

Mom, dad, meet my mate: An evolutionary perspective on the introduction of parents and mates

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ABSTRACT: *Many studies focus on the role of parents in the selection of mates, with most showing that parents have influence, albeit variable, in this process. Within Western societies, individuals often present a potential mate to their parents. This meeting represents a turning point, signifying that one is serious about the potential mate becoming a long-term, committed partner. Although this introduction of parents and possible mate is important, there has been no prior investigation into its timing, or specific reasons (other than signifying commitment) why an individual would want to orchestrate the meeting. Using an evolutionary psychology framework, we hypothesized that individuals are motivated to bring home their mates in order to seek parental feedback and approval, as well as indicate to their mate that they are serious about the relationship. We also hypothesized individuals want to meet their new partner's parents for insight into how their potential mate will look when older, their future health, and potential familial resources that will be available. Our findings generally supported our predictions. We also examined the influence of attachment style and birth order on the timing of the introduction, but found minimal influence for these factors.*

KEYWORDS: family dynamics, sex differences, inclusive fitness, birth order, attachment

The idea that parents have a significant influence on their children's lives is not a new one, despite recent claims for the greater importance of peers in shaping adolescent behavior (Harris, 1998, 2006). There is no ignoring the fact that parental investment and care is, and always has been, essential to survival. Beyond the basics of food and shelter, children also benefit in terms of the development of social skills and talents (e.g., language and music lessons, sports) that are fostered by parental encouragement and resources. Parents are highly invested in the welfare of their children. This parental investment is essential, but typically coupled with parents' limited resources, including the amount of time, energy, food, and material goods they can allocate toward one child. Thus, individual children are also invested in keeping their parents' attention and approval, despite the conflicts that can arise over the allocation of parental time and resources. Such conflicts tend to increase when there are several siblings close in age (Salmon, 2007). Conflict with parents is not only about how time, attention,

or other resources are allocated between siblings, because as children mature, conflict can also arise over the appropriate choice of a mate (Apostolou, 2008a, 2010; Buunk, Park, & Duncan, 2010).

Given the potential importance of the bond between parents and their children (particularly in terms of support, both emotional and financial), the introduction of a boyfriend or girlfriend to one's parents presumably represents a major milestone in one's romantic relationship. The meeting can serve as a public signal that the relationship is significant, and that the boyfriend or girlfriend is being considered as a potential long-term mate. It may also be an avenue to obtain useful parental feedback on one's choice of mate. For the boyfriend or girlfriend, it is a way to gather information about the mate and the mate's family. Due to the fact that this event can be momentous, it can be stressful for all the individuals involved. The parents might want to ensure that they are responsive in a helpful but honest manner, for example, while the boyfriend or girlfriend might be nervous about creating a good impression. For the individual who is orchestrating the meeting it could also be stressful, as the boyfriend or girlfriend is being considered for inclusion in the family, and thus, parental acceptance might be quite influential.

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There are noteworthy cultural differences in the weight parents have in selecting or approving one's mate (Buunk et al., 2010). In many cultures, parental influence is particularly strong for daughters compared to sons. For example, among the Kipsigis, a pastoral group in Kenya, parents select mates for their daughters, though the daughters' preferences often play a valuable role in their approval (Borgerhoff Mulder, 1988, 1990). Along similar lines, based on a sample of Hawaiian married couples, Jedlicka (1984) found that mothers had significantly greater influence than fathers, especially on daughters versus son's mate selection.

In numerous contemporary and historic cultures, marriages are arranged by parents, but even in societies where individuals are presumed to make their own choice of mates, parents still exert considerable influence (Broude & Greene, 1983; Sprecher & Felmler, 1992). As Buunk et al. (2010) review, anthropologists have long documented that in the majority of societies, arranged marriages have been prevalent and based on the needs of the family, rather than of the individuals involved. Buunk and colleagues reported that the effect is particularly strong for collectivistic cultures. Similarly, Faulkner and Schaller (2007) explored how people attend to the romantic relationship of others, especially kin. They found that people maintain higher levels of vigilance among close kin, as mediated by emotional closeness and perceptions of physical similarity. Moreover, women are more vigilant about their kins' relationships, while everyone tends to be more vigilant over female kin than male kin. They also found that everyone is more vigilant with respect to long-term committed relationships than casual, short-term relationships.

