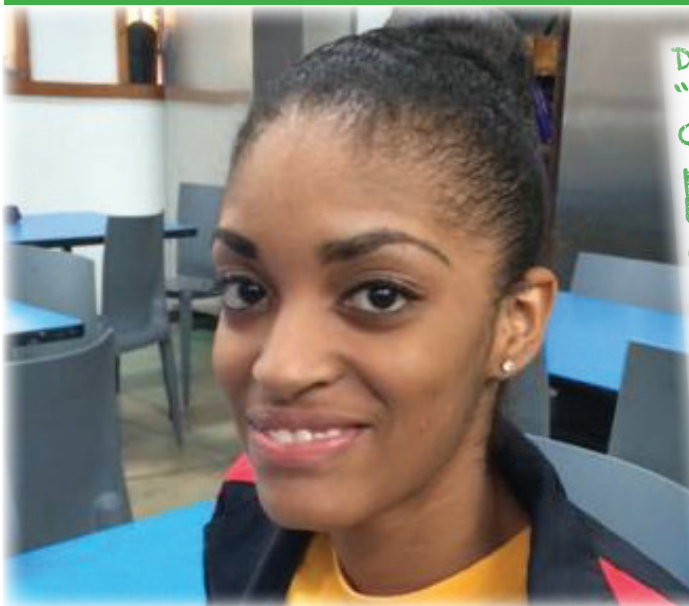




# CRECER

Challenging Racism & Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research

## Executive Summary 2015 - 2016



Derived from the Spanish word "crecer," meaning "to grow," the CRECER team is a community-based participatory research team committed to social justice for ethnic minorities and immigrant populations through academic research and community intervention and engagement. Our community-inspired projects provide students with many opportunities to take a stand and challenge the ways in which people think about ethnicity and culture, either through their academic work or through their leadership and involvement in such

# Table of Contents

• Message from Director of CRECER .....	pg. 2
• Team Member Introductions .....	pg. 3
• Strong Roots Parent & Caregiver Program .....	pg. 6
• Strong Roots Children's Branch Program .....	pg. 9
• Kulula Children's Program .....	pg. 12
• Breakthrough Miami .....	pg. 15
• Haïti Legacy Project .....	pg. 17
• Mental Health Training in Haïti .....	pg. 20
• Day of Dialogue .....	pg. 21
• Upcoming books by Dr. Guerda Nicolas .....	pg. 22
• Team Member Directory .....	pg. 23



## About CRECER

Derived from the Spanish word, “crecer,” meaning “to grow,” the Challenging Racism & Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) team is a community based participatory research team within the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami. The CRECER team is committed to social justice for ethnic minorities and immigrant populations through academic research and community intervention and engagement.

We seek to create and sustain intervention programs in schools, neighborhoods, and community centers to address issues that are often overlooked by our society. Our overarching mission is to encourage community empowerment through the development and sustainability of holistic programs for youth, families, and organizations that promote psychological, physical, relational, and community health and well-being. Collaborations and partnerships with local communities, focusing on the strengths of these communities, help us to achieve these goals.

As a research team, CRECER is deeply engaged in the study of culture and the development of participatory action research skills. Our community inspired projects provide students with many opportunities to take a stand and challenge and the challenge the ways in which people think about ethnicity and culture either through their academic work or through their leadership and involvement in collaborative community endeavors.

Visit us online: <http://education.miami.edu/crecer> or email us: [umcrecer@gmail.com](mailto:umcrecer@gmail.com)



## Meet the Team Members



**Guerda Nicolas, Ph.D.**

Dr. Guerda Nicolas joined the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami in August 2008 and the past 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. She completed her predoctoral training at Columbia University Medical Center and her postdoctoral training the New York State Psychiatric Institute/Columbia University, 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 (IS-PRC) along with Dr. Janet E. Helms.

Her current research centers on partnering with ethnically diverse and immigrant communities to develop culturally effective mental health interventions to combat depression, address issues of racism and racial discrimination stress, enhance the racial and ethnic identity development of children and adolescents, and promote individual, family, and community well-being.

### Message from CRECER Director

Dear Readers,

This issue of the Executive Summary highlights the work accomplished by the CRECER research team in collaboration with our community partners in Miami and in Haiti.

The values of CRECER are that we should not produce knowledge simply for knowledge sake, but to ensure that the work we do is meaningful for the communities and the people with whom we work. We value the resources and strengths of all of our partners who make the work that we do possible and sustainable. Therefore, the summaries of the work highlighted here are more of a reflection of their efforts than of ours.

As we are attempting to cope with the number of troubling social issues occurring in communities throughout the US, we hope that our community partnerships that seek to build the identity and family systems of people of color are making a difference.

Thank you to our community partners and to the foundations who continue to support our work both nationally and internationally. We look forward to another great year of programming in the 2016-2017 year!

Sincerely,  
Dr. Guerda Nicolas



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI  
SCHOOL of EDUCATION  
& HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



## Meet the Team Members



**Dorothy Addae, B.A.**

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, working with Dr. Anna Bardone-Cone and Dr. Lisa Flores.

Dorothy began her graduate career at the University of Illinois-Chicago in 2012 and transferred to Miami with Dr. Dina Birman.

Dorothy's international background contributes to her passion and research focus. Her interests center around the immigration experience, acculturation, and international policy. In addition to adjusting to the new country, Dorothy is interested in the identity development of immigrant children and immigrant family processes.

Lastly, Dorothy desires that her work and career will help in bridging the practice research gap, in disseminating and implementing research in communities.



**Amina Simmons, M.A.**

Amina Simmons is a third year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami, who joined the CRECER team in Fall 2014. She holds an MA from the University of Missouri-Columbia in Educational and Counseling Psychology and earned her BA in Psychology and Africana Studies from Pomona College. Her clinical and research interests include college student development and women's well-being with an emphasis on Black women and student parents.

Through research and clinical work Amina hopes to inform best practices and policies for working with community and academic populations, understanding the relationships between people and institutions/systems. This year she will co-coordinate the Kulula Project, a mentoring program for youth at The Barnyard Community Center in the West Grove.

