Spirituality after Divorcing in Older Age: A Hermeneutical Phenomenological Study Exploring the Impact of Divorce on the Spirituality of Older Adults who Divorce in the Later Life-Span

by

Glenn Edward Evans

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Todd W. Schultz, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Dwight Rice, D. Min., Ph. D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe the impact of divorce on the spirituality of people 50 and older whose marriages end after three or more years. Divorce is painful at any age, but this study focused on how people 50 and older who have lived by their spiritual beliefs for most of their lives were impacted. The study applied life-span theory, life course theory, and developmental psychology, as they offered integrated empirical guidance in studying human behavioral changes throughout a person's life. These theories provided a framework for exploring the central research question: How do participants at the age of 50 and older who were married for three years or more describe the impact of divorce on Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being in their first-year post-divorce? Interview questions were designed to support the central and guiding question to acquire descriptions of the participants' lived experiences with spiritual belief, spiritual practice, spiritual stress, and spiritual coping after divorce. The study developed 11 themes that address the problem at hand using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith et al., 2009), emotional coding, value coding, and In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2021). The data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The study results showed that the participants did experience an impact on their spiritual well-being in each of Fisher's domains except the environmental domain. However, all of the participants using methods of spiritual coping were able to spiritually recover.

Keywords: divorce, spirituality, spiritual stress, spiritual coping, spiritual recovery

Dedication

To Uncle "T" who said to me way back in 1977, you can do whatever you set your mind to. It was not only what you said, but that it was said from a man with the most tender loving heart that I have ever known, that made it effectively buzz in my ears every day since then.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge Sabrina Evans, a woman I did not have sense enough to pray for. You are a priceless indispensable person in the life God has given me and I cannot thank Him enough for you, although you 'bullied' me into this degree.

I acknowledge Dr. Faye Porter-Stevens, who handed me the worse graded paper I have ever received in college. Then gave me the strongest encouragement, with expectations of no excuses that challenged me to shift the intensity of my thinking and working to achieve at the doctorate level. No wonder the students all secretly called you, " The Doctor Maker".

I acknowledge Dr. Todd W. Schultz for guiding me in this dissertation and giving me such great straightforward feedback and insightful recommendations. Your words gave energy to my thinking throughout each phase of writing this dissertation. However, your guidance was much more than words because you helped me to maintain faith, momentum, and ability to finish. Without your coaching sir, I would not have made it.

I acknowledge Dr. Dwight Rice. Although I only had one class with you as my professor, it left such an impression on me that I was encouraged to not only see this as an education but also to see this education as a God given purpose and plan. Thank you, sir.

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American Psychological Association (APA)

Automated Anatomical Labeling (AAL)

Interpersonal Curiosity Scale (IPC)

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Intrapersonal Curiosity Scale (INC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One presented the introduction to this hermeneutical phenomenological study. The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of divorce's impact on the spirituality of people aged 50 and older who were married for three or more years seen as an activity-based change (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015) that may prompt a life span intraindividual change (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2009) of their spirituality. The theories guiding this study are life-span theory (Erik Erikson), life course theory (Glen Elder Jr.), and developmental psychology (G. Stanley Hall), as they provided empirical guidance in studying human behavior change for the topic of concern. The relationship between spirituality and a person's well-being has been greatly documented (Sharma, 2015). As such, this study sought to explore that relationship with people in the later life span dealing with the phenomenon of divorce. This chapter provided a comprehensive background for the study, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions, definitions, and summary.

Background

Problems Development in Marriage

Problems in marriage tend to fall into social, psychological, economic, or cultural categories (Brown et al., 2016). A person's psychosocial development is linked to problem development in marriage (Williamson et al., 2016). However, Solomon and Jackson (2014) conducted several quantitative studies about problem development in a marriage, concluding problems that cause divorce have no certain period when they evolve. However, there are indicators linking them to personalities. Some problems develop over simple issues such as spending too much time on the cell phone or the internet (Rani, 2014). Other problems include

lack of compatibility, interference from in-laws, cruelty, and domestic violence (Ariplackal &

George, 2015). Solomon and Jackson included actor agreeableness and partner neuroticism as

high causes of marital breakups. However, financial problems tend to be the most prevalent

among newlyweds (Williamson et al., 2016). Severe problems emerge with health concerns in

marriage. The problems associated with health concerns extend from the effects of lifelong

diseases and mental illnesses (Ola & Mathur, 2016).

Clinical Effects of Divorce

From a historical perspective, divorce is one of the most emotionally piercing difficulties

of all life events in any adult span of life (Amato, 2010; Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2009). The research

reveals that at the end of the 20th century, 43 percent to 46 percent of all marriages were

predicted to end in dissolution (Amato, 2010, p. 651). Amato additionally stated studies

conducted before 2000 showed that individuals who experience divorce are more frequently

admitted into psychiatric clinics and hospitals, and have a higher rate of suffering from anxiety,

depression, anger, feelings of incompetence, rejection, and loneliness than any other marital

group. Marital dissolution presents emotional, psychological, and spiritual distress for older

adults, combined with the possibility of some economic strain (Sharma, 2015). Divorce studies

show that 87% of all divorces cause stress and maladaptive functioning in divorcees during the

first year (Krumrei et al., 2011). In addition to maladaptive functioning, divorced and separated

people have the highest rate of attempting suicide and developing suicidal thoughts compared to

any other marital group (Kolves et al., 2010).

Divorce's Effects on Society

A lasting marriage is difficult to achieve in social systems which generate constant

uncertainty, competition, and mobility (Kitanovic, 2015). The mass media has played an

essential role in shifting traditional marital values (Ariplackal & George, 2015). As such, the

dissolution of marital relationships has important implications for individual well-being and

threatens social stability (Rani, 2014). Research has shown that divorce can debilitate a society

by dissolving families and weakening belief in the family as a fundamental social unit (Tach &

Eads, 2015). Divorce affects society by reducing family unit activities such as going to sporting

events, entertainment occasions, and church. In fact, church attendance tends to drop

significantly after a divorce (Kitanovic, 2015). Middle-income divorced adults typically become

impoverished, and their children experience psychological and economic stress (Eagan, 2004).

Divorce also has been shown to hinder a child's social development (Brown et al., 2016).

Children of divorced parents tend to develop learning issues, fail in school, have higher dropout

rates, and indulge in drug abuse (Iniguez & Stankowski, 2016). Iniguez and Stankowski (2016)

added that adolescent conduct disorder (ACD) has been linked to dysfunctional families.

Consequently, children from families with divorced parents tend to engage in abusive

relationships as adults (Arkes, 2013).

Spiritual Context of Human Behavior

Spirituality, as described by Pargament (2011), is comprised of what a person has lived

through and how a person chooses to live his or her life. Furthermore, as most individuals see,

spirituality is an experience or attitude transcending any religion (de Jager Meezenbroek et al.,

2012). Pargament (2013) detailed studies that significantly linked spirituality to human behavior.

He found that people use spirituality to (a) cope with difficult periods of life; (b) develop

strength; (c) associate spiritual experiences with feelings of hope, caring, and a sense of

obligation; and (d) form a guiding way of life. These varying aspects of spirituality for people 50

and over who experience divorce have a continuum of outcomes (Mayseless & Russo-Netzer, 2017).

Although Pargament (2011) gave basic tenants of spirituality, de Jager Meezenbroek et al. (2012) held that personality is not easily defined because it is multidimensional, complex, and affronts clear-cut limitations framed by traditional psychology. Developmental psychology, however, approaches the association between spirituality and personality from a theological paradigm (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). Slobodchikov and Isa'ev (2015) held that the theological paradigm employs the Christian belief that man becomes a whole person through his relationship with God. There is also a sizable body of scientific evidence associating spirituality with mental and physical health (Anand et al., 2015). A person lives from the deep convictions that spirituality holds for the meaning of life in association with his or her well-being (Anand et al., 2015). Wilderman (2013) said that spiritual or spirituality means something different to everyone. Fisher (2010) presented four domains of spirituality based on the framework definition of spiritual well-being proposed in 1975 by the National Interfaith Coalition of Aging (Lifshitz et al., 2019). These four domains are:

1. Personal—wherein one intra-relates with oneself with regards to meaning, purpose and values in life. Self-awareness is the driving force or transcendent aspect of the human spirit's search for identity and self-worth.

2. Communal—as shown on the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships between self and others, relating to morality, culture, and religion. These are expressed in love, forgiveness, trust, hope and faith in humanity.

3. Environmental—care and nurture for the physical and biological world, including a sense of awe and unity with the environment.

4. Transcendental—relationship of self with something or someone beyond the human level (i.e. ultimate concern, cosmic force, transcendent reality, or God). This involves faith towards, adoration and worship of the source of mystery of the universe.

These four domains of spirituality speak to the intrinsic value one envisions within his or her life. Understanding spirituality is crucial to this study because it interprets one's approach to living (Pargament, 2011). People 50 and older who have experienced a later-life traumatic experience will make these interpretations that directly connect to their quality of life in the years to come (Sharma, 2015; Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015).

Situation to Self

I am a 66-year young African-American man who has gone through many bad experiences, from a painful abusive childhood to homeless adulthood. However, God has always made me aware that He exists. I have been with a woman for whom I did not have enough sense to pray for nearly 23 years. My wife's degree is in Pastoral Care, and my master's is in Human Service. We both have been previously married, so we are familiar with the pain of divorce. In 2008, we founded a non-profit organization with the God-given name 'House of Healing Community Ministry' with two objectives. One is to provide for homeless people, and the other is to help married people build their marriages. Over the last nine years, I have researched and studied multiple articles on marriage and divorce to try and gain insight into the variances that cause marital breakups. The purpose of gaining insight was to help those couples whose marriages were not doing well to focus on problem areas and strengthen their marriages. Several years ago, when I read my first article on gray divorce (Brown & Lin, 2012) and was informed about the statistical significance of it in the later life span, this indulged my interest. My experiences with God always showing me He is there prompts me to study this topic for the

purpose of being able to help people in this situation who may have become spiritually disorientated in this life stage. This can be tragic for someone entering their final stage of life, and this phenomenon can disrupt their spirituality. I look forward to helping this group and adding to the literature on divorce by viewing this topic through an ontological lens (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and using the interpretivist/constructivist rationale. This was a valid approach to this study because Creswell and Poth hold that it assumes the participants have developed subjective meaning for their encounters and are believed to be the best resource for the perspective on their lived experience with divorce.

Problem Statement

The impacts of divorce have received a great deal of profiling through developmental psychology, life span theory, and life course theory concerning the psychological, physical, emotional, financial, and societal effects. However, there has been a deficient exploration of the impact of divorce on the spirituality of people 50 and older in the first year after divorce. As such, the problem for this study to address is divorce's impact on the spirituality of older adults in their later life span. Divorce is an action that involves a complexity of intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences (Sharma, 2015). A person cannot live through a divorce and not be changed. Another significance of this problem is that the effects of divorce on the spirituality of individuals 50 and older have not been focused on in any particular study, even though statistically gray divorce (Brown & Lin, 2012; Stepler, 2017) since 2004 has a higher prevalence than any other age group. The specific ages this present study investigated were ages 50 and older. Erickson's life stages associated with 50 and older are generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair for those in their mid-60s and beyond. These life stages have mental constructs directly impacted by one's spirituality (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2009).

The problem is precluded by an activity-based change (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). Developmental psychology defines an activity-based change, such as a divorce, as a significant event impacting how a person thinks, feels, and behaves at this crucial stage of life (APA, 2021). Life course theory suggests the strong possibility of an intraindividual change that happens, which shifts the individual's life trajectory and plasticity at this stage (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2009). This implies that something can happen in an individual's life at this stage that is so devastating he or she has a change within his or her personality that alters his or her life course and mentality. The problem may be found in the disruption of the inspiration of spirituality in those individuals 50 and over who consider themselves spiritual (Pargament, 2011). However, without sufficient study, conclusive determinations are not fostered. In mental health, spirituality has a paradoxical effect (Ameli et al., 2018). Research has demonstrated that spirituality can be a protective and healing resource when a person is faced with life's difficulties (Ameli et al., 2018). Conversely, research has also demonstrated that spirituality can potentially interrupt a person's progress toward growth and development when faced with a life crisis (Chiţoiu, 2018). A person's daily life is affected by the disruption of his or her spirituality, which may cause a severe setback in his or her concept of living well and moving forward (Pargament, 2011). Czekóová et al. (2018) held that spirituality and well-being differ across personality profiles. Ultimately, this problem could cause distressing shifts in the personality of individuals who are 50 and over who very well should be in the retirement mode of living but have to rethink life instead (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2009; Roberto & Weaver, 2019; Sharma, 2015). This problem was addressed from a hermeneutical phenomenological approach to describe the meaning participants gave to it.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe the impacts of divorce on the spirituality of seven people ages 50 and older whose marriages end after three or more years. At this beginning stage in the research, divorce was generally defined as marital dissolution (Bulanda et al., 2016). The theories guiding this study were life-span theory, originated by Erik Erikson, as it provided empirical data on personality development during a person's lifetime; life course theory, originated by Glen Elder Jr., as it provided empirical data on human behavioral changes; and developmental psychology, originated by G. Stanley Hall, as it provided an empirical psychological framework of human behavioral development. These theories provided a framework for understanding any transitions or changes in the life trajectory of older adults experiencing a crisis in the later life span. Concerning the study's objective, these theories provided a means to comprehend the impact of divorce, seen as an activity-based change (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). An activity-based change may prompt a life span intraindividual change (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2009) in the spirituality of people ages 50 and older whose marriages dissolved after 20 or more years.

Significance of the Study

This study will benefit practicing family life counselors as they construct their intervention strategies for grief and loss with clients who are in their later life stages, pastoral counselors who focus on family life ministry (Lin & Brown, 2020, p. 270) along with divorce ministry (Konieczny, 2016, p. 167), and social workers who help people in this situation (Canda & Furman, 2009, p. 494). The study also poses implications for psychologists who work in mental health (Understanding Developmental Psychology, 2021) and relates to the effects of this phenomenon as an activity-based change (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015) linked to grief and loss.

Additionally, the study has implications useful to mental health professionals when intervening

with a later-life crisis that may cause depression and suicide ideation in adults ages 50 and older

who divorce (Amato, 2010; Kolves et al., 2010; Robinson & Stell, 2015). Furthermore, the study

has implications that can help people ages 50 and older stabilize during the first-year

postdivorce, which will benefit families and the community (Pattaraarchachai & Viwatpanich,

2021). The study was focused on the first year after the divorce of older adults. As such, benefits

to counseling professionals include strategizing interventions by indicating normal and abnormal

patterns of anxiety levels (Perrig-Chiello et al., 2015). Numerous studies explore the

phenomenon of divorce, investigating ramifications and causations (Rani, 2014). However, this

study intends to advance the knowledge of the phenomenon of divorce from the aspect of

understanding how it affects the spirituality of people 50 and over during the first year

afterwards.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

Central Research Question

How do participants ages 50 and older, who were married for three years or more,

describe the impact of divorce on Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being that

occurred in their first-year post-divorce?

This question aligns with Fisher's (2010) four domains of spirituality (personal,

communal, environmental, and transcendental) as conceived by the National Interfaith Coalition

of Aging regarding one's well-being. The question allowed the researcher to understand the

participants' comprehension of well-being conceived in all four domains after they experienced

this phenomenon of divorce in later life.

Guiding Research Question

How do participants ages 50 and older, who were married for three years or more, describe the impact of divorce on their patterns of change experienced intraindividually during the first-year post-divorce?

This question is fostered by Erikson's life span theory and allowed the researcher to understand the participants' awareness of their shifts in behaviors or characteristics (Maree, 2021) and personality and mentality (Spikic et al., 2021) after experiencing the phenomenon of divorce in later life.

<div align="center">

Definitions

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1. Activity-based changes—Changes in an individual produced by motives, goals, conditions, and accompanying actions and operations (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015).

2. Despair—Is the stage of development correlating with bitterness, regret, ruminating over mistakes, feeling that life was wasted, feeling unproductive, depression, and hopelessness (Knight, 2017).

3. Developmental Psychology—The focus of developmental psychology is human growth and changes across the life-span. This includes physical, cognitive, social, intellectual, perceptual, personality, and emotional growth (Understanding Developmental Psychology, 2021).

4. Divorce—Marital dissolution is the formal, legal ending of a marriage by a court which ultimately ends the legal relationship (Bulanda et al., 2016).

5. Functional Connectivity—Two brain regions show a statistical connection between the measures of activity recorded for them (Edde et al., 2021).

6. Generativity—The primary developmental task of the seventh stage of the life cycle concerned with caring for and contributing to the next generation's life (Poole & Snarey, 2011).

7. Gray Divorce—Divorce of individuals who are 50 and older (Brown & Lin, 2010).

8. Integrity—Is the stage of development associated with acceptance, a sense of wholeness, a lack of regret, a feeling of peace, a sense of success, and feelings of wisdom (Knight, 2017).

9. Interpersonal Curiosity (IPC) Scale—The IPC is a 17-item measure of the extent to which a person desires to find out information about other people (Robinson et al., 2017).

10. Intraindividual Change—A more or less enduring change that is constructed as developmental (Ram et al., 2011, p. 363).

11. Intrapersonal Curiosity (INC) Scale—The INC is a 12-item measure of the extent to which a person is curious about the self (Robinson et al., 2017).

12. Life-span theory—Assesses development across the life span primarily as changes of genetically and organically based functional capacities and as behavioral adaptation (Alwin, 2012).

13. Life course theory—Assesses development based on sociology and aims to understand the evolution of life courses primarily as the outcome of institutional regulation and social structural forces (Alwin, 2012).

14. Life cycle—A series of stages, as childhood and middle age, which characterize the course of existence of an individual, group, or culture (Alwin, 2012).

15. Macro-level human behavior—This consist of major life-course decisions and/or choices in consideration of the impact of the individual acting in concert with others on the social

environment and the impact of the environment on the person (Van Wormer & Besthorn, 2017).

16. Micro-level human behavior—Centers on the human mind, neglecting the normative and institutional constraints of human behavior (Van Wormer & Besthorn, 2017).

17. Spiritual Coping—When a person becomes spiritually aware by connecting with self, others, and the world around them, and in many cases, with God or a higher power (Corry et al., (2015).

18. Spiritual Stress—The results of a traumatic event as a violation or a loss of something sacred to the individual or an event that severely disrupts the individual's spiritual orienting system, set of spiritual beliefs, practices, and relationships (Mahoney et al., 2008).

19. Spiritual Well-being—The affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, others, and the environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness (Watkins, 2008).

20. Spirituality—The incorporation of God, divinity, transcendent reality, meaning, and purpose in one's life (Mahoney et al., 2008).

21. Stagnation—The secondary developmental task of the seventh stage of the life-span tends to implicate failed connectedness to community or family, a lack of self-improvement, with little interest in living productively (Knight, 2017).

22. Trajectory—A sequence of roles and experiences made up of transition or changes in state or role (Maree, 2021).

23. Transition—stages a person's life goes through foster his or her social and personal development in status or identity, both personally and socially, that open up opportunities for behavioral changes (Maree, 2021).

Summary

Chapter One introduced the problem of divorce's impact on the spirituality of older adults whose marriages dissolve after three or more years. This study was designed to describe the lived experience of people whose lives may be changed from a spiritual perspective during the later life stage after divorce. The background of this phenomenon showed the global seriousness this problem poses. This global aspect has been composed over 15 years, and the studies on divorce indicate that this problem will continue to increase in the coming years. My personal motivation in pursuing this study was shown in the section 'Situation to Self." Additionally, the usefulness of this study to counseling professionals, pastoral counselors, and the mental health department was shown in the section entitled "Significance of the Study." The research questions investigated the spiritual conception of the participants and their assertions of their well-being. Chapter one provided a descriptive preview of chapters two and three and prepares the reader for further immersion in the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

No one enters a marriage with the thought of it ever failing (Mahoney et al., 2008). In spirituality and religion, marriage is seen as sanctified or having the divine significance of belief and experience with God (Mahoney et al., 2008, pp. 108-109). Mahoney et al. added that divorce violates the expectation of building a life together encompassing personal sacrifices in careers, personal, or home life based on the belief that the marriage will be lifelong. After all, the notion of marriage is 'until death do us part .' However, in 2005 globally, the divorce rate for first-time marriages was 50 percent (Putnam, 2011). The 2006-2010 data from the U.S. government's National Survey of Family Growth showed that number measured to slightly more than 20 percent of first marriages that had a downfall to divorce within five years, and 48 percent of marriages that ceased by the 20-year mark (American Psychological Association, 2013). There is much discussion about how divorce occurs and its effects on society (Kitanovic, 2015). The following review explains the prevalence of divorce and its threat to society in numerical detail. This literature review also demonstrates the relationship between previous research on divorce, including the context of its causes and its ramifications, and post-divorce experiences, in line with the present study. The review highlights the causes of this phenomenon and suggests that the occurrences will continue to grow throughout the years. The purpose of this literature review is to provide significant data regarding the phenomenon of divorce on a global scale, showing the usefulness of this study centering on its occurrence in the later-life stage.

While the literature on divorce has grown immensely over the years (Kitanovic, 2015), the norms of divorce have shifted beyond the scope of the previous discussions. Divorce has moved statistically from early-life or middle-aged couples to a higher percentage of older-age

couples in the last 15 years (Brown & Lin, 2012). This phenomenon is called gray divorce

(Brown & Lin, 2012). There is little work on the spiritual outcomes of gray divorce, but it

appears probable that the scope of consequences for older adults is more diversified than for

younger adults (Carr & Pudrovska, 2012). Brown and Lin's (2012) study provided a quantitative

analysis of couples divorcing in the later life stage, showing it was the most common life stage

for divorce. Therefore, this present study focused on participants who were married for 3 years

or more who divorced in the later life span. The crust of the review explains the research

questions about the possible effects divorce may have on Fisher's four domains of spiritual

wellbeing.

RQ1- How do participants age 50 and older, who were married for three years or more,

describe the impact of divorce on Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being that

occurred in their first-year post-divorce?

RQ-2 How do participants aged 50 and older, who were married for three years or more,

describe the impact of divorce on their patterns of change experienced intraindividually that

occurred during the first-year post-divorce?

Spirituality, from a lifespan and life course perspective, is directly linked to how people

think, feel, and behave, involving patterns of change during their lives (Elder, 1985; Pargament,

2011). The literature on divorce was searched for information on the dynamics found in its

effects on people. The review's central data informs the reader about the divorce of people aged

50 and older, as it has become a severe matter worldwide (Brown & Lin, 2012). As such, the

review discusses the ramification of divorce and why in later-life stages it can have a very

traumatic impact on people who are 50 and older (Zulkarnain & Korenman, 2019). The review

assesses previous empirical and theoretical literature relating to the outcomes of divorce and

focuses on occurrences during the later life-span. The literature helped guide the study's purpose, develop the research questions about the topic of interest, and paint the picture of why this study is important in adding to the discussion on the phenomenon of divorce.

Some articles that inform this review used quantitative methodology to demonstrate divorce statistics, and some used qualitative methodology to report lived experiences of divorced people 50 and older. Studies suggest that lack of emotional health can predict divorce (Brown et al., 2016). Other studies associate socio-demographic factors with divorce (Girase et al., 2016). Girase et al. (2016) added several lines of evidence (e.g., involving processes of psychosocial developmental stages) that have been referred to on all sides of the study of this phenomenon (Erickson, 1959). This review identified the gap in the literature regarding divorce's impact on the spirituality of people aged 50 and older who were married for three or more years. The related literature discusses perceived reasons for divorce, perceived reasons older adults divorce, marital dissatisfaction, marital dissatisfaction in older adults, personality conflicts, development of personality conflict in older adult marriages, divorce for people aged 50 and older, divorce ramification for people aged 50 and older, spirituality, spiritual stress, effects of spiritual stress on older adults, spiritual coping, and spiritual coping in older adults. The review's spiritual stress section examines how divorce affects spirituality for people aged 50 and older.

Theoretical Frameworks

Life-Span Theory

The study used two theoretical frameworks and one conceptual framework. The first theoretical framework for this study was Erikson's life-span theory. Freud, who is considered to be the father of psychology, held that personality develops during early childhood with an

emphasis on the significance of sexuality (Maree, 2021). He emphasized intrapsychic factors and sexual development that were completed by early adulthood. However, after an extensive investigation of Freud's theory, Erik Erikson disagreed with him on the importance of sexuality's position in human development (Maree, 2021). While examining Freud's theory, Erikson comprised a system of growth stages he deemed as a psychosocial development theory that highlights the social nature of our development (Baltes & Goulet, 2013; Maree, 2021). Erikson held that personality development happens all through the life-span and suggested that how a person interacts with others shapes one's sense of self, which he called the ego identity (Fulle Iglesias et al., 2009). Erikson proposed a theory of life-span development in eight stages, encompassing the resolution of a series of dilemmas shaping a person's growth throughout his or her entire life.

Erikson's eight stages of transitions which an individual's life goes through foster social and personal development in a concept he named life-span theory (Maree, 2021). Consequently, Maree (2021) held that at the early onset of this theory, Erikson received little recognition for his contribution to the general theoretical concept of what being human means. Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) noted that research on the life-span theory, which focuses on human development, had become a progressively vigorous area of inquiry in the last several decades with the potential of yielding fundamental theories about the emergence and transformation of human behavior over the life-course. Additionally, Heckhausen and Schulz contended that life-span theories of development require integrating information from multiple domains, including behavioral science, social science, and biological science. They asserted that life-span theory was poised to explain both macro-level human behaviors, such as major life-course decisions and choices, and micro-level human behaviors and cognitions that shape their development. Van Wormer and

Besthorn (2017) held that the macro-level considers the impact of the individual acting in concert with others on the social environment and the impact of the environment on the individual. The micro-level behavior centers on the human mind, neglecting human behavior's normative and institutional constraints (Van Wormer & Besthorn, 2017). Maree added that life-span theory is essential in defining micro-level and macro-level influences on health and well-being in later life. Both micro-level and macro-level human behavior are inner transitions that neuroscience research informs by describing the brain activity involved (Edde et al., 2021).

Neuroscience Implications within Life-Span Theory

Edde et al. (2021) neuroscience research on changes in the brain that occur during one's life showed areas that are called functional connectivity or temporal correlation go through complex alterations over each life-span. Functional connectivity is when two brain regions show a statistical connection between the measures of activity recorded for them (Edde et al., 2021). These alterations are complicit with decisions and choice-making in an individual's life, correlating with macro-level and micro-level behavior (Van Wormer & Besthorn, 2017). As such, during aging, the results of empirical research verify the conception of dedifferentiation processes (Edde et al., 2021). Edde et al. referred to this as the decrease in functional selectivity of the brain regions, leading to more defused and less specific functional correlation due to the lack of renewing of brain cells with aging. This is associated with the disruption of cognitive function with age (Edde et al., 2021). Edde et al. research correlated with Heckhausen and Schulz's (1995) findings that as an individual move through the lifespan, his or her potential for primary cognitive control undergoes significant changes. Heckhausen and Schulz proposed that coping with the demands and challenges encountered at each period of the lifespan has a way of shifting cognitive primary and secondary behavioral control.

In lifespan theory, primary control aims outward to adjust the environment, and secondary control aims inward to adjust the self (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995). From a biological perception, the lifespan refers to the length of life for an individual, drawing attention to the biological limits on development and signaling the temporal scope of scientific inquiry (Alwin, 2012). The lifespan developmental perspective focuses on the processes and experiences occurring throughout one's entire lifespan, from conception to death, both psychosocially and scientifically (Alwin, 2012). Varangis et al. (2019) research explored the transition from early middle-aged adults (35-49, n=63) to middle-aged adults to older-aged adults (50-64, n=136) and older adults (65-80, n=146). They used whole-brain and network-level functional measures and metrics derived from graph-theory methods, which is a model of a complex system defined by a set of nodes or connecting points and edges between them in the brain. They found data showing that older middle-aged adults presented significantly lower positive within-network connectivity for the auditory and dorsal attention networks compared to early-middle-aged adults. This signified that in their lifespan, older middle-aged adults showed signs of less connection between hearing and attention (Varangis et al., 2019).

Huang et al. (2015) research on lifespan showed an age-related decrease in connectivity strength within networks in the default mode. The default mode network is a set of brain regions active during resting states but deactivated when a person is engaged in goal-related tasks, optical network, and functional correlation (Huang et al., 2015). Huang et al. also found that the default mode network presented a lifespan age-related vulnerability, and since the hippocampus is a part of the default mode network, they suggested that memory alterations will be observed in normal aging. Farras-Permanyer et al. (2019, as cited in Edde et al., 2021), in conducting a quantitative study of 114 individuals aged 48-89, used automated anatomical labeling atlas

(AAL), also known as brain mapping, to employ correlation analysis of whole-brain functional connectivity and its networks' characteristics through density (r>0.2) and intensity (r>0.5), examining age-related changes. Their whole-brain analysis results were consistent with previous findings by Huang et al. in that with increasing age during the lifespan, there are decreased functional correlations in the functional connectivity, default mode network, sensorimotor network, anterior, and ventral areas (Farras-Permanyer et al., 2019).

In line with the whole-brain data's connection with lifespan theory is a study conducted by Robinson et al. (2017) concerning the age-related life-stage forms of addressing crisis issues. Using the Intrapersonal Curiosity (INC) Scale and the Interpersonal Curiosity (IPC) Scale, they conducted a quasi-experiment with subjects (n = 963) in three age groups, early life (20-39), middle life (40-59) and later life (60+). The INC is a 12-item measure of the extent to which a person is curious about the self (Robinson et al., 2017). The IPC is a 17-item measure of the extent to which a person desires to find information about others (Robinson et al., 2017). Their research found that throughout the phases of a developmental crisis, people experience a problematic internal lack of consistency and begin to build curiosity about themselves (Robinson et al., 2017). Robinson et al. observed that people then become driven to reduce their incongruence through methods of exploration of self, others, and the world (p. 427). Their results showed a crisis effect on INC, F(1, 620) ¼ 72.9, p < .001, 2 ¼ .11, and IPC, F(1, 620) ¼ 8.3, p < .005, 2 ¼ .01, concluding that crisis in adults aged 50 and older is not associated with heightened epistemological curiosity. However, it is for early-life and middle-life adults, but only slightly, and there is not a significant difference (Robinson et al., 2017).

The Life-Span Stages of Concern

Using the theoretical framework of life-span theory, this present study solicited a purposeful and convenient sample of seven people aged 50 and older. Erickson's life stage associated with this age group is generativity vs. stagnation. However, it changes around age 65 to integrity vs. despair (Knight, 2017). Damoiseaux (2017) research concluded that this lifespan age group has mental constructs that are directly impacted by one's environment and sense of self. As such, Fulle-Iglesias et al. (2009) also asserted that this lifespan age group's well-being can be affected by their spirituality. Erikson's generativity stage of development is linked to connectedness, purposeful living, and contributing to society (Knight, 2017). Generativity is defined as the primary developmental task of the seventh stage of the life cycle, concerned with caring for and contributing to the next generation's life (Poole & Snarey, 2011). Poole and Snarey (2011) held that the developmental challenge of adults in the generativity stage is to be procreant, effectual, creative and to overcome a permeating mood of egotism or personal stagnation. This will include any activity that plays a part in the development of others and the life of the generations (Poole & Snarey, 2011).

Conversely, stagnation's stage of development in this lifespan tends to involve failed connectedness to community or family, and a lack of self-improvement, with little interest in living productively (Knight, 2017). The stage of stagnation implies failure to find a way to contribute to others (Poole & Snarey, 2011). A person in stagnation may feel disconnected and uninvolved with his or her community or society (Poole & Snarey, 2011). Poole and Snarey emphasized that feelings of stagnation can impact how a person manages his or her later life.

Subsequentially, Erikson's lifespan integrity versus despair centers on whether the person has lived a life that was satisfying and meaningful (Knight, 2017). Erikson's positive integrity stage

of development is associated with acceptance, a sense of wholeness, a lack of regret, a feeling of

peace, a sense of success, and feelings of wisdom (Knight, 2017). Poole and Snarey (2011) held

that the life stage of integrity represents a person's ability to look back over his or her life and

have a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. On the other hand, a negative despair stage of

development correlates to bitterness, regret, ruminating over mistakes, feeling that life was

wasted, feeling unproductive, depression, and hopelessness (Knight, 2017). Poole and Snarey

said that the life stage of despair could be a severe detriment to a person's health and well-being

as he or she faces the end of life. Three typical results of the stage of despair are increased

depressive symptoms, increased regret, and decreased life satisfaction (Poole & Snarey, 2011).

Poole and Snarey additionally said that according to Erikson's theory, a person does not undergo

integrity or despair all the time because most healthy people have an evenness between each

when they begin to figure out their lives.

Spiritual Context of This Life-Span

Watkins (2008) cited a study by Newberg et al. completed in 2001 that affirmed

biological scientists' findings of genetic markers within human DNA that "long[s] for God" (p.

8). He stated that "persons whose lives change because of retirement, career adaptations, family

life situations, personal health conditions, health conditions of significant others, living

arrangements, etc., will also experience significant changes in their spirituality" (p. 15). The

spiritual formation of older adults in the later lifespan implies that life, including the "bonus

years" (50-60+), involves a continual growth process (Watkins, 2008). As such, Watkins held

that older adult Christians in Erikson's lifespan phase of generativity or integrity are positively

embedded in celebrating life, experiencing a growing love relationship with God, having a

positive attitude regarding their own lives and the environment, and, as much as it depends on

them, are at peace with the significant others in their lives. They can also celebrate wholeness

even if their bodies are frail and they are residents of an extended care facility. By contrast,

Watkins indicated that Christians in Erikson's lifespan phase of stagnation and despair do not

have a positive attitude toward life and cannot be whole. Not only can they not be whole, but

they also experience problems in their relationships with God, self, others, and the environment

(Watkins, 2008).

Intraindividual Change

Lifespan theory suggests the strong possibility of an internal transformation that shifts the

individual's life trajectory and plasticity at this stage (Productive Aging & Work, 2015). This

transformation may be an intraindividual change (Ram et al., 2011). Ram et al. defined

intraindividual change by stating, "Changes in behavior that manifest on different timescales are

indicative of and can be used to measure different constructs are known as intraindividual change

or more or less enduring change that is construed as developmental" (p. 363). Boker (2009),

however, expounded on this definition a little further, stating that an intraindividual change is the

variations between two or more traits, behaviors, or characteristics of a single person. As such,

the implication here is that something can happen to an individual at any life stage that is so

devastating he or she may have a shift within his or her mentality (Boker, 2009) and spirituality

(Czekóová et al., 2018), altering his or her life course and personality (Fulle-Iglesias et al.,

2009). The research on lifespan theory supports the rationale behind this implication (Knight,

2017).

Implications of Biologic Science to Divorce in the Later Life-Span

In 1946 social scientist Lawrence Kelso Frank emphasized the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to aging (Le Couteur, 2018). Mangalam and Kelty-Stephen (2021) repeated this concept by stating, "Understanding biological and psychological behavior requires a broad range of approaches and methods and faces the fundamental challenge of deciphering the 'choreography' associated with complex behaviors and functions" (p. 104). Le Couteur (2018) asserted that biological science produces studies concerned with lifespan examining frailty, aging biomarkers, and sarcopenia. Santilli et al. (2014) confirmed the importance of understanding sarcopenia in the later lifespan by stating that "sarcopenia is a syndrome characterized by progressive and generalized loss of skeletal muscle mass and strength and it is stringently correlated with a physical disability, poor quality of life and death" (p. 177). Regarding biological information concerning lifespan, scientists create links from their research to assist readers in finding related inter-disciplinary content, facilitating more significant clinical crosstalk on aging (Le Couteur, 2018).

