FACTORS WHICH FACILITATE AND HINDER

PSYCHO-SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT FOR MOTHERS

WHO ARE LIVING APART FROM THEIR CHILDREN

By

LORI B. LARSEN

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Department of __Counselling Psychology__

The University of British Columbia
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1Y3

Date __April 27, 1987__

ABSTRACT

There is very little information in the literature on mothers without custody of their children. In an attempt to partially remedy this situation an exploratory study, based on in-depth interviews with mothers who voluntarily chose to live apart from their children, was conducted. The aim was to identify the factors facilitating and hindering adjustment for these women. Using a sample of 17 women who volunteered for the study, the critical incident technique was employed to gather data from the participants. The collected incidents were then grouped into categories and descriptive statements were formulated about each one.

There were 212 critical incidents collected from the 17 participants. These incidents were grouped into 3 main categories and 15 sub-categories. The categories provide a concise and easily understood description of the facilitating and hindering factors affecting adjustment for non-custodial mothers. The reliability of the placement of items into the appropriate categories was tested by using four independent raters, using percentage of agreement as an index of reliability.

Recommendations for supportive services and programs needed by these women are offered. Therefore, the findings are useful for planning and implementing future programs for non-custodial mothers. As well, guidelines are presented for individual, family, and divorce mediation counsellors who find themselves working with this group of women.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

An understanding of the experience of mothers living apart from their children is limited since non-custodial motherhood is such a recent and relatively infrequent phenomenon (Doudna, 1982; Fischer, 1983; Fischer & Cardea, 1981, 1982; Greif, 1985, 1986, 1987; Isenhart, 1979; Keller, 1975; Koehler, 1982; Luepnitz, 1982; McKie, Prentice & Reed, 1983; Paskowitz, 1982; Rosenblum, 1984, 1986; Rowlands, 1980; Rubin, 1983; Sullivan, 1979; Todres, 1978; Weiss, 1979). When joint-custody is either not workable or undesirable, children generally live with one parent or the other. And, according to Luepnitz (1982), it is much more socially acceptable to be the custody parent than the non-custody parent if one is a mother because mothers are expected to parent. That is, "Society operates, for the most part, on two interlocking assumptions: that it is the role of women to care for the children and the role of men to be the breadwinner" (Levine, 1976, p. 15). Thus, it is not surprising that in Canada about eighty-three percent of children from separated or divorced families live with their mothers (Statistics Canada, 1983).

In accordance with the cultural norm, Berger (1983) suggested that children are better off with their mother in cases of divorce. Additionally, in Olshaker's (1971) opinion, the need for a mother is of greatest importance during infancy

and pre-school years. According to Olshaker, fathers can provide no comparable nurturance to their young children. Bettelheim (1956) maintains a similar caution, "...the male physiology and that part of his psychology based on it are not geared to infant care" (p. 125). These statements, along with countless others permeate our lives. On the one hand, they describe the traditional child rearing roles taken by most men and women in our society. And, on the other hand, they help to sustain those roles. Although many people question the validity of these beliefs (Badinter, 1980; Doudna, 1982; Fischer, 1983; Fischer & Cardea, 1981; Glubka, 1983; Houstle, 1979; Isenhart, 1980; Keller, 1975; Koehler, 1982; Levine, 1976; Luepnitz, 1978, 1982; McKie, Prentice, & Reed, 1983; Mead, 1935, 1954; Orthner, Brown, & Ferguson, 1976; Paskowicz, 1982; Ricks, 1984; Rosenblum, 1986; Rosenthal & Keshet, 1981; Rowlands, 1980; Rubin, 1976, 1983; Stoll, 1985; Sullivan, 1979; Veevers, 1980; Weiss, 1979), they are still the prevalent point of view in our culture.

Furthermore, Delamont (1980), Musetto (1982), and Stoll (1985) believe that since the norms for appropriate behavior are learned and internalized very early in life, then it follows that the non-custodial mother is not impervious to the tenets of the larger society. This may be one primary reason why mothers living apart from their children may have difficulty adjusting to their situation. That is, because it is such an unusual development for women to relinquish custody, the non-custodial mother is often thought of as unnatural, whatever her actual psychic state (Weiss, 1979). Correspondingly, Rubin (1983)

wrote that,

> "...even on those relatively rare occasions when a divorced mother willingly gives up custody to a father, neither she nor we are wholly comfortable with the choice. We may understand intellectually, we may even speak words in support of her decision. But inside we wonder, 'how could she do it?' And she may have 20 sound reasons for making the decision that way, but guilt usually clogs her inner life and corrodes her peace of mind" (p. 196).

Thus, the concept that it is normal for mothers to have custody of their children not only makes it difficult for them to choose to live apart from their children, but it also makes it hard to convince other people and themselves that it may be better if they lead a life in a separate household from their children.

This study was primarily concerned with understanding what conditions facilitate and hinder adjustment for non-custodial mothers. The central aim was to understand these conditions as a means to increase the sensitivity and effectiveness of services for mothers who are living apart from their children. The general research question asked of the women in this study was, "What, from your perspective, facilitated and hindered adjustment to your situation?" Answering this question may provide valuable information that will assist non-custodial mothers and counsellors working with this group.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are referred to in the following and subsequent chapters. Therefore, they are defined here in order to enable the reader to understand the terms used, particularly

in Chapter II, the Literature Review.

Non-Custodial Mother

A non-custodial mother is a woman who lost or relinquished custody of her natural offspring after having lived for a time with that child or children (Paskowicz, 1982).

For the purpose of this study a woman was considered eligible to participate as a non-custodial mother if she voluntarily chose to live apart from her childen.

Separation from the Children

The state of living apart from the children. That is, living in a separate household from the children. The term refers to a physical as opposed to a psychological separation.

Incident

An incident is any event, idea, action or thought that occurred to or for the individual participant.

Facilitating Incident - Helping or contributing to a positive outcome.

Hindering Incident - Contributing to a negative outcome or preventing a positive outcome.

Critical Incident

Flanagan (1954) defined an incident as critical if it made a significant contribution, either positive or negative, to the general aim of the activity. In this study, the respondents judged for themselves whether an incident was critical.

Adjustment

Defining the term adjustment is a persistent problem in psychology because there are numerous conceptions of how to define or describe an adjusted person (Bonney, 1964). Coe (1972) pointed out that adjustment is a personal matter and that every individual has his or her unique way of adjusting. For the purpose of this investigation, the term is described as an ongoing and active process and is defined as "A modification of attitudes or behaviors to meet the demands of life effectively, such as, carrying on constructive interpersonal relations, dealing with stressful or problematic situations, handling responsibilities, or fulfilling personal needs and aims" (Goldenson, 1985, p. 16).

Importance of the Study

In an attempt to understand and help families of divorce, researchers tend to focus primarily on those family members who remain together. That is, they tend to approach families of divorce as if they consist of only one parent, as though the non-custodial parent is no longer important to the family unit (Abarbanel, 1979).

A review of the literature revealed that an understanding of non-custodial mothers has received scant attention, and consequently, little is known about these women. Furthermore, there is little literature at the present time focusing specifically on the conditions which facilitate and hinder effective adjustment to the non-custodial mother's circumstance. The single exception is a study in which Greif (1987) employed a

questionnaire to inquire about the non-custodial mother's level of comfort regarding her situation. Therefore, since information about mothers who are living apart from their children is limited, it is important to augment the limited research presently available on non-custodial mothers by offering insights into specific features, characteristics and situations that contribute to or detract from the successful adjustment of these women.

This research is seen as distinct from other research because information is sought about the facilitative and hindering conditions that affect adjustment to the non-custodial mother's situation, according to her remembered experience. The critical incident technique was used in this study to stimulate the respondent's recall and the identification of the critical requirements affecting adjustment are considered to be important for the advancement and improvement of services for mothers living apart from their children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the conditions which facilitate and hinder effective adjustment to the non-custodial mother's non-traditional life-style. This account should be both interesting and useful to others who are working with mothers who are living apart from their children or to those who find themselves in this situation.

Assumptions

Certain assumptions underlie the research method. In order to employ the critical incident technique it is necessary to assume that:

a. Incidents exist which facilitate and hinder adjustment to the non-custodial mother's situation.

b. Participants will be able to accurately recall incidents experienced as a voluntary non-custodial parent.

c. Respondents will be able to accurately discriminate which events facilitated and which hindered their adjustment.

d. There is a pattern of shared experiences among non-custodial mothers which can be identified.

Limitations of the Study

The critical incident technique used in this study is of a subjective nature and is therefore subject to certain disadvantages or limitations. For example, the retrospective nature of the data make it vulnerable to the reporter's possible lack of recall of important information. Additionally, because of the sensitive nature of some of the incidents, respondents may have been tempted to alter the facts or possibly re-write history in order to make their situation seem more acceptable to others and to themselves. However, given the anonymity and voluntary nature secured by the critical incident approach, as well as the interviewer characteristics (see p. 34), these limitations were kept to a minimum.

Another limitation concerns the possible loss of

information in the process of summarizing the full-length incidents. However, there is no reason to believe that this occurred because each interview session was audiotape recorded and therefore, the researcher had an accurate account of what each participant reported. As well, the investigator was trained in the summary technique, and as part of the data gathering procedure, six follow-up questions were asked during the interview to help identify the incident more specifically and with more clarity. Consequently the respondent's statements were easier to summarize. Additionally, this process involved noting who the participant reported as being responsible for the incident occurring as well as noting what was specifically facilitating or hindering about the incident. Several examples of full-length incidents and their simplified counterparts (Appendix F) have been included.

Generalizability of the results is affected by the number of respondents in the study. Since participants in this study were limited in number to 17, this was taken into account when interpreting the results. In addition, participants selected for this research were confined to non-custodial mothers who had voluntarily relinquished custody of their children to their ex-spouses. Therefore, no claims are made as to the extent to which these women are typical of other non-custodial mothers and consequently, one can only speculate as to the likelihood of other non-custodial mothers having similar experiences to those women in this study. Furthermore, Borg and Gall (1983) pointed out that people who volunteer to participate in studies tend to be higher in intelligence and have a higher need for achievement

than non-volunteers. This claim indicates that volunteer participants may identify different incidents than a non-volunteer group. Additionally, the sample for this study was not randomly selected because the number of available non-custodial mothers was limited.

Another limitation has to do with how old the child was when custody was relinquished as this may result in less consistent responses among women than would otherwise occur given that all relinquished a child of the same age.

And finally, it is important to point out that although frequencies and percentages are used in the analysis of the results, no definitive conclusions are drawn from the data because they are regarded as descriptive in nature.

Thus, because of the descriptive methodology, small sample size, restricted composition and volunteer status of respondents, the findings of this research are regarded as exploratory. Recognizing the limitations of this study, every effort was made to take these into account when interpreting the results.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature revealed that there is very
little written on the experience of non-custodial mothers. The
occurrence of mothers living apart from their children is a
fairly new and unusual phenomenon, which may explain the lack of
research in this area. This shortage of literature is one
indication of the necessity for further research on
non-custodial mothers. Greif (1987) has also pointed out that
mothers without custody are the least studied and least
understood group of single parents and he therefore advocates
the need for more research in this area.

Some of the reviewed research examined the reasons why
non-custodial mothers decided to relinquish custody of their
children. In other research, the focus is on the personality
traits found to be typical of these women. Additionally, in
much of the research the focus is on how non-custodial mothers
compared with custodial mothers. The information from these
research studies is seen as necessary to better understand the
non-custodial mother's situation.

It was not until 1975 that the first research paper on
non-custodial mothers appeared (Keller, 1975). Keller
interviewed 16 women who relinquished custody of their children
to their ex-husbands. Her primary research intention was to
identify personality patterns common to non-custodial mothers.
According to Keller, the women in her study perceived their

fathers as the nurturing parent, while perceiving their mothers as distant. In addition, Keller considered the women to be products of unresolved oedipal strivings and therefore, Keller concluded that they relinquished custody to the father of the children in an attempt to provide their children with a situation they desired with their own fathers. Keller also suggested that the women in her study feared intimacy and consequently, they relinquished custody as a way to relieve the threat of intimacy intrinsic to the mother-child dyad.

The next study on non-custodial mothers was not conducted until 1978 (Todres, 1978). Todres surveyed 38 women, examining the reasons they decided to live apart from their children. According to Todres, this decision was not impulsive, but was reached after considerable thought and some discussion with their husband. In addition, the decision to leave was based primarily on concern for their children's well-being. That is, most of the women reported that they thought it was in their children's best interest to remain living with their father because he could provide a more stable and financially secure environment for them. Todres also found that the women experienced societal rejection for their decision to live apart from their children. Additionally, Todres pointed out that although the mothers missed their children and felt a sense of guilt for leaving, they still thought they made the right decision.

Isenhart (1979) compared non-custodial mothers with custodial mothers and found that the two groups did not differ significantly on the variables of social conformity, value

systems, personal resources and view of having acted in the best interest of their children. However, according to Isenhart, the custodial mothers viewed themselves as more adequate as parents than the non-custodial mothers did.

A similar study was conducted by Fischer and Cardea (1981) comparing the life-style of non-custodial mothers with the life-style of married couples with children and, consistent with Isenhart's findings, they discovered that there were no particular traits, dispositions or life-styles that uniquely characterized women living apart from their children. They did find however, that all of the non-custodial mothers in their study were of the opinion that society's attitudes toward them were negative.

Fischer and Cardea continued their research in 1982, comparing 17 non-custodial mothers with 16 custodial mothers and found that the visitation patterns saw more frequent father visitation when mother had custody than mother visitation when father had custody. Fischer and Cardea suggested that this pattern may be attributed to lack of funds on the part of the non-custodial mothers. They postulated that funds play an important role because one-third of the children of the non-custody mother's group lived farther away than a days drive from their mothers, while only one child in the custody mothers group lived that far away from the non-custody father. Furthermore, since women are considered to be in a low income category, earning about fifty-three percent less than men (Statistics Canada, 1985), then it undoubtedly makes it more difficult for a non-custodial mother to travel this distance and

defray the costs involved.

In addition, non-custodial mothers in Fischer and Cardea's (1982) study reported more negative relationships with their children than non-custodial fathers. And finally, children's relationship with their mothers was described as close in sixty-two percent of the custody, but in only thirty-five percent of the non-custody group. Fischer and Cardea hypothesized that the lack of regular contact with the children in the non-custodial mother's group may be a partial explanation for these findings.

Koehler (1982) conducted in-depth interviews with three non-custodial mothers in order to gain a broader picture of their experience. She concluded that the most significant difficulty for these women was the negative judgment and criticism from others regarding their decision to relinquish custody. Koehler pointed out that one consequence of the negative criticism that these women experienced was a sense of guilt for not fulfilling their duty as mother in the traditional sense.

