I declare that *Women after divorce: Exploring the psychology of resilience* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

__________________________     ________________
SIGNATURE        DATE

(Mrs C Boon)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SUMMARY

This study investigates the role of resilience in women coping with the life transition of divorce. Five women were interviewed and an in-depth qualitative analysis undertaken, in order to explore the subjective experience of resilience during the period of separation and divorce, and its effect on post-divorce adjustment. In addition, the usefulness of formal divorce support groups to enhance resilience was examined. It was found that the most important aspects of resilience as reported by the women were social support; spirituality; personality traits such as optimism, courage and resourcefulness; an orientation toward the future; and competence/mastery of one’s environment (including mastery of one’s thoughts and emotions). It appeared that resilience facilitated adjustment in several ways; notably in providing a sense of purpose, control and competence resulting in an experience of personal growth. All of the women felt that they had developed a sense of their own identity and greater self-determination through the process of divorce. Support groups might be potentially effective in providing assistance in dealing with emotional issues such as anger and forgiveness; with skills development such as emotion regulation and cognitive techniques like reframing; as well as practical and informational support. Such groups might also provide a temporary community of social support where divorced women can interact with other people who are experiencing the same things. The study illuminated the subjective, often unique experience of separation and divorce; this emphasises the challenge for divorce groups to offer support which addresses this uniqueness.

Key terms: resilience; divorce; women; divorce groups; divorce adjustment.
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