



## A culturally congruent approach to life satisfaction: The role of personality traits, social stressors, and coping in African American adults

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### ABSTRACT

This preregistered study\* used a socioeconomically diverse, African American sample ( $N = 573$ ) to examine the association between personality traits, facets, discrimination, and culturally informed coping strategies (spirituality, interconnectedness, problem-oriented, and disengagement) with life satisfaction. Higher extraversion ( $\beta = 0.035$ ) and conscientiousness ( $\beta = 0.028$ ) and lower neuroticism ( $\beta = -0.036$ ) and discrimination ( $\beta = -0.146$ ) were associated with greater life satisfaction (all  $p < 0.001$ ); anxiety and depression (neuroticism), positive emotion (extraversion), and achievement-striving (conscientiousness) were the strongest facet-level correlates. Personality traits were related to coping, but coping was surprisingly unrelated to life satisfaction. An exploratory structural equation model generally supported these associations, except for a contradictory association between spirituality coping and lower life satisfaction. This work clarifies personality and coping associations with life satisfaction in African American adults and highlights similarities and differences in these associations when compared to non-minority samples. The structural model indicates avenues to further refine frameworks for understanding life satisfaction that consider both individual level and broader environmental/culturally specific factors contributing to well-being.

### 1. Introduction

Life satisfaction is associated with numerous positive health outcomes, including reduced risk of chronic diseases, fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, lower risk of dementia, and lower mortality rates (Karakose et al., 2024; Koivumaa-Honkanen et al., 2000). Among individual-level contributors, there is robust evidence that Five Factor Model personality traits, particularly extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness, are associated with life satisfaction (Mroczek & Spiro III, 2005). Among environmental-level contributions, the experience of discrimination has been associated with lower life satisfaction (Pieterse et al., 2012). Coping has been associated with both personality (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007) and discrimination (Ezzeddine & Poyrazli, 2020) and is one theoretical mechanism that may contribute to how personality and discrimination are associated with life satisfaction.

African American adults are at disproportionate risk for negative outcomes (Byrd et al., 2023), and life satisfaction may be a potential buffer against poor health (Gamaldo et al., 2021). A better

understanding of the individual and social contributors to life satisfaction in African American adults is essential to identify how unique contextual stressors, such as discrimination, may necessitate distinct pathways to resilience that are often overlooked in the broader literature. Personality traits are associated consistently with life satisfaction in non-minority samples, and some evidence suggests these associations extend to African American samples (McClendon et al., 2021). The present research takes a multi-faceted approach to understanding individual, cultural, and environmental factors associated with life satisfaction in this population. This work offers evidence towards more comprehensive and contextualized models of life satisfaction in self-identified African American adults. In particular, it addresses culturally-relevant coping strategies (Utsey et al., 2000) that may be more important for life satisfaction in African American populations than broad coping strategies that are not population specific. This study addresses how personality traits and experiences of discrimination are associated with life satisfaction and whether culturally-specific coping strategies can inform the association between these factors and life

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satisfaction.

### 1.1. Personality traits, facets, and life satisfaction

Five-Factor Model personality traits are well-examined dispositional predictors of life satisfaction (Mroczek & Spiro III, 2005; Røysamb et al., 2018). At the domain level, higher extraversion and conscientiousness are associated with higher life satisfaction and higher neuroticism is associated with lower life satisfaction (Anglim et al., 2020), whereas agreeableness and openness show positive, yet less robust associations with life satisfaction (Fors Connolly & Johansson Sevä, 2021). Similar associations have been observed in an African American sample, although the existing research is notably limited. In middle-aged and older adults, Gamaldo et al. (2021) found that neuroticism was negatively associated with several domains of satisfaction while extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness were linked to greater satisfaction with city of residence, home conditions and health respectively. The findings for agreeableness contrast with findings from the general population, where openness is typically unrelated to life satisfaction compared to other traits (Anglim et al., 2020).

Personality facet-level analyses are useful for identifying which specific components of the broad traits drive the domain-level associations (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The warmth and positive emotions/cheerfulness facets of extraversion, the achievement striving and competence facets of conscientiousness, and the trust and compliance facets of agreeableness have been linked to greater life satisfaction, whereas the depression, self-consciousness, and vulnerability facets of neuroticism have been associated with lower life satisfaction (Anglim et al., 2020; McClendon et al., 2021). To our knowledge, no research has examined the association between personality facets and life satisfaction among African American adults. Addressing this critical gap with facet-level analyses provides a more nuanced understanding of how individual characteristics shape life satisfaction.