Koehler also noted that the women in her study emphasized the emotional pain involved in making the decision to relinquish custody. Even though these women saw their children regularly, did not view themselves as having abandoned the role of nurturing parent, and did not love their children any less, they still felt a profound sense of loss and grief resulting from their decision.

Paskowicz, in her 1982 book entitled <u>Absentee Mothers</u>, expanded on Koehler's work. Paskowicz identified the reasons

why the 100 non-custodial mothers interviewed in her study relinquished custody of their chidren. She discovered that only in a minority of instances did mothers relinquish custody for a single reason. The majority mentioned several reasons for making this decision. In addition, Paskowicz found that their reasons were not usually simple or clear-cut; they were often part of a more intricate context. All participants in her study stated that financial reasons played a major role in their decision and many reported that serious emotional problems played a critical part. Some said that their desire for personal freedom influenced their decision, while others reported that intimidation by their ex-husband and/or his family affected their decision to relinquish custody of their children.

Paskowicz also focused on factors in the non-custodial mother's childhood and marriage that might have contributed to her choosing to live apart from her children. She found, for example, that there was a high degree of incest among these women as children. Three percent of the participants in Paskowicz' study were incest victims, compared to less than 0.25% of the population at large in the 1950's. Therefore, the rate of incest among her participants as children was 12 times higher than that of their peers. Additionally, Paskowicz found that twenty-six percent of the women in her study had mothers who were non-custodial parents. Furthermore, the mothers of eight percent of the women in the study died while these women were children. Thus, a total of thirty-four percent of the women in Paskowicz' study were raised, in part or in whole, by someone other than their mothers. This is 12 times higher than

the average.

In marriage, Paskowicz discovered that the majority of the women had shorter periods of time between each birth than the national average and about forty percent of the children of the non-custodial mothers were reported as unintended. This compares to five percent of children being reported as unintended according to a national fertility study conducted in the United States (Westoff & Ryder, 1977). Additionally, Paskowicz found that about seventy percent of the women's husbands took part, to significant degrees, in the care of their children during the marriage. This indicates that the non-custodial mothers took into consideration the competency and desire on the father's part to take on the role of nurturing parent, when making their decision to relinquish custody.

Paskowicz (1982) noted that sixty percent of the women in her study were in therapy because they felt a need for help as a result of relinquishing custody of their children. The remaining forty percent of women in her sample had no trouble adjusting to living apart from their children. One factor Paskowicz identified among the adjusted group which contributed to their establishing and maintaining emotional health was positive input from others, a factor which facilitated their adjustment.

Fischer (1983) conducted a small study documenting societal attitudes toward various child-free life-styles and found that the harshest judgments fell on homosexual couples and non-custodial mothers.

Rosenblum (1984) conducted an exploratory investigation of

mothers' decisions to relinquish custody and discovered that these decisions were usually made without consultation with family or friends, that the custody decision was most often made by the mother rather than the father, and although the reasons given for making this decision were varied, they were usually connected to external factors, personal factors, or factors related to the mother-child relationship.

In addition, Rosenblum found that many of the women in her sample reported that although they chose to relinquish custody, thus reducing the degree to which their lives were organized around motherhood, they felt that their mothering role was still central in their lives.

Continuing her research, Rosenblum (1986) focused attention on the reasons why non-custodial mothers made the decision to live apart from their children, and found that the women she interviewed made a distinction between leaving the children as a "wife" and leaving as a "mother". Those who relinquished custody as a "wife", according to Rosenblum, made the decision in deference of wife to husband. For example, concessions to a husband's demands, fear of his anger, or concern for his well-being. However, those women leaving as a "mother" did so in terms of leaving the role of mother. It was the parental status which was important. Rosenblum concluded that although the meaning of the decision to relinquish custody in the two cases was very different, the distinction tends to go unnoticed among the general population as well as among non-custodial mothers.

Greif (1986) surveyed 517 non-custodial mothers, using a

questionnaire in 1983, and one focus of his research was on the characteristics of those women who paid child support compared with those who did not. Additionally, he was concerned with the reasons each group reported for giving or not giving support. About fourteen percent of the women in his study paid child support. This compared with thirty-four percent of non-custodial fathers who paid support. Greif's results indicated that the women who paid support earned a higher income than the women who did not pay support. In addition, the mothers who gave support were less likely to have joint-custody than mothers who did not give support.

Further, Greif found that the most frequently cited reason for making child support payments was because it was required by the court. Secondly, the women stated that they believed it was the "fair" thing to do. And thirdly, they said that they paid support in order to stay more involved in their children's life. The majority of women who did not make child support payments reported that financial reasons prevented them from making these payments. Additionally, many reported that the judge or their ex-husband did not request payment. Many of the women also stated that they did not pay child support because their ex-husband did not give support when he was the non-custodial parent.

Greif (1987) continued to analyze his 1983 research, focusing attention on the non-custodial mother's level of comfort regarding her role. Results from his questionnaire indicated that, of the 517 participants, one-third reported feeling comfortable with their life as a non-custodial mother,

one-third had mixed reactions, and another third were primarily uncomfortable with their situation.

The mothers who were comfortable with their non-custodial status were examined as a sub-group to determine what personal factors were predictors of comfort, and he found six variables reported to be important. They were: a) the mother relinquished custody of her children voluntarily, b) she gave up custody for the benefit of her children, c) she believed that her children were better off living with their father, d) she accepted some responsibility for the marital break-up, e) she did not experience a significant difference in her financial status following her marital separation, and f) she did not have a strong religious affiliation.

Greif concluded that mothers who were comfortable in their non-custodial role were also satisfied with their relationship with their children, and did not feel guilt. Additionally, Greif postulated that if non-custodial mothers redefine their role as mothers, they are better able to adapt to their new situation.

Although Doudna (1982) did not conduct a research study, she did make several assertions regarding non-custodial mothers. For example, she claimed that mothers who give up custody are highly disapproved of because they have challenged what is, to many, a fundamental tenet in society. Additionally, she proposed that the non-custodial mother's adjustment reflects many variables, including the age of the children at the time of separation, as well as the mother's successful establishment of a new relationship with her children. Most important, however,

suggested Doudna, is the degree to which non-custodial mothers are able to find fulfillment in their new life.

Three of the reviewed articles were written by women who described their personal experiences as non-custodial mothers, and all had one common theme; they experienced negative judgment from others regarding their decision to relinquish custody of their children. One of these women (Sullivan, 1979), in describing the difficulties she encountered as a mother living apart from her children, stressed the importance of rejecting society's traditional image of motherhood, while redefining the mothering role in new ways. In addition, she wrote that an event that helped her to gain confidence and to recognize her inner strength was to appear on a televised interview program, sharing her experiences as a non-custodial mother.

In another article, Houstle (1979) discussed her inability to cope with the negative criticism from family and friends regarding her decision to relinquish custody and consequently, she chose to "go crazy" rather than face the denigration from others. Houstle poignantly illustrated how "going crazy" seemed to be a more socially acceptable alternative than being perceived as a mother not wanting to raise her children. In accord with Sullivan's (1979) recommendation, Houstle emphasized the importance of redefining the mother role.

Stoll (1985) also described how disapproval from others was difficult for her. And, like Doudna (1982), Houstle (1979), and Sullivan (1979), Stoll emphasized the importance of clarifying one's values about mothering instead of internalizing society's traditional beliefs about this role.

In summary, the above studies have many commonalities. The most striking is the non-custodial mother's perceptions of society's negative judgment toward them for relinquishing custody of their children (Doudna, 1982; Fischer, 1983; Fischer & Cardea, 1981; Greif, 1987; Keller, 1975; Koehler, 1982; Paskowicz, 1982; Rosenblum, 1986; Stoll, 1985; Sullivan, 1979; Todres, 1978). This finding coincides with Rowlands' (1980) assertion that in many cases non-custodial mothers suffer from a stigma that non-custodial fathers usually escape. Additionally, in her book, Beyond Reason, Margaret Trudeau (1979) described how she was inundated with negative criticism from all sectors of society for her decision to leave her husband and three children. And even though she saw her children regularly, she was still described by the media as a "hard and selfish career girl, capable of neglecting her children" (p. 251). Furthermore, she pointed out that while she was labeled negatively, her husband "became the most famous single father in the world and his popularity rating rose 17 percent..." (p. 249). Several of the authors of the above studies also pointed out the profound sense of loss and grief some non-custodial mothers experience as a result of their living apart from their children (Fischer, 1983; Fischer & Cardea, 1982; Houstle, 1979; Koehler, 1982; Paskowicz, 1982; Stoll, 1985, Sullivan, 1979; Todres, 1978). Guilt is another common factor these women were found to experience due to their decision to relinquish custody (Koehler, 1982; Paskowicz, 1982; Sullivan, 1979; Todres, 1978). In addition, many of the authors of the above studies agreed that the reasons given for relinquishing custody were varied and

unique and that most women gave several reasons for making this decision (Fischer, 1983; Koehler, 1982; Paskowicz, 1982; Rosenblum, 1984, 1986, Todres, 1978).

Although the above studies addressed many questions regarding the non-custodial mother's situation, conspicuously absent from this literature review are studies that specifically identify the incidents which facilitate and hinder successful adjustment to the non-custodial mother's situation. Though some of the authors discussed adjustment (Doudna, 1982; Greif, 1987; Houstle, 1979; Paskowicz, 1982; Stoll, 1985; Sullivan, 1979), their findings were limited in terms of the aim of this study. Doudna (1982), for example, offered conjecture rather than substantial evidence regarding the conditions facilitating adjustment for non-custodial mothers. Paskowicz (1982), on the other hand, identified only one reason reported by the women in her study as facilitating adjustment, that is, positive input and support from friends and family. Additionally, although Houstle (1979), Stoll (1985), and Sullivan (1979) advocated the redefinition of the mothering role as an effective strategy, this recommendation resulted from their own personal experience. Greif's (1987) study came closest to this research, however, the methods of the two studies differ significantly in approach.

This research is therefore unique because it involved an in-depth interview method used to identify the incidents which facilitated and hindered effective adjustment for the 17 non-custodial mothers in this study. These research results make a contribution to understanding the non-custodial mother's direct experience regarding the adjustment process from the

woman's perspective.

Research Expectations

Several expectations resulted from the literature review. It was expected, for example, that the participants in the present study would report what Paskowicz (1982) found with her subjects, that one condition facilitating adjustment is positive input from others. Another expection derived from Fischer's (1983), Koehler's (1982), and Todres' (1978) findings. According to these three researchers, a major difficulty that non-custodial mothers experience is negative judgment from others regarding their decision to live apart from their children. Thus, it was anticipated that negative judgment from others would be identified by the women in this study. Additionally, in accord with Koehler's (1982) and Todres' (1978) research results, it was speculated that the participants would identify guilt as a factor which affected their adjustment. And finally, Doudna's (1982) hypotheses that non-custodial mothers' effective adjustment is dependent on the degree to which they are able to successfully establish a new relationship with their children as well as their ability to establish and find fulfillment in their new situation was expected to be reported by the respondents in this study.

Research Assumptions

Some research assumptions resulted from the literature review. These assumptions are:

1. There are experiences facilitating the successful adjustment of non-custodial mothers which can be identified and enumerated using the critical incident technique.

   1a. The incident of having received supportive verbal statements will be reported by some participants.

   1b. The establishment of a new relationship with their children will be reported by some of the women in the study.

   1c. Some of the respondents will report a redefinition of their role as mother.

2. There are experiences occurring in the lives of mothers who have relinquished custody of their children which can be identified and enumerated using the critical incident technique which hinder the adjustment of these women.

   2a. Some of the participants will report a negative judgment toward them from others.

   2b. The incident of not having enough money will be reported by some of the respondents.

   2c. Some of the women will report a negative relationship with their children.

   2d. Some of the respondents will report a sense of guilt for not living with their children.

Review of the Critical Incident Technique

The data for this research were collected through the use of the critical incident technique which was developed by Flanagan (1947, 1954). This technique grew out of research conducted in the Aviation Psychology Program of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II and is an in-depth interview method concerned with obtaining specific incidents which facilitate or hinder some aim, in this case, successful adjustment for non-custodial mothers. Flanagan (1954) wrote that,

> "The critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles" (p. 327).

The object of the approach, according to Flanagan (1947), is to obtain first hand reports describing a situation in which success or failure is determined by specific reported causes.

The value of the critical incident technique lies in the deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation. That is, "The interview situation permits much greater depth than other methods of collecting research" (Borg and Gall, 1983, p. 436). Furthermore, Flanagan (1978) maintained that through this research approach the subjects' recalled incidents provide a rich and valuable source of information.

Flanagan (1954) asserted that the critical incident technique produces a record of specific behaviors reported by those in the best position to make judgments about the particular activity being investigated. Consequently, through

this method, the researcher can acquire information that the respondent would normally not reveal under other circumstances.

Although the collected incidents represent only raw data and do not automatically provide solutions to problems, Cohen and Smith (1976) pointed out that if hundreds of incidents describe what facilitates and hinders an activity, it provides a functional description of the important requirements for improving the task at hand. Therefore, the collection and classification of the incidents make it possible for the investigator to formulate the critical requirements of the activity.

Andersson and Nilsson (1964), in their research on the critical incident technique, concluded that information collected by this approach is both reliable and valid. Correspondingly, Mayeske, Harmon, and Glickman (1966) suggested that the information derived from this research method is relatively free from bias because it is based on actual experience. They also pointed out that one of the primary values of the approach is that the information obtained from the critical incidents is specific and relevant to the activity under investigation and that the incidents give operational expression to what helps and hinders the activity.

In summary, the critical incident method is an appropriate means of achieving an in-depth understanding of what, from the non-custodial mother's experience, facilitates and hinders successful adjustment to her situation.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample in this study consisted of 17 women who voluntarily relinquished custody of their children to their ex-spouses and who were also living apart from their children for at least one year.

According to Colaizzi (1978), the necessary criteria for selecting participants are "experience with the investigated topic and articulateness" (p. 58). Thus, two of the criteria for selection of participants were experience as a non-custodial mother and the ability to intelligently communicate about the experience. The sample also included women who were living apart from their children for at least one year, the assumption being that women who relinquished custody of their children at least one year prior to the interview had a time perspective enabling them to talk about their experience more objectively.

