

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE BROKERING FEELINGS AND LANGUAGE  
USE WITH PEERS ON ETHNIC IDENTITY AMONG LATINO/A ADOLESCENTS  
AND EMERGING ADULTS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology  
Clinical Psychology

by

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My mother, father, Robert, and Eddie, my sister-in-law and mentor Loraine and my life partner Joshua. My love for you all is beyond words. I will do my best to make you proud.

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## ABSTRACT

# THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE BROKERING FEELINGS AND LANGUAGE USE WITH PEERS ON ETHNIC IDENTITY AMONG LATINO/A ADOLESCENTS AND EMERGING ADULTS

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The purpose of this study was to examine whether feelings about language brokering, moderated by frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers, are a significant predictor of feelings of ethnic identity among immigrant-background Latino/a adolescents and emerging adults. The adolescent sample included 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade high school students and the emerging adult sample included college students. Language brokering feelings among adolescents and emerging adults were assessed using a cross sectional approach and analogous methodology which included a one-time questionnaire and daily surveys over the course of 14 consecutive days. It was hypothesized that participants who reported higher frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers would experience a stronger association between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity compared to participants who reported lower frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers. Second, it was hypothesized that emerging adults would rate their language brokering experiences more positively than adolescents and that emerging adults would have stronger ratings of ethnic identity compared to the adolescents. Data were collected from 76 eighth graders (49% male, 51% female), 84

tenth graders (39% male, 60% female, 1% did not state) and 77 emerging adults (38% male, 62% female). Findings indicated that heritage language use with co-ethnic peers did not moderate the relationship between language brokering feelings and there was not a significant mean difference between developmental periods on ratings of ethnic identity. However, there was a significant difference in mean ratings of language brokering feelings between emerging adults and 8<sup>th</sup> grade participants, indicating a developmental difference within the sample. These findings suggest that mental health professionals, practitioners, and educators can help younger language brokers reframe the process as a valuable and important experience that requires specialized linguistic ability and cultural knowledge of both the heritage and mainstream culture.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Children of immigrants often serve as language brokers; that is, bilingual individuals who translate and mediate the communication between two different language speakers both inside and outside the home (Chao, 2006; Hall & Sham, 2007; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1995). Language brokers have no special training and, rather than engage in objective translation, brokers often serve as the liaison and mediator for multiple agents during informal negotiations (McQuillan & Tse, 1995). For young language brokers, translating for parents may be an opportunity to practice and maintain the heritage language and also learn more about their heritage culture (Dorner, Orellana & Jimenez, 2008; Orellana, 2009; Tse, 1995). In addition, language brokers are placed into situations where they must navigate through two cultures, potentially developing a sense of belonging to the family's ethnic culture and better understanding the family's ethnic minority status. Research findings indicate that positive feelings about ethnic identity are an outcome of language brokering among Latino/a adolescents (Weisskirch, 2005). The current study examined outcomes associated with language brokering to better understand its impact on development during adolescence and emerging adulthood. In particular, this study examined whether feelings about language brokering, moderated by Spanish language use with co-ethnic peers, was a predictor of feelings of ethnic identity among immigrant-background Latino/a adolescents and emerging adults and secondly, whether there were differences among developmental periods in feelings of ethnic identity and positive feelings about the language brokering experience.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Research findings on how young people feel about the language brokering experience are mixed. Language brokering places children and adolescents in an adult role of authority that may exceed the abilities of the child, resulting in concerns over whether youth and young adults feel the responsibility as a beneficial experience or a disadvantageous burden. Weisskirch and Alva (2002) postulated that some of the mixed results about how children and adolescents feel about language brokering may be attributable to age, maturity, and cognitive advancements that occur as youth develop during adolescence. In addition, past research has examined language brokering feelings among adolescents and emerging adults in separate studies; few if any studies have included both adolescents and emerging adults in the same analysis. Past research studies have also used varying qualitative and quantitative methodology to measure language brokering feelings, which may have contributed to the contradictory results.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine whether feelings about language brokering, moderated by frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers, would significantly predict feelings of ethnic identity among immigrant-background Latino/a adolescents and emerging adults. Secondly, this study examined whether there are developmental differences between age groups when measuring feelings of ethnic identity and feelings about the language brokering experience. Unlike previous research, this study used analogous methodology across three developmental periods.

## **Definitions**

1. Language brokers are bilingual individuals who translate and mediate the

communication between two different language speakers both inside and outside the home (Chao, 2006; Hall & Sham, 2007; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1995).

2. Adolescence, a socially constructed construct, is often regarded as a stage of physical and psychological development beginning at the onset of puberty, bridging childhood and adulthood (Bayer, Gilman, Tsui & Hindin, 2010).
3. Emerging adulthood is a developmental period from the late teens through the mid to late twenties, with a focus on the age range 18-25 (Arnett, 2000).
4. Ethnic identity is considered the experience of belonging to an ethnic group and the subjective feelings and attitudes experienced through a sense of group membership (Phinney, 1989).

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the review of literature in Chapter 2, the following research hypotheses were developed.