### 1.2. Discrimination, culturally-congruent coping, and life satisfaction

Perceived discrimination is associated with many outcomes, including psychological distress (Kessler et al., 1999; Paradies et al., 2015), hypertension (Brondolo et al., 2003), and poor physical health (Paradies et al., 2015). In addition to negative physical and mental health outcomes (Brondolo et al., 2009), discrimination has been associated with lower life satisfaction (Barnes & Lightsey Jr, 2005; Utsey et al., 2000). The effect of discrimination, while not unique to African American individuals, has a pronounced impact on life satisfaction. Moody (2022), for example, found that both vicarious and personal experiences of discrimination were associated with lower life satisfaction among African American adults, a pattern not observed in White adults. The negative effect of such stressors may thus be unique to the minority experience and may be independent of individual factors, such as personality.

Coping strategies encompass general patterns of stress regulation that have been linked to health and well-being outcomes (Penley et al., 2002). Traditional frameworks tend to emphasize problem- and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Alternatively, Africentric coping strategies—interconnectedness, spirituality, disengagement, and problem-oriented coping—offer a culturally-specific framework for navigating stressors like discrimination. Interconnectedness (seeking social and emotional support), for example, is one of the most beneficial coping mechanisms for countering racial trauma and promoting well-being (Jacob et al., 2023). Spirituality (assistance from God or a higher power) has been strongly associated with health and life satisfaction (Levin et al., 1995; Utsey et al., 2007). Disengagement coping (avoidance and substance use) has been associated with negative psychological outcomes (Pittman & Kaur, 2018). Finally, the role of problem-oriented coping (behaviors or attitudes to actively solve the problems experienced) for African American individuals is unclear.

While problem-focused coping is often associated with positive outcomes in White samples, its effectiveness may vary depending on controllability of the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It thus may be less effective in populations who often face uncontrollable experiences, such as discrimination. Yet, the association between Africentric coping styles and life satisfaction lacks consistent support because it is under-studied. More research needs to address these strategies in the context of racial stress and life satisfaction.

### 1.3. Pathways from personality and discrimination to life satisfaction via coping

The extant research suggests personality, discrimination, and coping styles may be associated with life satisfaction in African American populations. The present research tests direct associations and a comprehensive, mechanistic model of the theoretical pathways that may connect personality, discrimination, and life satisfaction via coping strategies. Neuroticism, for example, has been consistently associated with disengagement coping, particularly denial, withdrawal, wishful thinking, and substance use (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). The experience of discrimination may also be associated with lower life satisfaction through disengagement/avoidance coping, given its established association with problematic drinking to cope, including among African American participants (Martin et al., 2003). Theoretically, these associations suggest that individuals high in neuroticism or those facing frequent discrimination may rely on avoidant strategies that diminish life satisfaction. Extraversion, in contrast, is positively associated with the use of social support, problem-oriented coping, and primary control coping (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). Extraversion may thus be associated with both interconnectedness and problem-oriented coping. Seeking out and maintaining social support (interconnectedness) is an effective coping mechanism linked to both extraversion and better overall well-being and life satisfaction. This evidence suggests a potential pathway where extraversion promotes social engagement, which in turn enhances life satisfaction. Conscientiousness has been associated with cognitive restructuring and primary control engagement that reflect problem-oriented strategies for coping. Conscientiousness may thus be associated with the Africentric problem-oriented coping. The association between agreeableness and openness and Africentric coping is not well-established, which highlights the need for research to clarify these associations. This existing literature provides evidence for these individual associations. The next step is to simultaneously examine how these multifaceted factors contribute to life satisfaction within the specific context of discrimination. The present study addresses the full mediational pathways with an exploratory model based on theoretical expectations.

### 1.4. The present study

This study systematically investigates how personality traits (domain and facet), discrimination, and culturally-relevant coping strategies are associated with life satisfaction in African American adults. This approach includes testing independent associations from personality traits, discrimination and coping to life satisfaction and leveraging these results to test an exploratory model of life satisfaction to identify indirect and direct paths between personality traits and discrimination and life satisfaction via Africentric coping styles. By including analyses at both the trait and facet levels, direct associations from Africentric coping styles, and the exploratory comprehensive model, this study contributes a systematic understanding of the individual and race-related predictors of life satisfaction among African American adults. It also evaluates whether coping mechanisms provide incremental value beyond established personality traits and whether theory for these pathways needs refinement in this population.

