

Emerging Adulthood

“Overgrown Children” and Where to Find Them: Film Portrayals of Coresiding and Residentially Independent Siblings’ Developmental Maturity

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Abstract

Though young adult coresidence (in which individuals aged 18–35 reside within the family home) is stigmatized in mass media, research has not explored how such depictions relate to understandings of development. We used qualitative content analysis to explore how contemporary Canadian and American films depicted coresiding young adults and their similarly aged, residentially independent siblings concerning various markers of adulthood. We found that coresiding characters were largely portrayed as developmentally immature both socially (e.g., full-time work) and characterologically (e.g., relational competence). In contrast, residentially independent siblings were overwhelmingly cast as developmentally on time. We argue that these depictions and contrasts reinforce a stigmatized coresider trope, framing the traits and actions of coresiders in terms of atypical developmental and attributing this living arrangement to individual faults. Implications for understandings of development and the wellbeing of emerging adults are discussed.

Keywords: coresidence, media, emerging adults, development, attitudes

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3 **“Overgrown Children” and Where to Find Them: Film Portrayals of Coresiding and**
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5 **Residentially Independent Siblings’ Developmental Maturity**
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8 Contemporary Canadian and American young adults (often defined as 18–35 for
9
10 demographic purposes [Mazurik et al., 2020]) are taking longer than previous generations to
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12 achieve adult milestones like completing postsecondary education, becoming financially
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14 independent, or having children (Krahn et al., 2017; South & Lei, 2015). In line with these
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16 developmental delays, rates of coresidence (in which young adults live with parents; Mazurik et
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18 al., 2020) have increased across the West in the past 3 decades (Esteve & Reher, 2021; Milan,
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20 2016). In July 2020, a record number of young adults in the United States lived with their parents
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22 (Fry et al., 2020). In Canada, the proportion of young adults living with parents was roughly 35%
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24 in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Factors linked to rising rates of coresidence in these nations
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26 include financial constraints, extended postsecondary training and job search periods, cultural
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28 values and expectations, and the desire to receive or provide familial care and support (Cepa &
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30 Kao, 2019; Fry et al., 2020; Sørensen & Nielsen 2020; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2020).
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35 Despite being increasingly common and driven by complex socioeconomic
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37 circumstances, coresidence is often stigmatized in Western sociocultural contexts (Casares &
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39 White, 2018; Mazurik et al., 2020; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2020). As young adult development in
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41 Canada and the United States undergoes significant social, economic, and cultural shifts, the
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43 mass media play an important role in shaping local attitudes toward such changes and producing,
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45 perpetuating, or challenging various forms of stigma (Klin & Lemish, 2008; Srivastava et al.,
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47 2018). Media depictions influence our understandings of human development, shape
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49 expectations of self and family, and promulgate particular moral standards (Srivastava et al.,
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51 2018). They influence attitudes toward coresidence and can affect institutions, relationships,
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3 behaviors, and understandings of self and others (Potter, 2012). However, little is known about
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5 the representation of coresiders in mass media.
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8 While previous research has noted a distinct lack of attention to broader social, cultural,
9
10 and economic drivers in media representations of coresidence (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020; Smith
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12 et al., in press), no one has explored the broader developmental positioning of coresiding young
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14 adults. It is also unclear how portrayals of coresiding young adults align with or depart from
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16 those of similarly aged peers living outside the family home. Delayed adult transitions are
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18 frequently linked to laziness, apathy, and entitlement within Canadian and American popular
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20 discourse (Cairns, 2017). However, as young adult coresidence carries a particular stigma in
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22 various Western nations (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020; Smith et al., in press), we wondered if
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24 coresident characters might constitute a distinct trope (common narrative devices, including such
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26 elements as archetypal characters and plot arcs, used to efficiently convey ideas or essences;
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28 García-Sánchez et al., 2021) within contemporary Canadian and American filmmaking.
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30 Specifically, we wondered to what extent coresiding young adults have become a symbol of
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32 atypical developmental or generalized immaturity within this media genre.
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38 This study was guided by the exploratory research question, how do contemporary
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40 Canadian and American films depict the developmental status of coresiding young adults in
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42 comparison with similarly aged siblings who reside outside the family home? This work
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44 contributes to the existing literature by assessing various social and characterological markers of
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46 adulthood beyond residential independence and considering whether coresiding characters
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48 represent distinct tropes within contemporary presentations of young adulthood. Using
49
50 qualitative content analysis, we systematically investigated 11 films released from 2010–2020.
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52 We found that the coresiding young adult comprised a distinct narrative trope marked by atypical
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3 (delayed) social and characterological development. In these works, siblings living outside the
4 family home functioned as foil characters, contrasting the developmental traits and actions of
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(delayed) social and characterological development. In these works, siblings living outside the family home functioned as foil characters, contrasting the developmental traits and actions of coresiders in ways that reinforced the global immaturity of coresiding young adults (lacking not only residential independence, but also most other common markers of adulthood in the global West). In these representations, coresiders are not simply young adults who live at home—they are failed adults set against normative ideals represented by developmentally on-time siblings. In these contrasts, the specific stigma attached to coresidence is highlighted. Recognizing such negative portrayals of coresidence is important, as the ongoing pathologization, individualization, and responsabilization of this living arrangement has negatively impacted the wellbeing of both young adults and parents (Culatta & Clay-Warner, 2021; Magaña & Smith, 2006).

Coresidence in Western Society and Media

Attitudes Toward Coresidence

Mainstream discourses often link delayed adult transitions to laziness, apathy, and entitlement amongst young adults (Cairns, 2017). Within Canadian and American popular discourse, coresidence is often linked to poor parenting, flawed individual development, or personal failure (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Culatta & Clay-Warner, 2021; Mitchell & Lennox, 2020). For example, Abetz and Romo (2021) found that Americans aged 22–31 who had returned to the parental home after living independently worked to legitimize coresidence as an investment in their future rather than a sign of individual failing. Mitchell and Lennox (2020) similarly noted that the equation of adulthood with financial independence and responsibility within the general public and the media in Canada stigmatized coresidence and threatened to position coresiders as failed adults. They further noted that this stigma can be internalized by

