

Executive Review

2011 - 2012

CRECER

Challenging
Racism &
Empowering
Communities
through
Ethnocultural
Research



University of Miami
School of Education
& Human Development

Counseling Psychology
Department of Educational
& Psychological Studies

About Us

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Derived from the Spanish word "crecer," meaning "to grow," the Challenging Racism & Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) team is committed to social justice for ethnic minorities and immigrant populations. Housed in the University of Miami School of Education & Human Development, our aim is to effect change through academic research and community engagement.

Our overarching mission is to encourage community empowerment through holistic programs for youth, families and organizations that promote psychological, physical, relational, and community health and wellbeing. To achieve these goals, we focus on the strengths of local communities and partnership with schools, neighborhoods, community centers, and active community members.

As a research team, CRECER is dedicated to the study of culture and the development of participatory action research skills. Our students challenge the ways we think about ethnicity and culture and inspire others to do the same through community projects, academic work, and leadership opportunities.

The following review offers an introduction to our team members, a detailed review of our active projects, and some of the exciting plans we have for the future. We thank you for your commitment to our work and hope you find it as inspiring as we do!

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Meet the team

Guerda Nicolas, Ph.D.

Team Leader



Dr. Guerda Nicolas joined the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami in August 2008 and is currently the Chair of the Department. She was an Associate professor at Boston College in the Department of Counseling, Developmental, and Educational Psychology. Prior to joining the EPS faculty. She obtained her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from Boston University in 1997. She completed her pre-doctoral training at Columbia University Medical Center and her postdoctoral

training at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and at Columbia University in the Department of Child Psychiatry. As a multicultural (Haitian American) and multilingual psychologist (Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole), her research is reflective of her background and interests. She is a licensed psychologist and was the Assistant Director of the Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture (ISPRC) along with Dr. Janet E. Helms.

Dr. Nicolas' current research projects focus on developing spirituality across the life span among ethnic minorities and culturally effective mental health interventions for ethnic minority adolescents with a focus on immigrant children, adolescents, and families. In addition, she conducts research on social support networks of Carribeans with a specific focus on Haitians. She has published articles and book chapters and delivered numerous invited presentations at national and international conferences in the areas of women's issues, depression and intervention among Haitians, social support networks of ethnic minorities, and spirituality.

Darren Bernal, M.A.

Project Coordinator: Strong Roots Parent & Caregiver Program



Darren joined CRECER in 2009 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. He earned his M.A. in General Psychology at The Catholic University of America. His research experience includes community based participatory research, examining the effects of stress on caregivers' cognitive functioning, and mindfulness-based techniques in sports psychology. Darren has lead therapeutic and psycho-educational groups for emotion regulation, conflict resolution, and substance

abuse; and has administered risk assessments and mental health evaluations. His current research interests include acculturation, social status, social class, and wellbeing in immigrant and underrepresented populations.

Kahaema Byer, M.S.

Project Coordinator: AFYA and Adolescent Advisory Board



Kahaema joined CRECER in 2011 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. She holds a Master's degree in Human Development and Family Studies and was a founding staff member of a cutting edge university-based arts program at The University of Wisconsin-Madison, owing to her Research on Arts and Youth Empowerment. Her research interests focus on low income youth in developing countries & the US; and Black Women. She holds a passion for the experiences of sexually exploited women and children in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Casta Guillaume

Project Coordinator: Au Cap Mental Health Awareness and Petit Goâve Psychosocial Programs



Casta joined CRECER in 2011 from the University of Miami's Community and Social Change Masters program. She received her B.A. in English Literature and Secondary Education at UM. She has worked for local non-profit organizations delivering out of school educational programming for predominately Haitian-American populations. Her research interests focus on culturally competent research design and interventions, in order to evaluate how community driven interventions can be utilized in both developing countries and immigrant populations as a means of increasing opportunities for community capacity building, mobilization and empowerment.

Brittany Lambert, M.S.Ed.

Strong Roots Parent & Caregiver Program



Brittany completed her Master's in mental health counseling at the University of Miami. She is a Research Coordinator in the Department of Psychology at the University of Miami for multiple studies assessing social and emotional development among children in high- and low-risk populations. Brittany's primary research and clinical interests include risk reduction in underserved populations; child and adolescent mental health; prevention and treatment of behavior problems in youth; and family-based interventions.

Billie Schwartz, M.A.

