

BLACK & ESSENTIAL:

RELATIONAL MAINTENANCE AND COPING

STRATEGIES AMONG BLACK LOUISIANANS DURING

COVID – 19

LSU

Manship School
of Mass Communication

Reilly Center for Media
& Public Affairs

TOPLINER REPORT



PREPARED BY DAVID STAMPS, PH.D.

This top line report is a summary of key outcomes from the collaboration between Dr. David Stamps (primary investigator) and LSU's Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs on behalf of the Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force. The overarching aim is to acknowledge the experiences of Louisiana's Black community with an understanding that it is vital to advance policy conversations supporting Black Louisianans' well-being as they navigate COVID-19 and future crises. This report was made possible thanks to the support of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation, and the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation.



THE CURRENT STATE OF BLACK AMERICANS

Black Louisiana residents are twice as likely to die due to COVID-19 compared to non-Black residents and face numerous factors increasing the likelihood of such an outcome including

- Living near chemical plants, placing majority Black communities in the crosshairs of air pollution, a leading cause of respiratory diseases
- Residing in food and medical deserts
- Facing disparities regarding housing insecurity and evictions
- Utilizing public transportation, increasing the likelihood of virus transmission



RESEARCH FINDINGS

One thousand and twenty-seven (1,027) Black Louisianans from across the state participated in the survey. Findings include descriptive data such as financial assistance received during COVID-19, illustrations of family dynamics, and Black individuals' technology access and engagement.

A SNAPSHOT OF DATA

- 38% (n = 378) of Black Louisianans in the sample live with someone who has a health condition
- 27% (n = 278) reported someone in their family who works in a health care setting, such as a hospital or nursing home
- 38% (n = 392) reported that someone in their household is employed in what is now deemed essential work, including employment at a fast-food restaurant or grocery store

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- 48% (n = 495) of Black Louisianans reported receiving the first round of stimulus payments
- 32% (n = 326) received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, 27% (n = 273) received Medicaid assistance, and 9% (n = 89) received Social Security benefits
- 19% (n = 195) reported receiving support from family and friends and 18% (n = 180) from food banks
- 17% (n = 174) received enhanced unemployment payments
- 9% (n = 94) received financial support from nonprofit organizations and 7% (n = 76) from faith-based organizations
- 4% (n = 48) utilized programs such as the Child Health Insurance Program and Section 8 housing assistance
- 20% (n = 205) reported drawing on four or more of the services and programs listed above

RESEARCH FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

- 87% (n = 888) of Black Louisiana residents have access to the internet in their private residence, including access via smartphone, laptop computer, or tablet
- 77% (n = 788) and 48% (n = 493) have access to a laptop or desktop computer, respectively
- 92% (n = 948) of Black Louisianans have access to a smartphone (i.e., cell phone with wi-fi access)

TECHNOLOGY USE

- 28% (n = 288) of Black Louisiana residents have used telemedicine (i.e., medical experts distributing health-related services such as medical advice and information via electronic technologies)
- 31% (n = 322) have ordered prescriptions online before and since the pandemic (as of November 2020)
- 58% (n = 592) have started to use digital technology, such as delivery applications (e.g., Task Rabbit) to order or pick-up groceries, medicine, or toiletries since the pandemic began

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Descriptive data suggest that digital literacies and access to digital technology, including the use of smartphone applications, and increased accessibility of debit cards, SNAP benefits, and Electronic Benefits Transfer cards use would benefit Black communities. As such, the study examines the relationship of access and comfort with technology to worry and psychological well-being among study participants.

The findings indicate there were no significant differences in the degree of worry among the sample based on the presence of the internet, a laptop, or a smartphone in the home. This outcome suggests that digital access is important for community members. Yet, technology did not alleviate Black Louisianans' concern about their family, finances, exposure to COVID-19, and the current state of readiness of medical facilities in Louisiana. This outcome suggests that media messaging should be a keen focus for reaching communities but may not act as a tool to dissuade or lessen the concerns of the community.

Additionally, Black Louisianans demonstrated a positive relationship with increased comfort with digital media usage and psychological well-being. This outcome suggests that among the sample, having a sense of ease with digital media positions individuals to feel more confident, including positive feelings of personal growth, efficaciousness, and favorable positioning for social mobility. This latter outcome matters regarding empowering Black individuals amid trauma that has vastly harmed the community.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS & NEXT STEPS

- Black Louisianans (92%) have access to smartphones, allowing the group to access smartphone applications, telemedicine, and other systems that support contactless engagement. Likewise, over 87% of the sample population has access to the internet in their private home, providing the occasion to deliver messaging on safety measures related to public health and vaccine updates. The use of smartphones and the internet creates an opportunity for short and long-form digital commercials, banner ads, and pop-up promotions that provide a wide range of public health messaging.

