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8 Older widows' television viewing

An interview study

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Women who have experienced the death of their husband face several challenges. There is grief and mourning, but partner loss also requires an intense restructuring of one's life, and produces changes in lifestyle and identity. Previous research on television viewing in widowhood is scarce. This study asks how older widows change their television viewing after the loss of their partner. The qualitative study includes interviews with widows ($N = 22$), aged between 66 and 90 years. The analysis shows three types of changes in television viewing: first, some widows use television in their adaptation strategies. Second, some widows avoid television viewing after the loss of their partner. Third, living alone brings the opportunity to make individual television choices. These results are interesting in light of the notions of an active audience and a life-span perspective on media use.

8.1 Introduction

Women who have experienced the death of their husband face several challenges. First of all, they need to deal with the deprivation due to the partner's absence (Stevens, 1995, p. 44). Bereavement may be associated with grief and mourning (Bennett, Hughes & Smith, 2005, p. 34). In addition, spousal loss involves the loss of both a culturally highly valued lifestyle and the loss of identity as part of a couple (Van Selm, 1998, p. 20); therefore, partner loss requires an intense restructuring of one's life, and produces changes in lifestyle and identity (Bisconti, Bergeman & Boker, 2006, p. 597). Many older people are confronted with partner loss: especially women, as men generally die earlier than their female partners. In the Netherlands in 2007, 55 thousand people experienced the loss of their spouse; the amount of women with about 38 000 being twice as high as the amount of men (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2007). Throughout the world, widowhood has become a predictable part of the aging process for women (Stevens, 1989, p. 11).

Losing a spouse thus provokes important changes in everyday life (Bennett et al., 2005), and the present chapter aims at answering the question how older widows change their television viewing after this life event. Television is readily available in most homes, and widows may change their television viewing behaviour when they face their profoundly changed situation. Possibly, women find television helpful when trying to

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adapt to the new situation. However, empirical research on television viewing in widowhood is scarce. Research on widowhood does not include television viewing, and research on television viewing only rarely pays attention to widows. Some of the existing studies on older adults and television viewing (for an overview, see Van der Goot, Beentjes & Van Selm, 2006) do mention widows. A few qualitative studies about the role of television viewing in older people's lives reported that widows felt alone after the loss of their spouse, and used television for company. Gauntlett and Hill (1999) reported that for older people who experienced the loss of loved ones, television could be a welcome friend. Haddon (2000) discovered that television broke the silence in the evenings, and offered some company for older persons who were homebound because of increasing physical immobility or who had lost their partners. Based on semistructured in-depth interviews with people aged 60 years and older ($N = 101$), Vandebosch and Eggermont (2002) came to a similar conclusion. Widows and widowers often felt lonely, and they watched television because it provided company. Mobility problems also contributed to the larger dependence of widows and widowers on television; for example, several female respondents became immobile after their husband's death because they lacked a driver's license.

However, these results should not leave the impression that all older widows suddenly start to watch more television than before, thus contributing to the finding that older people on average watch more television than younger people do. Mares and Woodard (2006) conducted a cohort analysis, in which they used six measurement times (1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994 and 1998) of the General Social Survey in which respondents were asked how many hours they watch television on an average day. They found that viewers over 60 watched more than younger age groups, even after controlling for cohort, period, sex, and education level. It appeared that some older people watch more television than younger people because they have no work obligations. To a lesser extent, some older adults watch more television than younger adults because of poorer health. However, widowhood and other variables concerning social contacts did not have an effect on the differences between age groups in the amount of television viewing.

In sum, previous qualitative research has only shown that some older widows use television for company when they feel lonely, but there is a lack of more specific information about the way older widows change their television viewing in reaction to the loss of a spouse. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to provide more information about how older widows change their television viewing after the loss of their husband.

8.2 Theoretical perspectives

Two theoretical perspectives within communication science make it interesting to study television viewing in widowhood: first, the notion of an active audience, and second, the life-span perspective on media use.

