

School of Education
Visiting Minority Scholars Lecture Series
Sociology Department Race and Ethnicity Training Seminar

Boundaries: “Race, Cultural Flexibility, and the Social Context of Schools”

Prudence L. Carter
Associate Professor of Education and Sociology
Stanford University

Monday, April 21, 2008
8417 Sewell Social Science Building
Noon – 1:15 p.m.

This talk presents findings from research examining the differences in *cultural flexibility* between Black and White students enrolled at schools with varying racial and ethnic compositions. Cultural flexibility is defined as the students’ propensity to accept and move across different cultural and social peer groups and environments. Results, drawn from a study of 471 students in four schools (two majority minority and two majority white) located in the Northeast and South, suggest some positive association between the school context and cultural flexibility for Black students; those in majority minority schools have higher cultural flexibility than those in majority white schools. For White students, regional context is more significant. These findings implicate the critical influence of the school context culture and the wider social climate on students’ abilities to mix across different social boundaries.

Prudence L. Carter is an associate professor in the Stanford University School of Education and (by courtesy) the Department of Sociology. Professor Carter received her M.A. in Sociology and Education from Columbia University, Teachers College, and her M. Phil. and Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University. Her primary research agenda focuses on the intersections among race, ethnicity, class, gender, and culture in explaining academic and mobility differences between different social groups. Professor Carter is the author of an award-winning book, *Keepin’ It Real: School Success beyond Black and White* (Oxford University Press 2005). Other publications have appeared in several journals and book volumes, including *Sociology of Education*, *Social Problems*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *African American Research Perspectives*, and *Sociological Studies of Children and Youth*. Professor Carter’s current research agenda investigates how racial ideology, culture, and social boundaries interact and influence student behaviors in various school contexts of South Africa and the United States.

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