EVALUATION UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2021
Parenting for Liberation Evaluation Results

Introduction

In late 2019, the StarLion Collective was invited to partner with Parenting for Liberation (P4L) founder and Executive Director, Trina Greene Brown, to measure the impact of P4L program activities happening over the course of a six to nine month period during the following year. With support from a grant from the Blue Shield of California Foundation, evaluators designed and implemented survey tools, and analyzed and supported with making meaning of the data collected using those tools. This report provides a summary of that evaluation process and findings.

Keystone Accountability describes six main purposes of evaluating programming: to improve projects, to build capacity, to demonstrate results, to inform strategy, to sustain legitimacy across stakeholders, and to inform society. In this case, because of P4L’s mission statement - To support Black parents to heal from historical and ongoing trauma & interrupt intergenerational violence to build resilient and joyful Black families in community - and the socio-political landscape it operates within, and particularly because P4L is a relatively young organization, the evaluation team designed tools with all six purposes in mind. The evaluation that was designed intended to measure shifts in Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors (often referred to as KABs) as a result of engaging with programming, as well as collect feedback on program content and delivery to inform future programming changes.

In order to create survey tools, the evaluation team spent some time with P4L staff developing a Theory of Change. According to Better Evaluation, “A good theory of change can help to: develop better Key Evaluation Questions, identify key indicators for monitoring, identify gaps in available data, prioritize additional data collection, and provide a structure for data analysis and reporting.” The P4L Theory of Change helped us identify and align around clear outcomes to measure, high level Evaluation Questions to help us determine indicators and

2 https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/node/5280#:.text=good%thoery%eof%change,for%data%analysis%and%reporting.
benchmarks for success, and, from there, the survey questions we would use with program participants to collect data. The evaluation team took a mixed methods approach and settled on surveys as the primary methodology, and later added a focus group component as well.

P4L (and the evaluation designed) attempts to answer the following questions:

- What is the knowledge that Black parents need but don’t have to help them see that traditional parenting strategies common in Black families are counterproductive to Black children’s, and Black people’s, liberation? What is the type of programming that most successfully imparts that knowledge?
- What are the conditions that are needed to support Black parents in moving away from fear-based parenting and toward liberated parenting? Can P4L programming create those conditions and create them well?
- What are the practices and conditions that can support this new way of being and parenting for the long-term? Does P4L programming teach Black parents those practices?

During the first 6 months of the contract period, as the evaluation team was working on the Theory of Change and Evaluation Plan, the socio-political landscape shifted dramatically. The devastating impacts of parallel pandemics - COVID-19 and systemic racism - were unfolding in profound ways all across the nation and globe, and the Black community was bearing the brunt of this impact in unprecedented ways. This being the case, P4L program staff was adapting program activities to be more responsive to the community that was in sore need of healing and care. Thus, priority was shifted to community care programming all while adjusting to an entirely virtual way of creating space for and being with people. Due to these conditions, and because of how quickly programming was happening, pivots were needed in the evaluation process in order to reflect these new circumstances.

Program staff and the evaluation team decided that, rather than administering an evaluation tool that was tailored to each type of program (which is where the survey design process started), because programming was adapting in real time and being offered in a multiplicity of ways over the course of several months, the evaluation team switched gears toward designing a post-test survey tool that could be sent out to a broader audience and that would collect data on multiple types of program offerings for the Beta Test phase. The programs evaluated during the Beta Test phase of data collection included six types of Community Care Circles (e.g. Storytime, Grief Circle, Mothering Ourselves, etc.), as well as various types of Virtual Learning Offerings (e.g. webinars, Instagram Live conversations, FaceBook Live presentations, podcast episodes, etc.). The survey tool administered during the Beta Test was later adapted to create a retrospective pre-/post-test and focus group guide, integrating stakeholder and program staff feedback and evaluation team observation in preparation for the Launch Phase of data collection, during which time program staff administered two Workshop/Book Series and follow up Focus Groups. However, it
is important to note that data from only one of those is included in this data set due to the evaluation team needing to limit the data being analyzed in preparation for this contract period coming to a close.

