Compassion, dominance/submission and curled-lips: A thematic analysis of dacryphilic experience

Abstract

Paraphilias are often discussed in the psychological literature as pathological

problems, yet relatively little research exists that looks into non-pathological paraphilias (i.e.,

non-normative sexual interests). Empirical evidence suggests that many individuals

incorporate a range of non-normative sexual interests into their sexual lifestyles. Dacryphilia

is a non-normative sexual interest that involves enjoyment or arousal from tears and crying,

and to date has never been researched empirically. The present study set out to discover the

different interests within dacryphilia and explore the range of dacryphilic experience. A set of

online interviews was carried out with individuals with dacryphilic preferences and interests

(six females and two males) from four countries. The data were analysed for semantic and

latent themes using thematic analysis. The respondents' statements focused attention on three

distinct areas that may be relevant to the experience of dacryphilia: (i) compassion; (ii)

dominance/submission; and (iii) curled-lips. The data provided detailed descriptions of

features within all three interests, which are discussed in relation to previous quantitative and

qualitative research within emotional crying and tears, and the general area of non-normative

sexual interests. The study suggests new directions for potential research both within

dacryphilia and with regard to other non-normative sexual interests.

dacryphilia; non-normative sexual interests; sexual crying; thematic analysis; online data

collection; qualitative research

Introduction

Non-normative sexual interests have been variously theorized by groups within different disciplines. In the field of psychology, the most prominent construction of non-normative sexual interests is that of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), which constructs non-normative sexual interests as paraphilias. The latest edition of the APA's diagnostic instrument, the DSM-5 (APA, 2013), describes a paraphilia as "any intense and persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners" (APA: 685). In addition, it specifically lists and describes those paraphilias considered "anomalous activity preferences" (i.e., voyeurism, exhibitionism, frotteurism, sexual masochism and sexual sadism) and those paraphilias considered "anomalous target preferences" (i.e., paedophilia, fetishism and transvestism). According to the DSM-5, a paraphilia is pathological if it meets two criteria. Over a period of six months, an individual should experience recurrent and intense sexual arousal directly relating to the activities or targets of the paraphilia (Criterion A), and these fantasies, sexual urges or behaviors should cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning (Criterion B). Alongside the eight specific paraphilias in the above list, the DSM-5 also allows for the diagnosis of "Other Specified Paraphilic Disorder" (i.e., one that is not listed above) and "Unspecified Paraphilic Disorder" (i.e., one that is unclear and needs further investigation prior to diagnosis).

In contrast to the DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000), the DSM-5 distinguishes between "paraphilic disorders" and "paraphilias". Consequently, each paraphilic interest listed in the DSM-5 that fulfils both Criterion A and Criterion B is described as a "disorder" (e.g., sexual masochism disorder). Furthermore, it states that the "clinically significant distress or

impairment" of Criterion B must come as a direct result of the paraphilia itself, rather than another factor (e.g., societal stigmatization; APA, 2013). However, the amendment to Criterion B is difficult to prove, as an individual or clinician may not be aware that the distress or impairment is caused by a factor such as societal stigmatization, which is a relatively abstract concept. As such, it is possible that psychology may continue to diagnose non-normative sexual interests as pathological disorders.

This means that much research into non-normative sexual interests has primarily focussed on pathological sexual interests (i.e., as experienced by those in the criminal justice system or mental health institutions). Subsequently, the experiences of those who have not been institutionalized and who would not describe their non-normative sexual interests as disorders have been largely neglected. The following review will focus on non-normative sexual interests that are not ostensibly disorders (i.e., those that would only fulfil Criterion A in the DSM-5).

Broadly speaking, research into non-normative sexual interests has occurred on both a micro- and macro-level. The micro-level research has tended to take an idiographic approach to individual non-normative sexual interests through often utilising qualitative data collection and analytic techniques. In many cases, this has comprised exploratory case studies, such as that of Griffiths (2013) into eproctophilia (i.e., sexual enjoyment or arousal from anal flatulence) in a young adult male and that of Terry and Vasey (2011) into female feederism, a form of fat admiration. Through the utilization of detailed interviews, these case studies have provided in-depth accounts of many aspects of an individual's sexual interest(s), as a means of better understanding the sexual interests in question and giving a platform for future studies. In other cases, this has comprised larger studies involving more members of specific non-normative sexual interests. For example, sociological studies have examined the roles of

different types of websites in the zoophilic community (Jenkins & Thomas, 2004) and have theorized four different ways in which those with zoophilic preferences may justify their preference online (Maratea, 2011). Experimental studies have examined different BMI and waist-to-hip ratio preferences in the female fat admiration community (Swami & Furnham, 2009; Swami & Tovée, 2009). Finally, forensic medical research has examined secondary sources pertaining to medical and legal cases in order to suggest a ten-point classification system for zoophilia and necrophilia, based on "severity" of interest (Aggrawal 2009b; 2011). These larger scale micro-level studies have all focussed on specific aspects related to a sexual interest (e.g., websites, justification of preference, interests within preference and severity of interest) as a means of achieving their research aims.

