

'I am right for your child!'—The key to winning over your future in-laws

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The key to dealing with future in-laws who disapprove of your relationship may involve showing them what a good influence you are on their child, rather than manipulating them with gifts. In the Springer journal *Human Nature*, Menelaos Apostolou shares the results of interviews with Greek- Cypriot children and parents and also finds that mothers may be more easily won over than fathers.

Children frequently choose mates who do not appeal to their [parents](#). For instance, they may choose [individuals](#) who are physically attractive, even though parents are more concerned with social standing and family background.

"Parents do not always find their [children's](#) mate choices to comply with their own preferences and engage in manipulation in order to drive away undesirable boyfriends and girlfriends," comments Apostolou. "To avoid this situation, individuals engage in counter manipulation in order to change their prospective parents-in-law's minds to accept them as mates for their children."

Parents can employ various tactics to dissolve the relationship, including bribery or threatening their children's mate. Meanwhile, children also have a battery of manipulation tactics they employ on their parents to make them accept their mates, including showing them that their mates are right for them and make them happy. However, little is known about how children's partners try to manipulate their prospective parents-in-law and which tactics are most successful.

The first part of the study involved 106 Greek-Cypriots answering an open-ended questionnaire. This revealed 41 separate acts that individuals employed on their partners' parents.

These acts included showing the parents how appropriate they are for their child, inviting them for dinner, buying gifts, and even standing up to the parents by telling them they were not worthy of their behaviour.

The second part of the study involved 738 Greek- Cypriots identifying the acts that were most likely to be employed, which Apostolou grouped into seven broader manipulation tactics.

The most likely tactic to be used is labelled "I am right for your child," in which they demonstrate to the prospective parents-in-law how good they are as mates for their children. Following this comes the "I do not deserve this!" tactic, where they show their mates' parents that they do not deserve their rejection. Third most common is the "Why don't you like me?" tactic, where individuals try to determine why the parents disapprove and try to change their minds.

Other tactics include "No confrontation"; "You have to accept the situation!" where they can threaten the parents by saying they risk never seeing their grandchildren; and the "Approach" tactic, where individuals try to grow closer to the parents by inviting them for dinner and buying gifts. Least common is the "Tell them I am good!" tactic in which they ask their mates to persuade their parents.

In the third part of the study, Apostolou questioned 414 Greek-Cypriot parents to find out the effectiveness of these tactics in altering parents' minds.

The "I am right for your child" and "No confrontation" tactics were found to be most likely to be successful, whereas "Approach" and "Tell

them I am good!" were least likely to be successful.

The results also suggest that mothers may be more likely to be influenced by some of these tactics than fathers.

The limitations of the study include its reliance on self-report data, and it being based on a single culture, which means its results may not readily apply to different cultural settings.

More information: Menelaos Apostolou. I Am Right for Your Child!, *Human Nature* (2015). [DOI: 10.1007/s12110-015-9241-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-015-9241-8)

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