

# Masculinity Ideology and Forgiveness of Racial Discrimination among African American Men: Direct and Interactive Relationships

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**Abstract** Forgiveness research has focused almost exclusively on interpersonal transgressions committed in close relationships. Consequently, less is known about factors informing forgiveness of non-intimate actors. The current study addresses these gaps by investigating correlates of forgiveness over racial discrimination among African American men ( $N=171$ ). Specifically, we explore relationships between the endorsement of traditional masculine ideology (e.g., restrictive emotionality), overall forgiveness, forgiveness with positive affect, and forgiveness with the absence of negative affect. Links between personality, religiosity, social support, discrimination experiences, and these forms of forgiveness also are examined. Restrictive emotionality emerged as a barrier to forgiveness of discrimination. However, the relationship between restrictive emotionality and forgiveness was moderated by age, socioeconomic status, personality, and religious coping disposition.

**Keywords** Masculinity ideology · Male role norms · African American men · Racial discrimination · Forgiveness · Personality · Religious coping · Positive psychology

Over the past decade, growing interest in forgiveness has led to three intersecting streams of scholarship. The first stream of work has explored an array of affective (e.g., empathy, vengeance, rumination, anger) and personality factors (e.g., neuroticism and social desirability) that motivate individuals to grant forgiveness following interpersonal transgressions (Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005; Maltby, Day, & Barber, 2004; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). A second stream of work has sought to identify the sociocultural underpinnings of forgiveness. This body of research has explored the ways in which cultural systems (e.g., religion) inform people's experience of forgiveness (e.g., definitions of forgiveness, ideas about the desirability of forgiveness, and perspectives on the conditions under which forgiveness should be granted). A third body of research has explored the historical and sociopolitical correlates of forgiveness. Central to this work has been an interest in the ways that national, racial, ethnic, class, religious, gender and sexual discrimination inform the meanings and manifestations of forgiveness in relationships between socially constituted groups (e.g., ethnic groups) (see Wohl & Branscombe, 2005 for example).

These lines of research have added substantially to our understanding of the forgiveness process. Nonetheless research on forgiveness is plagued by an important conceptual shortcoming. Specifically, the core of work in this area has focused primarily on individual responses to transgressions that occur in close relationships (Boon & Sulsky, 1997; McCullough et al., 1997). For example, Freedman and Enright (1996) have focused on forgiveness among survivors of incest, while Rye et al. (2005) have examined the factors that lead people to forgive in the aftermath of divorce. Close relationships tend to be marked by trust and commitment. In these relational contexts

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forgiveness is likely to be a negotiated, as opposed to unilateral process (Andrews, 2000). As a negotiated process, forgiveness transpires after the victim and transgressor engage in a dialogue about the offense and come to a mutual understanding of responsibility (Andrews, 2000). In contrast to negotiated forgiveness, the process of unilateral forgiveness occurs internally (Andrews, 2000). Unilateral forgiveness is likely to occur in situations where opportunities to interact with the perpetrator are limited or when such interactions may place the individual at risk for further victimization. The overwhelming focus on close relationships in forgiveness research ignores the reality that transgressions often are committed by non-intimate others (e.g., strangers and acquaintances) with whom we interact in public and private spaces. Further, this focus on forgiveness of intimate others limits our opportunities to identify the factors that may relate to forgiveness when negotiation is not likely.

We extend existing research by exploring factors that inform the process of forgiving transgressions committed by relatively anonymous or non-intimate actors. In particular, we build on lines of research that explore the sociocultural, historical and sociopolitical context of forgiveness by examining the factors that inform forgiveness of racially discriminatory transgressions. Of particular interest are the ways in which affect and personality factors, religiosity, and masculinity ideology inform the forgiveness of such transgressions among a sample of African American men.

Two specific research questions guide the present study: First, to what extent do masculinity ideology, personality, demographic factors, and religiosity inform African American men's general forgiveness of racial discrimination, forgiveness marked by the absence of negative affect, and forgiveness as marked by the presence of positive affect? Second, to what extent is the relationship between traditional masculine norms of emotional expressivity and African American men's forgiveness of racial discrimination moderated by personality, demographic factors, and religious coping disposition?

In addressing these two questions we first review the literature on gender, masculinity ideology, and forgiveness. Next, we review literature on the relation between gender, personality, social support, religiosity, and forgiveness. Third, we discuss the relevance of racial discrimination as a context for examining the process of forgiveness among African American men. Finally, we describe the findings of this empirical study and explore its implications.

### Gender, Masculinity Ideology, and Forgiveness

A small but substantial body of scholarship suggests that there are gender differences in forgiveness. Men are more

likely than women to endorse the view that forgiveness involves the release of fear and anger (Denton & Martin, 1998). Further, men appear to be less forgiving (Worthington, Sandage, & Berry, 2000). These and similar findings have been used as evidence of gender disparities in forgiveness. The question that emerges naturally from work on gender or sex differences in forgiveness is: how can we explain such differences? The caution of Worthington et al. (2000) is that our efforts to explain gender differences in forgiveness are compromised by the fact that women comprise the disproportionate majority of participants in studies of forgiveness. They assert the need for studies that seek to explicate the factors that inform forgiveness among men. This study responds to the call of Worthington et al. by taking a within-group approach to the study of men's forgiveness.

We posit that traditional masculinity ideology has a powerful impact on men's experience of forgiveness. Following from Walker and Doverspike's (2001) finding that there is a negative association between men's endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology and their willingness to forgive, we assert that masculinity norms exert their influence over the forgiveness process in two distinct ways. First, these ideologies shape men's emotional responses to offenses. Second, these ideologies inform men's involvement in social groups (e.g., social networks and faith communities) and social practices (e.g., religious worship) that are known to influence forgiveness.

