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Research Article

Gender Differences in the Narrative Productions of African American Adults

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Purpose: The narrative is an important component of cognitive–linguistic assessment of nonmainstream populations and provides a valuable basis on which to conduct cross-ethnic/cultural comparisons. Given that there is limited information on the narrative characteristics of African American adults, this study was designed to describe the nature of narrative productions among African American men and women and to determine if gender differences exist in those productions.
Method: Seventy-six African American adults—40 women (ages 46–86 years) and 36 men (ages 45–87 years)—recruited from Washington, DC, and the Metropolitan area took part in the study. Participants produced a complex story retelling and a personal narrative of their choosing. All narratives were transcribed orthographically, parsed into T-units, and analyzed for narrative superstructure. Narratives were then examined by establishing the quantity of information, distribution of information, and African American English (AAE) density and usage.
Results: The results of the study demonstrated that women produced more information across all measures of quantity and narrative conditions. Gender differences were observed where men produced narratives that were brief and succinct whereas women produced longer, more elaborative narratives. Moreover, women produced more information across constituent units of the narratives. Although the use of AAE and its effect on quantity and distribution of information were negligible, the results demonstrated that men produced more occurrences of AAE than women.
Conclusions: This study demonstrated that women were more talkative, produced more information, took more time to produce their narratives, and told stories that were more descriptive, evaluative, and reflective than those of their male counterparts. This study also suggests that personal narratives may be more robust in characterizing the process of African American adult narrative production whereas story retelling may be a good contrastive element in further describing narrativization.
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People of all ages enjoy good stories and good storytellers, especially those whose cultures are rooted in oral traditions. African Americans have their art forms deeply embedded in orality (e.g., folklore, songs) as well as the written word (e.g., slave narratives; Banks-Wallace, 2002; Gates, 1989). However, few studies have focused on the narrative productions of African American adults beyond the historical and literary perspectives of oration. There remains a lack of information informing speech-language pathologists, psychologists, and other professionals about the discursive nature of narrativization or the cognitive–linguistic influences undergirding African American narrative production. The African American narrative tradition is considered, by some, to be informal (e.g., Bleile, McGowan, & Bernthal, 1997; Koch, Gross, & Kolts, 2001) and, consequently, in opposition to the mainstream style of narrativization required for clinical domains, research, academia, and other formal venues (Michaels, 1981). This opposition creates challenges for those who are unacquainted with the African American narrative tradition as well as for those African Americans who lack exposure to the conventional narrative style (Johnson, 2012; Michaels, 1981). Consequently, African Americans risk an erroneous diagnosis and overidentification of impairment, in addition to limited access to important literacy, academic, social, and occupational experiences when their narrative style is not shared and/or appreciated by the mainstream population (Johnson, 2012; Michaels, 1981). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide a description of the narrative productions of African American men and women and to determine if gender differences exist in those productions.

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African American Narrative Tradition

The African American narrative tradition is robust stemming from the beginnings of African cultures and endures to the present day (Holloway, 2005). Narratives are not only important for communicating experience but also serve important social, cultural, ethical, and political functions (Obiechina, 1993). African American oration is fluid and constantly evolving over time (Banks-Wallace, 2002; Smitherman, 1986). Narratives are often modified, embellished, and improvised with every retelling such that a story is rarely told the same way each time (Smitherman, 1986, 2006). Narratives are like creative performances that improve with each retelling and, as such, preserve language and events in its natural form. Thus, the speaker will adapt the story to the context and to the needs of both speaker and listener (Banks-Wallace, 2002; Smitherman, 2006).

As a community, African Americans have been described as using a high-context narrative style, which is acknowledged as typical of oral cultures (e.g., Tella, 1996). The high-context narrative style has been described as an indirect and implicit form of discourse, where meaning is derived from the context (Tella, 1996). Thus, ideas are strung together making narration more responsive to improvization and a loquacious style of expression, where the speaker and listener assume shared knowledge and experience. African Americans have also been described as topic-associating speakers. The topic-associating style of narration is characterized by a series of loosely related nonlinear episodes or events with no explicit expression of an overall theme (Hyon & Sulzby, 1994). To fully understand these diverse narrative traditions, one needs to examine them within the context of the African American culture that produced them.

It is important to note that not every African American adult will produce such narratives (Craig & Grogger, 2012). Moreover, the topic-associating narrative style is cultural, socioeconomic, and education dependent as well as driven by the level of acculturation and proficiency of code-switching (Heath, 1986; Johnson, 2012). Most African Americans will be adept at code-switching in that they are equally proficient in producing topic-associating narratives as well as narratives that conform to the more formal style of oration.

Education and Narrativization

Prior studies demonstrate that the level of education mediates story recall, narrative structure, and biographical memory in narrative production (e.g., Juncos-Rabadan, 1996; Mackenzie, 2000). In a study of adult capacity for narrativization, Juncos-Rabadan (1996) found that those with higher education produced narratives with significantly better story structure, better quality, and more cohesion. In contrast, those with lower education were more descriptive and used more deictic expressions. Juncos-Rabadan noted that the increased use of descriptive sentences and deixis was linked to fewer cohesive links, decreased narrative structure and quality, and a sign of decreased narrative production capacity. Davis, Alea, and Bluck (2015) found that higher education was related to accurately remembered details in narrativization. Mackenzie (2000) reported that adults with higher education were more advantaged in narrativization than their less educated peers due to the enhancement of metacognitive skills. Specifically, those with more education selected better strategies and had better verbal ability, thus increasing their capacity for narrativization, whereas those with lower education produced shorter narratives and less complete descriptions.

Studies also described gender differences in narrativization when education was considered. Davis et al. (2015) reported that, with an increased level of education, women produced more factual elaboration in their narratives than men. Juncos-Rabadan (1996) found that women with higher education had a more elaborative narrative style and a greater narrative capacity than men. Juncos-Rabadan noted that this difference may have been due to differences in socialization and culturally acquired rules, where women are socialized toward a more holistic narrative style whereas men are socialized to be more analytical (see Wodak, 1981).

Gender Differences and Descriptive Narrative Production

Beyond ethnocultural differences, gender differences are said to exist in narrativization. Studies have shown that gender differences are presumed to arise from different childhood socialization practices (see Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998; and Leaper & Smith, 2004, for reviews). For example, Clearfield and Nelson (2006) noted that parents communicate more with girls than with boys, thus providing girls with more opportunities for social interaction. Similarly, Nelson and Fivush (2004), as well as Mascaro, Rentscher, Hackett, Mehl, and Rilling (2017), maintained that parents use a more elaborative discourse style with girls but a more pragmatic discourse style with boys. Moreover, studies have demonstrated that girls surpass boys in language-centered activities, such that girls begin to talk earlier and exceed boys in verbal fluency, articulation, vocabulary acquisition, and syntactic complexity (e.g., Cohen, 1998; Halpern, 2012). Although studies are limited with respect to African Americans, an investigation of gender differences among 7- and 8-year-old children by Leaper, Tenenbaum, and Shaffer (1999) found that African American and Caucasian children performed similarly, not only in same-gendered interactions but also in mix-gendered interactions. Specifically, boys used more controlling and domineering language, whereas girls used more affiliative communication and cast themselves in roles of subordination.

