WOMEN WHO DIVORCE IN MIDLIFE: THE RESILIENT RECONSTRUCTION OF THEIR LIVES

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation (in article format) hereby submitted by me for the Magister Artium (Clinical Psychology) degree at the University of the Free State is my own, independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university/faculty. I further cede copyright of the dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.

…… ……..

Judith Flett Date

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to address the dearth of South African literature on women who divorce in midlife with resilience. This study offers women's perspectives on how they reconstructed their lives with resilience after divorce after long-term marriages during the developmental stage of midlife. A purposive expert elicitation sampling technique was used to select a homogenous sample of three South African women from the Western Cape. A qualitative research design utilising the Repertory Grid methodology developed from Kelly's personal constructivist theory formed the overall framework. This facilitated individual personal constructs from the women before, during, and after the divorce process in which they reintegrated with resilience. Cognitive mapping, an extension of the Repertory Grid purposely designed for capturing a graphical representation of a personal construct system, was used for data analysis. It was evident from the findings that the women experienced divorce as a major disruption requiring emotional growth, strength, and adjustment. The women's personal constructs revealed that while there were some similarities, they were unique in their experience of divorce and reintegration. While they did not embrace the same world views or values, the women collectively experienced a major disruption and managed to survive the disruption and associated stressors using protective factors such as family, friends, religion, spirituality, and focusing on their careers to reintegrate with resilience. This study highlights the opportunity for therapists to offer resilience-enhancing resources, techniques and skills in order to help individuals reintegrate with resilience after a disruption like divorce.

Keywords: women, divorce, midlife, resilience, South Africa, Repertory Grid

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die gebrek aan Suid-Afrikaanse literratuur oor vroue wat in die middeljare met lewenskragtigheid skei, aan te roer. Hierdie studie bied die perspektiewe van vroue oor hoe hulle hul lewens met lewenskragtigheid ná egskeiding ná langtermynhuwelike gedurende die ontwikkelingstadium van die middeljare herkonstrueer het. 'n Doelbewuste, kundige, ontlokkende steekproeftrekkingstegniek is gebruik om 'n homogene steekproef van drie Suid-Afrikaanse vroue van die Wes-Kaap te selekteer. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp met die gebruik van die "repertory grid"-metodologie, wat uit Kelly se persoonlike konstruktivistiese teorie ontwikkel is, het die algemene raamwerk gevorm. Dit het individuele persoonlike konstrukte van die vroue voor, gedurende en ná die egskeidingsproses, waarin hulle met lewenskragtigheid herintegreer het, gefasiliteer. Kognitiewe kartering, 'n verlengstuk van die "repertory grid" wat doelbewus vir die vaslegging van 'n grafiese voorstelling van 'n persoonlike konstruk-sisteem ontwerp is, is vir dataontleding gebruik. Uit die bevindings was dit duidelik dat die vroue egskeiding as 'n groot ontwrigting wat emosionele groei, krag en aanpassing vereis, ervaar het. Die vroue se persoonlike konstrukte het onthul dat, terwyl daar sommige ooreenkomste was, hulle uniek in hulle ervaring van egskeiding en herintegrasie was. Terwyl hulle nie dieselfde wêreldbeskouings of waardes gehad het nie, het die vroue gesamentlik 'n groot ontwrigting ervaar en daarin geslaag om die ontwrigting en verwante stressors te oorleef deur beskermende faktore soos familie, vriende, godsdiens, spiritualiteit en fokus op hul beroepe gebruik om met lewenskragtigheid te herintegreer. Hierdie studie beklemtoon die geleentheid vir terapeute om hulpbronne, tegnieke en vaardighede wat lewenskragtigheid bevorder, aan te bied om individue te help om ná 'n ontwrigting soos egskeiding met lewenskragtigheid te herintegreer.

Sleutelwoorde: vroue, egskeiding, middeljare, lewenskragtigheid, Suid-Afrika, "repertory grid"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Worldwide there is a high divorce rate (Amato, 2014), and South Africa is no exception (Ackermann, 2014; Statistics South Africa, 2014). Traditionally, divorce rates have involved younger women; however, current trends indicate that marriages are now ending later in midlife (40-60 years) (Brown & Lin, 2012; Hilton & Anderson, 2009; Oramas, 2014). Factors associated with this phenomenon of middle-age divorce are longer life expectancy, increasing expectations for personal satisfaction and fulfilment from marriage, and the fact that women marry much later in life (Perrig-Chiello, Hutchison, & Morselli, 2014; Wu & Schimmele, 2007). In the event of marrying later, a much larger proportion of women will subsequently end up divorcing later (Brown & Lin, 2012; Dare & Green, 2011; Kreider & Fields, 2001). It is estimated that about 12% of women who are currently married will be divorced in their forties or later (Perrig-Chiello et al., 2014; Uhlenberg, Cooney, & Boyd, 1990). Surprisingly, given these statistics and trends, little research concerning older divorced women exists (Blatter & Jacobsen, 1993; Gray, de Vaus, Qu, & Stanton, 2011; Oramas, 2014). The focus of most divorce research has been on the effects of divorce on children and individuals who divorced in their twenties or thirties (Symoens, Bastaits, Mortelmans, & Bracke, 2013).

Female development in midlife

The average life expectancy for women in the world was 80.2 years in 2006 (National Centre for Health Statistics, 2011), while the current life expectancy for females in South Africa is 63.1 years (Statistics South Africa, 2014). The lower life expectancy for women in South Africa is attributed to two important trends: firstly, the number of AIDS-related deaths, and secondly, the high infant mortality rate (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Nevertheless, this makes living to midlife a viable component of a woman's life span (McFadden & Rawson Swan, 2012). Cohen (2012) says that even though women are expected to live well into middle adulthood, the concept of midlife is a relatively new construct that emerged in society only about 150 years ago. However, consensus on a set age range when someone is deemed to be middle aged is not yet established, but it rather refers to a period between youth and old age (McFadden & Rawson Swan, 2012). Midlife is considered a normative developmental stage, and currently, a person who is referred to as middle aged would typically be on average between 40 and 60 years old (Lachman, Teshale, & Agrigoroaei, 2015). Lachman et al. (2015) further state that, as the construct of midlife is relatively new and not yet clearly

defined, this life stage is not yet well understood but is considered a pivotal period in a person's life course.

Midlife is often a time of major changes and tends to be associated with stress, changing work conditions, crises, and some signs of physical and cognitive aging (Lachman, 2004; Newton, Ryan, King, & Smith, 2014). Change is considered a dynamic process from a lifespan perspective (Baruch, 2012; Lachman et al., 2015). Individuals experience a growth path that has gains in terms of knowledge, experience, and emotional regulation, as well as a decline path (Lachman et al., 2015; Willis, Martin, & Rocke, 2010). The decline path has losses in terms of functional health, speed of processing, and working memory, for example (Willis et al., 2010). Moreover, with ageing there is a shift in the balance with a person experiencing more losses than gains. Midlife can be considered unique in that it is a point where the individual is experiencing neither a high point of growth like in childhood nor a high point in losses like in old age (Baruch, 2012; Lachman et al., 2015; Willis et al., 2010). Lachman et al. (2015) suggest that most developmental research has focused on comparing young and old adults, while neglecting the middle aged. Moreover, Lachman et al. (2015) put forward that little research has focused on how poorer functioning in midlife affects those who depend or interact with individuals in midlife. In addition, Chedraui et al. (2012) and McFadden and Rawson Swan (2012) found that researchers had failed to pay attention to how women progress in general through their middle years, and also specifically through menopause.

Recently, research identified the typical midlife experiences that had been deemed distressful for women, like menopausal transition and the empty nest syndrome, as misrepresentations (Lachman et al., 2015). Nonetheless, research on women in midlife has revealed that women tend to experience changes in health and family roles that can lead to increased stress and/or depression in midlife (McMunn, Bartley, & Kuh, 2006). Studies have not supported the idea that women experience midlife crises resulting in a decreased quality of life, but rather revealed an alternative (Netz, Zach, Dennerstein, & Guthrie, 2005; Robinson & Wright, 2013). Women's well-being has been found to remain stable in midlife (Brown, Matthews, & Bromberger, 2005). In fact, the incidence of crises and change in midlife is considered to be comparable to those experienced across adulthood, and midlife is not unique in this regard (Robinson & Wright, 2013).

Midlife is a pivotal stage in the life course with a greater focus on integration, stability of functioning and maintenance of the losses and gains already experienced (Lachman et al.,

2015; McFadden, & Rawson Swan, 2012). During midlife, the variations in losses, gains, influences and experiences are extensive and largely remain due to the context of the individual. Getting divorced in midlife causes additional stress and contributes to midlife uncertainty (McFadden, & Rawson Swan, 2012). Lachman et al. (2015) propose some guidelines for studying middle-aged individuals: The person should be studied in relation to the self, in relation to an early time in his/her life, to a later time in his/her life, in relation to others, in multiple contexts, and in relation to difficult occurrences in his/her life (such as divorce) (Bowen & Jensen, 2015).

Divorce

Increase in divorce rate

Research has attributed the increase in divorce numbers to many factors, which include increasing expectations for personal satisfaction, economic independence of women, and the growing willingness of society to accept divorce (Kulik & Heine-Cohen, 2011). Amato (2010) points out that marriage is a form of social exchange, and the risk of divorce rises when the associated rewards of being married reduce in relation to the costs of staying. The risk of divorce also increases when one or both of the couple believes a better alternative to being in the marriage exists (Amato, 2010). An evaluation of the costs and benefits takes place relative to a person's reference group, the norms surrounding relationships, perceived fairness, loyalty, and the contextual permissibility of divorce (McDermott, Fowler, & Christakis, 2013). This is a relatively westernised, person-centred stance where those who experience high cost relative to the rewards are more likely to divorce. On the other hand, African people traditionally have taken a very different view of marriage (Mbiti, 2000; Sodi, Esere, Gichinga, & Hove, 2010). From an early age, African children are raised to believe that marriage is a sacred duty and a social obligation. Furthermore, divorce is seldom sanctioned and is not a common occurrence (Mbiti, 2000). With the influences of increased globalisation and the social effect of female empowerment, African women are now increasingly questioning traditional practises such as marriage and divorce. Consequently, more African women are increasingly experiencing the process of divorce (Sodi et al., 2010).

Negative aspects of divorce

Divorce is a stressful transitional period that commonly involves an emotional crisis (Oramas, 2014; Sbarra, Hasselmo, & Bourassa, 2015). A divorce has the capacity to destroy

relationships in a family and is often associated with frequent conflicts between spouses, financial and emotional losses, and other stressful events (Amato, 2014; Oramas, 2014; Symoens et al., 2013). This transitional period can be very traumatic for a family as a whole and individually for parents and children. South African research indicates that, between the years 2000 to 2010, as many as 39 000 South African children were faced with their parents' divorce. Most children are left confused, isolated, and distressed during this transition if the process is not addressed effectively (Botha & Wild, 2013). These children's mothers are also affected with some research finding that divorced women report lower levels of subjective well-being than their married counterparts (Amato, 2014; Dare, 2011; Gustavson, Nilsen, Ørstavik, & Røysamb, 2014; Symoens, Colman, & Bracke, 2014).