1. It was hypothesized that among 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and emerging adults, participants who reported higher frequency of native language use with co-ethnic peers will experience a stronger association between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity.
2. It was hypothesized that there will be developmental differences among the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and emerging adults, such that emerging adults will rate their language brokering experiences more positively than adolescents and that emerging adults will have stronger feelings of ethnic identity compared to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade subsamples.

## **Assumptions**

Outcomes of this research study are based on the following assumptions:

- Participation in the present study was voluntary; participants were not pressured to participate in the study and were informed that they could quit the study at any time.
- Participants are able to read English and comprehend items on the questionnaires. Eighth grade and 10<sup>th</sup> grade participants were enrolled in public middle and high schools in Southern California. Emerging adults were recruited from a comprehensive state university in Southern California. All participants were required to understand and speak English in order to be eligible for this study
- Participants answered the questionnaire and daily surveys honestly and to the best of their ability.
- The measures used in the study are appropriate for adolescents and emerging adults. Previous studies have used and validated the Multiethnic Identity Measure-Revised, MEIM-R (Phinney & Ong, 2007) with adolescents and emerging adults. The Language Brokering Feelings Scale (Buriel, Perez, Dement, Chavez & Moran, 1998) has been used with adolescents and the items are appropriate for emerging adults. The measure used to assess heritage language use with peers was designed specifically for this study and the reading level of items in measure was appropriate for both adolescents and emerging adults.
- No errors were made during data collection and data entry. Research assistants were trained by a university faculty member on how to properly collect data with adolescents and how to enter paper-based surveys into a computer database.

Reliability of data entry was checked on a subsample of all surveys. If any errors were found, all of the data entered by the research assistant in question were then checked by another assistant. Emerging adults completed the online surveys using university-approved online survey software; the software generates a database of responses.

- No errors were made during data analyses. Analyses were reviewed and approved by the thesis committee chair.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Language Brokering**

The act of language brokering is regarded as a complex communication process and is more challenging than strict linguistic translation between agents because brokers must act as both negotiators and socializing agents for their family (Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, & Moran, 1998; Grosjean, 1982; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003; Shannon, 1990; Tse, 1995). Brokering requires a child to mediate linguistic translation as well as important and complex social relationships between adults who have varying goals and levels of power and influence (Hall & Sham, 2007). In addition to serving as negotiators and decision makers within their family unit, language brokers also serve as cultural emissaries. Downing and Dwyer (1981) found that among Hmong immigrant families the family member who was most proficient in English served as lead translator and also as an envoy of cultural information in a variety of situations, including contact with school staff, law enforcement, and other complex social interactions. Brokering is an intercultural transaction since it involves the use of both cultural and linguistic understanding in order to interpret, create meaning, and mediate verbal and written communication (Chao, 2006; Gentemann & Whitehead, 1983; Tse, 1995; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez & Shannon, 1994; Wiesskirch, 2005; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002).

Brokering also requires a linguistic awareness of multiple languages and use of linguistic strategy (Tse, 1995), and it is through this comprehension and meaning making process that language brokers influence the message they translate and may influence the

opinion and decisions of the agents they assist (Bauer, 2013). Influencing the message is crucial as brokers frequently serve as the primary negotiator and decision maker as they are expected to successfully navigate social, educational, and business transactions necessary for family survival (Downing & Dwyer, 1981; Harris & Sherwood, 1978; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Wu & Kim, 2009).

Despite the complexity associated with language brokering, children who immigrate to the United States often start brokering within one to five years after their arrival and may begin brokering for their family during elementary school (McQuillan & Tse, 1995). The early age at which children begin to broker is significant since translation is a complex process that requires the broker to first comprehend the incoming vocabulary, then comprehend the meaning of the incoming message, and then reformulate the original message into the target language (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1991). While language brokering often begins in early childhood, there is no indication that brokering responsibilities necessarily end once adolescents enter emerging adulthood (Weisskich, Kim, Zamboanga, Schwartz, Bersamin, & Umana-Taylor, 2011). Research indicates that many language brokers continue assisting their families into adulthood, despite the parent's acquisition of communicative skills in English (Valdes, Chavez & Angalelli, 2003; Weisskirch, 2006; Weisskirch et al., 2011).

Children begin brokering at an early age because it is common for children to acculturate and acquire English proficiency before their parents (Chao, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). When children and adolescents with non-English speaking parents are asked to report if they language broker for parents and others, most indicated they do broker (Chao, 2006; Orellana et al., 2003; Tse, 1995) and do so across a

myriad of environments and situations. In a study by Tse (1995), adolescents reported brokering at home (86%), in schools and stores (each 80%), banks (46%), work (34%), and government offices (17%). Adolescent language brokers also reported brokering for a variety of agents such as peers, parents, family members, teachers, school personnel, and business people (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Orellana et al., 2003; Wiesskirch, 2005; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002; Tse, 1995). Language brokers translate legal documents, bank statements, household bills, school information, immigration forms, and employment applications; they schedule medical appointments, and may even dispute credit card charges and interact with the legal system and police (Orellana et al., 2003; Olsen & Chen, 1988). Language brokering may place children and adolescents in a position of authority that may exceed their linguistic and cognitive abilities. Thus, it is imperative to better understand if language brokering is perceived as a beneficial experience or a disadvantageous burden.