The macro-level research has tended to take a nomothetic approach to individual non-normative sexual interests through often utilising quantitative data collection and analytic techniques. As such, this has primarily entailed examining non-normative sexual interests as a broad category, rather than specific sexual interests. For example, Scorolli, Ghirlanda, Enquist, Zattoni, and Jannini (2007) passively observed a number of *Yahoo!* discussion groups related to non-normative sexual interests, in order to obtain an estimate of the prevalence of different non-normative sexual interests. Likewise, Ahlers et al. (2011) surveyed a large male sample about the prevalence of their non-normative sexual preferences and any incidences of distress related to these sexual preferences. The primary aim of both of these studies was to make a broad estimate of prevalence of interest, by using large sample sizes with statistically significant and generalizable results.

Dacryphilia

The studies outlined above have suggested a large variety of non-normative sexual interests and have highlighted the potential for insightful analysis within this area. In the present study, dacryphilia was chosen as a non-normative sexual interest that may be of interest to the health and social science communities. Dacryphilia has been defined as "arousal from seeing tears in the eyes of a partner" (Aggrawal, 2009a, p. 373), with a further widened definition including "(i) sexual arousal from someone displaying strong emotion and/or (ii) sexual arousal from the emotional release that accompanies crying (i.e., an 'emotional catharsis')" (Griffiths, 2012a). Aggrawal's (2009a) definition implies that sadism may form an inherent part of dacryphilia and implicitly indicates the potential presence of dacryphilic masochism in the recipient of sadistic dacryphilic activity. Griffiths' (2012a) widened definition suggests that dacryphilia could represent an extension of normative human behavior towards crying (i.e., an extension of the desire to give attention to and comfort a crier). Based on anecdotal data collected from online dacryphilia forums, Griffiths speculated that two distinct types may exist within the dacryphilic community: those with sadistic dacryphilic interests and those with voyeuristic dacryphilic interests. As such, dacryphilia creates a number of potential dichotomies: (i) sadomasochistic dacryphilic interests versus emotional dacryphilic interests; (ii) sadistic dacryphilic interests versus masochistic dacryphilic interests; and (iii) individuals who actively engage in dacryphilia versus individuals who passively engage in dacryphilia.

The potential contrast between sadomasochistic and emotional dacryphilic interests is of particular interest to the researcher, as both of these interests occupy differing and almost opposing aspects of human sexual experience. Likewise, the potential existence of sadistic, masochistic, active and passive interests within dacryphilia suggest that it is a non-normative sexual interest with enough variety for an interesting dataset and analysis. Finally, the

possibility that dacryphilia represents an extension of normative human behavior towards crying and tears raises the question of why some individuals might find sexual arousal in crying and tears. Thus, on the whole, there are a number of prospective research avenues that are implied within the limited literature on dacryphilia, but have received no empirical support to date.

Emotional crying and tears

Emotional crying and tears (as opposed to tears emitted as a physiological response to dryness and/or irritants, i.e., basal and reflexive tears) appear to be a uniquely mammalian phenomenon, the function of which is still not entirely understood (Panksepp, 2005; Vingerhoets, Bylsma & Rottenberg, 2009). Human crying was initially theorized as a biochemical function, through which tears play an excretory role in the detoxification of the body following the build-up of distress-related waste (Frey, 1985). The positive affect felt after crying was further theorised by Frey (1985) as a biochemical effect of the removal of this waste. Psychoanalytic models have proposed that crying works as an overflow process, whereby tears are released once the build-up of emotion in the body reaches a critical level (Koestler, 1964, Sadoff, 1966). Clearly, such a model does not lend itself well to empirical testing and as such is largely dismissed (Vingerhoets et al., 2009).

