



Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research

Corporate political activity in the context of the dietetic profession in Quebec : Current evidences, framework and recommendations

Faculté de médecine

Université
de Montréal



INTRODUCTION

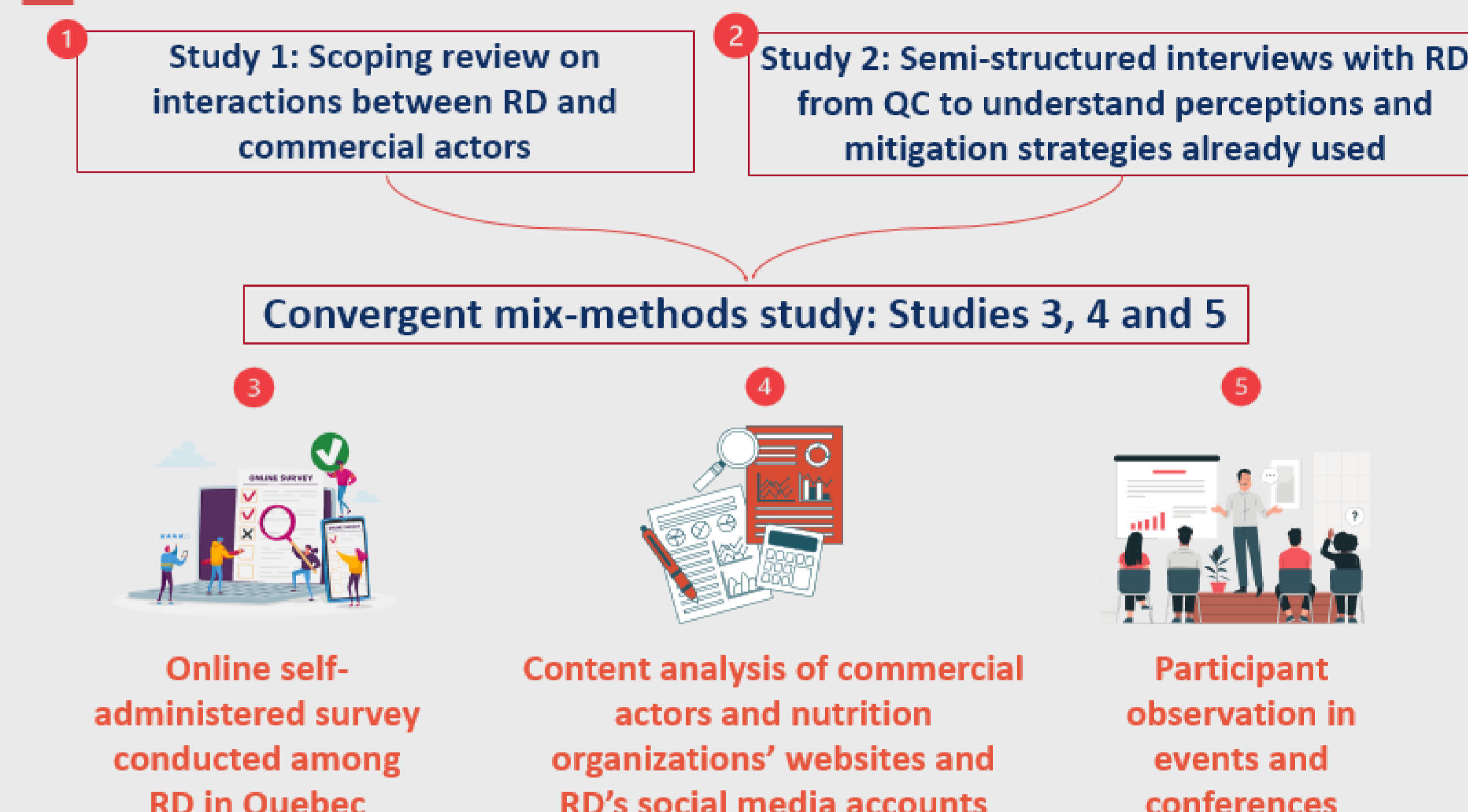
- Malnutrition and the climate crisis are among the greatest threats to human health. While governments have a responsibility to transform our food systems so that they become healthy and sustainable, registered dietitians (RD) also have a role to play in this transition.
- However, efforts by governments and RDs can be undermined by corporate political activity (CPA) strategies carried out by commercial actors.
- Risks related to relationships between the food industry and RDs have been discussed for several decades. Nevertheless, no empirical study has documented the interactions between RD and the industry, nor the CPA deployed within the profession.

OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this thesis was to document the CPA and conflicts of interest (COI) and their repercussions in the context of the dietetic profession in Quebec, Canada, and to identify solutions to minimize risks. Specific objectives were to:

- Review literature on the interactions between RD and commercial actors.
- Understand RD's perceptions of these interactions and CPA, as well as existing solutions in Quebec, Canada.
- Document and understand how CPA manifest in the context of the dietetic practice in Quebec, Canada.
- Propose recommendations to mitigate risks and COI related to CPA and interactions with commercial actors.

