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# Intergenerational Influences on Faith-based Strategies Used in Response to Racial Discrimination Among Young African American Adults

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**Abstract:** *Objective:* In this report, we used a qualitative descriptive design to explore young African American adults' intergenerationally influenced strategies to experienced racial discrimination.

*Methods:* The study was guided by a qualitative descriptive design using criterion and snowball sampling, and semi-structured interview questions. We also explored, quantitatively, gender differences among the racial discrimination experiences encountered and the strategies used.

*Findings:* Forty-nine participants included in this report were an average age of 29.5 (SD = 10.1). Racial discrimination experiences included daily microaggressions such as insensitive comments, stereotyping, exclusion from work and school activities, perceived low expectations, inequities in employment, and police profiling. Intergenerationally influenced strategies used in response to these experiences included religious beliefs and practices, positive reframing, and modeling behaviors used by previous generations. These intergenerationally influenced strategies enabled participants to remain calm, to express goodwill toward others, and to be patient and hopeful for a better future.

*Conclusion:* Since intergenerationally influenced strategies are likely potential sources of strength and resilience for young African Americans, knowledge of these strategies might be useful to health care practitioners seeking to improve the mental health care of this population.

**Keywords:** Intergenerational influences ■ Spirituality ■ Racial discrimination ■ Microaggressions ■ Mental health ■ young African American adults

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## INTRODUCTION

Social encounters perceived as racial discrimination are stressful and likely to result in negative mental health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Young African American adults, in particular, report significant experiences with racial

discrimination which have been linked to anxiety and depressive symptoms,<sup>2</sup> and increased risk for suicidal ideation.<sup>3,4</sup> In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, a majority of African American adults (71%) reported having experienced racial discrimination at some point in their lives from interactions that occurred at the individual level.<sup>5</sup> Over the course of a year, 50% of African American adults also reported being suspected of wrongdoing (47%), being considered as not smart (45%), experiencing unfair treatment in hiring or promotion opportunities (21%), and encountering racial profiling by police (18%).<sup>5</sup> Although experiences with racism are likely common among African Americans, individuals at greatest risk include men, young adults, and those with some college education.<sup>5</sup>

Recent media coverage has refocused our attention to the persistent and ongoing African American experience with racial discrimination. In comparison to Caucasians, African American men and women are more likely to experience racial discrimination.<sup>6</sup> For example, African Americans are more likely than Caucasians to be pulled over by police and then frisked, and three times as likely to be shot and killed.<sup>7</sup> According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2010, African Americans were six times as likely as Caucasians to be incarcerated in federal and state prisons, and local jails.<sup>8</sup> Increasingly, scholars are examining the negative impact of racial micro-aggressions; the everyday insults, indignities, and demeaning messages communicated by Caucasians to African Americans and others of color.<sup>6,9,10</sup> Although insidious in nature, the effects of micro-aggressions are cumulative and likely more harmful than overt acts of racial hatred. Micro-aggressions ultimately attack one's integrity, self-esteem, and mental health.<sup>11</sup> The reality for African Americans is that they will experience some form of racial discrimination at some point in their lives.

African Americans are the most religious group in the United States (U.S.) as evidenced by their religious

affiliations, engagement in religious practices, and the frequency with which they believe that God exists.<sup>12</sup> Historically, this strong religious culture has been a widely recognized protective factor in illness situations and has enabled African Americans to survive generations of oppression and racism.<sup>13</sup> In comparison to other racial/ethnic groups, African Americans are much more likely to rely on religious beliefs and practices in response to daily life challenges.<sup>12</sup> These religious beliefs and practices have been transmitted through African American oral history and subsequently are closely intermingled with everyday life.<sup>13</sup> As such, they are an important part of African American culture and are sources of strength and comfort when confronted with social, personal, and mental health issues.<sup>14,15</sup>

The practice of using faith-based strategies in response to experienced racial discrimination among African Americans is consistent with a strong religious culture but is also generationally influenced.<sup>16,17</sup> These faith-based strategies may include finding meaning and purpose in the experience or turning to God for support and guidance.<sup>18–20</sup> Faith-based strategies, such as hope and belief in God, promotes a sense of resilience and buffers the impact of experienced racism on psychological and emotional well-being.<sup>21</sup> However, specifics regarding the ways in which this rich culture of intergenerationally influenced strategies is used among young African Americans adults is an understudied area. In this study, we explored perceptions among young African American adults of their experiences with racial discrimination and the intergenerationally influenced strategies used in response to these encounters.

