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CIVIC ACTION AMONG IMMIGRANT YOUTH OF COLOR IN THE U.S.: CONTRIBUTIONS OF CRITICAL REFLECTION, SOCIOPOLITICAL EFFICACY, AND IMMIGRANT OPTIMISM

by

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Under the Direction of Gabriel P. Kuperminc, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

Civic action describes participation in political and prosocial activities aimed at benefiting one's communities. A growing literature rooted in critical consciousness (CC) theory suggests that engaging in *critical* action, or action that challenges societal inequities, is particularly important for empowering youth of color. Although valuable, this literature has paid little attention to the ways immigrant optimism may differentially influence the civic participation of youth of color who also have an immigrant background. Also, this literature has failed to consider the range of civic actions these youth engage in. The purpose of this study was to (1) operationalize immigrant optimism and examine its content and discriminant validity, and (2) test associations between immigrant optimism, CC elements, and indices of civic action in a sample of young immigrants of color. In phase one, this researcher iteratively generated and piloted items expected to capture immigrant optimism. This process included multiple rounds of feedback both from members of the target population and from experts on immigration phenomena. Most items were consistently positively ranked by experts and demonstrated content validity.

In phase two, participants were recruited to complete self-report measures of CC, immigrant optimism, and action indices. Participants (N = 172; 73% female) were first- (22%) and second-generation (77%) young immigrants of color (M_{age} = 20). Results from a two-factor CFA indicated that immigrant optimism and critical reflection items significantly and positively loaded onto their corresponding factor, evincing discriminant validity. Next, using parcels, a measurement model was specified with correlations among all variables. Model fit was adequate, χ^2 (120) = 178.74, CFI = .962, RMSEA = .053. Finally, an SEM model fit the data well, χ^2 (126) = 191.19, CFI = .956, RMSEA = .055. Although immigrant optimism was not significantly

associated with any study variable, findings point to important considerations regarding dimensionality as well as relevant group-level differences. Findings also highlight the influence of individual differences on civic participation, particularly as they relate to *internal* sociopolitical efficacy, which emerged as the most reliable predictor of action. Results shed light on the importance of considering multiple levels of influence on action in this population.

INDEX WORDS: Civic action, Critical consciousness, Immigrant optimism, Immigrant youth

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1 INTRODUCTION

Civic action is conceptualized as the behavioral dimension of civic engagement and involves participation in a range of political and prosocial activities "for the betterment of one's community" (Bobek, Zaff, Li, & Lerner, 2009, p. 616). In turn, civic action has been associated with various positive outcomes at the individual, collective, and societal levels (e.g., Lerner, 2004). For example, involvement during adolescence in school and religious organizations has been linked to greater participation, educational attainment, and life satisfaction by emerging adulthood (Chan, Ou, & Reynolds, 2014). Also, participation in electoral and volunteer activities during late adolescence and emerging adulthood has been associated with lower levels of depression in adulthood (Ballard, Hoyt, & Pachucki, 2019). Existing research thus provides support for the psychosocial and developmental benefits of participation in a range of civic activities and highlights the importance of examining facilitators and barriers of civic action to promote positive development.

Emerging adulthood, the developmental stage between adolescence and adulthood (ages 18-29), has been described as integral for building and fostering long-term civic values and commitments (Finlay, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010). Yet, studies have documented lower rates of civic participation in emerging adults relative to older adults, particularly when examining activities related to mainstream electoral politics. Among emerging adults in the U.S., researchers have further identified civic participation gaps by various demographic factors, including race and immigrant background (see Flanagan & Levine, 2010, for a review). Within this research, youth of color and those of immigrant origin – specifically first- (i.e., foreign-born) and second-generation immigrants (i.e., native-born to foreign-born parents) – have often been found to be less civically active than their majority counterparts (i.e., non-immigrant, White

youth). These gaps are pronounced in examinations of mainstream electoral activities (e.g., voting registration and turnout; Stepick, Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008). Although some studies have found that differences in civic participation are mitigated once SES is accounted for (Lopez & Marcelo, 2008), the evidence is mixed and suggests that pathways to and forms of civic action among young people color in the U.S. may be more complex and nuanced than previously assumed (e.g., Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016).

Various frameworks rooted in *critical consciousness* (CC; Freire, 1970, 1998) theory have consequently been proposed to examine and explain how and when youth of color become active and engaged members of society (e.g., sociopolitical development theory, Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999; empowerment theory, Zimmerman, 1995; social justice youth development, Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). CC theory describes the process by which marginalized groups reflect on and challenge systemic inequities via action. Importantly, CC focuses on activities that are deemed *critical* and are directly aimed at producing social change, such as protesting perceived injustice. Thus, more traditional, mainstream activities, such as voting, are only considered if those are expected to contribute to social change in the community (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). This theory has been applied to and tested with various marginalized communities around the world (e.g., Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Freire, 1998; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Among youth of color in the U.S., the process of developing CC has been described as "an antidote for oppression" (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999, p. 255), highlighting its relevance and implications for the development and well-being of these individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

A notable limitation of existing CC-based examinations of action is that they have primarily focused on the experiences of historically marginalized youth of color in the U.S. –

namely African American youth (e.g., Cadenas, Bernstein, & Tracey, 2018; Kiang, Christophe, & Stein, 2021; Seider, Clark, & Graves, 2020; Watts, Abdul-Adil, & Pratt, 2002). When youth of color who are also of immigrant-origin – hereafter *immigrant youth of color* – have been considered, the theory has been universally applied without attention to the different ways that immigrant phenomena might shape patterns of civic action among these youth.

A theoretically relevant phenomenon for the study of civic action among immigrant youth of color concerns the *immigrant optimism* hypothesis (e.g., Kao & Tienda, 1995; May & Witherspoon, 2019; Rosenbaum & Rochford, 2008). This hypothesis suggests that immigrant groups hold higher aspirations and more positive views of the host or receiving country than their non-immigrant peers, and this influences their development and adaptation across domains. When it comes to civic action, it is possible that such optimism offers a broader perspective than is available to non-immigrant youth from which to consider barriers and opportunities to bettering the communities these youth belong to. To date, however, evidence for this phenomenon has not been carefully considered in examinations of civic action and there have been no attempts to operationalize and situate the phenomenon of immigrant optimism within a CC framework.

Additionally, CC theory's narrow focus on actions that challenge the status quo does not fully capture the various forms of action in which immigrant youth of color choose to and have the opportunity to engage in (Suárez-Orozco, Hernández, & Casanova, 2015). On the other hand, broader theories of civic development, such as political socialization theory, tend to focus only on traditional political behaviors and neglect the former (e.g., Humphries, Muller, & Schiller, 2013; Terriquez, Villegas, Villalobos, & Xu, 2020). Consequently, examinations based on CC or broader civic engagement theories do not account for alternative facilitators and barriers that

may uniquely influence civic action among these youth. Research supports the notion that immigrant youth of color take part in different types of action based on several individual and contextual-level factors (e.g., Stepick, Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008), and are often driven by a sense of responsibility to address social issues that uniquely impact their communities (Suárez-Orozco, Hernández, & Casanova, 2015). These findings have largely been excluded in existing CC and broader civic development frameworks and these, therefore, paint an incomplete picture of civic action among immigrant youth of color. The purpose of the present study is thus to (1) operationalize immigrant optimism within a CC framework and examine its content validity, and (2) test an expansion of CC and civic development frameworks that considers the immigrant optimism hypothesis, includes different dimensions of civic action, and examines how core elements of critical consciousness and civic development theories uniquely promote or hinder participation in different forms of action among immigrant youth of color during emerging adulthood.

1.1 Theories of Critical Consciousness and Civic Development as Guiding Frameworks

Originally proposed by Freire (1970, 1998) as a framework to empower farmers of low socioeconomic status in Brazil, critical consciousness (CC) is one of the "most prominent conceptual frameworks for understanding civic development and engagement among youth involved in change efforts" (Christens, Winn, & Duke, 2016, p. 24). Essentially, CC describes the process by which marginalized groups become aware of, analyze, and resist systems of oppression. Under this framework, oppression is understood as both a state and a process that involves sociopolitical *asymmetry*, or "the unequal distribution of coveted resources among politically salient populations" (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999, p. 257). CC theory further

posits that oppression is easiest to sustain when the marginalized accept and internalize the unjust circumstances they/their group face rather than challenge them. The process of developing CC is thus theorized to help disrupt the cycle of oppression and promote well-being at both the psychological/individual and societal/collective levels (e.g., Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

Although there is variation in the conceptualization and operationalization of CC (see Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, and Rapa, 2015, for a review of measures), researchers have historically recognized at least two key elements: *critical reflection* and *critical action (*e.g., Diemer et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2014; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). A growing literature also supports the role of *sociopolitical efficacy* as a key aspect of CC (e.g., Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015). It is important to note that, while longitudinal research in this area is limited, the theorized sequence assumes critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy are antecedents/facilitators of critical action, although there is recognition that these processes are likely to be transactional (e.g., Bañales et al., 2020; Christens, Peterson, & Speer, 2011). This next section provides a brief overview of what each CC element involves and how they are typically measured.

Critical Reflection. Critical reflection involves an individual's awareness of structural inequities and of the impact of these on one's disadvantaged social conditions (Diemer & Li, 2011). In examinations of CC, critical reflection is often assessed by asking individuals to report on their awareness of disparities in the opportunities or resources that certain social groups experience, and/or the attributions they make for such disparities (e.g., individual versus systemic). Studies have found higher levels of critical reflection to be significantly associated with more frequent participation in critical action among Latinx and Black adolescents and

emerging adults (Bañales et al., 2020; Diemer & Rapa, 2016), although it is negatively associated with expected voting among Latinx youth (Diemer & Rapa, 2016).

Researchers have argued that, whereas high levels of critical reflection indicate high awareness of structural inequities – and is expected to be associated with positive outcomes – low levels of critical reflection may be indicative of beliefs that the society one lives in (e.g., American society) is generally fair and offers everyone opportunities to get ahead (e.g., Godfrey & Wolf, 2016). Such 'fair society beliefs' are expected to lead to negative outcomes among historically marginalized groups. Evidence for this theorized continuum – where fair society beliefs reflect low critical reflection and vice versa – however, is inconclusive, particularly among immigrant groups, who have been found to hold more optimistic beliefs about their conditions in the host society (e.g., Godfrey, Burson, Yanisch, Highes, & Way, 2019; Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Krogstad, 2018). This point is reviewed in more detail in a later section.

Sociopolitical Efficacy. Sociopolitical efficacy (SPE) concerns an individual's belief that sociopolitical change can be produced. Most examinations of SPE have focused on *internal* SPE, or an individual's beliefs in their own capacity to effect change (e.g., Peterson, Peterson, Agre, Christens, & Morton, 2011). This is typically measured by asking individuals to report on their perceived leadership skills and confidence that their sociopolitical 'voice' matters (Peterson et al., 2011). Studies have previously found that internal SPE facilitates participation in a range of civic activities among Latinx youth, including expected participation in both mainstream electoral politics and protests (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Further, among Latinx emerging adults, Hope, Keels, and Durkee (2016) found positive effects of internal SPE on participation in social change efforts related to immigration reform, while these effects were not observed among Black youth. Beyond critical action, studies have also found positive associations between internal SPE

and participation in both mainstream electoral and community service efforts in racially diverse samples of emerging adults in the U.S. (Moore, Hope, Eisman, & Zimmerman, 2016). For instance, among racially diverse and socioeconomically underserved youth ages 15-25, Diemer and Li (2011) found internal SPE to be directly and indirectly associated with voting behavior via participation in political activism, and these associations were all positive. That is, higher levels of internal SPE were associated with greater likelihood of participating in a political protest, march, or demonstration which was, in turn, associated with greater participation in local and national elections.

In addition to internal SPE, civic/political engagement researchers have delineated an *external* dimension of SPE, although this has not received as much attention in the CC literature. External SPE involves an individual's beliefs in the capacity of the government and its officials to respond to citizens and facilitate sociopolitical change (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Formal measures of external SPE are limited but, in psychological research, this dimension of SPE is often measured by asking individuals to report on the extent to which they believe their government cares about and is responsive to their own/their people's needs (Flanagan, 2005). Only a few studies have considered and distinguished between dimensions of SPE and these generally describe external SPE as "outward-looking" while internal SPE is "inward-looking" (e.g., Feldman et al., 2017). Consistent with this, research has previously found these two dimensions are negatively associated with each other and have distinct antecedents and consequences (e.g., Diemer & Rapa, 2016).

Also, critical consciousness scholars have suggested that dimensions of SPE, particularly internal SPE, may be mechanisms through which critical reflection leads to critical action; however, only a few studies have empirically examined indirect or moderating effects of internal

SPE on the relation between critical reflection and critical action, and findings are inconclusive. For example, among Latinx and African American youth, Diemer and Rapa (2016) documented a negative association between critical reflection and external SPE, while critical reflection was unrelated to internal SPE. Moreover, contrary to expectations, dimensions of SPE did not moderate or mediate associations between critical reflection and forms of action. On the other hand, in a sample of Hispanic DACA students, Cadenas, Bernstein, and Tracey (2018) found positive effects of critical reflection on internal SPE, and critical reflection was further positively correlated with low and high-risk forms of social action (e.g., confronting innuendos that oppose a cause and engaging in political activities that can result in arrest, respectively). In turn, low-risk social activism was positively associated with internal SPE. Notably, while this study was cross-sectional and thus causality is not assumed, the direction of this specified association (from action to efficacy) was contrary to theory and previous research. This study further failed to examine the external dimension of SPE.

Critical Action. Critical action emphasizes individual and/or collective participation in activities that are specifically aimed at promoting social justice (e.g., Diemer et al., 2021). This may include protesting and/or marching against discriminatory practices (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). It is important to highlight that actions related to mainstream electoral politics, such as voting or campaigning for a political party, are occasionally included in studies of CC, but are not inherently conceptualized as comprising *critical* action (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Under this framework, actions are only considered *critical* if their nature and intended function revolve around directly challenging injustice. In line with this, forms of community engagement or service, such as volunteering at a school or community-based organization, are often excluded in examinations of critical action, despite these being increasingly recognized as important

indicators of civic action in the larger civic engagement literature (e.g., Metzger, Ferris, & Oosterhoff, 2018).

1.2 Immigrant Optimism Hypothesis

The immigrant optimism hypothesis suggests that immigrant groups, specifically first- and second-generation immigrants, often hold higher aspirations for the future and more positive views of the host or receiving country than non-immigrants and this 'optimism' confers to them an advantage for positive development (e.g., Diemer et al., 2014; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Turney & Kao, 2012). This hypothesis originated from examinations of generational differences in academic outcomes, which have consistently found first- and second-generation immigrant youth outperform their third- and later-generation counterparts, despite experiencing more sociocultural risk factors (see Duong, Badaly, Liu, Schwartz, & McCarty, 2016, for a review). To date, immigrant optimism has not been understood as a construct but rather a phenomenon that has been documented in relation to various developmental processes and outcomes and has been operationalized in different ways.

Historically, the vast majority of research has operationalized immigrant optimism as high expectations of social mobility – namely high educational and/or vocational expectations (e.g., Louie, 2001; May & Witherspoon, 2019). At times, this has been expanded to include immigrant youth and parents' broader positive disposition to school and other U.S. institutions (e.g., Peguero & Bondy, 2015). Occasionally, immigrant optimism has been operationalized as *hope* and considered "more than just a positive expectation for the future. It is a goal-oriented theory that takes into account an active pursuit of one's goals and having both the agency and know-how to achieve said goals" (Bahena, 2020, p. 3). Also, in qualitative research, immigrant optimism has been referenced to explain findings related to positive expectations of immigrant

youth and their parents for their future in the U.S. (e.g., Roubeni, De Haene, Keatley, Shah & Rasmussen, 2015)

Due in part to differences in the operationalization of this phenomenon, underlying mechanisms for immigrant optimism have not been clearly delineated. Nevertheless, across studies, three processes are commonly used to explain it: *positive selection, dual frames of reference,* and *cultural socialization* (Fuligni, 1997; Louie, 2006). These processes will be considered throughout analyses and especially during the item generation phase of this study (described in detail in the current study section), and are thus briefly described here to exemplify aspects of the immigrant experience that may manifest in examinations of civic action but which have been previously ignored.

