Reflecting Respect: Transcultural Practices of Muslim French Youth  
Chantal Tetreault, Assistant Professor

Club announcements: Oct. 21st Homecoming Parade! Meet at 5:30 pm  
Oct. 24th Graduate Panal  
Nov. 16 – 20th AAA Conference, let us know if you want to go!  
Nov. 21st Undergraduate Presentations – sign up!

Props to anthro club!  
Been here at MSU for two and a half years. Linguistic anthropologist who deals with socio-cultural anthropology as well.  
Working with Muslim French Youth, mostly Algerian descent. Quote from Patrick Weil, architect of anti-headscarf law [2004] and member of Chirac’s Presidential Commission on laicite.  
Implying very strongly that women who don’t want to wear the headscarf are in a sense a victim of their own culture. Very French perspective on secularism.

Ethnographic Context:  
Spaces of Migration  
Spaces of social exclusion, racial marginalization – used to be for impoverished French, working class. Increasingly was rented by immigrant populations.  
Emergent youth sub-culture  

Did literacy training with the parents but worked mostly with school children trying to keep them from school failure.  

Larger research project:  
Belonging in France  
Interpreting new identities  
Cultural change and language change  
Transcultural communicative genres  

Transcultural practices: transformative cultural practices in a transnational context, le respect, parental name calling routines.  

Le respect was talked about being a good child to their parents. Combination of what it meant to be French in addition to being from an immigrant family.  

Reflecting Respect. Chosen because reflect means to throw or bend backward, transforms in reproduction. Not a perfect reflection.  

Ideological interpretations of le respect  
“Muslims, they don’t hit. We Muslims—the men—that they respect the most, it’s the old men, the women, and the children. Women, you can’t hit women. You can’t raise a hand against them.”  

-Mounia, girl of 12  

Adolescents’ emergent behavioral norms  
Dating, sexuality socially proscribed  
Adolescent morality on dating and respect  
Enacted in speech event: parental name calling (using the first name of a peer’s parent, used to taunt and tease amongst children. Among teens, would call one another by their mother’s names.)  
Information about a peer’s parents as symbolic capital  

Transcultural interpretations of le respect  
Parental name-calling  
Transcultural speech genre
Anthropology Club Meeting October 10th, 2011

Hip hop style, rap, rock: French and African American media influences
Name taboo: North African influences – don’t call people by their first names
“Beverly Hills, 90210” example

Dual nature of speech events
  Competence demonstrates insider knowledge
  Practice creates social and linguistic contexts for relationships – creates a power of interactional dynamics, symbolic power
  Relevance for adolescent peer group in diaspora

Daniel Balavoine’s “Le Chanteur” 1978
  I introduce myself, my name is Henry.
  I would like to have a successful life.

Would create nicknames for each other’s mothers and fathers names.

Conclusions
  How new identities are created in talk
  Youth as cultural innovators, not just social reproducers
  Muslim youth interpreting and enacting cultural change in transnational contexts

Teasing is about intimacy. Shows that you know them well. Similarities with American culture. Americans are the least likely to be teased, open to debate though.

Were the parents aware of what was going on? Yup, they knew but they didn’t seem to care much about it. Others would comment that it was a very North African practice. Thought of it as kid’s play. Children wouldn’t do this to an adult’s face. Transgressing up to a point, but it’s about peer culture.

Not all about racism and defining themselves in French culture but there are some underpinnings.

Still in contact with the kids!