The Role of the Clergy in Divorce:
* 
An Exploratory Survey

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Rabbi Issac N. Trainin
Ms. Antoinette Bosco
Father Thomas Candreva
Reverend Clarence Cleasby
Reverend Clarence Lambelet
Mr. Nicholas Kladopoulos
Reverend J. Hill
Ms. Carolyn Kenks
Father Edward O'Donnell
Rabbi Samuel I. Korff
Rabbi Halbfinger
Reverend Ernest E. Hunt
Reverend James Nicholas
Father George Rheinheimer
Rabbi David Bleich
Reverend David Hoag
Deaconess Carol Anderson (currently Reverend Anderson)
Father Steven J. Kelleher
Rabbi Sholom Rivkin
Rabbi Mordekai Shapiro
Mr. Harold N. Wilkinson

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ABSTRACT

Although clergymen are more likely than psychotherapists to be contacted by people in troubled marriages, little is known about the attitudes of the clergy towards intervention in divorce. In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 clergymen highly involved in assisting the divorcing. Respondents viewed divorce as a traumatic experience involving four discrete psychological stages. The decision to divorce was typically regarded as not mutual. The initiator's experience of divorce was viewed as more lengthy and more difficult. The respondents' role is characterized as being informal, practical, emotionally supportive, and concerned with reconciliation, the viability of the family unit and the welfare of the children. Clergymen shift between several distinct roles while working with the divorcing. The clergyman provides psychological counseling, religious guidance, and also functions in a religio-legal role. The stance that a particular clergyman takes appears to be a function of the institutional context in which he comes in contact with divorcing individuals. At the congregational level, respondents were more psychologically oriented, whereas in the religious courts they were more legalistic and circumscribed in their goals.
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As a consequence of the rapidly rising divorce rate, the need for divorce counselling is receiving increasing attention among mental health specialists (Brown, 1976; Fisher, 1974). Yet there is evidence that when people seek help with a marital problem they are more likely to consult a clergyman than a psychiatrist, psychologist, or marriage counselor. Moreover there is some evidence to the effect that people who consult clergymen are likely to be more satisfied with the assistance that they receive than those who see a psychotherapist. Yet, to our knowledge, no systematic study of the clergy in divorce counseling has been reported.

The present investigation, which is part of a larger project on professional assistance in divorce, examines the views and interventions of a group of clergymen who are highly involved in assisting divorcing individuals. A paper on the role of the therapists has been completed (Kressel & Deutsch, in press) and another on lawyers is in preparation. In all three investigations we began with the same basic query: Given that two people have agreed to end their marriage (even if only one of them really wants to) what can be done to insure that they will do so in a cooperative manner, rather than in a destructive manner? Our focus was on the process set in motion when a marriage is being terminated, rather than on the causes of divorce or efforts to prevent its occurrence. We wished, in particular to answer three major questions:

(1) What are the criteria that distinguish a constructive divorce from a destructive one?

(2) What obstacles stand in the way of achieving a constructive divorce
(and by extension complicate the task of the helping professional)?

(3) What strategies and tactics of professional intervention are most useful and how can they be classified?

**METHOD**

The investigation took the form of a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. An effort to locate highly expert practitioners was made through religious organizations, personal contacts, and the referral of one respondent by another. Since the purpose was to examine the unique role of the clergyman, individuals with extensive training in psychotherapy and pastoral counseling were intentionally excluded. The interview was in two parts. The first involved detailed questioning on the topics enumerated above. In the second, respondents were asked to discuss in detail a case in which they felt they had been particularly successful, without revealing information that would permit identification of their clients.²

The average age of the respondents was 52. Close to half considered themselves specialists in the area of marriage and family problems and all had a minimum of three years experience in divorce work. The respondents included six Orthodox rabbis, four Catholic priests, two laywomen active in divorce adjustment groups affiliated with the Catholic Church, six Episcopal ministers, one Episcopal deaconess, one Greek Orthodox priest, and one Mormon brother. The respondents interviewed serve a predominantly middle-class in population with an average income of $19,000. While the majority of instances respondents work with people of their own religion, one Episcopal minister noted that he tended to see "lapsed Roman Catholics." In addition, centers for divorced Catholics that help ease a person's adjustment to a divorce were described as serving significant numbers of Protestants.
The original sample represented a broad spectrum of religious affiliations. It was limited, however, in not being a representative sample within religious groups (as a consequence of technical difficulties of gaining entree, our purposeful exclusion from the samples of individuals trained in psychology, and the anti-divorce stand of a number of potential interviewees contacted). To expand the range of views solicited, ten supplementary telephone interviews of approximately fifteen minutes in length were conducted with two Conservative rabbis, one Reform rabbi, one Baptist minister, one mainstream Catholic priest, one Presbyterian minister and three nuns. These interviews elicited generally similar responses to that of the primary group, suggesting that the views of the clergymen represented here are not atypical. In any event, we make no claim that the present data necessarily represent the views of the clergy at large. Our purpose was rather the exploratory one of shedding light on underlying issues and principles of intervention, by an intensive study of highly expert practitioners.
THE CONTEXT OF DIVORCE

Before proceeding to an examination of respondents' views on the nature of a constructive outcome to a divorce and the factors and interventions that effect such an outcome, it will be useful to discuss the institutional and psychological contexts in which their involvement occurs.

Institutional Contexts for Clerical Divorce Counselling

The clergyman's work with the divorcing occurs in primarily two institutional contexts: as part of his congregational responsibilities or in connection with religious courts of divorce or annulment. / of the respondents function at the congregational level. At the congregational level, the clergyman's activities are akin to those of a psychotherapist in that they tend to be focused on reducing emotional turmoil, building self confidence and promoting psychological insight. There are, however, important differences. First, unlike the psychotherapist, the clergyman may take an active role in initiating the counselling relationship.

If I know that there's a problem I go get myself involved. They are often defensive: "There's nothing wrong." And I'll say, "Fine, you know where I am if you want me." Or if I am beginning to see changes in the children I'm liable to say, "Well there may be nothing wrong with you but there may be with your children."3

Second, even in cases where the initiative is the divorcing individual's, less of a presumption can be made that the person will enter a counselling relationship, since the pretext for the contact with the clergyman is vaguer ("I'd like to come by and chat") than that for seeing a psychotherapist. Third, compared to the psychotherapist, the clergyman's role is a much more informal one. One
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respondent aptly described his position as midway between that of a friend and that of a professional. (This informality raises a semantic issue: What does one call the divorcing person whom the clergyman counsels? We have been unable to find a graceful and totally appropriate designation and have settled, somewhat unhappily on 'client').