-The upward trend in the adoption of new media practices, such as the use of telemedicine and digital platforms for prescription and grocery delivery, is important. Black individuals sought out medical experts using telemedicine and acquired essential items from grocery and department stores using digital media to support indirect contact. A concerted effort in increasing digital literacies will help increase these numbers and the opportunities to keep Black Louisianans practicing social distancing efforts during COVID-19.

- As a suggestion, community members, particularly high school and college students, adopting leadership roles and providing instruction and tutoring would empower the community by increasing digital literacies and provide vocational and economic support directly to individuals who need it most.

- Of course, funding is necessary for building programs and to support day-to-day needs, yet building a lasting infrastructure for Black individuals is vital. These efforts should include increasing access to digital media and communication tools, building comfort among individuals in their use of digital media applications (e.g., video conferencing for telehealth services), and increase partnerships with local organizations and leaders, such as churches and community centers, to help lead these endeavors.



STUDY LIMITATIONS

The top line offered is a snapshot of the full executive report, which includes citations, references, statistical analyses, and additional contextualization of the items listed here. Likewise, with all research, this work has limitations, and findings, along with suggestions for next steps, should be considered thoughtfully.

The study utilized online data collection methods, which, during a global pandemic that requires social distancing to keep individuals safe, is appropriate. Online data collection, however, potentially excludes individuals who lack access to, knowledge of, or proficiency with using the internet and the data collection platform. To address this shortcoming, community members were recruited to increase outreach to participants who may not have access to digital tools and provide a means to complete the survey. Additionally, the sample may have biases introduced by eligibility criteria, such as excluding non-Black participants and participant self-selection. This project sought out Black individuals, and while the narratives offered may apply to non-Black communities, additional underrepresented and marginalized voices are missing from this conversation.



PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR

David Stamps is an Assistant Professor in the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University and a research affiliate with the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and M.A. from California State University, Northridge. His research is aimed at understanding the psychological and behavioral effects of identity -focused interpersonal interactions as well as individuals' exposure to and engagement with media. He is the inaugural recipient of The Claudine Michel Advocacy and Excellence Award and his work has been funded by the Congressional Black Caucus, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and E Pluribus Unum. A former entertainment publicist and grant writer, Dr. Stamps

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FULLREPORT



PREPARED BY DAVID STAMPS, PH.D.

The following report is a collaboration between Louisiana State University's (LSU) Manship School of Mass Communication assistant professor, Dr. David Stamps (primary investigator) and LSU's Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs on behalf of the Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force. This work was commissioned to research the disparities of COVID-19's impact on Black Louisianans. The current document provides recommendations on mitigating the systemic underpinnings of racial inequality and ancillary matters such as digital access, psychological well-being, and financial issues relevant to the pandemic. The overarching aim of this endeavor is to acknowledge and honor Louisiana's Black communities, including individuals in service occupations, residing in rural, suburban, and urban areas and individuals of varying ages, genders, political identities, income levels, and education attainment. Underlying this assertion is to advance policy conversations supporting Black Louisianans' well-being as they navigate COVID-19 and future disasters. This report was made possible thanks to the support of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation, and the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation.



The death rate for Black residents due to COVID-19 in Louisiana is roughly 60%, yet the population of Black Louisiana residents is approximately 32% (Louisiana Department of Health, 2020). Black Louisiana residents are facing numerous factors associated with such outcomes. For example, parishes within the state include numerous chemical plants, many of which are near majority Black communities, placing Black Louisiana residents in the crosshairs of air pollution, a leading cause of respiratory diseases (Adams, 2020). This certainty renders the Black population victims of environmental racism and leaves the group increasingly susceptible to COVID-19, as the virus impacts the respiratory system and causes a range of breathing complications (Galiatsatos, 2020). Moreover, the impact of COVID-19 on Black Americans in Louisiana comes as no surprise. Research shows that Black communities are more likely to live in food deserts (Anderson, 2016) and lack access to clean water (Mock, 2016). Likewise, Black individuals face disparities regarding housing insecurity and evictions (Chun et al., 2020), and are at higher risk of contracting the virus due to increased utilization of public transportation (Odoms-Young, 2018).

