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## Use of Mate Retention Strategies

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### Synonyms

[Mate guarding](#); [Mate retention](#)

### Definition

Mate retention refers to effort aimed at maintaining access to a mate.

### Introduction

Mate retention tactics comprise a broad menu of behaviors ranging from acts of kindness and resource provisioning, to vigilance, manipulation, and violence. Mate retention effort often occurs in response to a perceived or actual relationship threat. Sex differences and individual differences exist in the use of specific mate retention tactics, which share the common goal of reducing the probability of partner defection or infidelity. In order to understand the origins of these behaviors, it is necessary to understand the processes that underlie mate selection and the negative implications of partner loss.

### Introduction

Trivers (1972) defined parental investment as “any investment by the parent that enhances the offspring’s chances of survival at the cost of the parents’ ability to invest in other offspring” (p. 139). Most often, females invest more in their offspring than do males (Trivers 1972). Males’ amount of obligatory investment to produce offspring (i.e., copulation) is minimal (in terms of energetically “cheap” sperm) relative to the amount of obligatory investment of females, which entails energetically “expensive” gametic production, gestation, lactation, and requisite care after birth (Trivers 1972). Accordingly, females’ reproductive rate is limited compared to males’ reproductive rate, given the number of offspring that a female can produce is limited by the length of gestation; males’ reproductive rate is only limited by the number of fertile females that they can copulate with. In species where females have the greater obligatory parental investment, they are the choosier sex during mate selection (Trivers 1972). In species where males have minimal obligatory parental investment and higher yet more variable reproductive potentials, they compete with one another for access to fertile females (Trivers 1972).

Although females are often the more investing sex, some species do exhibit substantive male parental investment. For example, humans are considered to be among the less than 5 % of mammals that engage in some form of biparental

care (Geary 2000). Men contribute to rearing children by providing resources and protection, educating them, and helping them to form social alliances, often within the context of forming a monogamous (or socially monogamous) pair bond with the mother (Geary 2000). Although paternal investment is not obligatory, there is evidence that when fathers invest in raising their offspring, they are increasing the probability that the child will survive to reproductive age. In preindustrial societies, paternal investment is associated with a reduction in child mortality (Geary 2000). For example, in the Aché of Paraguay, the child mortality rate for children with fathers who take part in childcare is half the rate for children whose fathers are absent (Geary 2000). Pair bonding can also benefit men's continued sexual access to their partners. Accordingly, ancestral men who exhibited psychological and behavioral mechanisms that facilitated some degree of monogamy and biparental investment may have been more reproductively successful than those who did not, provided that the offspring they were investing in were indeed their own.

### The Problem of Infidelity

Generally, infidelity is a problem because it signifies the dissolution of the relationship and the loss of the time, energy, and resources associated with attracting that mate. However, infidelity also poses different adaptive problems for men and women. For men, infidelity represents the possibility of cuckoldry, whereas for women, it signifies the potential for the man's resources to be diverted away from her and her offspring.

**Paternal uncertainty.** For women, fertilization is internal, guaranteeing that they are the mothers of their offspring. However, men cannot be certain that they are the fathers of their offspring; it is possible that another man could have copulated with and inseminated their mate. Cuckoldry refers to a man unwittingly investing his time and energy rearing offspring that he believes to be his own, but are in fact the offspring of another man (Buss and Shackelford 1997; Trivers

1972). By raising a child that is not his, a man invests in offspring that do not possess his genes – investment that could instead be allocated to attracting a new mate and producing related offspring. Moreover, men can experience reputational damage when they are cuckolded which may reduce their desirability to prospective mates and further reduce their likelihood of producing offspring. Men experience more jealousy in response to a mate's sexual infidelity than an emotional infidelity, suggesting that they have developed mating strategies that function to alert them to potential cuckoldry.