The primary affiliation of eight of the respondents was with the religious courts (although some of these also had contacts with divorcing individuals at the congregational level). At the level of the religious courts, the clergyman's role tends to be more circumscribed and legalistic. Effectuating the religious divorce or annulment is a major concern. The procedures for obtaining a religious termination of the marriage are directly related to the religio-legal conceptions of the marriage bond. A basic distinction exists between Jewish and Christian legal codes in this regard.

Jewish law views marriage as a contract between a man and a woman. Mutual consent is thus a sufficient condition for the nullification of this contract. In the Jewish divorce proceeding the critical role is that of the husband. It is he who 'grants' the divorce and the wife who 'receives' it. The Jewish divorce proceeding involves a ceremony in which a man in the presence of two witnesses gives his wife a writ of divorce and announces that he divorces her and that she is free to remarry. The woman holds out her hand in a manner prescribed by religious law to 'accept' the writ of divorce. The couple are instructed that the divorce takes effect at the moment that the divorce writ touches her hand. The primary religio-legal motive for this ceremony (which is required by Orthodox and Conservative Judaism but not the liberalized codes of Reform Judaism) is to insure that any children borne of the wife's remarriage be considered
In contrast with Jewish law, Christian religions are more likely to require conditions other than mutual consent in the dissolution of a marriage. The Greek Orthodox Church permits up to two divorces and three remarriages for various grounds such as adultery and alcoholism. Roman Catholic law, as is commonly known, does not permit divorce. Procedures permitting annulment do exist, if it can be demonstrated that characteristics of either party at the time of the marriage make the covenant invalid. If the Marriage Tribunal accepts the evidence offered in favor of annulment the parties are free to remarry. More liberal Protestantism, like Reform Judaism, has more permissive codes and does not prescribe any religio-legal rituals as mandatory for divorcing individuals.

In recent years, various religious bodies have liberalized their procedures regarding divorce, remarriage and annulments. In the Catholic Church, for example, where divorce is not permitted, there is an increasing willingness to allow for latitude regarding psychological grounds for annulments. In addition, a formal decree has been issued by the Catholic Church in this country to the effect that divorced Catholics who remarry are no longer to be excommunicated. In Conservative Judaism, a procedure of annulment (whereby the Rabbinic court withdraws its consent to the marriage) is employed in cases in which the husband's consent, which is a prerequisite to a Jewish divorce, cannot be obtained. Despite this trend towards liberalization, for those religious groups that require religio-legal procedures for divorce or annulment, the process is often complex and fraught
with obstacles. The mere fact that a religious divorce or annulment has been accomplished may be a considerable achievement for a clergyman.

The clergymen affiliated with the religious courts tend to see people during or shortly after negotiation of the terms of settlement in the secular divorce. In some cases, contact will be maintained after the religious procedure has been completed to aid in the post-divorce adjustment. The primary mode of referral to religious courts is from clergymen at the congregational level who have been unsuccessful in reconciling a couple or who encounter individuals who, having obtained a secular divorce, are unaware of the advantages of or the possibility of obtaining a religious divorce or annulment. In some cases referral may be self-initiated.

The Psychological Context of Divorce

In the view of respondents, work with couples who are divorcing entails involvement with people undergoing one of the greatest stresses of adult life. Words such as "psychological damage," "tragedy," and "crisis" were commonly used in discussions of divorce. Extreme and irrational behaviors were viewed as common reactions to the severing of a close psychological bond. Respondents discussed the complex emotional experience of divorcing as an intertwined function of the chronological events, the multiple and often simultaneous sources of stress, and the characteristically nonmutual nature of the decision itself.6

Chronological Events

The chronological events include the precipitating crisis, the decision to divorce, the physical separation, the negotiation of terms of settlement and the civil and religious divorces. The precipitating events might include the departure of grown children from the family home, financial difficulties, a job offer that
involves relocation, 'middle-age crisis' (in males), or even participation in church sponsored marital enrichment programs. While such events were not viewed as actual 'causes' of divorce, they were viewed as often instrumental in motivating one or both of the spouses to consciously re-evaluate the marriage.

The decision phase begins at the point that there is a recognition by at least one of the spouses of serious marital difficulties and ends at the point that the reality of an impending divorce is acknowledged by both. Typical reactions to the surfacing of serious marital difficulties were described as characterized by efforts to 'save' the marriage: "Why don't we take a second honeymoon? Why don't we take a vacation together? Why don't we buy a new house?... They start trying to find the things that will get their marriage back on the tracks."

In particularly destructive cases, an avowed decision to divorce becomes part of a general and protracted escalation of marital conflict: "Where the person says, 'I'm going to do it' and then for six months before they go to the lawyer, beats the other person over the head daily with, 'I am going to divorce you and I've transferred all of the property to my name, and you're not going to have anything, and I am going to embarrass you in the presence of the community.""

Sources of stress in adjusting to divorce. The most difficult emotional phase in the chronological sequence was generally viewed as the point of physical separation, however, or the actual divorce. In general, the emotional trauma of divorce was viewed as primarily a function of the underlying characteristics of the divorcing process, rather than the observable steps towards divorce. Among these are the multiple sources of stress which impinge upon the divorcing.

For the husband, a divorce typically involves a change in residence and occasionally in job. As the non-custodial parent, he must adapt to seeing his
children less often and on a fixed schedule. For the wife, the changes were generally described as more radical. As the custodial parent, she must adapt to the new responsibilities of working while attempting to play the role of both mother and father. For most middle-class couples the post-divorce period is often one of severe financial strain. As the spouse with the lesser earning power, the financial pressure on the wife is likely to be particularly great. One of the respondents described most of the women with whom she has contact at a Catholic counselling center as needing financial aid—and because of the social stigma attached to public assistance many are unwilling to obtain even the limited help to which they are entitled.

Women also frequently find the process of beginning to date again a difficult one. One respondent described the difficulties facing many Catholic women:

They feel that they cannot date again. And they say, "How would I meet anyone anyway?" Women who were married in their teens and suddenly they're in their thirties and they don't know how to date again. They're really curious about "Well, should I let him kiss me goodnight?" They're back in the 1940's sort of morals and they're trying to fit into the 1970's in some way.

