *rarely* or *seldom* signified.

To avoid potential ambiguities associated with interpretations of responses other than "never" in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004), the current study used a more fine-grained measure that allowed a quantification of the frequency of participants' poaching experiences.

Method

Participants

Participants were 215 undergraduates at a public university in the southeastern United States (125 men, M age = 19.9 years, $SD = 3.2$; 90 women, $M = 19.8$, $SD = 4.2$). Participants self-recruited by signing-up for a stated appointment time on a sheet posted on a notice-board in a university building. All received an extra credit toward an Introductory Psychology class.

Measures and procedure

Groups of participants were presented with a brief, IRB-approved survey about the frequency of their mate poaching experiences across five categories and three temporal contexts of poaching. The categories were: "have you attempted to poach someone"; "have others attempted to poach you"; "have others successfully poached you"; "have others attempted to poach your partner"; and, "have others successfully poached your partner." The temporal contexts were: "short-term sexual partner; "long-term sexual affair"; and "new exclusive relationship." Participants were verbally informed that their answers to the survey would be anonymous, that the survey requested personal information, and that they would still receive the extra credit if they preferred not to

answer any or all of the questions. Participants were also verbally requested to read the survey's introduction, which included the following definitions: (1) "A mate poacher is someone who has sexual relations with a person whom the mate poacher knows is already in a nominally exclusive relationship with someone else"; (2) "An exclusive relationship is one in which a couple has an understanding that their relationship is sexually monogamous, and so sexual relations with people outside the relationship is a violation of the relationship. Exclusive relationships therefore do not include so-called "open" relationships."

In addition, the introduction included the following scenario: "Suppose that Sally is in an exclusive relationship. Further, suppose that David knows that Sally is in an exclusive relationship. If David tries to attract Sally as a sexual partner, then David is a poacher because he is attempting to have sexual relations with someone (Sally) whom he knows is already in an exclusive relationship. If David did not know that Sally was already in an exclusive relationship, then David would not be a poacher, even though Sally actually is in an exclusive relationship. To be called a poacher, an individual must know that the person he or she is attempting to attract is already in an exclusive relationship."²

The frequency of participants' experiences with *knew from the start* poaches was investigated through questions that explicitly stated the two aforementioned poaching criteria. For instance, *Question 1* asked, "Knowing, from the start, that a person was already in an exclusive relationship, have you ever attempted to attract this person as a short-term sexual partner?" The frequency of participants' experiences with "did not initially know" poaches was investigated through questions that explicitly stated that the poacher did not initially know that the poached was already in an exclusive relationship. For instance, *Question 4* asked, "Even if you did not initially know that a person whom you were attempting to attract was already in an exclusive relationship, have you, after finding out about the person's existing relationship, ever continued to pursue this person as a short-term sexual partner?"³ Participants rated the frequency of their poaching experiences by circling one of the following responses: "Never"; "Once"; "Twice"; "More than twice." We interpreted ratings other than "Never" as indicating some experience. Participants rated how successful a poaching experience had been by circling one of the following responses: "Not at all Successful"; "Moderately Successful"; "Very Successful." We interpreted ratings other than "Not at all Successful" as indicating some experience with a successful poaching.

² Keywords were in either boldface or italics.

³ Keywords were in either boldface or italics.

Results

Some experience with "knew from the start" poaches

In this section, we consider results displayed in Table 1. We first consider comparisons between the percentages within each sex in Schmitt and Buss (2001) who reported having some experience with each poaching category and the corresponding percentages in Schmitt et al.'s (2004) North American samples. Of these 12 comparisons, only for the category "others attempted to poach you" as a short-term sexual partner was there a significant difference, with percentages in Schmitt and Buss being greater for both men and women ($z > 1.96$). Of the 10 other comparisons, six percentages were greater in Schmitt and Buss and four were greater in Schmitt et al., but none of these differences were significant.

Nine of the 10 percentages of men in the current study who reported some experience with "knew from the start" poaching categories were lower than the corresponding percentages of men reporting some experience with the corresponding categories in Schmitt and Buss (2001). Four of these 9 differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). The one difference in the opposite direction was not significant. Further, 7 of the 10 percentages of women in the current study who reported some experience with "knew from the start" poaching categories were lower than the corresponding percentages of women reporting some experience with the corresponding categories in Schmitt and Buss. Three of these 7 differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). Of the three differences in the opposite direction, only for the category "others successfully poached your partner" was the difference significant ($z > 1.96$).

All six of the percentages of men in the current study who reported some experience with "knew from the start" poaching categories were lower than the corresponding percentages of men reporting some experience with the corresponding categories in Schmitt et al.'s (2004) North American samples. Four of these differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). Five of the six percentages of women in the current study who reported some experience with poaching were lower than the corresponding percentages of women in Schmitt et al. Two of these five differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). The one difference in the opposite direction was not significant.

