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"Si No Estuviera Conmigo, Yo Seria Muda en Este País": A Systematic Literature
Review of Language Brokering Among Latinx Youth

by

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University - University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

Abstract

This study reviews the literature on language brokering among first and second-generation Latinx youth. Language brokering is a commonplace occurrence among bilingual Latinx children and takes place in many locations from public institutions to the family home. Language brokering consists of translating and interpreting oral and written information as well as the cultural nuances that come with many social interactions. The impact of language brokering on the emotional and social well-being, acculturation process and parent-child relationships of Latinx youth is mixed. Further research addressing the impact of language brokering on parents and siblings as well as the importance of familial relationships during the brokering process would be beneficial to the field of social work.

Keywords: Latinos, language brokering, interpreting, translating, parent-child

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“i have a special place in my heart for children who calmly translate for their parents. so proud of how they switch their tongue, carrying two languages in their mouth without ever feeling like their parents are a burden. bless your hearts.”

Ijeoma Umebinyuo

“I offer [this] to you who live between. You – the foreigner. You – the one who absorbed your parents’ in between.”

Marilyn R. Gardner

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Introduction

The U.S. Census Bureau 2015 data estimates that Latinxs make up 17% of the U.S. population—nearly 54 million people. The terms Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably, and the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.a) defines Hispanic or Latino as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.” Within the last decade, the addition of the term Latinx has been adopted as a more inclusive, gender-neutral term used in place of Latino/a to refer to individuals of Latin American descent and with cultural ties to Latin America (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.a). It is pronounced *lah-teen-ex*, and for the purposes of this paper, the term will be used in place of Latino/a or Hispanic.

Within the United States, the highest percent (63.3) of Latinxs are of Mexican origin with Puerto Ricans (9.5%) and Salvadorans (3.8%) coming in second and third. Of the Mexican population, the most substantial Latinx population, 32.2% are foreign-born. While Latinxs can be found in every state in the U.S., the west contains 29.7% of the Latinx population, followed by the south with 17.2%. The state that contains the highest population of Latinxs is New Mexico (48.1%) followed by California and Texas both at 38.8% (Stepler & Brown, 2016). According to Pew Research Center (2014), 5% of Minnesota’s state population is Latinx and is largely of Mexican origin (72%). Up until the 2000s, population growth among Latinxs was attributed to immigration (first-generation), however, from the 2000-2010s U.S. born Latinxs (second-generation) make up most of the population growth within the United States (Tran, 2010; Stepler & Brown, 2016). In Minnesota, U.S.-born Latinx make up 61% of the state’s Latinx population whereas foreign-born Latinxs make up 39% (Pew Research Center, 2014).

More than half (63%) of Minnesota's Latinx population speaks a language other than English at home with Spanish being the most prominent (Pew Research Center, 2014; Ryan, 2013). Close to 79% of adult Latinxs 18 years of age and older who have lived in the U.S. up to five years reported speaking English "less than very well" (Pew Research Center, 2014). In contrast, nearly 40% of Latinx children aged five to 17 who have lived in the U.S. up to five years report speaking English "very well." This percentage jumps to 71.3% when the child has lived in the U.S. for 6 to 10 years. Therefore, it is not surprising then that Latinx children of Spanish-speaking immigrant parents are often tasked with acting as interpreters for their families in many everyday situations, and this is known as language brokering.

Different from merely interpreting interactions, a child who brokers must interpret not only words but content and nuance to read between the lines of the interaction. A child broker helps to convey understanding between culturally and linguistically different individuals, usually adults (Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, & Moran, 1998; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Kam & Lazarevic, 2014). These children use the act of language brokering to navigate between their microsystems—families of origin, schools, peers, and neighborhoods—to maintain harmony and keep their mesosystem connected (Paat, 2013; Morales, Yakushko & Castro, 2012). In other words, the role of language broker is more nuanced than simply that of interpreter and children who broker are tasked with the responsibility of being representatives for their parents and other family members.

