What Motivates the Consumption of Popular Culture Media in Emerging Adulthood?
An Examination of Arnett’s (1995) Five Self-Socialization Uses of Media

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Poster presented at the 7th annual Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood, Miami, Florida, October 16th, 2015

Electronic copies of this presentation are available for download at http://faculty.salisbury.edu/~lcgarmon/research.htm

Introduction

- Reading/Watching popular culture media is normative during emerging adulthood, but it is unclear why some media is consumed more than others.
- Arnett (1995) proposes 5 Self-Socialization Uses: 
  - Entertainment, Identity Formation, High Sensation, Coping, and Culture Identification (see Table 1).
  - This view is consistent with the assumption all individuals actively select the media to which they are exposed in order to satisfy personal needs (see Coyne, Padilla-Walker, & Howard, 2013)
    - Uses and Gratification Approach (Rubin, 1994)
    - Media Practice Model (Brown et al., 2002)
- 3 recent franchises include themes of potential interest to emerging adults as they explore the transition from adolescence into emerging adulthood, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships and coping with death
  - The Harry Potter Series
    - Positive relationships do not exist for the main character during childhood
    - Protagonist continuously deals with death, particularly of parental/mentor figures
  - The Twilight Saga
    - Inadequate interpersonal relationships with parents & peers for the main character
    - Unhealthy relationships among romantic partners (Insecure Attachment?)
  - The Hunger Games Trilogy
    - Incomplete interpersonal relationships for main character (Avoidant Attachment?)
    - Characters repeatedly deal with death and torture

Methods

- 421 emerging adults participated during Phase 1 (Spring) or Phase 2 (Fall)
  - Medium-sized Mid-Atlantic university
  - Ages ranged from 18 to 25
    - mean = 19.42
    - 67.2% 18 or 19 years of age
  - Majority self-identified as female (N = 305; 72.4%)
  - Majority self-identified as White (N = 308, 73.2%)
- Online Survey assessed
  1) Frequency of reading each book or watching each film in each of the 3 media franchises
  2) Perceptions of each franchise, including respondents’ motivation to read/watch each franchise using Arnett’s (1995) 5 Self-Socialization Uses (see Table 1).
- Participants divided into 4 Exposure Categories
  - Total Exposure summed for each Franchise
    - Maximum Exposures for each Book/Film capped at 6
    - The Harry Potter Series
      - 7 books, 8 films, 90 possible exposures
    - The Twilight Saga
      - 4 books, 5 films, 54 possible exposures
    - The Hunger Games Trilogy
      - 3 books, 1 film, 24 possible exposures
  - Percentiles were used to create 4 separate categories
    - Low, Average, High, or Very High
    - For each Franchise
    - For each Phase
    - Combined across Phases for each Franchise
Results
- Exposure to media franchise for emerging adults was high
  - Most had read a book or watched a film in each franchises (see Figures 1-3)
  - 87.6% reported at least one exposure during the previous year
- A series of One-Way ANOVAs reveal exposure was significantly associated with Self-Socialization Use scores (see Figures 4-8)
  - Individuals in higher Exposure Categories reported higher Use scores
  - Trends for The Twilight Saga differed slightly from the other 2 franchises for each Use
  - Coping appears to influence exposure to The Harry Potter Series differently
- Self-Socialization Use scores were consistently intercorrelated (see Table 2)
- Linear Regression analyses were conducted for each Franchise with Exposure Categories as dependent variables and Self-Socialization Use as independent variables (see Table 3)
  - Entertainment and Sensation Seeking Uses always contributed uniquely to Exposure Category
  - Cultural Identification Use contributed uniquely to The Harry Potter Series Exposure Category
  - Coping Use contributed uniquely to The Twilight Saga Exposure Category

Discussion
- Reported Exposure levels support our assumption emerging adults, not just adolescents, consume media from these media franchises.
- Findings also support the theory that individuals who repeatedly chose exposure to specific media franchises do so in order to satisfy specific personal needs and motivations, as opposed to theorists who view individuals are merely passive consumers of media content.
- The existence, and relevance, of Arnett’s (1995) Self-Socialization Uses was confirmed.
  - Individuals with higher levels of Exposure to media do perceive themselves as being more influenced by all Uses
  - Trends differ between franchises, suggesting these Uses may predict different exposure behavior for different media
  - Self-Socialization Use variables were significantly intercorrelated, especially within the same franchise, suggesting repeated consumption of the same popular culture media occurs for a variety of reasons.
- Future Research Questions:
  - Do the Self-Socialization Uses influence exposure equally for books and films?
  - Do demographic influences exist, particularly involving Gender or Family Income?
  - Is Identity Formation related to the development of personal identity, especially romantic expectations, such that those with a real-world view of interpersonal relationships consistent with a fictional portrayal would be more likely to perceive Identification Formation as a Self-Socialization Use of media?
  - Is Coping related to individual real-life experiences reflected in the fictional stories such that those who react more negatively to the death of someone to which they were close might be more likely perceive Coping as a Self-Socialization Use of media?

