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## **The Importance of Region and State Welfare Rules for Disconnected Single Mothers**

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## **Abstract**

The proportion of low-income, single mothers not receiving public assistance or participating in the formal employment sector has approximately doubled over the past decade. Many of the currently debated policy options to support these families focus on state level programs. However, little is known about the relationships between state welfare program characteristics and disconnectedness. This project assesses the effect of state welfare rules on the likelihood of being disconnected from these two income sources. Using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation and the Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database, the current research compares the circumstances of these at-risk mothers in southern versus non-southern states and examines the influence of welfare policies on the probability of becoming disconnected, controlling for other individual- and state-level variables. Results from multilevel logistic regression models demonstrate that the macro level matters, in particular women residing in states with more flexible welfare rules and lower unemployment rates are less likely to be disconnected. The present findings offer empirical evidence that more flexible policies, including exemptions from work activity requirements and more lenient sanction policies, are beneficial to this population.

## **Introduction**

Welfare caseload declines, decreases in child poverty, and increases in female labor participation are extensively investigated correlates of the 1996 U.S. welfare reforms (See, for example, Blank, 2002; Grogger, Karoly & Klerman, 2002). Lesser known and understood are the outcomes of women who have been unable to find work and have lost benefits or have been diverted from applying for public cash assistance. The proportion of single mothers with incomes less than 200 percent of the poverty line, not receiving public assistance nor participating in the formal employment sector has increased over the past decade (Blank, 2007). In addition to no or very low incomes, “disconnected” women are likely to experience barriers such as learning disabilities, physical limitations, and drug abuse (Turner, Danzinger, & Seefeldt, 2006). Such barriers hinder women’s abilities to find work as well as to negotiate the bureaucracies of receiving public assistance. Moreover, recent changes in public assistance leave little in the way of permanent support for struggling families.

Many of the currently debated policy options aimed at supporting these women focus on state level programs (Blank, 2007; Blank & Kovak, 2008). However, no empirical research has systematically explored the circumstances of disconnected women and how state welfare policies may affect the likelihood of one becoming disconnected. It is possible that certain aspects of the program such as sanctions and time limits may increase the likelihood of becoming disconnected for women in particular states. Or, perhaps states with more diversion programs deter women from receiving welfare in the first place. This research utilizes the 2001-2003 Panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), a national, longitudinal survey conducted by the US Census. Personal characteristics and state welfare rules associated with being disconnected are examined with multilevel logistical regression models. The research also

investigates potential differences between the circumstances of women residing in the southern and non-southern states of the United States. The findings provide evidence on how variation in TANF policies across states differentially relate to the probability of becoming disconnected.

## **Background**

### *Estimates of disconnected single mothers*

Although research on disconnected mothers is very new, the consensus is that disconnected single mothers make up a large and growing portion of families in poverty (Blank & Kovak, 2008; Brock et al., 2002; Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006; Wood & Rangarajan, 2003). Many of these studies, based in the tradition of examining welfare leavers, investigate the number of former welfare recipients who are without work but do not reapply for welfare (Acs & Loprest, 2004; Brock et al., 2002; Wood & Rangarajan, 2003). Using the National Survey of American Families, Loprest and Zedlewski (2006) find that in 2002 20 percent of former welfare recipients and 12 percent of those who never received welfare were disconnected.

Not all disconnected women are former welfare recipients and recent data confirm that the take-up rate for cash assistance has declined from approximately 85% of eligible families in 1996 to only about half in the first few years of welfare reform (Zedlewski, 2002). Blank and Kovak (2008) utilize a broader population, examining all low-income women and providing various estimates using national data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the SIPP. Defining disconnected as no welfare receipt or work income over the past year, CPS data show an increase from 9.9 percent of low-income female-headed households in 1997 to 20.0 percent in 2005. SIPP data also show an increase of disconnected women as a proportion of low-income female-headed households from 18.8 percent in 1990 to 24.9 percent in 2003. Using a slightly

less restrictive definition (i.e., women with annual incomes of less than \$2,000 and welfare receipt of less than \$1,000) both surveys show similar increases to about one quarter of low-income female-headed families (Blank & Kovak 2008).