Elsewhere, crying has been considered to have a communicative function, specifically in relation to helplessness and powerlessness (Frijda, 1986; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2003). According to this explanation, tears are emitted as a sign of surrender following exposure to frustration and a subsequent realization that this frustration cannot be overcome. Finally, Bourdieusian, social constructionist and social norms approaches to masculinity have suggested that men frequently construct emotional crying behavior as emasculating and as

such often attempt to avoid crying and tears (Carlson & Hall, 2011; Wong, Steinfeldt, LaFollette & Tsao, 2011).

Within the current paradigm, emotional crying and tears are largely understood as an attachment behavior designed to elicit a caregiving response (Nelson, 2005). As such, crying can be regarded as a means to elicit attention, empathy and support, and arouse others to help eliminate a source of discomfort (Cornelius & Lubliner, 2003). This model has been supported by empirical studies into the effects of crying and non-crying stimuli on participants, which have found that participants are more likely to offer emotional support to, and share sadness with, a crying person (Hendriks & Vingerhoets, 2006; Hendriks, Croon & Vingerhoets, 2008). Furthermore, it has been suggested that cognitive empathy plays a significant role in the caregiving response to crying (Lockwood, Millings, Hepper & Rowe, 2013). However, all of these studies have implemented measures of person perception (i.e., how the participant perceived the person in the crying and non-crying stimuli), emotional and/or behavioral responses to crying. None of these measures have allowed for the expression of a sexual arousal response, leaving a gap in the understanding of dacryphilia.

Previous research into sexual behaviors such as zoophilia and fat admiration has shown that quantitative methods are effective in exploring the diversity of interests shown by those with non-normative sexual interests. However, with both of these non-normative sexual interests, prerequisite knowledge was already available as a theoretical basis for questionnaires (e.g., zoophilia researchers could use clinical and legal cases as a reference and fat admiration researchers could measure body size preferences since fat admiration is clearly and explicitly concerned with a preference for certain body sizes). On the other hand, previous research into non-normative sexual interests has shown that qualitative methods are useful in providing rich individual accounts and distinguishing between different sexual

experiences as a means of exploring these interests. Finally, there has been an increasing bias towards online recruitment and data collection in non-normative sexual interest research, presumably as a result of the sensitive (and in the case of zoophilia, often illegal) nature of these interests, the consequent potential apprehension of participants in revealing their identity face-to-face and the likely rarity of many of these interests (Griffiths, 2012b).

Previous research into emotional crying and tears has been primarily concerned with the function of crying and emotional responses to crying. This means that sexual responses to crying have been neglected and (as far as the authors are aware) no literature has, as yet, specifically explored crying and tears within the context of dacryphilia. The present study is the first study to examine dacryphilia empirically. Given the lack of empirical research into dacryphilia, qualitative data collection and analysis was considered the most appropriate way to provide an initial empirical understanding of this non-normative sexual interest. Furthermore, online recruitment and data collection is suitable for accessing this sensitive population (Meho, 2005). The present study aimed to discover the different interests within dacryphilia and explore the range of dacryphilic experience.

Method

Participants: Eight individuals with dacryphilic interests (six females and two males) participated in the study. Almost all of the participants ($n = 6$) expressed a specific sexual preference towards dacryphilia and had previously had dacryphilic sexual experiences. One of the other participants had a marginal preference towards normative sexual activities and had previously had dacryphilic sexual experiences. The other participant did not have a sexual preference towards dacryphilia, but identified with dacryphilia (given all the other changes of 'preference' to 'interest' do you think we should say 'had an interest with

dacryphilia' rather than 'identified with'?). As such, both were subsequently included in the study. Participant demographic details are provided in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 50 years (mean = 30.25 years; SD = 10.15 years). The majority of participants were from the USA ($n = 5$), with Romania ($n = 1$), Belgium ($n = 1$) and the UK ($n = 1$) representing the nationality of remaining participants. Five of the participants identified as either hetero, heterosexual or straight ($n = 5$), one identified as straight and bi-curious ($n = 1$), one identified as heteroflexible ($n = 1$) and one identified as pansexual ($n = 1$). Most of the participants were recruited from the *CryingLovers* forum ($n = 5$), with the remaining participants recruited from *collarchat.com* ($n = 2$) and *FetLife* ($n = 1$).