Positive Selection. Researchers have described immigration as a highly selective process and suggested that this likely contributes to the phenomenon of immigrant optimism (Fuligni, 2012; Portes, 2012). First-generation immigrants are "positively selected, relative to the sending country population, in terms of their determination and motivation to succeed" (Portes, 2012, p. 571). Portes (2012) further suggested that first-generation immigrants *have* to be optimistic "in order to confront the many challenges and uncertainties of the journey" (p. 572). Essentially, arguments related to positive selection assume that immigrants are inherently more optimistic than those they leave behind or those they encounter in the host country. Little research, however, has empirically examined such group-level differences, although there is theoretical support for such argument, at least among those who migrate by choice (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In a sample of Latinx emerging adults, Cobb et al. (2020) found immigrant generation to be negatively associated with dispositional optimism and this was, in turn, negatively associated with depression. The current study therefore included a measure of dispositional optimism.

Dual Frames of Reference. Research has pointed to a dual frame of reference which may uniquely influence immigrants' experiences in and of the host society and contribute to a more positive outlook compared to their non-immigrant peers (e.g., Louie, 2006). Although reasons for immigration vary (e.g., for better educational opportunities, to reunite with family, to escape persecution; Zong, Batalova, & Burrows, 2019), presumably all immigrants were once dissatisfied with an aspect of their life in the native country and/or believed their life conditions would be to some extent better in the host country (Chavez & Menjívar, 2010). As others have noted, immigrants "bring with them a culture of optimism because the motivation for migrating to the United States is one of hope and opportunity" (Bondy et al., 2016, p. 6). Once in the host country, immigrants have been found to employ a dual frame of reference to evaluate their conditions in the host country both independently, as well as in relation to their experiences in the native country, ultimately favoring the host society, even when others may not (Louie, 2006). For example, despite attending overcrowded and understaffed schools, Latinx immigrant youth tend to believe there are more opportunities for social mobility in the U.S. – via education and schooling – than there are in their native countries, and this 'optimism' seems to facilitate their persistence in school (e.g., Suárez-Orozco, 1987; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). This phenomenon likely varies by individuals' actual living conditions in their native country and the circumstances under which they migrate (forced or by choice). For instance, experiences of conflict, persecution, and/or trauma in the native country might shape their perceived social conditions in the host country; however, to date, this has not been extensively examined.

Cultural Socialization Processes. Immigrant optimism has also been documented among second-generation immigrants, although some discrepancies have emerged that may suggest differences in cultural socialization practices (e.g., Louie, 2006). In a qualitative study, Louie

(2006) found second-generation Dominican youth compare their own and their parents' social conditions in the U.S. to those of their peers in the native country, contributing to more positive feelings about their experiences and opportunities in the U.S. However, these findings were not replicated in a second-generation Chinese immigrant sample. Dominican youth reported greater exposure to their native culture than their Chinese peers, and researchers theorized this likely contributed to the discrepant findings. For second-generation immigrants, their optimism may mostly emerge from parents' cultural socialization practices and traditions that both teach them about their native culture as well as encourage appreciation for the opportunities the host society has offered their families (e.g., Reese, 2001).

Indeed, some have argued that whether immigrant youth are native or foreign-born may not be as important to the immigrant optimism phenomenon as their parents' socialization and transmission of optimism and aspirations for the future. Immigrant parents often relay beliefs that the host society is one of opportunities (Bondy et al., 2016) and encourage their children to take advantage of them. Consistent with this, studies have found that, compared to their non-immigrant peers, immigrant students of color more often have parents who hold high expectations for their educational attainment and themselves have more positive attitudes towards school and, in turn, these assets facilitate positive academic outcomes (e.g., Pong & Zeiser, 2012). Relatedly, the term *immigrant bargain* has been used to describe how children of immigrants are aware of their parents' sacrifices – again, through socialization practices – and tend to experience a sense of "obligation to be successful to justify the hardships experienced by their parents" (Cherng & Liu, 2017, p. 16). Thus, this sense of obligation to be successful could be considered both an originating and maintaining factor for the immigrant optimism phenomenon among immigrant youth. Notably, for some, this sense of obligation may be

problematic, creating social pressure and undue burden (e.g., Taylor & Krahn, 2013). It is thus important to go beyond examinations of group-level differences, comparing immigrant to non-immigrant peers, to also consider within group variation in these processes.

Together, these findings at least partially explain why studies of immigrant youth of color tend to include both first- and second-generation immigrants in their analyses, and why the present study also focused on these youth. Studies have also largely found that, across outcomes, the so-called immigrant advantage ceases by the third generation (e.g., Duong et al., 2016), providing further support for distinguishing youth whose parents are foreign-born, which includes first- and second-generation immigrants, from those whose parents are native-born, which includes their third and later-generation peers. However, as noted, a major limitation of existing research on immigrant optimism involves unclear or inconsistent operational definitions. This study therefore sought to address gaps in the literature by identifying, generating, and testing items that may capture the processes identified above as relevant to immigrant optimism, including fair society beliefs – a concept that is theoretically relevant to immigrant optimism but has not been directly linked, and which has been implicated and empirically examined in relation to youth civic development. The next section expands on the relevance of fair society beliefs to both immigrant optimism and critical consciousness, as well as argues for a multidimensional conceptualization of civic action.

1.3 Proposed Expansion of Critical Consciousness and Civic Development Frameworks

As noted, a limitation of existing CC examinations of civic action includes failure to consider ways in which the phenomenon of immigrant optimism may manifest in this domain of development. Also, it is argued that the narrow focus of this framework on non-traditional civic

activities does not capture the diverse ways immigrant youth of color have been found to contribute to their communities and society at large (Suárez-Orozco, Hernández, & Casanova, 2015). To address these limitations, the present study tested an expanded model that (1) included immigrant optimism as a distinct, theorized precursor of civic action, and (2) considered multiple forms of civic action.

1.3.1 Immigrant Optimism as More Than Fair Society Beliefs.

As previously noted, immigrant optimism has been documented in various respects, although it has often been operationalized differently, contributing to inconclusive findings, and it has not yet been examined in relation to civic action (Bahena, 2020; Fuligni, 1997). One way immigrant optimism may manifest and influence patterns of civic action among immigrant youth of color in the U.S. is through high endorsement of beliefs that America is a fair society that offers everyone opportunities to better themselves (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Such beliefs have been previously referred to as *beliefs in a just America* or *fair society beliefs* and are considered a core tenet of the American 'promise' and social contract (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007; Godfrey & Wolf, 2016). In turn, fair society beliefs have been implicated in the formation of civic values and commitments, which facilitate action (Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, & Flanagan, 2016). To date, however, fair society beliefs have not been carefully considered within a CC framework.

This is not surprising given that the CC literature emphasizes civic activities aimed at promoting social justice, which may necessitate challenging the status quo. Youth who believe in the fairness of the society they live in may be less likely to engage in activities that challenge the status quo, such as protests, and perhaps more likely to participate in mainstream electoral politics, such as voting (Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Gallay, & Cumsille, 2009). When considering

only non-traditional civic activities that promote social justice, as existing CC-based examinations have done, one is prone to assume that fair society beliefs are simply the inverse of critical reflection rather than consider these to be conceptually and empirically distinct constructs. Indeed, some scholars have implied that fair society beliefs are the opposite of critical reflection and only one qualitative and one quantitative study were identified in a literature review which examined fair society beliefs and critical reflection simultaneously, although not directly in relation to civic action. First, in their qualitative examination of attributions of inequities among African American and Latina immigrant women, Godfrey and Wolf (2016) identified themes of both critical reflection and fair society beliefs. Overall, participants in this study described both awareness of systemic inequities and beliefs that American society is fair and that everyone here has opportunities for mobility, yielding support for what researchers termed a "dual consciousness" (p. 100). Researchers thus speculated that critical reflection and fair society beliefs may be "distinct belief systems and motivations that can operate in tandem or in conflict" (p. 101). It would make sense to hypothesize that this "dual consciousness" be particularly evident in immigrant groups, given previously reviewed findings supporting their dual frame of reference when examining their social conditions in the host country. Similarly, this dual consciousness may help these youth both be aware of inequities in the host country *and* be optimistic about their future in it.

Consistent with this, in a later study, researchers used latent class analysis to examine how various facilitators and barriers to civic action, including critical reflection and fair society beliefs, might pattern together to influence indicators of well-being among adolescents of color (Godfrey et al., 2019). Again, although researchers expected fair society beliefs to represent the opposite of critical reflection and that it would, consequently, be negatively associated with well-

being, results suggested that fair society beliefs are independent from critical reflection and may represent a protective (rather than a risk) factor for the well-being of youth of color. Notably, this study did not report correlations among the two constructs, which could have strengthened the argument that fair society beliefs and critical reflection are empirically distinct constructs.

Despite methodological limitations, there is theoretical and some empirical support for critical reflection and fair society beliefs – as an aspect of immigrant optimism – functioning in related but independent ways in the prediction of psychosocial outcomes among youth of color in the U.S. Indeed, this distinction between critical reflection and fair society beliefs might be particularly evident among immigrant youth of color, who may both be aware of structural inequities and still be optimistic and believe in the 'promise' of the American dream (Flanagan et al., 2009). However, as previously noted, immigrant optimism is theorized to capture more than just positive or fair expectations of the host society. Thus, the present study used common indicators of fair society beliefs as well as generated and piloted new items to assess immigrant optimism more comprehensively.

1.3.2. Multiple Forms of Action (Beyond Critical).

Researchers have previously called for disaggregating types of civic action – rather than examining a composite of activities – as they may be associated with different facilitators and barriers as well as outcomes (e.g., Cadenas, Bernstein, & Tracey, 2018). To that end, a number of categorizations have been proposed, although not always with attention to the immigrant experience. For example, some have suggested distinguishing activities that are low versus high in cost in terms of the time, money, or effort they required (e.g., signing a petition vs. volunteering to mobilize a marginalized group; McAdam, 1986), while others have proposed categorizing civic action based on whether the activities are aimed at benefiting the dominant or

the minority community (e.g., volunteering for mainstream vs. ethnic-related organizations; Seo & Moon, 2013). Among immigrants of color, Dixon, Bessaha, and Post (2018) argued for paying close attention to activities that build a community identity and which are accessible to all, regardless of documentation status. Notably, some activities may present a higher level of risk for undocumented youth, or youth from mixed status families. Across the board, there is consensus that models of civic action need to consider the types of activities that are accessible to the groups of interest (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

Distinguishing among forms of action can help account for both opportunity gaps to formal participation in mainstream electoral politics based on age (e.g., youth under 18 are not eligible to vote), as well as structural barriers which disproportionately affect people of color, regardless of age (Dixon, Bessaha, & Post, 2018). This may be especially important to consider when studying the civic development of immigrant youth who lack proper documentation to live in the U.S. and, therefore, have fewer opportunities for formal participation in electoral politics (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Consistent with this, studies have often found that immigrant youth of color participate in mainstream electoral activities at lower rates than their counterparts, and studies have found that unequal access to such activities based on demographic factors at least partially explains this difference (Lopez & Marcelo, 2008). On the other hand, relative to their non-immigrant peers, immigrant youth of color have been found to participate at comparable and often higher rates in other forms of civic action, such as activities supporting their immigrant communities (e.g., Seif, 2011).

For the above reasons, multiple forms of action ought to be considered. Also, excluding mainstream electoral activities from examinations of civic action among immigrant youth of color is bound to yield only an incomplete picture of their civic development, especially

considering that most of these youth (88%) are U.S.-born and therefore eligible to participate in electoral politics (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). In turn, not assessing participation in mainstream electoral politics may limit our ability to support their positive development and full integration into American society (DeSipio, 2011).

Research also suggests that immigrant youth of color are especially likely to participate in activities that have a more immediate benefit to their communities and collective identities, including ethnic and religious identities (e.g., Chan, 2011; Ecklund & Park, 2007; Jensen, 2008). These activities may take the form of volunteer service or leadership roles within school and/or community-based organizations, including church (Jensen, 2008). It has been suggested that immigrant youth of color are motivated to participate in this type of activities as a means to grow and strengthen their social networks and learn more about their minority communities (Chan, 2011). These activities, however, are not necessarily captured in either the forms of action emphasized in the CC literature or those relating to mainstream electoral politics.

For the reasons stated above, this paper proposes a multidimensional conceptualization of civic activities that includes (1) those referred to as critical action in the CC literature, which challenge inequities and pursue social justice (*social change efforts*), (2) those related to mainstream electoral politics (*electoral political efforts),* and (3) those that more immediately benefit the communities youth regard as important (*community service efforts).*

1.4 Current Study

The present study fills gaps in the literature by operationalizing immigrant optimism within a CC framework, evaluating its content validity, and testing associations between immigrant optimism, core elements of CC, and three dimensions of civic action (i.e., social change, electoral political, and community service efforts). First, following recommendations for

establishing content validity of a construct, this researcher identified, generated, and piloted item indicators of immigrant optimism that expanded on the construct of fair society beliefs. Next, discriminant validity was examined in a two-factor CFA for immigrant optimism and critical reflection indicators. The items retained based on expert feedback and statistical analyses were then included in an expanded CC model, which tested associations among all variables (i.e., critical reflection, immigrant optimism, internal and external SPE, and indices of social change, electoral political, and community service efforts). A measurement model estimating correlations among all variables was used as a baseline against which to compare subsequent structural equation models. A few hypotheses are delineated for these models, based on the previously reviewed findings.

Overall, it was hypothesized that immigrant optimism and critical reflection would emerge as distinct constructs, as indicated by small to moderate intercorrelations. Further, it was expected that these constructs would have differential associations with social change, electoral political, and community service efforts. Specifically, following the premises of critical consciousness theory, it was hypothesized that critical reflection would be positively associated with social change efforts and negatively associated with electoral political efforts, although this hypothesis was exploratory as previous findings are inconclusive (e.g., Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). Further, given support for the role of positive perceptions of society on civic commitments to maintain a political system, immigrant optimism was expected to be positively associated with electoral political efforts (Flanagan et al., 2009). The role of dimensions of SPE (internal and external) in processes contributing to civic action was less clear, with some research examining *internal* SPE as a mediator of the link between critical reflection and critical action, and other research examining it as an independent predictor (Diemer & Li,

2011; Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Cadenas et al., 2018). Research has found internal SPE is positively associated with political behavior (Diemer & Li, 2011; Diemer & Rapa, 2016); thus, in the present study, a positive association was expected between internal SPE and electoral political efforts. Although little research has examined the role of external SPE within a CC framework, the broader civic engagement literature has documented positive effects of this dimension of SPE on traditional political participation (e.g., Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). It was therefore hypothesized that higher levels of external SPE would be associated with more frequent engagement in electoral political efforts. Also, external SPE was expected to be negatively associated with social change efforts.

Finally, limited research has examined facilitators or barriers to community service efforts. Within the presented framework, existing research up until now only provided consistent evidence for positive effects of internal SPE on community service efforts, while other effects were mixed. For example, studies have documented positive associations between fair society beliefs, a theorized aspect of immigrant optimism, and community service efforts among immigrant youth of color, although not consistently across racially diverse groups. Wray-Lake, Rote, Gupta, Godfrey, and Sirin (2015) found positive effects of fair society beliefs on community engagement among Asian but not Latinx youth. In said study, most Latinx youth identified as second-generation immigrants, while most Asian youth identified as first-generation immigrants, and researchers did not control for generation status while examining ethnic group differences or vice-versa. Given the mixed findings on antecedents of community service efforts, this study only hypothesized a direct, positive effect of internal SPE on this specific action index. Notably, the current study also included immigrant generation and race/ethnicity as a covariate in order to avoid masking important cultural/group-level differences.

2 METHOD

2.1. Item Generation Phase

2.1.1 Participants and Procedures.

To accomplish the first goal of this study and operationalize immigrant optimism within a CC framework, this study adapted recommendations from multiple sources for establishing content validity of a construct (e.g., Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009; Johnston et al., 2014). The item generation process was conducted in an iterative and collaborative manner and involved three main steps: (1) collaborative item generation by a team of graduate and undergraduate research assistants who identify as immigrant youth of color, including this researcher (N = 7), (2) an initial round of detailed item-level feedback and rankings by a small subsample of judges (N = 5), and (3) a final round of item-level rankings by a larger subsample of judges (N = 17).

