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Mathilde Taghon, H el ene Maire, Anne Pignault

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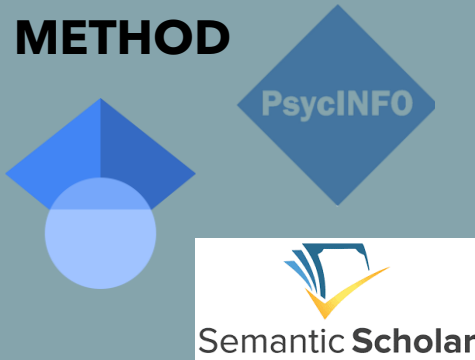
Children's mental representations of work: insights from developmental and counselling psychology

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INTRODUCTION

- Finding one's way in the world of work requires being knowledgeable about not only work, occupations, but also oneself, which is a lifelong process.
- Great discrepancies exist between individuals and between social groups regarding available resources to actively take part in this process.
- Middle childhood has been established as a critical period for vocational development, especially when it comes to the exploration and construction of the self (Gottfredson, 2002; Hartung et al., 2008; Super, 1990).
- The current integrative review aimed at answering questions such as how children perceive and understand about work as a concept, and which factors influence their representations of work.

METHOD



Starting point : lack of theories and empirical data on this topic.

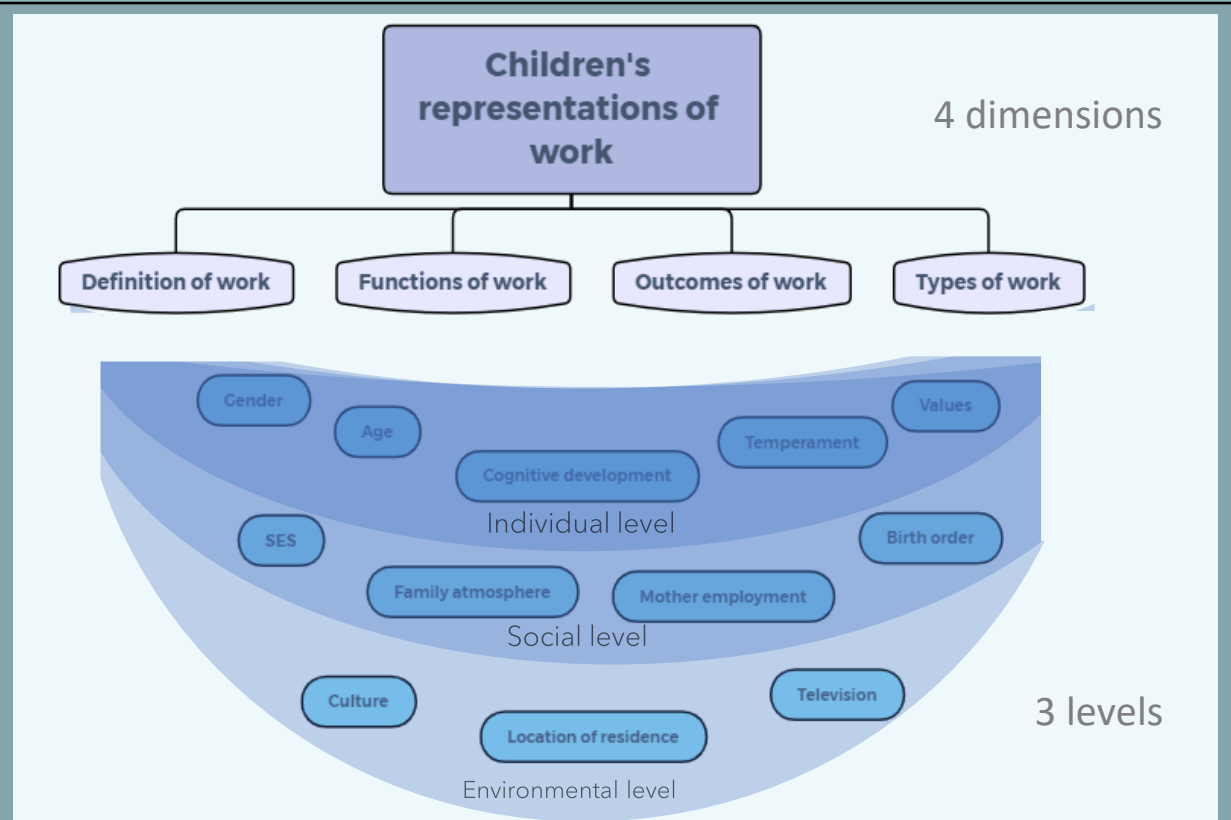
Staged review using 3 databases to explore three related branches of the literature:

- ◇ work representations of adults and adolescents,
- ◇ children's representations of jobs and occupations,
- ◇ and children's vocational preferences.

No temporal restrictions applied to select or exclude articles.

RESULTS

- ◇ 3 different levels of influence (McMahon & Patton, 1995) on children's vocational preferences: individual, social and environmental.
- ◇ Each level includes a number of variables identified as an influence on work representations.
- ◇ Future investigations: understanding which factors influence which specific dimension of the representation.



CONCLUSION

- ◇ Implications for the understanding of career development in a lifelong perspective: individuals rely on their self-perceptions to take career decisions, and these perceptions start to form during childhood.
- ◇ Understanding the connections between facets of the self-concept and representations of work early in life is crucial to promote better orientation skills in the future, as well as decisions based on personal characteristics (vocational interests, skills and strengths, values...) rather than stereotypes related to certain dimensions of the self-concept.
- ◇ Since knowledge regarding children's representations of work is limited, exploration is needed.
- ◇ Ongoing and future investigations: qualitative (semi-structured interviews with children) and quantitative studies (image classification tasks) to better understand how representations form and evolve in relation to interests and preferences.

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