

Policy framing of household food insecurity in Canada:

Why getting the problem wrong leads to faulty solutions

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A short tribute to Paul Bernard

Journal of Affective Disorders 118 (2011) 121–129

Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Journal of Affective Disorders

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jad




Preliminary communication

Depression and suicide ideation in late adolescence and early adulthood are an outcome of child hunger

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history:
Received 23 October 2012
Accepted 6 November 2012
Available online 29 December 2012

Keywords:
Depression
Suicide
Health
Longitudinal
Population studies

Background: Child hunger represents an adverse experience that could contribute to mental health problems in later life. The objectives of this study were to (1) examine the long term effects of the reported experience of child hunger on late adolescence and young adult mental health outcomes, and (2) model the independent contribution of the child hunger experience to these long term mental health outcomes in consideration of other experiences of child disadvantage.

Methods: Using logistic regression, we analyzed data from the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth covering 1994 through 2008/2009, with data on hunger and other exposures drawn from NLSY Cycle 1 (1994) through Cycle 7 (2006/2007) and mental health data drawn from Cycle 8 (2008/2009). Our main mental health outcome was a composite measure of depression and suicidal ideation.

Results: The prevalence of child hunger was 5.7% (95% CI 5.0–6.4). Child hunger was a robust predictor of depression and suicidal ideation (OR = 1.9, 95% CI 1.4–2.6) even when adjustment for associated

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When working is not enough: food insecurity in the Canadian labour force

Lynn McIntyre, Aaron C. Barton and JC Herbert Emery

Public Health Nutrition / First View Article / September 2012, pp 1 - 9
DOI: 10.1017/S13688012004053

Link to this article: <http://journals.cambridge.org/hyg/abstract/S13688012004053>

How to cite this article:
Lynn McIntyre, Aaron C. Barton and JC Herbert Emery When working is not enough: food insecurity in the Canadian labour force. Public Health Nutrition. Available on CJO. doi:10.1017/S13688012004053

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Outline

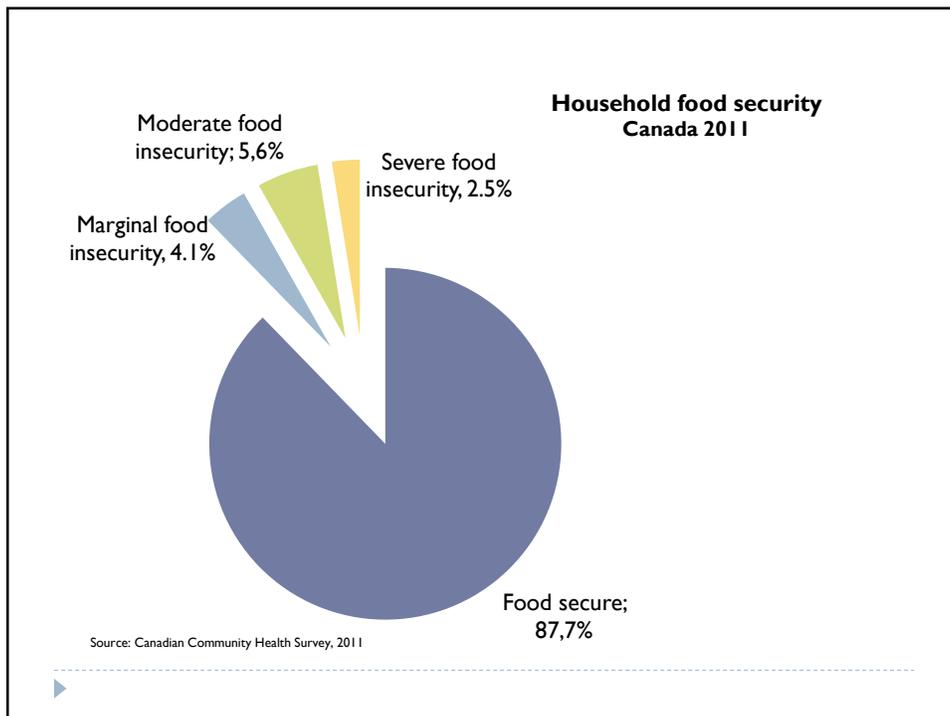
- ▶ Food insecurity as an intractable policy problem
- ▶ Policy framing analysis
- ▶ Four examples
- ▶ Final words

