

1 The effect of dominance rank on female reproductive success  
2 in social mammals

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26 The preregistration for this article can be found here: Shivani, Huchard E., Lukas D. 2020. [https://dieterlukas.github.io/Preregistration\\_MetaAnalysis\\_RankSuccess.html](https://dieterlukas.github.io/Preregistration_MetaAnalysis_RankSuccess.html).  
27  
28 Deviations from pre-registered methods are explained within the manuscript.

29

**30 Abstract**

31 Life in social groups, while potentially providing social benefits, inevitably leads to conflict among group  
32 members. In many social mammals, such conflicts lead to the formation of dominance hierarchies, where  
33 high-ranking individuals consistently outcompete other group members. Given that competition is a funda-  
34 mental tenet of the theory of natural selection, it is generally assumed that high-ranking individuals have  
35 higher reproductive success than lower-ranking individuals. Previous reviews have indicated large variation  
36 across populations on the potential effect of dominance rank on reproductive success in female mammals.  
37 Here, we perform a meta-analysis based on 444 effect sizes from 187 studies on 86 mammal species to  
38 investigate how life-history, ecology and sociality modulate the relationship between female dominance rank  
39 and fitness. As predicted, we found that (1) dominance rank is generally positively associated with repro-  
40 ductive success, independent of the approach different studies have taken to answer this question; and  
41 that (2) the relationship between rank and reproductive success is conditional on life-history mechanisms,  
42 with higher effects of dominance rank on reproductive output than on survival, particularly in species with  
43 high reproductive investment. Contrary to our predictions, (3) the fitness benefits to high-ranking females  
44 appear consistent across ecological conditions rather than increasing when resources decrease. Instead,  
45 we found that the social environment consistently mitigates rank differences on reproductive success by  
46 modulating female competition, with, as predicted, (4) dominant females showing higher reproductive suc-  
47 ccess than subordinates in two different types of societies: first, effect sizes are highest when females live in  
48 cooperatively breeding groups composed of a single dominant female and a large number of subordinate  
49 females; second, they are also elevated when females form differentiated relationships which occurs when  
50 groups are composed of unrelated females. Our findings indicate that obtaining a high ranking position in a  
51 social group consistently provides female mammals with fitness benefits, even though future studies might  
52 show lower effects given various biases in the literature we were able to access, including, but not restricted  
53 to, a publication bias. They further draw a complex landscape of the level of social inequality across mam-  
54 malian societies, reflected by variation in the benefits of social dominance, which appears to be shaped by  
55 reproductive and social competition more than by ecological competition.

56

**57 Background**

58 In order for social groups to persist, group members need to find strategies to deal with the conflicts that  
59 inevitably occur (Ward and Webster (2016)). In many female social mammals, conflicts and aggressive  
60 interactions are associated with the formation of different types of hierarchies. How these hierarchies form  
61 and are expressed differs across societies (Tibbetts, Pardo-Sanchez, and Weise (2022)). In singular coopera-  
62 tive breeders, a single dominant breeding female suppresses reproduction in subordinate group members,  
63 who rarely fight amongst each other until an opportunity to become dominant opens (Solomon, French, et al.  
64 (1997)). In many species where multiple breeding females form stable groups, females can be arranged in  
65 stable linear hierarchies, where mothers help their daughters to inherit their rank in their matriline (Holekamp  
66 and Smale (1991)). In another set of species, hierarchies are more flexible as a female's rank depends on  
67 her body size, condition, or availability of coalition partners (Pusey (2012)). However, it has remained un-  
68 clear whether and when dominant females gain substantial fitness benefits, indicating that there is selection

69 on all females to compete for a high rank. Instead of direct selection on females to compete over high domi-  
70 nance rank because it provides substantial fitness benefits, selection might be on females to find a place in  
71 the hierarchy that maximizes their fitness based on their intrinsic qualities and access to social opportunities.  
72 The prevailing assumption is that high ranking females benefit from their dominant status because out-  
73 competing other females provides them with priority of access to resources (Ellis (1995), Pusey (2012)).  
74 Subordinates are expected to accept their status, because despite having lower reproductive success than  
75 dominants, they have few outside options and would presumably face high costs, or have even lower suc-  
76 cess if they tried to challenge for the dominant status or to reproduce independently (Alexander (1974),  
77 Vehrencamp (1983)). An alternative assumption however is that both dominants and subordinates gain  
78 from arranging themselves in a hierarchy to avoid the overt fighting that occurs whenever differentially ag-  
79 gressive individuals repeatedly interact (West (1967)). All individuals make a compromise, such that they  
80 all balance the potential benefits of their respective positions with the potential costs (Williams (1966)).  
81 Previous reviews have found that while high ranking female mammals frequently appear to have higher  
82 reproductive success, there are many populations where such an association has not been found (Pusey  
83 (2012), T. Clutton-Brock and Huchard (2013)). Most studies that brought together such data have focused  
84 on primates and generally only provided qualitative summaries of the evidence, sometimes using a lim-  
85 ited number of fitness proxies (Fedigan (1983), Ellis (1995), Paula Stockley and Bro-Jørgensen (2011)).  
86 One meta-analysis across primates investigated whether life history might mediate the strength of the as-  
87 sociation between dominance and reproductive success and found that high-ranking females had higher  
88 fecundity benefits in species with a longer lifespan (Majolo et al. (2012)). However, there has been no study  
89 simultaneously examining the effect of life-history, social and ecological factors in modulating the benefits  
90 of social dominance. Similarly, there has been no quantitative assessment of the potential factors that may  
91 mitigate the relationship between rank and reproductive success to explain those cases where high rank is  
92 not beneficial. Here, we investigate the extent and sources of variation in the effect of dominance rank on  
93 female reproductive success across social mammals. Our study builds on the long history of research on  
94 dominance interactions (Strauss et al. (2022)) by bringing together effect sizes of the relationship between  
95 rank and reproductive success from diverse mammalian societies, and we add socio-ecological predictor  
96 variables that have not been included in earlier analyses.

97

## 98 Objective

99 In this study, we present a quantitative assessment of the strength of the relationship between female domi-  
100 nance rank and reproductive success in social mammals and explore factors that might mediate this rela-  
101 tionship. Our objective is to identify the ranges of variation in the relationship between rank and reproductive  
102 success and to investigate how this relationship is influenced by differences in life-history, ecology, and so-  
103 ciality. We addressed our objective through the following questions, by testing the corresponding four core  
104 predictions, which each break into a number of secondary predictions (see results):

105 **1) Does high rank generally lead to higher reproductive success for females in social mammals?**  
106 We expected that, overall, high dominance rank has a positive effect on reproductive success, based on the

107 previously published reviews and meta-analyses.

108 **2) What are the life history traits that mediate the benefits of rank on reproductive success?** We  
109 expected that dominants have higher reproductive success predominantly in species in which females have  
110 the ability to quickly produce large numbers of offspring, because reproductive competition may be most  
111 intense in those species that invest heavily in reproduction, and the consequences of such competition may  
112 be more detectable due to the potential for large variance in reproductive success among females in such  
113 species

114 **3) What are the ecological conditions that mediate the benefits of rank on reproductive success?**  
115 We expected that differences in reproductive potential would be particularly marked where within-group  
116 contest competition for resources is expected to be largest, that is when resources are limited and monop-  
117 olizable.

118 **4) What are the social circumstances that mediate the benefits of rank?** We expected that the associ-  
119 ation between dominance rank and reproduction is stronger in species living in more stable and structured  
120 social groups, where rank differences may be pronounced, and stable over long periods.

121

122

**123 Methods****124 Literature search**

125 The literature search was performed by S & DL. We started with the references in previous major reviews  
126 and meta-analyses on the association between dominance and reproduction in female mammals (see below  
127 for inclusion criteria): Fedigan (1983) (8 effect sizes on female primates entered), Ellis (1995) (16 effect sizes  
128 entered / 5 not entered on female non-primates, 38 effect sizes entered / 22 not entered on female primates),  
129 Brown and Silk (2002) (28 effect sizes entered / 7 not entered on female primates), Paula Stockley and Bro-  
130 Jørgensen (2011) (12 effect sizes entered / 2 not entered on female non-primates, 11 effect sizes entered  
131 / 1 not entered on female primates), Majolo et al. (2012) (26 effect sizes entered / 2 not entered on female  
132 primates), Pusey (2012) (45 effect sizes entered / 2 not entered on female primates), and T. Clutton-Brock  
133 and Huchard (2013) (8 effect sizes entered / 1 not entered on female primates, 6 effect sizes entered / 1 not  
134 entered on female non-primates) (some effect sizes appear in multiple of these studies, leading to a total  
135 of 136 effect sizes) (using Pubmed, 22 May 2019 - 13 June 2019). Next, we searched Google Scholar and  
136 Google Search with the following terms: "dominance AND female AND mammal AND reproductive success  
137 OR reproduction" (04 July 2019 - 31 July 2019; 143 additional effect sizes), "rank AND female AND mammal  
138 AND reproductive success OR reproduction" (14 September 2019 - 13 November 2019; 90 additional effect  
139 sizes), and "sex ratio AND dominance AND female AND mammal" (11 February 2020 - 06 March 2020; 75  
140 additional effect sizes).

141 We checked the titles and abstracts to identify studies that observed dominance interactions and reproduc-  
142 tive success in social groups of interacting female non-human mammals. We limited our checks to the first  
143 1000 results for all searches as automatically sorted by the respective search engine (sorted by 'relevance'  
144 on Google Scholar). We selected studies that measured the association between dominance rank and at  
145 least one aspect of female reproductive success and reported the data or a test-statistic. For both dominance  
146 and reproductive success, we only included studies that had direct measures, not secondary indicators. For  
147 dominance, we excluded studies where authors did not explicitly determine dominance relationships and  
148 only assumed that traits such as size, presence in core areas, or reproductive success itself indicate domi-  
149 nance. We did however include studies where authors established dominance hierarchies, found that they  
150 are associated with some other trait such as size or condition, and subsequently used the other trait to  
151 measure dominance. For reproductive success, we excluded studies that measured traits were assumed  
152 to be linked to reproductive success, but where these links were indirect or had not been explicitly tested.  
153 Studies we excluded reported, for example, associations between dominance rank and mating frequency,  
154 priority of access to food resources, or assumed that females in core areas are dominant. We included all  
155 kinds of academic publications, from primary articles published in peer-reviewed journals through reviews,  
156 books and book chapters, and unpublished PhD theses.

**157 Variables, their definitions, and their sources****158 Variables coded directly from the relevant publications:**

159 All data from the literature search on publications reporting the effect of dominance rank on reproductive  
160 success were entered prior to the first submission of the preregistration. S and DL performed the data  
161 extraction. We initially coded eight papers independently, for which we both extracted the same values and

162 classified the approaches in the same way. S and DL also independently went through the studies included  
163 in Majolo et al. (2012) and agreed on which to include and which not. After this, S and DL independently  
164 identified and coded articles, with occasional cross-checks and discussions of any border line cases. We  
165 extracted the relevant information to calculate the effect sizes and their associated variance. In addition,  
166 we coded a set of variables to characterize the methodological approach. The dataset contains 444 effect  
167 sizes from 187 studies on 86 mammalian species.

168 **Z-transformed effect size:** we converted all effect sizes to Z-transformed correlation coefficients ( $Z_r$ ). In  
169 cases where articles reported a pairwise correlation coefficient, we directly use this value. In cases where au-  
170 thors had used alternative statistical approaches (e.g. t-test comparison between two groups of individuals),  
171 the test statistics were converted to the statistic 'r' using formulas provided by Lakens (2013), Lajeunesse  
172 et al. (2013), and Wilson (2019). In cases where authors reported individual-level data reflecting domi-  
173 nance rank and reproductive success (for example in the form of a table that listed for groups of dominants  
174 and subordinates their mean and deviation of reproductive success or for every individual their rank and  
175 reproductive success), we calculated correlation coefficients directly from a 2-by-2 frequency table (when  
176 comparing classes of high- to low-ranking individuals) or from linear regressions (when individuals had con-  
177 tinuous ranks). In cases where studies simply stated that "all dominants bred but none of the subordinates"  
178 we assumed an error of 0.5% for both dominants not breeding and subordinates breeding to obtain the  
179 sampling variance estimates. We extracted separate effect sizes for each reported analysis: for example, if  
180 authors reported separately associations between dominance rank and mortality of offspring to 1 year and to  
181 independence, we obtained two effect sizes from this population reflecting infant survival. We Z-transformed  
182 all correlation coefficients to control for the asymptotic distribution of these values. We changed the sign of  
183 the effect sizes to make them consistent across studies. This was necessary because dominance rank was  
184 coded differently across studies, for example sometimes studies assigned dominant individuals the lowest  
185 value by starting a count from 1, whereas in other cases they were assigned the highest value to reflect the  
186 proportion of other females they are dominant over. We set the sign of effect sizes such that positive values  
187 mean that higher ranking individuals have shorter interbirth intervals, higher survival as adults and of their  
188 infants, higher infant production (e.g. larger litter sizes, higher probability of breeding), and higher lifetime  
189 reproductive success (e.g. higher total number of offspring weaned).

190 **Sample size:** we recorded the sample size for the relevant statistical comparison (number of females, num-  
191 ber of offspring, number of matrilines etc.).

192 **Sampling variance:** we calculated the sampling variance of the effect sizes based on the correlation coef-  
193 ficient  $r$  and the sample size, using the formulas provided by Wilson (2019). The standard error, which is  
194 alternatively used in some approaches, is the square root of the sampling variance (Viechtbauer (2010)).

195 **Species identity:** we recorded the common name and the latin species name as listed by the authors. We  
196 referred to the Mammal Diversity Database (Burgin et al. (2018)) to resolve instances where species attri-  
197 butions had been changed since the publication of the original study.

198 **Study site:** we recorded the name of the study site as listed by the authors in the method section. The focus  
199 of this variable is to determine whether multiple observations are from the same species from the same  
200 study population, and we accordingly assigned different names for the study site label in case two or more  
201 different species had been studied at the same site.

202 **Measure of reproductive success:** we recorded which aspect of reproduction dominance rank was associated with. We classified reproductive traits into six classes: - age at first reproduction (includes age at first birth, age at first conception, age at first menstrual cycle); - infant survival (includes rates of mortality of offspring prior to their independence; proportion of pregnancies carried to birth); - survival (includes rates of mortality of females per year, age at death); - infant production (includes litter size, offspring weight, litter mass, number of offspring per year, probability of birth in a given year, number of surviving infants per year); - interbirth interval (includes time between life births, number of cycles to conception, number of litters per year); - lifetime reproductive success (includes total number of offspring born or surviving to independence for females who had been observed from first reproduction to death).

211 **Classification of rank:** we recorded the approach the authors had used to assign dominance positions to individuals, distinguishing between those based on aggressive/submissive interactions between pairs of individuals and those based on other traits such as age, size, or which female was the first to reproduce.

214 **Scoring of rank:** we recorded whether in the analyses individuals were assigned a specific, continuous rank position or whether individuals were classified into rank categories (dominant versus subordinates, high- versus middle- versus low-ranking).

217 **Duration of study:** we recorded the number of years that authors had observed the individuals (anything less than one year was assigned a value of 1).

219 **Population type:** we recorded whether the population was free-living, provisioned, or captive based on the authors descriptions.

221 **Social group size:** we recorded the average number of adult females per group in the study population, based on the information provided in the manuscripts. We relied on the definition of a social group as used by the respective authors, which might include associations of females in: singular-breeder cooperative groups (as in wolves or meerkats); stable groups of multiple breeding females (as in baboons or hyenas); or breeding associations defined by physical proximity (as in bighorn sheep or antelopes). We will have a separate coding of the social system (see below).

227 **Variables extracted from the broader literature for each species/population:**

228 The following data were added prior to the analyses. For most of these, we extracted information from the relevant papers or publications reporting on the same population. For some of these, we used previously published species' averages, because records from each population for each specific period during which the effect of dominance rank on reproductive success were measured were not available for a large enough sample. We list sources we used to obtain these data.

233 **Litter size:** the number of offspring per birth; data available for each population, we used the average as reported by the authors (based on the data in Jones et al. (2009)).

235 **Interbirth interval:** the time in months between consecutive births; data available for a limited set of populations, we used the average as reported by the authors. Given that population specific data was available for only a very limited subset, we added species-level averages (based on the data in Jones et al. (2009)).

238 **Maximum lifespan:** the maximum time in months that an individual of that species has been recorded to live for (based on the data in Jones et al. (2009)).

