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DIFFICULTY OF DECISION-MAKING BY WIDOWS

by

Marilyn Bjorkman Noyes

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Household Economics and Management

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Marilyn Bjorkman Noyes

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ABSTRACT

Difficulty of Decision-Making by Widows

by

Marilyn Bjorkman Noyes, Master of Science

Utah State University, 1971

Major Professor: Miss Edith Nyman

Department: Household Economics and Management

The difficulty of decision-making by women who are widows compared to when they were wives was studied. The areas of decision-making that were rated as to difficult concerned family finance, child care, home-making (family foods, clothing, home furnishings, and housing), social activities, and yard and car care.

The sample consisted of 33 widows living in Logan, Utah during Spring Quarter, 1971. The subjects had at least one child living at home and had been widowed at least one year.

The instruments used were: (1) a background questionnaire, and (2) a decision-making questionnaire. The statistical test used for analysis was the sign (binomial) test.

Decisions concerning family finance, child care, cleaning and upkeep of the home, and yard care were more difficult for the women as widows than such decisions had been for them as wives.

Decisions concerning food, clothing, and home furnishings were not more difficult for the women as widows.

Decisions concerning washing the car were not more difficult, while decisions about maintenance, servicing, and repairs for the car were more difficult for the women as widows.

Decisions concerning social activities that are often done as individuals, not couples, were not more difficult for the women as widows. Decisions concerning those social activities that couples often participate in were more difficult for the women as widows than such decisions had been for them as wives.

(55 pages)

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Since the turn of the century there has been a continuous increase in the number of widows in American society. Berardo (1968) states that widowhood is becoming a major social phenomena. National census (U.S. Census, 1970) data indicate that there are approximately 11,750,000 widowed persons in the United States, of whom over nine and one-half million are women. At the present time widows outnumber widowers by more than four to one. According to the census data, one out of every eight women in the United States over the age of 14 is a widow.

Jacobsen (1959) cites three major factors to account for the excess numbers of widows over widowers in the United States: (1) mortality among women is lower than among men; (2) wives are typically younger than their husbands; and (3) among the widowed, remarriage rates are considerably lower for women than for men.

In view of these facts, one would expect that extensive investigation would have been done on this phenomena. Such is not the case. In fact, one is impressed by the lack of empirical data that are available. Several researchers, however, have recognized the need for information concerning widows and their pattern of adjustment. Eliot states:

The emotional and social adjustments to bereavement are an inevitable and universal experience, yet the natural reluctance of people to face this fact in advance or in retrospect has put a taboo upon the subject which ordinarily makes each such experience isolated and seemingly unique. Whether or not there are common elements of attitude and behavior underlying these experiences, the ways in which people have responded to and successfully recovered or unsuccessfully recovered from the shocks and strains of bereavement offer a problem for scientific study. (Eliot, 1930, p. 545)

Kent (1965, p. 14) remarked: "While much is made of the shock of retirement in gerontological literature, little is made of the shock of bereavement. Both are common expectations of mankind and should be studied."

Changes within the family itself motivate decision-making. These changes range from occupational or income changes to normal developmental changes (Paolucci, 1965). The loss of a family member is a normal developmental change and would require numerous decisions to meet the changed problems of family living. The loss of a husband creates many practical problems of living alone, requiring the widow to find new ways of carrying on family operations.

The husband's death creates a crisis situation which, according to Waller:

Strains the resources which families possess, cannot be resolved by the repertory of ready-made answers provided by the mores or built up out of the family's previous experience with trouble, and requires the family to find new (and usually expedient) ways of carrying on family operations. (Waller, 1951, p. 456-457)

Although the bereaved family may receive initial support from family and friends in the immediate period following the husband's death, thereafter it must usually fend for itself, both socially and psychologically. If successful and long-term adaptation of the bereaved family is to be achieved, the family must be reorganized as an ongoing social system: roles must be reassigned, status positions shifted, and values and goals reoriented (Berardo, 1968).

A recent study by Holmes and Masuda (1970) included a scale that assigned point values to changes that often affect human beings. The changes listed in this scale require decisions as individuals and families to new situations, whether these changes are under the individual's control or not, and whether he views these changes as desirable or not. The death of

a spouse is valued at 100 on the scale; the highest of any change listed. If a person has had many changes within a short time, it places a great challenge on the body. Holmes found that too many changes, coming too close together, often produce severe illness or deep depression. Physical and emotional illness can be prevented, Holmes states, by counseling susceptible people not to make too many life changes in too short a time.

This is also supported by Toffler (1970) who states that pressures that overburden our nervous systems can predispose us to disease and cripple our decision-making abilities.

A knowledge of the variations in adaptation to widowhood would help prepare individuals and families to deal with this common experience. As Peniston states:

The pain of grief cannot be avoided; but proper preparation will help in facing the work of grief, will lessen the disruption of family life, and will prevent the making of unfortunate decisions during this period of strain. (Peniston, 1962, p. 16)

Major attention, therefore, needs to be given widows and their families as they continue to function despite the loss of their husband and father.

The object of this study was to investigate difficulty of decisions made by the widow as she carries on family activities alone.

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. Difficulty of making decisions concerning earning and allocating money for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

2. Difficulty of making decisions concerning food purchasing, meal planning, and meal preparation for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

3. Difficulty of making decisions concerning selection and care of clothing for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

4. Difficulty of making decisions concerning child care, nurturing and discipline is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

5. Difficulty of making decisions concerning routine cleaning and upkeep of the house is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

6. Difficulty of making decisions concerning home furnishings is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

7. Difficulty of making decisions concerning care of the yard is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

8. Difficulty of making decisions concerning care of the car is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

9. Difficulty of making decisions concerning social activities is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives.

