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Emotion Brokering in Latinx College Students: Associations With Depressive Symptoms and Acculturative Stress

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Research on cultural brokering (i.e., interpreting cultural norms for others) indicates that some brokering practices (i.e., interpreting language) predict negative psychological adjustment. Recent research indicates that individuals also interpret emotions for others (i.e., emotion brokering). However, the associations between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment have yet to be reported. This investigation is the first to examine the associations between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms, acculturative stress) among Latinx college students. Study 1 (data collected in 2020) compared emotion brokering and language brokering and investigated how the frequency of each type of brokering (emotion, language) and the emotions (embarrassment, pride) experienced when brokering related to psychological adjustment. Results revealed that frequent emotion brokering predicted greater depressive symptoms among those who experienced greater embarrassment when emotion brokering. In addition, frequent emotion brokering predicted lower acculturative stress among those who experienced greater pride when emotion brokering. Study 2 (data collected from 2021 to 2022) examined the role of familism and family assistance attitudes as moderators of the relationships between emotion brokering frequency, emotions experienced (embarrassment, pride) when emotion brokering, and psychological adjustment. Findings revealed that the relationships between the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms were moderated by the endorsement of emotion brokering as a means of family assistance, rather than familism values more broadly. These novel findings have implications for cultural brokering and psychological adjustment.

Keywords: acculturative stress, culture and emotion, depressive symptoms, cultural brokering, Latinx youth

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Social communication involves not only navigating our own interactions but also involves helping others navigate social norms and interactions. Cultural brokering refers to the process where youth from immigrant families help their family members communicate with individuals from the host culture (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014a). The most widely researched form of cultural brokering is language brokering (i.e., interpreting language for others). Research indicates that cultural brokering can negatively impact psychological adjustment, particularly due to the emotionally intense nature of culture brokering (Shen et al., 2022).

Cultural brokering is common among youth from immigrant families (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014a) and is particularly prevalent among Latinx youth, many of whom face cultural expectations to assist their families (Dorner et al., 2008). Importantly, recent research also indicates that youth from immigrant families do not only interpret language and cultural practices but also interpret emotions for others (i.e., emotion brokering; Subramoney et al., 2024). The associations between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment, however, have not been investigated. This investigation examines the associations between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms, acculturative stress) among Latinx college students. Given the increases in global migration and vulnerability to stressors among youth from immigrant families, research on this topic is warranted and timely.

Emotion Brokering: Navigating Cultural Emotion Norms

Cultural differences in emotion norms can hinder communication between individuals similar to linguistic misunderstandings (Bresnahan & Zhu, 2017). However, little is known about how social partners may help others navigate intercultural

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emotion-based misunderstandings. Termed *emotion brokering*, this process involves helping others navigate interactions between social partners who hold different norms in the expression and experience of emotions. A recent qualitative study assessed emotion brokering experiences among Latinx college students (Subramoney et al., 2024). Participants routinely reported emotion brokering when they witnessed their parents misunderstand another's emotion.

Thematic coding also revealed that emotion misunderstandings typically involved the (a) emotion expression, (b) emotion elicitor, or (c) regulation of emotions. The following excerpt from a 20-year-old Latinx woman provides an example of the most common type of misunderstanding in which the relative misinterpreted the emotion expressed by a person from a different cultural group:

> One time I went with my mom to return some jeans and the cashier had a serious face the entire time. My mom thought that was completely disrespectful, but I'm used to it. I see it everywhere. I did tell my mom that it's normal to see that because it's not a sign of disrespect. It could be that she's shy.

This example highlights how cultural norms impact social and emotional communication. Specifically, the example illustrates an instance where the parent inferred that the cashier was communicating hostility but received an alternative interpretation of the event from the broker. Notably, the parent's interpretation of the cashier's communication was likely based on their heritage culture's expectations for the presence of *simpatía* (i.e., kindness, warmth, and friendliness; Magaña, 2020; Senft et al., 2021) in social interactions. Importantly, even though the broker may not provide the explanation immediately, their explanation serves to facilitate their parent's ability to infer and respond to others' emotion communication. The example also demonstrates that brokering requires cultural knowledge, perspective-taking skills, and social sensitivity on behalf of the broker, highlighting the emotion-eliciting nature of the brokering act.

Distinguishing Emotion Brokering From Other Forms Cultural Brokering

We propose that emotion brokering and language brokering both facilitate interpersonal communication (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014a) but can be distinguished by the specific form of communication brokered. Specifically, where language brokering involves facilitating linguistic communication (e.g., interpreting the price of an item at a store), emotion brokering involves facilitating emotion communication (e.g., interpreting that the cashier's facial expression is not signaling anger). Earlier work on emotion brokering suggests that the construct is distinct from language brokering and occurs in different interaction contexts (Subramoney et al., 2024). Specifically, brokering negative emotions appeared to mainly occur for close family members (i.e., parents) and typically involved strangers (e.g., fellow shoppers in a grocery store). Participants' reports of language brokering, although also primarily for the parent, mainly occurred in interactions with institutional agents (e.g., a bank teller). The study suggests that distinct interaction dynamics necessitate emotion versus language brokering and implies that each brokering experience may be distinct in terms of the emotions experienced by the broker.

Cultural Brokering and Psychological Adjustment

Cultural brokering is undoubtedly a crucial, potentially rewarding experience, but it can also exact a mental toll on the broker. Although the effects of emotion brokering for the broker have not been studied, the language brokering literature provides some evidence for how this process may impact the individual. Language brokers often interpret complex material (Tse, 1995), navigate public spaces where their minority status is visible (Crafter & Iqbal, 2022), and commit extensive time to broker (Dorner et al., 2008). Given the multiple stressors present when brokering, researchers have questioned whether language brokering predicts poor psychological adjustment (see Shen et al., 2022). There is evidence that language brokering frequency for parents (but not other family members) predicts depressive symptoms in several samples, including Mexican American adolescents (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b; Love & Buriel, 2007). Brokering also exposes youth to situations where they must navigate conflicting cultural frameworks, increasing their risk of experiencing a lack of belonging and, thus, acculturative stress (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b). Overall, these findings indicate that the cognitively and socially taxing nature of brokering may negatively impact psychological adjustment.

Recent meta-analytic evidence adds clarity to the question (Shen et al., 2022). Specifically, Shen et al. (2022) examined the extent to which language brokering frequency (i.e., how often individuals brokered), and negative and positive perceptions of language brokering (e.g., feeling burdened vs. confident) predicted poorer psychological adjustment (e.g., socioemotional well-being including depressive symptoms and acculturative stress). Interestingly, findings revealed that perceptions of the brokering experience are stronger predictors of psychological adjustment compared to brokering frequency itself. Similarly, studies specifically examining affect when brokering also support these findings. For instance, a longitudinal study by Kam and colleagues indicated that negative affect (i.e., composite ratings of embarrassment and nervousness) during language brokering was associated with depressive symptoms and acculturative stress, whereas positive affect (i.e., composite ratings of pride and "feeling good about yourself" when brokering) was not (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b). Taken together, these findings indicate that brokering frequency is insufficient to predict psychological adjustment, one must consider how the individual feels when brokering.

