



Mate Retention Strategies of Dominance-Oriented and Prestige-Oriented Romantic Partners

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Abstract

What mate retention strategies do dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented romantic partners use to keep their relationships intact? In the current study, 329 participants in committed romantic relationships completed measures of their dominance orientation, prestige orientation, and mate retention behavior. It was predicted that dominance-oriented partners would engage in tactics designed to force or coerce relationship commitment, whereas prestige-oriented partners (primarily men) would engage in tactics such as resource display and avoid costly strategies such as rival violence. Results confirmed these hypotheses. Dominance-oriented individuals imposed costs on their partners and intrasexual rivals; prestige-oriented individuals, in contrast, attempted to increase their partners' satisfaction by enhancing positive aspects of their relationships. These results suggest that romantic partners engage in strategic mate retention tactics corresponding with their dispositional levels of dominance and prestige motivation. Implications for relationship satisfaction and partner-directed violence are discussed.

Keywords Mate retention · Dominance · Prestige · Evolutionary psychology

“Every breath you take, every move you make, every bond you break, every step you take, I’ll be watching you.”

—The Police (1983)

Fortunately, most people in committed romantic relationships do not possessively control and jealously monitor their partner’s every move. But these famed song lyrics reveal a truism of human mating—after investing considerable time and effort in attracting a mate, people must also attempt to prevent their partners from cheating or defecting from the relationship (Buss and Shackelford 1997).

Reflecting sexual selection pressures throughout evolutionary history, heterosexual men and women tend to value different qualities in a potential long-term mate. Whereas men tend to indicate preferences for youth and physical attractiveness, women tend to indicate preferences for social status and resource acquisition potential (Bech-Sørensen and Pollet 2016; Buss 1989; Shackelford et al. 2005b). In particular, women

may show preferences for dominance and prestige—two routes to social status—because these characteristics signal a man’s capacity for acquiring resources. Some studies have found that women are attracted to dominant men (e.g., Sadalla et al. 1987), whereas others suggest that dominant men are only desirable as short-term mates and that prestige is more desirable in long-term mates (e.g., Snyder et al. 2008).

Although previous research has examined how dominance and prestige influence men’s and women’s mate preferences, less is known about the role of dominance and prestige in the domain of mate retention. That is, what mate retention strategies do dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented partners use to keep their relationships intact? This question is important because mate retention tactics are not only critical to relationship success but are also associated with important outcomes such as marital satisfaction (Shackelford and Buss 2000) and relationship aggression (Shackelford et al. 2005a).

Building on social evolutionary theories, the current research examined mate retention strategies among dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented romantic partners. In both large social groups and close interpersonal relationships, dominance-oriented individuals gain influence over others by force or threat of force, whereas prestige-oriented individuals achieve influence as a function of others’ respect or deference (Cheng et al. 2013; Henrich and Gil-White

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2001). Consistent with these behaviors, it was predicted that dominance-oriented partners would engage in mate retention tactics designed to force or coerce relationship commitment, whereas prestige-oriented partners (primarily men) would use mate retention tactics such as resource display and avoid costly strategies such as behaving violently toward rivals.

What Is Mate Retention?

Humans use a wide range of strategies to retain their mates and compete with same-sex rivals (Buss 1988). Buss introduced the first instrument to assess mate retention tactics, the Mate Retention Inventory (MRI), which was later developed into a short form (Buss et al. 2008) conceptualized as consisting of two broad mate retention domains: benefit-provisioning mate retention and cost-inflicting mate retention (Miner et al. 2009a, b; see also Holden et al. 2014).

Benefit-provisioning mate retention strategies, such as buying a partner an expensive gift or showing affection, enhance the positive aspects of one's relationship and increase commitment from one's partner. Cost-inflicting mate retention strategies, in contrast, debase a partner's self-esteem and include tactics such as surveilling or controlling a partner's whereabouts or emotionally manipulating a partner into staying in the relationship (Miner et al. 2009a). In addition to imposing costs on one's partner, cost-inflicting tactics can impose costs on romantic competitors, for example, by threatening violence toward an intrasexual rival. Both strategies can be effective at decreasing the likelihood of infidelity and relationship defection. However, cost-inflicting strategies are higher risk than benefit-provisioning strategies because they may result in a partner feeling threatened, which may hasten defection from the relationship (Miner et al. 2009a). Some cost-inflicting strategies, such as threatening or hitting a romantic rival, are costly because they increase the likelihood of incurring physical harm.

