Code Switch at an Alternative High School

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A two-year, ethnographic study of the use of the term *code switch* within an alternative high school community reveals that it has taken on a distinct, institutional meaning. Observed primarily as a reprimand, teachers nonetheless downplayed the significance of the disciplinary term in interviews. However, Black students expressed a sense of being asked to switch between two versions of themselves, only one of which is professional enough to belong in school. Students generally accepted that this was what teachers implied by the term, but some rejected the idea that code switching is a fundamental change, or that the change should only go in one direction at school. These findings indicate that what the school may intend to be a socially progressive term has been taken up in a way that reinforces negative self-perception among students. This paper concludes with suggestions for educators seeking to foster discourse that supports students from marginalized communities, without deferring to respectability politics.

Three weeks into a service-learning project at North Village Charter School,[1] I encountered the term that would become my primary interest throughout two years of fieldwork. A student used the term *code switch* in a way that seemed to mean something other than the linguistic concept I was familiar with, and he did so in a moment that would have been memorable regardless. I was observing Ms. C. deliver an Algebra lesson about the distributive property, which she began by asking whether anyone in the class could define the word distribute. A student, Jay, volunteered, on the condition that he could write his definition on the board. Permission granted, he wrote the following in large print: "Bu$$tin Trap$" (i.e., distributing drugs; the dollar signs in this transcription approximate what Jay wrote on the board). This elicited a range of surprised responses from fellow students, and Jay—the floor temporarily his—made an effort to simultaneously justify his invocation of street terminology and reprimand his classmates for their general reluctance to do so. He announced, "this is code switch," and that students shouldn't act like they're somebody new just because they go to North Village (Fieldnotes 2016.10.11). "Don't do that to the hood," he implored. To borrow terminology from Goffman's (1961) *Encounters*, the focus of this gathering had abruptly shifted from Algebra and its associated academic vocabulary to the vocabulary of the street/hood, resulting in a fundamentally different encounter (pp. 7–14).

Though I was at the time a stranger to the term *bustin traps*, my recognition of the concept of code switching prompted me to take note of subsequent evidence of this term and concept at North Village. It became apparent that within this school, code switch functioned primarily as a reprimand—a stock phrase teachers could use to put students on notice that they had violated one of the school's behavioral

[1] The school's name, like all participants' names, is a pseudonym.

expectations. While both teachers and students expressed a resignation that such reprimands were a necessary component of behavior management, there was nonetheless a substantial difference in understanding of code switch between those two groups.

Teachers viewed the concept as relatively unimportant to their work as educators, but acknowledged the phrase's usefulness for targeting certain simple misbehaviors. Students, on the other hand, perceived such reprimands as implicit warnings that their standing in the school was in jeopardy, as though they had been caught revealing parts of themselves that might disqualify them as students. North Village being an alternative school, teachers would have had reason to anticipate that their nudges towards professional behavior might be felt quite sharply by students for whom high school graduation had never been a sure thing. Perhaps more surprising than this miscommunication, however, is the one between educators and researchers: the fact that code switch, derived from a research concept describing or even validating variation, would become a phrase through which educators could enforce school norms in the first place.

Literature Review

Code switching is a controversial term for a range of practices that are likewise controversial. My understanding of *code* will be agnostic between language or language variety, as I take the distinction to be inessential for the purpose of this article. The controversy of interest here derives from the fact that the definition of code switching differs between the fields of education and linguistics, according to when switches merit interest. A speaker may switch from one linguistic code to another either between utterances (intersentential), or within a single utterance (intrasentential). Chomskyan linguists might locate the former sort of code switching among the "grammatically irrelevant conditions" that emerge in a speaker's "performance," on the assumption that their "competence" in Language X is not informed by any previous or subsequent utterances in Language Y (Chomsky, 1965, pp. 1–2). However, the incorporation of multiple languages within a single utterance is both grammatically interesting to formal linguists and communicatively interesting to sociolinguists (e.g., Blom & Gumperz, 1972). Therefore, while code switching originated in linguistics as a general term for language alternation, linguists tend to use the term to refer to intrasentential code switching.

