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**Sexual interest as performance, intellect and pathological dilemma: A  
critical discursive case study of dacryphilia**

## **Abstract**

The present study depicts the case of a straight, 25 year old, Romanian woman Angela M, who is an individual with a sexual interest in dacryphilia (i.e. she derives sexual pleasure and arousal from crying and/or tears). Asynchronous email interviews were carried out with Angela M between January 2013 and February 2013 as part of a wider study into dacryphilia. Angela M's interview transcripts comprised rich textual accounts that often made reference to cultural phenomena. Therefore, we apply critical discursive psychology to her data and identify the interpretative repertoires, subject positions, and ideological dilemmas that she uses to construct and negotiate her sexual identity. Our analysis suggests that Angela M draws predominantly upon two interpretative repertoires that construct her sexual interest in dacryphilia both as a performance and as an intellectual activity. However, some tensions exist within these interpretative repertoires, which Angela M negotiates by also constructing her sexual interest as a pathology. We explore the implications of the analysis with reference to postmodern theory and the historical context of a psychiatric tradition that pathologises non-normative sexual interests.

**Keywords:** Dacryphilia; non-normative sexual interests; crying; discursive psychology; online research

Dacryphilia is a non-normative sexual interest in which sexual pleasure and arousal is derived from crying and/or tears (reference removed for blind review). We have previously explored three areas of interest that may be relevant to the experience of dacryphilia (reference removed for blind review). These areas comprised those with compassionate, dominant/submissive and curled-lip interests. In the present paper, we analyse the experiences of a participant with compassionate interests in more depth. In particular we apply critical discursive psychology (Edley, 2001) to her interview data in order to generate novel insights concerning how she constructed her non-normative sexual interest in dacryphilia.

### *Critical discursive psychology*

Critical discursive psychology is a methodological approach developed by Edley (2001) that aims to identify three areas of discursive practice: 'interpretative repertoires' (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), 'ideological dilemmas' (Billig et al., 1988) and 'subject positions' (Davies & Harre, 1990). Interpretative repertoires can be considered the building blocks of conversation and are often apparent through their 'common-sense' deployment during interaction by members drawing on shared cultural resources (Edley, 2001). At times, different interpretative repertoires that are used by the same members may become inconsistent and contradict each other (Billig et al., 1988). However, rather than being problematic, this can be considered an ideological dilemma that the critical discursive psychologist can unpick in order to analyse the discursive tensions that exist in everyday interaction. Finally, interpretative repertoires may position different subjects (e.g. the speaker, other members) in different ways. In addition, as new interpretative repertoires are deployed and ideological dilemmas emerge, these subject positions may change again. Through examining the positions made available during interaction, the critical discursive psychologist can explore how subjectivity is claimed and constructed by members (Davies & Harre, 1990).

### ***Case study research***

Case study research is perhaps more commonly associated with analytic techniques that specifically incorporate cases into their research design (Yin, 2014). For example, grounded theory is a bottom-up analytic technique that involves case-by-case analysis aimed at generating novel theoretical insights (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). The application of critical discursive psychology within case study research is not particularly established in the literature. Nonetheless, it is still feasible for any analytic technique to be applied to case study research, as long as the research does in fact constitute a case study. The present study can be considered an explanatory case study that seeks to explain *how* a novel phenomenon (i.e. a non-normative sexual identity) is constructed by a single case (Yin, 2014). The case is unique in that none of the other eight participants in the initial study (reference removed for blind review) drew upon the variety and depth of cultural resources that the present participant did. Therefore, it can also be considered an intrinsic case study that was of specific interest owing to its uniqueness among the original data set (Willig, 2009). Following analysis, we intend to develop theoretical propositions from the data that may or may not be falsified by future studies, both into dacryphilia and non-normative sexual interests more broadly.

