

A Qualitative Case Study Evaluation of the Space Parenting Programme

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Abstract

The first three years of life are particularly important for a child's development, and the caregiving provided by parents and close family members (whānau) is arguably one of the most important factors for a child's development during this time. Programmes for parents during these early years of their children's lives have the potential to help parents develop effective caregiving skills, provide education on key topics related to early child development, and provide support systems for parents experiencing stress and/or isolation. Similar to other postnatal parenting programmes, Space for You and Your Baby (Space) is designed to support first-time parents during their transition into parenthood. Space is a programme offered by the Parenting Place, a national non-profit organisation offering a variety of parenting and community education programmes, and facilitated by local community partners (e.g., Play Centres, early childhood education providers, churches, and other social service providers). The aim of this collaborative evaluation case study was to investigate how the participants and facilitators involved in a local (Canterbury, New Zealand) Space programme evaluated their experiences with Space and compare these against the Space Theory of Change model. Mothers ($n=9$) and facilitators ($n=2$) from a local Space group participated in individual semi-structured interviews and were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, as well as three specific programme outcomes concerning their experiences; parenting confidence and self-efficacy, quality of mother-baby interactions, and social capital. All of the mothers reported that since the beginning of the Space programme, they felt as though their parenting confidence had increased; they generally reported that mother-baby interactions were improved; and reflected that the social environment of the sessions, the emotional support from others in the group, and the content and structure of the programme all contributed to enhanced

social capital. Feedback from facilitators was relatively similar to that of the parent interviews; however, there were some minor discrepancies across the two types of study participants in their reflections of the processes that promoted these outcomes. These results have practical implications for both the Parenting Place and the local community partner and are discussed in light of recent research on parenting support for first-time parents.

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As one of the mothers so fittingly said; “I feel like I've met some really special people who have added something to my life.”

A Qualitative Case Study Evaluation of the Space Parenting Programme

In Aotearoa New Zealand, new parents can access a variety of different resources that are designed to help them meet the demands associated with the transition to parenthood. A growing literature on early development and parenting and a proliferation of internet-based information sources has led to an increase in parents' ability to access a vast array of information on parenting-related topics from many different sources, such as parenting programmes. However, the extent to which these sources of information meets the needs of new parents or the extent to which parents attempt to apply the information and advice they encounter is only beginning to be investigated (Aston et al., 2018). Research that considers this issue has found that this abundance of information often leads to parents feeling overwhelmed and confused, and consequently anxious (Svensson, Barclay, & Cooke, 2006). Many parenting programmes will attempt to compile this information in a way that reduces this anxiety and produces positive outcomes for new mothers. This research will ultimately examine how this avenue of accessing information impacts new mothers, through evaluating a specific parenting programme in the local area in regards to its theoretical framework and previous literature.

Previous literature has indicated that there is a limited understanding of which resources are meeting the needs of parents (Aston et al., 2018). A study by Aston et al. (2018) investigated the parenting supports that new mothers were accessing and how this was influencing their social networks. A small sample of 37 mothers from Nova Scotia participated in a focus group or via an electronic interview. The results showed that mothers do not always receive postpartum support, either by choice or a lack of access, subsequently leading to a sense of isolation amongst new parents (Aston et al., 2018). The findings also indicated that these mothers made their parenting decisions based upon the information that they had gathered that aligned with their values and beliefs. Decision making typically

involved parents seeking advice from a variety of sources (a majority of which was online), and establishing a viewpoint that complemented both their perspectives and those that had been presented by others around them or online. A critical component determining how information was received was how it was delivered to parents. When mothers sought out advice for themselves, it was much more readily received than that which they felt had been forced upon them (Aston et al., 2018). This might be one reason why internet-based sources of information are so popular - other than the convenience, it allows parents to exercise their agency in determining what information to explore and the parameters around how information is filtered. Although resources for new parents are available in a variety of formats (e.g., prenatal classes, antenatal parenting programmes, conversations with family and friends, and via electronic and traditional print resources), each of which has its strengths and limitations, this research suggests that parents tend to be reactive rather than proactive in their attempts to become informed. The actions that expectant parents take to access these resources will largely depend upon their beliefs around what it will be like for them to have a baby and what they expect their support needs will be.

1.1 Beliefs of Expectant Parents about Having a Baby

Antenatal classes have been well documented as preparing parents for birth, yet they tend to neglect to educate new parents on what to expect once they arrive home with their baby (Buultjens, Murphy, Robinson, Milgrom, & Monfries, 2017). Although it is common for parents to not know what information they will need until they have a problem to overcome, participants in a study by Buultjens et al. (2017) noted that they felt unprepared for the immensity of the transition into becoming a parent. Further, women felt as though they were not adequately prepared for the psychological stressors associated with parenthood, even though it was something that they had read about previously. This insight demonstrates

that simply knowing about the transition to parenthood does not necessarily prepare an individual to effectively cope with the challenges that it may bring and that there is potentially a great need for psychological support for parents following birth (Buultjens et al., 2017).

Another study found that as women approached the end of their pregnancies, many of them expressed concerns about becoming isolated following the birth of their child. In contrast, men were more worried about the process of labour, their ability to care for their baby, and potential changes to the relationships with their partners (Svensson et al., 2006). These differences in concerns suggest that there are most likely gender differences present across the beliefs held by expectant parents about having a baby. However, all parents conveyed a preference for learning through education, rather than through trial and error, as they believed that this would reduce risks and avoid giving the impression that they were bad parents if mistakes were made (Svensson et al., 2006).

1.2 Preparing for Parenting

The study by Svensson et al. (2006) also demonstrated that parents prepared themselves for their new role as a mother or father by observing and speaking to others, learning through their own experiences with other babies, and by seeking support from those around them. Similarly, new parents found that talking to other people provided a great way to address questions or concerns that they had. This research showed that parents were particularly interested in community services, such as parenting programmes, that were available to them following birth.

In this regard, participants from the study conducted by Buultjens et al. (2017) reported that there was a need for more information on the support groups that were available to them postnatally. Improvements in this domain are crucial, as parents in the research by

Svensson et al. (2006) that had attended postnatal parenting groups described those groups as “essential”. The parents indicated that they provide opportunities for new parents to meet different people and can also clarify any questions that they might have about the vast array of information that they will be exposed to. Unsurprisingly, this study also showed that those who had more previous experience with parenting, pregnancy, and birth by observing and assisting those around them, were much more prepared for the personal challenges that were associated with being a new parent.

Mihelic, Filus, and Morawaska (2016) investigated the variables associated with postnatal adjustment of first-time mothers. Results were consistent with those produced by previous research (Gao, Sun, & Chan, 2014) in that high levels of social support were positively correlated with increased parental self-efficacy. However, this study found that support from family and friends was associated with lower maternal maladjustment, which was then found to be related to higher self-efficacy, rather than social support directly improving parenting self-efficacy. This relationship suggests that social support contributes to how well new mothers adjust to their parenting roles and this, in turn, influences their outlook and beliefs in their parenting abilities.

Postnatal parenting programmes are unique to other parenting programmes in that they are designed for new parents or parents who are experiencing a particularly difficult transition period with their new baby. Many postnatal groups such as Plunket, SKIP, and Baby and You place a strong emphasis on social support and teaching parents fundamental skills that will improve their confidence in themselves as parents as well as their confidence in their relationships with their babies. Parenting confidence is important to for new mothers, as it is an integral part of ensuring a positive transition into parenthood, as well as being vital for the development of positive mother-baby interactions. Confidence also helps parents to better care for their baby and creates feelings of accomplishment and fulfilment in regards to

their role as a parent (Kuo et al., 2012) Research has demonstrated that multiparous parents experience greater parenting confidence than primiparous parents, therefore, it is especially important to promote confidence in new mothers (Kuo et al., 2012). Furthermore, participation in postnatal parenting programmes is viewed by some as a primary prevention strategy, as it can promote positive developmental outcomes and reduce the influence of risk factors in the babies' microsystems (Hanna, Edgecombe, Jackson, & Newman, 2002).

1.3 Parental Expectations of Postnatal Parenting Programmes

Of the resources available to first-time parents in New Zealand, it appears as though some approaches are more kindly received by parents than others. de Haan (2016) interviewed 27 first time New Zealand mothers, aged between 16 and 40, living within the Auckland region to determine the nature of their early experiences with parent education. Responses indicated that the approaches that were currently being taken within parenting programmes may not be suitable for people of different cultures, such as those who identify as Māori. Another common theme was that although parents felt well trained and educated on the birthing process, they did not know what to do once the baby had arrived and felt incredibly underprepared for their transition into parenthood. A sample of new parents from Australia reported similar concerns, noting that their antenatal education did not prepare them beyond what to expect during their pregnancy and labour (de Haan, 2016). de Haan (2016) also found that even though some parents felt as though they were being supported in parenting and caring for their baby, they did not feel supported in caring for themselves during this time. These findings reinforce the necessity of postnatal education to assist new parents following the birth so that they can continue to be adequately supported throughout the various stages of parenting and their babies' development.

1.4 Postnatal Parenting Programmes: Theory, Design, and Evidence-Base

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy describes how an individual judges their competence and capacity to effectively cope in a given situation. Someone with high levels of self-efficacy will be more likely to partake in an activity, even when difficulties arise, than someone who has low self-efficacy. This variable tends to be influenced by a person's previous experiences, social influences, observing others partake in the activity, and the mental state of the individual (Gao et al., 2014). Much like parenting confidence, parenting self-efficacy refers to a man or woman's perception of their ability to cope with the demands of parenting and how they perceive their parenting skills. Bandura suggests that women who possess high levels of parenting-efficacy will feel accomplished and satisfied in their role as a mother, avoid blaming themselves for misfortunes, and persist when parenting tasks become difficult. She is, therefore, more likely to establish a responsive and positive relationship with her baby than a mother with lower parenting-efficacy.

Parenting-efficacy not only contributes to positive parenting behaviours, but it is also an important contributing factor when it comes to the psychological well-being of new mothers (Gao et al., 2014). Further, it is believed that social support has a positive impact on how efficacious parents feel. Therefore, to examine the relationship between the two variables, Gao et al. (2014) examined how perceived levels of social support impacted the parenting self-efficacy of 68 women in China through a secondary analysis of longitudinal data. The original study collected information from mothers during pregnancy, six weeks postpartum, and three months postpartum. The results showed that although social support and self-efficacy reduced following childbirth, parenting-efficacy improved between the second and third time points (six weeks and three months postpartum). This suggests that in alignment with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, having more experience with tasks associated with being a mother helped to improve the parenting-efficacy of the mothers at three months

postpartum. The authors also found that mothers who perceived better social support were more likely to also report increased parenting-efficacy. This finding further supports Bandura's theory, as the social support that mothers receive is likely to include both emotional encouragement and practical advice from those around them, resulting in an enhanced level of self-efficacy.

The first few years of life are particularly important for a child's development, therefore, ensuring that parenting is effectively nurtured during this time provides a solid foundation for positive outcomes later in life (Parfitt & Ayers, 2012). Parenting programmes can be a useful strategy for helping parents to navigate this challenging time, however, it is necessary for those running these programmes to use evidence to inform their practice. Researchers have generally found postnatal parenting programmes to be effective for eliciting positive change in several areas. Hanna et al. (2002) found that parents who have attended parenting groups experience preferable outcomes related to parenting skills, child health and nutrition, and maternal self-esteem, as long as seven years after participation, compared to those who did not attend a support group.

Research by Fielden and Gallagher (2008) found that, compared to parents who already had children, first-time parents found participation in parenting programmes more valuable in terms of social capital and parenting confidence. However, there were also gains realised for all parents, such as the social interaction between participants. Scott, Brady, and Glynn (2001) demonstrated that parenting groups can turn into long-term social networks with sustained benefits, even when they are no longer officially a group. Specifically, they found that all but one of the 24 groups they followed continued to meet after their parenting programmes concluded. This finding highlights the importance of these social interactions to new mothers and the ongoing social benefits and connections that can be produced by this form of support.

A study designed to examine the effectiveness of a technology-based postnatal parenting programme randomly assigned 118 couples to either an intervention or control condition (Shorey et al., 2019). The intervention group received two phone-based sessions (one before birth and one shortly after), as well as access to a mobile application throughout the following month. The control group were simply given the support that the hospital would typically provide (Shorey et al., 2019). The educational programme was informed by theoretical underpinnings from Bandura's Self-efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977). Outcomes of parental bonding, self-efficacy, and satisfaction, postnatal depression and anxiety, and perceived social support were assessed. From baseline to three months, those in the intervention group displayed significantly better outcome scores than those in the control group in areas of parental bonding, social support, self-efficacy, parental satisfaction and depression. They also experienced lower levels of anxiety when covariates were adjusted for (Shorey et al., 2019). These findings show that not only may parents feel more supported and confident when they have participated in a parenting programme, but they also score better on indicators of dyadic processes such as attachment, compared to control group counterparts.

1.5 Postnatal Parenting Programmes in New Zealand

Just as there are differences between parents and their early experiences of parenthood, parenting programmes also have their unique characteristics and goals. New parents in New Zealand have a limited range of options for postnatal parenting education and support, and while each of the programmes ultimately aims to provide new parents with the

best start in their parenting journey, the theoretical orientations and practices are rather distinct across the different providers.*

1.5.1 Plunket (PEPE).

Background and rationale. The Royal New Zealand Plunket Society was founded in 1907 to promote the welfare and health of infants in New Zealand by supporting and educating mothers. Currently, it is the leading health and family service provider in the country, with Plunket nurses seeing more than 90% of families with children under five (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008). Plunket is responsible for the organisation of many additional resources in the community such as toy libraries, playgroups, drop-in centres, and early childhood education. In conjunction with these services, Plunket nurses are made available on a free 24/7 phone service to assist parents however they need (Plunket, 2019). Plunket offers five free courses with the shared goal of helping parents through different periods of their child's development, promoting parenting confidence, and assisting parents to connect with others in their area (Health Navigator New Zealand, 2019). One of these programmes is a group Parenting Education Program (PEPE), focused on promoting positive attitudes and parenting skills, as well as building social capital (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008).

Practice. PEPE has four courses and is primarily designed for first-time parents. The goal of the programme is to support parents by giving them the tools and knowledge to raise healthy and secure children. The role of the facilitator is to create cohesion within the group and to foster connections within the community, ultimately building social capital in the group. The first of the PEPE courses is an antenatal programme designed to prepare parents for the first six weeks of their baby's life. The second of the PEPE courses, Your Growing

* There is an additional programme beyond those listed that is based in Christchurch, New Zealand called *Babies Can Play*. However, there was not enough information on this programme's theory, practice or evaluation to be discussed in this evaluation.

Baby (YGB), is targeted at parents of babies aged six weeks to one year and is 12 hours long. The content builds on that of the first antenatal programme and aims to make parents confident in their abilities by building on their pre-existing strengths, establish goals for their trajectories and understand their baby better. The final two courses lead on from YGB and are for parents of toddlers and pre-schoolers (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008).

Evaluation. Fielden and Gallagher (2008) conducted a retrospective survey to evaluate YGB by using three different questionnaires containing up to 30 questions that had been specifically developed for the study. Results showed that participating parents believed the programme helped them create strong social networks with members of community groups and other parents in the course, as well as promoting supportive and trusting relationships with their infant, family members, and other people within their social networks. Their expectations of the programme had been met and they felt as though their parenting confidence and skills had increased due to their participation in the programme. Further, participants reported that the course had given them new ideas about how to cope with parenting challenges and deepen their understanding of their baby's needs (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008).

1.5.2 Strategies with Kids – Information for Parents (SKIP).

Background and rationale. SKIP is designed to provide information, support, and parenting strategies for the parents and caregivers of young children aged between 0-5 years (Health Navigator New Zealand, 2019). The programme attempts to inform parents about their child's development, how this influences their behaviour, and how they should respond and alter the environment to promote optimum growth. Parenting styles are also a focus in SKIP, therefore, it is a goal to teach parents about how their parenting practices may influence their child's developmental trajectory. Finally, behavioural and developmental

issues are also considered in the programme, with potential solutions and strategies made available to parents (Health Navigator New Zealand, 2019)

Practice. Currently, SKIP advertises its approach toward supporting communities as being a seven-step, whānau-centred process that involves working with parents to design projects that produce sustained outcomes. The framework begins by collaborating with local parents to define what the focus of the project is and who will be involved. The next two stages involve preparation, followed by the interviewing of whānau to gain insight into the lived experiences of those in the community. Themes are then drawn from these interviews to create more defined goals for the subsequent implementation of the project, which is then co-created with parents to enhance the likelihood of success. Finally, these ideas are turned into action, with opportunities for redevelopment and necessary adjustments to be made (S.K.I.P, n.d.).

Evaluation. The Ministry of Social Development commissioned researchers to produce an evidence base regarding parenting variables such as influences on parenting practices, physical discipline, cultural considerations, and engagement with the programme and community partners so that the findings could inform how SKIP was developed. The fundamental elements that were integrated into the programme in response to the investigation were using an empowering and positive approach towards parents; working within a culturally responsive context; utilising an ecological, life-span model; being aware of parents' readiness and openness to behaviour change; supporting parents in their adoption of positive parenting practices; and creating a supportive environment for parents. Although this report was not an evaluation of the programme as such, it provided an initial framework of empirically supported elements to include in the programme (Ministry of Social Development, 2005). Evaluation research regarding the how these practices have since been

implemented by the programme or more general examinations of the programme in practice could not be found.

1.5.3 Baby Triple P.

Background and rationale. In 2001, Sanders' Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P) was internationally licensed and has since become one of the most widely used and evidence-based parenting programmes in the world (Triple P, n.d.). Triple P has recently grown from solely focusing on behavioural management of children from early childhood through to teens, to trialling an additional baby version that can accommodate for the families of children under one year of age (Butler, Hare, Walker, Wieck, & Wittkowski, 2014). The original intervention is based upon cognitive behavioural, social learning, and developmental theories, and has five different levels of intensity to cater to the various needs of parents. Level 1 of Triple P uses a universal approach to improve the general awareness and knowledge of parents, whereas level 5 involves specialised strategies targeted at families facing significant distress (Butler et al., 2014).