Just as men and women prefer different qualities in potential mates, they also employ different strategies to retain their mates. For example, in both non-married couples (Buss 1988) and married couples (Buss and Shackelford 1997), men are more likely than women to use resource display and submit to their partner's demands, whereas women are more likely than men to enhance their physical appearance. These sex differences are culturally robust and have been replicated in Brazil (Lopes et al. 2016), Canada (VanderLaan and Vasey 2008), Croatia (Kardum et al. 2006), Iran (Atari 2017), and Spain (de Miguel and Buss 2011). Consistent with evolutionary hypotheses, men married to young and physically attractive women (Buss and Shackelford 1997) and who perceive a high risk of infidelity (Goetz et al. 2005) devote greater effort to mate retention. Men low in sexual attractiveness also perform more mate retention behaviors when their partners are fertile

(Pillsworth and Haselton 2006). Despite these differences, there are some similarities in the mate retention tactics men and women use. For instance, both men and women perform oral sex on their long-term partners as a benefit-provisioning mate retention strategy (Pham et al. 2015; Sela et al. 2015).

Mate retention strategies are associated with a variety of relationship outcomes, particularly relationship aggression. Cost-inflicting strategies such as vigilance, mate concealment, emotional manipulation, and partner derogation are correlated with partner-directed violence (Shackelford et al. 2005a). The Dark Triad traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, which have been linked to aggression (Jones and Paulhus 2010), are associated with cost-inflicting tactics such as derogating a sexual competitor (Goncalves and Campbell 2014) and threatening an intrasexual rival (Jonason et al. 2010). The link between mate retention and relationship violence is evident in online contexts as well. Brem et al. (2015) examined mate retention tactics among users of the popular social networking site Facebook. They found that individuals who monitored their partner's online activity and attempted to control their partner's online posts were more likely to aggress against their partners. In the most extreme cases, mating retention effort can tragically lead to intimate partner homicide (see Kaighobadi et al. 2009).

Dominance and Prestige

Throughout evolutionary history, members of human and nonhuman social groups have gained substantial fitness benefits from attaining high social rank and influence within their groups (Cheng et al. 2010; Cowlshaw and Dunbar 1991). For example, high-ranking members enjoy disproportionate access to valuable resources and mates, directly enhancing their survival and reproductive prospects (Van Vugt and Tybur 2015). Furthermore, high-ranking individuals tend to possess asymmetric control over resources and can take or withhold resources from other group members (Emerson 1962). Given these benefits, the desire for status is a strong motivator within most hierarchical social groups.

How do people attain status? Researchers have explored this question by focusing on two distinct routes to status: dominance and prestige (Cheng et al. 2013; de Waal-Andrews et al. 2015; Henrich and Gil-White 2001). Dominant individuals use tactics such as coercion, intimidation, manipulation, and force to influence others and compete with rivals. These tactics are often accompanied by behavioral displays such as an imposing physical posture and direct eye gaze (Hall et al. 2005). Although dominance can result in physical conflict, it does not require the use of physical force to be effective; for instance, threatening to withhold resources from subordinates can be enough to force compliance (Emerson 1962). Prestigious individuals, in contrast, achieve

freely granted status as a function of others' respect, admiration, and deference. Rather than use coercive power, prestigious individuals rely on acquired skills and knowledge to gain others' trust and achieve shared goals (Maner and Case 2016).

Dominance, Prestige, and Mate Retention

Although much research has focused on dominance and prestige as sexually selected traits in the context of mate attraction (e.g., Hill et al. 2013; von Rueden et al. 2011), relatively little is known about how these strategies operate in the context of mate retention. In the current research, it is proposed that dominance-oriented partners engage in coercion-based tactics associated with cost-infliction, whereas prestige-oriented partners engage in relationship-enhancing tactics associated with benefit provision.

