

# Schools, Justice, and Immigrant Students: Segmented Assimilation, Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Perceptions of Fairness and Order

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## Topics

by [Anthony A. Peguero](#) & [Jennifer M. Bondy](#) — 2015

**Background/Context:** Students' perceptions of justice, fairness, and order within their schools are arguably key building blocks of socialization to participation within a democratic society. The ideals of justice, fairness, and order within their schools are particularly imperative because the educational system is founded on a belief of democracy and meritocracy. It is also known that students' perceptions of school justice can vary by race, ethnicity, and gender. What remains uncertain is how the fastest growing segment of the United States, students in immigrant families, perceive the school justice, fairness, and order within their school.

**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to explore if straight-line assimilation, segmented assimilation, and immigrant optimism hypotheses explain the relationships between schools, justice, and immigration, as well as the potential role of gender, race, and ethnicity in immigrant youth perceptions of justice, fairness, and order.

**Participants/Subjects:** This study utilizes the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS), a nationally representative sample of high school sophomores.

**Research Design:** This study's research design includes statistical analysis of secondary data.

**Findings/Results:** Findings do suggest that the students' perceptions of justice, fairness, and order are indeed moderated by immigrant generation, race, ethnicity, and gender.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** Educators and educational researchers who are seeking to better understand the schooling experiences of immigrant youth might benefit from questioning assimilation and Americanization as processes that inevitably promote educational progress. Given that immigrant youth are and have historically been marginalized within U.S. schools, it appears that socialization, Americanization, gender, and immigrant generational status are germane to creating democratic education for all students. Attentiveness to democratic school justice, order, and fairness is, therefore, imperative.

## INTRODUCTION

It is well known that schools are institutions of socialization. Dewey's (1916) notions about education cemented the link between education and democracy. According to Dewey, schools could serve not only to level the playing field, but also as an apprenticeship for civic life. Since Dewey's seminal (1916) work that clearly indicated that schools socialize and educate youth into appropriate social positions, roles and responsibilities for a democratic society, researchers have scrutinized the socialization process that occurs within this nation's schools. Consequently, researchers have argued and demonstrated that youth perceptions of justice, fairness, and order within their school are fundamental building blocks toward promoting pro-social behavior, psychological well-being, healthy interpersonal relationships, educational progress and success, as well as establish a process of increased adult civic engagement and democratic participation (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005; Kupchik, 2010; Rios, 2011). Although the ideals of justice, fairness, and order within their schools are particularly imperative because the educational system is founded on a belief of democracy and meritocracy, the history of educational racial, ethnic, and gender inequality must be acknowledged as barriers for healthy youth perceptions of justice within schools (Cammarota, 2004; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Lee, 2005, 2009; Portillos, González, & Peguero, 2012). Therefore, as the United States becomes increasingly immersed in a global competitive market, addressing an educational system fraught with inequalities linked to students' race, ethnicity, gender, and immigrant generation is imperative for the nation's future. In the context of this educational and research initiative, examining the perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order is essential to facilitate and promote educational success for the fastest-growing segment of U.S. school population—students in immigrant families.

Approximately 43 million foreign-born people reside in the U.S., which is about 13% of the total population; consequently, 25% of all students in U.S. schools have at least one immigrant parent and that percentage is expect to rise to 33% by 2040 (U.S. Census, 2010). Some have suggested that the global discourse that presents the U.S. as a nation based on perceptions of justice, democracy, fairness, and order draws immigrants to the U.S. (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006); on the other hand, there is a long and persistent history of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination within U.S. institutions (Cammarota, 2004; Chou & Feagin, 2008; Lareau, 2011; Tyson, 2011). Unfortunately, an immigrant report of unjust and discriminatory treatment due to their race, ethnicity, and gender is evident in the U.S. (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Lee, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Waters, 1999).

With this evident rapid population growth of students in immigrant families within the U.S. school system, the need to understand the evidentiary importance of schools as institutions of not only learning but also socialization increases. School is where students in immigrant families not only learn about U.S. values, beliefs, and behaviors but also about their social and cultural role in American society (Lee, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Because of the racial and ethnic distinctions of this current wave of immigrants to the U.S., inequalities linked to race, ethnicity, and gender are found to be key factors in the schooling of students in immigrant families (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Lee, 2005; López, 2003; Ogbu, 2003; Olsen, 2008; Rong & Preissle, 2008). It is within schools that students in immigrant families learn mainstream American culture and where they form beliefs about what society and persons outside of their families expect from them. But in the midst of this most recent immigration wave, how do students in immigrant families perceive justice, fairness, and order within their schools?

This research extends the literature on assimilation and education by exploring how the children of immigrants' perceptions about school justice, fairness, and order vary across immigrant generations. First, this study first presents a conceptual argument that bridges the connections between assimilation and youth perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order. Next, data are drawn from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS), a nationally representative stratified sample of tenth grade public school students, in order to employ a multilevel analysis about perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order for students in immigrant families. After the findings about the distinct patterns by race, ethnicity, and gender for the children of immigrants' perceptions school justice, fairness, and order are reported, a discussion about the relevance and implications for the children of immigrants' educational experiences and schooling will be presented.

## EDUCATION AND IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION

U.S. schools are one of the fundamental social institutions with which immigrants and their children first come into contact.

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Without a doubt, U.S. schools have undergone phenomenal transformations, with changes in educational philosophy, instruction, and curriculum as a result of the many historical immigration waves to this nation (Olsen, 2008; Rong & Preissle, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999); however, the scholastic approach, as well as the ideological role of the school, toward educating and socializing students in immigrant families has been historically debated. At the center of this debate between education and immigration are continuing fundamental questions about who is American, how to become one, at what pace, and how does the school facilitate the process of assimilation (Olsen, 2008; Rong & Preissle, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Subsequently, assimilation has been the historical educational model toward socializing students in immigrant families in U.S. society. Three theoretical frameworks have emerged from this debate about assimilation and education that will be at the center of this research analysis: straight-line assimilation, segmented assimilation, and the immigrant optimism hypothesis.

#### STRAIGHT-LINE ASSIMILATION

Conventional or straight-line assimilation theorists argue that the assimilation process involves immigrants assimilating to the dominant host culture and in turn the assimilation process facilitates upward mobility for immigrants (Alba & Nee, 2003; Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Kasinitz et al., 2009; Park & Burgess, 1969). Under this straight-line assimilation process, immigrants who assimilate to the dominant host culture will achieve employment, residential, and educational success. This straight-line assimilation perspective suggests that across generations, the children of immigrants from diverse backgrounds come to share a common culture and become indistinguishable from their native born peers. The children of immigrants are expected to resign their distinct cultural values and beliefs and relocate out of ethnic enclaves in order to earn improved economic and educational opportunities that will result in higher achievement and attainment across immigrant generations (Alba & Nee, 2003; Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Kasinitz et al., 2009; Park & Burgess, 1969).

#### SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION

Segmented assimilationists contend the process of straight-line assimilation no longer depicts the opportunities for and access to social mobility immigrants and their children currently have in the U.S. Segmented assimilation theorists describe a process of assimilation that results in various social, economic, and educational outcomes, which may reflect a path of upward or downward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Waters, 1999; Zhou, 1997). Segmented assimilationists propose that the assimilation process is segmented into several divergent forms of adaptation: assimilation into the White American middleclass; preservation of ethnic cultural traditions and close ethnic ties through social networks in the community also referred to as ethnic enclaves; and assimilation into the underclass also referred to as a second-generation decline. Within a segmented assimilation conceptual framework, assimilating and incorporating the dominant group's values and beliefs may place immigrants on distinct trajectories, one of which may be on a path of marginalization, poverty, and failure (Feliciano, 2009; Lee, 2005; López, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Waters, 1999).