Zheng and Alba (2021) contended that much of the clinical crosstalk in society's understanding of human ills has evolved. Zheng and Alba gave examples of how tuberculosis was once viewed as a lifestyle disease, epilepsy was demonic possession, and autism resulted from a mother neglecting her unwanted child. Zheng and Alba emphasized that society has slowly progressed in viewpoints about depression and posttraumatic stress disorder by seeing them no longer as character issues but as biological syndromes with clear neural causalities. They emphasize that "in each of these instances, a non-biological account was replaced by a biological account" (p. 105). This led to their argument about the importance of biological science in lifespan human development. In their research on marketing stakeholders, Zheng and

Alba argued that biological research can advance contributions to human welfare. Mangalam and Kelty-Stephen (2021) stated that biomedical, behavioral, and psychological analyses involve statistical examination conducted on collected data. This stands on the theory that group-level statistical effects can be applied to understanding the physiology and psychology of an individual as he or she ages (Mangalam & Kelty-Stephen, 2021).

Mangalam and Kelty-Stephen (2021) charged that "Taking such steps will lead to a paradigm shift in all scientific fields, granting researchers to study the nonstationary, anything but equilibrium processes that characterize the creativity and emergence of biological and psychological behavior" (p. 99). The effects of divorce on an individual in the later lifespan may be seen in contributing data from biological science that is focused on one's welfare in connection to physical disability, poor quality of life, and in some cases, sarcopenia, all of which have a psychological effect (Le Couteur, 2018). The topic of this study may have contributing factors from studies in biological science as well.

Life Course Theory

The study's second theoretical framework was life course theory (Elder, 1998; Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009). It has been vastly welcomed as a significant contribution to studying human behavior (Alwin, 2012). Life course theory had its beginning in the 1960s and 1970s by several scholars, but the most noted were Glen Elder Jr. and Tamara Hareven (Alwin, 2012). However, Elder (1998) held that the study of life course had its empirical origins in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a program at the University of California (Berkley) in a longitudinal study of children called the "Oakland Growth Study." Elder et al. (2003) also said that the first interest in life courses appeared in a study by W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki titled, "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (1918-1920)," that made the first use of histories and trajectories in a

sociological investigation. Elder (1985) defined trajectories as "a sequence of roles and experiences made up of transition or changes in state or role, and they explained that transitions often involved changes in status or identity, both personally and socially, that open up opportunities for behavioral changes" (p. 8). Volkart (1951) (as cited in Elder et al., 2003) stated that W.I. Thomas emphasized the need for a longitudinal approach to life history. Researcher Hutchison (2011) stated that "life course theory is an emerging interdisciplinary theory that seeks to understand the multiple factors that shape people's lives from birth to death, placing individual and family development in cultural and historical contexts" (p. 21). Elder (1998) stated that:

> Life course theory and research alert us to this real world, where lives are lived, and people work out development paths as best they can. It tells us how lives are socially organized in biological and historical times and how the resulting social pattern affects the way we think, feel, and act (p. 9).

The life course perspective acknowledges the value of timing of lives beyond chronological age and emphasizes the terms of biological age, psychological age, social age, and spiritual age (Hutchison, 2011). Fulle-Iglesias et al. (2009) highlighted that life-course theory takes a macro-level, group, or societal view of developmental influences. Fulle-Iglesias et al. presented life course theory as looking at roles defined according to age. The expectations of these roles are fixed in a particular historical and institutional context. Elder (2000) (as cited in Alwin, 2012) specified life course as "events, transitions and trajectories extending across the life span, such as entering and leaving school, acquiring a full-time job, marriage, divorce, retirement, and the likes" (p. 208). Age structuring and age stratification are base concepts in life course theories and research (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009). Dannefer and Uhlenberg (1999) (as cited in Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009) held that the concepts of age structuring and age stratification, in general, display the

fact that the majority of societies employ chronological age formally and informally to build the experiences, roles, and statuses of individuals. Fulle-Iglesias et al. (2009) held that life course theory, just as lifespan theory, examines patterns of change that inform our understanding of aging. However, Mayer's (2003) study (as cited in Alwin, 2012) argues that

> "Life-span theory views development across the life span primarily as changes of genetically and organically based functional capacities and as behavioral adaptation, but life course theory based on sociology, in contrast, aims to understand the evolution of life courses primarily as the outcome of institutional regulation and social structural forces" (pp. 206-207).

Elder (1998) stressed that life course theory outlines a common field of inquiry by presenting a framework that guides research on problem recognition and conceptual development.

Elder (1998) provided a context for how life course theory functions by viewing the causes and consequences of life course events and transitions. Then life course theory seeks to understand how life events and the role transitions they signify influence life-span development outcomes of interest across stages of the life cycle (Alwin, 2012). Alwin defined life cycle as "a series of stages, as childhood and middle age, which characterize the course of existence of an individual, group, or culture" (p. 208). However, he noted the critical element is that the life cycle is "age-graded, " that is, experience is organized differently depending upon the person's biological and socially defined status (Alwin, 2012). Elder et al. (2003) emphasized several ideal principles that characterize the life course approach as follows: (a) the principle of lifespan development, that is, human development and aging are lifelong processes; (b) the principle of agency, in which individuals construct their own lives through the choices and actions they take within social structures (i.e., the opportunities and constraints of social arrangements) and

historical circumstances; (c) the principle of time and place, in which the lives of people are

embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over time; (d) the

principle of timing, in which the developmental consequences of events and transitions are

conditional on their timing in people's lives; and (e) the principle of linked lives, in which

people's lives are lived interdependently, and sociohistorical influences are expressed through

networks of shared relationships.

   Elder et al. (2003) supported these principles with several underpinnings. First, Elder et

al. emphasized that later life adjustments and aging patterns are predominately linked to

influential years of life course development. Next, Elder et al. reinforced the importance of

studying lives over a substantial period of time by saying that this increases the potential

interplay of social change and human development. In connection to this, Elder et al. pointed out

that individuals make choices and compromises based on the alternatives they perceive before

them and the time in their life in which an event occurs, which may result in an intended or

unintended process. Harris (1987) (as cited in Alwin, 2012) argued that the study of the life

course is the "study of a sequence of events, that is to say, a process which is both intended or

unintended and the result of intentionality in which earlier events concoct later events" (pp. 21-

22). Harris (1987) noted that historical and biographical events reflect processes that can be

construed as event sequences. In keeping with the principle of linked lives, Elder et al. (2003)

expound upon unintended and intentional events across an individual's life cycle. Elder et al.

explained that the principle of linked lives refers to the interconnectedness of human beings as

they develop and change. Elder et al. expressed that human lives are lived interdependently, and

sociohistorical factors are expressed through a network of shared relationships and exchanges of

social support.

Life-course theory conveys that the social context, directly and indirectly, affects individuals (Elder et al., 2002). This indirect route involves social relations and interconnectedness between individuals (Elder et al., 2002). Fulle-Iglesias et al. (2009), commenting on linked lives (Elder et al., 2003) and referring to research conducted by Antonucci (1985) titled "The Convoy Model," expressed that although it is grounded in lifespan theory, it offers a proper life course perspective on the role of linked lives in development and aging. Fulle-Iglesias et al. asserted that:

"The Convoy Model" is grounded within a life-span perspective recognizing that these (linked lives) relations are both individual and cumulative and that they reflect a lifetime of experiences and exchanges. Family and intergenerational relations are conceptualized as longitudinal in nature, shaped by personal (e.g., age, gender, personality) and situational (e.g., role expectations, resources, demands) characteristics. One can think of personal characteristics as representative of the life-span perspective's focus on the individual and situational characteristics as representative of the life-course perspective's focus on the broader context. Both influence the structure and exchange of social support that, in turn, can buffer the effects of stress and influence health and well-being" (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009, p. 12).

In the aging process, "the Convoy Model" identifies the persuasive disposition of the interconnectedness of individuals (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009). This indicates that not only individual factors or broader contextual factors predict aging, but also the firsthand interactions and reciprocal persuasiveness between individuals in families with linked life trajectories (Elder et al., 2003). These linked lives can be positive or negative, promoting optimal aging or accumulating inequalities (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009).

Elder et al. (2003) further expounded on the dynamics of life course theory from the principle of time and place. They posed four concepts showing that an individual's life course is shaped by the historical times and places he or she experienced over his or her lifetime (Elder et al., 2003). These concepts are:

1. Social pathways refer to patterns of education, career, family, and living arrangements that are socially attributed and followed by individuals and groups within a society (Elder et al., 2003, p. 11).

2. Trajectories refer specifically to the sequences of roles and experiences that make up an individual's development throughout the life course (Elder et al., 2003, p. 11).

3. Exit transitions change in state or role, which refers specifically to times in the developmental trajectory when the individual makes a normative change (Elder et al., 2003, p. 12).

4. Transitions generally reflect on time role changes, such as becoming a parent during the childbearing years or becoming a widow in old age (Elder et al., 2003, p. 12).

Elder et al. (2003) stressed these were turning points that involved substantial changes in the direction of an individual's life and generally reflected unexpected life events. All life course transitions are rooted in a trajectory and have a specific form and meaning within a particular life cycle phase, age structuring, and age stratification (Alwin, 2012). Alwin (2012) held that age stratification integrates life-span, life cycle, and life course into one biographical concept, exhibiting an individual's demographics and development limits. The influence of linked lives on mental and physical health in old age is imposing and should be considered when addressing health irregularities in late life (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009). Specific family relationships have been shown to have differing effects on health and well-being (Hutteman et al., 2014). Elder

(1997b) said that "individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the constraints and opportunities of history and social circumstances" (p. 961). Elder (1998) summarized life course theory as providing a framework for studies that relate social pathways to human development history and developmental trajectories.

Qualitative Studies Relating to Life-Span Theory, Life Course Theory, and the Questions Under Consideration

There are a significant number of qualitative studies that address divorce and spirituality. However, this writer has yet to find one that explicitly discusses divorce and spirituality from the later life-span perspective of the questions under consideration. The questions under consideration were based on Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being as defined in 1975 by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (Lifshitz et al., 2019). These four domains are discussed in the related literature under the section heading "Spirituality." Although life course theory examines life events that influence life-span development while aging (Alwin, 2012), the topic of concern still needs to be specifically addressed in the life course literature. In addressing divorce and spirituality, Mahoney (2010) focused on the role of religion in marriage as it progresses through the life courses of the husband and wife. Mahoney used a relational spiritual framework to conduct her study of families. She concluded that families have to move beyond general religiousness to identify specific spiritual beliefs and practices for preventing the intensifying of problems within their household. Mahoney affirmed that spiritual belief was and is an essential element of development within the Christian family.

Spiritual belief was the element of focus during Krumrei et al. (2009) study of divorce. Krumrei et al. (2009) research examined the role of three spiritual responses to divorce that affected psychological adjustment. They used these to appraise divorce as a sacred

loss/desecration (Krumrei et al., 2009). The Sacred Loss and Desecration Appraisals Sacred loss and desecration both consist of a negative primary spiritual appraisal wherein an event takes on a powerful spiritual meaning because it is seen as adversely affecting a sanctified aspect of life (Pargament et al., 2005). People see a sacred loss as "something I held as sacred is no longer present in my life; Something of sacred importance in my life disappeared when this event took place; I lost something I thought God wanted for me; and Something that connected me to God is gone" (Mahoney et al., 2008, p. 109).

Although the relevancy of the Sacred Loss and Desecration Appraisal study discussed the aspects of spirituality and divorce, Krumrei et al. (2009) did not specify a later life-span group of participants while investigating the matter. Still, Krumrei et al. noted that the participants in the study engaged in adaptive spiritual coping and experienced spiritual struggles. Krumrei et al. used a sample of 100 adults ages 19 to 64 (55% female), which they recruited through public divorce records. The authors did not specify the average length of marriage in their study. However, their research provides relevant information to the topic of this study in that 51% of the participants were Christians who based their marriage on the Word of God (Krumrei et al., 2009). The results showed that the majority of the participants saw their divorce as a sacred loss/ desecration (74%), experienced spiritual struggles (78%), and engaged in adaptive spiritual coping (88%) (Krumrei et al., 2009). Subsequently, their appraisals of sacred loss/desecration and spiritual struggles were associated with higher levels of depression, while adaptive spiritual coping was correlated with tremendous posttraumatic growth. They reported that spiritual coping and struggles each contributed uniquely to adjustment beyond similar forms of nonspiritual coping. This included any form of struggles and corresponding links between viewing divorce as a sacred loss/desecration and depression (Krumrei et al., 2009).

After the sacred loss of divorce, depression could affect how one feels, thinks, and acts (Krumrei et al., 2009). In dealing with the consequences of divorce, Simonic and Klobucar (2017) conducted a qualitative study on the experience of positive religious coping using open semi-structured interviews with 11 participants who were the average age of 46, with a range of 33 to 54. They argued that after divorce, a new era begins in the people's life course. This era brings with it a necessity to readapt to life, which may cause the emergence of hard feelings. However, as mentioned earlier, Robinson et al. (2017) said that in a crisis, adults aged 50 and older are not associated with heightened epistemological curiosity.

Furthermore, Fuller-Iglesias et al. (2010) stressed that humans are very susceptible to influence in their early years but, with age, are thought to become increasingly stable in essential respects. As such, Simonic and Klobucar (2017) asserted that successful emotional adaptation to a new situation must become a high priority in the person's life. They suggested that religion and spirituality are adequate resources when one is coping with stressful situations brought on by divorce (Simonic & Klobucar, 2017). Their study sought to investigate if and how divorcees experience the burden of divorce. Additionally, they sought to investigate the divorcee's relationship with God (within Catholic tradition) as a source of positive support in surviving divorce. Using empirical phenomenological analysis, they built a general description of the investigated experience entailing three themes of the experience: experiencing the burden of divorce, which is related to experiencing the relationship with God, the methods of spiritual coping with divorce, and experiencing the effects of religious coping with divorce (Simonic & Klobucar, 2017). Coping with divorce is less stressful if the decision was addressed spiritually from the beginning (Bell et al., 2018). Bell et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study with 30 participants ages 25-50 who had been married for an average of 2 to 15 years. The study was on

the role that religion and spirituality play in deciding to divorce. They claimed that most of the

research on this concerns post-divorce adjustments and said very little had been discussed about

the decision to divorce or stay married from this spiritual perspective. They reported the results

of a content analysis of 30 qualitative interviews. These interviews focused on the intersection of

religion, spirituality, and the divine's role in the couple's decision to remain married (Bell et al.,

2018). Bell et al. asserted that approximately half of those interviewed with no prompting talked

about the role of spirituality in their divorce decision-making process. Their study produced four

themes that included (a) staying married is "morally right," (b) the dilemma of religious beliefs,

(c) being heavily influenced by religious social network, and (d) religious practices that inform

the decision-making process (Bell et al., 2018). Bell et al. study provides relevant information to

this present study because it clarifies the intense decision-making process of Christians who

divorce, leading to the effects it may have on their spirituality afterward and, subsequently, their

spiritual well-being living post-divorce

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for any study is the core philosophical, ideological, and

central ideas that lay the foundation for theories (Varpio et al., 2020). Varpio et al. stated that a

theoretical framework describes the theoretical foundations of a present research study based on

existing research. In contrast, a conceptual framework guides the researcher in making

conclusions. This study used developmental psychology as its conceptual framework. G. Stanley

Hall founded development psychology in the United States (Varpio et al., 2020). One of his most

important works is his book Adolescence written in 1904, which discussed his theory that mental

growth is proceeded by evolutionary stages (Arnett, 2006). Among his many accomplishments,

one was being one of the founders of the American Psychological Association and its first

president in 1892 (Arnett, 2006). Three other significant contributors were Lev Vygotsky, Albert

Bandura, and Erik Erikson (Maree, 2021). The inquiry of developmental psychology is prompted

by the age-old scientific question of nature vs. nurture (Koops & Kessel, 2017). Developmental

psychology is the field of psychology that studies changes in human behavior from early life to

death (Alwin, 2012). Vygotsky's work led him to assert that development begins on the social

level, while Bandura's research suggested that people learn from witnessing the actions of others

(Maree, 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that differences in adult development and aging

encompass broad, diffuse, multivariate, and perhaps highly idiosyncratic processes (Hofer &

Piccinin, 2010). This study used developmental psychology as its conceptual framework to

support its premise, merging an explanation of human growth, change, and consistency during

the life-span (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). These changes that developmental psychology

studies include physical, cognitive, social, intellectual, perceptual, personality, and emotional

growth (APA, 2021). Lifshitz et al. (2018) include spirituality as a change in their study

regarding human development.

Developmental psychology theories tend to explain development in terms of progression

through life stages (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). Developmental psychology targets normative

conceptions about development as they are reflected in individuals' mental representations

(Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995). Slobodchikov and Isa'ev held that developmental psychology

deals with the problem's ontogenesis and subject reality as it describes typical patterns of change

and individual variations of those patterns, which are idiosyncratic. After the development

description is completed, developmental psychologists seek to explain the change concerning

normative processes by looking at the alterations in thinking, feelings, and behavior during a

person's life (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015).

Developmental psychologists refer to these changes as "morphisms of personality," generally caused by an activity-based change (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). Activity-based change is a term used by developmental psychologists when approaching the study of human mental development from the activity-based paradigm. Activity-based changes are those changes in an individual produced by motives, goals, conditions, and accompanying actions and operations (Koops & Kessel, 2017). Activity-based change in developmental psychology places divorce as a significant event impacting how a person thinks, feels, and behaves at this crucial stage of life (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). However, activity is interpreted in two distinct philosophical meanings by developmental psychology. The first philosophical meaning attributed to activity in developmental psychology is that it consists of the constant changing of humans as social beings (Koops & Kessel, 2017). Secondly, activity from the activity-based paradigm is an energetic system of the subject's interactions with the world that transforms his or her personality and consciousness (Koops & Kessel, 2017). As such, the literature offers descriptions of spirituality from aspects of what happens when people 50 and older divorce and experience an activity-based change. Divorce, seen through the lens of life-span theory and life course theory, would be the impetus for such a morphism or intraindividual change (Fuller Iglesias et al., 2010).

The Connection: Life-Span Theory/Life Course Theory/Developmental Psychology

The connection between developmental psychology and life-span theory originated through Erik Erikson (Hofer & Piccinin, 2010). The correlation between life-span theory and life course theory began in the 60s and 70s by Elder (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2010). Fuller-Iglesias et al. (2010) declared that these perspectives offer an extensive theoretical framework of human development over time. The life-span perspective describes human behavior as premeditated by

developmental processes that cross the biological, historical, sociocultural, and psychological issues from conception to death (Baltes & Goulet, 2013). Fuller-Iglesias et al. stated, "Both life course and life-span perspectives make important contributions to the understanding of interdependencies or links between the lives of individuals within society and differential pathways and trajectories of aging" (p. 11). Fuller-Iglesias et al. explained that the two perspectives are also characterized by different questions about change linked to aging in human development. Fuller-Iglesias et al. said that life-course questions are focused on levels of subgroup disparities in trajectories of aging, while life-span questions center around the distribution of interindividual differences in the level and profile of human developmental change trajectories.

Although direct assessment and analysis of within-person trajectory change and variation is fundamental for understanding development and aging, cross-sectional research focused on explaining between-person age differences has dominated theoretical developments (Hofer & Piccinin, 2010). Studies on developmental and aging-related processes depend on various designs and methods while offering information on average population patterns of change, individual differences in levels and rates, and the dynamics of within-person processes (Hofer & Piccinin, 2010). As such, developmental psychology, life-span theory, and life course theory inform each other in the process of life stages and human development to produce an empirical scientific approach that aims to explain change and consistency throughout the aging of an individual (Maree, 2021).

Foundational Basis for this Research Study

Hofer and Piccinin (2010) stated that "an integrative science of aging requires multiple interdisciplinary collaborations and methodological approaches for understanding how

individuals and populations change over time" (p. 271). In 1998 Elder made a statement

concerning life course that actually edifies the necessity for this study being conducted from an

integrative scientific framework. Elder (1998) said, "All life choices are contingent on the

opportunities and constraints of social structure and culture" (p. 5). The choice to divorce at the

later life stage falls into such a category. The integrated science of life-span theory, life course

theory, and developmental psychology provide empirical data for this study that relate social

pathways to history and developmental trajectories. To this point, Alwin (2012) referred to life

course as a transitional progression through time. Transition experiences represent a strategic

approach to the possibilities of studying lives in motion (Alwin, 2012). Transitions make up life

trajectories, and they provide clues to developmental change (Elder, 1998). As such, life-span

theory, life course theory, and developmental psychology work together as an integrative science

of aging, additionally forming the foundational basis for this research study by providing

empirical guidance on human development and prospective human changes physically,

cognitively, socially, intellectually, perceptually, emotionally, and in personality at particular

ages of life. They not only inform the research as to congruent age developmental aspects, but

also widen the boundaries of what to anticipate when asking the research questions, as responses

will be idiosyncratic to each participant. This study was designed to describe the lived

experience of people who divorce in the later life-span after being married for three or more

years on how divorce may have impacted their spirituality. Life choices are primarily based on a

person's spirituality (de Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2012). As such, Fuller-Iglesias et al. (2010)

emphasized that biological, social, and cognitive development, change, and life choices are not

only or always cumulative and linear. They can also be nonlinear, dynamic, progressive, and

regressive, adaptive, and maladaptive, usual, and unusual. Exploring the topic of concern, using

an empirical foundation provides implications for best practices and will help pastors, ministries, and mental health professionals globally to address the spiritual well-being of older adults after having experienced this tragic turning point in their lives.

Related Literature

The foundation for this research began with this literature review (Creswell, 2013). As noted above, the theoretical frameworks for this study are life-span theory and life course theory, and the study's conceptual framework is developmental psychology. These frameworks and the argument for this study are the basis for this review's literature collection. This related literature section relies on empirical articles to justify the study within a contextual background of lifespan and life course development and the various effects of divorce on the spirituality of people 50 and older after having been married for three or more years. This literature review highlights the significance of the concerned research topic from a global perspective. The related literature also exhibits how the research topic importantly incorporates the study of the spirituality of people 50 and older who divorce after having been married for three or more years to the knowledge surrounding the grander discussion of the phenomenon of divorce globally. For several decades, divorce studies have focused on its cause and effects. Accordingly, the research on divorce's effects on divorcees has commonly centered around stressors that are physical, mental, social, financial, emotional, psychological, perceptual, and spiritual (Monden et al., 2015). However, the impact of divorce on people 50 and older and their spirituality has yet to be thoroughly investigated. Taylor (2011) said, "Studying marital problems among older divorcees yields lessons for all age groups" (p. 251). This literature review supports the thoughts and rationale behind the context of the study and its value to all age groups.

Perceived Reasons for Divorce

Rani (2014) held that there is a relationship between personality traits and specific

domains of reasons for divorce (p. 20). Notwithstanding, reasons for divorce can be derived from

a person's emotional background or psychosocial development (Brown et al., 2016). One

psychosocial development that may boost marital breakdown is a "fear of intimacy"(Cohen &

Finzi-Dottan, 2012). Descutner and Thelen (1991) (as cited in Cohen & Finzi-Dottan 2012)

defined "fear of intimacy" as "an inhibited capacity to exchange personally significant thoughts

and feelings with another individual who is highly valued" (p. 584). Divorce is premised on an

irreversible breakdown or disagreements between married people resulting in personality clashes

(Kitanovic, 2015), creating profound and lasting disruption of marital relations and causing

deterioration (Brown et al., 2016, p. 35). In legal practice, the most common causes of divorce

are adultery and physical or psychological violence (Williamson et al., 2016). However, their

research results additionally showed that the problems most often cited as contributing to divorce

were "communication" (70%), "willingness to work on the relationship" (70%), "trust" (61%),

"jealousy/infidelity" (56%), and "moods and tempers" (56%) for wives. For husbands, top-rated

contributors to divorce were "moods and tempers" (65%), "communication" (59%), "trust"

(53%), "quality of time spent together" (47%), "making decisions/solving problems" (41%), and

"management of money" (41%). Husbands reported an average of 7.8 problems (SD = 5.9)

contributing to their divorce, ranging from 0-19. Wives reported an average of 10.7 problems

(SD = 4.7) contributing to their divorce, ranging from 3-21 (Williamson et al., 2016, p. 1127).

Cohen and Finzi-Dottan (2012) reported in their longitudinal study that predictors of

marital disruption included domestic violence, constant conflict, infidelity, the number of noticed

relationship problems, a feeble commitment to marriage, and shallow levels of love and trust

between couples. Cohen and Finzi-Dottan also implicated that some couples have poor

relationship skills, prompting them to experience adverse relationship outcomes. At the same

time, the lack of compatibility, interfering in-laws, cruelty, domestic violence, and irregular

communication are on the rise as causes of marital split (Rani, 2014, p. 19). In line with that, a

host of social, psychological, economic, and cultural reasons were cited by couples while

applying for a divorce (Rani, 2014). Brown and Lin (2012), speaking from a life course

perspective, stated that "It is plausible that key turning points such as an empty nest, retirement,

or failing health could prompt couples to reflect on their marriage and decide to get divorced" (p

6). Bair (2007) (as cited in Brown & Lin, 2012) said, "After raising children and having careers,

many couples retire only to find that they do not enjoy spending time together" (p. 6).

In their research on divorce Tach and Eads (2015) found that social economics studies

suggested trends in the financial consequences were attributed to many marital dissolutions in

the last decade. Amato (2010) added risk factors as perceived reasons for divorce that included;

marrying as a teenager, being poor, experiencing unemployment, and having a low level of

education. Amato also suggested that living with one's future husband or wife or another partner

before marriage could lead to less marital commitment. Amato pointed out that having a

premarital birth and bringing children from a previous union into a new marriage (especially

among mothers) was a high predictor of divorce. In addition to that, Amato (2010) asserted that

marrying someone of a different race, being in a second or higher-order marriage, and growing

up in a household without two continuously married parents presented a high probability of

divorce. Guzzo (2017) defines a higher-order marriage as having one or both previously married

partners. Frisco and Williams (2003) (as cited in Amato 2010) found that perceived unfairness in

the division of household labor was linked with lessened marital happiness among couples,

which elevated the predictability of divorce. However, unfairness in household labor was predicated on the culture of marriage (Amato, 2010). As such, Amato emphasized that diverse norms group couples to each of their backgrounds.

Cohen and Finzi-Dottan (2012) research suggested that there are two distinct groups of divorcees. Cohen and Finzi-Dottan described the first group as couples who reported frequent arguments, physical aggression, thoughts of divorce, little marital happiness, and minimal interaction. The second group was described as couples who reported few arguments, little physical aggression, few thoughts of divorce, and moderate marital happiness and interaction (Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2012). Amato concurred with this finding by stating, "Although negative interactions and the absence of positive affect seem like obvious predictors of relationship dissolution, not all couples display a pattern of relationship dysfunction prior to divorce" (p. 653). Subsequently, Cohen and Finzi-Dottan found in their study that both groups shared a variety of risks for marital dissolution, including growing up in a divorced family, having a low level of religiosity or spirituality, and being in a second or higher-order marriage. As such, these patterns of risk factors have two paths to divorce: (1) a high level of conflict and unhappiness and (2) a low level of commitment (Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2012). Another distinct risk factor that Amato mentioned is that although a wife's employment and income do not undermine her marriage, they increase the chances of divorce in unhappy marriages, but not in happy marriages, by making it less painful for couples to separate. According to Canham et al. (2014), prior research has shown that women's increased educational achievements and workforce possibilities have led to greater economic independence. Women can now end unsatisfying marriages without enduring financial hardships. Ariplackal and George (2015) stated that many people had expressed that transitioning from a couple to a single person was extremely hard to accommodate

because of accountability to their mate. Amato (2010) emphasized that because a small

percentage of marriages end in joint separation instead of divorce, the universal belief that about

half of all marriages are willingly separated is a reasonable estimation.

Perceived Reasons Older Adults Divorce

Marriages change and evolve over the life course and thus may no longer meet one's

needs at later life stages (Brown & Lin, 2012). Canham et al. (2014) indicated that population

aging, generational shifts in family structure, gender (roles and expectations), and societal norms

had increased the number of later-life divorces in North America. Brown and Lin contended that

individuals who survive to age 65 may anticipate living approximately 20 more years, making a

long time spent with someone while growing apart. Their qualitative research on gray divorce

revealed that growing apart is a common reason older couples dissolve their marriage. As

individuals grow and change over their life course, their needs, desires, and roles can change; if

couples cannot adjust, their resolve to remain married will begin to deescalate, and their marriage

might end (Putnam, 2011). Duba et al. (2012) noted that poor adjustment to developmental tasks

such as retirement, relocation, and illness might affect older adult marriages. Canham et al. held

that older adult divorces are on the rise because of a reduced stigma surrounding divorce as a

whole and considering that its social acceptance has increased among all age groups, adults in

later life have become more comfortable with the prospect of ending long-term marriages

compared to adults in the past. Taylor (2011) held that studies revealed long periods of

dissatisfaction and relationship doubtfulness precede the decision to divorce. However, the

decision to divorce might have been made years before the divorce. Canham et al. said, "As

changes are inevitable throughout married life, a spouse who might have been 'the one' during

earlier stages of marriage might not be 'the one' later in the marriage. For some of our research

participants, their ex-spouses were the 'right person at the time of the marriage,' but due to

changes were not compatible in later life" (p. 602).

Marital Dissatisfaction

Modern marriages are ideally based on emotional bonds, mutual love, and the affection of

spouses (Rani, 2014). Marital satisfaction, as conceptualized by Duba et al. (2012), is when

couples meet each other's expectations. Duba et al. linked marital satisfaction to friendship,

companionship, love, commitment, similarity, stability, and togetherness. Bryant et al. (2001) (as

cited in Duba et al., 2012) included the elements of marital satisfaction such as loyalty, trust,

moral values, respect, patience, forgiveness, communication, and coping strategies. Duba et al.

research concluded that:

> Couples who engage in the following behaviors during particularly stressful and
>
> challenging times tend to move out of those experiences successfully: positive
>
> interpretations of marital transgressions, correctly perceiving how one's spouse is feeling
>
> about something, and responding empathetically toward each other can positively
>
> reframe situations, constructively engage with each other (rather than withdraw or engage
>
> in violent behaviors), and effectively use optimism during stressful situations tend to be
>
> happier and more stable than those who do not use such coping strategies (p. 40).

Mahoney et al. (2008) said that husbands and wives generally see their marriages through

the lens of spirituality. However, if the intimate expectations of partners are not met, the

marriage has not achieved its purpose, making divorces more common (Ariplackal & George,

2015). Cohen and Finzi-Dottan (2012) held that there were people who attribute the causes of

their divorce to the quality of the marital relationship itself rather than to internal factors. In their

research, Williamson et al. (2009) characterized two models of problems that exist in marriage

leading to divorce. First was the enduring dynamics model, and next was the emergent distress

model (Solomon & Jackson, 2014). The uniqueness of these two models is that the enduring

dynamics model lists problems that each individual personally had before his or her marriage

began, more commonly referred to as baggage brought into the marriage, and the emergent

distress model lists problems that arise during the marriage. Williamson et al. study showed that

seven out of the 13 problems listed as causes for marital dissatisfaction in their study were

reported as existing before the marriage began. In 2004 Eagan, in discussing marital attachment

and divorce, found that sharing feelings takes a back seat to business, jobs, education, and other

professional obligations, which causes less dependence. Kitanovic (2015) stressed that when

couples do not take ample time to share their feelings intimately, it may cause overt marital

dissatisfaction. Marital dissatisfaction may result in the wife or the husband becoming

independent and not feeling trapped in a situation he or she cannot escape (Tach & Eads, 2015).

Marital dissatisfaction is frequently followed by a buildup of troublesome behaviors, such

as abuse (emotional, verbal, and physical), alcoholism and substance abuse, infidelity, or

financial troubles (Canham et al., 2014). Marital dissatisfaction is also often linked to long-term

gender inequality or role imbalance in marriage (Ariplackal & George, 2015). Canham et al.

maintained that marital relationships decline over time, with participants reporting dissatisfaction

and feelings of anger, sadness, stress, annoyance, apathy, resentfulness, and even fear. They

further expounded that some participants recounted their relationships as bizarre, dysfunctional,

and incompatible. Other expressions of marital dissatisfaction reported by participants were

feeling isolated, invisible, and belittled while married (Canham et al., 2014). Acknowledging

marriage dissolution as a process, Putnam (2011) suggested that "communication is often the

first aspect of a marriage to be lost" (p. 560). In the case of not having to depend on marriage for

financial support, married persons increasingly and without hesitation resort to divorce when

marriage no longer contributes to their happiness (Kitanovic, 2015). Marital dissatisfaction has

been known to occur when a person's belief about marriage is deflated because expectations were

not met (Ola & Mathur, 2016). Husbands in Williamson et al. (2009) study exclaimed that their

most prominent reason for marital dissatisfaction was that their wives did not have the heart to

make plans for their future. In contrast, wives reported that their most prominent reason for

marital dissatisfaction was the husband's immature money management (Williamson et al.,

2009).

Marital Dissatisfaction in Older Adults

Life course developmental studies suggested that marital satisfaction deviates across the

life cycle due to age-related transitional periods (Duba et al., 2012). Duba et al. (2012) added that

as couples approach mid-life, high levels of stress brought on by multifold role commitments and

evolutional family changes may damage marital satisfaction and carry on into older adulthood. In

contrast to these areas of marital dissatisfaction in older adults, Woods et al. (2019) found in

their quantitative study that the longer couples are together, the more their dyadic coping—or

ways in which the couple interact to cope with stressors of marital dissatisfaction—may evolve

and become more congruent, limiting how stressors continue to be exchanged and heightened.

However, they additionally found that over time, as couples experience the corrosive effects of

marital dissatisfaction, this variable becomes the most important predictor of individual and

partner outcomes (Woods et al., 2019). Duba et al. conducted research on marital dissatisfaction

in older adults and formed a consensus of 10 elements that they established as causes for marital

dissatisfaction in older adults; these elements are:

- **Affective Communication.** This element consisted of the level of affection and understanding expressed by each partner translating in the best indicator of emotional intimacy (p. 44).

- **Problem Solving Communication.** This element conveyed the couple's inability to effectively resolve differences as well as overt discord (p. 44).

- **Aggression.** This element addressed the couple's intensity of intimidation and physical hostility experienced by one partner (p. 45).

- **Time Together.** This element communicated the level of discontent with the amount of interaction they have with each other (p. 45).

- **Disagreement About Finances.** This element presented one partner's dissatisfaction with the way money was handled by his or her partner (p. 46).

- **Sexual Dissatisfaction.** This element voiced the discontent with the quantity and quality of the sexual activity with their partner as they get older (p. 46).

- **Role Orientation.** This element disclosed the partners' traditional versus nontraditional orientation towards marital and parental roles (p. 46).

- **Family History of Distress.** This element provided each participant's experience with respect to his or her family of origin (p. 47).

- **Dissatisfaction With Children.** This element addressed each partner's relationship with their children (p. 47).

- **Conflict Over Child Rearing.** This element gave voice to the extent of conflict between partners over child-rearing practices (p. 47).

As opposed to this, Canham et al. (2014) research highlighted that one in four later-life divorces transpire without any troublesome behavior or apparent issues, often due to falling out of love over time and changes in family life.