### 1.5. Hypotheses

The present study included both a priori, preregistered hypotheses and exploratory analyses. As specified in the preregistration: (1) Discrimination, neuroticism, and disengagement coping were expected to associate negatively with life satisfaction, while agreeableness, extraversion, interconnectedness, and spirituality coping were expected to associate positively. (2) At the facet level, positive emotions and warmth (extraversion) and cooperation and trust (agreeableness) were expected to relate to greater life satisfaction, while depression and impulsivity (neuroticism) would relate to lower satisfaction. (3) Regarding personality-coping links, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion were expected to associate positively with interconnectedness. Neuroticism and discrimination were expected to relate positively to disengagement and negatively to interconnectedness; neuroticism was also expected to relate negatively to spirituality. Openness was exploratory given its less robust link to life satisfaction.

An exploratory path model examined simultaneous associations and potential mediation. The direct associations were expected to be consistent with the primary analyses. The specific indirect effects were hypothesized where theory suggested potential mediation. Specifically, neuroticism and discrimination were expected to associate with lower life satisfaction via disengagement and lower interconnectedness. Neuroticism was also expected to relate to satisfaction via lower spirituality, while agreeableness and extraversion were expected to relate to greater satisfaction through higher interconnectedness. All other mediation tests were entirely exploratory.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Sample

Data were from the Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span (HANDLS) study, an ongoing longitudinal study on the racial and socioeconomic factors that contribute to age-related health disparities and disease (Evans et al., 2010; <https://handls.nih.gov/>). The present study utilized a subsample of African American participants from Wave 5 (September 2017 – March 2020) who participated in an ancillary study on personality ( $N = 573$ ). Demographic information and descriptive statistics are in Table 1.

### 2.2. Measures

Personality was measured with the NEO-PI-3 (NEO-PI-3FH; McCrae & Costa Jr, 2007). Items were rated on a 5-point scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) (Agreeableness  $\alpha = 0.58$ , Conscientiousness  $\alpha = 0.80$ , Extraversion  $\alpha = 0.59$ , Neuroticism  $\alpha = 0.80$ , Openness  $\alpha = 0.61$ ). T-scores for domains and facets were used per standard procedure to facilitate interpretation. Reliability and validity have been shown for

**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics.

Variable	M (SD) or %
Age	59.96 (8.76)
Sex (female)	62.20%
Poverty status (below 125%)	39.90%
Neuroticism	45.64 (10.61)
Extraversion	48.61 (9.56)
Openness	48.60 (9.67)
Agreeableness	47.67 (10.65)
Conscientiousness	51.74 (11.85)
Discrimination	2.04 (0.85)
Interconnectedness	2.23 (0.67)
Spirituality	2.91 (0.73)
Disengagement	1.67 (0.49)
Problem oriented	2.46 (0.66)
Life satisfaction	4.56 (1.32)

both clinical and community samples, including for older African American adults (Sutin et al., 2013).

**Everyday Discrimination** was measured with a 9-item version of the Everyday Experiences with Discrimination scale (Williams et al., 1997). Participants rated the frequency of unfair treatment from 1 (*almost every day*) to 6 (*never*). Items were reverse coded such that greater scores indicated greater frequency of discrimination ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ).

**Coping** was measured with the 28-item Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997). Participants rated items from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot*). The items were grouped into four distinct coping styles previously established in African American samples to capture more culturally relevant coping strategies (Greer, 2007): Interconnectedness, spirituality, problem-oriented coping, and disengagement ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ; 0.68; 0.56; and 0.60).

**Life satisfaction** was measured with the mean score from the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985;  $\alpha = 0.84$ ). Items were rated from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*).

### 2.3. Demographic covariates

Age was measured in years. Sex was categorized as female = 0 and male = 1. Poverty status (assessed via family income as a function of household size) was used as a measure of SES using the 2004 Federal poverty guideline.

### 2.4. Analytic approach

Out of the subsample of 700 African American participants from HANDLS Wave 5, those who were missing data for discrimination, coping, and/or life satisfaction variables were removed, resulting in a final sample of  $N = 573$ . A logistic regression to evaluate differences based on sex, age, and poverty status for those with missing data indicated no substantial demographic differences. All study variables were then examined for normality. The distribution of everyday discrimination was positively skewed and addressed using the normal score of the Blom-transformed variable, which improved the distribution. Bivariate correlations between all study variables were conducted; linear regressions tested the associations of personality traits, personality facets, and discrimination, with coping styles on life satisfaction, and the association between personality and each coping style. Each regression was performed separately and included age, sex, and poverty status as covariates. In consideration of the multiple regressions performed, results were interpreted at the conservative  $p < .001$ .