Such mid-sentence mingling of languages is often stigmatized among non-linguists, but for those who study the practice, the controversy is instead about whether code switching is an appropriate descriptor for what bilinguals do. As Otheguy, García and Reid (2015) put it, "no matter how broadly and positively conceived, the notion of code switching still constitutes a theoretical endorsement of the idea that what the bilingual manipulates, however masterfully, are two separate linguistic systems" (p. 282). These scholars remind us that differently-named language varieties are social constructs and caution us against speaking as though grammars are actually separated within the mind of a bilingual person. In fact, findings from psycholinguistic research imply the opposite: that a person's multiple languages are simultaneously accessible in a single grammatical repertoire (see Bialystock, 2009). From this, Otheguy et al. (2015) conclude that the term code

switching is a misnomer because there aren't literally distinct codes to switch between. Terminology aside, the behavior that linguists attempt to describe with the term code switch exemplifies bilingual language use at its most natural and least suppressed. Unfortunately, the education system is singled out as a context where bilinguals are highly restricted in their language use, under the constraints of policy that is, confusingly, also referred to as code switching.

In educational contexts, code switching often refers to the intersentential variety, wherein speakers alternate between languages from one occasion to the next but don't combine languages within a single utterance. U.S. school-based literacy instruction tends to promote the adoption of a standardized language variety, and many educators may be resistant to the incorporation of other linguistic features deemed non-standard. Therefore, a dichotomy is established between so-called home and school language varieties, with students asked to switch completely depending on where they are (Young, 2014, p. 30). Though also called code switching, this practice is mutually exclusive with the intrasentential code switching that linguists focus on.

However, the linguistic basis for criticizing the term should give pause to educators as well: If a person's entire linguistic repertoire is ever-present in the mind, schools' disapproval of language blending places an enormous and underappreciated burden on multilingual students. This burden may be felt even by students who do not identify as multilingual, but whose use of language variably includes linguistic features that "index their ethnic identities" (Benor, 2010, p. 160). If their *ethnolinguistic repertoire* identifies the speaker as belonging to a minoritized ethnicity, we might refer to that speaker as belonging to a minoritized language community (Benor, 2010). Requiring students from minoritized language communities to code switch for school naturalizes the ideology that their way of speaking is inferior. The educational sense of code switching perpetuates "the biggest lie of all," according to Young (2009): "That there is one, set, specific, appropriate, formal way to communicate in America" (p. 67). When considering appropriate forms of communication, Flores and Rosa (2015) remind us that "linguistic stigmatization should be understood less as a reflection of objective linguistic practices than of perceptions that construe appropriateness based on speakers' racial positions" (p. 152). They point out that "individuals [cannot] control the ways their speech patterns are interpreted by their interlocutors" (p.155), which means that "altering one's speech might do very little to change the ideological perspectives of listening subjects" (p. 152). We must therefore consider racism as a force that both motivates code switching and undermines its ability to confer social appropriacy to racialized people.

The United States' prevailing definition of professional communication is informed by a long and continued history of anti-Black racism. When speakers of Black English are made to code switch their language for school, it is but one example of how institutions demand a heightened "racial self-consciousness" from Black people, resulting in a phenomenon that Du Bois called "double consciousness" (as cited in Young, 2009, p. 52). The pressure on members of the Black community to monitor themselves according to both their own cultural standards as well as those of the dominant culture adds a dimension to their navigation of multiracial spaces that is captured by a third, distinct use of the term code switching. Exemplified by the race and culture podcast titled *Code Switch*,

code switching in this sense means "hop-scotching between different cultural and linguistic spaces and different parts of our own identities—sometimes within a single interaction" (Demby, 2013). Thus, this popular notion of code switching is not merely a matter of language, but of culture.

