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There's No Crying in Baseball, or Is There? Male Athletes, Tears, and Masculinity in North America

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Abstract

We explore men's negotiation of emotional expression within larger social discourses around masculinity. Drawing on the phenomenon of men's crying within the competitive sports context, we demonstrate that although the prevailing image of men's emotion is one of constricted expression and experience, inexpressivity is representative neither of typical nor ideal masculinity in contemporary dominant culture. We first review the literature on prevailing cultural beliefs about normative male emotional expression, then focus on literature specific to men's tears. Turning to a discussion of masculinity and sports participation, we offer possible explanations for why counter normative emotional expressions may be particularly prevalent and public in the context of men's competitive sports, despite wider cultural discourses that appear to discourage men's openly expressive behavior.

Keywords
competitive sports, gender, masculinity, tears

The 1992 film *A League of Their Own* is a fictionalized account of one team in the real-life 1940s All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. At one point in a critical game, the right fielder (played by Bitty Schram) blows the Rockford Peaches' lead. Angrily berated by the gruff manager (played by Tom Hanks) she begins to sob because of her mistake. The cursing, exasperated manager loses his temper completely and shouts, "There's no crying in baseball!" The still-popular catchphrase does not, however, capture the reality of tears in baseball—or any other competitive sport.

The scene in *A League of Their Own* focuses on the stereotype-consistent crying behavior of women in sports, but in popular sports media, images of male athletes shedding tears as the result of major victories and defeats are common. Indeed, we are regularly exposed to videos and news headlines about athletes tearing up or weeping on the field and on the sidelines. Recent examples of crying behavior can be found in all types of sports: Michael Jordan upon being inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009 (basketball), Tiger Woods after his 2006 British Open win (golf), Brett Favre during his 2008 retirement speech (football), Iker Casillas after Spain's 2010 World Cup victory (soccer), and Roger Federer after his loss in the 2009 Australian Open final (tennis), to name just a few.

The prevalence of tears in men's competitive sports may, at first glance, seem counterintuitive, and there are two main reasons for this. First, given the association of tears with so-called "weak emotions" (e.g., Bekker & Vingerhoets, 2001), the public expression of sadness (after a loss), or other tear-eliciting emotions (such as joy or pride after a win), is inconsistent with what are typically put forward as prevailing masculine norms for display of emotion in North America (Good, Sherrod, & Dillon, 2000; Pleck, 1995). Second, male competitive sports are especially associated with hegemonic masculinity, for both athletes and spectators (Messner, 1992; Nelson, 1994). Therefore, competitive sports should be an especially unlikely place for supposedly counter normative expressions of emotion to occur.

In this article we explore these seeming contradictions to construct an account of men's negotiation of emotional expression within larger social discourses around masculinity. We draw on the phenomenon of men's crying within the competitive sports context to demonstrate that although the prevailing image of men's emotion is one of constricted emotional expression and experience (e.g., Wong & Rochlen, 2005), inexpressivity is

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representative neither of typical nor of ideal masculinity in contemporary dominant culture. We argue that performing "ideal" male emotion does not, as the prevailing view holds, involve a complete rejection of emotion, but is instead constructed as doing emotion in a way that can be defended as "not feminine." We first review research on prevailing cultural beliefs about normative male emotional expression, and then research specifically related to men and tears. We then turn to a discussion of masculinity and sports participation, with a particular emphasis on how emotion factors into the intersection of the two. Next, we offer possible explanations for why these "counter normative" emotional expressions may be particularly prevalent and public in the context of men's competitive sports, despite wider cultural discourses that appear to discourage men's openly expressive behavior. We conclude by identifying areas for further study related to tears, masculinity, and sport. Given that the majority of research cited in this article has been conducted with North American (U.S. American and Canadian) participants, we restrict our conclusions to these contexts. However, we expect that many aspects of our analyses would apply in other cultural contexts as well. For example, some research and examples we cite are drawn from Western Europe. Other research suggests a close link between sport and masculinity in non-Western cultures (e.g., Archetti, 1998; Morrell, 1998), where athletes are similarly depicted crying in popular media (e.g., Brazilian soccer players after a 2010 World Cup elimination, Indian cricketers after winning the World Cup in 2010). As such, men's crying in competitive sport may be a widespread phenomenon.

