'Is she really going out with him?': Attractiveness exchange and commitment scripts for romantic relationships

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ABSTRACT

Three experiments document the contingencies of the attractiveness exchange-script. Experiment 1 ($N = 219$) demonstrates that observers assume that the more-attractive partner in a romantic couple is relatively uncommitted to their relationship, and this script is stronger when evaluating women than men. Experiment 2 ($N = 165$) demonstrates that observers assume that a less-attractive man compensates his more-attractive female partner by providing status and resources, but only in a committed relationship and only when the attractiveness-differential is moderate. Experiment 3 ($N = 107$) demonstrates that highly-attractive men engage in mate-poaching behavior (proximity seeking) when a romantically-involved woman is accompanied by a less-attractive boyfriend, but not when she is alone or accompanied by a boyfriend who matches her attractiveness. This research affirms that observers possess implicit scripts concerning the exchange of relational benefits within relationships, and validates important premises of evolutionary models of attraction by behaviorally demonstrating men's use of mate-poaching tactics.

1. Introduction

Oh come on, Molly, look at me! I'm a five! This is a five! Hard five. You can't jump more than two points. It's the Tao of Love. Everybody knows that. Even if you were a nine and I was in a band. But no, you're a hard ten.

Dialogue from the movie, *She's out of my league* (2010)

Is she really going out with him? Cause if my eyes don't deceive me, there's something going wrong around here.

Lyrics from *Is She Really Going Out With Him?* (Joe Jackson, 1978)

If it is true that art imitates life, then the movie dialogue and song lyrics that are quoted above suggest that observers possess romantic scripts concerning the exchange of benefits between men and women in romantic relationships. In particular, the quoted passages suggest that romantic partners should match in physical attractiveness, and if they don't, then observers may become skeptical about the legitimacy or stability of the relationship. Yet despite the ubiquity of this particular attractiveness exchange-script in popular culture, relatively little empirical attention has been paid to documenting its existence. The present research takes steps towards filling this gap.

1.1. Scripts for romantic relationships

Humans are social animals and social life is exceptionally complex. Successfully navigating even the most basic social interaction requires a vast array of social and cultural knowledge. To facilitate this navigation process, humans possess the psychological capacity to develop *scripts* that describe behavioral patterns and facilitate inferential social reasoning (Abelson, 1981). Social scripts are learned from personal experience and exposure to relationship dynamics in movies and other media (Baldwin, 1992). Scripts generally consist of one or more "if-then" contingency rules. For example, a relationship-initiation script might stipulate that if a woman smiles at a man she spots across a bar and he maintains eye contact and smiles back, then the pair is attracted to one another. Further, an observer may use that script to infer what comes next, perhaps assuming that the man will approach the woman to initiate a conversation and ask her out. Social scripts are largely implicit, typically operating outside of people's conscious awareness. That is, until the script is violated. In such circumstances, the script may rise to conscious awareness and people will attempt to explain why the violation occurred (Baldwin, 1992).

Psychological scientists have documented the contingencies of social scripts concerning a host of relationship dynamics and have demonstrated how those scripts influence social expectations and

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behavior. Scripts can help people make sense of and guide their own social behavior. For example, attachment-related scripts determine whether people believe that others can be relied upon when needed and determine whether people will approach or avoid a romantic partner when distressed (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Destiny and growth scripts dictate people's expectations about, and reactions to, conflict in their close relationships (e.g., Knee, 1998). Scripts can also help observers to make sense of other people's social behavior. For example, marriage proposal scripts dictate the elements of a valid proposal, and lead observers to question the legitimacy of a proposal that lacks essential elements (Schweingruber, Anahita, & Berns, 2004). Still other scripts dictate the rules that govern the giving and receiving of benefits within romantic relationships, and it is observers' use of these *exchange scripts* that is the focus of the current research.

1.2. Exchange scripts for romantic relationships

Decades of research by relationship scientists reveals that social exchange processes do influence the formation and maintenance of romantic bonds. Research testing the tenets of foundational evolutionary (e.g., Buss & Barnes, 1986), social exchange (e.g., Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), and equity (Walster, Traupmann, & Walster, 1978) theories reveals that romantic partners are social economists, eager to barter their own valuable traits and qualities to obtain the best possible partner (e.g., Kenrick, Groth, Trost, & Sadalla, 1993). Often, benefits are traded through character-specific exchange, which occurs when one type of relational benefit is given in exchange for an equal measure of that same relational benefit. This exchange dynamic is evident in the positive correlation between romantic partners' physical attractiveness (e.g., Critelli & Waid, 1980), social status, and education level (McClintock, 2014). Moreover, partners are happiest when they perceive that the exchange of relational benefits is fair, and if the giving and receiving of relational benefits is deemed unfair, relationship instability can follow (e.g., Rusbult, 1980; Sprecher, 2001). For example, people report that they are more open to *mate poaching* (i.e., attempts to attract someone who is already in a relationship) if the poacher is more attractive and wealthy than their current partner (Davies & Shackelford, 2017). Furthermore, women who think they are more attractive than their partner are less committed and pay more attention to alternatives (e.g., Fugère, Cousins, & MacLaren, 2015).

Despite evidence demonstrating the importance of exchange processes within romantic bonds, relatively less is known about the scripts that people may possess to help them make sense of the exchange processes they observe in others' relationships. Interdependence theorists have posited that people possess an implicit motivation to perceive that relational benefits are fairly exchanged within a given romantic dyad (Murray et al., 2009). Violations of this script are thought to prompt a search for explanations that will balance the exchange equation. We suggest that one way for observers to balance the exchange equation is to conclude that the more-valuable partner will replace their current partner with a more "suitable," high-value match. This *exchange script* will lead observers to conclude that the more-valuable partner is less committed to their relationship than the less-valuable partner. An attractiveness-specific version of this script is expressed in the movie dialogue and song lyrics that opened this paper. As we will review shortly, there is some empirical evidence that people also apply a similar attractiveness exchange-script when making sense of others' relationships in real life. Indeed, most research concerning exchange scripts has focused on physical attractiveness as the relational benefit of interest, reflecting its ease of observability relative to other valued traits (Anthony, Holmes, & Wood, 2007), the centrality of attractiveness for person perception (e.g., Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972), and its high value on the interpersonal marketplace (e.g., Kenrick et al., 1993). For these reasons, we test an attractiveness exchange-script in the present research.

