

## Giving Voice to Language Brokering Children: Utilizing Altered Art to Process Trauma

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### Abstract

When working with children who language broker, a counselor may benefit from utilizing creative skills and techniques. A child who language brokers may be described as one who is utilized by his or her family to translate and interpret information within a new culture. Although narrative therapy could appropriately be used with these individuals, children who language broker may find it difficult to express their feelings through words. Therefore, incorporating creative therapies into the counseling process can be valuable in aiding expression. This article describes a combined four-step therapeutic approach recommended for use with refugee children who language broker. By utilizing creative therapies in conjunction with narrative therapy, the counselor assists children to tell their stories more clearly. This act of self-disclosure results in the child's increased self-awareness and ultimately encourages improvements in familial relationships. Through the use of old shoes and mixed media, a counselor facilitates and empowers children who language broker to tell their stories and to navigate their complex roles. This article is limited to a review of literature and a single group case study of refugee children who function as language brokers. Further research is needed with formal measurements and within other cultures and environments.

**Keywords:** *Language Broker; Refugee Children; Creative Therapies; Altered Art; Trauma*

### Introduction

Children under the age of 18 represented 52% of the refugee population in 2017 [1,2]. "Refugees are persons who are outside of their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection" [3,4]. The United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees also highlights that these individuals who have fled their country are oftentimes unable or fearful to return home. Relocation brings many challenges to immigrant families as they seek to adapt to their new countries and cultures. Refugee families in particular face both logistical and emotional hurdles. Upon relocating to a new country, these families face a tremendous amount of challenges related to settlement and functioning in a new environment. One of the most significant challenges for these individuals is communication within their new culture. In a qualitative study, Corona and colleagues note that these families commonly utilize their children to interpret and translate information as language brokers [5]. According to Weisskirch, children often acquire new languages at a faster pace than adults or parents. This explains why children often find themselves used as language brokers during this time of adaptation [6].

Looking at trends in the United States, over 12 million children speak a language other than English at home [7]. Having a child serve as a language broker, brings a variety of benefits to the parents. In a study conducted by Orellana, children who language broker were shown to "make it possible for their parents to live, eat, shop and otherwise sustain themselves as workers, citizens and consumers in their host

country” (p. 124) [8]. In the new society, where resources such as professional translators and interpreters may be in short supply, these children provide an essential service in any contexts necessary for immigrant families.

The numbers of immigrants coming to the United States demonstrates the necessity for attending to the special needs of children serving as language brokers for their families. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Immigration Statistics, 1,051,031 persons immigrated to the United States in 2015. These individuals are defined as “foreign nationals who are granted lawful permanent residence (i.e. immigrants who receive a ‘green card’), admitted as temporary non-immigrants, granted asylum or refugee status, or are naturalized” [9].

During the process of immigrating to another country individuals are commonly exposed to traumatizing events, the effects of which are frequently amplified for children [10]. Children experience trauma when they believe a stressful event is personally significant or if they fear the loss of a significant relationship [11]. Children who immigrate to a new country experience a loss not only of their home culture, friends and extended family, but parts of themselves as well. These children may find themselves unable to communicate their struggles and helplessness to their already strained adult family members [12]. Due to their role as language brokers, these children often experience the challenge of role reversal, as the child takes on a parental role. This is negatively related to self-perception in language brokering children [13]. The traumas that these children encounter can be especially difficult to express through verbal communication [14]. Without adequate means to communicate these traumas these children are prone to feelings of alienation and isolation. Gill noted that in working to help these trauma-exposed children process their experiences it is essential that the counselor use techniques that are both culturally and developmentally appropriate [15]. Altered art meets those requirements and provides a non-verbal and visual way to communicate and process trauma.

