

「研究論文」

Parental influence on their children's mating relationships among Japanese adolescents

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Abstract

This study was a partial replication study of Faulkner and Schaller (2007), and examined parental vigilance over children's mating behavior and relationships among Japanese adolescents. Participants were 159 Japanese university students (73 men and 86 women) with a mean age of 21.04 years. All participants answered questionnaires assessing perceived relationship vigilance by both of their parents. Participants were instructed to rate the extent that each of their parents would be aware of and concerned about the progression of two types of relationships (casual and serious relationships). The primary results were that (a) female participants reported more parental vigilance than male participants; (b) mothers were perceived to be more vigilant than fathers; (c) parents were perceived to be more vigilant of serious relationships than casual relationships; (d) the effect of participant's sex emerged within the context of serious relationships. These results are highly consistent with Faulkner and Schaller's (2007) results.

Key words: parental control, children's mating relationships, Japanese adolescents.

Introduction

In most cultures and throughout history, parents have exerted strong influence on the mate choice and mating behavior of their children (Buunk, Park, & Dubbs, 2008). While it might seem natural for parents to be interested in their children's mating decisions, few other extant species exert such a strong influence over their offspring's mating decisions, and only in humans is the *actual* mate choice of an individual sometimes determined solely by one's parents. Thus, we are left with the question, why do parents attempt influence over their children's mating behavior and relationships? An evolutionary perspective helps us understand the reason (Faulkner & Schaller, 2007). Individuals' total level of fitness depends not only on their own reproductive fitness but also on the reproductive fitness of their kin (Hamilton, 1964). More specifically, parents' inclusive fitness is potentially reduced whenever their children get involved in relationships with mates who seem unlikely to help their children produce reproductively viable offspring. Therefore, parents, who are attempting to maximize their inclusive fitness, are likely to take an interest in their children's mating behaviors and whom their children take

as mates.

Many studies have shown that there are sex differences in the extent to which parents monitor (maintain vigilance over) their children's mating behavior and relationships (Apostolou, 2007; Faulkner & Schaller, 2007; Perilloux, Fleischman, & Buss, 2008; Wight, Williamson, & Henderson, 2006). For example, parents report that it is more important to approve of their daughters' mate choices compared to their sons', and parents are also more likely to restrict their daughters' behaviors, such as not allowing their daughter to stay the night at a romantic partner's house, compared to sons' (Perilloux et al., 2008). Such sex differences make sense in light of evolutionary theory. Based on differential parental investment theory (Trivers, 1972), women invest more resources than men in the production of offspring and can bear fewer offspring than a man can sire. Thus according to Faulkner and Schaller (2007), if parents fail to attend to the mating activities of their daughter, they potentially lose the opportunity to dissuade her from spending one of her precious reproductive opportunities on a substandard mate, which may potentially reduce not only her reproductive fitness but also parents' own inclusive fitness. Meanwhile, the mating activities of their son have less consequential implications for parents' own inclusive fitness. As a consequence, parents exert greater influence over their daughter's mating behavior and relationships than their son's. Another sex difference is that mothers influence their children's mating behavior and relationships more strongly than fathers do. Men have greater capacity for enhancing reproductive fitness through direct means. On the other hand, women, due to the high cost of reproduction and the sharp decline in fertility associated with menopause, have greater constraints on their capacity to enhance their reproductive fitness directly. Thus mothers tend to use indirect means, such as enhancing their children's productive fitness, in order to enhance their own fitness (Faulkner & Schaller, 2007). As a result, mothers exercise stronger control over their children's mating behavior and relationships than fathers do.

Another factor, the length of the relationship (casual vs. serious), can also influence the level of concern and vigilance parents have for their children's mating decisions (Faulkner & Schaller, 2007). Compared to short-term casual relationships, long-term serious relationships are more likely to produce offspring. Thus, the latter relationships typically have greater implications for the inclusive fitness of both parents and their children than the former relationships do (Faulkner & Schaller, 2007). Consequently, parents exert greater vigilance over their children's serious relationships, as compared to their children's more casual relationships.

As reviewed above, many studies have examined parental influence on their children's mating behavior and relationships. However, in Japan, there is little research on this topic. Therefore, as a first step, we conducted a partial replication study of Faulkner and Schaller (2007) for Japanese adolescents.

Method

Participants and Measures

Participants were 159 Japanese university students (73 men and 86 women). Mean age was 21.04

years. All participants answered questionnaires assessing perceived relationship vigilance by both of their parents. Participants were instructed to “think about occasions in which you have been involved in a serious and potentially long-lasting romantic relationship (e.g., you would consider marrying your romantic partner)” and to rate the extent that each of their parents would be aware of and concerned about the progression of any such relationship. Participants were then instructed to “think about occasions in which you might have been dating someone for only a brief period of time (e.g., just a few dates)” and to rate the extent that each of their parents would be aware of and concerned about the progression of any such relationship. Both ratings were made on 9-point scales, with endpoints labeled *not at all aware or concerned* (1) and *very aware and concerned* (9).

Results and Discussion

Vigilance ratings were subjected to a 2×2×2 ANOVA that tested the effects of one between-subjects variable (sex of participant) and two within-subjects variables (sex of parent and relationship type).