## METHODS

This study involves a secondary analysis of a larger study conducted among African American adults designed to explore the use of religious practices and beliefs as mental health-promoting strategies in response to stressful life events. In this report, we focus on the perceptions of intergenerationally influenced strategies that participants used specifically in response to experiences of racial discrimination. Data for this report comes from interviews with 49 African American men and women residing in the Southeastern U.S. Inclusion criteria were: 1) African American ethnicity by self-report; 2) between 18 years and 50 years old; and 3) having experienced a stressful situation identified as racial discrimination.

This study used qualitative methods with content analysis to determine the themes related to the experience of microaggressions and the intergenerationally influenced strategies used among African American men and women.

Quantitative methods were used to describe sample characteristics and whether differences among themes existed according to gender using with  $\chi^2$  and Fisher's exact test (dichotomous and categorical variables). Approval for this study was obtained from Institutional Review Boards of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Emory University.

## PROCEDURES

Initial recruitment efforts targeted participants with known religious affiliations and therefore likely to use strategies influenced by African American religious traditions. We also recruited through word of mouth to individuals with unknown religious affiliations. The first author conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews lasting 15–45 min in participants' homes or private rooms located in local churches. Participants were given a \$30 gift card for each interview. All interviews were conducted between June 2013 and August 2017.

During the interviews, participants were asked: 1) to discuss about whether they had experienced a situation in which they were treated unfairly as a result of being African American; 2) to describe how the event made them feel; and 3) to describe how they used a religious belief or practice in response to that situation.

## DATA ANALYSIS

All interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim. The first author and a research assistant then reviewed each transcribed interview for accuracy. In order to content analyze the data, a table was initially constructed to organize each participant's responses by the perceived racist encounter; how the encounter made them feel; and whether a religious belief or practice was used during the event. The first and second authors worked together to identify key categories of encounters related to racial discrimination, and religious practices and beliefs used as coping strategies. Young African American adults, co-authors of this paper, assisted with validating the experiences reported by study participants.

## RESULTS

### *Participant characteristics*

The 49 participants in this report were representative of those African Americans identified as being at higher risk for experiences with racial discrimination in national surveys.<sup>8</sup> Participants primarily were an average age of 29 ( $SD = 10.1$ ), women (57%), never married (61%), had some college education (59%), were employed (51%), Baptist (36%), and lived in urban areas (61%). Findings

from the Chi-square analyses showed no significant differences among the gender groups with regard to age, marital status, education, employment status, religious affiliation, and place of residence (Table 1).

**Type of racial discrimination experience.** The majority of these 49 participants (83%) reported having experienced racial discrimination in their lifetime. Among all participants, the most frequent racial discrimination experience included hearing insensitive or inappropriate comments (29%) followed by perceived stereotyping or negative images (22.4%), feeling excluded from activities at work or school (16%), perceived low expectations of them by others (14%), encountering inequities in hiring/employment opportunities (12%), and experiencing police profiling (12%). There were no significant differences among gender groups according to types of racial discrimination experienced (Table 2).

**Strategies used in response to racial discrimination.** Among the 49 participants, strategies used in response to experiences with racial discrimination were primarily influenced by intergenerational resources that were learned through faith-based communities, parents, and/or grandparents. These intergenerationally-influenced strategies included a religious belief (48%), religious practice (29%), positive reframing (27%), and modeling behaviors learned from previous generations (12%). With the exception of modeling behaviors, there were no significant differences in strategies used according to gender (Table 3).

In the section that follows, we depict the types of racist encounters and strategies used, along with brief quotations from participants. The categories of intergenerationally-influenced strategies are organized by highest frequency of use.

**Strategies incorporating a religious belief.** Religious beliefs used in response to racial discrimination experiences included the belief in God's existence and in His powers over mortal beings. These beliefs had been taught to participants by parents, grandparents and elders in the home, church, or community. These individuals encouraged the belief that God was always present and there to provide for their needs, to protect them from harm, and to ultimately control outcomes from racist events.

