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Date May 29, 1973

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE CONCERNING SOME EMOTIONAL
RESIDUES EXPERIENCED BY DIVORCED PERSONS

by

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A professional paper submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

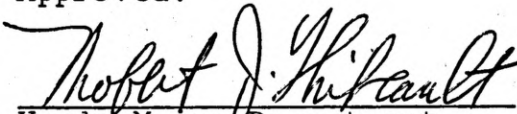
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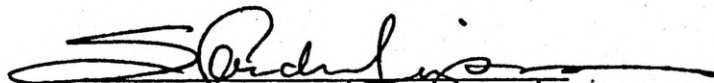
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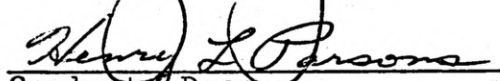
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
VITA.	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.	iii
ABSTRACT.	vi
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Questions to be Considered	5
General Procedure.	5
Limitations of the Study	6
Definition of Terms.	8
Summary.	9
II SOME PROBLEMS OF POSTDIVORCE ADJUSTMENT.	11
Introduction	11
Postdivorce Compared with Bereavement	12
The Social Strain of Divorce	17
The Process of Readjustment.	21
Summary.	25
III SOME EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF DIVORCE.	27
Introduction	27
Some Primary Emotions Experienced by Divorced Persons	29

Chapter	Page
IV SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	43
Summary.	43
Conclusions.	43
Recommendations.	46
LITERATURE CITED	52

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to explore some of the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced persons and some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment. This study also explored some of the primary emotions commonly experienced as a result of divorce and their relationship to the divorced person's self-concept.

The investigation of some emotional residues experienced by divorced individuals was conducted by a review of literature of those pertinent resources contained in the library of Montana State University. The investigation of some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment was presented in three general sections as follows: The period of postdivorce adjustment was compared with bereavement and the similarities and differences between these two situations were discussed. The social strain of divorce was investigated. Some problems of postdivorce adjustment were explored and described. The investigation of some of the emotional effects of divorce was also presented. Research concerned with this topic was presented in the following manner: Some of the primary emotions commonly experienced as a result of divorce and their relationship to the divorced person's self-concept were explored and described.

Specific data resulting from the trauma of divorce was difficult to obtain in that persons experiencing this trauma find it particularly difficult to be meaningful research subjects. However, as a result of this investigation of the emotional residues resulting from divorce recommendations were made for further potential research in this area. The recommendations are as follows: Recommendations were made for further research on the emotional aspects of divorce. It was also suggested that further investigation be made into aspects of a healthy marriage so that marital failure may be prevented. Also, it was suggested that the need for therapy after divorce be more fully recognized and urged.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the past, divorce has been viewed as an unexpected, undesired and unnatural state of morality. Although society continues to discourage divorce, it is no longer shunned and ignored. Rather, it is now realized that the problems resulting from divorce are not only real, but are in need of greater attention.

The separation and aloneness resulting from divorce is a crushing experience for many adults. Recently, there has grown an awareness that separation and aloneness, irregardless of the cause, is a social problem rather than a moral or natural one. This recognition has led to a greater emphasis being placed on the consequences of whatever caused the loneliness rather than upon the cause itself (Klemer, 1965:210).

Despite this new willingness to recognize and to give attention to the emotional problems resulting from divorce, there is a lack of systematic field research in this area. Forty years ago, Willard Waller's work pioneered in the area of postdivorce adjustment; however, the number of serious attempts at research in this field since Waller's time are limited and lacking (Goode, 1956:15). According

to Goode, there is no systematic field study of the divorce adjustment process in a representative and adequate sample of any population segment (Goode, 1949:384). Holt and Winick, in their paper on the psychodynamic elements in divorce, note that divorce has received curiously little attention in psychiatric and analytic literature (Holt & Winick, 1965:443). In reference to the psychological and emotional effects of divorce on men and women, Nimkoff also emphasizes the lack of collective studies in this area (Nimkoff, 1934:447).

After a rather thorough search of books dealing with the psychology of personal adjustment, and those discussing divorce specifically, the researcher found that the emotional problems resulting from divorce are usually not mentioned at all, or else referred to only briefly and usually somewhat superficially. Research has been conducted on the events which led to divorce as well as on the effects of divorce upon children. However, adequate studies pertaining to the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced individuals is negligible.

It is the contention of this investigator that this is an area which has been neglected for too long, and one which needs greater attention. With the ever increasing

number of divorced persons there exists an increasing number of lonely, distressed individuals who are trying to adjust to their new situation.

Although research in this area is limited, the attention given to this phase of divorce has yielded a substantial number of hypotheses. One general hypothesis concerning the adjustment process of divorce is that it is a traumatic period with considerable personal disorganization (Goode, 1956:15). It is also a hypothesis, or a statement generally made and accepted, that divorce is a period of individual personal distress which has many roots, notably the guilt at moral, religious or personal failure, as well as the difficult and complex problems of previous emotional attachments (Goode, 1956:15). The present study explores and describes some of the emotional effects of divorce upon the divorced and some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment, with some concentration upon major hypotheses and assumptions made by previous investigators. It is hoped that this research will offer help to those who are planning a divorce as well as those who are adjusting to divorce.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated some of the emotional effects

of divorce upon divorced persons and some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment.

Purpose of the Study

It is believed that divorce represents a real life crisis for most divorced persons (Nimkoff, 1934:447). If better known, the emotional price exacted by divorce would probably deter most couples from initiating divorce procedures without serious consideration (Eliot, 1948:625).

Divorced persons have to reorganize their emotional life, alter their habits of living, and habituate themselves to a new situation. These postdivorce adjustments present emotional and social difficulties for the divorced. To those who experience it, divorce represents an extremely painful and serious adjustment (Nimkoff, 1934:448-49).