As code switching takes on a popular meaning that encompasses both linguistic and non-linguistic methods of communicating one's affiliation with a cultural group, the controversy surrounding the term takes on additional importance. The ability to modulate one's demeanor across and within contexts is certainly a skill that anyone could be proud of. However, to advocate that Black people code switch in such a manner for the sake of racist notions of professionalism has been called a "surrender to prejudice" (Young, 2007, pp. 108–109, as cited in Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 85). That kind of pragmatism is "the first resort of marginalized classes," says Smith (2014), writing about the related concept of *respectability politics*. The politics of respectability concerns the pressure on marginalized people to disprove whatever negative stereotypes the mainstream society imposes on them, by conforming to mainstream values (Harris, 2003, p. 213). Characterized by the delegitimization of Black rage, respectability politics can be contrasted with the politics of the Black Lives Matter movement, which chooses to be "unapologetically Black" rather than to strive for compatibility with the mainstream (Black Lives Matter, n.d.; Smith, 2014). Despite the above points, for those in the Black community who seek advancement along mainstream career paths, the desire to be perceived as respectable by gatekeepers at predominantly White institutions could exert a strong pressure to code switch.

This study is about the use of the term code switch by members of an alternative high school community, where almost all the students are Black young adults, and all are seeking a diploma after not receiving one from a previous high school. Academic courses are balanced with vocational ones, to prepare students for a range of postsecondary options upon graduating from the one-year program. The community is co-constructed by staff members and each year's cohort of students, and it is reasonable to expect all parties to bring preconceptions about code switching to the table. On the one hand, most staff members would likely be familiar with the educational sense of the term and the idea that students should learn to switch from home-like to school-like ways of being in order to prepare for the working world. Similarly, Black young adults who are motivated to reconnect with formal schooling might already be familiar with code switching as a general framework for how to approach such a context. Its presence in multiple, related discourses would be expected to make code switching a salient concept at such a school. The "faux-egalitarianism" of advising students to code switch might even be viewed as preferable to condemning any inappropriate behaviors outright (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 82). However, the theme from the literature has been that the term code switching serves to reify inequitable social distinctions. This implies that reliance on the term in an alternative school setting would risk having students further internalize the oppression of an educational system that has already failed them.

Research Methodology

The topic for the following discourse analysis project emerged through ethnographic fieldwork. Conducted in satisfaction of an M.S.Ed. program in

Intercultural Communication, my focus was on studying communicative practices within the school community through participant-observation. Specifically, I decided to focus on the following research questions: How does the term code switch function in this school? What do teachers and students mean when they use the term, and does everyone share the same understanding?

Setting and Participants

North Village is an alternative charter school, located in a low-income area of a large, Mid-Atlantic city. Part of an international network of affiliated schools, North Village offers a one-year high school curriculum (granting a diploma) that is paired with one of several vocational certification programs. Students may enroll if they are between the ages of 18 and 21, are residents of the city, and do not yet have a high school diploma. Most students identify as former high school drop-outs, but a few had been homeschooled or are new arrivals to the United States. Virtually all students in the two cohorts I observed were Black, whereas roughly a quarter of staff members were Black. The majority of staff members were White.[2]

Data Collection

I gained access to North Village through an informal partnership between the school and the M.S.Ed. program at my university (a large, private research institution in the same city). Over two school years, I served as a volunteer assistant for three teachers in different subjects, joining their classes to observe and help out for a few hours of the day. During my first semester, I volunteered in Language Arts and Algebra. Then for my next three semesters, I volunteered in Language Arts, followed by Science, then back to Language Arts again. I took on additional hours and independent projects during the intervening summer, which increased my recognition at the school despite remaining a volunteer. For example, I received keys, began attending staff meetings, and had students rostered to a weekly workshop in my name. While I was volunteering, I made sure that students and staff were aware that I was also an M.S.Ed. student conducting research about my observations.

The data I collected include written field notes and interviews. I recorded interviews at a few points throughout my study, and transcribed them for analysis. Two teachers and a student were audio recorded for individual interviews, and a class of six students and their teacher was video recorded for a focus group.