Kulula Project



Billie Schwartz joined CRECER in 2009 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. She completed her Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling at Boston College. Her current research interests include prevention and intervention work with ethnic minority and immigrant youth with a focus on social justice. She has a particular focus on understanding racial and ethnic identity development in early childhood. She also has a passion for art and other creative modalities, specifically with children. She is currently completing an advanced practicum at the Mailman Center for Child Development in the Hem/Oncology Unit.

Lauren Smith, M.A., Ed.M.

Kulula Project



Lauren Smith joined CRECER in 2009 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. She earned her M.A. and her Ed.M. in Psychological Counseling at the Teachers College Columbia University. Her research interests include multiracial and racially ambiguous individuals. She also has a passion for identity development throughout the lifespan and the processes individuals use to cope as they develop. She is a 2011-2012 Teaching Fellow and currently works as a therapist for Family Counseling Services.

Anna Wheatley

Project Coordinator: Kulula Project
and Day of Dialogue



Anna Wheatley joined CRECER in 2010 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. She received her B.S. in Business Administration from Georgetown University in 2008. Prior to entering the program, she was a research assistant at the nation's premier think tank for public policy concerns of African Americans and other populations of color. Her primary research interests are in identity development among Caribbean/West Indian youth, with a focus on delinquency prevention.



Coordinator: Anna Wheatley

Day of Dialogue

December 3, 2011 marked our fourth Day of Dialogue in the Miami area. The event was one part of Catalyst Miami's Imagine Miami series, a program bringing together individuals to take action on issues affecting all of our greater Miami community.

A total of 57 members from local organizations and CRECER were present.

In attending to our theme of Accepting Differences, participants were diverse with regard to gender, racial and ethnic identities, spiritual background, and age.

The day included musical performances and team-building exercises facilitated by Voices United; panel presentations by MCCJ-trained heritage panelists; an intimate sharing of, and reflection on, individual stories; dialogue on identifying and addressing barriers to engagement; tabling by several community organizations; and an interactive drumming circle. A survey focusing on the structure and implementation of the event was administered by Catalyst Miami and completed by participants immediately following the event.



Future Plans

We are pleased to announce that the theme for Day of Dialogue 2013 will be Intolerance & Education.

Joining us will be both new and old partnerships with local, youth-based community organizations as well as members of our Adolescent Advisory Board.

We look forward to updating our supporters as this exciting youth initiative unfolds!

Community Partners

Day of Dialogue (DOD) began in 2006 as an annual event providing community members a space to identify needs and develop strategies to address them. Together, attendees representing local organizations and CRECER collaborate to produce action-oriented plans that address areas of immediate local concern.

- ▲ Catalyst Miami
Sponsor of events addressing wealth disparity & access to services
- ▲ Miami Coalition of Christian & Jews (MCCJ)
Non-profit, nonsectarian organization dedicated to eliminating intolerance and advancing intercultural understanding & respect
- ▲ Multicultural Education Center (MEC)
Non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of cultural awareness, inter-group communication, educational and art skills
- ▲ The Melissa Institute
Non-profit organization dedicated to addressing violence & promoting safety through education, community service, and research

Adolescent Advisory Board

Coordinator: Casta Guillaume

The Adolescent Advisory Board was created by CRECER to enhance understanding of the needs facing today's adolescent youth and to inform research and response efforts.



2011

The advisory board held its first general meeting on October 29, 2011 at the Miami Museum of Science. The meeting was attended by the thirteen members of the board who represent high schools across Miami-Dade County. At the meeting, the participants worked on reviewing a portion of the Kulula program measures. The feedback gained was reviewed by program coordinators and have been incorporated into the Kulula measures. Also, the students expressed their views on how the board might provide academic and even professional



Board members are teenagers from high schools in the greater Miami area who are active and insightful leaders within their peer groups. As part of the advisory board, members are asked to help CRECER better understand issues that are important to adolescents and teach us the best ways to address the needs of children and adolescents in the Miami area.

Afya, a Swahili word for "health," "wellbeing," and "strength," is a twelve-week holistic, Afrocentric stress-intervention and empowerment program designed to empower Black women in the community who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant; and to shield against and reduce the effects of racial discrimination and stress.

The Afya program includes elements of psycho-education, skills training, and group support in its aim to promote emotional, physical, relational, and community health by providing Black women the knowledge, skills, and support to have healthier pregnancies, babies, and lives.

