

## CHAPTER 2

### RE-EMERGENCE OF SELF AND AFTER MARITAL SEPARATION<sup>1</sup>

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*“Woman is in such a position that—although she is a free and autonomous being like all humans—she finds herself living in a world where men force her to adopt the status of the ‘Other.’”  
(Quoted from De Beauvoir, as cited in Donovan, 2012, p. 223)*

#### INTRODUCTION

Although generational perspectives and expectations regarding having a spouse may vary, it can generally be said that these differing and culturally sensitive viewpoints reflect a process of change and transformation. Indeed, the widely idealized notion of “happily ever after” is often not as eternal as imagined, and the trajectory of romantic relationships increasingly becomes a marker within the broader aging process.

In general, the gerontology literature recognizes meaningful and healthy social relationships as predictors of well-being in later life. However, there is a limited number of studies exploring how the end of marriages particularly those formed early in life through divorce, spousal loss, or separation, influences the re-emergence of self in older adults (Sebanz, 2007).

This chapter will examine how women navigate the later-life phase that begins with the end of their marriages and how they reconstruct their sense of self and adapt to evolving life experiences. In addition to a discussion of relevant literature,

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is adapted from the author’s master’s thesis titled “*The Process of Reconstructing the Self After Spousal Separation in Women Aged 60 and Over Living in İzmir*.” The thesis was submitted in 2017 to the Women’s Studies Master’s Program at the Institute of Social Sciences, Dokuz Eylül University. Access link: <https://avesis.deu.edu.tr/yonetilen-tez/411d9690-3e54-47ef-aa11-8ad1cc226ffb/>

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alone; applied, practical solutions are required. This necessitates that women's issues be recognized as *social issues*, which must be addressed on the level of social policy.

However, it must not be forgotten that every practical solution must be grounded in clearly defined problems. In this regard, conducting discussions based on philosophical foundations, generating new fields of inquiry and concepts, and fostering cognitive transformation are critical first steps. While this study aims to initiate such a discussion, it is hoped that future research will provide guidance for developing practical policy solutions. It should be acknowledged that any solutions offered prior to these foundational steps will likely be incomplete.

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