

Why parents don't approve of daughter's partner decoded

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Researchers found that parents' desire to see their daughter settle with a man who is supportive has its roots in an "evolutionary conflict over resources".

In the scenario where the son-in-law is hard up or uncaring, parents have to invest more resources in their daughter, eventually leading to conflict.

Also, the daughter, knowing that her parents will help her out, exploits this allocation by choosing a partner who is not in the parents' best interests.

This in turn leads to conflict over the choice of mate between parents and their offspring.

Scientists from Bristol and the University of Groningen in the Netherlands carried out the research by building a computer model to simulate the evolution of parental behaviour when their daughter is searching for a partner, 'The Telegraph' reported.

Researchers found that parents show a stronger preference than their offspring for attributes such as social class, family background, ethnic background and educational level.

Daughters meanwhile show a fondness for qualities such as physical attractiveness, smell, sense of humour and creativity.

The conflict over the suitability of a daughter's partner was likely to be greater when fathers rather than mothers controlled resources, the study found.

"The conflict over parental resources is central to understanding why parents and children disagree in mate choice," said Dr Tim Fawcett, a research fellow at the University of Bristol's School of Biological Sciences.

"Parents are equally related to all of their children, whereas children value themselves more than their siblings, so each child wants to get more than their fair share of parental resources," he said.

The study was published in the journal Evolution and Human Behaviour