"Knew from the start" poaches versus "did not initially know" poaches

In this section, we consider results of the current study displayed in Table 2. All 15 of the percentages of men reporting some experience of "knew from the start" poaches were greater than the corresponding percentages of men reporting

Table 1 Comparisons of percentages within each sex with some poaching experience across Schmitt and Buss (2001), Schmitt et al.'s (2004) North American samples, and the current study. Percentages in the current study are for *new from the start* poaches

	Men			Women			Men			Women								
	SB	S	z	SB	S	z	SB	DSH	z	S	DSH	z						
Attempted to poach someone:																		
short-term sexual partner	64	62	0.16	49	40	1.50	64	54	0.80	49	34	1.85	62	54	1.67	40	34	1.06
<i>N</i>	14	911		32	1021		14	68		32	31		911	68		1021	31	
new exclusive relationship	52	63	-1.07	63	52	1.80	52	50	0.18	63	27	4.55*	63	50	2.79*	52	27	4.73*
<i>N</i>	12	926		40	1328		12	63		40	24		926	63		1328	24	
Others attempted to poach you:																		
short-term sexual partner	95	75	2.15*	91	76	2.77*	95	70	2.59*	91	80	1.83	75	70	1.14	76	80	-0.88
<i>N</i>	21	1103		59	1940		21	88		59	72		1103	88		1940	72	
new exclusive relationship	83	72	1.12	81	75	1.08	83	54	2.90*	81	68	1.81	72	54	4.14*	75	68	1.55
<i>N</i>	19	1058		51	1915		19	68		51	61		1058	68		1915	61	
Others successfully poached you:																		
short-term sexual partner	50	63	-1.25	35	42	-1.07	50	38	1.02	35	38	-0.31	63	38	5.41*	42	38	0.80
<i>N</i>	11	926		23	1072		11	48		23	34		926	48		1072	34	
new exclusive relationship	43	52	-0.81	49	48	0.19	43	19	2.54*	49	19	3.98	52	19	7.04*	48	19	5.44*
<i>N</i>	10	764		31	1225		10	34		31	17		764	24		1225	17	
Others attempted to poach your partner:																		
short-term sexual partner							86	64	2.20*	85	74	1.53						
<i>N</i>							19	80		55	67							
new exclusive relationship				70	51	1.62	70	51	1.62	79	64	1.99*						
<i>N</i>				16	64		16	64		50	58							
Others successfully poached your partner:																		
short-term sexual partner				27	28	-0.07	27	28	-0.07	25	40	-2.00*						
<i>N</i>				6	35		6	35		16	36							
new exclusive relationship				35	22	1.27	35	22	1.27	30	30	0.02						
<i>N</i>				8	28		8	28		19	27							

Note. SB represents Schmitt and Buss (2001, Study 1), S represents Schmitt et al. (2004), and DSH represents Davies, Shackelford, and Hass (current study); blank cells indicate that the relevant data were not collected; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Table 2 Comparisons of percentages within each sex in the current study with *some* and *more than two* experiences with *knew from the start* versus *did not initially know* poaches

	Some				More than Two				More than Two			
	KFS		DNIK		KFS		DNIK		KFS		DNIK	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
You attempted to poach someone:												
short-term sexual partner	54	34	40	27	28	11	1.13	3.35*	8	0	2.74*	
N	68	31	50	24	35	14			7	0		
long-term sexual affair	38	21	28	19	9	7	0.37	0.98	2	1	0.55	
N	48	19	911	17	11	9			2	1		
new exclusive relationship	50	27	38	28	13	8	-0.17	1.24	1	1	0.00	
N	63	24	911	25	16	10			1	1		
Others attempted to poach you:												
short-term sexual partner	70	80	55	68	38	23	1.88	2.60*	51	31	2.73*	
N	88	72	911	61	48	29			46	28		
long-term sexual affair	59	64	35	52	20	15	1.66	1.00	37	22	2.13*	
N	74	58	911	47	25	19			33	20		
new exclusive relationship	54	68	42	56	20	12	1.69	1.73	33	24	1.32	
N	68	61	911	50	25	15			30	22		
Others successfully poached you:												
short-term sexual partner	38	38	29	22	14	11	2.28*	0.76	7	3	1.25	
N	48	34	911	20	18	14			6	3		
long-term sexual affair	18	23	12	9	2	3	2.64*	-0.53	2	1	0.55	
N	23	21	911	8	3	4			2	1		
Others successfully poached you:												
new exclusive relationship	19	19	14	18	2	2	0.19	0.00	4	1	1.09	
N	24	17	911	16	3	3			4	1		
Others attempted to poach your partner:												
short-term sexual partner	64	74	53	64	36	23	1.46	2.22*	27	19	1.24	
N	80	67	66	58	45	29			24	17		
long-term sexual affair	51	61	41	48	17	10	1.80	1.48	23	16	1.32	
N	64	55	51	43	21	13			21	14		
new exclusive relationship	51	64	47	53	13	14	1.52	-0.37	20	16	0.78	
N	64	58	59	48	16	18			18	14		
Others successfully poached your partner:												
short-term sexual partner	28	40	18	34	5	6	0.77	-0.55	10	8	0.52	
N	35	36	23	31	6	8			9	7		
long-term sexual affair	16	28	8	21	3	2	1.04	0.53	7	3	1.23	
N	20	25	10	19	4	3			6	3		
new exclusive relationship	22	30	10	16	2	1	2.31*	0.65	3	1	1.00	
N	28	27	13	14	3	1			3	1		