Traditional masculinity ideology equates authentic masculinity with invulnerability, strength, and stoicism (Levant, 1996; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). This ideology prescribes aggression and restrictive emotionality as signs of manhood and militates against expressing or disclosing positive as well as negative emotions (Brody, 1997; Gross & John, 1998; Nardi, 1992; Wester, Vogel, Pressly, & Heesacker, 2002). The norms of restrictive emotionality that are consistent with traditional masculinity ideology have important implications for understanding men's willingness to forgive. Forgiveness depends on individuals' willingness to make emotional disclosures about stressors or transgressions (Maltby et al., 2004). Further, forgiveness requires individuals to dispense of negative emotions, and/or to generate positive emotional responses (e.g., empathic responses) following offenses (Macaskill, Maltby, & Day, 2002; McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003; Rye et al., 2001). We assert that men who more strongly endorse traditional masculinity norms may be less likely to forgive because they perceive the cognitions, affect, and behaviors that are required for forgiveness (e.g., emotional expressivity, displays of empathy and emotional risk-taking) as violations of the masculine code. The question that guides our exploration is: how do traditional notions of masculinity and masculinist ideas about the appropriateness of

emotional expressiveness work in tandem with other factors to inform various styles of forgiveness? We seek to determine whether the factors that inform men's willingness to dispense of negative emotions similarly inform their capacity to generate positive emotional responses toward their transgressors.

The putative link between masculinity ideology and forgiveness must be examined against the backdrop of research that demonstrates that African American men hold flexible definitions of masculinity (Hammond & Mattis, 2005). These studies suggest that African American men may defy expected norms of emotional expressiveness, neuroticism, and forgiveness. We do not dispute these findings, however, we take note of research that find that despite their flexible notions of masculinity, African American men do tend to embrace traditional masculine norms regarding emotional self-disclosure (Levant & Majors, 1997). Given these findings, we expect that men who embrace traditional masculinity and who confront discriminatory experiences will be less likely to engage in emotional self-disclosure, and this more restrictive emotional style will inform their styles of forgiveness.

Importantly, the link between traditional masculinity ideology, emotions and forgiveness may be affected by personality. Empirical evidence suggests that neuroticism (i.e., the tendency to easily experience unpleasant emotions), is negatively associated with the likelihood to forgive (Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes, & Jackson, 1998; Maltby, Macaskill, & Day, 2001; Quartana, Schmaus, & Zakowaki, 2005). McCullough and Hoyt (2002) explain that neurotic individuals may have a heightened vulnerability to the experience of negative emotions. This vulnerability to negative affect may lead to a diminished willingness to forgive. We reason that men who score higher on neuroticism and those who more strongly endorse traditional norms of masculinity regarding emotional expressivity will be more vulnerable to the negative affect generated by exposure to racial discrimination, but will have fewer sanctioned opportunities to express these emotions. We expect, therefore, that neuroticism will be negatively related to the various styles of forgiveness.

We would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge that masculinity ideology, affect, and forgiveness are informed by larger social contextual and sociocultural factors. In particular, we note that individuals who are embedded in socially supportive networks tend to be less emotionally restrictive (e.g., they may be less likely to deny or minimize racial discrimination) (Ruggiero, Taylor, & Lyndon, 1997) and more forgiving. These support networks may provide individuals with safe and loving contexts in which to express their emotions, evaluate or craft resolutions to transgressions, or experience personal affirmation. However, in general, men report receiving less social support than

women (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987), and African American men have particularly limited access to networks of social support (Barker, Morrow, & Mitteness, 1998). In this study, we explore whether the relationship between forgiveness, affect, and social support holds for African American men—particularly for those who endorse traditional notions of what it means to be a man.

Importantly, although the support received from secular networks is important in facilitating forgiveness, research on the cultural contributors to forgiveness, demonstrates that a greater level of religious commitment (i.e., more frequent religious service attendance) also is associated with a greater likelihood to forgive transgressions (Wuthnow, 2000). Religion (i.e., sacred texts, sermons) reifies the value of forgiveness as an index of faith, as a method of coping (Pargament & Rye, 1998), and as a pathway to healing, reconciliation, and peace (Pargament, 1997). It is noteworthy that, in general, African Americans score higher on indices of religiosity than other groups (Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004), and they are significantly more likely than other groups to report engaging in forgiving behavior (Wuthnow, 2000). However, of equal note is the point that men are less conventionally religious than women (e.g., they attend religious services less frequently and are less likely to report membership in religious organizations) and therefore may have fewer opportunities to be exposed to images and messages of forgiveness. Taken together, these points raise questions about the links between religiosity and forgiveness among African American men. Despite men's relatively lower level of religious involvement, the centrality of religion in African American life suggests that among men in this sample religiosity will contribute to each index of forgiveness even after accounting for the contributions of personality, social support, and masculinity ideology.

### Forgiveness, Masculinity, and Racial Discrimination

Ideological, personality, social and cultural resources certainly inform individuals' capacity for forgiveness. However, scholars have argued cogently that studies of forgiveness must begin with an appreciation of the nature of the transgression. American scholars have paid significant attention to the factors that promote or hinder forgiveness of transgressions among intimate others. However, there is a need for greater empirical attention to factors that inform forgiveness of transgressions (e.g., racial discrimination) that are rooted in larger historical and sociopolitical conditions. Racial discrimination remains a persistent and insidious problem in American life. In fact, one national study found that only 8.8% of non-Hispanic Blacks reported that they had never experienced a daily discriminatory event (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999).

Further, a community study revealed that 70% of African Americans (compared to 30% of White Americans) reported experiencing at least one discriminatory event in their lifetime (Forman, Williams, & Jackson, 1997). Importantly, African Americans are more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to report experiencing racially discriminatory transgressions (Forman et al., 1997; Kessler et al., 1999) and African American men are especially likely to report experiences with racial discrimination (Banks, Kohn-Wood, & Spencer, 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

In light of African American men's frequent experiences with racial discrimination, we seek to identify the factors that facilitate or impede their ability to grant forgiveness when faced with racial discrimination. Of particular interest is the link between forgiveness, masculinity ideology and encounters with the unconscious and subtle acts of bias that scholars define as 'everyday racism' (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Harrell, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998). These everyday forms of racism include familiar practices that reflect systematic and institutional attitudes and behaviors (e.g., redlining of neighborhoods) (Essed, 1991; Harrell, 2000), as well as daily slights (e.g., being mistaken for someone who serves others [e.g., maid, bellboy] or receiving poor service because of one's race).

