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Decoding the Hidden Curriculum: Latino/a First-Generation College Students' Influence on Younger Siblings' Educational Trajectory

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ABSTRACT

Past research demonstrates that familial and community support can aid the academic success of Latino/a students. However, few studies explore how older siblings influence their younger siblings' education trajectory including primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. Drawing on 25 in-depth interviews with Latino/a first-generation college students at a large research university in Southern California, I find that older siblings assist their younger family members by (a) choosing schools, (b) assisting with reading comprehension, (c) helping with homework assignments, and (d) post-high school preparation. In doing so, they demystify norms and rules about education and attempt to position their loved ones on a path of upward mobility. I capture the labor Latino/a children of immigrants provide to their families and how these contributions can result in tensions between parents and children. Findings advance scholarship on intra-immigrant family brokering, Latino/a families, and education.

KEYWORDS

Children of Immigrants;
Latino/a first generation
college students; Latino/a
Families; education

Introduction

"...I did an education plan for my sisters. It had the classes they had to take... I created an educational plan because that's what I learned and that's not something you would get so easily anywhere! You would have to wait for a counselor for like three weeks to access them! I know that I have to go back to my sisters like "hey this is how you do it and maneuver your way around" – Jacob, 2nd year University of California (UC) student

Jacob is part of the 3.4 million Latino/a students who attend 4 year colleges across the US (NCES, 2020). Like most first-generation college students, Jacob struggled to navigate his classes, and the unspoken norms in-and-outside the classroom. Now, as his younger sisters have become of high school age, he sits with them and shares tips on how to achieve academic success – a strategy that many children of immigrants partake in (Alfaro & Umaña-Taylor 2010; Azmitia et al., 2009; Ceja, 2006; Cooper et al., 1999; Dockett & Perry 2013; Flores 2018; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007; Katz 2014; Louie 2012; McDade 2012; Puente & Simpkins 2019; Seginer 1992; Valenzuela, 1999; Obied, 2009; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002; Volk, 1999). Jacob's younger sister expressed interest in pursuing a Bachelor's of Science at a local UC and he created an "education plan" in which he detailed what courses she needed to take and a timeline for her degree completion. Older siblings in immigrant families often take on a quasi-parent role as they help their families navigate educational institutions and broader US society (Buriel et al., 1998; Dorner et al., 2008; Jones & Trickett, 2005; Katz 2014; Valenzuela, 1999; Morales & Hanson, 2005; Orellana et al., 2003; Trickett & Jones, 2007; Tse, 1995, 1996; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002).

In the context of education, scholars have directed their attention to unravel how familial and community support can aid the academic success of Latino/a students. Parents of Latino/a students are

shown to be key advocates of higher education (Brown et al., 2003; Ceballo, 2004; Ceballo et al., 2014; Ceja, 2004; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Valencia, 2002); however, they lack the ability to share tangible and intangible resources that can direct their children toward post-secondary education (Brown et al., 2003; Ceja, 2004; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Tornatzky et al., 2002). Siblings, peers, mentors, teachers, local programing, and organizations often help bridge these gaps by providing resources and guidance on the college-going process (Dennis et al., 2005; Flores, 2017; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Hurtado et al., 1996; Valenzuela, 2005 Yasuike 2019). In Latino/a immigrant families, studies show that older siblings take on a “teacher role” in their households for both the parents and younger children (Valenzuela, 1999; Orellana, 2009; Volk, 1999). Much of this research centers on how the eldest child helps their younger siblings in primary schooling *or* college enrollment. However, there are few empirical studies that elucidate how Latino/a first-generation college students share educational resources to their younger siblings during their primary, secondary, and post-secondary schooling.

The purpose of this paper is to capture how Latino/a first-generation college students assist in their younger kin’s schooling – from preschool to the labor market. Participants drew on their own experiences in school to help their parents and younger siblings decode the hidden curriculum; that is, the unspoken transmission of norms, values, and beliefs at school (Jackson 1990). Drawing on 25 in-depth interviews with Latino/a first-generation college students at a large research university in Southern California, I find that participants decoded the hidden curriculum by (a) choosing schools, (b) assisting with reading comprehension, (c) helping with homework assignments, and (d) post-high school preparation. By broadening the scope of how older siblings help their younger siblings’ entire educational trajectory, I capture the important labor Latino/a children of immigrants provide to their families. Exploring the contributions of the eldest child also illuminates how assistance shifts as their younger siblings come of age – producing tensions and disagreements among family members.

This work builds on the following literatures. First, I add to the growing body of literature on “brokering” in immigrant families. This research focuses on how youth serve as language, cultural, and legal brokers for their immigrant parents (Delgado, 2020; Jones & Trickett, 2005; Tse, 1995, 1996). However, I contribute to this literature by demonstrating how brokering can take place among siblings in immigrant families. Next, I add to the research on Latino/a familism (Updegraff et al., 2005; Zinn 1982). I show how Latino/a siblings share resources to achieve academic success; however, I move away from romanticized notions of familism to demonstrate that helping can also result in tension, frustration, and stress on the older children. Finally, I shed light on how Latino/a immigrant families work together to decode the hidden curriculum and assert their own agency to navigate hegemonic educational institutions in an effort to position their younger siblings on a path of upward mobility.