Amato (2014) suggests a simple model that offers insight into why most people experience divorce negatively. According to Amato (2014), divorce is not a discrete event but should rather be viewed as an unfolding process over time in which a variety of stressful events are most likely to occur. Because of divorce, most women experience a decline in their standard of living (Amato, 2010; Amato, 2014). This is due to the economics of dividing one household into two and women traditionally not having the same earning capacity as their former spouses (Amato, 2014; Brown & Lin, 2012). Often, the economic decline requires a relocation of home following the divorce, which is a stressful, time-consuming event for most people. Owing to relocation and the fact that most married couples socialise together, newly divorced women often find that they drift apart from former friends, leaving them feeling isolated and lonely (Osborne, Berger, & Magnuson, 2012; Symoens et al., 2014). Usually, mothers retain custody of their children and then experience the stress related to bearing the sole parenting role as well as being responsible for all household tasks. While having to bear the sole responsibility for raising children and maintaining the home, many women still experience continuing conflict with their ex-spouses over issues relating to the children and finances (Symoens et al., 2013; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Packer Rosenthal, 2013). These many stressors experienced over time can have a cumulative effect on the mental and physical health of divorced women (Amato, 2014; Symoens et al., 2014).

In addition to experiencing a decrease in mental and physical health, being divorced also results in the loss of benefits associated with married life. Marriage tends to offer emotional support, a regular sexual partner, companionship, and more financial security than when people are divorced (Amato, 2014; Gray et al., 2011). Marriage partners also tend to

encourage spouses to pursue healthier lifestyles by encouraging exercise and better eating habits while minimising potentially harmful habits like smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. Divorce consequently increases negative factors (such as an increase in the individual's stress levels) as well as the loss of positive factors (benefits associated with being married) (Amato, 2014).

Reorganisation of self and family after divorce

A newly divorced woman finds herself in a situation in which it is necessary to regain her psychological balance (Amato, 2010), come to terms with a failed marriage, and having to redefine herself (Symoens et al., 2014). When there is a divorce in a family, the family system also has to be reorganised (Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013). This requires the redistribution of role functions and a realignment of relationships to compensate for the losses due to the divorce. Eventually, over time, there is a reinvestment in new relationships and even potentially remarriage (Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013).

As women generally take on the primary responsibility for the children and the management of family life after divorce, their personal well-being is important (Hong & Welch, 2013). A woman's well-being in midlife during the divorce process is especially important, as it is thought that this experience might be a more painful adjustment than for her younger counterparts due to age-specific stressors (Gray et al., 2011; Steiner, Suarez, Sells, & Wykes, 2011). A woman divorcing in midlife after a long-term marriage faces many adverse factors that include adjusting to change of a long accustomed lifestyle. There is also the need to adjust to physical body changes, limited work opportunities, and a diminishing remarriage pool (Steiner et al., 2011). Furthermore, divorced women in midlife have the added challenge of children leaving the home and coping with ageing parents (Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013).

The modern family life cycle is characterised by a multiplicity of family forms (Sbarra et al., 2015). Many individuals now have two or more marriages with children at different developmental phases. This is also accompanied by transitional periods of single living and cohabitation over their life course (Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013). Some of a divorced woman's tasks will be establishing a workable relationship with her ex-spouse and entering into a new marriage or relationship. Some women who enter into a new marriage will also have the task of establishing a relationship as a stepmother with stepchildren (Wallerstein et al., 2013). These changes and transitions mean that she is required to explore and find a new

position in society as a single woman or as someone in between if not yet remarried (Wallerstein et al., 2013). Adjustment after divorce requires numerous changes in relationships, various roles, situations, and personal growth and development (Amato, 2014; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000). In fact, a divorce can be an opportunity for a woman to reinvent herself, an experience that can have positive consequences (Wallerstein et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, as individuals are influenced by a diverse range of factors, there is significant variation in how women move on and adjust to divorce (Kulik & Heine-Cohen, 2011). However, how individual women differ in their psychological adaptation to divorce is not well researched or understood (Amato, 2010). This is particularly true in the instance of women who divorce after long-term marriages. As a result, the experiences of this group of women and how they cope and navigate this phenomenon is a neglected research area (Oramas, 2014; Pudrovska & Carr, 2008).

Resilience after divorce

As much as divorce is stressful, some research indicates that the general well-being of a divorced woman, once the initial crisis has passed, does not differ from that of those who are widowed or have never been married (Wallerstein et al., 2013). After the stressful period associated with the divorce has passed, most women successfully adjust to their new lives. This often requires adopting new roles and new identities that are not linked to their former marriages (Amato, 2014; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Not all individuals experience the transition from married life as stressful. In fact, many women experience loneliness, abuse, and depression while married, and for them, divorce is seen as an ending to negative circumstances (Sbarra et al., 2015). For some women, being divorced is experienced as a feeling of freedom and renewed happiness following a difficult decision to divorce (Frisby, Booth-Butterfield, Dillow, Martin, & Weber, 2012; Määttä, 2011). Nonetheless, research has tendered to assert that divorce leaves women troubled and vulnerable with a focus on disruptions and challenges (Määttä, 2011; Thomas, 2011; Oramas, 2014).

More recently, the paradigm shift from a problematic-orientated approach to one that encourages strengths is becoming widespread across academic disciplines. Instead of focusing on individuals who fail to cope with divorce, the focus is on those who are able to cope,

adjust, and re-establish their identity (Frisby et al., 2012; Richardson, 2002). In fact, divorce can be regarded as an act of courage that may be liberating and the beginning of an important stage of emotional growth. From a more positive approach, some studies have revealed that many women who are divorced in midlife are resilient (Hong & Welch, 2013). These women experience positive subjective well-being and are thriving despite the adversity they have experienced (Gustavson, Røysamb, Von Soest, Helland, & Mathiessen, 2012; Hong & Welch, 2013; Ryan, 2009). In addition, studies indicate that the initiator of the divorce is better prepared for the process, tends to experience less grief, and adapts better after divorce, thus increasing the prospect of reintegrating with resilience (Frisby et al., 2012).

Resilience

Researchers have become increasingly interested in why some individuals experience negative outcomes when faced with adversity, while some overcome the situation and are able to thrive (Deist & Greeff, 2015; Mancini & Bonanno, 2011). As a result, there has been a shift from focusing on individuals' deficits to a salutogenic approach that focuses on factors that enhance the well-being and health of individuals facing adverse life events. A salutogenic approach offers a framework for conceptualising resilience (Deist & Greeff, 2015).

Richardson (2002) mentions three waves of inquiry into the development of resilience. The first wave of research concentrated on extrinsic and intrinsic protective factors, while the second wave focused on resilience as a dynamic and interactive process. The third wave focused on the motivation and efforts to enhance resilience by intervention and prevention techniques (Masten & Obradović, 2006; Richardson, 2002).

More recently, the fourth wave of resilience research received attention in the literature (Cicchetti, 2013; Masten, 2014). This wave of resilience research adopts a neurobiological perspective which focuses on a multileveled investigation incorporating the dynamics of change and adaptation (Masten, 2007; Masten, 2014). Gottesman (1974) and other pioneer scientists, including Garmezy (1991), Cicchetti and Blender (2006), and Rutter (2007) anticipated investigating resilience from a multileveled perspective. They propose researching psychosocial and genetic levels of vulnerability and protection over the course of the life span. All the same, these waves must not be differentiated sequentially, as research is still being conducted in all four waves (Masten & Obradović, 2006; Richardson, 2002).

As much as there are four waves of interest in this field, no consensus has been reached offering a single working definition for resilience (Herrman et al., 2011). Nevertheless, in the context of this research study, the term resilience will be used to refer to an individual who faced adversity (divorce) and managed to not only recuperate back to her original level of functioning but to thrive or surpass her original functioning somehow (Deist & Greeff, 2015; Fourie & Theron, 2012; Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990; Rutter, 2013; Strümpfer, 2003).

Research on divorce and resilience

It is evident that divorce can be considered an extremely adverse event for a family, and some recent South African studies on resilience focused on this area (Brown & Robinson, 2012; Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2013; Greeff & Aspeling, 2007). However, most research on resilience and divorce focused on children's and adolescents' resilience after divorce (Botha & Wild, 2013; Chen & George, 2005; Frisby et al., 2012) or the resilience of the child-parent relationship after divorce (Frisby et al., 2012; Golby & Bretherton, 1999; Jurma, 2015). Resilience researchers in South Africa also tended to focus on children and the youth (Botha & Wild, 2013; Cameron, Theron, Ungar, & Liebenberg, 2011; Theron, 2012; Theron, 2013; Theron et al., 2011; Theron, Liebenberg, & Maclane, 2014; Theron & Theron, 2010). Although there is increasing interest in adults involved in divorce, research on resilience in middle adulthood, especially women, is still insufficient (Bonanno, 2004; Chedraui et al., 2012; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2014).

Sbarra et al. (2015) argue that, while most adults show resilience after divorce, some suffer when their marriage disintegrates. Researchers are interested in why some individuals labour through the changes brought about by divorce with suffering and poor adjustment, while others appear to go back to their functioning before divorce, and others seem to manage to even enhance their functioning after divorce (Oramas, 2014; Richardson, 2002; Sbarra et al., 2015). These differences possibly can be explained by the presence or absence of protective factors.

Research conducted on adjustment of adults after divorce focused on factors relating to age, gender, social support, the presence of children, length of separation, independence, and self-esteem (Hong & Welch, 2013). An important protective factor in a women's positive adjustment to divorce is her ability to develop an identity that is separate from her ex-spouse

(Kulik & Heine-Cohen, 2011). In addition, some studies have shown that women cope better with the transition of divorce if they have economic stability (Hong & Welch, 2013). Even more important, economic stability imparts a sense of independence and increased security. This has the effect of reducing a women's dependence on others, including her ex-spouse (Kulik & Heine-Cohen, 2011). Hong and Welch (2013) studied resilient Taiwanese mothers after divorce and found that knowing where to find support, having a high level of independence, and a positive self-image were protective factors during the divorce process. An eagerness to engage in activities relating to personal development, having clear life goals, and finding comfort in their children and friends contributed to these women displaying resilience after divorce (Hong & Welch, 2013).

Becoming involved in a new relationship is also a very helpful resource in adjustment and psychological well-being after divorce. A new relationship lessens the attachment to an ex-spouse and is a source of emotional, sexual, financial, and social support (Gustavson et al., 2012; Kulik, & Heine-Cohen, 2011; Symoens et al., 2014). Steiner et al. (2011) found that spiritual well-being was a protective factor for middle-aged women after divorce. Their study revealed that women experienced an improvement in their adjustment to divorce through spiritual well-being, irrespective of the reason for divorce.

Windle (2011) suggests that resilience is not a stagnant state, and a person's experience of resilience will vary across his or her lifetime. It is also necessary to consider the individual's personal resources, environment, assets, and capacity for adapting. People may be more or less resilient at different stages in their lives and in response to different types of stressors (Windle, 2011). Richardson (2002) advocates that the process of developing resilience is effectively a process of disruption and reintegration.

The resiliency model

Richardson's (2002) resiliency model is a linear model (see Figure 1) in which a person moves through a significant disturbance towards four possible outcomes. Richardson (2002) maintains that the individual has the opportunity to either "consciously" choose the outcome of the disturbance or allow the outcome to unfold "unconsciously" (p. 310). The process starts from a biopsychospiritual state of homeostasis that represents a place in a person's life where he or she has adapted mentally, physically, and spiritually to his or her current set of circumstances whether it is bad or good (Richardson, 2002). A person would experience this

as being in their comfort zone even if the situation is not comfortable or pleasant. It is a place they have become used to. The homeostatic state is disrupted by change, opportunities, adverse life events or major stressors that can be internal or external, and planned or unplanned (Richardson, 2002). An example of a planned disruption is a person making the decision to get married, divorced, or change jobs.

