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Stuck in the Nest? A Review of the Literature on Coresidence in Canada and the United States

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Abstract

An historically high proportion of Canadian and American young adults are living with their parents. This trend has stimulated research and theorization of “coresidence,” yet recent reviews of the subject are lacking. In this paper, we examine literature on coresiding families spanning the last two decades, focusing discussion on their economic, cultural, gendered, familial, and psychological characteristics. We argue that theoretical understanding of this topic is expanding, that knowledge of this issue is improving in nuance, but that, despite these encouraging trends, researchers have neglected to examine the actual practices and consequences of coresidence. As a result, the field offers little guidance to parents, young adults, and family counselors. We recommend that researchers expand their methodological approaches, introducing more longitudinal and qualitative designs to capture the day-to-day practices of these families and the consequences of coresidence over time. In addition, we offer some guiding principles for practitioners working with young adults and their parents, based on our findings.

Keywords: Canadian families, early adulthood, launching children, reviews of the literature, transitions

Over the past thirty years, there has been a rise in the proportion of North American young adults living in the parental home. Like other markers that have traditionally signified adulthood (marrying, becoming financially independent, having children, and owning a home) residential independence is being achieved more gradually across North America (Clark, 2007; Vespa, 2017) and throughout the developed world (Gubernskaya, 2010; Newman, 2012). In 1981, 27.5% of Canadians in their 20s were living at home; by 2011, this proportion had grown to 42.3%, and the proportion in their late 20s in particular had more than doubled (Milan, 2016). In 2014, 31.6% of Americans 18 to 34 were living in their parents' homes - the first time in over 130 years that this living arrangement was more common for young adults than living with a spouse or partner in an independent residence (Fry, 2016). Among social scientists, this arrangement is referred to as "parental coresidence" or "coresidence," indicating that an adult child is living in the same household as at least one parent. Fingerman and Suiitor (2017) elaborate that coresidence can be considered "a form of support from parents to grown children; grown children who reside with parents save money and may receive advice, food, childcare or other forms of everyday support" (p. 3). The purpose of the present study was to describe what we currently know about coresidence in North America, based on academic literature from the past 25 years.

Historical shifts in the transition to adulthood – including delayed home-leaving – have been accompanied by judgment in the popular press, where the figure of the coddled young adult (or "Millennial") is prevalent. While the media's derision of young adults often centers on their strong sense of entitlement, it extends to their perceived narcissism, laziness, fickle consumerism, and deluded expectations about workplace remuneration and advancement (Cairns, 2017; Mirrlees, 2015). Often tied to this is the image of the "helicopter" parent, whose

intrusive, smothering, and enabling nature inhibits the child's adjustment (Fingerman et al., 2012; Mirrlees, 2015; Mortimer, 2012), and whose questionable parenting has bred hopeless reliance by offering freedoms without accompanying responsibilities (Cairns, 2017). Fitting with this, mainstream messages about coresidence - at least, in North America - often signify a failure to launch and a failure to fully raise one's child. Hollywood representations of coresident families, including *Stepbrothers* (Apatow & McKay, 2008), *Failure to Launch* (Aversano, Rudin, & Dey, 2006), and *The Hangover* (Phillips & Goldberg, 2009), exemplify the tendency to present coresident families in a negative light.

These historical shifts - and the judgments they have provoked - invite the question, How has the literature on coresidence developed during this period of change—not just in terms of empirical findings, but also in terms of theoretical development, methodological innovation, and implications for practitioners? Faced with a mismatch between overall growth in research on young adult coresidence in the past quarter-century, but limited efforts to map the field's development in North America over this period (c.f., Mitchell, 2006; Ward & Spitze, 1992; White, 1994), our paper's main objective is to ascertain the state of knowledge on Canadian and American young adults who live with their parent(s). We consider coresidence amongst young adults generally between the ages of 18 and 35, and incorporate studies examining home-leaving, coresidence, living with parents, living arrangements, home-returning, and boomeranging.ⁱ Reflecting trends in the literature, we explore the economic, cultural, gendered, relational, and psychological characteristics of coresident families, and conclude that we are encouraged that knowledge of this living arrangement is becoming more nuanced, and that efforts are being made to examine it theoretically; however, we find that the field has neglected the actual family practices associated with this living arrangement and the psychological, relational, and financial

consequences of such practices. On that basis, we argue that the literature provides little guidance to families and professionals who are navigating this apparent “family issue” and we challenge future researchers and practitioners (social workers, therapists, educators) to consider: For whom is coresidence an issue? Under what conditions? And due to which consequences?

