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# **PARENTING PROGRAMS FOR INMATES**

A LITERATURE REVIEW

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This essay explores the design, measures and effectiveness of parenting programs for incarcerated parents. There is a growing concern for children who have incarcerated parents. The potential effects of parental incarceration and the intergenerational nature of crime and delinquency is one reason to develop parenting programs. Experiences of parental incarceration are believed to cause mental, physical, emotional and economic hardship for children. Parenting programs might be beneficial for both parents and their children. Results suggest that further efforts need to be made to support incarcerated parents during incarceration as well as after release.

*Keywords:* intervention, incarcerated parent, parenting program, prison, parental incarceration

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# INTRODUCTION

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014) an estimated total of almost 6.9 million persons were under the supervision of the U.S. adult correctional systems in 2013. This includes inmates in state or federal prisons, local jails, and those on probation. About 1 in 100 adults in the United States was incarcerated in prison or local jails, compared to 1 in 51 adults being on parole or probation. In 2013 a total of 1.6 million females and males were in prison. Since 2010 the number of persons being held in prison has increased both for females and males. In the spring of 2015 females made up 6,7% (14,023) of the total population in federal prisons (Federal Bureau of Prisons 2015). In the UK, there is a total of 84,093 prisoners in public sector prisons.

“As a child I never dreamed I or one of my parents would be living inside a prison. My child can, and he has lived it for the past four and a half years. He's a teenager who's growing up so fast I dare not blink. It's magnified by living here. My worries are constant and the feeling of loss of time, of helping him through hard times, and missing those special moments tears at my heart. Knowing those days I missed will never come again.” (Luke 2002, p. 929).

The quote above from Luke (2002) is an example of how parents might feel when being incarcerated separated from their children. Parenting programmes might help parents ease the emotional stress caused by incarceration. An early life experience that can have significant negative consequences on children is having a parent who is incarcerated. Programmes for incarcerated parents are designed to reduce the harmful effects their incarceration might have on their children. Parenting programmes should reasonably also be based on what is known about the effects. However, programs vary across facilities. A review by Murray et al. (2009) found that children of incarcerated parents have higher rates of antisocial and mental health outcomes than their peers, showing that parental imprisonment possibly has harmful effects on children. However it should be mentioned that Murray et al. (2009) found most studies regarding effects on children to be of poor quality and the results should be seen as final in any way. Conclusions of Murray et al (2009) were that parental imprisonment is a risk factor for both child antisocial behaviour and mental health problems, but whether parental imprisonment is a causal risk factor or not is unclear. High incarceration rates have led to more interest in the effects of incarceration on children. Rather than focusing on the quantity of time children spend with their incarcerated parents, focus should be on improving the quality of these interactions (Blumberg & Griffin 2013).

Murray et al. (2009) mean that an obvious option for preventing negative effects of parental imprisonment is to simply imprison fewer parents. This could be achieved by increasing the use of alternative forms of criminal punishment, such as probation, intensive supervision, electronic monitoring and so on. Imprisoning fewer parents would require political and legal changes, and instead programmes that might reduce negative effects of parental imprisonment are implemented.

If parenting programs are successful, they should minimize any negative outcomes for children caused by one or both parents being incarcerated. After all, it seems like even though interventions involve the parent, it really is with the wellbeing of children in mind. One might say

that it is in society's interest to evaluate parenting programs. Helping incarcerated parents will also indirectly help their children by preventing or ideally mitigate any negative outcomes.

## **PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The background section of this essay showed that having an incarcerated parent might have a negative effect on children. Programmes are designed to mitigate this possible negative effect by encouraging incarcerated mothers and fathers to participate in programmes to develop their parenting skills. To describe this I have chosen to write a literature review that includes programmes for both women and men.

The purpose of this review is exploring the design of parenting programmes. My research questions are:

- What programs are available?
- How are these programs designed?
- What effect do they have?

# BACKGROUND

An intervention that can improve the mental health of parents would also improve the relationship with their children, mitigating any negative effects of parental incarceration (Makariev & Shaver 2009). Incarcerated parents' problems are more than often related to attachment insecurity that is passed on to their children. The phrase "intergenerational transmission of attachment" refers to the way attachment influences tend to run through several generations. Improving parenting behavior could break this cycle. Dysfunctional attachment relationships are often passed on to the next generation, in order to break this cycle effective interventions are needed (Makariev & Shaver 2009). Parents use a wide range of manners to discipline their children. Harsh childhood discipline may be related to negative outcomes, like criminality, caused by the "brutalization effect" on children. Aggressive, abusive, and harsh parenting especially with physical forms of punishment teaches children that aggression and violence is accepted. The negative parenting and aggressive behaviour is passed on to the next generation and can potentially result in criminality as well as mental health issues and poor academic performance (Reed & Reed 1997).

However, the idea of "breaking the cycle" of negative or insufficient attachment patterns that are transmitted across multiple generations is challenged by Mustaine Ehrhardt & Tewksbury (2015). They found that incarceration does not show any significant relationship with use of physical and harsh punishments. The only variable that contributed significantly was high levels of education that actually increased the likelihood of using harsh physical disciplinary methods. Fathers who are physically harsh are those who are less involved with their children, less cooperative with their child's mother, and enjoy life and parenting less than fathers who do not practice harsh physical methods of discipline (Mustaine Ehrhardt & Tewksbury 2015).

## *Possible effects on Children*

It should not be assumed that contact with or visiting the parent is necessary and only a positive experience. Contact with the incarcerated parent might not always be best for the child, the quality of the contact is important (Blumberg & Griffin 2013). The purpose and aims of any programme should ideally be determined by what is best for the child. If the incarcerated parent upon release is moving back home and will be the child's primary caregiver, improving the parent's state of mind with respect to attachment and understanding of the child's needs would be beneficial. But if the parent is unlikely to be the child's caregiver in the future, it makes more sense that an intervention should focus on the caregiver not necessarily the parent.

Visits by children are a relatively rare occasion for most parents, and is often outside their own personal control. Phone calls are more readily under inmate control, but telephone usage in prison can be expensive. Although electronic communication is essential outside of prison, security policies often make it difficult to use for inmates. However, a letter can be written at any time and at a low cost. Writing letters is an important way of communication for inmate parents. Letter

writing is even a part of the curriculum of some parenting programs, for example Loper & Tuerk (2010).

For parents, the time served in jail or prison may be a turning point in their lives (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Sentences can provide time to reflect and make positive changes for their children. Parental incarceration can also cause significant negative outcomes for children. One of the most vulnerable groups in society are children who have an incarcerated parent (Newman et al 2011). Parents' incarceration can cause negative effects for children in different ways, by economic risk and insecure attachment (Makariev & Shaver 2009, Arditti & Savla 2015). Arditti & Savla (2015) found parental incarceration to be a possible predictor of child trauma in single caregiver homes. By providing emotional and social support for parents, an intervention has the potential to reduce any harmful ripple effects on children caused by incarceration. In Sweden the Ombudsman for Children, a government agency, monitors how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is complied in Sweden's municipalities, county councils and government agencies. Every year, the Ombudsman submits a report to the government including recommendations for improvements for children. The Ombudsman for Children's task is to represent children and provide information relevant to children's rights and interests on the basis of CRC. The CRC states that no child should be separated from their parents against their will, except if the contact is dangerous or harmful for the child. If the child is separated from one or both parents, they still have the right to frequent contact (Barnombudsmannen 2015). Men and women who were poorly parented in childhood are likely to pass on their experiences to the next generation (Eddy & Reid 2003). Poehlmann (2005) found that children with an incarcerated parent expressed intense ambivalence, disorganization, or detachment related to the parent. Young children reacted with fear, anger, sleep problems, worrying, acting out, and developmental regression. Moffitt & Caspi (2001) found that childhood-onset delinquents had childhoods of inadequate parenting, neurocognitive problems, and temperament and behaviour problems. Their findings are consistent with the taxonomic theory of life-course persistent and adolescence-limited offenders by Moffitt (1993). How is "inadequate parenting" defined? Moffitt & Caspi (2001) used 10 measures for the domain "family adversity and inadequate parenting": parental criminality, mother's age at her first birth, deviant mother-child interaction, harsh discipline, inconsistent discipline, family conflict, mother's mental health problems, number of caregiver changes, years with a single parent, and family socioeconomic status (SES).