Embarrassment and Pride When Cultural Brokering

In considering the role of one's emotional experience in the brokering process, it is essential to consider more than the valence (i.e., positive vs. negative) of the affective experience. Unlike overall valence, discrete emotions indicate the quality of the emotional experience, providing specific insight into an individual's appraisal of an event (Consedine & Moskowitz, 2007). Self-conscious emotions are particularly relevant to brokering as brokering involves self-evaluation (e.g., awareness of accuracy), adherence to social norms (e.g., attempting not to offend a social partner), and the presence of others (Tracy & Robins, 2004). The present study focused on two discrete emotions particularly relevant to the brokering experience: embarrassment and pride. Embarrassment corresponds with appraisals of negative evaluation of the public self after an event that is incongruent with an individual's self-image (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

Conversely, pride is associated with positive self-evaluation after a meaningful achievement, thereby serving to enhance social status, social acceptance, and a positive self-concept (Tracy & Robins, 2004). Notably, these self-conscious emotions have been frequently reported in investigations of brokering experiences (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b; Weisskirch, 2006).

Qualitative research reveals multiple sources of embarrassment and pride among language brokers. The emotions are related to the duties brokers engage in as well as the social context in which they broker (i.e., exposure to discrimination). For example, sources of embarrassment include brokering accuracy, violation of the parent's privacy when conveying sensitive information (Antonini, 2016), the parent's linguistic and cultural knowledge (Cline et al., 2011), and the broker's awareness of their minoritized identity when brokering (Guan et al., 2016). Sources of pride when language brokering includes pride in the broker's linguistic competence, their broker's ability to assist the family (Corona et al., 2012), and maintenance of ties to their heritage culture (Guan et al., 2016).

Importantly, aspects of emotion brokering scenarios may make emotion brokering a particularly emotional experience. For instance, emotion brokering may be required in high-stakes scenarios where the parent does not request the need for interpretation (e.g., preventing conflict because a parent interpreted someone else as angry) and thus may violate the parent–child relationship hierarchy. Given prior studies linking negative psychological adjustment with language brokering (Shen et al., 2022), examining such experiences of embarrassment and pride while emotion brokering can provide important nuance for understanding the associations between brokering and psychological adjustment.

Cultural Brokering in Latinx Individuals

Research on brokering is particularly relevant to Latinxs in the United States. The Latinx population is rapidly growing and is currently the largest ethnic minority in the United States, accounting for 19% of the total population. A substantial number of Latinx individuals, 30%, lack English proficiency (Funk & Lopez, 2022). For this reason, brokering practices are prevalent among Latinx youth from immigrant families and thus relevant for study (Dorner et al., 2008). Importantly, as a diverse and heterogeneous group (Harwood et al., 2002), individuals with Latinx heritage likely demonstrate variability in their brokering experiences (i.e., frequency and emotions experienced when emotion brokering), and psychological adjustment. Gender is one factor that may impact brokering and psychological adjustment. Notably, Latinas typically face greater expectations to serve as brokers (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014a) and are also vulnerable to difficulties with psychological adjustment (Estrada-Martínez et al., 2019). Furthermore, generation status differences also impact both cultural brokering (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014a) and psychological adjustment (e.g., Estrada-Martínez et al., 2019; Mena et al., 1987). These factors emphasize the need for research that accounts for variability in emotion brokering experiences and cultural values among Latinxs.

The Present Investigation

This investigation had two core aims accomplished across two studies. Study 1 compared the frequency of emotion and language brokering, the emotions experienced while brokering, and associations with psychological adjustment. Study 2 examined the extent to which cultural factors (familism and family assistance attitudes) moderated the relationships between emotion brokering frequency, the emotions experienced when brokering, and psychological adjustment. Based on prior work (e.g., Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b; Shen et al., 2022), we investigated two aspects of psychological adjustment: depressive symptoms and acculturative stress.

Transparency and Openness

The study design and analyses were not preregistered. Materials and analysis code for this study are available (https://osf.io/jxrm9/?view_only=bb124a2bc596492a88ba8f5a2256adf2). We report how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions (if any), all manipulations, and all measures in the study. This study was not preregistered.

Study 1

Aims

Our first study had two primary aims. First, we sought to compare emotion brokering and language brokering in a sample of Latinx college students. We compared the frequency and the emotions experienced (i.e., embarrassment, pride) when engaged in emotion brokering and language brokering. Given that emotion-based miscommunications may arise in situations involving intense, challenging social interactions, we anticipated that emotion brokering would be less frequent than language brokering, but would elicit greater embarrassment and less pride compared to language brokering.

Second, we examined how the frequency and emotions experienced when engaging in each type of brokering were related to depressive symptoms and acculturative stress. Hypotheses were based on prior literature on language brokering (e.g., Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b), which identified negative affect when brokering as a predictor of greater depressive symptoms and acculturative stress when language brokering. However, we extended prior work on brokering by (a) focusing on discrete emotions (embarrassment and pride) as predictors of psychological adjustment and (b) examining the potential moderating role of emotions on the relationship between brokering frequency and psychological adjustment. Specifically, we predicted embarrassment, but not pride, when brokering would moderate the relationship between brokering frequency and psychological adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms and acculturative stress). Specifically, we predicted that individuals reporting more frequent brokering and greater embarrassment, but not greater pride, while brokering would experience greater depressive symptoms and acculturative stress. Importantly, we included both brokering types (i.e., emotion and language) in the models, to identify the unique effects associated with each form of brokering. We controlled for gender and immigrant generation status to account for the influence of these variables on depressive symptoms and acculturative stress.

Method

Participants

Participants were 140 (n = 110 female, n = 1 nonbinary; M_{age} = 20.78 years; SD = 1.88 years; range = 18–30 years) college students who self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/Latinx. A priori power

analyses anticipating small effects ($d = .15$) indicated that approximately 98 participants would be needed for power = .80. Participants attended a medium-sized university in Central California. Participants were recruited through the university's research participant system. Participants had to be at least 18 years old to be eligible to complete the survey. The majority of the samples (74%) were born in the United States with at least one parent born outside the United States, 17% were born outside the United States, and 9% were U.S.-born participants with two U.S.-born parents. The majority of participants reported Mexican heritage (70% maternal Mexican heritage, 71% paternal Mexican heritage). Participants reported their maternal highest level of education as follows: 51% did not complete high school, 32% had a high school diploma, 5% completed college, and 11% had another response (e.g., do not know).

Procedure

The survey was administered using Qualtrics. Data were collected from August 2020 to December 2020 as part of a larger study on emotion brokering. After providing informed consent and demographic information, we provided participants with the definition and examples of each brokering type (i.e., emotion, language) to prevent confusion between constructs. Participants were asked about the frequency of each type of brokering and their experiences of embarrassment and pride during each brokering type. The question blocks for each brokering type were randomized. Last, participants completed the depressive symptoms and acculturative stress scales. Participants received course credit as compensation. All study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Merced.

Measures

Brokering Frequency. The frequency of each brokering type (i.e., emotion, language) was captured by adapting a language brokering scale (Weisskirch, 2006). Items were adapted to ensure that questions on emotion and language brokering were similarly structured. Participants were asked a single question to assess the frequency of each brokering type: "How often have you translated/interpreted emotions expressed by someone from a different cultural background for others?" and "How often have you translated/interpreted language spoken by someone who speaks a different language for others?" to assess the frequency of emotion and language brokering, respectively. Participants rated their brokering frequency on a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*).

Emotional Experience When Brokering. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each brokering type (i.e., emotion, language) elicited feelings of embarrassment and pride. The following statements assessed emotions toward brokering: "I feel embarrassed when I [explain emotion norms for others; translate for others]" and "I feel proud to [explain emotion norms for others; translate for others]." Participants rated their responses on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), a single-item assessed each emotion experienced when brokering.

Depressive Symptoms. Participants reported their depressive symptoms in the past week using the 20-item Centre for Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977). Participants rated their symptoms on a scale ranging from 0 (*rarely or none of the time*) to 3 (*most or all of the time*). Total depressive symptoms scores were obtained by summing scores from each item. Possible scores range from 0 to 60. The scale has been validated with Latinx populations and has good reliability ($\alpha > .84$; Crockett et al., 2005). The internal consistency in this sample was $\alpha = .90$.