#### IMMIGRANT OPTIMISM

The final conceptual framework to be presented in this study is the "immigrant optimism" hypothesis. Kao and Tienda (1995) emphasize progress of immigrant origin groups over successive generations. But, unlike straight-line assimilation or segmented assimilation approaches, this framework stresses the relative overachievements of the second-generation compared with the first and third-plus generations, particularly the third-plus majority population. This approach differs by denoting that educational achievement is associated with achievement or optimism of immigrant parents who communicate and emphasize high educational aspirations and expectations to their children (Feliciano 2005; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Landale, Oropesa, & Llanes, 1998). In other words, immigrants often bring with them a culture of optimism because the motivation for migrating to the U.S. is one of hope and opportunity. Immigrant parents relay an optimistic belief to their children by highlighting that life in the U.S. is significantly better than the life in their native country of origin. This model implies that the second-generation will have higher educational and occupational attainments than either the first-generation or third-plus generations.

#### THE POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER

It is evident that the race and ethnicity of the majority of contemporary immigrants set them apart from the previous waves of immigrants who were primarily from Europe. For the current wave of immigrants, many of them have never experienced prejudice associated with a particular skin color or racial type in their country of origin (Feliciano, 2009; Lee, 2005; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Ogbu, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Waters, 1999; Zhou, 1997). Immigrants and their children are confronted with the reality of racial and ethnic classification and stratification in U.S. schools (Feliciano, 2009; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Lareau, 2011; Olsen, 2008; Rong & Priessle, 2008; Waters, 1999). Questions of educational success for students in immigrant families are inextricably coupled with the complexities of race and ethnicity in the U.S. Indeed, experiences with segregation and discrimination may contribute to poor outcomes for particular racial and ethnic minority immigrant subgroups of color (Feliciano, 2009; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Lee, 2005; Ogbu, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Waters, 1999). Studies reveal that race and ethnicity segment experiences with school violence, relationships with teachers, and involvement with extracurricular activities for students in immigrant families (Lee, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Peguero, 2009, 2011a,b; Peguero & Bondy, 2011). Therefore, assimilation trajectories can be influenced by the children of immigrants' race and ethnicity.

Racial and ethnic minority students and their parents report that racism and discrimination are daily parts of school experiences (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Lareau, 2011; Oakes, 2005; Ogbu, 2003; Olsen, 2008; Tyson, 2011). Racial and ethnic minority youth are aware that they have less access to educational resources, receive less attention from teachers and administrators, are placed on lower educational tracks, steered toward low-paying employment, and more likely to be suspended and expelled from school (Lareau, 2011; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Kupchik, 2010; Oakes, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Rios, 2011; Tyson, 2011); however, this socialization process apparent within schools is undoubtedly part of racial and ethnic minority students' lives. Moreover, it is also evident that the role of gender, and the associated differential treatment between boys and girls within the school system, could confound students' perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order.

Research also demonstrates that gender matters in the assimilation process, particularly school experiences, for students in immigrant families. Because social, cultural, and educational processes are gendered, the expectations and norms imposed on female youth with immigrant parents in comparison to their male counterparts can contribute to their divergent assimilation paths (Lee, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Waters, 1999). Findings indicate that expectations of

dual goals of advancing research on the intersection of race, crime and justice and of promoting racial democracy within the study of these issues by supporting junior scholars from under-represented groups.

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educational failure and success, academic pursuits and attainments, area of educational interests such as math or science, "good" or "bad" school behavior, and experiences with school violence are all found to have distinct gender patterns for students in immigrant families (Cammarota, 2004; Feliciano, 2006; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Koo, Peguero, & Shekarkhar, 2012; Lee, 2005; López, 2003; Shekarkhar & Peguero, 2011; Williams, Alvarez, & Hauck, 2002).

Prior research has demonstrated that Black/African American and Latino American boys are often perceived and differentially treated as sources of "aggression" and "problem behavior" and warrant additional monitoring by teachers and administrators, which often result in increased formal sanctions (Cammarota, 2004; López, 2003; Morris, 2006). Thus, Black/African American and Latino American boys often report that their schools are unjust because they do receive increased monitoring, surveillance, and scrutiny for their behavior (López, 2003; Morris, 2006; Portillos, González, & Peguero, 2012; Rios, 2011). On the other hand, fueled by the "model minority" stereotype, Asian American girls are often perceived and treated as harmless, nonthreatening, studious, and well mannered by teachers and administrators (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Lee, 2005; Morris, 2006). In this regard, the roles of race, ethnicity, and gender may be significant in relation to how students in immigrant families perceive justice, fairness, and order within their schools. What remains uncertain, however, is how students in immigrant families perceive justice, fairness, and order within their schools.

## CURRENT STUDY

Students' perceptions of justice, fairness, and order within their schools are arguably key building blocks of socialization to participation within a democratic society (Hagan et al., 2005). The ideals of justice, fairness, and order within their schools are particularly imperative because the educational system is founded on a belief of democracy and meritocracy (Dewey, 1916; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Kupchik, 2010). There is a history of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination, inequality, and injustice within U.S. schools (Cammarota, 2004; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Lee, 2005). Moreover, the impact of students' perceptions of justice, fairness, and order within their schools, or lack thereof, are found to be associated with educational progress and success (Hagan et al., 2005; Kupchik, 2010; Rios, 2011). Although previous research indicates that adult immigrants who migrate to the United States have increased optimistic beliefs that the U.S. is just, fair, and orderly, immigrants arrive to face a reality of racial, ethnic, and gender inequality and biased treatment (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). Therefore, understanding the perception of justice, fairness, and order within an institution of socialization that prepares the U.S.'s fastest growing segment of the school population, students in immigrant families, to enter a democratic society is imperative. Thus, to summarize, straight-line assimilation, segmented assimilation, and immigrant optimism hypotheses are the three theoretical frameworks that will guide this research about schools, justice, and immigrant as well as the potential role of gender, race, and ethnicity. In turn, there are the research aims for this current study.

First, with a straight-line assimilation framework, immigrant students who assimilate will have improved progress and success. In regard to this study, first-generation immigrant students will have relatively poor perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order; however, perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order will improve across immigrant generations. Moreover, according to a straight-line assimilation hypothesis, gender, race, and ethnicity should not moderate the relationship between immigrant generation, school justice, fairness, and order.

Second, with a segmented assimilation approach, immigrant students may experience improved or a decline in perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order across immigrant generations. Additionally, according to a segmented assimilation approach, gender, race, and ethnicity should moderate the relationship between immigrant generation, school justice, fairness, and order.

Third, with an immigrant optimism hypothesis, second-generation immigrant students should have relatively increased perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order in comparison to their first-generation or third-plus generation counterparts. Moreover, according to an immigrant optimism hypothesis, gender, race, and ethnicity should also moderate the relationship between immigrant generation, school justice, fairness, and order.