**Who We Reached**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beta Test</th>
<th>Launch</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="90% Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="100% Circle" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>90% of parents reached identified as Black.</td>
<td>100% of parents reached identified as Black.</td>
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**Beta Test**

**Launch**

**What is/are the age range(s) of your child(ren)? Check all that apply.**

- 0-5 years old: 19 (47.5%)
- 6-11 years old: 24 (60%)
- 12-17 years old: 14 (35%)
- 18+ years old: 3 (7.5%)
- 0-5 years old: 1 (10%)
- 6-11 years old: 7 (70%)
- 12-17 years old: 3 (30%)
- 18+ years old: 1 (10%)
After soliciting feedback from stakeholders about the Beta Test survey tool, and upon preliminary review of the Beta Test data with the evaluation team, more questions were added to the survey tool about parents’ identities and family backgrounds. This was intended to help P4L staff get a fuller picture of who programming was reaching, and a deeper sense of those families’ lived experience relating to class status and experiences with violence.

50% of participating parents said they have experienced or witnessed family violence.

Programming that was administered during both the Beta Test and the Launch Phases of data collection reached families in 10 states across the U.S., as well as one family overseas in the United Kingdom.
What We Learned

The following section is organized by outcome. Of the ten outcomes that were identified in the Theory of Change process, eight were measured via these survey tools. The outcomes that were not measured were excluded for one of two reasons: 1) the decision to focus primarily on inner/personal and family transformation work or 2) the additionally complicated nature of the outcome (e.g. requiring a longitudinal approach to evaluate impact over time which would push beyond the timeframe of the contract). Each of the eight outcomes measured are listed below and are followed by: the survey questions that were asked intending to measure that outcome in each of the data collection phases; and the corresponding data that was collected for those questions - both quantitative and qualitative. Data is presented in several ways, reflecting the mixed methods approach we took, and also reflecting how the emphasis of the questions shifted from Beta Test to Launch Phase to reflect stakeholder, program staff and evaluation team feedback and observations.

Outcome 1: Black parents understand the impact of PTSS, internalized racism, and intergenerational (including childhood) and ongoing trauma.

78% of participants said that they had more understanding about intergenerational trauma, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome and/or internalized racism.

83% of participants in virtual learning offerings, and 76% of participants in community care sessions said that they have an increased awareness of how their trauma response (e.g. fear) may be showing up in their parenting.
I understand the impact of intergenerational trauma, PTSD and/or internalized racism on me and my parenting.

I understand how fear-based parenting reinforces white supremacy rather than protects my child(ren) from white supremacy.

I have more awareness of how I can play a part in interrupting intergenerational trauma in my family.

"Everyday I am trying to not parent from a place of fear, anger, and trauma. Hearing it declared as 'Parenting from a place of love' is so profound to me and helps me unlearn lots of unhealthy behaviors and responses."

"The impact it has had on my caregiving style being able to be patient, creative, and more open to try new ways to learn and process each other and the world."
Outcome 2: There are many healing spaces and offerings for Black parents that support liberated parenting.
Outcome 3: Black families are connected to Afrocentric practices that support liberated parenting.

83% of participants said that the offering(s)/practice(s) they engaged in during this session made them feel cared for.

83% of participants said that the offering(s)/practice(s) they engaged in during this session are things they can try on their own and/or with their child(ren).

80% of participants said that the offering(s)/practice(s) they engaged in during this session can/will be helpful in making the changes they want to see in their parenting.
Outcome 4: There is a body of knowledge, experience and data on liberated parenting practices specific to the Black community.

78% of participants in virtual learning offerings, and 83% of participants in community care sessions said that the session provided them with knowledge/tools to practice liberated parenting with their child(ren).

I know practices/tools to use to help make changes I want to see in my parenting/help me move toward liberated parenting.

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<th></th>
<th>Average Before Workshop</th>
<th>Average After Workshop</th>
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<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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1 = Not at all
2 = A little
3 = A fair amount
4 = A lot
"One of the strategies I utilize is O.P.E.N. Communication. I let [my son] know that they can talk to me about anything even if they think I will not agree with their decision. I remind them that I love them unconditionally."