For those who encounter everyday acts of racial discrimination, the process of granting forgiveness may be complicated by a number of factors. First, racially discriminatory events often are ambiguous and fleeting, and the perpetrators of these acts often are strangers or acquaintances. As such, there may be few opportunities for the offended to confront their transgressors. Second, such events often involve transgressors who occupy social positions (e.g., police officers, physicians, employers) that give them disproportionate power over the victims of their transgressions. Because of these power differentials, targets of racism are always aware that their decision to respond may have substantial emotional, economic, health, and other consequences for them individually as well as for their families and friends. Third, in the effort to cope with the stress of racism, minority group members may tend to minimize or deny the discrimination that they experience (Crosby, 1984; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997). Importantly, although minimization and denial may protect individuals from pain and vulnerability, these cognitive strategies also may militate against the forgiveness process. Indeed, minimization or denial may lead to the suppression of thoughts about the offense, and to an increase in the intensity of negative emotions (e.g., anger; Wegner & Wezloff, 1996). Finally, the experience of disrespect that is characteristic of everyday racism may serve as a direct assault against African American men's masculine identity as it compromises their sense of dignity, power, and control.

We seek to understand the ways in which a particular constellation of cognitive, affective, personality, social, and cultural factors (i.e., masculinity ideology regarding emotional expressiveness, neuroticism, social support, and religiosity) shape various forms of forgiveness among African American men who encounter of everyday racism.

## Method

### Participants

A convenience sample of 216 community-residing African American men was recruited for the study. However, only the cases with no missing data ( $N=171$ ) were used for inferential statistics. The majority of participants (76.9%) were recruited from barbershops in Michigan and Georgia. The remainder of the study participants (23.1%) was recruited from educational institutions and events. Study participants ranged in age from 18 to 78 ( $M=32.09$ ,  $SD=10.24$ ). The majority of participants (47.2%) were between the ages of 18 and 29. More African American men in the sample were unmarried (60.6%) than married (39.4%). Levels of educational attainment among study participants were fairly evenly distributed. Only a small number of the men in the sample had less than a high school education (2.9%). In addition, 21.5% of the sample reported that they had obtained a GED or high school diploma, 36.8% have had some college; 21.6% reported completing a college degree (bachelor's or associate's degree), 5.7% reported completing a technical program, 5.3% reported having had some graduate school, and 9.1% reported obtaining a graduate or professional degree.

Participants were recruited through flier advertisements, direct contact, and by word-of-mouth. Approaching African American men in places that they frequent helped to ensure that a cross-section of African American men from various socioeconomic backgrounds was obtained. Among African American men, barbershops are noted as key sites of social, interpersonal exchange (Alexander, 2003; Gary, 1981; Harris-Lacewell, 2004). As such, although participants were recruited from education institutions and events, barbershops were chosen as the primary sites of recruitment. Following the initial contact and agreement to participate, barbershop owners and barbers were invited to provide feedback about the study measures, and to discuss data collection procedures. This decision to utilize barbers and shop employees as the first point of contact was critical to the engagement of study participants since these individuals were well-known and trusted members of their communities. These meetings were held at each barbershop individually. Two of the barbershops are located in the Midwestern region and the third barbershop is located in

the Southeast region of the United States. At each barbershop, patrons were informed about study participation by the receptionist or barber. Roughly 90% of the men approached in the barbershops consented to participate.

Fliers and study brochures were distributed at educational institutions and events in central locations. In addition, a table was set up at these locations during hours (e.g., lunch hours) where large groups of individuals were known to congregate. Individuals were allowed to initiate contact with the investigator at which time the survey details were discussed. Participants recruited at educational events or institutions were encouraged to complete the survey on site. If preferred however, participants were allowed to complete the questionnaires off-site. At the educational institutions and events 65% of the men who approached the investigator agreed to participate in the study.

### Procedure

Upon responding to the recruitment methods and agreeing to participate in the study, all respondents were required to sign a written consent form. Barbershop participants were given free haircuts as an incentive to participate in this study. The cost of the haircut for participating barbershops was \$15.00. Barbers and shop owners were paid directly for the haircut services. Participants recruited from educational events and institutions were not provided with a monetary incentive. On average, men took 45 minutes to complete the surveys. Following the completion of the survey, individuals recruited from barbershops and educational institutions were debriefed.

### Measures

**Demographics** The brief demographic section of the questionnaire asked participants to report their age, race/ethnicity, and relationship status. Response categories for level of education ranged from 1 (“Less than high school”) to 8 (“Graduate or professional degree”). For participant relationship status, a dummy variable was created to capture those individuals who were currently married. Individuals who reported that they were married were assigned a value of “1.” Participants who reported that they were single, separated, widowed, or divorced were assigned a value of “0.” Site identification was also considered. Hence, a dummy variable was created to identify the type of site from which participant’s were recruited. Participants recruited from barbershops were assigned a value of “1.” Those participants recruited from educational institutions/events were assigned a value of “0.”

**Social desirability** Social desirability was assessed with the 33-item Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale

(MCSDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), which assesses individual endorsement of behaviors as acceptable or unacceptable, as well as their belief that such behaviors are probable or improbable. Participants responded to each item (e.g., “Before voting, I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates”) as either “true” (1) or “false” (2). Reliability was ( $\alpha=0.63$ ) indicating that it may not be acceptable. A sum score was computed so that higher scores on this scale would reflect a greater tendency to respond in socially desirable ways.

**Neuroticism** Neuroticism was assessed with the 8-item neuroticism subscale of the NEO-PI (McCrae & Costa, 1987), which assesses the tendency to experience negative affectivity or emotional states. Participants responded to each item using a scale anchored with “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly disagree” (5). Reliability was acceptable ( $\alpha=0.73$ ) and a mean score was computed so that higher scale scores would indicate a greater tendency to experience negative emotions.

**Restrictive emotionality** Restrictive emotionality was assessed with the 7-item Restrictive Emotionality Subscale of the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI; Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, & Cozza, 1992), which assesses traditional masculinity ideology around disclosure of vulnerabilities. Participants responded to each item (e.g., “a man should never reveal worries to others” and “being a little down in the dumps is not a good reason for a man to act depressed.”) using a scale anchored with “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (7). Reliability was acceptable ( $\alpha=0.72$ ) and a mean score was computed so that higher scores would indicate a greater endorsement of traditional masculine ideology around emotional disclosures.

**Subjective religiosity** Subjective religiosity was assessed with a single-item question. Participants responded to this item (“How religious are you?”) using a scale anchored with “not at all” (1) and “very” (4).