Incarceration can provide an opportunity to improve parenting competence and reduce parent and child distress. Reducing the social and emotional impact of parental incarceration on children is the purpose and goal of most parenting programs. To reduce the negative cycle of poor attachment in childhood is a theme that is mentioned in several studies, for example Newman et al (2011) and Makariev & Shaver (2009). Because of the potential links between parental incarceration and possible future conduct problems in their children, interventions during incarceration may serve as a turning point in the lives of both parents and children. Efforts to increase the face-to-face time with children and their incarcerated parent are somewhat misguided. Rather than focusing on the quantity of time children spend with their parents, attention should be paid to improving the quality of the time spent. Research has demonstrated that parents' involvement with their children's educational activities, particularly reading, translates into increased reading skills, and academic achievement (Blumberg & Griffin 2013). Parenting programs may provide an opportunity to re-establish parental roles and reassure the children of their continued love and support. Parenting programs feed two birds with one seed by

benefiting both inmates and their children (Blumberg & Griffin 2013).

Poehlman (2005b) found that mothers' depressive symptoms were related to less frequent face-to-face contact during incarceration. Mothers described suicidal thoughts in reaction to loss of contact with their children. They also described how they missed the physical contact with children, hugging, touching, providing care, and observing developmental progress. Visits are important since they provide the physical aspect not possible by telephone contact. The psychological well being of the parent could be improved by visits during incarceration, but for children it can be traumatic (Arrditti & Savla 2015). Poehlmann (2005a), found that children who had visited their mother at the prison had less positive associations of mothers than children who had not visited. In the specific prison where the study took place, mothers were not allowed to play with children on the floor and the outdoor play area was surrounded by razor wire fencing.

Murray & Murray (2010) found that children with an incarcerated parent are more likely than children without an incarcerated parent to show a behavior that is both antisocial and delinquent. Children are also more likely to have serious mental health problems and substance abuse problems. Geller et al (2012) found evidence that paternal incarceration has a stronger effect on children's aggressive behaviors than if the father would absent for other reasons. To reduce the negative effects parental incarceration might have on children the best way could be to educate, help and support parents while they serve their sentence. Parenting programs designed to strengthen family bonds after incarceration is one way to reduce the negative effect of parental incarceration on children and adolescents. However, many children of prisoners do not develop antisocial or mental health problems (Murray et al. 2009).

Parenting plays an important role in the developmental process of children. Adolescent children of incarcerated parents are at increased risk of conduct problems. If the problems are persistent from an early age, the risk of committing crimes is higher and consequently the risk of being incarcerated increases. If a child receives positive parenting, adolescent conduct problems can be prevented (Eddy & Reid 2003). But what does "positive parenting" actually look like? If positive parenting can prevent childhood conduct problems the skills needed should be part of every parenting program curriculum. What positive parenting looks like and what skills are needed differ between programs.

Research suggests the relationship between parents and family members is influenced by their relationships prior to incarceration (Swanson et al 2013, Kennon et al 2009). Caregivers are often grandparents, aunts, the other parent, relatives or friends. The relationship between the inmate and the caregiver affects the quality of contact with children. Conflict between parent and caregiver are common and affects children in a negative way, contributing to emotional problems (Kennon et al 2009, Nesmith & Ruhland 2008). Family members negative attitudes toward the incarcerated parent is a barrier to developing a positive relationship with children. For parents with a history of violent crimes, especially if their family was victimized, opportunities for apologies and forgiveness are important. Again, the parent-child relationship depends on what is in the best interest of the child. For some men, a father-child relationship may not have been valued or even considered important until they were sentenced to a long prison sentence and placed in a maximum security prison (Swanson et al 2013).



The impact of parental incarceration on children is a complex and delicate issue. For some children, the separation from their parent while incarcerated may be beneficial, if the parent was a destructive force or damaging to the child's well being (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Ruhland & Nesmith, 2008). Even if children have worse outcomes than their peers, this may be because of parental criminality and disadvantage prior to imprisonment, not because of imprisonment itself. Incarceration of an abusive or criminal parent might actually decrease children's risk of developing behavior problems because it removes a negative and antisocial influence from their lives (Murray et al, 2009).

### *Swedish context*

In Sweden 30 000 children have at least one parent in prison or under probation, 10 000 of these have a parent in prison (Berman et al 2013). All Swedish prisons have a parenting course that aims to help the parents to stay in touch and also improve the parent-child relationship during their imprisonment. The needs and developmental stages of children of different ages and specific difficulties that can arise for children with a parent in prison are discussed in the course, the "parenting circle". The study circle is based on *Föräldraskap, en studiecirkel* by Rita Christensen. The Swedish Womens Organisation, SKR, did together with the Prison and Probation Service develop the parenting course using their own material "*Ur barnens perspektiv*". A project of developing new material is currently running since 2012 and is planned to end in september 2015. The goal of the project is to produce parental support material to be used within all facilities; jail, prison and probation services. The project is run by the organisation Bfff (former Bryggan) in Stockholm, and is financed by Arvsfonden. Bfff is run on a voluntary basis to offer support for mainly children who have a family member in prison.

Since 2005 a child ombudsman is present at every jail, prison and probation office in Sweden. The ombudsman is working to make sure a child's perspective is present whenever children are involved and also to ease the contact between the child and the incarcerated parent.

In 2008 in Malmö a storytelling project called "Storytelling from inside" was introduced; it gives incarcerated parents the opportunity to record bedtime stories for their children. The project currently runs in 13 prisons all over Sweden. Many facilities have an apartment where families can spend more time together. According to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (2015) all women's facilities have apartments available, unclear why this is not the case for all facilities. Infants up to 12 months old are allowed to stay with the parent in prison if the sentence is short and there is no better place available for the child.

Between 2010-2012 the European Union (EU) financed the COPING (Children of Prisoners, Interventions & Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health) project. The project includes interviews with children and parents, focus group interviews, and mapping how the interventions by society and the criminal justice system work (Berman et al 2013). The children of the COPING study had a higher risk of mental ill health compared to other children. Many children have trouble with concentration, emotions, behaviour and relations to others. For Swedish children with an incarcerated parent emotional problems and how to handle these are most prominent. Both the Swedish Prison and Probation Service and local organisations work with interventions for children. The Prison and Probation Service is focused on the incarcerated parent

and strengthening the family ties. The COPING study shows that a key factor for the child is their contact with the incarcerated parent, especially shortly after incarceration. The caretaker's ability to support the child is also important. Critical times when support is needed the most is shortly after incarceration and after release. It is recommended in the study that children should maintain the relation with and stay in touch with the incarcerated parent, something that all Swedish children mentioned as important and was connected with many different emotions. As part of the COPING study in Sweden all jails and prisons (a total of 83 units) were contacted regarding any interventions the offered. 17 of the total 52 units that replied reported having no intervention programs at all. Letters and telephone contact is crucial to stay in touch especially in Sweden where the prison often is far away and not easily reached by bus or train. Earlier Sweden has a closeness principle when placing interns, where parents were placed as close as possible to the hometown of their children to facilitate contact.

