Evaluating the Normative View on Parental Involvement

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Abstract

While there is plenty of research around the benefits of parental involvement in schools and after-school programs, there is a lack of literature and examination into the negative effects of enforced parental involvement at this institutional level—particularly in cases where parents are triggers to youth who carry a history of trauma. In these cases, parental involvement may exacerbate the harmful effects of trauma and stress for youth. Though there need to be larger, wider-scoped studies about this concern, I attempt to address the problem through a case study conducted at Mar Vista Family Center. In their mission, they explicitly detail the enforcement of parental involvement with their "Shared Responsibility Model." Data for this study was collected using evaluative interviews and analytic memos. After five months, I found that intentions for creating safety-centered parents and that consideration around trauma-informed programming is deficient. There was no evidence to suggest that the youth at the center, who engaged with their parents, were experiencing trauma; however, the lack of data from youth participants prevented definite conclusions from being drawn. Therefore, I infer that there has been significant negligence in understanding this problem in both research and the institutional setting and that broad applications of parental involvement as a fail-safe solution for most youth are still potentially harmful to some. I conclude that youth-centered spaces and organizations ought to focus on creating safe spaces with the input of youth and with care around every experience.

Introduction

The prevalent norms and expectations surrounding parental involvement in youth-centered spaces, such as schools and after-school programs, reflect a widely shared belief in its positive impact. Parental involvement is generally considered to be a crucial element in enhancing a child's academic achievement, behavioral development, and social functioning at school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Kirkhaug et al., 2013). Extensive research and institutional programming play a role in normalizing parental involvement by highlighting its benefits. Nevertheless, it is essential to critically evaluate this longstanding assertion, taking into consideration the potentially negative side effects and outcomes.

A significant concern arises from the reality that youth who experience trauma at home might lack a safe space away from their trauma sources. Although there is an expectation that schools and after-school programs ought to provide environments where triggers can be avoided, many of these spaces operate under the premise of mandatory parental involvement. Consequently, if parents fail to actively participate in certain youth-centered establishments, their children may be disqualified from accessing the services provided. Such a system grants decision-making power solely to adults and inadvertently excludes children from discussions pertaining to their well-being. As a result, their voices and agency may be overshadowed, potentially hindering their overall growth and development.

Furthermore, as later discussed, youth who experience chronic trauma and stress may maladapt within learning environments, as they face difficulties with concentration, analysis, and creativity, amongst other associated challenges (Themane & Osher, 2014). The question surfaces: What if parents themselves contribute to these difficulties? While some struggling students may indeed profit from parental involvement, there may be others who are adversely affected by it, exposing the flawed assumption of a one-size-fits-all approach. This issue demonstrates that indiscriminate applications of, and imprudent reliance on, parental involvement as a solution may not yield universal benefits.

To understand the issue, this study investigates the potential counterproductivity of parental involvement in spaces that harbor youth who experience trauma. Gaining insight into this topic of interest necessitates an understanding of the concept of a safe space within youth-centered environments and how participants themselves define it. Also, if there are youth who experience trauma, it is important to properly identify whether they interact with parental figures. Although there are various relationships between youth and other adult figures besides parents, the scope of this paper focuses on the trauma inflicted by parents.

For this case study, research was conducted with Mar Vista Family Center, a community organization in Culver City, California, which offers many programs for youth, including, but not limited to, preschool education, college preparation, and after-school activities. A key component of Mar Vista Family Center's mission is its "Shared Responsibility Model," which requires parental involvement at every level. Their website describes the Shared Responsibility Model as follows:

> Starting with the preschool program, where parents agree to participate as assistant teachers for at least six hours per week, parents are encouraged to see themselves as partners in their children's development and education. Parents participate in weekly workshops, develop observational skills in the classroom, and learn practical skills in behavioral management. As their children mature, parents are trained as peer coaches to provide positive support to children, youth, and other parents in the community. Parents also participate in monthly community meetings and continuing workshops to develop the skills needed to play vital roles in their families and their community as decision-makers, advocates, leaders, mentors, classroom volunteers, and fundraisers (Mar Vista Family Center, 2020).

