



Mediation as 'Cura Animarum': Dealing with Disputes within the Greek Orthodox Parish

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Abstract

This study aims to provide an analysis of the third party intervention conducted by Greek Orthodox Christian priests in disputes involving members of their parishes. Its objective is to reveal the ways in which cultural-religious value systems influence the behaviour of faithfuls and mediator-priests in the given context, as well as the development of perceptions on the desirable outcome. By exploring this informal, geographically specific mediation practice, this study sheds light on the prosocial values and praxes underlying the process, and discusses the factors that help Greek Orthodox priests resolve interpersonal conflicts within the ecology of their parishes.

Mediation as '*Cura Animarum*': Dealing with Disputes within the Greek Orthodox Parish

Socio-cultural norms, values and expectations constitute catalysts for the way a society approaches conflict, as well as for the processes considered acceptable or desirable for its resolution. Even though conflict appears to be part of our common human condition, the way in which "persons in different cultural contexts express and reveal conflicts...and what kind of conflict resolution they prefer, must be considered in their specific cultures" (Mayer, Boness, Coesebrink, & Barr 2004, p. 15). Conflicts evolve within a framework of rules and values about what is worth fighting for; what kinds of wrongs warrant action; what the normal or moral way to overcome them is; and what kinds of remedies are acceptable (Ross 1997; Merry & Silbey, as cited in Grillo 2001, p. 84). Similarly, religion as a system of worldviews and praxes sketches in important ways the landscape, within which a society develops perceptions of conflict, conflict behaviour, and preferable resolution processes by providing an "interpretation of the world and the place of human beings in it, [and] an account on *how life should be lived given that interpretation*," (Yandell 1999, p. 16, emphasis added). Given these insights, it is not uncommon for conflict resolution mechanisms to be associated with religious rituals and practices, usually under the guidance and with the involvement of religious figures such as priests, rabbis, ulama (Islamic scholars) and ministers, depending on what their role within their communities is perceived to be.

The influence of religion in a society's attitude towards conflict and the development of religio-culturally informed conflict resolution processes have been the focus of much scholarly work (e.g. Gopin 2001; Abu-Nimer 1996; Moussalli 1997; Köse and Beriker 2012; Greenhouse 1986; Nader 1990; Leung, Tremain, Koch, & Lu 2002). There are also several scholarly works on traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, either religious-oriented or not, which can be found in many human societies throughout the world (e.g. Meyer 2001; Barrett & Barrett 2004; Moussalli 1997; Weyrauch & Bell 2001; Gronfors 1997; Çelik & Shkreli 2010). Although they may not necessarily originate from religious values and understandings, these practices differ from secular third party interventions, as practiced primarily in Northern American and Europe, on a number of accounts, which may include: a) emphasis on spirituality and religious identity; b) use of religious scripts; c) emphasis on religious values; d) employment of religious rituals during the process; and e) involvement of religious figures and faith based actors as third parties (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). In these processes, the basic mechanisms of eliciting pro-

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3 social behaviour are often informed by religious values and are typically rooted in community praxis, with
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5 third parties referencing values such as harmony, love, justice, brotherhood, forgiveness, honour and peace
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7 in their effort to obtain parties' compliance.
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10 With the intention of contributing to this rich literature on traditional and religio-culturally
11 informed conflict resolution processes, in this study we examine the role of Greek Orthodox priests in
12 resolving conflicts within their parishes in an effort to reveal the ways in which cultural-religious values
13 and norms influence the mediation process and outcome in the given context. We try to answer the
14 following questions: why are priests requested to intervene as third parties in disputes involving
15 parishioners? What is their role as mediators? What are the strategies they employ during the process and
16 what determines their choice of mediator strategy? What is defined as the desirable outcome of the process
17 and what are the key factors affecting the outcome? The study, through an exploration of the above
18 questions, attempts to engage both a regional and an international audience in a discussion on a
19 phenomenon that may be common across state boundaries in the region, as well as in different societies
20 throughout the world.
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31 Although in the recent years, the Greek society has increasingly secularized and first steps have
32 been taken towards institutionalization of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, it is not
33 uncommon for people involved in low-intensity, interpersonal conflicts to seek the support of long-
34 established and culturally-rooted processes to effectively deal with the issues they face. Unofficial, less-
35 structured, and uninstitutionalised as these processes may be, they appear to resonate within a given religio-
36 cultural reservoir, and speak to the hearts and minds of people who feel a strong attachment to their
37 parishes as the molecular unit within the Greek Orthodox Church. Discussing the above questions offers
38 the opportunity to take a closer look at the inner workings of such unofficial, interpersonal conflict
39 resolution processes and explore the ways in which Greek Orthodox priests, still having a prominent role in
40 their parishes, intervene in interpersonal disputes to achieve the dual goal of resolving the immediate
41 disputes at hand and help parishioners advance spiritually.
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52 In the context of Greek Orthodox religious communities, perceptions on, and responses to conflict
53 occurrence are, up to a certain extent, influenced by Christian values and norms, with faithfuls commonly
54 bringing their disputes before priests. As such interventions take place in the frames of Greek Orthodox
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3 priests' pastoral service, before we delve deeper into our analysis of the intervention process, we will, first,
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5 discuss the role and status of priests in their parishes in an effort to familiarize the reader with the given
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7 cultural environment and contextualize priests' function as third parties.
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11 *Cura Animarum: Pastoral Service and the Role of Priests in Greek Orthodox Communities*
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14 Third party intervention by the Greek priests is rooted in the religio-cultural collective experience
15 of Greek Orthodox communities. Historically, until the emergence of modern nationalisms and the creation
16 of nation states, the Catholic Christian Church in Western Europe and the Eastern Orthodox Church in
17 South-eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean constituted the central mediation and conflict
18 management mechanisms within their respective societies, with clergy mediating "...family disputes,
19 criminal cases, and diplomatic disputes among the nobility" (Moore 2003, p.21). When it comes to Eastern
20 Christianity, this function of the clergy as agents of conflict management is naturally rooted in a
21 religiously-informed understanding of their overall instructive role within their communities. At the same
22 time, it came as the product of primarily two historical processes. Firstly, until the Edict of Milan issued by
23 Constantine the Great in 313 AD, which rendered the Eastern Roman Empire neutral in regards to religious
24 worship, Christians avoided taking their disputes to state courts. On the one hand, they considered it
25 inappropriate to resolve their disputes by resorting to the institutions of a pagan state, and on the other hand
26 they were afraid of being abused by Roman authorities. Thus, Christian priests used to substitute the
27 Roman judges. Secondly, during the Ottoman Ages the Greek Orthodox Church within the territory
28 controlled by the Ottoman Empire acquired an ethnarchic position. Among its duties was the trial of cases –
29 even civil cases- concerning the differences among Orthodox Christians; church courts were formed to
30 fulfil this duty. Consequently, responsible for the religious, as well as for the civil law was the same person:
31 "the bishop as spiritual leader and the bishop as a judge" (Kalliakmanis 2005, p. 147).
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49 In fact, it is since the inception of Christianity that clergy has played an important role within the
50 Christian communities. The word church refers not only to the gathering of people in one place, but also to
51 the community of faithfuls that have responded to the calling of Jesus. Parish is the molecular being of the
52 Church, "where the faithfuls experience in a given place and time the actualization of the Church: a society
53 of people, united in the name of Christ in one body, one confraternity, one family" (Gikas 2005, p. 50). In
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3 the Greek Christian Orthodox tradition, the parish functions as a pedagogic community, calling and
4 embracing the believers. The *raison d'être* of the Church is to serve better the faithfuls and bring into
5 success its ultimate mission: lead the faithfuls to salvation in Christ.
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9 The term pastoral service (*pimantiki*) is related to the verb shepherd (*pimeno*) and it refers to any
10 type of care by the 'shepherd' (*pimenas*) towards the faithfuls, the people of God, the minded flock (Gikas
11 2005). Since the very foundation of the Christian Church the term 'shepherd' has been established as the
12 image of the 'notable' in the first Christian communities. The term 'shepherd' is used by St. Peter, who
13 prompts the presbyters to herd the flock of God (Rodopoulos 1996). Thus, 'pastoral service' refers to the
14 personal interaction between the shepherd and the laity to satisfy the spiritual needs of the faithfuls. In
15 order to define the content of the pastoral service, Vasilios the Great uses the term 'care for the soul' (*cura*
16 *animarum*); Gikas 2005, p. 19). The shepherd as the spiritual leader of the parish is responsible for guiding
17 the faithfuls to truth and salvation. He is the bosom and patron of all parishioners and should fulfill his duty
18 with disinterestedness and self-sacrifice. The priest should keep in mind that his mission is not to exercise
19 authority over the laity, but to act as an agent of God, being the servant of the faithfuls and leading them to
20 benediction (Gikas 2005, p. 75). Perhaps the most important duty of the priest is –through pastoral service–
21 to inspire *love* among the members of the community, as love was defined by Jesus as the only path to
22 salvation. In Orthodox Christianity, love is thought to be the first and most valued quality in human efforts
23 to reach salvation, and this is evident in an emphatic way in the Christian scriptures. One could find a
24 multiplicity of examples, where love is cited as the ultimate value, upon which the Christian ethos should
25 be built. Illustrating for the significance of love is the following excerpt from Paul's First Epistle to
26 Corinthians, which is widely known as the 'Hymn to Love' (Cor. 13, 1-8):
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46 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I become sounding
47 brass, or a clanging cymbal; and if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries
48 and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I
49 am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be
50 burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love
51 envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly,
52 seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in
53 unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things,
54 hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth.