Educational attainment among Latinos/as and the hidden curriculum

While Latino/a children of immigrants are one of the fastest growing segments of the US youth population, they continue to face many barriers in matriculating and graduating from four-year colleges (Becerra, 2010; Lutz, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009; Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). A context of systematic disadvantage has led them to live in poverty with low resourced and under-funded schools, develop achievement gaps, experience cultural mismatch, and be primary targets of English Language Learner (ELLs) programs (Flores, 2017; Gloria et al., 2005; Valenzuela, 2005). These factors have coalesced into struggles with post-secondary education and future career prospects (Conchas, 2001; Shinnar, 2007; Terriquez, 2014). Children of Latino/a immigrants are also more likely to have parents who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and have difficulties with the English language, which can directly influence their social and economic mobility (Feliciano, 2005; Lee & Zhou, 2015; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Latino/a first-generation college students are often forced to navigate educational institutions that lack the proper resources to enable their success.

Previous research has established that family support and parental encouragement are strong predictors of academic success for Latino/a first-generation college students (Brown et al., 2003;

Ceballo, 2004; Ceballo et al., 2014; Ceja, 2004; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Goldenberg et al., 2005; Valencia, 2002). Familial involvement bolsters achievement when parents have a strong commitment to education, offer encouragement, and provide financial help (Ceballo, 2004). However, Latino/a immigrant parents can face difficulties in providing tangible resources about high school or post-secondary education (Brown et al., 2003; Ceja, 2004, 2006; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Tornatzky et al., 2002). This lack of knowledge on US schooling can inadvertently hinder the educational trajectory of Latino/a students from immigrant families.

Sociologists have documented how the hidden curriculum is a way inequality is generated in schools (Jackson 1990). The hidden curriculum can serve as a tool to maintain stratification in hegemonic structures through racial and class lines (Apple, 2004; McLaren 2007; Margolis, 2002). For Latino/a students, unspoken norms can manifest into difficulties with learning course material, hinder access to opportunities, even lead to struggles with their own ethnic identity (Darder, 1995; Langhout & Mitchell, 2008; Moll, 1988; Reyes, 2018). Latino/a students can be subject to racialized stereotypes, have educators place little value on their culture, and lack support from school officials and teachers (Flores, 2017; Ochoa, 2013; Valenzuela, 2005). Given the great impact the hidden curriculum can have on Latino/a students' educational outcomes, I turn my attention to how Latino/a immigrant families work together to bridge resources, share capital, and transmit knowledge about navigating US schooling.

Brokering and sharing resources among Latino/a siblings

While most research on immigrant brokering focuses on parent–child relationships, there are some studies that address how older siblings serve as brokers in their younger siblings' education. Scholars use the term “broker” to shed light on how youth help their immigrant families navigate linguistic, cultural, and legal issues (Delgado, 2020; Foner & Dreby, 2011; Jones & Trickett, 2005; Morales & Hanson, 2005; Orellana, 2009; Tse, 1995, 1996; Weisskirch, 2010). This brokering role emerges due to “role reversal” in which youth's acculturation surpasses that of their parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). The eldest child in immigrant households may serve as a “surrogate parent” to their younger siblings (Valenzuela, 1999).

Older siblings play a crucial role in immigrant families as they act as “teachers” and “tutors” for both their parents and younger children (Valenzuela, 1999). The eldest child is usually responsible for sibling care which can include watching over younger siblings while parents are at work, preparing meals, transporting, and performing household chores (Valenzuela, 1999; Orellana, 2009; Orellana et al., 2003; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008). Youth can also act as cultural educators as they assist with literary development by reading storybooks to their younger siblings, encouraging vocabulary development, and checking homework assignments (Dorner et al., 2008; Flores 2018; Kibler et al., 2016; Orellana, 2009; Orellana et al., 2003; Reynolds et al., 2011). Older siblings work alongside with their parents to ensure the younger children in the family stay on top of their homework assignments and school related activities.

Scholars have paid special attention to how older siblings facilitate college access (Ceja, 2004, 2006; Cooper et al., 1999; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007; Perez, 2010). Latinos/as college students note that siblings are a source of motivation and seek to do well in school in order to demystify the college process for their siblings (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Latino/a students who successfully navigate higher education can help their siblings by influencing their educational aspirations, sharing strategies on how to enroll and succeed in college, and providing socioemotional support (Buriel & De Ment, 1997; Ceja, 2006; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007; Valdés, 1996). This research establishes that older siblings serve as key sources of information and support in their younger siblings' post-secondary education.