Women who had separation from their children imposed on them were excluded from this research study because they may not have had the same types of issues to deal with as mothers who voluntarily relinqusihed custody to the father. That is, voluntarily and involuntarily relinquishing custody of one's children very likely produces distinctly different experiences (Greif, 1987). Therefore, only those women who voluntarily relinquished custody were included in the sample. Additionally, mothers with joint-custody were omitted because shared and

joint-custody likely results in dissimilar experiences. Some of the women in this sample, although they chose to live apart from their children, did not legally relinquish custody. These women were included in the sample because it was believed that their experiences would be similar to the mothers in the sample who legally relinquished custody of their children. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, the term non-custodial mother refers to all mothers who chose to live apart from their children.

Furthermore, the investigator decided to focus exclusively on women whose children were living with their ex-spouses because non-custodial mothers would likely have reasonable access to children living with their fathers than if living with someone else.

Selecting respondents proved to be difficult because there was no organized group of non-custodial mothers in the Vancouver or surrounding area that could be drawn from. Therefore, one avenue utilized to gain access to the sample was through word of mouth. That is, the researcher familiarized friends and colleagues of her interest in interviewing mothers living apart from their children. Additionally, access to these women was gained by putting notices on local bulletin boards (community centres, libraries, universities, and women's centres) in the Vancouver area (Appendix A). As well, an advertisement was placed in Kinesis, a local newspaper sponsored by the Vancouver Status of Women. Originally, the researcher hoped to obtain a sample of 25 women. However, due to the difficulty in acquiring participants, a total of 17 non-custodial mothers were obtained for the study.

All participants were screened to ensure that they fulfilled the requirements for inclusion in this study. Additionally, demographic data were collected and reported for each respondent in order to describe the sample who volunteered (Appendices G and H).

Background of Participants

The research was conducted with 17 women, ranging in age from 32 to 49 years, with an average age of 38 years. The median annual income for this group was $12,100, ranging from $7,000 to $40,000. Occupations represented were nurse, physiotherapist, counsellor, research coordinator, research assistant, accountant, secretary, receptionist, waitress, and artist. Several participants were students and one participant was unemployed at the time the interview occurred. Over three-quarters (76.5%) of the sample had attended college, university or received special training. These women had, on average, two children each.

Six of the seventeen women were students and fifteen were working either full or part-time. Additionally, 15 of the 17, or about eighty-eight percent (88.2%), had been or were currently involved in personal therapy and over half (53.3%) of them stated that the focus of their therapy was to help them adjust to living apart from their children. Thus, about fifty-three percent (53.3%) of the participants in this study sought a mental health professional to help them in the adjustment process. This roughly corresponds with Paskowicz' (1982) sample of women, where sixty percent (60.0%) were

identified as seeking professional help with adjustment. These figures contrast with Kiefer's (1979) and the International Year of Disabled Persons' (1981) estimate that about ten percent of people in the general population need some form of mental health services.

Only 4 of the 17 women or about twenty-four percent (23.5%) were either re-married or living with someone since separating from their husbands. Of these four women, only two or about twelve percent (11.8%) re-married. This contrasts to the 1985 national average of about thirty-six percent (36.4%) re-marrying after divorce (Statistics Canada, 1986). However, the percentage of women in this study re-marrying or entering a common-law relationship (23.5%) corresponds with the percentage of non-custodial mothers in Todres' (1978) sample who re-married or entered a common-law relationship (21.0%).

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted to determine whether or not the participants were able to recall incidents that were critical to their adjustment. Additionally, this phase of the research was employed to test the interview structure. Two women volunteered to participate. One was a non-custodial mother, while the other was a woman with joint-custody. Neither of these two women were included in the sample selected to participate in the research study. The willingness and ability of the respondents to recall and relate the experiences that facilitated and hindered their adjustment was demonstrated in the pilot study. Additionally, it was found that the interview

structure, with some minor adjustments, was effective.

Data Collection

Once the participants were selected, each was contacted by telephone to inform them about the interview. Specifically, they were told that they would be requested to identify, from their own experience, what helped and hindered them in terms of adjusting to living apart from their children. In addition, they were told that their participation was voluntary, that approximately one hour of their time would be required for the individual interviews, and that the interview would be audiotape recorded so that the researcher would have an accurate account of what they had to say. During this telephone conversation, the investigator described the methodology used for the study and briefly detailed what would be asked of the participant during the interview session. Additionally, the participants were encouraged to ask any questions of clarification during this time. And finally, an interview time was arranged. All interviews were conducted during the spring and summer of 1986.

Each interview opened with a brief introduction, followed by a request of the respondent to read and sign a consent form (Appendix B). The interviewer began each interview with a standard preamble as stated below:

"Some things seem to work better than others in helping women who are living apart from their children adjust to this situation. By sharing your experiences, you will help to identify the facilitative and hindering conditions affecting adjustment for non-custodial mothers. I am interested in

learning what things, from your point of view, facilitated you in adjusting to your situation and what things hindered your adjustment."

Following the preamble, the respondent was able to ask any questions she had regarding the study. The interview proceeded following the preamble. It involved a series of open-ended questions intended to help explore the respondent's experience as fully as possible. As the participant responded to the interview questions, the investigator abided by the following guidelines as defined by Flanagan (1954):

> "The interviewer should avoid asking leading questions after the main question has been stated. His remarks should be neutral and permissive and show that he accepts the observer as expert. By indicating that he understands what is being said and permitting the observer to do most of the talking, the interviewer can usually get unbiased incidents" (p. 342).

After the participant responded fully to the interviewer's questions, the interviewer asked if the respondent could recall another incident and if this was the case, the process was repeated.

The Interview

As noted earlier, the interview was projected to be approximately one hour in length. However, the actual interviews ranged from two to four hours in length. This was due, in part, to the sensitive nature of the interview material, as well as allowing each interviewee to fully express their experiences. The interview protocol proceeded as follows:

Introduction

"I am going to read this aloud as you read along. The reason is that all participants will approach the interview in the same way."

"I am interested in finding out what specific things you did or others did that helped you to adjust to your situation as a mother living apart from your children. Additionally, I would like to find out what specific things you did or others did that made adjustment difficult for you."

Facilitating Incidents

"We'll start with the things that significantly helped you to adjust. Think back to a time when something happened that significantly helped you to adjust to your situation. Be as specific as possible and as detailed as possible. Take as much time as you need to think of a specific incident and when you have an incident clearly in mind, let me know."

Follow-Up Questions

After the respondent recalled the incident, the following questions were asked:

a.   What were the general circumstances leading up to the incident?

b.   How long after you stopped living with your children did the incident occur?

c.   What exactly happened that was so helpful to you at that time?

d.   What was it about the incident that specifically helped you?

e. What changed for you through the incident?

f. If another person is involved, what is their relationship to you?

g. Can you think of another incident that significantly helped you to adjust. Again, take as much time as you need and when you have a specific incident in mind, let me know.

The above procedure was repeated until the respondent could not think of any new incidents that helped her adjust to her situation.

After each incident was recalled, the same seven follow-up questions cited above were asked.

Hindering Incidents

"Now I'd like you to think of a specific incident that made adjustment for you significantly more difficult. In as much detail as possible describe an incident that hindered your adjustment. Take as much time as you need to think of an incident and let me know when you are ready."

Follow-Up Questions

After the participant recalled the incident the seven follow-up questions as cited above were asked.

Following the interview, the participant was given a demographic questionnaire to complete (Appendix C).

Criteria Check

Perhaps one of the most serious problems encountered when using the critical incident method, according to Borg and Gall (1983), is to obtain incidents that are truly critical. To insure each reported incident was in fact critical, each incident was given a criteria check. An incident was considered to be critical if the respondent could recall, in sufficient detail, what it was about the experience that facilitated or hindered her adjustment. Therefore, during the interview, the investigator applied the criteria checks (follow-up questions) to the incidents. The criteria were:

a. All relevant factors in the situation were sought.

b. The respondent made a definite judgment as to the criticalness of the behavior.

c. The participant made it clear why she believed the behavior to be critical (Flanagan, 1954).

Interviewer Characteristics

The information in this study, collected through Flanagan's critical incident interview approach, allowed the participant to give self reports about her experience as a mother living apart from her children. Because of the sensitive nature of the material, some respondents may have found the interview to be threatening. Therefore, the interviewer attempted to make the interview situation as non-threatening as possible.

Before the actual interview began, for example, the interviewer spent a little time establishing rapport with the

participant and answered any questions she had. Additionally, by using the interviewer skills of attentive behavior, empathic listening and non-evaluative language, as well as demonstrating respect, support and acceptance, the participant hopefully felt a sense of trust and openness in sharing her experiences.

Furthermore, since the interviewer is a non-custodial mother, her own background and shared experiences not only facilitated a deeper understanding than might otherwise have occurred, but by disclosing her status, the participants felt a sense of acceptance for the decision they made to live apart from their children.

Data Analysis

An analysis of the collected incidents allowed the investigator to formulate the critical requirements of the activity. This process followed the completion of the interview when the incidents were summarized from the audiotape recordings. Data analysis involved examining the incidents for similarities and common factors. The objective, according to Flanagan (1954), is to summarize and describe the data in a concise, efficient manner, in order to increase the usefulness of the data while sacrificing as little as possible of its comprehensiveness, specificity and validity.

The first step in data analysis was classification of the incidents. This process included grouping the incidents into categories and formulating descriptive statements representing these groups. A major problem in the classification system was the importance of considering how general or specific the

categories should be. The aim was to determine the optimal balance between the general and the specific. Woolsey (1986) pointed out that the level of generality is established by the headings and sub-headings. Furthermore, Flanagan (1954) wrote that the problem consists of "weighing the advantages of specificity achieved in specific incidents against the simplicity of a relatively smaller number of general headings" (p. 345).

Therefore, when selecting category headings, the following guidelines, proposed by Flanagan (1954), were found to be useful.

    a.   Headings and requirements must be clear-cut, logically organized and easily discernable with an easily remembered structure.

    b.   Titles require meanings in themselves without detailed definitions.

    c.   Headings for major areas should be homogenous, parallel in content and structure and they should be neutral.

    d.   Headings must be of the same type and level of importance.

    e.   Headings should facilitate findings being easily applied and maximally useful.

    f.   The list of headings needs to be comprehensive, covering all incidents.

Keeping these guidelines in mind, the critical incidents were summarized from the taped interviews onto index cards, with one incident per card. Each card was labeled with a summary of the incident, approximate date the incident occurred, and a

sequential identification number was assigned to each incident.

Because the critical incidents contained diverse information, they were written with more conciseness and clarity. While it is possible to lose some information in this process, there is no reason to believe any essential information was removed (see Appendix F for examples of full-length incidents and their simplified counterparts).

The following process illustrates the progression employed in the summarization of each incident. First, the full-length incident was listened to in order to acquire an impression of its essence. Next, the answers to the follow-up questions were extracted and summarized. To assist in clarifying the incident further, the agent, or whomever was responsible for the incident occurring, and the source, or what, in particular, was helpful or hindering about the incident, was identified. And finally, from this information, the incident was summarized onto index cards.

After all incidents were summarized in this way, the development of the category system began. The first step in the category formulation was to examine each incident, noting similarities and common elements. The second step was to undertake a trial classification. A small sample of the incidents was sorted, placing incidents that seemed similar together. Following this measure, the researcher briefly defined these categories and continued to classify additional incidents into them. The categories were then reviewed and refined until all the incidents describing similar experiences were placed in the same sub-category headings. The definitions

for all categories were re-examined in terms of actual incidents placed in each, and this process was repeated until the classification system was complete. Several cycles were required to develop satisfactory categories for the incidents. The refinement of the categories was an ongoing process as each review of the category cards resulted in some category redefinitions. Finally, after several reviews, it became clear that the incident cards were in their correct categories and that the classification system was complete.

Rater Reliability

The method of data analysis consisted of developing a category system inductively and then checking its reliability by determining how consistently raters placed the incidents into the superordinate and subordinate categories (see Appendix I for rater reliability scores). Because decisions made in the classification process were subjective judgments, the system was submitted to four independent raters for review.

The raters were trained in the category system and were asked to categorize the selected incidents (1). The percent of accurate placements provided the measure of reliability, and a mimimum of seventy percent (70%) agreement between each rater's category placements and those of the researcher's for the sub-categories and eighty-five percent (85%) agreement for the superordinate categories (Woolsey, 1986) was set.

Rater A was a 39 year old male, with 3 years university training in the Social Sciences. He received extensive training in how to categorize the incidents. Rater B was a 32 year old

female and advanced student in Counselling Psychology. She had training in counselling and analytical techniques.

Each of the first two raters achieved scores of about ninety-four percent (94.1%) agreement with the researcher's category placements for the superordinate categories and about eighty-nine percent (88.7%) and ninety-one percent (90.6%) respectively for the subordinate categories.

Although these scores indicate a reasonably high level of reliability for the category system, there were two modifications made to the system resulting from these raters' categorization. Both raters experienced some confusion when distinguishing between the category of 'Inclusion in the Children's Life' and that of 'Parental Advisor'. Therefore, after examination of this ambiguity, it was decided that these two categories would be combined into one, labeled, 'Inclusion in the Children's Life'. Additionally, the category entitled, 'Compensatory Behavior' was changed to 'Evasive Behavior' because of the confusion both raters experienced resulting from that category's title.

Rater C was a 40 year old male with a degree in Journalism. He was working for a local newspaper and experienced at analyzing material. Rater D was a 39 year old female with a degree in Library Science and was working as a cataloguer. She therefore had training and experience cataloguing and classifying material.

The second set of raters achieved reliability scores of about ninety-two percent (92.2%) and one-hundered percent (100%) respectively for the superordinate categories and about

ninety-three percent (93.2%) and ninety-five percent (95.1%) respectively for the subordinate categories. These figures suggest that the category system is a reliable reflection of the reported incidents.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this critical incident study on what facilitates and hinders effective adjustment for non-custodial mothers, the 17 participants reported a total of 212 incidents. Of these 212 incidents, 134 or about sixty-three percent (63.2%) were facilitative and 78 or about thirty-seven percent (36.8%) were hindering.

Following the completion of the interviews, the incidents were summarized from the audiotape recordings onto index cards. Through an inductive process of gradual refinement, a set of 15 basic or sub-categories emerged. These 15 sub-categories were grouped into 3 major or superordinate categories (see Appendices D and E for definition of categories and Tables 1 to 5 for frequency and percentage rates of the incidents placed within each category). The 3 superordinate categories are represented with roman numerals and the 15 subordinate categories are represented with arabic numerals.

The frequency and percentage distribution within the three superordinate categories are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Incidents Within Each Superordinate
Category

Superordinate Category (n=212 Incidents)	F	Percent
I. INTERPERSONAL FACTORS	140	66.0
II. INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS	49	23.1
III. EXTERNAL FACTORS	23	10.9

By far, the largest of the three superordinate categories was that of 'Interpersonal Factors', with almost two-thirds (66.0%) of all incidents forming this category. This demonstrates the importance the participants placed on relationships with others as significant in assisting in their adjustment.