An exploratory structural equation model was fitted. Paths for personality traits or coping that were not significant in the regression analysis were removed from the model for clarity. The SEM model tested mediation from personality traits and discrimination to life satisfaction via the hypothesized coping styles. Within the model, covariation between all personality traits and discrimination and between all coping styles error terms were freed as indicated by significantly correlated variables (see Supplemental Table 1 for bivariate correlations). The sample size of  $N = 573$  exceeded the recommended ratio of 10 observations per estimated parameter (Kline, 2023), providing adequate power to evaluate the structural pathways. Goodness of fit was determined based on the benchmarks of  $\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.06$  and  $\text{CFI} \geq 0.95$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999). As an exploratory analysis, this model was intended to be hypothesis-generating regarding potential pathways rather than a formal adjudication of mediation.

## 3. Results

The results of the regression analyses are in Table 2. As hypothesized, neuroticism had a significant negative association with life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.285$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas conscientiousness and extraversion had significant positive associations with life satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.253$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = 0.254$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). Agreeableness and openness

**Table 2**

Standardized regression result for personality traits, discrimination, and coping styles on life satisfaction.

	Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p	$R^2$
Coping	<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>-0.198</b>	<b>0.056</b>	<b>-0.146</b>	<b>-3.529</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.056</b>
	Interconnectedness	0.008	0.082	0.004	0.100	.920	0.035
	Spirituality	-0.047	0.076	-0.026	-0.620	.536	0.035
	Disengagement	-0.16	0.113	-0.059	-1.409	.159	0.031
Personality traits	Problem-oriented	0.144	0.082	0.072	1.745	.081	0.033
	Agreeableness	-0.005	0.005	-0.036	-0.84	.401	0.036
	<b>Conscientiousness</b>	<b>0.028</b>	<b>0.004</b>	<b>0.253</b>	<b>6.351</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.099</b>
	<b>Extraversion</b>	<b>0.035</b>	<b>0.006</b>	<b>0.254</b>	<b>6.329</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.098</b>
Neuroticism facets	Openness	0.001	0.006	0.004	0.103	.918	0.035
	<b>Neuroticism</b>	<b>-0.036</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>-0.285</b>	<b>-7.077</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.113</b>
	Anxiety	-0.033	0.005	-0.273	-6.804	<.001	0.107
	Anger/hostility	-0.003	0.005	-0.031	-0.723	.47	0.036
Extraversion facets	Depression	-0.034	0.005	-0.283	-7.1	<.001	0.113
	Self-control	-0.025	0.005	-0.211	-5.175	<.001	0.072
	Impulsivity	-0.021	0.005	-0.169	-4.141	<.001	0.057
	<b>Vulnerability</b>	<b>-0.021</b>	<b>0.004</b>	<b>-0.202</b>	<b>-4.93</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.074</b>
Openness facets	Warmth	0.014	0.004	0.131	3.143	.002	0.051
	<b>Gregariousness</b>	<b>0.017</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>0.149</b>	<b>3.607</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.056</b>
	<b>Assertiveness</b>	<b>0.022</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>0.184</b>	<b>4.533</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.062</b>
	Activity	0.007	0.006	0.046	1.101	.271	0.037
Agreeableness facets	Excitement seeking	0.014	0.005	0.12	2.769	.006	0.048
	<b>Positive emotion</b>	<b>0.028</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>0.24</b>	<b>5.921</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.091</b>
	Fantasy	0.011	0.006	0.073	1.772	.077	0.04
	Aesthetics	0.003	0.005	0.024	0.579	.563	0.035
Conscientiousness facets	Feeling	-0.011	0.005	-0.102	-2.488	.013	0.045
	Action	0.006	0.005	0.054	1.303	.193	0.038
	Ideas	0.005	0.005	0.037	0.91	.363	0.036
	Values	-0.01	0.005	-0.078	-1.897	.058	0.041
Conscientiousness facets	Trust	0.005	0.005	0.04	0.956	.34	0.036
	Straightforwardness	0.005	0.005	0.046	1.08	.281	0.037
	Altruism	0.005	0.004	0.056	1.313	.19	0.038
	Compliance	0	0.004	-0.004	-0.091	.928	0.035
Conscientiousness facets	<b>Modesty</b>	<b>-0.022</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>-0.193</b>	<b>-4.722</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.071</b>
	Tendermindedness	-0.005	0.004	-0.054	-1.298	.195	0.031
	<b>Competence</b>	<b>0.017</b>	<b>0.004</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>4.407</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.067</b>
	Orderliness	0.004	0.004	0.038	0.913	.361	0.036
Conscientiousness facets	<b>Dutifulness</b>	<b>0.019</b>	<b>0.004</b>	<b>0.176</b>	<b>4.334</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.066</b>
	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>0.032</b>	<b>0.004</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>7.624</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.124</b>
	<b>Self-discipline</b>	<b>0.025</b>	<b>0.004</b>	<b>0.227</b>	<b>5.668</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.086</b>
	<b>Deliberation</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>0.156</b>	<b>3.811</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.059</b>

