

Ordinary People, Judith Guest, New York: Ballentine Books, 1976, 245 pp.

Reviewed by:

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Every so often a novel comes along that captures the imaginations of social and behavioural scientists. Keesey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, Salinger's *Catcher In The Rye* and Hannah Green's *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden* spring immediately to mind. How quickly these novels took their place on university bookstore shelves beside traditional sociology, psychology and education textbooks. And, why not? After all they offered students a lively alternative to ditch water dull, statistical treatments of human behaviour and proved once again that despite all our accumulated data the artist still has much — indeed sometimes more — to say about human existence.

If you are presently looking for this kind of relief, look no further. Judith Guest's *Ordinary People*, now out in soft cover, might be all you really need.

Guest, has turned out a truly remarkable novel. Perhaps it's trite to say so, but *Ordinary People* is the type of story you can't put down once you've started, or stay away from long if you have.

The setting doesn't much matter. It could be anywhere. It just happens to be the mid-west U.S.A. What matters are the people, in this case a family, the Jarretts, and what befalls them as a family following the unexpected death of one of the members.

In a way the Jarretts have touched the American dream and must now watch it slip from their grasp. Raised in an orphanage, Cal, the father has become a successful tax attorney. Beth, the wife, moves in a world of tweed pantsuits, racquet clubs, and tennis courts. By her own admission she needs her "illusions". They have two teenage sons, Conrad and Buck, both blessed with good looks, intelligence, athletic prowess and all that is necessary for popularity.

It is around the death of Buck, the eldest son, that the story unfolds. To the extent that he permeates the thoughts and moods of the three family members he becomes a kind of Doppelganger, following each member, sometimes coming between them, and always remaining very much a part of the family dynamics. Guest moves with incredible deftness inside and outside the heads of her characters giving us a sense of things which scientific rigor so often prevents.

Her vignettes of psychotherapy should interest counsellors and counsellor educators. They are superb. It is impossible to say how Guest arrived at her feeling for the nuances of the process but she most certainly has. There is about her depictions of the interview an understanding of the human quality of it all that usually seems known only to seasoned practitioners.

Judging from the reactions of a small sample of students who used the novel as supplementary reading for an introductory graduate course in counselling it appears that *Ordinary People* is a novel most counsellors will probably enjoy — and learn from too.

Clinical Biofeedback: A Procedural Manual, K.R. Gardner & P.S. Montgomery, Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1977, 24 pp.

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Clinical Biofeedback contains twelve brief chapters on such subjects as the scientific foundation of biofeedback, choice of patients, basic elements of treatment, instrumentation techniques, and biofeedback equipment.

Although the authors preface with the statement that the book is intended for use by the trained practitioner, it is my impression that the trained practitioner would derive minimal benefit from the text. For the novice, however, the book contains information on various aspects of biofeedback therapy.

The book provides a fair, though far from complete, bibliography as well as several appendices which could prove useful. These include a list of biofeedback resources, copies of routine clinic forms used by the authors, and a set of mental imagery exercises.

The bulk of the text concentrates on the structure and development of the therapeutic relationship with notes on conducting initial interviews, collecting baseline data, formulating contract agreements, and troubleshooting treatment problems. For those without formal training in this aspect of therapy, the book will be most helpful since it approaches the topic in a basic manner. For those trained in psychotherapeutic techniques, little will be gained from this part of the text.

There is also considerable discussion and step-by-step instruction in relaxation procedures. These again will likely be of benefit only to the beginner in the field.

The major contribution of this book lies in its simplified discussions of the non-instrument aspects of biofeedback therapy, providing the beginner with the most basic information about setting up treatment programs, from the frequency of appointments to the termination of treatment.

There are two major weaknesses: (1) The book offers virtually nothing for the trained experienced therapist, and (2) the format of the text makes it very difficult to read. Each paragraph is

indented only two spaces, and all subheadings begin right at the margin with no lines left between heading and text or between previous text and a new heading. This is a publication detail which should be altered in subsequent printings.

Clinical Biofeedback is not a reference which every therapist should own, but it could be helpful to those establishing new training programs, as an introduction to the therapeutic relationship as it pertains to biofeedback therapy.