- 240 *Cooperative breeding group*: whether social groups usually contain a single breeding female and additional  
241 non-breeding adult females that help to raise the offspring of the breeding female. Group membership for  
242 females is usually closed and changes occur through birth and death or fissioning of existing groups. This  
243 classification is in contrast to plural breeding groups and breeding associations (see below); data available  
244 for each population, we used the description of the social system in the population as reported by the authors.
- 245 *Plural breeding group*: whether social groups usually contain multiple breeding females that remain together  
246 for extended periods of time. It includes both groups in which females are philopatric or disperse. Females  
247 form differentiated relationships with other group members. This classification is in contrast to cooperative  
248 breeding groups and breeding associations (see above/below); data available for each population, we used  
249 the description of the social system in the population as reported by the authors.
- 250 *Breeding association*: whether social groups consist of multiple breeding females that associate either in  
251 space or by mutual attraction. Group membership is fluid and associations among individuals can rapidly  
252 change. This classification is in contrast to cooperative breeding groups and plural breeding groups (see  
253 above); data available for each population, we will use the description of the social system in the population  
254 as reported by the authors.
- 255 *Dominance system*: whether dominance rank of females appears to depend primarily on (i) their age, (ii)  
256 their physical attributes such as body size, or (iii) nepotism in the form of support from their mother or  
257 from same-aged group members. Data available from a subset of populations, to which we added data  
258 from primary reports of species-level classifications from other populations assuming that this trait is usually  
259 stable across populations within species (references listed in the data file).
- 260 *Philopatry*: whether females have the majority of their offspring in the same social groups or in the same  
261 location in which they have been born or whether females disperse to other groups or locations to repro-  
262 duce; data from species-level descriptions of female behaviour (based on the data in Barsbai, Lukas, and  
263 Ponderfer (2021)).
- 264 *Monopolizable resources*: whether the gross dietary category of a species is based on monopolizable re-  
265 sources (carnivory, frugivory), or non-monopolizable resources (herbivory, or omnivory) (based on the data  
266 in Wilman et al. (2014)).
- 267 *Environmental harshness*: whether the average climatic conditions experienced by the species are charac-  
268 terized by cold temperatures, low rainfall, and unpredictability (based on the data and principal components  
269 summarizing climate data in Botero et al. (2014)).
- 270 *Population density*: the average number of individuals per square kilometer for the species (based on the  
271 data in Jones et al. (2009)).
- 272 *Average and variance in relatedness among group females*: the average and variance in relatedness mea-  
273 sured using genetic approaches among adult females within the same group as reported for this species;  
274 data available from a subset of the populations (references listed in the data file).
- 275 *Coalition formation*: whether adult females form coalitions with other female group members to support each  
276 other during within-group aggressive interactions; data from species-level descriptions of female behaviour  
277 (based on the data in Lukas and Clutton-Brock (2018)).

278 **Sexual dimorphism in body weight:** we calculated sexual dimorphism following the two step approach of  
279 Smith (1999) as the average weight of males divided by average weight of females if males are heavier than  
280 females and as 2 minus the average weight of females divided by the average weight of males otherwise  
281 (based on data in: Jarman (1983), Loison et al. (1999), Smith and Cheverud (2002), Isaac (2005), and  
282 Kappeler et al. (2019))

283 **Male infanticide:** whether adult males in that species kill offspring (based on the data in Lukas and Huchard  
284 (2014)).

285 **Adult sex ratio:** the ratio of the average number of adult males divided by the sum of the average number  
286 of females and males per social group of that species. We took species' averages to reflect adaptation to  
287 likely levels of potential sexual conflict because several of the studies from which we extracted effect sizes  
288 had captive or experimental settings or only reported the number of females that were included in the study  
289 (based on the data in Barsbai, Lukas, and Pondorfer (2021)).

## 290 **Phylogeny**

291 We generated a single consensus phylogeny for the mammalian species in our sample from the most recent  
292 complete mammalian time-calibrated phylogeny (Upham, Esselstyn, and Jetz (2019)). We downloaded a  
293 credible set of 1000 trees of mammalian phylogenetic history from [vertlife.org/phylosubsets/](http://vertlife.org/phylosubsets/) (July 2020)  
294 and used TreeAnnotator (version 1.8.2 in BEAST: Drummond et al. (2012)) to generate a maximum clade  
295 credibility (MCC) tree (median node heights and a burn in of 250 trees). We trimmed the tree to match the  
296 species in our sample (in one instance using a close relative, */Canis lupus/* instead of */Canis familiaris/*) and  
297 converted branch lengths using functions of the package ape (Paradis and Schliep (2019)).

## 298 **Analyses**

299 We performed all analyses in the statistical software R (version 4.0.3; R Core Team (2020)). We built  
300 separate models for each prediction. For some predictor variables, we could not find data to match to all  
301 observed effect sizes, and excluded these cases with missing data from the respective analyses. We report  
302 the sample size for each analysis. To assess the robustness of the findings and whether modeling decisions  
303 might have an influence on our results, we used a frequentist and a Bayesian approach to build the statistical  
304 models. We fit meta-analytic multilevel mixed-effects models with moderators via linear models using the  
305 function "rma.mv" in the package metafor (Viechtbauer (2010)), taking into account the sampling variance  
306 as measurement error and including models that account for the potential correlations among effect sizes  
307 due to shared phylogenetic history among species (Nakagawa and Santos (2012)). Second, we estimated  
308 relationships with Bayesian approaches as implemented in the package rthinking using the function "ulam"  
309 (McElreath (2020)) to fit with Markov chain Monte Carlo estimation in stan (Stan Development Team (2020)).  
310 For the Bayesian models, we fit multilevel models that include the sampling variance as measurement error  
311 (Kurz (2019)) and the shared phylogenetic history as a covariance matrix. Weakly regularizing priors were  
312 used for all parameters. We drew 8000 samples from four chains, checking that for each the Gelman-  
313 Rubin convergence diagnostic 'R-hat' values are less than 1.01 indicating that the Markov chains have  
314 converged towards the final estimates. Visual inspection of trace plots and rank histograms were performed  
315 to ensure that they indicated no evidence of divergent transitions or biased posterior exploration. Posteriors  
316 from the model were used to generate estimates of the overall effect size and the influence of potential

317 moderators. We detail model construction in the following: we first assess whether species and population  
 318 identity create dependencies amongst the measured effect sizes. If so, we include these factors through  
 319 covariance matrices reflecting the dependence across measurements. The models take the following form:  
 320 we assume that each transformed effect size ‘Observed Fisher Zr’ we extracted from the articles (individual  
 321 effect sizes indexed by ‘n’) is a reflection of the ‘True Fisher Zr’ effect size of that population that was  
 322 measured with some error, with the extent of the error related to the observed ‘Variance’ of each effect size;  
 323 the ‘True Fisher Zr’ effect sizes come from an overall distribution, the mean ‘ $\mu$ ’ of which depends on an  
 324 intercept ‘ $\alpha$ ’ and the influence of the respective predictor variables modulated by a modifier ‘ $\beta$ ,’ with the  
 325 prior for  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  centered around zero assuming effect sizes can be both positive and zero and that the  
 326 predictor variable might have no effect; similarity in the variance  $\sigma^2$  between the ‘True Fisher Zr’ as arranged  
 327 in a pairwise matrix K between species ‘i’ and ‘j’ that transforms the extent of the shared phylogenetic history  
 328 D among species pairs ‘i’ and ‘j,’ assumed to follow a Gaussian process with a multinormal prior with the  
 329 parameters  $\eta^2$  (covariance among closely related species) and  $\rho^2$  (decline in covariance as phylogenetic  
 330 distance increases), whose priors are constrained between 0 and 1:

331  $ObservedFisherZr_n \sim Normal(TrueFisherZr_n, Variance_n)$   
 332  $TrueFisherZr_n \sim MVNormal(\mu, \sigma^2)$   
 333  $\$ \alpha = \alpha + \beta_{explanatory[i]}$   
 334  $\alpha \sim Normal(0, 1)$   
 335  $\beta_{explanatory[i]} \sim Normal(0, 0.5)$   
 336  $\sigma^2 \sim MVNormal(0, K(i, j))$   
 337  $\$ K(i, j) = \exp(-D(i, j))$   
 338  $\eta^2 \sim Exponential(1)$   
 339  $\rho^2 \sim Exponential(1)$

340

341 We determined whether a variable had a relationship with the variation in the effect of dominance rank  
 342 on reproductive success when the interval (for metafor the 95% confidence interval of the estimate; for  
 343 rethinking the 89% compatibility estimate of the posterior sample) of the estimated association did not cross  
 344 zero (continuous variable) or the contrast between levels did not cross zero (categorical variable), indicating  
 345 that our data show a consistent positive/negative association. We provide all code showing the setup of the  
 346 various models and the plots, the input files containing the data and phylogeny (see the “Data and Code  
 347 Availability” section for the archived versions or the linked github repository. In addition, the github repository  
 348 also contains a simulated dataset with the same structure as the actual data, which we used to assess the  
 349 fit of our models in the preregistration.

350

## 351 Preregistration

352 We preregistered hypotheses, methods, and analysis plans: [https://dieterlukas.github.io/Preregistration\\_MetaAnalysis\\_RankSuccess.html](https://dieterlukas.github.io/Preregistration_MetaAnalysis_RankSuccess.html)

354 The literature search was completed before the first submission of the preregistration. All variables that

were coded directly from the source publications (Z transformed effect size, variance, sample size, species identity, aspect of reproductive success, classification of rank, duration of study, population type, and social group size) were also entered prior to the first submission. In July 2019, S worked with a preliminary subset of the data (143 effect sizes), and investigated publication bias, the overall mean and variance in effect sizes, and whether effect sizes differed according to which reproductive output was measured. We added the data on the following explanatory variables and started analyses in July 2020 after the preregistration passed pre-study peer review at *Peer Community In Ecology*: Paquet (2020) Peer Community in Ecology, 100056. [10.24072/pci.ecology.100056] (<https://doi.org/10.24072/pci.ecology.100056>)

- litter size, litters per year, and population density for the respective species
- cooperative vs plural vs associate breeding from the descriptions in the respective population from the articles from which we obtained the effect sizes
- dominance system from additional references on the species
- philopatry of the respective species
- diet category of the respective species
- environmental harshness across the range of the respective species
- coalition formation in the respective species
- sexual dimorphism in body weight
- male infanticide
- sex ratio among adult group members
- average relatedness from the articles from which we obtained the effect sizes or additional references matching the exact population
- we did not collect data on variance in relatedness because it was not possible to extract this information from most studies reporting relatedness levels

## **Changes from preregistration**

**Additional variables:** We added data on the maximum lifespan of species to address Prediction 4.2. We realized that whether a study should be considered short- or long-term depends on the lifespan of the focal species. We used the information on the number of years a study had been conducted together with the maximum lifespan data to calculate the relative duration of a study as the number of years the study had lasted divided by the maximum lifespan of the species.

We added data on the dominance style of macaque species after noting that these species constitute a large proportion of our sample. Across macaque species, dominance interactions among females in a group have been assigned into one of four grades, ranging from egalitarian species in Grade 1 to highly despotic species in Grade 4. We were interested to assess the effect of dominance style on the benefits of dominance. We extracted the data on the dominance style for the species in our sample from Balasubramaniam et al. (2012)

We changed how we calculated sexual dimorphism in body weight. We had previously taken the ratio of male weight divided by female weight. A collaborator on a different project, in which we also use sexual dimorphism in body weight as a variable, alerted us to the article by Smith (1999) which shows that this simple ratio is biased because its distribution across species is non-linear resulting in asymmetries when females are the larger sex (as example, assume a species where individuals of one sex are 10kg and

394 individuals of the other sex are 8kg; if males are the larger sex the simple ratio would indicate that the larger  
395 sex is 25% larger [10/8=1.25]; however, if females were the larger sex it would indicate that the larger sex  
396 is only 20% larger [8/10=0.80]. We therefore switched to formula provided in this article, calculating sexual  
397 dimorphism as the average weight of males divided by average weight of females if males are heavier than  
398 females and as two minus the average weight of females divided by the average weight of males otherwise.

399 **Outlier check:** Before running the analyses, we made a funnel plot of the standard error over the effect size,  
400 where we noticed three outlier data points. We realized that for these three entries (EffectRefs 425, 427,  
401 and 428) we had used the wrong formula to calculate the effect size and variance. All of these are studies  
402 of multiple groups of *Callithrix jacchus*, each with a small number of females. For these three studies, we  
403 had erroneously used the 2-by-2 frequency tables to calculate the standardized mean difference, not the  
404 correlation coefficient. We corrected the values for these three entries before performing any of the analyses.

405 **Sampling bias:** The funnel plot of the complete dataset showed a strong asymmetry, indicating that our  
406 sample is biased towards including many studies with low precision and high positive effect sizes. To better  
407 illustrate this sample bias, we used a different way to plot the data (Nakagawa, Lagisz, O'Dea, et al. (2021))  
408 that was suggested after we had written our preregistration. We also added further analyses, based on  
409 functions in the packages 'metafor' (following Nakagawa, Lagisz, Jennions, et al. (2021)) and 'rethinking'  
410 (following McElreath (2020)), to determine the potential causes of the bias in our sample and the influence  
411 on what effects should be expected in new samples.

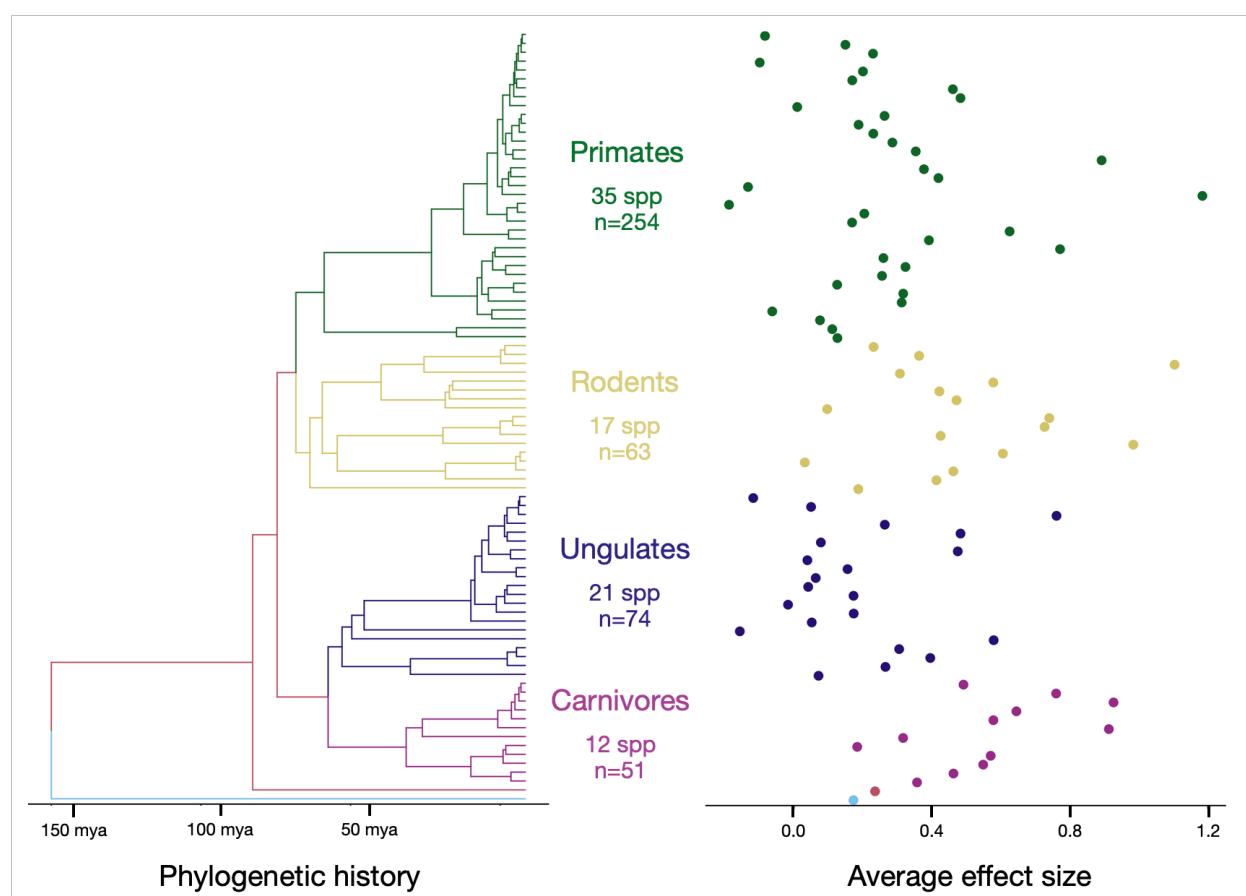
412 **Multivariate analyses:** We constructed the multivariate analyses after completing the univariate analyses.  
413 We added a set of multivariate analyses after finding that cooperative breeders have very different effect  
414 sizes of dominance rank on female reproductive success than plural/associated breeders, in order to dis-  
415 entangle the effect of this difference between breeding systems and the influence of some additional social  
416 variables.

417

**418 Results**

419 We extracted 444 effect sizes of the relationship between dominance rank and reproductive success of fe-  
420 male mammals from 187 studies on 86 species during our literature search (Figure 1). More than half of the  
421 effect sizes are from primate species (253 effect sizes), with macaques (109) and baboons (76) a particular  
422 focus for this research. About two thirds (283) of the reports are from wild populations; rank was predomi-  
423 nantly determined on the basis of aggressive interactions (407) rather than on other measures such as age  
424 or size (37); and it was about equally frequent that researchers classified rank categorically as dominant  
425 versus subordinate (251) than continuously from highest to lowest (193). Most of the reported effects link  
426 dominance rank to infant production (198) followed by infant survival (113), with fewer effects reported on  
427 interbirth intervals (46), lifetime reproductive success (34), survival (30), or age at first reproduction (23).

