

WIDOWS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS

By

PATRICIA RUTH TREADWELL

Bachelor of Science in Home Economics

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1976

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College  
of the Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
December, 1977

Thesis  
1977  
T784w  
Cap. 2



WIDOWS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS

Thesis Approved:

*Althea Skright*

Thesis Adviser

*Judith a. Powell*

*Frances Stromberg*

*Norman N. Durkin*

Dean of the Graduate College

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my grateful appreciation to Dr. Althea Wright for her guidance and suggestions. Appreciation is also given to Dr. Frances Stromberg and Dr. Judith Powell whose interest and critical evaluation have been invaluable. Appreciation is also given to the wonderful respondents who gave much more than asked and to the ministers who suggested the possible respondents.

I am grateful to my typist, Mrs. T. W. Lee, for her accurate typing. Also a special note of thanks goes to Brenda Cole, my dearest friend, for her critical reading and time given to proofreading the manuscript. I would like to thank Mrs. Eva Cole whose adjustment to widowhood has inspired and encouraged me to complete this study. Appreciation is also extended to Pam Kellenberger and Nancy Cannon for their encouragement and cheerfulness during times that seemed impossible.

My greatest appreciation and love is extended to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Treadwell, and to my brother, Walter, who have made the family seem very important to me. I realize their sacrifices have been many in order to help me through this project. Words alone cannot even express my thanks to them for their encouragement and faith in me. It has only been through the help of my family that this goal has become a reality for me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Statement of Problem . . . . .	1
Purposes of the Study . . . . .	4
Definition of Terms . . . . .	6
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	7
Role Loss . . . . .	8
Age, Health, and Length of Time Widowed . . . . .	10
Interactions With Family and Friends . . . . .	11
Income, Employment, and Education . . . . .	15
Living Arrangements . . . . .	18
Remarriage and Marriage Satisfaction . . . . .	19
Summary . . . . .	20
III. PROCEDURE . . . . .	22
Selection of Subjects . . . . .	22
Development of the Instrument . . . . .	23
Validity . . . . .	23
Pilot Study . . . . .	24
Collection of the Data . . . . .	24
Analysis of Data . . . . .	25
IV. RESULTS . . . . .	26
Description of the Subjects . . . . .	26
Examination of Hypothesis . . . . .	36
Information Resulting From Interviews . . . . .	37
V. SUMMARY . . . . .	47
Findings of the Interviews . . . . .	48
Areas of Possible Study . . . . .	52
Limitations of the Study . . . . .	54
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	55
APPENDIX . . . . .	58

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Description of Subjects . . . . .	27
II. Information Obtained Through the Instrument . . . . .	29

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Problem

In American society, it has been found that the social adjustment of women in widowhood has received very little attention in the study of family life (Berardo, 1968). Berardo (1968) stated,

Such apparent disregard and lack of research concerning this special phase of the family life-cycle appears somewhat anomalous, indeed, in light of the fact that three out of every four wives in the United States survive their husband (p. 192).

Williams (1961, p. 475) noted that, "It is striking that this inevitable and universal phase of life would be so patently neglected as an area of serious study." Kutner, Fanshel, Togo, and Thomas (1956, p. 19) have stated that "widows are coming to represent a sizeable group in American life and there is a growing need for information regarding their patterns of adjustment." According to the 1974 Census, there were approximately ten million widows in the United States and this represents a little more than twelve percent of women over the age of fourteen (Bureau of the Census, 1974).

Adjustments involved in widowhood have not been of much concern to researchers in the past but there appears to be some indication of renewed interest due to three factors which are increasing the likelihood of widowhood. First, the mortality rate among women is lower

than among widowers; second, wives are usually younger than their husbands; and third, the remarriage rate among widows is lower than among widowers (Berardo, 1968). Sheldon (1958) has stated that:

Unless the trends in male and female mortality are sharply reversed, the excess of women over men at the upper ages will increase and our older population will contain a larger proportion of widows (p. 93).

Although widowhood can occur early in marriage, it seems that the vast majority of the widowed are older (Kutner, et al., 1956). It was also reported (Kutner, et al., 1956) in the same study that the loss of a partner often means the end of an important relationship which may have given meaning to life.

. . . the separation by death may leave an enormous emptiness in the life of the survivor that requires a long period of readjustment. Frequently, the individual is not quite the same person; the spouse is so much a part of the social self that the widowed person, lacking the stimulus that was so much a part of personality, is changed, perhaps permanently. The mutual fulfillment of emotional, sexual, and social needs is suddenly terminated. If the person is emotionally dependent upon the departed spouse, the affective impact of the loss may be irreparable. In the case of the dominant individual new expressive outlets are now required. The widow or widower occupies a special place in our society; a new role must be assumed. Grief and bereavement must be contained and an attempt made to integrate this role with the ongoing social world. Economic hardship, isolation, cessation of social participation, closer ties with other family members or friends, changed housing needs, and altered domestic activities may be consequences (Kutner, et al., 1956, pp. 62-63).

Many of the difficulties faced by the widow may be due to the view society takes in relation to death. Farmer (1970) stated:

The modern matter-of-fact attitude, the curtailment of mourning, the taboo or refusal to talk about death, the feeling of inadequacy or intrusion in offering any sort of comfort, particularly without the solace of a belief in religion, leaving the body in a chapel of rest instead of at home, sending people to a hospital to die, the almost unseemly haste in burying or cremating the dead; all such practices reflect an embarrassment at death, a refusal to



face it, and a callous ignoring of the plight of the bereaved. . . . For the contemporary bereaved family it is business as usual . . . stiff upper lips, bright colours, not outward signs; this is what society expects. Unhappily too, in a society which demands geographical mobility from those who aspire to social mobility, the scattering of kin groups means that death for some is an experience to be faced alone, or in impersonal surroundings, particularly when it occurs in old age (p. 141).

In order to understand the difficulties women may face in widowhood it is helpful to look briefly at the stages one may go through after the death of a partner. The first stage may entail some form of grieving for the loss of a partner. The second stage may deal with the widow's fear of managing her life alone, as expressed by Buchanan (1974):

Every time our life is changed there are things to face in a changed world in which everything will be different. If we have been dependent on our mate for one, twenty, thirty, or more years, we have been used to accepting the security given by him. Now there is the fear of the unknown. Where do I go? What will I do? How will I get along without my mate (p. 293).

The third stage may be in the form of bitterness and anger. Buchanan (1974) stated:

. . . It is not uncommon for the widowed to be bitter or angry with God. Perhaps they feel that their mate was killed by a particular person because of neglect. Sometimes the anger is misplaced. Sometimes it is aimed at the doctor. . . . You could be angry at yourself because you didn't take care of your mate properly, or you could feel anger at God because he is the giver and taker of life. . . . Your whole life is going to have to be restructured (p. 293).

Many widows today may face the adjustments of loneliness, abandonment, resentment of status change, and financial insecurity (Miles and Hays, 1975). Langer (1957) stated:

An American woman is ill-equipped to acknowledge the possibility--probability--that her family will be broken, in time, by the death of her husband. She has never consciously expected this. Her expectations, socially inculcated, was one of never ending marital bliss, and so widowhood is an experience for which she is unprepared and in which she constantly feels frustrated (p. 160).

Other non-western societies have structured roles to offer the widow in adjusting to the loss and lack of security of her husband (Mathison, 1970). In contrast, the United States has very few guidelines for the appropriate behavior and adjustment for widows (Langer, 1957). This leaves many women in a frustrated situation in which there has been little, if any, anticipatory socialization. Langer (1957) stated:

The American way of life seems to hinder, rather than facilitate, a woman's adjustment. Furthermore, American society actively deters adjustment to widowhood. In the absence of clear, explicit expectations and socialization for meeting death, it not only acts in ways less functional than primitive societies, but at times acts in ways dysfunctional for widows. For example, our society sets no standards as to the period of time, form of dress, or sequence of social relations for those in mourning (p. 159).

Widowhood has become a problem in our society, as Berardo (1968), Miles and Hays (1975), Williams (1966), Kutner et al. (1956), Farmer (1970), and Buchanan (1974) have stated. It is a time which requires the development of alternative patterns of behavior in order for adjustment to be determined (Berardo, 1968).

#### Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were:

- A. To develop an instrument to assess the degree of adjustment in the following areas: role changes, companionship with opposite-sex friends, attitudes toward remarriage, family contacts, religious commitment, employment, income level, living arrangements, length of widowhood, age, health, educational level, and degree of satisfaction with previous marriage.

- B. To determine if the perceived social adjustment of the widows was associated with the following: (1) age, (2) health, (3) religious commitment, (4) educational level, (5) length of widowhood, (6) living arrangements, (7) income level, (8) home ownership, (9) frequency of social contacts with friends, (10) frequency of social contact with family, (11) attitudes toward remarriage, (12) employment, (13) degree of satisfaction with previous marriage.
- C. To examine the following specific hypothesis:
1. There will be no significant association between social adjustment to widowhood and the following:
    - (a) Age
    - (b) Health
    - (c) Religious commitment
    - (d) Educational level
    - (e) Employment level
    - (f) Present living conditions
    - (g) Home ownership
    - (h) Period of time widowed
    - (i) Frequency of social contact with friends
    - (j) Frequency of social contact with family
    - (k) Income level
    - (l) Attitude toward remarriage
    - (m) Degree of satisfaction with previous marriage

### Definition of Terms

The following words are defined for the purpose of this particular study:

1. Widowhood--A social category that a woman enters when her partner dies (Silverman, 1972).
2. Social Roles--A set of functionally interdependent relations between a social person and his social group (Znaniecki, 1965).
3. Extended Family--Two or more nuclear type families related by blood (Clayton, 1975).
4. Nuclear Family--The family unit consisting of father, mother, and offspring, if any (Nimkoff, 1965).
5. Re-engagement--The social interaction in which a widow displays the formation of new social contacts (Lopata, 1970).
6. Disengagement--The social interaction in which a widow displays little social contact (Lopata, 1970).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature will be divided into the following areas: role changes entailed in widowhood; factors involving health, age, and length of time widowed; interaction of family and friends; education, employment, and income level; living arrangements; and attitudes toward remarriage.