Acculturative Stress. The 24-item Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturation Stress Scale was used to measure acculturative stress (Mena et al., 1987). Participants rated statements on a scale ranging from 0 (*have not experienced*) to 5 (*extremely stressful*). Scores on each item were summed to obtain the total amount of acculturative stress. Possible scores range from 0 to 120. The Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturation Stress Scale is commonly used on Latinx populations and has good reliability ($\alpha = .89$; Fuertes & Westbrook, 1996). Internal consistency in this sample was $\alpha = .92$.

Analysis Plan

Preliminary Analyses. We conducted *t* tests to examine possible gender differences in self-reported brokering frequency (emotion, language), emotions of embarrassment and pride when brokering, depressive symptoms, and acculturative stress. In addition, we conducted Pearson's correlations to examine the relations between the emotion brokering and language brokering variables as well as measures of depressive symptoms and acculturative stress.

Primary Analyses. We conducted *t* tests to compare the frequency and reported experience of embarrassment and pride when emotion and language brokering (Aim 1). Next, we explored how the frequency of the two types of brokering and the emotions experienced during each type of brokering were associated with psychological adjustment (Aim 2). Four hierarchical multiple regressions were used to examine the effects of emotion and language brokering frequency and emotions (i.e., embarrassment, pride) when brokering on (a) depressive symptoms and (b) acculturative stress. Separate models were conducted for each emotion and each outcome variable. All predictors were mean-centered and subsequently used to create the interaction terms. All models controlled for participant gender due to observed gender differences in the preliminary analyses, as well as participant immigrant generation status; both variables have been found to influence cultural brokering and psychological adjustment (see Estrada-Martínez et al., 2019; Kam & Lazarevic, 2014a).[1] Participant immigrant generation status was operationalized to identify participants who (a) were born outside the United States (i.e., First generation immigrant), (b) have at least one parent who is born outside the United States (i.e., Second generation immigrant), and (c) have two U.S.-born parents (i.e., Third generation immigrant). Variables were entered as follows: Step 1 included gender and immigrant generation status, Step 2 included the main effects of emotion and language brokering frequency and the emotion (embarrassment or pride), and Step 3 included the interaction of each brokering frequency and the emotion. Analyses were conducted in SPSS Version 29. Unadjusted *p* values are reported given that separate inferences were drawn for each hypothesis (Rubin, 2024).

[1] The nonbinary individual was excluded from analyses that included gender as a covariate. Running the regression analyses on the full sample did not change the findings reported. However, it is not possible to draw any conclusions on these results due to inadequate statistical power to meaningfully interpret the findings (See Supplemental Material).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Means and standard deviations for all variables are presented in Table 1. The frequency of emotion and language brokering did not differ between genders. However, men reported greater embarrassment when emotion brokering than women, whereas women reported greater pride when emotion and language brokering than men. Additionally, women reported greater depressive symptoms than men.

Emotion brokering variables (i.e., frequency, embarrassment, pride) were positively correlated with language brokering variables. Additionally, experiences of embarrassment when emotion and language brokering were negatively correlated with pride when emotion and language brokering. There were no significant correlations between the frequency of emotion and language brokering and depressive symptoms or acculturative stress. However, embarrassment when emotion brokering was positively correlated with acculturative stress, and embarrassment when language brokering was positively correlated with both depressive symptoms and acculturative stress (see Table 2).

Aim 1: Comparing Brokering Frequency and Emotions Experienced When Brokering

On average, participants reported emotion brokering a few times a year and language brokering a few times per month (see Table 1 for means), indicating that emotion brokering occurred less frequently than language brokering, $t(116) = -10.69$, $p < .001$, CI [−1.67; −1.15], $d = 0.99$. However, it is worth noting that 27% of participants reported emotion brokering a few times per month, suggesting that for some individuals this was a somewhat regular experience.

There were also differences in the emotions experienced during each form of brokering. Participants reported greater embarrassment when emotion brokering than when language brokering, $t(103) = 2.48$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.24$, CI [0.04; 0.36] and less pride when emotion brokering than when language brokering, $t(103) = -6.15$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.60$, CI [−0.60; −0.31].

Aim 2: Associations Between Brokering Variables and Psychological Adjustment

For each set of regressions, we report the unstandardized regression coefficients in text and the standardized regression coefficients (i.e., the effect size estimates) in Table 3. We first examined how the frequency of brokering, embarrassment when brokering, and their interactions were associated with depressive symptoms (see Table 3, left panel). There was a significant positive main effect for embarrassment when language brokering ($b = 3.95$, $p = .01$). There were no other significant main effects (i.e., emotion brokering frequency, language brokering, or embarrassment when emotion brokering), Additionally, there was no significant Language Brokering Frequency × Embarrassment interaction ($b = -1.29$, $p = .32$). However, a significant Emotion Brokering Frequency × Embarrassment interaction was present ($b = 3.65$, $p = .05$). Specifically, individuals who reported more frequent emotion brokering and higher levels of embarrassment had greater depressive symptoms (see Figure 1a).

Next, we examined how the frequency of brokering, embarrassment when brokering, and their interactions were associated with acculturative stress (see Table 3, right panel). There was a significant positive main effect for language brokering frequency ($b = 4.04$, $p = .04$) and embarrassment when language brokering ($b = 11.00$, $p < .001$). There were no other significant main (i.e., emotion brokering frequency or embarrassment when emotion brokering) or interaction effects (Emotion Brokering Frequency × Embarrassment, or Language Brokering Frequency × Embarrassment).

We then examined how the frequency of brokering, pride when brokering, and their interactions were associated with depressive symptoms (see Table 3, left panel). The regression model revealed no significant main effects (i.e., emotion brokering frequency, language brokering frequency, pride when emotion brokering, pride when language brokering). Additionally, the Emotion Brokering Frequency × Pride and Language Brokering Frequency × Pride interactions were not significant.

Finally, we examined how the frequency of brokering, pride when brokering, and their interactions were associated with acculturative stress (see Table 3, right panel). The regression model revealed no significant main effects (i.e., emotion brokering frequency, language brokering frequency, pride when emotion brokering, or pride when language brokering). However, while the Language Brokering Frequency × Pride interaction was not significant, there was a significant Emotion Brokering Frequency × Pride interaction ($b = -7.02$, $p = .03$). Specifically, acculturative stress was lower among those who reported more pride when brokering and emotion brokered more often compared to those who reported more pride, but emotion brokered less often (see Figure 1b).

Table 1
Study 1: Descriptive Statistics for Language Brokering, Emotion Brokering, Depressive Symptoms, and Acculturative Stress

Variable	Overall		Men		Women					
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t* value	95% CI	*p*	*d*
EB frequency	1.81	1.24	1.76	1.16	1.81	1.27	−0.19	[−0.61, 0.50]	.85	−.04
EB embarrassment	1.80	0.71	2.09	0.73	1.73	0.68	2.15	[0.03, 0.68]	.03	.51
EB pride	2.97	0.70	2.57	0.79	3.07	0.62	−2.85	[−0.87, −0.14]	.01	−.77
LB frequency	3.20	1.28	3.19	1.27	3.19	1.29	−0.02	[−0.56, 0.55]	.99	−.003
LB embarrassment	1.56	0.73	1.73	0.78	1.52	0.72	1.30	[−0.11, 0.53]	.20	.29
LB pride	3.43	0.65	3.19	0.75	3.49	0.61	−2.10	[−0.58, −0.02]	.04	−.46
Depressive symptoms	18.38	10.59	14.04	7.64	19.44	11.00	−2.89	[−9.14, −1.66]	.01	−.52
Acculturative stress	36.86	20.62	33.35	16.97	37.69	21.53	−0.95	[−13.36, 4.66]	.34	−.21

Note. Gender comparisons reported for participants ($n = 139$) who identified as men or women. CI = confidence interval; EB = emotion brokering; LB = language brokering.