The two teachers I volunteered with concurrently in my first semester of research were interviewed separately, but from the same list of questions, which included one question about the meaning of code switch. Ms. C., the Algebra teacher, is a Black woman, and Ms. W., the Language Arts teacher, is a White woman. I then interviewed a student the following year on a different subject and raised the question of code switch with him as well. The student is a Black man, and he chose for himself the pseudonym Denzel. My conversation with Denzel was semi-structured, with no question list. Because each of my three individual interviews informed papers written as part of my M.S.Ed. coursework, I shared those papers with my interview participants to create an opportunity for member-checks. Member checking is a priority within the framework of *triangulation*,

[2] Demographic surveys were not conducted, so these racial categories are based on two years of ethnographic observation.

wherein an analysis is validated and enriched through the convergence of multiple data sources and multiple perspectives (Given, 2008, pp. 892–893).

In between these rounds of individual interviews, during my second semester of fieldwork, I conducted a group interview about code switch during Language Arts class time. The focus group and its subject matter were announced to students ahead of time. The participants were the six students (three women and three men, all Black) who attended class on the day of the discussion, as well as Ms. W. (the same Language Arts teacher who had previously been interviewed individually). The students had become accustomed to my regular presence as an observer and classroom assistant, although this was my first time assigning and directing classwork.

The focus group materials included a handout on which students were provided space to write out an answer to the question (also written on the board): "What do you think 'code switch' means at North Village? Is it important to you?" Writing brief answers to similar, so-called starter questions at the beginning of class was routine for these students. These written responses were collected and transcribed. The students were also provided with printed interview consent forms to sign, because the discussion was recorded with both a stationary camcorder at the front of the room, and a portable audio recorder was placed in the middle of the room. The classroom was arranged in a horseshoe seating arrangement, conducive to group discussion and audio recording.

The focus group began with a few minutes of independent writing, during which time I ensured that consent forms were signed and collected. I transitioned the class out of writing with a prepared introduction to my interest in the concept of code switching at North Village, alluding to the range of perspectives I had previously heard from teachers. The ensuing discussion continued for approximately fifteen minutes. After that, both recording devices were turned off, and Ms. W. took over for the remainder of the class period. I later approached one of the students from the focus group, Caimile, to secure a member-check about my interpretation of one of her comments during that discussion.

Analysis

In this section I provide an analysis of data from my field notes and interviews that pertain to what code switch means at North Village. I consider observed usage, and I analyze commentary provided by teachers and students about the term.

Observed Usage

After hearing Jay say "this is code switch" (Fieldnotes 2016.10.11), I observed the term in use at least 10 more times. Two patterns stand out immediately. First, the words code switch constitute a single term, one that is essentially invariant in form. Similar possible phrases such as "switch codes" were never attested, and although "code switching" was said during recorded conversations about the topic, this gerund form was never overheard in spontaneous use.

A second general observation is that the term typically constitutes a complete utterance or conversational turn. The exceptions to that scenario were cases where the speaker was clearly mentioning the concept of code switching, rather than using

the term. Looking only at use, below are a few examples from my field notes that illustrate the primary way the term code switch is employed at North Village:[3]

1. [A teacher, responding to a student who had said "shit."] *Keep in mind where you are. You're in a classroom setting ___ professionalism ___ code switch.* (Fieldnotes 2016.12.08)
2. [A student, responding to a classmate across the room who had said "shit." Teacher from example 1 is present.] *Code switch!* (Fieldnotes 2016.12.08)
3. [A different teacher, responding to a student who began speaking on the phone during class.] *Code switch. ((student apologizes)) Actions speak louder than words. Easier to say you're sorry than to change your behavior.* (Fieldnotes 2017.11.01)
4. [A student, responding to another student whose behavior was not observed. Teachers not present.] *Ah ah ah, code switch!* (Fieldnotes 2017.05.10)

In the four above examples, code switch functions as a reprimand. It can be used by teachers and students alike to respond to a student's speech or behavior that is deemed inappropriate. Teachers telling students to code switch seemed to be enacting their disciplinarian role, whereas students who used the term appeared to do so teasingly, but the contexts and phrasing were similar.