**Religious coping** Religious coping was assessed with five items from the Religious/Spiritual coping short form (Brief RCOPE; Pargament, 1999), which assesses dispositional religious coping strategies: search for spiritual connection, collaborative religious coping, seeking spiritual support, benevolent religious appraisal, and overall religious coping. Participants responded to each item (e.g., “I look to God for strength, support, and guidance in crises”) using a scale anchored with “a great deal” (1) and “not at all” (4). Reliability was acceptable ( $\alpha=0.88$ ) and a mean score was computed. The scale was reverse coded so that higher scale scores would indicate greater reliance on God and religion for support.

**Racial discrimination experiences** Racial discrimination experiences over the previous year were assessed with the 18-item Daily Life Experience (DLE) subscale of the Racism and Life Experiences Scales (RaLes; Harrell, 1997, unpublished manuscript; Harrell, 2000), which assesses the frequency with which particular “micro-aggressions” (e.g., being ignored, overlooked, or not given service) occur because of race. Participants responded to each item using a scale anchored with “never” (0) and “once a week or more” (6). Reliability was acceptable ( $\alpha=0.95$ ) and a mean score was computed so that higher scores on this measure would indicate more frequent occurrences of these experiences.

**Emotional social support** Emotional support was assessed with the 8-item Emotional Support subscale of the Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors (ISSB; Barrera, Sandler, & Ramsay, 1981), which assesses the frequency of recent intimate interaction or social support. Participants responded to each item (e.g., “Someone listened to you talk about your private feelings.”) using a scale anchored with “not at all” (1) and “about every other week” (5). Reliability was acceptable ( $\alpha=0.83$ ) and a mean score was computed so that higher scores would reflect the receipt of more emotional social support.

**Forgiveness of racial discrimination** Forgiveness of racial discrimination was assessed with an adapted version of the

15-item Forgiveness Scale (Rye, 1998; Rye et al., 2001), which was designed to assess individual willingness to forgive those who have wronged them. The original Forgiveness Scale has two subscales, Absence of Negative and Presence of Positive, which were previously identified by Rye et al. (2001). The Absence of Negative subscale (ten items) assesses the absence of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward the wrongdoer and will be referred to as “negative forgiveness.” The Presence of Positive (five items) assesses the presence of positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward the wrongdoer and will be referred to as “positive forgiveness.” The adapted measure asked individuals how they “have responded when they have been wronged or mistreated because of their race or racism.” Participants responded to items on the full measure using a scale anchored with “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1). Reliability for this scale was acceptable ( $\alpha=0.75$ ). Participant responses to the absence of Negative subscale (e.g., “I feel hatred whenever I think about the person who wronged me”) and the Presence of Positive subscales (e.g., “I pray for the person who wronged me”) were anchored in the same way as the full measure. Reliabilities for the Absence of Negative ( $\alpha=0.74$ ) and Presence of Positive ( $\alpha=0.70$ ) subscales were acceptable. For each of the scales, a mean score was computed so that higher scores would indicate a greater willingness to grant forgiveness over racial discrimination.

**Table 1** Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations of study variables.

Variable	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	32.13(10.26)												
2. Marital status <sup>a</sup>	...	0.38**											
3. Education	3.97(1.55)	0.07	0.05										
4. Neuroticism	2.42(0.63)	-0.11*	-0.14	-0.03									
5. Social desirability	1.41(0.13)	0.15*	0.25**	0.16*	-0.17*								
6. Restrictive emotionality	3.96(1.17)	-0.05	-0.10	-0.25**	-0.07	-0.37**							
7. Subjective religiosity	2.91(0.96)	0.13*	0.15*	-0.04	-0.17*	-0.04	0.17*						
8. Religious coping	2.98(0.81)	0.04	0.03	0.10	-0.13*	0.00	-0.01	0.33**					
9. Emotional-social support	2.97(0.89)	0.14*	0.09	-0.02*	-0.08	0.06	-0.03	-0.02	-0.12				
10. Racial discrimination	1.43(1.08)	-0.17*	-0.12*	-0.00	0.22**	-0.14*	0.12	-0.01	-0.03	0.05			
11. Overall forgiveness	3.34(0.49)	0.14*	0.20**	0.02	-0.33**	0.09	-0.16*	0.23**	0.29**	0.21**	-0.17*		
12. Negative forgiveness	3.48(0.59)	0.13	0.18*	0.07	-0.33**	-0.18**	-0.21**	0.15*	-0.11	0.15*	-0.32**	0.85**	
13. Positive forgiveness	3.13(0.68)	0.08	0.15*	-0.05	-0.17*	-0.07	-0.03	0.23**	0.38**	0.20**	0.11***	0.72***	0.24**

<sup>a</sup> 1=Married; 0=Not married.

\* $p<0.05$ ; \*\* $p<0.01$ , \*\*\* $p<0.001$ .

## Results

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to compare men who were recruited at the various sites on all study variables. Results indicated that men recruited from educational events or institutions were older,  $F(1,208)=8.94$ ,  $p<0.01$ , and had higher mean levels of educational attainment,  $F(1,207)=14.49$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; whereas men recruited from barbershops had higher mean levels of restrictive emotionality,  $F(1,195)=9.29$ ,  $p<0.01$ . Given these findings, site was included as a control variable in the subsequent regression analyses.

Descriptive analyses were conducted, and the means, standard deviations, and sample variables are presented in Table 1. Results suggested a relatively similar pattern of

relationships between the study variables, overall forgiveness of racial discrimination and positive and negative forgiveness. Individuals who scored higher on overall forgiveness scored higher on emotional social support but lower on both restrictive emotionality and frequency of encounters with racial discrimination. Individuals who scored higher on overall forgiveness and positive forgiveness scored higher on subjective religiosity and religious coping. Individuals who scored higher on negative forgiveness reported higher subjective religiosity.