The notion of an active audience entails that people are self-aware, goal-directed audience members, who are able to make sensible media choices in order to serve their interests (needs) and motives by means of media use (Renckstorf & McQuail, 1996, p. 3). The 'media use as social action' approach (Renckstorf & McQuail, 1996; Renckstorf & Wester, 2004) works with this notion, and focuses on media use as part of the flow of everyday life. The meanings of television viewing are developed in the context of the

everyday life that television viewing is part of. Routines are important; social action is not something that needs to be invented every day. Social life is organized into meaningful routines that contain the premises of interpretation of what is being done. These routines are the product of cultural and communal forces and are locally performed (Anderson & Meyer, 1988, p. 308-309). Along these lines, Renckstorf (Renckstorf & McQuail, 1996; Renckstorf & Wester, 2004) distinguishes between media use as part of routines (ritualized media use), and media use as part of situations where routines are not (yet) available and where individuals construct media use to solve problems (instrumental media use). In the latter case, people experience *problematic problems*: They are confronted with a situation for which they do not have appropriate actions yet, and it is a conscious concern to them to find appropriate actions (Renckstorf & McQuail, 1996; Renckstorf & Wester, 2004).

In this light, the case of older widows is interesting. The loss of their spouse presents widows with a so-called *problematic problem*; their everyday life changes profoundly and they consciously need to find new ways to fill their days in a meaningful manner. The routines they performed as a couple need to be replaced by actions that are meaningful to them as a single person. They are not only confronted with sadness over missing their partner, but also with the loss of activities that they used to do together with their partner, and the loss of the taken-for-grantedness of being part of a couple (e.g., going to events alone for the first time can be a big hindrance). Because they are so obviously confronted with a *problematic problem*, they are able to talk about how they dealt with that situation, and how they subsequently changed their television viewing behaviour (or not). Their accounts of these changes deepen the understanding of how television viewing can be part of dealing with problems for which there is no everyday-routine available yet. Thus, the accounts help to understand how new routines come into existence.

The second perspective that makes the present study interesting is the life-span perspective on media use, which involves the study of change and continuity throughout the life span (e.g., Baltes, 1987). Applied to the field of communication, this perspective frames change across the life span as an essential element in any attempt to examine the nature and functions of communication processes (Nussbaum, Pecchioni, Baringer & Kundrat, 2002). The current study focuses on change in television viewing.

Changes in television viewing can be understood in light of maturational or life-cycle explanations for media use, which entail that media use changes across the life span in response to an individual's development. The basic notion in life-cycle explanations is that media use is related to biological, cognitive and social development across the life span. Several authors (e.g., Dimmick, McCain & Bolton, 1979; Rosengren & Windahl, 1989) described this process using the uses and gratifications paradigm. The uses and gratifications approach can be situated within the wider tradition that views the audience as active, and it studies the needs and gratifications that media use is related to. Life-cycle explanations in terms of the uses and gratifications paradigm say that developmental events and processes create needs as well as resources (such as physical or material resources). Subsequently these needs and resources bring about certain types of media use. Many older people retire, experience physical aging, and are confronted with losses in their social networks. These developments lead to needs such as the need for activities to pass the newly available time or the need for company, and people can use television to meet these needs (Van der Goot & Beentjes, 2008).

The suggestion that development leads to new needs and subsequently to new media behaviour seems plausible, but empirical research that shows these processes is lacking. Therefore, the analysis of older widows' accounts of changes in their television viewing is valuable: The analysis can shed light on how a life event leads to new needs and thus to 'new' television viewing behaviour.

To summarize, both the notion of the active audience and the life-span perspective on media use make it interesting to study television viewing in widowhood. Studying older widows' television viewing can enrich the understanding of how people use television when confronted with *problematic problems* and about how a life event may lead to changed needs and subsequently to changed television uses.

8.3 Method

The study intends to gain in-depth information about how older women adjust their television viewing after the loss of their partner. Therefore, a qualitative study was conducted, with interviews in which respondents talked about the role of television viewing in their lives.

8.3.1 Participants

For my dissertation on television viewing in the lives of older adults (Van der Goot, 2009), people aged 65 years and older were interviewed. For the current study, I selected the interviews held with widows ($N = 22$); their ages ranged from 66 to 90 years. For some it was less than a year ago that their spouse had died, for others it was many years ago (maximum 25 years). Most of them lived independently, a few lived in a retirement or nursing home; they all lived without a partner, and they lived in different cities and villages in the Netherlands.

