

EMPOWERING CONVERSATIONS

2022

**FINAL
REPORT**

PREPARED BY

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& Honest Data Consulting
LLC

PRESENTED TO

Los Angeles County
Department of Mental Health





BACKGROUND

The Empowering Conversations Series by Therapeutic Play Foundation, in partnership with, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and the Black Mental Health Task Force, began with the intention to empower Black Families in Los Angeles County and destigmatize many important topics faced by the Black/African-American community. Through this conversation series, six events were held with the community to discuss important topics including housing, marijuana[ne] , parents, mental health, youth skill-building, and LGBTQIA++.

THE OBJECTIVE

Therapeutic Play Foundation and The Black Mental Health Task Force set out to:

- Increase Access to Mental Health
- Destigmatize issues facing the Black/African-American Community in Los Angeles County
- Empower the Los Angeles County community to educate their stakeholders and take action in their community to reduce disparities facing the community

STRENGTHS & BARRIERS

Black Communities in Los Angeles County face barriers and challenges that far exceed their White counterparts. This project, through the empowering conversation series events, included about 50% of participants that identified as Black.



BARRIERS

The project was met with a few barriers. Given the grant funding period, COVID-19 forced Therapeutic Play Foundation to transition from holding conversations in-person, to holding strictly virtual events.

Recruiting took place only through the virtual platform Eventbrite, and became an additionally challenging to gain participants for each event. Additionally, obtaining responses for post surveys was challenging as virtual response rates can make it difficult to obtain a sufficient sample of responses. Attrition was a challenge to understand as the conversation series events impacted participants in service areas (#s).

The virtual platform may have prevented some from participating who do not have internet access or cannot/do not think it is safe to speak on a virtual platform.

STRENGTHS & BARRIERS



STRENGTHS

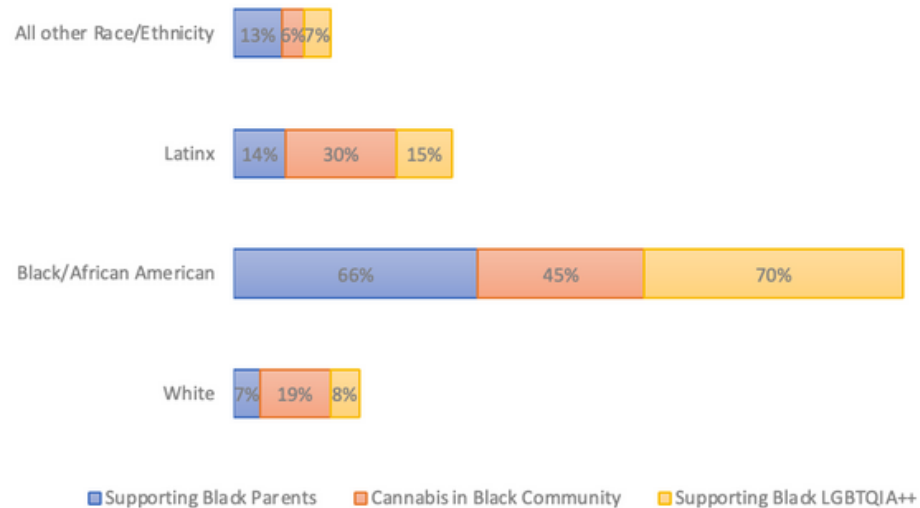
Importantly, there were several strengths associated with conducting the empowering conversations series events. While it being held virtually posed its own challenges, it did also present Therapeutic Play Foundation the benefit of reaching a wider audience for people living in our service areas. More people may have been able to attend the event online than would have been able to attend in-person. Additionally, this likely gave a voice to those who may have been unable to travel to the venue where this conversation was to be held.

The online platform also allowed for the ability to break out into different rooms to have discussions amongst participants in smaller groups to give everyone a voice about the critical topics of the Empowering Conversation Series Events.

In addition, our in-person Gala gave Therapeutic Play Foundation and the community an opportunity to come together and celebrate them. This gave everyone a chance during the pandemic to interact and celebrate their achievements. An added benefit of the Gala was not just Therapeutic Play Foundation meeting together with the community, but also many community sectors and their leaders were all in one place to interact, make connections and share in an empowering event.

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

Los Angeles County African American reportedly experience more discriminatory events than Non-Black County Residents.



The above breakdown is a representation of the Empowering Conversation Event participants. As you can see, each event shows the intended audience was reached in addition to others who can help empower the community to help reduce disparities within the Black/African American community (i.e., more about 50% of participants at each event reported as Black/African American).

Therapeutic Play Foundation was able to reach the intended audience within the community and give a platform to them to voice concerns and empower them with tools to help reach for a reduction in the challenges they face within many different sectors (e.g., housing, marijuana, parenting, etc.). For housing, issues discussed included homelessness and disparate housing laws. Conversations on marijuana discussed the stigmatization associated with being Black and using. Finally, parenting issues discussed the stigmatization of reaching out for help, the lack of available resources they are faced with and much more.

Additionally, Therapeutic Play Foundation had participants attend from across job sectors, including but not limited to, social workers, health care workers, educators, law enforcement officers, those working in business, and students. This diverse group indicates being able to reach a broad audience in the community. Finally, given the online nature of the recruitment process, it serves that these groups are people who care about these issues and will take the tools and conversations to others in their community.



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Participants from each Empowering Conversation Series Event were asked questions prior to the event and were then asked a similar set of questions afterwards. Gala survey results indicated that, many participants attended at least two conversation series events. This suggests that participants realized that the conversation was an effective way to discuss issues disproportionately affecting their community.

