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Benefits for Immigrant-Origin and Non-Immigrant-Origin Youth of Discussing Immigration in Gender and Sexuality Alliances

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Abstract

In a time of unprecedented polarization in the United States, particularly concerning immigration, schools are uniquely positioned to help students understand the consequences of drastic policy changes. Beyond formal settings such as social studies classes, extracurricular activities may be important for fostering discussions about sociohistorical and policy issues. Such discussions could serve to empower youth from marginalized populations and raise their critical consciousness. Yet the potential outcomes of discussions in these extracurricular settings have not been studied in depth. Using data collected in school-based Gender-and-Sexuality-Alliances (GSAs) throughout Massachusetts during the periods leading up to and following the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, we examined whether discussions of immigration issues in GSAs were associated with greater empowerment and critical consciousness among 580 youth (M_{age} = 15.59, range = 10 to 20 years). Multilevel structural equation models showed that the frequency with which youth discussed immigration, relative to their fellow members, was positively associated with residualized change in perceived peer validation for members in general and with residualized change in hope for immigrant-origin members only. Contrary to our expectations, we did not find significant associations for critical consciousness. Findings suggest how groups addressing issues of equity and justice can promote members' empowerment.

Keywords: Gender and Sexuality Alliance clubs; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth; immigration.

Practitioner Points

1. Leading up to and following the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, schools have been a setting in which bias-based harassment and discrimination have increased.
2. There is a need for spaces in schools where conversations about diversity can be sustained with mutual trust and support among peers, especially given the polarizing nature of discourse around immigration and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals more broadly in society.
3. Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) can serve as a place for dialogue to support youth to engage with one another on urgent civic issues and promote their feelings of empowerment. When they discuss immigration issues in GSAs more often, members, in general, feel more validated by their peers, and immigrant-origin members feel more hopeful.

Benefits for Immigrant-Origin and Non-Immigrant-Origin Youth of Discussing Immigration in Gender and Sexuality Alliances

The immigration policy climate in the United States is currently one of unprecedented exclusion, rather than integration (Pierce & Bolter, 2020; Pierce et al., 2018). Particularly for low-income or non-citizen immigrant populations, changes in policies related to entry, refugee asylum, enforcement, access to residency and citizenship, detention, and deportation have made integration into American society increasingly difficult (Pierce & Bolter, 2020; Pierce et al., 2018; Rodriguez Vega et al., in press). These policies appear to show detrimental impacts on immigrant-origin children and youth (Hainmueller et al., 2017; Vargas & Ybarra, 2017), who represent one-quarter of the nation's children (Child Trends, 2018). Particularly targeted are the roughly one-quarter of immigrant-origin youth who are undocumented or who have at least one parent who is undocumented (Cervantes et al., 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2017).

The Trump Administration's policies and rhetoric have also impacted the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, including LGBTQ people who are first- and second-generation immigrants (Conron & Brown, 2017; GLAAD, n.d.; Gonzalez et al., 2018; Gruberg et al., 2018). For example, had they been successful, the Administration's recent attempts to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program would have closed the door on access to formal employment and integration into society for an estimated 800,000 young undocumented immigrants, including approximately 36,000 LGBTQ youth (Conron & Brown, 2017; Yoshikawa et al., 2019). Though the U.S. Supreme Court has since upheld DACA, young adults reported experiencing feeling fear and uncertainty about their future during the attempts to phase out the program (Gomez & Huber, 2019).

Adolescence is a particularly important period of development for discussions of sociohistorical issues such as these immigration policy changes. During this period, youth's sociopolitical engagement tends to increase, due to 1) growth in their capacity for abstract thinking and forming their own worldviews; 2) integration of societal issues into their identities and their activities; and 3) being provided with more opportunities in their communities for civic participation (Flanagan, 2013; National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, 2019; Wray-Lake et al., 2016). Schools are in a unique position to help youth understand the consequences of such policies and actions. Not only do schools teach sociohistorical issues in their curricula, but also informal and formal discussions about such issues occur across a variety of classes and extracurricular school settings (Levinson, 2002). At the same time, schools have been a setting in which bias-based harassment and discrimination increased during the period leading up to and following the 2016 U.S. Presidential election (Rogers et al., 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). During this time period, LGBTQ youth born outside the U.S. reported experiencing school-based harassment and discrimination due to their sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, immigrant status, citizenship status, and English language proficiency (Kosciw et al., 2018). There is, therefore, a need for spaces in schools where conversations about diversity can be sustained with mutual trust and support among peers, especially given the polarizing nature of discourse around immigration and LGBTQ individuals more broadly in society.

Beyond formal settings in schools such as social studies classes, extracurricular settings may be important for fostering discussions about sociohistorical and policy issues, especially ones oriented around promoting and building a student's critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014) and imbuing them with feelings of empowerment (Mayberry, 2013;

Russell et al., 2009). Such discussions could serve to empower youth from marginalized populations who may otherwise experience distress, isolation, or disempowerment. Yet the potential outcomes of these discussions in extracurricular settings have not been studied in adequate depth. Using data collected in school-based Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) throughout Massachusetts during the periods leading up to and following the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, we examined whether members' discussions of immigration issues were associated with greater empowerment and critical consciousness. The current study investigates the following research questions:

1. Empowerment
    a. Do GSA members who individually (relative to their fellow members) and collectively discuss immigration issues more frequently experience increased relational empowerment individually and collectively?
    b. Do GSA members who individually (relative to their fellow members) and collectively discuss immigration issues more frequently experience increased cognitive empowerment individually and collectively?
2. Critical consciousness
    a. Do GSA members who individually (relative to their fellow members) and collectively discuss immigration issues more frequently experience increased critical reflection individually and collectively?
    b. Do GSA members who individually (relative to their fellow members) and collectively discuss immigration issues more frequently experience increased sociopolitical efficacy individually and collectively?
3. Moderation by immigrant-origin status

a. Do the associations between immigration discussion frequency and empowerment and between immigration discussion frequency and critical consciousness vary by youths' immigrant-origin status and by the proportion of immigrant-origin student members in the GSA?

GSAs as Settings to Discuss Immigration

As of 2018, approximately 37% of U.S. secondary schools across the United States had Gender and Sexuality Alliances (also known as Gay-Straight Alliances; GSAs), student-led clubs with a focus on LGBTQ youth that aim to create safe, welcoming environments for all youth, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). GSAs serve as multifunctional spaces for LGBTQ youth and their heterosexual, cisgender allies to solicit and provide social and emotional support, learn about and access LGBTQ-affirming resources, and engage in advocacy and awareness-raising efforts to counteract instances of discrimination in school or in the broader community (Griffin et al., 2004; Poteat et al., 2017). Research examining the benefits of extracurricular involvement more generally draws from the relational developmental systems paradigm, a metatheory of development, which emphasizes the need to examine individuals within their contexts (Lerner et al., 2015). According to the theory, when youth are in contexts that meet their needs, build upon their strengths, and foster prosocial and supportive relationships, such as GSAs, these contexts can enhance their positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2015). In GSAs, members often reserve much of their meeting time for discussion and dialogue, which can range from discussing personal stressors or concerns and soliciting support from peers, discussing current events, learning about a particular topic, or planning for larger awareness-raising and advocacy efforts (Fetner & Elafros, 2015; Griffin et al., 2004). Qualitative work suggests that through such

activities, youth attending GSAs feel a greater sense of agency, purpose, and empowerment (Mayberry, 2013; Russell et al., 2009). However, this study will be one of the first to test the relationships between discussions of immigration, empowerment, and critical consciousness using a quantitative approach.

Although GSAs are oriented primarily around issues facing LGBTQ youth, many GSAs aspire to adopt an intersectional lens by attending to how members' other sociocultural identities inform their lived experiences (Black et al., 2012; Chong et al., 2019; Lapointe & Crooks, 2017; Poteat et al., 2019). Youth's other sociocultural identities, such as their immigrant-origin status, affect their understanding and lived experiences of their sexuality and gender (Hulko & Hovanes, 2018). We expect that issues of immigration might arise in GSA discussions because immigrant-origin youth represent over a quarter of the nation's youth and are thus a prominent part of the LGBTQ community (Terriquez, 2015; Waters & Pineau, 2015).

There is emerging evidence documenting whether and how GSAs are attending to youths' sociocultural identities other than their sexualities and genders. Youth in GSAs discuss issues related to immigration, race, and racism, and many GSAs incorporate racial justice as part of their advocacy efforts (Chong et al., 2019; Poteat et al., 2019). Through their experiences in GSAs, members can benefit from discussions in a space that encourages open dialogue, which can promote positive youth development (Biegel, 2010; Vera Cruz, 2015). A previous mixed-methods study by Poteat et al. (2019) found no statistically significant differences in the frequency of discussing immigration issues by demographic characteristics. Their qualitative data suggest that immigrant-origin students were often the ones to bring up the topic of immigration, and that once this occurred, other students participated in the conversation (Calzo et al., 2021). These conversations are an important facet of GSAs because discussions about

oppression and adversity can establish open-mindedness and a sense of compassion across groups (Way & Nelson, 2018). For example, a discussion about the parallels of choosing not to disclose one's undocumented status or one's non-heterosexual sexuality for fear of repercussions can help students who hold one or more of these marginalized identities understand the similarities and differences across their lived experiences. Thus, both immigrant-origin and non-immigrant-origin students could benefit from conversations regarding immigration issues, which may have the potential to empower students to try to effect change within their school community (Russell et al., 2009). For LGBTQ immigrant-origin youth, who may feel otherwise excluded in LGBTQ spaces such as a GSA (Cisneros, 2018), these conversations may be particularly impactful for their empowerment. This study is one of the first to test the relationship between frequency of engaging in discussions around immigration issues in GSAs and youth positive development outcomes.

Youth's Discussion of Immigration as a Means to Foster Their Relational and Cognitive Empowerment

Youth's discussion of immigration issues within their GSA could enhance their positive development by serving the vital functions of empowering them and raising their critical consciousness. Further, given the youth-led nature of GSAs (Graybill et al., 2009; Poteat el al., 2017), such peer-driven discussions have developmental relevance because of the salient role of peers as sources of support during adolescence (Rubin et al., 2018). We draw from empowerment theory (Christens et al., 2016) and critical consciousness frameworks (Diemer et al., 2016; Freire, 1974) to hypothesize specific outcomes that could result from these discussions.

