KIRWAN INSTITUTE
for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

Race Matters... And So Does Gender

An Intersectional Examination of Implicit Bias in Ohio School Discipline Disparities

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The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity is an interdisciplinary engaged research institute at The Ohio State University established in May 2003.

Our goal is to connect individuals and communities with opportunities needed for thriving by educating the public, building the capacity of allied social justice organizations, and investing in efforts that support equity and inclusion. Here at the Kirwan Institute we do this through research, engagement, and communication.

Our mission is simple: *we work to create a just and inclusive society where all people and communities have opportunity to succeed.*

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INTRODUCTION

> *Imagine a society where all children have access to a high quality education. One that not only equips them with the skills necessary for continued life success, but one that also fosters their social and emotional development while engaging their innate curiosity and vast potential. One where differences are not only tolerated, but are fully embraced and esteemed as fundamental to the creation of a well-functioning school system and society.*

Imagining such a society is not difficult; in fact, it is exactly the aim of most educators, school administrators, and parents. After all, education is perhaps the most significant predictor of life outcomes; it has been found to correlate with health quality, lifetime earnings, civic participation, and even overall happiness and contentment (see e.g. Hunter & Bowman, 1996). As such, examining the barriers that limit access to a quality education is critical to the Kirwan Institute as we work toward the creation of a just and inclusive society where all people have the opportunity to succeed.

In 2014, the Kirwan Institute began its assessment of barriers to a high quality education through a series of reports that examined racialized discipline disparities in Ohio's public schools from 2005-06 to 2012-13 (Staats, 2014). Three major themes emerged from this analysis:

- **Race mattered, especially for Black[1] students:** With few exceptions, students of color experienced disciplinary action in excess of their population composition. This was particularly true for Black students who consistently received more than 60 discipline experiences per 100 Black students enrolled from 2005-06 to 2012-13. In fact, even when Black students received their fewest disciplinary experiences per 100 enrolled students across this time span (in the 2009-10 academic year), they still doubled the per 100 disciplinary actions incurred by the next most disciplined group (Multi-Racial students who experienced 30.8 actions per 100 enrolled students).

- **Discipline Rates Matter:** Kirwan's 2014 investigation echoed years of research demonstrating the connection between experiences of discipline action in school and the likelihood of having contact with the juvenile justice system – a phenomenon known as the School-to-Prison-Pipeline. This pipeline is most noticeable through the growing number of students being removed from school by law enforcement officers for minor non-violent infractions. Black students in Ohio were disproportionately susceptible to receiving these exces-

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[1] *The identifier "Black" does not include those students labeled as Hispanic.*

sive responses to perceived misbehavior. In fact, in the 2012-13 academic year, not only were Black students more likely to be removed by a hearing officer than their non-Black peers, 100% of all such removals were for "disruptive/disobedient behavior" – a non-violent infraction.

- **Implicit Bias May Play a Role in School Discipline Disparities:** While many factors contribute to racial discipline disparities (e.g., institutional and policy inequities and socioeconomic factors), Kirwan's 2014 analysis revealed implicit bias to be among the potential influencers. This was particularly visible through the prevalence of disciplinary actions attributed to "disruptive/disobedient behavior," an infraction that is highly vulnerable to the operation of implicit bias due to its subjective nature. As discussed later in this document, research suggests that teachers' perceptions of behavior may be unconsciously skewed based on students' race.

What is Implicit Bias?

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes and stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and behavior in an unconscious manner. These biases are different from overt biases, where the intention of an individual is to differentiate treatment toward another person based on perceived characteristics; instead, implicit bias may operate even when an individual has no intention to harm or disadvantage someone else. Furthermore, implicit biases are activated involuntarily without our awareness or intentional control (Blair, 2002; Rudman, 2004) and may even conflict with our declared beliefs (Graham & Lowery, 2004; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; J. Kang et al., 2012).

Throughout our lifetime, we are exposed to an enormous amount of direct and indirect messages about the world around us. In fact, social psychologists believe that our unconscious brains can sort through millions of pieces of information at any point in time; however, on a conscious level, we are only capable of processing between five and nine bits of information at a time (Miller, 1956). This means that the vast majority of the information

The vast majority of the information we receive each day is absorbed and processed without us ever realizing it

we receive each day is absorbed and processed without us ever realizing it. An unfortunate result of this phenomenon is the ability for our minds to harbor associations and beliefs about groups of people that we may not explicitly endorse and that may be based on inaccurate, overgeneralized, or otherwise distorted information. As Kirwan's 2014 school discipline analysis revealed, these unintentional acts of discrimination have real-life implications for Ohio's students.

About This Report

Using publicly available data[2] from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) Interactive Local Report Card, this report builds on the 2014 analysis by examining discipline disparities at the intersection of both race and sex. Covering the span of ten academic years (2005-06 to 2014-15) this report has several aims:

- Increase awareness of school discipline disparities at the intersection of race and sex.

- Highlight how skewed perceptions of race and gender impact perceptions of student behavior and contribute to disparities.

- Uplift meaningful solutions aimed at overcoming disparities in school discipline for Ohio students.

Beginning first with a general analysis of discipline rates across racial groups within and across each sex, this report makes the case for why sex must also be included as a key variable in school discipline research. Next, we take a deeper dive into the particular experiences of girls and boys for whom disproportionality in discipline representation exists. This is followed by an examination of the role

of implicit gender norms, racialized perceptions of femininity, and notions of masculinity, as well as racialized perceptions of innocence vs. criminality on the aforementioned disparities. Finally, we explore how educators, administrators, and all school personnel can utilize this information to develop meaningful solutions to address racialized and gendered discipline disparities in their districts and schools.

Importantly, the Kirwan Institute recognizes the distinct differences between sex (a biological identifier of male and female) and gender (a social construct referring to societally-deemed "normative" behavior associated with masculinity and femininity). Furthermore, we recognize the fluid nature of one's ascription to a particular sex and/or gender identity. Nevertheless, this document incorporates terminology consistent with that used by the Ohio Department of Education, the entity from which we retrieved our data. Thus, it is unfortunately void of categories related to the Trans community, thereby failing to account for the fluid nature of identity. Nevertheless, many of these findings may be helpful in deepening our understanding of Trans students' experiences given the connection between societal expectations of gender norms and many of the obstacles Trans students face.

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[2] *Data are current as of May 3, 2016.*

HOW MUCH DOES GENDER MATTER?

Patterns of racial disparities revealed in Kirwan's 2014 publication persist when the data is disaggregated by sex. In particular, Black students were disciplined at a rate more than twice that of the next highest disciplined racial group within the same sex. The following charts show the annual experiences of discipline for boys (Figure 1) and girls (Figure 2) per 100 enrolled Ohio students from 2005-06 to 2014-15.

**Figure 1: All Discipline Actions by Race for Male Students
Per 100 Ohio Students, 2005-06 to 2014-15**
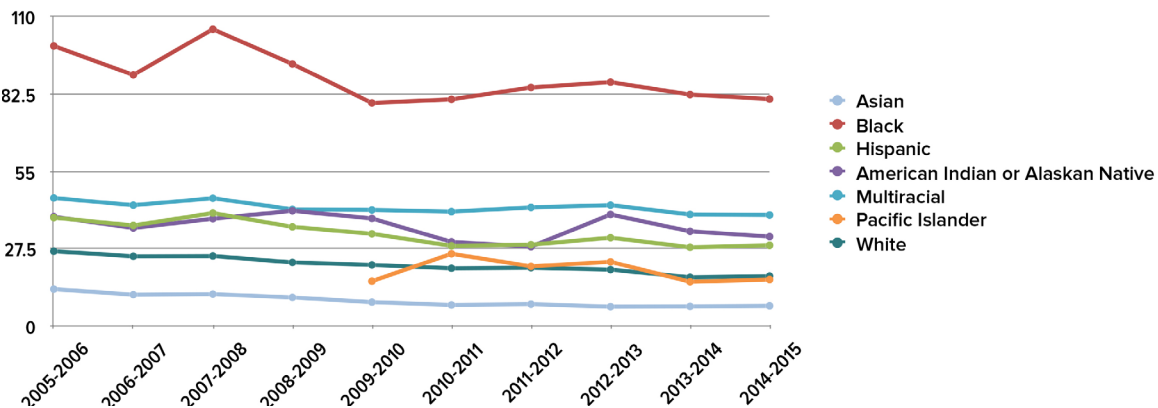
As shown, in the 2014-15 academic year Black boys received 80.8 disciplinary actions per 100 enrolled students, whereas Multi-Racial boys had the next highest number of disciplinary actions (39.4 per 100 enrolled students). Moreover, the most disciplined group (Black boys) experienced rates of discipline 11.5 times that of the least disciplined male racial group (Asian boys).