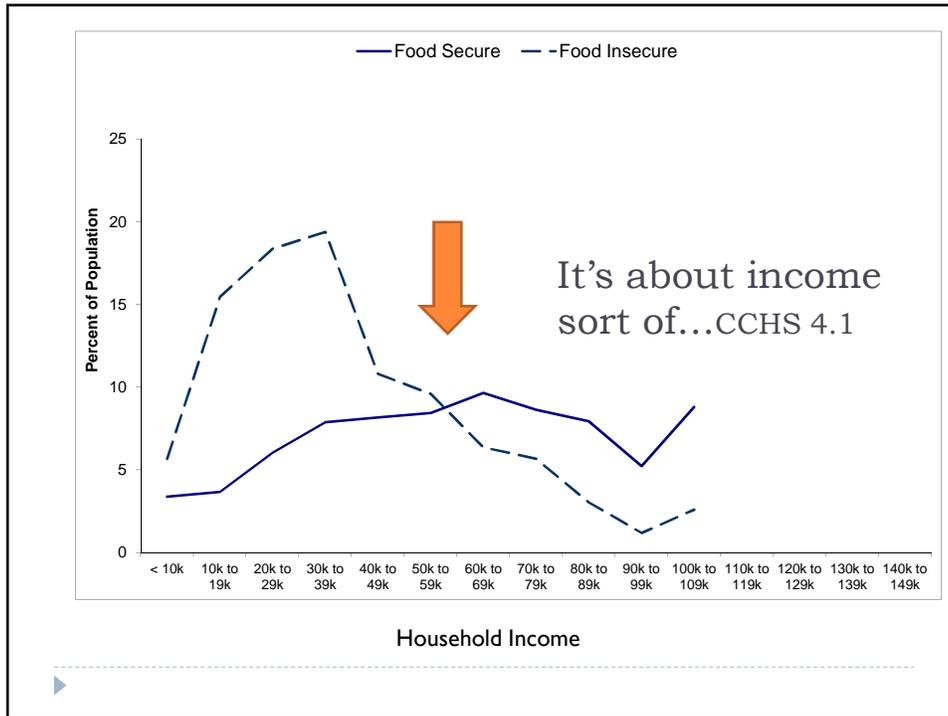
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Food Insecurity is defined as inadequate or insecure access to adequate food due to financial constraints

Food insecurity is an intractable policy problem

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-
- Drivers of Food Insecurity** **Linked policies**
- ▶ Low income as well as income shocks
 - ▶ Workforce participation , and education, partially protect but labour market practices can perpetuate food insecurity
 - ▶ Structural determinants that leave certain groups vulnerable
- ▶ Income support
 - ▶ Income volatility protection
 - ▶ Labour protection
 - ▶ Social protection/transfers
 - ▶ Higher education access
-

Dominant responses in the name of food (in)security

- ▶ Food banks
- ▶ Community gardens
- ▶ Farmers' markets
- ▶ School food programs
- ▶ Community kitchens
- ▶ Community-supported agriculture
- ▶ Food-related community economic development

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PROOF
Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity

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Food insecurity is a serious public health problem that affects over 3.8 million Canadians.

Who we are

PROOF is an international, interdisciplinary team of researchers who are committed to the reduction of household food insecurity, which is the inadequate or insecure access to adequate food due to financial constraints.

Our mandate

In 2011, the Government of Canada's health research investment agency, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) awarded 11 Programmatic Grants to Tackle Health and Health Equity in Canada. Our team was privileged to receive one of these grants to execute a five-year research program to identify viable and effective policy interventions to improve household food insecurity in Canada.

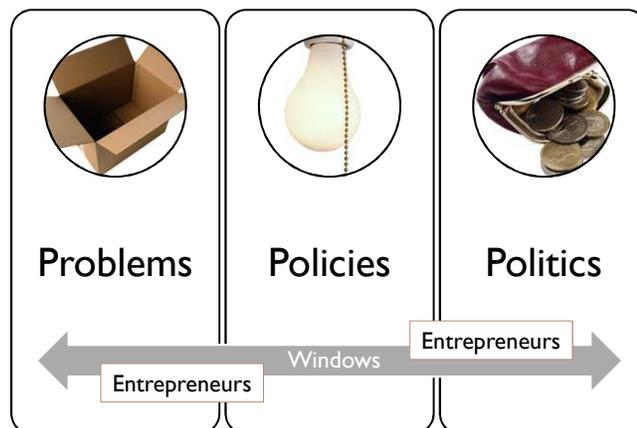
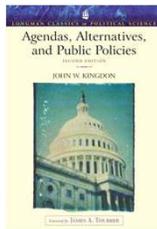
News & Updates

- Globe and Mail article: "Recession's legacy has food-bank usage soaring in Canada"
- New publication on the association between household food insecurity and heating cost inflation in Canada
- Canadian Government announces funding to address health equity
- United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier DeSchutter