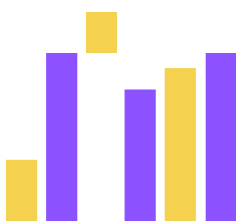
Researchers found disproportionate impacts on Black communities early in the pandemic regarding employment, access to rainy day funds, and the ability to make monthly bill payments (Lopez et al., 2020). Others, using the Census Pulse data, which estimates delinquency rates across racial and ethnic groups, found that Black homeowners were more than twice as likely to experience mortgage delinquency than White homeowners (Choi & Pang, 2020). Lastly, news coverage and reporting indicate that Black individuals (and other underrepresented racial minority groups) are more at risk for utility shut-off during the pandemic (Duster, 2020; Kowalski, 2020; Tomich et al., 2020).

Research and news coverage demonstrate how the COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented effects on Black communities, particularly on economic outcomes, education access, and physical and mental health. COVID-19 mortality and hospitalization rates have disproportionately burdened Black communities, and the financial and health burdens impact Black families in an inordinate manner (Shah et al., 2020). Still, it bears repeating that Black individuals are less favorably positioned to withstand the effects of the pandemic. To this end, the current report (1) discusses demographic and characteristic-based variables among a sample of Black Louisianans contextualizing the population's current state, and (2) presents questions attenuating some of the disparities Black Louisianans face amid COVID-19. These questions address the role of digital access and comfort with new media technologies as tools for harm reduction (i.e., encouraging social distancing, remaining in quarantine) and the promotion of new media as a way to access vital services (e.g., telemedicine, delivery of prescriptions, groceries, and toiletries).



RESEARCH SUMMARY

The report includes data collected and analyzed from 1,027 Black Louisianan participants. Of keen interest within this report are findings relevant to descriptive data, for example individual financial assistance received during COVID-19, and illustrations of family dynamics, such as households including members working in essential jobs or navigating chronic illness. The report also discusses technology access and engagement, specifically Black Louisianans' comfort with new media (i.e., smartphone applications, telehealth services). Moreover, the study indicates that Black Louisianans rely on new media tools to mitigate exposure by using delivery and pick-up services (e.g., Task Rabbit, Wal-Mart). Equally important, new media/digital technologies inform the group of vital information, including revisions to safety protocols (e.g., mask-wearing, social distancing) and updates on vaccine availability and distribution. Lastly, findings regarding the relationship between worry, technology access, digital media literacies, and psychological well-being are presented. Understanding these relationships and narratives are critical to provide Black Louisianans representation and visibility. Decision-makers will soon determine resource allocation, policies, and programs, such as strategic media messaging to encourage vaccines and public health updates. Moving forward, data such as this, will provide a fuller picture of populations that are often underrepresented.



Black communities are more likely to live in [food deserts](#) (Anderson, 2016), [lack access to clean water](#) (Mock, 2016), face [housing insecurity and evictions](#) (Chun et al., 2020), and are at higher risk of contracting the virus due to the increased [utilization of public transportation](#) (Odoms-Young, 2018).

METHODS

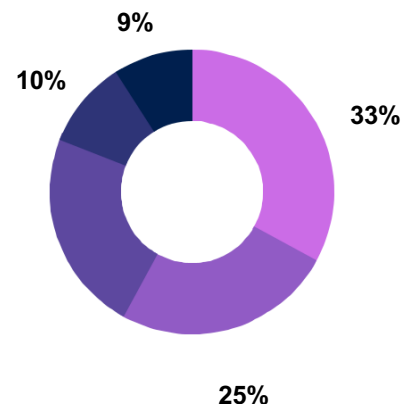
PARTICIPANTS

One-thousand and sixty-seven (1,067) self-identified Black participants were recruited using the crowdsourcing platform Qualtrics and through partnerships with community members. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, online data collection provided the safest form of engagement for participants and the research team. Forty participants were removed from the final analysis due to incomplete questionnaires or having missed the attention check question presented in the survey, leaving a final sample of 1,027 participants with an average age of 30.57 (SD = 12.30). Among the sample, 9% (n = 95) attended some high school but did not receive a diploma; 33% (n = 335) completed high school; 25% (n = 259) attended college but did not receive a degree, for example associates or bachelor's degree; 23% (n = 232) graduated from a two or four-year college; and 10% (n = 106) received a post bachelor's degree, such as a Ph.D. or M.D.

PROCEDURE

Participants were recruited online on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Participants were United States (U.S.) residents currently living in Louisiana. All participants were financially compensated for their involvement in the study. Each individual answered a battery of questions addressing demographics, family attributes, and individual financial assessments amid COVID-19. Participants also responded to questions related to racial identity, digital and new media access, critical and digital media literacy skills, and psychological well-being (see Appendix A for variables). Questions were randomized, and at the end of the survey, participants were presented with a debriefing statement detailing the study's intentions. Participation in the survey, on average, took approximately 40 minutes. Descriptive data and proposed models were presented, along with the full report, to several community members to read through and critique the findings of the study. The final step was adopted to avoid researcher bias and attenuate social desirability, or the trend to frame messaging in such a way to please audiences. Community members were compensated for their time.

