

# Caught in the middle: Exploring the nature of situationships

## Background

- Situationships resemble traditional relationships but lack commitment and clarity (Langlais et al., 2024)
- While prior research has examined characteristics of situationships, the role of power and gender in shaping situationship investment strategies remains unexplored (Langlais et al., 2025)

## Method

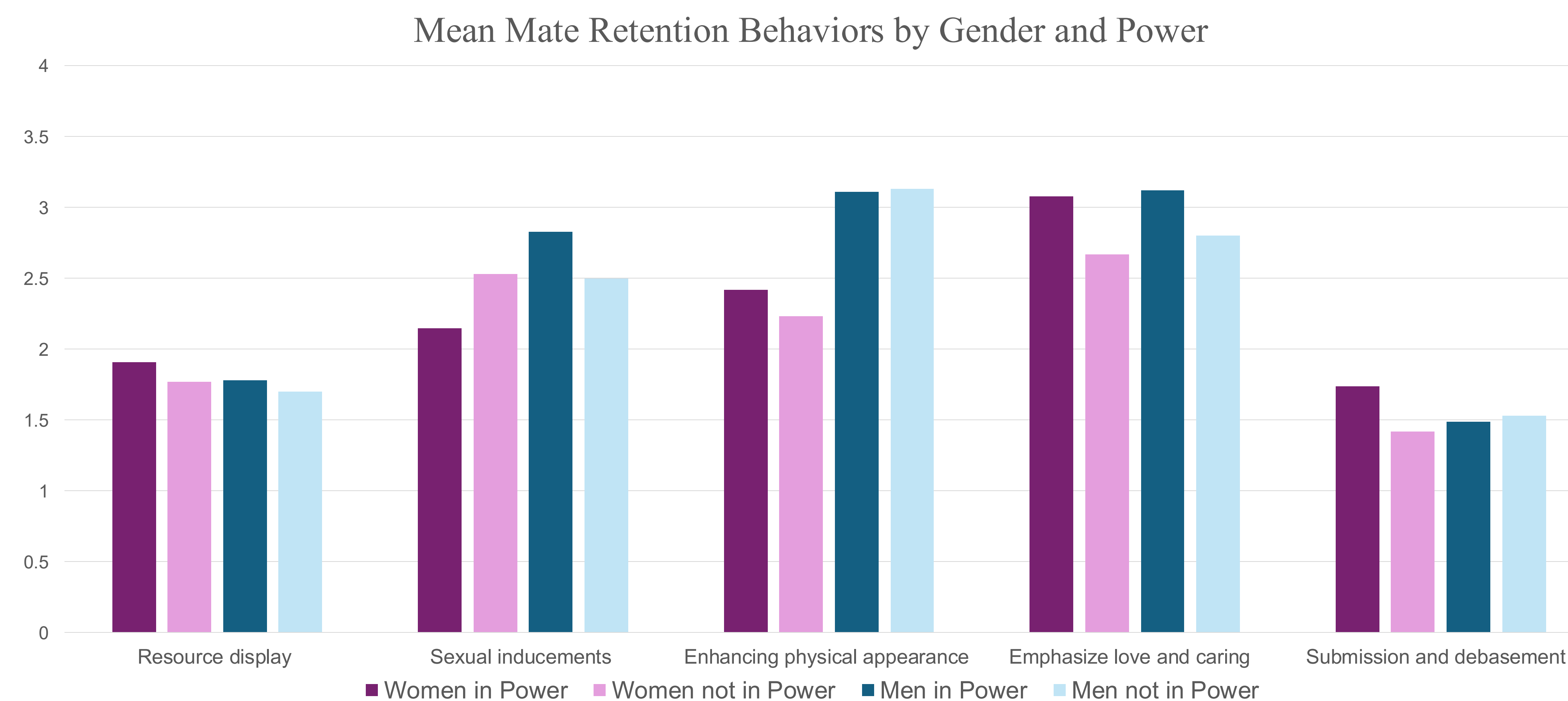
- 287 participants (141 men, 146 women) ages 18 to 32 with current or past situationship experience answered assessments on perceived relational power and mate retention behaviors

## Hypotheses

- Situationship control and gender predict sex-differentiated mate retention strategies, with partners increasing behaviors valued by the individual in power

## Results

- There was a significant interaction between gender and power on **partner sexual inducement** as well as **partner submission**, ( $ps \leq .02$ )
- There was not a significant interaction between gender and power on **partner resource display**, **partner appearance enhancement**, or **partner emphasis of love**, ( $ps \geq .26$ )
- There was a significant main effect of gender on **partner sexual inducements** and **partner appearance enhancement**, ( $ps \leq .01$ )
- There was not a significant main effect of gender on **partner submission**, **partner resource display**, or **partner emphasis of love**, ( $ps \geq .20$ )
- There was a significant main effect of power on **partner emphasis of love** and **partner submission**, ( $ps \leq .05$ )
- There was not a significant main effect of power on **partner resource display**, **partner appearance enhancement**, or **partner sexual inducements**, ( $ps \geq .15$ )



## Conclusion

- Gender may shape mate retention behaviors in situationships, as women engaged more in sexual inducement and appearance enhancement behaviors
- Relational power may also shape mate retention behaviors, as individuals in power reported greater partner submission and emphasis of love

## Limitations

- Cross-sectional, self-report design limits causal conclusions and may create response bias
- Sample was restricted to heterosexual participants with unequal power group sizes, limiting generalizability

## References

- Langlais, M. R., Guzman, P., Toohey, L., Podberesky, A., & Lee, A. (2025). Are situationships situational?: A mixed-methods study on the motivations for being in a situationship. *Sexuality & Culture*, 29(6), 2945–2964.
- Langlais, M. R., Podberesky, A., Toohey, L., & Lee, C. T. (2024). Defining and describing situationships: An exploratory investigation. *Sexuality & Culture*, 28(4), 1831–1857.