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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Melissa Ivy Rector entitled "A Program Evaluation of *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting*." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Child and Family Studies.

Heidi E. Stolz, Major Professor

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF PARENTING APART: EFFECTIVE CO-PARENTING

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Melissa Ivy Rector
December 2009

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"Behold this day for it is yours to make." (Black Elk)

ABSTRACT

A two-month longitudinal program evaluation was conducted of a four-hour mandated parent education program for divorcing parents of minor children. To expand on Brandon's (2006) program evaluation of the same program, the present study sought to examine knowledge gain and behavior change in participants. Using a retrospective post-then-pre design, 139 participants reported their *knowledge gain* in two areas: (a) the impacts of divorce and of putting children in the middle of conflict, and (b) strategies to reduce conflict with one's former spouse. Two-month follow-up interviews were used to assess *behavior change* in two areas: (a) using techniques to manage post-divorce conflict with one's former spouse, and (b) implementing strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict. The participants reported knowledge gain and behavior change in each of the four respective areas.

It was found that knowledge gain in both areas and behavior change in using techniques to manage post-divorce conflict did not vary as a function of parent gender, race, or parenting stage. However, results indicated behavior change in implementing strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict varied only as a function of parenting stage ($F(1) = 8.45$, $p < .01$). It was also found that knowledge gain in regards to the impact of divorce and putting children in the middle of conflict predicted behavior change in regards to implementing strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict ($p < .05$). The results of this study are intended to suggest improvements for the program as well as to provide insights for other parenting education programs for divorcing parents.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Of the many factors that have influenced the evolution of the American family, divorce is one factor that has become regarded as a familiar and steady catalyst of the evolution. Proof of divorce impacting American family life is illustrated by current data which indicate that between 43% and 50% of first marriages end in divorce. Thereby, it is now widely expected that 50% of U.S. children will experience their parents' divorce (Lansford, 2009). Due to the high prevalence of divorce among America's families, social scientists have sought to understand the relationship between divorce and child well-being for decades.

As with similar sensitive, complex, and hard-to-measure family experiences, the research findings on how divorce impacts child adjustment are not completely consistent. In fact, there is research to suggest that divorce causes harmful, long-term effects in children which end up affecting their overall mental health and relationships while other research serves to suggest that divorce does not cause harmful, long-term effects on children. However, social scientists have recently begun to come to a consensus that divorce "has some negative effects on children's adjustment but that these effects may be small in magnitude and not universal" (Lansford, 2009, p. 140). Research has further indicated that divorce tends to directly affect specific child outcomes. These domains of outcomes include academic achievement, antisocial behavior, psychological well-being, physical health, and later life relationships (Amato & Keith, 1991). To review the relationship between divorce and the outcomes, Chapter Two will focus on the research on each of these outcomes in depth.

Consensus has been reached by researchers regarding the fact that divorce impacts the five domains of child outcomes; thus, researchers have now begun to investigate the mechanisms

that serve to link divorce and child well-being. The mechanisms discussed in Chapter Two are hypothesized to have the capability to explain the relationship between divorce and child well-being. Socioeconomic status (SES) is one mechanism that can lead to low levels of well-being for children from divorced families because low standards of living can lead to both psychological and behavioral problems in children. Interparental conflict is another mechanism discussed in Chapter Two. Research has shown that post-divorce interparental conflict is associated with low levels of child well-being. The last mechanism presented in Chapter Two is post-divorce triangulation, or rather, parents putting children in the middle of their conflict. This mechanism is still under-researched, but studies have shown children who feel caught between parents do have lower levels of adjustment following divorce (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991; Schrodt & Afifi, 2007).

As a means to reduce any harmful, long-term effects of divorce on children, some institutions have sought to reduce the divorce rate itself (e.g., Louisiana Covenant Marriage Law, Strong Marriages Florida, Marriage Savers, Utah Marriage) while others have developed parent education programs for divorcing parents of minor children. Court-affiliated programs emerged in the 1970's, and currently there are mandatory parent education programs for divorcing parents of minor children within 46 states, though they are sometimes required only in certain counties or judicial districts. These programs serve to provide divorcing parents with skills and information to help them and their families cope better during the divorce process (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008). After (a) reviewing research on the child outcomes related to divorce and the mechanisms linking divorce with these outcomes, and (b) providing background material on parent education for divorcing parents, Chapter Two provides descriptions of different parent education programs across the country. Six programs and their respective program evaluation

results are reviewed in Chapter Two, because they provide useful substantive and methodological information to guide this thesis project.

Statement of Purpose

University of Tennessee (UT) Extension provides a parent education program for divorcing parents of minor children called *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting* that meets the mandatory state requirements for divorce education. It is a 4-hour program that teaches parents about the impact of divorce on children and builds skills to help parents promote healthy outcomes in their children. Although a prior program evaluation has been conducted on this program, this thesis aims to expand on the previous research. Brandon (2006) sought to investigate participants' needs, parent satisfaction with the class, and changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in an effort to improve the program. Written surveys were completed by participants immediately following the program and three to nine months after the program. Brandon found that participants were satisfied with the program and reported a decrease in nine of the ten behaviors investigated.

In order to expand on Brandon's (2006) program evaluation, the present study longitudinally examined knowledge gain and behavior change in participants. Specifically, this study utilized a retrospective post-then-pre design to attempt to measure *knowledge gain* in three areas: the impact of divorce on children, strategies to reduce conflict with former spouses, and strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict. Two-month follow-up interviews were conducted to assess *behavior change* in these two areas: using techniques to manage post-divorce conflict with former spouses and implementing strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to conduct a longitudinal program evaluation to

determine whether *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting* promotes knowledge gain and behavior change in participants. The results of this study are intended to suggest improvements for the program in order for the program to meets its goals and meet the needs of parents as well as to provide insights for other parenting education programs for divorcing parents.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Divorce has become a context that many families experience over the life course. Over one million divorces occur in the United States each year, and statistics have further indicated that 50% of all children born to married parents will experience divorce (Lansford, 2009). Due to the high occurrence of families facing divorce in this country, much scholarly research has focused on divorce and its effects on family life and well-being. Specifically, many researchers have investigated the effects of divorce on children in order to determine whether children adjust poorly to divorce and experience low levels of well-being. Child outcomes that have been investigated in relation to divorce and child well-being include academic achievement, psychological adjustment, antisocial behavior, physical health issues, and later life relationships (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008). The review of the research below is organized around those five domains of child outcomes.

Divorce and Child Outcomes

Academic Achievement

With regard to the association between divorce and children's lower academic achievement, the results have been consistent. Two separate meta-analyses suggested that divorce is associated with children's poor academic achievement (Amato & Keith, 1991; Reifman, Villa, Amans, Rethinam, & Telesca, 2001). Mulholland, Watt, Philpott, and Sarlin (1991), conducted a study to assess academic achievement in children between the ages of 10 and 14 with divorced parents. Teacher ratings were collected, parent interviews were conducted, and questionnaires were gathered from 60 children with divorced parents and 36 children with married parents. Children of divorced families had poorer grade point averages (GPAs) and less

motivation towards schooling compared to the control group of children with intact families. The differences in academic achievement between the two groups of students were not able to be attributed to other differences such as social class or intellect. A longitudinal analysis of GPAs in both groups of students further supported the differences in academic achievement (Mulholland et al., 1991).

In a related study, Ham (2003) investigated the relationship between divorce and adolescents' academic achievement. One hundred ninety-nine high school students participated in the study and filled out questionnaires concerning their family structure, other demographic information, their GPA, and school attendance. The results of the research supported the hypothesis that adolescents from intact families performed better academically and had a better attendance record compared to students from divorced families. Specifically, it was found that students from intact families had GPAs that were almost 11% higher than GPAs of students from divorced families (Ham, 2003).

Psychological Adjustment

The psychological adjustment of children experiencing divorce has been the focus of several research studies. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), Jekielek (1998) examined connections between interparental conflict, marital disruption and children's level of anxiety and depression/withdrawal. Jekielek (1998) restricted her sample to children living in two-parent families during the 1988 assessment whose children were between the ages of 6 and 14 during the 1992 assessment. The sample used in this study consisted of 1,640 children. Child emotional well-being was measured with scales assessing the child's symptoms of anxiety and depression/withdrawal behaviors. Parental conflict and marital disruption were measured in this study as independent variables. The results of the study

suggested that parental conflict and marital disruption were predictors of children's emotional well-being. Further, the benefit of a child living in an intact family in regards to levels of anxiety and depression decreased as parental conflict increased (Jekielek, 1998).

Divorce and separation were found to increase children's anxiety and depression, but this effect was found to be stronger two years immediately following the marital dissolution and weaker beyond the two year mark. It was also found that the overall influence of marital disruption on children's emotional well-being varies based on levels of parental conflict. Thus, children living with married parents involved in high conflict at the first assessment in 1988 but whose parents had divorced or separated by 1992, reported lower levels of anxiety and depression as compared to children whose married parents with high levels of parental conflict remained married at the second assessment (Jekielek, 1998). Strohschein (2005) also replicated these findings in a similar study of Canadian children.

Amato and Sobolewski (2001) examined the effect of divorce and marital conflict on adult children's psychological well-being. The authors used 17-year longitudinal data from the Marital Instability over the Life Course study. Four scales were used to measure adult psychological well-being which included scales of self-esteem, distress symptoms, satisfaction with several domains of life (e.g., job, home, friends), and an overall rating of happiness. The findings indicated that divorce and marital conflict do predict lower levels of psychological well-being in adult offspring (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001).

Antisocial Behavior

According to Lansford's (2009) review, many studies have shown that children whose parents are divorced engage in higher levels of externalizing behaviors during their adjustment period compared to children whose parents remain married. With regards to meta-analytic data,

Amato and Keith (1991) found significant results related to children's conduct (misbehavior, aggression, or delinquency) with children from divorced families having more conduct problems than those with married parents. In Reifman, Villa, Amans, Rethinam, and Telesca's (2001) replication and extension of Amato and Keith's meta-analysis, the authors found there was a slight, but consistent increase in negative conduct outcomes in children from divorced families as compared to intact families and compared to the Amato and Keith study conducted a decade earlier.

Emery, Waldron, Kitzmann, and Aaron (1999), used data on mothers and children from the child sample of the 14th year of the NLSY to examine whether the children in the study exhibited behavior problems. Of the 1,204 mothers and children who comprised the study's sample, there were 840 married families, 142 divorced families, and 222 never-married families. The authors found that children of divorced and never-married families had externalizing problem behaviors significantly more than children of intact families. They also found that the children's mothers' reports of their own past delinquent behavior predicted their future marital status which in turn predicted whether their off-spring exhibited externalizing problem behavior. Thus, mothers with high levels of delinquent behavior were more likely to get a divorce or never marry. As such, their off-spring were then more likely to have externalizing problem behaviors. Off-spring externalization of problem behavior was therefore predicted by both marital status of mother and mother's past delinquent behavior (Emery et al., 1999).

Physical Health

Compared to the child outcomes listed above, fewer research studies have focused on the effects of divorce on the fourth and fifth domains addressed here – children's physical health and later life relationships. With regard to physical health, Troxel and Matthews (2004) conducted a

thorough review of literature on marital conflict, marital dissolution, and physical health. Studies reviewed examined marital status (divorced, remarried, separated, etc.) and provided at least partial support for a positive association between marital dissolution and evidence of health problems in children. Dawson (1991) found that children living with their formerly married mothers had an increased number of unintentional injuries and illnesses as well as an increased chance of developing asthma as compared to children living with both parents. With a sample of 380 adults between the ages of 30 and 60 whose parents had divorced before they turned 17, Maier and Lachman (2000) found that parental divorce predicted more chronic (e.g., tuberculosis, hypertension, asthma) and acute (e.g., headaches, hot flashes, profuse sweating) health problems in men compared to those with married parents. Acute health problems, but not chronic health problems, were associated with parental divorce for women. These findings were further supported by Mauldon (1990) who found that children with separated or divorced parents experienced more health problems than children from intact families and that children's illness rates were greater post-divorce than pre-divorce.