However, past research concerning observers' use of the attractiveness exchange-script leaves important questions unanswered. For example, observers who evaluate photographs of dating couples believe that highly-attractive partners who match in physical attractiveness are more satisfied in their relationship than mismatched couples where the man is more attractive than his partner (Garcia & Khersonsky, 1996). But will these results generalize across the attractiveness spectrum, to relationships in which the woman is more attractive, and to judgments of relationship commitment? Furthermore, most research examining exchange scripts was conducted > 40 years ago (e.g., Sigall & Landy, 1973). Given that gender roles and relationship norms have changed in the past 40 years (Wood & Eagly, 2012), do such scripts still apply today? Most importantly, research has not examined the ways in which the exchange script might guide observers' behavioral reactions to other people's relationships. If men perceive that a highly-attractive woman is uncommitted to her relationship, will they attempt to lure her away from her less-attractive partner? The present research will address these unanswered questions, and propose and test novel hypotheses concerning attractiveness exchange-scripts for romantic bonds between men and women.

1.3. The current research

To limit the scope of our research question, we focus on documenting young adults' use of the attractiveness exchange-script to understand relationships between other young adults. People in this age group are often forming new relationships so this script may be quite salient for them. We also examine their use of the script to understand relationships in which a young-adult woman is more attractive than her young-adult male partner. This focus allows us to streamline our experimental designs by limiting the number of variables we need to manipulate. It also reflects the cultural heteronormativity that likely shapes exchange scripts and the high value that is placed on a woman's youth and attractiveness (Jackson, 2006). For better or worse (and most often, for worse; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Wolf, 1992), physical attractiveness influences women's lives more strongly than men's lives. Beauty is more central to the female gender role than the male gender role (Jackson, 2006), and women who do not conform to consensual beauty ideals are punished more strongly than men (e.g., Mason, 2012). Evolutionary theories like parental investment theory (e.g., Webster, 2009) and sexual strategies theory (e.g., Buss, 2007) also argue that a woman's attractiveness is particularly valuable to men because it signals fertility, a valuable, but otherwise invisible, relational benefit. Men also claim to value physical attractiveness in a female dating partner more strongly than women claim to value physical attractiveness in their male partners (e.g., Fletcher, Tither, O'Loughlin, Friesen, & Overall, 2004). For these reasons and more, a woman's attractiveness is highly salient to observers (Hahn & Perrett, 2014), and therefore, if she is more attractive than her male partner, the situation is particularly likely to activate the attractiveness exchange-script. We test this hypothesis in Experiment 1.

Experiment 2 examines whether the attractiveness exchange-script includes the stipulation that a less-attractive man must compensate his more-attractive, but committed, female partner by providing status and resources, and tests the script's limits. For example, we suggest that status can bridge a moderate attractiveness-gap but not a very large gap. Our final experiment examines one behavioral consequence of the attractiveness exchange-script. Specifically, in a naturalistic field experiment, we test the hypothesis that highly-attractive men will be more likely to engage in mate-poaching behaviors like proximity-seeking and flattery when a romantically-involved woman is seen to have a less-attractive boyfriend compared to if she is seen to have a boyfriend who matches her attractiveness. Taken together, these experiments will demonstrate the contingencies and behavioral consequences of the attractiveness exchange-script.

2. Experiment 1

In our first experiment, participants view pictures of male-female "romantic couples" in which partners are matched in attractiveness or one partner is more attractive than the other, and then rate the commitment of one target partner. We hypothesize that participants will conclude that partners who are more attractive than their ostensible boyfriend or girlfriend are relatively uncommitted to their romantic relationship, and that this effect will be stronger for judgments of women than men.

2.1. Method

For all experiments, we report how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions, all manipulations, and most study measures (see Supplemental materials for additional measures; Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2012).

2.1.1. Participants

Participants were recruited and participated at a popular student center (i.e., the *University Center*) at a mid-size, suburban, Canadian university ($N = 219$; $M_{age} = 22.12$ years, $SD_{age} = 3.04$; 106 women, 113 men). To allow for exclusions, we aimed to collect data until the end of the day we reached 200 participants. We did not conduct a power analysis prior to conducting the study. Sensitivity analyses indicate that with our sample size, 80% power, and $\alpha = 0.05$, we can detect a population f of 0.21 for the predicted interaction between target gender and matching condition. Participants received a chocolate bar or pack of gum in appreciation for their time. Participation was restricted to individuals aged 30 and under to ensure that participants were reasonably close in age to the models/confederates they encountered, a restriction that increased the homogeneity of the sample, and thus, improved power (Cohen, 1988).

2.1.2. Procedure

Using a laptop computer that was shielded from public view by a large cardboard screen, participants viewed digital waist-up photographs of five undergraduate, white, male-female "romantic couples." All "couples" were said to have been dating for two years. Participants were randomly assigned to answer questions about the commitment of <u>either</u> the five women or the five men depicted in the couples (the *targets*). After rating all five targets, participants completed a brief demographic survey that assessed age, gender, relationship status, and race/ethnicity. Participants were given a feedback letter explaining the experiment's purposes, thanked, and awarded their compensation.

2.1.3. Measures
2.1.3.1. Commitment.
Participants used a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to indicate their agreement with five statements about the targets' commitment. Example items include "The woman wants her relationship to last for a very long time," and "The man wants his relationship to last forever" (adapted from Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Participants' agreement with the commitment statements about each target were first averaged by statement (all αs > 0.77), and then these aggregated ratings were further averaged to create a reliable *target commitment* variable ($\alpha = 0.79$).

2.1.4. Attractiveness manipulation

The relative attractiveness of the partners constituted the independent variable. The methods and results of the pilot studies used to validate the experimental stimuli in all of the experiments that we report are available in the Supplemental materials, which can be viewed on the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/78ftx/. All five targets rated by a single participant exemplified one type of pairing. In the *matched condition,* male and female targets were matched in physical attractiveness. In the *girlfriend more-attractive condition*, female targets
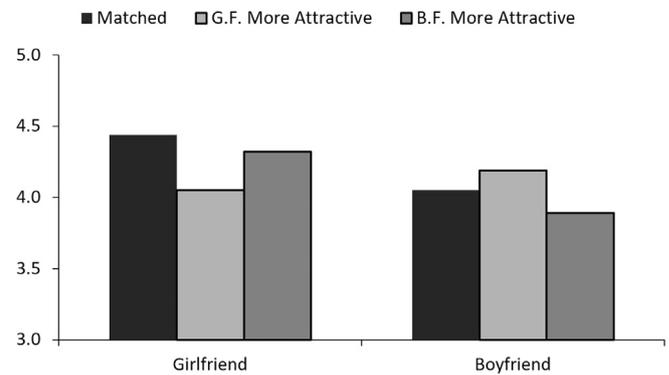

Fig. 1. Ratings of the targets' commitment as a function of attractiveness condition and target gender in Experiment 1. *Note.* G.F. = Girlfriend, B.F. = Boyfriend.

were more physically attractive than male targets. In the *boyfriend more-attractive condition*, male targets were more physically attractive than female targets.