"Family agreement(s)...I did try [discussing] appropriate consequences [when my daughter] did something, trying to figure out...how [to] make a family agreement [that is] reasonable. The building blocks are there, it's gonna take a while...to keep tweaking at it."
89% of participants in the Virtual Learning Offerings said that as a result of their participation, they believe that liberated parenting is one part of a strategy for collective liberation.

When I parent from a fear-based place, I account or apologize for, and/or explain my behavior to my child(ren) afterwards.

I believe liberated parenting is one part of a strategy for our collective liberation.
Outcome 6: Black parents have joyful, mutual, and equitable relationships with their children that nurture and honor their children’s voices, identities, and truths.

92% of participants of Virtual Learning Offerings feel that practicing liberated parenting will bring them and their child(ren) closer together.

I believe my parenting style can/should bring me and my child(ren) closer together.

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<th>Average Before Workshop</th>
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<td>3.4</td>
<td>4</td>
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1 = Not at all
2 = A little
3 = A fair amount
4 = A lot
"I'm thinking a lot about finding space for joy in my parenting because...the world is always going to be tough towards us but maybe we could just acknowledge that but also just step out...like liberated people. [W]e are worthy of that."
Outcome 7: Black parents have communities of practice where they can support, share resources with and have fun with each other.

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>Average Before Workshop</th>
<th>Average After Workshop</th>
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| I feel connected to other Black parents.                                  | 2.6                      | 3.3                    | 1 = Not at all  
|                                                                           |                          |                        | 2 = A little  
|                                                                           |                          |                        | 3 = A fair amount  
|                                                                           |                          |                        | 4 = A lot |
| I feel I have a community of Black parents I can turn to for support      | 2.6                      | 3.3                    |       |
| related to my parenting.                                                  |                          |                        |       |

Outcome 8: Black families are connected to sources and practices that elevate their sense of ethnic and cultural pride and support liberated parenting.

94% of participants in the Virtual Learning Offerings said that their participation helped them feel a sense of ethnic and cultural pride.
Recommendations for Ongoing and Future Evaluation

- Always maintain an evaluative thinking mindset - program evaluation must be considered at the point of program design. This means when improving or redesigning/retooling programming, evaluation for this new iteration of programming must be considered simultaneously.
- Stick with the retrospective pre-/post-test design - this seems to be the best fit for measuring changes in KABs as desired.
- Try to stay away from “Not applicable” as a response option - it usually doesn’t end up really telling us much information.
- Do program-specific surveys instead of surveys attempting to capture data from multiple program offerings - this reduces the chance of the data getting unintentionally muddied.
- Collect data after all programming events/after each type of program, e.g. webinar, workshop series, community care circle, etc.
- Analyze data at regular intervals - to try and match the rhythm of how quickly program content or delivery may change. This could be aligned with when the Theory of Change is revisited, or some other regular interval that makes sense internally. This also ensures the investment of energy and effort around evaluation is yielding returns - informing content, strategy and ensuring mission and impact alignment) - and helps avoid data backlogs.
- While program content may (and likely should) change over time, and content delivery style and method may change far more regularly than that, there is a way to keep the design of survey questions relatively evergreen (specific, but also broad enough) to account for those types of incremental changes.
- As much as possible, it is helpful to keep survey questions the same for a predetermined and not too brief period of time, to enable an “apples to apples” comparison over time, which is most useful in informing meaningful program design changes and for measuring impact.
- Evaluation results may indicate a need to return back to the Theory of Change and rework some of the outcomes identified to make them more specific to P4L’s content and reach. For example, Outcome 2: “There are many healing spaces and offerings for Black parents that support liberated parenting.” While the data may not tell us much relating to how many or few healing spaces there are for Black parents, it does tell us that P4L programming created a healing space where Black parents felt cared for - one of the core tenets that all of P4L’s work is predicated upon. Thus, the outcome should perhaps be reworked. (Some examples of a retooling: “P4L creates much needed healing spaces/offers for Black parents that
support liberated parenting” or “P4L increases parents understanding of the connection between healing and self-care and the ability to parent from a place of love.”)