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56 When the faithfuls live in love they do not seek for the satisfaction of their own interest, neither do
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3 they render themselves the centre of their actions; rather, they set as a goal the satisfaction of the near-by.
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5 In the Christian ethos, the example of Jesus, who sacrificed himself for the sake of all humans, is to be
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7 followed (*'Imitatio Christi'*). According to the Christian beliefs, Jesus became a man out of his love for
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9 human and love is the key to the new life he offers. Thus, it is reasonable that inspiring love among
10
11 community members is the reference point of pastoral service.
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13 Another value of importance in Christianity is *forgiveness*, which in many ways is considered to
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15 be a by-product of love. Faithfuls are continuously called in everyday life to show forgiveness or ask for it
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17 and restore damaged relationships with their fellow humans. Forgiveness of the other is connected in
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19 Christianity to the forgiveness the faithful will receive in the heavens, as it is considered an oxymoron to
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21 ask the mercy of God without the Christian forgiving the sins of those, who have harmed her/him. It is
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23 important here to note that in principle forgiveness in Christianity is not necessarily related to justice. It is
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25 the product of love for the fellow humans and it is to be shown as such, therefore unconditionally. In the
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27 Christian tradition, the new order that Jesus gave to his students was to love, not only their friends, but also
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29 their enemies. The achievement of this task passes through forgiveness. This value is widely emphasized in
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31 the religious instruction and guidance by the shepherds and there are many excerpts in the Scriptures that
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33 underline its importance in Christian life.¹ Accordingly, the priest, as the spiritual leader of the parish and
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35 responsible for the guidance of the faithfuls, attempts in his pastoral service to inspire love –and
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37 forgiveness, as its product- among the members of the community; this is evident in every aspect of the
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39 pastoral activity such as sermon, religious instruction, social care and, importantly, the mystery of
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41 Confession.
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43 Although not all priests are confessors, the mystery of confession has a special place in pastoral
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45 service. Confession is believed to be a God-established action, during which God through the priest

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47 ¹ For example, see: Matt. 18:21-22: *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I*
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49 *forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven*
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51 *times, but seventy-seven times. Jn 20:22-23: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are*
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53 *forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. Matt. 6:14-16: For if you forgive men when*
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55 *they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins,*
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57 *your Father will not forgive your sins.*
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3 forgives the wrongdoings of the confessant. For this to happen, sincere penitence is a necessary condition.
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5 The current practice of the mystery of repentance and confession constitute an amalgam of two different
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7 axis of the long ecclesiastic history. "On the one hand there is the mystery of confession and forgiveness
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9 and on the other hand there is the spiritual guidance and instruction" (ISEE 2007, p. 87). The religious
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11 instruction and advice by the priest during the mystery of confession are important as they refer to the
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13 issues of spiritual advancement. The shepherd through his words fulfils a task of salvation, guiding the
14
15 faithfuls to the Kingdom of Heaven. However, the advice he gives concerning everyday affairs is not to be
16
17 underestimated, since "every human action can either hinder or facilitate the spiritual progress of a person"
18
19 (ISEE 2007, p. 86).

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21 The relationship developed between the priest and the confessant is similar to the relationship
22
23 between a father and a child. The nature and the purpose of the mystery, the character of the relationship
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25 between the confessor and the faithful, and the fact that confessants bear their soul to the priest, renders
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27 necessary the confidential character of this interaction. In this process, the attitude of the priest is believed
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29 to be one of love and tenderness towards the confessant, not one of criticism (Rodopoulos 1996). Important
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31 here is the personalization of the pastoral care. The priest takes into consideration the different
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33 characteristics of each person in order to render spiritual instruction more effective (Kalliakmanis 2005),
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35 thus, vesting the pastoral service with a personal dimension. As presented later in this study, a great number
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37 of requests for priests' intervention take place in the frames of the mystery of confession and on the basis of
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39 the personal relationship that has been developed between priests and their laity.

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41 The above insights illustrate that through the pastoral service priests get to be seen as an authority
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43 when it comes to spiritual guidance of the faithfuls, providing spiritual instruction on how life should be led
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45 according to the Christian ethos. Part of this instruction may concern the proper responses of faithfuls in the
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47 face of conflict. Through this everyday dialectic engagement with their laity, priests develop strong
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49 personal relations with their parishioners; this establishes the necessary degree of familiarity and trust that
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51 makes faithfuls feel comfortable asking for priests' advice or, as a further step, their active intervention in
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53 conflicts they face in their everyday lives. As will be discussed later in this study, the inspiration of love
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55 and forgiveness appear to have a special place in priests' intervention, with the promotion of these key
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57 values being an overarching goal of the mediation process explored in this study.
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Greek Orthodox Priests as Social Network Mediators

Mediation, a form of third party intervention in conflict, particularly of a non-binding, non-coercive character is in many ways as old as conflict itself (Bercovitch & Houston 1996). The third party enters the dyadic relationship of the disputants and attempts to assist them reach a commonly acceptable solution. Mediation may take different forms, informed by the mediator's identity and by a series of contextual factors.

Christopher Moore (2003) makes a distinction between three broad types of mediators: a) authoritative mediators; b) independent mediators; and c) social network mediators. The first type of mediator has an authoritative relationship to the disputants, mostly because of an official position s/he holds within an organization or a community. Independent mediators are usually outsiders, who have no vested interest in the dispute they are called to intervene in. They draw their legitimacy from the fact that they are perceived as objective, neutral and professional. Finally, social network mediators are usually respected community leaders, elders or religious figures, who enjoy respect, trust and recognition from community members, and are thought to be capable of maintaining positive relationships between the parties and within their social network.