Black girls too faced disproportionate experiences of discipline compared to the next most disciplined female group – Multi-Racial girls. For instance, in the 2014-15 academic year, Black girls received 43.7 disciplinary actions per 100 enrolled students, while Multi-Racial girls experienced only 17.5 discipline actions per 100 enrolled students (Figure 2). Also notable is the magnitude of difference in disciplinary actions between the most and least disciplined racial group of female students; in the 2014-15 academic year, Black girls experienced 24.2 times more disciplinary actions per 100 enrolled students than the least disciplined racial group – Asian girls.

**Figure 2: All Discipline Actions by Race for Female Students
Per 100 Ohio Students, 2005-06 to 2014-15**
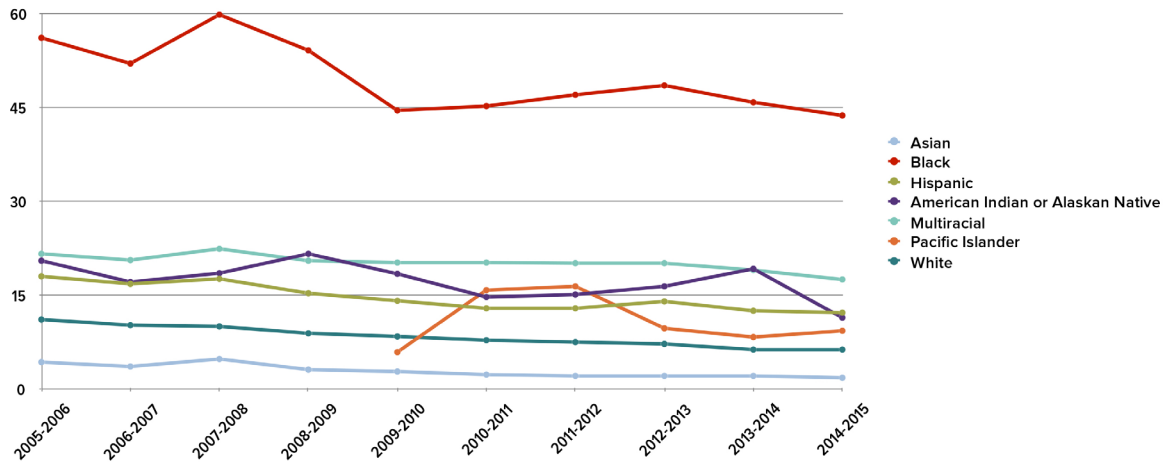
Importantly, the ratio between the most disciplined and least disciplined racial groups for female students is a lot larger than that of male students. Moreover, Black girls experienced more discipline per 100 enrolled students than all non-Black male students in the 2014-15 academic year.

Further analysis demonstrates that not only did Black students receive disproportionate discipline compared with their same-sex counterparts, they also face significant over-representation among the same-sex disciplined student population relative to their representation within the same-sex population overall. Figure 3 depicts a comparison of the average racial representation among all male students versus the total disciplined male student population.

Figure 3: Comparison of Racial Representation Among Disciplined Vs. Enrolled Males
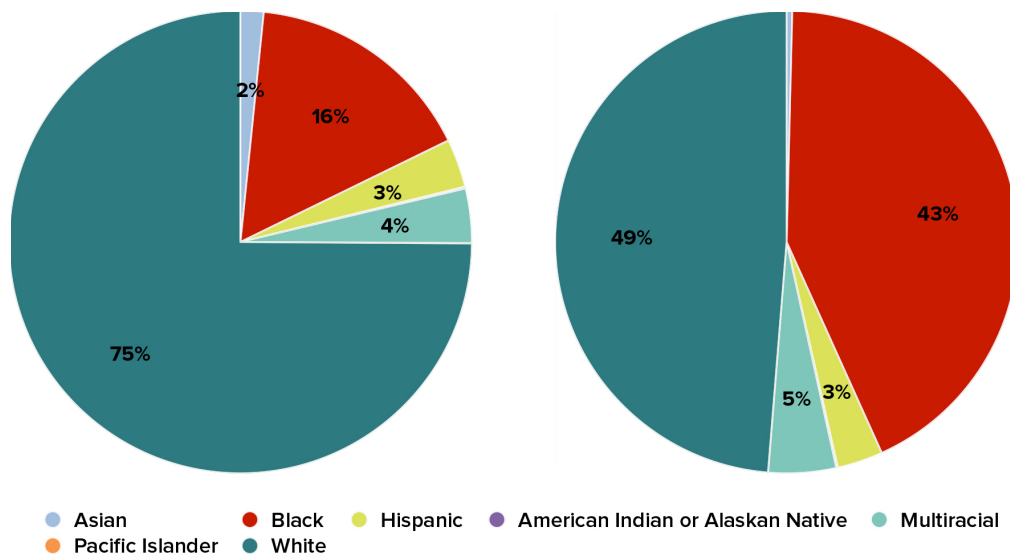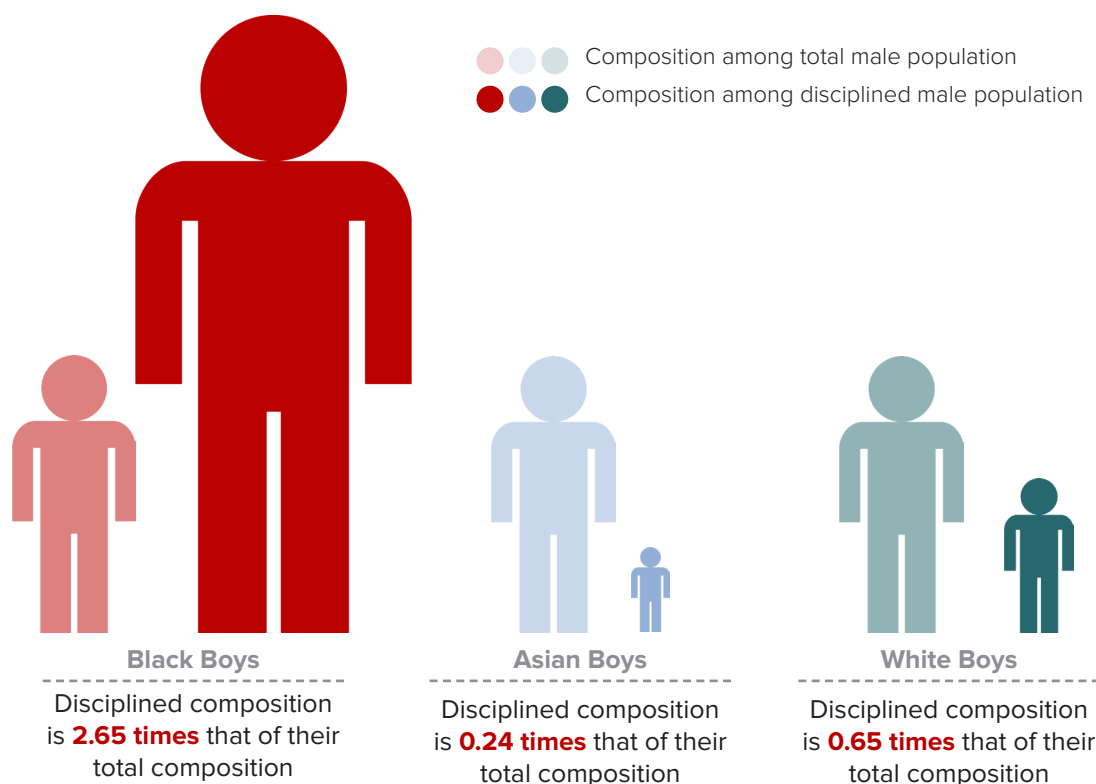
As seen above, many groups experienced nearly equal representation among both disciplined male students and enrolled male students: American Indian & Alaskan Native, Hispanic, and Multi-Racial males. In contrast, three populations averaged high levels of disproportionate representation in the respective categories: Asian males, Black males, and White[3] males. Specifically, Black boys averaged 16.15% of the total male population and 42.87% of the average disciplined male population. Alternatively, White boys comprised of 74.90% of the total male population but only 48.72% of the disciplined male population. And finally, Asian boys comprised of 1.61% of the total male population and only 0.39% of the disciplined male population.