2.2. Results

Preliminary analysis indicated that participant gender did not moderate the following results.

A 3 (matching condition: matched vs. girlfriend-more-attractive vs. boyfriend-more-attractive) X 2 (target gender: girlfriend vs. boyfriend) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) predicting target commitment ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.63$) revealed a main effect of target gender, $F(1, 213) = 7.54$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$, $f = 0.18$. Consistent with gender-role stereotypes and norms (e.g., Cross & Madson, 1997) as well as women's greater interest in monogamy (Schmitt, 2003), participants rated the female targets ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.61$) higher in commitment than the male targets ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.64$; $d = 0.35$). Results also revealed the anticipated interaction between target gender and matching condition, $F(2, 213) = 4.84$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, $f = 0.20$ (Fig. 1).

As predicted, matching condition influenced perceptions of the girlfriends' commitment, $F(2, 105) = 4.07$, $p = .020$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.072$, $f = 0.28$. Least significant difference testing indicated that more-attractive girlfriends were perceived to be less committed ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.63$) than matched girlfriends ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.70$), 95% Confidence Interval (CI) of the mean difference $[-0.66, -0.11]$, $p = .006$, $d = 0.59$, and marginally less committed than less-attractive girlfriends (in the boyfriend-more-attractive condition; $M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.40$), 95% CI of the mean difference $[-0.54, 0.02]$, $p = .064$, $d = 0.51$. Matched and less-attractive girlfriends were perceived to be equally committed, 95% CI of the mean difference $[-0.16, 0.40]$, $p = .390$, $d = 0.21$.

In contrast, and consistent with our hypothesis that attractiveness-matching would influence ratings of women's commitment more than men's commitment, matching condition did not exert a consistent effect on perceptions of the boyfriends' commitment, $F(2, 108) = 2.03$, $p = .136$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.036$, $f = 0.19$. However, consistent with our a priori hypotheses, least significant difference testing confirmed that more-attractive boyfriends were perceived to be less committed ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.62$) than less-attractive boyfriends (in the girlfriend-more-attractive condition; $M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.61$), 95% CI of the mean difference $[-0.59, -0.01]$, $p = .046$, $d = 0.49$. Matched boyfriends fell between the two ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.66$).

2.3. Discussion

Taken together, these results yield two important insights about observers' use of the attractiveness exchange-script. First, the script dictates that men and women are least committed when they have a

less-attractive partner. Second, the script has a stronger influence on perceptions of women's commitment than men's commitment. Our next experiment tests whether the exchange script includes compensation rules.

3. Experiment 2

Our predictions in Experiment 1 were based on the theory of character-specific exchange, which occurs when one type of relational benefit is given in exchange for an equal measure of that same relational benefit. Yet couples may also engage in *cross-character exchange*, whereby one type of relational benefit is given in exchange for an equal measure of a different, but equally valuable, benefit. For example, a man in a relationship with a woman may offer his capacity to invest in the relationship and any potential offspring, as evidenced by his social status and wealth, in exchange for his female partner's youth and fertility, as evidenced by her physical attractiveness (e.g., Webster, 2009). Indeed, evolutionary psychologists suggest that exactly this type of exchange occurs in actual relationships between men and women, and is reflected in men's greater valuation of attractiveness and women's greater valuation of social status (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2004). Therefore, we hypothesize that the attractiveness exchange-script includes a similar contingency rule: Observers will assume that if a man is dating a more-attractive woman, then he must possess a relatively-high level of social status.

We also propose and test three boundary conditions for this cross-character exchange script. First, we hypothesize that observers will apply the cross-character exchange script when a couple is known to be committed to one another (e.g., when they have been dating for a year), but not when they are uncommitted to one another (e.g., when they have just started dating). This is because it takes more time to assess a partner's potential status than it does their attractiveness (Anthony, Holmes, & Wood, 2007), making status a more relevant consideration for long-term relationships than short-term relationships. Moreover, women actually do value status more in a long-term partner than a short-term partner (e.g., Kenrick et al., 1993), and we think that this reality will be reflected in the exchange script.

Second, we hypothesize that observers will apply the cross-character exchange script when the attractiveness differential between couple members is moderate, but not when it is large. In Experiment 1, the mismatched couples differed in attractiveness by almost one standard deviation, and in that experiment, participants did not appear to apply a cross-character exchange script. Instead, they assumed that the couple was uncommitted. Thus, as the movie dialogue that opened this paper asserts, it may be possible to bridge a small attractiveness-differential with higher social status, but it is not possible to span a larger distance.

Third, reflecting the cultural stereotype of the rich man paired with the attractive woman, and reflecting evolutionary models of cross-character assortment, we also propose that observers will assume that social status can bridge an attractiveness-differential whereas other valued traits, like kindness and warmth (i.e., a *good personality*), cannot. Social status and attractiveness are closely aligned in the self-concept and on characteristics like observability, ambiguity, and controllability (Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008). In contrast, both traits are distinct from personality traits like kindness and warmth on all of these dimensions. Thus, we suggest that the exchange script stipulates that bridging an attractiveness differential is more likely to occur via a similar benefit like social status, than via a dissimilar benefit like a good personality.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants

Once again, participants were recruited and participated at the University Center ($N = 165$; $M_{age} = 21.42$ years, $SD_{age} = 2.86$; 96

women, 66 men, three did not report; 120 White, 21 East and South Asian, 21 of various other ethnicities, two did not report). We aimed to recruit 200 participants and did not conduct a power analysis prior to data collection. Selecting SPSS as the analysis program in G*Power, sensitivity analyses indicate that with our sample size, 80% power, $\alpha = 0.05$, we can detect a population f of 0.29 for the interaction between target, relationship length condition, and attractiveness condition. Participants received a chocolate bar or pack of gum in appreciation for their time. Participants reported that they had not taken part in the other experiments that we report.