Gender Differences in Adult Narrativization

Differences have been observed in the way adult men and women use language to influence and establish

outcomes. Women have been described as more expressive and elaborative yet tentative, polite, emotional, oriented toward establishing relationships, and concerned with establishing intimacy (Glass, 2015). Men have been described as more assertive, independent, and task oriented, concerned with establishing status and power as well as gathering and imparting information (Gray, 1992; Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001; Tannen, 1990). Generally, studies have shown that women produce more detailed and thematically coherent narratives than men (e.g., Friedman & Pines, 1991; Niedzwienska, 2003). Buckner and Fivush (1998) found that females produced longer and more descriptive narratives that were more temporally and causally organized than males. In a subsequent study, Fivush, Bohanek, Zaman, and Grapin (2012) found that women told more linear, contextual, and thematically coherent narratives than men. Tannen (1990) noted that men made themselves the protagonists in their narratives, whereas women downplayed their own role in their narratives. These gender differences are assumed to be the result of differences in socialization practices for boys and girls (Weatherall, 2002) as illustrated in a study of Kanaris (1999), who found that boys used "I" more in their narratives, whereas girls used "we" more, thus demonstrating that males are socialized to be more egocentric and engaged in positioning themselves in power, whereas females are socialized to position themselves as participants and observers.

Gender Differences in African American Narrativization

There are several early studies describing African American male narrative production (e.g., Labov, 1972, 1977; Labov & Waletsky, 1997; Wolfram, 1970). However, these and other studies did not include women. Consequently, little attention has been paid to the voices of African American women and the way that women use these narrative forms. Only recently have researchers focused on women's production patterns. For example, Morgan (1999) discussed the verbal play of "he said, she said" discourse as well as signifying and instigating. Morgan also described "reading dialect," which is a form of signifying in which the speaker denigrates the listener by "telling them off" or "telling them about themselves." Troutman (2001) discussed the use of "smart talk" as a means of expressing strong feelings within the context of wit and humor. Fordham (1993) stated that African American women use African American English (AAE) within the community but avoid using AAE and those traditional narrative forms around Caucasians. Fordham also reported that those African American women who want to succeed in professional endeavors learn to avoid AAE around their Caucasian and other professional counterparts. Similarly, Foster (1995) noted that middle-class African American women produce narrative patterns that align closely with mainstream forms, while using AAE and traditional narrative forms to express cultural identity, but within familiar contexts.

Narrative Superstructure

Focusing attention on the elements of the macrostructure of narrative production may best minimize the paradoxical disparity between speakers of AAE and African American narrative styles with the formal style of narrativization (Champion, 2003; Labov, 1972). Macrostructure refers to the general organization of the narrative with respect to themes, topic maintenance, and thematic coherence (Glosser & Deser, 1992). Macrostructure encompasses all elements of microstructure, including story length in words, phrases, and sentences; lexical diversity; and thematic cohesion (Glosser & Deser, 1992; Justice et al., 2006). Ulatowska and Chapman (1994) noted that the quantity and distribution of information can be useful in the assessment of African American narrative production.

Quantity of Information

Quantity of information refers to the amount of information provided by the speaker and has been measured in the duration of the narrative, length of the narrative, number of words, and number and length of utterances (e.g., Ulatowska & Chapman, 1994). Gender differences have been observed in the quantity of information produced in narrativization. For example, Schulkind, Schoppel, and Scheiderer (2012) found that women produced significantly longer narratives than men by recounting facts, interpretations, and descriptions, whereas men produced twice as much factual information but less interpretation and descriptions, making their narratives shorter and more succinct, demonstrating that men have a stronger factual orientation in their narrative constructions than women. They also observed that women produced significantly longer T-units than men. Longer T-units resulted in the production of more complex utterances and more elaborative descriptions. Similarly, Mulac and Lundell (1986) found that women were wordier than men with respect to mean utterance length. In contrast, however, Dovidio, Heltman, Brown, Ellyson, and Keating (1988) found that men used more words in their narratives and with more conversational turns. Likewise, Coates (1986) noted that men were more verbose than women in their narration, particularly as they age.

Distribution of Information

Distribution of information refers to the organization of information within narrative components. Narratives have a conventional structure that is inherently familiar across ethnicities and cultures. The sequence of events in narrative production is generally arranged linearly and in temporal order. However, some narratives may deviate from this strict linear sequence. Labov (1977) and Labov and Waletzky (1997) developed a model of narrative superstructure that may be used to accommodate these sequential departures. Labov and Waletzky's seminal model was based on studies of narrative productions among African Americans in South Harlem in the late 1960s. Accordingly, narratives follow a temporal sequence, and utterances that

deviate from this sequence are devices used to inform, elaborate, and clarify the actions reported in the narrative.

Labov (1977) and Labov and Waletzky (1997) described the narrative in terms of Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda. The *Orientation* is a device used by the speaker to familiarize the listener with person, place, and time, as well as to identify the main character's behavior and situation. The *Complication* is the main body of the narrative, generally containing a series of events or actions, and reports the next event in response to the listener's question, "and then what happened?" (Labov & Waletsky, 1997). The *Evaluation* includes the speaker's attitude and response to the consequences of the events. The *Resolution* reports the results of the event(s), and the *Coda* reports the conclusion and returns the narrative to the present time. This model offers the opportunity for an accurate assessment of African American speakers' communicative and linguistic capabilities in narrative production for the following reasons. First, it allows the clinician and other professionals to examine narrative production at the clause and sentence levels and provides insight into the speaker's syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic abilities (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). Second, it provides a naturalistic, personal, and accurate view of the speaker's cognitive–linguistic abilities (Labov, 1977). Third, it provides insight into the speaker's culture, personal experiences, values, beliefs, and background (Labov, 1977).

Ulatowska and Chapman (1994) noted that adults may skew information, such that one constituent segment of the narrative may be emphasized over another or some segments may be absent, resulting in a narrative that may be difficult to understand. For example, the Orientation information in a story, which specifies the character's place and time, may be easier to express than the Complication, which details the events in the story. Ulatowska and Chapman maintained that, when narrative information is reduced to the simple linking of facts, the resulting narrative may lack coherence, cohesion, and buildup to the climax of the story.

Influence of AAE

AAE is a rule-governed linguistic system spoken by African Americans in the United States (Green, 2002). Many African Americans, although not all, use AAE in their narrations, depending on the environment, social context, and audience. Gender differences have been reported primarily in dialect density, where men produce more AAE features than women in their narrations (e.g., Labov, 1990; Wolfram & Fasold, 1974). According to Wolfram (1986), the extent of AAE usage is based on gender differences in early socialization. In support of this view, Washington and Craig (1998) reported that elementary-aged boys (ages 5–6 years) used more AAE dialectal features than girls. However, they found no gender differences in the types of AAE features used.