Practice. The Baby Triple P programme has been designed to fit in with the level 4 criteria of intervention. It is intended to promote positive parenting skills that reduce distress and assist with developing a secure attachment. The programme aims to increase social support from partners and family, to provide mothers with strategies for improved coping, and to reduce the impact of mental health challenges (Wittkowski et al., 2018). Baby Triple P intends to promote maternal confidence and competence in parenting and to subsequently improve the quality of relationships between mothers and their babies, their attachment, and wellbeing (Wittkowski et al., 2018).

Evaluation. Baby Triple P is still being reviewed and revised by its creators to ensure its effectiveness and to become as empirically supported as the original programme.

Regardless of its continual development, in a feasibility study by Butler et al. (2014) set in a Mothers and Babies unit in Manchester, the programme was regarded by all of the parents participating as a non-stigmatising and positive approach that helped them to learn new skills and cope with issues within the family. The mothers consistently recognised that the therapeutic relationship was important, as was being able to discuss parenting concerns and issues (Butler et al., 2014). Other existing research includes a randomised control trial that looked to compare Baby Triple P to treatment as usual for mothers with Postnatal Depression. The 27 participants aged 18 to 45 years, were assessed post-treatment and at a three-month follow-up. Both groups experienced significant improvements between the baseline and the follow-up assessments. However, although those who participated in Baby Triple P experienced greater improvements than treatment as usual, the difference between the groups was not significant (Tsivos, Calam, Sanders, & Wittkowski, 2015).

1.5.4. Baby and You

Background and rationale. A further example of a parenting programme in New Zealand is Baby and You. This group-based course has been designed to follow on from antenatal classes and provide some tips and strategies to help ease the transition into parenthood from birth to three months. At this stage, there is nothing that has been published about the theoretical framework of Baby and You or a theory of change.

Practice. The service is intended to give new mothers access to information and support that will enable them to effectively cope with the challenges that they face in the first three months as new parents, whilst also learning to enjoy the rewarding moments that they will experience during this time (Parents Centre, 2019). Therefore, advice on self-care strategies, age-appropriate toys, and practical information that may be useful for new parents during this stage are all included in the service. The coordinators of the programme, Parents

Centre, propose that support networks are integral for parents thriving during these first months of parenthood. Consequently, educators provide solutions and advice on how to cope with issues such as relational changes and feeding, whilst simultaneously allowing other parents the opportunity to offer support and share stories about their personal experiences on the subject (Parents Centre, 2019).

Evaluation. Despite searching academic databases and the internet, an evaluation of the Baby and You programme could not be sourced, therefore the success of the implementation of these theories and practices is unknown.

1.6 Space for You and Your Baby

The focus of this thesis is on the New Zealand postnatal parenting programme called Space for You and Your Baby (Space). The programme was developed by PlayCentre in 2003 and was incorporated into the Parenting Place, a national non-profit organisation offering a variety of parenting and community education programmes, in 2018. Similar to other postnatal parenting programmes, Space is designed to support first-time parents during their transition into parenthood, however, it typically runs for much longer than other similar programmes (30-40 weeks rather than 6-10 weeks) (L Amersfoort, 2018).

1.6.1 Theory

A foundational document for the Space programme is their Theory of Change (ToC) model (see Appendix G). The Space ToC is similar to a logic model (Yin, 2013) in that it has been created by Space to provide a framework that explains all of the various elements that contribute to the programme. This includes an outline/summary of antecedent conditions, community partner profiles, target participant profiles, Space components, programme processes and both the short-term and long-term participant outcomes (Amersfoort, personal communication, February 10, 2019). Logic models, like Space's Theory of Change, are used

to communicate the relationships between an intervention or programme and the outcomes that it has been hypothesised to produce. These models may also be used to inform how data is collected during an evaluation project. When the data aligns with the expected outcomes, logic models provide a framework for an explanation as to how this has occurred and which processes are responsible for eliciting the experienced changes (Yin, 2013).

Space was developed by Playcentre and is consequently based upon the same theoretical model. An article containing an outline of the Playcentre programme philosophy mentions that it (and therefore Space) should be responsive and flexible to accommodate the needs of families and individuals, empower people to take on new learning opportunities and challenges by creating supportive and safe environments and by considering different learning styles and needs. The model also reflects the cultural diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand and reflects Māori principles (Playcentre Education, 2019). These domains outline some of the key philosophical underpinnings of the Space programme and provide a foundation upon which the content and sessions are based.

Another core component of Space is its theoretical basis in experiential learning. This means that parents are expected to practice the skills modelled to them during sessions so that they can receive feedback and gain confidence. This approach is included to create opportunities for parents to experiment with new strategies and information presented during the sessions, whilst receiving support and feedback from facilitators and other group members as they develop new parenting skills (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019).

Antecedent conditions. Antecedent conditions in a Theory of Change are the cultural, societal, and social conditions that create a need for a prevention or intervention programme. In the case of first-time parents, the antecedent conditions are the issues that often arise during the transition to parenthood. The ToC model states that Space is a

necessary resource due to the assumption that a majority of funded parenting programmes are targeted at those believed to be in the most need, leaving many parents who require assistance but do not meet the criteria of being high risk, unsupported. Further, the Space ToC proposes that parenting programmes are generally delivered as interventions for parents who are experiencing problems, rather than a fundamental part of supporting individuals and couples as they enter parenthood (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019). Finally, the ToC proposes that new parents frequently feel judged by others, unsupported, isolated, anxious, and guilty about their parenting capabilities and the decisions that they are making for their child, even if they are not considered to require parenting intervention (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019).

Short-Term Outcomes. According to the Space ToC, the long-term outcomes described below are facilitated by the ongoing achievement of several short-term outcomes. As there are several short-term outcomes identified in the Space ToC, it is beyond the scope of the current study to examine all of them. Thus, three short-term outcomes have been selected in collaboration with the Parenting Place and the local community provider to be examined in this evaluation: improved quality of mother-baby interactions, increased parenting confidence, and building social capital (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019).

Long-Term Outcomes. The Space ToC proposes that the Space programme should contribute to long-term outcomes in which parents are competent and adaptable and able to raise children who are active, contributing members of society. Space aims to help to create a shift towards a society in which people are accepting and supportive of differences between parents. Finally, Space hopes to encourage families to learn about the strengths within a community and what it has to offer so that the latent resources within a community are utilised as much as possible (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019).

1.6.2 Space in Practice

Space provides a low-cost support system for parents following the birth of their first child. The six components that characterise the practice of the programme include its delivery through community partners, a group format involving both parents and babies, the curriculum content, an extended timeframe, a discussion-based facilitation style, and the theoretical basis in experiential learning. According to the ToC, contextual factors, such as the characteristics of those involved in Space, the environment in which it is delivered, and social and cultural variables, are believed to promote (or hinder) the occurrence of several processes that lead to specific participant outcomes (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019). These said processes that have been hypothesised as being facilitated during Space sessions range from families being understood in terms of diversity and individual differences, to encouraging parents to reflect on their parenting practices and sharing information during sessions (see Appendix G for more) (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019).

Space is unique compared to other postnatal parenting programmes in that it specifically focuses on supporting first-time parents throughout much of the first year of life with their baby, rather than only offering support in the short-term (The Parenting Place, 2018). Sessions last approximately two hours and are held weekly for 20 to 40 weeks -much longer than parenting programmes typically run for (L Armstrong, 2018). Session content covers issues such as sleeping and crying, becoming a parent, establishing attachment, brain development, communication and language development, play strategies, physical development and socialisation (The Parenting Place, 2020)

Although sessions may not all follow the same structure, the following is an example of the sleep session guidelines that were provided by the Parenting Place. The first 20 minutes of the session are set aside for the introduction, which includes a karakia (prayer),

waiata (songs), whakatauki (metaphor or proverb) and a sharing moment. Following this, 15 minutes are then spent on music, including songs that are age-appropriate for babies, such as *head, shoulder, knees* and *round and round the garden*. The core part of the session is 40 minutes focused on the weekly topic, in this case, sleep. This particular session uses this time to brainstorm as a group, have facilitators present on the topic, and to prompt the group with questions. Participants then complete small group work and fill in their journals, up until the 20-minute morning tea break. Once the break has finished, mothers participate in a craft activity, followed by a short play session for the babies. A book is then read to the group before a round-robin styled discussion about personal experiences relating to the weekly topic is completed. Finally, the session closes with another karakia and the farewell song.

Space is facilitated throughout New Zealand by local community partner organisations that primarily use volunteer facilitators. Space facilitators receive training, a detailed curriculum, and access to other resources (e.g., videos, hand-outs, etc.), but generally operate quite autonomously and free from the supervision of Parenting Place coordinators or managers. Although this unique method of programme distribution could arguably create challenges for programme fidelity, it is assumed that community partners possess values that align with those of Space and therefore the facilitators will be able to present Space in a satisfactory manner (Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019). However, this assumption has not been formally tested. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the Space programme in collaboration with a local community partner. This study was commissioned by Parenting Place to further understand the needs that new parents have, and the perceptions that parents and local facilitators hold of how effectively Space addresses those needs.

1.6.3 Previous Space Evaluation

The Parenting Place Research, Evaluation and Development Team conducted a retrospective evaluation of the Space parenting programme in 2018, recruiting participants from the past five years ($N = 685$). A questionnaire was designed for parents to reflect on their experiences of becoming a parent and attending the Space programme (L. Amersfoort & Friesen, 2020). Responses to demographic questions indicated that all but three of the participants were female; all but one of the participants attended the programme with their biological child; 85% identified as Pākehā; more than 80% had a minimum of a Bachelor's degree level qualification, and 70% had returned to work in professional or managerial roles at the time of responding to the survey. A large majority of parents expressed that they chose to attend Space to make friends and meet new people, as well as to receive support from other first-time parents who shared similar experiences. Location, recommendations, and specific characteristics of the programme also contributed to parents' decisions to choose Space over other programmes (L. Amersfoort & Friesen, 2020).

More than three-quarters of the participants in the study reported that Space had positively contributed to the quality of their interactions with their child; assisted in improving their confidence as parents; provided information and strategies that were easily accessible and relevant to them; and helped them to build social capital and expand their social network (L. Amersfoort & Friesen, 2020). These responses were found to be unrelated to the demographic of the participants, which the research team considered to be important. Participants recalled that the aspects of Space that they found to be most beneficial in the long term were most commonly related to the sense of community that the programme had helped them to establish and the support that it had provided from parents who were sharing similar life experiences. Only 20% of the participants noted that the information provided within the programme (either from the facilitators or other parents) was the most helpful

component of Space. These responses demonstrate that for this sample of parents, that the social aspects of Space such as support and encouragement, were more important to the parents than the curriculum or content of the sessions themselves (L. Amersfoort & Friesen, 2020).

Comparison and Contrast Across Programmes. Given the limited information on some of the programmes reviewed above, it is difficult to make in-depth comparisons across these four programmes. Nevertheless, there are a few points of comparison that stand out. All of the programmes appear to share aims to support parents by providing parenting strategies, improving their confidence, facilitating stronger relationships within their communities and families, and promoting participant well-being.

Space, SKIP, Plunket and Baby and You all originate from New Zealand and place a strong emphasis on the country's culture and communities. Alternatively, Triple P was founded in Australia and has grown internationally from initially being a parenting programme for children of all ages to accommodating the specific needs of parents, such as those with young babies. In contrast, the four New Zealand based programmes were all specifically designed to cater to mothers and babies. Baby and You and SKIP both lack the large evidence-base of Triple P and the more modest evidence base for Plunket's PEPE programme, most likely because Baby and You and SKIP are much smaller and lesser-known than the latter options. Space also had limited research in support of the programme outside of the retrospective study that was recently conducted.

Space intends to promote specific outcomes for parents and babies. As it is beyond the scope of this study to examine them all, we worked with Parenting Place and a local community provider, to identify three outcomes to examine in this study – parenting confidence, quality of mother-baby interactions and social capital. The following sections will discuss existing research examining other parenting programmes concerning these

selected outcomes. This will provide context for the findings of this study and will also demonstrate where there are gaps in current literature that this study could fill.

1.7 Promoting Parenting Confidence

Previous literature has suggested that not only does participation in parenting groups help to reduce maternal stress and provide an avenue to establish meaningful relationships, but it also improves parenting confidence (Hanna et al., 2002). Fielden and Gallagher (2008) considered how participation in a parent education programme for first-time parents was related to parenting confidence. Results showed that at least 95% of parents that were surveyed felt as though their confidence in their ability to parent had increased due to their participation in a parent education programme (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008). Other evaluations of group parenting programmes support these findings, with results displaying an improvement in the confidence and parenting skills of the participants (Farquahar, 2003). These findings are important because research has also demonstrated that new mothers who have not participated in programmes have reported feeling the need to gain more confidence in their parenting practices and themselves (Gibson & Hanson, 2013).

In a cross-sectional study by Liu, Chen, Yeh, and Hsieh (2011), 372 postpartum Taiwanese women completed a self-report questionnaire covering demographic information as well as measures of maternal competence, confidence and stress. When controlling for confounding variables, results showed that high levels of maternal competence and confidence were correlated with low levels of parenting stress in mothers. Analyses also demonstrated that not only was maternal confidence directly related to parenting stress but it also indirectly affected parenting stress via maternal competence (Liu et al., 2011). Participants in this research, and some others that have been referenced, were not required to be first-time mothers, therefore the findings may not fully reflect the unique experiences

associated with the initial transition to parenthood. However, it is likely that these patterns are still applicable for first-time mothers, even if it is to a differing degree of intensity. This research highlights the need to support mothers through promoting their confidence and competence in parenting, as it will not only benefit their sense of self-efficacy, but it will also reduce their levels of parenting-related stress and potentially improve their parenting ability.

Shorey et al. (2017) conducted a randomised control trial to analyse the changes produced by a postnatal parenting programme. The syllabus was delivered through a mobile-health application with the intent of improving parenting experiences during the postpartum period. Parenting outcomes of self-efficacy, postnatal depression, satisfaction, and social support were all examined within the research using methods that had shown good reliability and validity. Two-hundred and fifty participants were assigned to either an intervention group (n=126) or a control group (n=124). Results showed that parents who participated in the programme experienced small but statistically significant improvements four weeks postpartum in parenting satisfaction, social support, and self-efficacy, compared to the control group who showed a statistically significant decrease in these outcomes (Shorey et al., 2017). These findings suggest that participating in a parenting programme can have small positive effects on how confident parents feel in their role as a new parent and how satisfied they feel about their experiences during this time.

In their meta-analysis, Barlow, Smailagic, Huband, Roloff, and Bennett (2012) evaluated 48 studies (N = 5,000) to determine how group-based parenting programmes could influence parental psychological health. Results across these various randomised control trials showed that programmes typically produced some statistically significant short-term (six-month) outcomes in areas such as anxiety, stress, depression, guilt, anger, confidence, and partner satisfaction, but the pooled effect sizes were almost all in the small range (except for reduced anger which was moderate) (Barlow et al., 2012). Further, data showed that not

only does parents' confidence improve and stress levels decrease in the short-term, but these two variables showed significant and sustained improvements at six-month follow-ups. This indicates that group-based parenting programmes can be particularly influential for parents in these two crucial areas, initially after the programme ends. Unfortunately, at one-year follow-ups, none of the benefits associated with parental well-being continued to demonstrate a significant change, therefore, further research may be required to investigate the variables that could lead to more sustained outcomes.

The aforementioned literature shows that strategies designed to increase the confidence of primiparous and multiparous mothers through parenting programmes can be effective. As discussed and shown above, parenting programmes can be a useful method for filling this need in society, as they produce significant improvements in confidence that last for a moderate amount of time. However, the literature specifically regarding the confidence of first-time mothers is somewhat limited and there will likely be discrepancies between these mothers and their more experienced counterparts. The current investigation will seek to explore whether Space can also promote an increase in parenting confidence, despite the differences in research methodology and programme structure between the present study and those that have been reviewed.

1.8 Improving the Quality of Mother-Baby Interactions

In addition to increasing parenting confidence, another hypothesised outcome of Space is an improvement in the quality of mother-baby interactions. Previous research has found that parenting programmes can influence parents' behaviours and their attitudes, often resulting in an increased understanding of their child's development and actions (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008). Similarly, community-based parenting groups have been shown to foster both parent-child and parent-parent interactions (Davies & Harman, 2016)

Research has demonstrated the importance of the quality of mother-baby interactions on child development, particularly for cognitive, socioemotional, language, and brain development, as well as their attachment style (Parfitt & Ayers, 2012). Evidence also suggests that maternal sensitivity is a key component in the development of babies' attachment styles and the quality of mother-baby interactions (Parfitt & Ayers, 2012). The relationship that develops between a mother and baby derives from the quality of interactions between the two of them. It is a reciprocal process to which both the mother and the baby contribute. Issues such as excessive crying and disturbed sleep can interfere with the development of a positive relationship, as can maternal psychopathology (Parfitt & Ayers, 2012). Parfitt and Ayers (2012) examined how parental mental health and anger issues impact the relationship that parents can form with their baby. The authors found that having poor mental health or difficulty managing anger negatively impacted both mothers' and fathers' subjective experiences of parenting, as well as how they perceived their baby and their relationship with them. Therefore, it is likely that psychopathology and difficulties with anger in new parents will negatively influence how they are interacting with their baby. Importantly, the authors recognised that high parental self-efficacy can act as a buffer for depression, relational issues, and stress for parents, and also improves child outcomes (Parfitt & Ayers, 2012).