**Diversion of resources.** For women, infidelity represents a different adaptive problem – the possibility that her mate may divert his resources away from her and her offspring toward a different woman (Trivers 1972). Losing men's parental investment results in women having to invest significantly more time and resources in order to rear their offspring, effectively reducing the amount of parental investment that each child receives (Trivers 1972). Women experience more jealousy than men in response to a mate's emotional infidelity, ostensibly because men who invest emotionally in another woman are more likely to defect or divert resources from their current relationship. Due to the substantial investment associated with attracting a mate and rearing offspring, it would follow that both men and women would have developed psychological and behavioral adaptations to prevent partner defection.

**Jealousy as an adaptive emotion pertinent to mate retention.** The prevalence of jealousy in both men and women suggests that infidelity was a problem that ancestral men and women experienced (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Evolutionary psychologists contend that the emotional experience of jealousy is adaptive because it signifies a threat to the relationship and it motivates behaviors geared toward preventing the mate from defecting from the relationship (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Today, male jealousy is frequently cited as a cause of their use of violence in romantic dyads. Jealousy might also relate to women's mate retention efforts. For example, Arnocky et al. (2012) found that among

heterosexual women currently in romantic relationships, jealousy predicted women's use of social aggression toward partners and peers and that physically attractive women reported being the targets of other women's social aggression most often, presumably because they constitute the greatest intrasexual threat to other women.

### **Why Engage in Costly Mate Retention Efforts?**

In order to understand why individuals might engage in costly mate retention tactics, even in the absence of an absolute threat to the relationship, it is important to consider that human decision-making is sometimes biased, such that whenever the costs of errors from two different choices differ in their severity (in terms of reproductive fitness), individuals should be biased toward making the choice which minimizes the cost of the error (Haselton and Buss 2000). From an "error management" perspective, behaviors which might dissuade partners from defecting should be common among humans given the cost of engaging in such behaviors is often less than the cost of failing to maintain a desired pair bond (i.e., losing a reproductively valuable partner). Behaviors that are explicitly or implicitly aimed at maintaining a pair bond are commonly referred to as mate retention tactics. Mate retention tactics encompass a wide range of behaviors that individuals use to prevent partner infidelity and defection.

### **Taxonomy of Mate Retention Tactics**

Conceptually, mate retention tactics can be divided into two broad categories: cost-inflicting behaviors and benefit-provisioning behaviors (Buss 1988). Cost-inflicting mate retention behaviors function to reduce partners' self-esteem and make them feel unworthy of the current relationship or to induce fear and social isolation, all of which might increase the probability of them remaining in the relationship. Conversely, benefit-provisioning mate retention behaviors

function to reduce the likelihood of partner defection by enhancing the partner's satisfaction with the relationship (Buss 1988). Mate retention tactics can also be categorized based on the individual to whom the behaviors are directed. Intrasexual manipulations are behaviors that are directed toward same-sex competitors and function to deter them from attempting to mate with the individual's partner. Intersexual manipulations are behaviors that are directed toward the partner which function to prevent them from straying from the current relationship.

***Intrasexual manipulations.*** Mate retention tactics within this category include public signals of possession and intrasexual negative inducements (Buss 1988). Public signals of possession function to let same-sex competitors know that the individual they may be interested in pursuing is already in a relationship. These tactics include verbal signals of possession (e.g., introducing partner as their wife/husband or girlfriend/boyfriend), physical signals of possession (e.g., holding partner's hand in front of members of the same sex), and possessive ornamentation (e.g., giving partner jewelry to signify to others that they are in a relationship; Buss 1988). Intrasexual negative inducements involve the individual engaging in direct action toward same-sex competitors to deter them from attempting to co-opt their partner. These tactics include derogation of one's own mate to competitors (e.g., telling members of the same sex terrible things about partner so they would not be interested in them), intrasexual threats (e.g., yelling at an individual for looking at their partner), and violence (e.g., hitting someone who made a pass at their partner; Buss 1988).