Theoretical Perspectives

Young adults’ movements in and out of the family home have been examined from several angles. Most research draws from the life course perspective, but recently, concepts from the fields of intergenerational relations and psychology have offered some insight into the relational and developmental dimensions of coresidence. Since virtually none of the studies reviewed have the express intent of testing a theoretical model (for a notable exception, see Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O’Brien, 2011) and since so many studies are framed only by the life course model, our review presents these theoretical influences separately from the empirical findings.

The Life Course Perspective

Defined as a “sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time” (Giele & Elder, 1998, 22), the life course is central to the life course perspective, an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that has remained a popular lens over the past quarter-century for looking at individual life trajectories. Central tenets of this perspective include acknowledgement of heterogeneity in events and roles across the life course, the idea of “linked lives,” meaning the interlocking and influential nature of life courses amongst close relationships (e.g., Greenfield & Marks, 2006), examination of development within a sociohistorical context, and acknowledgement of life transition reversals. To varying extents, studies rooted in this perspective share an interest in longitudinal impacts of processes and changes (Mayer, 2009).

The life course perspective draws attention to home leaving and home returning as transitional events. More specifically, such research aims to understand their intersection with formation of a domestic partnership, commencement of post-secondary studies, and commencement of full-time employment—and to identify predisposing and precipitating factors. The dominant focus of research questions in this vein could be summarized as, *Who leaves the parental home when, who returns when, and why?* Inquiries encompass both mixed-methods (e.g., Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009; Mitchell, Wister, & Gee, 2004) and quantitative designs (e.g., Sandberg-Thoma, Snyder, & Jang, 2015) inquiring into factors influencing movements. Major variables of interest include gender (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016), age (Mitchell, Wister, & Gee, 2002), economic status (Swartz et al., 2011), ethnicity (Gee, Mitchell, & Wister, 2003), family composition (Mitchell, Wister, & Gee, 2000), and perceptions of emotional closeness among family members (Aquilino, 1997). Life course research is also interested in the material, interactional, and psycho-social impacts of adult children's residential transitions on parents and siblings (e.g. Mitchell, 2004b). For instance, research explores empty nest syndrome (Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009) and the emotional and resource connections between adult children and parents before and after home-leaving (Billette, Le Bourdais, & Laplante, 2011; Goldscheider, Hofferth, & Curtin, 2014; Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Mitchell, 2004a; South & Lei, 2015). Overall, the life course perspective contributes a framework that situates life course events within their temporal, social, and historical context. This approach follows the sociological imperative of recognizing macro-level influences on individual acts, and thus guards against the framings of later home-leaving as indicative of only personal flaws and failures.

Intergenerational Perspectives

Researchers have begun to examine coresidence in relation to theories of parent-child ties in adulthood. Contingency theory suggests that parents and children provide support to one another in response to their needs (Birditt & Fingerman, 2013). Past studies reveal, for example, that parents give more practical and material support to adult children who are underemployed, unmarried, and enrolled in school (Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009; Fingerman et al., 2010). Researchers have used this model to examine how living arrangements are related to unemployment, partnership dissolution, student status, and negative life events (Beaupré, Turcotte, & Milan, 2008; Milan, 2016; Newman, 2012; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015; South & Lei, 2015; Swartz et al., 2011). A second model, the intergenerational solidarity framework, highlights family complexity by integrating multiple dimensions of family life, such as frequency of interaction, emotional closeness, agreement, geographic proximity, and exchange of instrumental assistance (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002). This framework has been used in part to inform studies examining the effects of coresidence on support, instrumental help, and closeness (White & Rogers, 1997) and the effects of closeness on housing and financial assistance (Swartz et al., 2011). Finally, the concept of “intergenerational ambivalence” has assisted in exploring how parent-child relations in later life could be simultaneously experienced as positive and negative (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998). According to this model, ambivalence has both a psychological dimension, observable in individual experiences of mixed feelings, and a sociological dimension, observable in contradictory social structural statuses or roles. Researchers have used the model to compare parents’ ambivalence toward coresident children and independently residing children (Kiecolt, Blieszner, & Savla, 2011), to compare feelings of ambivalence towards parents by coresident and independently residing adult children

