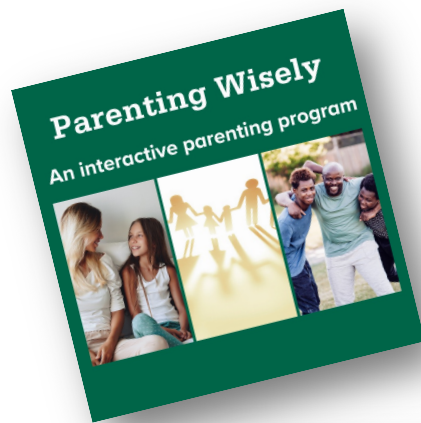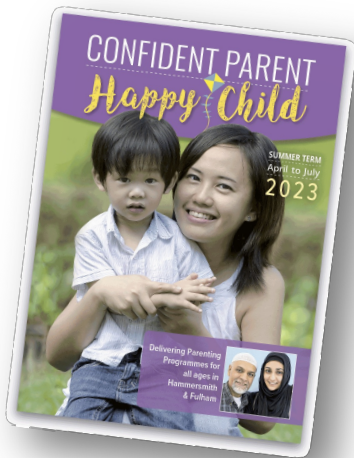# Group-based versus individual parenting programs

How to best optimize parental mental health and behaviors?
A meta-analysis

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Mathijs, L., Backhaus, S., Van Petegem, S., Mendelez-Torres, G.J., Gardner, F., Leijten, P.

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Theoretical Background

Parenting programs

Child behavior management

Effective in improving parenting skills; (e.g.,Barlow & Coren, 2018)

Parenting stress

Decrease in parental stress (e.g., Belge & Dumas, 2011; Kendall et al., 2013)
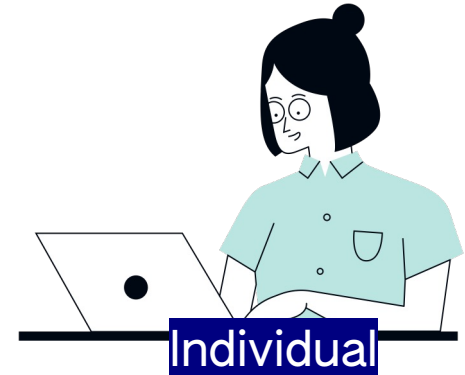Inconsistent! (Portwood et al., 2011)

Parental depressive symptoms

Reduce depression (e.g., Sanders et al., 2007)
Inconsistent! (Leijten et al., 2018)

Theoretical Background

Delivery formats

Group-based

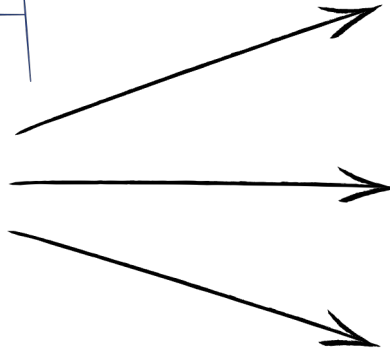Individual

Group-based vs. Individual

Social support

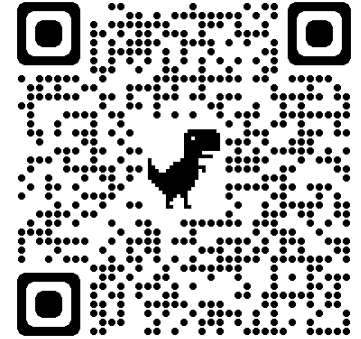Social learning

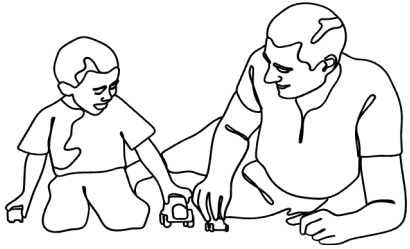Tailored support

???

