Dynamics of Disconnection:
Differences in Spells of Being Disconnected and Wellbeing by Gender

Laryssa Mykyta
U.S. Census Bureau
SEHSD # 2013-10
Prepared for
Annual Meetings of the Population Association of America

New Orleans, LA
April 11 – 13, 2013

 I thank Trudi J. Renwick, Jeongsoo Kim, Charles Hokayem, Jamie Choi, Charles Nelson, and David Johnson for helpful comments and suggestions

CORRESPONDENCE TO:
Laryssa Mykyta
Poverty Statistics Branch
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC
301-763-4194
laryssa.mykyta@census.gov

Abstract

In the wake of welfare reform and the recent recession, there has been increased interest in identifying and assessing the well-being of disconnected families (those having no earnings and receiving no TANF or SSI). I use the 2001, 2004 and 2008 Panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation to examine disconnectedness by sex over the last decade. Findings suggest that women were more likely to be disconnected in the 2001 and 2004 Panels but that the odds of being disconnected increased for men over the course of the recession. Results from discrete-time hazard models reveal sex differences in disconnection. Among men, younger men with less exposure to or interaction with the labor market are vulnerable to becoming disconnected; among women, single mothers heading households remain vulnerable to becoming disconnected. Different policy levers may be necessary to reduce the risk of disconnection by sex.

In the wake of welfare reform and the recent recession, researchers and policymakers have been interested in identifying disconnected families and assessing their well-being. Although the definition of disconnectedness has varied somewhat across studies, in general, a person is considered disconnected if they have no earnings and if they are not receiving TANF or SSI (Loprest 2011; Loprest and Nichols 2011) .[1] Several studies have also examined the prevalence and well-being of disconnected youth who are neither enrolled in school or participating in the the labor force. And although since the late-1990s there has been a spate of research interest in non-resident fathers, there has been little research on disconnectedness among men, with the notable exception of Edelman, Holzer, and Offner's (2006) study of young, minority men.

In this paper, I use the Survey of Income and Program Participation 2001, 2004 and 2008 Panels to examine disconnectedness among men and women over the last decade.[2]

[1] Some studies introduce more stringent criteria, excluding mothers residing in households with at least one worker from the definition or specifying a minimum number of months of not having earnings or receiving TANF or SSI.

[2] The estimates in this paper are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual values because of sampling variation and other factors. All comparisons made in this paper have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 95-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non-sampling error, and definitions see http://www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A01_20060323_Long%28S&A-3%29.pdf, http://www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A04_W1toW12(S&A-10).pdf and http://www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A08_PLA_W1toW8(S&A-15).pdf

Specifically, I address the following research questions:

(1) How many working-age men and women (ages 18-64 years) are disconnected from society, that is, are not working or enrolled in school and are not receiving public assistance (including TANF or general assistance), unemployment benefits or SSI disability payments?

(2) What are the characteristics of disconnected men and women and how do they differ?

(3) What factors predict entry into a spell of being disconnected for working-age men and women?

This paper adds to the literature on disconnection and economic disadvantage by examining disconnectedness among *both* working-age women and men. Thus far, there has been little research on disconnectedness among men. Further, this paper seeks to identify gender differences in well-being among men and women and, as such, has important policy implications. To the extent that the sources of disconnectedness vary for men and women, different policy levers may be necessary in order to prevent disconnection and to improve wellbeing for men and for women.

Background

To date, much of the research on disconnected families has focused on TANF leavers or single mothers[3] (See Loprest 2003; Acs and Loprest 2004; Turner, Danziger & Seefeldt 2006 for analysis of TANF leavers; see also Loprest & Zedlewski 2006; Blank and Kovak 2009; Loprest and Nichols for analysis of single mothers) .This is not surprising – after welfare reform in 1996, policy makers and researchers were particularly interested in understanding how time limits and

[3] Although there is variation in how researchers define disconnection, in general, a person is considered disconnected if they have no earnings and if they are not receiving TANF or SSI (Loprest 2011; Loprest and Nichols 2011) .

other policies under the new welfare law would affect the wellbeing of this vulnerable group. In general this research has found that 14 to 20 percent of former TANF recipients are disconnected (Acs and Loprest 2004). However, disconnection rates are higher among TANF leavers than among other single mothers, Loprest and Zedlewski estimated that about 12 percent of low-income mothers never receiving TANF were disconnected in 2002. Further, these studies have found that there has been an increase in the percent of low-income single mothers who are disconnected since 1996 (Loprest and Nichols 2011; see also Blank and Kovak 2009). However, a recent study by Cancian, Han and Noyes found a decrease in disconnection among cohorts of TANF and SNAP participants in Wisconsin between 2005 and 2009 (Cancian, Han and Noyes 2011).

Loprest and Nichols (2011) further find that not working is the dominant reason for becoming disconnected. Leaving school, losing SSI or TANF and becoming a single mom were all positively and significantly associated with entry into a disconnected state however (Loprest and Nichols 2011; Blank and Kovak 2009).

Research suggests that among women who have are disconnected, spells are not long. Results from national studies suggest that 11 to 14 percent of disconnected women were disconnected for more than a year. About half were disconnected for less than four months. (Loprest and Nichols 2011; Blank and Kovak 2009).

There has been less research interest in disconnection among men with the exception of work by Edelman, Holzer and Offner (2006) focused on young men and policies to reconnect them to the labor market. Edelman et al. (2006) found that in 2000, over 17 percent of young black men ages 16 to 24 years were "disconnected" from both school and work, higher than for any other race/ethnic group. Aside from this study, however, there has been no research to date

that examines disconnection among all men or compares differences in disconnection between men and women.