### *Previous Reviews*

Previous reviews of parenting programmes include the review by Bruns (2006) and Newman et al (2011), both on parenting programs for mothers. Bruns (2006) reviewed 15 studies published between 1995 and 2004, including only prison based programs and intentionally excluding any jail programs. Common themes for the articles included were child development, discipline and self-esteem but Bruns (2006) found that only a few authors described the curriculums used or the participant admission criteria. Newman et al (2011) included 11 articles in their review, articles published between 1991 and 2008. The purpose of their study was to ultimately design a program for mothers in Australia. The review revealed a range of outcome measures used to evaluate parenting programs with the adult-adolescent parenting inventory (AAPI-II) being the most common measure. Even if the outcomes of the evaluations varied, nearly all studies reported improvement in parent's attitude with regards to child discipline. Increased parenting skills and confidence were also reported outcomes. Newman et al (2011) concluded the vast differences in the content and delivery of the programs making them difficult to compare. One limitation of all the studies is that pre and/or post measures only were used. No study provided follow-up data to determine if the attitudinal changes and improved parenting knowledge were sustained.

Introducing parenting programs within the justice system is a complex task. Complexities include limitations relating to access and security, the prison culture and prison population, and the collection of data. The ability to demonstrate positive program outcomes is often compromised by such factors.

The large sample of approximately 3,000 children used in a study by Geller et al (2012) showed that paternal incarceration had a damaging effect on the socioemotional well being of young children age 5. Children were more likely to be aggressive and have attention problems, but no relationship was found between children's verbal ability and internalizing problems. Behavior problems were substantially higher for children who had been residing with the father prior to his incarceration. Levels of aggression were higher for boys than for girls, but the effects were still significant for both genders. Demographic information from Geller et al (2013) showed that children with an incarcerated parent are likely to come from families that are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Parents are more likely to report domestic violence, use drugs and drink heavily, mothers are likely to be in poverty when children are born, and both parents are likely unemployed. Parents often have a history of mental health problems, and mothers tend to be younger and less educated (Geller et al 2013). Children from families with a history of domestic

violence might need specific support. If children have witnessed domestic violence, most of children's problems may relate to the time prior of incarceration. In contrast, problems faced by children in nonviolent homes may relate more directly to their parent's incarceration. Domestic violence, especially if the parent is incarcerated for crimes committed against his/her family, different strategies might be needed to provide sufficient support.

Children's relationships with their incarcerated parents are influenced or dependent on the caregiver. A child who has more access to their incarcerated parent may feel more connected and perhaps less worried about the parent. When incarcerated parents can see their children regularly, particularly during longer sentences, they can witness their child's developmental progress and keep a meaningful connection with them. In general, a key to supporting children is supporting their parents and caregivers. Children are aware of the stress of their caregiver and many go to great lengths to ease them. Providing skills and support to help parents and caregivers cope emotionally, mentally, and financially may make these problems less visible and overwhelming to the children (Nesmith & Ruhland 2008). Caregivers need information about helping children cope with having an incarcerated parent. When a child does not have enough information at hand, the child is left with only their imagination.

## **METHOD**

By analysing the chosen studies my goal is to compare similarities and differences of parenting programmes in prison.

In my searches I have included only published peer-reviewed articles written in English. I have not limited my searches within any particular time frames; instead articles of interest that met my criteria have been included. However, recent studies were my priority in order to review studies that have been conducted since previous reviews by Newman et al (2011) and Bruns (2006). My searches in the databases PubMed and PsychInfo generated a sufficient amount of articles but some focused on children or the caregivers instead of mother and/or fathers in prison, jail or any other correctional facility. All forms of correctional facilities are included in the essay. Programmes for both men and women are included since I choose to focus on both genders. Some programmes are designed for men or women specifically but some are used for both.

Keywords I used were: parents, incarcerated, prison, and program. Databases I used: PsychInfo, PubMed and Campbell.

Articles published between 2000 and 2014 were reviewed. A search of key terms ("parenting programs," "prison programs") provided several articles about programs. Articles without any participating fathers or mothers were excluded, for example one article where wardens were interviewed. Finally, programs with incarcerated mothers and fathers were chosen for review. Altogether, 12 peer-reviewed articles were chosen. All included articles were program descriptions and the remainder included empirical data (program outcomes or evaluations).

Articles published between 2000 and 2014 were reviewed. A search of general terms (“parenting program”, “prison program”, “incarcerated parent”) provided numerous articles about programs but few directly addressed the parent-child relationship (eg, drug abuse programs, work and/or life skills programs). A search of reference lists of found studies was made to locate further relevant studies. Finally, programs working with incarcerated mothers and fathers were targeted for review. Programs in both jail and prison settings were included. I used Campbell Collaboration online ([www.campbellcollaboration.org](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org)) to find any reviews on parenting programs and related topics.

Altogether, 12 published, peer-reviewed articles were selected for review. All articles included program outcomes or evaluations. Duration of programs ranged from one to weeks, and varied from 1-hour sessions to ... hour session. The complete programs ranged from --- to 3 years.

It is of course possible and very likely that there is more research available and my essay is no way intended to or attempting to cover all published material on parenting programs in jail or prison. It is a review of a limited amount of articles. Studies that are not peer-reviewed are excluded.

## RESULTS

The articles below include programmes and interventions focusing on mothers (Loper & Tuerk 2011, Slead et al, 2008, Thompson & Harm, 2000, Shortt et al, 2014, Miller at al 2014, Scudder et al, 2014, Sandifer, 2008, Snyder et al, 2001), fathers (Barr et al 2014, Meek 2006) and both mothers and fathers (Eddy et al 2013, Wilson et al 2010). Table 1 provides an overview of the studies included in the review.

**Table 1 INCLUDED STUDIES**

Author, year, country	Participants	Intervention/program	Measures	Facilitators
Loper & Tuerk (2011) U.S	106, female	Parenting from Inside: Making the Mother-Child connection	PSI, PAM, BSI	PhD students clinical psychology
Slead, Baradon, Fonagy (2013) UK	163, female	New Beginnings	PDI, CIB, CES-D, MORS	Psychotherapists
Thompson & Harm (2000) U.S	104, female	Parenting from Prison	AAPI-II, BSI	Trained volunteers
Eddy, Martinez Jr. & Burraston (2013) U.S	359, female and male	Parenting Inside Out	PSS, CES-D	Clinical experience from working with families. PIO-trained

Shortt et al. (2014) U.S	29, female	Emotions Program	DERS, ATQ, CES-D, BSI, SRD	Masters-level interventionist
Barr et al (2014) California, U.S	41, male	Baby Elmo program	IGDI-IPCI	Social work graduate student + line staff
Miller et al. (2014) U.S	45, females	Parenting While Incarcerated	AAPI-II	University interns, community agency staff
Scudder et al 2014, U.S	71, female	Parent-Child Interaction Therapy	AAPI-II, PSI, CAP, TAI, DPICS-III	Master degree in psychology+undergrad. student
Wilson et al (2010), U.S	81 male, 69 female	Parenting from Prison	SES, SMS, KPS, IPA	(not specified)
Snyder et al (2001), U.S	58, female	Mother-child Visitation program	No specific measures	Researchers
Sandifer (2008), U.S	64, females	Rebonding and Rebuilding curriculum,	AAPI-II, PCRI	Family life skills instructor
Meek (2006), UK	75, male	"Intensive parenting class"	Course feedback. No specific measures	The researcher, assistants, invited guests

### *The New Beginnings program*

Sleed, Baradon and Fonagy (2013) examined the usefulness of the New Beginnings program; an attachment-based group intervention designed for mothers in prison and their babies. The participants were recruited from seven prisons in the UK with a mother and baby unit (MBUs). The interviews took place inside the prisons. During the baseline assessments the mothers were interviewed, completed a set of questionnaires and were also filmed interacting with their babies (Sleed, Baradon & Fonagy 2013). The program was carried out over a four-week period including eight sessions. 87% of the mothers and babies attended at least half of the sessions that were offered. Two parent-infant psychotherapists facilitated the groups of mothers and babies. The sessions included group discussions, handouts, homework tasks, and individual work sheets. Different topics included past and present patterns of relating and non-conscious behaviors between mother and babies. The study examined the outcomes for 88 pairs of mothers and their babies participating in the programme and a control group of 75 pairs in prisons without the New

Beginnings intervention. The aim was to determine whether the mother-infant relationship over time improved and to compare the outcomes with those of the control group.