8.3.2 Interviews

Interviews were held following an interview guide. In this guide, there were two starting points for talking about television viewing: 'can you describe when you switch on your television on an average day?' and 'what do you like to watch on television?' The interviewers used probing to learn about the reasons why the television was switched on, and why respondents chose particular programmes. It depended on the respondent how this probing proceeded: Some respondents reflected very precisely on what programmes they watched and why, while for other respondents their experience of television viewing had more to do with the activity of viewing television than with the content of programmes. In reaction to what the respondent was saying, interviewers asked retrospective questions in order to gain insight in changes in television use: Interviewers asked 'since when' or 'for how long' respondents had used television in the ways they mentioned. In addition, interviewers asked if the respondents had experienced changes in their television viewing now that they were growing older. Interviews were both held by me and by students who were taking a research seminar on qualitative research methods that I taught. All interviews were held in the home of the participant. Interviews were held in Dutch, and taped and transcribed verbatim. These transcripts formed the basis for the analysis.

8.3.3 Analysis

I derived guidelines for the analysis from methodological literature on qualitative analysis (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Wester & Peters, 2000, 2004). I used two tools: I worked with the computer programme *Atlas.ti*, which can be referred to as computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) (MacMillan & Koenig, 2004), and I wrote memos. The findings in the current chapter are based on part of the analyses that I did for my dissertation, in which I worked with the division of the analytical process in four phases that Wester and colleagues (e.g., Wester, 1995; Wester & Peters, 2000, 2004) formulated as part of their variant of the grounded theory approach. For the present chapter, I worked with a table that I made during the first of the four phases, the so-called exploration phase. This phase is dedicated to finding as many concepts and categories as possible that can offer an overview of what is relevant in the field, in light of the problem statement (Wester & Peters, 2000, p. 151). The main task in this phase is open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Wester & Peters, 2000, 2004) or initial coding (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) described coding as follows: “coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for that piece of data. Your codes show how you select, separate, and sort data to begin an analytic accounting of them” (p. 43). One of the tables that I made during the exploration phase, and that I used for the current chapter, included an inventory of all changes in television viewing that respondents had mentioned (see Appendix). In the table I noted for every interview ($N = 83$) the change in television viewing that the respondent mentioned (if any), the related change in life (if any), and how the respondent evaluated the new role of television viewing.

For the current analysis, I selected the entries in this table that were based on interviews with widows ($N = 22$). From these interviews I only selected the fragments about changes in television in reaction to widowhood¹. Subsequently I categorized the changes in television viewing that had occurred in reaction to partner loss. I distinguished three types of changes in television viewing, which will be discussed below.

8.4 Results

In the interviews, widows explained how they adjusted their television viewing after the loss of their husband. I distinguished three types of changes in their television viewing: first, the use of television in adaptation strategies, second, avoidance of television, and third, the freedom to make individual television choices. These three changes are not mutually exclusive: for example, some respondents indicated that they used television viewing in their adaptation strategies, whereas they also signalled the increased freedom to make individual television choices.

8.4.1 Television viewing in adaptation strategies

The first change in television viewing was that some widows used television when they tried to get accustomed to their new situation: Partner loss led to new needs and television viewing was helpful in fulfilling those needs. Television had the following functions when respondents were adapting to the loss: television provided company;

television helped to pass the time; television helped to structure the days; and television offered distraction from sadness.

8.4.1.1 Company

Some widows said that television brought 'people' and life inside the home, or they talked about the voices and sounds that television brought to the home that otherwise would be quiet. A respondent (#13, woman, 76 years, widowed since 5 years) said that she switched on the television for company and to have a voice inside the house: "Then there is life in my home. I do have a fish, but he doesn't say anything!" This function can be especially helpful in the first period after the loss of a spouse. A woman (#12; 77 years, widowed since 17 years) explained that, in the period after her husband had died, she watched television from early in the morning till late at night. The apartment had been so quiet after all the visitors were gone, and one of her daughters had advised her to turn the television on so she would have some sound around her. That was the reason she had the television on: "At that time I really had the television on in the morning just to see people."

8.4.1.2 Passing the time

Some respondents used television to pass the time. Several respondents described that they had less activities outside the house since they were alone. They explained that their life was different from how it used to be. Several of them indicated that the evenings or days seemed long to them. A woman (#20; 87 years, widowed since a year) said: "now that I'm alone I sometimes think: oh, again, such a long evening." Another woman watched television at night to pass the time, after her husband had died (#28; 83 years, widowed since one year). She said that previously they were busy all day and the time flew by. Now she watched television to shorten the time a little. Otherwise she would just be sitting there all night, and she figured that watching television was about the only thing she could do.