Step 1. First, this researcher met with the team of graduate and undergraduate research assistants to explain the purpose of this phase of the study and review the proposed conceptualization of *immigrant optimism,* based on the literature review presented above. Team members shared their reactions to the literature and reflected on its relevance to their own experiences as immigrants of color. Team members were in agreement that *immigrant optimism* is greatly influenced by socialization processes within the family system and, specifically, by parents' points of views and outlook of society. Additionally, team members described thinking that immigrant optimism may be influenced by individual-level characteristics, such as agency and gratitude, as well as contextual factors, including their family's migration journey and their context of reception. At the end of this initial meeting, team members were asked to each

identify and/or develop 2-3 items that may tap onto the proposed construct, considering the relevant processes described above (i.e., positive selection, dual frame of reference, and cultural socialization), while this researcher would develop a larger number of items. Importantly, such processes were not conceptualized as distinct dimensions of the construct. Rather, we expected items would reflect more than one of these processes, and all would contribute to the construct of immigrant optimism.

By the next meeting, the team had collectively developed 23 items. At this meeting, each team member described their rationale for their proposed item/s. The team further discussed general impressions of the entire list of items and began to make revisions, such as condensing two complementary items into one, for greater specificity, and deleting items that seemed repetitive. For example, we retained the item "*When I think about the barriers my parents and/or I have faced as immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way"* but deleted *"As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way."* This researcher incorporated edits and further revised the list of items based on the feedback obtained. The revised list included 18 items which were reviewed again during a third meeting. In this meeting, the team split into two subgroups to carefully discuss and assess the revised items using the list of questions presented in Appendix A. Team 1 included one graduate student and three undergraduate research assistants who reviewed the first 9 items. Team 2 included this researcher and two undergraduate assistants who reviewed the last 9 items. Teams provided written feedback on each of the 18 items, which was later incorporated by this researcher.

Step 2. Five 'judges' with expertise in immigration phenomena were recruited via personal communications (i.e., email) to provide detailed feedback on each of the 18 items. This sample included one Assistant Professor, one Associate Professor, two Professors, and one

researcher working at a non-profit institution. All the judges held doctorate degrees in psychology and conducted research on issues related to immigration and acculturation. Judges were provided with a written summary of the background and proposed conceptualization of immigrant optimism prior to completing the online survey. The survey asked judges to provide feedback on the measure by responding to the open-ended prompt, *"In general, please tell me what you think of this measure as a whole."* Then, the survey asked judges to provide individual feedback on each of the items by answering the following four questions: (1) *Does this item measure immigrant optimism?* (Yes/No), (2) *Please rank the extent to which you believe this item assesses immigrant optimism (*-10 = very confident it does not assess the construct to 10 = very confident it does assess the construct), (3) *Was this question worded in a way that made sense to you? What changes, if any, would you make?*, and (4) *Please provide any additional feedback on this item. You may consider the following questions: What does this item mean to you? What relevant process(es) does this question capture (positive selection, dual frame of reference, cultural socialization)? Is this question offensive or objectionable in any way?* Finally, at the end of the survey, judges were asked, ***"****Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding this survey? Is there anything we forgot to ask about?* Judges' comments on the overall measure are presented on Table 1, and average item-level rankings from this first round of feedback are presented on Table 2.

The highest ranked and most consistently positively evaluated items across judges were items 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 14, 16, and 17. Judges generally made only minor wording or grammar suggestions for these items, and/or identified considerations based on intended population. For example, regarding item 2, *"Growing up in an immigrant family, I learned that, in the U.S., I can accomplish anything I want"*, one judge suggested rephrasing to "decrease the number of

commas," while another judge noted that the phrasing *growing up,* "only applies to those raised in the country, not recent arrivals who did not "grow up" in an immigrant family." This judge further suggested changing the wording to *being from an immigrant family,* if meant for both. This item was therefore revised to, "*Being from an immigrant family, I have learned that I can accomplish anything I want in the U.S."*

On average, the lowest ranked items were items 11, *"My immigrant family encourages me to honor their sacrifices through work hard to advance my education/career,"* and 15, "*My immigrant family's hardships are the motivating factor for my hard work and achievements*," and individual rankings and feedback for these items were variable. Specifically, rankings ranged from -5 to 9 and from -5 to 10 for items 11 and 15, respectively. For item 11, one judge identified a typo *("…through work hard"),* and further suggested that this item may be capturing *filial piety* – a related but distinct construct – instead of immigrant optimism. Another judge stated, "in my experience with kids they'd say that they believe they need to do this, but not that their parents tell them this," while a different judge simply asked to clarify if it should be "expect" instead of "encourage." Given the variable feedback within this small sample, the item was revised slightly and retained for further examination by a larger sample of judges (see step 3). For item 15, one judge described it as a "good question" and made no suggested revisions. Another judge suggested a minor wording change, and a different one stated, "motivating factor feels technical and not all participants will get that." Two judges were less confident about this item, with one of them suggesting that this might be capturing "immigrant parental expectation" rather than immigrant optimism, and the other one suggesting that "this is more about motivation and familial socialization." Again, given the variable feedback, and the fact that cultural

socialization processes by parents, in particular, are conceptualized as relevant to immigrant optimism, this item was also retained.

Additionally, despite being ranked as well as most other items, items 7, 17, and 18 were deleted based on judges' written feedback and other considerations. First, item 7 was identified by one judge as a *precursor* of optimism rather than optimism. Another judge described the wording "*glad to live here*" as vague, while another one expressed concern that it might function differently for different immigrant generations. Next, item 18 was identified by most judges as problematic for being the only item that is "negatively worded." Finally, although judges did not express any concerns over item 17, this item was deleted due to repetitiveness/overlap with other items. Table 3 shows the revised items alongside the original ones.

Step 3. For the final step in the item generation phase, a larger sample of judges (N = 17) was recruited to provide numeral rankings only (without written feedback) on the revised list, which comprised 15 items (see Table 4). As part of the inclusion criteria for this part of the study, participants indicated whether they had scholarly and/or applied expertise in immigration/acculturation. Most judges (N = 15) had both scholarly and applied expertise, and two judges had only scholarly expertise. Judges were graduate students (N = 7), early (N = 7), mid (N = 1), and late career professionals (N = 2). One of the judges only answered the above questions and did not proceed to complete the remainder of the survey. Additionally, data are incomplete for one of the judges who answered only some of the yes/no questions. Thus, data available are from 15 to 16 judges.

Average item-level rankings for this subsample are presented in Table 4, and Table 5 includes side by side comparisons between the outcomes of this and the previous round of feedback. Within this larger subsample, the highest ranked items were items 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8,

with 15 judges indicating that each of these items indeed measure the construct, with various confidence levels. In contrast, the lowest ranked items were items 1, 10, and 11. Only ten, seven, and nine judges, respectively, agreed that these items measure the construct.

In addition to average rankings, a non-parametric one sample t-test was conducted to examine the extent to which judges agreed on their item-level rankings and establish content validity of each item (see Table 6). A conservative test value – or hypothesized median – of 2 was selected as it is the lowest possible positive ranking on the scale used, which ranged from -10 to 10 with 2-point intervals. Results from a non-parametric one sample t-test revealed that judges generally agreed that items 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 15 adequately assessed the construct of immigrant optimism, as indicated by the statistically significant and positive standardized test statistics for each of these items. Further, although the standardized test statistics for items 1, 4, 11, 12, and 14 were positive, these did not reach significance at the $p = .05$ level, suggesting that judges might have disagreed or been uncertain about how well these items assessed the construct. Finally, although non-significant, the standardized test statistic for item 10 was the only negative one, with an observed median of 0, suggesting that some judges were confident that this item does not assess the construct of immigrant optimism. In light of these findings, only items 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 15 were retained for the next phase. Correlations among these items are presented in Table 7.

2.2 Data Collection Phase

2.2.1 Participants and Procedures.

As noted, data were collected via an anonymous online (Qualtrics) survey that was distributed using the GSU SONA system as well as through flyers shared with relevant school- and community-based organizations, including GSU's Latinx Student Service and Outreach

(LASSO), Caribbean Student Association (CARIBSA), Vietnamese Student Association, among others. A Monte Carlo simulation was conducted prior to data collection to estimate the sample size needed to have at least 80% power to detect significant effects within the proposed measurement (baseline) model. Factor loadings, residuals, covariances, and regression coefficients were estimated based on existing research, when available. Results indicated that for the measurement model, a sample size of 250 was adequate to detect significant factor loadings and residual variances, as well as significant factor correlations that were small to moderate in magnitude (.20 to .35). Thus, the planned sample size for the study was $N \geq 250$.

A total of 258 responses were documented in the online platform. However, upon inspection of the data, it was noted that several of these were duplicate responses from the same IP address and/or were flagged as "spam" by Qualtrics. Duplicate responses came from SONA and it is assumed that participants attempted to complete the survey more than once to guarantee that their SONA participation was documented and credit granted. In these cases, only the initial response was retained. Other times, duplicate responses involved participants initially responding "no" to one of the three inclusion criteria for participation, being sent to the end of the survey as a result, and then immediately restarting a survey and answering "yes." Here, it was assumed that participants made a mistake in the initial response and, therefore, only the later response was retained. Additionally, 15 surveys contained only consent and/or demographic data without any responses to the actual study questionnaires. These responses were removed.

The final sample included 172 participants (73% female). Participants were between the ages of 18 and 28 (M_{age} = 20), and the vast majority of participants (73.3%) accessed the survey through the GSU SONA system (as opposed to via a direct link shared with community partners). Participants were first- (22%) and second-generation immigrants (77%). Participants

reported that their families were natives of a range of countries in Asia (30.2%), including East and South Asia, followed by Latin America (22.7%), Africa (20.9%), and the Caribbean (15.7%). Only a small proportion of participants identified origins in more than one continent or region (9.3%). Participants further endorsed different reasons that they and/or their parents moved to the U.S., including for better job (79.1%) and/or educational opportunities (77.3%), to escape poverty (42.4%), to reunite with family who already lived in the U.S. (32%), to escape war or government abuse of power (23.8%), and to escape violence or gangs (23.3%). Moreover, close to a quarter of participants (24.4%) reported that they and/or their parents experienced threats, violence, or persecution in their home countries. Finally, most participants reported being eligible to vote in national and local U.S. elections (86%), and the rest reported that they were not or did not know if eligible to vote.

2.3. Measures: Independent Variables

2.3.1 Critical Reflection.

Critical reflection of systemic inequities was measured using the Critical Reflection: Perceived Inequality subscale of the Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017). This subscale is comprised of eight items assessing critical reflection of racial/ethnic (e.g., "Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education"), socioeconomic (e.g., "Poor people have fewer chances to get ahead"), and gender inequalities (e.g., "Women have fewer chances to get good jobs"). Using the same format, three additional items were included to capture critical reflection of inequities experienced by certain immigrant groups: "Certain immigrant groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education," "Certain immigrant groups have fewer chances to get ahead," and "Certain immigrant groups have fewer chances to get good jobs." Items are ranked on a 6-point Likert type scale ranging

from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree.* The original scale was validated in a sample of predominantly Black/African American (63%), followed by Biracial or Multiracial (24.6%) youth ages 13-19, and has demonstrated adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .89; Diemer et al., 2017).

2.3.2 Internal Sociopolitical Efficacy.[1]

This study adapted and combined a total of seven items that have been previously used in two different studies to informally assess internal SPE and which have demonstrated adequate psychometric properties in racially diverse youth samples (i.e., four items from Dimer & Li, 2011; three items from Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Sample items from each of these studies include "I know more about politics than most people of my age" (Diemer & Rapa, 2016, Cronbach's alpha = .70) and "You can personally make a difference to solve problems you see in your community" (Diemer & Li, 2011). Items were adapted to fall on the same response scale – a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* – and reworded to consistently use first person language ("I can personally make a difference to solve problems in my community").

2.3.3 External Sociopolitical Efficacy.

Most research examining external SPE has relied on adapted items that assess trust in the government's (i.e., elected officials and institutions) ability to respond to people's needs (e.g., Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Shingles, 1981). This study therefore utilized subscales developed by Flanagan, Syvertsen, and Stout (2007) to assess trustworthiness of elected officials with five items (e.g., "Most elected officials listen to the citizens they

[1]The Critical Agency subscale of the Measure of Adolescent Critical Consciousness (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2015) is the only validated measure of internal SPE identified in a review. However, this subscale also includes items that would, theoretically, capture critical reflection of inequities and was thus not used here.

represent") and government responsiveness with three items (e.g., "The US government is pretty much run for the rich, not the average person"). Items (eight total) were ranked on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree.* Cronbach's alphas for these subscales have indicated good internal consistency among young adults (.74 and .76, respectively).

2.3.4 Immigrant Optimism.

As described above in the item generation phase, immigrant optimism was measured using newly developed items, which were revised and refined with expert feedback (see list of items retained on Table 6). Additionally, three existing items that are commonly used to assess fair society beliefs were examined in parallel to determine the extent to which these items were relevant to the new construct of immigrant optimism. These items were: "In America, you have an equal chance no matter where you came from or what race you are," "America is basically a fair society where everyone has an equal chance to get ahead," and "Basically people get fair treatment in America, no matter who they are." Past studies have reported adequate Cronbach's alpha when using these items (.71; Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Immigrant optimism and fair society belief items were ranked on a 7 and 5-point Likert type scale, respectively, ranging from *Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.*

2.3 Measures: Dependent Variables.2

2.3.5 Social Change Efforts.

Social change efforts were indexed using five previously used items describing engagement in social action (Diemer & Li, 2011). Items asked participants to report whether they

[2]All dependent variables were indexed rather than scaled. With indices, indicators are not assumed to be due to a common factor – they simply measure one. Indicators need thus not be inter-correlated to support their use.

have ever participated in a range of social change activities, including protests (e.g., “Have you ever taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration?”) and boycotts (e.g., “Have you ever NOT bought something because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it?”). In previous studies, response options for these items were dichotomous (yes or no). For the current study, items and their corresponding response anchors were modified to capture *frequency* of participation in the last 12 months (e.g., “*How often* have you taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration?”) on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from *Never* to *Very Often.*

2.3.6 Electoral Political Efforts.

Electoral political efforts were assessed with five items that have been previously used to examine election-based participation among college students of color (Wray-Lake, Tang, & Victorino, 2017). Items asked participants how often they have “worked for a [political] campaign,” “contributed money to a [political] campaign,” “privately urged others to vote a particular way,” “paid attention to candidates and issues,” and “talked about the campaign with other students” in the last year. The current study included an additional item on actual voting behavior (i.e., how often have you “voted in local and national elections”). Wray-Lake, Tang, and Victorino (2017) used response options that ranged from *A great deal* to *None* on a 5-point Likert type scale. However, for this study, response anchors were modified to range from *Never* to *Very Often* to be consistent with the other indices of civic action.

2.3.7 Community Service Efforts.

Community service efforts were measured using seven modified items from the Civic Participation subscale of the Active and Engaged Citizenship scale (Zaff et al., 2010). This subscale assesses frequency of participation in service activities and was validated in a large

sample of adolescents participating in the longitudinal 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development. Participants ranked the extent to which they have participated in service actions such as “help make your city or town a better place for people to live,” “help out at your church, synagogue or other place of worship,” and “volunteer your time (at a hospital, day care center, food bank, youth program, community service agency). In the original study, response options varied across items, with some ranging from *Never* to *Very Often,* while others ranged from *Never* to *Everyday.* Again, for consistency, this study asked participants to rank all items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Never* to *Very Often.*

2.3 Measures: *Covariates*

2.3.8 Demographic Variables.

As noted, this study controlled for immigrant generation (first generation = 0, second generation = 1). Additionally, two dummy codes were created for race/ethnicity, with one comparing those who identified as Asian (1) to their counterparts (0), and the other comparing those who identified as Latinx (1) to their counterparts. In this way, Black/African and Multiracial (combined) were used as reference. Race/ethnicity was coded in this way because, given sample limitations (e.g., small overall sample size, considerably smaller proportion of Multiracial participants relative to the rest), we were unable to conduct multigroup comparisons. Additionally, much of the research on critical consciousness theory is based on historically marginalized groups, namely Black Americans, without careful attention to immigrant status. On the other hand, the majority of research on immigrant optimism is based on Latinx and Asian groups. Thus, creating dummy codes as described above offered a theoretically sound solution to the above sample size limitations. In addition to immigrant generation and race/ethnicity, as described later in the data analysis plan, this study examined differences based on pre-migration

experiences of conflict or persecution (did not experience conflict or persecution = 0, experienced conflict or persecution = 1), as well as eligibility to vote in U.S. elections (not eligible = 0, eligible = 1), and controlled for these when applicable.