#### Measures

The measures used were PDI, CES-D, MORS, and mother-infant interaction coded by CBI. The PDI was also coded for Reflective Functioning: the mother's capacity to attribute and evaluate her own and her child's thoughts and feelings. The CIB was used to code videotaped interactions of the mother and her infant. The video recordings were made in order to "...explore changes in the quality of the mothers' and infants' interactive behaviors." (Sleed, Baradon & Fonagy 2013, p.356).

#### Results

The control group showed a decline in quality of maternal reflective functioning and maternal behavior, this decline was not evident in the intervention group. Sleed, Baradon & Fonagy (2013) mean that these findings might be accounted for by a complex interplay of factors; the prison environment, separation from family and social network, and the intense relationship in a closed setting. They found that many mothers identified their babies as an important source of comfort. As the women spend time in prison away from and adult network of friends, family and co-workers their babies become their only emotional support. This role reversal has according to the authors been identified before as a risk factor for a disorganized attachment relationship. *No* intervention effects were found on the MORS and the CES-D. There were no significant effects on levels of maternal depression or mothers' self-reported representations of their babies over time.

### *Parent-Child Interaction Therapy*

Scudder et al (2014) examined a parenting class for women offered within a correctional facility and a parenting class based on Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). The PCIT is an evidence-based program for the treatment of behavior problems among 2-7 year olds and improving parenting practices in families with a history of physical child abuse. A total of 71 women participated in the study; all were incarcerated at a state correctional facility in the US with all levels of security classification. Participants had to be 18 years or older, the mother of a child aged 2-12 years and fluent in English. Prior to the start of parenting classes and after completion of the classes the participants took part in study assessments consisting of self-report measures and individual behavior observations. Many mothers had more than one child aged 2-12 years and so were asked to answer items related to child behavior based on the child with most behavioural difficulties (Scudder et al 2014). The aim of the study is to compare a PCIT-based parenting class with the existing parenting class is based on *Partnerships in Parenting*. The aim of the PCIT intervention is to improve knowledge of child development, reduce parenting stress, and reduce child abuse potential.

The individual behavior observations were 5-minute interactions were the mother was instructed to interact as they would normally do with their own child. A research assistant played the role

of a child based on a semi-structured child behavior script. The two classes compared were the PCIT-based class and the existing facility parenting class based on the “Partnerships in Parenting” manual. The PCIT-based class uses role-plays and coaching of parenting skills through group-based exercises. Coding and coaching is central; one participant would role-play a child and one role-played the parent while the class would code and the instructor coach during the interaction. Each instructor held a Masters degree in Psychology and was assisted by an undergraduate student. The existing facility parenting class based on the Partnerships in Parenting manual was led by an instructor and an inmate assistant. Topics like self-esteem, communication, family origins, family rules and responsibilities, discipline versus punishment, child abuse, domestic violence and children, and going home (from prison) were discussed during the classes. Classes also involved role-play and homework assignments.

### Measures

The DPICS-III was used to code and assess the participants during class. Participants were also taught to code each others use of PCIT skills. The self-report measure was a questionnaire to measure demographic information about the participating mothers as well as parent-child information such as type and frequency of contact (Scudder et al 2014).

### Results

The interventions showed that participants of PCIT-based classes had significantly higher levels of positive attention (labelled praises, reflections, behavioural descriptions), and significantly lower levels of negative attention (questions, criticism, demands) than mothers in the facility parenting class. Using the AAPI-II, following the parenting classes mothers in the facility parenting class showed *higher* levels of child development knowledge than participants of the PCIT-based class. Both classes showed a significant decrease in total stress, as well as in abuse potential. However using the TAI mothers in PCIT-based classes reported higher levels of treatment satisfaction than mothers in the existing facility class (Scudder et al 2014).

### *The Mother-Child Visitation Program*

The exploratory study of Snyder et al (2001) examined a mother-child visitation program and a related parenting class at U.S. Midwestern women’s prison. The Mother-Child Visitation Program, (MCVP) is a private, non-profit program depending on donations and small grants (Snyder et al 2002). Age of participants ranged from 20 to 46 years old. The researchers wanted to explore whether participating in the MCVP would improve communication skills, reduce anxiety, and strengthen the mother-child relationship. The 58 participating women were interviewed in either the children’s visitation room or in a room for attorneys. 31 MCVP participants and 27 women waiting to take part in the program were interviewed. The research is based on a feminist perspective; the authors explain that “To understand incarcerated women as mothers, the researcher must be aware of and acknowledge the social context of prison, societal expectations of women as mothers, and how women in prison understand their roles as mothers and define their relationships with their children” (Snyder et al 2002, p 44). During the interviews the women were encouraged to share their thoughts, set the pace and direction of the conversation. This is one way of empowering the participants; to minimize the power differential between researcher and participant (Snyder et al 2001).

The researchers also shared some information about themselves to the group, in their own words “In keeping with feminist research practices” (Snyder et al 2001, p. 45). One issue with the sample is pointed out; the similarities between the comparison group and the participating group. The women participating as well as the women waiting to enter the program are probably motivated in their parental role; maybe more so than the general prison population (Snyder et al 2002).

### Measures

The interview schedule contained five topics: (1) frequency of communication between the mothers and their children, (2) the women’s assessment of the quality of relationships with their children, (3) their own perceptions of the effects their incarceration could have on their children, (4) their evaluations of how MCVP helped them with their children, and (5) their post-release plans (Snyder et al 2001).

### Results

When comparisons were made the results showed that women in MCVP had more contact (being contacted as well as contacting) with their children both by mail and by phone. The perceived impact of their incarceration on their children were similar in both groups, only two women in each group reported they did not think their incarceration would affect their children. MCVP participation and the women’s assessment of the relationship with their children proved statistically significant; 90% of women reported a good or very good relationship with their children (Snyder et al 2001). The result for non-participants was 70%. Program participation and post-release plans showed no relationship.

### *Rebonding and Rebuilding*

Sandifer (2008) evaluated the effect of a parenting programme from women at the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women, U.S. 64 women participated in the 12-week parenting program, and the comparison group included 26 women. The incarcerated mothers who volunteered to participate in the parenting course evaluation were 18 to 53 years of age, mean age 32.

Sandifer’s (2008) theoretical foundation is based on criminological life course theory. Her research allows focus on the idea that increasing mothers’ parenting skills would benefit both incarcerated mothers and their children, the parent-child relationship affect the criminal pathways of both mother and child. The direct focus is on identifying parenting behaviors that negatively affect children’s development. The purpose of the evaluated program is to teach and develop parenting and relational behavior that will increase a positive relationship between incarcerated mothers and their children. This is by increasing a) the communication and communication skills, b) knowledge about child development, c) knowledge about appropriate techniques of discipline, d) the ability to deal with a crisis by increasing knowledge about harmonious parent-child relationships, e) feelings of emotional and social support, and g) decreasing negative parenting attitudes (Sandifer 2008).

The taught parent education course uses *Rebonding and Rebuilding* (A Parenting Curriculum), a curriculum in six sections designed for used in jails. The programme also includes an interactive



component of visitation time that is both structured and unstructured. The sample included incarcerated mothers who volunteered to participate in the evaluation of the parenting course. Interviews took place in a private office inside the Education Center of the institution.