Table 2
Study 1: Zero-Order Correlations Between Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. EB frequency	—							
2. EB embarrassment	−.08	—						
3. EB pride	.16	−.42**	—					
4. LB frequency	.37**	−.11	.03	—				
5. LB embarrassment	.09	.38**	−.14	−.12	—			
6. LB pride	.10	−.28**	.40**	.27**	−.36**	—		
7. Depressive symptoms	.17	.17	.07	.07	.33**	−.07	—	
8. Acculturative stress	.13	.23*	−.09	.17	.36**	−.08	.54**	—

Note. EB = emotion brokering; LB = language brokering.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

This study is the first to our knowledge to (a) compare emotion and language brokering and (b) investigate the associations between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment. Individuals' experiences of embarrassment and pride differed when emotion and language brokering; also they were differentially associated with depressive symptoms and acculturative stress. Consistent with our hypotheses, emotion brokering appeared less frequent compared to language brokering. Participants typically reported brokering emotions a few times per year, whereas they reported engaging in language brokering a few times a month. Also consistent with our hypotheses, participants reported greater embarrassment and less pride when emotion brokering compared to language brokering. Thus, although emotion brokering occurred less frequently than language brokering, emotion brokering appears to be an emotionally impactful experience. Overall, these findings indicate that emotion and language brokering are distinct in their frequency and emotionality.

Analyses also revealed that experiences of embarrassment during emotion and language brokering were differentially associated with psychological adjustment. Partially consistent with our hypotheses, greater emotion brokering frequency and greater experiences of embarrassment when emotion brokering were associated with more depressive symptoms. In addition, and partially consistent with our hypotheses, greater emotion brokering frequency and increased experience of pride when emotion brokering was associated with lower acculturative stress (but not depressive symptoms). These findings extend prior knowledge on cultural brokering (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b; Subramoney et al., 2024) in two key ways. First, the findings emphasize the role of discrete emotions (i.e.,

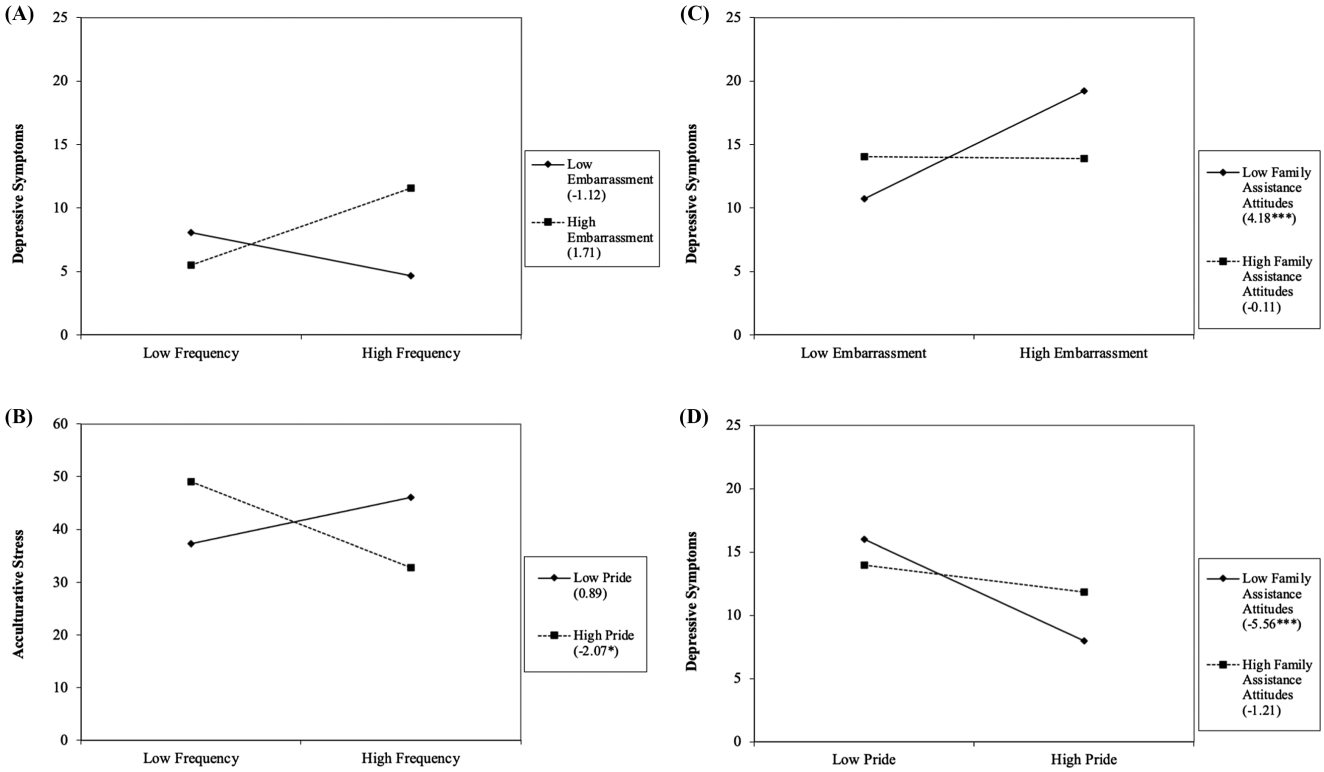
Table 3
Study 1: Hierarchical Regression Models Examining the Effects of Brokering Frequency and Emotions When Brokering on (a) Depressive Symptoms and (b) Acculturative Stress

	Outcome = depressive symptom			Outcome = acculturative stress		
Predictor	ΔR^2	β	95% CI	ΔR^2	β	95% CI
Step 1	.06			.02		
Gender		.24*	[0.67, 11.08]		.12	[−4.49, 16.02]
Immigrant generation status		−.001	[−5.77, 5.70]		−.09	[−16.15, 6.46]
Step 2	.13*			.22***		
EB frequency		.02	[−2.29, 2.66]		−.16	[−7.88, 1.02]
EB embarrassment		.16	[−0.87, 5.82]		.14	[−2.08, 10.29]
LB frequency		.06	[−1.43, 2.62]		.22*	[0.26, 7.82]
LB embarrassment		.28*	[0.95, 6.96]		.40***	[5.39, 16.60]
Step 3	.04			.01		
EB Frequency × EB Embarrassment		.22*	[0.07, 7.23]		.12	[−2.59, 8.98]
LB Frequency × LB Embarrassment		−.10	[−3.85, 1.28]		−.03	[−5.71, 4.07]
Step 1	.06			.02		
Gender		.24*	[0.65, 11.14]		.12	[−4.63, 16.05]
Immigrant generation status		.001	[−5.80, 5.75]		−.09	[−16.25, 6.50]
Step 2	.04			.07		
EB frequency		.04	[−2.15, 3.20]		−.08	[−6.71, 3.18]
EB pride		−.01	[−3.94, 3.70]		−.11	[−10.62, 3.71]
LB frequency		.07	[−1.57, 2.87]		.19	[−0.73, 7.92]
LB pride		−.19	[−7.00, 0.87]		−.16	[−12.71, 2.52]
Step 3	.05			.05		
EB Frequency × EB Pride		−.19	[−6.41, 0.78]		−.27*	[−13.24, −0.79]
LB Frequency × LB Pride		.20	[−0.39, 6.62]		.05	[−5.06, 8.21]

Note. Reported regression coefficients represent standardized β. CI = confidence interval; EB = emotion brokering; LB = language brokering.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Interactions Between Emotion Brokering and Psychological Adjustment



Note. Interactions between (A) emotion brokering frequency and embarrassment on depressive symptoms (Study 1) and (B) emotion brokering frequency and pride on acculturative stress (Study1). Interactions between (C) embarrassment when emotion brokering and family assistance attitudes on depressive symptoms (Study 2) and (D) pride when emotion brokering and family assistance attitudes on depressive symptoms (Study 2). The numbers in parentheses are unstandardized simple slopes.