Research Question
How does the provision of safe spaces for youth experiencing trauma interact with Mar Vista Family Center's commitment to parental involvement?

Literature Review
The Complexity of Trauma
Trauma results from an event, or a series of events and circumstances, that individuals experience as physically or emotionally harmful and that has lasting adverse effects on the person's mental, emotional, physical, or social functioning and well-being (Mullaney, 2018).

Appropriately, experts have named the three components of trauma the three E's: event, experience, and effects (Mullaney, 2018).

When studying youth who deal with trauma, the term "trauma" is often used interchangeably with the term "adverse childhood experiences." Defining adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs can inform a richer understanding of the trauma being addressed in this research (Learn, 2014). ACEs are those circumstances inflicted upon—and beyond the control of—a child. Direct experiences include, but are not limited to, enduring sexual, verbal, or physical abuse; having a parent who uses drugs; having a parent who suffers from mental illness; having a parent who is a domestic violence victim; having an incarcerated family member; and losing a parent through divorce or abandonment (Learn, 2014).

Prevalence

Recent studies suggest that 68% of adolescents have experienced at least one traumatic experience in their lifetime (Langley et al., 2013). Millions of children undergo adverse childhood experiences—of which the majority occur within the family environment. According to some data, biological parents have been identified as the perpetrators of 81% of substantiated cases of child maltreatment in the United States (Hodgdon et al., 2013).

The Unhealthy Impacts of Trauma

Developmental and environmental factors are involved in the programming of an appropriate response to stressful conditions. Children and adolescents are incredibly susceptible to stress which makes for unhealthy responses in the brain and maladaptive learning behaviors when undergoing trauma during crucial periods of development (Steck & Steck, 2016). Chronic stressful exposures affect multiple developmental domains, such as regulation of affect and impulse, memory, attention, and interpersonal relations, and may lead to the development of mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Steck & Steck, 2016). Moreover, chronic experiences of trauma may eventually affect the entire body, leading to an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disorders, suppression of immunity, and reproductive impairments (Steck & Steck, 2016). Youth who perpetually experience trauma may live much of their lives in "fight-or-flight" mode, responding to the world as a place of constant danger (Dods, 2015; Learn, 2014). Flooded with stress hormones, they often can't focus on learning.

The Importance of Safe Spaces

When youth feel unsafe, their instinctive response to the perception of threat compromises their ability to attend to and process information, making it even more difficult to learn and thrive. Fortunately, some neurological and behavioral changes can be reversed by treatment interventions (Steck & Steck, 2016). Various studies demonstrate that the negative consequences of early traumatic exposure can be ameliorated by secure relationships with alternative care persons and the creation of a safe space for growth opportunities (Dods, 2015; Leenarts et al., 2013). Places for learning can foster a safe space for youth by providing a supportive, respectful, and caring environment where students are secure from harm. For youth to learn well in an educational space, there must be both a sense of safety and a provision of support (Themane & Osher, 2014). Support does not need to take the form of conversations on trauma to be trauma-sensitive. Supportive adults and environments can establish asset-based learning by empowering youth to meet their needs on their own (Hodgdon et al., 2013).

The Complexity of Parental Involvement

It is well established that parent involvement makes a positive impact on a child's education, leading to improved academic achievement (Kirkhaug et al., 2013); however, it may not offer a protective effect in the face of traumatic events or alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression (Hardaway et al., 2016). Thus, while parental involvement is beneficial, it may not be essential in creating a safe space for youth. In fact, some studies suggest that systems designed to support children and their upward social mobility may inadvertently exacerbate trauma symptoms. For instance, as parental stress correlates positively with parent-child relational frustration and a child's own stress, highly involved parents who experience significant stress may negatively affect their child's behavioral development (Learn, 2014). In the case of immigrant adolescents exposed to community violence, high levels of parental involvement coupled with exposure to violence are linked to increased proactive aggression, whereas low levels of parental involvement mitigate this association (Hamner et al., 2015). This paradoxical relationship suggests that, for immigrant adolescents experiencing high levels of parental involvement, proactive aggression may serve to assert autonomy (Hamner et al., 2015). Overall, youth who have experienced trauma—particularly those from high-risk backgrounds—may seek autonomy to distance themselves from risks at home and their parents (Rutter, 2001). The desire for autonomy and low parental involvement, alongside the perception of parents wanting high involvement, consistently leads to more problems for adolescents (Trost et al., 2007). These findings suggest that parental involvement may not always resolve issues as intended and can even pose risks instead of being protective.