In the Aro and Palosaari (1992) study, male children with divorced parents were found to have more somatic (e.g., abdominal pains, headaches, dizziness) symptoms controlling for the child's prior health and demographic factors compared with children with married parents. O'Connor, Davies, Dunn, Golding, and Team (2000) also found that 2-year olds with divorced parents were significantly more likely to experience accidents such as burns, falls, and swallowing objects and physical illnesses which required medical attention or hospitalization when compared to children with married parents. Due to the increasing prevalence of overweight and unhealthy children, research has begun to focus on various contributing factors that ultimately lead to childhood obesity. Little research has been conducted on the marital status of

parents and how it affects children's body weight. A cross-sectional study of 1,138 elementary aged children was conducted to investigate the associations between divorce, children's weight, children's eating, and children's physical activity practices. While controlling for SES and physical activity factors, the authors found a significant relationship between divorce and children who were considered overweight with children of divorced parents having 6% higher BMI compared to children of intact families (Yannakoulia et al., 2008).

Later Life Relationships

While there has been consistent evidence for a link between divorce and the four domains reviewed above, there is less support for the relationship between divorce and later life relationships. Amato (1996) sought to explain the intergenerational transmission of divorce by using national 12-year longitudinal data from the Study of Marriage Over the Life Course to investigate whether parental divorce predicts the odds of offspring divorce. Amato also examined the following explanatory variables: age at marriage, cohabitation, education, income, wife's employment, attitude towards divorce, and interpersonal behavior problems to provide "an assessment of the extent to which these variables account for the association between parental divorce and offspring divorce" (Amato, 1996, p. 632). Cohabitation was included as an explanatory variable because past research has shown that adult children of divorced parents are more likely to cohabitate. It has also been found by many studies that cohabitation increases the risk for divorce and thus serves as a mediator between parental and offspring divorce. The results of Amato's study supported prior research that adult children of divorced parents have an increased risk of divorcing and the risk increases more if both spouses have divorced parents. Additionally, the likelihood that a couple would live together before marriage was higher if one

or both partners had divorced parents and Amato found that cohabitation increased the odds of a divorce by 59% (Amato, 1996).

Burns and Dunlop (2002) examined the longitudinal effects of parental marital quality and family conflict on adolescents' later adult lives, particularly their satisfaction with their intimate relationships in later life. The authors found that the adults whose parents divorced during their adolescence reported they were ready for intimacy, but were more wary of relationships. In other words, the adults of divorced parents felt they could establish intimacy with others (ability to make friends or ability to be warm and friendly), but had wary attitudes towards maintaining long-term relationships (Burns & Dunlop, 2002).

To investigate intergenerational transmission of divorce, Crowell, Treboux and Brockmeyer (2009) conducted a study examining adult attachment in 157 couples. The couples participated in the first assessment 3 months prior to their wedding, and the second assessment occurred 6 years later. Based on measures examining adult attachment, marital conflict, and observations of couples' interactions, the authors did not find evidence of intergenerational transmission of divorce in the couples' early stage of marriage. Thus, the authors found that adults from divorced families were not more likely to divorce within six years of marriage than adults from intact families (Crowell et al., 2009). While one study found that adults with divorced parents were more wary of relationships, it was also found that they were ready for intimacy and not more likely to divorce within six years of marriage. However, Amato (1996) did find evidence of intergenerational transmission of divorce based on national longitudinal data.

Overall, across four of the five domains, researchers have found evidence that divorce is associated with long-term, negative adjustment in children, but some findings suggest that

divorce does not pose severe long-term effects. There is also more limited evidence supporting the link between parents' divorce and later life relationships. As a result of these findings, a consensus has begun to emerge among researchers regarding the effects of divorce on children's well-being. The conclusion social scientists have come to agree on is that while divorce does have some negative effects on children's adjustment, these effects may be small in severity and not experienced by all children whose parents divorce (Lansford, 2009). Thus, while divorce may be a serious stressor for some children and lead to poor well-being, for other children a divorce may be a source of relief from stressors leading to improvements in their well-being (Amato, 1994). As a result of this consensus, researchers have begun to examine mechanisms linking divorce and child well-being. In other words, researchers have gone beyond strictly looking at the fact that a relationship exists between divorce and child well-being and have begun to consider the mechanisms that have the potential to explain the effects divorce can have on child well-being. The next sections review the research on the following mechanisms: family's socioeconomic status, interparental conflict, and parents putting children in the middle of conflict.

Mechanisms Linking Divorce with Child Outcomes

Socioeconomic Status

Because divorce usually results in declines in standards of living for custodial mothers and their children, socioeconomic status (SES) has been found to be a mediating mechanism which increases the risk of poor child well-being. Economic hardship induced by divorce has been found to lead to psychological and behavioral problems in children. Single mothers have a more difficult time providing their children with an environment suitable for learning which negatively affects their child's academic achievement. Further, families experiencing lower SES

tend to live in neighborhoods with high crime rates and poorer schools. These circumstances may serve to introduce children to delinquency (Amato, 1994).

SES also functions as a moderating mechanism. Fischer (2007) examined the hypothesis regarding differential effects of divorce on child outcomes based on parents' pre-divorce economic resources, with higher levels of pre-divorce resources predicting better child outcomes following the divorce. The author explains one argument in support of this hypothesis by stating that "the better a family's financial situation and the higher educated the parents are, the more capital there will be at hand to minimize the impact of divorce" (Fischer, 2007, p. 477). The author also surmises that with greater economic resources, children are more likely to maintain their normal routines following the divorce which helps reduce the risk of children experiencing poor child outcomes. Further, families with greater economic resources are less likely to fall below the poverty line while families with poor economic resources have a greater chance of becoming impoverished. The author found that the effects of divorce on the educational success of children were dependent on the family's pre-divorce level of economic resources. In fact, children whose fathers had high pre-divorce levels of resources created more of a divorce effect with the children experiencing a greater loss of financial well-being and becoming more at risk for negative outcomes following the divorce (Fischer, 2007).

Interparental Conflict

Conflict between divorced parents is an additional mechanism investigated by researchers to explain the relationship between divorce and child well-being. Lee (1997) conducted a study of 58 children between the ages of 4 and 12 years who had divorced or separated parents to investigate post-divorce interparental conflict and its association with children's behavioral adjustment. Interparental conflict was measured using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), and

children's behavioral adjustment to the divorce was measured using the Child Behavior Checklist with higher scores indicating larger behavioral problems. Overall, the results of this study indicated that post-divorce interparental conflict did predict the occurrence of behavioral problems in children. Thus, post-divorce interparental conflict was found to be a mediating mechanism. This relationship between interparental conflict and children's behavioral adjustment was found to be further altered by children's contact with both parents. While children having contact with both parents predicted better behavioral adjustment, children with contact with both parents in a high-conflict situation were found to have poorer behavioral adjustment (Lee, 1997). Hanson (1999) found pre-divorce interparental conflict to be a partial moderator of the relationship between divorce and child well-being.

Post-divorce Triangulation

To investigate the mechanism of post-divorce triangulation, Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1991) examined adolescents' feelings of being caught between parents and how this feeling explains their post-divorce adjustment. The authors interviewed 522 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18 approximately four and a half years following their parents' divorce. The authors state that

> the family systems literature – specifically, that on triangulation and boundary diffusion – suggests that when parents try to form alliances with a child against the other parent, or when the boundaries between the parent-parent and parent-child subsystems become unclear, children are likely to become drawn into parental negotiations, tensions, or active conflicts (Buchanan et al., 1991, p. 1008).

The child can then begin to carry messages to the other parent and become a confidant to either or both parents. The loyalty conflicts have the potential to cause stress for the child and ultimately lead to difficulty in adjusting to the divorce (Buchanan et al., 1991).

Buchanan et al. (1991) found that adolescents with divorced parents with a hostile, low cooperation, and high conflict relationship were more likely to feel caught in the middle than children whose parents were able to cooperatively co-parent. Thus, it was found that post-divorce triangulation functioned as a mediating mechanism. The authors also found the feeling of being caught between parents was strongly associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and delinquent behaviors in the adolescents. A relationship between parental conflict and poor adjustment was found, but only through adolescents' perception of being caught in the middle (Buchanan et al., 1991).

Further support for the mediating effect was found by Schrodt and Afifi (2007) who investigated the associations between feelings of being caught in the middle, mental health, and family satisfaction in young adult offspring of both divorced and intact families. The results of the study indicated that young adult offspring from divorced families reported more marital conflict and feelings of being caught in the middle of conflict than young adult offspring from intact families. They also reported less family satisfaction and weaker relationships with parents.

Summary

Given that approximately half of the country's children are likely to experience divorce, many institutions interested in the well-being of children are concerned about the negative effects divorce can have on child outcomes as well as the existence of discussed mechanisms influencing the relationship between divorce and child well-being. Some concerned entities have sought to reduce the incidence of divorce itself (e.g., Louisiana Covenant Marriage Law, Strong

Marriages Florida, Marriage Savers, Utah Marriage) while others have tried to reduce the impact of divorce on children through parent education programs for divorcing parents. These parent education programs serve to reduce the negative outcomes among children and families experiencing divorce as well as teach parents skills to encourage well-being in themselves and their children. These programs focus on reducing conflict and teaching parents to keep children out of the middle of conflict rather than focusing on socioeconomic status because an intervention program of any type would not be able to address and improve one's socioeconomic status. In other words, parent education programs aim to address the mechanisms that are amenable to intervention. Thus, it is assumed that interventions seeking to reduce conflict between divorced parents and teach parents to keep children out of the middle of conflict will promote healthy child outcomes. In the section that follows, a brief background to parent education for divorcing parents is given.

Parent Education for Divorcing Parents

Background

Court-affiliated parent education programs for divorcing parents first appeared in the United States in the 1970s and have continued to grow throughout the decades. "As of 2002, more than half a dozen states had statewide mandatory parent education" and further "research has revealed that there are now forty-six states with mandatory programs" (Pollett & Lombreglia, 2008, pp. 376-377). More specifically, fourteen states have state statutes mandating parents filing for divorce, separation, child custody, and visitation rights to attend a parent education program. Thirteen states have state statutes that allow judges, counties, or districts to devise their own mandates for parent education while one state allows the local courts to create parent education programs. Hawaii has mandated parent education for all parents but has yet to codify its

mandate. Alabama, Mississippi, Nevada, and North Carolina have small regions in which parent education is mandatory. Parent education is required by way of local court rules in six states (Alaska, California, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, and Ohio), and five states have counties and districts that mandate programs for parents (Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wyoming). The District of Columbia, Maine, and Vermont do not have a state statute, but judges will at times require parents to participate in a program before granting a divorce. Rhode Island does offer a parent education program through an outside agency, but does not require attendance. North Dakota, South Dakota, and South Carolina do not require parents to attend a program and thus do not offer parent education programs for divorcing parents (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008).

Parent education programs for divorcing parents have a goal of providing an educational intervention to help families better cope with divorce and promote healthy outcomes in children. The structure and content varies from program to program. In general, the programs are short in duration with a mode of 2 hours for court-provided programs and 4 hours for programs led by community organizations. Some programs are mandated for all divorcing parents while some programs are available to parents but not required. The majority of programs (64%) focus on reducing children's exposure to conflict between parents. Fifty-five percent of programs work towards improving parenting skills and 32% attempt to reduce additional legal complaints (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008).

In order to provide parents with techniques to reduce interparental conflict, programs may provide parents with information on how interparental conflict affects children and can lead to poor adjustment problems. The programs may provide parents with information on related resources offered in the community, show video-taped scenarios depicting how interparental

conflict affects children, and teach parents problem-solving and communication techniques to help parents manage their conflict. Programs across the U.S. use different approaches to teach parents techniques to improve their parenting. Programs may focus on encouraging contact between the noncustodial parent and the children when safe and work towards improving the relationships between the children and the parents. Programs may also teach parents skills to aid them in planning family activities, setting appropriate limits, and developing a behavior plan for their child (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008).