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3 coresident young adults. In situations where financial motives were not the primary or sole
4
5 reason for coresiding, participants frequently described themselves and their living situation in
6
7 terms of defeat, failure, and poor decision making.
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10 Adding important nuance, Evans et al. (2021) argued that negative attitudes toward
11
12 coresidence are closely tied to the individualistic values that dominate White European and
13
14 North American cultural spaces. They noted that while White Americans frequently position
15
16 coresidence as a “failure to launch” (p. 459), Americans from more collectivist backgrounds
17
18 frequently support, normalize, and celebrate young adult and parent coresidence. Socioeconomic
19
20 status also influences the moral evaluation of coresidence. In interviews with Canadian young
21
22 adults, Mitchell and Lennox (2020) found that participants from middle- and upper-class families
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24 were less accepting of coresidence than those from lower class households. Coresiding young
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26 adults with higher socioeconomic statuses were more likely to be considered mooches,
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31 unscrupulously living off the resources of others.
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33 Speaking to how individual circumstances can impact moral judgements, studies have
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35 also found that attitudes toward coresidence vary according to the motivations and circumstances
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37 of the coresiding young adult. Though neither Canadians nor Americans have typically
38
39 considered coresidence an ideal or preferable living situation for young adults (Evans et al.,
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41 2021; Mitchell & Lennox, 2020; Seltzer et al., 2012), this arrangement has been acceptable when
42
43 the young adult is actively working toward financial and residential independence. Consistent
44
45 with this, attitudes toward coresidence have been more favorable when temporary or short-term
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47 than indefinite (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020; Seltzer et al., 2012). In addition, vignette and
48
49 interview studies have shown that attitudes toward coresidence are more positive when young
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51 adults have good relationships with their parents, contribute to household tasks, embody adult
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3 behavior, and articulate clear timelines for attaining residential independence (Abetz & Romo,
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5 2021; Patterson & Reyes, 2022; Seltzer et al., 2012).
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8 As Culatta and Clay-Warner (2021) noted, the social stigma of falling behind
9
10 developmental expectations can have negative repercussions for individual wellbeing. In a study
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12 of over five hundred 18- to 29-year-olds in the United States, they reported a positive
13
14 relationship between falling behind and both anxiety and depression, even after controlling for
15
16 young adults' own expectations about various markers of adulthood. Specifically, they found that
17
18 falling behind expectations of peers is associated with anxiety and that falling behind
19
20 expectations of parents and society is associated with depressive symptoms. As the mass media
21
22 play an important role in shaping developmental expectations (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011),
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24 attention to representations of coresidence and coresiders can inform attempts to mitigate their
25
26 influence on young adult wellbeing.
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31 In sum, empirical research has suggested that attitudes toward coresidence in the United
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33 States and Canada are complex and multifaceted. Though public acknowledgment of the
34
35 economic barriers young adults face in pursuing residential independence is growing, dominant
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37 sociocultural norms and values continue to suggest that living outside the family home is a key
38
39 component of adulthood. Consequently, coresidence and coresiders remain stigmatized, except
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41 where this living arrangement is aimed at facilitating greater independence. These implications
42
43 of coresidence stigma and discourses of failed development for young adult mental health are
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45 worrying.
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49 **Media Representations of Coresidence**

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51 The stigmatization of coresidence and young adult coresiders in Canadian and American
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53 contexts is apparent in contemporary media. As Abetz and Romo (2021) noted, the media tend to
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3 portray young adult coresiders as “entitled, selfish, lazy, and unwilling to grow up” (p. 1096).
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5 Mitchell and Lennox’s (2020) investigation of coresidence in 44 Canadian news articles from
6
7 2012 to 2017 revealed that most (57%) described contemporary coresidence as largely driven by
8
9 macrosocial forces, including fluctuating labor markets, high student debt, high housing prices,
10
11 and changing social norms. However, even though social and economic shifts have made
12
13 independent living more challenging for contemporary young adults, 23% of the articles
14
15 contended that young adults should be capable of overcoming such challenges through effort.
16
17 The remaining 20% of articles eschewed macrosocial forces in favor of individualized
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19 explanations, depicting coresiders as personally responsible for failing to achieve residential
20
21 independence or as “mooches” who selfishly and immaturely rely on their parents for
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23 subsistence resources (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020, p. 226). Thus, while Canadian news media
24
25 frequently acknowledge that young adults face greater economic obstacles to home ownership
26
27 and financial independence than previous generations and construct coresidence as a means of
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29 coping with challenging socioeconomic circumstances, themes of failure and parasitism remain.
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35 To our knowledge, the only other systematic study in this area examined portrayals of the
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37 causes of coresidence in Canadian and American films released between 2010 and 2020 (Smith
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39 et al., in press). Focusing on how the motivations and circumstances of coresidence were
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41 depicted in these works, the team reported eight themes on why coresiding characters were living
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43 in the family home. The two most common frameworks portrayed coresidence as a consequence
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45 of young adults’ mental health challenges or flawed personalities. Here again, film portrayals
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47 depicted coresidence as symptomatic of individualized failings, simultaneously pathologizing
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49 coresidence and responsabilizing coresiders. Further, and in contrast to news media, film
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51 representations overwhelmingly ignored macrosocial drivers of coresidence.
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Critical Reflections on the Literature

Mass media communications have far-reaching influences on institutions, relationships, attitudes, behaviors, and understandings of self and others (Potter, 2012) and are important to understanding everyday experiences. They can both reflect and shape how Canadians and Americans understand and evaluate coresidence and coresiders and how families experience this living situation. Films can also increase (Riles et al., 2021) or reduce (Sznajder et al., 2022) stigmatization of particular groups. For example, Mitchell and Lennox (2020) found that young adults echoed some of the stigmatizing discourses in news media to describe their own experiences of coresidence, including feeling that coresidence must be legitimized by financial need and that returning home entailed personal failure. Yet, despite the profound transformations of home, development, and family implied by increasing rates of coresidence, surprisingly little research has explored how coresidence and coresiders are portrayed in contemporary American and Canadian media. Given the distinct purpose (objective reporting of facts), style (nonfiction), and audience of the genre (Bennett & Serrin, 2005), it is unclear whether findings from news media generalize to other forms of mass communication. For example, Americans born after 1995 rarely engage with traditional news sources, including print newspapers and magazines, and evidence a strong preference for visual, verbal, and viral media (Gentilviso & Aikat, 2019). Moreover, while Smith et al.'s (in press) analysis of the motivations or causes of coresidence in contemporary film adds a great deal to our understanding of coresidence representations, it does little to advance our understanding of how coresiders are positioned in relation to local conceptualizations of maturity, adulthood, and development.

To address this gap, we examined how coresiding young adults and similarly aged siblings living outside the home were portrayed in Canadian and American films released

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3 between 2010 and 2020. By exploring similarities and differences in how sibling characters in
4 different living situations were constructed, we highlight the role of coresidence in the social,
5 psychological, and moral positioning of young adults in different living situations. This
6 information helps us to better understand the potential influence of American and Canadian
7 media on personal and interpersonal experiences of coresidence and the negative psychological
8 states associated with this living arrangement better.
9

17 **Research Approach**

19 **Conceptual Model**

21 As Arnett (1997) noted, the notion of adulthood implies the existence of a collective
22 understanding of “what it means to be an adult ... a commonly held view concerning the criteria
23 that constitute adult status” (p. 4). Such understandings are grounded in sociocultural
24 conceptions of the “normal, expectable life,” which includes assumptions about the typical
25 process of development and sequencing of life’s changes (Settersten et al., 2015, p. 3). Ideas of
26 adulthood influence expectations about how individuals will live and behave as they move
27 beyond adolescence. They also motivate behavior, as individuals seek to keep pace with
28 developmental markers. By extension, notions of adulthood imply various forms of immaturity
29 that mark individuals as not yet having achieved this status.
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42 Arnett (2014) defined emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental period between
43 adolescence and adulthood characterized by independent identity explorations and development.
44 The most recent conception of this term refers to 18–29 year olds. Amongst emerging adults
45 (young adults who are preparing for and transitioning to adulthood and independence), local
46 indices of adulthood shape behavior, encouraging particular ways of acting, interacting, and
47 striving while discouraging others. To guide our comparison and contrast of the developmental
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3 positioning of coresident and residentially independent siblings, we developed a conceptual
4 model of markers of adulthood in Canada and the United States that included both social status
5 (role) and characterological (psychological and behavioral) indices.
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10 Beginning with social markers, we incorporated five transitions used by Statistics Canada
11 (Clark, 2007) and others to make sense of how young people make on their way to adulthood:
12 finishing school (including postsecondary), leaving their parents' home, finding full-year, full-
13 time work, engaging in conjugal relationships (married or in a common law relationship—this
14 includes those who are widowed, separated, or divorced), and having children (see Arnett, 1997;
15 Settersten et al., 2015; Sharon, 2016; Walczak, 2023). As Settersten et al. (2015) noted,
16 understandings of becoming an adult in the Western world have revolved around these markers
17 since the middle of the 20th century. Becoming financially independent and responsible also
18 rank highly amongst indices of adulthood (Arnett, 1997; Greene et al., 1992; Scheer et al., 1996;
19 Walczak, 2023). Though this criterion is difficult to place, being tied to both social roles (job
20 status) and patterns of value-driven behavior (accepting responsibility for personal spending), we
21 grouped it with social indices.
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37 In Canada and the United States, there has been ongoing debate about whether social role
38 transitions remain the most appropriate benchmarks for reaching adulthood. In 1997, Arnett
39 noted that American adolescents and college students aged 18–28 increasingly thought of
40 adulthood as an abstract characterological or intellectual process. Since then, a host of studies
41 suggest that while social status markers—particularly financial independence—remain relevant
42 to how teens and young adults in the global West define and relate to adulthood, psychological
43 and characterological indicators are increasingly central to developmental understandings (e.g.,
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3 Arnett & Galambos, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Horowitz & Bromnick, 2007;
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5 Settersten et al., 2015; Sirsch et al., 2009).

