Ethical Applications of Digital Community-Based Research with Black Immigrant and Refugee Youth and Families

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Abstract

The capacity to conduct psychology research online has expanded more quickly than have ethics guidelines for digital research. We argue that researchers must proactively plan ways to engage ethically in online psychological research with vulnerable groups including marginalized and immigrant youth and families. To that end, this paper describes the ethical use of internet and cellphone technologies in psychological research with Black immigrant and refugee youth and families, which demands efforts to both deepen and extend the Belmont principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. We describe and apply four research frameworks — community-based participatory research, transdisciplinary team science, representational ethics, and cross-cultural psychology — that can be integrated to offer practical solutions to ethical challenges in digital research with Black immigrant and refugee youth and families. Then, as an illustration, we provide a case example of this approach using the Food, Culture, and Health Study conducted with Black Jamaican American and Somali American youth and families, who experience tridimensional acculturation due to their race and have been disproportionately impacted by the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racism/Whiteness. We offer this article as a roadmap for other researchers seeking to conduct ethical digital community-based psychological research with Black immigrant youth and families and other marginalized communities.

Keywords: Digital/online research, Research ethics, Community-based participatory research, Black immigrant/refugee, Tridimensional acculturation

Public Significance Statement

Special care is needed to protect vulnerable groups, including minoritized youth and immigrant communities, in this new digital research environment; however, there are not yet clear ethical guidelines for doing so. This paper integrates four methodological frameworks that extend, deepen, and apply the core ethical principles of the Belmont report — *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, and *justice* — as a roadmap for psychologists wanting to use internet and cellphone technologies in community-based research with Black immigrant and refugee youth and families. We offer our own research project as a case study illustrating how to generate creative solutions to ethical dilemmas in online research with diverse partner communities by prioritizing their cultural and contextual realities, both proactively and responsively.

Ethical Applications of Digital Community-Based Research with Black Immigrant and Refugee Youth and Families

The capacity to conduct psychology research online has expanded more quickly than ethics guidelines and review boards can keep pace (Anabo et al., 2019), and special care is needed to protect vulnerable groups, including minoritized and immigrant youth, in this new digital environment. Currently, psychologists and other researchers who collect data online overwhelmingly refer to the core principles from the Belmont Report — *respect for persons, beneficence,* and *justice* — to describe their ethical priorities (Favaretto et al., 2020), yet online research with minoritized and immigrant families demands additional considerations to deepen and extend Belmont principles. Additionally, although community-based research is recommended as an ethical approach with Black and immigrant communities (Smith et al., 2015; Huslage et al., 2022), guidelines for ethical online community-based research are sorely needed. To fill this gap, our paper describes the ethical use and application of digital technologies in psychological research with Black immigrant and refugee youth and families.

First, we describe how and why the core Belmont principles are critical in research with Black immigrant and refugee communities, showing how digital research with communities experiencing marginalization may compromise ethical priorities without careful forethought and planning. Second, we introduce four complementary methodological frameworks — community-based participatory research, transdisciplinary team science, representational ethics, and cross-cultural psychology — that, integrated, offer practical solutions for ethical research. Third, using our Food, Culture, and Health Study with Black Jamaican American and Somali American youth and mothers, we illustrate how these frameworks can address ethical decisions at each step of the research process, even during societal upheaval like that brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and racism. To our knowledge, this is the first paper to address ethical frameworks relevant to digital community-based research with immigrant and refugee families.

Many of the ethical demands described in this paper are not unique to this study population. For example, research with minors always requires more ethical vigilance, and digital research tools always require anticipating data storage risks. Other considerations, however, are particular to Black immigrant and refugee families including how the research accounts for societal anti-Blackness, deficit-based scientific conceptualizations or methods, and unique intersectional patterns of acculturation among Black U.S. newcomers. Intentional efforts are required to avoid replicating marginalizing social experiences that could intensify Black immigrant and refugee participants' vulnerability in the digital study space.

Black Immigrants and Refugees in the United States

The Black U.S. immigrant population has more than doubled to 4.6 million since 2000, with the Caribbean being the primary origin, followed by Africa (Tamir & Anderson, 2022). Today, one in five Black Americans are immigrants or children of immigrants (Tamir & Anderson, 2022), having immigrated voluntarily, drawn by "pull factors" like U.S. education and jobs. One in eight are forcibly displaced (Lacarte, 2022): Forced to flee their countries, often with further trauma exposure in transit, refugees and asylees enter the United States through humanitarian processes that result in tenuous legal status (Davis et al., 2021; Lacarte, 2022).

Researchers whose study populations include Black immigrant or refugee communities must consider how legal status, race, and age impact participation, including recruitment, cost-benefit analyses, trust, and access to research benefits (Abdi et al., 2022). Without clear ethical guidelines for online research with Black immigrant and refugee families, resources for study design are limited by the knowledge of researchers themselves and their institutional review boards (IRBs; Olukotun & Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2020), which generally do not name refugees as a vulnerable group meriting additional protections despite their potentially tenuous legal status and potential trauma exposure (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015). Further, while ethical guidelines for research with minors are fairly clear, the intersecting vulnerabilities of young age, immigrant or refugee background, and Black race are rarely considered.