Definition of Terms

1. Decision-making: the process of considering and choosing among alternatives.

2. Home furnishings: furniture, carpeting, and appliances in the home.

3. Care of the car: maintenance of the car, including repairs, servicing, and washing.

4. Social activities: participation in religious, civic, and political affairs; and leisure time activities, club meetings, and other events.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature reveals that widowhood as a significant social and sociological problem has not engaged the empirical interests of investigators to any great extent (Berardo, 1968). One explanation advanced for the lack of research in this area centers around cultural taboos associated with death.

Eliot (1930, p. 544) has suggested that "Where death is concerned, there is, in some respects, a heavier load of taboo and resistance than in the case of sex."

Much in our American culture conspires to remove death from our minds and even our feelings. In television, the movies, and other expressions of our mores, emphasis is on the preservation of youth and the denial of aging. Death, though threatening and difficult to handle, is made remote. Social security and the proliferation of nursing homes have facilitated the removal of many elderly and severely sick persons from the family circles. Estranged by our civilization from the basic realities of life (of which death is a part), we have lost contact with the daily struggle for life of animals in the field and forest. We have less and less and less contact with the slaughtering of animals for food. Death has become for us foreboding, frightening, repugnant, and mysterious. (Krupp and Kligfeld, 1962, p. 226)

Death is no longer socially visible. There is little or no preparation for, or definition of, the role of widowhood. American culture has no norms concerning behavior during the mourning period, length of mourning, or behavior after mourning. There have developed certain customs associated with funerals and the disposing of the dead, but Mitford (1963) strongly suggests that the present customs have been developed by the mortuary industry, not by the families involved.

Berardo (1968, p. 197) states, "The majority of women survivors generally have had to face a multiplicity of personal and familial

adjustment problems while at the same time attempting to establish a satisfactory adjustment to a new and relatively undefined social role."

At the more personal level, widowhood requires the development of alternative patterns of behavior if the female survivor is to maintain satisfactory relations with the family, the kin group, and the community, and if she is to establish and sustain an acceptable self-concept--one that will receive approval and which may be appropriately expressed. Women occupying widowhood status experience varying degrees of role ambiguity emanating from vague and contradictory normative expectations concerning appropriate behavior. As a result, the American widow frequently experiences considerable uncertainty and anxiety over reaching decisions concerning such matters as when to terminate the mourning period, how to make others aware of this, when to begin dating again, how long she should wait before considering remarriage, etc. (Berardo, 1968, p. 201)

Research on widowhood can be summarized within the three behavioral sciences: anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Anthropologists for some time have been describing various facets of death and bereavement and the ritualistic customs and behavior associated with such phenomena among different societies around the world (Bendann, 1930; Krupp and Kligfeld, 1962).

There are apparently no articles devoted exclusively to the theoretical and practical aspects of widowhood, although many contain anywhere from a paragraph to two pages of commentary on the subject. It appears that past anthropological analyses of widowhood have concentrated rather exclusively on its relationship to the economic and kinship systems (Berardo, 1968).

A review of the empirical literature on widowhood discloses that researchers have generally concentrated on the bereavement processes, *per se*, and have approached their subject matter primarily from a psychological frame of reference. The personal, intra-psychic reactions to the shock of "dismemberment" have been particularly stressed. This orientation is characterized by a general lack of concern with the social life of mourners and with their long-term adjustment (Berardo, 1968).

A large proportion of the sociological research in this area has tended to concentrate on individual responses to the immediate crisis event while neglecting the accommodations of the family as a total unit or configuration. Sociological monographs concerning the American widowed are conspicuously absent from the literature (Berardo, 1968).

Most published studies of family breakdown are concerned chiefly with the causes and processes leading up to family dissolutions. At that point the members are supposed to "live unhappily forever after," but how they do so we are seldom told (Eliot, 1955).

From a statistical standpoint widowhood is largely a problem of the aged woman (Berardo, 1968). However, a substantial minority of the widowed in the United States does not fall in this age group. About one-fifth of the new widows created each year are under age 45 and their situation is, in many respects, different from those widowed at later ages (Metropolitan Life, 1962).

In the case of widows who still have children in their care, Illgenfritz states:

There are the objective problems of limited income and the need to find the time and energy to augment it and still be the kind of mother children need in the circumstances--a mother who can maintain a home, discipline and educate young children, and insure their positive emotional growth. Then there are the countless problems of guilt, fear, frustration, and loneliness, ever-present and always threatening. (Illgenfritz, 1961, p. 41)

In reference to one-parent heads of families Schelesinger states:

Their job is lonely and endless. It goes on twenty-four hours a day and requires countless decisions, large and small. Seldom is there anyone from whom single parents can expect moral and emotional support, advice, encouragement, praise, or even faultfinding. (Schelesinger, 1966, p. 137)

Effective decision-making is crucial to managing a home. Langer (1957) cites indecision, or difficulty in making decisions, as a common

characteristic of widows. Morgan (1961) suggests that who makes the decision in a family may not be as important as whether there is consensus on the matter. This would indicate that decision-making for widows is difficult because there is no one to discuss problems with, and decisions must be arrived at alone. Geiken (1964, p. 351) found that sharing was apparently affected by the nature of the task: "The more 'mental' the task, the greater the extent of sharing; the more physical or 'doing' involved in the task, the less extensive the sharing." This also suggests that some types of decision-making would be difficult to do alone.

Bogue states that sociologists have long known that

Few events in the life cycle require more extensive changes in activities, responsibilities, and living habits (or cause greater alterations in attitudes, reranking of values, and alterations of outlook on life) than does a change from one marital status to another. (Bogue, 1959, p. 212)

Sociologists have recognized that the disruption of marriage by the death of a husband has profound repercussions for the widow, her family, and the community. Yet a review of the literature reveals that the special problems that confront the widow both at the time of bereavement and beyond have not undergone extensive sociological research (Berardo, 1968).