Data and Methods

In this analysis, I use data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2001, 2004 and 2008 Panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is a panel survey based on a nationally representative sample of approximately 50,000 eligible households. All adults in sampled households are interviewed once every four months for a period of twenty four to forty-eight months and are asked questions regarding household composition, labor force participation, income from various sources and participation in government means-tested programs. The four month recall period enables researchers to capture transitions that are relatively short term, as well as changes of longer duration. As a result of its longitudinal design, the SIPP is particularly appropriate for studying transitions, including transitions in employment and program participation that enable us to determine whether or not an individual is disconnected and the length of spells of disconnection. Further, the SIPP follows original sample members throughout each panel, even if they leave the household. Thus, using SIPP, I am able to follow households and adults over time and examine the dynamics of being disconnected.

Defining disconnection

I use the 2001 (Waves 1 through 9), 2004 (Waves 1 through 12) and 2008 (Waves 1 through 11) SIPP Panels to identify disconnected working-age men and women ages 18 to 64 over the past decade. In this analysis, a working-age adult is considered disconnected if they

have not worked or been enrolled in school, and have not received cash assistance (including TANF or general assistance[4]), disability payments (SSI) or unemployment insurance (UI or supplemental unemployment insurance) for three or more consecutive months. Thus, a spell of disconnectedness begins at *t* if an individual has not worked and is not enrolled in school and does not receive cash assistance, disability payments or unemployment insurance in a given month and that individual either had earnings or received TANF, SSI or UI or was enrolled in school three months earlier at *t-3*. For respondents who are married, both individuals must be identified as disconnected for either individual to be defined as disconnected. For example, if a married man is identified as disconnected but his spouse is not disconnected (either because the spouse is working, in school or receives cash assistance, SSI or UI), then the man would not be defined as disconnected.

In the descriptive analysis, I use data for all working-age (ages 18 to 64) respondents in each month of each SIPP Panel to estimate the percent of working-age men and women who are disconnected by month from January 2001 through December 2011.

Predicting the risk of entering into disconnected status

In order to examine the conditional odds of entering into disconnected status, I use data from Waves 1 through 9 of the 2001 SIPP Panel, Waves 1 through 12 of the 2004 SIPP Panel and Waves 1 through 8 of the 2008 SIPP Panel to estimate discrete-time hazard models. These

[4] Note that although they are less likely to be eligible for TANF, men may receive assistance through state general assistance programs for childless adults.

data were collected between February 2001 through January 2004 (2001 Panel), February 2004 through January 2008 (2004 Panel) and from September 2008 through April 2011 (2008 Panel).[5]

For the hazard analysis, I limit the analytic sample to adults who were between ages 18 to 64 through the entire panel. As a result of these criteria, the analytic sample includes all adults aged at least 18 years at the time of the Wave 1 interview who were followed through Wave 9 of the 2001 SIPP Panel, Wave 12 of the 2004 SIPP Panel and Wave 8 of the 2008 SIPP Panel.[6] Because disconnection is defined only for working-age adults, the analytic sample is further restricted to those adults who were less than 65 years of age at the time of the final interview for each Panel. These criteria yield a pooled sample sizes of 76,886 adults (3,108,578 person-months) (See Table 1 for breakdown of analytic sample by SIPP panel).[7] Longitudinal weights are applied to account for sample design and attrition. When weighted, the sample represents 175.6 million adults ages 18 to 64 years in 2008; 169.4 million adults ages 18 to 64 years in 2004; and 166.6 million adults ages 18 to 64 years in 2001.

The dependent variable for the discrete time hazard models is coded as 1 if the individual enters a spell of disconnection[8], in month *t* and 0 otherwise. I estimate a set of nested models as follows: Model 1 includes a dichotomous variable reflecting the sex of the respondent (coded as 0 if female and 1 if male), and controls for survey panel, survey month[9], survey year, and a seam

[5] As a result of the SIPP survey design, labor force, school enrollment and program participation is measured from October 2000 through December 2003 for the 2001 Panel, October 2003 through December 2007 for the 2004 SIPP Panel and from May 2008 through March 2011 for the 2008 SIPP Panel.

[6] At the time of analysis, longitudinal weights were available through Wave 8 of the 2008 Panel.

[7] Due to Census budget shortfalls, the unweighted sample size was cut in half in the 2004 SIPP Panel beginning in Wave 9 (October 2006).

[8] An individual enters a spell of disconnection if he or she has not worked, been enrolled in school, and has not received cash assistance, SSI or UI in months *t*, *t*-1 and *t*-2 but had either worked, been enrolled in school or received cash assistance, SSI or UI in month *t*-3.

[9] Linear, quadratic and log functions of time (operationalized by survey month) were tested in alternate models. The quadratic specification provided the best model fit and is reported herein.

effect[10]. Model 2 includes covariates from Model 1 and incorporates a set of individual socioeconomic and demographic characteristics including age, race/ethnicity, marital status, presence of own child under 18 in the household, educational attainment, disability status, family poverty status and a variable reflecting personal poverty status (operationalized as the ratio of personal income to the poverty threshold for a single individual). As being disconnected in a given month might result in having family or personal income below poverty in that month, variables reflecting poverty status are lagged four months in an effort to control for state dependence and reverse causation.[11] Model 3 adds significant interaction terms between the covariates and sex of the respondents. Standard errors are based on replicate weights.