A 29-year old college educated and unmarried man, employed at a branch of a major financial institution described his experiences with racism and his religious beliefs that were influenced by Church teachings. This young man recalled memories of his childhood and the religious training he received on how to respond to difficult life events. These teachings were passed down through elders in the Church and Sunday School but also in his home through his great-grandmother. Through the

Church, his Pastor, an African American male, exemplified the appropriate ways to respond to negative life events "by the way he carried himself ... and the selfless way he gave you information." He also spoke fondly of his great-grandmother and the way in which she encouraged him to believe in an all-powerful God and in the benefit in praying for yourself:

... this comes from my great grandmother [name]. I think the biggest thing that she told me growing up was it's okay to pray for yourself. You know when you pray at night you know you always say, now I lay me down to sleep and then you say God bless Mama, God bless Daddy, God bless everyone but I never say God bless myself. I always thought it was selfish to pray for yourself because I'm only thinking about me. But my grandma was like how can you help others? God has to bless you too ... So at night I pray for my strength so I can go out and help others and do what it is in God's will for me.

During a racially-motivated encounter with a client, this participant remembered his religious teachings to rely on God to bring him through difficult life situations as well as to treat others with kindness and respect.

... I'm actually working at a bank ... so I deal with the older Caucasian clientele so it's very difficult because I can see the faces that I get when I walk in, it's almost like who are you, why are you here? ... I think maybe 5 years ago it would have really, really bothered me but actually now I kind of look at it with a smile ... You can really kill people with kindness ... It's like you know [,] I know how you feel but guess what you don't have a choice. I have to assist you and guess what when you meet me, you'll ... find out it's really not that bad ... [strategy used] I'm like if the Lord is with me He gives me that strength. And you know whatever happens I can deal with because things are going to happen every day whether we like what happens or we don't like what happens. But if we have the strength from the Lord then it's going to be okay.

**Strategies incorporating a religious practice.** Religious practices used as strategies in response to racial discrimination included the recall of a scripture passage from the Bible or the lyrics of a religious song. Prayers were another religious practice used to ask God for protection, strength, and the ability to persevere despite experiences with racial discrimination.

One 28-year old unmarried man described his experience with racial discrimination during a job interview for a

**Table 1.** Characteristics of study participants.

Characteristic	Females (n = 28)	Males (n = 21)	$\chi^2$ (df)
Age, y			
Mean (SD)	31 (11.3)	28.1 (8.2)	30.4 (25)
Education, n (%)			1.11 (3)
HS graduate or GED	2 (7)	1 (5)	
Partial college training	18 (64)	11 (52)	
College	7 (25)	8 (38)	
Graduate/professional	1 (4)	1 (4.8)	
Marital status, n (%)			1.70 (2)
Married	10 (35.7)	5 (23.8)	
Divorced	3 (10.7)	1 (4.8)	
Never married	15 (53.6)	15 (71.4)	
Employment status, n (%)			1.88 (2)
Student	13 (46)	7 (33)	
Quit because of health	3 (11)	1 (5)	
Employed	12 (43)	13 (62)	
Religious affiliation, n (%) (Adult years)			3.83 (6)
Baptist	10 (36)	8 (38)	
Methodist	5 (18)	2 (10)	
Holiness/Pentecostal	6 (21)	4 (19)	
Nondenominational	2 (7)	4 (19)	
Seventh-day Adventist	1 (4)	1 (5)	
United Church of Christ	0 (0)	1 (5)	
None	4 (14)	1 (5)	
Geographic area, n (%)			0.01 (1)
Urban	17 (61)	13 (62)	
Rural	11 (40)	8 (38)	

*There are no statistically significant differences by age.*

position in an office of all Caucasian staff. This young, part-time college student detailed his efforts to avoid stereotypes often associated with being a Black male prior to the interview. The participant presented himself to the interviewer in the most appropriate way he knew how; properly dressed and groomed. In spite of his efforts and qualifications, he was not hired. Feeling rejected from this experience, he relied on the readings of scripture passages from the Bible to ease his hurt and anger. The scripture passages he used were passed down through elders in the Church he referred to as “Saints.” According to this young man, he recalled always listening to these older individuals as they talked about the Bible verses that enabled their

ability to overcome their struggles. As a young adult, this participant now relied on these Bible verses to overcome his feelings of rejection.