Theoretical Framework
The Triad Spatial Model and Social Constructivist Theory

The triad spatial model, pioneered by Henri Lefebvre in 1974, provides a lens through which to understand our experiences with three distinct types of space: the conceived space, the perceived space, and the lived space. This model explores how these spaces are shaped by the design and construction of a physical environment, as well as by the subjective interpretations of individuals who occupy that space. The conceived space refers to the way a space is intentionally designed and the rules and regulations that govern its use (Lefebvre, 1991). It represents the idealized concept of the space as envisioned by its creators. The perceived space, on the other hand, reflects how the actual space is observed and experienced by its users, considering their expectations and individual perspectives (Lefebvre, 1991). It encompasses the subjective value that each individual assigns to the space, considering factors such as personal preferences, needs, and cultural background. The lived space captures the human experience within a given space, encompassing the actions, emotions, imaginations, and real-life encounters of its occupants (Lefebvre, 1991). It emphasizes the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment, highlighting how people actively shape and are shaped by the space they inhabit. Furthermore, the presence of people within a space influences how it is lived in, as certain individuals or groups may exert dominance over the space and influence the activities that take place within it (Lefebvre, 1991). This social aspect adds another layer of complexity to the understanding of spatial experiences.

Social constructivism is a movement in the social sciences that posits that individuals construct and interpret information in diverse ways, influenced by their unique processes of acquiring, selecting, interpreting, and organizing that information (Adams, 2006). The individual is actively participating in conceiving and shaping information through perpetual interaction with

and within the world. According to social constructivism, the construction, understanding, and interpretation of information are not solely individual endeavors but are deeply influenced by social interactions (Adams, 2006). Consequently, as individuals continuously experience and make sense of their surroundings, the information and knowledge they acquire cannot be dissociated from the social context in which they are accessed (Adams, 2006). By integrating the concepts of sensemaking from social constructivism and the triad spatial model, the study aims to provide a framework for examining how participants at Mar Vista Family Center make sense of their shared space and whether they perceive it as a safe environment. This approach acknowledges the dynamic interplay between spatial experiences, social interactions, and individual interpretations, highlighting the complex nature of the participant's understanding of their physical surroundings.

Methods
Evaluative Interviews

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the space occupied and contributed to by parents, staff, and volunteers, evaluative interviews were conducted. As a qualitative data collection method, these interviews entail in-depth conversations with individuals who are actively involved in a specific program of interest. The interview process was intentionally designed to be highly participatory, encouraging interviewees to evaluate the interview itself and provide real-time feedback to questions. These participatory elements aimed to shift power dynamics, foster a safe space, and build trust. Furthermore, the interviews examined the relationships between individuals, groups, programs, and the physical space. Interviews also delved into the interplay between past and present experiences, considering that many staff members had personal connections to the program through their own participation or their children's involvement. This exploration shed light on interpretations of the program's evolution and conceptions of trauma and safe space.

The interviews were conducted in a manner that reflected the relevant social conditions related to the research question and the chosen epistemological approach of the study. Consideration was given to participants' well-being, as trigger warnings were provided before sensitive questions and frequent check-in questions addressed their emotional states. Practical support, such as translation services, thoughtful selection of interview locations, breaks, provision of water, and topic transitions, were offered to ensure participants' comfort. All participants were respected as knowledgeable subjects, actively contributing their perspectives to the process of generating knowledge. To further cultivate trust and mutual understanding, fragments of the study's background were shared with the participants.