To determine whether parent education programs for divorcing parents are effective, program evaluation studies must be conducted. Program evaluation studies are essential for programs such as these because evaluators have the ability to investigate whether programs meet the needs of parents in attendance and ultimately promote healthy outcomes in children whose parents have divorced. Program evaluation studies can also be used to make improvements or changes in a program to better meet the needs of the participants and further encourage healthy outcomes. In the section that follows, five evaluation studies of parent education programs across the country are discussed to examine whether these programs have been found to be effective and beneficial for divorcing parents of minor children. The methodologies that have been employed in each study are also reviewed to support the chosen methodology of the present study.

Evaluation of Children First

Kramer and Washo (1993) evaluated a court-mandated program called Children First. It is a two-session program developed "to help groups of divorcing parents become more sensitive to their children's needs" (Kramer & Washo, 1993, p. 179). The brief program includes six videotaped situations of interactions between divorced family members. After viewing the videos

in each of the classes, the parents participated in a discussion regarding inappropriate behaviors and strategies to display more appropriate behaviors that take into account the child's feelings. To evaluate the overall value of this program in helping parents become more sensitive to their child's needs, 168 participants completed three questionnaires administered before the program began, immediately following the program, and three months after the program. Forty-nine parents who were once married to the participants who actually attended the program were also included in this study. A control group of 43 divorcing parents who did not attend the Children First program was also a part of this study. The control group only completed the first and third questionnaires (Kramer & Washo, 1993).

The authors examined six specific areas of parents' assessment of the effectiveness of the program, (a) reports of their current behavior, (b) ratings of their own adjustment to the divorce, (c) ratings of their children's adjustment to the divorce, (d) ratings of the quality of the parent-child relationship, (e) perception of their relationship with their former spouse, and (f) their use of other resources for divorcing parents. The results of the evaluation were mixed regarding the effectiveness of the program. The participants did find the program to be helpful and they felt that other divorcing parents would benefit from participation. Further, it was found that parents who reported high levels of conflict with their former spouse reported three months following the program that their former spouse "engaged in fewer behaviors that may triangulate their children into postmarital conflict" (Kramer & Washo, 1993, p. 185). However, few improvements were seen in the areas assessed that could be directly attributed to involvement in the program since the control group reported improvement as well. For example, both the treatment and control group reported that their children were better adjusted to the divorce at the three month follow-up (Kramer & Washo, 1993).

Evaluation of PEACE

In 1999, McKenry, Clark, and Stone evaluated the PEACE (Parents' Education About Children's Emotions) program which was one of the first court-mandated programs for divorcing parents to be implemented in the state of Ohio. The main goal of the program is "to enhance children's post-divorce adjustment," and the program is "based on the premise that most children have a difficult time adapting to divorce and that parents are not as effective during the post-divorce adjustment period" (McKenry, Clark, & Stone, 1999, p. 130). Included in the curriculum are facts about divorce, the grief process as it relates to children and adults, effects of divorce by developmental stage of the child, communication skills, tips on how to co-parent, and the legal process of divorce. The participants in this study included divorcing parents who attended the PEACE program and divorcing parents in a neighboring county during the same time period who did not attend a divorce education program. Of the 1,000 people who were initially contacted to participate in the study, 136 program participants and 100 nonprogram participants responded (McKenry et al., 1999).

In their questionnaire, the authors used Likert-type rating scales to measure the participant's co-parenting relationship, relationship with their children, their adjustment to the custody/visitation arrangements, their attitude regarding the nonresidential parent role, their knowledge about how children adjust to divorce, and their personal assessment of the PEACE program. The results revealed only one program effect: parents who had been divorced four years or less and participated in the PEACE program reported greater closeness with their children since the divorce as compared to the participants who did not attend the PEACE program. There were no program differences found for knowledge of how children adjust to

divorce, but the findings did indicate that residential parents who completed the program were more satisfied with their co-parenting (McKenry et al., 1999).

Evaluation of Kids in Divorce and Separation (k.i.d.s.)

The parent education program for divorcing parents called Kids in Divorce and Separation (k.i.d.s.) was evaluated in the Shifflett and Cummings (1999) study. The k.i.d.s. program "is intended to be implemented with families in separation or divorce to prevent increases in family conflict and related problems, and it is interventive in that it directly addresses conflict, communication, and divorce adjustment issues typical of families already experiencing such problems" (Shifflett & Cummings, 1999, p. 80). Twenty-nine parents who participated in the program were included in this study, and 10 parents from an unrelated general parenting class were included in this study as the control group. The authors used various scales and checklists to measure parental conflict, their behavior as well as their spouse's behavior, their knowledge regarding information presented in the class, and how they felt about the usefulness of the class and their impressions of the program (Shifflett & Cummings, 1999).

Before taking their respective parenting classes, the participants completed shorter versions of scales and checklists and after the second session of the program the participants completed the full versions of the measures. Two specific measures of parental conflict and behavior were sent to and completed by the participants one month after registering for the program and one month following the completion of the program. In comparing the groups, the findings of this evaluation revealed that the k.i.d.s. program did improve the participants' knowledge and understanding of parental conflict. The experimental group showed a significant decrease in reported negative behavior whereas the control group did not. These results also held up for the one month follow-up data which indicates that changes made by parents because of the

program were sustained over the one month. Further, the participants who improved more on knowledge also reported less negative behavior. The authors also found that the participants were satisfied with the program (Shifflett & Cummings, 1999).

Evaluation of Focus on Kids

Hans and Fine (2001) conducted focus groups of fourteen children between the ages of 8 and 13 whose parents participated in a parent education class for divorcing parents called Focus on Kids (FOK). The purpose of this study "was to understand children's experiences with divorce- from their own perspective- and then make inferences as to the role divorce education may have played, if any, in shaping those experiences" (Hans & Fine, 2001, p. 5). Three focus groups were held within a two-week period, and the moderators of the focus groups asked the children about their experiences with and perceptions of divorce. While the first two questions posed to the children were broader, the moderators did ask more specific questions related to their first experience with divorce, how their parents were behaving after they separated, and ways the negatives consequences resulting from a divorce can be decreased. The focus groups lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours and were recorded for analysis purposes (Hans & Fine, 2001).

Analysis of the focus groups revealed six areas the children most frequently discussed during the group. These areas include communication among co-parents (which also includes communication through children and parental fighting), communication between parents and children (includes lack of communication and children feeling unheard), transitional adjustments (includes changes in parenting style, living at two residences, and splitting time between parents), new partners, coping strategies, and favorable outcomes (includes one-on-one parent-child time, variability in day-to-day life, and emotional healing). It was found that "although the children were able to associate divorce with several favorable outcomes, none of the positive

aspects discussed can be attributed to FOK" (Hans & Fine, 2001, p. 22) and thus the objectives of the program were not fully met. In the focus groups, the children talked about being a messenger for one parent to the other which the FOK program teaches parents not to do. The program also emphasizes listening to your child, yet the children in the focus group discussed their frustration with their parents not listening to them (Hans & Fine, 2001).

Children were exposed to parental fighting which was also discouraged in the FOK program. This study was not designed to test the effectiveness of the FOK program, but to evaluate whether the program was successful in terms of meeting its objectives based on the perceptions from the children whose parents attended the program. FOK may improve the divorce experience for children, but, based on the findings of this study, the program is not meeting its objectives. However, the authors did find that the FOK curriculum "is attuned to the desires of the children" which is "important considering the primary goal is to improve the divorce experience for children" (Hans & Fine, 2001, p. 22). The authors do feel that the program does need to focus more on two areas: parents having new partners and the expressed need for children to have a person to talk to about their divorce experience. The authors suggest a divorce education class for children be offered by the courts. Ultimately, the authors feel that short-term divorce education cannot be expected to promote long-term behavior changes in parents going through such an emotional, life-changing experience (Hans & Fine, 2001).

Evaluation of a program in Utah

In the Criddle, Allgood, and Piercy (2003) article, the impact of a program in Utah on post-divorce conflict was examined. The study aimed to provide a longer term follow-up to evaluate whether a mandatory divorce education program in Utah was able to reduce conflict between former spouses. The experimental group consisted of 160 divorcing individuals who

participated in the divorce education program. The control group was made up of 59 divorced individuals who did not attend a divorce education program. A 5-10 minute telephone interview was conducted with each participant in the study. The authors measured conflict with questions taken from the Family of Origin Scale. Ten of the scale questions were used in the telephone interview to measure "autonomy from and closeness with one's ex-spouse" (Criddle et al., p. 102). Two questions were added to the interview to assess child support and alimony payments. Two more were added to measure child custody and visitation as well as discipline, holidays, and other rules. An additional five questions were also included to assess how often legal proceedings were initiated to sort out issues related to their divorce, such as custody, child support, alimony, etc. (Criddle et al.).

The results of the evaluation revealed that there was an association between class participation and post-divorce conflict. The participants who attended the divorce parent education program reported less post-divorce conflict than the participants who did not attend the program. Further, the results indicate that it may be more beneficial for both of the spouses to attend the class not necessarily together, but at some point during the divorce process. The authors also found that the written material distributed to the participants in the class was what the participants noted as useful. In terms of the second hypothesis, there was an association between participation in the program and "the number of custody and visitation legal issues since the initial custody arrangement" (Criddle et al., 2003, p. 108). It was suggested through discriminant analysis that "class attendance was only somewhat helpful in predicting whether or not a study participant would return to court" (Criddle et al., p. 108).

Overall, the evaluations reviewed illustrate that there are mixed findings regarding whether parent education programs for divorcing parents promote and encourage healthy

behaviors and outcomes for adults and children facing divorce. In the Kramer and Washo (1993) study, comparisons between the control and experimental groups did not show that Children First was wholly responsible for any changes in behavior, perceptions, adjustments, and relationships. There were only slight program effects found in the McKenry, Clark, and Stone (1999) study. However, in the Shifflett and Cummings (1999) and Criddle, Allgood, and Piercy (2003) studies, comparisons between the control group and experimental groups did indicate that the parent education classes seemed to be influential in increasing knowledge about divorce and reducing negative behavior, especially behavior related to post-divorce conflict. The Hans and Fine (2001) study interviewed children of divorce and revealed that based on the children's thoughts and feelings, the FOK program did not fully meet its goals, but it was focusing on the desires and concerns of children.

The five reviewed programs were found to address the mechanisms previously discussed in this chapter. For example, the Children First program evaluators found that parents put their children in the middle of post-divorce conflict less following participation in the program. The PEACE program sought to teach parents about the impact of divorce on children and how to co-parent successfully. In the k.i.d.s. program, which aims to address conflict and communication among divorced parents, evaluators found that parents did report an increase in understanding and knowledge of parental conflict. The FOK program also focused on communication among co-parents and coping strategies. Lastly, the program in Utah was found to reduce post-divorce conflict in divorced parents. Next, UT Extension's program for divorcing parents, which is the focus of the present study, is described in detail and past research on the program is reviewed.

Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting

Program Description

Divorcing parents of minor children in Tennessee are court-ordered to attend a four hour parent education class to learn how to keep children out of the middle of conflict and develop a parenting plan. *Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting* is a parent education program provided for divorcing parents of minor children and offered by The University of Tennessee Extension (UT Extension). The program is currently available to parents in 61 counties in Tennessee, and Family and Consumer Science (FCS) agents facilitate the program in their respective counties. The purpose of the program is to "educate parents about the impact of divorce, separation, and conflict on their children and to offer concrete actions that the parents can take to help their children" (University of Tennessee, 2005). There is a total of four hours of instruction time for this program, and the classes can consist of two 2-hour sessions or one 4-hour session.

The curriculum used in the program is adapted from the evidence-based *Children in the Middle* curriculum (University of Tennessee, 2005). Additional information on opportunities for reconciliation, domestic violence, the parenting plan, and alternate dispute resolution was added to the curriculum in order to meet the Tennessee state law requirements. During the four hour class, participants first participate in an opening activity, and ground rules are established. Next, the participants watch *The Evans Matter* video which explains the parenting plan process. Topics such as reconciliation, stress, grief, reactions of children based on their age and stage of development, and communication between ex-spouses are then discussed. The participants are shown clips on putting children in the middle of conflict and parents' use of put downs from the *Children in the Middle* video. Other segments on money issues, quizzing the child about the ex-spouse, and long-distance parenting from the video are also shown.