Greek Orthodox priests, although to some extent have an authoritative status within their communities, apart from their spiritual authority ('embedded power') they maintain a continuous relationship with disputants. It is this relationship, which they capitalize on in order to help parties find a solution in the problems they commonly face. Also, in the disputes they mediate they have prior and expected relationship with the parties; they are generally perceived as fair by the parties; have a primary concern of promoting stable long-term relationship between the parties; are often involved in the implementation of agreements; keep relationship with the parties after their intervention; and use their personal influence to promote adherence to agreement, which can classify them as social network mediators in Moore's terminology (2003).

In Greece, with the rise of the secular state, the range of people and institutions that undertook third-party functions expanded, a process that reflected developments in other parts of Europe, where according to Moore "although the clergy continued to play a role as intermediaries in local, intercommunal

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3 and interstate relations, the rise of the rule of law and nation-states led to the growth of secular
4 intermediaries. Secular judges both mediated and issued judicial rulings" (2003, p. 22). This evolution, the
5 social transformations that came with the emergence of the secular state in the West, and the increase in the
6 number of conflict management-oriented processes available at people's disposal, naturally led to a
7 decrease in the frequency in which people sought the help of priests in dealing with disputes. Undoubtedly,
8 in modern-day Greece the third party intervention process explored in this study does not necessarily
9 constitute the most common dispute resolution process that people resort to in the face of conflict.
10 However, it is still a common phenomenon for people to approach their community priests and ask for their
11 assistance, especially when it comes to low-intensity, interpersonal disputes.
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21 At the time this research was conducted, official ADR was non-existent in the country and still
22 resorting to ADR processes has not become a common practice in Greece, yet. Moreover, the type of third
23 party intervention examined in this study does not centre on a structured process, at least not in the same
24 way that one can talk about structured ADR interventions in a Northern American setting, as in the typical
25 cases of mediation, arbitration or other forms of collaborative and cooperative practices. Rather, what one
26 sees in priests' intervention is a lack of a predetermined, structured approach in dealing with the disputes
27 brought to them; overall, the process takes place in a private setting that is informal, voluntary, and
28 uninstitutionalised.
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39 *Methodology*

40 This study aims to understand Greek priests' role in resolving interpersonal disputes as social
41 network mediators. The first author of this article undertook semi-structured interviews with Greek
42 Orthodox priests during August and September 2007 in Northern Greece. The method used to reach out
43 interviewees was snowball sampling technique, through a process of consultation with priests, with whom
44 the researcher was already familiar. In total, the sample included 14 priests serving in different parishes
45 throughout Northern Greece. Seven of them served in villages and the remaining seven in cities. 11 of the
46 interviewees were graduates of Theological Universities, two of them of Ecclesiastical High Schools, and
47 one of them did not have a secondary education. Nine interviews were tape-recorded, whereas five priests
48 were disinclined to be tape recorded, so the researcher kept detailed notes of the discussions. All interview
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3 records and interviewee identities were kept confidential and interviewees were informed about their right
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5 to withdraw during the interview.
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7 The interview protocol used for the present study comprised two parts. First, it included a series of
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9 open-ended questions to collect general information about the intervention process and outcome. This first
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11 part of the protocol included questions about the priests' personal background; the nature of disputes
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13 brought to them; typical steps they take during the process; the methods/techniques they use to address
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15 disputes; and the outcome of their intervention. In order to understand the priests' tactics, we used a
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17 framework provided by Wall and Callister (1999), which was developed to capture mediation practices in
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19 indigenous cultural settings. Here, the interviewees were not presented with the Wall and Callister list of
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21 techniques in the form of a check list, being asked which of the listed steps and tactics they use; rather, we
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23 asked them a number of open-ended questions on what steps they take after they make the decision to
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25 intervene in a given dispute between parishioners, as well as what specific tactics they use during the
26
27 process. Many of their answers corresponded to techniques listed in Wall and Callister's framework, while
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29 some additions were also made to the list, informed by our interviewee's responses (the last three
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31 techniques listed in Table 1). Table 1 –adapted from Wall and Callister- offers a breakdown of those
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33 tactics. Based on our interviewee's answers, what follows –in the beginning of the findings section- is a
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35 description of some typical steps taken by the priest-mediators during their intervention.
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37 *[Insert table 1 here]*
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39 In the second part of the protocol, the interviewees were asked to narrate mediation cases that they
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41 most vividly remembered. In addition, during their narrations, informants were asked a series of open-
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43 ended questions that would help the respondents to focus on the related parts of the case they would
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45 narrate, and avoid 'non-response errors' (Willis 2005). In total, informants narrated 30 cases of disputes
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47 that had been brought to them.

48 After we collected the responses of our interviewees, we looked for meaning and action patterns
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50 commonly shared among the interviewees to better understand the thinking and praxis behind this type of
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52 third party intervention. In addition, a key goal of this endeavour, which was not only descriptive, but also
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54 exploratory, was to understand what informs the mediator's approach in the given context, what
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56 interviewees define as success, and how success comes about in practice.
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Ideally, in order to enhance the study's credibility it would be desirable to include in our interviewee sample community members, who had sought the intervention of priests. However, it would be impossible for the researcher to engage people in this task, as the nature of the disputes is usually very personal and community members would be unwilling to participate in the interviews. Additionally, the majority of interventions actually take place during the mystery of confession, which is characterized by a high degree of confidentiality between the confessor and the confessant. Thus, confessors can neither reveal a great deal of personal info about the participants, nor, of course, direct the researcher to them. Similarly, these contextual factors did not allow for participant observation of the intervention process, which could reveal a great deal on this type of mediation. For these reasons, for our research we had to rely on the insights offered by the priests alone. It is true that the self-reporting, non-observational character of this study is a limitation (e.g. correspondence between mediator claims and actual mediator behaviour cannot be established); however, it is our belief that even self-reporting can offer insights into the culturally rich mediation processes. It also allows the researcher to explore how the mediator understands and approaches his own role in the intervention through stating what he pays attention to in regards to both the process and the outcome.

Findings:

Priests are typically approached by at least one of the disputants, who request their intervention. At a first stage, priests seem to prefer to meet disputants separately either in the Church, or in the disputants' home, or in some cases at the priest's house, trying to elicit their views on the dispute, and generally gather information from them about the dispute. According to informants' responses, meeting disputants separately allows them to get familiar with the details of the dispute in a calmer setting. In this stage priests attempt to educate the parties providing advice on how they should think and act, also presenting what the other disputant's point of view may be, thus promoting the development of empathetic understanding between the parties.