Analytic Memos

In addition to conducting interviews, another valuable source of data for this study was the collection of analytic memos. These memos recorded observations of interactions and meetings held in the pre-teen room and the "By Youth for Youth" program. Additionally, they captured various conversations I had with individuals not only at Mar Vista Family Center but also at other centers. By gathering insights and perspectives from multiple sources, I aimed to establish a validated standard for assessing and facilitating a safe space for youth. These analytic memos served to record and analyze important discussions, observations, and reflections that emerged during my interactions with participants. They provided a rich and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing the creation of a safe space and allowed for a comprehensive examination of

the topic. Through the careful examination of these memos, I could identify common themes, patterns, and unique insights that contributed to the overall analysis of the research findings. The inclusion of analytic memos in this study adds depth and validity to the exploration of creating a safe space for youth, incorporating a diverse range of perspectives and experiences into the research process.

Results

Safe Space Conceptions

Over five months, I gathered a total of 35 analytical memos and conducted evaluative interviews with six staff members, two volunteers, and two parents. Throughout the evaluative interviews with the staff members, a prominent theme emerged that united all participants: their understanding and definition of "safety" within the organization. Specifically, they emphasized the importance of effective communication between staff and parents regarding the well-being and activities of the children. This entailed the proactive measure of keeping the children "off the street and inside our facilities," thus safeguarding them from potentially unsafe situations, as one staff member aptly expressed. Regular updates were provided to parents, irrespective of their physical presence, to keep them informed about observations made about their children. This dichotomy between safety within the center and the outside world played a significant role in shaping the participants' perception of how space for youth should be conceived. Much of the language around the center portrayed it as a controlled environment—with control paralleling safety in our conversations.

During the interviews, an interesting aspect related to control within the center was indirectly explored, leading to divergent opinions among the staff regarding another facet of safety. Three staff members argued that ensuring safety for the youth involved "allowing children to be themselves" and emphasized the significance of creating a space where they could freely and genuinely express their individuality. According to this viewpoint, control within the center primarily focused on maintaining the presence of youth within the premises while fostering an environment that nurtured their self-expression. Conversely, the remaining interviewees asserted that while freedom was indeed important, it needed to be balanced with a level of supervision and regulation to mitigate potential risks. Thus, the concept of control extended beyond physical boundaries and encompassed surveillance and awareness of the environment. The more comprehensively the space's activities and dynamics were understood, the greater the perceived sense of safety. As a result, safety assumed a preventative framework, where its essence resided in the inhibition of unsafety.

These two defining conditions—the interplay of restricted or unrestricted freedom and the emphasis on communication with parents—consistently surfaced not only within the context of Mar Vista Family Center but also among nine other after-school programs in California that shared a similar mission. Although specific organizations remain unnamed to ensure confidentiality, the insights garnered from the memos collected from these additional programs significantly enriched the broader dataset, extending beyond the confines of the narrower case study. Upon reviewing all 35 analytical memos, numerous connections to the overarching notion of safety were discovered. For most participants, safety revolved around the notion of providing adequate supervision to ensure the well-being of the children, often involving active involvement from parents. Additionally, establishing a space that was secure and shielded from external threats beyond the physical boundaries of the facility was deemed central to fostering a safe environment for the youth participants. These findings underscore the multifaceted understanding of safety and shed light on

the diverse dimensions that contribute to the perception of a safe space for children within such organizations.

Misunderstandings of Trauma

In all interviews and discussions with those at Mar Vista Family Center and other organizations, a noteworthy revelation emerged regarding the concept of parental involvement as a potential trigger. This perspective had not been previously considered, and it prompted conversations that ultimately led to the discussion of a referral system connecting participants to other organizations specializing in trauma-based care. While these organizations implicitly or explicitly strive to create a safe space, most employ a model where parental involvement is enforced and is not optionally tailored to individual participants.

