

©Copyright 2016
Yu-Ling Chang

State Social Safety Net Programs and the Great Recession:
The First Line of Defense and the Last Resort for the Economically Disadvantaged

Yu-Ling Chang

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2016

Reading Committee:
Marcia K. Meyers, Chair
Jennifer Romich
Melissa Martinson

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
School of Social Work

University of Washington

Abstract

State Social Safety Net Programs and the Great Recession:
The First Line of Defense and the Last Resort for the Economically Disadvantaged

Yu-Ling Chang

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Professor Marcia K. Meyers
School of Social Work

The Great Recession (2007–2009) and its lingering aftermath have posed challenges to the state safety net programs that are intended to provide income supports to the economically disadvantaged. The stratified, decentralized structure of the U.S. social welfare system has contributed to uneven policy responses to economic hardship across programs and states. With a focus on the Unemployment Insurance (UI) and General Assistance (GA) programs, this dissertation consists of three papers that investigate (1) the impacts of state UI modernization, (2) state UI approaches to social protection, and (3) state legislative reform of GA, respectively. This dissertation takes a multidisciplinary approach that integrates theoretical perspectives and research methods from social welfare, sociology, political science, and economics.

The first paper evaluates the effects of state UI modernization on the trajectories of household income-to-poverty levels during and after the Great Recession. It uses the nationally representative 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation panel dataset (merged with state data) and multilevel growth models to test the policy effects from 2008 through 2013. Findings show that working families had not yet fully recovered from the Great Recession by the end of 2013. However, working families in states enacting UI modernization provisions, on

average, experienced a greater economic improvement rate in the income-to-poverty level than their counterparts, controlling for state and household characteristics.

The second paper classifies state UI policy approaches to social protection by using an advanced model-based clustering technique to analyze multidimensional policy design and performance characteristics of 51 UI programs. Results indicate two distinct state UI approaches to social protection for workers: high and low protection. The high-protection approach, compared to its low-protection counterpart, is characterized as combining high financing adequacy with high taxable wages and average tax rates; high program accessibility with inclusive eligibility criteria; and high wage replacement with high benefit levels. These two approaches remained comparatively stable over time. However, both showed a declining trend in the social protection performances from 2007 to 2014.

The third paper employs a thematic content analysis of 26 legislative videos to examine how policy actors used knowledge to frame the problems of the poor and shape GA reform in Washington State. Findings show that knowledge construction of the GA-unemployable population as social deviants with psychological and behavioral problems influenced the GA reform directions toward a regulated, punitive model. These negative social constructions, intersecting with the mainstream welfare ideology of personal responsibility and work ethic, contributed to dismantling the safety net of last resort for the least resourceful poor.

As a whole, this dissertation research contributes to the fields of state welfare politics, policies, and practice through enhancing the understanding of the connections among macroeconomic conditions, anti-poverty politics, policy designs, and the state safety net system. Policy implications for promoting economic justice for disadvantaged and marginalized populations are offered.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Figures	iii
List of Tables	iv
Introduction.....	1
References.....	5
 Paper One. A Longitudinal Study on the Effects of State Unemployment Insurance Modernization on the Economic Security of American Working Families	 6
Summary	6
Literature Review.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Methods.....	17
Results.....	27
Conclusion	42
References.....	46
 Paper Two. Unequal Social Protection for Workers: Exploring State Unemployment Insurance Approaches Before and After the Great Recession	 50
Summary	50
Introduction.....	51
Literature Review.....	53
Methods.....	67
Results.....	73
Conclusion	87
References.....	90
 Paper Three. The Politics of Knowledge and Poverty: A Case Study of Washington State’s General Assistance Reform.....	 95
Summary	95
Introduction.....	96
Literature Review.....	98
Methods.....	104
Results.....	109
Discussion and Implications	125

References	129
Conclusion	133
Bibliography	138
Appendix.....	149

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Number	Page
0.1 State Social Safety Net System	2
1.1 Dual Policy Mechanisms for Ensuring the Economic Security of Working Families	11
1.2 State Certifications of UI Modernization Incentive Funding	12
1.3 The Average Household Income-to-Poverty Levels, May 2008–November 2013.....	30
1.4 Average Economic Trajectory of Working Families	32
1.5 Empirical Bayes Predictions for State Averages of and the Rates of Change in Household Income-to-Poverty Levels (November 2013).....	34
1.6 Predicted Economic Trajectories of Working Families by State UI Modernization Status	39
2.1 Map of State UI Clusters	80
2.2 Radar Graph of Standardized Means of UI Variables by Cluster	84
3.1 State General Assistance Program in 2011	97
3.2 The Legislative Process: How a bill becomes law	106
3.3 Venn Diagram: Co-occurring Diagnoses	115
3.4 Social Construction and Political Power of the General Assistance Populations	126
3.5 The Intersection of the Policy Process and Knowledge Utilization.....	128
4.1 Robust vs. Fragile State Social Safety Net System	136

LIST OF TABLES

Table Number	Page
1.1 UI Modernization - Approved Provisions and Incentive Payments	13
1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses	17
1.3 Characteristics of Sample Households in Wave 1 and Wave 16	20
1.4 The Average Household Income-to-Poverty Levels	29
1.5 Empty Mean and Unconditional Growth Models	31
1.6 Conditional Growth Models	36
1.7 Effect of State UI Modernization and Its Interaction with Time Effects over Time.....	38
1.8 Sensitivity Analyses, Using Three Alternative Measures of the Household Income-to-Poverty Level	42
2.1 Summary of the Descriptive Statistics of UI Variables	74
2.2 Summary Descriptive Statistics of Changes in UI Variables, 2007–2014.....	75
2.3 Cluster Assignments and Corresponding Probabilities of 51 UI Programs	78
2.4 Two-Group T-Test Results: Comparing Two Cluster Means for UI Policy Variables.....	82
2.5 T-Test Results: Comparing Two-Points-in-Time Mean Differences in Standardized UI Policy Variables by Cluster	83
2.6 T-Test Results: Comparing Two-Points-in-Time Mean Differences in UI Policy Variables by Cluster	85
2.7 T-Test Results: Comparing Two Cluster Mean Differences in Changes in Unstandardized UI Policy Variables	86
3.1 Frequencies of Characteristics of the GA/DL-U Population Mentioned in Quotes from the Legislative Activities.....	114

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is the culmination of my academic and professional journeys. I am very grateful for the support, guidance, feedback, encouragement, and inspiration that I have received throughout my doctoral training.

First I would like to thank my dissertation committee for their invaluable insight and support. I express a deep gratitude to my Chair, Dr. Marcia Meyers, for her amazing mentorship of my research and career development. Her ongoing advice and encouragement provided the guidance that allowed me to grow tremendously during my years at the University of Washington. I offer my thanks to Dr. Jennifer Romich for sharing ideas to make my work better and for being a role model of an engaged social policy scholar. Thanks also to Dr. Melissa Martinson for her great enthusiasm about and substantive support for my dissertation process and career path. I am also very thankful to Dr. Jerald Herting for his service as my Graduate School Representative and for his feedback on my methodological approaches.

I would also like to offer my thanks to the following organizations for the funding and training support I received for my advanced doctoral work: the West Coast Poverty Center, through the Social Policy Fellowship; the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, through the Washington State Labor Research Grant; and the National Poverty Center, through the SIPP Workshop Training Grant.

I am very fortunate to be part of the social work community at the University of Washington. Thanks to my dear friends and colleagues Ji Young Kang, Christina Miyawaki, Maria Rodriguez, Katie Schultz, Heather Storer, Ciwang Teyra, and Miriam Valdovinos, from whom I received incredible personal and intellectual support.

Finally, special thanks to my family in Taiwan and to my beloved partner, Jun-Chau Chien, who have always believed in me and supported my passion for social work. Without them, none of it would have been possible.

INTRODUCTION

The process of welfare devolution in the 1990s dramatically changed the U.S. social welfare system. Since that time, states have played a larger role in designing social safety net programs and providing social welfare services (Meyers, Gornick, & Peck, 2001; Soss, Schram, Vartanian, & O'Brien, 2001). State social safety net programs are public social programs designed and administrated wholly or in part by state governments seeking to ensure the economic security of disadvantaged people who have difficulties in meeting basic needs or who have been unable to maintain employment.

The Great Recession (2007–2009) has been the most historically deep and prolonged economic shock to American society since the Great Depression in the 1930s (Grusky, Western, & Wimer, 2011). Its lingering aftermath has challenged states' social safety net programs to provide responsive and adequate supports to unemployed and economically disadvantaged people. In earlier work, I argued that the stratified, decentralized U.S. social welfare system has contributed to uneven policy responses across programs and states during and after the Great Recession (Chang, 2015). These stratified and decentralized features create a three-tier state safety net system, which consists of a variety of programs serving different target populations (see below, Figure 0.1 and example programs). On the top of the diagram below is Unemployment Insurance (UI), which is a federal-state social insurance program providing income support for jobless workers who have lost their jobs involuntarily. Since UI covers a large numbers of workers and provides entitled and relatively generous benefits, it is often regarded as “the first line of defense” for the unemployed. Notably, UI experienced eligibility and benefit expansions at the state level driven by federal legislation in response to the Great Recession. In contrast, at the bottom of the diagram is General Assistance (GA), which is a

social assistance program funded solely by either state or by local funds and provides limited income support for poor populations who do not qualify for or who have used up their benefits of other federally-funded safety net programs. It serves as “the safety net of last resort” for the least resourceful poor (Anderson, Halter, & Gryzlak, 2002). Despite the increased needs of the population, GA has experienced an accelerated shrinking trend after the onset of the Great Recession. These two programs, GA and UI, have different characteristics and they responded differently to the economic crisis, thus influencing the economic well-being of the unemployed and the poor; this dissertation, by comparing the two, advances our understanding of the state safety net programs from a system perspective.

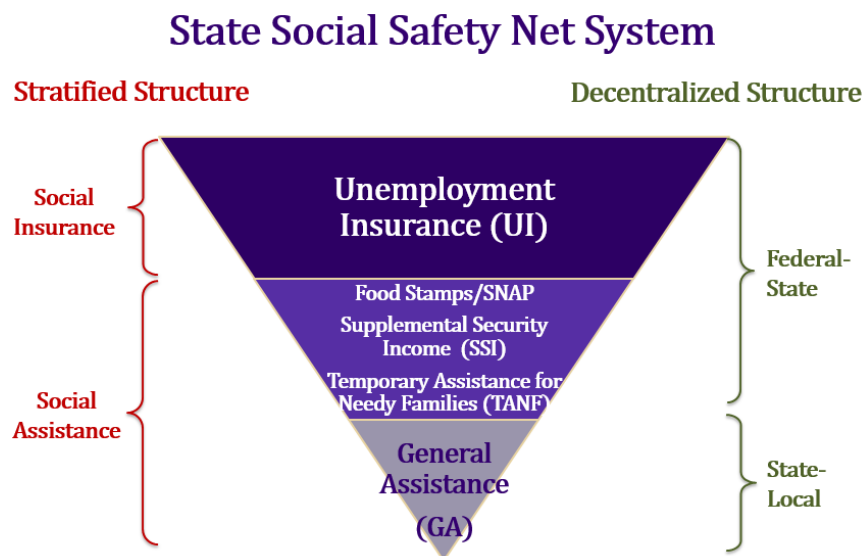


Figure 0.1. State social safety net system.

Note. Adapted from “Re-Examining the U.S. Social Safety Net for Working-Age Families: Lessons from the Great Recession and Its Aftermath,” by Y.-L. Chang, 2015, *Journal of Policy Practice*, 14(2), p. 142. In the figure, SNAP refers to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Building on my prior work (Chang, 2015), this dissertation addresses both the process of policy making and the consequences of public policies for economically disadvantaged populations during and after the Great Recession. I integrate theoretical perspectives and

research approaches from social welfare, sociology, political science, and economics. With a focus on the policy designs, I use Schneider and Ingram's (1997) Social Construction and Policy Design Theory to explain the state policy responses to the Great Recession and inform the state comparative research on policy designs and performance. The Social Construction and Policy Design Theory argues that the political power and social construction of target populations shape policy designs, influencing social justice, democracy, and future policy directions (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007; Schneider & Ingram, 1997; Schneider & Sidney, 2009). Although the political and social concepts of the Social Construction and Policy Design Theory are particularly relevant to the study of social safety net programs, this theory does not explain the economic forces that influence the policy designs and their distributive effects on target populations, which conventional policy analysis places at the center. To address this theoretical limitation, I also incorporate insights from economic theories to explain state policy responses and evaluate the economic impact of state policy choices.

This dissertation consists of three different papers that investigate (1) the impacts of state UI modernization on the economic well-being of working families, (2) the state UI approaches to providing social protection for workers, and (3) the policy making process of the state GA reform, respectively.

The first paper, *A Longitudinal Study on the Effects of State Unemployment Insurance Modernization on the Economic Security of American Working Families*, evaluates the effects of state UI modernization on the trajectories of household income-to-poverty levels during and after the Great Recession. It uses the nationally representative 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation panel dataset (merged with state data) and multilevel growth models to test the effects of state UI modernization from 2008 through 2013. This longitudinal research fills a gap

in the existing research on UI modernization provisions that primarily employed cross-sectional data analyses at the aggregate national level, which cannot make a direct inference regarding the policy effects on the changes in the economic well-being of working families over time.

The second paper, *Unequal Social Protection for Workers: Exploring State Unemployment Insurance Policy Approaches before and after the Great Recession*, uses an advanced model-based clustering technique to analyze multidimensional policy design and performance characteristics of 51 UI programs and classify state UI policy approaches to social protection. Through an examination of the interrelationships among multiple policy characteristics and an exploration of the underlying policy logic of different policy approaches, this research offers policy implications that improve UI policy designs in a coordinated fashion to achieve UI's social protection goals.

Although researchers often argue that severe state budget cuts in human and social services programs in the post-Recessionary years were due to state revenue shortfalls resulting from the Great Recession (Gais, Boyd, & Dadayan, 2012; Johnson, 2010), little research has focused on the dynamic state legislative process of allocating these limited financial resources. The final paper, *The Politics of Knowledge and Poverty: A Case Study of Washington State's General Assistance Reform*, employs a thematic content analysis of 26 legislative videos to examine how policy actors used scientific research, political judgments, and professional knowledge to frame the problems of poor people and shape GA reform in Washington State. Findings from this research offer implications for policy actors and future state welfare reforms.

As a whole, this dissertation research contributes to the fields of state welfare politics, policies, and practice through enhancing the understanding of the connections among macroeconomic conditions, anti-poverty politics, policy designs, and the state safety net system.

References

- Anderson, S. G., Halter, A. P., & Gryzlak, B. M. (2002). Changing safety net of last resort: Downsizing General Assistance for employable adults. *Social Work, 47*(3), 249–258.
- Chang, Y.-L. (2015). Re-Examining the U.S. social safety net for working-age families: Lessons from the Great Recession and its aftermath. *Journal of Policy Practice, 14*(2), 139–161.
- Gais, T., Boyd, D., & Dadayan, L. (2012). The social safety net, health care, and the Great Recession. In Ebel, R.D., & Petersen, J. E. (Eds.) *The Oxford handbook of state and local government finance* (pp. 542–593). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Grusky, D. B., Western, B., & Wimer, C. (2011). The consequences of the Great Recession. In D. B. Grusky, B. Western, & C. Wimer (Eds.), *The Great Recession* (pp. 3–19). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Ingram, H., Schneider, A. L., & deLeon, P. (2007). Social construction and policy design. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (2nd ed.) (pp. 93–126). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Johnson, N. (2010). *Laboratories of underfunding? State financing for antipoverty efforts after the Recession*. Paper presented at the Georgetown University and Urban Institute Conference on Reducing Poverty and Economic Distress after ARRA, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/laboratories-underfunding-state-financing-antipoverty-efforts-after-recession>
- Meyers, M. K., Gornick, J. C., & Peck, L. R. (2001). Packaging support for low-income families: Policy variation across the United States. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 20*(3), 457–483.
- Schneider, A. L., & Ingram, H. M. (1997). *Policy design for democracy*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Schneider, A., & Sidney, M. (2009). What is next for policy design and social construction theory? *Policy Studies Journal, 37*(1), 103–119. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2008.00298.x
- Soss, J., Schram, S. F., Vartanian, T. P., & O'Brien, E. (2001). Setting the terms of relief: Explaining state policy choices in the devolution revolution. *American Journal of Political Science, 45*(2), 378–395.

PAPER ONE.
**A LONGITUDINAL STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF STATE
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE MODERNIZATION ON THE
ECONOMIC SECURITY OF AMERICAN WORKING FAMILIES**

Summary

Under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Congress provided a total of \$7 billion of incentive funding available for states to reform their Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs to include more workers in the UI system and provide more-adequate income support for unemployed families. Using the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation merged with state-level data, this study examines the effects of state UI modernization on the income-to-poverty levels of American working families during and after the Great Recession (2007–2009). Results from the multilevel growth models show that working families had not yet fully recovered from the Great Recession by the end of 2013. However, working families in states enacting UI modernization provisions, on average, experienced a greater economic improvement rate in the income-to-poverty level than their counterparts, controlling for state and household characteristics. These findings offer policy implications for future federal-state UI reforms.

Keywords: Unemployment Insurance modernization, economic security, multilevel growth model, mixed-effects model, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)

Introduction

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a federal-state social insurance program providing income support to workers who have lost their jobs and meet the program's eligibility rules. The massive unemployment during the Great Recession (2007–2009) challenged the capability of the UI system to ensure the economic security of American working families. In order to include more workers in the UI system and provide more-adequate income support to unemployed families, Congress passed the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009, making incentive funding totaling \$7 billion available to states to reform their UI programs (Shelton, Romig, & Whittaker, 2009). To the author's knowledge, UI policy researchers have not yet conducted longitudinal research examining the association between state UI modernization and the economic improvement of working families following this federal intervention. Using the 16-wave panel data from the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation merged with state-level data, this study performs multilevel growth modeling procedures to assess the effects of state UI modernization on the household income-to-poverty levels over a five-and-a-half-year period. I find that, on average, households in states that actively reformed their UI provisions experienced a greater economic improvement rate and a higher income-to-poverty level in the long run, compared with their counterparts. My research findings provide implications for future federal-state UI reforms.

Literature Review

Background: The Great Recession and Unemployment Insurance Modernization

The Great Recession (2007–2009), beginning with the bursting of the housing bubble due to the subprime mortgage crisis, has been regarded as the deepest and most prolonged economic downturn since the Great Depression in the 1930s (Grusky, Western, & Wimer, 2011). It threw

many American working families into unemployment and economic insecurity. Although the Great Recession officially ended in June 2009, according to the definition of the National Bureau of Economic Research (2010), evidence indicates that this definition failed to capture the duration of the economic hardship experienced by American working families. According to government statistics, the unemployment and poverty rates in post-Recessionary years remained higher than their pre-Recession levels as of the end of 2014. The unemployment rate increased from 4.6% in 2007 to a peak of 9.6% in 2010 and remained at 6.5% in 2014 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015); the poverty rate for people aged 18 to 64 increased from 10.9% in 2007 to a peak of 13.8% in 2010 and remained at 13.5% in 2014 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). These numbers suggest that a lot of working families have experienced layoffs, reductions in working hours, or difficulty finding stable jobs during and after the Great Recession. Many of them have struggled with meeting their basic needs and re-establishing stable family incomes.

Unemployment Insurance (UI), a social insurance program established in 1935 under the Social Security Act, is the first line of defense against financial insecurity during economic downturns. UI provides partial wage replacement for workers who have lost jobs through no fault of their own, and the cooperative workforce system helps unemployed workers re-enter the job market or advance job skills to attain better opportunities. In practice, UI laws require an unemployed worker to meet both monetary and non-monetary eligibility criteria to qualify for UI benefits (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). With respect to monetary eligibility criteria, the jobless worker must have earned at least a certain amount of money during a base period, normally the first four of the past five completed calendar quarters prior to unemployment. Regarding non-monetary eligibility criteria, the worker must leave the labor force through no fault of his or her own (e.g., layoff or job site closure), must be available to work, and must be

actively seeking jobs (Shaefer, 2010). Since the beginning of the UI program in 1935, these eligibility restrictions have disproportionately excluded many non-white male industrial workers (e.g., agricultural workers, domestic workers, and low-wage workers) who do not have stable labor market attachments (Lieberman, 1998; Lovell, 2002; Orloff, 1996). Before the onset of the Great Recession, only 37% of unemployed workers collected unemployment benefits in 2007 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

Apparently, the UI system has not kept pace with fundamental changes in the U.S. workforce, which has shifted from a primarily male, full-time workforce in the manufacturing sector toward a significantly female, part-time workforce in the service sector. The outdated monetary eligibility criteria largely exclude those low-skilled, low-wage workers who are disproportionately part-timers (Lindner & Nichols, 2012). Moreover, the conventional good reasons for leaving work—layoff or job site closure—implicitly rule out many female workers who are primarily responsible for family duties and caregiving work (Mitchell, 2011). Hence, UI reform debates have centered on a reasonable definition of the base period, the evaluation of compulsory family reasons for leaving work, and the acceptance of searching for part-time work during the job separation.

In response to the changing workforce of the post-industrial economy as well as the increasing unemployment due to the Great Recession, Congress passed the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act (UIMA) as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in 2009. Under the UIMA, the federal government provided \$7 billion for states to reform their UI programs to provide more inclusive and adequate income support for unemployed workers. The state UI modernization provisions should be “permanent” and are “not

subject to discontinuation under any circumstances other than repeal by the legislature” (Unemployment Insurance Program Letter, 2009).

In practice, each state could qualify for a share of incentive funding by demonstrating that its UI law includes certain UI modernization provisions. To request the first one-third of the ARRA funding for UI modernization, a state was required to adopt an alternative base period (ABP), which shifts the window during which earnings requirements are examined. That is, a worker could alternatively use wages in the most recent four completed calendar quarters if the worker failed to qualify for UI under the regular base period (Gould-Werth & Shaefer, 2013). ABPs help low-wage workers or recent workforce entrants qualify for UI by counting the most recent wages preceding the filing of the worker’s claim. To obtain the remaining two-thirds of the state’s share of the ARRA funding, a state was required to adopt two of the four following rules: (1) part-time provision: permitting former part-time workers to receive UI benefits while seeking only part-time work; (2) alternative good reasons: allowing compelling family reasons for separating from employment, including domestic violence, spouse relocation, and caring for an ill or disabled family member; (3) training benefits: providing extended benefits for UI claimants participating in qualifying training programs; or (4) dependent allowance: providing an allowance of at least \$15 per dependent per week (Unemployment Insurance Program Letter, 2009).

By UI policy logic, UI modernization would achieve the policy goal of ensuring economic security through UI’s dual mechanisms: smoothing the consumption of unemployed families and stabilizing the macro-economy (Gould-Werth & Shaefer, 2013). Figure 1.1 demonstrates these two policy mechanisms. First, the UI modernization provisions include more unemployed families in the UI system and add benefits at more-adequate levels for workers in training or with

dependents. On the one hand, UI beneficiaries continue to engage in job search or training activities during job separation and then return to the workforce when available jobs and workers' skills match. On the other hand, when beneficiaries immediately spend their UI dollars on goods and services to stimulate the local economy, jobs are retained and created in communities (Burtless & Gordon, 2011; Fujita, 2010). Consequently, working families' economic security is ensured regardless of their employment statuses.

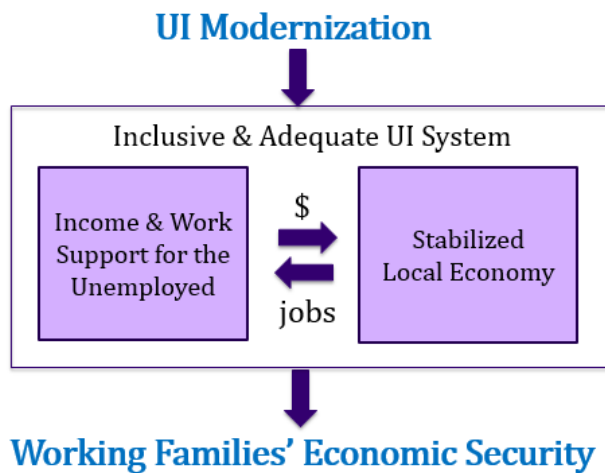


Figure 1.1. Dual policy mechanisms for ensuring the economic security of working families.

Although UI is a nationwide social insurance program, the federal government leaves many policy decisions about finance, eligibility, benefits, and requirements to state governments within general guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Labor. As a result, UI reciprocity rates and benefit levels have historically varied across states. For example, in the fourth quarter of 2007, before the onset of the Great Recession, UI reciprocity rates ranged from 15% of the total unemployed in South Dakota to 73% in Idaho, and average weekly benefits ranged from \$177 in Mississippi to \$393 in Hawaii (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Despite the fact that the UIMA of 2009 was initiated at the national level, considerable variations in policy reforms

existed across 50 states and the District of Columbia, including full reform of 34¹ states, partial reform of five states, and no reform of 12 states as of the August 2011 deadline for requesting federal incentive funding (see Figure 1.2). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2011), a total of 39 states adopted the ABP, 26 states adopted a part-time provision, 19 states adopted compelling family reasons, 16 states adopted a training benefit, and seven states adopted a dependent allowance (see Table 1.1). In order to meet requirements for UIM funding, most of the reform states adopted new UI modernization provisions and/or amended its UI statute, modified its regulation, or clarified its procedures under current law. In light of the aforementioned UI policy mechanisms, a failure to fully implement UI modernization nationwide would undermine the effectiveness of UI in mitigating economic hardship of working families.

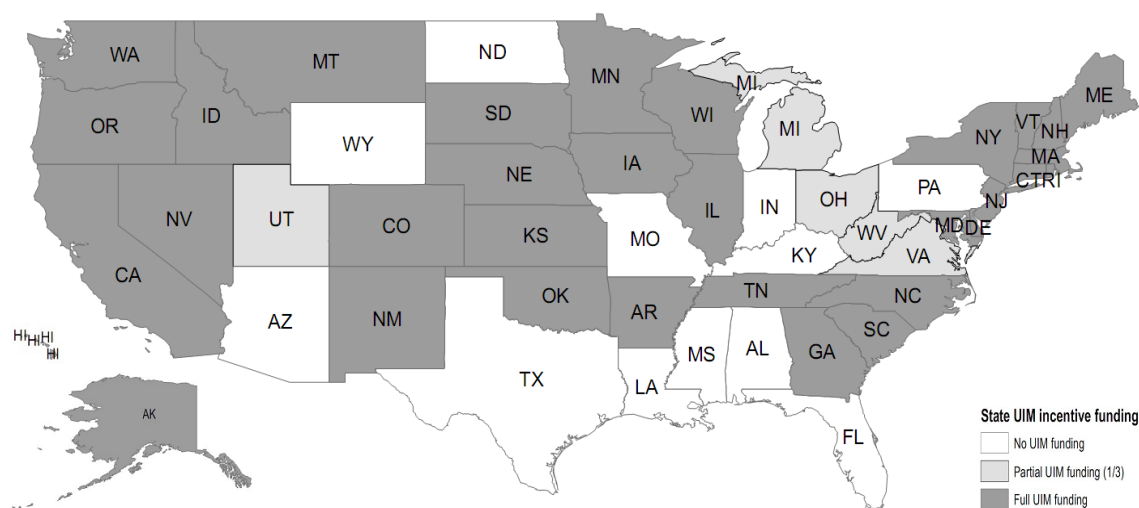


Figure 1.2. State certifications of UI modernization incentive funding.

Note. Created using data from the Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor (<http://www.doleta.gov/recovery/>) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011).

¹ The numbers of states in this paragraph and Table 1 include 50 states and the District of Columbia and exclude Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands.

Table 1.1.
UI Modernization - Approved Provisions and Incentive Payments

State	1/3 Approval	2/3 Approval				Amount (millions)	Effective mm/yyyy of the first post- ARRA provision
	Alternative Base Period	Part-Time Workers	Compelling Family Reasons	Training Extension	Dependents Allowance		
Alabama						\$0.0	
Alaska	X ¹		X ¹		X	\$15.6	01/2010
Arizona						\$0.0	
Arkansas	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹			\$60.0	07/2009
California	X ¹	X	X ¹			\$838.7	01/2011
Colorado	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹			\$127.5	07/2009
Connecticut	X		X ¹		X	\$87.8	04/2009
Delaware	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹			\$21.9	01/2010
DC	X	X ¹		X ¹		\$27.6	07/2010
Florida						\$0.0	
Georgia	X	X ¹		X ¹		\$220.3	04/2009
Hawaii	X	X ¹	X ¹			\$30.5	07/2009
Idaho	X ¹	X ¹		X ¹		\$32.3	10/2009
Illinois	X		X ¹		X ¹	\$301.2	01/2010
Indiana						\$0.0	
Iowa	X ¹	X ¹		X ¹		\$70.8	07/2009
Kansas	X ¹	X ¹		X ¹		\$69.0	01/2010
Kentucky						\$0.0	
Louisiana						\$0.0	
Maine	X	X		X ¹		\$28.2	04/2009
Maryland	X ¹	X ¹		X ¹		\$126.8	03/2011
Massachusetts	X			X ¹	X	\$162.7	10/2009
Michigan	X					\$69.4	
Minnesota	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹			\$130.1	08/2009
Mississippi						\$0.0	
Missouri						\$0.0	
Montana	X ¹	X ¹		X ¹		\$19.5	05/2009
Nebraska	X ¹	X ¹		X ¹		\$43.6	08/2011
Nevada	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹			\$76.9	04/2009
New Hampshire	X	X	X ¹			\$31.4	09/2009
New Jersey	X	X		X ¹		\$206.8	03/2009
New Mexico	X	X			X	\$39.0	
New York	X	X ¹	X ¹			\$412.7	03/2009
North Carolina	X	X ¹	X ¹			\$205.1	10/2010
North Dakota						\$0.0	
Ohio	X					\$88.2	
Oklahoma	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹			\$75.9	11/2009

Table 1.1. *Continued*

State	1/3 Approval	2/3 Approval				Amount (millions)	Effective mm/yyyy of the first reformed provision
	Alternative Base Period	Part-Time Workers	Compelling Family Reasons	Training Extension	Dependents Allowance		
Oregon	X ¹		X ¹	X ¹		\$85.6	03/2009
Pennsylvania						\$0.0	
Rhode Island	X		X ¹		X ¹	\$23.5	01/2011
South Carolina	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹			\$97.5	01/2011
South Dakota	X ¹	X ¹		X ¹		\$17.6	07/2009
Tennessee	X ¹	X ¹			X ¹	\$141.8	06/2010 ²
Texas						\$0.0	
Utah	X ¹					\$20.3	01/2011
Vermont	X	X		X ¹		\$13.9	08/2011
Virginia	X					\$62.8	
Washington	X		X ¹	X ¹		\$146.6	07/2012
West Virginia	X ¹					\$11.1	04/2009
Wisconsin	X		X ¹	X ¹		\$133.9	05/2009
Wyoming						\$0.0	
Total	39	26	19	16	7	\$4,3740	

Note. Adapted from “Unemployment Insurance modernization incentive payment state certifications,” by U.S. Department of Labor, 2011(<http://www.doleta.gov/recovery/>).

¹State amended its UI statute, modified its regulation, or clarified its procedures under current law in order to meet requirements for UIM funding. ²Effective no later than 2010.6.25.

Previous Research on UI Policy Responses and Impacts

UI researchers have paid substantial attention to UI policy responses to the Great Recession and UI policy effects on macroeconomic performance and workers’ employment outcomes. To date, researchers have not directly investigated the association between states’ UI modernization and household economic trajectories during and after the Great Recession.

Previous research evidence has shown that the UI system plays an important role in stabilizing macroeconomic performance in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or (un)employment rate at the aggregate national and state levels (e.g., Congressional Budget Office, 2011; Vroman, 2010a). Research has also found that UI benefits significantly reduced

national poverty rates among workers and households with different characteristics (e.g., Congressional Budget Office, 2011; Gabe & Whittaker, 2011; Vroman 2010b). However, evaluating UI policy impacts using cross-sectional data and aggregate indicators cannot fully capture the longitudinal economic experiences at the household level.

In the aftermath of the Great Recession, substantial UI research has focused on the relationships between UI benefit duration and workers' labor market outcomes such as re-employment or labor force withdrawals (e.g., Farber & Valletta, 2013; Howell & Azizoglu, 2011; Rothstein, 2011). Although studying the effect of UI benefits on workers' behavioral responses contributes to our understanding of workers' unemployment experiences, researchers often overlook UI's social protection function—providing economic security for working families. Contrary to “market-oriented UI reforms” that emphasize market forces and individual choices, UI modernization—a “provisioning-based UI reform”—focuses on social protection through increasing accessibility to and adequacy of UI benefits (Peterson, 2008, p. 453). Hence, evaluating the policy impacts of UI modernization needs to consider outcomes that capture the economic security of working families.

Previous UI studies have documented great variations in states' adoptions of UI modernization provisions (e.g., Ben-Ishai, McHugh, & Ujvari, 2015; Ben-Ishai, McHugh, & McKenna, 2015; Bivens, Smith, & Wilson, 2014; National Employment Law Project, 2012; Vroman, 2011), yet limited studies have used nationally representative data to estimate the impacts of state UI modernization on workers or their families. Lindner and Nichols (2012) used the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) from 1997 to 2007 to assess the impact of UI modernization on unemployed workers. They found that the share of unemployed workers eligible for UI benefits would have increased from about 50% to about 70% if all states had

adopted the ABP, part-time provision, and alternative good reasons for job separation. Gould-Werth and Shaefer (2013) specifically examined whether or not adopting the ABP increases UI receipt among unemployed workers with different educational levels and part-time/full-time status. Using the cross-sectional Current Population Survey (CPS) data from 1986 through 2011, they found a significant association between ABP adoption and UI receipt only among unemployed part-time workers with less than a high school degree.

For an understanding of the impacts of UI modernization on working families' economic security, the two studies noted above investigated only partial UI modernization provisions and exclusively estimated the effects of UI modernization on increasing eligibility or receipts among individual workers. The policy impacts left out of this approach include the effect on unemployed workers' families in which members share economic resources as well as the spillover effect on the entire population of working families who benefit from UI modernization through the policy mechanism of stabilizing the economy (see Figure 1.1). Research has shown that households in states with highly accessible UI programs, compared with their counterparts, experienced less significant household income losses during the Great Recession (2007–2009) (Bentele, 2012). However, what remains unknown is the extent to which states' enactments of the UI modernization provisions contributed to the trajectories of the economic improvement of working families during the Great Recession and its aftermath.

The federal UI modernization incentive funding (2009–2011) created a natural experiment for investigating the impacts of states' UI modernization on household economic well-being over time. Research investigating the association between state policy decisions and the economic well-being of working families will inform future policy debates and decision making at both state and federal levels. To this researcher's knowledge, UI policy researchers have not yet

conducted a longitudinal analysis of the association between states' enactments of UI modernization and household economic trajectories during and after the Great Recession. The present research makes a unique contribution to UI research by using the 16-wave nationally representative Survey of Income and Program Participation panel data (2008–2013) merged with state-level data to perform a longitudinal analysis of the effects of state UI modernization on household economic security. Table 1.2 lists my research questions and hypotheses.