- The Theory of Change and Evaluation Questions can and should be used as frameworks to refer back to over the lifecourse of the program, and to help serve as a guide when changes to survey tools need to be made as programming evolves. It is recommended that the Theory of Change is revisited annually to ensure that programming still reflects the outcomes you set forth and/or to determine and document if outcomes may have/should be shifted.

**Discussion & Conclusion**

Founder and Executive Director Trina Greene Brown created P4L out of a desire to heal herself in order to shift her approach to parenting her children. At the time, she was beginning to see patterns emerging around how her parenting from a place of fear was stifling her children’s ability to feel joy, to feel a sense of wonder, and to feel free. And to this she drew critical connections to what has driven much of her life’s work to date - Black liberation. While theoretical frameworks exist to address the ways in which parents should shift their behaviors to interact with their children from a place of connection and freedom, there is a critical gap in resources that specifically address the etiology of parenting from a place of intergenerational fear and trauma - in other words: parenting while Black. P4L was birthed into the world to try and fill this gap.

Reflecting back to where this process started, the following questions were identified as at the core of what P4L (and its evaluation) attempts to answer and address:

- What is the knowledge that Black parents need but don’t have to help them see that traditional parenting strategies common in Black families are counterproductive to Black children’s, and Black people’s, liberation? What is the type of programming that most successfully imparts that knowledge?
- What are the conditions that are needed to support Black parents in moving away from fear-based parenting and toward liberated parenting? Can/does P4L programming create those conditions and create them well?
- What are the practices and conditions that can support this new way of being and parenting for the long-term? Does P4L programming teach Black parents those practices?

Furthermore, to what extent did the evaluation design and implementation process achieve the six purposes of evaluation that were laid out in this report’s introduction?
The evaluation process and implementation was successful in achieving the following: it improved the project by providing real-time data to program staff to enable adaptations of programming to changing external circumstances; it built capacity by cultivating and sharpening skills and providing insight to program staff around evaluation planning and design, and around an evaluative thinking mindset; it demonstrated results by offering a view into how programming is or isn’t achieving the intended stated outcomes, and is or isn’t having the desired impact in the community; it informed strategy by allowing program staff to see if strategic choices need to be made around how and where to invest time and energy for current and future programmatic goals and objectives; it sustained legitimacy across stakeholders by both defending and strengthening the program’s legitimacy - in particular meeting funders’ expectations - in a way that maintains the integrity of the program’s mission and values with the goal of protecting and strengthening existing, and obtaining new, revenue streams; and it informed society - important lessons are offered through the experiences of social purpose organizations, of which P4L is one, and it is both the organization’s responsibility and part of the organizational mission to share those lessons with the broader community at every opportunity.

The data illustrates that Black parents believe P4L programming: increases their understanding of the impacts of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, internalized racism and intergenerational and ongoing trauma, both on themselves and on their parenting; offers healing spaces where they feel cared for; provides tools and practices that are Afrocentric, that boost ethnic and cultural pride, that promote healing and self-care, and that support their desire to lean into/move toward liberated parenting; helps reconnect them to the joy of parenting and helps them support their children’s voice and authenticity; and provides connection to and creates a support system with other Black parents that will help sustain shifts toward liberated parenting approaches over time.

In summary, the data tells us unequivocally that P4L programming is having a meaningful impact on the lives of Black parents. Even with minimal dosage, participation in P4L programming is reshaping the way Black parents relate to the traumatic experiences in their own upbringing and the trauma they experience navigating the world on a daily basis, and, in turn, reshaping how they think about the intention behind and the impact of the ways they raise their children. It is important to note that in the launch phase of data collection, half of respondents reported having witnessed or experienced family violence, and all of respondents grew up in homes where language and tactics were used to “keep children’s behavior in line.” Thus, the data proves that developing this critical awareness around how Black parents want to parent differently than the parenting style(s) they were exposed to in their homes and families of origin makes interrupting the intergenerational cycle of violence not only possible, but likely given the right conditions, messaging and messenger.