Attendees reported that the conversation series events were well-organized, dwelled on vital topics affecting the Black Community, and exited empowered to have the necessary conversations with family, friends, and other community members regarding the issues facing the Black Community. Additionally, those who attended the events and the Gala stated they would like to see more conversation series events put on by Therapeutic Play Foundation.

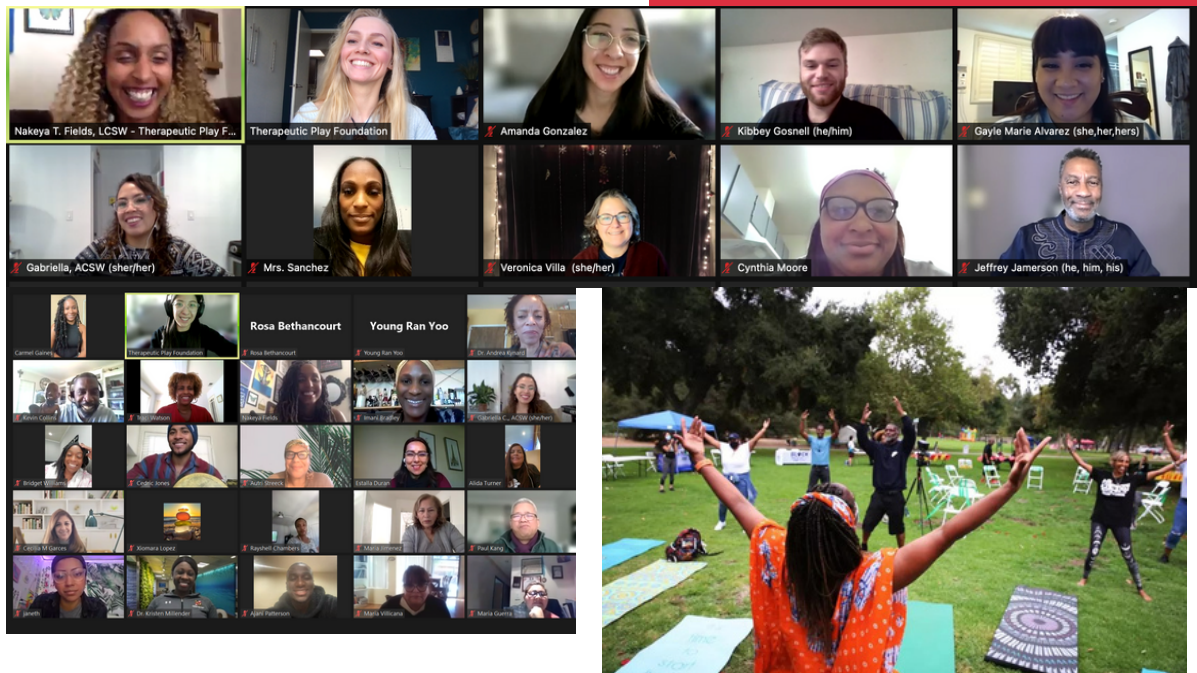


SUMMARY OF PRE/POST TEST

The pre test was given to participants during their registration in the online platform of Eventbrite. While the post test survey was given to participants who followed through with their registration and attended the Empowering Conversations Series Event. The survey was given towards the end of the event and allowed participants time to complete the surveys before leaving. This was to obtain the possible highest response rate for these surveys. Online surveys make it difficult to obtain responses given that you have to capture participants attention right away and if they do not do it when they receive the request for completing a survey they are not likely to complete it at all, so giving them in person is a way to attempt to overcome this challenge.

A total of more than 250 participants took the pre-test survey. After attrition of those who did not attend the event and those who did not take the survey because they left early or chose not to complete the post survey, a total of 150 participants remained. A completion rate of about 60%.

A matched-pairs analysis was conducted to determine the success of the empowering conversation series event to empower participants to have difficult conversations in their communities and to educate those in their communities. We used a Wilcoxon Signed-rank test to determine the effectiveness of the conversation series event. The Wilcoxon Signed-rank test is used on smaller sample sizes. Given the size this test was most appropriate. The results indicated that the empowering conversation series events were effective (i.e, 8 of 10 participants said they were empowered and confident) at empowering people and leaving them feeling confident to have these important conversations with family, friends, and their communities.



PARTICIPANT LEARNING & REFLECTIONS

Therapeutic Play Foundation received a lot of feedback about the empowering conversation series events. More than 1/3rd of participants gave their feedback about the events. Participants were given the respect of anonymity but, here are some of their reflections from the series. These reflections here are themes from many of the participants and are highlights of those thoughts on the events:

"I loved hearing the personal experiences and professional advice from panelists at the events."

"The empowering information and open dialogue."

"I really enjoyed that everyone who attended was there to listen, learn, and share in a respectful and open manner."



PARTICIPANT LEARNING & REFLECTIONS

Participants were also asked about what they learned specifically from the conversation series events. Below are some of those responses which most accurately reflect what participants who attended the events learned:

"That more conversations need to be had and that the opportunity to have these conversations are important and should be continued to be offered."

"It's really important for people to feel seen and heard, and the series provided that opportunity. Participants were very engaged in the work and the sessions and it was a great way to experience camaraderie, learn from other perspectives and how to do better as a community."

"I learned that we can pivot and use technology to still reach our village when we have to be in isolation."

"Mothers struggle with sharing their birth story."

Each of these sentiments were echoed by a number of participants. Other highlights from the events were discussions of the importance of mental health has impacted the Black/African American community significantly, the importance of being a supportive community for new parents and how to volunteer and help those around them.

Participants even provided their feedback on some topics they would like to see added in the future when these events are put on:

"Family dynamics, Gender role identify variations in the black community, black traditions and education about cultural awareness, Ancestry tracking- How to find your history."

Therapeutic Play Foundation seeks to continue to utilize these conversation series in the future to help the community have these important and difficult conversations.