The frequencies and percentages for each facilitating sub-category placed within each superordinate category are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Facilitative Categories Within Each
Superordinate Category

Facilitative Categories	F	% Within Superordinate Categories
I. INTERPERSONAL FACTORS	94	
1. Social Support	46	48.9
2. Inclusion in the Children's Life	25	26.6
3. Reassurance Children are Well-Cared For	10	10.6
4. Regular Contact With the Children	8	8.5
5. Assertion With Ex-Husband	5	5.3
II. INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS	31	
6. Acceptance of her Decision	15	48.4
7. Reminiscing	6	19.4
8. Evasive Behavior	6	19.4
9. Expressed Emotions	4	12.9
III. EXTERNAL FACTORS	9	
10. Having a Home that is a Family Place	9	100.0

As indicated in Table 2, 'Social Support' (48.9%) was
reported more often than any other facilitating category within
the 'Interpersonal Factors'. With regard to the 'Intrapersonal

Factors', by far, the most frequently cited sub-category was 'Acceptance of her Decision' (48.4%).

The frequencies and percentages for each hindering sub-category placed within each superordinate category are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Hindering Categories Within Each
Superordinate Category

Hindering Categories	F	% Within Superordinate Category
I. INTERPERSONAL FACTORS	46	
1. Negative Judgment/ Lack of Social Support	26	56.5
2. Exclusion From the Children's Life	20	43.5
II. INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS	18	
3. Guilt	11	61.1
4. Evasive Behavior	7	38.9
III. EXTERNAL FACTORS	14	
5. Poverty	14	100.0

As illustrated in Table 3, the hindering sub-categories placed within the 'Interpersonal Factors' contained about equal number of incidents, with 'Negative Judgment/Lack of Social Support' having 56.5%, and 'Exclusion from the Children's Life'

having 43.5%. In terms of the 'Intrapersonal Factors', 'Guilt',

with 61.1%, was reported most often as hindering adjustment.

The frequencies and percentages within each facilitative

sub-category are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Incidents Within Each Facilitative
Subordinate Category

Facilitative categories (n=134 facilitative incidents)	F	% Within Facilitative Categories
I. INTERPERSONAL FACTORS	94	
1. Social Support	46	34.3
2. Inclusion in the Children's Life	25	18.7
3. Reassurance Children are Well-Cared For	10	7.5
4. Regular Contact With the Children	8	6.0
5. Assertion With Ex-Husband	5	3.7
II. INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS	31	
6. Acceptance of her Decision	15	11.2
7. Reminiscing	6	4.5
8. Evasive Behavior	6	4.5
9. Expressed Emotions	4	3.0
III. EXTERNAL FACTORS	9	
10. Having a Home that is a Family Place	9	6.7

In Table 4 it is demonstrated that 'Social Support' (34.3%) and 'Inclusion in the Children's Life' (18.7%) were the two most often mentioned facilitating sub-categories.

The frequencies and percentages within each hindering sub-category are displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage of Incidents Within Each Hindering
Subordinate Category

Hindering Categories (n=78 hindering incidents)	F	% Within Hindering Categories
I. INTERPERSONAL FACTORS	46	
1. Negative Judgment/ Lack of Social Support	26	33.3
2. Exclusion from the Children's Life	20	25.6
II. INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS	18	
3. Guilt	11	14.1
4. Evasive Behavior	7	9.0
III. EXTERNAL FACTORS	14	
5. Poverty	14	18.0

In Table 5 it is demonstrated that 'Negative Judgment/Lack of Social Support' (33.3%) and 'Exclusion from the Children's Life' (25.6%) were the two most frequently reported hindering sub-categories.

In Table 6 is displayed who was identified as being responsible for the incident occurring within each facilitative sub-category.

Table 6

Frequency and Percentage of Agent Responsible for Facilitative Incidents

Facilitative Categories	F	Percentage
1. SOCIAL SUPPORT	46	
A. From Friends	24	52.2
B. From Family	8	17.4
C. From Others	7	15.2
D. From Children	6	13.0
E. From Ex-Husband	1	2.2
2. INCLUSION	25	
A. With Children	12	48.0
B. By Ex-Husband	6	24.0
C. Children with her Family	4	16.0
D. With Children's school	3	12.0
3. REASSURANCE	10	
A. From Children	4	40.0
B. From Ex-Husband	4	40.0
C. From Family	1	10.0
D. From Others	1	10.0

Table continues

Table 6 (continued)

4.	REGULAR CONTACT	8	
5.	ASSERTION	5	
6.	ACCEPTANCE OF HER DECISION	15	
7.	REMINISCING	6	
	A. With photographs	3	50.0
	B. Returning to shared activity	3	50.0
8.	EVASIVE BEHAVIOR	6	
	A. Through work	2	33.3
	B. Through school	2	33.3
	C. Through leisure activities	1	16.7
	D. Selective about who she talked with about her situation	1	16.7
9.	EXPRESSED EMOTIONS	4	
10.	HAVING A HOME THAT IS A FAMILY PLACE	9	

In Table 6 is demonstrated the overwhelming number of respondents reporting friends (52.2%) as being supportive, compared to the number reporting family (17.4%), or others (15.2%) as being supportive. Additionally, the participants identified their children (48.0%) more than anyone else as being responsible for including them in their lives.

In terms of the hindering incidents, who was identified as being respnsible for the incident occurring is shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Frequency and Percentage of Agent Responsible for Hindering Incidents

Hindering Categories	F	Percentage
1. NEGATIVE JUDGMENT/ LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT	26	
A. From Friends	8	30.8
B. From Family	8	30.8
C. From Ex-Husband	5	19.2
D. From Others	4	15.4
E. From Children	1	3.9
2. EXCLUSION FROM THE CHILDREN'S LIFE	20	
A. By Ex-Husband	13	65.0
B. By Children	3	15.0
C. By Others	3	15.0
D. By Children's school	1	5.0
3. GUILT	11	
A. From Children	8	72.7
B. From Self	3	27.3

Table continues

Table 7 (continued)

4.	EVASIVE BEHAVIOR		7	
	A.	With Friends	4	57.1
	B.	With Children	2	28.6
	C.	With Children's school	1	14.3
5.	POVERTY		14	
	A.	Unable to afford food/ clothing/comfortable apartment or home	6	42.9
	B.	Unable to afford transportation	4	28.6
	C.	Unable to afford leisure activities with the Children	2	14.3
	D.	Unable to afford toll calls to the Children	2	14.3

'Negative Judgment/Lack of Social Support', as displayed in Table 7, was reported equally among friends (30.8%) and family (30.8%). Ex-husbands (65.0%) however, were reported to be responsible for excluding her from the children more often than anyone else.

Time Frame

Data were collected and analyzed regarding how long after separating from the children the incidents occurred. Incidents were reported to occur starting from before the actual separation from the children up to 12 years afterwards. The

term, 'immediately after', refers to the time period between the inital separation up to one month after separating from the children. The results are reported in Tables 8, 9, and 10 below.

Table 8

Cumulative Frequency Distribution of the Length of Time After Separation the Faciliative and Hindering Incident Occurred

Length of Time From Separation	F	% of Incidents	Cumulative Frequency
BEFORE SEPARATION	10	4.7	4.7
IMMEDIATELY AFTER	41	19.3	24.0
1 - 11 MONTHS	55	25.9	49.9
1 - 2 YEARS	56	26.4	76.3
3 - 4 YEARS	19	9.0	85.3
5 - 6 YEARS	15	7.1	92.4
7 - 8 YEARS	6	2.8	95.2
9 - 10 YEARS	8	3.8	99.0
11 - 12 YEARS	2	.9	99.9

As indicated in Table 8, almost twenty percent (19.3%) of the 212 facilitating and hindering incidents occurred immediately after separation from the children. However, the majority of the incidents were reported to occur up to two years afterwards with about seventy-two percent (71.6%) occurring at that time.

Table 9

Cumulative Frequency Distribution of the Length of Time After
Separation the Facilitative Incident Occurred

Length of Time From Separation	F	% of Incidents	Cumulative Frequency
BEFORE SEPARATION	9	6.7	6.7
IMMEDIATELY AFTER	16	11.9	18.6
1 - 11 MONTHS	40	29.9	48.5
1 - 2 YEARS	37	27.6	76.1
3 - 4 YEARS	13	9.7	85.8
5 - 6 YEARS	9	6.7	92.5
7 - 8 YEARS	5	3.7	96.2
9 - 10 YEARS	5	3.7	99.9

As demonstrated in Table 9, over forty percent (41.8%) of the 134 facilitative incidents were reported to occur within the first eleven months from the time of separation, and about sixty-nine percent (69.4%) occurred within the first two years afterwards. Another ten percent (9.7%) occurred between three and four years after separation. Thus, over two-thirds (69.4%) of all facilitating incidents occurred within the first two years and over three-quarters (79.1%) were reported to occur within the first four years from the time of separation.

Table 10

Cumulative Frequency Distribution of the Length of Time After
Separation the Hindering Incident Occurred

Length of Time From Separation	F	% of Incidents	Cumlulative Frequency
BEFORE SEPARATION	1	1.3	1.3
IMMEDIATELY AFTER	25	32.1	33.4
1 - 11 MONTHS	15	19.2	52.6
1 - 2 YEARS	19	24.4	77.0
3 - 4 YEARS	6	7.7	84.7
5 - 6 YEARS	6	7.7	92.4
7 - 8 YEARS	1	1.3	93.7
9 - 10 YEARS	3	3.9	97.6
11 - 12 YEARS	2	2.7	100.3

As demonstrated in Table 10, over half (51.3%) of the 78 hindering incidents occurred within the first year after separation and about three-quarters (75.7%) were reported to occur within the first two years after the separation. Another eight percent (7.7%) occurred between three and four years afterwards, bringing the total number of hindering incidents occurring within the first four years to over eighty percent (83.4%).

The data were also analyzed in regard to when, during the adjustment process, the incidents occurred. In Table 11 is displayed the length of time from separating from the children that the facilitating incidents occurred.

Table 11

Length of Time from Separation the Facilitative Incident
Occurred

(n=134 incidents)	F		F
BEFORE SEPARATION	9	1 - 11 MONTHS	40
Reassurance	5	Support	15
Support	2	Inclusion	6
Accepting Decision	1	Accepting Decision	5
Expressed Emotions	1	Assertion	3
		Reminiscing	3
IMMEDIATELY AFTER	16	Regular Contact	2
Support	6	Evasion	2
Accepting Decision	3	Expressed Emotions	2
Inclusion	2	Reassurance	1
Regular Contact	2	Having a Home that is a Family Place	1
Evasion	2		
Assertion	1		

Table continues

Table 11 (continued)

1 - 2 YEARS	37	7 - 8 YEARS	5
Support	9	Inclusion	3
Inclusion	8	Accepting Decision	1
Having a Home that is a Family Place	5	Evasion	1
Regular Contact	4	9 - 10 YEARS	5
Accepting Decision	4	Support	2
Reminiscing	3	Inclusion	1
Evasion	2	Regular Contact	1
Reassurance	1	Evasion	1
Expressed Emotions	1		
3 - 4 YEARS	13		
Support	6		
Inclusion	2		
Having a Home that is a Family Place	2		
Accepting Decision	2		
Reassurance	1		
5 - 6 YEARS	9		
Support	5		
Inclusion	2		
Assertion	1		
Reassurance	1		

As illustrated in Table 11 the incidents classified into the category entitled, 'Reassurance that the Children are Well-Cared for', were reported to occur most often before separating from the children with fifty percent (50.0%) reported to occur at that time. Incidents forming the 'Social Support' category were reported to occur more frequently during the first eleven months after separation, with about one-third (32.6%) occurring at that time. A similar finding emerged with regard to the incidents classified into the category entitled, 'Acceptance of her Decision', with one-third (33.3%) of these reported to occur during the first eleven months after separation. Additionally, incidents forming the 'Inclusion in the Children's Life' category were also reported to occur frequently during the first eleven months after separation, with about one-quarter (24.0%) occurring at that time. The incidents forming this category were also reported to occur often between the first and second years after separation with about one-third (32.0%) occurring at that time. Incidents classified into the category entitled, 'Having a Home that is a Family Place', were reported to occur more often between the first and second years after separation, with over half (55.6%) of these reported to occur at that time.

In Table 12 is displayed the length of time from separating from the children that the hindering incidents occurred.

Table 12

Length of Time from Separation the Hindering Incident Occurred

(n=78 incidents)	F		F
BEFORE SEPARATION	1	3 - 4 YEARS	6
Exclusion	1	Exclusion	3
		Guilt	2
IMMEDIATELY AFTER	25	Negative Judgment	1
Poverty	9		
Negative Judgment	6	5 - 6 YEARS	6
Exclusion	6	Guilt	3
Guilt	2	Negative Judgment	1
Evasion	2	Exclusion	1
		Poverty	1
1 - 11 MONTHS	15		
Negative Judgment	7	7 - 8 YEARS	1
Exclusion	3	Exclusion	1
Poverty	2		
Guilt	2	9 - 10 YEARS	3
Evasion	1	Negative Judgment	2
		Exclusion	1
1 - 2 YEARS	19		
Negative Judgment	8	11 - 12 YEARS	2
Exclusion	4	Negative Judgment	1
Evasion	3	Exclusion	1
Guilt	2		
Poverty	2		

In terms of the hindering incidents in Table 12, it is demonstrated that 'Negative Judgment/Lack of Social Support' was reported to occur about equally during the time periods of immediately after, from one to eleven months after, and from one to two years after separation, with about twenty-seven percent (26.9%) of these incidents occurring during each of these periods (23.1%, 26.9%, and 30.8% respectively). The 'Exclusion from the Children's Life' category was reported to occur most often immediately after separation, with thirty percent (30.0%) of these incidents occurring at that time. Additionally, almost two-thirds (64.3%) of the incidents forming the 'Poverty' category were reported to occur most often immediately afterwards. And finally, about forty-three percent (42.9%) of the incidents forming the 'Evasion' category were reported to occur between one and two years after separation.

Agent Responsible for the Incident Occurring

It is interesting to note who the participants identified as being responsible for facilitating and hindering their adjustment. In Table 13 below is demonstrated who or what was identified as being responsible for the facilitating and hindering incidents occurring.