Cost-inflicting mate retention comes in three varieties: direct guarding (e.g., surveillance), intersexual negative inducements (e.g., jealousy induction), and intrasexual negative inducements (e.g., rival violence; Miner et al. 2009a). There are reasons for thinking that dominance may be associated with cost-inflicting mate retention. For example, direct mate guarding behaviors have been documented in dominant male chimpanzees, macaques, mandrills, and other primates (e.g., Setchell et al. 2005). In human males, dominance is positively associated with hostility and aggression (Johnson et al. 2007), responses that may underlie intrasexual negative inducements such as derogating a mate or behaving violently toward sexual rivals. Ainsworth and Maner (2012) found that men primed with a mating motive behaved aggressively toward same-sex rivals, particularly when being aggressive established social dominance over rivals. In a similar way, men for whom mate retention motives are activated may engage in aggressive cost-inflicting tactics, especially to signal dominance over sexual competitors. Furthermore, longitudinal research has shown that socially dominant behaviors in early childhood predict poor romantic relationship outcomes such as conflict and partner aggression in emerging adulthood (Ostrov and Collins 2007). Together, these findings suggest a possible link between social dominance and mate retention designed to impose costs on romantic partners and intrasexual rivals. This hypothesized relationship is not specific to men either, as women exhibit indirect aggression at same-sex rivals (Campbell 2004) and conceal their mates and monopolize time in response to attractive same-sex rivals (Vaillancourt and Sharma 2011).

Prestige, in contrast, is hypothesized to be associated with the use of admiration-based tactics broadly associated with benefit-provisioning mate retention. Unlike dominance-oriented individuals, prestige-oriented individuals use their skills and acquired knowledge to benefit others, which in turn

elevates their influence (Henrich and Gil-White 2001; Maner 2017). Prestigious men are rated higher on paternal investment and social cooperation than dominant men (Kruger and Fitzgerald 2011) and show lower levels of testosterone, physical aggression, and competitiveness (Johnson et al. 2007). Instead of competing with same-sex rivals, prestige-oriented partners may adopt more socially adept (and less risky) tactics to increase their partner's relationship satisfaction. For example, prestige-oriented partners may try to induce positive affective states in their partners through status displays such as buying one's partner an expensive gift. Such acts of conspicuous consumption can signal to romantic rivals the stability of one's relationship and deter mate poaching (Wang and Griskevicius 2013). Many of the benefit-provisioning strategies (i.e., appearance enhancement, possession signals) are immediately observable by others and attune others to status-linked public enhancements of the relationship. For this reason, prestige-oriented partners may generally avoid violence against rivals, as losing a public contest brings potential embarrassment and loss of status in the eyes of one's partner and others.

The Current Study

In the current research, it is proposed that dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented romantic partners engage in strategic mate retention efforts corresponding with their personality profiles. Cost-inflicting tactics such as surveilling a partner's whereabouts, derogating competitors, and threatening same-sex rivals fit with the manifestations of coercion, threat, and manipulation that characterize dominance. In contrast, benefit-provisioning tactics such as displaying affection and signaling one's relationship status to others correspond with the coalitional nature of gaining and maintaining prestige. Therefore, it was predicted that dominance orientation would be positively associated with the use of cost-inflicting tactics, and that prestige orientation would be positively associated with the use of benefit-provisioning tactics and negatively associated with rival violence. Given the fitness payoffs of status striving in men over evolutionary history (Fieder and Huber 2012; Van Vugt and Tybur 2015), the relationship between prestige orientation and benefit provision was expected to be stronger for men than women.

Method

Participants

Data were collected from 332 undergraduate students at a large university in east Texas, USA. The study was advertised on Sona Systems, an online recruitment system, as being for

heterosexual individuals currently in a committed romantic relationship. Two participants were excluded for failing an attention check and one participant was excluded for admitting to not being in a romantic relationship after completing the study, resulting in a final sample of 329 participants (242 women, 87 men, $M_{\text{age}} = 19.81$, $SD = 3.09$). Participants were predominantly White (60.2%), non-Hispanic (73.6%), and reported being in their relationships for an average of 20.34 months ($SD = 19.03$ months), or roughly 1 year and 8 months. All participants were compensated with course credit.

Materials

Dominance-Prestige Scales Participants completed the Dominance-Prestige Scales (Cheng et al. 2010), which consist of two subscales measuring dominance and prestige, respectively. The 8-item dominance subscale ($\alpha = 0.78$) assesses participants' dominance motivation and includes items such as "I enjoy having control over others" and "I am willing to use aggressive tactics to get my way" (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). The 9-item prestige subscale ($\alpha = 0.79$) assesses participants' prestige motivation and includes items such as "I am held in high esteem by those I know" and "My unique talents and abilities are recognized by others" (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). It is important to note that this subscale measures perceived prestige, or prestige orientation, rather than actual prestige, which is freely conferred by others (Henrich and Gil-White 2001). Items were reverse-scored and averaged to create composite indices of dominance and prestige, respectively, with higher scores indicating greater motivation on the respective index.