Present study

Method

Backhaus et al. (2023)

Eligibility criteria

- Inclusion
    - RCT's with group or individual programs
    - Social learning theory
    - Parents of children 2-10 y/o
    - Directed at parents
- Exclusion
    - Self-directed

Outcomes

Child behavioral managment
Non-violent discipline and positive reinforcement; (Barnett et al., 1996)

Parenting Stress
Negative psychological response to the obligations of being a parent (Bornstein, 2002)

Parental Depressive Symptoms
Persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities (WHO, 2023)

Effect size

- Cohen's d
  - Mean of treatment group – Mean of control group/ SD
- 1 study : several ES

Index	Description[b]	Effect Size
Between groups		
Cohen's d[a]	$d = M_1 - M_2 / s$ $M_1 - M_2$ is the difference between the group means (M); s is the standard deviation of either group	Small 0.2 Medium 0.5 Large 0.8 Very large 1.3

(Sullivan & Fein, 2012)

Our sample

Sample characteristics	(n = 118)	(n = 43)
Mean child age, M (SD)	5.55 (1.88)	5.28 (2.06)
Mean parent age M (SD)	35.90 (4.94)	34.10 (5.01)
Intervention characteristics		
Number of sessions, M (SD)	11.10 (6.83)	10.20 (5.59)
Number of weeks, M (SD)	11.60 (6.56)	13 (9.37)
Level of prevention or treatment of child conduct problems, n (%)		
Universal	26 (22.0)	6 (14.0)
Selective	41 (34.7)	10 (23.3)
Indicated	26 (22.0)	11 (25.6)
Treatment	25 (21.2)	16 (37.2)

Analyses

- Robust Variance Estimation
1) Test overall program effects on 3 outcomes
2) Test whether group-based or individual progams yield stronger effects

Results

Overall effects

$p < .001$, $d = 0.44$;
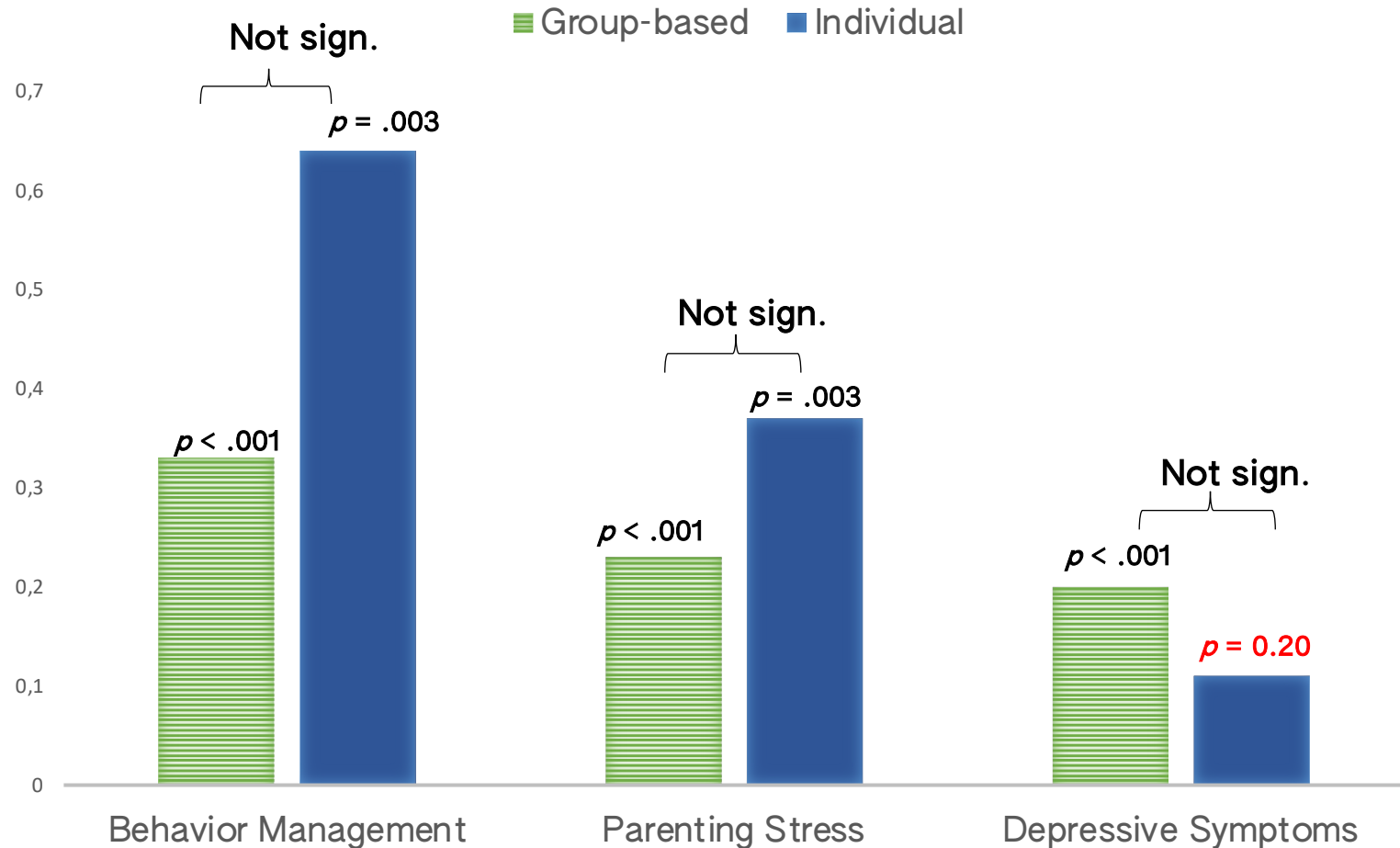95% CI [0.27, 0.60];
n = 71, k = 190