The agents discuss with the participants the differences between cooperative and parallel parenting and the possible changes in family structures following a divorce. The agents also discuss how to ease the transitions between homes for children. At the conclusion of the program, the participants receive certificates for completing the program. These certificates are given to the county court clerk as proof of attending the court-ordered class.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of the UT Extension's program are to

> provide parents with information that will help them support their children's adjustment to the divorce, help parents understand how and why conflict between them creates stress for children, encourage parents to work to decrease conflict, encourage parents to cooperate with each other to reduce the amount of conflict their children see, encourage parents to understand that children need a meaningful relationship with both parents, and help parents to develop a parenting plan that is in the best interest of their children (University of Tennessee, 2005).

Ultimately the goal is that parents will make parenting plans that better benefit their children and expose their children less to post-divorce conflict.

One objective for the program is to help the parents/caregivers understand how children are affected by divorce. The participants also learn techniques for effective communication with their children and the other parent. The third objective is to encourage parents to make a strong effort to avoid exposing their children to conflict. The last objective of the program is to increase the parent/caregiver's understanding of why it is important for both parents to have a relationship with their children and work cooperatively with one another. The objective for the judicial

system regarding this parent education program is to see fewer couples returning to court for divorce-related issues.

Anticipated Outcomes

A desired short-term outcome for *Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting* is that parents/caregivers who participate in the program will understand how important it is for them to work together for the sake of their children. Parents/caregivers will also have improved knowledge regarding how divorce impacts children of different ages/stages of development. Parents/caregivers will also plan to decrease their child's exposure to parental conflict as well as learn effective communication techniques. For intermediate outcomes, it is desired that parents/caregivers will report they have put their child in the middle of conflict less often than before participating in the program. They will report they have not returned to court for divorce-related issues and report an increase in cooperation with the other parent. Parent/caregivers will also report they have successfully followed their parenting plan. The long-term outcome of the program is improved outcomes in children of divorce (academically, socially, and emotionally) as compared to children whose parents did not participate in a parent education program for divorcing parents of minor children.

Past Research on Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting

Brandon (2006) conducted a three- to nine-month follow-up evaluation of the four-hour mandated the parent education program for divorcing parents discussed above, *Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting*. The purpose of the study "was to assess participant satisfaction with *Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting*; to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and parenting behaviors; and to identify ways to improve the program to meet participants' needs" (Brandon, 2006, p. 174). Brandon used a pre-test which asked participants to report on their use

of ten behaviors that have been determined to be harmful to children experiencing a divorce. Examples of these behaviors include putting the child in the middle of conflict, using children as spies and messengers, and fighting in front of the child. An evaluation of the class was completed at the end of the four-hour program to identify the participants' satisfaction with the class. Follow-up questionnaires were then sent out to a random sample of approximately a quarter of participants who signed an informed consent form at three to nine months after participation in the program. Parents were asked again to report on how often over the past two weeks they engaged in the same ten behaviors, their current level of cooperation with their former spouse, and other questions regarding the actual class. Three-hundred forty-five returned questionnaires could be matched with a pre-test (Brandon, 2006).

From the sample of 345, the majority of the participants reported satisfaction with the program. The participants reported a decrease in nine of the ten behaviors measured. These nine behaviors were

> talking to others about the other parent when angry at that parent, sending messages through the children, insulting the other parent in front of the children, asking the child about the other parent, asking the child to take sides, arguing in front of the children, complaining to the other parent in front of the children, yelling in front of the children, and fighting in front of the children (Brandon, 2006, p. 178).

The one behavior participants did not report a decrease in was asking the child to request money from the other parent which remained unchanged (Brandon, 2006). While, Brandon found evidence that *Parenting Apart* may help reduce nine of ten negative behaviors in divorced parents, the evaluation did not examine whether parents had any gains in knowledge regarding the impact of divorce on children or parental conflict. Thus, it still remains to be answered

whether *Parenting Apart* produces knowledge gain in participants and whether knowledge gain can predict behavior change.

Race, Parent Gender, and Parenting Stage in Parent Education

Gender differences, racial differences, and parenting stage differences of participants attending parent education programs have been examined in past research studies to determine whether those differences impact one's knowledge and behavior change. To begin, there is evidence to suggest differences in outcomes based on gender following participation in parent education programs. Lengua et al. (1992) found that male participants in parent education programs expressed little interest in the programs. Futher, Spoth, Redmond, Hockaday, and Shin (1996) found that fathers were more likely than mothers to report they did not want to attend the parent education program. Research has also shown that men and women use different learning styles (Philbin, Meier, Huffman, & Boverie, 1995). Given these findings, it is possible that male and female participants will differ in the knowledge gains and/or behavioral changes that might occur as a result of a parenting education program.

In addition to gender differences, there is evidence that participant race might also affect the effectiveness of a particular intervention. According to Forehand and Kotchick (1996), parent education programs have been primarily developed for and evaluated with white participants. However, the U.S. is becoming more and more diverse, and parent education programs must be culturally sensitive so as to reach all parents in attendance. The authors state, "… success in changing parental behavior without consideration for the parents' cultural background will be limited [with] cultural factors… possibly facilitat[ing] or hinder[ing] the success of parent training" (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996, p. 190). Thus, evaluations of parent education programs

for divorcing parents should assess whether the program is able to promote knowledge gain and change the behaviors of parents of different races.

Lastly, previous studies have shown that divorce affects children differently based on their age and stage of development. According to Amato's (1994) meta-analysis, divorce affects children of various ages differently. Preschool age children were found to lack the cognitive ability to understand the meaning of divorce and thus become confused when one parent leaves the home. They also tend to blame themselves for their parents' divorce due to their egocentric nature at this age. Elementary school age children were found to understand the meaning of divorce and report feelings of sadness and grief as well as anger toward one or both parents. It was found that adolescents felt anger toward one or both parents as well as becoming concerned about their own relationships by wondering if they will be able to maintain a long-term relationship in the future (Amato, 1994). Because children have been found to have differing reactions to divorce based on their age, it is possible that a parenting program for divorcing parents might be more or less effective based on the ages of the children involved in the divorce. Thus, it is important for evaluators to investigate whether the program is able to improve the knowledge and behavior of parents with younger and older children.

Summary

In summary, divorce has been shown through a myriad of research studies to affect five domains of child outcomes. Additionally, research has shown that three variables function within the relationship between divorce and child well-being. In order to reduce the negative child outcomes often associated with divorce, parent education programs for divorcing parents have been established. It is the purpose of this thesis to evaluate the parent education program offered in the state of Tennessee by UT Extension called *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting*. It is

also the purpose of this thesis to investigate any knowledge gain and behavior changes differences based on participants' gender, race, and age of child. It is hypothesized, however, that there will be no significant race differences due to the small number of minorities in the sample. The following are the research questions guiding this evaluation study.

Research Questions

1. At Time 2 (T2, immediately following 4-hour program), do parents report a greater level of knowledge compared to Time 1 (T1, before participation in program) in the following three areas: (a) the impact of divorce on children, (b) strategies to reduce conflict, and (c) strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict?
2. At Time 3 (T3, two months following participation in the program), do parents report improved behaviors compared to T1 in the following two areas: (a) using techniques to manage conflict with their former spouse and (b) using strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict?
3. Do knowledge change and behavior change vary as a function of parent gender, race, and parenting stage?
4. Does T1 to T2 knowledge change predict T1 to T3 behavior change, controlling for parent gender, race, and parenting stage?

CHAPTER III
METHODS

Sample

The sampling pool for this evaluation included divorcing parents enrolled in classes taught by UT Extension Family and Consumer Science agents who agreed to participate in the evaluation and were offering a class in March or April of 2009. The UT Extension agents in the counties in which *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting* is offered were first contacted by email and invited to participate in this evaluation study if they were teaching one or more classes in March or April. Of the 48 counties offering the program in the state during the two months, a total of 86 classes were conducted with 517 total participants. Nineteen counties agreed to participate in this study with 27 classes and 198 eligible participants. Of the 198 parents who attended the 27 classes in the 19 counties, 150 agreed to participate in this study and provide T1 and T2 data. Eleven of the 150 participants had to be dropped from the study because it appeared that they confused the now and before columns on the retrospective post-then-pre portion of the written survey (i.e., indicating they knew more about all items before the class than after the class). Due to the ambiguousness of their answers, it was decided to simply drop them from the study. Of the 139 participants providing T1 and T2 data, 116 participants provided T3 data. However, ten of those interviews had to be subsequently dropped because we did not have T1 or T2 data from them as they were a part of the 11 initially dropped from study.

Description of Participants

Descriptive statistics pertaining to sample characteristics are provided in Table 1 in Appendix A. Of the participants in this study, 46.8% were male and 52.5% were female. With regards to age of participants, 1.4% were under the age of 20 and 36% were between the ages of 20 and 29. Thirty-six percent were between the ages of 30 and 39, 22.3% of the participants were

between the ages of 40 and 49, and 2% of participants were over the age of 50. The majority of the sample was White, non-Hispanic (92.8%) with 5% of the participants Black, non-Hispanic, and .7% listed as Other. Ninety percent of the sample reported being separated from their spouses and 8% of respondents were not separated at the time of the program. Of those separated, 24.5% had been separated between three and six months with 26.6% separated for over a year. Ninety-three percent of the participants attended *Parenting Apart* because either they or their former spouse had filed for divorce. Three percent of participants attended due to custody issues with their former spouse or their child's other parent.

Procedure

Instruments

This evaluation study utilized a paper survey distributed to the participants at the end of the four-hour program and a two-month follow-up telephone interview.

Material Preparation

To allow for the comparison between the participants' responses to both the paper survey and the telephone interview, the informed consent forms (see Appendix B) and the surveys (see Appendix C) were linked only by code numbers to ensure confidentiality. Each code number included a three-digit county identification number used by UT Extension, the three-digit program start date, and a four-digit participant identification number. To create participant identification numbers, a distribution software program (EasyFit 5.0) was used to randomly generate four-digit numbers. The code numbers were printed on labels, and the labels were applied to the informed consent forms and the evaluation surveys. The matching informed consent forms and evaluation surveys were then placed in individual envelopes to be distributed to participants. The extension agents received a materials packet containing the individual

envelopes with the informed consent forms and participant surveys, mailing envelopes to return completed forms and surveys, a facilitator script (see Appendix D), and a checklist (see Appendix E) for the agent to keep track of the necessary forms and procedures.

Facilitator Training

After the willing extension agents were identified, they were contacted again by email to arrange a training meeting to inform them of the instructions and procedures for this evaluation study. The extension agents were trained primarily via a program called CENTRA which is an interactive, virtual classroom and conference call. During the training, the agents were able to view PowerPoint slides which provided an overview of the evaluation procedures while listening to verbal instructions. The informed consent forms, surveys, facilitator script, and evaluation checklist were reviewed during the training as well. Extension agents were encouraged to ask questions at the end of the training. The agents who were unable to participate in the CENTRA trainings were trained over the phone with the PowerPoint instruction slides sent to them prior to the training. Each extension agent received a UT Extension tote bag for their willingness to facilitate this evaluation study in their classes.

Administration of Written Survey

Following their completion of the four-hour *Parenting Apart* program, all parents were informed of the nature of the program evaluation. Those who agreed to complete the paper survey and participate in the two-month follow-up telephone interview then signed the informed consent form and filled out the evaluation survey. The informed consent form and survey were given out to participants in an envelope. The informed consent form was read aloud by the Extension Agent to enhance the clarity of the instructions. The agents then collected all the informed consent forms at one time and placed them in a pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope.

Next, the participants were instructed to complete the survey, and the agents also read aloud the instructions and questions on the survey. The participants were then instructed to put the completed survey back into their original envelope and seal it themselves. Once all participants had completed their survey and sealed it in their individual envelopes, the agents collected the sealed envelopes and mailed them together in a separate (i.e., not with the informed consent forms) pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope. The agents were instructed to mail the envelopes to the first author within two business days. As an incentive, the participants were given a UT Extension tote bag after completing the survey.