Table 1.2.
Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions	Hypotheses
R1: How did the economic security of American working families change from 2008 to 2013?	H1. Household economic security improved after the federal intervention of UI modernization. (A significant non-linear time effect on household economic security was expected.)
R2: Could state-level factors explain the variations in the economic security among working families?	H2. The level of and the change rate in household economic security significantly varied across states, and these variations were associated with state-level factors.
R3: Were working families in states enacting UI modernization provisions better off than those in states not enacting such provisions?	H3: Working families in states enacting UI modernization provisions experienced a higher level of and a greater improvement rate in economic security than their counterparts, controlling for state and household covariates.

Methods

Dataset and Sample

This study used the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) panel data merged with state-level data from multiple governmental data sources. The 2008 SIPP panel

selected a nationally and a state representative sample² of the non-institutionalized resident population of the U.S. (Mattingly, 2014). The survey interviewed the sampled households every 4 months from 2008 through 2013—a total of 16 waves. The 2008 panel included four rotation groups with different beginning interview months from September to December 2008, respectively. Respondents reported backward monthly data in each wave, resulting in four household-month data records for each household per wave. The strengths of using SIPP panel data for the present research, in comparison with using the Current Population Survey or the American Community Survey, include the following considerations. First, a longitudinal design enables researchers to study the trajectories of household economic well-being. Second, more detailed questions about economic resources provide a best possible estimate of household economic well-being at the lower end of the income distribution. Third, a study period covering multiple monthly data points before, during, and after the implementation of UIMA allows researchers to evaluate short-term and long-term policy impacts on working families.

I first pooled 16-wave data to construct a longitudinal dataset with 67 reference months from May 2008 to November 2013. I then merged state-level variables into the micro-household data by using the state FIPS code. I kept one record per household per month by tracking the household reference person. Samples that moved from one state to another state were excluded to control for the state policy context of each household.

The study population was households with a reference person aged 25 through 64 in order to assess the policy impacts on working families. Households with a reference person younger than 25 years were excluded, since younger adults were primarily in school, not in the workforce. Those with a reference person 65 years or older were excluded because elderly adults

² The 2008 SIPP increased sample sizes in several states to produce reliable state estimates. The primary sampling unit (PSU) was stratified within states (Mattingly, 2014).

were more likely to leave the workforce and then retired during the Great Recession, when job opportunities were limited. My analyses adopted the “intent-to-treat” approach and included all households meeting the above criteria, regardless of their employment status and UI receipt. This approach allows researchers to examine the entire UI modernization impact in a realistic context,³ avoids selection bias due to excluding certain households,⁴ and increases the generalizability of the research findings (Lachin, 2000).

Overall, the sample included a total of 1,418,368 monthly occasions from 36,696 households from 50 states and the District of Columbia. The average occasion per state was 27,811 (min.: 2,206; max.:134,957); the average occasion per household was 39 (min.:1; max.:64). The variations in the numbers of occasion among households and across waves might be due to sample attrition, new households split from the original units, missed interviews during the study period, or other reasons. The weighted sample loss was 46.5% in wave 15. An increase of 6.5% to 53% in wave 16 was due to the federal government shutdown in October 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

I examined household characteristics in the first and last waves to detect patterns of missingness that might invalidate the research inferences. Table 1.3 presents descriptive information among households in wave 1 and wave 16. On average, households in the two waves share similar demographic characteristics. However, reference persons in wave 16 are older and more likely to have a high school degree than their wave 1 counterparts. These differences might reflect the natural maturation of the sample or sample attrition among younger households and those with lower educational levels. To avoid potential bias estimates due to the associations

³ I assume that UI modernization affected the economic well-being not only of the person receiving the benefit, but also of the person’s family members and the broader population of working families.

⁴ The intent-to-treat design reduces bias associated with the combination of employment status, UI receipt, family complexity, and missing data.

between the missingness and certain household characteristics, my analyses were based on the assumption of missing at random (MAR). MAR assumes that bias estimates can be resolved through controlling observable, relevant variables in the data (Singer & Willett, 2003). Hence, my analytic models included a list of household characteristics that were associated with household economic well-being as listed in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3.
Characteristics of Sample Households in Wave 1 and Wave 16

	Wave 1	Wave 16
Gender	Female: 52.5%; Male 47.5%	Female: 52.7%; Male:47.3%
Race	White: 69.3%; Black: 13.0%; Hispanic: 10.7%; Others: 7.2%	White: 69.5%; Black: 12.6%; Hispanic: 11.1%; Others: 6.8%
Age	Mean: 45.4 yrs	Mean: 47.4 yrs
Education level	Less than high school: 10.2%; High school: 22.5%; College+: 67.3%	Less than high school: 7.8%; High school: 23.8%; College+: 68.5%
Marital status	Married: 55.8%; Single: 24.7%; Never married: 19.5%	Married: 55.9%; Single: 24.8%; Never married: 19.3%
Number of children	Mean: 0.80	Mean: 0.75
Employment status	Full-time: 53.4%; Part-time:25%; Non-employed: 21.6%	Full-time: 58.2%; Part-time:19.3%; Non-employed: 22.5%
Sample size	29, 329	12,800

Note. The listed household characteristics are represented by the reference persons of households.

Measures

Outcome variable.

Income-to-poverty level. Income-to-poverty level was used to measure household economic security. Income-to-poverty level in percentage gauges how close a household's income is to its poverty threshold (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). A household having an income-to-poverty level of 200 indicates that its total household income is about 200% above its corresponding poverty threshold. A higher value indicates higher household economic security. I

used a SIPP default variable of the poverty threshold for each household, which was calculated by dividing the annual U.S. Census poverty thresholds by 12. These poverty thresholds varied by household size, the number of children, and year. For example, the monthly poverty threshold was \$1,969 for a family of two adults and two children in 2013, and in 2008 it was \$1,820.

For sensitivity analysis, I used three alternative income-to-poverty measures. The first alternative measure took into account states' costs-of-living adjustment by applying the annual state regional price parities (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2014, 2015) to adjust states' poverty thresholds. The second measure excluded other governmental income supports when calculating the total household income in order to rule out other programs' effects on household economic security. The third one combined the above two adjustments to provide the most conservative estimate of UI policy effects on household economic security.

Predictors.

Time. Modeling the time effects on household income-to-poverty level was the first step in analyzing the systematic changes in household economic well-being over the study period. A statistically significant time effect suggests other predictors could explain the systematic changes captured by time. The observed time unit in the dataset was month. I transformed the unit of time from month to year to solve the nonconvergence problem resulting from a briefer time unit. Moving from a briefer time unit (month) to a longer one (year) could avoid the rounding errors of small effects via increasing the change rate's magnitude but keeps the results of tests unaffected (see Singer & Willett, 2003). The re-coded time variable was scaled from 0.0 to 5.5.

In addition to transforming the unit of time, anchoring the time predictor at a meaningful 0 helped facilitate the discussion of short-term and long-term policy effects through conditioning effects at certain points in time. In my analytic process (as discussed in the following section), I

tested a set of models with time variables centering at February 2009 (the beginning of the federal UI incentive funding), August 2011 (capturing the short-time policy effect at the end of federal UI incentive funding), December 2012 (capturing the lasting policy effect at the end of 2012), and November 2013 (capturing the long-term policy effect at the end of the study period), respectively.

State status of UI modernization. State status of UI modernization is a dichotomous and time-varying variable. States might have had some forms of UI modernization provisions before the federal intervention and added newly adopted provisions or reformed pre-existing provisions to fulfill the federal requirements (see Table 1.1). In this research, a state was coded from 0 to 1 when its first post-ARRA UI modernization provision took effect after February 2009; a state that did not make any reform fulfilling the federal requirements was coded 0 over the study period. This coding approach used states' own pre-existing conditions as baseline conditions, and the coefficient of this variable captured the effect of the state UI modernization after the federal intervention, conditioning at the point in time coded 0 in a model. I interpreted this policy effect as the average difference in income-to-poverty level between households in states enacting UI modernization provisions and those in states not enacting such provisions, at a given point in time.

Control variables.

State-level covariates. I controlled several state macroeconomic and UI policy characteristics to adjust the UI modernization effects. These state-level confounding factors might affect states' self-selection for implementing UI modernization and states' average household income-to-poverty levels.

Macroeconomic status. Economic and labor market conditions affected the employment opportunities available for people in the state as well as state UI Extended Benefits Programs triggered by macroeconomic indicators. I controlled for states' pre-intervention macroeconomic status by using the state official unemployment rate of 2008 published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Industrial structure. A state industrial structure determines a state's economic base. Because the construction and manufacturing industries were hit hardest by the Great Recession (Hout, Levanon, & Cumberworth, 2011), I controlled for state location quotients for construction and manufacturing in 2007—before the Great Recession made its impact. Using the online location quotient tool built by the BLS, I calculated a state location quotient by comparing an industry's share of state employment with its share of national employment. A state location quotient higher than 1 indicated the state had a higher than average concentration of employment in an industry.

UI policy characteristics. I use state UI reciprocity rates in 2008 to control states' pre-intervention UI accessibility. The UI reciprocity rate is defined as the percentage of people unemployed who are collecting UI benefits (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008).

Maximum UI benefit duration. Controlling for state maximum number of weeks of UI benefits avoided policy changes in UI benefit duration confounding the effect of UI modernization. Nine states have cut their duration of state-funded UI benefits to less than the standard 26 weeks since 2011 (Kimball & McHugh, 2015), negatively affecting available UI benefits for unemployed families in these states.⁵ I controlled for the maximum UI benefit

⁵ These states are Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Seven out of the nine did full or partial UI modernization. The state duration cuts had an additional negative impact on the number of weeks of the extended federal benefits available to unemployed workers because

duration in 2013 to capture the largest state variation in UI benefit duration.⁶

Household-level covariates. Household-level covariates included age, gender, race, educational attainment, marital status, employment status of the household reference person, and the number of children in the household. These variables might moderate the UI modernization effect on household economic well-being and therefore were controlled in the analytic models.

Seam bias. Seam bias is a critical issue of the SIPP study that might affect the accuracy of the estimates because data collected for the current month tend to be more comprehensive than data collected for retrospective months. A systematic difference in household income between interview and non-interview months signals a seam bias (Moore, 2008). To address this issue, I controlled for a seam bias variable that distinguishes the interview months (the fourth month in each wave) and the non-interview months (the first through third months in each wave).

Multilevel Growth Modeling and Analytic Process

This study used multilevel growth modeling to examine the effects of state UI modernization on the systematic changes in household income-to-poverty levels after Congress passed the UIMA. Several reasons make multilevel growth modeling an appropriate approach to assess the policy impacts. First, multilevel growth modeling controls for group-related dependency through partitioning variance into within-group and between-group components. This practice yields testing predictors at each level, and the cross-level interaction effects (Hoffman, 2015). The current analyses considered three-level modeling—occasions nested households nested in states—to test the association between state UI modernization and household income-to-poverty levels from 2008 through 2013.

extended federal benefits from the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC08) and the Extended Benefit (EB) programs are both calculated based on regular state UI benefits (Isaacs, 2013).

⁶ Some states employed a sliding scale for their maximum duration from 2011 through 2013. For example, Florida reduced the number of weeks of benefits available from 26 in 2011 to 23 in 2012, and to 19 in 2013.

Second, multilevel growth modeling is flexible in terms of fitting unbalanced data because it uses all available information to generate estimates of growth trajectories regardless of the number of occasions that a household contributed to the dataset (Singer & Willett, 2003). This is particularly useful for the SIPP panel data in which the numbers of occasions vary widely across households.

Third, empirical research shows that modeling outcome trajectories using multilevel modeling, compared with conventional non-experimental econometric models like the first difference and the difference-in-difference methods, can capture more complex trajectories and produce a more accurate account of program effects (Gordon & Heinrich, 2004). Researchers also point out that the difference-in-difference studies have largely ignored the time-series correlation, resulting in a serious bias in estimating the standard error of the policy effect and a potential false rejection of the null hypothesis of no effect (Bertrand, Duflo, & Mullainathan, 2002).

Four sets of multilevel models were tested in sequence using Stata/MP 13. The first set of models (empty mean models 1 and 2) tested whether a three-level model that accounted for the dependency of households in the same states was an improvement over a two-level model that simply accounted for the dependency of occasions in the same households.

The second set (unconditional growth models 3 and 4) aimed to accurately model the average trajectories of the household income-to-poverty level over the study period. After testing the fixed linear and non-linear time effects, I tested the random linear and non-linear (quadratic) time effects to see whether the average trajectories significantly varied across households and states.

The third set of models (conditional growth models 5–7) examined the association between state UI modernization and household income-to-poverty levels. Model 5 first estimated the unadjusted policy effects on the outcome variable regarding the level and the change rate. Model 6 adjusted these policy effects by controlling for state-level covariates. Model 7 further introduced household-level covariates and controls for the seam bias. A significant interaction effect of UI modernization and time suggested that the association between UI modernization and the household income-to-poverty level was conditional on time. This leads to an exploration of the short-term and long-term UI modernization effects.

The last set of models (re-centered growth models 8–10) examined the changing policy effects over time by replacing the original time variable to three re-centered time variables (see Measures section). Models 8–10 produced statistically equivalent models to model 7 with rearranged coefficients for interpreting conditional policy effects. The following equation shows the composite notation of the final multilevel growth model in which t indicates time (level 1), i indicates household (level 2), and j indicates state (level 3).

$$\text{IPL}_{tij} = (\gamma_{000} + \gamma_{100}\text{TIME}_{tij} + \gamma_{200}\text{TIME}_{tij}^2 + \gamma_{001}\text{UMI}_{tij} + \gamma_{101}\text{UI*TIME}_{tij} + \gamma_{201}\text{UI*TIME}_{tij}^2 + \sum_{x=2}^n \gamma_{00x} [\text{State-Level Cov.}]_{tij} + \sum_{y=1}^n \gamma_{0y0} [\text{Household-Level Cov.}]_{tij} + \gamma_{300} \text{SEAM}_{tij} + (u_{00j} + u_{10j} \text{TIME}_{tij} + r_{0ij} + r_{1ij}\text{TIME}_{tij} + r_{2ij}\text{TIME}_{tij}^2 + e_{tij})$$

Outcome:

- IPL_{tij} : household income-to-poverty level at time t for household i in state j

Fixed components:

- γ_{000} : the average level of IPL
- γ_{100} and γ_{200} : the intercepts of the rate of change and the changing rate of change in IPL
- γ_{001} : the effect of state UI modernization
- γ_{101} and γ_{201} : the effects of UI modernization on the rate of change and the changing rate of change in IPL
- $\sum_{x=2}^n \gamma_{00x}$: a set of the effects of state-level covariates on IPL
- $\sum_{y=1}^n \gamma_{0y0}$: a set of the effects of household-level covariates on IPL
- γ_{300} : the effect of seam bias

Random components:

- u_{00j} : state-specific residuals
- u_{10j} : state-specific residuals of the rate of change
- r_{0ij} : household-specific residuals
- r_{1ij} : household-specific residuals of the rate of change
- r_{2ij} : household-specific residuals of the changing rate of change
- e_{tij} : observation-specific residuals

All model parameters were estimated by the restricted maximum likelihood method, a method testing hypotheses about variance components and estimating parameters that jointly maximizes the likelihood (Singer & Willett, 2003). I used Wald test p-values to evaluate fixed effects and the deviance difference test (i.e., the $-2LL\Delta$ between nested models) to evaluate random effects (Hoffman, 2015). After determining the final model, I assessed assumptions of the normal distributions and constant variance at each level (i.e., level 1 residuals and level 2 and level 3 random effects) in accordance with steps suggested by Snijers and Bosker (2012). These diagnostic results showed that all assumptions of multilevel modeling were satisfied.

Results

Descriptive Results of the Household Income-to-Poverty Levels

Table 1.4 presents the average household income-to-poverty levels from May 2008 through November 2013 by state UIM enacting status. The state UIM status here refers to whether a state eventually enacted any UIM provision after the federal intervention, including a reformed or newly adopted one. As Figure 1.3 shows, the average household income-to-poverty level of all states (grey line) generally declined during the study period, except for a moderate increase trend after the beginning of 2013. This declining trend seemed similar among households in states with UIM provisions (UIM states) and those without UIM provisions (non-UIM states). The gap between the two groups remained consistently stable over time, suggesting

some pre-existing differences in household and/or state characteristics between the two groups.

To further investigate the effects of state UI modernization on the trajectories of household economic well-being over time and control for state- and household- level characteristics, I conducted the multilevel growth models and present the results in the following sections.

Table 1.4.
The Average Household Income-to-Poverty Levels (%), March 2009 to November 2013

mm/yyyy	Non-UIM states	UIM states	Total	mm/yyyy	Non-UIM states	UIM states	Total
Pre-federal intervention				During federal intervention (cont.)			
05/2008	387.89	433.16	415.06	03/2011	366.50	403.57	388.25
06/2008	383.24	421.82	406.39	04/2011	361.89	396.17	382.11
07/2008	381.53	421.84	405.70	05/2011	363.22	395.37	382.20
08/2008	384.99	421.29	407.02	06/2011	365.06	400.51	385.97
09/2008	387.66	427.10	411.58	07/2011	361.26	393.70	380.43
10/2008	394.81	436.25	419.93	08/2011	365.35	399.24	385.24
11/2008	395.91	437.16	420.89	Post-federal intervention			
12/2008	403.31	444.94	428.16	09/2011	363.29	397.58	383.43
01/2009	391.30	431.89	415.48	10/2011	362.81	399.08	384.10
During federal intervention				11/2011	364.23	404.84	388.05
02/2009	387.79	431.01	413.50	12/2011	365.80	407.47	390.21
03/2009	389.99	430.96	414.33	01/2012	365.10	403.50	387.54
04/2009	387.36	429.56	412.47	02/2012	365.12	404.87	388.34
05/2009	378.58	423.41	405.23	03/2012	362.76	400.25	384.64
06/2009	375.43	419.80	401.78	04/2012	357.06	397.31	380.56
07/2009	378.38	420.77	403.51	05/2012	360.22	402.76	385.07
08/2009	377.51	420.22	402.68	06/2012	357.50	400.00	382.39
09/2009	380.82	423.14	405.68	07/2012	355.52	398.19	380.47
10/2009	377.95	416.51	400.58	08/2012	360.44	401.03	384.15
11/2009	378.38	414.39	399.55	09/2012	354.46	395.17	378.26
12/2009	382.50	418.60	403.71	10/2012	358.86	398.69	382.06
01/2010	375.25	408.95	395.03	11/2012	358.04	394.47	379.31
02/2010	376.00	406.79	394.08	12/2012	360.17	403.43	385.48
03/2010	380.32	410.65	398.10	01/2013	362.04	399.98	384.23
04/2010	372.00	405.51	391.64	02/2013	355.69	395.18	378.84
05/2010	371.66	403.63	390.40	03/2013	357.05	398.03	381.05
06/2010	374.33	409.32	394.82	04/2013	359.52	397.18	381.59
07/2010	369.49	405.59	390.63	05/2013	362.45	400.69	384.84
08/2010	372.93	407.00	392.95	06/2013	356.57	396.96	380.18
09/2010	377.89	412.59	398.28	07/2013	365.89	400.82	386.32
10/2010	372.70	410.35	394.82	08/2013	369.72	403.06	389.22
11/2010	372.56	408.93	393.89	09/2013	368.54	404.21	389.50
12/2010	378.66	411.71	398.02	10/2013	370.97	408.65	393.09
01/2011	367.03	400.83	386.84	11/2013	374.76	405.95	393.04
02/2011	367.49	401.31	387.32				

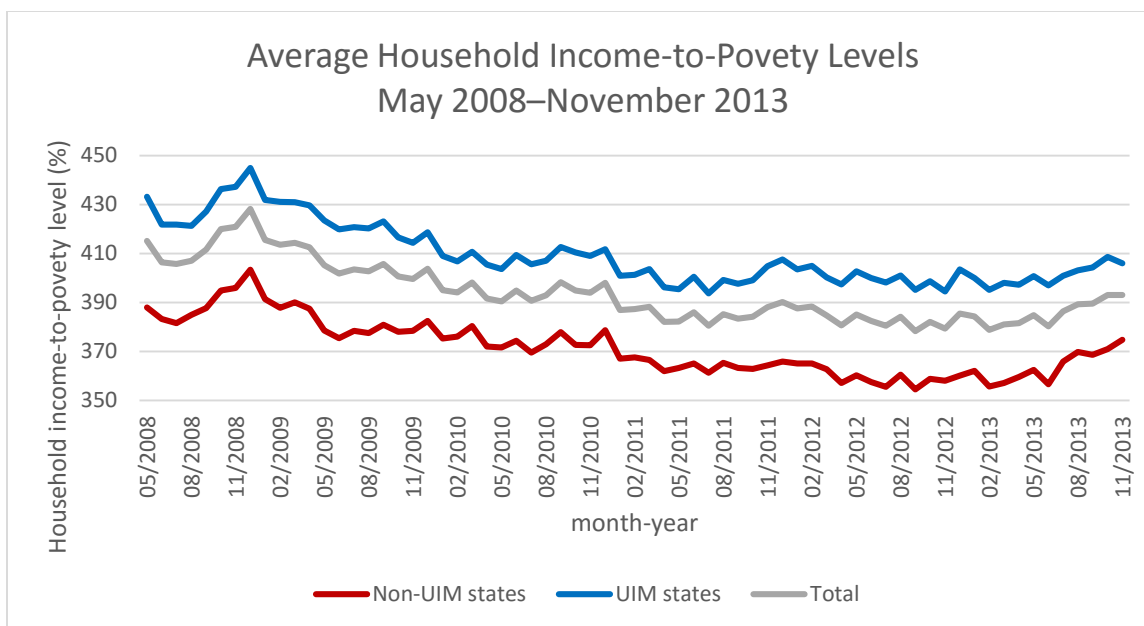


Figure 1.3. The average household income-to-poverty levels, May 2008–November 2013.

Predicting the Average Household Economic Trajectory

The average trajectory of the household income-to-poverty level from May 2008 to November 2013 was estimated using 1,418,368 monthly observations of 36,696 households. The first two columns of Table 1.5 report the results of two empty mean models—two-level and three-level models. Examining the results of these two models helps determine whether a three-level model is warranted. The deviance difference test agrees that the model fit of the three-level model (model 2) is a significant improvement over the two-level model (model 1) (LR $\chi^2=966.06$, $p<.001$). This suggests that the analytic models should take state-level factors into account when estimating the household income-to-poverty level.⁷

Building on a three-level model, unconditional growth models examine the average changing patterns of the household income-to-poverty level. Model 3 tests the linear time effect,

⁷ The intraclass correlations (ICCs) indicate that about 72% of the total variance in the observations' income-to-poverty ratio account for household characteristics; of that 72%, about 4% account for factors at the state level.

and model 4 tests the quadratic time effect—the fixed component. These models also test the household- and state-specific variations in time effects—the variance component. As shown in Table 1.4, the findings from the fixed component of model 3 and 4 support hypothesis 1, that the average household economic trajectory was non-linear, given the significant quadratic time effect ($\gamma_{200}=1.53$, $p<.001$).

Table 1.5.
Empty Mean and Unconditional Growth Models

VARIABLES		Empty2L Model 1	Empty3L Model 2	UGrowth1 Model 3	UGrowth2 Model 4
Fixed Component					
Year (linear term)	γ_{100}			-6.65*** (0.83)	2.80 (1.95)
Year ² (quadratic term)	γ_{200}				1.53*** (0.30)
Constant	γ_{000}	381.2*** (1.77)	374.78*** (9.44)	352.60*** (9.18)	364.95*** (9.25)
Variance Component					
L3: Intercept (state)	u_{00j}		✓	✓	✓
Linear term (state)	u_{10j}			✓	✓
L2: Intercept (state)	r_{0ij}	✓	✓	✓	✓
Linear term (household)	r_{1ij}			✓	✓
Quadratic term (household)	r_{2ij}				✓
L1: Residual	ε_{tij}	✓	✓	✓	✓
Model Fit					
Log restricted-likelihood		-9643944	-9643461	-9498988	-9415863
Deviance		19287888	19286922	18997975	18831726

*** $p<.001$, ** $p<.01$, * $p<.05$

Note. All of the coefficients are conditioned at the end of study period (November, 2013).

According to estimated coefficients of model 4, the average linear rate of change in household income-to-poverty level was 2.8% per year in November 2013. However, this rate of change was not constant over time. By multiplying the coefficient of the quadratic term of 1.53

by 2,⁸ the model predicts an accelerated change rate of 3.06% per year. That is, the average household income-to-poverty level increased by 5.86% per additional year in November 2013.

As Figure 1.4 shows, the slope changed from negative to positive over the study period, but the average household income-to-poverty level (i.e., 365% of the official poverty threshold) at the end of 2013 remained far lower than its Recession level (about 400% of the official poverty threshold) in May 2008. This suggests that American working families had not fully recover from the Great Recession at the end of 2013. The predicted marginal effects of model 4 indicate that the downward trajectory in the household income-to-poverty level rebounded around December 2012. Results from model 4 supports hypothesis 1, that household economic security improved over the study period, at a point in time after the federal intervention of UI modernization.

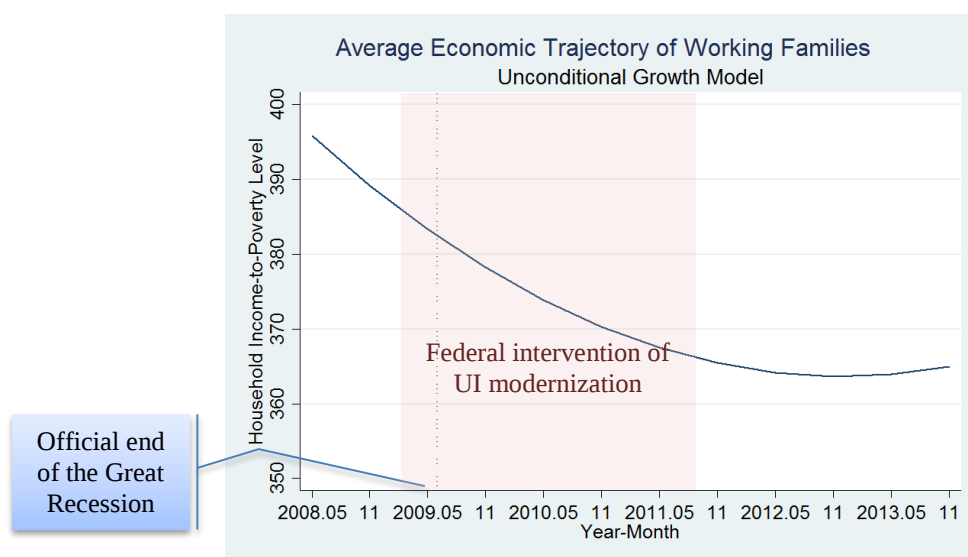


Figure 1.4. Average economic trajectory of working families.

Note. A vertical line is drawn in June 2009 to show when the Great Recession officially ended. The shaded area highlights the period of federal intervention of UI modernization from February 2009 through August 2011 via providing incentive funding for states to make permanent changes in their UI laws.

⁸ The doubling comes from taking the derivatives of the function.

Building on the supported hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2 expects that the level of and the rate of change in household economic security significantly varied across states. With model 4, different specifications of the random effects (variance component) are tested to see whether the average economic trajectories significantly vary across households in different states. The deviance difference tests show that the model fit improves significantly by adding a random linear time effect across households (LR $\chi^2 = 287483.07$, $p < .001$), and the model fit further improves significantly by adding a random linear time effect across states (LR $\chi^2 = 14.83$, $p < .001$). These test results indicate significant household and state differences in the linear rate of change in income-to-poverty levels from 2008 through 2013. Regarding testing the quadratic time effect models at household and state levels, the random quadratic time effect across households is retained because model fit decreases significantly when removing it (LR $\chi^2 = 166036.23$, $p < .001$). However, the random quadratic time effect across states is tested but not retained given a difficulty in successfully computing the standard error in the data. Figure 1.5 shows the Empirical Bayes estimates of the intercept and the linear time effect for each state in November 2013. These findings support hypothesis 2 and provide a foundation for further exploring the extent to which these variations could be attributed to the state status of enacting UI modernization.

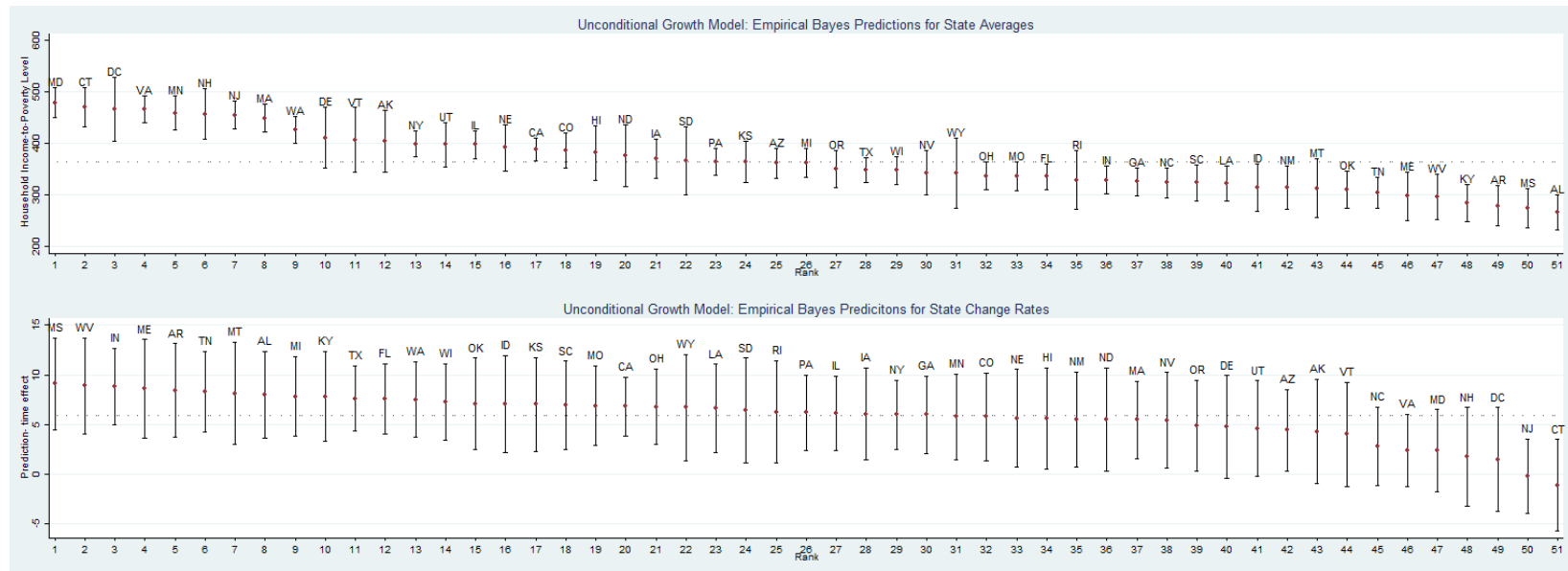


Figure 1.5. Empirical Bayes predictions for state averages of and the rates of change in household income-to-poverty level (November 2013).

Estimating the Effects of State UI Modernization on the Trajectories of Household Economic Security

Table 1.6 reports the results from three conditional growth models. Model 5 tests the effect of UI modernization and its interaction with time effects on the household income-to-poverty level. Compared with model 5, model 6 adjusts these effects by controlling for state-level covariates. Model 7 further controls for household-level covariates and the seam bias. The deviance difference tests agree that model 7 is the best-fit model among the three models.

According to estimates from model 7, the effect of state UI modernization on the household income-to-poverty level ($\gamma_{001}= 17.29$) and its interaction with the time effects ($\gamma_{101}=12.33$, $\gamma_{201}=1.71$) reach statistical significance at $p<.001$. This indicates a substantial difference in the average household economic trajectories between states with and without enacting UI modernization provisions. The average household income-to-poverty level for states with UI modernization was 17.29% higher than that for states without UI modernization, with a faster rate of change of 15.73% ($12.33 + 1.7 \times 2$) per year in November 2013, controlling for all the other covariates. These findings support the main research hypothesis that on average, at the end of the study period working families in states enacting UI modernization provisions experienced not only a higher level of economic security but also a stronger improvement rate than their counterparts in states that did not enact UI modernization.

Table 1.6.
Conditional Growth Models

	UIM1	UIM2	UIM3
VARIABLES	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Fixed Component			
Year (linear term)	-4.95*	-4.58*	-9.14***
	(2.59)	(2.60)	(2.56)
Year ² (quadratic term)	0.46	0.5	-0.02
	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.35)
UI Modernization (UIM)	17.86	16.78***	17.29***
	(5.08)	(5.13)	(5.03)
UIM*Year (linear term)	11.74***	11.27***	12.33***
	(2.62)	(2.64)	(2.59)
UIM*Year ² (quadratic term)	1.52***	1.47***	1.70***
	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.35)
Unemployment Rate		-13.78*	-6.38
		(7.49)	(6.92)
UI Reciprocity Rate		0.29	-0.37
		(0.80)	(0.74)
Regular UI Benefit Duration		-0.24	0.22
		(0.70)	(0.64)
Construction Industry Index		-148.98***	-125.59***
		(35.03)	(32.68)
Manufactory Industry Index		-89.14***	-85.29***
		(22.07)	(20.47)
Female			-24.76***
			(3.06)
Black			-113.65***
			(4.53)
Hispanic			-102.68***
			(4.57)
Others			-30.63***
			(5.60)
High School Degree			22.01***
			(2.86)
College +			103.96***
			(3.33)
Part-time			-22.32***
			(0.57)
No Job			-126.32***
			(0.95)
Separated/Divorced/Widow			-68.72***
			(1.64)

Table 1.6. *Continued*

	UIM1	UIM2	UIM3
VARIABLES	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Never Married			-69.92*** (1.99)
Age			2.45*** (0.13)
Number of Children < 18yrs			-35.62*** (0.65)
Reference Month			-1.04*** (0.32)
Constant	353.09*** (9.73)	675.60*** (79.71)	547.39*** (74.81)
REML Model Fit			
Deviance	18831679	18831633	18805886

*p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Note. 1. All of the coefficients are conditioned at the end of the study period (November, 2013). 2. Estimates of the variance component are not listed in this table because all three models share the same variance component. This table focuses on the fixed effects.

Short-Term versus Long-Term UI Modernization Effect

This research takes advantage of having multiple data points covering month-year before, during, and after the federal UIMA. This longitudinal nature yields analyzing short-term and long-term UI modernization effects. Table 1.7 reports estimates of the final conditional growth model with coefficients conditioning in August 2011, December 2012, and November 2013, respectively. Those conditional coefficients of state UI modernization and their interactions with time variables represent the short-term policy effect at the end of federal intervention, the lasting policy effect at the end of 2012, and the long-term policy effect at the end of the study period. I interpret these conditional policy effects as the average difference in income-to-poverty level between households in states enacting UI modernization provisions and those in states not enacting such provisions, at a given point in time.