A number of researchers have pointed out that parents and their children often come into conflict over mate choices. Both parents and offspring (i.e., children of a reproductive age) have evolved mechanisms that allow them to select mates that will increase their inclusive fitness. That is, in evolutionary terms, people who choose mates who will enable them to leave the maximum number of genetic descendants, including those who are not biological offspring, have an

advantage, and much of our behavior indicates that we evolved such a mechanism (Oli, 2003). However, just as parents and offspring may have conflicting views of the ideal allocation of parents' resources among siblings (Salmon, 2005, 2007; Trivers, 1974), they may also come into conflict over which traits are most desirable in the offspring's mate. In a series of studies, Apostolou has demonstrated that offspring value the attractiveness of their mates more than parents value the attractiveness of their in-laws (Apostolou, 2008a), that a good family background is more valued in an in-law than a spouse (Apostolou, 2008b), and that individuals prefer their daughters to marry at an earlier age than their sons, but to start sexual relationships at a later age than their sons (Apostolou, 2010). Clearly, parents and children may disagree about the optimal timing and choice of a sexual partner.

The above studies, as well as the current study, focus on the relatively direct input of parents on mate choice. However, it is useful to note evidence of indirect influence, too. For example, it has been proposed that mate preferences are the result of imprinting on parents' genotypes. In one study, participants correctly matched, at a higher rate than chance, facial photographs of men's wives with the men's mothers (Bereczkei, Gyuris, Kovacs, & Bernath, 2002). Furthermore, they found men who had been rejected by their mothers during childhood were less likely to select a mate with a face that resembled their mother's face.

In Western societies, the act of choosing a potential mate is often left to the individual. Therefore, the first meeting between one's mate and parents is a chance for 'one's choice' to be evaluated. As reviewed, in some instances individuals have limited freedom in selecting a mate, as parents might attempt to influence one's choice (e.g., Driskoll, David, & Lipetz, 1972), or past experiences may have left an indelible mark (e.g., imprinting; Bereczkei et al., 2002). A further point of consideration is that individuals do not typically bring a boyfriend or girlfriend home to meet their parents unless they are considering the possibility of this person as a long-term mate. People tend to be more discriminating when considering someone for a long-term relationship

than a casual relationship (e.g., Buunk, Dijkstra, Fetchenhauer, & Kenrick, 2002). Thus, when someone brings a mate home to meet the parents, it may be reasonably assumed that they are bringing home a mate they have carefully selected.

Although the introduction of parents to mates has potentially important consequences, the literature is scant on the reasons why such an interaction may occur, the timing of it, or the social scripts for the meeting. This dearth of information is particularly noticeable when one considers the preponderance of literature pertaining to mate choice. It is also noticeable because, especially in pre-industrial societies which may serve as a model of human's ancestral conditions, mating is often influenced by close kin.

Grandparents may also invest greatly in their grandchildren, whether it be in terms of emotional or financial support and resources. Thus, as a consequence of women's high level of parental investment in children, and the potential benefits offered through grandparental support, we hypothesize that women will want to meet a mate's parents more than men to gain information about the possible degree of paternal grandparental investment, as well as information about the future health of their partner. Women generally invest far more in their children than men (although compared to other mammalian species, human males often invest a substantial amount, e.g., Clutton-Brock, 1989). Women also have far more severe limitations on the number of children they can parent. Therefore, women should be highly selective about the quality of their mates, and seek mates who will be willing and able to invest their time, energy and resources in any resulting children. A preference for culturally successful marriage partners is, in fact, found throughout the world, at least in societies in which material resources can be accumulated or where men provide a high-quality but perishable resource, such as meat obtained through hunting (Buss, 1996; Irons, 1983; Symons, 1979). A woman's decision to stay married or not is also influenced by the quantity and quality of resources provided by her husband (Betzig, 1989; Buckle, Gallup, & Rodd, 1996; Campbell, 2002). In the most extensive cross-cultural study of the

pattern of marital dissolution ever conducted, Betzig found that 'inadequate support is reported as cause for divorce in 21 societies and ascribed exclusively to the husband in all but one unspecified case' (Betzig, 1989, p. 664). A man's willingness to bring a mate to meet his parents may be an indicator of his willingness to commit to the relationship and a possible advertisement of resource availability.

