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## Are High Levels of Educator Bias Associated with the Disproportionate Discipline of Black Students?

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Are High Levels of Educator Bias Associated with the Disproportionate Discipline  
of Black Students?

By Melissa Ramos

A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Leadership,  
School Counseling & Sport Management  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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This dissertation titled Are High Levels of Educator Bias Associated with the Disproportionate  
Discipline of Black Students?

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## DEDICATION

*This is dedicated to my childhood friend, Ashley Ramnauth, who made countless people laugh in her too-short time here on earth. I strive to do all of the things you never got a chance to do and I look forward to the day I get to see you again.*

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## Abstract

Data on school discipline inequities have shown disproportionate numbers of Black students suspended and expelled compared to their non-Black counterparts. Despite the implementation of evidence-based solutions such as positive behavior supports and intervention, educator professional development, and restorative practices aimed at closing the racial discipline gap, little to no change has occurred. Critical Race Theory is used as a lens for viewing racial hierarchies as a socially constructed tool to oppress people of color. This oppression can be seen in various aspects of society and in education, especially in school discipline. It is fueled by biases, both implicit and explicit. This study aims to bring light to the impact of educator bias on the lack of positive change upon implementation of evidence-based strategies aimed to minimize school discipline inequities.

The data for this quantitative study was collected through surveys designed to measure explicit and implicit bias of K-12 public school educators in a large urban school district in the Southeastern U.S. Regression analysis was used to determine if there is a relationship between high levels of educator bias and high levels of racial discipline disproportionalities. The discrepancies between total enrollment of Black students and discipline (i.e., multiple out-of-school suspension rates) of Black students was not found to correlate to individual factors such as educator race, gender, and total years employed at their current school. Post hoc analysis showed that the discrepancy could not be predicted by school-level factors such as surrounding neighborhood income levels. Findings could be limited by lower-than-expected participation rates but can be built upon with future research aimed at gathering data from a greater number of educators per school.



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Racism, defined as “the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), is deeply engrained in the history of the United States. For nearly 400 years, Blacks were enslaved at the hands of whites. Black enslavement in the traditional sense dates back to 1501 (Wright, 1902) and goes through the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Even since their legal freedom from slavery, Blacks still experience disadvantages from inequitable opportunities for jobs, education, and housing, to limited voting rights and increased imprisonment. (Gross & de la Fuente, 2020; Horowitz, 2019; Loury, 1998; Martinez & Glantz, 2018). The educational system is not immune to the systemic racism evident in American society. This is evident in inequitable school funding, distribution of curricular materials, placement of highly qualified teachers, and racial discipline data in schools. This study focuses on the racial discipline inequities in American public schools and the factors related to this problem.

### **Problem Statement**

Black students have long been disproportionately disciplined in school, meaning there is a significant discrepancy in the percentage of Black students enrolled versus the percentage of disciplinary referrals written on Black students. Despite the implementation of evidence-based strategies (e.g., strategies that incorporate relevant scientific evidence that allow educators to make informed decisions) aimed at reducing overall disciplinary referrals, no significant decrease in racial discipline disparities has occurred. Black students receive more frequent disciplinary referrals and harsher consequences than their white counterparts. This inequitable

discipline in many cases contributes to a loss of instructional time in school due to exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion.

This loss of instruction can lead to the inability to meet grade level requirements, thus amplifying the likelihood of school drop-out. Dropout rates tend to increase the likelihood of students entering the juvenile justice system. Some argue this is because high paying jobs can be out of reach for those without a diploma, leading to a dilemma of being unable to support oneself and committing crimes for finances (Choudhry, 2018). Therefore, we must consider the consequences of racial disproportionalities in school discipline in order to provide a fair chance at a successful future for all students, especially Black students who are currently disadvantaged due to discipline disparities.