Complicating this interpretation of code switch as reprimand are a few cases in which students noticed that their own behavior was under scrutiny and mentioned the term themselves. In the following examples, code switch seems to be uttered defensively:

5. [Two students, responding to a stare from me during class, after I overheard their side-conversation about street violence.] *Code switch, code switch. ((both students repeated the term, gesturing as if to assure me they were calm))* (Fieldnotes 2016.10.20)
6. [One student to another, who had accused him of acting goofy.] *I can code switch, ___, ___ ((goes on to list other examples of what he knows how to switch))* (Fieldnotes 2016.10.13)

Examples 5 and 6 are reminiscent of Jay's use of the term code switch after writing "Bu$$tin Trap$" on the board. Taken together, it seems students may attempt to explain away perceived misbehaviors as temporary switches before teachers or peers have a chance to reprimand them. Given that code switch can be a comment either on your own behavior or that of others, the overall function seems to mark an awareness of and draw attention to moments where school norms of appropriacy have been violated in relatively minor ways.

Teacher Definitions

My question to Ms. C. and Ms. W. about code switch was embedded in a five-question interview about teaching in general. I did not read the question verbatim from a script, but I did decide ahead of time how I would phrase it. After mentioning that I'd been hearing the term from students, I posed my question about code switch approximately as follows: How, if at all, do you see the concept of code switch factoring into your classroom? Besides the two teachers' answers to that question, I will include in this analysis one additional comment Ms. W. made two months later, during the focus group I recorded with her students on the same topic.

[3] See Appendix for transcription conventions.

Both teachers began their answer by acknowledging but downplaying the significance of the term code switch, before going on to specify that it is used to address cursing and other student behaviors. Ms. C. indicated that she takes code switching for granted but distanced herself from the term: "Um, it is meaningful. Uh…I don't know if I…I guess it's good to have a name for it, but I don't know if I necessarily think about it that way in my head. Like, I think it's just something that I do" (Interview 2016.11.10). Ms. W began her answer with similarly distancing language: "Yeah, people like to talk about that and use that a lot. Um, I never really thought about how exactly it plays out in class. Um… ((long pause)) tsk I don't really see it, like playing out as such a like important or major thing in Language Arts" (Interview 2016.11.10). Both teachers went on to say more about code switch, which leaves their opening remarks to read like disclaimers that they don't fully embrace the term that they are about to explain.

Ms. C. identified two "code switching categories" or "areas," (Interview 2016.11.10), and these were identical to the ones that Ms. W independently mentioned: cursing and body language. In both cases, cursing is brought up first. Ms. C. said, "One of the biggest code switching…areas, I guess, that, um, I try to emphasize is language. Cause I think students, um, get very comfortable with, like, cursing, and things like that." Whereas Ms. C. cited cursing as an example of an area where code switch does come into play, Ms. W. cited cursing as a counterexample to her prior statement that code switch generally doesn't come into play. Ms. W. said that "unless they're, like, cursing or being disrespectful, students are usually able to articulate themselves, um, in a manner that is ((long pause)) them" (Interview 2016.11.10). The vague quality shared by "cursing, and things like that" and "cursing or being disrespectful" becomes clearer as the teachers went on to describe what else besides cursing might relate to code switching.