2.3.9 Dispositional Optimism.

The Life Orientation Test – Revised (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) was used to assess dispositional optimism, which was later controlled for in primary analyses. The LOT-R is the most widely used measure of trait optimism and has demonstrated adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = > .70) across samples of emerging adults, including immigrants of color (e.g., Cobb et al., 2020). The scale is comprised of six items used for scoring and four items used as fillers. The scale includes both positively (e.g., "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best") and negatively-valenced items (e.g., "I rarely count on good things happening to me"). Items were ranked on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.*

2.4 Data Analytic Plan

2.4.1 Preliminary Analyses.

Histograms, P-P plots, and skewness and kurtosis values were examined using the Explore command on IBM SPSS Statistics 25 to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Next, the dataset was examined for missing data mechanisms using the Missing Values Analysis procedure in IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Little's MCAR test was conducted to determine whether data were missing completely at random. If results were significant, the MCAR assumption was rejected and potential auxiliary variables were examined. Under the assumption that data were missing at random, data were to be handled using Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) in *Mplus* 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) – one of the

recommended methods for handling data missing completely at random or missing at random. Then, internal consistency estimates were computed for all main variables using the Reliability Analysis procedure in IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Cronbach's alphas and inter-item correlations were examined. For the independent variables, Cronbach's alphas equal to or above .70 were considered acceptable. If lower, Cronbach's alpha *if Item Deleted* values were to be analyzed next to identify items that did not perform well and that needed to be removed (Field, 2013). For the dependent variables, Cronbach's alphas and inter-item correlations were also estimated but these were not expected to meet the above criteria. Instead, actual scores were considered of greater importance. Specifically, while indicators comprising each of the three indices of action were not expected to be highly correlated with each other, it was expected that the distribution of scores within each index would be similar.

Additionally, descriptive data, including means and standard deviations, were examined at the scale and item level using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Zero-order correlations among all main study variables were also assessed. Further, an independent sample t-test was conducted to examine mean-level differences across variables between youth who experienced conflict or persecution in their home country and those who did not. If there were significant differences between the two groups, this variable was controlled for in subsequent analyses (did not experience conflict or persecution = 0, experienced conflict or persecution = 1). Similarly, this study explored mean-level differences across indices of civic action between youth who are eligible to vote in U.S. elections and those who are not. If significant, eligibility to vote (no or I don't know= 0, yes = 1) was also included as a covariate.

2.4.2 Primary Analyses.

First, a two-factor CFA model was conducted to determine the extent to which the covariance among indicators of immigrant optimism and critical reflection was due to the hypothesized respective factor. Loadings and modification indices were examined and used as reference to improve model fit, with particular attention to correlated residuals and dual loadings. Correlations among factors would further provide evidence for the extent to which immigrant optimism and critical reflection are empirically distinct and should be modeled as such in subsequent models. Specifically, intercorrelations larger than or equal to .85 would indicate poor discriminant validity. Model fit indices were also examined to determine fit to the data, following recommendations by Kline (2016). For the Steiger-Lind Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), values that were less than .08 would indicate acceptable model fit. Additionally, the 90% confidence interval associated with the RMSEA was examined. Finally, for the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), values closer to 1.0 are ideal ,with values of .90 or higher typically considered to reflect adequate fit. Respecification was guided by theory and the above empirical criteria. If the model fit poorly and modification indices suggested there were large dual factor loadings and correlated residuals that are not supported by theory, then a second two-factor CFA model would be examined using parcels as opposed to items, following recommendations by Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, and Schoemann (2013). Parceling is a technique that “reduces the magnitude of specific variances” that contribute to dual factor loadings and correlated residuals (Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013, p. 288). In addition, using parcels as opposed to items improves reliability, as well as model convergence and stability, particularly of large models and in small samples.

Next, a measurement model was specified and used as a baseline against which to compare a structural equation model. Using *Mplus* 8 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2017), the measurement model specified correlations among all variables, including covariates. In this and subsequent models, independent variables (i.e., critical reflection, immigrant optimism, internal SPE, and external SPE) were modeled as latent constructs using parcels rather than items in order to lower the indicator to sample ratio and reduce the number of parameters. On the other hand, dependent variables were modeled as manifest. Latent constructs are "presumed to reflect a continuum that is not directly observable" and can represent a range of phenomena, including attributes and beliefs of people (e.g., Kline, 2016, p. 12). An important advantage of modeling constructs as latent rather than manifest is that this allows for the estimation of measurement error, which is not directly observable in the data. This was particularly relevant to goal 1 of the current study, which concerned the operationalization of immigrant optimism. In line with this, critical consciousness researchers have frequently modeled constructs as latent variables (e.g., Diemer & Li, 2011; Diemer & Rapa, 2016). On the other hand, all three dependent variables represented categories of observable behaviors with no underlying hypothetical construct and were therefore modeled as manifest variables. The measurement and subsequent models were inspected based on the same global and local fit criteria described above.

Next, structural equation modeling was used to test a model specifying associations among constructs, controlling for immigrant generation, dispositional optimism, pre-migration experiences of conflict or persecution (if applicable), and eligibility to vote in U.S. elections (if applicable). Independent variables were again modeled as latent constructs, while dependent variables were modeled as manifest. The structural model specified the paths most supported by research or theory. Specifically, this model included regression paths from critical reflection to

both social change and electoral political efforts. Social change efforts were also regressed on internal and external SPE. Further, this model included regressions from immigrant optimism, internal, and external SPE on electoral political efforts. Community service efforts were regressed on internal SPE only. Finally, independent variables were allowed to correlate with each other. This model would be modified to include exploratory paths (e.g., regression paths from critical reflection, immigrant optimism, and external SPE to community service efforts), if supported by modification indices. A Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference was used to test the statistical significance of change in overall fit from the baseline model (Satorra & Bentler, 2010). The best fitting model was retained.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Preliminary Analyses

The dataset was first examined to determine whether data were normally distributed. Kurtosis values were within the acceptable absolute value for all variables, except critical reflection. Similarly, skewness values were acceptable for all, except critical reflection and fair society beliefs, indicating that the residuals of these variables deviated slightly from normal. Histograms were also examined to corroborate these results. A robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimator was specified in primary analyses to adjust for non-normality. Then, Little's MCAR test was examined and results yielded non-significant findings (χ^2 = 867.155, df = 890, p = .70), indicating that the assumption of missing completely at random was met.

Reliabilities for all measures were examined next. Cronbach's alphas for the newly developed measure of immigrant optimism and for the previously established fair society beliefs items were examined separately first and then together as one measure. Results yielded Cronbach's alphas of .90 and .92 for immigrant optimism and fair society beliefs, respectively,

while Cronbach's alpha for the combined measure was .83. Inter-item correlations were then examined to clarify the nature of the discrepant values. All fair society beliefs items had low and sometimes negative correlations with the immigrant optimism items. Additionally, averaged fair society belief scores were not significantly correlated with averaged immigrant optimism scores. Collectively, these results suggest that fair society beliefs and immigrant optimism may be best understood and modeled as distinct constructs. Fair society beliefs were therefore examined separately in subsequent analyses. Cronbach's alphas for all other independent variables and covariates were adequate, ranging from .75 (for dispositional optimism) to .97 (for critical reflection). With regard to the dependent variables, results also revealed Cronbach's alphas greater than .70 for all domains of action.

Moreover, frequency analyses in SPSS indicated that the distribution of scores within each civic action index were generally consistent, with some exceptions. For the electoral change efforts index, item means ranged from 1.43 for *contributed money to a political campaign* to 3.30 for *voted in local and national elections,* indicating variable participation (Minimum = 1, Maximum = 5). It is important to note that the second lowest mean in this domain also had to do with involvement in a political campaign (*worked or volunteered in a political campaign).* Evidently, youth endorsed formal, political behaviors at a lower rate than more informal, political behaviors, such as talking about a campaign with peers. On the other hand, item means for the social change and community service indices were less variable, ranging from 1.88 to 2.90 and from 2.35 to 2.82, respectively (Minimum = 1, Maximum = 5). It is thus likely that the slightly higher variability in the electoral efforts' domain is at least partially explained by the more formal nature of the two items mentioned and potential barriers youth may face to such participation (e.g., lack of time or funds). All items were included in subsequent analyses.

Bivariate correlations among main study variables were conducted next and are presented in Table 8. Contrary to expectations, immigrant optimism was not significantly associated with any other main variable. On the other hand, critical reflection was significantly and positively correlated with internal SPE (r = .30, p < .001) and negatively correlated with external SPE (r = -.43, p < .001). In addition, critical reflection was significantly and positively correlated with electoral (r = .29, p < .001) and social change efforts (r = .35, p < .001), although its association with community efforts was not significant (r = -.04., p = .63). In addition, internal SPE was negatively related to external SPE (r = -.25, p = .001), and positively related to all domains of action (electoral r = .45, p < .001; social change r = .41, p < .001; community service r = .34, p < .001). Surprisingly, external SPE was negatively correlated with electoral efforts (r = -.24, p < .001). External SPE was also negatively correlated with social change efforts (r = -.32, p < .001), and uncorrelated with community service efforts (r = .08, p = .30). Finally, all action indices were significantly and positively correlated with each other, with the strongest association being between electoral and social change efforts (r = .65, p < .001).

Two independent sample t-tests were conducted next to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between (1) the means of youth who are eligible to vote in U.S. elections and those who are not (or were unsure), and (2) the means of youth who reported experiencing persecution in their home countries and those who did not (see Tables 9 and 10). A Bonferroni correction was applied to account for multiple comparisons with significance level set at $\alpha/n = .006$, where $\alpha = .05$ and $n = 8$ comparisons (Field, 2013).

On average, participants who reported being eligible to vote in U.S. elections significantly differed from their counterparts in their average participation in electoral efforts. Specifically, and as expected, eligible voters (M = 2.54, SD = .82) reported more frequent

participation in electoral efforts than their peers (M = 1.89, SD = .82; t (166) = -3.63, p < .001). Further, eligible voters (M = 2.63, SD = 1.05) reported slightly higher average participation in social change efforts than their counterparts at (M = 2.03, SD = 1.13), although this difference did not reach significance after Bonferroni correction (t (166) = -2.06, p = .01). Eligible voters and their counterparts did not significantly differ in their reported participation in community service efforts (t (16) = .46, p = .64). Given the associations of eligibility to vote with domains of action, this variable was controlled for in subsequent analyses. With regard to differences between those who reported that they/their family experienced persecution in their home countries and those who did not, results revealed no significant differences across action indices. This variable was therefore not included in subsequent analyses.

3.2 Primary Analyses

Confirmatory Factor Analyses. Results from a two-factor CFA with items for immigrant optimism and critical reflection are presented in Figure 1. As described earlier, this model (Model 1) specified correlations between the two factors and loadings for 18 items onto their corresponding factors (nine items each). Results revealed that all immigrant optimism items significantly loaded onto the immigrant optimism factor, with betas ranging from .56 for item 7 (*I can achieve more than my immigrant parents were able to)* to .79 for item 5 (*I believe anything is possible in the U.S. because my immigrant family teaches me that this country is of full of opportunities).* Similarly, all critical reflection items significantly loaded onto their corresponding factor, ranging from .83 for item 1 *(Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education*) to .92 for items 6 *(Certain immigrant groups have fewer chances to get good jobs)* and 9 *(Certain immigrant groups have fewer chances to get*

ahead). Contrary to hypotheses, the immigrant optimism and critical reflection factors were not significantly correlated with each other ($\beta = .05$, $p = .66$).

Despite the moderate to high item loadings for both factors, model fit indices indicated poor fit, as evidenced by a significant Chi-square, an RMSEA value higher than .08, and a CFI of .891 (see Table 11). Modification indices were therefore examined next. These included a number of possible modifications that were not supported by theory. For example, indices suggested specifying correlations between critical reflection items that were not consistently based on dimension (i.e., socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, immigrant status), or area of inequity (i.e., education, jobs, general opportunities).

Only one modification could be justified by theory. Modification indices suggested a correlation between items 7 and 8 under the immigrant optimism factor. This modification was considered further because both items involve youth's awareness of the limited opportunities their parents experienced as immigrants and a belief that they will be able to do better for themselves. Such characteristics seem unique to these two items as the rest of items either focused on comparing past opportunities in the country of origin to current opportunities in the U.S. (in line with a dual frame of reference), or on a positive attitude towards the future without an explicit recognition of past struggles. Based on these theoretical considerations, a modified two-factor model (Model 1a) was specified that included a correlation between items 7 and 8 (see Figure 2, Table 12). Results yielded a significant inter-item correlation of .5 ($p < .001$), which contributed to a small improvement in model fit as indicated by a slightly higher CFI and lower RMSEA. This model was retained as the best fitting model.

Still, to reduce sources of parsimony and sampling errors (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002; Little, 2013), parcels were created for inclusion of these two factors in

subsequent, larger models. A homogenous or facet representative parceling strategy was adapted for critical reflection, internal, and external SPE, while a balancing technique was used for immigrant optimism. A facet representative strategy is recommended when *subsets* of items rather than individual items are expected to uniquely contribute to the factor (i.e., the construct is expected to be multidimensional). Thus, for critical reflection, parcels were created based on the three dimensions identified above: socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and immigrant status. This yielded three parcels containing three items each. For internal SPE, items were packaged into three parcels: two parcels averaged items that assessed perceived ability to understand and participate in action processes (Diemer & Rapa, 2016) and one averaged items that assessed perceived ability to effect change in the community or in society. For external SPE, three parcels were created: Two that averaged items assessing trustworthiness of elected officials and one that averaged items assessing government responsiveness. On the other hand, a balancing technique – which involves combining items with higher loadings with items having lower loadings – was adopted for the immigrant optimism as there were no hypothesized subdimensions for this construct. As with all other independent variables, the immigrant optimism items were packaged into three parcels containing three items each.

Measurement Model. Next, a measurement model was specified that included correlations among all study variables. Results from this model are included in Table 15, Figure 3. The model fit the data well, $\chi^2(120) = 178.74$, CFI = .962, RMSEA = .053, SRMR = .044. First, with regard to factor loadings, all parcels significantly load onto their corresponding factor. In addition, there were several significant correlations among variables. Immigrant optimism was significantly correlated with two controlled variables: dispositional optimism ($r = .28$, $p = .001$) and with being Latinx ($r = .20$, $p < .001$), and it was surprisingly uncorrelated with all main

variables of interest. Consistent with previous findings, critical reflection was significantly and positively correlated with internal SPE (r = .34, p < .001), as well as social change (r = .35, p < .001) and electoral political efforts (r = .29, p < .001), while it was negatively correlated with external SPE (r = -.44, p < .001) and fair society beliefs (r = -.52, p < .001). Notably, this latter association was the largest in magnitude. Additionally, results revealed a significant positive association between critical reflection and being Latinx (r = .16, p = .019). On the other hand, being Asian was significantly associated with lower critical reflection (r = -.17, p = .025). These latter findings suggest that relative to Black and mixed-race youth, Latinx youth reported higher levels and Asian youth reported lower levels of critical reflection.

Consistent with hypotheses, findings also indicated that internal SPE was significantly and positively correlated with all action indices, and these effects were moderate in magnitude (rs = .46, .49, and .32 for electoral, social change, and community service efforts, respectively). On the other hand, external SPE was significantly and *negatively* correlated with electoral (r = -.23, p = .006) and social change efforts (r = -.31, p < .001). Also, internal SPE was negatively correlated with external SPE (r = -.30, p = .001). Both internal and external SPE were significantly correlated with fair society beliefs in the inverse direction (internal r = -.22, p = .005; external r = .36, p < .001).

All action indices were significantly and positively correlated with one other. Both electoral and social change efforts were significantly and negatively correlated with fair society beliefs (electoral r = -.31, p < .001; social change r = -.33, p < .001). The direction of the former association was inconsistent with the hypothesis that fair society beliefs would be *positively* associated with electoral political efforts, whereas the direction of the latter was as expected.

Finally, eligibility to vote was not significantly associated with any outcome variables, surprisingly.