***Intersexual manipulations.*** Mate retention tactics within this category include direct mate guarding, intersexual negative inducements, and intersexual positive inducements. Acts of direct guarding involve closely monitoring the activities of a mate (Buss 1988). Within the category of direct guarding, there are several strategies including vigilance (e.g., calling a partner at unexpected times to find out what they are doing), concealment of mate (e.g., taking partner away from a social gathering where same-sex competitors are present), and monopolization of their time (e.g.,

spending all of their free time with their mate; Buss 1988). Intersexual negative inducements sometimes function to lower the partner's self-esteem so that they do not feel worthy of the current relationship. Intersexual negative inducements include infidelity threat (e.g., flirting with others in front of partner), punishing a mate's infidelity threat (e.g., getting angry with partner for flirting), emotional manipulation (e.g., making the partner feel guilty about talking to members of the opposite sex), commitment manipulation (e.g., demanding a total commitment from partner), and derogation of competitors to one's partner (e.g., insulting same-sex competitors physical appearance in front of one's partner; Buss 1988). Finally, intersexual positive inducements function to increase the partner's satisfaction with the current relationship. They include resource display (e.g., giving gifts to partner), sexual inducements (e.g., giving into partners sexual requests), appearance enhancement (e.g., dressing nicely), emphasize love and caring (e.g., complimenting partner on appearance), and submission and debasement (e.g., doing whatever the partner wishes). The sexes use these tactics with different degrees of frequency and with varying degrees of effectiveness.

### Men's Use of Mate Retention Tactics

Based on parental investment theory, men should use mate retention tactics that involve providing their mate with resources, because this would signify that they are able to provide for their mate and any offspring they may have with survival-enhancing resources (Buss 1988; Trivers 1972). In this manner, men are conforming some of their mate retention efforts toward fulfilling the mate preferences of women, who may themselves benefit from an expressed preference for men who are able to provide resources (Trivers 1972). Indeed, Buss (1989) found that across 37 cultures, women reported a stronger preference for resource-provisioning abilities in a mate than did men. In the Aché of Paraguay, a society of hunter-gatherers, men who are better hunters tend to have greater reproductive success, demonstrating that

women may use men's resource-provisioning ability when selecting reproductive partners (Kaplan and Hill 1985). Furthermore, women prefer to mate with men who are older than themselves because these men are more likely to be financially stable and capable of providing resources (Buss 1989). In Buss's (1988) seminal study on men's and women's use of mate retention tactics, men reported engaging in resource display, including acts of gift giving, more often than women. Men who engage in benefit-provisioning mate retention strategies sometimes give their partners gifts when they are trying to secure their commitment (Buss 1988). Men are more likely to offer gifts to their romantic partners than are women (Jonason et al. 2009). Gift giving is a strategy that some men may use when trying to prevent a mate from defecting from a relationship (Jonason et al. 2009). By providing partners with gifts, men may be enhancing their mate value because they are communicating to their partner that they are able to provide resources. Indeed, some research has shown that the probability and value of gift giving is related to indices of individuals' income (Garner and Wagner 1991).

Men who have higher mate value (indexed here by their annual income and status striving) are more likely to use benefit-provisioning mate retention behaviors than men of lower mate value, who tend to resort to using cost-inflicting mate retention strategies with greater frequency. Generally, mate retention tactics that are judged to be most effective for men fall into the category of benefit provisioning and include being kind, caring, affectionate, and complimentary, whereas tactics that are judged to be ineffective fall into the cost-inflicting category and include hitting one's partner and derogating them in front of others (Buss 1988). It is important to note that the frequency and type of mate retention tactics that men use are not static but are under the influence of environmental factors. Two such factors that influence men's mate retention behaviors are partner's attractiveness and partner's fertility.