The second category for code switch that Ms. C. mentioned in her interview, "body language," is explained by way of a specific example about a student whose "posture" had seemed more appropriate for a couch at home than a classroom (Interview 2016.11.10). Given Ms. C.'s stated definition of code switch as a matter of "being aware of where you are, and what is acceptable, I guess, behavior within that context," it is unsurprising that she would apply the concept to non-linguistic behaviors such as the way one sits in a chair. At the time of Ms. W.'s individual interview, it was unclear whether "cursing or being disrespectful" (Interview 2016.11.10) included non-linguistic expressions of disrespect because Ms. W. only went on to talk about language. However, she was present during my focus group with her students, and she spoke up once at the very end to make a new point about code switch. "An important part of code switching involves tone, right. I think. And mannerisms and gestures and eye contact," she said, addressing the class (Interview 2017.02.01). Ms. W. then acted out an example of two stylistically different ways to say the same thing, noting that "it's the same words, but the tone, the eye contact the body language the gestures… All that feeds into the ways that you are perceived and the response. And I think that that's part of code switching that I don't think we as North Village staff do a very good job of emphasizing." Ms. W.'s concept of "tone" was revealed to encompass "body language"—which Ms. C. considered one of the two "biggest areas" (Interview 2016.11.10) for code switching—though, interestingly, Ms. W. said she thought this was under-emphasized at the school.

To summarize, these teachers' definitions of code switch are remarkably similar in content and structure. When interviewed, they both downplayed the relevance of the term to their classrooms before acknowledging that it was primarily related to the use of curse words. Then, body language and tone are cited as aspects of an utterance that students may also be asked to code switch. Teachers' use of code switch to address not only students' word choices, but their overall demeanor, will be considered further in the Discussion section.

Student Definitions

One of my guiding assumptions is that students at North Village take cues from their teachers about what code switch means at their school. Below I will analyze two excerpts from student interviews that illustrate a distinct student understanding of code switch, but first I will mention an entry from my field notes that supports the idea that students share the same association between cursing and code switch that teachers do. I noted when a student expressed pride in how well she and her peers had demonstrated that they knew how to code switch, which they did by not cursing during a focus group with a visiting researcher about sexual health (Fieldnotes 2017.07.18). This student told me that the researcher had asked everyone to "be real," seeking frank talk about a potentially profane subject and then expressed surprise at the overall lack of cursing. Explaining why she chose not to curse even though she could have, this student said she wanted to be sure that if Mr. A. (an admired staff member) passed by, he wouldn't overhear curse words. Framing this decision as an example of code switch, the student indicated that it was more important to not be heard cursing by North Village staff than it was to accommodate whatever communicative norms a visitor tried to temporarily establish.

Students also raised the topic of cursing during interviews, but the portions of those recorded conversations that I will analyze are about students' impressions of what such agreed-upon code switch areas mean to them. First, I will consider an important exchange from my individual interview with Denzel. At one point, I paraphrased a comment Denzel had made about there being other ways besides saying code switch to address behavior that is "outta line." At this, Denzel clarified that:

> code switch is like our formal way of, you know what they mean when they say code switch. [Dean: What- And what they literally mean is…] Code switch. Switch from who you are to who you know you should be. …Who you- who you actin like and who you know you should be actin like. (Interview 2018.02.20)

Denzel's description of the two selves that students may be asked to switch between isn't based on explicit instructions from teachers. Rather, he characterizes this as the implicit but widely-understood meaning of the phrase "code switch" at North Village. Furthermore, Denzel's self-paraphrase reveals that being someone and acting like someone are considered more or less equivalent. If people are who they act like, that would account for Denzel's confidence that being told to code switch says as much about who you are as it does about the specific behavior that triggered the reprimand.

Denzel's friend, Fiona, had been sitting nearby during my interview with Denzel, and she chimed in around this point to add an interesting perspective. I had responded to Denzel, noting that it sounded "like there's two you- two versions of you… Which one are you gonna go toward?" (Interview 2018.02.20). Fiona answered my rhetorical question this way: "When they say code switch, they want you to go to the professional one side" (Interview 2018.02.20). Denzel agreed, which indicates that when he had said "who you know you should be" and "who you know you should be actin like," the kind of person he meant was always *professional*. According to these students, code switching wasn't about alternating back and forth between multiple versions of oneself, but was instead a unidirectional push towards professionalism.

