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# Advocating, Unlearning, Tearing It All Down? How BIPOC Young Adults with Mental Health Concerns Perceive and Engage with the Media

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the salience of issues related to social justice, mental health, and health equity. During this time, the media have been instrumental in amplifying social movements but also in spreading mis/disinformation, violence, and hatred. Among communities who have been affected heavily during this time are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) young adults who have a mental illness/significant mental health concerns. As frequent engagers and creators of media, their perspectives are critical to informing what aspects of the media should be leveraged to promote the health, well-being, and safety of people who have been marginalized. Thus, our study asks: *How do BIPOC young adults (in the United States) who have a behavioral health diagnosis or significant mental health concerns perceive the media?* Guided by intersectionality and grounded theory, we conducted in-depth interviews with 20 participants. The results reveal participants' 1) deep recognition of how the media uphold oppressive structures and 2) identification of ways that people have used and can use the media to fight those same structures. Researchers and media leaders should listen to, center the experiences of, collaborate with, and follow the lead of people who have been marginalized. This is critical to transforming the media such that they promote the well-being of all people.

## Introduction

The media can perpetuate misleading narratives that harm people with marginalized identities – but the media can also be leveraged on a large scale to counter those narratives (Byrne, 1997; Corrigan et al., 2013; Geronimus et al., 2016; Klin & Lemish, 2008; Mok, 1998; Ramasubramanian, 2007; Stanton et al., 2017). At a historic moment (defined by COVID-19; Black Lives Matter; the January 6 2021 insurrection; and much more since the time of data collection), we examine this potential by seeking the perspectives of people who have been marginalized (PM), particularly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). (The terms PM and BIPOC will be used together henceforth in this paper to indicate an intersectional lens on racial groups subjected to marginalization; the abbreviation “BIPOC PM” will be used: See subsection titled “Theoretical basis: intersectionality” for further explanation). We specifically focus on BIPOC PM young adults in the United States who have a behavioral health diagnosis or significant mental health concerns, a group who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Few studies have explicitly examined media perceptions among this demographic, and none have done so during this time of social upheaval. Using intersectionality and grounded theory, our study seeks to qualitatively explore how people with these identities/statuses navigate mass media, how the media may affect their health, and their thoughts on solutions moving forward.

## BIPOC PM health and the media

Recent data show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health issues such as increased substance use and suicidal ideation are disproportionately affecting specific groups, including young people (indeed, most lifetime mental illness starts by age 24), racial and ethnic groups who have been marginalized, and people receiving treatment for preexisting psychiatric conditions (Czeisler et al., 2020; National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2022). People with multiple marginalized identities or statuses (e.g., queer, disabled Native American woman; transgender person with a substance use disorder) often face especially negative mental and physical health outcomes because of structural discrimination (e.g., Arani, 2020; Blick et al., 2015; Yee, 2011). Thus, one group who may be particularly impacted during this time is BIPOC young adults who have a behavioral health diagnosis or significant mental health concerns. For this and other reasons, the present study focuses on the perspectives of this group.

The media play a major role in influencing BIPOC PM health. Mainstream media content portraying BIPOC PM, racialized people with multiple marginalized identities, is scarce; and when it is present, it has been described as stereotypical, offensive, inaccurate, or incomplete (Biefeld et al., 2021; Gammage, 2015; Leavitt et al., 2015; Mastro, 2017; Smith et al., 2015, 2020). For example, Black women with mental illness are seldom portrayed in the media, contributing

to the normalization of their pain and to the “strong Black woman” stereotype (Davis, 2015; Harris & Roberson, 2014; Junior, 2021; Walker-Barnes, 2014). Such inadequate portrayals have the effect of suppressing from public consciousness the narratives of BIPOC PM, and may discourage BIPOC PM from seeking support and care (e.g., Brown et al., 2021; Corrigan et al., 2013; Junior, 2021; Klin & Lemish, 2008; Lopez, 2020; Mortensen et al., 2020). Coverage of large-scale events underscores these harmful conceptions of BIPOC PM; for example, the news often characterizes Black Lives Matter protests as threats and protestors’ actions as criminal (e.g., Brown et al., 2021; Dubey, 2020; Reid & Craig, 2021). Social media, too, has impacted the mental health of BIPOC PM – such as Asians/Asian Americans, who have been targets of violence because of COVID – in complex ways (e.g., Yang et al., 2020). Yet amid this time of crisis, there have also been media efforts to *support* BIPOC PM. For example, studies have shown the effectiveness of social media efforts to address COVID racial inequities (Jain et al., 2021) and to counter anti-Asian messages (He et al., 2021).

These media forces hold profound implications for BIPOC PM health, safety, and well-being – as suggested by much previous research (e.g., Campbell & Valera, 2020; Haft & Zhou, 2021; Stanton et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2020), and given that the media are such a pervasive and influential feature of the sociocultural landscape (Geronimus et al., 2016). For example, in a review of the literature on portrayals of race and ethnicity in US media content, Mastro (2017) described two mechanisms through which people can be harmed by negative racial or ethnic representation: 1) Among people of color, unfavorable portrayals of their racial or ethnic group can lead to undesirable emotions and self-esteem issues, and 2) among White people (“majority group”), such portrayals can lead to holding unsympathetic policy positions or behaving in ways that harm people of color.

Examining BIPOC PM’s media perceptions during a time of public health crisis and social unrest would not only be timely; it would also improve our overall understanding of how BIPOC PM perceive media depictions and narratives. Building on previous work, such as research that has examined BIPOC PM’s perceptions of the media with regard to mental health (e.g., Campbell & Valera, 2020; Johnson, 2016), our study will home in on the perspectives of BIPOC young adults who have a mental illness or significant mental health concerns. This is a group who heavily use a wide variety of media, whose identities have been represented poorly or scarcely in the media, who experience multiple interacting systems of oppression, and who have been affected particularly negatively during COVID-19 (Crenshaw, 1991; Czeisler et al., 2020; Mastro, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2022; Smith et al., 2015, 2020; Statista Research Department, 2021; The Nielsen Company, 2018). Their insights are critical to informing what creators, media industry leaders, researchers, the public, and other groups should prioritize moving forward to promote BIPOC PM health, well-being, and safety. Given the potential impact of media portrayals and stories on message recipients, representations that are holistic, informed, and accurate may have a direct positive impact on BIPOC PM mental health and may also positively impact BIPOC PM health by influencing

social policy, public opinion, funding decisions, and interventions.