## Meet the Team Members



**Natacha Janac, M.S.**

Natacha earned her master's in Nashville TN, at Tennessee State University and is a clinician who enjoys working with children and families. Currently, she provides mental health therapy through Devereux Advance Behavioral Foster Care Agency. Natacha joined the CRECER team in Spring 2014. She serves as the Chair of the policy council of Miami-Dade County Community Action & Human Service Head Start/Early Head Start program; aiming to fight the war on poverty by providing comprehensive child-development, nutrition, education, and social services for children and parents.

She is a member of the (CAA) Community Action Agency board of directors, who over-see all the programs and services provided by the Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department (CAHSD). Natacha is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc.; an organization that provide services to the community and helps educated young women to understand their worth. Natacha's research interests include working with families and communities and mental health issues in Haiti. Natacha is one of the founding Haiti Community Trust Board Members. She aims to focus her research on the strengths of marginalized individuals and their communities. She believes her work has the potential to make a transformative impact through empowerment and by promoting well-being.



**Kimberly Ho Misiaszek, M.A.**

Kimberly Ho Misiaszek is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. Kimberly 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.

Prior to her entry into the PhD program, she worked as a residential therapist for adolescents with substance abuse disorders, juvenile delinquency, and other co-occurring disorders. She also completed an internship at one of NYC's leading organizations dedicated to aiding victims of domestic violence and their children.

Kimberly is interested in investigating factors such as migration, religion/spirituality and movement/dance and their influence on identity, well being, and various developmental domains. She is currently involved in research looking at Jamaican return migrants and aspects related to their health, mental health, and life satisfaction, while her dissertation is focused on understanding the ethnic identity and experience of Chinese Jamaicans living in the United States, and the link between these factors and their well-being. Ultimately, she hopes her research will be used to inform child and family development policies and create sustainable and culturally relevant mental health prevention and intervention programs in low and middle-income countries.



## Meet the Team Members



**Noris Rios, M.A.**

Noris is a fourth year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. She currently serves as program coordinators for both the Kulula Mentoring program and Evaluation for Breakthrough Miami project.

She earned her BA in Psychology at the University of Miami with a minor in Foreign Languages (French & Italian). During her undergraduate career she worked as a research assistant at the UM Mood and Anxiety Disorders lab.

With a mix of Dominican and Mexican roots, her research interests are focuses on issues of cultural diversity in the mental health profession. She wants to explore how culture influences perception about mental health service utilization, and the field in general.



**Sarah-Jane Quessa Coupet**  
Ed.D

Sarah-Jane obtained her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Northeastern University. She completed her principal's licensure and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study, Educational Administration from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Dr. Coupet received her Master's Degree at Tufts University after having completed her undergraduate work at Hampshire College.

She was a Humanities teacher for Boston Public Schools for 10 years. Though she enjoyed teaching and supporting the academic success of young people, the inequities in the public school system propelled her to further her schooling in hopes of having a greater social impact.

Dr. Coupet's research interests are reflective of her background as a Haitian American and her teaching tenure at Boston Public Schools. She is interested in teacher development on a global scale; her current research emphasizes teacher development in her native Haiti. Additionally, her desire to work with diverse and immigrant communities promoting educational awareness motivates her work as an educational consultant and with the Haiti Legacy Project as a member of CRECER.

# The Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver Program



## Section Contents

- Program Overview and Goals
- Structure and Process
- Facilitators and Participants
- Changes based on participant feedback
- Suggested future changes and Future Directions

Project Coordinator: Dorothy Addae  
CRECER Team assistant: Natacha Janac  
Parent Co-Facilitator: Nicole Crooks  
Site: The Barnyard - Coconut Grove Cares, Inc.

## Program Overview

**Background.** The Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver Program (TSRPCP) was developed as one of the few family-based programs designed to target racial socialization within ethnic minority families. The program seeks to (1) foster security in racial and ethnic identities among parents and caregivers, (2) educate on the ways in which race, discrimination, and oppression impact them and their children, (3) develop the skill set to communicate and respond to their children's needs with regard to their own racial socialization and education. A parallel children's program, the Children's Branch, was created to complement the goals of TSRPCP and to facilitate parents' parenting skill development. The integration of these two programs cre-

ated a multi-level 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.

**Program Structure.** TSRPCP annual cycle consists of 14 bi-weekly (semi-monthly) meetings:

- 1 open house/program orientation
- 10 parent/caregiver group meetings
- Martin Luther King Jr. and Winter celebrations
- End of Year celebration

**Curriculum and Structure.** The Program consists of 3 modules, focusing on (1) racial socialization, (2) Parent-Child Interaction, and (3) Well-being, respectively. The program is held in the evenings, with supper (dinner) served prior to meetings. Sessions consist of defining and clarifying goals, doing check-ins, taking part in activities around the day's goal, and in discussions around the activities. The sessions end with a unity circle during which those who are present reflect on their time together.

**Facilitators.** Caregiver group meetings are co-facilitated by a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology, a masters student with clinical experience in domains of parenting and family issues, and for the first time, by a parent with experience from previous cycles.

**Participants.** During the 2014 - 2015 cycle, 12 caregivers attended each group meeting, with approximately 7-9 caregivers attending regularly. Participating families primarily included female caregivers, but this cycle two male caregivers also attended. The majority of the group were of African American or Caribbean Black backgrounds, in addition to a small number of caregivers of Hispanic descent.

**Data Collection.** As in prior cycles, two measurement sessions were conducted, pre- and post-program implementation. Measures assessed participant demographics, family dynamics and quality of family relationships, ethnic identity, socio-eco-

# The Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver Program

nomic and overall life satisfaction. Measures were administered by members of the CRECER research team on a group basis. The data will be entered into a database containing data from previous Strong Roots cycles.