Kaminski, Valle, Filene, and Boyle (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 77 parenting programme evaluations to determine the key components involved in effective parenting programmes. Analyses showed that programmes that trained parents on how to increase positive parent-child interactions and those which required parents to practice the skills that they had learnt during sessions, were much more successful and produced larger effect sizes than those that did not include these components. These findings existed regardless of the other content that was included in the programmes or how information was delivered to

parents (Kaminski et al., 2008). Although this research did not focus specifically on the postpartum period, it demonstrates how important parent-child interactions are during childhood and how it can influence developmental outcomes.

Giallo, Cooklin, Wade, D'Esposito, and Nicholson (2014) investigated the mediating effect of parenting behaviours in the relationship between maternal postnatal mental health and later emotional and behavioural outcomes of their children. Although this research was not connected to a parenting programme, it illustrated the types of needs that parents have and how these relate to child development. Psychosocial outcomes of the participating children were examined at age seven to assess whether the hypothesised correlations and mediating effects were evident. The analyses showed that parenting hostility, as measured by the National Longitudinal Survey of Children, in which mothers rated their feelings of anger and irritability during interactions with their child on a 5-point scale, mediated the relationship between postnatal maternal mental health and their child's outcomes. However, parental warmth did not influence this relationship (Giallo et al., 2014). The overall indirect effects of parental distress on behavioural and emotional difficulties were significant, however, they were small ($ab=0.12$; $ab=0.14$ respectively). This research highlights the important role of maternal well-being in the time following birth and how it can influence subsequent parenting behaviours and childhood outcomes. Further, the results of this study convey the need for parenting support following birth to encourage optimal parenting practices and improve the interactions between a mother and their child.

Mihelic, Morawska, and Filus (2017) completed a meta-analytic review comprising 36 randomised control trials from the past 35 years, to look into the effects that parenting programmes have on parents, infants, and the interactions between them. Outcome variables that were measured consisted of parenting confidence and parenting competence, and crying, sleeping and settling behaviours for babies. Observed parental responsiveness (i.e.,

recognising and adequately responding to the needs of their infant) was used to measure the relational outcomes. Results showed that when parental behaviour was the target of the interventions, there was a much greater correlation with change than when strategies were targeted at the infant. In their discussion, the authors also noted that interventions that focused on the responsiveness of parents benefited from being shorter in duration e.g., 6-12 weeks versus 30-40 weeks, and overall, parenting interventions were generally found to be effective for parents of children under 12 months of age.

Although there is not a vast body of literature regarding the influence of parenting programmes on the quality of mother-child interactions, several studies, such as those mentioned above, indicate that educational parenting groups are useful for improving related domains such as attachment, parenting practices, and parental responsiveness. The current study will contribute to this gap in the literature by specifically addressing how parents subjectively perceive the quality of the relationships with their babies has developed or changed as a consequence of participating in Space.

1.9 Increasing Social Capital

A sense of support can be a crucial aid for new mothers, facilitating confidence, coping and self-esteem, feelings of stability, and a reduction in anxiety and depression symptomology (Davies & Harman, 2016). In contrast, social isolation may lead to increased parental stress and ultimately result in a decrease in the quality of parental care that is offered to the baby. Research has consistently shown that entering motherhood can often exacerbate these negative feelings of isolation and a loss of identity (Davies & Harman, 2016). Fortunately, this is something that can be combatted by the resources that group-based parenting groups offer through their focus on increasing parenting confidence, social support, and reducing in the amount of stress that mothers face (Davies & Harman, 2016).

One of the domains of outcomes that will be examined in great detail in this evaluation is social capital. Fielden and Gallagher (2008) referred to social capital as the ability of parents to create positive relationships within their family and to develop supportive relationships with others in their communities. However, it can be argued that this definition is describing social support rather than social capital because it is more related to reciprocal relationships than growing social networks. Therefore, the findings of this study could be argued to reflect the concept of social support instead. Fielden and Gallagher evaluated PEPE programmes using 12 pilot parenting courses that took place in five regions across New Zealand. The researchers recruited 105 parents and 12 clinical nursing staff from these programmes. Three questionnaires were specifically developed for the different populations (those intending to complete a course, those who were attending a course, and clinical staff). Questions relating to how the course was delivered and the quality of its content were included (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008). The study found that those parents who attended courses reported higher social capital and better relationships than others who had not attended the courses did (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008).

Previous research has also demonstrated that when new parents have access to social interactions and support, they experience a reduction in physical and emotional stress, better maternal health, improved developmental outcomes for the child, better interactions between the parent and child, and increased relationship satisfaction (Gibson & Hanson, 2013). Conversely, social isolation may contribute to the development of postnatal depression for some mothers – something that has been linked to poor behavioural, emotional and social outcomes for the child. Gibson and Hanson (2013) investigated the support needs of 42 parents across five parent and child groups across Scotland to improve their understanding of how parenting programmes could promote social capital. The qualitative research showed that mothers found it challenging to socialise and meet other parents when they had not been

invited into a parenting group. It was also a common issue for mothers to have difficulty finding groups that they could join because searching on the internet did not tend to assist them in any way. As a majority of social support for women aged between 35 and 44 tended to come from their workplace, feelings of isolation following childbirth was particularly prominent in this age group when mothers took time off work (Gibson & Hanson, 2013). Parents also preferred to seek support from others who they believed were similar to themselves. Therefore, attending parenting groups was often beneficial for developing relationships with other like-minded individuals (Gibson & Hanson, 2013).

Glavin, Tveiten, Okland, and Hjalmlhult (2017) recruited a sample of 30 mothers from eight focus groups in Norway to examine how parenting groups assisted during the transition to parenthood. Data was collected by observing the interactions between group members rather than through an interview as is typically done. Three key themes that appeared were defined by the authors as 'networks that can last for many years', 'fellowship with others in the same situation' and 'become confident in mothering' (Glavin et al., 2017). Mothers found the parenting groups useful for discussing challenges and their experiences related to parenting and for creating social networks where desired. Not only did discussing shared experiences contribute to feelings of belonging and relatedness for mothers, but they also felt as though they had gained a social network, access to new information on health and parenting, and parenting confidence, even for mothers with pre-existing social networks (Glavin et al., 2017). It was demonstrated that it was more important for parents to hear about one another's difficulties than the triumphs that they were having. How groups were run also influenced how mothers related to one another. This included the size and structure of the group, as well as beginning attendance before the baby was three months of age. Some groups continued to meet for several years, well after the children started school as mothers enjoyed the safety of having other parents within their social network and, at times, felt as

though the group cared more about their parenting and general life issues than members of their families (Glavin et al., 2017).

Among the extensive research available on the influence of parenting programmes on social capital and more general social support, a consistent theme emerged across this literature review: almost all parents made some form of social gain when they participated in a parenting group, even when they already had pre-existing social networks. In the present study, I have adopted the definition of social capital from Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998, p.243) as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilised through that network” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

1.10 The Present Study

1.10.1 Aim

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the subjective experiences of parents and facilitators involved the Space parenting programme and the changes they perceive to have occurred concerning three of the Space ToC outcomes – parenting confidence, quality of mother-baby interactions, and social capital. In addition, this research project examined the relevance of the antecedent conditions, contextual factors, and change processes that are hypothesised to promote positive adaptations for new parents according to the Space ToC.

1.10.2 Research Questions

This evaluation considered questions regarding whether the programme has achieved the objectives that it has aimed to, who has benefitted from it, whether the process has been

sustainable, and which elements have contributed to whether or not the programme has succeeded (Bamberger, Rugh, Church, & Fort, 2004). Specific research questions were developed in collaboration with a local Space community partner, about specific areas of interest. For the parents in the programme, these include:

1. Why do parents choose to participate in Space? Does the programme satisfy these needs or interests?
2. Does participating in Space lead to an improved quality of mother-baby interactions and better familial relationships?
3. Does participating in Space lead to an increase in social capital for new parents?
4. Does participating in Space lead to an increase in parenting confidence and self-efficacy?
5. What do parents see as the strengths and limitations of the Space programme based on their experience?

Similarly, from the perspective of the facilitators, the research questions include:

1. What are the needs of parents in the community and how does the Space programme meet those needs?
2. How does the Space curriculum, training, and support facilitate effective programme delivery?
3. What challenges do facilitators face in supporting parents and working toward targeted outcomes?
4. What are the strengths and limitations of the Space programme?

1.10.3 Benefits of this study for Space

When considered alongside the recently completed Space retrospective survey (2020), this study contributes to the overall evaluation of Space because it examines in greater detail

the experiences and perspectives of a small sample of individual participants and facilitators from a single Space programme provider. If Space is promoting the changes that it is targeting as presented in its ToC model, then themes consistent with these outcomes should be readily identified across the majority of participant data. Such results will be useful for several reasons: firstly, none of the participants within this research attended Space at the time of the retrospective study so their narratives provide new perspectives on the programme that have not been explored before. Further, because all of the participants in this research were from the Space group, they all had the same facilitators, which overcomes the limitation of the retrospective survey where differences in experiences of the programme may have been attributable to the facilitator competency. Finally, this study provides an opportunity to triangulate findings across Space facilitators and participants.

2. Method

2.1 Design

The study design is a small, qualitative case study evaluation. Case studies provide narratives of phenomena, give useful insights into programmes, processes, and people (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006), and offer a unique way to explore, understand, and find meanings in the experiences of a target population (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017). They help to explain what is occurring in particular circumstances, how this has eventuated, and the consequences of this, making them a useful tool, particularly in the context of evaluation studies (Neale et al., 2006). Ideally, a case study should not only examine the subjects in isolation but also consider how they function within their environment (Yin, 2013).

Researchers may enhance this method further by triangulating multiple sources of information to produce more detailed data (Neale et al., 2006). The current study combined the information gathered from semi-structured interviews with parents and facilitators and participant journals to provide extensive feedback and evidence for or against the policies and practices of Space. Including journaling as a method of data collection is not uncommon in case study research, as it is a useful tool for recording the experiences of participants within a natural setting (Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012). Case studies also focus on processes (how things are done) and outcomes (whether or not this has worked) (Gibbs, 2012). In this instance, the processes and outcomes outlined within the ToC model were used to provide a template and inform the evaluation.

When there are a limited number of cases that can be analysed within a study, validity and generalisation are substantial limitations. However, the use of logic models and triangulation, among other methods, can assist in improving validity, whilst also considering theory (Yin, 2013). It is possible to triangulate data when two or more methods are used to

intentionally collect overlapping information within a case study. When results from differing methods converge, it can be assumed that the study possesses greater validity. Conversely, when the data that is produced from the different methods do not align, there will be less certainty around the findings of the study and its overall validity (Yin, 2013).

Neiterman et al. (2018) used a case study methodology to evaluate best practice for bridging programmes in educational settings. Interviews with participants and stakeholders were used in conjunction with observations of focus groups to produce a sample of data that could then be transcribed and coded to identify key themes. A similar combination of methods will be used in the current study. This involves interviews with individuals from different roles and information from participants' journals (rather than observations). By combining the information across informants to gain insight into the effectiveness of Space, the current study will be able to carry out an investigation that is similar to that of Neiterman et al. (2018).

2.2 Collaborative Evaluation and Participatory Evaluation

This research used a collaborative evaluation method, meaning that members of the research team made some visits to the community partners, were familiar with the facilitators, and together the parties developed a shared understanding of the objectives of this research project. The thoughts and ideas presented by the members of the community partner were used to refine the research method and helped to shape the interview schedules. However, unlike participatory evaluations where participants are also actively involved in the many aspects of the research process and considered co-researchers, the community partners for this evaluation were not involved in such roles (Fetterman, Rodriguez-Campos, Wandersman, & Golfarb O'Sullivan, 2014).

Participatory evaluations involve local people, such as mothers participating in Space and the community partner in this instance, working together with outside researchers to pursue a greater understanding of an intervention and propose subsequent improvements where necessary (Fawcett et al., 2003). In this way, the approach utilises the perspectives of a variety of stakeholders (who are viewed as the experts based on their role in the programme) to share the development of the research process fairly and equitably from planning research questions and research design, to gathering data and analysing the findings (Ravitch & Venkatesh, 2018).

Although this evaluation aligns with a collaborative evaluation model better than a participatory model, the six-stage framework proposed by Fawcett et al. (2003) designed to guide participatory evaluations was implemented for this study. The process began by naming the problem that was going to be addressed during the evaluation, in this case, improving the experiences of parenting for first-time mothers through a community-based educational programme. This was then followed by developing a logic model which had already been established through the ToC that was created by Space. The research team then joined in with this process during the third stage: identifying evaluation questions and methods that are appropriate for evaluating this type of programme. This step was approached collaboratively with the community partner, the owner of the Space programme (Parenting Place), and the University of Canterbury research team. Following this, the intervention, as well as its outcomes, were documented. A majority of this project focused on this stage and considered how the parenting programme functioned, while also evaluating the outcomes that it was producing. Finally, the information that was gathered from prior steps was used to propose necessary adjustments to the programme as well as celebrating the areas in which it was successful. The discussion section of this report serves as an analysis of this

information and offers suggestions based on the data that has been gathered through this approach to participatory evaluation.

Traditionally, evaluation research involves less collaboration than this study, with researchers who possess little knowledge regarding the context, content, and application of initiatives, assessing programmes from a distance. By including members of the community in the evaluation process through implementing this collaborative process, their lived experiences and knowledge of the Space programme has provided expertise and insight that I, as a researcher, would not have been able to achieve alone (Fawcett et al., 2003).

2.3 Recruitment

Participants were recruited when they were approximately half-way through the Space programme (around week 20 of the 40-week programme). Parents and facilitators were informed of the opportunity to participate at the end of one of the weekly programme sessions at a time that suited the facilitators. A full information sheet and consent form were made available to parents and facilitators (see Appendix B and Appendix E) so that they could take it home and consider the requirements in their own time before committing to participating in the study. Potential participants were also allowed to ask the research team any questions before agreeing to participate. Parents expressed their interest in participating in the study by approaching myself, either in person after the Space session or via email.

2.3.1 Inclusion criteria:

The target participants for Space is any new parent with a baby under one year of age. Therefore, this study included any parent from the group that was enrolled in this particular cohort of the programme that was willing to participate and share accounts of their personal experiences.

The only other inclusion criteria was English fluency to reduce the possibility of miscommunication and accurate transcription of the interviews. The Space facilitators were also invited, but not required, to participate.

2.3.2 Exclusion criteria:

The only exclusion criteria concerned the extent of parents' participation in the Space programme. If a parent was unable to attend more than 20% of the Space sessions, they were excluded as it was unlikely that they would have experienced the outcomes of Space to the same extent as someone who had attended most or all of the sessions.

2.4 Participants

Ten mothers and two facilitators agreed to participate in this research. One mother dropped out of the study during the journaling stage and her data was not considered in the analysis. The ages of the mothers ranged from 30 to 36. All eleven of the participants identified as New Zealand European/Pākehā. Every one of the participants in the study had tertiary qualifications, with each of the mothers having at least a Bachelor's degree and having worked either part-time or full-time before taking maternity leave. All of the mothers were in stable, long-term, committed heterosexual partnerships. None of them received benefits from the government outside of the paid parental support/Best Start grant. The facilitators had worked with Space for over a year and worked part-time for the local community agency.

2.5 Procedure

Mothers were first introduced to the evaluation during one of their weekly Space sessions. The plan for the research was presented to the mothers and facilitators before they were offered information sheets and consent forms (Appendix B and Appendix E). Those

who were interested were allowed to ask questions about their participation and the project itself, and it was made clear that involvement in the evaluation was entirely voluntary. The same process occurred in the following sessions over the next two weeks so that those who had been absent from prior sessions were still able to participate. Participants took information sheets and returned consent forms when it was most convenient for them (e.g., after the Space session, at a subsequent session, or at the time it was given).

Once recruitment had been completed, the participants were given a selection of times from which to choose for their interviews, and mothers were given the option of completing journals electronically via email or in a notebook. Journals were completed over four weeks, with each entry containing four prompts for discussion. Once this data was collected, the interviews took place in the following weeks at a location agreed upon by the participants and research team, or over the phone if it was not possible to meet in person. Each participant received a forty-dollar supermarket voucher to show appreciation for their time and contribution. Two-hour time slots were allocated for each interview, however, they only lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. Recordings were taken of the conversations and transcribed verbatim.

Once the interview transcripts had been created, participants received a copy of their interview via email and were given two weeks to read over and amend the text as they wished. At the end of the two weeks, the participants were thanked for their involvement in the study and no further participation was requested.

2.6 Journals

Parents who chose to participate in this study were asked to complete weekly journal entries for four weeks leading up to their interviews. The journals intended to allow participants to reflect on and document their experiences of Space. As two of the major

barriers posed by journaling are staying on track and poor participation (Hayman et al., 2012), weekly topics/cues for participants to reflect upon within their journaling were provided. Each week there were a few focus questions for participants to consider. This was to ensure consistency between each individual's journal and the questions in the semi-structured interview. These prompts were broad (see Table 1 below) so that participants were able to discuss issues that were important to them and so that they would not feel coerced into presenting a particular opinion or view of their experiences of the programme.

Leading up to the interviews, mothers were asked to submit their journals entries either via email or by returning their notebook so that entries could be paired with the transcriptions from their interviews. Data gathered from the journals were treated and analysed in the same way as the interviews. However, journal entries were viewed as supplementary data to improve reliability, rather than as a primary source of information. Thus, the journals were an important contribution to the quality of the study's methodology. The purpose of the journals was also to provide the opportunity for negative case analysis for the interviews so that any differing or conflicting information presented in the journals but not evident in the interviews could be identified and evaluated.