428



429

**Figure 1.** Phylogenetic distribution of the effect sizes in our dataset. We found most effect sizes from studies of primate social groups (green: 254 effect sizes from 35 different species), followed by ungulates (blue: 74 effect sizes from 21 different species), rodents (yellow: 63 effect sizes from 17 species), and carnivores (purple: 51 effect sizes from 12 species), plus a single effect size from hyraxes (red) and marsupials (aqua). Average effect sizes vary even among closely related species, though there are slight differences among Orders (e.g. carnivores generally have large effect sizes, for more details see below).

436

437

### 438 1) Does high rank generally lead to higher reproductive success for females in social mammals?

439 *Prediction 1.1: Publication bias does not influence our sample of effect sizes.*

440 We did not predict a publication bias but that our sample will include studies showing small effect sizes with  
441 small sample sizes. Most studies set out to test if high dominance might lead to both benefits and costs,  
442 and previous meta-analyses did not detect signals of publication bias (e.g. Majolo et al. (2012)).

443

### 444 Result 1.1: Our sample shows several biases

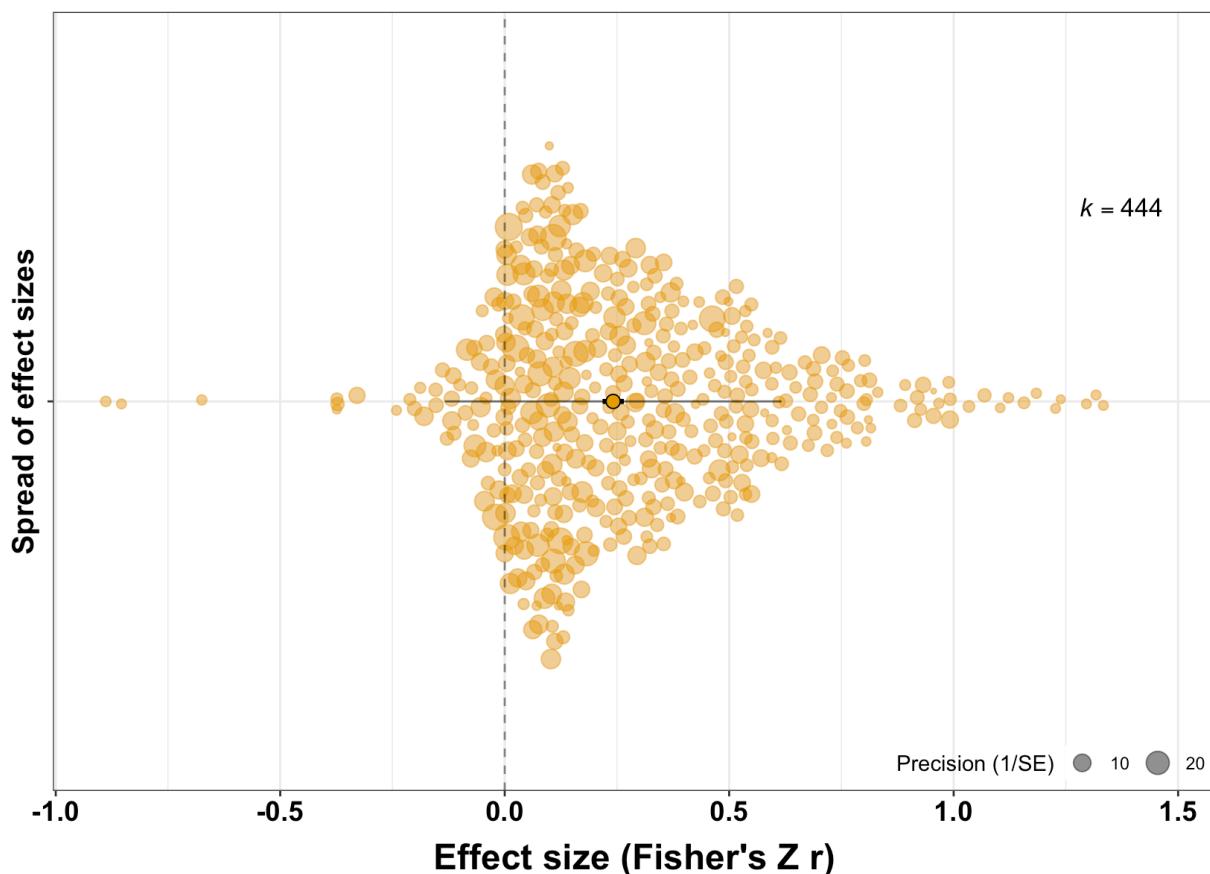
445 A visual inspection of an orchard plot of the raw data of the range of effect sizes indicates a sample bias,

<sup>446</sup> showing that extreme effect sizes tend to be of low precision and that there is an overrepresentation of  
<sup>447</sup> positive effect sizes (Figure 2).

<sup>448</sup>

<sup>449</sup> There are potentially (at least) three sources of sample bias, the first being 'publication bias' with studies  
<sup>450</sup> with low effect sizes (not reaching traditional levels of significance) not ending-up in the published literature,  
<sup>451</sup> the second being 'study system bias' with research focusing on populations where it is easy to detect effects  
<sup>452</sup> (e.g. cooperative breeders), and the third being 'study time bias' with studies performed over shorter time  
<sup>453</sup> frames generally being more imprecise. We added further post-hoc analyses to investigate these patterns  
<sup>454</sup> individually here, and in combined models after identifying which study systems might show different effect  
<sup>455</sup> sizes (section R5.1).

456



457

**Figure 2.** Orchard plot displaying the spread of the 444 effect sizes in our sample (each dot represents a single effect size, the size of the dot indicates the precision). Overall, most studies report a positive association between dominance rank and reproductive success (darker circle in the center indicates the mean, thick black edge right next to circle indicates precision interval, thin black lines extending from darker circle the confidence interval of the estimate). Our sample does show bias, with effect sizes not distributed symmetrically around the center but showing an overrepresentation of highly positive values.

464

465

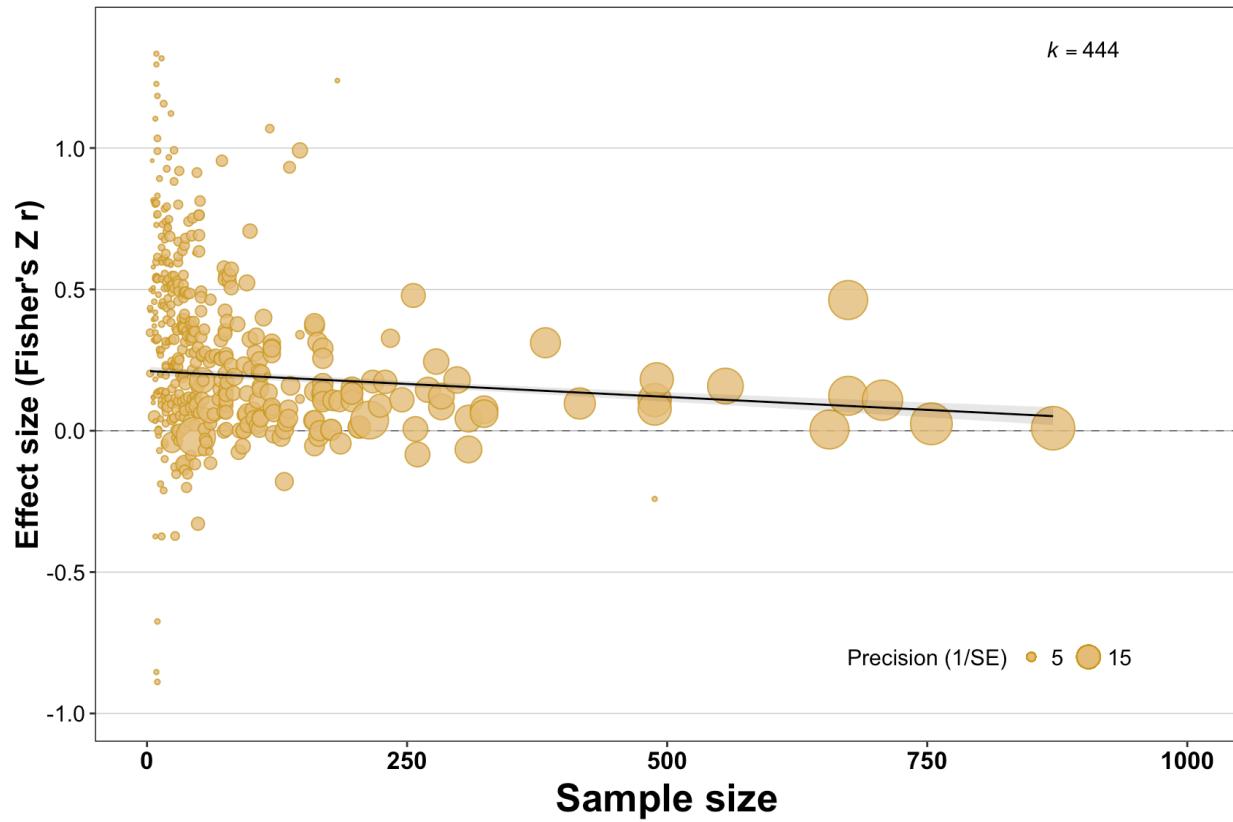
We applied tests for ‘publication bias’ that expect a standard distribution of p-values (Preston, Ashby, and Smyth (2004)) to our data, which suggest that effect sizes with a p-value smaller than 0.05 are about four times more likely to be reported than effect sizes with a p-value larger than 0.50.

Studies with smaller sample sizes have a higher risk to report inflated effect sizes due to a higher likelihood of Type I and Type II errors. In our dataset, the average effect sizes at smaller sample sizes are more extreme than those at larger sample sizes (effect sizes range from -0.89 to +1.33 for studies with a sample size of 20 or smaller, while for studies with sample sizes larger than 20 they range from -0.37 to +1.24). However, it is not just that the spread of values is larger for studies with smaller sample sizes, but the positive bias in effect sizes we observe decreases with the sample size of studies (metafor estimate 95% confidence

475 interval lower -0.03 to upper -0.02, rethinking estimate 89% compatibility estimate of posterior sample lower  
 476 -0.09 to upper -0.04) (Figure 3). This supports a ‘publication bias,’ where studies with small sample sizes  
 477 that did not show a positive effect are missing from the literature. However, the estimate of the intercept  
 478 and slope of this model linking effect size to sample size shows that, across the range of sample sizes, the  
 479 estimate of the overall effect size does not go below zero (see line in Figure 3). This indicates that females  
 480 with higher rank have higher reproductive success across the range of sample sizes.

481

482



483

484 **Figure 3.** Relationship between the effect size of dominance rank on female reproductive success and  
 485 the sample size of the study. Studies with smaller sample sizes show more extreme effect sizes, and also  
 486 indications of potential publication bias as there are more extremely positive values than what would be  
 487 expected based on the average effect sizes of studies with larger sample sizes.

488

489

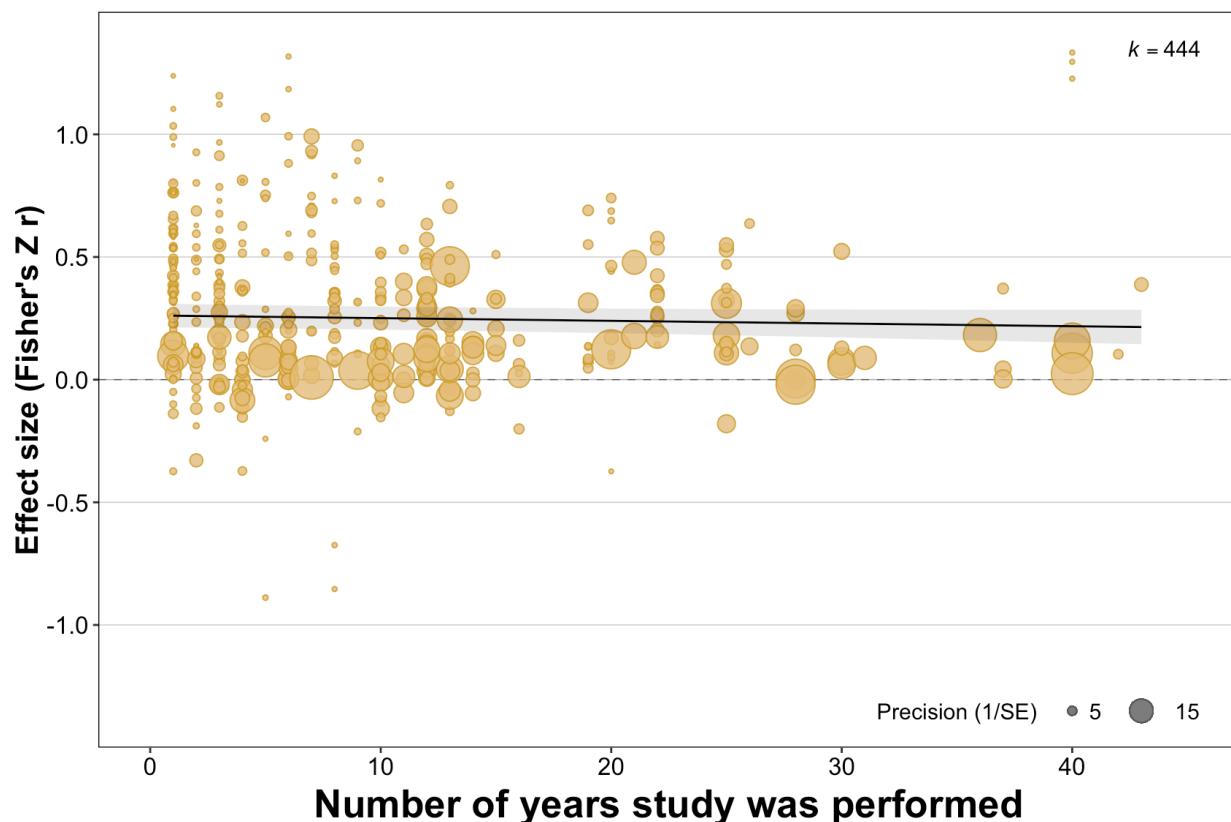
490 The base analyses also indicate that at least part of the sample bias might result from ‘study system bias,’  
 491 because they reveal substantially more differences (high heterogeneity) among studies than what would  
 492 be expected by chance if all studies reflected a single underlying effect (total heterogeneity / total variability:  
 493 73.37%). Given the diversity of studies in our sample, we did not expect that the effect sizes represent a  
 494 sample from a single distribution: for example, studies of offspring mortality tend to have larger sample sizes

495 (because each mother can have multiple offspring) and we predict different effect sizes for these studies.  
 496 Sections R2 - R4 present the specific analyses for each prediction to assess each of the factors potentially  
 497 leading to differences between effect size estimates, and we combine them in section R5.1.

498

499 Finally, including the study duration (in years) as a predictor of the effect sizes also indicates that our sample  
 500 shows 'study time bias.' Effect sizes are lower when studies have been conducted for longer (metafor  
 501 estimate 95% confidence interval lower -0.01 to upper 0.00, rethinking estimate 89% compatibility estimate  
 502 of posterior sample lower -0.05 to upper 0.00), but in particular the variance is reduced once a study has  
 503 been running for 10 or more years (Figure 4).

504



505

506 **Figure 4.** Relationship between the measured size of the effect of dominance rank on female reproductive  
 507 success and study duration. Studies that have been conducted for 10 or more years tend to have higher  
 508 precision (larger circle) and tend to be closer to the overall mean.

509

510

511 *Prediction 1.2: Overall, high dominance rank will be associated with higher reproductive success.*

512 We predicted that, taking into account the power of the different studies, the combined effect of high rank on  
 513 reproductive success will be positive. Previous studies that summarized existing evidence (e.g. Majolo et

514 al. (2012), Pusey (2012)) found that high ranking females generally have higher reproductive success than  
515 low ranking females.

516

517

518 **Result 1.2 Positive overall effect of higher rank on reproductive success**

519 We constructed an intercept-only meta-analytic base model to test for a general effect of dominance rank on  
520 reproductive success. Across our sample, there is consistent evidence that females with higher dominance  
521 rank have higher reproductive success (metafor estimate of overall effect size lower +0.22 to upper +0.27,  
522 rethinking estimate lower +0.26 to upper +0.30; the metafor estimate here and in the additional models is  
523 lower than the rethinking estimate because the statistical approach of the former expects the data to be  
524 more symmetrical than they are (see Figure 2 for the bias) while the rethinking approach pools information  
525 from the available heterogeneous data, such that the metafor estimate is closer to the median of the raw  
526 data of 0.23 and the rethinking estimate closer to the mean of 0.29). This overall effect means, for example,  
527 that in groups with two individuals dominants would have 0-6 offspring while subordinates would have 0-4  
528 offspring (see Discussion). Yet there is large variation in our sample, with effect sizes ranging from -0.89 to  
529 +1.33 (Figure 2).