Empowerment reflects a process by which individuals gain a greater sense of agency and control over the psychological and social factors which impact them (Christens et al., 2016;

Zimmerman, 2000). Multiple dimensions of empowerment have been proposed, including relational, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral empowerment (Christens et al., 2016). Here we focus on two of these dimensions: relational and cognitive. First, previous literature has described relational empowerment as feeling a greater sense of encouragement, mutual support, and solidarity with others (Christens et al., 2016), which has been highlighted by youth as especially important to them (Christens et al., 2016; Russell et al., 2009). Youth in one qualitative study reported feeling not only a generally increased sense of empowerment, but specifically greater relational empowerment from their GSA involvement, such as a greater sense of group membership, commitment to passing on the GSA's legacy, and empowering others (Russell et al., 2009). Second, the cognitive dimension of empowerment represents an individual's beliefs that they can overcome obstacles and achieve their goals (Christens et al., 2016). We focus on this form of empowerment because youth from marginalized backgrounds face a myriad of challenges and barriers over the course of their development due to stigma and discrimination (e.g., peer victimization, microaggressions, discriminatory policies and practices in schools; Hatzenbuehler & Pachankis, 2016; Kosciw et al., 2018). It is therefore vital to equip these youth with the confidence and skills to navigate and address such oppressive structures. To date, the role of extracurricular settings, especially those oriented around issues of diversity or social justice, in promoting empowerment has not been considered directly, or in a way that distinguishes relational and cognitive empowerment (Christens et al., 2016; Kirk et al., 2016).

Youth's discussion of immigration within their GSA may promote their relational empowerment (Figure 1, Level 1). We consider relational empowerment as it pertains to a youth's sense of validation and reassurance of worth from their peers (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009). Youth in GSAs have described gaining relational empowerment, reflected in mutual

connection with their peers (Mayberry, 2013; Russell et al., 2009), but factors contributing to this empowerment process have been less explored in research.

Because many aspects of the current political climate have stigmatized and dehumanized immigrant communities (Terriquez et al., 2018; Wray-Lake et al., 2018), youth's discussions of immigration in GSAs could serve partly to express solidarity and to solicit and provide needed reassurance or validation to peers in the face of larger negative societal messages or direct experiences of harassment. In a national survey of LGBTQ youth, Kosciw et al. (2018) found that, while LGBTQ students born outside the U.S. did not differ from U.S.-born students in experiences of in-school victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression, they were more likely to experience concerns for their safety at school related to their immigrant status, their citizenship status, or their English language proficiency. When they can discuss larger policy changes or more proximal experiences of victimization due to factors related to their identity, immigrant-origin GSA members may report greater increases in feelings of peer validation if they experience this kind of support in their GSA.

We also consider whether immigration discussions in GSAs promote cognitive empowerment in the form of hope (Figure 1, Level 1). Hope is understood in terms of individuals' sense of agency in affecting their future, such that they believe that they can identify and engage in sustained efforts to achieve their goals (Snyder et al., 1996). Scholars have argued that hope is important to cultivate among marginalized populations to counteract the effects of oppression (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Ginwright, 2016), as there is strong evidence of associations between discrimination, hopelessness, and suicidality in LGBTQ youth (Rivers et al., 2018; Smalley et al., 2018). A meta-analysis of intervention studies designed to increase hope has shown that hope is malleable (Weis & Speridakos, 2011), and further research suggests that hope

is associated with higher levels of academic achievement across students of different SES backgrounds (Dixson et al., 2018). Higher levels of hope may help individuals persevere despite marginalization. More frequent participation in immigration discussions in the GSA, relative to their fellow members, could provide more opportunities for youth to (1) process their emotional reactions to ongoing political events and negative experiences with their peers, staff, and families around immigration and (2) brainstorm how they can respond to these policy changes and negative experiences with their peers. While this may benefit GSA members in general, immigrant-origin youth may report greater increases in feelings of hope following discussion of immigration issues if they discuss ways in which to cope with their immigration-related stressors.

GSA Discussion of Immigration as a Means to Foster Members' Relational and Cognitive Empowerment

Little extant research has considered factors at the group level that could distinguish GSAs whose members, on average, report greater increases in empowerment than members of other GSAs. GSAs serve as supportive and affirming settings for youth facing marginalization (Griffin et al., 2004) and are often characterized by open climates, in which students voice differing views respectfully and have a say in what the group does (Poteat et al., 2016). As such, GSAs provide elements essential for positive group dialogue about immigration. Based on the relational developmental systems paradigm and the model of empowerment described above, we hypothesize that greater frequency of immigration discussions at the GSA level may directly predict the same two indicators of empowerment at the GSA level: perceived peer validation (relational empowerment) and hope (cognitive empowerment; Figure 1, Level 2). This

association may be enhanced when GSA membership includes a higher proportion of immigrant-origin youth.

Youth's Discussion of Immigration as a Means to Raise Their Critical Consciousness

In addition to our attention to relational and cognitive indicators of empowerment, critical consciousness theory further emphasizes the need to attend to factors that explicitly relate to youth's resilience in the face of systemic oppression. Critical consciousness is a framework that serves to elucidate the process by which individuals in marginalized groups gain awareness and understanding of oppressive systems in society and act to deconstruct and resist these systems (Diemer et al., 2016; Freire, 1970; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). In this framework, critical reflection is posited as a precondition for critical action (Diemer et al., 2016; Freire, 2000). Contemporary models of critical consciousness have integrated an additional dimension, sociopolitical efficacy, or an individual's perceived capacity to take action to promote equity in society and to counteract oppression (Torres-Harding et al., 2012). We advance that their discussions of immigration may help youth develop aspects fundamental in the construction of their critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy. As with our focus on empowerment processes, we emphasize the development of critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy as precursors to sustained action (Watts et al., 2011).

Youth who discuss immigration issues more frequently may come to report greater critical awareness of systems of oppression. Critical consciousness scholars have theorized that engaging in conversations about sociopolitical issues fosters critical consciousness by leading individuals to reflect on and build greater awareness of systems of oppression (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). Although those who choose to be involved in GSAs may have some level of critical awareness about oppression, engaging in discussions

about immigration throughout the year—particularly in the policy and rhetoric climate leading up to and following the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election—may further increase their levels of critical reflection. It may also be that immigrant-origin and non-immigrant-origin youth report differential increases in their levels of critical reflection following such discussions. Immigrant-origin youth or their family members are more likely to have been directly affected by the current policy climate and to have engaged in discussions about the topic (Alif et al., 2020). This may mean on the one hand that immigrant-origin youth are less affected by discussions about immigration within GSAs; on the other hand, the greater personal salience of the topic may mean that they are more affected.

Finally, we expect that participating in immigration discussions will predict greater sociopolitical efficacy among youth in GSAs. Previous qualitative interviews with GSA members suggest that youth conceptualize empowerment as efforts to exert control over and learn more about their sociopolitical environments (Russell et al., 2009). Further, in this qualitative study, participants saw their GSAs as sites that could create social change within the school environment and empower members to effect change by giving them a place to voice their opinions and concerns (Russell et al., 2009). Building upon this, we consider whether conversations around issues of immigration may have differential benefits for immigrant-origin youth concerning increased feelings of sociopolitical efficacy. We expect that immigrant-origin youths' more frequent participation in immigration discussions in the GSA, relative to their fellow members, could provide them with more opportunities to brainstorm how they can respond to ongoing political events and negative experiences with their peers and school staff. In doing so, immigrant-origin youth may report greater increases in feelings of sociopolitical

efficacy following discussion of immigration issues if they discuss ways in which they can take action to counteract oppression. No literature, to our knowledge, has explored this possibility.

GSA Discussion of Immigration as a Means to Foster Members' Critical Consciousness

GSAs may be more likely to foster discussions about the sociopolitical climate and policies regarding immigration in ways that highlight their oppressive nature than more formal education spaces like social studies classes, which may be constrained by the course curriculum (Terriquez et al., 2018; Ky Ng et al., 2017). GSAs serve as respectful settings for diverse youth where they can learn about issues of marginalization among various identity groups (Griffin et al., 2004), including immigrant-origin youth (Poteat et al., 2019). Based on the relational developmental systems paradigm and the model of critical consciousness described above, we posit that a greater frequency of immigration discussions at the GSA level may directly predict the same two indicators of critical consciousness at the GSA level: critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy. This association may be enhanced when a greater proportion of immigrant-origin students are members of their school's GSA. A lack of immigrant-origin representation in GSA membership has been found to impede discussions of immigration (Calzo et al., 2021; Poteat et al., 2019). Less is known about the association of this representation with the potential benefits of these discussions for all members.

Hypotheses

In sum, we hypothesized that the frequency of youth's discussions of immigration in their GSA would predict residualized increases in their empowerment and critical consciousness. Given that GSAs are spaces designed for student members to engage in awareness-raising (Griffin et al., 2004) and such activities reportedly improve participants' empowerment (Mayberry, 2013; Russell et al., 2009), we expect that discussing immigration issues in these

clubs will similarly benefit youth individually and the membership as a whole. In particular, we hypothesized that:

(1) youth's more frequent self-reported discussions of immigration, relative to the other members in their GSA, would predict residualized increases in perceived peer validation (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning),
(2) youth's more frequent self-reported discussions of immigration, relative to the other members in their GSA, would predict residualized increases in hope (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning),
(3) youth's more frequent self-reported discussions of immigration, relative to the other members in their GSA, would predict residualized increases in critical reflection (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning), and
(4) youth's more frequent self-reported discussions of immigration, relative to the other members in their GSA, would predict residualized increases in sociopolitical efficacy (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning).