## Feedback and Program Changes

### Additions/Changes From The 2014 - 2015 Cycle

**General Participant Feedback.** Feedback from participants has been positive and constructive. Participants enjoyed having a space where they can gather with each another to discuss experiences, as it was not typical for their everyday lives. They reported that the meetings allowed them to provide support to one another and learn about parenting strategies. Participants expressed appreciation for learning about local opportunities, events, and community resources provided by the CRECER team assistant, Natacha Janac. In addition to positive feedback, the program facilitates participant empowerment through suggestions for improvement. To this end, multiple program changes were adopted in the 2015 - 2016 cycle based on previous suggestions, as described below:

## Open House

**Suggestion:** The open house should focus on caregiver feedback regarding curriculum.

**Implemented changes:** At the beginning of the 2014 - 2015 program cycle, an open house was held during which a program overview was described and caregivers who had participated in previous cycles asked to give feedback on how the program could better meet their needs in the current cycle. The project coordinator acknowledged this feedback and asked participants if they would be willing to specify particular issues they wanted to discuss related to the three curriculum modules.

During the first week, the project coordinator provided an overview of what would be discussed in each module and caregivers specified related topics that were of interest to them such as talking to kids about dealing with discrimination- racially and due to sex, interactions with the police, and issues in the community such as the local park being inaccessible to lower-income community members. Over the course of the year, discussions included stress management techniques and well-being, experiences of racial discrimination of caregivers and their children, local incidents, community norms and engagement, and school concerns. Sessions also focused on children's experiences with race in schools, diversity within neighborhoods and interactions with neighbors.

## Module Cycling

**Suggestion:** Caregivers expressed that in previous cycles of Strong Roots there was a focus on the first two modules but not on the Well-being module.

**Implemented change:** The project coordinator asked the group if they would be willing to start curriculum work with the third module and they agreed.

## Parent as Co-Facilitator

**Suggestion:** Having meeting reminders and presence of a parent co-facilitator throughout the week.

**Implemented change:** An official parent co-facil-



# The Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver Program

erator position was established for Strong Roots. The responsibilities of this role included (1) being present throughout the week, (2) reminding caregivers about upcoming meetings, (3) assisting with meeting logistics as well as facilitating meeting discussions. (4) The parent co-facilitator also met with the project coordinator after every Strong Roots meeting to discuss how the meeting went and what to prepare for during the next meeting.



## Feedback from 2015 - 2016 Program Cycle

Participants made several important suggestions on how the program could be adapted to better meet their needs in the 2016 - 2017 cycle. Some suggestions were:

- Having a joint Parent/Caregiver and Children's Branch "Strong Roots Night."
- Giving priority to caregiver meeting time during meeting days.
- Having consistent facilitator presence throughout year.
- Having more variety in dinner menu.

## Facilitators and/or administrator feedback

- Clarifying community partner roles in regards to recruitment and communication with prospective participants.
- Taking a parenting program prior to being part of the Strong Roots Program.

## Future Directions

- In keeping with TSRPCP mission of community empowerment through participatory research, each of these suggestions will be taken into consideration and actualized based on participant needs.
- After 5 years of shaping the program to benefit the community, CRECER will now transition to data collection and analysis, as community members run the program.



# The Strong Roots Children's Branch Program



## Section Contents

- Program Overview
- Curriculum
- Facilitators and Participants
- Review and changes in 2015 - 2016 cycle.
- Suggested future changes and Future Directions

**Project Coordinator:** Kimberly Ho Misiaszek

**Faculty Consultant:** Lien Tran

**Site:** The Barnyard - Coconut Grove Cares, Inc.

## Program Overview

**Background.** The Children's Branch is the child component of the Strong Roots Program. In this program, projects and exercises focus on children's individual and community identities, with an emphasis on their racial and cultural identities. The program also develops skills around dialogue and communication in addressing race and identity among children.

**Curriculum.** The curriculum is divided into two modules. Module 1 has sessions related to racial socialization, and module 2, on children's interactions and relationships with others. Sessions were held for one hour, and took place after a family dinner. In the Spring semester, four senior students from the School of Communication's class on designing games for social change participated in children's branch as part of the class's service

learning component. They were given the opportunity to participate as volunteers in the program as well as develop other games based on the goals of the curriculum toward the latter part of the program.

## Group Facilitators 2015 - 2016.

The sessions in the Fall semester were led by two undergraduate volunteers from the University of Miami, and overseen by a doctoral student in counseling psychology with a Master's in mental health counseling, and a background in child development. In the Spring 2016 semester, four volunteers were recruited to facilitate the large cohort of children.

**Participants 2015 - 2016.** Children's ages ranged from 6 to 12 years old, with between 10 to 35 children attending per session.

## Review Of 2015 - 2016 Program Cycle

**Module 1 (Fall 2015).** The goal of the first session in module one was to establish rapport between all members of the program – the children, the volunteers, and the staff, and introduce the program. The first session was by 35 children who came with their parents. We addressed the group all together and had the children complete a booklet called "All About Me" with their caregiver that explored key characteristics about themselves. Children were able to identify most of these characteristics and discussed it with their parents.

The second session was attended by 15 children, and it focused on increasing children's awareness of self-esteem by identifying how they think and feel about themselves, and how other people view them and how their opinions about others make them feel. In general, children provided responses that indicated they could process negative comments about their physical appearance, and knew that other traits such as their intellect, or personality and their family, were more important aspects.

For the last session, children broke into groups based on different interests. They each participated in one of three activities or games, with



# The Strong Roots Children's Branch Program

the majority partaking in the Awkward Moment game. They enjoyed it very much, and remained engaged and focused through several rounds of play, even those who are considered “hyper” were very attentive.

Feedback and changes based on Spring 2015. It was observed during the fall sessions, that smaller breakout groups were more effective at keeping children engaged based on age, interests and gender differences. In consultation with a School of Communications professor, Lien Tran, who is also an interactive game designer and expert on games that promote social change, we recruited 4 of her students in game design for social change as volunteers. During the Spring 2016 semester, the 4 volunteers participated in the normal curriculum for the first 3 sessions, and used the last 3 sessions to devise ways of adapting games using content from the Children's Branch curriculum. We were also able to borrow the Awkward Moment game from Professor Tran to be used and adapted to promote pro-social communication and problem-solving skills among both parents and children.