Figure 4 more clearly portrays the magnitude of the disparities in representation for Black, Asian, and White male students.[4] As shown, Black males' representation among the disciplined male population was, on average, 2.65 times larger than their representation among all male students. Alternatively, White and Asian male students were only 0.25 and 0.65 times as represented among disciplined boys as they were among enrolled boys, respectively.

Figure 4: Composition Disproportionality of Black, Asian, and White Males among the Total vs. Disciplined Male Populations
Averaged, 2005-06 to 2014-15 Academic Years

Composition among total male population
Composition among disciplined male population

Black Boys
Disciplined composition is **2.65 times** that of their total composition

Asian Boys
Disciplined composition is **0.24 times** that of their total composition

White Boys
Disciplined composition is **0.65 times** that of their total composition
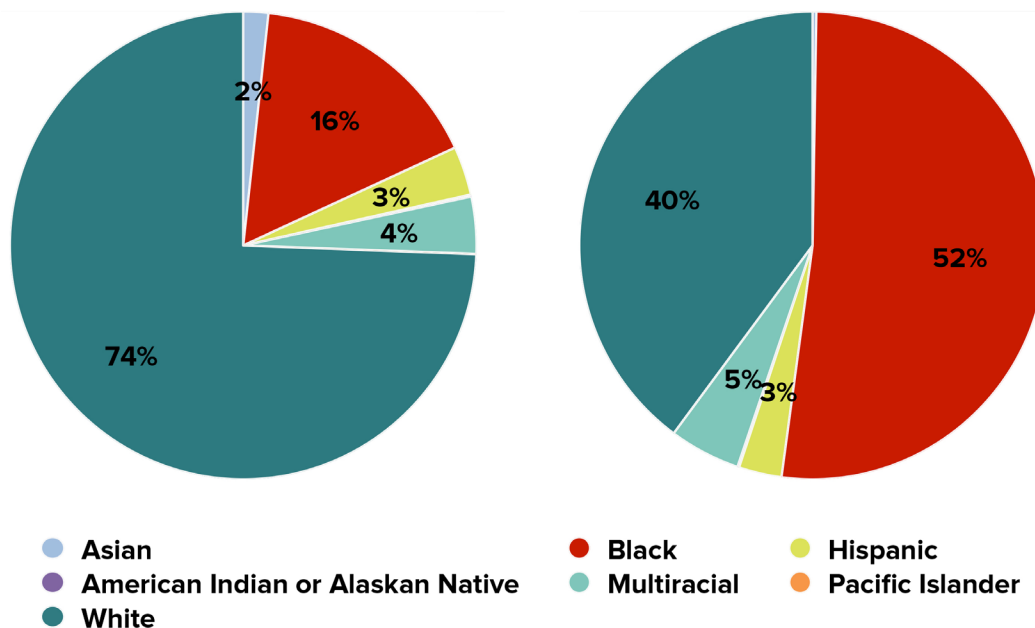
[3] *The identifier "White" does not include those students labeled as Hispanic.*
[4] *Only male racial groups with a ratio of representation either 33% above or 33% below parity were included for deeper analysis.*

A similar trend persisted among female students. For instance, Black girls averaged 16.4% of the total female population, but 51.7% of the disciplined female population (Figure 5). Moreover, Asian and White girls, like their male peers, averaged ratios of representation among disciplined versus enrolled female populations far lower than any other racial group – 0.15 and 0.54, respectively.

Figure 5: Comparison of Racial Representation Among Disciplined Vs. Enrolled Females
Averaged, 2005-06 to 2014-15 Academic Years

Legend:
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- White
- Black
- Multiracial
- Hispanic
- Pacific Islander

> **Importantly, not only did Black girls average more than 50% of all disciplinary experiences actions involving female students, they also experienced a greater level of over-representation than any other demographic group, including their Black male counterparts.**

Figure 6 again elevates the magnitude of these disparities.[5] As shown, Black girls were approximately 3.16 times more represented among the disciplined female population than they were among the total female population. In contrast, White and Asian females were only 0.54 and 0.15 times as represented among the disciplined population as they were among the total population, respectively.

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[5] *Only female racial groups with a ratio of representation either 33% above or 33% below parity were included for deeper analysis.*

**Figure 6: Composition Disproportionality of Black, Asian, and White Females
among the Total vs. Disciplined Female Populations**
Averaged, 2005-06 to 2014-15 Academic Years

Composition among total female population
Composition among disciplined female population

Black Girls
Disciplined composition
is **3.16 times** that of their
total composition

Asian Girls
Disciplined composition
is **0.15 times** that of their
total composition

White Girls
Disciplined composition
is **0.54 times** that of their
total composition
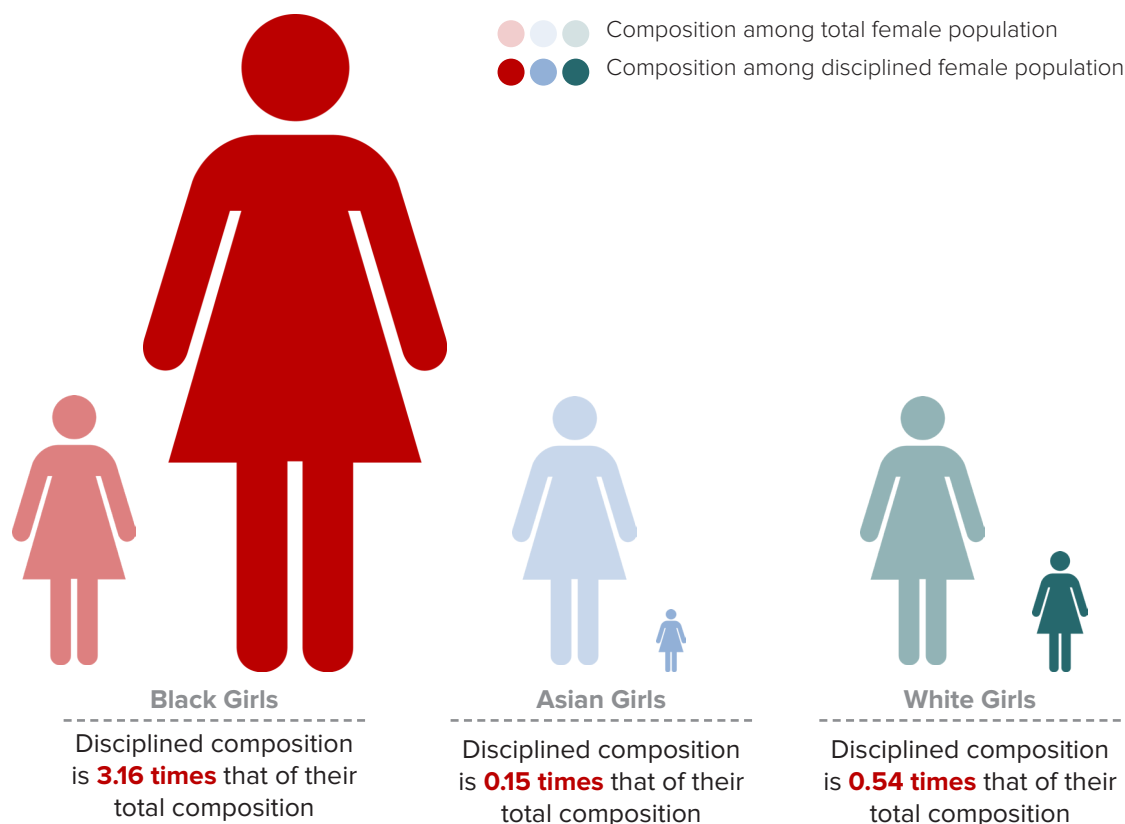
When calculated as a percentage of the total population (both male and female students), trends of over-representation among disciplined students persist for Black students. For instance, Black boys represented 8.30% of the total enrollment, yet comprised of almost 29.57% of all disciplined students – an over-representation of more than 370%. Similarly, Black girls represented 7.98% of the total enrollment, yet comprised of 16.30% of all disciplined students – an over-representation of approximately 204%.