Richardson (2002) puts forward that all disruptions cause primary emotions (loss, guilt, or confusion), which have the possibility of leading to introspection and the potential for growth. Over a period, the person who experienced the disruption will adjust to the circumstances and start the process of reintegration, which, according to Richardson (2002), has four possible outcomes:

1) **Dysfunctional reintegration** means that the person is in a state of disruption and is unable to cope. After divorce, for example, some adults resort to binge- and heavy drinking. Excessive alcohol consumption has consistently been linked to stressful events like divorce in both men and women (Keyes, Hatzenbuehler, & Hasin, 2011).

2) **Reintegration with loss** is a state in which people have lost motivation, drive, and hope due to the disruption and have not reintegrated to their normal original state of homeostasis. In the aftermath of divorce, some fathers who do not gain custody of their children can experience emotions of chronic sorrow and loss. This loss is considered to be long-lasting and, depending on the intensity, has negative implications for the individual's sense of well-being (Fletcher, & StGeorge, 2010). A father who experiences this type of chronic sorrow or loss is likely to reintegrate with loss.

3) **Homeostatic reintegration** is a state in which the individual focuses primarily on healing and has turned down any opportunity of growth. In essence, it is to get past the disruption and back to his or her original state of homeostasis. Richardson (2002) asserts that in some cases, for instance with the death of a spouse, a permanent physical disability, and the loss of a spouse through divorce, the option of reintegration back to original homeostasis is no longer available because the type of loss or disruption cannot be regained (Richardson, 2002). The implication is that, in these situations, a person either will not adapt well and function below his or her original level of homeostasis, or reintegrate with resilience.

4) **Resilient reintegration** occurs when the person experiences some growth opportunities and insights relating to the disruption and is able to identify, strengthen, and access existing or develop new nurturing resilience qualities. For example, Oramas (2014) found that, over time, divorced adults come to view the outcomes of the divorce positively, seeing it as an opportunity to develop a new identity and reach self-fulfilment (Oramas, 2014).

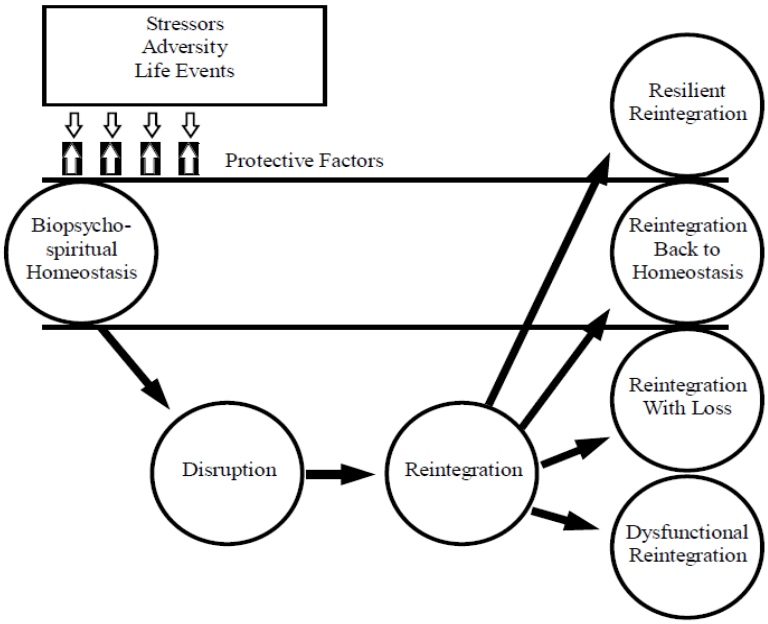

Figure 1: The resilience model.

Source: Richardson, G. E. (2002). The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58*, p. 311.

Resilient reintegration may be a difficult process. In traumatic events like divorce, in which the pair-bond relationship is severed, the disruption is accompanied predictably by pain, loss, and grief (Doughty, Wissel, & Glorfield, 2011). The process of loss and grieving during divorce can be characterised in much the same way as with the death of a loved one (Frisby et al, 2012; Papa, Lancaster, & Kahler, 2014; Stroebe & Schut, 1999; Weiss, 1988). During this process, like the bereaved, a divorced person has to reconstruct his or her personal world (Doughty et al., 2011). The dual process model (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) of grief identifies two types of stressors related to loss and reconstruction. The first is loss-oriented stressors that are related directly to a loss, as in divorce, and restoration-oriented stressors such as constructing a new life and the acquisition of new roles after divorce. Stroebe and Schut

(1999) believe that the bereaved go through a process of oscillation between dealing with loss-oriented stressors, restoration-oriented stressors, and times when they do not dwell on their loss at all. Oscillation is considered a healthy response to loss and is a process of adaptation to the loss (Doughty et al., 2011; Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Eventually, the more time a person spends focused on restoration-orientated stressors, the more likely he or she will reintegrate with resilience (Richardson, 2002).

The resilient reintegration of people's lives is of particular interest in this study, as it highlights the potential positive outcome of accessing, identifying, and developing resilient qualities in people who are dealing with adverse life events such as divorce (Richardson, 2002). Research shows that resilience can be improved with interventions (Botha & Wild, 2013; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Hong & Welch, 2013; Richardson, 2002). Newman (2005) found that a wide range of behaviours can be learnt to increase a person's resilience. His research suggests that people can learn to be more resilient by using techniques that help them stay in the present moment. Being in the present moment helps keep things in perspective (Newman, 2005). Frisby et al. (2012) conducted research on resilience following divorce and highlight the opportunity for therapists to offer resilience-enhancing resources, techniques, and skills to help people reintegrate with resilience.

To sum up, more women are divorcing later in midlife, and even though the adjustment is challenging, they potentially are able to reintegrate with resilience after divorce. However, the perspectives of women on the issue of divorce are important (Gringeri, Wahab, & Anderson-Nathe, 2010). Not all women hold the same world views, have the same values, morals, political views or even have the same interests. Individual women's experiences are unique, and one of the fundamental goals of feminist research is to give individual women their own voice (M. Allen, 2011). Therefore, research involving women should provide an understanding of a woman's experience as she understands it (M. Allen, 2011). Little is known about how individual women make the transition from marriage to singlehood during midlife (Hilton & Anderson, 2009; Sakraida, 2008; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2014). Furthermore, there is a lack of research on women's own perspectives on how they personally adapt to key midlife transitions like divorce (Dare, 2011).

This study aims to provide needed insight into the experiences of older women reintegrating with resilience after divorce. Thus, this study begins to address the lack of South African

studies in the literature on women who divorce with resilience in midlife (according to a search done on EBSCOHOST, September 2015).

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

Research question

This study aimed to explore the following question: How do women who divorce in midlife reconstruct their lives with resilience?

Research design

A qualitative research design utilising the repertory grid methodology developed from a personal constructivist theory (PCT) formed the overall framework for this study. This was used to facilitate an account of the participant's subjective reality and personal construct formulation during and after the divorce process (Kelly, 1955; McLellan & Uys, 2009).

Constructivism

Kelly's (1955) PCT originated from a more general constructivist paradigm. In psychology, constructivism explores and theorises how individuals create systems to find meaning and understanding in their experiences and their world (Raskin & Neimeyer, 2003). Mahoney (2004) posits that five fundamental themes encompass the diverse theories communicated in constructivism. These themes are (1) active agency, (2) order, (3) self, (4) symbolic relatedness, and (5) life span development. Firstly, constructivism, while differing in terminology and language, has proposed foremost that individuals experience constant active agency. This is a distinguishing factor from forms of determinism that view individuals as a passive echo of their world (Bagheri Noaparast, 1995; Mahoney, 2004). Secondly, it is argued that individuals devote much activity to ordering and patterning their experiences. This is done through a process of implicit emotional meaning-making of the world in which they live (Mahoney, 2004). The third theme argues that individual activity is essentially self-referent. An individual is not an island but grows and develops a sense of self in relationship with and within communication with others. Fourthly, individuals cannot be viewed separately from their basic grounding in societal and symbolic systems. Finally, in combining the themes, constructivism holds that an individual experiences an active, interpretive, self-organising, socially grounded, continuous, lifelong developmental flow that is dynamic (Raskin &

Neimeyer, 2003). In an individual, order and disorder coexist while striving for a dynamic balance, which is never quite reached. Altogether, the five themes express a constructed observation of human experience that gives importance to a developing self, through meaningful action in unfolding relationships in society (Mahoney, 2004).

Constructivism does attract scepticism concerning whether individuals actually have accurate access to an external and internal world. Nonetheless, constructivism does not dispute this notion. It is accepted that an individuals' understanding of themselves and their world is not objective (Raskin, 2002). Constructivism considers the constructed meaning of an individual as a subjective interpretation of how he or she experiences and views his or her world. However, contained in the paradigm is a differing on the inference of this position with regard to the nature of reality, the source of constructed meaning, and the best way in which to carry out psychological constructivism research (Raskin, 2002).

Personal constructivist theory (PCT)

Kelly (1955) proposes a method of researching or viewing an individual's psychological process, which he refers to as "constructive alternativism". The main principle behind Kelly's (1955) PCT is that people actively interpret the events around them. People see things as "different from" themselves and others or "similar to" something that may take place on different levels of consciousness. including unconsciousness (Kelly, 1955; Paget & Ellett, 2014). Individuals organise their experiences into bipolar constructs, which they then use to make sense of their world. For example, the construct "self-directedness" will have bipolar or dichotomous elements running from "dependent" to "independent" (Kelly, 1955). PCT uses the concept of bipolarity to establish how people view their world and themselves. Kelly (1955) maintains that a person's constructed system is a personal complex model built on the relationship among key constructs that have been refined, maintained, and tested through personal experiences in an individual's environment and in their personal relationships.

Kelly (1955) further suggests that an individual's interpretation of his or her constructed system is always subjective and cannot be interpreted as the absolute truth, as the truth is only in the eye of the beholder (McLellan & Uys, 2009). There are many ways to construe events, and Kelly's PCT focuses on how individuals understand and interpret the psychosocial landscape of their lives. Individual continually assess their personal theories or assumptions about their world and adapt these theories when faced with personal experiences (Walker,

Trenoweth, Martin, & Ramm, 2013). This continual evaluation of personal experiences affects the way individuals see the world, which leads to a change in an individual's world view over time. Kelly (1955) found that when faced with sufficient information or experiences that challenge the personal construct system, individuals tend to adapt their constructs according to the new information.

Kelly (1955) attempted to address various issues related to the eliciting of individuals' construct systems by introducing the repertory grid method of study. These issues include reducing observer and researcher bias, and empowering individuals to take responsibility for their own experiences using their own words. This effectively shifts the position of expert to the individual, thereby removing it from the researcher (Stewart, Stewart, & Fonda, 1981). Kelly's (1955) repertory grid can be used to help individuals identify meaningful distinctions in how they have constructed their individual worlds. The method elicits an individual's own constructs and perceptions without the need for an expert and avoids observer and researcher bias (Faccio, Castiglioni, & Bell, 2012; Shek, 2012; Stewart et al., 1981).