Personality Conflict

Having marital dissatisfaction and feeling deflated may be attributed to personality conflicts. To what extent psychiatric morbidity (mental quality of life) and personality factors contribute to marital disharmony and the decision to divorce is still an under-investigated question (Ariplackal & George, 2015). However, it is known that assessing people's personalities is very useful as it helps others understand them, their traits, biases, and preferences (Rani, 2014). The Big Five Personality traits is a theory developed in 1949 by D.W. Fiske and extended by other researchers in 1967, including Norman and Smith, and in 1981 by Goldberg, then in 1987 by McCrae and Costa (Kandler et al., 2015). Williams et al. (2019) stated that "the Big Five personality traits are powerful predictors of health and longevity" (p. 231). The primary and well-established model represented in the Big Five taxonomy of trait dimensions are: (a) neuroticism versus emotional stability, (b) extraversion versus introversion, (c) openness to experiences, (d) agreeableness, and (e) conscientiousness (Kandler et al., 2014; Wortman et al., 2012). Neyer et al. (2014) found in their study that people higher in neuroticism often experience lower well-being and health and are more prone to experiencing divorce. Solomon and Jackson (2014) added that a partner high in neuroticism would be subject to fostering negative communication patterns (e.g., high hostility).

In contrast, a partner with high agreeableness would be prone to engaging in positive communication patterns. As such, Solomon and Jackson explained that personality traits shape the full-scale essence of one's relationship and the experience that one has within his or her

relationship, which in turn may contribute to the likelihood of relationship dissolution. This insight into personality is important because marriage is no longer as sanctified as it was believed to be in the past (Ola & Mathur, 2016). Harmony of personalities, more so than ever, tends to be the framework of marriage stability (Solomon & Jackson, 2014). Solomon and Jackson emphasized that modern marriages are built on the foundations of personality bonding and nurturing lifelong relationships and friendships. In marriages of the 21st century, personality components that include psychological, sexual, emotional, and intellectual discord are no longer ignored as the elephants in the room, but have become grounds for divorce (Kitanovic, 2015). Grounds for divorce may also include neglect (Ola & Mathur, 2016). Neglect may not be specifically highlighted as a big five personality trait; however, it is known to trigger depression (Ola & Mathur, 2016). When a person becomes depressed about their marriage, it can result in them putting less effort into improving the relationship (Moran et al., 2013). Consequently, Solomon and Jackson found that one's relationship satisfaction is influenced by his or her partner's personality traits, regardless of his or her own personality traits. Solomon and Jackson stated, "Personality traits predict relationship satisfaction regardless of the length of the relationship, type of relationship, or the age of the couple" (p. 980).

Development of Personality Conflicts in Older Adult Marriages

Personality development is inherently linked to the changing developmental tasks across the life-span and coping with health changes constitutes one prominent personality developmental task in older age (Hutteman et al., 2014). However, recent research suggests that physiological health declines are only small factors on changes in personality with older adults (Magee et al., 2013). Relationship effects on personality and personality effects on relationships have different strong points subjective to the life transitions during which they occur (Neyer et

al., 2014). Neyer et al. stated, "Earlier studies on personality-relationship transactions have concluded that adult personality traits are so stable that they have stronger effects on relationships than vice versa, and that relationship effects play only a minor role in personality development" (p. 543). In addition to this, Kandler et al. (2015) held that:

> Even though individual differences in personality traits are largely stable over time, personality can change, and individuals differ in change throughout the life-span. Genetic and environmental sources affect both continuities in individual differences and variation in intraindividual change, indicating that multiple sources-which may be correlated and interact in complex ways-drive personality development and differential plasticity in old age (p. 188).

Kornadt et al. (2018) conducted a research study concluding that decreasing health in old age correlated with significant declines in the big five personality traits of emotional stability, agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness. Subsequently, Erikson's life-span stages of generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair present life stages where personality is firmly ingrained in relationships (Solomon & Jackson, 2014). As noted by Neyer et al. (2014), personalities in these life-span stages hardly change, and people in these stages are more commonly referred to as being set in their ways when there is a certain degree of life satisfaction. In cases of life dissatisfaction, people in these life-spans reflect on their lives, and some even try to redo or change the things they did not accomplish in their earlier life (Alwin, 2012). Personality conflicts in older adult marriages may derive from several different individual life course transitions (Elder et al., 2003) or life span intraindividual changes (Ram et al., 2011) experienced by the husband and by the wife. As such, the changes in the individual life trajectory may slowly drive each person apart (Brown & Lin, 2012) towards either living forwardly or

backwardly, depending on the stage he or she is experiencing. Elder (1997b) stated that

"Individuals construct their life course through the choices and actions they take within the

constraints and opportunities of history and social circumstances" (p. 961). Schwaba and

Bleidorn (2018) asserted that people retire at different ages and sometimes into different social

environments (physical, cognitive, and social change), which may impact personality traits in old

age. Individual differences in physical, cognitive, and social development may spur individual

differences in personality development during this life stage (Schwaba & Bleidorn, 2018),

leading to personality conflicts. Consistent with this concept, past research has found that the

rank-order stability of personality decreases in old age and increases individual differences in

personality change in older age groups (Briley & Tucker-Drob, 2014, pp. 453-454). Milfont et al.

(2016) suggested that rank-order stability is the level to which the relative ordering of individuals

on a given personality trait is maintained over time (p. 572). To this end, personality conflicts in

older adult marriages may occur because of the decline in rank-order stability in the husband or

wife over time and the individual differences in the commitment to social roles (Neyer et al.,

2014).

Divorce for People 50 and Older

Historically, marital studies reported that people who are married enjoy physical, social,

and psychological benefits that promote health and well-being (Ola & Mathur, 2016). Married

people are shown to have longer lives, better financial stability, better mental health, and less

stress (Girase et al., 2016). However, the past six decades have seen the number of marriages

steadily decline while divorces have escalated (Kitanovic, 2015). Denissen et al. (2019) stated,

"Divorce can be interpreted as a non-normative loss-based event that involves the loss of a

previously held social role" (p. 614). Like other traumatic events, divorce can unexpectedly

occur and severely disrupt every aspect of an individual's life (Mahoney et al., 2008). Previously married people have been known to experience mental health issues within the first year after divorce (Kitanovic, 2015). Monden et al. (2015) found in their study on divorce and antidepressant medication that 9.6% of women and 5.9% of men out of a sample of 530, which is 83 people, were prescribed antidepressant medication by their doctors in the first three years following a divorce. Monden et al. study also determined that the highest prevalence of antidepressant uses was observed about six to nine months before the actual divorce, roughly concurrent with the timing of the initiation of the formal divorce proceedings but began to decline for 12 months after the actual divorce (Monden et al., 2015, p. 4).

Knöpfli et al. (2016) stated that, "marital dissolution through either divorce or widowhood represents a biographical transition which may lead to substantial changes in life, whose impact on health depends on personal resources, but also on the life course position, mostly indexed by age" (p. 357). Consequently, Lin and Brown (2020) observed that later-life marital dissolution increasingly occurs through divorce, not widowhood. Brown and Lin (2012) conducted a study documenting divorce among people 50 and over. They called it "Gray Divorce" because it was a divorce for people in their 50s and older that occurred after they had been married for several years (Brown & Lin, 2012). Sharma (2015) found that the rate of divorce for people over 50 has doubled since 1990. Stepler (2017) adds that after 1990 the divorce rate for people 65 and older tripled, illuminating statistics that show six in 1000 who were married in 2015 have since divorced. Brown and Lin added that 650,000 people 50 and older divorced in 2010, which is rising worldwide each year. The divorce rate in the United States was 53% in 2015, and baby boomers led the way (Roberto & Weaver, 2019; Stepler, 2017). Kirby and Leopard (2016) found that the prevalence of people 50 and over who divorce

after a long-term marriage is on the rise faster than any other age group. Many later-life divorces

occurred because people had been unsatisfied with their marriage for several years (Williamson

et al., 2016). Research suggests divorce in later life is highly associated with marital instability in

earlier life (Kitanovic, 2015; Stepler, 2017). Although divorce harms people (Kitanovic, 2015), it

should be noted that the person who initiates the divorce does not experience the effects to the

same degree as his or her ex-spouse (Sharma, 2015).

Divorce Ramification for People 50 and Older

Divorce may influence well-being, with many individuals encountering feelings of

depression, loneliness and isolation, self-esteem difficulties, or other psychological afflictions

(American Psychological Association, 2013). Brown and Lin's (2012) study on gray divorce

showed that older adults who are financially stable and in good health might experience few

downfalls to divorce. On the other hand, older adults who are vulnerable financially or in poor

health could be shattered by a gray divorce. Divorce at 50 or older can be catastrophic for anyone

in this life-span (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2010), which would have a strong probability of

influencing his or her life course trajectory. The dissolution of marital relationships threatens

social stability and has significant implications for individual well-being (Rani, 2014). Divorce

presents an activity-based change, becoming an ontogenesis that may alter an individual's mental

structure (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). The living conditions, financial security, and physical,

psychological, and spiritual health of the person divorcing are impacted (Stepler, 2017). The

family life (FL) perspective of divorce at this stage suggests that older adults seldom remarry,

but seek other alternatives (Roberto & Weaver, 2019). Roberto and Weaver also suggested that

many later-life divorcees rely on their families for assistance and support. However, generational

ties are weakened if their children do not meet their expectations. This creates a failing effect on

the family because the parents of adult children become dependent on partners as a means of not placing burdens on them. Divorce at this stage of life dramatically affects the sense of hopelessness and loss for a small percentage of divorcees (Perrig-Chiello et al., 2015). Research has produced a significant accumulation of empirical resources providing evidence that associates divorce with depression, grief, and anger (Strizzi et al., 2021).

Spirituality

Mahoney et al. (2008) conceptualized spirituality as "the search for the sacred." They held that concepts of God, divinity, and transcendent reality are central to our definition of the 63 sacred. As such, Mahoney et al. stated, "Therefore, spirituality includes the many means that people use to incorporate the sacred into their lives, including the beliefs, experiences, rituals, and communities that they associate with supernatural forces" (p. 107). Spirituality, through the years, has had many nonreligious definitions posed by scientists and philosophers. Watkins (2008, pp. 8–9) quoted a few in his study:

- Moberg (1990, p. 6) "That which pertains to people's inner resources, especially their ultimate concern, the basic value around which all other values are focused, the central philosophy of life—whether religious, anti-religious, or none-religious which guides a person's conduct, the supernatural and nonmaterial dimensions of human nature."

- Schneiders (2005, p. 1) "Conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self -transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives."

- Ellor et al. (1999, p. 7) "The way a person seeks, finds, or creates, uses, and expands personal meaning in the context of the entire universe."

In 1975 the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA) met in Washington, D.C. under the leadership of Reverend Tom Cook Jr. to construct a normative definition of spiritual well-being (Watkins, 2008). The coalition was made of 18 different religious leaders from various faiths (Watkins, 2008). The definition of spiritual well-being by Thorson and Cook (1980, as cited in Watkins, 2008) reads, "Spiritual well-being is the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, others, and the environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness" (p. 10). Each religious leader agreed that the definition was fitting in the context of their faith (Watkins, 2008). Spirituality, as defined in the literature about the issue of concern, is the fundamental quality of humans searching for a sense of meaning or purpose, resulting in well-being that connects to all relationships during every stage of life (Canada & Furman, 2009). Czekóová et al. (2018) held that spirituality and well-being differ across personality profiles. Wilderman (2013) said that spiritual or spirituality means something different to everyone. Furthermore, de Jager Meezenbroek et al. (2012) argued that spirituality, as most individuals see it, is an experience or attitude that transcends any religion. However, King et al. (2013) held that "spirituality without a religious framework constitutes a risk factor for mental disorders, such as neurotic disorder or major depression" (p. 307).

Regardless of any of the frameworks of spirituality, Czekóová et al. (2018) said it adds connectedness to individuals in aspects of transcendence who journey towards life's intrinsic meaning and purpose. In this context, the spirituality of individuals 50 and older who divorce after being married for three or more years should be explored as a resource for understanding the propensity for changes during this life-span after such a traumatic event. Furthermore, spirituality as a means of coping with tragedies has significant paradigms in various cultures (Czekóová et al., 2018). One example is Pargament's (2011) description of spirituality as how a

person chooses to live his or her life. Another example is the aspects of spirituality vacillating between tradition and novelty depending on the cultural philosophy (Chițoiu, 2018). There is also a sizable body of scientific evidence associating spirituality with mental and physical health (Anand et al., 2015). A person lives from the deep convictions that spirituality holds for the meaning of life in association with his or her well-being (Anand et al., 2015). As such, Fisher (2010) presented four domains of spiritual well-being based on the framework definition of spiritual well-being proposed by the National Interfaith Coalition of Aging in Washington, D.C. in 1975. Lifshitz et al. (2019) stated that "Fisher's portrayal of spiritual well-being was framed on extensive literature review, encompassing the various definitions and multidimensional perception of spirituality in that literature. It was also validated by broad empirical research with Australian educators and recently with Hebrew speakers" (p. 985). These four domains are:

1. Personal—wherein one intra-relates with oneself with regards to meaning, purpose and values in life. Self-awareness is the driving force or transcendent aspect of the human spirit in its search for identity and self-worth. Communal—as shown on the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships, between self and others, relating to morality, culture, and religion. These are expressed in love, forgiveness, trust, hope and faith in humanity.

2. Environmental—care and nurture for the physical and biological world, including a sense of awe and unity with the environment.

3. Transcendental—relationship of self with something or someone beyond the human level (i.e. ultimate concern, cosmic force, transcendent reality, or God). This involves faith towards, adoration and worship of the source of mystery of the universe.

   Personal (Relation With Self). This domain of spiritual well-being has a knowledge

aspect of meaning, purpose, and value that one has acquired over his or her life span and life course experiences. The inspirational aspect is founded on his or her human spirit, creative awareness, and self-consciousness. The personal domain expresses itself as joy, fulfillment, peace, patience, freedom, humility, identity, integrity, creativity, intuition, and self-worth (Fisher, 2011).

Communal (Relation with Others). This domain of spiritual well-being has a knowledge aspect of morality, culture (and religion). The inspirational aspect is routed in in-depth interpersonal relations, reaching the heart of humanity. The communal domain is expressed as love, forgiveness, justice, hope and faith in humanity, and trust (Fisher, 2011).

Environmental (Relation With The Environment). This domain of spiritual well-being has a knowledge aspect of care, nurture, and stewardship of the physical, eco-political, and social environment. The inspirational aspect comes from connectedness with nature/creation. The environmental domain is expressed as a sense of awe and wonder, valuing nature/creation (Fisher, 2011).

Transcendental (Relation With Transcendent Others). This domain of spiritual well-being has a knowledge aspect of transcendent other, ultimate concern, cosmic forces, new age, (God for theists). The inspirational aspect is based on one's faith. The transcendental domain is expressed as adoration and worship, being at one with his or her Creator, of the essence of the universe, in tune with God (Fisher, 2011).

Current research on Fisher's Four Domains of Spiritual Well-Being

Lifshitz et al. (2019) conducted a multidimensional research study on Fisher's four domains of spirituality using variances to investigate each of their specific effects on spiritual

well-being. In Lifshitz et al. study, although the participants were from all age groups, they

found significant differences in the four domains' effects on the spiritual well-being between

younger and older adults. Lavretsky (2010) noted that curiosity about spirituality in later life has

increased, primarily because empirical research demonstrates the benefits of spirituality to an

assortment of well-being traits. Tornstam (1994, 1999, as cited in Lifshitz et al., 2019) stated that

"spirituality appears to flourish post midlife and that there was retrospective evidence for a self-

perceived shift toward a more spiritual view of the world in later years" (p. 985). Fowler (1981)

held that a hopeful relationship involving age and higher stages of faith development gives a

picture of unity and personal transcendence. Lifshitz et al. indicated another plausible reason

their research on the four domains revealed different effects on older adults: studies have

recently shown that the sense of spirituality tends to grow during later adulthood (Lifshitz et al.,

2019, p. 984). Subsequently, Lifshitz et al. said, "Our findings indicated that the four spritualty

domains are not equally dominant in people's lives" (p. 989). Lifshitz et al. stated that:

> Personal and communal spirituality were the most dominant domains reported by
>
> participants, followed by environmental spirituality, and transcendental spirituality was
>
> the least reported domain. Moreover, not all spiritual domains were positively associated
>
> with spiritual well-being (SWB), and some were negatively correlated with its measures.
>
> One major conclusion of the present study is that application of the multidimensional
>
> model of spiritual well-being may increase the accuracy of the body of knowledge.
>
> Another conclusion, of a more practical nature, suggests that encouraging older adults to
>
> develop their personal spirituality and self-growth can contribute to better well-being.
>
> Spirituality is a pervasive factor among middle-aged and elderly and may help to ensure

positive health-promoting behaviors, especially in times of stress and loss of age-related resources (p. 989).

Lifshitz et al. (2019) characterized the four domains and their potential to affect spiritual well-being in the following manner: (1) personal and communal spirituality were the most dominant domains reported by study participants, followed by environmental spirituality, (2) transcendental spirituality was the least reported domain, (3) personal spirituality was the only domain positively associated with SWB (lower depression and higher life satisfaction), and (4) communal and transcendental spirituality were associated with more depression (pp. 986–987). In fact, transcendental spirituality was the least dominant domain by far (Lifshitz et al., 2019). Lifshitz et al. findings linking transcendent spirituality to depression oppose prior study results showing a negative correlation between transcendent spirituality and depression or a nonsignificant connection between the two (Elhai et al., 2016). Surprisingly, environmental spirituality showed no correlation to well-being, which disputes the validity of previous research that found older adults happier, less stressed, and less depressed when exposed to nature (Beyer et al., 2014).

Curiously, although Lifshitz et al. (2019) research revealed the effects of the four domains of spirituality on older adults, they also found the following: (1) higher personal spirituality was significantly correlated with younger age, higher education and income, having more children, and better self-rated health, (2) higher communal spirituality was associated with younger age, higher education, higher income, having more children, and better self-rated health, (3) environmental spirituality was associated with higher income, having more children, and better self-rated health, (4) transcendental spirituality was associated with lower education and income, having more children, and being religious (p. 987). Surprisingly, in Lifshitz et al. study,

personal spirituality was the only domain shown to link solely with higher life satisfaction and spiritual well-being (Lifshitz et al., 2019, p. 988). However, Thauvoye et al. (2018) concluded in their study that the transcendental domain impacts well-being in older age, not necessarily to a lesser extent than other spiritual domains. Subsequently, Thauvoye et al. (2018) stated their study found that "spirituality experienced on a social basis is often expressed by feelings of compassion and caring, grounded within human empathy" (p. 2170).

The Importance of Spirituality in Later Life

Fisher (2021) said his desire to study spiritual well-being came from Godly wisdom found in the Bible—"if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Ryrie, 1995, New American Standard Bible, Romans 8:10). Fisher presented this verse as the impetus for understanding the positive effects of spiritual belief. Fry (2000, as cited in Thauvoye et al., 2018) stated, "Identification of specific spirituality facets that have a crucial impact on late-life functioning would enable a more effective encouragement of the spiritual resources through elderly caregivers in order to improve the well-being of older individuals" (p. 2172). The overall positive effect of spiritual beliefs on well-being corresponds with the view of spirituality as a resource (Elhai et al., 2016). Lifshitz et al. (2019) suggested that encouraging older adults to develop their spirituality and self-growth could further their wellbeing. Watkins (2008) stated, "Persons whose lives change because of retirement, career adaptations, family life situations, personal health conditions, health conditions of significant others, and living arrangements will also experience significant changes in their spirituality" (p. 15). As such, the importance of spirituality in older adulthood is shown to be vitally important to well-being physically, psychologically, and emotionally (Anand et al., 2015). Wink and Dillon (2002, as cited in Lifshitz et al., 2019) held that their cross-sectional study that applied semi

structured interviews at four points of adulthood demonstrated spirituality increased significantly

from late-middle to older adulthood.

The spiritual formation of older adults comes behind the same mental track of well-being.

It shows that people can work towards becoming spiritually all they can become, even across the

later life-span (Watkins, 2008). Watkins (2008) stressed that although the body may be

weakening because of wear and tear and the mental processes may be subsiding, as long as there

is life, the potential exists for spiritual molding and shaping, which will affect a person's

wellbeing. Relationships with family, friends, God, and ourselves are crucial to everyone's

spiritual well-being. This is especially true of persons in their later life-span years (Anand et al.,

2015; Watkins, 2008). Older adults are considerably susceptible to relationship stress (Watkins,

2008). It is well understood that loss of any type brings grief. Separation because of the death of

a family member or a close friend can profoundly impact the emotional and spiritual well-being

of older adults who have already suffered significant losses (Pickard & Nelson-Becker, 2011).

Divorce in the later life-span creates significant aspects of loss in the emotions of older adults

(Putnam, 2011; Watkins, 2008). To remain healthy, spirituality must be carefully adapted to

every change in the life course (Russo-Netzer, 2017).

Spiritual Stress

Spiritual stress occurs when traumatic events are interpreted as a violation or a loss of

something sacred to the individual and an event severely disrupts the individual's spiritual

orienting system, such as his or her generalized set of spiritual beliefs, practices, and

relationships (Mahoney et al., 2008, p. 108). Mahoney et al. categorized spiritual stress into three

phases; (1) divine spiritual struggles, which center on an individual's relationship, thoughts, and

feelings toward God; (2) intrapersonal spiritual struggles. referring to internal questions, doubts,

and uncertainties about spiritual matters; and (3) interpersonal spiritual struggles, involving

spiritual tensions and conflicts with family, friends, congregations, and communities, and may be

especially prominent during interpersonal crises (pp. 112-113). In cross-sectional studies, signs

of spiritual and religious distress, including negative spiritual/religious coping, spiritual/religious

strain, and passive prayer coping, have been associated with posttraumatic stress symptoms

(Ogden et al., 2011). Spiritually based coping methods that signal stress consist of viewing

divorce as a punishment from God, considering God's power as unable to influence the divorce,

experiencing spiritually based guilt or confusion, or experiencing tension and conflicts within

one's religious community about the divorce (Mahoney et al., 2008). Mahoney et al. (2008)

additionally stated that "a spiritual struggle is illustrated by a divorcee who is unable to move

beyond feelings of betrayal by God for the loss of a once sacred marriage" (p. 105).

In highlighting the fact that a person's spiritual stress can be conceived by his or her

thoughts about God, Krumrei et al. (2011) stated, "The impact of a stressor first depends on the

person's cognitive appraisals about the level of threat of the stressor when it occurs and his or her

ability to respond to the threat" (p. 974). Russo-Netzer (2017) held that stressful events such as

divorce challenge existing belief and meaning systems and function as turning points in a

person's spirituality. However, Davis et al. (2018) found that spirituality was associated with a

sense of peace in their study of ovarian cancer patients. They contended that change in the sense

of peace reduced depression with time for their patients (Davis et al., 2018). Specifically, a

patient's increased sense of peace was linked to his or her best psychological outcomes and

softened the impact of stressful life events (Davis et al., 2018). Divorce, however, presents a

different set of associations with spirituality than physical maladies because it carries an

aggregate of psychological ramifications stemming from an activity-based change caused by a traumatic life event (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015).

Because of both positive and negative spiritual outcomes caused by traumatic life events, Robinson and Stell (2015) held that life crises are periods of opportunity with the potential for either growth or decline. Putnam (2011) indicated the importance of understanding it must also be realized that divorce is the loss of a significant person in one's life and entails the feelings that surround any significant loss. This entails that there is still a grief process from the loss of a loved one. While there are socially acceptable ways of mourning the dead, in the case of divorce the grief is often internalized. This concealed grief, along with the feelings of guilt, hostility, hopelessness, and self-doubt that a wealth of new divorcees experience, produces an internal struggle that demands enormous personal fortitude to survive and move on with life (Putnam, 2011).

Moving on with life for people having depression in the 50 and older age group can be obstructed by a defined psychosocial adversity (Robinson & Stell, 2015). Krumrei et al. (2011) associated the conceptual and theoretical frameworks by explaining that the impact of divorce varies from one individual to the next, resulting in an internal battle that can be both spiritually negative and spiritually positive. Spiritual traumatic stress can also occur to the degree to which an event is viewed as threatening and damaging to an individual's core spiritual values and goals (Mahoney et al., 2008). When an individual is engaged in an internal battle, it is typical for him or her to seek to rebuild meaning, get questions answered, and reassess his or her spirituality (Russo-Netzer, 2017). Consequently, spirituality in response to divorce can formulate a sense of struggle for self and identity (Krumrei et al., 2011; Robinson & Stell, 2015). Spirituality is recognized as a distinct aspect of divorce adjustment from this approach. Krumrei et al. (2011)

reported that when a participant appraised divorce as immoral, it raised his or her spiritual stress, intensifying emotional maladjustment. Findings from Krumrei et al. study showed that 74% of their participants endorsed divorce as sacred loss or desecration, and these appraisals were associated with heightened depressive symptoms. Russo-Netzer (2017), as well as other researchers, contended that events such as divorce cause doubt, internal battles, and spiritual struggles that shape the route of a person's spirituality. Mahoney et al. (2008) pointed out that divorce may be even more painful when people cannot find anything in religious teachings to help them make sense of this sacred loss. They also feel blamed by the religious community, who cannot see beyond divorce as a sin.

Effects of Spiritual Stress on Older Adults after Divorce

Divorce does not have the same effects on all individuals regardless of age group (Spikic et al., 2021). In line with this, Bronselaer et al. (2008, as cited in Zulkarnain & Korenman, 2019) argued that despite it being theorized that the adverse effects of divorce are worse after long marriages due to the difficulty of rebuilding an identity post-divorce, the current empirical evidence has been conflicting. However, Strizzi et al. (2021) held that divorce had been consistently ranked globally among the most stressful traumatic life events. Mahoney et al. (2008) stated that "traumatic events profoundly disrupt the ability of people to understand, predict, or control their life" (p 108). Furthermore, Chung and Hunt (2014) stated that "relationship dissolution has been described as one of the most intense and painful social experiences" (p. 155). Divorce for people 50 and older after being married for a long time has the possibility of influencing their spiritual stress levels, disrupting their sense of self and sense of connectedness to their community, which is a vital source of well-being physically and mentally during this life-span (Fuller- Iglesias, 2010; Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). Additionally,

Zulkarnain and Korenman (2019) emphasized the mental health status of people who divorce

that are 50 and older may entail the likelihood of depression and a diagnosed psychological

condition, while their physical health conditions may include high blood pressure, lung

condition, heart condition, diabetes, cancer, stroke, and arthritis.

Spikic et al. (2021) stated that "divorce in older age leads to a greater need for rebuilding

one's social network" (p. 6). Additionally, Pattaraarchachai and Viwatpanich (2021) asserted that

their self-confidence and personal identities would improve if divorced older adults were

connected to family and community activities. People who divorced at this stage of life reported

the highest level of depression and anxiety (Brown & Lin, 2012). While Chung and Hunt's

(2014) research on divorce did not specify older adults, the results were devastating for any age

group. Chung and Hunt's research concluded that one of the effects of divorce is that individuals

sometimes present posttraumatic stress symptoms, characterized by the intrusion of solid feelings

related to dissolution and avoidance of situations and places that trigger thoughts of the

dissolution. Chung and Hunt additionally explained that people who go through a painful divorce

sometimes exhibit alexithymia, meaning they are so hurt that they do not have any words to

express their emotions. Thauvoye et al. (2018) maintained that spirituality functions as a

framework from which older adults try to cope with traumatic challenges such as these when

occurring in later life.

Regarding traumatic challenges, Krumrei et al. (2011) found that spirituality influenced

the level of threat divorce produces for most of the participants in their study because they

viewed their marriage as a sacred bond from God. In their study, White and Berghuis (2016)

found that the influence of the participants' belief systems and spiritual/religious practices had

more emotional impact than other challenges with separation/divorce, such as decreased

financial and social resources, increased responsibilities for children, and relationship conflicts.

As such, Harris et al. (2012) noted that depression and anxiety are predictors of spiritual stress

from both religious and secular viewpoints. However, the incorporation of faith separates the

secular and religious viewpoints. Faith is a personal belief system of spirituality and serves as a

prescription for daily living (Dyess, 2011). Those who lose faith in the context of having

spiritual stress may assume they have other losses, such as available spiritual support through

prayer, a relationship with God, and interaction with a community of faith (Harris et al., 2012).

However, Corry (2015) emphasized,

> The benefits of spirituality in line with creative expression as a positive focus and
>
> perceiving God as a friend were reported as meaningful outcomes. Thus, the active and
>
> conscious application of creativity and spirituality combined to manage emotions was of
>
> immense importance to participants in their study who felt that it was an integral part of
>
> their lives and that they would not cope without it (p. 522).

Spiritual and Religious Coping

In 1991, Florence Kaslow composed a concept that spirituality is a distinct aspect of

divorce adjustment. Spiritual coping, as conceptualized by Mahoney et al. (2008), consists of (1)

primary and secondary appraisals of a stressor; (2) cognitive or behavioral strategies to deal with

the event; and (3) sought-after outcomes of coping. Weber and Pargament (2014) held that there

is a consistent positive relationship between spirituality and well-being. Krumrei et al. (2011)

found that spiritual coping is associated with higher levels of posttraumatic growth. Pargament

and Ano (2004, as cited in Mahoney et al., 2008) said,

People often become stronger personally and deepen their connections to other people and their faith life. Individuals commonly attribute such psychological, social, and spiritual growth to spiritual resources, such as loving relationships with God, engaging in spiritual exercises, or obtaining support from fellow believers (p. 105).

As such, the importance of spiritual coping as a place to turn to after a traumatic event is vital to the survival and existence of well-being for a person whose concept of life is based upon his or her spirituality and relationship with God or a higher power (Mahoney et al., 2008). Corry et al. (2015) stated that "spiritual coping for individuals takes the form of becoming spiritually aware by connecting with self, others and the world around them, and in many cases, with God or a higher power" (p. 501). Religious coping (i.e., how one uses religion to manage stressful experiences), in relation to spiritual coping, is one characteristic of religious functioning that can positively or negatively affect mental health (Harris et al., 2012). As such, positive religious coping strategies include seeking support and a closer relationship with God, forgiving others, and seeking forgiveness for one's failings (Harris et al., 2012). Pargament et al. (1998) said that positive spiritual or religious coping also included working with one's higher power to solve problems and viewing the stressor as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Mahoney et al. (2008) held that positive spiritual coping in times of crisis is linked to tremendous stress-related psychological and spiritual growth and is additionally helpful in making positive changes in life. In contrast, Pargament et al. (1998) held that negative spiritual/religious coping strategies comprised viewing one's God or higher power as punishing or abandoning, judging one's community of faith/clergy as unsatisfactory, accrediting the stressor to a demonic force, and questioning the power of God. Harris et al. (2012) argued that spiritual coping through prayer has both positive and negative relationships with mental health. Harris et al. held that active

spiritual coping prayer strategies, such as using prayer to accept the situation, ask for help with problem-solving, or reduce arousal, are associated with better adjustment. However, Harris et al. also said praying to avoid stressors is associated with higher anxiety. In their study, Corry et al. (2015) found that spiritual beliefs provided their participants with a strong feeling of being supported and protected rather than feeling alone and helpless, and that it increased their participants' sense of self-awareness and acceptance of the fact that humans do not have control over everything that happens to them in life. One other aspect of spiritual coping expressed by Mahoney et al. is that people tend to help others who are experiencing spiritual struggles as a way of overcoming the issues that they are facing themselves.

Pargament et al. (1988, as cited in Simonic & Klobucar, 2017) identified three main strategies of spiritual/religious coping:

1. Collaborative strategy. With this strategy, neither an individual nor God plays a passive role in solving problems; rather, it is about a collaborative relationship from which one draws on guidelines for one's decisions (Simonic & Klobucar, 2017, p. 1646).

2. Self-directing strategy. With this strategy, one relies on one's own initiative, not on God. In problem-solving one perceives oneself as somebody who has received from God enough capabilities and sources to solve problems (Simonic & Klobucar, 2017, p. 1646).

3. Deferring. With this strategy one relies on God, seeing him as the one who will control the situation and solve the problem (Simonic & Klobucar, 2017, p. 1646).

Spiritual Coping and Older Adults

Mahoney et al. (2008) stated, "Being freed from a spouse who pushes against or discourages the other partner's spiritual values could be experienced as a wonderfully liberating

opportunity to return to, or discover anew, one's core spiritual vision for life" (p. 117).

Inevitably, older adults who experience divorce may find renewal of their core spiritual vision as

a goal of spiritual coping (Simonic & Klobucar, 2017). As such, Watkins (2008) claimed that the

goal of spiritual formation among older adults is to have the ability to nurture and celebrate

wholeness in every facet of life. In light of this, Ivtzan et al. (2013) said spirituality could be of

exceptional value for older adults in coping with the challenges of later life. Additionally,

Thauvoye et al. (2018) asserted that spirituality functions as a framework from which older

adults strive to cope with the challenges of later life. Pickard and Nelson-Becker (2011) stated

that "older adults draw upon images of God as comforter and protector to cope with challenges

encountered in the aging process" (p. 138). These concepts of spiritual coping in later life could

help stabilize an individual as he or she lives, knowing that the next significant chapter for him

or her eventually will be death. Thauvoye et al. stated,

> Older adults who have to deal with stressful events might find comfort in a feeling of
>
> connectedness with something that exceeds the self, similarly as they would find comfort
>
> in a feeling of connectedness with others if this would be their primary way of
>
> experiencing spirituality (p. 2176).

One of the reasons spirituality is necessary at this stage of life is because stressful events

experienced in older adults have a way of separating them from their family and community

(Krumrei et al., 2011). Lee et al. (2012) said that stress is related to higher levels of depression

and lower life satisfaction among older adults. In dealing with stress, experiencing religious

coping in the form of religious activity and spiritual coping in the form of spiritual practice

provides older adults the latitude to understand themselves, promoting self-awareness and the

chance to go on with their social and cultural activities (Pattaraarchachai & Viwatpanich, 2021).

Pickard and Nelson-Becker (2011) quoted Erikson in stating that "the quest for meaning, maintaining awareness and creativity with new grace, may be part of the developmental process for many individuals in the final stages of life" (p 141). Han and Richardson (2010, as cited in Thauvoye et al., 2018) clearly expressed that "spiritual coping mitigated the relation between loneliness and depressive symptoms for those elderly persons who reported high levels of spirituality and that most research indicates that spiritual coping in older adults has a general protective role in their well-being" (p. 2168).