Note: each regression performed separately, and all regressions performed included covariation for sex, age, and poverty status. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error;  $\beta$  = standardized coefficient; t = t-statistics; p = p-statistic;  $R^2$  = R-squared variables and statistics in **bold** are significant at  $p < .001$ .

were not significantly associated with life satisfaction. As hypothesized, everyday discrimination had a negative association with life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.146$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Contrary to hypotheses, none of the coping styles reached significance when regressed on life satisfaction.

The bivariate correlations for all facets are in Supplemental Table 2. Regression analyses (Table 2) indicated that all facets of neuroticism were associated with lower life satisfaction; anxiety and depression had the strongest standardized effects ( $\beta = -0.273$ ;  $\beta = -0.283$  respectively). All facets of extraversion were associated in the hypothesized direction, but only gregariousness, assertiveness, and positive emotion were significant at  $p < .001$ ; positive emotion had the strongest association ( $\beta = 0.240$ ). All facets of conscientiousness were associated in the hypothesized direction with life satisfaction; achievement striving had the strongest association ( $\beta = 0.300$ ) followed by self-discipline ( $\beta = 0.227$ ). Consistent with the domain-level associations for openness and agreeableness, no facets of openness were significantly associated with life satisfaction at  $p < .001$  and only the modesty facet of agreeableness was significantly associated with life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.193$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Results of the regression analyses for personality with coping are in Table 3. Extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were negatively associated with disengagement coping, while neuroticism and discrimination were positively associated with this style of coping. Agreeableness and openness had significant positive associations with interconnectedness, spirituality, and problem-oriented coping. Extraversion and conscientiousness were significantly positively associated with spirituality and problem-oriented coping.

### 3.1. Exploratory path model

A path model was identified based on initial hypotheses, significant bivariate correlations, and significant results from regression analyses. Coping strategies were included in the path model based on a priori hypotheses, despite non-significant bivariate correlations, to evaluate their potential indirect effects and incremental validity beyond personality traits. The model demonstrated adequate-to-good fit statistics (CFI = 0.967, RMSEA = 0.062). The structural equation model (Table 4) indicated significant direct, indirect, and total effects for demographics, personality traits and coping and life satisfaction. The total amount of variance explained by the model variables was  $R^2 = 0.180$ . The model accounted for 18% of the variance in life satisfaction, suggesting that while significant, these factors represent only a modest portion of the contributors to well-being in this population.

Direct positive effects on life satisfaction are in Table 4 and Fig. 1. Consistent with the hypotheses and the linear regressions, conscientiousness ( $\beta = 0.120$  [0.007, 0.247]) and extraversion ( $\beta = 0.140$  [0.038, 0.246]) had a positive direct effect on life satisfaction, whereas neuroticism had negative direct effect ( $\beta = -0.183$  [-0.306, -0.049]); age also had a positive association with life satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.187$  [0.099, 0.260]). While discrimination on life satisfaction did not reach significance, there was a significant positive association of discrimination on disengagement coping ( $\beta = 0.112$  [0.054, 0.188]). Contrary to expectations, spirituality coping had a significant negative direct effect on life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.214$  [-0.340, -0.116]). Indirect effects

**Table 3**  
Standardized regression results for personality traits and discrimination with coping styles.

Coping style	Agreeableness				Conscientiousness				Extraversion			
	B	SE B	β	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE B	β	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Interconnectedness	0.011	0.003	0.170	3.93	<.001	0.043	0.001	0.002	0.018	0.427	.670	0.017
Spirituality	0.030	0.003	0.432	10.831	<.001	0.188	0.015	0.002	0.239	5.909	<.001	2.5759
Problem-oriented	0.019	0.003	0.306	7.262	<.001	0.086	0.011	0.002	0.203	4.933	<.001	.5559
Disengagement	-0.007	0.002	-0.155	-3.631	<.001	0.063	-0.01	0.002	-0.254	-6.383	<.001	<.001

Coping style	Openness				Neuroticism				Discrimination			
	B	SE B	β	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE B	β	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Interconnectedness	0.013	0.003	0.187	4.537	<.001	0.051	0.001	0.003	0.02	0.461	.645	0.017
Spirituality	0.022	0.003	0.292	7.275	<.001	0.103	-0.018	0.003	-0.266	-6.505	<.001	0.057
Problem-oriented	0.019	0.003	0.278	6.848	<.001	0.078	-0.015	0.003	-0.247	-5.961	<.001	-0.027
Disengagement	-0.006	0.002	-0.111	-2.694	.007	0.054	0.017	0.002	0.378	9.75	<.001	0.137

Note: each regression performed separately, and all regressions performed included covariation for sex, age, and poverty status. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient; t = t-statistic; p = p-statistic; R<sup>2</sup> = R-squared.