### *Personal barriers*

Complementary research focuses on personal barriers and indicates that disconnected single mothers face a number of circumstances that hinder their ability to find stable, formal employment such as low education and poorer health (Acs & Loprest, 2004; Blank, 2007; Loprest, 2003; Miller, 2002; Turner, et al., 2006; Wood & Rangarajan, 2003). These findings are not surprising, and the research builds on a rich literature exploring long-term welfare recipients, sanctioned clients, and those who have reached the welfare time limits (e.g., Corcoran, Danziger, Kalil, & Seefeldt, 2000; Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006; Cherlin, Bogen, Quane, & Burton, 2002). ). Although the initial large decreases in the welfare rolls during the mid and late nineties has been attributed to a large number of work-ready women entering the labor force, recent leavers have reported an increasing number of barriers (Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006). Sanctioned clients also report barriers such as low education and poor health (Cherlin, Bogen, Quane, & Burton, 2002).

In addition to barriers to work, research on the question of disconnectedness is also related to service uptake. Although some disconnected women have reached TANF time limits and thus are no longer eligible for public cash assistance, others have chosen not to apply even though they are eligible. Women report decisions not to apply for welfare due to the “hassle” factor (Seefeldt & Levy, 2008). Some speculate that formal and informal diversionary tactics at many welfare offices have played a significant role in decreasing the welfare rolls (Mead, 2000). Other research theorizes that those women with the least amount of human capital are the least

capable of negotiating the bureaucratic application process (Brodkin, 2006).

### *Coping with and surviving poverty*

Although women who are disconnected from work and welfare have little or no formal measured income, studies on consumption poverty indicate that the extreme poor do survive. Specifically, Meyer and Sullivan (2003, 2006) use consumption reports by those in poverty to show that consumption exceeds reported income. Their findings indicated that standard measures are not capturing nontraditional income such as gifts or the use of debt to cover current expenses. Qualitative studies provide a rich understanding of coping strategies and support the speculation that both monetary and in-kind gifts from families and community groups may provide important survival income for families living in poverty (e.g., Edin & Lien, 1997). Moreover, non-cash public assistance may serve as a critical resource for families and previous research on disconnected women show that a high proportion of these women receive Medicaid and food stamps (Blank & Kovak, 2008). The current research attempts add to our understanding of the coping strategies of disconnected women by describing potential sources of informal incomes from family, friends and social service providers.

### *State TANF policies*

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PROWRA) shifted the details of many programs, including aspects of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), into the hands of the states with the assumption that local officials are in a better position to determine and meet the needs of their residents. As a result, states have different rules, which vary in leniency and strictness regarding program requirements and participation. Because of the varying rules and numerous combinations of them, a number of researchers have attempted to categorize and explain the strategies of states. A rich body of

literature offers a number of approaches, including creation of indices, examinations of overall state philosophies, and factor analyses (e.g., DeJong, Roempke, Irving, & St. Pierre, 2006; Fellowes & Rowe, 2004; Soss, Schram, Vartanian, & O'Brien, 2001).

Additionally, the complex variation in state TANF rules has led to research focused on isolating the individual effects of particular policies such as sanctions, time limits, diversion, earned income disregards, and maximum benefit levels. Others have used a number of key variables to account for the influence of welfare policies (e.g., Teitler, Reichman, and Nepomnyaschy, 2007). It is logical to hypothesize that state welfare rules are likely to have important, although perhaps small, effects on disconnectedness as well. I hypothesize that two types of rules are of particular interest in relation to the issue of disconnectedness. First, disconnected women may be discouraged to apply for welfare based on diversion programs and strategies. Fender, Signe, and Berstein (2002) offer a summary variable to measure “obstacles faced to get onto TANF” composed of two individual measures: whether or not the state has a diversion program and whether or not a job search is a mandatory part of the application (p. II-41). Second, disconnected women may separate from the program prematurely (without employment) based on how strict or lenient a state may be in terms of time limit and sanction rules and granting extensions or exemptions from certain requirements. Because there are a great number of rules related to exemptions and exceptions to rules, I employ the flexibility index designed by Fellowes and Rowe (2004). The index is made up of twelve related variables measuring state rules regarding work activity and sanction leniency (p. 371).<sup>1</sup>

