

# The influence of gender related factors on judgements about bereaved individuals



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## Abstract

This study examined the influence of gender typicality of grief behaviour, gender of the bereaved and gender of the respondent on judgements of peers about bereaved individuals. The study included 132 Dutch respondents with 95 females and 37 males aged 18-68 years who had to read vignettes about men and women expressing gender-typical and gender-atypical grief behaviour. Judgements were measured by answering questions about empathy, appropriateness and adaptation. Results showed that, a) gender-typical grief behaviour is seen as more appropriate than gender-atypical grief behaviour, b) peers expect better adaptation when the bereaved express more restoration-oriented grief behaviour than loss-oriented grief behaviour, c) females find grief behaviour more appropriate than males, d) females have more empathy for bereaved individuals, e) grieving women are seen as more appropriate than grieving men, and f) individuals have more empathy for bereaved individuals of the opposite sex. The results show all three gender related factors influencing judgements about grief behaviour in different ways. Limitations and implications for further research are discussed.

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## Introduction

Scientific literature presumes gender affecting bereavement and grief (Doka & Martin, 2011; Martin & Doka, 2000; Stroebe & Schut, 1998; Stroebe, Stroebe, & Schut, 2001). It appears men and women express different grief behaviours after the loss of a significant other. Overall research shows patterns of women seeking more support, use more emotional strategies and sharing their emotions with others. Men tend to avoid emotions more, show more anger and express their grief less to others (Doka & Martin, 2011; Gilbar & Dagan, 1995; Martin & Doka, 2000; Matud, 2004; Schwab, 1996; Tamres & Helgeson, 2002).

According to the Dual Process Model (DPM), these gender differences can be explained by men and women preferring different coping strategies (Stroebe & Schut, 1999, 2010). Coping refers to processes, strategies or styles to manage the situation in which grief places the individual. It is assumed to impact on levels of adaptation to grief (Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2005), to differ among gender and to affect behaviour (Doka & Martin, 2011; Tweed & Conway, 2006). The DPM has loss-oriented coping with grief on one side and restoration-oriented coping with grief on the other side, with oscillation between the two patterns. Loss-orientation refers to more loss-oriented coping strategies. It includes feeling and expressing the distress, rumination about the deceased, yearning, crying and longing for the deceased. Restoration-orientation refers to more restoration-oriented coping strategies. It includes actively focussing on problems and issues associated with loss. For instance, dealing with practical issues, the future and focussing on the new role a person has in life (Doughty, 2009; Meij et al., 2008; Stroebe & Schut, 2001, 2010). A longitudinal study following parents who recently lost their child confirmed women grieving more loss-oriented and men grieving more restoration-oriented (Meij et al., 2008).

Men and women preferring different coping strategies is one possible explanation for gender differences in expressing grief behaviour. Other contributions could be gender differences in emotion expression (Fischer, Mosquera, van Vianen, & Manstead, 2004; Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 1998), gender differences in personality (Doka & Martin, 2011; Taga, Friedman, & Martin, 2009) or gender differences in socially constructed norms and expectancies about grief behaviour (Costa, Hall, & Stewart, 2007; Walter, 2000, 2006).

Every culture and society has norms that proscribe the proper and acceptable way for men and women to grieve (Walter, 2006). They are deeply gendered (Creighton et al., 2013; Martin & Doka, 2000; Walter, 2000, 2006) and create clear expectations about bereaved men and women grieving in a certain way that is appropriate (Costa et al., 2007; Walter, 2000). It is hypothesized that expectations affect peers' judgement about the functioning of the bereaved (Kubitz, Thornton, & Robertson, 1989; Waldrop, 2011). In fear of a negative judgement, bereaved individuals can feel pressured to grieve in a way that is expected (Breen & O'Connor, 2010; Costa et al., 2007; Neimeyer, Baldwin, & Gillies, 2006; Rieker & Bird, 2000; Waldrop, 2007; Walter, 2000). For instance, men feeling pressure to show more restoration-oriented grief behaviour so they are not to be seen as dependent or feminine. Women

feeling pressure to show more loss-oriented grief behaviour so they are not to be seen as insensitive or uncaring (Golden, 1996; Versalle & McDowell, 2005).

There is contradicting evidence concerning negative judgements on base of gender typicality of grief behaviour. One study conducted by Versalle and McDowell (2005) suggests that bereaved individuals should not feel pressured. In this study, gender-typical and gender-atypical grief behaviours were not differently rated on levels of sympathy and appropriateness. However, findings of Kubitz et al. (1989) do confirm the fear of the bereaved. People rated gender-typical grief behaviour as more appropriate and therefore as more attractive.

In a recent systematic review of Logan, Thornton, Kane, and Breen (2018), contradicting evidence was found for two other factors that influence judgements. First of all, there are mixed results regarding gender of the bereaved. According to White and Stillion (1988), bereaved women receive more sympathy than men and other studies indicate that people are more willing to interact with bereaved women (Kubitz et al., 1989; Penman, Breen, Hewitt, & Prigerson, 2014). However, two other studies found no effect of gender of the bereaved on response outcome (Calhoun, Selby, & Walton, 1985; Versalle & McDowell, 2005).

Secondly, gender of the respondent appears to be a determinant that influence judgements as well. Versalle and McDowell (2005) found females giving more sympathy than males to grieving people. It is hypothesized that women have a greater empathic disposition and therefore emphasize more with others (Rueckert & Naybar, 2008). This finding corresponds with a study of Knight, Elfenbein, and Messina-Soares (1998) where females seem to be more willing to provide bereaved individuals with more comfort and more opportunities to ventilate. In another study, female respondents indicated greater intentions to support bereaved individuals and expected a more intense grief reaction (Logan, 2018). Logan et al. (2018) summarized in their systematic review that ‘‘compared with women, men expected less distress and faster adaptation to the loss and endorsed more inappropriate and unhelpful behaviours towards the bereaved’’ (p.110).