Coordinators: Casta Guillaume & Kahaema Byer

Afya Afrocentric Women's Health and Wellness

Specific Goals

- 1 Enhance health literacy on the impacts of racial discrimination and other forms of stress
- 2 Reduce impacts of racial discrimination and other forms of stress
- 3 Promote physical, emotional, relational, and community wellbeing
- 4 Encourage movement towards a health-promoting lifestyle
- 5 Reduce the risk of delivery complications, preterm births, and low infant birth weights
- 6 Promote community-involvement, leadership, and activism



AFYA is currently awaiting re-approval of funding. As project was not selected by the Global Alliance to Prevent Premature and Stillbirth and the DHHS Maternal Health Grant, it was not possible to attend relevant conferences on the theme of maternal and infant health research due to lack of funding.

Kulula Mentoring & Tutoring



The Kulula Mentoring and Tutoring Program is an evidence-based program for enhancing the ethnic identity and social skills of Black youth. Kulula, a Swahili word meaning to "excel" or "achieve," is a culturally enriched mentoring and tutoring program for elementary students in the Greater Miami-Dade area. The program utilizes elements of best practice models in mentoring, leadership development, personal health and wellness, and community engagement.



2011-2012

During the 2011-2012 school year, Kulula was implemented in both the Coconut Grove and Liberty City areas, two historic and predominately Black communities in the Miami-Dade. With the help of our community partner, the Thelma Gibson Health Initiative, Crecer was able to make 475 tutoring contacts with a total of 92 students from local elementary, middle, and high schools.

Specific Goals

- 1 Increase self-efficacy, leadership skills, and community involvement
- 2 Improve decision-making, coping, and problem-solving
- 3 Increase connection to school and academic performance
- 4 Increase awareness of and pride in participants' African heritage

Kulula Mentoring & Tutoring



The Kulula research component aims to measure the program's efficacy for both mentors and mentees. The pilot phase of the program was completed at the end of the 2011-2012 academic year. The information gathered during the pilot phase was used to inform final changes to the measures and preparations for the collection of useable data.

Measures

Mentee measures were selected and modified with the help of the Adolescent Advisory Board then matched to the appropriate program module.

Module	Objective	Measure
➔ Pre-testing	Baseline assessment of ethnic and racial identity	Demographics & MEIM
① The people in my life	Enhanced understanding and identification of important relationships	CASS (social support)
② Where I am from	Increased ethnic pride through knowledge of cultural heritage	My heritage
③ Who I am	Examination of negative speech, stereotypes, and images projected onto our peers and used in interactions with others	PRSS & Autonomy
④ Who I want to be	Clarification of aspirations for future career, education, and projection of self	Self-efficacy scale (student) & Student Career Goals
➔ Post-testing	Post-assessment of ethnic and racial identity	MEIM

Strong Roots Parent & Caregiver Program

Coordinator: Darren Bernal



2011 – 2012

The Strong Roots Program began its second cycle in November. The program continues to be implemented with community partners The Barnyard and volunteers from the local Junior League. The program was submitted for consideration a symposium and poster to the APA annual convention to be held in August 2012.

Parents reported gaining knowledge and discussing nutrition, ethnic identity, cultural history, conflict resolution, bullying with their children among other topics based on the material covered in the program. The Barnyard is looking forward to hosting the next round of the Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver program in the fall of 2012.

The Mental Health program in Cap Haitien is a result of a partnership between three schools at the University of Miami (School of Nursing, School of Education & Human Development, and the Miller School of Medicine), L'hospital Justinien (HUI), and the Ministry of Health in Haiti. The SONHS is a PAHO/ WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Human Resources Development and Patient Safety and is an active member of the Pan American Nursing and Midwifery Collaborating Centers network. As part of this activity, the SONHS has a training program in Haiti funded by the Pan American Health and Education Foundation (PAHEF) to address the critical lack of midwifery and maternal health services in Haiti.

Coordinators: Casta Guillaume & Kahaema Byer

The Haiti Project



Primary Objectives:

- 1 Enhancing existing resources by providing information to health care professionals about mental health.
- 2 Building capacity by training health care professionals to train their peers in the area of mental health.

Accomplishments

- ▶ The program was grounded in a community empowerment framework of Haitians training other Haitians to address the needs of Haitians
- ▶ Provided mental health training to over 100 physicians, nurses, and social workers in the Cap Haitien area (both locally and long distance)
- ▶ Trained a group of 14 trainers who to implement the sessions independently
- ▶ Enhanced connections between health professionals in the Cap Haitien area
- ▶ Built relationships between Cap Haitien professionals and Haitians in the US.
- ▶ The participants of the program and the trainers all recognized the need to established a long-term plan for addressing mental health at the hospital and in the local area.

For more information about...

- ▶ Joining CRECER
- ▶ Volunteering
- ▶ Collaborating
- ▶ Donating

...Please visit online or contact us at:

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