- 33% completed high school
- 25% attended college but did not receive a degree
- 23% graduated from a two or four-year college
- 10% received an advanced degree, such as a Ph.D. or M.D.
- 9% attended some high school but did not receive a diploma





FINDINGS

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

The following data describe the sample population's attributes, identifying specific characteristics of Black Louisianan households as each navigates the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings include familial details on health and employment attributes and individuals' access to financial resources. Types of financial resources examined include unemployment benefits, first-round stimulus payments, support from religious institutions and nonprofit organizations, to name a few. Lastly, technology access and use are shared, including smartphones, laptops, and desktop computers.

“Given the nature of COVID-19, I think we all take each other less for granted. My neighbors seem to be more friendly and, even with social distancing, will say hello, wave, and smile more. We cannot physically touch, yet distance brought us together.” (Female/36)

Familial Attributes

The data draw attention to specific characteristics, including 37% (n = 378) of Black Louisianans in the sample live with someone who has a serious health condition. Also, 27% (n = 278) of participants reported someone in their family who works in a health care setting, such as a hospital or nursing home. Lastly, 38% (n = 392) of individuals reported that someone in their household is employed in what is now deemed essential work, including employment at a fast-food restaurant or grocery store.

“My family offers financial assistance when they feel I need it and emotional support when I feel bored or worried about the COVID-19 crisis. My neighbors provide me with supplies when I need items I cannot obtain immediately. They also give me lunches provided by the school district for my son and provide pantry items to keep my kitchen stocked. People in my community have also offered rides to bring my groceries home.” (Female/47)



FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Financial Resources

Throughout the pandemic, numerous financial support mechanisms were deployed, some explicitly related to COVID-19 (e.g., stimulus payments), some that existed before COVID-19 but were enhanced (e.g., unemployment benefits), and others that existed before COVID-19 and remained as a stopgap for individuals and families to survive amid the pandemic (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits). Accordingly, Black Louisianans received financial support in various forms. To illustrate, 48% (n = 495) of Black Louisianans reported receiving the first round of stimulus payments, 32% (n = 326) received SNAP, and 27% (n = 273) received Medicaid assistance. Among the sample population, 19% (n = 195) reported receiving support from family and friends, 18% (n = 180) from food banks, and 17% (n = 174) in the form of enhanced unemployment payments. Nine percent (n = 94) received financial support from non-profit organizations, not including faith-based organizations, 9% (n = 89) from Social Security benefits, and 7% (n = 76) from faith-based organizations. Finally, 4% (n =

48) of the sample reported utilizing programs such as Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Section 8 housing assistance (n = 35). Roughly 20% (n = 205) of the sample population reported drawing on four or more of the services and programs listed above.

“I have been able to teach my parents how to use the internet more. My family now has a dedicated chat group that we use through a mobile app to stay in contact with each other.” (Male/33)

Technology Access

Of the sample of Black Louisianans, 87% (n = 888) have access to the internet in their private residence, including access via smartphone, laptop computer, or tablet. Seventy-seven percent (n = 788) and 48% (n = 493) have access to a laptop or desktop computer, respectively. Lastly, 92% (n = 948) of Black Louisianans have access to a smartphone (cell phone with wi-fi access).

“I have joined a Facebook group that is very positive, my group provides comfort and care to many people, whether they are friends or strangers. I have felt a great sense of inclusion there and even a desire to help community members” (Female/34).

Technology Use

Of the sample of Black Louisianans, 28% of individuals have used telemedicine (i.e., medical experts distributing health-related services such as medical advice and information via electronic technologies). Thirty-one percent (n = 322) have ordered prescriptions online before and since the pandemic (as of November 2020). Finally, 58% (n = 592) have started to use digital technology to order and utilize the pick-up services at grocery and department stores since the pandemic began.



FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Descriptive data from a sample of Baton Rouge residents suggest that increasing digital literacies and access to digital technology, including the use of smartphone applications, and increased accessibility of debit cards, SNAP benefits, and EBT use within digital platforms, would benefit the community.

These access points would create pathways for community members to access necessary materials and allow individuals to follow social distancing guidelines by shopping online. These vital steps also provide necessary services that help individuals transition to digital platforms for mental and physical health services or acquiring essential items using contactless resources. Lastly, increasing digital literacies and digital technology access would reduce the digital divide, positioning the group to combat the general exclusion from healthcare access, education advancement, and economic mobility.