**Stages of Psychological Divorce**

The most profound stress in divorce is that entailed by the necessity of achieving psychological separation from one's former spouse. For couples whose marriage has involved an intense emotional commitment, the process of psychic divorce described by respondents involves the following four stages:

1. An initial period of denial during which the individual refuses to face the possibility that the marriage may be dying.
2. A period of depression and disorientation involving withdrawal from social contacts and intense feelings of personal failure and confusion.

3. Feelings of betrayal leading to anger at the spouse and members of the opposite sex generally. Typically, the person is unaware of the motivational sources that propel his or her relationships at this stage.

4. A gradual period of readjustment during which the person begins to behave rationally, starts planning realistically, and during which (ideally), he or she gains psychological insight into himself or herself. One respondent described this phase as "a long process of being reborn."

The emotional coup de grace in divorce is the characteristically non-mutual nature of the decision: one spouse frequently wants to end the marriage far more than the other. The less a person wishes the divorce the more likely the experience of psychic divorce is to be a difficult one. The experience of the initiator and the non-initiator may, in fact, be considerably different.

The initiator's experience. The distinctiveness of the initiator's experience is related to the relatively earlier experience of some of the emotional stages and the relatively shorter time span of the entire process. Typically, this spouse experiences the denial stage and the difficult depression stage while the marriage is still intact. If the couple are in counseling, the initiator's desire for a divorce may express itself in a subtle sabotaging of reconciliation efforts. The conscious surfacing of the desire for divorce is viewed as a particularly difficult juncture along the divorcing process. A good deal of guilt is likely to be involved, and as a consequence, the initiator may redouble efforts at reconciliation or simply avoid the question of divorce for a time.
As the initiator becomes increasingly confident in the decision, the other spouse may become increasingly distressed. One respondent described the seesawing of emotions in the following manner:

I think the initial stages are usually more difficult for the person who has been mulling over the notion of divorce. They tend to go from timidity and insecurity about the whole thing to become stronger in their resolve. And the other person will become more defensive as time goes on. The more divorce looms as a reality, the more the person who has not been thinking about it gets panicky and wants to hang on.

Gradually, the initiator begins to experience anger. The transition may have a particularly trying quality.

. . . Anyone who really cares enough to enter the commitment of marriage has placed a lot of faith and trust in the other person, and when you place a lot of faith and trust in another person and then feel betrayed, it's a double loss—because in a sense you lose confidence in yourself—you made a mistake which is very hard to admit. And the other person whom you really did trust and committed your life to has either turned out to be not what you thought. . . or has changed—and I think this is a very disorienting experience. . . Once you're angry, you're sort of filling up with energy: "By gosh, I'll go out and do something; I'll get a divorce."

A temporary feeling of euphoria at the anticipation of a new freedom may follow the decision to divorce. The physical separation, however, generally brings on another experience of disorientation. An experience of disappointment is also described as occurring in some instances: "Some people live through
a horrible disappointment. They felt that they were being released from prison, and then they realized that they are in a new prison worse than the one before. There is a feeling of remorse, of regret on the part of some people."

Nevertheless, the initiating spouse's psychic divorce was seen as easier than the non-initiator's, since feelings of failure are likely to be less intense and since several of the emotional stages of psychic divorce have already been experienced at the point of physical separation.

The non-initiator's experience. Much of the difficulty in adjustment that is attributed to the non-initiator can be viewed as a consequence of a lack of psychological preparedness. The denial phase is described as continuing virtually until the time of the divorce:

We had one woman in a seminar who hung her husband's pajamas, shirts and underwear on the laundry line in the backyard rather than admit that her husband was gone; and another woman who said: "I kept the car, and I kept taking the car and parking it the way he'd park it so it looked like he was coming and going."

The physical separation generally triggers the depression stage. Coming at a time when other stresses are at a maximum, this stage is experienced as particularly difficult. Gradually the feelings of anger begin to surface. The surfacing of anger is viewed as a sign of recovery. The person begins to display more of an interest in social contacts. Yet, actions are still very much affected by irrational emotions. Lacking an appropriate target, the anger is more difficult to deal with. In most cases, the individual slowly begins to gain a certain detachment regarding his experience and begins to deal with his anger in a constructive way. His views of the divorce and his perceptions of the former spouse
become more realistic.

Most respondents felt that the non-initiator could not be expected to have recovered for a year or more after the physical separation.

How representative of the experience of the general divorcing population is the trauma of psychic divorce described by our respondents? To a degree, of course, the people whom they see, as several respondents noted, represent a distinctive subgroup who are more conservative in their values than most divorcing Americans. It would seem that the clergyman's client is more likely to experience divorce as particularly wrenching and distressful. On the other hand, the description of psychic divorce accords very closely with the emotional experience described to us by divorce therapists working with a somewhat different population (Kressel and Deutsch, in press). It also fits well with descriptions of general coping responses to a variety of life stresses as disparate as those caused by loss of a body part, natural disasters, and genetic defects (Falek & Britton, 1974). In addition, the few representative national surveys on the emotional adjustment of Americans support the notion of divorce as traumatic. Such studies consistently find that divorced individuals are the most unhappy and emotionally distressed group in the population (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976; Gurin, Veroff & Feld, 1960; National Center for Health Statistics, 1970). Other data indicate that the divorced are more prone to have physical illnesses (Ladbrook, 1976). Nevertheless, it would seem that the stresses of psychic divorce can be mitigated by a variety of factors. What is clearly needed are intensive studies of the divorcing based on representative sampling methods to find out what social and personal factors make it more or less difficult to cope with the problems resulting from divorce, rather than on clinical reports or ad hoc volunteer respondents.
Such studies would enable us to place the foregoing account of psychic divorce in perspective.

**CRITERIA OF A CONSTRUCTIVE DIVORCE**

If the help of a clergyman is sought by a couple on the verge of divorce, what ought that assistance accomplish? Not surprisingly, the respondents unambiguously favored reconciliation as a primary goal: "The original criteria for a good outcome is to try to save the marriage". "I'm against people getting divorced in most situations". "It's not my office to assist people in getting divorced. It's my office to assist people not to get divorced." The desirability of reconciliation derived from the respondents' views on the sanctity of marriage, the deleterious social consequences of a high divorce rate, and the view that divorce is often a means of evading personal and social responsibilities.

While reconciling marriages had clear priority, virtually all of the respondents spoke of the desirability of divorce when extreme physical or emotional abuse (either of a spouse or children) or "radical incompatibility" is involved. Nearly all of those interviewed accepted a divorce as a legitimate goal in instances in which, for whatever reason, reconciliation could not be achieved.

