

The Lived Experiences of Men in 12-Step Recovery against a Backdrop of Hegemonic Masculinity

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Summary: Hegemonic masculinity is a theoretical construct within sociology and represents socially constructed conceptions of dominant masculinity. Much of the sociological literature links aspects of this form of masculinity to men's poor health status, including a range of societal ills such as substance abuse. 12-step recovery is a widely endorsed model of addiction recovery which is based on spiritual principles. The features of hegemonic masculinity and 12-step recovery appear to be at odds with each other. This paper is based on the findings of a small qualitative study exploring the lived experiences of six men in 12-step recovery against a backdrop of hegemonic masculinity. The findings show how the active construction of hegemonic masculinity evolved throughout the life course of the men. A central theme to emerge is one of old and new formations of identity. Additionally, hegemonic masculinity interacts in a number of ways with the men's recovery.

Keywords: Hegemonic masculinity, identity, social class, addiction, alcohol, drugs, 12-step recovery, men's health, social constructions, status, change, crime, offending, desistance.

Introduction

A report carried out by the European Commission (2011) on the state of men's health in Europe identified substance abuse among men and social constructions of masculinity as a crucial area for academic exploration. The *National Men's Health Policy 2008–2013* suggests that 'it is crucially important to consider how men actively construct beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that can impact on their health' (Department of Health and Children, 2008, p. 23). It is within this social constructionist perspective that this paper is situated.

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