In most cases, as a next step, priests also bring disputants together; in this stage, they employ a number of tactics to help parties deal constructively with the issues they face: they reframe each party's arguments so as to allow them to listen to and understand each other's point of view; they provide an

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3 analytical view on the issues, helping parties move beyond the surface of the dispute and approach it in a
4 collaborative way; when tensions emerge, they use their authority to make statements to calm disputants;
5 they urge parties to apologize when they need to; they call for forgiveness and reconciliation; they pray –
6 either alone or with the parties; they call for empathy and respect; they remind parties of each other's
7 positive qualities, often making reference to parties' interdependency; they bring to the parties' attention
8 any costs the dispute may have to other/third parties; they use metaphors and examples mainly drawn from
9 Holy Scripts, above all making reference to Jesus himself as a role model (*Imitatio Christi*); and, finally,
10 they commonly quote religious rules and disputants' moral obligations. In doing so, priests teach prosocial
11 behaviours to the disputants and help lay the ground for the successful resolution of parishioners'
12 interpersonal conflicts, or at least place their relationship on a more positive basis. It is important to
13 remember here that, as noted earlier in this section, this is not a solidly structured process. The priest-
14 mediators, based on situational assessments, as well as personal preferences, may choose to place emphasis
15 on specific tactics over others, or even be eclectic and switch from a certain tactic to another driven by ad
16 hoc conditions. In the sections to follow we take a closer look at the process, elaborating on the insights
17 offered by our interviewees.
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35 a) *Reasons behind priests' intervention*

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37 The initiation of priests' intervention may come about in primarily three different ways: a) the
38 priest, maintaining a continuous social relationship with at least one of the parties, becomes aware of a
39 certain dispute and takes the initiative to intervene, as part of his pastoral service; b) one or both disputants
40 approach the priest asking for his intervention; or c) a third person, who is close to at least one of the
41 parties, takes the initiative to invite the priest's intervention. A key question that emerges is why parties
42 would invite or accept this form of third party intervention. Respondents here were allowed to give more
43 than one answer, as to the reasons that prompt parishioners to seek or accept their help. According to the
44 interviewed priests, the basic reason for Christians bringing their cases to priests is *trust and increased*
45 *confidence* stemming from priests' status within their communities as the representatives of God on Earth,
46 as the 'shepherds' of the laity (all 14 priests argued). In addition to this, through their interaction with
47 priests, faithfuls have come to develop feelings of *respect* toward the spiritual leaders of the community –a
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3 resource of central importance for any third party (all priests argued). Here, the majority of the informants
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5 also noted the importance of *personal relationship* between priests and parishioners (nine priests).
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7 Everyday personal contact is a part of the pastoral activity and strengthens even more the trust that priests
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9 enjoy. Given the above, within this context the priest is perceived as a trusted third party, with the locus of
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11 this trust being both external (priests as representatives of God) and internal (priests maintaining strong
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13 relationship with at least one of the disputants). In regards to the last point, through the personal connection
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15 they have with the parties, priests become familiar with each disputant's personal qualities, while at the
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17 same time are aware of the contextual specifics of the environment within which the dispute takes place.
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19 This quality is similar to what Lederach and Wehr (1991) describe as *confianza*, where "legitimacy and
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21 effectiveness come from the continuing personal connection of the mediator with the conflict parties
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23 before, during and after the mediation" (p. 85), suggesting that priests are more likely to be perceived as
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25 legitimate and credible as other studies showed (see Bercovitch & Houston 2000; Bercovitch & Kadayifci
26
27 Orellana 2009). Particularly relevant here is the fact that perceptions of legitimacy increase when third
28
29 parties have a well-established influence within their community and when the intervention process is
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31 expected to take place on the basis of a set of respected values (Johnston & Cox, as cited in Bercovitch &
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33 Orellana 2009, p. 187).

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35 Moreover, six interviewees noted that one of the reasons that faithfuls seek their help is their hope
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37 that the damaged relationship will be restored (*relationship-focused process*). As opposed to other types of
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39 intervention, parishioners appear to pursue not just a mutually acceptable settlement of their immediate
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41 dispute, but rather the restoration and improvement of their relationship. Resorting to legal processes,
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43 which are costly and inherently adversarial, would not contribute much to this end; instead, a trusted and
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45 respected priest's intervention seems like the preferable option. Four interviewees responded that perceived
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47 *impartiality* also plays a key role in the decision of the disputants to seek their help. "Priest is the father of
48
49 all parishioners. They all know that he is impartial, he will distance himself from both parties and he will
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51 not favour one party over the other".² Three priests replied that the *confidentiality* that binds them during
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53 and after the intervention process is a factor disputants take into consideration, and influences their decision
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55 to bring their issues before priests. As mentioned earlier, it is common for priests to become aware of a

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57 ² Father G., 30 August 2007, Despilio
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3 certain dispute during the mystery of confession, which is characterized by absolute confidentiality. Thus,
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5 priests are bound not to reveal any information about the dispute to third persons. Lastly, three interviewees
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7 noted that an additional reason for being asked to intervene is that this process is *cost free*.
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11 *b) Nature of disputes brought to the priests*
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13 There is a diversity of disputes in which priests are called to intervene. According to the direct
14 responses of the interviewees to the question 'in what types of disputes are you usually asked to
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16 *intervene?*', as well as the cases they narrated (see Table 2 for a breakdown of cases), the most common
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18 type of disputes brought to them is the *involvement of a third person between the spouses*. This may be an
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20 extra-marital relationship or the unconstructive involvement of relatives –most commonly parents in law-
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22 in the everyday life of the married couple, which instigates tensions between the spouses. Interviewees also
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24 responded that they are called to intervene in disputes between the spouses, caused not by the involvement
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26 of a third person, but mainly by tensions between the spouses themselves ('*marital disputes*' hereafter).
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28 These are issues related to everyday tension due to such factors as alienation between spouses,
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30 miscommunication, and disagreements over handling household issues.
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33 Disputes of *economic* nature about inheritance and property sharing between family members are
34 also commonly brought to priests. Many interviewees also responded that they are called to intervene in
35
36 disputes related to *baptism*, and more specifically, to the choice of the name of a child to be baptized. The
37
38 common practice in Greece is to name the child after the grandparents, as an expression of gratitude or
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40 honour, starting from the father's side. However, in many cases parents do not like the grandparents' names
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42 or –for several reasons- just do not want to name the child after them. This fact causes tension between the
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44 couple and their parents, and even between the spouses.
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47 Disputes between *neighbours*, between *parents and children*, and between colleagues in work
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49 environment are other common types of disputes priests are called to deal with. Table 2 reflects the wide
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51 spectrum of interpersonal disputes brought to priests.
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53 [Insert table 2 here]
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57 *c) The role of priests as third parties –mediation strategies employed during the process:*
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Mediation strategy is a plan, a general approach that a mediator adopts. It is the “characteristic pattern of behaviours or tactics that mediators employ when assisting people in a controversy” (Kressel & Wall 2012, p. 334). These behaviours both reflect and are shaped by a mediator’s understanding of what the aim of the process is and what the acceptable or unacceptable behaviours for achieving these aims are (Wall & Kressel, 2012). When one intends to explore a certain type of mediation processes, special attention needs to be paid to mediator strategy, as it entails important implications both for the overall process and for the outcome of the mediation. That’s why Brazil (2012) refers to mediation strategy as “the single most important variable affecting how mediation works” (p. 331). Usually, mediators have a repertory of strategies, among which they choose the one that fits better the case at hand.

Among other taxonomies found in the literature, Touval and Zartman (1985), in an effort to present the spectrum of strategies available to third parties, provide a classification of mediation approaches as following: a) *Communication/ Facilitation strategies*, where the mediator facilitates the communication between the parties, b) *Procedural/Formulation strategies*, where the third party exerts control over the process and the environment of mediation, and c) *Directive/Manipulation strategies*, in which the mediator affects the content and the substance of the mediation process. It is interesting to note here that while at a certain level of abstraction such dichotomies are analytically useful, research suggests that oftentimes mediators describe themselves as strategically eclectic, employing mixed behavioural tactics depending on contextual factors (Kressel & Wall 2012). For the purposes of this study, we used the classification offered above in order to explore the mediation approaches adopted by priests during their intervention. The distinctive characteristics of each approach can be seen in Table 3.

