

Interview Template: UI federal

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A. Starting off

- “Thank you so much for meeting with me”
- Discuss **CONSENT FORM** and **ATTRIBUTION**
- Recording: (**PRESS BUTTON TWICE, CHECK RECORDING AND LEVELS**)
- “My thesis is about federal-state relations in social policy; specifically welfare and unemployment insurance. Today I want to focus on unemployment insurance and how UI policy changes during the crisis affected federal-state relations. What I’m interested in are federal policies that affected states and state behavior that affects the federal government in UI. This includes provisions from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the 2012 Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act. These provisions are the ones I sent in advance, but just as a reminder, these include:

The extensions of the emergency compensation program, the 100% federally funded extended benefits and related to that the TUR trigger, the increase in weekly benefit amounts (FAC), the UI modernization payments, the work search requirements and mandatory reemployment and eligibility assessment activities and the nonreduction rule.

Then there is the management of state trust funds and how that affected federal state relations. (And finally, I’m interested in the changes to performance measurement in the Workforce Investment Act during the 2014 reauthorization, as it relates to individuals who receive UI.) [Q1]”

B. Coherence and motivation behind this set of policy changes

1. Do you think the UI provisions I just listed are related to each other?

- Why or why not?
- Do they form a coherent set of policy changes?
- Do they relate to the management of state UI trust funds and the changes to in the WIA-WIOA?

2. The motivation behind the extension of benefits obviously includes an element of counter cyclical income replacement. But what do you think is the motivation behind these UI provisions in the 2009 and 2012 acts?

Possibly supplement with options:

- Efficiency, because certain governments already have congruent responsibilities
- Respect for state autonomy
- Concerns about the behavior and/or incentives of states (lack of activation, driving up federal costs)
- To improve the lives of low-income/jobless individuals

[Ask specifics: why? How was this expressed? Can you give a practical example?]

C. The relevance of federal-state relations and IMH for this set of UI policy changes

3. Did federal-state relations play any role in the aforementioned UI provisions, if so how?

- Why, or why not?
- Was it important for the reform?
- What role for the intergovernmental funding structure?
[ask about STATE UI TRUST FUND MANAGEMENT if not mentioned]
- What role for the division of competences?

[Ask specifics: how was this expressed? Can you give a practical example?]

4. What role, if any, did concerns about the behavior and/or incentives of states (how states spent resources or design policies) play in the federal UI legislation that we discussed?

- How did this express itself?

- Can you give a practical policy example? [ask about STATE UI TRUST FUND MANAGEMENT if not mentioned]	
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D. Effect of UI changes during the crisis on federal state relations

5. Before the crisis, states had a lot of autonomy in designing their own UI system and in their reemployment efforts. Is it fair to say that state autonomy with regard to these two elements was reduced during the crisis? - Is this correct? Why or why not? - Are there any lasting changes, beyond the crisis?	
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E. Policy remedies to IMH

6. Where there any federal concerns about the behavior of states or the incentives of states with regard to their UI system and reemployment systems? If so were these concerns explicitly addressed? - If not, how would you characterize federal legislation like the nonreduction rule, the work search requirements and WIOA performance measurement? - If so, was it successful? - If so, how exactly did it mitigate IMH [concerns about state behavior]? - Why was this type of remedy chosen? - What was the response of states to UI provisions we discussed?	
7. Were there other policies considered that related to concerns about state behavior/incentives? - Were they implemented, and why (not)? - How did they work?	

F. Perceptions and motivations of other government levels

8. How would you characterize relations between federal and state policy-makers during and after the crisis with regard to UI? - Were there stumbling blocks in terms of federal-state relations and if so what was the biggest one? - How did this relate to the initial motivation behind the set of policy changes we mentioned at the start? - Was there concern about IMH? - Was there concern about federal overreach? [Ask for specifics: how was this expressed? Can you give an example?]	
9. How did federal policy-makers perceive states and vice-versa? - As partners in reform, as budget-maximizers, as maximizing their autonomy or primarily concerned about electoral politics in their own constituency? - [Ask specifics: how did this express itself? Can you give an example?]	

G. Reflecting on Institutional Moral Hazard

“For my research project, I frame federal funding for UI as an 'intergovernmental' – or 'federal-state' – insurance. Federal funding, partially, insures states against the costs of UI dependency. Any insurance entails some level of moral hazard. Moral hazard means the ability of the insured party to influence the insured risk. A classic example is that when a person is insured for the cost of visiting the doctor, that that person will visit the doctor more often. In the case of UI, because of federal funding, states may be less inclined to reduce UI dependency vis-à-vis a situation without federal funding and/or they may be inclined to find other ways to maximize federal funding. I call this phenomenon ‘Institutional Moral Hazard’. In other words, the moral hazard of states. What I want to analyze is whether the federal government has any concerns about what I call Institutional moral hazard with regard to UI, if and how the federal government addresses these potential concerns and in turn how that might affects state autonomy and how states reflect on such potential federal concerns.”
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10. Do you think that this framework to analyze federal-state politics makes sense? - If so/not, why? Do the governments involved ever conceive of their relationship as a type of insurance-relationship, you think? 11. How would you characterize federal-state relations in UI at this moment(, keeping that frame of institutional moral hazard in mind)? - Keeping in mind this institutional moral hazard frame [if interviewee thinks it makes sense] - Are there currently any important stumbling blocks? - If so: Are there any solutions for these stumbling blocks considered? If so, which and why? If not: what makes the current federal-state relation working so smooth?	
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H. Wrapping up

- Thank you so much, do you have any questions for me? - Is there something we left out? - Who should I talk to, to learn more? - You know how to get in touch? - Again, thank you so much!

Additional Notes:

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