Finally, contradicting results are found for a possible interaction between gender of the respondent and gender of the bereaved. It appears women have more positive attitudes towards females, also called own gender preference (Rudman & Goodwin, 2004), whereas men do not have a preference for either gender (Nosek & Banaji, 2002; Richeson & Ambady, 2001). Three other studies concluded otherwise and found men rating their own gender lower on sympathy and less favourably than they rate females (Glick et al., 2014; Vonk & Olde-Monnikhof, 1998; White & Stillion, 1988).

To summarize, two different possible explanations are given for men and women expressing different grief behaviour. First of all, it could be that bereaved men and women prefer different coping strategies. Where grieving men use more restoration-oriented coping strategies and grieving women use more loss-oriented coping strategies. Secondly, it appears that every culture or society has norms about the appropriate way to grieve and these expectations differ for men and women. In turn these beliefs influence predictions of peers about the bereaved and make grieving individuals fear a negative

judgement. Therefore, they express grief behaviour that is socially seen as appropriate for their gender. At last, three factors are discussed that possibly influence judgements, being gender typicality of grief behaviour, gender of the bereaved and gender of the respondent.

### *Current study*

Due to the contradicting evidence, the aim of this study is to examine if gender typicality of grief behaviour, gender of the bereaved and gender of the respondent affect peers' judgements about grief behaviour. Judgements will consist out of the amount of empathy peers feel towards the bereaved, how appropriate they think the behaviour is and how they think the bereaved will adapt in the nearby future.

Appropriateness is a commonly used measurement outcome examining responses to bereaved individuals (Kubitz et al., 1989; Versalle & McDowell, 2005) and will be used to examine how appropriate peers find gender-typical and gender-atypical grief behaviour. As discussed, norms about the appropriate way to grieve are strongly gendered, what makes appropriateness a fitting measurement outcome for examining gender related factors influencing judgements. Although empathy is not often used, it is a strong indicator of judgement and social support (Hoffman, 1982; Loewenstein & Small, 2007). It is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference and to place oneself in another's position (Davis, 2018). Therefore, empathy will be used as a second measurement outcome examining judgements about grief. Finally, adaptation is used as a third measurement outcome. With peers having clear time related expectations about adaptation to bereavement, it is useful to examine if these predictions depend on gender and different grief behaviours.

### *Hypotheses*

Firstly, it is expected that peers will judge gender-typical grief behaviour of both sexes higher on empathy, appropriateness and adaptation than gender-atypical grief behaviour. Overall literature supports the existence of gender-typical grief behaviour by men and women expressing grief behaviour according to gender related patterns. Scientific literature also supports peers having clear gender related expectations about the appropriate way to grieve that affect judgements about the bereaved. We assume these expectations to be based on behaviour that is more often expressed by men and women. Therefore, we expect the norms of peers about grief behaviour to correspond better with gender-typical grief behaviour.

Secondly, studies indicate females rating grief behaviour more positive and providing bereaved with more comfort and support. Together with the assumption about women having a greater empathic disposition, it is hypothesized that females will rate grief behaviour with more empathy, as more appropriate and with better adaptation than males.

Thirdly, it is expected that respondents will rate grief behaviour of women higher on empathy, appropriateness and adaptation than grief behaviour of men. This is expected for both male and female respondents. Men appear to devalue their own gender and according to overall research, women tend to express their grief more and more intense than men, including crying and sharing it with others. Therefore, we assume grief behaviour of women to be more familiar to peers. In turn, familiarity increases empathy and expectancies about appropriateness (Lalljee & White, 1982; Preston & De Waal, 2002). We hypothesize that bereaved women are easier to empathize with, their behaviour is seen as more appropriate and leads to better expectations about adaptation.

## Method

### *Design*

This study had a 2 x 2 x 2 design: gender of the bereaved (men vs. women) x gender of the respondent (men vs. women) x grief behaviour (gender-typical vs. gender-atypical). This resulted in a total of eight groups and four exposure measurements. In this study, the independent variables were grief behaviour, gender of the bereaved and gender of the respondent. All respondents were exposed to a fixed manipulation in two of the four case vignettes. The order of the vignettes was non-random and locked. The dependent variables included ratings on empathy, appropriateness and expected adaptation. The questions were the same for the different vignettes, with a randomization in order and an adjustment of the target name. The study was conducted online. By means of online surveying, quantitative data were gathered.

### *Respondents and procedure*

*Recruitment.* Respondents were recruited through a variety of strategies during two weeks. An anonymous link was shared on social media, being WhatsApp, Facebook pages and LinkedIn. Flyers were spread at public places using a shared anonymous QR code. The public places were located in Utrecht being the train station, the shopping mall and Utrecht Science Park the Uithof.

*Information and informed consent.* Respondents received information about the aim and content of this survey, the duration (15 minutes), the confidentiality of the data and an informed consent about their participation. After agreeing with this, respondents were still aloud to decide at any time during the survey to stop.

*Criteria.* For this study, the selected research population were Dutch adults living in the Netherlands. This criterion was applied because of the influence culture and society have on coping strategies and grief behaviour. Respondents also had to be able to read Dutch, define their gender by either being a man or a woman and being able to fill in the survey online using the internet.

