

## GUEST EDITORS' NOTE

Throughout history, our capacity to shed tears has attracted the attention of poets, writers, philosophers, and scholars. Moreover, humans' fascination with tears is evident in the significant roles they played in legends and myths. The main issues were the origin of tears, whether only humans shed emotional tears, gender differences, the background of individual differences, and why tears lead to better mental well-being.

Charles Darwin (1872) provided one of the earliest systematic analyses of the human capacity to express emotions through facial expressions. He emphasized the similarities between human and other animal expressions, mused about their functional value, and devoted an entire chapter to weeping. However, whereas he was convinced of the importance of emotions and their expression for human well-being and recognized the survival value of basal tears and infant acoustic crying, he had strong doubts about whether emotional tears served any purpose. Since this seminal work, researchers' attention to adult emotional crying was modest at best for more than a century. It was not until the turn of the 21st century that, with some notable exceptions, the first scientific publications on adult crying began to appear.

Why it took so long for researchers to become interested in emotional crying remains an enigma. Emotion research flourished, with particular attention to topics such as empathy and the idea that our brains are wired for social connection. Remarkably, in the many articles and books on empathy, crying is at best mentioned in passing, whereas in books on the social brain, it is not mentioned at all, thus neglecting the crucial role of tears in facilitating social connection. However, now, just over 25 years later, we witness an impressive increase in the number of studies on adult crying, with a wide variety of research approaches. The current special issue on Adult Human Emotional Crying in the diamond open-access journal *Psychological Topics* contains seven contributions that provide a compelling overview of how this field is developing.

In the first contribution, Janis Zickfeld and David J. Gruning introduce their impressive Control–Arousal Signal Model, an integrative framework that unifies physiological, cognitive, and social perspectives on crying. They propose that crying occurs when a perceived loss of control coincides with a sudden increase in arousal. The model conceptualizes crying as a five-phase temporal process - from stimulus appraisal to post-crying regulation - and highlights interpersonal signaling of loss of control as its primary function, with intrapersonal regulation as a secondary, context-dependent outcome. A major strength of the model is that it generates testable hypotheses regarding the determinants, functions, and outcomes of crying.

Subsequently, Asmir Gračanin and colleagues present their research based on an evolutionary account of crying. They tested the general hypothesis that tears serve

as a means of communication, particularly for individuals with less leverage in negotiations. This experimental work demonstrated that, as hypothesized, participants from two cultures were more likely to expect target individuals to cry when they perceived them as weaker. However, participants did not consistently expect tears from the weaker individual in a dyad. This is the first experimental study to show that people associate a propensity to shed tears with physical strength, contributing to our understanding of the biological interpersonal functions of tears.

In the third contribution, Waldie Hanser and collaborators explore how song lyrics contribute to listeners' tearful responses to music. Using a large corpus of songs reported to elicit crying, they analyze the linguistic and thematic features that characterize these lyrics. Their findings indicate that tear-eliciting lyrics tend to convey sadness and sincerity, and frequently refer to important social relationships and meaningful life events. In addition, by comparing patterns of word use in songs that evoke sadness with those that evoke feelings of being moved, the study shows that sadness-evoking lyrics are not only sadder but also more self-focused. At the same time, the lyrical content of both types of songs clearly distinguishes crying-inducing music from popular music in general.

Next, Mariko Shirai and Toshiaki Kimura contribute to our understanding of the interpersonal function of crying by experimentally examining how two different types of crying affect observers' intentions to provide social support. They also test several mediating and moderating variables. Interestingly, static crying elicits higher intentions to provide social support than dynamic crying. This effect is mediated by perceived appropriateness, perceptions of warmth, helplessness, and social connectedness with the crying individual, but can be reduced by unhelpful social beliefs. This contribution offers important new insights into the factors that shape prosocial responses toward crying individuals.

The fifth article, authored by Terri Tan Su-May and Kenichi Ito, examines how lay observers perceive workplace criers and how these perceptions are structured. Using a prototype approach across three studies, they identify the range of features that full-time employees associate with people crying at work and show that these perceptions are not uniform. Instead, certain attributes, such as being stressed, overwhelmed, sensitive, and anxious, emerge as central, while others – often emphasized in previous research on perceptions of criers in general – appear more peripheral. By demonstrating that lay conceptions are organized in a prototypical manner, the article offers a more nuanced account of how crying at work is evaluated and shows how these everyday perceptions relate to previous research and theory.

The article by Michael Barthelmäs and colleagues examines links between maladaptive personality traits and various aspects of crying and its outcomes. They investigate relationships between traits from the Personality Inventory for DSM-5 and crying frequency, latency, proneness, affect improvement, and strategic crying, while testing emotion regulation and perceived social support as mediators. Results

from two large studies involving individuals with mental health diagnoses highlight the roles of negative affectivity, disinhibition, antagonism, psychoticism, and detachment in predicting crying and its affective outcomes. They further show how emotion regulation processes and perceived social support mediate these relationships, providing important new insights into crying in the context of individual differences.

Finally, Fabienne Gutjahr and colleagues share their findings and insights from a study on therapists' implicit assumptions about crying in therapy, its perceived roles and functions within the therapeutic process, and the interventions used in response. Participants were therapists from psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, and systemic orientations. Findings indicate that therapists commonly view crying as a marker of critical therapeutic moments, often emphasizing its role in relationship building. They further distinguish between different types of crying, with varying assessments of whether it supports the process or signals resistance and avoidance. The resulting integrative category system provides a conceptual basis for future research and theory development on crying in psychotherapy.

While the topic of adult human emotional crying may seem narrow, its implications and practical relevance are clearly wide-ranging. Accordingly, we hope this special issue will be of interest to readers from diverse backgrounds.

As guest editors, we want to express our gratitude to the contributing authors for submitting their work and for their efforts in preparing their final versions. Similarly, we want to thank the reviewers for dedicating their valuable time and energy to help us achieve the desired quality of the articles. We present a list of the reviewers at the end of the current issue. We also want to express our appreciation to the editor-in-chief and the editorial board for their great support during this endeavor.

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