Administration of Follow-Up Telephone Interviews

For the follow-up telephone interviews, the principal investigator used a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The first telephone calls were attempted at 60 days from when the participant took the parent education class, and no more attempts were made after 75 days had passed since the participant took the class. If the participant provided primary and secondary telephone numbers, both were called if the first number was not answered. A message was left, if possible, following the third phone call attempt, and participants were given the opportunity to call back and leave a message regarding a more convenient time for the interview to be conducted. If participants specified a time to call, the interview took place at the scheduled time. No phone call attempts were made over the weekends. If a participant was still unable to be reached by the seventh call, another phone message was left. This procedure resulted in follow-up data from 106 participants, representing 76.3% of the initial sample.

At the beginning of the interview, the participant was reminded of the purpose of the study, the nature of the interview, the confidentiality measures, and their options to skip a question or to stop the interview at any time. At the end of the interview, the participants were

reminded that they would have a chance to win one of two $50 gift cards to Wal-mart as a thank you for their participation in the telephone interview. Any questions the participant had were also answered at this time. Participants had the opportunity to be given UT Extension's phone number for any additional questions they may have as well as the opportunity to be given their local county's extension agent's name and phone number to contact if they needed help with any divorce-related parenting issues. Upon completion of the follow-up telephone interview, participants were entered into a drawing to win one of the two gift cards. The two winners were called and asked to provide their address which was immediately written on the envelope containing the gift card and mailed the same day.

Rationale for Post-then-Pre Design

To measure knowledge gain in the participants, a retrospective post-then-pre design (Rockwell & Kohn, 1989) was used in this evaluation. In a retrospective post-then-pre design, program participants are asked to assess their current knowledge immediately following the program and then to reflect back and assess that same knowledge before participating in the program. Both assessments of knowledge before and after the program are gathered at the same time. This is unlike the traditional pre-post design where program participants answer questions before the program and then answer the same questions after finishing the program.

The retrospective post-then-pre design was used in this particular evaluation study for two reasons. First, it was chosen because divorcing parents participating in the program are court mandated to have four hours of instruction time. It was felt by UT Extension personnel that a traditional pre-post design would take too much time away from the four hours of instruction. Secondly, the design was chosen to reduce response shift bias. Response shift bias occurs when participants use different frames of understanding regarding the survey items between the pre-

and post- evaluation periods (Rockwell & Kohn, 1989). Thus in a traditional pre-post design, participants may not accurately assess their pre-program knowledge and then, following the program, their new understanding of the content covered in the program may affect their assessment of their post-program knowledge. In essence, the participants are assessing pre- and post- knowledge based on two different frames of reference. The retrospective post-then-pre design controls for response shift bias by allowing participants to assess their pre- and post-knowledge in one frame of reference (Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000).

Measures

Nineteen items were used to measure knowledge of: (a) the impact of divorce on children, (b) strategies to reduce conflict, and (c) strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict. The statements were created by the investigator based on the content of the *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting* program. The participants rated their level of knowledge between a 0 (low) and 6 (high) for each of the 19 statements, first rating their knowledge after the class (T2) and then rating their knowledge before taking the class (T1).

Divorce Impact Knowledge

Statements 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, and 12 of the survey were intended to measure participants' knowledge of the impact of divorce on children. Participants rated their level of knowledge of each of the following items:

- The impact of conflict between parents on children's stress.
- Impacts of divorce on children of various ages.
- The importance of both parents working together for the sake of their children.
- Sources of stress for children and adults.
- Tips on when to introduce your child to a person you are dating.

- Strategies for easing the transitions between homes.

Conflict Reduction Knowledge

Statements 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the survey were intended to measure participants' knowledge of strategies to reduce conflict with one's former spouse. Participants rated their level of knowledge of each of the following items:

- Cooperation techniques to reduce conflict (e.g., compromising, staying on topic).
- Effective communication techniques to use with the other parent (e.g., "I" messages).
- Situations in which cooperative parenting is appropriate.
- Situations in which parallel parenting is appropriate.
- The purpose of mediation.
- The benefits of mediation.

Post-divorce Triangulation Knowledge

Statements 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 of the survey were intended to measure participants' knowledge of strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict. Participants rated their level of knowledge between a 0 (low) and 6 (high), first rating their knowledge after the class and then rating their knowledge before taking the class:

- The importance of allowing both parents to have meaningful relationship with the children.
- The importance of creating a parenting plan that is flexible.
- The importance of creating a parenting plan that is in the best interest of the child/children.
- Reasons not to use your child as a messenger.

- Reasons not to put-down the other parent in front of your child.
- Reasons not to quiz your child about the other parent.
- Reasons not to have your child request money from the other parent.

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation of the above 19 items was conducted. Costello and Osborne (2005) mention several alternative criteria for determining how many identifiable factors exist within a set of items. One criterion is that the eigenvalues be greater than one. Another criterion is the retention of factors coming before the scree plot abruptly levels out. Initially, four factors with eigenvalues over one were found; however, these four factors were not conceptually interpretable. Therefore, the alternative criterion was considered and a visual inspection of the scree plot indicated two factors. Two factors were therefore forced in the analysis, and four items were subsequently dropped due to cross-loadings over .4 which is a suggested cut-off by Freestone and McGoldrick (2008). The two established factors made conceptual sense, and the 15 remaining items loaded on the two factors with loadings over .49 and no cross loadings over .38.

Conflict Reduction Knowledge now included items 7, 8, and 9. The three items were averaged to create composite T1 and T2 Conflict Reduction Knowledge scales. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructed scales were .82 at T1 and .81 at T2. Given that the three hypothesized knowledge areas were comprised of items that factored into only two knowledge variables, divorce impact knowledge and post-divorce triangulation knowledge were merged into one new variable labeled *Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge* which included items 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. The twelve items were averaged to create composite T1 and T2 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge scales. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructed scales were .92 at T1 and .87 at T2.

Managing Conflict Behavior

Questions 2, 3, and 8 of the survey were intended to measure participants' use of techniques to manage post-divorce conflict with one's former spouse. Participants reported the frequency of their behavior (0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often) for each of the following items:

- How often did you purposely use cooperation techniques to reduce conflict (e.g., compromising, staying on topic)?
- How often did you use effective communication techniques to manage conflict (e.g., "I" messages)?
- How often did you try to work with the other parent for the sake of your child?

Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior

Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 of the survey were intended to measure participants' implementation of strategies to keep their children out of the middle of conflict. Participants reported the frequency of their behavior (0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often) for each of the following items:

- How often did you use your child as a messenger between you and the other parent?
- How often did you quiz your child about the other parent (e.g., asked about the other parent's thoughts, feelings, or behavior)?
- How often did you put-down the other parent in front of your child?
- How often did you have your child request money from the other parent?
- How often did you argue with the other parent in front of your child?

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation of the above 8 items found two factors with eigenvalues over one and thus were retained and examined according to Costello and Osborne's (2005) criteria. The items loaded on the two factors as anticipated with factor loadings above .6 and no cross-loadings greater than .2. Items 2, 3, and 8 were averaged to create composite T1 and T3 Managing Conflict Behavior scales. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructed scales were .72 at T1 and .87 at T3. Items 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 were averaged to create composite T1 and T3 Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior scales. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructed scales were .78 at T1 and .88 at T3. All five items were reverse coded such that a higher score on this variable represented a higher level of triangulation avoidance (i.e., more effective parenting).

Parenting Stage

The parenting stage variable was created based on the participants' demographic information provided on the written survey; they listed the age, gender, and status (biological or adopted) of each of their children. This variable was coded 0 for parents who indicated they were parenting at least one child above the age of 5, and the variable was coded 1 for parents who indicated they were parenting only children age 5 and under.

The variable name "parenting stage" was chosen to describe parents who were in different parenting stages based on whether they had younger or older children as parent-child interactions differ relative to a child's age and developmental abilities. The age of 5 was picked as a cut-off because most 5 year-olds are in Kindergarten and typically have more advanced communication, reasoning, and memorization skills than younger children (Oesterreich, 2007). It was thought parents might feel more inclinced to triangulate a child over the age of 5 due to their more developed abilities to accurately pass messages to the other parent, answer question about

the other parent, and request money from the other parent. Since these were some of the measures of triangulation behavior, it was hypotheszied parents of older children would report committing those behaviors more frequently than parents of younger children.

Gender

The parent gender varable was created based on participants' direct responses on the written survey; they were asked to circle either "Male" or "Female." This variable was coded 0 for male and 1 for female.

Race

The parent race variable was created based on participants' direct responses on the written survey; they were asked to circle either "Black (non-Hispanic)," "White (non-Hispanic)," "Hispanic," "Asian," "Pacific Islander," or "Other." No participants selected "Hispanic," "Asian," or "Pacific Islander." Participants who selected "Black (non-Hispanic)" (n = 7), or "Other" (n = 1) were coded 0 (non-White) and those who selected "White (non-Hispanic)" (n = 129) were coded 1.

Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 17.0 was used to conduct the statistical analyses for this evaluation study. Descriptive statistics were first generated to examine means and standard deviations as well as to find any data entry errors or patterns of missing values. Inferential statistical analyses conducted are described below for each research question.

Research Question 1: At T2, do parents report a greater level of knowledge compared to T1 in the two areas?

Knowledge gain in the two areas (reducing conflict with former spouse and divorce and

triangulation impact) were both investigated using paired t-tests. First, a paired t-test compared T1 and T2 Conflict Reduction Knowledge measures. Second, a paired t-test compared the T1 and T2 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge measures.

Research Question 2: At T3, do parents report improved behaviors compared to T1 in the two areas?

To investigate whether parents reported using technigues to manage conflict more often two months following participation in the program, a paired t-test was conducted comparing T1 and T3 Managing Conflict Behavior measures. T1 and T3 Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior measures were compared in a paried t-test to investigate whether parents reported using more strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict.

Research Question 3: Do knowledge change and behavior change vary as a function of parent gender, race, or parenting stage?

Four repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether the pre-post differences in the two knowledge measures and the two behavior measures vary as a function of participants' gender, race, and parenting stage. In order to run each of the four ANOVAs, the pre and post scale scores were enterted as within-subjects factors. Parent gender, race, and parenting stage were entered as between-subject factors. Parent race was included as a factor in the interest of thoroughness and to establish a template for future evaluators to follow, however, it is unlikely race will be significant due to the very small number of minorities in the sample.

Research Question 4: Does T1 to T2 knowledge change predict T1 to T3 behavior change, controlling for parent gender, race, and parenting stage?

To determine the amount of change in knowledge from T1 to T2 in both areas, the scale scores of T1 Conflict Reduction Knowledge and Divorce and Triangualtion Impact Knowledge

were subtracted from the scale scores of T2 Conflict Reduction Knowledge and Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge, respectively. These new knowledge variables were titled T1 to T2 Conflict Reduction Knowledge Change and T1 to T2 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge Change. To determine the amount of change in behavior from T1 to T3, the scale scores of T1 Managing Conflict Behavior and Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior were subtracted from the scale scores of T3 Managing Conflict Behavior and Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior, respectively. These new behavior variables were titled T1 to T3 Managing Conflict Behavior Change and T1 to T3 Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior Change. An Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression was estimated of behavior change on knowledge change, parent gender, race, and parenting stage in order to investigate whether T1 to T2 Conflict Redution Knowledge Change predicted T1 to T3 Managing Conflict Behavior Change, controlling for parent gender, race, and parenting stage. Similarly, to investigate whether knowledge change was related to behavior change in the second domain, an OLS regression was estimated of T1 to T3 Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior Change on T1 to T2 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge Change, parent gender, race, and parenting stage. Given the reviewed literature, parent race was controlled for; however, it is again unlikely race will be significant due to the very small number of minorities in the sample.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of the sample are provided in Table 1 in Appendix A as stated previously in Chapter Three. One participant (.7% of sample) did not report on gender. Two participants (1.4% of sample) did not report their race, and three participants (2.2% of sample) did not report their age group. Three participants (2.2%) did not report whether they were separated from their former spouse, four participants (2.9%) did not report the length of the separation from their former spouse, and two participants (1.4%) did not report their reason for attending the class. In SPSS, the default setting for missing data creates scale scores for all participants for whom there is data on at least one scale item. For the paired-samples tests, any case with a missing value for either of the variables in a given pair is excluded from the analysis of that pair. For the regression analyses, missing data were deleted listwise whereby cases with missing values on a variable were excluded. Cases with missing values for any of the variables for the repeated measures ANOVA were also excluded from analysis. Descriptive statistics of the knowledge and behavior variables are available in Tables 2 and 3 in Appendix A. The descriptive statistics are also reported separately by parent gender, race, and parenting stage. Table 4 in Appendix A reports the results of the paired t-tests.