3.1.2. Procedure

Participants were given an envelope that contained a questionnaire and an 8×10 laminated card depicting side-by-side, full-body photographs of a white man and woman. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two relationship-length conditions: Participants in the *long-term condition* read that "the man and woman in the picture have been dating for one year;" whereas participants in the *short-term condition* read that "the man and woman in the picture are going on their first date." Then, participants were instructed to use their first impressions to rate the Girlfriend's and the Boyfriend's (the *targets*) commitment and possession of various traits (target order was counterbalanced). Next, participants completed a demographic questionnaire (e.g., age, gender). Then participants were given a feedback letter, thanked, and awarded compensation.

3.1.3. Measures
3.1.3.1. *Social status*. Participants used a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 4 = *somewhat*, 7 = *extremely*) to rate the target on four traits reflecting *social status* (i.e., popular, earning capacity, social status, ambitious; averaged, both target αs > 0.73).

3.1.3.2. *Good personality*. Participants used the same scale to rate the targets on seven traits reflecting a *good personality* (i.e., intelligent, emotionally stable, exciting personality, sense of humor, easygoing, kind & understanding, and friendly; averaged, both target αs > 0.71).

3.1.3.3. *Commitment*. Using the same scale, participants rated the targets on four of the five items that were used in Experiment 1 to assess *commitment* (e.g., the man [woman] is satisfied with his [her] romantic partner; both target αs > 0.82).

3.2. Attractiveness manipulation

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three attractiveness conditions: *matched, girlfriend slightly-more-attractive* (i.e., approximately half a standard deviation more attractive), and *girlfriend much-more-attractive* (i.e., approximately one standard deviation more attractive). Additional details concerning the development and pilot testing of these experimental stimuli are reported in the Supplemental materials. The photograph of the boyfriend was the same in all three conditions, but the appearance of the girlfriend was digitally altered to create three girlfriends that subtly varied in physical attractiveness. The digital alterations to the girlfriend's appearance focused on waist-to-hip ratio, jaw thickness, and skin tone (i.e., blemishes; Singh, 1993; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1993). Note that all three Girlfriends were still quite attractive in the absolute sense, and the physical differences between pictures were subtle and realistic.

3.3. Results

Three participants were excluded because they were more than three standard deviations above or below the sample means for ratings of one or both targets' social status (following Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Preliminary analyses indicated that participant gender did not

directly or interactively predict target ratings, so this variable was omitted from the following analyses.

3.3.1. Manipulation check

As a manipulation check, we entered relationship-length condition (short-term vs. long-term) into a repeated-measures ANOVA predicting the repeated measure of perceived commitment (Boyfriend vs. Girlfriend). Results revealed the anticipated main effect of condition, F (1, 161) = 5.98, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, $f = 0.20$, such that participants in the short-term condition rated the couple lower in commitment ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.81$) than participants in the long-term condition ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.70$; $d = 0.37$).

3.3.2. Social status

For our main analyses, we entered relationship-length condition (short-term vs. long-term) and attractiveness condition (matched vs. slightly-more-attractive vs. much-more-attractive) into a repeated-measures ANOVA predicting the repeated measure of target social status (Boyfriend vs. Girlfriend). Results revealed a main effect of target, $F(1, 155) = 67.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.30$, $f = 0.65$, such that the Girlfriend was rated higher in social status than the Boyfriend (Ms = 4.87 and 4.36, respectively; SDs = 0.71 and 0.82 respectively; $d = 0.66$). Results also revealed the anticipated three-way interaction between target, relationship-length condition, and attractiveness condition, $F(2, 155) = 5.72$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$, $f = 0.27$.

To decompose this interaction, first we entered relationship-length condition and attractiveness condition into an ANOVA predicting the Boyfriend's social status. No main effects emerged, but results yielded the anticipated interaction between attractiveness condition and relationship-length condition, $F(2, 156) = 4.62$, $p = .011$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$, $f = 0.27$ (Fig. 2). As predicted, attractiveness condition did not affect ratings of the Boyfriend's social status in the short-term condition, $F(2, 77) = 1.05$, $p = .354$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$, $f = 0.18$ (matched $M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.70$; slightly-more-attractive $M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.75$; much-more-attractive $M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.94$). However, in the long-term condition there was a main effect of attractiveness condition, $F(2, 79) = 4.40$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$, $f = 0.33$. Least significant difference testing indicated that the Boyfriend was rated higher in social status in the slightly-more-attractive condition ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.69$) than in either the matched condition ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.84$), 95% CI of the mean difference [0.17, 1.06], $p = .008$, $d = 0.79$, or the much-more-attractive condition ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.86$), 95% CI of the mean difference [0.06, 0.88], $p = .026$, $d = 0.60$. The matched and much-more-attractive conditions did not differ, 95% CI of the mean difference [−0.59, 0.30], $p = .513$, $d = 0.16$.

Next, we entered relationship-length condition and attractiveness condition into an ANOVA predicting the Girlfriend's social status. Results yielded a marginal main effect of attractiveness condition, $F(2,$

Fig. 2. Ratings of the Boyfriend's social status as a function of relationship-length condition and attractiveness condition in Experiment 2. *Note.* G.F. = girlfriend.

156) = 3.00, $p = .053$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, $f = 0.20$, such that ratings of the Girlfriend's status tracked the increases in her attractiveness. However, unlike ratings of the Boyfriend, relationship-length condition did not moderate ratings of the Girlfriend's social status, $F(1, 156) = 0.08$, $p = .784$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$, $f = 0.00$. Moreover, the interaction between relationship-length condition and attractiveness condition predicting the Boyfriend's social status (Fig. 2) was unchanged when we controlled for ratings of the Girlfriend's social status in the ANOVA described previously, $F(2, 154) = 6.31$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$, $f = 0.29$. Therefore, it appears that condition differences in the Girlfriend's attractiveness, not her perceived social status, explain the observed condition differences in perceptions of the Boyfriend's social status.

3.3.3. Good personality

We used the same repeated-measures ANOVA described previously to predict the repeated measure of target personality (Boyfriend vs. Girlfriend). Results revealed a main effect of target, $F(1, 155) = 6.16$, $p = .014$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, $f = 0.20$, such that the Girlfriend was thought to have a more desirable personality than the Boyfriend (Ms = 4.70 and 4.52, respectively; SDs = 0.74 and 0.90 respectively, $d = 0.22$). Results also revealed a three-way interaction between target, commitment condition, and attractiveness condition, $F(2, 155) = 3.27$, $p = .041$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, $f = 0.20$. This interaction did not take the same form as the interaction for social status depicted in Fig. 2.

