

METAPHOR AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR REDUCING HEALTH DISPARITIES FOR LATINA WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Racial and ethnic health disparities exist in a multitude of health domains, including higher incidence rates of cancer within minority populations and premature deaths associated with cancer. To address this problem, it has been suggested that health communication strategies incorporate a group's culture into the health message. Metaphors help people understand abstract concepts in more simplistic ways by directly assimilating the more easily comprehended concept to the more complex one. Because Latinas value family, the present study examined the hypothesis that a metaphor describing the physical body as a family and cancer prevention as a mechanism to protect the familial body will increase interest and intentions in cancer prevention. Moreover, to the extent Latinas value family and a collectivistic orientation, the metaphor should engage these values to better predict intentions. Perceived susceptibility to and seriousness of cervical cancer as well as perceived barriers to and benefits of cancer prevention were examined as potential mediators. Results suggest the collective-family metaphor engages collectivistic and familial individual differences. Pap smear intentions increased the more collectivistic in orientation and the more Latinas valued familism when exposed to the metaphor message. Results also suggest the family metaphor indirectly increases Pap smear intentions through enhancement of perception of benefits of Pap smears, but only for Latinas who are less American acculturated or low in individualism. There exist some ambiguities in the results as well, with inconsistent findings across individual difference measures of Latino identification and values and different outcomes. Implications and potential explanations are discussed.