To address the research questions and hypotheses, hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted (Table 2). All continuous study predictors were centered to minimize round-off errors (Neter, Kunter, Wasserman, & Nachtsheim, 1996), and interaction variables were comput-

**Table 2** Hierarchical regression analyses predicting forgiveness.

Variable	Overall mean forgiveness $\beta$ (SE)	Negative forgiveness $\beta$ (SE)	Positive forgiveness $\beta$ (SE)
<b>Block 1</b>			
Age	0.05(0.00)	0.01(0.01)	0.06(0.01)
Marital status	0.11(0.08)	0.05(0.10)	0.13(0.11)
Education	-0.06(0.02)	-0.03(0.00)	-0.10(0.03)
Site ID <sup>a</sup>	0.03(0.09)	0.03(0.11)	0.03(0.12)
Restrictive emotionality	-0.21(0.03)**	-0.20(0.04)*	-0.14(0.05)***
Social desirability	-0.09(0.29)	-0.00(0.34)	-0.15(0.40)***
Neuroticism	-0.26(0.06)**	-0.25(0.07)**	-0.16(0.08)*
Racial discrimination	-0.08(0.03)	-0.25(0.04)**	0.17(0.05)*
Subjective religiosity	0.13(0.04)***	0.13(0.05)	0.09(0.05)
Emotional social support	0.18(0.04)*	0.15(0.05)*	0.14(0.06)*
Religious coping	0.19(0.05)*	0.03(0.05)	0.31(0.06)**
Adjusted $R^2$	0.23	0.20	0.21
$\Delta R^2$	0.11**	0.09**	0.18**
<b>Block 2</b>			
Age	0.06(0.00)	-0.01(0.01)	0.12(0.01)
Marital status	0.13(0.08)***	0.09(0.10)	0.13(0.11)***
Education	-0.11(0.02)	-0.05(0.03)	-0.13(0.03)***
Site ID <sup>a</sup>	0.05(0.09)	0.03(0.10)	0.04(0.12)
Restrictive emotionality	-0.10(0.09)	-0.03(0.11)	-0.13(0.13)
Social desirability	-0.04(0.30)	0.06(0.37)	-0.16(0.42)***
Neuroticism	-0.21(0.06)**	-0.22(0.07)**	-0.11(0.08)
Racial discrimination	-0.08(0.03)	-0.25(0.04)**	0.18(0.05)*
Subjective religiosity	0.07(0.04)	0.06(0.05)	0.06(0.05)
Emotional social support	0.16(0.04)*	0.12(0.05)***	0.13(0.05)***
Religious coping	0.21(0.05)**	0.05(0.05)	0.32(0.06)**
Restrictive emotionality $\times$ age	0.32(0.03)*	0.15(0.04)	0.39(0.04)*
Restrictive emotionality $\times$ neuroticism	0.15(0.04)*	0.11(0.05)	0.13(0.06)***
Restrictive emotionality $\times$ education	-0.39(0.02)*	-0.29(0.02)	-0.34(0.03)***
Restrictive emotionality $\times$ social desirability	0.12(0.20)	-0.00(0.24)	0.23(0.28)**
Restrictive emotionality $\times$ religious coping	-0.17(0.04)*	-0.18(0.04)*	-0.06(0.05)
Adjusted $R^2$	0.27	0.23	0.26
$\Delta R^2$	0.07*	0.05***	0.07*

<sup>a</sup> 1=Barbershops; 0=Educational institutions.

\* $p<0.05$ ; \*\* $p<0.01$ ;

\*\*\* $p<0.001$ .

ed using procedures outlined by Aiken and West (1991). For each of the significant interaction variables, associations were plotted at one standard deviation above and below the mean. The variables were entered in two blocks, with the first block of variables examining direct effects. The second block included the interaction of restrictive emotionality and (1) age, (2) neuroticism, (3) education, (4) social desirability, and (5) religious coping.

#### Overall forgiveness

In block 1 of the model predicting overall forgiveness,  $F(11,157)=5.49$ ,  $p<0.001$ , significant effects were found for restrictive emotionality, neuroticism, emotional social support, and religious coping. These findings suggested that individuals who were less likely to endorse beliefs that men should limit emotional disclosure and those who were less neurotic (i.e., who were less vulnerable to unpleasant emotions) were more likely to forgive. In addition, the likelihood of forgiveness was greater for men reporting more emotional social support and greater reliance on religious coping.

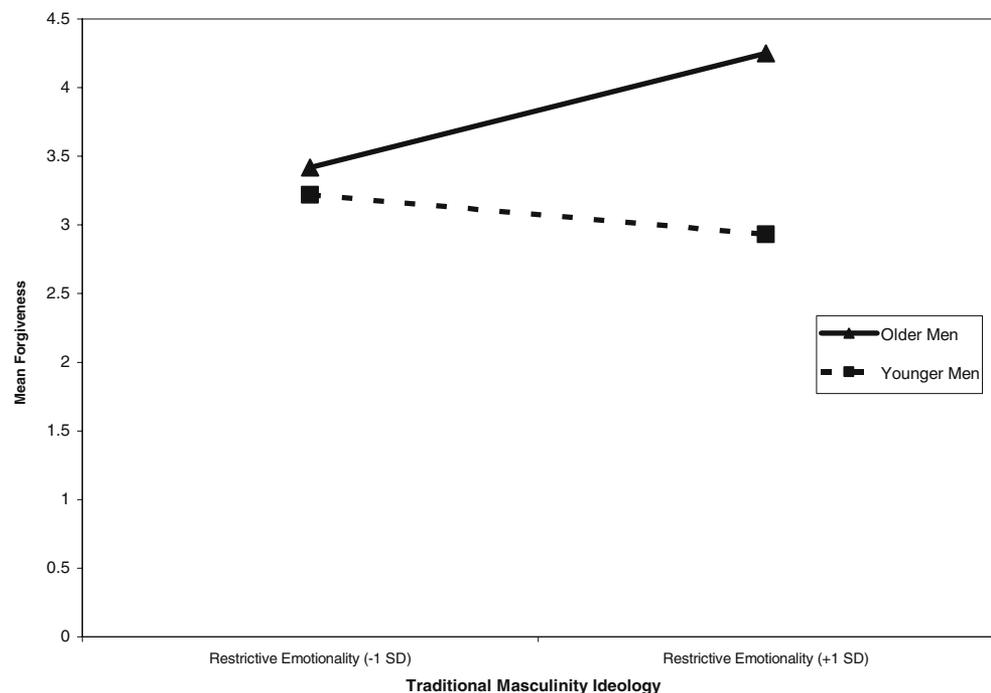
Including block 2 resulted in a significant increase in the overall variance predicted, and there were significant moderating effects for the interaction between restrictive emotionality and age, neuroticism, education, and religious coping,  $F(16, 152)=5.00$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Results suggested that for younger men lower levels of restrictive emotionality were associated with greater levels of forgiveness; whereas, for older men higher levels of restrictive emotionality were

associated with greater levels of forgiveness (Fig. 1). For men who scored higher on neuroticism there was a stronger positive association between restrictive emotionality and forgiveness compared to men who were less neurotic (Fig. 2). For men who reported a greater reliance on religious coping there was a significantly stronger negative association between endorsement of restrictive emotionality and levels of forgiveness compared to those men who reported lower levels of religious coping (Fig. 3). Also, similar to the pattern in Fig. 3, for those men with lower levels of educational attainment there was a stronger negative association between restrictive emotionality and forgiveness compared to men with higher levels of education.