### **Feelings Associated with Language Brokering**

The research on how young people feel about brokering for others is mixed. Some studies indicate that brokering is perceived as a routine activity that is a positive and fulfilling experience because it enables brokers to practice and use English and their native language while also allowing them to learn more about their culture (Orellana, 2001; Tse, 1995; Valdes, Chavez & Angelelli, 2003; Weisskirch, 2005). However, other studies find that language brokers perceive the experience as embarrassing, disadvantageous, and uncomfortable because there is pressure to translate both agents accurately (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Ng, 1998; Tse, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002).

Weisskirch and Alva (2002) postulate that some of the mixed results about how children and adolescents feel about language brokering may be attributable to age, maturity, and cognitive advancements that occur as youth develop during adolescence. Younger children may not perceive the brokering experience as positive or helpful. Specifically, they might feel nervous and embarrassed and that their parents acquired English more slowly because they served as language brokers for them. In contrast, Weisskirch (2005) found that Latino/a early adolescents felt positively about the language brokering experience, felt that brokering allowed them to help their family, made them feel more mature, and helped them learn both English and Spanish better. Further, Buriel et al. (1998) found that Latino/a middle adolescents reported satisfaction with their brokering roles and that brokering was positively correlated with feelings of biculturalism and academic performance. Tse (1995) surveyed Latino/a adolescents with a mean age of 16 about brokering frequency and their feelings about brokering. Survey responses revealed that more than half of the students (54%) enjoyed brokering, 46% of students reported feeling a sense of pride when brokering, and 31% reported that brokering for others made them feel independent and mature. Of the participants born in the United States, 48% indicated that brokering helped them learn Spanish, and nearly 50% of all participants indicated their parents learned English more quickly and acculturated more quickly as a result of brokering. Because language brokering is a complex process that necessitates higher levels of linguistic awareness and linguistic strategy (Tse, 1995), the process may be more stressful for younger children who are still developing cognitive and linguistic skills. Older adolescents and young adults may perceive brokering as less stressful because they have higher cognitive abilities and

linguistic proficiency in both languages (Weisskirch, 2005). In addition, older adolescents and emerging adults may feel more competent handling brokering situations and do not feel distressed or burdened during the experience because they are able to internalize the process and responsibility as something that children from immigrant families are expected to do for the family (Weisskirch, 2013). For younger adolescents, taking on an adult role may also be perceived as stressful and uncomfortable because the material or situation requiring translation may be beyond their linguistic skill level (Weisskirch, 2005; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002).

### **Language Brokering and Feelings of Ethnic Identity**

For many immigrant families, language brokering serves as an acculturation strategy (Berry, 2007) that enables and encourages both the retention of the heritage culture and acquisition of the new culture in children (Weisskirch et al., 2011). Formation of cultural identity is a complex process for adolescents from immigrant backgrounds. During the developmental task of ego-identity formation (Erickson, 1968), adolescents from immigrant backgrounds navigate through two cultures (i.e., their heritage culture and the culture of the new country) as they develop their identity in the United States (Berry, 1997). Youth of immigrant backgrounds develop a multidimensional sense of self as they develop an identity as a member of an ethnic group that is separate from and within the larger, majority society, thus developing an ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989). Ethnic identity can also be considered the experience of belonging to an ethnic group and the subjective feelings and attitudes experienced through a sense of group membership (Phinney, 1989). Language brokering is an intercultural transaction as it involves comprehending the nuances of both the heritage culture and the heritage language. Thus,

the broker may develop a stronger affiliation to heritage cultural values which may result in stronger feelings of ethnic identity.

The effect of language brokering feelings on ethnic identity among children was studied by Weisskirch (2005), who found that children who frequently engage in language brokering may demonstrate greater affiliation to their Latino/a cultural values. Weisskirch (2005) examined participant's age, place of birth, number of siblings, birthplace of father and mother, size of household, gender, level of acculturation, and scores on two language brokering scales as predictors of feelings of ethnic identity. Among the sample of Latino/a sixth graders, feelings about language brokering was the only variable that significantly predicted ethnic identity feelings. Specifically, the youth who framed language brokering as positive experience reported significantly stronger feelings of ethnic identity. As a whole, this sample of early adolescents reported positive feelings about language brokering and indicated that brokering allowed them to help their family, made them feel more mature, and helped them learn English and Spanish better. Framing language brokering as a positive experience may result in developing stronger feelings of ethnic identity as brokers are forced to become bicultural and bilingual, which may foster a stronger sense of connectedness to their heritage culture (Weisskirch, 2005).

Based on the role of heritage language in the development of ethnic identity and findings by Weisskirch (2005) which demonstrates a relationship between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity, there is a need for further research that examines the impact of language brokering and language use on ethnic identity development. Though language proficiency in one's heritage language is considered a strong indicator of cultural affiliation and level of acculturation (Cuéllar & González,

2000), there is a lack of studies examining this complex relationship. Thus, it is important to understand if frequency of heritage language, particularly with co-ethnic individuals, may further explain how language brokering feelings can influence the strength of ethnic identity feelings among adolescents and young adults.