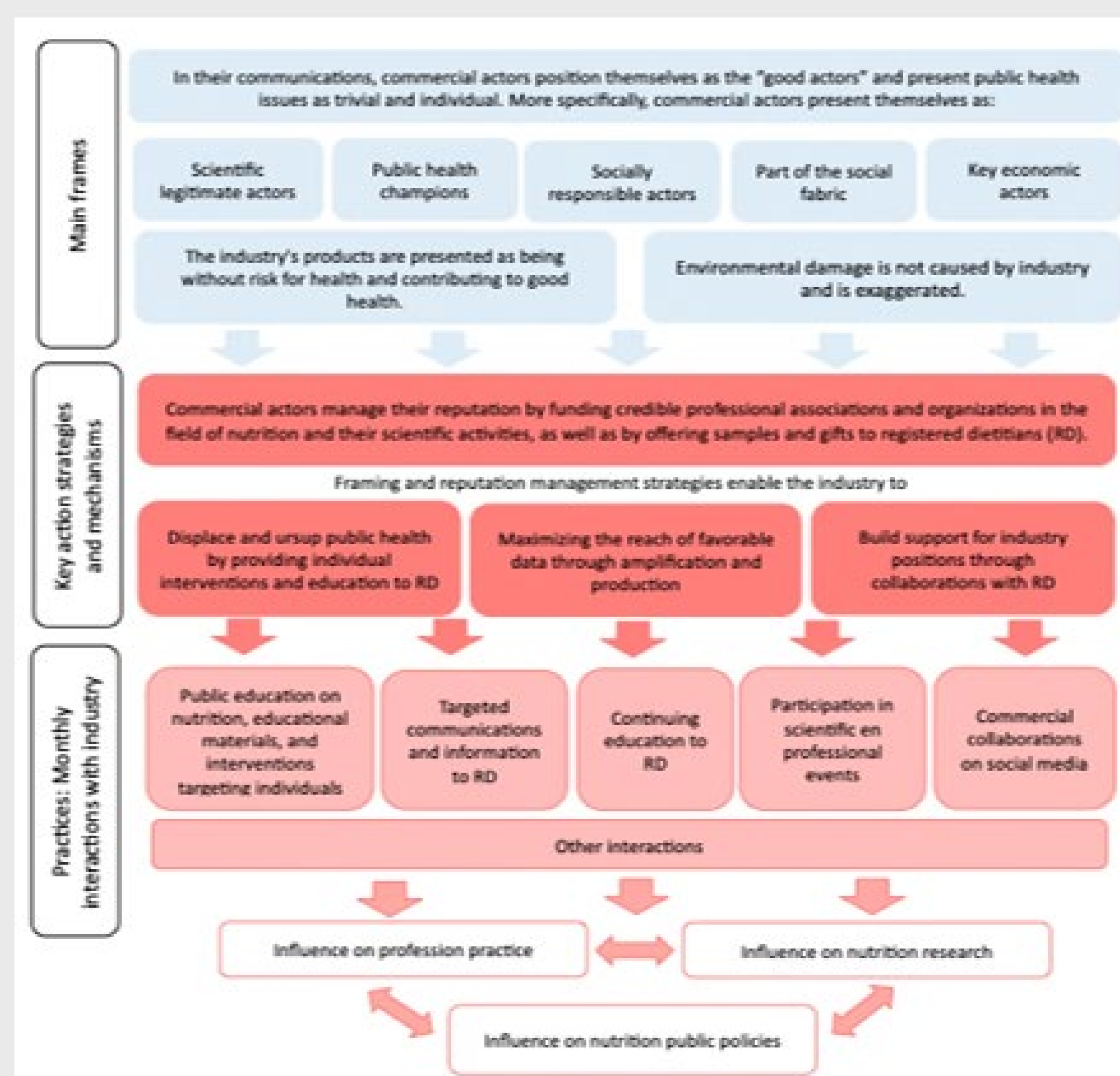
METHOD



RESULTS

- RD may have, on average, 1,7 interactions per month with commercial actors, including the food, pharmaceutical, and agrochemical industries. These interactions include social media collaborations, sales representative visits, gifts and samples, and attending sponsored continuing education.
- The notion of COI was not necessarily understood across the entire profession and RD hold divergent perspectives regarding the risks and benefits associated with interactions with commercial actors.
- The convergent mixed-method study (studies 3 to 5) resulted in an interpretative framework (Figure 1) of the CPA in the context of the dietetics profession.
- This framework highlights that framing strategies conveyed through various channels, along with reputation management strategies used by commercial actors, enable their involvement in public and RD education, the amplification and production of industry-favourable scientific evidence, and the creation of support for industry positions through alliances with the profession. Ultimately, CPA has the potential to influence research, public policies, and the professional practice of RD.