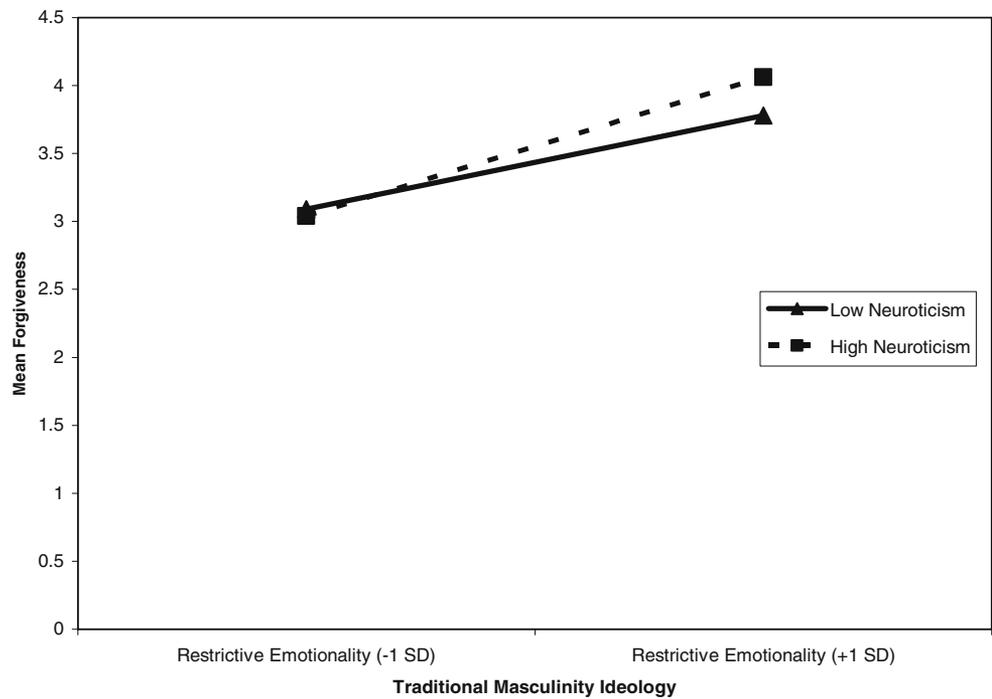
#### Negative forgiveness

In block 1 of the model predicting negative forgiveness,  $F(11,168)=4.18$ ,  $p<0.001$ , there were significant coefficients for restrictive emotionality, neuroticism, racial discrimination, and emotional social support. This finding suggested that individuals who were less likely to endorse beliefs that men should limit emotional disclosure along with those who were less neurotic were more likely to forgive in this particular way. Men for whom forgiveness manifested as the absence of negativity towards transgressors were more likely to report having social support. Further, this form of forgiveness was associated with relatively fewer discriminatory transgressions, lower adherence to the notion that men should restrict their emotions, and lower neuroticism.

**Fig. 1** The moderating effect of age in the relationship between masculinity ideology and mean forgiveness of discrimination.



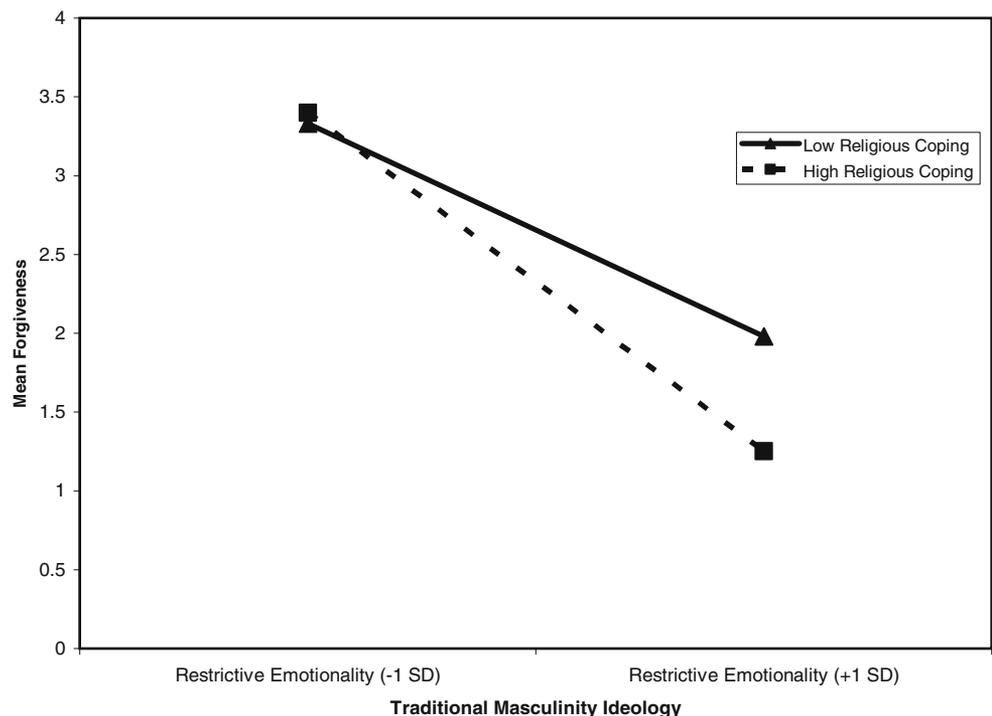
**Fig. 2** The moderating effect of neuroticism in the relationship between masculinity ideology and mean forgiveness of discrimination.