> **When combined we see that Black students, on average, comprised of 46% of the total disciplined population, despite making up only 16% of the total enrollment throughout the 2005-06 to 2013-14 academic years.**

In contrast, Asian boys and girls averaged 0.82% and 0.84% of the total population, while averaging 0.27% and 0.08% of the total disciplined population, respectively. Similarly, White girls averaged 36.17% of the total population and only 12.37% of the disciplined population. Interestingly, White males were extremely close to parity when analyzed as a portion of the total enrolled population. Specifically, White

boys averaged 38.48% of the total enrolled population, while averaging 33.60% of the disciplined population. Still, it is clear that Black, Asian, and White students face disparities in representation among the disciplined population when compared to their representation among the total population. Moreover, the disparities held true even when the data was delineated by gender. As such, the remainder of our analysis will focus specifically on these three populations with the intent of better understanding the nuances of their experiences.

IMPLICIT BIAS: A SILENT BARRIER OR AN INVISIBLE BOOST?

At the Kirwan Institute, we understand the tremendous influence of unconscious cognitive forces on the creation of barriers to equity and opportunity for students of color. Furthermore, we recognize that while bias may operate to disadvantage some groups, it may concurrently operate to the unmerited advantage of others.

In other words, bias can skew either as a favorable or an unfavorable assessment or inclination (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).

Exploring this dynamic of implicit bias further, this section will again examine the experiences of Black, Asian, and White students more closely – delineating by sex. The intent of our dual analysis of both underdisciplined and overdisciplined students is to deepen society's understanding of the ways in which both race and sex may unconsciously create blind spots that skew our perceptions of student behavior.

Intentions vs. Outcomes

The Kirwan Institute believes that educators and school administrators enter their school buildings each day with the intention of providing the best possible educational experience for every student.

However, we also recognize that implicit bias may impede on even the best of intentions. Lewis and Diamond (2015) describe this phenomenon in their book, *Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools*, by drawing on research in organizational studies. The authors outline how unbeknownst to us, bias may cause us to deviate from our intended routines and practices (Lewis & Diamond, 2015).

In the context of school discipline, the "ideal" (or ostensive) routine consists of a standardized process that results in appropriate student punishment. However, as Lewis and Diamond (2015) note, students' social status and staff responses may influence the identification of who has broken a rule. Furthermore, considerations such as family resources and institutional response may also shape what the "standardized" process actually looks like. The result can yield biased outcomes in a seemingly unbiased process. More often than not, this "actual" (or performative) discipline routine happens unintentionally and without awareness (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Importantly, as discussed below, research shows that it often operates differently for boys than it does for girls.

Boys Will Be Boys... Are Some Boys Just Bad?

Decades of research confirms the pervasiveness of stereotypes of minorities as criminals (see, e.g. Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004; Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Payne, 2001). This is especially true for African Americans as data from Project Implicit® suggests that 72% of individuals who take the Race-Weapons Implicit Association Test[6] possess a slight, moderate, or strong association of Blacks with weapons vs. harmless objects as opposed to Whites with weapons vs. harmless objects (Project Implicit, 2015). Given the often violent portrayals of Black masculinity (see e.g. Dixon & Linz, 2000; Oliver, 2003), it is likely that this association is exacerbated for African American boys in particular (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014; Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016).

Specific to the education context, there is research to show that dynamics as simple as having a stereotypically Black male "stroll"[7] may affect teachers' perceptions of a student's aggressiveness (Neal et al., 2003). This indicator of Black male identity has even been shown to affect White male students, as the researchers found that White males who portray a "stroll" were significantly more likely to be perceived as aggressive than those portraying a "standard"[8] walking style (Neal et al., 2003).

While the results of the previous study may seem extreme, anecdotal feedback from real students aligns with the assertion that racial stereotypes influence perceptions of behavior. Take the following quote from Harrison, an African American boy featured in the first chapter of a recent video series detailing the experiences of Black men and boys (Colorlines, 2014); here, Harrison recounts the ways in which he sees implicit bias shaping his experience as a student:

> *"There's days in my school where there will be three Black kids in a class, and after the first quarter…. You'll be getting your work done… you'll have pretty good grades… but the teacher will be like… she'll pull those three Black kids to the side and be like, 'you guys need to separate from each other, you're distracting the class.' There might be three White girls in the back laughing the entire class, and the only thing she says is 'be quiet.' Being Black comes with the stereotype of being loud, disruptive, and always angry when you don't get your way."*
>
> *- Harrison*

Not only does this example demonstrate the impact of race and sex on educators' perceptions of student behavior, it also documents the important reality that students are very much aware of the differential responses to their behaviors. Research

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[6] *The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is a widely recognized response latency measure that assesses the relative strength of associations between pairs of concepts. Theses associations include attitudes (positive vs. negative evaluations), stereotypes (group-trait associations), and have been expanded to include self-concept associations related to mental health. For more information, visit http://implicit.harvard.edu.*

[7] *A stroll was characterized as "a deliberately swaggered or bent posture, with the head help slightly tilted to the side, one foot dragging, and an exaggerated knee bend (dip)" (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003).*

[8] *The "standard" walking style was characterized as "an erect posture with leg and arm swing synchronized with posture and pace, a steady stride, and a straight head" (Neal et al., 2003).*

suggests that this awareness may potentially create stressful and hostile school climates for Black students; these school climates may in turn have major adverse effects on their academic performance (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Ohio's school discipline data further supports this anecdote. Specifically, for every racial group, "disruptive/disobedient behavior" was the number one cause of disciplinary actions, accounting for 61% of all discipline occurrences for male students (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). This ambiguous infraction allows for subjective and potentially biased interpretations of behavior. Figure 7 shows the average distribution of offenses leading to discipline for Black, Asian, and White males, for whom "disruptive/disobedient behavior" accounted for 63.9%, 59.3%, and 58.2% of the behavioral infractions, respectively.