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Sample

The list of subjects was obtained from the bishops of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, also known as the L.D.S. or Mormon Church, in the Logan, Utah area. (A bishop is a leader of a congregation called a ward.) This is the predominant church in the area and has a record of all residents, members and non-members, of the area. The stake presidents, who are leaders of a group of wards, were contacted to get permission to proceed with the study. Several of the stake presidents expressed particular interest in this study, and all gave permission to contact the bishops of their stakes. A letter was sent to each bishop, explaining the study and asking his cooperation in returning the list of the names of the widows, both members and non-members, of the L.D.S. Church, in his area. Some bishops who expressed a reluctance to release the names of widows requested the number of questionnaires needed for their area and distributed these themselves. All questionnaires were mailed to the researcher by the subjects.

Pretest

A pretest composed of 17 background factors and 52 items concerning difficulty of decision-making was given to eight widows in Morgan, Utah during Spring Quarter of the 1970-1971 school year. Each met the criteria for the subjects for the study: (1) length of widowhood at least one year, and (2) at least one child living at home at the time of the study.

No subject was used for both the pretest and the test. The pretest was delivered personally by the researcher. The only verbal exchange concerning the study was to ask the subject's cooperation. The pretest was then left with the subject, to be completed. When the investigator returned for the completed questionnaire, a short interview was conducted, asking for criticism and suggestions.

As a result of the pretest, some modifications of the questionnaire were made: (1) the background questionnaire was restructured to facilitate analysis by data processing methods; (2) a question was added, asking the respondent's religion; (3) a category for ownership was added to choices for question No. 14 concerned with financial arrangement of residence; (4) a category of "under \$3,000" was added to questions No. 15 and 16 concerned with annual income; (5) on the decision-making questionnaire, items 4, 8, 11, and 25 were reworded for clarification; (6) items 28 and 33 were separated from 54 and 53 for clarity; and (7) items 42 and 50 were added to include more questions on outside care of the home.

Study Instruments

The instruments used in this study were: (1) a background questionnaire, and (2) a decision-making questionnaire.

Background questionnaire

A 16 item questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to obtain information for the purpose of describing the sample population.

Decision-making questionnaire

Dunn (1959) defined the roles of husband and wife as developing around seven areas of behavior--housework, employment, financial support,

care of children, social participation, schooling, and future goals. In the present study, the writer was concerned with four areas as developed by Dunn--homemaking, care of children, social participation, and financial support, plus the additional area of yard and car care.

Geiken's (1964) Family Responsibility Inventory, developed for use with young married couples, served as a guide in the development of the decision-making questionnaire used to collect the data for this study. Items used from Geiken's Inventory were numbers 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 27, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, and 37. Other items were selected because of the author's personal experience, from discussions with other widows, and from reading.

The completed questionnaire, which is reproduced in the appendix, consisted of 55 statements related to areas of family living. The subjects were asked to check whether decisions regarding each item were Less Difficult, More Difficult, or of the Same Difficulty for them as widows as compared to when they were wives.

The statements included one general question and 54 questions related to the following areas of family living:

- A. Finance (numbers 2, 10, 14, 15, 21, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 49, and 51)
- B. Homemaking
 - 1. Food (numbers 1, 9, and 13)
 - 2. Clothing (numbers 7, 29, and 52)
 - 3. Housing (numbers 5, 6, 11, and 41)
 - 4. Home furnishings (numbers 17, 23, and 37)
- C. Child care (numbers 4, 8, 12, 16, 19, 22, 24, 25, 26, 30, 40, and 44)

- D. Social activities (numbers 18, 20, 28, 31, 33, 35, 38, 45, 46, 47, 53, and 54)
- E. Yard and car care
 - 1. Yard (numbers 27, 42, and 50)
 - 2. Car (numbers 3 and 48)

Testing

On May 26, 1971 the questionnaires were mailed to the selected widows. Included in this mailing were: (1) a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study; (2) a background information sheet; (3) the questionnaire on difficulty of decisions about homemaking tasks; and (4) a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the questionnaire (see appendix). One week after the questionnaire was mailed, a follow-up card was sent, urging cooperation in returning the questionnaire.

Analysis of the Data

1. Background factors were used to describe the sample.
2. The factors under investigation were analyzed statistically by the sign test at the .05 level of probability. To reject a hypothesis, over half of the items used to test the hypothesis must have been significant at or below the .05 level of probability. To fail to reject a hypothesis, over half of the items used to test the hypothesis must have been significant at above the .05 level of probability.
3. Difficulty of decision-making score--responses of "less difficult" were assigned a minus one (-1) score, "same" responses were assigned a zero (0) score, and responses of "more difficult" were assigned a positive one (+1) score. The sum of these weights determined the respondent's

score. Theoretically it would have been possible for a woman to get a -55 score (all items Less Difficult) or a +55 score (all items More Difficult).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present investigation was concerned with perception of difficulty of decision-making of selected homemaking tasks by widows. The women rated decisions concerned with 54 homemaking tasks as less, same, or more difficult for them as widows than they were for them as wives.

Sample

The questionnaire was sent to 59 subjects. Thirty-nine, or 66 percent, completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher. Of these, 33 fit the criteria established for the study; namely, each must have been widowed for at least one year, and each must have at least one child living at home.

Ages of the women ranged from the 20-30 category to the 50-60 category, with all but two of them over 30 years of age (Table 1). Over half of the respondents had been married for 15-20 years, while only two had been married less than five years (Table 1). All of the respondents had at least one child living at home: nine had one child, six had two, fourteen (42 percent) had three, two had four, and two had five (Table 1). As shown in Table 2, 21 (63 percent) of the women had either attended or graduated from college before being widowed. Sixty percent of them had completed additional education since being widowed. Thirty-one of the respondents were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, while two expressed no religious preference. Over half of the women owned their own homes, and eight more were buying (Table 3).

