



EXECUTIVE REVIEW

2012-2013

CRECER

Challenging
Racism &
Empowering
Communities
through
ETHNOCULTURAL
Research



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES





CRECER

About Us

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 Caribbeans 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.

Anna Wheatley, Project Coordinator



Anna Wheatley is a fourth-year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami and a previous student team leader of the CRECER Research Team. Anna was a co-coordinator for the Kulula Mentoring & Tutoring Project for three years, and has coordinated the annual Day of Dialogue community event for the past three years. Anna's primary clinical and research interests center generally on disadvantage or at-risk children and families, with a particular focus on very young children and their primary caregivers. Anna is a native of St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, and received her B.S. in Business Administration from Georgetown University in 2008 with a major in Management and a minor in Sociology.



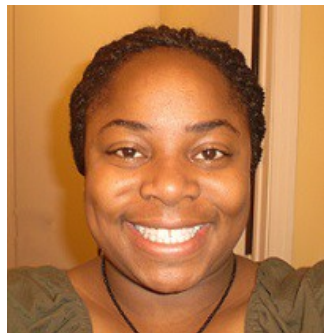


Noris Rios, Project Coordinator



Noris Rios is a second year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. She earned her B.A. in Psychology at the University of Miami with a minor in Foreign Languages. During her undergraduate career, she worked as a research assistant at UM in the Mood and Anxiety Disorders lab. With a mix of Dominican and Mexican roots, her research interests are focused on issues of cultural diversity in the mental health profession. She wants to explore how culture influences perceptions about seeking mental health counseling, and about the field in general.

Dorothy Addae, Research Assistant



Dorothy joined CRECER in 2013 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. She earned her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Missouri. Her research interests include the immigration experience of families and children, psychological well-being and adjustment, and bridging the practice research gap in communities. She works with Dr. Dina Birman researching acculturation issues related to immigrants and refugees.

Kimberly Ho, M.A., Research Assistant



Kimberly joined CRECER in 2013 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. Her clinical and research interests include working with children and families, developing culturally effective mental health intervention and prevention programs, and investigating factors such as religion, movement/dance, trauma, and identity on development and adjustment. Having grown up in Jamaica, she has a particular interest in Caribbeans and Caribbean-immigrants. Ultimately, she hopes her research will be used to inform

child development policies and create sustainable mental health interventions in low and middle-income countries. Prior to joining the team, she worked as a residential therapist for adolescents experiencing problems with substance abuse and/or juvenile delinquency. She earned her M.A. in Mental Health Counseling and Wellness from New York University and her B.Sc. in Communications with a double major in Psychology and Public Relations from the University of Miami.





Day of Dialogue

Spring 2013 Recap

The Day of Dialogue is a yearly event hosted by the Challenging Racism and Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) research team at the University of Miami. The forum provides neighborhood leaders and CRECER partners a space to identify the needs of the community, and develop strategies to address them.

The 5th DOD – Let's Talk Tolerance! – was held January 18, 2013. The event engaged high school youth affiliated with organizations throughout Miami-Dade in an effort to open up lines of communication and honest dialogue regarding issues of intolerance and discrimination, with a particular focus on topics such as bullying, religious affiliations, sexual identity, race/culture, and disabilities. The event centered around dialogues facilitated by community organizations, as groups of youth moved through engaging discussion sessions as well as opening and closing interactive activities.

This year's event expanded on the history of collaborative planning and implementation by specifically targeting youth ambassadors from identified community organization partners. Once again, there was a spirit of continued engagement and anticipation among the previous year's core participants. Planning for the event began in July 2012. Organizational partners and/or session facilitators were:

- Anti-defamation League
- BBYO: Jewish Teen Leadership
- Breakthrough Miami
- Catalyst Miami
- EnFamilia
- Karen Peterson Dancers
- Miami Coalition of Christians and Jews (MCCJ)
- Multicultural Education Center (MEC)
- Safe Schools South Florida
- The Melissa Institute

The Day's Agenda

- The day's agenda included dance performances, small discussion groups, circle activities, and informational presentations. The vast majority of participants were high school students, who were the target audience. There was a wide range of gender, racial/ethnic, and age variation. Over 80 individuals attended during some portion of the event—our highest turnout in DOD history!