### **Theoretical basis: Intersectionality**

Conceptualized and pioneered by Black feminist scholar-activists over the past few decades (Crenshaw, 1991), intersectionality refers to the “critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins, 2015, p. 2). Accordingly, we approach this study with intersectionality as our theoretical basis such that our research is guided by the understanding that people’s experiences are mutually shaped by overlapping systems of oppression and privilege – such as race, mental illness, and age. In using intersectionality as a critical framework throughout the research process, our examination of media perceptions among BIPOC PM can become more purposeful and organized with regard to how systems of power, privilege, and oppression reciprocally shape the health of BIPOC young adults who have significant mental health concerns. There have been explicit calls for intersectionality in communication research (e.g., Hernández & De Los Santos Upton, 2019; Nielsen, 2011; Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020), including calls to fund communication interventions during COVID that address racism (e.g., Hull et al., 2020). Indeed, communication research has been increasingly turning toward intersectionality to address important issues – for example, children’s experiences with media (Alper et al., 2016).

Intersectionality shaped every aspect of this study, from research question to analysis, similar to other critical media scholarship (e.g., Azhar et al., 2021). First, the research question (presented in the section below) recognizes how the *-isms* associated with race, mental illness, and age reciprocally shape social inequalities; thus, the question seeks to explore and uplift the experiences, perceptions, and narratives of BIPOC young adults with mental illness. Second, the interview questions themselves (such as “What media content makes you feel good about yourself as a person of color with mental health concerns?” and “What do you think are the most significant issues with how the media approaches your identities?”) are worded to explore participants’ experiences holistically, and to elicit experiences associated with various interlocking sources of privilege and oppression. Third, our coding, theme development, and subsequent conclusions are informed by our awareness and understanding of intersectionality.

Lastly, intersectionality also informed our use of the term “BIPOC PM” throughout this study. The term “people who have been marginalized” (PM) is used intentionally to emphasize that marginalization is a condition of oppressive structures that exists outside of the people groups involved (Cooper, 2016) as well as to signify that race intersects with other social identities like class, gender or sexual orientation that are also impacted by marginalization. The term “Black, Indigenous, and People of Color” (BIPOC) is used to indicate the aggregation of voices across a range of racial groups for the purposes of this study while acknowledging the ways that anti-Black racism in particular foregrounded social conditions during

data collection and analysis (Deo, 2021; Garcia, 2020). The stated terms are not without critique – for example, the focus on oppression at the expense of affirmation by not mentioning the inherent power of the people groups, the loss of distinction for specific racial groups when using umbrella terminology, or even supposed racial hierarchy by highlighting Black and Indigenous groups (Cooper, 2016; Deo, 2021). Some scholarship advocates for terms more empowering like “Powerful Groups Targeted for Oppression (PGTOs)” or more specific like “Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and/or Multi-Racial Groups (BHANAM)” (Cooper, 2016, para. 7). However, we believe the current language avoids reinforcing oppressive narratives while using familiar language to serve the purposes of our study.

### Research question

The current context of crisis in the US – from heightened racist violence to health inequities compounded by the ongoing COVID pandemic – both illuminates and exacerbates the longstanding harms that BIPOC PM face. While the media have contributed to this marginalization, the media can also be leveraged to stop harm, and to empower BIPOC PM to take back their own narratives and advocate for themselves without fear (e.g., Ramasubramanian, 2007; Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020). Thus, our qualitative study aims to understand how BIPOC young adults with significant mental health concerns perceive the media landscape. The results have the potential to guide development of media content and practices that could reduce discrimination toward BIPOC PM and increase empowerment, ultimately promoting the health, safety, and well-being of BIPOC PM. Such an approach is consistent with calls from public health experts to produce counter-narratives to create a culture of identity-safety that supports health for BIPOC PM (Geronimus et al., 2016). To this end, our research question is: *How do BIPOC young adults who have a behavioral health diagnosis or significant mental health concerns perceive the media?*

### Methods

To answer the research question, we conducted 20 semi-structured, in-depth interviews between November 2020 and January 2021. Our procedures were guided by intersectionality and by grounded theory, an inductive approach where one builds their theoretical analysis on patterned relationships they identify through synthesizing data into increasingly abstract conceptual categories (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). Accordingly, we did not have a hypothesis; we sought to ask non-leading, non-assumptive questions to the extent possible; and we began iterative coding and data analysis concurrently with data collection (elaborated later in this Methods section). The coupling of intersectionality and grounded theory has been used in previous social-justice-oriented research (e.g., Baird, 2021; Duran & Jones, 2020; Kassam et al., 2020). In line with grounded theory, our procedures were also guided, reflexively, by our own understandings and lived experiences as BIPOC women and genderfluid people who, though we work in various disciplines, all have the goal of justice in mind.

### Participants

All materials and procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (IRB #20–2732). Participants were recruited from US colleges and universities through departmental/institutional e-mail lists, social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), and word of mouth. Inclusion criteria for our purposive sample were: identifying as BIPOC, being 18–25 years of age, and reporting significant mental health concerns and/or a behavioral health diagnosis. Following grounded theory, we did not set an *a priori* sample size; instead, theoretical sampling of participants occurred until data saturation was reached (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012): In other words, we iteratively recruited participants and conducted interviews, reviewed and compared data across interviews, and identified areas for further exploration until we observed that no new information was revealed by collecting more data (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). Through this approach, we interviewed 20 participants.

The following demographics were self-identified by participants. The mean age of participants was 21.6 years (range 19–25 years). Broad racial and ethnic groups represented included Asian (East, South, Southeast), Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, Latinx/a/o, biracial, and mixed race. Among participants who mentioned or discussed their gender ( $n = 17$ ), 14 were women, 2 were men, and 1 was non-binary. Among participants who mentioned or discussed their sexual orientation ( $n = 8$ ), 3 were queer, 2 were straight, 1 was bisexual, 1 was lesbian/gay, and 1 was aromantic/asexual. Participants’ geographic locations included every US Census region. Because of the overall recruitment strategy, where recruitment materials advertised the study specifically to students, all participants were either current or recently graduated students (undergraduate or graduate) of universities or community colleges.