However, the eliciting of core constructs from a person is a long and arduous process persons must go through to reconstruct various aspects of themselves (Raskin, 2002). PCT has received criticism. In fact, Rogers (1956) was one of the first people to criticise Kelly's PCT. Rogers claims that it is a highly structured cognitive theory that fails to take into account the emotional aspects of an individual's experiences (Chiari, 2013). However, Chiari (2013) asserts that this method is not anything other than emotional. When persons reveal their personal constructs relating to their transitional progression and their core role structures, it inevitably will include emotional content (Chiari, 2013).

By using Kelly's construct theory, this study is able to offer the personal construct formulation of a range of women's experiences of how they reintegrated and reconstructed their lives after divorce in midlife.

Participants and sampling

Qualitative researchers commonly employ a purposive strategy by choosing their participants for specific attributes that they bring to the study (Esterberg, 2002). The participants for this research were selected intentionally for the specific qualities and experiences that they had. The sample of three women was selected using a purposive expert elicitation sampling technique (Cameron et al., 2011; Sakraida, 2005; Theron et al., 2011). A group of three

psychologists familiar with the concept of resilience were requested to nominate three women who were known to them (not clients) who met the following inclusion criteria: In the psychologist's opinion, the women must have integrated with resilience after getting divorced in midlife (35-60 years). The ages of the women participants were 50 years (Kate), 55 years (Joann) and 59 years (Dana) (all names are pseudonyms). They had to be mothers who had been divorced for the first time after 15 years of marriage (Hilton & Anderson, 2009). Dana was a mother of one daughter and had been divorced for 13 years after being married for 22 years. Joann had been divorced for 10 years and had been married for 22 years. She had three grown daughters from the marriage. Kate had been divorced for seven years after being married for 23 years and had two sons. They must have retained custody over their children if their children were still minors (Kulik & Heine-Cohen, 2011). The women must have been divorced for at least two years (and must not yet have remarried). At the time of the divorce, all the participants were awarded custody of their children, and none of the women had remarried.

A homogenous group of women were selected as the data collected from their experiences were compared. Furthermore, the inclusion criteria were guided specifically by literature that indicated that divorce might be a more painful adjustment at midlife, especially after a long-term marriage (Gray et al., 2011; Steiner et al., 2011). In addition, assuming the bulk of the child-rearing responsibilities, experiencing continuing conflict with their ex-spouses over issues relating to the children, and having custody of the children are additional stressors that would not be experienced by women without children or without custody of the children (Symoens et al., 2013; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Lastly, as divorce is a stressful transitional period involving emotional crisis, it is expected that a person will adjust to the circumstances over a period and begin the process of reintegration (Oramas, 2014; Sbarra et al., 2015; Richardson, 2002). Therefore, a period must be afforded to the women to adjust to considering re-marriage and to their new circumstances.

The prospective participants were nominated by the psychologists, who obtained consent to release personal and contact information as well as a provisional agreement from the participants to participate in this research. The researcher contacted the participants telephonically to make appointments for the interviews to be conducted.

Data gathering and procedure

The use of the repertory grid technique (RGT) and understanding an individual's personal construct system are contained in the methodology of PCT (Paget & Ellett, 2014). The RGT was developed from Kelly's (1995) personal construct theory, which maintains that research participants have their own views on the research topic based on their own personal constructs (Faccio et al., 2012; Shek, 2012). Kelly developed the RGT as a method to uncover and enable the researcher to gain a mental map of how individual participants view their world. For this reason, the RGT is used to identify how individuals construe or make sense of their experiences and has been used widely to understand the self-identity system in different research contexts (McLellan & Uys, 2009; Paget & Ellett, 2014; Shek, 2012; Stewart, 2001; Winter, 2012). The participants were interviewed individually by using the RGT, which took approximately two hours each.

An RGT matrix was developed for each participant together with the researcher, based on the principles of Kelly's RGT construction. This consisted of four components: topic, elements, constructs, and ratings (Jankowicz, 2005). The topic represented the focus or domain of the research, which was reintegrating with resilience after divorcing in midlife. The objects of the participant's thoughts related to the topic are referred to as elements and can be associated with "towns" or "cities" that must be placed on their "map or grid" (Kotze, 1995). In this study, an element is an occurrence or thought within the topic. The selection of elements determines the nature of the conversation that will take place between the participants and the researcher, as they are related directly to the topic. There are two ways to select the elements: The researcher can select all the elements, or the researcher can elicit them from the participant. Preferably, the researcher chooses the elements when the researcher wants to learn about a given set of elements from different participants. This was the case in this study, and the elements were chosen by the researcher (Jankowicz, 2005; Shek, 2011). The following nine elements were provided by the researcher, based on Kelly's (1955) suggested list of role titles, and adapted to integrate with Richardson's (2002) resilience model:

1. Self as a married woman representing state at homeostasis.
2. Self I showed to others during divorce.
3. True self during the divorce offering an indication of the extent of the disruption.

4. Ex-husband.
5. Persona non grata.
6. “Thing” that helped you the most through the divorce.
7. Helpful friend / family member symbolising stressors and protective factors.
8. Current self.
9. Ideal self offering an indication of reintegration outcome.

The constructs are the dimensions that the participants use to think about each element (Kotze, 1995). To elicit the constructs, the participants were asked to compare various triadic combinations of elements. The participants were given groupings of three elements at a time, for example, self as married woman, persona non grata, and ideal self. The participant was then asked in what way two of the elements were alike but opposite or different from the third (bipolar distinctions). An example of the elicited constructs for this triad are: ideal self and persona non grata are “confident” opposed to self as a married woman having “self-doubt”. This triad grouping continued until all the elements had been grouped with one another (Fransella & Bannister, 1977; Jankowicz, 2005). As there were nine elements, 12 different triadic groupings were presented to each participant to elicit the constructs. After each round of construct elicitation, the researcher used a laddering technique to clarify the given construct.

Laddering is a method of clarification and questioning used to elicit a deeper, tighter construct from the participant rather than a superficially loose one (Jankowicz, 2005). Laddering down helps the researcher gain more understanding of a particular construct, while laddering up reveals why the construct is important or a preferred construct for the participant. When using the laddering up technique, an example revealed that a participant had a preference for and found being “comfortable” with the “thing” that helped her the most and her friends and family to be a healthier characteristic than feeling “anxiety” like she experienced in her ex-husband’s presence. An example involving laddering down was when one participant revealed a construct regarding the triad between her ex-husband, her current self, and her persona non grata. The initial constructs elicited were “safe” as opposed to “unsafe”. When asked to reveal in more detail what underlay the construct of “safe” and “unsafe”, the participant revealed that she had found a “safe” person to be “trustworthy” as opposed to an “unsafe” person whom she “distrusted”. This allowed a general construct to be broken down

into a more fundamental element. The constructs elicited from the participant were recorded as short phrases or single words (Jankowicz, 2005).

Each element was then rated on each construct to provide a picture (cognitive map) of how the participant thought regarding the topic (reintegrating after divorcing in midlife) on a scale of one to six. By using the standardised RGT, a grid of constructs and comparisons was elicited (McLellan & Uys, 2009; Winter, 2012) and then utilised to interpret the findings (Jankowicz, 2005). The results of the interview are contained in a matrix called the grid; Appendices A, B and C are the participants' repertory grids.

Data analysis

The data collected from a RGT interview can be analysed quantitatively, qualitatively or as a combination of both (Aucamp, 2004). Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend cognitive maps because they are useful in qualitative research as they present the complexity of a person's thinking. A form of cognitive mapping, which is grounded in Kelly's (1995) personal construct theory and illustrates the exploratory map of a participant's understanding and perceptions of a topic at a given time, was used for data analysis in this study (McLellan & Uys, 2009; Village, Greig, Salustri, & Neumann, 2012). It is an extension of the repertory grid and designed purposely for capturing a personal construct system (Eden, 1993). The guidelines for the development of individual cognitive maps are purposely flexible in order to accommodate the individual and/or the context (Hanington & Martin, 2012; Village et al., 2012). The mapping of constructs and their relationships externalises how the participant's knowledge may be integrated mentally. Therefore, a cognitive map is a graphical representation that illustrates how the participants view the relationship between various elements and their constructs (Dixon & Lammi, 2014). Each cognitive map was constructed from the given elements and linked to the rated bipolar constructs chosen by each participant. The rated bipolar characteristic allowed for the nuance of "shades of grey" as the poles represented significant choices or issues relating to the research topic.

In keeping with the inherent flexibility of cognitive mapping (Hanington & Martin, 2012; Village et al., 2012), each cognitive map was directly related to the research topic of resilience by mapping both the elements and therefore the elicited constructs of each participant by means of Richardson's (2002) resiliency model. See Appendices D, E, and F for each participant's cognitive map. By using cognitive mapping, each participant's

viewpoint and values were obtained using an individual repertory grid and analysed individually, which offered the researcher an individual construct system relating to the research topic. The participants' individual cognitive maps where then compared using the elements and constructs (Dixon & Lammi, 2014; McLellan & Uys, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness includes credibility, which refers to accurately recording the phenomena under scrutiny and dependability, which shows that the findings are consistent (Babbie & Mouton, 2008). Furthermore, trustworthiness includes confirmability, which ensures a degree of neutrality in which the findings of the study are informed by the respondents and not the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest (Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006; McLellan & Uys, 2009). This research used the repertory grid technique, which elicits a personal construct from participants, using their exact wording. Furthermore, the interview process was audio recorded to contribute to ensuring accuracy. As the RGT is a standardised systematic interview method that relies on the participants providing their own understanding regarding the research topic in their own terms rather than the interviewer's, the data extracted for this research are less susceptible to external contamination and can be considered trustworthy (McLellan & Uys, 2009). Trustworthiness was further heightened by researcher–participant reciprocity (data verified by participants) and careful member checking (Theron et al., 2011).

Qualitative researchers are not largely interested in transferability and do not claim that the knowledge obtained is necessarily relevant in other contexts. Rather, transferability is seen as the obligation of the reader. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the reader look for thick descriptions and purposive sampling when considering transferability. Babbie and Mouton (2005) suggest that the researcher collects enough data and describes it in sufficient detail allowing the reader to judge if it is transferable or not. The researcher must further give evidence that the analysis was systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous as this provides a trail of evidence which increases the trustworthiness and credibility of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical considerations

Participants are considered important collaborators in research and were treated with dignity, respect and concern for their welfare during this research process (A. Allen, 2011). Ethical clearance (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2015/0301) was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, to carry out this study. The purpose of this study was explained to each participant on the day of their face-to-face interview, and their written informed consent to participate was obtained. All participants participated voluntary and were advised that they could withdraw from the research at any stage. They were assured that the information given would remain confidential and that their anonymity would be protected when the findings were presented. The participants were invited to choose a pseudonym which was used to identify them in this research. All face-to-face interviews were carried out in locations in which the participant felt comfortable – most commonly, the interviews took place in their places of residence or a place of their choice.

The researcher assumed responsibility to ensure the confidentiality of the data, and all data was anonymised once they were collected. All data were stored safely electronically, were password protected and accessible to the researcher only. In addition, the data are stored securely by the University of the Free State for the legally required five years, following which the data will be destroyed. The results from the data collected are discussed in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lachman et al., (2015) suggested that it would be useful to consider researching middle aged individuals from multiple contexts. This study took cognisance of this suggestion and considered the participants from various contexts relating to a divorce process. Constructs were elicited from the participants in relation to the different stages of resilience indicated in Richardson's (2002) resiliency model. This specific study, which involved women who reintegrated their lives with resilience after divorce, used the RGT to elicit and examine their constructed system during the divorce process from a multiple context perspective. The elements and elicited constructs of each repertory grid were utilised to develop the participants' cognitive maps. Each participant's cognitive map was discussed using their

quoted constructs, effectively giving each woman her own voice in this study. See Appendices D, E, and F for each participant's cognitive map.