Mate Retention Inventory-Short Form The Mate Retention Inventory-Short Form (MRI-SF; Buss et al. 2008) is a 38-item measure assessing 19 different mate retention tactics (two items per tactic) across five different categories: direct mate guarding, intersexual negative inducements, intrasexual negative inducements, positive inducements, and public signals of possession.

The first three categories comprise the cost-inflicting mate retention domain (Miner et al. 2009a). The direct mate guarding ($\alpha = 0.73$) category includes vigilance (e.g., "Snooped through my partner's personal belongings"), mate concealment (e.g., "Did not take my partner to a party where other men would be present"), and monopolization of time (e.g., "Insisted that my partner spend all her free time with me"). Intersexual negative inducements ($\alpha = 0.74$) are acts designed to impose a cost on a romantic partner and include jealousy induction (e.g., "Talked to another woman at a party to make my partner jealous"), punishment of a mate's infidelity threat (e.g., "Became angry when my partner flirted too much"), emotional manipulation (e.g., "Pleaded that I could

not live without my partner"), commitment manipulation (e.g., "Told my partner that we needed a total commitment to each other"), and derogation of competitors (e.g., "Pointed out to my partner the flaws of another man"). Intrasexual negative inducements ($\alpha = 0.69$) are acts designed to impose a cost on a same-sex rival and include mate derogation (e.g., "Told other men that my partner was a pain"), intrasexual threats (e.g., "Stared coldly at a man who was looking at my partner"), and violence against rivals (e.g., "Slapped a man who made a pass at my partner").

The latter two categories—positive inducements and public signals of possession—comprise the benefit-provisioning domain (Miner et al. 2009a). Positive inducements ($\alpha = 0.71$), which are designed to increase satisfaction with one's partner, include tactics such as resource display (e.g., "Bought my partner an expensive gift"), sexual inducements (e.g., "Performed sexual favors to keep my partner around"), appearance enhancements (e.g., "Made sure that I looked nice for my partner"), love and care (e.g., "Complimented my partner on her appearance"), and submission and debasement (e.g., "Gave in to my partner's every wish"). The final category, public signals of possession ($\alpha = 0.69$), includes verbal possession signals (e.g., "Bragged about my partner to other men"), physical possession signals (e.g., "Put my arm around my partner in front of others"), and possessive ornamentation (e.g., "Asked my partner to wear my ring").

Participants indicated how frequently they performed each of the 38 acts within the past year of their relationship (1 = *never performed this act*; 4 = *often performed this act*). The item wording was adjusted by sex, such that men indicated their responses about their opposite-sex partners, and vice versa. Composite scores were computed for the two broad mate retention domains (cost-inflicting and benefit-provisioning), the five categories, and each of the 19 tactics. A full listing of items in the MRI-SF can be found in Buss et al. (2008).

Demographics Participants reported their age, sex, race, ethnicity, academic standing, and relationship length. Participants also indicated their relationship satisfaction on a single-item measure ("How satisfied are you with your current romantic relationship?" [1 = *very dissatisfied*, 9 = *very satisfied*]), as done in previous work (e.g., Mellor et al. 2008; Shi 2003). Two attention check items were included to assess whether participants carefully completed all scales.

Procedure

The participants were enrolled in the study via Sonoma Systems and completed all scales using Qualtrics data collection software. Participants were presented with an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study and, after consenting to participate, were presented with the scales and demographics

questionnaire. After completing the scales, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Results

Descriptive Statistics Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all target variables are reported in Table 1, and sex differences in mate retention tactics using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level ($0.05/19 = 0.003$) are reported in Table 2.

Consistent with Buss (1988), men were significantly more likely than women to use mate concealment, rival violence, sexual inducements, and submission and debasement. Men ($M = 3.50, SD = 0.99$) reported being more dominance-oriented than women ($M = 3.20, SD = 1.04$), $t(326) = 2.33, p = 0.02, d = 0.30$, whereas women ($M = 5.46, SD = 0.78$) reported being more prestige-oriented than men ($M = 5.24, SD = 0.82$), $t(325) = -2.19, p = 0.03, d = 0.27$. Women ($M = 7.68, SD = 1.70$) reported greater relationship satisfaction than men ($M = 7.21, SD = 1.98$), $t(326) = -2.15, p = 0.03, d = 0.25$.