Language Brokering

Language brokering occurs in many different settings ranging from the child's home to institutions such as hospitals, banks, or county offices. While children most often broker for their parents, siblings and other adult relatives are also beneficiaries of brokering done by children.

Brokering is also done for both written and verbal communication, and on average, most children begin brokering between eight and ten years of age (Morales et al., 2012; Buriel et al., 1998).

Positive Impacts. There may be a connection between language brokering and biculturalism in junior high aged adolescents. Language brokers can maintain a connection to their culture of origin while simultaneously being exposed and engaged in the dominant culture which provides them with an opportunity to become better accustomed to that culture (Acoach & Webb, 2004). In older adolescents, language brokering is linked to self-confidence in academic performance (McQuillan & Tse, 1995). Another benefit for adolescent brokers is that it may result in increased feelings of trust by parents which could, therefore, provide more opportunities for adolescents to communicate and remain in contact with their parents (Bauer, 2013).

Brokering also provides children with the opportunity to engage in adult level problem solving (McQuillan & Tse, 1995). Academic self-concept, along with confidence in appearance and perceived popularity, has also been found to be positively related to favorable attitudes towards brokering. Students who were first-generation had more positive attitudes towards brokering than U.S. born students, however, they also reported lower happiness and satisfaction (Niehaus & Kumpiene, 2014).

While the acculturation gap between parents and adolescents can contribute to familial conflict, many parents expressed appreciation for aspects of their children's acculturation because it allowed the children to act as cultural brokers for their families. Child brokers assume responsibility for assisting with and completing adult tasks such as interpreting bills and other documents and translating for adults outside of the home. Adolescents who work as cultural brokers display pride in providing this assistance to their parents. However, brokering can cause children to worry about their parents falling victim to systems and distrust of the system often

prevents families with undocumented parents from accessing services for which their citizen children are eligible (Bacallo & Smokowski, 2007; Ayon 2013). Researchers argue that it is important to remember that brokering is often regarded by adolescents as a very natural part of assisting their parents, and often helps to strengthen family bonds between parent and child. It also may work to build interest in their native language and cultural heritage (Morales et al., 2012; Dorner, Orellana & Jiménez, 2008).

Negative Impacts. Although there is evidence of the benefits of language brokering, studies have also found that brokering does add undue stress and burden children (McQuillan & Tse, 1995). Brokering regularly includes making important decisions on behalf of non-English speaking parents with English speaking adult professionals. Child brokers are often placed in a position where they are tasked with making complex adult decisions that are beyond an appropriate age-level. This can cause the child to feel pressured especially when the assistance provided does not meet parents' expectations. This adds a level of responsibility for children because those decisions often affect the family as a whole (Morales et al., 2012). Kam and Lazarevic (2014) found that Latinx immigrant adolescents' feelings about brokering impacted whether the act itself is perceived as a stressor. Adolescents who felt burdened by or had negative feelings about brokering exhibited a "significant direct effect on depressive symptoms" (p. 2007).

Previous Research

Morales and Hanson (2005) conducted an integrative literature review on language brokering consisting of 24 published and unpublished resources, however, since its publication a great deal of additional research on the topic of language brokering among children of immigrants, particularly Latinx children, has emerged. Previous literature included in the review

was mixed on how or if language brokering affected children's academic performance and provided little insight as to its effect on the relationship between the non-English speaking parent and the child acting as a language broker. The literature examined by Morales and Hanson (2005), as well as the literature presented above also demonstrate that while there have been various studies addressing the topic, there is little consensus as to the positive and negative effects of language brokering on children.

Examining the recent literature on the topic would be beneficial to the social work field as the population of Latinxs in the U.S. continues to increase steadily especially in areas outside of the typical ethnic enclaves. By exploring the role that brokering plays on both the individual child and familial relationships of Latinx children, social workers can be better equipped to work efficiently with, advocate for, and provide support to Latinx families with language brokering children.