Findings from model 9 show that the average difference in the income-to-poverty level between the two groups did not reach statistical significance at the end of federal incentive

funding in August 2011. However, this economic gap reached a significant magnitude of 7.42% ($p < .001$) in December 2012 (model 8) and 17.29% ($p < .001$) in November 2013 (model 7), controlling for all the other variables. Further examining the predicted rates of change over time, the rate of change for households in states enacting UI modernization, compared with the rate for their counterparts, was 8.1% higher in August 2011, 12.63% higher in December 2012, and 15.73% higher in November 2013 (see Table 1.7).

The widening gap in the household income-to-poverty level between the two groups corresponds to the visualized economic trajectories in Figure 1.6. Using estimates from the final conditional growth model, Figure 1.6 projects the average household economic trajectories by state status of UI modernization, controlling for all the other variables, to present the long-term UI policy impact on household economic security. As the figure shows, the downward trend in the income-to-poverty level for households in UI reform states has slowed down, while the projected trend for households in non-reform states has continuously decreased. This longitudinal evidence supports a lasting policy impact of UI modernization on household economic well-being.

Table 1.7.
Effect of State UI Modernization and Its Interaction with Time Effects over Time

		Model 9 Aug. 2011	Model 8 Dec. 2012	Model 7 Nov. 2013
UI Modernization	γ_{001}	-1.87 (1.39)	7.42** (3.09)	17.29*** (5.03)
UIM* Year (linear term)	γ_{101}	4.70*** (1.15)	9.23*** (1.98)	12.33*** (2.59)
UIM* Year ² (quadratic term)	γ_{201}	1.70*** (0.35)	1.70*** (0.35)	1.70*** (0.35)
Predicted difference in growth rate per year		8.1	12.63	15.73

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Note. Predicted difference in growth rate per year is calculated by $\gamma_{101} + 2(\gamma_{201})$. Coefficients of all the other variables are estimated but not listed in this table.

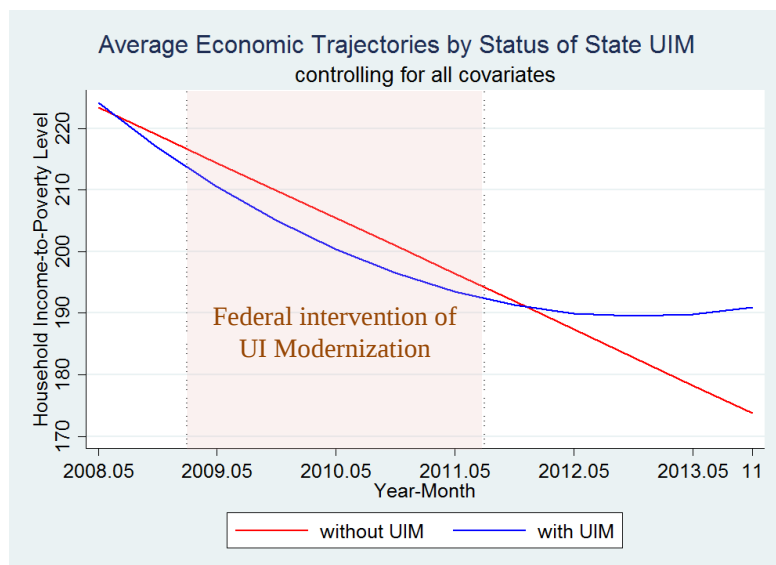


Figure 1.6. Predicted economic trajectories of working families by state UI modernization status. *Note:* The predicted trajectories are conditional on households with a reference person who is female, African American, with a high school degree, with a part-time employment status, with a marital status of divorce/separation/widow, and all the other state and household level continuous variables at means.

A few factors may explain the long-term UI modernization effect. First, the insignificant policy effect at the end of the federal intervention in August 2011 could be due to the time lag between the passages of state reform laws and the actual times that the reform laws took effect or were implemented. For example, in California the original Alternative Base Period Bill (ABx3-29) was passed and signed into law in March 2009 with an implementation date of April 2011. However, the California State Legislature extended the implementation date to April 2012 due to the long process of updating the state UI database, upon which the implementation of the ABP depended (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). In Washington State, the State Legislature passed a UI law expanding training benefits in 2011, but this law did not take effect as a permanent law until July 2012. One can expect that a significant policy impact occurred after the deadline of the federal intervention⁹ because the Department of Labor granted a grace period of 12 months for a

⁹ States needed to submit their applications for federal incentive funding no later than August 22, 2011. States' new laws were to take effect no later than 12 months from the date the Department of Labor certified the application.

state to implement its new UI laws after a state's UI modernization incentive funding was certified (Unemployment Insurance Program Letter, 2009; Washington State Employment Security Department, 2010).

Second, with the supports of UI modernization provisions and workforce services, UI recipients might spend a longer time in searching for a job that better matches their skills and expected salaries. In the long run, household income improved significantly (Fujita, 2010). On the other hand, unemployed workers in states without UI modernization were more likely to be excluded from UI systems. Without the supports of the state UI system and its corresponding workforce services during the prolonged economic downturn, unemployed workers might become discouraged and stop searching for a job. Consequently, jobless workers and their families continuously experienced decreasing economic security.

Third, the state UI system functions as an economic stimulus to the state economy by smoothing out unemployed families' consumption and, in turn, keeping and boosting jobs in communities (Mishel & Shierholz, 2010). As a result, working families in a state with UI modernization provisions benefited from the faster recovery of the state economy through increasing jobs and earned income. This partly explains the observed widening economic gap between states that actively reformed their UI systems and those that did not.

To sum up, the lagging state implementation of UI modernization provisions, unemployed workers' behavioral responses, and the dual UI policy mechanisms—consumption smoothing and economy stimulation—explain the association between state UI modernization and the improvement rate of household economic well-being over time.

Sensitivity Analyses

I performed several sensitivity analyses to assess the UI modernization effect in a more conservative manner. Table 1.8 reports the coefficients of UI modernization and their

interactions with time effects from the original model and three models using alternative measures of the household income-to-poverty level. The first sensitivity test employed a measure that excluded income supports from other government programs. It is possible that states that actively reformed their UI programs were also more responsive to federal resources for other income support programs. For example, the 2009 ARRA also offered a total of \$5 billion TANF Emergency Contingency Fund (ECF) for states to use as additional resources to help needy families by providing one-time benefits or offering subsidized employment programs (Pavetti & Rosenbaum, 2010). This approach ruled out other plausible state policy adoptions that might confound the findings. The second sensitivity test used a measure that adjusted for state cost-of-living standards. The household income-to-poverty level based on this measure might more accurately reflect the life experiences of working families in different states. The last sensitivity test combined the aforementioned two approaches.

The results of different sensitivity analyses show a similar pattern to the original model, though the magnitude of the effects become smaller (see Table 1.8). For example, accounting for both other governmental income supports and state cost-of-living standards, the last model (Model A3) estimates that working families in states with UI modernization experienced a higher income-to-poverty level of 11.22% and a larger increase rate of 10.55% per year in November 2013. Overall, the effects of UI modernization and their interaction with time effects remain substantively significant when using different approaches to measuring the household income-to-poverty level.

Table 1.8.
Sensitivity Analyses, using Three Alternative Measures of the Household Income-to-Poverty Level

		Original Model	Model A1	Model A2	Model A3
Excluding other income supports			✓		✓
Adjusting for state cost of living				✓	✓
UI Modernization	γ_{001}	17.29*** (5.03)	14.39*** (5.02)	13.98*** (4.96)	11.22** (4.94)
UIM* Year (linear term)	γ_{101}	12.33*** (2.59)	9.87*** (2.59)	10.78*** (2.56)	8.35*** (2.55)
UIM* Year ² (quadratic term)	γ_{201}	1.70*** (0.35)	1.28*** (0.35)	1.51*** (0.35)	1.10*** (0.35)
Predicted difference in growth rate per year		15.73	12.43	13.8	10.55

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Note. Predicted difference in growth rate per year is calculated by $\gamma_{101} + 2(\gamma_{201})$. Coefficients of all the other variables are estimated but not listed in this table. All results are available from the author upon request.

Conclusion

To include more workers in the UI system and provide adequate support for unemployed families, Congress passed the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act in 2009, providing \$7 billion for states to modernize their UI programs. Previous UI research has provided some insights into the effects of specific modernization provisions (e.g., ABP and part-time provisions) on UI receipt and poverty reduction, but it has not focused on the overall impact of UI modernization on working families' economic improvement in the aftermath of the Great Recession. This study uses longitudinal panel data and performs multilevel growth model procedures to explore household economic trajectories and to test their associations with state UI modernization. The findings show that the economic well-being of working families did not fully recover in the five-and-a-half years after the onset of the Great Recession. However, the level of and the change rate in the income-to-poverty level varied significantly among households across

states. The most conservative multilevel growth model estimates that working families in states with UI modernization experienced a higher income-to-poverty level of 11.22% and a larger increase rate of 10.55% per year in November 2013. This suggests that state UI modernization had a significant positive effect not only on the level of but also on the rate of change in the household income-to-poverty level. This longitudinal evidence provides a more nuanced picture of how state UI programs supported working families' economic well-being than in previous UI research.

Findings from this research have important policy implications at both state and federal levels. States can ensure working families' economic well-being by adopting UI policy provisions including the alternative base period, alternative good causes to leave the job market, part-time provisions, extended benefits for displaced workers in training programs, and dependent allowances. Nevertheless, some states' resistance to reform their UI programs resulted in unequal UI supports for working families across states, undermining the effect of the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act of 2009 on the economic security of American working families. This longitudinal research suggests that state policy decisions have profound and continuous impacts on working families' economic well-being. To protect all working families' economic security, future federal UI reform should consider a policy design that enables the federal-state UI system to function more effectively in providing equal protection for working families across states.

The author also acknowledges a number of limitations of this study. First, the measures of household economic security in this research did not take non-cash economic resources into account. When states' policymakers made their decisions on adopting UI modernization provisions, they might have considered other state income or work-support programs such as

food assistance, medical assistance, energy assistance, child care, and tax credits that are available to working families experiencing economic hardships. This study did not address potentially confounding effects of non-cash state safety nets on household economic security.

Second, the time frame of this study ended in November 2013 due to the data limitation of the 2008 SIPP panel. A more complete longitudinal assessment of the association between state UI modernization and household economic trajectories would be achieved if the 2008 SIPP collected data in a longer period. Although SIPP researchers have adopted an approach to merging two panels to expand the longitudinal time frame, the redesigned survey structure and data collection process of the new 2014 SIPP panel pose a potential challenge to conducting such a cross-panel study (Citro & Scholz, 2009). Alternatively, researchers interested in evaluating the long-term UI policy effect on household economic trajectories could pool the annual cross-sectional CPS ASEC Supplement data to construct state-level time series data and perform two-level (state-time) growth models. However, this approach would have a limitation of making a direct inference to the longitudinal economic trajectories of working families.

Third, this research evaluates the overall policy effect of UI modernization on working families rather than the effect of individual UI reform components (or their different combinations) on different subgroups of working families. This research did not address the complex policy issue. To date, researchers have systematically examined only the association between state-level ABP adoption and UI receipt among low-educated unemployed workers (Gould-Werth & Shaefer, 2013). Future research could further explore the effects of different state UI modernization provisions on different sub-populations, particularly vulnerable workers and their families, to inform future policy decisions. Despite this limitation, my evaluation takes advantage of the nationally representative panel data and makes a unique contribution to

providing longitudinal evidence on the effects of state UI modernization on the economic security of American working families.

References

- Ben-Ishai, L., McHugh, R., & Ujvari, K. (2015). *Access to Unemployment Insurance benefits for family caregivers: An analysis of state rules and practices*. Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute.
- Ben-Ishai, L., McHugh, R., & McKenna, C. (2015). *Out of sync: How Unemployment Insurance rules fail workers with volatile job schedules*. New York, NY: National Employment Law Project.
- Bentele, K. G. (2012). *Evaluating the performance of the U.S. social safety net in the Great Recession*. Retrieved from Center for Social Policy, University of Massachusetts website: http://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_social_policy/Evaluating_the_Performance_of_the_US_Social_Safety_Net_in_the_Great_Recession.pdf.
- Bertrand, M., Duflo, E., & Mullainathan, S. (2002). *How much should we trust differences-in-differences estimates?* (Working paper no.19048). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Bivens, J., Smith, J., & Wilson, V. (2014). *State cuts to jobless benefits did not help workers or taxpayers* (Briefing Paper, 380). Retrieved from Economic Policy Institute website: <http://www.epi.org/publication/state-unemployment-insurance-cuts/>
- Burtless, G., & Gordon, T. (2011). The federal stimulus programs and their effects. In D. B. Grusky, B. Western, & C. Wimerk (Eds.), *The Great Recession* (pp. 249–293). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Citro, C. F., & Scholz, J. K. (Eds.). (2009). *Reengineering the survey of income and program participation*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Congressional Budget Office. (2011). Unemployment insurance benefits and family income of the unemployed. In A. D. MacKenna (Ed.) *Unemployment Insurance and its antipoverty effects* (pp. 121–135). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- DeNavas-Walt, C., & Proctor, B. D. (2015). *Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2014* (Current Population Reports, 60–252). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Farber, H. S., & Valletta, R. G. (2013). *Do extended unemployment benefits lengthen unemployment spells? Evidence from recent cycles in the US labor market* (Working Paper No.19048). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Fujita, S. (2010). Economic effects of the unemployment insurance benefit. *Business Review*, Q4, 20–27.
- Gabe, T., & Whittaker, J. M. (2011). Antipoverty effect of unemployment insurance. In A. D. MacKenna (Ed.), *Unemployment Insurance and its antipoverty effects* (pp. 1–40). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Gordon, R. A., & Heinrich, C. J. (2004). Modeling trajectories in social program outcomes for performance accountability. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 25(2), 161–189.

- Gould-Werth, A., & Shaefer, H. L. (2013). Do alternative base periods increase Unemployment Insurance receipt among low-educated unemployed workers? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(4), 835–852. doi: 10.1002/pam.21708
- Grusky, D. B., Western, B., & Wimer, C. (2011). The consequences of the Great Recession. In D. B. Grusky, B. Western, & C. Wimer (Eds.), *The Great Recession* (pp. 3–19). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Hoffman, L. (2015). *Longitudinal analysis: Modeling within-person fluctuation and change*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Howell, D. R., & Azizoglu, B. M. (2011). Unemployment benefits and work incentives: The US labour market in the Great Recession. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 27(2), 211–240.
- Hout, M., Levanon, A., & Cumberworth, E. (2011). Job loss and unemployment. In D. B. Grusky, B. Western, & C. Wimer (Eds.), *The Great Recession* (pp. 59–81). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Isaacs, K. P. (2013). *Unemployment Insurance: Consequences of changes in state unemployment compensation laws*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41859.pdf>
- Kimball, W., & McHugh, R. (2015). *How low can we go? State Unemployment Insurance programs exclude record numbers of jobless workers*. (Briefing Paper, 392). Retrieved from Economic Policy Institute website: <http://www.epi.org/publication/how-low-can-we-go-state-unemployment-insurance-programs-exclude-record-numbers-of-jobless-workers/>
- Lachin, J. M. (2000). Statistical considerations in the intent-to-treat principle. *Controlled Clinical Trials*, 21(3), 167–189. doi: 10.1016/s0197-2456(00)00046-5
- Lieberman, R. C. (1998). *Shifting the color line: Race and the American welfare state*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lindner, S., & Nichols, A. (2012). *How do Unemployment Insurance modernization laws affect the number and composition of eligible workers?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Lovell, V. (2002). Constructing social citizenship: The exclusion of African American women from unemployment insurance in the US. *Feminist Economics*, 8(2), 191–197.
- National Bureau of Economic Research. (2010). *Business cycle dating committee, September 20*. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/cycles/sept2010.html>
- National Employment Law Project. (2012). *Modernizing Unemployment Insurance: Federal incentives pave the way for state reforms* (Briefing paper, May 2012). Retrieved from http://nelp.3cdn.net/a77bc3b5988571ee4b_dfm6btygh.pdf
- Mattingly, T. (2014, June). SIPP sample, weights, and standard errors. PowerPoint slides presented at 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation Workshop, Ann Arbor, MI.

- Mitchell, M. (2010). Gender and unemployment insurance: Why women receive unemployment benefits at lower rates than men and will unemployment insurance reform close the gender gap? *Texas Journal of Women and the Law*, 20(1), 55–74.
- Mishel, L., & Shierholz, H. (2010). *Two for the price of one: Providing Unemployment Insurance both assists the unemployed and generates jobs* (Issue Brief No. 281). Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Moore, J. C. (2008). *Seam bias in the 2004 SIPP panel: Much improved, but much bias still remains* (U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Research Division Survey Methodology Research Report Series, 3). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Orloff, A. (1996). Gender in the welfare state. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 51–78. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.51
- Pavetti, L., & Rosenbaum, D. (2010, April). *Creating a safety net that works when the economy doesn't: The role of the Food Stamp and TANF programs*. Paper presented at the Georgetown University and Urban Institute Conference on Reducing Poverty and Economic Distress after ARRA. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from: http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412068_food_stamps_tanf.pdf.
- Peterson, J. (2008). Unemployment Insurance reform: Elements of a social provisioning approach. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 42(2), 453–460.
- Rothstein, J. (2011). *Unemployment Insurance and job search in the Great Recession* (Working Paper No. 17534). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Shaefer, H. L. (2010). Identifying key barriers to Unemployment Insurance for disadvantaged workers in the United States. *Journal of Social Policy*, 39(3), 439–460. doi:10.1017/S0047279410000218
- Shelton, A. M., Romig, K., & Whittaker, J. M. (2009). *Unemployment insurance provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1623&context=key_workplace
- Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (2003). *Applied longitudinal data analysis: Modeling change and event occurrence*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Snijders, T. A. B., & Bosker, R. J. (2012). *Multilevel analysis: An introduction to basic and advanced multilevel modeling* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Unemployment Insurance Program Letter, No. 14-09. (2009). Retrieved from the United States Department of Labor website: http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=2715
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2014). *Real Personal Income for States and Metropolitan Areas, 2008–2012*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2015). *Real personal income for states and metropolitan areas, 2013*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). *Labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey: Unemployment rate*. Retrieved from <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000>

- U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Source and accuracy statement for the Survey of Income and Program Participation 2008 wave 1 to wave 16 public use files*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sipp/tech-documentation/source-accuracy-statements/source-accuracy-statements-2008.html>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2007). *Unemployment Insurance data summary: 4th quarter 2007*. Retrieved from http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum07/DataSum_2007_4.pdf
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2008). *Unemployment Insurance data summary: 4th quarter 2008*. Retrieved from http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum08/DataSum_2007_8.pdf
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2011). *Unemployment Insurance modernization incentive payment state certifications*. Retrieved from <http://www.doleta.gov/recovery/>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2015). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2015.asp>
- Vroman, W. (2010a). *The role of Unemployment Insurance as an automatic stabilizer during a recession*. Columbia, MD: IMPAQ International.
- Vroman, W. (2010b). *The Great Recession, Unemployment Insurance, and poverty*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Vroman, W. (2011). *Unemployment Insurance and the Great Recession* (Unemployment and Recovery Project Working Paper, 2). Retrieved from Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/unemployment-insurance-and-great-recession>
- Washington State Employment Security Department. (2010, September 17). *Unemployment Insurance Advisory Committee September 17, 2010, Executive Summary*. Retrieved from <https://esd.wa.gov/>

PAPER TWO.
UNEQUAL SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WORKERS: EXPLORING
STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPROACHES BEFORE AND
AFTER THE GREAT RECESSION

Summary

The federal-state Unemployment Insurance (UI) program underwent considerable policy changes in financing, eligibility, and benefit rules during and after the Great Recession (2007–2009). The purpose of this paper is to study state UI policy approaches to social protection. Model-based cluster analysis and means comparison tests are used to analyze the multidimensional policy design and performance characteristics of 51 UI programs before and after the Great Recession. Results indicate that there are two distinct state UI approaches to social protection for workers that are valid over time. The high-protection approach, compared to its counterpart, the low-protection approach, is characterized as combining financing adequacy with program designs of high taxable wages and average tax rates; high program accessibility with program designs of inclusive eligibility criteria; and high wage replacement with program designs of high benefit levels. These two approaches—either high or low protection—remain comparatively stable over time. However, both show a declining trend in social protection performance from 2007 to 2014. By conducting a state comparative analysis of UI approaches and examining their policy characteristics and underlying policy logic, this paper contributes to the comparative research on UI systems and offers implications for coordinated policy designs to achieve UI’s social protection goals.

Keywords: Unemployment Insurance, social protection, cluster analysis, comparative study

Introduction

Unemployment Insurance (UI) has been a critical component of social protection in contemporary welfare states since the early 1900s, when the United Kingdom launched the first nationwide unemployment insurance system under the National Insurance Act of 1911 (Orloff & Skocpol, 1984). The concept of social protection has broadly linked the goal of mitigating the adverse impacts of social risks on individuals and their families (Midgely, 2012). UI is a public social insurance program that requires compulsory participation of employers and workers. Financed through payroll taxes, UI provides wage replacement benefits for unemployed workers to compensate for their income losses during the job transition period. UI's essential role in social protection has generated substantial scholarly interest in studying UI systems and their performance (e.g., Gallie & Paugam, 2000; Ozkan, 2014; Schmid, 1995; Shahidi, 2015; Vroman & Brusentsev, 2005; Williams & Woo, 1995). Specifically, social policy scholars have analyzed different UI schemes through cross-national comparative research on similarities and differences in UI's institutional designs and performance among advanced countries. However, most of the recent systematic comparative studies have focused solely on the experiences of European countries (e.g., Gallie & Paugam, 2000; Ozkan, 2014; Shahidi, 2015), with the exception of a few studies from a global perspective (e.g., Vroman & Brusentsev, 2005).

In the context of the United States, UI was launched under the Social Security Act of 1935 as a policy response to the Great Depression. It has not only functioned as social protection through providing income support for unemployed workers to mitigate their economic hardship, but it has also operated as an economic stabilizer through redirecting UI benefits into goods and services consumption to stimulate the depressed economy (Gould-Werth & Shaefer, 2013; Vroman, 2010). Unlike in other advanced countries, UI in the United States is operated through the hybrid federal-state system, in which responsibilities for program designs are shared between

the federal government and the states (Shaefer, 2010; Vroman, 2012). Under the federal-state structure, considerable variations in UI program designs (e.g., financing, eligibility, and benefits rules) exist across 53 jurisdictions (50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, referred to collectively as states).

The decentralized UI administration in the U.S. inevitably involves complex implementation issues, subject to states' individual social, political, and economic conditions. On the one hand, providing public goods through a lower level of government is efficient because a state government can design a tailored program matching their public goods to state or local preferences. On the other hand, the decentralized structure may undermine the effectiveness of public policies when there is a problem of interorganizational cooperation (Weimer & Vining, 2011).

The Great Recession (2007–2009) and its resulting high and persistent unemployment has posed great challenges for the federal-state UI system to provide robust social protection for American workers. During this economically turbulent period, states' UI systems underwent substantial changes in financing, eligibility, and benefits (Chang, 2015; Issacs, 2013; Nicholson, Needels, & Hock, 2014). Policy concerns underlying these changes include workers' income security, economic stabilization, UI claimants' moral hazard, and interstate competition (Biverns, Smith, & Wilson, 2014; Hertel-Fernandez, 2013; Kimbal & McHugh, 2015; Peterson, 2008; Smith & Wenger, 2013; Vroman, 2012).

Policy process scholars have argued for a critical examination of policy design elements and how they relate to policy goals through comparative policy analysis (Schneider & Ingram, 1988). The purpose of this research is to explore state UI policy approaches to social protection. In this paper, I define a UI approach as a way to design and implement a UI program that has

interrelated elements working as a unified system to achieve policy goals. To explore state UI approaches to social protection for workers, the present research employs model-based cluster analysis to analyze state UI programs' key design and performance characteristics before and after the Great Recession. By studying state UI approaches and examining their underlying policy logic, this paper contributes to comparative research on UI systems and offers implications for improving policy designs under the federalist structure in order to achieve UI's social protection goal in preparation for future economic downturns.

Literature Review

This section begins with a review of the three main programmatic dimensions for understanding UI designs—financing, eligibility, and benefits—and their variations across states in the United States. After this overview, I discuss UI policy logic in relation to policy changes and previous research on UI approaches to social protection, respectively. Following this discussion I list my research questions and their corresponding theses.

State Variation in UI Policy Designs in the United States

UI policy designs involve multiple elements in financing, eligibility, and benefit dimensions at both the federal and state levels. This overview is by no means comprehensive, but it covers the most relevant UI characteristics for the purpose of state comparison.

Financing structure.

UI in the United States is financed by the Unemployment Trust Fund (UTF), which is funded by federal and state taxes on employers¹⁰ under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) and the State Unemployment Tax Act (SUTA). Generally, the federal trust fund

¹⁰ Only Alaska, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania levy state UI taxes on both employers and employees.

supports UI administrative expenditures and other related work-support programs, and the state trust funds pay UI benefits to unemployed workers. The amount of trust fund revenues is determined by the defined annual tax rates and taxable wages. The federal tax rate is 6% on the first \$7,000 of each covered worker's wages, which is also the minimum standard for states' taxable wages. Although the federal government allows states to establish their own tax rates and taxable wage bases to fund their trust fund accounts, federal law institutes a financial penalty that requires employers in states that set their wage bases below the federal threshold of \$7,000 to pay the much higher federal UI. However, if employers are in a state that follows the federal UI rules, the federal tax rate goes down from 6.0% to 0.6% through a 5.4% tax credit (Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012). The financial penalty and the "tax-and-credit-offset" incentive (Henchman, 2011, p. 7) were designed to ensure that states meet the federal requirements through imposing tax burdens on and providing tax credits for employers.

At the state level, the differential tax burdens on employers are operated through the experience rating formulas. All state UI tax rates use an experience rating based on the amount of UI benefits paid to an employer's former employees. By means of the experience rating design, employers are encouraged to maintain a stable workforce and discouraged from laying off too many workers. Employers with a high level of layoffs are subject to the maximum rate schedule, whereas those with a low level of layoffs are subject to the minimum rate schedule (Henchman, 2011). As of January 2016, the maximum state tax rate ranged from 5.4% in nine states to 12.27% in Massachusetts, and the minimum state tax rate ranged from 0% in four states (Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota) to 2.8% in Pennsylvania. To collect UI trust fund contributions, states then apply their tax rates for different employers to their state taxable wage

bases, ranging from \$7,000 in Arizona and Florida to \$42,100 in Washington State (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a).

UI's financing feature has a countercyclical function for reducing economic fluctuations. In economic booms, UI tax revenue increases and expenditure on UI benefits decreases. The surplus accumulated by the trust funds then serves as a "cushion" for economic downturns, when tax revenue decreases and expenditure on UI benefits increases (Weimer & Vining, 2011). However, research finds that the trust fund reserve rate (net trust fund balance as a percentage of covered wage) has shown a generally decreasing trend since 1990, with the exception of two periods of sluggish growth during the recoveries of 1993–1999 and 2000–2007 (Henchman, 2011; Vroman, 2011). That is, most of the states did not prepare sufficient trust fund reserves before the onset of the Great Recession. In early 2008, only about one-third of states' trust funds could support 12 months of their historically high benefits (Henchman, 2011). In practice, states could borrow from the federal trust fund if a state's trust fund did not contain adequate money to pay for benefits. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 (the stimulus package) temporarily waived interest payments for those states (Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012). During the Great Recession and its aftermath, 36 states depleted their trust funds and needed to borrow money from the federal trust fund (U.S. Department of Labor Office of UI Division of Fiscal and Actuarial Services, 2014).

UI research and related policy debates have disagreed on the causes of UI financing insufficiency. Some attribute the financing insufficiency to low taxable wage bases or low tax rates (Hertel-Fernandez, 2013; Vroman, 2009, 2011, 2012); others attribute it to the generosity of UI in terms of lenient eligibility requirements, high benefit levels, or long benefit duration (Henchman, 2011; Smith & Wenger, 2013). Despite the disagreement on the causes, most

researchers and policymakers agree that UI financing characteristics are interrelated with eligibility criteria and benefit rules.

Eligibility Criteria.

Eligibility rules determine the target populations that are expected to gain or lose from the policy. Policy designs of eligibility rules often reflect how target populations are expected to behave in order to achieve policy goals (Schneider & Ingram, 1997). To qualify for UI benefits, an unemployed worker must meet both the monetary and the non-monetary eligibility criteria (Shaefer, 2010). Regarding the monetary criteria, the unemployed worker first must have earned at least a certain amount in wages or have worked at least a certain amount of time during a given base period. A base period is typically defined as the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters prior to unemployment. The qualifying formulas for calculating the qualified wage or time amount have varied greatly across states, including a multiple of high-quarter wages, a multiple of weekly benefit amount, a flat qualifying amount, and a certain number of weeks/hours of employment at certain weekly/hourly wage (see detailed information in Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012). As a result, the minimum base period wage needed to qualify for UI ranges widely, from \$130 in Hawaii to \$4,710 in Arizona in 2015 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a). The defined base period along with a high minimum wage requirement potentially exclude low-wage workers from the UI system because they are more likely to have short or sporadic work histories. Therefore, if work and wage in the most recent calendar quarter can be counted, low-wage workers are more likely to meet the monetary eligibility requirement (Gould-Werth & Shaefer, 2013; Shaefer & Wu, 2011).

Regarding the non-monetary eligibility to qualify for UI benefits, a worker must lose his or her job through no fault of his or her own and must be available for work (typically, full-time

jobs). States have implemented and interpreted the non-monetary eligibility in a variety of ways. Most states typically consider a plant closing or a layoff by the employer as acceptable conditions to meet the requirement that a worker has left a job “involuntarily” or “through no fault of one’s own” (Shaefer & Wu, 2011). Research has found that the non-monetary eligibility requirements, not the monetary eligibility criteria, are key programmatic barriers for many low-wage and part-time workers to access UI (Shaefer, 2010).

Historically, only about one-third of unemployed workers received UI benefits from regular state programs before the Great Recession (Kimball & McHugh, 2015). To include more low-wage and disadvantaged workers in the UI system, the ARRA of 2009 provided a total of \$7 billion incentive funding for states to relax their monetary and non-monetary eligibility rules. Options regarding eligibility modernization included (1) adopting an alternative base period, which considers the most recent quarter of work, (2) allowing UI claimants to look for part-time jobs, and (3) accepting compelling family circumstances for separating from employment (i.e., domestic violence, spouse relocation, or caring for family members with illness or disabilities). By the end of the federal incentive funding available for states, 39 states adopted the alternative base period, 26 states passed the part-time provision, and 19 states allowed for the compelling family reasons (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011a). Research has shown that eligibility modernization improved the accessibility of UI, particularly among low-wage or low-education workers (Gould-Werth & Shaefer, 2013; Lindner & Nichols, 2012), female workers with children (Lindner & Nichols, 2012), and part-time, rural workers (Shattuck, 2009). However, a recent report (Kimball & McHugh, 2015) finds that despite an increase in reciprocity rate (i.e., unemployed workers receiving benefits from regular state programs as a percentage of the total number of unemployed workers) after the enactment of UI modernization incentive funding in

2009, the short-term increasing trend then turned to a declining trend; in 2014 it reached a historically low reciprocity rate of 23.1%. In other words, fewer than one in four jobless workers were receiving state UI benefits. Yet, the state reciprocity rate ranged from 14.8% in South Carolina to 65.7% in New Jersey. Kimball and McHugh (2015) attributed the decreased trend to an interaction of the improving economy overall and changing benefit rules in some states, particularly changes in the maximum benefit duration.

Benefit Rules.

Benefit rules determine how much and how long unemployed workers receive UI benefits. Benefits supporting workers with similar work histories and earnings in different states may vary in level (dollar amount) and duration (number of weeks). The benefit amount for an unemployed worker typically depends on the worker's previous earnings and the state's benefit formula. Most states' benefit formulas replace no more than half of a worker's past earnings. In some states, workers receive higher benefits if they have dependents (Lindner & Nichols, 2012). The maximum weekly benefits have been set and adjusted in different ways across states. Some states set the maximum amount to the state average weekly wage so that the maximum weekly benefit automatically adjusts as the average weekly wage changes. Other states specify the maximum weekly benefit in their UI laws and adjust the level only after passing legislation (Smith & Wenger, 2013). As of January 2015, the maximum weekly benefit amount across states ranged from \$235 (with no dependent allowance) in Missouri to \$698 (plus a maximum dependent allowance to \$1,047) in Massachusetts (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a).

During the Great Recession, the 2009 ARRA provided a temporary supplemental \$25 weekly benefit paid by the federal fund (Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012). Moreover, under the UI Modernization Act, seven states (Alaska, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Mexico,

Rhode Island, and Tennessee) adopted the dependent allowance provision to increase the benefit levels for workers with dependents as part of their UI reforms (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011a). Nevertheless, researchers have observed that states also made various policy decisions to reduce the UI benefit levels, including changing the formulas of calculating benefits, changing the period during which benefits were calculated, legislating new maximum benefit levels, and postponing the automatic benefit adjustments (Smith & Wenger, 2013). All of the above policy decisions potentially contributed to the state variation in the UI replacement rate, ranging from 30% in Alaska to 49% in Iowa in 2014 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015b).

Regarding the maximum UI benefit duration, three programs determine the maximum number of weeks available to the unemployed workers in a given state. The first program is the regular Unemployment Compensation (UC), which typically offered unemployment benefits up to 26 weeks in all states (with the exception of 28 weeks in Montana and 30 weeks in Massachusetts) before the Great Recession. UI modernization funding (2009–2011) encouraged 16 states to provide an extra 26 weeks of benefits for workers in training programs (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011a). Nevertheless, during the post-Recessionary period, nine states (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, and South Carolina) cut their duration of state-funded UI benefits to less than the standard 26 weeks, offsetting the efforts of UI modernization (Kimball & McHugh, 2015).

The second program is the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC), which is a temporary program to extend unemployment compensation during economic downturns. The most recent EUC began in July 2008 and ended in January 2013, as a policy response to the prolonged Great Recession (Nicholson et al., 2014). The EUC extended unemployment benefits to up to 53 weeks, offering extra support to those who had exhausted their regular UI benefits.

The length of weeks available for the unemployed workers depended on a state's unemployment rate. The criteria for EUC benefit duration was nationally uniform across states, and the EUC benefits were fully funded by the federal government. Therefore, states' economic conditions drove the state variation in benefit duration of the EUC. In order to maintain the level of unemployment benefits, the federal rules mandated a "nonreduction" rule that makes EUC08 payments contingent on states' maintenance of their benefit levels. If a state cut its weekly benefits without a federal exemption, the federal government would cut off all EUC08 payments to the state (Isaacs, 2013, p. 14).