Early studies have described African American women as more adept at code-switching than men and are inclined to use both AAE and the standard form of English in their narrative exchanges, depending on the context (e.g., Labov, 1977; Wolfram, 1970). Men, on the other hand, favored nonstandard expressions in everyday exchanges. Wolfram suggested that positive features of masculinity were associated with an increased density of AAE. Moreover, both Stewart (1970) and Harris (1999) suggested that "age grading" occurs in the use of AAE. Stewart suggested that dialect features that are prominent in adolescence level off in adulthood and become prominent again in old age. Similarly, Harris noted that many older adults often return to their original dialect style, regardless of the extent of mainstream acculturation in their earlier years. Wolfram (2003) also suggested a linguistic life cycle of AAE forms, which decrease in frequency from childhood to adulthood and then increase in frequency again with aging.

This Study

The extant literature has focused primarily on the developmental patterns of narrativization and AAE productions of African American children (e.g., Champion, 2003; Hyon & Sulzby, 1994; Michaels, 1981). There remains a lack of information on narrativization across the life span. Since the seminal works of Labov and Waletzky (1997), studies focusing on the narrative abilities of African American adults have been examined within the context of pathology (e.g., Ulatowska & Chapman, 1994; Ulatowska et al., 2001). African Americans produce many narrative forms depending on the context, prompting task, and speaker–listener dyad. There is considerable heterogeneity among African Americans with respect to socioeconomic status, geographic region, dialect, level of acculturation, and ethnic community, such that it may be difficult to tease apart disordered narration from what may be considered typical. Therefore, the narrative should be carefully assessed using culturally sensitive paradigms, which emphasize the speaker's communication skills, including content, meaning, and intent. It follows, then, that the organization and structure of African American narratives are filtered through cultural contexts and expectations of language use by the speaker's community (Labov, 1997; Smitherman, 1986).

There are several reasons motivating the study of the narrative abilities of African American adults. Principally, there is a paucity of research relating to the language and narrative concerns of African American adults. Next, there is a need to describe the ethnic and cultural differences in narrative styles and to determine the influences of dialect, education, socioeconomic status, and level of acculturation in narrative production. Moreover, studies of African American adult narrativization represent a unique opportunity to understand the cognitive–linguistic problems that may be associated with aging among this population. Efficient linguistic performance is essential for success across a wide spectrum of behaviors, including performing activities of daily living, improving social participation, engaging in occupational endeavors, and maintaining psychological well-being and survival. Normative studies of this nature illustrate how narrativization is dependent upon an intact

cognitive infrastructure (Cannito, Hyashi, & Ulatowska, 1988; Carruthers, 1998). Moreover, because language is a primary means of learning and transmitting one's culture, it stands to reason that narratives must also define and distinguish African American communities. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore gender differences in the narrative productions of African American adults. Based on a review of the literature, the following questions were tested:

1. Is there a gender difference in the quantity of information provided by African American adults during elicited narration?
2. Is there a gender difference in the distribution of information provided by African American adults during elicited narration?
3. Is there a gender difference in the use of AAE in narrative production?

Method

Participants

Seventy-six African American adults—40 women (ages 46–86 years; $M = 61.18$, $SD = 12.07$) and 36 men (ages 45–87 years; $M = 60.42$, $SD = 9.70$)—participated in this study. The age range was selected because middle to late adulthood (i.e., > 45 years old) is said to be skilled in the production of complex and efficient story structures in narration and specialized for the transmission of information and skill in storytelling (Kemper, 1992; Levinson, 1986; Mergler, Faust, & Goldstein, 1984–1985; Pratt & Robins, 1991).

All participants were native English speakers and, according to self-report, met the following inclusionary criteria: (a) community dwelling (i.e., independent living) and independent in all aspects of self-care; (b) minimum high school completion; (c) no history of neurological conditions, psychiatric disorders, or sensory defects; (d) no history of language disorder or learning disability; (e) no use of medications and other substances susceptible to alter cognitive functioning; and (f) a passing score (i.e., no more than two errors) on a cognitive capacity screening as indicated by performance on the Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire (Pfeiffer, 1975). No participants were excluded based on these criteria. Participants were recruited through a variety of sources, including local churches, universities, community centers, and referrals. Data for male participants were collected with the approval of the institutional review board of the University of the District of Columbia, and data for female participants were collected under the approval of the institutional review board and sponsorship of the University of Memphis. All participants were residents of Washington, DC, and the metropolitan area. Attempts were made during recruitment to match men and women by education. However, due to the lack of male volunteers, the included sample was not well balanced on this characteristic. Participation was voluntary, and individuals were compensated $20.00 for their time. Table 1 summarizes demographic information of the participants.

Table 1. Participant demographic information displaying group means and standard deviations.

	Women (n = 40)		Men (n = 36)		
Variables	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***p***
Age[a]	61.18	12.07	60.42	9.69	.77
Education in years	14.30	2.31	12.97	1.28	.00
Income[b]	4.30	1.99	5.50	1.46	.00
Health rating[c]	2.03	0.58	1.64	0.49	.00
AAE summary score[d]	0.76	0.62	1.08	0.81	.07

Note. AAE = African American English.

[a]Age in chronological years. [b]Scale is 1 (*under $10,000*) to 7 (*$50,000 and over*). [c]Scale is 1 (*excellent*) to 5 (*very poor*). [d]High scores = high levels of AAE use.

AAE

The presence of AAE was derived by examining each narrative for features unique to the dialect. Only those AAE features that were present in the narratives were included in the analyses. A list of AAE features along with the results of the Mann–Whitney U test indicating gender differences in production is found in Table 2. A single index called *Dialect Density Measure* (DDM) was created by counting the total frequency of each AAE feature produced and dividing that value by the total number of words in each narrative (cf. Craig & Washington, 2006). High numbers on the DDM represented high use of AAE, whereas low numbers represented a preference for standard American English.

Materials and Procedure

Two types of narratives were elicited from each participant. The first elicited narrative was a recall of a complex story entitled, *O'Henry Story—After Twenty Years* (Henry, 1913), modified from the original version (cf. North, Ulatowska, Macaluso-Haynes, & Bell, 1986; Ulatowska, Hayashi, Cannito, & Fleming, 1986). The *O'Henry Story—After Twenty Years* was selected because it provided control of the amount, type, and complexity of language and allowed participants' performance to be verified against a model. The second elicited narrative was a "spontaneously generated account of a personal experience" of the participant's choosing. The personal narrative, defined as a report of a sequence of biographical events, was selected because it was a naturalistic form of narration, the repertoire of responses was less predictable, and participants had complete autonomy over the amount of information conveyed (Labov & Waletsky, 1997).