In order to cope with the divorce situation, it is important for the divorced persons to realize that their trauma has been shared with many others. Although research cannot eliminate the emotional impact of divorce, it can, however, offer reassurance to divorced persons as they meet their new situation. In addition to this reassuring effect, research on the emotional effects of divorce would be of practical use to counselors, lawyers, judges, etc. in

aiding those persons who are in the process of being divorced as well as those who are experiencing adjustment problems after divorce.

Questions to be Considered

The following questions are concerned with some of the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced persons and some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment. These questions will be considered in Chapters II and III of the review of literature.

1. What are some of the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced persons?
2. What are some of the primary emotions most commonly experienced by the divorced?
3. What are some of the most commonly cited problems of postdivorce adjustment?

General Procedure

The investigation into some of the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced individuals and some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment will be presented in the following manner:

1. A review of literature concerning some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment will be presented.

2. The review of literature concerning adjustment to divorce will primarily investigate some ways in which divorced persons respond to their experience and some of the problems of readjustment.
3. A review of literature concerning some emotional effects of divorce upon divorced individuals will be presented.
4. The review of literature concerning some emotional effects of divorce will concentrate primarily on the primary emotions most commonly experienced by divorced persons, and the ways in which divorce influences a person's self-concept.

Limitations of the Study

The investigation was limited to a review of literature concerning some of the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced individuals and some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment. This study will be limited to divorce and will not cover the phenomena concerned with separation, desertion and death. Due to the lack of systematic field research in this area, the review of the literature will be limited to

resources in the area contained in the library of Montana State University.

It is interesting, and also relevant to this study, to seek the reasons for such a serious omission in psychological literature. Clearly, the emotional dynamics of the divorce situation do not readily lend themselves to experimental manipulation, nor even to the usual forms of controlled observation. Another factor, which must be considered, is the technical problems which must be met in a field study of this nature. Goode notes that the problems of such a research are many and include the following (Goode, 1949:399):

First, it is often difficult to acquire the names of divorced persons, which lessens the possibility of obtaining an adequate sample.

Second, because of the high incidence of mobility after divorce, it is difficult to trace divorced individuals.

Third, because of the subject-matter and the recency of all divorces, divorced persons may refuse to cooperate during an interview.

It is also important to note that research into intensely emotional, personal and sensitive factors (such as those

involved in divorce) must be conducted with extreme caution and skill so as not to make a person's reactions more painful (Goode, 1949:399; Switzer, 1970:13).

The researcher has noted several factors which may have prevented this phase of divorce from being the focus of field studies so as to clarify possible reasons for the lack of research in this area.

In order to complete this investigation, articles and books were selected as to their relevance and significance to the study.

Definition of Terms

The following general terms are defined as they will be used in this paper. Additional terms will be defined in the contents of this paper by citing specific references.

Divorce: this term refers to the legal dissolution of the marital tie between husband and wife, carrying with it the right to remarry.

Postdivorce Adjustment: this term refers to the process by which the change of role patterns and of existing social relations is incorporated into the individual's new life style without using the divorce as the primary point of reference.

Primary Emotions: this term refers to those emotions which have the greatest impact on the behavior of the individual.

Residue: this term refers to those aspects and factors that have not been resolved by the divorce.

Self Concept: this term refers to the individual's view or perception of himself.

Summary

Although divorce severs the legal contract between husband and wife, it cannot avoid the trauma of marital dissolution. According to Dr. Rieke, "Even the skillfully handled divorce produces trauma" (Rieke, 1965:256). It is evident that the personal crisis of divorce is one which requires a considerable amount of adjustment for the couple involved. Although each case will vary somewhat, the investigator contends that there exists common emotions and general problems of postdivorce adjustment shared by most divorced persons.

Extra emotional support is needed during critical stress periods such as the one experienced after divorce. Assistance during such a critical period can do much to help the individual work through the experience without being

overwhelmed by it. Knowledge and awareness of the emotional problems resulting from divorce is of integral importance for the understanding of the divorced individual. As has been previously noted, further research in this area is greatly needed. It is the purpose of this paper to explore and to describe some of the emotional effects of divorce and some problems of postdivorce adjustment. It is hoped that the present study will shed light upon some of the primary emotions and problems most commonly experienced as a result of divorce so that they may be acknowledged and understood. With a clearer understanding of this phase of divorce, counselors and others may find this information useful in helping the divorced.

CHAPTER II

SOME PROBLEMS OF POSTDIVORCE ADJUSTMENT

Introduction

The seriousness of divorce depends primarily upon the degree of affection which existed between the marriage partners. And, since an increasing number of American marriages are now founded upon affection, there is substantial reason to believe that divorce represents a real life crisis for most persons (Nimkoff, 1934:447). Dr. Martin Goldberg describes divorce as "one of life's most painful and devastating events - second only to the death of a spouse" (Goldberg, 1973:149). In therapy, for example, many people describe their feelings as "the crumbling of their whole world" (Coleman, 1964:617). It seems evident that divorce, and especially the deep trauma of an unwanted divorce, is a crushing experience for many individuals.

Research pertaining to divorce has shown the existence of emotional problems of postdivorce adjustment commonly shared by divorced individuals (Bohannon, 1970:29-38; Eliot, 1948:626-28; Hunt, 1967:145). In order to understand these problems, the writer feels that a descriptive understanding of the problems of readjustment

after divorce is essential to understanding the emotional problems encountered by divorced persons. The material in this chapter will be presented in three general sections. The first section will compare the postdivorce situation with bereavement. The second section will deal with the social strain of divorce. The third section will describe some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment.