The third program is the state Extended Benefit (EB) program, which provides additional unemployment benefits to UI claimants who exhaust their regular benefits when a state experiences high unemployment (Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012). The EB is triggered when a state's average insured unemployment rate (IUR) (i.e., the percentage of the unemployed receiving UI benefits) or its average total unemployment rate (TUR) reaches defined levels. Although the federal government mandates states to use an IUR criterion,¹¹ states may choose one, two, or neither of two optional triggers using alternative IURs and TURs, respectively. The federal and state governments normally share the costs of the EB program equally. Under the ARRA, however, the federal government paid 100% of the EB (Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012). This federal financial incentive encouraged more than half of the states to adopt the optional TUR trigger for EB, which responded in more timely fashion to the states' economic conditions. The numbers of states adopting the optional TUR trigger increased from 11 in 2007 to 39 in 2011 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011b, 2015c). As a whole, the three-tier UI benefit structure strengthens the UI's function as an "automatic stabilizer" for the overall economy, especially cushioning

¹¹ All states must pay up to 13 weeks of EB if the IUR reaches 5% for the previous 13 weeks and is 120% of the average of the rates for the previous 13 weeks (Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012).

economic shocks during recessions (Vroman, 2010). However, the regular state UI programs play the most important role in economic good times.

UI Policy Choices and Underlying Policy Logic

Policy logic is a way of reasoning that explains the interrelationships among policy decisions to achieve policy goals. Despite the fact that social protection for workers is UI's fundamental goal, UI policy decisions or reforms are often justified by different economic reasoning, including market stabilization, work disincentive (moral hazard), and interstate competition. Policy choices based on these economic reasoning may align or conflict with those based on social protection reasoning. These different ways of reasoning help to explain the coordinated or uncoordinated policy adaptations to achieve social protection.

First of all, the logic of social protection emphasizes protecting unemployed workers and their families against income losses and economic hardships due to involuntary unemployment. The goal of social protection would be achieved by ensuring the accessibility and adequacy of UI benefits under a UI program with a robust trust fund. UI reforms or policy implications from this perspective put emphasis on setting reasonable taxable wages and tax rates to adequately fund UI programs (Vroman, 2011, 2012); expanding eligibility to include more jobless workers in the UI system (Lindner & Nichols, 2012; Peterson, 2008); and offering adequate benefits to support unemployed workers (Bivens, Smith, & Wilson, 2014; Kimball & McHugh, 2015). From the logic of social protection logic, policymakers tend to make permanent policy changes to improve the UI policy designs in order to provide social protection and economic security for workers. A good example is the state UI modernization, with a focus on “provisioning-based reforms” of eligibility and benefits, although some states declined their shares of the modernization incentive funding (Peterson, 2008).

The logic of market stabilization aligns well with the logic of social protection to justify UI expansion during economic downturns. Its intellectual origin was Keynes's policy prescription for responding to economic downturns, assuming that government interventions are necessary to resolve economic crises (Henchman, 2011; Prasad & Gerecke, 2010). It particularly emphasizes strengthening the countercyclical mechanism of UI to stabilize market fluctuations through temporary or permanent means. Policy objectives include sufficiently preparing state trust funds during economic booms in order to avoid insolvency during economic recessions and efficiently distributing UI benefits to unemployed workers in order to stimulate the economy during recessions. Policy decisions based on the logic of market stabilization are highly associated with state macroeconomic conditions. For example, the extension of benefit duration being triggered on and off by unemployment rates.

Policy choices based on the logic of work disincentive and the logic of interstate competition often counter those based on the goal of social protection. UI programs have been criticized for creating work disincentives and perpetuating long-term unemployment (Arcanjo, 2012). Economists describe these unintended UI policy problems as moral hazard effects (Tatsiramos & Ours, 2012). The moral hazard claim is often used by policy reformers to oppose eligibility expansion and overly generous benefits in terms of levels and duration. Policy designs also address the unintended labor market effects by intervening in the workers' job seeking behavior (Henchman, 2011). Arcanjo (2012) studied changes in unemployment insurance schemes from 1991 through 2006 in four conservative European countries and found a trend toward weakening rights to social protection as well as strengthening obligations of the workforce attachment. Hence, policy reforms focus on workers' behavior requirements, administrative monitors, and re-employment services by means of incentives and sanctions

(Arcanjo, 2012). Smith and Wenger (2013) also observed that UI research and policy debates in the United States have paid abundant attention to the effects of UI benefits on workers' job searches, whereas little attention has been given to the determinants of UI benefit generosity. Scholars contend that overemphasizing the unintended labor market outcomes may undermine the crucial social protection function of UI (Ozkan, 2014).

Although UI provides benefits to the unemployed, UI taxes add to costs for employers. The logic of interstate competition assumes that states will lose their economic competitive advantage in relation to their neighboring states if they impose higher tax burdens on employers and distribute more generous benefits to the unemployed. Therefore, states favor limited UI taxes and restricted benefit provisions in order to build a favorable investment environment for economic growth and to avoid becoming a welfare magnet state (Schweke, Woo, McHugh, & Stettner, 2005; Pierson, 1995). An earlier study conducted by Bassi and McMurrer (1998) has provided evidence of the effect of interstate competition on UI tax rates. When states faced inadequate trust fund reserves for benefits during recessions, state policymakers may choose to shift the costs to the unemployed workers by tightening eligibility requirements or cutting benefits (Bivens et al., 2014), resulting in a race to the bottom.

The four types of UI policy logic discussed above present the complexity of the UI programs, which have multiple objectives. State policy decisions thus reflect a mixture of different types of policy logic. Observed variation in social protection performance reveals the relative weight given by states to different objectives as well as state social, economic, and political forces that shape policy choices. With the expiration of the federal ARRA during the post-Recessionary period, policy debate has shifted from expanding eligibility and extending benefits to reducing benefit duration, promoting re-employment, and restoring state UI trust fund

solvency (Vroman, 2012). Since most states borrowed money from the federal government to pay UI benefits after the states' trust funds were exhausted (Gais, Boyd, & Dadayan, 2012), federal loan repayment forces states to concentrate on addressing trust fund balance. Some states increased their tax rates to avoid massive and prolonged UI debts (Vorman, 2012), and some states altered benefit formulas or reduced the maximum duration of benefits (Bivens et al., 2014; Henchman, 2011; Kimball & McHugh, 2015). States might take a balanced approach in order to seek a compromise among conflicting goals. The state variations in observable UI policy characteristics and underlying policy logic point to the need to explore these nonhomogeneous state UI approaches to social protection.

Research on UI Designs, Performance, and Approaches to Social Protection

Despite the fact that past UI policy studies and reports in the United States have documented state UI variation in policy design elements or performance, most of these studies focus on describing state variations in certain characteristics (Bivens et al., 2014; Henchman, 2011; Kimball & McHugh, 2015; Vroman, 2012; Whittaker & Isaacs, 2012) or studying bivariate relationships between UI policy characteristics (Hertel-Fernandez, 2013; Smith & Wenger, 2013). For example, Hertel-Fernandez (2013) examined the correlates of UI trust fund solvency and found that the erosion of UI tax bases as compared to the generosity of benefits contributed more to diminishing UI trust fund solvency. Using a panel of 50 states' data from 1963 to 2006, Smith & Wenger (2013) found a positive association between UI trust fund solvency and UI benefit generosity. However, none of these works addressed the interrelationships among multiple UI characteristics, nor did they explore states' distinct UI approaches to social protection for workers. Without an understanding of the interrelationships among UI policy characteristics and a comparative study of states' UI approaches to social protection, we are left with an inadequate analysis to inform coordinated policy responses at both

the state and federal levels. In the current research, a UI approach to social protection places the UI's function of providing economic security for workers at the center. Different approaches to social protection can be detected by analyzing the policy design and performance characteristics across states.

Cross-national comparative UI studies have adopted a variety of policy indicators to compare the differences and similarities of UI systems. Some researchers rely solely on policy performance indicators to analyze UI systems—most commonly the UI coverage rate, UI replacement rate, and the average UI expenditure on benefits per unemployed person as a percentage of per capita (Gallie & Paugam, 2000; Ozkan, 2014). However, using performance indicators only cannot comprehensively capture their relationships with institutional designs. Moreover, using UI expenditure as a GDP percentage might distort the comparison because higher expenditures might simply reflect higher numbers of claimants without any institutional differences or changes.

Including policy design characteristics such as qualifying period, payment conditions, reference earning, and benefit level and duration (Arcanjo, 2015) improves the limitation of using performance indicators only. In Esping-Andersen's (1990) seminal work, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, he used both performance (replacement rate) and design characteristics (i.e., number of weeks required to qualify for benefit, waiting days, and benefit duration) to generate a de-commodification index to measure the social protection of the unemployment compensation systems across countries. Although reducing multidimensional UI policy characteristics to a single metric simplifies the comparative analysis and helps to develop the typology (Pallage, Scruggs, & Zimmermann, 2013), this approach provides little insight into the coordination among multiple policy choices. Taking advantage of the comparable, well-

documented state-by-state UI data in the United States, the current research uses multiple policy design and performance characteristics to study the subnational variation in UI approaches and their corresponding characteristics in the United States. Specifically, this research addresses the following questions:

(1) Were there distinct state UI approaches before and after the Great Recession? Policy design theory suggests that states with similar social and political forces tend to take the same policy approaches (Schneider & Ingram, 1988). Given state variations in social and political conditions, I expect to find more than one UI approach among states.

(2) What were the characteristics of the distinct state UI protection approaches? Policy design theory argues that policy design elements are interrelated, reflecting different types of underlying policy logic to achieve certain goals (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007; Schneider & Ingram, 1997; Schneider & Sidney, 2009). I expect that the policy characteristics of identified UI approaches were significantly different from one another in a logical, interpretable manner.

(3) Did the distinct state UI approaches remain comparatively stable over time? Based on the feed-forward effect that hypothesizes that past or current policy designs influence future policy designs (Ingram et al., 2007; Schneider, 2012), I expect no significant difference in identified UI policy approaches before and after the Great Recession.

(4) Were there significant changes in policy characteristics for different state UI approaches before and after the Great Recession? If so, were the changing directions similar or different among different approaches?

(5) Were the magnitudes of changes in UI policy characteristics similar or different among different approaches? Interstate competition theory suggests that the race to the bottom phenomenon exists across states under economic pressure (Pierson, 1995), therefore I expect

downward trends in UI characteristics during and after the Great Recession. However, the magnitude of the declining trends would vary by state UI approaches that weight social protection differently.

Methods

Data

I collected multiple state UI policy design and performance information in financing, eligibility, and benefit dimensions from the publicly available data on the United States Department of Labor website. Three primary data sources are: (1) the Comparison of State UI Laws, which has documented detailed state UI laws annually since 2001; (2) the Significant Provisions of State UI Laws, which has updated key state UI provisions every 6 months since 1960; and (3) the UI Data Summary, which has collected state-by-state UI-related information and policy performance quarterly since 1999.

I used the 2007 annual data to reflect the pre-Recessionary status of state UI systems and the most up-to-date 2014 annual data to represent the post-Recessionary status. Selecting these two points in time allows the researcher to compare state UI approaches before and after the Great Recession by holding the economic conditions in good times, reducing a confounding effect of the macroeconomic condition.¹² I excluded Puerto Rico's and the Virgin Islands' UI programs in the analysis due to the lack of their Regional Price Parities (RPPs, published by the Economic Analysis Bureau) in order to adjust the price levels across jurisdictions for the purpose of comparative research. My sample included the UI programs of 50 states and the District of Columbia (referred to collectively as 51-state UI programs or systems in the following contents).

¹² According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the lowest annual unemployment rate before the Great Recession was 4.6% in 2007, and the lowest annual unemployment rate after the Great Recession was 5.3% in 2015. Since 4th Quarter 2015 UI data were not available when I conducted the data analysis, 2014 annual data were used.

Measures

I used multiple characteristics of UI design elements in financing, eligibility, and benefit rules, and their corresponding performance indicators that have been commonly adopted in UI research.

Financing variables.

Taxable wage base. A taxable wage base refers to the maximum amount of wages paid to a worker during a tax year that is subject to UI taxes (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007b, 2014b). Taxable wage is measured in dollars with a minimum value of \$7,000. I did not adjust this variable for states' cost-of-living standards and inflation because the \$7,000 wage base captured the condition that a state simply adopted the federal minimum level at a given point in time.

Average Tax Rate. An average tax rate is measured by the total employer contributions as a percentage of the total wages paid by taxable employers in the past 12 months (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007c, 2014c).

Reserve Ratio. Reserve ratio is one of the major indicators¹³ of UI trust fund adequacy to assess whether a state collected sufficient revenue for providing UI benefits (Smith & Wenger, 2013). A reserve ratio is calculated by state trust fund balance over the covered wages in the past 12 months (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007a, 2014a). A higher value indicates higher UI financing adequacy.

Eligibility variables.

Minimum wage needed to qualify. States have adopted different qualifying formulas for setting the monetary eligibility criteria. To make the monetary eligibility criteria comparable, I

¹³ Other frequently adopted indicators include the high-cost multiple (HCM) and the average high-cost multiple (AHCM) (Henchman, 2011; Smith & Wenger, 2013). These two indicators were not used in this research because they were not applicable for many states in the post-Recessionary years due to outstanding debt exceeding their fund balances. The HCM and AHCM of these states were not computed and also not shown in the UI Summary Data.

used the minimum amount of wage needed to qualify for UI during the base period in each state in order to measure whether a state's criterion¹⁴ was high or low. Dollar amounts were collected from the Comparison of State UI Laws (2007 and 2014). I applied the annual RPPs¹⁵ to adjust the minimum wages needed for states' cost-of-living standards and inflation to make the dollar amounts comparable across states and over time. A lower minimum wage qualification suggests a lower threshold of the monetary eligibility in a given state.

Eligibility modernization. To capture other eligibility criteria, including the ABPs and non-monetary eligibility, I created a synthesized 0-to-4 point scale that transformed several dichotomous provision adoptions into a single, continuous eligibility modernization value. Based on information gained from the Comparison of State UI Laws, a state UI program adopting an alternative base period adoption was scored 2; a program adopting a part-time provision was scored 1; a program adopting any of the following alternative reasons for leaving a job was scored 0.25—domestic violence, spouse relocation, illness and disability, and others. I used these different weights to reflect the principles of the UI modernization funding distribution.¹⁶

Reciprocity Rate. A reciprocity rate is defined as the insured unemployed in the regular UI program as a percentage of the total employed over the most recent 12 months (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007a, 2014a). This indicator is often used for assessing the accessibility of UI, which is largely determined by eligibility rules. A higher value suggests a higher level of UI accessibility.

¹⁴ Note that Washington State is the only state that requires a minimum of 680 working hours during the base period. An average of the minimum wages of the other 50 states' programs was used instead as Washington State's minimum wage requirement.

¹⁵ I applied the 2013 RPPs to the 2014 UI data because the 2014 RPPs are not currently available; they will be released in July, 2016.

¹⁶ A state with an ABP adoption could collect the first one-third of the state's share of UI modernization incentive funding. To obtain the remaining two-thirds of the funding, a state must adopt two of four options, including two eligibility provisions (i.e., the part-time provision and the compelling family reasons) and two benefit provisions (i.e., the dependent allowance and the training benefits) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011a).

Benefits variables.

Maximum weekly benefit amount. The maximum weekly benefit amount in dollars was collected from the Significant Provision of State UI Laws. I used the amount that takes the maximum dependent allowance into account. To make data comparable across states and time, I adjusted the benefit amounts for states' cost-of-living standards and inflation using RPPs.

Replacement rate. Replacement rate is commonly used in UI comparison studies, indicating the adequacy of the UI benefits. A replacement rate is defined as the average weekly benefit amount as a percentage of the average weekly wage. The U.S. Department of Labor (2015b) published two replacement ratios using different weighting procedures. This research reported the ratio which was calculated by weighted average weekly benefit amount by weighted average weekly wage (normal hourly wage x 40 hours). The other ratio, which weights the replacement ratio after calculating the ratio, was used for the sensitivity analysis.

Maximum benefit duration. Maximum benefit duration measures the maximum number of weeks of regular state unemployment insurance benefits available to recipients. Data were retrieved from the Significant Provisions of UI Laws (2007 and 2014).

Exhaustion rate. An exhaustion rate is measured by the average monthly exhaustions (the numbers of claimants drawing the final payment) as a percentage of the average monthly first payments (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007a, 2014a). It is another key indicator of the adequacy of the regular state UI benefits. A lower value implies a lower adequacy of the UI benefits.

In the following discussion, UI design characteristics collectively refer to table wage base, average tax rate, minimum wage needed to qualify, eligibility modernization, maximum weekly benefit amount, and maximum benefit duration; UI performance characteristics collectively refer to reserve ratio, reciprocity rate, replacement rate, and exhaustion rate.

Analytic Procedure

To answer the first research question, I conducted model-based cluster analysis to detect the distinct state UI approaches among 51 programs from 2007 to 2014. Cluster analysis is a multivariate statistical technique that simultaneously analyzes variation across multiple variables (in this case, UI policy characteristics) in order to classify objects (in this case, states) into a small number of homogeneous clusters (Bartholomew, Steele, Moustaki, & Galbraith, 2008). Since UI policy variables were measured by different units, using the absolute variations might distort the cluster analysis results. To address this issue, I transformed each yearly UI variable to a standardized Z-score with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

Political scientists have argued that model-based clustering increases the validity of studies on typologies in the social sciences (Ahlquist & Breunig, 2011). Among different clustering techniques, model-based clustering, which is grounded in probability theory, is most statistically sophisticated in determining the numbers of clusters and assignments of objects, compared with other clustering methods such as agglomerative hierarchical clustering and K-means clustering (Fraley & Raftery, 1998; Everitt & Hothorn, 2011). Model-based clustering assumes that “the observed data are generated by some finite mixture of probability distributions” (Ahlquist & Breunig, 2011, p. 96). In other words, this clustering method hypothesizes a variety of models for each cluster regarding its volume, shape, and orientation. The Bayesian information criterion (BIC)¹⁷ is computed over different models to determine the number of clusters and the type of models that most closely fit the observed data (Fraley & Raftery, 1998). I utilized the *mclust* package in R to perform the model-based cluster analysis and detect a discernable pattern in the

¹⁷ A larger BIC indicates stronger evidence for the model fit. Specifically, BIC differences greater than 10 suggests very strong evidence for favoring one model over another; differences between 6 and 10, strong evidence; differences between 2 and 6, positive evidence; and differences smaller than 2, weak evidence (Kass & Raftery, 1995; Fraley et al., 2012).

data. This package also allows for an evaluation of the uncertainty (probability) of each object's cluster assignments (see detailed information in Fraley, Raftery, Murphy, & Scrucca, 2012).

Researchers have suggested reducing the number of dimensions (variables) to increase the efficiency of the model-based cluster analysis (Fraley et al., 2012). To assess and compare the variability of each variable, I first calculated the coefficient of variation (COV), the ratio of the standard deviation of a given variable to its mean. This measure permits the comparison of variance across different policy indicators and points in time. A higher score indicates more variation of a given variable among states at a point in time. The smallest COVs of the maximum UI duration variables suggested little dispersion of this variable among states in both 2007 and 2014 data (see Table 2.1). The maximum UI duration was then dropped in the cluster analysis, but included in follow-up means comparison tests. In addition to assessing the COV for each variable, I also performed principal component analysis (PCA) to analyze variability among multiple UI variables, and evaluated whether it was viable to transform the original variables to a small set of uncorrelated variables that reveal meaningful latent concepts. I decided to keep the original observable variables for cluster analysis because the first two principal components only captured about half of the total variability of all variables, and these principal components did not reveal clear, interpretable latent variables.

To assess the robustness of the final cluster solution, I conducted several sensitivity analyses by using the subsets of yearly data and using alternative measures of the replacement rate, the unadjusted maximum weekly benefit amount, and the unadjusted minimum wages needed to qualify for UI. Results were generally similar.

Turning to the second question, regarding the characteristics of distinct state UI approaches, I conducted two-group T-tests to compare the mean of each UI policy variable

between two clusters and ANOVA tests to compare the mean of each variable among three or more clusters.

To answer the third question, regarding whether the identified approaches remained comparatively stable over time, I conducted paired T-tests to assess whether the standardized mean of each UI policy variable for a given cluster in 2007 and 2014 were statistically significantly different. No significant differences between all standardized means in 2007 and those in 2014 suggest the continuity of cluster characteristics over time.

To analyze the absolute changes in UI policy characteristics of two clusters from 2007 through 2014 (the fourth question), I conducted paired T-tests to assess whether the absolute mean of each UI policy variable for a given cluster in 2014 was statistically significantly higher or lower than that in 2007.

Finally, I addressed the last question by performing the two-group T-tests to compare the mean of the absolute change in each variable between two clusters in order to assess whether their changing patterns in policy characteristics were similar or different. (ANOVA tests would have been used if the results of model-based cluster analysis suggested three or more clusters.)

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2.1 presents the descriptive statistics of all UI variables by year (2007 and 2014). The last column shows the coefficient of variation (COV) to assess and compare the variance of variables with different units. In general, larger COVs exist among financing and eligibility variables, whereas smaller COVs appear among benefit variables. The smallest COV of the maximum UI duration variables suggests little variability of the maximum regular UI benefit duration among states in both 2007 (COV=0.02) and 2014 (COV=0.09), although about one-fifth

of states cut the regular 26 weeks after the Recession (Kimball & McHugh, 2015). Notably, the COV of the reserve ratio considerably increased, from 0.77 in 2007 to 1.15 in 2014, indicating more variance in state financing adequacy after the Great Recession. The COV of eligibility modernization largely decreased, from 0.82 to 0.48, reflecting the fact that the federally initiated UI modernization reduced the variation in eligibility rules among states.

Table 2.1.
Summary of the Descriptive Statistics of UI Variables

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	COV.
Financing variables						
Taxable wage base 07 (\$)	51	13841.18	8019.11	7000.00	34000.00	0.58
Taxable wage base 14 (\$)	51	17182.55	10086.67	7000.00	41300.00	0.59
Average tax rate 07 (%)	51	0.65	0.28	0.26	1.53	0.43
Average tax rate 14 (%)	51	0.98	0.42	0.39	2.17	0.43
Reserve ratio 07	51	1.32	1.02	0.02	3.76	0.77
Reserve ratio 14	51	0.76	0.88	0.00	3.22	1.15
Eligibility variables						
Min. wage 07 (\$)	51	2114.66	983.19	94.34	4456.12	0.46
Min. wage 14 (\$)	51	2586.56	1212.23	111.88	5133.93	0.47
Modernization 07	51	1.49	1.22	0.00	4.00	0.82
Modernization 14	51	2.81	1.36	0.00	4.00	0.48
Reciency rate 07 (%)	51	36.53	10.92	18.00	62.00	0.30
Reciency rate 14 (%)	51	32.86	7.64	17.00	54.00	0.33
Benefit variables						
Max. wkly benefit 07 (\$)	51	381.65	76.50	233.96	540.46	0.20
Max. wkly benefit 14 (\$)	51	459.13	131.08	247.17	949.67	0.29
Replacement rate 07 (%)	51	41.98	5.81	25.50	51.50	0.14
Replacement rate 14 (%)	51	41.11	5.42	30.00	49.00	0.13
Max. UI duration 07 (wk)	51	26.12	0.62	26.00	30.00	0.02
Max. UI duration 14 (wk)	51	25.31	2.35	16.00	30.00	0.09
Exhaustion rate 07 (%)	51	33.07	8.36	10.60	54.50	0.25
Exhaustion rate14 (%)	51	40.68	8.80	16.80	66.20	0.22

Note. The minimum wage needed to qualify and the maximum weekly benefit variables were adjusted for state cost-of-living standards and inflation.

Table 2.2 presents the descriptive statistics of absolute changes in UI variables from 2007 to 2014. Examining the four performance variables, the average reserve ratio decreased by 0.55 (with a maximum decrease of 2.41 in New Mexico), the average reciprocity rate decreased by 4.67% (with a maximum of 25% in Idaho), and the average replacement rate decreased by 0.86% (with a maximum decrease of 15.6% in Indiana) from 2007 to 2014. However, the average exhaustion rate increased by 7.61% (with a maximum of 23.90% in Kentucky). These trends suggested that the overall UI protection for workers had been weakening since 2007, despite observed increases in the average taxable wage base, the average tax rate, the eligibility modernization, and the average maximum weekly benefit level.

Table 2.2.
Summary Descriptive Statistics of Changes in UI Variables, 2007–2014

Variable	Obs	Mean diff.	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Taxable wage base 07–14	51	3341.37	4428.16	0.00	27400.00
Average tax rate 07–14	51	0.33	0.28	-0.07	1.60
Reserve ratio 07–14	51	-0.55	0.64	-2.41	1.21
Modernization 07–14	51	1.32	1.29	-0.75	3.75
Min. wage 07–14	51	455.26	906.82	-2754.92	3939.05
Reciprocity rate 07–14	51	-4.67	8.09	-25	18
Max. weekly benefit 07–14	51	77.47	90.56	-113.45	412.79
Max. UI duration 07–14	51	-0.80	2.23	-10.00	0.00
Replacement rate 07–14	51	-0.87	4.32	-15.60	7.60
Exhaustion rate 07–14	51	7.61	6.45	-10.00	23.90

Note. The change was calculated by subtracting the 2007 value from the 2014 value.

Results from the Model-Based Cluster Analysis and the Means Comparison Tests

1. Were there distinct clusters among the 51 state UI systems from 2007 to 2014?

Using the standardized values of all the variables listed in Table 2.1 (except the two maximum benefit duration variables with the least variability), I conducted a model-based cluster analysis to explore the distinct clusters from the 51 state UI systems. Results from the cluster

analysis and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) suggested that a two-cluster VVI model was the best-fit model (BIC= -2508.868), with model assumptions of a diagonal distribution, variable volume, and variable shapes of clusters. The BIC difference of 6.2 suggested strong evidence for favoring a two-cluster VVI model over a three-cluster VVI model.

To confirm that the two-cluster solution was valid over time, I further conducted two separate cluster analyses using 2007 and 2014 variables, respectively. Results from these two analyses both indicated that a two-cluster solution fitted the data best, although the two best-fit models had different cluster assumptions. The clusters generated from the 2014 data were based on the same assumptions (diagonal distribution, variable size, and variable shape) as those from all yearly data (VVI model, BIC= -1308.696). The BIC difference of 8.3 suggested strong evidence for favoring a two-cluster VVI model over a three-cluster VEI model (diagonal distribution, variable size, and equal shape). The clusters generated from the 2007 data were based on a model assuming clusters with a spherical distribution, variable sizes, and an equal shape (VII model for 2007, BIC= -1309.435). The BIC differences of 12.7 and 14.0 suggested very strong evidence for favoring a two-cluster VII model over both a two-cluster EII model and a two-cluster VVI model. Overall, the agreement on a two-cluster solution among three sets of cluster analysis using different yearly data indicated that two discernible UI approaches across 51 states were valid over time.

Table 2.3 lists the three sets of the cluster assignments of 51 states and their corresponding probabilities of being assigned to a given cluster. Comparing cluster assignments using all yearly data (column 1) to those using the 2007 data only (column 4) and those using the 2014 data only (column 7), I find that the three sets of cluster assignments generally agreed with one another. The cluster assignments using all yearly data were nearly identical to those using the 2014 data,

with only one disagreement (KS). The cluster assignments using the 2007 data demonstrated moderate agreement with the other two sets of assignments. The disagreement between 2007 and 2014 assignments came from the seven states (i.e., CO, IN, KY, NH, NY, OH, and SD) that shifted from cluster 2 in 2007 to cluster 1 in 2014. These changes might have resulted from the fact that this group of seven states adjusted their UI approaches to be more aligned with states in cluster 1 during the seven-year period. It was also possible that these states were positioned around the borderline of two clusters in a multidimensional coordinate system, so that most of them had greater than zero probabilities of being assigned to either cluster 1 or cluster 2 (see columns 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9). One should be cautioned that a state's cluster assignment is probability-based, not deterministic. A state's cluster assignment suggests that one state was more closely aligned to one model approach than to the other one in a given point in time. It is more meaningful to analyze the state UI approaches by identifying the UI characteristics of the two model clusters and examining the multivariate relationships among UI characteristics.

Table 2.3
Cluster Assignments and Corresponding Probabilities of 51 UI Programs

	2007 & 2014 data			2007 data only			2014 data only		
	cluster assig.	prob. of C1	prob. of C2	cluster assig.	prob. of C1	prob. of C2	cluster assig.	prob. of C1	prob. of C2
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
AL	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	98.70%	1.30%	1	100.00%	0.00%
AK	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
AZ	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	100.00%	0.00%
AR	2	0.10%	99.90%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.50%	99.50%
CA	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	69.10%	30.90%	1	99.40%	0.60%
CO*	1	99.90%	0.10%	2	28.80%	71.20%	1	91.20%	8.80%
CT	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.30%	99.70%	2	0.00%	100.00%
DE	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	15.10%	84.90%	2	4.00%	96.00%
DC	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	97.60%	2.40%	1	100.00%	0.00%
FL	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	99.90%	0.10%	1	100.00%	0.00%
GA	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	95.90%	4.10%	1	100.00%	0.00%
HI	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
ID	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
IL	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	25.80%	74.20%	2	0.50%	99.50%
IN*	1	100.00%	0.00%	2	0.80%	99.20%	1	100.00%	0.00%
IA	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
KS+	1	99.40%	0.60%	2	24.90%	75.10%	2	12.40%	87.60%
KY*	1	100.00%	0.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	1	99.80%	0.20%
LA	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	99.70%	0.30%	1	100.00%	0.00%
ME	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
MD	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	99.00%	1.00%	1	93.40%	6.60%
MA	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
MI	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.90%	99.10%
MN	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
MS	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	99.60%	0.40%	1	99.90%	0.10%
MO	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	96.00%	4.00%	1	100.00%	0.00%
MT	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
NE	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	96.30%	3.70%	1	93.80%	6.20%
NV	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.10%	99.90%	2	0.00%	100.00%
NH*	1	100.00%	0.00%	2	0.80%	99.20%	1	96.60%	3.40%
NJ	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
NM	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.20%	99.80%	2	0.00%	100.00%
NY*	1	100.00%	0.00%	2	30.30%	69.70%	1	99.30%	0.70%
NC	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
ND	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.20%	99.80%	2	0.00%	100.00%

Table 2.3 *Continued*

	2007 & 2014 data				2007 data only		2014 data only		
	cluster assign. (1)	prob. of C1 (2)	prob. of C2 (3)	cluster assign. (4)	prob. of C1 (5)	prob. of C2 (6)	cluster assign. (7)	prob. of C1 (8)	prob. of C2 (9)
OH*	1	100.00%	0.00%	2	0.50%	99.50%	1	96.20%	3.80%
OK	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	7.90%	92.10%	2	0.00%	100.00%
OR	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
PA	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
RI	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
SC	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	98.70%	1.30%	1	99.80%	0.20%
SD*	1	100.00%	0.00%	2	0.10%	99.90%	1	99.30%	0.70%
TN	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	99.90%	0.10%	1	100.00%	0.00%
TX	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	98.30%	1.70%	1	100.00%	0.00%
UT	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
VT	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
VA	1	100.00%	0.00%	1	97.80%	2.20%	1	100.00%	0.00%
WA	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
WV	2	2.10%	97.90%	2	0.30%	99.70%	2	1.00%	99.00%
WI	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
WY	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%	2	0.00%	100.00%
# of C1	23			15			22		
# of C2	28			36			29		
Top 1	VVI, 2			VII, 2			VVI, 2		
BIC	-2508.87			-1309.44			-1276.60		
Top 2	VVI, 3			EII, 2			VVI, 3		
BIC	-2515.04			-1322.13			-1284.91		
Top 3	VII, 3			VVI, 2			VII, 3		
BIC	-2533.73			-1323.48			-1287.05		

Note. C1 refers to cluster 1, and C2 refers to cluster 2. *: A disagreement between 2007 and 2014 assignments. +: A disagreement between all-yearly-data assignment and 2007- or 2014-data-only assignment.

Overall, the first set of cluster assignments (column 1) based on all yearly data offers an overarching categorization of state UI systems during the study period, including the UI characteristics before the onset of the Great Recession and the most recent UI characteristics after the economic shock. I then use this cluster assignment throughout the following analyses.

Figure 2.1 presents the geographical distribution of states assigned to the two clusters. As shown

in the figure, the 23 states assigned to cluster 1 were more likely to be concentrated in the West (including noncontiguous states) and the Northeast regions and spread across the northern part of the Midwest, whereas the 28 states assigned to cluster 2 were more likely to be concentrated in the South and spread across the southern part of the Midwest.

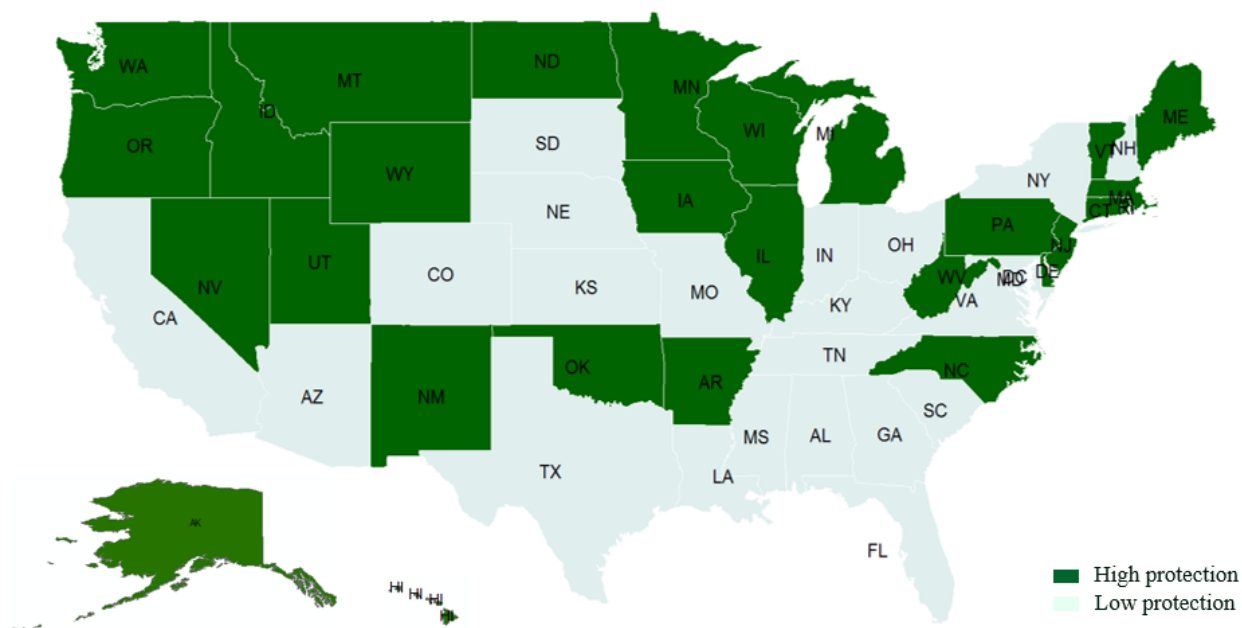


Figure 2.1. Map of state UI clusters.

2. What were the characteristics of the two distinct state UI approaches?

To analyze the characteristics of the two distinct state UI approaches, I conducted two-group T-tests to compare the mean of each UI policy variable between cluster 1 and cluster 2. Since the cluster solution was based on a model assuming the variable volume of clusters, I used the two-group T-test with unequal variances that allows for differences in variances between two clusters (Ruxton, 2006).