Results

Disconnected Adults by Month

In Figure 1, I report the percent of disconnected adults ages 18 to 64 years by sex from January 2001 through December 2011. In this figure, disconnected adults are defined as any working age adult who has not been working, has not been enrolled in school and has not received cash assistance through TANF or GA, SSI or UI for the past three months. Married individuals whose spouse is not identified as disconnected are not defined as disconnected.

As shown in Figure 1, the percent of disconnected women was higher than the percent of disconnected men in each month of the 2001 SIPP Panel (January 2001 through December 2003)

[10] Respondents tend to report changes in a given status as beginning in the first reference month of a survey wave. This results in a seam effect in which changes in status are clustered in the first of the four reference months. The seam effect is operationalized as a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not it is the first reference month of any wave to account for seam effects in reporting.

[11] Personal income and the single person poverty threshold for a given month and year were adjusted to 2011 dollars using the CPI-U.

and the 2004 SIPP Panel (January 2004 through December 2007).[12] Specifically, the percent of women who were disconnected was 1.0 percentage point higher on average over the course of the 2001 Panel (8.0 percent for women v. 7.0 percent for men) and 1.4 percentage points higher on average over the course of the 2004 Panel (7.8 percent for women v. 6.4 percent for men). However, the gap between men and women narrowed substantially in the 2008 Panel (May 2008 through December 2011). Although the percent of disconnected women was higher than the percent of disconnected men in most months of the 2008 Panel, there was no significant difference in the percent of disconnected men and disconnected women across the 2008 panel (7.6 percent v. 7.4 percent).

Further, as noted in Figure 1, the percent of disconnected women and men increased by 1.4 percentage points for women and 1.0 percentage points for men from January 2001 through December 2003. For the 2004 Panel, the change in the percent disconnected was only significant for women. Specifically, the percent of disconnected women increased by 1.4 percentage points in between January 2004 and December 2007, while there was no increase in the percent of disconnected men. However, the percent disconnected declined for both women and men between May 2008 and December 2011. In May 2008, an estimated 9.0 percent of working-age women and 8.6 percent of working-age men were disconnected 6 months just after the start of the recession; by December 2011, 7.3 percent of women and 6.6 percent of men were disconnected.

Sample Characteristics

Table 2 reports characteristics of the analytic sample for each SIPP panel. As shown in Table 2, the percent of adults who had ever been disconnected over the course of each panel

[12] All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and, unless otherwise noted, all comparisons are statistically significant at the 95 percent significance level.

declined from 18.6 percent to 17.9 percent between the 2001 and 2004 Panel[13], but increased to 19.3 percent in the 2008 Panel. The 2001 and 2008 Panels included recessionary periods: the 2001 Panel included the recession dated from March 2001 through November 2001; the 2008 Panel included the recession dated from December 2007 though June 2009. Although less than five percent of respondents experienced more than one spell of disconnection during the course of any panel, the proportion experiencing more than one spell increased by 0.5 percentage points between the 2001 and 2008 Panels.

With respect to differences by sex, the percent of men and women ever disconnected in each Panel only differed significantly in the 2004 Panel. The percent of women who were ever disconnected was 18 percent in the 2004 Panel compared to 16.8 percent for men.

The sample characteristics reported in Table 2 also highlight changes in the composition of the population over the course of the decade. For example, there was a decline in the percent of the population that was non-Hispanic white from 70.5 percent in the 2001 Panel to 66.0 percent in the 2008 Panel. At the same time, the proportion of Hispanics increased by 2.7 percentage points to 15.4 percent of the sample in the 2008 Panel.

Consistent with demographic trends, there was a decrease in the proportion of the sample that was married and an increase in educational attainment between the 2001 Panel and the 2008 Panel. By summer 2008, just 53.3 percent of working-age adults were married, and 31.1 percent had never been married. Further, the percent of working age adults with some college experience increased 5.1 percentage points (to 37.2 percent) and the proportion holding a bachelor's degree increased 2.7 percentage points (to 27.1 percent) between the 2001 and 2008 Panels.

[13] The -0.7 percentage point change in the percent of disconnected adults between the 2001 and 2004 SIPP Panels was significant at the 0.10 level ($p<0.10$).

Although family poverty rates did not differ significantly between the 2001 and 2004 Panels, the effects of the recent recession were seen in the higher poverty rates experienced by working-age adults in the 2008 panel. About 15.4 percent of adults had family incomes below the poverty level at the time of the first interview of the 2008 Panel, up 2.2 percentage points from the 2001 Panel. Personal poverty rates also increased by 3.2 percentage points between the 2001 and 2008 Panels.[14] About 32 percent of working-age adults had personal income below the poverty threshold for a single person in 2008.

Characteristics of Ever Disconnected Men and Women

Table 3 reports characteristics (measured at Wave 1) for persons who had ever been disconnected for at least three months, by SIPP Panel and sex. As shown the characteristics of disconnected persons by sex varied in each panel. Specifically, in each panel, disconnected men were more likely to be younger than disconnected women. For example, in 2008, 28.7 percent of disconnected men were 18 to 24 years old, compared to 23.3 percent of disconnected women. In contrast, 30.1 percent of disconnected women were aged 50 to 64 years compared to 25.4 percent of disconnected men.

Although working-age adults who were never married at Wave 1 were more likely than their married or ever married counterparts to report being disconnected during each Panel, there were differences in disconnection between men and women by marital status. For example, 58 percent of ever disconnected men had never been married, compared to 44 percent of disconnected women in the 2008 Panel. Separated/widowed/divorced women were also more likely to be disconnected at some point than their male counterparts (27.5 v. 20.6 percent in the

[14] Personal poverty status is calculated by comparing total personal income to the poverty threshold for a single person.

