

Examining fathers' grief after miscarriage

March 12 2019, by Madeline Vann



William & Mary School of Education doctoral counseling students conducted a study on the often overlooked grief experienced by fathers after a miscarriage. Credit: W&M School of Education

Fathers' grief after a miscarriage is often overlooked. A trio of doctoral counseling students in the William & Mary School of Education set out to rectify that, and published the results of their interviews with fathers in a 2018 issue of *The Family Journal*.

The team interviewed 11 married fathers who had experienced a miscarriage.

"I have found that much of the writing within counseling research and

also within grief and loss literature focuses on women and mothers. As such, I wanted to fill in this gap," said Nathaniel Wagner Ph.D. '18, now an assistant professor of counseling at Indiana State University. "I have not personally experienced miscarriage, but many of my friends and [family](#) have. I see this as an area of disenfranchised grief for both of the parents and I want to bring a voice to this loss."

Wagner and his coauthors, Victor Tuazon Ph.D. '18 and Colin Vaughn '13, M.Ed. '15, Ph.D. '19, identified several common themes in the fathers' interviews. They concluded that several factors impacted fathers' grief, including the meaning and expectations fathers had for fatherhood, whether they had observed movements such as heartbeats and whether the miscarriage occurred at home or in a more controlled medical setting.

Finally, the article identifies, through the fathers' observations, ways in which people around them were helpful. The fathers appreciated written notes or spoken words from other people who had been through miscarriage, as well as friends, family and employers who offered logistical support such as extensions on projects, flexible scheduling and assistance with meals and family needs. At the same time, many fathers also said they felt that they needed to be strong to support their wives and that their grief was often overlooked by friends and family who were concerned for the mothers' [grief](#) and loss.

The authors suggested that more research is needed with a wider range of families to understand how fathers experience miscarriage and what men need in order to grieve these losses. Additionally, they hoped that this preliminary research would be useful to counselors who are working with families that have experienced [miscarriage](#) by deepening the understanding of fathers' loss.

Wagner said he plans to include work in his career that explores "the

experience of loss with other non-normative families, providing trainings and psychoeducation to families, and developing and examining treatment interventions for [fathers](#) and parents experiencing this loss."

Provided by The College of William & Mary

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