### Measures

A 33-item Class Member Information Questionnaire, the AAPI-2, and the PCRI were used. The self-administered questionnaire was handed to gather background information about the participants. The AAPI-2 and the PCRI were used at Time 1 and Time 2 re-tests to assess change. Neither measure is intended for use with incarcerated participants so some scales were not used since they were not applicable. Four of seven scales PCRI were used: Satisfaction with Parenting, Parental Support, Communication, and Autonomy. The scales used from AAPI-2 were a) the Inappropriate Expectations scale, b) the Parental Empathy scale, c) the Corporal Punishment scale, and d) the Parent-Child Role Reversal scale.

### Results

There was an increase in parenting knowledge and skills of participants who completed the parenting course. Results were significant on the AAPI-2 scale Corporal Punishment showing a reduced preference for using physical force as a method of teaching children, and changed attitudes about how and when to discipline children (Sandifer 2008). Empathic awareness knowledge about child development was increased and attitudes towards parent-child reversal were changed. Communication skills, Parental support and Parental Satisfaction however showed no increase.

### *The Baby Elmo Program*

The exploratory study of Barr et al (2014) evaluated the *Baby Elmo Program*; a parenting program for teen fathers designed to enhance father-child interactional quality. The aim of the Baby Elmo Program is to provide secure attachment and a positive father-child relationship during the time of incarceration, which will benefit the development of both father and child (Barr et al 2014). The aim of the study is to examine whether parenting quality increases over time in the Baby Elmo program, as indexed by Forty-one incarcerated teen fathers and their infants aged 1-15 months participated in the study. Age of fathers is not reported, but they are referred to as teens. Participants were recruited from juvenile detention centers in three California counties, a total of five centers. In two of the counties the facilitators were line staff, and in the third county the facilitators were graduate social work students. The forty-one fathers and their infants completed at least four of the parent training sessions offered. The juvenile detention facilities are required to set up a child-friendly play area with toys, games, and books.

The program consists of 10 individual parent-training sessions where concepts and skills are introduced by staff. Concepts include: separation anxiety, exploration of the environment, following the child's lead, importance of praise and labels (providing a verbal identification, a label, of an object or action), descriptions, communication, and socioemotional development. Video segments from *Sesame Beginnings* accompany each session to model positive parent-child interactions. These video clips are meant to provide inspiration and examples for upcoming visits with the child. After each training session the fathers use the concepts and skills learned from the session during the next visit from their infant.

## Measures

All visits are video recorded for data analysis. Activities defined during the analysis were coded for parent-child interactional quality using the IGDI- IPCI coding scheme. They were also coded for which one of six activities: caregiving, dyadic play, free play, physical play, book reading, and video viewing (*Sesame Beginnings*) and the skills of praise and labelling.

## Results

Findings suggest that as the fathers took part in more sessions, parent support, praise, and labelling increased significantly. Fathers used the skill-based training during the visits and these learned skills contributed to positive changes in father-child interactional quality (Barr et al 2014). Overall, positive change in interactional quality was associated with the targeted parenting skills. There was no randomized control group, noted by authors as a clear limitation.

### *Parenting Inside Out*

Eddy et al (2013) report findings from the Parent Child Study, focusing on the impact of an intervention called Parenting Inside Out (PIO) based on Parent Management Training (PMT). The PIO was designed to provide incarcerated parents with motivation, knowledge and skills in order to prevent the development of antisocial behavior in their children (Eddy et al 2013). PMT as an intervention for child antisocial behavior was not originally used for incarcerated parents, but considering it's scientifically proven efficacy Eddy et al (2013) designed the PIO to extend the core elements of PMT to incarcerated parents. PMT provide parents with skills of positive involvement, encouragement, non-coercive and non-aversive discipline, supervision, and problem solving. The PIO intervention was intended to improve three areas: parent adjustment, the parent-caregiver relationship, and parenting (Eddy et al 2013). The hypothesis of the study is that improvements in all three of these areas during incarceration will help the parent to gain a new sense of who they are as a parent and the life they want for their child, and construct a new parenting role after release. The age of participating parents is not reported.

Both incarcerated fathers and mothers participated in the study. The parents were recruited from correctional institutions in Oregon, US. The actual study took place at four releasing institutions with minimum to medium security level. Women and minority participants were oversampled since the goal of was to include 50% women and 50% ethnic minority participants. Participants were randomized into the PIO intervention or a "services as usual" control group, and were assessed before the intervention, after the intervention, and at 6 and 12 months after their release. The child age range was 3 to 11 years. During the recruitment period the study was advertised via inmate newspapers, posters, and announcements during meetings. 359 participants included 161 men and 198 women. Most parents had a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse or addiction (87% of men and 93% of women) (Eddy et al 2013).

The PIO was taught in a group format with 36 sessions over a 12-week period. A total of 90 hours across 36 sessions were delivered. The core topics in PMT (positive involvement, encouragement, non-coercive and non-aversive discipline, supervision, and problem solving), was included in PIO along with added topics of communication and cooperation, thoughtful decision making, development, child health and safety, and positive parenting from prison through letter writing, phone calls, and prison visits. PIO sessions included parenting topics, video clips, role-plays, group discussions, and class projects and skills building exercises

conducted both inside and outside of sessions (Eddy et al 2013). All interviews were conducted in person before the PIO program began in a given prison and after the completion of the program but before release from prison. Inmates were asked to identify one of his or her minor children, and each interview focused on that particular child and the caregiver.

### Measures

Variables in the analyses were: Parent stress, Parent depression, Likely to Play an Active Role in Child's life, Positive Parent-Child interaction, Ease of Relationship with caregiver, Closeness to Caregiver, and Family contact in Prison. Parent stress was measured using 12 items from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and Parent depression was measured using 20 items from the CES-D. The authors specifically for the PIO constructed the other variable scales.

### Results

Results showed a significant effect on *parent stress* and *parent depressed mood*. At the post-intervention assessment intervention participants reported less stress and feeling less depressed than control participants. Gender of inmates was not related to parental stress, but females reported significantly higher levels of depressed mood. The intervention effect was also significant on positive parent-child interaction, regardless inmate gender. Parenting Inside Out appears to have a significant impact on incarcerated parents in three areas; parent adjustment, parent-caregiver relationships, and parenting. Some of the effects were main effects of the intervention; others were interactions between the intervention and baseline levels of a given outcome. In the case of interactions, the intervention appeared to have effect on the parents who most needed it (Eddy et al 2013).

### *Emotions Program: Taking Care of Yourself and Your Child When You Go Home*

Shortt et al (2014) conducted a pilot study to test their own *Emotions Program: Taking Care of Yourself and Your Child When You Go Home*. The program focuses on teaching incarcerated mothers emotion regulation and emotion coaching skills to prepare them for the stress related to the transition home from prison. 29 mothers participated in the Emotions Program; the comparison group of 18 women received no treatment. The mean age of the total sample was 33 years. The women were incarcerated at a women's state correctional facility in Oregon U.S. Mothers were recruited by information from the prison system. All participating mothers were assessed before and after the program, and also 6 months after their release from prison. The program is a development of the PIO by Eddy et al (2013). The emotional needs of incarcerated mothers and their children is the focus of the Emotion program, while the PIO was used on both fathers and mothers. Currently and formerly incarcerated mothers, community agencies and parenting instructors were consulted in the theoretical development of the mothers' program.

Two intervention components were developed; a parent emotion regulation component and an emotion-coaching component. Emotion coaching refers to parents guiding their children to understand and cope with emotions, for example coaching their children to cope with negative emotions. Emotion coaching can also be educating children about appropriate rules for expressing emotions and setting behavioral limits (Shortt et al 2014). The parent emotion-regulation component focuses on teaching mothers how to cope with their own emotions and thoughts. The hypothesis of this study was that strengthening mothers' parenting and emotion skills would help both mothers and their children cope with the stress associated with maternal incarceration and the transition home from prison.

