

Dyadic Playfulness Differences Between Sexual and Marital Therapy Couples

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ABSTRACT. Thirty-three clinical couples (17 sex therapy and 16 marital therapy) and fifty non-clinical couples were examined for potential differences in relationship playfulness utilizing the Couples Play Questionnaire. For clinical couples, Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and Edmond's Marital Conventionalization Scale scores were also compared. Both sex therapy and marital therapy couples were found to be deficient in play compared to non-clinical couples, while marital therapy couples were found to be most deficient. Greater marital conventionalization scores were found for sex therapy couples suggesting that they favorably distort their self-assessments. Results suggest that sex therapy couples may be the more inflexible of the three sample groups and may need therapeutic assistance with general relationship play as well as sexual play.

Certain features of traditional sex therapy can be recognized as designed to reestablish couple playfulness, but empirical research has only tangentially examined whether this aspect of dyadic interaction constitutes a problem for sexually dysfunctional couples. In several empirical studies (Betcher, 1981; Birchler & Webb, 1977; Gottman, 1979; Orthner, 1975, 1976; Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma, 1988) general relationship health has positively correlated with relationship playfulness. Others (Hollender, Luborsky, &

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