**Table 4**

Path model results: Standardized direct, indirect, and total effects on life satisfaction.

Variable	β	CI lower	CI upper
<i>Direct effects</i>			
Age	<b>0.187</b>	<b>0.099</b>	<b>0.260</b>
Sex	-0.069	-0.151	0.009
Poverty status	0.032	-0.052	0.119
Conscientiousness	<b>0.120</b>	<b>0.007</b>	<b>0.247</b>
Extraversion	<b>0.140</b>	<b>0.038</b>	<b>0.246</b>
Neuroticism	-0.183	-0.306	-0.049
Discrimination	-0.049	-0.132	0.044
Spirituality	<b>-0.214</b>	<b>-0.340</b>	<b>-0.116</b>
Problem-oriented	0.089	-0.023	0.230
Disengagement	0.092	-0.006	0.177
<i>Indirect effects</i>			
Conscientiousness	-0.019	-0.045	0.001
Extraversion	-0.009	-0.032	0.013
Neuroticism	<b>0.051</b>	<b>0.007</b>	<b>0.094</b>
Discrimination	0.010	-0.001	0.025
<i>Total effects</i>			
Conscientiousness	0.101	-0.008	0.220
Extraversion	<b>0.131</b>	<b>0.029</b>	<b>0.240</b>
Neuroticism	-0.132	-0.260	-0.013
Discrimination	-0.039	-0.117	0.060

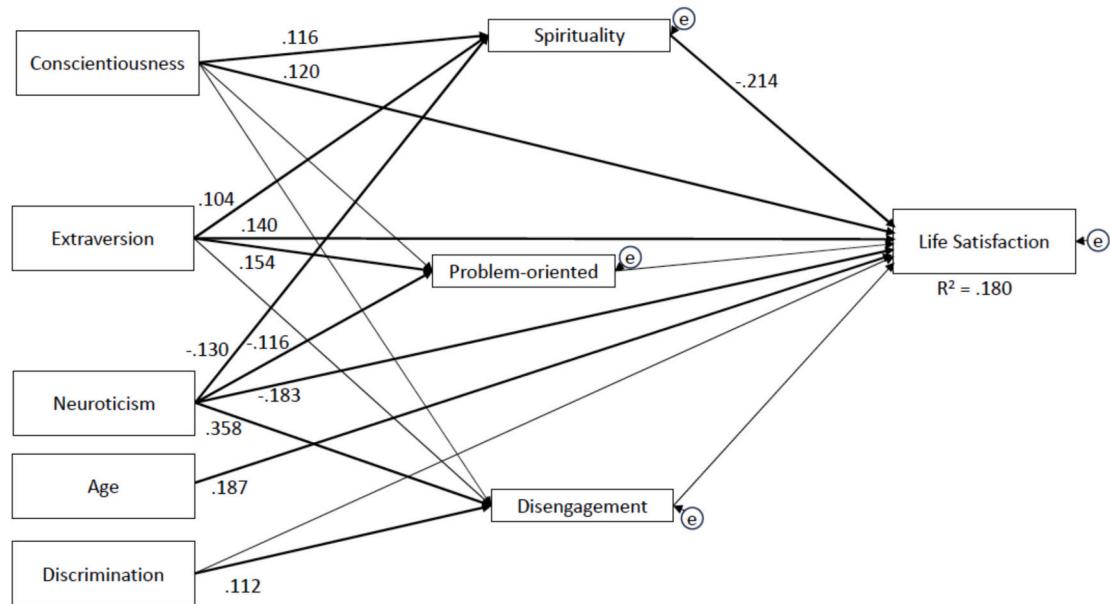
Abbreviations: CI = confidence interval statistics in **bold** are significant as indicated by confidence intervals not including zero.

indicated no significant mediation for conscientiousness ( $\beta = -0.019$  [-0.045, 0.001]), extraversion ( $\beta = -0.009$  [-0.032, 0.013]), or discrimination ( $\beta = 0.010$  [-0.001, 0.025]). Neuroticism's indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.051$  [0.007, 0.094]) was marginally positive significant due to the pathway via spirituality.