SEM Model. Next, SEM was used to test hypothesized paths assessing independent contributions of CR, internal and external SPE, and immigrant optimism to the three indices of social action. The model fit the data well, χ^2 (126) = 191.19, CFI = .956, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .050 (see Table 13). A Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test (Table 14) revealed that while model fit was somewhat lower relative to the measurement or comparison model, the decrement in fit was not statistically significant, providing support for this model both theoretically and empirically. Consistent with these results, modification indices did not yield any theoretically supported paths that could improve model fit, such as indirect effects. This SEM model with main effects only was therefore retained. Overall, this model significantly explained 37%, 33%, and 16% of the variance in social change, electoral political, and community service efforts, respectively. Additionally, results from the SEM Model (Figure 4, Table 16) revealed a few significant associations between core elements of critical consciousness and action indices that were consistent with hypotheses. Specifically, results revealed significant positive contributions of internal SPE to electoral political (β = .38, p < .001), social change (β = .37, p < .001), and community service efforts (β = .32, p < .001). Additionally, critical reflection significantly contributed to variation in social change efforts (β = .19, p = .018), whereas critical reflection was not significantly associated with electoral political efforts (β = .11, p = .25). On the other hand, hypotheses regarding the effects of immigrant optimism and external SPE on action indices were not significantly supported by these data. Contrary to expectations, immigrant optimism was not significantly associated with either predictor or outcome variables, although it was significantly correlated with covariates: dispositional optimism (β = .28, p =

.001), as expected, as well as with being Latinx (β = .20, $p < .001$). Also, despite significant correlations observed in the measurement model, the specified regressions of electoral political and social change efforts on external SPE were not significant (electoral political β = -.00, $p = .99$; social change β = -.12, $p = .12$). Similarly, fair society beliefs were not independently related to electoral political efforts (β = -.09, p = .27), despite significant correlations in the measurement model.

With regard to effects of covariates on action indices, results revealed significant positive associations of immigrant generation with social change efforts (β = .25, $p < .001$). On the other hand, immigrant generation had a significant negative association with community service (β = -.19, $p = .015$). Results also indicated that eligibility to vote significantly contributed to variation on community service efforts (β = .15, $p = .014$), although it did not have significant associations with electoral political (β = .11, $p = .14$) or social change efforts (β = .00, $p = .97$). Also, consistent with preliminary results, all action indices were significantly correlated with one another, and the association between electoral and social change efforts remained the largest in magnitude (β = .51, $p < .001$).

Race/ethnicity did not significantly contribute to variance in any of the outcome variables. However, Latinx youth reported significantly higher levels of critical reflection (β = .16, $p = .02$) and higher immigrant optimism (β = .20, $p < .001$) compared to Black/mixed race youth, while Asian youth reported significantly lower critical reflection (β = -.17, $p = .024$) and higher external SPE (β = .25, $p = .002$). Finally, in terms of associations between independent variables, results revealed a significant positive correlation between critical reflection and internal SPE (β = .33, $p < .001$), and negative correlations with external SPE (β = -.44, $p < .001$) and fair society beliefs (β = -.52, $p < .001$). Fair society beliefs were negatively correlated with

internal SPE (β = -.22, p = .005) positively correlated with external SPE (β = .36, p < .001). External SPE was negatively correlated with internal SPE (β = -.29, p = .002). These results were consistent with hypotheses under a critical consciousness framework.

4 DISCUSSION

The present study sought to address gaps in the literature by considering immigration phenomena, namely the immigrant optimism hypothesis, within critical consciousness and broader civic engagement frameworks. To accomplish this, the present study developed and validated a novel measure of immigrant optimism. Through an iterative and collaborative process, a set of items was created to capture the construct of immigrant optimism, considering processes related to a dual frame of reference and cultural socialization as described earlier. Both content and discriminant validity were established, following recommended steps by multiple sources for establishing content and discriminant validity of a construct (e.g., Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009; Johnston et al., 2014). The retained indicators were then included in an online, survey-data study along with measures of critical reflection, internal and external sociopolitical efficacy, and action indices (i.e., electoral political, social change, and community service efforts). These variables were later examined in an SEM model that specified correlations and regressions between and among variables. Overall, results from this study supported some but not all hypotheses and hinted at potentially relevant individual and group-level differences to consider in future research.

As described previously, the current study first involved an item generation phase that was essential to the data collection phase. The final set of immigrant optimism items retained from this first phase demonstrated high internal consistency and results further indicated that these items were best understood as independent of items from an established measure of fair

society beliefs. This was partially consistent with hypotheses in that fair society beliefs were conceptualized as a proxy for the more complex, comprehensive construct of immigrant optimism. In addition, the significant loadings of immigrant optimism indicators onto the hypothesized underlying factor of immigrant optimism provided further support for the content validity of the newly developed measure. Results from confirmatory factor analyses revealed that the immigrant optimism factor is distinct from critical reflection and its indicators, as expected. However, contrary to expectations, immigrant optimism and critical reflection were not significantly correlated with one another. Furthermore, in primary analyses, immigrant optimism was unrelated to all other independent variables and did not significantly contribute to variation in any of the dependent variables. Similarly, fair society beliefs were unrelated to action indices despite previous research identifying it as an important predictor of electoral efforts (e.g., Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Thus, hypotheses regarding immigrant optimism – which were largely based on the fair society beliefs literature – were generally not supported. It should be noted, however, that fair society beliefs were significantly correlated with critical reflection, internal, and external SPE in ways that are consistent with previous literature (e.g., Godfrey & Wolf, 2016; Wray-Lake, Rote, Gupta, Godfrey, & Sirin, 2015).

There are a few possible explanations for these non-significant findings. First, it is possible that immigrant optimism is in fact a multidimensional construct and that its full scope was not captured in the items retained for this study. For example, results from the two-factor CFA model at the item level indicated a unique association between the only two immigrant optimism items that were both past- and future-oriented. Specifically, these two items seemed to involve youth's awareness of the sacrifices and limitations experienced by their parents as immigrants and a belief that they (the youth) will do better. On the other hand, all other items

involved either comparing the past to the present, or thinking about the future only, with a positive outlook. Thus, it might be fruitful for future research to develop and test more items with these characteristics, and to investigate whether subsets of items are differentially associated with processes and outcomes of civic action. It might be particularly important to investigate immigrant youth's recognition and internalization of their parents' sacrifices and how exactly this relates to both immigrant optimism and civic action (e.g., Kang & Raffaelli, 2016).

For example, studies have previously found differences in how high vs. low internalization of indebtedness to parents for their sacrifices influences behaviors within immigrant youth and families (Kang & Raffaelli, 2016). Also, in a recent qualitative study of educational pathways of immigrant youth who arrived in the U.S. at high school age, Birman and colleagues (2020) found that these youth recognized the sacrifices and compromises that all immigrants make and felt a special responsibility to make the "pay-off" worth it for their parents. In turn, this seemed to motivate youth to persevere in their academic pursuits. These findings are in line with the literature on the immigrant bargain (e.g., Cherng & Liu, 2017), as described earlier, and there is reason to expect them to uniquely influence patterns of action. Specifically, a growing literature has identified sense of social responsibility, or a sense of duty to contribute to the betterment of others, as an antecedent of action (e.g., Katsiaficas, 2018; Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011). Among immigrant youth of color, it is possible that a sense of social responsibility stems from their recognition of their parents' sacrifices and sense of responsibility to make them worthwhile. Future research is needed to tease apart contributions of immigrant optimism and sense of social responsibility to the civic participation of immigrant youth.

It is also important to note that, as expected, immigrant optimism was significantly correlated with dispositional optimism and this effect was small in magnitude. This finding

provides support for the notion that immigrant optimism extends beyond just a trait component as reflected in the positive selection hypothesis (e.g., Fuligni, 2012; Portes, 2012). In addition, results revealed some significant associations that partially supported the hypotheses regarding contributions of critical reflection, internal, and external SPE to domains of action. First, consistent with hypotheses based on critical consciousness theory (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Hope, 2016), internal SPE emerged as a reliable predictor of participation in social change efforts, and it further contributed to variance in participation in electoral political and community service efforts, as expected. These findings are not surprising given that internal SPE has received considerable attention and support in its role as a facilitator of action across theories of sociopolitical development (e.g., Diemer & Li, 2011; Peterson et al., 2011; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Thus, it appears this individual-level characteristic is essential to civic participation; efforts aimed at promoting action should consider capitalizing and strengthening youth's beliefs in their capacity to effectively engage and create change.

Also, as hypothesized, higher critical reflection was associated with more frequent participation in social change efforts. The more youth recognized the inequities impacting racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, and those of low socioeconomic status, the more likely they were to engage in actions that challenged the status quo. This finding supports the core premise of critical consciousness theory that being aware of the impact that systemic inequities have on one's social group serves critical action among marginalized youth as it is unlikely they will "blindly participate in social movements, given the barriers to participation they face" (Diemer & Li, 2011, p. 1830).

On the other hand, external SPE did not emerge as a significant facilitator or barrier of electoral political or social change efforts, which was contrary to expectations based on the

literature. As previously noted, external SPE is not often examined within CC research given that the emphasis of the latter is on challenging the status quo (e.g., Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999), whereas external SPE relates to one's belief and/or trust in the government and its officials as they are. Thus, the non-significant effect of external SPE on social change efforts may simply suggest that external SPE loses relevance when critical reflection and internal SPE are controlled for. In other words, external SPE does not seem to meaningfully contribute to social change efforts, above and beyond the contributions of critical reflection and internal SPE. A similar pattern may be present in relation to external SPE and electoral political efforts. This is one of the gaps that the present study aimed to fill. Our results suggest that internal SPE is a reliable predictor of all action indices, whereas external SPE does not seem to exert a meaningful, significant influence on domains of action when internal SPE is accounted for.

In evaluating these findings, it is also important to keep in mind the context in which these data were collected. Studies have previously demonstrated that processes of civic and political engagement are often context dependent. Particularly relevant to this study is the existing literature showing that trust in the government is malleable and greatly influenced by changes in partisan control brought on by presidential elections (e.g., Keele, 2005). Also, studies have documented changes in reported levels of internal SPE among Republican and Democrat voters across election periods (Daniller & Gilberstadt, 2020)**.** Specifically, a recent Pew Research study found that voters who went for the Democratic candidate in 2020 reported slightly higher internal SPE than their counterparts in 2016, while the opposite was true for Republican voters. These voters reported lower internal SPE in 2020 than their peers in 2016 (Daniller & Gilberstadt, 2020). These studies highlight the importance of considering the political context in which data were collected. For the present study, data collection began in

Spring 2021 just a few months after President Biden took office. This period – and the months leading up to it – was certainly characterized by considerable changes in the political landscape of the U.S., which may have shaped the sociopolitical beliefs, including internal and external SPE, of participants.

Moreover, with the exception of immigrant optimism, which as reported above was uncorrelated with all variables, results indicated significant associations between and among all independent variables that were consistent with hypotheses. A particularly important contribution of this study is the simultaneous inclusion of fair society beliefs and critical reflection. In the past, studies have occasionally used a measure of fair society beliefs or related constructs as a proxy for critical reflection, and/or have assumed that perceiving a society to be fair equates to a lack of critical reflection (e.g., Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). By including both measures in the same construct, this study finds that measures of critical reflection and fair society beliefs are related but not equivalent. Relatedly, others have previously posited that critical reflection has an egalitarianism component to it in addition to an awareness of inequities (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017). However, this component is theoretically distinct from beliefs that one's society (e.g., American society) is fair as it emphasizes one's belief in and desire for all groups to be treated equally within society. It is a difference of what one perceives society to be versus what one believes society *should* be.

It was surprising that critical reflection was more strongly correlated with external rather than internal SPE since both critical reflection and internal SPE are core elements of critical consciousness, and external SPE is not. Again, this provides support for the proposed expansion of critical consciousness and civic engagement models. Without measuring all relevant processes, results may obscure important findings. Finally, the positive and significant

correlations between electoral political, social change, and community service efforts were consistent with expectations, although it was somewhat unexpected that electoral political and social change efforts would be as strongly correlated with each other. As described earlier, critical consciousness is concerned with actions aimed at producing social change, while the broader civic engagement literature tends to focus on traditional political behaviors. In attempting to integrate literatures, both types of action were examined in this study. However, the intended outcomes of these actions (i.e., to create social change vs. maintain the status quo) was not assessed. It is possible immigrant youth may engage in both protests and voting, for example, with the same goal of bringing about social change. Future research should thus consider assessing a range of civic behaviors, as we have in this study, and further assess the intended outcome with each of them to better categorize domains of action. It could also be the case that that the specific political context in which data were collected, as described above, shaped the strong and positive association between electoral political and social change efforts. It is possible that following the transitional period from a Republican presidency to a Democratic one, participants might have more strongly perceived that both electoral traditional and social change efforts mattered and could make a difference in society. Notably, political identification or ideology was not assessed in this study. Doing so might have helped clarify the nature of these findings.

4.1 Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current study is characterized by several strengths and contributes to our understanding of facilitators and barriers to civic action among immigrant youth of color, there are notable limitations that should be considered in future research. First, the small overall sample size limited the type of analyses that could be conducted, and this may have obscured

some findings. For example, results indicated that Latinx participants have higher immigrant optimism and critical reflection than their counterparts, while Asian participants reported lower critical reflection and higher external SPE than their peers. Although race/ethnicity were included as covariates, multigroup comparisons with a larger sample might have yielded more nuanced results and offered a better understanding of the nature and function of these group-level influences. Relatedly, the final sample was smaller than planned for in a-priori power analyses, and this may have limited power to detect significant effects.

Future research should consider expanding this study to investigate longitudinal associations between and among critical reflection, sociopolitical efficacy, immigrant optimism, and action indices. The cross-sectional nature of these data does not allow for conclusions about directionality of effects, and it is likely that relationships among main variables are bidirectional (e.g., Šerek, Machackova, & Macek, 2017). Also, using longitudinal data, researchers could investigate moderating and mediating effects of the associations specified in this study. For instance, it could be that immigrant youth of color endorse immigrant optimism progressively less and critical reflection progressively more, over time, in response to experiences with interpersonal and/or systemic discrimination, and this, in turn, may influence their civic participation. Studies have previously found negative associations between experiences of discrimination and fair society beliefs among youth of color (Flanagan et al., 2009), and a restrictive political climate has been found to shape the civic development among immigrants (Wray-Lake et al., 2018). Future studies should therefore examine the way in which discrimination influences these associations over time.

Another potential methodological limitation of this study is that dimensionality of constructs was not examined. This may have been especially relevant for the newly developed

measure of immigrant optimism, as described earlier, but also for critical reflection. Specifically, while parcels were created to be representative of each domain of critical reflection (i.e., SES, race/ethnicity, and immigrant status), we did not have power to examine unique associations of each domain with the remaining variables of interest. Researchers have previously called for more intersectional approaches to the study of critical consciousness and related processes (e.g., Godfrey & Burson, 2018). It is reasonable to assume that both the race/ethnicity and immigrant status domains were relevant to participants given the inclusion criteria for the study; however, the relevance of SES is less clear since identifying as economically disadvantaged was not required for participation in this study. Still, estimated effects for all three parcels (which again were created to represent each dimension) were significant and appeared to equally contribute to the critical reflection factor.

Also, dimensions of sociopolitical efficacy (i.e., internal and external) were previously found to interact with each other to predict civic outcomes (e.g., Feldman et al., 2017), and some investigations have found them to serve as mechanisms through which critical reflection leads to action, although not consistently (e.g., Cadenas, Bernstein, & Tracey, 2018; Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Given our sample size and related considerations for power, this study only examined the associations most supported by research and theory. Future studies should consider collecting larger samples that would allow for more complex analyses, especially interactions, which are generally smaller and therefore more difficult to detect in small samples. Finally, researchers should also consider investigating precursors to internal SPE given that this was particularly important for action. Civic knowledge and discussions with parents and peers around political issues have been directly and indirectly linked to internal SPE and action (Diemer & Li, 2011), and may thus be important to examine further in future research.

4.2 Conclusions

The current study represents an attempt to integrate theories of critical consciousness and civic development with relevant processes from the immigrant development literature. In particular, this study concerned the operationalization of immigrant optimism and its influence on process of civic action. Overall, findings of the current study provide support for simultaneously investigating processes previously assumed to conflict with each other and/or to be less relevant to a particular theory (e.g., external SPE within critical consciousness theory). In doing so, this study found that the most reliable predictor of civic action indices, including social change, electoral political, and community service efforts, was internal SPE, which has been identified as influential across theories of civic and sociopolitical development (e.g., Diemer & Li, 2011; Peterson et al., 2011; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

Also, our findings add to existing evidence for the influence of critical reflection on social change efforts, although directionality could not be established in this study. Finally, this study developed and validated a measure of immigrant optimism, which was expected to be related to critical reflection and to contribute to electoral political efforts. Although these hypotheses were not supported, findings offer some insights into immigration and acculturation processes not previously considered within critical consciousness or civic development theories.