8.4.1.3 Structuring the days

For some respondents the loss of a spouse meant developing new daily routines, including new television routines; in some cases television explicitly helped to structure the days. New routines often had to do with having dinner. Respondents explained that they were not comfortable with eating alone, and thus changed their schedule a little so that they could eat in front of the television. Or they would eat a sandwich early at night, so they could watch television after that. In some cases, respondents explicitly used television to provide structure to the day. This can be exemplified with a woman (#14; 73 years, widowed since 10 years) who started to watch the 8 a.m. news, after her husband had died, in order to bring regularity in her life. After the hectic time after his death, she had said to herself that she needed to keep regularity in her life and she should not stay in bed until she felt like getting up: "Just get up at a fixed time, quarter to eight [determined tone in her voice], eight o'clock the news and you move on like that: after that, getting dressed, eating something." Thus, the 8 a.m. news came to provide a starting point for her days.

8.4.1.4 Distraction from sadness

Another function was that television provided distraction from sadness; in some cases humorous programmes in particular fulfilled this function. The woman (#14) who watched the 8 a.m. news to start the day explained the following:

There was once a situation and I think about that rather frequently; it was in that difficult period too [after her husband had died]. It had gotten quite late because of several circumstances; I turned on the television just for a little while, and then there was some very silly movie, and I was laughing about it really loudly on my own, just as some kind of reaction to all the tension and the state of things. And they sometimes broadcast this movie again and then I do think about it again. (#14; 73 years, widowed since 10 years)

In that situation, the movie enabled her to laugh, amidst of all the turmoil she was going through. After that, she sometimes watched movies for relaxation.

In sum, the first change in television viewing was that some widows used television in their adaptation strategies after partner loss: Television provided company, helped to pass the time, helped to structure the days, and offered distraction from sadness. Three observations regarding these functions of television viewing in adaptation strategies are in place. First, the accounts showed that television can be helpful, but only to some extent. What shone through in some of the accounts was that television viewing after such loss was not completely satisfactory. For example, the woman whom I mentioned earlier who watched to pass the time (#28; 83 years, widowed since one year) explained that the activities she used to do together with her husband were more useful (they had a farm). It was good and helpful that television was there, otherwise she would not know what to do at night, but watching television did not make the situation right.

Second, television viewing can fulfil particular functions just after the loss, whereas later television takes on another role again. Earlier I referred to a woman (#12; 77 years, widowed since 17 years) who had a period of extensive television viewing after her husband had died. Her family had told her that she could watch television in order to have some life around her, and for a while she had watched almost all day to have company. Because she watched television so much, she had to turn to genres that she had not watched before and that she did not like that much. At the time of the interview, she lived in an apartment building where she was happy because she had good relationships with the other residents, something that she had missed terribly during the period after her husband's death. Now she said that growing older was not a problem; she had a good time with the people around her, and they laughed a lot. She was enthusiastic about television, and watched programmes that she really liked, such as sports. It can be reconstructed that in the transient period after her husband's death she missed other options for having company and therefore she relied on television instead, whereas later that was not necessary anymore.

Third, it was not a particular kind of television content that was helpful. The use of television viewing in adaptation strategies meant that some widows preferred cheerful, upbeat, optimistic, and sometimes comical television content. Such content brought them in a better mood when they were sad, provided company, and distracted them from problems. For example, I mentioned a woman who watched cheerful movies that made her laugh. However, some uses of television after such loss were determined more by the time of day and did not involve a specific kind of television content.

8.4.2 Avoiding television

The second change in television viewing was that some respondents avoided television after the loss of their partner because television did not fit in with their feelings after this loss. They felt too restless or too sensitive to watch or television reminded them too much of shared experiences from the past. A respondent who had felt too restless to watch was a woman (#18; 81 years, widowed since 24 years) who explained that, when her husband had passed away, a very different life had started for her. A lot of restlessness came into her life. In the beginning she was not really interested in television; she preferred to go for a stroll at night. Little by little, she became more restful again, and therefore she started to watch television more consciously. When this respondent tried to adapt to the new situation, she preferred other activities over television viewing: Television viewing did not fit in with her needs at that time.