Black immigrants and refugees in many receiving countries also experience a complex form of acculturation in the context of systemic racism. This is called tridimensional (3D) acculturation (Ferguson et al., 2012) because both the dominant European American culture (or White American: dimension 1) and a subculture such as African American culture, in this case, one that is marginalized by racism (2) play a role in their acculturation, along with their heritage culture (3). The American Psychological Association and Centers for Disease Control have referred to racism as an epidemic or pandemic (APA, 2020; CDC, 2021), while others have called this a “Whiteness Pandemic” to draw attention to the underlying, but often invisible, culture of Whiteness that maintains racism (Ferguson et al., 2021). The culture of Whiteness does not refer to having white skin but rather to a system of overt and covert beliefs and practices that prioritizes access to power, privileges, and resources for White people over others (Helms, 2017), posing acute and cumulative risks to the health of Black and immigrant U.S. communities through interpersonal racism and racially disproportionate police violence (a leading cause of death: Edwards et al., 2019), structural inequities in health, housing, income (Gillespie et al., 2020), food insecurity (Drexel University, 2018), and internet access (Reddick et al., 2020). During COVID-19, Black immigrants and refugees bear the burden of dual pandemics.

Researchers must proactively and responsively reduce barriers to research participation that stem from systemic racism. For example, Black adults, especially immigrants and refugees, are more likely than White adults to work in physically demanding, in-person service jobs (Kerwin & Warren, 2020; Artiga et al., 2020), which can limit their time and bandwidth to participate in research. Researchers must also build trust with potential Black and immigrant participant communities in light of historical and current abuses of Black and immigrant participants in research and service systems (Huslage et al., 2021). The primacy of post-migration stressors (which, for youth, include development in a new acculturative context marked by racism) may eclipse the perceived benefits of research participation (Davis et al., 2021). These factors present barriers to engaging Black immigrants and refugees, and researchers risk misinterpreting these difficulties using deficit narratives. Along with 3D acculturation, Black people from immigrant and refugee backgrounds may feel the need to act "racially innocuous" in White American circles, another strategy that helps them navigate racism-based pressures. In this taxing process, their identities and needs are muted and hidden to reduce race-related conflict and ease White people's discomfort (Liu et al., 2019). Research studies may be one such circle, exacting an emotional and physiological cost on participants with marginalized identities. However, with careful forethought, digital tools can help reduce these structural barriers.

The Belmont principles should act as the lower bound for digital research ethics with immigrant communities (Bloemraad & Menjívar, 2021), a strong starting point from which researchers can build new practices. The following section considers the importance of each Belmont principle in digital research with Black immigrant and refugee communities, along with ways in which each may need to be expanded or adapted in this context.

Belmont Principles in Practice with Black Immigrant and Refugee Youth and Families

Respect for Persons

The Belmont principle of respect for persons entails treating a person as a person (Dillon, 2010). In psychology and other social sciences, respect for persons is most often discussed with reference to the informed consent process (Anabo et al., 2019), though online research introduces new ethical questions about how to obtain consent. To ensure that these are true choices for participants, ethical researchers attend to factors that could impact participants' research involvement, like power dynamics between participant and researcher (Dillon, 2010), knowledge of the research process, and access to resources outside of the study (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003).

Informed consent is frequently framed as a one-time decision, made at the moment of signing a form. In reality, it is an ongoing choice that reflects participants' changing perceptions of study risks and benefits during data collection (which can shift dynamically around publicized incidents of racial discrimination or violence), broad orientations towards research, and other life circumstances. Actively withdrawing consent for participation requires high social capital and substantial knowledge of one's rights as a subject (Seagle et al., 2020). An *iterative consent process* may be indicated with Black immigrant and refugee families, in which researchers proactively initiate ongoing conversations with participants about their continued consent (Fisher & Anushko, 2012). This can be critical in online research, where participants may perceive fewer opportunities for voicing their concerns or questions to researchers. In work with immigrants and refugees, it may be difficult for researchers to assess whether non-response from participants reflects deliberate dropout (passive non-consent) or difficulty with access (Anabo et al., 2019).

Informed consent processes often reflect individualistic, Western notions of personhood, where a single person is the "unit of consent." In contrast, many African-heritage communities make decisions collectively. One person's consent to have data collected, stored, and used may not reflect the desires of other community members (Ross et al., 2018). In such cases, individual consent is insufficient to honor familial and communal autonomy. With children and adolescents so easily reachable online, researchers must proactively ensure that recruitment and consent procedures honor cultural decision-making processes. Alarmingly, in a survey of online researchers, only 44% deemed consent necessary in digital data collection with minors (Vitak et al., 2016). Researchers working with immigrant and refugee youth online must be especially vigilant to parent-adolescent acculturation gaps, where parties differ in how much they have adopted local cultural norms or how much they have retained heritage culture norms regarding privacy and mental health (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2014), which are relevant to psychological research participation. Respect for persons in cultures where high parental respect and deference are the norm, such as Caribbean and African cultures, can require approaching community leaders and parents before youth to discuss the purpose of the research, answer question or concerns, and build trust (Huslage et al., 2021). Digital tools make it easy to contact youth and their families directly, but researchers seeking to build long-term ethical relationships with Black immigrant and refugee families take additional steps to secure community guidance and buy-in.