(Fingerman, Huo, Kim, & Birditt, 2017), and to interpret the contingent nature of attitudes toward parents and adult children living together as a result of economic hardship (Seltzer, Lau, & Bianchi, 2012). In related research, this model has been employed to examine the consequences of parental financial assistance (Johnson, 2013), to examine the impact of support provided by middle-aged parents to adult children (Fingerman, Cheng, Cichy, Birditt, & Zarit, 2013), and to interpret ideologies and practices of parental support to adult children (Descartes, 2006). Taken together, these intergenerational perspectives shed light on coresidence as it relates to the family institution: they do so by situating the young adult within a web of family relationships, each characterized by distinct needs, supports, degrees of intimacy, sentiments, social roles and social statuses.

Psychological Perspectives

Although a number of economists, demographers, and sociologists have examined the topic of coresidence, psychologists' perspectives are rarer in the literature. Two specific concepts have been used by researchers to study the implications of coresidence at the individual level. First, Mortimer, Kim, Staff, and Vuolo (2016) have mobilized the concept of self-efficacy to investigate whether living with one's parents undermines a sense of autonomy and responsibility. The concept of self-efficacy refers to a person's perception that he or she can execute behaviors to produce intended effects; individuals who have higher perceived self-efficacy will set higher goals for themselves and make firmer commitments to these goals, while individuals with a lower sense of efficacy will avoid difficult tasks, set lower goals, and give up quickly when facing challenges (Bandura, 1993). In addition to self-efficacy, the concept of "emotional autonomy" has been introduced to this literature. Emotional autonomy is characterized by a shift in one's perceptions of and attachments to parents: parents are de-idealized and separated from

the self, and young adults realize that they can rely on internal resources to make independent decisions. This concept was used by Fozio-Thielk (2015) in a study comparing college students living or not living at home. Together, the concepts of emotional autonomy and self-efficacy could bring much-needed academic attention to the ostensible consequences of coresidence.

Looking ahead, concepts of agency that highlight the family environment could be insightful. As one possibility, the concept of “relational agency” emphasizes how interpersonal processes contribute to people’s senses of agency in particular contexts (De Mol et al., 2018, p. 55). De Mol et al. hypothesize that clients who enter therapy have often “lost their sense of relational agency in one or more important life domains” (p. 60). If sharing a home potentially triggers such a loss (for parents or for young adults), then researchers ought to analyze the processes through which it occurs and the mechanisms that promote its recovery.

Empirical Research

Since the 1990s, North American researchers have maintained a steady if not *growing* interest in the topic of coresidence. Survey studies of economy, gender, culture, and family characteristics have maintained their centrality in the field, as established by White (1994) and Ward and Spitze (1992), while qualitative designs and topics of psychological development and well-being have stayed on the periphery.

Economic Challenges Surrounding Coresidence and Delayed Transitions to Adulthood

Many social scientists have argued that economic circumstances have elongated the transition to adulthood and postponed independent residence (Côté, 2014; Furstenberg, 2016; Newman, 2012), and that young adults today are thus often supported by their families as they complete their education and find their way to financial independence. Many claim that in the absence of sufficient public welfare, young people may be using parental resources as a kind of

privatized safety net (Britton, 2013; Maroto, 2017; Mitchell, 2004b; Kamo, 2000). Some research supports these assertions. Unemployment is commonly correlated with coresidence in families (Engelhardt, Eriksen, & Greenhalgh-Stanley, 2016; Matsudaira, 2016; Milan, 2016; Mykyta & Pilkauskas, 2015; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015) and “boomeranging” back to the parental home (Bilette, Le Bourdais, & Laplante, 2011; Kaplan, 2012). Higher personal incomes, conversely, have been related to a greater likelihood of leaving the home (Mitchell et al., 2004). A higher proportion of students (compared to non-students) live with their parents (Milan, 2016), but contrary to popular wisdom, there is little evidence that student loan debt is tied to home returning among American young adults *overall*; instead, debt seems to have different consequences for Black and White students. Houle and Warner’s study (2017) found that for Black students, a 10% increase in student debt was associated with a 20% increase in the chance of returning home, whereas for White students, the same increase showed no such effect. Rental costs, house prices, and accessibility of social and rental housing also predict doubling up (Holdaway, 2011; Lee & Painter, 2013; Matsudaira, 2016; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010; Waters, Carr, & Kefalas, 2011). For example, a Toronto-based report found that 42% of young adults reported living at home because they could not afford rent (Worth & Tomaszcyk, 2017).