### Benefits and challenges for children who language broker

There are both benefits and challenges for children who serve as language brokers. Several studies have noted the beneficial effects of language brokering on children [16-19]. When serving as a language broker, children help both their parents and their host society. Additionally, language brokering may help these children become more comfortable in their host culture due to the range of experiences they are afforded. Positive aspects for children who language broker include higher self-esteem, increased maturity, greater academic performance, and accelerated identification with their host culture [18-20]. Pimentel and Sevin found that children who language broker had higher GPAs and standardized test scores compared to their non-language brokering peers [21]. Language brokering helps immigrant children develop necessary skills for academic success. When serving as language brokers, children not only translate verbal communication; they also facilitate understanding in written documents such as labels, instructions, bank statements, report cards, and tax forms. Due to the variety of contexts in which they language broker, children gain practical reading, math, and problem-solving skills [21]. While language brokering may be viewed as an inhibitor to some, Bauer found that language brokering can be beneficial to the child’s moral development, similar to the way that children are expected to complete simple household chores. The acquired “required helpfulness” associated with language brokering has been linked to moral development and maturity, and many children who language broker view it as a responsibility that is consistent with family and kinship values from a cultural perspective [16]. Bauer reported that some children viewed language brokering as a way of “giving back” to their parents and viewed the act of language brokering as a “caring activity”, reporting that language brokering increased their feelings of independence [22]. A study by Chao found that language brokering “may provide opportunities for communication and contact with parents that may contribute to adolescents feeling trusted and needed by parents” (p. 295) [17].

Despite these noted benefits, language brokering can also create some challenges for children and their families. The responsibility of language brokering puts a great amount of pressure on children [23]. Immigrant families utilize their children to translate in a variety of settings and situations, some of which are unfitting for children. Children who language broker are often put in situations in which they are exposed to many issues from which they usually would be protected. For example, when serving as language brokers, children may be exposed medical, financial, or legal information that is typically inappropriate for individuals their age. It may be traumatic for children to interpret for their parents in a medical context, specifically where topics of parents’ sexuality or violence are being discussed [24]. Furthermore, children who language broker oftentimes have to miss school due to their parents’ need for a translator in medical and other

contexts [25]. Adolescent and child language brokers have reported feelings of frustration, fear, anxiety, and even embarrassment [23,26]. The act of language brokering may also be uncomfortable and feel burdensome to children [27-29]. Weisskirch found that when youth reported negative feelings about language brokering, they were also likely to report difficult family interactions [20].

The frequency of language brokering can increase the overall negative impact on the language brokering child. Language brokering for multiple individuals has been positively linked to youth depression and increased feelings of discomfort [26,30]. Furthermore, a study conducted by Morales and Wang found that high frequency language brokers scored significantly higher on depression and anxiety assessments, when compared to moderate and low frequency language brokers [31]. Guan and Shen reported that higher frequency of language brokering is associated with lower levels of parent-child relationship quality [32]. Research has found more frequent language brokering to be associated with poor psychological health, more conflict between children and their parents, and more internalizing symptoms for the child language brokers [33].

In summary, although some children do experience positive consequences from language brokering, others experience lasting negative impacts. Therefore, it is vital for mental health professionals to employ therapeutic practices that appropriately address the unique struggles of children who language broker.

### Developmental and cultural considerations in selecting therapeutic techniques

Counselors must remember to consider the developmental level of their clients and treat them as children rather than miniature adults. While the natural communication method for adults is through verbal communication, this is not the case for children. When it comes to children their natural communication is play [34]. Counselors must employ a play-based or creative therapeutic approach that is developmentally appropriate when working with children who language broker. The counselor must also take into consideration the concrete-based thinking nature of the developmental stages of childhood. "In seeking to facilitate children's expression and exploration of their emotional world, therapists must turn loose of their world of reality and verbal expression and move into the conceptual-expressive world of children" (p.7) [34]. When working with children who language broker, there must also be the consideration of their cultural context. This includes language barriers and cultural or refugee related traumas that the child may have experienced. Due to the ability of creative therapies to be used across a multitude of cultures and the lessened need for verbal communication, these types of interventions can serve as a means to overcome language and cultural barriers [35]. With the use of play and creative theories being universal in nature, these types of therapies are often be more developmentally and culturally appropriate for language brokering children than traditional talk therapy.