One of the first major adjustments for widows is the realization that the death of a husband breaks up the pattern of interaction in which they formerly engaged (Lopata, 1970). In our society, the widow must begin to realize that there are other roles available that can be just as important as her past role of wife. The amount of disengagement a woman experiences may influence the degree to which her social roles were dependent upon her husband. Lopata (1970) stated,

In general, the more functional the husband-wife relation is to the wife's role, and the more multidimensional the involvement of her husband in a woman's life, the more disorganized become her other social relations with her husband's death. This is a consequence of his removal not only from the role of husband, but also from her other social circles. His death is likely to remove from her life not only a sexual partner, but the father of her children, the partner in couple-companionate leisure activities, the contributor to management of the home in which she is the housewife, a co-member in voluntary association membership, and a participant in other social roles. In addition, it can remove her link to the outside world; his relatives, the community, business associates, service personnel with whom he maintained contact, and any other set of interactions in which her involvement was dependent upon his (p. 44).

## Role Loss

Arling (1976) stated that one of the most important forms of role loss is found in widowhood. Arling (1976, p. 68) stated, "This loss of role presents new problems not only because of the loss of a partner but because of the absence of cultural expectations regarding the proper role of the widow." Lopata (1970, p. 48) has found that there are two ways in which a widow may try to maintain her role of wife. She may try to preserve the memory of her husband through such statements as, "My husband was an unusually good man." She may also feel an obligation to never remarry through such statements as, "One marriage is enough" (p. 48). Even though a widow may try to retain her role as wife, there are still many other choices available to her. These choices are not only composed of role alternatives, but also stages of re-engagement. Lopata (1970) has found that there are two stages involved in re-engagement for the widow. The first stage is re-engagement of social relations similar to those before the death of the husband. These social relations usually consist of activities with family, close friends, neighbors, and co-workers. The second stage may consist of social isolation. A widow may find that she has no social group that can replace the functions of her husband, therefore she isolates herself from others.

There are new roles open to the widow, but there are also restrictions. These restrictions usually deal with aspects of finances, health, mobility, and ability. Lopata (1970) feels that many times isolation experiences by widows may not be a result of choice, but of restrictions on personal achievement. According to Engel (1968) the widow must completely rebuild her self image.

She needs to reestablish her identity as a person and especially as a woman. Her husband's death leaves her emotionally and sexually frustrated, and leads her to question her femininity. She loses esteem for herself as a woman, and is confused about the role and degree of dependence that is appropriate to her position. The widow becomes increasingly egocentric; she suddenly becomes aware that she too may die; she is afraid of being alone, of going out alone. The woman feels there is no one with whom she can share her anxieties and dreams, her worries and hopes (p. 68).

Cumming and Henry (1961) have found that widowhood is a transition state to which women seem to adjust successfully, though they do state that there are problems involved in role loss which the widow will have to solve. The problems seem to consist of three types: (a) The loss of a very important object (husband), (b) Finding suitable ways of integrating herself into the social systems around her,

A woman is usually given her social identity through her husband's occupation, and at his death she must find a new way to reconstitute her identity as a person who was once the wife of a certain man. In this, she faces the same problem as the man at retirement. The widow must also use her later years to integrate her life experience satisfactorily, and to identify herself as a person who performed her central task adequately and then terminated it through no fault of her own (Cumming and Henry, 1961, p. 156).

(c) Shifting from the married state of divided labor and mutual dependence, to membership in a group of unattached women. Cumming and Henry (1961) have also found that there are certain factors associated with widowhood which may make the adjustment of role loss easier.

In the first place, widowhood is an honored state. There is a certain consideration afforded to widows. . . . In the second place, widows are identified to a large degree with their late husbands' careers, and though they may lose financial status, they do not need to lose such prestige as their husbands had at the same time. Furthermore, women have always been the mediators of relationships with kindred, and while there is some evidence suggesting that women do not maintain close ties with their dead husbands' kin, it is probable that they quickly revive ties with their own. Furthermore, if they have children, they are able to identify

with them, their careers, and their successes. . . . Finally, widows have a ready-made peer group in other widows, and there is reason to believe that they join this group happily (p. 157).

Widows may or may not view their role change in widowhood as positive. Lopata (1973), however, has found that once women do recognize there is change in their identities, due to the death of their husband, they do tend to view themselves as fuller and freer people than before their husband's death.

#### Age, Health, and Length of Time Widowed

Marris (1958) has found that as one grows older, his or her life tends to center more around the nuclear family instead of the extended family. Blau (1961) stated that as people grow older there is a likelihood that change in marital status will increase. Williams (1961, p. 281) states, "Those who have been widowed less than 10 years have lower morale than those who have been widowed for a longer period of time." Kutner et al. (1956) have found that as age and length of widowhood increases, the differences in the degree of social isolation between low and high status groups tends to decrease. Therefore, outside activities tend to increase with length of widowhood. They have also noted that negative feelings toward widowhood tend to be linked to low-status groups who have been widowed for less than 10 years (Kutner et al., 1956). Shanas, Townsend, Wedderburn, Friis, Milhoij, and Stehouwer (1968) have found that those recently widowed are more lonely than those widowed several years. Berardo (1968) has found that from a statistical standpoint widowhood seems to be more of a problem for the aged woman. Berardo (1968, p. 196) stated, "The loss of a husband not



only creates many practical problems of living alone, but it also produces a social vacuum in the life of the aged widow which is difficult to fill." Berardo (1968, p. 199) has also found that a "substantial minority" of the widowed do not fall into the usual definitions of the aged population. "About one-fifth of the new widows created each year, for example, are under the age of 45 and their situation is in many respects different from those widowed in later ages." Engel (1968) has found that given time to adjust to their husband's death, widows become able to repattern and engage in social relations in a regular schedule of activities. Abraham (1972) has found that younger widows, even when widowed a long time, were more likely to be seeking new relationships. It was also found (Abraham, 1972) that older widows were more in need of a sympathetic listener, while specific help in handling health, legal, and financial problems was also needed. Silverman (1972) has found that with length of time, between the second to sixth year, the widow is in a recovery stage from the loss of her husband. Parkes (1972) has found that those women most recently widowed tended to have such health problems as headaches, digestive disturbances, and aching limbs. In Parkes (1972) study the widows tended to view their health problems in terms of irritation and anger, and not by objective assessments of their problems.

#### Interactions With Family and Friends

Marris (1958), in this study concerning widowhood, has found that besides gifts and practical services, relatives and friends provided support by their companionship. It was found that widows relied most on their mothers, daughters, and sisters (Marris, 1958). Men were

helpful in two areas: (a) by doing odd jobs around the house, (b) by giving advice, and this was usually given by the brother of the widow (Marris, 1958). Marris (1958) has also found that the help that was valued the most, was that which allowed the widow to live as she had before her husband's death. Marris (1958) stated,

On the whole, although the widows found much support and companionship amongst their family, they still felt lonely and apathetic towards social life. They tended to feel awkward in company, resentful of any hint of pity or patronage, and easily hurt in their pride. They found it, besides, more difficult to take time for visiting, and had less money to spend on fares and entertainments. So, on balance, their relationships with their families became no closer, and changes towards fewer than towards more contacts in widowhood (p. 85).

Shanas et al. (1968, p. 164) stated that, "Particular importance is placed on the relationship between widowed mother and married daughter." Lopata (1970) has found that the widows' relations with their families seem to be decreasing with no replacement by other primary groups. Pihlablad and Adams (1972) have found that in general more family contact is associated with female satisfaction, than with male satisfaction. Buchanan (1974) stated that the death of a husband, no matter how prepared one may be, will still come as a shock, but this can be modified by the widow's own emotional strength and the comfort given by her family. Pihlablad and Adams (1972) stated in relation to the widow and contact with her children,

On the average, the elderly have contact with children at least three times per week. . . . Females show no great change in contact levels with widowhood. It appears that women, in general, have higher contact than do men; that their contact levels change less immediately after widowhood and decline less in the later periods of widowhood (p. 325).

Arling (1976) has found in his study that the healthiest of widows have more contact with their families. He also found (Arling, 1976) that in

small towns and rural areas there were more contacts with children and relatives. Lopata (1970) has found in relation to help patterns given by adult children to their widowed mother, that sons, especially older ones, offer more help in the form of advice, while the daughters give more emotional support and comfort. The relationship between widows and their children is of great importance if adjustments to the death of a husband are to be successful. Lopata (1970) has found that widows are not totally dependent on their children because of two changes in patterns of family life. The first, is the unwillingness of parents to encourage their children to remain in the family home. Second, is the independence of the older generation, especially women. These two changes, along with the importance of maintaining nuclear families, have tended to discourage widows from residing and depending on their children (Lopata, 1970).

Blau (1961) has found that as persons grow older, their associations with friends decreases as the incidence of widowhood increases. She has also found that widowhood seems to have adverse effects on social participation, only when it places a person in a position of difference in relation to those of his own age and sex (Blau, 1961). Babchuk (1965) has found that couples, in general, usually do not maintain extensive friendship networks independently. He has also found that husbands were more likely to have initiated friendships for the couple. It seems that with the death of her husband, the widow finds herself with few close friends. In relation to becoming re-engaged into a social group Buchanan (1974) stated,

It is important to recognize that you do have a different relationship with many married friends. Some couples you will be able to continue friendships with on a fairly

normal pattern, but most of your married couple friends will gradually change their life pattern with you. Unless you have a partner with you they will tend to feel uneasy with you. Married women are prone to be uncomfortable around a widow if their marriages are a bit rocky. It seems that both widowed and divorced women have some kind of sixth sense when it comes to unhappiness in other people. This is partly because, being alone, they may be more in tune to pain, hurt, and loneliness (p. 297).