Research Question

Today's social climate and attitude of hostility towards immigrants, as well as institutionally oppressive immigration policies now more than ever, demonstrate the need for further research to study the experiences of children of immigrants. This systematic literature review will attempt to fill a gap in the current literature by focusing exclusively on Latinx youth's experiences and attempting to answer the question of how language brokering affects the emotional and social well-being, acculturation process and parent-child relationship of first and second-generation Latinx children and adolescents.

Methods

Purpose of Research

The research question that was explored in this systematic literature review was: “How does language brokering affect the emotional and social well-being, acculturation process and parent-child relationship for first and second-generation Latinx children and adolescents?”

The population that was included are first- and second-generation Latinx youth. The term Latinx has been adopted as a more inclusive, gender-neutral term used in place of Latino/a to refer to individuals of Latin American descent and with cultural ties to Latin America. For the purposes of this paper, it will be used in place of Latino/a or Hispanic. The researcher’s definition of “first-generation” is a Latinx child who they themselves have immigrated to the United States, and “second-generation” is a native-born Latinx child who is a United States citizen with at least one foreign-born parent.

Types of Studies

For the purpose of this systemic literature review both qualitative and quantitative studies with empirical findings were included. Only studies conducted within the United States and those written in English were utilized; however, studies that were conducted and collected by researchers in Spanish, but written and published in English were also included.

Review Protocol

The following search terms utilized in this systemic literature review were: Latinos, Latinas, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexicans, language brokering, linguistic brokering, interpreting, translating, child, children, parent-child, parent-child relationship, acculturation, and family. Searches using all terms and combination of terms in any search field were conducted in the

following four databases to locate peer-reviewed, full-text articles for this literature review: SocINDEX, PsychINFO, Scopus, and ERIC.

Inclusion Criteria. Per the research question, empirical studies focusing on language brokering tasks performed by Latinx youth were included. Although this study primarily focused on the experiences of children and adolescents, studies including the experiences of Latinx youth and young adults up to age 24 were included. In particular, research that highlighted the impact of language brokering tasks on youth' emotional and social well-being, as well as brokering's effect on the acculturation process and parent-child relationship were included in this study.

Exclusion Criteria. A total of 642 were reviewed against the study's exclusion criteria. The researcher reviewed the title, abstract, and in some cases the entire body of the study to determine whether the study met the exclusion criteria. Studies were discarded if they were not empirical studies. Studies in which Latinxs were not the majority (at least 50%) of the participants or studies in which the participants' mean age was over 24 years were excluded. Studies were discarded if they did not focus on language brokering tasks or the effects of those tasks on Latinx youth. Studies that were conducted to test bilingualism in a classroom setting, as well those focused on creating a measuring instrument as opposed to collecting data were discarded. Finally, dissertations and non-published articles were also discarded. After exclusion criteria were applied, a total of 28 non-duplicated peer-reviewed articles met the criteria for this review. A detailed list of these articles can be found in Table 1.

Findings

The 28 articles that passed the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study included a range of methods and sample sizes. The bulk of these studies were conducted using quantitative

methods in the form of surveys and questionnaires. Researchers likewise used field observations, taped interviews, participant journal entries, and secondary data analysis to gain information from participants. Most of the youth were recruited from their elementary, middle, and high schools as well as some colleges/universities. Some participants were recruited through word of mouth, presentations, and fliers at community events, churches, and community agencies. All participants in the selected studies were Latinx but varied in age range and country of origin. Some studies' definition of "second-generation" included immigrant children who were foreign-born but arrived in the United States at an early age. Children of Mexican descent and children who were second-generation made up many of the participants in the studies examined. The following themes regarding how language brokering affects children's emotional well-being, social well-being, acculturation, and relationship with parents emerged.