Table 1. Distribution of age, number of years married, and number of children in widows' households

Years of age	Number of widows
20-30	2
30-40	10
40-50	11
50-60	10

Years married	Number of widows
0- 5	2
5-10	7
10-15	6
15-20	18

Number of children in household	Number of widows
1	9
2	6
3	14
4	2
5	2

Table 2. Educational status of the widows

Educational level before widowhood	Number of widows
Grades 10-12	12
1-3 years college	14
B.S. or B.A. degree	7

Formal education since widowhood	Number of widows
None	13
High school	3
Trade school	1
College	10
Graduate school	6

Table 3. Housing arrangements of the widows

Housing	Number of widows
Renting	5
Buying	8
Own	18
Other	2

Five of the women reported their present income to be higher than their average income for the two years previous to their husband's death. Fifteen have less income than previously, and 11 have the same. Two of the respondents did not indicate amount of income.

As shown in Table 4, the annual income for the women when they were married ranged from \$3,000-\$5,000 to over \$13,000. These figures are not adjusted for time or cost of living changes, which, in light of the length of time elapsed since they were widowed, would make some difference.

The present annual income of the women ranged from under \$3,000 to over \$13,000. Seventy-five percent of them had incomes under \$9,000 (Table 4).

Table 4. Income distribution before and after widowhood

Average annual income two years before husbands' death	Number of widows
Under \$3,000	0
\$ 3,000-\$ 5,000	4
\$ 5,000-\$ 7,000	10
\$ 7,000-\$ 9,000	3
\$ 9,000-\$11,000	2
\$11,000-\$13,000	6
Over \$13,000	2

Present annual income	Number of widows
Under \$3,000	3
\$ 3,000-\$ 5,000	7
\$ 5,000-\$ 7,000	9
\$ 7,000-\$ 9,000	6
\$ 9,000-\$11,000	6
\$11,000-\$13,000	0
Over \$13,000	1

Hypothesis I: Difficulty of Making Decisions

Concerning Family Finance

The first hypothesis stated that difficulty of making decisions concerning earning and allocating money for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was tested using the binomial test at the .05 level of significance. Ten of the 12 items used to test this null hypothesis were significant at the .05 level. The hypothesis was rejected. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Difficulty of making decisions concerning family finance

	Less	Same	More	Significance
2. Managing the family's money	3	12	18	.001
10. Paying the bills	2	13	18	Less than .001
14. Deciding on types of life insurance policies for the family	--	8	25	Less than .001
15. Planning for spending money	1	16	16	Less than .001
21. Choosing and financing a new or used car	2	3	28	Less than .001
32. Deciding whether or not wife works	5	21	7	.387
34. Deciding when to make purchases on credit	2	16	15	.001
36. Planning and managing to save money	--	16	17	Less than .001
39. Deciding on additional education for wife	4	16	13	.133
43. Deciding on health insurance for family	1	13	19	Less than .001
49. Deciding on car, fire, liability, and other property insurance	--	8	25	Less than .001
51. Figuring annual federal and state income tax	1	10	22	Less than .001

Widows seem to have great difficulty in making decisions about family finance. This would seem to agree with the Changing Times' (November 1961) statement that the economic dilemma in which widows find themselves is frequently brought about as a direct result of the failure of husbands to plan their estates and advise their wives.

The level of significance at which the items used to test this hypothesis were rejected strongly suggests that more preparation and help is needed in this area. In particular, 28 of the 33 respondents felt that decisions regarding choosing and financing a new car were more difficult; and deciding on life insurance and car, fire, liability, and property insurance were both more difficult for 25 of the respondents.

The two items that were not significantly more difficult for the women to make decisions about were (1) whether or not the wife works, and (2) deciding on additional education for the wife. Several of the respondents stated that there was no choice about working--it was an economic necessity.

Hypothesis II: Difficulty of Making Decisions Concerning Food for the Family

The second hypothesis stated that difficulty of making decisions concerning food preparation, meal planning, and meal preparation for the family is not more difficult for women who are widows than it was for them as wives. The present research fails to reject the hypothesis. Results are presented in Table 6.

None of the items used to test this hypothesis were significantly more difficult for women to make decisions about. This may be because this is a familiar role for the women to perform. One woman wrote,

"Whatever you handled as a wife does not change in degree of difficulty once you have been widowed--you've always done it. It's the things you haven't done that are hard." This would agree with LeMasters (Skolnick and Skolnick, 1971) who stated that the tasks of home management such as shopping for food and clothes, preparing family meals, doing the family laundry, and cleaning the house would be less likely to be a problem for mothers alone than for the man alone.

Table 6. Difficulty of making decisions concerning food for the family

	Less	Same	More	Significance
1. Doing the weekly grocery shopping	3	22	4	.500
9. Preparing the meals	5	13	13	.119
13. Planning meals	4	18	11	.059

Hypothesis III: Difficulty of Making Decisions
Concerning Clothing for the Family

The third hypothesis stated that difficulty of making decisions concerning selection and care of clothing for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The present research fails to reject the hypothesis. Results are presented in Table 7.

None of the items used to test this hypothesis were significantly more difficult for the women. This would agree with LeMasters (Skolnick and Skolnick, 1971) that homemaking tasks are less likely to be a problem for the woman alone than for the man alone.

Table 7. Difficulty of making decisions concerning clothing for the family

	Less	Same	More	Significance
7. Doing the laundry	1	28	4	.188
29. Buying clothing for the family	--	29	4	--
52. Taking care of clothing--keeping it hung up or folded	2	25	6	.145

Hypothesis IV: Difficulty of Making Decisions
Concerning Child Care

The fourth hypothesis states that difficulty of making decisions concerning child care, nurturing, and discipline is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. Four of the 12 items used to test this hypothesis were not significant at even the .001 level, and none of the 12 were significant at the .05 level. The hypothesis was rejected. The results are presented in Table 8.