Design and procedure: Participants were recruited via recruitment posts on one specific dacryphilia forum (i.e., *CryingLovers*), one general fetish forum (i.e., *FetLife*) and one BDSM forum (i.e., *collarchat.com*). The first forum (*CryingLovers*) was chosen as it specifically and solely represents dacryphilia, and the latter two forums were chosen as they provide access to a community of almost four million people with non-normative sexual interests and preferences (BitLove Inc., 2013; Collarchat.com, 2013). The study sample was self-selecting, in that participants were only selected if they responded to a participant recruitment post outlining the research aims and asking for those whose experiences could help achieve these aims. Participation in the study was voluntary and no incentive was offered for participation.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out (asynchronously) via email over a seven-month period (January 2013 – July 2013). Asynchronous email interviews were deemed the most appropriate interviewing method, as initial participation interest indicated a majority of participants in the USA. By using asynchronous email interviews, problems related to time-difference are avoided, making it the preferable method in long distance studies (James & Busher, 2006). All interviews began with a set of structured questions designed to obtain: (i) participant demographic information (e.g., age, nationality, education); and (ii) a basic profile of the individual participant's dacryphilia (e.g., first dacryphilic experience, specific arousals within dacryphilia, other sexual interests). This was followed by a set of unstructured participant-led questions (i.e., the unstructured questions were grounded in the participants' responses to the structured questions) about the individual participant's dacryphilia. This allowed the participant to take control of the interview process and minimised any subjective bias of the interviewer. Examples of the interview questions are provided in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 here

Owing to the asynchronous nature of the interviews, participants were free to respond at their leisure. The study was approved by the research team's University Ethics Committee, and all participants gave informed consent prior to the commencement of their interview, and were debriefed following their completed interview. Since the content of the interviews was already in text format, no transcription was necessary. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a flexible method for "identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). It not only provides a rich description of the

data set, but also allows for the interpretation of latent themes within the data (Braun & Clarke). Considering that no prior research had been carried out into dacryphilia and that the experiences of those with dacryphilic interests were unknown outside of the dacryphilic community, thematic analysis was considered to be the most useful method for providing an initial description of dacryphilic experience (Braun & Clarke). In the first stage of analysis, all interview transcripts were read once and then coded for semantic themes on a second reading. In the second stage, all interview transcripts were re-read and coded for latent themes emerging from the initial set of semantic themes. A final reading of the interview transcripts provided a set of analytical themes which gave a succinct account of the majority of coded extracts. Participants were then given the opportunity to offer feedback via email about the suitability of the themes, which provided the definitive set of themes. As such, the thematic analysis used can be described as a participant-led inductive approach. Although the preliminary research questions were to discover the different interests within dacryphilia and explore the range of dacryphilic experience, participants were not directed towards specific dacryphilic interests. Instead, these interests were grounded in the latent interpretation of participant-led data.

Results and preliminary discussion

Three main thematic areas of dacryphilia were constructed from the analysis of the interview transcripts: (i) compassion; (ii) dominance/submission; and (iii) curled-lips. Although the authors have chosen not to do so, it should also be noted that members of the BDSM (bondage and discipline; dominance and submission; sadism and masochism) community frequently capitalize the 'D' in 'Dominant' and do not capitalize the 's' in 'submissive'. This reflects the power dynamics between dominant and submissive types.

Compassion

The majority of participants (*n* = 4, all female) expressed their dacryphilia primarily through compassion, meaning that they enjoyed or were aroused by the compassion of comforting a crier. A number of sub-themes were identified as characteristic of compassionate interests within dacryphilia and are provided in Table 3. For many of these participants (*n* = 3), the idea of dacryphilia as a comforting action from themselves to the crier forms an important part of their dacryphilic identity. A typical feature of compassionate interests was the presence of childhood fantasies and dreams in which the individual meets someone who has had a 'hard life' and then proceeds to comfort them:

As a small child, I would take crying scenes from a movie or make them up, placing myself in the position of comforter. I would also wish very fervently that I would meet someone who had a hard life and who needed much comforting frequently. (Punkchick).

This appears to show how an interest in comforting is grounded in these participants' identities from an early age. Although there is an understanding that dacryphilia can be viewed as deriving pleasure from pain (i.e., tears), there is a clear emphasis placed on the comforting of pain:

I do not take pleasure in the pain of others, which presents a contradiction at times. I love that he is crying and trusts me enough to do so, but I wish the pain would go away. Comforting is a big part of it for me. (meantangerine)

This contrasts compassionate interests with an interest in pain itself (i.e., sadomasochism) and displays the way in which these participants seek to ease pain rather than gain direct pleasure from it. Those with compassionate interests not only contrast their interest with sadomasochism, but are also explicit in their disapproval of this imagined alternative form of dacryphilia (*n* = 3):