Inspired by the former data points, a series of research questions were posed to understand the relationships between worry amid the pandemic, psychological well-being, and protective factors such as access to technology, comfort with using digital media, and digital and critical media literacies (see Appendix A for survey measures).

RQ 1: Is there a significant relationship among the sample of Black Louisianans between worry and psychological well-being (e.g., self-acceptance, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?

RQ 2: Is there a difference among the sample of Black Louisianans with the internet in the home, having a laptop in the home, or a smartphone in the home and the degree or level of worry?

RQ 3: Is there a significant relationship among the sample of Black Louisianans between comfort with digital media usage and psychological well-being (e.g., self-acceptance, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?

RQ 4: Among the sample of Black Louisianans, does racial centrality (the importance of being Black) positively relate to psychological well-being (e.g., personal growth, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?

RQ 5: Among the sample of Black Louisianans, do digital and critical media literacies mediate the positive relationship between racial centrality and favorable attitudes toward psychological well-being (e.g., personal growth, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?



FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

A series of bivariate correlations, regressions, and a mediation model were tested in the lavaan package in R (see Appendix B for mediation model). Depending on the variable and the research question posed, each was modeled as an independent variable, mediator (if applicable), or dependent variable. Residual variances among the mediators (when appropriate) and the dependent variables were allowed to intercorrelate, and all possible paths were included in the model for RQ5 (see Figure 1). Therefore, the model was fully saturated (i.e., 0 degrees of freedom). See Appendix C for statistical analyses.

RQ 1: Is there a significant relationship among the sample of Black Louisianans between worry and psychological well-being (e.g., self-acceptance, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?

In general, greater worry among the sample population was associated with increased psychological well-being. This outcome illustrates that no matter the well-being of individuals, such as viewing themselves as valued and worthy of opportunities and resources amid COVID-19, Black Louisianans were equally concerned about their family, finances, exposure to COVID-19, and the current state of readiness of medical facilities in Louisiana.

RQ 2: Is there a difference among the sample of Black Louisianans with the internet in the home, having a laptop in the home, or a smartphone in the home and the degree or level of worry?

There were no significant differences in the degree of worry among the sample based on the presence of the internet, a laptop, or a smartphone in the home. This outcome suggests that digital access is important for community members. Yet, it again did not alleviate Black Louisianans' concern about their family, finances, exposure to COVID-19, and the current state of readiness of medical facilities in Louisiana.

RQ 3: Is there a significant relationship among the sample of Black Louisianans between comfort with digital media usage and psychological well-being (e.g., self-acceptance, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?

Black Louisianans demonstrated a positive relationship regarding increased comfort with digital media usage and psychological well-being. This outcome suggests that among the sample, having a sense of ease with digital media positions individuals to feel more confident about their well-being, including positive feelings of personal growth, efficaciousness, and favorable positioning for social mobility.

FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

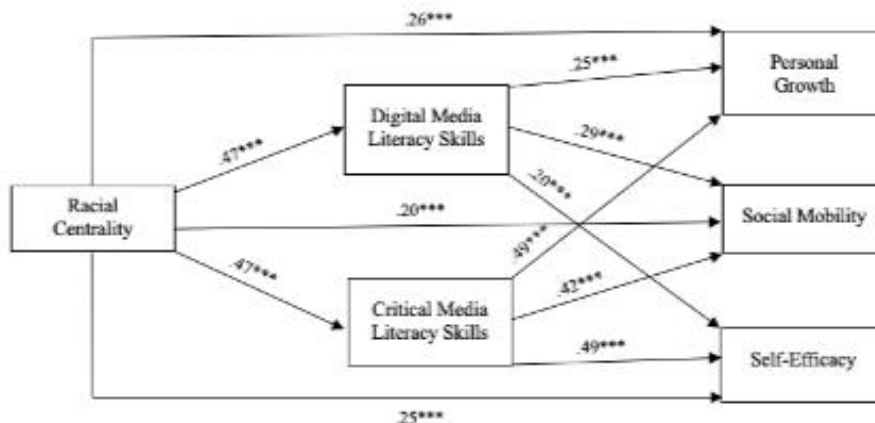
RQ 4: Among the sample of Black Louisianans, does racial centrality (the importance of being Black) positively relate to psychological well-being (e.g., personal growth, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?

Likewise, Black Louisianans demonstrated a positive relationship with increased identity and psychological well-being. This outcome suggests that among the sample, having a sense of collective racial identity is related to individuals feeling more confident, including positive feelings of personal growth and the ability to shift class status and vitality.