Postdivorce Compared with Bereavement

The natural reaction to the loss of a loved object or person is grief. While grieving, the distribution of emotional energy is changed significantly; new frustrations must be borne until new arrangements can be worked out (Bohannon, 1970:37). Thomas D. Eliot, one of the early investigators of grief from a social orientation, in an attempt at defining grief stated:

Psychologically, bereavement is a major type in the general class of traumatic frustration-situations. Arrested impulse or thwarted habit is at the root of all sorrow. Bereavement is one's own blocked wish for response following death of the loved object. The loved one is gone, but the associated memories and habits and needs remain alive as a real complex in the mind of the bereaved (Eliot, 1948:643).

Because loss is so deeply felt, human beings tend to mourn the loss of every meaningful relationship.

According to Sigmund Freud, "mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one" (Freud, 1915, Strachey, Standard Ed., 1962:243).

Research has shown that the degree of this mourning depends upon the amount of emotional involvement. Alexander Bain, one of the early British psychologists, expressed that the source of grief is the loss of or separation from some object or person with the sorrow being in proportion "to the power of the attachment" (Bain, 1975:146).

A rather extensive and interesting exploration of the conflicting inner impulses of sorrow was presented by Alexander Shand in 1914. He maintained that a primary human drive is that toward joy; its frustrations is the source of sorrow (Shand, 1914;331-32). Shand also noted that sorrow is greater when the object of deprivation or substantial reminders thereof (in the case of divorce the children, the house, the former spouse, etc.) remain to refresh the sense of loss of the relationship (Shand, 1914:320-23).

It should be recognized from the outset that significant losses of persons may take place in ways other

than death and that similar emotional reactions take place in other situations involving the loss or threatened loss of persons or objects that an individual perceives as important to his life. Research concerned with this topic has shown that several noted authorities have compared the divorce situation with bereavement. It has been noted that although it is of different quality, most divorced persons experience grief as real as do the widowed (Eliot, 1948:627).

According to Waller, one of the most perceptive sociologists who has ever written about divorce, the loss of a mate through death and loss through divorce, although markedly different, have much in common (Waller, 1956:552). Klemer also mentions this similarity by noting that both widows and divorcees experience a sudden shock of separation. In his practice, Klemer has found that they share several common experiences which include the following: (1) frustrated resentment in asking why this happened to them; (2) anger at their former husband for having left them; (3) guilt for not having prevented it; and (4) panic or fear of the future. He also points out that widows as well as divorcees must deal with their feelings of emotional emptiness, hostility, self-punishment and bitterness (Klemer, 1965:210-11).

Another characteristic of the person undergoing grief is the experience of the loss of meaning in much that previously had seemed important. According to Eliot, there is a sense of "emptiness, deadness, and futility" (Eliot, 1948:653). The person's whole attention is given to his response to the situation of the loss of the loved object.

Bohannon also compared the divorce situation to bereavement. He maintains that divorce results in the loss of a loved object just as fully as does the death of a spouse, however, by quite a different route of experience (Bohannon, 1970:37). He goes on to say that:

Divorce is difficult because it involves a purposeful and active rejection by another person, who, merely by living, is a daily symbol of the rejection (Bohannon, 1970:37).

In both situations there is a loss of an object, a loss which changes the whole life situation of the person who suffers it.

Although many of the structural components are similar - for example, absence of former spouse, usually lowered income, ambivalence of sorrow, preservation of old habit patterns, and so on - the divorced person lacks the institutionalized patterns which shape and ease the

reactions of the widowed (Waller, 1956:553). Waller notes that the mourning process of divorce assumes a less definite form than in bereavement, either because conventions do not provide for it or, as in some groups, even permit it (Waller, 1956:554).

There is no recognized way to mourn a divorce. As a consequence, the divorced person is placed in several sets of either undefined or incompatible roles. These incompatible roles are related more closely to the fact that the divorced person may be very unhappy about the marital failure, and even be attached to the former husband, but must instead show little sorrow or continued affection (Waller, 1956:553).

Divorce is also made difficult because the community helps even less in divorce than it does in bereavement. It has been postulated that because few people recognize it for what it is, the grief experienced by the divorced has to be worked out alone and without the benefit of traditional rites (Bohannon, 1970:37).

Hunt also likens the process of divorce to the process of recovery from a bereavement. He maintains that grief must be worked out of one's system through tears, reflections, and talk, which discharge the

feelings and gradually nullify them, slowly modifying one's habits and expectations (Hunt, 1967:183). Paul Bohannon further emphasizes that:

When grief gets entangled with all the other emotions that are evoked in a divorce, the emotional working through becomes complicated--in a divorce one is very much on his own (Bohannon, 1970:37-38).

The literature indicates that the adjustment to postdivorce living is often more difficult than the readjustment period which follows after the death of a spouse. Loss of a mate by death is not the occasion for public censure, personal qualms about adequacy or other unpleasant, continuing, and often inescapable accompanying effects of divorce (Rieke, 1965:256).

The difficult period after divorce sometimes seems endless and unbearable to the divorced person in its midst. The divorced person is faced with working out his grief without the aid of traditional rites. Although it is a wretched kind of labor, it cannot be avoided except at great cost to the rest of one's life (Hunt, 1967:183).

The Social Strain of Divorce

Much of the research pertaining to divorce has demonstrated its seriousness both for the individuals

involved, and for the society as a whole. According to Mabel Elliott, divorce is often the prelude to other social disasters. She points out that serious adjustments must be made after divorce. Living habits must be altered, and children must be cared for while they suffer from the deprivation of one parent's love and attention (Elliott, 1948:685).

Bohannon also gives attention to the social aspects of divorce. He describes divorce as a "complex social phenomenon as well as a complex personal experience" (Bohannon, 1970:29). In a society which tends to organize social life on the basis of couples rather than individuals, the man or woman, especially the woman, without a spouse is in an awkward position (Bernard, 1970:8).

Hunt also speaks of the social awkwardness of the divorced person's life. He notes that virtually all the leisure activities of adult society are built around couples rather than individuals (Hunt, 1967:145). He goes on to say that:

It is an extraordinary man - and an even more extraordinary woman - who can go alone to the ballet, a play, a country club, or a good restaurant, and be surrounded by people in pairs, without feeling acutely self-conscious and coming away moody and diminished in self-esteem (Hunt, 1967:145).

