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THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING BY AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEACHERS IN INNER-CITY CLASSROOMS

by

YVONNE M. WILSON

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Approved By:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

To my mom, Hattie Ruth Shropshire Wilson, who passed in 2002, and my dad, Charles Wainwright Wilson, Sr., who believed that education was and is the most important gift that they could give their children and therefore, made countless and endless sacrifices to ensure that we would have access;

To my 'da', Charles Wainwright Wilson, Sr., who provided strong support and encouragement after each class session and allowed me respite in his favorite recliner during each 'debriefing', who every two days checked in to see 'how it was going' and to find out, 'how much longer'?

To my sons, Philip Michael Wilson and Hamilton Payne Wilson, who watched and supported me throughout my extensive journey, hugged me, comforted me, studied with me, discussed and were 'sounding boards' for me and provided a safe place for me to implode, explode, and grow;

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and

To God, who fortified me, guided me and sent Angels to keep me safe, who provided for my emotional and financial safety and security while I completed His task.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The achievement gap is an occurrence that is often in debate in educational circles. It can be described as the difference in educational performance between students of color and White students (Rios, 2016). The results of these achievement gaps are that Black, Hispanic, and Native American students are seen to be underperforming their White counterparts academically, being unprepared for later success in life. Of the over 1.2 million students that do not complete high school annually, over half of them are students of color from low-income families (Flono, 2015). There are many theories about the cause of this achievement gap between these groups of students, ranging from inequity in resources including funding, materials, and staffing to other considerations such as socioeconomic factors and familial structures (Gillian-Daniel and Kramer, 2015; Rios, 2016). Some believe the achievement gap to be directly impacted by the dynamic in the school classroom: teacher effectiveness, classroom culture, and language diversity.

Gillian-Daniel and Kraemer (2015) believe that one of the causes of the disparity of academic success between White students and students of color is the lack of preparation of teachers. While they propose a list of reasons that they believe result in this incongruence including White privilege, they believe that the most mitigating factor is teacher effectiveness and preparation to teach content areas with rigor (Gillian-Daniel and Kramer, 2015). As schools become more culturally diverse, the teaching population remains primarily White and female (Freedman, 1999). In the 2011-2012 school year, over 80% of the teaching population was White and over 75% was female (NCES, 2013). Many of these teachers are often from the middle class and unprepared to address minority youth (Freedman, 1999). Gillian-Daniel and Kramer (2015) believe that the education these teachers receive, many of them new to the field

of education, does not adequately prepare them to interact with and understand the challenges of the increasingly diverse student population. Their solution to this dilemma is to offer professional development sessions that will provide guidance and instruction on working with minority youth (Gillian-Daniel & Kramer, 2015).

Lisa Delpit (2002) speaks to the same situation as does Gillian-Daniel and Kramer (2015) and acknowledges that the number of teachers of color has declined and the number of teachers of color entering teacher education programs has also declined. Delpit also agrees that most of the teachers in the profession are from middle class suburban communities that are far-removed from the areas and lifestyles of the students that they teach (Freedman, 1999). Due to this fact, Delpit believes that classrooms can lack the culturally-relevant environment, language and instruction needed to support an authentic increase in academic achievement and self-esteem of non-White students (Freedman, 1999).

Delpit (2002) refers to this phenomenon as a 'culture of power'. She asserts that the structure in classrooms is based on the dominant culture of European Americans or Whites (Delpit, 2002). White students who were raised in and are familiar with this culture or structure tend to do better in school academically and behaviorally than non-White students not exposed to this structure (Delpit, 2002). This fact coupled with what is known as the 'hidden curriculum', lends credence to an environment that is not conducive to academic success for students of color and of low socioeconomic status. Planned and enacted curriculum, respectively, refers to the designed or theoretical intention of what is to be taught and then, what is actually taught to students in a classroom setting (Pinar, W.F., Reynolds, W.M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P.M., 2008). However, hidden curriculum is information or knowledge that is not planned and not a part of the expected learning but communicated subliminally or discreetly to students in

educational settings (Pinar, W.F., and et.al., 2008). This curriculum might present itself in terms of disapproving looks when students use cultural or home language in school or specifically in the classroom. Both Delpit's (1987) 'culture of power' and Pinar's (2008) 'hidden curriculum' are significant in terms of negatively impacting the achievement gap--in other words, the gap continues to exist and may in some instances, seem to grow.

The fact that most of the teaching population is comprised of White females serves to demonstrate why there is probable cause to want to alter this educational dynamic and structure. In order for non-White students to begin to experience some successes in their educational setting or classroom, they must first feel comfortable and believe that their life and culture has worth and value, that they too are important. For this to occur, Delpit believes that teachers must acknowledge and validate students' lives, their culture and their language, more specifically, their home language (Freedman, 1999). She understands that learning occurs when students can understand linguistically and when the lessons are framed within a context that allows students to relate (Freedman, 1999).

The Oakland California School District understood this, even though the initiative was short-lived due to backlash from the community (Golden, 1997). The district understood that home language mattered and attempted to bring that significance into the schools and classrooms in an attempt to improve the academic success of its students. Its goal was to classify ebonics (Ebony + phonics) as a dialect of language spoken by distant African ancestors (Golden, 1997). Wagner (1997) also understood the significance of home language and its possible impact on the learning outcomes for students of color, specifically, African-American students.

Wagner (1997) believed that all children come to school with a preponderance of familiarity with a home dialect or informal language specific to their home and/or culture. Using

this language concurrently with standard English, Wagner believed that African-American children would understand the structures of standard English and learn not only to speak it but be able to understand its connections to their home dialect (Wagner, 1997). In addition, by having the richness of their culture, their language, recognized and respected, students would adopt a feeling of pride, encouraging them to learn (Wagner, 1997). Lloyd Leaverton, an educational psychologist, acted on his belief that children could speak, read, and comprehend both their informal dialect and standard English by creating a series of readers called, 'Leaverton Readers' (Wagner, 1997). These readers, similar to basal or elementary primers, used simple stories written in both AAVE (African American Vernacular English) and standard English, heightening students' abilities to make linguistic connections between their home language and English (Wagner, 1997). The fate of the Leaverton Readers mirrored that of the Oakland Resolution on Ebonics. Teachers and other educational professionals along with parents and community activists raised an uproar at the use of these readers believing that they would encourage students to speak informally instead of improving speech and understanding (Wagner, 1997). The use of these readers much like the Ebonics initiative were discontinued before their value was determined (Wagner, 1997).

The study of language use in the classroom becomes important because it could have the capability of reducing the achievement gap. If the use of culturally-specific language can improve students' self-esteem, allowing them to be more motivated increasing their academic success, then, the achievement gap can be affected. Amy Gutmann (1987) speaks of educational opportunities that provide distribution of resources in an equitable manner. Maximization, meritocracy, and equalization are forms of educational opportunity that are enacted within districts and school systems across the country. Maximization allows for all resources, students,

staff, funding, and materials, to be distributed so that the life chances and academic exposure for all students is maximized (Gutmann, 1987). Meritocracy arranges resources based on students' willingness to learn and their resulting ability to achieve academic success (Gutmann, 1987). Equalization, on the other hand, increases the divisions of resources to the least advantaged until they are receiving and benefiting just as those that are privileged (Gutmann, 1987). If teachers were to create a classroom environment that was culturally *equitable*, one which allowed less-advantaged students to receive instruction in a manner that recognized, encouraged, and fostered appreciation of their language, they might stand a chance of being academically successful, thereby narrowing the achievement gap.

Anderson (1990) offers an intriguing perspective on the culture of many inner-city youth, understanding that culture refers to more than the existence of a person based on their race. In this sense, culture refers to the lifestyle, the environment, and the means of sustenance that a person uses to survive. He illustrates a particular existence born out of ethnicity but precipitated by the societal structures and resources allocated based on that same ethnicity. Children are raised being exposed to a variety of inappropriate and illicit behaviors (1990). They learn how to not only live but survive early; they are taught to demand and command respect and to fight for it to obtain it (1990). That respect is bestowed upon those who demonstrate physical might and/or those that can deliver verbal violence with such intensity that they create fear in their adversaries (1990). Children are taught early to use explicit language and to fight as a means of communicating displeasure and to gain respect on the streets (1990). The ability to do this gains them what Anderson refers to as 'social capital', a sort of street code (1990). Similar to the cultural capital that both Anyon (1980) and Lareau (1987) describe, social capital is the possession of skills and abilities necessary to interact and navigate socially within the *culture*

that one lives. Unlike cultural capital, social capital is not dependent upon socioeconomic stature, educational backgrounds of parents, or structured academic language but instead on one's ability to fight, both verbally and physically, to survive, and to interact with others using the language of the street (Anyon, J.,1980; Lareau, A., 1987; Anderson, E.,1990). The behavior and actions of children such as these may appear to lack civility and structure but in its own unique way, has balance and provides a form of capital on the streets to these students that they in turn, bring to the classroom, to a classroom based on a 'culture of power' whose language is based on White experience, point of reference, and culture (Delpit, 1988).

While statistics show that a significant difference exists between the academic performance of White students and their African-American counterparts, what is even more troubling and compelling than the inequalities in resources are the disparities in discipline for students of color. Recent studies have shown that students of color, both African-American (Black) and Hispanic students receive more disciplinary action than White students (Hannon, L., DeFina, R., & Bruch, S., 2013; Kersten, K., 2017). Hannon, et.al. (2013) found that students of color, more specifically in this instance, African-American students, were three times more likely to be suspended than were other racial groups. Within that declaration, darker African-American students were seen to be suspended even more than lighter complexioned ones (Hannon, et.al., 2013). Perfunctory studies were completed to determine if family SES, parents' educational level, and students' academic performance were indicators of the discipline pattern; however, initial results showed negligible differences in these factors, leading researchers to believe that discrimination was the cause of the difference in discipline (Hannon, et.al., 2013). Coupled with a lack of belonging inside the classroom, a perceived lack of understanding and respect of one's culture, this excessive discipline policy for students of color is seen to be a part

of the ‘school to prison pipeline’ (Hannon, et.al., 2013). As students are continually suspended, losing more and more time in school, they lose focus and hope, and eventually drop out of school (Hannon, et.al., 2013; Rios, 2011).

Nolan (2011) also noted these occurrences: African-American and Hispanic students were detained and referred for disciplinary action more than Caucasian students and due to the fact that in some schools, law enforcement is present as a means of controlling discipline, students of color were exposed to the legal justice system much earlier than their Caucasian counterparts (Nolan, 2011). Again, these students spent more time being ‘disciplined’ than engaging in academic pursuits and eventually, dropped out, reinforcing the ‘school to prison pipeline’ theory (Nolan, 2011). In this case however, Nolan (2011) cited cases where the interaction between students and the school-based law enforcement occurred and escalated due to a misunderstanding of student language, voice levels, and body language or in other words, miscued code. These students, more than likely, just as those described by Anderson (1990), have a pre-determined code and a wealth of ‘social capital’. They possess a unique understanding of interaction and respect, how to engage in it and how to achieve it; this understanding is not complementary to the expectations for interaction and behavior in schools, leading to continued conflict and lack of understanding on both sides, that of the educational institution, often based on cultural capital (Anyon, 1980; Lareau, 1987) and that of the student, more frequently based on social capital (Anderson, 1990).

