The long-arm of motherhood: motherhood “penalty” for wellbeing over the life course?

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Research Motivation

Parenthood
Contemporary Motherhood / Mothering
Women’s Wellbeing across the life course

Mixed effects
• Meaningful & stressful
• Beneficial & harmful for health

Ideology of intensive mothering
• Increasing investment (i.e., time, money) on children

Contradiction between devoted mothering and paid work

Dissecting contemporary mothering (beliefs, behaviors) -> mother’s long-term health

Child’s
Mother’s wage
Short-term effect on mom’s health

Women’s Wellbeing across the life course
• Young adulthood to midlife
• Physical, mental wellbeing, health habits

Mother’s wage penalty
Short-term effect on mom’s mental health
Breastfeeding and mother’s health

**Breastfeeding**
- Labor-intensive
- Emotion-absorbing
- Value-laden, expert guided
- *Earliest mothering stage*

Mother’s wellbeing in mid-life
- Health habits (drinking, smoking, exercise)
- Health indicator (e.g., BMI, psychological stress)
Interactive care and mother’s health

Interactive care

• Reading books/playing with (infant/toddler) kids
• Taking children to museums, other activities
• Monitoring behaviors
• Early mothering stage

Other moderating (or mediating) factors

• Mothering beliefs
• Children’s outcome
• Work characteristics (status, time, earning)
• Marital quality, social support

Long-arm of motherhood

Mother’s wellbeing in mid-life

• Health habits (drinking, smoking, exercise)
• Health indicator (e.g., BMI, psychological stress)
Summary

Why mothering behaviors in early life matter across the life course?

Important issue to keep in mind: social patterns of mothering