With regard to the adjustment of the divorcing partners, there was consensus that a constructive divorce has the following properties. Firstly, it has certain psychological features: there is a diminution of feelings of guilt and failure that initially characterize the divorcing process, insight into one's own contributions to the marital breakup, an ability to form new satisfying relationships, particularly with members of the opposite sex, and a growing conception of oneself as a good and competent individual. Secondly, it is characterized by a divorce settlement which is financially equitable and in which arrangements regarding
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custody and visitation are worked out in a cooperative and mutually acceptable manner. Thirdly, it results in an absence of continuing divorce struggles and the ability of the divorced couple to cooperate on matters of mutual concern such as child custody and visitation.

There was a difference of opinion regarding whether remarriage can be considered a criteria of a constructive divorce. Some clearly viewed it as primary, others clearly did not. Opinions on this issue appeared to be a function of religious affiliation. Rabbis and the Greek Orthodox respondent emphasized the importance of remarriage. Catholic respondents emphasized the legitimacy of remaining single. In instances in which remarriage did occur there was general agreement that it should not end in divorce, it should provide a good stepparent for the children and that it should not occur quickly before the individual reaches an understanding of the causes of the divorce and his or her contributions to it.

Respondents generally viewed emotional trauma for children as an inevitable consequence of a divorce. This belief appears to be based on the notion that the antagonisms which the spouses feel for each other are likely to be displaced in the form of battles over the children (since it is easier to attack one's mate in one's parental role than in the role of rejected spouse) and the assumption that young children need the presence of a mother and a father as models for healthy development. The welfare of the children was a priority for virtually all of the respondents. In contrast to their goals for the spouses, respondents' goals vis a vis the children tended to be largely preventative, focused on minimizing permanent psychological damage rather than attempting to induce "gains" or "growth." The importance of a cooperative post-divorce relationship between
former spouses was emphasized in terms of its likely beneficial consequences for the children. A cooperative relationship between parents enables them to adequately resolve future issues that arise involving the child's welfare and make the child's emotional adjustment easier. Instances in which either parent fails to maintain contact with children after a divorce were viewed very unfavorably.  

OBSTACLES TO A CONSTRUCTIVE DIVORCE

Respondents viewed the intense emotional reactions of a divorcing person to the end of his or her marriage as creating major obstacles to a constructive outcome to a divorce. Critical decision-making skills such as the ability to accurately perceive options, one's motives and the motives of others and the capacity to anticipate future events are viewed as often impaired at a time when an individual is faced with important decisions that may involve relocation, the welfare of children, finances and possibly remarriage. Irrational emotions and a lack of self-confidence may cloud a person's judgment and prompt quick ill-considered decisions that are later regretted. Excessive preoccupation with one's own problems can also lead a parent to ignore the best interests of his or her children.

The intensity of the emotional reactions to divorce complicates the task of the clergyman. A client's suspiciousness, borne out of unresolved feelings of anger towards his or her spouse, is likely to make it particularly difficult for a clergyman to establish a relationship based on trust.

The negotiations of the issues involved in the divorce settlement also do not benefit from the prevailing winds of the psychic divorce. The attitudes of the noninitiator towards the practical details of custody, visitation, and child support and so on may be influenced to a much greater degree by a desire to
punish the other spouse than by a wish to seek arrangements which are realistic and mutually advantageous, or even in one's own best interests. The initiator's feelings of guilt or eagerness to leave may produce a reciprocally ill considered acquiescence with the noninitiator's demands. After the divorce harassment and conflict regarding the terms of the settlement may occur as an expression of anger, wounded pride, and a more realistic assessment of the situation.

While the social support provided by friends and family was viewed as a facilitative factor, respondents tended to emphasize the difficulties that the reactions of others to a divorce could cause for an individual trying to adjust. Several respondents noted that a divorced person, especially one from a traditional background, might experience a subtle social rejection that is likely to compound feelings of loneliness. Divorced women were viewed as particularly vulnerable in this regard. Since unresolved hostilities were viewed as invariably involved, it was felt that former spouses remaining friends was an unobtainable ideal which could hinder a healthy post-divorce adjustment by making it extremely difficult for a person to accomplish a psychic divorce. Continued contact with former in-laws were viewed as particularly problematic and undesirable.

One woman said, "I've let my husband go...He's getting married...they call me and tell me about the shower that his new bride is having and want to know what the children are going to wear to my ex-husband's wedding. I got him out of my system but I can't get all of the relatives out, they still for some reason want to act out the tragedy of this divorce and punish me for not having made him happy."

So here she is with a need not only to divorce her ex, but to get his family off her back.
Other factors that respondents viewed as likely to make adjustment to a divorce more difficult were the presence of young children, insufficient means of support and little work experience. Since women were generally viewed as more likely to experience these difficulties, the prevailing view among respondents was that it is more difficult for women to adjust to divorce than it is for men.

STRATEGIES OF INTERVENTION

The behavior of the clergyman in attempting to assist parties on the verge of divorce may be described under five major headings: 1) Establishing a relationship; 2) Diagnosis and information gathering; 3) Referral; 4) Assisting in the divorcing process; and 5) Accomplishing the religious divorce.

Establishing a Relationship

In order to intervene effectively, a clergyman must first establish a relationship between himself and the spouse (or spouses) that is based on trust—a delicate matter in the superheated emotional climate in which divorce occurs. As a consequence of their general concern for the viability of the family unit, most of those interviewed prefer to counsel both spouses rather than one. It is clearly more difficult to gain confidence and trust in such circumstances, due to the heightened sensitivity of each partner to the possibility that the clergyman is taking the side of the other. The task may be further complicated by mistaken assumptions about the clerical role: "They're so desperate. They want all these magical answers, especially from the clergyman, who is prone to giving them from the pulpit. They want a sermon. And when they don't get one, they get as angry as hell."

Moreover, unlike the psychotherapist, the clergyman may himself be an immediate
target of anger as an official representative of the church: "People who speak to me may be very angry: 'Why does the church have all these rules? Why can't I leave my wife? It's all the church's fault because we've got these silly teachings.'" Individuals may also be reticent to trust a clergymen fully because of a fear of being censured. While such fears may exist generally in individuals coming to counsellors and therapists, they are viewed as likely to be particularly intense as a consequence of the clergymen's role as an authority figure and the stand taken against divorce by some churches.

Against this array of obstacles, the clergymen can marshall a number of assets in his efforts to become an acceptable agent of change. Primary among these are certain unique aspects of the clerical role.

