

**Capital, Class and Chronic Illness :
A Dispositionalist Approach to Long Covid Management**

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American Sociological Association (ASA) Annual Meeting
Student Forum : Health & Illness
Chicago, IL

ABSTRACT :

Chronic illness research has extensively explored biographical disruptions and identity reconstruction but has often overlooked the role of social background in illness management. This study investigates how class-related attributes shape the ways individuals cope with chronic conditions by examining Long Covid as a case study. Drawing on sociology of socialization methodology, this research shifts from interpretive approaches toward a materialist perspective on illness as a socially differentiated experience. Based on 23 biographical interviews with Long Covid patients and additional ethnographic observations in a rehabilitation service, this study highlights three key findings. First, we identify a managed normalization in which patients deploy an ascetic discipline—rigorous scheduling, symptom quantification (both intuitive and technological) and strategic task allocation—to achieve regular comebacks and periods of remission. Second, we discern a spontaneous normalization marked by flexible, day-to-day symptom control, frequent overexertion and relapses that prevent any sustained remission. Finally, these contrasting ideal-types are unequally distributed : middle- and upper-class individuals, socialized into temporal discipline through family, school and work, are far more likely to enact managed normalization and thus experience remission, whereas those lacking such temporal dispositions tend toward spontaneous normalization and prolonged chronicity. By emphasizing socialization processes and material constraints, this research reframes Long Covid not only as a medical condition but as a site of social differentiation. It argues that illness management is not purely an individual struggle but a socially structured process, shaped by prior socialization and the uneven distribution of resources in the social world.

KEYWORDS : long covid ; health & illness ; dispositions ; habitus ; class