### *Regional characteristics*

In response to both the devolution of policy and the growth of poverty in certain

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<sup>1</sup> The specific components of the index are discussed in the methods section of this paper.



geographic areas, new policy research has also focused on the importance of place and space (e.g., Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, regional poverty centers). Beyond the effect of policy rules themselves, it is possible that the local environment affects individual outcomes and perhaps interacts with welfare rules to have differing impacts in different locales. The differing effects of welfare policy in rural versus urban areas, for example, has led to more research on the importance of local factors (Blank, 2004; Tickamyer, Henderson, & Tadlock, 2007). Irving (2008) concludes that regional differences in the South interact with metro versus nonmetro settings to have distinct influences on work versus non-work exits from TANF.

A related and ongoing question is how powerful welfare effects are in comparison to the influences of the economy (Council of Economic Advisors, 1999; Ziliak, Figlio, Davis & Connolly, 2000). Recent research indicates that local economic characteristics may serve as a support for policy effects with strong economic conditions reinforcing policy incentives (Herbst, 2008). It is plausible that similar regional effects may be seen in explanations of disconnectedness. Thus, the current research also investigates the effect of state unemployment rates on disconnectedness.

## **Methods**

### *Data*

The project data come from all waves of the 2001 panel of the SIPP. The purpose of the SIPP is to provide a comprehensive picture of income and program participation among US residents and was designed to allow evaluations of public programs. The central focus of the data is economic and demographic, with substantial detail on income sources and amounts, employment, public assistance participation, family composition, and residential location. The

SIPP interviews members every four months and collects monthly data on income sources. The 2001 panel spans 36 months with 9 waves. The panel contains an initial sample of 36,700 households. One limitation of the data for this project is that state identification is limited to 45 states and the District of Columbia. The remaining five states are combined into two variables; Vermont and Maine are combined, and North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming are combined.

Macro level data come from two sources, the Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database (WRD) and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Data on state welfare rules was merged into the data file from the WRD, a longitudinal database of state-specific TANF rules maintained by the Urban Institute and funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families and Assistant Secretary for Program Evaluation. The database contains information on implemented TANF rules for all 50 states and DC as coded from state caseworker manuals and updates. The BLS data was used to obtain state unemployment rates.

#### *Sample and Analytical Groups*

The study's sample comes from the 2001 panel of the SIPP and includes single mothers residing in low-income households. Sample criteria and study variables were taken from month four of each wave because of the seam bias identified by other researchers (Grogger, 2004). Using data from the initial interview, the study universe was restricted to women who were between the ages of 15 and 54. The population of interest were never married and identified as the designated parent of at least one child who resides in the household. Members of the study universe were also restricted to survey respondents whose total household income was below 200 percent of the poverty line. This income criterion captures a group of women who meet a traditional definition of low-income (below 200% of the poverty line). Moreover, sample

members did not report school as their major activity and were not SSI recipients. Finally, sample members resided in D.C. or in one of the 45 states coded independently in the SIPP. The SIPP state variable collapses Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota into one response category and Vermont and Maine into another due to small sample sizes and confidentiality concerns. Because state welfare policies differ among North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming and between Vermont and Maine, sample member residing in these states were dropped from the final analytical file.

Following these criteria, the final sample size is 1,711 single mothers. Sample members contribute up to nine observations over the span of the panel. Observations in which women become married, whose child turns 18, or whose household income rises above 200% of the poverty line are not included in the analysis. However, if a woman meets the sample criteria in a later wave, she is once again brought back into the sample. On average, each sample member contributes 3.7 person-wave observations and the final analytical file contains 6,339 person-wave observations. In addition to comparisons between disconnected and non-disconnected women, the project examines potential differences between southern and non-southern states. Thus, descriptive findings are also presented for this grouping and multivariate models include independent region controls.