Respondents described themselves as consciously making use of the informal nature of their role to establish and maintain good rapport. They are quite willing to speak openly regarding their own family situation and personal life in speaking about problems facing the divorcing individual. By being open and honest, by sharing personal experiences and by using a warm supportive approach, the clergymen attempts to establish credibility. Several respondents contrasted the leverage that their role provides with the leverage of a psychotherapist's role: "When I know people on a personal level I can do some things. Like say 'I'm in the neighborhood, why don't I drop in for coffee?' And then I can talk to them about the divorce. So in some ways I'm in a better position than a psychologist or a marriage counselor." Three of those interviewed felt that as a consequence of their paternal role, clergymen are in a position to provide particularly effective reassurance: "He was complaining about his children being taken away and it was basically this authority situation where I simply listened and reassured him as a
father. I think that helped him to be able to accept the situation."

An intense personal concern for the divorcing person's welfare may offset other difficulties in building trust:

It's not just a job for me; it's my ministry...it's a religious commitment that I have to minister to people in a time of need.

...For them this is the only divorce in the world and it's my obligation as someone who is counseling them to treat it that way.

My counseling work is the most precious part of my ministry to me.

Clergymen also draw upon strategies of gaining acceptability common to all mediators: impartiality, empathy and what we might call conditional confidentiality:

There is a story told about a great Rabbi. Two people came to him with an arbitration case. And he listened to one and said, "You're right." And he listened to the other and he said, "You're right." And the Rabbi's wife overheard this and said, "How can they both be right?" And the Rabbi said, "You're right too." So you have to use psychology and not antagonize anybody because if you tell him that he's wrong, the case is off.

* * * *

I don't listen artificially. I try to listen with a sense of feeling to what they are saying. The very fact of listening a great deal makes me reluctant to give any black and white advice...I've learned that thoughtfulness, concern is most important.

* * * *

I try to have an understanding with each of the people as to the nature of the confidentiality in our relationship. If I'm seeing each
separately I would rarely if ever say that I'm never going to say to one what the other has said to me. I have to establish my trustworthiness by my ability to excercise discretion. There are times when it might be very constructive for me to be able to say to one person something that the other has said to me. And I would spell that out. I'm not just a funnel through which what one person tells me goes to the other person, and neither am I a stone wall, that anything said to me stops right there. In point of fact, however, the majority of the respondents are not, as we have noted, impartial when it comes to the issue of reconciliation. In terms of establishing a trusting relationship this preference for reconciliation often represents a considerable strategic albatross. Compare, for example, the strategically comfortable position of one of the few respondents who had no avowed desire to reconcile marriages with the remarks of a more representative interviewee:

I myself may find the religious code a little bit too repressive... so I try to divorce myself from that code as much as possible, sometimes by saying, "Look, I really don't care if you get divorced or not; what I really want you to do now is to talk as freely and honestly with me as you can about what all this means to you and your expectations and we'll reflect together and kind of walk through your feelings." 10

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I point out to them that I'll... be attempting to assist them in not getting a divorce. If they wish to pursue it on that basis and hear me out then we can go ahead...now occasionally, people just announce that they are going to get a divorce...we have a pleasant conversation but it's obvious that they aren't interested in hearing anything I've got to say.
Perhaps the most viable strategy for overcoming the handicap which a preference for reconciliation represents is to de-emphasize this aspect of the counselling relationship, particularly in the initial meeting, while at the same time introducing the religious implications of the divorce and the unique but voluntary nature of the counselling process, i.e. the soft sell.

I tell them that there is a religious dimension that will be of concern to them...I point out without thundering...that I'll probably be the only one to talk about this and it's an area that really should be talked about, so let's talk about it...I also tell them it's their decision whether they want to deal with it or not...that I have absolutely no authority whatsoever. I can't force them in any way.

Inevitably, in a certain percentage of cases the clergyman fails in his efforts to become an acceptable agent to both parties. He may then end up counselling one of the spouses when in actuality he would have preferred counselling both. Several of those interviewed did in fact note that they would prefer to counsel both spouses more often than they actually do.

**Diagnosis and Information Gathering**

**Diagnostic Issues**

The clergyman functions in a variety of capacities in his work with the divorcing. He is a psychological counselor, an advocate of reconciliation and a religio-legal representative. Diagnosis is therefore, particularly important as a prerequisite to a choice of an appropriate intervention strategy in a particular case. A variety of difficulties, however, may complicate the diagnostic process. Clients may have initial goals that differ from those of the clergyman and they may also be unclear or ambivalent regarding their goals for the counseling relationship. A central ambiguity for all the parties, including the clergyman, is whether or
not the marriage can be "saved." Even in cases where help is requested in obtaining a religious divorce—generally a situation of relatively clear and circumscribed objectives—the hidden agenda may include a wish to be reassured about one's standing in the religious community, to be relieved of guilt or to be psychologically supported.

Opinion was divided on how difficult it is to determine whether a case of marital conflict will lead to divorce. Two respondents felt that in some instances it is an easy matter: "If a couple comes to me with a marital problem, after a half hour or so I can make a judgment in my mind about whether they are going to break up or not." Cases in which a respondent is able to readily diagnose a divorce might involve physical abuse to the wife or children. One respondent felt that in instances in which both spouses collude in denying the existence of problems, divorce is "virtually inevitable."

As in our study of divorce therapists, more detailed diagnostic criteria for divorce were lacking. Partly this may reflect our failure to probe sufficiently on this important issue. More basically, it would appear to indicate an absence of professional consensus on issues related to divorce counseling, which has not received consideration as a field of counseling distinct from marriage and family therapy until very recently.

Information Gathering and Diagnosis

Adequate methods of gathering information are basic to any diagnostic strategy. While information gathering necessarily involves asking direct questions, respondents emphasized the usefulness of patient listening and indirect methods of inquiry, particularly at the beginning of the counselling relationship when it is likely to be impolitic to "come right out and ask." One respondent noted that raising
the issue of whether the couple preferred to come to sessions separately or
together could serve diagnostic purposes:

If early on, in my first or second visit with them I say, "Do
you want to come together or separately, that oftentimes opens the
door to alot of other questions about their relationship, and in
most cases if they are not willing to come together that would tell
me that their marriage will end in divorce.

The clergyman may also rely on his prior knowledge of the individual's family
situation and the unique scource of information represented by ritualistic
confession.