Masculinity and Beliefs About Emotional Experience and Expression

Stereotypes of heteronormative masculine inexpressivity have been prevalent in Western cultures for decades (Wong & Rochlen, 2008). Like other gender stereotypes, gender-emotion stereotypes have a prescriptive as well as descriptive function, and most contemporary discussions of heteronormative masculinity emphasize the role of mental "toughness" and emotional reserve (Pleck, 1995). When it comes to masculinity, the dominant message is that felt emotion must be controlled and that open expression of emotion is a sign of femininity, and thus inferiority and weakened masculinity (Fischer, Bekker, Vingerhoets, Becht, & Manstead, 2004). Men are therefore expected to be consistently tough, calm, rational, and in control. Indeed, emotional control is included in Mahalik et al.'s (2003) list of 11 norms that define dominant masculinity in the United States.

Popular beliefs about what is considered gender typical "ideal emotion" manifest themselves early in the lives of young males, taking the form of social pressure towards conformity to these believed norms. Parents of pre-school children, for example, tend to encourage the expression of sadness in their daughters, but not in their sons (Fivush, 1989; Fivush & Buckner, 2000). As Good et al. (2000) point out, boys who cry are quickly reprimanded for their behavior and told that "big boys don't cry," because "crying is for girls" (p. 64). Implicit in this message is the idea that tears are feminine and inconsistent with masculinity, and therefore are unacceptable for boys to display when experiencing pain, hurt, or even joy. Such negative feedback, which can also include being called derogatory terms such as "sissy" and "fag," is aversive, and therefore serves as warning against too open display of feelings. Children themselves seem to have successfully received this message, as school-aged boys who are perceived to cry easily tend to be the least popular students from among their classmates, and boys in general are ashamed of their crying to a greater extent than girls (Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992; Truijers & Vingerhoets, as cited in Fischer et al., 2004). A caveat here is that although gender differences in self-reported crying appear to emerge around the age of 11 (van Tilburg, Unterberg, & Vingerhoets, 2002) and continue to increase with age, it remains unclear whether this difference can be accounted for by decreased self-reported crying of boys or increased reporting by girls (Rottenberg & Vingerhoets, 2012).

Nevertheless, Doyle (1983) notes that the first and most fundamental lesson boys learn in developing a sense of masculinity is to define it in terms of what is "not girl." This general rule applies to what children learn about what it means to experience emotion, what kinds of emotion-related expectations one should develop about oneself (or others) as persons, the signs and symptoms one should rely on to know one's own or someone else's emotion, and how to tell whether an emotion is genuine as well as appropriate to the context.

We can ask, however, whether to be "not girl" means a rejection of emotion entirely: is a lack of emotion really what is most valued in men? After all, the person without emotion is not human. Therein lies the paradox of emotion. Although emotion has typically been associated with femininity and irrational, disorganized behavior (e.g., Solomon, 2008), it is also viewed as essentially human, and in some cases is even seen as a requirement for optimal performance (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992; Warner, Zawadzki, & Shields, 2014).

To negotiate the tricky territory of appropriate emotion, one must be able to show rationality and control as well as emotional authenticity. Shields (2002, 2005) has proposed that an expressive mode in North America that enables an individual to achieve this delicate balance is characterized by controlled expression that telegraphs intense feeling while clearly showing that feelings are not themselves in control of the individual's motivations or behavior. Originally described as "manly emotion" because of its relation to idealized heterosexual masculinity, such displays convey that men are human, feeling beings who are deeply affected by what is happening around them, yet also show that they are able to maintain the emotional control and mental toughness associated with idealized masculinity. Manly emotion is more accurately described as "passionate restraint" because it is an expressive mode valued in women as well as men in circumstances where the individual's general competence and ability to exercise good judgment is at issue. Zawadzki, Warner, and Shields (2013), for example, found that participants rated both inexpressive and "extravagantly expressive" targets as less competent than those who demonstrated passionate restraint in response to a sad situation. A classic example of passionate restraint is tearing up in a sad or moving