### Data collection

To ensure consistency, all interviews were conducted and transcribed by one team member, the first author. Each participant gave written informed consent prior to their interview. Interviews (38.0–104.4 minutes, mean length = 65.1 minutes) took place on Zoom, a secure video calling platform, with cameras off to protect participant identity. Interviews were audio recorded if the participant gave written permission and verbal confirmation. In total, 19 interviews were audio recorded, and one was not, with the first author taking extensive written notes instead. Interviews followed a semi-structured guide (Appendix), with questions about identities and experiences with the media, especially in relation to race and mental health. Post-interview, the first author sent the participant a mental health resource sheet; the first author also sent each participant a \$50 Amazon gift card as compensation for their time.

### Data analysis

In accordance with grounded theory, interview transcription, coding, and analysis began concurrently with data collection,

and data were collected until data saturation was reached. Detailed coding, memo writing (writing reflective and analytical notes throughout the coding of each interview), and theme development were performed by the first and second author. The approach of multiple coders/analyzers was used to understand the data through varied perspectives; this approach has been successful in previous studies (Berends & Johnston, 2005; Goodall et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2020). First, the first and second author performed several rounds of inductive, open coding (no *a priori* codes) on a few interviews. They compared codes, agreed on common codes and resolved coding disagreements, and developed a final codebook to be applied to all interviews. Next, using the codes defined in this codebook, they each coded and memo-ed 10 interviews; each interview was randomly assigned to a coder. The first and second author conferred twice to discuss and document categories and patterns that they were beginning to conceptualize. Finally, after completion of coding, they jointly generated themes from the patterns of codes they observed across all data.

## Results

We identified six themes (and corresponding subthemes), which fell into two overarching thematic areas, “how people and society shape the media” and “how the media impact people and society.” Themes and subthemes are summarized in Table 1 and described in detail below, with example quotations from participants. Participants are assigned “names” (e.g., Participant A) based on the order that their first quote appears in this section. Participant racial and gender attributes (e.g., Asian man) are included where self-identified by the participant.

### How people and society shape the media

#### Theme 1: Motivations for using the media

This theme captures participants’ thoughts about creators’, audiences’, institutions’, and participants’ own various motivations for using the media. We identified two subthemes, the first being Subtheme 1.1, *conflicting motives driving media use*: Participants pointed out that while some people and institutions use the media to uplift people and spread awareness of important issues, others use the media to exploit people and weaponize longstanding stereotypes of BIPOC PM.

Participants discussed how various media are used to educate and learn, generate discourse, advocate for causes, spread resources and information (and dispel misinformation), expand perspectives, and counteract stigma:

You know, surprisingly, TikTok has been pretty awesome because there’s actually so much wealth of knowledge on there and people just giving different insights and different information, fields and histories that I didn’t know about. Kind of like, clarifying misconceptions. One example I could think of was clarifying misconceptions about ADHD. (Participant A, Latinx person, interviewed December 2020)

I now advocate through social media. I’m very vocal now about what I express—I try to use my platform instead of recreationally to be more educational . . . [for example, becoming a] Black Lives Matter advocate, and I still use my platform to kind of educate others. (Participant B, Asian woman, interviewed November 2020)

However, they also pointed out that people and institutions often use the media to harm – to belittle BIPOC PM, profit off of their suffering, or engage in performative activism, for example:

I wish the media would build these communities [immigrants] up as more than stereotypes of potential terrorists or rapists or someone who just brings drugs over. It’s kind of crazy to see how governments and media shape how children feel about themselves. I can’t imagine right now what it’s like being a Black child in this country and then seeing people who look like you getting shot on TV. And the way that media commercializes Black suffering. (Participant C, Asian woman, interviewed December 2020)

In addition to discussing “big-picture” problems and opportunities related to using the media, participants discussed using the media to preserve or enhance their own mental and emotional health. Subtheme 1.2, *adjusting media use for personal well-being*, focuses on this. Several participants use the media, especially humorous and lighthearted content, to cope with or temporarily escape from stressful situations in their lives and in the world:

Humor is a form of self-care for me, and . . . I also appreciate when people make humor out of a sad situation, like their own personal sad situation, because I do that too, sometimes, so it’s also just nice to be able to laugh about those things. And I would say there’s a lot of mental health-related content that does show up in my feed that people kind of make humor out of, which I really do appreciate, because I do that myself. (Participant D, Black woman, interviewed December 2020)

I watch wholesome media. I do not watch anything like over PG. I just want to watch kids’ media and yeah—I consume and do

**Table 1.** Summary of results: themes and subthemes.

How people and society shape the media	How the media impact people and society
Theme 1: Motivations for using the media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subtheme 1.1: Conflicting motives driving media use</li> <li>Subtheme 1.2: Adjusting media use for personal well-being</li> </ul> Theme 2: What does “representation” mean? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subtheme 2.1: Nuanced portrayals needed but still lacking</li> <li>Subtheme 2.2: Holistic media representation from having BIPOC PM as leaders</li> <li>Subtheme 2.3: Limitations of representation</li> </ul> Theme 3: How to effect positive change in the media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subtheme 3.1: Roles that various groups must play</li> <li>Subtheme 3.2: Resistance from institutions and burden on BIPOC PM</li> </ul>	Theme 4: How BIPOC PM’s mental health and well-being are affected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subtheme 4.1: Long-lasting mental health consequences for BIPOC PM</li> <li>Subtheme 4.2: Important to well-being and self-discovery</li> </ul> Theme 5: How people’s behavior is influenced by harmful media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subtheme 5.1: How the media affect the behavior of BIPOC PM</li> <li>Subtheme 5.2: How the media affect others’ behavior toward BIPOC PM</li> </ul> Theme 6: The media’s effects on society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subtheme 6.1: Reinforcement of existing norms, misconceptions, and power structures</li> <li>Subtheme 6.2: Driver of large-scale social change</li> </ul>

things that make me happy. (Participant E, Hispanic woman, interviewed December 2020)

### Theme 2: What does ‘representation’ mean?

Participants pointed out that media portrayals of BIPOC PM have been improving overall. However, they also emphasized that stereotypes and inaccuracy still abound, and that there is still little representation of people with multiple marginalized identities. Lack of representation of certain identities/statuses can in turn contribute to consequences such as continued lack of discussion about them in real life. Notably, participants believe that media portrayals improve when BIPOC PM lead the creative process. Nonetheless, participants also hinted that improved representation is not an end goal – i.e., seeing someone on screen who resembles them does not necessarily translate to breaking down actual power structures, or to treating BIPOC PM better in real life. Three subthemes arose, the first being Subtheme 2.1, *nuanced portrayals needed but still lacking*. Participants agreed that representation of BIPOC PM has been increasing and can positively impact mental health, but that many of these representations still lack accuracy and complexity. Participants also expressed that BIPOC PM are often tokenized rather than being seen as a whole person, or, as one participant put it, “recognizing who that person is, with all the details.”