Family resources are another variable to consider, though their effects have been more challenging to untangle. High socio-economic status (usually measured in this literature as one or both parents’ highest level of education) has often predicted earlier ages of home-leaving (Beaupré, Turcotte, & Milan, 2006; Goldscheider et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2004; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015; South & Lei, 2015). Individuals whose parents have higher levels of education are also more likely to leave for college when they move out (de Marco & Berzin, 2008; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998). At least in the U.S., parents with more education are

more likely to support their children financially, whereas parents with less education are more likely to support their adult children by allowing them to live in the family home (Fingerman et al., 2015; Fry, 2016; Swartz et al., 2011; White & Rogers, 1997). Swartz (2008) suggests that working-class families may use coresidence as a strategy for cultivating conditions favorable to upward mobility since it provides a more resource-rich pathway to a college education. By contrast, the likelihood and timing of returning home have been inconsistently related to parental socioeconomic status (Bilette et al., 2011; de Marco & Berzin, 2008; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Goldscheider, Goldscheider, St. Clair, & Hodges 1999; Mitchell et al., 2000; South & Lei, 2015).

Though families may be using coresidence as a means of encouraging upward mobility, the financial outcomes of coresidence are still poorly understood. One Statistics Canada report found an association between staying in the parental home longer and becoming a homeowner in one's 30s; however, this pattern held only until age 25. After age 25, remaining at home longer was associated with a lower probability of becoming a homeowner in one's 30s (Turcotte, 2007). Another study, by Swartz, McLaughlin, and Mortimer (2017) found that coresidence during the vulnerable transitional years had no significant impact on young adults' self-reported earnings in their early 30s. Finally, Maroto (2017) found parents have fewer financial assets and savings in years when their adult children are coresiding compared to years when they are not.

Gender and Coresidence

Overall, research shows a stable gender gap in rates of coresidence, with men coresiding at higher rates than women. In 2011, 37.7% of Canadian women in their 20s were living with their parents, compared to 46.9% of men (Milan, 2016). In the US in 2014, 29% of women 18 to 34 were living with their parents, while the proportion for men was 35% (Fry, 2016). The

reasons for this difference are not clear-cut. One common suggestion is that women marry or cohabit with a partner at younger ages, prompting an earlier move from the parental home (Beaupré et al, 2006). In addition, having a higher level of education and having children predict independent living, and both are more common among women (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016). A third possibility is that women and men receive different forms of support from their parents: though men are more likely to receive indirect financial support through coresidence and nonfinancial support such as parental advice, women are more likely to receive money from their parents (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016). When it comes to gender-based differences of home-*returning*, studies are few and have shown mixed effects of gender (Mitchell et al., 2000, 2004).

The causes of gender differences in coresidence are not clear, but recent findings suggest that men and women receive different benefits from coresidence. While sons report that their mothers perform domestic tasks for them when living at home, daughters are more likely to report that they are expected to contribute to household labour (Mitchell, 2004b; Sassler, Ciambrone, & Benway, 2008). Single mothers in the US, particularly African-American mothers, are more likely to live with their parents (Kamo, 2000). This trend may continue to be exacerbated with increasing austerity, as young parents turn to coresidence as a new, privatized form of social security. Mitchell (2004a) argues that this prolonged dependence on the parental household creates pressure on mothers because they perform the bulk of the household labour, not only taking on a greater share of standard domestic tasks, but also acting as unpaid social workers dealing with their adult children's mental health, addictions, or disabilities. In sum, coresidence seems to reinforce existing gender inequalities in both the parental and youth generations.

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Given the changing demographics of, and continuous immigration to North America, it is important to consider racial and ethnic differences in living arrangements. Coresidence is most common among minorities in Canada, including visible minorities (Milan, 2016), individuals who do not report a Canadian or European ethnic identity (Boyd, 2000; Gee, Mitchell, & Wister, 2003; Jeong, Hamplová, & Le Bourdais, 2014; Mitchell, 2004a), and individuals whose mother tongue is neither English nor French (Bilette et al., 2011; Milan, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2002). Similar trends are observed in the US: Black, Latino, and Asian young adults are more likely to live with their parents than white Americans (Britton, 2013; Di Yang & Liu, 2002; Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Lei & South, 2016). White Americans who speak languages other than English at home are also more likely to coreside (Kamo, 2000).