When we entered commitment condition and attractiveness condition into an ANOVA predicting ratings of the Boyfriend's personality, no significant effects emerged, all Fs < 1. The same ANOVA predicting ratings of the Girlfriend's personality also failed to yield significant effects, all Fs < 2.00 and ps > 0.10. However, additional post-hoc probing suggested that the observed three-way interaction was driven by a two-way interaction between target and commitment condition in the much-more-attractive condition, $F(1, 57) = 8.60$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.13$, $f = 0.39$ (see Table 1). Specifically, the much-more-attractive Girlfriend in the committed condition was perceived to have a more desirable personality than both her Boyfriend in that same condition, 95% CI of the mean difference [0.23, 0.89], $p = .001$, $d = 0.67$, and her counterpart in the uncommitted condition, 95% CI of the mean difference [0.08, 0.84], $p = .018$, $d = 0.63$. Thus it appears that the much-more-attractive Girlfriend was thought to have an especially desirable personality when she was in a committed relationship with a less-attractive mate. However, germane to our hypotheses, the results suggest that observers do not vary their perceptions of a man's personality as a function of his girlfriend's physical attractiveness.

3.4. Discussion

These results reveal the boundary conditions of the compensatory exchange script for romantic relationships between men and women. Specifically, observers will conclude that a man is relatively higher in social status if he is in a committed relationship with a woman who is moderately more attractive than him. However, if the attractiveness differential becomes too great, observers will not apply a compensatory script when evaluating the less-attractive man, even when the couple members are said to be committed to one another. Instead, our research suggests that they may apply a compensatory script when evaluating
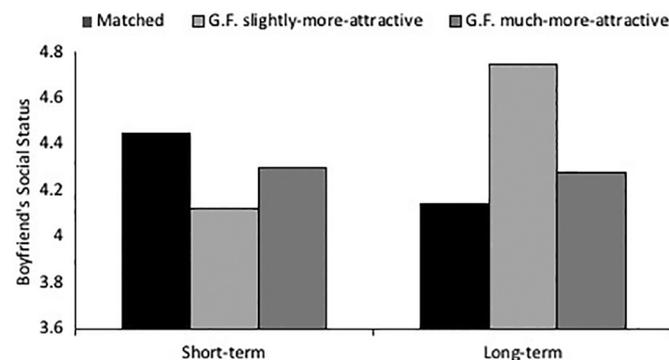
Table 1
Mean ratings of the targets' good personality in the girlfriend much-more-attractive condition as a function of commitment condition in Experiment 2.

	Uncommitted	Committed
Boyfriend	4.59 (0.84)	4.37 (0.84)[a]
Girlfriend	4.47 (0.62)[b]	4.93 (0.82)[ab]

Note. Values that share a superscript statistically differ at the $p < .05$ level. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.

the more-attractive girlfriend, assuming that she must have a very good personality to be dating a less-attractive man (i.e., she is "deep"). Future researchers should explore and replicate this element of the exchange script. But taken together, the results of this experiment suggest that if the attractiveness-differential is too great, the less-attractive partner may not be able to bridge that gap by offering high levels of other, valued traits. Instead, as we observed in Experiment 1, people may simply assume that the relationship is unstable. In our next experiment, we examine the behavioral consequences of this attractiveness exchange-script.

4. Experiment 3

In our final experiment, we seek to empirically document one important behavioral consequence of the attractiveness exchange-script: Men will attempt to lure a more-attractive woman away from her less-attractive partner because they perceive her to be uncommitted to her relationship. Men engage in mate poaching for a variety of reasons, including a desire for sexual variety and a beautiful partner (Schmitt & Buss, 2001). Men are also most likely to engage in mate poaching when the target of their affections is perceived to be uncommitted to her romantic partner. Furthermore, highly-attractive men are particularly likely to report that they engage in such behaviors (Sunderani, Arnocky, & Vaillancourt, 2013). Therefore, we propose that highly-attractive men will be particularly likely to use relationship-initiation tactics like flattery and proximity-seeking (see Schmitt & Shackelford, 2003) when the target of their evaluations and attention is a romantically-involved woman who is highly-attractive and coupled with a less-attractive partner.

We test this proposal in a naturalistic field experiment that examines men's evaluations of, and desire to spend time with, an attractive female confederate who is either alone, accompanied by a "boyfriend" who matches her level of attractiveness, or accompanied by a "boyfriend" who is much less attractive than the confederate. Experiment 1 affirmed that observers assume that a more-attractive woman is relatively uncommitted to her less-attractive boyfriend. Experiment 2 affirmed that observers do not apply a compensatory exchange script to such relationships when the attractiveness-differential is very large. Therefore, we predict that highly-attractive men will evaluate the confederate more positively (i.e., flatter) and express a stronger desire to spend additional time with the confederate (i.e., seek proximity) when she is accompanied by a much-less-attractive boyfriend compared to when she is accompanied by a boyfriend who matches her level of attractiveness.

In contrast, we expect that less-attractive men will behave differently towards the confederate. Risk-regulation research reveals that people will often pre-emptively reject or even derogate potential social or romantic partners when they perceive that the risk of rejection is too great (for a review, see Stinson, Holmes, & He, 2016). We predict that this kind of risk-regulation response will be activated for less-attractive men when the confederate is accompanied by a less-attractive boyfriend, because her lack of commitment to her current relationship, and thus her potential romantic availability (and the potential for rejection), will be particularly salient. Therefore, as a self-protective method of pre-emptively rejecting a desirable and romantically-available woman who is "out of their league," we predict that less-attractive men will evaluate the confederate more negatively and express less interest in spending time with her when she is accompanied by a less-attractive boyfriend compared to when she is accompanied by a matched boyfriend.[1]

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[1] Our predictions for highly-attractive men are also consistent with a risk-regulation account, because a high risk of rejection increases approach motivations when people are confident about their own relational value (Cameron, Stinson, Gaetz, & Balchen, 2010).

We remain agnostic regarding men's reactions to the confederate when she is alone. They may assume that such a beautiful woman must be in a relationship already, most likely with a man who matches her attractiveness, and so responses in this condition may track responses in the matched condition (see Supplemental materials for support for this idea). Or they may assume she is single, and available, in which case responses in this condition may most closely resemble responses in the more-attractive condition.