Decisions concerning child care are more difficult for many of the respondents. While all of the items used to test this hypothesis were rated as more difficult by the widows, three items seem particularly troublesome. Twenty-three of the widows found it was more difficult to make decisions concerning where children could go and what they could do. Eighteen of the women found that disciplining children was more difficult. Both of these tasks may be more difficult because, as Schelesinger (1966, p. 137) states, there is no one from whom the single parent can expect advice or moral and emotional support. One subject commented, "I feel I need someone else's opinion in discipline because I sometimes wonder if

Table 8. Difficulty of making decisions concerning child care

	Less	Same	More	Significance
4. Maintaining standards of personal cleanliness of children: bathing, brushing teeth, etc.	--	30	3	--
8. Finding the time to spend with the children	3	13	17	.001
12. Choosing where to go and what to do when the family goes out for fun	6	12	15	.039
16. Decisions affecting the family as a whole, such as when meals are served, and when television should be on	3	15	15	.004
19. Caring for children when they are ill	--	11	22	Less than .001
22. Decisions concerning the children, such as where they may go and what they may do	--	10	23	Less than .001
24. Disciplining the children	1	14	18	Less than .001
25. Deciding on a family vacation: whether to go and/or where to go	6	11	16	.026
26. Deciding when professional medical and dental help is needed for the children	--	26	7	.008
30. Buying gifts for holidays and birthdays for children	--	25	8	.004
40. Deciding on education for children	--	22	11	Less than .001
44. Decisions concerning the children such as music or dance lessons, participation in sports	--	26	7	.008

I'm being too strict or too lenient." The present research found that the widowed women had more difficulty making parental decisions alone. This contrasts with the Goode study of the divorced mothers who seemed to think it an advantage not to have to share the daily parental decisions with a partner who might not agree with their strategy (Goode, 1956). While widows and divorcees are popularly "lumped together" and do indeed have many problems in common, widows do not often think of themselves as fortunate to be alone.

The third troublesome item for the women was caring for the children when they were ill. This was more difficult for 22 of the respondents. One woman wrote by this item that she "needed reassurance from a companion."

Decisions concerning the physical care of the children such as keeping them clean, deciding on medical and dental help, buying them gifts, and deciding on music and dance lessons or participation in sports, while still significantly difficult, were not as much of a problem for the women. This would agree with LeMasters (Skolnick and Skolnick, 1971) who states that the physical care of the children would be less likely to bother the mother alone.

Hypothesis V: Difficulty of Making Decisions
Concerning Housing for the Family

Hypothesis five states that difficulty of making decisions concerning routine cleaning and upkeep of the house is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was tested using the binomial test at the .05 level of significance. The hypothesis was rejected (Table 9).

Table 9. Difficulty of making decisions concerning housing for the family

	Less	Same	More	Significance
5. Making repairs on household equipment	--	3	30	Less than .001
6. Deciding where the family will live	2	18	13	.004
11. Routine cleaning the house	3	17	13	.011
41. Repair and upkeep of home	--	1	32	Less than .001

All of the items used to test this hypothesis were more difficult for the women. Even routine cleaning of the house was more difficult for 13 of the respondents. Perhaps this is because, as one woman said, "There is no motivation!"

Thirty-two of the 33 women said decisions concerning repair and upkeep of the home was more difficult, and 30 said that repairs on household equipment were harder. This would suggest that they had little experience doing these things.

Hypothesis VI: Difficulty of Making Decisions
Concerning Home Furnishings

The sixth hypothesis states that difficulty concerning home furnishings is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The data did not permit rejection of the hypothesis as shown in Table 10.

Although this hypothesis was not rejected, one item was significantly more difficult for the women--that of deciding when to buy household

furnishings. The other items were not more difficult, perhaps because decisions concerning selecting and arranging of furniture are usually made by the wife.

Table 10. Difficulty of making decisions concerning home furnishings

	Less	Same	More	Significance
17. Selecting furniture for the house	5	21	7	.387
23. Rearranging the furniture	3	27	3	.656
37. Deciding when to buy household furnishings	--	22	11	Less than .001

Hypothesis VII: Difficulty of Making Decisions
Concerning Yard Care

Hypothesis seven states that difficulty of making decisions concerning yard care is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. None of the items were significant at even the .001 level. The results would suggest that the women have not previously been responsible for these activities, or perhaps they resist taking this additional role and are overwhelmed by what LeMasters calls "role overload" (SkoInick and SkoInick, 1971, p. 408). The hypothesis was rejected. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Difficulty of making decisions concerning yard care

	Less	Same	More	Significance
27. Gardening or other yard work	--	11	22	Less than .001
42. Taking care of trash and garbage	--	19	14	Less than .001
50. Clearing the walks and driveway of snow	2	13	18	Less than .001

Hypothesis VIII: Difficulty of Making Decisions
Concerning Car Care

Hypothesis eight states that difficulty of making decisions concerning care of the car is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. Because over half of the items used to test the hypothesis were not significant at the .05 level of probability, the hypothesis was neither accepted nor rejected (Table 12). The item concerned with who washes the car was significant at the .059 level, but the other item used to test this hypothesis was significant at less than the .001 level. Twenty-nine of the 33 respondents said it was more difficult to obtain maintenance, service, and repairs for the car. This would suggest that these women had not previously been responsible for the care of the car.

Table 12. Difficulty of making decisions concerning car care

	Less	Same	More	Significance
3. Deciding who washes the car	4	18	11	.059
48. Obtaining maintenance, servicing, and repairs for the car	--	4	29	Less than .001

Hypothesis IX: Difficulty of Making Decisions
Concerning Social Activities

The final hypothesis states that difficulty of making decisions concerning social activities is not more difficult for women who are widows than it was for them as wives. At the stated level, six of the 12 items used to test this hypothesis were significant, six were not. Therefore, the hypothesis was neither accepted nor rejected (Table 13).