During the focus group interview (Interview 2017.02.01), one student expressed a similar sentiment to Denzel and Fiona, while her classmate responded with a contrasting perspective in the moment. Their terminological disagreement was over whether code switching is better characterized as fitting in or adapting, which turns out to be a meaningful distinction for at least one student. As moderator, I supplied the phrase fitting in when paraphrasing a comment by Lehana, who had said that code switching is something you do "so you don't seem like the odd ball out." I interpret this conforming behavior as consistent with Denzel and Fiona's view, wherein code switch is a matter of becoming "who you know you should be actin like" at school, since teachers at school "want you to go to the professional-one side" (Interview 2018.02.20). Lehana expressed agreement with my phrase fitting in, and I was about to move on, when Caimile spoke up to disagree:

> I wouldn't say fitting in I would say adapting…((leaning)) Because like… Fitting in is like you changing yourself. Or like you changing yourself to be this thing. Adapting is, you IS this. Like you just change, like- Like you get what I'm saying adapting is you got it in you. You is just bringing it out when the right time comes. (Interview 2017.02.01)

The difference between fitting in and adapting is, to Caimile at least, a matter of whether a person's change is driven by external pressures ("to be this thing") or by what the person has inside already, ready to be brought out. At a later date, I was able to show my transcription to Caimile and obtain confirmation that I had interpreted her correctly. Her interpretation of code switch—as a call to adapt according to what you're already capable of—is markedly different from Denzel's assumption that code switch is a call to "switch from who you are to who you know you should be" (Interview 2018.02.20).

Rather, Caimile's understanding seems more consistent with Jay's, described in the Introduction, that code switch should not mean acting like you're somebody new just because you go to North Village. Jay knew that "Bu$$tin Trap$" was a valid way to explain what it meant to distribute something, and he wanted to demonstrate that knowledge by "bringing it out" now that "the right time [had come]" (Interview 2017.02.01).

Discussion

My research questions were: How does the term code switch function in this school? What do teachers and students mean when they use the term,

and does everyone share the same understanding? The usage examples I have documented here indicate that code switch is a relatively widespread term within the school, and that teachers and students use it to comment on moments when some behavioral expectation has been violated. The most basic case appears to be where a teacher says code switch to reprimand a student. Students were observed seeming to imitate that disciplinary authority by teasing peers with the same reprimand; other students were observed anticipating a potentially imminent criticism by saying code switch themselves first, defensively.

The above understanding of how code switch functions was bolstered through interviews with two teachers, who independently offered highly similar accounts of how they view the term. In each interview, the teacher distanced herself from the term at first, but went on to describe one primary and one secondary case where code switch would be applicable. The undisputed primary example of a student behavior that would call for a code switch comment was cursing in school. This is widely-known to be forbidden in virtually all schools, which therefore establishes a commonsense premise for using a term like code switch in such a way. The secondary use-cases were considerably more subjective, and they weren't strictly linguistic: One teacher cited body language, and the other cited tone as the other major form of (mis)behavior that teachers monitor and address with the term code switch. Overall, these teachers described code switch as if the term is used to remind students to make minor and reasonable behavioral adjustments in keeping with the professional expectations of the school. Neither teacher said explicitly that students should have to radically change themselves to satisfactorily code switch, but the full scope of what might fall under body language or tone was unspecified.

In interviews with students, themes of personal change emerged that teachers might be surprised to learn were related to perceived implications of the term code switch. One student described the term as if teachers use it as a euphemism for telling students to switch between two versions of themselves. His friend added that students aren't asked to switch bi-directionally between those two selves, but always from the current (implicitly unprofessional) version to the professional version. In a focus group interview, other students generally felt the same way, though two students disagreed over the nature of how code switch changes who you are. One student indicated that the change was motivated externally, when one takes on a new identity out of a desire to not be the odd-ball out. Another student disagreed, arguing that code switch was more about adapting to a place by drawing from within, choosing which aspects to reveal of your single, multifaceted identity. While students were certainly aware that code switch serves as a reminder to not curse, many students indicated that they would take such a reminder quite personally, as an implication that they themselves need to fundamentally change to become professional.