Table 1

Included Articles

Author(s)/Year	Sample	Type of Study	Effects of Language Brokering (LB)
Acoach & Webb (2004)	89 Hispanic teenagers, age 13-18 years	Quantitative: questionnaire	Link between LB and biculturalism; significant relationship between acculturation and academic self-efficacy in junior high students
Benner (2011)	640 Latinx students: 80% 2 nd generation, 10% 1 st generation, 10% 3 rd generation	Quantitative; longitudinal: surveys	Latinx brokers are more likely to be in low-increasing loneliness class than low-steady loneliness class
Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, & Moran (1998)	122 Latinx students from immigrant households: 15.6% 1 st generation, 84.4% 2 nd generation, average age 14.8 years	Quantitative: surveys	Total brokering was related to academic performance, biculturalism, and social self-efficacy.
Corona, Stevens, Halfond, Shaffer, Reid-Quiñones & Gonzalez (2012)	25 Latinx adolescents and their parents: adolescents mean age 12.4 years, 14 were 1 st generation, 11 were 2 nd generation	Qualitative	LB described by parents and adolescents as both a positive and negative experience
Dorner, Orellana, & Jiménez (2008)	12 Latinx children and their families from original case study group of 18: 10 were	Qualitative, case study: semi-	Adolescents view translating as natural part of helping out. Translating is

	2 nd generation, 2 were 1 st generation	structured interviews	relational and may foster interest in heritage, language, and culture
Dorner, Orellana & Li-Grining (2007)	280 Hispanic 5 th and 6 th graders: 53% first and 2 nd generation—90% of whom report translating for others	Quantitative: questionnaire	The work accomplished by the most active brokers was positively related to standardized test scores in reading comprehension
Eksner & Orellana (2012)	3 Mexican heritage children and their family from original case study group of 18	Qualitative	In LB events knowledge is located both within and between the broker and the parent; LB is a sociocognitive practice that represents an important Zone of Proximal Development for children and parents
Guntzviller (2016)	100 pairs of low-income Spanish-speaking mothers and bilingual (English/Spanish) children: age range for children 12-18 years, 63 children were 2 nd generation	Quantitative: survey	Individual mother-child pairs did not accurately identify each other's brokering interaction goal (BIG). If children do not view mothers as a caring parent during LB, both may experience negative repercussions.
Guntzviller, Jensen & Carreno (2017)	100 low-income parent-child dyads: age range for children 9-18 years; 1 st generation (n=26), 2 nd generation (n=70)	Quantitative: survey	Parents and children use a team-effort model that utilizes both parties' strengths and compensates for the limitations of the other, thus child interpreting can be viewed through interdependence and independence scripts.
Kam (2011)	684 students of Mexican descent: mean age 12.37 years, 73% 2 nd generation, 27% 1 st generation	Quantitative: questionnaire administered at three different times points over two-year period	LB frequency was positively associated with family-based acculturation stress. Negative LB feelings were positively associated with family and other-based acculturations stresses. Both LB frequency and negative LB feelings exhibited indirect effects on alcohol use and other risky behaviors through family-based acculturation stress.
Kam, Guntzviller & Pines (2017)	120 low-income Latinx mother-adolescent dyads: age range of children 10-17 years; 75% 2 nd generation, 25% 1 st generation	Quantitative: cross-sectional survey	Significant positive associations between brokering frequency and general perspective-taking and empathic concern. Empathic concern was negatively related to intercultural communication apprehension.
Kam & Lazarevic (2014)	234 Latinx students: average age 12.4 years, 31.5% 1 st generation	Quantitative: longitudinal survey data	Positive LB feelings were positively related to subjective/personal norms and efficacy; neither LB frequency for parents or other family members were significantly related to adverse mental or behavioral health outcomes. Brokering for parents may or may not function as a stressor depending on how children in early adolescences feel about brokering.
Katz (2014)	20 Latinx parents and their primary child broker: 18	Qualitative: random digit dial telephone survey;	Children's LB efforts and successes are reciprocally linked to the communication dynamics of their families. Providers largely unexamined