$^{*}p < .05$. $^{***}p < .001$.

embarrassment and pride) when cultural brokering in predicting psychological adjustment. This is consistent with prior literature on the role of discrete emotions as predictors of health (Consedine & Moskowitz, 2007). Second, our findings highlight the unique moderating roles emotions play in the relationship between emotion brokering frequency and psychological adjustment.

However, the findings also brought to light important considerations for further study of emotion brokering. First, Study 1 investigated emotion and language brokering irrespective of the relationship context in which the brokering occurred. Second, although the overall experiences of embarrassment and pride when emotion brokering were assessed, the source of these emotions (e.g., pride in one's own brokering vs. pride in one's family/cultural identity) was unclear. Finally, this study considered individuals' subjective emotional experience, but not other personally relevant factors, such as their cultural values and attitudes. Thus, a second study was designed to address the above concerns.

Study 2

Research on cultural brokering has recognized that the brokering experience is embedded in individuals' cultural context. Study 2 examined emotion brokering specifically in the context of brokering for family members. We investigated how cultural factors (i.e., familism and attitudes toward family assistance) moderated the relationships between the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and psychological adjustment.

Cultural Context and Cultural Brokering

Brokering typically takes place to assist family members, primarily the parent (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b; Tse, 1995). Interestingly, evidence indicates that brokering frequency for parents but not other family members predicts depressive symptoms and acculturative stress among adolescents (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b). Thus, views related to one's role in the family are important to consider when examining brokering and psychological adjustment. The close familial environment may inform individuals' cultural values, framing the role family plays in their lives. The independent/interdependent scripts theory examines brokering as a normative, relational activity that promotes interdependence within the family (Dorner et al., 2008). The theory proposes that the responsibility placed on brokers allows individuals to contribute to their household and family functioning. This perspective on brokering raises the importance of examining the role of cultural factors in the brokering experience.

Familism and Cultural Brokering

Familism values (values related to the centrality of the family in an individual's life; Knight et al., 2010) have been found to moderate the relationship between cultural brokering frequency and psychological adjustment (Hua & Costigan, 2012; Rainey et al., 2020). However, findings on the nature of the moderation are mixed. Specifically, some studies indicate that familism is protective among frequent language brokers (Rainey et al., 2020). Other studies, however, demonstrate that individuals who hold strong family obligation values and broker more frequently have greater internalizing symptoms (Hua & Costigan, 2012). These findings suggest that for some, family obligation values may result in greater pressure among language brokers, resulting in a negative impact on psychological adjustment.

Family Assistance Attitudes and Cultural Brokering

In addition to familism values, individuals may vary in their attitudes toward brokering as a family support behavior. For some, brokering activities may be a way to contribute to their households and assist their family members (Dorner et al., 2008). Studies on cultural brokering confirm that reports of greater independence, responsibility, and ability to support the family are common among brokers (Weisskirch, 2006). These findings are in line with other research that suggests that assisting the family may be related to role fulfillment and a sense of connection with the family, thus predicting positive well-being (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009).

Existing literature has demonstrated that broader cultural values and endorsement of specific assistance behaviors are important factors in cultural brokering and psychological adjustment. However, while the cultural value of familism and family assistance attitudes may be relevant to the emotion brokering process among Latinx individuals, they have not been examined to date. Importantly, as a heterogeneous group, there may be considerable variability in individuals' endorsement of these values. Variability in these values may play an important role in the relationship between emotion brokering frequency, the emotions experienced when emotion brokering, and psychological adjustment. These considerations were included in examining the role of culture in emotion brokering in Study 2.

Aims

Study 2 investigated Latinx youths' experiences of emotion brokering for family members. This study addressed several limitations from Study 1 by asking participants about emotion brokering for various family members, the source/elicitor of their emotions, and their endorsement of cultural values.

The study had two primary aims. First, we explored how cultural values of familism moderated the relationships between emotion brokering frequency, the emotions experienced when emotion brokering, and psychological adjustment. Given the inconsistencies in the literature on the moderating role of familism and language brokering frequency, no a priori hypotheses were made regarding the direction of the moderation of familism on emotion brokering frequency and psychological adjustment. Hypotheses regarding the role of familism in moderating the relationships between the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and psychological adjustment were as follows: Individuals who experienced greater embarrassment when emotion brokering and had greater endorsement of familism would report fewer depressive symptoms and less acculturative stress than participants with lower endorsement of familism. In addition, individuals who experienced greater pride when emotion brokering and had greater endorsement of familism would report fewer depressive symptoms and less acculturative stress compared to participants who reported lower endorsement of familism.

Second, in addition to familism values, we also explored how endorsement of emotion brokering as a family assistance behavior (i.e., family assistance attitudes) moderated the relationships between emotion brokering frequency, emotions experienced when emotion brokering, and psychological adjustment. We hypothesized that individuals who reported emotion brokering more often and endorsed emotion brokering as a family assistance behavior would report fewer depressive symptoms and less acculturative stress (compared to those who reported a lower endorsement of emotion brokering as a family assistance behavior). Additionally, we tested whether family assistance attitudes would moderate the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and psychological adjustment, over and above the frequency of emotion brokering. Specifically, we predicted that individuals who experienced greater embarrassment when emotion brokering and had greater endorsement of family assistance attitudes would report fewer depressive symptoms and less acculturative stress than participants with lower endorsement of family assistance attitudes. Also, we predicted that individuals who experienced greater pride when emotion brokering and had greater endorsement of family assistance attitudes would report fewer depressive symptoms and less acculturative stress than participants with lower endorsement of family assistance attitudes. In addition, we included gender and immigrant generation status as covariates when assessing these relationships.

Method

Participants

Participants were 279 (n = 161 female; M_{age} = 20.55 years; SD = 1.73 years; range = 18–30 years) college students who self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/Latinx. A priori power analyses anticipating small effects (d = .15) indicated that approximately 92 participants would be needed for power = .80. Participants attended a medium-sized university in Central California. Participants had to be at least 18 years old to be eligible to complete the survey. Participants who completed the survey in Study 1 were not eligible for participation in this survey. The majority of the sample (76%) were born in the United States with at least one parent born outside the United States, 14% were born outside the United States, and 10% were U.S.-born participants with two U.S.-born parents. The majority of participants reported Mexican heritage (71% maternal Mexican heritage, 70% paternal Mexican heritage). Participants reported the highest level of maternal education as follows: 45% did not complete high school, 33% had a high school diploma, 14% completed college, and 8% provided another response (e.g., vocational training).

Procedure

The survey was administered using Qualtrics. Data were collected from November 2021 to December 2022, following the same

procedures described in Study 1. All study procedures were approved by the institutional review board at the University of California, Merced.

Measures

Emotion Brokering Frequency. Participants rated the frequency of emotion brokering to assist their family members. They were asked, "How often do you emotion broker for the following people?" and were provided separate ratings on emotion brokering frequency for their mother, father, aunts/uncles, and grandparents. Participants rated their brokering frequency on a 5-point scale: 0 (*never*) to 4 (*daily*). These items had strong loadings on a single factor in an exploratory factor analysis and explained 62% of the total variance. A mean score for emotion brokering was formed to examine emotion brokering frequency for these family members; $\alpha = .80$. Participants also provided ratings for the frequency of emotion brokering for family members of similar ages (i.e., siblings, cousins). These items loaded on a separate factor and were excluded from further analyses (see Supplemental Material).