Summary

In summary, divorce, as seen in the literature review, is a common occurrence with many implications and without question adverse effects on society (e.g., health, education, and finances) (Kitanovic, 2015; Ola & Mathur, 2016). Subsequently, divorce has adverse social and developmental effects on children (Iniguez & Stankowski, 2016). However, the lived experience of the person divorcing is unique to his or her life journey (Putnam, 2011; Rani, 2014). In truth, the phenomenon of divorce is studied from the perspective of the people who experience it firsthand to help provide data concerning the entire process and the aftermath, including any positive or negative transitions that could have changed the trajectory of their life. As such, although the literature provided multiple perspectives, many aspects of divorce were examined including age, culture, religion, nationality, and causes; this also included the recognition and acceptance of spirituality's importance during marriage (Bell et al., 2018; Krumrei et al., 2011; Mahoney et al., 2008; Pargament et al., 2005). There was no substantial study exploring the impact of divorce on spirituality during the later-life stages of people 50 and older after having been married for three or more years. This writer found this to be a necessary study because it connects with the current high gray divorce prevalence globally (Brown & Lin, 2012; Kirby et

al., 2016; Kitanovic, 2015; Stepler, 2017) and the welfare of those individuals in the later lifespan that should be preparing to "settle-down" but find themselves in a phenomenological experience with varying outcomes. These are the final stages of Erikson's life-span theory (Maree, 2021). As such, the importance of one's spirituality to those who have a spiritual belief in God at this stage of life is crucial to their well-being after divorce (Czekóová et al., 2018; Fowler, 1981; Harris et al., 2012; Krumrei et al., 2009; Lavretsky, 2010; Lifshitz et al., 2019; Pargament et al., 2005; Pickard & Nelson-Becker, 2011; Thauvoye et al., 2018) and their life course transition (Elder, 1997b; Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009) that they are about to make. This study could birth new insights for clinicians, counselors, pastors, and anyone in the mental health community when attending to people 50 and older who acknowledge their spirituality and who divorced in this stage of life, as well as provide a fresh perspective on addressing their experiences while helping them to live to the fullest extent.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This hermeneutical phenomenological study describes the lived experience of divorce's impact on the spirituality of people 50 and older who divorce after having been married for three or more years. This methods section comprises the study's design, research questions, research setting, procedures for conducting the study, interview questions, data collection, data processing and analysis techniques, trustworthiness, the role of the investigator, and ethical considerations are detailed.

Design

The qualitative, hermeneutical, phenomenological research design was chosen because it educates our vision, describes our position, and studies the lived experience at deeper levels (Qutoshi, 2018). The beginning of phenomenology was in the era of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle (Qutoshi, 2018). Centuries passed before a German philosopher named Edmond Husserl became well-known for his use of phenomenology to study lived experience of human beings at the conscious level for understanding (Qutoshi, 2018). Husserl used phenomenology to frame a descriptive research approach that focused on seeing reality rather than truth (Qutoshi, 2018). The theoretical viewpoint is central to the phenomenological study, which promotes studying direct experiences and taking them at face value (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Husserl argued that phenomenology held both a philosophical and methodological stance, allowing it to study phenomena perceived by a human being at a deeper level of understanding in specific situations (Qutoshi, 2018). Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) observed phenomenology as an appropriate methodology for comprehending the core of the human experience. Sutton and

Austin (2015) held that phenomenology is based on the discipline of philosophy and psychology and is accepted as a premier method for describing human experiences.

In this study, the hermeneutical approach and the interpretivist/constructivist assessment were chosen because it is oriented toward lived experiences and interpreting the text of life (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology offers a theoretical guideline to researchers when investigating phenomena at the level of subjective reality (Creswell et al., 2007; Sutton & Austin, 2015). This phenomenological study aimed to probe into the sensitivities, viewpoints, understandings, and state of mind of people who experienced the phenomenon (Percy et al., 2015). This was a valid approach for the study because the phenomenological interpretivist/constructivist assumes that the participants have developed subjective meaning about their experience with divorce (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). In this framework, the participants were believed to be the best resource for a perspective on their lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of divorce in their setting. Therefore, broad open-ended questions were used to allow participants to describe their experience of the impacts, if any, divorce has had on their spirituality (Percy et al., 2015).

In using the hermeneutical phenomenological design in this study, the principal investigator was looking to capture the lived experience of the impacts on spirituality in the first year of divorce for participants aged 50 and older whose marriages dissolved after three years or more, based upon Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being

1. Personal—wherein one intra-relates with oneself with regards to meaning, purpose and values in life. Self-awareness is the driving force or transcendent aspect of the human spirit in its search for identity and self-worth.

2. Communal—as shown on the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships, between self and others, relating to morality, culture, and religion. These are expressed in love, forgiveness, trust, hope and faith in humanity.

3. Environmental—care and nurture for the physical and biological world, including a sense of awe and unity with the environment.

4. Transcendental—relationship of self with something or someone beyond the human level (i.e. ultimate concern, cosmic force, transcendent reality, or God). This involves faith towards, adoration and worship of the source of mystery of the universe.

These four domains of spiritual well-being speak to the intrinsic value one applies to his or her life (Fisher, 2010). Understanding spirituality was crucial to this study because it interprets one's approach to living (Pargament, 2011) as that of people having experienced a traumatic phenomenon in the later life-span and must carry on with life.

Research Questions

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to describe the effects of divorce during the first year on the spirituality of people 50 and older whose marriages dissolve after three years or more. To help investigate the essence of the phenomenon, the following research questions were constructed:

Central Research Question

How do participants ages 50 and older, who were married for three years or more describe the impact of divorce on Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being that occurred during the first-year post-divorce?

Guiding Question One

How do participants ages 50 and older, who were married for three years or more describe the impact of divorce on their patterns of change experienced intraindividually that occurred during the first-year post-divorce?

Setting

The setting was in the privacy of each participant's home with the approval of Liberty University's Internal Review Board (IRB) and the participant. Options for a neutral setting were suggested, such as a room at his or her church (with permission of the lead pastor), a room at a library (with permission from the controlling librarian), or a room at the participant's trusted friend's home (with his or her permission). The options were submitted to the Liberty University's IRB for approval. If there had been cause on the participant's part that we could not use his or her home, the options would have been presented to the participant for agreement, and the chair/IRB would have received notification of the change of setting.

Participants

This study's proposed purposeful and convenient sample (Creswell, 2014) was comprised of 6-10 divorced participants aged 50 and older who were married three years or longer and lived in Nashville, Tennessee, or the immediate surrounding area. The study exclusively solicited participants using the purposeful and convenient sample criteria of those who have been divorced for no more than 15 years so that they may have a vivid recollection of their first-year experience. In addition to the above criteria, the participants were sought out based on their free confession of believing themselves to be spiritual (Palinkas et al., 2015). The solicitation process took place through church announcements and personal emails with the approval of the Liberty University Internal Review Board (IRB) and the lead pastor of the proposed churches. The

solicitation process was not restricted to people with specific denominational affiliations. The

potential participants were familiarized with the purpose of the study and its attempts to

understand the impact of divorce on the spirituality of people 50 and over. The participants were

given an explanation of the time commitment and conditions of the study and were given contact

information for any questions. In addition, the informed consent policy was explained in full

transparency before any participant was asked to sign. The participants were also advised that

participating in the study was entirely voluntary, and at any time anyone wished to withdraw,

even if they had already begun the interview, it was completely acceptable. The participants were

additionally informed that the study was entirely confidential.

Procedures

Participants were selected using the purposeful sample criterion for the study (Creswell,

2014) and a convenient sample as approved by the Liberty University IRB. Through the semi

structured interviewing process based upon the overarching central research questions (Creswell

& Poth, 2018), the data were collected using an interviewing protocol for documenting

information on the lived experience of divorce's effects on the participants' spirituality. The

estimated interview time was 45 minutes to one hour, depending on the need for clarifying or

probing questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once each participant gave permission, individual

sessions were independently audiotaped with a HamiltoBuhl Classroom Cassette player, and the

principal investigator kept field notes of the recording (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sutton & Austin,

2015). To assist in data collection using the interview protocol for documentation, the

components consisted of a heading stating the date, place, interviewer, and interviewee using a

pseudonym (Creswell, 2014). The interviewer was instructed on standard procedures for

documenting statements during each interview. The interview consisted of nine standard

questions and 17 sub-questions aimed at developing themes. The principal investigator asked

probing questions for clarification or a full explanation. The principal investigator also

transcribed the interview. The interviews were validated by member checking (Creswell, 2014).

Once each interview was concluded, the data and the recordings were locked in a briefcase, then

carried to the principal investigator's office at home and locked in the fireproof safe.

The Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher was to follow the appropriate procedures for ensuring this was

a reliable hermeneutical phenomenological study (Creswell, 2014). This included securing

Liberty University's Internal Review Board's (IRB) approval for soliciting participants within a

prescribed criterion, obtaining necessary consent and release forms through complete

transparency, setting aside personal perspectives, detailing personal bias, collecting and

analyzing data, and writing a synthesis of the phenomenon with rich, thick description in order to

capture the lived experience of the participants. The principal investigator maintains all study

documentation and audio recordings in his safe in the office at his home. The complete

transparent approach used throughout the research procedures, including documentation in the

research journal during the data collection and analysis process, ensured the findings' integrity

and protected the results from any researcher bias. The principal investigator was the human

instrument in the research process and was responsible for interpreting the experience of the

phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection

The data were collected in each interview, and information was described in the words of

the participants and not the principal investigator (Creswell, 2013). The principal investigator

ensured rigor by reading and re-reading the interviews to winnow the information into themes

that emerged related to divorce's impact on the spirituality of people 50 and older (Creswell, 2014). The number of themes that emerged depended upon the interviews. After every possible piece of data was analyzed to the point of being exhausted or saturated, and no new information was gleaned (Creswell, 2014), the process ended, and the written report began. From each of the participants' perspectives, data were processed to determine what impacts, if any, divorce had upon their spirituality during the first year after the marriage dissolved.

Interview

This study sought to describe the effect of divorce on the spirituality of people aged 50 and older who were married for three or more years during the first-year post-divorce. These interview questions focused on the spirituality of people 50 and older after divorce to describe transitions made, if any, and how they were experienced. Several of these questions originated in Mahoney et al. (2008) for helping clinicians counsel people having spiritual struggles after divorce (pp. 119-121). All questions (Fisher, 2010) were based on Fisher's four domains of spiritual well-being and were followed up with clarification questions as the interview proceeded.

Icebreaker Questions:

What actor or actress would you want to play you in the movie about your life?

Which movie made you laugh the most?

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. In what ways do you see yourself as a spiritual or religious person?

   a. Spiritually, describe how divorce has affected how you see meaning, purpose, and value in yourself. (Fisher, 2010)

   b. Describe how divorce affected your spiritual perspective of your life purpose

moving forward. (Fisher, 2010)

    c. Describe how divorce affected your spirituality as to how you go about your day.

    d. Spiritually, how has divorce affected your aspect of morality, and your relationships with family and friends? (Fisher, 2010)

    e. How has divorce affected your connectedness to your community?

3. Spiritually, describe how divorce has affected your connectedness with nature/creation, and the environment in which you live. (Fisher, 2010)

4. How do you envision or think about God? (Mahoney et al., (2008)

    a. Spiritually, describe how divorce has affected your aspect of the relationship you have with God. (Fisher, 2010)

    b. Describe any confusion divorce has caused about your belief in God.

    c. How do you feel God sees you amid being divorced?

    d. How has divorce affected your alone time with God?

    e. Have you turned to God for help or support? (Mahoney et al., 2008)

5. How did you experience the purpose of your marriage in a spiritual or sacred way? (Mahoney et al., 2008).

    a. How did you view your marriage as being connected to God? (Mahoney et al., 2008)

6. Describe any internal changes you felt you went through during and after your divorce.

    a. Describe how divorce impacted your spiritual practice?

    b. How has divorce affected your praying?

c. How has divorce affected your Bible studying?

7. Describe any confusion divorce has caused about your spirituality.

    a. Describe how divorce affected your spiritual, intellectual and emotional movement.

    b. How has divorce affected your spiritual passion for living?

8. Describe how divorce affected your spiritual perspectives of daily living.

9. As you have identified what spirituality is to you, what is the most important aspect of your spiritual nature and why is it significant?

Explanation of Questions

Question one reveals background questions (Heppner et al., 2015). This question was meant to be relatively upfront with an inviting aura to the participant to help build rapport (Heppner et al., 2015). The question is intended to be understandable and non-offensive to set the interview's tone, allowing the participants to feel comfortable using their language (Heppner et al., 2015).

Question two opened the discussion by focusing on Fisher (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being questions were meant to help assess spiritual health and life orientation (Fisher, 2010). These were non-threatening opinion and belief questions aimed at developing a theme of the participants' spirituality (Heppner et al., 2015).

Question three was a sensory question (Heppner et al., 2015) designed to describe how the participant envisions his or her immediate environment after divorce. Krumrei et al. (2009) asserted that after the sacred loss of divorce, depression could set in, which may affect how one feels, thinks, and acts in his or her personal setting. This question aimed for the participant to explain any tension he or she may have felt at home or other areas where he or she usually is.

Question four was designed to describe how the participants see themselves in relationship with God. Fisher (2011) stated that the 'Transcendental domain' has the most significance in bringing about the other three domains. Probing the participant's perspective of his or her relationship with God helped to uncover a complete picture of his or her belief (Heppner et al., 2015). This was a non-threatening question looking to have the participants speak from a belief perspective.

Question five was designed to describe how the participants visualize their relationship with God during their marriage and now in divorce. Krumrei et al. (2011) reported that when a participant appraised divorce as a sacred loss and immoral, it raised his or her spiritual stress, which intensified emotional maladjustment. This question was designed to help the participant transition to more open questions. The researcher was looking for the participant to be comfortable enough to share more intimate details about his or her struggles with this phenomenon.

Question six was a behavioral question focusing on spiritual orientation (Heppner et al., 2015) designed to understand any variances in the participant's spiritual practice after divorce. White and Berghuis (2016) held that the influence of the participants' belief systems and religious practices had more emotional impact than other changes with separation/divorce. This was also a non-threatening question that let the participants speak freely about their spiritual adjustments, if there were any.

Question seven was a feelings question (Heppner et al., 2015) about changes in the participants' spiritual orientation that may have been caused by divorce. This question was designed for the participant to describe his or her spiritual clarity as to the direction or any

transition his or her life may be undergoing (Elder, 1997b; Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009; Krumrei et al., 2009).

Question eight was a behavior question (Heppner et al., 2015) designed to see how the participant continues his or her daily activities in line with his or her spiritual belief. Pargament (2011) ascribes spirituality to how a person chooses to live his or her life. This question probed how the participant's spirituality influences daily choices concerning gray divorce (Brown & Lin, 2012). Hopefully, this question would keep the interview flowing engagingly and yield valuable data.

Question nine combined a belief and feelings question (Heppner et al., 2015) that showed the participants' spiritual vitality for living after divorce. Anand et al. (2015) held that belief is the domain of spirituality that surpasses the material world and transcends a basic foundational understanding of the status quo. Pargament (2013) detailed studies that significantly linked spirituality to human behavior. He found that people use spirituality to (a) cope with difficult periods of life; (b) develop strength; (c) associate spiritual experiences with a feeling of hope, caring, and a sense of obligation; and (d) form a guiding way of life. This question helps the participants to think more deeply about their worldview of spiritual links to daily living by inviting them to self-observed (Creswell, 2014).

These questions were all designed to help the participants who are 50 and older to describe their spiritual outlook after divorcing from a marriage of three or more years. The questions were meant to aid the participant in talking more in-depth about his or her present-time spiritual realism drawn from experiencing the effects of the divorce. Krumrei et al. (2011) held that spirituality in response to divorce could formulate a sense of struggle for self and identity. Anand et al. (2015) referred to this sense of struggle as spiritual awareness. Anand et al. stated

that awareness is an alerting of a renewed mentality or mindset towards life or materialistic

thinking.

Data Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis [IPA] (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith et al.,

2009) was used to generate a description of the participants' experience of divorce's effects on

their spirituality into themes for coding and analysis (Creswell, 2014). IPA is used in

contemporary psychology and qualitative research to explore the personal perception of a lived

experience, but not to produce an objective opinion of the phenomenon itself (Brocki &

Wearden, 2006). The core principle of IPA is that all descriptions constitute a form of

interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). As such, analyses made by the researcher were consistently an

interpretation of the participant's experience. IPA is very prudent when exploring topics that are

sensitive, intricate, and filled with emotions (Smith & Osborn, 2015). IPA uses an idiographic

approach that involves acute and comprehensive engagement with individual cases and insights

integrated at later stages of the research (Smith et al., 2009). In addition to IPA functionality, the

data were coded using Emotional Coding, Value Coding, and In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2021).

Saldaña (2021) held that emotional coding is appropriate for qualitative studies exploring

intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences where their emotions arise due to internal

or external causes, especially in identity and social relations. Saldaña additionally stated, "Since

emotional responses are intricately woven with our value, attitude, and belief systems, Values

Coding also becomes a critical concurrent method" (p. 164). Strauss (1987, as cited in Saldaña,

2021) stated that "the root meaning of In Vivo is 'in that which is alive,' and as a code refers to a

word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, the terms used

by [participants] themselves" (p. 137). The outcomes were conveyed in a descriptive narrative of

the participant's lived experience and the meaning he or she gave to spirituality after divorce

(Creswell, 2014). Reliability was established through intercoder agreement using another person

to crosscheck the codes (Creswell, 2014). Validity was established using a rich, thick, detailed

description of the themes and an external auditor reviewing the entire project after the study

(Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, member checking (Creswell, 2014) was used to determine the

accuracy of the interpretations of the findings through a follow-up interview with each

participant as necessary

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established by using four techniques. The first technique used was

audit trail (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The audit trail technique documents the participants'

thinking, clarifies their understanding of the accuracy of the data, and validates that the findings

are based on the participants' own words (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Most importantly, audit trail

shows the data collection process, coding into themes, and analysis of the data (Creswell & Poth,

2018). The following technique was member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and

Poth held that member checking is a process that increases the reliability of the study because the

participant confers with the researcher that what is transcribed is correctly interpreted. Creswell

and Poth also attested that member checking is a precise means of validation because the

participant ensures the accuracy of what was stated. The last technique used was reflexivity

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth noted that reflexivity helps the researcher examine

himself or herself as the principal investigator to dispel his or her bias. Creswell and Poth

additionally identified reflexivity as a means of keeping information purely based on the

participants' description of their lived experience with the phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

The first ethical consideration was the approval from the Liberty University Internal Review Board (IRB) (Creswell, 2014; Liberty University, 2020-2021, p. 10) and adherence to all policies. The following ethical consideration was obtaining the necessary permission (Creswell, 2014) by using informed consent of all participants in participating in the study and the churches' lead pastors in using their churches to solicit participants for the study. I assigned pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities and information. In using my computer, there is a password to protect it from being accessed by anyone except myself. All hard copies of the study were locked in the safe at home. Because this is a crucial study that may be published as an article adding to the literature on divorce, I negotiated authorship with the participants and all concerned parties (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

The central phenomenon studied was the impact of divorce on the spirituality of people 50 and older whose marriages dissolved after three years or more. This chapter noted the methods and design of this hermeneutical phenomenological study that were employed. Research questions guiding the study were presented. Additionally, the details regarding the problems the phenomenon of divorce causes within the topic of concern were presented. The criteria for a purposeful sample and a convenient sample of participants in the study were discussed, along with the number needed in anticipation of saturation. The procedures constructed in the study were documented, and my role as the investigator was clarified. The chapter illustrated the data collection techniques and their purpose. Trustworthiness techniques to dispel any bias were presented. Lastly, ethical considerations were stated for the protection of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology study was to understand the experiences Christians who divorce in the later life-span have with their spirituality in the first year postdivorce. Chapter four includes a brief biographic overview of each participant. This chapter also presents the experiences and critical results based on an examination and a summary of the findings obtained through seven individual interviews in this hermeneutical study. The findings are presented based on individual responses about their shared experiences with the research questions. A detailed account of each interview was constructed upon the two theoretical frameworks (Life-Span Theory and Life Course Theory) and the conceptual framework (Developmental Psychology). The constructive analysis of the themes that were developed in the collected data is also presented in this chapter. As such, chapter four has within it results from the findings in the data and their contextual interpretation presented in narrative form to preserve the participants' individual voices, factual words, and key phrases. Themes were generated that were responsive to this study's purpose and research questions. The findings produced 11 themes; nine responded to Research Question 1, addressing Fisher's four spiritual domains, and two responded to Research Question 2. Chapter four also includes how the data were collected, secured, and analyzed.

Believers of God Divorcing in the Later Life-Span

The spiritual well-being of believers of God who experienced divorce in the later lifespan has not been focused on in any particular empirical literature (Brown & Lin, 2012; Stepler, 2017). Spirituality is endorsed as connected to a person's well-being (Fisher, 2010; Van Cappellen el at., 2016). In 2010, Joshua M. Gold made a statement saying, "Our relationship

with others is central to our spiritual development." As stated in Chapter 2, Fulle-Iglesias et al. (2009) indicated as a Life-Span Theory implication that how a person interacts with others is what shapes one's sense of self. Mukherjee (2016) held that spirituality encompassed personal beliefs incorporating love, compassion, and respect for life. Mukherjee added that spirituality is about relationships with ourselves and with others and is a way of living and coping. Zhang and Yu (2014) showed a correlation between spiritual values and well-being. Fisher (2010) identified spirituality as personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental.

Fisher (2010) Four Domains of Spirituality

Fisher (2010) held that each person's beliefs and worldview impact their understanding and commitment to the importance of each of the four domains for spiritual health. He also remarked that "the difference between their 'ideals' and how they feel/'lived experience' gives an indication of their spiritual well-being in each of the four domains" (p. 115). Fisher (2011) stated:

> Spiritual health is a dynamic state of being, reflected in the quality of relationships that people have in up to four domains of spiritual well-being: Personal domain where a person intra-relates with self; Communal domain, with in-depth inter-personal relationships; Environmental domain, connecting with nature; Transcendental domain, relating to some-thing or some-One beyond the human level. The Four Domains Model of Spiritual Health and Well-Being embraces all extant world-views from the ardently religious to the atheistic rationalist (p. 17).

When each participant divorced in their later life span as believers of God, this traumatic event could have negatively impacted each of their spiritual domains. As to RQ1 addressing this possibility, the significance of each spiritual domain is described by Fisher (2011, pp. 21-22):

- Personal Domain—Life meaning, life purpose, life value, and self-awareness.

- Communal Domain—Interpersonal relationship with self and others, relating to morality, culture, and religion.

- Environmental Domain—Beyond caring for the physical and biological, to having a sense of awe and wonder, and a sense of unity.

- Transcendental Domain—Relationship with self with some-one or some-thing beyond the human level, (having an ultimate concern, cosmic force, transcendent reality of God).

Table 1 shows the knowledge aspect of Fisher's (2010) four domains of spirituality, their characteristic inspirational essences, motivations filtered by belief, and how they are expressed.

Table 1. *Four Domains Model of Spiritual Well-Being*

	Personal	**Communal**	**Environments**	**Transcendental**
Knowledge aspect - filtered by the world-view *Inspirational view essence and motivation - filtered by beliefs*	**meaning, purpose, and values** *human spirit creates awareness self-consciousness*	**morality, culture (and religion)** *in-depth inter-personal relations reaching the heart of humanity*	**care, nurture, and stewardship** of the physical, eco- political and social environment *connectedness with Nature/Creation*	**Transcendent Other** ultimate concern Tillich cosmic force New Age God, for theists *Faith*
Conveyed as	Joy fulfillment peace patience freedom humility identity integrity creativity intuition self-worth	love forgiveness justice hope & faith in humanity trust	sense of awe and wonder valuing Nature/ Creation	adoration & worship, being: at one with Creator of the essence of the universe in tune with God

Review of the Participants

The participants for this study consisted of one man and six women, whose age range was from 56 to 71. All participants had been previously married for three or more years and divorced for 1-15 years. None of them have remarried. However, four of them said they were willing to remarry. Pseudonyms for each participant were used and were chosen by the participants themselves. Nevertheless, the pseudonyms are not used in such a way that the participants' privacy can be compromised. All participants self-identified as people who believe in God and spirituality. Five participants have lived in the Nashville area most of their lives. Rebecca recently left Nashville and moved to Ohio but resides in a hotel, and Sally Jane was only in Nashville for eight years and has now moved to Mississippi. However, she and her husband were both in Nashville before their divorce in Mississippi. In Table 2, the demographic characteristics and religious denominations of each participant are displayed.

Table 2. *Participants Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Denomination/Year's	Race	Years Divorced
Rebecca	56	F	ND/41	African-American	2+ Years
Barbara	61	F	Baptist/25	African-American	2+ Years
Blessing	70	M	ND/Baptist/45	African-American	2+ Years
Ethel	70	F	ND/Baptist/55	African-American	10+ Years
Ruby	66	F	Methodist/56	African-American	7+ Years
Sally Jane	71	F	Methodist/59	Caucasian-American	13+ Years
Thelma	62	F	Baptist/32	African-American	6+ Years

Note. Pseudonym have been assigned to protect participants confidentially.
ND represents Non-denominational.

Based on Table 2, the participants' significant associations are linked by race, gender, and denomination. Six are female, one is male, six are African-Americans, and one is Caucasian-American. Three participants are within the life-span of Generativity vs. Stagnation (50 to 64), and four of the participants are within the life-span of Integrity vs. Despair (65 and older) (Knight, 2017). The participants' viewpoints on Christianity are extensively linked as well. However, their divorces tend to have different reasons.

- Two (Ruby and Blessing) were divorced because their spouse simply walked away.

- One (Rebecca) was divorced because of polygamy.

- Three (Sally Jane, Barbara, and Ethel) were divorced because of adultery.

- One (Thelma) was divorced because of spousal neglect.

- All of their divorces were initiated by the participants.

Four of the participants' marriages were linked in ministry.

- Ruby was married to an ordained pastor.

- Rebecca was married to an ordained apostle.

- Barbara was married to an ordained minister.

- Ethel was married to an ordained deacon

- Two (Barbara and Rebecca) are both ordained prophetesses.

- Blessing is the lead trusty at his present church.

This next section of chapter four presents a concise depiction of each participants' background and Christian experience. These data was accumulated throughout each interview and is designated to critically highlight each participant's personality based on what was shared with the researcher.

Barbara

Barbara is a 61-year-old African-American female. Barbara was with her husband for over 30 years. They were both drug addicts who met in prison before they married. However, before their marriage, while still in prison, they both began believing in God. Eventually, her husband became a minister, and she first became an elder and later a prophetess. Eventually, her husband began being involved in adultery. Today, Barbara is a pastor at a church in Antioch, Tennessee. She has now been divorced for a little over two years. She understood the purpose of the study, and she addressed the interview questions with significant answers that produced data related to each research question.

Rebecca

Rebecca is a 56-year-old African-American female. Rebecca is the youngest of the participants and had the shortest marriage. Rebecca's divorce is the most recent of all the participants. She has known her ex-husband since her 30s, but she did not date him until she was 48. They were legally divorced when she was 55 after five years of marriage. Rebecca has been in ministry for over 30 years. She was also an ordained pastor and now is an ordained prophetess. When she met her husband, he was already an ordained apostle with many churches affiliated with him. Rebecca's husband was involved in polygamy. Rebecca is presently in therapy.

Sally Jane

Sally Jane is a 71-year-old Caucasian-American female. Sally Jane is the oldest of all the participants. The purpose of the study deeply resonated with her because she believed her marriage was sacred. Divorcing her husband was something she prayed about beforehand. Sally Jane was with her husband for approximately 14 years and has now been divorced for a little

over 13 years. Her husband left her for another woman and stayed away for over two years

before she heard from him again. Sally Jane has been a member of the Methodist church for over

57 years. Her answers to the interview questions produce intrinsic data for the research

questions.

Ruby

Ruby is a 66-year-old African-American female. Ruby's marriage lasted for over 30

years. Her husband became a pastor of a church for over 20 years. Her divorce occurred nearly

10 years ago, with her husband leaving her and the church he was pastoring. She was married

when she was 26 and divorced at 56. Ruby stated she had been a believer in God since she was

about 10 years old, and she has been going to church ever since, hardly missing any Sundays or

Wednesdays. She addressed the interview questions with significant answers, producing data

related to each research question.

Blessing

Blessing is a 70-year-old African-American male. Blessing was the only male participant

in the study. Blessing had been married and divorced earlier in life, and he remarried when he

was 57. He was married for 11 years and divorced when he was 68. Presently, he has only been

divorced for a little over two years. His wife left him, but he said she never gave him a reason,

especially since he and she attended the same church. Blessing has always been either a trusty or

a deacon in the churches he has attended.

Ethel

Ethel is a 70-year-old African-American female. Ethel's marriage was distinct from all the

participants in that when she first married her husband, she did not love him, but just needed

someone to help her in life. Her husband also did not love her, but he was lonely and just wanted

someone in his life. They were members of the same church when they met, married, and

divorced. They had been married for 24 years. After several years of marriage, she began to love

him and was so thankful. However, eventually, he walked away with another woman. Ethel was

59 at the time of her divorce. She has been divorced for a little over 10 years. Ethel gave some

very unique answers addressing the research questions.

Thelma

Thelma is a 62-year-old African-American female. Thelma is the only participant who

experienced divorce because of spousal neglect. Thelma was married for a little over 18 years.

She was 56 at the time of her divorce. She, her husband, and her three daughters were all

members of the same church. Thelma's marriage was going well until her husband began having

trouble at his job and quit. He began using cocaine and began adultery, but she forgave him

several times, and he finally got off drugs by going to counseling. He eventually began using

cocaine again and did not come home for several days at a time. Thelma eventually divorced him

due to his neglect of her. Thelma was 56 when she divorced her husband. She remained in the

same church with her three children and is still a member today.

Data Collection and Data Security

The data were collected using a semi-structured interview based on overarching research

questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Key ethical issues in data collection were averted in

compliance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 151).

Participants who were validated as a purposeful sample or a convenient sample (Creswell &

Poth, 2018, p. 159) were recruited. A recruitment package was mailed to each participant, which

included a recruitment letter explaining the purpose of the study and a consent form to be read

and signed (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 156) before the interviews were scheduled. Six

participants were interviewed in their homes and one in her hotel room. All participants were

interviewed "one-on-one" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). However, three participants

requested Zoom meetings. All interviews were recorded with permission from each participant.

Each interview was transcribed into written documents. All data is kept in the researcher's home

office in a fire-proof safe and password-protected computer. Additionally, the recordings were

kept safe in the researcher's office. Only one other person had access to the data, who checked

for researcher bias as a part of the reliability process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, she did

not have access to any of the participants' identities.

Reflexivity

Berger (2015) said: "Researchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and

sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self-

monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research" (p. 220).

With this in mind, I started this research study by reflecting on my own experience with the

phenomenon of divorce. However, I desired to understand the impact divorce may have on

Christians who experienced it in the later life-span. The first ethical technique I used was Audit

Trail (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Braun and Clarke (2021) indicated it is important to place

"emphasis on Audit Trail to map analytic development" (p. 245). In the practice of Audit Trail, I

collected the raw data using an interviewing protocol for documenting information from a

purposeful and convenient sample of participants, using a semi-structured interview that was

planned to last no more than 45 minutes to an hour but went longer than that with five of the

participants. With permission, I recorded each of the interviews. I used the recordings to

transcribe the data onto written documents. After transcribing the data, I reduced them by coding

them pertaining to the research questions. After coding the data, I categorized them into themes

relating to each of the participants' lived experiences on the topic of the study.

I used multiple methods to validate my process and results. As to this, field notes were

written during the interviews and used during the theme development process. Seven completely

different participants were used as data sources that came under the study's criteria. Methods

used in providing a lens to view the study were two theoretical frameworks (Life-Span Theory

and Life Course Theory) and one conceptual framework (Developmental Psychology). As noted

in Chapter 2, Varpio et al. (2020) stated that a theoretical framework describes the theoretical

foundations of a present research study based on existing research, whereas a conceptual

framework guides the researcher in drawing his or her conclusions. This process allows the

researcher to conceptually map out the variables that he or she may decide to use in the research

study and the relationships among them (Varpio et al., 2020).

Additionally, for ethical validation, member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261)

was used to ensure the credibility of the data that resulted from the interviews by reviewing each

participants' transcript with him or her and verifying accurate interpretation. Each participant was

given a review of their interview and asked to verify the interpretations. A couple of the

participants adjusted certain statements as to what they meant. In conclusion to member

checking, each participant confirmed that the interpretations were accurate. The last step in the

validation process was to ask a licensed professional counselor to review the analysis and results.

As a reminder to keep the study confidential, she was not given the participants' identities. I sent

her the data without exposing the participants' names, but only their pseudonyms. She returned

written comments, describing that I was being more judgmental than observational in my

analysis. I reviewed the data she recommended and revised the analysis to reflect a more

observational perspective. After revising the data and reviewing it with her, there were no more recommendations.

Data Analysis Process

According to Moustakas (1994), it is vital for the researcher to analyze data with the purpose of emergent meaning that correlates to the participants' described experience by producing structural descriptions. Structural descriptions bring visualization to the data as to "how the phenomenon was experienced" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 199; Moustakas, 1994). In analyzing the data, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith et al., 2009) was used, along with Emotional Coding, Value Coding, and In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2021) during the first cycle of coding. Smith et al. (2009) held that "IPA is not a theory-driven method but an inductive one, so conclusions are based on what is found in the data rather than on testing existing theories, as is the case for deductive reasoning" (p.12). Braun and Clarke (2022) described IPA as a "popular psychological approach to qualitative data analysis, centered on the exploration of subjective meaning-making and lived experience, and incorporating both thematic and idiographic data orientations (idiographic = an orientation to the particular, such as the unique experiences of individual participants)" (p. 289). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is used in contemporary psychology and qualitative research to explore the personal perception of a lived experience but not to produce an objective opinion of the phenomenon itself (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The core principle of IPA is that all descriptions constitute a form of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). As such, analyses made by the researcher are consistently an interpretation of the participant's experience. With the intent to interpret the participants' experiences with divorce's possible impact on their spirituality, in

addition to IPA functionality, Emotional Coding, Value Coding, and In Vivo coding were employed (Saldaña, 2021).

Saldaña (2021) held that emotional coding is appropriate for qualitative studies exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences where their emotions arise due to internal or external causes, especially in identity and social relations. Saldaña additionally stated, "Since emotional responses are intricately woven with our value, attitude, and belief systems, Values Coding also becomes a critical concurrent method" (p. 164). Strauss (1987, as cited in Saldaña, 2021) stated that "the root meaning of In Vivo is 'in that which is alive,' and as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, "the terms used by [participants] themselves" (p. 137). During the second cycle coding, once categorizing and themes began to emerge, In Vivo codes were discontinued, and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2021, pp. 133-137) was applied to bring about their label development. Descriptive coding is sometimes called "topic coding, tagging, or index coding" (Saldaña, 2021, pp. 133-134). Saldaña stated, "Descriptive Coding summarizes in a word or short phrase—most often a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (p. 134).

The first data analysis process was becoming familiar with the data by reading the transcripts several times. This is referred to as familiarization (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pp. 42-49). Bloomberg (2023) stated: "The more familiar you are with the details of your data, the better you will be able to present them and the better your analysis of them will be" (p. 337). Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained the qualitative analysis process is to be seen as organic. Spradley (1979, as cited in Saldana, 2021) offers that tensions in the data are excellent opportunities for constructing themes (p. 259). Bradberry and Greaves (2009, p. 14, as cited in Saldaña, 2021, p. 162) offered that "all emotions are derivations of five core feelings: happiness, sadness, anger,

fear, and shame." As such, Emotional Coding was used to "label the emotions recalled and

experienced by the participant" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 364).

Saldaña (2021), in referring to value coding, stated, "Value coding is applied in three

aspects to the participants' value, attitude, and belief" (p. 167). Saldaña briefly described each of

their meanings:

> value (ourselves, another person, things, idea), attitude (meaning what we think or feel
>
> about ourselves, another person, thing, or idea), and beliefs (includes a person's value
>
> and attitude, plus his or her knowledge, experience, opinions, assumptions, biases,
>
> prejudice, morals in the social world (pp. 167-168).