	child brokers were 2 nd generation	follow up interviews	beliefs about appropriate roles for children influenced how they communicated with child broker and their families.
Kim, Hou & Gonzalez (2017)	557 Mexican-American adolescents: age range 11-15 years, 75.4% 2 nd generation	Quantitative: bilingual questionnaires	When parent-child alienation is high, adolescents experience more burden and less efficacy in translating. When adolescents are more resilient, they experience more efficacy in translating.
Love & Buriel (2007)	246 Mexican-American 7 th and 8 th graders with at least one immigrant parent: average age 12.58 years	Quantitative: questionnaire	Positive LB feelings are correlated with a strong parent-child bond for boys and girls. Girls report more positive feelings associated with LB than boys.
Martinez, McClure & Eddy (2009)	71 two-parent Latinx families: average age of children was 12.74 years	Quantitative: interviews, questionnaires, observations	Adolescents in low LB environments displayed more positive adjustment than those in high LB environments. Adolescents in low LB environments reported less likelihood of using alcohol, tobacco and all substances compared to those in high LB environments
Morales, Yakushko, & Castro (2012)	6 two-parent Mexican immigrant families: child age range 10-16 years; all children were 1 st generation	Qualitative, case study: semi-structured interviews, LB simulation	LB can strengthen a parent-child relationship when acting together to meet family needs. Brokers feel frustrated, embarrassed and distressed, but also feel important due to parental trust and involvement in family decision-making process.
Niehaus & Kumpiene (2014)	66 Latinx students: age range 11-16 years; 49% 2 nd generation	Quantitative: survey	Positive attitudes toward LB were positively related academic self-concept, perceived popularity and confidence in appearance. First-generation students reported brokering more often, brokering in more demanding situations, and feeling more positively about LB.
Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza (2003)	18 Latinx 5 th and 6 th graders	Qualitative: observation, audiotapes, journaling	Various cultural values shape the nature of LB such as all members of a household or family should pool their skills and resources for the good of the whole.
Roche, Lambert, Ghazarian & Little (2015)	118 Latinx youth, primarily Mexican and Central American: 69% 2 nd generation, 31% 1 st generation	Quantitative: surveys	LB within the home associated with less parent-child closeness and less parental behavioral control over the kinds of youth behavior for which parents' oversight is important. Most common forms of everyday LB are no different from other forms of helpfulness for immigrant parents and have little consequence to parenting.
Sy (2006)	117 undergraduate Latina women: average age 18.7 years, 80% Mexican, 82% 2 nd generation, 18% 1 st generation	Quantitative: questionnaire	Trust in hierarchy had a significant positive effect on LB. LB was not significantly related to achievement but had a significant positive direct effect on school stress. Students who more