## METHOD

### DATA

The data for the research are drawn from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS). ELS is a longitudinal survey administered by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004) of the U.S. Department of Education. ELS is "designed to monitor the transition of a national sample of young people as they progress from tenth grade through high school and on to postsecondary education and/or the world of work" (p. 7). These data included information about the experiences and backgrounds of students, parents, and teachers, and descriptions of the schools the respondent students attended. ELS also provides "mappings" to additional external datasets such as the Common Core of Data (CCD). The CCD is the Department of Education's primary database on public elementary and secondary education in the U.S. The CCD provides much of school-level data.

As with most, if not all samples, the analytical sample is smaller than the original sample. Due to the significant amount of research missing data from private schools in ELS, this study focused on 12,030 public school students in the base year sample. As in previous research that investigated the experiences of the children of immigrants within U.S. public schools (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Peguero, 2009, 2011a,b; Peguero & Bondy, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008), and because the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender and generation is central for a segmented assimilation analysis, this study focused on Black/African American, Latina/o American, Asian American, and White American public school students. Students who reported being Native American, multiple races and ethnicities, and/or no race and ethnicity were excluded from the analysis. Finally, data from students who only participated in the abbreviated survey (which did not include parents' characteristics) were excluded from the sample because parents' birthplace is essential information to measure the student's generational status. Thus, this research uses a subsample from the ELS data consisting of 9,870 first, second, and third-plus generation public school students.

### PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL JUSTICE, FAIRNESS, AND ORDER

Similar to previous studies (Hagan et al., 2005; Kupchik & Ellis, 2008), perceptions of the school justice, fairness, and order are

based on eight items (0=Strongly Disagree, 1=Disagree, 2=Agree, and 3=Strongly Agree) that the student self-reported: (1) if a school rule is broken, students know what kind of punishment will follow; (2) school rules are strictly enforced; (3) the punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are; (4) the school rules are fair; (5) other students often disrupt class; (6) disruptions by other students get in the way of my learning; (7) fights often occur between different racial/ethnic groups; and, (8) I don't feel safe at this school. Descriptive statistics for dependent variable(s), as well as key explanatory measures, are reported in Table 1.

#### GENERATIONAL STATUS, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER

As in prior research (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Peguero, 2009, 2011a,b; Peguero & Bondy, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008), generational status is measured as a set of dummy variables indicating whether the student is a first, second, or third-plus generation. Immigration and birthplace information for the students are reported on the parents' survey. First-generation students are children who are born outside the U.S.; second-generation students are born in the U.S. and have at least one parent born outside the U.S.; and, third-plus generation students who are born in the U.S., as well as both of their parents.

The schools' proportion of students in immigrant families is measured by the percentage of students who are non-English proficient or have limited English proficiency in the school. It is noted that there are limitations with this measurement to assess the proportion of immigrants within a school. Researchers have discovered that many U.S. born children of immigrants (i.e., second-generation students) are placed into non-English proficient or have limited English proficiency (Olsen, 2008; Rong & Preissle, 2008). Although this is a limitation, researchers have also indicated the non-English proficient or have limited English proficiency students are predominately first- or second-generation students (Olsen, 2008; Rong & Preissle, 2008).

In ELS survey design, students self-report their race and ethnicity. Black/African American, Latina/o American, and Asian American students are over-sampled to obtain a sufficient representation for statistical analyses of these groups. All of the analyses in this study incorporated sample weights that were calculated by NCES (2004) to compensate for the survey design and non-response bias, and to present findings that are nationally representative (see NCES, 2004 for further detail).

As noted, the CCD provides the information for the proportion of Latino/a American, Asian American, Black/African American, and White American within a school separately. This is vital because a predominate part of the Black/African and White American student population are third-plus generation immigrant youth while a significant number of the Latino/a American and Asian American student population are first and second-generation immigrant youth.

Student gender is coded male or female based on the student's self-report of his or her biological sex.

#### STUDENT, FAMILY, AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Previous studies have established which student (i.e., achievement, academic and sports involvement, misbehavior, and victimization), family (i.e., socioeconomic status, structure, and parental involvement), and school characteristics (i.e., poverty, size, security, social and physical disorder, and locale) are associated with perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order as well as the school experiences of students in immigrant families (Hagan et al., 2005; Koo et al., 2012; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Kuphick, 2010; Olsen, 2008; Peguero, 2009, 2011a,b; Peguero & Bondy, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Thus, these control measures are included in this study.

Achievement is measured by using the standardized measure developed by RTI and NCES. ELS included a reading and math composite score based on standardized tests developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The composite test score is the average of the math and reading standardized scores, re-standardized to a national mean of 50.0 and standard deviation of 10. Academic involvement ( $\alpha = .91$ ) is a count index that was constructed by counting the number of the affirmative responses to five school-based academic related activities students could participate in such as (1) band, orchestra, chorus, or choir, (2) school play or musical, (3) student government, (4) academic (or achievement) related honor society, and (5) school yearbook, newspaper, or literary magazine. Sports involvement ( $\alpha = .93$ ) is a count index that summed the number of interscholastic sports the student was involved in; the sports included in this count index are (1) baseball, (2) softball, (3) basketball, (4) football, (5) soccer, (6) cheerleading/drill team, (7) other team sport, and (8) individual sport. Misbehavior ( $\alpha = .86$ ) is a constructed scale that counts the number of misbehaving acts the student self-reported while in school (0 = never, 1 = once or twice, 2 = more than twice): (1) cutting or skipping classes; (2) getting into a physical fight at school; and (3) getting into trouble for not following school rules. Victimization ( $\alpha = .75$ ) is a count variable (0 = never, 1 = once or twice, and 2 = more than twice) that is based on four items of within school victimization: (1) someone threatened to hurt me at school; (2) someone bullied me or picked on me; (3) someone hit me; and, (4) someone used strong-arm or forceful methods to get money or things from me.

The NCES preconstructed measure of family socioeconomic status is a standardized (z-score) variable based on five equally weighted, standardized components: father's/guardian's education; mother's/guardian's education; family income; father's/guardian's occupational prestige; and mother's/guardian's occupational prestige (see NCES, 2004 for further detail about preconstructed variables). Family structure is a dichotomous variable indicating if the student lives in a single-parent household or a two-parent household; single-parent households serve as the reference group. Parental involvement ( $\alpha = .91$ ) is an index based on eight items that measured parents' involvement in their children's school experience (each coded 0 = not involved or 1 = involved): (1) checking homework, (2) helping with homework, (3) discussing school courses, (4) discussing school activities, (5) discussing things studied in class, (6) discussing grades, (7) discussing transferring, and (8) discussing college attendance.

Poverty measures the proportion of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch within each school. Size is measured as the total student enrollment of the school. School administrators were asked whether or not the school had the following eleven security measures ( $\alpha = .85$ ) implemented in their schools (e.g., require students to pass through metal detectors each day, random sweeps for contraband, security cameras to monitor the school, etc.). School locale indicates whether the school is located in an urban or nonurban (reference category) locale. School administrators answered 19 questions about school social disorder ( $\alpha = .83$ ) that indicate whether or not each of the following is a problem at their school: (1) tardiness, (2) absenteeism,

(3) class cutting, (4) physical conflicts, (5) robbery or theft, (6) vandalism, (7) use of alcohol, (8) use of illegal drugs, (9) students under the influence of drugs/alcohol while at school; (10) the sale of drugs on campus, (11) possession of weapons, (12) racial-ethnic tensions, (13) student bullying, (14) gang activities, (15) physical abuse of teachers, (16) verbal abuse of teachers, (17) student acts of disrespect for teachers, (18) gang activities and (19) undesirable cult or extremist group activities. Based on 15 measures (e.g., graffiti on the walls/doors/ceilings, classroom broken lights, graffiti on desks, etc.), independent NCES researchers recorded the prevalence of the school's physical disorder ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

## ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Since the ELS is designed as a cluster sample in which schools are sampled with unequal probability and then students are sampled or "nested" within these selected schools, the subsample of ELS violates the assumption of independent observations. The nested structure of ELS (i.e., students within schools) makes multilevel modeling an appropriate analytic tool (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2008). Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) is utilized to analyze the multilevel relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and students' perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order while controlling for student, family, and school characteristics.