I would say it’s getting better now. But before, it was almost as if they—the media—would try to encapsulate an entire, like specifically, like my culture, into like a trope, almost. One specific example I can think of is ... Baljeet [from the Disney show *Phineas and Ferb*]. (Participant F, Asian man, interviewed November 2020)

The main issue is when there’s a character whose only purpose is to be sexy and they don’t develop her other personality traits, like when it’s sort of either like, just be sexy or played for laughs that she’s loud and gets angry easily and is emotional about stuff but doesn’t have other personality traits—then that’s what’s the issue because like, there are real Latinas who do get over-emotional and there are real people who are sexy and like having sex, but they also have other things that aren’t like—like that’s not the main thing that they’re built around. So the issue is the one-sidedness of it. (Participant G, mixed Latina/White woman, interviewed November 2020)

In particular, intersections of identities – and the complexity of people’s experiences and identities – are seldom considered or shown:

When I think of the news specifically, at least, whether that’s TV news or news I’m consuming online, I think that they portray Black people with mental health—I feel like it’s not even considered. I feel like, like when I think of the sector of education, specifically where Black students are getting pulled out of schools or harassed or assaulted by police officers for “disobedience,” there’s never a consideration of the person, the student’s mental health. (Participant D, Black woman, interviewed December 2020)

I don’t really feel very represented. I mean me. I mean, as in yeah, there can be a gay character, a Black character, poor character, whatever. But it’s like, I mean yeah, those are represented in TV—separately, though, so I very rarely feel represented. I mean, there has been a few shows I’m like, oh my God, yes—you know, like, this is me—but not really, for the most part. (Participant H, Black non-binary person, interviewed December 2020)

A second, related subtheme also arose: Subtheme 2.2, *holistic media representation from having BIPOC PM as leaders*. While participants observed an overall lack of nuanced representation as discussed above, they emphasized that where there is nuanced and realistic representation, that is a direct result of having BIPOC PM writers, producers, directors, etc. Many participants expressed that there is no way for non-BIPOC PM to authentically and knowledgeably portray BIPOC PM characters without the input of BIPOC PM, and that therefore there is a need for BIPOC PM leadership in content creation:

At least with *Moonlight* and *The Chi* specifically ... I think it was helpful, valuable that the people working on those works were also Black or were queer ... or low-income. And I think that that influenced the way that the movie ... was portrayed instead of being through the lens of a cis White male perspective. (Participant D, Black woman, interviewed December 2020)

On TikTok, I feel like the intersection between mental health and Blackness ... is represented very helpfully specifically by Black content creators. (Participant D, Black woman, interviewed December 2020)

I think that if diversity was normalized in all kinds of media in music and shows and movies and things, then it would not only make better stories that will make people feel seen and like we especially need diverse people of different intersecting identities working on these things to tell their own stories, which is why I am excited to do that and write about it and stuff. (Participant E, Hispanic woman, interviewed December 2020)

Lastly, *limitations of representation* arose as Subtheme 2.3. Participants agreed that positive representation makes people feel seen and validated, and can build a sense of community and solidarity. However, they also observed that such representation is not equivalent to abolishing the structures that endanger BIPOC PM day to day, and they pointed out that while representation is ostensibly increasing, this still ultimately benefits those already in power:

What does that look like in terms of even just like abolishing the police? Like, there’s no direct connection. It’s something that’s good. Sure, I’ll smile at it. I’ll be happy. Yes, representation, but that doesn’t mean that it’s stopping another death from happening. So I think that even more so than that, you have again conversations about abolishment, right—so this whole idea of like, you gotta tear the whole thing down. (Participant I, Black woman, interviewed December 2020)

There’s also been a huge wave of Black art being produced. And you know, it’s a good time for that. But I’m also very heavily critical of it because the people that are making profits off of that are like, White ... In terms of the profits that are being gained, they’re not necessarily going to these communities to improve their, you know, like the conditions that would lead to better outcomes, right, that would lead to better mental health, that would lead to more future opportunities. (Participant A, Latinx person, interviewed December 2020)

### Theme 3: How to effect positive change in the media

In addition to discussing what they believe needs to improve in the media to promote BIPOC PM well-being, participants also offered thoughts on how these changes can be made. The first subtheme we identified was Subtheme 3.1, *roles that various groups must play*. Participants believe that change in the media will result

from the effort of multiple groups. For example, it was suggested that *media institutions* should develop policies to protect BIPOC PM who use their platforms, address biased algorithms, and end censorship practices that target BIPOC creators; *creators* should listen to and amplify the voices of BIPOC PM, make space for them to lead, and incorporate their input; and *the public* should demand change and be more conscious about the media they support.