We also hypothesize that men will generally wait longer than women to introduce their mate to their parents. Although personality characteristics and parenting abilities are important, men also tend to value physical attractiveness in long-term mates and place more importance on it than women (Buss, 1989; Symons, 1979). Moreover, female mate value is closely tied to fertility, which is linked to youth and various physical attributes (Singh, 1993; Thornhill & Grammer, 1999). Therefore, female mate value is readily observable and so men may be less likely to need parental feedback on this issue. If this is true, then men are more likely to bring a partner home only when they are ready to commit, as it will be seen as a signal of their interest in forming a long-term stable relationship by both the partner and parents.

We also predict that individuals who were first-born children will be more likely to wait to bring home a partner to their parents. Firstborns are very invested in maintaining high levels of parental approval and their privileged place in the sibling hierarchy (Salmon & Daly, 1998; Sulloway, 1996), so we predict they will delay until they are absolutely certain about their mate selection to help ensure that their parents will see them in a favorable light.

Attachment style is also a noteworthy issue to address. Chisholm (1996) argued that attachment is a facultative adaptation to one's environment when growing up, with respect to the level of uncertainty. We hypothesize those who are securely attached (i.e., had heavily invested parents and developed in a low-risk environment) would introduce potential mates to their parents early in the relationship because they are secure in the parents' and mate's affection. We also expect that those who are insecurely attached and anxious (i.e., preoccupied, had parents with an

inability to invest) would seek an early introduction as a way of pleasing their parents and to gain approval from a mate.

METHODS

Participants

There were two groups of participants, both of which were convenience samples of university undergraduates who received a small course credit for their effort. One sample was from a small private university in California, composed of 41 men (age in years, $M = 18.63$, $SD = 0.83$) and 63 women (age $M = 18.56$, $SD = 0.78$), of whom 33% were first born, 23% were middle born, 34% were last born, and 12% were only children. The other sample was from a comparably sized public university in Nova Scotia, Canada. There were 26 men (age $M = 20.81$, $SD = 1.72$) and 69 women (age $M = 20.29$, $SD = 1.87$). With respect to birth order, 23% were first born, 24% were middle born, 44% were last born, and 9% were only children. Data from both sites were analyzed together, as there were no systematic differences between the sites.

Measures and procedures

Participants completed three paper-and-pencil surveys, and the surveys were presented in the same order using an identical format for each of the two samples. First, they completed a short demographics survey, which included the Likert-type question, 'How emotionally close are you to your mother' and similarly, 'to your father' with 1 = extremely close and 7 = extremely distant. It also contained an item that asked, 'How much do you rely upon the financial assistance of your parent(s)? Are you financially dependent or independent? (1 = extremely dependent, 7 = extremely independent)'.

These questions were followed by a survey that outlined the introduction of parents to mates. On this survey, participants were asked whether they have ever wanted a boyfriend or girlfriend to meet their parents, and if so, why. The three reasons we supplied were: 'to see if parents like him/her', 'see how mate reacts to parents', and 'it signals to your mate that you're serious about him/her'. Participants were to check any item that applied

to them. Then they were asked, 'Please think of three *other* reasons for why you would want your mate to meet your parents. If this does not apply to you, imagine three reasons'. Following this, we asked participants to think of three reasons why they would *not* want their mate to meet their parents.

Participants responded whether they have ever wanted to meet a boyfriend's or girlfriend's parents, and if so, to select any of the following that applied: 'to see how mate might look (e.g., how attractive) in future', 'see how mate's personality might be in the future', 'get an idea of mate's potential treatment of your children', 'see what mate's health might be like in the future', 'see what resources might be available to my kids from their grandparents', and 'see what sort of past my mate would have had so I better understand him/her today'. Then they were asked, 'Please think of three *other* reasons for why you would want to meet your mate's parents. If this does not apply to you, imagine three reasons'. They were asked, using a 1 (extremely unimportant) to 7 (extremely important) Likert-type scale, 'How important is it to you that your parent(s) like your boy/girlfriend?' and 'How important is it to you that your boy/girlfriend's parent(s) like you?'

Last, participants completed an attachment survey. We used the scale developed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), which describes four different styles of attachment based on the self and other. Participants select the one that best describes themselves, as well as completing Likert-type rating (1 = not at all like me, to 7 = very much like me) for each of the four descriptions (securely attached, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissive).

