How Does Pregnancy Loss Affect the Importance of Motherhood to Women in the US?

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Background: Pregnancy Loss

- About 14% of all pregnancies in US result in miscarriage and .5% end in stillbirth
- Consequences of pregnancy loss include:
  - Grief (Korenromp et al., 2005)
  - PTSD (Englehard, van den Hout, & Arntz, 2001)
  - Depression and anxiety (Murphy, Shevlin, & Elklit, 2012)
  - Fertility related distress (Schwerdtfeger & Shreffler, 2008)
- Importance of motherhood

Methodology

- The National Survey of Fertility Barriers (NSFB)
  - RDD Telephone sample of 4,787 U.S. women between 25-45
  - Wave 1: 2005/06 and Wave 2: 2008/09
  - Analytical sample: 1,260 participants that completed both waves

Methodology

- Pregnancy Loss
  - Miscarriage or stillbirth
- Importance of Motherhood Scale
  - 5 Questions:
    - Having children is important for wellbeing
    - I always thought I would be a parent
    - Life is more fulfilling with children
    - Important to have children
    - Important to raise children
- Controls
  - Race/Ethnicity, Age, Education, Union status, Number of children
- Analysis: Change Score Analysis OLS
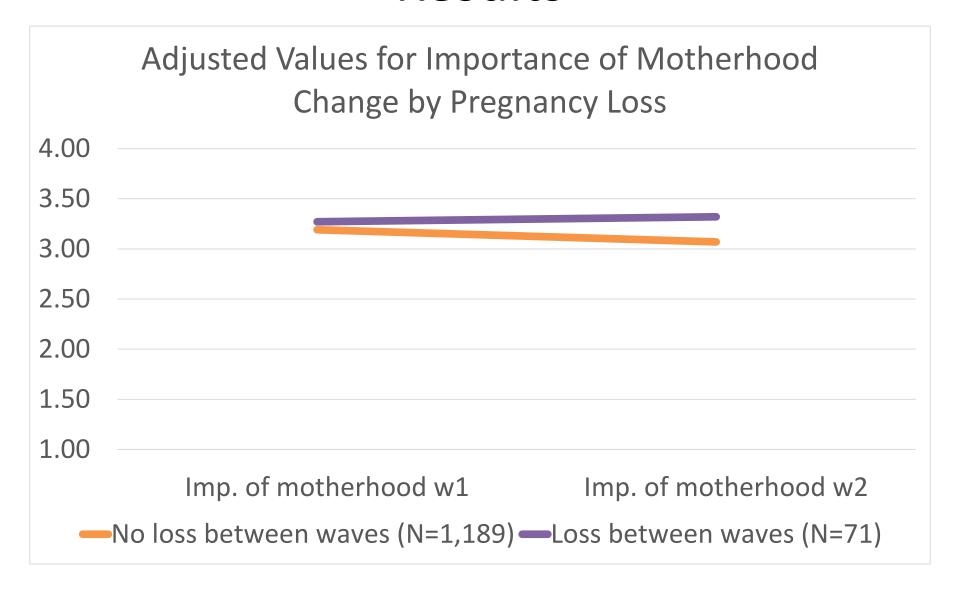
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	No loss between waves (N=1,189)		Loss between waves (N=71)		Range	p value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Importance of motherhood scale						
Imp. of motherhood w1	3.19	.77	3.27	.64	1-4	
Imp. of motherhood w2	3.17	.79	3.42	.56	1-4	**
Change between w1 and w2	-.03	.52	.15	.59	-2-2	**

OLS Results

Variables	Model 1 b	Model 1 SE	Model 2 b	Model 2 SE
Loss between waves	.18 **	.06	.18 **	.07
Race/ethnicity (white)				
Black			-.01	.04
Hispanic			.07	.05
Other			.14	.08
Age			.00	.00
Education in years			.00	.01
Union (w1 or w2)			.04	.04
Number of children			.01	.01
Constant	-.03 *	.02	-.08	.14

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Results

Adjusted Values for Importance of Motherhood Change by Pregnancy Loss

Discussion

- Pregnancy Loss Key Findings
  - No difference in motherhood attitudes at W1
  - Loss between waves → Increase in importance of motherhood
  - Controlling for sociodemographic variables did not alter the effect of pregnancy loss

Discussion

- Implications for practice
  - Pregnancy loss affects ways women think of motherhood
  - Negative psychological impact of loss can affect women and their partners
  - Ask about pregnancy loss and motherhood attitudes
  - Family professionals can provide targeted support

Thank you!

Questions? Please email:
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Race/ethnicity						
White	.71	.46	.69	.47	0-1	
Black	.15	.36	.16	.37	0-1	
Hispanic	.11	.31	.10	.31	0-1	
Other	.03	.18	.04	.21	0-1	
Age	35.39	6.05	33.25	5.04	25-45	**
Education in years	15.50	2.56	15.99	2.33	6-22	
Union (w1 or w2)	.76	.43	.89	.32	0-1	*
Number of children	1.53	1.38	1.82	1.85	0-10	

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001