Emotions Experienced When Emotion Brokering. Participants rated their embarrassment and pride when emotion brokering. We addressed multiple sources of embarrassment and pride, based on findings in the language brokering literature (e.g., Guan et al., 2016). Specifically, participants were asked to rate embarrassment and pride in relation to themselves, the person for whom they brokered emotions, their Latinx heritage, and their American heritage. Participants rated their responses on a 4-point scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency was $\alpha = .77$ for embarrassment and .83 for pride when emotion brokering. exploratory factor analyses confirmed that items related to each discrete emotion (i.e., embarrassment and pride) loaded onto corresponding discrete emotion factors (total explained variance for embarrassment items = 60%, total explained variance for pride items = 68%). The mean for embarrassment and pride were calculated and used in analyses (see Supplemental Material).

Familism Values. The Mexican American Cultural Values Scale was used to assess familism (Knight et al., 2010). The scale consisted of 16 items that assessed three dimensions of familism (familism support, familism obligations, familism referent). Familism support refers to the desire to maintain close and supportive family relationships. Familism obligation refers to the duty to provide caregiving in the family. Familism referent refers to the reliance on the family to define the self. Participants rated their responses on a 5-point scale: 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*completely*). The internal consistency was $\alpha = .90$ and items on the familism subscales were highly correlated (>.74). The items from each subscale were summed to create a composite scale for familism.

Attitudes When Emotion Brokering for the Family. We assessed participants' attitudes on emotion brokering in relation to their families. Items were derived from previous literature on the experience of efficacy, achievement, and support related to cultural brokering for the family (Dorner et al., 2008; Weisskirch, 2006). Four items assessed participants' endorsement of emotion brokering as a means to support the family, duty to the family, experience of independence when emotion brokering for the family, and achievement when emotion brokering for the family. Participants rated their responses on a 4-point scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Exploratory factor analysis indicated that the four items loaded onto a single factor and explained a total variance of 63% ($\alpha = .80$; see Supplemental Material).

Depressive Symptoms. Participants reported their depressive symptoms using the Centre for Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale ($\alpha = .84$).

Acculturative Stress. The 24-item Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturation Stress Scale was used to measure acculturative stress ($\alpha = .92$).

Analysis Plan

Preliminary Analyses. We conducted *t* tests to examine gender differences in emotion brokering variables, familism, family assistance attitudes, depressive symptoms, and acculturative stress. In addition, we conducted Pearson's correlations to examine the relations between the emotion brokering variables, familism, family assistance attitudes, depressive symptoms, and acculturative stress.

Primary Analyses. We examined how familism and family assistance attitudes predicted psychological adjustment. Eight hierarchical multiple regression models were conducted. Separate models were conducted for each emotion (i.e., embarrassment, pride), moderator (i.e., familism value, family assistance attitudes), and dependent variable (i.e., depressive symptoms, acculturative stress). As exploratory analyses, we also conducted separate regressions for each familism subscale (i.e., familism support, familism obligation, familism referent). However, findings did not differ by subscale (see Supplemental Material). Predictors were mean-centered and used to create the interaction terms. All models controlled for participant gender and immigrant generation status. Variables were entered as follows: Step 1 included gender and immigrant generation status, Step 2 included main effects of emotion brokering frequency, emotion type (embarrassment, pride), and moderators (familism, family assistance attitudes), and Step 3 included the interactions between brokering frequency and moderators, and emotions and moderators. Analyses were conducted in SPSS Version 29. Again, unadjusted *p* values are reported given the distinct inferences drawn for each hypothesis (Rubin, 2024).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Women reported greater emotion brokering frequency, lower endorsement of familism, and greater depressive symptoms and acculturative stress than men (see Table 4). Emotion brokering frequency was positively correlated with pride when emotion brokering, family assistance attitudes, and acculturative stress. Embarrassment when emotion brokering was positively correlated with pride when emotion brokering, family assistance attitudes, depressive symptoms, and acculturative stress. Finally, pride when emotion brokering was positively correlated with familism and family assistance attitudes, and negatively correlated with depressive symptoms (see Table 5).

Aim 1: Familism, Emotion Brokering, and Psychological Adjustment

For each set of regressions, we report the unstandardized regression coefficients in text and the standardized regression

Table 4
Study 2: Descriptive Statistics for EB, Depressive Symptoms, and Acculturative Stress

Variable	Overall		Men		Women					
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t* value	95% CI	*p*	*d*
1. EB frequency	1.35	0.90	1.17	0.73	1.48	0.99	−2.66	[−0.53, −0.08]	.01	−.34
2. EB embarrassment	1.69	0.51	1.64	0.51	1.72	0.52	−1.24	[−0.22, 0.05]	.22	−.17
3. EB pride	2.91	0.63	2.85	0.70	2.96	0.58	−1.17	[−0.28, 0.07]	.24	−.16
4. Familism	3.11	0.81	3.33	0.76	2.96	0.82	3.78	[0.18, 0.56]	<.001	.46
5. Family assistance attitudes	2.83	0.57	2.85	0.53	2.81	0.60	0.54	[−0.11, 0.19]	.59	.07
6. Depressive symptoms	21.26	11.16	18.97	10.70	22.97	11.22	−2.97	[−6.66, −1.35]	.003	−.36
7. Acculturative stress	42.39	21.52	36.84	20.52	46.46	21.38	−3.78	[−14.64, −4.61]	<.001	−.46

Note. CI = confidence interval; EB = emotion brokering.

coefficients (i.e., the effect size estimates) in Tables 6 and 7. We first examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, embarrassment when emotion brokering, familism, and their interactions were associated with depressive symptoms (see Table 6, left panel). There was a significant main effect for embarrassment when emotion brokering ($b = 4.42$, $p = .003$). There were no other significant main (i.e., emotion brokering frequency, familism) or interaction effects (Emotion Brokering Frequency × Familism, or Embarrassment × Familism).

Next, we examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, embarrassment when emotion brokering, familism, and their interactions were associated with acculturative stress (see Table 6, right panel). There were significant main effects for emotion brokering frequency ($b = 3.05$, $p = .04$), embarrassment when emotion brokering ($b = 5.93$, $p = .02$), and familism ($b = 3.87$, $p = .02$). However, the Emotion Brokering Frequency × Familism and Embarrassment × Familism interaction effects were not significant.

We then examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, pride when emotion brokering, familism, and their interactions were associated with depressive symptoms (see Table 6, left panel). The regression model revealed a significant main effect for pride ($b = -4.19$, $p < .001$) when emotion brokering. There were no other significant main (i.e., emotion brokering frequency, familism) or interaction effects (Emotion Brokering Frequency × Familism, or Pride × Familism).

Finally, we examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, pride when emotion brokering, familism, and their interactions were associated with acculturative stress (see Table 6, right panel). The regression model revealed significant main effects for emotion brokering frequency ($b = 3.49$, $p = .02$), familism ($b = 3.86$, $p = .03$), and acculturative stress. There were no other significant main (i.e., pride) or interaction effects (Emotion Brokering Frequency × Familism, or Pride × Familism).

Aim 2: Family Assistance Attitudes, Emotion Brokering, and Psychological Adjustment

We first examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, embarrassment when emotion brokering, family assistance attitudes, and their interactions were associated with depressive symptoms (see Table 7, left panel). There was a significant main effect for embarrassment when emotion brokering ($b = 4.34$, $p = .004$), but not emotion brokering frequency or family assistance attitudes. There was no significant interaction between emotion brokering frequency and family assistance attitudes. Interestingly, there was a significant interaction between Embarrassment × Family Assistance Attitudes ($b = -7.26$, $p = .004$). Specifically, the positive relationship between embarrassment when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms was evident among those who had lower endorsement of family assistance attitudes (see Figure 1c).