Each participant was tested individually in a quiet room located at either the participant's home or office. For consistency, only the author collected the narratives. Participants were seated at a table with an audio recorder (Marantz Portable Recorder, Model No. PMD430) and digital USB-compatible recorder (Sony ICD-BP150) optimally positioned. Narratives were recorded through a

Table 2. African American English (AAE) features.[a]

AAE variants	Women	Men	*U*	*p*	Example
Appositives (APP)	1.93	2.00	89.00	.84	*Frank, he was so fine.*
Pronominal differences (PRD)	1.00	1.00	2.50	1.00	*He did it hisself.*
Subject deletion (SD)	2.33	2.14	154.00	.69	*Ø was talking.*
Past tense forms (PTF)	2.65	2.28	143.50	.76	*They went over to some drug store where it was lighted.*
Completive aspect with "done" (COM)	1.00	1.33	1.00	1.00	*I looked and saw that she done hurt her knee.*
Remote time with "been" (REM)	1.00	1.00	0.50	1.00	*I been buying cigarettes there since forever.*
–*s* Markers (SMK)	2.00	1.14	4.00	.50	*They're not friendly and they takes my money.*
Invariant 'be" (IBE)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	*And I be trying.*
Copula deletion (COP)	1.86	1.50	26.00	.87	*This man Ø standing at the corner waiting for his friend.*
Multiple negation (NEG)	1.20	1.57	13.00	.53	*We didn't have no money when I was growing up.*
Reduction of "gonna" (RED)	1.00	—	—	—	*That's the only curse word I ma-gon use.*
Irregular verb uses (DIV)	1.09	2.25	33.00	.01	*I seen pictures of me when I was no bigger than that.*
"Say/Said" constructions (SSC)	1.00	1.60	6.00	.41	*Say "What you doing?"*

Note. *p* Values of 1.00 reflect a production of one participant.

[a]All examples were extracted from study transcripts.

low-impedance lavalier microphone (Audio-Technica-ATR 35S) input into the recorder for clarity of audio reproduction. Prior to data collection, the author established rapport with the participants by engaging in casual conversation.

Following obtaining informed consent and administrating screening measurements (e.g., demographics questionnaire and Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire; Pfeiffer, 1975), experimental measurements were elicited. The *O'Henry Story—After Twenty Years* was prerecorded at a relatively slow speaking rate (average of < 110 words per minute) and with normal prosody using Kay Elemetrics CSL Speech Software (Model 4300B) and then transferred to a DVD, which was then played from a laptop during testing. Participants were provided with the written text and were invited to read silently along with the audio presentation so that each participant was presented with the story in the same manner. Immediately following the audio and written presentation, the written text was removed. Participants were then instructed to retell the story as thoroughly and accurately as possible, as if to someone who was unacquainted with the story and story characters.

In the second elicited narrative, participants were asked to provide an account of a personal experience, such as family histories or personal events. They were allowed sufficient time to think of a story and to mentally organize it. When the participants were ready, they were prompted to begin the narrative. The mean latency period between organizing the story and the onset of narrative production was 31.70 s (range: 10.39–42.61 s). Standard neutral prompts were used to expand the narrative, such as "and then what happened" or "anything else?" The narrative style was open-ended; the length of the narratives and the time allowed to produce them were not restricted.

Analysis Procedure

After the narrative samples were collected, they were prepared for examination following the procedures of discourse analysis derived from prior works of Ulatowska et al. (1986) and Cannito et al. (1988). All narratives were transcribed orthographically from the recordings, cleansed by eliminating mazes (i.e., false starts, abandoned utterances, repetitions, fillers, and interjections), and then parsed into terminal units (T-units). The T-unit was defined as an independent clause and all dependent clauses attached to it (Hunt, 1964); for example, *The policeman was checking doors of businesses* was assigned one T-unit. The T-unit was selected as the base unit of analysis because it is comparable to a spoken sentence, which is comprehensible to the average speaker and conceptually represents the stream of language production (Geisler, 2004). Moreover, according to Smith, Lee, and McDade (2001), the T-unit is culturally and dialectically nonbiased and appropriate for language assessment.

T-units were numbered sequentially, and then narrative superstructure was parsed into narrative segments, which included (a) Orientation, (b) Complication, (c) Evaluation, (d) Resolution, and (e) Coda following the paradigm of Labov and Waletzky (1997). Gender differences in narration were examined by establishing the quantity of information, the distribution of information, and AAE density and usage. The quantity of information was examined according to (a) the duration of each narrative as measured in minutes and seconds, (b) the total number of words contained in each participant's narration, (c) the total number of T-units, and (d) the mean length of T-units in words. The distribution of information was measured by the total number of T-units found in each constituent unit of the narrative. AAE was measured by counting the number of observed AAE features and then calculating the DDM for each narrative.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analysis along with three analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) with repeated measures, including quantity of information, distribution of information, and AAE density, were used to examine the main effects and interactions of gender on the dependent variables. Gender was the between-subjects grouping factor. The two narrative conditions (story recall and story generation) were

the within-subject factor. Each participant was measured on the dependent variables and on the covariate variables, identified as education in years and AAE. Education in years was selected because of variability within and between groups. Because the two groups were not matched for education, it was necessary to control this variable in the statistical equation. AAE use was selected because it was important to determine whether its use had an influence on gender in narrative production. Follow-up multiple comparisons were made using Bonferroni's correction. A supplementary analysis was conducted to determine if age-related differences exist in AAE productions because studies have shown that AAE use increases with advancing age (e.g., Harris, 1999; Stewart, 1970; Wolfram, 2003). An a priori α level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

Reliabilities

All transcriptions and coding of narratives from the audio recordings were completed manually by the author. To test intrarater and interrater reliability, 20% of the narratives were retranscribed from the audio recordings and recoded by the author. Three graduate students from the University of the District of Columbia, trained in the analysis procedures but blind to the hypotheses and group assignments, transcribed and coded the same selection of narratives. The narratives used for this purpose included a random selection of four story retellings and four personal narratives from each group, yielding a total of 16 narratives. Analysis of transcriptions included word-by-word agreements and disagreements, T-unit segmentation, narrative superstructure segmentation, and frequency of AAE features. The three student judges completed the analyses independently. Afterward, the student judges met with the author to review the results. At that time, any discrepancies and procedural misunderstandings were resolved. Point-to-point agreement was calculated for each analysis by dividing the total number of agreements by the total number of agreements plus disagreements. These calculations were completed based on discussion and reconciliation of disagreements by consulting the recordings. Intrarater reliability was 98% for both retranscription and recoding. Intertranscriber agreement for the 16 narratives was 93%. Interrater reliability for T-unit segmentation was 95%, that for narrative segmentation was 90%, and that for AAE frequency was 92%. The narrative samples were then analyzed for superstructure. The author and the three student judges scored the same selected narratives for the quantity and distribution of information. The components of each of the dependent variables were pooled and rendered the following results: Quantity of information was 98%, and distribution of information was 89%.