*Final sample.* Only respondents that completed the online survey and that met the other criteria were included in the final sample. One response violated the multivariate outlier assumption

with a Mahalanobis distance value greater than 16.27 (19.12) and was excluded from the sample. This resulted in a total study population of 132 respondents.

### *Instruments*

*Vignettes.* Four vignettes were composed presenting either gender-typical or gender-atypical grief behaviour. This grief behaviour was based on the literature about the DPM (Stroebe and Schut, 1999; 2001; 2010). This model is based on the coping strategies and grief behaviour of Western individuals. Two vignettes described gender-typical grief behaviour of a man and a woman. Two other vignettes described gender-atypical grief behaviour of a man and a woman. Examples of the vignettes can be found in the appendices.

To provide respondents with a complete image and to reduce the effect of imagination, background variables were used. To keep the conditions as homogenous as possible, the background variables were kept neutral, equal and comparable. All four bereaved individuals were around the same age (61-66 years old), had typical Dutch names, had lost their spouse through cancer around six months ago, had grown up children, were married for a significant amount of years and showed comparable gender-typical or gender-atypical grief behaviour.

To prevent carry-over effects, the order of the vignettes was non-random and locked. This prevented two vignettes of the same gender being followed up by one or another. Therefore, each respondent received the following vignette order: man/gender-typical grief behaviour, woman/gender-typical grief behaviour, man/gender-atypical grief behaviour, woman/gender-atypical.

*Ratings on empathy, appropriateness and adaptation.* Participants rated each vignette on empathy, appropriateness and expected adaptation. For each of these three categories, four statements were composed equally divided into two positive and two negative formulated statements to reduce satisfying responses that cause an acquiescent bias. This resulted in a total of twelve statements for each vignette, for example "I don't think this behaviour is appropriate" and "In this situation, the behaviour of Daan is appropriate". The statements were randomized in order to minimize a question order bias. The questions were customized with the name of the bereaved described in the vignette to prevent carry-over effects. The respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = "completely disagree" and 5 = "completely agree". To prevent missing data, all statements had to receive an answer before respondents could go to the next question and complete the survey.

*Demographic questions.* After completing the four vignettes and a total of 28 questions, respondents received two demographic questions, including gender and age.

*Qualtrics.* Qualtrics is a web-based surveying software. It was used to compose and disseminate the survey.

### Data analysis

All data were statistically analysed using IBM SPSS version 25. To validate the required sample size, an a priori power analysis was conducted. With multiple dependent (empathy, appropriateness, adaptation) and independent variables (grief behaviour, gender respondent, gender bereaved), a required sample size was conducted with an a-priori power analysis of using a repeated measures MANOVA. To receive a power of .8, an effect size of 0.25, using an alpha error probability of .05 and with a total of eight groups and four measurements, a total sample of 120 participants is required. Three repeated measures MANCOVA's were conducted with gender of the respondent (men vs. women) as a between-subject variable and gender of the bereaved (men vs. women) and typicality of grief behaviour (gender-typical vs. gender-atypical) as within-subject variables. Eventually, a paired sample t-test was used to compare total means of gender typicality of grief behaviour, gender of the bereaved and gender of the respondent.

## Results

### Descriptives

Table 1 provides descriptives of the studied sample, including the distribution of age and gender.

Table 1

#### Descriptive statistics of respondents

	<i>n</i>	Age <hr/> <i>M (SD)</i>
Men	37	29.51 (11.56)
Women	95	29.81 (13.03)
Total	132	29.73 (12.59)

### Gender typicality of grief behaviour

Main significant effects were found for gender typicality of grief behaviour on appropriateness,  $F(1, 130) = 8.61, p = .004$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ . Gender-typical grief behaviour ( $M = 4.01, SD = 0.05$ ) was significantly rated higher on appropriateness than gender-atypical grief behaviour ( $M = 3.86, SD = 0.06$ ). No significant effects were found for grief behaviour on empathy and adaptation. The hypothesis that gender-typical grief behaviour was rated higher on empathy, appropriateness and adaptation than gender-atypical grief behaviour was confirmed for appropriateness.

Results showed an interaction between gender of the bereaved and gender typicality of grief behaviour on adaptation,  $F(1, 130) = 58.97, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .31$ , where bereaved men

expressing gender-typical grief behaviour ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 0.07$ ) were rated higher on adaptation than men expressing gender-atypical grief behaviour ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 0.07$ ). Bereaved women expressing gender-atypical grief behaviour were rated higher on adaptation ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ ) than women expressing gender-typical grief behaviour ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 0.07$ ). This interaction is shown in Figure 1. There was no interaction between gender of the bereaved and gender typicality of grief behaviour on empathy and appropriateness. The hypothesis that gender-typical grief behaviour of both sexes would be rated higher than gender-atypical grief behaviour was only confirmed for bereaved men in combination with adaptation. The opposite appeared for bereaved women who were rated higher on adaptation for gender-atypical grief behaviour.

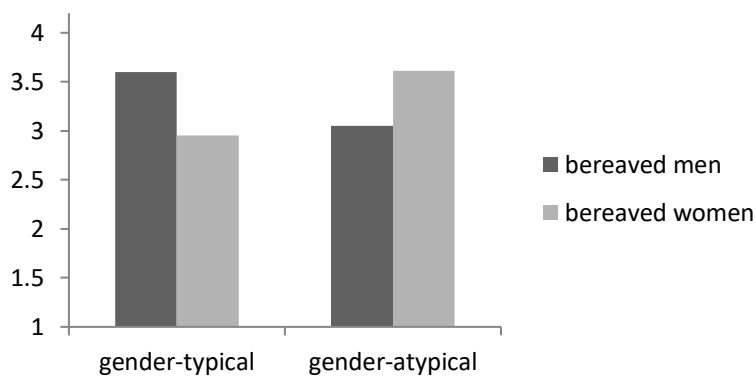


Figure 1. Expected adaptation for bereaved men and women expressing gender-typical and gender-atypical grief behaviour.