Conversely, some districts, in response to the allegations of excessive discipline being meted out to African-American students, have decided to refrain from suspending students and to implement only minor disciplinary action as a corrective measure (Kersten, 2017). Even though students were kept in school in an attempt to maintain exposure to instruction and time-on-task,

this action actually had adverse effects as disruptive students remained in the classroom causing distractions and interrupting instruction (Kersten, 2017). The lack of discipline for these students with errant behavior had multiple consequences: in addition to interrupting their own learning and impacting their own self-esteem, they also were forestalling the learning of other students who wanted to learn, indirectly affecting their self-esteem and feelings of worth (Kersten, 2017).

Rios (2011) discusses the result of the lack of engagement and attention to student culture in the schools, the excessive discipline experienced by African-American and Hispanic students. He witnessed a correlation between the schools' actions and the drop-out rate for these students (Rios, 2011). With nowhere to go but the streets, the self-esteem and feelings of worth of these students continue to spiral downward (Rios, 2011). These feelings caused an increase in feelings of aggression and acts of violence, again, bringing them into more frequent contact with law enforcement and the criminal justice system (Donnellan, et.al., 2004; Rios, 2011). So, without intending to, the educational system indirectly facilitates and feeds the behavior and activity/actions that they want to encourage students to discontinue. And thus the cycle exists.

The most recent and complete compilation of criminal behavior/offenses show that in 2015, 361 African-Americans under the age of 18 were arrested for murder while only 234 White youth under the age of 18 were arrested for the same charge (FBI, 2015). In addition, 9,702 Black youth were arrested for robbery while only 4,190 White youth were arrested (FBI, 2015). While this data in and of itself does not indicate a disproportionate arrest rate *based* on race, it does demonstrate that Black youth *are* more frequently arrested in the commission of these forms of violent crime. Anderson (1990) found that these forms of crime tended to be higher in Black or African-American communities due to the fact that many inner-city youth

were uneducated, unemployed and needed to help support their families. This fact brings full circle the point that Rios (2011), Hannon, et.al. (2013) and Nolan (2011) made about the fact that students drop out of school and become a part of the ‘school to prison’ pipeline. If teachers use culturally-specific language or code-switching, recognizing student language and culture causing African-American students to feel a sense of pride, accomplishment, and respect in the classroom, maybe the seeming unending cycle of lack of academic achievement, lack of power, and limited resources can be interrupted and prevent the resulting errant behavior that impacts academic success.

Theoretical Framework

Several interconnected/related theories provide a context from which this study stems. Delpit’s (1988) theory of the culture of power lends the undergirding foundation that supports the additional theories that also contribute to the structure of this study. Anyon’s (1980) theory of social capital and Lareau’s (1987) theory of cultural capital complete the basis for this research.

The theories that comprise the framework for this research are strongly similar in that they all are focused on equality as it relates to social and cultural interaction. Together, they provided a clearer and more cohesive understanding of the absence of equality based on a lack or unequal distribution of resources within education. The theory of the culture of power posits that there is a dynamic within mainstream classrooms that isolates students of color from the learning process (Delpit. 1988). In ‘The Silenced Dialogue’, Delpit (1988) discusses the disconnect that occurs between White teachers and students and Black students within the same classroom. Her further belief and conclusion made from personal experience and discussions with both White

and Black teachers and students is that unless one is a member or has been invited to be a member of that power construct, one is unaware of how to navigate it.

Anyon (1980) proposes that there is a distinct difference in the educational process of students from different classes, specifically, working class/blue class, middle class, upper-middle, and upper class. After observing 10 classrooms of 5th grade students for a year, Anyon concluded that upper-middle and upper class students were provided a form of instruction that prepared them for 'white collar' or professional careers while working class and middle class students received instruction that guided them towards skilled labor. This instruction or information that Anyon referred to as 'social capital' is subconsciously withheld from lower classes (1980).

Lareau (1987) intimates that students' background and that of their parents often prove a barrier in navigating the educational system. Due to social class standing and educational background, many parents are unable to provide the background/foundation necessary for their children to be successful in school. This lack of 'cultural capital', social connections, education, and linguistic ability, create again, a disconnect in the classroom for low-income students (1987).

These theories approach the same issue from three different but related perspectives that converged in this research to provide a new framework for additional research on education, specifically, instruction in inner-city classrooms.

History of Research of Code Switching

Interest in language existed long before it was identified and labeled as a formalized field of study. People made choices about their linguistic patterns and how they would use them as a method of communication. The use of two forms of language within the same community was first actively noticed in early 700 (Nevalainen, Raumolin, & Brunberg, 2005). Gumperz referred

to the occurrence of diglossia within a single community or group as a speech community (Nevalainen, et.al., 2005; Gal, 2014). This discovery could be said to be one of the first encounters in the field of study now known as sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics or the study of the joint interaction of language, culture, and social structure, has become a widely studied field pioneered by Gumperz, Hymes, Labov and Fishman to name a few. While each of these theorists has professed their own importance in initiating the field of study, collaboratively, they have structured a dynamism that has impacted sociolinguistics and contributed greatly to this field of research.

John J. Gumperz believed that language was not solely a linguistic function with the purpose of communication but one also based in social connections and structure (Gumperz, 1982). In his early studies, beginning with his doctoral work, Gumperz studied individual cultures as self-contained groups and noticed that each group not only had their own language but also that within each culture there was maintained unique dialects based on various structures such as family/culture, housing/community, career/education and socioeconomic status (Levinson, 2015; Gumperz, 1982). Sociolinguistics, or the study of language as a social construct became a focal point for future studies of communication (Levinson, 2015).

Dell Hymes focused his sociolinguistic study on the ethnographic anthropological aspect of language (Blommaert, 2010). He studied language and its various forms in order to lend understanding of people, society and their culture. His approach to understanding the linguistic form complemented the work of Gumperz and they co-authored and co-edited several volumes (Blommaert, 2010; Levinson, 2015). From these two significant contributors to the field sprouted several other important theories and studies on the interaction and impact of language.

Joshua Fishman began his studies and research in the mid-1960s with his Language Resources Project (Garcia, 2015). Although his approach was interdisciplinary as was that of Gumperz, Fishman's focus was sociopolitical; he studied language primarily from its use within political organizations within states as well as nations (Garcia, 2015).

Research Questions

These questions served to focus the direction of this study on the possibility of changing student success based on more than just basic instructional practice:

1. What personal attributes, beliefs, and dispositions in conjunction with school or the classroom influence a teacher to switch code or alter their speech pattern when delivering instruction or interacting with students?
2. Does this flexible change in language pattern impact or affect the behavior of African-American students and their interaction with the teacher in the classroom?
3. What conditions exist that cause teachers to alter speech patterns from standard English to culturally-specific language or to code-switch?

Research Design

In order to best obtain appropriate data that would respond to the research questions, the study was qualitative in format meaning that teachers were interviewed regarding their speech patterns and interactions with their students. A similar structure/format was used by Kasanda, C., Simasiku, L., and Smit, T. (2015) in which a small but concentrated sample was used to obtain information regarding instruction in both students' native language (L1) and English (L2). The format and structure of this research allowed not only an analysis of the decisions to alter

speech patterns and interaction, both verbal and non-verbal and the circumstances that surrounded those choices but also provided firsthand insight into the *reasons* for the choice.

In this manner, the information obtained supported research in actually identifying the thought process behind teacher speech and the choice to code-switch as well as the effectiveness of the choice and the use (Jacobs, P.A. & Gaver, D.P., 1998).

Chapter 2 **Literature Review**

Hua (2008) views language and its interplay not only as an indicator of cultural groups and interactions within and without those groups in society but more specifically as a means of indicating conflict and levels of power within familial structures and generations. He found that in bilingual families where English was the second language, the parent or older relative used the native language, L1, to make a point and switched to English to confirm the point and assert authority over the child (2008). Conversely, the child used English as a demonstration of their societal relevance and linguistic superiority over the older relative. However, this display by the child was often viewed as a form of disrespect and challenged by the older relative at which point the child reverted to the native language to regain favor with the elder (2008). Children also tended to switch to the native language to gain favor in the disagreement or conflict (2008).

Language and its various forms can also be used to ‘do identity work’ and claim affiliation with certain groups (Cashman, 2005, 2008; Gumperz, 1968, 1982; Hua, 2008). This is seen most often in social structures such as gangs, workplace interactions, and educational settings (Gumperz, 1968). Gumperz identifies these groups as speech communities, instances in which very specific linguistic patterns form a group with unique membership within or across

cultures (Gumperz, 1968). Cashman (2005) studied pivotal interactions in bilingual communications during a game of bingo. The administrators of the game used language to assert superiority over each other with regards to their fluency in either English or Spanish (Cashman, 2005). They also used it to identify with one group (English-speakers) or the other (Spanish-speakers). To demonstrate their superiority over participants, they used their knowledge of either the Spanish or English language to classify those not fluent into a lower group by correcting their speech patterns (Cashman, 2005). The participants of the game used language as a means of claiming membership (Cashman, 2005). In this manner, not only were several speech communities present but they were used to assert power and control during a social setting.

This interest in language extends into education, into the classroom with student and teacher interactions. Lareau (1987), Cashman (2005) and Delpit (2002) speak of language as a power construct within educational settings, either in attaining it for oneself or removing it from someone else. This language barrier, often between White and Black students, they believed, caused a difference in student learning. Rouse and Kemple (2009) found that White students experienced more academic successes while non-White students continued to struggle and experience difficulties. These non-White students experience marginalization and a sense of powerlessness as they are relegated to the 'outskirts of the educational process with minimal authentic support' (Young, I.M., 2000). They may feel as if they possess no real opportunity to be successful in the educational system and have no voice or opportunity to express their concerns or affect any changes in their educational circumstances. Is this disadvantage or achievement gap a result of a language differential? Many theorists have studied varied circumstances in an attempt to determine the answer to this question.

Cohen, G., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., and Master, A. (2006) recognized the achievement gap between White students and their non-White counterparts and identified one of its causes as negative stereotypes and self-image. They found in their study of African- and European-American students that not only did African-American students perform lower than their European-American counterparts academically but that they also became even more intimidated and stressed when interacting with those that were not of their culture who held a form of power or had the power to control their immediate and future success (Cohen, G., Garcia, J., Apfel, N. & Master, A., 2006). Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi (2004) saw a strong correlation between student self-perception, levels of anxiety, and aggression. They believed that students that did not have a positive outlook became more anxious and likely to act out, socially inside and outside of school (Donnellan, et.al., 2004). Cohen, et.al. (2006) found that a significant increase in academic achievement was caused by creating a feeling of self-worth and pride within the African-American students. If this is the case, then, it seems that since using culturally-specific language causes students to feel that sense of self-worth and pride, academic achievement should follow.

