Stony Brook University

The official electronic file of this thesis or dissertation is maintained by the University Libraries on behalf of The Graduate School at Stony Brook University.

The Social and Personal Implications of the Process of Identity Revision:
The Case of Separated and Divorced Catholics

A Dissertation Presented

by

Anna Aleksandra Bruzzese

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

Stony Brook University

August 2007

Stony Brook University

The Graduate School

Anna Aleksandra Bruzzese

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the

Doctor of Philosophy degree, hereby recommend

acceptance of this dissertation.

James B. Rule – Dissertation Co-Advisor
Professor Emeritus, Sociology Department

Kenneth A. Feldman – Dissertation Co-Advisor
Professor, Sociology Department

Naomi Rosenthal – Chairperson of Defense
Visiting Professor, Sociology Department

Pierre Hegy
Professor, Sociology Department
Adelphi University

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School

Lawrence Martin
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

The Social and Personal Implications of the Process of Identity Revision:
The Case of Separated and Divorced Catholics

by

Anna Aleksandra Bruzzese

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

Stony Brook University

2007

Divorce presents a unique challenge for many Catholics due to the official position of the Church against it. The stance of the Catholic Church on issues of divorce and sexual morality and the dominant social expectations regarding life after marital breakdown in the American society contradict one another. This existing contradiction creates conditions that are conducive to the emergence of role conflict among separated and divorced Catholics. In spite of the overall unresponsiveness of the Church, in the 1970s there emerged a movement of separated and divorced Catholics who challenged their marginalization in the Church and started a network of support groups for separated and divorced Catholics. In my dissertation I examine two different groups: a nationally representative Internet sample of 300 separated and divorced Catholics and a mail sample of 97 people who attend groups for separated and divorced Catholics. In order to highlight the personal aspect of the process of identity revision, I focus on the frequency of role conflict, methods of identity revision and the impact of the support groups on the members. I also trace the historical development of the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics, which coordinates these support groups, in an effort to illustrate the social significance of the process of identity revision.

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My husband, Vincent Bruzzese, whose unending love and support made it possible.

My children, Mary Ippolito and Nicolas Bruzzese, who fill my life with joy.

The loving memory of my mother, Zofia Wlodowska, whose example as a person and an academic has inspired me and given me the strength to continue.

My father, Stanislaw Jerzy Wlodowski, who first suggested that I should study social science and in doing so made me discover sociology.

My first American family, Mira and David Peck, without whose original invitation I would not be here now.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Acknowledgments

There are many people who were instrumental in helping me get to this point. I would like to thank my committee, Dr. James Rule, Dr. Kenneth Feldman, Dr. Naomi Rosenthal and Dr. Pierre Hegy for their advice, guidance, inspiration, encouragement, kindness and patience. I continue to look up to them both as people and as scholars. The one person who has influenced me the most as a sociologist was Dr. James Rule. I have taken all the classes I could with him and he has worked with me since my undergraduate years, first on my Solidarity project and then on my track papers and finally this dissertation. I greatly appreciate all that I have learned from him.

Graduate School is a challenging experience and I could not have gotten through it without the wisdom and support of Wanda Vega and Sharon Worksman. I also want to express my gratitude to the Sociology Department in general for educating and supporting me over the years. In addition to the members of my committee, I have met many others inspiring scholars here, among them Dr. Ian Roxborough and Dr. Jackie Smith who have made a lasting impression on me. I am also grateful for the friendships of my fellow graduate students, especially Vondora Wilson-Corzen, Scott Czepiel and Hwa-ji Shin.

I finished my first year of sociology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in my hometown of Torun, Poland and I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Wlodzimierz Winclawski, whose enthusiasm for the discipline was so contagious and who believed in my ability to succeed academically. I am also thankful for the intellectual encouragement of Dr. Roman Backer.

I would like to thank my family. I would never have been able to write this dissertation without the love, help and support of my husband Vincent. I admire his intellect, steadfast dependability and hard work. I have benefited greatly from his insights throughout this process. My daughter Mary Ippolito has been there throughout my career as a student and I deeply appreciate her patience and love. My son Nicolas has been a source of laughter and joy for us all. In addition, it was the memory of my late mother Zofia Wlodowska typing up her own dissertation at the kitchen table in our

Introduction: The Social and Personal Implications of the Process of Identity Revision: The Case of Separated and Divorced Catholics

The American Catholic Church today is a microcosm of the American society: there is no moral consensus among Catholics. Catholics disagree on all moral issues: from death penalty to abortion, from the role of women in church and society to the acceptability of divorce and pre-marital sex.

Personal morality is one of the more divisive issues for Catholics despite the official declarations of the hierarchy on the subject. Catholics have consistently been defying the Church's stance against divorce, divorcing at a rate comparable to other religious Americans (Martos 2000). Moreover, the issue of divorce underlines the fact that the lack of moral consensus does not simply occur between the hierarchy and the lay Catholics, but that many members of the clergy also oppose the official "party line" of prohibition of divorce. This is indicated by the willingness of "a substantial number of priests" to go directly against the hierarchy's policy and give communion to those who are remarried (but not annulled) (Greeley 1973:112).

In my dissertation, I argue that this current lack of moral consensus is an unintended result of democratizing reforms of Vatican 2 Council (1962-5). While it is reasonable to assume that there was always some amount of disagreement among Catholics on moral issues, up until the reforms of Vatican 2, dissent was much less visible and vocal. But Vatican 2 did not have the same impact on Catholics around the world in terms of exposing and/or creating dissent. The American Catholic Church has seemingly exploded with expressions of dissent, while European Churches found themselves either increasingly more irrelevant or still capable of containing any discernible dissent.

My dissertation explores the impact of this decline of institutional authority on marginalized individuals and groups. Divorced Catholics have been marginalized in the Church due to the ambiguous, but overall negative, stance of the hierarchy towards divorce. The authority structure in the Church has been gradually shifting as a result of Vatican 2, so that secular Catholics and lower clergy have become more empowered to

question moral declarations "from above." This has created a space for dissent to emerge, and more and more marginalized groups in the American Church have taken advantage of it. I examine the divorced Catholics' movement as one example of such a dissenting movement.

The main question guiding my research is how do divorced Catholics who feel conflicted negotiate and resolve the incompatible demands of living in a contemporary American society with the morally conservative teachings of the Catholic Church? What factors are related to people's success in reconciling these opposing forces? And then, what are the individual and the social consequences of the attempt to reconcile seemingly irreconcilable social expectations? In turn, these questions lead to additional inquiries about the relevance and applicability of existing theoretical assumptions, generalizations and theories regarding role conflict, its resolution, and the relationship between the Church hierarchy and marginalized Catholics.

Method and Data

The main focus of my dissertation is the process of identity revision and its social and personal implications. I look at the experiences of divorced Catholics who all share the potential for role conflict due to their marginalized position in the Church. Specifically I examine two different groups: a national sample of divorced Catholics in the U.S. and a sample of people who attend support groups for divorced and separated Catholics. I also trace the development of the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics (NACSDC), which coordinates these support groups.

Since I am looking at macro-level (social), as well as micro-level (personal) aspects and implications of identity revision, I use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative methods involve a historical analysis of the emergence of NACSDC based on the existing documents and literature, as well as an analysis of content of relevant divorce-related publications of Catholic authors. This approach will generate data to provide context for the main focus of my dissertation, which is the survey study of separated and divorced Catholics.

The quantitative method is a survey of two separate samples to examine the micro-level aspect of role conflict resolution among divorced Catholics. In order to generate

data for the micro-level analysis of divorced Catholics in a support group setting, a questionnaire was sent to members of the support groups for separated and divorced Catholics nationwide. This was accomplished with the assistance of the NACSDC board of directors. Between July and October 2003, 536 surveys were mailed to the contacts provided by NACSDC President Bob Zulinski. I do not know how many of these surveys were actually distributed to group participants, but by the end of February 2004, 97 surveys were sent back to me. The main goal of looking at the divorced Catholics in a support group setting is to see whether and how these groups contribute to the process of identity revision.

Additionally, in August of 2003, a separate survey was administered to a representative sample of 300 separated and divorced Catholics nationwide. This was done using an online questionnaire and having the research firm Online Testing Exchange (OTX) host the survey for sample collection. The main reason why I chose to focus on using a questionnaire to address my research questions is because I wanted to examine a fairly large number of subjects. So far most of the research done on divorced Catholics has utilized a qualitative method with relatively few subjects. It will be useful to find out if those findings can be confirmed using a quantitative method on a larger number of people. In order to analyze the data generated by the surveys I use a combination of various statistical techniques: comparison of means and cross-tabulations and a regression analysis.

Considering the fact that I am examining two distinctly different samples of divorced Catholics (one consisting of people who belong to a support group, whereas the other consisting of people who most likely do not), the survey administered to each group is somewhat different. While the support group respondents will receive questions that are positioned to get at the effects of the support group setting on the identity revision, the internet respondents are asked more general questions about their methods of identity revision.

Analytical Tools: Key Concepts

The main theoretical concept shaping my dissertation is the social psychological notion of role conflict. Although the focus of my dissertation is not the emergence but the resolution of role conflict, an explanation of the origins of role conflict is helpful in understanding some of the theoretical assumptions regarding its essence and dynamics.

Paul Secord and Carl Backman, who developed this concept, argued that role conflict "arises when one expectation requires behavior which in some degree is incompatible with the behavior required by another expectation" (1974: 431). Divorced Catholics collectively share the potential for experiencing role conflict by virtue of their religious and marital identities. While getting divorced does not automatically create a conflict for a Catholic, it carries a strong potential for it, because of the strict expectations that the hierarchy has for the lifestyles of divorced Catholics. To put in a very general way, if a divorced Catholic wants to remain in good graces with the Church, he or she must remain celibate, until he or she remarries with the Church's blessing, which can only happen if he or she first receives an annulment (Vondenberger, 2004:21). There are exceptions to this rule, but this is the rule as the hierarchy defines it.

The Emergence of Role Conflict: Individual Factors

The notion of role conflict is framed in structural terms: that is, if social expectations associated with social positions occupied by a person were incompatible, he or she would feel conflicted. However, even a very superficial glance at the data I collected regarding contemporary divorced American Catholics shows that the structural framing of role conflict is insufficient, because many of them do not report feeling conflicted over being divorced. My online research shows that while more than 50 % of separated and divorced Catholics experience some form of conflict (and 8.7% report feeling very conflicted), 43.3% report not feeling conflicted at all. My support group survey research shows that among members of support groups for separated and divorced Catholics, over 76% experience some form of conflict (and 17% feel very conflicted), whereas 23.9% report not feeling conflicted at all.

These findings raise questions regarding further conditions that need to be present (in addition to occupying a specific location in the social structure, and therefore being

4

subjected to conflicting social expectations) for role conflict to emerge. Secord and Backman deal with this problem by arguing that the severity of role conflict is related to, among other things, the relative incompatibility of expectations involved (1974:435). In the case of divorced Catholics, this means that the Catholic identity as officially defined by the Church is still seen as incompatible with being separated or divorced, unless one is prepared to lead a celibate life. So, one possible explanation for people not reporting feeling conflicted may be that they are sexually inactive. My online research demonstrates that in fact 18.7% of divorced Catholics report not being currently involved in a sexual relationship, and thus having no conflict.

This issue of relative incompatibility of relevant expectations also brings to our attention another factor involved in the emergence of role conflict: the subjective interpretation of the social demands. This particular issue needs to be noted because it undoubtedly explains why some people who theoretically "should" feel conflicted, do not. I do not have the tools to address it in my dissertation systematically. In-depth interviews would be more appropriate for this kind of examination of individuals' interpretations.

Another factor, suggested by social psychologists to explain the emergence of role conflict is the notion of identity salience. As Secord and Backman (1974) indicate, and identity theorists expand on, people have an established hierarchy of obligations that determines which expectations they are likely to choose to follow in a situation of role conflict. Identity theory, developed by Sheldon Stryker (1982) seeks to explain role-related behavior in terms of how salient a particular identity is to us.

Stryker and Serpe define identity as "reflexively applied cognitions in the form of answers to the question 'who am I?' These answers are phrased in terms of the positions in organized structures of social relationships to which one belongs, and the social roles that attach to these positions" (1982:206). A self is collectively made up of various identities. Because of the multiplicity of roles and identities we all have, the question of identity salience becomes crucial in trying to explain why we may choose to live up to one set of social expectations while neglecting another. Stryker and Serpe describe identity salience as the location of identity in the hierarchy of identities, according to their importance to ourselves (1982: 206). Both role theory and identity theory can be

used to explain what happens when one identity is more salient than another: the less salient identity is more likely to be ignored. Hence, a "cultural Catholic," a person who is not particularly devout, may simply become inactive in church as a result of their divorce, as their newly divorced status becomes more salient. A person who feels strongly about being a Christian but not as strongly about being a Catholic may resort to religious switching and join a Protestant denomination. Role conflict emerges when both identities are equally salient and important to one's sense of self but remain at odds with one another.

My use of the notion of identity salience is limited to providing a context as to why people hold on to identities, which cause them discomfort. I gauge the salience of people's religious identity by inquiring about their religiosity: their religious behavior and how religious they consider themselves to be. A more in-depth, qualitative methodology might be better suited to investigate issues of identity salience directly, because it would allow us to understand better the meanings people themselves attach to their various social roles.

A person's location in the social structure (i.e. occupying conflicting social statuses), subjective interpretation of conflicting social expectations and identity salience can be classified as "individual" aspects of the emergence of role conflict. However, since our identities link us to social structure, it is also important to try to understand the larger societal context in which our role conflicts emerge and are subsequently negotiated. As my research will demonstrate, role conflict resolution has potential to impact social structure in a lasting and significant way.

The Emergence of Role Conflict: Social Factors

A final factor I want to mention in an attempt to explain the emergence of role conflict has to do with larger-scale social and cultural conditions. The relative flexibility/openness of the social environment to dissent and difference also has an impact on the emergence of role conflict. Whether it is acceptable to occupy a marginalized identity, or whether marginalized identity is heavily ostracized contributes to how conflicted an individual might feel over his or her status. A morally liberal Catholic

parish may then "produce" fewer conflicted divorced Catholics than its morally conservative counterpart.

For the purpose of explaining the assumptions underlying the notion of role conflict, I have addressed a more general theoretical question about the factors, which determine its emergence. In sum, the theory informs us that a divorced Catholic gets to the point of experiencing role conflict when the following conditions occur:

1) His or her religious identity is salient to him or her.

2) He or she identifies with the hierarchy's expectations[1] of a good Catholic, as the Catholic who is obedient and plays by the hierarchy's rules.

3) He or she does something that breaks these rules but cannot fix the transgression for some reason (an "active" homosexual identity is a good example).

4) He or she finds the hierarchy's expectation regarding what he or she must do to make up for the disobedience incompatible with the demands of his or her other, equally salient identity.

The issues surrounding the emergence of role conflict are largely beyond the span of my current research. I do not have the data to address many of them directly at this point, but they represent potential topics for future studies. However, I do have the survey data to evaluate the following postulation that emerges from the notion of salience of religious identity: namely that members of the support group for separated and divorced Catholics are more likely to have experienced role conflict than those Catholics who do not join church based support groups. While there are many different reasons why a person might choose to join any group, I assume that the main reason why divorced Catholics join a church based support group is because they are struggling with the conflicting demands of being both divorced and Catholic. The reason is that these groups are often not easily accessible, which means a person must invest a significant amount of energy into finding one, and that the groups often specifically position themselves as not singles groups, but rather places where one is supposed to reflect why their marriage failed, and what it means to move on in a spiritual fashion. Anecdotal evidence suggests that dating is

---

[1] The Catholic Church in America in particular is not ideologically homogenous. This point will be addressed in some detail later. However, in spite of all the dissent, there is a dominant "party line" that the hierarchy tends to endorse.

generally discouraged in these groups. Because of the way these groups position themselves, primarily as places where wounded people "with baggage" come to heal, they would not be the best place to meet available single Catholics.

Role Conflict Resolution: The Process of Identity Revision

While I assume that most people in the religious support groups are there because they experience a role conflict between their religious and divorced identities, I first attempt to verify whether that is indeed the case. I answer questions of which divorced Catholics experience role conflict, how they attempt to resolve it, and what the consequences of this identity revision are on personal and social levels.

The successful resolution of role conflict implies a revision of one's identity. Instead of seeing oneself as a bad Catholic because of one's separation or divorce, a person is able to reconcile both identities and see oneself as a good Catholic in spite of a failed marriage. There are two components implied here: one having to do with an emotional adjustment to divorce and another with strengthening of religious identity. My strategy is to measure both of these aspects using survey methodology and then finding out which Catholics are most successful overall.

Identities are subject to modifications throughout life. Identity revision occurs when there is some sort of obstacle that prevents one from thinking of one's existing identities in the same terms. So, while one still clings to his or her "old" identity, his or her thinking has to be changed somewhat in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance and restore a sense of consistency between one's beliefs and one's behavior. The obstacles might involve a structural role conflict such as becoming a divorced Catholic, or they may involve a change in perceptions such as becoming more conservative or liberal in one's outlook.

Identity revisions commonly occur during life transitions. Finding oneself in a liminal position (such as getting married or divorced), may force one to rethink one's definition of what it means to be who one is becoming. When we find ourselves in liminal positions, or when we experience personal crises, our options are delimited not only by the salience of our identities, but also by the features of social organizations to

which we are connected through our roles. I will now discuss the larger social context in which conflicted divorced Catholics negotiate their identities.

Social Context of the Divorced Catholics' Identity Revision: The Authority Crisis in the American Catholic Church

The flexibility and openness of the social environment affects a number of available options for role conflict resolution. The more open the social environment, the more ways a person has to resolve his or her role conflict. This aspect of social organizations was studied by Albert Hirshman (1970) who described them in terms of their responsiveness to either dissent (which he refers to as "voice") or exit.

Traditionally, the Catholic Church has not been particularly responsive to dissent. It has had a history of suppressing (or at least trying to suppress) unpopular voices, such as those of pro-choice nuns, anti-celibacy clergy or most recently lay Catholics who demand greater accountability on the part of their dioceses in the light of recent sex abuse scandals (Farrell 2001, Eisenberg 2002). Given the conservative version of Catholicism that is preferred by the Vatican and the American Church leadership, on the surface it would seem that the only logical option available to the dissenting Catholics would be to leave the Church altogether. However, in comparison to its counterparts in other countries, the American Catholic Church has been a relatively open institution, never quite capable of silencing the opposition. This has been evidenced by lively and vocal dissent, which has included the voices of divorced Catholics.

The shifting authority structure in the American Catholic Church following Vatican 2 not only created space for public expression of dissent, but also enabled conflicted divorced Catholics to have options beyond either submitting themselves to the Church teachings or leaving the Catholic Church altogether. As Michele Dillon points out in her book "Catholic Identity," although "the church is a hierarchical organization where the line between doctrinal producers and consumers might seem relatively rigid, the church hierarchy is not the sole or primary producer of Catholicism. (…) In contemporary times, being Catholic is both dependent on the church hierarchy's interpretation of Catholicism and simultaneously independent of it. It means being both the producer and the consumer of doctrine" (1999:254).

9

Significantly, in spite of the global reach of the Roman Catholic Church, the divorced Catholic movement has been most prominent in North America[2]. The question is why the divorced movement started in the United States and not elsewhere. After all, Catholics divorce in other countries as well, and Vatican 2 was supposed to modernize the Catholic teaching globally (Cuneo 1999:11). Yet, it seems that it was the American Catholics who took the message of openness and agency of all believers, and attempted to apply it in most controversial ways, pushing the boundaries of traditional Catholicism the furthest.

This is remarkable because in other advanced Western countries such as France, the gap between the Church and the historically Catholic population has grown so wide that the country has become overwhelmingly secular, and the Church largely inconsequential. I explore the issue of the unique role of religion in American society and its impact on the mobilization of separated and divorced Catholics in detail in Chapter 1. I expand on these themes by placing the divorced Catholics' movement in the context of other post Vatican 2 identity-based Catholic social movements in order to document the authority crisis and a lack of moral consensus in contemporary American Church. My data sources are online websites of these movements. For my purpose, I am only interested in ascertaining when the organization was founded, what its purpose or main issue is and what its attitude towards change is.

On a practical level, the democratization of the Catholic Church and its consequences could be a dissertation in itself. For my purposes, I will only discuss the topic in so far as it relates to the emergence of the divorced Catholic movement. The current situation of moral ambiguity and an ongoing Gramscian ideological contention between the hierarchy and the marginalized groups in the Church is the social context in which divorced Catholics in the U.S. develop and negotiate their role conflict. This context enables divorced Catholics to problematize and challenge the higher-ups' proclamations regarding divorce and creates a social environment conducive to having options other than the Hirshmanian exit to resolve their role conflict. I will now discuss options of

---

[2] There is a divorced Catholic movement in other Western countries, such as the UK, but their case is very different from the American case due to the lower levels of religiosity of people in other advanced industrialized countries.

identity revisions available to conflicted divorced Catholics, as well as my analytical and methodological strategies for investigating them.

Strategies of Role Conflict Resolution: Exit, Conforming, Reframing and Reshaping

As Hirshman (1970) suggests, one way of resolving the role conflict that divorced Catholics have is an exit. This exit can take one of two forms: leaving the Church altogether, or switching to another, more "morally permissive" denomination. Before an exit takes place, there must occur a shifting of identity salience in a specific direction - the traditionalist Catholic identity must become subordinate to the "problematic" identity. In this case, another outcome is also possible. A person for whom his or her divorced identity becomes more salient than their traditionalist Catholic identity may also ignore the Church teaching, while still seeing himself or herself as Catholic, albeit a lapsed or an inactive one. The identity salience may also shift in the opposite direction - the "problematic" identity may become subordinate to the traditionalist Catholic identity. In this case, the person might choose temporary or permanent celibacy over unsanctioned sexuality. In essence, a person may resolve his or her role conflict by conforming to the hierarchy's expectations regarding appropriate behavior for a divorced Catholic.

My online data will give me a sense of how many divorced Catholics have chosen the exit option. I asked the respondents several questions aiming at describing how their level of involvement with religion changed after their divorce (such as whether or not they attend church more or less often, whether they pray more or less often, etc). I also asked them whether or not they are religious. My online data will enable me to find out how many people in my sample "exited" the Church following divorce: it will be those people who report that they never attend church, whose attendance and other religious activities decreased dramatically or ceased after divorce.

I have also asked similar questions of the members of support groups for divorced Catholics. I do not really expect to find anyone to fall into the "exit" category among these respondents though, since they are involved in a church-affiliated support group.

Divorced Catholics also have a Church-sanctioned way to resolve their role conflict. If they obtain an annulment, they will be able to remarry in the Church. This solution

however in itself may not resolve their conflict completely, as it may cause people to have doubts about their honesty in the process of annulment (Hegy 2000:9).

In both my surveys I asked people about the annulment - whether they have gotten it, if they are pursuing it and if not, then why not. In the support group survey, I also asked an open-ended question about the respondents' opinion about the Church policy on annulments (I was constrained by the format of the online survey from asking any open-ended questions). The data generated from these questions will enable me to shed light on what people's views are on this controversial process.

My discussion of other strategies of resolving role conflict has been informed by the literature on both religious gays and lesbians, and religious women in contemporary Western societies. The two main strategies are reframing and reshaping. The concept of reframing refers to the reinterpretation of religious teaching of policy in everyday life (Beaman 2001). Some feminist scholars have argued that given the patriarchal nature of organized religion, it is somewhat remarkable that women choose to participate in it in such large numbers. In other words, being a female in a contemporary American society and a member of a conservative religion may create a kind of role conflict. In fact, women report stronger affiliation to religion than men and attend religious services more often than men do, even though organized religion seems to devalue them by promoting the ideology of female submissiveness, according to the feminist researchers (Beaman 2001).

Female members of conservative religions (such as Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and Catholics) utilize different means to deal with the role conflict of being a conservative Christian and a contemporary American woman. The main strategy utilized by these women to deal with their role conflict is reframing, as most of them are not interested in demanding structural change in their Church. When it comes to divorced Catholics, reframing can mean reinterpreting the Catholic identity as not dependent on obedience to the hierarchy's "party line," but on critical involvement in and loyalty to the generally understood tradition. A divorced Catholic who reframes his or her religious identity may therefore ignore the Church policy regarding divorce, pursue a sexual relationship outside of marriage, or remarry without an annulment and yet continue to go to communion. This strategy seems often adopted by those divorced Catholics who may

12

go to the support groups just for validation but do not want to get involved in activism. As Young described it, many members of the original Boston support group in 1971 had "not seen themselves as a change agent or political vanguard in the Church" but were more interested in helping others going through the same transition (1978:89).

In my surveys, I approach the issue of reframing in several ways. First, I ask the respondents to describe themselves along the "obedience" continuum. I ask them to what extent they follow the Vatican's and the bishops' teachings and with how much room for personal interpretation of Catholicism. I have also asked the respondents whether after the change in their marital status they began to question Church teaching on marriage and divorce. Problematizing this Church teaching in one's mind is an indicator of reframing, and based on my data I will be able to tell how many divorced Catholics are likely to do so. I have also asked the respondents about their relationship status, and will be able to tell how many are separated or divorced and living with someone. I assume that those survey respondents who describe themselves as somewhat to very religious, who are currently involved in a non-sanctioned sexual relationship and who report not being conflicted must have reframed current Church teaching.

The notion of reshaping is more personally demanding than reframing because it implies some level of social activism. Reshaping refers to "attempts to modify religious organization and structure" along more inclusive lines (Beaman 2001: 117). Reframing usually precedes reshaping because any call for change requires substantiation in the reinterpreted Scriptures. One example of reshaping is a call for ordination of people who were previously excluded from the ranks of the priesthood such as women, openly gay or married people in the Catholic Church. A divorced Catholic may become involved in reshaping by joining NACSDC, or becoming involved in an anti-annulment movement through an organization such as Save Our Sacrament, whose aim is to change the Church policy regarding annulments. Both reframing and reshaping are strategies of resolving role conflict by developing a new discourse.

The data I have collected from the members of support groups for divorced Catholics will illuminate this aspect of role conflict resolution. Those respondents who report having joined the group in order to affect change in the Church will fall into the category of those who have opted to reshape the status quo.

In sum, the data I collected will enable me to answer the question of which strategy of role conflict resolution is most common among American divorced Catholics in general, and how this sample compares to the sample of members of the church-affiliated groups for the separated and divorced Catholics. I will also be able to tell how different demographic characteristics are related to the choice of a given strategy.

Steps Involved in the Process of Identity Revision

Having discussed the factors related to the emergence of role conflict, and the possible strategies of resolving it, I now turn to the steps involved in the process of identity revision. The research that is particularly relevant here concerns members of conservative religions who are also gay. The "gay religious" studies use the concept of identity revision to describe how role conflict involving two relatively salient identities may be resolved. In general, the process of identity revision seems to include several steps: rejection of negative labels (such as a gay or a divorced Catholic is a bad Catholic), development of counter-stigmatization strategies (mostly through adopting a new discourse to talk about being gay or divorced in a conservative Christian context) and often associating with a support group as a way of developing and maintaining a new, positive identity (Thumma 2001). The process of identity revision in the case of gays or divorced Catholics could be thought of as a kind of conversion (as discussed by Ponticelli, 1999), but in reverse. Ponticelli studied members of Exodus, a Christian group that helps its gay members reject their homosexual identity in the name of faith. She identifies the following steps in this particular kind of identity reconstruction:

1) adoption of a new discourse;

2) biographical reconstruction;

3) adoption of a new explanatory model;

4) acceptance of the transformed role;

5) developing strong bonds with one's new reference group.

Regarding adoption of a new exploratory model, Ponticelli stresses that in the case of rejecting one's sexual orientation in the name of faith (or in general in the case of conversion to a more fundamentalist set of beliefs), one needs to a "move away from

analogic reasoning toward a more declarative, more definitive logic" (Ponticelli 1999:171).