### **Language Use with Peers**

The process of exploring and navigating through two different cultures may offer adolescents choice in terms of cultural practices and beliefs, language use, and friendships. As discussed earlier, brokering involves linguistic ability and awareness of both the mainstream and heritage languages, and proficiency in one's heritage language is an indicator of cultural affiliation and acculturation level (Cuéllar & González, 2000). Language brokering can increase linguistic ability in both the native and second languages (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Tse, 1995) and language is often found to be a significant component in the development of ethnic identity (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1990; Hurtado & Gurin, 1995; Miller & Hoogstra, 1992). Therefore, social interaction with co-ethnic peers, especially if peers speak the same heritage language, may influence feelings of ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 2001). In addition, social interaction with co-ethnic peers is associated with greater linguistic proficiency in the native language and also influence feelings of ethnic identity. In particular, Phinney et al. (2001) found that among a sample of Mexican American adolescents, social interaction with Latino/a peers was positively related to ethnic identity feelings and that social interaction had a stronger influence on feelings of ethnic identity compared to ethnic language proficiency. These results indicate that co-ethnic peers may serve an important role during acculturation and ethnic identity development.

Past research on language brokering has largely focused on individual and familial psychosocial outcomes, as well as a cognitive approach that examines linguistic ability and proficiency in both languages. However, there is a lack of research that examines how heritage language use with peers may moderate the relationship between language brokering feelings and ethnic identity. This study examines frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers as a potential moderator on the effect of language brokering feelings on feelings of ethnic identity. Specifically, for the current study, it was hypothesized that participants who report higher frequencies of heritage language use with peers would have a stronger association between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. The current study focuses on Latino/a adolescents and emerging adults.

### **Latino/a Language Brokers**

As the fastest growing foreign-born population in the United States (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2001), Latino/a youth and young adults of immigrant backgrounds are a population of interest. According to recent data, the Latino/a population grew to 53 million in the year 2012, which is an increase of 50% since 2000 and nearly six times the Latino/a population in 1970 (Brown, 2014). As a whole, the U.S. population increased by only 12% during 2000 to 2012, indicating that Latino/a population growth accounted for more than half of the nation's growth during this 12 year time period. Among Latino/a adults in 2012, 49.8% were born outside the United States, and the Latino/a population is expected to continue increasing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the total Latino/a population to reach 129 million by the year 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). These figures indicate a growing number of Latino/a immigrants

who are faced with the many challenges of acculturation, one of which is learning a new language. Children who are first or second generation must face the challenges of acculturation and ego identity formation of adolescence and emerging adulthood while also being expected to serve as a bicultural-bilingual translator and negotiator for their parents and family. The current study will focus on examining language brokering feelings, specifically among Latino/a youth of immigrant backgrounds from early adolescence to emerging adulthood.

### **Current Study**

The current study investigated whether feelings about language brokering, moderated by frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers, is a significant predictor of ethnic identity feelings among 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and emerging adults of Latino/a immigrant-backgrounds. Although language brokering begins in early childhood, there is no indication that brokering responsibilities end once adolescents enter emerging adulthood (Weisskich et al., 2011). Additionally, past research examined language brokering feelings among adolescents and emerging adults in separate studies, using varying methodology that produced contradictory results. The current study explored two main hypotheses. First, it was hypothesized that participants who report higher frequency of native language use with co-ethnic peers would experience a stronger association between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. Second, it was hypothesized that there would be developmental differences among the three subsamples, such that emerging adults would rate their language brokering experiences more positively than the 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and that emerging adults would have stronger feelings of ethnic identity compared to the 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Procedures**

Eighth- and tenth-grade participant data came from a larger, existing dataset. Eighth- and tenth-grade participants completed one questionnaire packet at school that included a demographic questionnaire and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (Phinney & Ong, 2007), among other measures. They also completed another questionnaire packet at home that included the Language Brokering Feelings Scale (Buriel et al., 1998), among other measures. They were then asked to complete 14 consecutive days of daily surveys which asked about which friends they spent time with that day and if they spoke English or another language with each friend (again, among other measures). Adolescent participants were given a packet of daily survey forms and asked to submit one survey per day in collection boxes in designated classrooms at participating middle and high school campuses. They were compensated with fifty dollars in cash if they completed all portions of the study (payments were prorated for partial completion).

The emerging adult participants completed an online questionnaire followed by two weeks of an online daily survey. Adult participants were first required to read through a consent screen that provided general information about the survey as well as their privacy and rights as a research participant. After providing consent to participate, participants completed a brief demographic survey and multiple measures which included the Language Brokering Feelings Scale and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. The questionnaire was followed by two weeks (14 consecutive days) of daily surveys, to be

completed during the evening hours, which were analogous to the adolescent daily surveys. Adult participants were awarded research credits for their participation.