Most studies on brokering and sibling relationships focus on either elementary school or college, not both. Few studies capture the labor older siblings do for their younger siblings' in K-12 *and* post-high school (see Bouchey et al., 2010; Wang et al. 2019 for exceptions). In addition to this, much of the

post-high school research centers on college with little mention of how older siblings influence the career choices of their younger family members. Exploring the labor older children contribute to their families is important because it highlights how youth manage other children's education (on top of their own), the socioemotional consequences this can bring for siblings, and how children and parents in immigrant families work together to access resources.

Grounding sibling support in Social Exchange Theory

I draw on Social Exchange Theory to explore the role of first generation college students in their younger kin's educational trajectory. Social Exchange Theory is defined as the exchange of activities – both tangible and intangible – between at least two persons (Cook et al., 2013; Homans, 1958). In the family context, this framework suggests that social relationships among family members consist of exchanges to which individuals maximize the resources in their households. Previous scholars have used Social Exchange Theory to capture the contributions of children of immigrants to their siblings and parents (Lanuza, 2017; Lanuza & Bandelj, 2015; McHale et al., 2012).

As detailed in the previous sections, Latino/a immigrant parents often have limited resources and cannot provide the tangible resources needed for their children to achieve academic success. The brokering literature is useful in highlighting how children of immigrants – particularly first-generation Latino/a college students – can step in to fill these gaps by sharing educational resources, tips, and advice. In doing so, they demystify norms and rules about education and try to position their loved ones on a path of upward mobility.

In exchanging resources, past research has paid little attention to socioemotional consequences that can arise among siblings. The brokering literature acknowledges that helping can become a source of tension and strain among familial relationships (Mercado, 2003; Morales et al., 2012; Orellana, 2009; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). In applying Social Exchange Theory, I pay special attention to how older siblings help their younger siblings decode the hidden curriculum but also the socioemotional consequences of helping that emerges among siblings.

Data and methods

Participants and sample characteristics

This study is based on 25 in-depth interviews with Latino/a first-generation college students (18–25) at a large research university in Southern California. All participants identified as children of Latino/a immigrants and lived in the greater Los Angeles area including Orange County and San Bernardino County. Interviews took place between December 2018 and June 2019. All but one of the participants were of Mexican descent.

Interviews were part of a pilot study of a larger qualitative study that explores how children of immigrants serve as language, cultural, and legal brokers. This paper focuses on participants who shared their contributions to their siblings' educational trajectory. Pseudonyms are used in the manuscript to protect participants' identity. I received Institutional Review Board approval at the University of California, Irvine.

Sampling technique

I recruited college students who identified as Latino/a children of immigrants through snowball sampling technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). I shared my research and its objectives with an undergraduate student whom I had developed a close relationship through a summer research internship. This student shared flyers to her personal networks and several college Latina/o/x organizations. Participants also referred individuals in their networks to be part of the project. A total of 25 students agreed to be part of the study. Gender is skewed in this study as 17 women and 8 men agreed to be part of the study (see Table 1). Upon sharing the study objectives with the participants, I received oral consent from each interviewee. Each participant received a \$20 USD cash

Table 1. Sample characteristics (N = 25).

Name	Gender	Year in School	# of younger siblings	# of older siblings
Lizabeth	F	2 nd	1 (age: 14)	1 (age: 30)
Armando	M	Recent graduate	0	2 (ages: 25, 28)
Rebecca	F	Recent graduate	0	1 (age: 26)
Yadira	F	3 rd	3 (ages: 18, 14, 2)	0
Brenda	F	2 nd	3 (ages: 20, 10, 7)	0
Ashley	F	1 st	0	1 (age: 24)
Maria	F	1 st	0	0
Linda	F	3 rd	0	0
Randy	M	3 rd	1 (age: 3)	0
Yvette	F	1 st	2 (ages: 8, 3)	0
Steven	M	2 nd	2 (ages: 10, 7)	1 (ages: 29)
Andrea	F	4 th	2 (ages: 18, 12)	0
Jacob	M	3 rd	3 (ages: 17, 17, 11)	0
Andrew	M	2 nd	2 (ages: 16, 14)	0
Esmeralda	F	4 th	1 (age: 21)	1 (age: 28)
Miguel	M	Recent graduate	1 (age: 19)	0
Brenda	F	1 st	3 (ages: 17, 16, 3)	0
Jaqueline	F	4 th	1 (age: 13)	0
Yvonne	F	1 st	1 (age 7)	0
Sara	F	Recent graduate	2 (age: 9, 13)	3 (ages: 26, 28, 31)
Marina	F	3 rd	2 (ages: 18, 16)	1 (age: 22)
Lisa	F	4 th	2 (ages: 12, 10)	2 (ages: 28, 26)
Suzi	F	4 th	0	0
Aaron	M	1 st	0	1 (age 24)
Michael	M	2 nd	1 (age: 15)	1 (age: 23)

incentive at the end of the interview. Funding was provided by The University of California Institute for Mexico and the United States (UC MEXUS) and National Science Foundation (NSF) grant.