Table 13. Difficulty of making decisions concerning social activities

	Less	Same	More	Significance
18. Setting social dates with others	6	8	19	.022
20. Serving meals or keeping house orderly when we have guests	2	19	12	.006
28. Keeping informed about activities in the community	--	21	12	Less than .001
31. Buying gifts for relatives and friends	1	26	6	.062
33. Going to church	2	25	6	.145
35. Visiting with relatives	4	19	10	.090
38. Participating in activities to meet new people	2	6	25	Less than .001
45. Participation in social clubs and organizations	2	14	17	Less than .001
46. Visiting with women friends	8	17	8	.598
47. Visiting with couple (husband and wife) friends	1	6	26	Less than .001
53. Participating in church activities	3	21	9	.073
54. Participation in activities of the community--PTA, fund drives, committees, etc.	3	23	7	.172

Of the six that were not significant, four concerned activities that are often done as individuals, not couples. These were: (1) buying gifts for friends and relatives, (2) visiting with relatives, (3) visiting with women friends, and (4) participation in activities of the community--such as PTA, fund drives, committees, etc. The other two that were not significant at the stated level were: (1) going to church, and (2) participation in church activities.

Of the items that were significant, four were particularly difficult for the women. These were: (1) keeping informed about activities in the community, (2) participation in activities to meet new people, (3) participation in social clubs and organizations, and (4) visiting with married couples. All of these were significant at less than the .001 level.

Visiting with couple friends was the single most difficult item, with 26 of the respondents rating it as more difficult. Twenty-five of the women said it was more difficult to participate in activities to meet new people. One woman said she felt she "Didn't fit anywhere." Schelesinger (1966) states that isolation from normal community life to some degree is the fate of parents without partners. They don't seem to fit any of the normal social patterns. They are the self-styled "fifth wheels" of society. Indeed, it seems that most of the women would agree with Parsons (Skolnick and Skolnick, 1971) who states that

For the normal adult, his marriage and his role as parent constitute the primary going reinforcement of his psychological security. The family can thus be seen to have two primary functions, not one. On the one hand it is the primary agent of socialization of the child, while on the other it is the primary basis of security for the normal adult. (Skolnick and Skolnick, 1971, p. 402)

When the marriage is dissolved by the death of one of the partners, the remaining partner must then find some other basis of security. Lopata

(1970, p. 44) reports that wife disorganization is highest in widowhood where the husband-wife relationship was highly functional. She states, "The major factor in the amount of disengagement experienced by a woman upon the death of her husband is the degree to which her various social roles were dependent upon him." Although it is difficult for widows to do, Lopata feels engagement in new social roles rather than retention of the fading past is the best avenue for widows. Widows are socially isolated because they have not been socialized to analyze resources of their environment, to rebuild their lives.

Question 55

The final item of the decision-making questionnaire was "Over-all, how would you say that decision-making as a widow compares in difficulty with decision-making as a wife." Twenty-four of the 33 respondents said it was more difficult as a widow, while only two said decision-making was less difficult. This data would indicate that decision-making is indeed more difficult for women who are widows than it was for them as wives.

Comments ranged from simply "It is much more difficult now" to "The decision-making for me is more difficult--not because I can't do it but because I still resist doing it alone. I liked the security of companionship." One said, "To have someone who can see things from the same view with whom one can discuss important things ... was a great help. As much as relatives and friends try to be helpful, they are seeing things from their point of view, or from the children's point of view."

One woman said, "Hectic and lonely and frustrating;" another said, "Women who have depended on their spouse a great deal would naturally find it more difficult to make the decisions alone." One widow, whose husband

had been ill for a long time, said that over-all decision-making was easier because she had learned to make decisions before her husband died. One woman, who commented that "Sometimes it was easier, sometimes harder" and marked the over-all difficulty as "same," actually marked more items as being of greater difficulty. A feeling of loneliness and responsibility was conveyed to this investigator by the woman who commented, "Once a decision is made, you're on your own--there's no one to back you up" (Table 14).

Table 14. Over-all difficulty of decision-making by widows

	Less	Same	More	Significance
55. Over-all, how would you say decision-making as a widow compares in difficulty with decision-making as a wife	2	7	24	Less than .001

In summary, over-all decision-making is more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The areas in which widows had greater difficulty making decisions were family finance, child care, cleaning and upkeep of the home, and yard care. However, decisions concerning food, clothing, and home furnishings were not more difficult. Decisions concerning some aspects of car care and social activities were more difficult, while others were not more difficult.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Difficulty of decision-making for women who are widows was investigated. Very little research has been done on the special problems that confront the widow.

The sample was composed of 33 widows living in Logan, Utah, who had been widowed at least one year, and who had at least one child living at home. The questionnaires were developed during Spring Quarter of the 1970-1971 school year.

The instruments used in this study were: (1) a background questionnaire, and (2) a decision-making questionnaire.

Nine null hypothesis were formulated for testing:

1. Difficulty of making decisions concerning earning and allocating money for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was rejected.
2. Difficulty of making decisions concerning food purchasing, meal planning, and meal preparation for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis failed to be rejected.
3. Difficulty of making decisions concerning selection and care of clothing for the family is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis failed to be rejected.
4. Difficulty of making decisions concerning child care, nurturing, and discipline is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was rejected.

5. Difficulty of making decisions concerning routine cleaning and upkeep of the home is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was rejected.

6. Difficulty of making decisions concerning home furnishings is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis failed to be rejected.

7. Difficulty of making decisions concerning care of the yard is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was rejected.

8. Difficulty of making decisions concerning care of the car is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was neither accepted nor rejected.

9. Difficulty of making decisions concerning social activities is not more difficult for women as widows than it was for them as wives. The hypothesis was neither accepted nor rejected.

The following conclusions may be drawn from this study:

1. Decisions concerning family finance, child care, cleaning and upkeep of the home, and yard care were more difficult for women as widows than for them as wives.

