

# Emerging adults' family relationships in the 21st century: A systematic review

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January 22, 2019

## Abstract

The current study aims to describe the relationships between emerging adults and their families and how these evolve over emerging adult years. Through a systematic review of the literature, we extracted data from 38 empirical studies, which met the following inclusion criteria: published since 2000, included emerging adults and/or their relatives as participants, and focused on family relationships. The results showed that most studies examined the parent-child relationship, providing insight into the relational renegotiations occurring during emerging adulthood and into inter-generational discrepancies in the way that parents and children viewed their relationships. Family support was also found to be of substantial relevance during this developmental stage. In addition, sex, age, living arrangements, family structure, socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity and cultural contexts emerged as key factors influencing family relationships in varied ways. Implications for future research include the need to consider the family as the unit of analysis and to collect data from multiple family members; to conduct longitudinal studies in order to better understand changes in family relationships across emerging adulthood; and to focus on family relationships beyond the parent-child dyads, namely on sibling and grandparent-grandchildren relationships. In conclusion, this review provided a renewed perspective on family relationships during the transition to adulthood, contributing to clinical insights on individual and familial shifts in the fast-paced and complex contemporary context.

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