Some respondents felt it was a pity that they could not share their viewing with another person (anymore). For some, television viewing or particular content lost its charm. Sadness particularly came into play when in the past sharing the activity was the essence of watching television. An example comes from a participant (#20, woman, 87 years, widowed since one year) who described how she used to watch soccer together with her family. Her husband used to support a particular team, whereas she and the children supported another one. They gave comments during the match, teased each other, and jumped up when there was a goal. Now, she did not watch those matches anymore. Sometimes her children called her to say that their team had won, and then she sometimes watched for a little bit, but it was not how it used to be. The same woman also indicated she could not listen to music anymore. Her husband had been really fond of music, and because he enjoyed it so much, she had enjoyed it too. She felt emotional because she had lost her daughter to cancer and her husband had suddenly died, so she could not listen to music anymore, nor watch particular DVD's and movies. In addition, she said that she did not watch soap series because they were always about hatred and malice: "that does not cheer me up at all. And when you are alone, like me now, you're very sensitive to that."

8.4.3 Freedom to make individual television choices

The respondents also mentioned a third change in television viewing: They had the opportunity to make individual television choices now, whereas when they had lived together they had needed to attune their television behaviour. Now that they lived alone, they could use television in ways they wanted. For some, this freedom led to new television choices: Some watched more than before, or new programmes (that their partner had not liked); on the other hand, some watched less television or did not watch programmes anymore that they previously watched mainly because of their husband's preferences.

Some of the respondents contrasted the current situation with how it had been when they had watched together with their husband. For example, the respondent quoted earlier who watched movies for relaxation said:

Before, we watched soccer together. We each chose a team and the one who won had to treat. So, that ceased to exist. And when you watch together and one person is heavily interested the other watches too, but that was my only share in

these things. My husband was much more fanatical and now I hardly watch soccer anymore. I just watched with him, then [...]. Nowadays I watch movies too and my husband hated movies terribly. (73 years old; widowed since 10 years)

Another woman also contrasted her current viewing with how it had been when she still lived together with her husband:

He [husband who has died] watched the news almost every hour, but that was a bit too much for me, then I said: "now switch the television to something else; you've seen it so many times." And you know what, like that foreign news and all that stuff, I do not follow everything of that. There are people who can say all those names and the like, but for me that is not that necessary. That's just fine by me. (#15, woman, 83 years, widowed since 12 years)

So when she was able to make her own television choices, she watched much less news than her husband had done.

8.5 Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this chapter was to describe how older widows change their television viewing in reaction to the loss of their husband. The interviews with widows show three types of changes in television viewing. First, some widows use television in adaptation strategies after the loss of their partner: Television can provide company, distraction from sadness, a way to pass the time, and can help to structure the days. The interviews show that television can help, but only to some extent: Television can not make the situation right. Other observations regarding television in adaptation strategies are that it is not one specific kind of television content that is helpful, and that television can fulfil particular functions just after the loss, whereas later television takes on another role again. The second change is that some widows avoid television because they are too restless to watch or because television reminds them too much of shared experiences from the past. The third change is that living alone includes the freedom to make individual television choices. Some widows choose to watch more or less television or different programmes than they watched when they lived with their husband.

What do these findings contribute to the theoretical perspectives that were discussed in the beginning of the chapter? On the basis of the 'media use as social action' approach (Renckstorf & McQuail, 1996; Renckstorf & Wester, 2004), I conceptualized partner loss as a *problematic problem*: a situation in which people are confronted with a problem for which they need to find solutions and for which they do not have routines yet. The study shows that television viewing can contribute something to people who need to deal with the problem of partner loss; the interviews show how widows use television to make their new everyday life bearable. This study further contributes to the 'media use as social action' approach by showing how new routines come into being: Some respondents explicitly explain how television is part of the development of new daily routines.

Concerning the life-span perspective on television viewing, this study illustrates how a life event leads to new needs and subsequently to changes in television viewing behaviour. Importantly, the study shows the diversity in what happens to television viewing, which teaches that the same life event does not lead to the same needs and the same changes in television use for all people involved. The same event is interpreted differently by different people and thus leads to different behaviour. Earlier, I referred to

the cohort analysis by Mares and Woodard (2006) that showed that widowhood and other variables concerning social contacts did not have an effect on the differences between age groups in amount of television viewing. This is logical in view of the variety in the current interview study: after the loss of a partner, some women watch more than before, others watch less or do not change their viewing. Moreover, some people get new relationships or other new circumstances that changes their viewing again.