Consequences administered by teachers and administrators (here-on referred to as educators) are often subjective based on interpretation of the severity of the offense. These subjective consequences raise the question of why Black students are disciplined more frequently and harshly. Educator bias could be linked to subjective interpretation of offenses and amplified frequency and intensity of disciplinary actions towards Black students. Biases are prejudices that can be either positive or negative toward a person or thing. It is important to note that bias and racism are not the same thing. While bias is a prejudice, racism is a negative action fueled by that prejudice. Biases can be explicit, in which one is aware of the bias, or implicit, in which one's bias is automatic and the person may be unaware of them. Both explicit and implicit biases

impact one's actions by removing a neutral standpoint, leaving a person to automatically act on their prejudices, whether identified or not.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to determine if educator bias is related to inequitable school discipline. Researchers seeking to understand the factors related to racial disparities in school discipline along with the evidence-based strategies to close the racial discipline gap have been ineffective in reducing this racial discipline gap. This study sought to determine if there is a positive correlation between levels of implicit and explicit bias among educators and disparities in discipline records for students from various subgroups. Determining the possible impact of educator bias on school discipline may help in alleviating barriers that prevent evidence-based strategies from effectively reducing the racial discipline gap.

### **Research Question**

Therefore, this study's guiding research question was: Are low levels of educator explicit/implicit bias related to equitable school discipline practices? This information may help to identify next steps needed to avoid barriers in the implementation of evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing the racial discipline gap. The next section will discuss a theoretical framework that can account for these implicit and explicit biases.

### **Overview of Theoretical Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that is defined as an "intellectual movement and loosely organized framework of legal analysis based on the premise that race is not a natural, biologically grounded feature of physically distinct subgroups of human beings but a socially constructed (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of

colour” (Britannica, n.d.). Tenets of CRT include (1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; (2) challenge to the dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the importance of experiential knowledge; and (5) the use of interdisciplinary perspectives (Allen, 2012; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). These tenets place race at the center of society’s way of work, favoring whites in oppressing minorities. Derrick Bell, one of the earliest proponents of CRT, stated “We emphasize our marginality and try to turn it toward advantageous perspective building and concrete advocacy on behalf of those oppressed by race” (1995, p.79). Likewise, advocates of CRT recognize all humans as equal despite the oppressive actions of society on minority subgroups. Considering the first two tenets of CRT, I would argue that this oppression and exploitation can be seen in many aspects of American society, specifically in inequitable school discipline based on race.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This quantitative study analyzed cross-sectional data on student discipline and educator bias. Student discipline data included the racial demographic of students enrolled at K-12 public schools in a large urban district in Florida compared to the racial demographic of disciplinary referrals written. Student data also included consequences administered for disciplinary referrals (i.e., in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, etc.). Data on educator bias included implicit bias data based on items modeled after the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Educator explicit bias data was also collected through the use of an

instrument similar to the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986). Data on educator implicit and explicit bias was analyzed alongside student discipline data through regression analysis.

### **Significance of the Research**

It is critical to look into factors that can lead to inequitable student discipline in order to better understand how to make discipline more equitable. Factors that contribute to inequities in student discipline have previously been identified, including factors such as the presence of armed police officers on school campus, the rate at which students are disciplined by teachers or administrators in the school, and more over-arching factors such as school funding and student poverty.

Additionally, evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing the racial discipline gap have been identified. These include implementation of positive behavior interventions and restorative practices, as well as professional development for educators. Unfortunately, these strategies intended to decrease overall disciplinary referrals have proven ineffective in reducing the racial discipline gap. This study aims to analyze educator bias as a possible roadblock to the effective implementation of the previously discussed strategies.

### **Positionality Statement**

Prior to delving further into the topic and literature, I acknowledge my standpoint as a white female educator. Despite my privilege protecting me from direct consequences of racial biases, I as a school administrator have seen firsthand the negative impact on students caused by inequitable school discipline. While I consider myself an advocate of social justice and equality in movements such as Black Lives Matter, I understand that my positionality may influence this

study to an extent. My experiences as a school-based educational leader may have impacted the methodological choices and analysis made in this study.

My experiences also lead me to utilize the term “Black” when describing the population of people many describe as “African American” or “people of color”. I chose to utilize “Black” as many colleagues have found “African American” offensive due to the untrue insinuation that all Black people come from Africa. I also opted not to use the term “people of color” as many view this term as an umbrella term for many subgroups of marginalized people. While people of color as a whole also experience racial inequities, this particular study focused on those related to Black people.

