INTRODUCTION
Among the many influences on the parenting of young children, research has examined the role of intimate relationship quality on various parenting constructs (e.g., Rhoades et al., 2006). The Expectations in Close Relationships—Revised Scale (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000) and the Attachment Script Assessment (ASA; Waters & Rodrigues-Doolabh, 2001/2004) are two measures that have been used to investigate the associations between romantic attachment security and parenting. While the ECR-R measures self-reported romantic attachment styles, the ASA assesses coded cognitive scripts for secure-base behavior (SBS) in parent-child and parent-colleague relationships based on participant-generated stories about attachment scenarios.

Indeed, Steele et al. (2014) suggest that an individual’s history of socialization during childhood impacts the degree of secure-base script knowledge an individual possesses and can access. Individuals with inconsistent secure-base support in early childhood are thought to have difficulties making sense of relational interactions and regulating emotions in close relationships (Waters & Waters, 2006).

Importantly, secure attachment has been linked with a variety of positive parenting outcomes. For example, Huth-Bocks and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that mothers with greater SBS knowledge exhibited more positive and less negative parenting behaviors and their infants. Additionally, they scored higher on parental reflective functioning (i.e., caregivers’ capacity to understand their child’s mental states).

Interestingly, the association between the ECR-R and ASA has been inconsistent (e.g., Steele et al., 2014), quite possibly due to the self-report versus coded methodology of these measures. Further, no known studies have examined the concordance/discordance of the ASA and ECR-R in relation to parenting.

RESULTS
A two-step cluster analysis was conducted to identify groups of mothers based on observed (i.e., ASA romantic attachment scripts) and self-reported (i.e., ECR-R) romantic attachment security scores. The analysis produced two groups: (1) low concordant (45.2%; n = 52), including mothers reporting less attachment security with corresponding lower SBS scores, and (2) high concordant (54.8%; n = 63), including mothers reporting high romantic attachment security with corresponding higher SBS scores. Unexpectedly, groups of mothers with discordant scores on the ECR-R and ASA were not revealed.

Next, independent samples t-tests revealed that mothers in the low concordant group had significantly more parent stress and subjective distress over daily parenting hassles at 1 year post-partum compared to mothers in the high-concordant group. Mothers with less secure romantic attachment continued to have significantly more parent stress and subjective distress over daily parenting hassles, as well as helplessness within the parent-child relationship, at 2 years post-partum compared to mothers with more secure intimate relationships. At 2 years, mothers with less romantic security also reported more use of discipline and less involvement with their toddlers than mothers with more secure intimate relationships.

DISCUSSION
Study results suggest that profiles of mothers’ romantic attachment security significantly differentiate parenting at 1 and 2 years post-partum.

While groups of mothers with concordant scores on the ECR-R and ASA were revealed, groups of mothers with discordant scores on these measures were not found. Specifically, mothers’ perceptions of their romantic attachment style were consistent with objective ratings of their cognitive scripts for secure base behavior in romantic relationships.

Importantly, groups of mothers with less romantic attachment security were shown to experience more stress in the parent-child relationship and difficulties with daily parenting hassles. Insecure mothers were also found to engage in more discipline and to be less involved with their children.

These findings have important implications for understanding among new mothers; in particular, feeling more anxiety and avoidance about close relationships and having lower SBS knowledge may make the transition to parenthood more challenging for trauma-exposed mothers. Given that romantic insecurity leads to less security parenting in the early years, it is important that interventions aimed at improving the parent-child relationship consider the quality of the caregivers’ intimate relationships.

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