INDIVIDUAL-GROUP DYNAMICS IN A 12-STEP FELLOWSHIP: IDENTIFICATION, SERVICE, AND RECOVERY IN OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS


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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. I analyze this group using mixed methods and relying on data I 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. In this dissertation, I 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.

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Status of Research: Completed/published
Research Type: Graduate Dissertations
Related Fields: Group Dynamics  Organizations

Source URL: https://soc.washington.edu/research/graduate/individual-group-dynamics-12-step-fellowship-identification-service-and-recovery