RQ 5: Among the sample of Black Louisianans, do digital and critical media literacies mediate the positive relationship between racial centrality and favorable attitudes toward psychological well-being (e.g., personal growth, social mobility, and self-efficacy)?

Collectively, Black Louisianans demonstrated a positive relationship with increased identity and psychological well-being. This relationship was strengthened by the sample population's literacy skills, including viewing mass media and the use of digital media. The final research question suggests that not only is access and comfort with digital media essential, but this variable increases positive feelings of personal growth, efficaciousness, and favorable positioning for social mobility. This outcome highlights attributes such as resilience and coping mechanisms at play within the Black community amid a debilitating pandemic, which impacts this community to a greater degree than their non-Black counterparts.

Mediation Model: N = 1,027. *** p < .001. Unstandardized paths are shown.





CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In 2021, numerous decisions regarding policies, distribution of funds, and the implementation of programming, each of which addresses the inequities that Black communities face, will be activated. There is and will be a need for Black Louisianans to have ample support and appropriate strategies to attenuate the impact of the pandemic. These strategies include accessing strategic messages related to public health, reducing economic disparities, and extending protective tools (i.e., digital technology) to reduce systemic injustices. Below is a list of suggestions, based on data, to mitigate the noted disparities Black Louisianans face.

PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING

According to this data, the vast majority of Black Louisianans (92%) have access to smartphones. This affordance allows the group to access smartphone applications, including delivery and pick-up services, telemedicine, and other systems that support contactless engagement. Likewise, over 87% of the sample population has access to the internet in their private home, providing the occasion to deliver messaging on safety measures related to public health and vaccine updates. The use of smartphones and the internet creates a unique outlet where websites, social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), short and long-form digital commercials, banner ads, and pop-up promotions can be presented to provide a wide range of public health messaging and the promotion of digital services. This is a vital and cost-effective means of communication. The Pew Research Center notes that Black audiences are the largest group, compared to non-Black social media users, to read, post, and engage with social media sites, often to advocate for justice and equity (Auxier, 2020). In consideration of data and anecdotal evidence, promoting smartphone applications that enhance contactless engagement and promotional means to encourage safety measures related to public health and vaccine updates is encouraged.

DIGITAL LITERACY

The data highlight the importance of technology access and digital usage among the sample of Black Louisianans, and this information suggests an upward trend in the adoption of new media practices, such as the use of telemedicine and digital platforms for prescription and grocery delivery. Yet, these numbers, while promising, only represent roughly a third of the sample. This minority sought out medical experts for health-related services such as preventive care through telemedicine. Likewise, half of the participants utilize digital technology for services such as acquiring essential items from grocery and department stores using indirect contact. A concerted effort in increasing digital literacies will help intensify these numbers and increase the opportunities to keep Black Louisianans practicing social distancing efforts during COVID-19.



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS (CONTINUED)

Results demonstrate that digital literacies prompt favorable psychological well-being, albeit this did not mitigate worry about the pandemic. Overall, Black Louisianans have the tools to access these platforms. There is a correlation between digital media platforms and psychological well-being; thus, promoting digital literacies is a crucial next step. The promotion of digital literacies can be accomplished in various ways. The following suggestions include partnerships with local high schools, community colleges, community centers, and libraries to provide workshops and instructional classes in navigating websites, smartphone applications, and video conferencing.

Moreover, community members, particularly high school and college students, adopting leadership roles and providing instruction and tutoring would empower the community, continue to increase well-being, and provide vocational and economic support directly to individuals who need it most. The opportunities for increasing empowerment and partnerships are limitless, but this suggestion would require funding and coalition building, both of which will be influential in supporting Black Louisianans in rural and urban areas. The efforts toward increasing digital access and literacy would decrease the digital divide (Vogels & Anderson, 2019).

The research provided within the report mirrors that of national surveys regarding technology adoption among Black Americans. Interestingly, research highlights that smartphone access is near similar among racial groups, suggesting that efforts toward literacy, not solely distribution of hardware (although this should not be discounted), are an appropriate next step (Perrin & Turner, 2019). COVID-19 highlights the inequalities among Black populations in Louisiana, and the efforts to mitigate disparities are important. Funding is necessary, yet building a lasting infrastructure for Black individuals is vital. These efforts should include increasing the groups' access to communication tools, comfort with using digital media applications (e.g., using video conferencing for telehealth services), and building partnerships with local organizations and leaders, such as churches and community centers, to help lead these endeavors. Partnerships would build confidence among individuals, as community members, neighbors, and friends work alongside one another and champion efforts to increase community resilience.

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city skyline. In the foreground, a large, circular stadium with a flat roof is visible, surrounded by other buildings. The text "STUDY LIMITATIONS" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

As with all research, this work has limitations and findings, along with suggestions for next steps, should be considered thoughtfully.

