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Les inégalités sociales face à la santé:
constats, explications et politiques

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CULTURAL CAPITAL AND HEALTH

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DISCUTANT

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Cultural capital and health

The literature on individual-level socioeconomic inequalities in health is voluminous but theoretically underdeveloped. This has led to an overly narrow depiction of socioeconomic inequalities in health and limited consideration of the social processes that link socioeconomic resources to one another in the production of health. We adopt aspects of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction to discuss cultural capital for health and to describe multiple, overlapping forms of advantage and disadvantage (economic, cultural and social capitals) and diverse, multitudinous effects of social processes involving multiple forms of capital (acquisition, transmission and multiplier interplays) on the production and distribution of health. The Bourdieusian notion of capital encompasses but transcends the dimensions of socioeconomic status while the notion of capital interplays, a range of diverse ways in which capitals interpenetrate each other, provides a means of conceptualizing the interconnectedness of multiple forms of capital. In this seminar we focus on cultural capitals and describe how it interplays with different other affecting individuals' chances for good health. If time allows, we may together explore the potentials and limits of theorizing health literacy as a component of cultural capital for health.

We hope that the capital interplays described here provide helpful guidance for systematic study of the production and reproduction of socioeconomic inequalities in health in modern societies.

Thomas Abel est professeur de santé publique à l'Institut de médecine sociale et préventive de l'Université de Berne. Titulaire d'un doctorat en sociologie de l'Université de l'Illinois (Etats-Unis), ses recherches portent en particulier sur les déterminants sociaux de la santé et des comportements à risque, et sur les styles de vie et la culture de santé.