The teacher or the educational institutions through subtle messages or hidden curriculum dictate to students the expectations for both academics as well as behavior (Marsh, C.J. & Willis, G., 2007). The hidden curriculum is expected learning that is not explicitly stated but suggested through non-verbal methods (Marsh, C.J. & Willis, G., 2007). If indeed code-switching is seen as non-verbal as well as verbal, then the impact of hidden curriculum could be substantial. Not only would students receive verbal code that causes them to feel insignificant and academically unsuccessful, they may also be receiving non-verbal cues from educational professionals throughout the educational setting. Lareau (1987) also brings forth the hidden curriculum and

the ‘authority’ relationships that exist in the classroom, similar to Delpit’s (1988) ‘issues of power’, in which a teacher has ‘authority’ over a student, the information they receive, and how that information is presented. The ‘issue of power’ is only one aspect of Delpit’s (1988) culture of power within the classroom. Delpit (1988) also asserts that there are rules necessary to participate in this culture, that these rules are based on the dominant culture, that knowing the rules makes it easier to assimilate into that culture, and that people with that power are often unaware that they have it. These aspects of the ‘culture of power’ coincide with Anyon’s theory of social capital and Lareau’s theory of cultural capital to accentuate the disadvantage that low-to middle income students have in the classroom. According to Delpit (2005), in many school settings there is almost a one-sided, imbalanced communication that causes a disadvantage to non-White students. It is therefore important to determine if this imbalance can be shifted so that communication and the education that results from it can be equitable. This leveling of academic resources or equalization as termed by Gutmann (1987) ensures that educational resources for less privileged students are increased to match those of the more privileged or affluent students in the same setting. Equalization does not assume or presume that resources be equally distributed among all students but instead that the students’ opportunities for academic success be equal (Gutmann, 1987).

Annette Lareau (1987) approaches the premise of educational equity from a different perspective. Lareau (1987) studied low-income students as well as students from middle class families and found that middle class families held more cultural capital than did low-income families. Cultural capital refers to the language, behavior, and educational background that allows students to experience success in school (Lareau, 1987). Furthermore, she believes that social class and class cultures impact the ability of students to learn in school (Lareau, 1987).

Much like Delpit (2005), Lareau (1987) believes that specific linguistic and cultural patterns are in use within schools and that these patterns are based on the culture of the middle class. In addition, she notes that curricula are structured in a manner that benefits the middle class students. Because of this lack of cultural capital, lower-income students are often left out of meaningful learning interactions within their classrooms (Lareau, 1987). Creating an educational environment with an adaptive speech community would equalize learning opportunities for non-White students.

Jean Anyon (1980) similarly to Lareau (1987) also recognizes that same intangible capital whose absence can have a serious impact on the education and academic success of minority students. However, Anyon (1980) delves deeper into the curricular aspect of cultural capital and compares and contrasts the differences in the instruction and teacher engagement between inner city, urban schools with a minority student demographic and a suburban school with a more affluent student demographic. While many researchers acknowledge that a student's home language can have a positive influence on the academic performance of that student, Anyon goes a step further and considers social class along with language as an indicator of student performance in school. According to Anyon (1980), each class, capitalist or upper-class, middle, and, worker class, has access to resources, tangible and intangible. Those tangible resources are more easily identified and include money, property, stocks, and people (Anyon, 1980). Intangible resources are more difficult to identify and therefore, more difficult to determine if they are present or not. These resources include relationships/connections, education, and language (Anyon, 1980). Anyon not only found that the type of communication mattered but also the type and depth of the instruction that was communicated. She also found that social class determined what was expected both in school and in society: less rigorous work

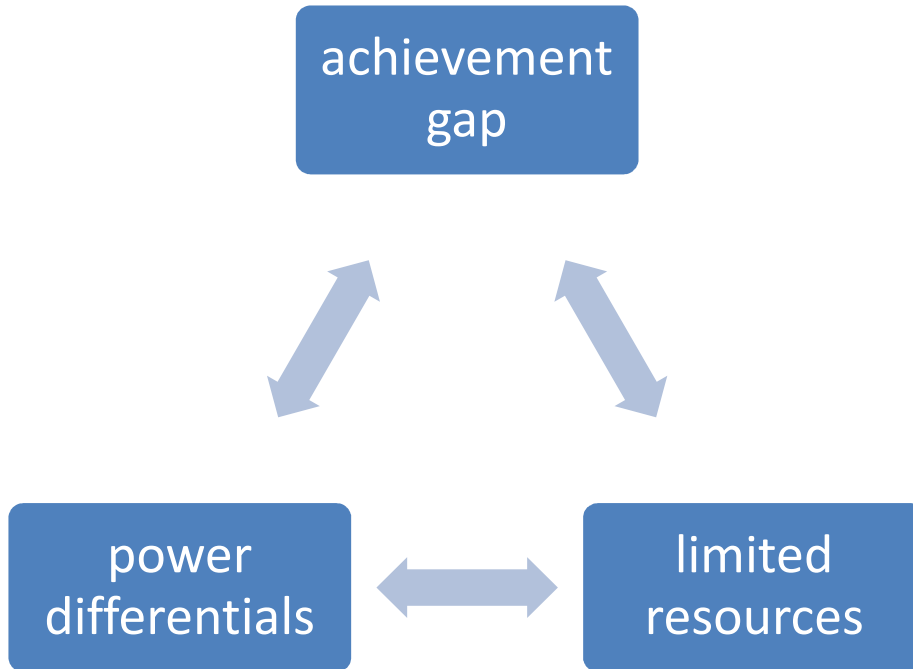
was expected from lower classes and students of color while more rigorous and creative work was expected from middle and upper (capitalist) classes (Anyon, 1980).

Previous studies (Cashman, 2005, 2008; Delpit, 1988; Gumperz, 1968; Hua, 2008) have determined that there are distinct linguistic patterns that occur within and between cultures and that oftentimes, teachers use these patterns in classrooms to engage students in communication. Teachers choose to alter their speech patterns in classrooms for various reasons. Kasanda, C., Simasiku, L., and Smit, T. (2015) spoke to teachers of Namibian students that used their Native language or L1 to conduct instruction of the English language. They studied 12 teachers who all expressed similar reasons for code-switching: they expected students to have a better understanding of what was taught and therefore perform better academically (Kasanda, et.al, 2015). However, results were inconclusive as they found that teachers were inconsistent in their use of the culturally-specific language (L1) for fear that students would rely more on their native language and therefore, not learn to speak English effectively (Kasanda, et.al, 2015).

Lei (2009) studied teachers that used code-switching to communicate with Chinese students learning English in a more natural or authentic format similar to what would be experienced in actual life communication. Lei (2009) asserts that classroom communication is more effective when the teacher modifies the types of questions as well as their speech and the manner in which they react to students' errors in communication responses. Students were found to be more at ease in attempting continued engaged communication when the teacher focused more on the content of what they student was saying as opposed to the form (grammatical) (Lei, 2009). Qualitative results demonstrate that when students were actively engaged in natural conversation using linguistic patterns that students were familiar with and accustomed to that there was improved communication and therefore understanding (Lei, 2009).

Freedman's (1999) review of *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (Delpit, 1995), highlights aspects of the increasing dichotomy or inequity in current education. According to Delpit, 30% of all students in classrooms are children of color and 70% of the 20 largest school districts are children of color. However, there are fewer and fewer teachers of color entering into the field of education and when they do, these entry-level teachers are assigned to the inner-city schools that require intensive support and resources (Freedman, 1999). Teachers responsible for the education of inner-city youth are middle-class, suburbanites that often have very little experience with and have become isolated from those of lower-income status (Freedman, 1999). In addition to this, teacher education programs do not prepare them to address or interact with students of color and/or of low socioeconomic status (Freedman, 1999). These facts combined with Delpit's (1995) explanation of the culture of power that permeates society and more importantly the classroom and the resulting lack of social and cultural capital makes it even more important to ensure that a form of balance is returned to the instructional processes in inner-city schools (Anyon, 1980; Lareau, 1987)

Several ideas are clear based on the reviewed literature and research on language patterns and the use of code-switching in education: one, there is an educational achievement gap between White and non-White students; two, this gap is caused and perpetuated by several factors including but not limited to resources and students' access to them; and three, students' access (or lack of access) to these resources causes power differentials (see figure A).

Figure A. - Achievement Gap Cycle

These factors affect the academic success of non-White students. For example, the current culture of power that allows affluent White students to thrive in classrooms decreases that possibility for low-income students and students of color, contributing to the achievement gap (Delpit, 1995; Cohen, G., Garcia, J., Apfel, N. & Master, A., 2006; Rouse and Kemple, 2009). The achievement gap is interpreted as low motivation or ability on the part of the low-income students and students of color and consequently, resources (i.e. - teachers, equipment, funding, etc.) are distributed in a meritocratic manner (limited resources) as opposed to an equitable one (Gutmann, 1987). This distribution of resources increases the opportunity of success for White students while decreasing it for students of color (power differentials). The feeling of hopelessness and lack of control over themselves and their success as described by Cohen, et.al. (2006) causes students of color and low-socioeconomic status to perform poorly academically (achievement gap). This cycle can appear unending. However, the cycle can be

interrupted if language attainment and use in the classroom encourages and supports the culture of all students.

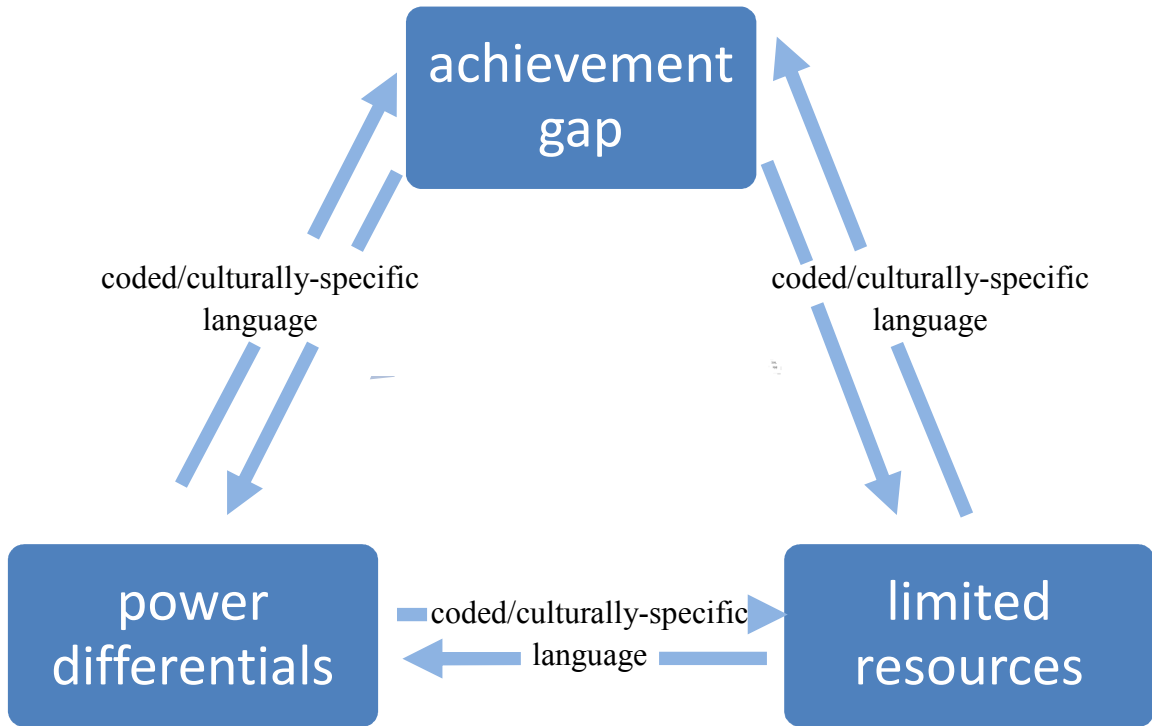
Wheeler and Swords (2006) use African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) to teach English to inner-city students. Instead of correcting instances of informal speech, Swords (2006) responds to students by asking them to code-switch or use the language that is appropriate for the situation and environment. In this way she acknowledges the comment of the student and addresses it, but also teaches them to use the form of language that is needed for the classroom. This method of instruction recognizes students' home language and use while providing them with a feeling of self-worth (Cohen, et.al., 2006). This process does not include the instruction of the informal use of standard English but instead the use of students' cultural vernacular or linguistic speech pattern to create an environment in which all students feel appreciated, equal, and capable of learning based on common and shared expectations.

