

Food Insecurity Framing and Policy Implications

PROOF CIHR Programmatic Grant

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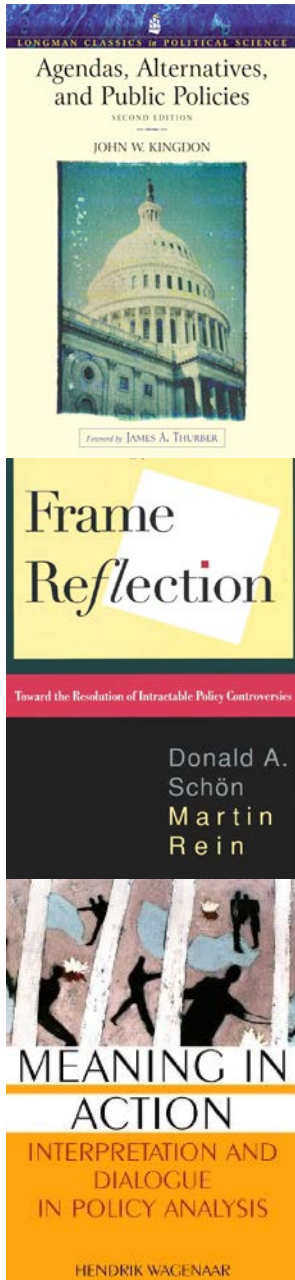
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PROJECT 4

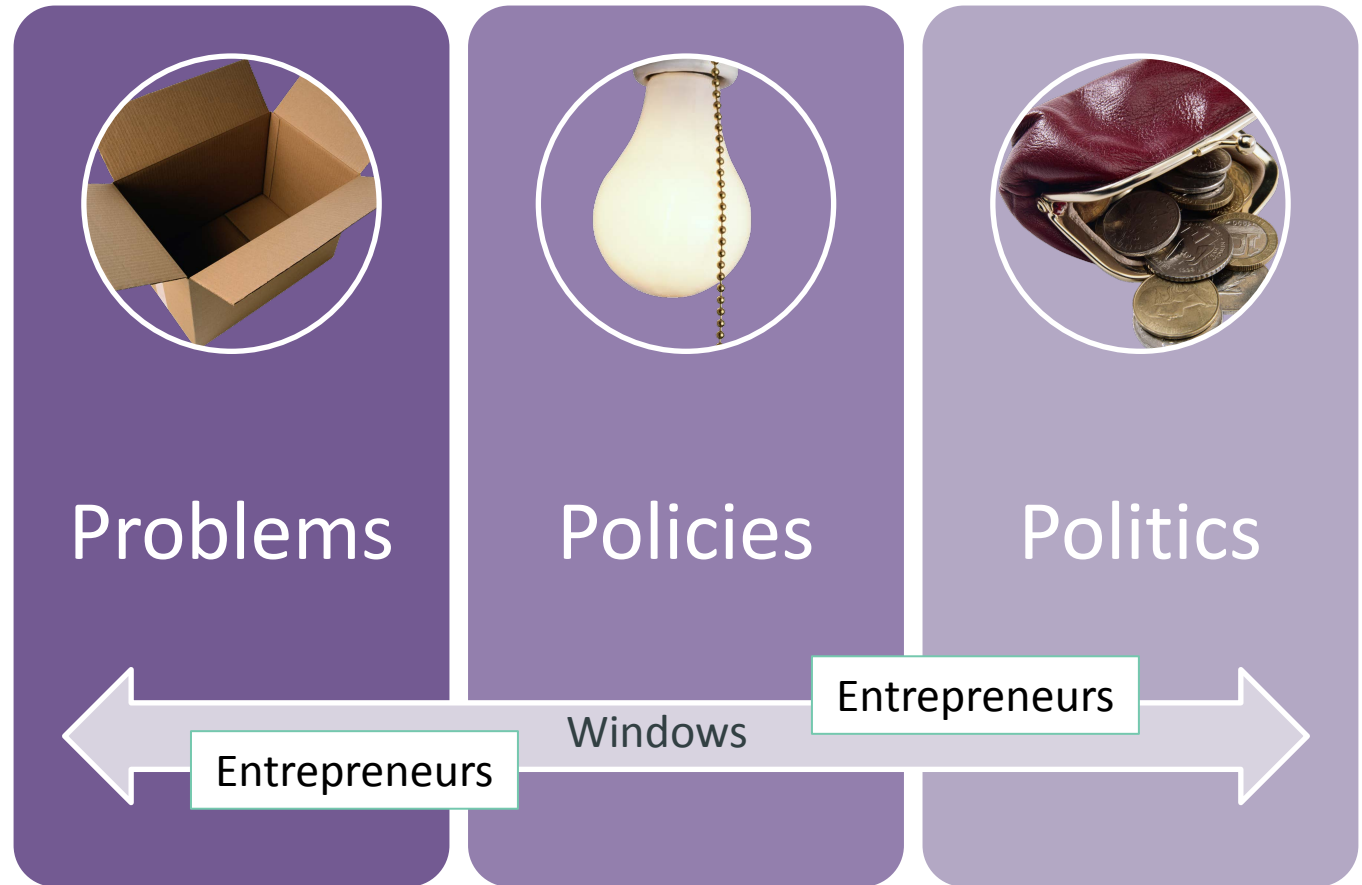
HOW IS HOUSEHOLD
FOOD INSECURITY
DEFINED AND SOCIALLY
CONSTRUCTED AS A
POLICY PROBLEM IN
CANADA?