One of the most striking characteristics of the clergyman's diagnostic
strategy is the extent to which third-party consultation is employed. This is
one of the few respects in which the clergy appear more similar to the lawyers
with whom we spoke than to the therapists. Clergymen described themselves as
contacting psychologists, marriage counselors, other clergymen, social workers,
family agencies, welfare departments, attorneys, judges—virtually any third
party who might help in giving a more objective, comprehensive view of the
situation. One respondent emphasized the importance of maintaining a good
relationship with judges presiding at separation agreements who might alert
the clergyman to the possibility for reconciliation in a particular case:
"I have a relationship that I treasure with the judge in family court...
because legal separation means they're not going to get divorced yet, that they
can still reconcile... there may be occasions where reconciliation is possible
... and the judge will tell you that in confidence."

For the most part respondents described their contacts with other professionals
as quite useful, although there was some evidence of tension with psychotherapists.
A number of respondents felt that psychotherapists tended to be too "closed-mouthed" and "too reticent to talk openly" to clergymen. This lack of rapport was attributed to "an overconcern with confidentiality," a lack of understanding and respect for the clergymen and his role by the therapist, and excessive ideological commitments to particular schools of therapy.

Friends and family, particularly parents are also among those contacted. There are two primary motives for such efforts. First, to determine whether there are individuals in the client's life who can be encouraged to provide emotional support, particularly during the stressful period of physical separation, and second, to determine whether allies can be found to motivate the client to take actions that the clergymen views as desirable. The clergymen might, for example, attempt to enlist the aid of others in inducing an individual to cooperate in religious divorce proceedings, or to take actions judged by the respondent as beneficial to the well being of the children.

**Referral**

Referral was discussed in more detail by the clergy than by either the matrimonial lawyers or the divorce therapists whom we interviewed. As a consequence of the paternal aspect of the clergymen's role, he is likely to become aware of the need for financial assistance that an individual would be reluctant to discuss openly with other professionals or friends. In some instances direct help might be provided from church funds over which the clergymen has control. More often, a respondent will encourage a divorced person to apply to appropriate public or private institutions for assistance.

About one third of the sample discussed referrals to lawyers. Although the data is only suggestive, there is some indication that clergymen affiliated with religious courts, either because they tend to have contact with divorcing
people close to the negotiation phase or because their roles are in some ways more similar to that of a lawyer, tended to be more informed regarding legal issues and also tended to note referrals to lawyers more frequently than respondents involved in counseling at the congregational level.

Respondents had mixed reactions regarding the effects of legal interventions in divorce. Several noted that the resolution of legal issues could facilitate emotional adjustment and that individual lawyers might encourage the transition out of the denial phase of the psychic divorce by their sharp attention to reality combined with an emotionally supportive manner. On the other hand, respondents were critical of what they viewed as a tendency of the adversarial system to escalate conflict by providing spouses with the ammunition to wage legal warfare.

There was considerable variation regarding the extent to which psychiatric referrals were considered appropriate. Some respondents described themselves as referring clients to psychotherapists in most instances in which they felt emotional difficulties were involved. Others preferred to handle all but the most serious cases themselves. The institutional context of the clergyman's affiliation appeared to be an important determinant of the extent of concern with psychological issues. Respondents who functioned exclusively at the congregational level were much more likely than those involved with the religious courts to be attuned to psychological problems, to make frequent referrals, and to become personally involved in counselling clients with emotional problems.

Psychiatric referral was most frequently mentioned in connection with cases involving extreme depression, drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual problems, or serious emotional illness in a child. An unwillingness to consider reconciliation might also prompt referral to a secular counselor although the
prevailing tendency among respondents was to become involved in such cases by maintaining a relationship based on secondary goals.

Respondents tended to view the ability to be an effective helping agent as more of a function of life experience than training. Where referrals are made, they appear to be done without apparent preference to any of the various mental health professions. There was, however, a tendency on the part of respondents to refer clients to agencies with religious affiliations (such as Catholic Charities) or to individual counselors affiliated with the respondent's religious group.

It should be noted that psychiatric referral was not viewed as precluding involvement on the part of the clergyman. In some instances, a respondent might remain involved because of a client's unwillingness to follow through on a psychiatric referral for financial reasons or because of a belief that going to a psychotherapist entails an attribution of seriousness to one's problems that he or she is unwilling to make. In many instances, however, respondents were also quite prepared to remain involved in a case in which an individual was seeing a psychotherapist, even where the services that the clergyman provides also center around the person's psychological adjustment.

Assisting in the Divorcing Process

Interventions during the divorcing process include handling emotions, encouraging realistic planning, achieving the religious divorce and fostering a cooperative divorcing relationship.

Handling Emotions

Respondents viewed the emotional support they provide as a particularly important and distinctive aspect of their work. Direct reassurance to clients about their freedom from guilt and their acceptability to God, as well as the catharsis of ritual confession are specifically religious interventions that
have the effect of reducing emotional trauma. Emotional support provides the breathing space that allows clients to muster up their own resources in a crisis and learn from the experience. A respondent might also use supportive strategies in the service of specific aims: to enable an individual to accept the reality of divorce, to motivate a parent to take actions judged in the best interests of the children, or to encourage cooperation in procedures necessary for a religious divorce or annulment.

**Encouraging Realistic Planning**

For the most part respondents did not view long-term help in dealing with underlying psychological conflicts as within the scope of their role. The counseling they provide was described as reality oriented and focused on assisting clients in coping with immediate problems. Respondents described themselves as functioning to reinforce the ego functions of their clients that are temporarily weakened by the irrational emotions characteristic of the divorcing process. They point out options, clarify costs and benefits of alternative decisions, reinforce and support whatever plans a client formulates, and attempt to introduce the perspective of others, notably that of the spouse and children.

**Facilitating the Psychic Divorce**

Emotional support and underlining the reality of the impending divorce may be part of a strategy aimed at inducing parties to accept the divorce on a psychological level. A religious divorce ceremony may also be a useful tool for facilitating divorce by concretizing the end of the marital relationship and fostering a sense of psychological closure.

Although by the time that they come for the Jewish divorce they’ve accepted it, they haven’t really felt the total severance of the relationship that they experience at that point. That’s one of the
purposes of the Jewish divorce. It really makes the individual feel that this is really the severance of the relationship.

Attempts to introduce religious ritual into the divorcing process appear to be on the rise in Christian communities in which no such ceremonies previously existed. A recent article in The Christian Century (1971) describes one such ceremony involving avowals on the part of both spouses that they relinquish the marriage bond and forgive each other. A secular divorce ceremony with similar goals is described by Bach (1973).

