Title: Social Media and Food Content: A Qualitative Exploration of Black/African American Young Adult Women's Experiences

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Background: Young adult (ages 18-25) Black/African American women often view social media content that can help or hinder their initiation and maintenance of health-promoting behaviors, including healthy eating. However, no previous research to our knowledge has explored how they view food content on social media and how it influences their food choices.

Objective: The aims of the current study were to (1) explore young Black/African American women's perspectives on and experiences with food-related content on social media, (2) understand influences on young Black/African American women's choices to cook meals and recipes they encounter on social media, and (3) gather feedback on potential future intervention strategies to promote healthy eating.

Methods: Black/African American young adult women participated in semi-structured interviews via Zoom. Interviews explored their use of food content on social media, perspectives on example social media food posts, opinion of social media food influencers including racial and cultural inclusivity, and gathered their feedback on future intervention strategies. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed for emerging themes using conventional content analysis.

Results: Participants (N=14) had a mean age of 22.4 years and BMI of 28.5 kg/m^2. Many participants (57.1%) reported seeing food content on their social media feeds several times a day, mostly on TikTok (81.8%), Instagram (63.6%), and YouTube (45.5%). Several themes were developed including Lifestyle Considerations; Inspiration/Variety; and Cultural Influences. Participants shared that social media is a helpful source of food inspiration and a tool for meal planning when meal ideas are easily adaptable around lifestyle factors and taste preferences. They also found content is most useful when it is educational, trustworthy, and culturally diverse. Additionally, many participants were skeptical about social media influencers making health claims and disliked posts promoting diet culture and advertisements. Participants felt the proposed intervention strategies would be valuable and provided suggestions for preferred features.

Conclusions: Social media has potential as a tool to influence food choices, and the creation of a personalized social-media-based intervention to promote healthful eating was appealing to participants. Results will inform a future intervention design tailored to Black/African American young adult women's preferences.