Figure 7: "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" Infractions as a Percentage of Total Infractions
Black, Asian, and White males, Averaged from 2005-06 to 2014-15

Black Boys		Asian Boys		White Boys	
Total Infractions	127,209	Total Infractions	1,150	Total Infraction	144,417
Disruptive/ Disobedient Behavior	81,292	Disruptive/ Disobedient Behavior	681	Disruptive/ Disobedient Behavior	84,031
Other Infractions	45,918	Other Infractions	486	Other Infractions	60,386
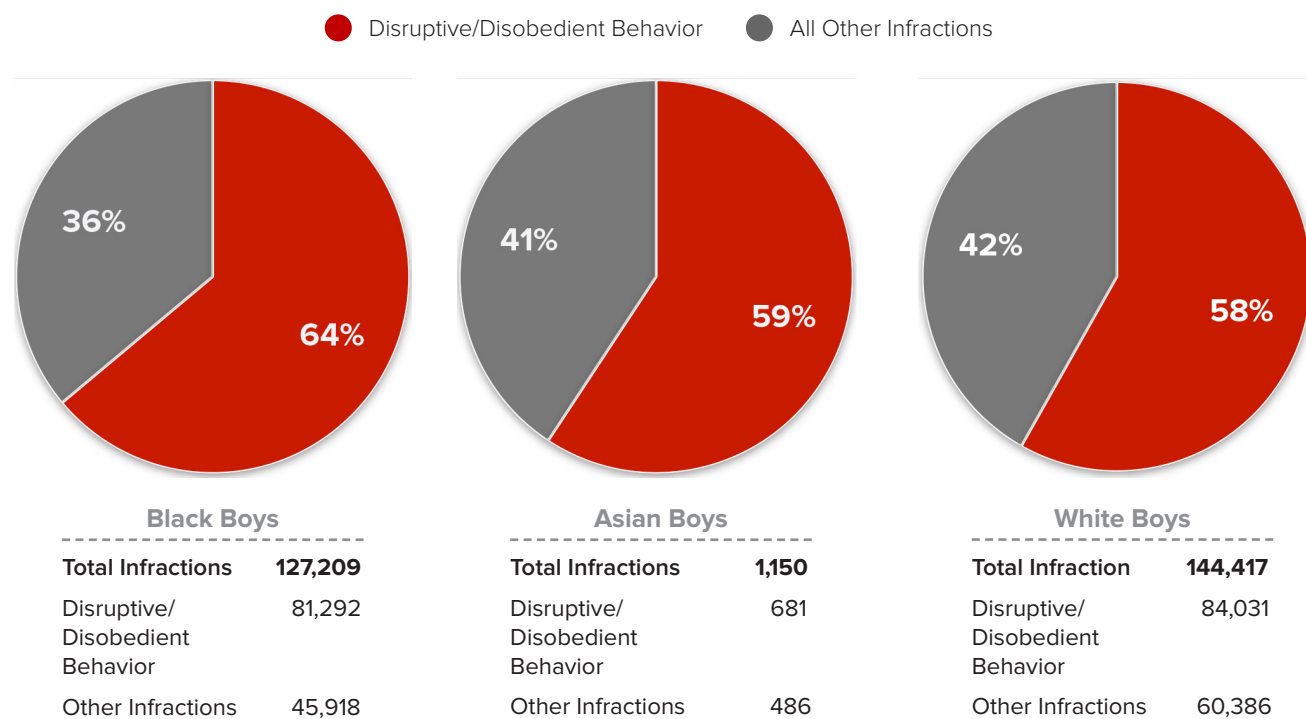
Furthermore, as Figure 8 depicts, the disciplinary outcomes associated with "disruptive/disobedient behavior" varied meaningfully across racial groups. Notably, Black boys were more likely to receive out-of-school suspension, expulsion, and emergency removal than their White and Asian male counterparts. In contrast, Asian boys were more likely to experience in-school suspension and in-school alternatives than their Black or White counterparts.[9]

[9] Asian boys averaged only 681 incidents of "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" each year. As such, their total pool is significantly smaller than Black and White boys, each of whom averaged greater than 80,000 such infractions annually.

Figure 8: Punishment Resulting from "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" Infractions
Black, Asian, and White Males, Averaged from 2005-06 to 2014-15

	Expulsion	Out-of-School Suspension	In-School Suspension	In-School Alternative	Emergency Removal
Asian	0.19%	36.67%	**42.37%**	**20.43%**	1.69%
Black	**0.46%**	**49.50%**	33.19%	13.90%	**2.88%**
White	0.43%	38.38%	42.07%	17.22%	1.87%

Black boys also averaged more annual discipline occurrences relative to their annual enrollment than White or Asian male students. Specifically, Black boys averaged approximately 127,209 disciplinary actions annually during the 2005-06 to the 2013-14 academic years, despite only maintaining an average enrollment of 143,847 (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). This means that if each Black male only incurred one disciplinary action each year, an average of 88.4% of Black males would have been formally sanctioned to accumulate this level of discipline.

Importantly, discipline typically does not happen on a one occurrence per person rate. Instead, it is often the case that multiple occurrences are attributed to one student. Even still, this proportion stands in stark contrast to those of Asian and White male students for whom average discipline occurrences equated to 8.0% and 21.6% of their average enrollment, respectively. To elaborate, Asian males averaged 1,150 disciplinary occurrences each year while averaging an enrollment of 14,323. Similarly, White boys averaged 144,417 annual discipline occurrences, equating to 21.6% of their 667,110 average enrollments. Figure 9 highlights these differences in proportions more clearly.

Figure 9: Discipline Occurrences as a Percentage of Enrollments
Black, Asian, & White Males: Averaged 2005-06 to 2014-15 Academic Years

Annual Enrollment   Annual Discipline Occurrences

Black Boys
- -
Average discipline occurrences equated to **88.4%** of their average enrollment.

Asian Boys
- -
Average discipline occurrences equated to **8.0%** of their average enrollment.

White Boys
- -
Average discipline occurrences equated to **21.6%** of their average enrollment.
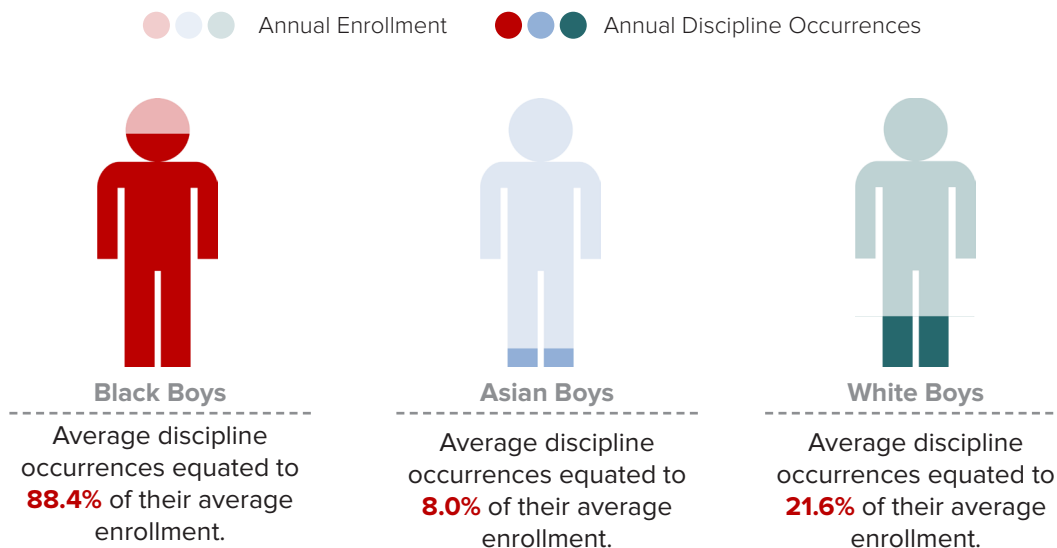
When examined across years, it becomes evident that Black boys have perpetually experienced a high number of discipline occurrences (Figure 10). In fact, there were several years in which the number of discipline actions incurred by Black boys matched or even outpaced their enrollment. This startling reality is only slightly dampened by the overall decline in this trend in recent years.