With this in mind, value coding was applied to "reflect the participants' values, attitudes,

and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 369). In Vivo

codes were used during the first cycle coding process to extract the participants' keywords and

phrases pertaining to the research question (Saldaña, 2021, p. 365). Descriptive Coding was used

as the method for second cycle coding to offer a list of topics for indexing and categorizing the

themes derived from the data (Saldaña, 2021, p. 362).

Results: Themes' Context

The theme interpretations significantly underline the possible impacts each participant

could encounter during the experience of divorce. Spradley (1979, as cited in Saldana, 2021, p.

259) offers that tensions in the data are excellent opportunities for constructing themes. Harding

(2019, as cited in Saldaña, 2021) advised "that roughly three-fourths of the total number of

participants should share a similar code between them (related to an experience or opinion found

in their data) for a "commonality" to be established, such as a category or theme" (p. 37).

Saldaña (2021) stated,

My own experience has taught me that, in some cases, the unique instance of a code that

appears just once and nowhere else in the data corpus, or a code that appears just two or

three times across different cases or periods, may hold important meaning for generating

a significant insight in later analysis (p. 37).

In this study, one theme applies to four participants, three themes apply to five

participants, two themes apply to six participants, and five themes apply to all seven participants.

The resulting themes that emerged from this study were described and categorized into structural

themes, describing how the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 199;

Moustakas, 1994). These themes provide implications for societal patterns and academic

knowledge for counseling. Table 3 presents the theme addressing research question one (RQ1).

Results of the Central Research Question

Table 3
Themes Addressing the Central Research Question

Theme +	RQ	Theme	Domain
Theme 1	RQ1	Divorce Imposed Feelings of Spiritual Emptiness Even with Their Strong Belief in God	Personal
Theme 2	RQ1	Divorce Triggered Feelings of Distance from God	Transcendental
Theme 3	RQ1	Divorce Evoked a Spiritual Hunger for God's Love	Transcendental
Theme 4	RQ1	Spiritual Reclamation	Personal
Theme 5	RQ1	Growing in Spirituality After Divorce	Transcendental
Theme 6	RQ1	Community Disturbance	Communal
Theme 7	RQ1	Passionate Interconnection with Their Community	Communal
Theme 8	RQ1	Enjoyment of Nature	Environmental
Theme 9	RQ1	Standing Back up on Their Spiritual Feet	All Four Domains

Note. All RQ1 themes address a specific spiritual domain with an illumination of the participants
    description of their experience.

RQ1: How do participants aged 50 and older, who were married for three years or more describe

the impact of divorce on Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being that

occurred during the first-year post-divorce? The four domains are:

1. Personal Domain

2. Communal Domain

3. Environmental Domain

4. Transcendental Domain

T1: Divorce Imposed Feelings of Spiritual Emptiness Even with Their Strong Belief in God (RQ1—Personal Domain)

Harris et al. (2012) emphasized that when a person loses faith in the context of having spiritual stress, he or she assumes they have also lost available spiritual support through prayer, his or her relationship with God, and interaction with a community of faith. Regarding RQ1, this theme discusses explicitly how the participants are faithful believers of God, but their experience with divorce has brought about spiritual stress. This theme begins with a focus on the "Personal Spiritual Domain" and the "Transcendental Spiritual Domain" (Fisher, 2010). It links up with all the following themes pertaining to Research Question 1: divorce's impact on the participants' spiritual well-being. This introductory theme is organized opening with extracts capturing the value and belief of spirituality being real to the participants: Ethel makes a statement of belief describing how she views spirituality and what it accounts for in her connection with God. Ethel presented a belief in God that has changed over the years after her divorce.

"Spirituality to me, is having a relationship with God, um, um, and abiding in all the

things He is asking us to do, but this didn't come till years after divorce"

Rebecca describes spirituality from a belief viewpoint of realism. She notes that spirituality is more real than any other part of life. Rebecca has been in ministry for over 30 years, and her description of spirituality appears to come from her knowledgeable perspective of having studied scriptures.

"To me spirituality is the real world, like, you know, like there is a movie called the

Matrix you take the red pill, blue pill, it, it's the pill take, you take when you want

reality, now I believe that the spirit world is the real world, you can endure a lot of things,

but if your spirit is broken, or if something is going on with your spirit it's kind of hard

to, to get that part back, ah, and it's also the part, I would say the spirit is the most

important, it is the most important, yeah, ah, spirituality as the real world, as the real me,

as the real God, as the real movement of things, so yeah, that how I see it".

Blessing describes spirituality from a belief context of having a technological similarity. Such as

humans having a Wi-Fi connection to God. Blessing's portrait of spirituality is spoken from a

religious aspect. He appeared to want to show his devotion to God in voicing this.

"Spirituality is where you have a, ah, it's just like ah, your cell phone, ah you have a

connection with the Father, and that connection keeps you when good times and

bad times".

Barbara described her belief in spirituality as involving active living and following God where

He directs her. When Barbara began to respond to the question, her voice softened as she

described how she viewed spirituality as moving in relationship to God.

"Walking and living in the Spirt, allowing the Spirit to lead and guide me into all thing

that what spirituality is, to me".

The participants accounted spirituality from an adjoining perspective of being beyond

human existence. The participants used statements of belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), accepting

that spirituality is 'true life' brought about by their personal experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018,

p. 353). While Barbara educed spirituality into her, Blessing placed spirituality in the aspect of

technology, but amongst human beings and God as being connected. Blessing illustrated that

even technology has problems that interrupt its functioning from time to time. Blessing

emphasizes "good times and bad times." This illuminates that human beings can have troubles

that interrupt their spiritual functioning. Spirituality was also presented as a personal connection

to meaning, purpose, and value to the participants.

Barbara described herself spiritually as holding an obligation to walk with Christ in how she

treats people and honoring God with obedience. This was an emotional (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162),

expression bent on her devotion to God.

> "I see myself as a spiritual person by walking in the light of Christ [Personal], helping
>
> others and loving my neighbor [Communal], doing the things that I know that pleases
>
> the Lord [Transcendental]."

Ruby described herself as spiritual by being someone who is passionate about doing what God

wants her to do. She made a statement of belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), in gaining a better

relationship with God.

> "I had to seek God first, as to what He wanted me to do, where He wanted me to be,
>
> just seek Him with my whole heart, and just, you know, depend on Him, and so I
>
> went deeper in what, He wanted me to do, not what I wanted to do."

Ethel described herself as spiritual by explaining the most valuable thing to her was having a

better affiliation with God.

> "My most important part of my spiritual life, is developing a better relationship
>
> with God."

> These statements of belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) show how each participant at this age

views their relation to God. This is a profound description of spirituality and its importance to

the participants. It carries into the significance of the research study on divorce's impact on their

spiritual well-being aligned with their 'Personal Domain' and 'Transcendental Domain' (Fisher, 2010). As expressed in chapter two, Pickard and Nelson-Becker (2011) stated that "Older adults draw upon images of God as comforter and protector to cope with challenges encountered in the aging process" (p. 138).

Barbara's comment highlights her standing in belief with the keywords "walk with Christ". She placed the emphasis and acknowledgment of the value of having a relationship with God regardless of any painful experience by stating:

> "I really don't think there was any confusion, there was a lot of anger and hurt, but I
>   wasn't confused in my walk with Christ".

> Not having confusion, as she stated, did not mean there was no pain. The fact is that pain

is a part of the divorce experience throughout all adult life-spans (Amato, 2010; Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2009). Stressful events such as divorce challenge a person's present belief and meaning systems and may modify a person's spirituality (Russo-Netzer (2017). One of the problems that exist is that divorce causes the participants to develop spiritual uncertainty. For example, Sally Jane and Rebecca commented:

> Sally Jane: "When my husband and I divorced, I wondered if I, everything I had done
>   was right then and I doubted everything I had done".

> Rebecca: "It affected my faith so much, like, like, believing God, like what does that
>   mean, you know like, it, it made me kind of push everything away and go, and
>   go, 'I don't know' you know, I don't…it takes so much battle to, ah, to kind of
>   fight the thought about how I felt about whether God was there or the people
>   that supposed to represent Him, I have attempted to get reconnected with who,
>   who I am like, it was hard to remember who I was before I got married."

These emotional (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162) key phrases stood out: Sally Jane said, "I doubted everything I had done," and Rebecca said, "Believing God, like, what does that mean." These were crucial allegations of their emotions brought about by divorce. Saldaña (2021) held that emotions arise from internal and external causes. The point of questioning one's spirituality after being someone who has believed in God for years can make a person question his or her whole life, affecting their 'Personal Domain.' Personal spirituality was the only domain 100% positively associated with spiritual well-being (lower depression and higher life satisfaction) (Lifshitz et al., 2019). Another display in the data from the 'Personal Domain' aspect was that divorce could have a believer of God feeling spiritually locked up at this age. Case in point, Blessing and Rebecca described these feelings:

> Blessing "I had, I, [pause] I had a thing where I was coming home and leaving home and felt like I was in prison, [pause] yeah, yeah, I felt like I was in prison even in my own home".

> Rebecca "There was a point that I, I didn't think I was spiritual at all, that I didn't think like, all of who I thought I was, was, like I felt I had 'imposter syndrome' like you were never who you say you were, at all, you know, so it was, it was, divorce impacted every area of my identity, every area".

In the statement by Rebecca, she emerged shamefully, but it also carried her aspect of belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) at that point of divorce. Shame involves social rejection, withdrawal, negative self- acknowledgment, and minimal self-worth (De France et al., 2017). Blessing's key phrase of 'felt like I was in prison' posted more of the attitude he derived during his divorce. Saldaña (2021) stated, "An attitude is a way we think about ourselves, another person, things, or idea" (p. 168).

Divorce can be seen as a sacred loss by believers of God (Krumrei et al., 2009). The appalling perception of divorce in this study was that some participants conveyed their marriage as a spiritual mistake or not bonded to God as relative to Fisher's 'Transcendental Domain.' In Rebecca's statement 'God did I miss you', her expression was of an emotional feeling of shame (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162), and disgrace at having married.

> "I, ah, it, it really undermined like…[long pause]…[deep breath] like I went through plenty times where I felt like God tricked me [laughter], I felt like He betrayed me in the sense that, you know, like was it something to, to be honest, I didn't spend a whole lot of time blaming God, I spent a whole lot of time blaming me like, God did I miss you?"

Ethel provided a statement of belief. However, it was that her marriage was not connected to God in any way which also equated feelings of shame.

> "Well it wasn't, it wasn't ah, I didn't view my marriage at first being connected to God, even though I had ah marriage ah counseling, it was, it was like um when I got married I did not love my husband, I liked him a lot ".

Thelma saw divorce as placing her in a position of having to make a decision for her spiritual well-being. Her statement indicated her feelings of hopefulness, emphasizing her belief and happiness of going on in life.

> "Ah I realized that this is it, this is, this is, my life, I either can live my best life, and be as happy as I can, or I can be sad and look back like oh, I could have done this and that person would have loved me".

Going on in life is what all participants knew they had to do. Still, they exclaimed that after their devastating divorce experience, they saw themselves as living in comparison to some

people in the Bible, experiencing at this point that spirituality is difficult to live. To this point,

Blessing and Barbara commented:

> Blessing "Ah I see myself as being Job, that has been through many things and has seen
>
>> the example of God, bring what I lost back to reality."
>
> Barbara "I see my life pattern after God, I have had a Paul experience, I have had Job
>
>> experiences, and through them all I been able, I've learned how to trust God."

Blessing and Barbara both provided statements of their belief, giving value to trusting in

God. Trusting God is crucial to the 'Transcendental Domain' (Fisher, 2011). Yet, following

Rebecca's divorce, spirituality being difficult to live was highlighted and described in a painful

way, affecting her 'Personal Domain' as she commented:

> "I believe the real war is within ourselves because spirit being the part that has access
>
> to God and everything has to, you know ah, interact with the rest of me my soul, mind,
>
> will, and emotions and you know and all of it has to collaborate with the body [laughter]
>
> cause the body has to say where were you getting me to go…If something is broken and
>
> and and I have to bring clarity to this, you know if my foot was broken all of my attention
>
> would be towards my foot, and so even though my spirit is the most important, that gets
>
> challenged when something else if broken".

Rebecca described how spirituality was most important to her, but divorce damaged her

belief. The key phrase she stated indicating her pain is "I believe the real war is within

ourselves". Simon and Klobucar (2017) claimed that divorce in the later life-span may cause the

emergence of hard feelings that birth a new era in the participants' life course.

All the participants expressed that living spirituality after divorce has challenges. This

was summed up by Ruby stating:

"Ah, this has been a process, it's really been a process for me because even though I've

experienced life in different ways, I've experienced it, but I also know, and it's

one thing I know for sure, about spirituality, is that there is always going to be

something that is going to test you"

Ruby's statement, in agreement with all the other participants, suggested that regardless

of how spiritual one is, there will be tests of one's belief. Spiritual belief is connected with all

four domains (Fisher, 2011). Nevertheless, Krumrei et al. (2011) held that when an older adult

experiences a stressful event, he or she may become divided from all things.

As stated in chapter two, Fuller-Iglesias et al. (2010) stressed that humans are very

susceptible to influence in their early years but, with aging, are thought to become increasingly

stable. As such, after having experienced divorce's impact on their spiritual well-being, all the

participants in this study began to have spiritual recovery. Spiritual recovery, as described by the

participants, is a slow process. Rebecca, Ethel, Barbara, and Ruby stated:

Rebecca, in making this statement of belief, had a facial expression and tone in her voice of

assurance. A key heartwarming phrase in her statement was 'I'm at least progressing'.

"Oh yeah, um, I'm still recovering, I'm I'm, I'm definitely, I still recognize that I'm still

recovering, like I don't feel 100% yet, but that's a feeling, and I know that that's a

mindset work, I'm still working on like I said everything took a hit and so, but I'm at

least progressing, you know, I, I definitely see progress, I, I have a want to, but I didn't

have a want to [laughter] so it's a, it's a, it's a work in process, you know trying to get

everybody to work as a team [laughter]".

Ethel, in making this statement, stressed her belief with this key phrase, "but I'm making it

there" to being whole in spirituality.

"It's been slow in certain areas, you know it's been kind of slow, but I'm

making it there".

Barbara, in making this statement of belief, spoke of her hope for regaining her spirituality with a

stable relationship with God.

"It took me right at a year, ah, maybe not that long, after six months, I started moving

forward, ah, cause I didn't want to stay in that rut, I didn't want the enemy to take me like

that, I wanted God to keep me consistent with Him".

Ruby, in making this belief statement, had a key phrase "a work in progress", that acknowledged

her spiritual recovery is coming.

"A work in progress, I'm still, I'm still working on me, um, I have come a long way, but

there is always room for spirituality and growth, in the Lord because we learn things,

every day, and when, just when you think, that you've got it, something else comes along

and you find out that you are not as spiritual as you thought you were. So it is a process,

it is."

In describing their spiritual recovery, the participants express how it has been in process

for a while, but that they also will keep going. They all exclaimed statements of belief toward

their spiritual recovery.

The picture this theme paints is that all the participants believe in God but were painfully

hurt regarding their emotions and spirituality by the impact of divorce. The participants spoke of

their passionate confidence in God being stable throughout this theme. However, as the theme

title specifies, spiritual emptiness may still arise when divorce occurs, even when having a strong

belief in God in this life-span. Theme 2 expounds upon the participants' experience with spiritual

stress.

T2: Divorce Triggered Feelings of Distance from God (RQ1—Transcendental Domain)

The first phase of spiritual stress is the divine spiritual struggles that center on an individual's relationship, thoughts, and feelings toward God (Mahoney et al., 2008, pp. 112-113). Regarding RQ1, theme 2 addresses divorce's impact on the 'Transcendental Domain". One of the most challenging feelings from divorce observed in the study was the participants' question about God's involvement in their marriage. Mahoney et al. also stated, "A spiritual struggle is illustrated by feelings of betrayal by God for the loss of one's sacred marriage" (p. 105). Throughout the data, the participants acknowledge that when they first experienced their divorce, there was a consistent feeling that God was not close to them then. Rebecca described the sadness of feeling forsaken, not knowing if God was involved in her marriage, and the lowness of not knowing how He feels about her.

"Ah, ah, you know how involved He should be, did He want to be involved, was He ever involved, you know, ah, was this a mistake was I delusional, why did He involve, get in, get in the matter….I really, the truth of the matter is that there is very much a distance very much because I am unresolved, and how God really feels about me, even though you know I have heard He loves me and all that stuff."

Barbara commented downheartedly, admitting that she now has no idea about God being in her marriage.

"I don't, I don't, know where I'm at now, I don't know that my marriage was connected to God. or not, you know what I'm saying."

Ethel made a statement framed with an attitude (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), that she had no relationship with God during her marriage or at the time of her divorce.

"I didn't have a relationship with Him, I was just going to church, and um um, I didn't see God as my Father, I just, you know I just, knew His name, but I didn't see Him as my

Father you know my Holy Father, I said the words that you know you gave your life

was on the cross, but it really didn't mean anything to me it just some words.

Blessing explained that he mistook being close to God while married, but the pain of his divorce

taught him he was not.

"I was being farther away from Him, you know what I'm saying, ah, sometimes jobs,

sometimes people, sometimes you as yourself feel like you are close to Him, but He,

He shows you by letting things happen how close you're not to Him"

Rebecca, Barbara, Ethel, and Blessing all made belief statements that were covered with

feelings of shame. Fisher (2011) stated, "From a theistic point of view, a strong faith in God

(Transcendental Domain), should enhance all the other relationships for spiritual well-being" (p.

24). The findings also showed that some participants felt they were at a place of

misunderstanding God.

Sally Jane described the shame and discomfort she felt misunderstanding God.

"I am not going to say that I always understand what God is trying to tell me, I know

He gets so aggravated with me sometimes, because He is trying real hard to tell me and

I am trying real hard to understand, but I'm getting it all mixed up."

Similar to Sally Jane's pain in misunderstanding God, Rebecca felt disturbed by God

after her divorce and Ethel found it very difficult to talk to Him.

Rebecca described the anger (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162), she felt at God, believing He mistreated

her. She also expressed the feeling of not wanting to be in God's present.

"It's been very frustrating, it's been, its felt isolated, it's been challenged to even want to

because I am mad at Him but I do have to, you know, evaluate I, I, I just, it is a mixture

of do it, you know it's for real it's like, I, I don't, I don't, even want to do it sometimes

not feelings from disappointment to, you know, you don't want to be in His presence,

because…it it seemingly hasn't been a good experience, [laughter]"

Ethel expresses her grief of having no relationship with God as a Father because she did not have

a father growing up. Her expressions were feelings of shame and hurt for not knowing God in

any kind of way.

"I think that was God's way cause I was, like I say I didn't know how to talk to Him as a

Father, ah it was like a stranger to me even though I didn't, I'm not going to say I didn't

trust Him but, even though I was going to church and singing in the choir and all of this it

just I don't know I think I just think God had was kind of, I know now He wasn't but I

was thinking then, He was like ah, what's the word I'm looking for, like He was ah, not

ashamed of me but, I was too ashamed to talk to Him, you know I was too, I was hurting

so much um, to talk to Him I didn't know how to talk to Him, I didn't, I don't know it

was just, it was weird."

Krumrei et al. (2009) said that the depression caused by divorce could affect how one

feels, thinks, and acts. Participants found it challenging to talk to God, believing that He does not

hear them; other participants found having a conversation with God challenging due to the

honesty involved. Sally Jane described the moments of depression she had believing it was

difficult talking to God, because He was not listening to her.

"Sometimes it would be a lot sadder that it been before, but it was always God I was

talking to I mean and sometimes I felt like I was not, I would think, what I would think

was 'you say you're listening, but you must not be doing it right because you're not

hearing from God', I did have those thoughts."

Rebecca made a statement of belief, describing her talks with God as being 'hard conversations'. Her statement possessed indications of her shame and humbleness (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162), because she admitted to not having answers and knowing she had to approach God

> "I have, you know kind of had those hard conversation with God, I can't say that I have all those answers but, I have had hard conversations, what I felt like honest transparent conversations with God."

Divorce during this life span significantly impacts some divorcees' sense of hopelessness and loss (Perrig-Chiello et al., 2015). Sally Jane, reflecting on her emotions, spoke from a sense of loss in knowing God's intent at the time of her divorce, shared:

> "I am sure I had a big part in the breakup, because I can't blame God for everything, there is, no way, but the way it turned out, you know I had no knowledge of what, what was in His mind for me at the time."

In alliance with Sally Jane's comment as to not knowing what God had in mind for her during the divorce, Rebecca expressed a similar belief, noting the challenges God may have had in getting to her because of how divorce had affected her mentality, she stated:

> "I think that the Lord may have some challenges getting to me, you know because again, I have to fight through the thoughts sometimes to I have some good days and some bad days, let me just put it that way, I had some good days and some bad days."

Spiritual struggle is shown by a divorcee being unable to move beyond feelings of betrayal by God (Mahoney et al., 2008). This aspect of emotional pain came forward as well in the findings.

Ruby's statement expressed her concerns and suffering of not correctly having the right husband for years. She stated a key phrase of her questioning God about her mistake "I thought we were living right".

> "You just don't think about, and I guess I should have known, but you think you, got a man of God, and, and this can happen, you know [laughing] what, what gone and I try not to I have really tried not to question God, but I did, I, I know, I did question Him, I'm like, I thought we were living right"

Rebecca gave a bitter, remorseful statement of feeling she had been forsaken by God.

> "So it was more the why and you know not having answers and you know almost like I felt abandon by Him, um, the rejection and the abandonment just blankets everything you know, yeah, so I really felt like you know, that, in my head I know it's not true, but in my womanhood and in my, my girly girl I felt like, I felt like, God you know, He must have this thing where it's okay for men to mistreat women."

Lifshitz et al. (2019) found that "Transcendental and communal spirituality are associated with immeasurable depression" (pp. 986-987). Appropriating this point, the finding also revealed that feelings of abandonment evoked participants not to seek God's help even while in severe emotional pain.

Ethel expressed that although she experienced much pain and sadness during her divorce, she did not have anyone to ask for help, and because of her dissatisfied relationship with God, she did not call on Him for help.

> "At the time of my divorce, I really did not have a good relationship with God, really with nobody, I was so hurt, and tore down and mad at everybody… there was a lot of pain and hurt there, I was not, ah, but it was a lot of pain there, a lot of hurt and pain, confusion, I went into a

dark place, into, I was like ah, ah, just staying in my room a lot, didn't go in, called into work, didn't work, I didn't work, depress all the time, and so, I ah, it was just a dark place and I didn't, I knew that I needed to call God, but I didn't call God, to help me."

Rebecca made a statement of belief filled with regret, based on seeing herself far from God.

"I know I am seen as His daughter, but it feels very distant, you know it has felt very distant, and even though I have the scripture that says, 'He is near to those of a broken heart and a contrite spirit', it, I have, I have not consistently or to the level of my desire felt the nearness of God.

The most crucial standpoint of theme 2 is that although the participants felt divorce had placed them distant from God, they all strongly believed in Him. This entitled their journey back to God.

Rebecca describes the challenges of returning to God as being the confusion the pain of divorce causes her to have. She spoke from her belief in God perspective, but full of frustration and appeared to have feeling of shame (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162), and bitterness.

"I believe the Word, but my raw thing that had to addressed which I have been working on is reestablishing that place because it really cut me bad, yeah so, that the confusion you had to challenge between what reality looks like and what the Word looks like…here is the Word and here is life and you are trying to lay the template of the Word over top of the situation to see if they match…it's not matching [laughter] it hard to reconcile, you know, it's really hard to reconcile, it has been hard to reconcile, and I know that, that it due to you know the broken heart, the shattered heart."

There is a key phrase that gives a good picture of Rebecca's statement, 'here is the Word and here is life and you are trying to lay the template of the Word over top of the situation to see if they match'.

In this theme, the participants were able to describe their feelings as to how divorce impacted their relationship with God (Transcendental Domain) to an aspect of being at a distance from Him. However, as in theme 1, theme 2 displays that the participants maintained a strong belief in God toward their spiritual recovery. Theme 3 in connection with both prior themes highlights the participants developing a hunger for the love of God towards their spiritual recovery.

T3: Divorce Evoked a Spiritual Hunger for God's Love (RQ1—Transcendental Domain)

The transcendental domain impacts well-being in older age, not necessarily to a lesser extent than the other spiritual domains (Lifshitz et al., 2019; Thauvoye et al., 2018). As mentioned in theme 1, all participants described a strong belief in God, even though divorce made them feel spiritually empty. Theme 2 demonstrated how the participants felt they had gotten a distance from God. However, as seen in theme 2, each participant, because of their strong belief, determined that they had to get back to God, even beyond the difficulties of getting there, regardless of divorce's impacts. Theme 3 addresses RQ1 pertaining to how divorce created a new hunger for the participants to become actively aware of God's love for them. All the participants expressed an intriguing total need for God.

Thelma describes how she sees God with an emotional (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162) statement of joyfulness and feeling secure and reassured of God. A key phrase she stated, "leaning totally on God," captured her overall comment.

"God is mostly the love of my life, He is my sustainer, He is my rock, He is all that I

need, that has gotten me through everything that I have gone through, cause my divorce

was rough, but ah, I held on to God, I held on to God, I just, like I said, I knew God was

there for me, and I just had to step out on faith, I knew God had me, it's like I just had to

do what I had to do because I had to jump ship, um in the beginning, it was hard, I would

ah, find myself to ah, talk myself up, to keep going, um, it just felt like oh, here we go

again, but um, I just continued to walk on the Word that 'My God will supply all my

needs according to His riches in glory' so I just stood on His Word that He was going to

be there for me…because I was leaning totally on God, my dependance with high

because that's who has been keeping me strong, guiding me, knowing that I am loved

regardless."

Rebecca describes how she envisions God with a statement of belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167)

that expressed her feelings in a sense of delightfulness in God as a 'loving Father'.

"I am growing in um seeing God as a loving Father, and ah I see Him as my protector,

my Friend, ah, the One who really knows me, um, [pause] and the One who ah, has, is in

total control of my life."

Blessing describes how he learned to depend on God by making a statement of belief in

receiving His assuredness of protection.

"I think of God as being an example for those, that ah, that has been through a struggle or

going through a struggle, that they can lean and depend on Him more for answers than

they can anybody else, because I felt like God you know what you created me, you

blessed me, and you ain't go let nothing happen to me that you and I can't handle."

Ethel's statement revealed her pain brought about a sole dependency on God. A key phrase that illuminates in this statement is, "I didn't have nobody else to cry out to, but God".

>"Cause I was, I was down, and I was unhappy, I was lonely, you know, really I was pitiful, you know so, that's what made me cry out to Him, you know, I had, I didn't have nobody else to cry out to but God."

Ruby's description of how she envisions God was filled with belief, feelings of happiness, joy, and contentment. Ruby's key phrase, "whatever happens, I will be with Him" showed her total assurance of God.

>"Um, He is the center of my joy, God will never leave me or forsake me….I Fully Relied On God', [laughter] fully, cause I didn't know what I was going to do, where I was going, or anything, and I had no body but Him, didn't have mom anymore, didn't have dad, had no body but God, that was it and you know I just, I needed Him, you know…He has been there every step of the way, every step of the way, I'm thinking nobody can orchestrate like God nobody can do it like God, no matter what comes up, I know if I don't do anything else, I can trust God, I was in my emotional state, but even though I knew, God what He could do you know um, um thinking okay you know, it's okay, whatever happens, I will be with Him, I been going through all of them emotions trying to process all that, so when the divorce happened I was focusing more on emotions hurt and pain, ah, knowing that all I had was God."

Barbara's description of how she pictured God revealed her strong belief in Him and her feeling of being blessed, joyful, assured, as well as filled with hopefulness.

>"I envision God, as my keeper…He's my helper, He is really to me, He really is, He really is, God is, God is love, I wanted to stop hurting, and I knew that if I stayed with

> God that I would, I knew that if, I knew that I could keep my sanity, right, God has
>
> promised me I was able to walk in it while I was going through my divorce yes I was, yes
>
> hurting, yes it was painful, but I stayed with God, because I knew at the end of it I was
>
> going to be okay, I wanted God to, um ease the pain for me, help me to get through it I
>
> made up my mind, you know what God, you been faithful to me, I'm gone trust you
>
> through this."

Sally Jane's statement is filled with expressions of belief and assuredness in relying on God.

> "The only way I could make it through was just to focus on God, and talk to Him and tell
>
> Him exactly what I was feeling, whether was mad or whether I was just hurt, or whether I
>
> was all of it together, I learned to rely on Him… the situation helped me to rely on Him
>
> more to always rely on Him, you know He, I just, God is always my first thought in the
>
> morning, He is always my last thought at night, before I go to bed, and He is with me all
>
> the way through the days and it made my relationship with Him much, I know it doesn't
>
> work that way for everybody, but it did me."

Spiritual belief is a crucial focus of a person's life (Krumrei, 2009; Pargament, 2011). In the statements above, the participants expressed a strong need for God in their lives. As such, the findings additionally showed that the participants primarily sought after their spiritual recovery relating to the 'Transcendental Domain' having a total need of God while in devastating pain. The participant described divorce's impact on this spiritual domain as intensifying its need for spiritual recovery.

Ruby describes her painful experience of being left alone after her divorce. The key phrase in her comment, "God's hand was on me", expressed her decision to live in belief and hopefulness.

> "I was left in a house all by myself, huge house, all by myself, with the pillow over my mouth at night so my neighbors could not hear me screaming, it was hard but, I never was put out, I moved out and that was God, God's hand was on me, the whole time that's why I know I never lost my faith with Him, because I knew what was going on was not of God, but I kept telling myself if He allowed it, even though its painful, I trust Him, but it hurt, it really hurt the pain was horrible, really horrible, but I had no body but God, and I I, just thank Him every day."

Sally Jane describes what she felt God's love was doing for her. She showed belief and confidence in Him by stating this key phrase 'I am not alone'.

> "God's love gives me serenity, now I'm not gone say that I don't have very strong emotions, I am human, I have human, but for me it's what's always got me through the hard times, it allows me to remind myself that I am not alone, God is there with me."

Thelma described her belief, hopefulness, and confidence in God even while in a state of feeling sad. A key phrase pulled out from her statement is "walk in that problem with God", which shows her reliability.

> "Although I was sad, it caused me to know that ah, I'm loved, that I have ah, so much to give, and I was able to walk in that problem with God and know that God was right there by my side."

The meta-analyses of 32 studies with approximately 15,000 people revealed that of the four relationships assessed using Spiritual Health And Life-Orientation Measure (SHALOM), relating with God is most important for spiritual well-being (Fisher, 2010). As shown directly above, the participants expressed a real need for God. Furthermore, the participants described how their beliefs prompted them to rely on God during their divorce.

Ruby described how she valued (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) God in helping her. She shared feelings of happiness, contentment and trust in this key phrase "I love God enough to trust Him to get me back on track".

> "I've got God's Word to help me through this, and you know, and if I get off track, I love God enough to trust Him to get me back on track, and um, my trust in Him, its deeper, its its, you know I, I thought I knew I trusted Him, but He has really shown me to, in many ways and mainly through His Word and His promises, that I can trust Him and that what, that's what important, that I can trust God, know life gonna, um, um, we gonna have trials, but He's overcome the world, so um I trust Him."

Blessing reflected on how God provided him with what he needed to get through the pain of divorce. A key phrase expressing his belief was "Lord, you gave me strength to get back on my feet".

> "I was looking at the standpoint, yes Lord, you gave me strength to get back on my feet, then you gave me strength when the divorce papers came to move on from her when she left, but you gave me strength, to make it through everything."

Barbara described how in the midst of her painful divorce, her trust in God grew deeper.

> "I began to trust Him for everything, divorce, and I remember, I remember telling God if this is the way it's going to be and if you are satisfied, help me to be satisfied, it's a trip that my divorce didn't take me out you know, I am grateful to God for that, that it didn't."

Sally Jane gave a picture of her belief that although she had feelings of sadness after her divorce, she also had assuredness about God being there.

> "It wasn't that I was not sad during my divorce, not that I didn't wonder how and what I
>
> was gone do, but at the same time I always knew God was there and God was going,
>
> He'd give me as many miracles as I needed until I got to where I was strong enough to do
>
> it on my own."

Thelma described the belief she had in God during her divorce. She experienced feelings of

assuredness and security from believing God was there for her. She emphasized her confidence

in this key phrase, 'God was there with me throughout my divorce'.

> "I know that God was there with me throughout my marriage, God was there with me
>
> throughout my divorce…I had to hold on to was God at His Word that He told me that
>
> He love me even if never leave me and that I held on to God, that who, that's who kept
>
> me sane, yeah I could do dirt but I knew that that was not of God, it helped me to realize
>
> that you know I can smile through my struggle because God got my back, and God had
>
> me, sane, He had me happy [laughs] I'm a praying mama, I pray all the time, in the car,
>
> in the bathroom, so it increased it because that way it helped me to know that I was not
>
> alone, that I could make it through this that God was right there by my side I'm seeing
>
> things that I knew would come true that I just continue to praise Him, continue to love
>
> myself continue to not be so negative, to be positive to know that God is with me, and
>
> God is bringing me through, that, I am so blessed, I am so blessed."

As it was critical to the participants that their relationship with God (Transcendental

Domain) increased their understanding of spirituality (Fisher, 2011, p. 18), this built an

eagerness to bond with Him to gain insight for restoration.

Rebecca made a statement of belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), describing her willingness to go

after God to have a better relationship from her understanding. A key phrase in her statement is,

"I am going to pursue God no matter what".

> "I've, I've kept, basically made up my mind that I'm going to pursue God no matter
>
> what, in the sense that you know it, it's not where I wanted to be, the relationship is at,
>
> but I realized that, um, in my mind I know He is there, but I have to do my part to kind of
>
> come to Him like, I have to take the risk, you know and I'm speaking that from the most
>
> vulnerable place, I have to take the risk, so I am working on really understanding from
>
> God's perspective that He trusted me with suffering, which is a hard thing, but He trusted
>
> Jesus with suffering"

The participants responded passionately to God's help during and after their divorce. The

following statements describe the participants' thoughts of getting out of the pain of divorce and

back to better feelings of spiritual well-being.

Blessing makes a statement of belief, expressing that God opened a way to comfort him during

his divorce.

> "You go through divorce and when God opens up the door which He says, 'He will open
>
> up a door that no man can shut' and when I realized that the door has been open I had to
>
> [smiling] give Him the glory."

Barbara's statement is of belief pictures the success God brought her through after her divorce.

> "By the grace of God I made it through. I made it through, but it sure took some Word
>
> and it took some alone time with God…I can just reflect back on the beauty of God, and
>
> see how He have been in my life, to help me through my divorce."

Sally Jane makes a belief statement displaying feelings of comfort in recognizing God as being her healer.

> "I am His daughter, He took care of me, and He was my healer, because I was hurt beyond belief, but He was still healing me."

Thelma's statement of belief displayed her gratefulness and assuredness because God brought her through struggles.

> "He was there He brough me through it, God is good, He is blessing me beyond measure, just showing me that everything that I've desired and struggled through has brough me through."

Ethel shared that while she was in pain, she believed God had helped her by sending people to her. She made a statement of hopefulness saying, "He pulled me out of it".

> "I would stay in pain, you know, but somehow or another God, you know, He just, I don't know how He did it, but He just pulled me out, He pulled me out of it, I never called on God's name, but He knew my mind I guess, yeah, I knew He knew my mind, and I thank God, He even sent people to help me."