This experiment has the potential to make important empirical and theoretical contributions to psychological literatures concerning social exchange, self-regulation, and evolutionary psychology. First, if we observe that men's own physical attractiveness moderates their reactions to the confederate, such field results will offer much needed "live action" experimental support for the contention that individuals direct their romantic behaviors towards individuals who match their own level of attractiveness (e.g., van Straaten, Engels, Finkenauer, & Holland, 2009). Second, by using experimental field methods to examine men's use of two indirect mate-poaching tactics (i.e., flattery and proximity-seeking), our results will make an important contribution to the extant mate-poaching literature, which, to date, has relied on self-reports (e.g., Lemay & Wolf, 2016; Schmitt, 2004).

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants

Participants were men who were recruited and participated in primarily outdoor common areas of a mid-size, suburban, Canadian university campus (e.g., outside the library; $N = 107$; $M_{age} = 23.01$ years, $SD_{age} = 4.05$; 68 White, 18 East and South Asian, 13 of various other ethnicities, 8 did not report their ethnicity; 70 were single, 26 were exclusively dating, 11 did not report their relationship status). Six additional participants were excluded because they reported that they were engaged or married. We aimed to recruit 80 participants but oversampled to account for possible exclusions. However, we did not conduct a power analysis prior to conducting the study. Sensitivity analyses indicate that with our sample size, 80% power, and $\alpha = 0.05$, we can detect a population f^2 of 0.09 for the predicted interactions. Participants received a chocolate bar or pack of gum in appreciation for their time.

4.1.2. Procedure

We devised an elaborate cover story to test our hypotheses without activating social desirability biases against mate poaching. In common areas on campus, an attractive, warm and friendly, female undergraduate confederate named "Alice" approached potential male participants and asked them to help her with a class project. In the experimental conditions, after the participant agreed to help, Alice called over a male confederate who handed her a questionnaire package. She smiled at him sweetly and said, "Thanks hun!" After he walked away, Alice said to the participant, "That's my boyfriend, he's helping me out."

Then Alice explained that her class project required her to give a short speech to students on campus and collect feedback about her performance. Alice gave a 30-second speech about on-campus events and activities. Following the speech, the participant completed a short questionnaire, which they believed would only be seen by Alice's professor. Finally, the participant completed a demographic questionnaire (e.g., age, relationship status). When finished, the participant was directed to a research assistant who debriefed him concerning the true purposes of the experiment and awarded his compensation.

4.1.3. Measures

4.1.3.1. Speech quality. Participants used a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 7 = *strongly agree*) to indicate their agreement with two statements concerning *speech quality* ($\alpha = 0.63$): "Alice's speech was persuasive," "Alice's speech was engaging."

4.1.3.2. Warmth. Participants used the same scale to indicate their agreement with two statements concerning Alice's *warmth* (α = 0.87): "Alice appeared warm and friendly" and "Alice appeared likable."

4.1.3.3. Proximity seeking. The questionnaire indirectly assessed participants' desire to spend time with Alice (i.e., proximity seeking). Participants read that "as part of this course project, Alice will have to form and lead a focus group on her topic in the next few weeks." Participants were asked to answer three questions assessing *proximity seeking* (α = 0.79; see also Anthony, Wood, & Holmes, 2007): "How much would you like to join this focus group that Alice will lead?", "How willing are you to attend meetings held late in the evenings, and on Saturday and Sunday mornings at 8:00 am?" (1 = *not at all willing*, 7 = *extremely willing*), and "How many meetings with Alice would you like to attend? (1 = *one meeting*, 7 = *seven meetings*).

4.1.3.4. Flattery. Participants were offered the opportunity to provide additional comments about Alice's performance by writing them in a blank space on the questionnaire. Two female coders read the comments and used a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to rate their positivity (r_{icc} = 0.95) and negativity (r_{icc} = 0.97). Negativity ratings were reserve-scored and then the two ratings were averaged to create a reliable index of *flattery* (α = *0.95*). Coders were blind to the participants' attractiveness and experimental condition.

4.1.4. Independent variable

Two male confederates played the role of the boyfriend. In the *matched condition*, Alice and the boyfriend matched in physical attractiveness (see Supplemental materials for attractiveness validation data). In the *more-attractive condition*, Alice was notably more attractive than the boyfriend. In the *alone condition*, Alice was unaccompanied and participants did not have any information about her relationship status. The confederates were blind to the experiment's hypotheses.

4.1.5. Coding participants' attractiveness

While the participant listened to Alice's speech, between one and four female coders used a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to rate his *physical attractiveness* (average r_{icc} between pairs of coders = 0.97; coders' ratings were averaged) and *degree of matching* in attractiveness with Alice (average r_{icc} between pairs of coders = 0.98; coders' ratings were averaged).[2] Coders were blind to our hypotheses concerning attractiveness.

4.2. Results

Six men were excluded because they did not believe the cover story. One man was excluded because he knew the female confederate previously, and two men were excluded because they were interrupted by friends while they participated.

4.2.1. Preliminary analyses

Preliminary exploratory analyses indicated that the ratio of single-to-romantically-involved men did not vary across experimental conditions nor did participants' romantic-relationship status moderate the results that we report.

Coders' ratings of participants' attractiveness (*M* = 4.43, *SD* = 0.84) and matching in attractiveness between the participants and the confederate (*M* = 3.78, *SD* = 1.22) were strongly correlated, *r* = 0.90, *p* < .001, confirming that higher-attractiveness men matched, and lower-attractiveness men mismatched, the female confederate's level of physical attractiveness. Moreover, coders' ratings of the participants'

physical attractiveness did not vary by experimental condition, $F(2, 95)$ = 1.77, *p* = .177, η_p^2 = 0.04, *f* = 0.20.

4.2.2. Focal analyses

In a series of hierarchical linear regression analyses we regressed each of our dependent variables onto: Step 1) mean-centered attractiveness, one dummy-coded variable contrasting the alone and matched conditions (C1; 0 = alone, 1 = matched), and a dummy-coded variable contrasting the alone and more-attractive conditions (C2; 0 = alone, 1 = more-attractive); and Step 2) the Attractiveness × C1 interaction and the Attractiveness × C2 interaction (see Aiken & West, 1991). For each dependent variable, we followed up the initial hierarchical regression with a parallel analysis in which the matched condition was the comparison group (i.e., coded 0) in both contrast variables.

