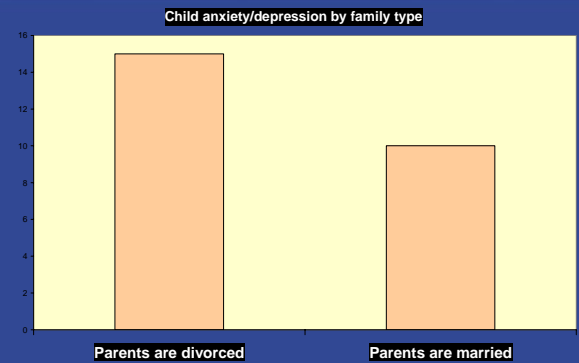


Tracking the mental health consequences of divorce in Canada: Do children and their mothers respond similarly?

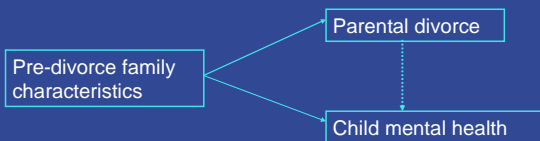
Lisa Strohschein, Assistant Professor,
Dept. of Sociology, University of Alberta

Funding: SSHRC-INE grant "Raising and leveling the learning bar" and the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIAR)

A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



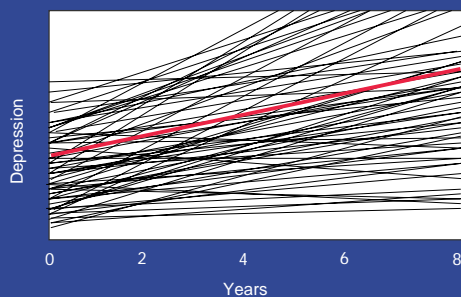
A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



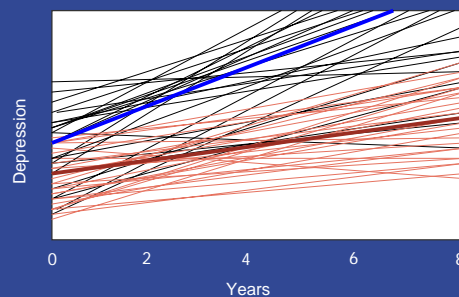
A process-oriented approach to parental divorce

- Ideally, to track the consequences of divorce, require a study design that:
 - prospectively follows children in biological two parent households over a specified period of time, during which some families will experience the exit of a parent from the household
 - has intervals between measurement occasions that are meaningful (NLSCY – every two years)

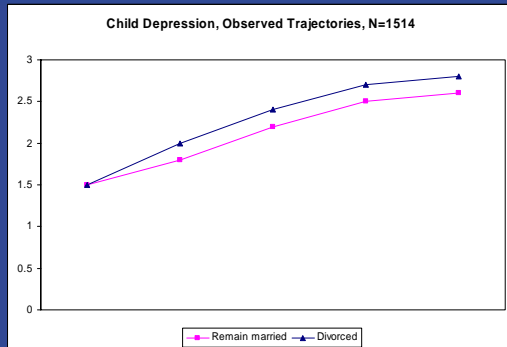
A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



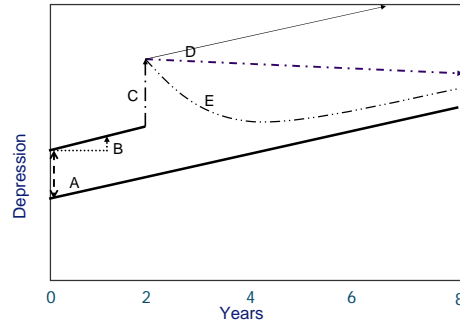
A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



- A differences in depression at initial interview between continuously married households and later divorcing households
- B differences in rate of change in depression over time, given that a divorce has not yet occurred
- C time-specific jump in depression associated with event of divorce
- D linear rate of change in depression associated with time since divorce
- E addition of a quadratic term for time elapsed since divorce to capture nonlinear rate of recovery