Within the context of Mar Vista Family Center, the program director emphasized the significance of reporting instances of abuse to child protective services. When asked about their understanding of trauma in relation to child-parent relationships, every participant at Mar Vista Family Center revealed that their understanding of trauma predominantly revolved around experiences of abuse. Surprisingly, each participant acknowledged the existence of one or more aspects that they had not associated with the term "trauma." Despite my efforts to clarify the broad spectrum of trauma by introducing the concept of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the prevailing perception remained that trauma had limited relevance to the center's activities. Intriguingly, none of the conversations or interviews provided a definitive response regarding whether the Mar Vista Family Center had actively considered or evaluated the potential negative effects of mandating parental involvement. However, it is worth noting that four of the interviewees dismissed the idea and passionately defended the Shared Responsibility Model that stood as a crucial component within the center's mission.

These findings shed light on misunderstandings surrounding the concept of trauma and its connection to parental involvement. The discussions at Mar Vista Family Center and with other organizations highlighted the need for a nuanced understanding of trauma and the importance of tailoring interventions to individual circumstances. It became evident that there is an opportunity for education and broader awareness regarding the diverse manifestations of trauma and its impact within the context of creating safe spaces for youth.

Parental Safety

One staff member highlighted the significant impact of group discussions with parents at different stages of the organization's programming. For instance, during the nap time of preschool children, Mar Vista Family Center facilitates conversations focused on the challenges parents face, fostering open dialogue to find community-based solutions. These sessions take place every weekday, lasting for one hour.

According to staff members, these discussions provide a valuable platform for parents to improve their relationships with their children. Through receiving feedback and effective strategies to address issues at home, many parents experience improvements in their parenting skills. Additionally, parent interviewees mentioned the opportunity to openly express their own traumas, ranging from challenging experiences during their upbringing to their involvement in present traumatic situations. Within these sessions, parents can share their learned approaches to parenting and explore the potential for personal growth and transformation. As one interviewee stated, the sessions enable parents to be "reprogrammed" in a way suggesting a shift in their understanding

and application of parenting strategies. When asked about the session and how it empowered parents in particular, the participant answered:

> Some of those parent sessions are based on parents looking back on how they were parented, which gives them the opportunity to observe themselves or reflect on parenting styles that they picked up on…It ultimately gives them the opportunity to tell their story, and to change the narrative.

This is an excellent exercise that the interviewee told me had "changed many lives." By fostering an atmosphere of trust and understanding, the sessions empower parents to voice their challenges, access collective wisdom, and explore alternative approaches to parenting. This participant's response underscores the significance of the sessions in empowering parents, enabling them to grow, connect, and cultivate a sense of agency in their parenting journey. From interviews and memos, it became clear that parents had a clearly defined safe space to reflect, work on parenting skills, and to even work through ACEs. Unfortunately, the need to structure the same empowering space for youth was seemingly ignored.

I mentioned this lack of a safe space in my initial analysis of the shared responsibility model throughout my memos, as I talked about the ways in which the mission was imposed upon youth without asking for their input or taking their case-by-case stories into consideration. The youth did not participate in the same kind of space building—they only are given the opportunity to occupy and perceive space. It was at this moment that I realized that excluding youth from my study was not only a limitation but a perpetuation of the experience in many of these organizations. Without their voice in this data, I was creating a space for staff and parents again that precluded youth from exercising their influence. Regrettably, I did not have time to change the scope of my research. I instead decided to investigate the pre-teen room and the By Youth for Youth (BYFY) program.

The Pre-Teen Room and the By Youth for Youth Program

The pre-teen room at the Mar Vista Family Center provides a safe and inclusive environment where young members belonging to this age group can freely interact and engage in discussions. A volunteer participant enthusiastically shared, "they can talk to each other about school, homework, problems at school, or whatever they want." However, the volunteer also noted a difference in communication dynamics when it comes to older youth. They hypothesized that the challenge arises from the teenagers' growing desire for independence as they navigate the delicate balance between asserting their autonomy and seeking guidance. During the interview, it became apparent that the volunteer tended to ascribe gendered traits to the communication difficulties observed. They highlighted male youth as being less open with their problems, suggesting that they may "sometimes need more attention." While it is important to approach such observations with sensitivity and avoid generalizations, it provides an avenue for further exploration and targeted assistance tailored to the needs of male youth within the pre-teen room. It is worth noting that the pre-teen room maintains a supervised setting, ensuring the well-being and safety of the participants. Parents are given the option to join their children in this space, yet it is interesting to observe that parental presence is relatively infrequent. This observation, recorded in memos and interviews, suggests that the pre-teen room acts as a preferred setting for youth to assert their independence and establish connections with their peers, enjoying a degree of separation from parental oversight.