Table 13

Agent Responsible for the Facilitative and Hindering Incidents

(n=212 Incidents)		
Agent	F	Percentage
SELF	41	19.3
CHILD	38	17.9
FRIENDS	34	16.0
EX-HUSBAND	32	15.1
FAMILY	20	9.4
OTHERS	17	8.0
PROFESSIONALS	16	7.6
POVERTY	14	6.6

It is illustrated in Table 13 that the respondents' family, that is, mother, father, sisters, brothers, aunts, and uncles, were reported to be responsible for either facilitating or hindering adjustment in a limited number of cases (9.4%). Similarly, counsellors, family doctors, and other professionals were identified as responsible for a small proportion of the incidents (7.6%).

On the other hand, however, the participants identified themselves (19.3%), their children (17.9%), their friends (16.0%), and their ex-husbands (15.1%) as being most responsible for the incidents.

In Tables 14 and 15 the frequency and percentage for the agent responsible for the facilitating and hindering incidents are displayed.

Table 14

Agent Responsible for the Facilitative Incidents

(n=134 facilitative incidents)

Agent	F	Percentage
SELF	31	23.1
CHILDREN	26	19.4
FRIENDS	26	19.4
EX-HUSBAND	14	10.5
FAMILY	12	9.0
OTHERS	13	9.7
PROFESSIONALS	12	9.0

In Tables 14 and 15 it is demonstrated that the participants reported family as being responsible for only nine percent (9.0%) of the facilitating and about ten percent (10.3%) of the hindering incidents. Similarily, professionals were identified as being responsible for nine percent (9.0%) of the facilitating and about five percent (5.1%) of the hindering incidents. Conversely, however, the respondents identified themselves as responsible for about twenty-three percent (23.1%)

of the facilitating and for only about thirteen percent (12.8%) of the hindering incidents. Correspondingly, friends were reported to be responsible for about nineteen percent (19.4%) of the facilitating and for only about ten percent (10.3%) of the hindering incidents. Ex-husbands, on the other hand, were reported as being responsible for the facilitating incidents in only about eleven percent (10.5%) of the cases and responsible for the hindering incidents in about twenty-three percent (23.1%) of the cases.

Additionally, the participants identified their children as being responsible for a reasonably high percentage of the facilitating and hindering incidents, with about nineteen percent (19.4%) reported to be responsible for the facilitating and about fifteen percent (15.4%) responsible for the hindering incidents.

The latter four figures demonstrate that the respondents identified themselves, their children, and their friends as the three most facilitating sources, while their ex-husbands were identified as the most hindering source. As well, the majority of the participants identified their friends as more facilitative than family in regard to their adjustment.

Table 15

Agent Responsible for the Hindering Incidents

(n=78 hindering incidents)

Agent	F	Percentage
SELF	10	12.8
CHILDREN	12	15.4
FRIENDS	8	10.3
EX-HUSBAND	18	23.1
FAMILY	8	10.3
OTHERS	4	5.1
PROFESSIONALS	4	5.1
POVERTY	14	18.0

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Statement of Results

Social Support

Several findings of interest emerged from examination of the data. One of the most significant patterns that emerged early and was consistent throughout the interviews was the identification of support from others as a facilitative factor, with about one-third (34.3%) of the 134 facilitating incidents forming this category. This finding concurs with Paskowitz' (1982) finding that support from friends and family is an important contributor to adjustment for mothers who are living apart from their children. In this study, it was the most frequently cited incident and therefore may be the most important factor affecting the adjustment process. In fact, 16 of the 17 participants, or about ninety-four percent (94.1%) indicated that support was a major aspect in terms of their adjustment. One of the surprise findings regarding this category was the importance placed on support from friends as opposed to support coming from family members. It is interesting that over one-half (52.2%) of the 46 incidents classified into the 'Social Support' category were related to friends, compared to only about seventeen percent (17.4%) relating to family.

However, one respondent reported how support from her

family was facilitative to her.

> "You know that terrible aloneness. Oh shit, gee, it was shitty, but knowing there was my family I could count on when I needed them. I could talk to them about my pain, and then it didn't hurt so much."

Another woman recalled how support from her boyfriend helped her.

> "I had such a strong reaction the day my kids left. I don't think I ever felt that bad in my whole life. It was like I was falling apart. So what was helpful was when my boyfriend came in and he held me. He was just so supportive and nurturing....I guess just the comfort in being physically held, especially if you feel as if you're falling to pieces. To have someone hold you tightly so it feels as though you can't really fall apart."

A third woman recounted how support from her family doctor was facilitative.

> "Because he was nonjudgmental, I felt I could be totally honest with him about my situation. I guess I hadn't thought about it until just now, but I probably hadn't been totally honest with anyone because I was afraid that people would think I was a horrible person. So when he was supportive and nonjudgmental of me, I felt this huge relief that finally, I had someone I could talk to."

Inclusion in the Children's Life

Inclusion in the children's life was also reported as an important factor facilitating adjustment for the participants with about nineteen percent (18.7%) of the facilitative incidents forming this category. The following example exemplifies how inclusion was facilitating for this woman.

> "My son's teacher called to invite me for a consultation about my son's school report. This just

occurred out of the blue too. His teacher involved me. She didn't make the assumption that since the kids didn't live with me that I wasn't interested in being involved in their schooling. That was important to me because she involved me and saw me as important in my son's life."

Although inclusion with the children's school or other source was identified as helpful, it seems that direct inclusion with the children was the most significant factor for the participants with forty-eight percent (48.0%) of the incidents in this category identifying the children as the meaningful source responsible for facilitation. An example of this is demonstrated by the following incident:

"Since I couldn't be at my daughter's birthday party, I wanted to participate in some way. So she and I made a cake together, and I was able to share in her birthday. I got to share something special with her on her birthday."

Another woman recalled how inclusion in her daughter's life was facilitative to her.

"I was going downtown to have lunch with my girlfriend, and my daughter decided she was going to dress me up, you see. So she dressed me in all her clothes, which are really cute if you're 15, but you look absolutely silly when you're 36. And she's got me all dressed up in stretch pants and leg warmers and the whole bit. So, I got dressed up and came out and said, 'Well, what do you think?' And she starts laughing, you know. And we had a good laugh together over that. So when you get things like that, simple things like that make you feel close to each other, make me feel part of her life, and it helps a lot."

Evasive Behavior

It is important to point out that some of the participants, about five percent (4.5%), reported a need to avoid thinking

about their situation as being facilitative. This may sound incongruent to facilitation, but this was not the case for the women who reported avoidance as a facilitative factor. The following example demonstrates how avoidance was helpful for this respondent:

> "If you keep busy, it prevents you from getting depressed. That's why I became a workaholic."

Another participant reported,

> "I had to stop thinking about my daughter. I just felt that I had to get away from thinking about her all the time. It was eating away at me. So I travelled for a year....What was so helpful I guess was that I avoided the situation, but I had to because it was just too painful for me to face."

Negative Judgment/Lack of Social Support

In terms of the 78 hindering incidents affecting adjustment, a considerable number formed the 'Negative Judgment/Lack of Social Support' category, with one-third (33.3%) of all hindering incidents forming this cateogry. This category corresponds strikingly in frequency and content to the most frequently reported facilitative category. That is, about one-third (34.3%) of the facilitating incidents formed the 'Social Support' category. Additionally, while 16 of the 17 participants (94.1%) reported that support from others affected their adjustment, 15 of the 17 (88.2%) reported that negative judgment and lack of support hindered their adjustment.

In accordance with Doudna's (1982), Fischer's (1983), Fischer and Cardea's (1981), Greif's (1987), Houstle's (1979), Koehler's (1982), Rosenblum's (1986), Stoll's (1985), Sullivan's (1979), and Todres' (1978) findings that non-custodial mothers

experience negative judgment from others, the majority of women in this study (88.2%) reported negative judgment and lack of support from others as hindering their adjustment. It is important to point out that of the 26 incidents forming this category, over nineteen percent (19.2%) identified the ex-husband as being judgmental. This compares with only about two percent (2.2%) of the 46 facilitating incidents falling into the 'Social Support' category identifying the ex-husband as being supportive. In order to illustrate how negative judgment and lack of support hindered adjustment for the participants, some direct quotations of responses are presented. One woman, for example, reported how lack of support from her boyfriend hindered her adjustment.

> "He wasn't able to understand what I experienced with this. And what was really hard was that sometimes he made light of my feelings, as though I was being overly emotional. He'd say that I was making myself depressed by feeling sorry for myself because I wasn't there with my kids. You know, I felt that I was being criticized about my feelings for my kids. That hurt because he criticized what was a very deeply emotional experience for me. And what was so hard about that was he's the person I'm most connected with and he didn't undertand what this other most important part of my life was like for me. It made me feel as if I didn't have anywhere or anyone to turn to and I felt extremely isolated in dealing with it all by myself."

Another respondent related how negative judgment from her psychiatrist hindered her.

> "Well, I was missing my kids a lot and still crying a great deal and I needed some help....I was feeling pretty depressed, so I went to see a doctor, a psychiatrist, someone to talk to and this person hurt me because he more or less told me that I was a floozy and that I didn't want to live with my kids because I just wanted to have a good time. He told me that I shouldn't feel guilty either because that's just the way I was. You know, just out to have a good time. I

felt horrible and wished that I hadn't opened my trap
about anything to him about how I felt because I was
just starting to build myself up and he knocked me
right back down again."

Exclusion from the Children's Life

Another hindering category reported by the majority of
participants was 'Exclusion from the Children's Life', with
about twenty-six percent (25.6%) of the hindering incidents
forming this category. It is noteworthy to point out that an
overwhelming number of hindering incidents (65.0%) identified
the ex-husband as being responsible for excluding her from the
children's life. Conversely, a much smaller number of
facilitating incidents classified into the 'Inclusion in the
Children's Life' category (24.0%) identified the ex-husband as
including her in the children's life.

Some typical examples of incidents classified into the
'Exclusion from the Children's Life' category are:

> "My daughter's birthday was coming up, and at her play
> school they would celebrate with little individual
> cupcakes for each child. So I told my ex-husband that
> I wanted to make these cupcakes for her school
> birthday celebration. So I did, and I got over to
> their house about 8:30 at night and my daughter was
> asleep. So I arrived with these cupcakes and my
> ex-husband wouldn't answer the door. Finally, he came
> to the door but still wouldn't open it. But, through
> the mail slot he said that I had no right to come over
> without telephoning. I thought he was being
> ridiculous, so I said, 'Well, I'm sorry to disturb
> you, but I've got the cupcakes and if you'll just open
> the door and take them, I'll be on my way.' And he
> said, 'No.' So I said, 'You'll open the God Damn door
> or I'll shove the cupcakes through the mail slot.' So
> there I was, on the front porch, shouting through this
> mail slot, 'Open this fucking door.' And he'd yell
> back, 'No.' I was fuming because he wouldn't let me
> drop off the cupcakes I made for my daughter's
> birthday. He took that away from me."

Another participant recalled how her ex-husband excluded her from spending Christmas with the children.

> "Not being able to spend Christmas with my kids. That was terrible. My ex-husband and I didn't have a clear-cut separation agreement, so I was powerless to change the situation. There was no way to negotiate with my ex-husband to change his mind."

Guilt

In accord with Koehler's (1982), Paskowicz' (1982), and Todres' (1978) findings that non-custodial mothers feel guilty for relinquishing custody of their children, some of the women in this study identified guilt as a factor that hindered their adjustment, with about fourteen percent (14.1%) of all hindering incidents forming this category. The following example describes one participant's experience with guilt.

> "Society's view of what a mother is. That has to be right up there with my husband and him doing his number on me. It was so easy for him to act the part. The father with the children and what a lousy person I must be and it wasn't true. But that is how I'd feel a lot of the time. You could still be a good father and not have your children, but it's much more difficult to be the good mother and not have your children. Society says you have to have them through thick and thin. It doesn't matter if you are poor or not, and it doesn't matter whether you may want some things for yourself. The children should come first. And I've bought into that view. I'm guilty because I put myself first."

Another woman recalled how guilt affected her,

> "When my kids left to live with their dad, I felt relief, but then I was guilty about my relief and thought that something was wrong with me because I didn't want my kids living with me."

Poverty

Another factor reported by some of the participants supports the research assumption that not having enough money hindered adjustment. That is, eighteen percent (18.0%) of all hindering incidents formed the category entitled, 'Poverty' and several respondents stated that not having enough money hindered them. For example, some mothers were not able to afford to buy a car and consequently, were unable to see their children as often as they would like. Others reported that they did not have enough money to afford to rent a house or apartment suitable for comfortable visits with their children. And some even stated that they were unable to afford to buy food for their children's visits. This factor corresponds to Greif's (1987) finding that the non-custodial mother's financial status plays an important role in her adjustment process.

Superordinate Categories

Regarding the superordinate categories, the largest of the three was 'Interpersonal Factors', which illustrates the importance the women placed on relationships and interactions with others as affecting their adjustment. That is, almost two-thirds (66.0%) of the 212 incidents formed this category, while about twenty-three percent (23.1%) formed the 'Intrapersonal Factors' category and only about eleven percent (10.9%) of the 212 incidents formed the 'External Factors' category.

Time Frame

The data indicate that the majority of incidents, both facilitating and hindering, occurred within the first two years after separation from the children with almost three-quarters (71.6%) of all incidents reported to occur during that time period. Therefore, an important time for non-custodial mothers in terms of the adjustment process occurred within the first two years from the time of separation.

Additionally, in contrast to the facilitating incidents, about thirty-one percent (30.8%) of the hindering incidents occurred immediately after separation, while only about five percent (5.2%) of the facilitating incidents occurred at that time. Thus, a critical time in terms of the hindering incidents occurred immediately after separation from the children.

The data also reveal that the facilitative category entitled 'Reassurance that the Children are Well-Cared For', occurred most often before separating from the children, with fifty percent (50.0%) of the incidents in this category reported to occur at that time. Incidents forming the 'Acceptance of her Decision', 'Social Support', and 'Inclusion in the Children's Life' category were reported to occur most often during the first eleven months after separation, with 33.3%, 32.6%, and 24.0% respectively reported to occur at that time. Incidents forming the 'Inclusion in the Children's Life' category were also reported to occur frequently between the first and second years after separation, with about one-third (32.0%) occurring at that time. As well, incidents classified into the category entitled, 'Having a Home that is a Family Place' were reported

to occur more often between the first and second years after
separating from the children with over half (55.6%) occurring at
that time.

In terms of the hindering incidents, 'Negative
Judgment/Lack of Social Support' was reported to occur about
equally during the time periods of immediately after (23.1%),
from one to eleven months afterwards (26.9%), and from one to
two years after separation (30.8%). The 'Exclusion from the
Children's Life' category was reported to occur most often
immediately after separation, with thirty percent (30.0%)
occurring at that time. Additionally, almost two-thirds (64.3%)
of the incidents forming the 'Poverty' category were reported to
occur immediately after separation. And finally, the incidents
forming the 'Evasion' category were reported to occur more
frequently between one and two years afterwards, with about
forty-three percent (42.9%) occurring at that time.