			often translated for their parents experienced higher levels of school-related stress.
Tilghman-Osborne, Bámaca-Colbert, Witherspoon, Wadsworth & Hecht (2016)	813 Latinx youth drawn from a larger longitudinal study: mean age 12.3 years, 89% Mexican American, 73% 2 nd generation	Quantitative: questionnaire	Parent-adolescent relationship positively and prospectively predicted LB attitudes for younger males. The more both female and male students brokered at the start of 7 th grade, the closer they were with their parents in 9 th grade.
Tse (1995)	35 native Spanish-speaking Latinx students: mean age 16 years, 25 2 nd generation, 10 1 st generation	Quantitative: survey	All students reported LB.: 1 st generation were all brokering within 4 years of arrival and 2 nd generation began brokering by age 10. Students with fathers who knew English “very well” still reported brokering. Half of 1 st generation students reported they learned English faster as a result of LB and nearly half of 2 nd generation students reported they learned more Spanish.
Villanueva & Buriel (2010)	9 Latinx female adolescents: mean age 13.5 years, 66.7% 2 nd generation, 33.3% 1 st generation	Qualitative: interviews	Students brokered most frequently for mothers. School-related issues/events were the most frequently brokered and elicited the most stress. Students reported other familial responsibilities, other than LB, as being more important family contributions
Weisskirch (2005)	55 Latinx adolescents: mean age 11.72 years, 49 were 2 nd generation, 6 were 1 st generation	Quantitative: survey	Adolescents feel positive about LB experiences with girls reporting significantly higher positive feelings. Adolescents low in acculturation felt somewhat more positive about LB experiences but also felt more obligated to broker.
Weisskirch (2007)	98 Mexican descent 7 th graders: mean age 13.14 years, 71 were 2 nd generation, 25 1 st generation	Quantitative: survey	LB is common among bilingual children. Higher ratings of negative feelings were associated with more difficulty around familial relationships. Brokers reported higher total self-esteem when brokering for parents, friends, school employees, and at restaurants.
Weisskirch (2013)	75 Mexican-American emerging adults: mean age 20.82 years, 30% 1 st generation, 66% 2 nd generation, 4% 3 rd generation or later	Quantitative: questionnaire	The frequency of LB was positively associated with LB efficacy. Lack of parent support predicted LB burden which then predicted overall self-esteem and general self-efficacy.
Weisskirch & Alva (2002)	36 bilingual (English/Spanish) fifth graders: primarily Mexican American (n=33), mean age 10.53 years, primarily 2 nd generation (n=34)	Quantitative: questionnaire	Children are generally uncomfortable with LB.

Frequency and Location of Language Brokering

The theme of frequency and location of language brokering was addressed in the literature with mixed results as to the positive and negative effects it has on child brokers. A study by Tse (1995) found that all first-generation children had begun brokering for their families within four years of arriving in the United States while second-generation children began brokering by age 10. One study found that first-generation students not only perform language brokering tasks more often than second-generation students, but they also broker in more demanding situations and have more positive feelings about brokering (Niehaus & Kumpiene, 2014; Weisskirch, 2007).

The frequency of language brokering was found to influence the level of school-related stress and loneliness of Latinx adolescents and young adults. Benner (2011) found that while most Latinx adolescents in the study exhibited consistently low loneliness levels in the first two years of high school, students who brokered more often for their parents were more likely to be in the low-increasing loneliness class (low loneliness initially but substantially increasing). Latina undergraduate students who translated more often for their parents reported higher levels of school-related stress (Sy, 2006). The frequency of brokering was positively associated with family-based acculturation stress but did not directly affect alcohol use or engagement in risky behaviors (Kam, 2011). However, adolescents in low brokering environments reported less probability of alcohol, tobacco, and all substance use as compared to adolescents in high brokering environments (Martinez, McClure & Eddy, 2009).

Weisskirch (2013) found that as brokering increased so did the child broker's level of brokering efficacy. A study conducted by Dorner, Orellana, and Li-Grining (2007) categorized child brokers into active and partial language brokers depending on whom they translated for,

number of places translations took place, and the difficulty and number of things translated. They found that by fifth grade most active language brokers scored higher than partial and non-brokers in both reading and mathematics. Kam, Guntzviller, and Pines (2017) also found that for both mothers and child brokers, more frequent brokering interactions were associated with higher levels of empathic concern and general perspective taking. Also, the frequency of brokering for parents and other family members was not found to be significantly related to adverse mental or behavioral health outcomes. In fact, one study found that children who frequently brokered at the start of seventh grade reported feeling closer to their parents by ninth grade (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014; Tilghman-Osborne, Bámaca-Colbert, Witherspoon, Wadsworth & Hecht, 2016).