Direct effects for personality traits on coping styles were consistent with the regression analyses: neuroticism had positive associations with disengagement coping ( $\beta = 0.358$  [0.247, 0.476]) and negative associations with problem oriented coping and spirituality coping ( $\beta = -0.116$  [-0.232, -0.006];  $\beta = -0.130$  [-0.241, -0.021]), extraversion had a positive association with problem-oriented coping and spirituality coping ( $\beta = 0.154$  [0.051, 0.255];  $\beta = 0.104$  [0.024, 0.200]), and conscientiousness had a positive association with spirituality coping ( $\beta = 0.116$  [0.013, 0.216]).

#### 4. Discussion

This study addressed how personality traits, everyday experiences of discrimination, and culturally-relevant coping strategies contribute to life satisfaction in African American adults. While theory suggested a central role for coping, our findings indicate that these processes are not operating as hypothesized, with personality a more robust and consistently related factor for life satisfaction. Consistent with the broader literature, extraversion and conscientiousness were associated with greater life satisfaction, whereas neuroticism and discrimination were associated with lower life satisfaction. Neuroticism was associated negatively with spirituality coping and problem-oriented coping and positively with disengagement coping; extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were associated positively with spirituality and problem-focused coping and negatively with disengagement coping; openness and agreeableness were associated positively with interconnectedness coping. Surprisingly, coping was unrelated to life satisfaction. At the facet level, most facets were associated in the same direction as their trait domains, with the strongest associations for anxiety, depression, self-control, impulsivity, vulnerability (neuroticism); gregariousness, assertiveness, and positive emotions (extraversion); modesty (agreeableness); competence, dutifulness, achievement, self-discipline, and deliberation (conscientiousness). The exploratory



**Fig. 1.** Figure note: Standardized beta weights are shown only for significant direct effects within the model. All direct paths included in the model are shown however covariation between personality traits, demographic variables, and discrimination were removed for figure clarity. Additionally, covariation among coping styles was identified in the final but is not visually represented in the figure.

structural model supported the associations between the personality domains and life satisfaction and further indicated that each trait had independent associations with life satisfaction. Discrimination was unrelated to life satisfaction and subsequently no support was found for the hypothesis that coping mechanisms mediate the associations between personality or discrimination and life satisfaction.

The findings from this sample are consistent with the broader literature on personality and life satisfaction. Specifically, extraversion and conscientiousness were associated with greater life satisfaction and neuroticism was associated with lower life satisfaction consistent with meta-analytic findings (Anglim et al., 2020). The results for strong associations for facets of neuroticism (anxiety and depression), the facet of positive emotion from extraversion, modesty from agreeableness, and achievement and self-discipline from conscientiousness highlight areas for future research to identify narrower personality-led pathways to life satisfaction.

The domain-level associations between personality and life satisfaction were supported within the exploratory structural model. Surprisingly, discrimination was associated with life satisfaction in the linear regression analysis, but not in the structural model, possibly because personality may account for some of the association between discrimination and life satisfaction. Discrimination was, however, associated with disengagement coping in the structural model, as well as the linear regressions. Individuals who experience discrimination may disengage from the race-related stressor as a consequence of undergoing negative race-related experiences that are out of one's immediate control (Pittman & Kaur, 2018). It may be important to examine this finding longitudinally and examine how this response to experiences of stress, particularly discrimination, impact the individual over time.

In contrast to our hypotheses, culturally-relevant coping styles were unrelated to life satisfaction, except for a negative association between spirituality coping and life satisfaction. Given the absence of significant bivariate correlations or regression results for this relationship, the structural finding for spirituality and life satisfaction should be interpreted with caution. It may represent a spurious association or reflect residual variance after accounting for other model variables.

The null association between coping and life satisfaction supports personality as a primary driver of these associations. It may also be that the coping strategies most relevant for life satisfaction are not captured

well with a measure such as the Brief COPE. Even with the adapted taxonomy of culturally-relevant coping, it may not capture the nuance of spiritual strategies for dealing with race-related stress. It may also be the case that momentary responses to daily stressors are particularly relevant for life satisfaction and that coping should be measured in a more acute, momentary manner rather than with trait-like coping captured in the present study.

#### 4.1. Strengths and limitations

This study offers a systematic examination of whether personality traits, experiences of discrimination, and coping processes are independently and concurrently associated with life satisfaction among African American adults. It is the first to investigate both broad personality traits and their lower-order facets in relation to life satisfaction among African American adults, providing novel descriptive evidence on the role of individual personality characteristics in well-being in this population. There are also limitations. First, the current sample was from the Baltimore area and therefore may not generalize to African American populations in other areas of the country. Second, the coping styles derived from the Brief COPE may not have the level of cultural specificity that would be possible in a measure designed specifically for African American populations. Third, the present study only examined one aspect of subjective well-being. There may be differences across different aspects of well-being. Finally, the data were cross-sectional and thus not possible to establish temporal associations. The findings could be used in the future to guide mediation analyses with longitudinal data.