Agent Responsible for the Incident Occurring

The participants identified themselves, their children, and
their friends as the three most facilitative sources affecting
their adjustment, while reporting their ex-husbands as the most
hindering source. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the
majority of respondents identified their friends as more
facilitative than family in regard to their adjustment.

Comparisons with Other Research Findings

Some direct comparisons between findings of this research and those of other researchers were made. For example, Paskowicz' (1982) findings that support from others facilitated non-custodial mothers, corresponds with one of the categories in this research entitled, 'Social Support'. Doudna (1982), Fischer (1983), Fischer and Cardea (1981), Greif (1987), Houstle (1979), Koehler (1982), Rosenblum (1986), Stoll (1985), Sullivan (1979), and Todres (1978) concluded that non-custodial mothers experience negative judgment from others, which corresponds with the research category entitled, 'Negative Judgment/Lack of Social Support'. As well, Koehler (1982), Paskowicz (1982), and Todres (1978) found that non-custodial mothers feel guilty for relinquishing custody of their children. This finding corresponds with the category in this research study entitled, 'Guilt'.

In addition, while the categories in this research did not directly agree with the constructs made by the following researchers, there were some similarity of findings. For example, Doudna (1982), and Greif (1987) hypothesized that the non-custodial mother's adjustment is dependent upon her ability to successfully establish a new relationship with her children. In this study, while this was not mentioned often enough or specifically enough to generate a category, a similar category was created. That is, 'Acceptance of Her Decision', which contained some statements supporting Doudna's and Greif's findings. One woman, for instance, while recounting how accepting her decision to live apart from her children was

facilitative for her, stated that a factor that helped was seeing her children less often. She was therefore able to accept her relationship with her children as a part-time rather than a full-time mother. She reflected that,

> "One of the big things was seeing my children less often....I mean, what helped me was that I began to accept my decision as something good and positive. It was coming to the realization that my relationship with my children was changing, not ending."

Doudna (1982) also postulated that non-custodial mothers' effective adjustment is dependent on their ability to find fulfillment in their new situation. Again, while this incident was not directly reported in this study, some women stated that they had more time to pursue their personal goals. For example, in describing the process of coming to accept her decision to live apart from her children, one respondent reported,

> "I was finally able to accept my decision and to think about my own goals. So I decided to go back to school. I became a student. I mean I could finally say, 'I am a student'. That was important to me because I wasn't just a mother anymore."

The women in this study did not report what Greif (1987) found in his research that the mother's adjustment is aided if she believes that her children are better off living with their father. However, a similar finding emerged. About eight percent (7.5%) of the participants stated that being reassured that the children were well-cared for by their ex-husband was a facilitating factor for them.

Implications and Recommendations

One potential value to this research is the provision of information that can be used by service agencies to help the adjustment of non-custodial mothers. The 15 subordinate and 3 superordinate categories suggest some general guidelines for program planning for these women. Therefore, it is recommended that counsellors and workshop leaders take these guidelines into account when working with non-custodial mothers.

Regardless of the reasons these women have for choosing to live apart from their children, they have one thing in common. They are in a situation that is relatively rare and socially disapproved of (Doudna, 1982; Fischer, 1983; Fischer & Cardea, 1981; Greif, 1987; Houstle, 1979; Isenhart, 1979; Keller, 1975; Koehler, 1982; Luepnitz, 1982; McKie, Prentice, & Reed, 1983; Paskowicz, 1982; Rosenblum, 1986; Rowlands, 1980; Rubin, 1983; Stoll, 1985; Sullivan, 1979; Todres, 1978; Weiss, 1979). Thus, many non-custodial mothers need counselling and related services. Some suggested strategies for counsellors working with this group of women are:

1. Recognize and become familiar with the facilitative and hindering factors affecting the adjustment process for non-custodial mothers. Additionally, it is suggested that counsellors learn about an individual client's facilitating and hindering sources from that client.

2. Facilitate role clarification by exploring and defining mothering in new ways.

3. Clarify needs, and plan and implement new behavior patterns. Help to identify the roles these women want to play in their childrens' lives and help them to pursue these needs in constructive and direct ways. In addition, help them to identify, set and maintain boundaries related to their needs.

4. Explore personal strengths. It is important for non-custodial mothers to discover that they have the inner resources necessary to lead the non-traditional life-style they have chosen.

5. Help these women to recognize, understand and alleviate their guilt by questioning its origin, when it developed and why.

6. Assist non-custodial mothers to become aware of and to examine the dynamics and impact of social and cultural norms. Encourage these women to question the validity of these norms and to examine the appropriateness to their life-style. Additonally, help them to understand these societal norms as opinions rather than statements of fact. Furthermore, facilitate an awareness of the negative stereotypes about non-custodial mothers and help this group begin to overcome the social sanctions imposed on them. It is important to help these women realize that although they cannot control the beliefs and actions of others toward them, they can change their own beliefs and actions regarding their situation.

7. Validate the women's belief that avoidance can be a rational and legitimate choice. Avoiding judgmental people, for example, can be a healthy response during the adjustment process.

8. Encourage these women to become familiar with their legal rights, especially regarding visitation and access to their children.

9. Work with, and help to educate both parents in order to facilitate honest and direct communication patterns within the family.

10. Offer individual counselling, exploring the emotional and psychological aspects affecting adjustment. One of the most meaningful ways to facilitate adjustment is to encourage non-custodial mothers to share their feelings and to work through them. According to Corey and Corey (1982), the expression of emotions is therapeutic because once emotions are expressed, especially 'pent-up' emotions, they tend to release new energy and consequently, the individual is more likely to realize inner resources needed to direct the course of their lives. Additionally, Kubler-Ross (1969) emphasized, in her work with loss from death, that the more the individual can express feelings of grief and loss, the less unbearable it becomes. Therefore, it is suggested that the counsellor assist these women to deal with their loss, especially the loss of their life-style and familiar mothering roles. The following example describes how helpful it was for one of the participants to

express her feelings.

> "I let myself miss them, to feel it and cry and just feel really really miserable to the point of wanting to scream to something, somewhere about my pain. And it's okay to express it because I think it's wonderful to love so deep that it hurts like hell without it. So when I miss my kids and feel that pain, it doesn't mean it's a negative thing. It's part of a process for me of dealing with that loss."

11. Develop a support group for non-custodial mothers, designed specifically to focus on the difficulties these women encounter as well as the special needs they have (2). Groups can provide many advantages for mothers who are living apart from their children. For example, it is important for non-custodial mothers to know that they are not alone. Therefore, involvement with other women in a similar situation can help to alleviate the isolation and alienation many non-custodial mothers experience. Another advantage of support groups is that members can create a safe environment which will encourage and promote sharing and expressing emotions. And, members who offer care and support will generally facilitate others to feel that their personal concerns are important and valid. As well, members who present constructive feedback will frequently facilitate new learnings, insights and change.

It is noteworthy that all of the 17 women who participated in this study stated on the demographic questionnaire that they thought a support group for non-custodial mothers would be helpful to them. In addition, some of the women commented during the interview session about their desire for a support group. One respondent, for instance, indicated how she thought a group of this type could facilitate her.

> "I took the route of trying to deal with all this myself. It bottled me up basically because I don't have anyone to talk with. So, I think what would be a really important resource would be a support group of women who are going through the same things because they are the only ones who could really understand."

Another women said that she joined a support group for single mothers because it was the only type of group that was remotely related to her situation, and although this group was helpful and offered support, she sometimes felt out of place and alone in dealing with some of the issues she faced as a mother living apart from her children.

12. Offer career and life-style planning programs, exploring interests, values, goals and skills. Additionally, explore realistic career options and suggest job training programs if applicable.

13. Help to develop a sense of hope in order to give these women the confidence that they have the inner strength and resources to continue to be different.

14. Most of all, offer understanding, sensitivity, support and acceptance to mothers for their choice to live apart from their children.

Social Change Strategies

While the following statements are not directly related to the research findings, the researcher formed some opinions about what needs to be done to promote adjustment for non-custodial

mothers.

For example, it is believed that an important strategy in facilitating non-custodial mothers is to re-educate the general public in order to make this choice a more acceptable and respected option for mothers when encountering separation or divorce. The more information and knowledge people have regarding this way of life, the better able they will be to understand and grasp some of the dynamics of the situation. The intention is that understanding will help to remove the social stigma attached to the non-custodial mother's circumstance.

Additionally, it is believed that in order to facilitate change, it is important to impact the various systems in our society and the legal and educational systems are two key areas to approach. The legal system tends to support the social norm that mothers are better suited than fathers for child rearing because in most contested custody cases the courts grant custody to the mother. Although emphasis on child custody decisions have changed in recent times from considering only the rights of the mother to the current considerations of the best interest of the children (Beeson, 1984), Pearson and Munson (1984) argue that attempts to implement the best interest concept and to evaluate parents on that basis have produced mixed results. Additionally, they claimed that "...in the majority of contested custody cases...the court appears to continue to operationalize the child's best interest in terms of the fitness and unfitness of the mother" (p. 14). This claim is consistent with the aggregated Canadian figures showing that women are awarded custody in about ninety-six percent of the cases (McKie,

Prentice, & Reed, 1983). Ricks (1984) and Weiner (1985) also pointed out that although father custody and joint-custody are becoming increasingly recognized as viable alternatives to the more traditional maternal custody, the maternal preference still has greater claim as evidenced by the statistics: Only about ten percent of the custody cases, according to Ricks (1984), are not awarded to the mother. Thus, the legal system may indirectly condone the idea that mothers "should" raise the children in cases of separation or divorce. It is therefore recommended that re-education programs in this area be implemented in order to encourage the members in this field to re-evaluate their beliefs about the mothering role.

The educational system is also a primary target to approach with information about the non-custodial mother's circumstance. In order to promote the non-custodial mother's situation as an accepted option for families of separation and divorce, more information in the form of literature, films, lectures, discussions and workshops is required.

The mass media is another important area to pursue because of its huge influence and impact on the general public. Various educational programs about mothers living apart from their children, for example, could be researched and produced, portraying the experiences of non-custodial mothers and therefore helping to put them in a more realistic and positive light. Programs of this type could help to dispel some of the many negative myths about these women.

It is also suggested that information about non-custodial mothers become available in libraries and community and

recreational facilities. As well, it is recommended that courses and workshops offering relevant information about this group of women be designed for colleges, universities and community centres, promoting question periods, open discussion, and suggested reading material. In addition, workshops offered to individual and family counsellors as well as conciliation and divorce mediation counsellors, who are likely to be working with this group of women are important in order to familiarize these professionals with the issues and concerns confronting non-custodial mothers.

Increasingly, more and more women are making the decision to live apart from their children. In addition, other women are questioning whether they should make this decision and questioning the social and emotional costs involved. It is therefore hoped that the results from this research offer useful information that will help others to better understand the non-custodial mother's situation and the conditions that facilitate and hinder adjustment for them. Furthermore, the desire is for the recommendations and guidelines to be useful to non-custodial mothers and to mothers posed with the question whether to retain custody or not. Additionally, these guidelines provide important information for counsellors who are working with this group of women.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Summary of Findings

It has been the object of this study to identify the factors affecting adjustment for non-custodial mothers. The findings suggest some answers to the major question, "What conditions facilitate and hinder adjustment for mothers living apart from their children?" A number of factors emerged which are seen to affect the adjustment process for these women.

Data were collected through the use of the critical incident technique, an in-depth interview method. Analysis involved examining the collected incidents for similarities and common themes from which a category system was developed that summarized and described the data in a concise and comprehensive way.

Three major or superordinate and fifteen basic or subordinate categories evolved from the data. By placing each subordinate category into whichever superordinate category was most appropriate, a picture of the important aspects affecting adjustment emerged.

There were 212 critical incidents identified by the 17 women who participated in this study. These women reported 134 facilitative (63.0%) and 78 hindering (37.0%) incidents. And, by far, the most facilitating incident was support from others. In fact, of the 134 facilitating incidents, about thirty-four percent (34.3%) formed this category. Additionally, support

from friends was identified with more frequency (50.2%) than support from family (17.4%), children (13.0%), or ex-husbands (2.2%). Conversely, negative judgment and lack of support from others was reported to be the most hindering incident with thirty-three percent (33.3%) of the 78 hindering incidents falling into this category. As well, 'Exclusion from the Children's Life' was identified as a major factor hindering the adjustment process with about twenty-six percent (25.6%) of the hindering incidents forming this category.

It is noteworthy that the respondents identified themselves (23.1%), as well as their children (19.4%), and their friends (19.4%) as being most responsible for facilitating their adjustment, while their ex-husbands (23.1%) were reported to be most responsible for hindering adjustment.

A critical time for these women regarding the events affecting adjustment tended to occur within the first two years after separation from their children, with about sixty-nine percent (69.4%) of the facilitating incidents and about seventy-six percent (75.7%) of the hindering incidents occurring during that time period. Additionally, a critical time in terms of incidents hindering adjustment occurred immediately after separation, with about thirty-two percent (32.1%) of all hindering incidents reported to occur at that time.

In terms of the superordinate categories, by far, the largest of the three was 'Interpersonal Factors' with sixty-six (66.0%) percent of the 15 sub-categories falling into this major category. This demonstrates the importance these respondents placed on interactions with others as affecting their

adjustment.

Summary of Recommendations

There are various aspects that contribute to the well-being of non-custodial mothers. The following is a summary of the suggested strategies for counsellors and other professionals working with these women:

a. Become familiar with the aspects affecting adjustment for non-custodial mothers.

b. Define mothering in new ways by exploring and clarifying the mothering role. As well, examine the social and cultural pressures to conform to the traditional mother role.

c. Deal with the guilt and denigration these women experience and build on their strengths in order to enhance self-esteem.

d. Discuss the importance of avoiding negative judgment as a viable option.

e. Encourage these women to familiarize themselves with their legal rights regarding visitation and access.

f. Provide a support group for non-custodial mothers as a way to put these women in touch with each other.

g. Offer career and life-style planning programs.

h. Educate both parents in order to facilitate constructive communication patterns.

i. Offer hope to these women, emphasizing that they are not alone in their situation and that they have the inner resources to deal with the issues they face.

j   Offer support, understanding and acceptance to this group of women for their choice to live apart from their children.

In addition to the above recommendations, it is suggested by this researcher to approach the legal and educational systems with relevant information about mothers living apart from their

children. As well, it is recommended that programs about non-custodial mothers be produced by the media in order to familiarize the general public with the experiences of these women.