Language brokers translated and interpreted in a variety of settings that included schools, medical settings, stores, restaurants, community agencies, non-profit organizations, and more. Brokers were often responsible for not only interpreting verbal communication between parents and other adults, but also for translating letters, applications, bank statements, contracts, and other complicated paperwork. Katz (2014) found that due to complicated terminology and unfamiliarity with procedures, children brokering in health-care institutions at times experienced helplessness, anxiety, and fear of failure. Conversely, in their qualitative study, Villanueva and Buriel (2010) found that Latina adolescents reported that parent-teacher conferences were the most stressful events to broker.

Feelings about Language Brokering

The research indicates that feelings about brokering influence positive and negative outcomes for both child brokers and their parents. Negative feelings about brokering were positively associated with family-and other-based acculturation stress, but students who had a lower level of acculturation felt more positive about brokering experiences although they felt

more obligated to broker. Also, higher ratings of negative feelings were linked with more strain within familial relationships (Kam, 2011; Weisskirch, 2005; Weisskirch, 2007). On the other hand, positive feelings and attitudes regarding brokering were positively related to subjective norms, personal norms, academic self-concept, efficacy, perceived popularity, and confidence in appearance. First-generation adolescents and girls, in particular, reported feeling significantly more positively about language brokering (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014; Niehaus & Kumpiene, 2014; Love & Buriel, 2007; Weisskirch, 2005). Positive brokering feelings were also linked to strong parent-child bond for both male and female brokers, and for younger males, the parent-adolescent relationship positively predicted language brokering attitudes (Love & Buriel, 2007; Tilghman-Osborne et al., 2016).

Weisskirch and Avla (2002) found that fifth-grade students generally feel uncomfortable with language brokering. The act of brokering was reported as an adverse experience due to the difficulty of words or ideas in some settings and inability to find the right words at times in both English and Spanish. However, brokering was also described by both parents and adolescents as a positive experience regarding helping the family and pride in the ability to speak two languages (Corona et al., 2012). Studies by Buriel et al. (1998) and Acoach and Webb (2004) revealed the positive role of language brokering and biculturalism to academic performance in junior high school students. Additionally, child brokers reported higher self-esteem when brokering for parents, friends, school employees, and at restaurants. Brokering also produced feelings of importance due to the trust parents placed in child brokers and their level of involvement in the family decision-making process (Weisskirch, 2007; Morales et al., 2012).

A Relationship-Based Task

A theme that emerged in the more recent studies was that of language brokering being a relationship-based task that is a collaborative effort between brokers and the person for whom they are brokering as opposed to a solitary one. Two studies found that the act of translating is rooted in relationships as brokers and parents have been found to use a team-effort model that utilizes both parties' strengths and compensates for the others' limitations (Dorner, Orellana & Jiménez, 2008; Guntzviller, Jensen & Carreno, 2017). In their small qualitative study, Eksner and Orellana (2012) found that knowledge possessed by child brokers and parents is shared to facilitate teaching and learning by both parties during brokering tasks. Additionally, Morales et al. (2012) found that language brokering could strengthen the parent-child relationship when the broker and their parent acted together to achieve the family's needs.

Katz (2014) found that family communication dynamics were reciprocally linked to the language brokering efforts and successes. Adolescent brokers report feeling more burden and less efficacy while translating when parent-child alienation levels are high (Kim, Hou & Gonzalez, 2017). The study conducted by Guntzviller (2016) revealed that a child broker's primary brokering interaction goal was to respect their mother and the mother's primary interaction goal was to support their child. However, when mothers and children have mismatched views about brokering interaction goals, they may both experience adverse effects due to lower communication quality during language brokering. It was also found that in order to achieve their brokering interaction goal of respect, many children may alter the message between their mother and receiving party, both Spanish to English and English to Spanish. This adjustment may be made to protect mothers from information the child believes may be harmful or to prevent her from being cast in a negative light.

Natural Part of Helping Family

The last theme that emerged in the literature was that of language brokering being considered by children as a natural part of helping their parents and family which is in stark contrast to the prevailing conception of language brokering as a form of parentification for children of immigrants.