The analyses proceed in several steps. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the variables in this study. In order to understand that intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and generational status in relationship to perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order, the sample will be split by gender and interactions between race, ethnicity, and generation are incorporated into the analysis. Tables 2 and 3 present the findings associated with perceptions of school justice and fairness (i.e., students know the punishment for broken school rules, school rules are strictly enforced, school punishment is the same no matter who you are, and school rules are fair). Tables 4 and 5 present the findings associated with perceptions of school order (i.e., other students often disrupt class, disruptions get in way of learning, racial and ethnic groups often fight, and students do not feel safe at school). The reference group will be White American female and male public school students.

## RESULTS

### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 provides descriptive information about the variables in this study. As for each aspect of school justice and fairness, 59.3% of students agreed that students know the punishment for breaking the school rules, 58.1% of students agreed that the school rules are strictly enforced, 49.1% of students agreed that the punishment is the same no matter who you are, and 48.5% of students agreed that the school rules are fair. As for each aspect of school order, 52.2% of students disagreed that other students often disrupt class, 40.5% of students agreed that disruptions get in way of learning, 45.7% students agreed that racial and ethnic groups often fight, and 48.7% of students disagreed that they do not feel safe at school. As for generational status, 12% are first generation, 16% are second generation, and 73% are third-plus generation in this public school student sample.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables**

Variable	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
<b>Student Level</b>				
Perception of school justice, fairness, and order				
Students know punishment for broken rules	0 – 3	1.77	.68	9,870
School rules are strictly enforced	0 – 3	1.75	.68	9,870
School punishment same no matter who you are	0 – 3	1.69	.86	9,870
School rules are fair	0 – 3	1.52	.75	9,870
Other students often disrupt class	0 – 3	1.06	.69	9,870
Disruptions get in way of learning	0 – 3	1.50	.80	9,870
Racial and ethnic groups often fight	0 – 3	1.90	.82	9,870
Does not feel safe at school	0 – 3	1.19	.71	9,870
Immigrant generational status				
First generation	0 – 1	.12	.32	1,170
Second generation	0 – 1	.16	.36	1,540
Third-plus generation	0 – 1	.73	.45	7,160
Race and ethnicity				
Black/African American	0 – 1	.15	.36	1,490
Latina/o American	0 – 1	.16	.37	1,630
Asian American	0 – 1	.11	.32	1,130

White American	0 – 1	.57	.50	5,620
Student characteristics				
Female	0 – 1	.51	.50	5,040
Educational achievement	21.50 – 79.90	49.96	9.94	9,870
Academic involvement	0 – 5	.55	.85	9,870
Sports involvement	0 – 8	.93	1.29	9,870
Misbehavior	0 – 6	.94	1.51	9,870
Victimization	0 – 8	.80	1.33	9,870
Family Characteristics				
Family socioeconomic status	-2.10 – 1.90	-.07	.73	9,870
Two parent/guardian family structure	0 – 1	.76	.43	7,460
Parental involvement	0 – 8	5.11	2.75	9,870
School Characteristics				
% Students in immigrant families	0 – 100	6.31	8.47	580
% Latina/o American	0 – 100	14.05	.22	580
% Asian American	0 – 80	5.12	.11	580
% Black/African American	0 – 100	18.49	.25	580
% White American	0 – 100	36.89	31.53	580
Poverty	0 – 100	24.93	18.63	580
Size	52 – 4,631	1,411	839.90	580
Security	0 – 11	3.56	2.34	580
Urban	0 – 1	.28	.45	160
Social disorder	0 – 19	12.84	1.68	580
Physical disorder	0 – 15	1.22	1.70	580

#### PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS

Tables 2 and 3 show the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and perceptions of school justice and fairness as well as other pertinent factors. Results suggest that race, ethnicity, gender, and immigrant generation do matter for students' perception of school justice and fairness.

**Table 2. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model Effects and Standard Errors for Perceptions of School Justice and Fairness**

	Students Know Punishment for Broken School Rules				School Rules are Strictly Enforced			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Within Schools								
Immigrant generational status, race, and ethnicity								
First-generation								
*Latina/o American	.110 †	.072	.047	.086	.133 *	.068	-.080	.087
*Asian American	.143 *	.073	.150 *	.080	.002	.070	.041	.081
*Black/African American	.166	.133	.187 †	.132	.243	.198	.259 *	.125



Second generation										
*Latina/o American	.095	†	.065	.067	.069	.183	**	.061	.027	.069
*Asian American	-.051		.072	.142	* .079	.037		.073	.020	.080
*Black/African American	.125		.121	.063	.132	.158		.157	.111	.141
Third-plus generation										
*Latina/o American	-.065		.059	-.014	.074	.029		.060	.004	.077
*Asian American	.206		.209	-.074	.152	-.178		.223	-.010	.137
*Black/African American	.155	*	.048	.112	* .057	.073	†	.051	.097	* .056
Student Characteristics										
Educational achievement	-.002	†	.001	-.002	.001	.001		.001	-.001	* .001
Academic involvement	-.006		.009	.013	.013	.002		.009	.003	.012
Sports involvement	.031	*	.006	.033	*** .006	.038	***	.006	.034	*** .006
Misbehavior	.044	***	.008	.018	** .006	.044		.008	.028	*** .007
Victimization	-.038	**	.012	-.014	† .010	-.035	**	.012	-.012	.011
Family Characteristics										
Socioeconomic status	-.040	*	.021	-.006	.024	-.027	†	.020	-.041	* .023
Structure	.020		.028	-.020	.034	.017	***	.030	-.006	.036
Involvement	-.004	†	.005	.003	.005	-.013	**	.005	.006	.005
Between Schools										
% Students in Immigrant Families	.002		.002	-.001	.001	-.001		.002	-.001	.002
% Latina/o American	.045		.101	.179	† .109	-.104		.112	.019	.119
% Asian American	-.331	*	.172	-.216	.208	-.210		.172	.004	.220
% Black/African American	.150	*	.079	.039	.114	-.012		.080	-.074	.111
Poverty	.001		.001	.001	.001	.001		.001	.001	.001
Size	.001		.001	-.001	** .001	.001	**	.001	-.001	.001
Security	.015	**	.005	.014	* .007	.019	**	.006	.028	*** .007
Urban locale	-.035		.034	-.025	.041	-.034		.036	.007	.041
Social disorder	-.004	†	.002	-.001	.002	-.008	**	.003	.001	.002
Physical disorder	-.001		.009	-.009	.012	-.013	†	.008	-.022	* .012
Intercept	1.732	***	.012	1.621	*** .015	1.641	***	.014	1.627	*** .015
Random effects										
	Variance		$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	
Between schools	.026	***	845.445	.038	*** 892.651	.039	*** 987.479	.046	*** 956.845	
Within schools	.503			.586		.513		.575		

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; †  $p \leq .1$

**Table 3. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model Effects and Standard Errors for Perceptions of School Justice and Fairness**