2008 Panel). However, a higher percentage of never married men than women were ever-disconnected.

Women who were ever disconnected were also more likely to be poor than their male counterparts. About 38 percent of ever disconnected women had family income below the poverty level compared to 29.4 percent of men who had ever been disconnected during the 2008 Panel. In addition, 63.1 percent of women who were ever disconnected reported having personal income below the poverty threshold at Wave 1 compared to 52.5 percent of men.

Disconnected women were also more likely to be a householder (or the spouse of the householder) than disconnected men. In the 2008 Panel, 60.8 percent of women who were ever disconnected during the panel reported being a householder or spouse of householder at Wave 1, compared to just 44.8 percent of men. Approximately-one-third of ever-disconnected men (34.9 percent) reported being the child of a householder at Wave 1 of the 2008 Panel compared to less than one in four (22.2 percent) ever-disconnected women.

Women who were ever disconnected during the course of a panel were also more likely to report that someone in their household received noncash benefits, or that they received food stamps, TANF or general assistance or public housing then their male counterparts at Wave 1. However, there was no significant difference in the percent of ever disconnected women and men reporting receipt of disability payments or unemployment compensation.

Results from Discrete Time Hazard Models Predicting Conditional Odds of Becoming Disconnected

Table 4 reports coefficients from discrete time hazard models predicting the conditional odds of becoming disconnected. As reported in Table 4, in Model 1, the log odds of becoming

disconnected were lower for men than for women.[15] This result is consistent with the pattern noted in Figure 1, in which women had higher rates of disconnection than men, particularly across the 2001 and 2004 SIPP Panels. However, in Model 2, after controlling for individual characteristics, men had significantly higher log odds of becoming disconnected than women. In Model 3, which includes interaction terms with sex, men were not significantly more likely to become disconnected than women, except in the 2008 Panel. This result is consistent with the narrowing in rates of disconnection in the 2008 Panel relative to the earlier Panels as seen in Figure 1.

Individual characteristics are also important determinants of becoming disconnected. In Model 2, adults less than 35 years of age had significantly higher log odds of becoming disconnected than their older counterparts. In Model 3, women under 25 years of age were 1.6 times ($\exp^{0.471}$) more likely and men under 25 years of age were 1.8 times ($\exp^{0.471+0.133}$) more likely to become disconnected than their counterparts ages 35 to 49 years. Results in Model 3 also indicate that men and women 25 to 34 years were more likely to become disconnected than their counterparts aged 35 to 49 years. Older adults ages 50 to 64 years also had higher odds of becoming disconnected than their counterparts ages 35 to 49 years, although the log odds were significantly reduced for men ages 50 to 64 years relative to women.

Working-age adults who were black non-Hispanic, Hispanic or other race/ethnicity were significantly more likely to become disconnected than those who were white non-Hispanic. Working-age women with a work-limiting disability were 1.7 times more likely ($\exp^{0.503}$) and working age men with a work-limiting disability were 1.9 times more likely ($\exp^{0.503+0.143}$) to become disconnected than their counterparts. Not surprisingly, personal poverty status was significantly associated with becoming disconnected. Working age adults with personal incomes

[15] The coefficient on the male dummy variable in Model 1 (B=-0.039) was significant at the 0.10 level ($p<0.10$).

below 150 percent of the single person poverty threshold had significantly higher odds of becoming disconnected, while those with own incomes 250% of the single person poverty thresholds were significantly less likely to become disconnected than their counterparts having personal incomes 150 to 249% of the single person poverty threshold.[16]

There are also gender differences in the associations between individual characteristics and becoming disconnected. Although married women had significantly lower odds of becoming disconnected than those who had never been married, married males were significantly more likely than married females to become disconnected.[17] Further, although women living with own children under 18 years were more likely to become disconnected than those with no children, men residing with their own children under 18 years had significantly lower log odds of becoming disconnected. This finding likely reflects the higher concentration of disconnection among female-headed families.

There were also gender differences in educational attainment. Among women, the odds of being disconnected did not differ between those holding a high school diploma and those who had not completed high school. However, men having less than a high school education had higher odds of becoming disconnected than women having less than a high school education.

Finally, although family poverty increased the log odds of becoming disconnected for working-age women, the coefficient on the interaction term suggests that the association was reversed for men, relative to women (0.2124+(-0.1727)=0.0397).

[16] The single person poverty threshold for a working age adult in 2011 was $11,702. Therefore, 150 percent of the threshold would be $17,553; 250 percent of the threshold would be $29,255.
[17] However, married males still had lower odds of becoming disconnected than their never married counterparts (-1.331+0.305=-1.026).

Discussion

In this analysis, I examined disconnection and the odds of becoming disconnected by sex over the last decade. Most of the previous literature on disconnection has focused on female-headed families and TANF leavers. Because this paper focuses on disconnection among all working-age adults and adjusts for spouses' disconnection status for those who are married, I find lower rates of disconnection than in the prior literature. Despite this, descriptive results reveal higher rates of disconnection on average for women relative to men prior to the recession (i.e. across the 2001 and 2004 SIPP Panels), with a narrowing in the 2008 Panel, during the recession (see Figure 1).

The narrowing of the rates of disconnection seen in Figure 1 are also consistent with results from the models. For example, in Model 3, the log odds of becoming disconnected were higher for men in the 2008 panel. Taken together, these results suggest that working-age men may have been harder hit during the recession than women. Indeed, in 2009, the term "mancession" was coined to describe the disproportionate unemployment impacts on men relative to women during the recent recession dated between December 2007 and June 2009. Future research will examine whether this narrowing has continued or whether there has been a divergence in disconnection by gender post-recovery.

