

## Book Review

Furman, R., Bender, K., & Rowan, D. (2014). *An Experiential Approach to Group Work, 2nd ed.* Chicago: Lyceum Books, Inc.

Reviewed by Charles Garvin, Ph.D., MSWCML, University of Michigan

*Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, Volume 11, Number 2 (2014)  
Copyright 2014, Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)

This text may be freely shared among individuals, but it may not be republished in any medium without express written consent from the authors and advance notification of ASWB

This book offers a series of individual and group exercises that can be used to teach group work skills. The chapters each consist of a brief theoretical introduction to the topic and one or more individual and group exercises, followed by appropriate checklists through which to examine the reader's understanding of the topic after completing these experiences. Brief, well-chosen examples are also included. An introductory chapter discusses group work history, types of groups, group theories, and group development. Emphasis is given to a "social justice model," which is an important reflection of the authors' own set of values. The value of experiential learning of group work skill is discussed, and this is the rationale for writing this text.

The scope of the twenty short chapters in this book is wide. Opening chapters deal with each stage of the evolution of the group such as planning for the group, group beginnings, group dynamics, evaluation and endings. The next set of chapters focuses on types of groups such as skills groups, support groups, treatment groups, psycho-educational groups, task groups, macro-practice groups, and anti-oppressive practice groups. A set of chapters presents groups for such problems of people as eating disorders, persistent mental illness, school children experiencing conflict, pregnancy in adolescents, the situation of immigrants, and coping with HIV/AIDS. Another chapter presents group work with Latinos and Latinas.

A chapter that has a strong value base is that dealing with anti-oppressive practice. Topics included here are exercises to help group members deal with

inequality in their own lives and their "internalized oppression" and disempowerment. The members and workers are also able to use the exercise that helps one examine one's own power and privilege. The authors recognize that in these instances the separation between micro and macro practice dissolves. As one who shares this interest in overcoming oppression, I think that in all types of groups there are many occasions to challenge oppression and erase the differentiations between macro and micro practice.

The other chapters do not raise as many issues regarding the relationship of values and ethics to practice, as I would have liked. For example, it would have been helpful to explore what value issues enter into choosing members for groups, determining purposes of groups, examining power issues at each group phase, evaluating the group, and so on.

The authors are all experienced group work educators at such institutions as the University of Washington, Tacoma; the University of Denver, and the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. They show in their choice of content a good knowledge of group work practice and theory and the ways of teaching these topics.

This book, however, is short and mainly composed of exercises, although there are brief theoretical introductions to each chapter. I could use this book as a summary of what the students learn from more extensive treatments and as a guide to the use of exercises in class – a practice I enthusiastically support.