Although Touval and Zartman developed their taxonomy mostly referring to mediation in international disputes, it is the authors’ belief that third party behavioural tactics included in this framework may be very well employed in interpersonal disputes like the ones explored in this study. Taking a look at the distinctive characteristics of each mediation approach in this taxonomy, one could argue that they may resonate with third party practices at interpersonal level, without obscuring a researcher’s analytical understanding of mediator roles at this level. Indeed, it is not uncommon to use analytic frameworks across levels of analysis, when deemed relevant, as is the case in the analysis of third party conduct in civil wars, which seems to be primarily informed by frameworks originally developed to explore international conflict

(e.g. see Svensson 2008).

[Insert table 3 here]

Our data showed that there is no specific strategy that priests *always* employ in their intervention. In different occasions priests as third parties adopt different approaches; thus, the mediators in our study seemed to be more context-oriented than style oriented, taking into account situational variables while approaching each dispute. Commonly, our informants replied that their behaviour during the intervention process incorporates tactics pertaining to two major mediator types: communication/facilitation mediator, where they serve as channels of communication and ensure constructive dialogue, and directive/manipulation mediator, contributing substantively to the search for a resolution. The fact that priests in our study do not seem to have a standard strategy that they always employ, but they appear to be eclectic is parallel to the findings of recent research suggesting that mediation strategies may be independent from each other, but not mutually exclusive (Pruitt 2012). This means that instead of sticking to a set strategy, mediators may employ behavioural specifics across stylistic boundaries, even in the same mediation process, being responsive to situational factors (e.g. switching from directive to facilitative strategies, when there seems to be an emotional escalation, during which directive tactics may backfire and derail the whole process).

Given this finding, the next step was to explore the conditions under which priests seemed to choose a certain mediation strategy over the others. In our interviews, although we included general questions about the overall strategies that priests adopt in their intervention, we did not specifically ask about the determinants of mediation strategy, mainly because we did not know a priori whether our informants employ different strategies at different settings. For this reason, in an effort to explore the factors, upon which this choice of strategy is dependent, we drew insights from the *cases narrated* by our informants. More specifically, we explored the priest-mediators' behaviour in the 30 intervention cases narrated by our interviewees and looked at three factors driven from the mediation literature that could potentially influence the choice of mediation strategy: a) nature of the dispute: *does the nature of the dispute affect the choice of strategy?*; b) parties-mediator's relationship: *does the existence of a Confessor-Confessant (CC) relationship between at least one of the disputants and the mediator affect the choice of strategy?*; and c) characteristics/ identity of the mediator: *how does the religious identity of the third parties*

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3 *in the given context affect the choice of strategy?* Answering these questions would help us get an
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5 understanding of the factors influencing the choice of mediation strategy in the examined environment and
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7 draw insights on the overall role of priests as third parties.
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9 ***i) Nature of the dispute affecting mediation strategy:*** Our data revealed patterns indicating that the nature
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11 of the disputes may influence the choice of mediation strategy. For each dispute there appears to be one
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13 strategy systematically employed by the priests in their effort to help parties move forward. Although in
14
15 some cases there is a mixing of techniques pertaining to different mediation strategies, there are clear
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17 patterns that emerge indicating that for certain types of disputes there is predominance (but not exclusivity)
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19 of a mediation strategy over the others. *Communication-Facilitation* approaches are commonly adopted in
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21 marital disputes. As mentioned earlier, marital disputes usually emerge as a result of disagreements on
22
23 daily issues or of alienation between the spouses. In such cases priests' intention is to promote meaningful
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25 communication between the disputants and improve their relationship, creating an environment within
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27 which parties could collaboratively search for mutually acceptable solutions. Directive approaches would
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29 be of little use here; a settlement achieved as a result of pressure would prove stillborn. Since the parties are
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31 engaged in daily interaction and their relationship is a major concern for them, the preferable approach to
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33 adopt seemed to be Communication-Facilitation (Bercovitch & Houston 2000). This approach was, also,
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35 adopted in the case where the parents opposed the wedding of their children and in the dispute between the
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37 two neighbours, although conclusion on these cases cannot be considered strong due to the limited number
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39 of cases.
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41 On the other hand, Directive-Manipulation strategies were employed in disputes emerging out of
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43 the involvement of a third person between the spouses. The notion that marriage is a sacred institution is
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45 well-established in the Christian value system. It is not surprising, therefore, that priests employ a directive-
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47 manipulative strategy here to protect this sacred institution from external interference. Finally, the same
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49 approach was adopted in the two disputes over baptism. Here, the priests' overall attitude was to favour the
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51 parents' choice of name over following tradition, protecting the long-term relationship of the spouses. In
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53 doing so, they exercised pressure over other relatives –mainly grandparents- to respect and accept the
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55 parents' choice of name.³
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57 ³ However, again here the sample does not allow for safe conclusions (only two baptism cases).
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Somehow mixed were the results for economic disputes, although communication-facilitation strategies seemed to be more often employed in this type of disputes. The nature of such disputes is rarely related directly to religious norms or rules, and accordingly, the pressure priests may exercise is limited. As a result, their involvement centers on the encouragement of meaningful communication and the promotion of understanding between the disputants. At the same time, priests in the narrated cases appear to employ techniques pertaining to directive strategies such as asking parties for concessions and making substantive suggestions in helping parties identify mutually acceptable alternatives. Overall, when it comes to economic disputes, although there seems to be a preference toward facilitation strategies, no clear pattern is revealed.

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ii) Party –mediator relationship affecting mediation strategy: In our study we looked at whether there was a CC relationship between disputants and the priest as the basis of whether the mediator has strong relations with the parties. To illustrate this dimension of our research, it is necessary to remind the reader that the bond developed between the priest and the faithful through the mystery of confession is very strong. Apart from penance and forgiveness, this mystery is about spiritual guidance and instruction. The priest, responsible for the spiritual progress of the Christians, offers advice to faithfuls, not only on issues directly related to spiritual life, but also in everyday affairs, since “every human action can either hinder or facilitate the spiritual progress of a person” (ISEE 2007, p. 86). It is necessary here to delve deeper into some specifics of the mystery of confession. Firstly, not all priests are confessors, as not all priests have the strength and the necessary qualities to undertake such a duty. Any priest, who intends to become a confessor, needs to ask for the permission and receive a blessing by the bishop (*episkopos*) of a given diocese. The common practice for faithfuls is to have only one father-confessor, with whom they develop a spiritual relationship similar to the natural bond of father and child. Given the in-principle personalization of the pastoral care and the strong bond that is developed between the priest and the faithful, any advice by the confessor is to be taken seriously into account. Nevertheless, bringing a dispute to a priest and asking for his intervention does not depend solely on the existence of such a relationship, as the pastoral care is directed to all members of the laity.

In 18 out of the 30 cases narrated by our informants there existed a CC relationship between at least one of the parties and the mediator, whereas in 12 cases there was no such bond. Using Touval and

Zartman's taxonomy (1985), we made an effort to discover whether this variable (the existence of CC relationship) exercises an impact on the choice of the mediator's strategy. Data revealed that in disputes where a CC relationship exists it is more likely for priests to employ Directive-Manipulation strategies; the number of techniques pertaining to this approach was far higher in comparison to the other two available approaches (facilitative and procedural). Out of the 18 cases, in which a CC relationship existed, the mediator adopted a Directive-Manipulation strategy in 15 of them, whereas in only three cases the third party chose Facilitative-Communication techniques. Furthermore, in conflicts, where the disputants were not connected to the third party with a CC relationship, mediators appeared more likely to use Communication-Facilitation strategies. Out of the 12 disputes where no CC relationship existed, in eight cases Communication-Facilitation strategies were employed, whereas in four cases the third party chose a Directive-Manipulation approach.