Beneficence

Beneficence holds that research participants must be safe from undue harm and also enjoy benefits from involvement, with a reasonable balance between the two. *Beneficence* is usually treated as a “probabilistic ratio,” with the average participant expected to benefit from the research (Favaretto et al., 2020). Many researchers who use online methodologies report abiding by the “Golden Rule,” only designing studies in which they themselves would be comfortable participating, or generally trusting their own ethical instincts to inform their research practices (Vitak et al., 2016). Even researchers with strong ethical instincts, however, may experience biases and, at the very least, fail to fully appreciate the risks posed to immigrant and refugee participants. Given the potential for accidental negligence, it is wise to consult experts in immigrant and refugee issues about study design, such as cultural experts or organizations serving participant communities (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015).

Online research is often erroneously considered lower-risk than in-person research (Anabo et al., 2019), potentially lowering the vigilance of IRBs and researchers to procedural hazards. Participants may also be more willing to share private information online than they would during a face-to-face interview, especially if they are from subcultures accustomed to digital communication (e.g., adolescents from transnational families; Ferguson et al., 2016). While this willingness to share information is a boon to data collection, it may also hinder *beneficence* if it leads participants and researchers to cognitively deflate the risks of disclosure. Youth from Black immigrant and refugee families may benefit from explicit conversations about the risks of sharing information with study staff (Anabo et al., 2019), especially in open science (Bloemraad & Menjívar, 2021; Ross et al., 2018). Digital data breaches do occur, and they are often harder to notice than, say, an office burglary that exposes hard-copy participant files. Furthermore, while adolescents who share about sensitive topics (refugee experiences, discrimination, etc.) in a face-to-face study may receive sympathetic and encouraging responses from research staff, those filling out an online survey lack this supportive social experience. Researchers must weigh the benefits of asking people to “disclose into a void” and may offer debriefing sessions or share supportive resources at the end of the survey (Campbell et al., 2019).

Privacy is a component of *beneficence*, and digital information is often more identifiable, especially for teenagers with large digital footprints (Ross et al., 2018; Vitak et al., 2016). The relatively small sizes of Black immigrant or refugee populations in an area increase the likelihood that participants know study staff (Seagle et al., 2020). In such cases, data are highly identifiable, with the potential to influence participants' social lives. This must inform deliberations about *beneficence*. Research teams may need to take additional steps to ensure data are not identifiable (e.g., in scheduling interviews). The permanence of online data also requires rigorous data disposal, especially in qualitative research (Ross et al., 2018). However, beneficent research must offer the potential for participants to benefit from the knowledge they help to produce. In digital spaces, this may require researchers to store contact information of participants to share study findings in a format that will be useful, beyond journal paywalls and jargon. Another potential benefit of participation is an increased willingness to engage in future research that generates knowledge helpful to participant communities (Smith et al., 2015).

In contrast to obvious practices of hospitality in a physical lab (cleanliness, courtesy of staff, etc.), online data collection spaces may fail to be seen as actual *spaces* in which research occurs, though hospitality is no less important in digital interactions. It is hard to assess participants' discomfort through a screen with intimacy and reciprocity diminished (Salma & Giri, 2021). Further, people from racialized immigrant or refugee groups may feel limited capacity to challenge unethical research practices (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015). Communities with limited research experience, intersecting experiences of marginalization by race and immigrant status, and high levels of structural inequities may be more sensitive to inhospitable research spaces. A individuals' negative experiences in a study may dissuade others from participation, especially in tight-knit refugee communities where recruitment often happens by word of mouth or informal "snowballing" (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003).

Just as researchers must identify the best "unit of consent" in online research with Black immigrant and refugee families, they also must define a unit of protection. Data shared by one assenting sibling (e.g., displacement history) may pertain to other relatives (McLaughlin &

Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015). If disclosed, such stories can negatively impact families, possibly even interfering with asylum status (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015; Hernández et al., 2013). Public narratives emerging from the research (e.g., about Somali American youth's mental health) may also impact community members who do not participate. For this reason, Australian research codes entitle non-participating persons to certain ethical protections — for example, ensuring that community leaders are consulted before releasing genetic data (Ross et al., 2018).

Justice

The Belmont principle of *justice* asks researchers to attend to the distribution of risks and benefits of research in the general population, honestly considering the reasons for inclusion and exclusion of subjects (Ross et al., 2018). This is the Belmont principle least likely to be described explicitly in papers from psychology or related fields, signaling a potential area of drift from the original Report (Anabo et al., 2019) and reflecting, in part, a growing obsolescence of *distributive* notions of justice: Research procedures that seek population-level "fairness" by distributing risks and benefits evenly across the U.S. population may fail to attend to the wellness of a *particular* community, or to differences in groups' needs to benefit from research. The movement towards inclusionist ethics may direct researchers to proactively envision ways for Black immigrant and refugee communities to be involved in research (Collin et al., 2019).

Though digital methods can support the democratization of research participation by reducing some barriers to participation (Anabo et al., 2019), they routinely produce samples with low representativeness (Whitaker et al., 2017), which limits both the interpretability of findings and their benefit to broader society. In Black immigrant and refugee communities, recruitment most often occurs during face-to-face gatherings in community centers and places of worship, where research teams can build relationships with leaders, learn barriers and facilitators of study participation, and meet representative cross-sections of partner communities. Online recruitment and retention, on the other hand, may suffer from reduced levels of trust and intimacy (Salma & Giri, 2021). In a sociopolitical environment hostile towards individuals who are Black, foreign-born, and Muslim, Black immigrants who are at ease participating in online research likely have lower levels of fear about their immigration status and somewhat higher levels of trust in institutions (Olukotun & Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2020). Online research also over-represents participants with higher incomes and more years of education (Whitaker et al., 2017), so without forethought, findings may unevenly represent and benefit members of partner communities.