Background of participants

Dana (all names are pseudonyms)

Dana is a 59-year-old white South African woman who recently moved to Cape Town from Bloemfontein to be close to her daughter and her brother. Dana was born and bred in Bloemfontein, and she considers moving to Cape Town a new start/chapter for herself. When Dana got married, she was 23 years old. She now has a daughter who is 33 years old and has similarly moved to Cape Town with her husband. Dana was married for 22 years and divorced 13 years ago when she was 46 years old.

According to Dana, the marriage was abusive and she considered herself to be married unhappily. In fact, Dana was severely depressed at times to the extent that she received therapy and underwent shock treatment for depression. Dana and her husband were in the ministry, and she was very fearful that, if she divorced him, he would gain custody of their daughter because she suffered from depression. Consequently, Dana endured the marriage until her daughter was 18 years old before initiating the divorce. Dana was unemployed during her marriage and she was a full-time mother and pastor's wife. After the divorce, Dana studied for a diploma in bookkeeping, which she recently attained, and she is currently employed as a bookkeeper.

Dana was interviewed in her bachelor's flat in Cape Town where she presented as a quiet, warm, accommodating, and welcoming person. At the time of the interview, Dana was not involved in a relationship and seemed to be at ease with herself and in discussing her divorce.

Joann

Joann, a 55-year-old white South African woman, is a school teacher who lives in Cape Town. Joann is the mother of three adult daughters who have left the home and are independent from their mother. Joann was 22 years old when she married and was 45 years old when she divorced 10 years ago. Her marriage lasted for 22 years, and she considered herself to be happy in the marriage. Thus, she was devastated when she discovered that her husband was having an affair and initiated a divorce.

Joann was interviewed in her classroom at the school where she is employed. Joann came across as a warm, enthusiastic person and spoke with confidence. At the time of the interview, Joann was not in a relationship and not interested in actively attempting to become involved in one. At times during the interview, Joann was quite vehement when speaking about the divorce, which seemed to startle her. Joann was surprised that she still had such strong suppressed emotions relating to the divorce.

Kate

Kate is a 50-year-old white psychiatric nursing sister living in Cape Town, South Africa. Kate lives on her own, as her two grown sons have established their own independent lives. At 20 years old, Kate found herself pregnant with her first son. There was a joint decision to get married, and the marriage lasted for 23 years. Kate was 43 years old when she divorced, which was seven years ago. Kate articulated that her marriage was not perfect. Nonetheless, she felt that they were happy and made a good team. The marriage ended when a secret that Kate's ex-husband had been keeping was exposed. Kate was devastated by the information and initiated the divorce. The divorce process was very acrimonious, and Kate states this was the most difficult stage for her to deal with.

The interview took place in Kate's home, and she gave the impression of a person that was outgoing, friendly, and confident in herself. Kate has been in a relationship since her divorce that has since ended and she is currently single. Kate seemed to be at ease speaking about the divorce throughout the interview and did not appear to be disturbed by discussing the divorce at any stage.

Homeostasis: Self as a married woman

Marriage can be compared to a state of homeostasis in which a person has adapted mentally, physically, and spiritually to his or her current set of circumstances, whether it is bad or good (Richardson, 2002). A person might experience this as being in his or her comfort zone, even if the situation is uncomfortable or unpleasant.

Dana. Dana's quoted constructs' or view of herself as a married woman was a woman who was, "very guarded" and "unsafe" with a "very high level of anxiety". Dana considered herself to be "passive", "very hidden" and "reserved". Furthermore, she felt "full of shame", "guilt", and "somewhat dishonest". Consequently, Dana had "no confidence" and was

"somewhat judgmental" of others and did not feel "related or connected". In fact, she felt as if her life was one of "bondage". Dana's experience at homeostasis was unpleasant and distressful. On the other hand, Dana still considered herself to be "very loving" in relation to her family and friends. Dana's personal construct of her state of homeostasis as a married woman was of a woman who was experiencing negative circumstances associated with marriage and of a person with a negative sense of self.

Joann. Joann constructed herself as being "dependent" and "passive" with "self-doubt" as a married woman. Nevertheless, Joann also depicted herself as experiencing "some joy", being "relativity calm", and being "somewhat accepted" by the people around her. Joann additionally thought of herself as being "exciting", "supportive", "useful", and "thoughtful" of others. Joann's view of herself as a married woman was one of a woman who was relatively happy, experiencing the benefits of being married. She also indicated that she felt "dependent" on the relationship and had "some self-doubt". It appears as if Joann was experiencing the benefits associated with being a married woman to a large extent.

Kate. Kate's quoted constructs revealed that she viewed herself as a married woman who was at times "preoccupied", "very busy", and "somewhat angry". Kate also revealed that she sometimes was "wearing a mask" and could be "un-loving" and "a bit cut off" from the people close to her. However, Kate also saw herself as a "self-assured", "strong", "certain" woman who was "somewhat compassionate" and "spiritual". Her construct does not reveal that she was experiencing negative circumstances per se but indicates that she was experiencing the emotional support and companionship that a marriage could offer.

When the views of the three women of themselves as married women at homeostasis are compared, Joann and Kate's constructs support literature that highlights that they were experiencing some benefits like emotional support, companionship, and financial stability from their marriages (Amato, 2014; Gray et al., 2011). on the other hand, Dana, who was suffering very negative circumstances, supported literature that states that many women are lonely, abused, and depressed in their marriages (Sbarra et al., 2015). Dana appears to have had a very low negative sense of self at homeostasis. Conversely, Joann's sense of self was quite positive, even though she felt that she was "dependent" with some "self-doubt". Kate, on the other hand, appeared to view herself as a "self-assured", "strong" but slightly "cut off" married woman.

Disruption: Self shown to others during the divorce and the real self during the divorce

Divorce is a stressful transitional period characterised by a disruption which commonly involves an emotional crisis (Oramas, 2014; Sbarra et al., & Bourassa, 2015). The findings illustrate that all three women found the process of getting divorced after a long, accustomed lifestyle (Steiner et al., 2011), as stressful, regardless of whether they considered themselves happily married or not. The divorces where experienced as an emotionally traumatic and disruptive period leaving the women feeling troubled and vulnerable (Oramas, 2014; Määttä, 2011; Thomas, 2011; Sbarra et al., 2015).

Dana. During the divorce period, a "very guarded", "very hidden/reserved" Dana exposed to others that she was feeling "somewhat unsafe", "somewhat judgmental", and experiencing some "anxiety/discomfort". It was difficult for Dana to "relate" with the people around her and she found that she exhibited "somewhat dishonest" behaviour towards them. During this stage, it was obvious that Dana had "no confidence". Yet, Dana was able to reveal to certain people that she felt as if she was "somewhat in bondage" and feeling "shame and guilt". Nevertheless, Dana was also able to express to others that she was a "committed", "somewhat loving" albeit "passive" person during the divorce.

However, at this stage, Dana truly considered herself "very guarded", "unsafe", "very distant", and "dishonest". At the time, Dana was experiencing a "lack of confidence", "some anxiety/discomfort" and finding it difficult to "relate" to others. In addition, Dana found that she was "somewhat judgmental", "passive" and "very hidden/reserved". This seemed to be a very difficult period for Dana during which she felt "full of shame/guilt" and "somewhat in bondage". Throughout this phase, however, Dana still considered herself to be "very loving". Dana was quite congruent in what she exposed to others during the divorce; however, she did feel more "distant" and "unsafe" and experienced more "shame" and "guilt" than she let people realise.

Joann. Joann displayed to others a woman with "self-doubt" who was feeling "discarded and "worthless". Joann reflected that she revealed to others that she was "dependent", "somewhat thoughtless", and "passive". During that period, Joann expressed to others that she was "in pain", "resentful", "somewhat negative", and "obsessive in her thoughts". During that stage, Joann did feel as if she was "supportive" towards others but she also felt "shame".

During that time, Joann truly understood herself as a woman experiencing many emotions like “pain”, “self-doubt”, and being “resentful”, together with feelings of being “discarded” and “worthless”. Throughout this stage of the divorce process, Joann truly had extreme “obsessive thoughts” and felt “very shamed”. That was a difficult period for Joann, in which she considered herself “dependant”, “somewhat thoughtless”, “somewhat negative”, and “passive”. Yet, during that difficult time, Joann did think that she was able to be “supportive” of others surrounding her. Joann was relatively congruent in how she revealed herself to others. However, she did not, disclose to others the extent of the “self-doubt”, extreme “obsessive thoughts” and how “very shamed” she felt.

Kate. During the divorce process, the “preoccupied”, “somewhat spiritual” Kate admitted to “wearing a mask”. During that period, Kate exhibited to others a woman who appeared to be “busy”, “somewhat un-loving”, and “cut off”. At times, Kate believed that others would see her as “unkind”, “unforgiving”, and “somewhat angry”. Kate acknowledges that she was “wearing a mask” during this stage; yet, she really saw herself as “cut off” from those around her. This was a “busy” time for Kate who, even though she felt “spiritual”, also felt she was “somewhat unkind”, “somewhat unforgiving”, and “somewhat angry”. “Un-loving”, “preoccupied” Kate was congruent in revealing some aspects of herself but very incongruent in other instances. Kate gave the impression to others that she was “self-assured”, “certain”, and “strong”, while behind her mask she really was “very scared”, “vulnerable”, and “undecided”.

Individuals often deliberately withhold troubling and possibly embarrassing personal information from others (Kelly, 1998; Masuda et al., 2011). Literature suggests that during a difficult emotional period, many women do not always reveal what they are feeling or reveal the real situation to the people around them (Edin, Dahlgren, Lalos, & Högberg, 2010). Kate’s construct of what she showed to others, compared to how she really was, supports the literature. Conversely, Joann and Dana were congruent in most of their constructs; however, they did not reveal the extent of the shame that they felt. Richardson (2002) proposes that all disruptions cause major emotions such as loss, guilt, doubt, and confusion. The women’s construct systems clearly revealed that they had experienced major negative emotions during the disruption stage. These emotions left them feeling distressed and exposed, which replicates and broadens existing research findings (Oramas, 2014; Määttä, 2011; Thomas, 2011, Sbarra et al., 2015).

Reintegration: Stressors/protective factors

Ex-husband and persona non grata

The findings explicitly reveal that Dana, Joann, and Kate experienced a loss when their marriages ended in divorce. As such, literature indicates that they most likely would have experienced two different types of stressors that are related to loss and reconstruction (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Loss-orientated stressors are losses that are directly related to the loss, and for the women in this research the elements *persona non grata* and *ex-husband* represented loss-orientated stressors. Restoration-orientated stressors or protective factors were represented by the most helpful friend or family member and the "thing" that helped the most (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Additionally, as suggested by Lachman et al. (2015), the women were asked to construct their view of these stressors and protective factors in relation to themselves and the other elements with which they presented. Kelly (1955) asserts that people tend to see things as "different from" themselves and others or "similar to" themselves. In addition, a person's constructed system is built and tested through personal experiences in their environments and in their personal relationships. Kelly (1955) states that an individual's constructed system is always subjective and cannot be interpreted as the absolute truth, as the truth is only in the eye of the beholder (McLellan & Uys, 2009). Therefore, the three women in this study saw the loss-orientated and restoration-orientated stressors purely from their personal constructed view points and is subjective.