situation. The tear signals genuine emotion, and the limited flow indicates a control over those emotions (Vingerhoets, Cornelius, van Heck, & Brecht, 2000). In support of this idea, Warner and Shields (2007) found that in a vignette scenario, a single tear running down the cheek was evaluated more positively than visible crying. Wong, Steinfeldt, LaFollette, and Tsao (2011) came to a similar conclusion in their study on football players' evaluations of other players' crying. Participants in the "tearing up" condition rated crying behavior higher on perceived appropriateness, how often they perceived it to happen, and how likely they would be to cry in the same situation than participants in the sobbing condition.

Overall, it seems that in learning to function within the dominant discourses of masculinity, boys are not encouraged to shut down emotion entirely. Rather, they must learn to reject emotion expression identified with femininity or ineffectual/insubstantial masculinity, and, at the same time, learn how to perform emotion in an acceptably manly way. From this perspective, the "stiff upper lip" is not an indication that emotion is banished, but a signal that feelings are firmly under control. We propose that actual norms of masculine emotion, contrary to culturally shared beliefs about the prevalence of masculine inexpressivity, do not deny the significance of emotion, but instead focus on when and how appropriate masculine emotion should be visible to others (Shields, 2002).

Despite the persistence of beliefs that masculine inexpressivity is a truism (Shields, 2013), a growing body of evidence shows that inexpressivity is neither valued nor typical of men's everyday behavior (Wester, Vogel, Pressly, & Heesacker, 2002). For example, research on social sharing of emotion (verbally relating emotional events to others) consistently shows no gender differences. Across different methods, women and men tend to engage in social sharing 80 to 95% of the time, even for rather mild emotional occurrences (Rimé, 2007). Wong and Rochlen (2005) also point out that the persistent misunderstanding of men's typical expressive behavior may be the result of considering only limited modes of emotional expression in research on men's emotion.

Men and Tears

Before turning to a discussion of men's tears in competitive sports, we must first consider what is known about men's tears more generally. As noted before, within the broader cultural message of "boys don't cry," expectations of masculine inexpressivity are not as universal as the dominant stereotype of masculinity implies. Wetherall and Edley (1999) argue, for example, that to navigate the complexities of masculine expectations, men do not subscribe to any single set of norms for masculinity, but rather choose from among a number of norms that could apply in a given situation. In other words, the performance of masculinity is flexible and fluid, and men are active participants in the construction of masculinity. Despite the messages men receive that crying is incompatible with masculinity, investigation of both crying behavior and how people respond to a tearful individual show that the picture is more complex.

Men's Tears

Identifying individual differences among men that may account for crying behavior is made difficult by the fact that nearly all of this research relies on retrospective self-report. Although self-report may be a good indicator of what people believe to be true about themselves (Shields & Steinke, 2003), self-reports about emotional behavior tend to be heavily influenced by gender-emotion stereotypes; specifically, the more general the question and the further removed in time from the emotional event, the more likely self-reports will be in line with gender-emotion stereotypes (e.g., Else-Quest, Higgins, Allison, & Morton, 2012; La France & Banaji, 1992; Shields, 1991). Furthermore, situational factors also influence men's reported adherence to stereotypic masculine emotion norms (e.g., Jones & Heesacker, 2012). For example, Fischer and Manstead (1998) found that men report less crying to a male experimenter than to a female experimenter. Consistent with other gender research, public situations also elicit more gender stereotypic behavior than private situations. Fischer and Manstead found that when men's crying responses were videotaped and they were told that others would see the tape, men (but not women) reported less crying than when they were asked to describe their responses in writing and were told that no one else would see them.