I think it's in parts responsibility of the people who are in positions of power to put out that kind of content. So like, for example, in the realm of TV and movies . . . for White creators, producers, directors who are in those spaces, like really pulling in people of other races or identity or other races or genders or sexualities, etc., what have you, including people who have mental health issues or who have a disability. I really think the onus is on people who are already in those positions, who have the power to really provide a space for representation in the media. And it's important for them to do that kind of research and to really actively seek out people to come on and be on those boards and not just have people who are on those boards just to say, "Oh, we have Black representative or we have an Asian representative or a Native representative." (*Participant D, Black woman, interviewed December 2020*)

Well, the unfortunate part of it is that it's really the people, you know. Because artists are only ever going to make the thing that's gonna make them money. And people that make TV are only ever going to make TV shows that make them money. So if they're putting these things out, then that's because that's what the people want to see. So it'd really have to be people coming together and realizing how this is toxic and then not, like just opting not to watch that content anymore, not to listen to that content anymore, right, because the people that are making money from things are always gonna change if the people are changing. (*Participant J, Black man, interviewed December 2020*)

A second subtheme we found was Subtheme 3.2, *resistance from institutions and burden on BIPOC PM*. Participants believe that powerful people and institutions *should* bear the burden of making a change, but that these people/institutions would not do so – so in reality, the burden would fall on BIPOC PM:

The mainstream [medias] are all corporately owned almost all by the same few people, right, so the message that we're getting is, at present, is the ones that, like, "elite" owners of these are approving of, and so they're not going to approve of anything that is too "radical" that will actually harm their potential profits and God forbid, you know, provide for actual material change for the marginalized. So I can't say it's their responsibility because they will definitely not take that responsibility. (*Participant A, Latinx person, interviewed December 2020*)

I have my qualms about this because I think as people of color, we're kind of like forced to be the experts of our oppression or our marginality, and that is kind of frustrating. I think it should be the responsibility of everyone to bring this to the table, right. But at the end of the day, I think the people who are going to bring it to the table are the people that experience it. And I think at the end of the day, it's going to be people of color who have to raise this awareness. (*Participant K, Latinx mixed race (Black, Indigenous, White) woman, interviewed November 2020*)

Corporations like Twitter and Facebook have answers that they need to come up with of why they're letting [misinformation] happen and what they could do to prevent it, because there are probably policies they could put in place that aren't against freedom of speech—which they refuse to do, though. (*Participant B, Asian woman, interviewed November 2020*)

## How the media impact people and society

### Theme 4: How BIPOC PM's mental health and well-being are affected

Participants expressed that the media have played a major role in shaping their mental health throughout their lives. They discussed both past and current media experiences that have left lasting impressions on them, demonstrating that the media can affect someone not only in the moment but also long afterward. The first subtheme is Subtheme 4.1, *long-lasting mental health consequences for BIPOC PM*. Participants discussed how both current media and media they were exposed to in childhood and adolescence have negatively impacted them. From kids' shows to social media, these often promote unrealistic and White-centric body ideals, caricature or erase BIPOC PM, expose people to bleak realities, and facilitate constant comparison of one's life to others' (often leading to feelings such as impostor syndrome). As a result, participants have felt stressed, isolated, and othered; for many, processing these feelings has been a continuous journey.

I think the media does a really big part in shaping how people perceive their self-worth, and it's hard not to internalize that, and I think it requires that a lot of people do a lot of unlearning that they've been conditioned to believe growing up. (*Participant C, Asian woman, interviewed December 2020*)

I do not recommend letting the Internet raise you because that was a very tumultuous time for me because I was exposed to all like, the social justice stuff and the reality of the world and how scary and confusing it is. (*Participant E, Hispanic woman, interviewed December 2020*)

When I was growing up in like middle and high school, I feel like the portrayal of women and just like how they looked and the ideal beauty standard definitely took a negative toll on my mental health because obviously the beauty standard portrayed in social media and magazines is like thin, tall, Caucasian female with blonde hair. And I didn't match any of that. (*Participant L, Indian woman (participant explicitly noted that she identifies as Indian over the overarching "Asian" identity), interviewed November 2020*)

On the other hand, in Subtheme 4.2, participants described how the media are *important to well-being and self-discovery*. Participants find that the media are important to their identity and mental health journeys. Some have found affirmation, solidarity, and community on social media (e.g., Reddit, Facebook), some have discovered resources (e.g., mental health information) that helped them seek support and find comfort, and some follow entertainment or informational media (e.g., YouTube channels, podcasts like *Code Switch*) that resonate with their experiences. Many participants remarked that the emergent social media platform TikTok has positively affected their mental health because of its unique features: One can very easily tailor the content on their feed, and one can find a wealth of both pure entertainment and digestible information.

I saw a TikTok the other day . . . the person was talking about, or making a joke of like their intrusive thoughts, and it was just really nice because I feel like intrusive thoughts aren't really talked about a lot when it comes to mental health. So it was just really nice to see that TikTok, it felt affirming, so TikTok's always a place where I feel good about myself. (*Participant D, Black woman, interviewed December 2020*)

Colorism is just so strong in plenty of cultures and so it's like all of the prettier women were always light-skinned, you know, and I'm not, so it always made me feel like, okay, I could never be attractive, but now that there's like, you know, just more representation—more photos and videos and things like that—it makes me like, it definitely makes me feel better. (*Participant H, Black non-binary person, interviewed December 2020*)

The duality of participants' experiences illustrated in Subthemes 4.1–4.2 points to a media landscape that may impact BIPOC PM young adults' mental health in both significantly negative and significantly positive ways, including the consequences of erasure and misrepresentation as well as the outcome of belonging and identification. This impactful media landscape encompasses both professionally produced and user-generated content; the wide range of media types – from podcasts to magazines to new social media – that can influence mental health is notable.

### **Theme 5: How people's behavior is influenced by harmful media**

Negative media can influence people's actions, which can then directly or indirectly hurt their own or others' health and well-being. Participants discussed the impact of the media on the behavior of BIPOC PM and on the behavior of individuals in dominant groups. Subtheme 5.1 pertains to *how the media affect the behavior of BIPOC PM*. Participants felt that because of negative media representation and narratives, BIPOC PM are pushed to “conform to [certain] ideals in order to gain that acceptance.” They may internalize their marginalization and push away their culture; they may also shy away from seeking support or healthcare (e.g., for mental illness) because they know they will be stigmatized and that others will view them differently.

Like in *The Big Bang Theory*, Raj is also—like all of them are nerds—but he is even nerdier and can't talk to women and just has a lot more social issues. And to even see like, of the nerd group that he's like the nerdiest or the worst nerd, just goes back to show that it's really hard to change that identity if that's all you know. I feel like a lot of us growing up, we try and fit in or identify more with those media portrayals, because that's what everyone knows. Like when they think of an Indian, they think of those, like, nerdy characters they see on TV, so if we act like that, maybe it'll make us feel more accepted because the people in our society will identify me with like those characters they see on TV. So I feel like it's just really negatively pigeon-holed a lot of people with my identity to just pick the path that they see on media because they think that's the only acceptable one to other members of society, even if it isn't really acceptable to them. (*Participant L, Indian woman (participant explicitly noted that she identifies as Indian over the overarching “Asian” identity), interviewed November 2020*)

Many participants also discussed reducing or tailoring their media use, immediately or over a long time, upon realizing the media (or certain media) were causing them distress and were harming their mental health and self-perceptions.