> I'd say I'm on the fringes. The idea of making someone cry is repellent to me. (chendru)

Sadomasochistic dacryphilia is an interest that appears only in the data of those with compassionate interests (i.e., no participants identified with it, nor was it constructed as an active interest grounded within participants' data). It is depicted as significantly harmful to both sadists and masochists and as a repulsive idea:

> I had always imagined that forms of dacryphilia that imply physical and psychological torture, sadism more or less, cause serious distress to another person, because there is something so compulsive on the part of the experiencer; he's selfish and adamant in supplying for his need, regardless of what harm he may inflict. (Angela M)

This serves to further distance these individuals from those with other dacryphilic interests and also suggests that dacryphilia represents a continuum of distinct interests and activities.

Most of the participants (*n* = 3) with compassionate interests viewed their ability to comfort within dacryphilia as a natural role or duty. The ability to comfort is presented by these participants as an innate skill that differentiates them from those without dacryphilic interests:

I think I'm probably more comfortable with comforting than a non-dacryphile and possible more adept at it too. It comes very naturally to me and I've been told by multiple people that I'm good at it. (meantangerine)

This suggests that being compassionate may be an all-encompassing identity existent from an early age. For some, the ability to comfort was seen as strong enough to represent a potential profession for them:

I need to be someone like this in a professional way and to have a subtle and soothing influence on people who need it. Now I guess it would have been better for me to become a psychologist or sexologist than a linguist. (Angela M)

Once again, the implication that dacryphilia could be channelled into a professional career suggests that these participants feel that compassion plays a significant role in their identities.

Finally, most of these participants ($n = 3$) highlighted the subversion of norms as important to their interest. In one case, this was the result of societal norms regarding the strength and status of school bullies being subverted:

I can't tell for sure but it started in my childhood when I saw a boy crying in kindergarten after he couldn't repair his toy, he was frustrated and since he was the strongest in the class and a bully, I was surprised to see him crying and sort of enjoyed it. (Angela M)

For another participant, this came as a result of the subversion of gender norms regarding male aversion to showing emotion:

I like the intimacy involved with the show of weaknesses that is crying, particularly in men. I'm less interested when women cry because they can do so without society so much as batting an eyelash, but when men cry, they are often very self-conscious and afraid. (Punkchick)

This suggests that the subversion of norms prevalent in male crying may play a role in the desire to comfort and in the enjoyment of compassionate interests.

Insert Table 3 here

Dominance/submission

A further three participants (two submissive females and one dominant male) expressed their dacryphilia primarily through dominance/submission, meaning that they were aroused by either causing tears in a consenting submissive individual or being made to cry by a consenting dominant individual. Although this type of dacryphilia is often characterized as sadomasochistic by those with compassionate interests, dominant/submissive was deemed a more appropriate description, as participants in this group identified more with dominance/submission than sadomasochism. It should also be noted that there is a distinct difference between dominant and submissive types (Williams, 2006) and that their being grouped together under the same thematic area is the result of the limited number of dominant participants (i.e., this thematic area is not intended to represent "switch" types).

A number of sub-themes were identified as characteristic of dominant/submissive interests within dacryphilia and are provided in Table 4. All of those with dominant/submissive interests ($n = 3$) enjoyed both emotional and physical pain. This can be linked with the manner in which tears can be caused by either emotional or physical pain:

I actively enjoy being dominated, either mentally/emotionally or physically/masochistically, to the point that I can no longer hold back tears. (UllrsIshtar)

This suggests that the way in which tears are caused does not necessarily matter, as long as it ultimately causes tears. One participant acknowledged the equal power of emotional and physical pain, but concluded that a combination creates the most intense arousal:

Being verbally humiliated/abused is a turn on, because the guy is giving you attention. He cares enough to invest his time in telling you the things that displease him. When the two are coupled, emotional and physical, it is more intensely arousing, but still both are the same sexual satisfaction. (Meredith)

This highlights the different ways in which those with dominant/submissive interests can use emotional or physical pain to gain sexual arousal through tears. For all three of these participants, tears and crying were constructed as a secondary component of their dominant/submissive interests. This can manifest itself in dominant male arousal caused by tears, which is consequently arousing for the individual:

I think it turns me on to see the man turned on by the presence of tears, more so than by actual crying. (Meredith)

Or in the way that crying represents the surrender to a dominant male:

The limits of what I feel I can take being pushed to such an extent that I cry is extremely erotic for me. The crying itself isn't exactly the turn on, but rather the intense feeling of surrender that

comes with it. The moment I start crying is the moment where I give up the 'fight' to resist and totally give in to the moment. (UllrsIshtar)

Although tears and crying were viewed as a secondary component of each individual's overarching dominant/submissive interests, the examples display the importance of tears in achieving sexual satisfaction. Without tears, Meredith would not be as aroused by her sexual partner's reaction and UllrsIshtar would not be able to fully realise her surrender to domination. As such, tears and crying play an essential, if indirect and secondary, role in the sexuality of these individuals with dacryphilic interests.

