

GROWING TOGETHER: Participation in and outcomes of programs for parents of adolescents

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Avhandlingen för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsstyrelsen vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligens försvaras fredagen den 15 juni 2018, klockan 14:00 i sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Anna-Karin Andershed, Institutionen för juridik, psykologi & socialt arbete, Örebro universitet.

Föreliggande uppsats grundar sig på följande artiklar:

- I. Alfredsson, E. K., & Broberg, A. G. (2016). Universal parent support groups for parents of adolescents: Which parents participate and why? *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *57*, 177-184. doi: 10.1111/sjop.12278
- II. Alfredsson, E. K., Thorvaldsson, V., Axberg, U., & Broberg, A. G. (2018). Parenting programs during adolescence: Outcomes from universal and targeted interventions offered in real-world settings. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*. doi: 10.1111/sjop.12446
- III. Alfredsson, E. K., Thorvaldsson, V., Axberg, U., & Broberg, A. G. *Outcomes from programs for parenting adolescents: The adolescent perspective*. Manuscript submitted for publication.



Abstract

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This thesis is focused on parenting during children's adolescence and its overarching aim was to investigate universal supports offered to parents of adolescents, specifically group-based parenting programs. The thesis builds on a research project which followed 315 parents (of children aged 10–17) enrolled in community parenting programs in south-west Sweden. Three papers reporting on the project are included. **Study I** examined the characteristics of parents in universal (available to all parents in the population) parenting programs and their reasons for enrolling. The results showed that on a group level, parents who enrolled in these programs reported a more difficult psychosocial situation than parents do in general. Further, while the majority of parents gave general reasons for enrolling, about a fifth gave problem-oriented reasons. This replicates findings from studies of younger children and points to a difference between “universal” and “targeted” needs among parents, further supported by the findings showing that parents with problem-oriented motives reported greater child-related difficulties than those with general reasons. **Study II** explored the short- and long-term effects of both universal and targeted (aimed at families at risk or with identified problems) parenting programs on parenting strategies, family climate, and parental and adolescent mental health. The results revealed small to moderate changes in almost all outcome variables and in all parenting programs. Overall, parents in COMET reported the largest short and long-term changes. No substantial differences in change were seen between the other programs. The findings are mostly consistent with earlier studies of parents of adolescents as well as younger children. **Study III** investigated the adolescents' perspectives on their parents' participation in these programs. The results revealed consistent, yet mostly non-significant, patterns of perceived change in desirable directions. When relevant risk factors were considered, significant improvements were seen in adolescent psychological well-being during the intervention period, and adolescent attachment security and psychological problems showed positive change at one-year follow-up. In contrast, adolescents with reported exposure to increased interpersonal stress during the study period experienced a rise in psychological problems during the intervention period, which was maintained at one-year follow up. The pattern of change could not be traced to any particular program. The findings in the present thesis show that when programs for parents of adolescents are offered universally, they do reach parents in actual need of support whether they have general or more problem-oriented reasons for enrollment. The results further support the effectiveness of generic parenting programs when offered in real-world settings to parents with different needs. Finally, the results suggest that relevant contextual stress factors during adolescence need to be considered when the outcomes of parenting programs are investigated. The findings contribute to further understanding of participation in and outcomes of parenting programs during children's adolescence, from both the parental and the adolescent perspective.

Keywords: Adolescence, Adolescent mental health, Prevention, Universal prevention, Parenting, Parental support, Parenting programs

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