We also hypothesized that these processes would occur at the GSA level. In particular, we hypothesized that:

(1) members of GSAs who discuss immigration more frequently would collectively report, on average, residualized increases in perceived peer validation (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning),
(2) members of GSAs who discuss immigration more frequently would collectively report, on average, residualized increases in hope (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning),

(3) members of GSAs who discuss immigration more frequently would collectively report, on average, residualized increases in critical reflection (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning), and

(4) members of GSAs who discuss immigration more frequently would collectively report, on average, residualized increases in sociopolitical efficacy (adjusting for their perceptions of these constructs at the year's beginning).

Finally, we considered whether the magnitude of these associations varied based on youth's immigrant-origin status (at the individual level) and by the proportion of immigrant-origin student members (at the GSA level).

Method

Participants

We gathered data from 580 GSA members in grades 6-12 (M_{age} = 15.59 years; SD = 1.39 years; 20% cisgender male, 59% cisgender female, 22% gender expansive) in 38 GSAs across Massachusetts (range of 4–34 students per GSA; M_{size} = 15.26 students; SD = 6.62). See Table 1 for descriptive data of student demographic characteristics and study variables. Most students (80%) identified as a sexual minority. Approximately one quarter (26%) of students reported having an immigrant-origin background (roughly the same proportion as in the United States as a whole; Waters & Pineau, 2015). See Appendix A for tables of frequencies by countries of origin and map of the non-U.S. countries of origin reported by students for themselves and for their parents. In the sample, 31% of the students identified as non-White. Seven in ten (70%) of the students who reported an immigrant-origin background also identified as nonwhite, and three in ten (30%) of students who were not of immigrant origin identified as nonwhite. About one-third of students (32%) qualified for a free- or reduced-price lunch.

We also gathered data from 58 advisors (M_{age} = 43.58 years, *SD* = 10.50 years; range = 27–62 years). Twenty-one GSAs had one advisor and 17 had more than one (15 had two, one had three, and one had four advisors).

Procedures

We purposively sampled GSAs across Massachusetts for geographic diversity as well as diversity in the size and racial and socioeconomic composition of the schools. We identified GSAs in consultation with the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students, with representation from traditional public schools, charter public schools, and vocational public schools. We secured permission from GSA advisors and principals to work with their school's GSA and asked youth members to participate in a study to explore their experiences in the club. We stated that their answers would be confidential and that we would not share their responses with their peers, parents, or other adults. Advisors gave consent for all youth to participate and 100% of youth attending the baseline recruitment session gave their assent. We used advisor adult consent over parent consent to avoid the risk of inadvertently outing LGBTQ youth to their parents. This consent approach is common in research with LGBTQ youth to protect their safety (Mustanski, 2011). These procedures were approved by the primary institution's IRB and each school.

Data collection was planned over two years, wherein 19 GSAs participated in Year 1 and a separate set of 19 GSAs participated in Year 2. Year 1 was the academic year 2016-2017, the year of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election and inauguration. We adopted this approach for issues of feasibility to ensure that we could visit all GSAs within a close time frame at each wave, given that they were located across the state and some met on the same days of the week. The youth and advisors completed one survey in the Fall (October-November) and one in the Spring

(April-May), with generally identical survey protocols. However, we included measures of demographic characteristics only during the Fall assessments. At our first visit, we distributed and collected Wave 1 baseline surveys during a GSA meeting. The survey took 30 minutes to complete and proctors were present to answer questions and collect the surveys at the end of the meeting. Each participant received a $10 gift card for their participation at Wave 1. At our second visit, we collected Wave 2 surveys for youth and advisors following identical procedures as those for Wave 1. Each participant received a $20 gift card.

Of the initial 580 youth who completed Wave 1 surveys, 85 youth (14.3% of the original sample) discontinued their involvement in the GSA earlier in the year (as reported by their advisors). The remaining 143 youth who did not complete the Wave 2 survey (24.1% of the original sample) either were not present at the Wave 2 data collection, did not complete the survey prior to the end of the school year, or were in GSAs whose advisors did not provide feedback on whether they had discontinued their involvement in the GSA. In total, 71.9% of the original youth sample who were potentially still active GSA members at the end of the year completed Wave 2 surveys.

When comparing youth who participated at both waves to youth lost at Wave 2 who were still potential GSA members, youth lost at Wave 2, compared to youth who participated at both waves, reported at Wave 1 more frequently discussing immigration, F (1, 475) = 11.22, p = .003, η_p^2 = .01 (retained participants: M = 1.42, SD = 1.08; lost participants: M = 1.7780, SD = 1.18); lower hope at Wave 1 than youth who participated at both waves, F (1, 475) = 5.87, p = .02, η_p^2 = .01 (retained participants: M = 4.69, SD = 1.78; lost participants: M = 4.25, SD = 1.77); and lower perceived peer validation at Wave 1 than youth who participated at both waves, F (1, 475) = 4.81, p = .03, η_p^2 = .01 (retained participants: M = 3.64, SD = 0.94; lost participants: M =

3.42, *SD* = 0.97). They did not differ in their reported sociopolitical efficacy, F (1, 475) = 2.64, p = .10, or critical reflection, F (1, 475) = 0.35, p = .56. There was no differential attrition based on immigrant-origin status (χ^2 = 0.16, p = .69) or gender (χ^2 = 0.48, p = .79), but there was greater attrition among heterosexual than sexual minority youth (χ^2 = 13.72, p < .001; 43% vs 24%) and racial/ethnic minority youth than White youth (χ^2 = 11.49, p = .001; 43% vs 23%).

Measures

Perceived Peer Validation

Youth reported peer validation using a modified version of the three-item "reassurance of worth" and three-item "approval" scales from the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009; e.g., "How much did your peers treat you like you're admired and respected?"). Response options ranged from 1 (very little/never) to 5 (the most/always). The scores were averaged; and higher average scores represent greater perceived peer validation. The internal consistency estimates were α = .92 (Wave 1) and α = .94 (Wave 2).

Hope

Youth also completed the six-item State Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1996; e.g., "At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals"). Response options ranged from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true). Higher average scale scores represent a greater sense of hope. The internal consistency estimates were α = .92 (Wave 1) and α = .92 (Wave 2).

Critical Reflection

Youth reported on past-month critical reflection using the 8-item "perceived critical reflection" subscale from the Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer et al., 2017; e.g., "Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get ahead"). Response options ranged from 1

(strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher average scale scores represent greater critical reflection. Internal consistency estimates were α = .97 (Wave 1) and α = .97 (Wave 2).

Sociopolitical Efficacy

Youth reported their current sociopolitical efficacy via the five-item "perceived behavioral control" subscale of the Social Justice Scale (Torres-Harding et al., 2012; e.g., "If I choose to do so, I am capable of influencing others to promote fairness and equality"). Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher average scale scores represent a greater sense of sociopolitical efficacy. The internal consistency estimates were α = .91 (Wave 1) and α = .92 (Wave 2).

Participation in Immigration Discussions

Frequency of youth participation in GSA-based discussions about immigration from September-October (Wave 1) and November-April (Wave 2) was tapped using a three-item measure. The preceding stem was, "How often do ***you*** talk about these topics in your GSA meetings up to this point this year?" (Wave 1) and "From November until now, how often did ***you*** talk about these topics in your GSA meetings?" (Wave 2). The topics included in the three items were (1) issues of discrimination or inequality related to immigrants, (2) experiences of students who are from immigrant backgrounds, and (3) LGBTQ issues within different immigrant groups (response options: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and very often [scored 0 to 4]). Higher average scores represent participating more frequently in immigration discussions. The internal consistency estimates were α = .92 (Wave 1) and α = .94 (Wave 2). A weighted average scale score was calculated using *(2*average item score at Wave 1 + 5*average item score at Wave 2)/7* to reflect that Wave 1 assessed the first two months of the school year and Wave 2 assessed the subsequent five months.

Indication of Youth Immigrant Origin

Youth self-reported whether they were born outside of the United States (*Were you born outside the U.S.?:* yes/no*)* and whether either of their parents was born outside of the United States (*Was either of your parents born outside the U.S.?:* yes/no). Youth who selected "yes" to either question were asked to report their and/or their parents' countries of origin. We used the combined measures to identify and code first- or second-generation immigrant-origin youth as it typical in this literature (Waters & Pineau, 2015). See Appendix A for maps and lists of students' and parents' non-U.S. countries of origin.

Other Demographic Factors and Covariates

Youth also self-reported their sexual orientation (*Choose one that you best identify with: gay or lesbian, bisexual, questioning, heterosexual/straight, pansexual, asexual, queer, or a space to provide another written-in response*), gender identity (*Check all that apply: male, female, transgender, genderqueer, gender fluid, non-binary, or a space to provide another written-in response*), race/ethnicity (*Check all that apply: White [non-Hispanic], Black or African American, Asian/Asian American, Latino/a, Bi/Multi-racial, Native American, Middle Eastern/Arab or Arab-American, or a space to provide another written-in response*), and age (in years). Receipt of free- or reduced-price lunch (FRPL; *Do you receive a free* or *reduced-cost lunch at school?: No, Yes, I don't know*) was recoded such that *I don't know* responses were coded as missing data (8.28% of the sample indicated that they did not know if they received free- or reduced-price lunch).

Because of the small representation of youth within some of the specific sexual minority, racial/ethnic minority, and gender minority groups, we used binary indicators of sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and three categories for gender identity in our analyses. We coded "other" responses for any demographic variables that reflected sexual, racial/ethnic, or gender

minority identities and categorized these based on consensus among the study team (whose members were diverse in race/ethnicity as well as sexual orientation and gender identity).

At Wave 1, youth reported the frequency with which they participated in GSA discussions in general (irrespective of the topic) up to that point (generally reflecting the first three to four meetings of the year). At Wave 2, youth also reported this, in reference to their participation throughout the school year since our first visit (on average, covering a 5-month period). Response options were *never, rarely, sometimes, often,* and *very often* (scaled 0–4). Based on youth's reports at Waves 1 and 2, we computed a weighted average of their GSA discussion frequency for the year, proportional to the time spans which those waves reference (2 months for Wave 1, 5 months for Wave 2). We used this score as a covariate in our analyses.