Table 2.4 summarizes the results of the two-group T-tests. One-tailed p-values are reported to determine if the mean difference between cluster 1 and cluster 2 was statistically significantly

greater or less than zero. The pre-specified alpha level was .05. Results showed that the mean taxable wage base, the mean tax rate, the mean reserve ratio, the mean maximum weekly benefit, the mean replacement rate, the mean eligibility modernization, and the mean reciprocity rate of cluster 2 were statistically significantly greater than those of cluster 1. In contrast, the mean exhaustion rate and the mean minimum wage needed to qualify of cluster 1 were higher than those of cluster 2, although the p-values did not reach the significance level. These results suggest that on average the UI approaches taken by states in cluster 2 provided stronger social protection for unemployed workers than those in cluster 1 in terms of more adequate UI financing, higher reciprocity rates, and higher replacement rates. These UI performance indicators were coordinated with policy designs that were characterized as higher taxable wage base, higher average tax rates, more inclusive eligibility rules, and higher weekly benefits. Accordingly, I named the UI approach of cluster 1 as low UI protection and that of cluster 2 as high UI protection.

Table 2.4
Two-Group T-test Results: Comparing Two Cluster Means for UI Policy Variables

Variable	Mean 1	Mean 2	S.E. 1	S.E. 2	t	df	Pr
Taxable wage 07	8195.652	18478.570	254.872	1563.145	-6.493	28.430	0.000
Taxable wage 14	9743.478	23293.210	473.354	1874.123	30.403	-7.010	0.000
Avg. tax rate 07	0.443	0.820	0.027	0.048	-6.811	41.750	0.000
Avg. tax rate 14	0.653	1.249	0.032	0.071	-7.688	37.440	0.000
Reserve ratio 07	0.859	1.690	0.139	0.210	-3.303	45.180	0.001
Reserve ratio 14	0.429	1.035	0.101	0.195	-2.762	39.961	0.004
Min. wage 07	2243.257	2039.343	186.672	190.558	0.764	48.674	0.224
Min. wage 14	2798.886	2412.152	268.934	215.135	1.123	44.363	0.134
Modernization 07	1.065	1.839	0.220	0.235	-2.402	48.939	0.010
Modernization 14	2.304	3.232	0.329	0.188	-2.448	35.551	0.010
Reciprocity rate 07	29.609	42.214	1.236	2.053	-5.260	43.166	0.000
Reciprocity rate 14	24.261	38.107	1.116	1.782	-6.501	44.963	0.000
Max. benefit 07	344.321	412.323	13.504	13.702	-3.535	48.624	0.001
Max. benefit 14	382.443	522.115	19.431	23.619	-4.567	48.596	0.000
Replacement rate 07	39.470	44.043	1.209	0.950	-2.974	43.899	0.002
Replacement rate 14	38.204	43.504	1.007	0.892	-3.939	46.650	0.000
Exhaustion rate 07	34.539	31.861	2.088	1.261	1.098	36.977	0.140
Exhaustion rate 14	42.135	39.486	2.110	1.424	1.041	1.041	0.152

3. Did the two distinct approaches remain comparably stable from 2007 to 2014?

To analyze whether the two approaches remained comparably stable from 2007 to 2014, I conducted the paired T-tests to compare the mean of each standardized UI policy variable for a given cluster in 2007 and that in 2014. Results showed no statistically significant differences between all standardized means in 2007 and those in 2014 for the low UI protection cluster and the high UI protection cluster (see Table 2.5), suggesting the continuity of cluster approaches in a relative sense over time.

Table 2.5

T-test Results: Comparing Two Points-in-Time Mean Differences in Standardized UI Policy Variables by Cluster

Variable	Mean 07	Mean 14	Mean diff. (2014–2007)	S. E. (2014–2007)	t	df	Pr
Cluster 1- Low UI protection							
Taxable wage 07–14	-0.704	-0.738	-0.034	0.046	-0.726	22	0.475
Avg. tax rate 07–14	-0.739	-0.781	-0.043	0.087	-0.491	22	0.628
Reserve ratio 07–14	-0.448	-0.379	0.069	0.089	0.779	22	0.444
Min. wage 07–14	0.117	0.175	0.058	0.178	0.325	22	0.749
Modernization 07–14	-0.349	-0.375	-0.025	0.217	-0.117	22	0.908
Reciprocity rate 07–14	-0.634	-0.724	-0.091	0.104	-0.869	22	0.394
Max. benefit 07–14	-0.488	-0.585	-0.097	0.108	-0.896	22	0.380
Replacement rate 07–14	-0.432	-0.537	-0.104	0.202	-0.517	22	0.611
Exhaustion rate 07–14	0.176	0.165	-0.011	0.205	-0.052	22	0.959
Cluster 2- High UI protection							
Taxable wage 07–14	0.578	0.606	0.028	0.105	0.262	27	0.796
Avg. tax rate 07–14	0.607	0.642	0.035	0.172	0.204	27	0.840
Reserve ratio 07–14	0.368	0.312	-0.057	0.153	-0.371	27	0.714
Min. wage 07–14	-0.096	-0.144	-0.048	0.147	-0.323	27	0.749
Modernization 07–14	0.287	0.308	0.021	0.186	0.112	27	0.912
Reciprocity rate 07–14	0.520	0.595	0.074	0.173	0.431	27	0.670
Max. benefit 07–14	0.401	0.481	0.080	0.162	0.493	27	0.626
Replacement rate 07–14	0.355	0.441	0.086	0.105	0.817	27	0.421
Exhaustion rate 07–14	-0.144	-0.136	0.009	0.094	0.092	27	0.927

Figure 2.2 presents a radar graph that plots the standardized mean of each UI characteristic for two clusters in 2007 and 2014. The closely overlapping 2007 and 2014 lines for both of the two clusters mirrored the results from the paired T-tests that indicated that the two distinct UI approaches remained comparatively stable from 2007 to 2014.

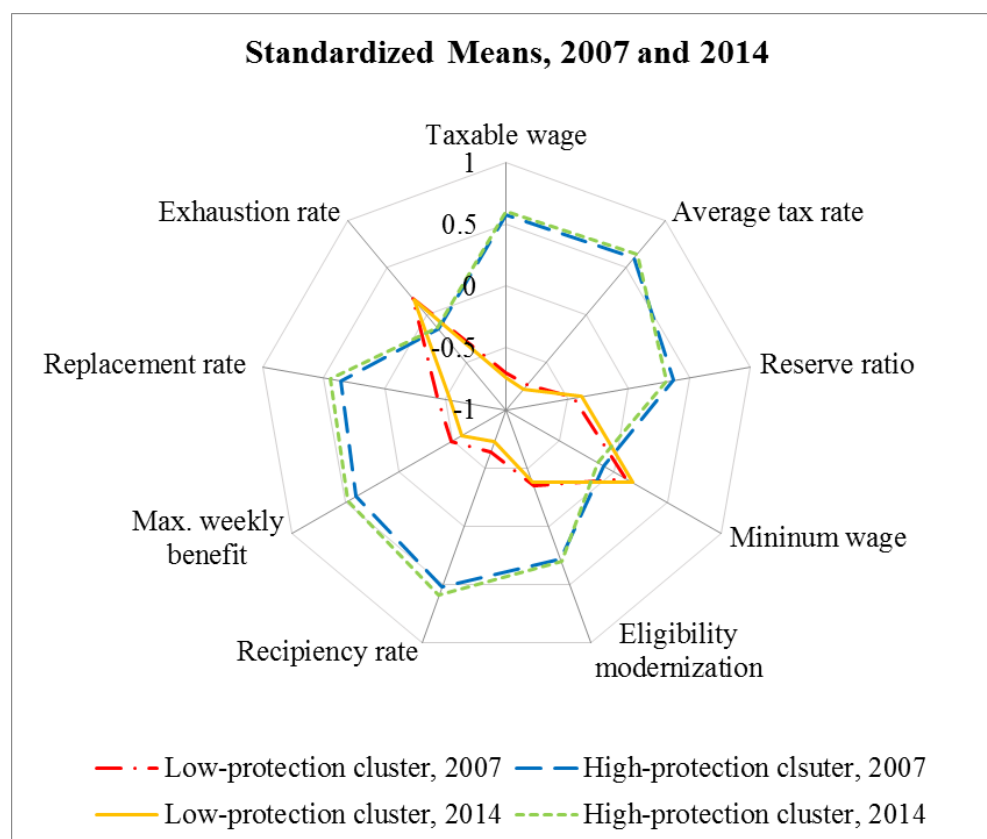


Figure 2.2. Radar graph of standardized means of UI variables by cluster.

4. Were there significant changes in UI policy characteristics of the two clusters from 2007 to 2014? If so, were the changing directions similar or different between two approaches?

To examine the real changes within each cluster in UI policy characteristics from 2007 to 2014, I conducted the paired T-tests to assess whether the unstandardized mean of each UI policy variable for a given cluster was higher or lower in 2014 than in 2007. The results (see Table 2.6) show statistically significant increases in the mean taxable wage base, the mean average tax rate, the mean maximum weekly benefit, the mean exhaustion rate, the mean eligibility modernization, and the mean minimum wage needed to qualify from 2007 to 2014. However, there were significant decreases in mean reserve ratio and mean reciprocity rates from 2007 to 2014, but no significant decreases in mean replacement rates. Overall, the evidence of the race to bottom was mixed, varying by UI characteristics.

In general, the changing directions were similar between the high UI protection cluster and the low UI protection cluster, with one exception—the change in maximum duration of UI benefits. The shrinking trend in regular maximum UI duration was significant for the low UI protection cluster ($p=.025$), but not significant for the high UI protection cluster ($p=.065$). On average, the low UI protection cluster had a significant decrease in the maximum UI duration of 1.22 weeks, whereas the high UI protection cluster had only an insignificant decrease of 0.46 week.

Table 2.6

T-test Results: Comparing Two Points-in-Time Mean Differences in UI Policy Variables by Cluster

Variable	Mean diff. (2014–2007)	S. E. (2014–2007)	t	df	Pr
Cluster 1- Low UI protection					
Taxable wage 07–14	1547.826	448.620	3.450	22	0.001
Avg. tax rate 07–14	0.210	0.029	7.146	22	0.000
Reserve ratio 07–14	-0.430	0.090	-4.793	22	0.000
Min. wage 07–14	555.629	206.945	2.685	22	0.007
Modernization 07–14	1.239	0.289	4.292	22	0.000
Reciprocity rate 07–14	-5.348	1.119	-4.781	22	0.000
Max. benefit 07–14	38.123	12.018	3.172	22	0.002
Replacement rate 07–14	-1.265	1.143	-1.107	22	0.140
Max. duration 07–14	-1.217	0.586	-2.077	22	0.025
Exhaustion rate 07–14	7.596	1.761	4.314	22	0.000
Cluster 2- High UI protection					
Taxable wage 07–14	4814.643	991.920	4.854	27	0.000
Avg. tax rate 07–14	0.429	0.063	6.826	27	0.000
Reserve ratio 07–14	-0.656	0.145	-4.529	27	0.000
Min. wage 07–14	372.809	158.631	2.350	27	0.013
Modernization 07–14	1.393	0.234	5.959	27	0.000
Reciprocity rate 07–14	-4.107	1.860	-2.208	27	0.018
Max. benefit 07–14	109.792	18.972	5.787	27	0.000
Replacement rate 07–14	-0.539	0.591	-0.912	27	0.185
Max. duration 07–14	-0.464	0.298	-1.560	27	0.065
Exhaustion rate 07–14	7.625	0.820	9.297	27	0.000

5. Were the magnitudes of changes in UI policy characteristics of the two clusters similar or different?

To further explore the differences in the magnitude of changes between the low-protection cluster and the high-protection cluster, I performed the two-group T-tests with an unequal variance to compare the changes in the unstandardized mean of each UI policy variable between the two clusters. The high UI protection cluster, compared with the low UI protection cluster, had a significantly stronger magnitude of positive changes in the taxable wage base, the average tax rate, and the weekly benefit (see Table 2.7). This might account for the disproportion of states with index mechanisms of their taxable wages and benefit levels between the high and low UI protection clusters. On the other hand, it might also imply that the pressure of interstate competition among states in the low UI protection cluster made policymakers unwilling to impose tax burdens on employers and increase benefits for employees.

Table 2.7.
T-test Results: Comparing Two Cluster Mean Differences in Changes in Unstandardized UI Policy Variables

Variable	Mean 1	Mean 2	S. E. 1	S. E. 2	t	df	Pr
Taxable wage 07–14	1547.826	4814.643	448.620	991.920	-3.001	37.262	0.002
Avg. tax rate 07–14	0.210	0.429	0.029	0.063	-3.156	37.880	0.002
Reserve ratio 07–14	-0.430	-0.656	0.090	0.145	1.322	43.809	0.904
Min. wage 07–14	555.629	372.809	206.945	158.631	0.701	43.275	0.757
Modernization 07–14	1.239	1.393	0.289	0.234	-0.414	44.656	0.341
Reciprocity rate 07–14	-5.348	-4.107	1.119	1.860	-0.572	43.134	0.285
Max. benefit 07–14	38.123	109.792	12.018	18.972	-3.191	44.269	0.001
Replacement rate 07–14	-1.265	-0.539	1.143	0.591	-0.564	33.398	0.288
Max. duration 07–14	-1.217	-.464	.586	.297	-1.145	33.014	0.130
Exhaustion rate 07–14	7.596	7.625	1.761	0.820	-0.015	31.379	0.494

Conclusion

The historically high and prolonged unemployment during the Great Recession and its aftermath have posed significant challenges to the federal-state UI system in the United States. Substantial state UI policy changes in financing, eligibility, and benefit rules provide abundant sources of variation for exploring the state UI approaches to social protection. Identifying state approaches based on multidimensional characteristics of the policy design and performance help to explain the policy logic underlying different approaches to providing economic security for workers. Moreover, by examining the concurrent changes in policy designs and performance characteristics within and between different approaches, we gain more understanding about the joint effects of policy design elements on the declining unemployment protection in the United States. Although the observed associations cannot directly imply causalities about whether policy design elements affect policy performance characteristics or vice versa, these interrelationships reflect the consistent underlying policy logic and their policy feedback loops over time.

Conceptually, this paper advances our knowledge about the policy logic that influenced state UI policy decisions during and after the Great Recession in the United States. The relative weight that policy actors give to social protection and other policy concerns (e.g., market stabilization, work disincentive, and interstate competition) of their UI programs were systematically carried through a set of political decisions on UI financing, eligibility criteria, and benefits rules. State variation in policy changes reflect the different financial pressures, political priorities, and social norms across states. When cost control for states and employers outweighs the social protection for workers, policymakers would prefer to provide weak unemployment protection and make decisions such as reducing tax burdens on employers, tightening eligibility, cutting benefit levels or duration, and requiring workers' behavioral compliance.

Findings from this research indicate two distinct state UI approaches—high UI protection and low UI protection. The high-protection approach, compared to the low-protection approach, is characterized as high financing adequacy with high taxable wages and average tax rates, high program accessibility with inclusive eligibility criteria, and high wage replacement with high benefit levels. These two approaches remained comparatively stable before and after the Great Recession. However, both showed a declining trend in social protection performance from 2007 to 2014. Despite some positive changes in design characteristics such as taxable wages, tax rates, benefit levels, and eligibility modernization, the overall UI protection performance still showed a weakening trend across clusters. To achieve the goal of social protection, future reforms of UI policy design elements are needed to address the declining reserve ratios, increased exhaustion rates, decreasing replacement rates, and the decreasing reciprocity rate.

The federal-state UI system in the U.S. is distinct from the common centralized UI system among other advanced countries. The weakening and unequal state UI protection exposes unemployed workers to the risk of economic insecurity. To prepare for future economic recessions, UI researchers have argued for a leading role to be undertaken by the federal government in reforming the UI system in order to avoid the strong reluctance on the part of individual states to provide comprehensive social protection (Vroman, 2012). The current research is particularly timely in light of the new modernization proposal of 2016, which reflects the idea of strengthening the federal responsibility. It focuses on setting federal standards for 26 weeks of state regular benefits, the alternative base period, part-time provisions, and compelling family reasons for leaving a job; furthermore, the 2016 proposal includes the mandatory TUR EB triggers, raising the taxable wage with an automatic index adjusting for inflation, and a minimum state UI tax rate (Bernstein & Spielberg, 2016). If the federal government begins to

share greater responsibility for standardizing the UI program designs, the UI system in the U.S. would be more aligned with those in other advanced countries (Vroman, 2012).

Finally, this paper offers directions for future research on state UI systems. The two notable state clustering patterns found in this research need further study. First, the cluster results show that states seem to take similar approaches to those of their neighboring states. From the perspective of policy diffusion theory, state policymakers often borrow or copy policy ideas from other innovative states through a policy learning process (Berry & Berry, 2007; Walker, 1969). From the perspective of economic competitive theory, the existing federal-state structure of the UI program creates incentives for states to reduce UI taxes and benefits to maintain a competitive economic advantage in relation to the neighborhood states (Pierson, 1995). Nonetheless, how the mechanisms by which policy diffusion or interstate competition processes interacted with macroeconomic conditions to shape the state UI policy changes during and after the Great Recession remain unexplored. Future research could examine whether states are policy innovators or imitators and whether states are engaged in a “race to the bottom” with neighboring states. Second, findings from this research show that the low unemployment protection states are disproportionately concentrated in the southern geographical region, where people of color make up a large share of the labor force. People of color are also overrepresented among the longer-term unemployed (Krueger, Cramer, & Cho, 2014) and are less likely to receive UI benefits (Gould-Werth & Shaefer, 2012). Future research could investigate the relationships among states’ racial composition, political power, and UI approaches to social protection.

References

- Ahlquist, J. S., & Breunig, C. (2012). Model-based clustering and typologies in the social sciences. *Political Analysis*, 20(1), 92–112.
- Arcanjo, M. (2012). Unemployment insurance reform–1991–2006: a new balance between rights and obligations in France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. *Social Policy & Administration*, 46(1), 1–20.
- Bartholomew, D. J., Steele, F., Moustaki, I., & Galbraith, J. (2008). *Analysis of multivariate social science data* (2nd ed.). Boca Raton, FL: CRC press.
- Bassi, L. J., & McMurrer, D. P. (1998). Unemployment Insurance in a federal system: A race to the bottom? In *Essays on interstate competition in the Unemployment Insurance system* (Unemployment Insurance Occasional Paper 98-5). Washington, DC: U.S. Unemployment Insurance Service. Retrieved from <https://wdr.doleta.gov/owsdrr/98-5/98-5.pdf>
- Bernstein, J., & Spielberg, B. (2016). *Preparing for the next recession: Lessons from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. Retrieved from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities website: <http://www.cbpp.org/>
- Berry, F. S., & Berry, W. D. (2007). Innovation and diffusion models in policy research. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Bivens, J., Smith, J., & Wilson, V. (2014). *State cuts to jobless benefits did not help workers or taxpayers* (Briefing Paper, 380). Retrieved from Economic Policy Institute website: <http://www.epi.org/publication/state-unemployment-insurance-cuts/>
- Chang, Y.-L. (2015). Re-Examining the U.S. social safety net for working-age families: Lessons from the Great Recession and its aftermath. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 14(2), 139–161.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press and Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Everitt, B., & Hothorn, T. (2011). *An introduction to applied multivariate analysis with R*. New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Fraley, C., & Raftery, A. E. (1998). How many clusters? Which clustering method? Answers via model-based cluster analysis. *The Computer Journal*, 41(8), 578–588.
- Fraley, C., Raftery, A. E., Murphy, T. B., & Scrucca, L. (2012). *Mclust Version 4 for R: Normal mixture modeling for model-based clustering, classification, and density estimation*. (Technical Report No. 597). Retrieved from Department of Statistics, University of Washington website: <https://www.stat.washington.edu/research/reports/2012/tr597.pdf>
- Gallie, D., & Paugam, S. (2000). The experience of unemployment in Europe: The debate. In D. Gallie & S. Paugam (Eds.), *Welfare regimes and the experience of unemployment in Europe* (pp. 1–22). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gould-Werth, A., & Shaefer, H. L. (2012). Unemployment Insurance participation by education and by race and ethnicity. *Monthly Labor Review*, 135, 28–41.

- Gould-Werth, A., & Shaefer, H. L. (2013). Do alternative base periods increase unemployment insurance receipt among Low-Educated unemployed workers? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(4), 835–852.
- Henchman, J. D. (2011). *Unemployment insurance taxes: Options for program design and insolvent trust funds* (Background Paper, 61). Retrieved from Tax Foundation website: <http://taxfoundation.org/article/unemployment-insurance-taxes-options-program-design-and-insolvent-trust-funds>
- Hertel-Fernandez, A. (2013). Dismantling Policy through Fiscal Constriction: Examining the Erosion in State Unemployment Insurance Finances. *Social Service Review*, 87(3), 438–476.
- Ingram, H., Schneider, A. L., & deLeon, P. (2007). Social construction and policy design. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (2nd ed.) (pp. 93–126). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Issacs, K. P. (2013). *Unemployment insurance: Consequences of changes in state unemployment compensation laws*. Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Retrieved from <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41859.pdf>
- Kass, R. E., & Raftery, A. E. (1995). Bayes factors. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 90(430), 773–795.
- Kimball, W., & McHugh, R. (2015). *How low can we go? State unemployment insurance programs exclude record numbers of jobless workers* (Briefing Paper, 392). Retrieved from Economic Policy Institute website: <http://www.epi.org/publication/how-low-can-we-go-state-unemployment-insurance-programs-exclude-record-numbers-of-jobless-workers/>
- Krueger, A. B., Cramer, J., & Cho, D. (2014). Are the long-term unemployed on the margins of the labor market? *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 229–280.
- Lindner, S., & Nichols, A. (2012). *How do Unemployment Insurance modernization laws affect the number and composition of eligible workers?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Midgley, J. (2012). Social protection and social policy: Key issues and debates. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 11(1-2), 8–24.
- Nicholson, W., Needels, K., & Hock, H. (2014). Unemployment compensation during the Great Recession: Theory and evidence. *National Tax Journal*, 67(1), 187–218.
- Orloff, A. S., & Skocpol, T. (1984). Why not equal protection? Explaining the politics of public social spending in Britain, 1900–1911, and the United States, 1880s–1920. *American Sociological Review*, 49(6), 726–750.
- Ozkan, U. R. (2014). Comparing formal unemployment compensation systems in 15 OECD countries. *Social Policy & Administration*, 48(1), 44–66.
- Pallage, S., Scruggs, L., & Zimmermann, C. (2013). Measuring Unemployment Insurance generosity. *Political Analysis*, 21(4), 524–549.
- Prasad, N., & Gerecke, M. (2010). Social security spending in times of crisis. *Global Social Policy*, 10(2), 218–247.

- Peterson, J. (2008). Unemployment insurance reform: Elements of a social provisioning approach. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 42(2), 453–460.
- Pierson, P. (1995). Fragmented welfare states: Federal institutions and the development of social policy. *Governance*, 8(4), 449–478. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0491.1995.tb00223.x
- Ruxton, G. D. (2006). The unequal variance t-test is an underused alternative to Student's t-test and the Mann–Whitney U test. *Behavioral Ecology*, 17(4), 688–690.
- Schmid, G. (1995). Institutional incentives to prevent unemployment: Unemployment insurance and active labor market policy in a comparative perspective. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 24(1), 51–103.
- Schneider, A., & Ingram, H. (1988). Systematically pinching ideas: A comparative approach to policy design. *Journal of Public Policy*, 8(1), 61–80. doi:10.1017/S0143814X00006851
- Schneider, A. L., & Ingram, H. M. (1997). *Policy design for democracy*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Schneider, A., & Sidney, M. (2009). What is next for policy design and social construction theory? *Policy Studies Journal*, 37(1), 103–119. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2008.00298.x
- Schneider, A. L. (2012). Punishment policy in the American States from 1890 to 2008: Convergence, divergence, synchronous change, and feed-forward effects. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(2), 193–210.
- Shaefer, H. L. (2010). Identifying key barriers to unemployment insurance for disadvantaged workers in the United States. *Journal of Social Policy*, 39(3), 439–460. doi:10.1017/S0047279410000218
- Shaefer, H. L., & Wu, L. (2011). Unemployment Insurance and low-educated, single, working mothers before and after welfare reform. *Social Service Review*, 85(2), 205–228.
- Shahidi, F. V. (2015). Welfare capitalism in crisis: A qualitative comparative analysis of labour market policy responses to the Great Recession. *Journal of Social Policy*, 44(04), 659–686.
- Shattuck, A. (2009). *Rural workers would benefit from unemployment insurance modernization*. (The Carsey Institute at the Scholar's Repository, Paper 71). Retrieved from The Carsey Institute website: <http://scholars.unh.edu/carsey/71/>
- Smith, D. L., & Wenger, J. B. (2013). State unemployment insurance trust solvency and benefit generosity. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(3), 536–553.
- Tatsiramos, K., & Ours, J. C. (2014). Labor market effects of unemployment insurance design. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 28(2), 284–311.
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2007a). *Unemployment Insurance data summary: 4th quarter 2007*. Retrieved from http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum07/DataSum_2007_4.pdf
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2007b). *Significant provisions of state UI laws, Jan 2007*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/sigpros/2000-2009/January2007.pdf>

- U.S. Department of Labor. (2007c). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2007*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2007.asp>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2011a). *Unemployment Insurance modernization incentive payment state certifications*. Retrieved from: <http://www.doleta.gov/recovery/>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2011b). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2011*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2011.asp>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2014a). *Unemployment Insurance data summary: 4th quarter 2014*. Retrieved from http://www.workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum14/DataSum_2014_4.pdf
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2014b). *Significant provisions of state UI Laws, Jan 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/sigpros/2010-2019/January2014.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2014c). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2014.asp>
- U.S. Department of Labor Office of UI Division of Fiscal and Actuarial Services. (2014). *State Unemployment Insurance trust fund solvency report, 2014*. Retrieved from <http://ows.doleta.gov/unemploy/docs/trustFundSolvReport2014.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2015a). *Significant provisions of state UI Laws, Jan 2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/sigpros/2010-2019/January2015.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2015b). *UI replacement rates report*. Retrieved from http://www.oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/ui_replacement_rates.asp
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2015c). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2015.asp>
- Vroman, W., & Brusentsev, V. (2005). *Unemployment compensation throughout the world: A comparative analysis*. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute.
- Vroman, W. (2009). *Unemployment insurance: Current situation and potential reforms*. Retrieved from The Urban Institute website: http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/UploadedPDF/411835_unemployment_insurance.pdf
- Vroman, W. (2010). *The role of unemployment insurance as an automatic stabilizer during a recession*. Retrieved from IMPAQ International website: http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/ETAOP2010-10.pdf
- Vroman, W. (2011). *Unemployment Insurance: Problems and prospects* (NASI Policy Brief 2). Retrieved from National Academy of Social Insurance website: <https://www.nasi.org/research/2011/unemployment-insurance-problems-prospects>
- Vroman, W. (2012). *Financing Unemployment Insurance after the Great Recession*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Walker, J. L. (1969). The diffusion of innovations among the American states. *American Political Science Review*, 63, 880–899.

- Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2011). *Policy analysis: concepts and practice* (5th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice-Hall.
- Whittaker, J. M., & Isaacs, K. P. (2012). *Unemployment insurance: Programs and benefits*. Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Retrieved from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33362.pdf>
- Williams, L. A., & Woo, M. Y. (1995). The “worthy” unemployed: Societal stratification and Unemployment Insurance programs in China and the United States. *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, 33, 457–519.

PAPER THREE.
THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND POVERTY: A CASE STUDY OF
WASHINGTON STATE'S GENERAL ASSISTANCE REFORM

Summary

Although policy process scholars have theorized how the social constructions of policy target populations influence the political distribution of benefits and burdens through policy designs (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007; Schneider & Ingram, 1997), little research has focused on the intersection of social construction and knowledge utilization in the state legislative policy-making process, particularly when states faced severe fiscal constraints due to economic downturns. General Assistance (GA), an anti-poverty program providing income support for poor people who fall outside or exhaust their income support from other federally-funded welfare programs, has experienced an accelerated diminishing trend after the Great Recession.

Applying the Schneider and Ingram's (1997) Social Construction and Policy Design Theory and Head's (2008) knowledge-based policy making, this study investigates the relationship between the knowledge constructions of the problems of and policy solutions for the GA populations in the context of state GA reforms during the post-Recessionary period. Using thematic content analysis of Washington State's legislative archives, I examine themes regarding knowledge constructions of the GA populations and policy solutions in the legislative policy-making process. Findings show that knowledge construction of the GA-unemployable population as social deviants with psychological and behavioral problems influenced the GA reform in the direction of a more regulated, punitive model. These negative social constructions, intersecting with the mainstream welfare ideology of personal responsibility and work ethic, contribute to the dismantling of the safety net of last resort for the least resourceful poor.

Keywords: poverty; policy design; social construction; General Assistance; Great Recession

Introduction

The Great Recession (2007–2009) and its lingering economic impact on state revenue caused the implementation of a severe budget cut of state social safety net programs in the years following the economic shock (Skinner, 2012). Among state social safety net programs, General Assistance has experienced an accelerated shrinking trend in the aftermath of the Great Recession, despite the growing need for aid among economically disadvantaged populations (Schott & Cho, 2011; Schott & Hill, 2015).

General Assistance¹⁸ (GA) has been documented since the establishment of the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) in 1935 as part of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, which included a set of relief programs for the unemployed and poor. GA programs, funded and administered by the states and their counties, provide income support to poor individuals who do not qualify for federally-supported social assistance programs or whose benefits from other programs are insufficient or exhausted. Hence, GA plays a critical role as the “safety net of last resort” for the least resourceful poor in the U.S. social welfare system (Anderson, Halter, & Gryzlak, 2002, p. 249).

Subject to states’ political priorities and fiscal constraints, GA programs have experienced eligibility restrictions, benefit reductions, and program elimination over the past few decades (Gallagher 1999; Halter, 1994; Schott & Hill, 2015). According to the U.S. Social Security Administration (2000), the number of states (including the Federal District and territories) reporting that they have a GA program decreased from 53 in 1960 to 30 in 1997. The average monthly number of GA recipients decreased sharply from about 4.5 million in 1936 to about 0.6 million in 1997. After the 1996 federal Welfare Reform, with its emphasis on devolving social

¹⁸ States and local governments have adopted a wide range of program names, including “General Public Assistance,” “General Relief,” “State Aid,” “Poor Relief,” etc. (Gallagher 1999; Schott & Hill, 2015).

welfare decisions to state governments (Soss, Schram, Vartanian, & O'Brien, 2001), states no longer reported their GA implementations to the Social Security Administration. Comprehensive nationwide surveys on state GA implementations have been conducted only occasionally by nongovernment research institutions. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that among 36 states with a GA program, at least one-third of them considered downsizing or eliminating their GA programs as policy responses to state budget restraints due to the prolonged economic crisis (see Figure 3.1) (Schott & Cho, 2011). A recent follow-up report documents that the number of states with a GA program fell to 26 in 2015, and since the mid-1009s, GA benefits have shrunk severely to an amount below half of the federal poverty level (Schott & Hill, 2015).

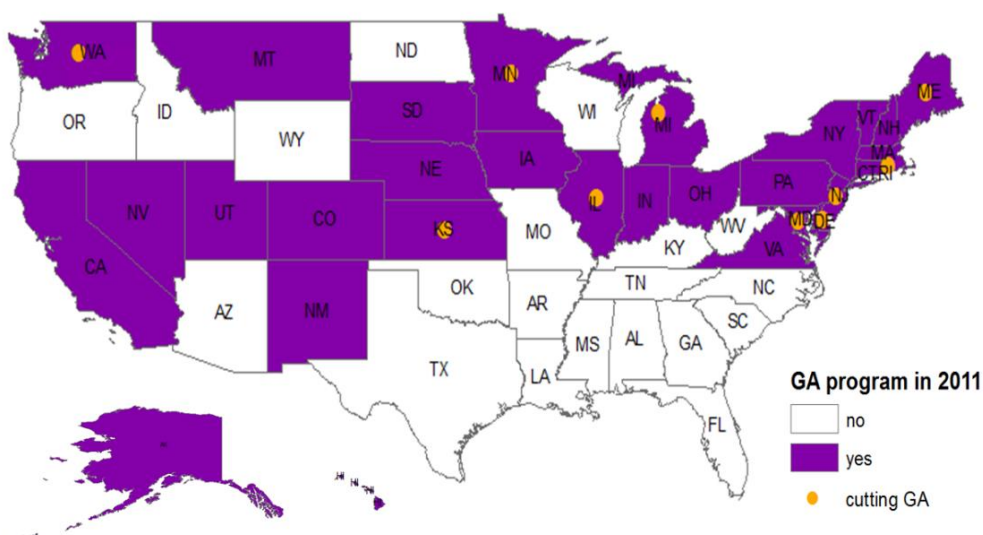


Figure 3.1. State General Assistance programs in 2011.

Note. Figure created using data from Schott and Cho (2011).

Because the size of the current GA is relatively small within the context of the U.S. social safety net system, and because GA's target populations are usually invisible at the margins of society, there has been limited public and scholarly attention paid to GA's erosion and transformation. The present research sheds light on this issue of the shrinking GA by studying state legislative GA reform. Using the theoretical framework of Schneider and Ingram's (1997)

Social Construction and Policy Design Theory and the conceptual model of Head's (2008) knowledge-based policy making, I conduct thematic content analysis to examine the relationship between the knowledge construction of the GA populations and the recent GA reforms in Washington State. Findings contribute to our understanding of the intersection of social construction and knowledge utilization in the state welfare reform process. This paper also provides implications for policy actors who facilitate policy and social changes in anti-poverty programs.

Literature Review

In this sections, I first review the theories of social construction and knowledge utilization in the policy process. I then review previous research on the relationships between knowledge of poverty and welfare reform.

Social Construction and Knowledge Utilization in the Policy Process

Policy process scholars have theorized how problems are brought to the government, how policy actors inform policy solutions, and how policies are implemented, evaluated, and changed (Sabatier, 2007). Among a variety of policy process theories, Schneider and Ingram's (1997) Social Construction and Policy Design Theory (SCPDT) is particularly relevant to studies on social welfare policies because it places at its center meaning-making policy elements that reflect social beliefs or norms. In contrast to the Institutional Rational Choice Theory, which assumes that problems are objective realities and that policymakers base their decisions on rationally calculating the costs and benefits of the policy outcomes, SCPDT argues that policy process is neither value-free nor apolitical. Problems are socially constructed, and policy decisions are politically charged (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007; Schneider & Ingram, 1997; Schneider & Sidney, 2009).

Focusing on social construction and political power of target populations, SCPDT not only explains who gets benefits or burdens and why, but also how established policy designs replicate social and power relations. Recent policy studies have increasingly applied SCPDT since its development in the early 1990s. Two propositions—the “target population proposition” and the “feed-forward proposition”—are central components of SCPDT (Ingram et al., 2007; Pierce et al., 2014).

First, the “target population proposition” argues that the allocation of benefits and burdens to different target groups is determined by the positive or negative social constructions and the high or low political power of the target groups. Using these two dimensions, SCPDT proposes four types of constructions of target populations: the advantaged, the contenders, the dependents, and the deviants (Schneider & Ingram, 1997; Schneider & Sidney, 2009). Among different social groups, economically disadvantaged groups with low political power are often classified as dependents or deviants. Dependents are more positively perceived by society and expected to receive benefits through the allocation of public resources (they are described, for example, as children and mothers), while the deviants are often negatively perceived and more likely to receive burdens or punishments instead of benefits (they are categorized, for example, as criminals and illegal immigrants) (see Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 109; Schneider & Sidney, 2009, p. 107).