When applying this schema to the case of divorced Catholics, it becomes apparent that this step is accurate when a divorced Catholic chooses celibacy or another Church-sanctioned scenario as means of resolving their conflict. However, in the case of dissenting from the Church position, the move would be away from a "moral absolutist" mindset to a more flexible, nuanced reasoning, which problematizes the Church "party line." In this context, dissent becomes a natural result of having developed a new "positive" divorced Catholic identity (much like a "positive" gay identity), which challenges rather than conforms to the Church teachings by claiming that a divorced (much like gay) and non-celibate Catholic can still be a good Catholic;

I am constrained by my main research tool (survey), which is not the best-suited method to address issues of content and meaning that people associate with their renegotiated identities. In-depth interviews would be more appropriate to generate data that would shed light on this very subjective aspect of identity revision. However, since the literature put out by advocates of the divorced Catholics movement is not excessively large, I will be able to examine it and at least get a sense of the kind of message that the advocates try to spread among divorced Catholics. While this will not satisfactorily address the issue of whether the conflicted Catholics follow the modified version of Ponticelli's model of identity reconstruction, it will address the issue of what kind of logic (morally absolutist or flexible) tends to be championed in these publications. Additionally, in my surveys I also asked people whether they began to question Church teaching on marriage and divorce following the change in their marital status (for the online sample) or since joining the group (for the support group sample). Although this question will not provide in-depth information about specifically what these Catholics are thinking on the issues, it will provide a sense of the number of respondents for whom there has been a change in thinking about these matters.

As the preceding discussion suggests, my data will enable me to contribute to the sociological understanding of issues surrounding the social context and strategies of role conflict resolution. Another important part of my study has to do with trying to understand what factors are related to success in divorced Catholics' identity revision.

15

The following section explains the theoretical foundations of the research design of this aspect of my dissertation.

Personal Implications of Identity Revision

The main consequence of identity revision on a personal level is a new way of seeing oneself and making sense of one's social world. It is important to keep in mind however, that identity revision is not something that necessarily happens "once and for all," but rather it is something that happens throughout people's lives. A useful way of understanding this point has been advanced by social identity theorists who have studied the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of group relationships, or along two dimensions: the social and the personal (Howard 2000). This theory sees identities as changeable, especially prone to shifting during life transitions and periods of liminality. Given the multiplicity of identities we all have throughout our lives and at any given time, it appears that social identity theorists see role conflict as more of a normal state rather than an exception or a "one time" event. Keeping this in mind, my study captures a moment in an ongoing process, rather than a definitive end point.

Themes of Inquiry: Success in Separated and Divorced Catholics' Identity Revision

A key aspect of my dissertation is the issue of how conflicted separated and divorced Catholics negotiate their role conflict and what characteristics are related to their ability to successfully revise their identities. Since the essence of role conflict experienced by divorced Catholics has to do with a crisis of their religious identity in the aftermath of divorce, I operationalize success in the resolution of role conflict here as a self-reported sense of adjustment to being divorced and a strengthening of religious identity. The dependent variable "success" is an index combining both Likert scales: divorce adjustment statements and statements regarding changes in religious behavior. I examine success demographically and focus on the strategies used by people to cope with their role conflict.

Themes of Inquiry: The Impact of Group and Personal Support

Separated and divorced Catholics in America have different options when it comes to seeking support in dealing with their role conflict. The choices range from joining a Catholic or a secular support group, reaching out to fellow parishioners, a priest or friends and family. In my surveys I asked the respondents to indicate how supportive they found each one of these sources of support. In this dissertation I examine each one of them to see which ones are most helpful.

The divorced Catholics' advocates often stress the importance of certain kinds of support: the ones offered by other Catholics: family members, friends, parish members, and the parish priest. Such support is especially relevant because it sends a positive message about the separated or divorcing person's religious identity. Many authors involved with the divorced Catholics movement point out that the ambiguity of the Church position on divorce seems to be reflected in the mixed messages divorced Catholics get in their parishes (Kemp, 2001). Kemp's critical remarks about the ambiguity of Church messages directed at divorced Catholics mirror those of Father Young, when he noted that many Catholics feel uneasy and unsure about whether being supportive towards their fellow Catholics who are going through divorce somehow implies that one supports divorce and opposes the Church teaching (Young 1978). In the light of this dilemma, the support of the parish community seems crucial. A supportive parish can really strengthen a Catholic in crisis, while a judgmental parish can break their resolve to hold on to their religious identity. As Carrie Kemp (2001) reflected on her personal life experiences in a new parish environment following her divorce, the support of her parish was the key factor that prevented her from leaving the Catholic Church and looking for another place for spiritual fulfillment.

In order to investigate the issue of religious support further, I utilize data generated by the support group survey to look at the reasons why separated and divorced Catholics join the church support groups and what they get out of them. My support group survey also includes open-ended questions asking the groups members to reflect on how the level of support from various sources impacted their Catholic identity. This is done to give these people a voice and learn directly from their perspectives.

17

Social Implications of Identity Revision

The sociological significance of role conflict stems from its implications for social change. Social identity theory and social constructionism can be used to explain how role conflict may lead to social change on a macro-level. Social identity theory differs from the identity theory in that it emphasizes group processes (such as the construction of collective identity and its use in the mobilization processes) as opposed to role behavior (Desrochers et. al. 2003).

Many different scholars point out that the personal struggle to reconcile two or more seemingly irreconcilable identities can lead to social activism, and eventually social change. This is so because roles by definition connect us to the social structure. As Howard puts it: "identity struggles may (…) generate explicit social movements; a collective identity motivates a social action. This identity requires a perception of membership in bounded groups, consciousness about that group's ideologies and direct opposition to a dominant order" (2000:34). In other words, identities can be utilized strategically in collective action. In her article, Howard cites several studies describing the so-called new social movements (i.e. identity-based social movements), including such diverse groups as gays, the elderly, racial minorities and women.

Secord and Backman argued "where many incumbents of the same role position find themselves subject to similar role strains, mutual support is present for finding a common means of resolution and this often results in the development of a shared system of beliefs concerning the appropriate forms of resolution. Such a situation may also lead to a gradual modification of the conflicting role expectations" (1974:456). This passage implies that reframing and reshaping that takes place in a group setting may have important macro-level implications beyond the micro-level consequences. Such social consequences can potentially be much more lasting than individual consequences of identity revision.

In sum, social change often results from marginalized individuals' efforts to redefine their identities and role expectations that no longer "fit." As Dillon pointed out, what individuals get from participating in a social movement based on their identities is an ability to maintain their revised identities even in the face of continued counter-definition

and marginalization by those in power who want to uphold the status quo. Social movements give the contesting individuals a confirmation that their revised identity is valid (1999:161). In order to illustrate the links between role conflict and social activism/mobilization, I analyze relevant NACSDC publications, in particular those regarding its history.

In addition to the social identity theory, social constructionism also offers useful insights into the construction of new social reality. Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggested that the process of social construction of reality involves three steps: externalization, objectivation and internalization. Externalization refers to the creation of new social reality through interaction. Often this takes the form of creating a new institution. By examining the organization's publications as well as relevant articles and books, I show how the emergence of NACSDC and the subsequent revision of the Canon law regarding the excommunication of divorced Catholics in the U.S. disrupted previously dominant norms and exemplified externalization.

Objectivation refers to the establishment of this new social reality as a social fact. I show how this is accomplished within the divorced Catholic movement through publications, conferences and websites. All of these means are used to promote a "positive" divorced Catholic identity as a social fact.

Finally, internalization refers to a change in attitudes, in this case a new way of perceiving the role of a Catholic. This new Catholic role is more inclusive and less legalistic. I argue that for the participants in the divorced Catholic movement, the internalization stage represents a point of successful revision of their identity. It is the point when they are able to achieve a kind of peace by realizing that being divorced does not in itself make them bad Catholics. In other words, at this point they are able to resolve the role conflict of being divorced and Catholic. They realize that their marital status and religious identity are not as incompatible as they once thought.

When it comes specifically to the divorced Catholic movement, the larger theoretical story is of Gramsci's hegemony (1971) and the importance of definitions and ideas in achieving and exercising power. The emergence of NACSDC, as well as many other organizations in the post-Vatican 2 era, shows that a hierarchical institution does not have a monopoly on interpretations, especially when it claims to espouse a very emancipatory

19

ideology, such as Marxism or Christianity. The "emancipatory consequences" can be observed in the form of mobilization of marginalized Catholics (including divorced Catholics) into identity-based social movements within the Church. These consequences were emancipatory in that they allowed people who were formerly effectively marginalized to resist, or at least question their marginalization in a more systematic way, by challenging the legitimacy and the content of the hierarchy's claims regarding the status of such varied groups as women, gays, and the divorced in the Church. These Catholic new social movements have utilized the hierarchy-led reforms of Vatican 2 to challenge the teachings of the pope and the bishops. In Chapter One I expand on this theme and describe some specific accomplishments that the divorced Catholic movement had in terms of affecting policy change. I also examine the tools and strategies of the ideological struggle between the proponents of the official position of the Church on divorce and the divorced Catholics' advocates.

The main goal of this investigation of the development of the divorced Catholics movement and placing it in the context of other post-Vatican 2 movements is to examine the social consequences of the process of role conflict negotiation.

Conclusion

In this Introduction I have described the main theoretical concepts and assumptions, which guided my research design. I have related my research design to relevant literature and presented my objectives, analytical strategies and data sources. Sociologists and social psychologists have not studied divorced Catholics systematically, and as a result the relevant literature is filled with many theories and assertions that lack much supporting evidence. Most of them are based on anecdotal data. By collecting data using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology, my goal is to provide additional evidence to evaluate the accuracy and the utility of the theories and assertions described here.

Chapter One: The Social Context: The Catholic Church and Divorce

In this chapter I discuss the macro-level aspect of role conflict among divorced Catholics, specifically its two facets: the social and cultural conditions related to its emergence on the one hand, and the social consequences of role conflict on the other. Although these are two separate analytical categories, one having to do with sociological "causes" and the other with "consequences" of role conflict, they are interconnected: the relative flexibility/openness of the social environment is related to the emergence of role conflict because the less open/flexible an environment, the more ostracized and conflicted individuals with marginalized identities might feel. At the same time, the less flexible a social environment is, the fewer options of challenging their marginalization the ostracized individuals have. In this chapter, my goal is to place the divorced Catholics' movement in the context of other post Vatican 2 identity based social movements in order to document how the authority crisis and a lack of moral consensus in contemporary American Church impacted the mobilization and activism of divorced Catholics. In addition, I examine the Gramscian struggle over the status of the divorced in the Church between the divorced Catholics' advocates and the proponents of the official Church position, in order to highlight the social consequences of the process of role conflict negotiation.

Social Factors Related to the Emergence of Role Conflict among Separated and Divorced Catholics: Flexibility of the Religious Community

One of the factors related to the emergence of role conflict among marginalized individuals is the flexibility of the community or an institution to which they are tied by virtue of their social positions. The less flexible a social environment is, the more conflict it potentially produces, because of the rigid rules of membership. One would expect to find many more conflicted divorced Catholics in traditionalist Catholic countries or parishes than in the more liberal ones. The flexibility and openness of the

social environment affects a number of available options for role conflict resolution. The more open the social environment, the more ways a person has to resolve his or her role conflict. This aspect of social organizations was studied by Albert Hirshman (1970) who described them in terms of their responsiveness to either dissent (which he refers to as "voice") or exit. In the Catholic context, the less flexible social environments can be characterized by emphasis on obedience to authority of the Magisterium and legalism, as opposed to emphasis on individual conscience and following a more generally understood Catholic tradition.

Most people do not associate the notion of openness with Catholicism, seeing the Church as rigid and authoritarian. As a Dominican Fr. Thomas Doyle put it recently, mostly due to the recent sex abuse scandal, "The laity are waking up, and I believe they need to be treated not as subjects but as brothers and sisters in the Lord. This (Church) is not a monarchy, even though it looks like one, acts like one and responds like one" (U.S. Catholic, June 2003:13).

However, the American Catholic Church today is a microcosm of a larger American society in a sense that there is no moral consensus among Catholics. Catholics disagree on all moral issues: from death penalty, to abortion, from the role of women in society to the acceptability of divorce and premarital sex. Moreover, this issue of lack of moral consensus is much more complex than it at first appears. It is not as simple as a kind of Marxian class division between the Church hierarchy and lay Catholics, since both the hierarchy and the ranks of secular Catholics have their share of moral radicals, liberals, conservatives and ultra-traditionalists. In other words, there is a full spectrum of ideological differences regarding moral issues among both the professional clergy and the ordinary parishioners. This kind of diversity of expressed viewpoints is evidence of relative flexibility and openness of the Catholic Church in America today. While the "apparatchiks" in the Church have traditionally tried to suppress dissent, such as that of pro-choice nuns, anti-celibacy clergy or most recently lay Catholics who demand greater accountability on the part of their dioceses in the light of recent sex abuse scandals, they were not ultimately successful at silencing the opposition (Farrell 2001, Eisenberg 2002). The relative openness of the American Catholic Church becomes even more apparent in comparison to its counterparts in other countries, where dissent among Catholics is

22

minimal or the population became much more secularized and the Church largely inconsequential.

In this chapter I argue that this current lack of consensus is an unintended result of democratizing reforms of Vatican 2 (1962-5). While there was always some amount of disagreement among Catholics on moral issues, up until the reforms of Vatican 2 Council the dissent was much less visible and vocal. After Vatican 2 there was an explosion of identity-based Catholic social movements in the United States. The following table contains a sampling of Catholic organizations that emerged in the years following Vatican 2 around divisive moral issues. These organizations range from ideologically conservative to radical, and were selected to reflect the breadth of moral and ideological viewpoints held by contemporary Catholics. They also represent identity-based social movements, often founded as an attempt to reconcile Catholic identity with other identities, which may be interpreted as exerting conflicting social and psychological pressures on a person.   These potentially "conflicting" identities include: being divorced, being a proponent of artificial birth control or abortion, being gay, being a feminist or traditionalist.

Table 1.1 Sampling of post-Vatican 2 Identity-Based Catholic Organizations

Name of an organization	Year of Founding	Founded by	Purpose/Issue	Orientation Towards Change
North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics, Inc. (NACSDC)	1971 1974 (inc.)	Fr. Young	advocates for separated and divorced Catholics	cautious but pro
Beginning Experience	1974	Sr. Josephine Stewart	a non-denominational organization for divorced, separated and widowed individuals and their children, emphasis on overcoming grief	cautious but pro
Dignity/USA Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Catholics	1969	Fr. Patrick Nidorf	advocates for change in the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality	pro
Courage	1980	Fr. John Harvey	the first Church-sanctioned organization that helps Catholic homosexuals live a chaste life according to the Church's moral teaching	conservative
Call to Action	1976	Dan and Sheila Daley	an independent national organization whose members believe the Spirit of God is at work in the whole church, not just in its appointed leaders	pro
Women's Ordination Conference	1974-5 1977 (inc.)	Mary B. Lynch	works for the ordination of women as priests and bishops into a renewed priestly ministry in the Roman Catholic Church	pro
Catholics for Free Choice	1973	Joan Harriman, Patricia Fogarty McQuillan, and Meta Mulcahy	an advocacy group for women's reproductive health	pro
Catholics United for Life	1973	Theo Stearns and other members of her commune	pro-life; agrues that there is a link between using artificial contraception and abortion	conservative
WATER-Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual	1983	Mary Hunt and Diann Neu	a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people	pro
CORPUS- the Association for an Inclusive Priesthood	1974	Frs. Frank Bonnike, William Nemmers and Frank McGrath	promotes an expanded and renewed priesthood of married and single men and women in the Catholic Church	pro
Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church	1979-80	Leonard Swidler	to bring about substantive structural change in the Catholic Church; share decision making	pro
Voice of the Faithful	2002	Jim Post, Jim Muller, Peggie Thorp	to support victims/suvivors of clergy sexual abuse, to shape structural change within the Catholic Church	pro
The Catholic Traditionalist Movement	1965	Gommar DePauw	maintaining the Latin mass; against the "erroneous interpretations and implementations of Second Vatican Councils decisions" (www.latinmass.com)	traditionalist and separatist

(Sources for Table 1.1 are the organizations' websites, http://www.nacsdc.org, http://www.beginningexperience.org, http://www.dignityusa.org, http://couragerc.net, http://www.cta-usa.org, http://www.womensordination.org, http://www.catholicsforchoice.org, http://cul.detmich.com, http://www.his.com/~mhunt http://www.corpus.org, http://arcc-catholic-rights.org, http://www.voiceofthefaithful.org, http://www.latinmass-ctm.org, accessed March 21, 2004)

The growing disconnection between the "party line" proclaimed by the Church leadership and the attitudes of many members of the clergy, as well as the ordinary Catholics has been documented by many scholars. It is important to keep in mind that, as the above examples imply, Catholics who dissent from Church proclamations about morality are not necessarily "weak" or cultural "Christmas-and-Easter" Catholics, but include people who are very committed to their religious identities, such as priests and nuns.

In general, the question of conformity to Church teaching is not as unambiguous as it might seem on the surface. Counter-intuitively, the relationship between ideology and obedience among Catholics is not linear. Considering the dominant public perception of Vatican in general and both the current and the previous popes in particular as conservative, it seems logical to assume that the more conservative a Catholic is, the more likely he or she is to obey the authority of the papacy and the bishops. However, a closer look at the post-Vatican 2 Catholic groups reveals that this relationship holds true only to a certain extent. It is true that liberal Catholics often reject the pope and the hierarchy as too anachronistic in terms of their views and policies regarding ordination of women, birth control and divorce, but ultimately the issue for Catholics is this: conformity to what teachings and of what period in the history of the Church. It is inaccurate to assume that the more traditionalist the Catholic, the more obedient he or she is going to be to the Vatican. In fact, some of the most traditionalist Catholics dissent from the hierarchy's teaching altogether. They saw Pope John Paul II (as well as other members of post Vatican 2 hierarchy) as not authentically Catholic because of their support for Vatican 2 reforms (Cuneo, 1999:98). In other words, some Catholics who consider themselves very conservative find it quite easy to question Church teachings on the grounds that the hierarchy has embraced the perceived inaccuracies of

Vatican 2 and corrupted the authentic meaning of Catholicism.[3] It is somewhat ironic that sociologically speaking, by their dissent the traditionalist Catholics who proclaim a very strict, hierarchical version of Catholicism contributed to the crisis of the Church authority.[4]

The lack of moral consensus among Catholics is related to some significant changes in contemporary American Catholicism. In his book "The Catholic Revolution," Andrew Greeley talks about the relationship between a widespread rejection of the Church teachings regarding birth control and cohabitation and the church attendance. Those who dissent from the Church's "party line" on these issues are less likely to attend church regularly than those who agree with it (2004:72-73).

As Albert Menedez points out, the weekly attendance in Catholic churches decreased from about 77% prior to Vatican II in the 1960s to roughly 50% in the 1990s (The Humanist, 1993). According to Frank Newport (2002), an analyst of the Gallup Poll, the weekly church attendance of Catholics has been steadily declining each year, with 44% doing so in 2000 and as little as 31% continuing to attend weekly in 2001. Newport links this decline to the 2001 priest sex abuse scandal, but he does not feel that the sex abuse scandal is the sole reason for it because the decline has been so steady, and because this trend preceded the scandal (www.galluppoll.com, accessed January 14, 2003).

This decline in church attendance by lay Catholics has been accompanied by a similarly dramatic decrease in professional clergy. As U.S. Catholic reported in February 2003, the number of nuns has diminished by approximately 70% in less than 30 years, from its peak of 180,000 in 1965 to 60,000 today. In addition, the nuns' median age is 69 (p. 37). In short, the American Catholic Church is faced with a serious membership crisis, both among its professional clergy and lay members. While the reasons for this decline in formal participation in the Church are complex, and beyond the scope of this chapter, some scholars suggest that this phenomenon indicates a recent trend away from emphasis on obedience to legalistic rules (exemplified by the insistence on weekly Mass

---

[3] My research suggests that in the spirit of Gramscian theory, both sides of the ideological fence: the "traditionalists" and the "progressives" accuse one another of basing their proclamations on bad theology.

[4] Needless to say, they would dispute this observation.

attendance) as a key aspect of Catholic identity and towards an increasing reliance on personal conscience. D'Antonio et al. describe this tendency among Catholics as "a trend away from conformity and toward personal autonomy" (2001:85). Greeley's research also underlines a shift away from the institutional Church of strict norms and rules and towards a personalized concept of both God and the Church (2004:78). Along similar lines, Jane Redmond in her book "Generous Lives: American Catholic Women Today" (1992), compared contemporary American Catholicism to being Jewish, arguing that being Catholic these days is more a matter of culture than legalistic participation.

This dissertation is focused on divorced Catholics, and the issue of the Church position on divorce is a large part of the reason why many ordinary Catholics feel increasingly disconnected from their Church. Catholics have consistently been defying the Church's stance against divorce, divorcing at a rate comparable to other religious Americans (Martos 2000:127). As Michael Hout stated in his 2000 article on the alienation felt by divorced and remarried Catholics, twenty years after the date of their first marriage 48% of Catholics are divorced from that spouse as compared to 49% of Jews, 56% of Protestants, and 59% of those with no religious affiliation (Hout 2000:10). What is more, studies show that a large majority of Catholics believe the Church should allow both remarriage after divorce and full participation in church sacraments for divorced Catholics (Menedez in The Humanist 1993). Menedez's point is supported by the findings of the Gallup Poll, that in 1993, 78% of sampled Catholics agreed that divorced Catholics should be permitted to remarry in the Church, and 61% felt that those who remarry are still good Catholics even though their actions go directly against the Church teachings (Gallup, Jr. and Lindsay 1999).

The issue of divorce further underlines the fact that the lack of moral consensus does not simply occur between the hierarchy and the lay Catholics, but that many members of lower clergy also oppose the official "party line" of prohibition of divorce. This is indicated by the willingness of "a substantial number of priests" to give communion to those who are remarried (but not annulled), in spite of the official Church guidelines which stipulate against it (Greeley 1973:112).

In sum, Catholic Church in America today is in flux. It is no longer the quasi-totalitarian institution of old, but it is a battleground of competing views and ideas. This

is not to suggest that the battlefield is even, but it is clearly a fairly open and flexible social environment. The implication of this finding for the emergence of role conflict is that since the Catholic community is relatively flexible, the number of divorced Catholics experiencing role conflict should not be exceedingly high. As I will show below, my data largely supports this assumption.

Frequency of Role Conflict among Separated and Divorced Catholics

According to Paul Secord and Carl Backman, role conflict "arises when one expectation requires behavior which in some degree is incompatible with the behavior required by another expectation" (1974:431). On the surface, the dual identity of being Catholic and separated or divorced is seemingly irreconcilable due to the historical position of the Church hierarchy against divorce, and the many misconceptions surrounding the status of divorced Catholics in the Church (Kemp 2002, Wilde 2001, Young 1993). The Catholic identity as defined by the Church leadership is still seen as incompatible with being separated or divorced, unless one is prepared to lead a celibate life. In itself, divorce is not a sin for Catholics, but any sexual activity outside of Church-recognized marriage is.

My online research[5] shows that while more than 50 % of separated and divorced Catholics experience some degree of conflict and 43.3% report not feeling conflicted at all, whereas 8.7% report feeling very conflicted. These findings support the expectations derived from the earlier theoretical discussion. Based on the fact that the American Church in general is a relatively flexible institution, and that the American culture is also pluralistic and relatively open, it is not surprising that many people who occupy marginalized structural positions may not feel very conflicted.

Of course this is all done on a very general level of analysis. A better understanding of this relationship could be gained from comparing the incidence of role conflict among divorced Catholics in conservative American parishes with those in liberal American parishes, or among American Catholics and Catholics in traditionalist Catholic countries, but at this point I do not have the data to conduct such a study.

---

[5] The online survey methodology I used is explained in detail in chapter 2.

Having discussed how flexibility of their social environment impacts the emergence of role conflict among divorced Catholics, I will now look at the conditions related to the emergence of the divorced Catholics' movement, or more generally the social consequences of role conflict negotiation. Before I look specifically at the emergence of North American Conference for Separated and Divorced Catholics as a result of role conflict negotiation, it is important to examine the larger social context, which made the evolution of the divorced Catholic movement possible.

Social Consequences of Role Conflict Negotiation among Separated and Divorced Catholics

The Crisis of Hegemony: Vatican 2 and its Unintended Effects

Flexibility of the social environment is not only related to the emergence of role conflict but it also constrains the options related to the negotiation of this conflict available to marginalized individuals. I will now examine more closely how Vatican 2, or the moment of formal democratization of the Church, made the emergence of the divorced Catholics' movement possible.

The existing diversity of moral viewpoints among Catholics is connected to the authority crisis of the Church leadership. The key question becomes what made this post-Vatican 2 explosion of dissent possible in the American Church. In terms of theoretical explanations, it is useful to briefly apply Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony (1971) to this situation. Gramsci's concept of hegemony underlines the importance of definitions and ideas in achieving and exercising power. Gramsci states that a fragile balance of consent and coercion upholds hegemony (1971:12). However, I argue that hierarchical institutions, which claim to espouse a very emancipatory ideology, such as Marxism or Christianity, do not have a monopoly on interpretations of the ideas they are claiming to uphold. Certain concepts take on a life of their own and can be turned against the hierarchy itself. A similar process occurred in other social setting and times. In communist Eastern Europe workers took the emancipatory Marxist ideology away from the party officials (whom they creatively labeled a "red bourgeoisie") and used it to challenge the power elite. Similarly, in the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council's change of emphasis away from the uniqueness of professional clergy

to the empowering of ordinary Catholics - by defining the Church as the people of God - had emancipatory consequences, which challenged the hegemony of the hierarchy (Dillon 1999, Greeley 1990). This was a very significant moment in the history of the Church because it signified its formal democratization or a shift away from what Jay P.Dolan calls the "monarchical/authoritarian/hierarchical" model of the Church, which had been dominant until then and towards the democratized "people of God" model of the Church (Dolan, 2003:14).

The "emancipatory consequences" can be observed in the form of mobilization of marginalized Catholics into identity-based social movements within the Church, such as the ones mentioned earlier in this chapter. The emergence of the divorced Catholic movement was one instance of such presumably unintended consequences because the movement utilized the hierarchy-led reforms of the Second Vatican Council to challenge the teachings of the pope and the bishops. These consequences were emancipatory in that they allowed people who were formerly effectively marginalized to resist, or at least question their marginalization in a more systematic way by challenging the legitimacy and the content of the hierarchy's claims regarding the status of the divorced, the homosexual, feminist women, the ultra-traditionalist Catholics and others in the Church. As Michele Dillon points out in her book "Catholic Identity"(1999), although "the church is a hierarchical organization where the line between doctrinal producers and consumers might seem relatively rigid, the church hierarchy is not the sole or primary producer of Catholicism. (…) In contemporary times, being Catholic is both dependent on the church hierarchy's interpretation of Catholicism and simultaneously independent of it. It means being both the producer and the consumer of doctrine" (p. 254).

Catholic analysts today disagree when they evaluate the impact of Vatican 2, depending on their own ideological orientation. The traditionalist analysts, such as Varacalli (2000) or Rose (2002) tend to see the emergence of many of the grass-roots Catholic organizations whose message was critical of the hierarchy in negative terms. They feel that these organizations are divisive and have weakened the moral position of the Church in the American society. On the other hand, the more progressive analysts such as Dillon (1999) or Cuneo (1999) see the emergence of the many identity-based

social movements in more positive terms, as evidence of salience of Catholicism in people's lives.