Lei (2009) also discusses a classroom in which teachers focus more on the content of what students are saying rather than the structure. Lei (2009) feels that this method allows for a 'communication-rich' classroom that encourages student participation and motivates students to learn. The culture of power (Delpit, 2005) that has allowed European-American or White students to excel academically can be diffused and the resources used in the instructional process can be allocated so that learning is equitable for low-income, working-class, middle-class as well as affluent students.

Understanding this cycle and its impact can have far-reaching implications on the instructional process in schools, curriculum design and implementation at the district, state, and national levels, including the structure and format of standardized tests but most importantly on

the future career goals of minority students. The use of culture-specific linguistic patterns in classrooms, if used properly, can break the recurring cycle (see figure B).

Figure B - Interrupted Achievement Gap Cycle



The Achievement Gap

Again, Victor Rios (2016) describes the achievement gap as the difference in educational performance between students of color and White students. Many researchers have proposed various reasons for this difference in academic performance (Anyon, 1980; Lareau, 1987; Delpit, L., 2002; Gillian-Daniel, G.L. & Kraemer, S.B., 2015; Jencks, C. & Phillips, M., 1998; Rios, 2016). Rios (2016) believes that this difference or gap in academic achievement is created by many factors including but not limited to socioeconomic factors, school funding, lack of materials and adequate staffing. Gillian-Daniel and Kraemer (2015) understand this gap or the

cause of it to be in existence before students even enter school. They, as Rios, believe that the difference in performance is caused by societal factors outside of the control of the students and their parents (Gillian-Daniel, G.L. & Kraemer, S.B., 2015). Early cognitive issues as well as institutional cultures and conditions are additional reasons that Gillian-Daniel and Kraemer (2015) believe the achievement gap exists. These early cognitive issues could stem from lack of prenatal care, substance abuse during pregnancy, exposure to toxins such as lead and asbestos, etc. Jencks and Philips (1998) also believe that Black students enter school with an academic deficit; however, they believe that this deficit is more a result of the differences between child-rearing and educational practices in the home. This is in line with Lareau's (1987) belief about cultural capital impacting student successes in school settings. The two schools of thought, Lareau's (1987) and Cohen, et. al. (2006) are not in contradiction of each other: students experience the richness of their culture at home; however, because that culture is not the dominant one with the cultural power, they enter school without the cultural capital they need to assimilate. They feel isolated, ineffectual, begin to lack confidence, self-esteem, and motivation causing a decline in academic attainment.

Despite its possible causes, there is no doubt that a gap is evident when comparing test scores of Black and White students. Black students score 75% below White students on standardized tests (Jencks, C. & Phillips, M., 1998). Using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) also indicated differences in achievement between Black and White students in both Reading and Math (NCES, 2009). While admitting that the gap exists, the NCES is also careful to indicate that the differences in scores across the country between Black and White students could be due to several different factors including but not limited to demographic or population changes as

well as policy changes at the school, district, and state levels (NCES, 2009). Nevertheless, in the 46 states that administer the NAEP, in both 4th and 8th grade Reading scores in 2007, there is at least a consistent 14-point difference between the scaled scores of Black students and their White counterparts (NCESa; NCESb). The most significant gaps in scores are in the District of Columbia in the 4th grade with a 54-point difference and in Nebraska in the 8th grade with a 51-point difference (NCESa; NCESb). There is a similar significant gap in the Mathematics scores for 4th and 8th grades. In the District of Columbia, there is a 67-point difference in scaled scores between 4th grade Black and White students and a 38-point difference in scaled scores between 8th grade Black and White students (NCESc; NCESd). The data in this report and ones similar to it have been the cause for several education reforms determined to close or reduce the achievement gaps between White and non-White students (NCES, 2009).

The achievement gap seems to be ever-present. Additional studies beyond elementary and middle school show that Black students and White students demonstrate a difference in academic achievement and standardized test scores. This is evidenced by the lower graduation rate of Black high school seniors compared to their White counterparts (Hartney, M.T. & Flavin, P., 2014).

There are other implications to the use of culturally-specific language. If the use of culturally-specific language/communication has the ability to allow individuals to feel in control of themselves and to make them feel as if they have power, if it can improve someone's image of themselves, allowing them to feel self-worth, then, the use of culturally-specific language in other situations can have equally profound ramifications. It can improve interactions in the work place. It can also improve race relations. Re-training law enforcement officials and other public service employees, all those that interact with youth in any capacity, as well as parents and

educators that are daily responsible for student growth, can cause the achievement gap to decrease.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Research Design

The approach to this study was qualitative in nature. A qualitative design focuses more on the social aspect of behavior, what causes it to happen and why (Trochim, 2006). This study focused on and examined the occurrence of code-switching by teachers in order to determine why it was used. Twelve African-American inner-city elementary teachers who self-identified as using culturally-specific language (CSL) (or not) were interviewed to determine the instances (or absences) of code-switching in their own classrooms and the decisions that caused its use or absence. Teachers self-identified based on use/occurrences of code-switching or culturally-specific language use in the classroom. Qualitative data or responses to questions were obtained through an initial inquiry for identification purposes as well as an hour-long interview. These methods of data collection effectively and efficiently identified instances of verbal and non-verbal code-switching and circumstances surrounding that period in time when linguistic variations occurred. Kasanda, C., et. al. (2015) used a similar structure to obtain information from Namibian teachers to determine reasons for using code language in the classroom.

Data Collection

As this research was qualitative and based on textual data, information was collected using participant interviews (Trochim, 2006). Participants (teachers) were interviewed in 1-hour

blocks. Teachers used metacognition to consider the reasons for the use of varying speech patterns; their responses were recorded by note-taking and audio recording.

Interviews were conducted using the interview protocol in Appendix A. A recording device was used to facilitate data collection and audio files were transcribed at the end of each interview to fill in any gaps in responses. All data was then transferred into one document file for uploading to QDA Miner Lite, a qualitative analysis software. While all interviews were manually analyzed for subtle nuances in responses, Miner Lite more rapidly identified actual trends and patterns in responses and supported the manual review of data.

Data Analysis

Previous research indicates that linguistic variations occur to ‘do identity work’, ‘to assert influence, control or power over another’, or ‘to relegate participants to a group’ (Cashman, 2005, 2008; Gumperz, 1968, 1982; Hua, 2008). Therefore, qualitative data was reviewed based on the reasons for the use of code-switching and the circumstances that caused the decision for its use. There were two groups of information obtained: teachers’ use of coded language or act of speaking in a linguistic variation outside of standard English and the situations or circumstances that surrounded the language change. This information obtained through the hour-long interviews was coded using QDA Miner Lite, a qualitative data analysis software. Through the context of the interview, also examined was the perceived acceptance of that code by the students.

The information from this study, teachers’ reasons for implementing use of coded language and perceived outcome of that use was examined with these previously identified reasons in mind. However, whereas previous research was based on bilingual situations where a native language and standard English were being used, in this studied instance, the setting

discussed were English-speaking classrooms with participants' (teacher and students') native language being English and the switch occurring in an informal version of English or one unique to that speech community and where physical positioning and action as well as non-verbal cues were equally significant.

Coded language in the confines of this research referred to any informal linguistic patterns of speech or action that was formed outside of standard English. Lei (2009) spoke of various methods of communication or communicative teacher talk, within a classroom. Referential questions are genuine inquiries that the teacher poses to students. Both the teacher and student work together to find the answer. It forms a mutual learning environment and most closely models real-world or authentic interaction (Lei, 2009). Content feedback is a communicative process where the teacher focuses on the content of what the student is saying instead of the format, thereby encouraging continued dialogue and sharing of information (Lei, 2009). IRF sequencing or initiation-response feedback is and has been the typical structure of dialogue in the classroom where the teacher poses a question to students, students respond, and then, the teacher provides feedback on that response (Lei, 2009; Wells, 1993). It is also believed to be the most ineffectual method of engaging students in the learning process (Lei, 2009; Wells, 1993).

In this research, the focus was on the second form discussed by Lei (2009), content feedback, the method of classroom communication where the teacher and student engage in culture-rich communication with the teacher focusing on the content of what the student is saying as opposed to the structure. This research also looked at the non-verbal communication or movements that occurred between teachers and students in the classroom.

Information obtained from the participant interviews was manually analyzed to identify consistent patterns in specific categories as they related to the research questions: reasons for use of code-switching, situational triggers that caused the teachers to alter their speech pattern, and student response. Each transcribed interview was reviewed for words (synonyms or like phrases) that responded to each research question and color-coded based on that placement (Appendix B). Each interview was then reviewed for outlier terms, terms or phrasing that did not fall into one of the specific categories but that were significant in their meaning. This form of analysis provided a richer understanding of motivating factors, engagement, response, and student attitudes and impact and changes.

Research Site Demographics

While there are no specific research sites, the commonality of locations for all involved participants were inner-cities and schools located within them. An additional commonality were the low-socioeconomic status of the areas in which the schools are located where the teachers are employed as well as the ethnicity of the students with whom the teachers work and interact. Confirmation of the socioeconomic status and ethnicity of students was obtained and clarified in the self-identification process and further clarified from district websites and in the participant interviews.

Research Participants

Participants for this study were obtained through verbal inquiry and resulting self-identification. Some prior knowledge of districts, schools, and participants guided the initial inquiry process.

Limitations

One of the limitations inherent within this study was the small participant pool. The study initially involved twelve teachers: using (or not) coded forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Due to this fact, the reliability of the data may not be as strong and may not be broadly applied to all African-American or European-American teachers. However, the benefit of the small sample size was that it generated richer detail from participants and allowed a thorough and deeper analysis of the qualitative data obtained from this study (Crouch, M. & McKenzie, H., 2006). The select and limited participant pool allowed more control of internal validity and provided a greater ability to exclude causal effect of other factors, such as teacher mobility (layoffs and transfers). Another limitation was the human factor of the teachers. The human factor is influenced by both internal and external factors and can be subject to bias (Jacobs, P.A. & Gaver, D.P., 1998). In other words, student academic achievement and perceived feeling of self-worth could be a result of subjective interaction between students and the teachers. As structured, this study can be the catalyst for additional study of classroom communications and interactions, specifically, language use in inner-city classrooms and its effect on the achievement gap. It can be of benefit in future instructional design, instructional modifications, and have broader applications to other industries, including but not limited to other public service fields such as law enforcement.