At Wave 1 and Wave 2, advisors completed a two-item assessment of their perceived competence to address issues of immigration and culture. The items were preceded by the stem, ''How competent do you feel to do the following:'' (a) talk about immigration or experiences of anti-immigrant discrimination and (b) talk about students' experiences in different cultures. Response options ranged from 1 (not at all competent) to 5 (very competent), and higher average scale scores represented greater confidence in one's ability to address issues related to immigration and culture. We computed a weighted average of their perceived competence for the year, proportional to the time spans which those waves reference (2 months for Wave 1, 5 months for Wave 2). For GSAs with more than one advisor, their scores were averaged. We used this score as a covariate in our analyses.

In addition to advisor perceived competence to discuss immigration and culture, we also included the following GSA-level covariates: the proportion of first- or second-generation immigrant-origin youth in the GSA; the number of students in the GSA, number of advisors in

the GSA (1 = more than one advisor), frequency of GSA meetings (response options ranged from 1 [No regular meetings scheduled] to 5 [More than once/week]), and year the GSA participated (1 = 2016-2017; 2 = 2017-2018).

Analytic Plan

We tested our hypotheses using multilevel modeling with maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). We used random intercepts to account for the clustering of students in GSAs. We used multiple imputation in Mplus with 50 imputed datasets to test our models with all participants (Enders et al., 2016).

We tested two models. In both models, our dependent variables were residualized change in youth's perceived peer validation, hope, critical reflection, and sociopolitical efficacy at Level 1 and collective GSA perceived peer validation, hope, critical reflection, and sociopolitical efficacy at Level 2. We tested the first model (Model 1) with all outcomes and included correlations among the outcomes of interest. The predictor of interest in the first model was the average frequency of immigration discussions over the school year (i.e., the weighted average composite of their Wave 1 and Wave 2 scores). This variable was group-mean centered, and the group means were used at the GSA level. Centering is recommended for variables in multilevel modeling to give scores of zero an interpretable meaning; in the case of group-mean centering, scores represent the deviation of an individual from their group's mean (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This type of centering allows us to investigate youth's experiences relative to their fellow GSA members. The group-mean centered immigration discussion variable was used to predict change in perceived peer validation, hope, critical reflection, and sociopolitical efficacy while adjusting for youth's baseline frequency of these variables at Wave 1. The group means of immigration discussion frequency at the GSA level were used to predict change in GSAs'

collective perceived peer validation, hope, critical reflection, and sociopolitical efficacy, while adjusting for GSAs' baseline frequency of these variables at Wave 1.

In both models, we adjusted for the main effect of youth's immigrant-origin status (1 = first- or second-generation immigrant). We also included six other covariates at the individual level: sexual orientation (0 = heterosexual, 1 = sexual minority); race/ethnicity (0 = White, 1 = racial/ethnic minority); gender identity, which was represented by two dummy variables to indicate whether youth identified as cisgender male (1 = cisgender male) or gender expansive (1 = gender-expansive), making cisgender females the referent group; receipt of free- or reduced-price lunch (1 = recipient); youth's age in years; and a weighted average of youth's reported frequency of participation in all GSA discussions. At the group level, we included six covariates: advisor self-efficacy to address issues of immigration and culture, the proportion of first- or second-generation immigrant-origin youth in the GSA; the number of students in the GSA, number of advisors in the GSA (1 = more than one advisor), frequency of GSA meetings, and year the GSA participated.

We used the second model (Model 2; as shown in Figure 1) to test our hypotheses regarding whether the association between youth's reported frequency of immigration discussion and their residualized change in our four outcomes differed for youth based on their immigrant-origin status. In addition to all of the study variables included above, we also included *immigration discussion* × *immigrant-origin youth* interaction terms at Level 1 and *collective immigration discussion* × *proportion of immigrant-origin youth* interaction terms at Level 2.

Results

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics and descriptive data for youth participants and our study variables. Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations among our key study

variables. We found moderate correlations among our outcomes of interest, which partially drove our decision to include the covariances among those outcomes in our model. For Model 1, all individual-level (Level 1) coefficient estimates, their standard errors, and confidence intervals are reported in Table 3, and GSA-level (Level 2) coefficient estimates, their standard errors, and confidence intervals are reported in Table 4. Model 2 coefficient estimates, their standard errors, and confidence intervals for the interaction terms are reported in Table 5. Information criteria indicate that there was not much difference between the two models in terms of their model fit (Model 1: mean AIC = 15400.93, mean BIC = 15933.22; Model 2: mean AIC = 15463.676, mean BIC = 16039.596 across the 50 imputed datasets).

Model 1

Our analyses found evidence of benefits of discussion of immigration for GSA members. As hypothesized at the individual level, while adjusting for youth's initial sense of peer validation and all other covariates, youth who reported discussing immigration issues more frequently (relative to the other members in their GSA) reported increased perceived peer validation at the school year's end (b = 0.146, p = .019). Contrary to our hypotheses, frequency of participating in immigration discussions did not predict residualized change in youth's levels of hope (b = 0.128, p = 0.156), critical reflection (b = 0.032, p = 0.624), or sociopolitical efficacy (b = 0.136, p = 0.055) when adjusting for all other factors. Contrary to our hypotheses, at the group level, frequency of collective participation in discussions of immigration issues was not associated with collectively greater perceived peer validation (γ = 0.096, p = 0.604), hope (γ = 0.338, p = 0.111), critical reflection (γ = -0.209, p = 0.266), or sociopolitical efficacy (γ = 0.075, p = 0.737), after accounting for other factors.

Model 2

In Model 2, we added interaction terms to test if the benefits of discussion of immigration varied by youth's immigrant-origin status at Level 1 and by the proportion of immigrant-origin members at Level 2. We found that immigrant-origin youth, but not non-immigrant-origin youth, reported increased hope at the school year's end when discussing immigration more frequently over the school year (b = 0.354, p = 0.039 for immigrant-origin youth vs. b = 0.029, p = 0.760 for non-immigrant-origin youth), after adjusting for individual members' initial sense of hope and all other covariates. All other interaction terms were nonsignificant at Level 1 and Level 2. This indicated that immigrant-origin students did not differentially benefit from discussing immigration more frequently than their non-immigrant-origin peers in GSAs in terms of their sense of peer validation, critical reflection, and sociopolitical efficacy (at Level 1), nor did the proportion of immigrant-origin youth moderate the relationships between GSAs' collective frequency of immigration discussion and the outcomes of interest at the group level. See Table 5 for these coefficients.

Discussion

In a context of polarization in the United States concerning nearly every issue related to immigration, can there be spaces in which such discussions are associated with positive youth outcomes, rather than rancor and conflict? We assessed whether youth's discussions of topics such as discrimination related to immigrants, general experiences of immigrant-origin students, and LGBTQ issues within different immigrant groups that occurred within a space devoted to addressing issues of diversity–GSAs–was related to indicators of youth empowerment and critical consciousness. The results of the current study indicated that immigrant-origin youth's frequency of discussing immigration issues in GSAs over the school year predicted greater empowerment along multiple dimensions—perceived peer validation and hope. For non-

immigrant origin youth, benefits extended only to perceived peer validation. Surprisingly, we did not find a significant relationship between the frequency of immigration discussion and increases in critical consciousness. Our findings have implications for how GSAs and similar groups oriented around issues of equity and social justice might seek to promote the empowerment of their diverse members in a time of polarizing discourse, exclusionary policy changes, and increased rates of school-based victimization.

Immigration Discussions in Relation to Greater Empowerment

Our findings suggest that there are benefits for youth when they discuss immigration issues more frequently than others in their GSA. A previous mixed-methods study by Poteat et al. (2019) found no statistically significant differences by demographic characteristics in members' frequency of discussing immigration in their GSA over the course of the school year. From the qualitative data, they found that engaging with these topics in the GSA can bring up the fear of discrimination for immigrant-origin youth and fear of misspeaking for non-immigrant origin youth (Poteat et al., 2019). Yet, in the current study, we found that immigrant-origin and non-immigrant origin members who did talk more about these issues, perhaps despite their discomfort, reported greater feelings of validation from their peers. Poteat et al. (2019) found that students with higher levels of social justice self-efficacy at the beginning of the year reported greater increases in discussing immigration over the course of the school year, indicating that they may have felt more equipped to handle this discomfort. They may also be receiving positive feedback from their peers in the GSA, which in turn increases their comfort in speaking about these issues. The positive association between discussions of immigration issues and increased feelings of peer validation is important because youth have emphasized that relational empowerment is a particularly relevant form of empowerment to them (Christens et

al., 2016; Russell et al., 2009). However, we found that the associations at the GSA level did not reach statistical significance after adjusting for the individual-level effects and all other covariates. While many GSAs aspire to address interlocking systems of oppression and sociocultural identities beyond sexual orientation and gender identity (Chong et al., 2019; Poteat et al., 2019), it may be important to consider not simply the frequency of discussion but the quality of these discussions. Further research is warranted and might consider conditions under which these conversations carry greater benefits (e.g., based on advisor or youth leader training to facilitate such discussions).

We also found that youth's participation in more frequent discussions related to immigration, relative to their GSA's other members, was predictive of increased hope (a measure of goal-oriented agency, the State Hope scale), but only for immigrant-origin youth (see Figure 2). Immigrant-origin youth in GSAs may have been particularly affected by the policy climate in the United States that, at the time of data collection, may have threatened their sense of hope for the future and their ability to achieve longer-term goals (whether for themselves or their families; Cervantes et al., 2018). The first year of data collection in this study spanned the 2016 U.S. Presidential election and inauguration, while the second year of data collection included a variety of policy actions, including attempts to terminate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); increased enforcement, detention, and deportation; and efforts to build a wall at the southern U.S. border (Pierce & Bolter, 2020; Rodriguez Vega et al., in press). A resulting pervasive climate of fear has been described as affecting children in immigrant families during this period of harsh enforcement and border policies (Cervantes et al., 2018), and immigrant-origin LGBTQ youth reported feeling unsafe in schools because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, immigrant status, citizenship status, and English language proficiency (Kosciw

et al., 2018). Our finding that discussions of immigration were a significant contributor to increased hope for immigrant-origin students suggests that such discussions may help this population navigate the uncertain political climate (Bahena, 2020; Dixson et al. 2018; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Ginwright, 2016). More broadly, this ties to calls from scholars that hope is necessary to foster among youth from marginalized groups (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Ginwright, 2015). The immigrant-origin GSA members in our sample may have reported increased hope (compared to their non-immigrant-origin GSA peers) because these conversations were likely more salient to their identities and experiences. Thus, discussions regarding their sociocultural identities may enhance psychological empowerment for youth from marginalized groups, and perhaps particularly so in times of harsh policies directed at them or their families. Having these discussions may allow students from marginalized backgrounds an opportunity to understand the effects of these policies or to receive support around negative interactions with peers, staff, and family members. If students are discussing how they might respond to immigration-related policy changes or negative experiences of immigrant-origin students, these conversations may have particular benefits for immigrant-origin youth's sense of hope.