Note. KFS represents *knew from the start* poaches, and DNIK represents *did not initially know* poaches; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed); N for men = 125; N for women = 90.

some experience of “did not initially know” poaches. Six of these differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). Fourteen of the 15 percentages of women reporting some experience of “knew from the start” poaches were greater than the corresponding percentages of women reporting some experience of “did not initially know” poaches. Three of these differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). The one difference in the opposite direction was not significant. Eleven of the 15 percentages of men reporting “more than two” experiences of “knew from the start” poaches were greater than the corresponding percentages of men reporting “more than two” experiences of “did not initially know” poaches. Three of these differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). For one poaching category, percentages did not differ. None of the three differences in the opposite direction was significant. Fourteen of the 15 percentages of women reporting “more than two” experiences of “knew from the start” poaches were greater than the percentages of men reporting “more than two” experiences of “did not initially know” poaches. Three of these differences were significant ($z > 1.96$). For one poaching category, percentages did not differ.

Some experience versus “more than two” experiences

In this section, we consider results of the current study displayed in Table 3. All 15 of the respective percentages of men and women reporting some experience of “knew from the start” poaches were significantly ($z > 1.96$) greater than the corresponding respective percentages of men and women reporting “more than two” experiences of “knew from the start” poaches. Similarly, all 15 of the respective percentages of men and women reporting some experience of “did not initially know” poaches were significantly ($z > 1.96$) greater than the corresponding respective percentages of men and women reporting “more than two” experiences of “did not initially know” poaches.

Sex differences

In this section, we consider results of the current study displayed in Table 4. Across all three temporal contexts, a significantly greater percentage of men than women reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which they attempted to poach someone ($z > 1.96$). A significantly greater percentage of women than men reported having some experience of “knew from the start” poaches in which someone attempted to poach them for a “new exclusive relationship” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly greater percentage of women than men reported having some experience of “knew from the start” poaches in which someone successfully poached their partner for a “long-term sexual affair” ($z > 1.96$).

A significantly greater percentage of men than women reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which they attempted to poach someone as a short-term sexual partner ($z > 1.96$). A significantly greater percentage of women than men reported having some experience of “did not initially know” poaches in which someone attempted to poach them for a “long-term sexual affair” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly greater percentage of women than men reported having some experience of “did not initially know” poaches in which someone successfully poached their partner as a “short-term sexual partner” and for a “long-term sexual affair” ($z > 1.96$).

Across all three temporal contexts, a significantly greater percentage of men than women reported having “more than two” experiences with “knew from the start” poaches in which they attempted to poach someone ($z > 1.96$). A significantly greater percentage of women than men reported having “more than two” experiences of “knew from the start” poaches in which someone attempted to poach them for a “long-term sexual affair” and for a “new exclusive relationship” ($z > 1.96$).

Across all three temporal contexts, a significantly greater percentage of men than women reported having “more than two” experiences with “did not initially know” poaches in which they attempted to poach someone ($z > 1.96$). A significantly greater percentage of women than men reported having “more than two” experiences of “did not initially know” poaches in which someone attempted to poach them for a “new exclusive relationship” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly greater percentage of men than women reported having “more than two” experiences with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone successfully poached them as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$).