### ***The present study***

In the present study, we apply a critical discursive psychological approach to the case of Angela M. Angela M's interview transcripts comprised rich textual accounts that often made reference to cultural phenomena. Critical discursive psychology is a poststructuralist analytic technique that pays specific attention to language and the variety of ways in which it is employed. Moreover, it is an analytic technique that allows researchers to situate subject positions in their broader cultural, social and political context, rather than simply on their

participants' terms. As such, we felt that critical discursive psychology would prove particularly insightful in the analysis of Angela M's data. Within our analysis, we aim to identify how Angela M constructs a sexual identity through her positioning of both the subjects of her sexual interest (i.e. crying men) and herself as a subject experiencing dacryphilia.

### **Method**

The participant in the present study chose the pseudonym Angela M and is a straight woman from Romania. At the time of the study, she was 25 years old, single, and working as a translator and astrologer. She has a Bachelor's degree in Russian culture and linguistics. Angela M first got in touch with us after we placed a recruitment post on the dacryphilia forum *CryingLovers*. She gave informed consent to take part in the initial study into dacryphilia. Between January 2013 and February 2013, the first author carried out a set of asynchronous semi-structured email interviews with Angela M for the present study. The initial set of questions were standardised for each participant and involved establishing demographic details, as well as a basic profile of their dacryphilic interest (e.g., when they first experienced dacryphilia). The subsequent questions were grounded in the participants' initial responses and therefore varied for each participant. The interview responses were typed electronically by participants and not spoken. Therefore, a Jefferson transcription is not possible and they are presented here in their original typed format. For a more detailed overview of the study design and procedure, see (reference removed for blind review). Following data analysis in the initial study, we felt that Angela M's transcripts contained interesting and novel data that we were unable to explore within the aims and methodological constraints of the initial study. We asked Angela M if we could write a case study based on her data, which she also gave informed consent for.

In the present study, we apply a critical discursive psychological approach (Wetherell 1998; Edley, 2001). This involved identifying the three areas of discursive practice that are relevant to critical discursive psychology noted above (i.e., interpretative repertoires, subject positions, and ideological dilemmas). In order to do this, we read Angela M's transcripts a number of times and built up a file of any interesting descriptions in relation to how she constructed her sexual interest. In particular, we were interested in how these constructions might be situated within cultural, social and historical contexts. Likewise, we sought to explore how Angela M positioned both the subjects of her sexual interest (i.e. crying men) and herself as a subject experiencing dacryphilia.

### **Analysis**

The dominant interpretative repertoire that runs throughout Angela M's interview positions the subjects of her sexual interest as literary characters and actors, while Angela M herself is positioned as an audience member. In other words, she draws upon the cultural resource of performance in the arts to construct her sexual interest in dacryphilia. Alongside this dominant interpretative repertoire is another interpretative repertoire that positions Angela M's sexual interest in dacryphilia as an intellectual activity that may be associated with highbrow culture.

#### ***Dacryphilia is a performance***

This interpretative repertoire constructs both Angela M and the subjects of her sexual interest (i.e., crying men) in the terms of performance. In Extract 1, Angela M describes what type of man she enjoys watching crying:

#### *Extract 1*

5 I: You mention that you enjoy watching a ‘fascinating man’ or a man that you  
6 could ‘never attain in reality’. Can you elaborate further on the sort of man that  
7 you enjoy watching crying?

8  
9 A: Yes, I enjoy to see a man that is mysterious, elegant, rather dandy-like and at  
10 the same time not willing to cry because he was taught not to, he was taught to  
11 be/act manly. At one point he needs to get in touch with his feminine side  
12 through a loss or an embarrassment and by crying he gets there and feels more  
13 complete, more liberated.

14  
15 This is simply put, the classic kind of story or motif that I pursue in my fetish,  
16 the one that arouses me most, keeps me in suspense somehow. I like it when it  
17 happens all of the sudden and the character of my story is not willing to let go,  
18 to cry yet, he struggles, he represses, denies what he feels then ..there’s this  
19 minutiae catharsis, when his eyes get flushed, well up with tears or the man is  
20 either shaken by sobs, has a breakdown or other such scenario. Such as  
21 Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* before the death of his beloved Catherine,  
22 such as Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, the Byronic hero, Vicomte de Valmont in  
23 *Dangerous Liaisons*.

