

Is the Food Security of Refugee Households Challenged by the Resettlement and Social Policies and Practices? The Case of Syrian Refugees in Canada

Samer Al-Bazz¹, Hassan Vatanparast^{1,2}, Daniel Beland⁵, Joe Garcea⁴, Rachel Engler-Stringer³, Judy White⁷, Mustafa Koc⁶, Lina Kharabsheh¹, Ginny Lane²



University of Saskatchewan: ^[1] College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, ^[2] School of Public Health, ^[3] Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, College of Medicine, ^[4] Department of Political Studies, College of Arts and Science; McGill University: ^[5] Department of Political Science; Ryerson University: ^[6] Department of Sociology; University of Regina: ^[7] Faculty of Social Work

INTRODUCTION

- Major refugee movements can cause food-security problems among the refugees. ^[1]
- Newly arrived refugees have a higher prevalence of household food insecurity compared to the general population. ^[2, 6]
- The majority of food insecure households are those who rely on income assistance programs. ^[3]
- Canadian legislation lacks a clear and comprehensive policy framework designed to explicitly address and improve household food insecurity. ^[4]
- There is also a lack of understanding of how the relevant Canadian state policies and programs contribute to the rates of household food security of recently arrived Syrian refugees in Canada. ^[5]

OBJECTIVE

To evaluate how existing Canadian resettlement and public policies are addressing food security status of Syrian refugee families resettled in three Canadian provinces: Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec since November 2015 during this critical early integration period.

METHODS

DESIGN

Convergent parallel mixed methods design guided by a theoretical framework that is inspired by the “social constructivism” (for the qualitative component) and “post-positivism” (for the quantitative component) research paradigms, and the grounded theory research tradition.

SETTING

FOOD SECURITY:

Metropolitan areas, small cities, and rural communities in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Quebec.

POLICY:

Nation-wide qualitative data (multiple perspectives) from key informants from various sectors and document review.

PARTICIPANTS

MAIN POPULATION:



400 Syrian refugee families from the three refugee resettlement programs (GAR, BVOR, & PSR)[§].

SECONDARY POPULATION:

Key informants from policymakers, settlement service providers, private sector, and NGOs.



DATA COLLECTION

QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT:

Household Food Security Status Data:

Translated income-related Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) administered electronically using REDCap application.

QUALITATIVE COMPONENT:

Policy-Related Data:

Document review.

Household Food Insecurity Experiences:

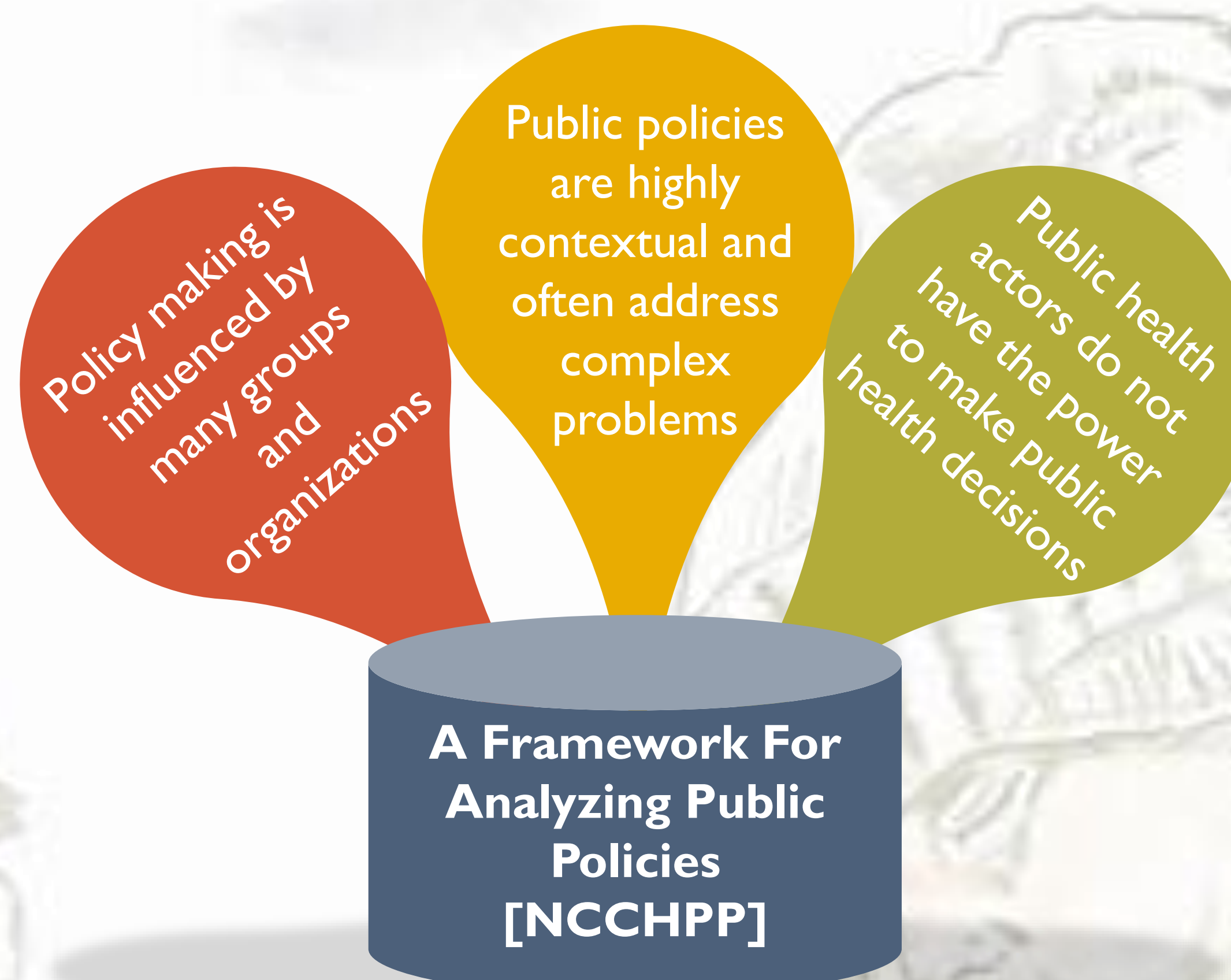
Semi-structured individual in-depth interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS

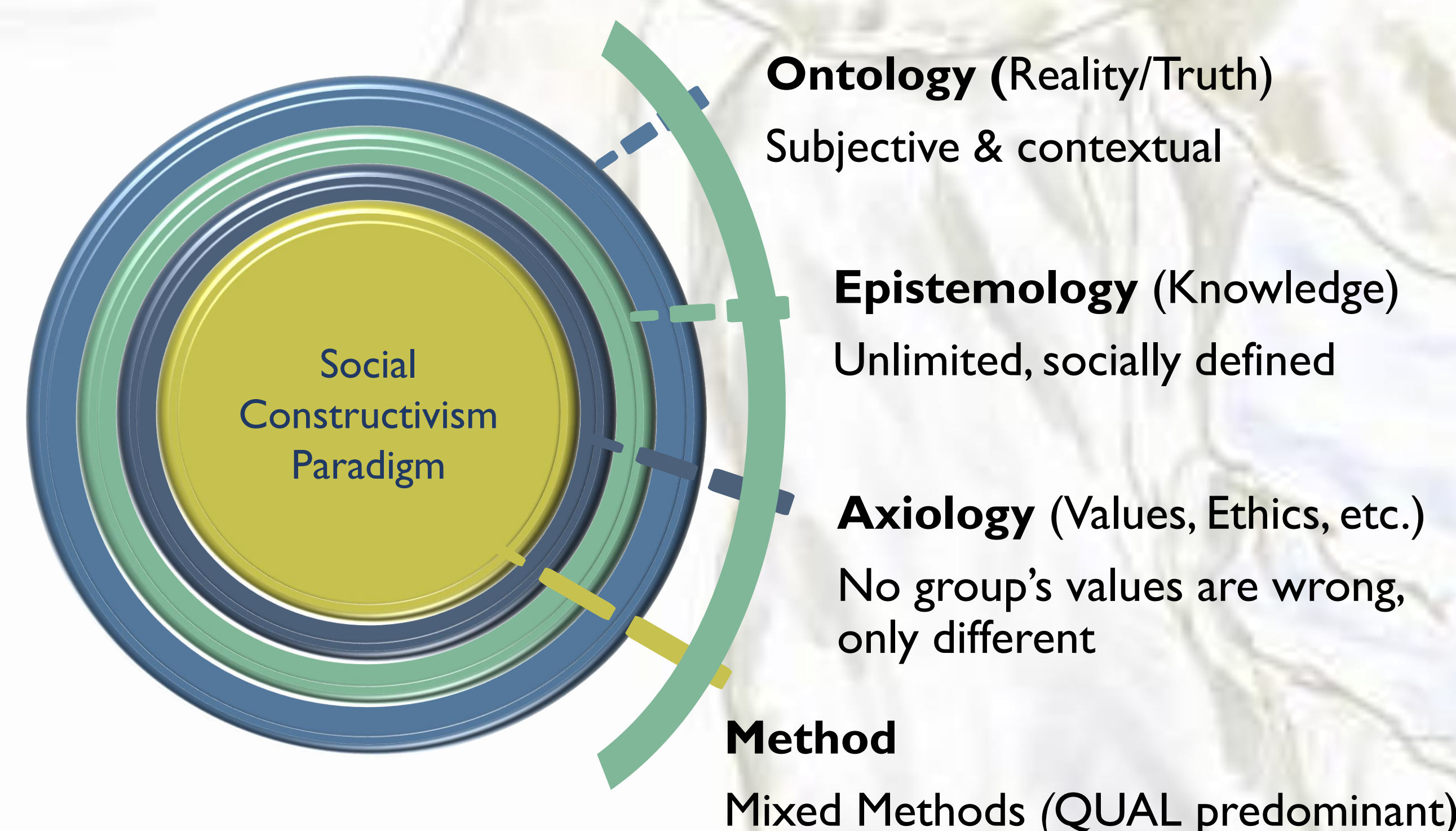
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