An evolving understanding of the Belmont Report asks researchers to take a practical lens to research benefits. Even a highly representative online psychology study that can inform mental health care delivery for a city's Black immigrants and refugees has diminished ability to bring about *justice* if systemic factors like racism, poverty, transportation barriers, and stigma undermine the community's access to care (Fisher & Anushko, 2012). Researchers must build dissemination plans that can benefit communities even in the face of entrenched barriers. Further, some refugee communities are burdened by "over-researching" (Seagle et al., 2020), and investigators must weigh the potential benefit of knowledge production against the possible burden of studies on the community — which may be pronounced even in online research.

Four Helpful Methodological Frameworks (Especially When Integrated)

In view of the need to deepen and extend the Belmont principles for ethical digital research with Black immigrant and refugee youth and families, we propose four methodological frameworks as supplementary guides. When successfully integrated, these frameworks can generate creative solutions to these ethical dilemmas, aided by digital tools (see Table 1).

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

CBPR was born of the realization that researchers must engage with communities, especially communities of color that face systemic oppression and exclusion, in ways that reduce disparities (Collins et al., 2018). Its principles include addressing community-identified issues, collaborating equitably, building trust, and promoting co-learning (Becker et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2015). CBPR requires compromise and collaboration through culture- and discipline-spanning relationships that include youth, parents, community leaders, and academics who may also be community members. CBPR principles include centering research questions on community priorities, identifying ecological resources together, building long-term relationships, gathering information through focus groups and interviews, and relying on cultural brokers. CBPR also aims to disseminate the resources and co-created knowledge gained in research back to participants, enhancing their capacity to meet their own goals long after a project ends.

Without careful planning, digital methods can distance researchers from communities. A grounding in CBPR principles, even in digital studies, helps teams define the scope and needs of a partner community, generate ethical and methodological strategies specific to that setting, and share findings in ways that support *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, and *justice*. For example, including community representatives in the design and piloting of procedures can proactively identify strategies for appropriate consent in a specific context (*respect for persons*). Cultural brokers can help to monitor ongoing consent and participant comfort throughout the study (Fisher & Anushko, 2012) and also craft beneficial dissemination procedures (*beneficence*). Finally, CBPR builds community capacity to generate knowledge and benefit from research, and as such, supports *justice* through mutual learning even when conducted digitally.

Transdisciplinary Team Science (TDTS)

In TDTS, members of different disciplines and community stakeholders jointly develop new frameworks to address common research problems (Stokols et al., 2008). TDTS transcends a single discipline's resources, often generating novel, dynamic models drawn from diverse perspectives, which engender innovative solutions to complex real-world problems (Hall et al., 2012). TDTS teams often represent a range of educational and cultural backgrounds and are held together by effective leadership and digital communication strategies (Ferguson et al., 2019).

TDTS is inherently an adaptive methodological orientation. A combination of strong visionary leadership and an established joint decision-making process provides both the stability and flexibility needed to handle decision-making around new online methodologies while monitoring real-time community conditions. Other strategies include establishing an explicit team identity and expectations around team accountability; committing to shared interest in an underlying construct to safeguard against conceptual drift; designing protocols iteratively; and using agreed-upon methods for both routine communications and addressing difficulties (Ferguson et al., 2019). In addition, TDTS requires each team member to proactively share their respective expertise and perspectives, regardless of their training level, which nurtures research innovation and mentorship. This contrasts with the "jack-of-all-trades" researcher approach.

TDTS is particularly suited to support *beneficence* and *justice* in digital research with communities who are disproportionately affected by the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racism (APA, 2020). The integration of community voices and presence of established procedures for shared decision making ensures that the risk-benefit analysis is ongoing and community-informed (*beneficence*). For example, immigrants and refugees may have a tenuous legal status and be dependent on national, state, and local support systems, such that their circumstances change rapidly with policies or administrations (Seagle et al., 2020), especially if they are closely affected by racially charged events like police brutality. TDTS encourages researchers doing online research to harness digital technologies not only for participant data acquisition, but also for research team communication whereby geographically dispersed collaborators can communicate and adjust moment-to-moment in response to changing community needs in each local context. Recognizing multiple forms of expertise and having a team norm of proactively sharing skills and ideas can generate creative solutions to ethical challenges (e.g., data storage: *respect for persons;* dissemination of findings*: justice*).

Representational Ethics (RE)

RE guides researchers to challenge stereotypes and situate findings ecologically (Haarlammert et al., 2017), particularly for urgent considerations with communities experiencing marginalization (Garcia & Birman, 2020). RE frameworks often use "insider and outsider" language to describe researchers' belonging to a researched community, which may shape their attitudes towards participants, interpretation of data, and dissemination priorities. For example, as early as the formulation of hypotheses, cultural insiders may propose constructs and models outsiders cannot perceive (Hughes & Seidman, 2002), and they may be poised to interpret findings in nuanced and contextualized ways that center community needs. However, the salience of insiders' experiences may lead to biased conclusions. Meanwhile, outsiders have the detachment that can be associated with objectivity, but often have limited abilities to draw accurate, contextually-informed conclusions and therefore risk perpetuating damaging narratives. Teams with both insiders and outsiders (or partial insiders, who straddle both worlds) can "cover" these perspectives' contrasting risks and benefits. Challenging the image of the "objective scientist," RE helps researchers proactively engage their social positionalities that inevitably influence the research process, such as in the way participants view researchers (Haarlammert et al., 2017).