There are so many stereotypes about Black males and we got to make sure that we keep our appearances ... One experience I had was when I went in for the job interview, and the interviewer looked at me as if she were surprised at how I was really dressed and when I pulled out my resume, she looked at me real funny, and she was like, you are too overly qualified for this position. . . . and she really discouraged me from getting that position, she even went to

**Table 2.** Types of racial discrimination encounters.

Racial Discrimination Encounter	Definitions	Females n = 28	Males n = 21	$\chi^2$ (df)
In insensitive/Inappropriate Comments, n (%)	Name calling, racial slurs, insensitive racially based jokes and comments; disrespectful, rude or offensive verbal and nonverbal expressions; culturally insensitive comments from fellow white students or coworkers; made to feel ashamed of one's physical characteristics	8 (29)	6 (29)	0.0 (1)
Perceived Stereotyping or Negative Images, n (%)	Negative images of Black males as thugs, criminals; assumption of criminal activity (crossing streets, grabbing purses, mean looks); feared by others	4 (14)	7 (33)	2.5 (1)
Feeling Excluded from Activities at Work or School, n (%)	Exclusion from clubs, extracurricular activities; exclusion from promotions, types of positions, advancement in the workplace; limited opportunities in school or the workplace, unequal treatment in school or the workplace	6 (21)	2 (10)	1.25 (1)
Perceived Others' Low Expectations of Them By Others, n (%)	Negative messages related to low intrinsic worth believed to be directly related to one's racial identity	4 (14)	3 (14)	0.0 (1)
Encountering Inequities in Hiring/ Employment Opportunities, n (%)	Lack of employment opportunities believed to be the result of one's racial identity	4 (14)	2 (10)	0.25 (1)
Experiencing Police Profiling, n (%)	Stopped or pulled over by police for mistaken identity or suspected of criminal behavior believed to be the result of one's racial identity	2 (7)	4 (19)	1.58 (1)

*There were no statistically significant differences by gender.*

**Table 3.** Types of strategies used in response to racial discrimination.

Strategies	Definitions	Females n = 28	Males n = 21	$\chi^2$ (df)
Religious Belief, n (%)	A belief or feeling of certainty; an attitude related to a truth that God exists	15 (54)	9 (43)	0.55 (1)
Religious Practice, n (%)	A set of behaviors associated with a culture of worship; may include prayer, music, art, dance, public service, sacrifices, sermons, meditation, etc.	8 (29)	6 (29)	0.0 (1)
Positive Reframing, n (%)	A consideration of events in a positive light to overcome adversity; transforming thinking of an event as positive; or having a positive perspective on a negative situation	8 (29)	5 (24)	0.14 (1)
Modeling Behaviors Learned from Previous Generations, n (%)	Responding to adversity using strategies which were learned from older individuals who have lived through similar situations	1 (4)	5 (29)	4.57* (1)

Note: Participants may have used more than one type of strategy.

df = degree of freedom.

\* $P \leq 0.05$ .

the point of saying ... this is not what you really want to do, the rate that we are looking to pay, you really don't want that rate. . . . I felt so low, my self-esteem was so low. And for that moment I felt angry. I felt cheated ... [so] I used scripture ... *I can do all things through Christ*, it tells me "no"—not to [be angry]. It says you can overcome ... I can do all things through Christ [who] strengthens me ...

One 24-year old, male graduate student described his experience with racial profiling as an undergraduate student and the strategies he learned from the times spent with his grandmother during summer vacations.

This was my Dad's mother and this grandmother I don't see as often but we used to stay over there. She didn't have any running water. There was no inside plumbing we had to go to the outhouse ... she lived on a tobacco farm so they harvested the tobacco, took it out to the barn and let it dry out. I think for most people their past kind of invokes a sense of comfort even if it's not comfortable because if you listen to some people's past it's quite different ... but I think it

was a time for me to learn as much as I can from the older generation ... As with the past of African Americans in general I think my past personal history is important and although the story may change the struggles haven't changed.

In his young adult years during an experience with racial discrimination, he recalled the teachings and work ethic learned from his grandmother:

... they [the police] had misidentified me and thought I was another individual and approached me ... my question was ... what prompted him to come to me? so I say that to say that ... it has been very difficult in that I feel as if being a Black male in America today, I have to work five times as hard to show that I am capable ... no matter how much education that I've gotten [or] will get, it will just be a fact that I will have to work 2 to 3 times harder to show who I am. In the times where I felt like maybe my race ... my ethnicity, could have impacted my goals or my aspirations, I have the word, the scripture for situations like that ... if you, seek ye *first the*

kingdom of God and all his righteousness and all these things will be added unto me, so with all that being said, no matter how difficult it may be, how tedious the journey may be, if I continue to seek God's Kingdom, then He will always have me in the right place and the right time to kind of penetrate those barriers.