One of the most significant outcomes of the participants' experience with divorce was their spiritual recovery in learning to rely on God. Fisher (2010) refers to this prospect as being in the 'Transcendental Domain' as 'faith towards, adoration, and worship' (Lifshitz et al., 2019, p. 985). Participants shared how God helped them by restoring their knowledge of relying on Him. Participants additionally shared how God rescued them from thoughts of suicide.

Sally Jane describe her being intrigued by the appearance of God's help. She was so comforted in knowing God was taking care of her, she spoke with certainty of being going to be okay.

> "He was gone help me find a way, it helped me to rely on Him more, to always rely on Him, it doesn't matter the situation and to share the joy with Him once you get that joy, its more than joyful now, cause I know I can rely on…He does carry you through and I don't know what the other people believe or think, that okay, this was God."

Barbara described how she believed God had saved her from committing suicide and reassured her that He was with her.

> "God said you don't have to end it all, I got you, see what I'm saying He just kept letting me know He was there, so even suicide thought was there, He let me know, He was there, 'I know what you're thinking, but I'm here.'"

Ethel expressed feelings of happiness in God relieving her of wanting to kill herself.

> "It was times that I wanted to kill myself, it was a time that I wanted to kill myself, ah, but I couldn't figure out how to do it, I was just seeing my ex-husband being mean to me, hurting me, why, why, why, why are you doing me this way so this divorce affected me a lot you know it, it really did, I just, I thank God you know, He got me over all of that wanting to die"

Fisher (2010) described the 'Transcendental Domain' as being an ultimate concern of the reality of God. In having a spiritual hunger for God's love, the participants professed their relationship with Him as coupling with the Highest loving being.

Ruby expressed feelings of astonishment and joy and a passionate belief in God. One of the key phrases in her statement is 'there is no one like God'.

> "I love God, I mean, there is no one like God no one like God, my craving came through God's love, His love, there is, nobody is going to love you like He is, no matter what they say, you can tell a person I love you all day long, but when you feel it, and you know, without a doubt I know God loves me, somebody else I might have to question, but I know He loves me, so, His love, when, when He loves you and you love Him there is no relationship like that, even my little grandson, as much as I love him, it is not like God's love, man will change up on you, and God will never do that."

Sally Jane describes her belief in God as being 'everything'. She conveyed how she saw God all around her at all times.

> "He is everywhere, He is in everything I look at everything I see, everything I taste, ah, He is everything I feel, He just covers me, and everything that's around me, completely, ah He is my safety, He is security, He is love and caring and every, even anger when I'm angry I know He is still there with me, but He is everything, He is everything."

Ethel described her vision of God as being 'everything'. She expressed that God has a 'heart of gold' and gives her all that she needs.

> "I think about God, God to me is, a very, very, very special person ah, the highest person, well I'm not going to say person cause He is a Spirit, but He is just high above everybody, a loving Father, ah, gives, He gives all, everything He has for us He's everything and that was His Son, so I look at God as just being, um high above everything, He is loving and kind and ah beautiful which I have never seen Him before,

but I believe He is beautiful, and, loving and just, He's got a heart of gold a heart that I

may, that I want to have, I am working towards having."

This theme exemplified how the participants in this study engage through their belief and

value of God towards their spiritual recovery after their divorce. The participants, throughout the

theme, acknowledged that they were experiencing the pain of their divorce's impact on their

'Transcendental Domain.' However, they each spoke of their assurance of God being with them.

Theme 4 proceeds in connection with themes 1 and 2 as well in moving towards the spiritual

recovery of the participants.

T4: Spiritual Reclamation (RQ1—Personal Domain)

Corry et al. (2015) found that spiritual beliefs provided a strong feeling of being

supported and protected rather than feelings of being alone and helpless. It also increased the

sense of self-awareness. In this theme pertaining to RQ1, divorces' impact on the "Personal

Domain," participants expressed how their spiritual confidence returned to them during their

post-divorce. A reminder to begin this theme, we touch base with theme 1 in recovering spiritual

confidence as a challengingly slow process.

Rebecca described spiritual recovery as a growing process that presents elements of fear and

uneasiness.

"Oh it, it has been challenging because I definitely acknowledge that I am a spirit being

living in a body I, I know I have a soul too, and that soul is mind, will, and emotions and

so ah, [breathing as if she is trying to relieve herself] it ah, it has been a, a growing

process, in acknowledging how this aspect of me comes together"

Fisher (2011) said, "The spirit is dynamic. It must be felt before it can be

conceptualized." (p. 20). In the 'Personal Domain,' the reality of one's spiritual need for

conceptualization is attained through the knowledge of meaning, purpose, and value (Fisher, 2010). In this study, the participants admitted it was necessary to have courage in applying self-honesty as the first step of reattaining meaning, purpose, and value.

Ruby expressed the necessary feeling of always being self-honest even while she was in the pain of divorce. A key phrase in her statement "the only way healing can take place' draws a picture of her devotion.

> "I am always honest with myself, yeah, I know how to say no too, when, ah, and I
> learned if it don't line up with the word of God, then it's not from Him, and for myself, I
> ah, I know like I said, I, I, I have gotten there, when, I tell myself that the days that I was
> hurting, I hurt, oh yes, I had to be honest with myself, yeah that is the only way healing
> can take place, you have got to address the problem, and you got to own it"

Rebecca described her self-honesty as being in a place needing restructuring. At this point, Rebecca expressed a feeling of not being in a safe place to be openly honest because she was still struggling with the turmoil that divorce had caused her.

> "So my self-honesty was really challenged, um you know, even more to really restructure
> it, my honesty level, it made me restructure them, you know, you know and um, include
> some very safe places, like a therapist, that a very safe place because they are only for
> you and then um, you know really, it restructured, basically that's it, it , made me
> restructure it"

The severe constraint of open self-honesty in the reclamation of spirituality was brought about by the participants only when in a place of feeling safe. Self-honesty is a way of connecting with yourself that brings about spiritual coping (Cory et al., 2015). At that point, the participant had shown that self-honesty was crucial to getting back on track. Blessing made a

statement of belief that he learned that in order to be spiritually renewed, "I had to step out of me completely." He shared:

"Being honest with myself after my divorce gave me the opportunity to finally realize that I had to step out of me completely and step on the foundation that was higher than me."

Ethel's statement conferred belief and hopefulness towards spiritual renewal.

> "So I said okay Ethel, you know, after my divorce, you know, you got to make a change, you got to do better you know you got to, and started to get back to learning my life had meaning"

> The findings additionally revealed how divorce brought about spiritual humbleness in the

participants in association with their "Personal Domain'. Divorce, as commented by the participants, prompted motivation for spiritual growth as a need. Blessing described the motivation he received as being a change in attitude about himself after his divorce. A key phrase in his statement, "I found out that I couldn't just sit there," acclaims the motivation from divorce:

> "God has seen me as being humble because my divorce, it, it helped me to understand, that, humbleness is the way, and by faith if I am humble then I can receive a just reward. So I found out that I couldn't just sit there, that I had to get up and maneuver and do the things God had me to do, my spiritual changes, mentally, has given me the opportunity to run this race with patients, because that was one thing that I was lacking was patients, I was lacking patients and patients being to be steadfast unmovable always abounding in the word of God."

Sally Jane remarked a key phrase, "divorce helped me to increase in spirituality on every level", where she saw her divorce providing a valuable lesson in several areas of her life.

> "Divorce helped me to increase, to increase spiritually on every level, and it was
>
> something that I really needed for much later in my life, and I am going to be real explicit
>
> on that that, it helped me to have more patients it helped me to have more sit back down
>
> and think about what's going on time, ah, I cry tears of joy, I cry tears of grief, I shed
>
> tears, but they're different tears then they were before then, it it's yes I'm sad because I
>
> don't have something or someone in my life that was really important, but did that do
>
> anything this made me stronger, and be more compassionate to other people."

Thelma made a belief statement of how she felt assured of her spiritual growth after her marriage was over. A key phrase she said was, "I knew that God was with me", which indicated her confidence.

> "After my marriage was over I knew that, I knew that God was with me because I was
>
> growing spiritually, and I was learning that you know what, I know God loves me and I
>
> love myself."

Although at the beginning of this theme, there was a reference to the participants' indication of how hard their spiritual recovery is, they acknowledged how critical their focus must be on self-identity. Fisher (2011) indicated, "Spirituality is concerned with a person's awareness of the existence and experience of inner feeling and belief" (p. 20). Barbara makes a value (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) statement expressing her happiness and vigor at knowing herself better.

> "Um honesty with myself, I can truly say I have gotten to know me better, gotten to know
>
> me a lot better, ah, being here by myself I get to spend a lot of time with me, I get to good
>
> reflect, ah, ah, I still look at myself."

Ethel made a belief statement placing value (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) on being able to see herself

clearer and understand why she was the way she was after her divorce.

> "This is making me to look more at myself and um, its doing a lot for me like telling me
>
> to be quiet, pray about things more than talk about it, ah and its teaching me how to be
>
> loving and ah kind ah people, forgiving people, you know when they make a mistake, I
>
> have to look at myself and see that I made mistakes and, and I want somebody to forgive
>
> me so I said I want to do the same towards them and it was like gradually God just started
>
> making me see why I was the way I was, ah, after I come out of the divorce I started
>
> reading more you know and so, I I then I started seeing myself, you know looking at, I
>
> started seeing myself better."

As stated in chapter two, Anand et al. (2015), in their study, conveyed that a person lives

from the deep conviction that spirituality holds the meaning of life in association with his or her

well-being. The participants disclosed that their self-value recognition was also enhanced once

they began to spiritually recover.

Rebecca described her self-value as being resilient and courageous in achieving 'hope, dreams

and desires'. She expressed this with a clear feeling of contentment.

> "I used to be a great advocate for people and not one for myself and so I am now more an
>
> advocate for myself [long grasping for air] um I believe that ah, I believe I've gain, I've
>
> took more ownership, you know, I think I took more ownership and like I said I've
>
> always been resilient at least I thought so, um, but, it has forced me to kind of um, be
>
> more courageous about some of the hopes and dreams and desires."

Ruby described her growth in self-value, showing her belief and assurance through the keywords

in her statement 'I know who I am in Christ'.

"Getting past the hurt, the pain, the deception, I had to really dig deep and tell myself I know who I am, in Christ, I know I didn't step outside."

Barbara made an emotional statement recognizing her self-value. This encouraged her belief that there was more to her than the pain divorce had placed her in.

"Ah I had to take a look at the woman of God in the mirror, to know that there was more to me than brokenness and hurt, and God began to show me…I am not going to let nobody continue to hurt me, cause I put me first in my life and that is what my divorce has helped me to do."

Sally Jane made a belief statement explaining that seeing her self-value by what God had her doing for others enlightened her life's purpose.

"God needed me to be there for somebody else to ah, understand Him and His will and who He really is in actuality, this allowed me to have purpose in my life."

Thelma described how she sees herself now in a way that brings about tremendous happiness in seeing her self-value.

"I see myself as hope, I see myself as love, I see myself as joy because God has placed that in my heart, removed all of that yuckiness that I was going through, divorce made me more focus on me, that I was important, and that I was lovable, regardless of what that man did…I am a vessel, I am a light, I I I just, I just love and cause I mean to wake up every morning and to receive His mercy…I try to be, I am positive light a loving kind person because of God, has given me a second chance to get it right."

Ethel made a belief statement, acknowledging gratitude and feelings of contentment in seeing her self-value, saying, "I feel, I'm happier".

"I'm not like that no more thank you Jesus, ah I just feel at ease, I feel I'm happier, I feel

content now I feel Free, I feel more loving, I love me, I didn't love me at first I love me,

effect to love others, I know God loves me and if nobody else says they love me I know

God loves me and that's enough."

Lifshitz et al. (2019) stated, "Spirituality tends to grow during later adulthood" (p. 984).

From a life course perspective, the trajectory of a person's life concurs with their response to the

experience (Elder et al., 2003). In this sense, the participants' response to the divorce experience

was solely based on their belief in God. Russo-Netzer (2017) observed that if or when someone

is involved in an internal battle; it is typical for him or her to struggle with rebuilding meaning

and reassessing his or her spirituality. The participants described how they saw themselves

making it back up and growing in self-confidence. Barbara explained that there was a definite

sense that the consciousness of her spirituality was growing better. She revealed:

"Made it better, my divorce just made it better, even though I would go to church and,

and, and cry, it would be in such a way that I just wanted to worship God, because I

trusted that He would bring me through, it wasn't no woo it's me, it wasn't no sad, I

wasn't crying because I was sad, ah, I was crying because I wanted, I, I, I know that my

worship…spiritually speaking, I believe that my walk with Christ is great, I believe, that

my faith in Him, I'm strong about where I'm at, I am more encouraged to do ah, what,

what, He has called me to do."

Rebecca described herself as being in a process of rediscovery of who she truly is and now

gaining a sense of validation. Her description encompassed phrases of contentment, value, joy,

and belief.

"This has helped to align my thoughts, of what is healthy and also confirm, to, to give myself some validation, um in the steps I'm taking I am rediscovering who I am at this point and acknowledging that she is okay, like I am definitely not the same person, ah, you can't through these things and be the same person, and I, and I'm giving myself permission not to be the same person, and embracing the new girl you know, and she okay…mentally I took a very strong hit and so um I re- as I'm learning who I am now I'm also building my esteem there as well, I now feel like, I feel like I don't have nothing to lose and to go for it, you know it just it it it, it just garnered more courage."

Blessing described the belief and comfort he is in now with this key phrase, "I'm in the right standing with God". He said:

"Well now, I realize that what I was crying over I don't have to cry over that no more, ah, like now I know that I'm in, you know, I'm in the right standing with God my, my peace came, was, when I knew that I could put back what God had placed for me."

Ruby describes divorce as being her motivation for believing in God in continuing to move forward.

"Divorce caused me to pursue God more because it didn't make me go backwards, I just wanted to keep going forward."

Sally Jane describes how divorce brought about belief and confidence in relying on herself.

"I learned, I learned more about how to do and what to do and to rely on myself, I am just a much stronger person, I don't expect things like I use to."

Thelma described the sense of need she gained after her divorce. Her description was a part of her belief which included feelings of hopefulness, comfort, joyfulness, and contentment.

"I had to know that everything is going to be better from here, and it gonna, I am gonna

increase my wealth, I am gonna increase ah my desire to spend time with God, I

increased my love for an myself, and to know that I deserved better and if that means just

me and my granddog than that's what it is gone be… the Lord was there to guide me to

let me know I didn't have to accept this and that I can be able to just live my life happy to

know that I am loved by Him I'm loved, I am loved by my kids, by my family, by my

granddog, it increased me to know that life goes on, and I can too, to know that I am

blessed, to know that I am, who I am happy just being by myself."

Ethel described herself at this point after her divorce in a sense of regaining joyfulness and

hopefulness.

"I, ah, so I view myself as being a whole, whole lot better than I was, A happier person, a

stronger person, a, I feel like I am a God fearing person."

The fact that the participants expressed a satisfactory experience of progressive spiritual

recovery after divorce is vital to their spiritual well-being. Russo-Netzer (2017) indicated that to

remain strong, spirituality must be painstakingly adjusted to every change in the life course. As

to this, the participants expressed feelings of being spiritually alive. Barbara describes her

spiritual growth of spiritual reassurance since her divorce with a strong belief (Saldaña, 2021, p.

167) statement reflecting her sense of self-worth, reassurance, and hopefulness. She stated:

"I have learned, since my divorce I have learned to put me first, I have learned to take

care of me, I don't let nobody disrespect me, mistreat me I just, I just won't allow that to

happen in my life anymore so I'm first in my life today…everything that happened after

my divorce for the good, for my good, my life is heading in a good direction, my life is

headed in some great direction, went last weekend got certified to be a pre-recovery

mental health specialist, my headed, my life since my divorce its always, it's been this way [she is pointing up] going straight up, I know what God done called me to do and the deal is still on to go do it, I am on the right track, that I am doing what He called me to do, now I'm good, I'm of a sound mind, if that makes any sense of a sound mind, and content, with where I am at, I'm very content, and I have a sound mind, I don't walk in the spirit of fear, but in love, power, and of a sound mind, I am content, I am good, spiritually physically and emotionally I'm good, especially spiritually I'm good, I have a sound mind, I don't worry like I use to, I don't stress out like I use to, stressing over nothing."

Blessing describes himself as being at a place of belief in knowing himself better spiritually:

"I think that now I am better, I'm on the level of knowing that the home that I am living here on earth, that He has prepared me, for the home that I am going to in heaven."

Ethel recognized that she still had some sadness to overcome, but she described herself as being at a place knowing that God is working on her. She revealed:

"Well I still have some, ah struggles, I still have somethings God is still working out in me, ah, I'm not there yet, I don't think I will ever be there, until I get to heaven, but I'm happier now, I am content now."

Ruby described herself as being at a better place and she showed a belief in knowing that she was still in the process of recovering spiritually.

"I'm better than I was, um, three years ago, better than I was nine years ago, its better, its better it, it, and um, it's like I said it's been a process, but it's so much better, than it was."

According to Lifshitz et al. (2019), when older adults develop their personal spirituality and self-growth, they will further their well-being. This theme was related to the participants' progress during their spiritual recovery. It revealed the emotions (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162) and value (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) each participant placed in their spiritual growth in meaning and purpose; (Personal Domain). Theme 5, in continuing to relate to the participants' spiritual recovery, shows how they each began to enrich their belief in God.

T5: Growing in Spirituality After Divorce (RQ1—Transcendental Domain)

White and Berghuis (2016) observed how participants' belief systems and religious practices have an influence that may impact their emotions. Religious practices are seen as church attendance, praying, and Bible studying (Mahoney et al., 2008) as a means of growing in relationship with God. Themes 1, 2, 3, and 4 illustrated that the participants' spiritual growth after experiencing a traumatic event was crucial to their well-being. As mentioned in chapter two, Wink and Dillon (2002) (as cited in Lifshitz et al., 2019) held that their cross-sectional study demonstrated that spirituality increased significantly from late-middle to older adulthood. This theme addressed RQ1 in recounting the participants' description of how the pain of divorce impacted their transcendental domain (Fisher, 2010) by increasing their pursuit of a better relationship with God. The participants reflected on their beliefs before their divorce as to how it was now in question. Blessing described his divorce as placing him in question of his original belief in God. He stood on his belief, but he stated that he needed to 'go back to where he started' with the purpose of relearning. He stated:

> "It, it had me going more, ah, as a child and going to church…I had to go through a ministry to teach me on how to just lay prostate, just lay, you know, get down, you know, get all the way down, go back to where you came from, go back to the mother dust,

berry, berry you face into the into the dust, because that is where you came, and I had to learn how to ah, lay, lay prostate in front of Him, I had to come to that place, I had to go back to where, where I started, I had to learn, you know even though my belief as a child was a Baptist, I had to learn how to step out of my belief, and I had to learn how to visit other beliefs, in order for me to learn a little bit more of what I need to do in time of trouble."

Sally Jane, in questioning her spirituality, felt she needed to "dig deeper" in every relationship brought about by her original belief in God. She described her divorce as being a prompt in not just accepting things as they look, but in seeking further knowledge of all social connections. She shared:

"Just that, it helps me to know that when I hear something I think I 100% understand it, I may not at all, that's just my making that conclusion, it helps me to dig deeper into every person I meet, every situation that I come up on, to say is there a different way to look at this, should I get outside the box I'm in right now, and look at this at a different direction to make sure I'm going the way that I need to go, is there a different way I can handle this, that will be better not just for me but for somebody else to."

Ethel described her original belief in God as being disappointing. In fact, she downheartedly stated, 'At first I felt like I couldn't depend on God'. At this point, years after her divorce, however, she remarked a key phrase showing herself as having recognized she has; "a purpose in life…I'm gone…be okay".

"Well at first I felt like, I couldn't depend on God, you know well I'm like where are you God, you know where are you at, but then, yeah, all this was coming back to me that I

could ah, I guess, I knew it was God, and He was just letting me know that I was, I had a

purpose in life, that I'm gone make and I'm gone you know be okay."

Spirituality, from a life-span and life course perspective, directly involves patterns of how

people change in thinking, feelings, and behavior during their life (Elder, 1985; Pargament,

2011). Blessing reflected on his divorce as being a trial that taught him spiritual lessons that

created life changes through what God said. He shared:

"Sometimes you have to go through the fire and sometimes you have to go through the

flood, but you come out, once you been through the trial, then you learn how to do what

God said"

Spirituality is the aspect of a person's existence that produces a sense of meaning,

morality, and relationships with (God the Spirit) and the world around them (Van Hook, 2016).

The participants acknowledge that the pain of their divorce drew them closer to God. Barbara

described how the pain of her divorce experience moved her closer to God. Her statement

showed her gladness about where she is spiritually today and that she had no worries.

"My divorce drew me closer to God, I didn't, I didn't, I didn't, not, I did not stray away

from God when I went through my divorce, it drew me closer to God, because, ah, of my

brokenness, in my marriage, I was broken, and all I wanted to do was to be healed, and I

made a decision God, it's just me and you, I'm staying with you, and that was my

spiritual walk with Him, it drew me closer to the Lord…I think my, my divorce has

drawn my relationship with Christ better, I feel better, ah I know I'm at peace, I know I'm

stronger in my walk, my divorce I can truly say drew me to God, I am not angry at God

because I'm divorced I love God, my my walk with Him is stronger, I know I'm better,

yeah, I didn't walk away from God, I drew closer to Him I just don't see where my

divorce did anything but drew me closer to God."

Blessing described his divorce as having weakened him and made him reach out to God for

strength to get back to Him. A key phrase he made is, "it gave me a better picture of how I

needed to get closer to Him (God)".

> "My being divorce gave me, it gave me a better, it gave me a better picture of how I
>
> needed to get closer to Him, instead of ah, I asked God every day, and I asked Him every
>
> time I prayed, Lord give me strength, to get closer to you, and the reason I asked Him to
>
> give me strength to get closer to Him, because I knew what the enemy was trying to do in
>
> my mind by the divorce, he was trying to ah, confuse my mind, but the more the enemy
>
> would come the more I said Lord give me strength, yeah, there was a great shift, it shifted
>
> me from where I was to Him."

Ethel described how after her divorce, she gained healing from her pain and closeness to God

through praying with hopefulness, by the key phrase "I need you to love on me like a Daddy".

> "I said God I need that I need that right now, I need you to love on me like a Daddy, then
>
> God just like, God took it out of my mind, you know, I just, He just, He just took hurt out
>
> of my mind, and I didn't have that no more, and He started just talking to me and just, I
>
> was reading the word a little more and, and ah, asking questions more, but I got closer to
>
> God, I got more in the Word, I started praying more, I started doing the things that a
>
> Christian, a true Christian is supposed to do."

Sally Jane described how her divorce brought her closer to God in assurance that she could

depend completely on Him:

> "The divorce brought me closer to God, because I had to rely solely on Him, ah, it made my walk with Him much closer, ah, because I knew He was there for me, and with me, I never doubted that I never doubted, it brought me closer to God cause I had to talk to Him more."

Ruby in describing her divorce, made a happy statement of content, that it strengthen her relationship with God:

> "My divorce did not affect my relationship with God at all because God was there in the beginning, so it didn't affect it, it made it stronger, I can, I can say that my relationship really made it stronger, I really became a (frog) 'Fully Relied On God', [laughter] fully, cause I didn't know what I was going to do, so divorce increased my alone time with God, that is what divorce did."

Thelma described the pain in which God brought her out of after her divorce as re-enforcing her need to get close to Him:

> "God brought me out of what I was feeling when the divorce happened, so I knew what I needed to do, and I just knew that no matter what, what it look like, at that time God had me, God was leading me, I had to get closer to God, I had to, to really walk the walk and talk the talk, closer."

One of the benefits of spirituality is when one perceives God as a friend; it produces a meaningful outcome (Corry, 2015). The participants explained how in the post-divorce years, their faith renewed stronger. Blessing's statement described divorce in the beginning appeared to be taking his life down, but he is doing well because his faith is stronger now. He reported:

"When divorce first happened I thought I was losing life, the reason I am winning was because my faith in Jesus Christ was stronger than, ah, stronger than when I first begin."

Ethel described her relationship with God in a joyful way as being cleansed by Him and brought out of the pain of divorce she was in:

 "He has brought me out of all of that pain, you know, He has cleaned me up, He has, He is still cleaning me up, and so, ah, all thing are much better now I mean, 100% better, ah I wouldn't go back to the life I had."

Ruby describes her strengthening in faith as being shown by God, that He still has a purpose for her even after she has lived in the pain of divorce:

"God uses me to bless people, He is letting me know that this divorce is not about me, it's about Him doing what He purposed me to do in life, and to help to be a blessing to others, and if can still be a blessing to other through my pain, then my living is not in vain."

Sally Jane described her divorce as teaching her that she doesn't need anyone to depend on but God. Her statement indicated that her learning to depend solely on God brought her joyfulness and reassurance. She expressed the key phrase, 'I found out how much stronger…how much you can grow…not just rely in a human way', that professed the importance of her relationship with God, 'Transcendental Domain' (Fisher, 2010). She revealed:

"I don't have to have anybody or anything else in my life because of my spirituality in God, ah because He is all in all, my ex-husband was not all in all and I never really ah, I was not conscious of thinking he should be my all in all, but I did because I depended on him a lot, now that I know that I don't have to have anybody or anything, but God to

depend on and it made me a lot stronger person because of it, my belief in God is so

much stronger, even though I have always thought it was stronger at the time that I was in

right then, I didn't think it could be any more stronger, and as I've grown I found how

much stronger and how much more you can grow and rely on, and not just rely on in a

human way, but to know and understand, that God is above everything else, that He can

handle everything else, He is in the midst of everything whether it's good, bad, or not, it's

made that much stronger it made me much stronger."

Thelma made a statement of belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), having the assurance that God helped

her faith to grow as to come out of the pain of divorce, and move on in life.

"He helped my faith to grow stronger, helped to me to ah, realized that I can, I can do bad

all by myself, this increased my faith, yeah it increased it because I ah, I needed more

things to draw me out, to keep me sane to keep me going."

Trusting God is paramount to recovery when spiritual people suffer mental or emotional

pain (Mousavi et al., 2014). In their acknowledgment of the renewal of faith, the participants

explained they had attained new knowledge of God, which also produced trust. Ethel described

her new knowledge of God as something that created the belief in being able to talk to Him:

"I didn't know that I could talk to God, you know, really talk to Him, you know like me

and you talking, I didn't know I could talk to Him like that, but I found out I could, so I

just started talking telling Him things, cause He already knows, I just started talking to

Him, this changed a lot, I mean back in the day, back in the, before the divorce…you

know I didn't trust God like I see Him now, I didn't see Him as my friend, as my savior,

as my Daddy."

Ruby described her new knowledge of God in a delightful way because she never knew she could depend on Him the way she does now:

> "Well, [breathing air with a sig] it just, it amazes me, to see how God works, cause I've seen Him in new ways, how He works and His ways totally are not our ways, I am leaning to depend more so."

Thelma described herself as having confidence now, that God was there with her all the while she was going through difficult times:

> "I know now, I know now, God was there, cause He was loving me, even though I was going through some tuff time I still, I know God was right there with me."

> Neurological studies have shown that praying and meditation permanently strengthen

neuro-functioning parts of the brain associated with lowering anxiety and depression, enhancing empathy, and improving cognition (Miller & Chavier, 2013). The value of prayer as part of a person's resolution is to bring interior change within him or herself (Kappadakunnel, 2016). Regarding this, participants, moving towards their spiritual recovery, described their time with God and how valuable it was to them. Sally Jane describes how divorce placed her in so many sad feelings to the point that her alone time with God was crucially needed to beg Him for help:

> "My alone time with God, it gave me a lot more alone time with God because I had to, the only way I could make it through was just to focus on God and talk to Him, I still had those time that I got off in my closet by myself for those long talks, but it was also a continual all day long thing, of going through ah, just short questions and short sentences, sent to God, ah my divorce increased my prayer time, and the effect of my prayer because

sometimes you know you are begging to understand, you are begging to know where you

are supposed to be going."

Thelma described how her divorce increased her reliance on God with this key phrase, "it

increased my time to ask for direction". She describes her praying as becoming more passionate

in overcoming the 'tunnel' she was in.

> "My divorce definitely increased my time spent with God, it increased my study time, ah,
>
> it increased my time to ask for direction, ah, so I had time that I was able to, you know,
>
> ah cry out to God, ah, plead to God, ah ask for direction, and um, dance my way out of it,
>
> pray my way out of it, I prayed more in-depth, more precise, I had to pray that things
>
> were going to go well you know, I saw the light in the tunnel, but I wanted to continue to
>
> praise and worship and to know that it was not in vain, to know that this too shall pass,
>
> and I knew that I was going to come out alright."

Barbara described her prayer time with God as having many expressions of anguish. However,

her belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) and commitment is seen in her statement as well:

> "I told God you, you, you told the woman with the issue of blood that her faith has made
>
> her whole, I don't want just to be healed, I want to be whole too, in my prayer time and I
>
> began to quote back to God what He had told me I said you promised me, but I was still
>
> with God, 'God what do you want me to do here', [crying], 'How do you want me to
>
> handle this, where, where do I go from here?' I told the Lord when I got divorce God
>
> keep my income I don't want to lose my house and I told the Lord I don't want to live
>
> with that anxiety, when I think I ain't doing something right, I'm like, God is this what
>
> you want me to do?"

Ethel described her prayer time with God as talking to Him about everything she experienced and asking questions. She indicated that some of her prayers would be full of grief and some would be full of hopefulness. But all of her prayers were filled with the desire to make a change. She stated:

> "It was no peace, no peace there, until I started getting back, you know, when I started getting back into the word and praying more, the peace came, I don't even know how I was able to start talking to God, but I did, um, kind of started talking to Him and I know one time I said God I hear everybody said that I can talk to you and I can…I would say God help me, I'm in a bad way, and I don't know how to stop doing the things I'm doing, I been asking God to give me a deeper love for people, give me understanding…lot of times I will say God show me, show me, you know, lot of things I don't understand I be like God why is this going on, why is this happening, so then I started to realized that I had to make a change…a quick change I had to get close to God, I had to start praying that was the only help, so I just cried out to God, I remember one night just crying out to God and I thought I was losing my mind, 'God I'm going crazy' you know, I said what's going on I want to be happy, why can't I be happy, that's what I wanted, I remember saying that to Him why can't I be happy."

Blessing describes his praying as a means of knowing God's purpose for his life:

> "I got more into the word of God, more into prayer, more into doing what I needed to do, in order for God to do what He needed to do in me."

Ruby said her prayer life was increased by her divorce. She described her praying as letting God know how much she realized she needed him after her divorce with this key phrase, "I can't do this without you". She said:

"I just prayed, through prayer, Lord, I can't do this without you, I need you, I know you

are there, my praying, my divorce increased my prayer life, [laughter] it totally increased

my prayer life, yes, yes I thought I had one, but no not until after my divorce."

The participants described how their post-divorce experience not only brought about

stronger praying, but also further developed their Bible-studying desire in reinforcing their belief

in God. Ruby described her desire to indulge the word of God deeper as something that came

about while she and her ex-husband were separated not divorced. However, she began studying

more so because she had just retired, not realizing how necessary it would become in helping her

through the pain of divorce she was about to experience. She stated:

"I went deeper in His Word, I wanted to go deeper in His Word, really just before the

divorce because when I retired from work after working 30 years, and I retired I had time

and it was like I wanted to go deeper in God's Word, but I didn't realize going deeper in

God's Word was gonna land me, the way I was going through divorce, going deeper in

His Word and justifying because you know I been able to just soak it in, when I find good

books to read, um, anything that is going to help me, grow spiritually, I look for."

Sally Jane described her Bible studying as being warranted by her divorce as a means of getting

answers to her problems. She noted that with time the understanding of the Bible goes deeper,

inspiring the growth in her knowledge of life:

"My divorce increased my Bible studying because, where do you get your answers, and

how do you understand them more, you read that Bible more, you ask God to help clarify

what that is saying to you now, in the present time because you can read a verse today

and it means one thing to you and you can read it a year from now and it may have a

whole different meaning for your life."

Thelma described her Bible studying as doing deep research on how being divorced had made her feel. Her painful experience of divorce prompted her to search for many scriptural answers, in the midst of her spiritual growth. She revealed:

"I started diving deep into the Bible, to ah research out ah the things I was feeling, I, I, I got more books, I journaled more, I ah, I talked to the Lord more, I said God brough me through because listening to ah, different scriptures, listening to different people digging deep in the Bible about divorce, digging deeper into the Bible about love, and ah it caused me to grow."

Pargament (2013) study detailed that people use their spirituality to; (a) cope with difficult periods of life, (b) develop strength, (c) associate spiritual experiences with feelings of hope, caring, and a sense of obligation, and (d) form a guiding way of life. All four of these detailed applications of spirituality are reflected throughout Sally Jane's description of how her relationship with God improved her spiritual depth of peace after the pain of her divorce. Sally Jane's description shows herself living in happiness (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162) by strengthening her belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) in God no matter what she faces.

"That peace has carried me through and it's, it's a depth of peace because, I'm not saying I wasn't always peaceful, I wasn't but it, after a my divorce I got a depth of peace that I didn't know was possible, ah and it carries me through to the different situations I meet now, that peace is still there inside me, ah, assure me that all I have to do is make sure my heart right, I don't always have to do the right thing even, because that's why God gave us Jesus and that's why the cross was there, I am susceptible to mistake and misunderstanding, but I have a peace knowing that God has already made away to forgive me, and set me back on the right place, ah it increased the depth of the peace within my soul, within my body, within the way that I live, the way that I walk now, ah, more than anything else so, you can say blessings

don't come, out of divorces, but that was a blessing I got out of that divorce I have lost so

much and yet I am so joyful and peaceful inside, so it's helped me to be able to hold onto that

peace it helps me have a different understanding and outlook on life and people and you

know, ah, and my peace is always there, even though there was some grief and that is

something I didn't understand before how the divorce helped me have that kind of peace, like

I said, I know it not supposed to be a blessing, in a divorce but that was a blessing that I

gained that peace and I hold on to it and it is a part of me no matter what my situation at the

time."

This theme presented the participants' experience of the growing process of their spiritual

renewal. Although this theme consists of the participants describing their experience of reuniting

with God, it does not expand beyond their efforts of spiritual regrowth. However, theme 5, after

connecting with themes 1, 2, 3, and 4, carries on to connect with themes 6, 7, 8, and 9 on the

process of the participants' complete experience of divorce's impacts on their spirituality. Theme

6 refers to the participants' experience of divorce's impact on their 'Communal Domain' (Fisher,

2010).

T6: Community Disturbance (RQ1—Communal Domain)

This theme addresses RQ1 regarding the 'Communal Domain". The participants describe

how they experienced frustration within their communities at the outset of their divorce. The age

of these participants was in Erikson's life-span seventh stage, Generativity vs. Stagnation

(Maree, 2021) when they divorced. Generativity is the positive side of this age group, but the

negative stagnation stage of development includes a failed connectedness to the community

(Knight, 2017). This can be associated with an activity-based behavioral change (APA, 2021)

brought about by divorce's impact on the communal domains of some participants. This portion

of the participants' data was analyzed from an emotional perspective as having resentment and

annoyance with their community. Robinson and Stell (2015) explained how psychosocial

hardship can obstruct a person who is 50 or older from moving on with life. Participants

described how their interrelations with community members became mistrusting, prompting a

disconnection. Rebecca described her interactions with people community-wise as being

resentful. Her statement indicates that she was experiencing judgmental conflicts that caused her

anxiety, prompting her to develop an attitude (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), of people belittling her.