Interview content

Each interview lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Using a semi-structured interview guide, I collected information about their background, educational trajectory, their experiences as a broker in childhood, adolescence, and in young adulthood. Students detailed their experiences how they helped their parents and the consequences this had on themselves and their parents. I also asked the participants to share explicit examples of how they helped their younger siblings or how their older siblings helped them in their own educational path. I made an effort to capture details about how they helped their siblings and what consequences that had on them and their families. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to maintain a conversational style with each participant. Sharing my own experiences as a broker for my two younger sisters facilitated rapport throughout the interview. Interviews were conducted in English; albeit Spanish was offered to students. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed with the help of two undergraduate research assistants. Once transcribed, documents were uploaded onto NVivo 12 Qualitative Data Analysis Software. I approached my coding through Weiss (2015) analytic method and Charmaz's (2014) focused coding technique. First, I conducted open coding of the data to develop preliminary themes. These themes were also informed by the analytical fieldnotes (i.e., "memos") I wrote right after each interview. These "memos" helped me capture details of the interview and allowed me to develop a written record of how each interview was similar and different. Once I completed open coding, I began to organize salient themes into codes. These were informed by the topics of the interview guide: background information, family relationships, brokering as a young child, brokering among siblings, brokering in education, brokering in social services, brokering legal information, political inclusion and civic engagement, and

integration to the US. Given my interest in the brokering patterns among siblings, I paid special attention to the “family relationships” code. This was a broad code in which captured positive or negative relationships with family members, the labor they provided for their family, and what family meant to them. From the “family relationship” code I began to focus on the interview data that focused on how older siblings shared educational resources to the younger members of their family. I created a separate code titled “older siblings sharing ed resources” and then developed sub-codes that focused on how participants helped their younger siblings or received help from their older brother(s)/sister(s). From these sub-codes, four themes emerged as to *how* educational resources were shared among siblings.

Results

My data suggests that participants influence their younger siblings’ educational trajectory in four ways: (a) choosing schools, (b) assisting with reading comprehension, (c) helping with homework assignments, and (d) post-high school preparation. While much of the research in this area focuses on either primary schooling *or* college-going strategies, I find that participants helped their brothers and sisters in every stage of their education, from preschool to college and into the labor market. In what follows, I provide insight into *how* older siblings share educational resources and *how* they help shape their younger siblings’ educational trajectory at every stage.

Siblings influence school choice: “I’m not going to have him go to a school near my neighborhood”

Helping parents find a school

Participants reported assisting their parents with decisions on what schools would be best for their younger siblings. Numerous studies point out how parents’ social capital and class can influence what schools their children attend (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Horvat et al., 2003; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Levine-Rasky, 2008; Meier, 1999; Parcel & Dufur, 2001; Ream & Rumberger, 2008). However, parents from underrepresented backgrounds face numerous challenges for an equitable education; namely, language barriers, limited financial resources, race discrimination, and legal status (Abrego 2006; Alexander et al., 2014; Conchas, 2001; Lewis, 2003; Ochoa, 2013). Respondents often discussed how these factors shaped their own educational trajectory as many had to “scaffold” resources to attend college (Vygotsky, 1978). My data suggests that children of immigrants actively assert their agency and draw on the capital they have developed throughout their schooling to help their younger siblings.

Randy is a 21-year-old double major in Sociology and Psychology who helps his mom raise his 3-year-old brother. Randy takes his brokering role seriously because his mother is often managing a hectic schedule with working two jobs and caring for her 3-year-old son as a single mother. Growing up, Randy attended a predominately white elementary school. He remembers painful memories of being singled out for being one of the only “brown” kid in his classes. Being at a research university only intensified his racial isolation (Reyes, 2018). He wanted to make sure his little brother did not experience the same challenges but also received the best quality education possible. Drawing on the networks and capital he gained through his schooling, Randy tried to enroll his brother in the best preschool he could find in the greater Los Angeles area:

Randy: Ever since I started at UC and I got in those connections. I started researching programs, resources that he has [access to], or if there’s programs available for him from early age till he’s done with school. I will be his shadow when it comes to education and getting him a career.

Vanessa: Have you looked at preschool?

Randy: Yeah. I know I shouldn’t do that, but I know for a fact I’m not going to have him go to a school near my neighborhood but try to look for most importantly multi-racial school. I don’t want to put

him into a school where it's Caucasian majority. Not like, I guess, feel white, but not internalize or think or get to that point where he thinks he's white and he's privileged. No, because I want him to know the oppression that there is in this society and be aware of what he's going to encounter in his day to day life. That's my main priority when looking for schools, and obviously with good readings and stuff like that, but it's mainly have a multicultural school.