**Module 2 (Spring 2016).** Module 2 focused on children's interactions. The first two sessions focused on their family relationships and friendships with the goal of helping children think about the people who love and support them. Thus, in sessions, they discussed the qualities of a good friend, and how to be a good friend to others. Children drew pictures of a house and their family members, and were able to identify friends in their lives that provided positive support. The volunteers got on very well with the children and this was evidenced at one point by some of the children drawing the new volunteers as members in their “Village” from whom they could receive positive support.

In the last 4 sessions, children shared tips on the importance of communication, how to deal with problems (such as bullying), ways to show gratitude, and closed with considerations of their future. Two of the sessions were modified to allow volunteers to try some of the games they had designed or modified. The first game was similar to lacrosse/hockey (with no hitting allowed) and was designed to get children active, learn how to be a good team



member, and engage strategy, planning, and organization skills. The children all participated in the game and enjoyed it very much. They worked well together on teams and encouraged each other during the games. In another session, a physical game was also played that also encouraged team building, and learning how to work together as a single unit. They made gratitude cards for their parents and gave it to them on the final celebration. During the final session, children made preparations for the final celebration based on their expressed interests.

## Summary And Lessons Learned

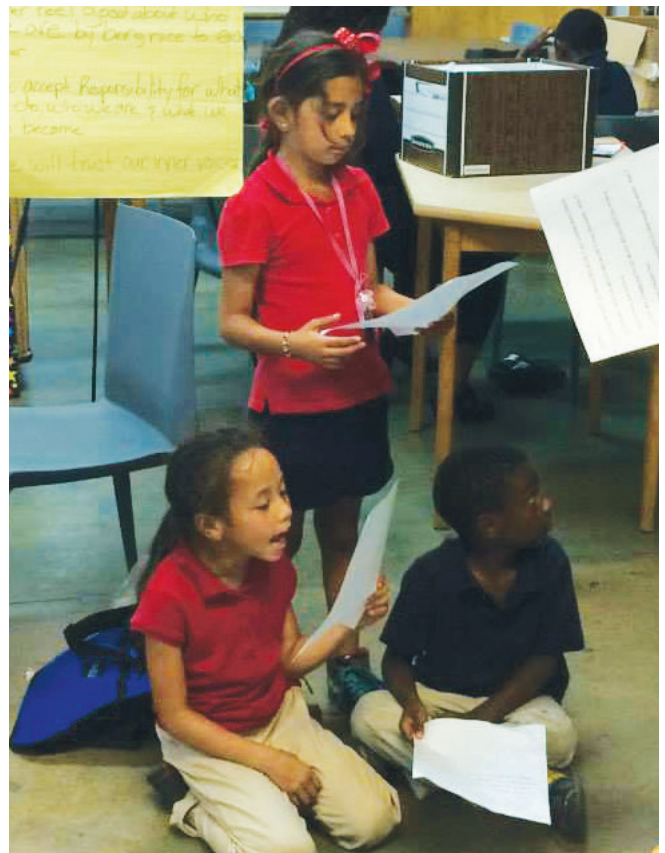
In the 2015 - 2016 cycle, our goal was to revisit the curriculum and adapt it to the children's play preference, include hands-on projects and physical activity. Child participation, involvement, and enjoyment were increased as a result of these physical games that incorporated learning objectives such as cooperation, communication, teamwork and strategy. However, some children still enjoyed sessions where we drew or wrote things that encouraged self-reflection and processed them after-



# The Strong Roots Children's Branch Program

wards as a group. Our takeaways were:

- The newly introduced card game, Awkward Moment, was an engaging and productive addition to the curriculum.
- Having 4 volunteers was a significant improvement in adapting the the children's needs and abilities. Recruitment strategies will be expanded to find volunteers.
- Male volunteers helped increase participation and involvement, especially with the older boys who, in the past, tended to disengage from the overall group activities. We aim to recruit an equal male-female volunteer ratio in the future.
- The positive feedback on both card and physical games will be reflected in the curriculum in the future, while maintaining self-reflection and discussions.
- Activity time between parents and children will need to be negotiated with the Parent and Care-giver program to play the Awkward Moment game.
- Ending sessions in a prayer circle increased group unity and social cohesion.



# The Kulula Project



## Section Contents

- Program Overview
- Changes based on participant feedback
- Curriculum and Project
- Kulula Events
- Participants
- Data Collection

Project Coordinator: Amina Simmons

CRECER Team assistant:

Parent Co-Facilitator:

Site: The Barnyard - Coconut Grove Cares, Inc.

## Program Overview

At the beginning of every Kulula meeting, all the mentors and mentees gathered together in a large circle, went through the rules and expectations laid out in the Kulula Creed as well as others developed by the mentors during their training. Next, the mentors and mentees gathered to perform the opening ceremony of watering the tambiko (Swahili for libations) plant. This ceremony served as a unifying start to the Kulula meeting, while the plant served as a symbol of the growth that the mentors and mentees hoped to gain through the program and their acknowledgment and thanks for the growth they have experienced thus far. Each individual took a turn watering the plant and re-

sponding to prompt, “what are you thankful for?”. Then, mentees and mentors worked in their respective jamaas for 30-40 minutes on the curriculum, joining as a group at the end of the meeting to recite the Kulula Creed together and sing the “I Love Myself” song in closing.

On a weekly basis, the mentors, program coordinator, and service-learning student gathered for a debriefing session to discuss any behavior issues, concerns, or updates for the coming week. Monthly, the mentor group would come together for a Kulula family dinner. Dinners included a time for fellowship and team building and served as a space to discuss the mentees progress, reflect over the past month’s meetings, and prepare for the next month.

## Additions/Changes from 2014-2015

This year the Kulula Project decided to incorporate service learning students as a part of the staff that helps to run the program. One graduate student, Kristen Pender, from the Community & Social Change masters program at UM, was selected to assist the project coordinator with various tasks. Kristen’s interests include general community programming as well as development and implementation of curriculum-based program in a community setting. Kristen assisted with recruitment and training of mentors, organization of mentor-only events, and also filled in as a Kulula mentor on an as-needed basis. The project coordinator provided Kristen with guidance about program implementation and mentoring for future graduate study. Kristen leaves Kulula to start a PhD program in the fall of 2016 in North Carolina. Moving forward, we hope to continue the partnership with the Community and Social Change Program in order to build connections between programs at UM and provide graduate students with an opportunity to mentor one another while also serving the community.