For previous Day of Dialogue summaries: <http://www.education.miami.edu/CRECER/the-day-of-dialogue.html>





Adolescent Advisory Board

Fall 2013



The Adolescent Advisory Board is a board of youth who serve to review the measures used by the CRECER research team for cultural relevance and appropriateness. The board is based in Miami, where CRECER collects its data and is comprised of a group of engaged youth leaders from the Miami Science Museum Upward Bound Program.

This past year, the Kahaema Byer and Jordan Ainsley, members of the CRECER team implemented a participatory based research curriculum for and with the youth to facilitate understanding of the research process and the importance of research as a tool for social change. The curriculum was well received by the youth and followed a collaborative, iterative approach so as to partner with the youth in its development.

The Adolescent Advisory Board members selected the theme of education as its focus area and extensively reviewed research to understand the process of education, using technology, print, and reflective/critical discussions. Due to lack of time and shift in direction, a final research project was not implemented but youth received a wealth of resources and demonstrated a deepened and critical understanding of the education system.





Kulula Project

Spring 2012 Recap

Orientation

The Kulula Mentoring and Tutoring Program is an evidence-based program for enhancing the ethnic identity and socialization 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. Overall, Kulula seeks to increase self-efficacy, leadership skills, and community involvement, improve decision-making, coping, and problem-solving, increase connection to school and academic performance, and increase awareness of and pride in participants' African heritage.

Implementation

Virrick Park, Age Range:

The mentoring program at Virrick Park was run in partnership with the Thelma Gibson Health Initiative (TGHI) under the Children's Trust Youth Prevention Intervention Program. A total of **3 mentors** (undergraduate and graduate students) provided tutoring on Tuesdays during the Spring semester. The mentoring program had an average weekly attendance of 15-20 students, split into 3 groups.

Ponce de Leon Middle School, Age range: 11-15

A total of **8 tutors** (undergraduate and graduate students) provided tutoring on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays during the Spring semester. A total of **9 mentors** (undergraduates and one graduate student) implemented the mentoring program, which ran weekly on Fridays during the Spring semester. The mentoring program had an average weekly attendance of about 10-15 students, split into 3 groups.

Tutoring and mentoring were run as a part of the Thelma Gibson Health Initiative (TGHI) Youth and Family Services under the Children's Trust Youth Prevention Intervention Program.

Progress on Previous Challenges:

Mentoring:

- Consistent presence from mentoring facilitators to supervise/plan
- Curriculum progress improved and quickened due to better comprehension from this age group

Tutoring:

- Improved attendance from students
- Additional tutors recruited to replace those who stopped after Fall semester
- Multiple tutoring days during week increased number of tutoring sessions provided



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Current Challenges:

Mentoring:

- x Some inconsistency issues with mentors from week to week
- x Some lack of engagement and enthusiasm towards the curriculum from students of this age group
- x Inconsistent attendance by some children (some stopped attending altogether, others joined the program towards the middle or end of the curriculum)
- x Presence of TGHI staff and token economy system during mentoring sessions affected the Kulula program integrity

Tutoring:

- x Inconsistent attendance from tutors
- x School block scheduling limited the amount of homework the students had with them to work on
- x Difficulties finding relevant materials to tutor on for students without homework
- x Tutoring time within sessions was shortened due to daily introduction/warm-up with TGHI staff

Plans for 2013-2014 Kulula Implementation:

- x Program will run at one site: The Barnyard Community Center
- x Target age group: 7-11 years old
- x Proposed weekly Kulula meeting day: Wednesday 5:30 to 7 pm
- x Open House at Barnyard to recruit program participants: October 8, 2013
- x Recruitment and training of mentors to take place during September-October 2013
 - o Target number of mentors to recruit: 10

Measurement

A total of **2 measurement sessions, pre- and post- Kulula program implementation** were administered during the Spring semester, at each site (Virrick & Ponce). Measures were administered by members of the CRECER research team and volunteer Masters students from the department of Educational and Psychological Studies. Measures were administered on a one-to-one basis.