Not surprisingly, my results also indicate that economic disadvantage is clearly associated with disconnection for both men and women. Adults who are under 35 years of age who are not white non-Hispanic, who have a work-limiting disability and who have fewer personal resources are more likely to become disconnected than their counterparts. However, the results also reveal gender differences in disconnection. Compared to working-age women, working-age men who were ever disconnected were less likely to have been poor and more

likely to have been under 25 years of age or to have resided with their parents or with someone else at Wave 1. In contrast, disconnected women were more likely to be poor, to have fewer personal resources or to be heading their own household. However, ever-disconnected women were also more likely than their male counterparts to have received mean-tested benefits, such as food stamps or public housing at Wave 1. Moreover, the model results further suggest that men becoming disconnected were less likely to have own children residing with them or to have family income below poverty than women.

These gender differences suggest that among men, younger men with less exposure to or interaction with the labor market may be more vulnerable to disconnection than their older counterparts. Approximately one-third of ever-disconnected men were living in their parents' household in 2008 (and an additional 13 percent lived with a relative or non-relative)[18], suggesting that for men, living with other adults may provide an important source of support. As a result, disconnected men may be more likely to rely on private safety nets to buffer the effects of being disconnected. More research is needed to determine the extent to which disconnection among men reflects a temporary delay in labor market entry or persistent vulnerability. Further, additional research should explore differences in disconnection among men by race/ethnic group.

In contrast, among women, about one-half of those who were ever disconnected were householders and approximately one-third were poor at the start of the panel. These results suggest that women, particularly women heading families, face continued vulnerability to becoming disconnected. A more detailed analysis of spells of disconnection, including the length and persistence of spells, would likely highlight additional gender differences.

[18] In the 2008 Panel, 32.3 percent of ever-disconnected women lived with a parent(s), relatives or non-relatives. In the 2004 Panel, 48.8 percent of ever-disconnected men lived with a parent(s), relatives or non-relatives compared to 29.1 percent of ever-disconnected women. In the 2001 Panel, 45.7 percent of ever disconnected men lived with a parent(s), relatives or non-relatives compared to 28.1 percent of ever-disconnected women.

Differences across the panels in disconnection by gender further suggest the importance of the public safety net in ameliorating the effects of economic downturns, particularly for women as means-tested programs are targeted to families with children. Therefore, women may have been more able to access these programs, particularly TANF, than men during the downturn. Further, ever disconnected women also were more likely to receive benefits from other means-tested programs such as food stamps and public housing than ever disconnected men, suggesting the public safety net may serve as a buffer for some disconnected women. Although not examined here, participation in other means-tested programs may also increase the likelihood of reconnection, as Loprest and Nichols (2011) found in their analysis of low-income single mothers.

The gender differences highlighted in this analysis suggest that different policy levers may be needed to address disconnection among men and women. For men, policies which connect young men, and particularly young minority men to the labor market, may be needed to address disconnection. For women, the importance of public safety net in preventing disconnection of women and their families cannot be underestimated.

This analysis is limited in several ways. For example, although this paper examines gender differences in entries into disconnected status, I have not yet explored whether there are gender differences in exits from disconnection. I plan to extend the analysis to examine both entries and exits. Further, I only explore the first entry here and not multiple entries into disconnected status. Although, I intend to extend the analysis by incorporating models estimating multiple entries, it is notable that there was only a significant difference in the number of spells of disconnection between men and women in the 2004 Panel.

Further, this analysis does not examine the odds of any given event precipitating a transition to disconnected status, such as a loss of employment, or a loss of TANF or GA, Unemployment insurance or disability payment. In the next iteration, I will examine how such events affect becoming disconnected for men and women.

I have also not addressed shared frailty here. While my models control for individual characteristics likely to be associated with the conditional odds of becoming disconnected, there is the possibility that there is unobserved heterogeneity that is not accounted for by these characteristics. The next iteration of the models will include adjustments for shared frailty.

Attrition is a problem in longitudinal studies and this analysis is no exception. The analytic sample includes only working-age adults in the original Wave 1 sample who are followed through each panel. These individuals may be more likely to be residentially stable and less disadvantaged and therefore less likely to experience disconnection than those who attrite. Longitudinal replicate weights are employed in order to control for sample design and attrition.

Despite these limitations, this analysis represents the first attempt to examine gender differences in disconnection among all working-age adults. Gender differences in factors associated with disconnection suggest that various policy levers to prevent disconnection among men and women at risk. Further, gender differences in disconnection during the recent recession highlight the importance of the public safety net in ameliorating the effects of the downturn, particularly for women.