24  
25 That’s class A of types that I enjoy seeing. There’s also another class of men  
26 that are naturally gentle and cry more readily and they’re very candid when it  
27 happens, very at ease with their own emotions such as Biff Loman in *Death of*  
28 *a Salesman* or Pip in *Great Expectations*, Marco Zuluaga in Almodovar’s  
29 *Hable Con Ella* (Almodovar actually has all the male characters portray sweet,

30 sensitive, effeminate men or gays, but those in this movie that I cited are not  
31 gay, they're just vulnerable).

Angela M starts her response by directly replying to the question asked and describing 'the sort of man that [she enjoys] watching crying' (Extract 1, interviewer, lines 2-3). She initially describes this sort of man 'as not willing to cry because he was taught not to, he was taught to be/act manly' (Extract 1, lines 6-7). Although it is not specified, we would suggest that the implied 'teacher' of the man is the gender norms dictated by society. However, the man moves away from these norms because 'he needs to get in touch with his feminine side through a loss or an embarrassment' (Extract 1, lines 7-8). Rather than this being a negative experience for the man, he 'feels more complete, more liberated' (Extract 1, lines 8-9) and in doing so subverts his previous 'act' of conforming to gender norms. This first paragraph of Angela M's response positions the subject of her sexual interest (i.e. a crying man) as subversive, which we have briefly explored elsewhere in relation to dacryphilia (see [reference removed for blind review]).

In the next paragraph, Angela M begins to explicitly position dacryphilia as a performance. In reference to her above description, she states that 'this is simply put, the classic kind of story or motif that I pursue in my fetish, the one that arouses me most, keeps me in suspense somehow' (Extract 1, lines 11-12). Here, the positioning of her sexual interest as a performance is clear, as Angela M borrows from the lexicon of literature to describe her sexual fantasy as a 'story' or 'motif'. In addition, she mentions that this 'kind of story or motif...keeps me in suspense somehow'. The idea of a sexual fantasy keeping Angela M 'in suspense' once again seems at home in the realm of literature and plot. In the following sentence, Angela M describes a crying man as 'the character of my story' (Extract 1, line 13)



and in doing so positions the subject of her sexual interest specifically as a performer. She then describes how ‘there’s this minutiae catharsis, when his eyes get flushed, well up with tears or the man is either shaken by sobs, has a breakdown or other such scenario’ (Extract 1, lines 14-16). The first part of this sentence again invokes a literary device by describing what happens as a ‘catharsis’. In the latter part, Angela M then describes a number of ‘scenarios’ that might occur after the ‘catharsis’. This serves to further underline the idea that she experiences her sexual interest and arousal in much the same way as a reader might experience different plot lines in different novels.

Angela M then lists her preferred classic literary characters who cry ‘such as Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* before the death of his beloved Catherine, such as Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, the Byronic hero, Vicomte de Valmont in *Dangerous Liaisons*’ (Extract 1, lines 16-19). She contrasts these crying characters – ‘class A of types that I enjoy seeing’ (Extract 1, line 21) – with another set of characters from literature, the stage and film ‘that are naturally gentle and cry more readily and they’re very candid when it happens, very at ease with their own emotions such as Biff Loman in *Death of a Salesman* or Pip in *Great Expectations*, Marco Zuluaga in Almodovar’s *Hable Con Ella*’ (Extract 1, lines 22-25). Angela M’s discursive work here is interesting for three reasons.

First, it emphasises that the discursive reference point for her sexual interest is the language of performance, as she directly refers to a number of literary characters, as well as a character in a play and a character in a film. This suggests that Angela M explicitly positions the subjects of her sexual interest (i.e., crying men) as performers and implicitly positions herself as an audience member that observes and is aroused by the performance.