Given the above insights, it appeared that the relationship between the parties and the mediator does seem to play a role in the choice of mediation strategy. It was revealed here that in disputes, where parties have a CC Relationship with the third party, it was more likely for the mediator to employ a Directive-Manipulative strategy. The nature of CC relationship allows the third party to make substantive suggestions, as on the one hand the priest feels personally responsible for the spiritual progress of the confessants and, on the other hand, the trust and respect he enjoys allows him to pressure for the disputants' compliance. It could be argued here that a CC relationship gives the priests both the 'power' and the 'right' to intervene substantively in the disputes, a resource that priest-mediators don't hesitate to make use of. On the contrary, absence of such relationship is more likely to lead to the employment of Communication-Facilitation strategies.

iii. Characteristics of the mediator affecting mediation strategy: Priests' standing as religious figures has two significant implications for the intervention process. On the one hand, there is a given system of values and rules within which they live and act. As the mediation examined in the present study is a part of the pastoral activity, these values and rules are emphasized throughout the process. During the intervention, the primary goal is the spiritual instruction of the faithfuls, with priests acting not only as third parties, but also as pedagogues. On the other hand, this system of values and rules is dictated by an authority (God) external both to them and to the disputants. When the behaviour of the disputants deviates from what is in

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3 accordance with the accepted values and divine laws, priests feel that they need to intervene and elicit their
4 compliance. As a result, priests' intervention seems to be structured around two interlinked axes:
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6 inspiration of the valued attributes to the disputants, with an emphasis on their relationship; and compliance
7 with divine laws, both of which seem to govern their behaviour during the process.
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11 In relation to the value system provided by Christian worldview, as presented earlier, love and
12 forgiveness are of central importance in Christianity. These are the values that priests try to inspire to the
13 faithfuls throughout their intervention. In the frames of the community, priests' interventions are not meant
14 to be one-time events; rather, it is expected that the disputants will maintain a relationship subsequent to the
15 mediation process. Within such a context, it would be reasonable for the mediator to employ techniques
16 targeted toward helping parties maintain an amicable relationship (Wall & Dunne 2012). This is why
17 priests in their intervention focus primarily on restoring the relationship of the parties involved, creating an
18 environment of positive interaction, favourable for promoting love between the faithfuls. A series of
19 techniques priests use during the process are pertaining to Communication-Facilitation strategies, as their
20 goal is not necessarily to resolve the immediate conflict at stake, but rather to help the parties develop a
21 meaningful relationship on the basis of love, as stated by Father A: "If the parties cease being egoist and
22 start loving each other, then the solution is not far away. Love never fails".⁴ Interestingly, during the
23 process priests seem to make no reference to the value of justice, which is considered of secondary
24 importance in Christianity, as justice alone does not lead to salvation, argued by Father L.: "Since we are
25 priests and not judges, our duty is to inspire love and not to dispense justice".⁵ Instead, priests suggest the
26 party which has suffered the injustice to forgive the wrongdoer for the sake of building a positive
27 relationship.
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45 This emphasis on the relational dimension points to a process that resembles in some of its
46 elements what Umbreit (1997) calls humanistic mediation: a process with transformative and healing
47 potential to address the relational space between disputants. Here, in conjunction with bringing front and
48 centre disputants' past and current relationship, the mediator "helps parties in conflict to experience [the
49 process] as a safe, if not sacred, journey toward genuine dialogue and healing" (1997, p.206). This is
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55 ⁴ 14 September 2007, Kastoria

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57 ⁵ 10 September 2007, Plagiari

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3 similar to transformative mediation, which centers on an understanding that a key effect of conflict is that it
4 alienates disputants "from their sense of their own strength and *their sense of connection to others, and thus*
5 *it disrupts and undermines the interaction between them as human beings*" (Bush & Pope 2002, p.72,
6 emphasis added). For proponents of this approach, getting help in overcoming their relational crisis may
7 constitute a major part of what parties in conflict want from a mediator. That's why, third party
8 intervention, among others, "must directly address the interactional crisis itself" (Bush & Pope 2002, p.73).
9 By placing parties' empowerment and recognition of each other at the centre, transformative mediation
10 processes intend, as the term suggests, to positively transform and regenerate parties' relationship and
11 interaction patterns –a 'value added' that mediators embracing this approach may bring to the table (Bush
12 & Pope 2002). In the context explored in this study, with the parties most likely maintaining a continuous
13 relationship both with each other and with the third party, it comes naturally that the relational dimension is
14 of much concern during the process. This is, of course, informed and reinforced by the given value system,
15 in which the inspiration of love among the faithfuls is a core desideratum.

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Apart from these similarities, the intervention process explored in this study may also have some differences with the humanistic and transformative approaches described above. This comes again as a result of mediator's identity as a religious figure operating within a religious value-frame. As our findings suggest, at times we see priests employing directive approaches during their intervention –approaches that are rather absent in humanistic and transformative mediation. This can be explained by the fact that the given system of values and rules, within which priests act, is dictated not by them, but by an external, superior authority (God). This seems to be influencing their behaviour during the intervention process toward the directive end of the mediation strategies spectrum. In that sense, the room they have for manoeuvring is somehow restricted, and when the behaviour of the disputants deviates from the given system of norms, they need to intervene in substantive issues of the dispute and exercise pressure to the parties. Thus, priests commonly suggest concessions that parties can (or should) make; press the disputants to show flexibility; make substantive proposals; and –as a form of leverage- make parties aware of the costs of non-agreement. Through these techniques they make an effort to cause perceptual and attitudinal changes to the disputants so as to elicit compliance to a specific value system. What we see here is that the relational dimension discussed previously has a third pole other than the disputants alone: the intervention

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3 is also about the relationship between disputants and God. This means that the obligations attached to this
4 relationship on the part of the faithfuls/disputants need also to be addressed in this type of mediation.

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7 That's why, at times we see priests adopting a more directive approach, in their effort to help parties live up
8 to their status as children of God.
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10 11 12 13 *Defining Desirable Outcomes: Love, Forgiveness, Peace, and 'Imitatio Christi'*

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15 To answer what the priests desire as the outcome of their intervention, interviewees were given the
16 option to give more than one response each, if preferred, as there might be a combination of desiderata that
17 priests would like to see reflected in the outcome of their intervention. In this question, 12 interviewees
18 responded that the inspiration of *love* between the disputants is what they would hope to see at the end of
19 the mediation process. As argued by Father G., for most priests "love is the path which leads us to Jesus
20 Christ. It is the way to let Christ live inside us".⁶ Thus, if disputants come to see the issues they commonly
21 face through this prism, it is hoped that they will place their immediate dispute on a different basis, within a
22 'love framework' that requires them to work cooperatively toward finding a solution. Here, we see that
23 love appears both as a medium for a positive paradigmatic shift and as a desirable outcome of the
24 intervention.
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35 Furthermore, seven priests in their interviews defined *forgiveness* as one of the desirable
36 outcomes. In contrast, interestingly, justice does not seem to be sought during the intervention process.
37 Rather, according to the priests, Christians involved in disputes should seek for settlement in an apology-
38 forgiveness pattern. Two priests also stated that they valued *peace* as one of the desirable outcomes. A
39 peaceful parish provides the fertile ground for the values promoted in the pastoral service to blossom; an
40 environment of peace may allow for the faithfuls' spiritual growth and their salvation. Interestingly, while
41 two priests noted that *harmony* could also be a desirable outcome of their intervention, others stated that
42 they don't necessarily see it as a desideratum, as it is not directly related to spiritual progress and personal
43 development. Furthermore, one interviewee replied that revealing the *truth* is also among his goals;
44 however, as the number shows this was generally not a very common answer. Finally, and importantly, five
45 of our interviewees commonly cited the imitation of Jesus (*Imitatio Christi*) as a desirable outcome of their
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57 ⁶ 19 September 2007, Thessaloniki
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3 intervention. The general notion in Christianity is that Jesus as a perfect, sinless man (along with perfect
4 God) stands as an example to be followed by all Christians: "Christ should be our example. Any of our
5 actions should reveal something of Him".⁷ In their intervention, priests seek to inspire faithfuls to become
6 living imitations of Jesus not only in regards to the immediate dispute they face, but in their overall ethos, a
7 long-established virtue in the Christian Orthodox tradition. Reminding faithfuls that their ethical obligation
8 is to imitate Jesus, provides them with an example to look up to, and may help them refrain from
9 adversarial orientations in approaching their issues.
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19 *Factors Affecting the Outcome of the Intervention:*