Fostering a Cooperative Relationship

The following strategies are used by respondents in inducing divorcing spouses to cooperate:

Establishing optimal distance. One respondent emphasized the importance of an optimal degree of distance between spouses as a factor likely to effect their ability to cooperate unhampered by intense emotions: "People need... a certain amount of distance from each other. If the distance gets too far there's nervousness... If you're dealing with a couple who are going into a divorce... I will assess where they have to be in the relationship to work constructively."

Distance may be regulated by decisions about whether or not to hold conjoint meetings or by decisions regarding the nature of the living arrangements during divorce.

Pointing out the costs of a competitive stance and the benefits of a cooperative stance. This strategy attempts to focus clients away from the gains and losses of their spouse and onto their own gains or their children's gains by demonstrating that they have more to gain from a cooperative stance than a competitive one. A clergyman is particularly likely to emphasize the costs of parental recrimination to the emotional health of the children: "I'll tell them 'You have children and...they need your full senses. Remembering
the bitterness, you will let it out among your children... Is this the kind of life you want to live?"

Focusing on the future. Related to the above strategy is an attempt to focus clients onto future goals in the hope that a motivation to cooperate and end a conflict rather than exacerbate it will be encouraged.

Minimizing the destructive influence of third parties. Third parties, and in particular the parents of divorcing spouses are viewed as having the potential to escalate conflict. A few respondents noted that they did not hesitate to contact parents directly to mitigate their involvement.

Serving as a go-between. A clergyman can serve as an indirect means of communication in instances in which more direct communications are experienced as too frightening to too risky: "Sometimes they will use me...to work with the other person. I really become a kind of delegate, and this may not even be explicit. Even in a relationship that is cordial and civil, they will use me to sound out where the other person is. And this can be very subtle."

Accomplishing the Religious Divorce

Religious divorce or annulment is an arena into which vengeful feelings stirred by the divorcing experience may project themselves. The clergyman is in a difficult position, faced with the task of implementing a religio-legal procedure for which enforceable sanctions do not exist. In most cases, the initiative for the religious procedure comes after the secular divorce and from only one spouse. The other spouse may be reluctant to cooperate because of a dissatisfaction with the terms of the secular divorce, a desire to punish, or a discomfort regarding aspects of the religious procedure. As issues involved in Catholic marriage annulment procedures and Jewish divorce procedures are distinct, the interventions involved are best described separately.
The Jewish Divorce

According to Jewish law, the central requirement for a religious divorce is the consent of both of the parties. From a religio-legal standpoint, the consent of the male is, however, critical. Rabbis described concerted efforts to contact the nominating spouse by issuing a religious summons, telephone contacts and contacts through third parties. After both spouses have been contacted, attempts to gain their cooperation may involve explaining the practical benefits of a religious divorce or if necessary contacting influential third parties such as family members or other Rabbis who may be able to prevail upon a recalcitrant party to cooperate. (In Israel, and in certain extremely Orthodox communities outside of Israel it is not unusual for a recalcitrant husband to be induced to "cooperate" by incarceration or physical force.) In cases in which it is not possible to gain a husband's cooperation through other means, renegotiation of certain terms involved in the divorce settlement may be employed as a means of gaining his cooperation. Such negotiations may involve a financial settlement (referred to as "blackmail" by one respondent) or the transfer of objects whose value is of a more symbolic nature.

Roman Catholic Annulment Proceedings

Grounds for annulment that are common in Church tribunals include failure of either party to be baptized at the time of the marriage, lack of intention of sexual fidelity on the part of either party at the time of the marriage, or a consent to marriage induced under force. (For a comprehensive list of grounds for annulment see Kelleher[1976], pages 122-124.) Proving that any of these conditions existed can be extremely difficult. Priests affiliated with marriage tribunals described themselves as engaging in direct questioning of spouses, indirect questioning where "delicate subjects" (such as details of sex life) are involved, contacting third parties as witnesses to the state of
a spouse at the time of the marriage and attempting to gain access to any relevant records. A priest's ability to effectuate an annulment is likely to depend on the voluntary cooperation of a number of individuals. As a consequence of the difficulties often encountered in gaining this cooperation, the length of the proceedings (a year or longer is not unusual), and the uncertainty of the outcome, discouragement and emotional strain must frequently be countered by reassurance and support.

POST DIVORCE COUNSELLING

Although respondents of all denominations discussed the importance of financial, emotional and religious assistance after divorce, the most organized and systematic of these efforts were described by Catholic respondents involved in divorce adjustment programs. Individuals undergoing a traumatic experience are provided with a reference group of others undergoing similar experiences, frequent social contacts, and a religious community that accepts them.

Interventions begin with active outreach: "If someone calls and says 'Can you tell me what's happening?', we view that as our first crisis counseling session...we'll find out where they live and we'll send a member so they don't feel shy about coming...to tell them what we're about." The initial contact is followed by an intake process that attempts to match the needs of the individual to the services provided by the center.

The services provided by the center may include a limited amount of individual counseling, group discussions, recreational activities for children of a divorced person, daycare facilities, religious group rituals, and workshops of particular problems facing the divorced Catholic. A central aspect of these programs are group meetings in which particular problems facing members are dealt with. One respondent noted that confrontational tactics were often used in attempting to induce change
particularly where the welfare of the children is involved: "We'll sometimes use what you might call 'shock treatment'. We'll say: 'Do you see what you're doing Mrs. Jones in the way that you have been using your son against your ex-husband? Well if you want him to be a homosexual, continue doing exactly what you're doing because you're doing a beautiful job."

Accomplishing Religious Goals after Divorce

Respondents' strategies after divorce are also aimed at the relationship between the divorced individual and the religious community. Respondents described interventions aimed at inducing a divorced person to continue to participate in activities of his or her religious community and interventions that encourage a conceptualization of the divorce experience within a religious framework.

Encouraging Participation in the Religious Community

Assuring clients regarding their standing in the religious community is one intervention aimed at encouraging a divorced person to maintain his or her religious affiliation after a divorce. Two of the Catholic respondents interviewed noted that they encouraged remarried Catholics to reach "a decision of conscience" regarding participation in church activities rather than simply withdraw from religious life because of the Church's prohibition of divorce. Reintegrating an individual into a distinct religious community that accepts rather than rejects him and that meets important needs is another way of inducing a divorced individual to maintain religious affiliation. The centers for divorced Catholics described above serve this function.