### **Sample**

Eighth- and tenth-grade participants were included in the current study if they reported three key characteristics: Latino/a background, at least one parent of immigrant background, and translation for their parents. These participants were recruited from predominantly Latino/a middle and high schools in the Los Angeles area as a part of a larger study. Data were collected from 76 eighth-graders (49% male, 51% female) and 84 tenth-graders (39% male, 60% female, 1% did not state). Among the eighth-grade sample, ages ranged from 12 to 15 ( $M = 13.53$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) with 84% born in the United States, 15% born in other countries, and 1% did not report. Of the students born outside the United States, 50% were born in Mexico, 30% were born in El Salvador, 10% were born in Argentina, and 10% were born in Guatemala. Among the tenth-grade sample, ages ranged from 14 to 17 ( $M = 15.52$ ,  $SD = .59$ ). Among the 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 75% were born in the United States, 23% were born in other countries, and 2% did not report. Of the students born outside the United States, 52% were born in Mexico, 21% in El Salvador, 11% in Honduras, 11% in Guatemala, and 5% were born in Nicaragua.

For the emerging adult subsample, Latino/a adults between the ages of 18-20 years were recruited through the psychology research pool at a comprehensive university in Southern California. The psychology research pool was comprised of students enrolled in introductory psychology courses and a sophomore-level class comprised of psychology majors. Participants in the current study were screened to include only those who self-identify as Latino/a, have at least one parent of immigrant background, and report

translating for their parents. Data were collected from 77 adults (38% male, 62% female), (mean age = 18.73,  $SD = .69$ ). Of the emerging adult subsample, 91% were born in the United States, and 9% were born in another country. Of the 7 students born in another country, 3 were born in Mexico, 2 were born in El Salvador, 1 was born in Guatemala, and 1 was born in Peru. The majority of emerging adults lived at home with family (67%), followed by on-campus dormitories (17%) or off campus with friends (16%).

### **Measurement**

The demographic variables were measured using standard fact sheet items while language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity were assessed using previously established self-report instruments. The measure for heritage language use with co-ethnic peers was developed for the purposes of this study.

**Language brokering feelings.** To assess language brokering feelings, participants completed the Language Brokering Feelings scale (Buriel et al., 1998) regarding their attitudes toward brokering. This scale consists of 15, Likert items (ranging from 1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*) and included questions such as: “I feel embarrassed when I translate for others,” and “I feel good about myself when I translate for others.” Reliability of the 15 item scale, as assessed by Chronbach’s alpha, was .79 for the eighth grade subsample, .73 for the tenth grade subsample and .81 for the emerging adult subsample.

**Language use.** To assess frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers, participants listed the first name of the three friends they spent the most time with each day, the ethnicity of each friend, and whether they spoke English or another language (i.e., Spanish) with each friend that day.

**Feeling of ethnic identity.** To measure feelings of ethnic identity, participants completed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney & Ong, 2007). This scale consists of 6 items (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) and includes questions such as: “I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group,” and “I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.” Reliability of the 6 item scale, as assessed by Chronbach’s alpha, was .71 for the eighth grade subsample, .79 for the tenth grader subsample and .89 for emerging adult subsample.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The current study explored two main hypotheses. First, that participants who reported higher frequency of native language use with co-ethnic peers would have a stronger association between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. Second, it was hypothesized there would be developmental differences among the three groups, such that emerging adults would rate their language brokering experiences more positively than 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders and that emerging adults would have stronger feelings of ethnic identity compared to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade subsamples. The range, mean and standard deviation for scores on the measures are reported in Table 1 for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade sample, in Table 2 for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade sample, and in Table 3 for the emerging adult sample. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 20.0 for Windows.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Subsample*

Variables	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Feelings of Ethnic Identity	1-4	3.06	.51
Language Brokering Feelings	1-4	2.77	.43
Spanish Use with Peers	0-1	.37	.36

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Subsample*

Variables	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Feelings of Ethnic Identity	1-4	2.97	.49
Language Brokering Feelings	1-4	2.85	.40
Spanish Use with Peers	0-1	.47	.39

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for the Emerging Adult Subsample*

Variables	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Feelings of Ethnic Identity	1-4	3.02	.58
Language Brokering Feelings	1-4	2.99	.41
Spanish Use with Peers	0-1	.48	.37

**Moderated Multiple Regression Analyses**

To explore the first hypothesis, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted separately for each developmental period to assess whether the association between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity were moderated by heritage language use with co-ethnic peers. After centering the predictor, moderator, and outcome variable, an interaction term for language brokering feelings and heritage language use with co-ethnic peers was computed. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis was completed in three steps. The first regression model predicted the outcome variable, feelings of ethnic identity, from the predictor variable, language brokering

feelings. Heritage language use with co-ethnic peers was added to the second regression model and the interaction effect between language brokering feelings was added to the third and final regression model to determine if there was significant increase in predictive value (i.e., significant  $R^2$  change and significant regression coefficient for the new interaction term).

Among the 8<sup>th</sup> grade subsample, results indicated that language brokering feelings ( $b = .284, SE_b = .144, \beta = .241, p = .053$ ) and heritage language use with co-ethnic peers ( $b = .150, SE_b = .167, \beta = .106, p = .373$ ) were not significantly associated with feelings of ethnic identity. The interaction between language brokering feelings and heritage language use with co-ethnic peers was also not significant ( $b = -.361, SE_b = .399, \beta = -.108, p = .369$ ) indicating that heritage language use with co-ethnic peers is not reliably moderating the relationship between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. The regression statistics are reported for 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Table 4.