Engel (1968) has found that contacts with friends increase right after the husband's death, while social life is greatly reduced. Buchanan (1974) gave some very important advice to widows concerning contacts with friends:

One of the things you are going to discover is that within a matter of three or four weeks, your friends who are considerate and helpful the first few days are now starting to be less noticeable. In many cases, by the end of the month, you are pretty much on your own. This often comes as a shock to the widowed, but remember this is common. There are exceptions of course, and some people do stay around and care for months and months but I would not count on it (p. 292).

Engel (1968) stated that the most difficult effect on social life and friendships occurs when the majority of the widow's friends are still married. Pihlblad and Adams (1972) have found that daily visits with friends were more common for widows than for married women, and this should not decrease with length of widowhood. They have also found that friend contact is associated with satisfaction, even more than is family contact. Also, persons with no friends have lower satisfaction than persons without children or siblings, while those with high friend contact have higher satisfaction than those with high family contact (Pihlblad and Adams, 1972).

Lopata (1970) has found that for widows there is usually a cycle of friendship relations: (a) struggle to try to fit back into couple-oriented groups, (b) rejection and strain resulting from interaction

with previous couple friends, (c) withdrawal from couple-orientated groups, and (d) replacement with friendships. These new friendship patterns may consist of friendships with other widows, or a continuation in couple-orientated groups with a male escort (Lopata, 1970). Buchanan (1974) has outlined some very good suggestions for ways in which the widow may become socially orientated, after the husband's death. The first suggestion is to have a common group, such as others who are widowed, that are able to come together and share their feelings. Secondly, the forming of hobbies or activities that the widow may enjoy which does not require a couple.

In some respects a widowed person finds himself freer to do things that he had felt hampered doing when married. . . . This is an opportunity for you to express a part of you that perhaps had not been expressed in married life (Buchanan, 1974, p. 297).

#### Income, Employment, and Education

Berardo (1968) has found that the majority of widows are aged and their incomes are usually below average. It has also been found that many widows have to "use what small amount of insurance their husbands did carry to pay for funeral expenses, medical bills, taxes, and mortgages, leaving them with only a small savings on which to survive" (Berardo, 1968, p. 194). Many widows are unknowledgeable about their financial affairs at the time of their husband's death, due to lack of planning:

The truth is that most men do leave their affairs in a jumble. This is not because their lives are unduly complicated but simply because they can't seem to get around to the task of setting up a program for their families that would automatically go into operation upon their death. Death is unpleasant to think about and always seems remote.

The tendency is to put the problem off and plan 'to get to it one of these days' (Changing Times, 1961, p. 10).

In relation to class differences regarding income, it appears that the death of a husband for the lower-class woman reduces finances as well as social activities (Blau, 1961). However, the middle-class widow may experience a reduction of income at first, but her resources will generally be greater than that of the lower-class widow. In giving financial advice to the widow, relatives seem to give the best help along with the clergy, funeral director, social security officer, lawyers, or trust officers (Abraham, 1972).

Berardo (1968) has found that widows, because of serious financial problems, may find themselves seeking employment. Many older women are faced with several problems when they find they must support themselves. First of all, they have been out of the labor market for years and are at a disadvantage in relation to demands for required skill and education. Secondly, they may be confronted with a subtle discrimination on the "part of employers who are not in favor of hiring older persons, let alone women" (Berardo, 1968, p. 194). Research seems to indicate that the widow who is able to play a part in the productive economy, may adjust better to widowhood (Kutner et al., 1956). Kutner et al. (1956) have found that an older employed widow is more likely to have higher morale than a housewife or retired widow. They also have found that:

For widowed women, there is a need for a service that will provide occasional jobs, such as baby sitting, service as companions for bed-ridden persons, and occasional light housekeeping tasks. Many widows have never been in the labor force and have never acquired skills in any other line. These kinds of jobs frequently coincide with their experience as homemakers (Kutner et al., 1956, p. 254).

Marris (1958) has found that most women who are employed before their husband's death usually returned to work. The decisions to resume work after the husband's death consists of several factors: (a) health, (b) age, (c) whether there are dependent children in the home, (d) exhaustion of savings, (e) loneliness, and (f) previous work experience of the widow (Marris, 1958). Lopata (1970) has found that employment may not supply the widow with sources of social relations. It seems that employment of widows has been periodic, and many times consists of low paying domestic work. Lopata (1970) reported that widows usually take jobs as emergency measures because of lack of money, but not as a means of social involvement. Research has also found that the time a job is seen as helpful is right after the death of a husband, and the new widow is often advised, "to take a job to keep busy" (Lopata, 1970, p. 54). Parkes (1972) has found that in the long run, widows who are employed tend to find new interests and friends earlier than those widows who had no job outside of the home.

Engel (1968) stated that:

Work can provide the widow with income, security, and new social contacts, but it is a poor substitute for the absorption into a kinship system which was characteristic of societies in the past. Furthermore, working is not without its problems, the least of which is finding a job to which the woman can return after years of absence, or finding a first job when she is middle-aged or older and equipped with only minimal skill (p. 164).

Lopata (1973) stated that the higher the education, the more women will be affected by widowhood. Some reasons for this may be the relationship the widow shared with her husband such as companion and friend. The less educated widow is more likely to have negative feelings toward her adult children: "They are more likely than the better educated to

feel that they are imposed upon when they are asked to perform services which they would not voluntarily offer" (Lopata, 1973, p. 603). The more educated widows are more likely to develop regular patterns of contact with kin, especially around holidays (Lopata, 1973). Lopata (1973) has also found that with more education there is an increase in friends, but there is also strain in interaction with friends after the death of a spouse.

### Living Arrangements

Belcher (1967) has found that the widowed make up a large proportion of one-person households, but there has not been much concern with factors which result in living alone. Chevan and Korson (1972) have found that living with others for the widowed may be a guarantee against some forms of social isolation. It should be noted that living alone does not necessarily create social isolation. Chevan and Korson (1972) stated,

Maintenance of an independent household is for many of the widowed the symbolic bastion within which they define their roles. To think of living any other way is abhorrent, entailing a loss of privacy as well as independence and thereby threatening the integrity of personal adjustment (p. 46).

There seem to be four types of living arrangements among the widowed: (a) the widow with children present in the household, (b) the widow living in some form of kinship group, (c) the widowed who live with non-relatives in forms of substitute kinship groups, (d) the widowed who live as heads of households in the kinship groups, and (e) the widowed who live alone (Chevan and Korson, 1972).



## Remarriage and Marriage Satisfaction

Bowerman (1953) stated that there is a tendency for individuals to marry those who are similar to their own marital status.

General trends are similar for all marital status groups, but in each case people select mates of their own marital status in larger percentages than they do those in the other marital status groups (Bowerman, 1953, p. 174).

Bernard (1956) has found that widows may or may not remarry according to certain factors. First, there must be a desire to remarry. Second, there must be no inhibiting factors that would prevent remarriage. Third, there must be opportunities for meeting and courting prospective partners. Fourth, the attitudes of family and community may effect the chances of remarriage. Fifth, the personal qualities of a member of the opposite sex must be appealing to the widow. Bernard (1956) also gave two reasons why widows may choose not to remarry: (a) if the widow was unsatisfied with her first marriage she may be reluctant to remarry, while on the other hand if her marriage was highly successful she may feel a second marriage could never compare to her first one; (b) a widow may be reluctant to remarry if her sexual relations with her first husband were unsuccessful. Marris (1958) has found that the principal appeal of remarriage was in the companionship it offered the widow.

. . . loneliness can be a terrible thing. You don't know what it's like until you've been through it. If you can find someone who is good to you, then it's better than being on your own. I've been lucky, my first husband was a very good man, and my second has been good to me too. It's three years, now and I still know a good one's been taken. . . . Well, after all, we were together twenty-five years. Even though I can't get used to it, and I often call this one by the wrong name (Marris, 1958, p. 61).

It was also found that the younger widows were more in favor of remarriage, which supports the tendency for the remarriage rate to decrease with age (Marris, 1958). Marris (1958) also found that remarriage took place from three months to three years after the death of a husband. Tunstall (1966) has found that past the age of 60, remarriage is rare despite the popular ideas to the contrary. McKain (1972) has found that in many cases, society frowns on remarriage in the later years. He also stated that, remarriage in the later years will become accepted only if more and more older persons continue to marry (McKain, 1972). Research has found that many remarriages are successful and this may be due to past experience, especially if the first marriage proves to be successful (McKain, 1972). McKain (1972) also listed some factors involved in the success of remarriages: (a) widow and future husband knew each other well before marriage, (b) remarriage has approval of relatives and friends, (c) widow and future husband are able to adjust to role changes brought about by increasing age, and (d) ownership of a home but did not plan to live in the home after marriage.

#### Summary

Berardo (1968) has found that research dealing with adjustments of widows has received very little attention. Farmer (1970) has found that many of the adjustments faced by widows may be influenced by the views society may take in relation to death. Buchanan (1974) has found that there are three stages one may go through after the loss of a husband. The first stage may involve some form of self grieving, the second stage may deal with the widow's fear of managing her life alone; and the third stage may be in the form of bitterness and anger. Miles

and Hays (1975) have found that widows may experience adjustments of abandonment, loneliness, financial insecurity, and resentment of status change.

It is interesting that other non-western societies have structured roles to offer the widow in adjusting to the death of her husband (Mathison, 1970). However, the United States has very few guidelines for adjustment and appropriate behavior for widows.