Second, it implies that Angela M has a flexible notion of masculinity. She positions her men subjects in terms that might be related to ‘alpha’ (i.e. Heathcliff, Mr Rochester and Vicomte de Valmont) and ‘beta’ (i.e. Biff Loman, Pip and Marco Zuluaga) types of



Angela M responds to the question by describing her own behaviour in the fantasies. She begins by stating that ‘all I can say is that most times I play only the role of the observer in them’ (Extract 2, line 31). The idea that ‘I play only the role’ positions her in the terms of acting, yet concurrently Angela M is ‘the observer’ and therefore positioned as an audience member. This initial assertion thus constructs Angela M’s participation in sexual fantasy as part of a performance, in which she is both a performer and an observer of the performance. Angela M then goes on to describe what the ‘real men’ of her fantasies might be doing during these fantasies (e.g., ‘they repent for some wrong they have done to me...’ Extract 2, line 34-35). As she draws this response to a close, Angela M once again reiterates that ‘I listen and I notice their expression in silence, not participating, not emoting with them, I’m almost like a shadow in those instances’ (Extract 2, lines 36-38). Although this sentence does not specifically use the terminology of performance, the concept of ‘I listen and I notice their expression in silence, not participating’ reflects the behaviour that might be expected of an audience member at a performance. Likewise, the description that ‘I’m almost like a shadow’ further suggests that Angela M may be in the dark of audience, away from the lights of the stage or the screen. In combination with the explicit positioning of herself as ‘observer’ in the opening of this response, we would suggest that the latter half of the response implicitly underlines Angela M’s positioning as an audience member in the performance of her sexual fantasies.

### ***Dacryphilia is an intellectual activity***

This above interpretative repertoire constructs both Angela M and the subjects of her sexual interest in the terms of performance. The performance arts, especially those referenced by Angela M above, can be considered intellectual activities that form part of highbrow culture.

In the following interpretative repertoire, Angela M positions her sexual interest in dacryphilia more generally as an intellectual activity. In Extract 3, Angela M describes what she enjoys about discussing dacryphilia with others:

*Extract 3*

- 43           I:     Do you like watching others engage in dacryphilia?  
44
- 45           A:     I don't like the idea of engaging in a sexual activity that ritualizes crying and  
46                   invariably psychological distress but I enjoy the cultural exchange between  
47                   people who acknowledge the shades and complexities of intense emotions and  
48                   analyze them in detail. I guess it's also a form of therapy because we may feel  
49                   at ease discussing them in a group setting that shares the same outlook, with  
50                   persons who do not judge us.

In this extract, Angela M appears to understand the question about 'watching others engage in dacryphilia' (Extract 3, line 39) as a question about watching dacryphilic acts with others. Angela M starts her response by stating 'I don't like the idea of engaging in a sexual activity that ritualizes crying and invariably psychological distress...' (Extract 3, lines 41-42). This initial positioning sets Angela M's interest apart from what might be considered a sadomasochistic or dominant/submissive dacryphilia that may cause 'psychological distress' and which Angela M expresses her negative feelings about elsewhere (see [reference removed for blind review]). It also sets up a contrast for what Angela M does enjoy about watching dacryphilia, which is 'the cultural exchange between people who acknowledge the shades and complexities of intense emotions and analyze them in detail' (Extract 3, lines 42-44). This

description initially describes what is ostensibly a sexual interest as a ‘cultural exchange’ and in doing so, positions this sexual interest as an intellectual activity focused around culture. The intellectual nature of this activity is emphasised by the scholarly implications of ‘analysing’ the ‘shades and complexities of intense emotions’. It is striking that there is no mention of sexual activities in this description. On the other hand, it could be easily read as a description of academic research, which serves to further position Angela M’s dacryphilia as intellectual. Angela M ends her response by suggesting that watching dacryphilic acts with others could be ‘also a form of therapy because we may feel at ease discussing them in a group setting that shares the same outlook, with persons who do not judge us’ (Extract 3, lines 44-46). Although this sentence does not tie in with the interpretative repertoire, it may have implications for the ideological dilemma that we discuss later in the analysis.