Among the 10<sup>th</sup> grade subsample, results indicated that language brokering feelings ( $b = .055, SE_b = .142, \beta = .045, p = .698$ ) and heritage language use with co-ethnic peers ( $b = .229, SE_b = .148, \beta = .179, p = .124$ ) were not significantly associated with feelings of ethnic identity. The interaction between language brokering feelings and heritage language use with co-ethnic peers was also not significant ( $b = .106, SE_b = .370, \beta = .032, p = .776$ ) indicating that heritage language use with co-ethnic peers is not reliably moderating the relationship between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. The regression statistics are reported for 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Table 5.

Finally, among the emerging adult subsample, results indicated that language brokering feelings ( $b = .420, SE_b = .155, \beta = .298, p = .008$ ) was significantly associated

with feelings of ethnic identity, but heritage language use with co-ethnic peers ( $b = .308$ ,  $SE_b = .175$ ,  $\beta = .195$ ,  $p = .083$ ) was not significantly associated with feelings of ethnic identity. The interaction between language brokering feelings and heritage language use with co-ethnic peers was also not significant ( $b = .106$ ,  $SE_b = .370$ ,  $\beta = .032$ ,  $p = .776$ ), indicating that heritage language use with co-ethnic peers is not reliably moderating the relationship between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. The regression statistics are reported for emerging adults in Table 6.

Table 4

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Ethnic Identity Among 8<sup>th</sup> graders*

	Measurement	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	$p$	$F$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
		$b$	SE	$\beta$				
	-	-	-	-	-	7.12	.091	.091
	Constant	.053	.060	-	.379	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.357	.134	.302	.009	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	4.05	.104	.013
	Constant	.064	.061	-	.293	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.320	.139	.270	.024	-	-	-
	Peer Language	.165	.166	.117	.322	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	2.97	.114	.010
	Constant	.078	.063	-	.218	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.284	.144	.241	.053	-	-	-
	Peer Language	.150	.167	.106	.373	-	-	-
	Interaction	-.361	.399	-.108	.369	-	-	-

Notes:  $b$  = unstandardized betas;  $\beta$  = standardized betas

Table 5

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Ethnic Identity among 10<sup>th</sup> graders*

Steps	Measurement	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
		<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$				
1	-	-	-	-	-	.567	.007	.007
	Constant	-.053	.056	-	.344	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.105	.138	.086	.450	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	1.49	.037	.030
	Constant	-.054	.055	-	.330	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.057	.141	.046	.698	-	-	-
	Peer Language	.227	.146	.178	.125	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	1.01	.038	.001
	Constant	-.058	.057	-	.314	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.055	.142	.045	.698	-	-	-
	Peer Language	.229	.148	.179	.124	-	-	-
	Interaction	.106	.370	.032	.776	-	-	-

Notes: *b* = unstandardized betas;  $\beta$  = standardized betas

Table 6

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Ethnic Identity among Adults*

Steps	Measurement	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
		<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$				
1	-	-	-	-	-	9.13	.109	.109
	Constant	-.064	.066	-	.337	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.464	.153	.330	.003	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	6.48	.149	.041
	Constant	-.062	.065	-	.347	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.413	.153	.294	.009	-	-	-
	Peer Language	.322	.172	.204	.064	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	4.36	.152	.003
	Constant	-.069	.067	-	.310	-	-	-
	LB Feelings	.420	.155	.298	.008	-	-	-
	Peer Language	.308	.175	.195	.083	-	-	-
	Interaction	.220	.443	.054	.621	-	-	-

Notes: *b* = unstandardized betas;  $\beta$  = standardized betas

### ANOVA Analyses

To test the second hypothesis, whether there are significant mean differences among developmental periods on language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity, two one-way ANOVAs were conducted. The first one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine developmental differences in feelings about language brokering. Results, reported in Table 7, indicated there was a significant difference among

developmental periods on ratings of language brokering feelings,  $F(2,234) = 5.86, p = .003$ . Post hoc analyses using the Scheffe post hoc criterion for significance indicated that feelings about language brokering were significantly more positive among emerging adults ( $M = 2.99, SD = .41$ ) as compared to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade subsample ( $M = 2.77, SD = .43$ ),  $p = .004$ . This was the only significant difference among developmental periods on ratings of language brokering. The second one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine developmental differences in ratings of ethnic identity feelings. Results, reported in Table 8, indicated that there was not a significant difference on feelings of ethnic identity,  $F(2,234) = 5.86, p = .003$ , among 8<sup>th</sup> graders ( $M = 3.06, SD = .51$ ), 10<sup>th</sup> graders ( $M = 2.97, SD = .49$ ), and emerging adults ( $M = 3.02, SD = .58$ ).