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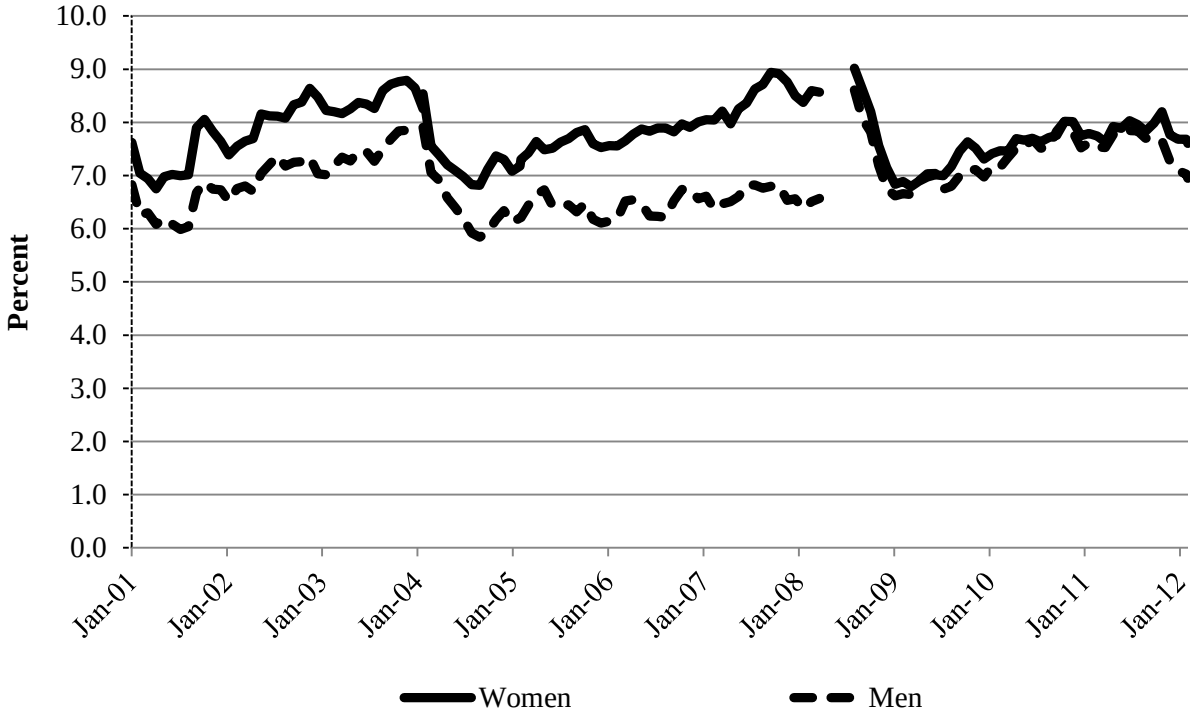
Figure 1: Percent of Disconnected Adults[A], Ages 18 to 64 Years by Sex, January 2001 – December 2011



[A] In Figure 1, disconnected adults are defined as any working age adult (aged 18 to 64 years) who has not been working, has not been enrolled in school and has not received cash assistance through TANF or GA, SSI or UI for the past three months. Married individuals whose spouse is not identified as disconnected are not defined as disconnected.

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001, 2004 and 2008 (Waves 1 through 10) Panels. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non-sampling error, and definitions see http://www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A01_20060323_Long%28S&A-3%29.pdf, http://www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A04_W1toW12(S&A-10).pdf and http://www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A08_W1toW9(S&A-14).pdf,

Table 1: Sample of Adults Ages 18 to 64 years, by SIPP Panel[A]

	2008 Panel	2004 Panel[B]	2001 Panel
Unweighted	33,514	15,032	28,340
Males	15,966	7,089	13,493
Females	17,548	7,943	14,847
Weighted	175,570,423	169,421,887	166,616,412
Males	86,729,282	83,413,215	82,020,000
Females	88,841,141	86,008,672	84,596,412
Person-Months	1,412,733	698,245	997,600
Male	668,954	325,787	471,370
Female	743,779	372,458	526,230

[A] Adults included in the sample were at least 18 years old at Wave 1 and less than 65 years old at the time of the final interview and were interviewed at every wave in the Panel.
[B] Due to Census budget shortfalls, the unweighted sample size was cut in half in the 2004 SIPP Panel beginning in Wave 9 (October 2006).

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001, 2004 and 2008 Panels

Table 2: Sample Characteristics at First Reference Month of Wave 1 Interview, by SIPP Panel

	2008		2004		2001		Difference 2008 & 2001 ($p<0.05$)
Weighted N	175,570,423		169,421,887		166,616,412		
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	
Ever disconnected 3+ months during panel	19.3	0.3	17.9	0.4	18.6	0.3	
Male	19.4	0.4	16.8	0.4	18.9	0.5	
Female	19.2	0.3	18.0	0.4	19.3	0.3	
Number of spells of disconnection							
None	80.7	0.3	82.2	0.4	81.2	0.3	
One	14.8	0.2	13.4	0.3	14.7	0.2	
Two or more	4.5	0.2	4.4	0.2	4.0	0.2	*
Sex							
Male	49.4	0.1	49.2	0.1	49.2	0.0	*
Female	50.6	0.1	50.8	0.1	50.8	0.0	*
Age							
18 to 24 years	15.7	0.1	16.3	0.1	15.7	0.1	
25 to 29 years	11.8	0.1	11.1	0.1	11.2	0.1	*
30 to 34 years	10.9	0.1	11.7	0.1	12.1	0.1	*
35 to 49 years	36.2	0.1	38.4	0.2	39.1	0.1	*
50 to 64 years	25.4	0.1	22.4	0.1	21.9	0.1	*
Race							
White, Non-Hispanic	66.0	0.1	68.1	0.2	70.5	0.3	*
Black, Non-Hispanic	11.8	0.1	11.6	0.2	11.3	0.1	*
Hispanic	15.4	0.1	13.9	0.1	12.7	0.1	*
Other Non-Hispanic	6.8	0.1	6.4	0.1	5.5	0.3	*
Marital Status							
Married	53.3	0.2	55.5	0.2	57.0	0.2	*
Widowed, separated or divorced	15.6	0.2	15.5	0.2	16.2	0.2	*
Never married	31.1	0.2	29.0	0.3	26.8	0.2	*
Has own child(ren) under 18 years of age	37.4	0.3	39.9	0.4	40.5	0.3	*
Educational attainment							
Less than high school	11.5	0.3	13.4	0.4	13.7	0.2	*
High school diploma or GED	23.8	0.3	23.1	0.4	29.5	0.3	*
Some college	37.2	0.3	37.3	0.4	32.1	0.3	*
Bachelor degree or higher	27.4	0.3	26.1	0.5	24.7	0.3	*
Had work-limiting disability	11.3	0.2	10.8	0.3	11.1	0.2	
Family income below poverty threshold	15.4	0.3	13.0	0.4	13.2	0.3	*
Ratio of personal income to poverty threshold for single person							
Less than 100%	31.8	0.3	29.8	0.4	28.6	0.3	*
100-149%	8.4	0.2	7.8	0.2	8.4	0.2	
150-249%	15.4	0.2	16.0	0.3	16.9	0.2	*
250%+	44.4	0.3	46.5	0.4	46.1	0.3	*