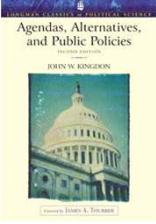
<http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca>

- ① Food insecurity is a population health problem
- ② Population problems need policy solutions
- ③ Policy arises from intervention theory (*what should work*), rationale (*this is how it will work*), and persuasion (*let's make it work*)

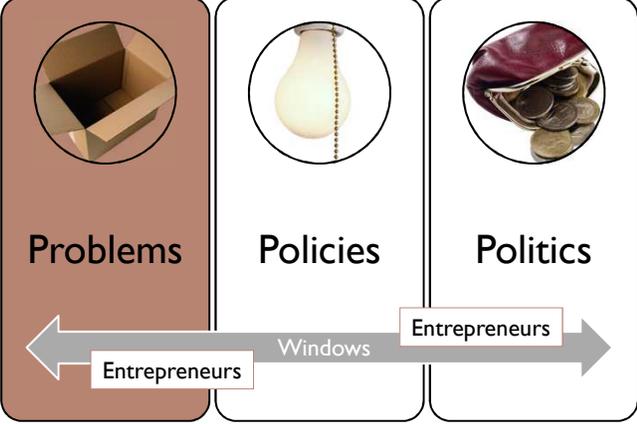
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Agendas, Alternatives,
and Public Policies
JOHN W. KINGDON



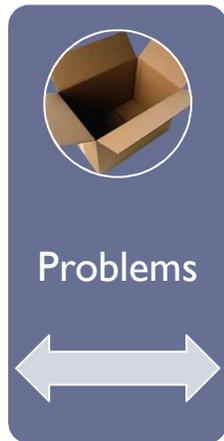
Problems Policies Politics

Entrepreneurs Windows Entrepreneurs

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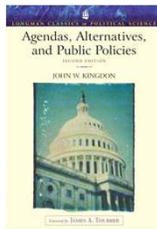
Framing = problem definition



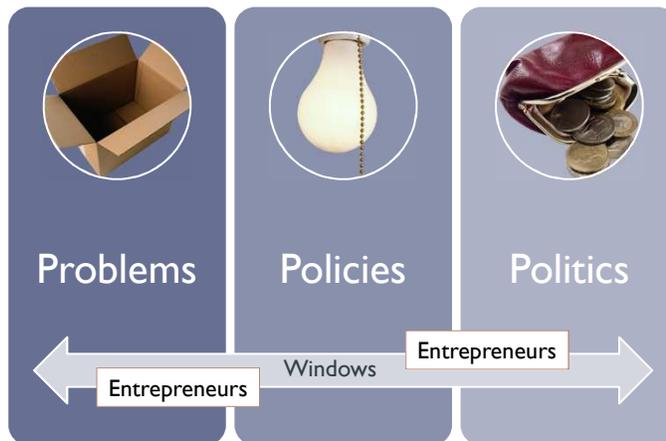
Framing is selective – it rules in at the same time as it rules out.

Each frame suggests a different causal pathway and proposes different actors as valid policy participants.

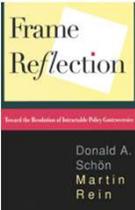
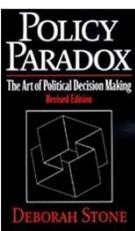
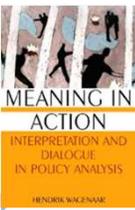
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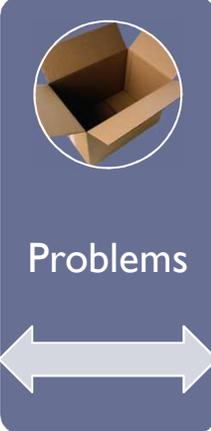
And problem definition is a key element in policy change



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Framing analysis



- **What policy actors** are implicated and how are they assigned responsibility?
- **What is the problem and how is it defined** (*need and rationale* for action)?
- **How are solutions introduced and linked** to the problems that they are supposed to solve (*actions*)?

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First Example: Canada's Response to the 1996 World Food Summit

World Food Summit Reports

	Governing Party	Prime Minister
Canada's Action Plan (1998)	Liberal (Majority)	Jean Chretien
Progress Report 1 (1999)	Liberal (Majority)	Jean Chretien
Progress Report (2002)	Liberal (Majority)	Jean Chretien, Paul Martin -Nov. 14, 2003
Progress Report 3 (2004)	Liberal (Minority)	Paul Martin
Progress Report 4 (2006)	Conservatives (Minority)	Stephen Harper
Progress Report 5 (2008)	Conservatives (Minority)	Stephen Harper

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1. *Frame shifts*

- ▶ The *right to food* emphasized in 1-3; absent from 4 and 5.
- ▶ Chronic disease appears in 4 and 5 as a food security issue. Previously a factor in food insecurity vulnerability.