Table 7

*One-Way ANOVA of Language Brokering Feelings by Developmental Periods*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	2	2.06	1.03	5.86	.003
Within Groups	234	41.19	.176		
Total	236	43.26			

Note: 1 = negative feelings associated with language brokering, 4 = positive feelings associated with language brokering

Table 8

*One-Way ANOVA of Ethnic Identity by Developmental Periods*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	2	.308	.154	.542	.582
Within Groups	233	66.27	.284		
Total	235	66.58			

Note: 1 = lower level of ethnic identity, 4 = higher level of ethnic identity

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The present study examined whether feelings about language brokering, moderated by frequency of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers, was a significant predictor of ethnic identity feelings among immigrant-background Latino/a adolescents and emerging adults. Secondly, this study examined whether there were developmental differences between 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and emerging adults on mean ratings of language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. Findings indicated that heritage language use with co-ethnic peers did not moderate the relationship between language brokering feelings for the three developmental periods and that there was not a significant mean difference between developmental periods on feelings of ethnic identity. There was a significant difference between mean ratings of language brokering feelings among emerging adults and 8<sup>th</sup> grade participants.

Phinney et al. (2001) found that among Mexican American adolescents, social interaction with Latino/a peers was positively related to feelings of ethnic identity and had a stronger influence on feelings of ethnic identity than ethnic language proficiency. However, the present study found that heritage language use with Latino/a peers was not significantly associated with feelings of ethnic identity within any of the developmental periods. These findings are notable as the Phinney et al. results indicate that co-ethnic peers may serve an important role during acculturation and ethnic identity development. Furthermore, proficiency in one's heritage language is an indicator of cultural affiliation and acculturation level (Cuéllar & González, 2000), and as a language broker, it is necessary to acquire linguistic ability and cultural awareness of both languages. The lack

of a significant moderation effect in the present study may be due to the grouping of all language brokers together irrespective of how often they actually translate for their family. Participants who broker more frequently may have stronger linguistic abilities in Spanish and use Spanish more often with co-ethnic peers, which in turn may strengthen the relationship between positive language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. Weisskirch et al. (2011) found among an emerging adult sample, those who brokered most frequently reported a greater retention of heritage cultural values, practices and stronger sense of identification than those who broker less frequently. Future studies that focus on peer interaction and heritage language use with co-ethnic peers should include an analogous measure of language brokering frequency within the daily survey and participants should be grouped for analysis based on frequency of language brokering. A moderation effect of heritage language use with co-ethnic peers among may exist among high frequency language brokers.

It is also important to note that adolescents in predominantly Latino/a middle and high school settings, such as those in this study, may interact with a higher number of co-ethnic peers compared to emerging adults in a university setting. More research examining the influence of co-ethnic peer interaction on language brokering and ethnic identity is needed to fully understand this complex interplay of mainstream and heritage language use, the responsibility of translating for family, and peer influence on ethnic identity development.

The findings did not reveal a significant mean difference between developmental periods on feelings of ethnic identity. This indicates that for this cross-sectional sample, feelings of ethnic identity remained relatively stable across developmental periods. It is

important to note that adolescence and emerging adulthood may still serve as a period of continued ethnic identity exploration where consolidation may or may not take place (Montgomery & Côte', 2003). Significant developmental differences in ethnic identity feelings may be found in younger children and late stage emerging adulthood.

Analyses revealed a significant difference between mean ratings of language brokering feelings among emerging adults and 8<sup>th</sup> grade participants. This supports the theory postulated by Weisskirch and Alva (2002) that some of the mixed results about how young people feel about language brokering may be attributable to age, maturity, and cognitive advancements that occur as youth develop during adolescence and into emerging adulthood. Emerging adults may perceive brokering as less stressful because they have higher cognitive abilities and linguistic proficiency in both languages (Weisskirch, 2005). In addition, older adolescents and emerging adults may feel more competent navigating through bilingual sociocultural interactions and do not feel distressed or burdened during the experience because they are able to better internalize the brokering process and responsibility as something that is done to help the family (Weisskirch, 2013). For younger adolescents, taking on an adult role may be perceived as more stressful and uncomfortable because the material or situation requiring translation may be beyond their linguistic skill level (Weisskirch & Alva, 2002; Weisskirch, 2005).

### **Limitations**

While past studies examined the effect of social interaction with co-ethnic peers and heritage language use on feelings of ethnic identity, this study took a novel approach by assessing the relationship between language brokering feelings and ethnic identity with peer heritage language use as a potential moderator. The study also took a novel

approach when measuring the moderator by using a 14-day daily survey across developmental periods. This study will add to the existing literature on language brokering feelings, heritage language use with co-ethnic peers, and feelings of ethnic identity. However, certain limitations to the study exist.

The data for language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity were collected using self-report questionnaires in a cross-sectional design. Future research should utilize a longitudinal study design assessing language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity across different periods of childhood, adolescence, and emerging adulthood. This study selected younger emerging adults (ages 18 to 20); future studies should include older emerging adults as well. Future studies should also include a larger sample size for each developmental period as the sample sizes in this study were relatively small. The 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade subsamples were selected from a larger study; to increase sample sizes, eligibility for study participation should be limited to adolescents who report translating for parents. Also the use of a cross-sectional, correlational design limits assertions of causality between language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity. Future research may consider an experimental design in which participants view vignettes of co-ethnic peers translating for their parents in common situations after self-reporting language brokering feelings and feelings of ethnic identity to understand if self-perception and perception of peer language brokering differ across developmental periods. The data for heritage language use with co-ethnic peers were collected using self-report daily questionnaires. These daily questionnaires required participants to recall interactions with multiple peers throughout the entirety of their day and may have been influenced by the participant's ability to correctly recall daily interactions.