RESULTS

Reasons for introducing parents to mates

When asked, 'Have you ever wanted your boy/girlfriend to meet your parents', 126 (91%) women and 51 (76%) men replied in the affirmative, which is a significant sex difference, $X^2(1, N = 205) = 8.82, p = 0.003$ (unless otherwise stated, all chi-squares are tests of independence, two-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$). The top reasons for wanting a mate to meet one's parents were similar for

men and women, except 'solidify relationship', $X^2(1, N = 187) = 3.96, p = 0.047$ (see Table 1).

The top reasons participants provided for not wanting a mate to meet their parents were similar for men and women (see Table 2). The only item to reveal a significant sex difference was that the 'parents might disapprove', $X^2(1, N = 193) = 5.84, p = 0.016$.

Reasons mates wanted to be introduced to parents

There were also minimal sex differences for the reasons individuals wanted to meet their mate's parents (see Table 3). However, there was a significant sex difference for the item 'to better understand mate', $X^2(1, N = 205) = 5.53, p = 0.019$, and for the item pertaining to future health, $X^2(1, N = 205) = 4.22, p = 0.04$. Participants were

asked to nominate reasons to not want to meet a mate's parents. There were three primary reasons: Fear that the mate's parents would disapprove of the participant (62% of men, 64% of women, $X^2(1, 205) = 0.13, p = \text{ns}$), the participant was not ready (13% of men, 30% of women; $X^2(1, 205) = 6.98, p = 0.008$), and the parents could be a threat to the relationship (22% of men, 18% of women; $X^2(1, 204) = 0.49, p = \text{ns}$).

Duration in delay of introducing parents to mates

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) model was created to examine sex differences in how long individuals wait before having a mate meet their parents. Age was included as a covariate because we expected that younger individuals would be less independent, and hence, less likely to wait. For similar reasons, we included a covariate of financial dependence. There was no significant sex difference, $F(1,194) = 0.49, p = \text{ns}$. However, age was a significant covariate, $F(1,194) = 14.006, p < 0.000$, as was financial dependence, $F(1, 194) = 6.03, p = 0.015$. Younger and financially dependent participants waited less time before introducing their mates to their parents. For the purposes of exploration, we created another ANOVA model with the additional covariates of emotional closeness to one's mother and emotional closeness to one's father. These covariates were not significant and did not impact on the findings.

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO WANTED PARENTS TO MEET MATE BY REASON

Item	Men	Women	Chi-square
See if parents like him/her	79	86	1.17
See how they react to parents	55	67	2.67
Signals to mate that you're serious	61	53	1.30
Obtain parental approval	51	54	0.14
Solidify relationship	51	35	*3.96
Signal commitment to others	21	21	0.002
See where I come from	21	15	1.11

Percentage are approximate due to rounding; *signifies $p < 0.05$.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO DID NOT WANT PARENTS TO MEET MATE BY REASON

Item	Men	Women	Chi-square
Parents might disapprove	61	78	5.84*
Not serious/not want it to be	25	29	0.29
Discourage mate/threaten relationship	28	26	0.07
Embarrassment	28	25	0.33

Percentage are approximate due to rounding; *signifies $p < 0.05$.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN WANTING TO MEET A MATE'S PARENTS BY REASON

Item	Men	Women	Chi-square
To better understand mate	67	82	5.53*
Get idea of how mate will treat kids	39	50	2.27
See mate's future personality	38	46	1.31
See how mate might look in future	37	25	3.11
Get an idea of mate's future health	34	21	4.22*
Determine grandparental support/resources	21	28	0.027

Percentage are approximate due to rounding; *signifies $p < 0.05$.

Then, we created an ANOVA for the independent variables of participant sex and of attachment style to determine the latter's influence on time in waiting for the introduction, again with the covariates of age and financial dependence. Attachment style was not significant, $F(3,183) = 1.03$, $p = ns$. Age was again a significant covariate, $F(1,183) = 14.59$, $p < 0.000$, as was financial dependence $F(1,183) = 5.51$, $p = 0.020$. We performed Pearson's correlations for ratings for each attachment style with waiting time, but there were no significant results. We next conducted independent samples t -tests to examine attachment style with regards to participant sex. The only significant sex difference to emerge was women ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.95$) were higher in ratings of fearful attachment than men ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.00$), $t(160) = 2.55$, $p = 0.01$.