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7 To social markers of adulthood, we therefore added a series of characterological indices
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9 from social science research. These markers reflect ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that
10
11 are tied to notions of maturity, independence, responsibility, and personal control within Western
12
13 developmental thought (Settersten et al., 2015; Sharon, 2016). As Arnett (1998) noted, such
14
15 characterological markers are individualistic and speak to aspects of “psychological and moral
16
17 identity” (p. 307). Across various studies, accepting responsibility for one’s self (self-reliance,
18
19 self-sufficiency) and making independent decisions about beliefs and values (not relying on or
20
21 needing the guidance or approval of parents—a form of emotional independence) have emerged
22
23 as frequently endorsed criteria for transitioning to adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 1998; Greene et al.,
24
25 1992; Scheer et al., 1996; Walczak, 2023; Wysota, 2014).

26
27 Other characterological indices in the literature include relational signs of adulthood,
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29 including establishing relationships with parents as an equal adult (Arnett, 1997), forming
30
31 intimate relationships with others (friends or lovers) (Wysota, 2014), developing mature forms of
32
33 communication, and being responsible for and to others. Behaving responsibly in everyday life
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35 (being aware of the consequences of one’s actions) is also a commonly cited indicator of
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37 adulthood (Greene et al., 1992; Wysota, 2014). As Arnett (1997) noted, this includes avoiding
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39 risky or antisocial behaviors that could bring harm to oneself or others (such as unprotected sex,
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41 substance use, or impaired driving). Several psycho-emotional characteristics are also suggested
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43 as indices of adulthood within the developmental literature, including the ability to set and
44
45 pursue realistic goals, achieving insight into one’s self and motives, and evidencing emotional
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47 stability (Wysota, 2014).
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Methodology

The current research utilized qualitative content analysis to systematically evaluate how young adult coresiders and residentially independent siblings were positioned in contemporary Canadian and American films relative to common indices of adulthood. By juxtaposing similarly aged characters from the same family unit who do and do not reside within the family home, we can better appreciate how the media construct the relationship between residential dependence/independence and adulthood. As Schreier (2012) noted, this methodology involves the iterative development of a hierarchical coding frame to organize and describe manifest and latent meanings in qualitative data.

Data Collection

Relevant films were located using the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and Google. To be included, films had to be feature length (more than 90 minutes), fiction, and English language. They also had to feature a young adult (roughly 18–35) protagonist or deuteragonist (i.e., secondary main character) who was coresiding with one or more parents in the family home and at least one similarly aged sibling (< 10 year difference) who was living outside the family home or had imminent plans to do so (e.g., leaving for college). As understandings of coresidence vary across cultures and over time (cf. Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Li & Hung, 2019; Ponti & Smorti, 2020) and given our focus on American and Canadian representations in the postrecession and prepandemic period, we included only films released between January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2021 that were set in the United States or Canada. Our dataset ultimately included 11 films featuring a total of 11 coresiding protagonists or deuteragonists and 11 adult sibling characters (Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 here]

Data Analysis

We developed a coding frame by dividing the films as evenly as possible across four researchers. Each researcher developed an individual coding frame to account for depictions of adulthood and development in their assigned films. These coding frames were generated through a blend of inductive (data-driven) and deductive (concept-driven) approaches and guided by the open coding procedure detailed by Schreier (2012). First, during the conceptualization phase, all researchers viewed their assigned films multiple times, looking for how coresiders and residentially independent peers were portrayed. They took notes on individual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving and how these related broadly to lay and academic conceptualizations of development, adulthood, and maturity. They paid attention to similarities and differences between coresiders and siblings within each film and amongst characters across films. Second, in the category definition step, all investigators grouped similar observations and concepts together and defined them based on their common characteristics. In this step, researchers consulted developmental literature to nourish emerging ideas. Last, in the category development phase, all researchers introduced structure to their coding frames through hierarchical organization and the development of mutually exclusive and exhaustive dimensions and subcategories.

The four coding frames involved a series of hierarchically organized dimensions and subcategories (Schreier, 2012). The research team then met several times to merge these individual frames into a single coding frame. Through this integration process, similar dimensions were consolidated, duplicate dimensions were removed, and dimension and subcategory definitions were refined by returning to film data and the developmental literature. The team then undertook trial coding to test the coding frame's reliability. Four pilot films were

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2
3 selected for trial coding based on their breadth of sibling and coresider content. The first four
4 authors took part in trial coding, and each pilot film was viewed by two different researchers.
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6 When trial coding the films, the researchers used Google Sheets displaying markers of adulthood
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8 as rows and films as columns. For each marker of adulthood, the researchers recorded whether
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10 the coresider and adult sibling characters in each film were portrayed as positively evidencing
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12 the marker (present), clearly lacking the marker (absent), or making progress towards achieving
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14 the marker (developing). Where there was insufficient evidence, the marker was categorized
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16 under insufficient data. Trial coding results were compared for intercoder consistency, and all
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18 inconsistencies ($n = 7$) were highlighted for group discussion and remedial action. Intercoder
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20 inconsistencies were addressed by clarifying the definitions of relevant dimensions and
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22 subcategories and adding new subcategories where needed. Two researchers subsequently
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24 divided and coded all films using the revised coding frame. In the end, only five inconsistencies
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26 emerged between coders, and all were the result of data entry errors.
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33 **Results**

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35 The findings of our qualitative content analysis are presented according to two analytic
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37 dimensions: social markers of adulthood and characterological markers of adulthood.
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40 **Social Markers of Adulthood**

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42 This analytic dimension captured six social statuses commonly associated with adulthood
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44 in Canada and the United States (completed or completing post-secondary education, conjugal
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46 relationship experience, financial and residential independence, parenthood, and full-time work).
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48 See Table 2 for a summary of the presence, absence, or development of social markers of
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50 adulthood across coresiders and residentially independent siblings. In what follows, we consider
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3 how coresiding young adults and young adult sibling characters are differently portrayed in
4 terms of each of these social statuses.
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8 [Insert Table 2 here].
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10 ***Has Completed or is Completing Postsecondary Education***