Chapter 4 Results

This chapter contains the results of qualitative research designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What personal attributes, beliefs, and dispositions in conjunction with school or the classroom influence a teacher to switch code or alter their speech pattern when delivering instruction or interacting with students?
2. Does this flexible change in language pattern impact or affect the behavior of African-American students and their interaction with the teacher in the classroom?
3. What conditions exist that cause teachers to alter speech patterns from standard English to culturally-specific language or to code-switch?

Sample

Information for this research was obtained from interviews with 12 African-American teachers that self-identified. Teachers were asked if they identified as African-American or Black and if they taught in the inner-city. Affirmative responses allowed the investigator to inquire about willingness to participate in the study. The sample was maintained at this smaller size to allow for depth of interaction with participants as well as depth in analysis of information (Crouch, M. & McKenzie, H., 2006). In a smaller sample size, richer, more detailed information can be obtained since more attention can be spent per participant (Crouch, M. & McKenzie, H., 2006). Each teacher was interviewed regarding their use of code-switching or culturally-specific language (CSL) use in their classrooms. Although the participants had a wide range of experiences, there were commonalities they shared (see Table 1 and Appendix D). All 12 teachers are employed in inner-city schools/districts: 10 are employed with the 3rd largest school district in the country (NCES, 2015), one is employed by the 95th largest school district in the country (NCES, 2015), and one is employed by a private school located on the south side of Chicago (Niche.com). Ten of the teachers were female and two of the teachers were male. Four teachers had more than 20 years of teaching experience, one had 17 years, three had between 10-

15 years, and four teachers had less than 10 years of teaching experience. The sample is well-educated with two Ph.D. candidates, four teachers with two Master's degrees each, five with one Master's degree, and one in the process of completing a Master's degree. All educators in the sample teach at the K-8 elementary level: 10 are general education teachers while two teachers work with the Special Education student population.

Table 1 - Participant Data

		Educational level	Years teaching	school district
1	Ms. Smith	Master's	2	Chicago
2	Mrs. Johnson	Master's	10	Chicago
3	Mrs. Williams	Master's	15	Chicago
4	Mrs. Jones	Master's (2)	23	Chicago
5	Mr. Brown	Ph.D. candidate	25	Chicago
6	Ms. Davis	Ph.D. candidate	11	Chicago
7	Ms. Miller	Master's (2)	22	Chicago
8	Mrs. Moore	Master's (2)	8	Chicago
9	Ms. Thomas	Master's	22	Chicago
10	Mr. Harris	Bachelor's	1	Chicago
		(Master's in progress)		
11	Ms. Martin	Master's (2)	17	Detroit
12	Ms. Lewis	Master's	2	private

Neighborhood/School Demographics

Demographics of the neighborhoods in which the schools are located were consistent across most schools and teachers: low- to low-middle income Black and Hispanic families with most to all students attending the schools receiving free or reduced lunch (see Appendix D). The exception would be the private school at which Ms. Lewis teaches--none of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Ms. Smith, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Jones, and Mr. Brown teach at a STEM school located in the West Englewood community on the south side of Chicago. It has a total of 449 students with 80.6% being African-American and 16.9% being Hispanic (CPSb, 2019). This is a definite shift from two years ago when the African-American student population was 82.8% and the Hispanic student population was 14.2% (CPSa, 2016). The demographic of West Englewood is similar to the school with 89.9% of the population being African-American and 7.6% being Hispanic (Statistical Atlas, 2018). Ms. Davis teaches at a Chicago Public School also located on the south side of Chicago in the West Pullman neighborhood. With a total of 191 students; 99% African-American and .5% Hispanic, the West Pullman community is comprised of 99% African-Americans (cps.edu; Statistical Analysis). Although not necessarily poverty level, the median income in the West Pullman community is \$36,800, about \$4000 below average for the Chicago area (Statistical Analysis). Ms. Miller is also placed at a school on the south side of Chicago sharing neighborhood demographics and socioeconomic status with the schools of Mrs. Moore and Ms. Thomas. 93.3% of the population in the South Shore area is African-American with 1.8% being Hispanic. The median income is \$27,900 which is approximately \$8,000 below the Chicago area average (Statistical Analysis). The school has 354 participants with 98.9% of them as African-American (cps.edu). Mr. Harris

works on the southwest side of Chicago in a primarily Hispanic neighborhood. 83.6% of the population is Hispanic and 92.5% of the school's population is Hispanic. (Statistical Analysis; cps.edu). The area median income is \$38,800, over \$10,000 more than the median income in the South Shore area but still below average income for Chicago (Statistical Analysis). Ms. Martin and Ms. Lewis are outliers in that although both work in urban areas, Ms. Martin works in Detroit Public Schools and Ms. Lewis works in a private school on the south side of Chicago. The socioeconomic status of the neighborhood in which the private school is located is upper-middle to upper class with 49.5% of the population being White, 25.7% being Black, and 14.2% Asian (Statistical Analysis). The diverse school demographic functions as a representative sample of the neighborhood: 47% White, 27% Black, 14% Asian, and 8% Hispanic (Niche.com).

All schools except two, Ms. Davis' and Mr. Harris' schools, are in provisional support status (cps.edu). This designation does not conclusively mean that students have poor academic standing however, that characteristic is most often a component of that composite SQRP (school quality rating policy) score:

The SQRP is a five-tiered performance system based on a broad range of indicators of success, including, but not limited to, **student test score performance, student academic growth, closing of achievement gaps**, school culture and climate, attendance, **graduation**, and preparation for post-graduation success (cps.edu).

As indicated by the bold type, most of the SQRP rating is based on academics or academic-related areas. Therefore, academics is an area for improvement in most of the schools in which these educators, teach.

Findings

All teachers interviewed with the exception of two, rely on code-switching as a method of communicating with students. Reasons for doing so varied from perceived lack of understanding either in directives or subject content to students' lack of familiarity with standard English to a perceived lack of 'cultural connection'.

Research Question 1

When asked why they chose to use coded- or culturally-specific language (CSL) with students (RQ 1), most teachers responded that it made students feel comfortable but also stated that it made them seem more relevant and relatable to the students, that it built rapport, and improved overall communication. These reasons speak to establishing a classroom environment that is culturally relevant, culturally sensitive and therefore, accepting of students' culture. Mrs. Johnson stated: *"I use culturally-specific language because I want to be relevant to my students. I want them to feel as if we have something in common."* Ms. Davis stated that using culturally-specific language was a means of connecting with her students. She remembers having to attempt to 'navigate' through 'proper English' when she was in school as in her home, her family spoke informally or in CSL. Ms. Davis does not want her students, *'to experience the 'struggle'* that she experienced and therefore, uses CSL to build rapport and so that students will know that she is like them. When she was herself younger, Ms. Davis experienced the linguistic aspect of the culture of power. She felt uncomfortable and had difficulty understanding because the language used in the classroom was not one she was familiar with but instead, standard English, English that many White students are familiar with (Delpit, 1988). Conversely, Cashman (2005) also believes that people engage in shared language or use of mutual language to do 'identity work'. Identifying with a group through the use of similar or shared language allows one to become a member of the group, if only temporarily (Cashman, 2005). In becoming a member of

a group, there is a level of trust and comfort (Cashman, 2008). Both Ms. Davis and Ms. Smith indicated that using CSL created a level of trust in their classrooms. Becoming a member of a group, even if only temporarily, allows insight into that group providing a basis for understanding and discussion, which would seem to facilitate instructional engagement.

Teacher participants doing ‘identity work’ stated that when they used culturally-specific language or CSL, they felt that students saw them as ‘genuine’, ‘authentic’, and like their mothers. Mrs. Moore stated, “*These children are like my babies so I talk to them like they’re my children.*” A similar sentiment expressed by Mrs. Jones, “*It’s what their parents do, too, their mothers.*” Ms. Miller stated that, “*students were more accepting without them feeling as if I’m judging them.*” In these instances, in using CSL with their students, these teachers have initiated the foundation for a new speech community, a group with a shared language, culturally-driven but specific to their group (Gumperz, 1968). In this instance, they do not use their language as a power construct but as a tool for ‘building rapport’ and to recognize culture. They use language not only that the students are familiar with but language that they hear at home causing students to ‘relax’. “*Using language that my students are familiar with helps them understand concepts without feeling intimidated by vocabulary and academic jargon,*” says Ms. Davis.

In a unique situation, Ms. Lewis works in a private school attended by affluent students. The guidelines for participation in this study were that the teacher needed to be African-American and the school needed to be located in the inner-city; the dynamic that she explains is therefore, interesting. Ms. Lewis’ classroom contains a balance of 6 different ethnicities including Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian. None of the students in her class or the school qualify for free or reduced lunch and the school is rated as one of the top 10 schools in the city. However, in my interview with Ms. Lewis, she stated that she definitely uses code-switching in

her interaction with her students. She clarifies that, *“It helps me to relate to my students in a unique way that ‘speaks’ to them.”* Her position is more challenging because she has at 5 different cultures that she interacts with on a daily basis and it is her desire to respond culturally to all of her students. But as an explanation of her use of CSL, she says, *“I think it helps them feel...understood.”*

Research Question 2

Participants were also asked how students responded when they used CSL to interact with them (i.e. - ask questions, make requests, initiate discussion, etc.). In other words, did the teacher’s change in language pattern impact or affect the behavior of the students and their interaction with the teacher (RQ 2)? The simple answer is, ‘yes’. Teachers stated that once they began to use CSL when working with students, they understood concepts better and were able to discuss content. Ms. Smith stated that when she initiated the use of CSL, there was *“no awkwardness, no pushback but they understood better.”* Ms. Lewis had similar sentiments in that her students, *“listen when I engage them in conversation and grant my request pretty quickly.”* Mr. Harris stated that when he began speaking like the students, they *“responded with head nods and smiles”*, because now they understood the material. He also stated though that there was more laughter and more engagement; he found that students were willing to interact with the material more and manipulate the information because they were now able to *‘work with it’*. Mr. Harris stated that, *“...using culturally-specific language helps their processing. It’s like choosing the path of least resistance for their brains...”* Mrs. Johnson said that her use of CSL caused students to *“behave and respond accordingly.”* In other words, they changed their behavior to that which was desired or engaged in discussion as expected. Similarly, other teachers noticed and indicated that their students seemed more *‘on-task’* when they used CSL.