In Extract 4, Angela M responds to a final question about how she might define herself within dacryphilia:

*Extract 4*

51 I: How would you define yourself within dacryphilia?

52

53 A: Well, I guess I’m not a typical dacryphile as one it is depicted in some  
54 dictionaries. I’m rather an intellectual dacryphile, I enjoy having fantasies  
55 about various forms of male crying but I don’t try to determine the guys I  
56 know to expose themselves to crying as to arouse me. I also don’t mind if I  
57 meet a guy who doesn’t cry or can’t cry. I like to see crying in movies and to  
58 read about it and share my information with other [sic] like me.

Angela M opens her response by saying that 'I'm not a typical dacryphile as one it is depicted in some dictionaries' (Extract 4, line 49-50). This already positions Angela M as somebody who has read 'some dictionaries' and consequently may have scholarly ambitions. In the following sentence she directly defines herself as 'an intellectual dacryphile' (Extract 4, line 50). This is an explicit statement that makes clear that Angela M positions her sexual interest as 'intellectual'. In the following section, she talks about what she does and does not enjoy within dacryphilia, before finishing with 'I like to see crying in movies and to read about it and share my information with other [sic] like me' (Extract 4, lines 53-54). The activities of watching 'movies' and 'reading' may or may not have intellectual implications depending on what films or books an individual is interested in. However, considering the characters that Angela M describes in Extract 1, we would suggest that Angela M's interests in 'movies' and 'reading' are more likely to be highbrow. In the latter half of the sentence, Angela M talks about how she likes to 'share my information with other [sic] like me'. Once again, this sentence makes no reference to sexual activities and could be read as a description of knowledge dissemination by a scholar of the humanities. The location of this text as the final sentence of the transcript may suggest that Angela M is definitively positioning her dacryphilia as an intellectual activity.

### ***Dacryphilia as a pathology***

The above two interpretative repertoires provide Angela M with a discursive framework to draw upon that positions crying men as performers and Angela M as an audience member. Likewise, they position Angela M's sexual interest as an intellectual activity. However, as Extract 3 illustrates, Angela M appears to construct a sense of tension around aspects of dacryphilia, such as the 'psychological distress' (Extract 3, line 42) that it may cause. In the following analysis, we examine how Angela M negotiates the tension that exists between an

intellectual activity and the potential harm that it causes. Furthermore, we suggest that Angela M negotiates this tension by constructing her dacryphilia as a pathology, thus expressing her negative feelings towards its effects and simultaneously absolving herself of full responsibility for any potentially harmful consequences of dacryphilia.

In Extract 5, Angela M outlines how some of her women friends have responded to her sexual interest in dacryphilia:

*Extract 5*

59 I: You mention that some of your close female friends ‘agree with it’. In what  
60 ways do they agree with your kink?

61

62 A: They don’t judge me for engaging in dacryphilic activities and few of them  
63 even send me clips and materials about crying, knowing I like to read and see  
64 such stuff. They amaze me somehow because this is not something to approve  
65 about someone. It’s an addiction and an obsessive-compulsive behavior as far  
66 as I know, and I have days when I spend a lot of time with this instead of doing  
67 more useful stuff. I guess they can’t imagine the dark side of it when I make it  
68 look quirky.

Angela M begins by addressing the question and stating that ‘they don’t judge me for engaging in dacryphilic activities’ (Extract 5, line 58) and consequently positions her friends as non-judgemental and accepting of her sexual interest. However, Angela M then claims that ‘they amaze me somehow because this is not something to approve about someone’ (Extract 5, lines 60-61). Her ‘amazement’ could perhaps indicate that Angela M is pleasantly surprised at her friends’ acceptance of her sexual interest. Yet in the latter half of the sentence, she says

that ‘this is not something to approve about someone’ and therefore positions herself as disapproving of her own sexual interest. Angela M expands on her negativity as she explains ‘it’s an addiction and an obsessive compulsive-behavior as far as I know, and I have days when I spend a lot of time with this instead of doing more useful stuff’ (Extract 5, lines 61-63). Here, Angela M draws directly from a medical discourse of ‘addiction’ and ‘obsessive-compulsive behaviour’ to explicitly construct dacryphilia as a pathology. This is emphasised by her assertion of ‘spending a lot of time with this’, which suggests that in her own understanding is perhaps a symptom of her ‘addiction’.