These findings may have implications for the development of intervention programs aimed at promoting civic action among immigrant youth of color. Specifically, our findings suggest that promoting and strengthening internal SPE might be particularly productive in terms of empowering youth to engage in actions for the betterment of their communities. It will therefore be important that more research investigates facilitators to internal SPE, including political socialization processes by family, peers, schools, and media (e.g., Muralidharan &

Sung, 2016; Pasek, Feldman, Romer, & Jamieson, 2008). Such examinations have the potential to inform intervention programs to promote well-being at the individual, collective, and societal levels.

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APPENDIX

Tables

Table 1. General impressions from first subsample of judges (N=5).

Judge	*In general, please tell me what you think of this measure as a whole.*
1	"It seems that all the items except the last one are in the positive direction. It seems focused on comparing to country of origin. In our work the belief in US as a meritocracy is also important, but not here directly (I think that in this country if I work hard I will succeed). Perhaps this is implied in the first question about American Dream."
2	"Overall, the measure makes sense and seems to capture the construct well without being too repetitive or too long. There are some wording choices that might be challenging to follow."
3	"I think the items are clear. Are there supposed to be different dimensions? I am asking because if that's the case, you want to make sure to have more items to tap into each dimension. As you continue to refine the scale, you will reduce the number of items. You want to make sure that you have enough to start. Also, all items are positively worded (measuring immigrant optimism) except for the last one, you might want to consider to include more negatively worded items or drop the last one."
4	"This is a good list AND I notice that MOST but not all items in this measure seems to tap specifically into immigrant optimism about opportunities in the US Others seem to tap into the dual frame of reference (e.g., Other items are about the dual-frame of reference (e.g., 3, 12, 13, & 17).) And still others are a bit more general to general future optimism (can accomplish anything; have high aspirations, optimistic about the future; can overcome anything. Do you intend to factor analyze? And is it necessary to include the words "my immigrant parents" and as a child of immigrants" in your questions? If you left those out, you could have non-immigrants take it and then have a comparison group."
5	"I think it looks good in general. I wonder what age/ English language level it is intended for, as some words may not be understood by younger or less English-client participants."

Table 2. Average item-level rankings from first subsample of judges (N=5).

Items	Said "Yes"	Avg. + Confidence	Said "No"	Avg. – Confidence	Av. Total Confidence
1. My immigrant parents raised me to believe in the American Dream	4	7.8	0	n/a	7.8
2. Growing up in an immigrant family, I learned that, in the U.S., I can accomplish anything I want.	5	9.2	0	n/a	9.2
3. I am able to keep a positive attitude about U.S. society because my family reminds me that the opportunities here are greater than in my country of origin.	4	8.3	1	-5*	5.6
4. Because my family teaches me to be grateful for all the opportunities we have had in the U.S., I appreciate my life here more.	3	7.7	2	-2	3.8
5. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I am optimistic about my future in the U.S.	5	9.6	0	n/a	9.6
6. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I was raised to have high aspirations for my life in the U.S.	4	7.3	0	n/a	7.3
7. When I think about opportunities in the U.S. and opportunities in my family's country of origin, I feel glad to live here.[a]	4	7.5	1	Missing	7.5
8. I believe anything is possible in the U.S. because my immigrant family teaches me that this country is of full of opportunities.	1	9.8	0	-5*	6.8

9. When I think about the barriers my parents and/or I have faced as immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way.	5	7.6	0	n/a	7.6
10. My immigrant family raised me to believe that I can achieve more than they were able to.	3	5	2	.5	3.2
11. My immigrant family encourages me to honor their sacrifices through work hard to advance my education/career.	3	3	2	-2.5	.8
12. I feel fortunate because my living conditions in the US are better than the conditions in my country of origin.	4	6.8	1	Missing	6.8
13. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe I receive better care (education, health care, jobs) in the US than I would in my family's country of origin.	3	7	2	0*	5.3
14. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe that my future will make my parents' sacrifices in moving here worth it.	5	7.4	0	n/a	7.4
15. My immigrant family's hardships are the motivating factor for my hard work and achievements.	2	6	2	-1	1.8
16. I have high aspirations because the U.S. has given my family opportunities that our country of origin could not afford.	4	8.3	1	Missing	8.3
17. I believe that, in the U.S., there are more	4	8	0	n/a	8

opportunities for me to thrive than there are in my family's country of origin.[a]					
18. After experiencing life in the U.S., my optimism for the future has diminished since I/my family first migrated.[a]	3	6.7	2	Missing	6.7

Note: *indicates that there was only one score available and that score is displayed instead of an average score. [a]indicates that the item was not retained for the next round of feedback.

Table 3. Comparison table of original vs. revised items after first round of feedback.

Original Items	Revised Items
1. My immigrant parents raised me to believe in the American Dream	My immigrant parents raised me to believe in the "American Dream"
2. Growing up in an immigrant family, I learned that, in the U.S., I can accomplish anything I want.	Being from an immigrant family, I have learned that I can accomplish anything I want in the U.S.
3. I am able to keep a positive attitude about U.S. society because my family reminds me that the opportunities here are greater than in my country of origin.	I keep a positive attitude towards U.S. society because my family reminds me that the opportunities here are greater than in our country of origin.
4. Because my family teaches me to be grateful for all the opportunities we have had in the U.S., I appreciate my life here more.	My family teaches me to be grateful for all the opportunities we have had in the U.S.
5. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I am optimistic about my future in the U.S.	No changes
6. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I was raised to have high aspirations for my life in the U.S.	As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I was raised to have high hopes for my life in the U.S.
7. When I think about opportunities in the U.S. and opportunities in my family's country of origin, I feel glad to live here.	Deleted due to lack of specificity around feeling "glad"; also identified by some judges as a *precursor* of optimism, not optimism
8. I believe anything is possible in the U.S. because my immigrant family teaches me that this country is of full of opportunities	No changes
9. When I think about the barriers my parents and/or I have faced as immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way.	When I think about the hardships my family has faced as immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way.
10. My immigrant family raised me to believe that I can achieve more than they were able to.	I can achieve more than my immigrant parents were able to.
11. My immigrant family encourages me to honor their sacrifices through work hard to advance my education/career.	My immigrant family encourages me to honor their sacrifices through hard work.
12. I feel fortunate because my living conditions in the US are better than the conditions in my country of origin.	I feel fortunate because my living conditions in the U.S. are better than the conditions in my family's country of origin.

13. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe I receive better care (education, health care, jobs) in the US than I would in my family's country of origin.	As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe I receive better educational and job opportunities in the U.S. than I would in my family's country of origin.
14. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe that my future will make my parents' sacrifices in moving here worth it.	As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe that my future will make my family's sacrifices in moving here worthwhile.
15. My immigrant family's hardships are the motivating factor for my hard work and achievements.	My immigrant family's hardships motivate me to work hard and achieve more
16. I have high aspirations because the U.S. has given my family opportunities that our country of origin could not afford.	I have high aspirations because my family has more opportunities in the U.S. than in our country of origin.
17. I believe that, in the U.S., there are more opportunities for me to thrive than there are in my family's country of origin.	Deleted due to repetitiveness (see items 3, 13, 16)
18. After experiencing life in the U.S., my optimism for the future has diminished since I/my family first migrated.	Deleted due to negative wording

Table 4. Average item-level rankings from second subsample of judges (N =15/16).

Items	Said "Yes"	Avg. Confidence	Said "No"	Avg. Confidence	Av. Total Confidence
1. My immigrant parents raised me to believe in the "American Dream"	10	6.6	6	-4.5	2.6
2. Being from an immigrant family, I have learned that I can accomplish anything I want in the U.S.	15	7.3	1	Missing	7.3
3. I keep a positive attitude towards U.S. society because my family reminds me that the opportunities here are greater than in our country of origin.	12	7.3	4	-.7	5.7
4. My family teaches me to be grateful for all the opportunities we have had in the U.S.	13	5.9	3	-5	4.5
5. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I am optimistic about my future in the U.S.	15	7.3	1	2*	6.9
6. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I was raised to have high hopes for my life in the U.S.	15	7.3	0	n/a	7.3
7. Deleted after first round of feedback					
8. I believe anything is possible in the U.S. because my immigrant family teaches me that this country is of full of opportunities	15	7.5	0	n/a	7.5
9. When I think about the hardships my family has faced as immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way.	15	6.6	0	n/a	6.6

10. I can achieve more than my immigrant parents were able to.	13	6.9	2	-4.5	5.4
11. My immigrant family encourages me to honor their sacrifices through hard work.	7	6	8	-5.5	-.1
12. I feel fortunate because my living conditions in the U.S. are better than the conditions in my family's country of origin.	9	7.5	6	-1.8	3.8
13. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe I receive better educational and job opportunities in the U.S. than I would in my family's country of origin.	11	7.5	4	-2.8	4.7
14. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe that my future will make my family's sacrifices in moving here worthwhile.	13	6.3	2	-.5	5.4
15. My immigrant family's hardships motivate me to work hard and achieve more	12	6.3	3	-4	4.3
16. I have high aspirations because my family has more opportunities in the U.S. than in our country of origin.	12	6.8	3	-2	5.1
17. Deleted after first round of feedback					
18. Deleted after first round of feedback					

Table 5. Side by side comparisons of results from Rounds 1 and 2.

Item	Round 1			Round 2		
	% Yes	Avg. + Confidence	Outcome	% Yes	Avg. + Confidence	Outcome
1. My immigrant parents raised me to believe in the American Dream	66.7	7.8	Retained with minor changes	62.5	6.6	Deleted
2. Growing up in an immigrant family, I learned that, in the U.S., I can accomplish anything I want.	83.3	9.2	Retained with minor changes	93.8	7.3	Retained
3. I am able to keep a positive attitude about U.S. society because my family reminds me that the opportunities here are greater than in my country of origin.	66.7	8.3	Retained with minor changes	75	7.3	Retained
4. Because my family teaches me to be grateful for all the opportunities we have had in the U.S., I appreciate my life here more.	50	7.7	Retained with minor changes	81.3	5.9	Retained
5. As an immigrant/ child of immigrants, I am optimistic about my future in the U.S.	83.3	9.6	Retained with no changes	93.8	7.3	Retained
6. As an immigrant/ child of immigrants, I was raised to have high aspirations for my life in the U.S.	66.7	7.3	Retained with minor changes	93.8	7.3	Retained
7. When I think about opportunities in the U.S. and opportunities in my family's country of origin, I feel glad to live here.	66.7	7.5	Deleted	-	-	-

8.	I believe anything is possible in the U.S. because my immigrant family teaches me that this country is of full of opportunities	16.7	9.8	Retained with no changes	93.8	7.5	Retained
9.	When I think about the barriers my parents and/or I have faced as immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way.	83.3	7.6	Retained with minor changes	93.8	6.6	Retained
10.	My immigrant family raised me to believe that I can achieve more than they were able to.	50	5	Retained with minor changes	81.3	6.9	Deleted
11.	My immigrant family encourages me to honor their sacrifices through work hard to advance my education/career.	50	3	Retained with minor changes	43.8	6	Retained
12.	I feel fortunate because my living conditions in the US are better than the conditions in my country of origin.	66.7	6.8	Retained with minor changes	56.3	7.6	Retained
13.	As an immigrant/ child of immigrants, I believe I receive better care (education, health care, jobs) in the US than I would in my family's country of origin.	50	7	Retained with minor changes	68.8	7.5	Retained
14.	As an immigrant/ child of immigrants, I believe that my future will make my parents' sacrifices in moving here worth it.	83.3	7.4	Retained with minor changes	81.3	6.3	Retained

15. My immigrant family's hardships are the motivating factor for my hard work and achievements.	33.3	6	Retained with minor changes	75	6.3	Retained
16. I have high aspirations because the U.S. has given my family opportunities that our country of origin could not afford.	66.7	8.3	Retained with minor changes	75	6.8	Retained
17. I believe that, in the U.S., there are more opportunities for me to thrive than there are in my family's country of origin.	66.7	8	Deleted	-	-	-
18. After experiencing life in the U.S., my optimism for the future has diminished since I/my family first migrated.	50	6.7	Deleted	-	-	-

Table 6. One Sample Non-Parametric T-Test.

Items	Observed Median	*T*	*Standard Error*	*Std. Test Statistic*	*p*
1. My immigrant parents raised me to believe in the "American Dream"	4	71	17.58	.63	.53
2. Being from an immigrant family, I have learned that I can accomplish anything I want in the U.S.	8	104	15.83	3.25	.001
3. I keep a positive attitude towards U.S. society because my family reminds me that the opportunities here are greater than in our country of origin.	7	109.5	17.55	2.82	.005
4. My family teaches me to be grateful for all the opportunities we have had in the U.S.	6	80.0	15.89	1.73	.083
5. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I am optimistic about my future in the U.S.	8	66.0	11.04	2.99	.003
6. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I was raised to have high hopes for my life in the U.S.	7	105.0	15.83	3.32	<.001
7. I believe anything is possible in the U.S. because my immigrant family teaches me that this country is of full of opportunities.	8	105.0	15.86	3.31	<.001
8. When I think about the hardships my family has faced as immigrants, I know I can overcome anything that comes my way.	7	103.5	15.89	3.21	.001
9. I can achieve more than my immigrant parents were able to.	6	102.5	17.52	2.43	.015

10. My immigrant family encourages me to honor their sacrifices through hard work.	0	41	17.55	-1.08	.28
11. I feel fortunate because my living conditions in the U.S. are better than the conditions in my family's country of origin.	5	80.0	17.49	2.20	.25
12. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe I receive better educational and job opportunities in the U.S. than I would in my family's country of origin.	6	80.5	15.87	1.76	.08
13. As an immigrant/child of immigrants, I believe that my future will make my family's sacrifices in moving here worthwhile.	6	95.0	15.88	2.68	.007
14. My immigrant family's hardships motivate me to work hard and achieve more	4	67.5	14.23	1.55	.12
15. I have high aspirations because my family has more opportunities in the U.S. than in our country of origin.	7	99.5	17.51	2.26	.024

Table 7. Correlations Among Final Immigrant Optimism Items.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Item 1	-								
Item 2	.53***	-							
Item 3	.52***	.66***	-						
Item 4	.54***	.55***	.59***	-					
Item 5	.57***	.58***	.67***	.60***	-				
Item 6	.49***	.49***	.56***	.44***	.63***	-			
Item 7	.25**	.34***	.30***	.44***	.31***	.53***	-		
Item 8	.36***	.48***	.48***	.45***	.51***	.65***	.66***	-	
Item 9	.46***	.49***	.54***	.51***	.51***	.54***	.51***	.63***	-
Mean	5.21	5.05	5.13	5.51	4.92	5.51	5.82	5.89	5.73
Std. Deviation	1.46	1.56	1.36	1.27	1.62	1.39	1.28	1.26	1.35

***$p < .001$; **$p = .001$.

Table 8. Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Imm. Optimism	-							
2. Critical Reflection	.06	-						
3. Internal SPE	.09	.30***	-					
4. External SPE	.10	-.43***	-.25**	-				
5. Fair Society Beliefs	-.07	-.50***	-.19*	.38***	-			
6. Electoral	.01	.29***	.45***	-.24*	-.31***	-		
8. Social Change	-.07	.35***	.41***	-.32***	-.32***	.65***	-	
9. Community Service	.09	-.04	.34***	.08	.05	.26***	.24*	-
Mean	5.42	5.63	3.43	2.56	1.87	2.44	2.54	2.58
Standard Deviation	1.05	1.41	.76	.62	.94	.85	1.08	.85

***$p < .001$; **$p = .001$; *$p < .05$.

Table 9. Independent Sample T-Tests: Eligibility to Vote in U.S. Elections.