Results

Quantity of Information

The first research question addressed the issue of whether gender differences exist in the quantity of information produced in narrativization, as measured by duration in minutes, the total number of words contained in each narrative, the total number of T-units per narrative, and the mean length of T-units in words. These variables were not adjusted for story length in order to ascertain whether women were more talkative than men in their orations. Observations of these dependent variables without controlling for story length were critical for this study in that the amount of information provided by each participant provided a marker for differences between genders and between narrative conditions. Table 3 contains the mean scores and standard deviations of the indices for the quantity of information in the two narrative conditions.

The ANCOVA showed that education and AAE did not produce a main effect on the quantity of information. However, the analysis showed a main effect of gender, $F(1, 64) = 6.07$, $p < .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, in which women produced more information than men in both narrative conditions, and a main effect of narrative condition, $F(1, 64) = 8.48$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$, where personal narratives elicited more information than the more difficult story retelling condition.

The analysis yielded three significant two-way interactions including interactions of narrative condition with education, $F(1, 64) = 7.25$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$; gender with quantity of information, $F(3, 64) = 6.36$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$; and quantity of information with narrative condition, $F(3, 64) = 8.29$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$. Of note was a three-way interaction involving quantity of information, narrative condition, and education, $F(3, 64) = 7.11$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. Main effects and interactions are displayed in Table 4. The results and discussion will be addressed in light of the interaction effects. Examination of the data indicated that participants with higher education produced more information across all measures of quantity. Further, women who attained higher education than men (see Table 1) produced more information in all indices. Both men and women produced more information in personal narratives than in story retelling ($p = .03$); however, participants with higher education produced more information in story retelling, whereas those with lower education produced more information in personal narratives. Post hoc comparisons indicated that participants with higher education produced longer narratives in words ($p = .02$), more T-units ($p = .04$), and more words per T-unit ($p = .05$) in story retelling. No differences were observed in personal narratives. Hence, higher education was associated with the generation of more information and in the presence of task complexity.

Distribution of Information

The aim of the second research question was to determine if gender differences exist in the distribution of information produced in narrativization. This analysis included narrative superstructure parsed into five segments including Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda. These segments served as indices for the dependent variable. Table 3 displays means and

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for quantity of information, distribution of information, and distribution of African American English (AAE) tokens for the two narrative conditions.

Variables	Women		Men	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
	Quantity of information			
Duration (time in minutes)				
Story retelling	2.69	1.14	2.18	1.07
Personal narrative	2.79	1.49	2.26	1.66
Total number of words				
Story retelling	317.10[a]	149.64	238.29	135.98
Personal narrative	392.45[a]	223.79	276.68	138.29
Total T-units				
Story retelling	33.78	14.98	29.29	15.38
Personal narrative	43.95[a]	24.59	35.11	19.99
Total words per T-units				
Story retelling	9.41[a]	1.41	7.90	1.62
Personal narrative	9.20	1.47	8.18	1.60
	Distribution of information			
Orientation				
Story retelling	3.67	0.80	3.00	0.88
Personal narrative	4.46	0.77	4.39	0.85
Complication				
Story retelling	20.12[a]	1.92	17.21	2.11
Personal narrative	21.40[a]	2.61	16.73	2.88
Evaluation				
Story retelling	6.75	5.82	7.19	5.42
Personal narrative	8.42	6.66	6.39	6.59
Resolution				
Story retelling	1.50	2.52	0.52	1.39
Personal narrative	6.57[a]	8.14	2.94	3.04
Coda				
Story retelling	1.12	0.17	1.15	0.19
Personal narrative	3.47[a]	0.55	1.95	0.60
	Distribution of AAE			
Total number of AAE				
Story retelling	2.15	1.93	3.13	3.78
Personal narrative	2.95	3.45	2.65	2.50

[a]Significant gender differences based on independent-samples *t* tests, with a significance threshold of $p < .05$.

standard deviations for the distribution of information in each narrative condition.

Although education and AAE had no effect on the distribution of information, a main effect of gender was observed, $F(1, 67) = 4.79$, $p < .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, in which, overall, women produced more information in each constituent segment of the narrative than men. A main effect of narrative condition was also observed, $F(1, 67) = 8.89$, $p < .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$, in which both men and women produced more information in each narrative segment for personal narratives than in story retelling. A two-way interaction was noted with narrative condition and education, $F(1, 67) = 7.32$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, such that participants with higher education produced more information in all narrative segments in story retelling, whereas participants with lower education produced more information in personal narratives. Post hoc comparisons for story retelling showed that participants with higher education produced more information in the Complication and Resolution, whereas participants with lower education produced more information in the Orientation, Evaluation, and Coda. Post hoc comparisons for personal narratives showed that participants with higher education produced more information in the Complication and Evaluation, whereas participants with lower education produced more information in the Orientation, Resolution, and Coda. No other main effects and interactions were observed.

AAE in Narrative Production

The third research question determined if gender differences exist in the use of AAE in narrative production. An ANCOVA was conducted using all AAE features found in the produced narratives as the dependent variable, with education as the covariate. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for each narrative condition. The data indicated that more AAE features were produced in personal narratives than in story retelling. Further, men produced more AAE features in story retelling, whereas women produced more AAE features in personal narratives.

The ANCOVA did not find a main effect of gender, $F(1, 68) = 0.18$, $p < .67$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. However, education was significantly related to the production of AAE, $F(1, 68) = 9.50$, $p < .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$, in which participants with lower

Table 4. Analysis of covariance summary table showing main effects and interactions for the quantity of information.

Source	*df*	*F*	η_p^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Gender	1	6.07	.09	.02*
Education (covariate)	1	0.01	.00	.93
AAE (covariate)	1	0.26	.00	.61
Between-subjects error	64	(11569.49)		
Within subjects				
Narrative type	1	8.48	.12	.01*
Narrative Type × Education	1	7.25	.10	.01*
Narrative Type × AAE	1	1.01	.02	.32
Narrative Type × Gender	1	2.09	.03	.15
Within-subject error	64	(6359.56)		
Quantity of information	3	5.32	.08	.02*
Quantity × Education	3	0.01	.00	.94
Quantity × AAE	3	0.32	.01	.58
Quantity × Gender	3	6.36	.09	.01*
Within-subject error	64	(26073.40)		
Narrative Type × Quantity of Information	3	8.29	.12	.01*
Narrative Type × Quantity × Education	3	7.11	.10	.01*
Narrative Type × Quantity × AAE	3	0.98	.02	.33
Narrative Type × Quantity × Gender	3	2.11	.03	.15
Within-subject error	64	(14183.32)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. AAE = African American English.
*$p < .05$.

education produced more AAE features than participants with higher education. No other significant main effects or interactions were observed. Table 2, showing the results of the Mann–Whitney *U* analysis, indicated that only irregular verb use was significant, $U = 33.0$, $p < .01$, in that men used this feature more than women (e.g., *He had seen him before*). Further examination of AAE with education using the report function of SPSS Version 24.0, which provided aggregated and subsample statistics for each variable, showed that more AAE features were produced in personal narratives from participants with 12–15 years of education, whereas those with 16 or more years of education produced more AAE in story retelling. The accompanying analysis of variance indicated that only the total number of AAE features with respect to education produced in personal narratives was significant, $F(5, 70) = 2.36$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$.