A process-oriented approach to parental divorce

- crisis model versus chronic strain model
- crisis model:
 - immediate response to the loss of a parent from the household
 - effects are greatest around the time of the transition
 - model predicts a return to pre-divorce levels within two years as child adjusts to the loss
- chronic strain model:
 - divorce has the potential to create further stresses, such as economic hardship, that perpetuate or even amplify the mental health consequences of a parental divorce over time

A process-oriented approach to parental divorce

We want to be able to distinguish between the two models:

- Do kids whose parents divorce eventually return to pre-divorce levels of mental health? If so, what is the average length of time?
- Do emerging secondary stressors associated with living in a single parent household inhibit the recovery process?

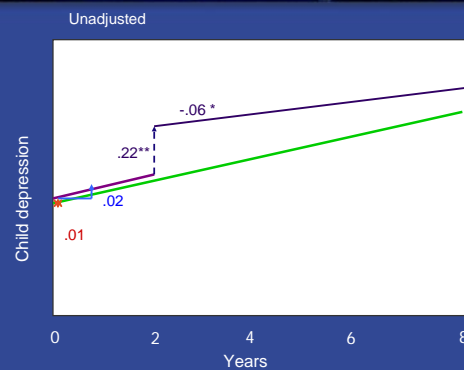
The NLSCY also allows us to ask questions about the parents:

- What are the mental health responses of mothers to divorce?

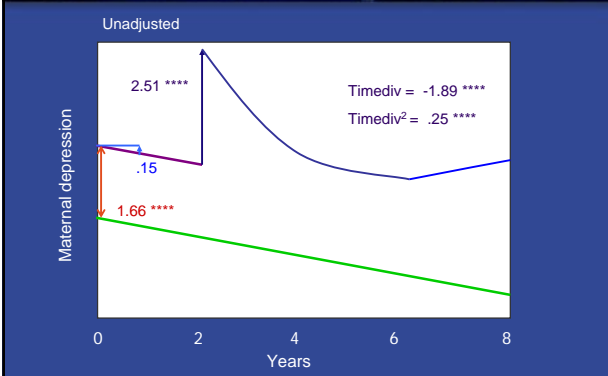
A process-oriented approach to parental divorce

- Sample: Canadian NLSCY:
 - ages 2 – 3 in 1994 and participating in 5th wave
 - two biological parent household in 1994
 - marital dissolution not due to widowhood
 - after divorce, there is no re-marriage
 - of 1514 kids, 253 (16.7%) experience parental divorce

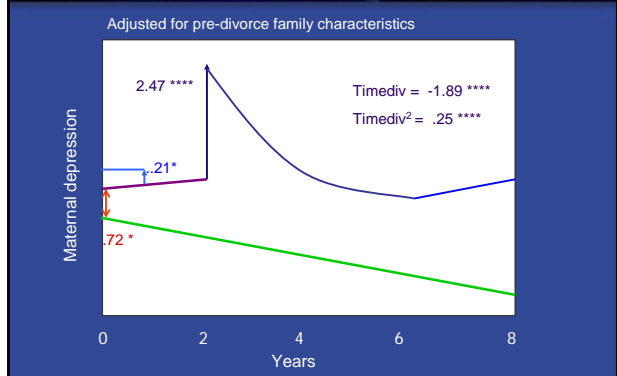
A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



A process-oriented approach to parental divorce



A process-oriented approach to parental divorce

Summary:

Child depression: neither crisis nor chronic strain

Maternal depression: combination of crisis and chronic strain model

A process-oriented approach to parental divorce

Final Issue:

Changes in maternal depression relative to her reported levels of depression at initial interview associated with changes in child depression

Once added to the model for child depression, parental divorce is no longer significant: suggests that maternal response to divorce accounts for child's response

A process-oriented approach to parental divorce

Questions? Comments?

lisa.strohschein@ualberta.ca