Second, the “feed-forward proposition” suggests that past and current policy designs shape future policy directions through influencing the social identity and political participation of target populations as well as the policy learning experiences of policymakers (Ingram, et al., 2007; Pierce et al., 2014). Through policy designs (i.e., policy goals, tools, rules, and implementation structures), policymakers send policy messages to target populations to signal the expected

behavioral norms. On the other hand, policy designs influence the policy learning experiences of policy actors in the future (Schneider & Ingram, 2009). For example, researchers have found that after the enactment of the federal welfare legislation Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, welfare agencies have delivered policy messages such as “undeserving” and “unentitled” to the poor through promoting pervasive value-laden discourses and practices of “welfare to work” or “self-sufficiency” (Jurik & Cowgill, 2005). Since then, these values have been deeply embedded in a variety of social welfare policies.

In a recent scholarly review of SCPDT, Schneider and Sidney (2009) indicate that future policy scholars should expand the theory regarding the social construction of knowledge in the policy process through exploring the relationship between the knowledge construction of target populations and policy designs. Specifically, the social construction of knowledge involves “processes of problem definition, interpretations of cause and effect, characterizations of knowledge and information as relevant or not relevant to a policy issue, as technical and scientific are contrasted with anecdotal and impressionistic” (Schneider & Sidney, 2009, p. 107). This insight encourages policy researchers to rethink knowledge utilization in real-world politics.

Knowledge utilization and evidence-based policy researchers have argued for considering a broader knowledge base as evidence in the policy making process (e.g., Epstein, Farina, & Heidt, 2014; Glasby & Beresford, 2006; Glasby, Walshe, & Harvey, 2007; Head, 2008; Freeman, Griggs, & Boaz, 2011; Rycroft-Malone et al., 2004). Policy analysis scholar Brain Head (2008) has proposed an integrated perspective of evidence-based policy making. Head’s conceptual model of evidence-based policy points out that three types of evidence—scientific (research-based) knowledge, political knowledge/judgments, and professional knowledge/practices—are influential, rather than deterministic, in political processes in which

evidence is diverse and contestable. According to Head's definitions, "scientific (research-based) knowledge" comprises systematic analysis of past and current circumstances and analysis of causal effects of specific interventions. "Political knowledge/judgments" includes determining priorities, communicating values and messages, and negotiating trade-offs and compromises. "Professional practices" refer to knowledge of everyday problems of program implementation and client service (Head, 2008).

Head's three lenses of policy evidence help researchers to analyze the social constructions of knowledge in the policy process in a more comprehensive manner. This conceptual model supplements SCPDT to explain how policy actors use different knowledge to construct the policy problems of the target populations and their corresponding solutions in the policymaking process.

Studies on Knowledge of Poverty and Welfare Reform

Constructing knowledge about poverty and anti-poverty policies has been a crucial socio-political process influencing the allocation of public resources to poor populations (Amundson, Zajicek, & Kerr, 2015; Guetzkow, 2010; O'Connor, 2000; Szanton, 1991). Public assistance programs that provide income support for economically disadvantaged people have been highly associated with stereotypes and stigma attached to target populations in the U.S. welfare system. O'Connor (2000) critically examined the development of poverty knowledge and related social welfare policies in the twentieth century and found that an emphasis on cultural pathology and individual behavior among the poor had become an influential part of the discourse in academic research, policy agenda, and public opinion since the 1960s. As a result, the major goal of federally-funded welfare programs moved away from ending poverty and into the direction of ending dependency on welfare. Furthermore, driven by the trend in evidence-based policy making, research findings from demonstration projects at the state level influenced the policy

directions of welfare reform legislation since the 1980s and 1990s (O'Connor, 2000). The changing knowledge about poverty and the emerging research evidence shaped the 1996 federal welfare reform. Underlying the reform legislation—the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act—is a welfare ideology that emphasizes individualist attributions of poverty and disciplines the poor to move from welfare to work (Jurik & Cowgill, 2005; Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011).

Empirical research on knowledge utilization in state policy making has indicated that scientific experimental/evaluation research does not have decisive effects on welfare policy decisions. Instead, multiple knowledge sources, including experiences of practitioners and welfare recipients, the views of the citizenry, the implementation experiences of other states, and ideologies of the governor or state legislators, also play influential roles in shaping states' welfare policies (Greenberg, Mandell, & Onstott, 2000).

Although past welfare reform studies have examined the influence of scientific research and political judgments on policy changes (e.g., Guetzkow, 2010; O'Connor, 2000; Schram & Soss, 2001; Szanton, 1991), the intersection of social construction and knowledge utilization in the state legislative policy process is still underexplored. Studying legislative policy reforms at the state level is especially relevant to the economic well-being of the poor because states have played a critical role in allocating benefits and burdens to the poor since the federal welfare reform. Reviewing the development and application of social constructionism, Buono (2015) reminds social problem researchers that studying the construction of social problems cannot avoid analyzing the underlying power relations and political economy, particularly in the context of how policies respond to global economic crises that create and shape policy issues. An

especially interesting period for examining knowledge, politics, and state welfare reform is the post-Recessionary period, when states faced scarce budget resources due to the Great Recession.

Furthermore, previous welfare reform studies have paid substantial attention to welfare mothers, children, or the target populations of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program (Danziger, 2010), while little attention has been devoted to the GA populations (Noy, 2009). Compared to other federally-funded public assistance programs, state-funded GA programs have been more sensitive to state political and economic conditions, particular during economic downturns in the post-Welfare Reform Era. Even though GA serves diverse poor populations in terms of age, gender, race, and health conditions, the prevailing stereotypes of GA recipients are working-age, able-bodied males of color who are not deserving of welfare (Anderson et al. 2002, Henly & Danziger 1996). Perhaps the lack of scholarly interest in the GA program partly reflects the problematic construction of deserving and undeserving poor.

To fill these knowledge gaps, I explore the relationship between the knowledge construction of the GA populations and the diminishing state GA in the aftermath of the Great Recession. It focuses on how policy actors use different types of knowledge to frame GA problems and solutions and influence policy reforms in the state legislative process.

Specifically, my research questions are as follows: (1) how did policy actors use knowledge to construct the GA populations and their problems? (2) How did policy actors use knowledge to craft policy solutions? (3) How did constructed knowledge about the GA populations and policy solutions influence the state GA reforms and future policy directions?

Methods

Case Selection and Context

Studying social construction processes in policy designs requires interpretive research methods that place the meaning-making practices of actors at the center (Schneider & Sidney, 2009). A qualitative case study allows the researcher to answer “how” questions related to complex phenomena in a context within which the meaning-making practices are situated (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Hence, I conducted a qualitative case study to analyze the state legislative process in which policy actors used scientific evidence, political judgments, and professional knowledge to construct problems and solutions and to inform decision making.

I adopted a purposeful sampling and selected the Washington State Legislature as my study subject for three main reasons. First, the Washington State Legislature passed two reform bills in a three-year time frame (2009–2011), which provided substantial legislative activities and materials through which to study state GA reforms in the wake of the Great Recession. The Washington State Legislature passed the first reform bill (HB 2782) in March 2010 and another, a follow-up reform bill (HB 2082), in June 2011. Under these reforms, the GA program was first renamed the Disability Lifeline (DL) program with substantial revisions, and then the entire DL was eliminated and transformed into three programs serving small sub-populations of the original GA populations (Pennucci, 2010; Schultz, 2009).

Second, previous state policy making research has identified the Washington State Legislature as a particular case of promoting evidence-based policy making (Hird, 2005; White & VanLandingham, 2015). Notably, the Washington State Legislature has a unique research division—the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP)—which carries out policy-relevant research upon the Legislature’s request. To the researcher’s knowledge, the WSIPP is the only state research institute that has published an analytical report on GA programs to inform

the state's reforms. Studying the GA reform in Washington State allows the researcher to gain abundant information about knowledge utilization in the policy-making process.

Third, the Washington State Legislature has fully documented the policy-making process by videotaping legislative meetings and making all archives publicly available. Having visual archives overcame the limitation of simply analyzing the textual archives if the researcher was not able to physically participate in the policy-making process. Through investigating these video records, the researcher can observe both verbal and nonverbal interactions among policy actors in different legislative meetings over time.

Data Sources

Multiple data sources with different perspectives support a case study that explores complex phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The primary data sources are 26 videos of the Washington State Legislature's activities regarding the GA program or the renamed DL program during the study period. These videos include nine work sessions, six public hearings, six executive sessions, and five floor actions. Figure 3.2 presents the legislative process and observable activities in the present research. All videos were retrieved from the website of TVW, the Washington State Public Affairs Network (<http://www.tvw.org/>). The length of GA/DL meetings ranged from about 5 minutes in an executive session to about 1.5 hours in a work session (see Appendix 1). The supplementary data sources included the legislature's public bill analyses, textual materials (e.g., presentation slides and reports) of legislative meetings, and research reports or policy briefs published by relevant agencies or interest groups.

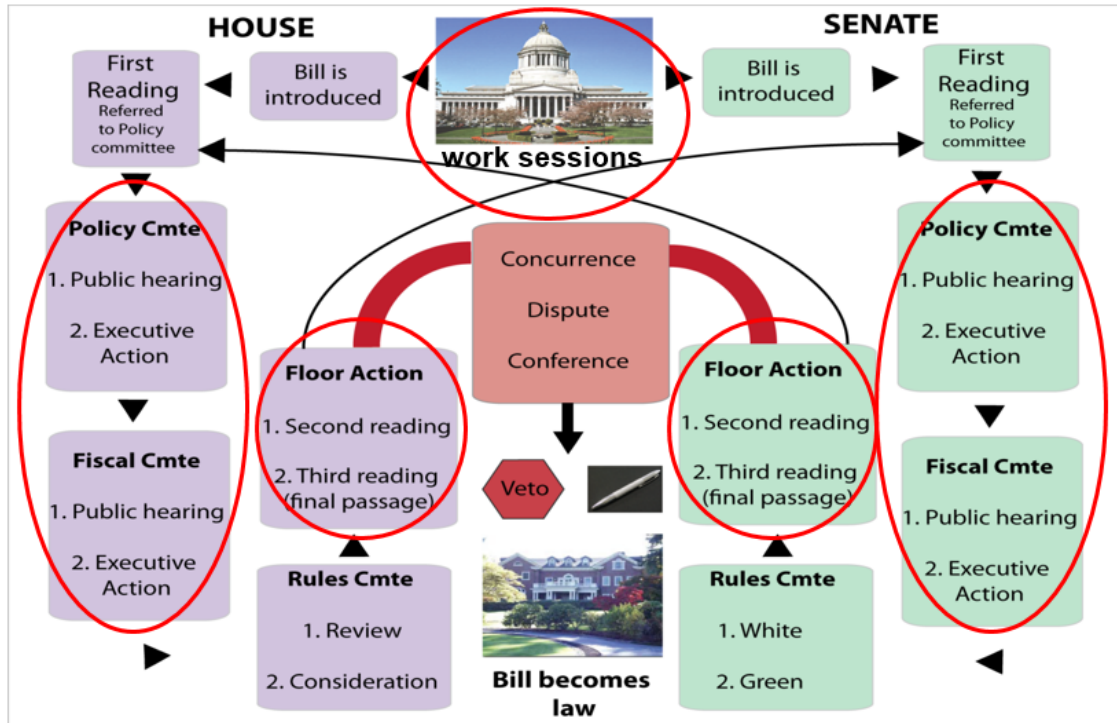


Figure 3.2. The legislative process: How a bill becomes law.

Note. Adapted from “Lobbying 101” [Training material] by the Washington State Budget & Policy Center, 2012. The Washington State legislative process involves several sequential legislative activities, typically including (1) work sessions where issues are reviewed by a committee, (2) public hearings where interested groups give testimony and express concerns, (3) executive sessions where the committee decides how a bill should be reported to the entire house, and (4) floor actions where legislators debate the bills and vote on final passage. After the bill is passed by the first chamber, it moves through the same process in the other chamber. When the bill is accepted by both chambers, the governor signs it into law (Washington State Legislature, n.d.). The red circles mark observable legislative activities in the present research.

Analytic Approach and Procedures

I adopted a thematic content analysis approach to examine the common and recurrent themes in the data. Unlike conventional content analysis, which focuses solely on counting the attributes in the data, thematic content analysis places emphasis on the qualitative nature and narratives of the data (Smith, 1992; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). It is well aligned with a case study that intends to answer “how” questions regarding the meaning-making activities in the context of the policy process.

All data sources were managed by the qualitative software ATLAS.ti 7, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis package which supports coding and analysis of multiple types of qualitative data (e.g., text, picture, video, audio, and so forth). For each video, I first identified data segments of each policy actor's statement regarding the use of scientific evidence, political judgments, or professional knowledge to describe a problem of the GA/DL populations or to discuss a policy solution. A segment (referred to as a "quote" in ATLAS.ti) is the unit of analysis. A total of 309 quotes were identified in the 26 videos.

I then applied codes to each quote. My coding method did not allow a particular code to be present more than once within a single quote, but the same quote may contain several different codes. I also used the "hyperlink" function in the ATLAS.ti (Friedse, 2013) to associate quotes from the primary video data with relevant supplementary textual materials (e.g., policy reports, presentation slides, bill analyses, etc.) in order to further examine data contents and contexts. I took a focused transcribing approach that only transcribed quotes for the purpose of reporting and left out everything else coded but not transcribed. This is particularly suitable for analyzing visual data that is not primarily collected for answering research questions (Friedse, 2014).

Using both deductive and inductive coding techniques (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), I developed a hierarchical coding scheme that organizes codes into main categories and subcategories (Friedse, 2014). My preliminary main categories and subcategories are theory-driven codes derived from Schneider and Ingram's (1997) concepts of policy design elements, Head's (2008) concepts of policy-relevant knowledge, and the official stages of state legislative activities. The initial coding scheme was modified, expanded, and re-sorted by incorporating inductive data-driven codes merged during data analysis to fit the legislative language and contexts, particularly those repeated terms used to describe problems and justify policy solutions.

For example, inductive data-driven codes such as “vulnerable” and “(un)deserving” people are subcategories under the deductive theory-driven main category of “knowledge-political judgment.” I finalized the coding scheme after three rounds of developing, applying, and merging codes when codes achieved consensus between analyses. The final five main categories were legislative activities, policy actors, policy-making process, policy design elements, and policy-relevant knowledge. Each main category contained two or three levels of subcategories, for a total of 102 codes.

After coding all video data, I explored the patterns and themes from the data to answer the research questions by using the “Codes-Primary Documents Table,” the “Codes Co-Occurrence Table,” and the “Query Tool” in the ATLAS.ti (Frieze, 2013, 2014). To answer each research question, I first used the “Codes-Primary Documents” to analyze the frequencies of codes of interest. I then used the “Codes-Co-Occurrence Table” to find the associations between codes. To further explore and interpret the relationships of interest, I used the “Query Tool” to identify the quotes and synthesize key themes through constant investigations and comparisons. Note that the analytic tools in the ATLAS.ti were mostly helpful for the researcher to analyze the quantitative attributes, detect patterns, and identify representative quotes from the data. However, forming meaningful themes and interpreting the relationships mostly relied on the researcher’s synthesis of research memos and quotes throughout the course of the analysis.

Qualitative researchers have indicated the importance of the research quality or trustworthiness (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Seale, 1999). To increase the trustworthiness of my research interpretations, I discussed the preliminary findings with policy practitioners who have substantive knowledge and experience about the state legislative process and anti-poverty policy advocacy in Washington State. Preliminary findings were also disseminated and discussed in two

national conferences and one public lecture where welfare policy researchers and practitioners contributed their knowledge and experience of GA in other states. I incorporated their feedback and insights into my research findings.

Results

This section begins with an overview of General Assistance (GA) reforms in Washington State from 2009 through 2011, followed by a discussion of major themes related to knowledge construction of GA populations and policy solutions according to the three stages of policy making: problem framing, solution crafting, and decision making. In the interest of brevity, under each theme I cite selected quotations from data that provide supportive and informative narratives. In some cases, numerical counts of the codes may be presented to provide a balanced picture in order to avoid the problem of anecdotalism (Seale, 1999).

Policy Context: General Assistance Reform in Washington State, 2009–2011

GA in Washington State prior to 2009 was a means-tested social welfare program providing both cash and medical assistance for poor adults who did not qualify for other federally-funded income support programs and who were unable to engage in gainful employment due to physical or mental infirmity. The maximum monthly cash benefit for single persons was \$339 and for couples was \$428 in Washington State (P33:1).¹⁹ During the Great Recession, the average monthly number of individuals enrolling in the GA program increased from 29,239 in 2007 to 35,001 in 2009. The number was estimated to have increased to 41,098 in 2011 (Washington State Legislative Evaluation & Accountability Program Committee, 2009).

¹⁹ This citation format indicates the source of information gained from the primary and supplementary documents in the ATLAS.ti. The first number refers to the document and the second number refers to the quote. See Appendix 1 for a list of the documents and their corresponding legislative activities.

Despite the growing need for GA, the Washington State Legislature made several attempts to cut it, focusing on its subprogram, the GA-Unemployable (GA-U). In response to Governor Chris Gregoire's 2009–2011 Budget proposal that planned to eliminate both cash and medical provisions for the GA-U (Office of the Governor, 2008), the Legislature held several work sessions and public hearings in the three-year time frame. At the end of the 2009 legislative session, the Legislature decided to reduce the expenditure of GA cash grants by referring GA-U clients to other federally-funded welfare programs, while at the same time expanding the managed care medical program for GA-U clients statewide.

During the 2010 legislative session, the first reform bill, Security Lifeline (HB 2782), was introduced and signed into law. One of the major components of this bill was the Disability Lifeline (DL) program, which replaced the GA program. In contrast to the GA program, the renamed DL program restricted the DL-Unemployable (DL-U) clients to a time limit of 24 months in a 60-month period and required them to participate in chemical dependency treatment, a vocational rehabilitation program, and/or a housing voucher project in order to remain eligible for DL-U benefits (P49). Under the time-limit rule, the State Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) terminated many DL-U clients' cash benefits. However, the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) from the Washington State Supreme Court demanded that DSHS re-issue cash benefits to DL-U clients (P24).

To offset the budget expenditure due to the TRO, beginning in January 2011 the monthly cash benefit for DL-U clients was reduced from \$339 to \$266. As of April 2011, the maximum monthly cash benefit was down to \$197 (P30). Later on, another reform bill (HB 2082) was introduced and passed during the 2011 legislative session. HB 2082 eliminated the entire DL

program and established three new programs to provide categorized, limited support for small sub-populations of the original GA clients (P32).

With an understanding of the context for GA reform, I further explored the three research questions by synthesizing the major themes in three stages of the policy-making process: problem construction, solutions crafting, and decision making. Each section addresses one of the three research questions, respectively: How did policy actors use knowledge to construct GA populations and their problems? How did policy actors use knowledge to craft policy solutions? How did constructed knowledge about GA populations and policy solutions influence the consecutive GA reform decisions?

The Problem-Construction Stage

In the problem-construction stage, during legislative meetings policy actors from a variety of interest groups used statistics, research studies, political judgments, and practical experiences (including client stories) to construct characteristics and problems of the GA/DL populations. Three key themes were (1) categorizing the GA/DL populations, (2) pathologizing and criminalizing the GA/DL-Unemployable (GA/DL-U) population, and (3) overlooking the common economic hardship among the diverse GA/DL-U population.

1. Categorizing the GA/DL populations

Social constructions of the GA/DL populations occurred at the very beginning of the legislative process, when policy actors depicted the sub-programs of GA/DL and their corresponding target populations in work sessions where policy practitioners and policy analysts used their knowledge to inform legislators. By GA design in Washington State in 2009, eligibility criteria, cash and medical benefits, and financing sources varied by categories of GA programs (P33). The first category was the General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) program, which was a fully state-funded program providing cash and medical benefits for women who

were pregnant and not eligible for the federal-state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program or adults who were unemployable for more than 90 days due to physical or mental incapacity. The second category was General Assistance-Expedited Medicaid (GA-X) program, which was a federally reimbursed program²⁰ for people presumptively eligible for the federally-funded Supplemental Security Income (SSI) cash and Medicaid. The third category was General Assistance-Other (GA-A, B, D, I, R) program, which provided state-funded cash and medical assistance for aged, blind, or disabled people who were not eligible for SSI due to non-citizen status or because they failed to meet other eligibility requirements. Applicants for GA were subject to a \$1,000 assets limit and a \$339 unearned income limit for a single person. In 2008 the GA-U population represented about 51.5% of the GA clients, the GA-X population represented about 38%, and the GA-A, B, D, I, R represented the remaining 10.5% (P33). The reform DL program retained these three categories and had a similar distribution of three DL populations (53.3%, 34.1%, and 12.1%, respectively) in 2010 (P46).

The above categorization was associated with different problem constructions and unequal policy treatments among the GA/DL populations. The difference in unemployable conditions between GA-U and GA-X clients mentioned most often were the duration and magnitude of incapacities. GA-U clients had relatively short-term physical or mental impairments (less than 12 months) or their impairments were not severe enough to qualify for SSI benefits (P1:7, P33, P36). This classification set the tone for reforming the GA-U program based on the assumption of providing short-term assistance (P16:3).

Moreover, policymakers or policy analysts pinpointed the GA-U clients as the most problematic group among the welfare populations by focusing on GA-U clients' certain health

²⁰ When a client's SSI application was approved, the state received a retroactive SSI payment from the federal government.

conditions and the GA-U program's increasing caseload/expenditures. The following quotes characterize such views: "GA-U medical program expenditures are among the fastest growing of DSHS medical programs" (P35:5); "Because of their age and disabilities, GA-U/DL-U recipients are one of the higher cost state medical coverage groups" (P28); and "GA-U clients as a group are expensive users of inpatient hospital services and those with mental illness and/or substance abuse are relatively frequent visitors to hospital emergency rooms" (Joesch et al., 2011, p. 3). This type of categorization was the first step toward targeting the GA-U program in the reform agenda in Washington State.

2. Pathologizing and criminalizing the GA/DL-U population

GA-U clients were often viewed as undeserving deviants, particularly as drug addicts or people with complex mental or behavioral problems, throughout the legislative process. Table 3.1 summarizes the frequencies of characteristics of the GA-U population mentioned in quotes from the legislative activities. The most frequently mentioned characteristics were homelessness, mental illness, and chemical dependency. In fact, only about 25% of GA-U clients were homeless, about 35% of GA-U clients have mental illness, and about 32% of GA-U clients have alcohol or drug problems (P34). However, policy actors negatively constructed the problems of GA-U clients in two ways: (1) highlighting the socially undesired problems by using contrasting statistics of different health characteristics, and (2) delivering messages that linked undesired characteristics with criminal activities that threaten public safety.

Table 3.1
Frequencies of Characteristics of the GA/DL-U Population Mentioned in Quotes from the Legislative Activities

	All legislative activities	Work sessions / Public hearings	Executive sessions / Floor actions
Homelessness	65	49	16
Mental illness	51	42	9
Substance abuse	50	36	14
Physical illness	20	16	4
Criminals	19	18	1
Poverty	14	12	2
Pregnant women or domestic violence victims	12	11	1
Veterans	10	8	2
Immigrants	2	2	0

When discussing the health conditions of the GA/DL-U clients, practitioners, policy analysts, and government staff repeatedly referred to the Venn diagram below (see Figure 3.3) with varying titles and highlights in five out of nine work sessions. Using the diagram, policy actors selectively emphasized mental or behavioral problems, despite the fact that having a chronic physical condition was the primary characteristic (about 70%) of GA-U clients; only about 15% of GA-U clients had all three conditions (i.e., chronic physical condition, mental illness, and substance abuse). Narratives emphasized that GA-U or DL-U clients “have complex co-occurring diagnoses” (P2:15, P3:5, P34, P35, P36), “face greater challenges when their health conditions are complicated by substance abuse problems” (P3:14, P35), or “often have more than one incapacity including substance abuse” (P28). Policy actors also easily connected people with mental illness or substance abuse to criminal activities and public safety issues. For example, the bill sponsor of HB 2782 stated:

Mentally ill people represent a danger. Most mentally ill people don’t represent a danger, but there are some who do. I think it’s a quite frankly scaring thought to have them on the street without medication, without homes, without any resource and foods. (P15:3)

When policy actors made the linkage between undesired health conditions or behavioral problems to threats to the public, they strengthened the negative constructions of GA/DL-U clients, although unintentionally.

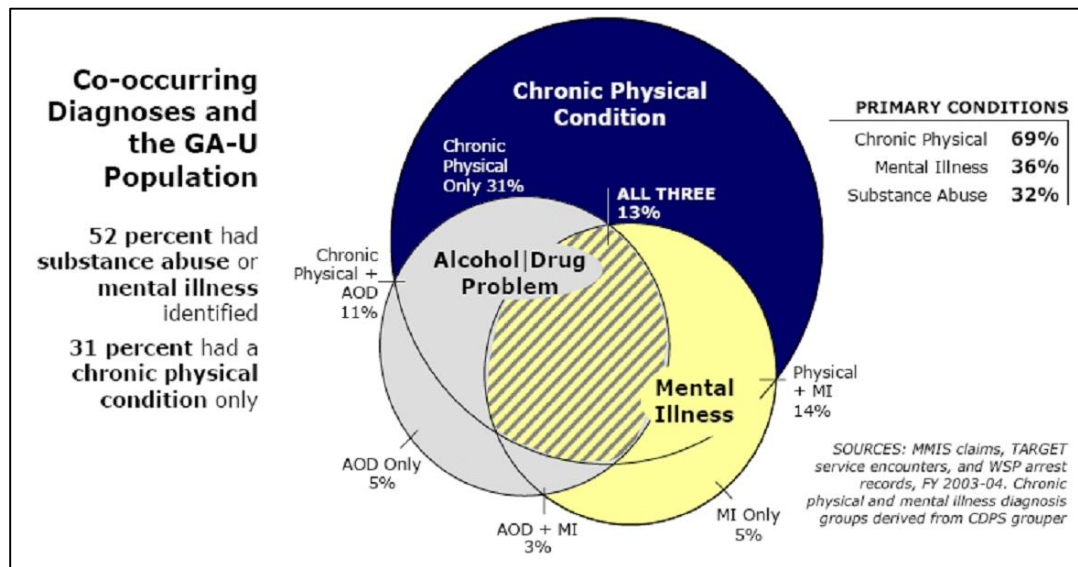


Figure 3.3. Venn diagram: Co-occurring diagnoses.

Note. Adapted from “GA-U Clients: Challenges and Opportunities (Report 6.54),” by Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2006, p. 4.

3. Overlooking the common economic hardship among the diverse GA/DL-U population

Descriptions regarding the demographic characteristics of the GA-U/DL-U population in terms of gender, race, and age implied that GA-U/DL-U clients did not fit the image of the conventional deserving poor, such as children, women, and people of color. Instead, descriptions were similar to the following: “the GA-U clients are primarily white males, with an average age of 42 years old” (P3:14, P35) and “the DL-U clients are primarily 40-year-old white males” (P22; P28). These stereotypes overlooked the diversity of the GA/DL-U population and their common economic need for income support. As Table 3.1 presents, policy actors generally did not depict the poverty problem or other factors causing economic hardships. For instance,

domestic violence victims on the GA/DL-U program did not gain attention until the 2011 legislative session. A practitioner testifying in a public hearing pointed out that “I also want to remind the members of this committee because domestic violence victims of women are often the forgotten group of clients that access this program...[They] have no place to go and no resources to be able to access to safety...For people [who] don’t have children, this is the program to support them” (P23:12). Although this testimony brought legislators’ attention and sympathy during the meeting to the overlooked economic need of domestic violence victims, policy practitioners and government staff were not able to change the stereotype of the GA/DL-U population because they were unable to provide statistics on the size of GA/DL-U clients with domestic violence issues when legislators asked for further information (P23:25).

The Crafting-Solutions Stage

Responding to the governor’s proposed budget cut of both GA-U cash and medical benefits, policy actors from different interest groups actively participated in work sessions and public hearings to give testimony and express concerns. Discussions of policy solutions centered around two themes: (1) eliminating vs. retaining the cash benefit, and (2) eliminating vs. expanding the medical benefit. Rationales for each policy solution were based on professional experiences, scientific evidence, and/or value judgments.

1. Eliminating vs. retaining the cash benefit

Opponents of eliminating the cash benefit were made up primarily of a variety of frontline agencies²¹ serving or advocating for economically disadvantaged individuals. They argued for

²¹ These interest groups include Columbia Legal Services, the Low Income Housing Initiative, Serenity House of Clallam County, Jewish Family Services, United Way of King County, Solid Ground, the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, Catholic Community Services, Pierce County Human Services Coalition, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, FISH Food Banks of Pierce County, Plymouth Housing Group, and Compass Housing Alliance.

retaining the monthly GA cash benefit of \$339 in the 2010 legislative session and restoring a small monthly DL stipend of \$50 for personal needs in the 2011 legislative session. They mostly used their professional knowledge about daily practices and their professional values about the public good to justify the importance of the cash provision.

For example, frontline practitioners depicted GA-U populations as a truly needy, vulnerable group, and described the GA-U program as “the only safety net for these people” (P2:9), as a “gateway to medical care” and other services or support (P3:5), or as a path to “returning to a productive life” (P22:15) through stabilizing clients’ lives. Practitioners presented clients’ stories to legislators (P2, P34) and occasionally brought clients to tell their vivid personal experiences. As a client testified in a work session: “GA retains my dignity, gets me off the street...GA allows me to pay my cell phone, stay connections with friends, and make medical appointments” (P2:24). Frontline practitioners tended to use model clients’ stories to strengthen their arguments, for example that GA-U serves as a safety net of last resort, and that providing cash benefits is an “investment in lifesaving” for the most vulnerable in our society (P23:11). Informed by the practitioners, the Chair of the House Human Services Committee concluded in a work session that the cash benefit of the GA-U program “can be the difference between life and death for people in the state of Washington” (P2:30).

Facing pressures from the GA-U interest groups, legislators sought for alternative solutions to the provision of cash support. In the 2009 legislative session, the Legislature directed its research division, the WSIPP, to conduct a systematic assessment including research reviews, experiences of other states, and recommendations regarding promising approaches. The WSIPP staff reported in a follow-up work session, concluding that it was unknown whether or not the GA cash benefit was a cost-effective policy approach because there was “no rigorous, empirical

research on the provision of general assistance” (P5:7, P36:14). This report also pointed out that other states have lowered costs by setting time limits or stricter eligibility requirements, reducing benefits, or eliminating the program. However, it is difficult to estimate the policy impacts on homelessness, crime, and mental and physical health outcomes of GA-U populations (Pennucci, Nunlist, & Mayfield, 2009). Notably, poverty alleviation was rarely considered as a key policy impact of the GA cash benefit in the discussion. The systematic research review conducted by WSIPP excluded earlier qualitative research on the negative impacts of GA reforms on clients’ daily lives in other states (e.g., Halter, 1992; Coulton & Crowell, 1993). That is, anecdotal evidence and qualitative research that was based on GA clients’ experiences were undervalued in the WISSP report. The WISSP report, although it was plausibly neutral, showed that the comprehensive use of research evidence to inform a rational, value-free decision about the GA-U cash provision was unrealistic.

2. Cutting vs. expanding the medical benefit

The state-funded Medical Care Services (MCS) program covered individuals not eligible for Medicaid, including GA-U recipients. In the governor’s 2009–2011 budget proposal, the MCS program would have been eliminated along with the GA-U program termination. However, although the medical assistance portion of the GA-U program was initially in danger of elimination, in the 2009 legislative session policy makers decided to launch a statewide GA-U Medical Integration Program emphasizing managed care, mental health, and care coordination. This statewide program was expanded from a pilot managed care program in two counties, and it was implemented by the Community Health Plan of Washington in late 2004 (P28). This successful expansion was made through the efforts of a coalition of health services interest groups.

In contrast to the case of the GA-U cash provision, the opponents of eliminating the GA-U medical provision included broader interest groups,²² extending from frontline agencies to academic researchers involved in health services and policies. They not only provided their professional knowledge and values, but also presented rigorous quantitative research evidence supplemented with client stories to justify the managed care approach to the GA-U medical provision. Policy actors framed this approach as a “successful evidence-based model” and continually informed legislators in work sessions and public hearings from 2009 through 2011 (P2, P3, P4, P6, P11, P20, P22).

The “successful evidence-based model” framing actually built on the problem constructions stating that GA-U was one of the “fastest growing DSHS medical programs” (P35:5) and that GA-U clients were “complex, high-cost” patients/recipients” (P22, P28:4, P36:9). Proponents of the managed care approach used rationales such as “effective collaboration” among health services, “saving state dollars,” and “more cost-effective than usual care” (P2, P5). To illustrate the impacts of the managed care model, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Washington presented his earlier research on the integrated mental health care model in a very assertive cost-effectiveness tone:

This is an evidence-based intervention, a five-year study of integrated care with a randomly assigned experiment design that has desired outcomes of clients’ improvement and saving cost...The data is compelling...This is the best research outcome. (P2:18)

He and his colleague from the Community Health Plan of Washington also provided successful case stories to support his argument, and their approach impressed the legislators. The Chair of

²² In addition to the aforementioned interest groups generally supporting both cash and medical provisions, core interest groups specifically arguing for the managed care approach include the Washington State Hospital Association, Community Health Network of Washington, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Washington, and Harborview Medical Center.

the policy committee commended this testimony as being “very important and valuable” (P2), even though the research findings were solely based on patients with depression in general, which might not be applicable to the entire GA-U population.

In addition to academic researchers, policy analysts from WSIPP and a left-leaning state policy think tank, the Washington State Budget and Policy Center (WSBPC), also sent consistent messages to policymakers in terms of cost-benefit or evidence-based discourses in their reviews of the GA-U medical service. Conclusions from two reports were as follows:

[WSIPP report] Evidence-Based Strategies. Research evidence suggests that client and taxpayer finance outcomes can be improved by providing treatment services to individuals diagnosed with mental illness or substance abuse disorders. (Pennucci et al., 2009, p. 1)

[WSBPC policy brief] Without this program, costs in other areas of the state budget will undoubtedly rise including use of emergency rooms for health care, programs that assist the homeless, and public safety resources. Conversely, by making smart investments in this valuable public structure, the state can save money and improve outcomes for recipients. (Schultz, 2009, p. 6)

Taken together, policy messages regarding the medical provision implied that smart policymakers should make smart investments in integrated medical services. Through making strong statements with scientific and professional information, policy actors were able to provide a convincing rationale to influence policy directions. Based on the 2009 legislative decisions, the DSHS implemented an expanded medical integration program statewide in November 2009. Furthermore, this medical component of the GA-U program remained unchanged for the DL-U clients when the DL program was launched in 2010 (Joesch et al., 2011).