Men in environments that permit divergence from restrictive masculinity tend to report more frequent crying than men who are not. Bronstein, Briones, Brooks, and Cowan (1996), for example, found that male adolescents who grew up in a household with emotionally expressive and accepting parents reported more gender stereotype-incongruent emotions (including crying) than adolescents who had more emotionally restrictive parents. Similarly, survey research (Ross & Mirowsky, 1984) has shown that non-traditional men (i.e., men who do not subscribe to hegemonic masculine norms) report crying more often than traditional men (who define themselves according to traditional masculine norms). On the other hand, research on cultural variance in crying indicates that gender differences in self-reported crying proneness are greatest in wealthier, more democratic, and feminine countries (van Hemert, van de Vijver, & Vingerhoets, 2011). Other groups of men who report higher frequencies of crying are those with high self-esteem (Vingerhoets, van den Berg, Kortekaas, van Heck, & Croon, 1992), and those who work as therapists (Trezza, Hastrup, & Kim, 1988, as cited in Bekker & Vingerhoets, 2001). Although research on gender and tears shows that women as a group report more frequent crying (e.g., Bekker & Vingerhoets, 1999, 2001; Vingerhoets & Scheirs, 2000), there are also certain situations in which men report crying more frequently than women. Fischer and Manstead (1998), for example, found that men were more likely than women to report crying over a death, the breakup of a relationship, the death of a pet, and at farewells.

In summary, it appears that men's reports about their crying propensity and frequency are affected by both the immediate and the sociocultural environment. As with other gender stereotypic behaviors, individuals are attentive to gendered expectations for how to behave in particular ways at particular times. So crying for the "right" reasons—such as serious situations of loss

over which one does not have control—is deemed appropriately masculine (Fischer & Manstead, 1998).

Responses to Men's Tears

Given the association of crying with femininity and weakness, one might expect that crying men would be evaluated negatively. However, research findings on this subject are mixed, and do not appear to support this conclusion. Consistent with the idea that the expression of emotion actually is an important component of embodied masculinity, research shows that, at least in some situations, men who cry are rated more positively than women. Labott, Martin, Eason, and Berkey (1991), for example, had participants watch a video of either a man or a woman crying in response to a sad movie, and found that both women and men reported feeling more sympathy for the crying man than the crying woman. Results also indicated that criers were considered more emotional, but not more feminine than targets who were laughing or who remained neutral. Warner and Shields (2007), in a vignette study on how gender affects people's perceptions of a target's tears, similarly found that crying men were evaluated more favorably than crying women. Other studies, however, have found that crying men are evaluated more negatively than crying women (e.g., Fischer, 2006) or show no differences in crying evaluations between genders (e.g., Hendriks, Croon, & Vingerhoets, 2008).

The inconsistency across studies in evaluation of men's tears suggests that contextual factors, like those that influence self-reports of crying, should be investigated. That is, the perception of the reason for the tears and the nature of crying (moist eyes versus openly weeping) may predict whether men will be more harshly or more positively judged than women for their tears. Having examined the literature on beliefs about masculine emotion norms as well as men's tears, we now turn to a discussion of men in competitive sports.

Athletics, Tears, and Masculinity

As the opening examples of this article illustrate, both wins and losses in competitive sport seem to be capable of evoking intense emotions in male athletes, and this seems to be true for male spectators as well (Fischer et al., 2004; Shields, 2002). Indeed, unpublished data from Vingerhoets shows that watching sportsmen crying, both in defeat and in victory, frequently evoked tears in men (see Fischer et al., 2004, for a description). As several participants in Walton, Coyle, and Lyon's (2004) qualitative study on masculinity and emotion put it:

> Tom: But it depends what the emotion's about though. 'Cause if it's a football match…
> Craig: That's true yeah. I was hugging complete strangers in Barcelona if truth be known. I was over two seats. Two, everybody was all over the place.
> Andrew: So it's all right to show your emotions at a football match.

As this exchange illustrates, sports is one context in which open emotional expression is considered normal and appropriate for men. Indeed, the "screaming at the tube, slapping raucous high-fives, indulging in loud emotional outbursts" (Nelson, 1994, p. 4) that seem to accompany sports reveal men's expression of emotion that might be seen as over the top in many other contexts. Similarly, Nelson's (1994) contention that a man may become irritable for an entire day if his team loses illustrates that emotion widely believed to be "unmanly" is allowed to pass relatively unnoticed in the competitive sports context.