#### 5. Conclusion

The present study offers an approach to clarifying important aspects of the individual and their experiences that contribute to life satisfaction in African American adults and an understanding of the mechanisms of risk and resilience in this population. While culturally relevant coping strategies were theoretically expected to play a central role, our results suggest that their impact may be more limited or context-dependent than initially hypothesized and do not override the fundamental role of personality characteristics in shaping overall life satisfaction. Other stress-related processes should be investigated to understand the

relationship between individual responses to race-related stress and their consequences. Building a comprehensive model that represents the multiple factors contributing to life satisfaction is an important area for future work. Such work should also consider the daily experiences of discrimination and attempts to cope with it. The present study emphasizes the continued importance of examining personality trait and facets for life satisfaction and can be leveraged to better conceptualize the impact of race-related stressors and further identify areas to optimize outcomes for minoritized individuals.

### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Elizabeth Milad:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Antonio Terracciano:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology. **Daisy Zavala:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Selin Karakose:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology. **Martina Luchetti:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology. **Amanda A. Miller:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology. **Michele K. Evans:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Resources. **Alan B. Zonderman:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Resources. **Angelina R. Sutin:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Software, Resources, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization.

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### Declaration of competing interest

The authors do not have any conflicting or competing interests associated with the current submission to Personality and Individual Differences. Additionally, the authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2026.113675>.

### Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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**Supplemental Materials: A Culturally Congruent Approach to Life Satisfaction: The Role of Personality Traits, Social Stressors, and Coping in African American Adults**

Supplemental Table 1. All Study Variable Bivariate Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	-													
2. Sex	.018	--												
3. Poverty Status	-.066	-.056	--											
4. Neuroticism	-.147**	-.068	.136**	--										
5. Extraversion	-.074	.018	-.105*	-.510**	--									
6. Openness	-.064	.016	-.112**	-.308**	.459**	--								
7. Agreeableness	.204**	-.220**	-.074	-.392**	.180**	.266**	--							
8. Conscientiousness	-.015	-.036	-.047	-.637**	.424**	.300**	.361**	--						
9. Discrimination	-.115**	.117**	.048	.330**	-.260**	-.162**	-.230**	-.249**	--					
10. Interconnectedness	-.054	-.099*	.073	.041	.108**	.178**	.159**	.019	.058	--				
11. Spirituality	.048	-.129**	-.021	-.257**	.220**	.284**	.430**	.243**	-.068	.538**	--			
12. Disengagement	-.093*	-.007	.188**	.399**	-.221**	-.124**	-.171**	-.260**	.273**	.405**	.154**	--		
13. Problem-oriented	-.032	.000	-.023	-.236**	.241**	.278**	.272**	.204**	.011	.564**	.692**	.315**	--	
14. Life Satisfaction	.182**	-.036	-.004	-.297**	.235**	-.009	.013	.251**	-.152**	-.002	-.012	-.072	.066	--

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Supplemental Table 2. All Correlations for Personality Facets with Life Satisfaction

Personality Domain	Facet	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Neuroticism	Anxiety	<b>-.266**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Anger	-.061	.144
	Depression	<b>-.294**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Self-control	<b>-.217**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Impulsivity	<b>-.184**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Vulnerability	<b>-.221**</b>	<b>.000</b>
Extraversion	Warmth	<b>.145**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Gregariousness	<b>.154**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Assertiveness	<b>.167**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Activity	.015	.715
	Excitement Seeking	.066	.115
	Positive Emotion	<b>.237**</b>	<b>.000</b>
Openness	Fantasy	.060	.153
	Aesthetics	.023	.586
	Feeling	<b>-.116**</b>	<b>.005</b>
	Action	.041	.323
	Ideas	.032	.444
	Values	-.079	.058
Agreeableness	Trust	.054	.198
	Straightforwardness	.073	.082
	Altruism	.069	.098
	Compliance	.047	.266
	Modesty	<b>-.162**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Tendermindedness	-.040	.344
Conscientiousness	Competence	<b>.176**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Orderliness	.028	.496
	Dutifulness	<b>.176**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Achievement	<b>.283**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Self-discipline	<b>.227**</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Deliberation	<b>.172**</b>	<b>.000</b>

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).