530

531 *Prediction 1.3: Effect sizes from the same population and the same species will be similar.*

532 We predicted that studies that have been conducted on the same species, and in particular at the same site,  
533 will report similar effects of dominance rank on reproductive success. For some long-term studies, multiple  
534 studies have been performed using slightly different methods and/or data from different years which might  
535 include the same set of individuals leading to very similar effect size estimates. For studies of the same  
536 species from different sites, we expected similarities because many aspects of the life-history and social  
537 system that will shape the relationship between rank and reproductive success will be conserved.

538

539

540 **Result 1.3: Similarity of effect sizes from the same study and from the same species**

541 To the base model, we added random effects to account for non-independence due to effect sizes originating  
542 from within the same study, from studies performed on the same population and on the same species. The  
543 estimate of the overall effect size did not change in this model accounting for non-independence (metafor  
544 estimate of overall effect size when accounting for non-independence lower +0.22 to upper +0.31, rethinking  
545 estimate lower +0.26 to upper +0.35) from the overall effect estimated in the base model. Effect sizes from  
546 the same species and the same study, but not from the same population, tend to be similar to each other.  
547 The absence of a population effect could be because the 'study' and 'population' effects are likely to be  
548 confounded, as there are very few observations of the same population but from different studies in our  
549 dataset. Alternatively, it could be that effects do not vary much across populations of the same species,  
550 which is also indicated by the absence of differences between wild and captive populations (see below), with  
551 differences among studies of the same species mostly due to differences in the choice of measurement.

552

553 *Prediction 1.4: Closely related species will show similar effects of dominance rank on reproductive success.*

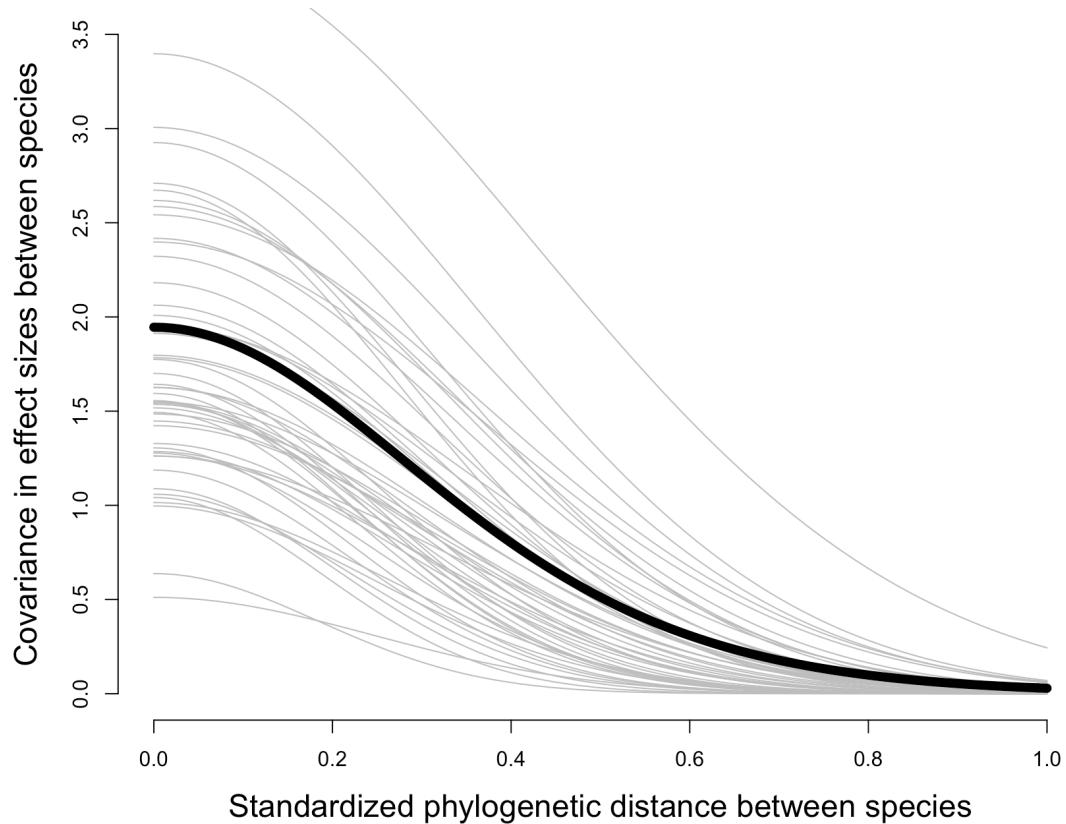
554 We predicted that effect sizes of the relationship between dominance rank and reproductive success will be  
555 more similar among closely related species (Chamberlain et al. (2012)) because methodological approaches  
556 can be specific to specific Orders (e.g. ungulates are studied differently than primates) and because closely  
557 related species share life history, social and ecological traits that might shape the influence of rank on  
558 reproductive success.

559

560 **Result 1.4: Effect sizes from species in the same Order are similar**

561 To the random effects model, we added a covariance structure to reflect potential similarities in effect sizes  
562 arising from closely related species showing similar effects due to their shared phylogenetic history. Both  
563 statistical approaches indicate that closely related species tend to have effect sizes that are more similar  
564 than those of distantly related species. The metafor approach suggests that about 20% of the variation in  
565 effect sizes is associated with covariation among species. The rethinking approach shows high uncertainty  
566 in the estimates (Figure 5), reflecting the high heterogeneity in the underlying data with high variation within  
567 species and different measures taken among closely related species. It suggests that species of the same  
568 genus tend to have similar effect sizes and that shared phylogenetic history might also explain similarities in  
569 effect sizes among species in the same Order, but covariance estimates are close to zero for species pairs  
570 that are more distantly related (Figure 5; the highest standardized distance between any pair of species in  
571 the same Order is 0.40).

572



573

574 **Figure 5.** Relationship between the phylogenetic distance between pairs of species and the similarity  
575 of their effect sizes (solid black line represents mean estimate of rethinking model, grey lines represent  
576 variation in the estimate). Species that are closely related and share most of their phylogenetic history  
577 (standardized phylogenetic distance close to zero) show intermediate levels of covariance in their effect  
578 sizes of dominance rank on female reproductive success. The covariance drops to low values at a  
579 standardized phylogenetic distance of around 0.4, the level separating species that are part of the same  
580 Order.

581

582

583 *Prediction 1.5: Effect sizes depend on the approach used (wild vs captive populations / agonistic interactions  
584 vs physical signs of rank / linear rank vs classes).*

585 We expected that some of the variation in effect size across studies arises from methodological differences:  
586 (i) we predicted lower effect sizes for studies of captive populations compared to wild populations: while  
587 the absence of stochastic events in captivity might mean that dominance is more consistently associated  
588 with certain benefits, the effects of high dominance rank on reproductive success will be reduced  
589 because of lower competition over resources;

590 (ii) we predicted lower effect sizes for studies where rank was measured based on agonistic interactions  
591 rather than on size or age because size and age are frequently directly associated with differences  
592 in female reproduction and clear differences between dominants and subordinates may indicate the  
593 existence of castes that tend to be associated with strong reproductive monopolization (Lukas and  
594 Clutton-Brock (2018)); and  
595 (iii) we predicted different effect sizes for studies classifying individuals into two or three rank categories  
596 compared to linear ranking depending on the social system. In cases where there is usually a single  
597 dominant female (singular cooperative breeders, such as meerkats), using a linear regression between  
598 each individuals' rank and its reproductive success will likely estimate a lower effect size because such  
599 an approach assumes differences in rank or reproductive success among the subordinates when there  
600 are none. In contrast, grouping individuals into categories to compare dominants to subordinates will  
601 capture actual differences more accurately. In cases where several females breed (plural breeders,  
602 such as hyenas) and are ordered in a linear hierarchy, a linear regression will exploit the full information  
603 available on individual differences in rank and reproductive success, whereas grouping individuals will  
604 lead to a loss of resolution, at a risk of underestimating the differences between highest and lowest  
605 ranking individuals. We performed simulations to determine the extent to which this choice of approach  
606 skews the effect sizes and found that it can lead to differences of more than 35% between the true  
607 and the estimated effect sizes. For illustration, we include this simulation in our code.

608  
609

610 **Result 1.5: Effect sizes are higher when studies used physical signs to classify individuals into cat-  
611 egorical rank categories, but do not depend on whether they were measured in captive or in wild  
612 populations**

613 To the base model, we added random effects reflecting the differences in approaches across studies (dom-  
614 inance ranks classified continuous/categorical; dominance determined through agonism/correlate; popula-  
615 tion type wild/provisioned/captive).

- 616 (i) Effect sizes did not clearly differ depending on whether studies were conducted with captive (metafor  
617 estimate lower +0.24 to upper +0.30, rethinking estimate lower +0.27 to upper +0.37; n=138 effect  
618 sizes), provisioned (metafor estimate lower +0.21 to upper +0.33, rethinking estimate lower +0.14 to  
619 upper +0.41; n=23 effect sizes), or wild (metafor estimate lower +0.22 to upper +0.34; n=283 effect  
620 sizes) individuals, and this does not change when we nest the population type within species (indicating  
621 that effect sizes do not differ between captive, provisioned, and wild populations of the same species).
- 622 (ii) Studies which determined the rank of females based on agonistic interactions have lower effect sizes  
623 (metafor estimate lower +0.22 to upper +0.26, rethinking estimate lower +0.24 to upper +0.32; n=407  
624 effect sizes) than studies which used other correlates (body size, age, etc.) to assign dominance ranks  
625 (metafor estimate lower +0.43 to upper +0.55, rethinking estimate lower +0.41 to upper +0.63; n=37  
626 effect sizes). These 37 effect sizes where rank was assigned based on correlates are from cooperative  
627 breeders and/or studies in which groups consisted of mothers and their daughters.
- 628 (iii) Studies which measured dominance rank categorically by classifying individuals as either dominants  
629 or subordinates report higher effect sizes (metafor estimate lower +0.29 to upper +0.35, rethinking es-

630 timate lower +0.31 to upper +0.41; n=251 effect sizes) than studies assigning individuals continuous  
631 ranks (metafor estimate lower +0.16 to upper +0.22, rethinking estimate lower +0.17 to upper +0.28;  
632 n=193 effect sizes). In essentially all studies of cooperative breeders (31 of 32 effect sizes), compar-  
633 isons were between the single dominant female and a class of the remaining subordinate females,  
634 which may contribute to higher effect sizes for studies using categorical measures of rank (see section  
635 R5.2.1).

636

637 **2) What are the life history traits that mediate the benefits of rank on reproductive success?**

638 *Prediction 2.1: High dominance rank will benefit females more than their offspring.*

639 We predicted that high rank is more likely to be associated with higher reproductive success in studies that  
640 measured female age at first reproduction, number of offspring born per year or across a lifetime, or female  
641 survival rather than the survival of their offspring. While in cooperatively breeding species reproductive sup-  
642 pression might impact offspring survival, in plural breeders offspring survival is more likely to be influenced  
643 by factors that are outside of the control of females, such as infanticide by new males (Cheney et al. (2004)).

644

645 **Result 2.1: Dominance rank has weakest effects on offspring survival and highest effects on lifetime  
646 reproductive success**

647 To the base model, we added a predictor variable reflecting the six classes of measures of reproductive  
648 success.

649 Dominance rank appears to have the highest effect on age at first conception (metafor estimate lower +0.32  
650 to upper +0.43, rethinking estimate lower +0.33 to upper +0.52; n=23 effect sizes), followed by life time  
651 reproductive success (metafor estimate lower +0.27 to upper +0.40, rethinking estimate lower +0.31 to  
652 upper +0.47; n=34 effect sizes), interbirth interval (metafor estimate lower +0.25 to upper +0.37, rethinking  
653 estimate lower +0.28 to upper +0.37; n=46 effect sizes), infant production (metafor estimate lower +0.21 to  
654 upper +0.33, rethinking estimate lower +0.23 to upper +0.38; n=198 effect sizes), adult survival (metafor  
655 estimate lower +0.18 to upper +0.31, rethinking estimate lower +0.18 to upper +0.34; n=30 effect sizes),  
656 and the lowest effect on infant survival (metafor estimate lower +0.14 to upper +0.25, rethinking estimate  
657 lower +0.15 to upper +0.26; n=113 effect sizes). Effects of dominance rank on survival are lower than on  
658 other measures of female fitness (contrasts between infant survival and age at first conception/life time  
659 reproductive success/interbirth interval/infant production do not cross zero; contrasts between adult survival  
660 and age at first conception/life time reproductive success/interbirth interval do not cross zero). Effect sizes  
661 for life time reproductive success are slightly higher (but contrasts overlap zero) than for its components  
662 (adult survival, interbirth interval, infant production). However, there does not appear to be a straightforward  
663 additive (or multiplicative) combination of these individual effects (Figure 6).

664

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**Fig A) Cooperative breeders**

Adult survival

Infant survival

Infant production

**Fig B) Plural breeders**

Adult survival

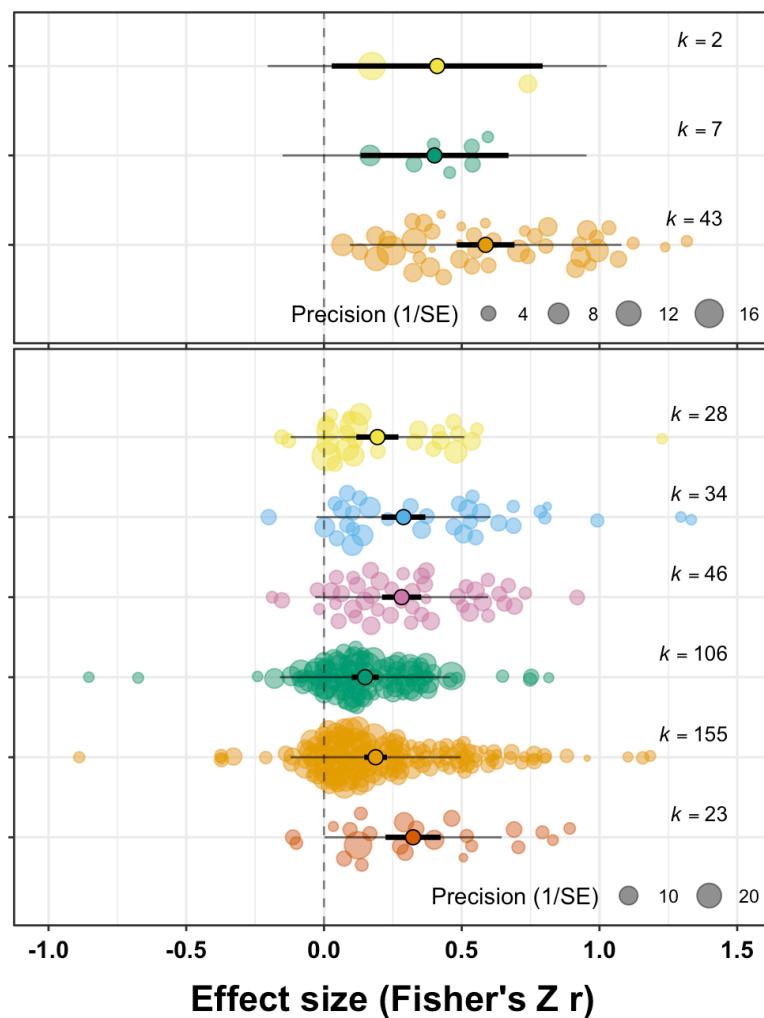
Lifetime success

Inter-birth interval

Infant survival

Infant production

Age at first conception



665

666 **Figure 6.** Raw effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success are generally higher for cooperative  
 667 breeders (a) than for plural breeders (b), and differ according to the measure of reproductive success. In  
 668 general, dominance appears to have stronger effects on reproductive output (lifetime reproductive success,  
 669 age at first conception, infant production, inter-birth intervals) than on survival (both of the adult females  
 670 themselves and of their infants). The differences between measures of reproductive success change  
 671 slightly when accounting for similarity among observations from the same and related species, but the  
 672 ordering remains the same. As in previous figures, each dot represents a single effect size, with the size of  
 673 the dot indicating the precision (legend bottom right). For each measure of reproductive success, the darker  
 674 circle in the middle represents the estimated mean effect, with the bold lines representing the confidence  
 675 interval of the mean effect and the thinner lines the prediction estimate of the model.

676

677

678 *Prediction 2.2: Dominance will have stronger effects on immediate reproductive success in species in which*  
 679 *females produce many offspring over a short time period.*

680 One key mechanism that has been proposed is that females with high dominance rank have priority of  
681 access to resources during periods when these resources are limited, which in turn can increase their repro-  
682 ductive success. Accordingly, we predicted stronger effects of rank on measures of immediate reproductive  
683 success in species in which females have higher energetic investment into reproduction, with larger litter  
684 sizes and shorter interbirth intervals (Lukas and Huchard (2019)), as there is a higher potential for variation  
685 in reproductive success (P. Stockley (2003)). In contrast, in long-lived species in which females produce  
686 only single offspring at long intervals, high-ranking females are expected to have less opportunity to trans-  
687 late short-term resource access into immediate reproductive success but might store energy to potentially  
688 increase their own survival or lifetime reproductive success (Lemaître, Ronget, and Gaillard (2020)).