Researchers in this area must consider not only differences *between* racial/ethnic groups, but also differences *within* groups according to duration since immigration. In both countries, coresidence is more common among immigrant than non-immigrant young adults (Beaupré & Le Bourdais, 2001; Glick & Van Hook, 2002; Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Milan, 2016). First generation young adults are less likely to live with their parents because often their parents remain back in the home country (Jeong et al., 2014; Kamo, 2000; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010), while the second generation (born in Canada or the US to foreign-born parents) is the most likely to be living with their parents compared to either first or third and higher generation (Jeong et al., 2014; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010; Waters et al., 2011). Undocumented immigrants are also particularly likely to continue living with their parents through young adulthood (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010).

Findings relating ethnocultural factors and home-*returning* are uncommon, however they too reveal interesting variations. Despite their tendency to leave home earlier, Canadians with British and (to a lesser extent) Southern European ethnocultural backgrounds are more likely to boomerang home, to stay out of the home for shorter periods, and to return more times compared to Asian young adults (Gee et al., 2003; Mitchell., 2004a). English speakers – though they are no more likely to coreside with their parents than French-speakers (Mitchell et al., 2002) – are more likely to return home than French- or other language- speakers (Mitchell et al., 2000). Meanwhile, in the US, Black and Hispanic young adults are more likely to both stay home longer and return home more often (Lei & South, 2016).

Although coresidence behaviors have been patterned across ethnocultural identities, the norms, values, attitudes, and experiences that may underlie these patterns have yet to be examined in depth. In many US studies, Latino and Asian cultural orientations toward family are used to explain why young adults from those backgrounds are more likely than their white counterparts to live with their parents (Britton, 2013; Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Kamo, 2000; Lei & South, 2016). In black families, later home-leaving appears to be connected to later ages at first marriage (Britton, 2013) and a propensity toward pooling resources due to the legacy of slavery and economic hardship (Kamo, 2000). Returning home among black students has been linked to carrying debt (Houle & Warner, 2017). Waters et al. (2011) argue that in post-industrial cities like New York and San Diego where immigrants tend to settle, the structural conditions of an expensive housing market and the increasing importance of postsecondary education combine with existing cultural openness to multigenerational households, leading to the “maintenance of parental subcultural values that define multigenerational living as benign and helpful” (p. 17). In fact, some second-generation immigrants view multigenerational living as a permanent or at least

open-ended arrangement, and they question the American conception of home leaving as an important marker of adulthood (Holdaway, 2011). Similarly, in the Canadian context ethnic identities have been related to reasons for home-leaving and returning: a study by Mitchell (2004b) showed that whereas British-Canadians were most likely to report leaving home for independence, Chinese-Canadians were most likely to leave to attend school, and Indo-Canadians were most likely to leave in order to get married. In related research, Gee et al. (2003) found that European-Canadians were more likely than Asian-Canadians to state that they were living at home (or had returned home) for financial reasons, while Indo-Canadians were most likely to state that they were living at home because of tradition and family closeness.

Family Characteristics

Family structures and relational characteristics have been related to different home-leaving, returning, and coresidence patterns. Sociologists and demographers have found that compared to young adults with fewer siblings, young adults with a greater number of siblings are more likely to move out earlier, stay out longer, and not return (Beaupré et al., 2006; Mitchell et al., 2000, 2004). However, the dynamics of the “crowded nest” are not entirely clear-cut: some studies have observed that young adults with more siblings have *higher* odds of returning to the family home or have found *no* relationship between the number of siblings and young adult living arrangements (Bilette et al., 2011; South & Lei, 2015; Swartz et al., 2011). The intactness of families has also been examined: compared to young adults who grow up with intact (non-divorced) families, young adults who grow up in step families are more likely to leave home earlier and less likely to coreside with their parents (Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015; Seltzer, Yahirun, & Bianchi, 2013; Turcotte, 2006). In contrast to these fairly consistent findings, research on the relation between growing up in a stepfamily and home-returning have been

mixed (Beaupré et al., 2008; Bilette et al., 2011; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Mitchell et al., 2000). Partnership of the child also plays a major role in relation to living arrangements.