We found that discussions at the GSA level did not significantly predict residualized increases in collective hope among members, after adjusting for the individual-level effects and all other covariates. Likewise, the presence of a greater proportion of immigrant-origin youth did not moderate this relationship. Though we did not find support for the hypotheses that more frequent discussion of immigration issues in GSAs relates to collective increases in empowerment, these findings contribute to research on psychological empowerment by identifying a specific activity in which students can engage (i.e., discussing immigration issues within GSAs or settings oriented around social justice) that could enhance both their relational

and cognitive empowerment. Our findings highlight the potential for differential benefits of these types of identity-based discussions in GSAs for members with various sociocultural identities.

Immigration Discussions in Relation to Critical Consciousness

In contrast to our findings related to our indicators of empowerment, the associations between youth's relative frequency of participation in immigration discussions and residualized change in critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy did not reach statistical significance. There are a few possible reasons why we may have seen null results at the individual level. First, GSA members may have already been aware of oppressive systems that marginalize LGBTQ populations or others, based on their own or their knowledge of others' experiences of overt or subtle discrimination (Wagaman, 2016). There may have been a ceiling effect driving the null result for critical reflection, though average scores of the measure of critical reflection were around the midpoint of the scale, so this is perhaps unlikely. For sociopolitical efficacy, the scores were on the higher end of the scale, so a ceiling effect is more plausible. Such an effect could account for why we did not observe significant changes in members' levels of sociopolitical efficacy. For critical reflection, another possible explanation is that youth's contributions to the discussions did not serve to increase their awareness of oppressive social structures. Simply voicing support or opposition for certain actions or policies or providing emotional support in response to members' experiences of victimization or discrimination may have not been enough to elevate their critical reflection (awareness of systemic discrimination). Our findings align with a previous study that found no statistically significant impact of a 7-week intergroup dialogue program on critical social awareness (Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003).

We found that discussions at the GSA level did not significantly predict residualized increases in collective sociopolitical efficacy, after adjusting for the individual-level effects and

all other covariates. We may not have found benefits at the group level because of the content of the discussions of immigration issues in the GSA. Previous work in this area suggests that discussions of immigration in GSAs can include education for members and support-seeking (Poteat et al., 2019), but the relative frequencies of these motivations are unknown. In addition to discussions of various issues, some GSAs also engage in awareness-raising and activism to combat LGBTQ-related discrimination (Griffin et al., 2004). Working in their schools and communities to effect change may be more impactful for students' sociopolitical efficacy than discussions in the GSA, as these discussions may not equip students with the practical knowledge of how to take action (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Finally, no data were collected regarding the tenor of these conversations. For example, levels of discord in having these discussions may have hindered members' critical consciousness development. Previous work in this area suggests that an open climate for dialogue fosters sociopolitical efficacy (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014). If members struggled to maintain a supportive space where they could disagree without restricting conversation to avoid conflict, then there may have been fewer gains in their critical consciousness. Although GSAs strive to provide a supportive climate for LGBTQ youth (Griffin et al., 2004), they may need to make more deliberate efforts to ensure that this is inclusive of members who are marginalized in other ways as well (Calzo et. al, 2021).

In comparing our findings for empowerment and critical consciousness, we found that empowerment may develop over the course of the school year as a result of GSA discussions, but that these discussions may not emphasize building aspects of critical consciousness in the same way. It may be that the topics of conversation, while enriching enough to provide hope for immigrant-origin youth, may not have been deep enough to increase members' awareness of the structural social inequalities that exist—a fundamental aspect of critical reflection (Diemer &

Rapa, 2016). More intensive efforts on the part of GSAs to foster links to social action and recognition of discrimination and oppression may be required for sociopolitical discussions to begin to affect processes related to critical consciousness. In practice, GSAs may want to consider the aims of their conversations around certain topics. For instance, at times GSAs may wish to facilitate conversations around immigration or other forms of diversity in a way that promotes knowledge, awareness, skill-building, and efficacy to counteract discrimination (i.e., to build various dimensions of critical consciousness), while at other times GSAs may wish to facilitate these conversations to provide support, validation, hope, and encouragement. In addition, a key component of critical consciousness, action, may be missing from the students' experiences. Thus, while discussions with peers can foster critical consciousness (Diemer & Li, 2011), the benefits of the conversations in the current sample of GSAs did not. GSA advisors seeking to improve student members' critical consciousness could consider incorporating opportunities to advocate for inclusive policies and practices for immigrant-origin students in their school and community.

Limitations, Strengths, and Implications

The current study has limitations. First, the sample was drawn entirely from the state of Massachusetts, historically one of the more Democratic-voting states in the United States. However, we sampled from areas that varied in their political orientation and voting patterns during the 2016 election. Massachusetts has an established network of GSAs and support for these clubs at the state level is robust (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). Rather than a weakness, understanding how GSAs in Massachusetts can attend to the identities of their members and the associated benefits for youth shines a light on what is possible in a broader supportive context. Future research can extend to other areas of the country

with less state-level support for GSAs. Second, our sample was limited to students who were present in their GSA on the days of data collection. Because of this, we may have been less likely to reach less involved members, whose participation in these conversations and their reactions could be distinct from those reported by members who participated in our study. Anecdotally, in our conversations with advisors, they felt that we reached regularly attending members. Future research in this area should take care to include all current GSA members. Third, we did not assess the quality of these discussions nor the frequency of preparing for or engaging in advocacy or action around issues of immigration. Both may have affected students' positive outcomes. Other methods such as meeting observations could provide such additional data. Fourth, there is the possibility of reverse causality (that is, youth reporting higher levels of peer validation, sociopolitical efficacy, and hope may be more likely to participate in discussions about immigration) and maturation effects. We adjusted for Wave 1 levels of these outcomes in predicting year-end levels, which partially addressed the issue of reverse causality. However, future research should consider how experimental or quasi-experimental designs could be used to evaluate interventions directly intended to promote discussion of intersectional issues among diverse youth and their impacts on psychological empowerment. These types of designs could also account for the extent to which maturation is occurring and could be contributing to any natural change in the outcomes. Fifth, although we investigated our hypotheses based on data from two waves, it would have been even better to assess youth's hope and peer validation periodically over the year to shorten the retrospective recall time span. Future research should seek to consider developmental trajectories requiring more than two waves of data. Finally, some students may have discussed immigration in their academic classes or other activities, and their participation in such discussions may have also accounted for some of the observed changes over

time. The conversations that youth may be having with their families and peers outside their GSA could also potentially affect their critical consciousness and empowerment independent of club participation (Diemer & Li, 2011). Our consideration of these discussions in GSAs suggests some promise in GSAs serving as a space in which these types of conversations could carry positive effects for youth. Future research in this area should take care to account for any immigration discussions in which youth are engaging outside of their GSA.

To date, virtually no studies have examined how GSAs and similar groups may increase empowerment for youth with multiple marginalized identities (e.g., sexual or gender minority immigrant-origin youth). GSAs, while maintaining a focus on identities and experiences of sexual and gender minorities, also have the potential to consider these issues as they overlap with their members' other sociocultural identities in ways that acknowledge unique forms of marginalization attributed to specific combinations of stigmatized or privileged identities. For example, students who identify as LGBTQ and are undocumented may face an increased risk of deportation if they come out as LGBTQ and their families and communities reject them (Terriquez, 2015). According to Else-Quest and Hyde (2016), intersectionality can be quantitatively analyzed in several ways, such as including interactions to assess multiplicative effects on participants who endorse various constellations of sociocultural identities. Although we considered moderation based on youth's immigrant-origin background, our findings may apply to some groups of immigrant-origin youth more than others. Due to sample size limitations, we could not consider additional variability in our findings based on further intersections of youth's identities using three-way interactions. In particular, our sample had significant overlap across the subsamples of non-White and immigrant-origin youth, so immigration-related effects may be confounded with race/ethnicity. However, the potential

benefits of immigration discussions may have differed for immigrant-origin youth who are youth of color relative to White immigrant-origin youth. As an additional example, the benefits may pattern differentially across students from specific countries of origin. Youth who were included in the immigrant-origin group represent backgrounds from a range of countries (see Appendix A). Yet, current and historic exclusionary immigration policies have targeted specific immigrant communities (FitzGerald et al., 2019; Rogers et al., 2017). Future research on the experiences of immigrant-origin students in GSAs should consider recruiting a sample size to ensure they have sufficient power to test if their experiences vary by their sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and other aspects of their immigrant-origin status. As such, an intersectional approach is an important component of this research because it considers that systems of oppression related to race, gender, sexuality, and immigration status (and other social categories) may have compounding effects on one another—that is, these facets of identity cannot be understood in isolation from one another (Bowleg, 2013; Stoll & Block, 2015). Failure to attend to intersectionality may cause certain types of inequality or differential benefits to be under-theorized or missed altogether (Collins, 2000). Different identity-based conversations may increase hope for students of other marginalized identities, which places the GSA in a unique position to promote youth wellbeing. This stands as an important area for ongoing research with clear implications for identifying best practices in serving youth who are often less visible and who have less access to resources in their schools or communities (Russell et al., 2009).