4.2.2.1. Proximity seeking. Results of the first regression in which the alone condition was the comparison group are presented in the top panel of Table 2, and the estimated means based on the obtained regression equation are graphed in Fig. 3. Results of the follow-up regression in which the matched condition was the comparison group also yielded a significant Attractiveness X C3 interaction (0 = matched, 1 = more-attractive), β = 0.30, *b* = 1.05, 95% CI [0.12, 2.09], *t* (89) = 2.01, *p* = .047. Simple effects testing revealed that higher-attractiveness men in the more-attractive condition were more interested in joining the female confederate's focus group than either lower-attractiveness men in the same condition, β = 0.44, *b* = 0.82, 95% CI [0.08, 1.57], *t*(89) = 2.20, *p* = .031, or higher-attractiveness men in the alone condition, β = 0.37, *b* = 1.28, 95% CI [0.05, 2.51], *t* (89) = 2.07, *p* = .041. Lower-attractiveness men did not vary their interest in joining the focus group as a function of condition.

4.2.2.2. Flattery: Evaluation of the confederate's speech. Results of the first regression in which the alone condition was the comparison group are presented in the middle panel of Table 2, and the estimated means based on the obtained regression equation are presented in Table 3. Results of the follow-up regression in which the matched condition was the comparison group yielded a significant Attractiveness X C3 interaction, β = 0.29, *b* = 0.58, 95% CI [0.01, 1.16], *t*(90) = 2.01, *p* = .047. Simple-effects testing revealed that lower-attractiveness men in the more-attractive condition evaluated the confederate's speech more negatively than their lower-attractiveness counterparts in the matched condition, β = −0.42, *b* = −0.84, 95% CI [−1.50, −0.18], *t* (90) = −2.53, *p* = .013. High attractiveness men did not vary their evaluations of the confederate's speech as a function of condition.

4.2.2.3. Flattery: Positivity of additional comments. We used our usual regressions to predict coder's ratings of the positivity of men's comments. Results of the first regression in which the alone condition was the comparison group are presented in the bottom panel of Table 2, and the estimated means based on the obtained regression equation are presented in Table 3. Results of the follow-up regression in which the matched condition was the comparison group also yielded a marginally-significant Attractiveness X C3 interaction, β = 0.28, *b* = 1.36, 95% CI [−0.14, 2.86], *t*(58) = 1.81, *p* = .075. Simple-effects testing revealed that lower-attractiveness men in the more-attractive condition were more negative than lower-attractiveness men in both the alone condition, β = −0.68, *b* = −2.99, 95% CI [−4.49, −1.49], *t* (58) = −3.99, *p* < .001 and the matched condition, β = −0.59, *b* = −2.58, 95% CI [−4.18, −0.99], *t*(58) = −3.25, *p* = .002. Once again, higher-attractiveness men did not vary their feedback as a function of matching condition.

4.2.2.4. Warmth. Results of the regressions predicting evaluations of the female confederate's likeability (*M* = 6.34, *SD* = 0.80) did not yield significant effects, all *ps* > 0.208.

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[2] One coder rated 12 participants, the rest were rated by two or more coders. Ratings of participants' attractiveness did not vary depending on the number of coders.

Table 2
Results of hierarchical regressions predicting outcome variables in Experiment 3.

Predictor	β	b [CI]	SE	t	p	ΔR^2	f^2
Proximity seeking (M = 2.59, SD = 1.59)							
Step 1 (df = 91)						0.00	
Attractiveness	0.03	0.05 [−0.35, 0.44]	0.20	0.25	.806		
C1	0.02	0.05 [−0.73, 0.84]	0.39	0.14	.892		
C2	0.06	0.21 [−0.61, 1.03]	0.41	0.51	.611		
Step 2 (df = 89)						0.06	0.07
Attractiveness X C1	0.00	0.02 [−0.91, 0.94]	0.47	0.03	.975		
Attractiveness X C2	0.30	1.07 [0.12, 2.01]	0.48	2.25	.027		
Flattery: Evaluation of Confederate's Speech (M = 5.26, SD = 0.90)							
Step 1(df = 92)						0.04	
Attractiveness	0.05	0.05 [−0.17, 0.27]	0.11	0.48	.630		
C1	−0.03	−0.06 [−0.49, 0.37]	0.22	−0.28	.780		
C2	−0.19	−0.37 [−0.82, 0.09]	0.23	−1.61	.111		
Step 2 (df = 90)						0.07	0.07
Attractiveness X C1	−0.32	−0.63 [−1.15, −0.12]	0.26	−2.44	.017		
Attractiveness X C2	−0.02	−0.05 [−0.57, 0.48]	0.26	−0.18	.857		
Flattery: Positivity of Additional Comments (M = 4.93, SD = 2.01)							
Step 1 (df = 60)						0.18	
Attractiveness	−0.03	−0.06 [−0.64, 0.51]	0.29	−0.23	.823		
C1	−0.03	−0.12 [−1.24, 1.01]	0.56	−0.21	.834		
C2	−0.44	−1.90 [−3.06, −0.74]	0.58	−3.28	.002		
Step 2 (df = 58)						0.07	0.10
Attractiveness X C1	0.08	0.32 [−0.95, 1.59]	0.63	0.51	.614		
Attractiveness X C2	0.35	1.68 [0.22, 3.14]	0.73	2.31	.025		

Note. C1 contrasts the alone (0) and matched (1) conditions, C2 contrasts the alone (0) and more-attractive (1) conditions. SE = Standard Error, CI = 95% Confidence interval for the parameter estimate, ΔR^2 = R-square change.
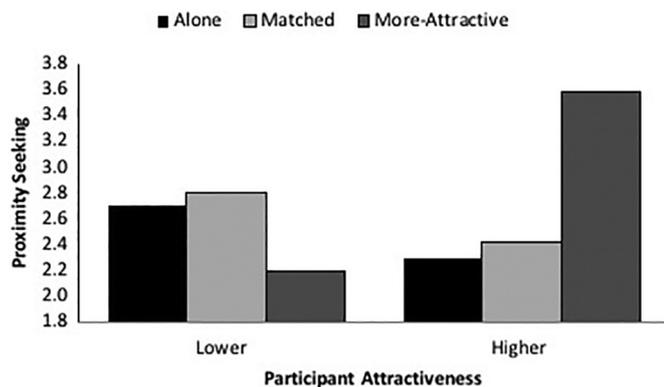

Fig. 3. Participants' interest in joining the female confederate's focus group (i.e., proximity-seeking) as a function of participants' attractiveness and matching condition in Experiment 3. *Note.* Results are graphed for men scoring one standard deviation below (i.e., lower) and above (i.e., higher) the sample mean for physical attractiveness.

