

Feminist Therapy and Ordinary People

Geraldine Javier

Alliance University

Dr. Ramos

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Feminist Therapy is a person-centered approach that focuses on the challenges women face due to discrimination, bias, oppression and other factors. This form of therapy focuses on the stressors that women experience and the effects on their mental health due to these issues. Feminist therapy was developed in response to the previously male dominated field of psychology, so that women can have a therapeutic environment free from sexism and misogyny. There is no specific founder of this approach that developed in the 1960s. In this form of therapy, issues are viewed from a sociopolitical and cultural context. It also considers the diverse social identities and experiences men and women have been socialized to accept. One of the key concepts in feminist therapy is that the client knows what is best for themselves and is the expert in their own life. Therapists encourage clients to hold themselves accountable for their own decisions and problems. Individual change is likely to occur when clients take social action. The feminist therapeutic approach emphasizes that societal gender-role expectations influence a person's identity from (or before) birth. Women are thought to be raised in a culture and society grounded in sexism and understanding this internalized oppression is key to this approach. Clients must look beyond societal norms and inward to themselves as the experts of their own identity. Therapy sessions are personal but also often political in nature. In these sessions, they may focus on gender issues, sexism, diversity and commit to both individual and social change. Feminist therapists help to empower clients who feel silenced or oppressed. Clients are encouraged to explore their individual identity and consider their strengths. This is accomplished by reframing the client's issues in the context of societal views instead of a result of their own personal behaviors. A feminist therapist does not instruct or dictate change in their clients due to the belief that clients are the experts of their own experience. They are less likely to make a diagnosis but work with their client to figure out what social factors might be behind those

symptoms. Some principles in feminist therapy include personal and political context, commitment to social change, value of diverse perspectives, strength-focused approach, self-disclosure, gender-role analysis, power analysis, reframing and social action. Traditional talk therapy and analysis is used. There are no strict set of techniques in feminist therapy. However, some techniques use are role-playing and assertiveness training to help build clients identity and self-esteem. Other techniques include bibliotherapy, viewing symptoms as communications, power analysis and reframing. Feminist therapy has evolved to include families, couples and people of all ages.

In Conrads therapy session with Dr. Berger, we see that he struggles with expressing his thoughts and emotions. I believe that feminist therapy can help in identifying how his gender role/society has limited him in his ability to expression his emotions. However, feminist therapy would not be the most effective form of therapy for Conrad overall. Feminist therapy is most effective with clients interested on how personal, societal, cultural and political issues are intertwined.

References:

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