#### *Gender of the respondent.*

Main significant effects were found for gender of the respondent on empathy,  $F(1, 130) = 6.44$ ,  $p = .012$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$  and appropriateness,  $F(1, 130) = 12.74$ ,  $p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .09$ . As shown in Figure 2, female respondents rated grief behaviour significantly higher on empathy ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ) and appropriateness ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.05$ ) than male respondents on empathy ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) and appropriateness ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ ). No significant effect was found for gender of the respondent on adaptation. The hypothesis that female respondents would rate grief behaviour higher than males on empathy, appropriateness and adaptation was confirmed for empathy and appropriateness.



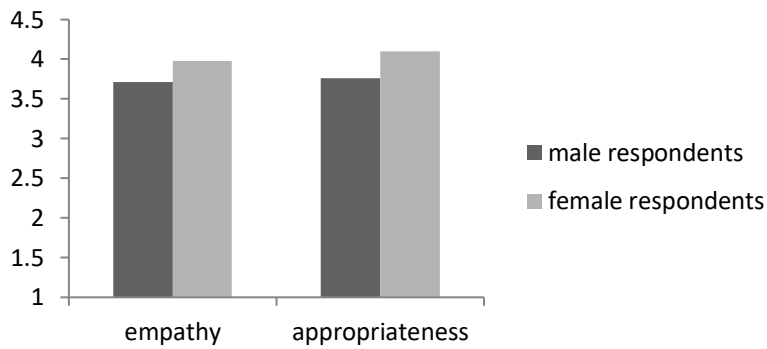


Figure 2. Respondents rating grief behaviour on empathy and appropriateness.

#### *Gender of the bereaved*

A main significant effect was found for gender of the bereaved on appropriateness,  $F(1, 130) = 7.45$ ,  $p = .007$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$  with respondents rating bereaved women ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 3.87$ ) significant higher than bereaved men ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.05$ ). No significant effects were found for gender of the bereaved on empathy and adaptation. The hypothesis that respondents would rate bereaved women higher on empathy, appropriateness and adaptation than bereaved men was only confirmed for appropriateness.

#### *Gender of the respondent and gender of the bereaved*

Interactions were found between gender of the respondent and gender of the bereaved on empathy,  $F(1, 130) = 4.93$ ,  $p = .028$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ . As shown in Figure 3, respondents rated bereaved individuals of the opposite sex ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ ) higher on empathy than bereaved individuals of their own sex ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ ). No interactions were found between gender of the respondent and gender of the bereaved on appropriateness and adaptation. The hypothesis that both male and female respondents would rate bereaved women higher on empathy, appropriateness and adaptation than grief behaviour of men was only confirmed for male respondents on empathy.

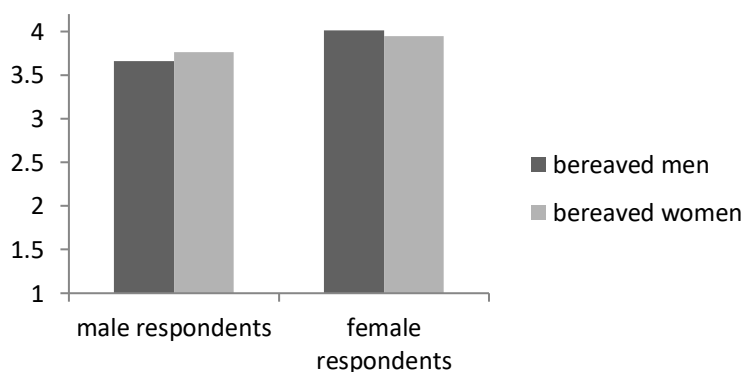


Figure 3. Respondents rating bereaved of the same sex and the opposite sex on empathy.

### *Comparing total means*

Finally, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the total means of empathy, appropriateness and adaptation on grief behaviour and gender of the respondent. Significant results were shown for appropriateness on grief behaviour,  $t(131) = 2.66$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $d = .20$ , with gender-typical grief behaviour ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) rated 0.12 higher on appropriateness than gender-atypical grief behaviour ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ). Significant results were also found for appropriateness on gender of the respondent  $t(131) = -2.24$ ,  $p = .027$ ,  $d = -.16$ , with females ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) rated 0.09 higher than males ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ). There were no significant results for empathy or adaptation.

## **Discussion**

### *Key findings*

This study provides information about the influence of gender related factors on judgements about grief behaviour. Evidence suggests gender-typical grief behaviour is seen as more appropriate, peers expect better adaptation when the bereaved expresses restoration-oriented grief behaviour, females find grief behaviour more appropriate and have more empathy for bereaved individuals, grieving women are seen as more appropriate and individuals have more empathy for bereaved individuals of the opposite sex.

### *Discussion of key findings*

First of all, peers see gender-typical grieving as more appropriate. This finding corresponds with expectations and scientific literature (Costa et al., 2007; Walter, 2000) but is in contrast with findings of Versalle and McDowell (2005). Where Versalle and McDowell (2005) described grief behaviour according to instrumental and intuitive grief patterns, this study used patterns of loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping. The vignettes used in both studies could therefore describe different gender-(a)typical grief behaviours what could have caused different judgements about appropriateness.