First, the study utilized online data collection methods, which, during a global pandemic that requires social distancing to keep individuals safe, is appropriate. However, online data collection potentially excludes participation among individuals who lack access to, knowledge of, or proficiency in using the internet and the data collection platform. To address this shortcoming, community members were recruited to increase outreach to participants who may not have access to digital tools and provide a means to complete the survey. Second, similar to other cross-sectional and survey studies, the current examination relied on self-report assessments, which may be affected by participants' inability to report their current temperament or the appeal to provide socially desirable responses. Third, the sample may have biases introduced by eligibility criteria, such as excluding non-Black participants and participant self-selection. This project sought out Black individuals, and while the narratives offered may apply to non-Black communities, additional underrepresented and marginalized voices are missing from this conversation. Fourth, although the sample population represents varied intersectional identities among Black individuals, including gender and geographic location, some identities were not assessed within the sample (e.g., sexuality, ability status). The lack of intersectional representation of Black populations is apparent, and adjustments in future research should consider ways to mitigate this issue.



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APPENDIX A

SURVEY MEASURES

Worry. Meyer and colleagues' (1990) worry scale was amended and used for the current study. The amended three-item measure included statements such as, "You or someone in your family will get sick from the coronavirus," and "You will lose your job or have your hours reduced due to the coronavirus." Participants rated their level of worry concerning Covid-19 on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .76$, $M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.83$). Higher scores demonstrate an increased level of worry concerning Covid-19.

Racial Centrality. Scottham and colleagues' (2008) racial centrality and regard scale was used to measure adherence to Black identity. The six-item measure included statements such as, "Being Black is an important reflection of who I am," and "Being Black is an important part of my self-image." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .91$, $M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.48$). A composite measure of items was created, with higher scores indicating increased racial centrality.

Critical Media Literacy. Ashley and colleagues' (2013) news media literacy scale was amended to gauge participants' awareness and critical assessment of the media's influence on consumers. The seven-item measure included statements such as, "If I pay attention to different sources of media, I can avoid being misinformed," and "Media makes things more dramatic than they really are." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .90$, $M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.48$). A composite measure of items was created, with higher scores indicating higher critical media literacy skills.

Digital Media Literacy. Hallaq's (2016) Digital Online Media Literacy Assessment was used to measure participants' access, awareness, and evaluation of digital media content and technologies. The fourteen-item measure included statements such as, "I am confident in my ability to evaluate information found online for credibility," "I visit social media sites to learn information about a specific company I am interested in," and "I feel confident in my ability to determine if online information is biased." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .93$, $M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.50$). A composite measure of items was created, with higher scores indicating increases in digital media literacy skills.



APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

Personal Growth. Ryff and colleagues' (2003) self-acceptance and personal growth subscale was used to assess participants' awareness of and feelings towards individual satisfaction with life choices, notwithstanding situational context. The six-item measure included statements such as, "For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth," and "I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree $\alpha = .92$, $M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.58$). A composite measure of items was created, with higher scores indicating increased observations of personal growth.

Social Mobility. Perceptions of social mobility were measured using the social mobility scale developed by Browman et al. (2017). The five-item measure included statements such as, "People can do things differently, and their social status can change," and "Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their status in society." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree $\alpha = .91$, $M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.59$). A composite measure of items was created, with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of social mobility.

Self-Efficacy. Chen and colleagues' (2001) new general self-efficacy scale was used to assess participants' beliefs in their capacity to perform actions that contribute to favorable life outcomes. The six-item measure included statements such as, "I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind," and "I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree $\alpha = .93$, $M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.56$). A composite measure of items was created, with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of self-efficacy.



APPENDIX B

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

RQ 1: Is there a significant relationship among the sample of Black Louisianans between worry and psychological well-being (e.g., self-acceptance, social mobility, and self-efficacy)? Greater worry is associated with greater self-acceptance ($r = .35$), greater social mobility ($r = .33$), and greater self-efficacy ($r = .32$) (all $ps < .001$).

RQ 2: Is there a difference among the sample of Black Louisianans with Internet in the home, having a laptop in the home, or a smartphone in the home and the degree or level of worry? There were no significant differences in worry based on having the internet, a laptop, or a smartphone in the home (all $ps > .05$).

RQ 3: Is there a significant relationship among the sample of Black Louisianans between comfort with digital media usage and psychological well-being (e.g., self-acceptance, social mobility, and self-efficacy)? Comfort with digital media usage was associated with greater self-acceptance ($r = .59$), greater social mobility ($r = .52$), and greater self-efficacy ($r = .58$) (all $ps < .001$).