Table 1: Journal Prompts

Topic	Questions
Week one: general	<p>Thoughts about Space this week?</p> <p>How do you feel about participating in the Space sessions each week?</p> <p>What has been a highlight of your experience of Space so far?</p> <p>What has been a challenging aspect of your experience of Space so far (if any)?</p>
Week two: parenting confidence	<p>Thoughts about Space this week?</p>

	How confident did you feel in your ability as a new parent when joining Space?
	Has your parenting confidence changed at all since joining Space? Please describe.
	What would help you feel more confident in your parenting abilities?
Week three: mother-baby interactions	Thoughts about Space this week?
	How would you describe your relationship with your baby?
	How has attending Space contributed to this?
	How does Space support you to have positive interactions with your baby?
Week four: social support	Thoughts about Space this week?
	How do you feel about the relationships that you have formed with the other mothers or facilitators at Space?
	Do you anticipate maintaining the relationships you have made through Space?
	What has contributed to this?
	Do any of the relationships that you have made through Space extend beyond the weekly sessions (i.e., do you hang-out with people from Space at other times)? In what ways have these relationships developed?

2.7 Interviews

Parent Interviews. The semi-structured interviews with parents occurred after informed consent was again reviewed with participants so they could raise any questions or concerns prior to participation. The purpose of the interviews was to discuss the research questions outlined above and enable mothers to share what brought them to Space, what their needs were as a new parent, how Space had met these needs, and how they were feeling

about their overall experience of parenting thus far. As mentioned, the specific questions in the interview were collaboratively written by the research team and the community partner to ensure that the interview covered issues that were important not only from an academic perspective but also to the community partner (see Table 2 below for interview schedule). Interviews were structured to highlight which programme components and processes parents felt contributed to the outcomes that they experienced.

Table 2: Parent Interview Schedule

Focus of Question	Interview Question
Demographic questions	<p>What is your age?</p> <p>What ethnicity do you identify with?</p> <p>Which suburb do you live in?</p> <p>What is your highest educational qualification?</p> <p>Are you employed? If yes, what is your highest educational qualification?</p> <p>What contributes to your family's income?</p> <p>Do you have a partner? If yes, what is your relationship status with your partner?</p>
General questions	<p>How did you hear about Space?</p> <p>Why did you choose to attend Space?</p> <p>What do you feel are your main support needs as a new parent?</p> <p>How is Space meeting these needs?</p>
Experienced outcomes	<p>Do you think that participating in Space has improved how you and your baby interact with one another?</p>

Strengths and weaknesses	How do you feel your confidence in your parenting has changed since enrolling in Space?
	How has attending Space impacted you socially?
	What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think have been most effective?
	What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think need to be improved?
	What are your thoughts on the Space manual (notebook) that has been provided as part of the programme?
	Do you have any other suggestions for how the Space programme could be improved or better facilitated?

Facilitator Interviews. The semi-structured interview questions for the facilitators aimed to address the research questions previously outlined. The purpose of the interview was also to encourage facilitators to share their perceptions about the needs of parents within the community they serve, their needs as facilitators, and their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Space programme/sessions (see Table 3 for interview schedule). The views of the facilitators regarding the group dynamics and programme structure were also queried, along with observations of changes in parenting quality at a general level (not referring to individual participants).

Table 3: Facilitator Interview Schedule

Focus of Question	Interview questions
Demographic questions	What is your age?

	What ethnicity do you identify with?
	What is your highest educational qualification?
	Are you employed? If yes, what is your occupation?
	How long have you been involved in [community partner]?
	When and how did you become involved in facilitating Space?
	Do you have children and/or grandchildren of your own?
General questions	What has been your experience of the training and support as a Space facilitator?
	How do you think that Space is succeeding or struggling to meet the needs of new mothers?
Curriculum	How do you feel about the quality of the Space curriculum?
	What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think were more effective?
	What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think need to be improved?
	What are your thoughts on the notebook that has been provided as part of the programme?
Parent outcomes	Do you think that participating in Space improves how mothers and their babies interact with one another?
	How do you think Space influences the confidence that mothers have in their parenting?
	How do you think attending Space impacts new mothers in a social capacity?

2.8 Data Analysis

The underlying goal of this case study was to analyse the experiences of parents and facilitators within the context of the Space programme, to gain in-depth knowledge of it from the perspective of the sample. This was intended to subsequently create a clear narrative of the successes, challenges, opportunities and limitations of the Space programme in this community. To acquire this understanding, data was analysed using thematic analysis which is often viewed as a reliable, yet flexible way to analyse qualitative data (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). This method allowed me to identify, report, and analyse patterns or themes that appear within datasets (Vaismoradi et al., 2013) by extracting quotes from interviews and grouping them according to the research questions and the key concepts they represented. These quotes were further organised into subcategories based upon their main ideas, which were then used to construct the results section and to develop the major themes. The information from the journals was analysed in the same way as the interviews with a particular focus on negative case analysis to attempt to find themes that were discrepant across the two sources. However, the results showed that the data from the two sources completely overlapped and did not reveal any contradictions or additional themes to those established in the interviews. Therefore, as the interviews provided a richer source of data, they became the focus of the results and only those findings have been reported in this evaluation.

2.9 Ethical Approval

This study was reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee as a Masters of Child and Family Psychology thesis project (Ref: HEC 2019/88). Accordingly, several ethical issues were considered and managed carefully through the procedures and reporting of results. These included ensuring that mothers and facilitators in

the Space group did not feel compelled to participate in the research, the prioritisation of confidentiality for those who agreed to be involved, and allowance to withdraw from participation at any point should they choose. Furthermore, consent was obtained from participants to record interviews and use their information in the evaluation. Finally, the safety of the research team during interviews was ensured by sharing locations with and sending texts to a supervisor before and after meeting participants for interviews.

3. Results

“When I meet mums who don't go to Space I think that is when I realise how much I have gotten from Space... because I found myself telling them stuff that they didn't know about or hadn't thought about.” (Amelia)

3.1 Parent Interviews

3.1.1 Reasons for Participation

At the start of the interviews, each of the mothers was asked how they initially heard about Space and what encouraged them to attend the programme. The common themes that emerged from these conversations were as follows.

Hearing about Space. To begin to understand why parents chose to participate in Space, it seemed necessary to explore how they had initially heard of the programme. Overall, the responses given by the mothers were uniform: the programme had been recommended to them or they had heard about the programme through word-of-mouth. Most of the participants responded to these recommendations by researching Space online to gather more information as to whether it was a good fit for themselves and their baby.

“[I] actually [heard about Space] through my neighbour, she recommended it to me. So word of mouth, I suppose. Yeah, I had a bit of a look online and thought it looked good so I contacted them... I was... looking to find some people with like-minded ideas and that was the place that [my neighbour] kind of said “you might find this good” based on her friends that had attended previously.” (Chloe)

“I had heard such good things through [my best friend and sister in law], and [it was] another outing and a chance to get out and meet other mums... so I did [a] Google

search and found out there was a contact [here] so I emailed and found out from there.”

(Sophie)

Social and Emotional Support. The mothers expressed many reasons for attending Space that related to the social benefits that they had hoped to get out of the programme. One of the most common aspects of this was how Space provided a platform for them to meet other mums with babies of the same age, as well as a place where their babies could interact with other babies. This was particularly important to one mother who highlighted the point that, as a first-time mother, her baby was an only child and would not naturally be exposed to other babies.

“I'm aware that at this stage he is an only child and so it's really good for him to have time interacting with other babies and that's another thing I notice - I've got friends who have only got their baby and their baby doesn't get a lot of socialisation and I think he is getting more and more out of that as he gets older as well.” (Amelia)

Other participants expressed a more general appreciation of having other babies of the same age around, as their babies were developing so quickly and constantly changing.

“Having babies the same age has been pretty crucial because even in my antenatal group I was the last to give birth... and I quite often find that when I catch up with their babies, they're at a totally different stage.” (Ella)

Just as having other babies of the same age around was a common reason for enrolling in Space, one of the most prominent themes that emerged throughout the parent interviews was how important it was for mothers to be around other mothers at the same stage of life as them. The desire to be a part of a community of mothers motivated some participants to attend the Space programme, particularly for those who did not have pre-existing friendships with other local mothers.

“To create a community of fellow mums... to connect with other people with babies, who were also going through the transition of leaving work and learn how to be a mum was a real appeal to me... Definitely a community of people going through the same thing, for me is key. To be able to share in those experiences and hear about what other people are going through and I guess find the humour in it because it can be quite a dark space, so that's really key.” (Madison)

Similar to the community appeal of Space, mothers reported that another important reason for their attendance at Space was the social support, shared values, and being around others experiencing similar life circumstances. The ability to discuss the unfamiliar experiences that come with parenting for the first time and to receive reassurance that they were doing well was a valued component of Space and was frequently mentioned by the new mothers.

“I guess the thing that I found really helpful [was] meeting people with a baby at the same stage as you and hearing their experiences because... you meet other mums who are in exactly the same scenario that you're in and so I actually found that really helpful with Space, to actually turn up and you're like 'oh okay, I'm actually not alone. Everyone else is in the same boat as me. I'm actually doing a good job.'” (Ella)

“It's good to have people on hand, to be able to discuss and talk to about things... Weird things happen with babies, you're never sure, like 'is this normal? Is this what she should be doing now?' So yeah, just having people on hand to talk to.” (Sophie)

Just as social support was a contributing factor as to why mothers chose to attend Space, so was the emotional support, particularly encouragement and reassurance from other mothers that everything that they were experiencing was normal. They also expressed that Space was a great place for them to go to receive non-judgmental advice and support on the issues that they were facing.

“I think... emotionally, having a shoulder to cry on and just kind of knowing that other people are going through the same thing, which is the biggie.” (Victoria)

“The biggest thing is just the emotional support from others... the thing that you get more out of it is the support from connecting with other mums.” (Elizabeth)

Further to emotional support, the mothers explained that another reason why they enrolled and continued to attend Space was because of how much they enjoyed it, how relaxed they felt there, and the respite-like nature of the sessions for them. Several mothers reported feeling as though being at Space was a time for them to take a break from the intensity of parenting and have some time to themselves.

“I can relax a wee bit, like I can leave [baby] sitting in the circle and go off to the bathroom and know that that's okay... and know that the facilitators will entertain [baby] or another mum will have her, and so you can kind of take a little step back from the intensity... so in a way it kind of feels like a bit of respite for the morning.” (Madison)

“I suppose it's just getting a break every now and then, that's probably the big one - just so you can get a bit of perspective.” (Hannah)

Content and Education. Mothers also chose to attend Space due to the educational content and the focus on development. This allowed them to feel like they could parent in a way that was developmentally appropriate and could participate in activities that were stimulating and engaging for their baby. They also expressed that it was good to have a source of information and education that was reliable, as they felt as though there was so much conflicting advice and suggestions on the internet and other parent education resources.

“There's so much information on the internet, it's hard to filter. So it's a good filter, like you know what is good information.” (Chloe)

“I think the fact that it has a focus on baby development and giving them the experiences that are right for them for the ages they are at and kind of supporting that growth and nurturing their brains in that way.” (Madison)

Some of the mothers explained that they felt as though Space was a fun and engaging environment in which they could spend time with their baby, yet they still learnt things along the way and gained knowledge. They said that the discussions with the other mothers, in particular, were useful for them in terms of this informal type of teaching, which really appealed to some of the individuals within the programme and contributed strongly to why they chose to attend Space over other parent education programmes.

“I haven't really thought of it as an education or teaching group, it feels more about having fun with our kids and each other, with a little bit of that stuff thrown in... it doesn't really feel like a parent education course but alongside that, we have learnt some stuff along the way.” (Amelia)

“I suppose I wanted an environment to actually have a few yarns and they also gave you useful education.” (Hannah)

Another prominent reason for mothers to attend Space was the music and activities that the programme offers. Mothers consistently reported enjoying the new things to do and time that they were able to spend doing fun things with their babies that they otherwise might not have made time for. The music was frequently referred to as being a highlight for mothers and babies.

“They're getting to the stage now where they're really interested in each other and there's so many cool toys there and music and books and yeah, lots of different things to entertain them. I think [baby] definitely gets cabin fever here - same toys, same space, so a new environment with new people and toys is quite exciting.” (Madison)

“Singing songs and yeah... stuff like that I wouldn't do really on my own at home so with Baby Times and going to Space, I know that I'm doing the things that I should be doing... That's been good to learn new songs and especially with Te Reo as well. I like the fact that we do quite a few songs in Te Reo because again, I don't really do that at home, whereas I read lots of books to her at home.” (Ella)

Routine and Structure. In conjunction with the in-session benefits of Space, a number of the mothers stated that the change in lifestyle that came with being a new mother led them to search for something to add structure to their days, give them a reason to get out of the house and provide something to look forward to each week. Some of the mothers made sure to schedule in an activity or social catch up each day, while Space was the only regular outing for others. Regardless of their other commitments, a majority of the mothers expressed their appreciation of the structure and routine that Space added to their lives.

“It adds a bit of structure to our week and so I always try and make sure Space happens. So even if maybe other things fall over, like catch up with friends, I will always get to Space. It keeps us social when we are not having our best week and I think that's hugely important to fit in your mental health.” (Amelia)

“I think that's definitely the biggest thing - like, all my time is focused on [baby], so it's pretty hard to find time for myself. You're just kind of going there and knowing that you've got that each week. It makes a difference.” (Victoria)

The mothers shared their appreciation of the duration of the programme – for many, this was the biggest contributing factor as to why they chose to attend Space. Since the programme is offered for the entire year, the mothers felt as though it was a better opportunity to forge genuine and lasting connections with other mothers and to establish trust. The session length had a similar effect for a number of the participants, in that being at

Space for two hours not only made it worthwhile for them to get ready and leave the house, but it also provided them with the opportunity to chat and socialise in the sessions, particular during the breaktimes.

“I think that because it was a couple of hours long, there are still a lot of groups out there that are only half an hour and even if you are five or ten minutes late, you have missed most of it.” (Emma)

“Because you knew this was for a year, you kind of thought, you're really going to get to know these people, [and] the information they give you at the time is really targeted for your age group.” (Hannah)

Overall, the mothers chose to attend Space because they were looking for a source of support both socially and educationally throughout a major transition in their lives. This shift of lifestyle also caused some mothers to search for structure in their weeks. Thus, they went to Space because it provided them with a reason to get out of the house and maintain a routine, as well as helping to maintain a sense of normality during new and challenging circumstances.

After the mothers were allowed to discuss their rationale for attending Space, they were asked about the changes that they had seen in their confidence as a new parent, the interactions and relationship quality between themselves and their baby and their levels of social support/social capital. Participants were prompted with questions on these areas to establish how the lived experiences of mothers attending the Space programme compared to the outcomes that the Theory of Change predicted.

3.1.2 Parenting Confidence and Self-efficacy

In the parent interviews, participants were prompted to discuss how they felt Space had influenced their parenting confidence. Overall, the mothers felt as though their confidence had improved since joining the programme. However, some found it difficult to distinguish between what could be attributed to Space and what would have occurred naturally over time with greater parenting experience.

“[Parenting confidence is] hard to pin down to something but in general I think it's improved massively and a part of it has to be attributed to Space.” (Hannah)

“That whole journey of getting to know the child and how to be a parent has changed throughout the time I've been attending Space and I think Space has definitely helped with that.” (Chloe)

Comes with Time. A number of the mothers felt as though the main reason for the increase in their parenting confidence was due to the time that had passed since becoming a mother. For some, this meant that their baby was less vulnerable and they felt less wary, whilst others felt as though more time together had allowed them to get to know their baby better and enabled them to respond more effectively to their needs.

“It has definitely increased my confidence... you get more used to being a mum and you get to know your baby better and all of those sorts of things. And I think as she's become more independent and there's more of a range of things to occupy her, I've become more confident that I can support her needs because in the early days she was so vulnerable.” (Madison)

Education and Discussions. Participants reported that the education, such as the parenting strategies that were discussed and visits from the Plunket nurse, contributed to the

growth in confidence as a parent. It was also apparent that being around other mothers allowed the participants to feel more normal and subsequently increased their confidence.

“Definitely time and spending that together [has improved my confidence]. I think having discussions at Space when the Plunket nurses have come in and that sort of thing kind of just reinforcing that what you're going through is normal.” (Victoria)

“When I see myself, mums who don't go to Space, and I see stuff that I'm doing that maybe I wouldn't be doing if I hadn't gone to Space... that makes me feel really good.”
(Amelia)

Others Experiencing the Same Thing. Another mechanism through which mothers felt as though their parenting confidence had increased related to social support and centred around the idea that others were experiencing the same thing and that simply doing your best as a parent is good enough. Having that reassurance gave mothers confidence that they were doing well in their parenting journeys - confidence that might otherwise have been absent if they were on their own.

“Space has definitely accelerated it so that the fact that I'm spending time with other mums in the same position and seeing that they're doing really well and having the same challenges at the same time and yeah, relaxing with it and knowing that that's normal... if I wasn't having that interaction with other people, I'd have no benchmark or no one to... reflect off.” (Madison)

“It has definitely helped confidence, especially when you say 'I'm struggling with this' and everyone says 'yeah, yeah' - that's a huge confidence booster. Like, I'm not doing anything wrong, it's just every baby and you can be the best parent in the world and sometimes they're just not wanting to sleep, that's just how they are.” (Amelia)

3.1.3 Mother-Baby Interactions

When asked if and how Space had influenced the quality of their interactions and relationship with their baby, most of the participants believed it had and identified a variety of ways that attending Space had helped. The themes that emerged within these conversations were as follows.

Session Content. During the interviews, mothers shared how the education that Space provided assisted them in knowing the best ways to engage with their babies, particularly through learning about development. This enabled them to understand what activities were the most developmentally appropriate and beneficial to their babies.

“Space's biggest benefit was around the play and what to do with them and how to kind of meet his developmental needs and stuff, that was the biggest benefit of Space and meeting mums.” (Chloe)

“With the little dot journals we get, some of the thoughts that they provoke make me think a little bit more about things and be a bit more intentional with her, with what I'm doing with [baby] based on where her brain is at and those sorts of things.” (Madison)

The most frequently discussed mechanism that the mothers felt had contributed to an improved quality of the relationship with their baby was how Space offered them ways to promote engagement between the two of them.