### *Multilevel Analyses*

A multilevel, mixed effects, logistic model is used to estimate the differing effects of individual level and state level variables. Previous methods of combining variables at different levels have been shown to produce standard errors that are biased downward because often the errors across micro units with the same macro group are not random (Moulton, 1990). In multilevel modeling, the technique is designed to examine effects at multiple levels. The present

analyses uses Maximum Likelihood estimations to produce efficient estimates (Hox, 2002; Luke, 2004). As described earlier, observations are based on person-wave cases, in which each individual contributes observations based on the number of interviews they completed and meet the sample criteria. Thus, the final data file is structured at three levels. The first level consists of person-wave observations; these observations are nested with persons, the second level; and persons are nested within states, the third level. The advantages of a multilevel model are also apparent at the person level since multilevel modeling is able to handle longitudinal data with missing or uneven time points. Although the variables at the person-wave level and the person level can be interchangeable, depending on the definitions used, it is critical to consider the nested nature of these observations and control for possible variation at the person level instead of examining the observations as independent. I use the `xtmelogit` command in Stata 10 to run and analyze the models (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2008).

The multilevel, logistic regression models were based on the following framework:

$$\text{Disconnected (D)}_{ij} [\text{Logistic regression}] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I_{ij} + \beta_2 S_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}$$

Where:

- D = Dichotomous variable indicating whether a women is disconnected in a particular wave,
- I = A vector of individual characteristics,
- S = a vector of variables that specify the state TANF rules and economic characteristics

The dependent variable is whether or not a sample member is disconnected from both formal employment and cash public assistance, TANF. A restricted definition of disconnected is used to capture women whose family earned income and cash assistance receipt during the interview month is zero.

Independent, individual-level, variables come from the SIPP and include the demographic characteristics of: race (measured as a group of dichotomous variables) and age (measured as a dummy variable equaling one for women younger than 25 years) of the mother, educational attainment (measured as a dichotomous variable equaling one if the respondent has less than a high school education), and number of own children under 18 residing in the household. A control for the year of the interview is also included on the individual level.

Independent, state-level, variables capture three types of measures: welfare rules, economic indicators, and region. Five variables measuring state welfare rules were coded from the Welfare Rules Database. The choice of state level TANF variables was based on previous research and an effort in creating a parsimonious model. A number of state rules are highly correlated with each other and thus do not merit simultaneous inclusion in the model. The first welfare related variable is a dichotomous variable for whether or not a state has a lifetime limit less than the 60-month federal limit. The next two variables are measures of diversion policies: whether or not a diversion program exists and whether or not the state requires an upfront job search. The fourth measure of state TANF policies is the maximum monthly benefit for a family of three.

The final state welfare variable is a composite measure of flexibility based on the Flexibility Index created by Fellowes and Rowe (2004). The Flexibility Index is a scale variable with values ranging from 1 to 12, where higher values indicate higher levels of flexibility in a state's TANF requirements. The Index is comprised of twelve individual welfare rules relating to exemptions from work activity requirements and to the severity of sanctions. Specifically, components reflecting work activity exemptions include those for illness, pregnancy, advanced age, caring for a young child, caring for an ill family member, working in an unsubsidized job,

pursuit of educational and training programs, and pursuit of a post-secondary education. For each of these eight components, a one point is given if the state allows the exemption. Another point is given if the state allows fewer hours of work than the federal requirement. The final three components are related to sanctions, with a score of one when a state's initial sanction is not the elimination of the entire benefit, when a state's worst-case sanction does not eliminate the entire benefit, and when the worst-case sanction does not continue permanently.