### Using creative and narrative therapies together

Creative and expressive therapies assist individuals in expressing themselves beyond the verbal means of traditional therapy approaches. Using the child's creativity can serve as a means of allowing them to express themselves in a way that is more viable for the language brokering child [36]. When immigrant children language broker, they are "giving voice" to their parents, or whoever they are translating for. Altered art provides immigrant children with a way to communicate their own personal feelings and unique experiences, this "giving voice" to them, just as they do for the adults they language broker for. Beauregard found in her review of creative therapies a significant improvement in the immigrant child's ability to cope, build self-esteem, and have pro-social behaviors. The review also found a significant reduction in emotional problems for these children. The conclusion of this review and other studies was that art therapies are effective as both targeting therapies and for building emotional resiliency in immigrant children [37,38]. These therapies utilize familiar objects that can assist them in therapeutic healing on several levels by being both developmentally and verbally appropriate for the child. The creative process used in altered art therapies facilitates self-awareness by allowing these children to clarify their personal journey and experiences [36]. Through the processing of their personal journey utilizing creative arts, children can begin to find new ways to solve conflicts, manage stress levels, and improve their self-esteem.

Creative therapies use hand on activities that both allow for the opportunity for free self-expression and encourage the creative use of familiar materials with mixed media techniques. As Driscoll states: "Altered art is a contemporary craft that begins with a discarded book or other object, and incorporates collage, creative lettering, painting, rubber stamping, or other techniques to produce a new object, or

to give an old object new meaning” (p.1) [39]. Altered art repurposes everyday items into a form of self-expression where the child can articulate their experiences through.

The creation of art works allows children to externalize and separate their problems from their inner mind as the art is physically outside of themselves. Malchiodi believes that through this expression, these children are offered a way to express their inner mind in ways that words are unable to [40]. The creative art therapy technique integrated with the narrative therapy approach allows children the freedom to narrate their own lives by them being both the creator and interpreters of their work. The integration of narrative therapy within this technique also encourages the child to feel empowered through the feeling that they are the expert of their own life and experiences, which is a major combatant of the feeling of losing control that refugee children often experience [41,42]. The narrative therapy approach is also beneficial in that it emphasizes separating the client from their problems, and the belief that they have the power and ability to overcome their problems and adversities [43].

**Four-step framework**

This four-step therapeutic framework combines narrative therapy with creative arts therapies, thus facilitating self-awareness and enhancing communication. The four steps of this framework include: create, connect, communication, and change. Thompson and colleagues offer a more in-depth and detailed description of the framework utilized in this study [44]. Table 1 provides information on the unique four-step framework recommended for use with children who language broker.

Steps	Description
Step 1: Create	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The counselor provides the children with a variety of mixed media materials, all of which can bring about therapeutic benefits.</li> <li>• Counselors should avoid giving direct and rigid instructions to children regarding which materials to select and how to use them.</li> <li>• Children are encouraged to choose and utilize the materials as they please.</li> <li>• The creative freedom to play, choose, create, and use whichever materials they desire allows children the ability to freely express themselves.</li> <li>• This concept of giving children voice [45] creates a sense of empowerment and gives them back control they feel they have lost.</li> </ul>
Step 2: Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of expression through creative therapies helps children form new neural connections in the brain and in turn allows them to better process trauma, even trauma they are unaware of [46].</li> <li>• Expression creates physiological changes in the brain including the release of endorphins that effect brain cells.</li> <li>• These new neural connections also allow them to form new ideas and thoughts, belief systems, and response pattern [46].</li> </ul>
Step 3: Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselor serves as a “safe person” for the children to share their creative works and story with.</li> <li>• Having this trusted other is crucial to ensure the children can effectively communicate their trauma [47].</li> <li>• Altered are therapy allows children to narrate their story non-verbally, which can be a major source of pressure for the language brokering child.</li> </ul>
Step 4: Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The counselor helps the children to recognize their trauma and encourage their ability to see a potential to change it by creating a future story.</li> <li>• This optimism and change in beliefs occur as the children use creative therapies to heal themselves.</li> <li>• Altering the art object encourages the children to visually and concretely understand the ability for their story to change [48].</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Four-step therapeutic framework.