Dana. Dana followed a polarised approach in constructing her ex-husband. Dana presented him as a "very guarded" and "very dishonest" ex-husband who was "not related or connected", "hidden /reserved" and "very distant". Dana further constructed him as appearing to be "very confident" and "very judgmental" but really experiencing "high anxiety". Dana's experienced her ex-husband as a man who was "very aggressive", "very unsafe", and "very abusive". Despite his negative behaviour, it appeared to Dana that he was "in bondage" and "full of shame /guilt".

The persona non grata was a previous, "very confident" woman friend from Dana's church who seemed to be "somewhat comfortable" with herself. This woman had a side that Dana portrayed as "loving", "somewhat trustworthy", and "outgoing and friendly". However, during the divorce, other characteristics of this woman were revealed to Dana. During this phase, Dana experienced her previous church friend as "somewhat guarded", "dishonest",

"judgemental", and "slightly aggressive". This finding is consistent with literature that suggests that a stigma is associated with divorce in many contexts, of which religion is one (Jibril, 2014). Jibril (2014) maintains that judgmental attitudes can come from friends, family and colleagues, especially in a religious context. Staying in a marriage, even in negative circumstances, is often socially expected, and women are often judged when they do not conform by getting divorced.

Dana's view of her ex-husband is very negative and does not reveal any positive traits other than that he is "very confident". Dana is able to recognise some positive traits in the persona non grata, even though Dana has an overall negative opinion of her. When compared with how Dana viewed herself during the divorce, the findings reveal that she saw herself in a more negative way than she saw both her ex-husband and the persona non grata.

Joann. Even though Joann was devastated by her husband's infidelity and his initiating a divorce, she did admit to experiencing him as "confident", "useful", and "having some respect" for him. However, as consistent with literature, the relationship between them ultimately was destroyed (Amato, 2014; Oramas, 2014; Symoens et al., 2013) and Joann constructed him as being "thoughtless", in "some pain", "resentful", and "negative" during the divorce.

Joann's persona non grata was the husband of the woman with whom Joann's husband had an affair. Joann saw this man as "assertive" and "somewhat confident". He appeared to be making advances toward Joann, and she experienced this as "irritating" and "thoughtless". Joann further indicated that she viewed him as a man who was in "pain", feeling "worthless" with "more shame than joy". Joann had negative constructs of both her ex-husband and the persona non grata, but her ex-husband was viewed more positively than the persona non grata was. When Joann's view of herself is compared with her views of her ex-husband and the persona non grata, Joann viewed herself much more negatively than she viewed both of them.

Kate. Kate presented her ex-husband as a man who was "wearing a mask". The quoted constructed external view of him was of a man who was "un-loving", "somewhat unkind", "angry", and "unforgiving". Beneath the mask, Kate constructed her ex-husband as "somewhat undecided", "cut off", "somewhat scared", and "somewhat vulnerable".

An old nursing friend was Kate's persona non grata, and Kate also felt she was "wearing a mask". The one side of her friend was "self-assured", "strong", and "religious", while the

others side was “un-loving”, “unkind”, “unforgiving”, “cut off”, and “somewhat angry”. Both Kate’s loss-orientated stressors where not seen in a very negative light. However, Kate viewed herself as being in a much more negative state in comparison with her ex-husband and her persona non grata at that stage of the divorce process.

It is interesting that the participants collectively constructed themselves as being in a much more negative state or manner than both their loss-oriented stressors during the divorce process were. This finding is supported by Sbarra, Smith, and Mehl (2012) when they submit that many individuals turn a punitive light on themselves when their marriage ends in a divorce. Furthermore, literature supports that the transitional period is stressful for people who divorce (Oramas, 2014; Sbarra et al., 2015) and it has the capacity to destroy relationships in a family and with others. All three women were no longer on good terms with their ex-husbands, as is clearly indicated by how each woman construed them. Likewise, Kate and Dana were no longer experiencing positive relationships with their former friends. These emotional losses contribute to the already stressful event (Amato, 2014; Oramas, 2014; Symoens et al., 2013) and have the capacity to slow down the process of reintegration. However, protective factors may buffer against these negative experiences and enhance the process of reintegration (Richardson, 2002).

Helpful family/friend and “thing” that helped the most

Dana. The “thing” that helped Dana the most through the divorce was her relationship with God. Dana’s quoted constructs relating to her relationship with God are: “Very open/honest, very loving, very committed, very confident, very trustworthy, totally free, very truthful, very accepting, very comfortable, full of relief, very related/connected, very outgoing/friendly, more passive than aggressive”. Dana ascribed only extremely good constructs to her relationship with God. It is evident that this relationship was indeed very helpful during the disruption and reintegration phases of the divorce process.

Dana’s most helpful friend and family member were also of great support and help, and her quoted construction of this type of support was that it was “very open/honest, very committed, very trustworthy/safe, full of relief, very truthful, very loving, very comfortable, totally free, very related/connected, very accepting, very confident, more passive than aggressive, and very outgoing/friendly”. Dana’s protective factors were very closely interwoven, and she did not indicate any differentiation between her relationship with God or the support she received

from her most helpful family member/friend. It is clear from the rating of the constructs in superlative terms ("very") that she received great support from her friends, family and in her relationship with God.

Joann. Joann's career was the "thing" that helped her most through the divorce. Joann's quoted constructs of how her career made her feel are "confident, useful, respected, independent, thoughtful, somewhat assertive, supportive, exciting, acceptance, positive, calm and joy". This finding is supported by Grossman and Chester's (2013) research on women managers experiencing divorce. Women found their work to be a form of "healing power" (p. 129) in that it gave them time out from domestic troubles, occupied their minds, provided structure during a tremulous period and repaired their damaged self esteem. (Grossman & Chester, 2013). Joann viewed the helpful family member and friend as being "confident, useful, respected, independent, thoughtful, assertive, very supportive, exciting, acceptance, positive, calm, and joyful". It is evident that Joann's career and the support she received from her most helpful family member/friend were seen positively. However, the quoted constructs indicate that Joann seemed to regard her most helpful friend/family member slightly more positively than she regarded her career

Kate. Spirituality is the "thing" that Kate felt helped her most during the divorce. Kate's quoted constructs indicate that she viewed spirituality as helping her to be "very present, self-assured, loving, somewhat strong, still, somewhat certain, very spiritual, very true/honest, nurturing, compassionate, open, and peaceful". Kate's quoted constructs indicate that she viewed her most helpful friend or family member as "present, self-assured, loving, strong, still, somewhat certain, very religious, true/honest, nurturing, compassionate, open, and peaceful". Kate rated her restoration stressor/protection factors similarly, except for the spirituality and religious construct. Kate constructed spirituality as a completely different way of being when compared to being religious. Kate views herself as spiritual and her most helpful family or friend as religious.

Kate's identification of spirituality as the "thing" that helped her most during the divorce process and Dana's statement that her relationship with God helped her most are supported by literature. Steiner et al. (2011) and Krumrei, Mahoney, and Pargament (2011) found that women experience an improvement in their adjustment to divorce through spiritual well-being. Steiner et al. (2011) use the term *spiritual* to include being religious. As implied by the findings, spending time on religious and spiritual activities and with helpful friends/family

and in the work environment places a focus on restoration-orientated stressors, which has curative benefits and increases the likelihood that the person will reintegrate with resilience (Richardson, 2002).

Resilient reintegration: Current self and ideal self

Resilience is not a stagnant state, and people's experiences of resilience will vary during their life course depending on individual personal resources, context, assets, and capacity for adapting (Windle, 2011). Richardson (2002) says that, after a period, a person who experienced a disruption like divorce will adjust and begin the process of reintegration in terms of one of the possible four outcomes: resilient reintegration, reintegration with loss, homeostatic reintegration, or dysfunctional reintegration. When one considers the three women's personal constructs of themselves as they were at the time of the interviews, it seems as if they had managed collectively to reintegrate with resilience over time.

Dana. Dana currently constructs herself as "very open/honest, very trustworthy, very committed, very truthful, very loving, very comfortable, very related/connected, very accepting, fairly confident, more passive than aggressive, very outgoing/friendly, totally free, full of relief". The only difference between how Dana sees herself now and her ideal self is that, even though Dana perceives herself as "confident", she would like to be more so. Dana also views herself presently in a very similar way to her relationship with God and her most helpful friend/family member. The very positive manner in how Dana now constructs herself is in stark contrast to how she views her ex-husband and her former friend from the church.

However, the most startling change in Dana's sense of self is how she presently perceives herself compared to when she was experiencing the disruption of divorce. It is also evident that there is a vast difference in how Dana now constructs herself compared with how she viewed herself as a married woman (homeostasis). Dana is now functioning at a significantly higher level than she was at homeostasis. This indicates that Dana has reintegrated with resilience after experiencing the major disruption of divorce. Research supports this finding that some women like Dana feel "free" and "full of relief" after divorce when they were in an abusive or unhappy marriage (Frisby et al., 2012; Määttä, 2011).

Joann. Joann currently constructs herself as "confident, useful, respected, independent, thoughtful, somewhat assertive, supportive, exciting, acceptance, positive, calm, and joyful". The only difference between how Joann perceives who she is now and her ideal self is that

she would like to be "very independent" as opposed to being "independent". Joann still receives a small maintenance from her ex-husband, and this makes her feel less independent than she would like to be. Joann's negative sense of dependence on her ex-husband is supported by research that indicates that receiving financial support imparts a sense of dependence on others, including the ex-spouse (Kulik & Heine-Cohen, 2011). The positive manner in which Joann now perceives herself is contrary to how she views her ex-husband and her persona non grata. However, it is very similar to how she construes her career and the most helpful family member/friend. According to Joann's constructs, there is a vast positive shift in how she differentiates herself during the divorce and how she now views herself.

It is evident that there has also been a change in how Joann viewed herself as a married woman (homeostasis) to how she sees herself currently. Joann had considered herself to be happy in the marriage at homeostasis and even though the change is not large, Joann now feels more "confident", "independent", "accepted", "respected", and "calm". It is clear that Joann is now functioning at a higher level than she was as a married woman at homeostasis and has reintegrated with resilience.

Kate. Kate constructs her current self as "present, self-assured, loving, strong, still, certain, very spiritual, true/honest, nurturing, compassionate, open, peaceful" and her ideal self as "present, self-assured, loving, strong, still, certain, very spiritual, true/honest, nurturing, compassionate, open, peaceful". Kate does not distinguish in any way between how she is now and how she would ideally like to be. Furthermore, Kate's view of herself now and how she views spirituality and the most helpful friend/family member is similar and positive. However, there is a significant difference in how Kate identifies herself now and how she negatively perceives her ex-husband and her former nursing friend. Likewise, there is a significant difference in how Kate saw herself during the disruption of divorce and how she perceives herself currently. This finding clearly supports literature that women find the initial stage of divorce traumatic, disruptive, and emotionally challenging (Oramas, 2014; Sbarra et al., 2015). However, as in the case with Kate, literature also encouragingly suggests that coping with loss and disruptions is transitional and the crisis does tend to pass (Richardson, 2002). From Kate's constructions, it is evident that she considers herself "still, very spiritual, nurturing, compassionate, open and peaceful" and that her spiritual practise helped her the most. When Kate observes herself as being "present" as opposed to being "preoccupied", it supports Newman's (2005) research, which suggests individuals can learn to be more resilient

by using techniques that help them stay in the present moment, thereby helping them keep things in perspective . It is apparent that Kate is now functioning at a higher level than when she was a married woman at homeostasis and that she has reintegrated with resilience after facing the major disruption of divorce.