2. *Frame blending*

- ▶ Poverty is one of several factors that impede access to sufficient safe and nutritious food but not all the poor are food insecure.
- ▶ As interventions to address income security and poverty are deemphasized, complexity emerges.

3. *Within-frame conflict*: monitoring across jurisdictions

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UN Food Envoy Provokes Ottawa with Findings on Hunger and Poor Diet in Canada

[Heather Scofield, The Canadian Press](#)



UN Special Rapporteur's Report:

Food Availability (agricultural policies)

Food Accessibility: protecting access to food for the poorest (social protection, minimum wage, max resources)

Food Adequacy (obesity)

Food Aid and Development Cooperation; Indigenous Peoples

http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20121224_canadafinal_en.pdf

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How is household food insecurity defined and socially constructed as a policy problem in Canada?

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- Hansards & key government policy documents for NS, BC, ON, Fed since 1996
- NVivo document coding framework
- Refining interpretation through member checking, peer debriefing
- Synthesis and triangulation

Policy domain framing analysis

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Second Example: Harris Years in Ontario

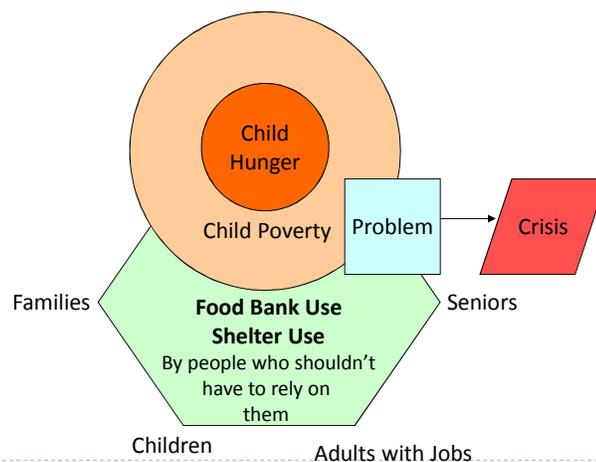
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Harris years analysis

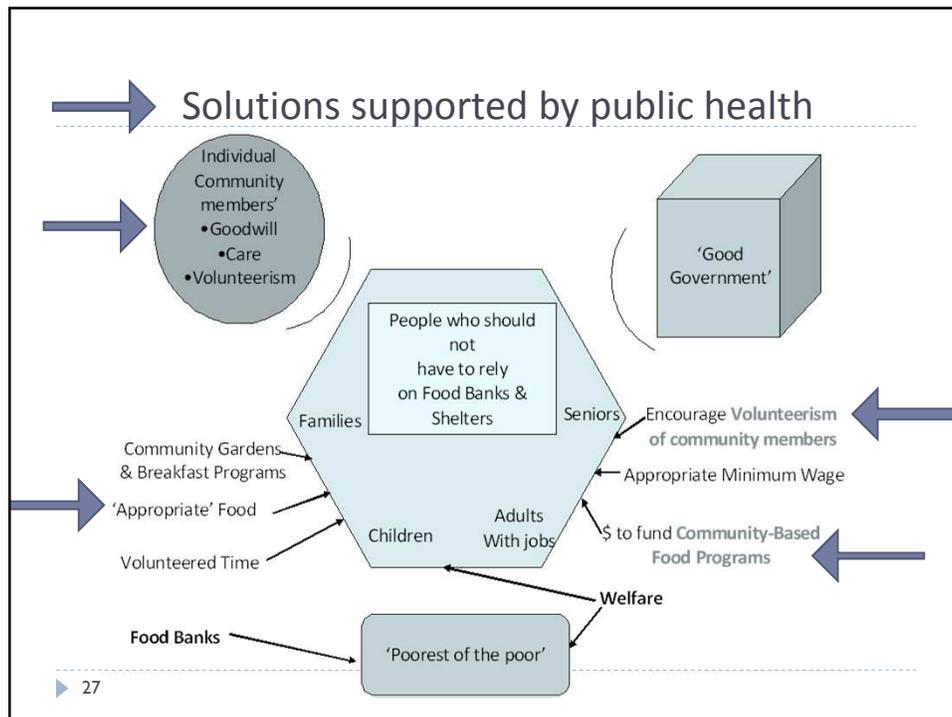
- ▶ Charged socio-political environment reflected in ON Hansards of the Harris years (1995-2002) + editorials
- ▶ How food insecurity was framed during an era of severe government cutbacks
- ▶ How the public health sector reacted to calls for structural approaches to reduce inequities

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Problem Identification



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Harris years analysis

▶ Key findings:

- ▶ Historical case for examining divergence in framing of policy action on household food insecurity (food-based vs income-based)
- ▶ Lost opportunity for critical mobilization around structural change
- ▶ The responses of public health during this era could explain public health's current community- and food-based approaches to addressing household food insecurity in both programming and advocacy.