“With the activities and the different things, like ideas have been given about what you can use around your home for your baby to play with. Just kind of I guess gave me a bit more confidence and showed me ways of interacting with him that I think kind of improved our connection.” (Chloe)

“I do [feel like our relationship has improved] from the activities that they do, they really help. And the music is obviously good to do something with the babies because... I wouldn't just necessarily flick on a baby CD and things like that.” (Emma)

Social Engagement. The discussions and relationships that were formed in Space provided mothers with the opportunity to reflect on and share their parenting experiences with each other. Mothers reported that by being able to talk about different parenting strategies with one another and being able to learn through observation and conversation, they could experiment with different ways of interacting with their babies to create stronger bonds.

“It's given me some really good tools. To be fair, I hadn't spent much time with babies prior to having [baby], so I was just doing what felt right but I guess A) it was nice to have that affirmed through Space and seeing what the other mums are doing and having conversations, but B) it gave me a wider range of opportunities... ways of interacting with [baby] that I maybe hadn't thought about, like the cool songs that we sing with all of the actions and those sorts of things.” (Madison).

“It [Space] has been a really big part of my parenting journey and it definitely would have been more challenging and a less rich experience without it. And I think because you spend a whole two hours every week, you really do see the growth in your baby. It's a really special thing - it sort of creates that whole idea of a village... so many mums spend no time with other mums or babies.” (Amelia)

Just as the sessions gave some of the mothers a break from the daily stressors of parenting, they also enabled them to spend quality time with their babies without the distractions of these daily tasks, which in turn, made some of the participants feel as though their relationship with their baby improved. The scheduled time each week to focus solely on

themselves and their baby, made some mothers feel closer to their babies than they would have otherwise.

“I guess it's time, sort of. When you are at home you kind of get distracted and [do] other things. Whereas, it [Space] is a time where you can just sit and interact and spend time together around other babies and mums.” (Sophie)

“There are a lot of situations during the day where I give him things to occupy himself, which they say is important. But to actually sit down and be present for two hours (I mean we are chatting to mums and stuff), but he loves it, he knows that you are just sitting there and watching him play... It kind of taught me how to enjoy time with [baby]; to slow down a bit... because you can sit down. It's because of the length of time, the familiarity of the people and the relaxed environment, and the sense that there is no judgment.” (Hannah)

Indirect Influence. Although a number of the mothers explained how Space had improved their relationships with their babies, several mothers felt as though despite being a nice opportunity to spend time together, Space was not the reason why they had a good relationship with their baby. Essentially, Space was a positive addition that enhanced an already good dynamic.

“We've got a pretty cool relationship but I think Space is a big part of the overall stuff that is going well for us... it's not necessarily that it would have been a disaster if I hadn't gone to Space, but it definitely helped.” (Amelia)

“I don't feel like Space in itself has impacted how we interact other than it's given me some ideas for different things we can do at home... our relationship, if you like, is good but I don't think that Space, the programme in itself, has done anything. What we've enjoyed is the social aspects, but then, that helps your relationships if you think about it because... you feel

more relaxed in what you are doing and that impacts your relationship. So it kind of does in a roundabout way.” (Elizabeth)

3.1.4 Social Capital

During the interviews, mothers were asked how Space had impacted them socially. The extensive answers indicated that the social benefits of Space were more apparent to them than the other benefits of the programme, as it was where they had observed the most tangible change in their lives since first attending the sessions. The following themes outline how Space was described as making the most impact on mothers socially.

Social Environment. The mothers reported enjoying the genuine, trusting, and kind nature of the group. The sense of community and connection that these attributes created within the sessions were highly valued by the group as a whole and were commented on by a number of the participants.

“I just know the first weeks were really pretty tough and having Space there and just knowing that I could get support if I needed it... I guess it kind of works as a safety net.”

(Amelia)

“Ultimately, I think new parents do want to go to something... it's nice to have something where you feel connection; it's nice to have something that is supportive.”

(Elizabeth)

These social interactions were particularly valued by the mothers due to the significant lifestyle change that most of them had experienced transitioning from the corporate/working world into the role of motherhood. Consequently, having a network of fellow mothers that they had not previously had access to or needed, was incredibly important for them socially.

“Having a group like that where you got a little bit more support and you can even just talk... because when you go and see a friend for a coffee, you don't want to be sitting and moaning about your kid all the time... I guess you don't want to feel like a burden with your friends talking about babies all the time, especially if they haven't got a baby and aren't going through the same stuff... like 'here she is again, talking about her baby.'” (Emma)

“Contact with other mums, that's really important. And there are a few things that I've found quite difficult... just having, I guess, some people to talk to about it.” (Chloe)

By fulfilling this need for support and creating a community of other mothers, a subsequent benefit of participating in Space for a number of the mothers were the people that they met and the friends that they made. Although some of the mothers expressed more hope than others about whether or not the relationships would extend beyond Space, either outside of the sessions or after the programme had finished, there was a universal agreement that positive relationships had been established throughout their time as a group.

“I feel like I've met some really special people who have added something to my life... they'd all be people I'd really love to see again.” (Amelia)

“It's a good network of mums and I have made some really close friends through it too, I really love that aspect of it.” (Victoria)

Emotional Support. The social aspect of Space was also beneficial for mothers beyond the relationships that they formed. For example, the emotional support provided by the group of mothers increased the confidence of some of the individuals through relieving stress and pressure, as well as improving their general outlook on life.

“It makes me a happy and positive person, so I suppose that is good for my relationships. It's helped with my confidence, so that helps with relationships as well.”

(Hannah)

‘‘There are a couple of other mothers there especially who are just real laid back about things and quite funny about it all and that made me really relaxed which was cool. It was like, they're awesome mums and they're not stressing about this, so I don't need to stress either. ’’ (Madison)

This implicit modelling that was created within the group was also described as being derived from the lack of judgment within the group and the shared values of the participants. Feeling included by the other mothers was incredibly important to some of the mothers, as their experiences of other parenting groups had indicated to them that not all groups were as supportive and as inclusive as Space.

‘‘I find it supportive because I remember at the first couple of times, I was like ‘oh my goodness, my baby is doing this’ and everyone was the same and I was like, ‘okay, that’s alright. ’... It’s just that shared experience in a really casual, informal and relaxed environment. If I were to boil it down, that is what it is - a shared experience in a relaxed, informal, and friendly environment... there is no judgment, it’s certainly the one group I felt no judgment. ’’ (Hannah)

‘‘We’re in the same place in the world and a lot of us come from the same background and the same upbringings and so there’s those shared values there, which I guess makes things... you’re just kind of starting from the same starting point, which I think is part of it. ’’ (Madison)

The themes of reassurance and shared experiences were also prevalent within the responses to questions relating to the social impact of Space. By sharing stories about parenthood with one another, the mothers made each other feel confident that they were being good parents by simply doing their best.

‘‘It's been very good just to hear what other people are trying and what people are doing and just that reassurance that you are probably not doing it wrong - nothing's wrong. You've just got to go with what's right for you.’’ (Emma)

‘‘I think we have been really lucky with the group of mums we've had here. We're all quite similar, we've always been reassuring with each other, anytime I've been like 'hey are you guys experiencing this?' there's been at least another parent, another mum is like 'yeah, don't worry about it, it's so normal'... it's so helpful and especially when you can do that for another mum as well, that's really nice.’’ (Amelia)

Content and Structure. Parts of the curriculum, such as weekly check-ins, designed to formally ask the parents how their week had been, as well as discussions about the educational content in the curriculum were noted by the participants as useful for social support.

‘‘I don't know if we're just really lucky with the group that we've got, but they're all quite thought-provoking type people... lots of interesting conversations and I really enjoy that about it, that aspect of it... Space kind of covers such a broad range and there's lots of discussion and reflection, like a reflective side to it which is really cool.’’ (Chloe)

‘‘If someone said "how's your week?" the response is "fine" or "good" because you know that people don't really want to hear; they don't have the time, they are just asking to be polite. So I like the fact that they [Space facilitators and fellow participants] are asking it formally.’’ (Elizabeth)

The length of the sessions was described as being another integral reason as to why the programme had been successful in forging relationships because it gave the mothers time to get to know each other and chat whilst still engaging in the educational content and activities.

“I guess because it is a two-hour session, it's almost like the socialisation happens within Space anyway because generally, it's a good mixture of we do some things, we do some formal stuff, some craft stuff and they let you hang out and chat as well while the babies just play.” (Ella)

Trying New Things at Home. Some of the mothers recalled that participating in the Space programme and trying out new activities within the sessions led to them feeling confident enough to try new things at home that they wouldn't have felt comfortable doing without the support and guidance of the programme. This demonstrates that the skills and reassurance that are built upon at Space are transferable to the home and have real-life applications for at least some of the parents.

“At the moment with messy play, I think he's learning through that and then that's given me more confidence so we've done painting at home.” (Elizabeth)

“I guess just from the conversations I've had with other parents like about different things like feeding and sleeping and hearing what other people are doing, it's given me confidence to go and try things at home.” (Sophie)

3.1.5 Strengths and Suggestions

Strengths. Overall, the mothers regarded Space very highly and were quick to discuss how much they loved the programme. All of them said that they had enjoyed it, would recommend it to others, and had gained something useful out of the programme.

“It's really well run and it's great having it. I get a huge amount out of it and the people are really lovely. It's a great programme and I'd definitely recommend it to other new mums.” (Victoria)

“I really can't recommend it highly enough. I tell all new mums having babies, like 'go to Space, go to Space, go to Space!'" (Amelia)

A strength of the programme that was frequently mentioned by the mothers was the inclusion of discussions within the sessions and how these led to natural conversations in which the mothers felt as though they could share their personal experiences with others and seek advice.

“I think the sessions where we have some good conversations about things [are the most effective]... and they're usually quite organic. Like we start with a topic, then it will go from there and through that, I get lots of cool ideas and we share lots.” (Madison)

In conjunction with the conversations within Space, other components of the curriculum were highlighted as being an area of strength of the programme, especially the inclusions of lots of engaging music, and activities and toys that appealed to both the mothers and their babies. These were especially appreciated due to the variety that is provided in terms of what the families could do together in their daily lives, outside of their regular activities and routines.

“I liked the play, I liked the fact that all the toys - they are sensory related. I think the singing is great, babies really liked the singing... I think that it's good they have a topic for discussion because there are different things that can be raised there that are important.” (Elizabeth)

“I reckon if I hadn't had Space, I wouldn't be part of the toy library and it has changed my life because like, now he's got a new bike and he has got new toys.” (Hannah)

The appeal of these novel forms of stimulation was heightened for a number of the participants because of the low-budget nature in which the programme was constructed. Not only was it noted that sessions were incredibly cheap, but the resources that the facilitators

included in the programme were easily accessible and affordable for the mothers to find for themselves.

“The other things I love about Space is it's done super low budget... like what can you do at home with the stuff you have got.” (Hannah)

Overall, the balanced inclusion of different forms of education, social support, activities, and a reason for new mothers to get out of the house, resulted in the mothers within this research appreciating and valuing the Space programme.

“I think the combination of education, activities and play, and the social aspect is really cool; it's something I'd love for other mums to be able to go to... I don't know why there's not more because I feel they are absolutely catering for what people need and want.” (Amelia)

“Wow, all of it [has been effective]! I guess the way they have targeted it for the age group for the age of the baby... I've found everything useful; I can't remember a session that hasn't been!” (Hannah)

Suggestions. Although Space has many benefits and has been described as an overall satisfactory programme for the mothers in this research, there were some suggestions for improvements and discussions of limitations during the interviews too.

As described above, most of the mothers heard about Space through word of mouth and they proceeded to investigate the programme further by researching it online. It is therefore unsurprising that a majority of the participants commented on advertising strategies and suggested that Space should be better broadcast to the community, particularly because they felt that Space can meet the needs of first-time mothers.

“If it wasn't for my friends... I would have no idea it even existed... so maybe better promoting it because I think it's been so great and I think for all new mums it would be really helpful to have another group to keep in touch.” (Sophie)

“I don't know how they advertise, so I think... because I know so many people who would love this group who have never heard about it, and I don't know the background workings of it, but I can definitely see an appetite for this group; for there to be a lot more Space groups than there are.” (Amelia)

Similarly, a few comments were made about the reach of the programme. In particular, participants commented on the fact that the demographics of mothers that attended the Space group in this evaluation were all very similar and were potentially not the types of parents that needed support the most. This also highlighted the issue that integrating into the group could have been intimidating for mothers who did not share similar demographic characteristics with those in the group already.

“The only thing I wonder... maybe it's quite targeted towards a certain demographic but I suppose we are not all the same nationality. I don't know from an income point of view, whether it's getting a good cross range, I don't know.” (Hannah)

“We've basically got a room full of highly educated, pretty assertive, on-to-it mums... we are definitely white middle class and I could see how that could be intimidating if you were from a different background.” (Amelia)

Some suggestions were made about including more specific content, particularly more information from experts about brain development in babies. The mothers frequently communicated their interest in understanding how their baby was developing throughout time and some of them said that they felt as though this would be best addressed through the inclusion of more guest speakers.

“[The Brainwave Trust is] a really awesome online resource and I read a lot of that and that would be cool to maybe incorporate more of. Like, I like the creative stuff and the arts and crafts and the singing but it would be interesting to do a bit more of what your baby's brain is doing at the moment.” (Ella)

“I'm interested in the psychology behind how they're developing... I think it would more be the role of a guest speaker rather than the facilitators themselves... it would be interesting to learn about the developmental stages that the kids are going through.”
(Victoria)

There were also suggestions made about the inclusion of more Te Reo Māori and Māori cultural concepts throughout the sessions. One mother felt especially strongly about this, as she believed that it was an important part of New Zealand culture and needed to be recognised. Other mothers made comments that were also consistent with this and supported the idea.

“I would actually love to incorporate Te Reo more. For me, personally, I think it's really important... I think language is quite important to culture. Incorporating Te Reo more, maybe opens the door to talk about the Māori culture a bit more and how do we raise kids from a Māori perspective and through that lens? Because we are in New Zealand and it's a bicultural society, so I think an awareness of that would be really cool, so I would love that!”
(Madison)

“I think another thing for the facilitators that would be beneficial for them would be more exposure to Te Reo because I can see that they're trying but they are not that familiar with it... probably confidence with their waiata and that type of thing, like pronunciation.”
(Victoria)

Similarly, some of the participants expressed that they felt as though the facilitators needed to work on their confidence and competence in general and improve their ability to get the group excited and engaged with the content.

“I think at times they try to do stuff that's from the book but it's kind of out of their repertoire.” (Victoria)

“I think they do well. Maybe just getting everyone a bit more excited about the singing.” (Ella)

Another area of facilitation that was highlighted as a target for improvement was allowing discussions to flow freely more often rather than bring the group back to the educational content. Several of the mothers felt that those discussions were better learning opportunities than the more manualised teaching from the facilitators.

“Sometimes I feel for the facilitators because I get the impression that we maybe go off track a bit too much and they're trying to bring it back in but we're all enjoying our conversations so much that they can't quite reign us back in. There's been a couple of weeks where I have thought it would have been nice for them to just let us continue the conversation there rather than bring the group back together. But I get it, they've probably got a structure that they need to follow and certain things that they want to achieve in each week... That would be a recommendation from me, would be when that happens, when conversation kind of becomes quite organic and segues off into groups and you can see that mums are really engaging with each other, just allow it to go for as long as it needs.” (Madison)

Notebook. When collaborating with the facilitators and programme organisers to determine which questions to include in the parent interviews, the community partners expressed an interest in how the mothers felt about the notebook that was provided as part of the Space curriculum. This notebook is used to support parents to record their babies' journeys through the programme. The mothers expressed how little they had used these

books over the past months and although they liked the idea of them in theory, they did not feel as though they were necessary or a good use of money.

“It's quite a big book and we don't reference it at all. You kind of get given it at the start and then we don't refer back to it, so it kind of got shelved a little bit. I haven't looked at it since.” (Chloe)

“I feel like I've got a baby book to record stuff in anyway, so you don't want to start duplicating stuff. And I mean, the benefits I found of Space is that you come and talk about things, like I feel like people read too much stuff anyway.” (Emma)

To summarise and as predicted by the ToC model, all of the participants expressed that overall, attending Space had improved their interactions with their babies, provided them with social support and networks, and increased their confidence as a parent, either directly through the curriculum and interpersonal relationships or by indirectly fostering these outcomes throughout time.

3.2 Facilitator Interviews

Similar to the parents, the facilitators were also asked about the aforementioned parent outcomes in their interviews and were enabled to share their perspectives on whether they believed that Space was successful in eliciting these changes. Furthermore, the facilitator interviews also focused on key aspects of facilitation, such as training, support in their roles, and the curriculum.

3.2.1 Needs of Parents in the Community

Social Capital. The idea of creating connections with other mothers was a common theme within the facilitator interviews. Both facilitators were aware that new mothers came to Space with a need for social support and that Space provided a platform for relationships

to be established. The facilitators viewed Space as a place for mothers to talk about where things have been going right or wrong in their parenting journey, to chat with one another, share experiences, and to be social and connect with other individuals at the same stage of life.

“It [Space] opens up those doors and allows them [participants] the freedom to express themselves about the bad things that are happening in parenthood, as well as the good.” (Facilitator one).

The facilitators reported that these connections had developed to a point where they had become prominent outside of the sessions (including online on forums such as Facebook and through seeing each other outside of the sessions), as well as during the sessions.

“The parents do communicate really well and... they get together outside of Space. After a while they start doing things together and they form friendships. They meet at people's different places and stuff over the holidays and have a coffee session and the babies get to play.” (Facilitator one).

The facilitators of the programme felt that Space was especially important for certain mothers, as it was their only source of regular social interactions during the week. They also believed that it provided mothers with a reason to get out of the house in the morning which was recognised by one of the facilitators as a challenge for some new parents.

“We’ve got some parents doing something every day and there are some parents that do nothing but the Space programme, so that's why Space is so important to those parents - because it's the only activity they have for the week.” (Facilitator one).