Social media was kind of worse for my mental health back then, just like comparing yourself to people and what they're doing and that sort of thing, but now that I've sort of pivoted into using social media less for looking at people I actually know and more for looking at artists and funny things like memes and like things that aren't actual real people that I'm comparing myself to—now I would say it doesn't really have any negative impact on my mental health. (*Participant G, mixed Latina/White woman, interviewed November 2020*)

When I was younger, I would follow like hundreds of celebrities because I idolized them and wanted to be them, but in seeing their lifestyle and things that they would post, I feel like that had a negative impact on my mental health. 'Cause I'm like, I can never look as skinny or as pretty as Kylie Jenner and I can never have the mansion that she has, or whatever it may be. And having a lot of unrealistic exposure was just not good for me. So now . . . I use social media and things like that to mostly keep up and keep in touch with people I know and maybe just general current events, I follow a lot more news outlets now. And just like, rather than celebrities, just kind of bigger organizations. (*Participant L, Indian woman (participant explicitly noted that she identifies as Indian over the overarching “Asian” identity), interviewed November 2020*)

It's kind of a reminder of how hard it can be to be Black in the United States, and for me I also do try to avoid that kind of content, I don't watch videos of people being shot, I will actively curate my feed, like my TikTok feed, for example, to not contain videos discussing like police brutality and just anti-Black racism, simply because I'm not in the business of consuming that kind of content because of the ways in which I know it affects me or might touch me personally. (*Participant D, Black woman, interviewed December 2020*)

The quotes above reveal the particular heaviness of media that display violence or constant systematic exclusion against a group (or members of a group) of which one is a part. After years of intentionally or unintentionally engaging with these harmful media, one may respond by changing their media habits to block out negative media and/or to view more positive media. Many participants reflected on going through such a shift.

The second subtheme we identified, Subtheme 5.2, pertains to *how the media affect others' behavior toward BIPOC PM*. Participants shared that other people may find acceptable, and may thus mirror, common but harmful behaviors that they see in the media (e.g., microaggressions, cultural appropriation). They may endorse views and actions that are detrimental to BIPOC PM well-being, avoid contact with BIPOC PM altogether, or physically endanger BIPOC PM, intentionally or not:

I've heard stories of like, even Beyoncé or like Serena Williams and other Black women who knew that they had complications during childbirth, but the doctors were like, “No, you're fine, take an aspirin.” Um, things like that's like, this assumption that Black women can tolerate so much pain at once, or at least more than a “normal being” can tolerate. I think those real-life consequences, right, of like Black women during their own childbirth is a result of this assumption that like, oh, like, they got strength, they can do it. (*Participant I, Black woman, interviewed December 2020*)

I think they're perceiving us in a very—or perceiving people like me in a very—misconstrued light. And it's aided by the people that, the news that they're consumed in, like, the Fox News, the Breitbart, the Daily Wire, the Prager University. The, all that, even the Parler thing that they're doing now, you know, all this media is meant to really just make a lot of uninformed people very angry and make them feel like their status as White people is at threat by people like me . . . who are minorities, immigrants, queer, you know, etcetera. (*Participant A, Latinx person, interviewed December 2020*)

### **Theme 6: The media's effects on society**

In addition to influencing individuals, the media can affect people on a large scale. Participants discussed the media's ever-



growing ability to spread information rapidly and widely, which can propel social change but also reinforce existing oppressive structures throughout society. One subtheme we identified, Subtheme 6.1, was *reinforcement of existing norms, misconceptions, and power structures*. Participants observed that media misrepresentation and appropriation by the dominant group perpetuate stereotypes of BIPOC PM and contribute to BIPOC PM oppression and harm. In addition, since media technologies make it so logistically easy to connect and congregate with like-minded people and seek content that reaffirms one's worldview, deeply entrenched societal attitudes, beliefs, and values are continuously reinforced through echo chambers.

These hate groups actually use social media as a tool for further empowerment of themselves . . . The reality of it is, is that like, when the KKK was operating even just before social media . . . I think the way that they actually did recruitment was more of like a word-of-mouth type of thing, right. Like very like snail-ish, very old. But now you could easily have a Zoom meeting from someone who's in Georgia with someone who's all the way in like, Massachusetts. (*Participant I, Black woman, interviewed December 2020*)

It makes me angry for celebrities such as—just an example—as the Kardashians that for so long, and even still today, Black people are criticized, Black women are criticized for so, so much about our own culture, such as braids, we're told it's unprofessional, or Afros, we're told it's unprofessional. And then the way we dress, that it's “ghetto,” that it's “slutty,” that, you know, we don't have respect for ourselves, but then you have people, White women such as the Kardashians—doing the same things we're doing after like, we made it part of our culture—and getting huge praise for it. And they're “trendsetters” or, you know, they're “classy.” . . . We get hate for the exact same things they're doing, but they're getting famous for it. (*Participant M, Black woman, interviewed November 2020*)

On the other hand, as we found in Subtheme 6.2, the media are a *driver of large-scale social change*. Participants believed that the ability of mass media, especially social media, to quickly and widely spread information and ideas has significantly contributed to recent social movements. Thus, while participants saw the downsides of this ability (e.g., spread of misinformation), they were hopeful about the media's potential to drive social change.