Recommendations for Future Research

Many additional questions arose while working with the data. Among these questions are the following:

a. Does the age of the mother without custody have an effect on the type of critical incidents reported?

b. Does the age of the children affect the type of incidents reported?

c. Does the sex of the children affect the types of incidents reported?

d. Does the length of separation from the children influence the type of critical incidents reported?

It is hoped that others will continue work in this area by exploring other aspects of the non-custodial mother's situation. The majority of studies examine the impact of divorce on the single parent, and therefore, little is known about non-custodial mothers. Additionally, little is known about the effects of a mothers' absence for the child of divorce. It would also be of interest to conduct studies focusing on the factors which facilitate and hinder adjustment for non-custodial fathers and to compare the results with the results from this research. As well, it would be valuable to study the aspects affecting adjustment for the single parent father.

It is recommended that similar studies be conducted on

other groups that society attaches a negative social stigma to, such as the homosexual population and childless couples. The researcher may discover that these people identify the same types of incidents as the women in this study and therefore, the implications and recommendations for helping non-custodial mothers may also be applicable to other groups with life-styles deviating from traditional society.

Additonally, similar studies on other cultures are important and relevant because the investigator may find different conditions affecting adjustment for non-custodial mothers. Since one's culture shapes social attitudes and values, then investigating the incidents affecting adjustment for non-custodial mothers living in a culture that does not promote the belief that mothers are better suited for child rearing would be of interest.

And finally, since the results of this study are limited in their generalizability, further research is required to confirm this study using a larger sample with a more varied composition.

In summary, many other kinds of studies on mothers living apart from their children are necessary for the future as the area is virtually untouched at the present time.

Conclusions

Mothers who are living apart from their children are on the increase. That is, although only about eleven percent of children of separation and divorce live with their fathers (Statistics Canada, 1983), the recent increase of divorces has dramatically raised the number of fathers with custody. In

1970, for example, there were 29,775 divorces in Canada and in 1982 this figure rose to over 70,000, a climb of about 135% in the 12 year period (Statistics Canada, 1985).

Although the number of non-custodial mothers is growing, these women have still chosen an uncommon and non-traditional life-style in our society. Thus, they usually face many more difficulties than fathers who are living apart from their children in regard to society's acceptance of them (Doudna, 1982; Fischer and Cardea, 1981; Greif, 1985; 1987; Koehler, 1982; Luepnitz, 1978, 1982; Rowlands, 1980; Veevers, 1980; Weiss, 1979). And, even though there are more and more non-custodial mothers who are challenging the socially assigned roles for child rearing, they are continually being confronted with how hard society works to discourage this expression, thus making adjustment for them difficult and stressful.

Since there are no established support groups specifically designed for non-custodial mothers, and very few people who are familiar with their situation, these women are often left feeling as if there is no one to turn to who understands their circumstance. It is therefore important for mothers living apart from their children to have access to qualified counsellors who are familiar with, and who understand their experience. This claim is supported by one of the women in this study who related, in typical comment, how helpful it was for her to have someone familiar with her situation to talk with. During the interview, for example, she stated,

> "This is cathartic. It's just been a year since I left the kids and within that time I've been wondering how all this stuff that I've been going through with my ex-husband and the kids has affected me. And not

having talked about it or re-lived it, which is what
I'm doing now, I guess I'm beginning to realize what a
strain this all has been on me. And I guess my
mistake is that I've tried to deal with all this stuff
myself, not talking about it with anyone else. Now I
realize how helpful this is to talk about it with
someone, especially with someone who has experience
with the same thing."

Because of the above reasons supporting the need for
resources for non-custodial mothers, it is important for
counsellors to familiarize themselves with the needs and issues
confronting these women in order to provide qualified and
competent support and services for them. The data in this
paper, therefore, have important implications. A counsellor,
for instance, who is aware of the factors facilitating and
hindering the non-custodial mother's situation can more readily
help this group of women deal with the difficulties they face.
Correspondingly, the counsellor who is attuned to the conditions
affecting the non-custodial mother's role can offer invaluable
knowledge, support and resources to these women. Therefore, the
identification of the factors facilitating and hindering
adjustment for this group is important for the advancement and
improvement of services for them. Additionally, the data from
this research are important for workshop leaders in helping them
develop relevant programs for women in this situation. As well,
the information is an important resource for conciliation and
divorce mediation counsellors in helping them to work more
sensitively and effectively with this group of women.

The data from this research are therefore an important
resource for individual, family and divorce mediation
counsellors working with mothers who are living apart from their

children because this information is seen as a way to increase the awareness and general knowledge regarding the problems and difficulties confronting these women.

Sight must not be lost that these findings have come from a small group of women who volunteered for this study and that not all non-custodial mothers' circumstances will fit the situation described in this paper. Thus, it is emphasized that the findings from this research must be considered tentative, due to the small sample size and limited composition of participants. Despite these limitations, however, it is hoped that this research offers useful information for non-custodial mothers and counsellors who find themselves working with these women.

NOTES

1. Each of the four independent raters were trained in the same way and given the following instructions:

"Your job is to categorize 106 randomly selected incidents in terms of facilitating or hindering adjustment for the sample of non-custodial mothers. There are 67 facilitative and 39 hindering incidents. We will begin with the hindering incidents. Here is a list of the 5 hindering sub-categories and on these index cards are the 39 incidents to be classified. First, read the names of each category and ask any questions you may have regarding their meaning. Now read each incident and categorize each one."

When this task was completed the rater applied the same procedure to the 67 facilitative incidents, categorizing them into the 10 facilitative sub-categories. Reliability tests for the superordinate categories proceeded in the same fashion with the four raters.

2. To date, there are no support groups specifically designed for non-custodial mothers in the Vancouver or surrounding area. However, there are some groups led by professionals or self-help groups in existence in the United States. On the west coast, Diana Case leads workshops for non-custodial mothers and on the east coast, Susan Falk and Joan Lakin conduct workshops for these women. Additionally, Cathy Knapp is the president of an organization based in Texas. This organization, with a membership of over 1,000 non-custodial mothers, publishes a

bi-monthly newsletter offering up-to-date information about non-custodial mothers. For more information regarding this organization, write to:

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

NONCUSTODIAL MOTHERS WANTED

I am doing research for my Master's thesis at UBC and require volunteers for my study. I am interested in women who are living apart from their children. I will be conducting one hour interviews with each participant. If you are interested, please contact Lori Larsen for further information.

Appendix B

Consent Form

I -------------------------, consent to participate in this study investigating the conditions that facilitate and hinder adjustment to the role of noncustodial mothering. This research is conducted by Lori Larsen, a Master's degree student in Counselling Psychology at UBC and supervised by Dr. Robert Tolsma, faculty advisor.

Information will be audiotape recorded during the interview session. This information will be transcribed onto index cards at a later date at which time the audio recording will be erased. No names will be used and the respondent's identity will remain confidential. The total amount of time required by the participant is approximately one hour. If there are any questions concerning the procedures, the investigator is available to answer them.

The participant has the right to refuse participation or withdraw from this study without consequences. Participation is voluntary.

Signed   ----------------------------

Date   ----------------------------

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your present age?

2. What is your present address?

3. What is your present occupation?

4. What is your present income?

5. What is the highest level of education that you have received?

6. How many children do you have?

7. What are your children's ages?

8. How long ago did you separate from your spouse?

9. How long ago did you stop living with your children?

10. How far away from you do your children live?

11. How often do you see your children?

12. How often do you have telephone contact with your children?

13. Are you working? Full/part-time?

14. Are you in school?

15. Are you involved in volunteer work?

16. Are you currently in counselling or therapy?
    If so, in group or individual?

17. Have you received counselling or therapy in the past?
    If so, group or individual?

18. Is or was your counselling or therapy related to helping you adjust to living apart from your children?

19. Are you re-married or living with someone?

Appendix D

Definition of Subordinate Categories

Facilitative Categories

1. SOCIAL SUPPORT

Receiving support and experiencing a sense of acceptance from friends, family and others.

"When he said he wasn't asking me if I loved my kids because he knew I did. I mean, to me, that was profoundly important because that meant that he accepted me. I guess I thought that people didn't know I loved my kids. So I usually had to explain to them all the time that I did. So the fact that he knew that I loved them, as a given, was such a burden lifted off me."

"He let me know that he thought I was a full person and a worthy person. So even though I wasn't living with my children, he let me know that he accepted me and that helps a great deal to feel that you are worthwhile."

2. INCLUSION IN THE CHILDREN'S LIFE

Having contact with the children, the children's school or the children having contact with her family.

"What was helpful was I had my son with me for the summer. I was able to really physically re-connect with him. And we were

able to be with each other like two people living together."

"Taking a holiday with the girls. That was another facilitating incident. We went camping for three weeks and it was fun and just plain relaxing to be together for that length of time....What was helpful about it? Well, just being together. Just being with them and getting to know them in that way.

3. REASSURANCE THAT THE CHILDREN ARE WELL-CARED FOR
Being told by others that the children were happy and well-cared for by their father.

"It helped to hear the kids say they were happy living with their dad. I mean, I could see for myself that they were doing well, but I was concerned that maybe I was just hoping things were fine. So it was reassuring to hear them say that they were fine."

4. REGULAR CONTACT WITH THE CHILDREN
Having contact and sharing time with the children on a regular basis.

"My son comes and stays with me every week-end. That really makes it easier for me. I need that time with him each week."

5. ASSERTION WITH EX-HUSBAND
Directly stating what she wanted from her ex-husband regarding the children.

"I wanted to be treated fairly. I didn't want to be called as a babysitter for him at a moment's notice. I think a great deal of respect was achieved because I made it quite clear to him that he couldn't call me at the last minute to babysit. So what happened was I gained his respect and he started to phone to ask me instead of demand that I babysit."

6. HAVING A HOME THAT IS A FAMILY PLACE
Having a home atmosphere that is comfortable for her and her children.

"It was finally finding a place that was well suited to our needs. I was much more relaxed with the kids than I was in the apartment. I mean, we had more room and more freedom in the house as opposed to the apartment living. Yeah, my home was a home for them and I began to feel like we were a family when we were together."

"My daughter feels really easy about coming to my house, and she loves to bring her friends over too because I have such a nice place for them to come to."

7. ACCEPTANCE OF HER DECISION TO LIVE APART FROM HER CHILDREN
Believing that she made the right decision to live apart from her children and accepting that decision.

"We laid out the pros and cons of living apart from my children and I realized that the choice I made was a good one. I was

more able to accept that I made that decision and that it was a valid decision."

.8. EVASIVE BEHAVIOR

Taking action to avoid the pain resulting from living apart from her children.

"I just had to stop thinking about my kids all the time. It was constant, day and night....So I got a job and took some courses at school. That really helped me tremendously because I was involved and active with other things and I wasn't dwelling on my kids all the time....I was much happier, looking forward rather than back."

"I mentioned that I found it really difficult to tell people about my situation, so I only told a few people whose reactions I could predict and deal with....I didn't want the misunderstandings or the negativity because I just had too hard a time dealing with it. So what was helpful was that I no longer had to deal with these types of reactions."

9. REMINISCING ABOUT THE CHILDREN

Thinking about the positive experiences she had with her children.

"I'll go, every now and then, to a little park he and I used to go to play tennis and I'll maybe sit there re-living the connection with him. I could almost feel my son's presence

there with me. It's that connection that is so helpful for me."

"When I looked through that photo album of me and the kids, I realized that we had a lot of good times together and that I was a good mother. It was really neat looking at all those photographs of us and thinking about all the good times we had together."

10. EXPRESSED EMOTIONS

Allowing herself to experience and express her feelings.

"One day I called a girlfriend and I started telling her how angry I was at my ex-husband. And the more I talked, the madder I got at him....It was helpful because I realized just how angry I really was and I got it out. It was a big release."

Hindering Categories

11. NEGATIVE JUDGMENT/LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Critical and disparaging remarks as well as disapproval from friends, family and others.

"When my ex-husband and I separated I wrote to his mother telling her about the separation and that the kids would be living with him. And she wrote back saying, 'You're not a good mother or wife and give me back the Christmas present I gave you.' And that was that, she's never spoken to me since. I

mean, my husband and I were married for 16 years and I was close to his family. And then, all of the sudden I lost half my family. It was gone because she was judgmental of me and then she cut me off. So, that one still hurts. It hurts a lot."

"They prejudged me about my situation. I either had to be extremely brittle so the judgment didn't hurt so much, or I'd end up trying to be really nice. I guess what I'm trying to say is that I didn't feel that it was okay to just be me. I had to try to either please people or just say, 'screw you', and I'm the type of person who spent most of my life trying to please people. And what I found out is that it doesn't work. So screw them, screw society for judging me. They're not the ones who have to live my life, I am."

12. EXCLUSION FROM THE CHILDREN'S LIFE

Feeling rejected, isolated or left out of the children's life.

"I wasn't informed about my kids school Christmas concert. I wanted to be included in their school activities, but I wasn't. So I felt as if I wasn't a decent and caring mother. I felt as if I didn't count."

"He wouldn't allow me to go to my daughter's graduation. I knew I had every right to go, but if I did, I was scared he'd cause a big scene and I didn't want to risk that. So I didn't go. I didn't get to go to her big day. I felt really left out, you know, and also powerless to do anything about it."

13. <u>POVERTY</u>

Not having enough money to make the children's visits more comfortable.

"My husband would not give me any maintenance whatsoever because I was the one to leave him. So I had absolutely no money. I went from upper middle class to poverty. It was really wierd because the kids were used to this enormous west coast cedar and glass house and it just didn't feel right to them to be at my little place. Our visits were really uncomfortable. I couldn't even afford to feed them. They'd come over and I'd say, 'Well, you can have a glass of water, but I can't offer you anything else because I don't have anything else.' Literally, that's the way it was."

14. <u>GUILT</u>

Having a sense of wrong-doing involving emotional conflict.

"My son asked me and hoped for my ex-husband, his dad, and me to get back together again and it was heart wrenching knowing that I couldn't do what my son wanted so much. That I couldn't be that ideal, little happy family unit that he so longed for. And what was so hard was that it perpetuated my guilt, knowing that my son was wishing for something that wasn't going to occur.

15. <u>EVASIVE BEHAVIOR</u>

Avoiding the pain she feels as a result of living apart from the children.

"This is an ongoing incident. I avoid talking with my son about why he is living with his dad. This causes a lot of tension between us, but I just can't do it. I'm afraid to bring the subject up. I think we're both afraid to bring it up. So I avoid talking about it with him."

"I didn't want anybody to know about my situation. I pretended that I had a happy little family. I lied. I put up a big front. It was very stressful on me because I couldn't socialize with anyone at work. I couldn't let my guard down....I couldn't get close to anybody."