Conceptualizing the Divorce in a Religious Framework

Because of the centrality of the experience of divorce, an individual's religious affiliations are more likely to be maintained and may even be strengthened where the experience is conceptualized within a religious framework. One respondent, in particular, viewed this goal as the most important aspect of his work with
divorced individuals. In religious counseling, this respondent encourages individuals to perceive the trauma and guilt they experience as indicative of the existence of a problem in their relationship with God and their desire for reconciliation in this relationship, and to acknowledge the serious nature of a situation in which "a sacrament has been broken." Individuals are led to attribute the fact that this has occurred to "human nature that is less than perfect" and are assured that, while their relationship with God is problematic, it is not and can never be severed. "No matter what we do reconciliation is possible... we pay a price for everything we do in life, but God's concern...is greater than our ability to undo the relationship. He will go to great lengths to make it possible to be more in his grace. We never fall out completely." The primary goals of this respondent were not therapeutic. Nevertheless, he did view the religious counseling that he provided as having beneficial effects from a psychological standpoint: "Instead of its being an onus that they find unhelpful or depressing, they find it surprisingly helpful. Because in some region of their being, they have tremendous guilt about this."

THE SKILLS AND TRAINING OF THE CLERGYMAN

While the clergyman's interventions clearly focus not only on the religio-legal aspects of divorce but on the psychological aspects as well, the formal training of the clergyman focuses on the former rather than the latter aspect of divorce. Several of those interviewed noted a recent tendency in seminaries to include courses in marriage counseling. Nevertheless, the majority of those interviewed held frankly skeptical attitudes towards the usefulness of formal training in counseling. The following remarks were typical of the attitudes of respondents: "If someone sat in a library for ten years it wouldn't do him any good", "I don't think it's part of education,
maybe it's a part of education in the big sense, but not formal education."

Respondents did feel that it is important that a clergyman working with divorcing people have particular personal qualities. Traits such as "sympathy," "thoughtfulness," "commonsense," "the ability to see things from another's point of view," "strong value commitments," "the ability to listen," and "caring very much about people." The majority of those interviewed felt that these qualities were more likely to be acquired through experience in personal relationships and in marriage and through experience in counseling married and divorced people than through academic training.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has described the variety of capacities in which a clergyman functions in his work with divorcing individuals: his work as a spiritual advisor, his religio-legal role, and his work as a psychological counselor. As a group, those interviewed tended to place a priority on the interventions they engage in that are aimed at facilitating psychological adjustment. In some cases, the religious values of a clergyman may preclude his involvement in aspects of divorce that are unrelated to reconciliation. Most of those interviewed, however, did become quite involved in psychological counseling with divorcing and divorced individuals. As part of a trend of religious groups to accept the legitimacy of divorce, clergymen can be expected to become increasingly involved in divorce counseling.

The clergyman's role as a divorce counselor has a number of features that distinguish it from the role of the psychotherapist. For the most part, the clergymen interviewed provided short-term reality counseling and not insight therapy. The relationships that respondents described between themselves and divorcing people were less formal and more personal than the relationship
between a psychotherapist and his clients. Finally, the clergymen takes more initiative in becoming involved in personal problems and in contacting friends and family of a divorcing person where it is felt that they could play a beneficial role.

There are, however, striking similarities between the role of the clergymen and the role of the psychotherapist in divorce. Both attempt to facilitate effective emotional adjustment of divorcing individuals and their children by establishing a relationship based on trust, providing emotional support, reinforcing ego functioning and fostering cooperation between spouses. Despite the similarities between their roles, at the present time, there appears to be very little collaboration between the two professions. In discussing their relationships with other professionals, respondents described themselves as least satisfied with their relationship to psychotherapists. Our study of psychotherapists indicated that psychotherapists tended to be uninformed regarding the role of the clergymen in divorce. It would seem that attempts to make divorce a more constructive experience for those involved could benefit greatly from more collaboration between clergymen and psychotherapists.
References


Brown, E. Divorce counseling. In D. Olson (ed.), Treating relationships


Footnotes

1 Results of a representative national survey indicated that of respondents who had sought help with a marital problem, 42% had consulted a clergymen, compared to 22% who saw a nonpsychiatric physician, 11% a psychiatrist, 8% a marriage counselor, 6% a physiological agency, and 6% a lawyer. Of those who saw a clergymen, 78% reported being helped. The comparable figures for psychiatrists and marriage counselors were 59% and 33% respectively (Gurin et al., 1960). While these data are old, we have been unable to find any more recent statistics on the subject.

2 A copy of the interview schedule may be obtained by writing to Divorce Project, Social Psychology Laboratory, Box 6, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027.

3 All quotations are taken verbatim from the interviews with minor syntactical corrections.

4 Children of the husband through a second marriage are not affected in this way because biblical law does not prohibit polygamy.

5 A divorced person of the Protestant faith encounters religio-legal requirements only upon attempting to remarry. Several denominations require that a pastor not officiate at a wedding if he is not confident that the marriage will be stable.

6 While virtually all of the respondents stressed the emotional difficulties that characterize the experience of divorce, the issues involved were rarely articulated in all their complexity by any one respondent. We have therefore constructed a composite account. While it is unlikely that this composite
would be asserted to in every detail by each of the respondents, it will serve
to convey the dimensions of the phenomenon.

7. Two respondents described the entire process of psychic divorce as typified
by the four stages described here. Six others described a sequence of two of
the stages of the process described here (e.g. the transition from denial to
depression or from depression to anger.) Ten respondents described emotional
difficulties typically experienced by divorcing people but did not note typical
stages or sequences of emotions. Three of the respondents did not address the
issue of psychic divorce.

8. The following qualifications should, however, be noted:

a) It may not be possible to classify one spouse as clearly the initiator
and the other spouse as the clear recipient of the divorce. Both may have
ambivalent reactions.

b) There is some suggestion that factors such as lack of employment experience
and young children may make an emotional adjustment to a divorce difficult for a
woman even where she was motivated in favor of the divorce.

9. Attempting to minimize contact between parent and child after a divorce
was, however, viewed as desirable in instances where severe emotional or
physical abuse to the child had occurred prior to the divorce.

10. Interestingly, this respondent had the most psychological training
among those interviewed and also viewed his role as most similar to that
of a therapist.

11. While dispensations exist that allow the procedure to be done in cases
in which the wife does not consent, no such procedures exist for cases in
which the male does not consent to a Jewish divorce.