I do definitely think that this point in time is really, really making people think a lot more than they ever have before. I do think that these protests were probably far more wide and impactful and had a lot more reach—also thankfully to the power of social media as well, too—but a lot more reach than any kind of race-related or racial protest had really ever had. (*Participant I, Black woman, interviewed December 2020*)

All I would have to say about social media is that it's never going to go away. And I don't think that it's something that we should hide from, I think there's pros and cons to it all the time—and there's a lot of cons to it, obviously—but people can use it for good. It's how you connect with people. It's how you educate others. (*Participant B, Asian woman, interviewed November 2020*)

## Discussion

This study sought to understand media perceptions held by BIPOC young adults with significant mental health concerns –

in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, tumultuous political events, and reinvigorated racial and social justice movements. Previous studies have reported that individuals within specific groups, including youth and racialized groups, have had increased mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic (Czeisler et al., 2020; National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2022). Studies have also examined the increased mental health concerns of those multiply marginalized (e.g., Arani, 2020; Blick et al., 2015; Yee, 2011). Yet no studies have examined the perceptions of this group in recent years. Furthermore, media hold implications for the mental health of BIPOC PM. For example, these communities are impacted negatively by media content or the absence of media content – such as the lack of portrayal of Black women with mental health concerns (Junior, 2021), or social media content related to anti-Asian racism during COVID-19 (Pan et al., 2021).

Our findings both support and add new perspectives to those previous studies; furthermore, these results suggest several opportunities for action and research. Overall, our findings bolster the existing notion of a multifaceted and reciprocally influential relationship between people/society and the media. Moreover, we were able to understand how participants' observations and lived experiences have led them to both 1) keenly recognize ways that the media reify oppressive structures and 2) identify concrete ways that people have used/can use the media to resist and combat those same structures. Ultimately, our participants are at once deeply critical of and deeply hopeful about the media.

## Theoretical implications

Our findings support several theoretical perspectives pertaining to identity and the media. First, these findings reiterate the importance of applying an intersectionality framework to health communication research (Dutta, 2010, 2018; Lupton, 1994; Nielsen, 2011; Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020). Participants discussed how their perceptions of the media were intertwined with their lived experiences as *Black women* or *Latina women* (for example), and participants often contrasted their experiences with those of a *cis White male* or *thin, tall, Caucasian female* (for example). The consistent use of such language highlights how participants' experiences are shaped by overlapping systems of power associated with their various identities – not just each one separately. Furthermore, the findings include participants' perception that the media industry, both in portraying BIPOC PM characters and in its treatment of real-life BIPOC PM, causes harm by frequently reducing people to stereotypes (for example, *sexy*) or only seeing them for a singular marginalized identity (for example, *gay*, or *Black*, or *poor*) – instead of treating people holistically by acknowledging their multidimensionality and complex experiences. Such practices are of course antithetical to intersectionality, further evidencing the need for an intersectionality-rooted approach when challenging industry practices and developing media-related interventions to promote BIPOC PM health and well-being.

In addition, the overarching thematic areas revealed (“how people and society shape the media” and “how the media impact people and society”) reflect the cyclical nature of the

media as both influenced by social context and influencing social attitudes and behaviors, consistent with theoretical models that have observed similar phenomena (e.g., reinforcing spirals model; Slater, 2015). The present study also underscores the importance of social groups in determining our sense of self, consistent with previous theoretical work (e.g., social identity theory, Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Altogether, our findings suggest that using an overarching intersectionality framework helps to elucidate a nuanced understanding of media as a dynamic social institution, and would be valuable in guiding future research and practice.

### Practical implications

*First*, Themes 1, 2, 4, and 5 underscore the importance of building critical media literacy (CML). CML views media culture as stemming from social production and struggle, encourages people to be critical of media representations and discourse, and emphasizes the importance of learning to use the media (and create alternative media) for self-expression and activism (Kellner & Share, 2005). Thus, building and sustaining CML throughout people's lives could motivate the public to use and create media more intentionally to center and uplift, rather than exploit and harm, BIPOC PM (Theme 1); it could also in the meantime promote BIPOC PM health by minimizing negative health effects that come from frequent negative imagery of BIPOC PM groups (Themes 2, 4, 5) (Stamps, 2021). Indeed, previous media literacy interventions, including some that used an explicit CML approach, have improved self-esteem and body image, contributed to identity-building, influenced attitudes and beliefs about race and gender stereotypes, and taught people to discern between real and fake news, to name a few examples (Bergstrom et al., 2018; Guess et al., 2020; Puchner et al., 2015; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015; Stamps, 2021). The success of these programs suggests that building CML on a population level would be useful. One strategy to build large-scale CML could be incorporating it into K-12 and higher education – and training educators in CML pedagogy (Funk et al., 2016; Tisdell, 2008). Such an approach would be consistent with our findings, especially Themes 4 and 5, which suggest that media exposure in childhood and adolescence can affect people long afterward (Greenberg & Mastro, 2008).

Furthermore, the health of BIPOC PM could be positively impacted in a systemic way by CML. Researchers such as Bergsma (2004) contend that, because poor health and a lack of media literacy are systemic issues impacting people who have been marginalized, public health advocates and media literacy professionals can work together to address systems of oppression and ultimately create a healthier society. Our work builds on this argument by illuminating the connection between a critical assessment of media related to BIPOC PM and improved health. One application could be building the capacity of BIPOC PM, who our study has shown to critique dominant ideologies and practices in the social institution of media, to apply those same skills to the social institutions of public health, medicine, and healthcare. This could, for example, proliferate calls to examine the crisis of Black maternal health. Those who are able to identify and oppose decisions

made by executives, writers, producers, etc. implicated in a media ecosystem and those who promote the power of the audience to bring about change could also challenge power dynamics within health contexts that negatively impact BIPOC PM and could activate the power of patients, caregivers, and citizens to oppose discriminatory healthcare systems and/or support alternatives championed by BIPOC PM communities. In addition, in line with CML, media could be used intentionally to educate the public about health disparities (differential health outcomes due to systemic oppression (Braveman et al., 2011)) through creative media content across platforms, such as film, television, or social media.