The Mar Vista Family Center's "By Youth for Youth" program goes beyond facilitating discussions and exercises; it actively fosters an empowering experience rooted in democratic

processes. Within this program, a unique session called "clearing" allows participants to express their thoughts and emotions freely among their peers under the watchful guidance of adults. This exercise not only provides an outlet for self-expression but also nurtures personal growth by encouraging feedback and support from fellow young individuals. In an interview, one volunteer who supervised a recent meeting explained that clearing sessions are "empowering" for youth. According to memos collected from observations and from my interviews, there weren't any youth who brought up trauma as it related to parental relationships. They did, however, talk about traumatic events at home, school, and in their communities. When questioned about the potential impact of parental involvement within the organization, the volunteer participant conceded that it could potentially dissuade youth from vocalizing their concerns. It is important to recognize that children may choose to withhold certain topics of discussion, not solely due to parental involvement but also because they might harbor hesitations about sharing personal matters in any context. This interviewee shed light on the fearsome youth may experience as they contemplate whether to reach out to staff members for support. The potential repercussions, such as being removed from their homes or facing disciplinary actions from parental figures, can create understandable anxiety and reluctance. This underscores the significance of establishing a comprehensive support system that addresses mental health concerns and includes on-site therapists or specialized staff members who can provide the necessary guidance and assistance to youth facing challenging circumstances.

The insights shared regarding the pre-teen room and the "By Youth for Youth" program at the Mar Vista Family Center are derived from a comprehensive collection of memos and interviews. These sources paint a vivid picture of the dynamics and experiences within these spaces. The observations made by volunteers during their interactions with the youth were documented in memos, capturing the nuances and intricacies of the pre-teen room and the clearing sessions.

On-Site Mental Health Care

In the recent past, Mar Vista Family Center had a counselor who conducted annual training sessions to help staff members cope with vicarious trauma resulting from difficult conversations with families. The counselor emphasized the importance of creating a professional boundary and recommended a method called "building a screen." According to three interviewees, this approach allowed staff members to separate themselves emotionally from the individuals they were assisting, enabling them to handle challenging situations in an appropriate and controlled manner.

When it came to the center's policy on whom youth and parents could turn to for support, the consistent answer from every interview was an "open door policy." This meant that youth had the freedom to visit staff members, particularly the head of the center, to discuss their personal struggles; however, it was observed that parents tended to engage with staff members more frequently than the children themselves. Pre-teens and young adults appeared to be less inclined to approach staff members about incidents or issues, especially among male youth members, as previously mentioned.

In these open-door meetings, the Mar Vista Family Center employed a "five question" method for both parents and youth. This approach involved asking the following questions:

1. What is the problem?
2. I hear the problem. What do you want?
3. What are you doing about it?
4. Is that working for you?

5. What else do you think you might do?

This method encouraged individuals to reflect on their own challenges, allowing them to hear themselves and reframe their approach to the problem at hand. As mentioned, parents actively participated in these conversations at a higher rate compared to youth. Moreover, since the policy was based on an open-door approach, members were not typically prompted to engage in these reflection-based discussions unless they initiated the conversation themselves.

Discussion
The Normative Interpretation of Safety

Mar Vista Family Center, like all the other organizations I held discussions with, deeply cared about their youth and the education that participants were receiving in addition to their safety at the center. Still, when it came to the topic of enforcing parental involvement, none of the conversations or interviews provided a definitive answer regarding their approach or consideration of potential negative effects. Through my interviews and analysis of memos, I discovered two prevailing normative interpretations of safe spaces. Firstly, safe spaces were viewed as protective environments that keep youth indoors, shielding them from potential threats on the streets. In this context, varying degrees of control were exercised or built into the space, addressing the three types of space—conceived, perceived, and lived—with differing intensities. The objective was to create a controlled and secure environment for the youth. Secondly, a controlled approach was embraced, emphasizing surveillance and communication to ensure parents remained well-informed about their child's activities and well-being within the center. It was believed that safe spaces required ongoing supervision and observation, accompanied by regular and thorough communication of information about youth participants with their respective parental figures.