Table 3
Estimated means for participants' evaluation of the confederate's speech and coder's ratings of the positivity of participants' comments as a function of participants' attractiveness and experimental condition in Experiment 3.

Dependent variable	Lower attractiveness participants			Higher attractiveness participants		
	Alone	Matched	More-attractive	Alone	Matched	More-attractive
Evaluation of speech	5.17	5.72[a]	4.88[a]	5.59	5.07	5.21
Positivity of comments	6.02[b]	5.62[c]	3.04[bc]	5.10	5.23	4.93

Note. Pairs of means within a given row that share a superscript are statistically different from one another at *p* < .05. Condition means are estimated for men scoring one standard deviation below (i.e., lower) and above (i.e., higher) the grand mean for physical attractiveness.

4.3. Discussion

This experiment revealed that attractiveness-mismatched couples in which the female partner is more attractive are subject to mate-poaching attempts (i.e., proximity seeking) by highly-attractive male rivals. This finding provides support for Davies and Shackelford's (2017) assumption that more-attractive people face poaching attempts from highly-attractive alternatives, and validates similar findings using self-report methods (Sunderani et al., 2013). These same couples also provoke less-attractive men to derogate the female partner, a social consequence that could have negative repercussions for such couples in real life (e.g., Etcheverry, Le, & Charania, 2008).

Although our choice to use a live-action confederate in this experiment increases ecological validity, it does introduce the possibility that the observed effects were the result of differences in the female confederate's behavior across conditions and with men of varying levels of attractiveness. However, men's ratings of the confederate's warmth and friendliness – arguably the most interpersonally-impactful dimension of social behavior (e.g., Stinson, Cameron, Wood, Gaucher, & Holmes, 2009) – did not vary as a function of her relationship status or the men's attractiveness. All participants reported that the confederate was exceptionally warm and friendly (i.e., 6.3 on a 7-point scale). People are adept at accurately evaluating others' warmth and friendliness (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992), and people's evaluations of an interaction partner's warmth correlate strongly with similar ratings by objective observers (e.g. *r* = 0.49 to 0.77; Stinson, Cameron, Hoplock, & Hole, 2015, p. 207). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the participants' evaluations of the confederate's warmth are valid, and thus her behavior did not, in fact, vary across the experimental conditions.

5. General discussion

In three experiments we documented the contingencies of the attractiveness exchange-script as it applies to relationships in which a female partner is more attractive than her male partner. Experiment 1 confirmed that observers conclude that the more-attractive partner in a romantic couple is less committed to the relationship than the less-

attractive partner, and this script is stronger when evaluating women than men. Experiment 2 demonstrated that the script includes the stipulation that a less-attractive man must compensate his more-attractive, but committed, female partner by providing status and resources, but not a good personality. Experiment 2 also revealed that people apply this compensatory exchange-script when evaluating a couple with a moderate attractiveness-gap, but not when evaluating couples with a large gap. Importantly, this compensatory script is only activated for committed relationships. These results extend previous research (e.g., Garcia & Khersonsky, 1996) by demonstrating that today's observers apply the attractiveness exchange-script across the attractiveness spectrum, to relationships where a woman is more attractive than her male partner, and to judgments of commitment. Our results also contribute to both social-exchange and evolutionary models of close relationships by demonstrating that people possess exchange scripts concerning the giving and receiving of relational benefits that track real-life relationship dynamics.

Experiment 3 demonstrated that highly-attractive men seek proximity with a romantically-involved woman when she is seen to have a less-attractive boyfriend, but not when she is alone or paired with a boyfriend who matches her attractiveness. In contrast, less-attractive men derogate a highly-attractive woman when she is paired with a less-attractive boyfriend, a response that is consistent with a self-protective, risk-regulation response to a romantically available (i.e., uncommitted) woman who is never-the-less "out of their league." These results are particularly important because they demonstrate the ways in which social scripts, like the attractiveness exchange-script, can affect behavior. Moreover, this research is among the first to behaviorally demonstrate men's use of mate poaching tactics.

One limitation of Experiments 2 and 3 is our use of a single model or confederate. It is possible that participants responded to something unique about the models/confederates, and thus the results of these studies may not generalize (Wells & Windschitl, 1999). All of the models/confederates were also white and relatively young, as were most of our participants, and we only examined scripts for relationships between men and women, a common problem in psychological research (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). We also neglected to explore the ways in which individual differences like narcissism – which is associated with both attractiveness (Holtzman & Strube, 2010) and mate poaching behavior (e.g., Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010) – may have influenced the processes we studied. Future research should seek to document the contingencies of the attractiveness exchange-script among older people, people of varied ethnic and racial backgrounds, same-gender or queer couples, and people who vary in narcissism. Additionally, researchers should seek to document exchange scripts for other characteristics, such as personality, and for relationships in which the man is the more attractive partner (e.g., Garcia & Khersonsky, 1996).

Future research should also examine other ways in which the exchange script may guide behavior. For example, people might use the attractiveness exchange-script to determine whether or not they will provide social support to a romantic couple. Support network members can often influence a relationship (Sprecher, 2001). Having a strong support network is important for relationship well-being, and lacking support can hurt relationships (e.g., Etcheverry et al., 2008). If members of a couple's social network believe that attractiveness-mismatched relationships are shorter-lived than attractiveness-matched relationships, then they may not offer support to such relationships. For example, they may disparage a friend's less-attractive partner and encourage bad relationship behaviors (e.g., cheating) to communicate displeasure and facilitate relationship dissolution.

The attractiveness exchange-script may also help to explain people's own reactions and behaviors within relationships. For instance, it may clarify when people will work to compensate an underbenefitted partner or choose to leave a relationship. For example, when exchange scripts are activated, people who doubt their mate value (i.e., those with lower self-esteem) feel threatened, and respond to such insecurities by increasing their provision of instrumental benefits to their partner (Murray et al., 2009). Thus, it is possible that less-attractive partners perform more chores or organizational tasks as a means of compensating their more-attractive partner, and specific exchange scripts may guide such behavior. Additionally, Buunk and Mutsaers (1999) found that remarried people perceived greater equity in their current relationship than their previous relationship. Thus, those who were remarried left an inequitable relationship for an equitable one, and exchange scripts may help guide such decisions. Taken together, the present research generates new research questions in a variety of relationship contexts.

Appendix A. Supplementary materials

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.11.014.

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