Figure 1. Interpretative framework of the CPA in the context of the dietetic profession



CONCLUSION

- This thesis presents an in-depth analysis of CPA conducted within the context of the dietetics profession by a diversity of commercial actors, including the food and pharmaceutical industries, as well as the agrochemical and medical technology industries, among others.
- This thesis highlights the importance for the profession of developing strategies to prevent COI, given commercial actors' omnipresence across all sectors of activity. Although training on this topic could be a relevant and valuable avenue for fostering critical thinking among RDs regarding the information and messages conveyed by industry, it is essential to question the underlying systems and structures that promote these ties with industry and dependence on its resources, thereby perpetuating power imbalances.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Marita Hennessy, Paule Bernier, Julie Desgroseillers, Geneviève Nadeau, Charlene Blanchette, Corinne Voyer, and Cynthia Marcotte for their valuable contributions and advice throughout this doctoral project.

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AUTHORS

V. HAMEL¹, M. MIALON², JC.,
MOUBARAC¹

1. University of Montreal, Quebec,

Canada, Centre de recherche en
santé publique

2. Université Paris Cité, Inserm

CONTACT INFORMATION

virginie.hamel.1@umontreal.ca

INTRODUCTION

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METHOD

1

Study 1: Scoping review on interactions between RD and commercial actors

2

Study 2: Semi-structured interviews with RD from QC to understand perceptions and mitigation strategies already used

Convergent mix-methods study: Studies 3, 4 and 5

3



Online self-administered survey conducted among RD in Quebec

4



Content analysis of commercial actors and nutrition organizations' websites and RD's social media accounts

5

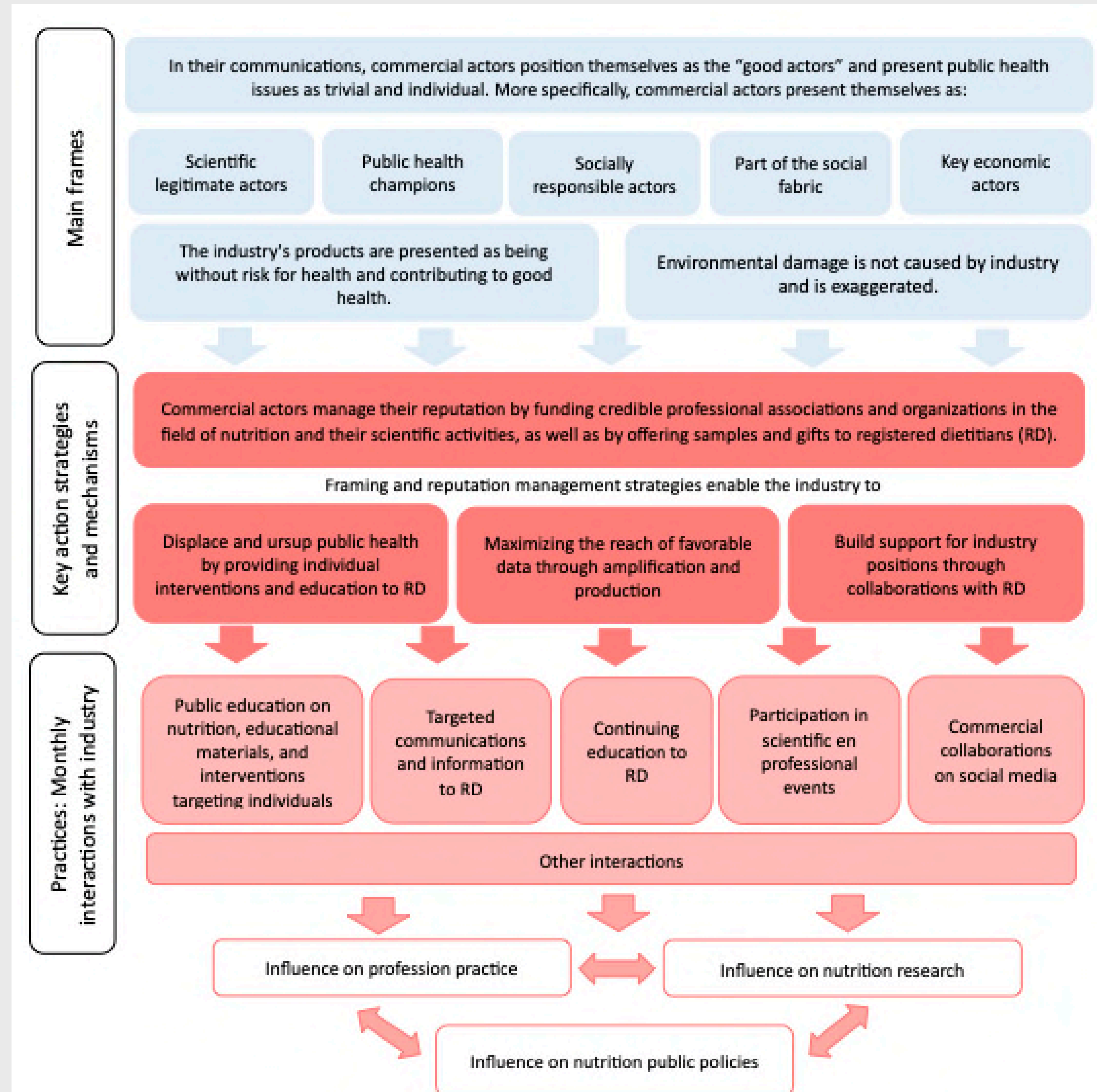


Participant observation in events and conferences

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