	School Punishment Same No Matter Who You Are				School Rules are Fair				
	Female		Male		Female		Male		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	
<b>Within Schools</b>									
Immigrant generational status, race, and ethnicity									
First-generation									
*Latina/o American	.163 *	.085	.168 *	.080	.193 *	.086	.141 *	.082	
*Asian American	.106 *	.078	.215 **	.086	.181 **	.072	.131 †	.085	
*Black/African American	.397 *	.187	.176	.156	.022	.190	.121	.163	
Second generation									
*Latina/o American	.145 *	.079	.015	.077	.081 †	.069	-.004	.067	
*Asian American	-.036	.086	.117	.101	.011	.066	.046	.082	
*Black/African American	-.117	.172	-.032	.157	.332 *	.177	.116	.116	
Third-plus generation									
*Latina/o American	-.086	.075	.019	.079	.001	.072	-.067	.073	
*Asian American	.538 **	.187	.013	.201	.108	.141	-.086	.137	
*Black/African American	.001	.055	-.102 †	.069	-.129 *	.056	-.082 †	.055	
Student Characteristics									
Educational achievement	-.003 *	.002	.002	.001	.006 ***	.001	.008 ***	.001	
Academic involvement	-.001	.012	.021 †	.014	.019 *	.010	.029 **	.012	
Sports involvement	.027 ***	.008	.032 ***	.007	.031 ***	.007	.052 ***	.006	
Misbehavior	-.010	.010	-.022 **	.007	-.010	.008	-.025 ***	.005	
Victimization	-.058 ***	.013	-.024 *	.012	-.025 *	.013	-.014 †	.009	
Family Characteristics									
Socioeconomic status	-.007	.023	-.018	.026	.027	.021	-.005	.023	
Structure	.012	.037	-.001	.040	-.016	.032	.037	.033	
Involvement	-.006	.006	.002	.006	-.007 †	.005	.003	.005	
<b>Between Schools</b>									



% Students in Immigrant Families	.002	.002	-.001	.002	.003	**	.002	.001	†	.002		
% Latina/o American	.210	†	.135	.273	*	.139	-.005	.110	-.016	.117		
% Asian American	.394	*	.191	.680	**	.211	-.334	*	.166	.212	.232	
% Black/African American	.102		.116	-.026		.131	-.268	**	.099	-.378	**	.115
Poverty	-.001		.001	-.001		.001	-.002	*	.001	-.001		.001
Size	.001	*	.001	.001		.001	-.001		.001	-.001		.001
Security	-.007		.007	-.004		.008	-.010		.006	-.002		.007
Urban locale	-.009		.042	-.020		.047	.015		.041	-.002		.044
Social disorder	-.005	†	.003	-.002		.003	-.002		.003	-.005	*	.003
Physical disorder	.008		.009	-.006		.013	.012		.009	.001		.011
Intercept	1.612	***	.017	1.560	***	.017	1.483	***	.015	1.387	***	.016
Random effects	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$		
Between schools	.060	***	996.287	.051	***	880.890	.058	***	1109.184	.055	***	983.449
Within schools	.743			.813			.556			.596		

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; †  $p \leq .1$

Table 2 shows the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and students' knowing the punishment for broken school rules as well as other pertinent factors. For girls, first-generation Latina American and Asian American, second-generation Latina American, and third-plus generation Black/African American female students have increased perceptions of students knowing the punishment for breaking the school rules than their White American female counterparts. For boys, first-generation Asian American and Black/African American, second-generation Asian American, and third-plus generation Black/African American male students have increased perceptions of students knowing the punishment for breaking the school rules than their White American male counterparts.

Table 2 presents the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and school rules are strictly enforced. For girls, first- and second-generation Latina American and third-plus generation Black/African American female students have increased beliefs that the school rules are strictly enforced in comparison to White American females. For boys, first and third-plus generation Black/African American males have relatively higher beliefs of the school rules being strictly enforced than White American males.

Table 3 displays the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and school punishment being the same no matter who you are. For girls, first-generation Latina American, Asian American, and Black/African American, second-generation Latina American, and third-plus generation Asian American females have stronger perceptions of school punishment being the same no matter who you are than White American female. For boys, first-generation Latino American and Asian American male students have increased perceptions of school punishment being the same no matter who you are than their White American male counterparts. On the other hand, third-plus generation Black/African American males are less likely to believe that school punishment being the same no matter who you are than White American males.

Table 3 presents the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and school rules are fair. For girls, first-generation Latina American and Asian American as well as second-generation Latina American and Black/African American females have relatively stronger perceptions that the school rules are fair in comparison to White American females. For third-plus generation Black/African American females, however, have diminished beliefs that the school rules are fair than White American females. For boys, first-generation Latino American, Asian American, and Black/African American males have increased perceptions of the school rules as fair than White American males. For third-plus generation Black/African American males, however, have diminished beliefs that the school rules are fair. At the school level, increasing proportions of students who are in immigrant families within a school, female and male students have increased beliefs that the school rules are fair.

#### PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL ORDER

Tables 4 and 5 present the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and perceptions of school order as well as other pertinent factors. Results suggest that race, ethnicity, gender, and immigrant generation do matter for students' perception of school order.

Table 4 shows the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and students' perceptions about other students often disrupting class as well as other pertinent factors. For girls, first-generation Latina American and Asian American and second-generation Asian American female students have increased belief that other

students often disrupt class than their White American female counterparts. For boys, first-generation Black/African American male students have increased perceptions that other students often disrupt class than their White American male counterparts; however, second-generation Black/African American male students have decreased perception that other students disrupt class.

**Table 4. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model Effects and Standard Errors for Perceptions of School Order**

	Other Students Often Disrupt Class				Disruptions Get in Way of Learning				
	Female		Male		Female		Male		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	
Within Schools									
Immigrant generational status, race, and ethnicity									
First-generation									
*Latina/o American	.148 *	.070	-.006	.068	-.060	.070	-.038 †	.074	
*Asian American	.110 †	.067	.027	.073	-.050	.066	-.133 †	.081	
*Black/African American	-.158	.165	.224 †	.153	-.177	.208	-.001	.172	
Second generation									
*Latina/o American	-.049	.056	.062	.054	-.076	.065	-.003	.064	
*Asian American	.101 †	.066	.058	.074	-.091	.082	-.067	.071	
*Black/African American	.032	.118	-.200 *	.098	.146	.117	-.313 *	.146	
Third-plus generation									
*Latina/o American	.009	.056	.009	.070	-.049	.071	.111	.082	
*Asian American	.098	.252	.067	.115	.290 †	.204	-.306 *	.153	
*Black/African American	-.022	.044	-.020	.047	-.004	.057	.035	.057	
Student Characteristics									
Educational achievement	.004 **	.001	.002	.001	.008 ***	.001	.009 ***	.001	
Academic involvement	.009	.009	.007	.012	-.011	.010	-.025 *	.013	
Sports involvement	.003	.006	.006	.005	-.013 *	.007	-.003	.006	
Misbehavior	-.001	.006	-.001	.005	.020 **	.007	.023 ***	.006	
Victimization	-.065 ***	.011	-.065 ***	.009	-.097 ***	.011	-.084 ***	.010	
Family Characteristics									
Socioeconomic status	.022	.019	.058 **	.020	.026	.023	.054 **	.022	
Structure	.007	.026	-.011	.028	.001	.034	-.056 †	.034	
Involvement	-.002	.004	.004	.004	-.001	.005	.003	.005	
Between Schools									