**Partner's youth and attractiveness.** Although young and attractive women are highly desirable partners (Buss 1989), forming a relationship with these women comes at a cost because they are

highly sought after by other men and may be more likely to be unfaithful (Hughes and Gallup 2003). Women with lower waist-to-hip ratios (WHRs), a physical trait of women judged by men to be attractive, report cheating on their partner more frequently than do women with higher WHRs (Hughes and Gallup 2003). Moreover, women who perceive themselves to be more attractive than their partner are more likely to flirt with other men and are more resistant to their partner's mate-guarding attempts. Men may use their partner's youth and attractiveness as cues to assess the probability that they will be unfaithful. In support of this, men married to younger and more attractive women engage in more frequent use of mate retention tactics including concealing their partner, emotional manipulation, commitment manipulation, verbal signals of possession, and violence against same-sex competitors, compared to those men married to older and less attractive women (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Men mated to more attractive women also engage in more frequent in-pair copulation (IPC; i.e., they have sex with their romantic partners more often; Kaighobadi and Shackelford 2008). Kaighobadi and Shackelford (2008) suggested that men married to attractive women might copulate with them more frequently as a strategy to prevent them from being cuckolded. By frequently introducing sperm into their partner's reproductive tract, they are enhancing the probability that their partner's offspring are also their own (Goetz et al. 2005).

**Partner's fertility.** In humans, ovulation is largely concealed; however, there is some evidence that the frequency and intensity of men's mate retention behaviors are influenced by their partner's fertility (Gangestad et al. 2002). Women report that their partners were both more attentive and more proprietary near ovulation (i.e., in the late follicular phase of their menstrual cycle; Gangestad et al. 2002). Men engage in more expressions of love and affection and are more self-assertive when their partner is fertile (Gangestad et al. 2014; Pillsworth and Haselton 2006). The increased frequency and intensity of men's mate retention behaviors during the late follicular phase of their partner's cycles is logical because this is when they are most susceptible to

being cuckolded. In addition to being vigilant about the possibility of mate poachers (i.e., individuals who try and co-opt individuals from existing relationships), men must also be vigilant about their partners straying from the relationship. Women are most interested in engaging in extra-pair copulation (EPC) when they are fertile (Gangestad et al. 2014). This is especially true when women perceive their partner to be less attractive than themselves (Pillsworth and Haselton 2006) and may reflect a dual mating strategy whereby women try and obtain good genes from one man and resources and commitment from the other.

### Women's Use of Mate Retention Tactics

Women's mate retention behaviors also align with parental investment theory (Buss 1988; Trivers 1972). Like men, women seem to conform some of their mate retention efforts toward satisfying the mate preferences of the opposite sex. For instance, men have developed a preference for cues to physical attractiveness, which may signal youth and fertility in a partner (Buss 1989; Trivers 1972). Across cultures, men consistently rate physical attractiveness as more important in a mate than do women (Buss 1989). Additionally, men tend to prefer women who are younger than themselves because these women have greater reproductive value (i.e., more childbearing years). Unsurprisingly then, women's mate retention behaviors are often focused on making themselves appear more reproductively valuable. Women, more than men, use appearance enhancement as a mate retention tactic (Buss 1988).

An alternative mate retention strategy for women involves flirting with other men in front of their partners to induce jealousy (i.e., infidelity threat). Partner's sexual infidelity is significantly more costly for men than for women as it can result in genetic cuckoldry. Women's infidelity threats may serve to make their partner experience sexual jealousy and engage in mate retention tactics to secure the relationship (Buss 1988). Mate retention tactics that are judged to be most effective for women involve appearance enhancement

(e.g., dressing nicely and wearing makeup; Buss 1988). Tactics that are judged to be least effective fall into the cost-inflicting mate retention category and include hitting one's partner and snooping through their personal belongings (Buss 1988). However, some research has shown that women may employ subtler forms of indirect or social aggression toward partners (behaviors such as "I try to make my romantic partner jealous when I am mad at him," "I give my romantic partner the silent treatment when he hurts my feelings in some way," and "I have threatened to break up with my romantic partner in order to get him to do what I wanted") and peers (behaviors such as "talked about others behind their backs," "excluded others from a group," "made other people not talk to others," and "been bitchy toward others") as a form of mate retention (Arnocky et al. 2012).