**Four-step framework justification**

Each of the four steps in this framework work together to help bring self-awareness and freedom of expression to the language brokering child that has experienced trauma. This framework used in creative therapy is particularly effective with trauma in that it

has the ability to allow children to express inhibited traumatic memories [49] through the use of play, the language of children [34]. "Trauma is often kept in one's memory as sensations, symbols, and mental images that can be difficult to access in traditional talk therapy or informal conversation" [50]. These traumatic memories are situated in primitive sections of the brain that are not part of a child's conscious awareness; creating new neural connections can allow the child to express these traumatic memories and receive healing from them. Creative materials and directives chosen in this intervention allow the language brokering child to have more self-awareness of their trauma. This is due in part because art helps change a person's attitudes, emotional states, and perceptions of pain [51]. According to Perry, conventional methods of child therapy inadequately target brain areas that may not be the source of trauma within these children, making them ineffective [52].

As described by Malchiodi, creative arts can work as a healing force for mind, body and spirit [53]. Using creative therapies allows the language brokering child to begin to examine their life experience through the creative object, and through their expression of what it signifies to them. This creative form of expression can help them to manage experiences that may have been previously too painful to assimilate [50]. Using the child's own creativity and imagination can help them to address their problems through the artwork itself and can facilitate healing by giving them the self-awareness needed to discuss these problems with members of their family [54]. Discussing their artwork rather than their trauma can help to simplify their complex issues and open a dialogue about it within their family system. The final stage in the four-step process can allow the child to change the narration of their story through their creative object and encourage them to shape new realities through the narrative therapy aspect in this framework [55]. The integration of a narrative process, when applied to creative therapy, can assist children who language broker find healing and move toward future goals.

### Using shoes as a symbolic medium

Shoes can be viewed as great symbolic objects reflecting the path one has taken in their own life journey. Shoes can be seen at metaphorical objects that represent the experiences that language brokering children have walked through. Also, the idea of wearing shoes is universal; following one's path or walking along one's individual journey is also not a culturally specific concept. Although language brokering children are consistently communicating for others, they may feel personally unheard themselves [22]. Shoes are both culturally relevant and available to be used as a medium of representing their feelings and experiences that they may feel have not been able to be expressed. There is also the added benefit of adding to the shoe to represent possible future outcomes that can serve as points of optimism in the child's journey.

### Choosing shoes and creative materials

Selecting specific shoes and materials should be treated as a specific process that carries significant meaning for the child creating the journey shoe. While some children may choose a shoe worn during their journey from their country of origin to their new country, others may choose a new type of shoe that has symbolic meaning for them. When helping choose their shoe, counselors working with these children should pose questions such as: "What country did I come from?" "What was my role in my previous home?" "How can I represent my role and feelings from my previous home using this specific shoe?" "and "How are these answers different now that I am in a new country?" The counselor must also explore how stepping into the role of a language broker has changed the child's role within the family [22]. Additionally, the counselor may also decide to discuss the child's desire for changes in their future family processes. These questions can be helpful in allowing the child to become self-aware and process their journey.

To allow the child to creatively express their journey through their shoe, the child should be given a variety of options of artistic supplies and options [48]. Counselors should use caution and be mindful of the child's culture when selecting materials to the language brokering child [56]. The materials given to the child to use can and should be multicultural in nature. They should be encouraged to use whichever materials they feel best describe their personal journey, while also using objects that are understandable within the context of their native culture [57]. "Multiculturalism helps counselors gain insight into the inequities experienced by clients from marginalized groups as well as the privileges bestowed to clients from privileged groups" (p. 36) [58]. Counselors working with these children must maintain a culturally sensitive viewpoint to have a greater understanding of their needs. While providing culturally relevant supplies, it is also necessary to provide general art supplies to aid the children in creating their journey shoe. Table 2 provides possible recommendations for supplies.