The areas dealt with in this study consisted of the following: role changes entailed in widowhood; factors involving health, age, and length of time widowed; interaction of family and friends; education, employment, and income level; living arrangements; and attitudes toward remarriage. It is hoped that this study will encourage others interested in the family to study the social adjustments of women in widowhood.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

The purpose of this study was to examine widows' perceptions of social adjustment. In order to accomplish the above purpose, the following steps were followed: (1) selection of subjects; (2) development of the instrument; (3) collection of the data; and (4) analysis of data.

#### Selection of Subjects

The research design required that the researcher contact women who were widowed. This was done by contacting six ministers, by letter, in the Stillwater, Oklahoma area. The letter requested the ministers to supply a list of names of widows who might participate in a study of widows' perceptions of their social adjustments. Two ministers provided a list of widows, one consisting of approximately 24 names and the other consisting of five names. The other four ministers replied but they declined to give names of widows to the researcher. The two churches which responded were representative of the larger protestant churches in the city.

The widows were contacted by phone, an explanation of the research was given and a request for their cooperation was made. A total of 25 widows agreed to have the investigator come to their home. A description of the subjects can be found in Table I (page 27).

### Development of the Instrument

The instrument in this study, developed by the author, was devised to assess the social adjustment of women in widowhood. The instrument consisted of two parts; (1) general background information, including: (a) age, (b) religious commitment, (c) employment status, (d) health status, (e) income level, (f) education level, and (g) home ownership, and (2) questions concerning information about the widow, including: (a) period of time widowed, (b) present living condition, (c) frequency of social contact with friends, (d) frequency of social contact with family, (e) attitudes toward remarriage, and (f) degree of satisfaction with previous marriage.

### Validity

The questionnaire was given to a panel of four judges, all of whom hold advanced degrees in Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University. The judges rated the items in terms of the following:

- (1) Does the questionnaire measure the important aspects of social adjustment in widowhood?
- (2) Are the questions clear?
- (3) Are the questions specific?
- (4) Are the questions significant?

The suggestions made by the panel of judges were: (a) additional question added to the instrument, (b) some terms used in the instrument were changed.

### Pilot Study

Five widows who were not to be a part of the regular sample agreed to cooperate in a pilot study of the proposed instrument. This was an attempt to secure reactions to the instrument before actual collection of data was made. The widows for the pilot test were secured from a Methodist minister in the investigator's home town, Duncan, Oklahoma. The five widows were asked to rate the items according to the following:

- (1) Are the questions measuring what they are suppose to?
- (2) Are the questions placed in an order that is logical?
- (3) Are additional questions needed?
- (4) Are there too many questions?
- (5) Are there any offensive questions?

The suggestions made by these widows were: (a) information regarding discussion techniques during the interview, (b) changes in arrangement of questions in the instrument. These suggestions were incorporated into the instrument.

### Collection of the Data

After the initial phone contact with each of the 25 widows, a time and place for an interview was arranged. Four of the widows were not willing to be interviewed, but the majority were cooperative. All of the interviews were conducted in the widow's home. The widows seemed comfortable and natural in their behavior in their own home. The process for the collection of data from the widows consisted of the following: (1) spending about 15 minutes for investigator and widow to establish rapport, (2) asking widow to fill out questionnaire, and (3) informal visit between investigator and widow to get at widow's own

feelings concerning widowhood.

#### Analysis of Data

In order to analyze all information obtained in the questionnaire frequencies and percentages were used. The Chi-Square analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between the widows' social adjustment and the following:

- (a) Age
- (b) Health
- (c) Religious commitment
- (d) Education level
- (e) Employment
- (f) Present living conditions
- (g) Home ownership
- (h) Period of time widowed
- (i) Frequency of social contact with friends
- (j) Frequency of social contact with family
- (k) Income level
- (l) Attitude toward remarriage
- (m) Degree of satisfaction with previous marriage

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Description of the Subjects

A detailed description of the 25 subjects who participated in the study is presented in Table I. All of the respondents in the study were Caucasian. The largest majority of widows (40%) had been widowed for 11 or more years. A large majority of the widows (84%) did have children as compared to those widows (16%) who did not have children. In relation to education level, 40 percent of the widows had attended high school and 24 percent of the widows had graduated from high school, while 36 percent of the widows had attended college.

A large majority of the widows (60%) were employed as compared with those widows (40%) who were not employed. The type of employment that most of the working widows (40%) preferred dealt with clerical skills as compared to those widows (12%) who preferred employment dealing with domestic skills.

In relation to present income the majority of the widows (48%) had an income level of \$5,000 to \$10,000. Another group of widows (20%) had an income level of \$10,000 to \$20,000, while a smaller number of the widows (12%) had an income level of \$20,000 or above. There was also a group of widows (16%) who had an income level of \$5,000 or less. A large proportion of the widows (80%) owned their own home as compared to those widows (20%) who did not own their home.



TABLE I  
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	Number	Percent
Incidence of employment	Yes	14	56.0
	No	11	44.0
Type of employment	Clerical	10	40.0
	Domestic work	3	12.0
	Self-employed	1	4.0
Number of years widowed	1 - 6 months	1	4.0
	7 months - 1 year	2	8.0
	2 - 4 years	6	24.0
	5 - 10 years	6	24.0
	11 or more years	10	40.0
Level of education	Less than 8th grade	5	20.0
	Attended high school, but didn't graduate	5	20.0
	Graduated from high school	6	24.0
	Attended college	3	12.0
	Graduated from two-year college	1	4.0
	Graduated from four-year college	3	12.0
	Attended graduate school	2	8.0
	Completed graduate work for a profession	0	0.0
Income level before widowed	5,000 or less	3	12.0
	5,000 - 10,000	8	32.0
	10,000 - 20,000	8	32.0
	20,000 or above	6	24.0
Income level after widowed	5,000 or less	4	16.0
	5,000 - 10,000	12	48.0
	10,000 - 20,000	5	20.0
	20,000 or above	3	12.0
Number of children	None	4	16.0
	One	4	16.0
	Two	6	24.9
	Three	8	32.0
	Four	2	8.0
	More than four	1	4.0
Incidence of home ownership	Yes	20	80.0
	No	5	20.0

In Table II can be found other information about the widows obtained from the instrument. In relation to religious commitment 52 percent of the widows perceived themselves as religious while 12 percent of the widows perceived themselves as somewhat religious. None of the respondents viewed themselves as not religious.

A large proportion of the widows (80%) felt that employment was a good way to meet others, while 16 percent of the widows felt that employment was not a good way to meet others.

More than half of the widows (64%) felt that education had helped their social adjustment to widowhood as compared to those widows (36%) who felt that education had not helped in their social adjustment to widowhood. A majority of the widows (56%) felt more education would not have been helpful in their social adjustment to widowhood as compared with those widows (44%) who felt more education would have been helpful in their social adjustment to widowhood. A large proportion of the widows viewed themselves as having no health problems (80%) after their husband's death as compared to those widows (20%) who did have health problems after their husband's death. More than half of the widows (76%) felt that health problems were not affecting their social contacts as compared to those widows (24%) who felt that health problems did affect their social contacts.

In relation to age at which adjustment to widowhood would be easier, the majority of the widows (36%) viewed the age range of 21-30 as the easiest age to experience widowhood as compared to those widows (16%) who felt that the age range of 31-40 would be the easiest age to experience widowhood.

TABLE II  
 INFORMATION OBTAINED THROUGH THE INSTRUMENT

Variable	Classification	Number	Percent*
Religious commitment	Very religious	9	36.0
	Religious	13	52.0
	Somewhat religious	3	12.0
	Not religious	0	0.0
Did education help in your adjustment?	Yes	16	64.0
	No	9	36.0
Could more educa- tion help in your adjustment?	Yes	11	44.0
	No	14	56.0
Problems which edu- cation helped you to handle	Management of finances	12	48.0
	Securing a job	5	20.0
	Investments	1	4.0
	Future management of finances	4	16.0
	Other	3	12.0
After the death of your husband did you find it nec- essary to seek employment?	Yes	13	52.0
	No	12	48.0
Reasons for seek- ing employment after widowed	Financial support	10	40.0
	More contact with opposite sex	0	0.0
	More contact with same sex	0	0.0
	Less time to think of husband	0	0.0
	Companionship	3	12.0
	Loneliness	0	4.0
	Other	0	0.0
Type of employ- ment respondent would consider	Clerical work	5	20.0
	Sales person	2	8.0
	Light housekeeping	7	28.0
	Babysitting	0	0.0
	Volunteer work	8	32.0
	Other	3	12.0
Did you have any health problems before the death of your husband?	Yes	9	36.0
	No	16	64.0

TABLE II (Continued)

Variable	Classification	Number	Percent
Type of personal health problems experienced before widowed	Emotional	1	4.0
	High blood pressure	3	12.0
	Diabetes	1	4.0
	Physical problems (stroke, broken bones)	3	12.0
	Allergies	1	4.0
At the time of your husband's death did you experience any type of illness?	Yes	5	20.0
	No	20	80.0
Type of illness at the time of husband's death	Nervousness and allergies	2	8.0
	High blood pressure	1	4.0
	Physical problems (stroke, broken bones)	2	8.0
Type of health problem that has given you the most trouble since your husband's death	Inability to sleep	5	20.0
	Headaches	6	24.0
	Arthritis	6	24.0
	Rheumatism	0	0.0
	No problems	6	24.0
	Other	2	8.0
Type of living arrangement at present	Living in own home	19	76.0
	Living in an apartment	0	0.0
	Living with a sister or brother	0	0.0
	Living with a married daughter	0	0.0
	Living with a married son	0	0.0
	Living with a single son	2	8.0
	Living with a single daughter	0	0.0
	Other	4	16.0
Do you live alone?	Yes	19	76.0
	No	6	24.0
Types of adjustments in living alone	Loneliness	14	56.0
	Lack of companionship	5	20.0
	Lack of husband's advice and support	3	12.0
	Learning to do things for yourself	0	0.0
	Other	3	12.0
Consideration given to living with children	Yes	1	4.0
	No	21	84.0

