

The Social World of Alcoholics Anonymous: How It Works (Hindsfoot Foundation Series on Treatment and Recovery)

Annette Smith

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Using qualitative field study, including participant observation andunstructured interviewing, this work focuses on Alcoholics Anonymous as a social world. The social organization of A.A. is linked to social worldconstructs, and aspects of A.A. social life, both formal and informal, are described. It is suggested that success in A.A. is dependent on integrationinto the social world, and that there are variations in the interactional processes by which this is achieved. Data is presented to illustrate that integration into the social world leads tothe A.A. conversion, a transformation of self-identity in which thealcoholic accepts at the deepest level of being that he or she is alcoholicand that recovery depends on the acceptance of A.A. values and practice of A.A. principles. A typology of A.A. social world participants is established which is informed by high or low levels of affiliative needs and group dependency, group-versus individual-focused social worldparticipation, and affective versus cognitive conversion experiences.



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