Research Question 1

The result of the paired t-test comparing T1 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge with T2 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge was statistically significant ($t = -14.11$, $p < .001$). The result of the paired t-test comparing T1 Conflict Reduction Knowledge with T2 Conflict Reduction Knowledge was also statistically significant ($t = -15.26$, $p < .001$).

Research Question 2

The result of the paired t-test comparing T1 and T3 Managing Conflict Behavior measures was statistically significant ($t = -4.43$, $p < .001$). The result of the paired t-test comparing T1 and T3 Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior measures was also statistically significant ($t = -8.72$, $p < .001$).

Research Question 3

Four repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether knowledge change and behavior change vary as a function of parent gender, race, and parenting stage. The repeated measures ANOVA for Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge did not find statistically significant variations in knowledge gain depending on gender, race, or parenting stage. The repeated measures ANOVA for Conflict Reduction Knowledge also did not find statistically significant variations among gender, race, or parenting stage. The repeated measures ANOVA for Managing Conflict Behavior did not find statistically significant variations in behavior change depending on gender, race, or parenting stage. Finally, the repeated measures ANOVA for Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior did not find statistically significant variations among gender or race, but did find a statistically significant variation for parenting stage ($F(1) = 8.45$, $p < .01$).

Research Question 4

With regard to the result of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, T1 to T2 Conflict Reduction Knowledge Change did not significantly predict T1 to T3 Managing Conflict Behavior Change in the context of parent gender, race, and parenting stage. Parent gender, race, and parenting stage were also non-significant in this regression. The results of the second OLS regression indicate that T1 to T2 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge Change did

significantly predict T1 to T3 Post-divorce Triangulation Avoidance Behavior Change, controlling for parent gender, race, and parenting stage ($p < .05$). Parent gender and race were non-significant in this regression, but parenting stage significantly predicted behavior change ($p < .01$).

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Purpose of Study

The present study was conducted to serve several purposes. First of all, it was designed to expand on a prior evaluation of University of Tennessee Extension's parent education program for divorcing parents of minor children called *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting*. Brandon's (2006) evaluation study examined participants' satisfaction with the program, changes in knowledge, behavior, and attitudes, and the participants' needs. Written surveys were utilized to gather this information immediately prior to the program, immediately following the program, and three to six months after participation in the program. In order to expand on the aforementioned evaluation study, the present study was designed to longitudinally measure knowledge gain in two areas: (a) strategies to reduce conflict and (b) the impact of both divorce and putting children in the middle of conflict using a retrospective post-then-pre design. Using two-month follow telephone interviews, the present study measured behavior change longitudinally in two areas: (a) using techniques to manage post-divorce conflict and (b) implementing strategies to keep children out of the middle of conflict. Thus, the present study moved beyond Brandon's study in that it measured specific knowledge constructs and tested whether knowledge gain in the two areas predicted behavior change in managing post-divorce conflict and keeping children out of the middle of conflict. The final purpose of this evaluation is to provide suggestions to UT Extension on how to improve the program so it will better meets its goals and meet the needs of the parents. It is also hoped that improvements made to the program will better help parents create a less stressful divorce experience for both themselves and their children.

Discussion of Results

Knowledge Gain

As stated previously, the result of the paired t-test comparing T1 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge with T2 Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge was statistically significant as was the paired t-test comparing T1 Conflict Reduction Knowledge with T2 Conflict Reduction Knowledge. Thus, the parents reported knowing more about the impact of divorce on children and the impact of putting children in the middle of conflict after the intervention compared to before it. The parents also reported knowing more about strategies to reduce conflict with their former spouse after the intervention compared to before it. According to these results, *Parenting Apart* was successful in teaching parents about those areas. Both findings correspond with past evaluation studies that found that participants in various parenting education programs for divorcing parents reported learning from pretest to posttest (Brandon, 2006; Kramer & Washo, 1993; Shifflett & Cummings, 1999).

The knowledge gain reported by the participants suggests the program informs parents about the two areas through the use of their program materials and activities. First of all, the curriculum used in the program is adapted from the evidence-based *Children in the Middle* curriculum (University of Tennessee, 2005) which contributes to the program's overall credibility. Within the curriculum, the agents speak about topics such as reconciliation, stress, grief, reactions of children based on their age and stage of development, and communication between ex-spouses. Also discussed with the participants are the differences between cooperative and parallel parenting, the possible changes in family structures following a divorce, and how to ease the transitions between homes for children. As stated previously, the participants are shown clips on putting children in the middle of conflict and parents' use of put downs from the

Children in the Middle video. Other segments shown to participants regard money issues, quizzing the child about the ex-spouse, and long-distance parenting. Additionally, parents are given a booklet to serve as a helpful reference containing detailed information on all the topics and issues covered in the program. Overall, the results suggest that these various approaches are successful in terms of creating change in knowledge. It is also possible the knowledge gain might be attributed, in part, to the relevancy of information presented over the course of the program. Since the majority of participants attended because a divorce was filed, the information taught by the extension agents was most likely very relevant to the participants and pertained to their immediate circumstances.

Behavior Change

As with research question one, the result of the paired t-test comparing T1 and T3 Managing Conflict Behavior measures was statistically significant and the result of the paired t-test comparing T1 and T3 Post-divorce Triangulation Behavior measures was also statistically significant. According to these results, the parents reported improved behaviors from a month prior to attending the program to two months after attending the program. The participants reported using techniques to manage conflict more frequently and reported putting their child in the middle of conflict less frequently. These results also correspond with past evaluation research studies whose findings indicated the participants improved their behavior following the program for divorcing parents (Brandon, 2006; Kramer & Washo, 1993; Shifflett & Cummings, 1999). It is possible that after participating in the program, the participants felt motivated to behave differently for the sake of their children. However, without a control group, it is impossible to attribute the improved behaviors to participation in the class. Brandon mentions several reasons as to why parents might report improved behaviors over time. These reasons include “the

passage of time or less frequent contact with the other parent, resulting in less conflict between the parents" (Brandon, 2006, p. 180).

In regards to *both* the reported knowledge gain and reported behavior change, the results of this study indicate *Parenting Apart* is successful in addressing two mechanisms that have been found to explain the effects of divorce on child well-being: interparental conflict and post-divorce triangulation. The parents in this study reported knowing more about strategies to reduce interparental conflict and reported using strategies to reduce interparental conflict more often. As discussed in Chapter Two, interparental conflict was found to function as a mediating mechanism and predict the occurrence of behavioral problems in children (Lee, 1997). By reducing interparental conflict, parents are hopefully decreasing the likelihood of their children developing behavioral problems. The parents in this study also reported knowing more about the impact of post-divorce triangulation and reported avoiding post-divorce triangulation behaviors more often. Post-divorce triangulation was also discussed in Chapter Two and found to function as a mediating mechanism. Buchanan et al. (1991) found that the feeling of being caught in the middle of one's parents was strongly associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and delinquent behaviors in adolescents. By knowing more about the impact of post-divorce triangulation and avoiding triangulation behaviors, parents are ultimately benefitting their children by working towards preventing depression, anxiety, and delinquency outcomes in their children.

Variations in Knowledge Gain and Behavior Change

The repeated measures ANOVAs for conflict reduction knowledge, divorce and triangulation impact knowledge, and managing conflict behavior did not find statistically significant variations among gender, race, or parenting stage. In other words, knowledge gain in

those two areas and behavior change in the one area did not significantly vary for males or females, whites or non-whites, or for parents parenting only children age 5 or younger or parents parenting at least one child over the age of 5. Although the repeated measures ANOVA for post-divorce triangulation avoidance behavior did not find statistically significant variations among gender or race, there was a statistically significant variation for parenting stage. Parents with children age 5 and under had less of a behavior change than the parents with at least one child over the age of 5. This finding is not surprising due to the likelihood that parents with children under the age of 5 did not change their behavior to the same extent because there was less to change (i.e., a parent did not ask a two year old to request money from the other parent either before the class or after the class).

The repeated measures ANOVAs revealed no gender differences in knowledge gain and behavior change. While Lengua et al. (1992) found that men reported less interest in attending parent education programs, male participants attending *Parenting Apart* were not found to learn less than female participants. It is possible that the information presented in the course is both equally relevant and significant for males and females. The repeated measures ANOVAs revealed no race differences in knowledge gain and behavior change thus knowledge gain and behavior change did not vary as a function of race. It is possible that the information is relevant and significant for whites and non-whites, however it is important to note that the non-white portion of the sample was considerably small (n = 8) compared to the white portion (n = 129) and any significant differences would not be found with such a small minority sample size. Thus, this finding needs to be further examined with a more diverse sample.

Predicting Behavior Change

It was found that T1 to T2 conflict reduction knowledge change did not significantly predict T1 to T3 managing conflict behavior change controlling for parent gender, race, and parenting stage. Parent gender, race, and parenting stage were also non-significant in this regression. T1 to T2 divorce and triangulation impact knowledge change did significantly predict T1 to T3 post-divorce triangulation avoidance behavior change, controlling for parent gender, race, and parenting stage. Parent gender and race were non-significant in this regression, but parenting stage significantly predicted behavior change. Thus, a parent with a child 5 and younger is predicted to have a lower score on post-divorce avoidance behavior change based on their knowledge change than parents with at least one child over the age of 5. Again, a possible explanation for this difference is that parents with younger children would have a lower score in this behavior change area because some of them have children who are too young to be triangulated into the middle of conflict between the adult parents. For example, a parent of a nine month old son would not be able to quiz him about the other parent or ask him to request money from the other parent. Moreover, parenting stage would not matter for managing conflict behavior because those apply to behaviors between adults.

Overall, parents were found to have greater post-divorce triangulation avoidance behavior change scores based on their knowledge gain. In other words, their knowledge gain in the divorce and post-divorce triangulation impact area was related to their triangulation avoidance behavior change. It is plausible the information presented on triangulating one's child in conflict was more amenable to being directly applied to one's behavior than the information presented on managing post-divorce conflict. It is also important to note that the participants watched video segments demonstrating how parents put children in the middle of conflict and

how parents can change their behavior to not put children in the middle. It might be that by observing parents triangulate their child in conflict and then immediately watching how to avoid the triangulation behavior, participants gained a greater motivation to avoid triangulating their own children. In fact, in a qualitative evaluation of the PEACE program, Stone, Clark, and McKenry (2000) found that role playing was mentioned most often as an activity that was very helpful to the participants. The authors state that the role playing seemed

> to influence the participants in several positive ways: (a) role plays seemed to increase the participants' level of empathy for their children… (b) role play sometimes increased participants' empathy toward their former spouse… (c) role play also provided alternative, positive models for participants to emulate… and (d) role plays also provided a change of pace that captured the participants' attention (Stone et al., 2000, pp.32-33).

In other words, it might be that being exposed to triangulation behavior in an educational setting either by video segments or role playing, one is more inclined to apply the targeted behavior after the program.

Knowledge gain in conflict reduction was found not to be related to managing conflict behavior change. This finding may be due to the items used to measure conflict reduction knowledge which mainly focused on the purpose and benefit of mediation. Managing conflict behavior items, on the other hand, focused mainly on one's use of cooperation and communication techniques. Perhaps knowing the purpose and benefits of mediation does not predict one's use of cooperation and communication techniques. It is also possible that the program does not sufficiently emphasize cooperation and communication techniques as a means of managing conflict. The removal of those two items from the conflict reduction area after the factor analysis may be an indicator that those concepts were not covered adequately in the

classes and equally across the counties participating in the study.