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Progress on Previous Challenges:

Mentees

- Found measures that match each of the curriculum modules
 - Demographics
 - MEIM (Ethnic Identity)
 - Module 1 – CASSS (Social Support)
 - Module 2 – My Family History (Heritage)
 - Module 3 – Autonomy & PRSS (Peer Racial Socialization Scale)
 - Module 4 – Self-Efficacy Scale Student Version (Academic Self-Efficacy); Career Goals (post only)
- Mentees were assigned ID numbers to maintain anonymity
 - Measurement packets contained a cover sheet with the mentees' ID number, assent form, each questionnaire, and a comments sheet for administrators to make notes
- Mentees at Virrick Park received sticker sheets as incentive for participating

Mentors

- These were administered to mentors pre- and post- program implementation:
 - Demographics
 - MEIM (Ethnic Identity)
 - MELS (Mentor Efficacy)
- Mentors were also assigned ID numbers

Current Challenges:

Mentees:

- Some mentees left the program before the post- measurement
- Some mentees joined the program late in the curriculum. Their pre- and post- measurements were obtained, but results might not reflect information about the full program
- Difficulties with children being consistent for measurement days at Virrick Park and having to track them down during the week in order to get measures done

Future Developments:

- CRECER team will discuss efficacy of the measures
- IRB amendment will be submitted for approval of any questionnaire revisions and the change program site

For more information on the Kulula Project, please see our website: <http://www.education.miami.edu/CRECER/the-kulula-mentoring-and-tutoring-program.html>

Project Co-ordinator: Anna Wheatley

Mentoring Facilitation: Lauren Smith & Billie Schwartz

Project Assistant: Noris Rios

Sites: Virrick Park & Ponce de Leon Middle School





Strong Roots Parent & Caregiver Program

Progress Report (2012 - 2013)

Program Goals/Objectives:

The Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver Program was developed as one of the few family-based programs designed to target racial socialization within ethnic minority families. A parallel child program was also created to complement the goals of this parenting program and to facilitate parent involvement in the overall program. The integration of these two programs created a multilevel intervention that features both joint and separate activities with the ultimate goal of fostering cultural knowledge and psychological well-being within parents, children, and the family system.

Progress Report:

Between Fall 2012 and Spring 2013, the third cycle of the Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver program was implemented. The program consisted of one orientation session and nine regular sessions in a local, underserved, Southern Florida community. Sessions were typically bi-weekly and were coordinated around school and holiday schedules. Participating families were predominantly African American or Caribbean Black; however, 11% of caregivers were of Hispanic descent. Across the 10-week program, 27 caregivers and 24 children participated in the group sessions. Eighty-five percent of caregivers were female and 50% of child participants were female. The range of the total number of sessions attended was from 1 to 10 sessions but on average caregivers attended 4.44 sessions.



Project Co-ordinator: Anna Wheatley

Measurement Team: Lauren Smith & Billie Schwartz

Project Assistant: Kahaema Byer





Parent and Caregiver Group Sessions



Caregiver sessions were facilitated master's level therapist with a mental health counseling and research background. Caregiver sessions emphasized discussion of racial identity, ways in which parents teach their children about race/culture (racial socialization), communication, positive parenting practices (e.g., discipline), and well-being. A special guest speaker also attended one session to speak to the caregivers about navigating the school system for their children and the importance of committees such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

Program topics for caregivers were organized primarily within three modules: 1) Racial Socialization, 2) Communication, and 3) Well-being. Within the first module, early sessions focused on establish expectations and group rules, facilitating bonding and sharing among parents and caregivers, and setting the foundation for the role of race and culture in modern, ethnic minority families. Many participants acknowledged the influence and importance of race and culture in how they raise their children. Participants were also able to recognize and

share positive and negative racial socialization messages that they portray to their children and discuss how some of these messages could be reframed to more positive overall.