Main Analyses Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to assess the predicted relationships among sex (coded as 0 = female, 1 = male), dominance orientation, prestige orientation, and their respective interactions for each of the five mate retention categories. Previous research has found that mate retention is associated with age, relationship length, and relationship satisfaction (see Buss and Shackelford 1997; Pazhoohi et al. 2016; Salkicevic et al. 2014). Thus, each of these variables was controlled for in Step 1 of the regression analyses. The main effects were entered in Step 2, and the centered two-way interactions and the centered three-way interaction were included in Step 3.

Results for the three cost-inflicting mate retention categories are presented in Table 3. For direct guarding, the model was significant ($p < 0.001$) and accounted for 14.7% of the variance in this category after controlling for demographic variables. Specifically, dominance orientation was positively associated ($\beta = 0.30, t = 5.56, p < 0.001$), and prestige orientation negatively associated ($\beta = -0.16, t = -2.95, p = 0.003$), with direct guarding. For intersexual negative inducements, the model was significant ($p < 0.001$), accounting for 13.6% of the variance. Dominance orientation was positively associated ($\beta = 0.30, t = 5.56, p < 0.001$) with intersexual negative inducements, whereas the main effect of prestige orientation approached significance ($\beta = -0.09, t = -1.71, p = 0.09$). For intrasexual negative inducements, the model was significant ($p < 0.001$), accounting for 15% of the variance. Dominance orientation was positively associated ($\beta = 0.34, t = 6.20, p < 0.001$), and prestige orientation negatively associated ($\beta = -0.12, t = -2.20, p = 0.03$), with intrasexual negative inducements.

Results for the two benefit-provisioning mate retention categories are presented in Table 4. For positive inducements, the model was significant ($p = 0.001$) and accounted for 5.4% of the variance in this category after controlling for demographic variables. Sex was positively associated ($\beta = 0.17, t = 3.13, p = 0.002$) with positive inducements, whereas the main effect of prestige orientation approached significance ($\beta = 0.10, t = 1.88, p = 0.06$). For public signals of possession, the model was significant ($p < 0.001$), accounting for 10.5% of the variance. Both dominance orientation ($\beta = 0.18, t = 3.32, p = 0.001$) and prestige orientation ($\beta = 0.11, t = 2.12, p = 0.04$) were positively associated with public signals of possession.

The only significant interaction that emerged was between sex and prestige orientation predicting direct guarding. To interpret this interaction, the simple effect of prestige orientation was evaluated within men and women. Among men, increases in prestige orientation were associated with

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among target variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	19.81	3.09	–									
2. Relationship length (months)	20.34	19.03	0.23***	–								
3. Relationship satisfaction	7.56	1.79	0.01	0.08	–							
4. Dominance	3.28	1.03	-0.10	-0.07	-0.24***	–						
5. Prestige	5.40	0.79	-0.07	0.07	0.07	0.13*	–					
6. Direct guarding	1.59	0.53	-0.01	0.11*	-0.22***	0.32***	-0.12*	–				
7. Intersexual negative inducements	1.82	0.50	-0.02	0.14*	-0.17**	0.32***	-0.05	0.66***	–			
8. Intrasexual negative inducements	1.56	0.49	-0.03	0.05	-0.21***	0.36***	-0.08	0.60***	0.71***	–		
9. Positive inducements	2.75	0.45	0.05	0.14*	0.03	0.11*	0.12*	0.27***	0.41***	0.27***	–	
10. Public signals of possession	2.44	0.57	0.09	0.21***	0.14*	0.16**	0.16**	0.32***	0.47***	0.43***	0.57***	–

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 2 Sex differences in reported performance of mate retention tactics