Next, we examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, embarrassment when brokering, family assistance attitudes, and their interactions were associated with acculturative stress (see Table 7, right panel). There were significant main effects for embarrassment when emotion brokering ($b = 7.55$, $p = .01$) and family assistance attitudes ($b = 6.24$, $p = .02$). There was no significant main effect for emotion brokering frequency and no significant Emotion Brokering Frequency × Family Assistance

Table 5
Study 2: Zero-Order Correlations Between Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. EB frequency	—						
2. EB embarrassment	.08	—					
3. EB pride	.21**	−.23**	—				
4. Familism	−.05	−.08	.19**	—			
5. Family assistance attitudes	.30**	−.25**	.44**	.20**	—		
6. Depressive symptoms	−.01	.21**	−.21**	−.05	−.08	—	
7. Acculturative stress	.18**	.16*	.03	.12*	.13*	.44**	—

Note. EB = emotion brokering.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6

Study 2: Hierarchical Regression Models Examining the Effects of Emotions When Brokering and Familism and (a) Depressive Symptoms and (b) Acculturative Stress

Predictor	Outcome = depressive symptom			Outcome = acculturative stress		
	ΔR^2	β	95% CI	ΔR^2	β	95% CI
Step 1	.03*			.05**		
Gender		.17*	[0.88, 6.86]		.23***	[3.93, 14.76]
Immigrant generation status		.02	[−2.57, 3.69]		.002	[−5.60, 5.73]
Step 2	.04*			.06**		
EB frequency		−.05	[−2.30, 1.01]		.13*	[0.09, 6.02]
EB embarrassment		.20**	[1.57, 7.26]		.15*	[0.83, 11.02]
Familism		.01	[−1.81, 1.95]		.15*	[0.50, 7.23]
Step 3	.004			.01		
EB Frequency × Familism		.03	[−1.60, 2.57]		.002	[−3.70, 3.78]
EB Embarrassment × Familism		−.06	[−5.08, 1.89]		−.08	[−9.96, 2.52]
Step 1	.03*			.05**		
Gender		.17*	[0.88, 6.86]		.23***	[3.93, 14.76]
Immigrant generation status		.02	[−2.57, 3.69]		.002	[−5.60, 5.73]
Step 2	.05**			.04*		
EB frequency		.01	[−1.58, 1.77]		.15*	[0.44, 6.54]
EB pride		−.24***	[−6.59, −1.79]		−.04	[−5.77, 2.98]
Familism		.04	[−1.30, 2.52]		.15*	[0.38, 7.34]
Step 3	.001			.001		
EB Frequency × Familism		.02	[−1.75, 2.34]		−.02	[−4.30, 3.15]
EB Pride × Familism		−.02	[−3.33, 2.58]		.02	[−4.58, 6.17]

Note. Reported regression coefficients represent standardized βs. CI = confidence interval; EB = emotion brokering.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Attitudes or Embarrassment × Family Assistance Attitudes interactions.

We then examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, pride when emotion brokering, family assistance attitudes, and their interactions were associated with depressive symptoms (see Table 7, left panel). The regression model revealed a significant main effect for pride ($b = -4.28$, $p = .001$), but no significant main effects for emotion brokering frequency or family assistance attitudes. There was no significant Pride × Family Assistance Attitudes interaction. There was, however, a significant Pride × Family Assistance Attitudes interaction ($b = 3.85$, $p = .05$). Specifically, the negative relationship between pride when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms was

Table 7

Study 2: Hierarchical Regression Models Examining the Effects of Emotions When Brokering and Family Assistance Attitudes on Emotion Brokering on (a) Depressive Symptoms and (b) Acculturative Stress

Predictor	Outcome = depressive symptom			Outcome = acculturative stress		
	ΔR^2	β	95% CI	ΔR^2	β	95% CI
Step 1	.03*			.05**		
Gender		.17*	[0.86, 6.82]		.21**	[3.57, 14.75]
Immigrant generation status		.02	[−2.56, 3.68]		.02	[−4.83, 6.66]
Step 2	.04*			.06*		
EB frequency		−.05	[−2.38, 1.13]		.09	[−1.12, 5.33]
EB embarrassment		.20**	[1.39, 7.30]		.18**	[2.07, 13.03
Family assistance attitudes		−.01	[−2.99, 2.67]		.17*	[1.02, 11.47]
Step 3	.04**			.01		
EB Frequency × Family Assistance Attitudes		.07	[−1.29, 4.25]		.06	[−2.59, 7.88]
EB Embarrassment × Family Assistance Attitudes		−.20**	[−12.10, −2.41]		−.08	[−14.54, 3.76]
Step 1	.03*			.05**		
Gender		.17*	[0.86, 6.82]		.21**	[3.57, 14.75]
Immigrant generation status		.02	[−2.56, 3.68]		.02	[−4.83, 6.66]
Step 2	.05**			.04*		
EB frequency		−.003	[−1.76, 1.69]		.12	[−0.35, 6.14]
EB pride		−.24**	[−6.84, −1.72]		−.08	[−7.44, 2.26]
Family assistance attitudes		−.04	[−2.25, 3.68]		.15	[−0.13, 11.06]
Step 3	.02			.004		
EB Frequency × Family Assistance Attitudes		.06	[−1.51, 4.10]		.07	[−2.63, 8.10]
EB Pride × Family Assistance Attitudes		.13*	[0.08, 7.62]		.01	[−6.79, 7.53]

Note. Reported regression coefficients represent standardized βs. CI = confidence interval; EB = emotion brokering.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

stronger among those with lower endorsement of family assistance attitudes (Figure 1d).

Finally, we examined how the frequency of emotion brokering, pride when emotion brokering, family assistance attitudes, and their interactions were associated with acculturative stress (see Table 7, right panel). There were no significant main (i.e., emotion brokering frequency, pride, family assistance values) or interaction effects (Emotion Brokering Frequency × Family Assistance Attitudes or Pride × Family Assistance Attitudes interactions).

Discussion

Study 2 expanded the understanding of emotion brokering by examining the role of cultural factors in the relationship between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment.

Contrary to our hypotheses and prior findings on cultural brokering (Hua & Costigan, 2012; Rainey et al., 2020), analyses revealed no moderating role of familism on emotion brokering frequency and psychological adjustment (neither depressive symptoms nor acculturative stress). In addition, there was no moderating effect of familism on the relationship between the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and psychological adjustment. Further analyses investigating these associations for each familism subscale (i.e., familism support, familism obligations, familism referent) also revealed no moderating effects. Taken together, evidence suggests that cultural factors other than familism may play a greater role in understanding predictors of psychological adjustment among this sample.

Interestingly, family assistance attitudes also did not moderate the relationship between emotion brokering frequency and psychological adjustment (neither depressive symptoms nor acculturative stress). Rather, findings indicated that family assistant attitudes moderated the relationship between the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms. Partially consistent with our hypotheses, greater experiences of embarrassment predicted greater depressive symptoms among those who reported lower family assistance attitudes. Additionally, although pride buffered depressive symptoms overall, the negative relationship between pride and depressive symptoms was stronger among those with lower family assistance attitudes. Thus, associations between emotions experienced when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms were stronger among those with lower family assistance attitudes. These findings suggest that pride when emotion brokering may be particularly protective among those with lower family assistance attitudes. Findings suggest that emotions play an important role in determining the relationship between family assistance behaviors and psychological adjustment (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009). Interestingly, these moderation effects were not present in the relationship between emotion brokering and acculturative stress. Thus, family assistance attitudes may be more important in understanding socioemotional aspects of psychological adjustment and not acculturative stress. Taken together, these findings reveal the value of assessing heterogeneity in individuals' cultural values in understanding cultural brokers' experiences.

