

School of Education
Visiting Minority Scholars Lecture Series

***(Re)Constructing Home and School:
Immigrant Parents, Agency, and the
(Un)Desirability of Bridging Multiple Worlds***

Fabienne Doucet

New York University

Wednesday, February 24, 2010 – 12:00-1:30 p.m.
Room 259 Educational Sciences Building

Traditionally, educational research has positioned the worlds of home and school as inherently incongruent, particularly for immigrants and people of color. In this talk, Doucet examines how immigrant parents exercised agency in negotiating boundaries around home and school, presenting the possibility that families play an active and deliberate role in *creating* distance between the worlds of home and school. Data come from structured interviews conducted with 54 parents of Haiti-born (1.5 generation) and U.S. born (2nd generation) Haitian-American adolescents. The findings suggest that parents actively constructed and reconstructed distinct boundaries for home and school, rather than being passive victims of these boundaries. This possibility pushes against the assumption that creating bridges between the worlds of home and school is desirable for immigrants by considering the self-protective function of maintaining separate spheres.

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Fabienne Doucet brings an interdisciplinary perspective to her research and teaching in Early Childhood Education, given her training in human development and family studies, which stands at the crossroads of developmental psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Her research program addresses the educational experiences of immigrant and U.S.-born children of color. Using ethnography, Doucet seeks to understand how structural factors, such as race, nationality, immigrant status, and socioeconomic status (1) impact upon children's educational experiences, and (2) contribute to parents' interactions with and understandings of the educational project. She has examined the everyday experiences of African American preschoolers, their parents' childrearing values and practices, and how parents and caregivers prepare African American children for the transition to school. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education with fellowships from the National Science Foundation and the Spencer Foundation. There she studied the adaptation and schooling experiences of 1.5- and 2nd-generation Haitian youth and their families under the umbrella of the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation study. Her latest project is a critical ethnography of immigrant family involvement in Head Start. She is an affiliated faculty member of the NYU Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Doucet has a Ph.D. in human development and family studies from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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