Limitations

One limitation of the present study is its reliance on self-report. Participants self-reported their knowledge levels for the retrospective post-than-pre portion of the survey. The participants also self-reported their behaviors on both the written survey and the follow-up telephone interviews. Self-report is vulnerable to two biases. First, self-reporting is susceptible to the social desirability of answers. According to Babbie (2007), social desirability occurs when researchers "ask people for information, [and] they answer through a filter of what will make them look good" (p. 251). Therefore the participants may not provide completely honest answers. The likelihood of the participants responding in a socially desirable way is even greater for this evaluation due to the nature of the behavior items. The participants were asked to report on their frequency of doing some socially undesirable behaviors such as arguing with their former spouse in front of their child/children, quizzing their child about the other parent, and putting down the other parent in front of their child/children. Also adding to the likelihood of this bias occurring among the participants is the fact the behavior items were also addressed via the follow-up telephone interviews which are less private than written surveys. Self-reporting may also be inaccurate because "everyone's self-assessments can fluctuate greatly and may not provide a reliable measure of knowledge, skill, attitudes, or behavior" (Klatt & Taylor-Powell, 2005, p. 2).

An additional potential limitation of the study is the lack of representativeness of the sample in regards to the total population. If the sample is not representative of the population from which it was gathered, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Of the 61 counties offering the *Parenting Apart* program across the state, only 48 counties were offering the program during the time of this evaluation. There are several explanations as to why 13 counties

did not offer the program during the time period. These reasons include extension agent position vacancies, classes not being offered during the evaluation period, or classes not "making" due to a lack of enrolled participants. Of the 48 counties offering the program, only 19 participated in the study. Post-hoc analyses comparing the program participants in the 19 participating counties with program participants in 25 counties that did not participate in the evaluation study (I only had access to data on 25 of the 29 non-participating counties, n = 264) did not suggest substantial differences between study participants and program participants in non-participating counties. The percentages of male participants and female participants were similar with 46.8% male in the 19 participating counties and 43.2% male in the non-participating counties. In regards to the age groups, 29.9 % of participants in non-participating counties were in the 20-29 age group, while 36% of the participants in the participating counties were in this age group. Forty-five percent of program participants in non-participating counties were in the 30-39 age group, compared with 36% of the sample in this age group. The percentages of program participants in non-participating counties and study participants in the 40-49 age group were similar (22.7% and 22.3%, respectively). Both the sample and population had few participants under 20 and above the age of 50.

To further examine the representativeness of the sample in regards to why the participants attended the program, the majority of the program participants in the non-participating counties attended the program because a divorce had been filed as with the 19 participating counties (90.9% and 92.8%, respectively). Similarly, 3.8% of the program participants in non-participating counties were never married and attended the program due to custody issues concerning their children and 2.2% of the participants in the 19 counties were in the same situation. In regards to how representative the sample is in terms of race, data were only

available for 13 of the 29 counties that did not participate in the evaluation study. One hundred percent of the program participants from the 13 non-participating counties indicated they were white (non-Hispanic), with 92.8% of study participants indicating the same. Additionally, according to 2008 UT Extension data of direct contacts with divorcing parents of minor children across the state, the majority of the contacts (95.9%) also indicated they were white (non-Hispanic). Thus, the sample seems to be generally representative of the total population in terms of race according to available data. The mean divorce rate (ratio of the number of recorded divorces per 1,000 population) was also similar between participating counties and non-participating counties. According to 2006 Kids Count data, the mean divorce rate for the 19 participating counties was 4.5, and the mean divorce rate for the 29 non-participating counties was 5.2. Based on the available data for the non-participating counties, the sample appears to be generally representative of the total population.

Not all of the 139 participants were able to be reached for the follow-up telephone interview. One hundred six parents participated in the telephone interviews leaving 33 participants out of additional analyses. A further threat to the generalizability of the findings is if the 33 participants differ somehow from the 106 who completed the telephone survey. In terms of demographic information, of those participating in the telephone interviews 50% were male, 6.6% were non-white, 38.7% were in the modal age category of 30-39, and 65.1% were parents of at least one child over the age of 5. Of those who did not participate in the telephone interview, 36.4% were male, 3% were non-white, 45.5% were in the modal age category of 20-29, and 48.5% were parents of at least one child over the age of 5. In terms of marital status, of those who participated in the telephone survey, 90.6% were separated from their spouse at the time of their attendance with 28.3% separated for over a year. Of those who did not participate in

the telephone survey, 87.9% were separated from their spouse with 21.2% separated for over a year. Ninety-five percent of those who participated in the telephone interview attended *Parenting Apart* because one spouse had filed for divorce. Eighty-five percent of those who did not participate in the telephone interview attended because one spouse had filed for divorce.

By comparing those participating in the telephone interviews and those who did not, fewer female participants could be reached. It could be that the females who did not participate were single mothers with busy schedules that did not match with the calling times. Many participants were unable to be reached due to changed phone numbers and residences. Further, since calls were not made on the weekends, it was impossible to contact the participants who were only available at that time. It is also clear that the younger participants were harder to reach. The difficulty in reaching the younger participants could be due to changes in their residency, phone numbers, or unwillingness to complete the follow-up portion. The incentive of being entered into a drawing for $50.00 gift card to Wal-mart upon completion of the phone interview might not have interested the younger participants. A majority of respondents to the telephone interview had at least one child over the age of 5; whereas parents with at least one child over the age of 5 and parents with children only under the age of 5 were approximately equally represented in those who did not complete the telephone interview. Thus, more parents with children only under the age of 5 did not complete the telephone interview. The parents with children only under the age of 5 were perhaps more difficult to reach due to their limited time while caring for their younger children. In all other aspects, the 33 participants who did not complete the telephone interview are not much different from the 106 who did complete the interview.

An additional limitation of the present study was its inability to tap the hypothesized knowledge areas with the 19 constructed items. The factor analysis initially found four factors with eigenvalues over one, however, the four factors did not make conceptual sense so a scree plot visual inspection was used to determine two factors. Divorce impact knowledge and post-divorce triangulation knowledge merged into one factor with twelve items while conflict reduction knowledge remained with only three items. Unfortunately, four items had to be dropped from the analysis due to their high cross-loadings. It would have been ideal to have the factor analysis work out in the same way it did for the eight behavior items, but the result of the knowledge factor analysis will hopefully lead to better attempts at measuring knowledge regarding strategies to keep one's child out of the middle of conflict and the overall impact of divorce on children.

Lastly, this evaluation was not able to use a control or comparison group. According to Babbie (2007) the use of "a control group allows the researcher to detect any effects of the experiment itself… control groups not only guard against the effects of the experiment themselves but also the effects of any events outside [of] the experiments" (pp. 223-224). As previously stated in the discussion of the results, it is impossible to make claims that *Parenting Apart* was the reason parents reported a knowledge gain and improved behaviors. The issue of passage time or other outside reasons could potentially explain why the participants reported they learned more and improved their behaviors. Since Tennessee mandates a four-hour parent education program for divorcing parents of minor children, it would have been difficult to create a control group of divorcing parents who were not taking a similar program. It was also beyond the scope of this project to collect data from divorced parents of minor children who did not attend the program because they divorced before it became mandated by the state in 2001.

Additionally, it was not feasible to create a control group of parents from another state due time constraints, cost, and distance.

Summary and Future Directions

As indicated by results of the present evaluation, UT Extension's *Parenting Apart*: *Effective Co-Parenting* program does seem to produce knowledge gain and improved behaviors in participants over a short amount of time. In the future, a long-term evaluation needs to be conducted on this program in order to expand on both the findings described herewithin and to expand on Brandon's (2006) evaluation study. With available resources, a more thorough longitudinal evaluation using a control group could be developed and conducted to further determine the effect of the parent education program on the long-term well-being of families. Children's reports of their parents' behavior could also be incorporated into a future evaluation in order to capture how the divorce really is affecting the child.

It would also be in the best interest of research and the ultimate success of the program for future studies to investigate the knowledge constructs further. More investigation needs to be done to determine whether there are items that better measure knowledge of strategies to keep children out of the middle of parental conflict or knowledge of the impact of divorce on children. It is plausible that there are other measurable and meaningful constructs that better predict the future behavior of participants than the items used in the present evaluation. It would also be useful to find additional items that measure conflict reduction knowledge so the measure is richer. Reflecting on the items used to measure the behavior of the participants, it is clear that some items may only have applied to parents with older children (i.e., having child request money from the other parent, quizzing child about the other parent, etc.). In the future, evaluators need to include items that measure post-divorce triangulation avoidance behavior of parents with

younger children, such as a parent coercing one's child to say he or she wants to live with one parent over the other or a parent not maintaining custodial agreements.

It may also be best in future evaluations to gather information on the participants' socioeconomic status. As previously discussed, past participants in the program as well as the participants in the present study were not racially diverse and thus no significant findings were found in regards to racial differences and no conclusions could be firmly drawn as to whether the program was relevant for all races. Since *Parenting Apart* does not serve a racially diverse audience but likely serves a socioeconomically diverse audience and findings in previously reviewed literature indicate that socioeconomic status does matter in terms of parenting style (Amato, 1994; Fischer 2007), it would be pertinent to investigate whether socioeconomic status influenced parents' knowledge change and behavior change.

In two different findings of this evaluation study, parenting stage was found to be significant. It was found that post-divorce triangulation avoidance behavior change did significantly vary by parenting stage and while divorce and triangulation impact knowledge change was not found to predict post-divorce triangulation avoidance behavior change, parenting stage was found to significantly predict behavior change when controlling for parenting stage, parent gender, and race. Due to these findings pertaining to parenting stage, it is suggested that future evaluation studies take into account knowledge and behavior outcome differences in parents based on the age of children they are parenting. The current evaluation instruments could be updated to better measure these outcome differences based on one's parenting stage so that the items apply to both parents with older children and parents with younger children.

Lastly, in an effort to improve the *Parenting Apart* program, it is suggested that the curriculum focus more on cooperation and communication techniques as a means to effectively

manage post-divorce conflict. Since knowledge regarding the benefits and purpose of mediation did not determine managing conflict behavior change in participants, it is recommended the curriculum incorporate more instruction on these techniques. Accordingly, it is also suggested that the curriculum be altered to become as skill-based as it is information-based. As previously discussed, the video segments on post-divorce triangulation may explain why knowledge gain in that area predicted the behavior change in the same area. To further promote long-term behavior change and knowledge retention in both the knowledge and behavior areas, the curriculum could possibly include role playing activities or additional video segments. It would also be in the best interest of the program to ensure the information provided is relevant for parents with young children. Based on the findings in the present evaluation and the current organization of the program, it seems the program applies more to parents with older children. Since parents of minor children of all ages attend the program, it is important the program is relevant to all parents, regardless of the ages of their children.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Characteristics

		N	Percent
Gender			
	Male	65	46.8
	Female	73	52.5
Race			
	White (non-Hispanic)	129	92.8
	Black (non-Hispanic)	7	5.0
	Other	1	.7
Age Group			
	Under 20	2	1.4
	20-29	50	36.0
	30-39	50	36.0
	40-49	31	22.3
	50-59	2	1.4
	Over 60	1	.7
Separated from spouse			
	Yes	125	89.9
	No	11	7.9
Length of separation			
	Under 3 months	26	18.7
	3-6 months	34	24.5
	7-9 months	10	7.2
	10-12 months	18	12.9
	Over a year	37	26.6
	Not applicable	10	7.2
Reason for attending class			
	I or my spouse has filed for divorce	129	92.8
	I or my former spouse has filed for change of custody from previous divorce	1	.7
	I have never been married to the child's other parent, and there are custodial issues related to our child	3	2.2
	I am a grandparent or other relative seeking custody of grandchild or related child	1	.7
	I am considering divorce	0	0
	Other reason	3	2.2