Although gender-atypical grief behaviour is seen as less appropriate, peers don't expect worse adaptation or feel less empathy towards the bereaved. This means that bereaved expressing gender-atypical grief behaviour will not receive less emotional support. However, additional research is needed to see how the amount of appropriateness influences the interaction between peers and the bereaved, for instance on other aspects of social support. If bereaved receive less social support when their grief behaviour is seen as less appropriate, clinicians should strengthen bereaved in their individual coping style to help them deal with this judgement.

Where gender-typical grief behaviour is seen as more appropriate, individuals expect better and faster adaptation for both sexes when they express more restoration-oriented grief behaviour. Restoration-orientation includes more components that focus on a life without the deceased, such as

actively focusing on problems and issues associated with loss, the future and the new role a person has in life. Loss-orientation is more directed on the deceased and the experience of the loss and less on a future without the deceased (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). This difference in focus possibly explains why peers expect worse adaptation with loss-oriented behaviour. Although evidence suggest oscillation between the two coping patterns to be the best predictor of adaptation to bereavement (Stroebe & Schut, 1999), peers expect otherwise. This means for clinicians, loved ones and bereaved women, not to worry about adaptation if women don't cry as much as expected because there appears to be no consensus between science and society about the best way to grieve.

Secondly, this study found females having more empathy for bereaved individuals and females see grief behaviour as more appropriate. It corresponds with the study of Versalle and McDowell (2005), with literature about women having a greater empathic disposition (Rueckert & Naybar, 2008) and women being more likely to provide comfort and social support (Reevy & Maslach, 2001). Findings of Logan et al. (2018) suggest that men may recognize and respond differently than women to the grief of others based on their own natural grieving style and whether they have been socialized to experience grief and loss in a certain way. It is possible that men use these factors as standards to evaluate grief behaviour more than they use empathy and appropriateness. Research is needed to examine how this affects bereaved people with a social network consisting out of more males than females. Clinicians should take into account that those individuals might need more emphasizing or more social support from other recourses, such as support groups.

No gender differences were found on adaptation, suggesting men and women have similar expectations about adaptation to grief. Costa et al. (2007) found men and women having clear expectations concerning the appropriate duration of grief, providing evidence that time is an important factor in shaping norms about adaptation to bereavement. When examining expectations about adaptation, time and coping behaviours appear to be more important than gender. A new question arises when bereavement exceeds the expected period of time. Will this affect the amount of social support bereaved receive?

Thirdly, findings show men and women feeling more empathy towards bereaved women. It is possible that individuals can empathize easier with bereaved women because they are more familiar with women grieving and the amount of empathy increases with familiarity (Preston & De Waal, 2002). However, this does not mean that bereaved men don't need as much empathy as bereaved women do. Clinicians and the environment should take into account that a bereaved man might need more emphasizing or more social support from other recourses, such as support groups.

Looking into this difference, individuals rate grief behaviour of the opposite sex higher on empathy. This was only expected for men and corresponds with literature about men rating individuals of the opposite sex more favourable (Glick et al., 2014; Vonk & Olde-Monnikhof, 1998; White & Stillion, 1988). However, current literature provides no clear explanation for females rating bereaved of the opposite sex higher on empathy. Replication is needed to examine if this finding appears in

other studies as well. Despite a lack of scientific evidence, this finding suggests it seems best for bereaved individuals to appeal to different groups or individuals for social support. For peers and clinicians it is important to address this topic when the bereaved predominantly receives support from one person or from a gender homogeneous group.

### *Limitations*

This study has several limitations. First of all, there were no existing grief vignettes describing coping behaviours derived from the DPM. Therefore, the vignettes were designed and written for this study and no part of existing psychometrics. They were not tested on reliability and validity, what makes interpretations of findings less reliable and valid. Other factors such as the use of several positive and negative loaded words could have influenced judgements rather than the described grief behaviour itself. The vignettes also included several other factors, besides gender of the bereaved and gender typicality of grief behaviour, that were not included in analysis. For instance age of the bereaved, living situation, time since the loss, cause of death and marital status. Further experimental research needs to be done examining the influence of these factors on judgements. Besides gender, other determinants concerning the respondents should be further explored as well, including the influence of education level, grieving style, age and grief experience. Lastly, the vignettes described only four different behaviours. Taking the complexity and diversity of grief behaviour into account, this is too little to represent grief behaviour expressed by bereaved. This makes generalizability of the findings low, where it is likely for bereaved to express grief behaviour that differs from the vignettes and it is likely for peers to judge bereaved friends or family members differently than strangers described in the vignettes.

Another limitation concerns the absent of a baseline measurement. Without a baseline measurement, individual differences concerning amounts of empathy and ideas about appropriateness and adaptation can influence ratings. Thirdly, despite different transformations, the assumption of normality was violated. Although the analyses used are assumed to be robust against this violation when using large group sizes, this distribution needs a critical look. A possible cause is the sample consisting three times as much women than men, what could have influenced the means of ratings. Therefore, statements concerning the influence of gender of the respondent need careful interpretation. Another limitation is the fixed order of the vignettes. This could have led to order effects, such as fatigue and carry-over effects due to comparable stories and questions. It cannot be excluded that findings are amenable to these factors.

### *Implications*

This study implicates the need for psycho-education about the impact expectations have on the bereaved. Clinicians and peers should take this impact into account, for instance when bereaved individuals grieve in ways they don't prefer to avoid negative judgements. Therefore, an important

implication for peers providing bereaved individuals with social support would be to judge bereaved less on base of expectations and listen more to their needs. In turn, providing bereaved with psycho-education should address that there is no evidence for or consensus about the right way to grieve. They should be strengthen in their individual coping when their grieving style leads to negative judgements or less support. When gender of the bereaved or gender of the loved ones affect the amount of empathy bereaved receive and if this influence their wellbeing, the existence of therapy or support groups should be addressed. Including the social network in therapy should be a consideration of the clinician to examine expectations, to educate peers about the impact of expectations and to adjust expectations. For instance, bereaved individuals grieving in ways that is not conform expectations does not imply worse adaptation. As Logan et al. (2018) concluded “the general public predominately recognize and respond to grief according to a personal frame of reference. However, such factors are amendable to change through community education and support” (p. 479).