A supplementary post hoc analysis was conducted to determine if age had an effect on the use of AAE. This analysis included a subsample of participants divided into two groups consisting of 27 adults (nine men, 18 women) between the ages of 45 and 54 years ($M = 50.41$, $SD = 2.86$) who served as the middle-aged cohort and 26 adults (nine men, 17 women) between the ages of 65 and 86 years ($M = 73.08$, $SD = 7.41$) who served as the older cohort. This adult age-group breakdown is commonly used in surveys, census data, and epidemiologic research. The 11-year gap between cohorts was used to detect age-related differences in the use of AAE. The results showed that older adults produced significantly more AAE features in both the story retelling condition, $t(24) = -2.55$, $p = .02$, and personal narratives, $t(23) = -3.39$, $p = .00$, compared to middle-aged adults. To further determine if gender differences in AAE production existed in this age-related breakdown, the analysis showed no significant differences between men and women, $F(1, 50) = 1.26$, $p \leq 27$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.

Discussion

This study addressed the need to describe the narrative productions of African American men and women and to determine if gender differences exist in those productions. In doing so, two contrasting narrative tasks were elicited to determine differences in the quantity of information, distribution of information, and influence of AAE dialect density. Given the findings of previous research of gender differences in verbal productions (e.g., Dovidio et al., 1988; Fivush et al., 2012; Glass, 2015; Schulkind et al., 2012; Tannen, 1990), it was anticipated that African American adult speakers would perform similarly to their mainstream counterparts. The results of the study confirmed this prediction. Women produced more information across all measures of quantity and told stories that were more elaborate, reflective, linearly organized, and better focused in time and place than did men. The results also indicated that individuals with higher education produced more information in each constituent segment of the complex story retelling condition than in personal narratives. Conversely, individuals with comparatively lower education produced more information and better organized personal narratives regardless of gender. Finally, men produced more AAE features than women. Moreover, those with lower education produced more AAE features than those with higher

education. Each major finding is discussed below. (Note that all language samples provided are taken directly from study transcripts.)

Quantity of Information

The first research question sought to determine if gender differences exist in the quantity of information produced in story retelling and story generation. The results demonstrated that women were more talkative than men. Moreover, women took more time to produce their narratives, used more words, produced more T-units, and produced more words per T-unit. These patterns remained significant across narrative conditions and reflect the overall amount of information produced. The results align with previous research reporting that women are more verbose than men (e.g., Glass, 2015; Grysman, Fivush, Merrill, & Graci, 2016; Mulac & Lundell, 1986; Schulkind et al., 2012).

A closer inspection of the narratives themselves suggested that women's productions were more elaborate, more reflective, and used more internal state language (e.g., "*I was so upset*." "*I felt blessed.*") than their male counterparts, thereby making their productions longer in duration, words, and T-units. Women frequently produced a statement recounting an event and followed that statement with an explanation, a qualifying statement, a summary, or a moral, which contributed to women's voluble narratives. For example, in story retelling, women produced commentaries, morals, personal perspectives, and hypothetical resolutions based on the story. Examples are provided below:

Commentary and personal perspective: "*Bob noticed that Jimmy didn't look the same. His nose was different. His manner was different. People don't change that dramatically over the course of time. That would tell me that Jimmy was perhaps not the man Bob was expecting.*"

Moralizing: "*Bob had done wrong. Because of his actions, he was arrested by the man he thought was his friend, Jimmy. It just goes to show that your evil deeds will catch up with you.*"

Hypothetical resolution: "*He saw that Bob had the face of a man wanted by the police. He couldn't arrest him. So, he had to have a plainclothesman to come arrest him. Now what he should have done was arrest him hisself. It would've made him more honest. I mean, you don't do that to a friend."*

Women were also more descriptive in their retelling, as represented in the following excerpt: "*Bob was this sinister figure waiting there in the dark. As far as I can remember, he was very pale. He had an angular face with a scar on his forehead. I think he was wearing a hat. And he wore a diamond stick pin on his coat or something. I'm sure he looked suspicious because the policeman stopped him.*" These linguistic behaviors were largely absent in men's retelling. Men were more succinct and pragmatic, recounting the basic facts in their retelling. Consider the following example: "*Bob saw Jimmy. (He) had a conversation with him. He discovered that Jimmy wasn't Jimmy. He (Jimmy) arrested him. That's the end of the story.*" Hence, in the more complex story retelling condition, gender differences were significant in that women produced more information than men, closely aligning with prior research (e.g., Gray, 1992; Schulkind et al., 2012).

There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, women, as a group, were better educated than their male counterparts. Even after controlling for education, women produced more information. In contrast, men restated the facts as they remembered them and ended the story, often, abruptly. Women not only stated the facts as they were presented in the story but added additional information making their stories longer and more comprehensive and that, therefore, could be judged to be more meaningful. Contributing to this finding is that women were concerned with providing the accuracy of information. Some women prefaced their productions by stating: "*I really want to get this right*," "*Give me a minute to organize my thoughts*," or "*I want to do this well*." The finding that women produced more information than men in both narrative conditions suggests that women may have been more invested in their story productions and the sharing of information and that women worked harder to create a more comprehensive and meaningful narrative.

Although no significant differences were found in the personal narrative condition, the same characteristics observed in women's story retellings held for some of the personal narratives. Consider the detail produced in the following excerpt produced by a woman whose narrative spanned 78 T-units:

> This happened when I was in junior high school. My friend, Sharon, decided to have an intimate party at her house while her parents weren't home. So, we invited Leon that was in our class. And Leon had this fine cousin named Frank who was visiting from New York. Leon was just this big fat guy. But Frank was so, oh, he was so cute. He was tall and lean….

Men told shorter personal narratives consisting of facts with minimal detail or commentary. The following is an example of a complete personal narrative:

> It was back in 1965. Me and Ben went to James' house to get his father's car, so we could go to Pimlico. So, we got his father's car. A '61 Chevrolet Impala. And we drove to Pimlico. While we was out there we met some young ladies. And we had a nice time. And we came on back.

In personal narratives, women told stories that appeared to be more emotionally laden, which included topics such as recounting relationships, family conflict, mishaps, suffering and hardships, and growing up in the presence of segregation and racism. As such, those productions were more complex and more elaborate and lent themselves to longer narratives than those of men. A complete example of a woman's personal narrative is provided in Supplemental Material S1. In contrast, men often told shorter stories about events involving peer connections, recreation, work, or life lessons. Men's stories appeared

to be largely positive and told without the same emotion and with more of a sense of autonomy, achievement, and overcoming. A complete example of a male's personal narrative is provided in Supplemental Material S2.