It is reasonable to think that teachers and staff at North Village consider their use of the term code switch to be a pragmatic way to promote certain expectations within school while acknowledging that students may live by different expectations elsewhere. This acknowledgement of the complexity of students' lives might even be progressive, if students were encouraged to code switch freely for purposes of self-expression. However, the habit of deploying code switch as an un-elaborated reprimand, in response to anything that could

be construed as disrespectful, needs to be examined in light of comments from students. There is evidence that some students have internalized an idea, based on the concept of code switch, that they must switch between distinct selves—sorted as either appropriate or inappropriate; professional or unprofessional—in order to succeed. If this understanding is perceived by school teachers and leaders to be overly harsh or simplistic, they have a responsibility to promote a more supportive or nuanced conversation.

Implications

I will end with some implications raised by this study for educators at schools like North Village and for other scholars of Intercultural Communication and Educational Linguistics.

Implications for Educators

The way that code switch has been operationalized at North Village may be taken as a cautionary example of how a potentially progressive term doesn't necessarily ensure a positive discourse. Any educator seeking to promote new terminology or communication strategies should consider periodically assessing how and whether the relevant language is being taken up across their school. A related point to consider is that the issues surrounding the term code switch at North Village were not totally unpredictable. As already mentioned in the Literature Review section, Otheguy et al. (2015) have warned linguists that the "switch" in code switch is misleading, implying the sort of strict, internal compartmentalization that students at North Village have been shown to be attributing to their own identities. It is probably too much to ask for educators to monitor the way that fields other than their own cycle through jargon, but in the case of loanwords, the external reality of a borrowed term can provide insight into how it could be (mis)used in the school.

Even recognizing the controversies surrounding the term code switch, there is still hope for it to be used positively at North Village or another school. In my estimation, the way the term was used up, so to speak, as a disciplinary rebuke precluded entire conversations about bidialectalism or ethnolinguistic repertoires that a linguistic concept of code switching might have otherwise facilitated (Benor, 2010). The most innovative use of the term code switch I observed at North Village was when the Science teacher asked his class whether they "could code switch into the mind of a scientist" (Fieldnotes 2017.09.20). This indicates that there remains creative potential for code switch at North Village. That said, anyone seeking to refresh how the term is used might as well consider adopting newer alternatives, such as "code-meshing" or "translanguaging," to avoid the misleading implications of "switch" (Otheguy et al., 2015; Young, 2014).

Ultimately, my concerns with my findings about how code switch was being used at North Village would have been the same if it had been an entirely different term that was making students feel inadequate. Substituting "be professional!" into the same reprimands would be no better, if professionalism were not carefully defined to be inclusive of the whole student. Especially when serving a student body with prior negative experiences with school, it will take

time-consuming conversations to assure students that they do belong in school, even when missteps happen.

Implications for Researchers

This paper is the product of two years of ethnographic fieldwork, and it represents one account of how a term that is widely used and discussed in multiple disciplines, code switch, has been taken up as a reprimand within a particular school community. As an ethnographer of North Village, my research was partially motivated by—and certainly complicated by—my belief that this was an unfortunate misusage. Being confronted with an ostensibly positive term from my own academic field that had been reduced to a behavior-management shortcut was jarring. One of my hopes for this paper is that other scholars of Intercultural Communication, Educational Linguistics, and related fields be similarly unsettled upon learning how their terminology can be taken up by educators. Our shared concern should be that our descriptions of language practices not be adopted as justifications for the further marginalization of linguistically minoritized students in school. While it will not always be possible to anticipate how a given academic term might take on new or problematic meanings among educators, this study should serve as a reminder that there is at least reason to anticipate such changes in general. Researchers' ability to address ongoing miscommunications and clarify newly adopted concepts presupposes an attentiveness to educational settings that is often lacking. Further research into the negotiation of educational linguistic terms among teachers and students is therefore called for.

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions

((text))	transcriber's description of events
___	gaps in the transcription
[text]	interjection by another speaker
TEXT	emphasized word
!	end of emphasized phrase
?	end of questioning phrase
.	end of phrase
…	short pause
,	very short pause
text	abrupt cut-off
tsk	tongue click