Insert Table 4 here

Curled-lips

The final participant (male) did not express an interest consistent with either compassion or dominance/submission. Instead, he expressed his dacryphilia primarily through an interest in curled-lips, meaning that he was aroused specifically by the curling of the lip during crying. A number of sub-themes were identified as characteristic of this individual's interest in curled-lips and are provided in Table 5. In the first instance, the participant suggested that his interest was rare, or perhaps unique, as reflected by his sole interest within the whole sample:

My own dacryphilia focus (lip curling) is pretty much unique, as far as I can tell. I haven't found any dacryphiliacs who focus on this aspect of crying. I have come across a minority of people who like it, but it is still not their main kink. (TorNorth)

This participant's experience of dacryphilia is solely concerned with the movement of the bottom lip during crying:

[I personally like the] protruding, curling, contorting or bulging of the bottom lip when women cry. (TorNorth)

As such, it focuses primarily on the physical (i.e., the lips, a physical part of the body), and differs from both compassionate and dominant/submissive interests, which both involve emotional components. Furthermore, it is clearly differentiated from lip fetishism and linked to one of the secondary products of crying (i.e., the movement of the lips):

I'm definitely a big fan of women's lips in general, but I feel there's a definite difference between being attracted to lips and being attracted to lips curled as a result of crying. (TorNorth)

This suggests that the interest in curled-lips may be a dacryphilic interest, rather than a form of partialism (i.e., an umbrella term for a range of non-normative sexual interests in which an individual derives sexual pleasure and arousal from specific and exclusive body parts such as genitalia, buttocks or breasts; Milner, Dopke & Crouch, 2008).

Insert Table 5 here

Discussion

The respondents' statements in the present study focused attention on three distinct areas that may be relevant to the experience of dacryphilia (i.e., compassion, dominance/submission and curled-lips). The interviews enabled the development of

qualitative accounts from participants with interests in all three areas of dacryphilia. An analysis of these experiences helped characterize these interests within dacryphilia through a set of sub-themes. For example, compassionate interests were characterized as comforting and a natural role/duty, and by a subversion of societal/gender norms and negative feelings towards perceived sadomasochistic dacryphilia. Dominant/submissive interests were characterized by emotional and physical pain, and by the presence of tears and crying as a secondary component of dacryphilia. The interest in curled-lips was characterized by its rarity and as an attraction to lips during crying.

The present study not only suggested three initial areas of interest within dacryphilia, as the data imply that dacryphilia may comprise a continuum of interests that can differ from each other, but which are all connected by an overarching enjoyment or arousal from tears and crying. The existence of multiple interests within specific non-normative sexual interests is well-documented in the literature. For example, research into fat admiration has suggested a distinction between "feeder" and "feedee" and has presented different body preferences within these interests (Swami & Furnham, 2009; Swami & Tovée, 2009; Terry & Vasey, 2011). However, while Aggrawal (2009b, 2011) has suggested that paraphilic interests such as zoophilia and necrophilia can be classified into ten types that move from low-intensity to high-intensity interests, the "severity" of interests was not constructed thematically from participant accounts in the present study. Instead, the thematic areas constructed in the present study implied that dacryphilic interests are differentiated by their focus (i.e., compassion, dominance/submission and curled-lips), rather than by their intensity. An in-depth discussion of the sub-themes constructed in compassionate, dominant/submissive and curled-lip interests now follows.

