

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT:** Angry Rumination, Empathy, and Dispositional Forgiveness: The Moderating Role of Gender Role Orientation

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Research (Miller, Worthington, & McDaniel, 2008) has shown that women have higher levels of dispositional forgiveness than men. Studies (Exline & Zell, 2009; Toussaint & Webb, 2005) have also discovered that empathy predicts dispositional forgiveness differently in men compared to women. It is unclear why these sex differences exist. Therefore, four models were constructed, analyzed, and compared using structural equation modeling in order to determine whether gender role orientation moderates the relationship between empathy and dispositional forgiveness. Self-report data were collected from 502 undergraduate university students at a mid-sized, Midwestern, public university in the United States. The models examined did not fit the data well; possibly caused by the interaction between empathy and femininity within each model. However, significant findings emerged. Results showed that angry rumination negatively predicted dispositional forgiveness. Concerning gender role orientations, results showed that femininity positively predicted dispositional forgiveness, while masculinity did not significantly predict dispositional forgiveness. Contrary to expectations, empathy negatively predicted dispositional forgiveness. However,

additional analyses clarified that empathy actually positively predicted dispositional forgiveness; a finding that was likely distorted by multicollinearity in the main models examined. Results revealed that femininity significantly moderated the empathy-dispositional forgiveness relationship. In this study, masculinity did not significantly moderate the relationship between empathy and dispositional forgiveness. This work concludes with a discussion of results in the context of McCullough's theory of forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1998) and Gilligan's (1994) theory of moral reasoning. Additionally, issues affecting the measurement of constructs and implications for research and practice are discussed.