However, Vatican 2 did not have the same impact on Catholics around the world in terms of weakening the authority of the Church leadership, and exposing and/or creating dissent. So far, in spite of the global reach of the Roman Catholic Church, the divorced Catholic movement has been most prominent in North America.[6] Some countries, such as Poland have no divorced Catholic movement specifically, and more generally an almost negligible amount of visible, organized Catholic dissent. The relevant question here is why the divorced movement started in the United States rather than elsewhere. After all, Catholics divorce in other countries as well, and Vatican 2 was supposed to modernize the Catholic teaching globally (Cuneo 1999:11). In fact, as Andrew Greeley reports, there is evidence that large numbers of Catholics in countries as diverse as Poland, Netherlands, United States and Chile hold attitudes on sexual morality, for example, which go against the official Church proclamations (Greeley 2004:92-93). Still, it seems that it was the American Catholics who took the message of openness and agency of all believers, and attempted to apply it in most controversial ways, pushing the boundaries of traditional Catholicism the furthest. Greeley's arguments do suggest that it may only be a matter of time before Catholics in other countries follow the American example in terms of translating these dissenting attitudes into action. To say more about these speculations is beyond the scope of this chapter, however.

The somewhat unique impact of Vatican 2 on the American Church suggests that it is something about the interplay between Catholicism and the American culture that explains this propensity of American Catholics not only to "stay and complain," in Greeley's words (1990:25) but also to organize for social change and challenge the authority of the Church leadership in the process.

---

[6] There is a divorced Catholic movement in other Western countries, such as the UK, but their case is quite different from the American case due to the lower levels of religiosity of people in other advanced industrialized countries.

Pluralistic Tradition and the Continued Importance of Religion in the American Culture

Historically, the American Catholic Church was an immigrant Church. In the early 20th century, the conservative Irish bishops dominated its hierarchy. They were accustomed to a very restrained style of worship and demanded an attitude of obedience and deference from lay Catholics (Brown, 2001; Roof and Manning, 2001). This Northern European dominance had several important implications for the development of the Church in the U.S. Especially when non-European Catholic immigrants grew in numbers, they were turned off by the restrained version of Catholicism they encountered here. Because of the dominance of the formal style of worship and because of limited upward mobility within the Church, many Latino Catholics engaged in religious switching and joined evangelical Protestant churches (Roof and Manning, 2001). Some however stayed and engaged in a grass-roots Charismatic renewal. This kind of response is symptomatic of the Gramscian ideological struggles in the American Catholic Church. The conservative hierarchy tries to make American Catholics conform to the Eurocentric, Vatican-approved version of Catholicism, sometimes even surpassing the European Church in terms of severity of its response. This was the case when the American Church used to excommunicate remarried Catholics. The European Church, as conservative as it was, never used this drastic measure to try to contain divorce (Wilde, 2001).

However, when it comes to containing dissent, the heavy-handedness that has worked well in traditionalist Catholic countries has not been equally successful in the United States. One factor, which enabled the emergence of dissent in the American Church, is the fact that in the U.S. the Catholic Church has existed in a much more religiously and politically pluralistic culture. It was never an ecclesia here. In fact for many years the Catholics were looked down upon. Today, the Catholic Church is just a denomination – one of many religions. Even for those Catholics who were "born into it", for whom Catholicism is an ascribed status, eventually end up having a choice so, fundamentally, Catholicism becomes a voluntary status. Because of the vital competition from other religious and non-religious alternatives, the Church's influence was never nearly as hegemonic as in some other social settings.

Another big difference between the American Church and its counterparts in other European and Latin American countries is that in the U.S. the Church was never a comparatively important player on the political scene. For example, in Poland and Nicaragua, the Church got involved in revolutionary struggles against the oppressive governments, as it developed and attempted to implement the Liberation Theology (Osa 2001, Sawchuk 2001). Political significance and victories strengthened the authority of the Church in those countries in the post-Vatican 2 era, so that dissenting from the Church took on a completely different meaning, and could be framed as signifying unpatriotic betrayal of causes other than religion. As a result, where in the American context dissent is seen as a sign of independence, a healthy expression of democracy, and caring about something strongly, in other contexts dissent may be more easily framed as a sign of disloyalty.

Today the "lower clergy" in the United States often disregards and openly disagrees with the hierarchy (Greeley, 1973). In general, American Catholics, both lay and clergy members openly criticize their leadership in publications (such as U.S. Catholic) or through participation in grass-roots organizations (such as Voice of the Faithful). Of course the hierarchy fights back as much as possible, which has been exemplified by discouraging parishes from accommodating Voice of the Faithful and arguing that dissent is harmful to the unity of the Church (as expressed by the "divided we fall" thesis of Varacalli, 2000). Yet at least in America there is a public dialogue on controversial issues unlike in the more traditionalist Catholic countries.

Also, American Catholics took the liberalizing reforms of Vatican 2 much more to heart because they were more in line with participatory ideals of the American civil society (Doyle, 2003). These American values of independence, individualism and voluntary association, in combination with a unique political and social history of Catholicism in America that I described previously make the stance of disagreeing while staying in the Church less contradictory than perhaps in other social settings.

But, of course, the United States is not the only country in the world with long-standing pluralistic, democratic traditions. Yet in other advanced Western countries, the gap between the Church and the Catholic population has grown so wide that many of them have become overwhelmingly secular, and the Church largely inconsequential.

Clearly there has to be an additional reason for why religion continues to remain as important in people's lives as it is in the American society, despite the fact that its principles are often at odds with the demands of contemporary secular culture. According to Karpathakis, the reason for this paradox is that in American society religion is a socially acceptable/politically correct and safe way of expressing difference (2001:390). This "neutralizing" function is particularly important in a society that is as racially, ethnically and economically diverse as the American society is. Consequently, religious identity remains important in providing self-definition and social location. As Greeley put it, the U.S. society is both "religiously pluralistic and religiously devout"(1990:25).

When discussing the continuing appeal of Catholicism in particular, Andrew Greeley argued that dissenting Catholics stay because they like being Catholic. In other words, even though they have other options - exit, or religious switching to a different denomination - they voluntarily choose the Catholic Church and because they are drawn to the traditions, symbolism and the sacramental imagination of the Catholic Church (which paints God as present in the world, not separate from it, and hence the world is filled with revelation and is not bleak). Greeley feels that "disgruntled Catholics who choose to remain, stay in the Church because it is their birthright, and that they feel as Catholic as the pope" (1990:25).

The divorced Catholic movement emerged in the United States as one of the many identity-based social movements in the aftermath of Vatican 2. Its emergence is evidence of the unique impact of Vatican 2 on the American Church, made possible by a combination of historical and social factors. I will now discuss the specifics of the movement's emergence and relate them to the process of role conflict negotiation.

Social Movement Mobilization: The Emergence of North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics

In order to understand the emergence of a divorced Catholic movement in spite of the institutional unresponsiveness of the Church to the concerns of the divorced, we need to look at those Catholics for whom their religious identity is non-negotiable in its salience,

and for whom exit is not an option.[7] Many American Catholics going through a separation or divorce, for whom being Catholic was particularly salient, refused to exit the Church, become inactive and invisible. One of the earliest support groups for the separated and divorced Catholics emerged in 1971 in Boston, and was organized with the help of a Paulist priest Father James Young (Young 1978). In 1973, the group organized a daylong conference devoted to the concerns of the separated and divorced Catholics, which received an overwhelming response and resulted in a story published in Time magazine. At around the same time, other similar groups began to spring up independently of one another, around the U.S. and Canada. After the publication of the Time magazine article, the Boston group became an information center for the others. The Boston group organized a second conference in 1974, to which representatives from other groups were invited. At this conference, the framework for the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics was established. The NACSC became incorporated in 1975. The organizations' efforts were mainly focused on creating and coordinating support groups for separated and divorced Catholics, but it was also consciously pursuing the goal of reshaping the role of a divorced Catholic, changing the Church's response and people's reaction to this label. The response to the organization's efforts was remarkable. In addition to articles in publications such as Time and the New York Times, more and more people attended the subsequent conferences and more and more dioceses developed ministries to separated and divorced Catholics (Ripple Comin, 1991). Today, the organization has a very informative website with extensive list of resources a person may purchase. It publishes a quarterly named "Jacob's Well" and continues to organize seminars and conferences. Both the name of the quarterly and the organization's logo are symbolic and refer to a Biblical story described in John 4, when

---

[7] I don't want to suggest that exit automatically implies an identity is not salient to someone, because there are other conditions that impact on one's ultimate decision whether to stay in or to leave the Church. These conditions include the relative power of the church in its social milieu, the overall culture and the presence of like-minded people. In ultra-traditionalist environments, for example in some Catholic countries where the Church hierarchy is hegemonic, an exit may be an expression of identity salience (because a person may feel that as a sinner who cannot be absolved of his or her sins he or she does not want to "stain" the Church community by staying). However, as I argue earlier in this chapter, the U.S. culture is more conducive to the emergence of certain kinds of identity-based religious social movements, such as the divorced Catholics movement.

Jesus reached out to a Samaritan woman who had several male partners in her life, thus overcoming her stigmatized status on two counts: as someone who had more than one husband and as someone who was not Jewish.

Social change often results from marginalized individuals' efforts to redefine their identities and role expectations that no longer "fit" (Howard 2000). As Dillon points out, what those individuals get from participating in a social movement based on their identities is an ability to maintain their revised identities even in the face of continued counter-definition and marginalization by those in power who want to uphold the status quo. In turn, social movements give the contesting individuals a confirmation that their revised identity is valid (Dillon, 1999:161).

Even though only 4.3% of the online survey respondents joined the Church-sponsored group for the separated and divorced Catholics, among them are people who through their dissent, work for and bring about significant change in social institutions – in this case the Roman Catholic Church. In my mail survey, which was completed by 97 members of support groups for separated and divorced Catholics only 16 people (18%; 6 did not answer this question) stated that they were in the group, among other reasons, for the purpose of activism for change in the Church. This supports the assertions found in the literature that the social change aspect was not the key component of divorced Catholics' involvement from their perspective. As Young (1978) described it, many original members of the Boston support group in 1971 had "not seen themselves as a change agent or political vanguard in the Church" but were more interested in helping others going through the same transition (1978: 89). So, as the social psychologists would predict, in the case of the divorced Catholics' movement, the social activism had very personal, psychological roots. Regardless of the reasons why majority of divorced Catholics participate in NACSDC-sponsored support groups, the ultimate consequences of the divorced Catholics' organizing however have been more far reaching, as I will demonstrate below. Before I discuss the social consequences of the divorced Catholics' organizing, it is important to highlight some of the strategies used by their advocates in the ideological struggle against the authors representing the "party line" of the Catholic Church on the subject of divorce.

The Tools and Strategies of Ideological Struggle

In his analysis of hegemony, Gramsci emphasizes the importance of language in manufacturing consent (1971:348-350). Language is the main tool used in ideological struggles between the members of the power structure and their challengers. It is used as a weapon either to perpetuate or to challenge the status quo. The language that divorced Catholics' advocates tend to adopt is indicative of a less absolutist stance. This is exemplified by discourse that problematizes the rigid policy of the Church on divorce, and stresses the need for inclusiveness and mercy towards the divorced Catholics (Hosie 1995, Greeley 1973, Kelleher 1973, Greteman and Haverkamp 1983). The alternative is to insist that a divorced person cannot remain a good Catholic unless they live a celibate life (Pilarczyk 2002, Pontifical Council for the Family 1997). The literature typical of the hierarchy's "party line" on the subject of divorce emphasizes the need to sacrifice and embrace the current discipline of the Church in the absence of an annulment (i.e. celibacy or staying away from communion), and it contains more absolutist arguments such as the need to uphold the message of Christ regardless of how unpopular it may be in the contemporary society (Pilarczyk 2002, Pontifical Council for the Family 1997).

In order to be effective, the movement participants had to utilize elements of the Church teaching - a common point of reference for all Catholics - to be able to problematize the current approach of the Church toward divorce. One example of this is the use of Biblical imagery in the NACSDC publications. The use of a Biblical story of the Samaritan woman at the well for its purposes is one example of the NACSDC's attempts to claim legitimacy in the eyes of Catholics. Below I present specific examples of the kinds of arguments representing both sides of the divorce debate within the Catholic community.

Competing Interpretations of Divorce

Separated and divorced Catholics' advocates see divorce as a major personal and religious crisis. The emphasis is on individual's pain as opposed to a moral concept of sin. As Jane Redmond put it when discussing her research on Catholic women, "Divorce was probably the most frequent and pervasive source of church-related pain I encountered" (1992:193). And she continues, "Like death, divorce is a wrenching

experience, full of desolate grief. (…) Of all the issues that came up in conversations about pastoral care, it was by far the most painful and alienating" (Redmond, 1992:268). Carrie Kemp points out, "For someone else, divorce might be a life dilemma. For a Catholic, it's an issue that involves a core of who they are" (2002:39). Both Redmond and Kemp are lay Catholics, but voices supporting separated and divorced Catholics also belong to the clergy. For example, Father John Hosie adds, "Few, except those who have been divorced, really appreciate that it is one of the worst experiences that can happen to anyone. Its effects of grief are quite comparable to those felt at the death of a spouse. Added to those feelings can be a sense of failure, shame, guilt, and anger, which can be overwhelming. The divorced feel that they are drowning, and no one seems to know or care" (1995: 7).

Similarly, the Bishops of New Zealand and Australia wrote, "We must avoid the false idea that divorce is always an easy way out. Separation and divorce mark the death of a dream (…). Grief and guilt collide in the personality of the separated or divorced person, resulting in a loneliness that some find intolerable" (1995: 66).

On the opposite side of the ideological spectrum, the proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" see divorce as an act that Jesus hates and forbids, an immoral act. The Catechism of the Catholic Church declares, "The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble. (…) Between the baptized, 'a ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death.' (…) Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law" (1995:632-633).

Proposed Solutions

Divorced Catholics' advocates suggest a range of solutions: from an internal forum (i.e., continuing to receive communion after remarriage without an annulment, for example in cases when a person is convinced the previous marriage was not valid but has no witnesses to testify in front of the tribunal) to an annulment. They also support change of current Church policies, which can lead to doubt and confusion due to their excessive complexity. This is exemplified by the argument made by Father John Hosie who states that the Church's approach to the divorced is an area that "is certainly

changing and developing, but if we base our approach on both the *words* and *example* of Jesus, we need have no fear" (1995: 58-59).

The proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" advocate celibacy and an annulment as ways of dealing with divorce. They imply that faith requires sacrifices, "The whole Christian community should develop ways to support fidelity to the sacrament of marriage by a constant commitment to (…) encouraging and helping separated and divorced couples who are alone to remain faithful to the duties of their marriage" (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1997:14). Regarding a couple that obtained a civil divorce only, Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk argues that civil divorce does not cancel the couple's obligation to the Church and each other to remain celibate and not to remarry, because "they are still bound by the pledge of faithfulness to each other that they made to Christ and to Church. Because they gave themselves to each other to be a sign of the faithfulness of Christ, they are bound to continue to reflect that faithfulness in their lives. If they are unable to reflect it in their life together, they are called to respect it in their life apart, without attempting another marriage union" (2002:34). However, in some cases the Pontifical Council of the Family acknowledges annulment as an option, "Pastoral assistance should also be provided for those who turn to or could turn to the judgment of the ecclesiastical courts. They should be helped to consider the possible nullity of their marriage" (1997:15).

Remarriage without an Annulment

Divorced Catholics' advocates see remarriage without an annulment as a personal issue. Stephen Kelleher points out that "Christ made no statement to the effect that a person who obtained a divorce and remarried would be permanently cut off from a union with God or with the Church" (1973:50). He further claims, "Christ is not present in this ecclesiastical finalistic judgment about the incapacity of a person to marry. It is cruel" (1973:163). As discussed in the previous section, Father John Hosie describes the internal forum as a possible solution, while acknowledging that it may be a confusing, difficult option when an individual's situation is not so clear-cut, **"**There is less clear support by the Church for a person who is in a doubtful state of conscience about the validity of a first marriage when there is a remarriage. However, the complexity of the

Church annulment procedures may at the present time make it difficult for a person to overcome this doubt. There is a need for better communication in this area, as in others" (1995: 58-59).

On the other hand, the proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" see remarriage without an annulment as an illicit act by which a Catholic separates himself or herself from the Church, "Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by the civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1995:633). The Pontifical Council for the Family gives clergy the following advice regarding how to deal with a remarried person, "… invite the divorced involved in a new union to recognize their irregular situation, which involves a state of sin, and ask God for the grace of true conversion. (…) (However)…since they have divorced and remarried, they cannot receive the sacraments of Penance or the Eucharist" (1997:16). This is justified by referring to the Scriptures, "When divorced Christians enter a civil union, the Church, faithful to our Lord's teaching (cf. Mk 10:2-9), cannot give any public or private sign that might seem to legitimize the new union" (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1997:15). Echoing this argument, Father Peter Stravinskas claims, "Their (the divorced people's) attempt at a sacrament (asking a priest to bless their second marriage) is sacrilegious and morally sinful; their ongoing union is adulterous" (2003:12). Father Stravinskas goes even further and voices the following opinion on the need for a remarried woman to have her first marriage annulled and the second marriage validated, "The Church teaches (that the woman's eternal salvation) is at risk under present conditions" (2003: 21).

Annulment

Among the divorced Catholics' advocates there is a range of views on the subject of annulment - from a deceptive practice (i.e., the Catholic divorce) to a process of healing/reconciliation. Jane Redmond puts it bluntly, "It's kind of a travesty for the Church to insist on an annulment. It's a Church divorce" (1992:196). In his article "Church Marriage Procedure and the Contemporary Family," Father Andrew Greeley explains that the tribunals came into existence at the time when marriage was mostly seen as a legal arrangement of mutual obligation. As notions of what marriage is changed,

these modifications became reflected in the civil law but the canon law changed much more slowly. As a result, Greeley asks,

> Is permanence ideal a legal obligation that Church is most likely achieve through laws and penalties or is it a religious ideal best achieved through preaching the Gospel and sustaining married people? In other words, should Church get out of the matrimonial business and concentrate on religious ideas? (…) Tribunals are in all likelihood part of useless baggage, which ought to be discarded as soon as possible (1973:110-112).

Kelleher agrees with Father Greeley's main point, "The problem is one of injustice of marriage law in church and injustice of tribunals. (…) Church law is sometimes couched in language that deceives the masses of people it governs. The matrimonial law is outdated" (1973:16). He further points out, "Good conscience solution may cause confusion and guilt" (Kelleher, 1973:181). In "Jacob's Well", the publication of the NACSDC, Hector Medina presents a less condemning view of the annulment, by arguing that while the annulment process may be extremely difficult and emotionally draining, it plays a valuable role of forcing a person to examine critically what went wrong and can lead to a kind of spiritual healing, "People become focused on whether an annulment is granted or denied and fail to see the healing manner of God moving us through the water of painful memory so that we do not drown in the depths of obsession or be swept under in the undercurrents of consuming anger" (2003, Quarter 2: 12).

The proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" see annulment as a process of healing and reconciliation, which is fundamentally different from divorce. Regarding the rules of annulment, Father Stravinskas states, "None of this is arbitrary; engaging in the process could bear enormously good fruit for a person spiritually" (2003:13). Archbishop Pilarczyk argues that the declaration of nullity is "not some kind of subtle "Catholic divorce" proceeding. (…) When such a judgment has been pronounced, the parties are free to marry again, not because something, which formerly existed, has been dissolved, but because no sacramental marriage ever existed. (It may be worth noting that (…) the children of such union are not considered illegitimate (Pilarczyk, 2002: 33).

The Pontifical Council of the Family recommends, "Pastoral assistance should also be provided for those who turn to or could turn to the judgment of the ecclesiastical courts. They should be helped to consider the possible nullity of their marriage" (1997:15).

Role of the Clergy

Divorced Catholics' advocates see role of the clergy when dealing with the divorced as appropriately concerned with providing support to a person in crisis. Commenting on the negative treatment divorced Catholics receive from other Catholics, including priests and on the lack of responsiveness on the part of many dioceses, Father Hosie suggests, "the Church bears a (…) grave responsibility to reach out with compassion and help to people whose marriages have ended, and to those who entered second marriages. (…) Yet other Catholics or the priests concerned probably felt they were being true to Christ over the matter" (1995: 47-48).

The Bishops of New Zealand and Australia exclaim, "You (the divorced) should not have to apologize for seeking the counsel of a priest. On the contrary, you should find in the priest a ready listener and an understanding pastor" (1995: 67).

In comparison, the proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" see role of the clergy when dealing with the divorced as appropriately concerned with faithfulness to Scriptures, "When divorced Christians enter a civil union, the Church, faithful to our Lord's teaching (cf. Mk 10:2-9), cannot give any public or private sign that might seem to legitimize the new union" (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1997:15).

Separated and Divorced Catholics' Role in the Church

Divorced Catholics' advocates define the role of divorced Catholics as valuable members of the Church. In "When Dreams Die," Bishops of New Zealand and Australia suggest that the experience of suffering associated with going through a marital breakup can predispose the separated and divorced Catholics to be Christ-like in their concerns for others going through a crisis in their marriage. Because of this, their role in the Church is quite unique and important (1995: 69-70). Irene Varley, the Executive Director of NACSDC at the time, expressed a similar view, "As this ministry continues its service (…), it is important that we identify as a ministry of reconciliation. We are challenged to continue to love the gospel message and to bring hope to the lives of the divorced. We

42

need to know how holy we are, even in our failures. It is in our failures that we relate to the need for, and experience, the love of Christ…like the Prodigal Son and his brother for the love of their father" (2004:12).

The proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" see the role of divorced Catholics as dependent on their sexual activity. For example, Archbishop Pilarczyk argues that prohibiting Catholics who remarried without an annulment from receiving Holy Communion is a reasonable response, "It is not that the church singles out the invalidly married people for special punishment. *All* church members who deliberately remain in sinful situations are ineligible to receive Communion. But such persons are not therefore excluded from membership in the Church. They are free to participate in the life of the Church to the extent that their situation allows" (2002:34-35).

Similarly, the Pontifical Council for the Family advises, "The whole Christian community should develop ways to support fidelity to the sacrament of marriage by a constant commitment to (…) encouraging and helping separated and divorced couples who are alone to remain faithful to the duties of their marriage" (1997:14).

Justification of the Opposing Sides' Positions

The grounds for the position of divorced Catholics' advocates lie in problematizing the dominant interpretation of the Scriptures and in the emphasis on Christ's mercy. Brother James Greteman and Leon Haverkamp state, "Although Jesus called His disciples to follow Him to perfection, He never ceased to love them in their imperfect humanity. He called them to strive for wholeness, but He did not turn His back on their fears and failures. He understood that performance seldom measures up to its promise. In this light we extend an invitation to all divorced Catholics to "come home" (1983:7). Father Hosie echoes their point, "As a Church, our attitude toward divorce has been too heavily based on a legalistic interpretation of the words of Jesus, and too little on his example" (1995: 57-58). He also points out that while Jesus abhorred divorce, he was compassionate toward the divorced person. Additionally, Saint Paul and Saint Matthew also did not reject the possibility of divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances, even though they strongly discouraged divorce. And so, "the Church, basing itself on the authority of Paul, has continued to urge the observance of the words of Jesus, but allows

exceptions, permitting divorce and remarriage in certain circumstances. It has extended the exceptions that Paul allowed" (Hosie, 1995: 59).

Father Andrew Greeley declares, "Legalism is false to the 'genius of Christianity'" (1973:113). Another scholar, Stephen Kelleher draws on the history of the Church to make his point that many Catholics are wrong to assume that the Church has always forbidden divorce and remarriage and that this stance has been a direct reflection of what is in the Bible, "The teaching that marriage is indissoluble is not an infallible teaching and has never been defined by the church as a doctrine of faith. Historically, the practice in many parts of the church permitted divorce and remarriage and this practice was based on direct appeal to the Scripture, and at least tolerated by some popes" (1973:16). He also observes that the Church does not interpret the Scripture's message that God forbade all divorce and remarriage literally. To the contrary, the church allows for all kinds of exceptions, including permitting divorce when a marital relationship has not been consummated. Incidentally, according to the Church's teaching, Mary and Joseph's relationship falls into the category of non-consummated marriages (Kelleher, 1973:18, 43-44). Additionally, Kelleher argues, "The present teaching of the church on the nature of marriage, the present legislation governing its canonical effects and the present practice of the pope, the curia and the tribunals are simply not contained in Divine Revelation, and I do not believe they are even based on good theology" (1973:68). And, "The absolutism of the church which states that all marriages, no matter how dead they may obviously be, are signs of Christ's living presence in the world are woefully misplaced" (1973:113). Finally, he suggests, "The New Testament teaching is not so clear that it precludes the possibility of change" (1973:48).

On the other side of the ideological divide, the proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" base their position on the assertion of constancy of Church teachings and in emphasis on faithfulness in spite of the pressures of "popular opinion" of the times. In "The Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried," The Pontifical Council for the Family states that while the Church must respond to the reality of how widespread divorce has become, it also needs to uphold its unchangeable position that marriage is "an exclusive indissoluble commitment. (…) Furthermore, the Church does not limit herself to condemning errors, but in accordance with the constant teaching of her Magisterium

(…) she wishes every means so that the local communities can provide support for those who are living in situations of this sort" (1997: 12-13).

In a similar argument Archbishop Pilarczyk suggests that the Church has to be firm on the issue of divorce in order to uphold what the Bible teaches,

> Because Christ's love is permanent, so is Christian marriage. (…) In obedience to the teaching of Jesus (see for example Mark 10, 11, ff.), the Church takes this natural ideal and makes it the norm for believers, seeing in it a reflection of nothing less than Christ's love for each of us. For the Church to teach that sacramental marriages can be dissolved and that the divorced spouses can properly enter into subsequent marriages would be to teach that Christ's love for us can disintegrate, that there is provision for inconstancy in it, that perhaps he does not love us unconditionally and forever (2002: 31-32).

Symbols Used by the Opposing Sides

The main symbol used by divorced Catholics' advocates is the Biblical woman at the well, "Jesus reveals the depth of his compassion for all those who suffer rejection, by offering the living water of His own love to the Samaritan woman who had been divorced by five men. In her we all find acceptance and know that we are loved" (printed on a NACSDC card with a pin, which were included with the membership kit).

The main symbol used by the proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" is the cross. For example, Archbishop Pilarczyk evokes the cross while describing a situation when there is no apparent resolution; a person cannot get an annulment, cannot stay in the old marriage and feels the need to be in another relationship, "There seems to be a conflict between compassion and the demands of faithfulness. What we do then is we turn to the cross of Christ and acknowledge that our faithfulness can be very costly, even as his was, and that the love of God for us human creatures is sometimes expressed in a call to suffering and sacrifice" (2002: 35).

Language Used by the Opposing Sides

The divorced Catholics advocates' language stresses the need for mercy and forgiveness, inclusiveness, and faithfulness to the essence of Christianity. Brother Greteman and Haverkamp state, "… although Jesus called His disciples to follow Him to perfection, He never ceased to love them in their imperfect humanity. He called them to

45

strive for wholeness, but He did not turn His back on their fears and failures. He understood that performance seldom measures up to its promise. In this light we extend an invitation to all divorced Catholics to 'come home'" (1983:7).

On the other hand, the language used by the proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" stresses the need for repentance and sacrifice and faithfulness to Christ's teachings. Archbishop Pilarczyk argues that when it comes to the issue of divorce, "The church is not free to disregard the dimension of marriage which reflects Christ's love and faithfulness to us. The church is not free to disregard that dimension because the church did not put it there. Christ did. For the church to downplay or overlook the demand for total, unconditional and lifelong commitment, which is central to sacramental marriage, would make the church itself unfaithful to Christ" (2002:35). And when it comes to the status of the divorced and the existing restrictions in the Church, "No sin can be forgiven unless the sinner is willing to forgo the sin, to get out of the sinful situation that he or she has gotten into" (Pilarczyk, 2002:35).

In sum, the overall orientation of the divorced Catholics advocates on the subject of divorce and the status of the divorced in the Church is nuanced and flexible, while the orientation of proponents of the Catholic Church's "party line" on these issues is absolutist and rigid. Table 1.2 contains a summary of the above-presented arguments on the subject of divorce used by the advocates of the divorced Catholics on one hand, and the proponents of the Church 's official position on the other hand.