Summary of results

These results reveal the personal construct system of each woman in the specific context of divorce. The findings provide insight into the women's worlds, of who they were at homeostasis and disruption. Further insight was gained into what helped or hindered each woman during the transition and how they view themselves now at reintegration after divorce. The three women's constructs were compared to reveal similarities and highlight their differences for each element. Similarly, the findings were compared with available literature on women who divorce with resilience in midlife.

The findings of this study are consistent with the resiliency model (Richardson, 2002) and suggest that the women in this study, who got divorced after long-term marriages, did reintegrate with resilience. Before the disruption (divorce), two of the women considered themselves to be relatively content, enjoying components of the benefits associated with marriage. However, the third women experienced her marriage as abusive and felt disconnected, lonely, and depressed. The women's constructs of themselves as married women correlated with how they viewed themselves at the state of homeostasis. While the motive for the divorce was not the focus of this research, two of the women who considered themselves content were both devastated when divorce proceedings started. Conversely, the other woman felt relieved to terminate a situation that she compared with being in bondage.

Collectively, the women found the process of getting divorced after a long-term marriage, whether they were content or not, very stressful and experienced it as an emotionally traumatic disruption leaving them feeling distressed and exposed. The two women who had initially viewed themselves as relatively content at homeostasis underwent a significant adverse change in how they constructed themselves in the disruption stage. Conversely, during the disruption, there was very little alteration for the woman who had already constructed herself negatively at homeostasis. Two of the women displayed congruency in how they felt during the disruption and what they revealed to people around them, whereas the other women wore a mask and hid her true feelings. Research supports this finding,

especially for women undergoing a stressful transition like divorce (Edin et al., 2010; Kelly, 1998; Masuda et al., 2011).

Furthermore, divorce has the power to demolish relationships and is associated with conflict between spouses and friends or family. Therefore, it is inevitable to experience stressors during divorce, and together, the women experienced their ex-husbands as a stressor, with the participant who had been in an abusive, unhappy marriage experiencing her ex-husband from an extremely negative point of view. The women identified someone else at the time as an additional stressor and viewed them from a pessimistic perspective but not as negatively as their ex-spouses. Of notable interest is the finding that all three of the women viewed themselves more negatively than they viewed their ex-husbands or their persona non grata during the disruption. Conversely, the women construed protective supportive factors in the form of helpful family and friends, spirituality, relationship with God (religion), and career very positively, thus helping them during the transition of divorce.

Crises are not a stagnant state, and after a period, individuals who experience major disruptions like divorce adjust and begin the process of reintegration. The women who participated in this study currently regard themselves in a very positive albeit different way. They construe themselves much more positively than they construe their ex-husbands and their persona non grata. Their current perspectives of themselves are interwoven closely with their views of their helpful friends or family members and their respective careers, spirituality, and relationship with God. In fact, they collectively constructed themselves as being very similar to their inference of what an ideal self is.

Dana, Joann, and Kate experienced divorce as a major disruption requiring emotional growth, strength and adjustment. These three women's constructs have revealed that, while there are some similarities, they are unique in their experience of divorce and reintegration, which is supported by feminist literature (Gringeri et al., 2010). They do not appear to embrace the same world views or necessarily have the same values, morals, or even the same interests. However, collectively, they have experienced a major disruption and managed to survive the disruption and associated stressors by using their protective factors to reintegrate with resilience. They are experiencing positive subjective well-being and are thriving despite the adversity they experienced (Gustavson et al, 2012; Hong & Welch, 2013; Ryan, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Women who divorce with resilience in midlife are a neglected area of interest in the discipline of psychology; therefore, the aim of this study was to contribute towards the understanding and knowledge of women who divorce with resilience after a long-term marriage in midlife within a South African context. A further aim was to offer a female perceptive in the field of resilience and divorce by giving a voice to three women. This qualitative study used the repertory grid technique (RGT) derived from the personal construct theory to identify the individual personal construct formulation of the women's experiences of how they reintegrated and reconstructed their lives after divorce in midlife. The data collected from the RGT was analysed using a form of cognitive mapping, which is an extension of the RGT designed for capturing a graphical representation of a personal construct system.

It was evident from the findings that the participants in the developmental stage of midlife collectively experienced divorce, underwent a major disruption, experienced emotional growth, and had to re-establish their lives as single mothers after divorce. The findings further suggest that, irrespective of whether the women were happily married or not, all of them experienced the process of divorce as very stressful and emotionally challenging. The study also found that the women's ex-spouses and certain of their former friends were stressors. However, on the other hand, the study found that family members and friends as well as the women's careers, religion and spirituality, were protective factors.

These findings support emerging research in this area revealing that, after a stressful period related to divorce, most women successfully adjust to their new lives, adopt new identities (Amato, 2014; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002, Wallerstein et al., 2013), overcome the situation, and are able to thrive and progress to lead very productive lives (Deist & Greeff, 2015; Mancini & Bonanno, 2011). The study further confirmed that these women were unique in their experience of divorce and reintegration. Additionally, the findings and knowledge gained from this study support research that offers a practical application for therapists. There is the opportunity for therapists in individual therapy sessions to utilise the RGT in order to understand a woman's unique system of personal constructs relating to divorce. This would allow the women and therapist to develop an understanding of how the client is constructing their life. Furthermore, the focus of therapy can then be on reconstruction and the reintegration of an individuals construct system by revising existing constructs and experimenting with desired new ones. The use of the RGT additionally offers the therapist a

measure to observe therapy outcomes by comparing the individuals constructs when entering therapy and the construct system on exiting therapy (Winter, 2012). There is moreover the opportunity for therapists to offer resilience-enhancing resources, techniques, and skills to help individuals reintegrate with resilience after a disruption like divorce (Frisby et al., 2012; Newman, 2005; Steiner et al., 2011).

A limitation of this study became evident during the course of this study. The participants where all white females; therefore, they are not a true representation of South African women. From a cultural perspective, Africans have traditionally considered marriage as an indissoluble bond between a man, his wife, and their respective families. Marriage tended to be stable, and divorce was discouraged and rare in the collective system (Boniface, 2012; Mbiti, 2000; Sodi et al., 2010). Consequently, in the past, divorce rates in South Africa saw white adults experiencing significantly more divorces than African adults did. Yet, current statistics show a dramatic shift in divorce trends for African adults. More African adults than White adults are now divorcing (Statistics South Africa, 2014). This change in trend indicates that many African women are now experiencing divorce, which is juxtaposed to a collective cultural perspective that does not sanction divorce. Zulu women for whom lobola is paid (custom of bride wealth) or who are married are afforded significant recognition and status in the community, and being divorced has the potential to affect her status negatively (Rudwick & Posel, 2015). For most women, research indicates that divorce is a major disruption requiring emotional growth, strength, and adjustment. In addition, African women have culture-specific issues to transcend in order to reintegrate after divorce. Literature on African women's experiences and how they manage the transition from marriage to divorce in this context is lacking. For future research, it is recommended that a cross-cultural study on women who divorce with resilience in South Africa would contribute greatly to the understanding and knowledge in this field.

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APPENDIX A: DANA – REPERTORY GRID

SCALE

Very Agree Somewhat Somewhat Agree Very

1 2 3 4 5 6

	Self as a Married woman	Self I showed others during divorce	Actual self during divorce	Ex-husband now	Thing that helped you	Current Self	Ideal self	Persona non grata	Helpful friend/family member	
Open/honest	6	6	6	6	1	1	1	4	1	**Guarded/hidden**
Safe/trustworthy	5	3	5	6	1	1	1	3	1	**Unsafe/distrust**
Committed/close	6	5	6	6	1	1	1	3	1	**Distant**
Truth	4	3	5	6	1	1	1	2	1	**Dishonest**
Loving	6	3	4	6	1	1	1	2	1	**Abuse**
Comfortable	6	3	4	6	1	1	1	3	1	**Discomfort /anxiety**
Not relating/connecting	2	2	2	1	6	6	6	2	6	**Related /connected**
Acceptance	4	4	4	6	1	1	1	4	1	**Judgemental**
Aggressive	5	5	5	1	4	4	4	3	4	**Passive / withdrawn**
Confidence	6	5	5	1	1	2	1	1	1	**Lack of confidence**
Outgoing/friendly	6	6	6	5	1	1	1	2	1	**Hidden /reserved**

APPENDIX B: JOANN – REPERTORY GRID

SCALE

Very Agree Somewhat Somewhat Agree Very

1 2 3 4 5 6

	Self as a married woman	Self I showed others during divorce	Actual self during divorce	Ex-husband now	Thing that helped you	Current Self	Ideal self	Persona non grata	Helpful friend/family member	
Confident	5	5	5	2	2	2	2	3	2	**Self doubt**
Discarded	5	2	2	2	5	5	5	4	5	**Useful**
Respect/admired	3	5	5	3	2	2	2	4	2	**Worthless**
Independent	5	5	5	2	2	2	1	4	2	**Dependant**
Kind/thoughtful	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	2	2	**Thoughtless/unkind**
Assertive	5	5	5	2	3	3	3	2	2	**Passive**
Supportive	2	2	2	5	2	2	2	5	1	**Irritating**
Painful	5	2	2	3	5	5	5	2	5	**Exciting**
Resentful	4	2	2	2	5	5	5	2	5	**Acceptance**
Positive	2	4	4	5	2	2	2	4	2	**Negative /mean**
Calm	3	4	6	4	2	2	2	4	2	**Obsessive thought**
Joy	4	4	1	3	2	2	2	4	2	**Shame**