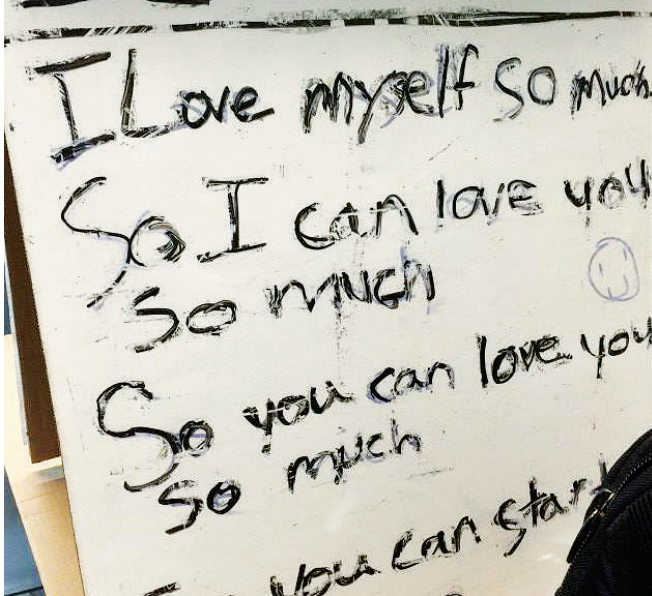
## Curriculum and Project

Kulula’s Afrocentric-based curriculum focuses on social, identity, and academic development. The



# The Kulula Project

5 modules throughout the curriculum address the following questions: “Who Are The People In My Life?”, “Where Am I From?”, “Who Am I?”, “Who Do I Want To Be?” and the closing ceremony.



For the Fall 2015 semester, each jaama began with the 1st module “Who Are The People In My Life” which encouraged the mentees to examine the relationships in their lives. The second module, “Where Am I From?”, prompted mentees to complete journal activities and discuss what they believed were some positive and negative elements in their relationships, where members of their family live, and their knowledge of their community and family history. Mentors pointed out to mentees that they have relationships to their external environment through community organizations and institutions. Mentors also had the mentees complete family flowers and world maps that helped to facilitate discussions about their family history.

For the Spring 2016 semester, each jaama began with the 3rd module “Who Am I?” which encouraged the mentees to examine their body image, societal standards of beauty, negative judgments and self-esteem. Other modules for the Spring 2016 semester included: “Who Do I Want to Be?” and the closing ceremony. Mentees completed journal activities and discussed positive and negative images of themselves, representation in the media, and self-esteem. Other themes and topics discussed in-

cluded: leadership, achievement, values, and community change. Mentors also emphasized building positive images of self through developing lists of coping skills, affirmations, and engaging in activities that enhance mentees knowledge of their history and heritage.

All mentees in the Kulula Mentoring Program participated in the Civic Engagement Project. Mentees were asked to identify an issue in the community that they would like to see changed, and suggest ways in which to address it. The goal for this larger activity is to use this project as a way to encourage youth to engage in both first order change (immediate or present action) and second order change (sustainable plan of action involving community officials and other stakeholders).

For the 2015-2016 academic school year the mentees decided to address the issues of “Homelessness in their Community” as a group. In order to engage in first order change, the youth organized a canned food drive to take place during their End of the Year celebration. Families who attended were encouraged to bring “2 canned goods” and the youth created multiple flyers to showcase the event and announce the food drive. The group decided to enact second order change by writing letters to Commissioner Ken Russell, expressing their concerns and potential solutions to address homelessness and by inviting the commissioner to their End of the Year celebration.

The youth collected more than 7 boxes and multiple bags of canned food to be donated to a local church that provides for the homeless in their community. Furthermore, Commissioner Ken Russell surprised the students by attending their celebration, bringing his canned good donations and their letters. The commissioner shared with the students his story of growing up in the community and expressed gratitude for their commitment to an issue that is also close to his heart and a major part of his vision for change. This response by the local community and broader city officials shows the students that they have the ability to make a significant impact in their community.



# The Kulula Project

## Kulula Events

Every year UM CRECER hosts two major events for Kulula, Strong Roots, and Children's Branch programs run in partnership with the Barnyard Community Center. For the 2015-2016 academic year those programs included a Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration as well as an End of the Year celebration. The Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration began with a family dinner, followed by a listening and feedback/reflection portion of the famous, "I Have a Dream Speech", and concluded with dessert and fellowship. The End of the Year celebration began with a family dinner, followed by a presentation of certificates and performances by the Kulula and Children's Branch participants. It concluded with dessert and fellowship. This year, the Kulula mentees incorporated their civic engagement project into the End of the Year celebration by organizing a canned food drive, and inviting commissioner Ken Russell to attend the celebration.

## Participants

Kulula took place at the Barnyard Community Center for six sessions during the Fall 2015 semester and fourteen sessions during the Spring 2016 semester. A total of 7 mentors, 5 mentors from the University of Miami (3 undergraduates and two graduate students), 1 graduate student mentor from Florida Atlantic University, and 1 undergraduate student mentor from Florida International University implemented the program during the Fall semester and a total of 5 mentors, 4 mentors from the University of Miami (two undergraduates and two graduate students), and 1 graduate student mentor from Florida Atlantic University implemented the program in the Spring 2016 semester. Kulula sessions ran weekly with the mentees for an hour on Thursday evenings. Of the 14 children signed up to participate in October, there were on average weekly attendance of 8-10 mentees. The mentees were divided into 4 smaller groups or jamaas (Swahili term for group or family). Mentees demographics include: 9 females and 5 males ranging from 1st to 6th grade.



## Data Collection

Pre- and post-tests were given to both mentors and

mentees. Mentors completed questionnaires about their ethnic identity and their perspective on specific aspects of mentoring. Mentees completed questionnaires that examined their understanding of their ethnic identity, knowledge of family history, social support and feelings about school. Informal information and feedback about the program was also collected from the mentees. Mentees reported positive feedback on quality of snacks/treats provided, engaging with their mentors, and playing games. Mentees reported negative feedback on quantity of snacks/treats and feeling bored with the curriculum, commenting "we did this last year!."