The description of the changes in television viewing after partner loss raises the question to what extent these experiences of television viewing also apply to other older adults. The first two changes involve the functions that television has in reaction to the loss (company; passing the time; structuring the days; distraction from sadness) and the avoidance of television contents. These functions are not new, and can readily be found in uses and gratifications literature. This is not surprising; I would not argue that widows suddenly discover functions for television that other people would not think of. However, the study shows that after a life event certain functions become more prominent. The question whether these functions and the mechanism of avoidance also gain importance after 'comparable' processes such as a divorce or partner loss at a younger age need to be answered in future research. The third change, namely that there is freedom to make individual television choices, has to do with the transition from living together to living alone. The differences in room for individual choices are also visible when we make a comparison between couples who watch television and people who live and watch alone. However, this study with widows makes this freedom very visible, because these respondents are able to explicitly compare the two situations.

A practical recommendation for communication with people who are confronted with partner loss is to make them aware of the choices they have regarding media use. Although people may not be able to change their circumstances, they can make conscious choices about television viewing or other pastimes inside the home, and choose contents that help them feel a little better. The study shows that television can help to some extent, by providing some relief. However, the interviews also show that widows should utilize television in their own personal ways; for some it is better to avoid television in order to not invoke negative feelings.

One limitation of this study is that the measurement of changes in television viewing after partner loss was not very precise: we used retrospective questions, and there was a wide variety in how long ago spousal loss happened. Future research should map the process in which television viewing changes after partner loss more precisely. Longitudinal research is needed to show the phases in which television viewing changes.² The current study suggests that, after spousal loss, first there is an outright difficult period, in which television viewing can provide some comfort or needs to be avoided. Gradually, new habits and routines are developed that are meaningful in the life as a single person. Some authors (Stevens, 1989; Van Grootheest, Beekman, Van Groenou & Deeg, 1999, p. 393) suggest that it takes three to five years to adapt to the loss and to fully reorganize behaviour. The question is how people adjust their television viewing during those years, in several steps, until a new meaningful routine is developed. Such research would give yet more colour to the notions of the active audience and to the life-span perspective on media use.

The second limitation is that this study focuses on change in television viewing, and neglects continuity. The life-span perspective includes both change and continuity (e.g., Baltes, 1987), and therefore research on media use across the life span should consider

both. Continuity refers to generational explanations that assume that the circumstances in which a generation grows up determine to a large extent this generation's behaviour later in life. Vandebosch and Eggermont (2002) argued that researchers should not only take into account older people's current life circumstances, but also their personal developmental history which is strongly interwoven with societal evolutions. Possibly, generations adopt specific patterns of media use when they are young and remain faithful to those throughout the life span (Mares & Woodard, 2006). From the current interviews I selected only the fragments regarding change in television viewing, whereas accounts of continuity in viewing were also apparent in the same interviews. In my dissertation, I pay attention to both continuity and change in television viewing in order to more fully develop the life-span perspective on television viewing.

All in all, this study expands the available knowledge about television viewing in widowhood. Whereas previous research only reported that some older widows use television for company, the current chapter gives a more elaborate description of how older widows change their television viewing after the loss of their husband. Spousal loss requires an intense restructuring of one's life and produces changes in lifestyle and identity, and the study shows how television viewing changes amidst these processes. Thus, the study adds colour to the notions of an active audience and the life-span perspective on media use.

Notes

- 1 Widows also reported changes in their television viewing in reaction to other changes, such as physical aging.
- 2 Longitudinal research regarding adaptation to partner loss is available (e.g., Van Baarsen, van Duijn, Smit, Snijders & Knipscheer, 2001), but does not include measures of television viewing.

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Appendix Changes in television viewing (one interview is included as an example)

	Change in life	Change in TV viewing	Evaluation of new role of TV viewing
Inter-view number	Summary	Summary	Summary
#2	Widow (79 years), widowed for 3 years. Before that: 6 to 7 years of living alone. Being alone is not easy = loss. Changes in activities, e.g., vacation.	She searched for something. More TV New routine: <i>the Bold</i> every day at 5:30 pm. Eating a sandwich at the same time. Also other activities in adaptation process.	Automatically more TV. “I didn't have a choice; I had to deal with it. I could say: I don't do anything anymore, but that wouldn't bring me much further either. So that was ok.” “I don't say: hurray, I'm alone.” Coping: she has a positive attitude, she tries to make something of her life. In the beginning her sons said: you have to go out. Husband is not there anymore; at night a replacement is necessary. The starting point is something negative, a problem. Of course TV can not be a replacement for a husband.