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12 Postsecondary education included educational attainment of an apprenticeship or trades
13 certificate or diploma, college or other recognized non-university certificate or diploma, or a
14 university degree (Clark, 2007; Orton, 2009). In terms of the postsecondary education of
15 coresiders, four out of 11 successfully graduated with diplomas or bachelor's degrees, but none
16 were employed in their area of training. For instance, Aura (*Tiny Furniture*) graduated with a
17 filmmaking degree but did not pursue work in the filmmaking industry (Dunham, 2010) and Pat
18 (*Silver Linings Playbook*) was a high-school teacher who lost his job following a violent incident
19 (Russell, 2012). Abe (*Dark Horse*) had some college education, but dropped out without
20 completing a degree (Solondz, 2011). Scott (*King of Staten Island*; Apatow, 2020) and Pete (*Pete*
21 *and Cleo*; Hamilton, 2010) definitively did not pursue postsecondary education, not having
22 completed high school, and the educational status of the five remaining coresiders was unclear.
23 Thus, most coresiders were depicted as having some level of postsecondary training.
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40 In contrast, residentially independent siblings were nearly twice as likely to be depicted
41 as having completed (3/11) or completing (4/11) postsecondary education. As implied by their
42 occupations, Richard (*Dark Horse*) completed medical school (Solondz, 2011) and Jake (*Silver*
43 *Linings Playbook*) completed law school (Russell, 2012). Moreover, Cleo (*Pete and Cleo*;
44 Hamilton, 2010) often discussed his progress towards a master's degree and Wendy (*Take Me*
45 *Home Tonight*; Dowse, 2011) applied to a master's program at Cambridge after successfully
46 completing her bachelor's degree. Thus, although both coresiders and siblings were depicted as
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3 having achieved some postsecondary education, siblings were presented as more likely to find
4 employment in their area of training and to achieve higher levels of education than coresiders.
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7 ***Has Conjugal Relationship Experience***

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10 This marker of adulthood was defined as being in or having previous experience with a
11 marriage, common-law, or long-term cohabiting romantic relationship (Clark, 2007). Across all
12 films, only one coresider was portrayed as having past conjugal relationship experience and none
13 were currently in conjugal relationships. Pat (*Silver Linings Playbook*) was recently divorced,
14 having been placed under a restraining order by his wife after assaulting her lover (Russell,
15 2012). Ten coresiders were depicted as having no conjugal relationship experience, though eight
16 were depicted as casually dating, often awkwardly. For instance, coresider Abe (*Dark Horse*)
17 spent several hours waiting and sleeping outside the home of his love interest after she stood him
18 up on their first date. When she eventually returned home, Abe stated “I know this might take
19 you by surprise.... Miranda I want to marry you. Will you accept? Don’t say anything, just think
20 about it!” (Solondz, 2011, 15:52). In *King of Staten Island*, coresider Scott had sex with his love
21 interest and then asked if he could crash with her for a bit after being locked out of the family
22 home by his mother, to which she replied, “Did you just fuck me for shelter?” (Apatow, 2020,
23 1:32:33). Such cringeworthy scenes draw on and perpetuate common stereotypes of coresiders as
24 socially awkward, undesirable romantic partners, or perpetually single.
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44 Three residentially independent adult siblings were clearly depicted in conjugal
45 relationships: Hillary (*Preggoland*; Tierney, 2014) and Patt (*Jeff Who Lives at Home*; Duplass &
46 Duplass, 2011) were portrayed as married, and Jake (*Silver Linings Playbook*; Russell, 2012)
47 was portrayed as engaged. Wendy (*Take Me Home Tonight*; Dowse, 2011) was depicted as
48 progressing towards conjugal relationship status by being in a long-term romantic relationship.
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3 One of three adult siblings who were not depicted as having conjugal relationship experience
4 was young enough that her single status was normative; Claire (*King of Staten Island*; Apatow,
5 2020) is aged 18 by the film's end. The relationship status of four adult siblings was unknown.
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7 Thus, adult siblings were portrayed as more likely to have or progress towards conjugal
8 relationship experience than coresiders.
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14 ***Is Financially and Residentially Independent***

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17 Regarding material individuation from parents, including the ability to support oneself
18 fully financially and the successful establishment of an independent household (Arnett, 1994), all
19 coresiders lacked residential independence by definition. In terms of finances, coresiding young
20 adults were frequently portrayed as dependent on parents for financial support, and none of the
21 films explicitly depicted coresiders as financially independent. For example, in *Pete and Cleo*,
22 Cleo disparaged his brother for his lack of both residential and financial independence: “you are
23 a joke, you know that? You stay home and you mooch off of mom” (Hamilton, 2010, 18:00).
24
25 Throughout these works, only two coresiders progressed towards both residential and financial
26 independence; Lou (*Adoption*; Knoblauch & Matukewicz, 2016) secured employment and
27 planned to move out, while Ruth (*Preggoland*; Tierney, 2014) packed her belongings into a
28 moving van and explained her choice to move out to her father by the film's end.
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42 By comparison, residentially independent adult siblings were depicted as more materially
43 individuated from parents. Nine siblings lived independently of their parents, while two had
44 imminent plans to move out to attend college. Four out of 10 siblings were also explicitly
45 portrayed as being financially independent of their parents. For example, Abe's brother (*Dark*
46 *Horse*) is a physician (Solondz, 2011), Pat's brother (*Silver Linings Playbook*) is a lawyer
47 (Russell, 2012), and Laurel's twin, Audrey (*The Pretty One*) is a successful realtor who owns a
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3 house and rental property (LaMarque, 2013). Such portrayals framed coresiders as lagging in
4 material self-sufficiency: coresiders predominantly did not achieve financial independence
5 (despite the economic support of coresidence) while residentially independent siblings did.
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10 ***Is a Parent***

12 Parenthood is characterized by providing considerable care for at least one child within a
13 familial, or comparable, context (Human-Hendricks & Roman, 2014). In the films, none of the
14 coresiders were portrayed as being or wanting to become parents to children. For example, the
15 final scene of *Preggoland* featured coresider Ruth mouthing the words “Fuck no” to her romantic
16 partner when he noted that she looked pleased to be holding a child (1:45:18). Where the topic of
17 children appeared in the films, numerous coresiding characters were also explicitly portrayed as
18 ill-suited to care for children. Scott (*King of Staten Island*) tattooed an underage stranger in a
19 park (Apatow, 2020) and Ruth (*Preggoland*) drunkenly hit her friend’s child in the face with a
20 piñata stick (Tierney, 2014). Similarly, few residentially independent siblings were depicted as
21 having children (1/11) or making concrete plans to adopt or conceive (1/11). However, though
22 parental representations were also low amongst residentially independent siblings, only
23 coresiders were portrayed as explicitly lacking the desirable qualities for parenthood.
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40 ***Works Full Time***

42 In terms of consistently working 30 hours or more per week (Clark, 2007), most
43 coresiders were unemployed (5/11) or engaged in low-paying, part-time, entry-level positions
44 (2/11), such as a restaurant busser (Scott in *King of Staten Island*; Apatow, 2020) and a video
45 rental store salesclerk (Matt in *Take Me Home Tonight*; Dowse, 2011). Where coresiders were
46 employed, they were frequently portrayed as unfit for their positions, and several lost their jobs
47 due to incompetence, irresponsibility, or disinterest. Abe (*Dark Horse*) was fired from his
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3 father's business for not doing any actual work (Solondz, 2011), Aura (*Tiny Furniture*) lost her
4 position as a restaurant hostess due to recurring lateness and absences (Dunham, 2010), and
5
6 Harrison (*Rocky Road*) was forced out of his job as a Wall Street investment banker for claiming
7
8 excessive company expenses (Roberts, 2014). Only Ruth (*Preggoland*) is depicted as
9
10 competently and responsibly working full time at a grocery store (Tierney, 2014), and Lou
11
12 (*Adoption*) appeared to secure future full-time employment as an insurance agent near the end
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14 of the film (Knoblauch & Matukewicz, 2016). Overall, coresiders were largely portrayed as
15
16 struggling to find and maintain full-time employment given their poor work ethic and
17
18 irresponsible behavior.
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24 Most films did not explicitly portray or comment on the employment status of
25
26 residentially independent adult siblings (7/11), though it was reasonable to assume that they were
27
28 employed given their residential status. Where siblings were overtly depicted as working, they
29
30 were in prestigious occupations (4/11). Abe's brother in *Dark Horse* is a physician (Solondz,
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32 2011), Pat's brother in *Silver Linings Playbook* is a lawyer (Russell, 2012), Laurel's twin,
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34 Audrey (*The Pretty One*) is a successful realtor who owns a house and rental property
35
36 (LaMarque, 2013), and Jeff's brother (*Jeff, Who Lives at Home*) is a successful business
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38 professional (Duplass & Duplass, 2011). These occupational pursuits sharply contrast with the
39
40 unemployment or part-time, entry-level work of coresiders.
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45 **Characterological and Behavioral Markers of Adulthood**

