

SIBLING CONFLICT AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY DURING THE
TRANSITION TO EMERGING ADULTHOOD

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, family researchers have acknowledged the importance of sibling relationships across the lifespan, but there has been little investigation of the emerging adult years and how this relationship functions during the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood. Therefore, the present study sought to contribute to this relatively sparse area of research by investigating dyadic perceptions of two domains of sibling conflict and three aspects of relationship quality from first-born and second-born siblings from 48 families during first-borns' transition to college. In addition to identifying longitudinal trajectories of conflict and relationship quality across this transition, we also utilized the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy & Cook, 2006) to examine associations (both actor and partner effects) between sibling conflict during the year before first-borns entered college and relationship quality the following year, as well as associations between relationship quality and sibling conflict the following year. Our findings suggest that not only does the sibling relationship appear to maintain many of its prior longitudinal trajectories during the first year after first-born children leave the natal home, but there appear to be important longitudinal links between sibling conflict and relationship quality across this transition, indicating that in some ways, and for some siblings, this relationship during the adolescent years may have important implications for its long-term functioning into the adult years.