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21 It is evident in our discussion in the previous section that the values cited by our interviewees as
22 desirable outcomes are non-measurable qualities and it would be difficult for the researchers to identify
23 whether love or 'Imitatio Christi' were indeed the outcomes of the mediation processes described by our
24 informants. For this reason, as a basis for our analysis on the factors influencing the outcome of the
25 intervention we used the question of whether there was an agreement between the parties in a dispute or
26 not. Out of the 30 intervention cases narrated by our informants, 19 resulted in an agreement between the
27 parties, whereas 11 were unsuccessful. In our effort to identify factors that may influence agreement/non-
28 agreement as an outcome, we again looked at three factors that could affect the result of the mediation: a)
29 the nature of the dispute; b) the relationship between the parties and the mediator; and c) the overall
30 mediation strategy. In regards to the relationship between the nature of disputes and the outcome of priests'
31 mediation, no specific pattern seemed to emerge in the narrated cases; the nature of the dispute did not
32 seem to affect reaching an agreement. In regards to the second factor, however, our analysis of the narrated
33 cases indicated a positive relation between the existence of a CC relationship and successful outcomes. In
34 13 out of 18 interventions, where a CC relationship existed, the parties came to an agreement. This pattern
35 may be explained on the basis of the nature of this relationship between the Christians and their father-
36 confessor. Faithfuls recognize that the confessor is responsible for their spiritual progress and they accept
37 his advice and suggestions as coming from an 'expert' in religious matters. Acknowledging that the priest
38 has no other intention but their salvation, disputants perceive his suggestions as a moral obligation. This is
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57 ⁷ Father A., 12 September 2007, Kipoupoli
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3 a result of the trust and respect developed in the frames of this relationship, the main parameters of which
4 were described previously in this study, when we talked about priests' embedded power within their
5 communities. Such finding is not surprising given the fact that existing literature also suggests that
6 legitimacy and leverage may have a crucial role in brokering agreements (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana
7 2009). Moreover, in the 12 cases where a CC relationship did not exist, there seemed to be no specific
8 pattern in reaching an agreement. Thus, although the existence of a CC relationship may seem to be
9 associated with successful outcomes, its absence does not necessarily lead to a certain kind of outcome,
10 either successful or unsuccessful.

11
12 In terms of the impact of mediation strategy on the outcome, analysis of the narrated cases showed
13 no clear association between the adoption of *facilitative approach* and a certain type of outcome.
14 Communication-Facilitation strategies were employed in 11 cases, out of which five ended in an
15 agreement, indicating absence of a pattern between facilitative strategy and specific outcomes. However,
16 our analysis revealed an association between the use of *Directive-Manipulation* strategies and a certain type
17 of outcome. Directive approaches were adopted by the priests in 19 interventions and in 14 of them the
18 parties came to an agreement. This number indicates that within the religious-cultural environment
19 examined here, the employment of Directive-Manipulation strategies is more likely to lead to successful
20 mediation outcomes. Studies in mediation in other cases also show similar results (see, for example,
21 Beardsley et al. 2006; Bercovitch & Houston 1996; Bercovitch & Lamare 1993). In the context concerned,
22 the finding that Directive-Manipulation strategies appear more likely to result in successful outcomes could
23 be explained by a fact discussed in a previous section: such approaches are usually employed in cases
24 where a CC relationship exists between the priest and at least one of the disputants—a relationship, which,
25 as explained earlier, makes parties more disposed to follow the suggestions made by priests and come to an
26 agreement.

27
28 Examining the general trends occurring in the intervention process explored in this study, special
29 mention should be made to a strong pattern, which seems to emerge in relation to both the mediation
30 process and the mediation outcome. As illustrated earlier, two factors, which affect both the process and the
31 outcome of mediation, are the existence of Confessor-Confessant relationship and the employment of
32 Directive-Manipulation strategies. When a CC relationship exists, third parties seem more likely to employ

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3 Directive strategies. In its turn, the use of Directive strategies appears more likely to lead to successful
4 mediation outcomes. In an effort to explore further the relationship between these two factors and the
5 outcome of the intervention we looked at all cases, in which *both* a CC relationship existed and a Directive
6 strategy was employed by the third party and examined their outcomes. It was revealed that out of 15 cases,
7 in which both factors existed, 12 ended in an agreement. Therefore, when the parties involved in a conflict
8 are connected with a CC relationship with the mediator, *and* the latter employs manipulative strategy, it is
9 very likely that the dispute will be settled (Figure 1). On the other hand, no relationship could be found
10 between the absence of both factors and the mediation outcome. In eight cases, in which neither of these
11 factors existed, the outcomes were balanced (parties came to an agreement in four cases).

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21 *[Insert figure 1 here]*
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23 In fact, research suggests that directive strategies are more likely to be effective when mediators
24 are trusted and perceived as legitimate by disputants (Muldoon, as cited in Bercovitch & Kadayifci 2009, p.
25 183). Muldoon's research seems to point to the pattern revealed in the present study: increased trust
26 embedded in the mediator-parties relationship increases mediator leverage, which makes it more likely for
27 the mediator to adopt directive strategies. When there is established trust to community leaders and
28 obedience to cultural-religious norms, parties respond positively to these directive strategies moving
29 towards an agreement.
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39 *Conclusion:*

40 The research presented in this article intended to contribute to the existing literature on the
41 influence of cultural-religious systems of values, and norms on the perceptions of, and responses to conflict
42 occurrence by analysing the role of the Greek Orthodox priests as third parties. This type of third party
43 intervention does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it takes place within the Christian Orthodox value system
44 and is embedded in the cultural ecology of modern day Greece. This reality has numerous implications for
45 the behaviour of the parties and the mediator during the process, and for the development of perceptions on
46 the desirable outcome. Priests' position within Christian communities in this part of the world allows them
47 through their pastoral activity to develop strong personal relationships with the faithfuls. Their co-existence
48 and constant interaction with potential disputants start long before a conflict emerges, and usually continue
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3 after the dispute is settled. Priests, as all social network mediators, stand as important parts of a common
4 network, within which they enjoy the respect and the trust of the members (Moore 1996; Wehr & Lederach
5 1991). As religious figures responsible for the spiritual progress of the faithfuls, they perceive a personal
6 obligation to assist disputants, emphasizing the building of 'smooth' interpersonal relationships. To frame it
7 more accurately, what was overall demonstrated in our analysis was the instrumentalisation of key religious
8 values and norms (love and forgiveness) throughout a mediation process that, within the given context,
9 should be seen more as a medium for religious guidance, than as an opportunity to 'set things right'. This
10 intervention is a part of the pastoral service, a means of religious instruction, with priests relying on
11 religious-oriented behaviours when they act as mediators, similarly to their religious counterparts in
12 neighbouring countries (Çelik & Shkreli 2010; Köse & Beriker 2012), as well as in different parts of the
13 world (Wall, Beriker, & Wu 2010; Wall & Dunne 2012).