689 **Results 2.2: Stronger effects in species with larger litter sizes and more litters per year**

690 Effects of dominance on reproductive success are higher in species with larger litter sizes (metafor estimate  
691 of litter size lower +0.03 to upper +0.05, rethinking estimate lower +0.05 to upper +0.09; n=444 effect sizes)  
692 and with more litters per year (metafor estimate of litters per year lower +0.04 to upper +0.08, rethinking  
693 estimate lower +0.06 to upper +0.11; n=444 effect sizes). Effect sizes in species where females produce  
694 single offspring are on average 0.25 while effect sizes in species where females produce litters are on  
695 average 0.34, and effect sizes in species where females produce one or fewer litters per year are on average  
696 0.25 while effect sizes in species where females produce multiple litters each year are on average 0.45.  
697 The association of the effect sizes with the number of litters per year remained when accounting for the  
698 phylogenetic relatedness among species, but the association with litter size did not, suggesting that it might  
699 be influenced by other characteristics that differ among species with variable litter sizes.

700

701 **3) What are the ecological conditions that mediate the benefits of rank on reproductive success?**

702 *Prediction 3.1: Positive effects of high dominance rank on reproductive success will be stronger in popula-*  
703 *tions in which females feed on resources that are more monopolizable.*

704 We predicted that high rank will have stronger effects on reproductive success in fruit- and meat-eaters  
705 compared to herbivores or omnivores. One of the main expected benefits of high rank is priority of access  
706 to resources, which should be more relevant in populations in which resources can be monopolized (Fedigan  
707 (1983)).

708

709 **Result 3.1: Effects of dominance rank on reproductive are independent of diet**

710 Effect sizes are larger in carnivores (0.35; n=72 effect sizes) than in omnivores (0.28; n=227 effect sizes),  
711 herbivores (0.25; n=117 effect sizes), or frugivores (0.21; n=28 effect sizes) (estimated difference carnivores  
712 versus omnivores rethinking lower -0.14 to upper -0.01, difference carnivores versus herbivores rethinking  
713 lower -0.16 to upper -0.03, difference carnivores versus frugivores rethinking lower -0.24 to upper -0.02;  
714 estimates for all other comparisons cross 0). Carnivores are no longer estimated to have different effect  
715 sizes when the phylogenetic relatedness among species is taken into account, potentially due to the higher  
716 prevalence of cooperative breeding in carnivores.

717

718 *Prediction 3.2: Effects of dominance rank on reproductive success will be more pronounced in populations*  
719 *living in harsher environments.*

720 We predicted that the effect of rank on reproductive success will be stronger in populations in which re-  
721 sources are limited because they live in harsh and unpredictable environments. Previous studies have  
722 shown that cooperatively breeding species are more likely to occur in such environments (Lukas and Clutton-  
723 Brock (2017)), but we also expect stronger effects among plural breeding populations living in harsh envi-  
724 ronments.

725

726 **Result 3.2: Effect sizes are not higher in harsher environments**

727 We found no evidence for an association between environmental harshness and the effect of dominance  
728 rank on reproductive success (metafor estimate lower -0.3 to upper +0.4, rethinking estimate lower -0.6 to  
729 upper +0.1; no change when accounting for shared phylogenetic history; n=259 effect sizes).

730

731 *Prediction 3.3: Effects of dominance rank on reproductive success will be more pronounced in populations*  
732 *with high densities of individuals.*

733 We predicted that the effect of rank on reproductive success will be stronger in populations in which more  
734 individuals share a limited amount of space. At higher population densities, social groupings and interactions  
735 are more likely and competition over resources is expected to be stronger.

736

737 **Results 3.3: Higher population density is associated with stronger effects of dominance rank on**  
738 **reproductive success**

739 Effect sizes are higher in populations with higher densities of individuals (metafor lower +0.04 to upper +0.08,  
740 rethinking lower +0.05 to upper +0.10; n=346 effect sizes), even when including phylogenetic relatedness.

741

742 **4) What are the social circumstances that mediate the benefits of rank?**

743 *Prediction 4.1: Benefits of rank will be most pronounced in cooperatively breeding species.*

744 We predicted that rank effects on reproduction will be higher in cooperative breeders, where the dominant  
745 female is often the only breeding female because she suppresses the reproduction of subordinate females  
746 (Digby, Ferrari, and Saltzman (2006)), compared to plural breeders, where aggressive behaviour is more  
747 targeted and limited to access over specific resources.

748

749 **Result 4.1: Cooperative breeders have larger effect sizes than plural breeders**

750 Effect sizes of cooperative breeders (average 0.58; n=52 effect sizes) are higher than those observed in plu-  
751 ral (average 0.25; n=324 effect sizes) or associated breeders (average 0.23; n=68 effect sizes) (estimates  
752 for difference cooperative breeder vs plural breeder metafor lower -0.40 to upper -0.30, rethinking lower  
753 -0.41 to upper -0.27; cooperative breeder vs associated breeder metafor lower -0.47 to upper -0.35, rethink-  
754 ing lower -0.45 to upper -0.26; plural breeder vs associated breeder metafor lower -0.07 to upper +0.05,

755 rethinking lower -0.07 to upper +0.05). Cooperative breeders are still estimated to have higher effect sizes  
756 than species with other breeding systems when accounting for phylogenetic relatedness, but the differences  
757 are slightly reduced (Figure 6).

758

759 *Prediction 4.2: For plural-breeders, the time-scales at which the reproductive benefits of dominance accrue*  
760 *depend on how individuals achieve high rank.*

761 We predicted that in populations of plural breeders in which groups contain multiple breeding females, the  
762 way in which these females compete over dominance will influence the potential benefits of high rank. In  
763 populations in which female rank depends primarily on age, high ranking females will have higher reproduc-  
764 tive success for short periods of time because changes in rank are expected to occur regularly, and because  
765 high rank may only be reached towards the end of their reproductive life (Thouless and Guinness (1986)). In  
766 societies in which female rank depends primarily on size or condition, rank effects on reproductive success  
767 are expected to be expressed on intermediate time frames, as individuals may not be able to maintain a  
768 larger relative size or condition over lifetime but they are expected to acquire rank relatively early in their  
769 reproductive life (Giles et al. (2015), Huchard et al. (2016)). In societies in which female rank primarily  
770 depends on nepotism, and ranks are often inherited and stable across a female's lifetime, we predicted that  
771 effects of rank on reproductive success will be strongest when measured over long periods because small  
772 benefits might add up to substantial differences among females (Frank (1986)) whereas stochastic events  
773 might reduce differences between females on shorter time scales (Cheney et al. (2004)).

774

775

776 **Result 4.2: Overall, effect sizes do not differ according to how dominants achieve or maintain their**  
777 **high ranks**

778 Effect sizes are higher in species in which condition plays a major role in determining which females are  
779 dominant rather than subordinate (average effect size 0.38; n=94 effect sizes), compared to species in which  
780 age (average effect size 0.31; n=100 effect sizes) or nepotism (average effect size 0.24; n=243 effect sizes)  
781 influence dominance rank (estimates for difference condition vs age: metafor lower +0.05 to upper +0.17,  
782 rethinking lower +0.01 to upper +0.16; condition vs nepotism: metafor lower +0.07 to +0.20, rethinking  
783 lower +0.08 to +0.20; age vs nepotism: metafor lower -0.07 to upper +0.03, rethinking lower -0.01 to upper  
784 +0.12). Species with different dominance systems are no longer estimated to be different when including  
785 the phylogenetic similarity.

786 Our initial prediction focused on whether the time-scales at which the reproductive benefits of dominance  
787 accrue depend on how individuals achieve high rank. However, we realized that there was no straightforward  
788 way to assess this prediction. The species in our dataset have vastly different lifespans and associated inter-  
789 birth intervals, so the time-scale needs to be considered on a relative rather than an absolute scale. The  
790 values for the relative duration of a study (number of years studied divided by the maximum lifespan of the  
791 species) show that 90% of effect sizes are from studies that lasted less than 10% of the lifespan of the  
792 species (median 3%). In all of the 19 species in which studies spanned more than 10% of the lifespan,  
793 females acquire rank by nepotism. We did not find any consistent pattern of relationship between effect size

794 and study duration dependent on the system of dominance acquisition.

795

796 *Prediction 4.3: For plural-breeding macaques, effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success are*  
797 *larger in species characterized as more despotic than in species characterized as more egalitarian.*

798 We added an analysis after the preregistration, focusing on variation in dominance style among macaques.

799 Macaque species have been assigned to a four-grade social style according to the relationships among

800 females. Grade 1 species, the most despotic, are characterized by steep dominance hierarchies and more

801 asymmetries in social interactions among breeding females, whereas grade 4 species show more frequent

802 counter-aggression from subordinates towards dominants and less bias in social interactions. We expected

803 that the steeper hierarchies in more despotic species would lead to larger differences in access to resources,

804 and accordingly higher reproductive success for dominant females.

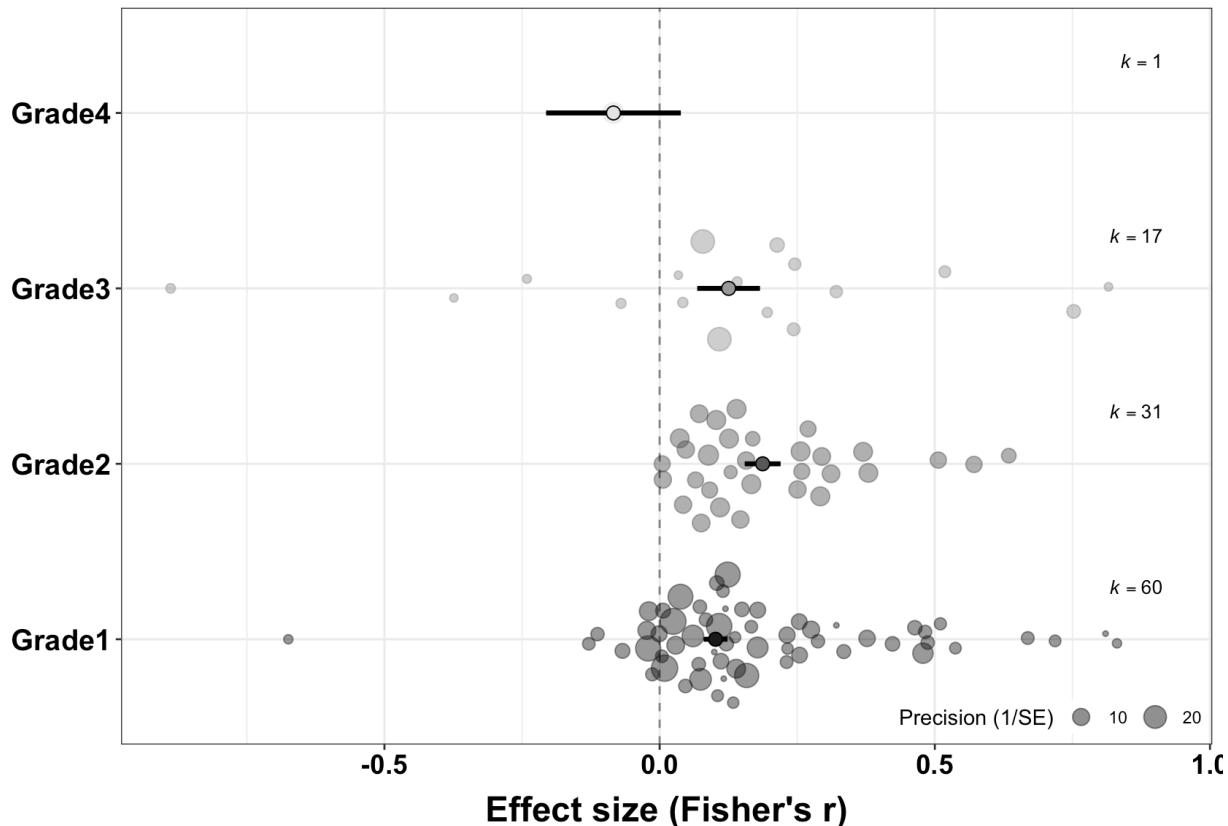
805 **Result 4.3: Among macaques, effect sizes do not differ according to how the dominance style among**  
806 **females has been characterized**

807 Differences in dominance styles among macaques are not associated with the effect of dominance rank  
808 on reproductive success (metafor estimates effect sizes of species in Grade 1 to be different from species  
809 in Grade 2 lower +0.05 to upper +0.12 but no differences for the five other pairwise Grade comparisons;  
810 rethinking estimates for all comparisons overlap zero; n = 109 effect sizes from 9 species). Egalitarian  
811 species do not show lower effects of dominance rank on reproductive success than other species and the  
812 sample size is too small to determine whether despotic species differ from other species (Figure 7).

813

814

---



815  
 816 **Figure 7.** The effect of dominance rank on female reproductive success is similar across macaque species  
 817 with different dominance styles. Relationships among female group members in species of grade 1 (bottom  
 818 dark grey) are generally considered egalitarian, while grade 4 (top light grey) is assigned to species in  
 819 which relationships are deemed highly despotic. Species with different dominance styles are not estimated  
 820 to be different (all posterior contrasts overlap zero).

821

822

823 *Prediction 4.4: Dominance rank will have stronger effects on reproductive success in populations in which*  
 824 *females are philopatric in comparison to populations where females disperse to breed.*

825 We predicted that effects of rank on reproductive success will be lower in populations in which adult females  
 826 are able to leave their group and join other groups compared to populations in which females cannot breed  
 827 outside their natal group. In populations in which females are philopatric, they are likely to have support  
 828 from female kin which can strengthen dominance differences (Lukas and Clutton-Brock (2018)). In addition,  
 829 in species where females can change group membership easily, females are expected to join those groups  
 830 where they have the best breeding option available to them (Vehrencamp (1983)).

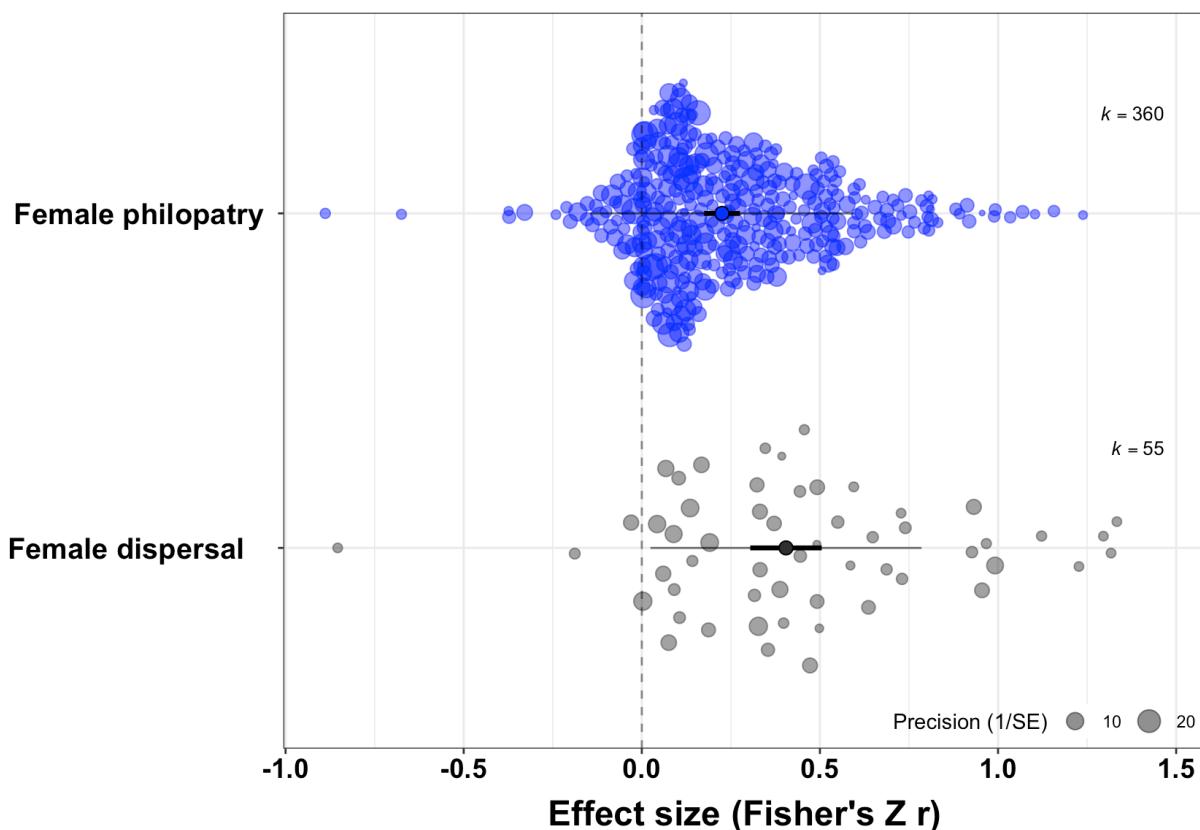
831

832

833 **Result 4.4: Stronger effects in populations in which females disperse to breed rather than in which**  
 834 **females are philopatric**

835 The effects of dominance rank on reproductive success are higher in species in which females disperse and  
 836 join new groups (average effect size 0.46; n=55 effect sizes) compared to species in which most females  
 837 were born in the group where they breed (average effect size 0.26; n=360 effect sizes) (metafor estimate of  
 838 difference lower -0.24 to upper -0.12, rethinking estimate lower -0.25 to upper -0.11), also when accounting  
 839 for phylogenetic covariance (Figure 8).