Most research in the sociology of education centers on how parents influence their children's schooling. However, my data suggests that children of immigrants play a role in selecting what schools their siblings attend – as early as preschool. When selecting schools, older siblings create decisions of what they believe constitutes a “good school.” Randy vehemently stated that his brother's preschool needed to be a multicultural school. In part, this choice was rooted in his own experience with racial discrimination as a Latino student but also to preserve his brother's ethnic identity. Randy drew on his own schooling and his network at UC to find the best preschool that met his requirements for his little brother.

Encouraging younger siblings to attend a school

Past research has established that Latino/a students heavily rely on their siblings when selecting what college to attend (Ceja, 2004, 2006; Cooper et al., 1999; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007; Perez, 2010; Perez & McDonough, 2008). While much of this research focuses on how Latino/a students help their younger siblings in high school choose colleges, I focus on how older siblings influence the decisions of their younger siblings who have not yet entered high school. Learning how to maneuver through college was a strenuous and frustrating task for the first-generation college students. For instance, the high costs of college, the lack of college resources at his high school, and being the first in his family to graduate high school made Jacob's goal of going to college seem unobtainable. However, Jacob was determined to make it to college. He enrolled in his local community college and later to the University of California. Now, as a top student in his class, Jacob draws on these experiences to share advice to his younger sisters who are in middle school on how to navigate their own postsecondary endeavors:

Jacob: You would have to wait for a counselor for like three weeks to access them! I know that I have to go back to my sisters like “hey this is how you do it and maneuver your way around” and then also with the UCs look at your best options, don't look at the schools and look at school giving you the best support because we get caught up in names and reputations but its more than that. So that's the advice I told them about like look if you're going to do anything look at the program. Just because you didn't get into a specific program doesn't mean you don't have options. You have a lot of options. And don't feel bad about going to community college because there is a stigma about going to community college and they look at you differently.

Many first-generation college students become aware that much of their education deals with navigating the hidden curriculum. Jacob understands first-hand how the lack of this capital can create an unnecessary setback in one's trajectory. He seeks to be a resource for his sisters so they do not have to endure the same negative experiences he had. Their mother actively encouraged higher education and Jacob shared tangible resources to his sisters. Children of immigrants often serve as bridges between their parents and their siblings to promote higher education through advice, material resources, and practical step-by-step guidance.

Older siblings help with reading comprehension: “I force them to read a lot”

Schools often promote that parents should read to their kids 20 minutes a day to increase their reading comprehension and vocabulary. However, for immigrant parents who do not know the English language and work long hours, this is a hard task to complete. My data suggests that older siblings step in for their parents to help their younger siblings develop important cognitive and literary skills. Participants took the initiative to encourage their siblings to read books and complete reading challenges (Kibler et al., 2016; Kibler et al. 2014; Knoester & Plikuhn 2017; Gregory 2001). Parents recognized how reading was conducive to academic success; however, their language barriers inhibited

their ability to read to their children. As a result, some parents asked their older children to be responsible for their younger siblings' reading habits.

Immigrating to the US as a child, Andrea remembers her struggles with English in primary school. Now, as a UC student, she sees how reading and writing can translate into key skills that can boost your prospects in postsecondary education and the labor market. Andrea tries to play an active role in her brother and sister's education:

I force them to read a lot! I'll take them to the library and they would choose whatever book they want. If they do it [read the book], I would reward them with getting pizza or buying ice cream at Jack in the Box. When they would come back with their workbooks in the summer I would tell them, "If you wanted to watch Netflix you have to do these many pages of your workbook and show me how much you finished."

Andrea notes that it difficult to get her siblings to read because she straddles between the role of an authoritarian mother figure and an encouraging sister because "it's hard to get them to listen" to her. Promising her siblings treats such as pizza or ice cream has helped convince her brother and sister to get the reading completed. While most research centers on how parents play an active role in their children's schooling and development, siblings exhibit parent-like roles in which they keep younger siblings accountable for their school work and implement strategies to encourage completion of tasks (Valenzuela, 1999; Orellana, 2009).

While some respondents still lived at home, the majority lived on-campus. Living away from home created fragmented ties between the parents and their younger siblings. Participants became busy with their own school work and their limited interactions at home restricted their power at home. A direct consequence of students leaving for college was that they were no longer able to encourage their siblings to read to the same extent as when they lived at home. Yvette, who is wrapping up her first year in college, shared how her mother could already see a difference in her 8-year-old brother's reading level:

Vanessa: Do you ever help your younger siblings?

Yvette: One [of my siblings] is elementary school and I do help him to read. [Now that I left] my mom says "If you were here, he would already be reading at high school level because you would be helping him." So, I do help him in little things like reading and math.

Parents often courage their eldest child to help the younger siblings (Dorner et al., 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Orellana, 2009; Orellana et al., 2003). Yet, once students left their households, it was difficult for them to keep the same level of involvement in their younger siblings' educational trajectory. Parents, such as Yvette's mother, expressed to the participants how their limited interactions at home negatively impacted the academic performance of the younger children. Children of immigrants played a crucial role in their younger siblings' primary education – in particular, reading comprehension. Yet, as youth transitioned into adulthood and moved away from home, their family ties weakened. Immigrant parents were no longer able to rely on their eldest child to bridge the reading and language gaps at home.