Despite these limitations, our study has notable strengths. It is one of a limited number of studies in the extracurricular literature to test if a particular activity, discussions of sociopolitical issues, predicted improved empowerment and critical consciousness and did so using a longitudinal design among a diverse set of schools. Further, we highlighted the diversity of

student membership in GSAs in particular and the differential benefits that members may gain from their participation. In addition, our models adjusted for youth's general level of participation in GSA discussions and suggest that there is a distinct benefit for participating in discussions about immigration issues over and above other conversation topics. Finally, we moved beyond traditional indicators of civic engagement (e.g., volunteering, voting) and gave explicit focus to how GSAs can serve as a place for dialogue during immediate sociopolitical crises to support youth to engage with one another on urgent civic issues and promote their feelings of empowerment.

Our findings have implications for the practice of promoting discussions of identity and intersectionality in schools. In line with our finding of increased hope among immigrant-origin youth after discussing immigration, it is likely that having discussions of immigration in GSAs—which are typically spaces focused on supporting youth based on their sexual orientation and gender identity—raises the potential for youth to develop an understanding of intersectionality and their social locations. Terriquez (2015) found in a study of undocumented youth activists in California that LGBTQ youth made up a substantial proportion of the sample and were moreover more civically engaged than their straight and cisgender peers. The undocumented immigrant youth movement in California adopted a "coming out" strategy specifically modeled on LGBTQ youth activism (Cisneros, 2018; Enriquez & Saguy, 2016). Terriquez (2015) argues that this parallel strategy may encourage discussions of intersectionality in spaces that are traditionally focused on distinct facets of identity. Attention to intersectionality is necessary and has been long called for among scholars (Collins, 2000; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Stoll & Block, 2015). At the same time, conversations about identities, privilege, and marginalization constitute notable challenges for both youth and adults, even among those who have a history of pursuing

this work in their practice. There exists little guidance, empirically-based or grounded in theory, on how to facilitate these conversations and if they are intended to build self-awareness, knowledge, and efficacy to promote social justice or if they are intended to promote action. There is a clear need for researchers and practitioners to work together to address this need and have an opportunity to do so within settings such as GSAs and others where youth come together in solidarity and support of one another around issues of oppression.

Given the current findings, it may be important to identify ways for advisors and student leaders to promote more frequent and effective conversations among their members on issues such as immigration and other sociopolitical crises as they arise. In addition, it would be beneficial to identify ways in which to do so that address these issues from an intersectional lens (e.g., race, ability status, or religion). Previous research suggests that advisors may be a key facilitator for intervention; conversations about immigration and race occur more frequently in GSAs where advisors report greater feelings of self-efficacy to discuss issues of race, ethnicity, and immigration (Poteat et al., 2019). However, in the current study, we found that advisors' self-efficacy to discuss issues of immigration was not related to other youth outcomes. Efforts to build such self-efficacy by providing strategies for guiding discussions could help to increase both the frequency and effectiveness of these conversations. Given the lack of associations observed with critical consciousness, it may be important to include in such guidance for discussing structural aspects of oppression and planning for actions to advocate for policy change. The DREAMER youth movement, with national and local organization, has made large strides in bringing the oppression of undocumented young people into the national discourse; continued efforts to link such movements to GSAs and social justice for sexual and gender

minority youth may enhance the capacity of GSAs to foster critical consciousness and action across multiple domains.

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Table 1

GSA Member Demographics, Frequency of Immigration Discussions, and Levels of Empowerment and Critical Consciousness (N = 580)

Variable	*N* (%)	*M* (SD)
Sexual orientation		
Bisexual	119 (20.5)	
Pansexual	115 (19.8)	
Heterosexual	115 (19.8)	
Gay or lesbian	100 (17.2)	
Questioning	38 (6.6)	
Queer	26 (4.5)	
Asexual	20 (3.4)	
Other written-in response	43 (7.4)	
Not reported	4 (0.7)	
Gender identity		
Cisgender female	330 (56.9)	
Cisgender male	95 (16.4)	
Non-binary	35 (6.0)	
Transgender	44 (7.6)	
Genderqueer	13 (2.2)	
Gender fluid	14 (2.4)	
Other written-in response	47 (8.1)	
Not reported	2 (0.3)	
Race or ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic	397 (68.4)	
Biracial or multiracial	63 (10.9)	
Latino/a/x	63 (10.9)	
Asian or Asian-American	21 (3.6)	
Black or African-American	20 (3.4)	
Middle Eastern, Arab, or Arab-American	3 (0.5)	
Other written-in response	7 (1.2)	
Not reported	3 (0.5)	
Frequency of participation in immigration discussions (weighted average)		1.52 (0.99)
Peer validation (Wave 1)		3.59 (0.93)
Peer validation (Wave 2)		3.56 (0.99)
Hope (Wave 1)		4.62 (1.78)
Hope (Wave 2)		5.03 (1.69)
Sociopolitical efficacy (Wave 1)		3.92 (1.60)

Sociopolitical efficacy (Wave 2)	4.21 (1.51)
Critical reflection (Wave 1)	5.34 (1.37)
Critical reflection (Wave 2)	5.29 (1.39)
Frequency of participation in all GSA discussions (weighted average)	3.00 (0.95)

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations among Frequency of Immigration Discussions, Immigrant-Origin Status, and Levels of Empowerment and Critical Consciousness

	Im. Dis.	Im.-Origin	P. Valid W1	Hope W1	Crit. Ref. W1	SP Effic. W1	P. Valid W2	Hope W2	Crit. Ref. W2	SP Effic. W2
Im. Dis.	1									
Im.-Origin	0.064	1								
P. Valid W1	0.099	0.04	1							
Hope W1	0.001*	-0.051***	0.371	1						
Crit. Ref. W1	-0.055***	-0.092***	-0.065***	-0.023***	1					
SP Effic. W1	0.167	-0.029***	0.411	0.508	-0.052***	1				
P. Valid W2	0.212	0.018	0.379	0.187	0.007	0.329	1			
Hope W2	0.085	0.02	0.319	0.518	0.046	0.41	0.435	1		
Crit. Ref. W2	-0.005***	-0.084***	-0.027***	0.019	0.632	-0.018***	0.023	0.026	1	
SP Effic. W2	0.208	0.012	0.292	0.368	0.068	0.553	0.483	0.633	0.077	1

Note. Im. Dis = weighted average level of immigration discussion frequency; Im.-origin. = Immigrant-origin status; P. Valid = perceived peer validation; Crit. Ref. = critical reflection; SP Effic. = sociopolitical efficacy; W1 = Wave 1; W2 = Wave 2. Variables have been group mean-centered to reflect individual-level variability.

Table 3

Level 1 Estimated Paths in Multilevel Structural Equation Model for Frequency of Immigration Discussions and Perceived Peer Validation, Hope, Critical Reflection, and Sociopolitical Efficacy

Estimated Paths	Coefficient	SE	95% CI
Frequency of immigration discussions to outcomes			
Frequency of immigration discussions to perceived peer validation	0.146*	0.062	(0.024, 0.268)
Frequency of immigration discussions to hope	0.128	0.090	(-0.048, 0.304)
Frequency of immigration discussions to critical reflection	0.032	0.066	(-0.097, 0.161)
Frequency of immigration discussions to sociopolitical efficacy	0.136	0.071	(-0.003, 0.275)
Covariance among outcomes			
Peer validation and hope	0.404***	0.074	(0.259, 0.549)
Peer validation and sociopolitical efficacy	-0.002	0.051	(-0.102, 0.098)
Peer validation and critical reflection	0.310***	0.064	(0.185, 0.435)
Hope and critical reflection	-0.039	0.081	(-0.198, 0.120)
Hope and sociopolitical efficacy	0.716***	0.104	(0.512, 0.920)
Critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy	0.032	0.072	(-0.109, 0.173)
Autoregressive associations			
W1 perceived peer validation to W2 perceived peer validation	0.294***	0.052	(0.192, 0.396)
W1 hope to W2 hope	0.408***	0.041	(0.328, 0.488)
W1 critical reflection to W2 critical reflection	0.580***	0.042	(0.498, 0.662)
W1 sociopolitical efficacy to W2 sociopolitical efficacy	0.414***	0.055	(0.306, 0.522)
Covariates to peer validation			
Immigrant-origin status to peer validation (3rd-gen or later as referent)	-0.044	0.135	(-0.309, 0.221)
Sexual minority identity to peer validation (heterosexual as referent)	-0.177	0.170	(-0.510, 0.516)
Cisgender male to peer validation (cisgender female as referent)	-0.163	0.180	(-0.056, 0.190)
Gender expansive to peer validation (cisgender female as referent)	-0.190	0.144	(-0.472, 0.092)
Racial/ethnic minority identity to peer validation (White as referent)	0.168	0.143	(-0.112, 0.448)

Recipient of FRPL to peer validation (non-recipient as referent)	-0.075	0.162	(-0.393, 0.243)
Age to peer validation	0.046	0.052	(0.056, 0.148)
Frequency of participation in GSA discussions to peer validation	0.128*	0.061	(0.008, 0.248)
Covariates to hope			
Immigrant-origin status to hope (3rd-gen or later as referent)	0.139	0.197	(-0.247, 0.525)
Sexual minority identity to hope (heterosexual as referent)	-0.094	0.273	(-0.629, 0.441)
Cisgender male to hope (cisgender female as referent)	0.163	0.214	(-0.256, 0.582)
Gender expansive to hope (cisgender female as referent)	-0.374	0.236	(-0.837, 0.089)
Racial/ethnic minority identity to hope (White as referent)	0.082	0.214	(-0.337, 0.501)
Recipient of FRPL to hope (non-recipient as referent)	-0.096	0.238	(-0.562, 0.37)
Age to hope	0.045	0.071	(-0.094, 0.184)
Frequency of participation in GSA discussions to hope	0.107	0.085	(-0.06, 0.274)
Covariates to critical reflection			
Immigrant-origin status to critical reflection (3rd-gen or later as referent)	0.000	0.147	(-0.288, 0.288)
Sexual minority identity to critical reflection (heterosexual as referent)	0.300	0.187	(-0.067, 0.667)
Cisgender male to critical reflection (cisgender female as referent)	-0.383*	0.172	(-0.720, -0.046)
Gender expansive to critical reflection (cisgender female as referent)	-0.247	0.165	(-0.570, 0.076)
Racial/ethnic minority identity to critical reflection (White as referent)	-0.141	0.158	(-0.451, 0.169)
Recipient of FRPL to critical reflection (non-recipient as referent)	0.016	0.215	(-0.405, 0.437)
Age to critical reflection	0.032	0.049	(-0.064, 0.128)
Frequency of participation in GSA discussions to critical reflection	0.114	0.061	(-0.006, 0.234)
Covariates to sociopolitical efficacy			
Immigrant-origin status to sociopolitical efficacy (3rd-gen or later as referent)	0.080	0.161	(-0.236, 0.396)
Sexual minority identity to sociopolitical efficacy (heterosexual as referent)	-0.225	0.181	(-0.580, 0.130)
Cisgender male to sociopolitical efficacy (cisgender female as referent)	0.082	0.174	(-0.259, 0.423)
Gender expansive to sociopolitical efficacy (cisgender female as referent)	-0.190	0.162	(-0.508, 0.128)
Racial/ethnic minority identity to sociopolitical efficacy (White as referent)	0.036	0.171	(-0.299, 0.371)
Recipient of FRPL to sociopolitical efficacy (non-recipient as referent)	-0.275	0.176	(-0.620, 0.070)
Age to sociopolitical efficacy	0.005	0.072	(-0.136, 0.146)