In Extract 6, Angela M responds to a question about what types of dacryphilia might cause psychological distress and subsequently builds upon her earlier positioning of dacryphilia as a pathology:

*Extract 6*

- 69           I:     Do you feel that psychological distress could be caused by any form of  
70                     dacryphilia, or only specific ones?  
71
- 72           A:     I had always imagined that forms of dacryphilia that imply physical and  
73                     psychological torture, sadism more or less covert, cause serious distress to  
74                     another person, because there’s something so compulsive on the part of the  
75                     experiencer; he’s selfish and adamant in supplying for his need, regardless of  
76                     what harm he may inflict. Passive dacryphilia can be self-destructive to the  
77                     extent the participant gets absorbed in his own activity to the exclusion of all  
78                     else. This is why I choose to call them humorously, malignant dacryphilia and  
79                     benign dacryphilia, although both are equally pathological.



Angela M opens her response by attempting to identify what forms of dactyphilia might cause psychological distress. She states that she ‘always imagined forms of dactyphilia that imply physical and psychological torture, sadism more or less covert, cause serious distress to another person...’ (Extract 6, lines 68-70). This sentence both identifies a form of ‘sadistic’ dactyphilia and positions this form of dactyphilia in a discourse of harm that involves ‘physical and psychological torture’, as well as ‘serious distress’. In particular, the reference to ‘torture’ implies that this form of dactyphilia is intentionally harmful and has long-term effects. In the second half of this sentence, Angela M switches discourses by writing that ‘...there’s 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’ (Extract 6, lines 70-72). In this sentence, the discourse of addiction pathology is abundant, as Angela M talks about a ‘need’ and lists symptoms such as ‘compulsive’, ‘selfish’ and ‘adamant’ behaviour. This continues in the following section, where Angela M discusses how ‘passive dactyphilia can be self destructive to the extent that the participant gets absorbed in his [sic] own activity to the exclusion of all else’ (Extract 6, lines 72-74). Here, Angela M is identifying a different form of dactyphilia, namely ‘passive dactyphilia’. However, the idea of getting ‘absorbed in his own behaviour to the exclusion of all else’ mirrors Angela M’s assertion in Extract 5 of ‘spending a lot of time with this’ and suggests a further consequential symptom of addiction across another form of dactyphilia. Angela M ties up these two forms of dactyphilia at the end of the section, by stating that ‘I choose to call them humorously, malignant dactyphilia and benign dactyphilia, although both are equally pathological’ (Extract 6, lines 74-75). This sentence initially suggests that Angela M may be positioning ‘sadistic’ dactyphilia as ‘malignant’ and ‘passive’ dactyphilia as ‘benign’. However, she leaves the reader under no illusions as she asserts that ‘both are equally pathological’ and therefore positions dactyphilia in its entirety as a pathology.

## Discussion

In the above analysis, we have suggested that Angela M draws upon two interpretative repertoires as she constructs her sexual identity as an individual with an interest in dacryphilia. The first interpretative repertoire allows Angela M to draw upon a cultural resource that constructs dacryphilia as a performance. This entails differing subject positions for both the subjects of her sexual interest and Angela M herself. For example, crying men are positioned as performers in literature, theatre, and film, whereas Angela M is positioned as an audience member in an arts performance. The second interpretative repertoire allows Angela M to draw upon a cultural resource that constructs dacryphilia as an intellectual activity. This is similar in some ways to the first interpretative repertoire. However, it primarily affords Angela M subject positions, rather than the subjects of her interest. For example, Angela M is positioned as an intellectual and often as a scholar (of dacryphilia). Clearly, the above two interpretative repertoires have positive implications for Angela M and her dacryphilic interests, at least in the context of performance arts and intellect as highbrow cultural activities. This appears to create some tension for Angela M as she negotiates her sexual identity. As a result, it leads to an ideological dilemma in which Angela M constructs dacryphilia as a pathology and often positions it as an addiction or an obsessive-compulsive behaviour.