As for crying athletes themselves, the tears of these men seem to be largely taken in stride by other athletes, fans, and the media. One prominent example comes from Derek Loville, a former San Francisco 49ers running back, who cried regularly before taking to the field on game days. When one of his teammates, Adam Walker, was asked about his reaction to this emotive behavior, the teammate replied that although he found the crying "strange at first," he attributed the emotion to the fact that his teammate simply "loves playing so much" (Lutz, 1999, p. 189). Loville's crying was also treated with respect in the media. For example, the *San Francisco Examiner* published a piece on Loville entitled "49ers Loville Cries Tears of Strength" (Lutz, 1999).

Wong et al. (2011) further show the relative normality and acceptability of tears on the football field. Wong et al. asked competitive college football players to rate vignettes of football players crying on dimensions of appropriateness (how appropriate the behavior was deemed to be given the context), typicality (how frequently participants perceived such behavior to actually occur), and conformity (how likely would participants be to behave the same way if placed in the given scenario), and found that the players, on average, rated crying behavior above the midpoint for all three. Interestingly, players consistently rated scenarios highest on appropriateness and lowest on conformity, indicating that they felt crying was highly appropriate after losing (and to a lesser extent, winning), yet they reported being less likely to engage in this type of behavior themselves. One possible interpretation for this finding is that football players themselves do not object to displays of emotion on the field, but think that others will find it objectionable (and thus wish to withhold their own emotions to some extent).

On the other hand, not all male athletes who cry in public are treated kindly. When quarterback Tim Tebow broke into tears after losing to Alabama in the Southeastern Conference (SEC) final, the reaction was largely negative, with spectators likening Tebow to "a little girl" and a "crybaby" (Wong et al., 2011). Here we see once again that men need to cry the "right way" to be considered manly. One article on the askmen.com website entitled "The Rules for Crying in Sports" tells us that crying after a loss "of course, is unacceptable if that athlete is responsible for the loss" (Schottey, 2013), and goes on to describe Tim Tebow's "horrible" performance in the SEC final. The credibility of askmen.com's piece and its ability to speak for all sports spectators is certainly questionable, yet it seems likely that a player's current performance and status on the team (or as an individual athlete) might affect how others react to his crying. Other possible factors could include team retirement status (is this the last game that an athlete will play with his team?), underdog status (was the player or team expected to win the game?), and frequency of crying (has the player cried over other issues in the past?; Lutz, 1999; Schottey, 2013).

To understand why transgressions of perceived gender norms for emotional expression have become prominent and even celebrated in the competitive sports context, it is useful to understand how competitive sports and masculinity are intertwined in sports culture.

Sports and Masculinity

According to Messner (1992), sport is an institution with structures and values that are closely tied to those of society at large, and as such, is used as a vehicle for socializing boys into the perceived norms and culture of masculinity. Qualities that are emphasized in sports, such as physical strength, aggression, stoicism, and competition, bear a striking resemblance to the norms that are believed to be most valued in men of the Western world (Wong et al., 2011). In fact, of Mahalik et al.'s (2003) 11 qualities that define hegemonic North American masculinity, sport and its surrounding culture arguably promote seven: winning, risk-taking, violence, dominance, playboy (the ability to attract a large number of women), disdain for homosexuals, and pursuit of status, though the applicability of these qualities certainly varies widely by sport and by athlete.

As the only large cultural institution in Western society that remains formally gender segregated, Nelson (1994) further argues that male sports have become cultural bastions of masculinity, in which men come together to celebrate all that is male, and sometimes, deride all that is female. Defining masculinity according to anti-femininity begins early in children's sports careers. Boys who do not play sports are considered "sissies," and the worst insult a young male athlete can receive from his peers is "you throw like a girl" (Nelson, 1994, p. 2). Indeed, Messner's (1992) qualitative interviews with 30 male former athletes revealed that for these men, sport and masculinity were intertwined from the very beginning. Competitive sports offered a way for the boys to form ties with male peers, as well as to gain respect from older males. Of particular relevance in the men's stories were their fathers, who were often absent or emotionally distant. The men described how they were propelled to excel in sports because of a desire to win the love and affection of their fathers, and to live up to the power and status of the older men. Sports were also used by these athletes to seek approval and affection from male peers, older brothers, and later in their careers, the crowd and media. Unfortunately, this validation and approval was seen as contingent on performing well and winning, and the men therefore developed a conditional sense of self-worth, in that beating the "other guys" was seen as the key to connecting with others in the athlete's life. Messner concludes that, as a result, the men developed "positional identities," in which they located themselves on a hierarchy above or beneath others in their social and athletic circles, and judged themselves in relation to these other males.