Living at home (and boomeranging back home) is less likely when young adults are in a stable partnership, cohabiting, or married (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2002; South & Lei, 2015; Swartz et al., 2011). Milan (2016) notes that in Canada in 2011, 96% of young adults who coresided with their parents were unaccompanied, with no spouse, partner, or child with them.

The historical decrease in the married proportion of the population – as well as increasing ages of marriage over time – are thought to be related to the historical trend of increasing coresidence (Fry, 2016; Milan, 2013).

When it comes to the emotional and support-related qualities of the family relationship of coresiding parents and children, several themes emerge. First of all, parents with coresident children are by and large satisfied with this arrangement (Mitchell, 1998; Turcotte, 2006). A study by Kiecolt et al. (2011) even found that parents felt *less* ambivalent toward a coresident adult child compared to an independently living child. While some researchers have reported the ambivalent feelings of young adults regarding living at home (Mann-Feder, Eades, Sobel, & DeStefano, 2014), they have also reported more positive experiences than negative ones (Fingerman et al., 2017; Worth & Tomaszczyk, 2017). Some studies have found associations between living at home and increased conflict and irritation between parents and children as well as more conflict and disagreement between parents (Aquilino, 1997; Turcotte, 2006; Ward & Spitze, 2007). However, a diary study by Fingerman et al. (2017) found that in-person contact accounted for virtually all differences in relational quality between coresiding and non-coresiding young adults. These authors therefore suggest that coresidence itself does not directly harm parent-child relations, but rather grants “more opportunities for positive interactions,

parental support, and stressful encounters." (p. 346). Some of the variables that have predicted parents' satisfaction with this arrangement include shared activities and child's helpfulness with household tasks; open hostility and open disagreements, on the other hand, predict lower degrees of satisfaction (Mitchell, 1998). Though limited in number, qualitative studies suggest that parent-child relations in these settings are strained by the boundaries of private and public space, household chores, cleanliness, monitoring of comings and goings, and provision of advice on careers or romance (Mann-Feder, 2014; Newman, 2012; Sassler et al., 2008). Interestingly, adult children's status transitions are related to the degree of conflict they experience: relationships are judged less conflictual when coresident children are enrolled in school, employed, and financially independent versus when they occupy none of those statuses (Newman, 2012; Ward & Spitze, 2007).

Psychological Development and Well-being

We were able to find only three North American studies that focused directly on maturity and coresidence. Mortimer et al. (2016) found in a longitudinal study that parental housing support (coresidence) exerted no significant influence on self-efficacy of young adults as they aged from 21 and 22 to 31 and 32. Similarly, in her cross-sectional survey-based dissertation, Fozio-Thielk (2015) found no differences in emotional autonomy between coresiding and independently living community college students, despite finding a significant difference in parental control within these situations. She suggested that young adults may be able to adapt to their living situation in order to achieve emotional autonomy. In line with this view, a qualitative study of 30 home-returning Americans found participants used a variety of strategies to construct themselves as mature, for instance, by alluding to their non-combative disagreements with parents, their return home as a financially-mature choice, their ability to get on well with family,

or their efforts to make financial contributions - even token sums - to the household (Sassler et al., 2008). Given that interviews from this study were conducted in 1993 and 1994, and coresidence has become even more common since that time, it would be interesting to observe whether these discursive strategies have shifted over time.

More than a quarter-century ago, Ward and Spitze (1992) predicted that co-residence - as a violation of an age-graded transition - would result in reduced well-being for parents and their children. Though research on the topic is scant, what exists reveals a mixed picture. Dubas and Petersen (1996) found in a sample of mainly white, middle and upper middle-class individuals that young adults living in the same household as their parents demonstrated the highest level of depressed affect, compared to young adults living within a one-hour drive, in the same state, in another part of country or outside the country. Interestingly, a prior history of depressive episodes did not increase likelihood of remaining in parental home during young adulthood, suggesting that aspects of the family environment may have a causal role. That being said, recent research has failed to find correlations between anxiety and living situation (McMillin, 2017), or differences in positive or negative mood between coresiding and non-coresiding offspring (Fingerman et al., 2017). Interestingly, a study by Copp, Giordano, Longmore and Manning (2017) found higher levels of depressive symptoms for young adults who had boomeranged home compared those who were living independently *and* compared to those who had never left. Though this effect persisted even when prior depressive symptoms were included in the model, it held only for young adults who were experiencing employment problems. Thus, the authors proposed that examining young adults' rationales for living at home, as well as distinguishing between returning and home-staying, were crucial measures for understanding the complex relationship between psychological well-being and coresidence.