% Students in Immigrant Families	.001	.001	-.001	.001	-.002	.002	-.002	.001
% Latina/o American	.069	.082	-.092	.085	.013	.100	-.282 **	.100
% Asian American	.214 †	.134	.175	.138	-.329 **	.128	-.257 *	.136
% Black/African American	-.086	.079	-.147 *	.069	-.251 **	.088	-.399 ***	.085
Poverty	-.002 *	.001	-.001	.001	-.003 **	.001	-.001	.001
Size	-.001 *	.001	-.001	.001	.001	.001	-.001	.001
Security	-.001	.005	-.005 †	.005	-.002	.006	-.006 †	.006
Urban locale	.0514 *	.029	.024	.032	.010	.035	.052	.039
Social disorder	-.004 *	.002	-.001	.002	-.004 *	.002	-.002	.003
Physical disorder	-.005	.008	.008	.008	.013 †	.008	.001	.010
Intercept	1.067 ***	.011	1.048 ***	.012	1.466 ***	.013	1.548 ***	.014
Random Effects	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$
Between Schools	.021 ***	830.310	.020 ***	759.515	.029 ***	804.678	.027 ***	793.006
Within Schools	.432		.440		.567		.586	

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; †  $p \leq .1$

Table 4 presents the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and disruptions getting in the way of learning. For girls, third-plus generation Asian American female students have increased beliefs that disruptions get in the way of learning in comparison to White American females. For boys, first-generation Latino American and Asian American, second-generation Black/African American, and third-plus generation Asian American males have relatively lower beliefs that disruptions get in the way of learning than White American males.

Table 5 displays the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and racial and ethnic groups often fight. For girls, first, second, and third-plus generation Black/African American females have stronger perceptions that racial and ethnic groups often fight than White American female. On the other hand, third-plus generation Asian American girls are less likely to believe that racial and ethnic groups often fight. For boys, first and third-plus generation Black/African American male students have increased perceptions of racial and ethnic groups often fighting than their White American male counterparts. On the other hand, first-generation Asian Americans are less likely to believe that racial and ethnic groups often fight. At the school level, increasing proportions of students who are in immigrant families within a school, female and male students have decreased beliefs that racial and ethnic groups often fight.

**Table 5. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model Effects and Standard Errors for Perceptions of School Order**

	Racial and Ethnic Groups Often Fight				Does Not Feel Safe at School			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Within Schools								
Immigrant generational status, race, and ethnicity								
First-generation								
*Latina/o American	.029	.065	-.033	.071	-.003	.059	-.167 *	.072
*Asian American	.059	.071	-.176 **	.070	-.057	.048	-.103 †	.070
*Black/African American	.392 **	.131	.254 *	.123	.004	.139	.128	.119

Second generation									
*Latina/o American	.039	.069	-.064	.059	.071	.064	-.018	.056	
*Asian American	.053	.082	-.073	.079	-.092 †	.062	-.114 *	.059	
*Black/African American	.266 *	.136	-.013	.119	.239 *	.123	-.109	.100	
Third-plus generation									
*Latina/o American	-.048	.064	-.001	.070	-.012	.062	.043	.065	
*Asian American	-.169 †	.108	.098	.142	-.032	.185	-.140	.104	
*Black/African American	.286 ***	.052	.140 **	.057	.042	.047	.072 †	.047	
Student Characteristics									
Educational achievement	.013 ***	.001	.009 ***	.001	.011 ***	.001	.011 ***	.001	
Academic involvement	-.004	.009	.005	.011	-.018 *	.010	-.003	.012	
Sports involvement	.002	.006	-.003	.006	.016 **	.006	.014 **	.006	
Misbehavior	-.014 *	.006	-.014 **	.005	.010 †	.006	.001	.006	
Victimization	-.071 ***	.012	-.058 ***	.009	-.102	.011	-.102 ***	.010	
Family Characteristics									
Socioeconomic status	-.017	.019	.011	.021	.005	.018	.002	.021	
Structure	.036	.030	-.040	.030	.023	.026	-.039	.030	
Involvement	-.011 *	.005	.001	.004	.005	.005	-.006	.004	
Between Schools									
% Students in Immigrant Families	-.009 **	.003	-.009 **	.003	-.006 ***	.001	-.004 *	.001	
% Latina/o American	.102	.139	-.147	.149	.082	.086	-.175 *	.093	
% Asian American	-.225	.178	-.383 *	.189	-.104	.146	-.119	.161	
% Black/African American	.034	.112	-.070	.106	-.111	.083	-.321 ***	.075	
Poverty	-.002 **	.001	-.001	.001	-.003 **	.001	-.001	.001	
Size	-.001 ***	.001	-.001 ***	.001	-.001	.001	.001	.001	
Security	-.001	.007	-.005	.008	-.001	.005	-.008	.005	
Urban locale	.048	.048	.025	.050	.032	.033	-.002	.034	
Social disorder	-.004	.002	-.007 *	.003	-.006 **	.002	-.009 ***	.002	
Physical disorder	-.007	.012	.018 †	.011	-.023 **	.008	-.001	.008	
Intercept	1.906 ***	.017	1.899 ***	.017	2.188	.012	2.186 ***	.013	

Random Effects	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$	Variance	$\chi^2$
Between Schools	.102 ***	1699.603	.104 ***	1555.348	.035	1026.150	.030 ***	905.233
Within Schools	.447		.505		.385		.452	

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; †  $p \leq .1$

Table 5 presents the HLM results that examine the relationships between generational status, race, ethnicity, gender, and not feeling safe at school. For girls, second-generation Black/African American females have stronger beliefs that their school is unsafe in comparison to White American females; however, second-generation Asian American females do not think that their schools are unsafe. For boys, first-generation Latino American and Asian American and second-generation Asian American males do not think that their schools are unsafe. Third-plus generation Black/African Americans believe that their schools are unsafe. At the school level, increasing proportions of students who are in immigrant families within a school, female and male students have decreased beliefs that their schools are unsafe.

#### STUDENT, FAMILY, AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

HLM results demonstrate a number of student characteristics associated with perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order. In general, there are significant correlations between increased educational achievement and increased perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order for both boys and girls. It also appears that there is a positive correlation between sports involvement and increased perceptions of school justice and fairness for both for both boys and girls; however, this pattern is not as significant with perceptions of school order. It also appears that being victimized at school has negative effects for perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order for both boys and girls.

Results indicate family characteristics are significantly associated with perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order. As family socioeconomic status increases, perceptions of the school rules as strictly enforced decrease for female and male students. As parental involvement increases, perceptions of students knowing punishment for broken school rules, school rules are strictly enforced, and racial and ethnic groups often fighting lower for female students.

Findings suggest that school characteristics are linked with perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order. As school security increases, perceptions of students knowing punishment for broken school rules—and that the school rules are strictly enforced—increases for both female and males students. As school security increases, perceptions of students disrupting class and disruptions get in the way of learning decrease only for male students. As school poverty increases, perceptions of other students disrupting class and racial and ethnic groups often fighting decrease for female students.