Perhaps not surprisingly, masculinity continues to be important in the sporting careers of adult men. Nelson (1994) contends that those who are good at sports get instant masculine credibility, and even nonathletes who associate themselves with sport through team loyalty can feel as though they were part of the dominant masculine culture. This is especially true for what Nelson calls "manly sports": North American football, basketball, baseball, boxing, ice hockey, wrestling, and soccer, all of which are particularly useful for men who wish to define their masculinity through sport. In these sports, Messner (1992) argues that aggression is highly valued. Brutal hits, for example, are considered displays of dominant masculinity, and thus not "violent" as long as they are carried out within the rules of the game. He further suggests that public masculinity is regulated not just through anti-femininity, but also through projections of homophobia. Men in sports who are too emotionally open with their peers, for example, run the risk of being seen as a "fag." Masculinity within sport is constructed as a place where tenderness, softness, or weakness must be suppressed at all costs, and this often includes denial of physical pain and continuing to play despite injury. How is it, then, even in this context of hypermasculinity, where the dominant discourse seems to be one of emotional control, that male athletes find room to shed tears in victory and in defeat?

Athletics, Emotion, and the Construction of Masculine Identity

Paradoxically, although men's sports are constructed as highly tough, physical, and masculine domains, and it would therefore be expected that proscriptions against emotional display would be heightened and strictly enforced within this context, it may be precisely because sports are so crucial to the construction of athletes' (and spectators') masculine identities that they become a prominent site for the expression of emotion. Kottler (1996) proposes that men (as well as women) cry as a result of feelings that affect components of their core identity, and for male athletes, two of these are "athlete" and "man" (Adler & Adler, 1991; Messner, 1992). Identities relating to sport and masculinity are highly interwoven, such that a loss may represent more than just failure at a game. Most significantly, defeat may represent a loss of masculine credibility, as well as a break in an athlete's sense of (conditional) self-worth, particularly in relation to male peers (Messner, 1992). Ultimately, even though it may seem that sports institutions would promote dominant discourses of the inexpressive male as the ideal, in practice, the interconnected nature of sport and masculinity make it a powerful site for emotional involvement and expression.

The intensity of a player's response to wins and losses may also stem in part from the emotional management of the coach. The emotional aspects of coaching are not often acknowledged as being part of a coach's duties. Research, however, indicates that coaches play a major role in manipulating and regulating players' emotions, ostensibly in service of the team and the athlete. In Adler and Adler's (1991) participant observation study on male college freshman basketball players, for example, the authors remarked:

> He [the coach] had to manipulate them [the players] to the precise point where they were committed enough to their athletic role and future that they held it as their first priority and sacrificed everything to it. At the same time, he had to keep them from entertaining dreams so grandiose

> that they neglected their classes and university-related responsibilities because they were dreaming of jumping to the NBA every day. (p. 80)

As a result of such emotional management, which encourages athletes to construct their entire lives around sport and to sacrifice everything for the game, athletics may become such an integral part of players' identities that a loss becomes devastating. In competitive contexts, losses may represent not only a personal failure, but also a dent in one's athletic dreams and career. As one player in Adler and Adler's (1991) study commented:

> You work so hard. He [Coach] say, "Son, you keep this up, you're a first round NBA player"… Coach keeps that idea in your head that you could be the next Michael Jordan, you've got this and that. He manipulate you in that way. A lot. (p. 82)

This construction of a male athlete's identity around sport is also facilitated by the fact that competitive athletes may spend the majority of their time with teammates and other athletes, meaning that their social world becomes engulfed by sport (Adler & Adler, 1991). For this reason, crying in front of one's teammates after a major loss may be acceptable because teammates, having gone through the same trials and tribulations as the player who is crying, may be the only people who understand the intensity and meaning of the emotion being experienced (Adler & Adler, 1991).