# Breakthrough Miami



## Section Contents

- Program Overview
- Curriculum and Process
- Participants: Mentors and Mentees
- Breakthrough Miami program Feedback
- Administrative Feedback

Project Coordinator: Noris Rios

Site: University of Miami, School of Education

## Program Overview

The Breakthrough Miami Mentoring Program is a two-tier mentoring program that inter-connects all of the participants of Breakthrough Miami (BTM) to each other, while building a network of professionals to provide guidance to BTM participants in their academic pursuits.

**Tier 1:** Recent alumni of BTM provide guidance and assistance to seniors and juniors in the program on college preparation, post-secondary school choice, and financing a college education.

**Tier 2:** BTM participants are matched with professionals according to their career interests/aspirations.

## Curriculum and Process in the 2015 - 2016 cycle

After being matched, mentors attended a mandatory 2-hour training session during which they were provided with a mentoring manual, and whereby best mentoring practices and program expectations were reviewed. Emphasis was placed on unique challenges related to long-distance mentoring, and methods for overcoming these. Participants were informed that they would be expected to complete mandatory bi-monthly surveys in order to monitor their progress, as well as pre- and post-program measures to evaluate the program. The importance

of continuous communication was emphasized, and minimum program expectations for contact between mentors and mentees were set as brief weekly check-ins (over phone, text, email, etc.) and bi-weekly meetings (via Skype, in person, or phone call).

## Program Topics

- Developing educational and career goals
- Managing anxiety related to applying for college
- Obtaining information about colleges
- Different aspects of the application process
- Time management
- Study skills
- College application timeline prep (financial aid, staying on track during high school, completing applications)
- Managing high school interpersonal issues

## Participants

This academic year, 9 high school junior students received mentorship from 5 BTM alumni who are currently attending college. Mentors and mentees were matched based on several points of similarity, identified as important factors to consider for matching during the focus group phase of the project. The factors included things such as high schools attended, college attended, ethnicity, and career interests or majors.





# Breakthrough Miami

## Demographics

### Ethnicity

- Mentors: 3 African American, 2 Hispanic
- Mentees: 6 African American, 3 Hispanic

### Age

- Mentors: 18-19
- Mentees: 15-16 (11th grade)

### Sex

- Mentors: (5 female)
- Mentees: (2 male, 7 female)

## Program Feedback

Overall, mentors and mentees provided positive feedback regarding their respective mentor or mentee, suggesting that they were well matched. Most expressed that their meetings were useful and that the topics they addressed were helpful for the mentees. Most also conveyed a desire to meet more often and to have more opportunities to meet as a group.

## Successes

- Mentoring goals: The topics addressed by mentors and mentees aligned with the goals of the mentoring program, and were described as useful by the majority of participants.
- Desire to mentor: mentees expressed a desire to mentor in the future.
- Targeting high school juniors was described as useful because they are better prepared going into senior year

## Areas for Improvement

- Engagement: Some mentors and mentees mentioned feeling disappointed that their matched mentor/mentee was less engaged and/or committed.
- Frequency of contact: Mentors and mentees expressed a desire to meet more often with their mentor/mentee. They stated that it was difficult to schedule times to meet, and that they would benefit from having external support in creating opportunities to meet.
- Response rates: Response rates for surveys were low throughout the year, even with multiple reminders to participants.

## Summary of Findings

- Focus groups with past mentees of BTM identified important matching criteria, program content and structure.
- Sample applications and recruitment materials shared by Big Brothers and Big Sisters organization were used as a reference to develop the applications and recruitment materials used for the Breakthrough mentoring program.
- Evidence-based best practices for mentoring programs were referenced and incorporated in the development of the mentoring manual.

## Administrative Feedback

## Successes

- Monthly meetings: Monthly meetings between CRECER and Breakthrough were essential for ongoing and dynamic program review and adjustments.
- Point person: A reliable, appointed BTM contact person was essential to resolving issues quickly and in maintaining communication between partners, in disseminating decisions to interested parties efficiently, and in reaching out to mentors and mentees.
- BT event dates: Program event turnout and participation were best when dissemination and recruitment occurred during program orientation or sessions.

## Areas for Improvement

- Communication: Despite having a contact-person and monthly meetings, different levels of engagement in the program continue to pose a challenge to maintaining communication between parties. Of particular challenge was the involvement of non-BTM staff who did not have effective ways of reaching participants without BTM staff as intermediaries.
- Issues/Changes within Breakthrough: Managing different perspectives within BTM, and between partnering organizations posed a challenge in the direction, curriculum and participant expectations.



# Haiti Legacy Project



## Section Contents

- Program Overview
- Participants
- Training
- Feedback

Project Coordinator: Sarah Quessa

Site: University of Miami, School of Education

## Program Overview

The Haiti Legacy Project (HLP) provides scholars, educators, students, artists, and activists access to resources that examines Haiti's rich and complex historical narrative and Haiti's contributions to the world. HLP has established an educational program that emphasizes the history of colonization, the Haitian revolution, and Haiti's global impact. Through an online interface, teacher training, and other avenues, HLP is fostering a sense of pride and identity among educators and students in Haiti.

Haiti Legacy Project has:

- Created a 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.
- Produced a webpage that houses historical artifacts, books, journal articles, poetry, music and art that emphasizes various aspects of Haitian history and Haiti's global contributions.
- Generated an engaging history curriculum that encompasses activities, lessons, and resources utilizing a Universal Design for Learning (UDL framework).

## Ongoing goals

- Provide training to teacher leaders in Haiti on the materials and efficient strategies that can be utilized to implement the materials into their curriculum with their students.
- Develop a team of teachers who serve as trainers for other teachers of the project in the future – an effort to ensure sustainability of the project.
- Evaluate the overall impact on individual and systemic implications.

Point person: A reliable, appointed BTM contact person was essential to resolving issues quickly and in maintaining communication between partners, in disseminating decisions to interested parties efficiently, and in reaching out to mentors and mentees.



