

# Efficacy of a Flemish foster parent intervention for foster children aged 3 to 12 with externalizing problems

Femke Vanschoonlandt, Johan Vanderfaeillie, Frank Van Hoen, Skrällan De Maeyer, & Marijke Robberechts



Vrije Universiteit Brussel

# Overview

- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions

# Introduction

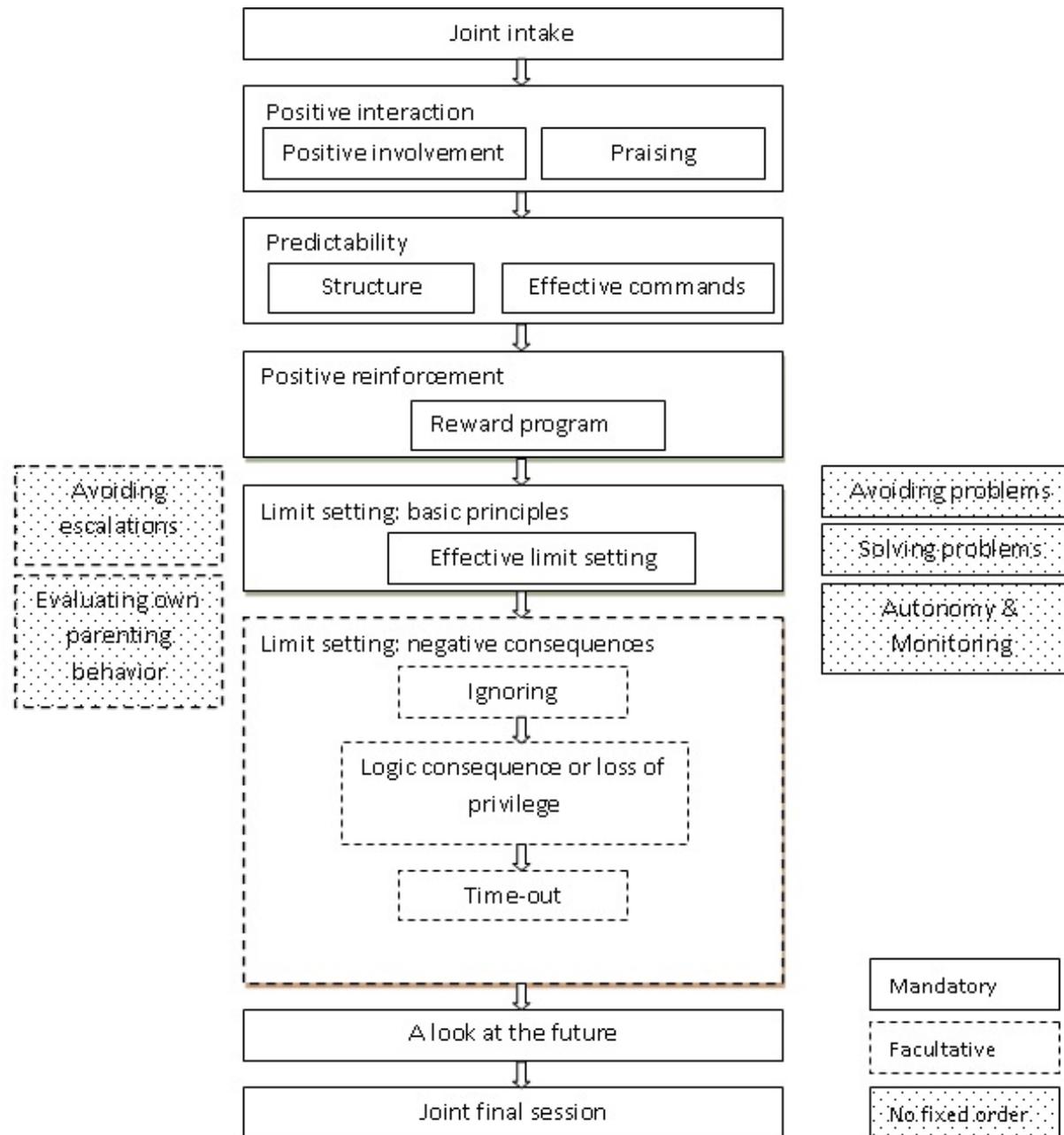
- Foster care placements are, in Flanders, the first option of choice when parents cannot maintain the care for their children
- Foster children's externalizing problems are a huge challenge:
  - About 40% of Flemish foster children, aged 3 to 12 have externalizing problems (Vanschoonlandt, Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, De Maeyer, & Robberechts, 2013)
  - Flemish foster mothers caring for children with externalizing problems are highly stressed and do not provide an adaptive parenting environment (Vanschoonlandt, Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, De Maeyer, & Robberechts, submitted)
  - Foster children's externalizing problems are consistent and are an important predictor of breakdown (Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, Vanschoonlandt, Robberechts, & Stroobants, 2013; Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, & Coussens, 2008)