Three statistically significant main effects emerged. There was a main effect for sex of participant ($F(1, 157)=5.08, p<.05$), which indicated that women reported more parental vigilance than men (means=4.07 and 3.55). There was also a main effect for sex of parent ($F(1, 157)=78.49, p<.01$), which indicated that mothers were perceived to be more vigilant than fathers (means=4.39 and 3.22). Moreover, there was a main effect for relationship type ($F(1, 157)=244.52, p<.01$), which indicated that parents were perceived to be more vigilant of serious relationships than of casual relationships (means=5.08 and 2.54).

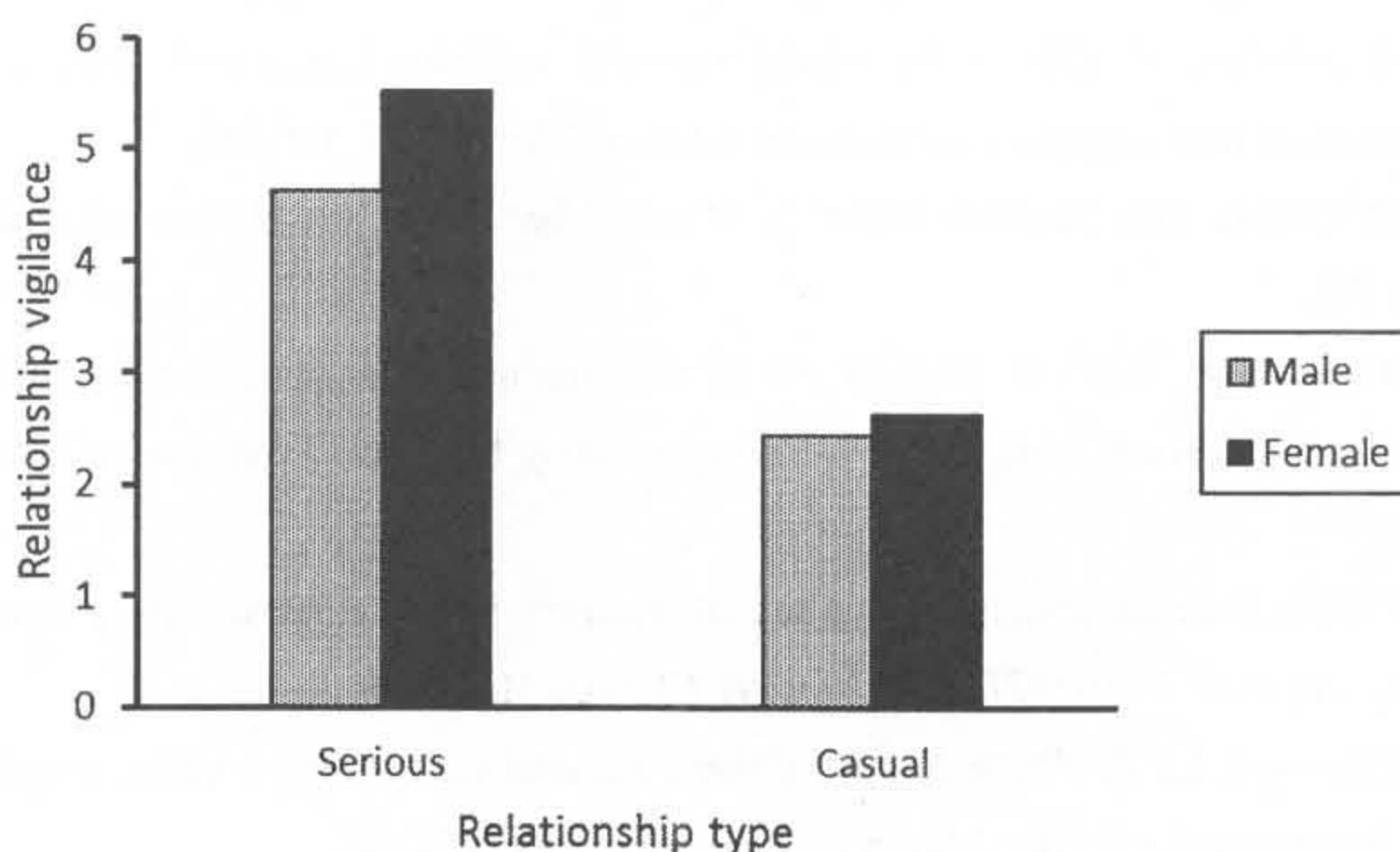


Figure 1. Interactive effect of sex of participant and relationship type in predicting perceived vigilance over participants' romantic relationships.

There was a two-way interaction between sex of participant and relationship type ($F(1, 157)=4.78$, $p<.05$). This interaction is described by the means presented in Figure 1. The effect of participant's sex emerged within the context of serious relationships (women reported more parental vigilance than men; means=5.52 and 4.64), but this sex difference did not emerge within the context of casual relationships (means=2.62 and 2.45 for female and male participants, respectively).

These results are highly consistent with Faulkner and Schaller's (2007) results, which suggest that parents tend to be more vigilant of their daughter's relationships, and that this is more pronounced under conditions in which a substantial indirect fitness benefit is more clearly at stake. The results of this study also support the proposition of Buunk et al. (2008) that across different cultures, parents have exerted, and continue to exert, some form of influence on the mate choice and mating behavior of their children.

There was one additional two-way interaction, between sex of the parent and relationship type ($F(1, 157)=18.18$, $p<.01$). The impact of parent's sex on vigilance was especially powerful for serious relationships (means=5.83 and 4.32 for mothers and fathers, respectively), as compared to casual relationships (means=2.95 and 2.12 for mothers and fathers, respectively). However, this interaction did not substantially qualify interpretation of either main effect.

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