Mate retention	Men		Women		<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Cost-inflicting domain						
Direct guarding						
Vigilance	1.89	0.73	1.88	0.73	0.07	0.01
Mate concealment	1.52	0.71	1.22	0.47	3.68***	0.50
Time monopolization	1.68	0.76	1.53	0.70	1.74	0.21
Intersexual negative inducements						
Jealousy induction	1.40	0.58	1.24	0.49	2.33	0.30
Punish infidelity threat	2.22	0.85	2.23	0.87	−0.08	−0.01
Emotional manipulation	1.90	0.85	1.66	0.79	2.46	.29
Commitment manipulation	1.93	0.71	1.92	0.72	0.11	0.01
Competitor derogation	2.24	0.75	1.87	0.81	3.69***	0.47
Intrasexual negative inducements						
Derogation of mate	1.67	0.67	1.56	0.58	1.32	0.18
Intrasexual threats	2.13	0.99	1.94	0.95	1.56	0.20
Violence against rivals	1.25	0.56	1.04	0.23	3.49***	0.49
Benefit-provisioning domain						
Positive inducements						
Resource display	2.90	0.73	2.69	0.76	2.20	0.28
Sexual inducements	2.48	0.80	2.17	0.74	3.34***	0.40
Appearance enhancements	2.92	0.72	2.98	0.68	−0.67	−0.09
Love and care	3.49	0.59	3.49	0.56	0.01	0.00
Submission and debasement	2.56	0.71	2.18	0.74	4.11***	0.52
Public signals of possession						
Verbal possession signals	2.57	0.81	2.75	0.84	−1.73	−0.22
Physical possession signals	3.21	0.73	3.15	0.82	0.66	0.08
Possessive ornamentation	1.75	0.84	1.34	0.66	4.16***	0.54

Bonferroni adjusted alpha level (0.05/19)

*** $p < 0.003$

decreases in direct guarding ($\beta = -0.26$, $t = -3.24$, $p = 0.001$). No significant effect was observed among women ($\beta = 0.07$, $t = 0.80$, $p = 0.43$). Contrary to predictions, sex did not moderate the relationship between prestige orientation and benefit-provisioning mate retention.

Discussion

To solve the ancestral challenge of mate retention, individuals engage in a variety of mate retention behaviors designed to secure commitment from one's partner, either by decreasing the likelihood of defection or by increasing relationship satisfaction (Miner et al. 2009a). The current study examined the relationships among dominance orientation, prestige orientation, and mate retention behaviors, testing the predictions that dominance orientation would be positively associated with cost-inflicting mate retention, and that prestige orientation

would be positively associated with benefit-provisioning mate retention and negatively associated with rival violence.

The results partially supported the hypotheses. As predicted, dominance-oriented men and women attempted to impose costs on their partners in an effort to decrease relationship defection. Specifically, dominance-oriented partners attempted to guard their partners from potential rivals, relied on emotional evocations such as jealousy and manipulation to prevent their partners from defecting, and threatened intrasexual rivals in an attempt to ward them off. These mate retention behaviors dovetail with personality descriptions of dominant individuals, who intimidate others and coerce them to do as they wish (Cheng et al. 2013). Interestingly, dominance-oriented partners also used public signals of possession as a mate retention tactic. This category includes verbally or physically signaling to others a partner's current involvement in a relationship. It is possible that dominance-oriented partners use these signals, not to bestow benefits or

Table 3 Hierarchical regression analyses predicting cost-inflicting mate retention from sex, dominance, and prestige

	Direct guarding			Intersexual negative inducements			Intrasexual negative inducements		
	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β
Age	-0.04	-0.03	-0.01	-0.05	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04	-0.02
Relationship length	0.14*	0.16**	0.17**	0.17**	0.19***	0.19***	0.08	0.10	0.11*
Relationship satisfaction	-0.21***	-0.13**	-0.13*	-0.17**	-0.09	-0.08	-0.20***	-0.11*	-0.11*
Sex		0.06	0.05		0.09	0.09		0.09	0.09
Dominance		0.30***	0.30***		0.30***	0.30***		0.34***	0.33***
Prestige		-0.16**	-0.17**		-0.09	-0.09		-0.12*	-0.11
Sex \times dominance			-0.04			0.02			0.02
Sex \times prestige			-0.12*			-0.04			-0.09
Dominance \times prestige			-0.02			0.02			-0.04
Sex \times dominance \times prestige			0.07			0.002			-0.06
Adjusted R^2	0.05	0.15	0.16	0.04	0.14	0.13	0.03	0.15	0.16
ΔR^2		0.11***	0.02		0.10***	0.002		0.12***	0.02

* $p < 0.05$
 ** $p < 0.01$
 *** $p < 0.001$

enhance their relationships, but rather to show off their partners or publically warn rivals against poaching.