Poaches for long-term sexual affairs

In this section, we consider results of the current study displayed in Table 5. A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which they attempted to poach someone for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which someone successfully poached them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having “more than two” experiences with “knew from the start” poaches in which someone successfully poached them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which someone attempted to poach their partner for a “long-term sexual affair”

Table 3 Comparisons of percentages within each sex in the current study with some versus more than two experiences with *knew from the start* or *did not initially know* poaches

	KFS			KFS			DNIK			DNIK		
	Some More than two			Some More than two			Some More than two			Some More than two		
	Men	Women	z	Men	Women	z	Men	Women	z	Men	Women	z
You attempted to poach someone:												
short-term sexual partner	54	28	4.24*	34	8	4.38*	40	11	5.22*	27	0	5.29*
N	68	35		31	7		50	14		24	0	
long-term sexual affair	38	9	5.51*	21	2	3.99*	28	7	4.32*	19	1	4.03*
N	48	11		19	2		35	9		17	1	
new exclusive relationship	50	13	6.39*	27	1	5.03*	38	8	5.69*	28	1	5.14*
N	63	16		24	1		48	10		25	1	
Others attempted to poach you:												
short-term sexual partner	70	38	5.08*	80	51	4.08*	55	23	5.18*	68	31	4.92*
N	88	48		72	46		69	29		61	28	
long-term sexual affair	59	20	6.34*	64	37	3.73*	35	15	3.64*	52	22	4.16*
N	74	25		58	33		44	19		47	20	
new exclusive relationship	54	20	5.63*	68	33	4.62*	42	12	5.40*	56	24	4.26*
N	68	25		61	30		53	15		50	22	
Others successfully poached you:												
short-term sexual partner	38	14	4.30*	38	7	5.02*	29	11	3.48*	22	3	3.85*
N	48	18		34	6		36	14		20	3	
long-term sexual affair	18	2	4.22*	23	2	4.26*	12	3	2.70*	9	1	2.46*
N	23	3		21	2		15	4		8	1	
Others successfully poached you:												
new exclusive relationship	19	2	4.38*	19	4	3.73*	14	2	3.50*	18	1	3.89*
N	24	3		17	4		18	3		16	1	
Others attempted to poach your partner:												
short-term sexual partner	64	36	4.43*	74	27	6.41*	53	23	4.82*	64	19	6.20*
N	80	45		67	24		66	29		58	17	
long-term sexual affair	51	17	5.74*	61	23	5.13*	41	10	5.51*	48	16	4.65*
N	64	21		55	21		51	13		43	14	
new exclusive relationship	51	13	6.51*	64	20	6.04*	47	14	5.62*	53	16	5.33*
N	64	16		58	18		59	18		48	14	
Others successfully poached your partner:												
short-term sexual partner	28	5	4.95*	40	10	4.65*	18	6	2.89*	34	8	4.38*
N	35	6		36	9		23	8		31	7	
long-term sexual affair	16	3	3.50*	28	7	3.75*	8	2	2.18*	21	3	3.72*
N	20	4		25	6		10	3		19	3	
new exclusive relationship	22	2	4.88*	30	3	4.85*	10	1	3.12*	16	1	3.61*
N	28	3		27	3		13	2		14	1	

Note. KFS represents *knew from the start* poaches; DNIK represents *did not initially know* poaches; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed); N for men = 125; N for women = 90.

Table 4 Comparisons of percentages of men versus women in the current study with *some or more than two* experiences with *knew from the start* or *did not initially know* poaches

	Some				More than two				More than two					
	KFS		DNIK		KFS		DNIK		KFS		DNIK		DNIK	
	Men	Women	z	Men	Women	Men	Women	z	Men	Women	Men	Women	z	z
You attempted to poach someone:														
short-term sexual partner	54	34	2.90*	40	27	28	8	2.03*	28	8	11	0	3.69*	3.25*
N	68	31		50	24	35	7		35	7	14	0		
long-term sexual affair	38	21	2.70*	28	19	9	2	1.54	9	2	7	1	2.12*	2.09*
N	48	19		35	17	11	2		11	2	9	1		
new exclusive relationship	50	27	3.50*	38	28	13	1	1.62	13	1	8	1	3.20*	2.33*
N	63	24		48	25	16	1		16	1	10	1		
Others attempted to poach you:														
short-term sexual partner	70	80	-1.59	55	68	38	51	-1.86	38	51	23	31	-1.85	-1.30
N	88	72		69	61	48	46		48	46	29	28		
long-term sexual affair	59	64	-0.78	35	52	20	37	-2.49*	20	37	15	22	-2.72*	-1.32
N	74	58		44	47	25	33		25	33	19	20		
new exclusive relationship	54	68	-1.98*	42	56	20	33	-1.91	20	33	12	24	-2.21*	-2.39*
N	68	61		53	50	25	30		25	30	15	22		
Others successfully poached you:														
short-term sexual partner	38	38	0.09	29	22	14	7	1.08	14	7	11	3	1.78	2.16*
N	48	34		36	20	18	6		18	6	14	3		
long-term sexual affair	18	23	-0.89	12	9	2	2	0.73	2	2	3	1	0.00	1.03
N	23	21		15	8	3	2		3	2	4	1		
new exclusive relationship	19	19	0.06	14	18	2	4	-0.67	2	4	2	1	-0.88	0.59
N	24	17		18	16	3	4		3	4	3	1		
Others attempted to poach your partner:														
short-term sexual partner	64	74	-1.63	53	64	36	27	-1.71	36	27	23	19	1.45	0.76
N	80	67		66	58	45	24		45	24	29	17		
long-term sexual affair	51	61	-1.44	41	48	17	23	-1.02	17	23	10	16	-1.19	-1.13
N	64	55		51	43	21	21		21	21	13	14		
new exclusive relationship	51	64	-1.93	47	53	13	20	-0.89	13	20	14	16	-1.43	-0.24
N	64	58		59	48	16	18		16	18	18	14		
Others successfully poached your partner:														
short-term sexual partner	28	40	-1.85	18	34	5	10	-2.68*	5	10	6	8	-1.48	-0.39
N	35	36		23	31	6	9		6	9	8	7		
long-term sexual affair	16	28	-2.09*	8	21	3	7	-2.78*	3	7	2	3	1.38	-0.47
N	20	25		10	19	4	6		4	6	3	3		
new exclusive relationship	22	30	-1.26	10	16	2	3	-1.13	2	3	1	1	-0.47	0.00
N	28	27		13	14	3	3		3	3	1	1		