The analysis also showed that women with higher education produced more words per T-unit. Note the following T-unit example produced by a woman holding a baccalaureate degree: "*And the man who was standing in the doorway, read the note, which indicated that he knew who he was from the very beginning*" (24 words). This is in contrast with the following example of a man also holding a baccalaureate degree: "*As they were talking, Bob told him that the restaurant was no longer there*" (14 words). To further add to the quantity of information, speakers were asked to produce narratives unfettered by time restrictions. Elicitations were open-ended, thus offering the opportunity for speakers to produce stories with as much or as little information as they were willing to provide. An additional analysis was conducted to determine if the outcome would be different when story length was controlled. Therefore, all narratives were analyzed so that participant's productions were averaged at 47 T-units. The results rendered the same outcome; that is, women produced significantly more information in all indices of quantity examined for both narrative conditions. Hence, the results of this study demonstrated that the quantity of information in complex story retelling may have been driven by a woman's need for precision and to express more meaningful and comprehensive stories. The quantity of information in personal narratives may have been driven by a woman's inclination for providing more reflection, insight, and valence in their personal narratives.

Distribution of Information

The second research question sought to determine if gender differences exist in the distribution of information produced in narrativization with respect to the five narrative segments based on Labov and Waletsky's (1997) paradigm, including Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda. In this study, a main effect of gender was uncovered where women produced more information than men in each constituent segment of the narratives. This finding was observed for both narrative conditions. With respect to individual narrative segments, overall, both groups produced the most information in the Complication, which is the main body of the narrative in which the speaker recounted events as they occurred. However, women produced more information in the Complication than men, which is consistent with the outcome previously noted that women were more detailed and elaborate than men (Buckner & Fivush, 1998; Niedzwienska, 2003). The Evaluation, which is the speaker's commentary on the events, also elicited a substantial amount of information in favor of women, but no significant gender differences were observed. The Orientation, Resolution, and Coda did not elicit a great deal of information, but gender differences were observed, where women produced more information in these segments.

There was a main effect of narrative condition in which both groups produced more information in each narrative segment for personal narratives compared to the more complex story retelling. A possible explanation is that personal narratives are presumably well rehearsed through years of retelling and employed more meaningful biographical events. Biographical events are generally structured in temporal order and represent the flow of life experiences (Mergler et al., 1984–1985; Pratt & Robins, 1991). These remembered life events can be emotionally charged as illustrated in the example of the woman's narrative in Supplemental Material S1. In contrast, the personal narratives of men were generally produced with very little emotion or reflection. Men produced shorter narratives, which lend themselves to greater thematic cohesion and where the events center on a central theme with a beginning, a middle, and an ending. However, for women, even comparatively short personal narratives were more detailed and descriptive, as was illustrated in a narrative found in Supplemental Material S3.

In many personal narratives produced by both men and women, the Complication was regularly interrupted by the insertion of one or more evaluative statements. However, women's evaluative statements were more reflective (e.g., "*When I think back on it, I think I did the right thing, but…*") and more relational (e.g., "*My friend Sheila helped me out.*") and provided more elaboration of events than men (e.g., "*Back then, we rode our bikes in Rock Creek Park, through the horse trails and then down into Georgetown.*"). Some women's evaluations were suggestive of emotional investment (e.g., "*I just cried*"). Moreover, women told personal narratives that were more specific with respect to place and time (e.g., "*I remember, it was in 1968 when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated; It was in the summer when I was 9-years-old. And I stayed in the house. I was so scared.*").

The major finding in this analysis was the interaction of narrative condition with education. Participants with higher education produced more thematically cohesive and linear narratives encompassing the five narrative segments compared to those with less education, most noticeably in the story retelling condition. However, given the fact that women, as a group, attained more education than men, women therefore produced longer, more linear narratives than men. Those with lower education were more tangential or topic neutral in their narratives, such that the narrative had no definitive central theme. Consider the personal narrative of a man with 12 years of education in Supplemental Material S4. In contrast, the personal narratives of women matched in education adhered more to a central theme, although there were tangential shifts sidelining the central theme. An example may be found in Supplemental Material S5.

Similar behaviors were noted in the story retelling condition. However, given the strict linear progression of events as presented in the story, participants were concerned with retelling the events of the story as they occurred and as they recalled them. Men, generally, recalled the events of

the story with minimal or no evaluative statements or commentary. Their T-units in narrative segments were shorter, and their Codas were abrupt. Their Orientations, Resolutions, and Codas were generally no more than three T-units. Conversely, women told longer, more descriptive stories. Their Orientations, Resolutions, and Codas were longer and often inserted more evaluative statements during their retellings and included morals at the end of their retellings. Consider the contrasting excerpts from the retellings of participants matched for education (baccalaureate degree) in Supplemental Material S6 (male) and Supplemental Material S7 (woman). In the Supplemental Material examples, women presented orientation information along with elaborative statements that illuminate the person, place, and context as well as the "who, what, when, where, and how" of the story characters and their activities. The Complication contained a series of events that were regularly interrupted by Orientation statements used to introduce new characters and evaluative statements, where the speaker commented on the ongoing action. Moreover, evaluative statements interrupted the overall thematic coherence of the narrative, where the story was interrupted by commentary and then the theme reemerged again as the action continued or a tributary of the central theme was produced. Evaluative statements represented unique explanations that provided additional meaning to the narrative.

Influence of AAE

The aim of the third research question was to determine if gender differences exist in the use of AAE during narrative production. Although the analysis showed that gender did not influence the use of AAE, education was a significant factor. Those with less education produced higher rates of AAE compared to those with higher education. As previously stated, groups were not well matched for education, although every attempt was made to do so. Thus, the data showed that women had significantly more years of education than men and produced fewer dialect features in their productions. Even when education was controlled in the analysis, the results demonstrated that education influenced the use of AAE, thus consistent with prior research (e.g., Koch et al., 2001; Leaper et al., 1999; Wolfram, 1986).

It is also important to note that not every participant produced AAE. Of the 76 participants, 50% (n = 38) produced AAE features (i.e., 23 men and 15 women). Only 13 AAE features were observed in the narratives and were produced only once and by single participants (see Table 2). For example, the completed aspect with "done" (*She done fell and broke her arm*), the remote "been" (*He been waitin' for his friend to come along for a while*), the invariant "be" (*This person always be pickin' a fight at school*), and the pronominal variant "hisself" (*He couldn't do it hisself*) were produced only once by one male participant and one female participant. An explanation for the negligible use of AAE is that all participants were residents of the Washington, DC, and metropolitan area. Most participants, particularly women, were employed in some capacity by the federal government. Many of the older retired women were volunteers with their local hospice, the DC Foster Grandparents Program, and served as mentors in other capacities. The older retired women, without exception, were active and engaged in the community. Many of the younger men were professionals (e.g., business owners, federal employees, teachers, coach, mentors). Others served as health care assistants, maintenance workers, or construction workers. Some of the older retired men were professionals (e.g., a classical concert vocalist, a lecturer, a postal manager, an optometrist). Generally, the older retired men did not report that they were active in the community but were active churchgoers. Hence, in the present sample, the type of employment may have mediated the use of AAE, because most actively employed participants reportedly avoided using AAE around their Caucasian and other professional coworkers. Another factor is the area of residence. Most participants lived in middle-class mixed-ethnic neighborhoods. Some of those neighborhoods were at the advent of gentrification (Note: neighborhood characteristics, breakdowns, and demographics are available on NeighborhoodInfo DC). Therefore, it could be that, apart from family, friends, church interactions, and other familiar settings, there was limited opportunity to use AAE (see Fordham, 1993).