840



841

842 **Figure 8.** Effect sizes of dominance rank on female reproductive success are lower in species in which  
 843 females are philopatric and remain in the group/area where they have been born (top, blue dots) than in  
 844 species in which females disperse to breed (bottom, grey dots).

845

846

847 *Prediction 4.5: In plural breeding species, dominance will have stronger effects on reproductive success  
 848 when the number of females in the group is smaller.*

849 We predicted that the effect of rank on reproductive success will be stronger in plural breeding populations  
 850 in which there are fewer females per group, because dominant females will be more likely to interfere in  
 851 reproductive attempts when there are fewer subordinates (T. H. Clutton-Brock et al. (2010)) and because  
 852 increased competition in larger groups is expected to reduce reproductive success even among dominants  
 853 (Van Noordwijk and Van Schaik (1988)).

854

855

856 **Result 4.5: Effects of dominance rank on reproductive success are higher when groups contain  
857 fewer females**

858 Both approaches detect a negative association between the effect sizes and group sizes (metafor estimate  
859 of log group size lower -0.099 to upper -0.678, rethinking estimate of standardized group size lower -0.10 to  
860 upper -0.05; n=444 effect sizes). Compared to groups of 2 females, groups of 10 females show ~10% lower  
861 effect sizes and groups of ~50 females show 50% lower effect sizes. The negative association between  
862 group size and the effect sizes remains when accounting for similarity among closely related species.

863

864 *Prediction 4.6: Dominance rank will be more strongly associated with reproductive success in populations  
865 in which average relatedness among female group members is high.*

866 We predicted that the relationship between dominance rank and reproductive success will be more pro-  
867 nounced in species in which social groups primarily consist of close kin compared to groups composed of  
868 unrelated females. Groups with high levels of average kinship among females are those where groups are  
869 small, females remain philopatric (Lukas et al. (2005)), and females have support to establish their positions  
870 (Lukas and Clutton-Brock (2018)), which all are expected to lead to higher benefits of high rank.

871 **Result 4.6: No association between levels of relatedness and effects of dominance rank on repro-  
872 ductive success**

873 Effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success increase with increasing levels of average relat-  
874 edness among female group members (metafor estimate lower +0.31 to upper +0.59, rethinking estimate  
875 lower +0.31 to upper +0.71; n=288 effect sizes), though the association is no longer detected when includ-  
876 ing the shared phylogenetic history among species (metafor estimate lower -0.01 to upper +0.56; rethinking  
877 estimate lower -0.02 to upper +0.65).

878

879 *Prediction 4.7: Dominance rank will be more strongly associated with reproductive success in populations  
880 in which variance in relatedness among female group members is high.*

881 In addition to levels of average relatedness among group females, we also predicted that the relationship  
882 between dominance rank and reproductive success will be more pronounced in species in which there is  
883 high variance in relatedness, with females being closely related to some group members but not to others,  
884 as compared to species in which group females are either all related or all unrelated. In several species  
885 with female philopatry, groups are structured into matrilines (Fortunato (2019)). Members of the same ma-  
886 triline tend to support each other in interactions with unrelated females, likely reinforcing differences among  
887 females.

888 **Result 4.7: Variance in relatedness**

889 We could not assess this prediction because sufficient data was not available.

890

891 *Prediction 4.8: The effect of dominance on reproductive success will be less pronounced in populations in*

892 which females regularly form coalitions.

893 We predicted that high ranking females will have less pronounced reproductive benefits in species in which  
894 females form strategic coalitions with others (Bercovitch (1991)). Individuals have been suggested to form  
895 strategic coalitions to level the reproduction of others (Pandit and Schaik (2003)) and these coalitions are  
896 less likely in cooperatively breeding species (Lukas and Clutton-Brock (2018)).

897 **Result 4.8: No differences in effect sizes between species in which females form coalitions to those  
898 in which they do not**

899 Species in which females form coalitions show only slightly lower effects of dominance rank on reproduc-  
900 tive success (average 0.27; n=246 effect sizes) than species in which females do not have support during  
901 aggressive interactions (average 0.32; n=180 effect sizes) (estimate of difference metafor: lower -0.11 to  
902 upper -0.01, rethinking lower -0.09 to upper +0.01), with no difference in models accounting for similarity  
903 due to phylogenetic relatedness (metafor lower -0.10 to upper +0.07; rethinking lower -0.09 to upper +0.03).

904

905 *Prediction 4.9: Dominance rank will have less effect on reproductive success in populations in which there  
906 is intense inter-sexual conflict.*

907 We predicted that the association between high dominance rank and increased reproductive success of  
908 females will be lower in populations in which males compete intensely over reproductive opportunities be-  
909 cause this leads to intersexual conflict that harms female fitness (Swedell et al. (2014)). In such populations,  
910 males tend to be aggressive towards females and males taking up tenure in a group tend to kill offspring  
911 indiscriminately or might even target offspring of high-ranking females (Cheney et al. (2004), Fedigan and  
912 Jack (2013)), reducing any potential differences between high- and low-ranking females. We assessed  
913 whether high ranking females benefit less from their positions in populations in which groups show strong  
914 female-biased sex composition, or in which males commit infanticide, or with strong sexual size dimorphism  
915 (with males being larger than females).

916

917 **Result 4.9: Dominance rank has less effect on reproductive success in social groups with fewer  
918 males per female but not with sexual dimorphism and male infanticide**

919 Effect sizes are larger in species in which sex ratios in social groups are more balanced and lower when  
920 there are fewer males per female (metafor estimate lower +0.55 to upper +1.25, rethinking estimate lower  
921 +0.07 to upper +0.11; n=328 effect sizes), and the association remains the same when accounting for shared  
922 phylogenetic history.

923 Effect sizes are lower in species in which males commit infanticide (metafor estimate lower -0.20 to upper  
924 0.00; rethinking estimate lower -0.15 to upper -0.04; n=332 effect sizes), but the relationship does not hold  
925 when accounting for phylogenetic relatedness (metafor lower -0.13 to upper +0.07, rethinking lower -0.07  
926 to upper +0.06).

927 Differences in effect sizes are not associated with the extent of sexual dimorphism in body size across  
928 species (metafor estimate lower -0.17 to upper +0.11; rethinking lower -0.05 to upper +0.01; similar estimates  
929 when accounting for shared phylogenetic history; n=334 effect sizes).

930

931

**932 Summary of univariate analyses**

933 Overall, our data indicate that females of higher rank generally have higher reproductive success than fe-  
934 males of lower rank. In terms of the approach, effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success were  
935 higher (i) when individuals were assigned a rank category rather than a continuous position and (ii) when  
936 rank was determined using indirect measures rather than aggressive interactions, plus (iii) variation in effect  
937 size was also influenced by differences not captured by our variables with measures reported in the same  
938 study or from within the same Order of species being more similar than expected by chance. We found  
939 no differences in effect sizes when studies were conducted in a captive rather than a wild setting. Effect  
940 sizes of dominance rank were higher for measures of reproductive output than for measures of survival, and  
941 higher for measures of maternal than offspring fitness.

942 We found that effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success are associated with seven of our  
943 single predictor variables (one in the opposite direction from what we predicted), whereas we did not find an  
944 association with another eight of the single predictor variables (Table 1). Five of the six associated predictor  
945 variables reflect variation in the social environment, while we did not find any association with any of the  
946 predictor variables reflecting the ecological environment.

947

948 **Table 1.** Overview of our predictions and results of univariate analyses indicating whether **we did or did**  
 949 **not find an association between individual variables with variation in effect sizes of dominance rank**  
 950 **on female reproductive success.** The table presents, for each variable, which direction of association we  
 951 predicted, the association we observed (estimates of the 95% confidence interval with the metafor approach  
 952 and of the 89% posterior compatibility interval with the rethinking approach), and the respective estimates of  
 953 the association when accounting for shared phylogenetic history among the species in our sample. Overall,  
 954 our results align with 7 out of our 16 predictions.

Predictor variable	Predicted association	Observed association	Metafor 95% CI	Rethinking 89% PCI
P2.1 success measure	negative (survival lower)	negative	not available	-0.10 - -0.01
P2.2 litters per year	positive	positive	+0.03 - +0.05	+0.05 - +0.09
P2.2 litter size	positive	none	-0.01 - +0.03	-0.04 - +0.09
P3.1 diet	positive (carnivores higher)	none	-0.04 - +0.03	-0.10 - +0.06
P3.2 environmental harshness	positive	none	-0.30 - +0.40	-0.60 - +0.10
P3.3 population density	positive	positive	+0.04 - +0.08	+0.05 - +0.10
P4.1 cooperative breeding	positive	positive	+0.30 - +0.40	+0.27 - +0.41
P4.2 dominance acquisition	positive (condition higher)	none	-0.10 - +0.12	-0.02 - +0.03
P4.3 dominance style	positive (despotic higher)	none	-0.07 - +0.03	-0.01 - +0.12
P4.4 philopatry	positive	negative	-0.24 - -0.12	-0.25 - -0.11
P4.5 group size	negative	negative	-0.07 - -0.01	-0.10 - -0.05
P4.6 average relatedness	negative	none	-0.01 - +0.56	-0.01 - +0.12
P4.8 female coalitions	negative	none	-0.10 - +0.07	-0.09 - +0.07
P4.9 male infanticide	negative	none	-0.13 - +0.07	-0.07 - +0.06
P4.9 sexual dimorphism	negative	none	-0.17 - +0.11	-0.05 - +0.01
P4.9 sex ratio	positive	positive	+0.44 - +1.25	+0.07 - +0.11

956

957

**958 5) Potential interactions among predictor variables**

959 We expected potential interactions among the predictor variables because some of them might influence  
960 each other while others might potentially modulate the influence of another predictor variable on the dom-  
961 inance effects. Six predictions were added in the preregistration (P5.5-P5.9). We added further analyses  
962 based on the outcome of the single-factor analyses. These are listed in the changes from the preregistration  
963 section and their results are presented below.

964

**965 Result 5.1: Heterogeneity and sample bias**

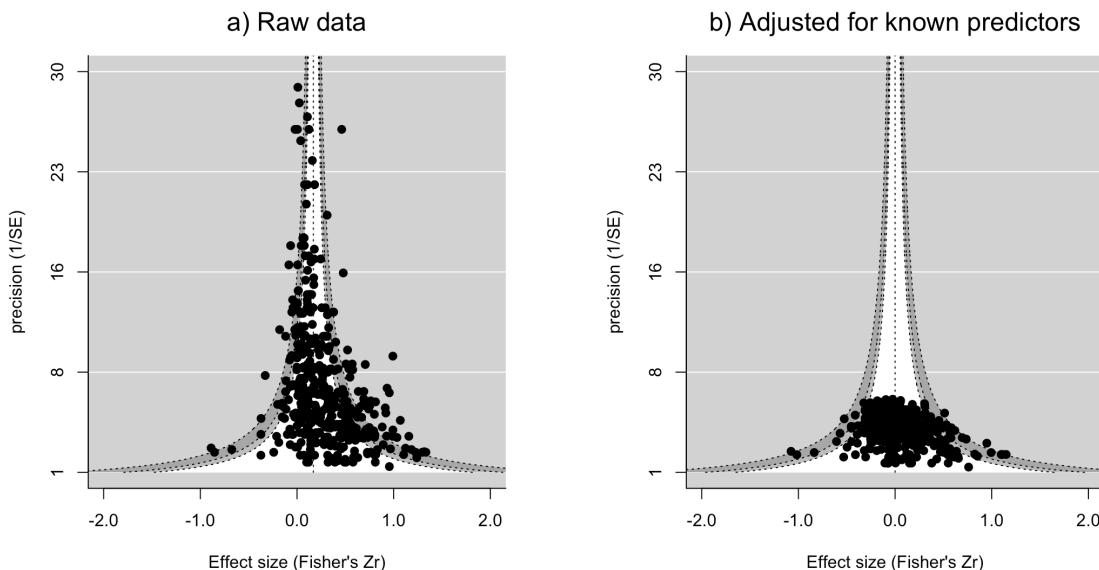
966 The sample bias, namely the over-representation of extreme effect sizes, in our data likely results from all  
967 three influences of (i) publication bias, (ii) study system bias, and (iii) study time bias. In addition to the  
968 direct indications of publication and study time bias in our sample, our univariate analyses identified many  
969 factors that could lead to study system bias. For example, while less than 5% of all mammalian species  
970 are cooperative breeders, 12% of all effect sizes in our sample come from cooperative breeders which have  
971 high positive effect sizes.

972 To identify the potential interplay between the three biases, we built combined models. If biases occur  
973 because study systems with different effect sizes also have particular sample sizes and study duration  
974 (e.g. cooperative breeders tend to live in smaller groups), we should no longer detect an association between  
975 sample size, study duration and effect sizes when controlling for the different study systems. The combined  
976 models indicate that the study system factors identified in the univariate analyses are directly associated  
977 with variation in effect sizes (all their estimates do not overlap zero), as is sample size, but not the study  
978 duration. This indicates that our sample has both publication and study system bias. The lack of a direct  
979 influence of study time bias presumably occurs because sample size is associated with the number of years  
980 a study has been conducted for, indicating that large samples - both in terms of study duration and breadth  
981 - might reduce noise.

982 The reduction in publication bias when accounting for the study system bias is visible when comparing the  
983 funnel plot of the raw effect sizes in relation to their precision (Figure 9a), which shows a clear asymmetry, to  
984 the funnel plot of the effect sizes adjusted for known predictors (Figure 9b), which only indicates that some  
985 large effect sizes at small precision are not balanced.

986

---



987  
988 **Figure 9.** Funnel plots based on raw effect sizes (a) and effect sizes adjusted for known predictors (b).  
989 When accounting for the influence of which reproductive trait was measured, whether the species is a  
990 cooperative breeder or not, the number of litters per year the species produces, and the phylogenetic  
991 covariance among species, the distribution of the 444 effect sizes in our sample appears much less  
992 imbalanced (b) than the raw effect sizes (a). The mean effect size (grey dotted line in the center going  
993 upwards) is shifted close to zero when adjusting for known predictors because these predictors explain  
994 why some studies have positive effect sizes. Precision decreases for most estimates because they no  
995 longer represent the measured values, but incorporate the uncertainty as the values are inferred from the  
996 expected interaction of the predictors.

997

998

### 999 **Results 5.2: Differences between cooperative and plural/associated breeders**

1000 In our preregistration, we had decided to first construct univariate models as reported above, testing the  
1001 influence of a single variable at a time to assess support for the specific predictions. One of the main factors  
1002 that we found to be associated with higher effect sizes is cooperative breeding. Cooperative breeders  
1003 differ from other social organisms in many additional aspects, so we first checked whether any of the other  
1004 associations we detect occur because they covary with cooperative breeding.

#### 1005 **Result 5.2.1: Differences in approach to study cooperative breeders**

1006 Approaches of assigning rank depend on the breeding system of the study species, with many studies of  
1007 cooperative breeders assigning rank into categories (98% categorical, 2% continuous) based on other mea-  
1008 sures (50% agonism, 50% other) while studies of plural and associated breeders often assign continuous  
1009 ranks (51% categorical, 49% continuous) based on agonistic interactions (97% agonism, 3% other). Combin-  
1010 ing the variables representing the different study approaches with the variable representing the classification  
1011 as cooperative breeder or not into single models indicates that the difference in effect sizes is primarily due  
1012 to the stronger dominance effects in cooperative breeders (estimate of difference metafor lower +0.23 to

1013 upper +0.34, rethinking lower +0.23 to upper +0.37, n=444 effect sizes) and only very little due to the ap-  
1014 proaches the authors chose (other measure vs agonism estimate of difference metafor lower +0.02 to upper  
1015 +0.15, rethinking lower -0.02 to upper +0.16; rank categorical vs continuous estimate of difference metafor  
1016 lower -0.02 to upper -0.09, rethinking lower -0.07 to upper +0.03, n=444 effect sizes).

1017 **Result 5.2.2: Different life history measures and cooperative breeding**

1018 In cooperative breeders, effects of dominance rank were only assessed on three of the six life history traits.  
1019 We therefore performed separate analyses for cooperative and for plural/associated breeders to identify the  
1020 life history traits showing specific increases in higher ranking females compared to others.