Univariate ANOVAs for birth order (first, middle, last born or only child) and attachment style showed that preoccupied attachment significantly varied by birth order, $F(3,159) = 3.73$, $p = 0.01$. Only children had the highest ratings ($N = 17$, $M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.66$), followed by last born ($N = 62$, $M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.75$), middle born ($N = 36$, $M = 3.08$, $SD = 2.01$) and first born ($N = 45$, $M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.73$). An ANOVA to explore time in waiting to meet for birth order and sex of participant with the covariates of age and financial dependence was not significant for the primary variables of interest (birth order $F(3,193) = 0.61$, $p = ns$, participant sex $F(1,193) = 1.11$, $p = ns$), but age remained significant $F(1,193) = 13.39$, $p < 0.000$, as did financial dependence $F(1,193) = 4.05$, $p = 0.05$. For exploration, regrouping birth order such that first and only children were considered together as compared a group of middle and last borns remained non-significant, $t(193) = 1.89$, $p = 0.06$, although the first group tended to take longer ($M = 17.99$, $SD = 37.62$ in weeks) than the second group ($M = 10.91$, $SD = 13.03$).

There were no significant sex differences in self-rated emotional closeness to one's mother, independent samples $t(202) = 1.57$, $p = ns$, or to one's father, $t(199) = 0.57$, $p = ns$. However, participants were emotionally closer to their mothers ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.18$) than their fathers ($M = 2.91$,

$SD = 1.70$), paired-samples $t(200) = 5.998$, $p < 0.000$. There was also no significant sex difference in level of financial dependency, $t(202) = 1.78$, $p = ns$. Lastly, for the purposes of exploration, we also investigated whether the participant lived with their mother or not. Men who did not live with their mother, and who had an insecure, preoccupied attachment style reported that it was more important to them that their parent(s) liked their mate, Pearson's correlation $r(14) = 0.70$, $p = 0.006$. This effect was not found for women.

DISCUSSION

Our results clearly indicate that people view the introduction of their mate to their parents as an important step, particularly when they see the relationship as one that is long-term. As Table 1 indicates, over half of the participants use this introduction as a way to gauge how parents accept the mate, how the mate deals with the parents, and to indicate that it is a serious relationship. Our study is also congruent with the existing literature that indicates parental influence on mate choice is more apparent for women than for men.

We hypothesized that women, more than men, would want to meet a mate's parents to gain information about the possible degree of paternal grandparental investment, as well as information about the future health of their partner. We found evidence to support this hypothesis, as significantly more women have wanted a mate to meet their parents. However, of the various reasons why, the only one to reveal a significant sex difference was that men want to have the meeting in order to solidify the relationship. Likewise, when asked why they would not want a mate to meet their parents, there were minimal sex differences but women were more likely to express concerns that their parents would not approve. Together, these results indicate that women are more likely than men to want such a meeting to occur, but that men view it as a step to solidify the relationships, while women might see it as an opportunity to gain parental approval.

Indeed, the importance of parental approval is also clear when participants were asked to

nominate reasons they would not want to meet a mate's parents. Women were more concerned than men that they were not ready for this important step. Women may view their own parents as being highly influential on their mate choice, and due to this importance, view meeting their mate's parents as a very critical step in the relationship. They may extend this perspective and perceive that a mate will be shaped and influenced by his parents, and hence, to meet a mate's parents is a way to gain better understanding of him. Further support for this idea stems from our findings on why one would not want a mate to meet their parents. Significantly more women expressed concern that their parents might disapprove of their mate, which highlights the importance of parents' approval on women's mate choice.

The hypothesis the women would want to investigate indicators of grandparental resources and determine a mate's health was not supported. In fact, significantly more men than women reported that they would want to do so to gain insight into the future health of their mate. Similarly, wanting to know how a mate might look in the future was also close to significance at $p = 0.059$, in favor of men. Together, these findings suggest that men view meeting their mate's parents as a window into the future reproductive health of their mate. At the same time, though, women want to meet their mate's parents to enable them to better understand their mate, which again points to the important role of parents on women's own mating relationships, and the fact that they might presume men are similarly shaped by their parents.