Mrs. Jones noted that, “*students listen in my class, they pay attention and don’t really act out.*” Although she has students with ‘extreme behavior’ in her classroom, she admits that she has a ‘good handle’ on them because she relates in a manner that they are familiar with, that is consistent with the communication at home. She states that the ‘kids like it, someone speaks your language, it makes them feel comfortable.’ Mrs. Jones also admitted to using non-verbal code to facilitate communication within her classroom: “*I use proximity, standing ‘kimbo’ (weight on one leg with other leg bent), might dap, roll my eyes, roll my head on my neck...they all mean different things at different times...usually means you’re serious about something...*”

Ms. Miller also admitted to using non-verbal code when working with her students: “*I might do one of the new dances, dab, I might roll my eyes, roll my neck, flick my hand and they understand! It’s just a form of communication!*”

Ms. Thomas, transferred into her current school that has a monocultural demographic (100% African-American students) from a school that was primarily White and Hispanic and affluent. She indicated that she attempted to use the same language (standard English) that she used with the affluent students but saw that she, “*was not getting across to them.*” She indicated that they spent the first ‘*several weeks learning how to understand and respect each other*’. This situation stemmed from ‘confused code’ or relationality (Cashman, 2005). This occurs when there are previously established but multiple roles in a relationship and the participants in the relationship ‘jostle’ linguistically for a period of engagement, attempting to find the same ‘language’ (2005). She now only uses CSL to address errant behavior: “*If I am using language that they can relate to....then [they know] there is a problem...they know their behavior is not on-point.*” She and her students have reached an unspoken ‘agreement and compromise’ where she has gradually moved them to receive instruction in standard English but corrects poor

behavior using cultural language. She states that students are *'more likely to respond/comply to my request when I am speaking in terms they understand'*. She clarifies, *"I had to show them I can 'go there'.*

One point stands out in these situations: communication between the African-American teachers and the students is clearer, understood, and creates an environment of comfort and safety for the students. Lisa Delpit (1988) spoke of a disconnect that occurs between White teachers and Black students: White teachers speak in a less direct manner where Black students are accustomed to more direct instructions. Where a Black parent might say, "Clean your room", a White parent might say, "Don't you want to clean your room?" (Delpit, 1988) Transfer this similar situation to a classroom and a Black student believes that they are being given a choice when in actuality, the White teacher believes that s/he has given the Black student a directive. This causes confusion in communication, increased behavior problems, and more disciplinary actions (Delpit, 1988). An interaction between Mrs. Moore and her students demonstrates this initial confusion and then, the clarification: *"I begin using standard English but if they don't understand, I say it another way. They are shocked when I use 'coded language' but they now understand and 'start doing what I tell them to do."* What is evident is that Black students come to school possessing their own cultural capital (Lareau, 1987). They possess a rich communication pattern specific to their culture and while this does not mean that they do not understand or cannot use standard English, it means that communication and more specifically, learning, are better facilitated with at least use of the form of communication that is comfortable to them. They understand concepts better and can engage and participate more actively in discussions because it is based on their culture, their experiences, their language, their 'code'.

Research Question 3

Conditions that existed that prompted the use of code-switching were in many cases related to the reasons (RQ 1). For example, having a student in class that lives in transitional housing is a situation or condition that was present in that student's life prior to entering school. However, that situation has maybe exposed that student to language and/or behaviors that are brought to the classroom. This might be a reason for the teacher to code-switch or use culturally-specific language. For the purposes of this study, conditions refer to existing situations and/or school/familial structures that might impact students' interaction in class. Reasons would be those *decisions* to use code-switching made by the teacher *not impacted* by existing situations or conditions. The situations may have subconsciously *caused* teachers' reasons for using culturally-specific language; however, that analysis was outside of the scope of this research and therefore, not investigated. However, some participants or teachers volunteered/explained that there were pre-existing situations that caused them to initiate the use of culturally-specific language. Extreme behavior, students' use of coded language (street and gang code), and lack of familiarity with standard English (cultural language is used at home) were all conditions already in existence that students 'brought to class' that indicated to some teachers that they would need to 'relate' on a more familiar level. Ms. Lewis has a student in her class with extreme behavior caused by his diagnosis of 'severe ADHD' who requires a one-to-one (an individual aide). She states that when he '*bats at other things or other students*', she uses both verbal and non-verbal code. She uses CSL to stop his action and then, proximity and visual cues to obtain and maintain his attention. Ms. Davis states, "*I use it (CSL) when front-loading new information...so that students will understand...and when communicating with parents about academic or behavioral*

progress or concerns". She further states that in meeting with her parents and students, there is "almost a feeling of expectation...to be relatable and to communicate in a down-to-earth way without making a person feel 'less than.'" Mr. Harris also uses CSL due to students' lack of understanding of standard English: "When I'm trying to teach a complex idea or subject, I use CSL to 'ground it'." Mr. Harris clarifies that "using a language that they are not used to makes it difficult to understand. Speaking in language that they are familiar with helps their processing and understanding." This distinction made by Mr. Harris indicates that he believes that students understand standard English but are more comfortable with CSL since it is what they hear and use most often. An additional comment by Ms. Miller confirms students' comfort with and use of informal language use (culturally-specific): "this is the way that they have been taught to communicate". Families form their own speech communities where there are specific methods of interacting and speaking that may not be a part of the mainstream standard English (Gumperz, 1968; Anderson, 1990). Students are exposed to this language beginning early in life and are often not acquainted with standard English or at least, not accustomed to using it (Anderson, 1990). Normally, they would lack the cultural capital to be successful in school (Lareau, 1987). Ms. Miller has a student that had been in or experienced two home fires. His parents are angry and the student has extreme behavior and is acting out, exhibiting undesirable behavior. "There was a lot of cursing at home and so, when I spoke to him and was not cursing, it did not seem serious to him". He had been conditioned to respond to extreme cultural language. While Ms. Miller did not choose to use profanity with this student, she 'definitely had to go down to his level' to re-direct his behavior. This teacher had to initiate discussion, conversation, re-direction, and all interaction with this student solely using acceptable culturally-specific language without profanity because he was not accustomed to *responding* to standard English. Her method of

communication with this student had to be direct and clear and for her, this meant using culturally-specific language. In these cases, the pre-existing situation of lack of familiarity (not necessarily lack of understanding) with standard English speaks to an issue of cultural capital (Lareau, 1987) and illuminates the culture of power (Delpit, 1988). Students and their families engage in one form of communication at home; however, it is not the language most often used in school in mainstream education. Within their homes and their neighborhoods, they possess significant cultural capital and can move through these environments with ease (Anderson, 1990; Lareau, 1987). However, once within the confines of a school and their classroom, students are met with a language that they are not *most* familiar with--they have heard it but are not accustomed to using it. The language of the dominant culture is most often used and it subtly removes the 'power' that students felt in their homes, their neighborhoods, in their world. It creates a sense of inferiority and minimizes their culture. And this occurrence is the foundation of what Delpit (1988) refers to as the 'culture of power'.

The participants that consciously chose not to use culturally-specific language shared a belief that standard English was more professional and appropriate in the classroom setting. Mr. Brown stated, "*...I prefer not to use CSL due to the fact that I have Hispanic students in the class as well as African-American students. I don't want any confusion in language and no barriers and use 'neutral' language...*" While Mr. Brown does experience errant behavior, he also admitted that he does not tolerate it. He sends students out of the classroom and uses parent contact in an attempt to re-direct the behavior. Ms. Martin also refrains from using CSL saying, "*I use the 'King's English most of the time to show professionalism and what is expected out in the real world. I do use culturally-specific language when I'm joking around or am really making a point in re-directing their behaviors.*" In this instance, Ms. Martin, although early in

her interview stated that she did not use code-switching, is acknowledging the benefit of using CSL to communicate more clearly with her students. Does this lack of cultural communication impact engagement in these classrooms? Neither subject taught by these two teachers is a tested subject nor were their classrooms directly observed; however, both teachers admitted that their rooms are quiet and ordered with less laughter. If additional research were conducted, it would be interesting to determine students' opinion and feelings about these classrooms and their learning.

Explanation of Findings

Using the coding software, QDA Miner Lite, provided a different perspective of the data obtained from the interview. After consolidating all text from each interview into one case document, it was uploaded to Miner Lite. All text was coded into three categories, again, based on the research questions: why CSL or culturally-specific language (also known as code-switching) was used or **WHY?** (RQ 1), what was the impact of the use of CSL or **IMPACT?** (RQ 2), and what existing conditions caused teachers to alter their speech pattern or **CONDITIONS?** (RQ 3). Certain key words and phrases were identified as directly responding to each truncated question stem (based on manual coding of qualitative data). Each word or phrase was color-coded and then, sorted by category and then, by number of 'hits' or times of repetition. Stated simply, the software identified how many times words or phrases were used *by category*. In this manner, the research questions were able to be answered based on *how frequently* the 12 participants used identified words or phrases related to the truncated questions stems also known as the research questions.

When considering the personal attributes, beliefs, and dispositions in conjunction with school or the classroom that influence a teacher to switch code or alter their speech pattern when

delivering instruction or interacting with students or simply, why a teacher code-switches or uses culturally-specific language (CSL), the words/phrases that were most often used in order of ‘hits’, were ‘it allows relevance’ (9), ‘it improves communication’ (8), ‘it makes students feel comfortable/at ease’ and because ‘it recognizes and is part of their culture’ (both 4), and lastly, it ‘builds rapport’ (3). Isolating the two most frequent responses, in this 12-participant sample, the most significant belief and disposition that influences the use of culturally-specific language is teacher relevance as perceived by the student and improved communication between teacher and student. Even with this small sample size, the impact of improved communication in the classroom is significant. This improved communication would restore the power that Delpit (1988) believes to be missing in classrooms where the dominant culture is White.

Attempting to determine if flexible change in language pattern has an impact on or affects the behavior of African-American students and their interaction with the teacher in the classroom or more simply stated, identifying the impact of the use of CSL in the classroom, participants believed that ‘improved understanding’ (19) was by far the most stated reason of their choice in flexible language. The second most stated reason was directly related to the next point regarding improved behavior: teachers felt that using CSL in the classrooms with their students has caused their ‘presence’ as ‘one of them’ to be acknowledged (9). This was identified by head-nods of the students when teachers used CSL, smiles, increased engagement as evidenced by participation in discussions, and an increase in on-task behavior. This is most telling for several reasons: it means that these teachers have gained acceptance and placement in a speech community or have created one within their classrooms (Gumperz, 1968; Cashman, 2005). It also indicates that their ‘identity work’ has been successful and they have been ‘identified’ as ‘one of them’ (Cashman, 2005). The third most stated reason of their choice to use CSL with

their students is improved behavior' (8). 'Of the ten teachers that identified regular use of CSL, none at this point in the school year were experiencing significant behavior problems. Lastly, participants believed that the conditions that exist to cause teachers to alter speech patterns from standard English to culturally-specific language or to code-switch were pre-existing extreme behaviors (i.e. - defiance, anger management, impulse control, etc.) and a lack of familiarity with and understanding of standard English (both at 5). This point is substantiated by a statement made by Ms. Miller, "*I had to use that language [CSL] ...there was a lot of cursing at home and so, when I spoke to him and did not use that language, it did not seem serious to him.*" She further clarified, "*This is the way that they have been taught to communicate...I am trying to teach them to communicate so that everyone understands them.*"

Chapter 5 Discussions

The purpose of this study was to determine why teachers use culturally-specific language (CSL) and the impact that its use has on students in the classroom. This chapter will discuss current related research and its connection to this study. It will also discuss limitations to this study, implications of the study and possible next steps for additional research. Restating the research questions:

1. What personal attributes, beliefs, and dispositions in conjunction with school or the classroom influence a teacher to switch code or alter their speech pattern when delivering instruction or interacting with students?
2. Does this flexible change in language pattern impact or affect the behavior of African-American students and their interaction with the teacher in the classroom?