#### SCHOOLS, JUSTICE, AND IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

To review and summarize, there are three assimilation hypotheses that guided this analyses about schools, justice, and immigrant students: straight-line assimilation, segmented assimilation, and the immigrant optimism hypothesis. First, there seems to be some support for a straight-line assimilation hypothesis. For example, the relationship between first and second-generation perceptions about students knowing the punishment for breaking the school rules and that the school rules are strictly enforced are not significant for Black/African American female students; however, third-plus generation Black/African American females have stronger beliefs that students know the punishment for breaking the school rules and the school rules are strictly enforced. First-generation Latina American female students believe that other students often disrupt class; however, that belief is no longer evident by second-generation. For first-generation Black/African American males, there is also belief that other students often disrupt class. By, second-generation, Black/African American males are less likely to perceive that other students often disrupt class.

Second, there are also some findings that suggest a second-generation decline in relationship to the children of immigrants' perceptions about school justice, fairness, and order. For instance, first-generation Asian American males have increased perceptions about school punishment being the same no matter who you are but that strong belief about school punishment disappears by second-generation. Likewise, first-generation Latino American and Asian American males have strong beliefs that the school rules are fair but that belief disappears by second-generation.

Third, there is some support for the immigrant optimism hypothesis by finding that first and second-generation immigrants have improved educational experiences but those educational strengths disappear by third-plus generation. For example, first and second-generation Latina American female students have greater perceptions of the school rules are strictly enforced, school punishment being the same no matter who you are, and the school rules as fair; however, those relationship are no longer evident by third generation. Also, first and second-generation Asian American males have increased perceptions that students know the punishment for breaking the school rules; but, that relationship is no longer significant by third generation.

#### DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to explore how the children of immigrants' perceptions about school justice, fairness, and order across immigrant generations. Straight-line assimilation, segmented assimilation, and immigrant optimism hypotheses were utilized to guide this research analyses. Thus, the findings revealed warrant highlighting and further discussion how these aforementioned theoretical assimilation frameworks further our understanding about schools, justice, and immigrant students.

## STRAIGHT-LINE ASSIMILATION

There seems to be some support for a straight-line assimilation hypothesis. Within a straight-line assimilation paradigm (Alba & Nee, 2003; Kasinitz et al., 2009), it is suggested that the children of immigrants from diverse backgrounds come to share a common culture and become indistinguishable from their native born peers. There are limited results that could align with a straight-line assimilation perspective because second-generation Latina American females and second-generation Black/African American males have decreased perceptions that other students often disrupt class. Moreover, third-plus generation Black/African American females have increased beliefs that students know the punishments for breaking the rules and that schools rules are strictly enforced. Taken together, these results may suggest that assimilation processes enable succeeding generations to become more integrated into mainstream American beliefs, show less distinctiveness in racial and ethnic beliefs, and be upwardly mobile in education. However, such an understanding, particularly in relation to second-generation youth, becomes questionable within a dual frame of reference.

Matute-Bianchi (1986) and Suárez-Orozco (1989) find that recently arrived first-generation immigrants tend to develop a dual frame of reference where they compare and evaluate their educational experiences in the U.S. with their educational experiences their country of origin. A dual frame of reference tends to lead first-generation immigrants to positively assess their experiences in the U.S. even when faced with discrimination and marginalization (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Ogbu, 2003; Suárez-Orozco, 1989). However, the inverse may be true regarding first-generation immigrant youth perceptions of disruptive behavior in school. Research demonstrates the first-generation immigrant youth are less likely to misbehave in their community and school in comparison to their White American counterparts (Peguero, 2011b; Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). It may be that recently arrived first-generation youth have increased perceptions of disruptive behavior in school due their dual frame of reference with their home country and its schooling context, as well as their decreased likelihood of misbehaving. Second and later generation students who have been in the U.S. longer, who do not have a dual frame of reference in relation to their schooling experiences, and who have attended school longer with White American youth, may have decreased perceptions of disruptive behavior.

## SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION

This study of immigrant youths' perceptions of school justice, order, and fairness also supports a segmented assimilation framework by finding that generational status, race and ethnicity, and gender matter in assimilation processes as well as reflect distinctive educational outcomes. That is, second-generation Latina/o American, Asian American, and Black/African American immigrant students do not demonstrate a piecemeal decline in their perceptions of school justice, order, and fairness. For instance, in relation to first-generation Asian American male students, second-generation Asian American males have decreased perceptions that school punishment for infractions is the same no matter the student. In addition, there is a second-generation decline in Latino American and Asian American males' belief in school rules as fair. In terms of second-generation Latino American males, research finds that even though Latino American students are not misbehaving more in school in relation to their White American counterparts, they are more likely to receive in-school sanctions for disciplinary infractions, be labeled defiant, and be suspended or expelled from school (Cammarota, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). It is possible that the decline in second-generation Latino American male students' belief that school rules are fair is linked to their disproportionate punishment. Moreover, although this study did not include measures of discrimination, bias, or differential treatment, qualitative research suggests that there are language, cultural, and other differences between educators and second-generation Latino American males that may help to account for differences in school disciplinary outcomes and youth perceptions of justice, order, and fairness (Cammarota, 2004; Lopez, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Thus, it is recommended that future research explore teacher-student interactions to determine if cultural synchrony contributes to patterns of school discipline and second-generation Latino American youth perceptions of school rules as fair.

The segmented assimilation perspective raises questions about the model minority stereotype and its impact on second-generation Asian American male students' perceptions of school justice. According to the model minority stereotype, Asian American students are perceived as hard-working, self-sufficient, and possessing a drive for success that will propel them into the middle-class (Lee, 1996, 2005; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Within the model minority stereotype, the academic success of Asian American students is used to argue that the U.S. schools are democratic, meritocratic, and free of racial discrimination and inequality (Lee, 1996; 2005; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Therefore, it seems there should not be a decline in second-generation Asian American male students' perceptions of school punishments for infractions as being the same or school rules as fair. Yet, research also underlies how the model minority stereotype makes invisible the racism and discrimination that Asian American students have experienced and continue to experience (Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003; Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Moreover, the data on Asian American students are frequently aggregated and mask the tremendous differences in achievement and educational experiences across Asian ethnic groups. While Southeast Asian male students, such as those from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, are often depicted as model minorities, they are also depicted as dropouts and gangsters (Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003; Ngo 2006). Qualitative research on the educational experiences of Southeast Asian males, and second-generation boys in particular, finds that stereotypes of gangsters can inform teachers' perceptions and interactions with this particular group of students (Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003; Ngo, 2006). In the context of segmented assimilation, future research should try to establish a link between the model minority stereotype and its impact on Asian American males' perceptions of school justice.

## IMMIGRANT OPTIMISM

There is also support immigrant optimism hypothesis, which emphasizes that first and second-generation immigrant youth, and particularly second-generation youth, have improved educational experiences that disappear by third-plus generation (Kao & Tienda, 1995). For example, in comparison to first and second-generation Latina youths, third-plus generation Latina girls have diminished perceptions that school rules are fair and strictly enforced, and that school punishments are the same no matter who you are. Peguero and Shekarkhar (2011) found that even though third-plus generation Latina students are not misbehaving more in school, they have an increased likelihood of school punishment in relation to their White American counterparts. Other studies note that in relation to White American girls, Latina students are more frequently and severely disciplined for less serious behavioral offenses (Bettie, 2014; Dietrich, 1999; García, 2009; Rolón-Dow, 2004). It is therefore conceivable that third-plus generation Latina youths' declining perceptions of fairness in school rules may be associated with their own disproportional punishment.