TABLE II (Continued)

Variable	Classification	Number	Percent
Problems involved in living with children	Living arrangements	7	28.0
	Lack of privacy	3	12.0
	Lack of specific job around the house	1	4.0
	Temptation to meddle in children's affairs	0	0.0
	Children's temptation to meddle in your affairs	0	0.0
	Money	0	0.0
	Other	10	40.0
Do you feel that in working out- side of the home there is opportu- nity to meet many different people?	Yes	20	80.0
	No	4	16.0
Do you feel that employment would help social adjustment?	Yes	20	80.0
	No	5	20.0
Do you feel that your age has helped or hin- dered your social contact with others, since your husband's death?	Yes	11	44.0
	No	14	56.0
Age at which so- cial adjustment could be easier for widow	20 and under	5	20.0
	21-30	9	36.0
	31-40	4	16.0
	41-50	5	20.0
	51-60	0	0.0
	61-70	2	8.0
	71 and above	0	0.0
Do you have any children?	Yes	21	84.0
	No	4	16.0

TABLE II (Continued)

Variable	Classification	Number	Percent
How often do you get together with any of your children?	Once a day	5	20.0
	Once a week	5	20.0
	Once a month	5	20.0
	Once a year	3	12.0
	Other	3	12.0
If you have grand-children how often do you get together with any of them?	Once a day	1	4.0
	Once a week	3	12.0
	Once a month	6	24.0
	Once a year	3	12.0
	Other	3	12.0
How frequently do you socially contact female friends?	Never	1	4.0
	Occasionally	7	28.0
	Often	11	44.0
	All the time	6	24.0
How frequently do you socially contact male friends?	Never	9	36.0
	Occasionally	12	48.0
	Often	4	16.0
	All the time	0	0.0
Do you have a close female friend who enjoys social activities with you?	Yes	22	88.0
	No	3	12.0
Do you have a close male friend who enjoys social activities with you?	Yes	4	16.0
	No	21	84.0
How many new acquaintances have you met, through job of friends, since the death of your husband?	0-5	4	16.0
	6-10	2	8.0
	11-13	3	12.0
	16-21	1	4.0
	22 or more	15	60.0
Have you found new friends who have become important in your life?	Yes	19	76.0
	No	6	24.0

TABLE II (Continued)

Variable	Classification	Number	Percent
Do you still keep up social contact with old friends, since your husband's death?	Yes	18	72.0
	No	7	28.0
Types of old friends you socially contact	Women	0	0.0
	Men	0	0.0
	Couples	2	8.0
	Women and couples	6	24.0
	Men and couples	0	0.0
	All types	10	40.0
Reasons for little social contact with couples	Uncomfortableness in being the odd woman	6	24.0
	Jealousy of other wives	1	4.0
	Approaches by married men	1	4.0
	Stuck with a surprise date	0	0.0
	Nothing in common	11	44.0
	Other	6	24.0
How often do you have social contact with others besides your family?	Never	0	0.0
	Occasionally	4	16.0
	Often	14	56.0
	Very often	7	28.0
Have you found family help to be an essential part of your adjustment to the death of your husband?	Yes	19	76.0
	No	6	24.0
Given the right opportunity would you remarry?	Yes	9	36.0
	No	16	64.0
Would your children and relatives approve of a remarriage for you?	Yes	18	72.0
	No	6	24.0
Who do you think might object to your remarriage?	Children	4	16.0
	Relatives	2	8.0
	In-laws	1	4.0
	No one	17	68.0

TABLE II (Continued)

Variable	Classification	Number	Percent
Do you feel there would be many problems involved in remarriage?	Yes	15	60.0
	No	10	40.0
Types of problems involved in remarriage	Financial	3	12.0
	Housing arrangements	0	0.0
	Sex	0	0.0
	Children	2	8.0
	Relatives	1	4.0
	Memories of husband	10	40.0
	Adjusting old friendships to new ones	4	16.0
	Other	4	16.0
Characteristic valued most in a second husband	Affection	2	8.0
	Love	5	20.0
	Companionship	14	56.0
	Someone to shoulder responsibility	0	0.0
	Good financial provider	1	4.0
	Other	2	8.0
Satisfaction of needs in previous marriage	Low need	2	8.0
	Met most needs	6	24.0
	High need	17	68.0
Most important need your husband satisfied	Financial support	7	28.0
	Ability to listen and understand	9	36.0
	Interest and encouragement	4	16.0
	Ability to handle household affairs	0	0.0
	Sex	0	0.0
	Strength in making decisions	1	4.0
	Other	3	12.0
Overall social adjustment	Unsuccessful	0	0.0
	Successful	13	52.0
	Very successful	12	48.0

\* Responses do not total 100% because some failed to respond.



A large number of the widows (76%) live alone as compared to those widows (24%) who do not live alone. Approximately half of the widows (56%) expressed loneliness as one of the biggest adjustments in living alone.

More than half of the widows (60%) interacted with their children at least once a month, if not more, as compared to those widows (24%) who interacted with their children once a year or less. In relation to living with children almost all of the widows (84%) viewed this as impossible as compared to those widows (4%) who viewed living with their children as a possibility.

In relation to contacts with close friends most of the widows (88%) had a close female friend as compared with those widows (12%) who did not have a close female friend. A larger proportion of widows (48%) had a close male friend with whom they occasionally enjoyed social activities, as compared with those widows (4%) who had social contact often with a close male friend. More than half of the widows (76%) felt that new friends had become very important in their life as compared to those widows (24%) who did not feel that new friends had become important. More than half of the widows (76%) viewed their new friends as important because they provided a source of companionship and support. A large number of the widows (56%) often experienced social contact with others besides their family. Also a large majority of the widows (76%) perceived family help as important to social adjustment in widowhood as compared to those widows (24%) who perceived family help as not important to social adjustment.

A large proportion of the widows (64%) did not play to remarry as compared to those widows (36%) who would remarry if given the right

opportunity. Although, in relation to problems involved in remarriage a large majority of the widows (60%) felt there would be few problems as compared to those widows (40%) who felt there would be many problems. More than half of the widows (56%) viewed companionship as the most valued characteristic in a second husband. In relation to self-confidence at various times during widowhood most of the widows perceived 1-6 weeks as a time of shock and disbelief. The second period of time from six weeks to four months was viewed by the widows as a time of very little self-confidence. The most difficult time for most of the widows was the time period of four months to one year because at this time realization that their husband is gone finally is believed. It is during this time that the widow realizes that she must rebuild her self-confidence. The last period of 1 year and longer was seen as a time of rebuilding confidence and making social contacts with others.

A large number of widows (52%) felt that the role change from wife to single woman had not really affected their social adjustment. A smaller proportion of widows (48%) felt that the role change from wife to that of a single woman had affected their social adjustment. In relation to overall social adjustment most of the widows (52%) felt that they had successfully adjusted socially to the death of their husband. Another proportion of the widows (48%) felt that they had adjusted very successfully to the death of their husband. None of the widows viewed their social adjustment as unsuccessful.

#### Examination of Hypothesis

Hypothesis I - There will be no significant association between social adjustment to widowhood and the following:

- (a) Age
- (b) Health
- (c) Religious commitment
- (d) Education level
- (e) Employment level
- (f) Present living conditions
- (g) Home ownership
- (h) Period of time widowed
- (i) Frequency of social contact with friends
- (j) Frequency of social contact with family
- (k) Income level
- (l) Attitude toward remarriage
- (m) Degree of satisfaction with previous marriage

The Chi-Square analysis determined that there were no significant associations between social adjustment to widowhood and the variables listed in the above hypothesis. The analysis was complicated by the small number of subjects in the study.

#### Information Resulting From Interviews

During the interviews the widows shared many of their feelings regarding their social adjustments in widowhood. The first area that was discussed dealt with the religious commitment of the widow and her social adjustment to widowhood. The majority of the widows felt that they were religious. As one widow put it, "I could not have made it through the death of my husband without faith in God." There were a few widows who perceived themselves as somewhat religious. As one widow stated, "Religion has not been one of my biggest helps through

my husband's death, but I do have a belief in God." It seemed that those widows who had a very strong belief in God were more relaxed and more talkative during the interview. These widows seemed more accepting of death and as one widow felt, "Death is a natural occurrence and we might as well try to adjust ourselves to it." It was also interesting to note that these religious widows seemed to be more accepting of their own death.

Many of the widows viewed church activities as a great source of social contact. One widow stated, "If I didn't have my friends and activities at church, I just really don't know what I would do." The other widows who viewed themselves as somewhat religious seemed to be uneasy during the interview. They were very unaccepting of their husband's death and many times seemed to avoid the use of the term "death". These widows seemed to have very little social contact with others. They were all employed and work seemed to be the center of their life since their husband's death. Many of these widows expressed a wish for greater faith in God. As one widow felt, "It could have been a great help to have had a strong belief in God, but I didn't and I suppose I never will."

The next area discussed in the interviews dealt with education. Nearly all of the widows had attended high school and some had attended college. Many of the widows felt education was not important in adjusting socially to the death of their husband. As one widow stated, "Education or the lack of has nothing to do with the death of your husband." Another widow stated that, "In widowhood you have to educate yourself." Several of the widows felt that no matter how much or how little education they had it was enough. Such as this widow who stated, "I have

not had much education but what I have had has been enough to get by." Most of the widows felt that more education was not needed. One exception was that most of the widows needed more knowledge in matters dealing with finance. One widow stated,

More education would not have helped me in adjusting to the loss of my husband. This is something that deals with your innermost feelings, not with how much education you have. Granted, education is needed in dealing with practical matters, such as finances, but as far as I'm concerned has little worth in adjusting socially to the death of a husband.

