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MARITAL THERAPY FOR THE DIVORCE-SEEKING COUPLES IN THE LEGAL SYSTEMS, SOUTH KOREA: FAMILY SYSTEMIC, MENTAL HEALTH-RELATED, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSES

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Aim: This study was to analyze the sample data collected from divorce marital therapy sessions in the local court system in South Korea as well as diagnose typical symptoms in the divorcing couples.

Methods: The survey forms and marital therapy notes were collected from 200 divorce counseling cases in the local court systems, South Korea. The 200 divorce counseling cases were categorized as twelve major themes. Family therapy notes were utilized as an aid in verifying the divorcing couples' self-reports. The research method was partially adopted from the article, "Working with Korean-American Families: Multicultural Hermeneutics" (Sang Bok Lee, 2003: *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 31, 159 - 178). Multicultural hermeneutics was instrumental for explicating multiple layers of multicultural narratives, psychological dynamics, socio-economic systems, and of family systemic relations when dealing with the divorcing couples.

Results: The results were summarized as: economic issues (20%); extra-marital relationship (16%); in-law conflict (12%); substance abuse, addiction & marital violence (12%); international marriage & cross-cultural differences (10%); personality difference (8%); re-marriage issues (6%); sexual conflict (6%); age gap (4%); personality disorder & mental disorder (2%); parenting & children issues (2%); pre-mature marriage (2%). The twelve categories were grouped as mainly

- (1) family systemic or relationship-related issues,
- (2) socio-economic issues, and
- (3) mental health-related issues.

Conclusion: Psychiatrists, family therapists, and mental health professionals who work with the divorcing couples need to be aware of the predominant causes for rapidly increasing divorce rates when conducting therapeutic assessment and implementing intervention for the divorcing couples.