### *Conclusion*

This study provides evidence for gender related factors influencing judgements about grief behaviour. Different findings suggest relations between gender typicality of grief behaviour, gender of the bereaved and/or gender of the respondent on the amount of empathy peers feel towards the bereaved, how appropriate they think grief behaviour is and/or how they expect the bereaved to adapt to the loss. However, questions remain unanswered concerning how these judgements influence behaviour towards the bereaved and how this affects the bereaved. Additional experimental research is needed to examine other factors influencing judgements and longitudinal research is needed to see how judgements influence the bereaved over a period of time.

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## **Appendix 1: Vignettes**

### *Man – gender-typical grief behaviour*

Ton is een man van 64 jaar. Ongeveer zes maanden geleden is hij zijn vrouw verloren aan kanker. Ze waren toen net 34 jaar getrouwd. Samen hebben zij 3 volwassen kinderen die al enige tijd uit huis wonen en inmiddels allemaal zijn afgestudeerd. Sinds het overlijden van zijn vrouw is Ton druk geweest met het regelen van alle zaken rondom het overlijden en het oppakken van zijn leven. Hij heeft het huis opgeruimd en al haar kleding gedoneerd. Vorige maand is hij langs de bank gegaan om alle financiën op zijn naam te laten zetten. Ondanks alle aangeboden hulp heeft Ton dit veelal alleen gedaan. Hij heeft het sporten en werken enige tijd geleden weer opgepakt en dat bevalt hem goed. Ton probeert zijn gedachten te richten op de toekomst. Hij wil er het beste van maken. Hij heeft goed contact met zijn familie en zijn vriendengroep. Ze bellen en zien elkaar regelmatig en praten dan voornamelijk over alledaagse dingen. Ton vindt dit prettig. Ondanks het gemis, probeert hij vooruit te kijken en verder te gaan met zijn leven.

### *Woman – gender-typical grief behaviour*

Sanne is een vrouw van 66 jaar. Ongeveer een half jaar geleden is zij haar man verloren aan kanker. Samen waren zij bijna 40 jaar getrouwd en hebben zij twee volwassen zoons en een volwassen dochter. De afgelopen periode heeft ze het zwaar gehad. Ondanks haar vermoeidheid, slaapt ze niet goed. Ze blijft denken aan haar man en ze huilt veel om hem. Soms realiseert ze zich ineens dat ze voor twee personen aan boodschappen in haar mandje heeft. Deze realisatie momenten komen gedurende dag veel voor en overspoelen haar met emoties. Ze vindt het fijn om het over hem te hebben met vrienden en familie en om zijn spullen om haar heen te hebben. Zo lijkt hij er toch nog te zijn. Het ondernemen van activiteiten en haar vrijwilligerswerk geven haar wat afleiding, maar het brengt haar minder plezier dan voorheen. Ze ziet er veelal tegenop. Over de toekomst wil ze voorlopig nog niet teveel nadenken. Ze bekijkt alles per dag.

### *Man – gender-atypical grief behaviour*

Daan is een man van 62 jaar. Een half jaar geleden is hij zijn vrouw verloren aan kanker. Zij waren 28 jaar getrouwd en hebben samen twee volwassen kinderen die inmiddels niet meer thuis wonen. Zijn familie en vrienden zijn voor en na het overlijden van zijn vrouw veel bij hem geweest. Ze hebben hem geholpen met het regelen van de begrafenis en andere zaken rondom haar overlijden. Wanneer familie en vrienden bij hem zijn, praat hij veel met hen over zijn echtgenote. Ook wanneer hij alleen is denkt hij gedurende de dag veelvuldig aan haar. Hij mist zijn vrouw enorm en hij huilt nog dagelijks om haar. Ondanks dat haar spullen in huis hem confronteren met het verlies, wil Daan dat alles in huis voorlopig blijft zoals het was. Haar schoenen staan nog bij de deur en haar jas hangt aan de kapstok.

Hij heeft werk en andere activiteiten zoals sport weer opgepakt, maar het staat hem vaak nog tegen. Daan denkt nog niet teveel aan de toekomst, hij leeft bij de dag.

*Woman – gender-atypical grief behaviour*

Emma is een vrouw van 61 jaar. Zes maanden geleden is zij haar echtgenoot verloren met wie ze bijna 30 jaar getrouwd was en met wie ze een volwassen zoon heeft. Haar man is overleden aan kanker. Ze is de periode voor en na zijn overlijden zo druk geweest met alles, dat haar familie en vrienden haar nauwelijks zien. Emma is veel bezig met de toekomst, alles is anders nu ze alleen is. Ze vraagt zich af of ze niet kleiner moet gaan wonen nu haar man er niet meer is. Aangezien hij dit altijd regelde, heeft ze een afspraak gemaakt met de bank om haar financiële opties te bekijken. Daarnaast heeft ze besloten om de al geboekte vakantie door te laten gaan en een vriendin mee te nemen. Het idee van thuis blijven en huilen vindt ze vreselijk. Ze heeft op haar werk aangegeven dat ze het prettig vindt als iedereen haar normaal behandelt. Ze wil niet alsmaar over haar man en zijn overlijden praten. Ze wil niet nog meer met zijn afwezigheid geconfronteerd worden. Ondanks het grote gemis, probeert Emma haar gedachten te richten op de toekomst en probeert ze er het beste van te maken.