In contrast to the tactics of dominance-oriented partners, prestige-oriented partners attempted to enhance their relationships through public signals of possession. The main effect of prestige on positive inducements, though marginally significant, was in the predicted direction. Together, these results indicate that prestige-oriented partners aimed to increase their partners' satisfaction by investing time, resources, and effort in

their relationships. These partner-focused responses correspond with research showing that prestige is positively associated with traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and prosociality (Cheng et al. 2010). Indeed, agreeableness correlates significantly with benefit-provisioning mate retention (Pham et al. 2015), and conscientiousness is positively associated with prestige-linked inducements such as resource display and appearance enhancement (de Miguel and Buss 2011). Note, however, that the relationship between prestige

Table 4 Hierarchical regression analyses predicting benefit-provisioning mate retention from sex, dominance, and prestige

	Positive inducements			Public signals of possession		
	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β
Age	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.07	0.08
Relationship length	0.13*	0.14*	0.14*	0.19**	0.19***	0.19**
Relationship satisfaction	0.03	0.06	0.06	0.12*	0.16**	0.16**
Sex		0.17**	0.16**		0.09	0.09
Dominance		0.09	0.12		0.18**	0.21***
Prestige		0.10	0.09		0.11*	0.11
Sex \times dominance			0.01			-0.02
Sex \times prestige			0.06			0.05
Dominance \times prestige			-0.05			-0.10
Sex \times dominance \times prestige			0.06			-0.02
Adjusted R^2	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.11	0.10
ΔR^2		0.05***	0.01		0.06***	0.01

* $p < 0.05$
 ** $p < 0.01$
 *** $p < 0.001$

orientation and benefit provision did not differ by sex, as was predicted. Sex appeared to moderate only the effect of prestige orientation on direct guarding. Nonetheless, as predicted, prestige orientation was negatively associated with the use of direct guarding and intrasexual negative inducements, suggesting that prestige-oriented partners generally eschewed cost-infliction and avoided direct conflict with same-sex rivals.

These findings shed light on the strategic nature of mate retention. It appears that mate retention efforts are not only sensitive to mate value standards such as physical attractiveness and fertility (Buss and Shackelford 1997; Pillsworth and Haselton 2006), but also align with romantic partners' dispositional personality traits (e.g., Atari et al. 2017; de Miguel and Buss 2011). When faced with relationship threats, dominance-oriented partners mobilize the tactics with which they are familiar—force, coercion, and intimidation—and direct these tactics toward both their partners and rivals. Prestige-oriented partners, perhaps to reduce the negative reputational fallout from direct conflict with romantic rivals, take a different, coalitional approach aimed at increasing their partner's satisfaction and bolstering the positive aspects of the relationship.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the current results. First, participants were American undergraduates—a predominantly Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) sample (Henrich et al. 2010)—and the results may not generalize to non-WEIRD samples. Second, this study examined the simple correlational relationships among self-reported trait levels of dominance orientation, prestige orientation, and mate retention behaviors. It is impossible to determine the causal influence of these traits on mate retention, nor is it possible to know the specific situational precipitators that enacted mate retention effort. Third, there are likely additional trait variables not measured in the current studies that explain additional variance in mate retention or mediate the relationships among dominance orientation, prestige orientation, and mate retention.

Jealousy and hostile attribution are two likely candidates. One possibility is that dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented partners differentially experience jealousy, which in turn guides the specific mate retention tactics they use. Dominance-oriented partners may be more likely to experience paranoid jealousy and suspiciousness of their partner's and others' actions, which underlies their guarding behaviors, whereas prestige-oriented partners may exhibit anxiety-driven jealousy motivated by a fear of loss (Marazziti et al. 2010). Jealousy motivated by attachment anxiety may be particularly important, as recent research has shown that the relationship between partners' attachment anxiety and their mate retention is mediated by perceived risk of infidelity (Barbaro et al. 2019).

Similarly, dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented partners may show differences in threat attribution. Dominance-oriented partners may misattribute benign interactions between their partners and opposite-sex others as threatening and initiate cost-inflicting measures accordingly. Research has shown that aggressive individuals who feel threatened misinterpret others' intentions (Dodge and Somberg 1987) and that when given hypothetical scenarios of marital problems, husbands with a history of marital violence assume that the wife is behaving with negative intent (Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchinson 1993). Dominance-oriented partners prone to aggression and suspicion may inflict costs to punish their partner's (presumed) negative intentions. Prestige-oriented partners, in contrast, may attribute affronts to their image as especially threatening and redouble their efforts to satisfy their partner. Some tactics prestige-oriented partners use, such as buying a partner an expensive gift, may derive in part from attributions that one's material contributions are insufficient relative to what rivals can offer. Future research is needed to explore these possibilities and additional potential mediators.