Figure 10: Discipline Occurrences as a Percentage of Enrollment
Black, Asian, and White Males: 2005-06 to 2014-15
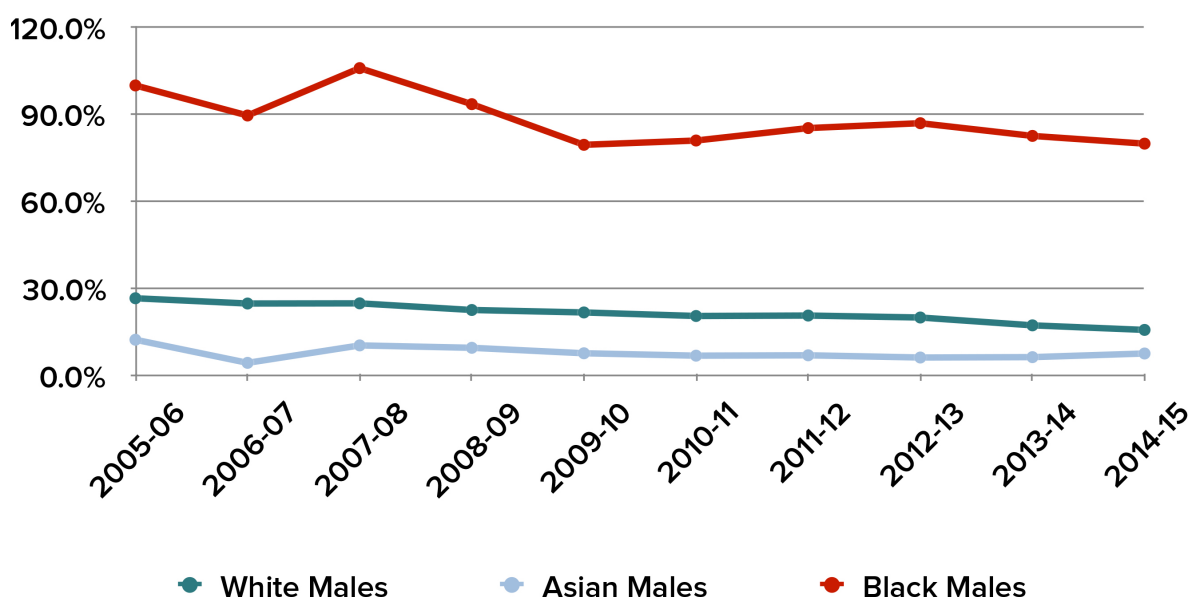
Notably, In the 2007-08 academic year, Black boys accumulated 155,024 discipline occurrences, despite having an enrollment of only 146,692 that year.

Still, questions remain as to the cause of these differences. Could it be that Black boys are simply more likely than Asian and White boys to engage in behaviors deemed improper by school officials? Research suggests otherwise pointing instead to implicit bias as a major contributor to the high quantities of discipline experienced by Black male students. In particular, scholars have noted the ways in which perceptions of behaviors may be distorted based on cultural misunderstandings. For instance, lively debates and verbal sparring, common amongst Black boys, have been misinterpreted as contentious and aggressive by White educators in particular (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Moreover, studies have found that Whites with high levels of implicit racial bias against Blacks are more likely to perceive Blacks as threatening when looking at facial expressions, as opposed to when they view similar expressions on White faces (Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003). This skewed perception may cause educators to unnecessarily reprimand students for otherwise harmless cultural

expressions.

Returning again to Lewis and Diamond's analysis of the role of implicit bias in racial disparities in schools, it becomes clear that even White students are aware of the ways in which race colors teachers' perceptions (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, p. 55).

> *I think security guards, just like, I think they like point out African Americans a lot more than like White… Like I'll walk down the hall without a pass, and they'll just let you go. But then they'll find someone else and say, 'You have a Saturday detention.'"*

> *Samantha*

This dynamic of implicit bias is extremely important and often overlooked by researchers and practitioners alike.   It suggests that not only are Black students experiencing excessive discipline, White students, and perhaps other students, are concurrently being under-disciplined. To be clear, the Kirwan Institute in no way advocates for increased punitive sanctions for any student, but rather – as outlined in a later section – for the creation of a race-conscious and restorative approach to addressing student behavior. Equally important, this example demonstrates the reality that White students too are aware of how race influences their educational experiences.

"Act Like a Lady" – Racialized Notions of Femininity

While discourse often focuses on the unique experiences of Black boys in school, Black girls continue to receive very little attention. Yet, as this report has demonstrated, Black girls also experience elevated rates of discipline relative to other female students. Given this, it is important to understand how implicit bias operates with regards to Black girls. For instance, research on the experiences of girls of color suggests that Black girls in particular are at heightened risk of experiencing high rates of discipline in school due to their cultural incongruence with traditional, White, middle-class expectations of femininity (see e.g. Blake, Bulter, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2011; Blake, Butler, & Smith, 2015).

The unique historical and contemporary experiences of Black women have perpetually left them void of the protections afforded to White women by men (Black or otherwise), as well as institutions (Collins, 2002; Glenn, 2002; Morris, 2007). Thus, Black girls learn very early on the importance of being assertive and defending oneself. This assertiveness, contrasting so starkly with traditional fe-

Black girls averaged 15,918 more disciplinary occurrences each year than White girls, despite there being 488,000 fewer Black girls than White enrolled annually on average.
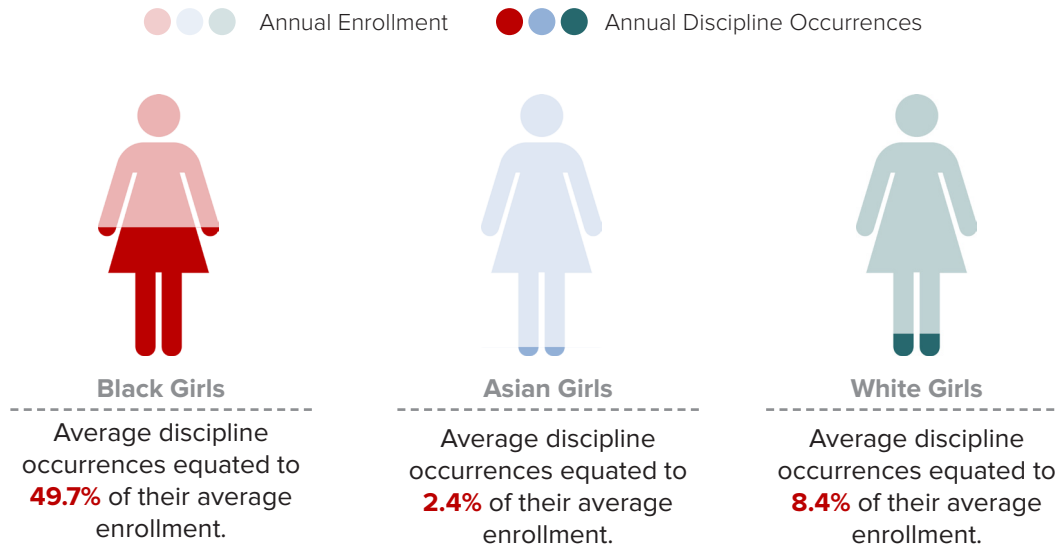
male gender norms that emphasize passivity and quietness, may be misinterpreted as abrasive and aggressive. Morris (2007) highlights this dynamic in his case study analysis of the experiences of Black girls in middle-school: "I observed several instances of Black girls […] being scolded for calling out answers or questioning teachers. This reaction happened less frequently for boys, and very rarely for girls of other racial and ethnic groups" (p. 502).

Our analysis of Ohio school discipline disparities supports Morris' assessment. As Figure 11 details, Black girls were much more likely than White or Asian girls to experience disciplinary action.