PUBLICATIONS

- McIntyre L, Patterson PB, Anderson LC, Mah CL. (2016) **Household food insecurity in Canada: Problem definition and potential solutions in the public policy domain.** *Canadian Public Policy*, doi: 10.3138/cpp.2015-066
- McIntyre L, Lukic R, Patterson PB, Anderson LC, Mah CL. (2016) **Legislation debated as responses to household food insecurity in Canada, 1995-2012.** *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* doi:/10.1080/19320248.2016.1157551
- Patterson PB, McIntyre L, Anderson LC, Mah CL. (2016) **Political rhetoric from Canada can inform healthy public policy argumentation.** *Health Promotion International* doi: 10.1093/heapro/daw019
- McIntyre L, Tougas D, Rondeau K, Mah CL. (2016) **“In”-sights about food banks from a critical interpretive synthesis of the academic literature.** *Agriculture and Human Values* doi: 10.1007/s10460-015-9674-z
- Mah CL, Hamill C, Rondeau K, McIntyre L. (2014) **A frame-critical policy analysis of Canada’s response to the World Food Summit 1998-2008.** *Archives of Public Health* doi:10.1186/2049-3258-72-41
- McIntyre L, Patterson PB, Anderson LC, Mah CL. **A great or heinous idea?: Why food waste diversion renders policy discussants apoplectic.** *Critical Public Health*, in press
- McIntyre L, Patterson PB, Mah CL. **A framing analysis of household food insecurity within the Canadian political arena illustrates the co-construction of an intractable policy problem.** *Critical Policy Studies*, in press