With the addition of interaction variables,  $F(16,152)=4.18, p<0.001$ , there was a trend towards a significant change in the overall explained variance. In addition, the coefficients suggested a significant moderating effect for the interaction between restrictive emotionality and reli-

gious coping. Those men who reported greater reliance on religious coping had a significantly stronger association between decreased endorsement of restrictive emotionality and increased forgiveness compared to those men who reported lower levels of religious coping. The pattern of

**Fig. 3** The moderating effect of religious coping in the relationship between masculinity ideology and mean forgiveness of discrimination.



this finding is similar to the association in the model predicting overall forgiveness; thus, the figure is not shown.

### Positive forgiveness

In block 1 of the model predicting positive forgiveness,  $F(11,168)=4.97$ ,  $p<0.001$ , the coefficients for neuroticism, racial discrimination, emotional social support, and religious coping were significant. This finding suggested that individuals who were less neurotic were more likely to report forgiveness as marked by the presence of positive affect towards transgressors. These results suggested that greater reliance on religion as a coping mechanism, higher levels of emotional social support, and more frequent experiences of discrimination were associated with greater likelihood to engage in positive forgiveness.

The addition of interaction variables resulted in a significant increase in the explained variance, and there were significant moderating effects for the interactions between restrictive emotionality and age and social desirability,  $F(16,152)=4.62$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Results suggested that for younger men higher levels of restrictive emotionality were associated with higher levels of forgiveness compared to older men. Given that the pattern of this relationship is visually similar to the relationship in Fig. 2, it is not displayed. In addition, for those men who had a greater tendency to respond in socially desirable ways the association between endorsement of restrictive emotionality and higher levels of forgiveness was stronger.

### Discussion

The current study sought to identify correlates of African American men's willingness to forgive racial discrimination. We attended to three distinct but overlapping indices of forgiveness: (1) overall forgiveness; (2) forgiveness as manifested in the absence of negative affect, cognitions, and behaviors; and (3) forgiveness as manifested in the presence of positive affect, cognitions and behaviors. We were particularly interested in the role played by one dimension of masculinity ideology (i.e., restrictive emotionality) in the forgiveness–discrimination relationship. Study variables were differentially related to these three indices of forgiveness.

We found that African American men who more strongly endorsed traditional masculinity ideology related to emotional disclosure were less willing to forgive racially discriminatory experiences (as measured by overall forgiveness). This study illuminates the relationship between masculinity ideology and forgiveness that was identified in earlier work conducted by Walker and Doverspike (2001). Restrictive emotionality also was inversely associated with,

and predictive of, negative forgiveness. In sum, African American men who hold traditional masculine assumptions about emotional disclosure appeared to find it more difficult to dispense with the negative affect and cognitions that may be inspired by exposure to racial discrimination. Importantly, restrictive emotionality was not associated with men's willingness to engage in positive forgiveness. Taken together, these findings suggest that overall, positive as well as negative forgiveness are distinct styles of forgiveness, and that masculine ideologies regarding emotional expressiveness are not uniform in their influence over these styles of forgiving. Indeed, only two factors, emotional social support and neuroticism were uniform in their influence over all three indices of forgiveness.

With respect to social and emotional support our findings revealed that African American men who were currently married and those who reported a greater level of emotional social support were more willing to forgive discriminatory transgressions as measured by all three indices of forgiveness. Research suggesting that men have smaller social networks and that they tend to experience those networks as less supportive than women (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987; Barker et al., 1998) compels us to consider the specific ways in which social and emotional support may influence forgiveness among men. It is possible that social support provides safe opportunities for African American men to discharge the negative affect related to encounters with discrimination and to reimagine their transgressors in empathic ways. The support that men receive in their relationships also may help them to make meaning of the discriminatory events that they encounter, and may provide a context for reinforcing views of themselves as valuable individuals who are worthy of love and respect. These findings suggest, too, that African American men who enjoy greater levels of emotional and social support may be able to weather the difficulties of discriminatory encounters without losing their positive outlook. Maintaining a positive affect in the face of frequent experiences with discrimination is consistent with Worthington's (2003) assertion that individuals often fill injustice gaps by moving on with their lives. To the extent that these points are true, we are compelled to raise questions about the implications of these findings for men who are socially isolated. Further, our findings suggest the need for future work that clarifies the specific forms of support that are most important in predicting each form of forgiveness.

Consistent with existing findings (see Ashton et al., 1998; Maltby et al., 2001; Quartana et al., 2005) neuroticism was negatively related to all three indices of forgiveness. If we accept McCullough and Hoyt's (2002) assertion that neuroticism makes individuals more vulnerable to negative emotions, then our findings suggest that

this heightened vulnerability may hinder forgiveness in two ways: first, by blocking the capacity to relinquish negative affect, and second by impeding efforts to embrace positive affect. These assertions warrant further empirical attention.

The findings of this study complicate previous research demonstrating a positive link between religiosity and forgiveness (Wuthnow, 2000). In particular, as expected, subjective religiosity was positively correlated with all three indices of forgiveness. However, subjective religiosity did not predict forgiveness in the regression analyses. Further, religious coping was positively related to and predictive of overall forgiveness as well as the capacity to forgive by embracing positive affect, cognitions and behaviors towards transgressors. However, religious coping was not related to the capacity to relinquish negative affect, cognitions or behaviors. These findings suggest that although the construct of subjective religiosity may reflect an identification with theologies that insist on forgiveness as an index of authentic faith, the view of oneself as religious is not sufficient to inspire forgiveness of racially biased acts. It also may be the case that racial discrimination is so historically entrenched, so pervasive, so insidious, and so representative of human capacity of evil that the specific behaviors and cognitions measured by the religious coping scale are insufficient to promote the relinquishment of negativity.

This study suggests that men who are religiously committed (as evidenced by their use of religious coping) may use positive affect as a bridge to forgiveness. However, we must resist the temptation to assume that the lack of association between religious coping and negative forgiveness suggests a gap in faith. Indeed, in contrast to simplistic notions of religiosity that assume that anger is antithetical to authentic faith, sacred texts provide numerous examples of faithful individuals who were motivated by anger and other “negative emotions” to confront injustice and to engage in radical acts of personal and social transformation. If men of faith find it difficult to release the negative affective charge that results from being targeted for discrimination, then we need studies that examine the extent to which these men may use negative emotions to transform unjust social arrangements.