## **Appendix 2: Questions**

### *Empathy*

1. Ik voel mee met (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma)
2. Ik kan mij niet voorstellen hoe (hij/zij) zich voelt
3. Ik kan mij niet verplaatsen in (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma)
4. Ik kan mij inleven in (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma)

### *Appropriateness*

5. Ik vind het gedrag niet gepast
6. Ik vind het gedrag van (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma) passen bij de situatie
7. Het gedrag van (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma) is afwijkend
8. Het gedrag van (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma) is in deze situatie normaal

### *Adaptation*

9. Ik verwacht niet dat het over een half jaar goed zal gaan met (hem/haar)
10. Ik verwacht niet dat de problemen van (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma) nog lange tijd zullen aanhouden
11. Ik verwacht dat (hij/zij) in een neerwaartse spiraal terecht komt
12. Ik verwacht dat (Ton/Sanne/Daan/Emma) zich wel zal redden in de toekomst

### Appendix 3: SPSS Syntax

#### *Recode variables*

```
RECODE Em2_mt Em4_mt Ad1_mt Ap2_mt Ap3_mt Ad3_mt Em3_wt Em4_wt Ad1_wt Ap2_wt  
Ap3_wt Ad3_wt Em3_mat Em4_mat Ad1_mat Ap2_mat Ap3_mat Ad3_mat Em4_wat Em3_wat  
Ad1_wat Ap3_wat Ap4_wat Ad3_wat (1=5) (2=4) (3=3) (4=2) (5=1).  
EXECUTE.
```

#### *Compute variables - Empathy*

```
COMPUTE Em_tot=(Em1_mt + Em2_mt + Em3_mt + Em4_mt + Em1_wt + Em2_wt + Em3_wt +  
Em4_wt + Em1_mat + Em2_mat + Em3_mat + Em4_mat + Em1_wat + Em2_wat + Em3_wat +  
Em4_wat) / 16.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_m=(Em1_mt + Em2_mt + Em3_mt + Em4_mt + Em1_mat + Em2_mat +  
Em3_mat + Em4_mat) / 8.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_w=(Em1_wt + Em2_wt + Em3_wt + Em4_wt + Em1_wat + Em2_wat +  
Em3_wat + Em4_wat) / 8.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_t=(Em1_mt + Em2_mt + Em4_mt + Em3_mt + Em1_wt + Em2_wt + Em3_wt +  
Em4_wt) / 8.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_at=(Em1_mat + Em2_mat + Em3_mat + Em4_mat + Em1_wat + Em2_wat +  
Em3_wat + Em4_wat) / 8.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_mt=(Em1_mt + Em2_mt + Em4_mt + Em3_mt) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_wt=(Em1_wt + Em2_wt + Em3_wt + Em4_wt) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_mat=(Em1_mat + Em2_mat + Em3_mat + Em4_mat) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Em_tot_wat=(Em1_wat + Em2_wat + Em3_wat + Em4_wat) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

#### *Compute variables - Appropriateness*

```
COMPUTE Ap_tot=(Ap1_mt + Ap2_mt + Ap3_mt + Ap4_mt + Ap1_wt + Ap2_wt + Ap3_wt +  
Ap4_wt + Ap1_mat + Ap2_mat + Ap3_mat + Ap4_mat + Ap1_wat + Ap2_wat + Ap3_wat +  
Ap4_wat) / 16.
```

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_m=(Ap1\_mt + Ap2\_mt + Ap3\_mt + Ap4\_mt + Ap1\_mat + Ap2\_mat + Ap3\_mat + Ap4\_mat) / 8.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_w=(Ap1\_wt + Ap2\_wt + Ap3\_wt + Ap4\_wt + Ap1\_wat + Ap2\_wat + Ap3\_wat + Ap4\_wat) / 8.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_t=(Ap1\_mt + Ap2\_mt + Ap3\_mt + Ap4\_mt + Ap1\_wt + Ap2\_wt + Ap3\_wt + Ap4\_wt) / 8.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_at=(Ap1\_mat + Ap2\_mat + Ap3\_mat + Ap4\_mat + Ap1\_wat + Ap2\_wat + Ap3\_wat + Ap4\_wat) / 8.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_mt=(Ap1\_mt + Ap2\_mt + Ap3\_mt + Ap4\_mt) / 4.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_wt=(Ap1\_wt + Ap2\_wt + Ap3\_wt + Ap4\_wt) / 4.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_mat=(Ap1\_mat + Ap2\_mat + Ap3\_mat + Ap4\_mat) / 4.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ap\_tot\_wat=(Ap1\_wat + Ap2\_wat + Ap3\_wat + Ap4\_wat) / 4.

EXECUTE.

*Compute variables - Adaptation*

COMPUTE Ad\_tot=(Ad1\_mt + Ad2\_mt + Ad3\_mt + Ad4\_mt + Ad1\_wt + Ad2\_wt + Ad3\_wt + Ad4\_wt + Ad1\_mat + Ad2\_mat + Ad3\_mat + Ad4\_mat + Ad1\_wat + Ad2\_wat + Ad3\_wat + Ad4\_wat) / 16.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ad\_tot\_m=(Ad1\_mt + Ad2\_mt + Ad3\_mt + Ad4\_mt + Ad1\_mat + Ad2\_mat + Ad3\_mat + Ad4\_mat) / 8.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ad\_tot\_w=(Ad1\_wt + Ad2\_wt + Ad3\_wt + Ad4\_wt + Ad1\_wat + Ad2\_wat + Ad3\_wat + Ad4\_wat) / 8.

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE Ad\_tot\_t=(Ad1\_mt + Ad2\_mt + Ad3\_mt + Ad4\_mt + Ad1\_wt + Ad2\_wt + Ad3\_wt + Ad4\_wt) / 8.

EXECUTE.