> "The way I talk to people like, like, you don't get to rewrite people story you don't, you
>
> only know a fraction of it, and then all this judgement that comes so I was, I was shocked
>
> by the judgement, and so that made me um, that made me pull back, um, it made me,
>
> understand that everybody, don't desire to know your story, Oh yeah, I didn't want to be
>
> bothered, [laughter] I didn't, I, kinda because you don't want to be explaining, you know,
>
> cause you were, you were, a couple and then you're one and so the question is where is
>
> so-and-so, and what happened, and you know, and for my mental and emotional health,
>
> health I backed up yeah."

Ruby described the annoyance created by the people still seeing her as a pastor's wife, which

caused her to develop an attitude of seeing them as having "wagging tongues" she needed to get

past. She revealed:

> "Once you're, out there, you know everybody knows you as, okay well, pastor and his
>
> wife, I had to get pass wagging tongues, you know, I had to get pass thinking 'what are
>
> people going to say' I had to get pass that, and um, telling, you know, everybody yapping
>
> because you know you…I'm hearing, all these things, I was a little stand off-ish, a little

bet you know reserved, I did a lot of listening, instead of ah, talking and, and ah, I was really cautious of communicating with people."

Blessing commented from an attitude that not everyone is for you, even when they say they are:

"Everybody that speaks a word in your life, or everybody that says that they are for you, you will find out that they not, you will find out that they are trying to trick you, you will find out the only person that is for you is the one that created you."

Ethel described herself as not trusting or liking people after her divorce because she saw everyone as taking her ex-husband's side. She developed an attitude of seeing people as hurting her and being unfriendly, which caused her to be angry at people as well. She stated:

"Oh, I had ah, a problem with trusting people, I didn't trust people and ah, I didn't like people a lot, especially if you hurt me [laughing] I had a problem with forgiving, I felt like people were turning against me, I felt like they were taking his side, and some days I felt like I didn't have nobody, ah, there, I was, I was so angry and hurt, like I couldn't let go, I didn't know how to let go, ah, and I would take things out on my family, and you know friends, say things so they would hurt cause I was hurting, and I, you know, a lot of times ah when I was hurting, or I was sad or whatever, I kind of stopped wanting to be around people, not being around my family, a lot um, didn't go a lot of places, always made excuses about you know, I can't go off, I got something to do, when I really didn't have nothing to do after I got the divorce, I kinda didn't want to be around a lot of people, I use to hang with a group of people, I don't hang with a lot of people no more."

The 'Communal Domain' is an essential contribution to one's spiritual well-being because it is founded on building relationships with others (Fisher, 2011). Divorce's impact on

these participants' 'Communal Domain' could cause severe frustration, which may have harmed

their spiritual well-being in the sense of interpersonal relationships with others and their faith in

humanity (Fisher, 2010). Although the participants were not seen as being in Erikson's life-span

stage of stagnation as opposed to generativity, their description of their internal feelings at this

point resembled its perspective. Poole and Snarey (2011) specified that a person in stagnation

might feel disconnected and uninvolved with their community. This theme showed how the

participants got hurt by people in their community whom they believed to be in line with helping

them feel better after their divorce. As such, the pain of divorce triggered anger within the

community. Theme 7 will describe how the participants rejoined their communities and families

after spiritually growing in their relationship with God.

T7: Divorce Fostered a Passionate Interconnection with their Community

(RQ1—Communal Domain)

As shown in theme 6, the participants experienced a disturbance in their community

relations. Moving forward, theme 7 addresses RQ1 pertaining to divorce's impact on the

'Communal Domain' and shows how the participant regains connection with their community.

As mentioned in theme 6, the participants were not seen to be in the stagnation life-span.

However, at their age, the participants can be seen as living in Erikson's life-span stage of

generativity. As noted in chapter two, Knight (2017) held that the generativity stage of

development is linked to connectedness, purposeful living, and contribution to society. This

theme illustrates the participants' sense of need for purpose, looking upon their relationships with

friends and family to make changes regardless of how divorce affected their 'Communal

Domain' as shown in theme 6.

Ethel described her re-engagement with her friends as being guidance by God to bring in valuable expressions of forgiveness and love to people she was hurt by and she hurt in return:

> "God has even, had me to go back to people that I hurt in in past ah, my past life I went back to them and told them that I, that I ah, I didn't have to say that I am a Christian I just said I am sorry the way I treated you, and you know would you forgive me and we hugged, and now we friends, we are good friends now."

Lifshitz et al. (2019) indicated that community spirituality is found to be the second most dominant domain, and it also correlates with the highest depression (p. 989). However, Wink and Dillon (2003) (as cited in Lifshitz et al., 2019) contradicted those findings in association with late adulthood in correlation with their 'Communal Domain' as being described as having positive relations with others. In reestablishing their relationship with their community, the participants reflected on how they began to see God's love throughout the people.

Rebecca described her experience of reconnecting with her community as surrounding herself with people as a means necessary to see God:

> "I needed a person, you know, um, and I know that, you know Jesus is, was God in the flesh, but He is seated at the right hand of the Father so He is not a person, you know in the sense of, so I think I kind of felt like now I was open to Him becoming tangible through people."

Barbara description of her connection to people in her community was expressed in a happy loving way showing the value (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) she placed on them:

> "I was surrounded by my friends that loved me and prayed with me, prayed for me, that helped me to get through, and I believe that their strength and their trusting in God and

them believing God for me ah, ah I had two strong people praying for me I can truly say

it's been good been really, really good."

Sally Jane thoughtfully stated that her connection with her family and friends came about by her

questioning her responsibility to them after seeing how they were supporting her:

> "I looked at what my family and friends were doing for me more than I was what I was
>
> doing for them, I had to stop and ask myself about that, what could I do for them, what
>
> part do I play."

Thelma described how the passionate treatment of her family and friends stopped divorce from

affecting her self-worth:

> "I know that when I divorced, it hurt me a lot, but I am seven out of 10 children and I
>
> have a lot of friends, um, I just I have so much love around me to keep me going, ah, I
>
> kept in my place of knowing who I was"

Blessing described his community as being truly bonded in such a way that any time anyone

needed help, someone would be there for them:

> "I got around people who I knew that had my back, as well as I had their back, they could
>
> pray for me and I could pray for them, you know what I'm saying, and so I had to lay my
>
> head on someone's shoulder in order for me to understand, that what I was going through,
>
> I thought I was by myself, but I wasn't by myself because they were going through the
>
> same things, they would say we are praying for you, we are a community that stands
>
> close to each other, that if death comes, sickness comes, house fires whatever, everybody
>
> gets together and they do what they can for each other."

Ethel exhibited warmhearted feelings about the people around her. She showed a strong belief

(Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) that God had sent them to help her and talk to her, providing hopefulness

in overcoming her pain of divorce. She revealed:

"God didn't talk to me, but what He was doing was sending people to me, to talk to me,

to help me, to come out of that depression, God was sending me people, sending people

to me to talk to me, and witness to me and you know try to keep me on that straight like

so, um that's the way He was, I was communicated with, I guess I was communicating

with Him through my friends, and people that He sent to me, and seem like I was getting

stronger, and ah, He would put me around people that would help me, would talk to me,

that would pray with me, you know or let me know it's going to be alright, I didn't see

myself making it, but he would tell me that and then other people started telling me that,

and you gone be alright, you know, ah, that's, that's what happen to me that's, mostly

being in that Word, really the Word of God you know and around people that love the

Lord, ah, has, it's really helped me, it's really, really helped me."

Spirituality involves the many means that people incorporate the sacred into their lives,

including the belief, experiences, rituals, and the community they associate with (Mahoney et al.,

2008). The participants describe their commitment to their communities as part of their intent to

live. Ruby joyfully describes herself as being used by God in helping people in her community:

"I have seen, how God has worked, that helped me realized, what my purpose was

because people that I thought was doing so much better than me, they have still had to

call me for advice, so He is still using me as a vessel, to be a blessing to people."

Barbara recalled herself as being active in her community by helping people in need. Her expression appeared full of joy and passion for helping to feed homeless people and to help others to get back on their feet. She said:

> "Ah, it's my passion to always help people, know Jesus said "when I was hungry, did you feed me, when I was naked did you clothe me, and my passion is to help other people to become productive members of society, I was drawn more, as much as, not so much as the homeless community that I love dealing with, but I guess, you know what, I go to the park more, ah I takes walks more, I am able to spend time with my best friend more…it's always helping somebody else, doing something, feeding somebody, cooking for other folks, I don't know how to cook just for me, that me now."

Blessing in being community minded explained how his experience with divorce educated him in helping others who may go through divorce:

> "I can say it's been, ah, something that I can give somebody else who is going through, ah that, that homeless person, that, that person who is going through a divorce, that person that thinks he is about to go through divorce. It gives me the experience of praying with them and seeking God's face with them so they can see the blessings of the Lord."

Ethel described her connectedness to her community as associating with obeying God. Because of this she stated a key phrase, "I feel free, I'm glad, I like being around people". She said:

> "God asked us to do, you know, love your neighbor and, care about others, and, stay in His word, I'm happier, I feel free, I'm glad, I like being around people, I like helping people, I love more."

Sally Jane described herself as being open to help anyone who needed support in her community:

"After I divorced, it made me, it made me, a bigger force in my community because they could see that I was there, they understood and knew that I was there for whatever they needed so they didn't feel bad like I had, and I always tried to do and like, in my church or in different ah, community things, you know, I'm always here, there is not a time there is not a space, that you could not knot on my door, or call me and I will be there, I definitely want to have an impact on people and to help them get through what they are going through, I can give them hope so that can get through then change from sadness to joyful."

Thelma described herself as a person who is capable of helping people who are in very difficult positions in life:

"I see myself as a spiritual person by being loving to the tuffish hardest people that are difficult to love…doing really positive things in the community, I started working with people around the time that I had had the divorce, this has really warmed my heart, how I am able to, to help other people during the time that I was hurting."

All the participants explained that, at this point, they have a mindset of supporting people in their community and other areas of society. The participants each made statements recognizing the value of helping people. As a reminder shown in chapter two, Pargament and Ano (2004) (as cited in Mahoney et al., 2008, p. 105) stated, "People often become stronger personally and deepen their connections to other people as well as their faith life." Barbara describes her recognition of her faith and self-value by what she does in her community:

"I have learned that I am important to me because I am a giver and a helper, and I am always helping other people, I am always giving of myself."

Sally Jane described how her faith in God helped her to perceive the value of her community by

the help that they provided her:

> "God helped me to know I needed them to be there for me, to learn a lesson, to ah,
>
> understand Him and His will and who He really is in actuality."

Rebecca described her contentment in learning what being divorced has taught her to be able to

help others. She expressed happiness in seeing herself as a person who can walk in sympathy

with others having heart-felt problems:

> "Divorce has become a benefit at this point, I believe it's a benefit because I am able to
>
> understand it, I am able to empathize more with people who walk through these things…I
>
> love who I've become as far as the person of empathy in these situations cause walking
>
> through them I have realized that ah many, more than a few people don't really
>
> understand it, and so I'm, I'm really grateful, at this point that now, my live is bigger, my
>
> heart is bigger, and my understanding is wider, I like that."

As another means of becoming rooted within the community, the participants

acknowledge that going back to church became extremely necessary after divorce because of the

pain they were experiencing. Mahoney et al. (2008) held that church attendance is vital to

spiritual practice in connecting people of faith. Sally Jane explained that her church attendance

increased after her divorce because she needed emotional care.

> "Being divorce increased my going to church, ah, because, at that time I was able to go, I
>
> needed that and I needed that support, ah, and I went every church service, now I even
>
> went not to just to one denomination, but I also had a really good friend who was
>
> Catholic, and she would say 'well you can come to my church anytime, I could,

physically get down on my knees at an altar which I really needed then, ah, at this point

in my life."

Ruby described herself as being at a place of hopefulness in attending church after her divorce.

She made an expression of seeing herself as in total need of being around people of faith who

taught the Bible to gain a sense of overcoming the pain she experienced in her divorce. She

revealed:

"I could not stay out of church I had to sit up under an anointing someone that was

gonna, ah Bible base someone that was going to give me the Word, from the Bible God's

perspective, I had to hear it, I had to keep hearing that, keep going, and just listening and

just and and learning, and growing more, and more, in hearing the Word of God, even

more so and just, letting it really sink in, that I was going to be alright, and that He was

going to take care of me."

Fisher (2011) described the 'Communal Domain' as having an inspirational aspect routed

in deep interpersonal relations to reach the heart of humanity. The participant became

enthusiastic about representing God in their communities. Barbara described her desire towards

her community as helping them to know God and feeding them, as she mentioned earlier:

"He came to save those of us that was lost, and that's my, that's my passion, that's the

desire that I have, is to do what God does and that's what important, most important in

my life with Christ, to help people to be saved and get back up."

Ethel described herself as now being free from the pain that divorce caused her. These days she

really wants to help others by telling them about what the Lord did for her to inspire them. She

said:

"Well I'm free, I feel freer, I feel joy in my heart, ah, I'm always wanted to help people, tell people about the Lord, tell them what He done for me, I wanted to be around my friends that knew God…I wanted to be around people that knew the Lord that I could help"

Sally Jane made a very emotional statement depicting the value of representing God in her community as she reflected on what she experienced and how it changed her:

"Knowing what I have went through I am able to reached out to, to let them be able to see God at a different light than they were looking at Him at the first time and that does that for me to, but it was because God needed me to be there for somebody else, to farther their knowledge of Him and to help them through some really difficult times that they didn't know how they were going to get through, that's worth more than all the money in the bank."

The purpose of this theme was to explain how the participants regained their connection to each of their communities. While theme 6 speaks about how the participants were troubled in their communities, this theme displays how they overcame divorce's impact on their relationships with family and friends. As noted in the interviews, some recovered sooner than others. What should also be noted is that reconnecting in the communal domain is a slow process in spiritual recovery, as mentioned in theme 5. Theme 7, in connection with themes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, maintains the spiritual recovery process. Theme 8 discusses the participants' adoration of nature in the 'Environmental Domain.'

T8: Enjoyment of Nature (RQ1—Environmental Domain)

Lifshitz et al. (2019) stated that "The environmental domain has no association with a person's spiritual well-being at all" (p. 989). However, Lifshitz et al. additionally noted that their

study was in contrast to previous studies, showing the "elderly to be happier, less stressed, and less depressed when exposed to nature" (Lifshitz et al., 2019, p. 989). They explained that their study posted contradiction in previous studies, mainly because of the different contexts of the times during the investigations being decades apart. As noted in chapter two, Fisher (2010) shows the environmental domain as having aspects of care, nature, and stewardship that express itself as a sense of awe and wonder. This is a succinct theme; however, approaching RQ1 per the questioning of divorce's impact on the participants' environmental domain displays the passion and value (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) of the participants' connection to nature. Barbara describes her being in nature with this heartwarming key phrase, "it is an experience to breathe." She also referred back to how she once viewed nature as just the passing of her life, but now she professes to enjoy the creation because it captivates her:

> "Oh wow, I see more of nature, um ah tell you, I enjoy sitting out on the porch, I go for walks, get on my bicycle, and ride ah, it sort of exercise, but it is an experience to breathe, even though it is hot now, and I haven't been on it ah but, I love to walk in the park, I'm able to view God's creation in a different way, whereas I use to zoom by as if, as if life was passing me by, now I take time to smell the roses, I take time to see God in His infinite wisdom, even when I am going across the waters, but nature is beautiful, I hear the birds they wake me up, and on Saturday you know what, I noticed, on Saturday and Sunday they don't say nothing, they do not wake me up."

Ethel describes her being in nature in the sense of something that makes her feel good with this key phrase, "I love getting up in the morning hearing the birds." She stated:

> "As far as the trees and the birds I love getting up in the morning hearing the birds, whatever they be doing, singing, I love the sunshine coming in, I love to see the sun rise."

Sally Jane described herself as being a person who likes being outside, but she also noted that her divorce caused her to want to be in nature more. She explained the value of her being in nature is that it helps her to grasp her connection to God:

> "After my divorce I just went outside more, course I have always been that way, I have always loved nature I have always been connected to it, ah, I just love being out, I like to, as a matter of fact that all have done this last week playing in the dirt, I like to, ah, I don't wear gloves when I garden because I love to feel of the soil on my hands, I can feel God through every bit of it, I can, and it's like they talk to me, God talks to me through that sometimes, and I don't know how to explain that to you, that's just something that's me, but that got very much stronger."

Thelma described her being in nature as a means of gaining comfort with this key phrase, "take more walks to be able to clear my head". She stated:

> "I love being outside, at the time of my divorce it caused me to be outside more, to take more walks to be able to clear my head, to think things through."

Blessing describes himself as someone who wakes up in the morning looking at nature and is filled with gratitude:

> "God created the world, and because He created the world when I wake up in the morning time and I hear the birds chirping, and I look outside and I look through the window and see the sun shining, that means thank you God."

The life-span age group of 50 and above have mental constructs directly impacted by their environment and sense of self (Damoiseaux, 2017). They saw the environment around the participants as bringing a great sense of self and providing a sense of peace.

Barbara describes herself as someone who enjoys life in acknowledgment of the value (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) of her activities in nature. She also described herself with a passionate expression as someone who sees nature through a spiritual lens:

> "I say God, look at God, as far as I could see the waters, and I say God you made all of this water for us to enjoy, I love water, I love, I love, I am enjoying life, I'm enjoying seeing God, I went to ah, look at the ducks down in Alabama, I took a lot of pictures, ah, I still got those pictures of all those ducks, and all the fish that was in the water, great, great big oh goldfish, just great big goldfish, I'm like oh my God I like horseback riding, so much, I also started going to the zoo since I was divorced, I enjoy nature every morning, yes, visually, in the spirit ream every morning, watch this, I know to get up because the birds get me up, I hear them, ah, I hear them chirping, I hear them chirping every morning, that's, that's how I get up, it's like they are calling my name, like time to get up, and I remember one time I was sitting outside, and a bird was saying pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty, I said I hear you talking to me, so I'm more aware, I even get to experience the green trees that are the other side of my fence."

Rebecca describes her being able to view the ocean as placing her in a feeling of internal peace, empowering her to "talk with God". She revealed:

> "Oh I love water, I love water and so water um at one point I was able to go to Florida and stay with a friend of mine um, and she lived 20 minutes from the beach, and so I made, I made several trips to the beach, and it was the place that I felt the most peace to talk with God and so nature really has contributed to me."

This theme focused on RQ1 on divorce's impact on the participants 'Environmental Domain.' As stated in chapter two, the 'Environmental Domain' associates' care of nature with

the physical and biological world (Fisher, 2011). The participants, throughout the theme, express their belief in how their environment provided them with a mindfulness of spirituality, consisting of concepts of belief, peace, and wonderment. Theme 9 connects to the insight of the analysis pertained in each of the previous themes.

Theme 9: Standing Back up on Their Spiritual Feet (RQ1—The Four Spiritual Domains)

As seen in all the previous themes, divorce places the participants in a stage of pain that musters a craving for spiritual recovery. As a reminder, Russo-Netzer, (2017) held that when an individual is engaged in an internal battle, it is common for him or her to seek to rebuild meaning, get questions answered, and reassess his or her spirituality. As such, in this final theme addressing research question one, the discussion surmises all spiritual domains as a part of the participants' spiritual recovery after the pain of divorce.

In this theme:

- The 'Personal Domain' is focused upon because, according to Lifshitz et al., (2019), it has the highest association with spiritual well-being.

- The 'Transcendent Domain and Communal Domain' are focused upon because, according to Anand et al., (2015), relationships with family, friends, God, and even with ourselves are crucial to everyone's spiritual well-being, especially to people in their later life-span years.

- The 'Environmental Domain' because, according to Fisher (2010), the passion of nature inspires peace, awe, and wonder.

As such, although this theme addresses RQ1, it reflects the essence of all the previous themes in demonstrating the participant's mighty fight in their spiritual recovery after divorce has impacted each domain. In connection with all other themes, theme 9 addresses how the

participants stood back up on their spiritual feet regardless of the pain and somewhat internal changes they may have experienced in the first year after their divorce. The participants sought spiritual recovery by first reflecting on their relationship with God. Rebecca described her past experience with God as being intellectually seen through her belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167) and hopefulness:

> "Intellectually because that is one of the things of being having a history with God, like I intellectually knew that girl you are not finish so you can go anywhere, you gone have to get up from here and start living because God has already given me a word to thrive, so I knew to hold onto what He said to me."

Barbara described her past experience with God with a belief key phrase, 'God delivered me', which showed her reliance:

> "He had brought me through that 12-year addiction and, and, because I had trusted Him to bring me out of that, see I wasn't at home when I come out, I was locked up in jail, and when God delivered me in jail and I began to trust Him while I was locked up I began to trust Him for everything."

Sally Jane described her past experience with God using a statement of reassurance in His support of her:

> "God has proved to me through every situation no matter how dire I thought it was, or how unfair I thought it might be, He hadn't gone anywhere, He was still right there, I think because my faith has always been a simple point of my life."

Thelma described her past experience with God by reflecting back on Him bringing her out of her struggles:

"Because I have been through so much, I have been through some hard times I've, I've, I have been through it, and I don't look like what I have been through and I thank God because God has blessed me to be a blessing, and to know that my struggles that He brough me out."

Slobodchikov and Isa'ev (2015) research revealed that the theological paradigm utilizes the Christian belief that man grows into a whole person through his relationship with God. The participants at this point began to describe their belief in being children of God.

Rebecca explains intellectually her thoughts of nearness to God in being His daughter:

"He is near to me but, me as a woman um, and me as a daughter, I'm not really sure, like I know intellectually that I am a daughter."

Barbara describes her relationship with God as her Father as improving since her divorce:

"I am still His daughter, He still loves me, God talks to me often and much, even when I don't think He is, since my divorce, my relationship has gotten better."

Sally Jane makes a statement of belief showing her happiness (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162), as to being a child of God. She made a key phrase, "I believe with all my heart and soul, that I am His daughter" that showed her reassurance.

"I am His daughter, and He help me get a place where I could make a living again because at the time I had had ah, serious surgery, and was not able to work, therefore there was no income and there was still bills, but He always somehow, somebody showed up with money or food or help of some kind I, He took care of me I was His daughter, I, I

believe with all of my heart and all of my soul, that I am His daughter and that the actions

the words, ah everything I do and say, reflex upon Him."

Thelma described her confidence in making it through her experience of divorce by her

reassurance of being a child of God:

"I just knew that, hey, it's going to be alright, and I knew that I was going to make it, I

wasn't going to allow myself to fall down and be discussed and busted because I was a

child of God and I knew God had me."

Blessing describes his confidence in being a child of God with a statement explaining the value

he has of God caring for him:

"The most important is knowing that I have a Father who cares, I just hey, God, you

know what ha, ha, I'm your son, I'm your child, we depend on our, ah, paternal father,

and ask him questions, but we forget that we have to go to our spiritual Father more."

Ruby described herself as being a child of God regardless of the dreadful things she experienced.

She made a key phrase, "He probably saw my tears and said I have got to help my child" that

showed her assurance of receiving fatherly help.

"I think He probably saw my tears and said I have got to help my child [laughing] I, ah,

cause they were really, it was really, really tuff, I'm still His child, and He loves me, no

matter what."

Sims-Smith (1999) (as cited in Gibson, 2008) said, "Part of what happens in silence is

that your energy gets restored. Your heart gets calmed and your spirit gets lifted and the worrying

mind that we all have, in silence, has a chance to take a rest." Regarding this statement, the

participants described the progress of their internal peace, showing confidence in their personal

growth in spiritual well-being. Barbara describes how she has spiritually grown in peace by

spending more alone time with God.

> "My alone time with God has been better, there has been days when I really poured out
>
> and cried to God and you know ah, again I needed God to give me some peace, I'm not
>
> living in brokenness anymore."

Blessing described his growth as being stable, knowing he was back at a place spiritually, where

he could follow God:

> "The Lord just, ah, He had showed me what I needed to do, and that if I didn't do it that I
>
> would be on the losing end, He had stabled me with the peace and the stability of
>
> knowing that the only thing that I had to do was follow Him."

Knight (2017) noted Erikson as affirming that the positive integrity stage of development

is associated with acceptance, a sense of wholeness, a lack of regret, a feeling of peace, a sense

of success, and feelings of wisdom. As the participants expounded that their spiritual growth was

progressing strongly in building a sense of wholeness, they also acknowledged that they had a

strong renewal of standing on belief in God. Sally Jane describes her belief (Saldaña, 2021, p.

167), in God as having been made strong because no matter what bad experience she has been

through, she has always seen Him as helping her. She also expresses being in comfort by living

in nature 'Environmental Domain'. She made a key phrase, "God is there" that expressed her

frame of thought about her relationship with God. She revealed:

> "I always kind of fit into nature and that, natural life, that, that it gives me, me and it just
>
> reenforces that peace inside me, I love being outside, even though physically you may not

can see God, God is there and He, He gives us and sometime we don't pick up on, we

don't, I don't always read it right, I don't always know or say I know this is God, God ah

and yet I know when I look back at it, it was God that had it, but I always, always, known

He was in the deepest part of me, and I have always known that He's is going to pick me

up, I know God's got me, I don't have to know how or when or where or whatever I

know it, cause He has proved it to me and I have an understanding and a peace now that

God is going to handle it, ah, I can still have all the emotions that a human has, but at the

end of the day, I am okay with it, I need to hopefully, let His love like I said shine

through me, um I believe that's His purpose for me I mean."

Thelma provided examples of her belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), in God, with passionate

expressions of hopefulness, contentment, and assurance. She made a key phrase, "I mean, I can't

live without Him" that exemplifies her dependency on God "Transcendent Domain" and how she

has gotten stronger in the "Personal Domain" and "Communal Domain". She said:

"It's a relationship it is ah, a being that is higher than me, that's beyond me, that can

guide me, that keeps me in control, that reminds me of all that He said He do and can do

and that is doing to know that everything is going to be alright, to know that God is with

me ah, provides for me, that He is my friend, that He is there for me He is my all and all I

mean, can't live without Him It's not easy, it can be difficult, but having that keeps me

going keeps me smiling, puts dance in my feet, keeps me knowing that I have hope that I

am not just out there dangling in the wind, I had God on my side, I was able to look at the

picture and realize that hey I'm trying to hold this together myself and I couldn't do that

physically, I needed God to guide me through in my direction to step out, my faith of just

going forward and sharing the love that I have in my heart and the kindness and not you

know, feeling like 'oh I am doing this because I need this from you' or whatever, I just know that hey I am blessed, and I am blessed to be a blessing, and I don't have a problem with being a blessing."

Ruby emphasized that her belief is that God is the only one who can raise a person up:

"My spirituality to me, um, it is an anointing, it is on your life that only God can um, elevate you, and it has to come from God and a strong faith in Him and trust that He is going to get you through whatever life throws at you I've learned that um, I have to keep my mind focused on the prize, and we know what the prize is, God, realizing, as I talk I am realizing whew, nobody but God, nobody, but God."

Blessing described his belief in God as being confident that He will answer all that a person needs:

"See rest means that He is going to give you the answer that you need before, before and after something happens, I knew, you know, the only thing I had to do was hold on to His hand, and He will do the deliverance, see I had to understand that I can talk to Him just like I am talking to you, so in order for me to go to Him, like that, I had to first give Him, you know give Him the glory, it was all about Him, it wasn't about me, it was about Him, this gave me more, more ways of knowing, that the earth is the Lord's and its fullness."

Ethel described her belief in God as realizing that through all the pain she was in, He kept her:

"I thank God that He, you know, I thank God He kept me, He kept me, He is keeping me, cause I was in an awful way I didn't even like me, I was in so much pain, I did not like me."

Barbara described how her belief in God has confirmed His faithfulness to her with this key

phrase, 'I never had to ask for anything'. She expresses her desire to help people "Communal

Domain" as being a part of her life's passion:

> "Wow [long pause] helping others, doing what God has called me to do [she began to cry
>
> a little] it's my passion, I stayed with God, I did, I did, because I didn't wanna I didn't
>
> wanna my, my um experience while I was going through these changes in trusting God,
>
> and thought, even though I didn't waiver, I did ask God was I doing the right thing, I
>
> never had to question God 'where are you now' I never had to ask for anything, before I
>
> even ask Him He's already supplied it, He knows what I need and the only thing I said is
>
> God, has not forgot, the plans that He had for me, before I got off track, God has shown
>
> me over and over and over in the last year and a half He is still faithful to me, and I don't
>
> take it lightly."

Theme 9, in connection with all other RQ1 themes, summarized the possible impact

divorce had on the participants' spirituality. However, the participants progressed in their

spiritual recovery from divorce's impact on their spiritual well-being during their first year. It

emphasized that the participants held onto their past experiences with God in helping them

regain their confidence in Him. The theme showed how the participants saw themselves

spiritually growing in helping others and in finding peace in nature. As shown in all the previous

themes, the participants strongly believe in God.

Results of the Guiding Question

In addition to a person's spiritual well-being, the study focuses on the possibility of

intraindividual change after a person's divorce, which is noted as an activity-based change

(Understanding Developmental Psychology, 2021). Research question two deals with the

possibility of the participants experiencing an internal change caused by their divorce in the later

life span. Ram et al. (2011) stated that an intraindividual change might shift the trajectory and

plasticity of a person's life. Table 4 aligns RQ2 with the theme labels and their focus.

Table 4

Themes Addressing the Guiding Research Question

Theme + RQ	Theme	Focus
Theme 1 RQ2	Loss of Spiritual Peace	Intraindividual
Theme 2 RQ2	Divorce Elicited Internal Battles	Intraindividual

Note. RQ2 themes present an illumination of the participants description of their intraindividual
experience.

RQ2: How do participants aged 50 and older, who were married for three years or more describe

the impact of divorce on their patterns of change experienced intraindividually that

occurred during the first-year post-divorce?

T1: Loss of Spiritual Peace (RQ2—Intraindividual Change)

Theme 1 addresses RQ2 from the participants possibly experiencing an intraindividual

change from the impact of divorce. The interest of RQ2 is, "Did the participants' experience with

divorce cause an intraindividual change of the trajectory of their personality and cognitive

plasticity (Ram et al., 2011) as an activity-based change (APA, 2021)?" As mentioned in chapter

two, an intraindividual change, as shown by Ram et al. (2011), is seen as "a developmental

phenomenon that manifests as long-term change" (p. 366). While each participant is analyzed as

to the phenomenon of divorce's impact on their spiritual well-being, the question of any

intraindividual changes that may have occurred must also be investigated in association with

each participant's spiritual well-being. As such, the participants described how they viewed their

mentality and internal feelings after their divorce. Barbara described herself as experiencing depression and distress after her marriage. Her statement implies that her internal peace was disturbed for nearly a year. She stated:

> "When God delivered me from drugs, He delivered me from brokenness, but then in my marriage I began to be broken all over again, oh my I, I didn't have any peace inside for maybe six months to a year, I ah, I started be anxious, my marriage, my divorce, ah was very painful, anxiety, during my, during the end of my marriage, got on medication, it was real, real bad, so that affect was on me oh, I had so many bad days. It wasn't till nearly a year after my divorce that I started getting my peace back, in fact it happened so suddenly I didn't realize I was walking in peace."

Rebecca described herself as losing good feelings about who she was after her divorce. She emphasized emotions of brokenness internally:

> "You know recently I had to really um, really, really, ah pay a lot of attention to my soul because that was the place where brokenness had happened, I didn't really know that this divorce had affected me so, affected every area I had no real good thoughts about myself, like I could speak you know because I knew to speak right, but I didn't, I didn't really have a good belief about myself."

Blessing described himself as not having any peace in his own home. He made a very key phrase stating, 'I felt like a buried camel the people thought the camel had died', that showed his internal feelings. He revealed:

> "It gave me the opportunity to not be like that ah, not be like that camel that they buried, cause I felt like a buried camel the people thought the camel had died, so I felt like I

wasn't having any peace in my home, so let me go to the first place that I know I'm safe,

God's house, so that's what I use to do."

Ethel described herself as not liking who she was after her divorce, because her behavior showed her internal agitation. Her statement was filled with sorrowful expressions of downheartedness, and not having any feelings of peace inside. She stated a key phrase, 'I kept myself in a dark place', showing the internal pain she was experiencing. She said:

"Well, it wasn't no peace at first, it wasn't no peace after I divorced, it, it just wasn't no peace cause, I don't know if it was because of me, or because of him, but long as I kept myself in that dark place ah kept talking about the problem ah focusing on what happened you know I would stay there I would stay in, ah, bad way, I didn't like me cause, because I had so much pain and anger in me, I didn't even like me, so it was like I had to learn how to like me again, you know, I was about, I don't want to be alone, I don't want to be by myself, and just crying a lot, in that room and ah, didn't, didn't even have the strength, to get out of the bed, couldn't even get on the phone and call anybody, and ask for help, it, I couldn't even do that, I didn't want to take a bath, just lying there, in that dark room, and all I wanted, it's like my mind went somewhere else, it's like I wasn't even in my right mind."

As stated in chapter two, Robinson and Stell (2015) shared that spirituality in reaction to divorce may create a sense of internal struggle for self and identity. Additionally, it noted that divorce in the later life-span has the potential of drawing upon substantial phases of loss in the feelings of older adults (Putnam, 2011). As to this, the participants discussed their perception of how the internal pain of divorce lowered their sense of life's meaning. Ruby describes herself at being at a place where she could not see life any longer. She made a statement of sadness

(Saldaña, 2021, p.162), voicing her hopelessness toward going on in life. A key phrase she stated

was, "I just knew I wasn't gone make it, I felt like it was over". She revealed:

> "At the time of the divorce, my life meaning was really low, yeah I was at a low point
>
> then, and it was, horrible pain, horrible, um, and you know, I didn't think that feeling
>
> would ever go away, but it has, it has lifted, cause it was bad like I said I, I just knew I
>
> wasn't gone make it, I felt like it was over…it was really hard for me to address it, I was
>
> in such an emotional state."

Ethel described herself as having an awful sense of aloneness, causing her to internally picture

her life as having no meaning:

> "I didn't see my life with no meaning after divorce, I didn't see any meaning, ah, ah, a lot
>
> of things changed, I was lonely and by myself, ah I didn't have nobody, I was just in a
>
> sad way, I felt I was lost and nobody cared"

Rebecca explained that her divorce caused her to experience the loss of her life meaning in a way

that placed her in a motion of mental circling, which eventually made her feel her purpose was

now wavering. She said:

> "I felt like after my divorce my life didn't have much meaning because I thought that my
>
> husband and I were connected in purpose, I said to God recently, I said Lord I feel like
>
> I'm a dog chasing my tail, I feel like I am just spinning around in circles cause really this
>
> picture of how the situation hit me, I felt like, I had, I had been disqualified from purpose,
>
> yeah, I did, you know like, oh yeah, you know, you are trying to talk about relationships
>
> with other people, but you couldn't keep your own relationship together, felt like I was

disqualified, you know on so on so many levels, that took some work, some mind work, and emotional work to kind of even get through this, but I felt disqualified."