RQ 4: Among the sample of Black Louisianans does racial centrality (the importance of being Black) positively relate to psychological well-being (e.g., personal growth, social mobility, and self-efficacy)? See mediation model for results of direct effects for RQ4. Accordingly, the independent variable, racial centrality, was uniquely associated with all the three dependent variables—personal growth, social mobility, and self-efficacy (all $ps < .001$).

RQ 5: Among the sample of Black Louisianans does digital and critical media literacies mediate the positive relationship between racial centrality and favorable attitudes toward psychological well-being (e.g., personal growth, social mobility, and self-efficacy)? To test the proposed mediation model (RQ 5), the indirect effects of racial centrality through digital media literacy skills and critical media literacy skills were examined. There were significant indirect effects of racial centrality on personal growth through both digital media literacy skills ($IE = .12$, $p < .001$) and critical media literacy skills ($IE = .23$, $p < .001$). There were also significant indirect effects of racial centrality on social mobility through both digital media literacy skills ($IE = .14$, $p < .001$) and critical media literacy skills ($IE = .20$, $p < .001$). Finally, there were also significant indirect effects of racial centrality on self-efficacy through both digital media literacy skills ($IE = .09$, $p < .001$) and critical media literacy skills ($IE = .23$, $p < .001$). Mediation was consistent for all analyses, supporting the proposed model.



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David Stamps is an assistant professor in the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University and a research affiliate with the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and M.A. from California State University, Northridge. His research is aimed at understanding the psychological and behavioral effects of identity-focused interpersonal interactions as well as individuals' exposure to and engagement with media. David's research appears in various books and peer-reviewed academic journals including, *Films as Rhetorical Texts: Cultivating Discussion about Race, Racism and Race Relations*, and in peer-reviewed journals, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, the *Howard Journal of Communications*, and *Journal of Communication Inquiry* to name a few. He is the inaugural recipient of The Claudine Michel Advocacy and Excellence Award and his work has been funded by the Congressional Black Caucus, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and E Pluribus Unum. A former entertainment publicist and grant writer, Dr. Stamps also holds a B.A. from Columbia College Chicago. You can find him on Twitter at [@davidstampsII](https://twitter.com/davidstampsII) and www.davidstamps.com.

ABOUT LSU'S REILLY CENTER FOR MEDIA & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The LSU Manship School of Mass Communication's Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs is partnership-driven, action-oriented, and dedicated to exploring contemporary issues at the intersection of mass communication and public life. Its interdisciplinary approach draws together experts from diverse fields to advance research and dialogue. The intent is to inspire our communities to think deeply, take action, develop solutions, and broaden knowledge. To learn more, visit www.lsu.com/reillycenter.



FUNDERS

ABOUT LOUISIANA COVID-19 HEALTH EQUITY TASK FORCE

Gov. John Bel Edwards created the Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force to look at how health inequities are affecting communities that are most impacted by the coronavirus. The task force's work focuses on actions and research that aims to improve health outcomes and equity in Louisiana and is comprised of leaders across the state from educational, public health, grassroots organizations, religious institutions, and government.

BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION

About the Baton Rouge Area Foundation: The Foundation is among the largest of more than 700 U.S. community foundations. The Foundation does three things: 1) connects fund donors—philanthropists—to worthwhile projects and nonprofit organizations; 2) conducts civic leadership initiatives, including restoring the University/City Park Lakes; 3) Creates fundraising strategies for organizations and advises them on governance and growth strategies. With our donors, the Foundation has granted more than \$600 million since inception in 1964.

HUEY AND ANGELINA WILSON FOUNDATION

Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation was created to better the lives of the people in the Greater Baton Rouge community. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson believed communities should use their local talents and resources to solve problems; however, communities sometimes need additional support along the way. The Foundation believes when people have their healthcare, education and basic needs met they can be self-sufficient, productive, and successful members of society. The Wilsons knew that the most disadvantaged people in our communities need the most assistance, so the Foundation focuses on the sick and disabled, the indigent, and the formerly incarcerated. Since 2000 the Foundation has invested more than \$59 million in causes throughout the 10-parish capital region.

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The Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation was founded by Claude B. "Doc" Pennington and his wife Irene Wells Pennington in 1982. The Foundation focuses on human health, creative minds, and ensuring all Louisianans have access to economic opportunities, partnering with other donors, businesses, government, and most importantly community nonprofit partners - without whom none of the Foundation's ambitions on any issue can be realized. The Foundation is committed to investing in people, partnerships, and new ideas that solve specific problems, and together ensure an equitable and sustainable community.