Assisting with homework assignments: "I wouldn't sell my books so I can give it to them"

Numerous studies demonstrate that siblings help each other with their homework (Lanuza, 2017; Orellana, 2001; Orellana, 2009; Orellana et al., 2003; Valenzuela, 1999; Volk, 1999). I also found support for this as participants consistently stated that either their older siblings assisted them in their homework assignments or they were the ones that helped their younger kin. For instance, Lacy, shared that her mother was deeply invested in her education as she consistently encouraged her to pursue higher education. Yet, whenever she had questions about her homework assignments, she reached out to her older sister.

Vanessa: How involved were your parents in your schooling?

Lacy: They [parents] were involved, definitely! My mom would try to make sure that I'm passing my classes or not failing or trying to do my best. But I wouldn't say that they would sit down and do their homework with me or any of that. My older sister would help me with that.

Similarly, other students, such as Andrew, would ensure they kept all their notes from their high school and community college classes to share it with their siblings. Students who engaged in this strategy tried to pass down their notes to ensure their siblings' success in these courses.

Andrew: I would keep all my notes from my class just in case my siblings needed help [so they could reference them] if they were in those classes. Like statistics! I bought a huge notebook so I can purposely keep track of everything, my English, history notes. I wouldn't sell my books if I thought they were important so I can give it to them.

Most research documents how siblings tutor the younglings at one point at time. Through retrospective accounts, my interview data suggests that children of immigrants archive their coursework to save it for their younger siblings. This suggests that older siblings carry this "tutoring" role throughout their educational trajectory.

Participants shared they would go above and beyond to make sure their younger siblings knew they would always be there for any question they may have. Esmeralda shared how she would always make herself available for her younger brother:

Vanessa: Do you ever help your younger brother at school?

Esmeralda: "Yes, all the time! Even with school projects and papers. I was in school and all the time he always came to me, and not so much my older brother. He [younger brother] would be like, "Oh I have to write this paper about this" and I would be like okay "Yes! I can totally help you."

While participants shared their enthusiasm to help, some reported that it came off as a nuisance to their younger kin. This is especially the case when younger kin were not interested in receiving help. Esmeralda noted this as she reflected, "he thinks I'm annoying, but I just want what's best for him! I'm trying to back off a little bit right now." Youth from immigrant families help their parents in raising their younger kin and have to navigate the blurred lines of "sibling" and "pseudo-parent." While parents encourage high achievement and post-secondary education, older siblings share tangible resources that can aid the academic success of their younger siblings.

Post-high school preparation: "You're really good at selling stuff maybe you can do real estate"

Encouraging career paths

In addition to helping in their educational trajectory, older siblings also assisted with helping their younger siblings consider different career paths. Esmeralda heavily encouraged her younger brother to pursue higher education. She became frustrated when her brother would not take her advice and would refuse to talk about the subject. She then decided to move away from persuading higher education and began to encourage him to think about potential careers. In her opinion, his charming personality and his ability to sell items would make him ideal for a career in real estate.

Esmeralda: But even with that you know I really tried to encourage him, why don't you take a class in this? You're really good at selling stuff maybe you can do real estate! He actually ended up doing the real estate license but he didn't get into it but I did try to push him a little bit towards higher education but it didn't work.

Esmeralda originally sought to push her brother toward going to college; however, his limited interest in higher education made her brainstorm about future career prospects for him. Her brother ultimately worked in the real estate industry in Southern California by managing various properties.

Scholars have examined the role of parental influence in their children's career choices (Hairston, 2000; Jodl et al., 2001; Moore, 2006; Sonnert, 2009). Participants, like Esmeralda, consistently shared instances in which they tried to direct their younger siblings into various career paths. Older siblings often examine their siblings' strengths and encourage jobs that their younger kin may like.

Supporting one's younger siblings was not always easy. Participants who were part of mixed-status families – that is, that least one member of the family was undocumented – discussed how legal status played a role in helping their younger siblings. Brenda was an undocumented undergraduate student with a brother and a sister whom were both US citizens. As her brother came into high school age, Brenda began to motivate him to think about future careers. He told her he wanted to become a police officer. However, as an undocumented immigrant, Brenda was reminded of the painful memories of how she wanted a career in law enforcement was not able to do so because of her undocumented status:

Brenda: They don't have to struggle as much as I did [being undocumented]. They have a lot more privilege and I don't really have that and I had to struggle with that. I remember that I really wanted to do law enforcement or like a detective and stuff like that and work with kids in criminal cases and I look at my status and I can't do that. Because you have to be a citizen and my brother likes law enforcement stuff and I tell him well at least you can do it, you should take advantage of that. But I cant.