<u>Appendix E</u>

<u>Definition of Superordinate Categories</u>

1.   <u>INTERPERSONAL FACTORS</u>

Relating to aspects of the relationship between the participant
and another person or persons.

2.   <u>INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS</u>

Relating to aspects within the individual.

3.   <u>EXTERNAL FACTORS</u>

Factors relating to circumstantial aspects of the situation.

Appendix F

Full-length Facilitating Incident and Its Simplified counterpart

Transcription #1

Respondent

"Well, my son and I take walks now. Like this one time we were taking a long walk down by the river and sooner or later he began to talk about what was bothering him and that really made me feel good that he felt close enough to me to open up. It was him opening up to me that was so helpful. Letting me into his life."

Interviewer

"So the general circumstances leading up to this incident were...?"

Respondent

"Well, my place was small and when he and his sister came for a visit, they'd share a room. There was no privacy. So pretty soon, he started to complain that he never had a chance to talk with me alone. So what we started to do was to take these long walks and that was our time together to talk about whatever he wanted to talk about."

Interviewer

"And how long after you stopped living with your children did

this incident occur?"

Respondent

"Oh, that was probably two and one-half years after."

Interviewer

"So what happened that was so helpful was taking the walk with your son and him opening up with you."

Respondent

"Yeah. Just being together for a length of time, talking and sharing what was on his mind."

Interviewer

"And what was it about taking the walk with him and him opening up that was so helpful to you?"

Respondent

"Just that he did talk and open up with me. I guess because of that I felt much closer to him. He really shared personally with me, and I felt as if he was letting me be part of an important part of his life."

Interviewer

"And how did things change for you as a result of this incident with your son?"

Respondent

"Well, I realized that if he and I can get away and walk, he'd feel free to open up about what was bothering him. I guess what changed was that our relationship improved. He wasn't so bottled up, wanting to have time alone with me and not getting it. We make sure that we take the time to take walks together when he visits. And now, it's a very important time for us."

Interviewer

"And who is involved in this incident?"

Respondent

"My son."

Follow-Up Questions

1.   What were the general circumstances leading up to the incident occurring?

Her son complaining about not having time alone with her.

2. How long after separation from the children did the incident occur?

Two and one-half years.

3. What happened that was helpful?

Her son sharing his personal feelings with her.

4. What was it about the incident that was helpful? (Source)

Feeling closer to her son and included in his personal life.

5. <u>What changed as a result of the incident?</u>

She made a point of setting time aside for her and her son to take walks together during his visits.

6. <u>Who is identified as the person responsible for the incident occurring?</u> (Agent)

Her son.

<u>Summary of the incident</u>

Feeling included in her son's life when he confided in her.

Full-length Facilitative Incident and Its Simplified Counterpart

Transcription #2

Respondent

"Specifically there was the Christmas party. It was just a week before Christmas and Christmas is always a tough time for me. I wanted to be with my kids and had invited them over, but they couldn't come. So feeling that emptiness, being without them at that time. And then telling my friend about how I felt and then my friend invited me to her place for Christmas. So I arranged to go to her Christmas party. And what was really important to me was that I knew I had her when I was feeling so low about my kids. I realized that I was not alone at Christmas. I was with my friend. It was like being with another type of family, so I didn't feel so bad."

Interviewer

"What were the general circumstances leading up to this incident?"

Respondent

"Well, not being able to be with my kids at a time that it was important for me to be with family. I was feeling pretty bad about that. My friend knew how I felt and so she invited me to her party."

Interviewer

"And how long after you stopped living with your children did this incident occur?"

Respondent

"Well, that was December of last year, so just over a year."

Interviewer

"And what exactly happened that was so helpful for you at that time, spending Christmas with your friend?"

Respondent

"It was that security that if I didn't have my kids, I still had her at a time when I needed her. Realizing that I had her and her support. Yeah, her support was what I needed. Just knowing she was there for me."

Interviewer

"And what was it about being with her at Christmas that was so helpful for you?"

Respondent

"That I needed her and that she obviously cared about me. That helped alot, just knowing that she cared was helpful to me."

Interviewer

"So what changed for you as a result of being with her that Christmas?"

Respondent

"I think it was further strengthening that I wasn't going to fall apart without the children. And, while I loved Christmas and the traditions, and being with my kids, but what you do is the best you can do and that your whole life can't revolve around your kids. I still have my friends and I can count on them. That was an important realization."

Interviewer

"And who would you identify as being involved in this incident?"

Respondent

"My friend."

Follow-Up Questions

1.   What were the general circumstances leading up to the incident occurring?

Talking with a friend about how sad she, the participant felt about not being able to spend Christmas with her children and how that was always a meaningful and important tradition for her.

2. How long after separating from the children did the incident occur?

Just over a year.

3. What happened that was helpful?

Being invited to a close friend's Christmas party at a time when

she, the participant wanted to spend Christmas with her children. Her friend was very supportive to her by inviting her to the Christmas party.

4. <u>What was it about the incident that was helpful</u>? (Source)
Feeling loved by her friend and realizing that this friend was like another type of family for her.

5. <u>What changed as a result of the incident?</u>
Realizing that she wasn't alone and wasn't going to fall apart without her children at Christmas time because she had a close and caring friend to be with at that time.

6. <u>Who is identified as the person responsible for the incident occurring?</u> (Agent)
Her friend.

<u>Summary of the incident</u>
Her friend was supportive during a time of need.

Full-length Hindering Incident and Its Simplified Counterpart

Transcription #3

Respondent

"Another one was talking with a friend of mine who is a feminist and she and I were talking about kids and she said to me, 'Well, you don't like children do you?' And I was really hurt that her assumption was that I didn't like children and she knows I have children that don't live with me because she's met them. And that she'd assume that I didn't like children. That really bothered me. And she was even uncomfortable talking to me about her wanting a child. I mean, I enjoyed children and all that.

Interviewer

"So what were the general circumstances leading up to that incident?"

Respondent

"Well, we were working together and became friends and she invited me over for tea and we were talking about the prospect of her having a baby."

Interviewer

"And how long after you separated from your kids did that incident occur?"

Respondent

"About three and one-half years. Just last spring."

<u>Interviewer</u>

"And exactly what happened that was so difficult for you when she made that assumption?"

<u>Respondent</u>

"I guess what was hard for me was that she didn't understand. She didn't experience it herself and probably never would because she's very much the earth mother type and really thinks that women are motherly in all ways. So it was so far from her conception to have a child and not want to live with that child always. I was upset by that because she calls herself a feminist and to me feminism is about choice and I felt, in a sense, she was denying me that choice. That if I gave up my children, I must not like children.

<u>Interviewer</u>

"So what happened that was so difficult for you was..."

<u>Respondent</u>

"Just that assumption that I didn't like children. I wasn't supported in my decision. In fact, it was more like her judging me for making that decision. My decision wasn't valued. And even among feminists, I wasn't valued. My choice was not being recognized as a legitimate choice."

Interviewer

"So you felt her judgment about your decision?"

Respondent

"Yeah."

Interviewer

"And what was it about that incident that hindered your adjustment?"

Respondent

"The need to explain that I did love my kids. But it was hard. That was on my mind a lot. She was someone I liked a lot, and I felt that I had to defend my choice to her. I felt she was judging me falsely. She didn't know if I liked children or not, but she just made that assumption. That's what was so hard, she made that assumption without asking me how I felt about it."

Interviewer

"So what changed for you as a result of this incident?"

Respondent

"Actually, I became much less trusting of people. And also a very powerful thing came out of that. A recognition that I needed to find women who had done the same thing. That if I was feeling judged and that if I wasn't feeling validated, it's because I didn't know anyone else who had done it and that I

shouldn't be looking for validation from people who had never done it and probably never would."

Interviewer

"So in that incident, what changed for you? How were things different?"

Respondent

"The disappointment that a friend wasn't, well, I felt that she wasn't supportive which was a disappointment. A big disappointment."

Interviewer

"So it was the unmet expectation that you thought she'd be supportive of your choice and the disappointment because she wasn't?"

Respondent

"Yeah, and in a sense, I see it in political terms. A woman should be able to make that choice. I mean, what kind of movement is this when we still have this traditional notion about women?

Interviewer

"That is difficult because traditional motherhood seems to be so engrained into all of us."

Respondent

"Yeah, we've sure internalized it. It's ours. We don't need anyone else out there to tell us."

Interviewer

"Okay, so the person involved in this incident would be your friend."

Respondent

"Yeah."

Follow-Up Questions

1.   What were the general circumstances leading up to the incident occurring?

Having tea with a friend and talking with her about motherhood.

2.   How long after separating from the children did the incident occur?

Three and one-half years.

3.   What happened that was hindering?

Her decision to live apart from her children was not recognized as a valid choice.

4.   What was it about the incident that was hindering? (Source)

Disappointment that her friend was judgmental and unsupportive of her decision to live apart from her children.

5.   What changed as a result of the incident?

A recognition that she needed to find other women in her situation for support and validation.

6. Who is identified as the person responsible for the incident occurring? (Agent)

Her friend.

Summary of the incident

Receiving negative judgment from her friend for her decision to live apart from her children.

Full-length Hindering Incident and Its Simplified Counterpart

Transcription #4

Respondent

"Well, I remember one time my daughter grabbing onto my leg when I was leaving. She was about six years old and saying, 'Mommy, don't go.' And that kind of stuff haunts you for weeks afterwards. You keeping thinking, 'What have I done?'

Interviewer

"So what were the general circumstances leading up to that incident?"

Respondent

"I spent the week-end with the kids and when I dropped them off, having my daughter grab my leg, begging me not to go."

Interviewer

"So, with that particular incident, how long after you stopped living with your kids did it occur?"

Respondent

"I guess it was about four months after."

Interviewer

"And what exactly happened for you that was so difficult at that time?"

Respondent

"Peeling her fingers away from my leg. Oh God, and having to walk down the street, listening to her crying at the door. Just having to turn my back on her and having to walk away. That was really hard."

Interviewer

"And what was it about walking away while she was crying at the door that was so hard for you?"

Respondent

"Because I didn't want to hurt her. But doing what I had to do was hurting her and I hated every minute of it. Walking away from her, turning my back on her. I still feel guilty when I think about that."

Interviewer

"And what changed for you as a result of this incident in terms of your adjustment?"

Respondent

"Well, I think it hindered my adjustment because I heard it and I could see it for so long afterwards. I could picture her in my mind, clinging onto my leg, crying for me not to go. God, it was hard to leave her. I felt guilty for a long time after that. What changed for me? I just felt very very guilty every time I'd think of her crying for me not to go."

Interviewer

"And the people involved?"

Respondent

"Basically, my daughter.

Follow-Up Questions

1.   What were the general circumstances leading up to the
incident occurring?

Dropping the children off at their dad's after they spent the
week-end with her.

2. How long after separating from the children did the incident
occur?

Four months.

3. What happened that was hindering?

Walking away from her six year old daughter while her daughter
clung onto her leg and cried for her not to go.

4. What was it about the incident that was hindering? (Source)

Hurting her daughter by walking away from her.

5. What changed as a result of the incident?

feeling guilty.

6. Who is identified as the person responsible for the incident
occurring? (Agent)

Her daughter.

Summary of the incident

She felt guilty for walking out on her daughter when her daughter was crying for her not to go.

Appendix G

Demographic Information

PARTICIPANT	AGE	INCOME	POST SECONDARY EDUCATION	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
1	37	$20,000	2 Years	2
2	38	7,000	0 Years	1
3	43	10,000	6 Years	4
4	37	10,200	3 Years	1
5	32	12,100	4 Years	2
6	40	14,000	4 Years	3
7	36	12,000	6 Years	2
8	44	21,600	6 Years	3
9	41	27,000	0 Years	2
10	49	40,000	1 Year	2
11	33	12,000	3 Years	1
12	35	12,000	4 Years	1
13	39	15,600	0 Years	4
14	36	8,400	0 Years	2

PARTICIPANT	AGE	INCOME	POST SECONDARY EDUCATION	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
15	44	10,000	6 Years	2
16	38	39,000	1 Year	2
17	41	32,000	2 Years	1

PARTICIPANT	AGES OF CHILDREN	ATTENDING SCHOOL	EMPLOYED	COUNSELLING
1	11, 13	No	Full-time	No
2	15	Yes	No	Yes
3	8, 11, 16, 18	Yes	Part-time	No
4	16	No	No	Yes
5	9, 12	Yes	Full-time	No
6	13, 17, 19	No	Full-time	No
7	13, 18	Yes	Part-time	No
8	16, 17, 19	No	Full-time	No
9	16, 17	No	Full-time	No
10	19, 20	No	Full-time	No
11	13	No	Full-time	Yes
12	13	No	Part-time	Yes
13	6, 9, 15, 21	Yes	Full-time	Yes
14	14, 15	No	Part-time	Yes
15	13, 18	No	Full-time	No
16	15, 19	Yes	Part-time	No
17	15	No	Full-time	No

RESPONDENT	COUNSELLING IN PAST	SEPARATION FROM EX-HUSBAND	SEPARATION FROM CHILDREN
1	Yes	3 Years	3 Years
2	No	13 Years	6 Years
3	Yes	4 Years	4 Years
4	Yes	11 Years	9 Years
5	Yes	7 Years	4 Years
6	Yes	10 Years	10 Years
7	No	7 Years	4 Years
8	Yes	11 Years	1 Year
9	Yes	5 Years	1 Year
10	No	8 Years	8 Years
11	Yes	9 Years	9 Years
12	Yes	10 Years	10 Years
13	Yes	2 Years	2 Years
14	Yes	6 Years	6 Years
15	Yes	5 Years	5 Years
16	Yes	12 Years	2 Years
17	Yes	12 Years	12 Years

Appendix H

Summary of Demographic Information

Median age of the participants = 38 Years

Median annual income = $12,100

Median number of years of post secondary education = 2

Median number of children each = 2

Median age of the children = 15 Years

Median number of years since separating from
ex-husband = 7

Median number of years since separating from
children = 5

Number of students = 6 (35.3%)

Number working full-time = 10 (58.8%)

Number working part-time = 5 (29.4%)

Number in counselling currently or in past = 15 (88.2%)

Focus of counselling dealing with adjustment to
living apart from the children = 8/15 (53.3%)

Number re-married = 2 (11.8%)

Number living with someone = 2 (11.8%)

Appendix I

Rater Reliability Scores for Superordinate and Subordinate Categories

Superordinate Categories		Subordinate Categories	
Rater Number	Percentage	Rater Number	Percentage
A	94.1	A	88.7
B	94.1	B	90.6
C	92.2	C	93.2
D	100.0	D	95.1