## Participants

The Haiti Legacy Project works in collaboration with Musee Ogier-Fombrun and the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami. HLP provides professional development for teacher leaders who will serve as trainers for other teachers. The emphasis of the training is to train teachers to utilize the history resources and provide effective strategies to enhance their history instruction. The Haiti Legacy Project curriculum creates an innovative historical and global narrative emphasizing three historical periods that have been excluded in historical canons: Slavery/Colonization, Haitian Revolution, and Global contributions.

# Haiti Legacy Project

## Fall 2015 Training

Haiti Legacy Project administered the first history teacher-training seminar Fall 2015. This seminar had 15 participants ranging from primary to secondary grade teachers from both public and private schools in the region. School administrators from the region also partook in the training.

### The training objectives

- Provide educators with access and exposure to the website resources.
- Provide educators with access and exposure to the teachers' curriculum.

## Summer 2016 Training

In compliance with the ongoing goals of the HLP a teacher-training summer seminar 2016 was administered. This seminar had 50 participants. These participants ranged from primary to secondary teacher leaders, school administrators, and district administrators from the region. The participants represented both public and private sector in the region. Before the training, the curriculum resources were translated into Haitian Creole to be disseminated to the participants.



The training objectives:

- Provide educators with access and exposure to the website resources.
- Give educators with access and exposure to the teachers' curriculum, which compliments their existing curriculum.
- Explore how the curriculum can be utilized to enhance their existing curriculum.
- Create connections between the Mental Health Trainings & the educators learning and teaching history.

## Feedback

### Fall 2015 Training

The participants provided feedback that the training is highly necessary and needed for teachers in the region. They suggested that more trainings be provided, and that appropriate resources are given to support their teaching efforts in their respective schools. Upon completion of the training, HLP team visited a school in the region and saw the training content being implemented by the teaching faculty.

In addition, throughout the year, teachers participated in a one-day training that integrated a visit to the museum and a total of 550 teachers participated in those training.

is highly necessary and needed for teachers in the region. They suggested that more trainings be provided, and that appropriate resources are given to support their teaching efforts in their respective schools. Upon completion of the training, HLP team visited a school in the region and saw the training content being implemented by the teaching faculty.

In addition, throughout the year, teachers participated in a one-day training that integrated a visit to the museum and a total of 550 teachers participated in those training.



# Haiti Legacy Project

## Summer 2016 Training

The training was well received by the participants, particularly access to the website. They see it as an opportunity for them to find resources both to add to their knowledge and to improve their instruction. The website gave teachers the opportunity to be reflective about the importance knowing one's history. They were able to make the connection between knowing their history and to their sense of identity and self-esteem development.

This training covered techniques that helped students with various learning needs to access the content. Teachers used knowledge gained from the Mental Health Training to help them to better teach the content. They were able to understand that student learning requires seeing, listening, and reacting (writing & speaking). Infusing these four learning modalities and the UDL framework in their history lesson planning allowed the teachers to design lessons with clear goals, assessments of student learning and effective activities that lead to student learning. The participants provided insightful comments and feedback to HLP. The participants requested more training be conducted in this region. Additionally, they expressed a need for resources due to a lack of access to technologies.





# Mental Health Training in Haiti



## Section Contents

- Program Overview
- Participants

Project Coordinator: Natacha Janac  
Site: University of Miami, School of Education

## Program Overview

The School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami partnered up with Re-bati Sante Mental and the Musée Ogier-Fombrun, to implement the Mental Health Training program that aims to provide training to teachers on mental health issues. The overall goal of the program is to equip the teachers with the knowledge and support that will enable them to address the socio-emotional needs of the students they teach. Our Mental Health Training Program is grounded in a community empowerment and sustainability framework that seeks to meet the follow 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 signs and symptoms of mental health issues in children and adolescents.

## Participants

For the program year 2015-2016, the Mental Health training took place in Saint Marc and Arcahaie. A total of 10 trainings were provided from the months of August 2015-June 2016. Each training was conducted by a CRECER research team member and trainings had an average of 20 participants from each of the cities. Four participants from each location that exhibited a great understanding of the material and had consistent participation were chosen to become trainers for future trainings.



# Day of Dialogue



Project Coordinator: Amina Simmons  
Site: University of Miami, School of Education

## Program Overview

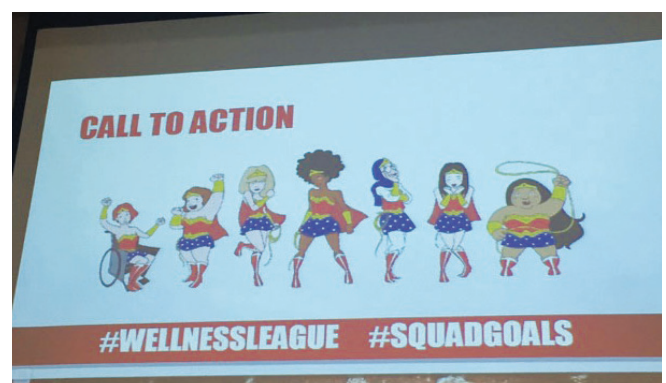
Often, scholarly endeavors about community-based work focus narrowly on methodology with regard to implementation of interventions or outcomes of proposed projects and partnerships. While this work is valuable, it seems that there may be an integral piece of the process that academics, organizers, and communities can easily overlook. The building of partnerships is the cornerstone of community work, yet rarely do we see scholars talking about what that process looks like. This process of bringing community entities that often have very little contact with one another, although they serve many of the same community members is about both intentionality and careful facilitation of a dialogue.



## Summary of Program

Day of Dialogue is a community driven event that the Challenging Racism and Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) team has been facilitating in Miami since 2006. Started at Boston College and moving to the University of Miami, under the guidance of Dr. Guerda Nicolas, Day of Dialogue provided community organizations with the opportunity to come together to both identify and take action to address the needs of the community. Six dialogues have been hosted in Miami, with various topics including: racism, tolerance, promoting youth engagement, Native American communities, building bridges across cultures, and addressing the needs of Blacks in Miami. This year, the collaborative partners hosted the seventh day of dialogue that focused on women's wellness, with a variety of past and present community partners.