RE supports application of *respect for persons, beneficence*, and *justice* throughout research projects with Black immigrant and refugee communities. The identities represented on research teams play a large role in participants' engagement in these communities (Olukotun & Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2020). RE guides researchers not to ignore their positionality, but to ensure that appropriate members of the team are represented in decisions (*respect for persons*). For example, academic insiders can bring perspectives on practices and standards around consent while insiders to the local community generate ways to apply these in practice during digital studies. RE helps researchers mitigate their biases in data processing, which enables them to generate valid and actionable findings to promote *beneficence* and *justice*. The RE framework can also support *beneficence* by helping researchers consider who is best positioned to lead an investigation and by informing initial training and ongoing education for research team members who are cultural outsiders to the participant communities involved. In particular, White researchers working with Black immigrant and refugee communities must recall that the trust of participant communities is an earned privilege and not a right, especially given abuses of Black and immigrant participants in research (Huslage et al., 2021). Therefore, teams of investigators should include, if not be led by, Black researchers who are cultural insiders to the partner communities, and White researchers on the team must commit to trusting and following the Black team leaders' lead, pace, and direction.

Cross-Cultural Psychology (CCP)

CCP is concerned with identifying similarities and differences in psychological processes (e.g., traits, beliefs) across cultures (Berry et al., 2011). A primary methodological tool of CCP is the comparison of cultural groups to distinguish culture specifics — phenomena and processes limited to a subset of societies — from culture universals — those common across all societies. Additionally, CCP promotes the use of contextual variables (e.g., education, food insecurity, migration history) in interpreting findings and advocates for attention to the structure (e.g., invariance), not just the level (e.g., mean differences), of constructs (Van De Vijver, 2009). A core CCP tenet is that effective research entails an open and curious stance toward exploring similarities and differences. Investigators ground this learning process in cultural humility, critiquing their own assumptions about others cultures (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013).

In research with Black immigrant and refugee communities, CCP supports *respect for persons* and *justice*. First, attention to culture specifics can help teams design recruitment and consent procedures that allow expression of autonomy in each involved communities (*respect for persons*). Additionally, CCP encourages the development of study aims that explore shared and unique experiences between and within communities, minimizing essentialism. Such research can identify broad structural factors that impact immigrant and refugee communities, informing policy and interventions, while also supporting nuanced understanding of local contexts. CCP protocols can, therefore, increase research benefits (*beneficence*) and ensure that these are distributed equitably across multiple communities with shared and unique needs (*justice*).

Case Study: The Food, Culture, and Health Study

In this section, we present a case study to illustrate how these four methodological frameworks can, together, mitigate the ethical risks that accompany digital research with marginalized immigrant and refugee families. We discuss ethical risks and solutions for each stage of a study, from design and team assembly to data analysis and dissemination (Table 1).

The Food, Culture, and Health Study examined the roles of 3D acculturation and media in the nutrition and health of Black U.S. adolescents from Caribbean immigrant and African refugee families. Participants were Somali American adolescents (mostly second-generation) in the Minneapolis Metro area of Minnesota and Jamaican American teenagers in the Miami Metro area of Florida, along with their mothers. Student online surveys were administered in English via Qualtrics from December, 2020 to July, 2021, after which families were invited to participate in Zoom interviews. The team of this multi-site, mixed methods, transdisciplinary study included representatives of both cultures being studied, along with a community partner agency. Personnel spanned training levels from high school students to a professor emerita, with disciplines as diverse as developmental psychology, communication science, and nutrition.

About the Communities

The first major wave of Jamaican migration to the United States occurred in the 1960s, with most arriving for jobs and education, and then to be closer to family. In South Florida, the Jamaican community is known for cultural values of family closeness, even following immigration (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2014), and respect for older relatives, along with high educational attainment, leadership, and Christian practice (Ferguson & Dubow, 2007). Jamaicans in the United States often use platforms like WhatsApp to communicate with family abroad.

Somali emigration accelerated in the 1990s after civil war and humanitarian crises (Abdi et al., 2022). Kin and social networks helped resettle newly arrived refugees in the Twin Cities. In keeping with the core Somali value of hospitality, established residents often host newcomers until work is secured. Somali Minnesotans are known for excellence in Qur’anic recitation, small business ownership, community leadership, and higher education. They are nonetheless subject to discriminatory surveillance due to intersectional status as Muslim, Black, and immigrant. Many generations of Somalis use social media, with a reputation for humor and directness.

Since Jamaican and Somali Americans value face-to-face relationships, the Study was designed for in-person recruitment and data collection. However, right before the project launch, the nation entered lockdowns in March of 2020 to curb the spread of COVID-19. Not only did community gathering places shutter, but family stress rose drastically. COVID-19's impact was disproportionately felt in Black, immigrant, and refugee communities where the virus has had a higher mortality rate and many individuals were unable to work from home (Brickhill-Atkinson & Hauck, 2021; Kerwin & Warren, 2020). Consequently, the Study launch was delayed. Then, on May 25th, 2020, Mr. George Floyd, an unarmed Black American, was murdered by a White police officer in Minneapolis, sending new shockwaves through local Black communities.

