

**WOMEN AFTER DIVORCE: EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
RESILIENCE**

by

CHRISTINE BOON

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PROMOTER: PROF J M NIEUWOUDT

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Student number: 464-467-0

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

(Mrs C Boon)

DATE

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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.

CONTENTS

1	BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES	PAGE
1.1	Background	1
1.1.1	A personal note	1
1.1.2	An overview of divorce	2
1.1.3	A brief overview of resilience	8
1.2	Objectives	10
1.3	Presentation	11
2	THE RESILIENT SELF	
2.1	Introduction	12
2.2	The importance of meaning	12
2.3	The ‘hardy’ personality	14
2.4	Self-complexity	15
2.5	Adaptive changes in self-concept	16
2.6	Social identity	17
2.7	Emotional intelligence	20
2.8	Cognitive resilience skills	22
2.9	Cognitive adaptation theory	24
2.10	Coping strategies	26
2.11	Ego-resiliency	27
2.12	Conclusion	28
3	THE CHALLENGE OF DIVORCE AND RESILIENCE	
3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	Shattering	31
3.3	Restructuring	32
3.3.1	Identity change and role-exiting	34
3.3.2	Family reorganization and single parenting	36
3.3.3	Relationship with the former spouse	38
3.3.4	Emotional adjustment	40

3.3.5	Establishment of a new life pattern (social support and economic stability)	41
3.4	Resilience	45
3.4.1	Elements of resilience	45
3.4.2	Models of resilience	47
3.4.2.1	Flach's (1988, 1997) model of disruption and reintegration	47
3.4.2.2	The resiliency model: Richardson, Neiger, Jensen and Kumfer (1990)	48
3.4.2.3	The resilience framework: Kumpfer (1999)	52
3.5	Resilience as motivational energy	54
3.6	Conclusion	55
4	INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ENHANCING DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT	
4.1	Introduction	56
4.2	The format of the group	56
4.3	The role of the facilitator	58
4.4	Types of support/assistance offered	58
4.5	Conclusion	59
5	METHOD	
5.1	Introduction	61
5.1.1	Cautionary notes	62
5.2	Participants	63
5.3	The interview	64
5.4	Procedure	64
5.5	Trustworthiness of the data	65
5.6	Analysis	65
5.7	Ethical considerations	66
6	JANE	

6.1	Background	67
6.2	The journey	68
6.2.1	Marriage and separation	68
6.2.2	The post-separation experience	69
6.2.3	Resilience	74
6.3	Analysis	78
6.3.1	Identity change and role-exiting	78
6.3.2	Family reorganization and single parenting	79
6.3.3	Relationship with former spouse	79
6.3.4	Emotional adjustment	80
6.3.5	Establishment of a new life pattern (social support and economic stability)	80
7	HELEN	
7.1	Background	82
7.2	The journey	82
7.2.1	Marriage and separation	82
7.2.2	The post-separation experience	84
7.2.3	Resilience	86
7.3	Analysis	90
7.3.1	Identity change and role-exiting	90
7.3.2	Family reorganization and single parenting	91
7.3.3	Relationship with former spouse	92
7.3.4	Emotional adjustment	93
7.3.5	Establishment of a new life pattern (social support and economic stability)	93
8	SOPHIA	
8.1	Background	95
8.2	The journey	95

8.2.1	Marriage and separation	95
8.2.2	The post-separation experience	97
8.2.3	Resilience	100
8.3	Analysis	104
8.3.1	Identity change and role-exiting	104
8.3.2	Family reorganization and single parenting	106
8.3.3	Relationship with former spouse	107
8.3.4	Emotional adjustment	109
8.3.5	Establishment of a new life pattern (social support and economic stability)	110
9	GERALDINE	
9.1	Background	112
9.2	The journey	112
9.2.1	Marriage and separation	112
9.2.2	The post-separation experience	113
9.2.3	Resilience	116
9.3	Analysis	119
9.3.1	Identity change and role-exiting	119
9.3.2	Family reorganization and single parenting	120
9.3.3	Relationship with former spouse	121
9.3.4	Emotional adjustment	121
9.3.5	Establishment of a new life pattern (social support and economic stability)	123
10	MARY	
10.1	Background	124
10.2	The journey	124
10.2.1	Marriage and separation	124
10.2.2	The post-separation experience	125
10.2.3	Resilience	127
10.3	Analysis	128
10.3.1	Identity change and role-exiting	128
10.3.2	Family reorganization and single parenting	130

10.3.3. Relationship with former spouse	131
10.3.4 Emotional adjustment	132
10.3.5 Establishment of a new life pattern (social support and economic stability)	133
11 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
11.1 Conclusions	135
11.1.1 The effects of divorce	135
11.1.2 Resilience	137
11.2 Recommendations	140
11.3 Limitations of the study	141
11.4 Suggestions for further research	142
REFERENCES	143