Looking at the parents' end, Mitchell and Lovegreen (2009) conducted a mixed-method studies to explore how parents with different cultural backgrounds respond to the empty nest (a household in which adult children have moved out). They found that Indo-Canadian parents were more likely than Chinese, Southern European, and British Canadian parents to experience symptoms of Empty Nest Syndrome, which the authors defined as "experiences of depression and emotional distress when children leave home" (p. 1651). These feelings were especially difficult when a son moving out was constructed as a social norm violation. Underscoring the intersections between culture, family, and psychology, this research suggests the need to recognize how the meaning of home-leaving differs across cultural groups and in doing so creates distinctive psychological and social experiences for parents and adult children.

Conclusion

Coresidence between parents and adult children in North America is on the rise (Beaupré et al., 2006; Ruggles, 2007; Schoeni & Ross, 2005). While this trend is evident, the causes, effects, and meanings of coresidence remain challenging to sort out. At present, demographic and economic circumstances associated with this condition have received the greatest attention, with the life course perspective guiding many of these inquiries. Factors such as unemployment, income, and housing costs appear to account for some of the observed variations, though debt may have a less significant role than one would expect. Ethnic, immigrant, and racial identities also have proven to be strong predictors of coresidence. Preliminary research hints that cultural understandings of family and the life-course may contribute to living at home, but direct study of these mechanisms are lacking. Parental resources, especially educational attainment, play a role, as do family characteristics, such as family size, intactness, and union stability. Gendered patterns have emerged in the literature, including differences in rates of coresidence, in the forms

of support received from parents, and in perceived expectations to contribute to the household. Interestingly, while most parents appear to be satisfied with this arrangement, this is at least partially conditional upon young adults successfully achieving adult statuses. Studies on the psychological factors related to living at home are few, but early work generally denies a simple relationship between coresidence and psychosocial development or well-being. Overall, quantitative approaches have dominated the literature, but qualitative approaches have brought important insights into some of the meanings and purposes of living at home.

Our review leads us to three conclusions about the state of knowledge on coresidence in Canada and the United States. First, our review leads us to believe that theorizing around coresidence is beginning to expand. Though most research on this topic is guided by a life course perspective, we have seen evidence of attempts to expand theoretical understandings of this topic - for instance, through concepts of ambivalence, contingency, and self-efficacy. If this trend continues, it will hopefully bring much-needed attention to the psychological and interpersonal dimensions of coresidence. Second, our review suggests that coresidence is a complex issue, and knowledge of it is becoming more nuanced with time. In the past couple decades, this complexity has been evidenced through distinctions between home-stayers and home-returners, ethnic and racial groups, women and men, and reasons for living at home. Third, and most importantly, this review reveals a limited understanding of the practices of coresiding families and the consequences of these practices - psychologically, interpersonally, and financially. Researchers have contributed little to the most common debates around this topic - for instance, over whether coresidence is associated with psychological immaturity, whether it over-burdens parents, or whether it benefits young adults financially in the long-term. Young adults, their parents, practitioners, and the general public have gleaned little from researchers when it comes

to understanding and confronting the challenges of this increasingly common family form. It is unclear even how much of an “issue” coresidence is - or for *whom* it is - and what should be done about it. Fingerman and Sutor (2017) recently pointed to a “cultural lag” in the public understanding of parental support during the transition to adulthood; while it may be too early to say, the lack of research on practices and consequences of coresidence may be contributing to a similar lag in the public understanding of it, including a lack of evidence-based policies for practitioners working with these families.