Another limitation of the current work is that the frequency of mate retention behaviors was assessed with little insight into how or in what order these specific tactics were chosen. Given that cost-inflicting strategies are high risk (Miner et al. 2009a), dominance-oriented men may first seek to use less risky strategies such as guarding before turning to more direct and conflictual tactics such as intrasexual violence (Kaighobadi et al. 2008). The success of dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented partners' past mate retention strategies is also unknown in the current research. For these individuals, past success may determine the use of specific tactics in the future. Additional research is needed to elucidate the cognitive and situational processes underlying the selection of specific tactics by dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented individuals, respectively.

Implications

The mate retention literature suggests that romantic partners engage in strategic behaviors to maintain their relationships and that these behaviors are critical to long-term relationship success. The current study extends this body of literature by suggesting that romantic partners engage in mate retention efforts corresponding with their dispositional levels of dominance and prestige motivation. Several important questions arise from the current work. First, are dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented partners successful at mate retention? Apart from indicators such as relationship length, one way to operationalize relationship success is to examine overall relationship satisfaction as well as satisfaction with a partner's mate retention tactics. There is some evidence to suggest that mate retention tactics are associated with relationship

satisfaction. Cost-inflicting tactics such as monopolizing a partner's time and manipulating a partner's emotions are negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Shackelford and Buss 2000), whereas benefit-provisioning tactics such as positive inducements and public signals of possession are positively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Salkicevic et al. 2014). In the current study, dominance orientation was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, which is consistent with previous research (Burn and Ward 2005). In contrast, prestige-oriented partners were generally more satisfied with their relationships. Ironically, the mate retention tactics used by dominance-oriented partners may do little to enhance their own relationship satisfaction.

Another important question emerging from the current work regards the relationship between mate retention and relational aggression: Does dominance orientation predispose individuals toward violent means of mate retention when faced with a relationship threat? Men and women are attuned to a variety of cues signaling potential infidelity by their partner (Shackelford and Buss 1997). When husbands perceive that their wives are likely to cheat, they attempt to punish the threat of their mate's infidelity and derogate rival men (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Because dominance-oriented individuals achieve desired outcomes through threat and force, they may engage in partner-directed violence to achieve these cost-inflicting ends. For instance, Shackelford et al. (2005a) found that men in romantic relationships who used direct guarding and intersexual negative inducements reported inflicting more violence on their partners—a finding which was corroborated by women's reports of their partner's behaviors. Dominance orientation may magnify the use of strategies designed to punish infidelity threats; if these strategies are deemed unsuccessful, they may escalate from cost-infliction to physical or emotional partner abuse.

More broadly, the current research supports the value of applying an evolutionary framework to the study of relationship maintenance behavior. From this perspective, human nature consists of evolved psychological mechanisms designed to solve repeated survival and reproductive problems over evolutionary history. These mechanisms are theorized to be context-dependent and respond to contextualized environmental input (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Consistent with this perspective, it is hypothesized that dominance-oriented and prestige-oriented partners only engage in mate retention aligning with their dispositional levels of dominance and prestige, respectively, when faced with a viable threat of relationship defection. Dominant men apply the tactics of force, threat, and intimidation that presumably contributed to their mate value and mating success. Although dominance is not considered an important determinant of mate value in women, women still face the ancestral challenge of long-term mate retention, and the situationally specific display of dominance may have yielded fitness benefits. Prestige-oriented partners would be expected to be

less likely to impose costs on their partners in favor of a more calculated approach focused on increasing their partner's satisfaction and rekindling the relationship bond. To deal effectively with rivals, prestige-oriented partners may avoid conflict and instead rely on status signaling.

Conclusions

The challenge of long-term human mating does not end with successfully courting a mate, as long-term mating also requires insulating the relationship against partner defection and mate poaching. In short, partners must continually identify, monitor, and fend off potential threats to their relationships. As the poignant lyrics to “Every Breath You Take” (The Police 1983, track 7) remind us, partners can invoke a variety of strategies in the pursuit of these goals, ranging from positive tactics such as complimenting their partners to more distrusting acts like surveilling and controlling their partner's behavior. A partner's dominance and prestige motives may be useful indicators of which mate retention route he or she is likely to take.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Ethical Approval Statement All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institution and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Statement Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the studies.

Conflict of Interest The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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