The Emotions Program consisted of 15 2-hour lessons held over a period of 8 weeks. The sessions were taught using didactic instruction, role plays, discussion, video, handouts, and homework (Shortt et al 2014). After release from prison mothers were offered 6 months of support including a home visit, phone calls or texting and written materials. The facilitators had extensive experience in teaching parenting classes. Baseline emotion regulation, emotion socialization, and adjustment variables were examined for comparability between the mothers in the intervention and comparison groups, showing that mothers in the intervention group had higher levels for depressive symptoms at baseline (Shortt et al 2014). The average class attendance was 84%, while only 38% of the mothers wanted support after release.

#### Measures

Measures used were the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) and the Adult Temperament Questionnaire (ATQ) for the "Regulation of mothers' emotions" outcome. Mothers reported their own emotion coaching using the Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire for the outcome "Mothers' socialization of emotion behavior". "Mothers' adjustment" was measured using three scales: the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), and the Self Report Delinquency Scale (SRD).

#### Results

Results suggest that the mothers who took advantage of the support offered after release were able to control their emotions, had lower levels of emotion dysregulation, and higher levels of effortful control (Shortt et al 2014). Regarding outcomes of adjustment, results suggest that depressive and mental health symptoms over time declined for both groups.

#### *Parenting from Prison for both males and females*

Wilson et al (2010) evaluated the effectiveness of the Parenting from Prison program (PFP) for both male and female offenders. The program is an adaption of Partners in Parenting, a program offered by the Colorado Family Education. The PFP contains added topics that are relevant to incarcerated parents, and the aim is to increase parents' knowledge about risks, resiliency factors and developmental assets (Wilson et al 2010). The topics of the PFP curriculum include self-esteem, risk and resilience factors, communication, discipline, problem solving and decision-making. Risk factors discussed include community, family, and peer-related risk factors with an emphasis on preventing substance abuse. Each topic is also linked to drug and alcohol use, for example associations between self-esteem and drug use (Wilson et al 2010). BrainWise is a component of the curriculum that is integrated to teach new skills like strategies for dealing with negative emotions. The final sample included 81 males and 69 females, with a mean age of 31.5 years. The course included discussions, group exercises, role-playing, and individual work. The results include data from ten different PFP sessions conducted at six different correctional facilities in Colorado. Participants completed a survey both pre-test and post-test for data collection.

#### Measures

Measures used were the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES), Pearlin and Schooler's Self-Mastery scale (SMS), Kansas Parental Satisfaction scale (KPS), and the Index of Parental Attitudes (IPA). Apart from these scales data was collected on demographics, children, parental confidence, and a Parenting from Prison knowledge test.

## Results

Post-test participants communicated more frequently with their children than reported pre-test, but the total number of participants who used phone calls for communicating with their children actually decreased. Participants reported higher levels of self-esteem (SES), self-mastery (SMS), parental confidence, parental satisfaction (measured by KPS) and more positive parental attitudes (measured by IPA) (Wilson et al 2010). Attitudes toward parenting and parental confidence were differed between the genders. Women reported more negative attitudes toward parenting than men pretest, but not posttest. Men had reported low score on the IPA pretest, indicating already positive attitudes and score did not increase posttest. The authors note that effect sizes were small, for example did PFP account for only 3.0% of the increase in self-mastery.

### *Parenting from Prison for females*

Thompson & Harm (2000) evaluated a Parenting from Prison (PFP) program for women provided by The Parent Center in the Arkansas Department of Corrections. The topics of the curriculum include child development, communication, guidance, and self-esteem. Outcome measures were self-esteem, parental attitudes, and mother-child relationship during incarceration. The study was held over a three-year period, containing eight 15-week sessions that were held by trained volunteers (Thompson & Harm 2000). The women were selected by a mental health worker based on their expected parole date and their chance of returning to their children. If the women wanted to, they were offered a place in the program. The mean age of the 104 participants was 29, ages ranging from 18 to 54 years.

## Measures

Participants completed the Index of Self-Esteem (ISE), the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) and a questionnaire about their personal history before entering the PFP. Post-test they completed the ISE and AAPI again and a follow-up questionnaire. The pre-test PFP questionnaire collects demographic data and the mother's childhood and adult social history; quality of relationship with her children, custody arrangements, quality of child care, relationship with her own parents, contact with family members, nature of offense, history of being abused as a child or an adult, use of alcohol or other drugs. The post-test questionnaire collects data about quality and frequency of the interactions with their children through visits or letters during the 15-week study period and their evaluation of the program (Thompson & Harm 2000).

## Results

Scores of self-esteem improved significantly during the program. Mothers who had some contact with their children through letters or visits reported improved self-esteem post-test. On the other hand, mothers who did not have any contact with their children reported lower self-esteem than the others. A majority of women (64%) reported a good relationship with their parents. Many women had been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused and self-esteem and self-esteem score remained low for these women. Positive parental attitude, parent-child roles, and expectations of children significantly improved. The variable Empathy for Children's Needs showed little improvement for the total group, but increased significantly for those whose children visited them at least monthly, and declined for those who were visited less often (Thompson & Harm 2000). The approval of hitting, spanking, and slapping children decreased. The semi-structured questionnaires contained questions regarding Mother-Child Interactions; perceptions of parenthood, opinions on discipline, and frequency and quality of contact with children. An "interesting generational pattern" (Thompson & Harm 2000, p 75) was found;

mothers revealed a high use of corporal punishment by their parents, less severe methods with their children, and a shift toward nurturing methods they will use in the future.

### ***Parenting from Inside: Making the Mother-Child connection***

Loper & Tuerk (2011) assessed the effectiveness of Parenting from Inside: Making the Mother-Child Connection (PFI) in a group of incarcerated mothers at a state prison in the U.S. The parenting class included eight sessions. The sample consisted of 106 mothers who participated in the study. Mothers were recruited by information given on fliers posted in the prison. The program is designed to help mothers manage being separated from their children and to improve communication with their children and caregivers. Specific program goals are to equip mothers with skills for controlling emotional reactivity and stress caused by separation from their children, and improving communication with the family (Loper & Tuerk 2011). Mothers were assigned into two treatment groups; either they received Immediate Treatment (IT) or were part of the Waitlist Control (WLC) group. The WLC group began treatment 11 weeks later than the IT group. The mean age of mothers in the IT group was 32, for the WLC group 34.

A cognitive-behavioral technique called MOM-OK was taught throughout the intervention; a technique to deal with parenting stress. MOM-OK stands for: Mellow Out (calming techniques), Mind (recognize unhelpful thoughts), Other thoughts (realistic or adaptive thoughts), and Kid (the child's needs are important). The eight sessions each had different topics: "Taking care of feelings", "Smart listening", "Conversations that connect", "Communicating with your child through letters", "Telephone visits", "Connecting with your child's caregiver", "Talking to your child about your offense", and "Giving guidance when your children are in trouble".

### **Results**

For unknown reasons, prior to intervention the IT group reported higher levels of parenting stress, anxiety symptoms, hostility, and obsessive compulsive symptoms compared to the WLC group. After the PFI program the mothers reported reduced parenting stress, improvements in emotional adjustment and in alliance with caregivers and increased communication through letters. The mothers reported that they had strong relationships with their children and that they were loved in return. The PFI intervention did not affect this belief in any way. Post-treatment the mothers reported fewer mental health symptoms on the BSI. Between the IT and WLC groups there were no differences, apart from the Visitation Stress Scale. The intervention did not improve mothers' adjustment patterns compared to the WLC group. The opinion of the authors is that undetected effects of the intervention might have been visible with a larger sample size or if levels of stress had been equal between sample groups (Loper & Tuerk 2011).

### ***Parenting While Incarcerated***

In the study of Miller et al (2014) the participants were influential in the process of the design of "Parenting While Incarcerated" (PWI), a program for incarcerated mothers. The age of participants ranged from 21 to 48 years old, the mean age being 31. The goals of the study were to tailor and implement a parenting program for mothers, and to evaluate the process and outcomes. The PWI is based on the evidence-based Strengthening Families Program (SFP), which has been previously used with caregivers of children with incarcerated parents (Miller et al 2014). The PWI was designed to specifically meet the needs of incarcerated mothers. Parenting attitudes were measured pre- and post-intervention. The 1-hour sessions were held in a private visitation room where prison guards were stationed outside the room, guards could see but not hear

the group. Facilitators were university interns and community agency staff who had previously worked with the SFP. At every session the facilitators noted how mothers responded to the material. Topics in the curriculum that proved irrelevant were removed or changed.

### Measures

Program satisfaction was measured using an SFP survey; parenting attitudes were measured using the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2). 45 women participated, but 32 of them were released before the end of the study. 22 women completed the post-test SFP surveys.

### Results

Evaluation of the sessions showed that women discussed topics that were specific to the jail context; concerns about their release, whether they would have custody of their children or not, and the relationship with the caregiver. The PWI was developed to meet their concerns and lessons on self-esteem, budgeting, grief and loss, and controlling emotions and behaviors were introduced. Participants also wanted advice about how to discuss addiction with their children. The weekly group meetings were challenged by the fact that participants on an ongoing basis were released, admitted, transferred, or sentenced to prison. Results showed a statistically significant reduction in one AAPI-2 subscale; lower approval of corporal punishment attitudes at post-test compared to pre-test (Miller et al 2014). Again, 22 mothers only completed the post-test surveys.

### *Young Fathers in Prison*

Meek (2007) delivered an intensive parenting class to young men in a UK prison. In total, 75 young men ages 18-21 completed the course. In total nine courses were delivered over nearly 3 years, with courses starting every 2-4 months. Participants were self-referred. Different topics included in the course were childcare issues (e.g. child development, nutrition, discipline, health and safety) and information on sexual health, domestic violence, legal issues, and maintaining contact with children and family members during incarceration and after release. Participants were welcome to suggest topics during the 1-week courses, so that the course could meet the needs of each group. The author facilitated the courses, with assistance from a trained volunteer, a member of the prison staff and a classroom assistant (a trained prisoner). The domestic violence session was held by a police officer, and a representative from a local fathers' group facilitated the session on father's legal rights. Classes were taught via methods of role playing, quizzes, worksheets, individual work and group based exercises. Not all participants were fathers at the time of the course, and this was not a criterion for participation. However priority was given to those who had children or a pregnant partner.

### Results

Participants were asked to report which aspects of the course they found most useful. When participants were asked to report the single aspect of the course that they found the most useful, responses were distributed over three themes: child care-specific issues, other related issues (legal issues, domestic violence, parenting self-esteem, pregnancy) and general comments on the course. Specific childcare issues related to physical care (e.g. changing nappies, washing) turned out to be the topic appreciated by most. Child development and behavior, how to deal with children's misbehavior, parenting self-esteem, and domestic violence topics were also appreciated. Participants appreciated the sessions, but the majority reported that they did

not need or want to any kind of parenting support post-release. 75% of respondents wished for support to stay in touch with children during their time in prison by longer visits and access to privacy during visits.

### Summary of Results

The participants were self-referred in all studies, except in the study of Thompson & Harm (2000) where a mental health worker selected women that were eligible. Neither Snyder (2001) nor Meeks (2007) used specified measures to evaluate their intervention. The AAPI-II was the most commonly used tool, followed by the CES-D and BSI. The AAPI-II was used in four studies: Scudder et al (2014), Sandifer (2008), Miller et al (2014), and Thompson & Harm (2000). The PSI was used by both Loper & Tuerk (2011) and Scudder et al (2014). The CES-D was used in three studies: Shortt et al (2014), Eddy et al (2013), and Slead et al (2013). Results vary across studies regarding outcomes. Miller et al (2014), Scudder et al (2014), and Sandifer (2008) reported post-test lower levels of support for punishment like hitting or spanking.

Slead et al (2013) found no intervention effect on the CES-D, while Shortt et al (2014) and Eddy et al (2013) found that depressive symptoms reported using CES-D declined. Wilson et al (2010) is the only study that used IPA to measure parental attitudes, and the only study to measure self-mastery using the SMS.

The duration of the interventions differ across studies. The duration of the studies of Snyder (2001) and Scudder et al (2014) are not clear, even if Scudder et al (2014) held weekly sessions. The intervention of Barr et al (2013) included 10 sessions, but the duration is unclear. The studies by Meek (2007), Miller et al (2014), Loper & Tuerk (2011), and Thompson & Harm (2000) all ranged from 1 year up to 3 years. Sandifer (2008), Slead et al (2013), Barr et al (2014), Shortt (2014), Wilson et al (2010), and Eddy et al (2013) ranges from 4-12 weeks in duration with 8-36 sessions carried out.

## **DISCUSSION**

The stigma of being an “ex-con” may weigh heavily on parents post-release. As the studies have shown, the support of family members is important. During incarceration the rejection of the caregiver can make contact with children difficult and problematic, and consequently make a positive parent-child relationship less likely after release. The age of participants vary across studies, and might affect the results even if this is not recognized in the articles. The study by Meeks (2006) supports the idea that younger parents might be in need of more practical information regarding children. Older participants might have less confidence due to a longer history of incarceration and rejection from caregivers or children. Older participants are also



more likely to have older children, maybe teenagers, and their support should be tailored. Older children and teenagers need different forms of support than infants and young, pre-teenage children.

If the intension is to minimize the impact of negative parenting on children, we must continue to seek understanding of why some parents use harsher physical discipline strategies. A major challenge is to ensure that interventions are based on evidence, and are continuously evaluated to ensure they meet the needs of parents and their children. One way of meeting the needs of inmates is to keep the topics of the courses open to suggestions, for example like Meeks (2006) did in the U.K study with young men. The influence of the participants is important; otherwise interventions will be based on the opinions of researchers who have probably never been incarcerated.

Follow-up data related to parents and child post-release outcomes are also necessary. Yet, follow-up investigations seem difficult to carry out, like the results of Bruns (2006) also showed. Inmates are sometimes moved to other facilities, they are released or may chose to quit the program for other reasons. Interventions in jails and prisons have different opportunities. Programs based in prisons might have better opportunities to succeed, since inmates have longer sentences and can commit to a program. Parents passing through jail may stay for a very limited time, or might be there for longer. Not being able to collect post-test surveys and conduct follow-ups is definitely a problematic issue for parenting programs in any correctional facility.

Wilson et al (2010) is the only study where drug and alcohol abuse is part of the curriculum. I find this surprising since many inmates have drug and alcohol abuse problems, Eddy et al (2013) for example drug and/or alcohol abuse or addiction (87% of men and 93% of women). The same study (Wilson et al 2010) found that men had a more positive view on their parenting than women, both before and after the intervention. Maybe women have higher expectations on their own parental role, or are harsher when rating themselves?

