“When We Hurt the Ones We Love: Predicting Violence Against Women from Men’s Mate Retention”

“Mate retention behaviors are designed to solve several adaptive problems, such as deterring a partner’s infidelity and preventing defection from the mating relationship. Although many mate retention behaviors appear to be innocuous romantic gestures (e.g., displaying resources, giving flowers), some may be harbingers of violence. We investigated the relationships between male mate retention and violence against women in romantic relationships. In Study 1, 461 men reported their use of mate retention behaviors and separately completed instruments designed to assess violence in their relationships. Study 2 assessed 560 women’s reports of their partners’ mate retention behaviors and the degree to which their partners used violence against them. As predicted, and across both studies, men’s use of particular mate retention behaviors was related positively to female-directed violence. Study 3 secured two separate data sources — husbands’ reports of their mate retention and wives’ reports of their husbands’ violence in a sample of 214 individuals forming 107 couples. The results corroborated those of Studies 1 and 2, with particular male mate retention behaviors predicting violence against romantic partners. Discussion outlines future directions for research that are likely to result in a more comprehensive understanding of partner violence against women.”