# Introduction

- In several countries, foster parent interventions have been developed
    - Very small effects of cognitive behavioral parent training programs implemented in foster care
    - Little rigorous studies on the efficacy of interventions especially developed for foster care (e.g., attachment based)
- => Adaptations of evidence-based parent training programs to the specific needs of foster parents and foster children might be successful

# Introduction

- **Development of a Flemish foster parent intervention** (Vanschoonlandt, Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, & De Maeyer, 2012)
  - **Decisions concerning content**
    - Social-interaction perspective
    - Characteristics of effective parent training programs
    - Specific needs of foster children
  - **Decisions concerning form**
    - Trainer
    - Group and/or individual format



# Introduction

- Aim: Study the efficacy of the foster parent intervention with respect to:
  - Breakdown
  - Foster children's externalizing problems
  - Foster mothers' parenting stress

# Methods

- **Participants**
  - Foster parents of foster children, aged 3 to 12 with externalizing problems (i.e. borderline or clinical score on one of the small-band externalizing scales or the broad-band externalizing scale of the CBCL)
  - Exclusion criteria (e.g., child has autism or a mental retardation or uses psychotropic medication in an inconsistent way; foster parents are divorcing, have low cognitive abilities or are already receiving help for the foster child's problems)
- **Design**
  - Randomized controlled trial: intervention ( $n = 30$ ) versus care-as-usual ( $n = 33$ )
  - Pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up (three months) assessment
- **Instruments**
  - Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorle, 2000, 2001)
  - Nijmegen Questionnaire for the Parenting Situation (NQPS; Robbroeckx & Wels, 1996)
    - Total parenting stress ( $\alpha_0 = .95$ ,  $\alpha_1 = .95$ ,  $\alpha_2 = .96$ )
  - Treatment integrity checklist trainers
- **Data-analysis**
  - Intention-to-treat
  - ANCOVA
  - Effect size

