PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Karyn R. Lacy, assistant professor of sociology, and assistant professor of Afroamerican and
African studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to
associate professor of sociology, with tenure, and associate professor of Afroamerican and
African studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:
Ph.D. 2000 Harvard University
M.A. 1993 Temple University (Sociology)
M.A. 1991 Temple University (African American Studies)
B.A. 1987 Oberlin College

Professional Record:
2004 – present Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Center for
Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS), University of Michigan
2000 – 2004 Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Emory University

Summary of Evaluations:
Teaching – Professor Lacy’s courses are important contributions to the curricula of CAAS and
the Department of Sociology. She has taught six different courses, focusing on the introdutory
and survey courses on race and ethnicity in both units. She also effectively taught a threesemester undergraduate honors seminar in Sociology. Students find her courses challenging yet
stimulating, and they praise her patience and accessibility, giving her strong and steadily
improving evaluations. Outside the classroom she is an active and effective mentor to a growing
number of undergraduate and graduate students.

Research – Professor Lacy is the author of a prize-winning study that breaks new ground by
unearthing evidence of intra-class differences among relatively affluent middle-class black
Americans. Her first book, Blue Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle-
Class (University of California Press, 2007), was named co-winner of the Oliver Cromwell Cox
Best Book Award of the American Sociological Association’s Section on Racial and Ethnic
Minorities in 2008. Based on a powerful combination of ethnographic observations and thirty
interviews with couples residing in one of three strategically selected suburban middle-class
neighborhoods in the Washington, DC area – each with a different racial and income mix –
Professor Lacy challenges the conventional wisdom of a monolithic black middle-class by
highlighting the increased salience of “intra-class distinctions” among middle-class blacks.

Recent and Significant Publications:
“Breaking the class monolith: Understanding class differences in Black adolescents’ attachment
to racial identity,” in Social Class: How Does It Work, D. Conley and A. Larceau (eds.),
Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class, University of


**Service** – Professor Lacy has compiled a strong record of service to the University of Michigan and to the discipline of sociology nationally. She has served as an elected member on the Sociology Executive Committee and is presently serving as co-organizer and convener of the CAAS “Works in Progress” series. Her service to the profession is truly extraordinary for a junior scholar, and includes an unusually wide range of reviewing assignments for journals, membership on several editorial boards, and participation on national advisory committees – all of which speaks to the high esteem in which she is held by her peers.

**External Reviews:**

**Reviewer (A)**

“...I have followed her career, and now consider her to be absolutely first-rate... [she] is developing a reputation as a superb scholar [of her generation] in her area of expertise. She is a bright, well-read, and highly able researcher who has made and will continue to make important contributions to the literature of sociology and the study of race in America.”

**Reviewer (B)**

“...[Blue-Chip Black] was an important corrective to earlier scholarship on the black middle class. ...she showed that place matters: The relative emphasis on maintaining a black identity varied by the proportion [of] African American[s] in the community. ... This finding presents a challenge to much recent scholarship which claims that race is distinct from ethnicity in that race is not situational or affiliational but rather imposed from without and more monolithic in nature.”

**Reviewer (C)**

“Blue-Chip Black is an important contribution to the general field of (sub)urban and community sociology, cultural sociology and debates about black identity. ...Lacy expands the reach of sociology’s concepts while shedding new light on a population that has remained below the radar screen. ... Blue-Chip Black establishes Karyn Lacy as one of the best ethnographers of her generation.”

**Reviewer (D)**

“Blue-Chip Black makes an important contribution to the study of the black middle-class. ... I know many people who have read it and, although it has not been out all that long, it is clearly having an impact on the field. ...her work will be widely read, widely cited, and it will help to enrich the ‘conversation’ about class and race in America...”

**Reviewer (E)**

“As sociology aims to rigorously represent, interpret, and analyze the social world, Lacy is a fine sociologist. And since African American studies is an interdisciplinary that must include empirical investigations of contemporary black life, and attend to core questions of identity, mobility, and agency, Lacy’s work is well-situated there too. ... There is no doubt that Lacy is well-regarded in
the field of race and ethnicity, as evidenced by her recent award of the Oliver Cox Best Book Award from the ASA Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities.”

Reviewer (F)
“...Blue-Chip Black leaves many signal theoretical and analytic contributions. ...The lasting impact of this work points to the complexity of the black middle class experience set in the context of the multiple ways that spatial location and place shape opportunities. ...Without question, the scholarship of Professor Lacy shoots through any thresholds of quality, scope of work, significance, robust research agenda, and impact...”

Summary of Recommendation:
Professor Lacy’s research has resulted in a prize-winning study that breaks new ground in the area of class differences. She is a dedicated and effective teacher and is a generous and highly valued colleague who renders important service to her units and the national discipline. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Karyn R. Lacy be promoted to the rank of associate professor of sociology, with tenure, and associate professor of Afroamerican and African studies, with tenure, in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Terrence J. McDonald
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
Professor of History and Dean
College of History, Science, and the Arts

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