The Decision-Making Stage

The cumulative knowledge constructions of target populations and policy solutions in the work sessions and public hearings carried over to the legislative decision-making meetings. In the executive sessions, where a committee decided how to report a bill to the entire House, and

floor actions, where legislators debated and voted on final passage, legislators were the key policy actors using informed knowledge along with inherent values to make policy decisions. Three synthesized themes in the decision-making stage were (1) considering the allocation of benefits to the undeserving GA-U as political incorrectness, (2) transforming the GA-U program from an entitled cash model to a regulated care model, and (3) dismantling the DL-U through decoupling cash and medical provisions.

1. Considering the allocation of benefits to the undeserving GA-U as political incorrectness

In the decision-making stage, legislators' political ideologies and judgments reinforced the social constructions of the undeserving GA-U clients. The narratives about GA-U clients' complex problems and the characteristics of the unconventional welfare dependents often co-occurred with discourses of political priorities and the taxpayers' burden. For instance, a Republican House Representative reiterated his concern about policy priorities which were determined by a value-laden assessment of vulnerability:

When I looked at the population. They are predominately white, male, aged 35-36, without dependents. They are not women, not minorities...if we have to make a difficult decision about cutting service to most vulnerable people, I prioritized those who are seniors, children, most struggling... truly most vulnerable. (P10:12)

Under the assumption that the GA/DL-U clients are not deserving or truly vulnerable, there were discourses opposing any kind of public resources allocated to GA/DL-U clients by emphasizing accountability to all citizens and taxpayers. These proponents thought that alcohol or substance abuse were the primary reasons that people were on the GA/DL-U program, and that there were existing public or private resources to serve them (16:9; 25:7). A House Representative (Republican, 10th District) expressed her disagreement on the allocation of benefits and public resources to the DL-U clients in HB 2082 as follows:

Alcohol and substance abuse is the primary reason that some of these people are involved in the Disability Lifeline ... I just want at some point, for all of us on this House floor, as good stewards of the public dollar and the welfare and well-being of citizens of this state, to really look holistically at what we are doing and how we are doing it ... What we want to make sure is that we are not duplicating efforts [and] that people are not abusing our public assistance, and we want to make sure that we are providing the best [services] for citizens... I am not sure that we are really serving the citizens well with this program. And I will ask for a “no” vote this time. And let’s really look at how we are doing this and that we do it well, efficiently and protecting all citizens in this state. (P25:7)

Political claims like this suggested that allocating benefits to the undeserving GA-U/DL-U clients was politically incorrect.

2. Transforming the GA-U from an entitled cash model to a regulated care model

The original GA reform bill (HB 2782), introduced by House Representative Dickerson (Democrat, 36th District) in the 2010 legislative session, intended to save state expenditure on the GA-U program through expediting the transition of qualified GA-U clients to other federally-funded welfare programs. This bill initially did not propose any time limits, reduced benefits, or restrictions of the GA-U cash benefits. However, the final passed bill was a compromise reflecting continuous attacks against cash benefits for GA-U/DL-U clients from the Republican camp, pushing the DL-U program to take a more regulated and punitive approach (P39, P40, P43).

Opponents of the cash provision utilized research evidence and political judgments to argue that providing health or treatment services outweighed providing unconditional cash benefits. House Representative Dammeier (Republican, 25th District) proposed Amendment 1132 to eliminate the cash benefits. Citing the WISSP report, he said:

Focus on evidence-based solutions. I understand that a lot of people see it as an integral part of the program. In fact, the WSIPP study yielded the result. [Cash assistance] is not evidence-based! This is the time we do need to make priority choices; I believe that eliminating the cash grant and hopefully, allowing the

resources to be freed up to come back to the services to the population in terms of treatments and services would be much better use of our state dollars. (P10:1)

However, a House Representative (Democrat, 37th District) holding the opposite position interpreted the research report and implications in a different way. He argued:

Technically he is right...The review is actually a literature review. It is not a study. Nobody has done in a real research...work directly with clients, look at the evidence, look at the intervention, look at the result, follow them and track them and then say okay now, this proves this doesn't work. (P10:6)

To make an effort to retain the cash component, another House Representative (Democrat, 27th District) drew upon informed professional knowledge and stated that:

Before the session started, I met social service advocates... [One service provider] encouraged me to save the cash grant...She cited Maslow's hierarchy of needs saying that food and shelters are fundamentally necessary to anyone who is seeking to move up the hierarchy of needs to become self-actualized...The fact is that we have to have food and shelter...We haven't raised the amount [of monthly cash benefit] for 15 years. It is hard to live on 339 dollars a month...And with that, services like the treatments can be utilized by [clients]. (P10:2)

Because the House failed to pass Amendment 1132 (eliminating cash benefits), the Republican camp turned its focus to the imposition of a time limit. As the bill traveled through the Senate, the time limit component was then included in the bill under a bipartisan compromise (P16:30) but with support from research or professional evidence. The Senate bill sponsor, Hargrove (Democrat, 24th District), reframed the new Disability Lifeline program from a "care instead of cash" perspective, underlying a negatively constructed perception of GA-U clients. He illustrated the policy philosophy in the Senate floor debate:

Another significant change in this bill is a portion of the care instead of cash philosophy that we instituted in our policy committee. Approximately 18–30% depending on the research tells us these people are homeless...This bill creates a voucher program for those homeless people that have chemical dependency or mental health issues because it's clear from the data that if these people do not have a home to go with their treatment then their treatment doesn't work. And again, if they refuse treatments, they won't get the voucher or the cash...Giving them the help

they deserve but not enable bad behaviors by continuing to give them the cash grant. (P16:3)

In the Engrossed Second Substitute HB 2782, the Disability Life of 2010 finally instituted a time limit of 24 months in a 5-year period, a monthly stipend reduced to \$50 with housing vouchers for homeless people, and a sanction of terminating cash benefits if a person refuses to participate in a housing program, substance-abuse treatment, or vocational rehabilitation. It ended up imposing more behavioral control through providing regulated care provisions to replace the entitled cash benefit. Lawmakers believed that the “from cash to care approach” was a successful policy solution to save the state money and improve GA-U clients’ outcomes because these problematic individuals would achieve self-sufficiency through the package of care. By taking this approach, “they are not misusing the money” (P12:3).

3. Dismantling the DL-U through decoupling cash and medical provisions

Within one year after the enactment of the Disability Lifeline of 2010, the Legislature passed another reform bill (ESHB 2082) during the 2011 legislative session, which took effect on November 1, 2011. In the context of the federal Affordable Health Care Reform, a reiterated theme in the discussion of the Disability Lifeline was decoupling cash and medical provisions to save state dollars spent on the DL-U clients. On the one hand, the policymakers proposed to eliminate the cash provision of the DL-U clients in order to reduce state expenditure; on the other hand, they planned to take advantage of the federal funding of the Health Care Reform to expand Medicaid to cover the DL-U clients (P21, P20, P48, P49).

ESHB 2082 eventually eliminated the entire DL program and instead established three new programs to provide categorized, limited support for the least resourceful poor populations in Washington State: (1) Essential Needs and Housing Support Program; (2) Aged, Blind or

Disabled Assistance Program, and (3) Pregnant Women Assistance Program.²³ Apparently, the DL-U program was transformed into the Essential Needs and Housing Support Program and the Pregnant Women Assistance Program, and the DL-X and DL-Other were transformed into the Aged, Blind or Disabled Assistance Program. The “undeserving” DL-U clients are served by the Essential Needs and Housing Support Program, which does not grant any cash support to its clients. Instead, grants are distributed to local homeless and housing agencies to support expenditures on limited rent and utilities, personal health and hygiene items, cleaning supplies, and transportation. In contrast, the other two programs retain the cash provision for those who fit a positive construction of the truly most vulnerable poor; that is, the deserving poor. These three new programs are now serving very limited sub-populations of the original GA populations. Unsurprisingly, policymakers have continually attempted to cut the Essential Needs and Housing Support Program in subsequent years (Burkhalter, 2013; Justice, 2013).

Discussion and Implications

This case study supports the “target population proposition” of the Social Construction and Policy Design Theory (SCPDT): the social constructions of target populations explain why deserving “dependents” receive benefits while undeserving “deviants” receive burdens (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; 1997). Notably, this study found that the process of constructions moving from “dependents” to “deviants” explains the policy reform direction that allocates more burdens than benefits. Drawing insights from SCPDT, Figure 3.4 lays out the relative positions of a variety of characteristics of the GA populations. Findings from the case study of the General Assistance reforms in Washington State show that overgeneralizing the undesired problems of

²³ The Pregnant Women Assistance Program typically serves women who have reached the 60-month TANF time limit and do not qualify for an extension.

mental illness, homelessness, drug abuse, and criminal behavior to the entire GA population laid the groundwork for subsequent policy solutions that focused on mental health services, substance abuse treatment, conditional housing vouchers, and vocational rehabilitation. These negative constructions of the GA-U population have shaped the policy designs transforming programs from an entitled cash model to a regulated care model and imposing behavioral regulations and punitive sanctions on the least resourceful poor. A recent study on the social construction of the poor also finds that the specific subcategories of welfare recipients (for example, drug addicts) may be used to question the worthiness of the whole group (Amundson et al., 2015).

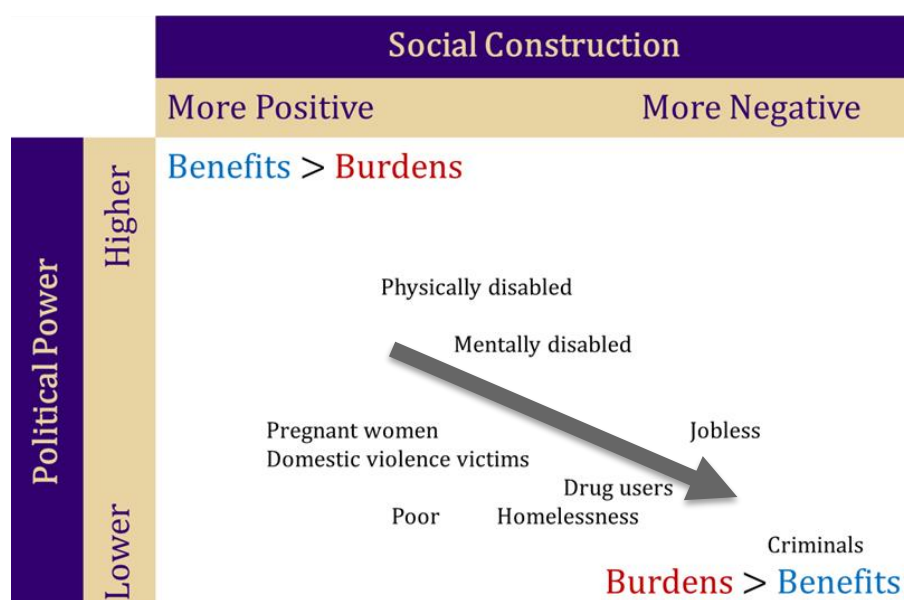


Figure 3.4. Social construction and political power of the General Assistance populations. This figure is adapted from Schneider and Ingram (1997, p. 109) and Schneider and Sidney (2009, p. 107).

The consecutive GA/DL reforms in Washington State also support the “feed-forward proposition” of SCPDT: current policy design shapes future policy directions. The reformed Disability Lifeline based on a “Care-Not-Cash” model (Noy, 2009) was in a continual process of evolution into the three categorized small programs that differentiated underserving deviants (e.g., the homeless, drug users, and criminals) from deserving dependents (e.g., pregnant women

and the aged, blind, or disabled). By the end of the three-year reform, the economic need of the GA-U population was no longer addressed by directly granting cash benefits to GA-U clients. The negatively perceived GA-U population has been continuously marginalized in the social safety net system over time.

This case study also contributes to our understanding of the intersection of social construction and knowledge utilization in the state welfare reform process (see Figure 3.5). Findings show that the constructions of problems and solutions intersected with different patterns of knowledge utilization in the legislative policy making process. In work sessions and public hearings, policy actors from interest groups play a larger role than legislators in constructing problems and solutions by using research and professional reasoning and values to inform policy directions. In executive sessions and floor debates, where lawmakers are key players, the ways in which legislators use informed research and professional knowledge depend on their inherent political and welfare ideologies. Despite the fact that contrasting political ideologies existed between the Republican and Democratic camps, the bipartisan consensus on the mainstream welfare ideologies (i.e., personal responsibility and work ethic) drove the priorities of resource allocations and the choices of the policy tools (i.e., time limits and service instead of cash). However, the laypersons' voices and knowledge from the negatively constructed, politically powerless GA-U population were disregarded in the GA reforms. As a result, the policy process unequally distributed the burden to the GA-U population, which lacked both a positive social construction and political power. Without changing the negative constructions and the powerless position of this population, one can expect a diminishing trend in GA across states through a policy learning or diffusion mechanism (Schneider & Ingram, 1988). Consequently, the social

safety net of last resort in the United States will be dismantled in a “degenerative policymaking system” which harms democracy and social justice (Schneider & Ingram, 1997).

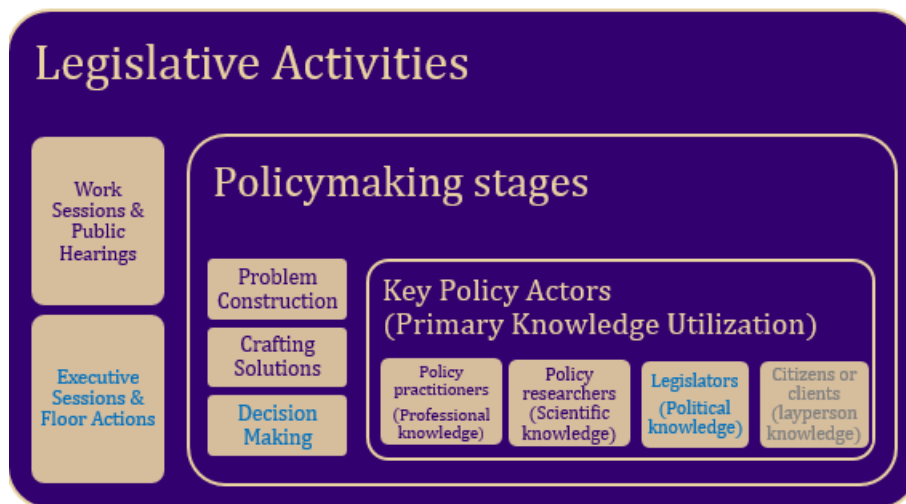


Figure 3.5. The intersection of the policy process and knowledge utilization.

Conventional scientific researchers often have concerns about the generalizability of case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Although this case study might have a limitation of generalizing findings to other states with different GA programs during different time periods, the findings of the intersection of social construction and knowledge utilization in the state legislative policy making process can be applied to a broad welfare reform context. As current policy debates are attempting to further dismantle federal structures of social assistance programs such as the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps) through a block grant that devolves program decisions to states (Rosenbaum & Keith-Jennings, 2016), this paper offers implications for policy actors and future welfare reforms. By understanding how policy actors can use multiple knowledge to inform legislative decisions, policy researchers and practitioners may consider their roles in challenging the misconceptions of poor populations and promoting opportunities for reforms at both state and federal levels.

References

- Amundson, K., Zajicek, A. M., & Kerr, B. (2015). A social metamorphosis: Constructing drug addicts from the poor. *Sociological Spectrum*, 35(5), 442–464.
doi:10.1080/02732173.2015.1064799
- Anderson, S. G., Halter, A. P., & Gryzlak, B. M. (2002). Changing safety net of last resort: Downsizing General Assistance for employable adults. *Social Work*, 47(3), 249–258.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559.
- Buono, R. D. (2015). Reimagining social problems: Moving beyond social constructionism. *Social Problems*, 62, 331–342.
- Burkhalter, A. (2013). With HEN program, DSHS succeeds by doing less with less. Real Change. *Real Change News*. Retrieved from <http://realchangenews.org/2013/02/27/hen-program-dshs-succeeds-doing-less-less>
- Coulton, C. J., & Crowell, L. (1993). How time-limited eligibility affects General Assistance clients. *Public Welfare*, 51(3), 29–36. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9311103626&site=ehost-live>
- Danziger, S. K. (2010). The decline of cash welfare and implications for social policy and poverty. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 523–545.
- Epstein, D., Farina, C. R., & Heidt, J. (2014). The value of words: narrative as evidence in policymaking. *Evidence and Policy*, 10(2), 14–23.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 12(2), 219–245.
- Freeman, R., Griggs, S., & Boaz, A. (2011). The practice of policymaking. *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, 7(2), 127–136.
- Friese, S. (2013). *ATLAS.ti 7 user guide and reference*. Berlin: Scientific Software Development GmbH.
- Friese, S. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gallagher, L. J. (1999). *A shrinking portion of the safety net: General Assistance from 1989 to 1998*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Glasby, J., & Beresford, P. (2006). Commentary and issues: Who knows best? Evidence-based practice and the service user contribution. *Critical Social Policy*, 26(1), 268–284.
- Glasby, J., Walshe, K., & Harvey, G. (2007). What counts as “evidence” in evidence-based practice? *Evidence and Policy*, 3(3), 325–327.

- Greenberg, D., Mandell, M., & Onstott, M. (2000). The dissemination and utilization of welfare-to-work experiments in state policymaking. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 19(3), 367–382.
- Guetzkow, J. (2010). Beyond deservingness: Congressional discourse on poverty, 1964–1996. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 629, 173–197.
- Halter, A. P. (1992). Homeless in Philadelphia: A qualitative study of the impact of state welfare reform on individuals. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 19, 7–20.
- Halter, A. P. (1994). Chipping away at General Assistance: A matter of economics or an attack on poor people? *Social Work*, 39(6), 705–709. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9411163192&site=ehost-live>
- Head, B. W. (2008). Three lenses of evidence-based policy. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 67(1), 1–11. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8500.2007.00564.x
- Henly, J. R., & Danziger, S. K. (1996). Confronting welfare stereotypes: Characteristics of General Assistance recipients and postassistance employment. *Social Work Research*, 20(4), 217–227. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9612182813&site=ehost-live>
- Hird, J. A. (2005). *Power, knowledge, and politics: Policy analysis in the states*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Ingram, H., Schneider, A. L., & deLeon, P. (2007). Social construction and policy design. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (2nd ed.) (pp. 93–126). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Joesch, J. M., Short, R., Mancuso, D., Krupski, T., Roy-Byrne, P., Roll, J., Court, B., Hafer, E., Jones, B., & Unutzer, J. (2011). *Evaluation of the General Assistance Managed Care Pilot in King and Pierce Counties for the period January 2008 through September 2009* (Brief Report). Retrieved from Center for Healthcare Improvement for Addictions, Mental Illness and Medically Vulnerable Populations website: <http://www.chammp.org/>
- Jurik, N., & Cowgill, J. (2005). The construction of client identities in a post-welfare social service program: The double bind of microenterprise development. In A. L. Schneider & H. M. Ingram (Eds.), *Deserving and entitled: Social constructions and public policy* (pp. 173–196). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Justice, K. (2013). *2013–15 budget: The good, the bad, and the ugly* (Policy Brief, July 03, 2013). Retrieved from Washington State Budget & Policy Center website: <http://budgetandpolicy.org/schmudget/>
- Noy, D. (2009). Progressive welfare reform? Ending General Assistance cash grants for homeless people in San Francisco. *Journal of Poverty*, 13(1), 55–73. doi:10.1080/10875540802623393
- O'Connor, A. (2000). Poverty research and policy for the post-welfare era. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 547–562.

- Office of Governor. (2008). *Proposed 2009–2011 budget & policy highlights*. Olympia, WA: Author. Retrieved from <http://digitalarchives.wa.gov/WA.Media/do/F1AF8BA6FC6DA8782FB0E0F021CC299D.pdf>
- Pennucci, A. (2010). *Washington's General Assistance-Unemployment program: Caseload trends* (Document No. 10-05-4101, May 2010). Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Pennucci, A., Nunlist, C., & Mayfield, J. (2009). *General Assistance programs for unemployable adults* (Document No. 09-12-4101, December 2009). Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Pierce, J. J., Siddiki, S., Jones, M. D., Schumacher, K., Pattison, A., & Peterson, H. (2014). Social construction and policy design: A review of past applications. *Policy Studies Journal*, 42(1), 1–29. doi:10.1111/psj.12040
- Rosenbaum, D., & Keith-Jennings, B. (2016). *House 2017 budget plan would slash SNAP by more than \$150 billion over ten years: Low-income households in all states would feel sharp effects*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Rycroft-Malone, J., Seers, K., Titchen, A., Harvey, G., Kitson, A., & McCormack, B. (2004). What counts as evidence in evidence-based practice? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 47(1), 81–90. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03068.x
- Sabatier, P. A. (2007). The need for better theories. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (2nd ed.) (pp. 3–17). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Schneider, A., & Ingram, H. (1988). Systematically pinching ideas: A comparative approach to policy design. *Journal of Public Policy*, 8(1), 61–80. doi:10.1017/S0143814X00006851
- Schneider, A. L., & Ingram, H. M. (1997). *Policy design for democracy*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Schneider, A., & Sidney, M. (2009). What is next for policy design and social construction theory? *Policy Studies Journal*, 37(1), 103–119. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2008.00298.x
- Schott, L., & Cho, C. (2011). *General Assistance programs: Safety net weakening despite increased need*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Schott, L., & Hill, M. (2015). *State General Assistance programs are weakening despite increased need*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Schram, S. F., & Soss, J. (2001). Success stories: Welfare reform, policy discourse, and the politics of research. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 577(1), 49–65.
- Schultz, S. (2009). *General Assistance: New strategies for vital program* (Policy Brief, February 11, 2009). Retrieved from Washington State Budget & Policy Center website: http://budgetandpolicy.org/reports/general-assistance-new-strategies-for-a-vital-program/pdf_version
- Seale, C. (1999). *The quality of qualitative research*. London: Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage Publications.

- Skinner, C. (2012). *Protecting the safety net in tough times: Lessons from the states*. Retrieved from National Center for Children in Poverty website: http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1061.html
- Smith, C. P. (1992). *Motivation and personality: Handbook of thematic content analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Soss, J., Fording, R. C., & Schram, S. (2011). *Disciplining the poor: Neoliberal paternalism and the persistent power of race*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Soss, J., Schram, S. F., Vartanian, T. P., & O'Brien, E. (2001). Setting the terms of relief: Explaining state policy choices in the devolution revolution. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(2), 378–395.
- Szanton, P. L. (1991). The remarkable quango: Knowledge, politics, and welfare reform. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 10(4), 590–602.
- U.S. Social Security Administration. (2000). *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2000*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 15(3), 398–405.
- Washington State Budget & Policy Center. (2012). *Lobbying 101* [Training material]. Seattle, WA: Author.
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (2006). *GA-U Clients: Challenges and Opportunities* (Report 6.54). Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/rda/documents/research-6-54.pdf>
- Washington State Legislative Evaluation & Accountability Program Committee. (2009). *Washington State Legislative budget note*. Retrieved from <http://leap.leg.wa.gov/leap/budget/lbns/2009lbn.pdf>
- Washington State Legislature. (n.d.). *Overview of the legislative process*. Retrieved from <http://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Overview.aspx>
- White, D., & VanLandingham, G. (2015). Benefit-cost analysis in the states: Status, impact, and challenges. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, 6(02), 369–399.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation research addresses both the consequences of state social safety net choices and the processes of state policy making in the context of the Great Recession and its aftermath. It contributes to the fields of state welfare politics, policies, and practice through enhancing our understanding of the connections among macroeconomic conditions, anti-poverty politics, policy designs, and the state safety net system.

The first paper evaluated the effects of state UI modernization (2009–2011) on the trajectories of household income-to-poverty levels during and after the Great Recession. These reforms are particularly relevant for economically disadvantaged workers, including part-time and low-wage workers. This paper makes a unique contribution by using the nationally representative, 16-wave Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) panel data (2008–2013) and multilevel growth modeling to assess the short-term and long-term policy impacts. As the research presented in this dissertation indicated, working families had not yet fully recovered from the Great Recession by the end of 2013. However, this research presented another important finding, by showing that working families in states enacting UI modernization provisions, on average, experienced a greater rate of economic improvement in the household income-to-poverty level than their counterparts in other states, controlling for state and household characteristics. Findings from this research suggest that states' actions or inactions regarding UI modernization have profound and continuing policy impacts on the economic recovery of working families. States can improve these families' economic security by adopting a combination of UI policy provisions, including the alternative base period, permitting compelling family reasons to leave jobs, training benefits, and dependence allowance.

Acknowledging the complexity of UI policy designs, the second paper further explored state UI policy approaches and the underlying policy logic. This paper employed an advanced model-based clustering technique to analyze the multidimensional policy design and performance characteristics of 51 UI programs. My results indicated that states take two distinct approaches to social protection for workers in their UI programs. One of these approaches can be described as providing high levels of social protection and the other, providing low levels of social protection. The high social protection approach, compared to its low social protection counterpart, is characterized as combining high financing adequacy with program designs of high taxable wages and average tax rates; high program accessibility with policy designs of inclusive eligibility criteria; and high wage replacement with high benefit levels. These two approaches—either high or low protection levels—remain comparatively stable over time. However, both show a declining trend in social protection performance from 2007 to 2014. Findings from this research reveal that the relative weight that state policymakers give to social protection and other policy concerns (e.g., market stabilization, work disincentive, and interstate competition) in their UI programs are systematically carried through a set of policy design decisions regarding UI financing, eligibility criteria, and benefits rules. This research is particularly relevant to the current UI modernization proposal of 2016, which emphasizes the role of the federal government in standardizing state UI policy designs in order to provide equitable and fundamental social protection for workers across states.

Turning to a focus on the state policy making process, the third paper employs a thematic content analysis of 26 legislative videos in order to examine the process in action, so to speak; that is, how did policy actors in an actual legislative setting use different types of knowledge to frame the problems of the economically disadvantaged and shape the reforms of the General

Assistance for the unemployable poor in Washington State? My findings show the importance of knowledge construction; specifically, that knowledge construction of the GA-unemployable population as social deviants who exhibited psychological and behavioral problems influenced the directions of GA reform toward a more regulated, punitive model. These negative social constructions, intersecting with the mainstream welfare ideology of personal responsibility and work ethic, contributed to the dismantling of the safety net of last resort for the least resourceful poor in the United States. This research provides policy implications for future welfare reforms. Policy researchers and policy actors should be aware of their roles in constructing policy problems and prescriptions. Specifically, it is crucial to challenge the misconceptions of the poor populations that are embedded within the social safety net system by using solid research and professional knowledge.

In the end, this dissertation underscores that the systemic structures and policy designs of the social safety net have a profound influence on social and economic justice. The stratified and decentralized safety net system in the United States perpetuates economic stratification and reinforces the marginal status of the very poor. Social policy scholars have debated the issue of whether income support programs should cover the general population or, instead, should target the most vulnerable poor. Arguments against the targeted social assistance programs revolve around the negative stigma attached to the poor and the weak collective political influence from the powerless to shape policy directions. However, on the other side of the argument, proponents of targeted programs claim that social insurance programs mostly reflect the interests and values of the mainstream middle class and muffle not just the needs, but the voices of the vulnerable poor. It may be possible to construct a compromise social safety net system that combines social insurance and assistance programs, one that provides a robust social safety net (see the left panel

of Figure 4.1) that supports the many different populations; this, nonetheless, requires that all categorized programs are committed to the goals of social protection and economic security.

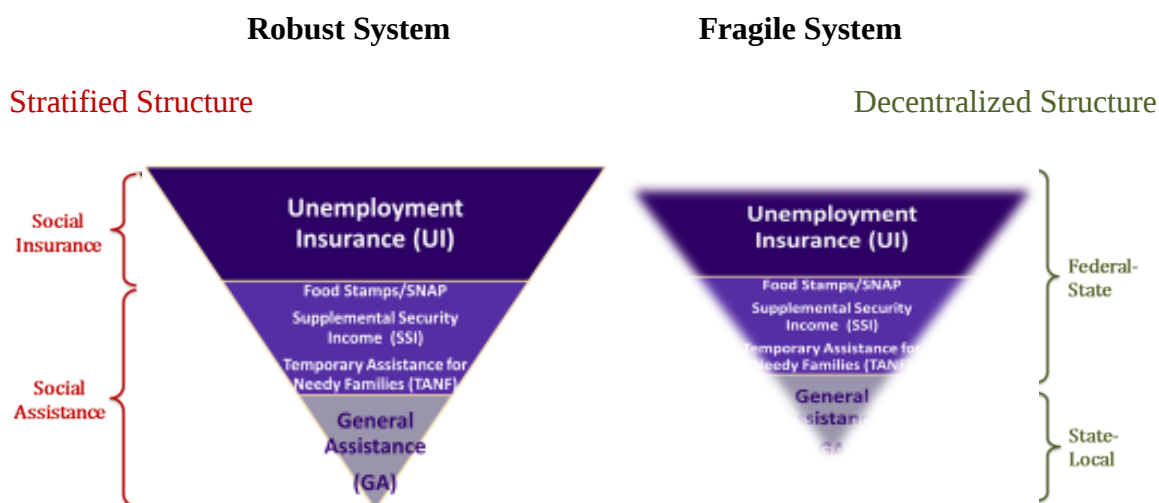


Figure 4.1. Robust state social safety net system vs. fragile state social safety net system.

However, the devolution of policy designs from the federal government to states contributes to the variations in the levels of commitment to social protection and economic security of state safety net systems. Particularly when states face severe fiscal constraints due to economic downturns or political pressures from business communities as a result of interstate competition, their state safety nets are likely to be retrenched and dismantled through the state policy-making process. Notably, this dissertation research finds that a handful of states have fragile state safety net systems (see the right panel of Figure 4.1) that provide weak UI protection for workers and no GA protection for the unemployable poor. As a result, individuals in need fall through a hole in the safety net. These states, including Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, are concentrated in the southern geographical region of the United States, where people of color make up a large share of the labor force and the entire population. This finding raises the issue of

the intersection of geographical and racial disparities in social protection among the various state safety net systems. Rebuilding a robust state social safety net system is surely one of the most important tasks for strengthening the social protections for all American people. Under the federalist structure, states' innovations of social safety net program designs that recommit to providing inclusive economic security for all people are crucial to lead to bottom-up national policy changes.

Ultimately, this dissertation provides important implications for the social work profession as a whole. Social workers have not only been involved directly with economically disadvantaged populations through providing social and human services, but are also key players in analyzing, informing, and influencing social policies. Particularly in the historical context of the U.S. social welfare system, social policy decisions have been considerably devolved to state and local governments. Social workers are far more able to make social and policy changes in state capitals than in the federal capital (Schneider & Netting, 1999). Compared to policy researchers in other disciplines, social work researchers have stronger professional values that are committed to the well-being of vulnerable and marginalized social groups. Future social work research on the social safety net programs should continue to contribute to our understanding of how economic conditions, political power, and social norms shape state policy designs and how these factors impact the economically disadvantaged. With this knowledge, social workers can re-shape policy discourses and improve policy designs by promoting more comprehensive and effective policy changes to advance social and economic justice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahlquist, J. S., & Breunig, C. (2012). Model-based clustering and typologies in the social sciences. *Political Analysis*, 20(1), 92–112.
- Amundson, K., Zajicek, A. M., & Kerr, B. (2015). A social metamorphosis: Constructing drug addicts from the poor. *Sociological Spectrum*, 35(5), 442–464.
doi:10.1080/02732173.2015.1064799
- Anderson, S. G., Halter, A. P., & Gryzlak, B. M. (2002). Changing safety net of last resort: Downsizing General Assistance for employable adults. *Social Work*, 47(3), 249–258.
- Arcanjo, M. (2012). Unemployment insurance reform–1991–2006: a new balance between rights and obligations in France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. *Social Policy & Administration*, 46(1), 1–20.
- Bartholomew, D. J., Steele, F., Moustaki, I., & Galbraith, J. (2008). *Analysis of multivariate social science data* (2nd ed.). Boca Raton, FL: CRC press.
- Bassi, L. J., & McMurrer, D. P. (1998). Unemployment Insurance in a federal system: A race to the bottom? In *Essays on interstate competition in the Unemployment Insurance system* (Unemployment Insurance Occasional Paper 98-5). Washington, DC: U.S. Unemployment Insurance Service. Retrieved from <https://wdr.doleta.gov/owsdrr/98-5/98-5.pdf>
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559.
- Ben-Ishai, L., McHugh, R., & McKenna, C. (2015). *Out of sync: How Unemployment Insurance rules fail workers with volatile job schedules*. New York, NY: National Employment Law Project.
- Bentele, K. G. (2012). *Evaluating the performance of the U.S. social safety net in the Great Recession*. Retrieved from Center for Social Policy, University of Massachusetts website: http://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_social_policy/Evaluating_the_Performance_of_the_US_Social_Safety_Net_in_the_Great_Recession.pdf.
- Bernstein, J., & Spielberg, B. (2016). *Preparing for the next recession: Lessons from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. Retrieved from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities website: <http://www.cbpp.org/>
- Berry, F. S., & Berry, W. D. (2007). Innovation and diffusion models in policy research. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Bertrand, M., Duflo, E., & Mullainathan, S. (2002). *How much should we trust differences-in-differences estimates?* (Working paper no.19048). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Bivens, J., Smith, J., & Wilson, V. (2014). *State cuts to jobless benefits did not help workers or taxpayers* (Briefing Paper, 380). Retrieved from Economic Policy Institute website: <http://www.epi.org/publication/state-unemployment-insurance-cuts/>

- Buono, R. D. (2015). Reimagining social problems: Moving beyond social constructionism. *Social Problems*, 62, 331–342.
- Burkhalter, A. (2013). With HEN program, DSHS succeeds by doing less with less. *Real Change*. *Real Change News*. Retrieved from <http://realchangenews.org/2013/02/27/hen-program-dshs-succeeds-doing-less-less>
- Burtless, G., & Gordon, T. (2011). The federal stimulus programs and their effects. In D. B. Grusky, B. Western, & C. Wimerk (Eds.), *The Great Recession* (pp. 249–293). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Chang, Y.-L. (2015). Re-Examining the U.S. social safety net for working-age families: Lessons from the Great Recession and its aftermath. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 14(2), 139–161.
- Citro, C. F., & Scholz, J. K. (Eds.). (2009). *Reengineering the survey of income and program participation*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Congressional Budget Office. (2011). Unemployment insurance benefits and family income of the unemployed. In A. D. MacKenna (Ed.), *Unemployment Insurance and its antipoverty effects* (pp. 121–135). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Coulton, C. J., & Crowell, L. (1993). How time-limited eligibility affects General Assistance clients. *Public Welfare*, 51(3), 29–36. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9311103626&site=ehost-live>
- Danziger, S. K. (2010). The decline of cash welfare and implications for social policy and poverty. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 523–545.
- DeNavas-Walt, C., & Proctor, B. D. (2015). Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2014. *Current Population Reports*, 60–252. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Epstein, D., Farina, C. R., & Heidt, J. (2014). The value of words: narrative as evidence in policymaking. *Evidence and Policy*, 10(2), 14–23.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press and Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Everitt, B., & Hothorn, T. (2011). *An introduction to applied multivariate analysis with R*. New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Farber, H. S., & Valletta, R. G. (2013). *Do extended unemployment benefits lengthen unemployment spells? Evidence from recent cycles in the US labor market* (Working Paper No.19048). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 12(2), 219–245.
- Fraley, C., & Raftery, A. E. (1998). How many clusters? Which clustering method? Answers via model-based cluster analysis. *The Computer Journal*, 41(8), 578–588.