The Study team discussed the impact of these events on our partner communities, as well as on our own research team, given that the PI (anchor author), two Co-Is (8th and 10th authors), both cultural brokers (6th and 7th authors), and a lead undergraduate research assistant (4th author) had Jamaican and Somali backgrounds, and many other team members were from communities of color (9th and 10th authors). The team arranged Zoom meetings with families from our partner communities to listen to their experiences and solicit their input on whether, when, and how to move forward with the Study amid these new community traumas. Based on their input, the decision was made to proceed with data collection but move all activities online. This plan reflected the Study's potential to support community goals by generating knowledge about adolescents' health and resilience even amid the dangers of COVID-19 and racism (Viswanathan et al., 2004). The frameworks of CBPR, TDTS, RE, and CCP had informed the study from its inception, but they grew in relevance and applicability in light of these converging crises.

Forming research questions and designing the study. To support *beneficence* and *justice*, research questions must matter to participant communities and have the potential to benefit them. After Mr. Floyd's murder at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, the PI led the research team in broadening research questions and constructs of interest amid the changing needs, resources, and social landscapes of potential participants. Through dialogue with cultural insiders and outsiders, hypotheses were retained, modified, added, or retired. New survey and interview questions reflected updated community priorities and capacity (e.g., COVID-19 stressors, screen media use for school, changes in thoughts about race), such that iterative procedure design (from TDTS) proved useful even before data collection began. Because COVID-19 pandemic limited in-person engagement with participants, the team decided through equitable power-sharing (from CBPR), to pivot from in-person to online methods, with site-specific procedures reflecting community preferences. Teen community advisors from each cultural group piloted these methods and helped confirm construct equivalence across cultural groups (from CCP). With parental approval, these teen advisors were compensated for their time, and their input was valued alongside that of senior team members (a TDTS principle).

Research participation can be an empowering and efficient way for a community to bring about desired change. However, especially during the pivots in a digital community-based study, researchers are wise to pause and consider again, in dialogue with participant communities, whether formal academic research is most appropriate to the questions at hand. In some cases, the community is best served by other knowledge-generating and resource-building efforts, like informal needs assessments followed by application for direct programming grants. Here, the positionalities of the Study's investigators and their connections to participant communities supported the discernment of stakeholders' preferences to pursue community-based research.

Ethical problems can arise when White supremacy and anti-Blackness are overlooked in the early planning stage of research in Black immigrant and refugee communities. To ensure *beneficence,* RE counsels team leaders to be proactive in establishing safeguards including explicit training for the research team on social positionality (see Haarlamert et al., 2017; Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019) and ongoing support for researchers' own ethnic-racial identity development (Helms, 2017), which are likely to be new experiences for many White researchers. White researchers are also encouraged to be vigilant against subtle features of White supremacy culture in their own attitudes and inclinations during project planning and execution (e.g., White saviorism, individualism, paternalism, untamed urgency, quantity over quality tendencies, fear of conflict, need for comfort, and denial/defensiveness: https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/). White researchers partnering with these communities may especially benefit from leveraging digital technologies not only for data acquisition, but also for real-time consultation with Black team leaders and cultural brokers to guide decision-making, and to facilitate reflective processing and mentorship around how researchers' positionalities are showing up in the day-to-day research (i.e., reflexivity). Finally, as discussed later, these considerations flow all the way through to dissemination when White researchers are charged with ensuring that they tell Black immigrant/refugee participants' stories in a way that advances racial justice *(justice)*.

Recruitment. Without the face-to-face relationships that facilitate engagement in many Black immigrant and refugee communities (Olukotun & Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2020), potential participants may not feel free to candidly ask questions to study staff. To practice *respect for persons*, Study cultural brokers spoke with community leaders and parents first for recruitment conversations before interacting with adolescents, and they allowed extra time in parent recruitment calls to discuss the purpose of research using metaphors and language anchored in community priorities. With Somali parents, this often involved using medical metaphors for risk and resilience research, like discussions about how research has helped community members become aware of signs of kidney disease. These conversations relied on cultural brokers' insider status (from RE). Further, discussing research in general rather than just the study at hand, these interactions generated community capacity for research participation, a CBPR principle.

Even targeted online recruitment is likely to generate under-representative samples with regard to income and years of education (Whitaker et al., 2017), compromising *justice*. In response, the team took measures to ensure that samples at each study site were maximally representative of the local Black immigrant or refugee community. First, cultural brokers were at the fore of recruitment efforts, affirming community ownership of research (a CBPR principle). The team chose culture universal and specific participant contact methods (using CCP). Across both cultures, social media use was common among youth and parents were most comfortable with phonecalls for recruitment. However, Somali and Jamaican families varied in their email habits and their chosen social media platforms, and site-specific procedures reflected these differences. As social distancing impeded recruitment, cultural brokers implemented creative solutions, often relying on existing WhatsApp networks in an iterative process (from TDTS).

Quantitative data collection. In the Study, quantitative data collection occurred through a Qualtrics survey with embedded parent consent and youth assent forms. The team quickly learned that mothers with strong preferences for oral communication often felt less comfortable giving consent in impersonal digital portals. Rather than insisting they complete this step (which would compromise both *respect for persons* and *beneficence*) cultural brokers took the opportunity to respect culture-specific preferences (from CCP) and suggest a modified consent procedure. With IRB approval, cultural brokers gave parents the option to give telephone consent so that the form could be completed in real time during a conversation. This change represented an iteration in the study protocol (a TDTS principle) that supported parental autonomy and also built community research capacity through the involvement of cultural brokers (CBPR).