Support for Lower Socioeconomic Families. Both facilitators expressed strong feelings about the need for parenting support for families of low socioeconomic status and their disappointment and frustration that Space was struggling to cater to this demographic.

One facilitator even considered whether or not Space was the right fit for that population or whether another programme entirely might be more effective.

“My gut feeling is that it's not quite the programme to reach a lot of struggling mothers who can't afford to go, actually. It's an amazing programme... and look, mothers that don't have to work and have money, they have needs as well, we've got to watch we're not judgmental... but for some reason it's just not getting in the other types of mothers and we don't know why... That's when we think, well, do we need to run another type of group that would involve mothers like that?” (Facilitator two).

In contrast, the other facilitator felt as though the lack of engagement from mothers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds was due to a lack of resources such as time, money and transport, and had spent a significant amount of time exploring alternatives so that these individuals could be reached and attend the Space programme.

“I just wish we could get some of those low economic families into Space a bit more, but that would mean money, that would mean time, we don't have the transport. We're trying to work out how to break into those areas... we really, really want to help out the people in our community because we are finding that we have people coming from distances... so they come a long way in to come to Space, which is great, but I guess I'm trying to work out how we can find a way to reach the families that really need it.” (Facilitator one).

A further issue that was identified by the facilitators in regards to the inclusion of mothers from the target population was the compatibility of the mothers currently attending the programme and those that the community partner was hoping to reach.

“Well-dressed most of them. Yeah, you just know it. And even as a facilitator you feel quite accountable, because they are like that.” (Facilitator two).

This idea was reinforced by the withdrawn nature of one mother within the group that did not fit the look and style of the others in the group.

“She's [from] a lower economic family who needs the support from the group and from the Space programme, but it's getting her there... allowing her time to get used to the group and the people, I mean, she doesn't say much. She's a bit unsure and a bit shy, nervous, worried that her son is not doing as well as other babies so she holds back a bit and doesn't come weekly, which doesn't help her to get to know the parents.” (Facilitator one).

Education. Another salient need of new mothers within the community, according to the facilitators was parent education. They felt as though Space was meeting this need through teaching mothers that there is no right way to do things and by educating them on individual differences.

“Every child is different and you learn something different about a child and one child might do something and another one might do something entirely different.” (Facilitator one).

The facilitators also felt as though Space allowed parents to learn, not only through their own experiences but also through the experiences of the other mums around them. One of the facilitators highlighted how there is a real *“willingness to learn”* (Facilitator two) within the group. They also noted how at times, Space can act as a catalyst and encourage mothers to research topics that have been raised in discussion and gather ideas about parenting outside of the group time, as well as during the sessions themselves.

“I think it makes them go away and think about things. Like a lot of the mums go away and put up maybe a YouTube clip that they have seen about babies and mums on the Space Facebook page. It's got mothers mixing outside of Space, talking to each other. It's got them thinking about 'oh, I might do that craft at home.' Yeah, it's kind of like laying the foundation, planting the seed.” (Facilitator two).

3.2.2 Training, Curriculum and Programme Delivery

Training. Since this Space group is the only programme in the region, the facilitators reported feeling isolated from other Space facilitators and from the Parenting Place following the initial training that was provided. They expressed that follow-up sessions and/or check-ins would be a good way to remedy these feelings and that the additional support would be greatly beneficial to them both.

“To have someone checking up or emailing just to see how your day has been, that would be quite nice, I think, to have a little bit more feedback.” (Facilitator one).

One of the facilitators had experienced a particularly challenging start to the job. This was due to the facilitator having to facilitate Space before receiving any training due to an unexpected changeover in staff. Fortunately, the previous facilitator had left useful resources to be used which eased the transition slightly.

“I felt quite thrown in the deep end... I really did actually. I kind of felt like I was only really working on how I thought [previous facilitator] worked. So initially... I struggled a wee bit and I felt that perhaps I didn't know enough at the time. But once I did all of my training and started working with [facilitator one], I felt way more confident.” (Facilitator two).

The other facilitator experienced slightly different challenges when first taking on the roll. She had never seen a Space group run before and felt as though she had to piece things together based on her theoretical knowledge.

“When I first started, my first Space group was my Space group. What we learnt in practice and in paper form, we put together our Space group from that.” (Facilitator one).

Despite the aforementioned setbacks, one of the facilitators expressed that they enjoyed the training, that it was great professional development, and that they looked forward to receiving more. Some areas of focus for future sessions were also discussed.

“I think that it's really important for a facilitator to have a good foundation and even to be shown how to do the paperwork and do the accounts... that could be a good thing for them to bring into the training... heading up your weekly plan and your termly plan, stuff like that.” (Facilitator two).

Curriculum. The facilitators were very positive about the Space curriculum and felt as though it appropriately covered relevant topics for mothers in the first year of their babies' life.

“It covers everything really of what we need to cover over the year with the parents. It's broken down quite well into parts so it's easily read and managed.” (Facilitator one).

“I think it's going really well with the new mums that do come through. It's a really good programme, the mothers seem to love it. We have good content... and they're coming back, so that says to me that we're doing something right.” (Facilitator two).

They were both especially happy with elements of the curriculum like messy play, particularly because it provided mothers with opportunities to do activities that they might not have the resources or skills to facilitate at home.

“The messy play is quite important. I find that particular part of the programme is vital because it teaches the babies so much and the parents a lot and a lot of these parents will try some of this messy play at home but don't really want the mess. So that's why preschools and Space programmes are so good because they get these things they wouldn't do at home and this term is when we do all that messy play stuff... the parents are thoroughly enjoying it and so are the babies.” (Facilitator one).

Notebook. Although the facilitators felt as though the notebook provided to the parents at the start of the Space programme was a good keepsake to record their child's

developmental milestones and the information from the sessions, they both expressed that it was challenging for them to incorporate it into the sessions in a way that engaged the mothers.

“It’s a really good keepsake, yeah, and they’ve modified it and it’s actually quite a nice wee book. But we either need time in the session to get them to fill it out, which I don’t think they all do, they tend to talk in those times and start chatting to the people beside them and then they wouldn’t fill it out.” (Facilitator one).

They also expressed their concerns about the value of the notebooks considering the cost and explained that they were not getting enough use for the price that the community partner had to pay for them. It was suggested that other alternatives could be better, such as an online version of the content so that it was more user friendly and cost-effective.

“We have those booklets that the mothers have, they’re really dear, they’re about \$25 each and the mothers don’t really use them or want them. So maybe they could look at something different to that.” (Facilitator two).

“Those books that the parents take home, those have been hard to work with. We’ve only tried about three times... three sessions over the three years and we’ve got a bit better with it this year, but everyone... with the books the parents take home, they don’t always bring them back on a weekly basis.” (Facilitator one).

Guest Speakers. The facilitators both mentioned that they felt as though the integration of guest speakers and information from outside organisations was a key component for effective programme delivery. They explained that Space provided mothers with the opportunity to access additional information that would not typically be made available to them outside of a parenting programme like Space, as well as giving mothers a chance to learn from one another, with one another.

“I think that going to Space means that you have something to look forward to, you get to see other people, you're learning stuff together. I think it's a lot of practical, hands-on. I mean you can read the information but I think it's basically being shown what to do, you're being part of the class - it's all that hands-on, thinking stuff, together.” (Facilitator two).

Two particular resources were highlighted by both of the facilitators as being invaluable for the mothers – visits from the local Plunket nurse and videos by Nathan Wallis from the Brainwave Trust.

“We have the Plunket nurse coming in every six weeks, that helps them. It helps me too, I learn little knacks that I can pass on to the mums.” (Facilitator one).

“When we have the Plunket nurses come and [the mothers] can ask anything they like, it's a great question and answer time... [the Plunket nurse is] just full of information and she'll come alongside the parents if they are struggling a bit more and need some more one on one, she will give them that time. So that opens doors for them. If they weren't at Space, they may not have had the opportunity to spend more time with a Plunket nurse because they may not have talked about what was going on.” (Facilitator one).

One of the facilitators hypothesised that the reason that these outside resources were received so well was due to the demographic of mothers within the programme and their desire to learn more about their babies.

“The mothers liked hearing from Nathan Wallis... The brain man, guy. They really loved... I feel anything like that, I guess [that] appeals because they're very educated women.” (Facilitator two).

Changes to Sessions. A theme in both facilitator interviews was the need to be fluid and adaptable within the sessions. The facilitators recognised that there were times when they

were required to be flexible around the needs of the mothers and babies on any given day. They felt competent in their ability to adjust things as necessary to accommodate these needs.

“We're quite free to change things around a little bit but we don't stick to strict guidelines, like a baby doesn't stick to a schedule all the time; there's always a few flare-ups, so we acknowledge that and we are aware of those flare ups and we allow for it.” (Facilitator one).

Similarly, facilitator one, in particular, felt as though the session structure sometimes needed to be adapted to suit the interests of the group throughout their time together. This was especially the case with updating and adding to the songs that were incorporated in the sessions to maintain engagement.

“More music, more variety because I'm running out of... at this point I'm looking to having to purchase things because we don't have enough choice of music... it happens every year - we get to the point where parents talk through the songs because I think they're bored. They've had those songs and they've started to chat through the music sessions and I don't find that very easy because I think they should be joining in to teach their babies something. The reason they are here is for the parents to learn and for the babies to learn and if the parents are talking, the babies aren't going to think much of it.” (Facilitator one).

The facilitators also mentioned their openness to improvement and how they tried to provide mothers with a platform for sharing their thoughts and ideas about how to make the Space sessions more interesting and enjoyable. Although one of the facilitators expressed that it can be hard to receive feedback at times, they do what they can to take it on board and use it constructively.

“Every so often, and I must admit, not every week but we try and say 'is there anything that... we need to work on or is there anything that you would like to learn more

about?' We often ask those questions at the end of the session to see if there's anything more they want to delve into that we haven't.” (Facilitator one).

“One of the mothers said to me, 'oh look, I'm a teacher and at school we do this, this, and that' and initially, I thought, now I can either be offended by that or I can actually take that on board and think, actually, yeah I'll try that.” (Facilitator two).

3.2.3 Facilitation Challenges

Only Space Group in the Area. A prominent concern that was evident within the facilitator interviews was that this Space group was the only one in the city. The facilitators felt that this meant that it made it harder for people to access the programme since there was only one session a week in one location to cater to an entire population of first-time mothers.

“[City] isn't so popular with Space, it's the one group and it's not as advertised as it could be. If there were other dotted ones around the areas of [City], then there would be more people going to them and there would be more of them, more opportunity because they're closer to home.” (Facilitator one).

Conversely, due to the lack of popularity of the programme in the city, at times the facilitators felt as though it had been difficult to find people to join the programme since very few people had heard of it and little effort had been made to advertise it.

“That's the one thing we've had trouble with - is finding the people to come to the Space programme - that hasn't always been the easiest, finding the parents.” (Facilitator one).

A further complication recognised by the facilitators that was associated with being the only group in the city was that they were the only facilitators that were tied to the group. This meant that if either of them was sick or unable to attend the sessions, there was nobody to cover for them.

“The problem with us right now is that if anyone is sick there actually is no one to replace the facilitator, so we have to shut the group down for that day/week.” (Facilitator one).

Cultural Competency. A challenge that the facilitators reported facing was integrating both Te Reo Māori and Māori cultural concepts into their sessions. While they felt that this was important to include, they indicated that, on a personal level, they lacked the knowledge and competency to effectively do so. This issue was also linked back to being the only group in the area, in that the facilitators did not have another group to model this off or communicate with about how to improve their cultural competency.

“I know for one thing, we're not so good with the Māori side of things... I know a little bit, but I'm not fluent. So, it's really hard to implement that into a session and [facilitator two] is not very good at that either. So that kind of thing, it would be nice to know how people work with that... what they do.” (Facilitator one).

3.2.4 Parenting Outcomes

Parenting Confidence. When asked about the impact that the Space programme has had on the confidence of the mothers, the facilitators spoke about the reassurance that it provides the mothers that they are doing well in their parenting.

“I think it kind of shows the mums that they are doing okay, that they love their children, they are doing a good job. That not everyone is perfect, all of the mothers are in the same boat together. Yeah, I think that by bringing the mothers together... a mum at home isolated, can think 'oh I'm not doing a good job'... but if they come together and see each other, I think it's just getting that confidence that 'oh I'm actually doing quite well myself.’” (Facilitator two).

They also spoke about how during the sessions, mothers are investing time in their children, are free of distraction, and are connecting with their baby in a capacity that they may not be able to when they are at home.

“They come every week, that whole [two] hours [are] about mother and baby investing time in each other, whereas maybe if they were at home, they wouldn't quite do that. So, when they come to Space it means that slows the mum down, with other mothers, and they're connecting.” (Facilitator two).

Quality of Mother-Baby Interactions. When the facilitators were asked about how the programme influences the quality of mother-baby interactions, they mentioned that Space provided guidance for mothers and allowed them to model different parenting and interaction techniques to one another. The facilitators also mentioned that some mothers were a bit unsure about how to relate to their babies in the initial months. However, Space offered a way for them to seek guidance from the facilitators and their peers on how to establish bonds.

“They connect with their babies more because they are interacting with them and they're learning techniques that they can use... So, I think it does make a difference, Space.” (Facilitator one).

Social Capital. During the interviews, the facilitators were prompted to reflect upon how they felt Space had impacted the mothers socially. Both facilitators agreed that the mothers viewed Space as a social experience and that they appreciated the opportunity to get out of the house each week to see other people and feel supported.

“They get to know each other; support each other. It means that they're not isolated at home, they're coming out. It gives them a reason to get up in the morning and get cracking, you know? That can be hard.” (Facilitator two).

Although it was too early to determine whether the current group was going to continue to meet as a group after the sessions finished, one of the facilitators said that this had been a common outcome for previous groups. Those groups had created a Facebook page so that they could continue to access the Space content and community after the sessions had ended.

“By the way they talk, I think it’s a very social time - no, the parents have all really enjoyed it actually. Every group we’ve had has moved on to other things... doing other activities within those groups, like that parents still see each other.” (Facilitator one).

“There’s a past Space page on Facebook that you can connect to, that allows you to keep up with a bit about Space so you can keep going along... not to the group, but to learn a bit more.” (Facilitator one).

3.2.5 Strengths and Limitations

Strengths. Overall, the facilitators were very positive about the Space programme during their interviews. They expressed that the music, hands-on activities such as the crafts and messy play, as well as the opportunity for mothers to learn from each other’s parenting journeys, were particular strengths of the programme. One of the facilitators also acknowledged that there is a great deal for them to learn from the mothers too, rather than solely functioning as teachers.

“They loved the messy play and the painting, they like making the crafts. I think they like coming each week and achieving something or take away something.” (Facilitator two).

“I think, like for us, we’re always learning as well, as facilitators. I mean, we don’t have all of the answers and everything, it’s like we learn from them [mothers] as well.” (Facilitator two).

Limitations. Despite the strengths of the programme, some limitations were also discussed. The facilitators spoke about feeling as though there was not enough time during the sessions to cover everything that they would have liked to. Further, they explained that it could have been better to spread topics over several weeks to consolidate the mothers' learning instead of rushing through one topic each week.

"Sometimes we find we don't have enough time to do everything. It's a lot of information that goes into a session, into a two-hour session... you've got the music, you've got your storytime, you've got messy play, you've got your activity and you've got your thought of your day. There's a lot involved and to get through it, we have to just keep going and going and just keep pushing. Sometimes I feel like... I'm a little pushy sometimes because I know we've got so much to do that we have to move on to something quite quickly. Sometimes it would be quite nice to spend a bit more time on something." (Facilitator one).

Another limitation that was described concerning this group in particular, rather than the Space programme itself, was that the group of mothers was not very diverse. The facilitators worried that this was limiting the inclusivity of other people who do not fit that profile, as they might find the current group intimidating or difficult to relate to.

"We're struggling to meet the needs of the other mums that feel intimidated coming into the group, so where do they fit on the scheme of things? We need to run something for them." (Facilitator two).

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to investigate whether the Space parenting programme was producing outcomes for the participating parents that aligned with those outlined in the ToC model. Mothers and facilitators from a local Space group participated in individual semi-

structured interviews and were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, as well as three specific programme outcomes: parenting confidence and self-efficacy, quality of mother-baby interactions, and social capital. Mothers also completed weekly journals which supported the findings from their subsequent interviews. The results supported the Space ToC model and showed that, according to both the facilitators and the mothers, the members of the local Space group were experiencing the programme's predicted outcomes, particularly with the social interactions and support that mothers were receiving.

4.2 Primary Findings

Parenting Confidence and Self-Efficacy. Some participants found it difficult to report outcomes related to parenting confidence and self-efficacy, as it was hard for them to determine which improvements were due to Space and those which would have occurred regardless. However, all of the mothers felt as though their parenting confidence had improved since beginning the Space programme for various reasons. They attributed these changes to the time that had passed since joining Space, the education and discussions that occurred within sessions, having other mothers around them that were experiencing the same thing, and the encouragement and support from the group to try new things at home with their babies.

Although parents described the increase in parenting confidence in the context of the Space programme, the possibility remains that such growth would have happened naturally as the new parents became increasingly familiar with their infant. Nevertheless, other research has indicated that mothers who attend parenting programmes tend to experience an increase in confidence in their parenting due to their participation (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008), whereas mothers in another study who did not attend any parent education, felt as though

they lacked confidence (Gibson & Hanson, 2013). Despite the difficulty some mothers had with determining the reason for these changes, all of the participants recognised that their parenting confidence had grown throughout their parenting journey. None of the mothers reported feeling dissatisfied with their current confidence levels – a finding that is not necessarily true of all mothers in light of the aforementioned studies. This general theme of satisfaction, therefore, suggests that Space is likely implicitly contributing to this outcome.

