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How early childhood services address health inequalities and child wellbeing in France

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INTRODUCTION

- Social health inequalities (SHI) are increasing and settle in from an early age (Poulton *et al*, 2002, Chen *et al*, 2007; Lang *et al*, 2017)
- Strategies identified to tackle these SHI refer to:
 - **Early action:** return on investment in human capital decreases with age (Heckman, 2006; Irwin *et al*, 2007; Bambra *et al*, 2010)
 - **Intersectoral action:** different public policies from different sectors - health, social, education, early childhood care, leisure, etc. (Moleux *et al*, 2011)
 - **Focus on child development and their basic needs (CBN)** (Morisson *et al*, 2014; Poissant, 2014; Martin-Blachais, 2017)

HYPOTHESIS

- **Consideration of SHI and CBN** by early childhood services (ECS): **variations according to the sector of affiliation** which potentially **affect interactions between professionals** as well as the **relationships with families**.
- **CBN as a common purpose for families and professionals;** however, **variations of their representations** of these CBN; moreover **relationships** between families and early childhood services are **marked by social inequalities and misunderstandings** about each other's strategies and positions.

METHODS

The research is based on Bronfenbrenner ecological approach. Two French *départements* are studied: Allier (03) and Ille-et-Vilaine (35); both are characterised by social and spatial health inequalities. Within these departments, two local authorities (LA) were selected as case studies for in depth analysis.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Confirmation of the **complexity of public actions** addressed to early childhood:

- Ambivalence associated with the **definition of early childhood**;
- Similar approach to **the needs of the child and of his or her family**;
- Reference to the **concepts of "diversity" and "vulnerability" to designate inequalities**.

MAIN MESSAGES

- Thanks to its **ecological and intersectoral approach**, this project will **highlight how early childhood services may contribute to tackle SHI and improve child WB**
- Addressing the **complexity of the interactions between public policies, professionals and families** will lead to a better understanding of the current challenges crossing early childhood

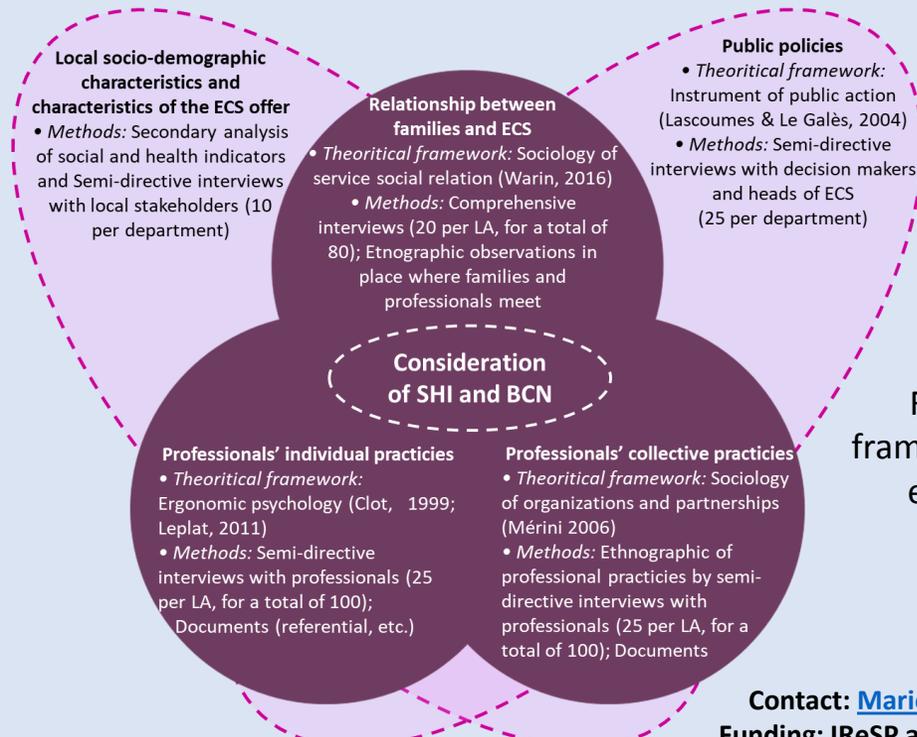


Figure 1: Theoretical framework and methods for each research object