The next area discussed dealt with employment. Many of the widows were employed. One widow stated, "Work has really helped me; it has given me a routine. It is something to look forward to. It is a motivator--it is something you have to do." Most of the working widows seemed to need other people. As this widow stated, "In working outside the home you have less time to think of your problems. You meet new kinds of people. You need to be around other people--it really helps." It seems that for many of the widows work helps them to regain confidence in their abilities to carry on without their husbands. One widow who seemed to be having a hard time in adjusting socially to her husband's death felt,

Work is doing something constructive with all the free time you have. I just could not imagine what my life would be like without my work. I do not see how a widow could cope with life if she did not do something worthwhile with her time.

Nearly all the working widows felt that work was the answer to keeping busy and doing something constructive with their time. It was interesting to note that work was not particularly viewed as a source of social contact. Many of the working widows had social contact with other women who worked with them through such activities as, shopping, eating out,

or attending a movie. Very few times were any of the widows invited to a social gathering by married women with whom they worked. The exception being if an escort was provided or if other widows were attending. One widow stated, "Employment has provided a source of companionship but this does not mean it has provided social contacts outside of work." It seemed that most of the widows who worked viewed employment as having little to do with social adjustment. One widow stated,

As far as social adjustment goes, being employed does not help. Friends at work are not really close friends--they are people who have to interact with you. They are usually not the ones with whom you interact with on a social basis.

Also most of these widows found that working was essential to their financial well-being. As one widow put it, "I really have no choice since my husband's death. Things have really been bad financially." There was also a group of widows who did not work. It should be mentioned that some of these widows had retired. Many of these widows mentioned that they had a great deal of free time since they did not work. One of the widows interviewed described very well her feelings regarding work,

In working outside the home, there is opportunity to meet new people, whether these people become important is another thing. Personally, I never wanted or found the need to work outside the home even after my husband's death. I do feel now that in looking back employment would have helped my adjustment to widowhood. I have had a very hard time in accepting my husband's death. Work probably would have taken my mind off my husband and my problems. It would also have made me feel needed.

In regard to those widows who were retired it seemed that they immediately found new activities to take the place of their work.

The next area discussed in the interviews dealt with finances.

Most all of the widows found that their financial status dropped when

widowed. The only exception was one widow who remarried and her financial status increased with her remarriage. This was the only area of discussion that the widows seemed to be hesitant about. In most cases the widows knew exactly how much their income had been before their husband's death, but many had no idea how much their income was after their husband's death. One widow stated, "Off-hand I had no idea of what my financial status was at the present time." Many of the widows found this to be a very helpful part of the interview. Nearly all of the widows took time to figure out their current income. One of the widows stated, "This discussion about finances really seemed a little too personal, but after talking about it, I find it has been a very valuable experience." Most of the widows felt that financial status had a great deal to do with social adjustment. One widow stated, "It is terrible to admit, but if you don't have the money for entertainment or shopping, your social adjustment to losing your husband is hard. At the beginning of your loss, you need to get out and do things." In general, it seems that most of the widows find this to be a very touchy subject, but it may be an area that needs more discussion.

The next area of discussion in the interview dealt with the health of the widow and her social adjustment to widowhood. The majority of the widows did not have any health problems before their husband's death. Very few of the widows developed serious health problems following their husband's death. The few widows who did experience serious problems after their husband's death felt these problems were due to nervous disorders. The widows were also asked if there were any type of minor health problem that bothered them after their husband's death. There were several things that most of the widows

discussed. They were headaches, inability to sleep, and arthritis. One widow stated, "Inability to sleep is the worst feeling. My husband had been gone for 12 years and I still have a very hard time trying to sleep." Another widow stated, "My headaches started right after my husband's death and I still have them occasionally on a bad day." Many of the widows experienced stiffness of bones and the development of arthritis soon after their husband's death. The majority of the widows felt that health problems did not affect their social contact with others. One widow stated, "Even though I do occasionally have a day that I am not feeling well, I don't let it affect my social contacts."

The next area discussed dealt with age and its effect on the social adjustment of widows. The widows were asked to discuss the age at which social adjustment could be easier. The majority of the widows found the age range between 21 and 30 could be the easiest time to be widowed. One widow stated, "You are still young and it is easier to begin a new life." More than half of the widows felt that their age had not affected their social contact with others. Although a small number of widows felt that age did play a part in social contact with others, one widow stated, "Men look for much younger women even though they are more your age."

Length of widowhood was also an area of discussion in regard to social adjustment in widowhood. Most of the women had been widowed between 5 and 11 years. One widow stated, "The longer you are widowed, the easier it gets to make social contacts." Most of the widows felt that with length of widowhood social adjustment becomes attainable. Another area of concern was home ownership. The majority of the widows did own their home and this seemed to be an important part of their



social adjustment. One widow stated, "If my home had not been paid for I could never have made it through my husband's death." It seems that in owning their home a sense of security is gained. As another widow stated, "At least you own your home and no one can take that."

The type of living arrangement was another area of discussion. Nearly all of the widows lived alone and most found this the only way to live. The biggest problem seemed to be loneliness involved in living alone. As one widow stated, "It gets awfully lonely, but in the long run, it is better to live alone." Another widow expressed her feelings this way, "The worst part of living alone is coming home to an empty house and eating dinner alone. If I can make it past that I'm usually fine." A third widow stated, "When my husband died I felt so alone. My best suggestion for other widows is to keep busy. Don't dwell on your husband's death or it will drive you crazy."

Social contact with family and its effects on social adjustment was another area of discussion. Nearly all of the widows had children but most of them had families of their own. All of the widows with children viewed their families as the biggest source of support and comfort during their social adjustment to their husband's death. One widow stated, "My family has been great, the kids have really helped me. If it had not been for my family I just really do not know who I could have counted on." Another widow felt, "Your children are your life, they provide things to look forward to." In general, it seems that family help is an important factor in successful social adjustment to widowhood. The few widows who did not have any children seemed to value parental support and encouragement. In one case a very close friend provided support for the widow.

Social contacts with friends and its relation to social adjustment was another area of discussion. Most of the widows had a close friend and in every case it was another woman. One widow stated, "It is great to have a close friend. It really helps to have someone who you can feel close to. It's not like having your husband, but it can make up for some of the loneliness." Another widow felt that friends, "Provide encouragement, companionship, and support. Someone with whom you can share your honest feelings. People who will be understanding and who will listen to you. You can be yourself around them." Nearly all of the widows felt that social contact with friends was an important part of adjusting socially to the death of their husband.

Another area of discussion dealt with remarriage and its relation to social adjustment in widowhood. Nearly all of the widows felt that they would not remarry. One widow stated, "This has never crossed my mind. I was very happy with my husband and I had a good marriage. I just would not like to risk another try." Another widow stated, "I have never met anyone who could fill my husband's shoes." There were only a few widows who would even consider remarriage. There was one widow in particular who had been widowed twice and she stated, "I swore when my first husband died I would not remarry but I did. So I guess I would probably remarry again. I hate being alone and I hate being a widow." Most of the widows seemed to view remarriage as unimportant in social adjustment to widowhood.

An area of discussion in the interview dealt with the interaction between widows and old friends. One widow stated,

I do try to keep up contacts with friends we knew, but it is different now. I really feel like an outsider around couples. They try to go out of their way to make you feel

at ease, but later they ignore you. It was really bad when I was first widowed because couples would be so nice but the wives were always on edge. It seems they are afraid to leave their husbands in the same room with you. The funny thing is I did not even want their husbands or any other man but my husband. It would seem that other people you knew before your husband's death, would realize that all you want is a little companionship from others. I really pity other women when they lose their husbands then they will know how it feels.

Previous marriage satisfaction was an area of discussion. The majority of the widows viewed their marriage in terms of high need satisfaction. As one widow put it, "There was only one man for me and he satisfied my needs very well." Another widow expressed how her husband satisfied her needs, "He was all I could ever have asked for. He had the greatest ability of listening and understanding. I really miss this." In general most of the widows were highly satisfied with their previous marriage, but this did not seem to make remarriage more appealing.

Another area of discussion dealt with feelings of confidence in self at various periods of time. The majority of the widows felt that 1-6 weeks was a time of numbness and shock. As one widow stated, "I was lost and I could not even realize that my husband was dead." Another widow stated, "I was shakey and I had no confidence in myself at all." The next time period of 6 weeks to 4 months was still a time of confusion for most of the widows. One widow stated, "It was a time in which I began to realize that I must pull myself together and I knew with God's help I could." Most of the widows felt that this was a time of slowly gaining more confidence in self. The next time period was 4 months to 1 year and it was at this time that nearly all of the widows were gaining more confidence in self it not complete confidence. As

one widow put it, "I'm almost completely confident in my abilities to handle financial affairs since my husband's death. Still another widow felt she was, "Beginning to regain confidence and slowly rebuilding her life." The next time period of 1 year and longer was felt to be the time in which self-confidence should be regained. One widow stated, "I'm almost myself again but it has taken a year for me to regain any sort of confidence. There are still days in which my confidence in self is low but on the whole I'm much more confident than in the beginning of widowhood."

An area of discussion during the interviews dealt with role change from that of a wife to that of a single woman. The majority of the widows did not find their role change very difficult. One widow stated, "I have been able to accept the fact that I'm a widow and I do not dwell on how it would have been if my husband had lived." There was also a smaller number of women who felt their role change was very difficult. As one widow put it, "My marriage was very successful but I just could not cope with being alone." Another widow felt very good about her role change from wife to that of a single woman. She stated, "I have gained a new sense of freedom. I'm much freer in my contacts with others. I have become a very outgoing person. I think the change has really been for the best." Another widow stated, "I was very dependent on my husband and it has been very difficult to adjust."