Note: Standard errors based on replicate weights
Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001, 2004 and 2008 Panels

Table 3. Sample Characteristics at First Reference Month of Wave 1 for Respondents Who Were Ever Disconnected During SIPP Panel, By SIPP Panel and Sex

	2008				2004				2001				Male Female Difference (p<0.05)		
	Male N=16,783,912		Female N=17,062,645		Male N=14,000,331		Female N=16,247,206		Male N=14,734,068		Female N=16,317,924				
	%	se	%	se	%	se	%	se	%	Se	%	se	2008	2004	2001
Number of spells															
One	76.4	0.9	77.0	0.9	73.0	1.5	77.0	1.2	78.4	0.9	79.0	0.9		*	
Two or more	23.6	0.9	23.0	0.8	27.0	1.4	23.1	1.2	21.6	0.7	21.0	0.8		*	
Length of spell	8.5	0.3	9.2	0.3	10.2	0.5	10.8	0.5	7.4	0.3	8.3	0.3	*		*
Age															
18 to 24 years	28.7	0.8	23.3	0.8	30.6	1.4	25.6	1.2	28.8	0.9	21.8	0.8	*	*	*
25 to 29 years	12.7	0.7	12.3	0.6	9.7	0.9	8.5	0.7	10.1	0.8	9.1	0.6			
30 to 34 years	8.6	0.5	8.7	0.5	6.9	0.9	7.8	0.7	7.7	0.6	8.7	0.6			
35 to 49 years	24.6	0.8	25.6	0.7	25.4	1.2	26.0	1.1	27.2	1.0	28.2	0.8			
50 to 64 years	25.4	0.7	30.1	0.8	27.4	1.3	32.1	1.1	26.1	0.8	32.1	0.8	*	*	*
Race															
White, Non-Hispanic	58.1	1.1	55.3	0.8	58.0	1.3	57.0	1.3	60.3	1.2	59.2	1.0	*		
Black, Non-Hispanic	17.4	0.9	18.9	0.7	18.4	1.1	19.6	1.1	18.0	0.8	19.3	0.6			
Hispanic	17.6	0.7	19.3	0.7	17.4	1.1	16.3	0.9	16.0	0.9	16.2	0.7			
Other Non-Hispanic	6.9	0.5	6.5	0.4	6.1	0.7	7.1	0.6	5.7	0.7	5.4	0.6			
Foreign-born	15.3	0.7	17.9	0.7	14.3	1.1	15.9	1.0	---	---	---	---	*		
Marital Status															
Married	21.5	0.8	28.5	0.8	21.2	1.4	28.3	1.1	27.1	0.9	31.0	0.9	*	*	*
Widowed, separated or divorced	20.6	0.8	27.5	0.8	22.4	1.2	30.4	1.2	21.5	1.2	31.3	0.9	*	*	*
Never married	58.0	0.9	44.0	1.0	56.4	1.5	41.3	1.2	51.4	1.2	37.7	0.9	*	*	*
Educational attainment															
Less than high school	20.9	1.0	19.6	0.8	25.1	1.6	22.0	1.2	25.5	1.1	24.6	0.8			
High school diploma	32.4	1.0	30.0	0.9	27.7	1.4	27.3	1.2	34.6	1.2	34.2	0.9	*		
Some college	34.8	1.1	35.2	1.0	33.7	1.8	36.5	1.4	26.2	1.1	27.8	1.0			
Bachelor degree or higher	11.9	0.6	15.2	0.7	13.6	1.0	14.2	1.1	13.6	0.9	13.3	0.6	*		

Table 3. Sample Characteristics at First Reference Month of Wave 1 for Respondents Who Were Ever Disconnected During SIPP Panel, By SIPP Panel and Sex