### **Organization of the Study**

The following chapter will summarize relevant research related to school discipline and racial discrepancies present in disciplinary referrals. I will then describe factors that have been identified as possible contributors to these racial discrepancies, as well as steps taken to decrease the racial discipline gap. I will then present educator bias as a possible barrier to the effective implementation of the steps taken to reduce inequity in school discipline. Chapter 3 will outline the quantitative methodology this study will use to answer the research question.

Chapters 4 and 5 will review data retrieved and findings related to the research question. First, data will be presented containing Pearson correlations for both implicit and explicit bias of educators and other variables including school disciplinary discrepancy scores and educator race, gender, and length of time employed at their school. A post-hoc analysis will also be discussed regarding average income surrounding schools compared to the discipline discrepancy at the school. In chapter 5 I will review my opinions on the findings and will discuss the study

constraints as well as possible implications for both school-based educational leaders and for future research.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the broad issue of racial inequities in school discipline and the consequences of over-discipline on Black youth. The purpose of this study was introduced as a means of ascertaining if there is a relationship between educator bias and equitable discipline. This may allow researchers to identify possible barriers to the effective implementation of evidence-based strategies intended to decrease the racial discipline gap. The barriers will be examined through a Critical Race Theory lens, which highlights the dominant ideology and systemic racism present in the United States.

The chapter briefly introduced the quantitative methodology used, which look at implicit and explicit bias of educators as well as school demographic information of students and disciplinary referrals. Finally, this chapter briefly introduced content to be discussed in chapters 4 and 5, including study findings, limitations, implications for school-based educational leaders as well as for future research, and a discussion of the findings.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In this chapter, I review data on racial disparities in school discipline and various factors that contribute to these disparities. I then introduce Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework in looking at historical and modern racism followed by various evidence-based solutions that have been ineffective at reducing the racial discipline gap. Lastly, I discuss implicit and explicit bias as a possible hindrance to the effective reduction of discipline disparities via evidence-based solutions.

Discipline can be punitive (receiving negative punishments) or non-punitive (verbal reminders of expectations). Punitive discipline can be defined as an unpleasant consequence for a child's undesirable behavior (Roter, 2015). Research suggests that punitive discipline leads to decreased academic achievement (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Gonzalez, 2015). Such consequences in the school setting can include removal from the class, detention, suspension, and even expulsion. The exclusionary practices (e.g., class removal, suspension, and expulsion from school) related to punitive discipline lead to students being absent from meaningful activities in schools. When those students return to school, they may find it difficult to academically and/or socially re-engage with classroom activities due to their inability to keep up with academics caused by their absences as well as a lack of social interactions during their absence. Both of these will be discussed later. Data regarding exclusionary practices have shown that students who are recipients of these exclusionary practices have higher rates of dropping out of school altogether (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005). This can be related to the previously



mentioned lack of academic and social engagement caused by increased exclusion from meaningful classroom activities.

### **Racial Disparities in School Disciplinary Practices**

While data highlighting the racial discipline gap and its causes have been increasingly reported at the local level, federal reporting has not always been so publicly prominent. The Office of Civil Rights only began reporting the data nationally starting in 2018. However, many researchers have been disaggregating local data to the school, grade, or individual student level. Additional researchers offer explanations on variations, causes, and implications of the racial discipline gap. This disaggregation has proven to be crucial in determine trends in the disproportionate discipline of Black students as it highlights the significant inequities and prompts calls to change (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