The encouragement, support, and shared experiences that some of the mothers recalled as helpful for their parenting confidence also aligned with findings by Liu et al. (2011). That study demonstrated that mothers who experienced less parenting stress felt more confident and competent in their abilities as a parent. The social interactions that parents in this study discussed as assisting them in feeling more efficacious would likely have helped to reduce their levels of stress. Although this mechanism was not explicitly explored in this research, the relationship between positive social interactions and reduction in parenting stress as potential mediators for increases in parenting confidence could be a target for future evaluations of group-based parenting programmes.

Quality of Mother-Baby Interactions. As hypothesised, participants generally reported that mother-baby interactions were improved due to their attendance of Space sessions. The interactions at Space allowed mothers to share their experiences and the session content that gave mothers new ways to interact with their babies.

As evidenced in research by Fielden and Gallagher (2008), parenting programmes can influence the behaviours and attitudes of parents known to impact the understanding of their child's development and actions. Mothers in the present evaluation reported that learning new ways of interacting with their baby and becoming more educated about their development, particularly in terms of brain development and developmentally appropriate activities, played a significant role in improving their interactions and relationships with their babies. Research

has demonstrated that understanding their child's development assists parents to effectively interact with their babies, and are also important for establishing positive developmental trajectories (Parfitt & Ayers, 2012).

As previously mentioned, the current literature regarding the effects of parenting programmes on mother-baby interactions is limited. Therefore, the findings from this research are particularly valuable. These results demonstrate that social learning may be an area to direct future research. As the participants in this evaluation articulated that they had started to reflect on and experiment with how they interacted with their baby, based on the implicit modelling and conversations that they had been exposed to from other mothers in the group. It would be interesting to explore whether the learning opportunities created by social interactions were more influential than the curriculum for these mother-baby interactions, in other contexts, beyond what was discussed in these interviews.

Social Capital. Social capital is an abstract concept that can be defined many ways as demonstrated throughout previous chapters. However, the definition by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) that was outlined in the introduction has formed the basis of the following conclusions.

The outcome that both the parents and facilitators recalled as having the greatest impact on mothers was the social capital that Space provided for the mothers. The mothers reflected that the social environment of the sessions, the emotional support from others in the group, and the content and structure of the programme, all contributed to their enhanced social experience as an outcome of attending Space.

Fielden and Gallagher (2008) found that different parenting programmes were more effective than others at increasing social capital and support. However, parents who did attend courses reported better outcomes than those who had not. All of the mothers in the present study stated that Space had improved their social outcomes through providing them

with a network of mothers to discuss parenting concerns and general life topics with, as well as supporting each other with advice and shared experiences. This finding indicates that, per the results reported by Fielden and Gallagher (2008), Space may possess some of the characteristics of parenting programmes that assist them in eliciting notable improvements in social capital.

A study by Gibson and Hanson (2013) reported that mothers found it difficult to meet other parents and socialise without having a parenting programme as a platform to engage with other parents. The mothers in the current evaluation noted that it was particularly important to them to have people in their lives that were experiencing the same transition into parenthood and that having a network of mothers was integral to having a positive parenting experience.

One of the primary themes that emerged in research by Glavin et al. (2017) when evaluating the function of parenting programmes was ‘fellowship with others in the same situation.’ This idea was consistent with the theme that consistently emerged in the parent interviews of the current study, relating to being around other people who were experiencing similar life circumstances. Glavin and colleagues noted that mothers used the parenting groups to discuss their parenting experiences and challenges, and for creating social networks. They found that this led to connectedness, confidence, and access to new information - all of which were discussed by the mothers in the Space programme as outcomes that they had experienced.

Facilitator Feedback. The feedback from the facilitator interviews was generally quite similar to that of the parent interviews, however, there were some unique topics of discussion. One of the facilitators commented that they had noticed that some of the parents had started to talk through the music segment of the sessions. They expressed their frustration about this because they did not think that the babies would get the most out of the sessions

and learn from them if the parents were not engaged with the content themselves. The observation of this facilitator alluded to her perspective on the purpose of the programme and what made the sessions effective. It would appear that this facilitator believed mothers viewed Space as a place for babies to learn and for parents to be immersed in the curriculum. However, the information that was gathered from the mothers about why they had chosen to attend Space showed that none of the main reasons for their involvement in the programme was so that their babies could learn. Instead, the mothers primarily valued the social interactions that occurred with the other mothers in the group and with their babies during activities and discussions. Therefore, it is unsurprising that at times, the mothers chose to prioritise conversations with one another over participating fully in the singing.

A limitation that was mentioned by the facilitators only was the issue of having no additional facilitators who could run the group or help out if one of the two from the group were sick or unavailable. This may only be an issue due to the lack of other Space groups in the local area or it may not be unique to this group. Nevertheless, it was a limitation that troubled both of the facilitators. This is an issue that Parenting Place should consider addressing in collaboration with the community partners. One strategy that may assist with this, is that community partners could try to identify one or two mothers in the programme who can act as back-up facilitators if a regular facilitator is unable to attend the session. These mothers could receive training to ensure that they are competent in this role. This approach aligns with the ethos of a Play Centre model, which Space was originally founded upon, and therefore may provide an intuitive solution. The acceptance of this as a dynamic within groups would potentially vary across cohorts. However, it is an interesting consideration that could take the pressure off the facilitation role.

The primary findings that emerged from this evaluation seem to have fulfilled the original aims. Parents generally reported having experienced the outcomes that were

presented in the programme's ToC. However, the information that the parents and facilitators provided about their personal experiences with the programme enriched these findings to become more than a simple cause and effect relationship. The narratives gave some insight into how these outcomes were achieved, and the contexts and components that promoted these areas of growth. These ideas could, therefore, be considered in a practical capacity by the Parenting Place and community partners going forward. Other findings that were somewhat unrelated to the specific outcomes of interest also emerged throughout the evaluation and are outlined below.

4.3 Secondary Findings

A study by Shorey et al. (2019) examined the effectiveness of a technology-based postnatal parenting programme and assessed outcomes of parental bonding, self-efficacy, and satisfaction, postnatal depression and anxiety, and perceived social support. The educational programme in that study was informed by theoretical underpinnings from both Bandura's Self-efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977) and the Attachment Theory proposed by Bowlby (1969). Those in the intervention group displayed significantly better outcome scores than those in the control group in areas of parental bonding, social support, self-efficacy, parental satisfaction and depression. They also experienced lower levels of anxiety when covariates were adjusted for (Shorey et al., 2019).

Although the evaluation research for the present study was not experimental, the findings relating to mother-baby interactions appear to reflect similar outcomes to the parental bonding mentioned above, as well as parenting confidence relating to self-efficacy. The other outcomes examined by Shorey et al. (2019) were not considered within this study; however, the improvements in both of the aforementioned domains in both of these papers, despite the stark contrast in programme delivery, indicates that it may be the participation in

parenting programmes that elicits positive changes, rather than the specific nature or content of the programme itself. Comparisons between different parenting programmes in New Zealand, such as SKIP and Plunket, using the same methodology for each of the evaluations, could provide an interesting insight into the causal mechanisms for these positive changes.

Other researchers noted that parents reported feeling greater levels of satisfaction with their parenting courses when the facilitator's style aligned with the parents' expectations (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008). This suggests that facilitators should ensure that they are in tune with the needs and expectations of their clients to achieve the greatest change. The feedback from a number of the mothers in this evaluation suggested that the facilitators should check in with them to see what content they would like to have covered and if they had any questions relating to their parenting journey. This implies that there may be some room for the facilitators to improve in their attunement to the needs and expectations of the parents. The same study also provided evidence showing that mothers and fathers have different support needs, yet fathers tend not to clearly express what their support needs are (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008). This discrepancy highlights the importance of considering the target participants of the intervention. This evidence may provide a rationale as to why the participants in the Space group are all mothers. Although the programme is primarily designed for first-time mothers, it should be considered whether or not the sessions are suitable for any fathers in the community need parent education and/or support that could be offered by Space if some minor adjustments were made. Finally, it is likely that the differences between the outcomes that have been demonstrated across research on the subject are due to the variability in the design and delivery of parenting programmes (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008), showing that not all support groups are the same, nor will they produce the same outcomes. This also highlights that there could be some differences between how Space

is delivered across the country and is a reminder that some caution should be taken when applying these findings across different groups.

4.4 Practical and Theoretical Importance

Suggestions for Parenting Place. According to the results from both mothers and facilitators, Space could generally be said to have increased parenting confidence, improved mother-baby interactions and increased social capital. When the mothers were asked about how the programme had impacted them socially, a number of them discussed ideas relating to community, connection, and a network of fellow mothers. This may indicate that the mothers will develop social capital in the future (a concept that could be investigated in future longitudinal research). This idea of parenting within a community is particularly interesting because historically, this style of raising a baby would have been the norm. However, in modern western society, people's lives have become much more individualistic and this sense of community has diminished. This shift in societal norms may explain as to why mothers value group-based parenting programmes so highly, as it gives them a sense of connection that is innately desired by humans, particularly during vulnerable periods in their life. Although the idea that it takes a village to raise a child is frequently expressed as popular sentiment, there is minimal literature examining this hypothesis with parenting programmes. This could be a fruitful avenue of exploration for future research. This area of inquiry could be particularly informative when considering Māori communities in New Zealand, as Māori culture remains much more aligned with this community-based philosophy and may provide a possible explanation as to why the participants in this evaluation were all of Pākehā ethnicity.

Suggestions for the Community Partner. When participants were asked about the limitations of the Space programme and for their suggestions for programme improvement,

the themes that were discussed by mothers were very similar to the ideas mentioned by the facilitators, indicating a unified understanding about what had and had not been working well for the group. Areas of discussion for both groups included a lack of advertisement being a problem for accessibility, the inability to reach parents of lower socioeconomic status. They also noted the limited Te Reo and Māori cultural content being integrated into the sessions, use of the notebook within the programme (with some wanting better incorporation and others preferring for it to be removed entirely), the lack of other local Space groups, and having too much content to cover during some sessions. Further to these limitations, the mothers also expressed wanting to learn more about their babies' brain development and for the facilitators to allow discussions to continue to flow freely when the conversation becomes engaging for the mothers. Therefore, it seems as though the community partner could improve the delivery of Space by ensuring that facilitators (and/or guest speakers) are culturally competent, knowledgeable about different aspects of brain development, and allow sessions and discussions to flow naturally.

4.5 Limitations and Future Research

Due to the time and resource constraints of this research, only three of the seven ToC outcomes were evaluated. Other outcomes, such as increasingly purposeful and responsive baby-baby interactions, and learning information and strategies (See Appendix G), provide a clear framework for future research and evaluations of the Space programme. The sample of participants in this evaluation was small with only nine mothers and two facilitators. This may limit the generalisability of these and having a larger or additional sample in future Space evaluations may enrich these findings. It could also be of some benefit to conduct research involving pre- and post-attendance interviews or surveys for participants of the programme. This could be supported by using the same measures for a control group of

mothers who did not attend a group, to gather more data around the changes that might or might not have been elicited by Space.

The current study was limited by having only one Space group in the local area. Although having participants from the same group enabled more depth of understanding into the functioning and experiences of this particular sample, the findings may not be generalisable across different Space groups in New Zealand. Groups that contain a different demographic of mothers, smaller or larger class sizes, delivery from other community partners, alternative facilitation styles or other contrasting characteristics, may vary greatly from the current sample. The inability to establish definitive causal relationships between the programme and the outcomes also poses a challenge, in that it is not known for certain which components of the parenting programme have been eliciting positive change and cannot be applied to other programmes or groups with guaranteed success. Therefore, the potential lack of generalisation of these findings is a limitation.

Future research could also look to remedy the heterogeneity of the current sample. Although Space is primarily designed for first-time mothers, it also caters for fathers and families with more than one child. However, the participants in this evaluation were all Pākeha, first-time mothers with tertiary educations and their experience of the programme could have been strongly influenced by their demographic characteristics, their support needs, and prior life experiences. Therefore, it could be beneficial to investigate whether these same conclusions could be drawn about Space with a different demographic of participants.

A randomised controlled trial of a Māori adaptation of Triple P parenting programme, targeted at the parents of children aged three to seven years, demonstrated that the cultural adaptation was successful in producing positive parenting and child behaviour outcomes (Keown, Sanders, Franke, & Shepherd, 2018). This evidence shows that Māori adaptations to

parenting programmes can be successful in producing positive parenting and child outcomes and may be an area of expansion for current parenting programmes in New Zealand.

Therefore, it could be worthwhile for the Parenting Place to consider how Space could be developed to become more culturally based within the current framework or by creating a more immersive Māori curriculum as an additional option for parents who wish to utilise it. This could help to address the heterogeneity of participants.

Vaismoradi et al. (2013) describe quality case studies as ones that recognise that individuals all experience different lived realities and consequently seek to explore the various perspective of participants so that the phenomena can be fully understood. These authors described the process by which this should occur, including maintaining as much of the natural context of the phenomenon as possible and by using the narrative of participants as the main source of information. According to this approach, the current case study is robust in that it utilised the commentaries of the participants, recognising that each of their individual experiences were true representations of the multiple realities being lived by parents and facilitators, while also gaining insight into the sessions in practice. The present study also sought out these perspectives to better understand what was occurring in the programme - another idea discussed as an essential component of good case studies by the same authors (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

As described by Yin (2013), case study analyses are, by nature, limited in their ability to explain phenomena and are better suited for descriptive or exploratory roles. This research was no different in that it was quite clear how mothers and facilitators described their experiences of Space and the changes that they had noticed since joining the group. However, both the participants and anyone attempting to interpret the information would be somewhat limited in their ability to definitively and confidently explain how or why these outcomes were produced (although it is possible to speculate). This limitation is not unique to this case

study but it is an important consideration to keep in mind when examining the results. Yin (2013) also suggested that to improve the methodology of a case study evaluation, triangulation of methods should be considered. The current study included journals, parent interviews, and facilitator interviews to gather as much information from the participants as possible given the constraints of the project. When analysed, it was clear that the data collected through the weekly journals were very consistent with that of the parent interviews, which provided greater confidence that the information was an accurate reflection of the mothers' experiences and was, therefore, a strength of the investigation process. Similarly, the use of logic models to inform research is considered to be good practice in an evaluation (Yin, 2013). This study was based upon Space's logical model, the Theory of Change. This not only provided a framework for the research, but it also gave the findings more meaning as they aligned with the theoretical foundation that the programme had been based upon.

4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study evaluation was intended to provide insights into the Space programme in terms of the experiences of the parents, facilitators, and the outcomes that mothers experienced from the programme. As the programme had several outcomes outlined in the Theory of Change, the project was not able to consider all of the short- and long-term outcomes. The chosen short-term outcomes for evaluation were parenting confidence, mother-baby interactions, and social capital.

Journals, interviews with parents, and interviews with facilitators were all used to gather data about the aforementioned outcomes and the overall participant experiences of Space. Mothers shared positive accounts of their experiences of the programme that were consistent in both their journal entries and in their interviews. They generally felt as though the programme had increased their confidence, improved their interactions with their babies,

and increased their social capital. Although mothers expressed improvements in these areas, they felt as though this may have been due to other variables, outside of the Space curriculum. For example, other possible influences that were mentioned by participants included the time that had passed since they first joined the group and the informal group discussions that frequently occurred. The curriculum was viewed by mothers as having less of an explicit impact on the aforementioned outcomes than various social aspects of the sessions, like establishing networks and gaining reassurance. Feedback from facilitators was consistent with these ideas, however, they regarded the curriculum as more influential and commented less on social domains than the mothers.

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Appendix A: Ethical Approval



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson
 Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588
 Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: HEC 2019/88

12 August 2019

Abbey Woods
 Child and Family Psychology
 UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Abbey

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "A Qualitative Case Study Evaluation of the Space Parenting Programme" has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 5th August 2019.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

Dr Dean Sutherland
Chair
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee

Department: College of Education, Health & Human Development

Email: abbey.woods@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

HEC Ref:

Date:



Appendix B: Parent Participant Information Sheet

Hello, my name is Abbey Woods and I am a student at the University of Canterbury. I am working toward a Master's degree in Child and Family Psychology and am hoping that you could help out by being a part of my study. The details of my research are presented below.

What is this research about?

This research will investigate how parent participants and course facilitators from Space evaluate this programme. We will be drawing on information provided by both mothers participating in the programme, as well as those who have had experience facilitating the programme, to determine how effectively the sessions are working in alignment with the goals of Space. It is also an opportunity for you to share ideas about what could be improved within the curriculum or sessions, and what you think has been beneficial to your experiences as a new mother.

Am I eligible?

If you are a parent regularly participating in the Addington/Sydenham 2019 Space group, then you are eligible to participate in this study.

What will I need to do?

As a parent participating in this study, you will be asked to make weekly journal entries for four weeks on topics that will be guided by the research team. This will be used as part of data collection. The journal entries should only take 10 to 15 minutes of your time each week.

In addition, I will ask you to participate in an interview with me at a time and location most convenient for you (we could even do the interview via video conference (e.g., Skype or similar). The interview will last for approximately one hour.

Why be involved?

By participating in this study, your ideas could help Space to improve their programme in the future. You will be given the opportunity to share your thoughts and experiences of the programme with the research team and have this feedback shared with Space coordinators anonymously. You will also receive a \$40 grocery voucher in appreciation of your contribution to this research.

Are there any benefits or risks to participating?

We expect that you will find your experience of being a part of this study enjoyable, as it will give you a chance to reflect on what you are learning in Space and how you have grown as a parent. However, there is a slight chance that if your adjustment to parenting has been a challenge for you, then reflecting on these experiences could be distressing or uncomfortable. To minimize this risk, we will only ask you to share information in your journal and in the interview that you feel comfortable with. If, at any point during the interview you feel distressed or uncomfortable, you are welcome to take a break or end the interview, and the interviewer can provide contact details for appropriate supports if you wish.

Do I have to participate?

Involvement in this study is voluntary (it is your choice) and you will be able to withdraw at any stage of the process without consequence if you change your mind after signing up. Your choice regarding whether or not to participate will not influence how you are treated by Space or the University of Canterbury now or in the future. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your data can either be returned to you or destroyed; however, once data analysis has begun (October 2019), it will not be possible to remove your information.

