

Psychology of Popular Media Special Issue Call for Papers

“This Is (Not) Fine”: The Psychology of Popular Media During 2020 Crises



(A portion of KC Green’s “On Fire.” Photo: KC Green)

The year 2020 has been embroiled in crisis, including a global pandemic that has wreaked havoc on public health and welfare, rampant civic unrest spurred by continued racial injustice, and a politically polarizing U.S. presidential election with global ramifications. Popular entertainment media has played an integral role in how the public understands, copes with, and responds to these crises. Stories in film, TV, and novels have been used to both gain perspective, invite distraction, and tap into current zeitgeist. Video games and star-studded dance parties on Instagram have been used to foster social connection during physical isolation. And to express themselves and entertain others, social media users have relied on TikTok challenges and Internet memes, such as “This is fine,” in order to convey that they are, in fact, not fine.

At the same time, there have been fundamental changes to popular media symbols, production, and consumption in response to the current crises. Iconic brands have distanced themselves from racist pop culture symbols. TV shows have left studios to broadcast from the intimate spaces of people’s living rooms instead. Traditional sporting events have been cancelled, while video game live streaming has increased in popularity. In the wake of school closures, many parents have had to reconsider screen time rules for children. Thanks to streaming services, for better and worse, many are finding themselves consuming more popular media than they ever have before.

This special issue will curate research on the collision of current crises and popular entertainment. Topically, we seek studies that provide insight into psychological processes, but this issue provides a multi-disciplinary venue for empirical research from traditions including, but not restricted to, communication, politics, sociology, and cultural and media studies. Potential topics for the issue could include:

- Entertainment consumption for coping with 2020 crises (e.g., binge watching, selective exposure, reruns, nostalgic media)
- Influence of narratives, celebrities, or characters on public perceptions of 2020 crises
- Effects of media format changes to popular media on media figure and message reception
- The role of media figure attachments during social distancing
- Family media use during shelter-in-place and social distancing
- Sports consumption during shelter-in-place and social distancing
- Psychology of fan identity and activism during 2020 crises
- Psychology of meme culture during 2020 crises
- Co-viewing and co-playing practices during the pandemic (e.g., distance viewing, watch parties, live streaming events)
- The role of popular media in parenting and family communication during 2020 crises

Editorial Team

Editor-In-Chief: **Karen Dill-Shackleford**

Associate Editor and Special Issue Overseeing Editor: **Elizabeth L. Cohen**

Special Issue Editors: **Omotayo Banjo, Arienne Ferchaud, and Benjamin K. Johnson**

Submissions

To minimize the time investment for authors, *Psychology of Popular Media* is initially accepting 2,000-word, extended abstracts (with or without data already collected) to undergo preliminary review by the editors. Initial submissions are due **September 14, 2020** and are to be submitted to the overseeing editor at elizabeth.cohen@mail.wvu.edu.

Within a few weeks, submissions selected by the editors will be invited to submit full-length manuscripts for external peer review, which will be used to determine manuscript inclusion in the special issue, and can be submitted through the journal’s submission portal (<https://www.editorialmanager.com/ppm/default.aspx>). Instead of an extended abstract, we will also consider 6,000-word Stage 1 Registered Reports to undergo expedited peer review. Invited submissions are due **January 15, 2021**.

To facilitate a rapid dissemination of its contents, this special issue will be published online. Accepted manuscripts will be published as soon as they have completed the article production process. Open research practices such as pre-registration, data sharing, and material sharing are encouraged for all submissions, but not required.