Nimkoff also notes that the divorced person finds that his social situation is not what it was before divorce, and that he must make adjustment to the altered position in which he finds himself (Nimkoff, 1934:448).

According to Bohannon, all divorced persons suffer because their community has been altered (Bohannon, 1970:31). The divorced person ceases to be a part of a couple, and as a result, friends take a different view of a person after divorce. Bohannon has also found that in many cases the change in community attitude is experienced by the divorced person as ostracism and disapproval (Bohannon, 1970:31). This feeling of being divorced from the community may cause the divorced person to wonder if anything in the world is stable. In the process of becoming an autonomous social individual again, the divorced person may also experience fear and loneliness (Bohannon, 1970:32).

Along with inner conflict, the divorced person also experiences the pressure of external forces. The opinions of the divorced person's relatives, friends, and acquaintances exert social pressure on him. According to Hunt, the interest and good wishes of these people thinly disguise their all-too-frequent disapproval and poor

opinion of his way of life (Hunt, 1967:145). He goes on to say that in order to regain their approval and good opinion of him, the divorced person feels that he must genuinely and openly fall in love (Hunt, 1967:145).

Hunt points out that the world around the divorced person views him as a failure. As a result, it becomes evident to the divorced person that to love again would prove that there is really nothing missing in him; and a successful marriage would demonstrate the kind of human being he really is (Hunt, 1967:145).

Thomas Eliot found that many divorced persons feel under social compulsion to suppress their regrets, to appear happy, and to show that they "don't care" (Eliot, 1948:629). A study conducted by William Goode reveals similar findings. In his study of 450 divorced urban mothers whose ages ranged from 20 to 38, Goode found that whenever the divorcee is permitted, she is likely to give a stereotyped answer which is in conformity with public expectations (Goode, 1949:400). This study also found that almost all of the women interviewed made specific attempts to fill the social gap caused by the absence of the husband (Goode, 1949:400).

Goode's study demonstrates the attempt to facilitate an internal resolution of emotional problems through external conformity with expectation. Goode claims that such incompatibilities are in themselves a source of emotional difficulty. He further explains that a major element in the so-called "divorce trauma" is the presence of such antitheses (Goode, 1949:49).

As evidenced in the literature, divorce carries with it many social problems for the divorced couple. It seems evident from the research cited that these problems, coupled with the internal problems experienced as a result of their loss, contribute to the painful struggle of the postdivorce period of adjustment.

The Process of Readjustment

The divorced person's continued reaction to his changed situation has been a matter of examination by such noted sociologists as Willard Waller. In the late 1920's, Waller attempted to ascertain the emotional costs of divorce by studying its effects upon the personalities of divorced persons. He found that the postdivorce process was essentially a traumatic one, in which there is a considerable breakdown of values and standards (Waller,

1930:135). His highly valued work remains the base line for any analysis of the postdivorce adjustment process.

The process of adjustment described by Waller consists of an extremely painful process of habit alteration (Waller, 1956:553). In relation to this process, Waller stated that:

The blocking of sex habits, ego habits, appetitive satisfactions in general - the whole set of habits of the married person's way of life - this sets into operation a number of processes as a result of which the individual comes to be a different individual with a changed set of habits in a new integration with one another (Waller, 1956:553).

He goes on to say that after each of these deprivation crises, the personality must slowly adjust to the changed situation.

According to Thomas Eliot, personality readjustments after divorce include compensatory behaviors which are either substitutive, defensive, or aggressive, and which may or may not prove satisfying or relaxing (Eliot, 1948: 626). Eliot also reveals that although the goals and tests of readjustment may not be conscious in the divorced persons, they are observable under the following heads: "the salving of wounded pride; the rechannelizing of living habits; the re-establishment of friendship groups;

the relaxation of tensions; the reorientation of sexual affection or substitution of love objects" (Eliot, 1948:625).

Nimkoff described divorce as "a crisis which demands two sets of adjustment" (Nimkoff, 1934:448). The divorced person must first accommodate himself to society. The second adjustment, which Nimkoff noted as the more difficult of the two, is the adjustment of the person within himself (Nimkoff, 1934:448).

In relation to adjustment, Hunt found that it is what the divorced person sees or believes about his own case that most affects his thinking about himself and his adjustment or maladjustment to his new status (Hunt, 1967: 26).

A relevant study investigated the relationship between adjustment and attitudinal changes about life which divorcees experienced. The sample population consisted of 65 white, middle-class divorcees living in Tallahassee, Florida. Four instruments were used: Divorcees Adjustment Instrument, IPAT Anxiety Scale Questionnaire, Brownfair's Self-Rating Inventory, and the Thorndike Dimensions of Temperament. The data were collected by mailed questionnaires. It was found that Breaking Old Habits was the most difficult stage in

which adjustment is achieved (Blair, 1970:5541-A-5542-A). This study revealed that constructive attitudinal changes about life and adjustment of divorcees are positively related.

Research has shown that the divorced person faces the task of restoring harmony to his emotional life. According to Nimkoff, the divorced person must effect a sexual adjustment; he must accustom himself to a changed routine; and he must cope with the feelings of loneliness which may overcome him (Nimkoff, 1934:448).

As has been previously noted, Eliot observed that personality readjustments after divorce include compensatory behaviors. From his studies of the overt behavior of the divorced, together with their personal autobiographical data, Eliot found varying evidence of

profound internal unadjustment [including:] suppressions, repressions, regressions, ambivalent motivations, blockages, cleavage between lust and love, loss of self-confidence and ambition, doubts, indecision, nightmare, and morbidly transferred attachments or aversions.

He concluded by stating that: "Full recoveries are rare" (Eliot, 1948:626-28).