3. What conditions exist that cause teachers to alter speech patterns from standard English to culturally-specific language or to code-switch?

Most often, code-switching is intentionally used by ESL teachers in the classroom in an effort to teach English or an L2 (non-Native language). Chikiwa, C. & Schafer, M. (2016) discuss the use of code-switching as an instructional tool/device in the mathematics classroom. They discovered two types of code-switching, borrowed and transparent (Chikiwa & Schafer, 2016). In borrowed code-switching, the most frequently used, one primary language is used while words and phrases from other languages are used to punctuate conversation and meaning (2016). Kasanda, et.al, (2015) discussed the use of code-switching and its connection to academic achievement. They found that students responded to the use of code-switching when teaching English; however, could not conclusively attribute its use to academic achievement over an extended period of time since teachers failed to use it consistently. As a structure within the classroom as indicated by the teacher participants,

Code-switching is also used within families and without as a power construct, to assert authority over or to exclude from a group (Cashman, 2008; Hua, 2008). Hua (2008) studied the use of code-switching in families where an older family member would use coded-language or traditional language to assert authority over a younger family member and where in turn, the younger family member would code-switch to English to demonstrate their superiority over and relevance to the older family member. It is also used to form groups or communities, to exclude individuals from communities, or to provide a hierarchical structure within an existing community (Cashman, 2005, 2008; Gumperz, 1968, 1982).

Having Cultural Capital

The above uses of code-switching can be evidenced in the current study: several participants interviewed spoke of using culturally-specific language in a similar method observed by both Chikiwa, et. al. (2016) and Kasanda, et. al. (2015), as an instructional tool: Mrs. Johnson indicated, *“I use terms they are familiar with first, I engage them first...”* Mrs. Jones said, *“If I’m using it to help them understand something, they get a ‘lightbulb’ look or have an ‘ah-ha’ moment...”* And additionally, Mr. Harris said, *“There are times when I’m trying to teach a complex subject or idea. I use culturally-specific language (CSL) to ‘ground it’.”* Mrs. Johnson also admitted that she and her students *“understand each other”*, giving the impression that it is a mutual and equally understandable exchange of information. Despite the fact that her class is intense, she stated that she overheard students saying that they liked her class and that they argue over who gets to sit closest to the front because they *enjoy* it. Mrs. Williams embeds CSL into the language and the texts that she uses during instruction and in her discussions with her 2nd grade students. She believes that if *“you use language that is culturally relevant, it works.”* She clarifies by explaining that students understand concepts better because her delivery is ‘culturally applicable’. Ms. Davis is cautious when instructing in her class because she does not want students to feel *“intimidated by academic jargon”* and so, she restores their ‘power’ by speaking in a language that is familiar.

Students could also be said to exercise some form of authority or power over teachers when they use their coded language just as in the familial situations of which Hua spoke (2008). Ms. Martin said, *“...[My] students typically speak and respond in a culturally-specific manner”*. This means that if she did not either re-direct to standard English which she does understand or stop the coded or culturally-specific language which she does not choose, she would undoubtedly experience management issues. Teachers that are not familiar with that particular ‘dialect’ are

often at a loss because there is discussion occurring that they do not understand and therefore, behaviors may occur that they cannot impact or even address. Ms. Miller noticed that her students use non-verbal code when they don't like something or someone. They may 'shift their body or turn their hand'. These non-verbal methods of communicating give students 'power' within class without calling attention to themselves. Understanding this, Ms. Miller can reciprocate and then, use the same non-verbal code with her students, if she does not approve of an action or something that the students have said.

These situations described restore or recognize the culture that students come to class with. Their culture is embraced and used to communicate and instruct in a manner that is familiar. Lareau (1987) and Pinar (2008) speak of the 'hidden curriculum', an unspoken set of guidelines or expectations for interacting and learning within the school setting. It can describe the structure of the classroom, both physical and instructional and can set the tone for expected behavior and linguistic exchanges. When culturally-specific language and interaction is used, this barrier of the 'hidden curriculum' is no longer existent, at least, not in the classroom. Information and expectations that may have previously been unclear or hidden are now clear and understood. Instead of feeling powerless, students feel powerful and have 'capital' in their learning and can engage in the process with comfort. *"Initially, I used the language they were comfortable and familiar with...it was the only way they would respond. As time is progressing, I am giving some a single look and they understand."* In Ms. Thomas' classroom, students have come to understand that their culture is appropriate and is important and although, they, Ms. Thomas and her students had to come to a compromise on how the use of CSL was used, her students are 'happy and learning'.

Gumperz (1968) in his early research, spoke of speech communities as specific groups bounded not just by geographic boundaries as when diglossia occurred but as groups that shared regular and frequent face-to-face or social interaction with each other (Nevalainen, Raumolin, & Brunberg, 2005). Classrooms and interaction within are considered regular and frequent, meeting daily for extended periods of time. The group builds patterns of interaction and communication specific to them and is based on 'finite sets of grammatical rules' (Gumperz, 1968). As discussed within the results of this research, code was consistently most often used in very specific situations: to gain and/or provide understanding, to build rapport, to create relevance, and to correct/re-direct and/or modify behavior. In each of these instances, teachers used the same unique 'code' to engage and interact with students and in doing so, acknowledged the culture and further inserted themselves in the 'community'. It is important to remember and understand that code does not always imply that verbal speech is used. It is automatically assumed that 'language' implies 'speech'; however, communication does take on many forms as discussed by Willis-Rivera (2010). Eye contact, gestures or movement (including lack of), proxemics (space/personal space), and haptics (touch/frequency of touch) are just a few of the methods of communication and interaction that are a part of cultural interaction (Willis-Rivera, 2010). When reviewing the interactions these teachers had with their students, a pattern begins to emerge: proxemics or proximity to students as well as strong voice control were used to re-direct poor behavior and 'code' relative to the culture and ethnicity of the student was used to *correct* serious severe behavior; eye contact was used to gain attention and issue a non-verbal warning or to give direction, and specific verbal code was used to engage, communicate, and instruct.

Having Social Capital

Anyon's (1980) theory of social capital is broader than Lareau's (1987) theory of cultural capital in that it includes parents, their educational backgrounds, their financial standing, and their employment. It has ramifications on students when they enter school in terms of their 'social standing'. In her year-long study of ten classrooms, Anyon (1980) found that students of lower class or parents with lower social standing, were not provided with the same information as those students with more affluent parents or as parents that had advanced educational backgrounds (1980). As a matter of fact, she found that these students were not engaged as frequently, were taught simpler concepts, and prepared for careers that were unskilled or moderately skilled (1980). So, not only was culture ignored in these classrooms, their social class was also brought to impact *how* they were taught.

In a classroom where culture and social standing are recognized and welcomed, dynamics change. Consider Ms. Lewis' classroom where most, not all, of her students come from affluent backgrounds. This would be a perfect setting to deliver instruction in standard English and to encourage professional careers. However, Ms. Lewis takes the opportunity to use CSL to include all students in the interaction of the classroom. She focuses on and welcomes their differences by using CSL. Ms. Lewis says that students in her classroom are 'relaxed' and 'comfortable being silly' when she uses CSL to address them. In doing so, she maximizes the social capital of the four African-American students in her class. Mrs. Johnson allows students to interact and engage in discussion using CSL and opts to "*at a later time, correct their English*". This action allows students to be themselves despite their ability or skill and ignores whatever social implications may be present that caused their informal language use. Correcting

a student's speech creates an uncomfortable setting and situation that could be embarrassing and may cause 'loss of face' or 'loss of cool points'. Allowing the student to engage in classroom interactions using CSL restores and/or maintains social capital. Ms. Davis extends her use of CSL to include her interaction with parents. Again, this equalization of language where involved people are speaking in a manner that everyone understands recognizes culture and maintains social capital: parents feel important and students feel safe and understood. She says, "*I want them to understand [concepts] without feeling intimidated by vocabulary and academic jargon.*" She is careful not to make her students or parents feel 'less than' or 'small'. Ms. Miller confirms this same belief about choosing to engage in the use of CSL with her students by indicating, "*Some would think they were being disrespectful, but they are not.*" Ms. Miller understands that it is a form of social expression.

However, the most significant and applicable use of coded language has implications for impacting student self-esteem, identity, and possibly academic achievement. In a study conducted by Cohen, G., Garcia, J., Apfel, N. & Master, A. (2006), students were shown to have improved self-worth and pride when they practiced the use of affirmations and received cultural acknowledgements. The practice and continued use of daily positive self-affirmations as well as cultural studies improved African-American student achievement (Cohen, et.al. 2006). Delpit (1988) also believed in cultural recognition supporting improved academic achievement. She asserts that children from middle- and upper-class homes perform better than those from non-middle class homes and families since the culture of the classroom is based on the dominant culture and that culture has 'power'. This is evident in the language use, the method of instruction and interaction and in the expectations for behavior (Delpit, 1988). This also has implications for narrowing the achievement gap. There continues to be a consistent difference

between the achievement of White students and their African-American counterparts (Hartney, M.T. & Flavin, P., 2014; NCES, 2009). Suggested causes for these differences include but are not limited to prenatal care, home life, socioeconomic status, and educational resources (Gillian-Daniel, G.L. & Kraemer, S.B., 2015; Rios, 2016). The ability to ‘level the playing field’ and provide at least equal access to and provision of resources in all areas would provide a foundation for improving the academic chances of African-American students (Gutmann, 1987). Of the 10 teachers that admitted to using CSL as a method for communication in their classrooms, all 10 stated that there is improved dialogue/discussion and interaction in their rooms. All 10 teachers stated that they use CSL to engage students and to relate information so that students understand. ‘Improved understanding’ was by far the most identified reason for engaging in the use of culturally-specific language. Once students understand, teachers have a better chance of impacting academic performance.

The most important aspect of code-switching or culturally-specific language is understanding that it is not always focused on race or ethnicity, although during this study that indeed was the focus. It must be understood that cultures should be recognized and included during the instructional process, embedded into the structure of the classrooms and school buildings and included as an integral part of the curriculum design process. ‘Coding’ in this way becomes and creates a culturally-responsive atmosphere that recognizes and includes different races/ethnicities, differing socioeconomic levels, religious practices, political affiliations, lifestyle choices, language, and more. This point was evident in Ms. Lewis’ classroom which was comprised of four different ethnicities but contained multiple cultures: ethnicities, class levels, religious practices, etc. Again, Ms. Lewis admitted to using culturally-specific language

in her classroom and stated that each communication was ‘unique’ and made each child feel ‘understood’.

Conclusions

In the small but powerful sample used in this study, there was a definite indication towards the benefit of the use of culturally-specific language or code-switching. In classrooms where CSL was consistently used not only as an instructional device but as a method for building rapport and engaging students, it decreased the likelihood of errant behavior. It increased time on-task and created an environment of shared understanding of expectations and of content. More importantly, it created a positive classroom culture where students felt safe, respected, and culturally acknowledged. According to Cohen, et.al. (2006); Lei (2009) and Delpit (1988) and many others, these are all characteristics of an improved academic performance. If this dynamic can be shifted within inner-city schools with the recognition and use of culturally-specific language, not as a second language but as an instructional tool and cultural acknowledgement, then, the culture of power will shift and African-American students will gain cultural capital, providing an opportunity for academic gains (Anyon, 1980; Delpit, 1988).

