

ANTH 112.21 Introduction to Socio-Cultural Anthropology
Winter 2019

I acknowledge that St FX is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

Mar. 26-28: Linguistic anthropology.

READ: ~~Perspectives: Linda Light, "Language"~~

Fordham, Signithia. 1999. "Dissin' 'The Standard': Ebonics as Guerrilla Warfare at Capital High." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 30(3): 272- 293.

Fordham's research is in the area of linguistic anthropology

What do linguistic anthropologists study?

Characteristics of (human) language:

- Productivity: can produce an infinite number of messages about an infinite number of subjects
- Displacement: can discuss things not actually occurring
- Arbitrary: it is a socially constructed system of symbols

Descriptive Linguistics:

- Phonology: the study of sounds
 - phonetically distinct sounds versus phonemes
- Morphology: the study of meaningful sound sequences
 - Morphemes: bound and free
- Syntax: ordering morphemes into sentences

Sociolinguistics: The study of language in its social context (This is where Fordham fits in)

- Dialect, Language and politics; language and gender

Nonverbal communication

- Proxemics: distance
- Kinesics: body language
- Bodily adornment

Fordham focuses on the politics of language (could also address literature on resistant students, such as Willis (1977) or Nolan (2018))

Also see Jamila Lyiscott:

https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english?language=en

- what version of English is her paper written in?
- what is "Ebonics"/"Black English"/ "Black Dialect"/ "African American Vernacular English"?
- where does Fordham conduct her research?
- what does Fordham argue?
 - how do the African American students in her study use language? Why do they do so?

Context:

- what is important to know about the context within which the students use the languages they do?

Concepts:

- language as “basic medium of group identity” (Fordham 1999: 275)
- standard versus vernacular language
- linguistic inversion
- weapons of the weak
- **leasing the standard**
 - “appearing to but not to be” (e.g. Fordham 1999: 278)
 - “acting White” (e.g. Fordham 1999: 278)
 - relationship to dominant system of power relations

Evidence:

- when do these students speak which dialect?
 - which students strategize in what ways around their dialectical options?
- how do students use avoidance to resist what they see as hostile to their identity?
- what does “leasing” standard English involve, especially for high achieving students?
- why do these students resist acting and speaking “White”?

Conclusion:

- what does Fordham suggest might work to improve the under-achieving students’ academic performance?

References to published works not on the course outline:

- Nolan, Kathleen. 2018. “‘I’m a Kid from the Bronx’: A Reflection on the Enduring Contributions of Willis’s Cultural Production Perspective in *Learning to Labour*.” *Ethnography* 19(4): 464–478
- Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*. Teakfield, UK: Saxon House.