The Other Woman: Women's Tendencies to and Perceptions of Mate Poaching Across the Menstrual Cycle

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**Introduction**

**Mate poaching:**
- romantically pursuing an individual already in a committed romantic relationship
- a commonly used mating tactic (Schmitt & Buss, 2001).

**Ovulatory Shift Hypothesis:**
- women’s mating-related behaviors, preferences, and perceptions shift near ovulation to facilitate acquisition of the best genes for potentially conceived offspring (Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008).
- Women put more effort into their appearance, are more interested in socializing with men, and are more flirtatious near ovulation (Haselton, Mortezaie, Pillsworth, & Bleske-Rechek, 2007; Haselton & Gangestad, 2005; Cantu, Simpson, Griskevicius, Weisberg, Durante & Beal, 2014).
- Women report more jealousy and mate-guarding behaviors towards ovulating women (K crem, Neel, Neuberg, Puts & Kenrick, 2016; Hurst, Alquiat & Puts, 2017).

**Unconscious Detection of Ovulation Cues:**
- Men find the scent and appearance of ovulating women more attractive (Miller & Maner, 2010; Roberts et al., 2004).
- Women are near peak fertility.

**Experiment 1**

Method
**Within-Subjects Manipulation:** Participants (N = 88, M age = 19.80, SD age = 0.90) were shown a photo and description (modified from Durante, Griskevicius, Simpson, Cantu & Li, 2012) of two different men in a randomized order, a physically attractive man and a physically average man.

**Mate Poaching:** Participants evaluated the extent to which they would engage in 18 different mating behaviors in an effort to lure the target away from his current mate.

**Conception Risk:** Participant cycles were standardized and conception risk was assigned based on Wilcox et al., 2001 actuarial data.

**Results**
- Among normally ovulating women, there is a positive association between conception risk and mate poaching for the attractive man.
- At high conception risk mate poaching was higher for the attractive man than the average man, F(1, 84) = 21.35, p < .0001
- No difference in mate poaching at low fertility.

**Experiment 2**

Method
- Participants (N = 92, M age = 19.20, SD age = 1.18).

Discussion
- These findings both corroborate previous findings that high fertility rivals are seen as more threatening (K crem et al., 2016), as well as suggest that the suspicion partnered women have of ovulating women is in fact based on an increased likelihood of ovulating women attempting to mate poach such men.

- Future research should examine additional contexts that may impact women’s likelihood of mate poaching, such as mate scarcity v. abundance or fast v. slow sexual strategy. As well as poaching ques that may increase a partnered women’s perception of a woman as a potential threat.