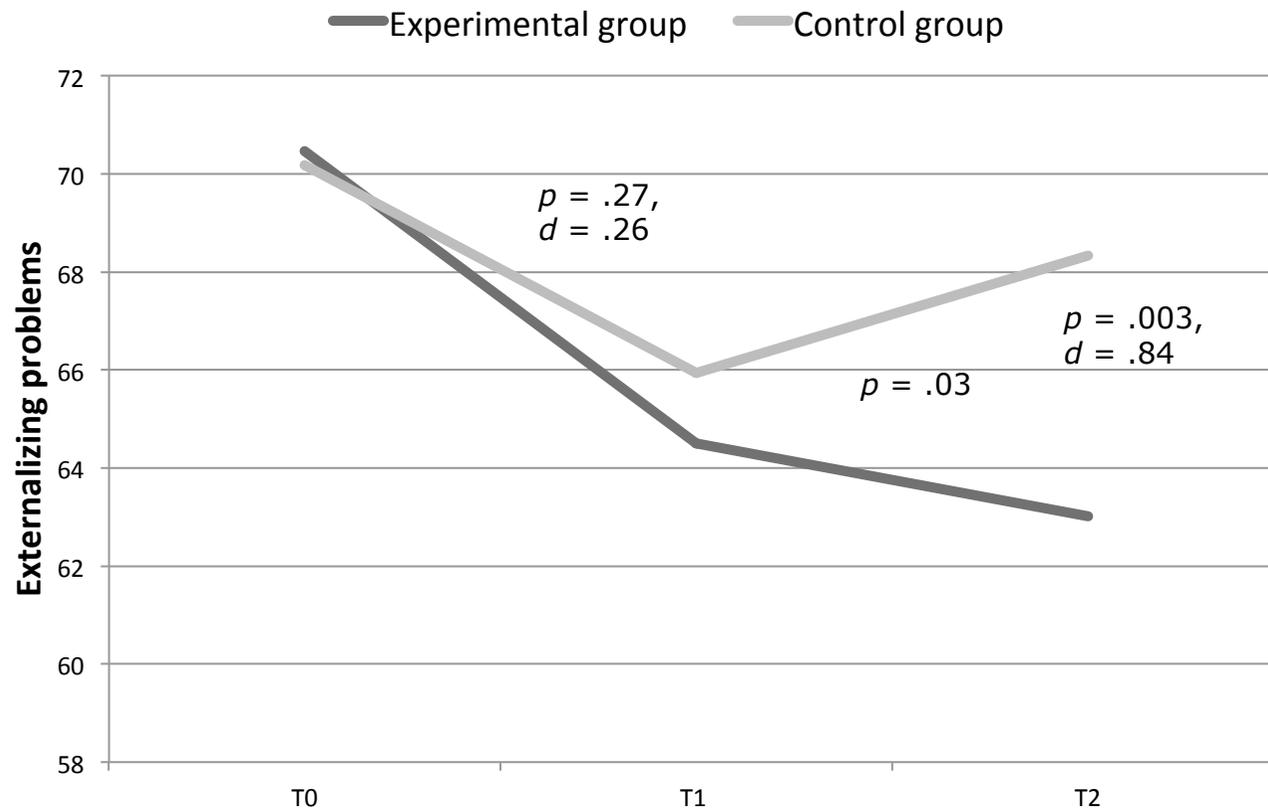
# Results: Treatment integrity

- Duration and form of the intervention
  - Two foster families dropped-out
  - Mean number of home visits was 10.21 (min. = 7, max. = 14, *sd* = 1.35)
  - Mean duration of a home visit was 88.39 minutes (min. = 67, max. = 125, *sd* = 16.48)
  - Mean duration of the intervention was 3.32 months (min. = 2, max. = 6, *sd* = 1.09)
  - Only 25% of the foster parents attended a group session during the individual phase
  - Only 10.7% of the foster parents attended a group session as follow-up
- Content of the intervention
  - Nearly all mandatory modules were discussed with nearly all foster parents
  - None of the facultative modules was unnecessary
  - All but one foster parent combined a positive approach with predictability and effective limit setting
  - The facultative modules concerning the general parenting skills were implemented by a limited number of foster parents