The literature showing that Black students receive more disciplinary referrals than white students is vast. In 2018, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) released an analysis that showed Black students represented roughly 39% of all school suspensions despite making up only 15.5% of the school population. This means that Black students are being suspended at 2.5 times the rate that would be expected if suspension rates mirrored population rates, and as noted in Table 1, is an overrepresentation of more than 23%. Some might argue that Black students are suspended more frequently than white students because they are more likely to be in schools that serve students from lower socio-economic statuses, which have higher rates of disciplinary referrals than those serving students from higher socio-economic statuses. However, the same 2018 analysis by the United States GAO noted that

regardless of the type of school, level of school poverty, or type of disciplinary action, the disproportionate discipline of Black students is widespread. The overuse of suspensions, expulsions, and other exclusionary practices for Black students is magnified with the increasing police presence in schools (Rudd, 2014; Weisburt 2019; Scott, Moses, Finnigan, Trujillo, & Jackson, 2018). This could be due to the reliance of police to intervene in school-level discipline where it would otherwise be handled internally by teachers or administrators. Police are more likely to be present in schools with higher populations of Black students, meaning police are then more likely to interfere with the discipline of Black students due to educator reliance on police intervention. Since police officers practice exclusionary discipline outside of the school system (i.e., imprisonment), this interference in schools leads to harsher consequences and higher likelihood of a utilization of exclusionary practices or involvement with the criminal justice system. This reliance on exclusionary practices prevents Black students from obtaining their right to instructional time. Students who are suspended or expelled do not have access to the same amount of instructional time as their peers. I argue that this loss of instructional time therefore hinders their academic ability. It should also be noted that the academic ability of Black students is often expected to be less than their non-Black peers, evidenced by the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted programs (Hodges, Tay, Maeda, & Gentry 2018; Ford, 2010; Ford & Whiting, 2007)

**Table 1**  
*Student Enrollment and Rate of in- and out-of-school Suspensions*

Race	Enrollment	Out-of-School Suspension		In-School Suspension	
		Percentage	Representation	Percentage	Representation
White	50.3	32.5	-17.8	38.5	-11.8
Black	15.5	38.7	+23.2	31.9	+16.4

*Note.* Data taken from United States Government Accountability Office (2018)

Students engage in disruptive behavior for a variety of reasons. Some disruptive behavior in class can stem from a student's inability to academically meet grade-level expectations. Students who are suspended miss instruction that could make it more difficult for them to meet grade-level expectations, thus increasing their frustration levels and undesired behaviors. For instance, if a student is suspended Monday through Wednesday and returns to school on Thursday, they have missed three days-worth of critical academic instruction. When they return to school on Thursday, they are presented with academic expectations they are unable to meet due to a lack of foundational knowledge covered earlier in the week. Therefore, the student becomes frustrated and they disengage from the task. Now, having nothing to do that meets the teacher's instructional expectations, they get bored and engage in behaviors the teacher may deem inappropriate, leading to further disciplinary action being taken. The student may return to an educator who has not let go of the student's offense and whose attitude toward the student is unwelcoming or off-putting. The educator's demeanor towards the student could also cause the student to become frustrated and disengage or revert to the behaviors deemed inappropriate.

Suspending Black students at higher-than-expected rates can exacerbate the achievement gaps. In addition to hurting Black students academically, excluding Black students from

classroom instruction further hinders their ability to develop socially and emotionally with their peers. Punitive discipline may lead to lower abilities of Black students to meet academic, social, and emotional age-appropriate expectations, which I argue criminalizes them.

These developmental hindrances contribute to the well-known school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is a national trend in which many Black youth are harshly punished in schools and essentially funneled into the criminal justice system due to harsh school consequences or law enforcement involvement in schools. In turn, many Black citizens are deprived of their ability to positively contribute to society due to their forced lack of presence in free society when incarcerated. The financial strain of limited contributions in spending by Blacks in addition to the societal costs of keeping Blacks imprisoned is not only an injustice to an entire subgroup of people, but a threat to democracy at its core. In other words, mass incarceration of Black people means a large group of people are not contributing to the economy and are costing taxpayer dollars to keep incarcerated. It is important to note that Blacks make up roughly 13% of the population in the United States but represent nearly 40% of incarcerated individuals (Prison Policy Initiative, 2022)

The factors that can contribute to racial discipline gaps in schools are numerous. These factors can be within the school such as the presence of armed police officers on school campuses and the rate at which students are disciplined by educators at the school. Factors that

contribute to racial discipline disparities can also be more over-arching such as school funding and student poverty. All of these will be discussed in the next section.