References
Table 1
Self-Reported Exposure Influence based on Arnett’s (1995) Self-Socialization Uses of Media

*In considering how many times you read the books or watched the movies in this series, please indicate below how much, if any, you feel the following factors influenced your reading and/or viewing behavior.*

(1= None / 3= Considerably / 5 = Very Much)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses of Media</th>
<th>Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>to enjoy a part of leisure life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Formation</td>
<td>to cultivate conception of own values, abilities and hopes for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation Seeking</td>
<td>to provide intense and novel stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>to relieve and dispel negative emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Identification</td>
<td>to remain connected to the larger peer values and interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 1: The Harry Potter Series Exposure](image)

![Figure 2: The Twilight Saga Exposure](image)

![Figure 3: The Hunger Games Trilogy Exposure](image)
Figure 4: Self-Socialization Use and Media Franchise Exposure: *Entertainment*

- Harry Potter, $F(3,311)=25.320$, $p<.001$
- Twilight Saga, $F(3,291)=32.332$, $p<.001$
- Hunger Games, $F(3,261)=14.278$, $p<.001$

Figure 5: Self-Socialization Use and Media Franchise Exposure: *Identify Formation*

- Harry Potter, $F(3,311)=13.858$, $p<.001$
- Twilight Saga, $F(3,291)=11.055$, $p<.001$
- Hunger Games, $F(3,261)=4.978$, $p=.002$

Figure 6: Self-Socialization Use and Media Franchise Exposure: *Sensation Seeking*

- Harry Potter, $F(3,311)=25.077$, $p<.001$
- Twilight Saga, $F(3,291)=26.936$, $p<.001$
- Hunger Games, $F(3,261)=16.176$, $p<.001$

Figure 7: Self-Socialization Use and Media Franchise Exposure: *Coping*

- Harry Potter, $F(3,311)=13.137$, $p<.001$
- Twilight Saga, $F(3,291)=13.669$, $p<.001$
- Hunger Games, $F(3,261)=3.178$, $p=.025$

Figure 8: Self-Socialization Use and Media Franchise Exposure: *Cultural Identification*

- Harry Potter, $F(3,311)=4.339$, $p=.005$
- Twilight Saga, $F(3,291)=8.439$, $p<.001$
- Hunger Games, $F(3,261)=4.356$, $p=.005$
Table 2
Media Self-Socialization Uses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Media Franchise</th>
<th>(N = 315)</th>
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<th>Cop</th>
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<td>.479***</td>
<td>.374***</td>
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Note: ENT = Entertainment Use; IDFORM = Identify Formation Use; SSEEK = Sensation Seeking Use; COPING = Coping Use; CULTID = Cultural Identification Use

Table 3
Linear Regression Analyses for Media Exposure Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Franchise</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter</td>
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<td>SE</td>
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<td>COPING</td>
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<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTID</td>
<td>-.106</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Twilight Saga   | B   | SE  | β   | t   | R² change | p   |
| Ent             | .300 | .046 | .361 | 6.548 | .000  |
| IDFORM          | .022 | .072 | .020 | .299  | ns    |
| SSEEK           | .175 | .060 | .189 | 2.932 | .004  |
| COPING          | .158 | .069 | .152 | 2.291 | .023  |
| CULTID          | .024 | .055 | .026 | .447  | ns    |

| Hunger Games    | B   | SE  | β   | t   | R² change | p   |
| Ent             | .222 | .052 | .258 | 4.240 | .000  |
| IDFORM          | .031 | .077 | .036 | .404  | ns    |
| SSEEK           | .223 | .055 | .290 | 4.056 | <.000 |
| COPING          | .016 | .079 | .017 | .202  | ns    |
| CULTID          | -.041 | .061 | -.050 | -6.66 | ns    |

Note: ENT = Entertainment Use; IDFORM = Identify Formation Use; SSEEK = Sensation Seeking Use; COPING = Coping Use; CULTID = Cultural Identification Use