2. Decisions concerning food, clothing, and home furnishings were not more difficult for women as widows.

3. Decisions concerning some aspects of car care and social activities were more difficult; some were not more difficult for the widows; therefore, no conclusions could be drawn concerning these two areas.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Since it is very difficult to analyze the problem of decision-making for widows without knowing something of the marriage that preceded it and the role each husband and wife played in the marriage, further research on the roles of the husband and wife during the marriage as well as the roles filled by the widow would be helpful in analyzing adjustment to widowhood.

2. This writer concurs with Eliot (1930, p. 547) who stated over 40 years ago that valuable insights and helpful conclusions could be gained by investigating types of response to the shock of bereavement, the causes of such responses, types of behavior in the adjustment period, and factors affecting successful adjustment.

3. This writer also agrees with Waller's statement of more than 30 years ago:

Because of the many varieties of bereavement, study of a large number of cases would be highly desirable ... its effect necessarily varies with the age of the bereaved, his emotional involvements with the deceased, the nature of the death, the other relationships of the bereaved, and the degree of emancipation of the bereaved person; outside of this universe of factors we have a great range of cultural factors which affect the situation. (Waller, 1938, p. 491-492)

4. This writer would recommend replicating the study using (a) a larger sample, and (b) a sample of women who have diverse religious backgrounds.

5. Other factors that could be explored concerning a woman's adaptation to widowhood are: the age and sex of children; the widow's employment outside the home; the degree of involvement in community and church activities; participation in special social groups such as Parents with Partners, Singles Set, Mutual Interest, etc.

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APPENDIX

Table 15. Summary of data collected for 33 subjects

Widow	Present age	Length of marriage	Number of children living at home	Education before widowed ^a	Education since widowed ^b	1970 income ^c	Adjusted score ^d
1	40-50	15-20	5	1	B	5-7	+22
2	40-50	15-20	3	2	No	7-9	+12
3	30-40	10-15	2	2	B	5-7	+21
4	30-40	10-15	2	2	B	7-9	+19
5	40-50	10-15	3	3	C	+13	+29
6	40-50	15-20	2	1	No	7-9	+20
7	40-50	15-20	2	1	No	5-7	+25
8	50-60	15-20	3	2	B	3-5	+28
9	20-30	under 5	2	2	B	5-7	0
10	50-60	15-20	3	1	A	3-5	+11
11	50-60	15-20	1	1	A	9-11	+20
12	50-60	15-20	1	1	No	3-5	+54
13	30-40	10-15	5	2	No	9-11	+ 7
14	50-60	15-20	1	1	No	3-5	+38
15	30-40	10-15	4	2	No	3-5	+ 2
16	40-50	15-20	3	2	B	--	+28
17	30-40	5-10	3	3	C	7-9	- 2
18	30-40	5-10	4	2	B	5-7	+23
19	50-60	15-20	1	2	No	3-5	+33
20	50-60	15-20	2	1	No	3-5	+26
21	40-50	15-20	3	3	No	7-9	+29
22	50-60	5-10	1	3	C	9-11	+22
23	40-50	15-20	3	1	B	5-7	+23
24	50-60	15-20	1	2	B	3-5	+25
25	40-50	15-20	3	2	No	7-9	+26
26	30-40	under 5	1	2	B	5-7	+21
27	30-40	5-10	1	3	C	3-5	+18
28	30-40	5-10	3	3	C	9-11	+21
29	50-60	15-20	1	1	No	3-5	+ 1
30	50-60	15-20	3	1	No	under 3	+39
31	40-50	15-20	1	2	A	9-11	+ 8
32	30-40	5-10	3	1	A	5-7	+46
33	30-40	10-15	3	3	C	5-7	+20

^a1 = high school, 2 = 1-3 years college, 3 = B.S. or B.A. degree.

^bA = high school, B = college, C = graduate school.

^cThousands of dollars.

^dAdjusted score = "more difficult" minus "less difficult" scores.

May 14, 1971

Dear Mrs.

Your name has been given to me as someone who could help with my research on widowhood. As you may know, research on this subject is very limited. It would be most helpful if you would take a few moments to fill out the enclosed questionnaire and background information sheet and return them to me in the envelope provided.

All information will be held confidential, and will be used for this study only. Please do not identify yourself.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Marilyn Noyes
Graduate Student
Household Economics
and Management

kab

April 20, 1971

Dear (bishop):

President _____ has given me permission to contact you for a list of widows in your ward, members and nonmembers, who have minor children living at home. I am doing research for my thesis, which is concerned with decision making of widows.

I would appreciate you or your clerk compiling this list for me. If you have the addresses of the widows, this would be helpful, or the name each would be listed under in the phone book.

If for any reason you object to releasing these names, I would be happy to send you the number of questionnaires needed for the widows in your area. These could then be given to the individuals to be completed and returned to me. In this way their complete anonymity would be assured.

Please use the enclosed envelope to return the list (or the number of questionnaires needed) to me.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Marilyn Noyes
Graduate Student
Household Economics
and Management

MN:kab

Name of widow

Address

or

Phone listing

If you prefer not to release the names, how many copies of the questionnaire will be needed? _____

May 14, 1971

To Whom It May Concern:

You have been suggested as someone who could help with my research on widowhood. As you may know, research on this subject is very limited. It would be most helpful if you would take a few moments to fill out the enclosed questionnaire and background information sheet and return them to me in the envelope provided.