### *Performance and performativity*

The idea of performance in relation to sexual identity invokes Butler's (1999) concept of performativity. Butler developed the theoretically significant concept of performativity in relation to gender identity. As Salih puts it, for Butler "gender is not something one *is*, it is something one *does*, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a

“doing” rather than a “being” (Salih, 2007: 55, emphasis in original). The way in which Angela M constructs her sexual identity in the present study appears to mirror this concept. Rather than constructing her dacryphilia as something that simply exists and is experienced, for Angela M dacryphilia seems to be an identity that is performed both for her and by her in a series of repetitive sexual fantasies. Angela M’s socio-historical background (i.e. as a young European woman born in the late 1980s with a Bachelor’s degree in linguistics) perhaps situates her as an individual who might draw upon the cultural resource of Butler’s poststructuralist ideas and theory of performativity. This in turn has interesting implications for how Angela M might conceptualise her own sexual identity. By drawing upon a poststructuralist cultural resource, it is likely that Angela M relates to dacryphilia as a fluid and performed identity, instead of one that is fixed and essentialist. This implies that she may have a more positive perception of her non-normative sexual identity, as opposed to the pathologised version that is often presented by clinical psychology and psychiatry.

### *Performance and intellect*

Angela M’s construction of both her subjects and herself in the terms of performance in the first interpretative repertoire can also be interpreted alongside the second interpretative repertoire, in which dacryphilia is constructed as an intellectual activity. By constructing her dacryphilia specifically in the terms of classic literary, film, and theatrical performance, Angela M creates a sense of highbrow culture concerning her sexual interest. This is further emphasised by her positioning of herself as a scholar of dacryphilia, which may also be related to highbrow activities (e.g. academic study). The idea of presenting higher intellect as a legitimising device for “sexual deviance” has previously been explored in relation to other sexual interests. For example, Maratea (2011) has analysed the ways in which those with zoophilic interests legitimise these interests online and suggests that “appeals to

enlightenment” (i.e. that those with zoophilic interests are enlightened and have heightened understanding) is one such technique. Similarly, Durkin and Bryant (1999) examine how those with paedophilic interests account for their deviance in an online forum and identify “BIRGing” (i.e. basking in reflected glory) as a strategy, whereby individuals cite examples of famous intellectuals who also had paedophilic interests as a means of justification (e.g., Socrates, Oscar Wilde).

Clearly, both zoophilia and paedophilia are largely criminalised sexual interests, whereas dacryphilia is not. Therefore it is unlikely that this sort of legitimisation is Angela M’s sole motivation when constructing her sexual interest as highbrow. Instead, it may be useful to look towards the historical treatment of non-normative sexual interests by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists as a means of better understanding the socio-political context that Angela M is situated within.

De Block and Adriaens (2013) trace the Western conceptualisation of non-normative sexual interests from early psychiatry through Krafft-Ebing and Freud to Ellis and Hirschfield and end with the various versions of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). They conclude that although recent attempts to distinguish between disordered and non-disordered “paraphilias” in the DSM are laudable, on the whole Western psychiatry has tended to pathologise non-normative sexual interests, to the detriment of many individuals with those interests. Elsewhere, the DSM “paraphilia” category has been critiqued on the grounds that it may pathologise sexual interests that do not fit with Western socio-cultural norms, rather than relying on objective criteria actually related to mental disorders (e.g., Green, 2002; Moser & Kleinplatz, 2006). As an individual who has grown up in the late twentieth century, Angela M’s perceptions of non-normative sexual interests may have developed against the backdrop of a cultural resource (i.e., the DSM) that pathologises these interests. As such, the construction of her dacryphilia in the terms of

performance arts and intellect may comprise an attempt to resist hegemonic psychiatric discourse through a positive redressing of her sexual interest.