$p < .001$, $d = -0.26$;
95% CI [−0.36, −0.16];
n = 83, k = 281

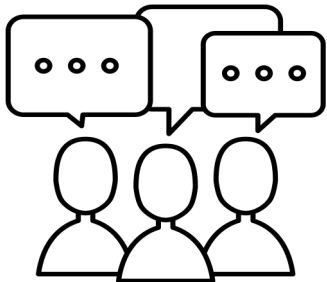$p < .001$, $d = -0.18$;
95% CI [−0.28, −0.09]
n = 58, k = 106

Discussion

- Overall small ES
    - Except for child behavior management in individual format → Direct coaching? (Hershell et al., 2008)
- Difference for parental depressive symptoms outcome!
    - Only effect in group-based format
    - Social support?
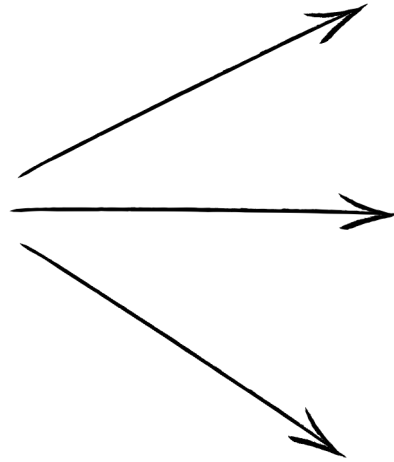- Depends on parents and clinician

Thank you for your attention!

Louise.mathijs@ulb.be

Results

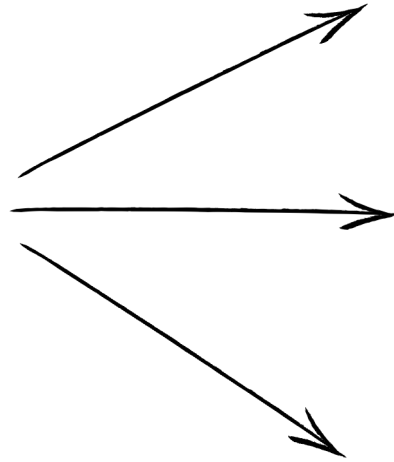## Group-based vs individual

$d = 0.33$;
95% CI [0.19, 0.46]

$d = -0.23$;
95% CI [-0.34, -0.12]

$d = -0.20$;
95% CI [-0.31, -0.09]

Results

Group-based vs individual

$d = 0.64$;
95% CI [0.24, 1.05]

$d = -0.37$;
95% CI [−0.60, −0.14]

$d = -0.11$;
95% CI [−0.30, 0.07]