**Strategies incorporating positive reframing of the event.** Participants reframed events that were perceived as racially discrimination into one where the opposing individual or encounter was less threatening. Positive reframing influenced participants' thinking of the offending individual as having problems or lacking knowledge. When this strategy was used, the problem was placed with the offending individual, giving the participant a sense of control over the situation. Another way of reframing was when participants thought of the situation as serving a greater purpose or God's way of preparing them for a future challenging situation. Participants compared their experiences of racial discrimination to the sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus. One 19-year old female college student spoke in detail of her experiences of feeling excluded and isolated in a predominately white institution. She did not refer to her experience with bullying and trying to fit in as racially motivated; however, those experiences were still harmful to her mental health.

.... I always felt very stressed whenever I tried to fit into the norm of that school and the norm was white with long pretty hair and very fit, very skinny. And for me I was the complete opposite of all those things. I was big as a child, I was Black, I had very short hair and it stressed me out a lot trying to fit into the situations. It made me feel so worthless, it made me lose a lot of self-esteem and it was just a bad time. I tried to be perfect and no one's perfect and it just really messed me up and it just led to a lot of problems like depression and self-esteem issues, cutting. . . . the things I used to do to fit in was throwing up every day you know trying to become skinny like them. I tried to play sports because a lot of the girls were athletic but I am highly uncoordinated so that did not work out very well so ... Other things I did included trying to make people laugh at me, not laugh at me but I tried to be the funny person in the room, the class clown, I wanted people to think I was cool and happy all the time and funny so I tried to become a class clown and that was also a method to get people to stop picking at me so instead of them laughing at me I wanted them to laugh with me. . . .when I hit rock bottom ... I read the Bible a lot, some scriptures that I turned to was Psalm 31 ... and another scripture was

Matthew 5:14. I remember Matthew 5:14 *For you are the light of the world, a city sit upon a hill cannot be hid* and Psalm 31 ... its' basically about praying to God to get you through those dark days and that God is with you ... so just call on God whenever you need something and God will always be there for you.

One 20-year old male undergraduate college student at a majority white public university shared his thoughts on how exposure to Bible stories heard during his formative years in Church services, as well as conversations with his father, influenced his ability to positively reframe his experiences with racial discrimination.

But there is a Bible verse. I know it's in Isaiah ... They that wait on the Lord will mount up wings of an eagle ... Those who serve the Lord, you know, shall renew their strength. . . . once I realized what it mean, it was like, yeah, when you pray, 'Hey, renew my strength,' you know, it's real. . . .It just makes me feel like everything's okay. I realize that, you know, the little things that we worry about in life aren't even that big. You know. One thing [teaching] from Church is '*It could be a lot worse.*' You know, there are people who are out there losing their lives and losing limbs. I still have a place to stay, you know, food to eat, you know, water to drink. So that was- that's how it kinda made me feel. Like, you know, He's [God] there, you know, and as long as you continue to serve, He'll continue to be there.

In referring to his racially motivated encounter, this participant had this to say:

I know I'm personally not bothered by it 'cause in the end ... to retaliate in a bad way would only be [harmful to me] or the other person ... I mean, through different readings, you read through a Bible ... Nothing that happens on this earth now is anything compared to the price Jesus paid on the cross ... they could still be doing that. You know, so I think about how bad things have been and I'm like, "Well, it's not that bad," you know.

**Strategies using behaviors modeled from previous generations.** Participants described ways in which they responded to experiences with racial discrimination through modeling behaviors learned from previous generations. These behaviors served as a blueprint for how to live and respond in racially charged situations by being calm, patient, and redirecting their anger. Participants described their religious training that taught them to pray for patience to endure the situation(s); prayers to not be bitter; and prayers of forgiveness for the offending individuals, and to accept and respect all individuals. One



43-year old woman living in a rural area described her experience with racial profiling. When shopping at a local farm and gardening store with her grandfather, he was the model for being kind and patient in spite of disrespectful treatment. This participant recalled one incident of being ignored by the sales clerk when shopping one day. Specifically, the sales clerk helped other clients before acknowledging the participant as a customer. Rather than be confrontational, the participant waited patiently, modeling behaviors of her grandfather:

He [grandfather] used to be the most amazing man. I used to wonder, where does he get it from? Because we would walk in a store, he would speak to everybody. And I think one day I finally said something to him. I was like why do we have to go in this store and why do you speak to them they don't speak back. 'Well that's something they'll have to give an account for with the Lord. If they don't speak back that's on them I've done my part' ... For me I always hear or think about what my grandfather would do or what he would say in this particular situation and of course I hear him say 'go on do the best that you can do, don't worry about it, the Lord will fix it. Just do the best that you can do.' He was just an easy spirited person and I find that I'm the same way. I can get rowdy but I prefer not to.