Type of Supplies	Examples
Culturally relevant supplies	Photos of child/family members/friends, maps of home country, images of travel, documents/passports/tickets, pages from significant texts, images of flags from child’s home country, found objects (buttons, keys, game pieces)
General art supplies	Acrylic paint, gesso, brushes/sponges of various sizes, palette, adhesives (hot glue, superglue, Mod Podge, paper (tissue paper, construction paper, scrapbook paper), other (fabric, ribbon, sequins, gems, wire, beads, twine)
Clean-up	Smocks for activity, water, paper towels, rags, trash containers

**Table 2:** Recommend supplies for creating a journey shoe.

**Creating the journey shoe**

Once the shoe and supplies are chosen, the child can begin the process of making the journey shoe. The child should first be allowed to apply a base coat with acrylic paint or gesso, if they wish to. There may be a need for multiple applications of the base coat. After drying the base coat, the child can begin applying collaging elements. The counselor should encourage the language brokering child to use paper, tissue, fabric, or other flat materials for the first layer, to help the next layers adhere. Once these two more flat layers are completed to the child’s satisfaction, they can then begin adding elements such as found objects or more three-dimensional objects until they reach their desired result. Dependent on the time constraints, the counselor can choose to allow layers to dry all at once, or in sections. Finally, a final layer of Mod Podge should be added to the project to seal and protect it.

**Unpacking the journey shoe**

Once the journey shoe is completed, the task of discussing and describing the language brokering child’s journey through the object they have crated begins. The counselor should ask the children to tell their story through the shoe while helping them to verbalize their personal thoughts, feelings, and desires about the changes in family roles and their personal journey [59]. They may also wish to assist the child in discovering ways to discuss these findings with other family members or their parents through the shoe. The creation of the journey shoe will not only allow them to discuss their inner personal thoughts and feelings, but to gain self-awareness about their personal cultural identity and express it more clearly than they would through talk therapy [60].

**Shoes for future journeys**

Another therapeutic way to use the journey shoe is through creating one that can symbolize the child’s future journey. This discussion may begin with questions such as: “Where would I like to be in the next year, in five years, or in ten years?” “What type of shoe would best represent my changes or future journey?” and “How would I like my role with my family to look?” These questions should begin a discussion that allows the child to consider how to portray how they wish their future journey to look like. The process of creating a future journey shoe, as with the original journey shoe, can assist language brokering children in expressing themselves and their future goals to their parents in order to help achieve them [59]. Allowing these children to explore their own feelings towards their past and future journey can help them to process difficult emotions regarding their relocation and make decisions regarding their future [28]. The creation of a future journey shoe can instill a sense of hope and optimism when they think about their future and achieving their goals.

**Case Study**

Language brokering refugee children whose first language was Arabic were used for this case study. These children were a part of a non-governmental organizational outreach project to refugees located in Europe. Refugees were placed in this “holding city” in Europe after having been in a refugee camp and before being assigned to a permanent country of residence within Europe. The average time spent in Europe for Most children in this group had spent an average of 8 months in Europe and would stay in the “holding city” for 2 - 4 years. Children aged 6 to 12 years met with therapists and local volunteers for 4 hours daily during a two-week intensive counseling program.

Clinicians gave each child one shoe that could no longer be worn or repaired. The subculture of poverty that these children lived in dictated the specificity of non-useable shoes. The value of a wearable shoe for a refugee child who had lost everything and perhaps walked many miles shoeless and with foot injuries was immense. Supplies provided included magazines in Arabic, the European language in their current city, and English. Children also had access to buttons, shoestrings, cloth scraps from both cultures, sand, rocks, nails, bandages,

plastic eyes, wire, copies of currency from both cultures, duct tape, brown paper packing material, and blue tarp material. Clinicians intentionally limited supplies for shoe-making to materials that could be easily acquired locally so that this could be replicated by lay counselors in the future, as there are no counseling services available for these children at this refugee hub. Children were also provided with general art supplies such as paint, glue, scissors, and clear packing tape.