In terms of parental involvement, it was widely regarded as a positive and essential element for fostering an effective learning environment and nurturing healthy family relationships. This normative perspective aligns with broader research findings that highlight the benefits of parental engagement in youth programs. It appears that certain individual cases of youth dealing with trauma may, in fact, be slipping through the cracks of the Shared Responsibility Model and other models like it; however, further research is needed to delve into the potential implications and impact of enforced parental involvement for youth dealing with trauma.

A Lack of Attention to Trauma

The centers and the participants of my interviews all presented a lack of understanding of the nuances of the term "trauma." When presented with questions about trauma, they typically reinforced their policies around safety or exported the issues to other organizations that deal with such matters. Based on my literature review, trauma seems to be an incredibly pervasive issue with youth, and it ought to be dealt with at any organization serving young individuals.

To contrast Mar Vista Family Center's approach to safety, let's consider two organizations that prioritize trauma-informed care in their mission statements:

1. "Our staff is committed to providing the highest quality care by interacting with our patients in a therapeutic way, looking at each individual patient and not just the symptoms."
2. "The goal of our program is to provide critical resources and empower young people to take control of their lives, supported by trauma-informed care, harm reduction, and positive youth development strategies in a safe, non-judgmental environment."

Here, there is clearly more attention paid to the youth and their case-by-case conditions while still bringing up the language of empowerment. Nowhere in these statements were parental figures mentioned. Nonetheless, this comparison does not indicate a variance of action or direction in those organizations. It merely establishes a different frame of reference when thinking about how to work with youth. There also may not be a "best" mission statement or model, and the comparison is not an attempt to showcase one. Mar Vista Family Center works hard at what they do, and they try to do what they believe to be best. This case study interrogates their mission—and the Shared Responsibility Model specifically—as one example of how the conceived space may negatively impact the lived space for youth.

　　　Although my study does not confirm that youth dealing with trauma are specifically triggered in these environments, it suggests that the issue is not receiving sufficient attention. These centers genuinely care about their youth members, but the application of normative views to a vulnerable and developing population may contribute to overlooking the impact of trauma. Additionally, factors such as background and culture should be further considered. In one interview, a parent who had gone through the program as a child mentioned the difficulty of expressing criticism towards the center. They felt constrained due to their upbringing as an immigrant and were taught not to take such programs for granted. They expressed a reluctance to "bite the hand that fed them." Cultural teachings, socioeconomic status, and upbringing may deter youth from discussing traumas or criticizing the presence of their parents. This case study highlights the need for greater attention to trauma within these environments. It is imperative to recognize the diverse experiences and backgrounds of youth and to create spaces that are sensitive to their individual needs.

Conclusion

　　　Though centers like Mar Vista Family Center work hard to establish a safe space with intention, there is little to no attention paid to the potential harm from enforced parental involvement. Organizations ought to adjust their models, and implementations of such models, with care for each individual member. This approach can hopefully open a dialogue between the organization and youth participants to jointly create a safe space. Mar Vista Family Center deserves praise for much of the work that they do; however, there needs to be a way for discourse to take place in and around all the spaces that bring youth and parents together by necessity. Attention to this issue is necessary not only within the organizations themselves but also in the research conducted around these organizations and related topics. Urgent action is required to ensure that these spaces adapt to the needs of the community members they serve, providing comprehensive support to youth participants and increasing awareness of the complexities surrounding trauma in youth-oriented environments. By prioritizing the well-being and individual experiences of youth, organizations can create safer and more inclusive spaces that promote healing and growth.

Limitations

　　　Several limitations were encountered during this study, including challenges related to staff communication and availability, constraints in conducting interviews within the designated time frame, the inability to collect data directly from youth participants, and a scarcity of current literature on the topic.

Acknowledgments

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