The interesting finding was that AAE use was negligible, although the examiner was also African American and a Washington, DC, resident. By way of exploration, the examiner asked several participants who did not produce AAE if they ever used the dialect in day-to-day activities and, if so, under what contexts. The response was that they did not unless they were with family and good friends, but never beyond those familiar contexts and never around Caucasian and other professional coworkers. A 45-year-old woman stated that she did not know anyone "nowadays" who used the dialect. A few participants held a negative view of AAE, conflating it with slang or the colloquial Ebonics. Queries of those who did not use AAE reported that "*I just don't use it*," "*I was taught to speak Standard English in school,*" "*I was always corrected in school when I used it*," and "*I am uncomfortable speaking that way unless I'm around other African Americans.*"

The analysis showed that men produced more AAE features in the complex story retelling compared to women. The features used by men included irregular verb use (e.g., *They was supposed to meet back in 20 years.*"), *–s* markers (e.g., *I forgets the name of it*), and pronominal differences (e.g., *He couldn't arrest him hisself*). In contrast, women produced more AAE features in personal narratives. Examples were the use of irregular verbs (e.g., *We was all living in Newport News, Virginia*), completive aspect with "done" (e.g., *And he said, "oh, my Lord, she done fell down the steps"*), or double negative (e.g., *This ain't no story. This is the truth*). It may be that men were attempting to reduce the complex story to a more comfortable form and that women were more comfortable with the personal narrative. However, to suggest that the use of AAE is comfortable for African American speakers may not be an accurate characterization in many

cases, because with increased financial status and position, many African Americans may abandon the use of the dialect and may be uncomfortable hearing it from others. Because AAE was rarely used does not indicate that those who have abandoned its use have lost the capacity to communicate using the dialect. Rather, the dialect may be used at will when the situational context demands it. The use of AAE, then, is a matter of choice and the choice of situational code-switching.

Another issue is that of "age grading." Based on additional post hoc analysis, an age effect was observed in both groups, in that participants aged 65 years and over produced higher DDM rates than younger participants, consistent with Harris (1999) and Stewart (1970). Younger participants used the dialect sparingly. For example, a 49-year-old woman produced a single incidence of the past tense form (i.e., *He lighted his cigarette*) but immediately self-corrected her production (i.e., *He lit his cigarette*).

Clinical Implications

The organization and structure of narratives are greatly influenced by cultural contexts and expectations of the language used by the speaker's community (Ball, 1992; Craig & Grogger, 2012). Therefore, viewing the narrative from these perspectives provides a liberal view that emphasizes communication skills including content, meaning, and intent that result from specific language and literacy behaviors (Ball, 1992). Approaching the narrative from these perspectives appropriately emphasizes the linguistic skills and possible deficits that may arise as a function of typical or pathological aging.

This study has additional implications with respect to narrative assessment and code-switching. Clinicians and other professionals should be mindful of the use of AAE. It should not be expected that all African Americans use the dialect. If during the diagnostic intake AAE features are observed, then the dialect should be measured in overall outcomes. If not, then the dialect should not be considered. Moreover, when considering AAE, particularly during narrativization, personal narratives should be the preferred elicitation in testing rather than complex story retelling to obtain the most naturalistic responses.

The methodology used in this study may be useful as an approach to narrative assessment and intervention, but other paradigms may also be considered such as picture descriptions, reminiscence elicitations, or news and topic discussions. The characteristics detailed in this study may be used as a starting point and a gauge to differentiate typical productions from those that may be pathological. Given the heterogeneity of the African American community, clinicians should design their discourse assessments and interventions accordingly.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study was an attempt to describe the narrative productions of African American adults. In doing so, every attempt was made to recruit as many participants as possible. However, a conspicuous limitation of the study was a failure to match men and women in education. The fact that more college-educated women were recruited than men may have skewed the data. However, controlling for education in the statistical equations should have tempered that confound. Although the results and the narrative productions obtained were fruitful, the need to match men and women on educational attainment was an overriding concern.

Another limitation was that participants were recruited from a single geographic location (i.e., Washington, DC, and the surrounding metropolitan area) and represented an elite group of participants, given the demographics and general socioeconomic status of the region. Consequently, the findings of this study may not generalize to less affluent locations of the country. Therefore, additional research should be conducted to determine the characteristics of narrativization of individuals living in locations that are less privileged, as well as research conducted in diverse areas of the United States. In doing so, researchers will be able to document, describe, and establish a normative database for narrativizations of African American adults. Additionally, regional variations in narrative productions and the use of AAE and standard American English may be observed and documented for comparisons.

Finally, this research focused on middle to late adulthood, which represents two different stages in adult development (Levinson, 1986). Although both groups are adept at storytelling and story retelling, there may be differences in abilities such as producing quantity of information, words per T-units, accuracy of information, comprehensiveness, and verbosity, as well as differences in metacognitive activities and word recall that drive narrativization, such as quality of information or patterns of information produced. Therefore, future research should focus on age-related differences in adult cognitive–linguistic development as it relates to storytelling and story retelling.

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to describe the narrative productions associated with African American men and women and, as such, represent the beginning phases in describing normative behaviors and gender differences in those productions. The results showed that women were more talkative, produced more information, took more time to produce their narratives, and told stories that were more elaborative, evaluative, reflective, cohesive, and emotionally laden than those of their male counterparts. The women in the present sample, as a group, completed more years of education than men. Consequently, those who were college educated produced more information and more complex narratives. Conversely, those with less education (i.e., high school diploma or GED) produced more cohesive and informative personal narratives. Gender differences were also demonstrated in that men produced narratives that were succinct whereas women were interested in precision and detail. Although the use of AAE and its effect on

the quantity and distribution of information were negligible, the results showed that men used AAE more than women.

This research suggests that personal narratives may be robust in characterizing the cognitive–linguistic process of narrativization. Story retelling may be a good contrastive element in further describing narrativization in this population. These tasks, taken together, provide a valuable basis on which to conduct cross-ethnic/cultural comparisons where, heretofore, studies only focused on comparing African American productions with that of Caucasians and, as such, compared using Caucasian norms and examined through the lens of Caucasian culture. Normative studies in narrative production must be performed across ethnicities (i.e., African American, Hispanic/Latin American, Asian American, Native American) before cross-ethnic/cultural comparisons can take place; otherwise, the results may be biased in favor of one ethnicity/culture over the other. The results of this study are promising in that they provide a foundation for future investigations and contribute to the currently limited body of research.

Note that additional narrative examples for both story retelling and personal narratives as referenced in the text are provided in Supplemental Materials S1–S7. All supplementary materials were parsed into T-units and constituent narrative units.

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