1021 In cooperative breeders, effect sizes are higher for infant production (metafor estimate lower +0.49 to up-  
1022 per +0.72, rethinking estimate lower +0.55 to upper +0.69, n=43 effect sizes), and lower for infant survival  
1023 (metafor lower +0.13 to upper +0.54, rethinking lower +0.20 to upper +0.61, n=7 effect sizes) and adult  
1024 survival (metafor estimate lower +0.02 to upper +0.59, rethinking estimate lower +0.12 to upper +0.73, n=2  
1025 effect sizes) (Figure 6).

1026 In plural/associated breeders, effect sizes are (depending on the approach) highest for lifetime reproductive  
1027 success (metafor estimate lower +0.19 to upper +0.29, rethinking estimate lower +0.33 to upper +0.47,  
1028 n=34 effect sizes), age at first conception (metafor lower +0.27 to upper +0.36, rethinking lower +0.25 to  
1029 upper +0.43, n=23 effect sizes) and interbirth interval (metafor loewr +0.23 to upper +0.34, rethinking lower  
1030 +0.25 to upper +0.38, n=46 effect sizes), followed by infant production (metafor lower +0.13 to upper +0.22,  
1031 rethinking lower +0.19 to upper +0.27, n=155 effect sizes) and adult survival (metafor lower +0.14 to upper  
1032 +0.24, rethinking lower +0.15 to upper +0.30, n=28 effect sizes), and are lowest for infant survival (metafor  
1033 lower +0.11 to upper +0.20, rethinking lower +0.11 to upper +0.20, n=106 effect sizes) (Figure 6). The  
1034 two methods give slightly different estimates because there is large variation among the effect sizes within  
1035 each life history trait. In particular, effect sizes of dominance rank on lifetime reproductive success can be  
1036 either low or high, often for the same population. For example, an experiment with house mice reported  
1037 effect sizes ranging from 0.08 to 0.80, depending on the relatedness among the group members (König  
1038 1994). For mountain gorillas living in the Virungas, one study reported no effect of dominance rank on  
1039 lifetime reproductive success (0.00) (Robbins et al. 2007) while another reported the highest effect size  
1040 in our sample (1.33) after excluding major sources of environmental variability on reproductive success  
1041 (Robbins et al. 2011).

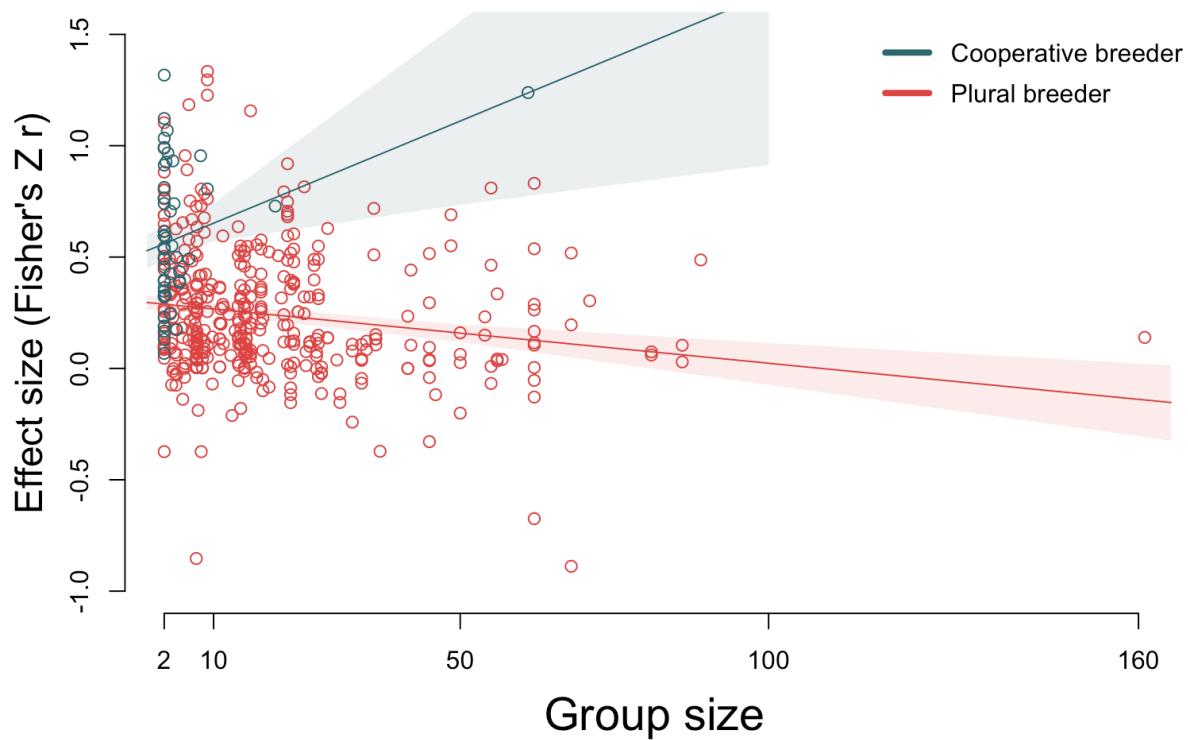
1042 **Result 5.2.3: Litters per year and cooperative breeding**

1043 Cooperative breeders tend to have higher reproductive rates than species with other breeding systems.  
1044 However, the association between reproductive rate and effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive  
1045 success remains across all breeding systems (metafor estimate of cooperative breeding lower +0.22 to  
1046 upper +0.58, litters per year lower 0.00 to upper +0.07, interaction lower -0.10 to update +0.04), with larger  
1047 effect sizes in species producing more litters per year in cooperative (rethinking estimate lower +0.02 to  
1048 upper +0.20; n=52 effect sizes) and plural (rethinking lower +0.13 to upper +0.33; n=324 effect sizes), but not  
1049 associated breeders (rethinking lower -0.08 to upper +0.23; n=68 effect sizes) (estimates take into account  
1050 phylogenetic relatedness).

1051 **Result 5.2.4: Group size and cooperative breeding**

1052 In mammals, groups of cooperative breeders never grow to the same size (in our data, median 2 females per  
 1053 group, n=52) as groups of plural/associated breeders (in our data, median 14 females per group, n=392),  
 1054 meaning that the negative relationship between group size and we describe above might arise because  
 1055 cooperative breeders have both smaller group sizes and larger effect sizes. In our data, both group size  
 1056 and cooperative breeding remain independently associated with the effect sizes of dominance rank on re-  
 1057 productive success. The analyses suggest an interaction (metafor estimate for cooperative breeding lower  
 1058 +0.16 to upper +0.39, for group size lower -0.01 to upper 0.00, interaction lower 0.00 to upper +0.03, n=444  
 1059 effect sizes), with effect sizes increasing with group size in cooperative breeders (rethinking estimate lower  
 1060 +0.01 to upper +0.02), where a single dominant continues to monopolize reproduction as groups get larger,  
 1061 and declining with group sizes in other breeding systems (rethinking estimate lower -0.01 to upper 0.00),  
 1062 where dominants might be less able to control reproduction of other group members as groups grow larger  
 1063 (Figure 10).

1064



1065

1066 **Figure 10.** The relationship between the number of females in the group and the effect of dominance on  
 1067 reproductive success depends on whether the species is a cooperative (olive dots show data and olive line  
 1068 with shading shows estimate from rethinking model) or a plural breeder (red dots show data and red line  
 1069 with shading shows estimate from rethinking model). In cooperative breeders, effect sizes increase with  
 1070 increasing group size as a single female continues to monopolize reproduction in the group, whereas effect  
 1071 sizes decrease with increasing group size as dominants can potentially no longer control other females in

1072 the group.

1073

---

1074 **Result 5.2.5: Average relatedness and cooperative breeding**

1075 Similarly, there appears to be an interaction between average relatedness and breeding systems (metafor  
1076 estimate for cooperative breeding lower -0.06 to upper +0.44, for average relatedness lower -0.75 to upper  
1077 +0.03, for interaction +0.10 - +1.51, n=288 effect sizes), with effect sizes increasing with higher levels of  
1078 average relatedness in cooperative breeders (rethinking estimate lower 0.00 to upper +0.12, n=36 effect  
1079 sizes) and decreasing with higher levels of average relatedness in plural/associate breeders (rethinking  
1080 estimate lower -0.06 to upper 0.00, n=252 effect sizes)

1081 **Result 5.2.6: Philopatry and cooperative breeding**

1082 Female dispersal is more common in cooperative breeders (46%) than in plural/associated breeders (9%).  
1083 Effect sizes are larger in species with female dispersal among the plural/associated breeders (rethinking  
1084 estimate lower -0.19 to upper -0.02, n=363 effect sizes), but not in cooperative breeders (rethinking estimate  
1085 lower -0.10 to upper +0.12, n=52 effect sizes) (metafor estimate for cooperative breeding lower +0.15 to  
1086 upper +0.49, for philopatry lower -0.18 to upper +0.06, for interaction -0.18 - +0.26). This suggests that  
1087 dominant females in cooperative breeders appear to maintain reproductive control independently of whether  
1088 they obtained their position by queuing in the group or entering the position through immigration.

1089 **Result 5.2.7: Coalition formation and cooperative breeding**

1090 Coalition formation does not occur in cooperative breeders, leading to a potential confound. Restricting the  
1091 analyses to plural/associated breeders, we found that effect sizes are higher in species in which females do  
1092 form coalitions than in species where they do not (metafor estimate lower 0.00 to upper +0.14, rethinking  
1093 estimate lower +0.01 to upper +0.11, n=374 effect sizes). This likely reflects the benefits of nepotism in  
1094 matrilineal groups. For our analysis, we did not differentiate between stabilizing coalitions, which usually  
1095 occur among kin to maintain matrilineal rank differences, and revolutionary coalitions, which usually occur  
1096 among unrelated individuals to limit the power of others in the group.

1097 **Result 5.3: Philopatry and average relatedness**

1098 Among plural/associated breeders, average relatedness is lower in species in which females disperse (mean  
1099  $r$  0.03, n=16) than in species in which females are philopatric (mean  $r$  0.10, n=228), and differences in effect  
1100 sizes are mainly associated with whether females disperse or are philopatric (higher effects when females  
1101 disperse than when they are philopatric, metafor estimate lower -0.11 to upper -0.03, rethinking estimate  
1102 lower -0.22 to upper -0.02) rather than levels of average relatedness (metafor estimate lower +0.03 to upper  
1103 +0.10, rethinking estimate lower -0.04 to upper +0.01, n=242 effect sizes).

1104

1105 *Prediction 5.4: Female philopatry [larger effect sizes predicted] might be associated with increased group  
1106 sizes [smaller effect sizes predicted], leading to an interaction that might influence the estimation of their  
1107 respective associations the effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success.*

1108 **Result 5.4: Philopatry and group size are both associated with variation effect sizes**

1109 Group sizes of species in which females disperse tend to be smaller than group sizes of species in which fe-  
1110 males are philopatric. Both philopatry and increasing group size independently lead to lower effect sizes, but  
1111 the association of philopatry is reduced compared to the single factor analysis (metafor estimate philopatry  
1112 lower -0.09 to upper -0.01 group size lower -0.07 to upper -0.01, rethinking estimate philopatry lower -0.16  
1113 to upper 0.00 group size lower -0.07 to upper -0.03, n=415 effect sizes).

1114

1115 *Prediction 5.5: Higher population density [predicted to lead to larger effect sizes] might be associated with*  
1116 *larger group sizes [smaller effect sizes predicted], leading to an interaction that might influence the estimation*  
1117 *of their respective associations with the effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success.*

1118 **Result 5.5: Population density and group size are both associated with variation in effect sizes**

1119 Population density and group size have independent influences on effect sizes, but both their associations  
1120 are smaller, suggesting their roles can cancel each other out (population density estimate metafor lower  
1121 0.00 to upper +0.01, rethinking lower 0.00 to upper +0.01; group size estimate metafor lower -0.03 to upper  
1122 0.01, n=346 effect sizes).

1123

1124 *Prediction 5.6: Smaller group sizes [larger effect sizes predicted] might be associated with more intense in-*  
1125 *tersexual conflict [smaller effect sizes predicted], leading to an interaction that might influence the estimation*  
1126 *of their respective associations with the effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success.*

1127 **Result 5.6: Group size and sex ratio are both associated with variation in effect sizes**

1128 Group size and sex ratio have independent influences on effect sizes, with similar association as observed  
1129 in the single factor analyses (group size estimate metafor lower -0.01 to upper 0.00, rethinking lower -0.07  
1130 to upper -0.02; sex ratio estimate metafor lower +0.53 to upper +1.18, rethinking lower +0.06 to upper +0.11;  
1131 n=346 effect sizes), while there is no support for an interaction between the two (interaction estimate metafor  
1132 lower -0.02 to upper +0.02, rethinking lower -0.03 to upper 0.04).

1133

1134 *Prediction 5.7: Monopolizable resources [larger effect sizes predicted] might be associated with reduced*  
1135 *population density [smaller effect sizes predicted]), leading to an interactive influence on the strength of the*  
1136 *effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success.*

1137 **Result 5.7: As in the individual analyses, population density but not diet is associated with differ-**  
1138 **ences in the effect sizes**

1139 Population density but not the diet category are associated with variation in the effect of dominance rank  
1140 on reproductive success (population density estimate metafor lower 0.00 to upper +0.01, rethinking lower  
1141 +0.05 to upper +0.11; diet category estimate metafor lower -0.31 to upper +0.21, rethinking lower -0.40 to  
1142 upper +0.69; n=346 effect sizes), while there is no support for an interaction between the two (interaction  
1143 estimate metafor lower -0.02 to upper +0.02, rethinking lower -0.03 to upper +0.04).

1144

1145 *Prediction 5.8: Environmental harshness [larger effect sizes predicted] might be associated with reduced*  
1146 *population density [smaller effect sizes predicted]), leading to an interactive influence on the strength of the*  
1147 *effect sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success.*

1148 **Result 5.8: Population density but not environmental harshness remains associated with variation**  
1149 **in effect sizes**

1150 Population density but not environmental harshness are associated with variation in the effect of dominance  
1151 rank on reproductive success (population density estimate metafor lower 0.00 to upper +0.01, rethinking  
1152 lower +0.04 to upper +0.11; environmental harshness estimate metafor lower -0.10 to upper +0.07, rethinking  
1153 lower -0.08 to upper +0.01; n=214 effect sizes), and there is no support for an interaction between the two  
1154 (interaction estimate metafor lower -0.001 to upper +0.001, rethinking lower -0.09 to upper +0.01).

1155

1156 *Prediction 5.9: Studies performed on wild versus captive individuals and using different measures of repro-*  
1157 *ductive success might not only differ in the overall strength of the effect of rank on reproductive success,*  
1158 *but also in how other variables influence this effect.*

1159 **Result 5.9: No different influences in captive and wild populations**

1160 Models in which both the intercept and the slopes can vary according to whether studies were performed in  
1161 the wild or in captivity also showed that there are no detectable differences of the effects of dominance rank  
1162 on reproductive success between populations in these settings (for the different life history measurements  
1163 and for cooperative breeding).

1164

1165

1166 **Summary of combined analyses**

1167 The analyses of combinations of predictors of the effect size of dominance on rank on reproductive success  
1168 indicate that many predictors may have a direct influence. Regarding the potential influence of the study  
1169 approach on inferences, we find that specific approaches are more common in some study systems, but that  
1170 using different approaches does not lead to different estimates of the effect size. We also find that average  
1171 relatedness might not directly mitigate effect sizes, but that it is a co-variate of the breeding system and  
1172 whether females are philopatric or disperse. In addition, we find that all cooperative breeders have large  
1173 effect sizes independent of further social variation, while differences in social factors such as group size and  
1174 coalition formation further mitigate effect sizes among plural breeders.

1175

**1176 Discussion**

1177 Our results provide support for three of our four pre-registered objectives. First, we find that in social mam-  
1178 mals, dominant females have higher reproductive success than lower-ranking females. While there appears  
1179 to be a publication bias in the dataset we put together, this bias is unlikely to be so strong as to negate the  
1180 overall positive effect of higher rank on reproductive success. Second, positive effects of dominance rank  
1181 are present across all life history measures and among plural breeders, where data for all measures of repro-  
1182 ductive success exist, are highest for life-time reproductive success. This suggests that even if dominants  
1183 might face some trade-offs (e.g. higher stress levels Cavigelli et al. (2003)), obtaining a high ranking position  
1184 in a social group generally leads to fitness benefits, though how females obtain these benefits (e.g. shorter  
1185 interbirth intervals versus larger offspring) differs between populations. Effects are particularly pronounced  
1186 in species in which females produce large numbers of offspring at once. Third, and against our predictions,  
1187 we did not find that ecological factors play a major role in mediating the benefits of rank on reproduction.  
1188 Fourth, the types of society females live in appear to have a particular modulating influence. Strong as-  
1189 sociations between dominance rank and reproductive success are consistently found among cooperative  
1190 breeders, they are intermediate in stable groups with small numbers of unrelated breeding females, and  
1191 lowest when large numbers of females associate.