Summary

In this chapter divorce was viewed as both a feeling state and a process of readjustment. The chapter was presented in three general sections which covered the following topics: postdivorce compared with bereavement; the social strain of divorce; and some problems of post-divorce adjustment.

Research pertaining to this area of divorce has shown that divorced persons experience a feeling of grief as real as do the widowed. It was seen that divorce results in the loss of a loved object just as fully as does the death of a spouse. In both situations this loss was seen as affecting the whole life situation of the person who suffered it.

Although the process of divorce has been likened to the process of recovery from a bereavement, it has been realized that there is no recognized way to mourn a divorce. The grief experienced by the divorced has to be worked out alone without the benefit of traditional rites. The literature indicates that the adjustment to postdivorce living is often more difficult than the readjustment process which follows the death of a spouse.

Divorce has been viewed as a social problem as well as a personal one. It has been shown that the divorced person finds that his social situation has been altered and that he must make serious adjustments to his new way of life. In a society whose social life tends to be based on couples rather than individuals, the divorced person often experiences a feeling of social awkwardness. Along with inner emotional conflict, the divorced person also experiences the social pressure of external forces. It seems that the divorced person constantly feels under social pressure to conform according to the expectations of the world around him.

Research has shown that divorce is generally anything but a trivial affair to those who experience it. As evidenced in the literature, divorced persons experience serious adjustments and alterations of living habits after divorce. According to Nimkoff, the success which the divorced person will have with his new social orientation depends to a large extent upon his ability to effect a satisfactory internal adjustment (Nimkoff, 1934:448).

CHAPTER III

SOME EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF DIVORCE

Introduction

Divorce is so common in the United States today that approximately one out of every four American marriages ends in divorce. This high rate of divorce increases the chances that counselors will encounter clients who have been divorced, who are going through a marital breakup, or who are destined to experience it. The researcher feels that in dealing with clients who are living through the events and experiences of a divorce, counselors must be aware of the emotional dynamics involved in divorce.

In the past, the termination of marriage by divorce has been viewed primarily as a sociological or legal problem with little attention given to the emotional and psychological aspects. Recently, however, research has shown that although divorce severs the legal contract between the husband and wife, it also leaves some emotional residues which must be dealt with by the divorced couple (Rieke, 1965:256).

According to Rieke, "No amount of legal ability can avoid the trauma produced by divorce" (Rieke, 1965:256).

It should be remembered that the experience of marriage had created a multitude of microscopic electrical contacts in the brains of the marriage partners, and that no judge's signature on a piece of paper can undo the many connections which will certainly endure after the divorce. And thus, although divorce severs the partnership of husband and wife, it never severs the relationship completely.

The circumstances of divorce, as has been previously mentioned, do not lend themselves to traditional rites of passage which help to shape and ease the process of readjustment. Rather, the divorced person must meet his new situation alone and without the aid of established patterns of behavior. Although research cannot take the sting or heartache out of divorce, it can, however, offer reassurance to divorced persons as they face their new lives.

The writer feels that in order to understand the psychological problems of divorce, a descriptive understanding of some of the emotions experienced by divorced persons is essential to understanding the emotional residues of divorce. In this chapter, some of the emotional effects of divorce will be explored. Research concerned with this topic will be presented in the

following manner: some of the primary emotions commonly experienced as a result of divorce and their relationship to the divorced person's self-concept will be described.

Some Primary Emotions Experienced by Divorced Persons

Research has shown that: "Divorce is an extremely painful experience for most people, as breaking close ties always is, even outside of marriage" (Bohannon, 1970:5). According to Nimkoff, when marriage fails of its purpose, husband and wife face a trying emotional experience (Nimkoff, 1934:447). Although there are few adequate and intensive studies on the emotional aspects of divorce, the literature does indicate the existence of primary emotions commonly experienced by divorced persons.

Research has demonstrated that divorce is one of the loneliest experiences that a person will have during his lifetime, in that the divorced individual is the only one who can experience it at that time. According to Angela Reed, divorce is a "totally separate way of life, a subculture which has mushroomed from the loneliness and longing of unhappy people" (Reed, 1970:142). Hunt maintains that: "Of all the negative feelings of the newly

separated, none are more common or important than loneliness" (Hunt, 1967:48). From his studies of divorced persons, he has found that only a minority escape the torment of loneliness, and that even those who greatly desired the end of the marriage often find their initial loneliness excruciating.

Clark Moustakas, a noted authority on the subject of loneliness, states that: "Existential loneliness is an intrinsic and organic reality of human life." He goes on to say that: "In existential loneliness man is fully aware of himself as an isolated and solitary individual" (Moustakas, 1961:24). According to Moustakas, there is a power and depth in loneliness which is unlike any other experience (Moustakas, 1961:8).

Feelings of loneliness take root deeply and manifest themselves in varied ways. In the case of divorce, the divorced person finds that he is suddenly single, and thus very much alone. Following this realization, a deep, inner loneliness may permeate his whole being. He may experience a feeling of emptiness, a sensation of having an empty pit in the stomach, and as a result wonder what is going on inside of him. He may also feel that he is totally isolated from others in that no one can possibly understand the pain

and loneliness which is deep inside of him. The passage which follows seems to capture the very core of the lonely experience:

Empty, that's how it feels to be lonely.
A sense of being in a deep dark pit, with nothing
in sight, and no way out. It feels like a dark
rainy day. Just there, just sitting there lonely,
It's like a blue, a dark blue, almost a black, but
then it's also a light blue, washed out and dingy.
It's a deep empty pit in your stomach (Moustakas, 1961:40).

Loneliness is a very private matter, an experience of raw sensitivity which the person must face by himself (Moustakas, 1961:8).