Regarding encounters with discrimination, our findings indicate that less frequent encounters with racism was predictive of a greater ability to forgive by relinquishing negativity. In contrast, the regression model reveals that more frequent encounters with racism was predictive of a greater likelihood of forgiving by embracing more positive views and attitudes of and behaviors towards transgressors. These findings suggest that as encounters with racism increase in frequency, the psychological and spiritual demands on men may change. When one is routinely confronted with slights against one’s humanity, forgiveness

may require more than a willingness to withdraw from negativity. It may demand a more profound capacity to reify one’s own humanness by reimagining transgressors as worthy of love and empathy. Without doubt it is important to examine the ways in which endorsement of humanistic ideals and racial identity (e.g., the centrality of race as an index of identity) may inform this link between encounters with racism and forgiveness.

This study further demonstrates that African American men’s endorsement of restrictive emotionality is not static. Results from our tests for moderation demonstrate that it is important to determine how the relationship between restrictive emotionality and forgiveness changes with the addition of demographic factors, personality, and religious coping disposition. Consistent with the assertion of Cazenave (1984) and Hunter and Davis (1992, 1994) we found that among men in our sample, age and one index of socioeconomic status (educational attainment) appeared to moderate the impact of this dimension of masculinity ideology on forgiveness.

For men in the sample, restrictive emotionality was inversely related to forgiveness. However, that relationship was more pronounced for African American men who were less educated. This finding is consistent with Cazenave’s (1984) earlier assertion that a link exists between socioeconomic status and the salience of expressive roles among African American men. We posit that education also may influence forgiveness by providing men from lower socioeconomic groups with more constrained opportunities to learn when, where, and how emotional disclosure (or emotional reticence) affects their experience of racism.

For both age groups, positive forgiveness was related to more restrictive emotionality. However, this association was more pronounced for younger men. When examining forgiveness as a whole, it appears that restrictive emotionality facilitates forgiveness of discrimination for older men but serves as a barrier for younger men. It is unclear whether this finding reflects developmental or cohort differences in the experience and negotiation of emotions. However, this finding is consistent with studies that indicate age-related differences in emotion regulation, expressivity, and control across the life-span (Gross et al., 1997). This finding is also consistent with studies demonstrating that many of the age-related differences in emotionality are not as marked for positive affect (Gross et al., 1997). Future research should assess whether these age differences persist longitudinally and in contexts where emotionality is measured more directly (i.e., in ethnographic studies where emotional responses may be observed more directly).

We sought to assess whether the relationship between masculinity ideology and forgiveness might be moderated by more stable (i.e., dispositional) characteristics. We found the relationship between restrictive emotionality and posi-

tive forgiveness was stronger among men with a disposition to respond in socially desirable ways. This finding is consistent with studies documenting positive links between forgiveness and social desirability (Quartana et al., 2005). Given the somewhat lower reliability of this scale, these results should be interpreted with caution. Unexpectedly, we found that restrictive emotionality is positively associated with forgiveness among men who have a greater tendency to experience negative emotions (i.e., men who are more neurotic). This finding highlights the complexity of the forgiveness process among men. We offer that men's ideological assumptions about emotionality may be counterbalanced by a heightened sense of vulnerability to negative affect. We speculate that men who are less willing or able to self-disclose, but who are especially sensitive to negative affect, may find it particularly taxing to experience antagonistic social interactions. These men may be especially motivated to resolve conflicts by forgiving their transgressors. These speculations warrant further investigation.

Existing research on forgiveness has tended to focus on individuals' willingness to forgive significant others (e.g., intimate partners, friends, family members) who have transgressed against them. A key contribution of this work lies in its exploration of factors contributing to forgiveness when transgressors are strangers or acquaintances, and when options for negotiation are limited leaving individuals to pursue this process unilaterally. Through its focus on transgressions committed by strangers and acquaintances, this study advances theoretical work on unilateral forgiveness begun by Andrews' (2000).

Despite the contributions of this study to the forgiveness literature, some limitations exist. First, the correlational nature of the study means that the time–order sequence between the reported racial discrimination experiences and the associated forgiveness processes are difficult to assess. Similarly, it may also be difficult to interpret the direction of the relationships between the study variables. For example, the positive correlation between racial discrimination and neuroticism could indicate that more neurotic individuals tend to report frequent experiences with discrimination. Alternately, consistent with more recent stress-affect-health models (Kemeny, 2003), which suggest that stressors evoke specific psychobiological responses, this correlation between neuroticism and discrimination may indicate that frequent exposure to racial discrimination leads individuals to develop more negative affectivity. It is also important to note that this cross-sectional study examines a slice of time in the participant's life that may not be reflective of more longitudinal experiential processes. Future studies may seek to examine how men grant forgiveness of discrimination across the lifespan. Finally, the use of a single item measure of religiosity was another limitation. Future research can build on our findings by

exploring whether multidimensional measures of religiosity (e.g., religious commitment, salience, and orthodoxy) yield similar or different results.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the correlational results support the independence of the two subtypes of forgiveness. Some scholars might be tempted to imagine forgiveness that manifests as the absence of negative affect and cognition as the simple opposite of forgiveness that manifests as the presence of positive affect and cognition. However, the fact that there was little overlap in the variables that were correlated with or predictive of these two forms of forgiveness, and the fact that the degree of intercorrelation between these forms of forgiveness was low ( $r=0.24$ ) suggests that far from being opposite ends on a single continuum of forgiveness, these aspects of forgiveness are conceptually and experientially distinct. Future studies should seek to explore the conditions under which individuals may engage in various forms of forgiveness. It will be important for future studies to investigate the relationship between various manifestations of forgiveness of racial discrimination and particular indices of mental and physical well-being. It also will be beneficial to ask whether the capacity to express forgiveness in affectively and cognitively positive ways (or in ways that reflect the absence of negative affect and cognition) is helpful in facilitating particular physical and psychological health outcomes. Such an exploration may help to explicate potential affective mechanisms of poor outcomes linked to chronic exposure to racial discrimination among African American men (e.g., cardiovascular reactivity).

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