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47 This analytic dimension considers seven characterological and behavioral markers of
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49 adulthood in Canada and the United States (evidences relational competence, avoids antisocial or
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51 deviant behavior, establishes relationships with parents as an equal adult, exhibits emotional
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53 stability and self-control, fulfills commitments and obligations, pursues realistic goals, and takes
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responsibility for self, decisions, and life). Table 3 summarizes the presence, absence, or development of characterological and behavioral markers of adulthood across coresiders and residentially independent siblings. In what follows, we consider how coresiding versus residentially independent young adult sibling characters are portrayed in terms of these social statuses.

[Insert Table 3 here].

Evidences Relational Competence

Relational competence is the ability to create and maintain close romantic, platonic, and familial bonds (Cashen, 2018). This concept regroups various relational abilities and tendencies of adulthood, including balancing personal needs with those of others, recognizing and addressing interpersonal conflict, expressing affection and care in intimate relationships, and evidencing dedication and commitment to sustaining close relationships (Shulman et al., 2011). About half the coresiders (6/11) clearly exhibited relational incompetence. For instance, rather than addressing feelings of resentment toward his brother around their lack of quality time together, coresider Pete (*Pete and Cleo*) destroyed the textbooks his brother brought on their camping excursion (Hamilton, 2010). Additionally, Ruth (*Preggoland*) and Lou (*Adoption*) both evidenced a lack of mutuality in relationships, failing to appreciate the needs and desires of others. The former selfishly ruins the baby shower of a close friend (Tierney, 2014, 00:57) while the latter brings his seriously ill brother to a party while caring for the youth (Knoblauch & Matukewicz, 2016, 1:01:15). The remaining coresiders (5/11) were depicted as developing relational competence. For example, while Scott (*King of Staten Island*) initially attempts to sabotage his mother's budding romantic relationship, he recognizes and communicates how his unresolved grief around the death of his father might be negatively impacting his family by the

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3 end of the film: “I know we don’t really talk about it much but I miss Dad. A lot.” (Apatow,
4 2020, 2:05.57). Laurel (*The Pretty One*) is portrayed as developing the ability to express care and
5 affection throughout the film as she moves from spying on her ex-boyfriend to openly expressing
6 a desire to rekindle their relationship (LaMarque, 2013). Thus, while all coresiders are initially
7 portrayed as lacking relational competence, about half develop these skills during the film.
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11 In contrast, where depictions of residentially independent siblings’ relationships were
12 present (7/11 films), the films overwhelmingly portrayed them as possessing (3/11) or
13 developing (3/11) relational competence. For example, Richard (*Dark Horse*) attempts to
14 mediate conflict between coresiding sibling Abe and their father (Solondz, 2011) and Claire
15 (*King of Staten Island*; Apatow, 2020) has close and supportive relationships with friends and
16 family. Moreover, while Pat (*Jeff, Who Lives at Home*) was initially depicted as arrogant, self-
17 involved, and insensitive to the needs and desires of others, he evidences concern and
18 commitment to others and expresses affection and warmth by the film’s end, dramatically
19 apologizing to his wife and risking his own life to save his brother. Only Hillary (*Preggoland*;
20 Tierney, 2014) consistently evidenced relational incompetence amongst residentially
21 independent siblings, spending much of the film engaged in combative, cruel, and manipulative
22 behavior. Overall, when adequate evidence was present, siblings tended to exhibit more
23 relational competence than coresiders.
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26 ***Avoids Antisocial or Deviant Behavior***

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28 Most coresiding young adults (7/11) displayed antisocial or deviant behavior. Sometimes,
29 this behavior was antagonistic and out of step with adult behavioral norms, but it did not
30 necessarily violate the laws of society (Human-Hendricks & Roman, 2014). For instance, Lou
31 (*Adoptation*; Knoblauch & Matukewicz, 2016) was shown flipping people off whilst jogging,
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3 Aura (*Tiny Furniture*; Dunham, 2010) frequently lied to others and consumed all her mother's
4 wine and food without permission, and Scott tattooed an underage stranger in a public park (*King*
5 *of Staten Island*; Apatow, 2020). Other times, the antisocial behavior of coresiders obviously
6 violated the laws of society (Human-Hendricks & Roman, 2014). Examples include Jeff's illegal
7 substance use (*Jeff, Who Lives at Home*; Duplass & Duplass, 2011), Matt's car theft and
8 destruction of others' property (*Take Me Home Tonight*; Dowse, 2011), Scott's selling of illegal
9 substances (marijuana and stolen pharmaceuticals; *King of Staten Island*; Apatow, 2020), Pat's
10 verbal and physical assault of his wife's boyfriend (*Silver Linings Playbook*; Russell, 2012),
11 Laurel's identity theft (*The Pretty One*; LaMarque 2013), or Abe's kissing of a woman without
12 consent while infected with hepatitis (*Dark Horse*; Solondz, 2011). Only two coresiders were
13 depicted as largely prosocial and adhering to the laws and customs of their context.

14
15 In contrast, only 2/11 residentially independent sibling characters were shown engaging
16 in antisocial behavior. Pat (*Jeff, Who Lives at Home*) drove recklessly at high speeds in a busy
17 residential area and eventually crashed his new vehicle into a tree (Duplass & Duplass, 2011),
18 while Audrey (*The Pretty One*) intentionally caused conflict in her boss's marriage and coldly
19 evicted her tenant with little notice (LaMarque, 2013). Where sufficient data to make a decision
20 was presented, most siblings (5/11) were depicted as prosocial, law-abiding citizens. For
21 example, both Claire (*King of Staten Island*; Apatow, 2020) and Richard (*Dark Horse*; Solondz,
22 2011) actively endured their respective coresider siblings' negative behavior while attempting to
23 mediate family conflict. Claire provided Scott with thoughtful gifts, evidenced concern for his
24 well-being and enquired about his mental health, encouraged him to socialize with peers by
25 bringing him along to social events, and consistently encouraged him to pursue worthy goals.
26 Likewise, at the behest of their mother, Abe's brother Richard offered to loan him money,
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3 expressed understanding for the apparently challenging personality of their father, and
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5 encouraged him to finish his college degree to mitigate Abe's conflict with their father. Both
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7 Richard and Claire disrupted or delayed their own activities and responsibilities to mediate such
8
9 family conflicts.
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11 12 ***Establishes Relationships with Parents as an Equal Adult*** 13