Implications for Practice

These findings have some definite implications for practice or instruction in the classroom. The findings do not imply that teachers in classrooms should begin to be ‘colloquial’ using slang at and during every interaction with students. It should be made clear that this also does not imply that Black students should have Black teachers, White students should have White teachers and so forth. What these results do strongly suggest is that culturally responsive teaching should become a consideration for districts across the country. Hammond (2015)

describes culturally responsive teaching as, “the process of using familiar cultural information and processes to scaffold learning.” She further clarifies that this method of teaching includes focusing on relationships and increased social awareness (Hammond, 2015). An environment that is culturally responsive uses information that is familiar to a specific culture (based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, political affiliation, religious practices, etc.) to engage learning. At the very least, recognition of student culture creates an atmosphere of respect, self-awareness, and confidence (Cohen, 2006; Hammond, 2015). Providing the opportunity for the use of *appropriate* culturally-specific language/communication (verbal and non-verbal) in the classroom while later addressing proper mechanics would create an air of ‘trust’ and ‘acknowledgement’.

The theories of social and cultural capital as well as Delpit’s (1988) theory of the culture of power’ identify the importance of the status of low-income and/or minority students (Anyon, 1980; Lareau, 1987). To improve relationships to impact student performance in the classroom, districts can initiate cultural sensitivity classes for teachers that demonstrate the oftentimes oppressive impact of the dominant culture on low-income and minority students in the classroom. Districts could also institute cultural awareness classes that provide understanding of cultural language, first and foremost, but also of other areas that impact low-income and minority students’ academic performance including but not limited to lack of housing, lack of finances, lack of education, and other areas considered to be social and cultural capital. Most importantly, districts should begin to structure curriculum that is based on and includes consistent attention to culturally responsive pedagogy or practice. The use of instructional tools based on culture, cultural anchor charts related to students, and resource materials that encourage and support learning of successful minorities will create interest and excitement and perpetuate opportunities

for authentic engagement (Hammond, 2015). Lastly, the Department of Education and other offices responsible for assessment should review standardized assessments that are routinely administered as indicators of student academic growth to either include culturally relevant language or remove content that is unfamiliar to all cultures. A critical aspect to keep in mind again is to understand that although code-switching or culturally-specific language (CSL) is an important support in a classroom, it is but a part of the framework that will effectively support minority students.

Recommendations for Additional Research

The original structure and format of this research was to include classroom observations of actual teacher/student interaction and student engagement. These observations were to be supported by videotape as well as teacher and participant interviews but were met with considerable difficulty that impacted timeliness and study structure. Parents were hesitant to consent to the participation of their child in the study due to their lack of familiarity with the governing body of the research (the University) and were equally suspicious of them being included in videos. Teachers were also inconsistent in the distribution of consent forms and the collection of them; the principal investigator experienced significant difficulty in obtaining ability to meet with the parents beforehand in an information session that would have provided helpful background. Although the smaller sample size provided rich dialogue and information regarding the use of culturally-specific language by African-American teachers in the classroom, broadening the sample size and including the ability to complete videoed observations of actual teacher engagement and student interaction in addition to teacher interviews would strengthen the impact of the findings and allow generalization to a larger population. Including student interviews, indicators of student academic achievement and behavior, as well as parent

interviews would provide much more valuable information. Being able to determine the impact of CSL on student behavior would be a significant finding since the 10 teachers who used CSL all indicated that behavior was not a serious problem. If recognizing and understanding culture moderates student behavior, it would be worth investigating possible connections between CSL and incidents of errant behavior as variables. Understanding family structure and background would lend insight into circumstances that impact a student's method of engagement in the classroom and therefore, home visits in addition to parent interviews might also be a strong addition to continue this research. And because culturally responsive teaching is not solely a benefit for African-American (Black) students, based on the information obtained from the interview with Ms. Lewis, the teacher that worked at the affluent private school, it would be interesting to include a wider student demographic to determine if the use of culturally-specific language was applicable across other cultures.

Applicability is also considered with law enforcement and their interaction with the community. They seem to experience a 'disconnect' when interacting with inner-city and minority residents. Applying methods of cultural awareness as well as sensitivity, specifically with regard to culturally-specific language and actions, may improve public relations in inner-city communities, but may also have further-reaching implications in decreasing crime rates and fatalities.

Appendices

- A. Interview questions
- B. Question Stem codes
- C. Participant/School Data

Appendix A
Interview/Language Use Questions

Participant/Teacher Name _____

Years of teaching experience _____

Educational Level _____

Current Grade Taught _____

1. **What is the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood/school/students?**

2. **What is the student demographic of your class?**

3. **Why do you choose to use/not to use culturally-specific language?** (Jacobs, P.A. & Gaver, D.P., 1998)
 - a. What are the specific instances that cause you to choose culturally-specific language? (Cashman, 2005, 2008; Gumperz, 1968, 1982; Hua, 2008)
(‘identity work’, codeswitching is used to interact with and be a part of a group)

4. **How do students respond when you make a request or engage them in conversation?** (Delpit, 1988; Lei, 2009; Gumperz, 1968) *(language used is of the speech community that the students are most familiar with and understand; culture is respected and addressed linguistically)*

5. **Do students understand concepts?** (Delpit, 1988; Lareau, 1987; Kasanda, C., Simasiku, L., and Smit, T., 2015; Lei, 2009; Cohen, G., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., & Master, A., 2006) (*students understand information when presented in a language they are familiar with*)

6. **What is the overall behavior of your class?** (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004) (*lack of self-esteem and self-worth causes increase in aggression and disruptive behavior*)
 - a. Are there any students with extreme behavior? How do you interact with/speak with them?

Appendix B

Table

Question Stem Codes

RQ 1 <i>Why?</i>	frequency or 'hits'	RQ 2 <i>Impact?</i>	Frequenc y or 'hits'	RQ 3 <i>Conditions?</i>	frequency or 'hits'
relevance/ relate	9	understand	19	behavior (negative)	5
improves communication	8	acknowledgement/ acceptance	9	lack of understanding	5
culture	4	behavior (positive)	8	family/family structure	N/A
comfortable	4	trust	6	student/street code	N/A
builds rapport/ rapport	3	laugh/laughing/ smile/ smiling	5		

Appendix C

Table

Participant/School Data

		Education level	Yrs. tchg	school district	School demographic	Current grade/subject taught	Class/student demographic (teacher identified)	School free reduced lunch
1	Ms. Smith	Master's	2	CPS	80.6 % Black * 16.9% Hispanic	5 th /ELA/SS	primarily Black	97.1%*
2	Mrs. Johnson	Master's	10	CPS	80.6 % Black * 16.9% Hispanic	6 th - 8 th /Science	primarily Black; a few Hispanic	97.1%*
3	Mrs. Williams	Master's	15	CPS	80.6 % Black * 16.9% Hispanic	2 nd /SCC	primarily Black	97.1%*
4	Mrs. Jones	Master's (2)	23	CPS	80.6 % Black * 16.9% Hispanic	3 rd /ELA/SS	Black, a few Hispanic	97.1%*
5	Mr. Brown	Ph.D.	25	CPS	80.6 % Black *	6 th -8 th /SS	Black, a few Hispanic	97.1%*

					16.9% Hispanic			
6	Ms. Davis	Master's	11	CPS	99% Black* .5% Hispanic	K-3 rd /SpEd.	Black	93.2%*
7	Ms. Miller	Master's (2)	22	CPS	98.9% Black* 1.1% Hispanic	1 st /SpEd.	Black	96.6%*
8	Mrs. Moore	Master's (2)	8	CPS	96.5% Black * 2.4% Hispanic	K-4 th /SpEd.	Black	96.1%*
9	Ms. Thomas	Master's	22	CPS	96.5% Black * 2.4% Hispanic	3 rd SCC	Black	96.1%*
10	Mr. Harris	Bachelor's	1	CPS	1.8% Black * 92.5% Hispanic 2.3% Asian	7 th /SCC	primarily Hispanic	96.1%*
11	Ms. Martin	Master's (2)	17	DPSCD	99% Black ** .3% White	7 th - 8 th /Science	Black	79%**

12	Ms. Lewis	Master's	2	Priv. (Chi)	50% Caucasian^ 21.5% multiracial 16.5% Asian 9% Black	2 nd SCC	Black White Asian Hispanic Indian Mixed race	0
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* data retrieved from Chicago Public Schools

**data retrieved from Detroit Public Schools

^data retrieved from Niche

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ABSTRACT**THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING BY AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEACHERS IN INNER-CITY CLASSROOMS**

by

YVONNE M. WILSON**May 2020****Advisor:** Dr. Benjamin Pogodzinski**Major:** Curriculum and Instruction**Degree:** Doctor of Education

Language and its use in classrooms has a significant impact on student motivation and self-perception (Delpit, 1988; Lei, 2009). Even more curious and significant is the motivation of teachers that intentionally use culturally-specific language and affectations, also known as code-switching, as an instructional device. This dissertation will examine the use of code-switching by African-American or Black teachers in urban, non-White classrooms. It will explore the foundations of sociolinguistics, specifically, language as a social construct (Gumperz; 1982; Gal, 2014; Levinson, 2015), as well as a communicative tool. In the span of the research contained in this dissertation, 12 African-American teachers will self-identify as users of culturally-specific language. These teachers will be interviewed regarding their use of language in the classroom and the motivation for its variation in use. The goal will not only be to determine the teachers' reasons for using a specific language pattern but to discuss the perceived and observed responses and reactions of the students. At its culmination, teacher rationale for the use of culturally-specific language will be identified as well as its possible and perceived impact on students.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Education has always been an important factor in our family. My parents made many sacrifices so that we had the type of experience that was best suited to each of us. My particular interest in education probably stemmed from early academic development and goals set by my parents. I was reading by the age of 2 and went from Kindergarten to 3rd grade with only a few brief weeks in 1st grade. I entered college at the age of 17. I graduated in four years despite the onset of lupus and pre-existing concerns with histoplasmosis. I completed both my Master's and Doctorate degrees while being a single mom and working two full-time jobs.

My interest in educating children came about quite accidentally as I looked for a career that would support my role as a single parent. However, I found that once I walked into an elementary classroom, I felt like I finally found my niche. Having the ability to provide a unique and individual learning experience for children was an exhilarating feeling. But, even more profound was the ability to connect with students culturally to facilitate understanding. This was the beginning of my interest in cultural anthropology, more specifically, sociolinguistics and its use in classrooms. I found early on that it was crucial in education to understand students' culture; however, it was equally important to understand that culture referred to more than race/ethnicity. It encompasses of course, race/ethnicity but also includes language, manner of dress, food, religion, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, just to name a few. Having worked in large inner-city districts for 22 years, I found that the more these factors were taken into consideration during instruction and general communication, the better the students and their parents responded. It is my goal in future research to continue to study the dynamic between cultural communication in the classroom and student engagement and academic success.