We further hypothesized that men would wait longer than women to introduce their mate to their parents, as they can independently assess mate value based on women's physicality. However, there was no significant sex difference in timing the introduction of a mate to one's parents. Indeed, the only participant characteristics that significantly influenced the timing was age and financial dependence, such that younger and financially dependent participants waited less time before introducing their mates to their parents.

We did not support our prediction that those who are securely attached would introduce their mates to their parents early in the relationship because they are secure in the parents' and mate's affection, and that those who are insecurely attached and preoccupied would seek an earlier introduction as a way of pleasing their parents and to gain approval from a mate. We also explored birth order, and it does not appear to affect timing of the introduction, either. We did unexpectedly find that birth order varied with preoccupied attachment such that only children were the highest on this style and first born were the least. By point of comparison, Buunk (1997) found no difference between birth order and attachment style. However, there were some methodological discrepancies; for example, Buunk compared first to laterborns, which can miss out on important differences between middle and lastborns, while we looked at only, first, middle, and lastborn as distinct groups. In addition, Buunk also used Hazen and Shaver's (1987) three categories of attachment style measure (avoidant, anxious-ambivalent, secure) while we used a four categories measure (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), which may also have played a role in our slightly different results. Preoccupied attachment is characterized by an intense focus on relationships and a dependence on others for self-esteem. Only children might have scored higher than other birth orders due to a lack of early relationship skills practice. It may also be the case that preoccupied individuals experience more frequent separation anxiety, which might be more common in onlies who have spent many years as the sole focus of parental investment and can become too reliant on it.

The fact that young age and financial dependence potentially cause individuals to have an earlier introduction of mates to parents is interesting. We included these two factors as covariates, with the prediction that they would influence the timing of the meeting. If one is young, parents might still govern considerable control and influence, thereby expecting that they will meet whomever their

child is dating. Likewise, if one is financially dependent (which may include living in their parent's home), the parents might expect to meet their child's mate fairly early in their relationship. Thus, the meeting will occur, although it might not signal the same level of seriousness that it would among older or more independent individuals. As well, younger and financially dependent individuals may live closer to their parents, which makes the introduction more convenient and expected. That is, if individuals live close to their parents and visit them frequently, it may be more natural to introduce a potential mate, even if it is not someone who is being considered for marriage. In contrast, if one has to endure a long trip and potentially incur a financial cost, then the meeting might be seen as more important and represent that the mate is being considered very carefully for a long-term relationship.

Although this study represents a necessary first step into a new research area, there remain several issues to be addressed. In this study, we asked participants who felt that a question did not apply (e.g., such as being asked to think of reasons for why they would want a mate to meet their parents) to use their imagination. It is possible that people who have encountered this situation, particularly those who did so recently, respond differently than those who have not. As well, we relied upon a convenience sample of young adults who are attending university. This age group is appropriate for studying dating relationships, but it may be valuable to include those outside the university setting. One consistent finding in the literature is that education delays age at marriage, although the majority of individuals marry soon after completing their education (for a review, see Teachman, Polonko, & Scanzoni, 1999, p. 49). This effect seems particularly pronounced for women (Teachman et al., 1999). It is possible, then, that those in university behave differently in their time frame of introducing their parents to their mates, or in the reasons for the introduction.

It might also be useful to interview the future parents-in-law to determine if they want to meet their child's mate, when they expect

to do so, and the reasons why they value this introduction. We propose that parents will view the mate as a potential family member, who will establish and maintain a long-term relationship with their child. Thus, they will presumably want to make a positive impression on the mate, but also carefully assess the suitability of the mate for their child, especially if they have a daughter.

CONCLUSIONS

Our results indicate that people do indeed view the introduction of parents and prospective mate as one that represents an important step in beginning a long-term relationship. Perhaps due to the greater social support typically received from female kin, and in keeping with the existing literature of the role of parental influence on women's mate choice, women were more concerned with parental approval than men. Attachment style and birth order had minimal impact on the timing of the meeting, but younger age and financial dependence seem to cause individuals to have earlier introductions of mates to parents because they are less experienced and less independent from their parents. Without sufficient resources of their own, parental approval and continued willingness to invest need to be secured before time and effort are wasted on a relationship that may meet strong disapproval (with a corresponding threat of withdrawal of parental investment).

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