### Group therapeutic process and framework

Children were asked to use the shoes and materials they were given to tell the story of their journey as refugees from their home to the city in Europe. The four-step therapeutic framework was utilized.

#### Step 1: Create

At first, the children were very timid and hesitant about using the materials. Two lay counselors from the Arabic culture modeled gluing and painting on their own shoes, which helped the children feel more comfortable. Watching the lay counselors seemed to give the children permission and freedom to create. The first week was a very methodical process with little communication. The work seemed painful to the children, who expressed worry about their parents knowing the meaning of their shoes. Once the children were reassured that this was confidential, they began to work more freely and were empowered by experiencing a sense of control in their own worlds.

Examples of journey shoes created by refugee children who language broker included:

- “The Question Shoe” by a 12-year-old boy with 3 younger siblings whose father could not make the journey with them. He wrote and glued question marks all over the top and sides of his shoe. He wrote questions in Arabic on cardboard and place them so they would stick out of the shoe.
- On the bottom of the shoe, he wrote in English “No one knows the answers”.
- “A Broken Shoe” by a 7-year-old girl who was the only surviving member of her immediate family. She lived with an aunt and uncle who also made the journey. Her mother and younger siblings died in route to Europe. She glued broken pieces of glass and pottery on her shoe. She wrote the names of her deceased family members on the broken pottery.

#### Step 2: Connect

By the second day of week two, the children seemed to open up and be more comfortable. Their communication increased, and they began to discuss their shoes as they worked. During this process, the children started to make new neural connections related to the trauma experiences. In doing so, the children began to attach ideas and beliefs to their works of art.

#### Step 3: Communicate

On the third day, counselors encouraged these children to communicate and express their trauma narrative to a trusted other, by telling about their shoe so far. The illustration of a clearly defined trauma narrative was evident for most children with themes of loss, death, fear, and uncertainty. When asked what they would add, many expressed the construct of the restructuring of family roles. The children were able to openly communicate their experiences without the pressure and responsibility of language brokering. Examples include: (a) “I want my mother to be the mother again” (b) “I do not want to be the father to my brothers”, (c) “I do not want to be the mouthpiece for my mother”, (d) “I want to go back to school instead of work with mother”, and (e) “I just want to stop knowing it”. The two previously mentioned children responded as follows:

- “A Broken Shoe” - 7-year-old girl. “I would add money for my aunt and uncle to earn here, so that they are not so burdened”.
- The Question Shoe” - 12-year-old boy. “Of course, I would add my father. I cannot be them man. I do not know the answers”.

#### Step 4: Change

On the final day, counselors asked the children to add something to their shoe that would symbolize hope for their future journey and help them to proceed toward healing and catharsis. Again, the things these children added centered around the idea of their parents regaining their roles. Recognizing that the art object could be changed or modified helped these language brokering children to find hope

that changes could occur in their own lives as well. They responded verbally, with responses including statements such as “My mom will learn the language”. “We can be in normal school”. “My mother will cry less and smile more”. “My father can work here”. and “My parents will learn to live here”.

Again, looking at the individual case studies, similar themes emerged.

- “A Broken Shoe” - 7-year-old girl. “I would add a job for me so I can help my aunt and uncle. I am clever. I can be a servant. “She drew a picture of a broom and put it on her shoe.
- “The Question Shoe” - 12-year-old boy. “I would add a paper with our day of departure from here on it and a picture of where we live next. The not knowing is hard for my mother”. He added a paper with a date in the next week.

In probing further, the children were asked to identify one thing that helped them on their journey. In identifying these strengths and resources, the goal is to assist these language brokering children to be able to draw on those same strengths and resources in the future as they transition. Again, the two individual case studies are illustrative of this.

- “A Broken Shoe” - 7-year-old girl. “I am a clever girl. My mother always said I was the most clever and could do many hard things. Now I have many hard things to do”. She added a picture of herself to the bottom of her shoe.
- “The Question Shoe” - 12-year-old boy. “I am like my father---- strong and smart. I have helped take care of the women and decide for them. I can protect them like my father”. He added a plastic knife for protection.