## DISCUSSION

In this report, we describe intergenerationally influenced strategies used among young African American adults during encounters perceived as racial discrimination. Participants detailed their efforts to dress and groom appropriately, to arm themselves with the best education at the best schools, and to express themselves clearly using grammatically correct language. However, in spite of these efforts, participants still encountered racial profiling and subtle microaggressions that resulted in their depressed moods, anger, hurt, and feelings of low self-esteem. Daily life encounters perceived as racial discrimination are known hazards to health outcomes among individuals with a clinical diagnosis that includes anxiety<sup>22</sup> and depression.<sup>23</sup> They also create racial disparities in patient satisfaction with health care providers<sup>24</sup> and in the use of mental health services.<sup>25</sup> In a study with another young adult population, generational storytelling is important for relationships, insights about emerging adults' parents and themselves, and life lessons.<sup>26</sup>

Religious beliefs and practices are integral to the culture of African Americans and are historically used in response to stressful encounters. Consistent with this religious

culture, these participants believed in God and in His ability to deliver them from racial discrimination.<sup>18</sup> Scripture passages were used to identify with the lives of Biblical characters who also suffered and were powerless, yet adhered to certain values and beliefs.<sup>27</sup> These stories provided a sense of hope and faith in God's ability to protect, strengthen, and heal.<sup>27</sup> In other research, religious beliefs and practices were sources of resilience to the stress of daily experiences with racism.<sup>28</sup> For example, prayers were used to request relief from feelings of bitterness, strength to endure daily racist experiences, to walk away, and to promote the faith and hope for a better future.<sup>16,18</sup> Although used among older African Americans, these strategies continue to be a resource for young African Americans in response to the stress of racially-motivated encounters.

Positive reframing of an encounter perceived as racist was used among these participants to find something positive in a negative encounter. Existing conceptualizations and measures of positive reframing are vague and limited to 'looking for something good'<sup>29</sup> or 'finding meaning in a negative situation.'<sup>30</sup> In spite of this vagueness, positive reframing has associations with decreased psychological distress among adults who experienced a traumatic event,<sup>29</sup> a serious illness such as cancer,<sup>30</sup> and when infected with HIV.<sup>31</sup> Among these participants and others, conceptualizations around spirituality influence attitudes toward life and therefore provide a sense of confidence to endure stressful situations,<sup>29</sup> and increase the length of survivorship during illnesses.<sup>32,33</sup> Our findings showcase the ways in which positive reframing might be conceptualized among religiously affiliated adults. For example, reframing negative situations might occur through the identification of positives associated with suffering, and the extension of kindness and forgiveness to offending individuals.<sup>34</sup>

Modeling behaviors and learning cultural values from previous generations is an important function of societies and families. However, when the topic is focused on religious culture, scholars tend to agree that the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and practices occur as early as childhood, and persist well into adulthood,<sup>35,36</sup> and decreases the incidence of risky behaviors during adolescence.<sup>37</sup> Our findings support the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and practices, and extends what is known of how spiritually-based strategies are specifically used during encounters with racism, discrimination, and racial microaggressions. At least on some level, a child's upbringing with values of love, kindness, patience, and forgiveness might encourage responses of calm and restraint, and buffer the emotional stress during potentially hostile and violent encounters. It

is also important to note that the that gender difference in the theme whereby modeling behaviors of older generations is likely attributed to an awareness that African American males are more likely to be targets of racial discrimination. Subsequently, older generations may have placed more emphasis on modeling strategies for survival during these type experiences.

### Limitations

While this study contributes to the evidence on intergenerationally influenced strategies in response to stressful life events, the design of the study limited participants' discussion to faith-based strategies used in response to one stressful life event. The study might have been strengthened through additional questions that explored whether non-faith based strategies were used and also whether these young adults might continue to transmit these strategies to future generations. However, despite these limitations the findings presented here contribute to an understudied area of young adults use of generationally influenced strategies in response to stressful life events. The findings also contribute to the body of literature on culture and the persistence of oral religious traditions among African Americans.

## CONCLUSIONS

Intergenerationally influenced strategies are likely useful to young African Americans adults in response to encounters perceived as racial discrimination. The strategies highlighted in this report might be useful to health care practitioners in their attempts to understand the stressful life events experienced among this population. Researchers and health care practitioners might consider incorporating these strategies into interventions and mental health programs targeting young African American adults.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors whose names are listed immediately below certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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