Compassion: The analysis indicated that three of the four participants with compassionate interests defined their dacryphilia through the importance of comforting a crier. This appeared to be grounded in their identity and remembered as part of childhood fantasies and dreams. This provides a basis for the suggestion that their interest is compassionate and implies that dacryphilia is a longstanding and long-term sexual interest for them. The idea of a longstanding non-normative sexual interest existent from childhood is supported by (among others) Griffiths' (2013) case study into eproctophilia in a young adult male, whereby the individual recalls childhood masturbatory memories in relation to a crush fetish. Those with compassionate interests also emphasized that their dacryphilia is focussed on comforting pain, rather than pain in itself. This is consistent with Griffiths' (2012a) widened definition of dacryphilia that cites "strong emotion" and "emotional release" rather than emotional pain. Likewise, the concepts of strong emotion and emotional release can be more readily associated with comforting than pain. It may be of interest for future studies to compare the results of those with and without dacryphilic interests on a construct related to comforting, such as empathy (e.g., Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004).

Three of the participants were also emphatically critical of a perceived sadomasochistic dacryphilia. This implied that they not only wished to distinguish their interest from other dacryphilic interests, but that they also wished to portray their dacryphilic interest in a positive light. More specifically, compassionate interests were presented as less physically and psychologically damaging than the perceived sadomasochistic interests. This appears to be mirrored by Maratea's (2011) study into zoophilia that suggests "denial of injury" and "justification by comparison" among other defence mechanisms used by online zoophilic communities. Clearly, there is a difference between dacryphilia and zoophilia, and the reasons for which either community may wish to defend their sexual interest. However,

the present study suggests that Maratea's findings may be more broadly generalizable across different non-normative sexual interests, such as dacryphilia.

Dacryphilia was generally described as a natural role/duty by those with compassionate interests. Some participants suggested that their ability to comfort was in some way innate and differentiated them from individuals without dacryphilic interests. Other participants suggested that their ability to comfort could be put to work in a relevant professional career (e.g., psychotherapy). Lockwood et al. (2013) have previously suggested that those with higher cognitive empathy scores are likely to have quicker caregiving responses to visual crying stimuli. This in turn suggests that certain individuals are more suited to comforting criers than others. Although it is beyond the scope and nature of the present study to discuss the potential cognitive empathy of those with compassionate interests, future cognitive studies could address whether these individuals do display quicker caregiving responses to crying.

Dacryphilic experiences were also perceived as a subversion of societal/gender norms by three of the participants, either as a result of a specifically male role (e.g., the strong male bully) or the male gender in general being subverted. The existence of this in other non-normative sexual interests is supported by Griffiths' (2013) case study into eproctophilia, in which the participant discussed the idea of societal norms being subverted by female flatulence in public and if a woman crushes an insect in public (i.e., relating it to a crush fetish, also experienced by this participant). All non-normative sexual interests represent – by definition – a subversion of societal norms. Likewise, male crying has been constructed societally as an emasculating activity that would represent a clear subversion of societal/gender norms (Carlson & Hall, 2011; Wong et al., 2011).

However, the participants in the present study were directly relating their own dacryphilic experiences to a subversion of societal/gender norms, rather than simply acknowledging that dacryphilia on the whole is a non-normative sexual interests or that male crying subverts norms. This suggests that the subversion of norms prevalent in male crying may play a role in the desire to comfort and in the enjoyment of compassionate interests. This could have implications for this particular dacryphilic interest, as it may assist in explaining its aetiology.

Dominance/submission: All three of the participants with dominant/submissive interests expressed an interest in tears being caused by both emotional and physical pain. This is an interesting observation in relation to the literature, which asserts that crying and tears serve as an attachment behavior function, aimed at eliciting a caregiving response (Cornelius & Lubliner, 2003; Nelson, 2005). Clearly, tears in a dominant/submissive context do not appear to elicit a caregiving response, in that the usual response appears to be further emotional and/or physical pain, or sexual activity. However, those with dominant/submissive interests may to some extent be supported by the claim that crying and tears are designed to elicit attention (Cornelius & Lubliner, 2003; Nelson, 2005). For instance, Meredith links the act of crying with being given attention and the immediate response following tears is further (sexual) attention. This suggests that the function of tears in a dominant/submissive context differs from that in an everyday context. Based on the analysis of the present study, it is unclear whether this difference is biological (i.e., that the physiological production of tears differs in dominant/submissive individuals) or a result of the social construction of dominance/submission in a BDSM context. It may be of interest for BDSM researchers to further investigate the extent and nature of this difference.