Mahoney et al. (2008) stated that "Traumatic events profoundly disrupt the ability of people to understand, predict, or control their life" (p. 108). In this perception, the participants expressed a lack of self-confidence and displayed their thoughts of not desiring to live after their divorce, brought on by internal feelings of hopelessness.

Ruby shared how fearful she was of not getting over her pain:

"My emotions were really high, they were ah, just, ah I didn't think I was gone ever get to the place where I wasn't just hurting, I mean literally, I didn't think I would ever get back, I knew I had God, there was part of me honestly, but I wasn't sure if I was going to live through my divorce, I really wasn't, I had to press through the pain and pray through the tears, just think about God and how much He loves me, and the fact that, He knows everything."

Ethel describes this as being a point in her life where her thoughts were of emptiness and not having any self-value. She made a key phrase, "really laying there wanting to die" that signified her downheartedness at the time. She revealed:

"I had thoughts going through my mind that I wasn't gone be nothing, I wasn't gone have nothing, I didn't have nobody, I was in that dark room with nobody to talk to and ah, just dark and lonely, really laying there wanting to die, the thing about I didn't want to live no more."

Rebecca explained that her feelings were of not wanting to continue living in the pain she was experiencing. She made a key phrase, "I didn't feel like I had a reason to go on" that showed

how sadness (Saldaña, 2021, p. 162), was now the picture divorce had placed over her life. She said:

> "I don't, ah, there is several times, I didn't want to live, not that I would commit suicide, but that living like I didn't, I didn't feel like I had a reason to go on, I just didn't want to go on there was no reason for life, I felt like it wouldn't matter to anyone if I would go"

Fox et al. (2016) held that meditation in the form of centering prayers on the issue decreased anxiety and stress and increased faith development and mindfulness. The participants, however, acknowledged that the internal pain caused by their divorce also made praying stressful. Blessing described himself as being in agony while trying to pray about his troubles. He made a key phrase of misery "I was praying and didn't even know where I was" that indicated the nerve-wracking moments he tried to express his belief (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), in the connection he had with God "Transcendental Domain". He said:

> "It was emotionally, it was emotional, it became to the standpoint where I was praying and didn't even know where I was, I prayed about the same way for a long time, I had to get up off my thoughts, and try to get to a place where tears were not coming out of my eyes, I even feel like I got blind one-time"

Rebecca described herself as having lost her desire to pray as much as she did before her divorce and she expressed that her praying manner has changed to now just chatting with God. She said:

> "Um, my praying has, it has become um, less consistent, you know like it's been made more conversational than it has been, you know and spiritic, so yeah my divorce has affected its consistency."

This theme addressed the possibility of the participant experiencing an intraindividual change (Ram et al., 2011) by the data presented in it showing that they lost their spiritual peace for a while. This loss of spiritual peace may alter a person's life course and personality (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009). While the participants described themselves as having lost their spiritual peace in this theme, their discussions were not conclusively analyzed, showing them as developing an intraindividual change. As such, Ram et al. (2011) study also showed a lesser effect of internal battle he called an intraindividual variability, which may have been what each participant experienced. Ram et al. defined intraindividual variability as a "short term change that is constructed more or less reversible" (p. 363).

T2: Divorce Elicited Internal Battles (RQ2—Intraindividual Change)

Theme 2 addressed RQ2 from how the participants' divorces triggered internal battles. However, regarding RQ2, it demonstrates that the participants' internal battles did not result in an intraindividual change, an enduring change that is more or less constructed in life development (Ram et al., 2011). Instead, theme 2 showed that the participants' internal battle experience was progressively overcome post-divorce. Concealed pain that divorced participants experienced may produce internal struggles requiring massive individual resilience to make it on in life (Putnam, 2011). Rebecca describes her sad feeling of being internally lost by stating a key phrase of "I still don't necessarily know where I am". She said:

> "I didn't necessarily and I still don't necessarily know where I am, like, the effects are more traumatic than I ever knew they were."

Ethel described her emotions using a sad, downhearted key phrase, 'going around in a circle', that depicted her internal feelings:

"I was just in ah, like ah, I was in like just a sad way, it was like I, I felt like some days I

was just lost in a field by myself, just going around in a circle, I didn't know where I was

going to end up, I was just you know I was just lost."

When a person experiences a life stage of despair, it can bring about serious harm to their

spiritual well-being (Poole & Snarey, 2011). In light of this, Rebecca appears to have a downcast

sad feeling in which she describes her internal change as of being spiritual wrecked and lost

inside:

"Really the picture of how the situation hit me and the divorce it was like you know

being hit, hit with a semi-truck and the car spinning, out of control right and so, and you

know when the car stopped spinning you don't know what side of the road you are on,

you don't know where you are you don't, and so yeah, it felt ah, very disconnected like I

didn't necessarily know where I was."

Psychological pain and anger are related to suicidal tendencies (Uğur & Polat, 2021).

Sinclair and Leach (2017) found in their study that two common risk factors of suicide are living

alone and being unmarried. Sinclair and Leach additionally stated that a strong religious faith

protects someone from committing suicide. Barbara described her downhearted feelings of

suicide with a key phrase "if I can just end it all". She stated:

"Ah, there were thoughts of suicide, maybe a few times because I didn't want to keep

feeling what I was feeling, and I'm like if I can just end it all, you know."

Ethel described the anger she felt while developing an attitude (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), at people

she believed were trying to hurt her:

"I would say I forgive you, I really didn't in my heart, I really didn't forgive you, ah, I

was just so angry, hurt, and mad, you know all the time and when people would hurt me

being angry seemed like it was building just like a building block, seemed like it was

getting worse and worse."

When responding to questions about intraindividual change the participants expressed

viewpoints of living in darkness and the crying that internal pain causes. Ethel in an internal

grieving way described the loss of her marriage by staying in a dark place:

"I stayed in that dark room, I think my divorce affected me that way, cause I stayed in

that dark room for many months…ah, I was in that dark room with nobody to talk to and

ah, just dark and lonely."

Ruby described the biggest affect her divorce had was her pain inside that still brought her to

crying. Her tone of voice while she was answering the question showed downheartedness as

well. She revealed:

"The biggest effect this has had on me is my tears, my tears, and um you know, I might

cry tomorrow, but I'm not crying today and I seen them slowly not as heavy as they use

to be, I I am a highly emotional person, I am a crier definitely but, thinking about things

you know particular crying, but I guess the main thing to even with the tears because with

the tears there is feelings of pain ah, ah pain, and that feeling of pain has eased, so I guess

when the pain eased the tears eased."

Internal changes affect self-identity and personality (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009). In regard

to this, Barbara describes her response to her pain from a remorseful perspective using the key

phrase "it caused me to be who I wasn't". She stated:

"I didn't deal with pain until it started dealing with me and then I don't want to deal with

it anymore because it caused me to be who I wasn't, anxiety is a disease that ah, it, had I

not gotten control of it I think it may have taken me over, and so I had to take medication

for a while."

Weaken confidence takes place even with strong faith, but pain occurs due to a bad

experience, and moving forward means risks are involved (Pace, 2017). Participants described

their perception of their confidence being weakened by divorce's impact on their emotions.

Rebecca expressed her disappointment in lacking in value (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), as a woman

and in ministry:

"Being divorced affected my confidence, my esteem, it affected my yeah mainly my

confidence, it, it just it affected my confidence as a woman, as a minister um, I thought I

was a good wife, I, you know, I believed I was a good wife, I, I mean was very

intentional about that, but, but um, um so mainly it was the confidence… um my

sexuality also, um, because it included you know divorce I mean you know infidelity of a

variety of kinds [laughter] so yeah, yeah so, how I saw myself as far as attractive you

know of that goes into esteem though."

Sally Jane describe herself with an attitude (Saldaña, 2021, p. 167), as feeling something she did

was wrong and she did not understand. She said:

"I had a lot of doubts about myself and my purpose after being married for so long and

then divorced, everything kind of come to a stop for a little while, I didn't really want to

be and do things like I had before, I wondered what I was doing wrong, I mean, I'd

always thought you know, it wouldn't be very long, I would understand what God was

trying to tell me."

As stated in chapter two, people who divorce that are 50 and older have a likelihood of

depression with a diagnosis of psychological conditions that may affect their physical condition,

placing them on medication (Zulkarnain & Korenman, 2019). Ethel and Barbara described how the internal pain of divorce changed their health.

Ethel: "I ah, I ah, develop bronchitis and asthma, became a diabetic, ah because when I was ah, being so unhappy and sad I started eating up everything, drinking the wrong things eating the wrong things so much."

Barbara: "My divorce, ah, I, ah, I went to see my doctor and he put me on some anxiety medication, and high blood pressure medication. I also was taking diabetes medication."

The participants began a recovery from divorce's impact on them internally. Barbara described where she is now in the progress of feeling better internally. She portrayed herself in a delighted and excited way of being on the road to recovery:

"Great changes, I don't take my anxiety medication anymore, I believe being supported by friends and family was why I wasn't as broken or it wasn't as bad off, I didn't lose my mind although some days I thought I was, so I spent a lot of time ah just praying, spending time with God and with them to help me get through cause I didn't want the enemy to think that he had won with me."

RQ2 theme 2 details how the participants experienced internal pain that could have caused an intraindividual change. They all held on to their belief towards spiritual recovery. Nakagawa (2020) noted that older adults could remain stable, although they may experience an event that can cause an internal battle. RQ2 themes 1 and 2 discussed the possibility of intraindividual changes that were possible for the participants to experience.

Thematic Analysis of the Participants' Story

The data revealed that divorce did induce spiritual stress (Mahoney et al., 2008; Russo Netzer, 2017) in all of these late life-span believers of God during the first year. The data revealed that they went through periods of divorce impacting their personal domain, suffering the loss of life's meaning and purpose. Some data also displayed divorce having impacted their "Transcendental Domain" as they viewed themselves as far away from God. Some data showed divorce's impact on their "Communal Domain" with friends and family to the point of creating anger and hatred. Nevertheless, the data revealed that they all began to spiritually recover (Russo-Netzer, 2017). They expressed that their spiritual coping brought about their spiritual recovery (Mahoney et al., 2008). Corry et al. (2015) stated that "spiritual coping for individuals takes the form of becoming spiritually aware by connecting with self, others, the world around them, and, in many cases, God" (p. 501). None of them stated that divorce negatively impacted their "Environmental Domain," causing them to lose connection with nature and their surrounding environment.

Summary

The findings in Chapter 4 addressed the research questions pertaining to what impacts occurred on the participants' spiritual well-being after having divorced at the age of 50 or older. Chapter 4 presented the answers to the research questions through structural descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, this chapter produced the results of the data analysis for this study. The participants of this study were introduced through profiles that included brief demographic backgrounds. The participants were recruited using purposeful samples and convenient samples. Each participant was over 50 years old at the time of their divorce. The data were collected using semi-structured one-on-one interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data

were analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009),

Emotional Coding, Value Coding, and In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2021). Eleven themes emerged

in the study, nine of which addressed research question one; a) divorce imposed feelings of

spiritual emptiness, even with a strong belief in God, b) divorce triggered a feeling of distance

from God, c) divorce evoked a spiritual hunger for God's love, d) spiritual reclamation, e)

growing in spirituality after divorce, f) community disturbance, g) passionate interconnection

with their community, h) enjoyment of nature, and i) standing back up on their spiritual feet.

Two themes addressed research question two; a) loss of spiritual peace, and b) divorce elicited

internal battles. The themes were categorized and labeled using Descriptive Coding (Saldaña,

2021). The findings indicated that all the participants experienced spiritual stress (Mahoney et

al., 2008) that impacted their spiritual well-being after their divorce in the first year. The finding

also indicated that each participant held onto their spiritual belief through spiritual coping and

continued spiritually recovering. Krumrei (2011) stated that spiritual coping is linked with

posttraumatic growth. The finding showed that the participants connect to others in the

community and with nature, even more so than before their divorce. This presents the basis that

the participants all appear to be progressively improving in their spiritual well-being.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to investigate the possible impact of divorce on the spiritual well-being of believers of God who experience this phenomenon in their later life-span. As a reminder of this, the research questions were:

RQ1: How do participants aged 50 and older, who were married for three years or more describe the impact of divorce on Fisher's (2010) four domains of spiritual well-being that occurred during the first-year post-divorce? The four domains are:

1. Personal Domain

2. Communal Domain

3. Environmental Domain

4. Transcendental Domain

RQ2: How do participants aged 50 and older, who were married for three years or more describe the impact of divorce on their patterns of change experienced intraindividually that occurred during the first-year post-divorce?

The purpose of chapter five is to explain the meaning of the analysis results in connection to the research questions regarding the topic of the study. Chapter five has five other sections that interpret the study's features, providing vital information supporting its importance globally. These sections are: (a) a summary of the findings, (b) a discussion of the findings reflected upon by the criteria of the theoretical frameworks presented in chapter-2, (c) implications, (d) delimitations and limitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Summary of the findings

The summary of the findings is presented in thematic statements (Braun & Clarke, 2022), reducing the themes in unification with the two research questions. The data suggest that divorce does have an impact on a believer's spiritual well-being when they experience this phenomenon in the later life-span. However, the data also suggest that their strong beliefs supported the participants' outcomes. Eleven themes emerged from the data. Nine themes addressed RQ1, and two themes addressed RQ2. Themes 1 and 2, regarding research question one, (personal and transcendental domains), display the participants experiencing pain after their divorce that made them struggle with their spiritual well-being for a moderate amount of time. However, these themes also explained that the participants, as believers of God, did not lose their strong convictions towards Him. This demonstrated how divorce might make a person feel as if they were far away from God in the sense of being alone in emotional pain, even with their faith that has not changed. Pain has a way of unsettling a person's spiritual well-being while they are still standing in hope.

When people have internal devastation that makes them question themselves, the strength of their belief within the context of their personal and transcendental spiritual domains regenerates them mentally and spiritually. Themes three, four, and five addressed research question one (personal and transcendental spiritual domains) regarding the participants' spiritual feelings of starvation for God. All three themes showed the participants' spirituality restructuring into strength through their beliefs. Although the participants were no longer walking in absolute grief, the themes conferred that they were gradually recovering spiritual soundness by acknowledging their need for God. The pains in life will compel a believer in God's eyes to open wider toward Him. In addressing research question one (communal spiritual domain), themes six

and seven summarized how the participant went from the agony of bad relationships with their community to regaining closeness to them. Sometimes, when a person experiences unreasonable problems, family and friends cannot see him or her from a moral standpoint. However, along with spiritual recovery, renewal of forgiveness and love for family and friends returns.

Theme eight addressed research question one (environmental, spiritual domain), depicting how nature brought peaceful feelings to the participants. Theme nine is associated with all the themes of research question one. Theme nine summarized the data in research question one, showing that divorce impacted the participants' spiritual well-being the first year but that they all are now in spiritual recovery. For passionate believers of God, spiritual recovery from a devastating experience such as divorce is not about if or when but trust. Research question 2, themes 1 and 2, addressed the possibility of intraindividual change. These themes summarized that the participants experienced feelings of mental and spiritual pain that momentarily shifted their internal understanding of their life's meaning. However, these themes also signaled that the participants went on toward spiritual recovery without losing their confidence in God. The strength of a person's belief will be the foundation of their spiritual recovery from the painful impacts of any traumatic event.

Discussion

The literature in Chapter Two shows the lens of the frameworks through which this study is seen. These frameworks infer several factors of changes in older age. Although most of the literature surrounding life development is on natural changes in life about growth, changes in life about experiences, and life trajectory changes in mentality due to adverse events, this study used each of these frameworks in researching divorce's possible impact on the spiritual well-being of older adults who are believers of God.

Theoretical Discussion

Erikson's life-span generativity stage of development is linked to connectedness, purposeful living, and contributing to society. His life-span positive integrity stage of development is associated with acceptance, a sense of wholeness, a lack of regret, feelings of peace, a sense of success, and feelings of wisdom (Knight, 2017). As shown in Chapter 2, divorce at 50 or older can be catastrophic for anyone in this life-span (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2010), which would have a strong probability of influencing his or her life course trajectory. The literature surrounding divorce in the later life span shows that it takes upon significant aspects of loss in the emotions of older adults (Putnam, 2011; Watkins, 2008). The participants in this study described their experience with divorce as evoking feelings of pain and brokenness. Tornstam (1994, 1999, as cited in Lifshitz et al., 2019) stated that "spirituality appears to flourish post midlife and that there was retrospective evidence for a self-perceived shift toward a more spiritual view of the world in later life years" (p. 985). Although divorce placed the participants' belief in what appeared to be a period of internal pain, they did not allow their painful experience with divorce to change their belief in God. Anand et al. (2015) held that in the later life-span, relationships with family, friends, God, and even with ourselves are crucial to everyone's spiritual well-being. The participants in this study, after having experienced divorce, recognized a need to continue growing spiritually. The spiritual formation of older adults in the later lifespan implies that life, including the "bonus years" (50-60+), involves a continual growth process (Watkins, 2008). Watkins also observed that older adult Christians in Erikson's life-span phase of generativity or integrity are positively embedded in celebrating life, experience a growing love relationship with God, have a positive attitude regarding their own lives and the environment, and, in as much as it depends on them, are at peace with the significant others in their lives, and

they can celebrate wholeness. These participants went through a phase of feeling low in their

lives. However, in line with Watkins' observation, they did in fact return to celebrating life,

reconnecting in the love of friends and family, and most importantly to themselves, growing in

their relationship with God.

In using Elder's life course theory, I sought to understand any factors that may have

shaped the participants' lives during their experience of divorce. As seen in Chapter 2, Elder

(1998) said:

> Life course theory and research alert us to this real world, a world in which lives are lived
>
> and where people work out paths of development as best they can. It tells us how lives
>
> are socially organized in biological and historical time, and how the resulting social
>
> pattern affects the way we think, feel, and act (p. 9).

The participants in this study made numerous statements about recovering value in their

life meaning after a year post-divorce. Hutchison (2011) shares that the life course perspective

acknowledges the value of timing of life beyond chronological age. Hutchison emphasizes that

life course perspectives utilize the terms biological age, psychological age, social age, and

spiritual age. Elder et al. (2003) stressed that an individual's life course is shaped by the

historical times and places he or she experienced over his or her lifetime. The participants in this

study, being older adults, acknowledged that they had been believers of God for over 30 years.

Koenig's (1955, as cited in Lifshitz et al., 2019) studies showed that the sense of spirituality

tends to grow during later adulthood. Anand et al. (2015) held that older adults are more

emotionally stable than younger adults. Elder et al. emphasized that later life adjustments and

aging patterns are predominately linked to influential years of life course development.

The participants in this study, having been believers of God for 30 years or more, were stable in their belief but did experience emotional pain. In research question two, based on life course theory, I sought to understand if the participant experienced an intraindividual change. In Chapter 2, intraindividual change is defined as changes in behavior that manifest on different timescales which may make shifts within a person's mentality (Boker, 2009) and spirituality (Czekóová et al., 2018), altering their life course and personality (Fulle-Iglesias et al., 2009; Ram et al., 2011). The participants in this study did not describe their experiences posing an intraindividual change in their lives. In referring to life course theory, Ram et al. (2011) spoke of a possible internal change that is only temporary, called intraindividual variability. Having suffered lost connections with family, friends, and God, the participants described their experiences impacting these internal feelings. However, believing in God brought about their spiritual coping and spiritual recovery.

Empirical Discussion

The participants in this study exemplified characteristics seen in the related literature on the research questions about divorce's impact on spiritual well-being in Chapter Two. This related literature consisted of studies on: a) Spirituality, b) Spiritual Stress, and c) Spiritual and Religious Coping. Fisher (2010) stated, "The framework of definition of spiritual well-being proposed by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging during their conference in 1975 is: 'the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness'" (p. 107). However, as Fisher (2010) noted, some researchers have tried to equate spiritual well-being with mental well-being. Nevertheless, Fisher noted that most research confounds spirituality and religion. All the participants in this study, who are older adults, showed themselves as strong believers of God who held on to their beliefs regardless of the pain

they experienced during the first year of their divorce. Czekóová et al. (2018), in speaking about

spirituality, said it adds connectedness to individuals in aspects of transcendence who journey

towards life's intrinsic meaning and purpose. Each participant expressed immensely that they

were a child of God and referred to themselves as knowing that they were spiritual beings

internally. Pargament (2011) described spirituality as how a person chooses to live his or her life.

All the participants described their belief in God as influencing their behavior in life.

   As noted in Chapter Two, the four domains of spirituality are; personal, communal,

environmental, and transcendental (Fisher, 2010). Each participant encountered spiritual stress in

the domains during their experience with divorce. In investigating the "Personal Domain," it was

indicated by Fisher (2010) stated that "internal harmony depends on intentional self-

development, coming from congruence between expressed and experienced meaning, purpose,

and values of life at the 'Personal level'" (p. 107). While Lifshitz et al. (2019) study examined

spiritual well-being, they noted that the "Personal Domain" has the highest influence on spiritual

well-being. In contrast to their findings, this study showed that each participant's strong belief in

God helped them to recover from divorce's impact on their spiritual well-being. As cited in

Chapter Two, Mahoney et al. (2008) categorized spiritual stress into three phases; (1) divine

spiritual struggles, which center on an individual's relationship, thoughts, and feelings toward

God; (2) intrapersonal spiritual struggles, referring to internal questions, doubts, and

uncertainties about spiritual matters; and (3) interpersonal spiritual struggles, involving spiritual

tensions and conflicts with family, friends, congregations, and communities, and which may be

especially prominent during interpersonal crises (pp. 112-113).

   The participants, experiencing spiritual stress because of divorce's impact on their

"Communal Domain" stated that they felt disconnected from their friends and family for a while.

They even admitted that they became angry and began to hate some of them. A few participants also admitted that they began to abuse members of their families verbally. Lifshitz et al. (2019) showed that the "Environmental Domain" did not influence any of their participants' spiritual domains in a negative way (p. 989). However, in contrast, none of the participants described any spiritual stress in connection to their "Environmental domain." The participants described their connection to the "Environmental Domain" as a means of having incredible peace. As to this Fisher (2010) stated, "Many have 'peak experiences' in special places or events that transcend emotional enjoyment and enhance spiritual well-being" (p. 115).

Russo-Netzer (2017) held that stressful events such as divorce challenge existing belief and meaning systems and function as turning points in a person's spirituality. Fisher's (2010) research asserted that "the transcendental domain has an over-arching influence on the quality of relationships and development in the other three domains of spiritual health and well-being" (p. 116). In investigating the "Transcendental Domain," this study showed that two participants first struggled with their connection to God, feeling that He had betrayed them (Mahoney et al., 2008). However, these two participants strongly conceded to having a passionate desire to spiritually recover because they perceived God as still present in their lives. All of the participants in this study have a solid sense of being connected to God. Fisher (2010) noted that "whether theistic or not, nearly all people have a concept of 'God.' As they compare their ideals with their lived experience, it is up to each person to define their own meaning" (p. 110).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Krumrei et al. (2011) found that spiritual coping is associated with higher levels of posttraumatic growth. Additionally, Mahoney et al. (2008) held that positive spiritual coping in times of crisis is linked to more significant stress-related psychological and spiritual growth and is additionally helpful in making positive changes in life.

In the process of spiritual coping, the participants, after having a period of trouble in connection to friends and family, or the "Communal Domain," reunited with each of them, which became a part of life satisfaction (Fisher, 2010). As mentioned in theme 7, the participants began to see God in a loving community, which was a means of spiritual coping in bringing about their spiritual recovery. Through their experience, the participants interacted with their family and friends to build better relationships. In spiritual coping to strengthen each of their personal domains, the participants increased in praying, Bible studying, and church attendance. As to this as shown in Chapter Two, in dealing with stress, experiencing religious coping in the form of religious activity and spiritual coping in the form of spiritual practice (praying, Bible studying, and church attendance) provides older adults the latitude in understanding themselves, promoting self-awareness and the chance to go on with their social and cultural activities (Pattaraarchachai & Viwatpanich, 2021).

Spiritual coping, as shown in Chapter Two, was crucial to the spiritual recovery of the participants. Han and Richardson (2010, as cited in Thauvoye et al., 2018) clearly expressed that "spiritual coping mitigated the relation between loneliness and depressive symptoms for those elderly persons who reported high levels of spirituality and that most research indicates that spiritual coping in older adults has a general protective role in their well-being" (p. 2168). By maintaining their belief throughout the process of spiritual coping, each participant, as presented in theme 9, described themselves in numerous ways as standing back up on their spiritual feet.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The study results have theoretical implications for counselors in psychology or pastoral counseling. As seen in Erikson's life-span theory, generativity vs. stagnation and integrity vs.

despair are the areas of the age of the participants under study. This theory illustrates the social

nature of one's life development (Slobodchikov & Isa'ev, 2015). Alwin (2012) said Elder and

Hareven's life course theory specifies events, transitions, and trajectories extending across the

life span. Life-span theory was used in the study to describe the mentality and behavioral norms

of the participants during their life development at the time of their experience with divorce, as

acquired through their answers during the interview. Life course theory was used in the study to

provide a rationale for possible changes in the participants' lives because of divorce. While

lifespan theory explains normal life development, life course theory explains events that may

change the trajectory of one's life positively or negatively. As such, life-span theory expounds on

mentality and personality changes during physical growth. Life course theory expounds upon

mentality or personality changes due to events at any age. The conceptual framework of this

study was looked at through the lens of Hall's developmental psychology. Developmental

psychology aims to look for possible shifts of thinking, feelings, and behavior the participants

may have presented describing their experience with divorce, as these are vital components of

spiritual well-being (Lifshitz et al., 2019). In developmental psychology, this is known as an

activity-based change (Understanding Developmental Psychology, 2021). Because each of the

three frameworks did not produce research in measuring the value of belief in God during life

events, this study extended them by advocating that there would be a difference in one's

behavioral changes as seen as norms in life-span theory and life course theory if the participants

under study were strong believers of God.

This study shows that the participants' spiritual well-being may have been affected by

divorce, causing spiritual stress (Mahoney et al., 2008). However, because the participants were

strong believers of God, they were all spiritually coping (Krumrei et al., 2011) and progressed in

regaining their spiritual well-being. This suggests that the participants' divorces caused no activity-based change or life trajectory shift because of their spiritual beliefs. Life-span theory and life course theory do not include any specific literature concerning mental or behavioral changes, specifically of people who are believers of God that divorce in their older years. In a book written in 1982 by Erik Erikson titled The Life Cycle Completed there is a chapter titled "Gerotranscendence." The chapter was comprised of information about Lars Tornstam's Gerotranscendence Theory that pertained to how religious thoughts of higher beings come about at older age, which increase life satisfaction. Erikson, Elder, and Hareven may not have concluded this information within their studies. However, in this study, each participant described the traumatic experience of the phenomenon of divorce in the first year, showing the pain they all went through and that being a person who believes in God stood out tremendously as a strong recovery factor.

Empirical Implications

In observing the participants during the interviews and listening to them as they described their experiences with divorce, the negative context of each theory framed in this study began to be placed well out of hand. The norms of life development are specified in each theory, showing that traumatic experiences trigger a negative life trajectory. However, each participant appeared excited to allow the researcher to know they were at a place of spiritual recovery and enjoying life. The participants' emotions deviated from the description of life course events because their life trajectories had not shifted in a negative direction. All the participants showed positive inspiration in moving on in life with meaning and purpose. An activity-based change could have caused depression and caused each participant to enter into Erikson's life-span stage of stagnation. Nevertheless, having a strong "spiritual, personal domain" and a strong "spiritual,

transcendental domain" shifted their lives upward. In observing each participant, one of the points learned was that even while in pain, what kept them stable was their belief.

The argument for this study is that in most human lives, there will be moments that will bring about disrepair. The growing concern of this study is that older adults have the highest percentage of divorcing age of all people globally (Brown et al., 2022) and, depending on their belief, their lives could become disastrous until they end. As such, for future divorcees, without exception, the pain will come to them. Loss of life meaning and a sense of low self-esteem will statistically increase as well. Observations of this study show that those who are stable, strong believers of God are in a mental place of growing in spiritual coping and spiritual recovery of their well-being.

Practical Implications

There are a few possibilities of how divorce can impact the spiritual well-being of a person who has reached a later life-span stage. The key to this is what pain incurs in a person according to their perspective of belief in God. Since spirituality is primarily seen as a belief in a higher human existence (Mahoney et al., 2008), the perspective of one's belief can lead them to recovery after having experienced the pain of divorce in the later life-span because of life-long experiences with problems believed to be subjugated by his or her belief in God. For example, although divorce causes many people to be placed on anxiety medication (Krumrei et al., 2011), divorce in the younger life-span has led to more suicides than in the older life-span of Christian believers (O'Reilly & Rosato, 2015). This indicates that a person who believes in God and has had various tragic experiences in life grows more confident in overcoming the pain of divorce but also realizes it takes patience as well. For counselors or ministers who support Christian divorcees in their later life-span, this study supports what is already known about the pain of

divorce. However, it also shows that Christians may endure pain in feelings of loss and are no longer feeling close to God. To spiritually recover, they must be strongly encouraged to lay deep in their faith and trust regardless of their internal struggle. Trusting God is paramount to recovery (Mousavi el at., 2014).

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitation of the study was that of having only older adults at the age of 50 or older who were believers of God as participants because the focus was on divorce's impact on their spiritual well-being. Numerous limitations would need to be addressed. In addressing divorce's impact on people who believe in God, although there are plenty of denominations in the United States and Tennessee, there were only two denominations participants were a part of, and those were Baptist and Methodist. Numerous denominations may have brought more insight to this study. Some denominations do not believe in divorce at any cost, no matter if their couples have severe marital stress. Another limitation was gender. Although this study did have six females, it only had one male. One exceptionally intriguing limitation is that no participants divorced because of "irreconcilable differences." All of the study's participants divorced for immoral actions from their spouses. This was intriguing because Christians divorcing because of "irreconcilable differences" could have brought about a new line of results in this study. This is also intriguing because adultery, polygamy, spousal neglect, and other evil actions by a spouse will be seen as actions that may be justified by divorce. However, having two believers of God simply agreeing to divorce in the later life-span could result in spiritual stress. Brown and Lin (2010) held that growing apart is one of the perceived reasons most older adults divorce. One other limitation was the demographics of participation.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study addressed divorce's effects on the spiritual well-being of Christians who experienced it during their later life-span. However, due to the limitations of the participants, the recommendations for future research consist of all that could not be achieved during this study. The recommendation is that this study be conducted by acquiring participants from numerous denominations in the United States or worldwide because divorce is a global phenomenon. Enlarging the study may show exceptional results depending on the cultural orientation to Christianity. Research is needed in investigating divorce's impact on Christians who have "irreconcilable differences" yet are both believers of God. This would be a great topic to investigate since this study's participants orchestrated their divorces because of their spouses' evil actions. The significance of this is that other future participants could have decided to divorce simply because they no longer agreed to be together, and they could both be Christians in the later life-span. The question of older-aged Christians divorcing because of "irreconcilable differences" could borrow more into how a participant's spiritual well-being is impacted. One other thought is that even though Lars Tornstam's Gerotranscendence Theory does not specifically refer to Christianity but to belief in higher beings, it may also be used as a theory in the study since it is already being used in the medical field (Wadensten, 2007).

Summary

In researching the literature on divorce for the past several years, it came to my attention that the world is filled with billions of Christians, and millions of them experience divorce. However, the concern about Christians divorcing intensified after reading Brown and Lin's (2012) article on gray divorce. This article did not specify Christians, but the fact remains that the older adults' divorce percentage is much higher than any others. My thought was, how do

older adults who are believers of God go on living after such a traumatic experience? In light of

this, the purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe the effects of

divorce on the spirituality of people 50 and older whose marriages ended after three or more

years. The study was examined through the lens of life-span theory, life course theory, and

developmental psychology. The study participants were all believers of God who were within the

age range of 56 to 71. The study used semi-structured interviews that lasted 45 minutes to an

hour. One interview lasted over an hour and 20 minutes because the participant had much to

share. All the participants divorced in the later life-span. The topic of the study incorporated

spiritual stress, spiritual anxiety, loss of spiritual meaning, loss of purpose, loss of life meaning,

and lowering of self-value. All the participants described experiencing these feelings during their

first year of divorce, and some of them even shared that it was longer than that before they began

to recover. One of the main points made by the participants is that spiritual recovery is a slow

and painful process. This led to the understanding in the study whereby this is a spiritual coping

process that a solid foundational belief in God is the only means of spiritual well-being recovery.

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Economics of the Household, 17(4), 1081-1106.

http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s111

Appendix A:

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 23, 2022

Glenn Evans

Todd Schultz

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-653 Spirituality after Divorcing in Older Age: A Hermeneutical Phenomenological Study Exploring the Effects of Divorce on the Spirituality of Older Adults Who Divorce in the Later Life Span

Dear Glenn Evans, Todd Schultz,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Consent

Title of project: Spirituality after Divorcing in Older Age: A Hermeneutical Phenomenological Study Exploring the Effects of Divorce on the Spirituality of Older Adults Who Divorce in the Later Life Span

Principle investigator: Glenn E. Evans, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 50 or older, and were married for three (3) years or more, divorced within the past 1-15 years, and a Christian believer in God, however no specific denomination. Participants presently can be single or remarried. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the effects of divorce on the spirituality of people 50 and older whose marriages end after three (3) or more years. This study will seek to gain an understanding of divorce's effects on the four domains of spirituality as presented by John Fisher, which are: personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a one-on-one, audio-recorded interview that should take 45 minutes to 1 hour.
2. Participate in a meeting to review the transcript of your interview to confirm its accuracy, which should take 20-30 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include helping older adults to better establish a relationship with their family and community. It places them socially in a place of better morality and culture, which will foster in-depth interpersonal relationships with others as human beings who live in this world with them. When a person in the older life span is spiritually vibrant, he or she also has a high sense of care, nurturing, and stewardship as one who wants to pass on knowledge to the young.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer, and paper forms will be locked in the researcher's fireproof safe in his office at home. Data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and paper forms will be destroyed.
- Interviews will be audio-recorded using a HamiltonBuhl classroom cassette player, and the researcher will keep field notes of the recording for transcription. Recordings and field notes will be stored in the fireproof safe in the researcher's office at home for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation. You may also contact the researcher at the email address/phone number in the next paragraph. Data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Glenn E. Evans. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at _____ and/or _____. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Todd Schultz, at _____.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Dat

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Date

Eligible Participant (name)

Address

City, State, Zip code

Dear:

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to gain an understanding of the possible effects of divorce on the spiritual well-being of older adults who divorce in late life, and I am writing to invite you as an eligible participant to join my study.

Participants must be Christians believers of God with no specific denomination, 50 and older, who were married for 3 or more years, and divorced in later life within the past 1-15 years. Participants may be single at this time or remarried. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take part in a one-on-one private interview, which will last for 45 minutes to one hour, consisting of several questions toward describing their spiritual well-being after divorce. The interview will be audio-recorded (if given permission) and conducted in person in participants' home, my office, or where you feel most comfortable so long as it is a confidential area. If necessary we may meet via Zoom. Once the interview has been transcribed by me, the principal investigator, I will ask to meet with you again a few weeks later for approximately 20 to 30 minutes to review the transcript of your interview as a means of making sure it has verifiable content in a procedure referred to as "member checking". Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

A consent document is included in this package (with a returned stamped self-addressed envelope). The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, please sign the consent document, and mail it back to me to initiate the scheduling of our meeting. Alternatively, you may give verbal consent, however, the signed consent document must be given to me for reviewing and answering any questions before the interview is conducted.

Sincerely,

Glenn E. Evans