	Not Eligible to Vote		Eligible to Vote					99% CI	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*	Lower	Upper
Imm. Optimism	4.94	1.18	5.50	1.00	-2.49	168	.014	-1.16	.03
Critical Reflection	5.02	1.77	5.74	1.33	-1.91	27.4	.067	-1.76	.32
Internal SPE	3.21	.74	3.46	.76	-1.57	169	.12	-.69	.17
External SPE	2.89	.58	2.51	.61	2.83	169	.005	.03	.73
Fair Society Beliefs	2.59	1.17	1.75	.84	3.43	28.5	.002	.16	1.51
Electoral Political	1.89	.82	2.54	.82	-3.63	166	<.001	-1.11	-.18
Social Change	2.03	1.13	2.63	1.05	-2.60	166	.01	-1.20	.00
Comm. Service	2.65	.80	2.57	.86	.46	166	.64	-.39	.56

Note. Not Eligible to Vote $N = 25$; Eligible to Vote $N = 147$. CIs that do not contain zero are considered statistically significant.

Table 10. Independent Sample T-Tests: Persecution in Native Country.

	No Persecution		Persecution					99% CI	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*	Lower	Upper
Imm. Optimism	5.33	1.04	5.72	1.02	-2.10	168	.037	-.87	.09
Critical Reflection	5.64	1.43	5.61	1.38	.14	169	.89	-.62	.70
Internal SPE	3.45	.79	3.36	.67	.64	169	.52	-.27	.44
External SPE	2.58	.64	2.53	.54	.42	169	.67	-.25	.34
Fair Society Belief	1.86	.97	1.91	.86	-.29	166	.77	-.49	.39
Electoral Political	2.43	.83	2.46	.91	-.14	166	.89	-.42	.38
Social Change	2.60	1.10	2.37	1.02	1.20	166	.23	-.27	.74
Comm. Service	2.52	.85	2.76	.81	-1.57	166	.12	-.63	.16

Note. No Persecution $N = 131$; Persecution $N = 41$. CIs that do not contain zero are considered statistically significant

Table 11. Summary of fit indices for Two-Factor CFAs at the item level.

Model Name	CFI	RMSEA	90% CI	SRMR	χ^2	df	*p*
1. Two-factor CFA	.891	.086	.074 - .099	.089	306.130	134	< .001
1a. Two-factor CFA with correlated residuals	.908	.080	.067 - .093	.088	278.700	133	< .001

Table 12. Results of a Two-Factor CFA Model, with a correlated residual (Model 1a).

Relationship/Outcome	Predictor	β	*SE*	*p*	95% CI for β	
					Lower	Upper
Factor Loadings:						
Imm. Optimism	IO Item 1	.68	.06	<.001	.56	.79
	IO Item 2	.74	.05	<.001	.64	.84
	IO Item 3	.80	.04	<.001	.72	.88
	IO Item 4	.72	.05	<.001	.62	.82
	IO Item 5	.81	.05	<.001	.71	.90
	IO Item 6	.74	.07	<.001	.60	.88
	IO Item 7	.50	.11	<.001	.29	.71
	IO Item 8	.68	.08	<.001	.53	.83
	IO Item 9	.70	.06	<.001	.58	.82
Correlated Residual:						
IO Item 7	IO Item 8	.50	.10	<.001	.30	.70
Factor Loadings:						
Critical Reflection	CR Item 1	.83	.04	<.001	.74	.91
	CR Item 2	.87	.03	<.001	.81	.94
	CR Item 3	.85	.04	<.001	.78	.92
	CR Item 4	.92	.02	<.001	.87	.96
	CR Item 5	.88	.03	<.001	.82	.94
	CR Item 6	.92	.02	<.001	.88	.96
	CR Item 7	.86	.04	<.001	.79	.93
	CR Item 8	.88	.04	<.001	.80	.96
	CR Item 9	.92	.02	<.001	.88	.96
Covariance:						
Imm. Optimism	Critical Reflection	.02	.11	.87	-.20	.23

Intercepts:						
Imm. Optimism	IO Item 1	3.58	.23	<.001	3.13	4.03
	IO Item 2	3.25	.22	<.001	2.81	3.68
	IO Item 3	3.78	.23	<.001	3.32	4.23
	IO Item 4	4.35	.33	<.001	3.71	4.99
	IO Item 5	3.06	.21	<.001	2.65	3.46
	IO Item 6	3.98	.26	<.001	3.47	4.49
	IO Item 7	4.57	.37	<.001	3.84	5.30
	IO Item 8	4.70	.33	<.001	4.05	5.35
	IO Item 9	4.26	.31	<.001	3.65	4.86
Intercepts:						
Critical Reflection	CR Item 1	3.49	.30	<.001	2.90	4.09
	CR Item 2	3.65	.33	<.001	3.01	4.29
	CR Item 3	3.53	.29	<.001	2.97	4.10
	CR Item 4	3.70	.32	<.001	3.10	4.32
	CR Item 5	3.43	.30	<.001	2.85	4.01
	CR Item 6	3.61	.30	<.001	3.03	4.19
	CR Item 7	3.59	.30	<.001	3.01	4.18
	CR Item 8	3.61	.30	<.001	3.01	4.21
	CR Item 9	3.61	.30	<.001	3.02	4.20
Residual Variances:						
Imm. Optimism	IO Item 1	.54	.08	<.001	.39	.70
	IO Item 2	.46	.08	<.001	.31	.61
	IO Item 3	.36	.06	<.001	.24	.49
	IO Item 4	.48	.08	<.001	.33	.63

IO Item 5	.35	.08	<.001	.20	.50
IO Item 6	.46	.11	<.001	.25	.66
IO Item 7	.75	.11	<.001	.54	.96
IO Item 8	.54	.11	<.001	.33	.75
IO Item 9	.51	.08	<.001	.35	.67
CR Item 1	.32	.07	<.001	.18	.45
CR Item 2	.24	.06	<.001	.12	.35
CR Item 3	.28	.06	<.001	.17	.40
CR Item 4	.16	.04	<.001	.07	.24
CR Item 5	.23	.06	<.001	.12	.34
CR Item 6	.16	.04	<.001	.08	.23
CR Item 7	.26	.06	<.001	.13	.38
CR Item 8	.23	.07	.001	.09	.38
CR Item 9	.15	.04	<.001	.07	.23

Note: IO = Immigrant Optimism; CR = Critical Reflection.

Table 13. Summary of Fit Indices.

Model Name	CFI	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR	χ^2	*df*	*p*
Measurement	.962	.053 (.036 - .069)	.044	178.74	120	<.001
SEM	.956	.055 (.038 - .070)	.050	191.19	126	<.001

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. χ^2 = Model Chi-Square.

Table 14. Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test.

			Comparison		
Model	c	cd	TRd	Δ*df*	*p*
Measurement	1.022	1.074	12.29	6	.06
SEM	1.024	-	-	-	-

Note. c = scaling correction factor; cd = difference test scaling correction; TRd = Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test.

Table 15. Results of Measurement Model.

Relationship/Outcome	Predictor	*r*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI for *r* Lower	95% CI for *r* Upper
Factor Loadings:						
Imm. Optimism	IO Parcel 1	.96	.02	<.001	.92	.99
	IO Parcel 2	.84	.07	<.001	.71	.97
	IO Parcel 3	.91	.03	<.001	.85	.96
Critical Reflection	CR Parcel 1	.94	.03	<.001	.88	1.00
	CR Parcel 2	.92	.03	<.001	.85	.98
	CR Parcel 3	.99	.01	<.001	.96	1.01
Internal SPE	InSPE Parcel 1	.87	.04	<.001	.79	.95
	InSPE Parcel 2	.88	.04	<.001	.81	.96
	InSPE Parcel 3	.51	.08	<.001	.35	.68
External SPE	ExSPE Parcel 1	.82	.04	<.001	.74	.90
	ExSPE Parcel 2	.84	.04	<.001	.76	.91
	ExSPE Parcel 3	.69	.06	<.001	.57	.80
Covariances:						
Imm. Optimism	Critical Reflection	.11	.09	.21	-.06	.29
	Internal SPE	.06	.10	.57	-.14	.25
	External SPE	.03	.10	.75	-.16	.23
	Fair Society Beliefs	-.11	.09	.21	-.28	.06
	Electoral	.08	.09	.39	-.10	.25
	Social Change	-.00	.09	.97	-.19	.18
	Comm. Service	.10	.10	.33	-.10	.29
	Imm. Generation	.06	.09	.49	-.12	.24

	Asian	-.13	.09	.13	-.31	.04
	Latinx	.20	.06	<.001	.09	.31
	Disp. Optimism	.28	.08	.001	.12	.44
	Eligibility to Vote	-.01	.11	.93	-.23	.21
Critical Reflection	Internal SPE	.34	.07	<.001	.20	.48
	External SPE	-.44	.07	<.001	-.57	-.30
	Fair Society Beliefs	-.52	.08	<.001	-.70	-.37
	Electoral	.29	.07	<.001	.15	.43
	Social Change	.35	.07	<.001	.22	.47
	Comm. Service	-.04	.08	.62	-.19	.11
	Imm. Generation	.00	.07	.10	-.14	.14
	Asian	-.17	.08	.025	-.32	-.02
	Latinx	.16	.07	.019	.03	.29
	Disp. Optimism	.11	.09	.23	-.07	.28
	Eligibility to Vote	-.12	.07	.19	-.32	.02
Internal SPE	External SPE	-.30	.09	.001	-.48	-.12
	Fair Society Beliefs	-.22	.08	.005	-.38	-.07
	Electoral	.46	.08	<.001	.30	.63
	Social Change	.49	.07	<.001	.35	.63
	Comm. Service	.32	.08	<.001	.18	.47
	Imm. Generation	.02	.08	.85	-.14	.17
	Asian	-.15	.09	.11	-.32	.03

	Latinx	.08	.08	.34	-.08	.23
	Disp. Optimism	.04	.10	.71	-.16	.23
	Eligibility to Vote	-.10	.08	.24	-.25	.06
External SPE	Fair Society Beliefs	.36	.08	<.001	.20	.52
	Electoral	-.23	.08	.006	-.39	-.07
	Social Change	-.31	.08	<.001	-.47	-.15
	Comm. Service	.10	.10	.30	-.09	.28
	Imm. Generation	-.13	.08	.11	-.29	.02
	Asian	.25	.08	.002	.09	.41
	Latinx	-.14	.07	.06	-.29	.01
	Disp. Optimism	.04	.11	.72	-.17	.25
	Eligibility to Vote	-.14	.08	.07	-.30	.01
Fair Society Beliefs	Electoral	-.31	.06	<.001	-.44	-.19
	Social Change	-.33	.07	<.001	-.46	-.19
	Comm. Service	-.05	.09	.60	-.13	.22
	Imm. Generation	-.25	.08	.002	-.41	-.09
	Asian	.28	.08	<.001	.13	.43
	Latinx	-.08	.06	.19	-.21	.04
	Disp. Optimism	-.03	.08	.68	-.19	.12
	Eligibility to Vote	.01	.11	.91	-.21	.23
Electoral	Social Change	.65	.05	<.001	.56	.75
	Comm. Service	.26	.08	.001	.11	.41

	Imm. Generation	.22	.08	.005	.07	.37
	Asian	-.30	.08	<.001	-.44	-.15
	Latinx	.17	.07	.016	.03	.31
	Disp. Optimism	.08	.08	.35	-.08	.23
	Eligibility to Vote	.11	.07	.20	-.03	.26
Social Change	Comm. Service	.24	.08	.001	.09	.39
	Imm. Generation	.28	.08	<.001	.13	.43
	Asian	-.21	.08	.009	-.37	-.06
	Latinx	.06	.07	.37	-.07	.19
	Disp. Optimism	.05	.09	.60	-.12	.21
	Eligibility to Vote	.04	.09	.62	-.08	.18
Community Service	Imm. Generation	-.14	.08	.10	-.30	.03
	Asian	-.10	.08	.21	-.25	.05
	Latinx	-.05	.08	.52	-.20	.10
	Disp. Optimism	.12	.08	.12	-.03	.27
	Eligibility to Vote	.05	.07	.45	-.09	.19
Imm. Generation	Asian	-.22	.08	.009	-.38	-.06
	Latinx	.10	.07	.14	-.03	.23
	Disp. Optimism	-.12	.06	.07	-.24	.01
	Eligibility to Vote	.33	.11	.003	.12	.55
Asian	Latinx	-.32	.03	<.001	-.39	-.26
	Disp. Optimism	-.09	.07	.18	-.23	.04

	Eligibility to Vote	-.08	.09	.37	-.25	.08
Latinx	Disp. Optimism	-.06	.07	.38	-.19	.07
	Eligibility to Vote	.07	.04	.07	-.00	.15
Disp. Optimism	Eligibility to Vote	-.07	.07	.32	-.20	.07

Note. N = 172. Immigrant Generation was coded as first generation = 0, second generation = 1. For the race/ethnicity variables (Asian and Latinx), Black/African and Multiracial (combined) were used as the reference. 95% CIs that do not contain zero are considered statistically significant.

Table 16. Results of SEM Model.

Relationship/Outcome	Predictor	β	*SE*	*p*	95% CI for β	
					Lower	Upper
Factor Loadings:						
Imm. Optimism	IO Parcel 1	.96	.02	<.001	.92	.99
	IO Parcel 2	.84	.07	<.001	.71	.97
	IO Parcel 3	.91	.03	<.001	.85	.96
Critical Reflection	CR Parcel 1	.94	.03	<.001	.88	1.00
	CR Parcel 2	.91	.03	<.001	.85	.98
	CR Parcel 3	.99	.01	<.001	.96	1.01
Internal SPE	ISPE Parcel 1	.86	.04	<.001	.78	.95
	ISPE Parcel 2	.89	.04	<.001	.81	.98
	ISPE Parcel 3	.52	.08	<.001	.35	.68
External SPE	ESPE Parcel 1	.81	.04	<.001	.73	.89
	ESPE Parcel 2	.84	.04	<.001	.76	.92
	ESPE Parcel 3	.69	.06	<.001	.58	.81
Regressions:						
Electoral Efforts	Imm. Optimism	.01	.06	.91	-.11	.12
	Critical Reflection	.11	.10	.25	-.08	.30
	Internal SPE	.38	.09	<.001	.20	.57
	External SPE	-.00	.08	.99	-.16	.16
	Fair Society Beliefs	-.09	.08	.27	-.24	.07
	Imm. Generation	.13	.08	.10	-.02	.28
	Asian	-.14	.09	.11	-.30	.03
	Latinx	.06	.07	.40	-.07	.19

	Disp. Optimism	.06	.07	.37	-.07	.19
	Eligibility to Vote	.11	.08	.14	-.04	.26
Social Change	Critical Reflection	.19	.08	.018	-.03	.34
	Internal SPE	.37	.08	<.001	.21	.54
	External SPE	-.12	.08	.12	-.28	.03
	Imm. Generation	.25	.07	<.001	.13	.38
	Asian	-.06	.08	.50	-.22	.11
	Latinx	-.06	.06	.34	-.17	.06
	Disp. Optimism	.04	.07	.55	-.09	.17
	Eligibility to Vote	.00	.06	.97	-.11	.12
Comm. Service	Internal SPE	.32	.07	<.001	.18	.47
	Imm. Generation	-.19	.08	.015	-.35	-.04
	Asian	-.10	.07	.17	-.24	.04
	Latinx	-.09	.08	.22	-.25	.06
	Disp. Optimism	.08	.07	.25	-.06	.22
	Eligibility to Vote	.15	.06	.014	.03	.27
Covariances Among Outcomes:						
Electoral Efforts	Social Change	.51	.08	<.001	.36	.66
	Comm. Service	.19	.08	.024	.03	.35
Social Change	Comm. Service	.22	.08	.006	.06	.38

Covariances Among Predictors:						
Imm. Optimism	Critical Reflection	.11	.09	.23	-.07	.29
	Internal SPE	.06	.10	.58	-.14	.25
	External SPE	.04	.10	.72	-.16	.23
	Fair Society Beliefs	-.11	.09	.21	-.28	.06
	Imm. Generation	.06	.09	.50	-.12	.24
	Asian	-.13	.09	.13	-.31	.04
	Latinx	.20	.06	<.001	.09	.31
	Disp. Optimism	.28	.08	.001	.12	.44
	Eligibility to Vote	-.01	.12	.93	-.24	.22
Critical Reflection	Internal SPE	.33	.07	<.001	.19	.48
	External SPE	-.44	.07	<.001	-.58	-.30
	Fair Society Beliefs	-.52	.08	<.001	-.68	-.37
	Imm. Generation	-.00	.07	.98	-.14	.14
	Asian	-.17	.08	.024	-.32	-.02
	Latinx	.16	.07	.020	.03	.29
	Disp. Optimism	.11	.09	.23	-.07	.28
	Eligibility to Vote	-.13	.10	.17	-.32	.06
Internal SPE	External SPE	-.29	.09	.002	-.47	-.11
	Fair Society Beliefs	-.22	.08	.005	-.38	-.07
	Imm. Generation	.02	.08	.86	-.14	.17
	Asian	-.15	.09	.11	-.32	.03