Table 1.2 Comparison of Opposing Arguments and Strategies Regarding Divorce within the Catholic Church

Issue/Strategy	The divorced Catholics' advocates	The proponents of the official position of the Church
see divorce as:	a major personal and religious crisis	an act that Jesus hates and forbids, a result of sin
suggest the following solution:	a range of solutions: from an internal forum to annulment; also seek support and change	celibacy and an annulment; faith requires sacrifices
see remarriage without an annulment as:	a personal issue	an illicit act by which a Catholic separates himself/herself from the Church
see annulment as:	a range of views: from a deceptive practice (i.e. the Catholic divorce) to a process of healing/reconciliation	a process of healing and reconciliation; a process that is fundamentally different from a divorce
see the role of the clergy and other Catholics in relation to a divorced Catholic as :	appropriately concerned with providing spiritual support to a person in crisis in the name of God's mercy	appropriately concerned with faithfulness to their interpretation of the scripture
define the role of divorced Catholics as:	being divorced and Catholic is not incompatible; the divorced are valuable members of the Church; their sexual activity should not be the sole characteristic determining their standing in the community	the standing of a divorced Catholic in the Church community is determined by their sexual activity; a chaste divorced Catholic is a valuable member of the community
grounds of their positions on relevant issues:	a problematizing interpretation of the Church teaching, traditions and the Scripture; the Church teaching has been changeable, and Jesus's principal message was mercy and forgiveness	the notion that the Church position has been constant, that the Church cannot bend Jesus' teachings to suit the wishes of the public opinion
symbols:	woman at the well - a symbol of Christ's inclusive mercy	cross - a symbol of need to accept suffering and sacrifice in the name of faith
their language emphasizes:	need for forgiveness and mercy; faithfulness to the essence of Jesus' teachings and the inclusively understood Catholic tradition	need for repentence, sacrifice and faithfulness to the Church teachings
overall orientation:	nuanced, flexible	absolutist, rigid

Social Change Attributed to the Divorced Catholic Movement

Social change attributed to the divorced Catholic movement ranges from education and mobilization at grass-root level to shaping relevant policy change at the level of institutional Church.

On the grass-root level, NACSDC succeeded in creating peer ministry in the form of support groups, conferences and publications. On the level of the institutional Church, NACSDC was involved in creating and expanding diocesan outreach to the divorced. Due to their efforts, by the early 1980s, most dioceses in the United States offered support groups for separated and divorced Catholics. Their activism also caused Bishops to

> write pastoral letters about the long overdue and much needed ministry to divorced Catholics, and to participate in special homecoming Masses and programs for those who felt "unchurched," alienated, excommunicated or unwanted. (…In addition) NACSDC was involved with the drafting of the Papal document on the family (Familiaris Consortio), the pastoral on the role of women in the Church, preparation for the Synod on the vocation and mission of laity in Church and society, the focus of the Secretariat of Marriage and Family Life, the visitation of Pope John Paul II to the United States (Kircher, 1991).

The divorced Catholic movement has had several major accomplishments in terms of affecting policy change. The 1976 U.S. Bishops' Bicentennial Justice Conference resulted in several resolutions aiming at reconciling separated, divorced and remarried Catholics to the Church. In November of 1977, Pope Paul removed the automatic excommunication penalty for remarriage, which had been selectively applied to American Catholics. The occurrence of both of these events is credited to a large degree to "the growing number, estrangement, organization and mobilization of divorced American Catholics" (Wilde 2001:235, 242).

The larger sociological question that emerges from this chapter has to do with the extent to which social change is intentional. The social change aspect of NACSDC is somewhat downplayed on the organization's website. The group positions itself mainly as an advocate of separated and divorced Catholics, rather than a political entity. My research confirms that many divorced Catholics do not think of themselves as agents for change when they join their NACSDC-sponsored support groups, and yet by virtue of

participating in them they contribute to the ongoing debate in the Church over the status of divorced Catholics, or even to changes in policy of the Church.

The other side of this issue has to do with limits of institutional control. On a larger scale, the Church elite was unable to contain the outcome of Vatican 2, which had far reaching and unintended social consequences, including the emergence of the divorced Catholics' movement. Similarly, the very involvement of the official Church representatives in the debate regarding divorce and the status of the divorced in the Church opens up symbolic "gates" of public contention, and signifies that further change is possible.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the macro-level aspect of role conflict among separated and divorced Catholics. I described how flexibility of their social environment on one hand is related to the emergence of role conflict itself, and on the other hand, how it constrains the possibilities of role conflict resolution. I situated the divorced Catholics' movement in the context of other post-Vatican 2 identity based Catholic social movements. I also demonstrated how the divorced Catholics' movement utilized elements of the hegemonic ideology of the Church to challenge the Church's stance on divorce. By examining the evolution of the divorced Catholic movement, by discussing its strategy and by situating it in the context of these other post-Vatican 2 Catholic movements, I addressed the impact of democratization on the American Catholic Church, as well as the social consequences of the process of role conflict negotiation.

Chapter Two: Role Conflict and the Strategies of Its Resolution among Separated and Divorced Catholics: Online Survey Findings

Online Survey Methodology

The online survey of American separated and divorced Catholics was done in order to learn about a population that has not been studied in this way so far. This survey was administered in August of 2003, to a representative sample[8] of 300 separated and divorced Catholics nationwide. This was done using an online questionnaire and having the research firm Online Testing Exchange (OTX) host the survey for sample collection. A random nationwide sample of email invitations was sent out, inviting potential respondents to take a survey at the OTX site. Upon clicking on the link supplied in their email they were directed into the OTX servers, where they were asked several screener questions for qualifications purposes (such as: "are you Catholic?" and "are you divorced or separated?").[9] Once the data was collected, OTX supplied me with the data in the form of a SPSS dataset. The main purpose of looking at a representative national sample of separated and divorced Catholics is to find out how many of them actually experience role conflict, who those individuals are demographically, and which methods of identity revision are most successful.

Primary Objective

The main goal of this research was to find out to what extent social psychological theories of role conflict and its resolution can be applied to separated and divorced

---

[8] OTX has relationships with various nationwide sample providers (such as yahoo.com, Greenfield Online, etc.), which gives them access to more than 50 million nationwide emails. The email invitations are sent out to addresses selected on a random basis, without any regard to location, age, gender, race, religion, etc. of the email account owner. While no one has an exhaustive list of all email addresses in the U.S., the sheer number of available addresses, and the unbiased method of selection ensures that the sample is as random and representative of emailing U.S. public as possible. According to a recent study done by the Harris poll, by November 2001 over 64% of U.S. population had access to the Internet. (http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=266, accessed January 14, 2003)

[9] Upon entering the OTX server, the email recipient is matched to any one of the surveys hosted by OTX according to demographics and the priority of test.

Catholics. The primary questions guiding my research are:

1. How do separated and divorced Catholics who feel conflicted negotiate and attempt to resolve the incompatible demands of living in contemporary American society with the morally conservative teachings of the Catholic Church? What are the demographic differences among separated and divorced Catholics who choose different strategies for resolving the conflict? These issues are addressed in the section on "The Means of Resolving Role Conflict: Conforming, Reframing and Still Searching" and "The Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and the Choice of Strategy for Role Conflict Resolution."

2. Which groups are most likely to be successful in reconciling these opposing forces? This is addressed in the section on "The Relationship between the Choice of Strategy and Success in Role Conflict Resolution." and "The Relationship between the Type of Support and Success in Role Conflict Resolution."

In this context, success in role conflict resolution is defined through a combination of emotional and religious adjustment (described in-depth on pages 70-77). Thus, this is "success" understood as an ability to reconcile two conflicting identities at the same time, specifically as an ability to strengthen one's Catholic identity in spite of separation or divorce. Success is examined demographically, by relationship status, type of support received and strategy of role conflict resolution. The majority of the analysis in this chapter is bi-variate, as the primary concern is with the strategies employed and the distribution of the dependent variable (success) across the various categories (such as demographic characteristics, relationship status, type of support and strategy). The construction of the "success" variable (dependent variable) as well as the various strategies (independent variables) involved combining several key variables that were collected in the survey.

Due to the cost-related constraints of a one-time survey with a limited number of questions asked, the data collected restricts the kind of analysis that can be confidently performed. Hence, the focus of this chapter is on description and identification of characteristics related to success, but not on prediction of individual success. For example, it may well be that females are more successful than males because they are more emotionally adjusted due to the fact that they have larger social networks.

Consequently, if the size of one's social network were controlled for, there may well be no gender difference for this variable. Such information is useful if one is attempting to predict the probability of success (i.e., knowing that someone is male does allow a prediction, but knowing their gender, their level of education and the size of their social network gives a more accurate prediction). I discuss the methodological limitations of my survey, and ways to address them in more detail on pages 88-89.

In this research, I examine each group individually, describe its likelihood to employ a particular strategy for role conflict resolution and its placement on the scale of success.

Role Conflict among Separated and Divorced Catholics

Divorced and separated Catholics share the potential for experiencing role conflict because the Church hierarchy overtly condemns and rejects divorce as an option. As a result, the overall stance towards separated and divorced Catholics within the Church can be characterized as ranging from ambiguous to negative. The expectations of the hierarchy regarding the lifestyles of the divorced and separated Catholics are very strict. In order to remain in good graces with the Church, a divorced Catholic must remain celibate, until he or she remarries with the Church's blessing. In principle, this can only happen if he or she obtains an annulment first, although there are some rare exceptions to this rule (Vondenberger, 2004:21). Such stringent expectations of the Church towards the divorced clearly go against the demands of life in contemporary American society, where the divorced are expected to "move on," date and have sexual relationships with new partners. Despite this seemingly inevitable contradiction in role expectations, even a very preliminary glance at the data I collected regarding contemporary separated and divorced American Catholics shows that this framing of role conflict is incomplete, because many of them do not report feeling conflicted over being separated/divorced and Catholic. If role conflict were solely structural, or based on a person's location in the social structure (i.e. occupying conflicting social statuses - in this case being a separated or a divorced Catholic), and consequent clashing social expectations, then it would be universal, or nearly so. My online research shows that while more than 50% of separated and divorced Catholics experience some degree of conflict, 43.3% report not feeling conflicted at all, whereas 8.7% report feeling very conflicted (Table 2.1). This result was

determined by asking the respondents the following question: "How conflicted do you feel being both divorced and Catholic, given the Church's stance on divorce?" The possible responses were: "very conflicted," "somewhat conflicted," "not very conflicted" and "not at all conflicted."

2.1 Frequency of Role Conflict among Separated and Divorced Catholics (online data)

	Frequency	Percent
Very conflicted	26	8.7%
Somewhat conflicted	75	25.0%
Not very conflicted	69	23.0%
Not at all conflicted	130	43.3%
Total	300	100%

Since so much of the divorced Catholics' role conflict stems from the emphasis on "illegitimate" sexual activity, one possible explanation for people not reporting feeling conflicted may be that they are sexually inactive. My online research demonstrates that 18.7% of divorced Catholics report not being involved in a sexual relationship, and thus having no conflict.

Theoretical Background

As defined by Paul Secord and Carl Backman, role conflict occurs when "one expectation requires behavior which in some degree is incompatible with the behavior required by another expectation" (1974:431). Role conflict is framed in structural terms: that is, if social expectations associated with social positions occupied by a person were incompatible, he or she would feel conflicted. Another factor, suggested by social psychologists to explain the emergence of role conflict is the notion of identity salience. As I discussed in the Introduction, Secord and Backman (1974) suggest that people have an established hierarchy of obligations that determines which expectations they are likely to choose to follow in a situation where there is a role conflict.

My finding that many separated and divorced Catholics do not feel conflicted at all (43.3% -Table 2.1), and an additional 23% do not feel very conflicted (Table 2.1) is not very surprising given the fact that the American Church in general is a relatively flexible

institution, and that the American culture is also pluralistic and relatively open. As I argue in the preceding chapter, in an open or flexible social milieu occupying a marginalized social position "structurally" does not always carry as heavy social penalties as in more closed or authoritarian social environments. However, this widespread nonchalance about divorce among the laity should still be of some concern to American Catholic Church hierarchy, since it illustrates the fact that many contemporary Catholics are not overly concerned about their disconnection from the Church. It also confirms what other researchers have found, namely that many Catholics simply disregard the Church's stance on issues related to sexual morality (Gallup, Jr. and Lindsay 1999, Greeley 2004, Hout 2000, Martos 2000).

Research Strategy

After collecting the data and reviewing current literature on role conflict resolution, I created a scale to identify the level of success in role conflict resolution. The scale construction is defined in detail on pages 71-77. I operationalized four strategies for role conflict resolution. They were: exiting, conforming, reframing and reshaping.

Exiters

People who reported a strong decline in religious involvement, a significant weakening of Catholic identity, a sense of disconnectedness from the Church, and reported having been conflicted at the time of separation/divorce and/or at the time of the survey are classified as exiters. Specifically, this group consists of respondents who reported strong declines in religious activity on the religious change scale, which was constructed out of the following items:
- "Has your level of church attendance increased or decreased since the change in your marital status?"
- "Has your level of activity in the church community increased or decreased since the change in your marital status?"
- "Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend reading the Bible has...increased a lot/increased somewhat/no change/decreased somewhat/decreased a lot?"

- "Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend praying has... increased a lot/increased somewhat/no change/decreased somewhat/decreased a lot?"

- "Thinking about your experiences since your change in martial status, please indicate how much you agree with the following statement: I became a stronger Catholic."

- "Thinking about your experiences since your change in martial status, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements: I feel reconnected with the Church."

Conformists

Those who conform to current Church policy regarding marriage dissolution (that is those respondents who are annulled or getting and annulment, or are not currently involved in a sexual relationship, and reported having been conflicted at the time of separation/divorce and/or at the time of the survey) are classified as conformists. Specifically, this group consists of respondents who checked "I had my marriage annulled" or "I am pursuing an annulment", and/or "I am not currently involved in a sexual relationship and thus have no conflict" as answers to the following question: "Given that there is a certain inherent conflict in being both Catholic and divorced/separated (considering the Church's stance on this issue), how did you attempt to resolve this conflict? Please check all that apply." The other potential answers to this question were: "I joined a support group for separated/divorced Catholics," "I sought counseling from a priest or other members of the clergy," "I sought counseling from a secular therapist," "I relied on the support of family and friends," "I relied on the support of my fellow parishioners," "I felt no real conflict in being both Catholic and separated/divorced," "I disagree with the Church's stance on divorce," and "I am Catholic but not very religious."

Reframers

People who question relevant Church policy (i.e., who began to question Church teaching on marriage and divorce, and reported having been conflicted at the time of separation/divorce and/or at the time of the survey) are categorized as reframers. Specifically, this group consists of respondents who answered, "strongly agree" or

"somewhat agree" to the following statement: "Thinking about your experiences since your change in martial status, please indicate how much you agree with the following statement: I began to question Church teachings on marriage and divorce."

Reshapers

Those who strongly disagree with the current position of the Church on divorce and remarriage but who are nonetheless active in the Church (i.e., those who dissent from the Church and are also active in Church activities and were also were conflicted at the time of separation/divorce and/or at the time of the survey) are classified as reshapers. Specifically, this group consists of respondents who answered, "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to the question: "What is your opinion on the Church's current position on divorce and remarriage?" and who indicated "extremely active" or "somewhat active" in response to the question: "How active are you in your church community?"

As mentioned earlier, all the respondents discussed above reported having been conflicted at the time of separation/divorce and/or at the time of the survey. Specifically, they answered "no" to the following statement: "I felt no real conflict in being both Catholic and separated/divorced" and either "not very conflicted," "somewhat conflicted" or "very conflicted" to: "How conflicted do you feel being both divorced and Catholic, given the Church's stance on divorce?"

Each group was examined demographically and noted for differences between them. The groups were also examined to see how their choice of strategy and type of support they received was related to their level of success in resolving their role conflict.

The Means of Resolving Role Conflict

The categories described above reflect current literature, which suggests four main ways of resolving role conflict: exit, conforming, reframing and reshaping (Hirshman 1970, Beaman 2001). In the process, a conflicted person revises his or her identity, having reconciled the contradictions that had caused role conflict, and is able to perceive himself or herself in a new light.

Exiters

In looking at role conflict resolution, my main focus is on people who try to manage or balance the two problematic identities as a way of resolving their role conflict. Hence, I have excluded those who never had a conflict and did not report having one at the time of the survey (30.3%, 91 people). I also excluded people who chose exit as their strategy for resolving role conflict (17%, 50 people). Theoretically, exit can take two forms: leaving the Church altogether or switching to another denomination. I operationalized those who are exiting as people who whose attendance and other religious activities decreased dramatically (but not necessarily stopped) following their separation or divorce.

Although exit can be a viable strategy of getting rid of the sense of inner conflict, it involves an abandonment of one identity, or a considerable subordination of the Catholic identity to the "problematic" identity. In essence, by exiting I mean reducing the saliency of one's Catholic identity, as demonstrated by a dramatic decline on my religious change scale (see the discussion on pages 54-55). The exiters in my sample may or may not have left the Church completely, but their reported behavior suggests that since their separation or divorce at least until the time of the survey, they were either leaning that way, or actually exited.

For this reason I am specifically looking at the 159 remaining respondents who used an already theoretically identified way of balancing their conflicting identities: conforming, reframing or a combination of these two strategies. It should be noted that 18% of them used more than one way, combining reframing and conforming.[10] Because reshapers represent such a small proportion of the sample (only nine cases), they cannot be looked at in combination with any other group.

---

[10] This explains why the cases in Tables 2.3 through 2.6, add up to more than 159/more than 100%. Each category is treated as its own separate universe. This means that individuals may fall into more than one category, if they exhibit behavior characteristic of conforming, reframing, or a combination. The people who used more than one strategy of dealing with role conflict are also looked at independently in the "conformist/reframers" column. In other words, a conformist/reframer would be counted three times: once as a conformist, once as a reframer, and once as a conformist/reframer, because there is no way for me to determine which one of these strategies was dominant.

Conformists

Clearly, almost no one in my sample is a conformist in a sense that they conform to the Church doctrine completely, since if they were they would not have gotten divorced. However, some respondents may still be considered conformist based on whether or not they conform to the Church prescribed discipline for separated and divorced Catholics.

The Church-sanctioned way for divorced Catholics to return to good standing in the community is either through celibacy or annulment. Annulment in particular is a controversial option, since in spite of the protestations of the hierarchy, it has become a de facto Catholic divorce. I refer to the respondents who attempt to resolve their conflict by conforming to the current discipline of the Church, either through celibacy or pursuing an annulment as conformists. 44% (70 people) of my sample fell into the conformist category, and not surprisingly, they were also significantly most religious (Table 2.11). Most conformists in my sample are female (54% - Table 2.3), older (53% - Table 2.3) and college graduates (53% - Table 2.3). Most of them also had a low income, less than $50,000 a year (63% - Table 2.3). In terms of their family situation they tend to have no children (50% - Table 2.4) or one to two children (43%-Table 2.4).

Reframers

Another strategy that allows an individual to maintain his or her Catholic identity, while also coming to terms with their separation or divorce is reframing. The concept of reframing refers to the reinterpretation of religious teaching or policy in everyday life (Beaman 2001). When it comes to separated/divorced Catholics, reframing can mean reinterpreting the Catholic identity as not dependent on obedience to the hierarchy's "party line," but on a more critical involvement in and loyalty to the generally understood Catholic tradition.

I operationalized "reframers" as people who since their separation or divorce have begun questioning Church teaching on marriage and divorce. There are 60 reframers (38%) in my sample. On the issue of divorce, the reframers are equally likely to be male or female (Table 2.3). They tend to be younger (63% - Table 2.3) and have some college or less education (52% - Table 2.3). Most of them also fall in the lower income category of less than $50,000 a year (53% - Table 2.3). Like conformists, they tend to be either

58

remarried (33- Table 2.4) or divorced and single (18- Table 2.4). Also, they tend to have one or two children (52% - Table 2.4) or no children (43%-Table 2.4).

Reshapers

Yet another strategy of dealing with role conflict is reshaping. The notion of reshaping is more personally demanding than reframing, because it implies some level of social activism. Reshaping refers to "attempts to modify religious organization and structure" along more inclusive lines. (Beaman 2001: 117)   One example of reshaping is a call for ordination of people who were previously excluded from the ranks of the priesthood, such as women, openly gay or married people in the Catholic Church. A divorced Catholic may become involved in reshaping by becoming active in an anti-annulment movement through an organization such as Save Our Sacrament, whose aim is to change the Church policy regarding annulments. I operationalized reshaping as remaining active or increasing their involvement in the Church but disagreeing with the Church position on divorce and remarriage.   There are only nine cases of reshapers in my survey, which without any qualitative information remain unfeasible to examine and thus are excluded from this analysis. This small number of reshapers is not surprising, given that the sample was representative of average American separated and divorced Catholics.

Mixed Strategies

In addition, 18% of my sample (28 people) has combined conforming and reframing as a way of negotiating their role conflict. The categories of reframing and conforming are not logically mutually exclusive. For example, an individual could end up in both the conforming and reframing categories if he or she disagrees with the Church position on divorce but was on the receiving end of an annulment (for example if his or her ex-spouse insisted on it).   So these 28 people are classified in three distinct ways in this research:
1) As a conformist: people in this group have either gotten an annulment (or are in the process of receiving one) and/or are celibate.
2) As a reframer: people in this group question the Church's stance on divorce.
3) As both: people in this group display characteristics of both conformists and reframers.

59

As an example to justify this method of classification (where each person in this group is viewed in three distinct ways: as conformist, as reframers, and as someone who used more than one strategy for role conflict resolution), one needs to look no farther than the notion of classification of individuals based on observable physical characteristics. In the sense that if I were to classify those people with blond hair and those people with brown eyes, I would have two distinct groupings that I can then examine demographically; however, there would be a certain portion of the sample that would have *both* blond hair and brown eyes. In this case that person would be classified in the group for blonds, in the group for those with brown eyes and also in a third group for those with both characteristics.

Defined demographically, conformists/reframers are equally likely to be male or female (Table 2.3) and equally likely to be either under or over the age of 45 (Table 2.3). They also tend to have graduated from college (64% - Table 2.3). Still, most of them fall in the lower income category of less than $50,000 a year (54% - Table 2.3). What stands out is that the conformists/reframers are more likely than the other groups to be separated (36% vs. the average of 23% - Table 2.4). If the conformists/reframers are separated, they tend to be separated and dating (21% - Table 2.4). However, if they are divorced, then much like those who are solely conformists or solely reframers, they tend to be either divorced and single (29%- Table 2.4) or remarried (25%- Table 2.4). In terms of the number of children, the conformists/reframers most resemble conformists in that they tend to have no children (54% - Table 2.4) or one to two children (43%-Table 2.4). It should be noted that conformists who are dating are reported to not be sexually active.

In Flux

The remaining group (36%, 57 people) in my sample did not fall into any of the theoretically pre-determined categories of exiting, conforming, reframing or reshaping. These are the people who are either still searching for a strategy of managing their role conflict, or have come up with their own strategies that have not been identified in current literature on religious role conflict resolution yet. The lack of qualitative data prevents me from determining specifically which one of these scenarios best describes

them. As the analysis presented in Table 2.2 shows, there is no difference for respondents' age or time since most recent marital breakup, so these two factors do not seem to determine who ends up in the "in flux" category.

Table 2.2 Impact of Age and Time Since Marital Breakup on Being "In Flux"

	Age	Time Since Recent Break Up (1 = past six months through 6 = more than ten years ago)
In Flux	41.28	4.25
Not In Flux	42.14	4.28
Average	41.83	4.27

This "in flux" group consists mostly of younger people (60% - Table 2.3), with lower levels of education (75% of them have some college or less – compared to 64% of the sample – Table 2.3) and less income (68% of them make under $50,000 – compared to 63% of the sample; Table 2.3). They tend to be either remarried (30%- Table 2.4) or divorced and single (21% - Table 2.4) and have either one to two children (46% - Table 2.4) or no children (44% - Table 2.4). They are significantly less religious than the average (Table 2.11). Their comparatively low level of religiosity might indicate that Catholic identity is not as salient to them as to the other separated and divorced Catholics who have chosen a specific strategy.

The table below summarizes the classification and dominant characteristics of people based on their choice of strategy for role conflict resolution. This table indicates those characteristics that represent core values for each strategic category.   Specific statistics for these groups are in Tables 2.4 and 2.5.

61

Table 2.3: Modal Value for Each Category of Role Conflict Resolution Strategy

Category	Conformists	Reframers	Conformist/Reframers	In Flux
Definition	Annulled/Seeking an Annulment and/or Celibate	Began to Question Church Teaching on Marriage and Divorce	Combine the Strategies of Conforming and Reframing	No Defined Conflict Resolution Strategy
Sample Size	(N=70)	(N=60)	(n=28)	(N=57)
Modal Gender	Female	Even	Even	Female
Modal Age	45+	Under 45	Even	Under 45
Modal Age/Gender	Female under 45	Males under 45	Males under 45 and Females 45+	Female under 45
Modal Education Level	College Graduates	Some College or Less	College Graduates	Some College or Less
Modal Relationship Status	Remarried	Remarried	Divorced and Single	Divorced and Single

Table 2.4 Strategy Compostion by Demographics

%Within Categories

	Total	Conformists	Reframers	Conformist/ Reframers	In flux
	(N=159)	(N=70)	(N=60)	(n=28)	(N=57)
Total	100%	44%	38%	18%	36%
Male	45%	46%	50%	50%	42%
Female	55%	54%	50%	50%	58%
Age under 45	57%	47%	63%	50%	60%
Age over 45	43%	53%	37%	50%	40%
Males under 45	22%	19%	33%	36%	23%
Males over 45	23%	27%	17%	14%	19%
Females under 45	35%	29%	30%	14%	37%
Females over 45	20%	26%	20%	36%	21%
White	88%	90%	87%	86%	86%
Non-white	12%	10%	13%	14%	14%
College graduate	61%	53%	48%	64%	25%
Some college or less	39%	47%	52%	36%	75%
Under $50,000 a year	63%	63%	53%	54%	68%
$50,000-$100,000 a year	30%	27%	40%	32%	23%
$100,000+	8%	10%	7%	14%	9%

Table 2.5 Strategy Composition by Relationship Status

%Within Categories

	Total	Conformists	Reframers	Conformist/ Reframers	In flux
	(N=159)	(N=70)	(N=60)	(n=28)	(N=57)
Total	100%	44%	38%	18%	36%
Separated	23%	26%	27%	36%	21%
Divorced	77%	74%	73%	64%	79%
Separated and Single	9%	11%	8%	11%	7%
Separated and Dating	8%	11%	13%	21%	5%
Separated and Living with Someone	4%	3%	5%	4%	5%
Separated and Engaged*	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Divorced and Single	20%	24%	18%	29%	21%
Divorced and Dating	13%	14%	10%	7%	12%
Divorced and Living with Someone	8%	3%	10%	4%	11%
Divorced and Engaged	3%	1%	2%	0%	5%
Remarried	33%	31%	33%	25%	30%
No Children	45%	50%	43%	54%	44%
One to two Children	47%	43%	52%	43%	46%
Three to four Children	7%	7%	5%	4%	7%
Five or More Children*	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%

*low base size

The Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and the Choice of Strategy for Role Conflict Resolution

Considering that separated and divorced Catholics are a marginalized group that has not been studied using online survey methodology on a large scale so far, it is useful to describe this population in terms of their demographic characteristics.

Gender

The data suggests that females are also most likely to be either conformist (44%-Table 2.5) or "in flux" (38% - Table 2.6), while males are most likely to be either conformists (44% - Table 2.5) or reframers (42%-Table 2.6). This is somewhat predictable, because women are generally more involved in religion and obedience has traditionally been linked with Christian female socialization. And while as Pevey, Williams and Ellison reported in their study of female members of a Southern Baptist Bible Class, in spite of overtly subscribing to the doctrine of female submission, women often come up with creative ways of reframing this doctrine in their daily lives (2001:141). My findings suggest that on the issue of divorce, Catholic women are less likely than men to reframe it. It would be interesting to see how gender impacts the likelihood of reframing on issues such as homosexuality for example. Still, 34% of women in my sample fall into the reframing category (Table 2.6).