Our seventh day of dialogue, *Peeling Back the Layers of Women's Issues : A Call To Action for Women's Wellness*, we held interactive and dynamic discussions with a various community partners such as: Urgent Inc, MCCJ, Miami Workers Center and many more. Collectively, participants shared stories and insights addressing a broad range of issues including: reproductive justice, gender identity, violence against women, interracial friendships, domestic work, media impact on future generations, and sex education in the school system. We proposed several community agendas regarding women's wellness, created a collective digital sharing platform (using the SLACK app technology) and discussed ways to support the col-

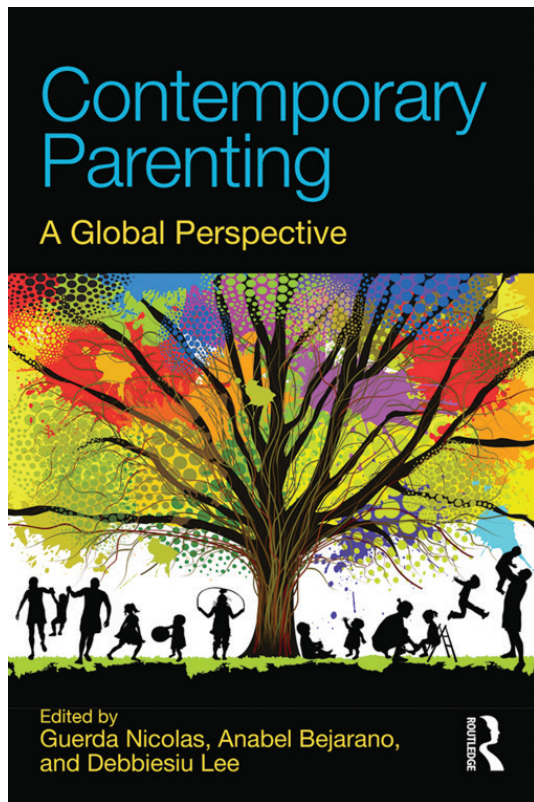




## Dr. Guerda Nicolas' Upcoming Books

Dr. Nicolas has published several articles and book chapters and delivered numerous invited presentations at the national and international conferences in the areas of women issues, depression and intervention among Haitians, social support networks of ethnic minorities, and spirituality. Her upcoming books are:

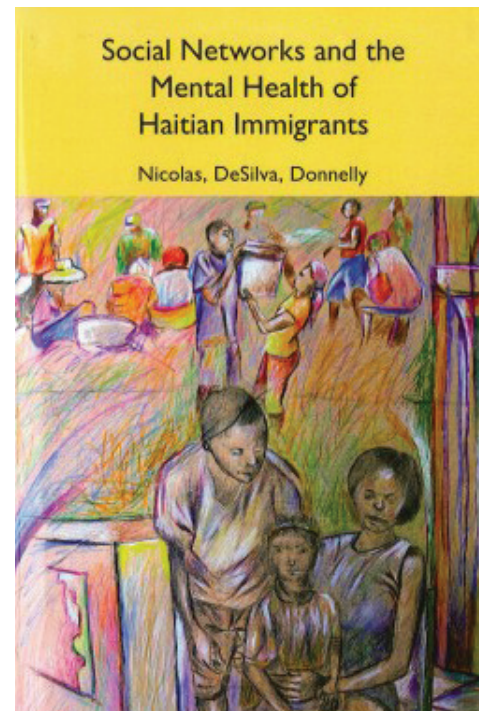
***Contemporary Parenting: A Global Perspective***, by Routledge Press. Through a global, multidisciplinary perspective, this book describes how four factors influence parenting practices: a country's historical and political background, the parent's educational history, the economy and the parent's financial standing, and advances in technology.



Part 1 reviews each of these factors in detail. Part 2 features cases that illustrate the impact these factors have on parenting practices around the world including Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

***Building Mental Health Capacity in Haiti through Collaborative Partnerships*** by Nova Publishers. This monograph is a guidebook focusing on how to implement mental health training programs internationally. The book is structured in a way that utilizes Haiti as an example of what scholars who are interested in global mental health can do to effectively implement a training program internationally.

***Social Networks and the Mental Health of Haitian Immigrants*** by Caribbean Studies Press provides information regarding the lives of Haitian immigrants through research at the intersection of culture, social networks, and mental health. In addition, recommendations for providing culturally sensitive and effective services are included in the book.



# CRECER Directory

- [Marie Guerda Nicolas](#) ..... [nguerda@miami.edu](mailto:nguerda@miami.edu)
- [Dorothy Addae](#) ..... [d.addae@miami.edu](mailto:d.addae@miami.edu)
- [Amina Simmons](#) ..... [a.simmons4@umiami.edu](mailto:a.simmons4@umiami.edu)
- [Natacha Jannac](#) ..... [njj5@miami.edu](mailto:njj5@miami.edu)
- [Kimberly Ho Misiaszek](#) ..... [k.ho2@umiami.edu](mailto:k.ho2@umiami.edu)
- [Noris Rios](#) ..... [n.rios1@miami.edu](mailto:n.rios1@miami.edu)
- [Sarah-Jane Quessa Coupet](#) ..... [s.quessa@gmail.com](mailto:s.quessa@gmail.com)

Visit us online: <http://education.miami.edu/crecer> or email us: [umcrecer@gmail.com](mailto:umcrecer@gmail.com)



*Dorothy and Noris hosting a Strong Roots event at the Barnyard*



Get  
Involved!

Join Us and Make a Difference!

# CRECER

Challenging Racism & Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research

We are always looking for individuals and organizations who share our commitment to social justice and our dedication to enhancing cultural identities and promoting health and wellbeing amongst ethnic minority and immigrant individuals and communities.

*“commitment to social justice ...”*

If you are interested in developing competencies in community-based, culturally- informed research, are interested in bringing a CRECER program to your community, or would like to make a donation, contact us at [umcrecer@gmail.com](mailto:umcrecer@gmail.com).

*“develop competencies in community-based,  
culturally-informed research”*



Breakthrough Miami Programming at the University of Miami, Summer 2016

University of Miami  
Department of Educational & Psychological Studies  
School of Education and Human Development  
5202 University Dr. Coral Gables, FL 33146