***Partner's resource-provisioning ability.***

Women engage in more mate retention behaviors when their partners have higher incomes and have higher levels of status striving (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Specifically, women married to men with higher incomes reported engaging in more acts of vigilance (e.g., checking up on partner at unexpected times) and infidelity threat compared to women married to men with lower incomes (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Women have evolved to prefer men who are capable of providing their offspring with survival-enhancing resources (Buss 1989; Trivers 1972). Women might engage in mate retention tactics more frequently and with greater intensity when their partners are wealthy, because the cost of losing a valuable partner, who is capable of providing large amounts of resources, is significantly more detrimental than losing one who can provide meager amounts of resources.

## **Concurrent Mate Retention Tactics**

***Derogation of partner and partner violence.***

Concurrent mate retention tactics are tactics that are commonly used together when individuals are trying to prevent relationship defection (Shackelford et al. 2006). Men who engage in

more intersexual negative inducements (e.g., derogating partner in front of others), direct guarding (e.g., taking partner away from social gatherings where men are present), and intrasexual negative inducements (e.g., threatening same-sex individuals for looking at their partner) are also more likely to insult their partner as a mate retention tactic (McKibbin et al. 2007). Moreover, men who are more likely to use intersexual negative inducements, direct guarding, and intersexual negative inducements are also more likely to engage in acts of intimate partner violence (IPV) when they suspect that their partner has committed an infidelity (Kaighobadi et al. 2008). Furthermore, men who engage in mate retention tactics within the category of vigilance (i.e., frequently monitoring partner's activities) are more likely to commit IPV when they suspect infidelity (Kaighobadi et al. 2008). Men's use of IPV may function to (1) punish the partner, (2) discourage them from committing future infidelity, and (3) signal to same-sex competitors that they are capable of inflicting violence on others (Arnocky et al. 2015). To this end, IPV may represent the extreme of a cost-inflicting mate retention strategy that some men and women use when other mate retention tactics are unavailable to them or have failed to be effective at reducing the perceived probability of partner infidelity.

***Forced in-pair copulation.*** Men who perceive that their partner has been unfaithful are also more likely to engage in forced in-pair copulation (FIPC; Goetz and Shackelford 2006). Men's use of FIPC and other acts of sexual coercion is related to their use of cost-inflicting mate retention tactics such as punishing mate's infidelity threat, emotional manipulation, derogation of competitors, and violence against rivals (Goetz and Shackelford 2006). When men suspect that their partner has been unfaithful, they may experience greater urgency to copulate with their partners (Goetz and Shackelford 2006). Their partner's resistance to copulating with them may signify that their partner has been unfaithful and may prompt men to engage in acts of sexual coercion including FIPC. Infidelity signals may cause men to engage in acts of sexual coercion including FIPC as a means to introduce their own sperm

into their partner's reproductive tract and/or to displace rival semen from their partner's reproductive tract (Goetz and Shackelford 2006).

### **Compensatory Mate Retention Tactics**

Compensatory mate retention behaviors function to compensate for additional factors that increase the likelihood that a partner will commit infidelity or abscond from the dyad. Some of these factors include time spent away from the partner and the individual's mate value. As the proportion of time that a couple spends together decreases, the probability of a partner's infidelity increases (Baker and Bellis 1993). To reduce the chances of being cuckolded, men who had spent a greater proportion of time away from their partners since the couples last copulation reported (1) a stronger attraction to their partner, (2) that their partner was likely more attractive to other men, (3) a stronger interest in copulating with their partner, and (4) that their partner had an increased interest in copulating with them (Shackelford et al. 2002). Men's increased desire to copulate with their partner after a period of separation may function to introduce their sperm into their partner's reproductive tract and reduce the probability of their partner being fertilized by the sperm of a competitor.