Age

People under the age of 45 are most likely to be reframers (56% - Table 2.6). People over the age of 45 are most likely to be conformists (53%- Table 2.6). This may point to possible common generational concerns and attitudes, but I do not have data to pursue this issue further.

Age/Gender

Males under 45 are most likely to be reframers (56%) while their older counterparts (males 45+) tend to be conformists (53%). Younger females tend to be evenly distributed among conformists (36%), reframers (33%) and those in-flux (38%), while older females are more strongly concentrated in the conformists group (56%)

Race

White people are most likely to be conformists (45% - Table 2.6), while non-whites are equally likely tend to be either reframers (42% - Table 2.6) or "in flux" (42% - Table 2.6).

Education

College graduates are most likely to be conformists (60%), while people with less education tend to be "in flux" (44% - Table 2.6).

Income

People with lowest income (less than $50,000 a year) tend to be conformists (44%- Table 2.6). People with moderate income (between $50,000 and 100,000 a year) are most likely to be reframers (51%- Table 2.6). The most affluent people in my sample ($100,000+ a year) are most likely to conformists (58%- Table 2.6). What is interesting is that it is people on the extremes in terms of income who are most likely to conform to the Church discipline.

Relationship Status

Overall, separated and divorced Catholics in my sample are most likely to be conformists (50% for separated Catholics and 42% for divorced Catholics- Table 2.7). People who are separated and single are most likely to be conformists (57%- Table 2.7). The separated and dating are equally likely to be conformists (62% - Table 2.7) or reframers (62%- Table 2.7). This suggests that conformists most likely remain celibate in these relationships, or do not see their relationship as formal enough to qualify as a serious commitment to sin, while reframers either disregard the current doctrine forbidding sex outside of marriage or reframe the issue. People who are separated and living with someone are equally likely to be either reframers (43% - Table 2.7) or "in flux" (43% - Table 2.7). This pattern is mirrored by divorced Catholics who are living with someone (46% and 46% respectively – Table 2.7). Clearly, living with someone is an overt violation of Church teaching, so it does require some reframing, or at least might cause someone to continue searching for a strategy. Interestingly, 100% of the separated

and engaged respondents fall into the "in flux" category (Table 2.7).   However, they represent only 1% of my sample (which is an n of 2). Divorced and engaged Catholics are also most likely to fall into that category (60% - Table 2.7). Divorced and remarried Catholics are most likely to be either conformists (42% - Table 2.7) or reframers (38% - Table 2.7). Similarly, 30% of the divorced Catholics who are living with someone are non-conflicted (Table 2.7), indicating a disconnection from the Church's influence on their personal choices. The divorced and living with someone Catholics are also equally likely to be reframers (30%- Table 2.7), suggesting an attempt to negotiate the Church doctrine to suit their personal circumstances.

Number of children

It is also interesting to note that when it comes to the issue of divorce, a majority of divorced Catholics who have no children are conformist (49% - Table 2.7). Those with one to two children are no more likely to be reframers (41% - Table 2.7) than conformists (40% - Table 2.7). Those with three to four children are slightly more likely to be conformists (45% - Table 2.7).

Table 2.6 Demographic Composition by Role Conflict Resolution Strategies

%Within Demographics

	Total (N=159)	Conformists (N=70)	Reframers (N=60)	Conformist/ Reframers (n=28)	In flux (N=57)
Total	100%	44%	38%	18%	36%
Male	45%	44%	42%	19%	33%
Female	55%	44%	34%	16%	38%
Under 45	57%	36%	42%	15%	37%
Over 45	43%	54%	32%	21%	34%
Males Under 45	22%	36%	56%	28%	36%
Males Over 45	23%	53%	28%	11%	31%
Females Under 45	35%	36%	33%	7%	38%
Females Over 45	20%	56%	38%	31%	38%
White	88%	45%	37%	17%	35%
Non-white	12%	37%	42%	21%	42%
College Graduate	61%	60%	47%	29%	23%
Some college or less	39%	34%	32%	10%	44%
Under $50,000 a year	63%	44%	32%	15%	39%
$50,000-$100,000 a year	30%	40%	51%	19%	28%
$100,000+	8%	58%	33%	33%	42%

Table 2.7 Relationship Status by Role Conflict Resolution Strategies

%Within Demographics

	Total	Conformists	Reframers	Conformist/ Reframers	In flux
	(N=159)	(N=70)	(N=60)	(n=28)	(N=57)
Total	100%	44%	38%	18%	36%
Separated	23%	50%	44%	28%	33%
Divorced	77%	42%	36%	15%	37%
Separated and Single	9%	57%	36%	21%	29%
Separated and Dating	8%	62%	62%	46%	23%
Separated and Living with Someone	4%	29%	43%	14%	43%
Separated and Engaged*	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Divorced and Single	20%	53%	34%	25%	38%
Divorced and Dating	13%	48%	29%	10%	33%
Divorced and Living with Someone	8%	15%	46%	8%	46%
Divorced and Engaged	3%	20%	20%	0%	60%
Remarried	33%	42%	38%	13%	33%
No Children	45%	49%	37%	21%	35%
One to two Children	47%	40%	41%	16%	35%
Three to four Children	7%	45%	27%	9%	36%
Five or More Children*	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%

*low base size

The above sections described the main ways in which conflicted separated and divorced Catholics manage their role conflict. From these comparisons, I have learned to what extent the theories of role conflict and their resolutions are applicable to this population. The preceding sections also described the relationship between demographic characteristics of the respondents and their choice of strategy for role conflict resolution. Although there is no overriding theory that explains these findings, their utility stems from their possible practical applications for both the advocates of separated and divorced Catholics and the hierarchy who want to know more about their target population.

Success in Role Conflict Resolution

Defining Success

In addition to learning about the demographic characteristics, incidence of role conflict and ways of resolving it among American divorced Catholics, I was interested in how well their chosen strategy actually works. Clearly, the limitations of a one-time survey methodology prevent me from declaring authoritatively who has achieved a lasting success in coming to terms with their conflicting identities. Social psychology sees identity revision not as something that necessarily occurs "once and for all", but rather as something that happens throughout people's lives. A useful way of understanding this has been advanced by social identity theorists who have studied the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of group relationships, or along two dimensions: the social and the personal (Howard 2000). This theory sees identities as changeable, especially prone to shifting during life transitions and periods of liminality. Given the multiplicity of identities we all have throughout our lives and at any given time, it appears that social identity theorists see role conflict as more of a normal state, rather than an exception or a "one time" event. Keeping this in mind, my study captures a moment in an ongoing process, rather than a definitive end point. Still, it is a significant moment of coming to terms with separation/divorce and with the opposing demands of their religious identity.

Operationalizing Success

Since the essence of role conflict experienced by separated/divorced Catholics has to do with a crisis of their religious identity in the aftermath of divorce, I operationalize success in the resolution of role conflict here as a self-reported sense of emotional adjustment to being divorced and a strengthening of religious identity. In order to operationalize role conflict resolution, I created a "success" variable, which is an index combining two Likert scales. This emotional adjustment scale is based on the research of Lisbet Oygard regarding adjustment to divorce (Oygard 2001).

Emotional Adjustment

Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement in a number of different statements. The wording of the item was, "Thinking about your experiences since your change in martial status, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements…" The following six statements on the online survey went into the "emotional adjustment" variable:

- I have realized that others had solved problems similar to mine

- I became less anxious

- I became less depressed

- I feel less guilt

- I feel more confidence in myself

- I became more trustful toward other people.

Each statement has the same possible five options:

5= strongly agree

4= somewhat agree

3= neither agree nor disagree

2= somewhat disagree

1= strongly disagree

For the purpose of creating the index, I reversed the scale (in the actual survey, 1= strongly agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=somewhat disagree and 5=strongly disagree). As a result, the range of possible values on the index goes from minimum value of 6 (answering 1 to all six questions) to a maximum value of

30 (answering 5 to all six questions). Thus, if a person "strongly disagreed" with each statement, they would have a score of 6 (or a 1 on each statement) indicating a low level of emotional adjustment and if they "strongly agreed" with each statement they would have a score of 30 (or a 5 on each statement) indicating a high level of emotional adjustment. This preliminary scale was used to weigh the data.

Weighting was necessary because not all answers are equally indicative of emotional success - each answer contributes differently (as is shown in the Table 2.8 below). Much like if I were to study religiosity and wanted to create an index, the answer of "strongly agree" to the statement "religion is my life" should be weighted more strongly than the answer of "strongly agree" to the statement of "I enjoy going to church." Thus, it is necessary to find out statistically the relative strength of each statement. Otherwise, if someone "strongly agreed" with the statement "I became less depressed," they would receive five points and if they "strongly agreed" with the statement "I realized others had similar problems to mine" they would also receive five points. This essentially gives both statements equal weight, which may not be reflective of reality (once again, shown in the table below).

To find out how influential each statement is, I used the respondents' average scores on the index (using the above range of 6 to 30) to apply the weights to their answers on the six questions, so their mean score on the adjustment scale (6 to 30) became their weight. When weighted, the lowest result is 36 (someone who "strongly disagreed" with each statement, thus getting a mean score of a 6 on each question; 6x6), and highest is 180 (someone who answered "strongly agree" to each statement, thus getting a mean score of 30 for each question; 30x6). Considering that the questions are not bi-variate but multi-nominal, a weight needs to be given to each possible answer.

Table 2.8 Emotional Adjustment Weighting

Emotional Adjustment	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I realized that others had solved problems similar to mine	15.75	18.18	19.53	21.34	24.35
I became less anxious	13.13	16.38	19.22	22.38	26.69
I became less depressed	13.63	18.03	19.56	22.69	26.65
I feel less guilt	13.22	17.04	19.75	23.15	26.50
I feel more confidence in myself	10.20	17.73	15.57	21.10	25.02
I became more trustful of other people	16.76	20.16	20.76	24.20	27.50

As an example, everyone who answered "somewhat disagreed" with the statement "I became less anxious," on average received an overall score of 16.38 on the scale of 6 to 30 (described above). These scores are used as the "weight" for creating the overall Likert scale of emotional success. The table above shows that not all answers contribute equally to one's emotional success (those who "strongly disagree" with the statement of self-confidence, are much more likely to be lower on the emotional scale than those who "strongly disagree" with the statement on being more trustful to others). The scores above were than added to create a final overall range of emotional success. On the low end of this scale would be a person who said "strongly disagree" to every question; that person would receive a score of 82.69 (15.75+13.13+13.63+13.22+10.2+16.76). On the opposite end of the scale would be a person who answered, "strongly agree" to each statement and who received the highest score of 156.71 (24.35+26.69+26.65+26.5+25.02+27.5).

Further, if a person answered as follows:

I have realized that others had solved problems similar to mine – strongly agree

I became less anxious – somewhat agree

I became less depressed – neither agree nor disagree

I feel less guilt – strongly agree

I feel more confidence in myself – neither agree nor disagree

I became more trustful toward other people – strongly agree,

he or she would have a score of 135.86, which is toward the top end of the scale. I then broke this scale into quarters (25% of the sample fell between 0 and 118, 25% fell between 118 and 128, 25% fell between 128 and 139.6 and the top 25% was above a 139.6).

Finally, I reduced this to a three-point scale, with the scores of "low," "medium" and "high." The bottom 25% was defined as "low," 25% to 75% was defined as "medium" and 75% to 100% was defined as a "high" level of emotional adjustment. Note: If an unweighted scale was used, the person above would have received a score of 26 (5 points for each "strongly agree" and 3 points for each "neither agree nor disagree" on the original 6 to 30 scale and ended up in the 85th percentile, or high level of success. On the adjusted scale they wound up in the 66th percentile or medium level success, because the measures of "I became less depressed" and "I feel more confidence in myself" are contribute more in terms of determining emotional adjustment.

Religious Adjustment

The second component of the success variable was the religious adjustment aspect. Exactly like emotional adjustment, respondents were asked their level of agreement with various statements. The following six statements on the online survey went into the construction of this variable:

- I became a stronger Catholic ("Thinking about your experiences since your change in martial status, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements…"),

- I feel reconnected with the Church ("Thinking about your experiences since your change in martial status, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements…"),

- change in church attendance ("Has your level of church attendance increased or decreased since the change in your marital status?"),

- change in church activity ("Has your level of activity in the church community increased or decreased since the change in your marital status?"),

- change in Bible readership ("Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend reading the Bible has….")

- change in prayer ("Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend praying has..").

Each statement was on a five-point scale. For the statements: "I became a stronger Catholic", "I feel reconnected with the Church", the options were:

5= strongly agree

4= somewhat agree

3= neither agree nor disagree

2= somewhat disagree

1= strongly disagree

For the questions regarding change in: church attendance, church activity, Bible readership and prayer, the possible answers were:

5= increased a lot

4= increased somewhat

3= no change

2= decreased somewhat

1= decreased a lot

The steps in the construction of this scale were analogous to the construction of the emotional adjustment scale. The scores for this scale also ranged from 6 to 30 and were distributed as follows:

Table 2.9 Religious Adjustment Weighting

Religious Adjustment	Strongly Disagree/ Decreased a lot	Somewhat Disagree/ Somewhat Decreased	Neither Agree nor Disagree/ No Change	Somewhat Agree/ Somewhat Increased	Strongly Agree/ Increased a lot
I became a stronger Catholic	12.98	15.70	18.23	22.00	25.31
I feel reconnected with the Church	13.65	15.44	18.45	22.71	25.42
Change in church attendance	12.53	15.87	17.45	21.19	25.33
Change in church activity	12.26	15.41	18.16	22.50	26.13
Change in Bible readership	10.19	16.07	17.66	20.79	25.52
Change in frequency of prayer	8.80	11.70	16.92	19.22	22.87

Thus, for this scale, a decreased amount of time one spends praying has a more dramatic impact than not "feeling reconnected to the Church." A decrease in prayer contributes more strongly towards religious adjustment and is therefore weighted more heavily.

The remainder of the religious adjustment scale was adjusted in a similar fashion to the emotional adjustment scale. The lowest possible score one could get on the religious adjustment scale would be a 70.41 (12.98+13.65+12.53+12.26+10.19+8.8) and the highest possible score would be 150.58 (25.31+25.42+25.33+26.13+25.52+22.87). This scale was broken into thirds ("low," "medium" and "high") with 33% falling under 80, 34% to 66% falling between 80.1 and 92 and the top 33% falling above 92. This scale could not be broken into quarters first (as the emotional adjustment scale was) because a large proportion (33%) fell between the lowest possible score of 70.41 and 80.

Success

The success variable was finally computed by combining the two three-point scales created above (emotional adjustment and religious adjustment). The success scale was the resulting combination of these two scales (nine distinct combinations, collapsed into five categories, further reduced to three.) These two individuals scales (religious adjustment and emotional adjustment) are correlated at .209, which is significant at the .01 alpha levels. All tables show the three distinct measures of success; religious, emotional and the combination of the two. The combination was as follows:

Table 2.10 Distribution of Success - Five Point Scale

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low Success	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%
Somewhat Low Success	26.3%	26.3%	33.3%
Neutral Success	34.7%	34.7%	68.0%
Somewhat High Success	22.7%	22.7%	90.7%
High Success	9.3%	9.3%	100.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 2.10 shows the distribution for this new variable. This scale was then turned into a three-point variable as well by redefining "low success" and "somewhat low success" as "low" (or 1), "neutral success" as "neutral" (or 2) and "somewhat high" and "high success" as "high" (or 3). The distribution of this new and final success scale is as shown in Table 2.11.

Table 2.11 Distribution of Success - Three Point Scale

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low Success	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
Moderate Success	34.7%	34.7%	68.0%
High Success	32.0%	32.0%	100.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	

Tables 2.12 through 2.17 show the various distributions (demographics, relationship status, support type and category of role conflict resolution) for the three scales described above (emotional adjustment, religious adjustment and overall success).

The Relationship between the Choice of Strategy and Success in Role Conflict Resolution

In terms of how a person's choice of strategy for role conflict resolution impacts success, both conformists and conformists/reframers are significantly more likely to be successful, and "in flux" Catholics were significantly less likely to be successful at managing the two conflicting identities (Table 2.13). Considering that conformists are also the most religious (Table 2.12) and since my success variable is operationalized in such a way that it includes indicators of strengthening of religious identity, it is useful to look at emotional adjustment separately, so as not to confound the findings. In terms of emotional adjustment only conformists/reframers are significantly more likely to be successful (Table 2.14). When looking at the strengthening of religious identity only, conformists and conformists/reframers were significantly more successful than the average in this aspect (Table 2.15).

These findings suggest that having a definite, or an already theoretically identified strategy of dealing with role conflict is more beneficial than not having one, as the "in flux" respondents are significantly less successful. The theoretical assumption is that one obtains a strategy before obtaining success (as once success is obtained there is no need for a strategy). There seems to be a window of opportunity for the Catholic Church to target and help the unsuccessful "in flux" Catholics more effectively, and perhaps preventing them from leaving the Church eventually (i.e., becoming 'exiters'). Their significantly lower level of religiosity (Table 2.12) suggests that they may be on the path to exiting the Church as a way of getting rid of their role conflict. Level of religiosity is determined by the respondents answer to the following question: "How religious would you say you are on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not religious at all and 10 being extremely religious?"

Table 2.12 Religosity Levels for each Role Conflict Resolution Strategy*

	Total (N=159)	Conformists (N=70)	Reframers (N=60)	Conformists/ Reframers (n=28)	In flux (N=57)
Level of Religosity	5.98	*6.37*	5.78	5.71	*5.61*

* bold italics signify statistical significance at .05 level

Table 2.13 Overall Success Levels for each Role Conflict Resolution Strategy*

	Total (N=159)	Conformists (N=70)	Reframers (N=60)	Conformists/ Reframers (n=28)	In flux (N=57)
Level of Success	2.23	*2.37*	2.30	*2.43*	*2.11*

* bold italics signify statistical significance at .05 level

Table 2.14 Overall Emotional Adjustment Levels for each Role Conflict Resolution Strategy*

	Total (N=159)	Conformists (N=70)	Reframers (N=60)	Conformists/ Reframers (n=28)	In flux (N=57)
Level of Emotional Adjustment	2.03	2.09	2.13	*2.18*	1.93

* bold italics signify statistical significance at .05 level

79

Table 2.15 Overall Religious Adjustment Levels for each Role Conflict Resolution Strategy*

	Total	Conformists	Reframers	Conformists/ Reframers	In flux
	(N=159)	(N=70)	(N=60)	(n=28)	(N=57)
Level of Religious Adjustment	2.34	*2.44*	2.32	*2.46*	2.32

* bold italics signify statistical significance at .05 level

The Relationship between the Type of Support and Success in Role Conflict Resolution

In addition to looking at the impact of specific strategy on success in role conflict resolution, I was interested in finding out what type of support separated and divorced Catholics found most helpful.   I looked at what impacts success in role conflict resolution most: group support (either from the separated/divorced Catholic support group, secular support group or the parish community) or personal support (from other family members, friends, parish priests or therapists).

Specifically, to gauge the level of support, the respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being not supportive at all, and 10 being extremely supportive; there was also an option 11 for those who found the category not applicable to their situation) how supportive they found each of the following: friends; fellow parishioners; priests or other members of the clergy; family; therapist (not affiliated with the Church); support group for separated and divorced Catholics; and support group (not affiliated with the Church). Responses 1 though 3 were classified as not supportive, 4 through 10 as supportive (moderately to very). The frequencies for this breakdown are presented below, in Table 2.16.

2.16 Perception of Support from Personal and Group Sources

Support Source	Not Suppotive	Supportive
Family	8%	92%
Friends	7%	93%
Parish	37%	63%
Priest	28%	72%
Therapy	24%	76%
Catholic Support Group	39%	61%
Secular Support Group	30%	70%

Group Support

I found that when it comes to helping the respondents reconcile their conflicting identities, the impact of the support groups for separated and divorced Catholics is crucial. A supportive Catholic group significantly helps to strengthen the person's religious identity and emotional adjustment. When a Catholic finds this group not supportive, his or her overall level of success declines (Table 2.17). The impact of a secular support group also impacts the overall success positively (when it is found supportive). However, like the Catholic support group, it does significantly impact religious adjustment (Table 2.17). The impact of the parish support is limited to the religious identity aspect. A non-supportive parish is linked to a significant decline in religious adjustment, and a supportive parish is linked to a significant strengthening of religious adjustment (Table 2.17).

Personal Support

What stands out here is the impact of priestly support. When it is absent, the overall success of a separated and divorced Catholic declines dramatically, although the overall success does not improve significantly when the priest is found to be supportive. The absence or presence of the support from a priest also impacts religious adjustment, either in a negative or a positive way. This suggests that in terms of the overall success a priest may not be able to help significantly, but he can do damage if he withholds his support. Perhaps this is because when a priest is helpful and supportive, people might see it as him

just "doing his job," and so the impact is relatively smaller than when that support is conspicuously absent.

The findings regarding priests and Catholic support groups in particular, but also the one regarding the impact of the parish are important, because the results provide empirical support (beyond anecdotal evidence reported in existing literature so far) for the outcry of many divorced Catholics' advocates for a more compassionate and responsive Church (Kemp 2001, Young 1978 and 1993). The data clearly show that priests, Catholic support group and the parish make a difference to a Catholic on the crossroads of their religious life.

A therapist has a negative impact on overall success, if he or she is not supportive (Table 2.17) as the likelihood of overall success in role conflict resolution declines significantly. Conversely, a supportive therapist has a positive impact on religious adjustment.

Table 2.17 Relationship between Type of Support and Success

		Overall Success	Religious Adjustment	Emotional Adjustment
Total	159	2.24	2.34	2.03
Family				
Not Supportive**	12	2.00	2.33	1.92
Supportive	145	2.26	2.34	2.05
Friend				
Not Supportive**	11	2.27	2.18	2.27
Supportive	145	2.24	2.36	2.02
Parish				
Not Supportive	38	2.16	*2.21*	2.08
Supportive	66	2.30	*2.47*	2.05
Priest				
Not Supportive	32	*1.97*	*2.19*	1.91
Supportive	81	2.35	*2.46*	2.07
Therapy				
Not Supportive	21	*2.10*	2.29	2.00
Supportive	67	2.33	*2.43*	2.06
Catholic Group				
Not Supportive	24	*2.11*	2.31	2.00
Supportive	37	*2.56*	*2.68*	*2.16*
Secular Group				
Not Supportive**	19	2.11	2.31	1.97
Supportive	44	*2.36*	*2.43*	2.11

* bold italics signify statistical significance at .05 level

**low base size

The Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Success in Role Conflict Resolution

Finally, it may be useful to look at success at reconciling two conflicting identities in terms of demographic characteristics. Only those demographic characteristics that have a significant impact on "success" are examined here.

Gender

Males score significantly lower on the emotional adjustment measure, while females come close to scoring significantly higher on it (Table 2.19).

Age/Gender

Younger males (under 45) also score significantly lower on both overall success and the emotional adjustment measure. Females over 45 are significantly more likely to be religiously and emotionally adjusted (Table 2.19).

Race

Not being white also significantly impacts the overall success positively (Table 2.19).

Relationship Status

Overall, the separated Catholics have significantly higher levels of strengthening religious identity but also significantly lower levels of emotional adjustment than the divorced Catholics (Table 2.20). This result suggests that these individuals try to increase their levels of religious activity as a way of resolving their role conflict. However, this increased level of involvement in the Church is not working for them. In other words, while they are engaging in the religious practice and rituals, they have not received an emotional "pay off" from these activities yet (Table 2.20). Also, the fact that their emotional adjustment levels are so low might be explained by the fact that separation does not offer a closure in the same way that divorce does. While separation is not a sin in the Catholic Church,[11] it signifies a major crisis in the marriage and will

---

[11] Neither is divorce in itself, as explained earlier, but divorced Catholics are supposed to lead celibate lives or get an annulment and remarry in the Church.

most likely lead to divorce in the future, which not surprisingly will cause high levels of emotional distress. An alternative explanation would be that this finding is simply an effect of time, as the separated people probably experienced the break-up of their marriage more recently than their divorced counterparts. However, even when controlled for time since last separation or divorce, divorced people have a significantly lower level of religious adjustment than the separated respondents (as "time" is not statistically significant at the .05 level).

Table 2.18 Effect of Time since Marital Breakup on Religious Adjustment (Regression Coefficients)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	3.396	0.279		12.157	0
Separated or Divorced	-0.422	0.157	-0.286	-2.686	0.009
Time since recent breakup	-0.81	0.051	-0.169	-1.586	0.117

As the Table 2.18 shows, although it is true that the more time passes since last separation or divorce, the lower one goes on the religious adjustment scale, this decrease is not statistically significant (p >.05), and so it does not explain the decline in religious adjustment. While being separated or divorced is statistically significant (as one goes from being separated to divorced they decline .422 on average on the religious adjustment scale), time since most recent marital break-up is not (with a significance level of .117).

Table 2.19 Relationship between Demographics and Success

		Averages		
	Sample Size	Overall Success	Religious Adjustment	Emotional Adjustment
Total	159	2.24	2.34	2.03
Male	72	2.14	2.36	*1.90*
Female	87	2.32	2.33	2.14
Age under 45	91	2.22	2.35	2.01
Age over 45	68	2.26	2.34	2.06
Males under 45	36	*2.03*	2.31	*1.86*
Males over 45	36	2.25	2.42	1.94
Females under 45	55	2.35	2.38	2.11
Females over 45	32	2.28	*2.25*	*2.19*
White	140	2.22	2.35	2.02
Non-white	19	*2.37*	2.32	2.11
College graduate	97	2.34	*2.45*	2.06
Some college or less	62	2.18	2.28	2.01
Under $50,000 a year	100	2.22	2.34	2.03
$50,000-$100,000 a year	47	2.28	2.34	2.02
$100,000+	12	2.25	2.42	2.08

* bold italics signify statistical significance at .05 level

86

Table 2.20 Relationship between Relationship Status and Success

	Sample Size	Averages		
		Overall Success	Religious Adjustment	Emotional Adjustment
Total	159	2.24	2.34	2.03
Separated	36	2.19	*2.47*	*1.89*
Divorced	123	2.25	2.31	2.07
Separated and Single	14	2.21	2.43	2.00
Separated and Dating	13	*2.08*	*2.46*	*1.69*
Separated and Living with Someone**	7	2.29	2.43	2.00
Separated and Engaged**	2	2.50	3.00	2.00
Divorced and Single	32	2.19	2.28	2.06
Divorced and Dating	21	2.24	2.29	2.00
Divorced and Living with Someone	13	*2.46*	2.31	*2.23*
Divorced and Engaged**	5	2.20	2.40	2.00
Remarried	52	2.25	2.33	2.08
No Children	71	2.23	2.35	2.04
One to two Children	75	2.24	2.33	2.01
Three to four Children	11	2.36	2.36	*2.18*
Five or More Children**	2	2.00	2.50	1.50

* bold italics signify statistical significance at .05 level

Conclusion

The online survey of separated and divorced Catholics produced some significant and practically applicable findings, as well as raised more questions that can be addressed in future surveys or using qualitative methodologies. The critics of the current ambiguity of the Catholic Church towards its separated and divorced members have been largely vindicated by the findings pointing to the importance of priests, Catholic support groups and the parishes in helping these conflicted individuals on the crossroads of their religious identification. The critics have based their pleas on anecdotal evidence or on limited number of cases. This study has been able to confirm their observations using a much larger sample size.

In the light of the membership crisis in the contemporary Catholic Church, this study could be useful to the hierarchy because it identifies those who are at risk for leaving or abandoning their Catholic identity as a way to get rid of their role conflict, specifically the "in flux" Catholics, who have not yet chosen a definite way of balancing the conflicting identities. They have not yet exited the Church, and so there is a hope of retaining them, but the Church needs to take a more proactive role in reaching out to them through a more responsive clergy, more accepting parishes, and more visible and accessible support groups.