Third Example: Food banks

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Framing of the “food bank problem”

Poppendieck’s (1998) Seven Deadly ‘ins’ –

- ▶ Insufficiency
- ▶ Inappropriateness
- ▶ Inadequacy
- ▶ Instability
- ▶ Inaccessibility
- ▶ Inefficiency
- ▶ Indignity

5 more ‘ins’

- ▶ Invisibility
- ▶ Invalidation of entitlements
- ▶ Inequality
- ▶ Institutionalization
- ▶ Ineffectiveness

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Strategy	Solution	Examples	Related "in"
Policy advocacy	Improve the food bank	Lobby policymakers to increase funding to food banks & similar charitable organizations (Frederick and Goddard, 2008)	Insufficiency Inadequacy Instability
	Alleviate poverty	Lobby policymakers to fight welfare retrenchment (Poppendieck, 1994) or to set a fair living wage (Thériault and Yadlowski, 2000)	Invalidation of entitlements Inequality Institutionaliz'n Ineffectiveness

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FOOD BANK USE IS THE PROBLEM & THE SOLUTION IS TO BUILD BETTER FOOD BANKS

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- ▶ Watching the faces of the families and children lining up for food at the door, she saw how undignified receiving emergency food hampers was for the people who needed to be there. So it was time to change the way the food bank regarded clients. From then on, clients were the food bank's most valuable resource, to be treated as potential volunteers, future workers and supporters. ...changing [its] name.... to reflect what [it] wanted to achieve: food action plans and food security in our community. (BC Hansard 2006)

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Final Example: How food insecurity is framed as a public policy problem in Canada

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Who experiences it

- Those who are not able to afford food because ...
- “The poor”
- “The vulnerable” but honest folk
- Children
- Hard-working citizens
- Surprising, not surprising (whomever)

DON'T ASK WHY (Social Determinants of Health)

Ways to talk about food insecurity

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Outcome-based frame (what the problem is)

There is hunger in Merritt largely because a lot of people don't have enough money in order to access food, and they can't produce or gather enough food for themselves to supplement the incomes that they have in terms of buying their food. Access to food is not only money but also the knowledge of how to cook food, how to preserve food and how to grow and harvest food. (BC Hansard 1999)

Food insecurity is the problem and FOOD IS WHAT IS NEEDED

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Outcome-based frame (what the problem is)

The fact that the Dept. of Community Services supports the school breakfast program...is an admission of failure, of utter failure of the social safety net. The fact that the basic personal allowance in the social assistance system is not enough to feed people, that they also need to make use of food banks...is an acknowledgment of failure. (NS Hansard 2005)

Food insecurity is an EXAMPLE of the problem, a lens on unmet basic needs



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Action-based frame (what needs to be done)

Mr Speaker...we need to look at minimum wage; we need to look at the social assistance rates; we need to look at the enforcement of maintenance; and we need to deal with community economic development in communities that have particularly high rates of unemployment and of child and family poverty. (NS Hansard 2000)

Structural problems require STRUCTURAL CHANGES (tax reform, social safety net)



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Action-based frame (what needs to be done)

Many people who are currently accessing food banks and other handout-type programs would much rather be providing for themselves but lack the skills, training or knowledge to succeed. Support for community-based projects, which encourages self-sufficiency and increased self-confidence among participants, is crucial. (BC Hansard 1999)

**INDIVIDUAL
CAPACITY is
the problem
& collective
efforts need
to be rooted
in successful
PERSONAL
ACTIONS**

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Final Thoughts

- ▶ Food insecurity may be an intractable policy problem in Canada because policy actors are at an impasse on how to address it given they frame it divergently.
- ▶ In contradiction to the presentation title: *Why getting the problem wrong leads to faulty solutions*, different frames suggest different causal pathways for how food insecurity works in households, which may be more or less valid
- ▶ Resolving the 'framing problem' is required to move forward on policies that might better address food insecurity at the household level in Canada.

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Thank you

Questions? Comments?



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