```
COMPUTE Ad_tot_at=(Ad1_mat + Ad2_mat + Ad3_mat + Ad4_mat + Ad1_wat + Ad2_wat + Ad3_wat + Ad4_wat) / 8.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Ad_tot_mt=(Ad1_mt + Ad2_mt + Ad3_mt + Ad4_mt) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Ad_tot_mat=(Ad1_mat + Ad2_mat + Ad3_mat + Ad4_mat) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Ad_tot_wt=(Ad1_wt + Ad2_wt + Ad3_wt + Ad4_wt) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE Ad_tot_wat=(Ad1_wat + Ad2_wat + Ad3_wat + Ad4_wat) / 4.  
EXECUTE.
```

```
COMPUTE log10_ap_tot_wt=LG10(Ap_tot_wt).  
EXECUTE.
```

#### *Descriptives - Respondents*

```
MEANS TABLES=Age BY Gender  
/CELLS=MEAN COUNT STDDEV.
```

```
DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=Gender Age  
/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX KURTOSIS.
```

#### *Assumption testing*

##### *1. Normality*

```
EXAMINE VARIABLES=Em_tot Ad_tot Ap_tot BY Gender  
/PLOT BOXPLOT NPLOT  
/COMPARE VARIABLES  
/STATISTICS DESCRIPTIVES  
/CINTERVAL 95  
/MISSING LISTWISE  
/NOTOTAL.
```

##### *2. Homogeneity of variance*

```
GLM Em_tot Ad_tot Ap_tot BY Gender  
/METHOD=SSTYPE(3)  
/INTERCEPT=INCLUDE  
/PRINT=HOMOGENEITY  
/CRITERIA=ALPHA(.05)  
/DESIGN= Gender.
```

### 3. Multicollinearity

```
REGRESSION  
/DESCRIPTIVES MEAN STDDEV CORR SIG N  
/MISSING LISTWISE  
/STATISTICS R ANOVA  
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10)  
/NOORIGIN  
/DEPENDENT Gender  
/METHOD=ENTER Em_tot Ad_tot Ap_tot.
```

### 4. Outliers

```
REGRESSION  
/MISSING LISTWISE  
/STATISTICS COEFF OUTS R ANOVA  
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05)POUT(.10)  
/NOORIGIN  
/DEPENDENT Gender  
/METHOD=ENTER Em_tot Ad_tot Ap_tot  
/SAVE MAHAL.
```

### 5. Linearity

```
GRAPH /SCATTERPLOT(MATRIX)=Em_tot Ad_tot Ap_tot  
/PANEL ROWVAR=Informed_consent ROWOP=CROSS /MISSING=VARIABLEWISE.
```

### Repeated measures MANCOVA – Empathy

```
GLM Em_tot_mt Em_tot_mat Em_tot_wt Em_tot_wat BY Gender  
/WSFACTOR=target_sex 2 Polynomial target_behaviour 2 Polynomial  
/METHOD=SSTYPE(3)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_sex) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_behaviour) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_sex)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_behaviour)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_sex*target_behaviour)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_sex*target_behaviour)  
/PRINT=DESCRIPTIVE ETASQ HOMOGENEITY  
/CRITERIA=ALPHA(.05)  
/WSDESIGN=target_sex target_behaviour target_sex*target_behaviour  
/DESIGN=Gender.
```

### Repeated measures MANCOVA – Appropriateness

```
GLM Ap_tot_mt Ap_tot_mat Ap_tot_wt Ap_tot_wat BY Gender  
/WSFACTOR=target_sex 2 Polynomial target_behaviour 2 Polynomial  
/METHOD=SSTYPE(3)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)  
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_sex) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
```



```

/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_behaviour) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_sex)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_behaviour)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_sex*target_behaviour)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_sex*target_behaviour)
/PRINT=DESCRIPTIVE ETASQ HOMOGENEITY
/CRITERIA=ALPHA(.05)
/WSDESIGN=target_sex target_behaviour target_sex*target_behaviour
/DESIGN=Gender.

```

*Repeated measures MANCOVA – Adaptation*

```

GLM Ad_tot_mt Ad_tot_mat Ad_tot_wt Ad_tot_wat BY Gender
/WSFACTOR=target_sex 2 Polynomial target_behaviour 2 Polynomial
/METHOD=SSTYPE(3)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_sex) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_behaviour) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_sex)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_behaviour)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(target_sex*target_behaviour)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(Gender*target_sex*target_behaviour)
/PRINT=DESCRIPTIVE ETASQ HOMOGENEITY
/CRITERIA=ALPHA(.05)
/WSDESIGN=target_sex target_behaviour target_sex*target_behaviour
/DESIGN=Gender.

```

*Paired sample t-test - Comparing total means*

```

T-TEST PAIRS=Em_tot_t Ad_tot_t Ap_tot_t WITH Em_tot_at Ad_tot_at Ap_tot_at (PAIRED)
/CRITERIA=CI(.9500)
/MISSING=ANALYSIS.

```

```

T-TEST PAIRS=Em_tot_m Ad_tot_m Ap_tot_m WITH Em_tot_w Ad_tot_w Ap_tot_w (PAIRED)
/CRITERIA=CI(.9500)
/MISSING=ANALYSIS

```