All information will be held confidential, and will be used for this study only. Please do not identify yourself.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Marilyn Noyes
Graduate Student
Household Economics
and Management

kab

Background Questionnaire

1. What is your present age? 20-30 yrs. 30-40 yrs.
 40-50 yrs. 50-60 yrs.
2. How old were you when you were married? under 25 over 25
3. How long were you married? 0-5 yrs. 5-10 yrs.
 10-15 yrs. over 15 yrs.
4. How long have you been widowed? less than 1 yr. over 12 yrs.
 over 1 yr., less than 12 yrs.
5. Death of husband was result of accident
 short illness
 long illness
6. What are the present ages of your children living at home?
7. What grade level of school did you last attend before you were widowed?
 1-6 1-3 years college
 7-9 B.S. or B.A. degree
 10-12 Graduate school
8. Have you attended school since you have been widowed? yes no
 If yes, which have you attended? high school college
 graduate school
9. Approximately how much of the time since your husband's death have you been occupied outside your home? (work, school, church, or community work)?
 none 25% 50% 75% 100%
10. Did you have full time work experience while you were married?
 yes no
11. How often, on the average, do you see the following people?
 (Choose a number from the list on the right that most nearly describes how often you see each.)
- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> parents | 1. Do not have any |
| <input type="checkbox"/> brothers or sisters | 2. Once a week or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> parents-in-law | 3. Once a month or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> brothers-or | 4. More than once a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sisters-in-law | 5. About once a year |
| | 6. Less often than every year |

12. What is your religion? _____
13. Do you have other adults living in your home? (Sister, Mother, Father, etc.) ___yes ___no.
14. What is the financial arrangement for your present residence?
___renting ___buying ___own ___other (specify) _____
15. Approximate yearly income the two years preceding husband's death.
___under \$3,000 ___\$3,000-5,000 ___\$5,000-7,000 ___\$7,000-9,000
___\$9,000-11,000 ___\$11,000-13,000 ___over \$13,000
16. Your approximate yearly income last year. Include money received from all sources.
___under \$3,000 ___\$3,000-5,000 ___\$5,000-7,000 ___\$7,000-9,000
___\$9,000-11,000 ___\$11,000-13,000 ___over \$13,000

QUESTIONNAIRE

Difficulty of Homemaking Tasks

How would you rate the difficulty of the following tasks for you, as a widow, compared to before you were widowed?

Please check the box that most nearly describes your feelings.

TASK	COMPARISON OF DIFFICULTY		
	less	same	more
1. Doing the weekly grocery shopping			
2. Managing the family's money			
3. Deciding who washes the car			
4. Maintaining standards of personal cleanliness of children: bathing, brushing teeth, etc.			
5. Making repairs on household equipment			
6. Deciding where the family will live			
7. Doing the laundry			
8. Finding the time to spend with the children			
9. Preparing the meals			
10. Paying the bills			
11. Routine cleaning the house			
12. Choosing where to go and what to do when the family goes out for fun			
13. Planning meals			
14. Deciding on types of life insurance policies for the family			
15. Planning for spending money			
16. Decisions affecting the family as a whole, such as when meals are served, and when television should be on			

TASK	COMPARISON OF DIFFICULTY		
	less	same	more
17. Selecting furniture for the house			
18. Setting social dates with others			
19. Caring for children when they are ill			
20. Serving meals or keeping house orderly when we have guests			
21. Choosing and financing a new or used car			
22. Decisions concerning the children, such as where they may go and what they may do			
23. Rearranging the furniture			
24. Disciplining the children			
25. Deciding on a family vacation: whether to go and/or where to go			
26. Deciding when professional medical and dental help is needed for the children			
27. Gardening or other yard work			
28. Keeping informed about activities in the community			
29. Buying clothes for the family			
30. Buying gifts for holidays and birthdays for children			
31. Buying gifts for relatives and friends			
32. Deciding whether or not wife works			
33. Going to church			
34. Deciding when to make purchases on credit			
35. Visiting with relatives			
36. Planning and managing to save money			
37. Deciding when to buy household furnishings			

TASK	COMPARISON OF DIFFICULTY		
	less	same	more
38. Participating in activities to meet new people			
39. Deciding on additional education for wife			
40. Deciding on education for children			
41. Repair and upkeep of home			
42. Taking care of trash and garbage			
43. Deciding on health insurance for family			
44. Decisions concerning the children such as music or dance lessons, participation in sports			
45. Participation in social clubs and organizations			
46. Visiting with women friends			
47. Visiting with couple (husband and wife) friends			
48. Obtaining maintenance, servicing, and repairs for the car			
49. Deciding on car, fire, liability, and other property insurance			
50. Clearing the walks and driveway of snow			
51. Figuring annual federal and state income tax			
52. Taking care of clothing--keeping it hung up or folded			
53. Participating in church activities			
54. Participation in activities of the community--PTA, fund drives, committees, etc.			
55. Over-all, how would you say decision-making as a widow compares in difficulty with decision-making as a wife			

COMMENTS:

Follow-up card

A follow-up card was sent to everyone who received a questionnaire. These were sent out one week after the questionnaire.

Dear Mrs. Smith:

A few days ago you received a questionnaire to fill out. If you have not already completed and returned the questionnaire, please do so immediately. It is important that every questionnaire be returned.

Thank you for your help.

VITA

Marilyn Bjorkman Noyes

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: Difficulty of Decision-Making by Widows

Major Field: Household Economics and Management

Biographical Information:

Personal Data: Born at Heber, Utah, July 30, 1934, daughter of Arthur E. and Eveline Brough Bjorkman; married Hal Freeman Noyes December 17, 1954; three children--Dallas, Harold, and Jeffery.

Education: Attended elementary school and junior high school in Bountiful, Utah; graduated from Davis High School in 1951; received the Bachelor of Science degree from University of Utah, with a major in home economics education, in 1955; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree in Household Economics and Management, at Utah State University, in 1971.

Professional Experience: 1964-70, home economics teacher, Davis High School, Kaysville, Utah; 1963-64, fifth grade teacher, Farmington Elementary School, Farmington, Utah; 1959-60, fifth grade teacher, Declo Elementary School, Declo, Idaho; 1958-59, fourth grade teacher, Lava Hot Springs Elementary School, Lava Hot Springs, Idaho; 1956-57, home economics teacher, Bryant Junior High School, Salt Lake City, Utah; 1955-56, home economics teacher, Burley High School, Burley, Idaho.

Organizations: Member of Phi Upsilon Omicron honorary fraternity.