APPENDIX C: KATE – REPERTORY GRID

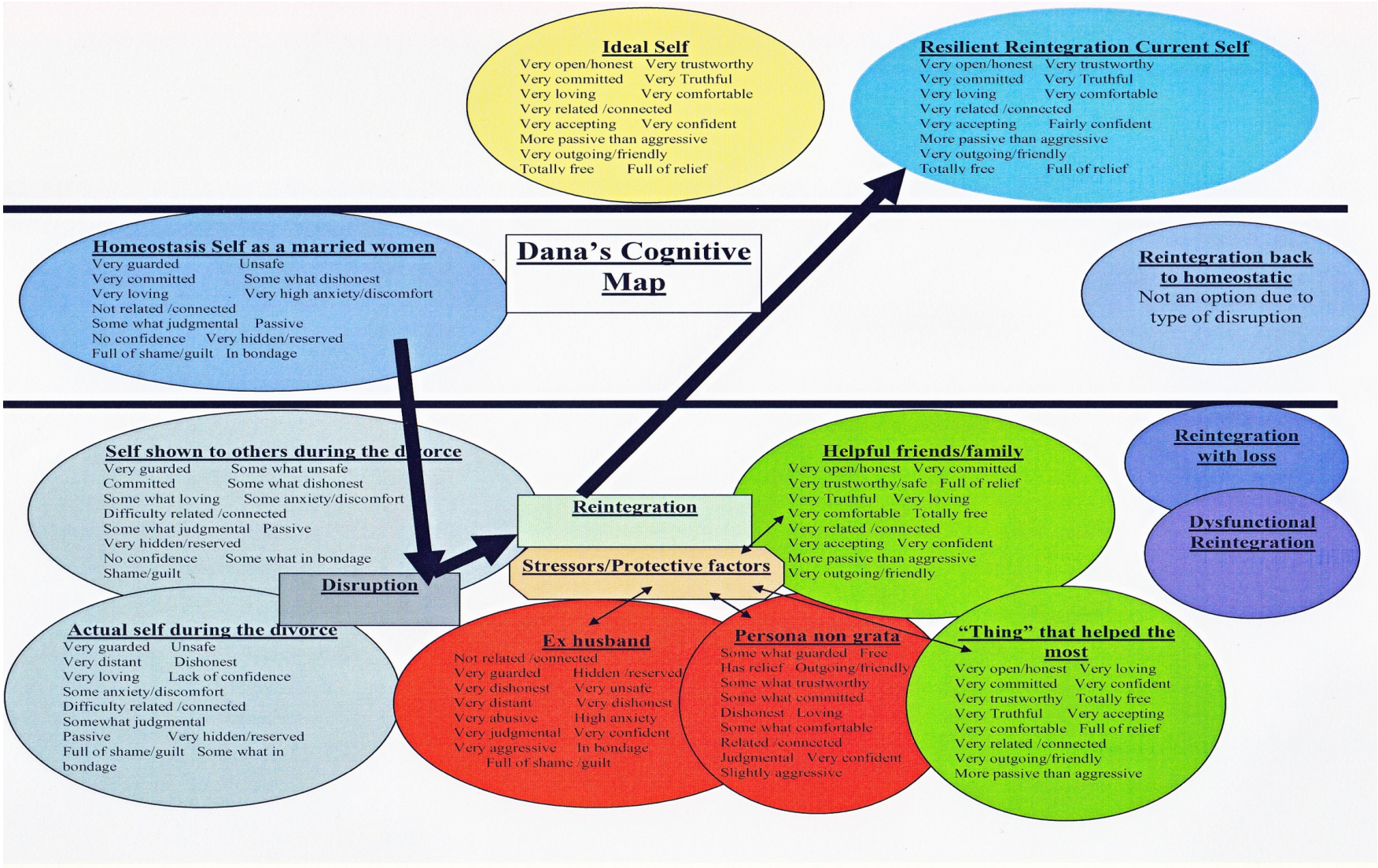
SCALE

Very Agree Somewhat Somewhat Agree Very

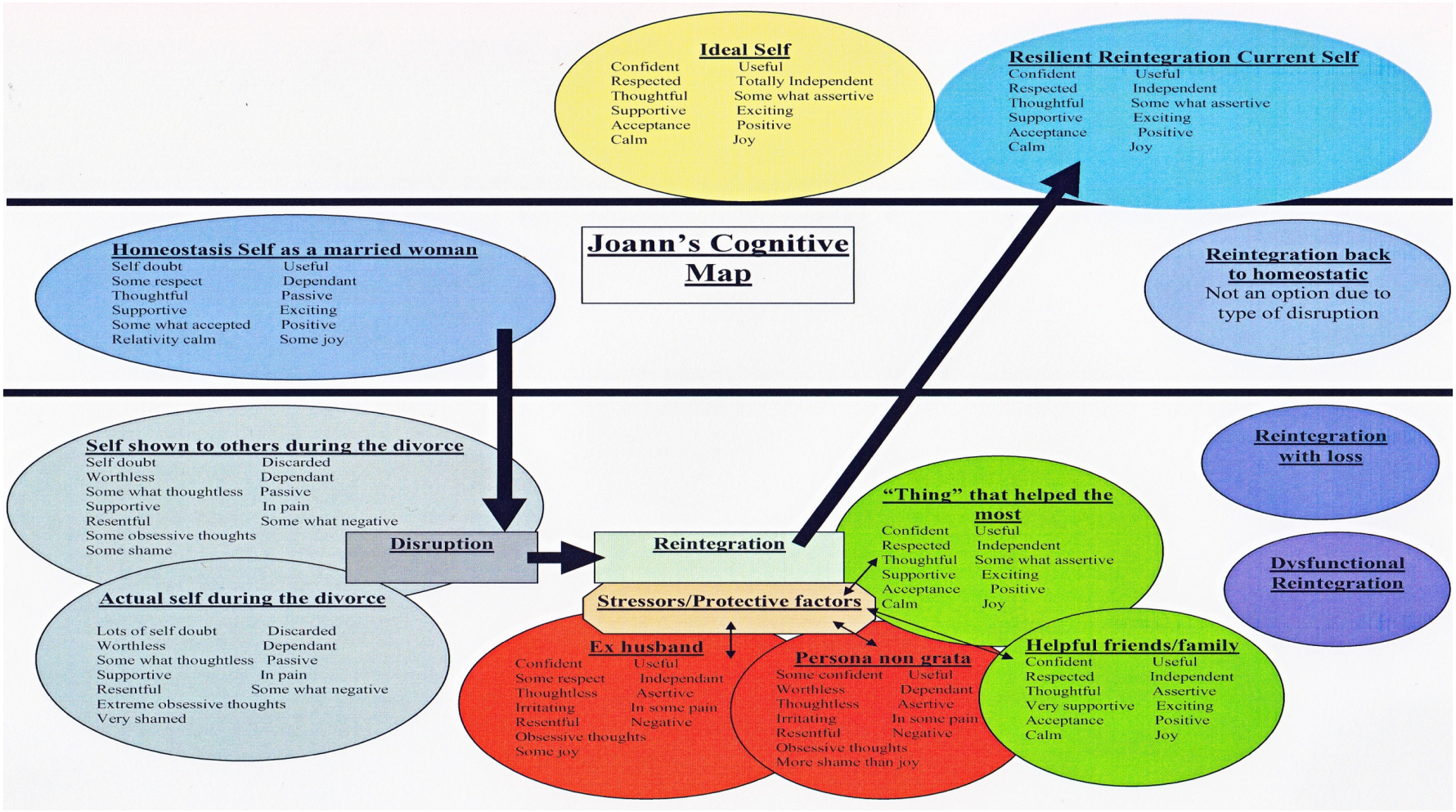
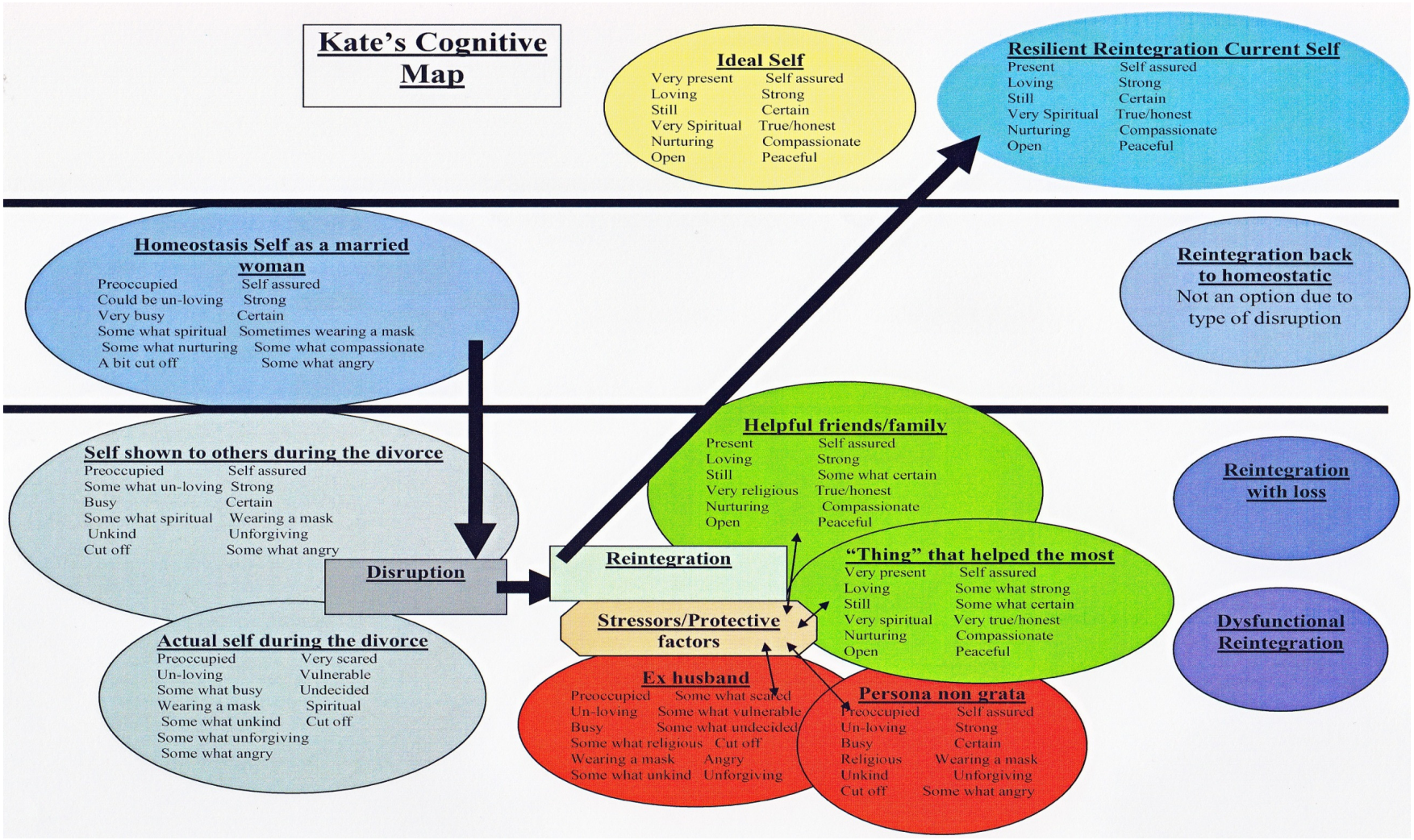
1 2 3 4 5 6

	Self as a married woman	Self I showed others during divorce	Actual self during divorce	Ex-husband now	Thing that helped you	Current Self	Ideal self	Persona non grata	Helpful friend/family member	
Preoccupied	2	2	2	2	6	5	6	2	2	**Present**
Self assured	2	2	6	4	2	2	2	2	2	**Scared**
Un loving	3	2	3	2	5	5	5	3	4	**Loving**
Vulnerable	5	5	2	3	4	5	5	4	5	**Strong**
Busy	1	2	3	2	5	5	5	2	2	**Still**
Undecided	5	5	2	3	4	5	5	5	4	**Certain**
Religious	4	4	5	3	6	6	6	1	1	**Spiritual**
Wearing a mask	3	2	2	2	6	4	5	2	4	**True / honest**
Un kind	4	2	3	3	5	5	5	2	5	**Nurturing**
Peaceful	4	4	4	5	2	2	2	4	2	**Angry**
Compassionate	4	5	5	5	2	2	2	5	3	**Unforgiving**
Open	3	5	5	4	2	2	2	4	2	**Cut off**

APPENDIX D: DANA'S COGNITIVE MAP



APPENDIX E: JOANN'S COGNITIVE MAP



APPENDIX F: KATE'S COGNITIVE MAP