To support the consent process, promote security, and allow participants to ask questions throughout data collection, youth filled out Qualtrics surveys during daily Zoom meetings hosted by research assistants and staff, arriving at any time during the daily two-hour windows. One member of the Miami site (3rd author) noticed that participants from the Jamaican community often arrived at the end of survey sessions, such that there was not enough time for them to complete the surveys before the session "closed." This compromised *beneficence* by rushing participants uncomfortably and was also a risk to *justice*. Upon team reflection and dialogue with community members — practices of cultural humility and information-gathering from CCP and CBPR, respectively — we learned the Study team's schedules were systematically misaligned with participants' work and school calendars, resulting in potential under-representation of families whose parents worked outside the home. The scheduler (5th author) modified schedules to allow for more families to participate, grounded in the TDTS principle of iterative design.

Next, the team learned through cultural brokers (a channel used in CBPR) that some youth who participated in the study expected that the cultural brokers who had recruited them would be present at data collection sessions. One teenager voiced disappointment that there were no Black project staff present at the Zoom data collection session he attended. Our efficient research practices had put *beneficence* at risk, causing unnecessary discomfort for participants, and missed an opportunity to practice *respect for persons* because youth who attended Zoom sessions when there were no cultural insiders present were not able to engage relationally with others who reflected key parts of their identity.

In response, the team took three steps. First, the lead Graduate Research Assistant (1st author) helped the survey team modify their schedules to ensure thoughtful racial representation (and, when possible, ethnic representation) during all Zoom sessions. Meanwhile, the data collection team was guided through steps of self-reflection about insider and outsider status in research using tools from RE (social identity mapping: Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019) along with resources for supporting cultural humility (from CCP). Second, the study's PI (anchor author) and co-I (8th author), who represented each partner community, recorded culture-specific video messages thanking families, which were embedded into the beginning of the Qualtrics survey. Finally, each cultural broker chose a few weekdays to regularly attend Zoom sessions, allowing families to opt to attend a "Somali day" or "Jamaican day" for continuity as desired. Procedural changes were by now expected and, ironically, routine, thanks to the team's TDTS framework.

Participants offered the Study team an opportunity to practice *respect for persons* when we learned that despite our fervent measures to protect participant anonymity during Zoom calls, teenaged survey respondents overwhelmingly preferred to leave cameras and microphones on during survey sessions, conveying that during the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to see others from shared ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Using cultural humility practices (from CCP), we considered ways that academic research culture (and individualistic White American culture, more broadly) had led us to follow an established set of customs rather than query participants' needs. After an IRB consultation to ensure approval, we embraced participants' preferences for visibility during data collection, knowing that it upheld their autonomy while (literally) counteracting the invisibility of ethnic minorities in research.

Qualitative data collection. Qualtrics survey respondents were invited to follow-up Zoom interviews, with topics and questions designed by the multidisciplinary team and piloted with teen advisors (TDTS), which ensured that procedures would be comfortable for participants and helpful to stakeholders (consistent with the principles of *beneficence* and *justice*). When our multicultural, multi-site team faced scheduling and communication barriers, we built procedures for shift assignments; time zone conversion; and rapid contact with families via cultural brokers, relying on online tools (from TDTS) and the insight of cultural brokers (from CBPR).

The practical constraints of online interviews posed challenges to *respect for persons*: Not all participants had internet connection, private space, or familiarity with Zoom, which compromised their ability to be interviewed (and therefore their autonomy), as well as the representation of diverse families, part of *justice*. To address this, cultural brokers sometimes visited participants' homes to set up Zoom for interviews. Interviewers committed to Zooming from private, secure locations supporting participant privacy and *beneficence* and interviews were conducted in families' preferred language for participant comfort.

Of note, participants appeared to be more comfortable and willing to disclose information when they were talking to researchers with shared cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds, but sometimes spoke in less detail owing to assumptions of common experiences. Since it is critical to mirror and affirm the personhood of participants through representation on study teams (*respect for persons*; Dillon, 2010), but also important to learn enough details to generate knowledge of use to participants (*beneficence* and *justice*), all interview teams included at least one cultural insider and one outsider so both participants and data quality benefitted from RE.

Data analysis and interpretation. Online researchers must recall the personhood of participants behind the seemingly "disembodied" data (Dillon, 2010): A breach can present risks to *beneficence* for Black immigrant and refugee participants in domains like immigration status and social standing. To address this risk, Study team members shared data only through a secure, IRB-endorsed online platform (per TDTS), maintained research ethics training, and received periodic reminders regarding applications of confidentiality ethics for online research.

Researchers support *justice* and *beneficence* by attending to unseen assumptions that may shape their interpretation of qualitative data from Black immigrant and refugee communities. We relied on insider-outsider pairings, a tool from RE: All qualitative coding teams included cultural insiders and outsiders (e.g., a Black, Jamaican-born researcher alongside a White, American-born researcher) who met for consensus over Zoom. When participants acculturate in 3D, data analysis may require the perspectives of heritage culture peers, African Americans, and White Americans. TDTS, CBPR, and RE tools allow positionally diverse researchers to be "present at the table" with one another, each contributing valuable perspectives while ensuring that no socially privileged identities (e.g., Whiteness, high education attainment, or local language fluency) override the knowledge, contributions, and interpretations of other stakeholders.