NVivo software for coding key points, common themes and pattern generation, and model building.

POLICY ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK



PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS



- The prevalence of Household food insecurity among refugee families in Saskatchewan (61.6%) exceeded that of new and long-term immigrants to the province, as well as that of Canadian general population (Figure 1).
- Almost half of the children of refugee families in Saskatchewan were found food insecure compared to children of new immigrant families (Figure 1).
- Canada has no integrated food policy in place at all levels of government.
- A variety of food-related legislation, regulations, directives, standards, and guidelines exist at all levels of government.

Figure 1. Prevalence of food insecurity among refugees, new immigrants, long-term immigrants, and Canadian general population⁶



- Food insecurity is strongly **income related**.
- Refugees receive some federal and provincial social, resettlement, and **income support**.
- Household food insecurity among Syrian refugees is **not responsive** to existing policy, including income assistance.
- No theory** to qualitatively explain the high rates of household food insecurity from **multiple contextual perspectives**.
- No theory** to explain how social policies impact refugees' household food security.

STUDY IMPACT

Understanding the lived experiences of the Syrian refugees and key informants may help build a model of influence of resettlement and social policy and practices on household food insecurity among Syrian refugees.

Next Step

- Data analysis, triangulation, and interpretation.
- Determine food security status of Syrian refugees in the three provinces.
- Develop a policy impact model that explains the impact of policy on food security of refugees.

[1] FAO. (1996). World Food Summit: Synthesis of the technical background documents (sec. 15, map 18). Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Retrieved January 07, 2019, from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w2537e/w2537e00.HTM>

[2] Nunnery, D. L., & Dharod, J. M. (2017). Potential determinants of food security among refugees in the U.S.: an examination of pre- and post- resettlement factors. *Food Security*, 9(1), 163–179.

[3] Tarasuk, V., Dachner, N., & Loopstra, R. (2014). Food banks, welfare, and food insecurity in Canada. *British Food Journal*, 116(9), 1405–1417.

[4] PROOF. (2018). Public policy and public programs to address food insecurity. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from Food Insecurity Policy Research (PROOF): <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resources/research-publications/public-policy-and-public-programs-to-address-food-insecurity/>

[5] Gundersen, C., & Ziliak, J. P. (2014). Childhood Food Insecurity in the U.S.: Trends, Causes, and Policy Options. *The Future of Children*, 24(12), 1–19.

[6] Lane, G., Nisbet, C., & Vatanparast, H. (2019). Food Insecurity and Nutritional Risk among Canadian Newcomer Children in Saskatchewan. *Nutrients*, 11(8), 1744.

§ GAR: Government-Assisted Refugee Program; BVOR: Blended Visa Office-Referred Program; PSR: Privately-Sponsored refugee Program

Acknowledgement: Funding for this project is provided by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) under the initiative of Culture, Migration, and Food Security (CMF) and international research group.



RESULTS

DISCUSSION

NEXT

REFERENCES