*Second*, Themes 2 and 3 emphasize the need for the media industry to give long-overdue attention to BIPOC PM as collaborators and leaders in content creation. Those in positions of high power must make room for BIPOC PM to lead content creation (including children's media), production efforts, and other initiatives (Theme 2). And, as Themes 4 and 5 and previous literature emphasize, representation is critical in children's media (Greenberg & Mastro, 2008). In addition, media executives, creators, audiences, and researchers must work together in coordinated, intentional, and sustainable ways to transform the media landscape and potentially drive changes in other structures (Theme 3). Scholars such as Clark (2019) and Smith et al. (2015, 2020) have recognized this need and begun to offer recommendations for such collaborative efforts – for example, in film, working with writers and decision-makers to ensure that diversity is increased both in leading characters and in background and supporting characters; and among White people looking to practice online allyship, “using one's own social media presence to seek, identity, and promote [BIPOC PM's] perspectives” and informing White peers about these (Clark, 2019, p. 528). Of note, Theme 2 illuminates our demographic's perception of what purpose media representation serves and what its limitations are; to our knowledge, this is the first study to reveal such a perspective. In particular, Subtheme 2.3 suggests that centering BIPOC PM must go beyond positive representation – participants perceive that representation in itself will *not* eliminate day-to-day violence against BIPOC PM, abolish systems of oppression, or create systems that serve BIPOC PM. Thus, the perception is that representation is *not an end goal*. Rather, when coupled with CML, representation may promote BIPOC PM mental health (e.g., by validating their experiences); encourage the public to reimagine possibilities and challenge existing power dynamics; and raise awareness of social issues such that the public becomes more willing to disrupt and transform oppressive structures – including the media themselves (Funk et al., 2016).

*Third*, Theme 6 reveals the importance of 1) using the media as a tool to proliferate social change and 2) developing safeguards to prevent and minimize the harm that the media cause. Participants perceive that the media, which connect people and spread information with increasing rapidity, both propel social change and reinforce existing harmful norms and power structures. Notably, participants gravitated toward speaking about social media in particular. For example, they believe it has been instrumental in sustaining the momentum of the recent Black Lives Matter protests, but they also believe

it can spread misinformation widely, harm self-image, and provide a platform for hate groups like the KKK to connect efficiently. Organizers and supporters of social justice movements should continue to harness the power of social media to spread awareness and social change on a large scale (e.g., Syed et al., 2021); researchers would do well to collaborate with organizers on such efforts. At the same time, leaders of social media platforms should develop more and stronger safeguards to prevent harm – for example, curbing mis- and disinformation, and protecting children and adolescents from distressing or predatory content; researchers should collectively push for these policies, as a lack of response has proven detrimental (e.g., rampant vaccine misinformation) (Wardle & Singerman, 2021).

### Strengths and limitations

This study has several strengths: First, to our knowledge, it is the first to broadly ask BIPOC young adults with a behavioral health diagnosis or significant mental health concerns how they perceive the media and what changes they believe should be made to the media landscape. Second, we were able to capture how both emergent social context (e.g., Black Lives Matter, TikTok) and evolving factors throughout participants' lives (e.g., their critical awareness of media systems) have interfaced with their media experiences. Third, we had two coders to enhance data analysis; this allowed for us to approach the data from two different BIPOC PM perspectives resulting from our varied lived experiences and academic disciplines. Fourth, this study both builds on and adds context to more specific work, reveals previously under-examined perspectives, and serves as a rich platform on which future research in the area can build. Regarding limitations: First, given our recruitment methods, all study participants were students or recent graduates of universities or colleges. Thus, their perspectives should not be understood as representative of the perspectives of *most* BIPOC young adults with significant mental health concerns. Second, men were underrepresented in our study; of the 17 participants who indicated their gender, only two were men. As such, our results likely lacked certain viewpoints that we would have gained had we been able to recruit more men. Moreover, more non-men than men expressed interest in participating in this study, which is notable in itself and may warrant exploration.

### Conclusions

Catalyzed largely by the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter, and subsequent social movements, we are experiencing an era of heightened awareness about social justice, human rights, and health equity. In this era, the media have been instrumental in amplifying social movements but also in spreading mis/disinformation and violence. Our study results reveal that BIPOC young adults with significant mental health concerns, a group who have been affected heavily during this time, both 1) deeply recognize how the media uphold oppressive structures and 2) have identified tangible ways that people have used and can use the media to fight those same structures. Researchers with socially

conscious agendas should actively and continuously center BIPOC PM – and engage with media creators and executives – to disrupt dominant narratives and transform the media landscape into one that promotes the health and well-being of individuals and communities who have been marginalized for too long.

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## Appendix

### Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Note: Before starting the interview, the interviewer clarifies the definition of “media” as it is to be used throughout the interview; the script is as follows: *When we say “media,” we mean any type of media, from social media like Tik Tok and Instagram, to things like TV, movies, newspapers, music, radio, podcasts, YouTube, anything print or on the Internet—anything!*

#### (I) I. Introductory questions

- How are you feeling this semester?
  - In what ways have you been practicing self-care?
- What shows or other media have you been watching or reading or listening to recently?

#### (II) Questions about identities

- How important is mental health to you?
  - How is mental health talked about in your family/community?
- How much have you thought about your mental health over the past few months?
  - In what ways?
  - How have current events affected your mental health?
- What race(s) or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?
  - How has this/have these identities shaped your experiences?
- What other identities are important to you?
  - How do these identities relate to your racial/ethnic identities?

#### (III) Questions about media content and its relation to race and mental health

- What types of media do you use most frequently?
  - What do you use each of those for/what purpose does each of those serve for you?
- How has the media affected your mental health?
- What media content makes you feel good about yourself (as a person of color/person of your racial/ethnic identity with mental health concerns)?

- Can you describe an example or examples of these?
  - Such as social media posts, articles, videos, pictures, movies, TV shows, etc.?
- How do these make you feel?
- How do these affect how you see yourself?
- How do you think these affect how others view you/those with your identity?
- What media content does not make you feel good about yourself (as a person of color/person of your racial/ethnic identity with mental health concerns)?
  - Can you describe an example or examples of these?
    - Such as social media posts, articles, videos, pictures, movies, TV shows, etc.?
  - How do these make you feel?
  - How do these affect how you see yourself?
  - How do you think these affect how others view you?
- (If not already discussed above) What examples in the media can you think of that relate to or represent your identities?
  - How does this/do these make you feel?
- (If not already discussed above) How do you feel the media generally characterizes/portrays people with your identities?
  - What assumptions do you believe people make about people who share your identities?
- If you were going to create media content that relates to your identity as a person of color/person of your racial/ethnic identity with mental health concerns, what would that look like?
  - What message would you want to send?
- What do you think are the most significant issues with how the media approaches your identities?
  - What could be some solutions?
  - Whose responsibility is it to fix this system?
  - What are the broader societal consequences?

#### (IV) Wrap-up

- What other thoughts would you like to add about your experiences with the media as it relates to your identities?
  - Anything about current events in particular?