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15 This marker of adulthood becomes evident through the establishment of mutual respect
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17 between young adults and their parents, as adult children come to perceive their parents as
18
19 individuals with identities beyond their parental roles, balance self-needs with the needs of their
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21 parents, and reciprocate acts of care and support (Arnett, 1997; Badger et al., 2006; White et al.,
22
23 1986). None of the coresiders established equal relationships with their parents. While adequate
24
25 evidence was absent in three cases, the dynamic between the remaining eight coresiders and their
26
27 parents resembled that of an underage child and an adult in that the coresiders were dependent on
28
29 their parents and their parents acted as caretakers. For example, Jeff (*Jeff, Who Lives at Home*;
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31 Duplass & Duplass, 2011), Lou (*Adoption*; Knoblauch & Matukewicz, 2016), Harrison (*Rocky*
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33 *Road*; Roberts, 2014), and Aura (*Tiny Furniture*; Dunham, 2010) all argued with their parents
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35 over contributing to simple household chores. After being asked to scoop the cat litter, for
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37 instance, Aura angrily accused her sister and mother of being unsympathetic toward the stresses
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39 of living at home and being unemployed (Dunham, 2010, 51:30). Other coresiders were coddled,
40
41 overindulged, and overprotected by their parents. For example, when Abe (*Dark Horse*) was
42
43 finally fired from his dad's business after years of incompetence, he expressed indignation over
44
45 being left to fend for himself, to which his brother responded, "Oh please, don't be such a drama
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47 queen. You know mom and dad will never kick you out of your bedroom" (Solondz, 2011,
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3 1:00:25). Thus, the films projected a general lack of age-appropriate relationships between
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5 coresiders and parents.
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8 Frequently, relationships between residential independent siblings and parents were not
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10 depicted (5/11). When these relationships were portrayed, siblings established themselves as
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12 equal adults more often than coresiders (6/11). Richard (*Dark Horse*) and Jake (*Silver Linings*
13
14 *Playbook*) reciprocate support received from parents; the former is consulted by his parents on
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16 coresider Abe's lack of career goals and direction (Solondz, 2011), and the latter helps his father
17
18 with money management (Russell, 2012). Other siblings maintained healthy boundaries with
19
20 their parents. For instance, Audrey (*The Pretty One*) refused to enable her father's
21
22 codependency, which she saw played out in his relationship with coresider Laurel (LaMarque,
23
24 2013). The ability to engage in reciprocal support while maintaining boundaries suggested
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26 healthy, mutual relationships between adults, which contrasted with coresiders' enmeshed or
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28 dependent–caretaker dynamic with their parents.
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32 33 ***Exhibits Emotional Stability and Self-Control***

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35 This marker of adulthood refers to the ability to align emotions and behaviors with the
36
37 standards and goals expected by society given one's age and personal circumstances, even in the
38
39 face of everyday stressors, strains, and impulses (Hennecke & Freund, 2017). Only 2/11
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41 coresiders were depicted as developing emotional stability and self-control by learning to
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43 manage symptoms of bipolar disorder better (Pat in *Silver Linings Playbook*; Russell, 2012) and
44
45 learning how to engage in healthy conflict and establish a stable identity (Laurel in *The Pretty*
46
47 *One*; LaMarque, 2013). Other coresiders presented a low (4/11) degree of emotional stability and
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49 self-control, as evidenced by an inability to express, cope with, or regulate emotions and
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51 behavior in age-appropriate ways. For instance, Aura expressed her disapproval about a party her
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3 sister throws while their mom was out of town by impulsively walking through the party in her
4 underwear in hopes of embarrassing her sister (Dunham, 2010). Five films lacked sufficient
5 evidence to make a decision.
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10 Where sufficient evidence was available, Richard (*Dark Horse*), Wendy (*Take Me Home*
11 *Tonight*), and Claire (*King of Staten Island*) could regulate their emotions and behavior in
12 response to their coresiding siblings' immature or pathological behaviors. For instance, despite
13 feeling frustrated with her coresiding brother, Claire (*King of Staten Island*) tried calmly to
14 dissuade him from ruining their mom's budding romantic relationship (Apatow, 2020, 1:14:30).
15 On the other hand, Pat (*Jeff, Who Lives at Home*) and Hillary (*Preggoland*) could not express,
16 cope with, or regulate their emotions or behaviors in healthy ways. For instance, coresider Ruth's
17 sister tried (and failed) to conceive throughout the duration of *Preggoland*, and showed
18 malicious envy in response to the attention and support coresider Ruth received when faking a
19 pregnancy (Tierney, 2014). Overall, the emotional stability and self-control or lack thereof of
20 adult sibling characters was largely evidenced in their interactions with coresiders, with the
21 former emerging in stark contrast to (and thus emphasizing) the coresiders' dysregulated
22 presentation.
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40 ***Fulfills Commitments and Obligations***

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42 Only two coresiders were depicted as consistently fulfilling explicit or implied
43 commitments and obligations to others. Pete (*Pete and Cleo*) fulfilled familial obligations,
44 providing emotional and practical support to his mother and younger brother after the death of
45 their father (Hamilton, 2010), while Harrison (*Rocky Road*) fulfilled his commitment to help to
46 save his father's ice cream truck business (Roberts, 2014). Four coresiders developed this
47 tendency across the course of the films, as depicted through employment and caretaking
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3 responsibilities. For instance, Lou (*Adoption*) progressed toward adequately meeting the
4 obligations of caring for his younger adoptive brother, Owen, as the movie progressed
5 (Knoblauch & Matukewicz, 2016). In contrast, Abe (*Dark Horse*) routinely failed to complete
6 spreadsheets assigned to him while working for his dad's business (Solondz, 2011) and Aura
7 (*Tiny Furniture*) consistently failed to show up for shifts when working as a hostess. For the
8 remaining three films, there was insufficient data to make a judgment on this aspect of
9 adulthood.
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19 Where sufficient data was available to make a judgment (5/11 films), evidence supported
20 adult siblings' ability to fulfill commitments and obligations to work, education, and family. For
21 example, Jake in *Silver Linings Playbook* successfully built his career as a lawyer (Russell,
22 2012), while Claire in *King of Staten Island* was committed to school and consistently providing
23 emotional support to her family (Apatow, 2020). Thus, although coresiders were sometimes
24 depicted as fulfilling their commitments and obligations or developing these capacities, they
25 sometimes shirked their duties, whereas the films never depicted siblings as shirking their
26 commitments and obligations.
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37 ***Pursues Realistic Goals***

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39 This subcategory encapsulated striving to achieve desired, specific, and achievable
40 income, career, and relationship outcomes or other normative future-oriented states (Ranta et al.,
41 2014). Most coresiders (8/11) were depicted as not pursuing realistic goals for their future. For
42 some, this meant a lack of future aspirations (5/11). For others, it meant grandiose or poorly
43 thought out aspirations (2/11) for which no meaningful action was taken (1/11). For instance,
44 Scott (*King of Staten Island*; Apatow, 2020) aspired to open a tattoo diner, where patrons would
45 be tattooed while dining (an idea his friends and family disparaged as unappealing, unsanitary,
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3 and unrealistic). Though Scott attempted to make some progress towards this goal through a
4 tattoo apprenticeship, he quickly abandoned this pursuit. Conversely, three coresiders are shown
5 as developing and working toward realistic goals, Harrison (*Rocky Road*), who achieves his goal
6 of saving the family business (Roberts, 2014), Ruth (*Preggoland*), who earns a promotion and
7 moves out of her father's basement suite, and Pat (*Silver Linings Playbook*), who achieves a
8 healthier mindset and lifestyle.
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17 Where sufficient evidence was present (5/11 films), most residentially independent
18 siblings had (4/11) or developed (1/11) realistic career, educational, or family goals and took
19 meaningful action toward achieving these goals throughout the course of the films. For instance,
20 Claire (*King of Staten Island*) and Andrew (*Adoptation*) were progressing toward career and
21 educational goals by attending university and working at an internship, respectively (Apatow,
22 2020; Knoblauch & Matukewicz, 2016). Hillary (*Preggoland*) was working toward starting a
23 family by trying to conceive and looking into adoption (Tierney, 2014). Only Pat (*Jeff, Who*
24 *Lives at Home*) failed to set realistic goals and exert appropriate effort toward reaching them,
25 instead spending lavishly while failing to progress in his career or develop some means of
26 increasing his income. Thus, adult siblings were more likely to be depicted as recognizing and
27 honoring socially sanctioned, practical, and age-appropriate courses of action, whereas
28 coresiders were often unable or unwilling to direct their efforts towards doing the same.
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44 ***Takes Responsibility for Self, Decisions, and Life***