	Latinx	.08	.08	.33	-.08	.23
	Disp. Optimism	.03	.10	.73	-.16	.23
	Eligibility to Vote	-.10	.08	.25	-.26	.07
External SPE	Fair Society Beliefs	.36	.09	<.001	.19	.53
	Imm. Generation	-.13	.08	.11	-.29	.03
	Asian	.25	.08	.002	.09	.41
	Latinx	-.14	.07	.06	-.29	.01
	Disp. Optimism	.04	.11	.72	-.17	.25
	Eligibility to Vote	-.15	.08	.07	-.30	.01
Fair Society Beliefs	Imm. Generation	-.25	.08	.002	-.41	-.09
	Asian	.28	.08	<.001	.12	.43
	Latinx	-.08	.06	.19	-.21	.04
	Disp. Optimism	-.03	.08	.68	-.19	.12
	Eligibility to Vote	.01	.11	.91	-.21	.23
Imm. Generation	Asian	-.22	.08	.008	-.38	-.06
	Latinx	.10	.07	.14	-.03	.23
	Disp. Optimism	-.12	.06	.07	-.24	.01
	Eligibility to Vote	.33	.11	.003	.12	.55
Asian	Latinx	-.32	.03	<.001	-.39	-.26
	Disp. Optimism	-.09	.07	.18	-.23	.04
	Eligibility to Vote	-.08	.09	.37	-.26	.10
Latinx	Disp. Optimism	-.06	.07	.38	-.19	.07

	Eligibility to Vote	.07	.04	.07	-.00	.15
Disp. Optimism	Eligibility to Vote	-.07	.07	.32	-.20	.07

Note. N = 172. Immigrant Generation was coded as first generation = 0, second generation = 1. For the race/ethnicity variables (Asian and Latinx), Black/African and Multiracial (combined) were used as the reference. Eligibility to Vote was coded as no/don't know = 0, yes = 1. Electoral Efforts R^2 = .33, p < .001. Social Change Efforts R^2 = .37, p < .001, Community Service Efforts R^2 = .16, p = .002. 95% CIs that do not contain zero are considered statistically significant.

Figures

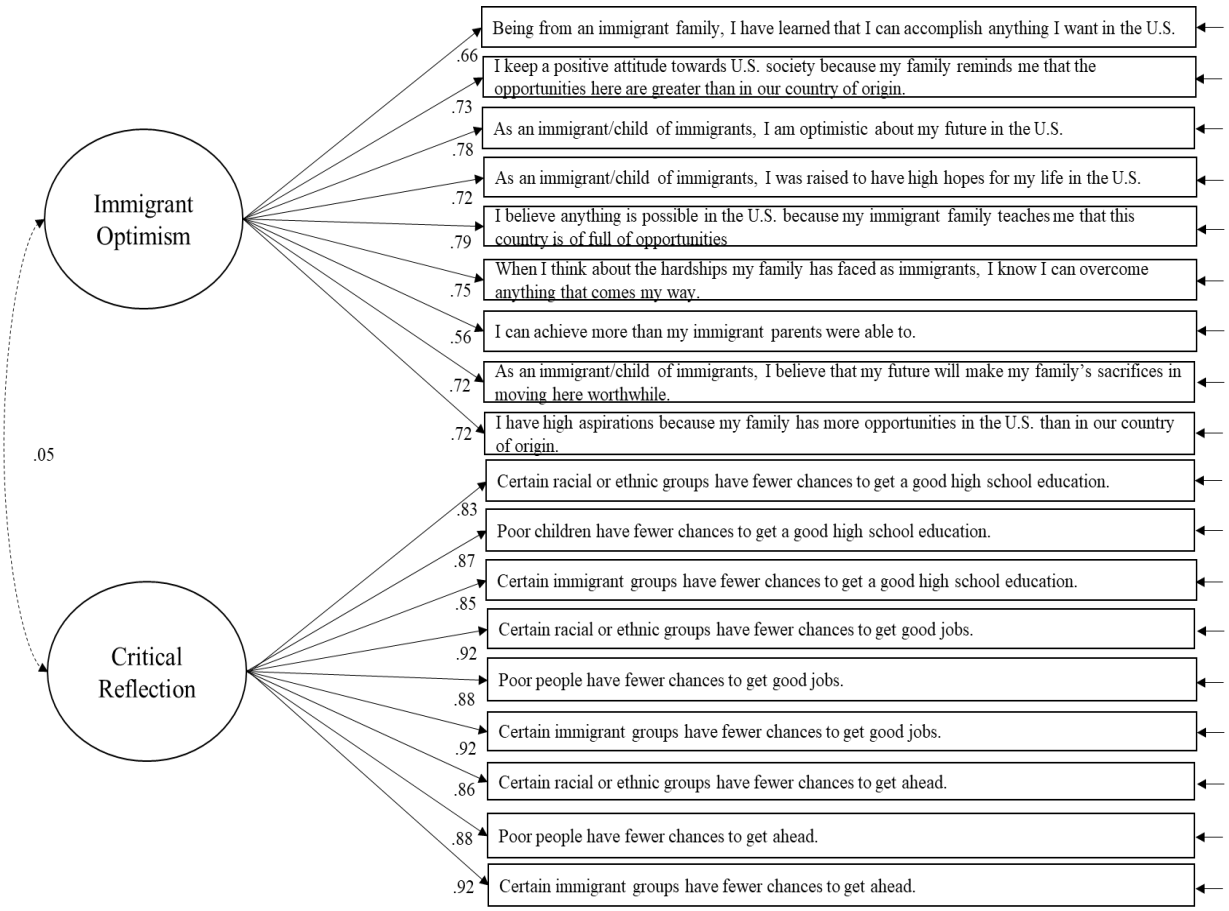

Figure 1. Model 1: Two-Factor CFA using items.

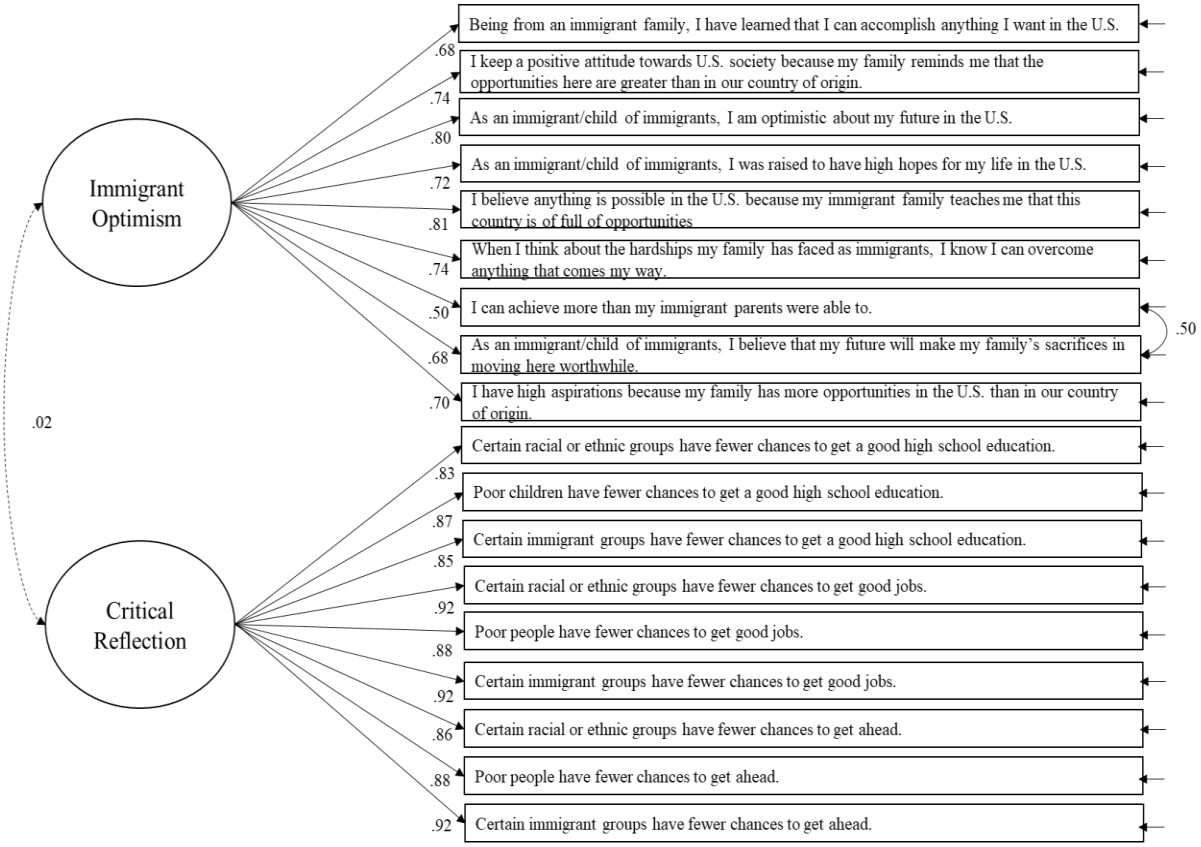

Figure 2. Model 1a: Two-Factor CFA with correlated residual between immigrant optimism items 7 and 8.

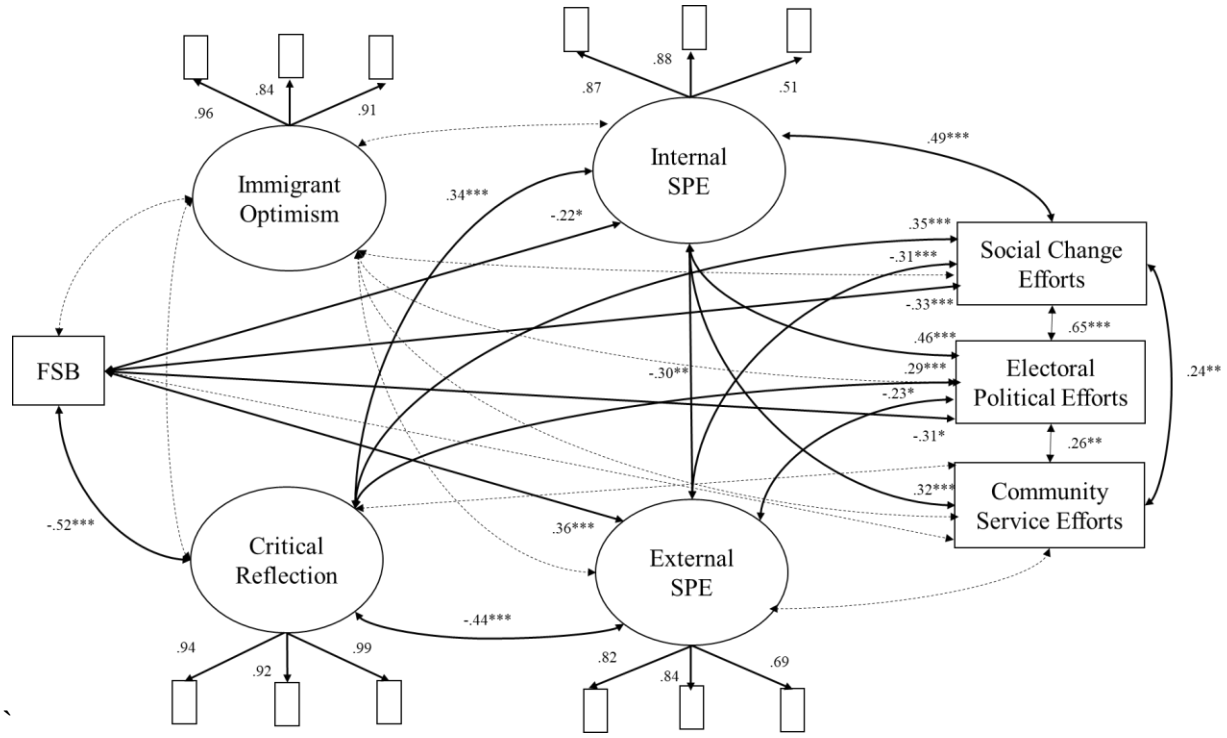

Figure 3. Measurement Model. Estimates included for significant paths only (in bold). Covariates not pictured. ***$p < .001$; **$p = .001$; *$p < .05$

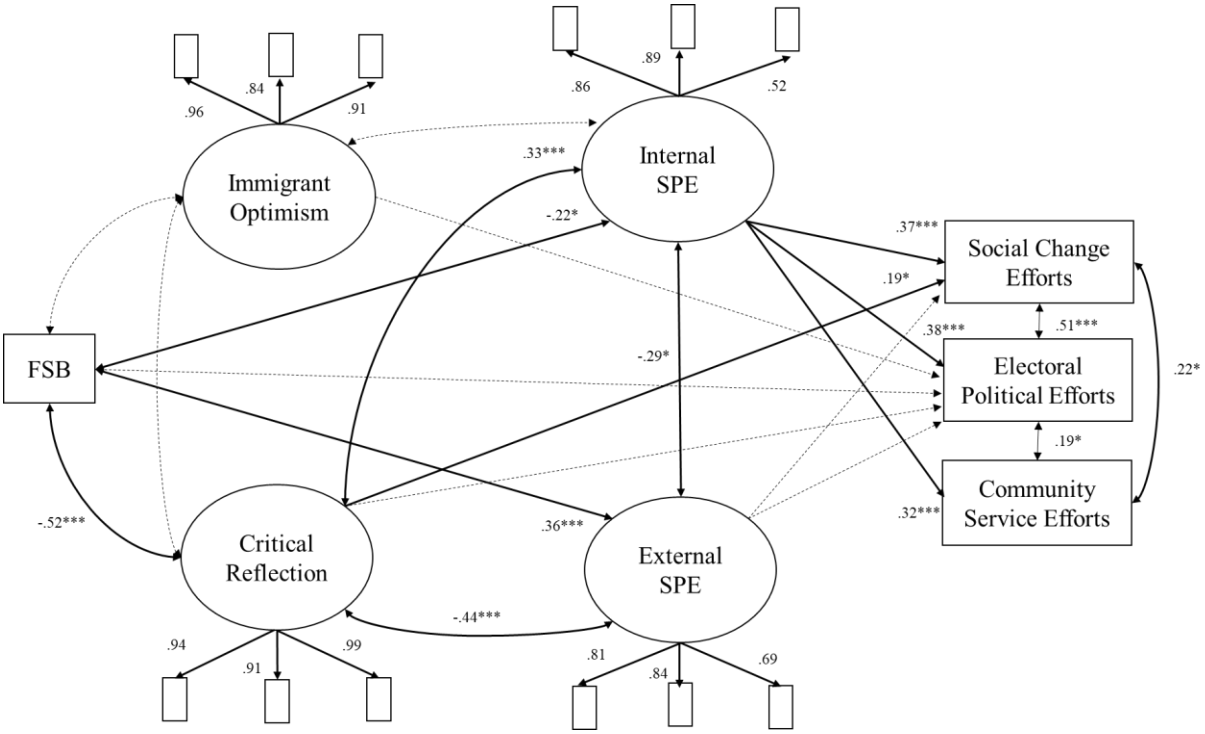

Figure 4. Results of SEM Model. Estimates included for significant paths only (in bold) for clarity. Covariates not pictured. ***$p < .001$; **$p = .001$; *$p < .05$

APPENDIX A

In general, please tell me what you thought about the measure?

For each individual item:

- What did the question mean to you?
- What relevant process(es) does this question capture?
    - How representative of that process(es) is this question?
- Was the question worded in a way that made sense to you?
    - What changes, if any, would you make?
    - Does this question require minor or major revisions to be clear?
- Was the question in any way offensive or objectionable to you?
    - What changes, if any, would you make?
- Was the question about something which is important or relevant to you as a young immigrant of color?
- How would you select your response category if you were completing this measure?

Regarding instructions and format

- Were the instructions and formatting clear?
- Did the response choices make sense?

Other:

- Is there anything we forgot to ask?
- Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding the survey?