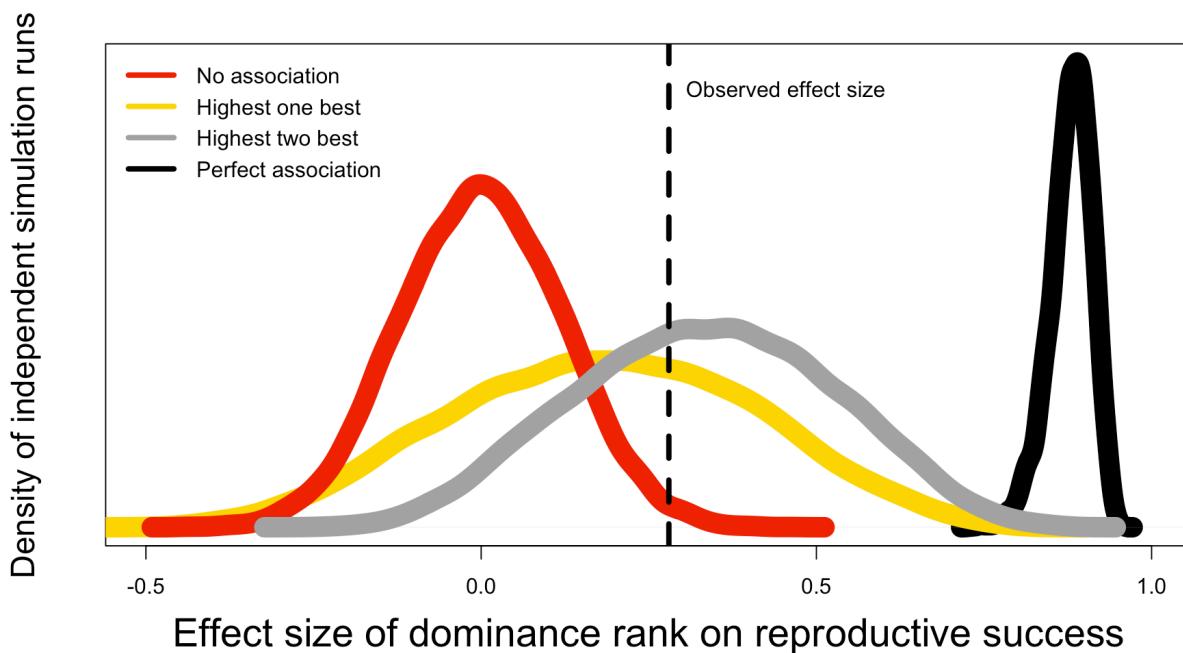
1192 Despite a consistently positive relationship between higher dominance rank and higher reproductive suc-  
1193 cess, the data show some biases, namely a combination of publication bias, study system bias, and study  
1194 time bias. Unlike often claimed for meta-analyses, the over-representation of positive findings in our case ap-  
1195 pears not to be primarily due to a file-drawer problem of unpublished negative findings but due to researchers  
1196 targeting their efforts on particular systems. Studies of the potential mechanisms of female competition and  
1197 reproductive suppression appear to have focused on societies where there are clear differences in rank and  
1198 in reproductive success between dominants and subordinates. Additional studies on (or publication of ex-  
1199 isting results from) societies in which hierarchies might not be as obvious could be revealing to understand  
1200 how generally selection shapes female competition. In addition, obtaining reliable reproductive success  
1201 data in long-lived mammals takes particular effort, again likely limiting the systems that have been studied  
1202 to investigate the effects of dominance rank. We did find that studies conducted for longer time periods, and  
1203 specifically for more than 10 years, show less variance in their estimates, potentially because they also have  
1204 larger sample sizes. Alternatively, or in addition, studies conducted across longer time frames might be less  
1205 likely to show extreme effect size estimates because natural changes in dominance rank and events that  
1206 affect all females equally (e.g. droughts or infanticide Cheney et al. (2004)) occur relatively regularly across  
1207 a multi-year study, while estimates derived over short time frames may over-estimate effect sizes. For future  
1208 studies, detailed long-term investigations are not only relevant to understand the long-term consequences  
1209 of the effect of dominance rank on reproduction, but also to infer the multiple mechanisms that can link rank  
1210 to reproductive output (e.g. Fedigan (1983), Pusey, Williams, and Goodall (1997), Tibbetts, Pardo-Sanchez,  
1211 and Weise (2022)). Tracing such differences in reproductive success over multiple generations will also be  
1212 important to determine the selection processes shaping social evolution.

1213 Overall, we estimated an average effect of 0.28 of rank on reproductive success. What does this mean?  
1214 First, it is important to highlight that this effect size reflects how well rank predicts reproductive success, but  
1215 the effect size does not directly indicate how different the reproductive success of high-ranking females is

1216 from that of low-ranking females. While the effect of dominance has to be zero in groups where all females  
1217 have exactly the same reproductive success, an effect of zero is also found in a group where there are  
1218 large differences in reproductive success across females which do not align with the females' dominance  
1219 rank. Just by chance, we would expect differences in reproductive success among females in a social group  
1220 and these differences could be associated with traits that might be used to classify social rank. To assess  
1221 whether the effects we detect are higher than such random variation, we performed simulations. For this,  
1222 we simulated artificial groups of female macaques, the genus most common in our sample. We assumed  
1223 that each female in each group might have an average of 2 offspring, following a Poisson distribution, so  
1224 most females have 1 or 2 offspring and very few more than 8 offspring. We performed 10,000 simulations  
1225 of six groups of twelve females each (the median group size in our data). When we set no association  
1226 between rank and reproductive success, less than 0.1% of simulations showed an effect size as high or  
1227 higher than the 0.28 we observe in the data (Figure 11). Effect sizes for a perfect association between each  
1228 female's rank and her reproductive success ranged between 0.75-0.95 (mean 0.88), lower than 1 because  
1229 some females of different rank will have the same number of offspring. Simulations in which the two highest  
1230 ranking females always have the highest reproductive success, while rank among lower ranking females is  
1231 no longer associated with success, produces effect sizes close to what we observe (mean 0.32), whereas  
1232 values tend to be slightly lower if only the highest ranking female consistently has the highest success (mean  
1233 0.18). These simulations cannot resolve whether there is generally phenotypic selection to gain high rank  
1234 (Huchard et al. (2016)), or whether high ranking females have higher reproductive success because they  
1235 obtained this position by chance (Snyder and Ellner (2018)), or whether there are some traits that lead to  
1236 both higher rank and higher reproductive success (Fedigan (1983)). However, the value of the overall effect  
1237 size we observe compared to those under random expectations indicates that social rank has a particular  
1238 association with reproductive success beyond the random variation we expect in social groups.

1239

---



1240  
1241 **Figure 11.** The average effect size of dominance rank on female reproductive success we observe in our  
1242 sample (0.28; dotted vertical line) is in between the effect sizes expected for social groups in which there is  
1243 either no (grey line) or a perfect association (black line) between each rank and the reproductive success  
1244 of females. The observed value is close to a situation in which the two highest ranking females (red line) or  
1245 only the highest ranking female (yellow line) always have the highest success in a group of twelve females.  
1246 Lines represent the densities of 10,000 simulated samples showing the respective effect size for each of  
1247 the four associations (dots inside lines show quartiles).

1248  
1249 Among the social traits we investigated, the highest difference in the effect of rank on reproductive success  
1250 was between cooperative breeders and plural/associated breeders. This result was expected given the  
1251 higher reproductive skew that has been found among females in cooperative breeders (Lukas and Clutton-  
1252 Brock (2012)). The contrast between breeding systems appears due to the degree of reproductive control  
1253 that dominants in cooperative breeders have. Our results also show that other social factors, in particular the  
1254 number of females in the group and their relatedness, influence effect sizes in opposite directions in cooper-  
1255 ative breeders than in plural breeders. The observation that in cooperative breeders reproductive success  
1256 is shared less even though females are more related and a larger number of competitors is present is in  
1257 line with theoretical predictions that complete monopolization of reproduction can be stable if subordinates  
1258 are queuing to inherit the dominant position themselves (Kokko and Johnstone (1999)). The likely impor-  
1259 tance of reproductive control of dominant females in cooperative breeders compared to plural/associated  
1260 breeders is also reflected in the effect of group size on the benefits of dominance in the different breeding  
1261 systems. Similar to what has also been found in eusocial insects (Rubenstein, Botero, and Lacey (2016))  
1262 and cooperatively breeding birds (Riehl (2017)), among cooperatively breeding mammals there usually is  
1263 a single breeding dominant female and large groups occur when her reproductive output is high without

1264 loss of reproductive control. In contrast, among plural/associated breeding mammals groups grow large as  
1265 more females/matriline join a group leading to reduced reproductive control of dominants. In this context,  
1266 it is important to again bear in mind that we only look at the association between rank and the variation  
1267 in reproductive success within groups. In cooperative breeders, increases in group size might reduce the  
1268 reproductive output of dominant females even if they still monopolize reproduction (T. H. Clutton-Brock et al.  
1269 (2010)). In plural breeders, even though the relative difference between dominant and subordinate females  
1270 might be lower in larger groups, in terms of overall fitness it might still be better to be dominant in a group of  
1271 the optimal size than in a smaller group (e.g. small group where dominant has 3 versus subordinate has 2  
1272 offspring, i.e. 50% higher fitness, compared to a group where dominant has 4 while all other females have  
1273 3 offspring, i.e. 33% higher fitness).

1274 Among plural and associated breeders, effects of dominance rank on female reproductive success are higher  
1275 when (i) females disperse, (ii) groups are smaller, and (iii) females form coalitions. These observations are  
1276 somewhat opposite to the processes presumably linked to reproductive suppression in cooperative breeders.  
1277 In addition, these findings also do not support accounts that focus on nepotism as a primary factor in leading  
1278 to social groups with large differences among females. It appears that in situations of strong nepotism  
1279 females in a group might have more similar reproductive success, with patterns such as youngest sister  
1280 ascendancy potentially reducing differences among kin (Datta (1988), Bergstrom and Fedigan (2010), Lea  
1281 et al. (2014)), as predicted when offspring production is costly (Cant and Johnstone (1999)). In species with  
1282 high nepotism, differences might be predominantly among matrilines (Holekamp et al. (2012)) rather than  
1283 among individuals, which our study focused on. In our sample we observe relatively strong effects of high  
1284 dominance rank in plural breeders when females form social bonds with unfamiliar/unrelated individuals they  
1285 encounter when joining new breeding units upon reaching maturity (e.g. Cameron, Setsaas, and Linklater  
1286 (2009)), such as among equids and gorillas. Groups in which females compete with and form complex  
1287 bonds with unrelated females tend to be characterized by high relationship complexity (Lukas and Clutton-  
1288 Brock (2018)). Rates of aggression tend to be high and dominance relationships are often based on age  
1289 differences (Rutberg and Greenberg (1990)) with rare changes in the hierarchy, such that females who  
1290 obtain high ranking positions in these units are likely to gain fitness benefits for extended periods of time.  
1291 Overall though, effect sizes can be high independent of how females acquire and maintain rank, as also  
1292 highlighted by the similarity in effect sizes across macaque species with different dominance styles. It thus  
1293 sounds as if social inequality, regardless of its sources and forms, has broadly similar consequences on the  
1294 variance of reproductive success.

1295 Of the ecological variables we investigated, only population density was associated with differences in effect  
1296 sizes of dominance rank on reproductive success, again supporting the role of social interactions in shaping  
1297 fitness outcomes of dominance interactions. The observation that other ecological factors do not mitigate  
1298 the strength of the fitness benefit dominant females receive might suggest that dominants are consistently  
1299 able to outcompete other females in the group rather than dominance only being important under challeng-  
1300 ing conditions. While local ecological conditions, rather than the coarse species-level traits we used here,  
1301 might modulate fitness benefits of high dominance rank for females, it seems unlikely that there would be a  
1302 strong directional influence given that effect sizes from the same species tend to be similar, even in captive  
1303 conditions. In line with this, previous work has shown that subordinate females may not always be the first  
1304 to suffer under limiting conditions (Fedigan (1983)). Instead, a number of ecological challenges, such as

1305 for example predation or drought (Cheney et al. (2004)), particularly affect pregnant or lactating females.  
1306 Accordingly, these costs are mainly carried by those females that have high reproductive output, thereby  
1307 reducing variance in reproductive success and diminishing the relative benefits dominant females acquire  
1308 (Altmann and Alberts (2003)).

1309 The overall effect size of dominance rank on female reproductive success across the species in our sample  
1310 is slightly higher than that reported in a previous study, though we find a similar value when we restrict our  
1311 sample to primate species, the focus of the previous study (the average in our sample is 0.28 across all  
1312 species, and 0.23 across primates only, versus 0.20 in a previous report for primates Majolo et al. (2012)).  
1313 These estimates of the effects of female dominance rank are lower than those previously reported for males.  
1314 The previous study on primates reports an effect of male dominance rank on fecundity of 0.71 (Majolo et  
1315 al. (2012)), and estimates in a different study of the effect of dominance rank on males' mating success are  
1316 ~0.6 (Cowlishaw and Dunbar (1991)). Do these different estimates reflect that males benefit more from high  
1317 dominance rank than females? We think that we cannot make such an inference at this stage. Measures  
1318 of mating success might not necessarily translate in equally high skew in reproductive success (Fedigan  
1319 (1983)). Studies measuring male reproductive success also tend to cover even shorter time periods than the  
1320 studies that identify female reproductive success; when sampled over similar time frame, in particular when  
1321 sampled across the whole lifespan, the variances in reproductive success of males and females appear more  
1322 similar (Lukas and Clutton-Brock (2014)). This is partly because mammalian males often move between  
1323 groups, thus are only sampled for a subset of their reproductive career. Several factors identified here as  
1324 modulating the effect of dominance rank on reproductive success may also be linked to differences between  
1325 females and males. For example, the benefits of dominance may be mostly reproductive in males, while  
1326 they may affect both reproduction and survival in females, again potentially leading to more similar values  
1327 when measured across the whole lifespan. It could be expected that sex differences in the benefits of  
1328 dominance on lifetime reproductive success are largely modulated by the mating system, where males may  
1329 benefit more than females in polygynous species, but not in promiscuous or monogamous ones. Overall,  
1330 the benefits of rank differ qualitatively and quantitatively between males and females and only additional  
1331 symmetrical meta-analyses in males can answer such a question.

1332 Our findings highlight that social factors can have important influences on demography and genetic evolution  
1333 by leading to systematic differences in reproductive success. The effect of high dominance rank on  
1334 reproductive success influences the growth and composition of social groups across generations. In particu-  
1335 lar when social rank is heritable, long-term changes are visible in the few studies which have been able to  
1336 track reproductive success across multiple generations. For example, among spotted hyenas, the highest  
1337 ranking female in 1979 is the ancestor of more than half of the females in the clan in 2009 (Holekamp et al.  
1338 (2012)). This perspective also nicely highlights how small differences in reproductive success can add up  
1339 over long time frames. While in the case of this hyena clan the highest ranking female gained the benefits,  
1340 chance variation might also reduce such differences. For most populations, the effect sizes we reported  
1341 are far from perfect such that dominants do not consistently have the highest reproductive success. Luck  
1342 might also play a large role (Snyder and Ellner (2018)), in particular during extreme conditions where only  
1343 few females might survive or reproduce (Lewontin and Cohen (1969)).

1344 Our focus in this study was on the consequences of competition among females within groups, highlighting

1345 that some females (the subordinates) have a reduced fitness. It is important to bear in mind that such  
1346 an approach overlooks selection that operates on competition between groups, which may be substantial  
1347 in cooperative breeders where a single female mothers all offspring in a group, such that only one of her  
1348 daughters can inherit the highest rank. Accordingly, living in social groups might not necessarily maximize  
1349 fitness differences among females compared to a situation where they would all be solitary. Instead, the  
1350 fitness benefits of social life may outweigh its costs for most females, such that even subordinates have a  
1351 higher relative fitness when group-living compared to living alone. Nevertheless, our findings clearly show  
1352 that these benefits are unequally shared, and that this is true across environmental conditions. They draw  
1353 a complex landscape of the level of social inequality across mammalian societies, where the benefits of  
1354 social dominance are modulated by aspects of life-history, demography and sociality that affect the form  
1355 and intensity of reproductive and social competition, more than by ecological competition.

1356 **Ethics**

1357 Our study relies on previously published data and did not involve working directly with animals.

1358 **Author contributions**

1359 **Shivani:** Hypothesis development, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, revising/editing.

1360 **Huchard:** Hypothesis development, data analysis and interpretation, write up, revising/editing.

1361 **Lukas:** Hypothesis development, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, write up, revising/editing,  
1362 materials/funding.

1363 **Data and code availability**

1364 The dataset has been published at KNB doi:10.5063/F1PZ578P. The code of the current version is archived  
1365 at Edmond doi:10.17617/3.80

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1370 **Conflict of interest disclosure**

1371 We, the authors, declare that we have no financial conflicts of interest with the content of this article. Elise  
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1373

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1380

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