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15 The research presented in this article constituted the first study on this type of intervention
16 conducted by Greek Orthodox priests within their communities as third parties in interpersonal disputes
17 involving faithfuls. It illustrated that despite the growing secularization of the Greek society, priest may
18 still play a prominent role within their parishes, and it shed light on the ways in which they can engage
19 parishioners in thinking pro-socially about their personal interactions. Above all, it underlined the existence
20 of an extended reservoir of prosocial values and practices rooted in the ecology of Greek Orthodox
21 communities –a reservoir that may be common in other Orthodox Christian communities in the region, too.
22 Further research could explore ways to involve parishioners themselves and focus on deeper inquiries on
23 the reasons that lead faithfuls to comply with priests' suggestions.
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Table 1

Techniques used by priests during their intervention (adopted from Wall & Callister 1999).

Technique	Description	No of Priests Using Technique (out of 14)
1. Meet separately	<i>Mediator meets with each disputant separately</i>	14
2. Listen to disputant's side	<i>Mediator has disputants state their points</i>	14
3. Argue for concession	<i>Mediator argues for or proposes a specific concession or agreement point and negotiates a compromise</i>	13
4. Put disputants together	<i>Mediator brings the disputants together for a meeting that otherwise would not take place</i>	5
5. Gather information	<i>Mediator collects or asks for information from the disputants or others and does research to obtain info</i>	12
6. Gather information from 3rd party	<i>Information, opinion and advice obtained from 3rd party</i>	7
7. Educate	<i>Mediator educates, persuades, or advises one disputant as to how s/he should think and act</i>	13
8. Meet with 3rd party present	<i>Mediator brings additional third disputants to a meeting</i>	0
9. Have 3rd party assist	<i>Mediator offers or gets 3rd party's assistance for the disputants or the mediator</i>	4
10. State other's point of view	<i>Mediator presents or argues the other disputant's point of view and asks a disputant to see the other's point of view</i>	11
11. Moral	<i>Mediator points out a specific moral obligation or societal norm</i>	13
12. Meet together with disputants	<i>Mediator meets together with disputants and requires disputants to state other's point of view: mediator also has disputant state his/her point of view to the other</i>	11
13. Apologize	<i>Mediator has one disputant apologize or acknowledge his/her fault</i>	9
14. Mediator assists	<i>Mediator personally offers or gives assistance and takes a specific action</i>	2
15. Obtain forgiveness	<i>Mediator asks one disputant to tolerate or forgive the other</i>	13
16. Relax	<i>Mediator makes specific statements to calm the disputants</i>	13
17. Have 3rd party educate	<i>Mediator has a third party educate, persuade or advise one or both disputants on how they should act or think</i>	0
18. Have 3rd party argue for concessions	<i>Mediator has a third party argue for or propose a specific concession or agreement</i>	0
19. Pray	<i>Mediator prays alone or with one or both disputants</i>	14
20. Break time	<i>Mediator stops the quarrelling and has disputants rest</i>	0
21. Mediator's data	<i>Mediator provides objective data about the dispute or the environment</i>	1

22. Threat	<i>Any threat from the mediator</i>	3
23. Note cost to 3 rd party	<i>Mediator points out costs of dispute to others, cites an obligation not to dispute (includes noting benefits of agreement to others)</i>	13
24. Get grasp of situation	<i>Mediator grasps the cause (analyses situation)</i>	12
25. Criticize	<i>Mediator criticizes a disputant's personal attitude & behaviour or uses a specific label</i>	3
26. Call for empathy	<i>Mediator enhances the other disputant or calls for respect of the other; mediator puts a positive face on the other</i>	12
27. Cite dependency	<i>Mediator expresses similarities or interdependence in disputant's goals, fates, and needs (includes mentioning personal costs of disagreement and benefit of agreement)</i>	9
28. Have drink with disputants	<i>Mediator has a drink with disputants prior to agreement</i>	4
29. Formalization	<i>Mediator caps the agreement with techniques other than a drink</i>	0
30. Provide logical explanation	<i>Mediator backs up any technique with logic</i>	0
31. Drink; capstone	<i>Mediator has drink with disputants to cap the agreement</i>	0
32. Analyse the disputants	<i>Mediator analyses the disputants and grasps each disputant's characteristics</i>	14
33. Example	<i>Mediator cites example or similar case</i>	14
34. Praise disputants	<i>Mediator praises the disputant who is being addressed</i>	0
35. Reconcile	<i>Mediator negotiates a general compromise</i>	14
36. Quote law or rule	<i>Mediator quotes a specific law or rule that is relevant to the dispute</i>	12
37. Written agreement	<i>Mediator has disputants sign a quasi-legal written agreement governing their future behaviour</i>	0
38. Being vague	<i>Mediator is intentionally vague when describing the situation or asking for concessions</i>	0
39. Have 3 rd party criticize	<i>Mediator has a 3rd party criticize a disputant's person, attitude or behaviour</i>	0
40. Separate disputants	<i>Mediator separates the disputants</i>	0
41. Example of Jesus Christ	<i>Mediator uses the example of Jesus Christ, as one to be followed by the disputants</i>	14
42. Use of Metaphors	<i>Mediator uses metaphors in order to make their points simpler, easily understood</i>	14
43. Meet in mediator's house	<i>Mediator asks disputants to meet at his house, in order to enhance trust and make them feel more comfortable</i>	7

Table 2

Nature of cases priests mediated

Involvement of a 3 rd person between the spouses:	9 cases
Marital disputes:	9 cases
Economic disputes:	8 cases
Baptism disputes:	2 cases
Parents opposing wedding:	1 case
Dispute between neighbours:	1 case
Total:	30 cases

For Peer Review Only

Table 3

Touval & Zartman's (1985) taxonomy of third-party behavioural tactics-strategies

Communication-Facilitation Strategies	Procedural-Formulation Strategies
1. Make contact with parties	1. Choose meetings site
2. Gain the trust and confidence of the parties	2. Control pace and formality of meeting
3. Arrange for interactions btw the parties	3. Control physical environment
4. Identify issues and interests	4. Establish protocol
5. Clarify situation	5. Suggest procedures
6. Avoid taking sides	6. Highlight common interests
7. Develop a rapport with parties	7. Reduce tensions
8. Supply missing information	8. Control timing
9. Develop a framework for Understanding	9. Deal with simple issues first
10. Encourage meaningful Communication	10. Structure agenda
11. Offer positive evaluation	11. Keep parties at the table
12. Allow the interests of all parties to be discussed	12. Help parties save face
	13. Keep process focused on issues

Directive-Manipulation Strategies	
1. Change parties' expectations	8. Take responsibility for concessions
2. Make substantive suggestions & proposals	9. Make parties aware of costs of non-agreement
3. Supply and filter information	10. Suggest concessions parties can make
4. Help negotiators to undo a commitment	11. Reward party concessions
5. Help device a framework for acceptable outcome	12. Change expectations
6. Press the parties to show flexibility	13. Promise resources or threaten withdrawal
7. Offer to verify compliance with agreement	

Figure 1

Relationship between CC Relationship, Directive Strategies and Successful Outcomes