The current study collapsed various Latino/a groups into one homogenous group and did not take into account intra-group differences and variability. Though the majority of participants were of Mexican descent, there may be differences between participants based on parent's country of origin as cultural differences may exist. Future research should further explore intra-group variability in research on Latino/a participants. In addition, this sample is limited to Latino/a adolescents and emerging adults from the Los Angeles area, which can limit generalizability to other regions of the United States. Future research should explore language brokering feelings among adolescents and emerging adults in regions of the United States with a smaller Latino population as the experience may be perceived differently in areas where there is a smaller Spanish speaking community.

### **Implications**

The current study revealed a significant difference between emerging adults and 8<sup>th</sup> grade participants on language brokering feelings. The oldest participants rated the experience most positively, and there was an increase in positive feelings across developmental groups, indicating that the older the participant, the more positively they felt about brokering. In addition, the hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that positive feelings about language brokering significantly predicted higher feelings of ethnic identity among 8<sup>th</sup> graders and emerging adults. These two findings suggest that mental health professionals, practitioners, and educators who work with adolescents and emerging adults experiencing stress associated with language brokering should help younger brokers reframe the process as an advantageous experience that improves cultural and linguistic awareness of both the heritage and mainstream culture and help

adolescents understand that being bilingual is a marketable skill. The current study observed positive feelings about brokering increasing across adolescence and into emerging adulthood, thus it is imperative that professionals and educators help younger brokers understand the importance of language brokering for others and how it benefits both them and their family in a manner that is culturally appropriate and age appropriate. Furthermore if there is an existing parent-child conflict associated with language brokering, professionals can help teach conflict resolution skills that involve a culturally appropriate discussion about how the language brokering experience is perceived by the adolescent and how brokering may affect the parent-child dynamic as both the parent and children acculturate within mainstream American culture.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that heritage language use with co-ethnic peers did not moderate the relationship between language brokering feelings and ethnic identity. They also did not reveal a significant developmental difference on feelings of ethnic identity. There was a significant developmental difference on ratings of language brokering feelings among emerging adults and 8<sup>th</sup> grade participants. This finding suggests that mental health professionals, practitioners, and educators who work with adolescents experiencing stress associated with language brokering should help brokers reframe the process as a valuable experience that requires specialized linguistic ability and cultural awareness of both the heritage and mainstream culture.

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## APPENDIX A

### LANGUAGE BROKERING FEELINGS SCALE

	1	2	3	4
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel embarrassed when I translate for others.	1	2	3	4
I think my parents learned English slower because I translated for them.	1	2	3	4
I think my parents know less about Americans because I translate for them.	1	2	3	4
I feel nervous when I translate for others.	1	2	3	4
I think my parents know more about Americans because I translated for them.	1	2	3	4
I have to translate for others even when I don't want to.	1	2	3	4
I think translating has helped me to better understand people who are from other cultures.	1	2	3	4
I think translating has helped me to learn English.	1	2	3	4
Translating from others makes me feel more grown up.	1	2	3	4
I think translating helped me learn my other language.	1	2	3	4
I think translating has helped me to understand my parents better.	1	2	3	4
I like to translate.	1	2	3	4
I feel good about myself when I translate for others.	1	2	3	4
I think my parents learned English faster because I translated for them.	1	2	3	4
I think translating has helped me to care more for my parents	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B

DAILY SURVEY FORM

Give the names and ethnic groups of the 3 friends with whom you spend the most time:

<b>Friend's first name</b> _____	<b>Gender:</b> Male  Female	<b>Ethnic Group (select one)</b> African American European American Middle Eastern Asian American Latino/Hispanic Other: _____
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<b>Friend's first name</b> _____	<b>Gender:</b> Male  Female	<b>Ethnic Group (select one)</b> African American European American Middle Eastern Asian American Latino/Hispanic Other: _____
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<b>Friend's first name</b> _____	<b>Gender:</b> Male  Female	<b>Ethnic Group (select one)</b> African American European American Middle Eastern Asian American Latino/Hispanic Other: _____
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BELOW IS A LIST OF ACTIVITIES IN WHICH YOU MIGHT HAVE USED ENGLISH OR ANOTHER LANGUAGE. PLEASE TELL US THE ACTIVITIES YOU DID **TODAY**

	Yes	No
Spoke English with Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoke English with Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoke English with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoke English at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Spoke Spanish with Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoke Spanish with Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoke Spanish with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoke Spanish at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What language do you speak the MOST OUTSIDE HOME?      English       Other

What language do you speak the MOST AT HOME?      English       Other

APPENDIX C

MULTIGROUP ETHNIC IDENTITY MEASURE

In this country, people come from a lot of different cultures and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Black, African American, Native American, Irish American, White, and Japanese American. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree

Ethnic group that describes you best: \_\_\_\_\_

I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	1	2	3	4
I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	1	2	3	4
I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.	1	2	3	4
I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4