ERIN POWER'S DEFENDS DISSERTATION

Submitted by Jerald R Herting on September 15, 2014 - 2:57pm

The dissertation is entitled "Individual-Group Dynamics in a 12-Step Fellowship: Identification, Service, and Recovery in Overeaters Anonymous."

The committee, consisting of Edgar Kiser, Jerry Herting and Steven Pfaff, were united in praising the dissertation for its outstanding empirical study of self-help groups and its insights into how group processes inform the way that individuals identify themselves, define their needs and sense of sickness and recovery, and remained committed to their fellows.

Powers situates her study by showing that self-help/mutual-aid groups, relative to other forms of voluntary association, continue to thrive. Many of these groups follow the 12-Step model of Alcoholics Anonymous. One such organization is the fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous, a group for those with a desire to stop compulsively overeating and/or recover from other eating disorders. Powers analyzes the group using mixed methods and relying on data she collected primarily from 2010 to 2012, including 151 participant surveys, 16 group surveys, 30 interviews, and 366 discrete observations of 21 OA groups (i.e., meetings) located in a large Pacific Northwest city. Powers study is among the few that explore 12-Step groups as sociological phenomena, addressing identification processes, the effects of costly behavioral dictates on group members, and the diverse determinants and types of recovery experienced by members.

Hearty congratulations to Dr Powers!

People Involved: Erin Powers
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