Note. KFS represents *knew from the start* poaches, and DNIK represents *did not initially know* poaches; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed); N for men = 125; N for women = 90.

Table 5 Comparisons of percentages within each sex in the current study with *some and more than two* experiences with *knew from the start and did not initially know* poaches for a “long-term sexual affair,” a “short-term sexual partner,” and a “new exclusive relationship”

	KFS						DNIK																	
	Men			Women			Men			Women														
	LT	ST	NE	z^1	z^2	z^3	LT	ST	NE	z^1	z^2	z^3												
You attempted to poach someone:																								
Some	38	54	50	-2.54*	-1.91	0.63	21	34	27	-2.00*	-0.87	1.13	28	40	38	-2.00*	-1.75	0.26	19	27	28	-1.24	-1.41	-0.17
N	48	68	63				19	31	24				35	50	48				17	24	25			
>Two	9	28	13	-3.92*	-1.02	2.98*	2	8	1	-1.88	0.55	2.07*	7	11	8	-1.09	-0.24	0.86	1	0	1	0.95	0.00	-0.95
N	11	35	16				2	7	1				9	14	10				1	0	1			
Others attempted to poach you:																								
Some	59	70	54	-1.85	0.77	2.61*	64	80	68	-2.33*	-0.47	1.87	35	55	42	-3.12*	-1.17	2.02*	52	68	56	-2.13*	-0.45	1.69
N	74	88	68				58	72	61				44	69	53				47	61	50			
>Two	20	38	20	-3.20*	0.00	3.20*	37	51	33	-1.95	0.47	2.42*	15	23	12	-1.61	0.74	2.33*	22	31	24	-1.35	-0.35	1.00
N	25	48	25				33	46	30				19	29	15				20	28	22			
Others successfully poached you:																								
Some	18	38	19	-3.51*	-0.16	3.35*	23	38	19	-2.10*	0.73	2.81*	12	29	14	-3.30*	-0.56	2.77*	9	22	18	-2.47*	-1.75	0.75
N	23	48	24				21	34	17				15	36	18				8	20	16			
>Two	2	14	2	-3.53*	0.00	3.85*	2	7	4	-1.62	-0.79	0.62	3	11	2	-2.48*	0.51	3.12*	1	3	1	-0.96	0.00	0.96
N	3	18	3				2	6	4				4	14	3				1	3	1			
Others attempted to poach your partner:																								
Some	51	64	51	-2.05*	0.00	2.05*	61	74	64	-1.91	-0.46	1.46	41	53	47	-1.90	0.89	-1.02	48	64	53	-2.25*	-0.75	1.52
N	64	80	64				55	67	58				51	66	59				43	58	48			
>Two	17	36	13	-3.44*	0.89	4.27*	23	27	20	-0.52	0.54	1.06	10	23	14	-2.71*	1.78	-0.96	16	19	16	-0.59	0.00	0.60
N	21	45	16				21	24	18				13	29	18				14	17	14			
Others successfully poached your partner:																								
Some	16	28	22	-2.29*	-1.29	1.02	28	40	30	-1.73	-0.33	1.41	8	18	10	-2.43*	-0.66	1.80	21	34	16	-2.00*	0.96	2.93*
N	20	35	28				25	36	27				10	23	13				19	31	14			
>Two	3	5	2	-0.80	0.51	1.15	7	10	3	-0.81	-1.23	1.69	2	6	1	-1.60	0.65	2.67*	3	8	1	-1.47	0.96	2.05*
N	4	6	3				6	9	3				3	8	1				3	7	1			

Note. LT represents long-term sexual affair; ST represents short-term sexual partner; NE represents new exclusive relationship; z^1 indicates z-score for long-term sexual affair versus short-term sexual partner; z^2 indicates z-score for long-term sexual affair versus short-term sexual partner; z^3 indicates z-score for short-term sexual partner versus new exclusive relationship; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed); N for men = 125; N for women = 90.

versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having “more than two” experiences with “knew from the start” poaches in which someone attempted to poach their partner for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which someone successfully poached their partner for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$).