Figure 11: Discipline Occurrences as a Percentage of Enrollments
Black, Asian, & White Females: Averaged 2005-06 to 2014-15 Academic Years

Annual Enrollment   Annual Discipline Occurrences

Black Girls
Average discipline occurrences equated to **49.7%** of their average enrollment.

Asian Girls
Average discipline occurrences equated to **2.4%** of their average enrollment.

White Girls
Average discipline occurrences equated to **8.4%** of their average enrollment.

In particular, Black girls averaged 68,681 discipline occurrences each year from 2005-06 to 2014-15 – an amount equating to 49.7% of their average annual enrollment (138,175). This stands in stark contrast to White girls whose average discipline occurrences (52,763) equated to only 8.4% of their average annual enrollment (627,095). Meanwhile, Asian girls averaged only 342.9 discipline occurrences equating to only 2.4% of their 14,563 average enrollments. Importantly, Black girls averaged 15,918 more disciplinary occurrences each year than White girls, despite there being 488,000 fewer Black girls than White enrolled annually on average.

Just as with their male counterparts, "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" accounted for the vast majority of offenses leading to disciplinary actions for female students. As seen in Figure 12, this ambiguous infraction accounted for more than half of all disciplinary actions for White girls on average, and approximately 2/3 of all discipline actions for Asian and Black girls from the 2005-06 through the 2014-15 academic years.

Figure 12: "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" Infractions as a Percentage of Total Infractions
Black, Asian, and White females, Averaged from 2005-06 to 2014-15

	Black Girls		Asian Girls		White Girls
Total Infractions	68,973	Total Infractions	351	Total Infraction	53,232
Disruptive/ Disobedient Behavior	46,090	Disruptive/ Disobedient Behavior	225	Disruptive/ Disobedient Behavior	30,067
Other Infractions	22,883	Other Infractions	126	Other Infractions	23,166
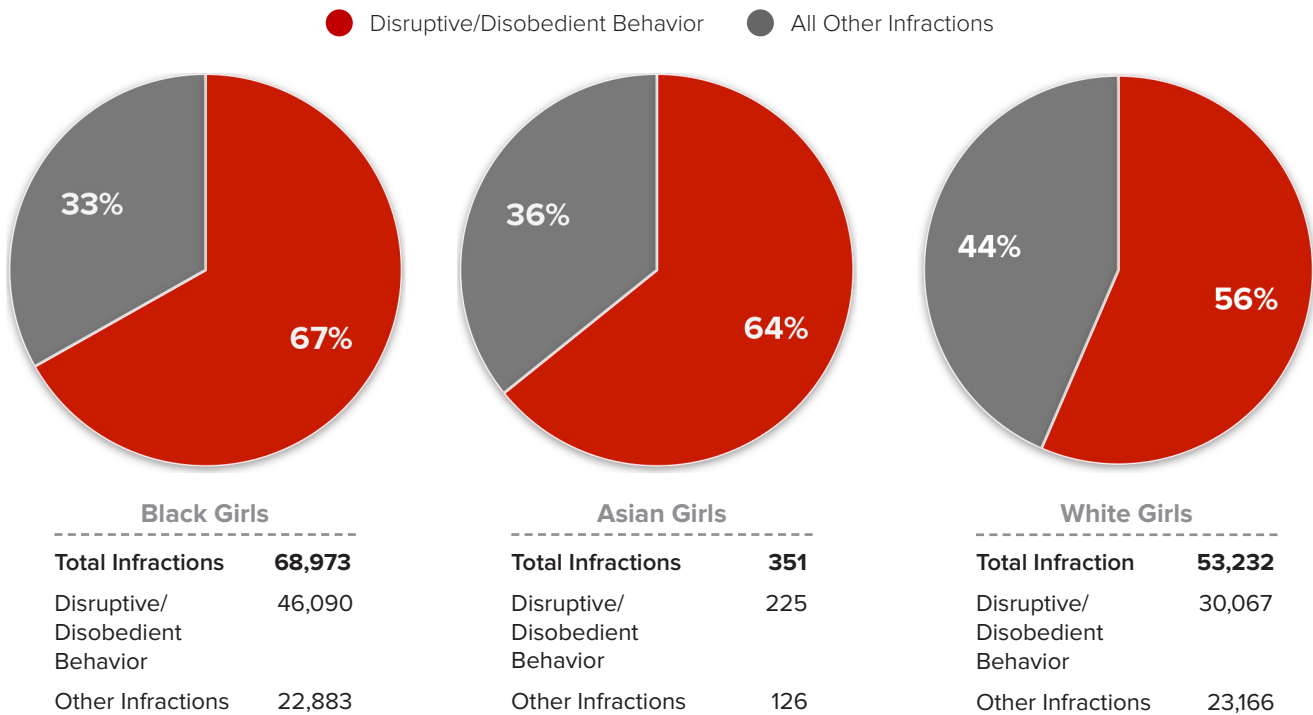
The ambiguity inherent in this infraction allows for not only biased interpretation of student behavior, but also biased interpretations of the severity of the infraction and thus, the severity of the resulting punishment. Figure 13 depicts the disciplinary actions resulting from "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" infractions for Black, Asian, and White girls. Notably, White and Asian girls experienced a higher prevalence of in-school suspension and in-school alternatives than Black girls. In contrast, for the exact same infraction, Black girls were more likely than their peers to receive out-of-school suspension, and emergency removal. Notably, White and Black girls experienced equivalent rates of expulsion for "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" infractions.

Figure 13: Punishment Resulting from "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" Infractions
Black, Asian, and White Females, Averaged from 2005-06 to 2014-15

	Expulsion	Out-of-School Suspension	In-School Suspension	In-School Alternative	Emergency Removal
Asian	0.00%	35.89%	**45.87%**	18.23%	0.00%
Black	**0.35%**	**46.65%**	36.18%	14.30%	**2.52%**
White	**0.35%**	34.93%	43.52%	**19.68%**	1.52%

Dress code violations are frequently the source of discipline occurrences for girls. This can be particularly true for Black girls who face scrutiny regarding their clothing preferences not aimed at their female counterparts.   Moreover, Black students are keenly aware of the differential enforcement of these policies and are often tasked with defending themselves, thus putting them all the more at risk of receiving disciplinary action (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, p. 60):

> That happens to a lot of my friends, I mean, they tried to get me one year but, you know, I wasn't havin' it. I put up a fight. I said, 'you know, that's not fair.' How come, you know, it's just my luck, a girl [presumably White given the previous statement] just happened to be walking by wearing the skirt …. It was pretty short, And I said 'Well, what about her? You didn't stop her. Why did you stop me?' So they kinda just let it go.

> *-Tiffany*

Scholars have long noted the ways in which racialized enforcement of policies related to dress code connect to stereotypes of Black women and girls as hyper-sexual (e.g. Jezebel) (West, 2008; White, 1999). The above quote demonstrates the dual-dynamic nature of implicit bias with regard to female students. Just as that educator's perceptions of Tiffany's attire may have been skewed by hypersexual stereotypes of Black girls, so too might the educator's perceptions have been skewed by historical associations of White female bodies as pure and innocent. This dynamic aligns closely to a concept known as unconscious confirmation bias – that is, the tendency to unconsciously seek out things that

align with one's unconscious beliefs while "overlooking" those things that don't (Ross, 2014). Stated differently, implicit bias may have caused that administrator to simultaneously "see" Tiffany's dress-code violation and "not see" the other girl's.

Beyond dress, there have been several recent high-profile examples involving Black female students being threatened with suspension and expulsion due to the "disruptive" nature of their natural hair – an infraction involving nothing more than showing up to school with their own hair (see e.g. Chaiyabhat, 2013; Kim, 2013; Stevenson & Brown, 2015). Moreover, this racially charged interpretation of Black hair as "disruptive" is deeply connected to long standing Westernized notions of beauty (Bryant, 2013; Thomas, 2013); yet again this highlights the ways in which Black girls are penalized for their incongruity with "traditional" White notions of womanhood.

