

Arranged unions and distrust: The influence of parental choice on mate guarding

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Mate guarding is classified as excessive or unwarranted jealous or protective behavior towards a spouse or mate. This is common among many different species and can be useful to defend territory, guarantee paternity, or prevent disease. The authors of a new study published in *Personal Relationships* have discovered that this behavior is more common in societies which practice arranged marriages or in cultures that place a high value on parental influence in the choice of mate for their children. Furthermore, the authors comment on the fact that mate guarding is not an exclusively male phenomenon, and women can be just as forceful in protecting their monogamous relationships.

In many cultures, rules, behavioral practices, and physical measures, including veiling and walled courtyards, have been applied to prevent contact between women and potential [sexual partners](#). The current findings indicate that the occurrence of mate guarding is more prevalent in Muslim, Indian, Chinese, Turkish, Moroccan, and South Asian societies.

Lead author A.P. Buunk, "In Western cultures, most husbands do not actively try to prevent contacts between their wife and other men and may even accept a moderate degree of flirting. In contrast, in many Islamic cultures husbands actively prevent even superficial contact between a female member and another man. If a male cannot guarantee the [paternity](#) of their [offspring](#), they could very well be investing precious resources in another man's offspring. It therefore becomes most important to ensure the fidelity of the female mate."

There is considerable evolutionary evidence that in most societies and historical periods, marriage has been at least partly arranged and has been based on a series of familial considerations rather than on the desires of the individuals concerned. In their article the authors emphasize that the degree in which parents control the mate choice of their children is an important factor in the occurrence of mate guarding. Additionally, freedom of mate choice or the ability to form a love-based union seems to make mate guarding less necessary. The findings clearly indicate that in cultures and social contexts in which freedom of [mate choice](#) is valued highly, the level of mate guarding is relatively low.

There are different reasons why men and women may choose to engage in mate guarding. In Venezuela, a man may pursue an arranged marriage to form important social or business alliances with other men. In this case a man may feel that he needs to guard his "property" zealously. A woman in an arranged marriage may fear desertion, and with it the stigma of divorce, as a result of her husband's infidelity and would therefore be more likely to engage in mate guarding behavior. Buunk, "If a marriage is not based on choice or love a person is more likely to become jealous over seemingly inconsequential events. This is probably because it is harder to be sure that the other person is in love with you out of their own volition."

More information: "Mate Guarding and Parental Influence on Mate Choice."; Abraham P. Buunk and Alejandro Castro Solano. *Personal Relationships*; Published Online: January 28, 2011. [DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01342.x](#)

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