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Knowledge Variables

	N	Mean	SD	α
Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge Pre	126	49.67	14.09	.92
Male	60	47.60	14.32	
Female	66	51.38	13.99	
White	117	49.58	14.20	
Non White	8	50.25	16.27	
Child age 5 and under	47	49.06	13.48	
Child age over 5	78	49.97	14.79	
Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge Post	126	66.93	6.80	.87
Male	61	66.48	7.30	
Female	69	67.41	6.25	
White	121	66.98	6.58	
Non White	8	69.63	3.96	
Child age 5 and under	48	67.71	6.13	
Child age over 5	81	66.47	7.11	
Conflict Reduction Knowledge Pre	134	9.82	4.49	.82
Male	61	10.30	3.86	
Female	72	9.36	4.94	
White	124	9.86	4.50	
Non White	8	9.5	4.11	
Child age 5 and under	50	9.24	4.74	
Child age over 5	82	10.17	4.33	
Conflict Reduction Knowledge Post	134	15.91	3.05	.82
Male	63	15.76	2.43	
Female	72	15.96	3.57	
White	126	15.9	2.95	
Non White	8	17	1.31	
Child age 5 and under	52	15.87	3.16	
Child age over 5	82	15.84	3.07	

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Behavior Variables

	N	Mean	SD	α
Managing Conflict Behavior Pre	104	6.55	1.92	.72
Male	64	6.63	2.01	
Female	72	6.24	1.99	
White	127	6.38	2.03	
Non White	8	7.5	0.76	
Child age 5 and under	52	6.38	2.34	
Child age over 5	83	6.42	1.78	
Managing Conflict Behavior Post	104	7.91	2.88	.87
Male	53	7.94	3.33	
Female	53	7.89	2.33	
White	99	7.9	2.95	
Non White	7	8.14	0.69	
Child age 5 and under	36	8.61	3.98	
Child age over 5	69	7.67	1.80	
Post-divorce Triangulation Behavior Pre	104	11.45	3.06	.78
Male	65	11.94	2.78	
Female	72	11.4	3.12	
White	128	11.65	3.02	
Non White	8	12.25	1.67	
Child age 5 and under	52	12.88	1.75	
Child age over 5	84	10.88	3.31	
Post-divorce Triangulation Behavior Post	104	13.81	1.53	.88
Male	52	14.10	1.29	
Female	53	13.49	1.70	
White	98	13.76	1.58	
Non White	7	14	0.82	
Child age 5 and under	35	14	1.26	
Child age over 5	69	13.67	1.66	

Table 4
Paired Sample T-tests

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
DivTriKnowPre - DivTriKnowPost[a]	-17.25	13.72	1.22	-19.67	-14.83	-14.11	125	.000
ConRedKnowPre - ConRedKnowPost[b]	-6.09	4.62	0.39	-6.88	-5.30	-15.26	133	.000
ManConfBehPre - ManConfBehPost[c]	-1.37	3.14	0.31	-1.98	-0.75	-4.43	103	.000
TriBehPre - TriBehPost[d]	-2.36	2.76	0.27	-2.89	-1.82	-8.72	103	.000

[a] Divorce and Triangulation Impact Knowledge T1 and T2
[b] Conflict Reduction Knowledge T1 and T2
[c] Managing Conflict Behavior T1 and T3
[d] Post-divorce Triangulation Behavior T1 and T3

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form
Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting

In order to measure the value of this program, we would like to assess your knowledge and behavior about certain topics covered in this class. This will involve filling out a form and having a telephone interview about two months after the class. The telephone interview will last 8 to 10 minutes. Your name and phone number will be on this informed consent form. Both will be added to a list of all who agree to have the phone interview. This form and your class evaluation form will be matched by a code number. Because these forms can be matched, someone could link your name with your survey. We have taken steps to keep this from happening. Only the three members of the research team will have access to the list of participants.

The forms will be collected, sent, and stored separately in a locked file cabinet at UT. Your identity will be kept private. Once the entire project is finished, the forms with your personal information will be destroyed. This evaluation is being carried out across the state. The results of the evaluation will be used to report on the value of the class to persons who might need to know about it. This includes judges who hear divorce cases, Extension specialists and administrators, persons who work with families, and the general public. Findings may be shared through reports, journal articles, newspapers, or other mass media.

No one attending the classes will be personally identified in any of these reports.

Today you will be given a small token of our appreciation after you have filled out your evaluation form. After completing the telephone interview, you will be entered into a drawing to win one of two $50 Wal-mart giftcards. Being a part of this study is voluntary. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

_____ _____

(Signature) (Date)

For the follow-up telephone interview, please print your name and phone number below:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

In case we cannot reach you from the above phone number, please provide a second phone number:

Phone Number: _____

Appendix C

Evaluation Form
Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting

For the statements below, please indicate how much you **NOW KNOW** about each of the following topics in the first column. **THEN**, use the column on the right to indicate how much you knew about each topic before taking the class.

	NOW							BEFORE						
	Low						High	Low						High
1. The impact of conflict between parents on children's stress	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Impacts of divorce on children of various ages	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Cooperation techniques to reduce conflict (e.g., compromising, staying on topic)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Effective communication techniques to use with the other parent (e.g., "I" messages)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The importance of both parents working together for the sake of their children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Situations in which cooperative parenting is appropriate	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Situations in which parallel parenting is appropriate	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. The purpose of mediation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The benefits of mediation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Sources of stress for children and adults	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Tips on when to introduce your child to a person you are dating	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Strategies for easing transitions between homes	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. The importance of allowing both parents to have a meaningful relationship with the children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.The importance of creating a parenting plan that is flexible	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. The importance of creating a parenting plan that is in the best interest of the child/children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Reasons not to use your child as a messenger	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Reasons not to put-down the other parent in front of your child	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Reasons not to quiz your child about the other parent	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Reasons not to have your child request money from the other parent	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Continue on to the next page

To answer the next set of questions, **REFLECT** back on your interactions with your child(ren) and your ex-spouse over the course of the **MONTH PRIOR** to taking this class (CIRCLE one):

1. How often was your child exposed to conflict between you and the other parent?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

2. How often did you purposely use cooperation techniques to reduce conflict (e.g., compromising, staying on topic)?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

3. How often did you use effective communication techniques to manage conflict (e.g., "I" messages)?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

4. How often did you use your child as a messenger between you and the other parent?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

5. How often did you quiz your child about the other parent (e.g., asked about other parent's thoughts, feelings, or behavior)?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

6. How often did you put-down the other parent in front of your child?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

7. How often did you have your child request money from the other parent?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

8. How often did you try to work with the other parent for the sake of your child?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

9. How often did you argue with the other parent in front of your child?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

Please continue on to the last page

Please fill out the following:

1. Gender (CIRCLE one): Male Female

2. Race/Ethnicity (CIRCLE one):

Black (non-Hispanic) White (non-Hispanic) Hispanic Asian Pacific Islander Other

3. Age group (CIRCLE one):

Under 20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and up

4. Please indicate the age, gender, and status of your children:

	Boy	Girl	Biological	Adopted	Step
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____
Age _____	____	___	_____	_____	____

5. Are you currently separated from your spouse (CIRCLE one)? Yes No

If yes, how long have you been separated (CIRCLE one)?

Under 3 months 3-6 months 7-9 months 10-12 months Over a year

6. Please CHECK your reason for attending this program:

____ I or my spouse has filed for divorce
____ I or my former spouse has filed for change of custody from previous divorce
____ I have never been married to the child's other parent, and there are custodial issues related to our child
____ I am a grandparent or other relative seeking custody of grandchild or related child
____ I am considering divorce
____ Other reason (please specify) _____

Appendix D

Parenting Apart Evaluation Facilitator Checklist

Facilitator: Thank you very much for your assistance with this evaluation project! In order to make sure that all data is gathered in the same way, we need you to check each box below and return all materials as instructed.

☐ I started the survey process at the end of the four-hour class.

☐ I used the tabloid-sized instruction sheets when administering the survey.

☐ I read the facilitator script when I administered the survey.

☐ I first gathered the informed consent forms after they were signed by the participants and sealed them in the appropriate pre-addressed, stamped envelope (# 1) in front of the participants.

☐ I then gathered completed surveys sealed in individual envelopes from the participants and put all survey envelopes in a separate pre-addressed, stamped envelope (# 2) in front of the participants. (Do not seal until you include this signed checklist.)

☐ I gave each participant a UT Extension tote bag.

☐ I will mail both envelopes within two business days.

When this checklist is completed, please sign and date it and place it in the # 2 envelope with all unused evaluation materials and seal the envelope.

Facilitator Name (please print): _____

Facilitator Signature: _____

County: _____

Date of class: _____

Appendix E

Parenting Apart Evaluation Script

RED = read aloud; BLACK = information for the facilitator

Note to facilitator: Thank you for your help in this evaluation. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants' responses, and to make sure that the data gathered are usable, it is very important that each county gather data exactly the same way. Please use the tabloid-size instruction sheets in your evaluation packet and say the words in the script below word for word. We welcome your feedback and suggestions about our data collection process. Thank you again!

Following your *Parenting Apart* class, please read the following:

"This class has been chosen to participate in an evaluation study. A research team at the University of Tennessee has written a short survey to help them determine whether *Parenting Apart* really helps parents. This research project is not part of the *Parenting Apart* program and you are not required to participate in it."

Display the tabloid-sized "Evaluation of *Parenting Apart*" sheet. Read the sheet aloud.

Now display the tabloid-sized evaluation instruction sheet (with the four steps). "Before I hand out the survey packets, I'll walk you through each of the four steps. Next, I'll answer any questions you might have. Then, I will hand out the packets."

Step 1: Get a survey packet.

"To participate in this study, each of you will be handed a survey packet that contains an informed consent form and the evaluation survey."

Step 2: Informed Consent

Hold up your copy of the statement of informed consent. "The top sheet inside your survey packet is the 'Informed Consent Statement.' Basically, it lets you know what the risks and benefits of the study are and tells you the steps of the evaluation. This form and your survey are matched by a code number, but we have taken steps to keep anyone other than the researchers from linking your name with your survey. It also states that participation in this evaluation means that you will be called in two months for a short follow-up telephone interview. Once you complete the telephone interview, you will be entered into a drawing to win one of two $50 giftcards to Wal-mart. At the bottom of the statement, you will be asked for your signature and your primary and secondary phone number." Point to bottom of page where participants are asked to provide their signature and phone number. "After everyone who is willing to participate has completed the informed consent form, I will take them up and seal them together in an envelope."

Step 3: Survey

Hold up your copy of the evaluation survey: "The next sheet in your packet is the evaluation survey. After you complete the survey, you will seal it in the envelope it came in. (Pretend to demonstrate this for the participants.) I will then collect all envelopes and place them all in a larger envelope separate from the envelope containing the informed consent forms."

Step 4: Tote bag

"After I collect all of the surveys, you will be given this tote bag! Does anyone have any questions for me about this process?"

Answer questions as needed. Once questions are answered:

"Okay, we're ready to hand out the surveys. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Also, remember that the researchers are evaluating the program, not YOU. Please ask me if you have any questions and refer to this instruction sheet if needed. I will be reading both the informed consent form and the evaluation survey aloud to the group. If you want to fill out the survey at a faster pace than I am reading, please feel free to do so. It is very important to the researchers to have your honest answers. Please let me know what I can do to help."

Distribute survey packets. Read the informed consent form aloud, collect the forms, and seal them in the appropriate envelope (# 1). Next read the entire evaluation survey aloud to the participants. Assist people as needed, but do not look at their survey. If they ask for clarification of an item, refer to your copy of the survey rather than looking at their survey. Collect the completed surveys sealed in their envelopes and place them in the larger envelope (# 2).

After you have collected the survey envelopes and you have placed the completed checklist and leftover evaluation materials in the same envelope:

"Great. It looks like everyone has had the chance to finish. I'd like you to see that in order to keep you data private, I am sealing this envelope (Seal envelope). It will be opened by researchers at the University of Tennessee."

Hand out tote bags. As you hand out the tote bags, remind the participants that they will be called in two months for the follow-up telephone interview.

VITA

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