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47 This marker referred to young adults' ability to assume responsibility or moral
48 accountability for their life choices and actions (for example, by accepting responsibility for and
49 correcting their own mistakes) (Greene et al., 1992). Roughly half the coresiders (6/11)
50 developed this capacity over the course of the films. Ruth in *Preggoland* made a series of bad
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3 decisions in the first half of the film, from throwing an after-hours party in the grocery store she
4 works at to faking a pregnancy for attention. As the film progressed, Ruth took responsibility by
5 fessing up to these decisions, acknowledging how her behavior had hurt others, and apologizing
6 to her friends, family, and love interest/boss (Tierney, 2014). However, 3/11 coresiders failed in
7 this regard for the whole films. For instance, Pete in *Pete and Cleo* blamed failing to launch on
8 oppression by the White man and being parentified, or having to take on age-inappropriate
9 family responsibilities, after the death of his father (Hamilton, 2010). Sufficient evidence to
10 make a decision was absent for the two other coresiding characters.
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22 Conversely, where sufficient evidence was present, siblings habitually took responsibility
23 for themselves, their decisions, and their life (4/11) or progressed towards the same (1/11). For
24 instance, Audrey moved out after her mother's death, built a successful career, and owned her
25 home, while by the end of *Jeff, Who Lives at Home*, Pat started to take responsibility for his
26 arrogant and financially irresponsible behavior, saying to his wife: "Things have gotten way off
27 track. And weird and shitty. And I'm a big part of that, and I'm really sorry for it" (Duplass &
28 Duplass, 2011, 1:09:15). Sufficient evidence to make a decision was absent in six of the films.
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30 Although coresiders were mostly depicted as taking responsibility or developing the capacity to
31 do so, they were sometimes depicted as failing in this regard throughout the whole film, whereas
32 siblings were always depicted as taking responsibility or developing the capacity to do so.
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34 Across films, coresiders were largely depicted as having acquired or progressed towards few
35 characterological and behavioral markers of adulthood. Ultimately, adult siblings were depicted
36 as more on time in terms of exhibiting age-appropriate characterological and behavioral markers
37 than coresiders.
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Discussion

The present study explored how coresiding young adults and their residentially independent siblings were portrayed with respect to common Western social and characterological markers of adulthood. Across films, coresiders were largely depicted as having acquired or progressed toward few (if any) social markers of adulthood. For every social index considered, coresiders were less likely than residentially independent siblings to be portrayed as achieving adult milestones. In other words, in addition to being residentially independent, sibling characters are more likely than coresident young adults to be depicted as completed or completing schooling, having conjugal relationships, attaining financial independence, having children, and working full time. Conversely, coresiding characters are always more likely than their siblings to lack key social markers of adulthood. The comparison is particularly stark for working full time, conjugal relationship experience, and financial independence. In terms of characters' development toward gaining social markers, coresiders are depicted more often as developing towards more social markers of adulthood (with moving out being the most common index). Thus, adult siblings were depicted as more on time in terms of age-appropriate social role and responsibility acquisition than coresiders.

Residentially independent siblings were also more likely than coresiders to be portrayed as achieving characterological markers of adulthood. Conversely, coresiding characters are always (i.e., for every index) more likely than their siblings to exhibit the absence of key characteristics of adulthood. This contrast is most apparent in relationship to establishing relationships with parents as an equal adult (absent for 8/11 coresiders vs. 0/11 siblings), acting toward achieving realistic goals (absent for 8/11 coresiders vs. 1/11 siblings) and avoiding antisocial or deviant behavior (absent for 7/11 of coresiders vs. 2/11 siblings). In terms of

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3 characters' development toward gaining characterological maturity, slightly more coresiders than
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5 residentially independent siblings are depicted as developing towards these markers of adulthood
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7 (with the contrast most apparent in the takes responsibility for self, decisions, and life
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9 subcategories). Here again, adult siblings were depicted as more developmentally on time than
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11 coresiders.
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15 In sum, the films in the present analysis portray coresident young adults as largely failing
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17 to embody adulthood as it is commonly constructed in the West (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020).
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19 Young adults who live at home are depicted as globally immature; they lack not only residential
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21 independence, but also the statuses, skills, characteristics, capacities, and desires of adulthood
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23 more broadly. In contrast, adult sibling characters are depicted as overwhelmingly
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25 developmentally on time in terms of age-appropriate roles and personal attributes. In these
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27 contrasts, residentially independent siblings serve as foil characters (i.e., “a character ... who, by
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29 sharp contrast, serves to stress and highlight” distinctive features of a protagonist [Abrams &
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31 Harpham, 2015, p. 294]) who differ from coresiders in ways that better highlight the distinct
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33 qualities of young adults who live at home.
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39 Contrasting residentially independent and coresiding young adult characters in this
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41 manner accentuates the off-time personal and social development of coresiders. These foil
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43 characters (Smiley, 2005) work to develop the trope of the immature coresider, suggesting that
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45 this living arrangement reflects the individual qualities of coresiders, not their family dynamics
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47 or broader socioeconomic contexts. Because these characters are siblings, these matched
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49 portrayals also suggest that the residential status of coresiders is attributable to their global
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51 immaturity. They suggest that living at home—and other absent social role markers—reflects a
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53 difference between individuals, as opposed to, say, family finances or parenting approaches. The
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3 question of “if *they* can do it, why can’t *you*?” permeates many of these films. With
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5 socioeconomic and family factors held stable, audiences are primed to consider how individual
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7 differences account for the relative success and failure of young adult siblings to attain various
8
9 markers of adulthood, including—but not limited to—residential independence. Such portrayals
10
11 are in line with the findings of Smith et al. (in press), who pointed to the responsabilization of
12
13 young adult coresiders. However, by looking at matched sibling pairs from the same family, the
14
15 current work eschews the significance of parenting styles or failures by highlighting the
16
17 comingling of successful and unsuccessful adults within the same developmental context, thus
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19 intensifying the sense of individual responsibility within contemporary films.
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24 **Contributions and Implications**