Numerous studies noted that the importance and value of family within Latinx culture contributes to youth viewing most common forms of language brokering just as another form of natural helpfulness to their immigrant parents. Cultural values such as using skills and sharing resources to prioritize the collective good shape language brokering so that many children report other standard familial responsibilities, such as doing household chores, as being the most helpful contribution to their family (Dorner et al., 2008; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner & Meza, 2003; Roche, Lambert, Ghazarian & Little, 2015; Villanueva & Buriel, 2010).

Discussion

This systematic literature review yielded an unexpected abundance of studies that provided a wealth of information which will be of immense value to social workers who work with Latinx youth, particularly in the context of today's unpredictable social and political climate. Of the themes explored in this literature review, the one that yields the most varied results is that of the positive versus negative impacts that language brokering may have on Latinx children and adolescents as well as the mixed feelings that child brokers express about their language brokering experiences.

Through the public-school system, first- and second-generation Latinx youth are immersed in American culture and the English language allowing them to acculturate at a faster

rate than their parents (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). For this reason, language brokering has been found to be a widespread activity that most bilingual first- and second-generation Latinx children of immigrants have reported participating in on behalf of their non-English speaking parents and family members. Language brokering, also known as “natural translation,” “family interpreting,” “para-phrasing,” and “cultural brokering” (Eksner & Orellana, 2012, p.196), involves an array of activities not limited to purely translating oral or written exchanges. Brokers must understand the cultural nuances of both their native culture as well as American culture then convey those nuances in a way that the person for whom they are brokering will understand.

Even though many brokering activities do occur in public between family members and other non-related adults, most language brokering tasks take place within the home between a parent and a child broker. Oldest children are often relegated to the role of family language brokering although a child’s personality, temperament, and ability all play a factor in who assumes the role of broker. Many times, younger siblings will take over when older siblings spend more time away from the home, and often siblings will collaborate on brokering tasks (Orellana et al., 2003). Parents have also been found to work together with their child during brokers events, and many may use it as an opportunity to increase their child’s Spanish vocabulary, syntax and overall knowledge of the Spanish language (Eksner & Orellana, 2012). Latinx cultures are collectivistic in nature and as such the value of familismo frames familial interdependence, strong family ties, respect for parents and other adults, supporting family members, and working together for the good of the family in a positive light (Guntzville, 2016). Consequently, children may view language brokering as usual everyday way to give back or assist their parents that aligns with the family values with which they were raised (Dorner et al., 2008).

Implications for Future Research and Practice

While recent studies have started to focus on the experiences of parents as recipients of their child's brokering skills, future studies that explore this in greater depth would continue to be beneficial to the field. These studies would hopefully bring to light how social workers could empower parents who may feel embarrassment for relying on children to broker daily interactions. Current literature has begun to develop around the consideration of language brokering as an activity based in relationships. Research involving semi-structured interviews and field observations would allow for the continued development of studying the act of brokering through the lens of being a mutually beneficial, knowledge-building activity between parent and broker, as well as between sibling brokers. Additional qualitative, longitudinal research with a more significant number of participants would yield a great deal of valuable personalized information and insight into the experiences of parents, brokers and their siblings.

Although many positive impacts have been discussed in this systemic review, it is essential for social workers to acknowledge the potential negative impacts that language brokering can have on Latinx children and adolescents. When Latinx families interact with organizations, agencies, and other systems that do not have the resources to provide services in Spanish for families they place those families at an automatic disadvantage. Although it is vital for social workers to validate Latinx youth who engage in brokering for their parents, it is essential to acknowledge that children may not consider brokering to be their most important family contribution. Social workers must recognize the complex nature of brokering and its implications for child learning and development, impact on family dynamics, and how organizations positively and negatively interact with child brokers and their families. Macro-level policy changes are essential to combat the systemic limitations which place a hindrance on

non-English speaking families and therefore create the need for Latinx children to step into the role of language broker so their parents will not feel silenced in this country.

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