As for crying that results from winning a big game, work from Lutz's (2002) historical review of a film genre referred to as the "male weepie" may shed light on the source of men's emotion and the meaning of their tears. The production of these melodramatic films began in 1931 with the making of *The Champ*, and according to Lutz, their popularity reached a peak in the 1950s. The explicit goal of male weepies was to elicit an emotional response (particularly tears) in men, just as the "women's films" of the 1930s and 1940s were produced with the intention of making women cry. In the essay, Lutz argues that the "flashpoint" for tears in these films was centered around fulfilling the performance of masculinity. Crying occurs when the main character recovers his masculinity after overcoming a challenge relating to his role as a provider, husband, or some other social role considered central to masculine identity. What elicits emotion in men, it seems, is when a character rises back to the glory of living in accordance with the normative expectations of hegemonic masculinity, after experiencing a temporary lapse into social disruption.

Drawing a parallel between these male-targeted melodramas and sport, it seems that competitive sport may provide men with the modern-day equivalent of a "male weepie": players battle through countless tribulations and setbacks on the field to achieve the ultimate masculine success, which is represented by a championship win. As Nelson (1994) puts it, "games become symbolic struggles, passion plays reenacted daily to define, affirm, and celebrate manliness" (p. 5).

Summary and Future Directions

In summary, we review evidence suggesting that despite seemingly broad cultural messages of "boys don't cry," norms for hegemonic masculinity do not proscribe tears altogether; rather, crying must be done in the "right," masculine way (Shields, 2002, 2005). Specifically, emotion is not to be expressed in ways that are stereotypically associated with girls, women, or femininity. Indeed, we find that norms for masculinity are more fluid and flexible than they appear: when signaling through tears that their emotion is genuinely felt but under control, for example, crying men may be evaluated more favorably than crying women. Furthermore, a number of contextual variables (e.g., culture, family environment) influence men's reported crying behavior. These ideas are supported by the example of men's crying in the competitive sports context. We have argued that, contrary to what is widely believed, men's sports are not immune from the expression of supposedly counterstereotypical emotions, but are rather a prominent site for such emotions precisely because they are so strongly linked to important aspects of masculine identity. Thus, as long as tears are expressed in the "correct," nonfeminine way, tears in competitive sports can be considered an acceptable and normal part of the game.

Although this review represents a beginning point in research on tears, masculinity, and sport, there are many questions that remain. For example, future research could investigate the developmental aspects of crying in sports. Is there a developmental trajectory to the frequency and contexts in which tears occur, in sadness and disappointment as well as joy and celebration? Similarly, future research could examine continuity and change over time (historically) in norms for acceptable displays of masculine emotion. Cross-cultural data will also be important. Does the intersection of sport, masculinity, and tears operate similarly in non-Western cultures? Finally, future research could investigate important moderating variables related to how male athletes' tears are perceived by others. Experimental research on this topic could help to examine, for example, which factors (e.g., past crying behavior, game performance) are important in determining whether male athletes' tears are evaluated positively or negatively.

Conclusion

Through examination of gender and emotion research, as well as images of prominent male professional athletes, it is clear that the expression of emotion is an accepted and even essential component of performing masculinity, despite popular beliefs to the contrary. Although emotion stereotypes and discourses of masculinity in both the professional sports context and society more broadly emphasize the importance of inexpressivity, seemingly above all else, the prized position of male athletes such as Derek Loville who cry "correctly" indicate that these beliefs do not capture the nuances of how emotion is actually constructed and performed within hegemonic masculinity. As prototypes of ideal manliness, male athletes enact manly emotion on a public stage, but what is seen here can be applied to men in many other contexts. The presence of passionate, controlled emotion, rather than the complete absence of emotion, portrays ideal masculinity. So yes, there is crying in baseball, as well as in other competitive sports—and it is likely to be around for some time to come.

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