All three participants also regarded tears and crying as a secondary component of their dominant/submissive interests, citing surrender and the arousal of their sexual partner from tears as the predominant components. This presents an interesting comparison to those with compassionate interests, who regularly made reference to the presence of crying and tears in their sexual arousal. On the other hand, all three participants with dominant/submissive interests specifically state that crying is not the aspect of dacryphilia that they find arousing. This raises the possibility that dacryphilia may be defined beyond simply tears and crying and may involve arousal from anything else that tears and crying entail. The arousal of a male partner from a female partner's tears can certainly be linked to tears. Likewise, if surrender is viewed as an act of powerlessness, then UllrsIshtar's arousal from surrender may be a result of her tears communicating her powerlessness to her partner (Frijda, 1986; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2003). As such, the idea of tears and crying as a secondary component of dominance/submission suggests that other dacryphilic components may exist beyond those described in the present study.

Dominant interests were underrepresented in the study ($n = 1$) and are therefore grouped together with submissive interests. The literature indicates that domination and submission are two related, yet quite different, aspects of BDSM (Williams, 2006). Therefore, it may be of interest for BDSM researchers to further explore dominant interests and any differences that they may have from submissive interests.

Curled-lips: The one participant with this interest suggested that his interest was rare, or perhaps unique. This is reflected in his sole inclusion within this interest. Clearly, any conclusions drawn from this participant are tentative and should be considered as exploratory reflections on a single case. However, the participant himself identifies with dacryphilia and

plays a large role in the online dacryphilia community as the administrator of a forum and a number of blogs. As such, the authors are confident that his experiences may be relevant to dacryphilia, but should be considered with some caution nonetheless.

The participant expressed his interest as focussed on the movement of the bottom lip during crying. Although this would initially appear to be linked with partialism – a majority interest within non-normative sexual interests (Scorolli et al., 2007) – the participant clearly distanced his dacryphilic interest from this sexual interest by specifically differentiating the two. This suggests that dacryphilia may not only be concerned with the primary product of crying (i.e., tears), but also with the secondary products (i.e., how the rest of the face moves during crying). Consequently, it lends further support to the idea of tears and crying as a secondary component of dacryphilia, as discussed in regard to the dominant/submissive interests.

Study advantages and limitations: The present study aimed to discover the different interests within dacryphilia and explore the range of dacryphilic experience. The exploration of three initial possible interests within dacryphilia was successfully achieved through the implementation of a set of online asynchronous interviews that assisted in reaching a sensitive and predominantly American population (Griffiths, 2012b; Meho, 2005). Without the use of online recruitment and data collection, it is unlikely that it would have been possible to carry out the study.

Online data collection methods may also have a disinhibiting effect on their participants that could reduce the risk of false data being provided by participants (Crutzen & Göritz, 2010). Furthermore, the use of online asynchronous interviews was useful in allowing participants to provide descriptive and reflective accounts of their dacryphilic experiences

(James & Busher, 2006) and was more cost-effective and less time consuming to carry out than face-to-face interviews (Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Kraut et al, 2004).

However, there are also limitations to the present study. In spite of the benefits of employing online data collection methods and specifically online asynchronous interviews, nonverbal and paralinguistic cues are lost in an online research environment. This may lead to a misunderstanding of participants' responses, as well as creating a barrier that may inhibit the researcher's understanding of the participants' psychological dispositions (Willis, 2011).

The sample size was not only small ($n = 8$), but also comprised a minority of dominant ($n = 1$) and curled-lip interests ($n = 1$), and a majority of females ($n = 6$) and Americans ($n = 5$). This means that the results may not reflect the experiences of other individuals with dacryphilic preferences and may display gender and cultural bias. Furthermore, the majority of participants identified as either straight, hetero or heterosexual ($n = 6$). Even among the remaining two participants, neither identified as exclusively gay or asexual (i.e., they identified as heteroflexible and pansexual). This leaves a gap in the dacryphilic experiences of those who do not identify with any aspect of heterosexual orientation. Finally, a larger sample size may have led to the construction of further interests, as the interests outlined in the present study only relate to the eight participants who were interviewed.

Conclusion

The respondents' statements in the present study focused attention on three distinct areas that may be relevant to the experience of dacryphilia (i.e., compassion, dominance/submission and curled-lips). This highlighted the potential diversity of interests that may exist within dacryphilia and provided some initial insight into how sexual arousal

from crying and tears can differ among individuals. In particular, there appears to be a distinct difference between those who experience sexual arousal from compassionate interests and those who experience sexual arousal from dominant/submissive interests. Based on the sample in the present study, there appears to be a gender bias towards women and a cultural bias towards Americans. However, this may be a result of the limited nature of the small sample size and, as such, any extrapolation would be unwise. Future studies may wish to recruit a larger sample size in order to further investigate the limited yet interesting preliminary explorations of the present study.

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