In the case of divorce, loneliness stems from what psychiatrists call "separation neurosis." Fromm-Reichmann emphasizes the serious implications of this neurotic anxiety by stating that: "The most unpleasant and at the same time the most universal experience, except loneliness, is anxiety" (Fromm-Reichmann, 1960:129). Holt and Winick have found that no matter how much preparation there has been for the divorce, the shock of a marriage's termination is likely to be so profound that it mobilizes tremendous separation anxiety (Holt & Winick, 1965:451). As is well known, the divorced person experiences the loss of and separation from a loved one in whom he had placed emotional

investment and with whom he had identified to some degree. Since the self is comprised of a series of identifications and emotional investments, it seems that the destruction of the external referent - that is, the former spouse - would be perceived and experienced as the destruction of an important aspect of one's own selfhood.

According to Harry Stack Sullivan's interpersonal theory of personality development and dynamics, the major value in a person's existence is his relationship with other persons (Sullivan, 1953:110-11). In our culture, the central value of human life is found in relationships in which there is a situation of mutual investment of affection such as that experienced in marriage. Switzer maintains that a threat to that major value in an individual's life results in a threat to his own being. He goes on to say that the perception of that threat cues the signal of anxiety (Switzer, 1970:105).

According to Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, anxiety is essentially the fear response to separation. She states that:

The conception of anxiety as the expression of the anticipated loss of love and approval, or separation, social isolation, or disruption of one's interpersonal relationships implies its close psychological affinity to loneliness. In fact, I believe that many of the emotional states to which psychiatrists refer as anxiety actually are states of loneliness or fear of loneliness (Fromm-Reichmann, 1960:132).

Rollo May shares with Fromm-Reichmann the concept of the anxiety-arousing power of the loss of love. Anxiety, as defined by May, is "the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value which the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality" (May, 1950:191). Again, this concept implies the fear of disapproval, loss of love, and disruption of interpersonal relationships which signal the response of anxiety.

It is agreed by theorists of anxiety - Fromm-Reichmann, Freud, Goldstein, Horney and May - that anxiety is a "diffuse" apprehension which is "unspecific," "vague," and "objectless" (May, 1950:191). May points out that the nature of anxiety can best be understood by realizing that it is a threat to the very "core or essence" of the personality which produces the anxiety. He explains that anxiety is "diffuse," "unspecific," and "vague" because of the level in the personality on which the threat is experienced. According to May, it is the security pattern of the individual which is threatened. He also explains

that anxiety is "objectless" because it "strikes at the basis of the psychological structure on which the perception of one's self as distinct from the world of objects occurs". (May, 1950:191-92).

Neurotic anxiety occurs when the incapacity for coping adequately with threats is due to inner psychological patterns and conflicts which prevent the individual from using his natural powers to find a constructive solution to the problem; the result being a defense from and an avoidance of the problem (May, 1950:199). And thus, neurotic anxiety is the great distorter of reality. It renders the individual psychologically helpless, interferes with his ability to change, with his growth, maturation and self-realization, and with his correct evaluation of his own and other peoples' interpersonal interactions (Fromm-Reichmann, 1960:142). In the case of divorce, the divorced person may conclude that because he has failed to achieve love in his marriage then he is not a loving person and that he is incapable of love. He may begin to have self-doubts, and thus to feel that something is wrong with him. In searching for answers to the reasons for his marital failure, he may conclude that it was all his fault and that he is a failure. He may become so fearful of the disapproval of others that

he may accept what he perceives to be negative judgments from others as being accurate; this may tend to reinforce his own feeling that something is wrong with him. This feeling of anxiety may also cause the divorced person to experience a fear of the future and a dread that he will fail again. And thus, the divorced person may become preoccupied with his future and may constantly fear that the future will provide him only nothingness and meaninglessness. This anxiety about the future is clearly described in the passage which follows:

Sometimes I wonder what will become of me
 My heart yearns for permanence which never can be
 I do not know a real face any more
 And my compassion is misplaced
 The spontaneity and joy and continuity are gone
 Where is the beginning which remains
 Where is the heart which speaks only truth
 No where, no more, will I find commitment to meet mine
 To live a lie, to die of life, to search in failure
 Is this to be my destiny? (Moustakas, 1961:34).

And thus, divorced persons have to deal with a sense of failure for they have experienced defeat in one of life's most significant undertakings.

Divorce represents the culmination of a marriage that has already failed. Elliott describes divorce as being "the final revelation of a broken faith, an open admission of a marriage which failed" (Elliott, 1948:685). Kenneth and Irene Donelson have noted that divorced persons

often feel that because their marriage has broken up they are doomed as a failure (Donelson & Donelson, 1969:173). According to Nimkoff, this feeling of failure may well cause the divorced person to question his own judgment and adaptability (Nimkoff, 1934:448). He further explains that:

. . . perhaps above all other things, the divorced person must deal with the problem of self-reproach. There is a tendency to blame oneself for errors made in the past, to imagine that things would have been different had one only acted differently at such and such a time (Nimkoff, 1934:448).

While indulging in this secret self-reproach, the divorced person may become so unsure of his own abilities and so mistrustful of himself that he may become fearful of failing again (Hunt, 1967:141-42),

Research indicates that divorce has "frightening implications as to the extent of personal disappointment, disillusionment, and hurt" (Coleman, 1964:159). According to Donelson and Donelson, divorce is at times very similar to an earthquake. There is often a violent wrench at the start followed by "after shocks" of grief, guilt, resentment, self-pity, frustration, and feelings of failure (Donelson & Donelson, 1969:173). From their law practice they have found that within a matter of hours the divorced person may fluctuate from feelings of grief over the loss

of his spouse to feelings of resentment because his spouse has left him. They go on to explain that the divorced person will also experience the "after shock" of self-pity. During this period of shock, the divorced person will ask himself such questions as: "Why did my marriage have to go sour? or Why did this happen to me?" (Donelson & Donelson, 1969:173).