### Group summary and follow up

In summary, the journey shoe was a particularly effective tool with these children due to its metaphoric value, the ability to use materials within their cultural context, and the ability to access linear and emotional trauma information through a multimedia and oral approach. It was notable that the children moved from a somber silence to a dutiful art-making mode to a rather open sharing of feelings and trauma narrative.

In the following weeks, children utilized mixed media family portraits utilizing similar materials on paper to begin to open doors to conversations with parents. They also designed creative luggage with a parent with everything they would need for their next move. This transition from the individual trauma narrative to family trauma narrative to the future plan proved effective in helping these children navigate a very challenging journey. It is important to note that the counselor’s use of symbolism and metaphor should not prohibit them from utilizing less symbolic forms of communication. As Brooks notes, “both forms of communication involve intertwining threads that contribute to the richness of the therapeutic fabric” (p. 761) [61].

### Implications for improved mental health outcomes

A study conducted by Mendez-Negrete showed the efficacy that creative expression can have in helping individuals to verbally express their experiences [36]. The creation of the journey shoe can allow language brokering children to find the support to express themselves more clearly by first allowing them to express themselves creatively. Through this support, these children could more effectively express themselves to those for whom they language broker and to other important adults in their lives as well. Allowing the language brokering child to feel heard and understood creates the optimal circumstances for these children to adjust to their new environment [34]. Enabling the expression of the child’s thoughts and feelings can better their lives in a multitude of ways: it can allow their parents to better understand their feelings, needs, and desires [36]; improve the families’ willingness to share and seek assistance from each other; and help the child feel less alone in their new environment. Creative expression can provide a bridge between what the child is trying to express and how well the parent’s understanding of the language brokering child’s view of their personal journey is. This allows them to better support the language brokering child and help both parties conquer challenges faced by their new environment and roles [18].

### Limitations of the Study

Due to the nature of creative arts therapy, funding for this intervention may be limited as there is a need for both creative supplies and therapeutic training. Funding sources for this type of intervention are limited in that they rarely identify creative therapies as meeting their specific criteria for support. Due to the evolving nature of creative therapy and the limited support within the research community, there is little attraction for further research to prove its efficacy in treatment [62]. There are also limitations regarding the clients themselves,

as children may believe that they do not have the creative ability and therefore, will be reluctant to participate. There is also the limited participation of children due to their comfort level associated with self-expression; there is also a tendency for these children to align with strict cultural beliefs regarding self-expression and spontaneity inhibition [40]. As with most creative interventions, there is also the potential limitation regarding the counselor's ability to be supportive of free creative expression with minimal directive efforts. There is a natural tendency for counselors to interpret the children's artistic expression rather than allowing the child to describe it themselves and tell their own story [40].

### Implications for Future Research

Although there are many empirical research studies into the efficacy of narrative creative therapies [41,47], few of these are related specifically to language brokering children. Meyer Demott and colleagues demonstrated a significant reduction in PTSD symptoms in asylum seeking children utilizing creative arts therapies [63]. Further studies are needed to build upon this research and to add the use of objects such as "found objects" or creative expressions from the children's home culture to the therapeutic process. There does exist a few studies which research the challenges faced by language brokering children and their families [20,64,65].

Though there are a few studies such as Linesch., *et al.*'s that researched the use of art therapy with language brokering children (specifically with Latino families) [59,66], there is still a large gap in the research that needs to be further explored. It must also be noted that children within the school setting may be able to effectively complete therapeutic work that is non-verbal and culturally sensitive. This is due to the freedom that these language brokering children feel from their responsibilities at home within the school setting. Considering the vast number of children living in homes where English is not the primary language spoken, there is a need in the professional community for added research into how language brokering effects the children in these homes, and other possible effective methods of treating them [67]. It is the ethical duty of the psychological community to ensure that language brokering children are able to express their feeling and receive the proper care they are in need of. The importance of this topic is so great that there needs to be a drastic effort made to pursue further research and interventions. Mental health workers and child educators need to ensure that every child feels heard, no matter what language they speak.

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