Frequency of participation in GSA discussions to sociopolitical efficacy	0.288***	0.071	(0.149, 0.427)

Note. Values are unstandardized coefficient estimates, their standard errors (SE), and 95% confidence intervals (CI). Immigrant-origin youth is dichotomized 0 = not 1st/2nd-generation immigrant-origin youth, 1 = 1st/2nd-generation immigrant-origin youth; sexual minority is dichotomized 0 = heterosexual, 1 = sexual minority; gender-expansive is dichotomized 0 = not gender-expansive, 1 = gender-expansive; cisgender male is dichotomized 0 = not cisgender male, 1 = cisgender male; Racial/ethnic minority is dichotomized 0 = White, 1 = racial/ethnic minority; Receipt of free- or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is dichotomized 0 = does not receive FRPL, 1 = receives FRPL.
*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p \leq .05$.

Table 4

Level 2 Estimated Paths in Multilevel Structural Equation Model for Frequency of Immigration Discussions and Perceived Peer Validation, Hope, Critical Reflection, and Sociopolitical Efficacy

Estimated Paths	Coefficient	SE	95% CI
Frequency of immigration discussions to outcomes			
Frequency of immigration discussions to perceived peer validation	0.096	0.185	(-0.267, 0.459)
Frequency of immigration discussions to hope	0.338	0.212	(-0.078, 0.754)
Frequency of immigration discussions to critical reflection	-0.209	0.188	(-0.577, 0.159)
Frequency of immigration discussions to sociopolitical efficacy	0.075	0.223	(-0.362, 0.512)
Covariance among outcomes			
Peer validation and hope	0.006	0.161	(-0.31, 0.322)
Peer validation and critical reflection	0.009	0.088	(-0.163, 0.181)
Peer validation and sociopolitical efficacy	0.013	0.118	(-0.218, 0.244)
Hope and critical reflection	0.000	0.138	(-0.270, 0.270)
Hope and sociopolitical efficacy	0.010	0.180	(-0.343, 0.363)
Critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy	0.005	0.116	(-0.222, 0.232)
Autoregressive associations			
W1 perceived peer validation to W2 perceived peer validation	0.860	0.888	(-0.880, 2.600)
W1 hope to W2 hope	0.514	0.699	(-0.856, 1.884)
W1 critical reflection to W2 critical reflection	0.620	0.334	(-0.035, 1.275)
W1 sociopolitical efficacy to W2 sociopolitical efficacy	0.707	1.046	(-1.343, 2.757)
Covariates to peer validation			
Proportion of immigrant-origin members to peer validation	-0.249	0.444	(-1.119, 0.621)
Number of members to peer validation	-0.003	0.009	(-0.021, 0.015)
Number of advisors to peer validation	-0.066	0.157	(-0.374, 0.242)
Frequency of meetings to peer validation	0.027	0.124	(-0.216, 0.270)
Year of study participation to peer validation	0.030	0.140	(-0.244, 0.304)

Advisor perceived competence in immigration to peer validation	0.136	0.085	(-0.031, 0.303)
Covariates to hope			
Proportion of immigrant-origin members to hope	0.793	0.922	(-1.014, 2.600)
Number of members to hope	-0.002	0.010	(-0.022, 0.018)
Number of advisors to hope	-0.004	0.217	(-0.429, 0.421)
Frequency of meetings to hope	-0.045	0.232	(-0.500, 0.410)
Year of study participation to hope	-0.100	0.209	(-0.510, 0.310)
Advisor perceived competence in immigration and culture to hope	-0.068	0.133	(-0.329, 0.193)
Covariates to critical reflection			
Proportion of immigrant-origin members to critical reflection	0.072	0.462	(-0.834, 0.978)
Number of members to critical reflection	0.005	0.007	(-0.009, 0.019)
Number of advisors to critical reflection	-0.067	0.145	(-0.351, 0.217)
Frequency of meetings to critical reflection	0.064	0.178	(-0.285, 0.413)
Year of study participation to critical reflection	-0.066	0.146	(-0.352, 0.220)
Advisor perceived competence in immigration to critical reflection	0.025	0.097	(-0.165, 0.215)
Covariates to sociopolitical efficacy			
Proportion of immigrant-origin members to sociopolitical efficacy	0.254	0.705	(-1.128, 1.636)
Number of members to sociopolitical efficacy	0.007	0.009	(-0.011, 0.025)
Number of advisors to sociopolitical efficacy	-0.016	0.160	(-0.330, 0.298)
Frequency of meetings to sociopolitical efficacy	0.034	0.172	(-0.303, 0.371)
Year of study participation to sociopolitical efficacy	-0.041	0.165	(-0.364, 0.282)
Advisor perceived competence in immigration to sociopolitical efficacy	0.022	0.140	(-0.252, 0.296)

Note. Values are unstandardized coefficient estimates, their standard errors (SE), and 95% confidence intervals (CI). Immigrant-origin youth is dichotomized 0 = not 1st/2nd-generation immigrant-origin youth, 1 = 1st/2nd-generation immigrant-origin youth; sexual minority is dichotomized 0 = heterosexual, 1 = sexual minority; gender-expansive is dichotomized 0 = not gender-expansive, 1 = gender-expansive; cisgender male is dichotomized 0 = not cisgender male, 1 = cisgender male; Racial/ethnic minority is dichotomized 0 = White, 1 = racial/ethnic minority; Receipt of free- or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is dichotomized 0 = does not receive FRPL, 1 = receives FRPL. *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p \leq .05$.

Table 5

Coefficients from Multilevel Interactions from Multilevel Structural Equation Model for Frequency of Immigration Discussions by Immigrant-Origin Status and Perceived Peer Validation, Hope, Critical Reflection, and Sociopolitical Efficacy

Estimated Paths	Coefficient	SE	95% CI
Individual level			
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to outcomes			
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to perceived peer validation	0.210	0.125	(-0.035, 0.455)
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to hope	0.354*	0.171	(0.019, 0.689)
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to critical reflection	-0.112	0.132	(-0.371, 0.147)
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to sociopolitical efficacy	0.152	0.171	(-0.183, 0.487)
Group level			
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to outcomes			
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to perceived peer validation	-0.456	0.727	(-1.881, 0.969)
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to hope	-0.586	0.975	(-2.497, 1.325)
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to critical reflection	-0.689	0.645	(-1.953, 0.575)
Frequency of immigration discussions*immigrant-origin status to sociopolitical efficacy	-0.174	0.951	(-2.038, 1.690)

Note. Values are unstandardized coefficient estimates, their standard errors (SE), and 95% confidence intervals (CI). Immigrant-origin youth is dichotomized 0 = not 1st/2nd-generation immigrant-origin youth, 1 = 1st/2nd-generation immigrant-origin youth; sexual minority is dichotomized 0 = heterosexual, 1 = sexual minority; gender-expansive is dichotomized 0 = not gender-expansive, 1 = gender-expansive; cisgender male is dichotomized 0 = not cisgender male, 1 = cisgender male; Racial/ethnic minority is dichotomized 0 = White, 1 = racial/ethnic minority; Receipt of free- or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is dichotomized 0 = does not receive FRPL, 1 = receives FRPL.
*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p \leq .05$.

Figure 1

Multilevel SEM Conceptual Model Where (a) Individuals' Greater Relative Frequency of Discussing Immigration Predicts Their Increased Empowerment and Critical Consciousness (Level 1) and (b) GSA and Advisor Characteristics Predict Increased Empowerment and Critical Consciousness of the Group (Level 2)