Emphasis on personal responsibility forces the divorced person to carry the burden of shame and guilt for his broken marriage (Steinzor, 1969:16). And yet, it has been found that these feelings of failure, guilt, and shame not only weaken the divorced person's ability to readjust, but also shatter his self-concept, self-assurance and feelings of personal adequacy (Donelson & Donelson, 1969: 173; Steinzor, 1969:6).

Instead of increasing an individual's capacity for self-development and tolerance, guilt can drive a person into feelings of self-pity and self-punishment. To the extent that the divorced person views his divorce as a shameful step and a tragedy, his self-concept will also be affected. Research confirms that self-respect has much to do with one's identity; and thus, the individual who experiences a loss of status or self-respect by divorce often feels that he has lost the cornerstone of his

identity (Steinzor, 1969:12). As a result, the divorced person experiences feelings of inferiority at the very time when he greatly needs self-respect and self-support to help him face his new situation.

From counseling the divorced, Steinzor has found that this "unreasoning guilt" can push an individual into either withdrawal from others or spiteful retaliation (Steinzor, 1969:6). Thomas Eliot confirms this view by noting that the divorced may fluctuate between "craving sympathy and dreading pity," as well as between "revenge and remorse" (Eliot, 1948:629).

Dr. Martin Goldberg emphasizes the importance for a person who is angry or resentful to have an opportunity to express that anger or resentment. He also points out that if, for some reason, the need to externalize these emotions is not fulfilled, the divorced person may become hopelessly trapped in the deep and persistent rut of depression (Goldberg, 1973:150).

Depression, as described by Goldberg, represents an internalization of anger, the result of a process whereby angry feelings are turned inward on the self (Goldberg, 1973:150). If the divorced person is expected to be strong all of the time and has no one to whom he can

admit his resentments and anxieties, he will become a "first-class prospect for later emotional disturbances" (Klemer, 1965:211).

According to Dr. Klemer, divorced individuals "must deal with their feelings of emotional emptiness, hostility, self-punishment and bitterness," He further emphasizes that it is especially important for a person to have an opportunity to express what he is feeling. He concludes by stating that: "Those feelings should be expressed rather than repressed" (Klemer, 1965:211).

Summary

In this chapter some emotional effects of divorce were explored and described. Particular emphasis was placed on some of the primary emotions commonly experienced as a result of divorce and their relationship to the divorced person's self-concept.

Research pertaining to the emotional effects of divorce has shown that divorce is an extremely painful experience for most people. It was seen that divorce does not end everything about a marriage and that many emotions endure after the divorce has become final. Divorce was seen as a cause, as well as a consequence, of human misery.

Although divorce severs the legal contract between husband and wife, it has been recognized that divorce does not resolve all of the problems experienced by the divorced couple. Rather, it also leaves some emotional residues which must be dealt with after the divorce.

Research has shown the existence of some primary emotions commonly shared by divorced persons. As evidenced in the literature, divorced persons often experience anxiety, failure, lack of affection, existential loneliness, frustration, resentment, anger, guilt, depression, and fear of the future. These emotions were seen as affecting the self-concept of the divorced person who experienced them.

Divorce has been viewed as one of the loneliest experiences that a person will encounter during the course of his life, in that the divorced person must face his loneliness by himself. It was seen that divorce is also a period of extreme anxiety. Research has shown that the divorced person experiences a sense of failure which may cause him to have self-doubts about his own capabilities for love and for success in future relationships. It was also shown that the divorced person is burdened with feelings of frustration, resentment, anger and guilt which,

if not externalized, can cause the divorced person to be trapped in a deep depression. Along with inner emotional conflict, the divorced person also experiences a fear of the future. It seems that divorce results in an emotionally trying experience which requires a considerable amount of strength in order to cope with such feelings as emptiness, meaninglessness, fear and depression.

In light of the universality of divorce and its impact upon human life, remarkably little has been written on this area of human distress with the purpose of clarifying precisely the inner emotional dynamics involved in the divorce situation. It is hoped that this research on some of the emotional residues of divorce will provide a foundation which may lead toward the increasing clarification and more adequate handling of the emotions which many divorced persons have experienced and which many individuals will certainly experience again. It is also hoped that this paper will be useful to counselors, psychologists, lawyers, and all other individuals who in their professional roles or who because of personal relationships are called upon to deal with divorced persons. Although it is realized that research cannot eliminate

the trauma and pain of divorce, it can hopefully, however, offer reassurance to divorced persons as they meet their new situation.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study explored and described some of the emotional residues experienced by divorced persons. Particular emphasis was placed on some of the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced individuals and some of the problems of postdivorce adjustment. This study also investigated some of the primary emotions commonly experienced as a result of divorce and their relationship to the divorced person's self-concept.

Conclusions

In the past, the termination of a marriage by divorce has been viewed primarily as a sociological or legal problem with little attention given to the emotional aspects. However, the researcher has found that it has now been realized that the problems resulting from divorce are not only real but are in need of greater attention. Despite this new willingness to recognize and give attention to the emotional residues experienced by divorced persons, there remains a lack of systematic field research in this area.

In light of the universality of divorce as well as its emotional impact on those experiencing it, remarkably little has been written on the emotional effects of divorce upon divorced persons. It seems suprising to the investigator that the field of psychology, "the science of human behavior," has largely ignored the emotional aspects of this area of human distress. However, the investigator contends that divorce is not a topic comfortably encompassed perhaps because of the emotionally tinged dimensions of the divorce experience which makes it particularly difficult for divorced individuals to be meaningful research subjects.

Although specific data pertaining to the emotional residues of divorce was difficult to find, research pertaining to divorce has shown the existence of some emotional effects and some problems of postdivorce adjustment commonly experienced by divorced persons.

Research has shown that divorce does not resolve all of the problems experienced by the divorced couple. Rather it also leaves some emotional residues which must be dealt with after the divorce.

As evidenced in the literature, divorce is a period of extreme anxiety. It was seen that this anxiety is precipitated by separation, fear of disapproval, loss of

love, and disruption of interpersonal relationships.