Typically, research and school initiatives focus on the barriers to educational success that first-generation Latina girls experience while neglecting barriers encountered by second and third-plus generation Latina girls (Olsen, 2008; Rong & Preissle, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). In light of this study's finding, and given that youths' perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order are associated educational promotion and success (Hagan et al.,

2005; Kupchik, 2010; Rios, 2011), addressing third-plus generation Latina girls' deteriorating perceptions in the fairness of school rules and their application is imperative for democratic schooling in U.S. society.

## LIMITATIONS

As with all research studies, there are limitations associated with this study that warrant highlighting. First, there is an issue of endogeneity associated with this research study. For instance, this study reports that there is a relationship between student misbehavior and their perceptions of school justice and fairness, especially for boys. It is plausible that students who misbehave and are disciplined can have diminished perceptions of school justice and fairness; however, there is also research that demonstrates that racial and ethnic minority youth actually experience disproportionate punishment. Research demonstrates that racial and ethnic minorities have increased levels of school discipline, even after controlling for misbehavior (Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011; Skiba et al., 2011). Additionally, as a result of increased social control, racial and ethnic minorities also believe that disproportionate discipline diminishes students' beliefs in the school's fair and just treatment (Hagan et al., 2005; Kupchik, 2010; Rios, 2011). Shortcomings of this data also foreclose an examination of the impact of discipline policies such as zero tolerance on immigrant youth understanding of school justice, order, and fairness. The advent of zero tolerance policies that have pervaded schools since the 1990s may be detrimental to the perception of whether or not school rules and punishments are fair. Nevertheless, exploring the causal effects of misbehavior and discipline on perceptions of school justice and fairness for the children of immigrants over time was not a part of this analysis and warrants further investigation.

Second, this study did not test for how traditional notions of gender, and femininity in particular, may influence female immigrant students' perceptions of school rules being fair and punishments being the same regardless of the student. Previous research indicates that Latina American and Black/African American girls are more frequently cited and referred for improper dress and behavior the defy notions of middle-class, White femininity (Bettie, 2014; Blake et al., 2011; Dietrich, 1999; García, 2009; Morris, 2007; Olsen, 2008; Rolón-Dow, 2004); yet, Asian American girls are often viewed as meek and passive victims of cultural sexism and are therefore in need of saving (Lee, 2005; Olsen, 2008). The lack of consistency in what constitutes proper behavior and dress may contribute to female immigrant students' increased or decreased perceptions of school rules and punishments being fair.

Third, this study's analysis is based on primarily self-reported data. Issues of selective memory, telescoping, attribution, and exaggeration are often cited as downfalls of using self-report data. To that end, however, this study's analysis is centered on youth perceptions and beliefs about school justice, fairness, and order specifically. In other words, although the real or objective assessment of school justice, fairness, and order may not match student perceptions, prior studies denote that perceptions of justice, fairness, and order do matter in terms of how youth behave and interact with authorities (Hagan et al., 2005; Kupchik, 2010; Rios, 2011). Despite the limitations associated with this study, the findings provide evidence to support the need for continuing research that explores and questions how school justice, fairness, and order are influencing the children of immigrants' education and experiences in the U.S. school system.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research can address the limitations associated with this study as well as build upon its findings. First, as a result of the changing racial and ethnic characteristics of youth, future research should explore within group analysis. In other words, it is also important to assess the differences of perceptions of school justice, order, and fairness among different ethnicities and countries of origin. Many studies demonstrate that the educational experiences vary significantly for Mexican, Haitian, Korean, Hmong, Filipino, Senegalese, and Ghanaian youths (Allen, Jackson, & Knight, 2012; Lee, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Waters, 1999).

Second, social, cultural, economic, and political context may matter for the children of immigrants' perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order. To better understand the role of immigration related factors in student perceptions of school justice, order, and fairness, the social, political, and economic environment of immigration should be considered. A recent decline in the national economy combined with the heated national debate over immigration may contribute to immigrant students' declining perceptions of school rules and punishments being fair for everyone. Future research is needed to better understand how the social, cultural, political, and historical context of a school and its community shape immigrant youths' understanding of school justice, order, and fairness.

Third, this study focused solely on students' understanding of school justice, order, and fairness as part of a broader process of socialization and assimilation to U.S. society. However, it is important to examine teachers' roles in youth perceptions of school justice, fairness, and order. Research suggests that teachers often hold stereotypical views of immigrant students, and that these views contribute to elevated or decreased types of sanctions received (Olsen, 2008; Peguero & Bondy, 2011).

Finally, future qualitative research can extend the limitations of this study in at least two ways. First, and as we previously mentioned, ELS relies on self-reported data that potentially contains numerous sources of bias, such as respondent selective memory and exaggeration. Selective memory and exaggeration can present challenges to accurate recall of interactions and events around issues of justice, fairness, and order in schools. Further qualitative research on this topic would benefit from ethnographic observations in a classroom and interviews with immigrant youth, teachers, and administrators to allow for a more precise identification of how immigrant youth perceptions of justice, order, and fairness are informed by generation status, race, ethnicity, and gender. Second, a multi-sited ethnographic approach to the study of immigrant youth perceptions of justice, order, and fairness in schools would serve to further highlight the interplay of generation status, race, ethnicity, and gender. For example, a multi-sited ethnography would allow for comparisons to be made between schools with different levels of diversity represented in their student population, and schools in different geographical contexts. Our findings that school context and characteristics are linked to immigrant youth perceptions of justice, order, and fairness indicate that additional studies and sources of data are needed to better understand phenomena around perceptions of school justice. It should not be assumed that regardless of the school, immigrant youth who share the same generation status, race, ethnicity, and gender perceive school justice in the same manner.

## CONCLUSION



The findings generated from this analysis illuminate youth perceptions of justice, order, and fairness in schools across three generations of female and male Latina/o American, Asian American, and Black/African American immigrants, as well as across immigrant generations of female and male White Americans. For the reason that school is an institution of socialization and assimilation (Lee, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999), and for the reason that racial and ethnic minority youth are frequently differentially perceived and treated in schools (Cammarota, 2004; Hagan et al., 2005; Kupchik, 2010; Lee, 2005; Rios, 2011), understanding immigrant youth perceptions of school justice, order, and fairness is vital to the success or failure of U.S. public school as a democratic and meritocratic institution. While results in this study suggest some support that straight-line assimilation, segmented assimilation, and immigrant optimism are relevant, it is important to discuss results through each of these theoretical lenses in order to better understand the complex relationship between education, assimilation, and students' perceptions of school order, justice, and fairness.

In the current context of school reform, much emphasis is placed on policies and outcomes, as well as technical responses to schooling problems. Far less attention is placed on social processes in schools. This study illuminates that research on immigrant youth education should develop a deeper understanding of how social processes shape immigrant youths' experiences and their perceptions of school. It is important to acknowledge that assimilation into American culture and society, or Americanization, is a social process that occurs through a variety of U.S. institutions, including school. Assimilation processes across genders and immigrant generational status have perhaps not unfolded in an even and gradual acceptance of U.S. values, beliefs, and behaviors. Educators and educational researchers who are seeking to better understand the schooling experiences of immigrant youth might benefit from questioning assimilation and Americanization as processes that inevitably promote educational progress. Given that immigrant youth are and have historically been marginalized within U.S. schools (Apple & Franklin, 2004; Ogbu, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Rong & Preissle, 2008), it appears that socialization, Americanization, gender, and immigrant generational status are germane to creating democratic education for all students. Immigrant youth are of particularly special interest because they are part of the nation's future parents, leaders, citizens, and voters. Attentiveness to democratic school justice, order, and fairness is, therefore, imperative.

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