Children of immigrants perform important labor for their younger siblings. They conduct career assessments of their younger siblings, explore the career requirements, and guide their siblings on how to secure a desired position. However, as Brenda points out, helping siblings can be a painful reminder of the uneven resources that are available in families. Undocumented young adults who have US citizen siblings often help demystify careers that they may not even be able to access themselves.

Promoting higher education

In line with past research that demonstrates that children of immigrants help their siblings attend college (Azmitia et al., 2009; Ceja, 2006; Perez, 2010; Martinez & Cervera, 2012; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Perez & Rodriguez, 2011), my data also falls in line with this work as participants repeatedly stated helping their siblings learn about college, share resources, and assist them through every step of the way.

Sociologists find that college educated individuals can return to their immigrant families and communities and become a social resource (Khachikian & Bandelj, 2019; Vallejo, 2012; Vallejo & Lee, 2009). Participants served as drivers of ethnic and social capital to position their younger siblings for upward mobility. One way in which this process occurred was through the development of educational plans – documents that were created by older siblings that outlined how to complete a degree. When younger siblings asked questions about college, participants opted to draft them an educational plan to let them know how to prepare for college:

Jacob: Both of my sisters want to go to community college. What I learned at the UC was the different requirements things you need to know in order to transfer to UC and after learning about these requirements I did an education plan for my sisters... I created an educational plan because that's what I learned and that's not something you would get so easily anywhere!

As Jacob points out, he steps in to do an educational plan because accessing this information is difficult. He also wants to help his sisters from the numerous mistakes he made as a first-generation college student. Jacob struggled in high school due to lack of guidance and support. He started helping his siblings once he started to excel in his college classes: "I didn't help [my sisters] because I myself was not exposed to these things. I got kicked out of an AP program so what was I supposed to tell them, you know? But I told them about how I got kicked out and what not to do." He drew on those

difficult moments to empower and support his sisters' educational trajectory. Participants also mentioned choosing classes, promoting Advance Placement (AP) classes, providing emotional support, and even paying for their siblings' college.

Children of immigrants must often step in to overcompensation for the lack of resources at their siblings' schools. Like Jacob, Miguel grew up in South Central Los Angeles and rarely heard about college in high school. The lack of guidance made his journey extremely difficult. Now, he tries to help his brother avoid these same mistakes. However, from Miguel's perspective, his brother does not care to listen to his advice:

Vanessa: Do you ever help your younger brother with school?

Miguel: I try to help but he doesn't listen to me! I ask if he wants help and I wanted to help because he wanted to do computer science and I made this education plan and I tell him my experience and what I had to go through. And he hasn't gone through that much. It's not a cake walk but it's not as bad as me. And I always made it through and he even went to private school and I told my mom that he should go to public school. My brother just didn't give a fuck. He's just lazy and all he likes to do is sleep. And I'm just like why? I don't want him to be worst off than me.

Vanessa: What does your mom say about him not wanting your help?

Miguel: She tried to tell me to just do it for him, please. I would help him and guide him but I'm not going to literally pick up his computer and do it for him. I'm not gonna force him to do these things. Especially for me I took the long way through. My mom begs me to help and I will help him but he doesn't want it.

With some exceptions, much of the research on siblings and Latino/a families can inadvertently romanticize the relationships between older and younger siblings. However, my data suggests that sharing information, while largely serves as a benefit for younger siblings, can produce tensions among brothers and sisters. Parents may also apply added pressure to older siblings to help. Older siblings expressed their desire to help but their frustration with younger siblings who did not want any advice. These tensions were amplified when older siblings felt as though they went through great adversity and their younger siblings had not.

Discussion/conclusion

In this paper, I explored how older siblings in Latino/a families help their younger siblings' trajectory from K-12, college, and the labor market. In-depth interviews with Latino/a first-generation college students suggest that older siblings assist by selecting schools, influencing literary and reading development, facilitating homework assignments, and supporting post-high school preparation. Older siblings decoded the hidden curriculum for their immigrant parents and younger siblings as they shared resources and guidance on how to navigate the US schooling system. This finding contributes to literature on immigrant families and sibling support by capturing the labor older siblings provide to their families in nearly every stage of their younger siblings' educational trajectory (Azmitia et al., 2009; Ceja, 2006; Cooper et al., 1999; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007; Obied, 2009; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999; Volk, 1999).

Over the past decade, college enrollment has increased among Latino/a students – contributing to a significant number of Latino/a first-generation college students. In fact, 6 out of 10 first-generation college students are Latino/as (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018). Research has well established that first-generation college students face many difficulties when they maneuver through college with little support or guidance. My findings suggest that Latino/a students draw on their experiences and resources to secure opportunities and promote higher education for their younger siblings. Children of immigrants attempt to demystify US schooling by bridging tangible capital with their parent's high educational aspirations to enable the academic achievement of the younger members of the family.