A significantly smaller percentage of women reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which they attempted to poach someone for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of women reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which someone attempted to poach them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of women reported having some experience with “knew from the start” poaches in which someone successfully poached them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$).

A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which they attempted to poach someone for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone attempted to poach them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone successfully poached them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having “more than two” experiences with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone successfully poached them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having “more than two” experiences with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone attempted to poach their partner for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of men reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone successfully poached their partner for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$).

A significantly smaller percentage of women reported having some experience with “did not initially know”

poaches in which someone attempted to poach them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of women reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone successfully poached them for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of women reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone attempted to poach their partner for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$). A significantly smaller percentage of women reported having some experience with “did not initially know” poaches in which someone successfully poached their partner for a “long-term sexual affair” versus as a “short-term sexual partner” ($z > 1.96$).

Discussion

In this section, we discuss the results outlined in the preceding section. We also highlight limitations of the current study and suggest how these might be addressed in future research.

Some experience of “knew from the start” poaches

The principal aim of the current study was to investigate the percentages of participants reporting some experience with various categories of poaching when presented with a survey which, throughout, explicitly stated two criteria that distinguished poaching from other forms of romantic attraction: (1) the pursuing individual must be aware from the start that the targeted individual was already in a romantic relationship; (2) the targeted individual’s relationship must be considered by all concerned parties to be exclusive or monogamous. Comparisons between these percentages in the current study and the corresponding percentages in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004), in both of which the surveys did not explicitly state the two aforementioned criteria, indicated that percentages were generally smaller in the current study. We conclude, therefore, that by explicitly stating the two poaching criteria throughout the survey, the current study reduced the number of experiences with non-poaching forms of romantic attraction that were reported as experiences with poaching. Accordingly, we argue that the current study provided estimates of the percentages of men and women who have had some experience with poaching that are more accurate than those provided by the two previous studies.

“Knew from the start” poaches versus “did not initially know” poaches

Unlike previous studies, the current study investigated the percentages of participants reporting experience with poaching when presented with questions that explicitly stated that the poacher was not initially aware that the targeted individual was already in an exclusive relationship but continued to pursue the targeted individual after becoming thus aware. Comparisons in the current study between the percentages of men and women reporting both some and more than two experiences with categories of “did not initially know” poaches versus the corresponding percentages of “knew from the start” poaches indicated that percentages were generally greater for “knew from the start” poaches.

The finding that greater percentages of participants reported more experiences with “knew from the start” poaches than with “did not initially know” poaches indicate that individuals who attempted to poach, more often than not knew *before* beginning to do so that the targeted individual was in an exclusive relationship. Possibilities for the means by which pursuers gain this knowledge include direct questioning by the pursuer of the target or third parties and deliberate or inadvertent uninvited disclosure by the target or third parties. Notwithstanding this, the fact that some poachers only became aware that the targeted individual was in an exclusive relationship after the poaching attempt had begun suggests that targets of poachers may engage in deception regarding their relationship status. There would clearly be value in future research investigating the foregoing issues.

Some experience versus “more than two” experiences

For both “knew from the start” and “did not initially know” poaches, all of the respective percentages of men and women reporting some experience were significantly greater than the corresponding respective percentages of men and women reporting “more than two” experiences. This is not surprising, as all individuals who reported more than two experiences must have had some experience, whereas the reverse is not necessarily true. Nevertheless, the fact that all the differences between the percentages for some experience and “more than two” experiences were *highly* significant suggests that a large proportion of the individuals who have poached have not done so more than twice. To the best of our knowledge, the current study is the first to provide such precise quantitative estimates of the frequency of poaching.

Sex differences

Among 12 comparisons for both “knew from the start” and “did not initially know” poaches in which participants attempted to poach someone, all 10 statistically significant re-

sults indicated that a greater percentage of men than women reported having some experience and “more than two” experiences. Conversely, among 12 comparisons for both “knew from the start” and “did not initially know” poaches in which someone attempted to poach the participant, all five statistically significant results indicated that a greater percentage of women than men reported having some experience and “more than two” experiences. Taken together, these results indicate an internal consistency in the current study regarding the responses of men and women and suggest that men were generally more inclined to engage in poaching than were women. This is in line with Schmitt and Buss’ (2001) and Schmitt et al.’s (2004) findings that men reported engaging in more poaching attempts than did women. It was also in accordance with the only sex differences found in the mean ratings of benefits and costs specific to poaching reported in Davies, Shackelford and Hass (2006). These indicated that men perceived certain benefits as more likely to motivate them to poach, whereas women perceived certain costs as more likely to deter them from poaching, suggesting that men are more willing to engage in poaching than are women.