To provide further support that men engage in compensatory mate retention behaviors after periods of partner separation, Gallup et al. (2003) found that men engage in semen-displacing behaviors (i.e., behaviors designed to displace rival's semen from their partner's reproductive tract; Gallup et al. 2003). Specifically, after periods of partner separation, men reported engaging in deeper and more vigorous penile thrusting during copulation with their partner (Gallup et al. 2003). When the penis is inserted deep into the vagina, the glands and coronal ridge may function to displace rival semen from the reproductive tract (Gallup et al. 2003).

Men's mate value also influences their tendency to engage in compensatory mate retention tactics. Height is one characteristic that is closely associated with men's mate value. Taller men tend

to be healthier and possess other cues associated with viability, such as low fluctuating asymmetry (Manning 1995). Subsequently, women report being more attracted to taller men. Shorter men in romantic relationships report greater levels of jealousy than do taller men (Brewer and Riley 2009). Furthermore, shorter men are less likely to engage in mate retention tactics that would jeopardize their current relationship than taller men are, perhaps because they are aware that since they had lower mate value, their partner would be more likely to defect from the relationship if they engaged in these behaviors (Brewer and Riley 2009). This suggests that individuals' own mate value influences the type of mate retention tactics employed.

### **Individual Differences in Mate Retention Tactics**

Individuals who score high on the traits of the dark triad (i.e., psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism) are more likely to engage in cost-inflicting mate retention tactics, such as punishing mates' infidelity threat and violence against rivals, than are individuals who score low on dark triad traits (Jonason et al. 2010). Machiavellianism is a personality trait that is associated with distrust of others and a motivation to take advantage of others for personal gain. Individuals who score high on this personality trait tend to engage in more acts of direct mate guarding, suggesting that they are distrustful of their partners (Brewer and Abell 2015). Similarly, men who have low levels of emotional stability engage in more cost-inflicting mate retention tactics (McKibbin et al. 2014). These men may be hypersensitive to potential relationship threat. Conversely, individuals with high levels of honesty-humility are less likely to engage in mate retention tactics that involve manipulating or deceiving their romantic partners (Holden et al. 2014). Furthermore, men who score high on the agreeableness dimension of the five-factor model of personality tend to engage in more benefit-provisioning mate retention tactics; these men also report greater interest in, and more time

engaging in, oral sex with their partner (a form of sexual inducement). Women who score high on the conscientiousness dimension of the five-factor model of personality also engage in more benefit-provisioning mate retention tactics and report greater interest in, and more time spent engaging in, oral sex with their partner (Pham and Shackelford 2013).

### Coalitional Mate Retention

Coalitional mate retention refers to tactics that individuals engage in to help prevent their friend's partners from defecting from the relationship (Pham et al. 2015). The tactics that individuals employ to help their friends include praise (saying positive things about their friend to his or her partner), vigilance (watching their friend's partner's behavior), therapy (repairing the relationship between the friend and his or her partner), monopolizing friend's partner's time (spending a great deal of time with the partner so they cannot spend their time with a same-sex competitor), and violence (performing acts of violence against friends' rivals; Pham et al. 2015).

When individuals engage in acts of coalitional mate retention, they may be behaving altruistically, since these behaviors do not provide them with any direct benefit. Perhaps engaging in acts of coalitional mate retention functions as a costly signal, because only mated individuals who feel as though their relationships are stable or single individuals who feel that they can easily attract a desirable partner are likely to allocate time and energy enhancing their friends' romantic relationships (e.g., Arnocky et al. 2014b). It could also be that acts of coalitional mate retention are a form of reciprocity (Boyd and Richerson 1989). Individuals who engage in acts of coalitional mate retention may expect the friends who they have aided to engage in acts of coalitional mate retention when they experience relationship threat (Boyd and Richerson 1989). Men are less likely to ask their male friends to engage in coalitional mate retention tactics which would suggest that men commonly view same-sex friends as competitors (Pham et al. 2015). Requesting help from male

friends may indicate that the partner is more willing to defect from the relationship, which may cause these male friends to engage in mate-poaching attempts (Pham et al. 2015).