Research has shown that anxiety prevents the divorced person from using his natural abilities to find a constructive solution to his problems, and thus, it renders him psychologically helpless. It was also seen that divorced persons may experience a sense of failure and that they are often burdened with feelings of guilt, frustration, anger and resentment.

Research has demonstrated that divorce is one of the loneliest experiences that a person will have during his lifetime. It was seen that the loneliness and lack of affection experienced by the divorced person often create such feelings of emptiness inside of him that he may view the future as being hopeless and meaningless. It was also shown that these emotions affect the self-concept of the divorced person who experiences them.

The research has also shown that divorce is a social problem as well as a personal one. It was seen that the divorced person finds that his social situation has been seriously altered and that his new way of life presents such problems as social awkwardness and discomfort. Divorced persons also experience social pressure to conform to the expectations of others. The literature has also shown

that divorced persons experience serious adjustments and alterations of living habits after divorce. It was seen that these postdivorce adjustments present emotional and social difficulties for the divorced.

The divorce situation has been viewed as being similar to the period of bereavement. It was seen that divorce results in the loss of a loved object just as fully as does the death of a spouse. Divorced persons experience grief as real as do the widowed. However, it has been realized that the grief experienced by the divorced has to be worked out alone and without the aid of traditional rites of passage.

Divorce may be viewed as both a feeling state and a process of readjustment. Research has demonstrated that adjustment to postdivorce living is a difficult process involving serious alteration of previous living habits. It has also been seen that divorce is an extremely painful as well as an emotionally trying experience for most people.

Recommendations

In light of the evidence indicating that the emotional residues experienced by divorced persons are emotionally trying and painful and due to the lack of

specific data on this area of human distress, the researcher feels that certain recommendations are necessary. The recommendations are as follows:

It is the opinion of the investigator that more research is greatly needed in order to clarify and explain the emotional residues experienced by divorced persons. The researcher feels that a descriptive understanding of the emotional effects of divorce and the problems of postdivorce adjustment is essential to understanding the emotional problems encountered by divorced individuals. The researcher also feels that more research needs to be done to determine more precisely the extent to which the divorced person's self-concept is affected by the experience of divorce. And thus, the researcher suggests that further research and more specific studies be conducted on this aspect of divorce so that the primary emotions and problems of post-divorce adjustment commonly experienced as a result of divorce may be acknowledged and understood.

With the ever increasing number of divorced persons, and thus, the increasing number of lonely, distressed individuals, the researcher feels that it is of utmost importance that it be realized that divorce is a consequence, as well as a cause, of human misery. In light of this

acknowledgment, the researcher also feels that much would be achieved if divorce were heeded less and marriage more. Thus, the researcher would like to recommend that further investigation be made into aspects of a healthy marriage so that marital failure may be prevented. It is also recommended that workshops for married couples, marriage counselors and others who are interested in the causes of divorce be established at universities and at local schools in order to help those who are having marital problems.

In light of the research which indicates that divorce does not necessarily resolve the problems of the couple, the researcher feels that if better known, the emotional price exacted by divorce would most likely deter many couples from initiating divorce procedures without serious consideration. And thus, the researcher suggests that the courts make it mandatory that all couples engage in marriage counseling before the divorce is granted.

As has been indicated in the literature, divorced persons do not have the aid of traditional rites of passage to help them cope with the adjustments which they must make to their new way of life. Recognizing that the adjustment to postdivorce living is a difficult process, the researcher feels that it should be realized that considerable strength

is needed to cope with the loss of love, the feeling of failure, the loneliness, the anxiety, the guilt, the frustrations, the fears of the future and similar consequences of divorce. And thus, the researcher recommends that the need for continued guidance after divorce should be recognized and more frequently urged.

From a reflex point of view, it is clear that an individual forms associations between words and sensations and that the word, as a conditioned stimulus, can signal the reaction which is evoked by the situation which the word describes (Salter, 1961:23). It seems evident to the researcher that the word "divorce" may call forth in the divorced person the emotional disturbances associated with his divorce. It also seems likely that due to the negative connotation of this word, that the word "divorce" may produce for the divorced person conditioned reactions such as: Something is wrong with me; I am incapable of success in future relationships; I am a failure; etc. In relation to this knowledge, the researcher suggests that recognition be made of the impact which such labels as "divorce" have on those persons associated with these labels.

It has also been realized that emotional conditioning exists without awareness and that we are unconsciously

influenced and affected by the way others react to us; in fact, we become the reactions (Salter, 1961:36). In the case of divorce, divorced persons are seriously affected by the way others respond to them and to their divorce. And thus, the researcher also suggests that it be acknowledged and understood that negative reactions to divorced persons greatly affect them in that these reactions may cause these individuals to develop negative feelings about themselves.

The researcher feels that it is of great importance that therapists be aware of the inner emotional conflicts experienced by divorced persons. The need also exists for therapists to be aware that in many cases they can be most effective in helping clients who are undergoing the painful process of divorce. The researcher feels that a therapy which would be most effective in helping divorced persons deal with their emotional trauma is one in which therapists are willing to listen in an understanding and nonjudgmental manner. It is the opinion of the researcher that therapy should be a meeting of two persons in which the therapist is openly and freely himself and thus can enter freely and acceptantly into the world of his client. The researcher feels that it is of major importance that clients be

encouraged to express their emotions rather than keeping them bottled up inside. It is the feeling of the researcher that in order for an individual to restore his mind to its natural and healthy state of excitation he must learn to express his emotions openly and honestly, thus giving vent to the many emotions pent up inside of him. In the case of divorce, divorced persons must learn to ventilate their emotions so that they may relieve the tensions involved in the inner emotional conflict which they may be experiencing. And thus, the researcher concludes by recommending that the need for therapy after divorce be more fully recognized and urged.

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