The state unemployment rate is included in the model to account for economic influences on the macro level. Lastly, geographic variables control for residence in the South and metro area. Specifically, a dichotomous variable was used to examine the influence of region; the variable equals one if the state is one of the 17 states in the South region per the US Census Bureau definition.<sup>2</sup> A control for residence in a metro versus nonmetro area along with an interaction term for nonmetro southern residence is also included in the final model.

#### *Conceptualization, measurement, and description of supports*

Central to the research project is the question of how disconnected mothers are faring and thus the ability to operationalize and measure in-kind supports from family members and community groups. The adult well-being topical module provides variables measuring the expectation of support from a variety of groups. Specifically, a series of question asked how much help (all, most, some, or none), the respondent would expect to receive if a need were to arise. The sources of support are categorized as family, friend, and other. A descriptive

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<sup>2</sup> States in the South Region per the US Census Bureau definition include: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

analysis of these questions is presented to complement the multilevel models. Because these questions only occurred once at the end of the panel, inclusion of these variables in the multilevel, longitudinal models was not appropriate.

### **Sample Description**

In the first wave of the 2001 SIPP panel, 990 single mothers reported household earnings less than 200% of the poverty line and were not full-time students or SSI recipients. Of this sample, 183 (18.5%) of them were disconnected, defined as reporting no earned income or TANF receipt during the interview month.

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics and barriers to work for single mothers in the first wave of the panel. Comparisons are made among disconnected women and non-disconnected women residing in southern and non-southern states. The average age is 30.1 years with only disconnected mothers in the South differing at a statistically significant level, with an average age of 28.5 years. Differences in other demographic characteristics occur between regions but not between disconnected and non-disconnected mothers. For example, a greater proportion of southern residents are African American, but no statistically significant differences exist between disconnected and non-disconnected women in either region.

Insert Table 1 about here

Although the demographics of the two groups are notably similar, the description of barriers to work indicates important differences in health characteristics. Disconnected women report caring for others and physical and mental health disabilities at much greater frequencies than non-disconnected women. These differences, however, are presented with a caveat. Only the question regarding the work-limiting condition was asked of all survey respondents. The

other two questions were asked only of non-working women and thus there is a large portion of missing data among non-disconnected women. Focusing on the work-limiting condition, approximately twice as many disconnected women as non-disconnected women (15.8% compared to 7.4% in southern states, and 24.3% compared to 10.4% in non-southern states) report a physical or mental health work-limiting condition.

### **Multilevel Findings: Effects of State Welfare Policy**

Table 2 contains the results of three multilevel logistic regression models. Model 1 is the null model. Without accounting for any independent variables, an examination of the influences on the person and state level shows that each level of grouping is an important explanation of disconnectedness. In other words, variation exists among the groups at each level; and observations within the groups, be they persons or states, are not unrelated. A larger proportion of the variation lies on the individual level with the variance component of the state level accounting for approximately a fifth of the total variance.

Insert Table 2 about here

Model 2 contains individual level fixed effects. The results, found in column 2 of Table 2, indicate that African American and Hispanic women are less likely to be disconnected, and additional children lead to a lower likelihood of disconnectedness, although the effect for each additional child is arguably small. The inclusion of these variables in model 2 reduces the among-person variance from that of model 1, but only by a small amount, indicating that they explain only a small portion of why particular women experience a spell of disconnectedness.

State level fixed effects are added in model 3, the full model. The addition of state level variables in model 3 has very little effect, as expected, on the covariates at the individual level.



At the state level, only one of the five welfare rule variables have a statistically significant impact. Women residing in states with higher levels of flexibility are less likely to be disconnected. Although the effect of each additional “unit” of flexibility is relatively small, the impact is additive and more notable when considering that the variable is not dichotomous, as the other welfare rule variables are, but contains responses ranging from one to twelve. The state unemployment rate has a positive impact on disconnectedness; as the unemployment rate rises so does the likelihood of disconnectedness. Finally, the region dummy for southern states is not statistically significant.

Further analyses were conducted to test for the possibility that models incorporating random slopes as well as random intercepts might be a better fit for the data. I considered the possibility that the effect of region and the effect of the flexibility index may each have a random in addition to a fixed effect on the outcome. However, the effects were very close to zero and not statistically significant. Thus, these results are not discussed nor presented in the tables.