### *The dilemmatic nature of pathology*

In spite of the above two interpretative repertoires that construct Angela M's sexual identity in largely positive terms, a tension still exists between positivity and pathology, as exemplified by the ideological dilemma that we have identified. This raises the question of *why* Angela M still experiences this tension. We would suggest that the answer to this question is twofold. First, if the psychiatric conception of non-normative sexual interests as pathologies is considered within Gramsci's (1971) definition of the hegemonic, then it follows that Angela M's positive redressing of her sexual interest is part of the "hegemonic struggle". This hegemonic struggle takes place in a society that is a 'vast argumentative texture' (Laclau, 1993: 341) where various discourses compete for dominance. As a social being attempting to construct her own identity from these competing discourses, it makes sense that at times the hegemonic discourse may dominate Angela M's own constructions. This is perhaps what is happening when Angela M uses the language of diagnosis and pathology to construct her sexual identity as problematic.

Second, it is possible that it is useful for Angela M to occasionally construct her sexual identity as pathological. In the everyday construction of her sexual identity, it is likely that Angela M is aware of the stigma surrounding non-normative sexual interests. In addition, it may be the case that this stigma spoils Angela M's sexual identity and has a negative effect on her (Goffman, 1963). Therefore, by constructing her sexual interest as a pathology, Angela M is able to absolve herself of responsibility for an identity that may be considered socially undesirable to others. This is especially pertinent to the data collection method in the present study, where Angela M was asked a series of questions by a researcher who she was

unfamiliar with. As the research interview is a social interaction between interviewer and respondent (Potter & Hepburn, 2005), it makes sense that Angela M may have wished to present herself to the academic interviewer in a socially desirable way. Thus, while Angela M may not wish to construct her sexual interest as pathological to the macro-structures that may institutionalise her, it might be useful for her to construct her sexual interest as pathological at the micro-level of everyday interactions.

### *Limitations and future directions*

The present study involves a single case consisting of data collected solely from asynchronous email interviews. As such, it does not constitute a triangulation of methods. Triangulation may be important within case study research, as it allows for a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and may lead to increased validity (Willig, 2009; Yin, 2014). This leaves the present study open to critique that it may not be truly representative of both Angela M's holistic experience and the experience of others with a sexual interest in dacryphilia. However, as an intrinsic single-case study, we are satisfied with our choice not to implement triangulation and would emphasise Silverman's (1993) argument that triangulation may lead to a loss of context, which in turn may negate the idiographic quality of case study research. Nonetheless, if future research seeks to test the theoretical propositions developed from this case, it may be useful to triangulate data collection methods. For example, the *CryingLovers* forum from which Angela M was recruited contains a number of naturalistic textual accounts that may be suitable for future data analysis.

Moreover, questions are usually raised about the "generalisability" of case study research design. However, as Yin argues, case studies 'are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes...your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)'

(Yin, 2014: 15). The present study is an intrinsic case study that is the first of its kind to examine how a non-normative sexual interest may be constructed as both a performance and an intellectual activity. Therefore, we would suggest that the aim of the present study is to generate theoretical propositions that may or may not be falsified by future studies. Specifically, it may be of interest for future research to examine the proposition that dactyphilia and/or other non-normative sexual interests may be constructed as highbrow cultural activities. Likewise, it may be of interest to explore the proposition that dactyphilia and/or other non-normative sexual interests may concurrently be constructed as pathologies, even when no clinical diagnosis exists for the participant(s). The present study provides a useful theoretical basis from which to carry out such research.

**6160 words.**

#### **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare that they have no financial interests or benefits in publishing this article.

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