# Using Technology to Examine Cultural Learning of African–Americans:
## Verbal and Nonverbal Messages of Deception

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Police officers frequently work with people of different cultures and those who speak different languages, thus needing to learn cultures (Navarro, 2001). The purpose of this case is to examine the self-perceptions of African-Americans regarding their ability to distinguish deception in interpersonal communication. RQ1: How do African-Americans self-report their ability to detect interpersonal communication deception? RQ2: What behaviors do African-Americans believe are indicators of interpersonal communication deception? The method of study is survey research conducted through SurveyMonkey.com. Participants (n=57) discuss their perceptions of deception in their lives. The results suggest that respondents (80%) believe they are better than others at detecting deception. The literature findings also suggest that African-Americans believe themselves to be more effective at detecting deception within their own ethnic group compared to other ethnic groups. Commensurate with previous deception studies, the current study finds that an array of communication behaviors, believed to be indicative of deceit by other ethnic groups, are also used by African-American respondents.*

## BACKGROUND

The African-American culture possesses a storied history. Brought to America against their will and forced into servitude, African slaves were stripped of culture and compelled to adopt the culture and ways of the American slave owner. As such, the African-American culture is a miscellany of both the dominant American culture and the post-Civil War struggle that defined the freedmen of late 19th century America.

Acculturation into the dominant culture was not the choice of the African-American. But because of acculturation, African-Americans may very well understand the dominant culture better than their culture is understood by anyone outside of their own culture. This presumption may also extend to perceptions of deception in the dominant culture. Although this idea has been discussed, there seems to be little research about whether the idea is true (Bailey, Nowicki, & Cole, 1998). Until the early 21st century, African-Americans were the dominant minority culture in the United States. One cannot help but wonder why this co-culture has been all but omitted from many areas of research (Bailey et al., 1998). Communication research is no exception.

As there appears to be little research that includes African-Americans as research participants, the author of this thesis explored the African-American culture's perception of deceptive communication. This research examined attitudes toward deception from an intra-cultural perspective and an intercultural perspective.

This case used technology to examine the self-perceptions of African-Americans regarding deception in interpersonal communication. The current study also proposes to examine the nature of self-report of African-Americans regarding deception. How do African-Americans self-report their ability to detect interpersonal communication deception? What behaviors do African-Americans believe are indicators of interpersonal communication deception?

## SETTING THE STAGE

Police officers frequently work with people of different cultures and those who speak different languages, thus needing to learn cultures. In this case, a police officer used technology to seek information from African Americans about their perceptions of verbal and nonverbal communication related to deception. Deception has been the subject of a vast amount of communication research (Levine, Shaw, & Shulman, 2010a). This research has been rather broad in scope, examining many facets of deceptive communication behaviors. Researchers have examined the effect of stakes on deceivers' behaviors, the effect of probing questions, the reliability of perceived nonverbal indicators of deception, and a plethora of related data.

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