### **Adult-Well Being Findings: Sources of Support**

Tables 3 and 4 present a description of sample members during wave 9 of the survey. During this wave, respondents were asked questions from the adult well-being module.

Table 3 presents data from the adult well-being module and focuses on a series of questions about how much help women expect from different sources in times of need. In all states, regardless of region, a larger proportion of disconnected women expect to receive all of the help they need from family and friends. Comparing regions, a larger proportion of southern residents expect to receive all of the help they need in comparison to women living in states outside of the South. These differences are statistically significant for help from family as well

as help from friends. The magnitude of these differences is also quite large. For example, 61.5 percent of disconnected women in the South expect all of the help they need from family. In comparison, about half of non-disconnected women in the South and disconnected women in non-southern states expect to receive all of the help they need while only 39 percent of non-disconnected, non-southern women do. Differences in receipt of help from other sources are not statistically significant either between regional groups or disconnected groups.

Insert Table 3 about here

Demographic characteristics, reported in Table 4, are notably similar to the characteristics of sample member for Wave 1, as reported in Table 1. One exception is the racial make-up of the groups with a lower proportion of African American women in the disconnected group in the South and a lower proportion of Hispanic women in the disconnected group in the non-southern states.

Insert Table 4 about here

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Recent changes in the structure of public assistance programs have benefited some groups, but left others without consistent sources of support. The findings here add to our understanding of the circumstances of one at-risk group, disconnected single mothers and their children. Descriptive results illustrate a group of women who look similar to other low-income women on a number of measures. However, differences do exist when examining barriers to work and sources of support. These differences, although statistically significant, may be partially explained by the survey structure. Questions regarding work barriers were not asked of working mothers, and questions regarding sources of support were asked only once at the end of

the panel. It is possible that sample attrition may render those data less reliable. In fact, in the person-wave analytical file, the proportion of observations from each wave steadily decreases from 15.6 percent from wave 1 to between 10 and 12 percent in waves 2 through 7 to only 9 percent in wave 9. The observed differences in race from wave 1 descriptives to wave 9 descriptives may also be related to this sample size decrease over time. The notable decrease in minority, disconnected women (African Americans in the South and Hispanics in other states) was an unexpected finding and merits further research by the field.

Of more importance to the central research question are the results from the multilevel models. Women residing in states with more flexible welfare rules and lower unemployment rates are less likely to be disconnected from either welfare or work. Although these effects are statistically significant, they explain only about a quarter of the observed among-state variation, leading to the conclusion that other state characteristics may be influential and that state residence does matter to the outcome measure.

The findings are tempered by the limitations of the data. Although the SIPP presents many advantages and is in some aspects ideal for examining these research questions, the dataset presents a handful of difficulties. First, five states, or almost ten percent of all states, are missing from the analyses because they were collapsed with each other in the coding of state residence. Second, the use of monthly data for analytical purposes is very limited due to the seam bias of the survey. Thus, the present analyses were limited to data reported in the interview month. Third, many pertinent questions related to sources of support are only asked once during the three years of the panel preventing a longitudinal analyses of these data. Finally, sample attrition, especially among the most disadvantaged, is a feasible possibility.

Related to the limitations of the project is its limited scope. Many assumptions were

made regarding who should be considered disconnected and what important influences, especially at the state level, should be considered. Further research on disconnected women and macro-level effects is critically needed. Analyses can be replicated with different definitions of disconnectedness and different measures of state welfare rules and related state characteristics to further the present findings. The models here and focus on flexibility may also serve as a foundation for more local level analyses. Because many states allow county departments to determine key aspects of welfare implementation and economic indicators can vary greatly within state borders, analyses on a more local level are important. Perhaps more information on frontline practices and level of discretion could be measured and accounted for as well.

