

Feminist Ordinary People Paper

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The feminist therapeutic approach is one developed by many different women with the aim of considering demographic traits and how they contribute to a person's issues and how the person can be understood and helped. According to Gerald Corey, author of *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, the majority of clients in counseling are women, along with the majority of licensed practitioners (Corey, 2015, p. 340). Even though this is the case, most of the theories discovered and taught were founded by white males from western cultures, with only one of them (Adler) taking a pro-feminist view in early theory (2015, p. 340). This has led to feminist therapists to challenge the ideas and assumptions that compose what a mentally healthy person looks like that were male-targeted.

Ordinary People is a film directed by Robert Redford that depicts the life of a teenager who has survived a suicide attempt and is mourning the loss of his older brother. Conrad Jarrett's life is trying to resume back to how it was before these events occurred, but it does not seem to work. His relationship with his parents and friends are now different. Conrad has a hard time relating to his best friends, he decided to quit the swim team and he and his mother barely talk, and when they do, it is awkward and clunky. The movie does not go into depth on Conrad's mother's feelings and perspective and we do not see either of his parents getting mental help for what they have faced in losing a child and having the other try to kill himself.

Feminist therapy includes techniques that could be used with Conrad, even though he is a male. Two techniques that may help him would include relabeling and social identity analysis and gender-role. Relabeling changes the label or evaluation applied to a behavioral characteristic (2015, p. 352). By doing this, Conrad would be able to see himself more outside of trying to kill himself and outside of letting his brother and his parents down by not being able to save him. His nightmares and thoughts show the viewers that he was plagued with guilt from the night of his

brother's death and that his mother's attitude towards him changed after he left for the mental hospital. He is more than the events that happened. Social identity analysis and gender-role could help Conrad put his position in his family into perspective; he should not feel responsible for his mother's feelings as her son. Even though he is a male and is becoming a man, this does not mean he has to take responsibility for anyone else except for himself until he has his own family, even though society might be trying to tell him otherwise, especially since his older brother passed away.

Feminist therapy might work for Conrad, but there is a large chance that it would not, only because it is a modality geared towards female clients. This approach would be best suited for his mother who should also get mental health counseling after the death of her first born and almost losing her second, remaining child. Feminist therapy would help Conrad's mother learn more about herself and her place in her family and, most importantly, possibly help her rekindle the relationship with her son.

References

Corey, G. (2015). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy 10th Edition*.

Redford, R. (Director). (1980). *Ordinary People* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.