The last area discussed was the overall social adjustment to widowhood. None of the widows felt their adjustment had been unsuccessful. The majority of widows felt their social adjustment had been successful and a smaller number felt their overall social adjustment had been very successful.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The purposes of this study were (1) to develop an instrument to assess the degree of social adjustment perceived by women who have experienced widowhood. The instrument assessed information in the following areas: role changes, companionship with opposite-sex friends, attitudes toward remarriage, family contacts, religious commitment, employment, income level, living arrangements, length of time widowed, age, health, educational level, and degree of satisfaction with previous marriage; (2) to determine if social adjustment of widows was associated with the following: (a) age, (b) health, (c) religious commitment, (d) educational level, (e) employment level, (f) present living conditions, (g) home ownership, (h) period of time widowed, (i) frequency of social contact with friends, (j) frequency of social contact with family, (k) income level, (l) attitude toward remarriage, (m) degree of satisfaction with previous marriage.

The sample consisted of 25 widows from the Stillwater area. All of the subjects were Caucasian. The majority of the women had been widowed for 11 or more years. Most of the women had attended high school and a smaller group had attended college. The majority of the widows viewed themselves as religious while a smaller proportion viewed themselves as somewhat religious.

The questionnaire included the following areas; (1) general background information, including: (a) age, (b) health, (c) religious commitment, (d) education level, (e) employment, (f) present living conditions, (g) home ownership, (h) period of time widowed, (i) frequency of social contact with friends, (j) frequency of social contact with family, (k) income level, (l) attitude toward remarriage, (m) degree of satisfaction with previous marriage. The Chi-Square analysis determined that the perceived adjustment of widows in the study was not associated with the following:

- (a) Age
- (b) Health
- (c) Religious commitment
- (d) Educational level
- (e) Employment level
- (f) Present living conditions
- (g) Home ownership
- (h) Period of time widowed
- (i) Frequency of social contact with friends
- (j) Frequency of social contact with family
- (k) Income level
- (l) Attitude toward remarriage
- (m) Degree of satisfaction with previous marriage

#### Findings of the Interviews

Age was an area of discussion which was not viewed by the majority of widows as important to social adjustment. A smaller number of the widows did view age as important to social adjustment to widowhood.

One widow stated, "It is better to be young because you have your whole life ahead of you. It makes a big difference when you're middle-aged or older." As another widow put it, "Men look for much younger women even though they may be your age."

The widows did not seem to view health as an important aspect of social adjustment. The widows did not feel that health problems affected their social contacts. As one widow stated, "I may occasionally have a day that I do not feel well but I do not let it affect my social contacts." It seemed that for most of the widows health was not seen as a problem in relation to social contacts.

The widows seemed to feel that religious commitment was a very important factor in social adjustment to widowhood. Most of the widows viewed themselves as religious and a smaller number viewed themselves as somewhat religious. Many of the widows viewed their social contacts around church friends and church activities. One widow stated, "If I did not have my friends and activities at church, I just really don't know what I would do." It seems that for all of the respondents some form of religious commitment is important to their social adjustments.

Education was another area which was not seen as important to social adjustment by the majority of the widows. Nearly all of the widows attended high school and some had attended college. One widow stated, "Education has nothing to do with the death of your husband." The majority of the widows felt that more education was not needed. The one exception was in the area of finances. The majority of the widows felt that more knowledge was needed in dealing with finances.

Employment was viewed by the majority of the widows as important to social adjustment in widowhood. A large number of the widows were employed. One widow stated, "In working outside the home, you have less time to think of your problems." It should be noted that work was not particularly viewed as a source of social contact. There was a smaller group of widows who did not work. One widow stated, "Work probably would have taken my mind off my husband and my problems. It would also have made me feel needed."

Present living conditions was another area of discussion in the interviews. Most of the widows viewed this as having little to do with their social adjustment in widowhood. Nearly all of the widows lived alone and they felt this was the best arrangement for them. As one widow put it, "I cannot see myself as living any way but alone even though it does get lonely." One of the biggest problems found among the widows who lived alone was loneliness. As one widow stated, "It is awful to come home to an empty house." Another widow stated, "I miss just knowing someone is there for you if you need them."

Home ownership was viewed by the majority of the widows as important to social adjustment. One widow stated, "It is such a relief to know your home is paid for." The owning of a home seemed to give the widows a sense of security. As another widow stated, "If your home is paid for it really helps to take some of the financial pressure off you. You can enjoy life more."

Social adjustment in widowhood and length of widowhood seemed to be important to the widows interviewed. A large number of the widows had been widowed between 5 and 11 years when interviewed. As one widow stated, "The longer you are widowed the easier social contacts become."



In general most of the widows viewed length of widowhood as important to their social adjustment.

Frequency of social contact with friends seemed to be important to most of the widows. Nearly all of the widows had a very close friend with whom they could share their feelings. One widow stated, "It is great to have a close friend. It's not like having your husband but it can make up for some of the loneliness." In general contact with friends seemed to help the widow to get out socially. As one widow stated, "My close friend really encourages me to get out. We often go out together; it really helps."

Frequency of social contact with family seemed to be important to the majority of the widows who had children. Many of the widows expressed feelings such as, "I never could have made it without my children. They gave such support and encouragement." It seemed that most of the widows relied most on help from their children, not other relatives or in-laws.

Income level and social adjustment to widowhood was viewed as important to the majority of the widows. It was found that most of the widows' incomes dropped with widowhood. One exception was with remarriage in which the income increased. A large number of the widows seemed to view income as important to social adjustment since income level influenced their standard of living. One widow stated, "It takes extra money to go shopping or out to a movie." It seemed that income level seemed to influence the incidence of social contact with others outside the home.

Attitudes toward remarriage were not viewed as important to social adjustment by the widows. The majority of the widows would not remarry

and as one widow stated, "Remarriage has never crossed my mind. No man could ever take my husband's place." There was a smaller majority of widows who would consider remarriage. As one widow put it, "I had a wonderful marriage and I would like to find someone as good as my husband was. I really hate living alone. I guess I just like being married." Another widow felt very good about her role change from wife to that of a single woman. She stated, "I have gained a new sense of freedom. I'm much freer in my contacts with others. I have become a very outgoing person. I think the change has really been for the best."

Degree of satisfaction with previous marriage seemed to be important to the social adjustment of widows. All of the widows perceived their overall social adjustment as successful or very successful. One widow stated, "My marriage was very successful and this has really helped me in my social adjustment. I was successful in one relationship and this encourages me in other social contacts."

#### Areas of Possible Study

This study indicates the need for more research into the social adjustments of widows. Many of the respondents expressed relief at being able to share their own feelings regarding the social adjustments involved in being a widow. They all expressed the need for more information regarding widowhood. As one widow put it, "It is so confusing to be a widow--how are you suppose to behave--what are you suppose to do?" It seems that most major events in society do have ritualized behaviors for people, but in widowhood it seems the individual must try to figure out his or her appropriate role.

The respondents also expressed interest in community involvement regarding widows. Although there is a program set up for widows in Stillwater, none of the respondents attended. In the interviewing process it was suggested that some form of counseling for widows might be helpful. In talking to the respondents it seemed that counseling could be most beneficial approximately six months to two or more years after the death of a husband. The majority of the widows seemed to think that they had made the social adjustment to widowhood very well, but they did express the need for knowing that some kind of counseling was available, if needed.

Some of the respondents also suggested some kind of organization in which widows and widowers could come together to meet and discuss some of their social adjustment problems. As one respondent explained, "It would be nice to meet persons, of both sexes, who have lost a husband or wife--they know how you feel." The study of widowhood is an area in which much could be done to help social adjustment. Family specialists, ministers, and other interested persons could be instrumental in helping widows to make an easier adjustment to the loss of their husband.

Some variables that may be looked at in future research are:

(a) satisfaction with employment, (b) children's views on widowhood, (c) interaction with grandchildren, (d) widows' views on remarriage, (e) suggestions for community help in dealing with problems of widowhood. In order to accomplish this, further research is needed which deals with the personal needs of the woman who has lost her husband.

### Limitations of the Study

It is important for the reader to realize that widowhood is a very emotional and guarded facet of life for many people. The lack of research dealing with widowhood, and specifically with social adjustment, indicated that this study could be helpful in gaining more information on such a neglected area. The major limitations of this study were due to the securing of respondents. Since the subject of widowhood is a very personal and private adjustment it was very hard to secure women who were willing to be interviewed. Therefore, it was necessary to use caution and tact in the selection of names given by the ministers. Another limitation of the study was the size of the sample. A larger sample would have yielded more information and insight into this aspect of family life. It is hoped that in the future more research will be conducted on the social adjustment of widows.

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, R. B. "Mutual Help for the Widowed." Social Work, 1972, 17 (5), 54-61.
- Arling, G. "Resistance to Isolation Among Elderly Widows." Aging and Human Development, 1976, 7 (1), 67-85.
- Babchuk, N. "Primary Friends and Kin: A Study of the Associations of Middle-Class Couples." Social Forces, 1965, 43 (4), 483-493.
- Belcher, J. C. "The One-Person Household: A Consequence of the Isolated Nuclear Family?" Journal of Marriage and The Family, 1967, 29, 534-540.
- Berardo, F. M. "Widowhood Status in the United States; Perspective on a Neglected Aspect of the Family Life Cycle." Family Coordinator, 1968, 17, 191-201.
- Bernard, J. Remarriage. New York: The Dryden Press, 1956.
- Blau, Z. S. "Structural Constraints on Friendship in Old Age." American Sociological Review, 1961, 26 (3), 429-439.
- Bowerman, C. F. "Assortive Mating by Previous Marital Status: Seattle, 1939-1946." American Sociological Review, 1953, 26 (2), 170-177.
- Buchanan, R. L. "The Widow and Widower." In Earl E. Grollman (Ed.), Concerning Death: A Practical Guide for the Living. Boston: Beacon Press, 1974, pp. 287-311.
- Changing Times. November, 1961, pp. 10-13.
- Chevan, A., and Korson, H. J. "The Widowed Who Live Alone: An Examination of Social and Demographic Factors." Social Forces, 1972, 51, 45-52.
- Clayton, R. The Family, Marriage, and Social Change. Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1975.
- Cumming, E., and Henry, W. E. Growing Old. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1961.
- Engel, M. H. "The Widow." In William C. Bier (Ed.), Women in Modern Life. New York: Fordham University Press, 1968, pp. 158-181.

