



# WHAT DID YOU PREGONCEIVE BEFORE YOU CONCEIVED?

## THE EFFECTS OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ATTITUDES ON MISCARRIAGE

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### Introduction

Historically, the traditional role for women has been defined as mother and housewife, and the traditional role for men has been that of protector and material provider (Sommer, 2007). However, in recent years, more women are returning to the work force and more fathers are choosing to share parenting roles with mothers (Stephens et al, 2011). How do these shifts in gender role attitudes potentially impact grief following a pregnancy loss? We studied the effects of these traditional gender attitudes on wives and husbands in their grieving process after having a miscarriage. We were interested in learning if the traditional gender role attitudes wives and husbands prepossessed before they had children were correlated with these levels of grief. Additionally, studies show that women tend to have more intense levels of grief following a miscarriage than men (Boyd, 2019). Thus, we explored these research questions:

1. How do gender role attitudes affect levels of grief when one experiences a pregnancy loss?
2. Does the sex of the parent affect their levels of grief?
3. How does a planned vs. unplanned pregnancy affect levels of grief?
4. Does the gestational age of the loss affect coping and levels of grief?

### Methods

- This sample was drawn from Wave 2 of CREATE
- 57 couples experienced a pregnancy loss (n=57 wives, n=47 husbands).
- **Grief** was measured using the short form of the Perinatal Grief Scale (Potvin et al., 1989).
- **Traditional gender role attitudes** were examined using seven items from the Family Attitudes, Social Participation, and Work questions given on the National Survey of Families and Households.
- **Planned pregnancy** was measured using an item created for the CREATE project.
- **Gestational age of the loss** was measured by asking, "What was your gestational age at the loss of your pregnancy (in weeks)?" (Potvin et al., 1989).

Table 1. OLS Regression Results Exploring The Effects of Traditional Gender Role Attitudes, Sex of the Parent, Unplanned Pregnancy, and Gestational Age of the Loss on Perinatal Grief

	Wife Grief b (se)	Husband Grief b (se)
Wife Traditional Attitudes	.070 (.05) <sup>+</sup>	.096 (.06) <sup>+</sup>
Husband Traditional Attitudes	-.115 (.05) <sup>*</sup>	-.042 (.06) <sup>+</sup>
Wife Planned Pregnancy	1.03 (.34) <sup>**</sup>	-.378 (.06) <sup>*</sup>
Husband Planned Pregnancy	-.074 (.33) <sup>+</sup>	1.01 (.52) <sup>+</sup>
Gestational Age of the Loss	-.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)

Note. <sup>+</sup>p < .10, <sup>\*</sup>p < .05, <sup>\*\*</sup>p < .01

### Results

The OLS regression analysis revealed that:

- Traditional gender role attitudes for husbands and wives approached significance, but were not statistically significant.
- However, a husband's traditional gender role attitudes were associated with his wife's grief.
- Wife and husband grief scores are correlated.
- If pregnancy was planned, both wives and husbands reported higher levels of grief.
- The gestational age of the loss of the pregnancy was not statistically associated with grief for wives or husbands.



### Discussion

- When experiencing a miscarriage, grief is most associated with if the couple was expecting to have a child.
- Less traditional fathers have partners that grieve more. Fathers who are less traditional are likely to be more committed to sharing care for their child. So, having a partner who was committed to sharing care makes women more likely to grieve their loss.
- The wives' traditional gender attitudes established before having a child did not affect the amount of grief experienced by the wife.
- The time of the loss during the pregnancy did not affect the level of grieving. This supports literature that states mothers feel a connection to their child at any point of growth (Boyd, 2019).
- Thus, expecting to be a parent and active nurturer results in higher levels of grief.

### References

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