General Discussion

This investigation examined associations between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment among Latinx college students. Study 1 demonstrated that emotion brokering is an impactful experience that is distinguishable from language brokering in its frequency and associations with psychological adjustment. Study 2 further elucidated how attitudes toward brokering as a family assistance behavior moderated the relationships between the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms (but not acculturative stress). Overall, our studies broaden the understanding of distinct forms of cultural brokering. Specifically, findings demonstrate the associations between distinct forms of cultural brokering and psychological adjustment and extend knowledge on the emotionality of the cultural brokering experience.

Embarrassment and Pride When Emotion Brokering

We examined the role that discrete emotions play in the relationship between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms, acculturative stress). Whereas Study 1 asked participants about their overall embarrassment and pride when emotion brokering, Study 2 asked participants to rate their embarrassment and pride for themselves, their family, and their cultural identities. Across these two studies, we found consistent evidence that embarrassment and pride (irrespective of their source) were key predictors of psychological adjustment among individuals who report emotion brokering.

Embarrassment when emotion brokering was a predictor of depressive symptoms across both studies. Theoretical accounts suggest that embarrassment corresponds with a negative evaluation of the public self (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Greater reported embarrassment when emotion brokering compared to language brokering (Study 1) suggests that emotion brokering contexts may be particularly likely to involve negative self-evaluation. The high-stakes nature and social demands present in emotion brokering may explain these findings. For example, emotion brokering involves inferring mental states from multiple social partners and may result in uncertainty and potential errors. Additionally, associations between embarrassment and the loss of self-esteem may underpin these findings (e.g., Keltner & Buswell, 1997). Frequent experiences of embarrassment when emotion brokering may result in an ongoing loss of self-esteem, and corresponding increased vulnerability to depressive symptoms. However, given the cross-sectional nature of these studies, it is equally possible that individuals vulnerable to depressive symptoms are more prone to experiences of embarrassment when emotion brokering. Further research is needed to test the veracity of these possible explanations.

We also found that greater pride when emotion brokering was negatively associated with acculturative stress among individuals who reported more frequent emotion brokering (Study 1) and negatively associated with depressive symptoms for individuals reporting lower family assistance attitudes (Study 2). Pride when emotion brokering may foster participants' sense of achievement and self-efficacy related to their social and emotion competence (Tracy & Robins, 2004). Given the role of pride in the development of social bonds and social capital (Williams & DeSteno, 2009), pride may be adaptive when individuals' minority status is salient (e.g., in brokering settings with unequal power dynamics; Crafter & Iqbal, 2022). It is noteworthy that the negative associations between pride when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms were stronger among those who reported lower family assistance attitudes (Study 2). This

suggests that the personal sense of achievement and self-esteem benefits may be particularly meaningful among individuals who have lower endorsement of emotion brokering as a way to support the family. Importantly, given the bidirectional nature of these studies, it is not possible to identify causality in these findings. For instance, self-esteem enhancements associated with a sense of achievement when emotion brokering may predict lower depressive symptoms. Alternatively, individuals who report lower depressive symptoms may be more likely to appraise emotion brokering as a source of personal achievement.

Implications for Cultural Brokering and Psychological Adjustment

This investigation underscores the importance of examining the relationships between distinct forms of cultural brokering and psychological adjustment. The majority of research on cultural brokering and psychological adjustment focuses on language brokering (Shen et al., 2022). Thus, less is known about how distinct forms of cultural brokering may predict psychological adjustment. As illustrated in Study 1, different forms of cultural brokering may have distinct associations with depressive symptoms and acculturative stress. For instance, whereas prior research suggests that positive affect when language brokering does not predict acculturative stress (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014b), we demonstrate that pride when emotion brokering is associated with lower acculturative stress among those who broker emotions frequently (when controlling for pride when language brokering). Furthermore, we identified that embarrassment when emotion brokering predicted depressive symptoms but not acculturative stress (Study 1). These findings indicate the importance of clarifying and distinguishing the various types of cultural brokering.

Our findings also emphasize the role of emotionality in the cultural brokering experience. Distinct from most research in cultural brokering (see Shen et al., 2022), we examined the role of discrete, self-conscious emotions (rather than composite measures of negative affect) in the brokering experience. Interestingly, overall ratings of embarrassment and pride show that participants reported greater pride than embarrassment when engaging in both types of brokering (Study 1). These ratings highlight that although brokering can be laborious, it also can be a rewarding experience (see Dorner et al., 2008). Beyond capturing both negative and positive discrete emotions, the present studies also demonstrate the value of considering variability in these emotions as predictors of psychological adjustment among cultural brokers. Moreover, we demonstrate that beliefs related to family assistance play a role in the extent to which these emotions predict depressive symptoms among this Latinx sample. Taken together, these findings elucidate the role of emotions as a predictor of well-being (Consedine & Moskowitz, 2007; Stein et al., 2019) and identify emotions and cultural values as a source of heterogeneity among Latinx cultural brokers (Harwood et al., 2002).

Limitations, Future Directions, and Constraints on Generality

First, additional research is needed to examine other discrete emotions (e.g., fear, contempt) experienced when brokering and the subsequent outcomes for the individual. Second, longitudinal research is needed to determine causality, as well as the possible immediate and downstream consequences for psychological adjustment. For example, youth may experience greater embarrassment when brokering during early adolescence but greater pride in later adolescence as they develop socially. Third, small effect sizes in the present study provide a need to examine emotion brokering in the context of other cultural stressors related to having a minoritized identity (e.g., discrimination). Finally, given that emotion brokering typically occurs in the context of the parent–child relationship (Subramoney et al., 2024), future research should investigate the role of relationship quality (e.g., support) as a potential mediator of the relationships between the emotions experienced when emotion brokering and psychological adjustment.

There are several important factors to consider when interpreting the present findings. First, the investigation was conducted among a Latinx college student sample, many of whom were from immigrant families. However, these findings may not generalize to other samples, such as individuals not in college or from nonimmigrant families. Second, participants' bilingual experience may have influenced aspects of these results. Further research should explore how linguistic expertise shapes the emotion brokering process. Finally, data in Study 1 were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and data in Study 2 were collected after the restrictions were lifted. Thus, the findings may be subject to cohort effects (e.g., brokering frequency may have been affected by social distancing policies). Even so, the findings are important given the need to study mental health among vulnerable populations, particularly Latinxs' who were already at increased risk of depressive symptoms (Estrada-Martínez et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This investigation is the first to identify the associations between emotion brokering and psychological adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms, acculturative stress) among Latinx college students. Our findings demonstrate that (a) emotion brokering is distinguishable from language brokering in its frequency and associations with depressive symptoms and acculturative stress, and (b) family assistance values moderate the relationships between experiences of embarrassment and pride when emotion brokering and depressive symptoms. Our findings have important implications for understanding psychological adjustment among youth who serve as cultural brokers. Findings indicate the importance of considering the forms of emotional labor that children of immigrants manage, as well as how variability in specific emotions experienced during such labor can exacerbate or ameliorate psychological adjustment. Moreover, these findings also have practical implications for individuals who broker, as well as those with whom they may interact (e.g., school counselors). Taken together, the studies highlight the crucial need for research investigating emotions in intercultural communication, the role young people play in mitigating potential communication gaps, and how such experiences impact individuals.

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