### **Factors that Contribute to Racial Discipline Gaps**

A variety of over-arching factors contribute to racial disparities in school discipline. I argue that levels of poverty and inadequate school funding play a role in the disciplinary discrepancies. Educational professionals have documented that a vast majority of underfunded schools are in neighborhoods where socio-economic status is below the poverty line (Randazzo, 2018; Renschler, 1993). Students at these schools may feel less-than because they tend to have fewer and outdated curricular resources, minimal access to technology, and old worn-down buildings. In addition to human resource challenges caused by funding, finances also play into a lack of school resources. Losen, Hewitt, and Toldson (2014) note that many obstacles within schools are posed by the inequitable availability of school resources. Oftentimes schools in low-funded areas have older buildings, furniture, and play areas. The curricular materials are typically outdated and damaged, without enough for each child to have their own copy. The lack of appropriate resources at these schools can contribute to poorer academic mastery and student and teacher disengagement, which may both lead to a hindered school culture.

Students at schools in lower socio-economic status neighborhoods also have a high turnover rate of teachers who tend to lack the “highly qualified” label. This is especially relevant to a discussion of inequitable disciplinary practices. Losen, Hewitt, and Toldson (2014) note that disparities in school discipline can be attributed to the inequitable distribution of highly qualified teachers. Highly qualified teachers are more equitable in their disciplinary practices than those who are not highly qualified. This can be due to lack of teacher training on classroom

management strategies as well as student lack of trust in these less qualified teachers caused by high rates of turnover and inconsistency in staffing.

While the barriers caused by inadequate funding, and curricular materials, and teachers can lead to a variety of issues with instruction and classroom management, these also cause a domino effect that plays into discipline. Ineffective and/or inexperienced teachers lack control over the learning environment, which inhibits effective teaching already hindered by lack of materials, thus causing students to disengage academically and display disruptive behaviors.

Additional factors of racial disparities in school discipline are visible at the student level. These factors include exclusionary practices such as in-school and out-of-school suspensions and increased police presence in schools. Removing students from the learning environment is a common strategy educators utilize when they feel a student's behavior is becoming disruptive. These removals vary from short-term office referrals to long-term expulsions. The majority of classroom removals are in between these time frames and consist of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. For instance, during the 2019-2020 school year 51% of discipline referrals within the Florida county in which this study is located resulted in an in-school suspension and 36% resulted in an out-of-school suspension (FLDOE, 2020). In many counties and states, students can be suspended from school starting in preschool and suspensions have widely increased since the implementation of zero-tolerance policies (policies that require student suspension/expulsion on the first referral of any particular in-school offense regardless of outstanding circumstances) and legislation requiring the presence of police officers or armed guardians in schools (United States GAO, 2018; Advancement Project, 2005; Bottiani,

Bradshaw, & Mendelson, 2016; Children's Law Center, Inc, 2018; Hines, King Jr, & Ford, 2018; Weisburst, 2019).

Many researchers have suggested police presence in schools does more harm than good, as the over-reliance on law enforcement to handle school-based discipline leads to an increase of referrals to juvenile justice and harsher consequences for low-level offenses. The increased reliance on police officers has led many more students to the juvenile justice system for incidents that would typically be handled at the school by teachers or administrators, again contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (Weisburst, 2019; Rudd, 2014). Additionally, some argue that the decision to put armed officers in schools presents negative consequences including financial costs of human resources, weapons, and ongoing training, as well as negative social consequences stemming from negative impacts to school culture.

The increased dependence on law enforcement officers trained to deal with serious crimes from the adult realm can create a poor school culture and stigmatize youth. For example, Giroux (2003) explains how schools resemble public life and that society's challenges with national security, gun violence, and crime policy have rolled into the school buildings through zero-tolerance policies. Implementation of these policies allows schools to suspend or expel students based on a single act at rates that are not unexpected, yet still disturbing (Hines, King Jr., & Ford, 2018) and for acts that are minor, subjective, and often trivial (Advancement Project, 2005; Bottiani, