

## Learning from the Outcomes of Existing Prison Parenting Education Programs for Women Experiencing Incarceration: A Scoping Review

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**Abstract:** *This scoping review addresses the question, what are the outcomes of existing prison parenting education programs for women experiencing incarceration and what can we learn? The framework used was based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR). Significant positive changes were identified after attending prison parenting programs and women generally provided positive feedback about their experiences however, there were also insights into the distress caused. The content covered in the programs is also explored. In conclusion, prison can be an opportunity for parenting education and support although currently the best way to provide this support to women has not been established. This review gives insight to those wanting to develop a parenting program specifically for women.*

**Keywords:** *prison, incarceration, women prisoners, mothers, education, parenting programs*

This is the first scoping review that we are aware of which focuses on parenting education for women who are incarcerated, including quantitative and qualitative data. Thirteen studies are included in the review which evaluates parenting programs for women during incarceration, in the last decade across the globe. The inclusion of the frequency of topics in education programs are described and discussed. This review aims to explore the outcomes of prison parenting education programs and to provide key learning outcomes for improvement.

### Context

There are more than 714,000 women and girls accommodated in corrective institutions globally, who make up 6.9% of the prison population worldwide (Walmsley, 2016). These figures have increased by 53% since the year 2000 and are increasing at a faster rate when compared to the male prison population, demonstrating a 20% rise. It is also estimated that millions of children worldwide have a parent who is incarcerated and tens of thousands live in prison with their mother (PRI, 2013). The majority of women experiencing incarceration have endured complex histories which often include child abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, domestic violence and drug and alcohol addiction (Seagrave & Carlton, 2010, Wilson et al., 2010, Thompson & Harm, 2000, Henderson, 1990, Harm & Thompson, 1997, Moore & Clement, 1998).



Many women have also experienced children being removed by child protective services (Seagrave & Carlton, 2010) and are dealing with the prison environment associated with shame, powerlessness, and prison rules (Easteal, 2001). These life events can result in complex trauma often exhibited by low self-esteem, inability to display emotions, physical or psychological agitation, self-injury and suicide attempts (Baldwin, 2017). This trauma can impact the woman's ability to maintain employment, may create issues with parenting, alcohol and substance abuse, as well as affecting mental health conditions (Strathopoulos, 2012). These factors along with lack of nurturing and inappropriate parental role modelling in their own childhood, can make parenting their own children challenging (Thompson & Harm, 2000). Mothers who are incarcerated experience physical separation from their children as well as their role as mother, which incites a new identity of mothering (Easterling et al., 2019). Prison systems that do not pay attention to motherhood further damage and punish women which can result in missed opportunities for rehabilitation, relationship building, and positive intervention (Baldwin, 2017). The Bangkok Rules adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010, were designed to protect the rights and needs of women and their children who are incarcerated. These rules were initiated in 193 countries due to the fact that the criminal justice system was historically designed for men, and it has been recognized that the needs of women differ considerably (PRI, 2013). Incarceration can provide an opportunity to offer women time to learn about parenting and strengthening relationships (Fowler et al., 2018, Miller et al., 2014). One of the most important elements to improve outcomes for women is to initiate and maintain relationships with family and children (Bartels & Gafney, 2011, Barrick et al., 2014). Despite the many challenges that women face, children are a strong motivator to avoid re-offense and substance abuse and promote the desire to re-gain custody (Prguda & Burke, 2020). It has been reported that many women do hope to resume the care of their children, however, the support they require is multifaceted and includes social, family, emotional and legal support to maintain mothering (Barnes & Stringer, 2014).

There have been five previously published reviews investigating the impact of parenting programs conducted in prisons throughout the world. These include two literature reviews (Loper & Tuerk, 2006, Newman et al., 2011) two systematic reviews (Tremblay & Sutherland, 2017, Troy et al., 2018) and one systematic review and meta-analysis (Armstrong et al., 2017). The searches in these reviews were undertaken prior to 2015 and published later. Another literature review by (Shlonsky et al., 2016) investigated the impact of prison nursery programs specifically. There was only one review involving incarcerated mothers which included only quantitative studies and programs in a community setting as well as a prison (Tremblay & Sutherland, 2017). There were some positive impacts reported following parenting programs initiated during incarceration which included parenting attitude (Tremblay & Sutherland, 2017), parenting skills (Newman et al., 2011, Armstrong et al., 2017), parenting knowledge, parent-child relationships (Armstrong et al., 2017) and parenting behaviour (Tremblay & Sutherland, 2017).

### **Research Question:**

What are the outcomes of existing prison parenting education programs for women experiencing incarceration and what can we learn?

### ***Aims***

The paper aims to explore:

1. the scope and structure/content of evaluated prison parenting programs for women in the last decade
2. the outcomes of parenting programs for women who have attended a program during incarceration
3. what we can learn for future research and program development

**Methods**

The scoping review follows the framework outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) extension for scoping review checklist. The PRISMA statement includes a 27-item checklist of essential steps for transparent reporting of a scoping review and a four-phase flow diagram. This process ensures transparency and reproducibility (Tricco et al., 2018). The current study utilised PIC (population, intervention and context) for search terms and inclusion criteria. The population (incarcerated females), intervention (parenting education) and context (international literature).

**Inclusion Criteria**

**Population**

Women were required to be over the age of 18 and incarcerated. They did not need to be a biological mother. Males were excluded and studies that evaluated a program comprising males and females were included if the results were analysed separately.

**Intervention**

The women were required to attend a parenting program or program that focused on parenting whilst they were incarcerated. Programs assessing a mother baby unit were excluded as well as programs that extended into the community.

**Context**

Searches were conducted to include all international published studies limited to English language and published in the last ten years, (from 2009 to 2019) to represent parent education literature relevant to current parenting needs for women in prison.

**Sources of Evidence**

The evidence included research studies that evaluated a parenting program within a prison.

**Search Strategy and Selection of Studies**

Eleven databases were searched: Medline; Embase; Emcare; PsycInfo, Cochrane Library, Australian Criminology Database, Criminal Justice Database; Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC); Scopus, Google, and Google Scholar. The initial search in Medline combined Boolean operators with the key words: Prisons; Prisoners; Criminals; Mothers; Women; Parenting and Childrearing. The terms were searched as key words, Medical Subject Headings and subject headings. The searches were conducted in November 2019 by an experienced academic librarian assisted with refining the database searches. See Table 1 below for the final search in Medline.

**Table 1**

*Medline Search*

1	PRISONS/
2	PRISONERS/
3	CRIMINALS/
4	((penitentiari* or penal or custodial or custody or corrections or correctional or corrective or detention or remand or borstal) adj5 (institution or facilit* or centre\$1 or center\$1 or system\$1 or service\$1)).ti,ab,kw.
5	(imprison* or inmate* or incarcerat* or jail* or gaol* or offender\$1 or prison* or detain* or criminal* or convict* or felon\$1).ti,ab,kw.
6	or/1-5
7	MOTHERS/
8	WOMEN/

9	(mother\$1 or mum\$1 or mom\$1 or female\$1 or women or woman).ti,ab,kw.
10	or/7-9
11	PARENTING/
12	CHILD REARING/
13	(parenting or child* rearing or child* upbringing or “rear* child*” or “bring* up child*” or parent* management or mothering).mp.
14	11 or 12 or 13
15	6 and 10 and 14
16	Limit to English
17	Limit to 2009 – current

The total number of documents found were transferred to an Endnote X9® Library and Covidence database (Covidence systematic review software, Veritas Health Innovation, Melbourne, Australia. Available at [www.covidence.org](http://www.covidence.org)). The duplicates were removed using Covidence. The search results were analysed using the title and abstract by the first author (BL) and these studies were included for review of the full text. The full text was reviewed by BL and AB and discussed for inclusion. Any conflicts were resolved in consultation with two other authors (AE). The Grey literature was searched on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2019 using the search string, 'Parenting education incarcerated mothers,' in Google, Google Scholar. The reference lists of all the included papers as well as previous reviews were hand searched for any further studies.

### **Data Extraction**

The authors designed a table with headings to use as a guide to extract relevant data to inform the scoping review question. Data included: Parenting program name; author, year, country; type and content of program; facilitator details; program development; methodology; tools to evaluate; validation of tool; contact hours of program; number of participants; attrition rate; evaluated outcomes; long term follow up and further comments.

### **Data Synthesis/Presentation**

Data is presented in tables as well as a summary and description of information in the results and discussion of this review. The data was synthesized to establish the outcomes of evaluations and determine what can be learnt from previous implementation of parenting programs in prisons.

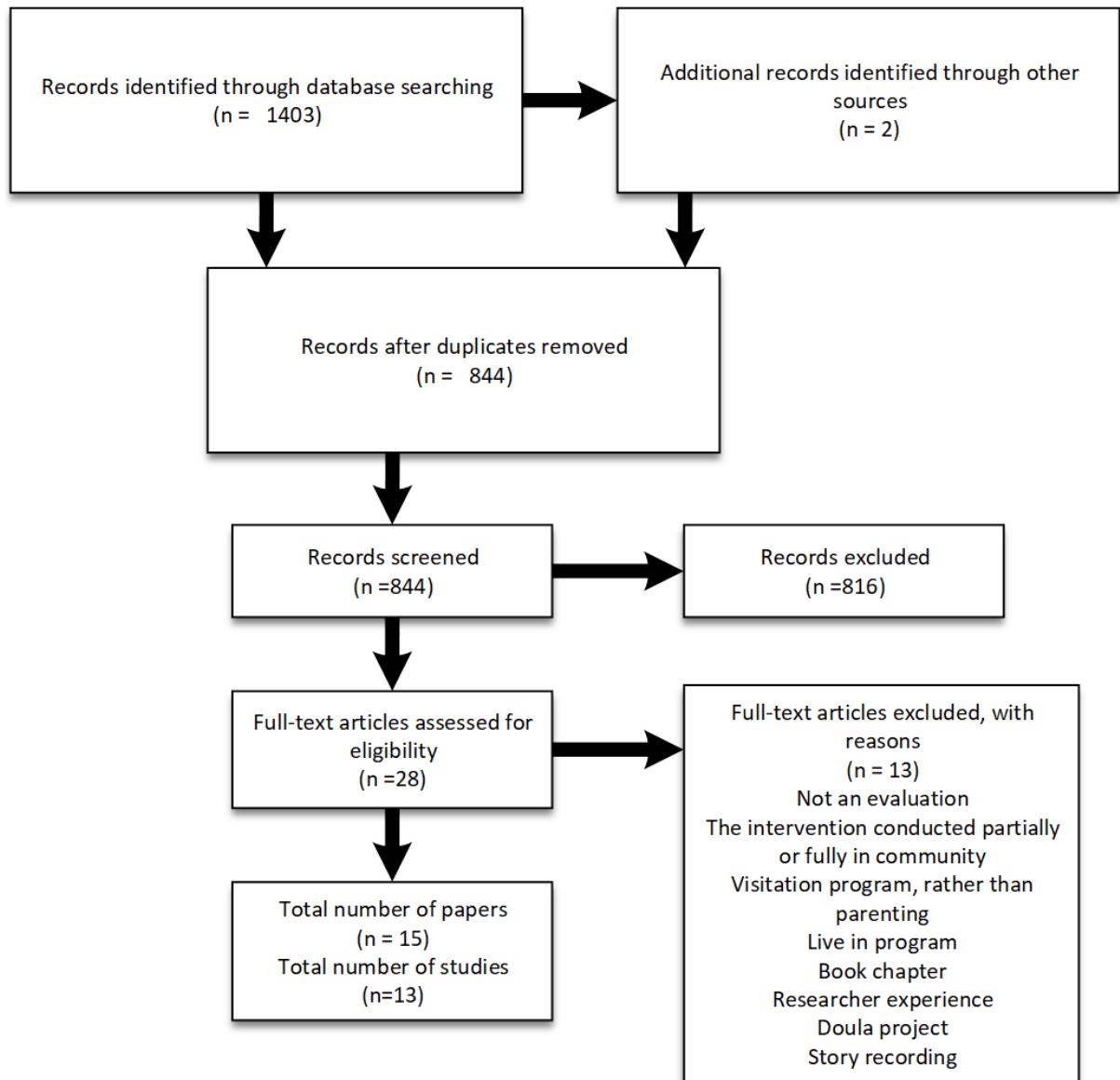
## **Results**

### **Study Selection**

Many of the papers screened focused on prison health, programming and studies about the impact upon the children of incarcerated mothers. These studies were identified and excluded by title and abstract. Figure 1 demonstrates the PRISMA diagram for the study selection which includes the number of full text reviewed records which were excluded based on eligibility criteria. A total of 13 studies were eligible for inclusion which comprised of 15 papers (This included two studies that had multiple papers reporting on the same study).

**Figure 1**

*PRISMA Flow Chart*



***Included Studies***

Aim 1: The scope and structure/content of evaluated prison parenting programs for women in the last decade.

Table 2 compiles characteristics of the included studies whilst Table 3 details the included topics in the programs and the number of programs that have included the same or similar topic.

**Table 2**

*Data Extraction Table*

<b>Program name Author/year Country</b>	<b>Type of program Program facilitator</b>	<b>Program Develop- ment &amp; Methodology Tool validation</b>	<b>Contact time <sup>1</sup> Participants Attrition</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Comments Duration follow up</b>
Program not named (Kennon et al., 2009) USA	Experiential discussion-based group class, peer support. Workbook to read after class and guest speakers invited. Communication with child and caregiver, legal issues, nurturing, self-esteem and self-efficacy, 0-18 years (children) Conducted in 2 prisons - 3 sessions (maximum and minimum security) Facilitated by two developmental psychologist (the authors)	Specifically designed by psychologists  Pre and post-test follow up immediately and 8 weeks: Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, The Incarcerated Parent's Legal Questionnaire, Communication Questionnaire; Qualitative Satisfaction Questionnaire  Two validated tools Three developed for the study	24 contact hours 18-26 per class  66 recruited (57 women included)  14% attrition	Improved parenting attitude (significant) Improved self-esteem (significant) Knowledge (legal questionnaire) (significant)  Written responses demonstrated that women had an understanding of what children need, importance of communication and caregiver relationship	8 week follow up Parenting attitude (marginal increase) Increased self-esteem (significant) Legal questionnaire (decreased from post-test, higher than pre-test)  Parents offered individual consults for problem solving There was no change in communication seen after the program  No control group
Mothering at a Distance (MAAD) (Perry, 2009)  (Perry et al., 2011) Australia	Focus on relationship between mother and child and general parenting (therapeutic group work) 0-5 years (children) Conducted in 6 locations/ 16 sessions (maximum and minimum security)  Facilitated by custodial officers; psychologist; teachers; welfare and service and programs	Specifically designed Minor adjustments for Aboriginal women Piloted during development  Pre and post program question interview and 8 weeks (satisfaction with mother's group, playgroup and suggestions for improvement) Interviewed pre-program to determine relationship with child, struggles with guilt and separation and learning goals  Surveys and interviews developed for study Questioned about photo of child (leaving a visit, sick child etc) Staff post program interview	20 contact hours and 10 playgroup hours 6-10 per class (1 individual)  110 recruited (75 completed program, 73 completed survey)  31.8% attrition	Survey completion (n=73 97.3%) Increased confidence (90.4%) Understanding of child (91.8%) Felt closer to child (82%) Feel better about caring for child (89%) Found visit time more enjoyable (n=38 52%) Facilitators understood needs (89%) Useful (n= 73 100%) Enjoyed taking part (89%) Would recommend group to others (n=68 93.2%) Extremely/mostly satisfied (75.3%) Little change in empathetic response to pictures (i.e. child leaving prison visit) was identified after the program  Staff reported (n=10) that the program was positive for women, positive interaction with children (n=8); more useful for mothers with child contact and children <5 years)	8 Week follow up 8 weeks completion (n=36 48%) Increased confidence (80.6%) Understanding of child (83.3%) Felt closer to child (83%) Feel better about caring for child (89%) Do not get as angry/listen more to child (n=28 77.8%) Useful (n=33 92%) Enjoyed taking part (91.7%) Listening more (n=31 86.1%) Facilitators understood needs (75%) Would recommend group to others (n=34 94.4%) Extremely/mostly satisfied (77.8%) React to child in a positive way (n=25 69.4%) Behaviour management learnt new things (n=29 80.6%) Find visiting more enjoyable (n=38 52%) Videotaping of mother-child interactions did not pass ethical approval 8 women participated in playgroups No control group

1 The contact time is reported in hours or in the number of sessions if the number of hours were not reported.

<p>Parenting from Prison (PFP) Revised since 2007</p> <p>(Wilson et al., 2010) USA</p>	<p>Skills based program, focusing on strengthening family relationships, reunification, behaviours, self-esteem, communication and increasing parenting knowledge 6 facilities/ 10 sessions Does not state who facilitated</p>	<p>Adapted from existing program (Partners in Parenting Curriculum)</p> <p>Pre and post- evaluation Demographic details, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, Self-Mastery Scale; Parental Satisfaction Scale; Index of Parental Attitudes (IPA), Parental Confidence and Parenting from Prison Knowledge Test</p> <p>Tools reliable Knowledge test designed for study – reliability not reported</p>	<p>20 sessions 9-22 per class 102 (81) males 82 (69) females</p> <p>16% attrition females</p>	<p>Parental Confidence <sup>2</sup> (significant) Self-esteem (significant) Self-mastery (significant) Parental satisfaction (significant) Parental attitude (significant) Knowledge (significant) Increase in type and frequency of communication (except for phone calls)</p>	<p>Knowledge was statistically significant although, on average participants scored 2 more questions correct on post-test Effect sizes small for some analyses No control group Intervention varied in length in different locations</p>
<p>Referred to as the ‘Parenting Program’</p> <p>(Wulf-Ludden, 2010) USA</p>	<p>Skills, knowledge and motivation, parenting and relationships. Video based (16 hours) and group education. Extended visiting and overnight stays 0-18 years (children) One facility</p> <p>Facilitated by the Parenting Program coordinator</p>	<p>Adapted from existing program (Active Parenting Curriculum)</p> <p>All women surveyed Discipline Questionnaire (44% of women at prison participated in parenting program)</p> <p>Validated tool</p>	<p>16 hours of video 15 theory sessions</p> <p>201 (104 completed survey; 144 corporal punishment; 133 contact and 104 General Strain Theory (number completed for each outcome measure)</p> <p>69.3% of all inmates surveyed – 44% participated in a parenting program</p>	<p>Increased child contact (significant) Contact with children reduced strain (not significant)</p>	<p>Women included in analysis were part of parenting program but may not have completed or attended any classes as commencing child visits was included as participation without having attended the program No control group</p>

<p>Parenting from Inside: Making the Mother-Child Connection (PFI)</p> <p>(Loper and Tuerk, 2011) USA</p>	<p>Cognitive behavioural therapy to reduce emotional reactivity to stressful situations. Relationships, communication. Group discussion, video vignettes</p> <p>Facilitated by Advanced Doctoral students in Clinical Psychology (with support of author post session) Co-facilitated by an inmate who had attended the pilot and trained in therapeutic group process 0-18 years (children)</p> <p>One facility/ 5 sessions</p>	<p>Specifically designed with input from women</p> <p>Pre and post evaluation: Parenting Stress Index-Modified; level of child contact; Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM); Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI); MomOK usage</p> <p>Child contact and MomOK usage – reliability not documented</p>	<p>18 contact hours 22-52 offered class 176 women (106 - 60 intervention and 46 control)</p> <p>48.8% attrition</p>	<p>Visitation stress reduced (significant) Lower levels of parenting stress Improved alliance with caregiver Improved communication (letters)</p> <p>Global Index Symptom Score Metal illness – clinical to non-clinical range (Intervention n=13 vs control n=7) Non-clinical range to clinical (Intervention n=1 vs control n=6)</p> <p>Paired t-test Intervention group Parenting stress concerning competency and visitation (significant) Improved alliance with caregiver Reduced mental distress Increased phone calls Care giver consults Marginally increased letter writing</p>	<p>Uneven distress levels before the intervention (intervention group higher) Groups randomly assigned</p> <p>Study intended to measure the longer-term effects however there were not enough attendees in the follow up</p> <p>Small effect size</p> <p>No change in control group during wait period No difference in change patterns between intervention and control (except for visitation parenting stress)</p>
<p>The Friends Outside Positive Parenting for Incarcerated Parents Program</p> <p>(Simmons et al., 2013) USA</p>	<p>Cognitive behaviour principals. Parenting, relationships and legal responsibilities. Discussion groups, debates, simulations, case studies, role playing, brainstorming and self-evaluation One facility/ over a year</p> <p>Facilitators were trained (doesn't state who facilitated)</p>	<p>Adapted from existing program (Red Cross course and other parenting curricula) (iterative process) Pre and post evaluation: AAPI II</p> <p>Validated tool</p>	<p>30 contact hours 20 per class</p> <p>318 women</p> <p>Attrition not recorded as retrospective data collection of pre and post evaluation forms</p>	<p>Inappropriate Expectations (significant) Empathy (significant) Family roles (significant) Power and independence (significant)</p>	<p>No control group</p> <p>Males included in this study</p>
<p>Parenting While Incarcerated</p> <p>(Miller et al., 2014) USA</p>	<p>Group education with specified topics. Parenting, addiction, communication, relationships, self-esteem, emotions and budgeting 0-18 years (children) One facility/ 3 sessions</p> <p>Facilitated by interns from University and community partner agency staff trained in original program – SFP</p>	<p>Adapted from existing program (The Strengthening Families Program - SFP) Iterative process during current study</p> <p>Pre and post evaluation: Satisfaction survey and AAPI II</p> <p>Validated tool Satisfaction survey (used previously for SFP)</p>	<p>12 – 15 contact hours</p> <p>45 mothers (38 completed pre-test and 22 post)</p> <p>42% attrition rate</p>	<p>Corporal punishment (significant) Overall high satisfaction</p>	<p>Compared intervention to existing program Women did not receive the same intervention due to iterative process and variable dose of program 71% (n=32) women released before program completion Small sample size Medium to large effect sizes No control group</p>



<p>Parent-Child-Interaction Therapy (PCIT)  (Scudder et al., 2014) USA</p>	<p>Role plays and in-room coaching of parenting skills and discussion 2-18 years (children)  One facility (maximum and minimum security) - two sessions  Facilitated by instructor with master's degree in psychology and co-facilitator – undergraduate student</p>	<p>Adapted from existing program (PCIT)  Pre and post evaluation: demographic details, AAPI II; Parenting Stress Index; Child Abuse Potential Inventory; Therapy Attitude Inventory and Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System III (parent interacting with researcher pretending to be a child)  Tools validated Demographic form used previously</p>	<p>10.5 contact hours  82 (71) women 12-15 per class  14% attrition</p>	<p>Positive attention (significant) Positive attending (significant) Decrease in negative attention (significant) Increase in effective commands (significant) Both programs: Decrease in parenting stress and Child abuse potential (significant) Treatment acceptability significantly higher for PCIT than existing Attitude towards child development increased in existing group (significant)  Mother's in PCIT demonstrated more positive parenting skills and less negative attention than existing</p>	<p>Intervention compared to existing parenting course Rate of improvement was much lower than standard PCIT in the community  No control group</p>
<p>Family Matters: Family Wellness Education  (Bell and Cornwell, 2015) USA</p>	<p>Based on a theory of family systems and attachment. Family culture, ethnicity, relationships, communication, responding and attachment  2 sessions  Facilitated by a variety of people (re-entry specialist, community relations administrator, family therapist, psychologist, corrections officer, inmate - with minimal training (1 hour) 2 facilitators (only 1 for half the course)</p>	<p>Specifically designed  Pre and post evaluation: Systematic Therapy Inventory, Authentic Happiness Scale  Tools validated</p>	<p>12 sessions 10-15 per class  26 women and 47 men Wait list control group  Attrition not reported</p>	<p>Self-understanding (significant) Understanding of family (significant) Self-competence (significant) Improved self-esteem (significant) Competence and self-esteem improved  When compared to control self-competence not significant. Self-esteem significant and women in class made more positive changes but overall not significant Positive comments from participants about relationships</p>	<p>3 month follow up results did not change from initial follow up – positive changes remained, self-esteem results did not reach significance Many participants reconnected a strained or estranged relationship especially with children Can be co-facilitated by an inmate 10 people omitted from analysis due to no room for improvement High score in pre-tests  Males included in this study  Small sample size</p>
<p>Mothering at a Distance  (Rossiter et al., 2015) Australia</p>	<p>Focus on the relationship between mother and child and general parenting (therapeutic group work) Targets Aboriginal women but non-Aboriginal women can attend 0-5 years (children) 5 facilities/over 3 years Facilitated by Correctional Services Staff</p>	<p>Specifically designed  Post program evaluation with mixed method survey  Survey questions used in previous study</p>	<p>20 contact hours  157 completed program (134 completed questionnaire)  8 attended playgroup  85.4% response rate</p>	<p>Increased confidence (95%) Understand child behaviour (98%) Group leaders understanding (96.1%) Changed reaction to upset child (81.1%) New ways to manage difficult child behaviour (86.5%) High satisfaction overall (96.8%) All participants enjoyed playgroup and found useful (n=8) Women reported they developed supportive mothering, identifying as a mother, recognition of being needed, increased knowledge and skills, maintaining connection, hope for future, recognised difficulty of separation</p>	<p>Playgroup discontinued due to reluctance of child protection to allow children in out of home care  No control group  No data pre-program  Slightly different questionnaire over 5 years of data collection</p>

<p>Turning Points Parenting Curriculum (TPPC)  (Urban and Burton, 2015) USA</p>	<p>Intensive parenting education with supervised visits (4 hrs each) and three support group sessions 0-18 years (children)  One facility/over 3 years  Facilitator not reported</p>	<p>Adapted from existing program (Practical Parent Education)  Pre and post evaluation of knowledge gained at beginning and end of each session (Four – five multiple choice questions), plus post-test after last session to test knowledge, attitude and skills  Tool not validated</p>	<p>10 sessions 204 unduplicated 289 women (over 3 years) 261 completed (44 women completed at least two years of program)  10% Attrition rate over 3 years</p>	<p>Knowledge (significant, 42% growth) Confidence improved (57%) Learned a lot of useful information (75%) Learned several useful strategies (59%) Planned to use new strategies (72%)</p>	<p>1 year follow up (n=18) Knowledge loss over a year Retained knowledge of communication, dealing with anger, complex emotions, discipline (not significant) The women learned several things that they found useful  No control group</p>
<p>Un-named Psychotherapeutic parent education course  (Kamptner et al., 2017) USA</p>	<p>Attachment-Informed Psychotherapeutic Program for Incarcerated Parents. Focus on warmth, sensitively attuned, responsive caregiving, parenting and relationships One facility/2010-2016  Facilitated by second year Masters students in Clinical Counselling Psychology (trained by Clinical Psychologist and weekly supervision)</p>	<p>Specifically designed  Pre and post evaluation: AAPI II; The Parenting Sense of Competence scale; Survey of Parenting Practices; The Brief Symptom Inventory and demographics  Tools validated</p>	<p>48 contact hours 10-25 per class  Participant numbers variable see significant outcome column  Males and females (only females reported)</p>	<p>Significant decrease psychological distress on Brief Symptom Inventory (n=61) Survey of parenting practices (n=97) Parenting sense of competence scale (n=255) Parental expectations (n=63) Corporal punishment (n=64) Parent-child role reversal (n=64) Children’s Power and Independence (n=64) Empathy improved (not significant)</p>	<p>No control group  The program had a greater impact on females than males</p>
<p>Parenting Inside Out (PIO)  (Collica-Cox, 2018)  (Collica-Cox and Furst, 2019) USA</p>	<p>Cognitive behavioural and social learning theory. Communication, bonding, parenting, relationships and re-entry. Infant to 24 years  One location/ 2 sessions  Author and student co-facilitator (does not state the training)</p>	<p>Specifically designed Input from mother and fathers  Pre and post evaluation interviews; Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; DASS 21 Scale; level of child contact; Knowledge Validated tools</p>	<p>28 contact hours 13-14 per class  Group 1 - 14 women (11 completed 10 interviewed) Group 2 - 13 (10 completed)  21-23% attrition</p>	<p>Decrease in depression (significant) Increase in self-esteem (significant) Decreased stress (not significant) Reported improved relationships, communication and confidence in parenting The second group had more complex problems Decrease in depression (significant) Decrease in anxiety Decrease in stress Increase in self-esteem (minimal) Increase in Knowledge (significant) Separation from child caused most stress Women reported improved confidence and communication. The course met or exceeded expectations</p>	<p>A pilot program before the introduction of dog-assisted therapy No control group Small sample size</p>

**Table 3***Topic and Frequency*

Relationships with child/caregiver/family (11)
Communication/listening (10)
Responsibility for crimes/positive action (10)
Child discipline (8)
Emotional reactions/stress/anger parents (8)
Child development (7)
Effective parenting/parenting skills (7)
Re-uniting/post release period (6)
Self-esteem/self-efficacy (5)
Visits, letters, phone (5)
Problem solving/decision making (5)
Substance abuse/addiction/risks (5)
Grief and loss/distrust (4)
Limit setting (4)
Family rules, traditions, culture, ethnicity (4)
Problem behaviours/antisocial behaviours (4)
Safety/child abuse (3)
Money management/employment (3)
Family origins (3)
Legal issues (3)
Parenting from prison (3)
Warmth towards child (3)
Building support networks (3)
Growth/personal growth as parent (3)
Behaviour management child (3)
Play therapy (2)
Attachment (2)
Parental expectations (2)
First aid/Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) (2)
Child's needs/perspective (2)
Guidance when children are in trouble (2)
Teach child new skill (2)
Self-care (2)
Rewards for child (2)
Understanding own parenting style (2)
Acknowledgment of children (1)
Early brain development (1)
Depression (1)
Parental role modelling (1)
Talking to child about offense (1)
Gratitude/forgiveness (1)
Temperament of child (1)
Yoga, meditation and stress management (1)
Negative messages (1)
Women's issues (1)
Resiliency (1)
Healthy child (1)

Special needs (1)
Sexuality (1)
Stranger danger (1)
Diversity and tolerance (1)
Bullying (1)

Thirteen included studies evaluated twelve different parenting programs, with female participants, in a prison setting. Eleven studies were conducted in the USA and the other two in Australia, which evaluated the same parenting program named, ‘Mothering at a Distance’ (MAAD) (Perry et al., 2009, Rossiter et al., 2015). Four studies included male and female participants; the results of the female participants have been reported in this review (Wilson et al., 2010, Simmons et al., 2013, Bell & Cornwell, 2015, Kamptner et al., 2017). A pilot study was included in the review, described as the control, prior to the introduction of therapy dogs to determine the effects of animal assisted therapy in conjunction with ‘Parenting Inside Out’ (Collica-Cox, 2018). It was hypothesized that the therapy dogs would assist in reducing stress; improving emotional wellbeing; communication; reading skills; loneliness and depression.

### ***Program Structure/Content***

The majority of the programs used a combination of discussion groups, with a teaching module of topics, role play, handouts and videos. The focus of the parenting programs included: parenting from prison (Kennon et al., 2009, Urban & Burton, 2015); parenting and the relationship with the child (Perry et al., 2009); parenting, relationships and reunification (Wilson et al., 2010); parenting skills, behaviour and relationships (Wulf-Ludden, 2010, Miller et al., 2014); parenting and relationships (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) (Loper & Tuerk, 2011, Simmons et al., 2013, Collica-Cox, 2018) and parenting and relationships (Attachment theory) (Bell & Cornwell, 2015, Kamptner et al., 2017). Some programs focused on children under five years of age, considering the first five years of life as important for attachment and bonding (Perry et al., 2009, Rossiter et al., 2015). Other programs covered an age range from infant to 18 years (Kennon et al., 2009, Wulf-Ludden, 2010, Loper & Tuerk, 2011, Miller et al., 2014, Urban & Burton, 2015); two to 18 years (Scudder et al., 2014) and infant to 24 years (Collica-Cox, 2018). All the parenting programs were taught in group sessions, however, the ‘MAAD program’ provided some flexibility around the number of participants and structure of the program; this allowed women not eligible for group classes to attend personal classes and some participants to attend the program in two full days (Perry et al., 2009). Six programs enabled mothers to have increased contact with their child (although not all women were allowed child contact) (Perry et al., 2009, Wulf-Ludden, 2010, Miller et al., 2014, Rossiter et al., 2015, Urban & Burton, 2015, Collica-Cox, 2018). Extended visits, overnight stays and supervised visits with feedback about parenting were offered to the women in the study by Wulf-Ludden (2010). ‘The MAAD Program’ attempted to run a weekly play group which was challenging due to difficulties accessing children which led to disappointment for the women and staff (Perry et al., 2009).

Table 3 demonstrates the different topics that were covered within the programs reviewed and the frequency that a topic was included. This is reported according to what was described in the studies, some studies included more detail than others. A component about relationships with the child, family and or caregiver was included in all but one study, however, they did include communication and building trust (Urban & Burton, 2015). Communication and taking responsibility or demonstrating positive action was also a focus of the majority of the programs. Over half of the programs also included child discipline (8 studies), emotional reactions (8), developmental milestones (7) and parenting skills (7).

Aim 2: The outcomes of parenting programs for women who have attended during incarceration. Table 2 includes a summary of the outcomes of the parenting education programs

as well as the tools and method used to measure the outcome.

### ***Evaluation Methods***

Twenty-five different evaluation tools were used to determine the impact of parenting programs, with studies using one to two and up to six tools. The most commonly used tool was the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory II (AAPI II) (Kamptner et al., 2017, Miller et al., 2014, Scudder et al., 2014, Simmons et al., 2013). This tool is designed to evaluate parenting attitude and screen for risk of child abuse. Parental attitude was assessed in a further four studies, using various tools to measure this outcome (Perry et al., 2009, Rossiter et al., 2015, Urban & Burton, 2015, Wilson et al., 2010). The majority of tools were validated tools that have been used in previous studies. Eleven of the studies used pre and post evaluation tools or surveys and interviews completed by the participant and the remaining studies used a survey or interview only after completion of the parenting program (Rossiter et al., 2015, Wulf-Ludden, 2010). All studies relied on the participants to complete the evaluations. One study utilized observation of the mother whilst parenting (as well as participant evaluation) which was coded by a researcher during a five-minute interaction, where the researcher acted as a child in a role play activity (Scudder et al., 2014). Evaluation of the 'MAAD program' involved pre and post interviews and surveys along with the observation of a picture of a child in different scenes i.e. a sick child, and a child leaving the prison visit. Participants were asked questions in relation to the picture to assess insightfulness and maternal sensitivity, however, it was not very useful in determining any significant outcomes (Perry et al., 2009). Four studies re-assessed participants at a third time point and the remaining studies evaluated the program immediately after completion. The third time point included eight weeks after program completion (Kennon et al., 2009, Perry et al., 2009); three months (Bell & Cornwell, 2015) and one year (Urban & Burton, 2015).

### ***Evaluation Outcomes***

#### ***Knowledge Gain***

The studies that included assessment of participants' knowledge before and after attending the parenting program were able to demonstrate statistically significant knowledge gains (Kennon et al., 2009, Wilson et al., 2010, Urban & Burton, 2015). One year after 'The Turning Points Curriculum' it was found that participants had not retained most of the knowledge gained during the program, however, women had maintained some knowledge pertaining to communication; dealing with anger; complex emotions and discipline (Urban & Burton, 2015). Kennon et al. (2009) assessed knowledge of legal issues, after eight weeks and there was a demonstrated loss of legal knowledge, however, results were improved compared to knowledge prior to the program.

#### ***Change in Attitude***

Seven studies were able to demonstrate a significant positive change in parental attitude assessed using the AAPI II, surveys, Index of Parenting Attitude or the Discipline Questionnaire (Perry et al., 2009, Wilson et al., 2010, Simmons et al., 2013, Kennon et al., 2009, Rossiter et al., 2015 Miller et al., 2014). Kennon et al. (2009) demonstrated further improvements in parenting attitude eight weeks after attending the parenting program. Various subthemes of the AAPI II were demonstrated to have a significant positive change which included: improving the woman's attitude towards **corporal punishment** (Miller et al., 2014); improving the woman's attitude towards **the role of the parent**, demonstrating that the participants have an understanding of the child's needs as different from their own needs and that the parent is responsible for meeting their own needs (Simmons et al., 2013, Kamptner et al., 2017); improving the woman's attitude towards the **expectations of a child** depending on their age (Kamptner et al., 2017, Simmons et al., 2013); encouraging the child's **independence**, giving a child choices, allowing the child to express their opinion, solve problems and not be controlled by parents' demands (Simmons et al., 2013, Kamptner et al., 2017); a positive change in **empathy** (Sim-

mons et al., 2013). Empathy was also seen to improve in the study by Kamptner et al. (2017) however, it did not reach statistical significance ( $p=.065$ ).

### ***Stress***

Loper & Tuerk (2011) were able to demonstrate statistically significant decreases in stress during child visitation. However, the women in the program had fairly limited child contact so this could be a perceived reduction in stress. Perry et al., (2009) also established that over half of the women who attended the program found visits with their children more enjoyable.

### ***Contact with Children***

Wulf-Ludden (2010) found a statistically significant increase in child contact as well as Wilson et al. (2010) who demonstrated an increase in the type and frequency of communication including letters and visits.

### ***Parental Behaviour***

The 'Parent Child Interaction Therapy' program evaluated by Scudder et al. (2014) demonstrated a significant improvement in positive interactions during role plays and a significant reduction in negative attention towards the child (role-played by the researcher). This demonstrates moderate to large effects in positive behaviour change by the mother compared to an already existing parenting program in the prison.

### ***The Women's Responses***

Women appeared to be motivated after attending parenting programs and gained understanding of what children need, with feelings of hope for the future. Women began to understand the importance of writing to their children and building good relationships with the caregivers of their children. They reported that children need love, communication, and consistency, and for children not to feel responsible (Kennon et al., 2009). Women after attending the 'MAAD Program' reported increased confidence and knowledge about how to deal with problems with their children and guilt about not being able to support their children. Many positive comments were made, and the women were overwhelmingly thankful for participation in the 'MAAD Program'. These women described understanding their children more, identifying as a mother, and feeling empowered (Perry et al., 2009, Rossiter et al., 2015). Facilitators reported that women developed empathy, confidence, and self-worth and were more responsive and playful with their children (Perry et al., 2009). Women reported enjoying crafts and sending what they made as a gift to their child. Nevertheless, there were some insights into the fact that participation was sometimes painful and distressing for women, one woman reported feeling worse after the class because of the lack of control she was experiencing. Frustration and jealousy were also reported when women were not able to practice the skills with their children directly. Very few women recognized the impact of incarceration on their children even after attending the program. There were no comments from the women about culture or caregiver relationship problems, identified in the surveys (Rossiter et al., 2015). Participants in the study by Bell & Cornwell (2015) reported improved communication and relationships with their children, along with stories of estranged or strained relationships having significant improvements, reconnection, and forgiveness. Women who participated in 'Parenting Inside Out' reported improved relationships with other women and staff. They changed the way they felt about parenting and themselves as a mother, gained confidence, calmness, and increased their sharing and contributing in the group. They reported feeling less stressed even though this was not evident in the scale used to measure stress. Women also felt more composed when talking to family by utilizing emotion regulation exercises. Women conveyed they might change the way they discipline their children, and some wanted to complete the parenting program again after initially being quite reluctant to be involved (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2019).

## Discussion

### Methodological Limitations of Studies Reviewed

There were a number of studies that delivered different amounts of education time or content. Due to the iterative approach of 'Parenting While Incarcerated,' participants received different versions during the study (Miller et al., 2014). In the study by Kennon et al. (2009) parents were offered individual consultations for problem solving. However, because the program was under evaluation, this meant that some participants were receiving more education time than others. This was also evident in the study by Wulf-Ludden (2010) as it was noted, not all participants in the program had completed the same amount of education and some may not have completed any. The self-evaluations used in these studies have limitations, as women may report what they believe to be appropriate and potentially fear how their response impacts regaining custody of their children. They may also feel inspired after completing a program which may seem easy to apply, particularly if the women have not had contact with their children for a period of time and have forgotten the difficulties of parenting. Literacy challenges could also limit the extent of the responses women were able to give. Role play was utilized in the 'Parent-Child-Interaction Therapy' (PCIT) program as an alternative way to evaluate the program, hence not relying on self-report (Scudder et al., 2014) which has the potential to be useful in allowing women with limited child contact to practice parenting skills and gain feedback. However, this fabricated scenario where women are aware of the observation and without the stressors of life and managing children, creates a much less challenging situation and therefore, it may be easier for some participants to demonstrate positive parenting behaviours.

### Aim 3: What Have we Learnt for Future Research?

It would be beneficial to follow-up with women in the long-term to determine if the knowledge and skills gained were transferrable into the women's lives and assess the impact on their children. There is limited evidence to demonstrate the long-term effects of parenting education on the impact of incarcerated women and their children; although a number of studies not included in this review have attempted this with some success. 'Project Home' achieved follow up of women six months after release via home visits, phone calls, and texting which involved monetary reward (Shortt et al., 2014). Only one study was found that assessed the impact the program had on the child, called 'The Incredible Years Program'. Women were offered 24 hours of group parenting education in prison or post release into the community and four, one-and-a-half-hour home visits, in the Netherlands. Results demonstrated significant positive changes in disruptive child and parenting behaviour reported by mothers immediately after the program. Teachers and childcare staff who were blinded to the study intervention reported a marginal reduction in disruptive behaviour (Menting et al., 2014). Frye & Dawe (2008) conducted 'Parenting Under Pressure' in the community after prison release and were able to follow up with the women three months after the intervention demonstrating significant improvement in maternal mental health, quality of the parent-child relationship, reductions in child abuse potential, and problem behaviours for the child. The programs that extend to women and children after release may be more time and resource intensive, however, it may be what is required to break intergenerational cycles.

Variation in the content of the programs was demonstrated in Table 3. The diversity demonstrated makes it difficult to isolate which aspects are most useful and beneficial for women. Interestingly, legal issues were included in only three of the programs although many women are involved with child protection and custody issues. Discussion of legal issues was a very popular aspect of the program evaluated by Kennon et al. (2009) as evidenced by the attention and questioning demonstrated by the women. There were also topics not directly related to parenting which could have an impact on parenting such as: self-esteem, depression, CPR and first aid, taking responsibility for crime, and changing parental behaviour. All but one program included a segment about maintaining relationships which has been demonstrated to be

an important factor in reducing recidivism (Barrick et al., 2014). Due to the fact that the women have been separated from their children, the importance of re-establishing the relationship and regaining trust may be a priority for women in these circumstances rather than general parenting education topics which was demonstrated in the frequency of the topics. Communication was also included in the majority of programs due to women having restricted opportunities for communication with their children and family, therefore, it is important to maximize these interactions.

### **What Have we Learnt for Future Program Development?**

Many of the studies outlined problems encountered while working within the prison which could be utilized to guide research and programming in the future. The majority of women have complex histories and health problems that can impact their learning capacity and trigger emotional responses (Perry et al., 2009). It is necessary to have two facilitators in a class in order to support women if they become distressed and a referral plan needs to be in place (Kennon et al., 2009, Scudder et al., 2014, Loper & Tuerk, 2011, Collica-Cox, 2018). There is scope to include the women themselves in a facilitation role, and this could provide women the opportunity to develop new skills and have a sense of purpose (Loper & Tuerk, 2011, Bell & Cornwell, 2015). Adequate breaks enable women to concentrate for short periods, and classes need to be at a suitable time to ensure that other activities or responsibilities are not competing (Perry et al., 2009). Reading materials need to be written in simple to read language with the opportunity available for information to be read aloud for women with literacy difficulties (Wilson et al., 2010, Miller et al., 2014). Considerations need to be made concerning what women are allowed to have in their possession, which may or may not include handouts and stationery (Miller et al., 2014). Attrition was a major problem reported in the studies reviewed (Miller et al., 2014, Perry et al., 2009, Loper & Tuerk, 2011). This is difficult to negotiate as women are often transferred or released without substantial notice. Having flexibility around the format, as well as having modules that can be taught in isolation or a recap of previous classes, can enable more women to be exposed to at least some parenting education. Having education continue outside into the community may assist women to make contact on release and continue to gain the support required to make a positive change (Miller et al., 2014). Flexibility (one-on-one or full days) could be of importance in a prison setting considering many women are sentenced for short periods and often transferred at short notice.

Although it is difficult to assess which elements of the parenting programs have been most beneficial, it would appear that a program designed to meet the specific needs of women experiencing incarceration with their input would be an ideal starting point. The needs of men and women vary quite considerably, and there are limited programs evaluated that are specifically designed for women, with the input of the women themselves (Loper & Tuerk, 2011). A study that utilised a community-based theoretical model, a type of participatory action research, would be suited to understand various cultural populations that have been marginalized and allow the women to be part of the research process (Badiee et al., 2012, Nicolaidis & Raymaker, 2015, Chapter 16, p. 170). Small adjustments were made to some of the programs to accommodate for the cultural needs of women, however, it is not detailed how this was undertaken and if participants cultural needs were met. Cultural safety<sup>3</sup> is a consideration for future program development and evaluation. When assigning women to an education group it is important to identify the amount of child contact and age of their children, in order to group women with similar needs (Miller et al., 2014). Differences in child contact was seen to be a problem in the 'MAAD Program', as women with limited contact experienced feelings of jealousy when other women discussed their recent experiences with their children (Perry et al., 2009). If specific age groups are targeted, it would be beneficial to screen women before

<sup>3</sup> Cultural safety requires the professional, in this case the educators to examine the impact of their own culture during service delivery. They need to acknowledge and address their biases, attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, prejudices, structures and characteristics that could affect their interactions. Ongoing reflection and self-awareness and accountability is necessary for providing a culturally safe environment (Curtis et al., 2019)



enrollment in a program (Rossiter et al., 2015).

Listening to what women have to say about the program can help determine what worked, what did not work, and the reasons why which can be overlooked when only quantitative data is collected (Collica-Cox, 2018). Women in prison are vulnerable, and it is quite possible that by discussing parenting, especially if women have limited child contact, it could create distress, frustration and may be irrelevant for women with limited or no child contact (Perry et al., 2009). It is important to determine what women aim to achieve by attending a parenting program and ensure psychological support is available. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data that measures the specific aims of the program in a timely manner, would be most beneficial (Collica-Cox, 2018).

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This scoping review focuses on parenting education for women who are incarcerated, including quantitative and qualitative data. This review includes the frequency of various topics covered in the parenting programs which has not been incorporated in previous studies, where the main focus has been on evaluation outcomes. Incarcerated women have been overlooked in the past due to smaller representation in prisons compared to men.

There is potential that some studies have been missed despite thorough searching of databases and reference lists. An alert system was set up on the databases to capture new studies that may have been published after the searches were complete. The studies were not critiqued for quality, however, this is not compulsory for scoping reviews. One researcher extracted the data from the eligible studies, this was undertaken thoroughly checking and re-checking the data collected to ensure accuracy and this was discussed in detail with two other experienced researchers.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the world there is limited rigorous research to support the long-term benefits of prison parenting programs for women and their children. The type and content of education that is most beneficial has not been determined. There have been some short-term positive changes in parenting attitude, knowledge, behaviour, communication, confidence, visitation stress, increased child contact, and improved relationships that is evidenced by the studies reported in this scoping review. These findings are largely based on the self-reports of female participants. It is difficult to determine how transferrable the skills or knowledge will be when women are released and begin caring for their children in the community combined with the stress of reintegrating into society. The studies that collected qualitative data appeared to capture the real voices of the women demonstrating enthusiasm, what women learnt and their hopes for the future, as well as a real sense of empowerment and mothering identity. Women also identified some negative emotions that were a result of attending a parenting program, not identified in quantitative studies. What women believe and think about attending a parenting program is as important as the measure of program success, and by collecting this data the authors can ascertain the topics that are most useful to the women and reasons why. Despite short-term gains demonstrated in these studies, authors felt positively about the impact of parenting programs and, therefore, recommended continuation. It appears that parenting programs can have a positive impact on women at least in the short term. It may be that parenting education is best for women who have child contact and will be released shortly after completion of the program to ensure that the skills learnt can be put into practice. Those with longer sentences or limited contact could focus on the development and maintenance of their relationship with their child. Incarceration can provide some women opportunities to gain education, and then in turn, confidence to continue parenting after release which has the potential to impact many children affected by their mother's incarceration. Education and gaining confidence are important considerations as separation between mothers and their children can have serious emotional, physical, and psychological effects on both the mother and child. Effective parenting

programs can assist in the promotion of healthy relationships and could have the potential to reduce the intergenerational cycle of poor parenting and incarceration. Therefore, it is vitally important to identify the unique needs of women experiencing incarceration when developing a parenting program. For example, cultural safety needs to be considered, and asking women what their cultural needs and expectations around parenting are will assist to address these when developing and evaluating a program. There are only a few examples where preparatory work to develop a parenting education program in prisons have commenced with women being involved. It is essential that parenting education provided in prisons is developed to meet the bespoke needs of the women, and hearing women's voices and supporting their suggestions and ideas with evidence, will enable this to be achieved. It is important that this information is disseminated and translated into practice.

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