- Fraley, C., Raftery, A. E., Murphy, T. B., & Scrucca, L. (2012). *Mclust Version 4 for R: Normal mixture modeling for model-based clustering, classification, and density estimation*. (Technical Report No. 597). Retrieved from Department of Statistics, University of Washington website: <https://www.stat.washington.edu/research/reports/2012/tr597.pdf>
- Freeman, R., Griggs, S., & Boaz, A. (2011). The practice of policymaking. *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, 7(2), 127–136.
- Friese, S. (2013). *ATLAS.ti 7 user guide and reference*. Berlin: Scientific Software Development GmbH.
- Friese, S. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fujita, S. (2010). Economic effects of the unemployment insurance benefit. *Business Review*, Q4, 20–27.
- Gabe, T., & Whittaker, J. M. (2011). Antipoverty effect of unemployment insurance. In A. D. MacKenna (Ed.), *Unemployment Insurance and its antipoverty effects* (pp. 1–40). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Gais, T., Boyd, D., & Dadayan, L. (2012). The social safety net, health care, and the Great Recession. In Ebel, R.D., & Petersen, J. E. (Eds.) *The Oxford handbook of state and local government finance* (pp. 542–593). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Gallagher, L. J. (1999). *A shrinking portion of the safety net: General Assistance from 1989 to 1998*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Gallie, D., & Paugam, S. (2000). The experience of unemployment in Europe: The debate. In D. Gallie & S. Paugam (Eds.), *Welfare regimes and the experience of unemployment in Europe* (pp. 1–22). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Glasby, J., & Beresford, P. (2006). Commentary and issues: Who knows best? Evidence-based practice and the service user contribution. *Critical Social Policy*, 26(1), 268–284.
- Glasby, J., Walshe, K., & Harvey, G. (2007). What counts as “evidence” in evidence-based practice? *Evidence and Policy*, 3(3), 325–327.
- Gordon, R. A., & Heinrich, C. J. (2004). Modeling trajectories in social program outcomes for performance accountability. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 25(2), 161–189.
- Gould-Werth, A., & Shaefer, H. L. (2012). Unemployment Insurance participation by education and by race and ethnicity. *Monthly Labor Review*, 135, 28–41.
- Gould-Werth, A., & Shaefer, H. L. (2013). Do alternative base periods increase Unemployment Insurance receipt among low-educated unemployed workers? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(4), 835–852. doi: 10.1002/pam.21708
- Greenberg, D., Mandell, M., & Onstott, M. (2000). The dissemination and utilization of welfare-to-work experiments in state policymaking. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 19(3), 367–382.
- Grusky, D. B., Western, B., & Wimer, C. (2011). The consequences of the Great Recession. In D. B. Grusky, B. Western, & C. Wimer (Eds.), *The Great Recession* (pp. 3–19). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

- Guetzkow, J. (2010). Beyond deservingness: Congressional discourse on poverty, 1964–1996. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 629, 173–197.
- Halter, A. P. (1992). Homeless in Philadelphia: A qualitative study of the impact of state welfare reform on individuals. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 19, 7–20.
- Halter, A. P. (1994). Chipping away at General Assistance: A matter of economics or an attack on poor people? *Social Work*, 39(6), 705–709. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9411163192&site=ehost-live>
- Head, B. W. (2008). Three lenses of evidence-based policy. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 67(1), 1–11. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8500.2007.00564.x
- Henchman, J. D. (2011). *Unemployment insurance taxes: Options for program design and insolvent trust funds* (Background Paper, 61). Retrieved from Tax Foundation website: <http://taxfoundation.org/article/unemployment-insurance-taxes-options-program-design-and-insolvent-trust-funds>
- Henly, J. R., & Danziger, S. K. (1996). Confronting welfare stereotypes: Characteristics of General Assistance recipients and postassistance employment. *Social Work Research*, 20(4), 217–227. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9612182813&site=ehost-live>
- Hertel-Fernandez, A. (2013). Dismantling Policy through Fiscal Constriction: Examining the Erosion in State Unemployment Insurance Finances. *Social Service Review*, 87(3), 438–476.
- Hird, J. A. (2005). *Power, knowledge, and politics: Policy analysis in the states*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Hoffman, L. (2015). *Longitudinal analysis: Modeling within-person fluctuation and change*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hout, M., Levanon, A., & Cumberworth, E. (2011). Job loss and unemployment. In D. B. Grusky, B. Western, & C. Wimer (Eds.), *The Great Recession* (pp. 59–81). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Howell, D. R., & Azizoglu, B. M. (2011). Unemployment benefits and work incentives: The US labour market in the Great Recession. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 27(2), 211–240.
- Ingram, H., Schneider, A. L., & deLeon, P. (2007). Social construction and policy design. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (2nd ed.) (pp. 93–126). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Isaacs, K. P. (2013). *Unemployment Insurance: Consequences of changes in state unemployment compensation laws*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41859.pdf>

- Joesch, J. M., Short, R., Mancuso, D., Krupski, T., Roy-Byrne, P., Roll, J., Court, B., Hafer, E., Jones, B., & Unutzer, J. (2011). *Evaluation of the General Assistance Managed Care Pilot in King and Pierce Counties for the period January 2008 through September 2009* (Brief Report). Retrieved from Center for Healthcare Improvement for Addictions, Mental Illness and Medically Vulnerable Populations website: <http://www.chammp.org/>
- Johnson, N. (2010). *Laboratories of underfunding? State financing for antipoverty efforts after the Recession*. Paper presented at the Georgetown University and Urban Institute Conference on Reducing Poverty and Economic Distress after ARRA, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/laboratories-underfunding-state-financing-antipoverty-efforts-after-recession>
- Jurik, N., & Cowgill, J. (2005). The construction of client identities in a post-welfare social service program: The double bind of microenterprise development. In A. L. Schneider & H. M. Ingram (Eds.), *Deserving and entitled: Social constructions and public policy* (pp. 173–196.) Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Justice, K. (2013). *2013-15 budget: The good, the bad, and the ugly* (Policy Brief, July 03, 2013). Retrieved from Washington State Budget & Policy Center website: <http://budgetandpolicy.org/schmudget/>
- Kass, R. E., & Raftery, A. E. (1995). Bayes factors. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 90(430), 773–795.
- Kimball, W., & McHugh, R. (2015). *How low can we go? State Unemployment Insurance programs exclude record numbers of jobless workers* (Briefing Paper, 392). Retrieved from Economic Policy Institute website: <http://www.epi.org/publication/how-low-can-we-go-state-unemployment-insurance-programs-exclude-record-numbers-of-jobless-workers/>
- Krueger, A. B., Cramer, J., & Cho, D. (2014). Are the long-term unemployed on the margins of the labor market? *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 229–280.
- Lachin, J. M. (2000). Statistical considerations in the intent-to-treat principle. *Controlled Clinical Trials*, 21(3), 167–189. doi: 10.1016/s0197-2456(00)00046-5
- Lieberman, R. C. (1998). *Shifting the color line: Race and the American welfare state*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lindner, S., & Nichols, A. (2012). *How do Unemployment Insurance modernization laws affect the number and composition of eligible workers?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Lovell, V. (2002). Constructing social citizenship: The exclusion of African American women from unemployment insurance in the US. *Feminist Economics*, 8(2), 191–197.
- Mattingly, T. (2014, June). SIPP sample, weights, and standard errors. PowerPoint slides presented at 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation Workshop, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Meyers, M. K., Gornick, J. C., & Peck, L. R. (2001). Packaging support for low-income families: Policy variation across the United States. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 20(3), 457–483.

- Midgley, J. (2012). Social protection and social policy: Key issues and debates. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 11(1-2), 8–24.
- Mishel, L., & Shierholz, H. (2010). *Two for the price of one: Providing Unemployment Insurance both assists the unemployed and generates jobs* (Issue Brief No. 281). Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Mitchell, M. (2010). Gender and unemployment insurance: Why women receive unemployment benefits at lower rates than men and will unemployment insurance reform close the gender gap? *Texas Journal of Women and the Law*, 20(1), 55–74.
- Moore, J. C. (2008). *Seam bias in the 2004 SIPP panel: Much improved, but much bias still remains* (U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Research Division Survey Methodology Research Report Series, 3). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- National Bureau of Economic Research. (2010). *Business cycle dating committee, September 20*. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/cycles/sept2010.html>
- National Employment Law Project. (2012). *Modernizing Unemployment Insurance: Federal incentives pave the way for state reforms* (Briefing paper, May 2012). Retrieved from http://nelp.3cdn.net/a77bc3b5988571ee4b_dfm6btygh.pdf
- Nicholson, W., Needels, K., & Hock, H. (2014). Unemployment compensation during the Great Recession: Theory and evidence. *National Tax Journal*, 67(1), 187–218.
- Noy, D. (2009). Progressive welfare reform? Ending General Assistance cash grants for homeless people in San Francisco. *Journal of Poverty*, 13(1), 55–73. doi:10.1080/10875540802623393
- O'Connor, A. (2000). Poverty research and policy for the post-welfare era. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 547–562.
- Office of Governor. (2008). *Proposed 2009–2011 budget & policy highlights*. Olympia, WA: Author. Retrieved from <http://digitalarchives.wa.gov/WA.Media/do/F1AF8BA6FC6DA8782FB0E0F021CC299D.pdf>
- Orloff, A. (1996). Gender in the welfare state. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 51–78. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.51
- Orloff, A. S., & Skocpol, T. (1984). Why not equal protection? Explaining the politics of public social spending in Britain, 1900–1911, and the United States, 1880s–1920. *American Sociological Review*, 49(6), 726–750.
- Ozkan, U. R. (2014). Comparing formal unemployment compensation systems in 15 OECD countries. *Social Policy & Administration*, 48(1), 44–66.
- Pallage, S., Scruggs, L., & Zimmermann, C. (2013). Measuring Unemployment Insurance generosity. *Political Analysis*, 21(4), 524–549.

- Pavetti, L., & Rosenbaum, D. (2010, April). *Creating a safety net that works when the economy doesn't: The role of the Food Stamp and TANF programs*. Paper presented at the Georgetown University and Urban Institute Conference on Reducing Poverty and Economic Distress after ARRA. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from: http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412068_food_stamps_tanf.pdf.
- Pennucci, A. (2010). *Washington's General Assistance-Unemployment program: Caseload trends* (Document No. 10-05-4101, May 2010). Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Pennucci, A., Nunlist, C., & Mayfield, J. (2009). *General Assistance programs for unemployable adults* (Document No. 09-12-4101, December 2009). Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Peterson, J. (2008). Unemployment Insurance reform: Elements of a social provisioning approach. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 42(2), 453–460.
- Pierce, J. J., Siddiki, S., Jones, M. D., Schumacher, K., Pattison, A., & Peterson, H. (2014). Social construction and policy design: A review of past applications. *Policy Studies Journal*, 42(1), 1–29. doi:10.1111/psj.12040
- Pierson, P. (1995). Fragmented welfare states: Federal institutions and the development of social policy. *Governance*, 8(4), 449–478. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0491.1995.tb00223.x
- Prasad, N., & Gerecke, M. (2010). Social security spending in times of crisis. *Global Social Policy*, 10(2), 218–247.
- Rosenbaum, D., & Keith-Jennings, B. (2016). *House 2017 budget plan would slash SNAP by more than \$150 billion over ten years: Low-income households in all states would feel sharp effects*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Rothstein, J. (2011). *Unemployment Insurance and job search in the Great Recession* (Working Paper No. 17534). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Ruxton, G. D. (2006). The unequal variance t-test is an underused alternative to Student's t-test and the Mann–Whitney U test. *Behavioral Ecology*, 17(4), 688–690.
- Rycroft-Malone, J., Seers, K., Titchen, A., Harvey, G., Kitson, A., & McCormack, B. (2004). What counts as evidence in evidence-based practice? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 47(1), 81–90. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03068.x
- Sabatier, P. A. (2007). The need for better theories. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (2nd ed.) (pp. 3–17). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Schmid, G. (1995). Institutional incentives to prevent unemployment: Unemployment insurance and active labor market policy in a comparative perspective. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 24(1), 51–103.
- Schneider, A. L. (2012). Punishment policy in the American States from 1890 to 2008: Convergence, divergence, synchronous change, and feed-forward effects. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(2), 193–210.
- Schneider, A. L., & Ingram, H. M. (1997). *Policy design for democracy*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

- Schneider, A., & Ingram, H. (1988). Systematically pinching ideas: A comparative approach to policy design. *Journal of Public Policy*, 8(1), 61–80. doi:10.1017/S0143814X00006851
- Schneider, A., & Sidney, M. (2009). What is next for policy design and social construction theory? *Policy Studies Journal*, 37(1), 103–119. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2008.00298.x
- Schneider, R. L., & Netting, F. E. (1999). Influencing social policy in a time of devolution: Upholding social work's great tradition. *Social Work*, 44(4), 349–357.
- Schott, L., & Cho, C. (2011). *General Assistance programs: Safety net weakening despite increased need*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Schott, L., & Hill, M. (2015). *State General Assistance programs are weakening despite increased need*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Schram, S. F., & Soss, J. (2001). Success stories: Welfare reform, policy discourse, and the politics of research. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 577(1), 49–65.
- Schultz, S. (2009). *General Assistance: New strategies for vital program* (Policy Brief, February 11, 2009). Retrieved from Washington State Budget & Policy Center website: http://budgetandpolicy.org/reports/general-assistance-new-strategies-for-a-vital-program/pdf_version
- Seale, C. (1999). *The quality of qualitative research*. London: Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Shaefer, H. L. (2010). Identifying key barriers to Unemployment Insurance for disadvantaged workers in the United States. *Journal of Social Policy*, 39(3), 439–460. doi:10.1017/S0047279410000218
- Shaefer, H. L., & Wu, L. (2011). Unemployment Insurance and low-educated, single, working mothers before and after welfare reform. *Social Service Review*, 85(2), 205–228.
- Shahidi, F. V. (2015). Welfare capitalism in crisis: A qualitative comparative analysis of labour market policy responses to the Great Recession. *Journal of Social Policy*, 44(04), 659–686.
- Shattuck, A. (2009). *Rural workers would benefit from unemployment insurance modernization*. (The Carsey Institute at the Scholar's Repository, Paper 71). Retrieved from The Carsey Institute website: <http://scholars.unh.edu/carsey/71/>
- Shelton, A. M., Romig, K., & Whittaker, J. M. (2009). *Unemployment insurance provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1623&context=key_workplace
- Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (2003). *Applied longitudinal data analysis: Modeling change and event occurrence*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Skinner, C. (2012). *Protecting the safety net in tough times: Lessons from the states*. Retrieved from National Center for Children in Poverty website: http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1061.html
- Smith, C. P. (1992). *Motivation and personality: Handbook of thematic content analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, D. L., & Wenger, J. B. (2013). State unemployment insurance trust solvency and benefit generosity. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(3), 536–553.
- Snijders, T. A. B., & Bosker, R. J. (2012). *Multilevel analysis: An introduction to basic and advanced multilevel modeling* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Soss, J., Fording, R. C., & Schram, S. (2011). *Disciplining the poor: Neoliberal paternalism and the persistent power of race*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Soss, J., Schram, S. F., Vartanian, T. P., & O'Brien, E. (2001). Setting the terms of relief: Explaining state policy choices in the devolution revolution. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(2), 378–395.
- Szanton, P. L. (1991). The remarkable quango: Knowledge, politics, and welfare reform. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 10(4), 590–602.
- Tatsiramos, K., & Ours, J. C. (2014). Labor market effects of unemployment insurance design. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 28(2), 284–311.
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2014). *Real Personal Income for States and Metropolitan Areas, 2008–2012*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2015). *Real personal income for states and metropolitan areas, 2013*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). *Labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey: Unemployment rate*. Retrieved from <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Source and accuracy statement for the Survey of Income and Program Participation 2008 wave 1 to wave 16 public use files*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sipp/tech-documentation/source-accuracy-statements/source-accuracy-statements-2008.html>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2015b). *UI replacement rates report*. Retrieved from http://www.oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/ui_replacement_rates.asp
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2007a). *Unemployment Insurance data summary: 4th quarter 2007*. Retrieved from http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum07/DataSum_2007_4.pdf
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2007b). *Significant provisions of state UI laws, Jan 2007*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/sigpros/2000-2009/January2007.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2007c). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2007*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2007.asp>

- U.S. Department of Labor. (2008). *Unemployment Insurance data summary: 4th quarter 2008*. Retrieved from http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum08/DataSum_2007_8.pdf
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2011a). *Unemployment Insurance modernization incentive payment state certifications*. Retrieved from: <http://www.doleta.gov/recovery/>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2011b). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2011*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2011.asp>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2014a). *Unemployment Insurance data summary: 4th quarter 2014*. Retrieved from http://www.workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum14/DataSum_2014_4.pdf
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2014b). *Significant provisions of state UI Laws, Jan 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/sigpros/2010-2019/January2014.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2014c). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2014.asp>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2015a). *Significant provisions of state UI Laws, Jan 2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/sigpros/2010-2019/January2015.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor (2015b). *UI replacement rates report*. Retrieved from http://www.oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/ui_replacement_rates.asp
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2015c). *Comparison of state unemployment laws, 2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.unemploymentinsurance.doleta.gov/unemploy/comparison2015.asp>
- U.S. Department of Labor Office of UI Division of Fiscal and Actuarial Services. (2014). *State Unemployment Insurance trust fund solvency report, 2014*. Retrieved from <http://ows.doleta.gov/unemploy/docs/trustFundSolvReport2014.pdf>
- U.S. Social Security Administration. (2000). *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2000*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Unemployment Insurance Program Letter, No. 14-09. (2009). Retrieved from the United States Department of Labor website: http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=2715
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 15(3), 398–405.
- Vroman, W. (2009). *Unemployment insurance: Current situation and potential reforms*. Retrieved from The Urban Institute website: http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/UploadedPDF/411835_unemployment_insurance.pdf
- Vroman, W. (2010a). *The role of Unemployment Insurance as an automatic stabilizer during a recession*. Columbia, MD: IMPAQ International.

- Vroman, W. (2010b). *The Great Recession, Unemployment Insurance, and poverty*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Vroman, W. (2011a). *Unemployment Insurance and the Great Recession* (Unemployment and Recovery Project Working Paper, 2). Retrieved from Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/unemployment-insurance-and-great-recession>
- Vroman, W. (2011b). *Unemployment Insurance: Problems and prospects* (NASI Policy Brief 2). Retrieved from National Academy of Social Insurance website: <https://www.nasi.org/research/2011/unemployment-insurance-problems-prospects>
- Vroman, W. (2012). *Financing Unemployment Insurance after the Great Recession*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Vroman, W., & Brusentsev, V. (2005). *Unemployment compensation throughout the world: A comparative analysis*. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute.
- Walker, J. L. (1969). The diffusion of innovations among the American states. *American Political Science Review*, 63, 880–899.
- Washington State Budget & Policy Center. (2012). *Lobbying 101* [Training material]. Seattle, WA: Author.
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (2006). *GA-U Clients: Challenges and Opportunities* (Report 6.54). Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/rda/documents/research-6-54.pdf>
- Washington State Employment Security Department. (2010, September 17). Unemployment Insurance Advisory Committee September 17, 2010, Executive Summary. Retrieved from <https://esd.wa.gov/>
- Washington State Legislative Evaluation & Accountability Program Committee. (2009). *Washington State Legislative budget note*. Retrieved from <http://leap.leg.wa.gov/leap/budget/lbns/2009lbn.pdf>
- Washington State Legislature. (n.d.). *Overview of the legislative process*. Retrieved from <http://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Overview.aspx>
- Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2011). *Policy analysis: concepts and practice* (5th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice-Hall.
- White, D., & VanLandingham, G. (2015). Benefit-cost analysis in the states: Status, impact, and challenges. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, 6(02), 369–399.
- Whittaker, J. M., & Isaacs, K. P. (2012). *Unemployment insurance: Programs and benefits*. Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Retrieved from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33362.pdf>
- Williams, L. A., & Woo, M. Y. (1995). The “worthy” unemployed: Societal stratification and Unemployment Insurance programs in China and the United States. *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, 33, 457–519.

PAPER 3 APPENDIX

Appendix 1. A list of legislative video archives and related documents.

Date & Type	Committee	Agenda	Length	Document(s)
01/12/2009 work session	House Committee on Human Services	General Assistance- Unemployable: Overview and Briefing	0:31:35	P1 ^v , P33 ^p Washington State DSHS (2006)
01/22/2009 work session	House Committee on Human Services	General Assistance- Unemployable: in-depth look at services and resources	1:20:10	P2 ^v , P34 ^p
02/11/2009 work session	Senate Committee on Ways & Means	General Assistance- Unemployable (GAU)	1:23:35	P3 ^v , P35 ^p
12/04/2009 work session	House Committee on Human Services	Savings and efficiencies in the GA	20:00	P5 ^v , P36 ^p , Pennucci et al. (2009)
01/21/2010 public hearing	House Committee on Human Services	HB 2782 reorganizing delivery of services to recipients of public assistance	1:07:53	P6 ^v , P38 ^b
01/28/2010 executive session	House Committee on Human Services	HB 2782 1st substitute bill be substituted	8:26	P7 ^v , P39 ^a
02/06/2010 public hearing	House Committee on Ways & Means	HB 2782 reorganizing delivery services to recipients of public assistance	0:33:30	P8 ^v
02/09/2010 executive session	House Committee on Ways & Means	HB 2782 2nd substitute bill be substituted	8:18	P9 ^v , P40 ^b
02/12/2010 floor action	The House	House floor debate	0:59:33	P10 ^v , P41 ^a
02/23/2010 public hearing	Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections	2SHB 2782 Concerning the Security Lifeline Act	0:59:01	P11 ^v , P42 ^b
02/25/2010 executive session	Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections	2SHB 2782 Concerning the Security Lifeline Act	0:06:01	P12 ^v
03/02/2010 public hearing	Senate Committee on Ways & Means	2SHB 2782 Concerning the Security Lifeline Act	0:23:32	P13 ^v , P43 ^b
03/08/2010 executive session	Senate Committee on Ways & Means	2SHB 2782 Security Lifeline Act	0:04:07	P14 ^v , P44 ^b
03/19/2010 floor action	The House	2SHB 2782 Security Lifeline Act	0:39:46	P15 ^v
03/22/2010 floor action	The Senate	Floor debate on pending legislation E2HB 2782	0:26:47	P16 ^v , P45 ^a
03/23/2010 floor action	The House	E2SHB 2782	9:05	P17 ^v

12/07/2010 work session	House Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee	Disability Lifeline Program Implementation Update	0:25:32	P18 ^v , P46 ^p
01/11/2011 work session	House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services	Implementation of E2SHB 2782	1:22:59	P19 ^v , P49 ^p
01/12/2011 work session	Senate Committee on Health and Long-Term Care Committee	Disability Lifeline	0:23:00	P20 ^v , P47 ^p
01/26/2011 work session	Senate Committee on Health and Long-Term Care Committee	Bridge waiver for Basic Health Plan and Disability Lifeline: Medicaid Purchasing Administration	0:14:54	P21 ^v , P48 ^p
01/31/2011 work session	Senate Committee on Ways & Means	Overview of Disability Lifeline Cash & Medical Assistance Programs	0:53:02	P22 ^v , P28 ^p (Joesch et al., 2011)
05/05/2011 public hearing	House Committee on Ways & Means	HB 2082 Making changes to the Disability Lifeline program	0:46:39	P23 ^v , P29 ^b
05/11/2011 executive session	House Committee on Ways & Means	HB 2082 Making changes to the Disability Lifeline program	0:23:35	P24 ^v , P30 ^b
05/13/2015 floor action	The House	HB 2082 Making changes to the Disability Lifeline program	0:22:04	P25 ^v
05/18/2011 public hearing	Senate Ways & Means Committee	ESHB 2082 concerning the long-term Disability Assistance program and the Essential Needs and Housing Support program	0:29:52	P26 ^v , P31 ^b
05/23/2011 executive session	Senate Ways & Means Committee	ESHB 2082 concerning the long-term Disability Assistance program and the Essential Needs and Housing Support program	0:09:16	P27 ^v , P32 ^b , P50 ^b

Note. ^a Amendment, ^b bill analysis or bill report, ^p presentation slide, ^v video archive

EDUCATION

PhD	University of Washington Concentration in Public Policy and Management Certificate in Statistics Track in Social Science Dissertation: <i>State Social Safety Net Programs and the Great Recession: The First Line of Defense and the Last Resort for the Economically Disadvantaged</i> Committee: Dr. Marcia K. Meyers (Chair), Dr. Jennifer Romich, Dr. Melissa Martinson, and Dr. Jerald R. Herting	June 2016
MSW	National Taiwan University Concentration in Women and Gender Studies	June 2006
BSW	National Taiwan University	June 2003

AWARDS, HONORS, GRANTS, & FELLOWSHIPS

Washington State Labor Research Grant	04/2015–06/2015
Teaching Poverty 101 Workshop Training Grant, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison	05/2015
Training Grant, Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences, University of Washington (UW)	01/2015
Social Policy Research Fellowship, West Coast Poverty Center, UW	02/2012–06/2014
Survey of Income and Program Participation, Introduction & Advanced Workshops Training Grants, University of Michigan	06/2013 & 06/2014
Lee Student Support Fund, Society for the Study of Social Problems	05/2014
Graduate and Professional Student Senate Travel Grant, UW	05/2014
Fragile Families Data Workshop Training Grant, Columbia University	07/2013
Studying Abroad Scholarship, Ministry of Education, Taipei, Taiwan	08/2010–07/2013
Commendation for Extraordinary Effort, Taipei City Government	2007 & 2009
Presidential Award, Dept. of Social Work, National Taiwan University	09/2001 & 02/2002

RESEARCH INTERESTS & EXPERIENCE

Interests

Poverty and income inequality, social policies and human service programs, workforce and labor studies, child and family wellbeing, immigrant studies, international social welfare

Experience

State Social Safety Net Programs and the Great Recession, <i>Principal Investigator</i>	08/2014–present
Chinese Children and Health Well-Being: Low Birthweight and Obesity Determinants and Disparities, <i>Pre-doctoral Research Associate</i>	01/2015–present
How Safe are State Safety Nets? <i>Pre-doctoral Research Intern</i>	06/2011–present
Economic Security of Working Families and Income Support Programs in Washington State, <i>Principal Investigator</i>	10/2013–07/2014
Race, Class, Place, and Educational Attainment for African American Students, <i>Co-investigator</i>	01/2011–07/2011
Social Survey on Taipei 1206K03 Demolition in Zhongzheng District, <i>Principal Investigator</i>	05/2007–09/2007
Microenterprises of Low-Income Women, <i>Principal Investigator</i>	04/2005–06/2006
Historical Development of Social Welfare in Taiwan, <i>Research Assistant</i>	06/2004–01/2006

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Publications

- Chang, Y.-L.** (2016, October, forthcoming). An overview of the General Assistance. R. Rycroft (Ed.). *The American middle class: An economic encyclopedia of progress and poverty*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2015). Re-examining the U.S. social safety net for working-age families: Lessons from the Great Recession and its aftermath. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 14(2), 139–161.
- Bartle, E., Barretti, M., & **Chang, Y.-L.** (2015). Policy practice framework. S. J. Roll (Ed.). *Macro Practice in Social Work: From Learning to Action for Social Justice*. Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work. Work Group #2: Knowledge Development, Transmission, and Application.
- Storer, H. L., Mienko, J. A., **Chang, Y.-L.**, Kang, J. Y., Miyawaki, C., & Schultz, K. (2012). Moving beyond dichotomies: How the intersection of race, class and place impacts high school graduation rates for African American students. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 39(1), 17–45.
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2007). *Research methods for social work*. (Chen, J.P., & **Chang, Y.-L.** et al., Trans.). Taipei: Wu-Nan Culture Enterprise. (Original work published 2005)
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2006). *Microenterprise experience of economically disadvantaged women in Taiwan*. Master's Thesis. Department of Social Work, National Taiwan University.

Manuscripts under Review or In Progress

- Martinson, M. L., **Chang, Y.-L.**, Han, W.-J., & Wen, J. (under review). Social determinants of child overweight and obesity in Shanghai, China.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (in progress). A longitudinal study on the effects of state Unemployment Insurance modernization on the economic security of American working families.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (in progress). The politics of knowledge and poverty: A case study of Washington State's reform of the General Assistance program.
- Chang, Y.-L.**, Bruch, S. K., & Meyers, M. K. (in progress). State welfare regimes in the post-welfare reform era: A model-based cluster analysis approach.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (in progress). Unequal social protection for American workers: Exploring state Unemployment Insurance policy approaches.
- Cao, Y., & **Chang, Y.-L.** (in progress). A widening or shrinking income gap between rural and urban areas? Evidence on the minimum standards of living in China.

Peer-Reviewed Conference Presentations

- Martinson, M. L., **Chang, Y.-L.**, Han, W. J., & Wen, J. (2016, June). *Child overweight and obesity in Shanghai, China*. Joint World Conference Social Work, Education and Social Development, Seoul, Korea.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2016, March). *Economic restructuring, poverty discourses, and stratified social protection systems: A cross-national comparison of the U.S. and China*. Relational Poverty Network 3rd Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA.
- Martinson, M. L., **Chang, Y.-L.**, Han, W. J., & Wen, J. (2016, January). *Social determinates of child obesity in Shanghai, China: Comparing Chinses and US Disparity Patterns*. Society for Social Work and Research 20th Annual Conference, Washington, DC.
- Martinson, M. L., **Chang, Y.-L.**, Han, W. J., & Wen, J. (2015, November). *Social determinates of child overweight and obesity in Shanghai, China: Understanding Chinese Disparities*. Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management 37th Annual Conference, Miami, FL.
- Martinson, M. L., **Chang, Y.-L.**, Han, W. J., & Wen, J. (2015, October). *Social determinates of child obesity in Shanghai, China*. The Lancet-China Academy of Medical Sciences Health Summit, Beijing, China.
- Chang, Y.-L.**, Bruch, S. K., & Meyers, M. K. (2015, January). *Exploring geographic disparities in the state social safety nets in the post-welfare reform era*. Society for Social Work and Research 19th Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2015, January). *State Unemployment Insurance Modernization and economic recovery of American working-age families after the Great Recession*. Society for Social Work and Research 19th Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2014, November). *The effect of state Unemployment Insurance Modernization on economic recovery of working families*. Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management 36th Annual Conference, Albuquerque, NM.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2014, October). *Re-examining policy and programmatic responses to poverty and the Great Recession*. Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting, Tampa, FL.

- Chang, Y.-L.** (2014, October). *The politics of knowledge and poverty: A case study of recent policy reforms of the General Assistance program in Washington State*. Relational Poverty Network 1st Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2014, August). *Re-examining the U.S. social safety net for working-age families: Lessons from the Great Recession and Its Aftermath*. Society for the Study of Social Problems the 64th Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2014, May). *Re-examining the policy responses of the U.S. social safety net during and after the Great Recession: Lessons for policy research and practice*. Policy Conference 2.0, Austin, TX.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2014, January). *Knowledge, politics, and welfare reform: Examining policy changes in the General Assistance program in Washington State*. Society for Social Work and Research 18th Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX.
- Chang, Y.-L. & Meyers, M. K.** (2013, January). *Explaining state variation in welfare generosity of TANF and SNAP in the 2000s*. Society for Social Work and Research 17th Annual Conference, San Diego, CA.

Invited Professional Presentations

- Chang, Y.-L.** (2015, December). *State social safety net programs and the Great Recession: The first line of defense and the last resort for the economically disadvantaged*. UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare Winter Public Lecture Series, Berkeley, CA.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2015, April). *State Unemployment Insurance Modernization and economic well-being of working families during and after the Great Recession*. Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies & Center for Studies and Demography and Ecology joint seminar, Seattle, WA.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2014, February). *Public policies and economic security of working-age families*. Graduate Student Research Symposium for the Washington State Legislature, Olympia, WA.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2009, June). *Social work interventions for at-risk families*. Regional Conference for Prevention Services for At-Risk Families, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2008, December). *A case study of using integrative social and health service to assist a depressed single mother to reconstruct her life*. Case Conference for Community-Based Mental Health Service, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Chang, Y.-L.** (2007, March). *Preventive services for children in at-risk families*. Educational Training at the Dong Men Elementary School, Taipei, Taiwan.

TEACHING INTERESTS & EXPERIENCE

Interests

Poverty and inequality, social welfare policies, social work macro practice, social research method and statistics, program evaluation

Experience

University of Washington

Poverty and Inequality, <i>Sole-instructor</i> (MSW course)	01/2015–03/2015
Poverty and Inequality, <i>Co-instructor</i> (MSW course)	09/2014–12/2014
Introduction to Social Welfare Practice, <i>Teaching Assistant</i> (BSW course)	09/2014–12/2014
Time-Related Issues in Longitudinal Studies, <i>Co-lecturer</i> (PhD course)	11/2013
Macro Practice: Organizations and Policy Practice, <i>Co-instructor</i> (MSW course)	04/2012–06/2012

East China Normal University

The U.S. Poverty Measures and Income Support Policies, <i>Guest Lecturer</i>	03/2015
--	---------

National Taiwan University

Social Work Practicum: Child and Family Service, <i>Field Instructor</i>	06/2009–08/2009
Social Work Research Methods, <i>Teaching Assistant</i> (BSW course)	09/2004–06/2005
Social Statistics, <i>Teaching Assistant</i> (BSW course)	09/2003–06/2005

National Taiwan Normal University

Social Work Practicum: Child and Family Service, <i>Field Instructor</i>	06/2009–08/2009
--	-----------------

Soochow University

Social Work Practicum: Child and Family Service, <i>Field Instructor</i>	06/2008–08/2008
--	-----------------

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Post-MSW Experience

Washington State Budget and Policy Center <i>Policy Analyst Extern</i>	10/2013–07/2014
---	-----------------

Zhongzheng Social Welfare Center, Taipei City Government, Taiwan <i>Licensed Social Worker</i>	08/2006–06/2010
--	-----------------

Pre-MSW Experience

Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan <i>Intern</i>	07/2004–08/2004
---	-----------------

Modern Women's Foundation, Taiwan

02/2004–06/2004

Intern

The Child Welfare League Foundation, Taiwan

09/2002–01/2003

Intern

Shilin Social Welfare Center, Taipei City Government, Taiwan

07/2002–08/2002

Intern

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS & SERVICE

Professional Affiliations

Influencing Social Policy

2016

Council on Social Work Education

2014–present

Society for the Study of Social Problems

2014–present

Relational Poverty Network

2014–present

Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management

2013–present

Society for Social Work and Research

2011–present

Taiwan Association of Professional Social Workers

2003–present

Academic & Community Service

Cross-school Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work Education, *Member*

2014–present

UW PhD Visit Day for Prospective Students, *Student Panelist*

03/2015

UW Doctoral Program in Social Welfare Admissions Committee, *Student Representative*

12/2014–02/2015

Society for Social Work and Research Doctoral Student Task Force, *International Student Representative*

2014–2015

Social Work Labor Justice Series: Minimum Wage Session, *Moderator*

05/2014

UW School of Social Work, *First-year Doctoral Student Mentor*

07/2012–06/2013