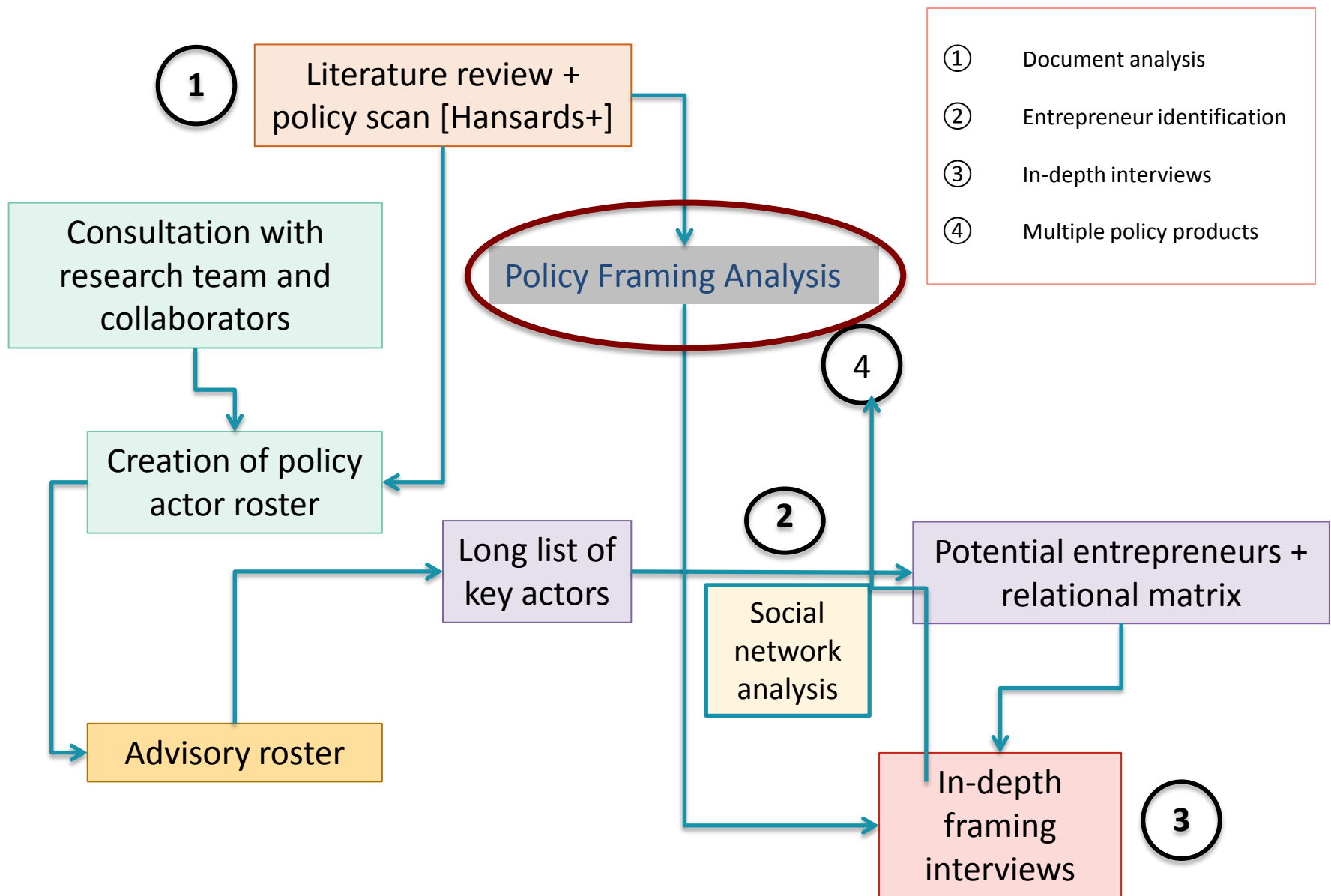


Framing analysis: What is the problem? Who is responsible? What needs to be done?



PROJECT 4—METHODS OVERVIEW

- **DOCUMENTS (1995-2012)**
 - Comprehensive Hansard set (Fed, BC, ON, NS)
 - Fed House debates and selected standing committees
 - BC, NS, debates
 - Government documents (BC, NS, ON)
 - Academic literature (refined for specific papers)
- **POLICY ACTORS & ENTREPRENEURS**
 - Roster >> survey – Social Network Analysis >> entrepreneurs, vignette interviews
- Frame-critical analysis, interpretive policy analysis, critical interpretive synthesis



FRAMING ANALYSIS: SUMMARY

Food banks (and food bank-related legislation) dominate as a policy solution

YET

Consensual understandings

- Household food insecurity is a result of inadequate financial resources
- Food charity model falls short as a solution to food insecurity
- The public policy sphere is invoked as a solution

