



Perspectives on Communication: African American Men



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The goal of Healthy People 2010 is to improve health and reduce health disparities for all.

Social Determinants of Health

- ❖ African American Unemployment rate 8.5% (3.9% for Whites)¹
- ❖ African American Drop out Rate 11.8% (6.8% Whites)
Males (5%) and females (4.7%)

Communication Factors

- ❖ Form Differences^{2, 3}
- ❖ Semantic Differences⁴
- ❖ Semantic-syntactical differences⁵
- ❖ Pragmatic nonverbal^{6, 7, 8} and verbal differences^{3, 9}
- ❖ Civil Rights legislation
Plessy vs. Ferguson 1896
Brown vs. Topeka BOE 1954
Larry P. Vs. Riles, 1972
Martin Luther King Elementary 1979
- ❖ Narrative genre & academic success¹⁰

African American Academic and Economic Success

- ❖ African Americans in special education¹¹
- ❖ Demographic, economic, and achievement predict placement¹²
- ❖ AAVE speakers face increased discrimination^{13, 4, 14}
- ❖ Rural African American academic and employment success related to heart disease and cancer^{15, 16}



Pemiscot County, MO

- ❖ 26% African American
- ❖ 30% live below poverty
- ❖ 10% unemployment rate
- ❖ 23.3% drop out rate

Research Questions

1. What are African American men's perspectives on communication?
2. Does this perception relate to perceived discrimination, social capital, and coping?

Methods

Participants:

122 men; Age range-18-45 (M=28.33(3.66))

Education-
6 (5%) grades 1-8
35 (29%) grades 9-11
76 (62%) GED or grade 12
5 (4%) 1-3 years of college

Measures:

- ❖ Interpersonal Communication Inventory¹⁷. Designed to identify patterns, characteristics and styles. 50/54 items discriminated between weak and stronger communicators.
- ❖ Discrimination Summary: *Detroit area study 1995*¹⁸. This measure assesses the extent to which individuals have experienced discrimination and what they perceive the discrimination to be a function of e.g., race, class, gender.
- ❖ Measures of Coping: John Henryism and Framingham Type A Scales¹⁹ John Henryism is a measure that assesses active or passive coping styles.

❖ Measure of Social capital^{20, 21, 22, 23} Social capital refers to the specific processes among people and organizations, working collaboratively in an atmosphere of trust, that lead to accomplishing a goal of mutual social benefit. Social capital has been defined as including trust, cooperation, civic engagement, and reciprocity. These measures address horizontal (within community) and vertical (outside of community) social capital.

Procedures:

- ❖ Face to face interviews were conducted with each participant.
- ❖ Data were cleaned and double entered into an Access data base. Any discrepancies were identified and corrected.
- ❖ Data were analyzed using SPSS (v. 13.0). Descriptive analysis and Pearson correlations among measures were conducted.

Results:

Communication Inventory study total M=72.12(SD=13.44)
54% Scored within 1 SD of the mean (~66-85+)
➢ 21% scored above the mean (~85+)
➢ 31% scored below 1 SD of the mean (<66)



Men with higher communication scores were more likely to demonstrate:

- active coping (r=.23, p<.01)
- perceive less discrimination from their life experiences (r=.21, p<.05)
- access social networks and report more social capital (r=.33, p<.01)

Significant questions for 25 (21%) men whose total scores were 85 and above:

Yes Answers	No Answers
Do your words come out the way you would like?	When explaining something do others put words in your mouth?
When you do not understand a question, do you ask for clarification?	Is it difficult for you to talk to other people?
Do you ask how he feels about what you are saying?	Do you find it difficult to express your ideas when the other person has different ideas?
Do you talk about things that are of interest to both parties?	Do you tend to talk more than the other person?
Are you aware of how your tone of voice affects others?	Is it difficult to accept constructive criticism?
Do you later apologize to someone whose feelings you hurt?	Does it upset you when someone disagrees with you?
Can you discuss a problem with someone else without getting angry?	Do you fail to disagree with others because you are afraid they will get angry?
Are you satisfied with the way you settle your differences?	Do you become uneasy when someone pays you a compliment?
Are you able to trust other individuals?	Do you find it difficult to compliment others?
Do you let others finish talking before reacting?	Is it difficult for you to confide in other people?
Do you try to listen for meaning when someone is talking?	Is it difficult to see the other's point of view?
Do others listen when you talk?	Do others remark that you always seem to think you are right?
Can you tell the difference between what a person says and how she feels?	
While speaking are you aware how others are reacting to what you say?	We are grateful for the African American men who volunteered to participate in the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities RFA-MD-05-002 Men on the Move project.

Discussion

Communication strengths for men with high scores focused on the ability to
➢ take perspective of the other person
➢ communicate during uncomfortable situations of trust, receiving compliments, and situations of conflict

Implications

To increase social determinants of health:
➢ Teach how to take perspective before, during, and after the interaction.
➢ Explore situational, environmental, and cross-cultural contexts.
➢ Discuss and practice strategies for receiving and paying compliments, constructive criticism, disagreements, trust and mistrust