Poaches for long-term sexual affairs

Comparing poaches for a long-term sexual affair versus for a new exclusive relationship, we found no significant differences between percentages for men or for women reporting some experience or more than two experiences. In contrast, out of a total 40 comparisons, all 19 significant differences indicated that percentages within each sex reporting either some or more than two experiences with poaches for a long-term sexual affair were smaller than the corresponding percentages for a short-term sexual affair. Similarly, out of a total 40 comparisons, all 17 significant differences indicated that percentages within each sex reporting either some or more than two experiences with poaches for a short-term sexual affair were greater than the corresponding percentages for a new exclusive relationship. These findings indicate that poaches for short-term sexual affairs were more frequently engaged in than were poaches for either long-term sexual affairs or for new exclusive relationships. This reflects two general trends found in Davies et al. (2006). First, benefits specifically associated with poaching were rated as being more likely to motivate men and women to engage in short-term poaches than in poaches for long-term sexual affairs or new exclusive relationships. Second, costs specifically associated with poaching were rated as being less likely to deter men and women from engaging in short-term poaches than in poaches for long-term sexual affairs or new exclusive relationships.

The above findings should additionally be considered in light of Davies et al.’s (2006) hierarchy of mating

strategies hypothesis. Davies et al. found that when given the choice of attracting an unattached or an attached individual of equal attractiveness, men and women considered none of the benefits specific to poaching as large enough to motivate them to poach and most of the costs specific to poaching as large enough to deter them from poaching. Thus, Davies et al. hypothesized that men and women engage in poaching only when they are unable to secure a sufficiently attractive unattached individual. Together, therefore, the findings of the current study and Davies et al. suggest that poaching is largely undertaken to secure short-term matings by men and women who are unable to attract unattached individuals of sufficient mate value.

Limitations and future directions

A central limitation of the current study concerns whether the percentages of participants reporting some experience with various categories of poaching were generally smaller than those in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004) due to the stricter definition of poaching used in the current study or to some other differences across the studies. We contend that differences between the current survey and the earlier surveys, other than that regarding the definition of poaching, were unlikely to have contributed to the differences in percentages across the studies. This is because, in the following ways, we attempted to make the current survey effectively the same as the two earlier ones. First, we used the same basic question format as used in the earlier surveys. Second, in all three surveys, “some” experience of poaching was indicated by a rating other than “never.” Third, “some” experience of successful poaching was indicated in a comparable way across surveys, being indicated in the earlier surveys by a rating other than “Not at all successful” and in the current survey by a rating other than “never.”

It follows that, perhaps, the most plausible alternative to the stricter definition as the cause of the smaller percentages found in the current study was sampling differences. Whereas participants in the current study were undergraduates at a public university in the southeastern United States, participants in Schmitt and Buss (2001) were undergraduates at a public university in the midwestern United States and participants in Schmitt et al. (2004) were overwhelmingly from outside of the United States and included a significant proportion of individuals who were not college-based but community-based.

Several lines of argument, however, speak against the notion that it was sampling differences that produced smaller percentages in the current study as compared to those in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004). First, as the samples of the current study and Schmitt and Buss were both solely comprised of undergraduates in the United

States, the cultural differences between the current sample and that of Schmitt and Buss were likely to be less than the cultural differences between the sample of Schmitt and Buss and the university- and community-based North American samples of Schmitt et al. Yet, the percentages within each sex for each of the poaching categories were broadly similar across Schmitt and Buss and Schmitt et al.: only two of 12 comparisons were significant and there was no reliable trend in the direction of the differences for the other comparisons. Second, as the entire collection of samples within Schmitt et al. spanned 53 countries and five continents, the cultural differences between the current sample and solely the North American samples of Schmitt et al. are likely to be less than the cultural differences between all samples within Schmitt et al. Yet, across all samples within Schmitt et al., percentages reporting some experience with each of the poaching categories were broadly similar. For instance, the percentages in Schmitt et al. that reported having at some time attempted to poach someone as a short-term mate were 64% of men and 49% of women in North American samples, 70% of men and 38% of women in South American samples from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Peru, and 64% of men and 36% of women in samples from Southern Europe, including Cyprus, Greece, Malta, and Portugal. These two arguments suggest that the percentages reporting experiences with poaching were largely uninfluenced by sampling differences, even those that might reasonably be assumed to be relatively large, but were significantly influenced by whether the two poaching criteria were explicitly stated in a survey.