25
26 The present findings contribute to our understanding of how coresidence and coresiders
27
28 are portrayed in Western mass media. We see that coresiders are framed in contemporary films
29
30 as a particular kind of young person. While negative attitudes toward Millennials and Generation
31
32 Z at large are common in the West (these generations are often portrayed as lazy, entitled, and
33
34 narcissistic; Esposito & Raymond, 2023), coresiders are positioned in contemporary films as a
35
36 particularly troubling class of young people who are failing to develop socially, psychologically,
37
38 or relationally. As Worth (2021) noted, such “stereotypes about laziness and personal failure” (p.
39
40 30) present a simplistic and antagonistic view of coresidence. They also have implications for the
41
42 wellbeing of coresiders and parents. Falling behind the expectations of society, parents, and
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44 peers with regard to achieving markers of adulthood has been linked with psychological distress,
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46 depression, and anxiety amongst American young adults (Culatta & Clay-Warner 2021). Such
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48 experiences can have lasting impacts on individuals—studies have shown that psychological
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3 distress in young adulthood can hinder educational and occupational achievement and increase
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5 the risk of substance use and violence (Patel et al. 2007).
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7
8 More broadly, the current analysis strongly suggests that media depictions of coresidence
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10 tend to reinforce traditional developmental norms and understandings of adulthood in the face of
11
12 rapidly changing social and economic realities (Smith et al., in press). As Tomaszczyk and
13
14 Worth (2020) noted: “the prevalence of negative stereotypes about millennials as lazy, entitled
15
16 and coddled in the media ignore the economic forces that contribute to young adults’ inability to
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18 transition into independent living situations” (pp. 10–11). Set against sibling foils, the
19
20 characteristic immaturity and developmental atypicality of coresiding characters is highlighted,
21
22 driving home stigmatized notions of personal responsibility and individual defect. Within this
23
24 trope, coresidence is cast as an inevitable outcome of failed development amongst a specific
25
26 group of immature young adults. At the same time, political and economic drivers of coresidence
27
28 are obscured (Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Newman, 2012) and relevant social policies are spared
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30 interrogation (Chevalier, 2017). Such individuated rhetoric contradicts existing research, which
31
32 validates families’ use of coresidence as a strategy to navigate economic challenges largely
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34 outside of their control, like increased competition in job markets, rising housing costs, and
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36 extended periods of higher education (Mazurik et al., 2020; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2020). It also
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38 overlooks the important influence of social policies, programs, and processes on rates of young
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40 adult coresidence. For example, where young adults have access to affordable housing and
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42 education, coresidence rates are much lower (Arundel & Ronald, 2016). In short, the trope of the
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44 immature coresider favors individualized explanations of fault and failure over systemic
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46 explanations for coresidence and risks harming young people.
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Limitations

The present study has several limitations. First, it included only North American films in English. This limits the generalizability of our findings, as studies have found important cultural differences in coresidence rates and attitudes across cultures (e.g., Arnett & Galambos, 2003; Britton, 2013; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2020). Cultural differences in markers of adulthood have also been noted, suggesting that the conceptual model of adulthood used here could have limited applicability to other cultural settings (Arnett & Galambos, 2003). Last, as we examined films from 2010–2020, we cannot comment on possible shifts in portrayals of coresidence that might have followed the COVID-19 pandemic (Kajta et al., 2022).

Future Directions

Given that coresidence rates and attitudes vary across cultures, future research should attend to film depictions of young adult coresidence in other cultural settings and with reference to local developmental criteria. Such analyses and comparisons across contexts would provide a clearer understanding of how this living situation is portrayed in popular mass media around the globe. Future research might also examine portrayals of coresidence that have emerged since the COVID-19 pandemic to see if this event and the resulting forced displacement of many young persons has occasioned a shift in media representations. In addition, researchers must begin to investigate how exposure to stigmatized media portrayals of coresidence shapes attitudes toward coresidence and influences the wellbeing of young adult coresiders and their families via internalized stigma, social conflict, or other means. Attention should also be paid to how parents of coresiding young adult children evaluate the developmental status of their own coresiding and residentially independent children.

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Table 1*Film Information*

Title (Year)	Coresider Information	Sibling Information
Tiny Furniture (2010)	Aura: Female, early 20s, single, unemployed/restaurant host, no kids	Nadine: Female, 17, single, beginning college, no kids
Pete and Cleo (2010)	Pete: Male, mid 20s, single, college student, no kids	Cleo: Male, early 30s, single, unemployed, no kids
Dark Horse (2011)	Abe: Male, 35, single, employed in family business, no kids	Richard: Male, early 30s, married, physician, expecting
Jeff, Who Lives at Home (2011)	Jeff: Male, 30, single, unemployed, no kids	Pat: Male, early 30s, married, business professional, no kids
Take Me Home Tonight (2011)	Matt: Male, mid 20s, single, retail worker, no kids	Wendy: Female, mid 20s, becomes single, employment status unknown, no kids
Silver Linings Playbook (2012)	Pat: Male, early 30s, divorced, unemployed, no kids	Jake: Male, mid 30s, married, lawyer, no kids
The Pretty One (2013)	Laurel: Female, mid 20s, becomes coupled, real estate agent and artist, no kids	Audrey: Female, late 20s, casual relationship, real estate agent/landlord, no kids
Preggoland (2014)	Ruth: Female, 35, becomes coupled, grocery store clerk then assistant manager, no kids	Hillary: Female, late 30s, married, employed, one kid
Rocky Road (2014)	Harrison: Male, early 30s, hedge fund broker to ice cream shop sales/owner, no kids	Unnamed: Male, age unknown, employment status unknown, two kids
Adoptation (2016)	Lou: Male, 22–24, single, unemployed, no kids	Andrew: Male, mid 20s, dating, internship, no kids
King of Staten Island (2020)	Scott: Male, 24, casually dating, unemployed/restaurant busser, no kids	Claire: Female, 17, single, preparing to attend college, no kids

Table 2*Social Markers of Adulthood*

Social Marker	Character	Absent	Present	Developing	Insufficient Data
Completed or completing post-secondary education	Coresider	2/11	4/11	0/11	5/11
	Sibling	0/11	3/11	4/11	4/11
Conjugal relationship experience	Coresider	10/11	1/11	0/11	0/11
	Sibling	3/11	3/11	2/11	4/11
Financial independence	Coresider	9/11	0/11	2/11	0/11
	Sibling	0/11	4/11	1/11	6/11
Parenthood	Coresider	11/11	0/11	0/11	0/11
	Sibling	5/11	1/11	1/11	4/11
Residential independence	Coresider	9/11	0/11	2/11	0/11
	Sibling	0/11	9/11	2/11	0/11
Works full time	Coresider	7/11	1/11	1/11	2/11
	Sibling	0/11	4/11	0/11	7/11

Table 3*Characterological and Behavioral Markers of Adulthood*

Behavioral Marker	Character	Absent	Present	Developing	Insufficient Data
Evidences relational competence	Coresider	6/11	0/11	5/11	0/11
	Sibling	1/11	3/11	3/11	4/11
Avoids antisocial or deviant behavior	Coresider	7/11	2/11	0/11	2/11
	Sibling	2/11	5/11	0/11	4/11
Establishes relationships with parents as an equal adult	Coresider	8/11	0/11	0/11	3/11
	Sibling	0/11	6/11	0/11	5/11
Exhibits emotional stability and self-control	Coresider	4/11	0/11	2/11	5/11
	Sibling	2/11	3/11	0/10	6/10
Fulfills commitments and obligations	Coresider	2/13	2/11	4/11	3/11
	Sibling	0/11	5/11	0/11	6/11
Pursues realistic goals	Coresider	8/11	0/11	3/11	0/11
	Sibling	1/11	4/11	1/11	5/11
Takes responsibility for self, decisions, and life	Coresider	3/11	0/11	6/11	2/11
	Sibling	0/11	4/11	1/11	6/11

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3 Raw data associated with this study are not available for open download (all films are copyright
4 protected materials). Coding manuals and materials used in this study are not available for open
5 download. No aspects of this study were pre-registered.
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