	2008				2004				2001				Male Female Difference (p<0.05)		
	Male N=16,783,912		Female N=17,062,645		Male N=14,000,331		Female N=16,247,206		Male N=14,734,068		Female N=16,317,924				
	%	se	%	se	%	se	%	se	%	se	%	se	2008	2004	2001
Had work-limiting disability	25.9	0.9	25.5	0.8	27.7	1.3	25.9	1.1	23.6	1.0	23.4	0.7			
Family income below poverty threshold	29.4	1.0	38.0	0.9	26.2	1.6	33.5	1.4	24.9	1.3	35.4	1.0	*	*	*
Personal income below 1-person poverty threshold	52.5	1.1	63.1	0.9	54.0	1.5	59.7	1.5	47.3	1.2	59.6	1.1	*	*	*
Ever moved	28.0	1.0	32.6	0.9	32.4	1.4	37.6	1.2	25.2	1.3	31.2	1.0	*	*	*
Relationship to householder															
Householder	36.0	0.8	46.0	0.9	38.3	1.5	48.6	1.2	40.1	1.0	47.1	1.0	*	*	*
Spouse	8.8	0.6	14.8	0.6	8.0	0.8	15.2	0.9	8.8	0.6	19.3	0.8	*	*	*
Unmarried partner of Householder	7.0	0.6	6.8	0.5	4.9	0.8	7.1	0.9	5.4	0.9	5.5	0.6			
Child of householder	34.9	0.9	22.2	0.8	38.5	1.6	21.1	1.1	31.7	1.2	15.8	0.8	*	*	*
Relative of householder	8.3	0.6	6.4	0.4	6.7	0.9	5.2	0.6	8.5	0.7	7.8	0.6	*		
Non-relative of Householder	5.0	0.5	3.7	0.4	3.6	0.7	2.8	0.5	5.5	0.6	4.5	0.6	*		
Program Participation															
Anyone in household received cash benefits	12.4	0.8	13.7	0.8	11.5	1.1	12.4	1.1	10.7	0.7	13.2	0.7			*
Anyone in household received non-cash benefits	39.4	1.1	51.1	1.0	38.5	1.4	47.8	1.3	32.5	1.2	43.1	1.1	*	*	*
Received food stamps	5.8	0.4	15.9	0.7	5.7	0.7	13.1	0.8	3.0	0.4	11.2	0.6	*	*	*
Received disability	1.8	0.3	1.4	0.2	1.9	0.4	1.2	0.3	1.9	0.3	1.9	0.3			
Received TANF/General Assistance	0.5	0.2	3.0	0.3	0.2	0.1	2.5	0.4	0.3	0.1	3.2	0.4	*	*	*
Received public housing	4.3	0.4	9.8	0.6	5.6	0.8	10.1	0.9	3.8	0.5	9.2	0.6	*	*	*
Received SSI	3.5	0.4	3.8	0.4	2.9	0.5	3.7	0.6	2.7	0.3	4.1	0.3			*
Received Unemployment Compensation	2.5	0.3	2.0	0.3	3.1	0.6	2.2	0.4	1.4	0.3	1.0	0.2			

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001, 2004 & 2008 Panels

Table 4. Coefficients from Discrete-Time Hazard Models Predicting the Odds of Becoming Disconnected

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	**SE**	**B**	**SE**	**B**	**SE**
Male	-0.039+	0.022	0.093**	0.028	0.067	0.090
2001	0.187**	0.032	0.262**	0.036	0.242**	0.042
2008	0.160*	0.069	0.062	0.076	-0.066	0.087
Male*2001					0.038	0.049
Male*2008					0.238*	0.117
Month	-0.098**	0.003	0.015**	0.005	0.015**	0.005
Month-squared	0.001**	0.001	-0.0005**	0.000	-0.0005**	0.000
Seam	1.850**	0.030	1.565**	0.034	1.565**	0.034
Year	-0.002**	0.000	-0.003**	0.000	-0.003	0.000
Age (35 to 49)						
18 to 24 years			0.552**	0.054	0.471**	0.073
25 to 29 years			0.346**	0.051	0.337	0.073
30 to 34 years			0.204**	0.056	0.141+	0.080
50 to 64 years			0.328**	0.044	0.398**	0.050
Male*18-24 years					0.133	0.094
Male*25-29 years					-0.006	0.109
Male*30-34 years					0.113	0.124
Male*50-64 years					-0.147*	0.066
Race (White Non-Hispanic)						
Black, Non-Hispanic			0.283**	0.043	0.216**	0.044
Hispanic			0.228**	0.046	0.252**	0.062
Other Non-Hispanic			0.191**	0.062	0.168*	0.082
Male*Black, Non-Hispanic					0.124	0.083
Male*Hispanic					-0.048	0.077
Male*Other Non-Hispanic					0.049	0.119
Foreign-born						
Marital Status (Never married)						
Married			-0.123**	0.053	-1.331**	0.064
Widowed, separated or divorced			0.067	0.046	0.050	0.061
Male*Married					0.305**	0.077
Male*WSD					0.016	0.100
Has own child less than 18 years			-0.005	0.048	0.123**	0.048
Male*Has own child <18 years					-0.384**	0.083
Educational attainment (HSD/GED)						
Less than high school			0.007	0.041	-0.068	0.054
Some college			-0.244**	0.036	-0.267**	0.044
Bachelor degree or higher			-0.251**	0.046	-0.194**	0.052
Male*Less than high school					0.139+	0.073
Male*Some college					0.056	0.074
Male*Bachelor degree or higher					-0.103**	0.086
Had work-limiting disability			0.503**	0.040	0.503**	0.039
Male*Had work-limiting disability					0.143**	0.046

** $p<0.01$; * $p<0.05$; + $p<0.10$

Table 4. Coefficients from Discrete-Time Hazard Models Predicting the Odds of Becoming Disconnected

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	**SE**	**B**	**SE**	**B**	**SE**
Family income below poverty threshold			0.143**	0.046	0.212**	0.061
Male*Family income below poverty threshold					-0.173**	0.057
Ratio of personal income to poverty threshold for single person (150-249%)						
Less than 100%			0.513**	0.045	0.519**	0.045
100-149%			0.332**	0.057	0.330**	0.057
250%+			-0.444**	0.047	-0.447**	0.047

** $p<0.01$; * $p<0.05$; + $p<0.10$

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001, 2004 & 2008 Panel