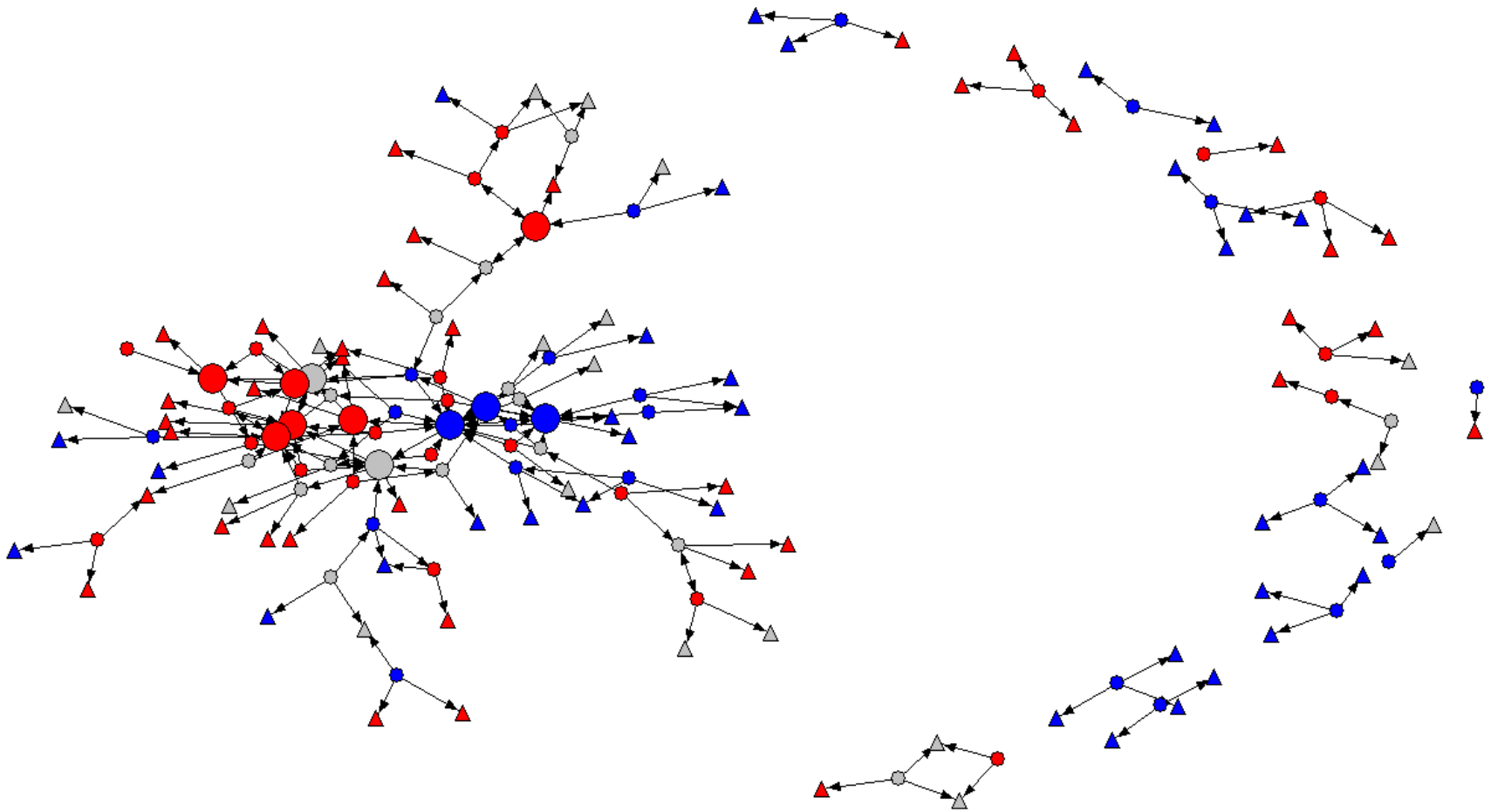
Expected divergences in food insecurity talk along the political spectrum

NONETHELESS

Polarization

- Food (including food waste diversion vs income [poverty reduction])
- Food insecurity is an intractable policy problem

FIGURE | Food insecurity policy network representation, colour-coded by approach (red: food-based, blue: income-based, grey: mixed) (n=160)



SNA generated a group largely reflective of existing structural divides rather than demonstrating entry points for policy



Getty

Food bank use is the problem and the solution is to **build better food banks**

An **intractable problem** is one that has been resistant to resolution through dedicated interventions, due to the presence of competing frames

(Schön and Rein 1994)

FRAMING FOR MORAL OUTRAGE

The number of children who are hungry has gone up by 50%....We're talking about children who go to school and can't learn properly because they are hungry and they are cold...**Your government has offered these children absolutely no hope at all that their lives will be better**...Just tell them that they have to go to bed hungry, that they have to do their part so you can deliver your tax cut to the wealthy Ontarians. (Lyn McLeod, LIB, Opposition, Ontario Hansard, 1996)

WHY FOOD INSECURITY POLICY LACKS TRACTION

- Food insecurity is a **substantive, persistent, policy-sensitive problem** that is **imbued with meaning**, and has become metaphorical code for **government failure, provoking moral outrage** so all action appears paltry.
- The result is inaction.



BE PRACTICAL | SUPPORT HARDWORKING CITIZENS | PROTECT VULNERABLE

RHETORIC MATTERS

- Legislators' engagement with food insecurity driven by its **symbolic political utility to opposition members**, not as substantive policy problem needing solution
- **Co-construction of intractability** >> inaction based on competing accounts of **who abrogated their moral authority**
- Rhetoric in opposition is both symbolically and substantively different from governing rhetoric
- System-level interventions may require argumentation and approaches that **do not rely on consensus**



Seniors
Mothers
Children
Working poor
Fixed incomes
Vulnerable (veterans,
disabled, homeless)
**Absent populations
(Indigenous)**

DO OUR PUBLIC
HEALTH STORIES
PERPETUATE
INEQUITY?

WAYS FORWARD: TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT POLICY

- **Paltry consensus** (helping hand, incremental changes dependent on individuals?)
- **Emotional distancing** (concrete poverty reduction objective rather than a goal of poverty eradication?) Is food insecurity a better metric than a policy problem?
- Do we need to reconcile **divergent worldviews?** (Humanist vs. ecological)
- More **effective argumentation?** Alliances? Evidence?
- **Momentum around basic income**

THANK YOU



CONFERENCE: NOVEMBER 17-18, 2016
Hart House, University of Toronto

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affected by food insecurity.

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