Within the second module (Communication), sessions primarily focused on relationships and interpersonal communication with goals of helping caregivers recognize their communication patterns and learn new tools for increasing positive communications within their family. Many participants were able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses within the area of communication and share tips with one another on how to improve family communication. The roots of communication patterns were also discussed as they relate to culture and caregivers' families of origin. In addition, one session focused on teaching caregivers tools for positive parenting including how parents can communicate and discipline from a place of love rather than a place of anger or frustration.

The last module focused on Well-Being which involved sessions on stress management and healthy practices within families (e.g., nutrition, religion/spirituality, physical health, mental health). The importance of self-care as a parent was also emphasized in order to promote overall well-being.





Children's Branch Sessions

Children's sessions were divided into two, thirty-minute activities. The first, guided by the Strong Roots curriculum, was facilitated by a doctoral student in counseling psychology with a background in child development, mental health counseling, and community participatory research. In this portion, projects and exercises focused on children's individual and community identities (with particular focus on their racial and cultural identities), and relevant practices of dialogue and communication. The second activity was guided by a professional dance instructor and choreographer, Octavia "Ohhh" Yearwood of Team Ohhh Dance. Through this, the children learned about the art of movement as a form of personal expression, communication, and connecting both with one another and the world that surrounds them.

Within the first portion of the Strong Roots Children's Program, sessions were focused on the children's developing social identities and connections. Children engaged in projects that allowed them to explore and share self-selected qualities and experiences with the group. Shifting beyond this emphasis on individuals, active-learning projects focused increasingly on discovering connections. The connections explored were initially those shared between the children, followed by the connections the children shared with facilitators, teachers, and others outside of their immediate peer group, and ultimately the idea of all individuals' connections with the different levels of their social contexts were highlighted.

Having established an emphasis on individual identities and group dynamics, the second portion of the Strong Roots Children's Program emphasized the practice of dialogue and communication as it relates to those with whom we are alike, different, and connected. The children participated in activities with focuses ranging from concrete communication practices, to the importance of empathy and understanding both our own feelings and those of others.

These portions culminated in a final scavenger hunt in which the children had to deploy their best communication skills, work as equal-contributors on small teams, and recall the qualities and characteristics their peers had shared throughout the program.

Summary

Overall, feedback from participants was positive regarding their experience in the program. Pre- and Post-test measures were also completed by caregivers and will be evaluated in the near future to assess any changes in parent views on areas such as racial socialization and family communication. In terms of program challenges, we continued to have varying consistency in attendance by caregivers and children and varying ages/developmental levels of child participants as has been observed in previous cycles. This will be taken into consideration when planning future cycles of this program.



Measurement: Darren Bernal

Project Co-ordinator: Brittany Lambert

Project Assistant: Jordan Ainsley





The Haiti Programs

1. Rebati Sante Mentale Children's and Families Wellness Center in Archaie Haiti

The purpose of this project is to construct a wellness center dedicated to understanding children's development and well-being from an ecological perspective that takes a holistic or "whole child" approach. The overall mission of the Children and Families' Wellness Center (CFCW) is to promote the positive development and well-being of children and families in Haiti. The CFCW will serve as a model of effective ways of addressing mental health of Haitian children and their families in the country in a culturally informed way.

2. The Teacher's Mental Health Training Project of Archaie: Train the Trainers Approach



Project Overview: The specific aims of the mental health component are to: **a)** train and provide ongoing support for teachers in Haiti to identify, screen for, and offer support for mental health needs of children and adolescents; **b)** prepare a selected group of trainees to become trainers in identifying, screening for, and offering support for mental health problems to children and adolescents; and **c)** prepare selected teachers with training on how to make an appropriate referral for further services.