Limitations and scope notwithstanding, the research findings add important, albeit limited, information to policy debates on options to support disconnected mothers and aid the states in which they reside. Clearly, flexible policies that consider the vast array of barriers and multiple challenges faced by low-income mothers seem to be key. More lenient requirements surrounding work activities and less harsh sanction policies may assist this at-risk group from becoming alienated from public assistance and the help caseworkers may offer. Of course, the policy questions here are very complex. It is possible that the recent growth in disconnectedness is due to an absence of programs not the characteristics of existing ones.

Regardless of the direction future policymakers choose, it seems most likely that the decisions will be in the hands of the states. Ron Haskins was quoted in a New York Times article of February 2, 2009 as saying (in reference to welfare reform), “When we started this, Democratic and Republican governors alike said, ‘We know what’s best for our state; we’re not going to let people starve’....And now that the chips are down, and unemployment is going up, most states are not doing enough to help families get back on the rolls.” Future research,

building upon the findings presented here, should further our understanding of state circumstances to help guide and inform these discussions.

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**Table 1. Means and unweighted proportions of select characteristics of single mothers below 200% of the poverty line, Wave 1 sample members**

	Southern states		Non-southern states		Total
	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	
Average age	28.5 (7.57)	29.6 (7.47)	30.9 (8.85)	30.5 (8.29)	30.1 (8.05)
Younger than 25	40.8%	34.7%	34.6%	32.8%	34.2%
Race					
African American	69.7%	69.0%	32.7%	44.5%	53.2%
Hispanic	10.5%	12.0%	27.1%	27.0%	20.8%
Average number of children	1.5 (0.90)	1.54 (1.22)	1.70 (1.07)	1.71 (1.17)	1.64 (1.16)
Less than high school degree	25.0%	22.1%	35.5%	31.2%	28.2%
Work barriers					
Caring for someone in the home***	38.1%	8.6%	41.1%	14.3%	17.2%
Had physical or mental health work-limiting condition***	15.8%	7.4%	24.3%	10.4%	11.3%
Had physical or mental health work-preventing condition***	11.8%	3.1%	15.9%	4.4%	5.8%
Metro Resident	65.8%	73.0%	86.0%	84.2%	79.3%
n	76	326	107	481	990

Notes: 2001 SIPP panel, Wave 1, Differences between disconnected and non-disconnected women are reported.

\*\*\* p < 0.001

**Table 2. Multilevel logistic regression models of disconnectedness, Odds ratios presented (n = 6,339 person-wave observations)**

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
<b>Fixed Effects</b>			
<i>Individual Level</i>			
African American		0.540*** (0.092)	0.521*** (0.092)
Hispanic		0.411*** (0.094)	0.395*** (0.091)
Less than 25 yrs old		1.140 (0.164)	1.136 (0.165)
Less than high school		1.211 (0.210)	1.226 (0.213)
Number of children		0.824** (0.050)	0.821*** (0.050)
<i>State Level</i>			
Time limit less than 60 months			1.300 (0.444)
Diversion program			1.113 (0.243)
Mandatory upfront job search			0.884 (0.189)
Flexibility index			0.917+ (0.046)
Benefits			1.000 (0.001)
Unemployment rate			1.318* (0.155)
Southern state			1.120 (0.379)
Control for years		Yes	Yes
Controls for non-metro and non-metro/ South interaction			Yes
<b>Random Effects</b>			
Intercept for State Effects	0.426 (0.123)	0.471 (0.129)	0.371 (0.138)
Intercept for Person Effects	2.207 (0.111)	2.151 (0.109)	2.157 (0.109)

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Log likelihood	-2805.4548	-2779.1642	-2773.4602
Wald chi2		50.55	60.88
Chi2 for LR test vs. logistic regression	993.54	947.97	918.16
P-value of chi2	<0.00	<0.00	<0.00

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Notes: Dependent variable is whether or not a woman is disconnected, defined as reporting no TANF receipt or earned income during the interview month. Odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses are reported.