While it is impossible to know the mental processes undergirding these assessments of student behavior and attire, we at the Kirwan Institute stand firm in our declaration that **educators are committed to the well-being of ALL of their students.** However, as these examples reveal, often times, being the people we intend to be is a lot harder than we realize due to the implicit biases we unconsciously may hold.

We often have subtle blind spots that skew our perceptions and impact how we move through the world. Fortunately, research suggests that with determination and time, we can change our associations, mitigate implicit bias, and move closer to the creation of a society in which all people and all communities have the opportunity to succeed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING BEYOND BIAS

"The first step to defeating our hidden biases is to be honest with ourselves about the blind spots we have. Having a bias is only human. The only shame is in making no effort to improve."

- Dr. Mahzarin Banaji

Throughout our lives we are being inundated with messages and stereotypes about different groups of people; these messages have informed our perceptions of others and influenced the creation and implementation of school policies and practices. As such, a comprehensive strategy – one that includes both individual and institutional approaches – is required if we are to move beyond the influence of bias in school discipline.

Changing Our Implicit Associations

The good news is that our brains are malleable – that is, we are capable of changing our mental associations, even the unconscious ones (see e.g. Ito, Chiao, Devine, Lorig, & Cacioppo, 2006; Kawakami, Phills, Steele, & Dovidio, 2007; Richeson & Ambady, 2003)! Indeed, researchers have begun to explore mechanisms and contexts in which our implicit biases are most likely to shift. Three approaches in particular show tremendous promise: Education & Training, Intergroup Contact, and Mindfulness Meditation.

- **Education & Training:** The first step to changing our implicit associations is to know what our biases are and how they operate. Research suggests that implicit bias training may promote improved decision-making by

leading individuals to question their objectivity (Bennett, 2010). This effect is magnified when education is coupled with taking an Implicit Association Test (Roberts, 2012). Moreover, training that aims to foster egalitarian motivations has been found to effectively inhibit implicit stereotype activation (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006).

- **Intergroup Contact:** Research demonstrating the effectiveness of intergroup contact dates back to 1954. Championed by psychologist Gordon W. Allport, intergroup contact theory asserts that intergroup prejudice may be reduced through increased familiarity with outgroups (Allport, 1954). Importantly, there are four key conditions for optimal intergroup contact: Equal status between individuals; collectively focused on an active goal-oriented effort; interacting in a cooperative setting as opposed to a competitive setting; and receiving support from authority figures, law, or custom where applicable. The efficacy of Allport's hypothesis has been consistently supported by contemporary scholars (Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011).

- **Mindfulness Meditation:** Mindfulness meditation has been shown to reduce implicit and explicit biases toward stigmatized groups, increase prosocial behavior, and even reduce stress while improving one's well-being (see e.g. Bishop et al., 2004; Y. Kang, Gray, & Dovidio, 2014). In particular, mindfulness meditation shifts biases by im-

proving perception and helping to regulate attention and emotion (Lueke & Gibson, 2015). This state of heightened awareness of the here-and-now affords individuals the capacity and focus necessary to replace unwanted associations. Notably, this technique has been found to reduce negative implicit bias and increase empathy when targeted towards homeless individuals (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008), racial minorities (Lueke & Gibson, 2015; Stell & Farsides, 2015), and even elderly populations (Lueke & Gibson, 2015).

In addition to the three strategies outlined above, researchers have explored myriad other interventions, with varying levels of success: **Exposure to counter-stereotypes** (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; J. Kang & Banaji, 2006), **perspective taking** (Benforado & Hanson, 2008; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Stone & Moskowitz, 2011; Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011), and **deliberate processing** (Betancourt, 2004; J. Kang, 2012). Simply put, "implicit bias is like a habit that can be broken through a combination of awareness of implicit bias, concern about the effects of that bias, and the application of strategies to reduce bias" (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012, p. 1267).

Institutional Remedies For Addressing Implicit Bias

When devising ways to mitigate implicit bias on an institutional level, it is important to understand the contexts in which individuals are most likely to act on stereotypes and biases. Fortunately, scholars have identified several instances in which implicit biases are most likely to manifest: (1) Moments of **intense time pressures** (Bertrand, Chugh, & Mullainathan, 2005; Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Payne, 2006; Sanbonmatsu & Fazio, 1990); (2) when we

have **elevated cognitive "busyness"** (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991; Payne, 2006); and (3) when decisions are made in **contexts high in ambiguity** (Bertrand et al., 2005). Understanding this, the recommendations that follow seek to elevate ways schools can create policies and practices that mitigate the operation of bias as it pertains to school discipline disparities.

- **Expand data collection and analysis:** Logging data is a critical first step toward understanding how bias may be operating (Blair, Steiner, & Havranek, 2011; powell, 2015). Data will can surface trends, thus allowing individuals to set clear goals, and track progress. Specifically, it will help educators understand whether there are classroom-level, grade-level, or school-level trends related to discipline disparities across racial and sex categories. As this report highlights, it is also important to **embrace intersectionality as the standard practice for data tracking and analysis, as opposed to the exception.** This includes the expansion of sex and gender categories to encompass students within the Trans community to account for their unique experiences.

- **Reduce Ambiguity in the Discipline Process:** Recall that for both male and female students of all racial and ethnic categories, "Disruptive/Disobedient Behavior" accounted for the vast majority of disciplinary infractions. This surfaces several questions: Who decides what behavior is considered "disruptive" or "disobedient"? How might deep-rooted stereotypes impact one's perception of behavior, especially in cases of cultural mismatch between the student(s) in question and the educator or administrator?

These questions highlight the importance of reducing ambiguity in the discipline process (Bertrand et al., 2005). Where possible, leaders should provide clear guidance and examples to ensure teachers, administrators, and all school personnel understand what constitutes justifiable discipline response. Moreover, given the tendency for performative processes to diverge from ostensive processes (Lewis & Diamond, 2015), school officials should outline clear guidance regarding the procedural "next steps" once an infraction has been identified.

- **Improve Decision-Making:** When possible, take the appropriate time and space when making discipline decisions to limit constraints on cognitive processing (National Center for State Courts). One way this can be accomplished is by implementing a mandatory "cool-down" period for educators and administrators poised to categorize a students' behavior as "disruptive" or "disobedient." This is especially important given research showing that elevated emotional states, such as anger or sadness, can influence the activation of negative out-

group bias (Dasgupta, DeSteno, Williams, & Hunsinger, 2009; DeSteno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, & Cajdric, 2004).

- **Increase Accountability:** Research suggests that having a sense of accountability can reduce the influence of implicit bias (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Green & Kalev, 2008; Todd, Bodenhausen, Richardson, & Galinsky, 2011). This may be accomplished by the creation of a third-party neutral ombudsperson whose job it is to mediate instances of perceived injustices related to behavioral infractions. Doing so will foster a school culture that encourages educators and administrators to question their objectivity and engage in deliberate processing before addressing behavioral concerns.

As evidenced in this analysis, by taking deliberate and collective action, we can mitigate the harmful effects of implicit bias on Ohio students and shrink the disparities in rates of school discipline across race and sex identities. With intention, attention, and time, we can create schools that provide safe spaces where children can learn, grow, and develop.

ENVISIONING A NEW WORLD

What if we began to view behavioral missteps as universal cries for help from our youth? What if we simply decided that it was no longer acceptable for students to have their education disrupted by the enactment of punitive and exclusionary discipline policies? What if we envisioned a new world where intersectionality is acknowledged and we work just as hard to "save our daughters" as we do to "save our sons?" Imagine a world where our implicit biases are unable to derail our attempt to create egalitarian and nurturing school climates. At the Kirwan Institute, we believe that through education and collective impact, our imagined world can be achieved. We believe it is possible to create schools and communities where all individuals have the opportunity to succeed.

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