Researchers could do more to investigate the practical implications of coresidence, especially in terms of family relationships, psychological well-being, and psychological development. Many basic questions remain to be answered, and thoughtful recommendations for future research (dating back over 20 years) remain overlooked - for example, Dubas and Peterson’s (1997) question, “how does one establish oneself as an independent, self-reliant adult while at the same time maintaining close familial ties?” (p. 4); White and Roger’s (1997) interest in exploring “the outcomes for parents' and children's well-being” (p. 75); and Ward and Spitze’s (1992) suggestion to look at “the nature of exchange relations for coresident parents and children” (p. 563). Beyond these questions, we would add: what factors underpin positive or negative experiences of coresidence? What works or does not work in these families? How do families adapt and innovate new rules and roles in daily life to fit with the new statuses of their members? To what extent do evaluations of this living arrangement depend on gendered experiences of housework, control, or material support? What should researchers recommend to parents struggling to decide whether to let their child live with them? What would they say to families wrestling with pressures to “launch” their adult child from the natal family? Is it possible to identify an appropriate level of support to provide to one’s children after they have

finished high school? What presumptions must be acknowledged when these recommendations are made - whether about the life-course, about parenting, or about the good life? At what point does living with one's parents count as a violation of an age-graded transition (cf. Ward & Spitze, 1992), and according to whom?

To examine practices and consequences of coresidence, research designs ought to branch out. Currently, research on coresidence tends to be limited by predominantly survey-based approaches (for exceptions, see Mann-Feder, 2014; Newman, 2012; Sassler et al., 2008). Growing the field through a focus on interpretive approaches (such as photovoice, family-based focus groups, interviews, and participant observation) would enable understandings of the rituals, routines, and practices of day-to-day life, or what Furstenberg (2010) has referred to as “the texture of family life when young adults reside in the natal household” (p. 74). In addition, longitudinal designs would be valuable for assessing the outcomes of coresidence in later life (cf. Maroto, 2017).

Looking further ahead, researchers would ideally be better equipped to inform policy decisions about young adults and parents living together. Assessments are needed to determine whether governments or other institutions (notably post-secondary institutions) ought to change what they are doing to enable young adults to live independently. Evaluations of budget cuts or other austerity measures on coresidence are also greatly needed. This research gap suggests the value of research partnerships between governments, other institutions with large stakes in coresidence, and social scientists in outlining policy agendas.

Although we do not have specific directives for practitioners addressing challenges associated to this new family form, based on our review we would stand by three guiding principles. First, *recognize complexity in the experience and significance of coresidence today.*

To promote understanding and trust, practitioners should maintain an open-mind and willingness to understand this topic from multiple angles. There is no one reason that young adults are continuing to stay at home longer today or are returning home after a period away, and our review affirms the intersection of this phenomenon with multiple factors, including economic forces, cultural norms, racial disparities, and psychological states. Practitioners who thoughtfully work to unpack the intersecting influence of these factors will be better equipped to empathize with and work alongside families and young adults navigating a shared living arrangement.

Second, *encourage frameworks of initiative and adaptation*. Some young adults and their parents will see the child's continued presence as contradicting their assumptions about the life-course (i.e., if they predicted a launch from the home following high school). Practitioners in a counseling role can help these families to focus less on the gap between expectation and reality, and more on the present situation as an adaptation drawing them closer to a desirable future. Building on this, counselors can also support family members in discovering new ways of relating to one another despite the constancy of the living arrangement. Opportunities to gain relational agency (De Mol et al., 2018) and personal growth may surface as parents and children negotiate boundaries, redefine responsibilities, build trust, and form friendships; it may be part of a counseling role to make those opportunities apparent.

Third, *stand for policies that support the social mobility of young adults*. We affirm the validity of parents and children choosing to live together as adults; simultaneously, we believe that families alone should not carry the burden of supporting young adults when they are faced with inaccessible housing, increased educational standards, precarious employment, or excessive debt. A system that relies too much on families to cope with these challenges is a system likely to amplify existing disparities between classes, races, and genders. Drawing on Waitaha (2014),

it is our view that such differences “are partly a result of the resources natal families marshal to support their transitioning young adults” (p. 481). Considering this, we advise readers to back policies that reduce the burden on families and make it possible for young adults of diverse backgrounds to succeed in life.

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Footnotes

ⁱ Fewer than ten of the studies reviewed include participants whose ages extend beyond this range, cf., Beaupré et al.

(2006, 2008); Engelhardt et al. (2016); Goldscheider et al. (2014); Sassler et al. (2008); Turcotte (2006), or White & Rogers (1997) as exceptions. Even in these cases, ages do not go below 15 years or above 45 years.