The findings of this paper demonstrate that children of immigrants not only broker for their parents, but also for their siblings. The brokering literature often centers on parent–child relationships with little attention to how children of immigrants engage in brokering among one another. I find that older children of immigrants perform a significant amount of labor for their families. In addition to helping their parents, they must also decode the hidden curriculum for their younger siblings and share resources that will enable their educational success. Future work should further explore how brokering takes place among siblings.

I move away from romanticized notions of sibling support to show how brokering can be a difficult task for children of immigrants. The findings fall in line with previous work that demonstrates how serving as a broker can be at times a stressful and frustrating role for young adults (Hall & Sham, 2007; Orellana, 2009). I contribute to this work by illuminating how brokering in sibling relationships can also be an added source of strain in immigrant families. Parents place pressure on their older children by asking them to step in and help the younger siblings. In other cases, younger siblings do not want to hear any advice. Among mixed-status families, undocumented young adults help their US citizen siblings acquire information that they are often barred from even accessing. In exploring the labor of children of immigrants, it is imperative scholars take into consideration the socioemotional consequences that arise from this role. Latino/a first-generation college students have the added responsibility of shaping their siblings' educational trajectory – on top of balancing their academics, work obligations, extracurricular activities, and post-graduation preparation. Capturing these contributions and its consequences can help researchers better understand the complex role of a “broker,” which can, in turn, help provide the blueprint for meaningful policy solutions that focus on the well-being of all family members.

The results of this paper set the stage for future research directions on sibling relationships and immigrant families. First, much of the brokering literature focuses on youth with limited attention on how the parents feel about brokering (Weisskirch, 2010). Exploring the perspectives of parents can provide a balanced account of how educational resources are shared in Latino/a immigrant families. This is important given that participants reported receiving some form of pressure from their parents to help their younger siblings. Next, my sample is largely skewed toward women participants which limits my ability to capture gendered differences among the study participants. Future work should explore how gender can influence the extent to which Latinos or Latinas are asked to share resources – particularly because previous work notes gendered differences in the brokering role in Latino/a families (Valenzuela, 1999; Morales & Hanson, 2005; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). Lastly, studies should document how other race/ethnicities navigate the hidden curriculum and distribute educational resources. Other groups, such as Asian American students, may exhibit similar brokering patterns, particularly those who come from historically underrepresented immigrant populations. Further exploring these dynamics of brokering can illuminate how immigrant families work together to navigate a context of disadvantage and historical educational inequity.

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Appendix.

Interview Guide*

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. In this interview, I will ask you different questions about your family, your relationship with your parents, and how you have helped them navigate different tasks. I will record this interview but please let me know if there are any questions you would like to skip. Do you have any questions before we begin?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- (1) Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- (1) What does an average day look like for you?
- (a) Are you a student? If so, do you like? What has your experience been?
- (b) Do you work? How do you like your work? How long have you worked there?

Family Relationships

- (1) Can you tell me a little bit about your family? (probe: parents, siblings, extended family)
- (a) Are your parents together or separated/divorced? What is your relationship with them?
- (2) What is your current living arrangement?
- (a) Do you live at home? On your own?
- (3) What kinds of relationships (positive or negative) do you have with your family members?
- (a) How often do you speak to your parents? (What are things that complicate or facilitate this?)
- (b) How has this changed over time? (probe: childhood, adolescence, young adulthood)
- (4) How much time do you spend with each of your family members?

Helping at home

Often, we hear that because parents don't understand the English language or don't understand some of the culture here in the US they have to ask questions about how to go about things. The next few questions will be geared about experiences you have had or experiences your siblings may have done.

- (1) What sorts of ways do you provide help to your parents or your family?
- (a) i.e. Purchase groceries, pay bills, babysit
- (b) how often to do you have to do this?
- (1) When is the earliest you remember helping your [mom or dad]?
- (a) Which parent tends to ask you to help out more [mom vs dad]?
- (b) How has this changed over time?
- (2) Why do you think you get asked to help [by your mom or dad]?

- (3) What sorts of things do you use to help you give advice to your [mom or dad]?
- (4) Do other family members ask you to help as well?
- (5) Can you describe a time when helping was very stressful?
- (6) Can you describe a positive moment of helping?
- (7) What was the hardest part of helping?
- (8) Why do you choose to help your parents?
- (a) How does it make you feel when your parent relies on you in these situations?

Helping siblings

- (1) Have you ever helped your younger siblings? If so, in what ways?
- (2) In what ways have you helped your sibling in their education?
- (3) What about other settings?

Helping in educational settings

- (1) How involved were your parents in your education?
- (2) Can you tell me a time where you had to help your parent at school?
- (3) Have you faced any difficulties when you had to help?
- (4) How has your immigration status (if undocumented) shaped the way your parents ask for help in the school system?
- (5) Do you ever share opportunities from school to your parents?
- (6) Did your parents ever share opportunities from school to you?
- (7) How involved are your parents in your schooling?

**This interview guide is shortened and only contains questions used in this paper*