The chance to visit their parent in prison or jail seems to be the most important thing for children, as shown in the COPING report. Ideally, the parent should be placed at a prison or jail as close as possible to the home of their child to ensure frequent visits are possible. Expensive, long trips to visit prison will undermine any good relation. For families who rely on public transport it might not even be possible to visit without having access to a car. Visitation rooms must be friendly and welcoming, not hostile or stressful. It must be a positive experience to visit prison, not something that adds more stress, stigma or anxiety for the child. Long-term effects of parenting programs need to be explored. For children the effects are immediate, phone calls, letters, and visits all add up and reduce any negative effects of being separated from ones parent. The work of Swedish organisation Bfff (former Bryggan) is crucial to support children, and their caretakers. It seems that staying in touch, frequent contact by any means (visits, phone calls, letters) is important and should be a priority for jails and prisons. Making sure visitation rooms are welcoming and access to privacy during visits is important for both parents and children (Meeks 2007). If contact is made difficult, either by long distances or hostile visitation rooms, then comprehensive parenting programs are a waste of time and funds. Of course the parents and children might still benefit from such programs after release, but from a child's point of view maybe the most crucial time is while the parent is absent during incarceration. Sandifer (2008) based her study on criminological research, focusing on parenting behavior that might reduce the risks of children themselves

becoming involved in criminality. This is important and should not be ignored, since a long-term focus is needed to prevent future criminality. If children experience stigma, concentration problems, and emotional problems this could negatively affect their academic performance, which in turn might affect their future. Inadequate parenting is mentioned by Moffitt & Caspi (2001) as a contributing factor to early onset delinquency.

Maintaining or improving, in some cases initiating, a parent-child relation can motivate parents during their time in prison, improve mental health (Loper & Tuerk 2011), and improve self-esteem (Thompson & Harm 2000). Depending on the age of the children, programs focus on different subjects. Some programs, for example *the New Beginnings program* and *Baby Elmo*, is designed for parents and their babies and work to improve and maintain attachment, while other programs focus on enhancing parents self-esteem, reduce stress and tools to regulate emotions. What adequate, well-functioning parenting really is will always be somewhat difficult to measure. And for how long should follow-ups be carried out? Should follow-ups try to measure happiness in terms of satisfaction with life, no mental illness or absence of mental health problems, or absence of criminal behaviour? A sentence could potentially be time well spent if the opportunity is there to increase parenting skills and enhance self-esteem among incarcerated parents. Whether the gender, ethnicity or education of the interviewer or course facilitator matters is hard to say and should be explored. Differences in perceived or desired adequate parenting between genders could also affect the design and measures of parenting programs; otherwise programs risk contributing to gender-based parental stereotypes.

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## APPENDIX

### *The Parent Development Interview (PDI)*

is a semi-structured interview used to explore the mother's own childhood experiences and her perceptions of her child, how she perceives her own relationship with the baby, and how her own relationship with her parents during childhood is influencing her parenthood now. Slead, Baradon & Fonagy (2013) used the PDI for Reflective Functioning (RF): the mother's ability to attribute and assess the thoughts and feelings of the child and of herself.

### *The Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System-III (DPICS-III):*

The DPICS-III is a behavioural coding system designed to measure the interaction quality of play interactions between parents and children. The coding system measures verbalizations, vocalizations, physical behaviors, and responses.

### *The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D)*

A scale is a self-report scale with 20 items designed to measure depressive symptoms in the general population (Nugent 2004). Each item is rated on a scale in terms of frequency during the past week.

### *The Individual Growth and Development Indicators for Infants and Children: Indicator of Parent-Child Interaction (IGDI-IPCI)*

The IPCI is a measure of the sensitivity and responsiveness of caregivers to children ages 2 to 42 months, identifying behaviors of parents and infants known to influence the socioemotional development of children (Barr et al 2014). Both positive and negative behaviors are identified. IGDI-IPCI assesses the frequency of interaction behaviors across two parent domains (support, interrupter) and two child domains (engagement, reactivity/stress).

### *The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory-Second Edition (AAPI-II)*

is an assessment tool of parenting and child-rearing attitudes designed to classify parents on a scale of low, medium, or high potential for child abuse and neglect. The tool contains four parenting constructs: expectations, empathy for children's needs, belief in physical punishment, and parent-child roles. The AAPI-2 is a self-report questionnaire that measures five types of dysfunctional parent-child skills and attitudes.

### *The Index of Self-Esteem (ISE)*

The ISE is a 25-item Likert-type scale designed to produce scores indicative of the magnitude or severity of problems with self-esteem (Nugent 2004).

### *Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAP):*

CAP Inventory is a screening questionnaire of 160 items that was designed for the detection of parents at high risk for child physical abuse. It is a self-report questionnaire containing 77 items that belong to the primary clinical scale, “the abuse scale.” The abuse scale consists of rigidity, distress, unhappiness, problems with child and self, and problems with family and others (Kutsal et al 2011).

*The Therapy Attitude Inventory (TAI)*

TAI is designed to estimate parental satisfaction with parent training therapy (Scudder et al 2014).

*The Parenting Stress Index Third Edition (PSI)*

The PSI is an assessment of potential stressors related to parenting; life stress, child development issues, perceptions of the parental role, and degree of support from the other parent. This 36-item self-report measure perception of the difficulties and stress experienced as a parent (Hand et al 2012).

*Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM)*

The PAM is a 20-item, self-report instrument that measures the strength of the perceived alliance between parents of children aged 1-19 (Konold & Abidin, 2001)

*The Parent–Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI)*

The PCRI assess potential problems that can negatively affect effective parenting and a healthy relationship between parents and their children. The seven PCRI scales identify potential problems in areas considered important for effective parenting and a healthy parent–child relationship. The PCRI is a 78-item self-administered questionnaire in a 4-point Likert-type format. Examples of items include “I sometimes feel overburdened by my responsibilities as a parent,” “Parents should give their children all those things the parents never had,” “Children should be given most of the things they want,” and “I feel I don’t know how to talk with my child in a way that he or she really understands.” (Sandifer, 2008).

*The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES)*

The RSES consists of 10 Likert-type scale items designated to assess positive and negative evaluations of self. Respondents indicate their level of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) (McKay et al 2014).

*Pearlin and Schooler’s Self-Mastery scale (SMS)*

SMS assess the degree to which participants perceive that they have control over life events. The scale consists of 7-items and responses are rated from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). Items include statements such as, "What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me."

*Kansas Parental Satisfaction scale (KPS)*

The KPS is a brief (three-item) instrument designed to measure parents’ satisfaction with themselves as a parent, satisfaction with the behaviour of their children and satisfaction with their relationship with their children (Hand et al, 2012)

*The Index of Parental Attitudes (IPA)*

The IPA is a 25-item scale that is used to measure parents' relationship problems with their children. It is completed by the parent and can be used for children of all ages (Church et al, 2013).

*Adult Temperament Questionnaire (ATQ)*

The ATQ is a self-report instrument that evaluates temperamental dimensions: negative affect, effortful control, surgency/extraversion, and orienting sensitivity (Laverdière et al, 2010).

*The Coding Interactive Behavior scales (CIB)*

*The CIB scales are comprised of 45 items which are rated on a scale for the frequency and intensity that the behavior is observed (items relating to parental behavior, child's behavior, and items relating to the quality of dyadic interaction as a whole) (Sleed et al, 2013).*

*The Mother's Object Relations Scales (MORS)*

The MORS is a self-report measure for assessing core features of mothers' perceptions of their baby (Sleed et al, 2013).

*The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)*

The PSS measures the degree to which situations are perceived as stressful. It measures how unpredictable, uncontrolled, and overloaded respondents find their lives. (Mitchell et al 2008)

*The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)*

The Brief Symptom Inventory is a 53-item self-report inventory of psychopathology and psychological distress. The nine primary symptom dimensions include Somatization, Obsessive-Compulsivity, Interpersonal Sensitivity, Depression, Anxiety, Hostility, Phobic Anxiety, Paranoid Ideation, and Psychoticism (Daoud & Abojedi 2010)

*The Self Report Delinquency Scale (SRD)*

*SRD is a self-report assessment that report criminal behavior (Shortt et al, 2014)*