Who will see my information?

Only the research team will see your individual data. We will be responsible for transcribing and analysing the information provided from the interviews and journals. Eventually, the data will be published. When this happens, only general themes and short quotes (anonymised) from the journal entries and interviews will be included with all personal or private information changed or deleted to protect your identity.

Where will my information be kept?

Your information will be stored in password protected electronic files and paper copies of your transcript will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet. Only the research team will be able to access the recordings/transcripts and journal entries.

Are there limits to my confidentiality?

If you share information that raises a concern about the safety of you, your family, or someone else, we will need to notify Space so that the necessary steps can be taken to reduce risk. If this happens, we will discuss this process with you.

What will happen to the findings from this research?

The results that are presented within this study will be published as a thesis, which will be publicly available and accessible through the UC Library. It is also likely that Space will use the document as evidence of the programme's efficacy and for funding or policy purposes. Further, it is possible that the research could be published in an academic journal or used for other educational purposes, such as presentations or further research. In each of these scenarios, your personal information will remain confidential and no identifying data will be published. If you are interested in acquiring a summary of the results from this study, please indicate this on the consent form so that we can arrange to send you a copy at the end of the project.

This research is being conducted as a requirement for the Master of Arts in Child and Family Psychology by Abbey Woods. The project will be supervised by Dr. Myron Friesen (University of Canterbury lecturer) and Dr. Linde-Marie Armersfoort (Child and Family Psychologist). Any queries can be emailed to Dr, Myron Friesen at myron.friesen@canterbury.ac.nz or discussed via phone at 03-369-5598.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints, please contact The Chair of the Human Ethics Committee at University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you choose to participate in this research, please complete the consent form and return it to either Abbey Woods or your group facilitator.

Consent Form for Participating Parents

- ☐ I have read the information sheet and have been allowed to ask questions. I understand what is being asked of me as a participant in this.
- ☐ I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I am able to withdraw at any time. If I choose to withdraw prior to October 2019, all of the information that I have provided will be removed.
- ☐ I understand that all of the information that I provide will be confidential to the researcher and supervisors.
- ☐ I understand that all data and quotes will be presented anonymously and will not identify any of the participants. The research team will do everything they can to protect my identity.
- ☐ I understand that if the researcher or supervisors are concerned for the safety of myself, my family, or those close to me, they will notify the Space team and this process will be discussed with me.
- ☐ I understand that the information that is gathered for this study will be used for a Master's thesis; a document that will be made publicly available through the UC Library. I understand that these findings could also be published in other places, such as Space reports or in academic publications.
- ☐ I understand that the data collected by the researcher will be securely stored at UC or on password protected computer files that will not be accessible to anyone outside of the research team. After 5 years of publication, this information will be destroyed.
- ☐ I understand the potential risks associated in participating in this research and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher Abbey Woods at any time via email at abbey.woods@pg.canterbury.ac.nz and via text/phone call at 0278594009 or contact the

primary supervisor Dr. Myron Friesen by email at myron.friesen@canterbury.ac.nz (phone 03-369-5598) for more information or to raise any concerns.

☐ I understand that if I have any complaints about the research, I am able to contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

☐ I would like a summary of the results from this study via email.

☐ I would like to receive a copy of my interview transcript.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Parents

Introduction

Researcher introduces herself and allows participant to do the same. The researcher explains the interview process and the available options should the participant become distressed, wish to take a break, or feel the need to end the interview.

Demographic Questions

Researcher: We would appreciate if we could begin with you answering some questions about yourself. Your answers will in no way impact how you are treated by the research team or by anyone involved in Space, nor will they impact how your interview is interpreted. All of your personal information will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone outside of the research team, even to those running the Space Programme. Due to this confidentiality, we hope that you feel comfortable being as open and honest as possible during this interview. Thank you!

What is your age? _____

What ethnicity do you identify with? _____

Which suburb do you live in? _____

What is your highest educational qualification? _____

Are you employed? YES (full time) / YES (part time) / NO

If yes, what is your occupation _____

Which of the following contribute to your family's income?

- A government benefit/allowance that you receive
- A government benefit/allowance that your partner receives
- Wages/salary that you receive

- Wages/salary that your partner receives
- Other sources of financial assistance

Do you have a partner? YES / NO

If yes, what is your relationship status with your partner? _____

How did you hear about Space? _____

Researcher: We are going to move onto the main part of the interview now. I have prepared several questions that I would like us to cover, but how we work through these questions is entirely up to you. We can work through each of them one after the other, or we can start our conversation with the first few questions, and this might lead to a variety of additional topics that come up during our conversation. We might discuss a variety of topics that are not on this list; but hopefully along the way, we will touch on each of these topics.

Very importantly, there are no right or wrong answers. We expect that each participant in this study will present their own unique ideas and experiences. If there are any topics that you feel uncomfortable discussing you are free to say that you would rather not discuss that question, and we will just move on to the next topic. In a similar manner if there are topics that you think are important for this evaluation of Space that are not covered, you are free to raise those issues at the end.

Finally, as mentioned in the info sheet, if you would like to receive a transcript of the interview, I can email you a copy. If there are any changes that you feel are necessary, please send these to me within two weeks from receiving the transcript.

How did you hear about Space?

Why did you choose to attend Space?

What do you feel are your main support needs as a new parent?

How is Space meeting these needs?

Do you think that participating in Space has improved how you and your baby interact with one another?

How do you feel your confidence in your parenting has changed since enrolling in Space?

How has attending Space impacted you socially?

What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think have been most effective?

What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think need to be improved?

What are your thoughts on the Space manual that has been provided as part of the programme?

Do you have any other suggestions for how the Space programme could be improved or better facilitated?

Appendix D: Journal Topics and Prompts for Parents

Week one topic: general

How do you feel about participating in the Space sessions each week?

What has been a highlight of your experience of Space so far?

What has been the most challenging aspect of Space so far?

Any other thoughts?

Week two topic: parenting confidence

How confident did you feel in your ability to parent when joining Space?

How and why has this changed? In what areas?

What would make you feel more confident in your parenting abilities?

Any other thoughts?

Week three topic: mother-baby interactions

How would you describe your relationship with your baby?

How has attending Space contributed to this?

What supports have been or would be useful to encourage positive interactions between you and your baby?

Any other thoughts about how Space has contributed to the interactions you have with your baby?

Week four topic: social capital

How has participating in Space met your support needs as a new parent?

Do the relationships that you have formed in Space extend beyond the weekly programme sessions?

Is there anything that you feel like you have gained from Space that was not included in the curriculum? Please explain.

Do you anticipate maintaining the relationships you have made through Space? What has contributed to this?

Any other thoughts on social support?

Department: College of Education, Health & Human Development

Email: abbey.woods@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

HEC Ref:

Date:



Appendix E: Facilitator Participant Information Sheet

Hello, my name is Abbey Woods and I am a student at the University of Canterbury. I am working toward a thesis in Child and Family Psychology and am hoping that you could help out by being a part of my study. The details of my research are presented below.

What is this research about?

This research will investigate how parent participants and course facilitators from Space evaluate this programme. We will be drawing on information provided by both mothers participating in the programme, as well as those who have had experience facilitating the programme, to determine how effectively the sessions are working in alignment with the goals of Space. It is also an opportunity for you to share ideas about what could be improved within the curriculum or sessions, and what you think has been beneficial to your experiences as a new mother.

Why me?

If you are a facilitator of the Addington/Sydenham 2019 Space group, then you are eligible to participate in this study.

What will I need to do?

If you choose to participate, you will meet with me for up to an hour for a semi-structured interview at a pre-arranged time.

Why be involved?

By participating in this study, your ideas could help Space to improve their programme in the future. You will be given the opportunity to share your thoughts and experiences of facilitating the programme with the research team and have this feedback shared with Space coordinators anonymously.

Are there any benefits or risks to participating?

We expect that you will find your experience of being a part of this study enjoyable, as it will give you a chance to reflect on your perceptions of the Space programme and how you have found the facilitation process. However, there is a slight chance that if your role has been a challenge for you, then reflecting on these experiences could be distressing or uncomfortable. To minimize this risk, we will only ask you to share information in the interview that you feel comfortable with. If, at any point during the interview you feel distressed or uncomfortable, you are welcome to take a break or end the interview, and the interviewer can provide contact details for appropriate supports if you wish.

Do I have to participate?

Involvement in this study is voluntary (it is your choice) and you will be able to withdraw at any stage of the process without consequence if you change your mind after signing up. Your choice regarding whether or not to participate will not influence how you are treated by Space or the University of Canterbury now or in the future. If you choose to withdraw from

the study, your data can either be returned to you or destroyed, however, once data analysis has begun (October 2019), it will not be possible to remove your information.

Who will see my information?

Only the research team will see your individual data. We will be responsible for transcribing and analysing the information provided from the interviews and journals. Eventually, the data will be published. When this happens, only general themes and short quotes (anonymised) from the journal entries and interviews will be included with all personal or private information changed or deleted to protect your confidentiality.

Where will my information be kept?

Your information will be stored in password protected electronic files and paper copies of your transcript will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet. Only the research team will be able to access the recordings/transcripts and journal entries.

Are there limits to my confidentiality?

If you share information that raises a concern about that safety of you, your family, or someone else, we will need to notify Space so that the necessary steps can be taken to reduce risk. If this happens, we will discuss this process with you.

What will happen to the findings from this research?

The results that are presented within this study will be published as a thesis, which will be publicly available and accessible through the UC Library. It is also likely that Space will use the document as evidence of the programme's efficacy and for funding or policy purposes. Further, it is possible that the research could be published in an academic journal or used for

other educational purposes, such as presentations or further research. In each of these scenarios, your personal information will remain confidential and no identifying data will be published. If you are interested in acquiring a summary of the results from this study, please indicate this on the consent form so that we can arrange to send you a copy at the end of the project.

This research is being conducted as a requirement for the Master of Arts in Child and Family Psychology by Abbey Woods. The project will be supervised by Dr. Myron Friesen (University of Canterbury lecturer) and Dr. Linde-Marie Armersfoort (Child and Family Psychologist). Any queries can be emailed to Dr, Myron Friesen at myron.friesen@canterbury.ac.nz or discussed via phone at 03-369-5598.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints, please contact The Chair of the Human Ethics Committee at University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you choose to participate in this research, please complete the consent form and return it to either Abbey Woods or your group facilitator.

Consent Form for Facilitators



- ☐ I have read the information sheet and have been allowed to ask questions. I understand what is being asked of me as a participant in this.
- ☐ I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I am able to withdraw at any time. If I choose to withdraw prior to October 2019, all of the information that I have provided will be removed.
- ☐ I understand that all of the information that I provide will be confidential to the researcher and supervisors.
- ☐ I understand that all data and quotes will be presented anonymously and will not identify any of the participants. The research team will do everything they can to protect my identity.
- ☐ I understand that if the researcher or supervisors are concerned for the safety of myself, my family, or those close to me, they will notify the Space team and this process will be discussed with me.
- ☐ I understand that the information that is gathered for this study will be used for a Master's thesis; a document that will be made publicly available through the UC Library. I understand that these findings could also be published in other places, such as Space reports or in academic publications.
- ☐ I understand that the data collected by the researcher will be securely stored at UC or on password protected computer files that will not be accessible to anyone outside of the research team. After 5 years of publication, this information will be destroyed.
- ☐ I understand the potential risks associated in participating in this research and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher Abbey Woods at any time via email at abbey.woods@pg.canterbury.ac.nz and via text/phone call at 0278594009 or contact the

primary supervisor Dr. Myron Friesen by email at myron.friesen@canterbury.ac.nz (phone 03-369-5598) for more information or to raise any concerns.

☐ I understand that if I have any complaints about the research, I am able to contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

☐ I would like to receive a summary of the study via email.

☐ I would like to receive a copy of my interview transcript.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Facilitators

Introduction

Researcher introduces herself and allows participant to do the same. The researcher explains the interview process and the available options should the participant become distressed, wish to take a break, or feel the need to end the interview.

Demographic Questions

Researcher: We would appreciate if we could begin with you answering some questions about yourself. Your answers will in no way impact how you are treated by the research team or by anyone else involved in Space, nor will they impact how your interview is interpreted. All of your personal information will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone outside of the research team, we hope that you feel comfortable being as open and honest as possible during this interview.

What is your age? _____

What ethnicity do you identify with? _____

What is your highest educational qualification? _____

Are you employed? YES (full time) / YES (part time) / NO

If yes, what is your occupation _____

How long have you been involved in Anglican Community Care for?

When and how did you become involved in facilitating Space?

Do you have children and/or grandchildren of your own? YES / NO

Any comments: _____

Researcher:

We are going to move onto the main part of the interview now. I have prepared several questions that I would like us to cover, but how we work through these questions is entirely up to you. We can work through each of them one after the other, or we can start our conversation with the first few questions, and this might lead to a variety of additional topics that come up during our conversation. We might discuss a variety of topics that are not on this list; but hopefully along the way, we will touch on each of these topics.

Very importantly, there are no right or wrong answers, we expect that each participant in this study will present their own unique ideas and experiences. If there are any topics that you feel uncomfortable discussing you are free to say that you would rather not discuss that question, and we will just move on to the next topic. In a similar manner if there are topics that you think are important for this evaluation of Space that are not covered, you are free to raise those issues at the end.

Finally, as mentioned in the info sheet, if you would like to receive a transcript of the interview, I can email you a copy. If there are any changes that you feel are necessary, please send these to me within two weeks from receiving the transcript.

What has been your experience of the training and support as a Space facilitator?

How do you think that Space is succeeding or struggling to meet the needs of new mothers?

How do you feel about the quality of the Space curriculum?

What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think were most effective?

What parts of the Space curriculum or sessions do you think need to be improved?

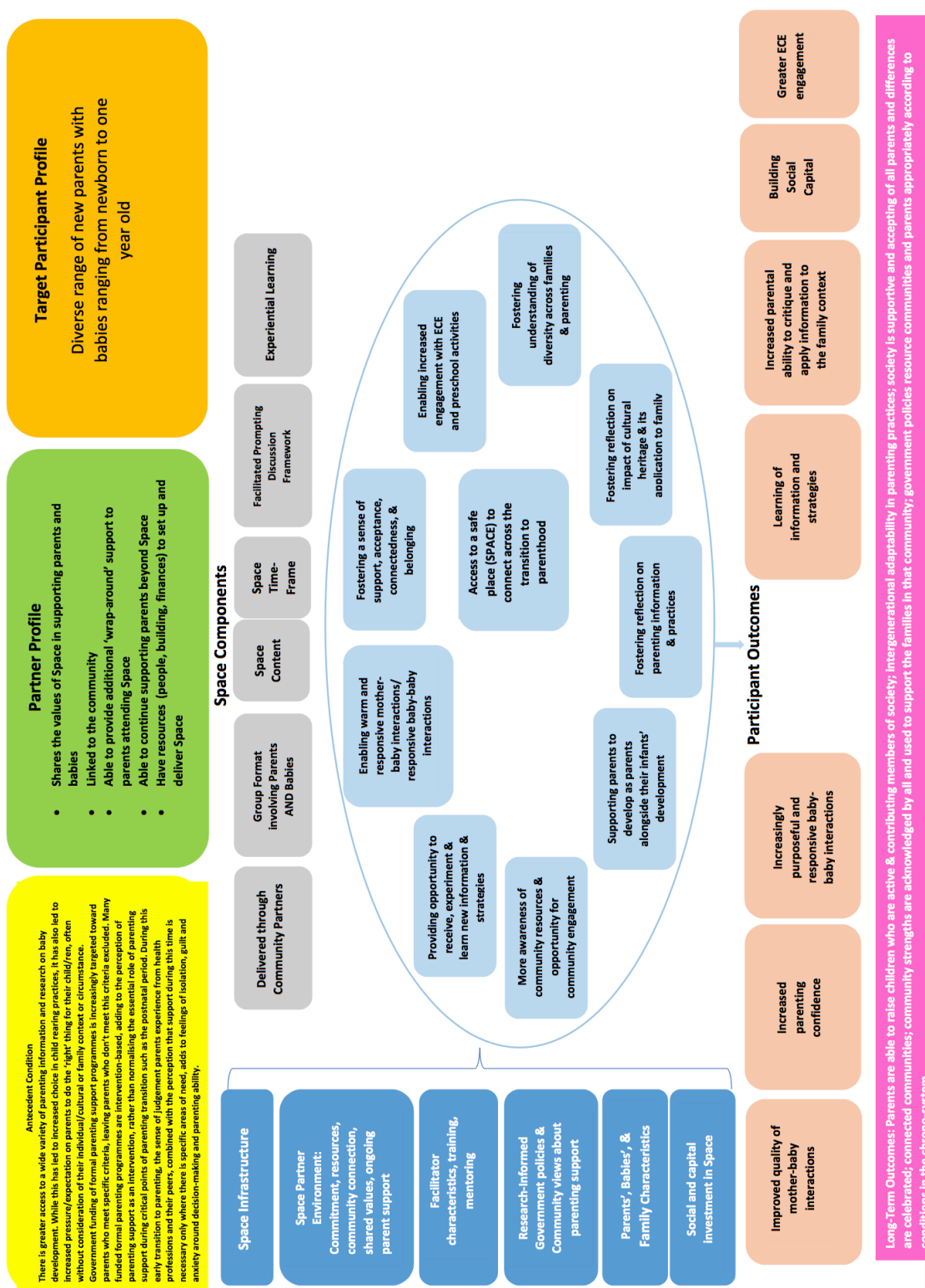
Do you think that participating in Space improves how mothers their babies interact with one another?

How do you think Space influences the confidence that mothers have in their parenting?

How do you think attending Space impacts new mothers in a social capacity?

What are your thoughts on the notebook that has been provided as part of the programme?

Appendix G: Space Theory of Change Diagram



(Armstrong, personal communication, February 10, 2019).