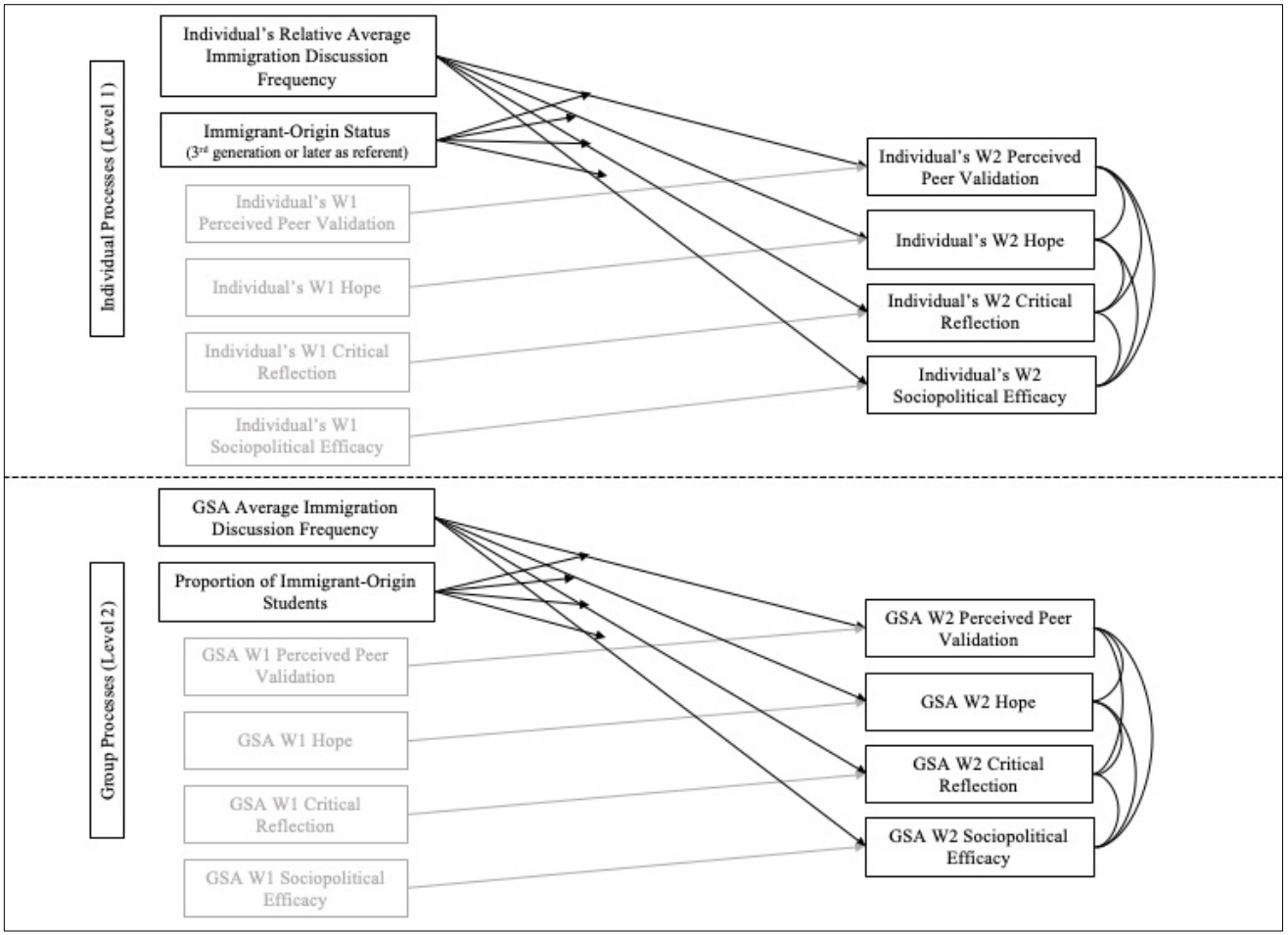
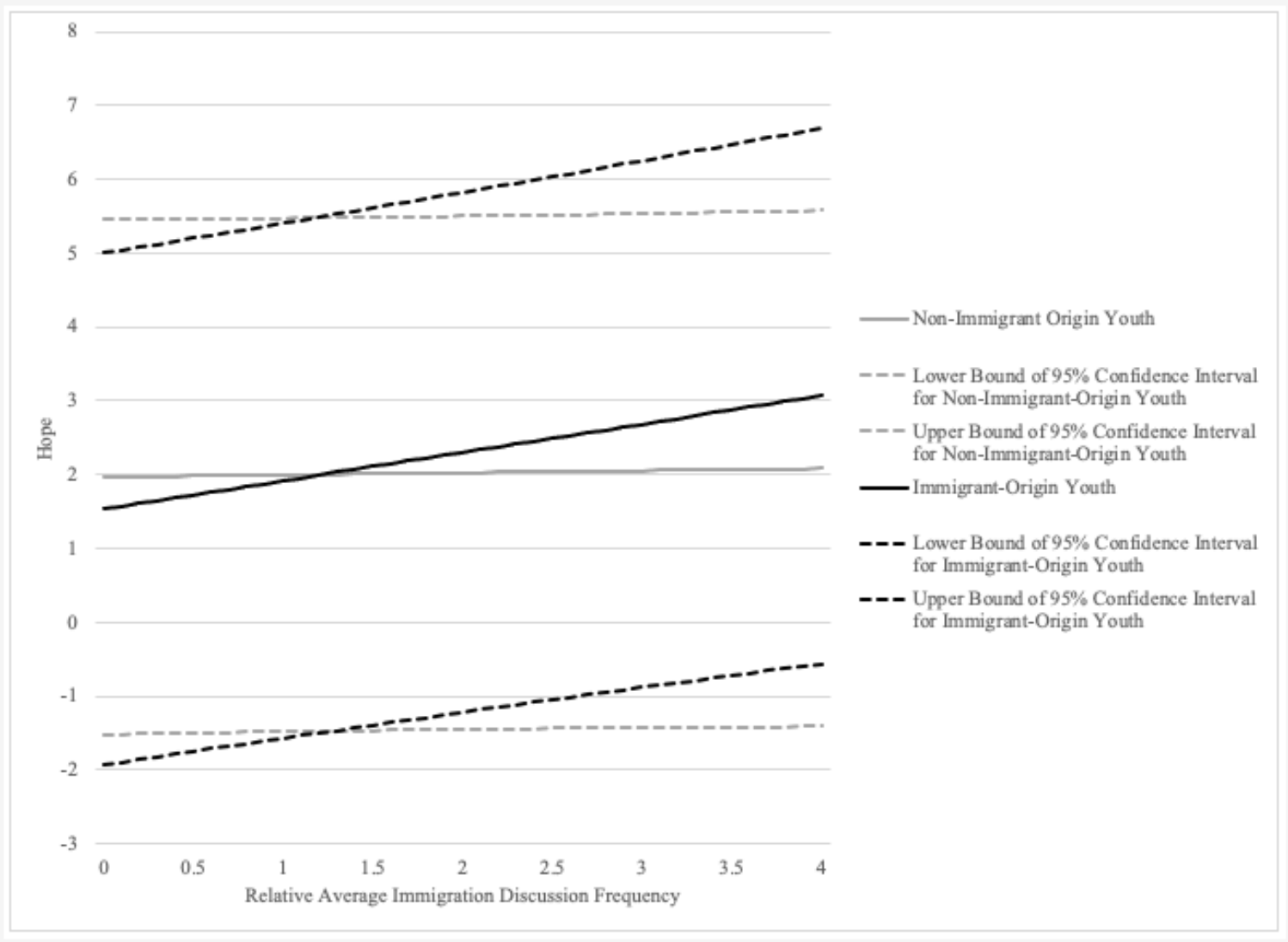


Figure 2

Interaction of Youth's Relative Immigration Discussion Frequency and Immigrant-Origin Status in Predicting Hope



Appendix A

Students' and Parents' Non-US Countries of Origin

Table A1

Students' Non-US Countries of Origin

Country	*n*
Albania	1
Brazil	1
Canada	2
Cape Verde	2
China	5
Colombia	1
Dominican Republic	4
Ecuador	1
England	1
Ireland	1
France	1
Germany	1
Norway	1
Israel	1
Mexico	1
Philippines	3
Portugal	1
Venezuela	1
South Africa	1

Table A2

Parents' Non-US Countries of Origin

Country	#
Algeria	1
Argentina	2
Australia	1
Brazil	6
Cambodia	5
Canada	4
Cape Verde	4
China	3
Colombia	3
Cuba	1
Dominican Republic	18
Dominica Republic of Congo	1
Ecuador	2
Egypt	2
El Salvador	2
England	4
France	1
Germany	6
Greece	2
Guatemala	4
Haiti	1
Honduras	2
India	6
Iraq	2
Ireland	2
Israel	3
Italy	2
Jamaica	4
Japan	3
Kenya	1
Korea	2
Laos	2
Macedonia	1
Mexico	5
Montenegro	1
Nepal	1
Nigeria	1
Northern Ireland	1
Philippines	4

Peru	1
Portugal	5
St. Vincent	1
Scotland	1
Sweden	1
Syria	2
Uganda	2
United Kingdom	2
Venezuela	2
Vietnam	1

Figure A1

Map of Students' Non-US Countries of Origin

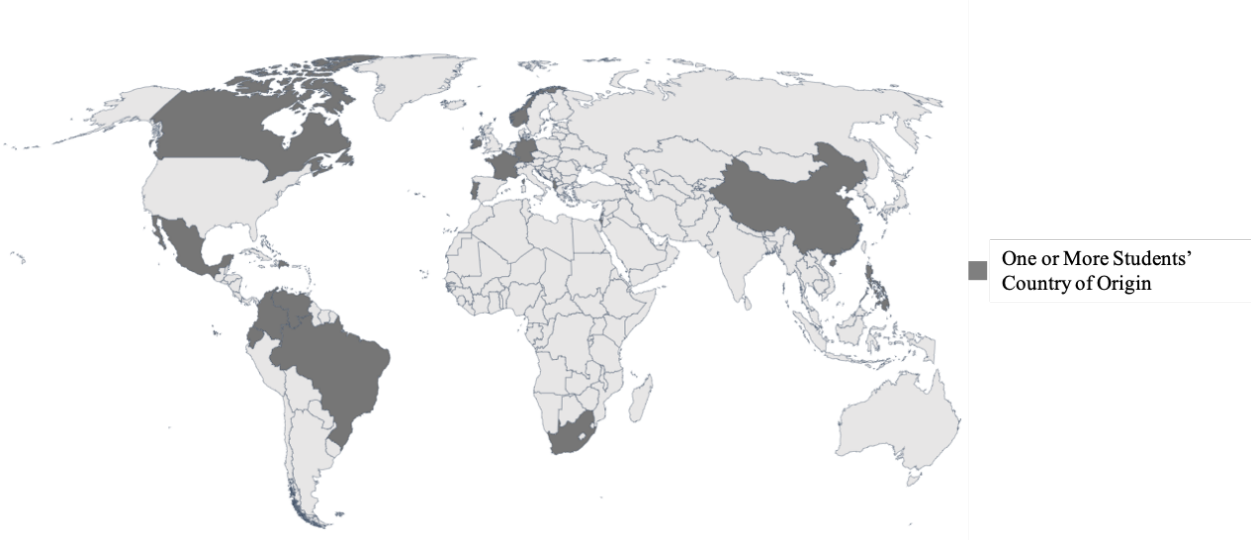


Figure A2

Map of Parents' Non-US Countries of Origin (Reported by Students)