To mitigate the risk of study findings perpetuating harmful narratives about Black immigrant and refugee communities and impeding their reputation or access to resources (a risk to *justice* and *respect for persons*; Olukotun & Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2020; Ross et al., 2018), the Study team proactively used cultural humility practices during analysis and dissemination, such as building social positionality maps (a tool from RE). Meanwhile, for coordination and quality control, the team discussed and signed an online dissemination contract agreeing to the products that would stem from the project with oversight from the PI (from TDTS).

Dissemination. In psychology research with Black immigrant and refugee communities, teams must go beyond journal publications to extend the benefits of research findings to participant communities and protect them from harm, in keeping with *beneficence* and *justice*. The main priorities in this phase are, first, to include community partners while crafting products and narratives from the findings (Seagle et al., 2020), and second, to return findings to communities in ways that let them benefit from research participation. The Study team ensured that participant communities were partners in dissemination planning. Once initial results were processed, an "executive summary" document was created by the lead and anchor authors to present core findings of the study. Community leaders were consulted over Zoom and email for insights, corrections, and interpretations before broader community dissemination began. This step involved soliciting community feedback (from CBPR) with cultural humility (from CCP). In addition to academic dissemination efforts, conversations with teen advisors and other cultural insiders led the team to create visually appealing pamphlets for the website and brief video products for culturally appropriate social media platforms (from CBPR).

Conclusion

Amid the lack of ethical guidance for digital research with Black immigrant and refugee youth and families, this article offers four methodological frameworks as a roadmap. When integrated and used with fluidity, creativity, and deference to participants' cultural and contextual needs, these frameworks generate research procedures that proactively reduce potential harm to Black immigrant and refugee youth and families. Our extension of the Belmont principles through these four frameworks helps researchers go beyond the worthy, time-honored goals of *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, and *justice*, by also engendering community buy-in, increased research capacity, and joyful long-term relationships. Any prescriptive procedures for digital psychology studies may prove redundant or insufficient in a number of years. Instead, we suggest that the way forward in digital psychological research with communities facing marginalization is to engage with ethics not as a set of procedures to be protected (Collin et al., 2019) but rather as a path through which to conduct relationships.

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Table 1

Applying Belmont Principles within Four Methodological Frameworks to Guide Ethical Online Research with Black Immigrant and Refugee Families

	Application of Belmont Principles		
Principles of Guiding Frameworks	Respect for Persons	Beneficence	Justice
Community-Based Participatory Research: • Address community-identified issues • Engage in equitable collaboration and mutual learning between research teams and communities • Work with cultural brokers	• Researchers proactively consult with cultural brokers on consent procedures, who then monitor effectiveness to inform changes • Study: Extensive conversation between participants and cultural brokers during recruitment and consenting allowed for mutual learning and capacity building	• Researchers and community members co-develop research questions that benefit the partnering communities • Study: Early conversations with immigrant teens and parents from the intended cultural communities directly informed research questions and methodology	• Proactively develop strategies for dissemination to increase equitable distribution of benefits from research • Study: Developed pamphlets and videos of study findings with community input; identified best community avenues for dissemination
Transdisciplinary Team Science: • Co-develop/use transdisciplinary conceptual frameworks • Address real-world problems as informed by community members on research team • Rely on iterative, flexible study procedures, effective leadership, and team communication	• Iteratively design procedures that address dynamic participant and situational factors • Study: Rapidly modified consent procedures and data collection schedule to attend to participant needs and preferences	• Continually evaluate the cost-benefit ratio in light of dual pandemics impacting Black U.S. immigrant communities • Study: Pivoted from in-person to online methodology to reduce COVID-19 health risk; adapted research aims to increase benefits to partner communities	• Integrate multiple disciplines to address complex, real-world problems that impact Black immigrant communities • Study: Integrated psychology, media, and nutrition sciences to study and intervene on structural factors impacting Black U.S. immigrant health
Representational Ethics: • Seek insider & outsider representation • Reflect on social position • Attend to contextual influences	• Ensure cultural insiders are represented in research team leadership and decision-making about study design • Study: Cultural and generational insiders (e.g., teenage digital natives) are valued consultants	• Reduce the risk of bias or deficit narratives in by including insider & outsider perspectives • Study: Team reflected on social positions and included insiders & outsiders on all data collection, analysis, and dissemination teams	• Increase representation of Black immigrant participants in psychological science research • Study: Cultural insiders' lead role in participant recruitment improved sample representativeness
Cross-Cultural Psychology: • Identify culture universals and culture specifics across groups • Attend to contextual variables • Practice cultural humility	• Adapt recruitment and consent processes for culture specifics • Study: Cultural brokers engaged both parents and teens during recruitment and consent processes, but they varied on which partner they engaged first based on cultural norms	• Practice cultural humility in research design, interaction in the multicultural research team, and interaction with participants • Study: Listened to and prioritized participant preferences & values, rather than defaulting to academic research/own-culture norms	• Address universal and specific contextual factors to ensure equitable access to study participation • Study: Generated contextually-informed solutions to Zoom access (e.g., home visits) to remove group-specific barriers

Note. Study = Food, Culture, and Health Study