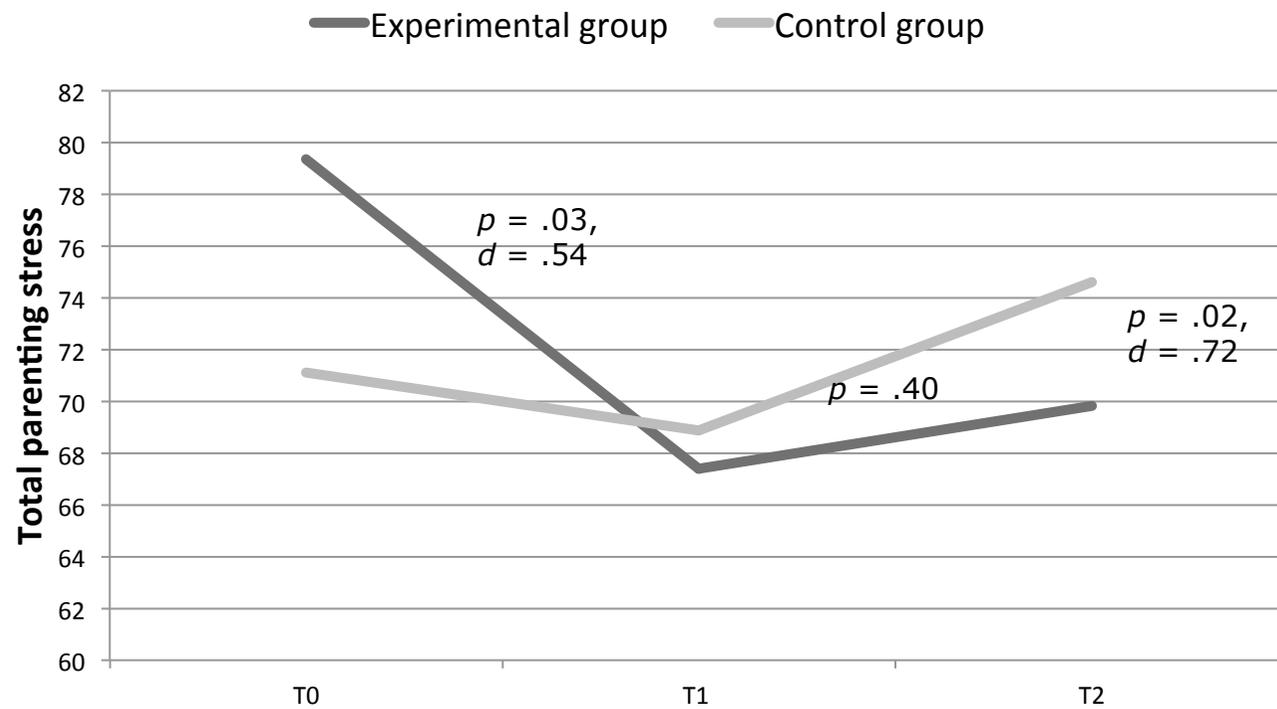
# Results: Breakdown

- Short-term: 0 in experimental group, 3 (9.09%) in control group (nonsign., Fisher's exact,  $p = .24$ )
- Long-term: 2 (6.67%) in experimental group, 1 (3.03%) in control group (nonsign., Fisher's exact,  $p = .60$ )
- During entire study period: 2 (6.67%) in experimental group, 4 (12.12%) in control group (nonsign., Fisher's exact,  $p = .67$ )

# Results: Foster child's externalizing problems



# Results: Foster mothers' parenting stress



# Conclusions

1. Feasible to develop and implement a foster parent intervention in Flanders.
2. Good outcomes for foster children's externalizing problems and foster mothers' parenting stress.
3. More research needed concerning the longer term effects (e.g., breakdown).
4. More research needed concerning the mechanisms of change.

# Questions?

Thank you for your attention!

# References

- Achenbach, T., & Rescorla, L. A. (2000). *Manual for Aseba preschool forms & profiles*. Burlington: ASEBA.
- Achenbach, T., & Rescorla, L. A. (2001). *Manual for the Aseba school-age forms & profiles: child behavior checklist for ages 6-18*. Burlington: ASEBA.
- Robbroeckx, L. M. H., & Wels, P. M. A. (1996). *Nijmeegse vragenlijst voor de opvoedingssituatie: Handleiding*. Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Vanderfaeillie, J., Van Holen, F., Vanschoonlandt, F., Stroobants, T., & Robberechts, M. (2013). Children placed in long-term family foster care: a longitudinal study into the development of problem behavior and associated factors. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, 587-593.
- Vanderfaeillie, J., Van Holen, F., & Coussens, S. (2008). Why do foster care placements break down? A study on factors influencing foster care placement breakdown in Flanders. *International Journal of Child and Family Welfare, 2-3*, 77-87.
- Vanschoonlandt, F., Vanderfaeillie, J., Van Holen, F., & De Maeyer, S. (2012). Development of an intervention for foster parents of young foster children with externalizing behavior: Theoretical basis and program description. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 15*, 330-344.
- Vanschoonlandt, F., Vanderfaeillie, J., Van Holen, F., De Maeyer, S., & Robberechts, M. (2013). Externalizing problems in young foster children: Prevalence rates, predictors and service use. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, 716-724.
- Vanschoonlandt, F., Vanderfaeillie, J., Van Holen, F., De Maeyer, S., & Robberechts, M. (2013). Parenting stress and parenting behavior among foster mothers of foster children with externalizing problems. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, 1742-1750.