- Farmer, M. The Family. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1970.
- Kutner, B., Fansel, D., Togo, A., and Langner, T. Five-Hundred Over Sixty. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1956.
- Langer, M. Learning to Live as a Widow. New York: Julian Messner, 1957.
- Lopata, H. Z. "The Social Involvement of American Widows." American Behavioral Scientist, 1970, 14, 41-57.
- Lopata, H. Z. "Self-Identity in Marriage and Widowhood." The Sociological Quarterly, Summer 1973, 14, 407-418.
- Marris, P. Widows and Their Families. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958.
- Mathison, J. A. "Cross-Cultured View of Widowhood." Omega, 1970, 1, 201-217.
- McKain, W. C. "New Look at Older Marriage." Family Coordinator, 1972, 21, 61-69.
- Miles, H. S., and Hays, D. R. "Widowhood." American Journal of Nursing, 1975, 75, 280-282.
- Nimkoff, M. F. Comparative Family Systems. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.
- Parkes, M. C. "The First Year of Bereavement." In J. M. Bardwick (Ed.), Readings on the Psychology of Women. New York: Harper and Row, 1972, pp. 143-156.
- Pihlblad, C. T., and Adams, L. D. "Widowhood, Social Participation and Life Satisfaction." Aging and Human Development, 1972, 3 (4), 323-330.
- Shanas, E., Townsend, P., Wedderburn, D., Friis, H., Milhij, P., and Stehouwer, J. Old People in Three Industrial Societies. New York: Atherton Press, 1968.
- Sheldon, H. D. The Older Population of the United States. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958.
- Silverman, R. P. "Widowhood and Preventive Intervention." Family Coordinator, 1972, 21, 95-102.
- Statistical Abstract of the United States, 97th Edition. Washington, D. C.: United States Bureau of the Census, 1976, p. 37.
- Tunstall, J. Old and Alone. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

Williams, R. W. "Changing Status, Roles, and Relationships." In Clark Tibbits (Ed.), Handbook of Social Gerontology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 274-280, 474-486.

Znaniecki, F. Social Relations and Social Roles. San Francisco: Chandler, 1965.

## APPENDIXES



Please answer the items below as frankly as possible. The absence of your name from the information assures anonymity. Please mark the appropriate space. Also on some of the questions there are blank spaces; please feel free to give your own response. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Please rate your degree of religious commitment:

- \_\_\_ 1. Very religious                      \_\_\_ 3. Somewhat religious  
\_\_\_ 2. Religious                              \_\_\_ 4. Not religious

2. What type of education have you had?

- \_\_\_ 1. Less than 8th grade  
\_\_\_ 2. Attended high school but did not graduate  
\_\_\_ 3. Graduated from high school  
\_\_\_ 4. Attended college  
\_\_\_ 5. Graduated from two year college  
\_\_\_ 6. Graduated from four year college  
\_\_\_ 7. Attended graduate school  
\_\_\_ 8. Completed graduate work for a profession

3. Do you feel that the amount of education you have had, has helped you in adjusting to the death of your husband?

- \_\_\_ 1. Yes  
\_\_\_ 2. No

4. Do you feel that more education would have helped you in meeting the problems of widowhood?

- \_\_\_ 1. Yes  
\_\_\_ 2. No

5. Please check the type of problems that you feel education has helped you to handle, since the death of your husband? (Please check only one)

1. Management of financial needs
2. Securing a job
3. Investments
4. Future management of finances
5. Other (Please indicate the type of problem, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are you presently employed?

1. Yes
2. No

Please describe the type of employment in the blank provided

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. After the death of your husband did you find it necessary to seek employment?

1. Yes
2. No

8. Please check the most important reason for seeking employment:

1. Financial support
2. More contact with persons of the opposite sex
3. More contact with persons of the same sex
4. Less time to think of husband
5. Companionship
6. Loneliness
7. Other (Please indicate the type of reasons, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you feel that in working outside of the home there is opportunity to meet many different people?

     1. Yes

     2. No

Would you please explain the reason or reasons for your above answer in the space provided \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you feel that being employed would help your social adjustment to widowhood?

     1. Yes

     2. No

11. If you were choosing a type of employment which one of the following would you consider? (Please check only one)

     1. Clerical work

     2. Sales person

     3. Light housekeeping

     4. Babysitting

     5. Volunteer work

     6. Other (Please describe the type of employment, if none of the above, in the blank provided)

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Please check the approximate amount of your income before your husband's death:

     1. 5,000 or less

     3. 10,000 to 20,000

     2. 5,000 to 10,000

     4. 20,000 or above

13. Please check the approximate amount of your present income:

     1. 5,000 or less

     3. 10,000 to 20,000

     2. 5,000 to 10,000

     4. 20,000 or above

14. Did you have any health problems before the death of your husband?

1. Yes

2. No

Please describe the health problem or problems \_\_\_\_\_

---

15. At the time of your husband's death did you experience any type of illness?

1. Yes

2. No

Please describe the illness \_\_\_\_\_

---

16. Please check the type of health problem, if any, that has given you the most trouble since your husband's death: (Please check only one)

1. Inability to sleep

2. Headaches

3. Arthritis

4. Rheumatism

5. No health problems

6. Other (Please indicate the type of problem, if none of the above, in the space provided) \_\_\_\_\_

---

17. Do you feel that health problems have affected your social contact with others since your husband's death?

1. Yes

2. No

If so, please indicate the reasons in the blank provided \_\_\_\_\_

---

18. Do you feel that your age has helped or hindered your social contact with others, since your husband's death?

1. Yes

2. No

19. Please check the age at which you think social adjustment in widowhood could be easier: (Please check only one)

1. 20 and under

5. 51-60

2. 21-30

6. 61-70

3. 31-40

7. 71 and above

4. 41-50

20. How long have you been widowed?

1. 1-6 months

4. 5-10 years

2. 7 months - 1 year

5. 11 or more years

3. 2-4 years

21. Do you own the home in which you now live?

1. Yes

2. No

22. Please check the type of living arrangements that you now have:

1. Living in own home

2. Living in an apartment

3. Living with a sister or brother

4. Living with a married daughter

5. Living with a married son

6. Living with a single son

7. Living with a single daughter

8. Other (Please indicate the type of living arrangement, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_

---

23. Do you live alone?

1. Yes

2. No

24. Please check the biggest adjustment you had to make in living alone?

1. Loneliness

2. Lack of companionship

3. Lack of husband's advice and support

4. Learning to do things for yourself

5. Other (Please describe the adjustment, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_

25. Do you have any children?

1. Yes

2. No

If you do have children would you please indicate how many and their ages in the following blank. \_\_\_\_\_

26. How often do you get together with any of your children?

1. Once a day

3. Once a month

2. Once a week

4. Once a year

5. Other (Please indicate how often, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_

27. If you have grandchildren how often do you get together with any of them?

1. Once a day

3. Once a month

2. Once a week

4. Once a year

5. Other (Please indicate how often, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_







41. What would be the biggest problem involved in living with your children? (Please check only one)

- 1. Living arrangements
  - 2. Lack of privacy
  - 3. Lack of specific job around the house
  - 4. Temptation to meddle in children's affairs
  - 5. Children's temptation to meddle in your affairs
  - 6. Money
  - 7. Other (Please describe the problem, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

42. Given the right opportunity would you get married again?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

43. Would your children and relatives approve of a remarriage for you?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Who do you think might object? \_\_\_\_\_

44. Do you feel there would be many problems involved in remarriage?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

45. If you decided to remarry which one of the following would be the biggest problem? (Please check only one)

1. Financial
2. Housing arrangements
3. Sex
4. Children
5. Relatives
6. Memories of husband
7. Adjusting old friendships to new ones
8. Other (Please describe the problem, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

46. Please check the characteristic you would value as most important in a second husband? (Please check only one)

1. Affection
2. Love
3. Companionship
4. Someone to shoulder responsibility
5. Good financial provider
6. Other (Please describe the characteristic, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

47. Would you please rate the degree to which your previous marriage satisfied your needs?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

- 1-4 Low need satisfaction
- 5-7 Met most needs
- 8-10 High need satisfaction

48. Please check the most important need that your husband satisfied for you?

1. Financial support
2. Ability to understand and listen to you
3. Interest and encouragement in your activities
4. Ability to handle difficult household problems
5. Sexual needs
6. Strength in making decisions
7. Other (Please describe the need, if none of the above, in the blank provided) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

49. Would you please describe your feelings of confidence in your self, at various periods of time, following the death of your husband.

1-6 weeks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6 weeks to 4 months \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4 months to 1 year \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 year and longer \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

50. Have you found your role change from a wife to that of a single woman very difficult?

1. Yes

2. No

Could you please give some possible reasons for your above answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

So far the purpose of this study has been to determine the social adjustment of women in widowhood. It may be helpful in the answering of this last question if the term, social adjustment was explained just a bit more. Social adjustment is a process or condition which enables a person to deal with life's changes and is affected by the interaction of the individual with other human beings.

51. Would you please rate your overall social adjustment to widowhood:

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

       1-4 Unsuccessful

       5-7 Successful

       8-10 Very successful

VITA

Patricia Ruth Treadwell

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Thesis: WIDOWS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Altus, Oklahoma, May 28, 1954, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Treadwell.

Education: Graduated from Duncan High School, Duncan, Oklahoma, in May, 1972; received Bachelor of Science in Home Economics degree from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May, 1976. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1977.

Honor Societies: Omicron Nu.