In the future, it might be useful to look at the two groups I excluded from this analysis, namely those who have already exited or are exiting the Church and those who were never conflicted, in order to better understand the specifics of their disconnection from the Church. There are some limitations to the online survey methodology I used in this study. First, due to cost constraints, I was unable to ask my respondents any open-ended questions, which might have shed more light on their responses. Because of this, the inherent restrictions of survey methodology were magnified, specifically the lack of depth in understanding people's motivations and insights.

In addition, it may be useful to examine the issue of success in role conflict resolution by doing a longitudinal study. This would give us some insight into how long lasting various identity transformations are. My study is just a snap-shot of people's lives and while I asked the respondents to reflect on how they felt in the past, it would be

preferable to have asked them right after their separation or divorce and then several years later.

Further research needs to examine the factors that can predict both success and types of strategies employed for success. This research would most likely entail not only a demographic analysis of respondents, but a psycho-graphic and behavior-graphic analysis as well. Various factors, which are not included in the data obtained for this research, are most likely crucial in understanding the causal relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable of success. Such factors might include:

- severity of emotional trauma experience due to the divorce (whether they withdrew from activities due to a painful divorce, and thus become exiters as a response to their divorce and not their conflict),
- education received after divorce (whether they went back to school, which may or may not lower religiosity, depending on the kind of college they went to),
- change in profession or career or change in income (whether they have more or less money after the divorce),
- change in social network (whether they gained or lost friends),
- response of children to divorce (whether religion was used to help children deal with the divorce, or secular methods employed),
- change in location (whether they moved and thus, moved away from a parish they were comfortable with),
- political affiliation,
- how liberal/conservative their parish is.

In spite of the limitations of my research, stemming from both the cost constraints and the fact that this is the first time this population has been studied using online methodology, the main benefit of this approach is evident. The online survey technology is promising in that it can make accessing marginalized individuals easier and more effective.

In addition to further studies of separated and divorced Catholics, it would also be instructive to do similar large-scale studies of other divisive issues - for example, homosexuality or feminism among Christians. These populations are notoriously hard to reach using a traditional mail survey methodology because of their marginalized position

in the religious community. Online survey methodology removes "gatekeepers" and permits direct access.

Chapter Three: The Functions of Support Groups for Separated and Divorced Catholics: Mail Survey Findings

Theoretical Background: Support Groups and Identity Revision as Means of Resolving Role Conflict

The main theoretical assumption guiding the construction of this mail survey was that participants in the support groups for the Separated and Divorced Catholics are there to resolve their role conflict, stemming from the Church's negative attitude towards divorce. Both the writings of separated and divorced Catholics' advocates and the example of other conflicted groups, such as conservatively religious gays suggest that marginalized individuals are often torn by their ostracized status; they use the support group as the means to reframe and possibly reshape it, then sustain their revised identities in the face of continued opposition (Ripple Comin 1991, Thumma, 2001, Ponticelli 1999, Young 1978).

Support groups for separated and divorced Catholics are an aspect of an identity social movement, which emerged in the early 1970s during a period following Vatican 2 (1962-5), when many Catholics who had found themselves marginalized by the hierarchy began to organize. And yet, as one of the original founder's comments point out, many original members of the Boston support group in 1971 had "not seen themselves as a change agent or political vanguard in the church" but were more interested in helping others going through the same transition (Young 1978: 89).[12] Today, the main organization representing separated and divorced Catholics in the United States and Canada is the North American Conference for Separated and Divorced Catholics. On its website, NACSDC is described as:

> A Catholic Ministry for Divorced and Separated, sanctioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and working since 1974 to create a network of support for families experiencing separation and divorce.

---

[12] Although one has to wonder whether this kind of statement is just an example of being politically cautious. After all, Young was a priest. Similarly, NACSDC cultivates ties with members of the hierarchy, all the while supporting a rather subversive cause (and having already accomplished significant change within the Church).

Through our membership on USCCB's National Catholic Organizations Committee, NACSDC speaks to the Church with the united, collective voice of separated and divorced Catholics. Through our Central Office, conferences, member groups, ministry leadership training, resources, and liaisons with church and civic organizations, NACSDC has substantially improved the entire family's experience of divorce by addressing the religious, emotional, financial, and parenting issues relative to separation, divorce, and remarriage (http://www.nacsdc.org/about.html, Accessed January 20, 2006).

The organization declares itself committed to "fostering the spiritual and emotional recovery and development of those who separate, divorce, or remarry; promoting the formation and continued development of local support groups and peer ministry and being a united voice to the Church on the needs of today's separated and divorced families" (http://www.nacsdc.org/about.html#believe, accessed January 20, 2006).

In this chapter I discuss what separated and divorced Catholics get out of being in a NACSDC-sponsored support group. I examine what, if any, connection their being there has to do with role conflict. I also look at the respondents' sources of personal and social support in dealing with the aftermath of marital dissolution. In addition, I specifically focus on activists or those individuals who join the group for the purpose of impacting change within the Church.

Data Source

In order to generate data for the analysis of separated and divorced Catholics in a support group setting, I sent a questionnaire to members of the support groups for separated and divorced Catholics nationwide. I accomplished this with the assistance of North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics' group of directors. Between July and October 2003, 536 surveys were mailed to the contacts provided by the NACSDC President at the time, Bob Zulinski. The response rate cannot be accurately calculated because I do not know how many surveys were actually distributed by the group facilitators, but by the end of February 2004, 97 surveys were sent back to me. Based on the identification by the respondents or from the mail stamp, 23 responses came from Michigan, 18 from New Jersey, 16 from Florida, 12 from Ohio, 9 from Rhode Island, 9 from Massachusetts, 4 from Missouri, 3 from California and 2 from New York.

A "typical" respondent in this sample is female, over 50, white, college graduate and with lower income (less than $50,000 a year).[13] Once the surveys arrived, they were coded and saved as a SPSS dataset.

Attempting this survey shows how difficult it is to reach members of marginalized groups using traditional sociological methodology of a mail survey. When I first started this project, I thought I was going to look at groups on Long Island only, and was told by one of the local group's leader, with some hostility, that he did not trust researchers. However, as soon as I turned to NACSDC for help, I was met with kindness and helpfulness. Still, the uneven distribution and return of the surveys, combined with the inability to tell what the true response rate was underlines the inherent difficulty of using gatekeepers. I do think that the future of large-scale research aiming at marginalized groups lies in the Internet, since that is the medium where respondents can be reached directly. The benefit of the mail survey for me was the ability to include open-ended questions, which was cost-prohibitive in the online survey. The open-ended questions give additional insight into the attitudes, experiences and opinions of the respondents.

Ultimately, due to the difficulties just described, this data was not generated by random sampling, and so in spite of a decent number of responses (97) the findings cannot be applied with confidence to all members of separated and divorced Catholic groups. However, this study represents the first large-scale systematic attempt to learn about this population and is useful as preliminary data on the inner working and purpose of support groups for the separated and divorced in the Catholic Church.

Research Objectives

As stated earlier, my initial key assumption was that people join support groups for separated and divorced Catholics mainly to deal with role conflict in the aftermath of their marital breakdown. However, once I began to analyze the data, it became clear that this assumption was either too simplistic and/or my survey was not the best way to get at the issue of role conflict among separated and divorced Catholics.

---

[13] See Table 3.4 on p. 103. In comparison this sample is more likely to be older and female than the online representative sample of separated/divorced Catholics.

One significant issue that arose was the time factor. In my sample, it has been on average 8 years since the respondent was separated or divorced.[14] More important, the mean amount of time in the group is 2.8 years, meaning that on average it took respondents about 5 years after the divorce to join the support group. Given the length of time that has passed since the point of the emotional impact and the hypothetical "onset" of role conflict, it seems that joining the group may have little to do with actually dealing with divorce and that alternative motives for joining and staying in the group need to be examined.

Another important concern has to do with the way I measured conflict. I had asked the respondents to answer the question "How conflicted do you feel being both Catholic and divorced, given the Church's stance on divorce?" Although this seemed an obvious choice at the time I formulated the question, after looking at some of the findings (which I discuss on pages 95-96, it seems to me that it is a leading question for people as religious as my respondents. It is a bit like asking a committed Christian "How guilty do you feel driving a Lexus when there are starving children in the world, given what the Bible says about wealth and sharing it?" Most people would say that they feel at least somewhat guilty, and yet they may not really give this behavior much thought without being specifically asked about it. My original goal in wording this question was to be as specific as possible, but if I were to do this survey over, I would leave out the line "given the Church's stance on divorce" because if one is conflicted over this issue, then one needs no reminder or suggestion why.

Keeping in mind the limitations of my survey design, I will address the following questions in this chapter:
- How conflicted are the separated and divorced members of the Catholic support groups?
- What, if any, impact does being in the group have on their ability to resolve their conflict?
- What motives do the respondents identify for joining the group? Is it to resolve their role conflict? Why do they choose a Catholic support group?
- Why do they wait so long to join?

---

[14] In comparison, it has been on average 4.5 years since the online survey respondent has gotten separated or divorced.

- Why do they stay in the group for as long as they do? What functions do the groups fulfill?

- Who are the activists/reshapers in this sample?

- How do the respondents find out about the support groups?

- Where do the respondents find support in dealing with aftermath of divorce?

- What recommendations can be made on the basis of these findings?

Role Conflict among Members of the Support Groups for Separated and Divorced Catholics

In order to gauge the level of role conflict among members of the support groups for Separated and Divorced Catholics, I had asked them the following question: "How conflicted do you feel being both Catholic and divorced, given the Church's stance on divorce?" The possible answers were: "very conflicted," "somewhat conflicted," "not very conflicted" and "not at all conflicted."

3.1 Frequency of Role Conflict among Members of
Support Groups for Separated and Divorced Catholics
(mail survey data)

	Frequency	Percent
Very conflicted	15	16.3%
Somewhat conflicted	30	32.6%
Not very conflicted	25	27.2%
Not at all conflicted	22	23.9%
System Missing	5	
Total	97	100%

So, when asked this direct question, 76.1% reported experiencing some level of conflict (in comparison to about 50% of the Internet survey respondents), 16.3% are very conflicted (versus 8.7%), 32.6% are somewhat conflicted (versus 25%), 27.2% are not very conflicted (versus 23%) and 23.9% report not feeling conflicted at all (versus 43.3%).

However, these statistics need to be interpreted cautiously, as the high level of religiosity among those in support groups is most likely a contributing factor. In

response to the question "How religious would you say you are on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1= being not religious at all and 10= being extremely religious?" the average score among the mail survey respondents was 7.18 versus 5.62 among the Internet survey respondents. In other words, the support group members are significantly more religious than the "average" separated or divorced Catholics.

In order to examine whether joining and/or staying in the support group is a strategy of dealing with role conflict of being separated or divorced and Catholic, I looked at the effect that time spent in the group has on feelings of conflict.

3.2 Effect of Time Spent in Group on Feelings of Role Conflict (1=Very Conflicted through 4=Not at all Conflicted)

Time in Group	Mean Score
0-1 years	2.53
1 to 2 years	2.65
2 or more years	2.52
Total	2.56

Given that on average these respondents have waited 5 years after their divorce to join a support group, the self-reported levels of conflict are surprisingly resilient (although this may well be the result of being asked directly about being conflicted, as discussed earlier). There emerged another interesting and counter-intuitive finding regarding conflict among the support group participants. People who spent more than 2 years in the group were no less conflicted than those who spent 1-2 and 0-1 years in the group. On average, the respondents are somewhere between "not very conflicted" and "somewhat conflicted," suggesting that either asking them about conflict directly was indeed a leading question and/or feeling role conflict was not why they joined the group. In other words, this data suggests that dealing with role conflict is not really what being in the group is about.

If being in the group has no effect on role conflict that I could measure, then new questions arise. Mainly, why did the participants join and what other functions does the

group serve in their lives? Indeed, why did the respondents even choose a Church-affiliated support group for separated and divorced Catholics? And why did they wait so long to join and then stay in it for as long as they did?

Function of the Support Group over Time

The respondents were asked to reflect on the function that they feel the group plays in their life by answering the following question: "What function do you feel your group plays in your life (please check all that apply)?" Possible answers included "emotional support," "social network," "educational," "spiritual support," "activism aiming for change within the Church" and "meeting people."

I wanted to see how the respondents' view of function of the group changes over time, so I ran cross tabs of the above listed functions by time spent in group. I looked at three different time periods: 0-1 year, 1-2 years, and 2+ years.

Table 3.3 Effect of Time Spent in Group on the Perception of the Support Group's Function

"What function do you feel the group plays in your life?"

% Agree

Time In Group	Emotional	Social Network	Meeting People	Activism	Educational	Spirtual
0 to 1 Years	92.1%	52.6%	57.9%	13.2%	53.3%	55.3%
1 to 2 Years	95.2%	61.9%	61.9%	23.8%	57.1%	61.9%
2 or more Years	84.6%	80.8%	65.4%	23.1%	57.7%	80.8%
Total	90.6%	63.5%	61.2%	18.8%	56.5%	64.7%

I found that the likelihood of saying yes to a statement that a group provides emotional support increases at the 1-2 year point (rising from 92.1% at 0-1 years to 95.2% at 1 to 2) and then drops off to 84.6% for the people who have been in the group for 2 years or more. The educational aspect remains more or less the same over time (55.3% for those who were in group for 0 to 1 year), 57.1% for those between 1 and 2 years, and 57.7% for those who were members for 2 years or more).

97

It seems that after 2 years the social network aspect of group participation takes over as a primary motivation, as the likelihood of saying yes to a statement that a group provides a social network increases dramatically to 80.8% for the respondents who were in it for more than 2 years, from 52.6% reported by those who just joined (0-1 year) and 61.9% reported by those who were in the group for 1 to 2 years. The answers to the meeting people function also validate the notion that over time the group's function becomes increasingly social. Table 3.3 also shows that 57.9% of those who were in the group for 0-1 years say yes to the statement that they are in the group to meet people. This number increases to 61.9% among those who were in the group for 1 to 2 years, and again to 65.4% among those who were in the group for 2 or more years. While alone, this is not a large increase, the fact that directionally it is the same as that observed for the social aspect is key here.

Spiritual support also increases dramatically over time, as 55.3% of those who were in the group for 0 to 1 years agree that the group serves this function, which increases to 61.9% for those who were in the group between 1 to 2 years, and jumps up to 80.8% for those who were in the group for 2 years or more. In terms of activism for change in the Church, there are not enough cases to generalize from about the trend over time, as there are only 16 activists in this sample.

In sum, the primary finding is that building and sustaining a new social network is the main reason why people remain in the group. The group's emotional impact is the strongest at the 1 to 2 year point, and after that the group evolves into more of a social resource to meet people and retain the connections with other members. The increasing spiritual impact also needs to be noted. Hypothetically, this could be an effect of an expanding religious network.

Motives for Joining the Group

In addition to asking the respondents to reflect on the functions a group plays in their life, I also asked them an open ended question about the main reasons why they joined this group in order to get additional insights into the participants' original motivations in their own words.

Several respondents pointed out that after separation or divorce their old social network no longer met their needs. One female member of the group stated, "I did not feel comfortable around my 'married' friends. I was different. In group we all have the same loss, which has made most of us stronger and better people" (Female, 45). Another person recounted, "Because I was newly arrived in Florida - have always had a nice group of friends - got divorced and left my home in South America - knew nobody here and had to think of myself as divorced, although I'd been separated for years in Colombia" (Female, 64). Yet another respondent indicated that she wanted to "meet others who are 'on the journey' - really knew no one, well who have been 'divorced' - support emotionally and spiritually" (Female, 31). Another person explained, "I needed friends. All my friends and family were married. I wanted friends who were not married" (Female, 53). This answer was echoed by a 66-year-old female who stated, "I was looking for emotional and spiritual support and making new friends". The next respondent said, "At age 56 (at time of separation) none of my friends were divorced and I knew I had to make a new life for myself so I joined the support group one week after my ex-husband announced his plans. Also went to Beginning Experience" (Female, 70). The following female responded reached out to the support group due to the uniqueness of her situation, "I am the only divorced person in my family… in my generation. I was disappointed in myself and needed reassurance that it was not my fault! My support group made a huge difference in my life. It felt good to speak with others who were going through the same things as me" (Female, 32).

While it is logical to expect that divorce might create a disconnection with the old social network, there are various kinds of options available to people seeking support in the aftermath of separation or divorce, including secular, non-denominational and Catholic groups. Clearly, these are individuals to whom being Catholic constituted a salient identity, as evidenced both by their self-reported level of religiosity[15] and by the fact that they specifically mention that the Catholic aspect of the group was important to them:

---

[15] Which is higher than the levels reported in the Internet sample by the average separated and divorced Catholic who completed the Internet survey, as discussed earlier.

I try and find out answers from my Church as to how we (divorced) are to live the rest of our lives. These people help each other through the bad times that we endure. We listen, cry, talk with and encourage each other. We know we can count on each other for help. They are basically the only "outside" contacts I have, other than going to work or to the market. I think it would be really helpful if a priest would be available to go to group meetings like we have, to talk with us and help us to know what our religion asks of us and how we are to be able to live the rest of our lives and still be in good standings with the Church (Female, 41).

Other respondents voice similar sentiments by emphasizing their need for "emotional support from fellow Catholics who were as reluctant to divorce as I was" (Female, 52). Another person joined "to meet other Catholics going through the same experience" (Female, 45). Yet another indicated that his goal was "to try to understand where I was. How I fit in being a separated Catholic. I really had no place to go and experience the common situations. My friend who remarried had been in a similar group several years prior" (Male, 61). Another member wanted to "get a better handle on Church and divorce" (Female, 50). For this respondent, the draw was that people in the group "practiced same faith" and that the setup was "supportive, structured, well established program, small size group" (Female, 41). Another female respondent reported, "I was only in it for several weeks. I was struggling with getting separated and divorced. It clearly helped me with self-esteem and putting perspective on my marriage and priorities. I was very depressed and felt I had no friends to talk to. Nice talking to 'strangers' who knew neither one of us. Everyone dropped out of the group but me. I still have a hard time going to Church and guilty feelings" (Female, 44). Yet another person joined the group "to keep peace within my heart regarding my faith - marriage, to me, was much more than a legal commitment - it is a blessing, a sacrament shared by God's grace - I was devastated when I realized my life was in danger if I stayed with him. (I felt very conflicted until Catholic counseling helped me realize God did not expect me to stay in an abusive marriage)" (Female, 48). Similarly, the Catholic aspect was part of the draw for the next respondent,

I was looking for a form of support that enhanced my emotional and spiritual growth. I was in secular groups for about a year and by chance someone said there was a group in another city. I helped start the group at our parish with the help of a sister that worked at the LA Archdiocese

100

(Office of Family Life). Over the years, the OFL had cut back and the divorce ministry was cut so there is only the Director who must share her time for all her ministries (Female, 52).

While the motives of joining because one's old social network no longer fit and to meet others going through a similar process seem logical, what is somewhat confusing is why on the participants waited so long (on average 5 years after separation or divorce) to join their support group. Some respondents addressed the issue of time in their response to the question, "What were some of the main reasons why you joined this group?"

The three responses given below reinforce the notion that some people are drawn to the support group because they want to make connections with others whom they feel they have something important in common with, in this case religion and perhaps their marginalized status within it. These individuals imply that they have gotten over the trauma of separation or divorce prior to joining and are either there purely for social reasons or to reach out to others. One person was looking "to meet people, especially other single Catholics. (…) I had been divorced for a long time before joining a Catholic singles group. I was long recovered from my divorce and this group was strictly social for me. I haven't had time to attend the activities for a long time" (Female, 56). Another responded stated, "I felt I had something to offer to those going though a separation or divorce, so they would not feel the rejection that I did. (…) I have basically moved on with my life. I am in the group mainly as a support person" (Female, 71). Similarly, this member explained, "I had been divorced several years and remarried. I and several other previously divorced parishioners started the group to help others going through divorce and in crisis" (Female, 56).

The following statement suggests that achieving closure may not be something that can be rushed, it may be something that takes the backseat to other more pressing concerns a newly separated or divorced person might have, "I felt it was necessary to 'complete' the divorce process even after 11 years so that I could move forward with my life and my relationships with men as well as the Catholic Church itself" (Female, 44).

Since I had not anticipated that the average respondents would wait this long to join the group, I did not ask about time directly or indirectly. More research is needed to confirm and clarify this finding.

Activists

The criterion for being classified as an activist in this survey was checking "activism aiming for change within the Church" in response to the question, "What function or role do you feel your group plays in your life? (Please check all that apply). Other responses were: "emotional support," "social network," "educational," "spiritual support" and "meeting people."

In my sample, only 16 people stated that they were in the group for activism aiming for change within the Church (6 did not answer this question). While that is not enough cases to generalize from with confidence, it should be noted that this number represents 18% of the sample. Additionally, these individuals are a key to understanding the support group as a facet of the larger social movement and so it is useful to see how they are different from or similar to the average respondent. Some interesting findings here are that 12% of activists are male, 29% of non-activists are male and 26% of the total is male. Whereas 88% of activists are female, 71% of non-activists are female and 74% of the total is female. Fifty percent of activists are females under 50, 29% of non-activists are females under 50 and 33% of the total is female under 50. Fifty-six percent of activists are under the age of 50, 37% of non-activists are under the age of 50 and 40% of the total is under the age of 50. Nineteen percent of activists are non-white, 5% of non-activists are non-white and 7% of the total is non-white. (3 out of 4) 75% of Latinos are activists. Ninety-four percent of activists are college graduates, 80% of non-activists are college graduates and 82% of the total has graduated from college.

So a "typical" activist in this sample is female, under 50, non-white and college graduate. However, it is once again important to note that due to the low sample size of activists (N=16), it is not possible to make inferences about the demographic make-up of "activists" as a whole, but only as to their characteristics in this study.

Table 3.4 Demographic Composition of Activists

%Within Categories

	Total (N=91)	Activists (N=16)	Non-Activists (N=75)
Total	100%	18%	82%
Male	26%	12%	29%
Female	74%	88%	71%
Age under 50	40%	56%	37%
Age over 50	60%	44%	63%
Males under 50	8%	6%	8%
Males over 50	18%	6%	21%
Females under 50	33%	50%	29%
Females over 50	40%	38%	41%
White	93%	81%	95%
Non-white	7%	19%	5%
College graduate	82%	94%	80%
Some college or less	18%	6%	20%
Under $50,000 a year	65%	69%	64%

Activists' Views of the Church's Position on Divorce, Remarriage and Annulment

Since the activists are the ones who specifically are in the group for the purpose of impacting change, it is useful to examine their responses to the open-ended questions regarding the respondent's opinion of the Church position on divorce, remarriage and annulments. The specific wording of the first question was: "What is your opinion on the Church's current position on divorce and remarriage?"

Several activists saw the Church's stance as overall positive, although some noted the lack of awareness and access to Church-affiliated support groups. A 31-year-old female

respondent stated, "I believe it is a compassionate position - and a very serious commitment and responsibility!!" Another person suggested, "Much awareness, education and "charity" is needed at all levels, funds to eliminate the myths and pastor those who disenfranchise themselves are necessary" (Female, 66). One person offered, "I think the facts are not known by most people. I even thought I would have to quit being a Eucharistic Minister being divorced. I know now that is not true. I think it should be less secret that divorce is not the end of being a Catholic" (Female, 37). The following 59-year-old female noted, "The Church is becoming more tolerant of divorce. But our group is the only support group within the Catholic diocese of SW Michigan."

Other activists were quite critical of the Church's position. A 57-year-old male respondent stated, "I think the Church has a long way to go to reflect true Christ-like attitudes. There are some good and healthy reasons for divorce and there are people that don't want to be divorced but had no choice and the Church (Church law) doesn't distinguish them from the selfish who divorce." The next respondent wrote, "The Church being Rome, it's still antiquated. My parish, I find that there is a different and wonderful attitude of acceptance" (Female, 44). A 71-year-old female activist put it this way, "They still don't accept it and do not support the people who are going through a divorce." Another person stated that the Church position "needs to be more liberal as many priests still encourage staying in a bad marriage" (Female, 48). The following respondent was even more condemning of the Church's stance, stating, "It is very wrong and does not accept divorced people that have gone on with their lives (if I remarry a person, that is). God is my forgiving father, not the 'Catholic Church'. I could murder someone and confess it and be forgiven! Yet I am condemned to eternal Hell if I remarry and receive communion in Church of Love? NO WAY!" (Female, 45)

The specific wording of the second question was: "What is your opinion on the Church's current position on annulment?" Again, some activists found the Church's position to be positive. One argued, "I think it is valid. Marriage within the Catholic Church IS a sacrament. The process of annulment forces you to recount the relationship, what went wrong, why you should have never married in the first place, and allows you to make better judgment call with future relationships" (Female, 44). Another respondent pointed out how the Church often tries to expedite the annulment, "We have more come

for the annulment talk for understanding than any other speaker. It is by the head of the tribunal and my opinion is that they will dig to find a cause for you" (Female, 59). The next person echoed this opinion, "It seems good - the Church is making it an easier process for Catholics to get the annulments" (Female, 56).

The next respondent expressed a desire for an annulment to be more than just a formality by stating that it "needs to change from a requirement for remarriage to a spiritual healing and reconciliation with self, others and Church" (Female, 66). Yet another person wants to clear up existing misconceptions, "I think more people need to understand that an annulment is just saying that the marriage was non sacramental, not that it never occurred, so the children are not 'bastards' born out of wedlock" (Female, 37). A 48-year-old female respondent felt that it "needs to be publicized more to public and priests." Finally, another person stated, "It's valuable!!! Goal of 'healing' and being reflective to gain insight; but I don't agree with 'short form' for some and 'long form' for others!! I believe we should all complete 'long form'" (Female, 31).

Others disagree with annulment as a requirement for remarriage, due to the perception of its cost or recognize it as what Hegy and Martos (2000) refer to as a kind of deception, essentially "having one's cake and eating it too" on the part of the Church (i.e., annulment as a Catholic divorce). A 59-year-old female stated, "Even though I got an annulment I feel it's not needed to remarry. I have gone through the trouble and expense in order to separate myself from my ex-husband in every way possible." The next respondent pointed out the issue of the expense of an annulment, "It should not cost anything. It should be free" (Female, 55). A 71-year-old female contested, "They still believe they have a right to decide whether the divorced person had a 'valid' marriage. I don't agree with them" (Female, 71). A 57-year-old male put it this way, "I don't think it's Christ-like. It's a mechanism to justify rigid theology and Church laws, with a cumbersome way to deal with reality!"

It is interesting that the responses to both, the divorce/remarriage and the annulment questions ranged from expressions of agreement to the expressions of disapproval. This underlines the fact that the current policy of the Church is not interpreted or perceived uniformly by activists in this sample. Clearly, an experience of a separated or divorced Catholic in a progressive parish may be quite different from his or her experience in a

105

conservative parish. While I do not have the data to correlate these answers with the kind of parish the respondents are in, this question of a social milieu could be explored in the future research to gain more in-depth insight, and to search for any trends that might be identified.

Sources of Information about the Group

When I was designing the survey, I hypothesized that most of the respondents found out about the group from sources other than the parish bulletin (i.e., a weekly newsletter distributed after mass). I assumed this because of the separated and divorced Catholics advocates' assertion that the Church as a whole is not very dedicated to reaching out to its separated and divorced members openly. I thought that if only a few members found out about this group from their parish bulletin then this would support the claim that the Church sends mixed messages to these Catholics.

Table 3.5 Sources of Information about the Group

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Priest	4	4.2
Church Bulletin	46	48.4
Friends	22	23.2
Parishioners	1	1.1
Therapist/conselor	2	2.1
Other	20	21.1
Total Base	95	100.0
System Missing	2	
Total	97	

In response to the question, "How did you find out about this group for separated and divorced Catholics?" 48% of respondents identified Church bulletin as the source of information, 23% learnt about it from friends and 21% from other sources. Interestingly, only 4% learned about it from a priest.