Third, from a purely theoretical standpoint, it seems difficult to refute the argument that if a survey presented to participants fails to explicitly state in its introduction and questions that to be considered an instance of poaching the pursuer must be aware while attempting to attract the targeted individual that the target was in a nominally exclusive romantic relationship, some participants were likely to report experiences with non-poaching forms of romantic attraction as experiences with poaching.

In addition, it might be suggested that in Schmitt and Buss (2001) and Schmitt et al. (2004), any mate attractions that were reported as poaches despite the pursuers not being aware *while pursuing* the targeted individuals that the targets were in nominally exclusive relationships, are equivalent to “did not initially know” poaches in the current study.⁴ This is not the case. In “did not initially know” poaches, the pursuers *are* aware of their targets’ existing relationships during the pursuit, and so such attractions can properly be considered as poaches. In contrast, in the aforementioned mating attractions in the earlier studies, the pursuers only

⁴ We would like to thank one of the referees for making this suggestion.

become aware of their targets' existing relationships *after* the pursuit has ended and, therefore, such attractions cannot properly be considered as poaches.

Notwithstanding the foregoing arguments regarding sampling differences, the degree to which a study's findings can be generalized to populations outside of the sample population is a common research concern. It is, therefore, possible that at least some proportion of the differences in the percentages across the current study and the earlier studies was due, not to the devising of the current survey being informed by the stricter definition of poaching, but to sampling differences across the studies. Future research could control for any such sampling differences through a balanced replication, in which, through random assignment, one half of a sample would be presented with the current survey but in which the two aforementioned poaching criteria were never stated explicitly, and the other half would be presented with the current survey as in the current study. If percentages were to be significantly smaller among participants presented with the current survey as in the current study, this would strengthen the current study's claim that explicitly stating the two poaching criteria throughout a survey reduced the likelihood of participants reporting non-poaching experiences as poaching experiences.

Any such balanced replication should address additional limitations of the current study. First, it should include a manipulation check in the current survey in order to verify that participants were cognizant of the two poaching criteria while completing the survey. Second, as well as age, each of its surveys should request other aspects of participants' demographics, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Third, the order of the questions in each survey should be counterbalanced. For example, one might counterbalance the order of questions as regards to temporal context and "knew from the start" and "did not initially know" poaches.

In addition, it would be profitable for future research to present the current study's survey to undergraduate and community-based samples from other regions of North America and the world. Similarly, as the current study was the first to investigate experiences with "did not initially know" poaches and poaches for "long-term sexual affairs" and was the first to precisely quantify the occurrence of poaching, presenting the current study's survey to such samples would provide a means of assessing the extent to which the findings with the current sample regarding these novel investigations can be generalized to other populations.

Another limitation of the current study was the reliance on self-reports to secure data on experiences with mate poaching (Grimm & Church, 1999). Perhaps, the concern regarding this that is most pertinent to the current study was the robust finding of a sex difference in interpretations of intent in opposite-sex interactions (e.g., Abbey, 1982; Shotland & Craig, 1988). Specifically, men tend to misinterpret a range

of affiliative behaviors of women as being sexually suggestive. This phenomenon may, thus, cause men to overreport the number of poaching attempts made on them and their partners. Conversely, women may misinterpret men's actual sexual overtures towards them as being merely friendly. Accordingly, women may under-report the number of poaching attempts made on them and their partners. The foregoing suggests that the reports of participants regarding the frequency of poaching attempts made on them and their partners presented in the current study (and in other studies) may overestimate the sizes of the sex differences along these aspects of poaching. Establishing the veridicality of the estimates provided would, as Schmitt and Buss (2001) noted, "be an extraordinarily difficult task, given that mate poaching is often conducted clandestinely, rendering observational studies all but impossible to conduct" (p. 912). Although imperfect, therefore, self-report may be the best way to secure estimates of the frequency of poaching experiences from large numbers of individuals.

If one is to devise a measure for any psychological concept, the concept must first be operationally defined. The more accurately that the definition represents the concept, then the measure's construct validity will be greater and any measurements of the concept will be more accurate. In this article, we investigated whether mate poaching had been sufficiently demarcated from other forms of romantic attraction by the operational definition of poaching that had, to the best of our knowledge, informed the devising of all previous surveys for investigating the frequency of poaching. Our results indicated that these earlier surveys were likely to have led some participants to report experiences with non-poaching forms of romantic attraction as experiences with poaching. Consequently, earlier measurements may have provided inflated estimates of the frequency of poaching. Accordingly, although further investigations which address the limitations of the current study are required, we argue that the devising of a measure of the frequency of poaching must be informed by an operational definition of poaching that *explicitly* states that to be considered a poach, the pursuer must be aware while attempting to attract the targeted individual, that the target is already in a nominally exclusive relationship.

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