+ p < 0.10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01 , \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Table 3. Sources of Family and Community Support Available to Disconnected and Non-disconnected Single Mothers**

	Southern States		Non-southern States		Full Sample
	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	
<b>Family+</b>					
All of the help needed	61.5%	48.5%	50.0%	39.0%	45.7%
Most of the help needed	25.0%	27.5%	28.6%	32.4%	29.6%
Some of the help needed	7.7%	11.1%	15.7%	17.0%	14.0%
No help	5.8%	12.9%	5.7%	11.6%	10.7%
<b>Friends*</b>					
All of the help needed	46.2%	29.2%	31.4%	22.8%	28.3%
Most of the help needed	25.0%	31.6%	40.0%	38.2%	35.0%
Some of the help needed	21.2%	25.7%	20.0%	25.7%	24.5%
No help	7.7%	13.5%	8.6%	13.3%	12.2%
<b>Others</b>					
All of the help needed	28.8%	21.1%	17.1%	12.0%	17.2%
Most of the help needed	21.2%	22.8%	20.0%	25.7%	23.6%
Some of the help needed	26.9%	29.2%	25.7%	27.8%	27.9%
No help	23.1%	26.9%	37.1%	34.4%	31.3%
n	52	171	70	241	534

Notes: Adult Well-Being Topical Module of the 2001 SIPP panel, Differences between disconnected and non-disconnected women are reported.

+ p < 0.10, \* p < 0.05

**Table 4. Select Characteristics of Single Mothers below 200% of the poverty line, Wave 9 sample members**

	Southern states		Non-southern states		Total
	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	
Average age	29.1 (7.49)	29.9 (7.58)	30.8 (8.94)	30.2 (8.43)	30.1 (8.14)
Younger than 25	32.8%	27.2%	35.4%	28.5%	29.5%
Race					
African American	53.4%	68.3%	38.0%	37.5%	48.9%
Hispanic	17.2%	13.3%	15.2%	27.7%	20.4%
Average number of children	1.60 (1.17)	1.54 (1.31)	1.60 (0.96)	1.50 (1.21)	1.53 (1.20)
Less than high school degree	34.5%	22.8%	30.4%	30.9%	28.6%
Work barriers					
Caring for someone in the home***	55.1%	8.3%	36.7%	19.5%	22.0%
Had physical or mental health work-limiting condition**	17.2%	6.7%	17.7%	9.4%	10.5%
Had physical or mental health work-preventing condition***	15.5%	3.3%	16.5%	5.5%	7.3%
Metro Resident	65.5%	65.6%	79.7%	84.0%	75.7%
n	58	180	79	256	573

Notes: 2001 SIPP panel, Wave 9, Differences between disconnected and non-disconnected women are reported.

\*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Appendix A. Select Characteristics of Single Mothers below 200% of the poverty line, by wave (n = person-waves)**

	Southern states		Non-southern states		Total
	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	Disconnected	Non-disconnected	
Average age	29.3 (7.8)	29.9 (7.58)	30.8 (8.53)	30.3 (8.34)	30.1 (8.08)
Younger than 25	40.4%	34.6%	34.8%	36.2%	35.9%
Race					
African American**	66.4%	69.9%	38.3%	43.0%	53.3%
Hispanic***	9.1%	13.7%	18.1%	25.7%	19.3%
Average number of children	1.60 (1.05)	1.51 (1.25)	1.69 (1.03)	1.64 (1.17)	1.60 (1.17)
Less than High School	29.4%	22.3%	28.1%	32.4%	28.3%
Work barriers					
Caring for someone in the home****	40.1%	9.2%	38.4%	15.8%	18.7%
Had physical or mental health work-limiting condition****	15.1%	6.6%	19.0%	8.3%	9.7%
Had physical or mental health work-preventing condition***	12.6%	3.0%	14.3%	4.2%	5.9%
Metro Resident	68.5%	68.9%	82.1%	83.7%	77.3%
n	581	2,067	784	2,907	6,339

Notes: 2001 SIPP panel, Differences between disconnected and non-disconnected women are reported.

\*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001