This result however cannot refute the argument just given because it is quite possible that my sample is skewed towards liberal parishes, which would openly reach out to the separated and divorced, while the majority of the parishes may not be so willing to do so. I have no way to measure how liberal or conservative the respondents' parishes are.

Still, the finding that priests are so rarely the source of information about the group is intriguing given that a priest is the official representative of the Church. This could mean of course that separated and divorced individuals do not really turn to the priests after their marital breakdown. But it could also support the notion of a certain marginalization of the support groups in the institutional Church. Additionally, even if the direct reason for this finding is that separated and divorced Catholics do not go to their priest with this issue, this would suggest that there is still a stigma attached to divorce in the Church. To get a more accurate picture, these issues would need to be addressed systematically through further research.

Other Sources of Support

In order to learn who separated and divorced Catholics found most supportive, I asked the respondents to rate various sources. The specific wording of the question was: "How supportive would you say your family/friends/fellow parishioners/priest were when you were getting your divorce/annulment/ separation, with 1= being not supportive at all and 10= being very supportive?" I then recoded the responses, with answers 1 to 3 considered not supportive, and 4 through 10 considered supportive.

Table 3.6 Level of Support after Martial Breakup
"How supportive was your….. on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = no support and 10=extremely supportive)?"

	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Family	96	7.67	2.82
Friends	96	7.83	2.56
Parishioners	80	5.81	3.30
Priest	73	6.36	3.33

I found that the respondents believed their friends and family to be the most supportive. The findings regarding fellow parishioners and priests were incongruous and had a large standard deviation, suggesting that in this sample there was no consistent trend.

I also asked the respondents to reflect on how the level of support from the fellow parishioners and the priest impacted their identity as a Catholic. As the ratings suggested, the comments ranged from very negative to very positive; there was also a number of responses indicating no impact.

Some respondents report having negative experiences in response to the question, "How did this level of support (of fellow parishioners) impact your identity as a Catholic?" One person recalled, "I felt like I was the only divorced person in the Church. I am still a committed Catholic - my faith is strong, society doesn't know what to do about divorces - it's an awkward situation. It destroys families - or maybe I should say it maims them and they have to heal on their own anyway they can manage" (Female, 53). Another individual recalled how divorce "made me feel like an outcast - like I was walking around with a big scarlet 'D' on my chest" (Female, 56). Yet another person remembered the experience as being "very disheartening, discouraging, I would have never expected people to have so little compassion and be so judgmental" (Female, 43). For the next respondent, the negative fallout from divorce had long-term consequences, "For years I felt that I was an outsider at Church. I did not participate at all other than going to Church. After CRHP retreat everything changed for the better" (Female, 44). Another person felt that "most Catholics look down on me when they find out I'm divorced. They look at me as an outsider" (Female, 47). A 55-year-old male summed his experience up this way, "My identity as a Catholic declined to not attending church and functions as much as in the past" (Male, 55).

Other respondents have had very good experiences in their parish communities. One person stated, "I very much appreciated their support during a difficult time. My faith remained strong. My mom was my strongest support. I questioned the divorce many times, since as Catholics we don't get divorced. However, when I explained to a priest what was happening in my marriage, he recommended that I get out" (Female, 39). Another recalled, "It made me feel loved and that everyone cared about me and that they

knew I tried to make things work out. Everyone knew that it takes two to have a marriage" (Female, 35). A 52-year-old female remembered that the support she received, "made it very comfortable and proud to be a Catholic." Yet another person stated, "It helped me to feel comfortable remaining active in my church community" (Female, 45). A 41-year-old female reminisced, "I moved to a new parish when I separated and was welcomed with open arms. This led me to a renewal and excitement about my Church and Catholic faith." The last respondent acknowledged that her positive experience may not have been typical of separated and divorced Catholics, "Greatly, but my personal experience was the ideal and not what most Catholics feel or get - hence my passion to actively be part of the solution and not the problem" (Female, 66).

When it came to their experiences with priests, some respondents conveyed disappointment in response to the question "how did this level of support (of your priest) impact your identity as a Catholic?" A 59-year-old female recalled, "I was told by the local parish priest that I was married for life in the eyes of the Church - and would not discuss the possibility of an annulment. I had no friends that were Catholic."

Another respondent recalled how the reaction of her priest "made me bitter. I spoke with my pastor about obtaining an annulment and after relating my story he said, 'Go home and have a good cry about it. You'll never get it.' I told him: 'You and the Catholic Church p___ me off' and walked out. Friends (in my group) who have priests as relatives all have gotten annulments. Makes me wonder!" (Female, 70) A 79-year-old male recalled the ambiguous treatment he received, "Officially-not supportive but critical, unofficially priest friends were #10; it was discouraging/depressing/feeling of rejection". Another person said, "My parish priest seemed uncomfortable that this was happening. I continued to practice my faith - it was a source of comfort and strength for me. At no time did I stop attending church" (Female, 64). Yet another respondent remembered, "I began to question the Catholic Church. The priest listened to me but nothing was done to try to reconcile the marriage. My ex had already made his mind up. I don't feel comfortable attending. I feel like there is a big 'D' on my forehead. The pastor has expressed his opinion on divorce and I do not care for his thoughts. After listening to his sermons, I feel sorry I took the time to go to church" (Female, 47). A 58-year-old female put it succinctly, "I felt I was a better Catholic than he was a priest".

Others reported that their priest were helpful and/or supportive. One respondent remembered, "He was kind to me, he said not to talk about the divorce (although he knew I had valid reasons) - just to tell people that I didn't want to talk about it, that we both tried and couldn't work things out. He gave me one-month deadline when my divorce was final to do the annulment. He said, 'Just do it, get it done, my secretary will type it for you. You'll get a fresh start'" (Female, 53). Another recalled, "By the priest explaining the purpose of the annulment process and the misconceptions Rome placed on divorced Catholics, it was a turning point for me and my relationship with the Catholic Church" (Female, 44). Yet another stated, "He was very supportive and helped guide me through the annulment process. The support I received at my parish was strong and helped strengthen my own faith" (Female, 42). A 41-year old female called her priest's reaction one of "extreme support, enlightening experience - he taught me peace and forgiveness". Another person remembered, "Father did emphasize the Church's stand on marriage and was genuinely supportive and compassionate. It restored my faith in the priesthood" (Female, 66). A 55-year-old male recalled, "I felt it made me stronger in the Church community."

The lack of a clear pattern regarding the support from fellow parishioners and priests exemplifies the lack of moral consensus in the Church regarding the issue of divorce. From the point of view of the advocates of separated and divorced Catholics, this is more of a negative finding, because while there is some ambiguity, the official attitude towards divorce is still negative and this aids marginalization rather than integration of separated and divorced Catholics in the Church.

Conclusion

The mail survey of members of NACSDC-sponsored support groups for separated and divorced Catholics produced some useful findings, while also raising new questions and highlighting methodological shortcomings.

The main methodological issue is that the data in this study cannot be considered a random sample of separated and divorced Catholics in support groups, due to the difficulty in reaching the research subjects directly, as explained on pages 92-93. While at times I compared this sample to the statistically representative sample of separated and

divorced Catholics I generated via the Internet survey, these two are really not comparable because the mail survey was not done using random sampling, so it cannot be said that the data is representative of separated and divorced members of support groups. The information analyzed in this chapter is useful as preliminary data and as a qualitative look into the inner working and purpose of support groups in the Catholic Church.

In addition, there are measurement issues that became apparent only after the data was collected and was being analyzed. The main one, which I wrote about on page 94, was the way I measured conflict, which could be considered a leading question when asked of individuals as religious as the respondents in this sample. Another issue I did not foresee was the time factor, as discussed on pages 94 and 96. I did not anticipate the respondents waiting on average 5 years after their separation or divorce to join the support group, and so I failed to ask about this delay in the survey.

Keeping these limitations in mind, this survey did generate some intriguing findings. I found that the support groups for separated and divorced Catholics do not really impact the level of role conflict the respondents report. Again, the average respondent waits a long time after their separation or divorce to join. Additionally, although the group does have an emotional impact at first, after 1 to 2 years, the group becomes mostly a social network resource where people who have salient identities in common: their religion and marital status, can meet and make connections, as the emotional motivation for being in the group diminishes, while the social network and spiritual categories show a steady increase as primary factors for being in the group.

This survey confirmed what has been reported in existing literature - that most people are not in the group for reasons of social activism; in this sample there were only 16 activists. Moreover, their experiences as separated or divorced Catholics and their views on the Church's position regarding divorce, remarriage and annulment were varied. While some seemed very critical of the Church's stance on divorce, remarriage and annulment, others felt that the Church position was justified and/or compassionate.

The findings regarding activists' diverse views, as well as the respondents' mixed experiences with priests and fellow parishioners in the aftermath of their marital breakdown point to the fact that the Catholic Church is a microcosm of the larger society in a sense that there is a lack of moral consensus in the Church. I think one future avenue

for research would be to correlate the separated and divorced Catholics' experiences and opinions with how progressive or conservative their parishes are. The next step would be to try to figure out what kind of parish is dominant in American Catholicism, and what the regional trends are.

One practical implication of this survey from the point of view of separated and divorced Catholics' advocates is the need to institute some kind of "graduation" program at the 1-2 year point where the emotional function of the support group lessens. Perhaps the group could be divided into Beginner/Stage 1 Group and Advanced/Stage 2 Group with different emphases. In the first group the focus could be more on emotional and spiritual support, and in the second on strengthening the ties among the members and ongoing spiritual support. I think that such arrangement would be a way to acknowledge the changing needs of group participants and perhaps address them more mindfully. However, more research would be needed to understand more deeply what happens at this stage and whether there is a real need for a more formal approach to this issue.

The importance of parish and priest support is another aspect that needs to be studied further because these findings show a variety of experiences in this regard. However, from the point of view of the advocates these experiences ought to have been uniformly positive, and that clearly was not the case.

Perhaps the most intriguing finding from the point of view of Church leaders and the advocates alike is the one suggesting a lack of impact the support group has on conflict. It may possibly be the result of methodological shortcomings of my survey as explained earlier. However, it could also indicate a certain disconnect between feelings of "Catholic guilt" (when asked about a problematic action directly) and actual behavior. This would suggest the limitations of Church influence over American Catholics' morality, as previously reported by Greeley (2004), for example. On another hand, if it is confirmed by future research that separated and divorced Catholics who join the groups remain as conflicted as before, then this suggests that the support groups might address the issue of role conflict more head-on to help people resolve it better.

Conclusion: A Private Religion

In the popular imagination Catholics are a group beset by immense amount of guilt, which has a special name - "the Catholic guilt" and is seen as a manifestation of role conflict of being an American Catholic, torn between the demands of contemporary life in secular America and the often contradictory, severe demands of the faith.[16] When I first started my dissertation I was influenced both by the cultural portrayal of American Catholics and my own background of growing up in Poland, where Catholicism is more traditionalist, strict and powerful. As a result of these factors, I fully expected to find out that majority of the respondents to my surveys would be very torn over the fact that they were both separated or divorced and Catholic, given the Church's official stance opposing divorce. However, what I found in the process of doing my research quickly made me question my overly simplistic assumptions.

The first assumption I had to evaluate was my understanding that Catholic Church is anti-divorce and the ensuing notion that all divorced Catholics must be conflicted. I quickly learned that while the Church is officially against divorce, it sanctions a way out for its members who end their marriage in the form of an annulment. When I lived in Poland getting an annulment was virtually unheard of,[17] but that is not the case in America, where a vast majority of annulment petitions are granted. In the United States, the annulment is a de facto Catholic divorce in spite of all the hierarchy's protestations that the two are completely different things (Hegy and Martos, 2000). American separated and divorced Catholics may also join a church-affiliated support group. The existence of such groups seemingly sends a subtle message that the Church is not

---

[16] One illustration of this is the scene in Chris Columbus' 1991 film "Only the Lonely" when Danny, played by John Candy has to cover the statue of a Virgin Mary with his police hat before he can have sex with his girlfriend.

[17] Poland is over 90% Catholic. I personally only knew of one person who received an annulment and that person was related to Pope John Paul II, so she had major connections to the highest levels of the Church hierarchy.

completely against divorce. After all, there are no officially sanctioned groups for Catholic murderers or child pornographers.[18]

Additionally, there is an ongoing debate among concerned Catholics, including the clergy, about whether or not the current hierarchy's approach to divorce and remarriage is valid and right. In sum, the attitude of the American Church towards divorce can be characterized as negative overall, but also ambiguous in significant ways.

My research shows that many divorced Catholics, do not seem to care about the Church's stance on divorce. One of my main findings was that close to half (43.3%) of Catholics do not report feeling conflicted at all about being divorced and Catholic. This statistic comes from the online, representative sample of 300 separated and divorced Catholics. Among the 97 more religious[19] members of the Church-sponsored support groups for separated and divorced Catholics, this number, as expected, decreases to 23.9%. This particular datum generated through a mail survey, came from a convenience, nonrandom sample.

A slight majority of my online respondents reported being conflicted and they became the focus of my research, as I wanted to learn how they coped with their role conflict and what personal and social consequences this role conflict might have had. Still, the fact that so many of my respondents indicated not being conflicted at all was a major, counterintuitive finding - one that deserves more attention because it has implications for the Church itself and, perhaps, more generally for sociology of religion.

In previous chapters, in an effort to address the question of why so many of my respondents were not conflicted, I first looked at the sexual activity aspect, since so much of the divorced Catholics' role conflict stems from the emphasis on "illegitimate" sexual activity. My online research demonstrates that 18.7% of divorced Catholics report not being involved in a sexual relationship, and thus having no conflict.

---

[18] Also, in a more traditionalist Poland there were no Church-sanctioned support groups for separated and divorced Catholics.

[19] The high level of religiosity among those in support groups is most likely an intervening variable. In response to the question "How religious would you say you are on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1= being not religious at all and 10= being extremely religious?" the average score among the mail survey respondents was 7.18 versus 5.62 among the Internet survey respondents. In other words, not surprisingly, the support group members are significantly more religious than the "average" separated or divorced Catholics.

I also hypothesized that a combination of factors, including American Catholicism being fairly open (as illustrated by the existence of various nonconformist and dissenting Catholic organizations, which include the North American Conference for Separated and Divorced Catholics), the emancipatory consequences of Vatican 2, the American culture in general being pluralistic and individualistic and the continued importance of religion in American society created a relatively flexible, inclusive social environment which seems less conducive to the emergence of role conflict than a more restrictive kind of milieu.

The ambiguity of American Church towards divorce is linked to the fact that the American Catholic Church suffers from a kind of authority crisis and can be characterized by a lack of moral consensus. As I discussed in earlier chapters, the main evidence for these developments is that many Catholics simply disregard the Church's stance on issues related to sexual and personal morality (Gallup, Jr. and Lindsay 1999, Greeley 2004, Hout 2000, Martos 2000). Two particularly relevant examples of this are the fact that Catholics have consistently been defying the Church's stance against divorce, divorcing at a rate comparable to other religious Americans (Martos 2000, Hout 2002) and disagreeing with the Church doctrine regarding the sacramental participation of divorced Catholics and its policy on remarriage (Menedez 1993, Gallup, Jr. and Lindsay 1999).

For the purpose of this concluding chapter, I want to emphasize a key finding that emerged from my study, namely that people claim Catholic identity while disregarding Church teachings. The reasons for this phenomenon are complex. In American society religion in is highly visible. Religious symbolism has remained strong in our culture, from the phrase "In God We Trust" on a dollar bill to saying "one nation under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance or swearing on the Scriptures in court. In addition, and more significantly, religion has played a part in recent debates over creationism, euthanasia, abortion and stem cell research. While in some contexts religion has been a divisive force, it seems that overall in America religion is a safe, politically correct way of expressing difference (Karpathakis 2001). This country was founded on freedom of religion (or as some say, freedom *from* religion). Perhaps because of this unique history, people continue to identify themselves by religion and seem to feel much more comfortable describing themselves and other people as Catholic, Jewish or Evangelical

115

than publicly acknowledging the more politically incorrect and persistent realities of American social stratification - people's race or class. Religion thus plays an important, neutralizing function in a society as diverse and unequal as the United States.

But for all that undoubted visibility of religion in our society, its influence over most people's everyday moral and practical decisions seems much more shaky. Many Americans seem to live by secular principles –they have premarital sex, divorce, use birth control or pornography, and so on. They do so even if their religion forbids such practices. In other words, the degree to which most people follow their religion's more demanding teachings seems fairly small, yet people continue to hold on to their religious labels. In "Abiding Faith" Chaves talks about these seeming contradictions, "Religious faith in the United States is more broad than deep. (…) Of Americans who say the Bible is either the actual or the inspired word of God, only half can name the first book in the Bible and only one-third can say who preached the Sermon on the Mount. More than 90% believe in the higher power but only one-third say that they rely more on that power than on themselves in overcoming adversity" (2007:327). There is a certain inconsistency between people's declarations regarding religion and their application of these assertions in practice. As Chaves describes, "Overall, the following picture emerges from recent research: Since the 1960s, Americans have engaged less frequently in religious activities, but they continue to believe just as much in the supernatural and to be just as interested in spirituality" (2007:329).

As I reported earlier, my study shows that except for the significantly more religious among the separated and divorced Catholics, many Catholics do not report feeling conflicted over the issue of divorce even when asked about it directly. This is even more surprising considering that the question I asked in my surveys to determine the level of role conflict (namely "how conflicted do you feel being both Catholic and divorced, given the Church's stance on divorce?"), might be seen as a leading question, in retrospect.[20] If it truly were a leading question, then the levels of conflict I reported here may be actually inflated. In other words, it is possible that I might have "guilted" some of my respondents into saying that they were conflicted even if they normally do not give

---

[20] For a detailed discussion of the way I measured conflict, please see chapter 3.

this issue a second thought.

In any case, by demonstrating this fairly widespread lack of conflict among the separated and divorced Catholics, my finding suggests that the influence and meaning of religion have in fact become very individualized and privatized. Today many people clearly feel that they can be both divorced and Catholic without feeling conflicted over what the Church says on the topic. My findings seem to illustrate that while religion remains salient to one's identity on some level that is either very personal or, alternatively, superficial, it also needs to be reconciled with realities of living in a secular society.[21]

My other significant finding also seems to fit in with this premise. The data I generated through the mail survey of Catholics in church support groups shows that in spite of the fact that a majority of my respondents (76.1%) reported some degree of conflict over being both divorced and Catholic, their reasons for joining and staying in the support group for separated and divorced Catholics seem much more secular than resolving the religious role conflict.

On average these respondents waited 5 years after their divorce to join a support group, which seems like a very long time to deal with "Catholic guilt" over divorce. Secondly, being in the group seemed to have no significant impact on feelings of role conflict.[22] On average, the respondents were somewhere between "not very conflicted" and "somewhat conflicted," suggesting that either asking them about conflict directly was indeed a leading question[23] and/or role conflict was not why they joined the group. I found that building and sustaining a new social network is the main reason why people remain in the group. The group's emotional impact is the strongest at the 1 to 2 year point, and after that the group evolves into more of a social resource to meet people and retain the connections with other members. The group also has an increasing spiritual impact that, hypothetically, could be an effect of an expanding religious network. In

---

[21] I extensively discuss the ways in which divorced Catholics do this in chapter 2.

[22] People who spent more than 2 years in the group were no less conflicted than those who spent 1-2 and 0-1 years in the group.

[23] Considering that the level of conflict remained unchanged overtime, it seems very likely that it was a leading question.

sum, these findings suggest that even the more religious Catholics in my sample were not so severely impacted by guilt that they could not wait a few years to join a church-sponsored group for separated and divorced Catholics. In any case, their primary motivation seemed to have been rather secular - to make new friends, new connections and to move on. It seems that for most Americans non-religious concerns generally outweigh the religious concerns, even if a religious identity remains personally salient to them.

The disconnect between ongoing religious identification and the decline in obedience to religious authority has been welcome by some and decried by others. Those who welcome it see it as an evolution of religion from the emphasis on blind, unquestioning obedience to the institution to increasing reliance on individual conscience (D'Antonio et al, 2001, Dillon 1999, Greeley 2004, Redmond 1999). The more progressive analysts such as Dillon (1999) or Cuneo (1999) see this trend in positive terms, as evidence of salience of Catholicism in people's lives.

The critics see it very differently, as the kind of moral relativism that waters down religion to the point where it becomes a feel good, meaningless, politically correct, all-inclusive ideology requiring no discipline or sacrifice on the part of its members. The traditionalist analysts, such as Varacalli (2000) or Rose (2002) tend to see the post Vatican 2 emergence of Catholic dissent as responsible for corrupting and weakening the moral position of the Church in the American society.

Regardless of how this trend toward the apparent separation between obedience to Church authority and religious identification may be judged, it raises some important questions. Specifically, can Catholic identity become independent of the Church authority and still persist? If more and more Catholics continue to disregard what the Church says, what does that do to the meaning of Catholicism?

The observers of Judaism in America who talk with a degree of alarm about "the vanishing Jew" have long voiced a similar set of concerns. A corresponding Catholic concept would be that of "a cafeteria Catholic," who picks and chooses the parts of Catholicism he or she likes while conveniently discarding the unpleasant, difficult parts.

In "The Decline of Jewish Identity," Edward Shapiro (2007) makes an argument about American Jews, which seems quite applicable to the separated and divorced

118

Catholics in my study, if not most mainstream religions. It is put succinctly in the abstract of the article - that as a result of living in peace, prosperity and facing relatively less prejudice in America "religious definitions have been relaxed, permitting less observant behaviors to flourish and weakening restrictions on the definition of membership" (p. 252).

In contrast, it is interesting to think of the behavior of some American Muslims, who in the aftermath of 9/11 responded to the widespread hostility towards them by becoming more devout and more outwardly demonstrative of their religion. For example some women began wearing hijab, sometimes against the will of their more fearful relatives (Peek, 2007). Although Peek's study is non-representative of the U.S. Muslim population, it supports the observation that there is a relationship between an external threat (real or perceived) and an increased commitment to a more narrowly conceived version of one's religion.[24]

However, in a relatively welcoming, pluralist America, Jews, and I suspect Catholics as well, "were anxious to be thought of as no different than other Americans" (Shapiro, 2007:255). Over the years, Catholics made significant strides in terms of upward mobility, becoming the second best educated group among religious Americans, placing, incidentally, behind Jews (Christiano et al, 2002).

Shapiro cites a worried Yale professor, David Gelernter who has predicted that as a result of the concessions many Jews have made to adapt to the American culture, "being Jewish (…) will come to mean what 'being Scottish in America' means: nothing" (Shapiro, 2007:256). Now, a Jewish identity is clearly more complex than the Catholic identity, because it uniquely combines religion and ethnicity.[25] But this statement could be applied to Catholics in a sense that as my findings suggest, being Catholic seems to be equivalent to belonging to any other mainstream denomination in America. As I

---

[24] This is an observation that can be applied to many religions in many settings: Jews in anti-Semitic Europe, Catholic in a communist Poland, etc. It seems that when the external conditions are hostile, religion becomes stricter. This observation also goes beyond religion: when some aspect of people's identity (nationality, ethnicity, political affiliation, etc) is under attack, they seem to hold on to it and defend it all the more.

[25] Although not in simple terms, because Jews from different areas of the world speak different languages and have different cultures.

discussed in the earlier chapters, when it comes to everyday morality, Catholics do not behave significantly differently from other religious Americans. Perhaps the ordinary Catholics have lost their unique "Catholic guilt" as they have become integrated in the American society.

Shapiro poses a crucial question in this article, "What is the lowest common denominator of Jewish belief and practice that can act as the cement of Jewish identity?" (2007:257) He believes that the answer for Jews is a commitment to social equality. But that is a fairly general goal, one that many principled people of religious and nonreligious backgrounds alike may agree on.

Still, the question is a key one, and it is a question that most certainly can be applied to Catholics in America as well. What would be the answer when it comes to Catholics? When people think of what distinguishes Catholics from other Christians, they often point to the pope. However, it seems that to many contemporary American Catholics the pope is just a distant figurehead and not a real moral authority. Christiano and his associates cite Greeley's findings (1976a: 15), "In 1963, 70 percent of Catholics agreed that it is 'certainly true that Jesus handed over the leadership of his church to Peter and the popes.' Ten years later, only 42 percent endorsed that statement" (Christiano et al, 2002:216).

If loyalty to the pope is not a good candidate for the lowest common denominator uniting all Catholics, then what about going to Mass on Sundays? In "Decentering the Study of Jewish Identity: Opening the Dialogue With Other Religious Groups," Harriet Hartman and Debra Kaufman quote the study by D'Antonio et al which posits that "the sacraments seem to be central to Catholic identity" (Hartman and Kaufman, 2007:371). The fundamental sacrament in Catholicism is the Eucharist, which takes place weekly during the Sunday Mass. This makes D'Antonio and his colleagues next finding somewhat contradictory because they report that a majority of American Catholics think one can be a "good Catholic" without going to church every Sunday (Hartman and Kaufman, 2007:371). Clearly, American Catholics mean it, as only about 50 % of them attend the church weekly (in comparison to 70-75% at its highest point, in the 1950s). This is a considerable decline, which corresponded to the dissolution of the papal authority. Both of these occurrences are linked to the 1968 birth control encyclical

"Humanae vitae"[26] (Christiano et al, 2002:216) and the emancipatory effects of Vatican 2.

The question of the lowest common denominator that can unite Catholics seem to be a vital one that Catholic scholars and Church officials should want to address both through more research and theology. The Apostle's Creed, recited during Mass, which summarizes the beliefs of all Catholics contains a line "we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church," but the question remains to what extent and in what sense is this Church really, meaningfully one?

The Catholic Church claims to be one and universal and yet it is extremely varied not only across different nations but within the same dioceses as well. My research confirms that contemporary American Catholic Church is a microcosm of a larger society in a sense that there is no moral consensus in it. How a person may judge this fact depends on one's particular ideological inclination - it can be seen either as a sign of inclusiveness and strength or of fragmentation and weakness. But it is a fact that largely explains the apparent lack of "Catholic guilt" in many of my respondents. Why should they feel conflicted over being divorced when the Church doctrine can be reframed and the reaction they get from fellow Catholics depends on to whom they talk?

My findings support the notion that (to paraphrase Hartman, Kaufman, Bershtel and Graubard 2006: 371) in America, individual meanings very often take precedence over collective identities and traditional "givens" become options. In "The Decline of Jewish Identity," Shapiro describes the following situation that illustrates this point dramatically: "…Elaine Marks (…) recently showed just how far Jewishness can be stretched, 'I am Jewish precisely because I am not a believer,' she said paradoxically, 'because I associate from early childhood the courage not to believe with being Jewish.' For Marks (…) the Jew who rejects Judaism is transformed into the most committed Jew" (p. 257).

This logic cannot be applied to Catholicism wholesale due to the ethnic/birthright component of being Jewish. However, applying some of it to contemporary Catholicism in America, one wonders how far we can remove the long-established core from a given

---

[26] The birth control encyclical has had destructive consequences in terms of the Catholics' willingness to submit to Church hierarchy. A majority of church-going Catholics and priests dissent from the official Church's teaching on contraception (Christiano et al, 2002:217).

religion and still be able to use the name or the label legitimately or meaningfully. One of the messages of Vatican 2 was that the people constitute the Church. If the majority of the people disregard what the pope proclaims, will there be a Roman Catholic Church without Vatican? Or is it already here, in a sense?

I think much more research needs to be done to help us understand these perplexing trends in sociology of religion. Andrew Greeley has done some of this kind of research on Catholics, but we need to do more. As I report in chapter 1, Greeley's (1990) main point was that nonconforming Catholics stay Catholic because they like it. The Catholic imagination or worldview appeals to them more than alternatives. This is a compelling argument but it raises more questions, which we need to explore if we are to gain a better understanding of what is really happening with Catholicism today.