### Role of Emotion in Motivation of Mate Retention

The experience of anxiety may function to help men and women identify and solve adaptive problems (Buss 1990). Specifically, the experience of anxiety may promote corrective behaviors that aid in survival and reproductive success via the maintenance of social relationships (Buss 1990). The experience of social exclusion is detrimental to an individual's reproductive fitness; moreover, social exclusion is not arbitrary but motivated by the individual's interaction with group members (Buss 1990). One such group where exclusion is particularly harmful is the romantic dyad. Individuals have evolved adaptations in the form of emotional experiences to prevent infidelity and partner desertion. The emotional experience of anxiety and jealousy may function to identify relationship threat and motivate the individual to engage in behaviors to prevent or reduce the intensity of relationship threat. Individuals with high levels of anxiety may be hypersensitive to the threat of partner infidelity. Men who perceived greater risk of partner infidelity exhibit higher levels of self-reported anxiety and are more likely to engage in cost-inflicting physical, sexual, and psychological aggression toward their partners (Arnocky et al. 2015). Women with lower levels of self-perceived mate value (perceived physical attractiveness and value as a mate, relative to other women) are more likely to use cost-inflicting mate retention tactics such as flirting with other men and threatening to terminate the current relationship (Arnocky et al. 2012). These behaviors may function to lower their partner's self-perceived mate value and subsequently reduce the likelihood that their partner will defect from the relationship.

## Environmental Factors That Influence Mate Retention Tactics

**Operational sex ratio.** Environmental factors such as proportion of viable mates available also affect the frequency and intensity with which individuals engage in mate retention behaviors (Arnocky et al. 2014a). Operational sex ratio refers to the number of fertile females in the population relative to the number of sexually active males. When men and women are primed to believe they are members of the abundant sex (i.e., they are primed to think that opposite sex individuals are scarce relative to the number of same-sex individuals in a population), they report more jealousy when imagining their partner flirting with an attractive member of the opposite sex and a greater willingness to engage in acts of intersexual negative inducements (e.g., calling the person a derogatory name or slandering them in front of others) toward that rival (Arnocky et al. 2014a). Men are also more likely to reduce their sociosexuality (indicating greater orientation toward maintaining a single partner) when they believe mates to be scarce relative to abundant (Arnocky et al. 2016).

## Conclusion

Mate retention tactics function to prevent partner defection. Attracting and securing a mate often requires the individual to expend a great deal of time, energy and resources. Dissolution of a relationship signifies the loss of the time, energy, and resources associated with securing the partner. Partner infidelity is one of the foremost threats to a relationship and poses unique problems to men and women. Men's mate retention behaviors are designed to reduce the risk of cuckoldry, whereas women's mate retention behaviors are designed to prevent men from deserting them. Mate retention behaviors are not static, but vary in the type employed, the frequency, and intensity with which they are utilized, and are based on a wide range of factors such as the mate value of both the individual and their partner, partner's fertility level (in the case of women), the operational sex

ratio of the environment, and the presence of friends within the environment.

## Cross-References

- ▶ [Benefit Provisioning](#)
- ▶ [Coalitional Mate Retention](#)
- ▶ [Direct Guarding](#)
- ▶ [Fitness Benefits of Mate Guarding For Males \(Hawkes, 1995\)](#)
- ▶ [Intimate Partner Violence](#)
- ▶ [Mate Retention](#)
- ▶ [Mate Retention Strategies](#)
- ▶ [Mate Retention Tactic](#)
- ▶ [Paternity Certainty as Benefit to Men of Long-Term Mating](#)

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