The Training Program: Rebati Sante Mentale in partnership with the Musée Ogier-Fombrun, and School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami in Florida is implementing this program aim at providing training to teachers on mental health issues. The overall goal is to equip the teachers with support and knowledge that will enable them to better support young students they teach. Our Mental Health Training Program is grounded in a community empowerment and sustainability framework that seeks to meet the following key objectives:

Increase capacity and sustainability of mental health in Haiti by training health professionals, teachers, religious leaders, and community members in psychosocial programming and implementation that is culturally grounded in Haitian culture.

Train health professionals, teachers, religious leaders, and community members to recognize symptoms of psychological distress in individuals across different age groups and gender.

Train health professionals, teachers, religious leaders, and community members to become trainers on how to conduct information sessions with other groups in their respective community

Through the train the trainer model, we seek to increase community awareness about mental health issues and ways of seeking services for these issues.





Session Report: January 28th to February 1st, 2013



The session was held at the conference room in Musee Orgier-Fombrun. This was a perfect location for a training focusing on mental health and history. Most of the individuals in the area have never been to the museum nor have heard of it.

Cuisine Luloise, head by Mr. Jean Paul Webens of Luly, catered food in. This is very important give that the training site was at the Musee located at Moulin Sur Mer. It required some negotiations to ensure that an outside

caterer conducted the food. This was central as it enables us to support the economic development of a community business in the area. Furthermore, we wanted the Musee to be exposed to this partnership with the hope that they might utilize them for future events at the museum

A total of 15 teachers attended the first session of the program; 10 males and 5 females. These teachers represented three main sectors of the area: Montrouis (tourist area), Arachaie (main town), St. Marcs, and Tbwa (mountain) and different types of schools (public and private).

Mayor Jean Francois Wilson of Arcahaie welcomed the group as well as all of us to the training. He thanked Rebati for coming to the region to conduct this training.

Dr. Joel Piton from Boston and Dr. Guerda Nicolas served as the first set of trainers of the mental health program. Mireille Fombrun was the trainer of the history and museum component of the program.

The training materials were distributed to each participant and the main objectives of the day and the week were discussed with the group. Both French and Creole books were distributed but the group will mainly be working from their Creole book.

The Training focused on the following key areas:

- Difference between maladie mentale and Sante Mentale
- Difference entre normal development and mental health issues among kids
- Difference between symptom, syndrome, and disorder
- Causes of mental illness
- Roles of teachers
- Overview of specific disorders were discussed: Depression, Anxiety, Trauma, and Grief





3. Haiti's Legacy Project: An Education Program Focusing on Haitian Slavery and its Global Impact

The study of the Haitian Revolution is vast, provocative, and rich. The narrative of the independence struggle, offers scholars, students, artists, and activists, an opportunity in examining *St. Domingue* and Haiti from multiple lenses. Furthermore, it allows for a contribution based on their diverse disciplinary perspectives. This project will create an educational program centered on the history of colonization, the liberation story of Africans in the island, and their global impact. Through forum, the project aims at fostering a sense of pride and identity among teachers and the next generation of Haitians in the island, promoting educational and psychological well-being among all.

This project is in collaboration between University of Miami School of Education and Human Development, the Musee Ogier-Fombrun, and the Haitian Heritage Museum in Miami. It has the following interrelated goals:

- 1) To create an historical resource book and other supportive materials that outline the history of slavery and revolution in Haiti that educators can learn from and integrate into their curriculum
- 2) To document and highlight the global impact of the Haiti in the world before and following the revolution.
- 3) To provide training to teachers in Haiti on the materials and effective strategies that can be utilized to implement the materials into their curriculum with their students
- 4) To develop a team of teachers who will serve as trainers for other teachers of the project in the future an effort to ensure sustainability of the project.
- 5) To conduct an evaluation of the overall impact of the project with respect to individual and systemic impact.

For more information please see our website:haitilegacyproject.org





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