Specifically, we need to investigate qualitatively what it means to say that nonconformists "stay Catholic." More generally, we need to ask people what it means to be a Catholic today, how they define their Church and their religious identity. The reason why this needs to be done qualitatively at first is that these questions need to be open-ended so as to minimize biasing the respondents. It seems that in contemporary American society people are increasingly free to combine different spiritual traditions and practices, without looking for validation from the official religious authority. Chaves (2007) talks about how even born-again and evangelical Christians are just as likely as other Americans to believe in reincarnation, astrology or fortune telling, even though such beliefs go directly against their religion. This trend toward a privatization of religion weakens the centralized authority but does it ultimately destroy the religion in question? Will Judaism or Catholicism disappear? Or will they, as some argue, simply "go underground" only to reemerge at another time?

Edward B. Reeves describes how historically "ages of faith alternate with ages of apathy and disbelief; periods dominated by vibrant religious symbolism and healthy religious organizations alternate with periods when symbolism pales and the organizations teeter; periods in which there is only one accepted Church give way to periods rife with sectarian revival and religious pluralism." Religions oscillate; they are not static social phenomena (http://hirr.hartsem.edu/ency/change.htm, accessed January 15, 2007). As I argued in the Introduction, Catholicism has an emancipatory, people-

centered message at its core and this makes it a potentially volatile religion. It remains to be seen if and how people choose to transform it.

As long as people hold on to a label, such as "a Catholic" or "a Jew," even if they only do so on a shallow level at the moment, there is always a possibility for both – a deepening of the commitment to that identity on a personal level, and for mobilization, on a social level (with all the potential implications of such actions), if something occurs to rouse people's long-forgotten devotion.

Bibliography

Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.arcc-catholic-rights.org

Beaman, Lori. 2001. "Introduction to Gender in Religion." Pp. 115-118 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Susanne Monahan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Beginning Experience website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.beginningexperience.org

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Doubleday: Garden City, NY.

Bishops of New Zealand and Australia. [1982] 1995. "When Dreams Die." Pp. 63-71, Appendix A in *With Open Arms: Catholics, Divorce and Remarriage*, by Father John Hosie. Liguori Publications: Liguori, MO.

Brown, Mary Elizabeth. 2001. "Assimilation in New York City's Italian Parishes." Pp. 112-117 in *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, edited by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis. New York University Press.

Call to Action website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.cta-usa.org

Catholics for a Free Choice website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.catholicsforchoice.org

Catholic Traditionalist Movement website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.latinmass-ctm.org

Catholics United for Life website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.cul.detmich.com

Cerulo, Karen. 1997. "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:385-409.

Chaves, Mark. 2007. "Abiding Faith." Pp. 326-331 in *Sociological Odyssey*, edited by Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, 2nd ed, Thomson/Wadsworth.

Christiano, Kevin J., Kivisto Peter and William H. Swatos, Jr. 2002. *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments*. Altamira Press: Lanham, MD.

Comin Ripple, Paula. 1991. "History: The Early Years: The Divorcing Persons in a Responding Church", a file obtained from the NACSDC director.

CORPUS website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.corpus.org

Courage website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.couragerc.org

Cuneo, Michael W. 1999. *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism*. The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD.

D'Antonio, William, Davidson, James D. Hoge, Dean R. and Katherine Meyer. 2001. *American Catholics: Gender, Generation and Commitment*. Altamira Press: New York.

Desrochers, Stephen, Andreassi Jeanine and Cynthia Thompson. 2003. "Identity Theory." *A Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia*. Accessed March 22, 2003, http:// www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/wfnetwork/rft/wfpedia/wfpIDTent.html

Dignity USA website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.dignityusa.org

Dillon, Michele. 1999. *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith and Power*. Cambridge University Press.

Dolan, Jay P (interviewed by the editors). "To Form a More Perfect Union." *U.S. Catholic*, October 2003: 12-16.

Doyle, Thomas (Father) quoted in "Whitewash or Renewal?" by Kevin Clarke. *U.S. Catholic,* June 2003: 12-17.

Eisenberg, Carol. 2002. "600 Gather Despite Ban by Bishop." *Newsday* 9/14/02.

Farrell, Susan A. 2001. "Feminists, Religion and Ethics in New York City: the Roman Catholic Example." Pp. 322-332 in *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, edited by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis. New York University Press.

Ferder, Fran (interviewed by the editors). "Let's Talk about Sex." *U.S. Catholic*, February 2003: 20-24.

Gallup, George Jr. and D. Michael Lindsay. 1999. *Surveying the Religious Landscape: Trends in U.S. Beliefs*. Morehouse Publishing: Harrisburg, PA.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*. International Publishers: New York.

Greeley, Andrew. 1973. "Church Marriage Procedure and the Contemporary Family."
Pp. 106-113 in *Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church*, edited by
Lawrence G. Wrenn. Paulist Press: Paramus, NJ.

Greeley, Andrew M. 1990. *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American
Catholics*. Charles Scribner's Sons: New York.

Greeley, Andrew M. 2004. *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the
Second Vatican Council*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los
Angeles.

Greteman, James (Brother) and Haverkamp, Leon. 1983. *Divorce and Beyond:
Participants' Book*. ACTA Publications: Chicago, IL.

Hartman, Harriet and Debra Kaufman. 2006. "Decentering the Study of Jewish Identity:
Opening the Dialogue With Other Religious Groups." *Sociology of Religion* 67:
365-385.

Hegy, Pierre. 2000. "Catholic Divorce, Annulments and Deception." Pp. 9-24 in
Catholic Divorce: The Deception of Annulments, edited by Pierre Hegy and
Joseph Martos. Contiuum: New York.

Hegy, Pierre. 2000. "Disputed Biblical Interpretations about Marriage and Divorce."
Pp. 50-81 in *Catholic Divorce: The Deception of Annulments*, edited by Pierre
Hegy and Joseph Martos. Contiuum: New York.

Hegy, Pierre and Joseph Martos. 2000. "Divorce and Remarriage as Second Chances."
Pp. 201-222 in *Catholic Divorce: The Deception of Annulments*, edited by Pierre
Hegy and Joseph Martos. Contiuum: New York.

Hegy, Pierre and Joseph Martos, eds. 2000. *Catholic Divorce: The Deception of
Annulments*, Contiuum: New York.

Higgins, Nadia. "When Catholics Face Divorce." *Catholic Digest*, May 2002: 38-47.

Hirshman, Albert O. 1970. *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms,
Organizations and States*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.

Hosie, John. (Father). 1995. *With Open Arms: Catholics, Divorce and Remarriage*.
Liguori Publications: Liguori, MO.

Hout, Michael. 2002. "Angry and Alienated: Divorced and Remarried Catholics in the
United States." *America* 183: 10-12.

Howard, Judith. 2000. "Social Psychology of Identities." *American Review of
Sociology* 26: 367-393.

Karpathakis, Anna. 2001. "New York City Religions: Issues of Race, Class, Gender and Immigration." Pp. 388-394 in *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, edited by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis. New York University Press.

Kelleher, Stephen J. 1973. *Divorce and Remarriage for Catholics?* Doubleday & Company: Garden City, NY.

Kemp, Carrie. 2001. *Catholics Can Come Home Again! A Guide for the Journey of Reconciliation with Inactive Catholics.* Paulist Press: Mahwah, NJ.

Kircher, Kathleen L. 1991. "The Later Years: A Responding Church Calls the Divorced Person to Leadership," a file obtained from the NACSDC director.

Manning Christel and Wade Clark Roof. 2001. "Cultural Conflicts and Identity: Second Generation Hispanic Catholics in the United States." Pp. 89-95 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Susanne Monahan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Martos, Joseph. 2000. "Catholic Marriage and Marital Dissolution in Medieval and Modern Times." Pp. 127-151 in *Catholic Divorce: The Deception of Annulments*, edited by Pierre Hegy and Joseph Martos. Contiuum: New York.

Medina, Hector. 2003. "Sometimes It's a Song." *Jacob's Well: A Membership Publication of Catholic Divorce Ministry*, Quarter 2:12.

Menendez, Albert J. 1993. "American Catholics: A Social and Political Portrait." *The Humanist*, September/October: 17-20.

Newport, Frank. 2002. "Catholic Church Attendance Drops This Year in Midst of Scandal." Accessed January 14, 2003, http://www.galluppoll.com.

North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics website. 2004 and 2006. Accessed March 21, 2004 and January 20, 2006, http://www.nacsdc.org

Osa, Maryjane. 2001. "Pastoral Mobilization and Contention: The Religious Foundation of the Solidarilty Movement in Poland." Pp. 427-434 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Susanne Monahan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Oygard, Lisbet. 2001. "Therapeutic Factors in Divorce Support Groups." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 36 (1/2):141-158.

Peek, Lori. 2007. "Muslim Self-Identities after 9/11." Pp. 332-340 in *Sociological Odyssey*, edited by Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, 2nd ed, Thomson/Wadsworth.

Pevey, Carolyn, Williams Christine and Christopher Ellison. 2001. "Male God Imagery and Female Submission: Lessons from a Southern Baptist Ladies' Bible Class." Pp. 141-143 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Susanne Monahan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Pilarczyk, Daniel E. (Archbishop). 2002. *Twelve Tough Issues-And More: What the Church Teaches and Why*. St. Anthony Messenger Press: Cincinnati, OH.

Ponticelli, Christy M. 1999. "Crafting Stories of Sexual Identity Reconstruction." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62 (2):157-172.

Pontifical Council for the Family. 1997. *The Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried and Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life*. Pauline Books and Media: Boston, MA.

Redmond, Jane. 1992. *Generous Lives: American Catholic Women Today*. William Morrow & Co: New York.

Reeves, Edward B. 1998. "Change" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society* (online version), edited by William H. Swatos, Jr., Alta Mira Press: Walnut Creek, CA. Accessed January 15, 2007, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/ency/change.htm

Rose, Michael S. 2002. *Goodbye, Good Men: How Liberals Brought Corruption into the Catholic Church*. Regnery Publishing, Inc.: Washington DC.

Sawchuk, Dana. 2001. "The Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan Revolution: A Gramscian Analysis." Pp. 165-172 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Susanne Monahan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Shapiro, Edward S. 2007. "The Decline of Jewish Identity." Pp. 252-260 in *Sociological Odyssey*, edited by Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, 2nd ed, Thomson/Wadsworth.

Secord, Paul F. and Carl W. Backman. 1974. *Social Psychology*. McGraw-Hill: New York.

Stravinskas, Peter M. J. (Father). 2003. "The Catholic Answer: Your Questions about the Faith Answered." Our Sunday Visitor 17 (1): 11-28.

Stryker, Sheldon and Richard Serpe. 1982. "Commitment, Identity Salience and Role Behavior: Theory and Research Example." Pp. 199-218 in *Personality, Roles and Social Behavior*, edited by William Ickes and Eric Knowles. Springer-Verlag: New York.

Taylor, Humphrey. 2001. "Internet Penetration Has Leveled Out Over the Last 12 Months." Accessed January 14, 2003, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=266

Thumma, Scott. 2001. "Negotiating a Religious Identity: The Case of the Gay Evangelical." Pp. 189-195 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Susanne Monahan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

United States Catholic Conference, Inc.- Libreria Editrice Vaticana. 1995. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. An Image Book, Doubleday: New York.

Varacalli, Joseph A. 2000. *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order*. Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, MD.

Varley, Irene. 2004. "From the Executive Director." *Jacob's Well: A Membership Publication of Catholic Divorce Ministry,* Quarter 1:12.

Voice of the Faithful website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.voiceofthefaithful.org

Vondenberger, Victoria. 2004. *Catholics, Marriage and Divorce: Real People, Real Questions*. St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati: Ohio.

Wilde, Melissa J. 2001. "From Excommunication to Nullification: Testing and Extending Supply-Side Theories of Religious Marketing with the Case of Catholic Marital Annulments." *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 40 (2): 235-246.

Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.his.com/~mhunt

Women's Ordination Conference website. 2004. Accessed March 21, 2004, http://www.womensordination.org

Wrenn, Lawrence G. 1973. *Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church*. Paulist Press: Paramus, NJ.

Yalom, Irvin D. 1995. *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*. Basic Books: New York.

Yip, Andrew. 2001. "Dare To Differ: Gay and Lesbian Catholics' Assessment of Official Catholic Position on Sexuality." Pp. 183-189 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Susanne Monahan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Young, James J. 1978. "The Divorced Catholics Movement." *Journal of Divorce* 2 (1):
83-97.

Young, James J. 1993. "Remarried Catholics: Searching for Church Belonging." Pp.
347-352 in *Perspectives on Marriage*, edited by Kieran Scott and Michael
Warren. Oxford University Press: New York, 1993.

Appendix A: Online Survey

Screeners:

1. Have you ever been divorced or are you currently separated?

   . Yes (**Continue)**
   . No (**Terminate)**

1a. Are you currently?

   . Separated
   . Divorced

2. How would you define yourself religiously?

   . Roman Catholic (**Continue)**
   . Protestant denomination (**Terminate)**
   . Jewish (**Terminate)**
   . Islamic (**Terminate)**
   . Mormon (**Terminate)**
   . Non-religious (including atheist/agnostic) (**Terminate)**
   . Other (**Terminate)**

3. What religion were your parents?

   . Roman Catholic **(go to q4)**
   . Protestant denomination **(go to q3a)**
   . Jewish **(go to q4)**
   . Islamic **(go to q4)**
   . Mormon **(go to q4)**
   . Non-religious (including atheist/agnostic) **(go to q4)**
   . Other ____ (specify) **(go to q4)**

3a. Please specify which Protestant denomination your parents belonged to:

4. How many times have you been married?

   . Once **(go to Q5)**
   . Twice **(ask Q4a)**
   . Three or more **(ask Q4a)**

131

4a. How many times has your martial status changed?

- I've only been separated, never divorced
- Divorced once
- Divorced once and then separated from a second marriage
- Divorced twice
- Divorced twice and then separated from a third marriage
- Divorced three times or more

5. What is your current relationship status?

- Separated and single
- Separated and dating
- Separated and living with someone
- Separated and engaged
- Divorced and single
- Divorced and dating
- Divorced and living with someone
- Divorced and engaged
- Divorced and remarried

6. How long ago was your <if answered anything but the first two answers to Q4a, insert the words, "most recent"> divorce or separation?

- Within the past six months
- Within the past year
- Within the past three years
- Within the past 5 years
- Within the past 10 years
- More than ten years ago

7. Which of the following statements do you feel best describes you now?

I strictly follow the Church's teachings,
with no room for personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I follow the Church's teachings closely,
with a small amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I follow the Church's teachings selectively
with a moderate amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I follow the Church's teachings selectively,
with much room for personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I do not follow the Church's teachings,
but follow my own personal interpretation of Catholicism.

7a. Which of the following statements best described you prior to your separation or divorce?

I strictly followed the Church's teachings,
with no room for personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I followed the Church's teachings closely,
with a small amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I followed the Church's teachings selectively,
with a moderate amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I followed the Church's teachings selectively
with much room for personal interpretation of Catholicism.

I did not follow the Church's teachings, but followed my own personal
interpretation of Catholicism.

8. How often do you attend church?

. Every day
. Once a week
. Several times a month
. Once a month
. Once every several months
. Once or twice a year
. Rarely
. Never

9. Has your level of church attendance increased or decreased since the change in
your marital status?

. Increased a lot
. Increased somewhat
. No change
. Decreased somewhat
. Decreased a lot

10. How active are you in your church community?

- Extremely active
- Somewhat active
- Average level of activity
- Not very active
- Not at all active

11. Has your level of activity in the church community increased or decreased since the change in your marital status?

- Increased a lot
- Increased somewhat
- No change
- Decreased somewhat
- Decreased a lot

12. How often do you read the Bible?

- Every day
- Once a week
- Several times a month
- Once a month
- Once every several months
- Once or twice a year
- Rarely
- Never

13. Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend reading the Bible has….

- Increased a lot
- Increased somewhat
- No change
- Decreased somewhat
- Decreased a lot

14. How often do you pray?

    . More than once a day
    . Every day
    . Once a week
    . Several times a month
    . Once a month
    . Once every several months
    . Once or twice a year
    . Rarely
    . Never

15. Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend praying has..

    . Increased a lot
    . Increased somewhat
    . No change
    . Decreased somewhat
    . Decreased a lot

16. How religious would you say you are on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not religious at all and 10 being extremely religious?

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

17. There are several different places a person can go to for support during their separation/divorce. Please indicate how supportive you found each of the following, with 1 being not supportive at all and 10 being extremely supportive?

Not Supportive   Extremely Supportive
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

                        Not Applicable
                             11

Friends

Fellow parishioners

Priests or other members of the clergy

Family

Therapist (not affiliated with the church)

Support group for separated and divorced Catholics

Support group (not affiliated with the church)

17a. Given that there is a certain inherent conflict in being both Catholic and divorced/separated (considering the Church's stance on this issue), how did you attempt to resolve this conflict? **Please check all that apply.**

(Randomize List)
- I had my marriage annulled **(skip to Q18)**
- I am pursuing an annulment **(skip to Q18)**
- I joined a support group for separated/divorced Catholics
- I sought counseling from a priest or other members of the clergy
- I sought counseling from a secular therapist
- I relied on the support of family and friends
- I relied on the support of my fellow parishioners
- I felt no real conflict in being both Catholic and separated/divorced
- I disagree with the Church's stance on divorce
    - I am not currently involved in a sexual relationship and thus have no conflict
    - I am Catholic but not very religious

17b. Why haven't you had your previous marriage annulled? **Please check all that apply.**

- I am not very religious and did not feel the need to get my marriage annulled.
- I am religious but I disagree with the practice of annulment
- I do not feel that my marriage meets the criteria required for annulment
- I wish to stay married in the eyes of the Church
- Just haven't gotten around to it
- Too expensive
- Unaware of the option/procedure

18. Thinking about your experiences since your change in martial status, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements

   Strongly agree/ Somewhat agree/Neither Agree nor disagree/ Somewhat disagree/ Strongly disagree

A) I have realized that others had solved problems similar to mine

B) I became less anxious

C) I became less depressed

D) I feel less guilt

E) I feel more confidence in myself

F) I became more trustful towards other people

G) I began to question Church teachings on marriage and divorce

H) I became a stronger Catholic

I) I feel reconnected with the church

19. How conflicted do you feel being both divorced and Catholic, given the Church's stance on divorce?

- . Very conflicted
- . Somewhat conflicted
- . Not very conflicted
- . Not at all conflicted

19a What is your opinion on the Church's current position on divorce and remarriage?

- . Strongly agree
- . Agree
- . Neither agree nor disagree
- . Disagree
- . Strongly disagree

And finally, just a few questions for classification purposes only.

D1.   How many children between the ages under the age of 18 live in your household?

None
1-2
3-4
5 or more

(Skip to D3 if 'none' at D1)

D2.   What is the age of the youngest child in your household?

_____ (CODE actual response)

D3.   Which of the following groups comes closest to your yearly household income before taxes?

Under $30,000
$30,000 to $49,999
$50,000 to $74,999
$75,000 to $99,999
$100,000 or more
Prefer not to answer

D4.   What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some high school
High school graduate
Some college
College graduate
Graduate school
Technical/Trade School
Prefer not to answer

D5.   Please indicate your racial/ethnic background

Caucasian
African American
Asian American
Latino(a)
Other_____ (Specify)

D6.   Please indicate what state you live in (Drop Down Box)

Appendix B: Mail Survey

Please place an 'X' mark next to your choices for each question or fill in your answers where appropriate.

1. Please indicate your gender:

   Male _____
   Female _____

2. Please indicate your age:

   _____

3. Please indicate your racial background

   Caucasian _____
   African American _____
   Asian American _____
   Latino(a) _____
   Other_____(Specify)

3a. Please indicate your ethnic background (i.e. Italian, Polish, Mexican, etc…). If your background contains more than one ethnicity, please list all those you are aware of.

_____

4. Please indicate your total household income before taxes:

   Under $25,000 _____
   $25,000-$34,999 _____
   $35,000-$49,999 _____
   $50,000-$64,999 _____
   $65,000-$79,999 _____
   $80,000-$99,999 _____
   $100,000+ _____

5. What religion were your parents? (Please check all that apply)

    Roman Catholic _____
    Protestant denomination _____
    Jewish _____
    Islamic _____
    Mormon _____
    Non-religious (including atheist/agnostic) _____
    Other (specify) ____ _____

IF YOU ANSWERED 'PROTESTANT DENOMINATION, PLEASE ANSWER 5a, IF NOT PROCEED TO 6

5a. Please specify which Protestant denomination(s) your parents belonged to:

_____

6. Please indicate the highest level of education you have obtained.

    Some high school or less _____
    Graduated high school _____
    Trade school _____
    Some college _____
    Graduate college _____
    Some post-graduate study _____
    Post-graduate degree _____

7. Do you have any children?

    Yes _____
    No _____

(If you answered "Yes" to 7, than go to 7a, if "No" please go to 8)

7a. How many children do you have?

    _____

7b. What are the age/gender of your children?

Age

Male   ____

____

____

____

Female   ____

____

____

____

8.   How many times have you been married?

Once _____
Twice **(Please answer 8a)** _____
Three or more **(Please answer 8a)** _____

8a. How many times has your martial status changed?

I've only been separated, never divorced _____
Divorced once _____
Divorced once and then separated from a second marriage _____
Divorced twice _____
Divorced twice and then separated from a third marriage _____
Divorced three times or more _____

9. What is your current relationship status?

Separated and single _____
Separated and dating _____
Separated and living with someone _____
Separated and engaged _____
Divorced and single _____
Divorced and dating _____
Divorced and living with someone _____
Divorced and engaged _____
Divorced and remarried _____

10. How long ago was your divorce(s)/separation(s) (if divorced/separated more than once, please list all)?

_____

10a. Have you had your ever had a marriage annulled?

    Yes _____
    No _____

If you have not had a marriage annulled, please answer the next question (10b), if you have had your previous marriage annulled please skip to question 11.

10b. Why haven't you had your marriage annulled? Please check all the apply.

    I disagree with the practice of annulment _____
    I do not feel that my marriage meets the criteria required for annulment _____
    I wish to stay married in the eyes of the Church _____
    Just haven't gotten around to it _____
    Too expensive _____
    Unaware of the option/procedure _____
    Other (please specify) _____

11. Which of the following statements do you feel best describes you now?

    a. I strictly follow the Church's teachings,
    with no room for personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    b. I follow the Church's teachings closely,
    with a small amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    c. I follow the Church's teachings selectively,
    with a moderate amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    d. I follow the Church's teachings selectively,
    with much room for personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    e. I do not follow the Church's teachings, but follow my own personal
    interpretation of Catholicism. _____

11a. Which of the following statements best described you prior to your separation or divorce?

    a. I strictly followed the Church's teachings,
    with no room for personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    b. I followed the Church's teachings closely,
    with a small amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    c. I followed the Church's teachings selectively,
    with a moderate amount of personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    d. I followed the Church's teachings selectively,
    with much room for personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

    e. I did not follow the Church's teachings,
    but followed my own personal interpretation of Catholicism. _____

12. How often do you attend church?

    Every day _____
    Once a week _____
    A few times a month _____
    Once a month _____
    Once every few months _____
    Once or twice a year _____
    Rarely _____
    Never _____

13. Has your level of church attendance increased or decreased since the change in your marital status?

    Increased a lot _____
    Increased somewhat _____
    No change _____
    Decreased somewhat _____
    Decreased a lot _____

14. How active are you in your church community?

    Extremely active _____
    Somewhat active _____
    Average level of activity _____
    Not very active _____
    Not at all active _____

14a. Please specify which church-related activities, if any, you currently participate in.

15. Has your level of activity in the church community increased or decreased since the change in your marital status?

Increased a lot _____
Increased somewhat _____
No change _____
Decreased somewhat _____
Decreased a lot _____

15a. Please specify those church-related activities that you used to participate in but no longer do, since the change in your marital status?

16. How often do you read the Bible?

Every day _____
Once a week _____
Several times a month _____
Once a month _____
Once every several months _____
Once or twice a year _____
Rarely _____
Never _____

16a. Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend reading the Bible has…

Increased a lot _____
Increased somewhat _____
No change _____
Decreased somewhat _____
Decreased a lot _____

17. How often do you pray?

More than once a day _____
Every day _____
Once a week _____
Several times a month _____

Once a month _____
Once every several months _____
Once or twice a year _____
Rarely _____
Never _____

17a Since the change in your marital status, would you say the amount of time you spend praying has…

Increased a lot _____
Increased somewhat _____
No change _____
Decrease somewhat _____
Decreased a lot _____

17b How conflicted do you feel being both divorced and Catholic, given the Church's stance on divorce?

Very conflicted _____
Somewhat conflicted _____
Not very conflicted _____
Not at all conflicted _____

18. How religious would you say you are on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = being not religious at all and 10 = being extremely religious? **(please circle your answer)**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

19. How supportive would you say your family was when you were getting your divorce/annulment/separation, with 1 = being not supportive at all and 10 = being extremely supportive? **(please circle your answer)**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

20. How supportive would you say your friends were when you were getting your divorce/annulment/separation, with 1 = being not supportive at all and 10 = being extremely supportive? **(please circle your answer)**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

20a. How supportive would you say your fellow parishioners were when you were getting your divorce/annulment/separation, with 1 = being not supportive at all and 10 = being extremely supportive? **(please circle your answer)**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

20b. How did this level of support impact your identity as a Catholic?

20c. How supportive would you say your priest was when you were getting your divorce/annulment/separation, with 1 = being not supportive at all and 10 = being extremely supportive? **(please circle your answer)**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

 20d. And how did this level of support impact your identity as a Catholic?

21. How did you find out about this group for separated and divorced Catholics?

   Priest _____
   Church bulletin _____
   Friends _____
   Parishioners _____
   Therapist/counselor _____
   Other (specify) _____

21a. Please specify how long you have been in this group.

   _____

22. Thinking about your group experience, please indicate to what extent each of the following activities is encouraged on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = being strongly discouraged and 10 = being strongly encouraged. **(please circle your answer)**

Dating (no sexual intimacy)
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Dating (with sexual intimacy)

146

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Remarriage
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Annulment
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23. What function or role do you feel your group plays in your life? (please check all that apply)

Emotional support _____
Social network _____
Educational _____
Spiritual support _____
Activism aiming for change within the church _____
Meeting people _____

23a. What were some of the main reasons why you joined this group?

24. Thinking about your experiences in your group, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements. *(Please circle your level of agreement with each statement with 1= Strongly Agree, 2= Somewhat Agree, 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4= Somewhat Disagree and 5 = Strongly Disagree)*

a. I learned that I was not alone with my problem

1 2 3 4 5

b. I saw that I was just as well off as the others

1 2 3 4 5

c. I saw that others had solved problems similar to mine

1 2 3 4 5

d. Seeing others getting better was inspiring for me

1 2 3 4 5

e. I belong to and was accepted by the group

1   2   3   4   5

f. I revealed embarrassing things about myself and was still accepted by the others

1   2   3   4   5

g. I shared my innermost feelings with the group

1   2   3   4   5

h. I learned to say what was bothering me instead of holding it back

1   2   3   4   5

i. Hearing others stories increased my understanding of my own situation

1   2   3   4   5

j. I understood better why I think and feel the way that I do

1   2   3   4   5

k. Because of the group I became less anxious

1   2   3   4   5

l. Because of the group I became less depressed

1   2   3   4   5

m. Because of the group I feel less guilt

1   2   3   4   5

n. Because of the group I became more trustful towards other people

1   2   3   4   5

o. Because of the group I feel more confidence in myself

1   2   3   4   5

p. I learned to question Church teachings on marriage and divorce

1   2   3   4   5

q. I became a stronger Catholic

1   2   3   4   5

r. I feel reconnected with the Church

1   2   3   4   5

25. What is your opinion on the Church's current position on divorce and remarriage?

26. What is your opinion on the Church's current policy of annulment?

27. And finally, could please indicate which U.S. state or Canadian province you currently live in?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.
Your input is much valued and appreciated.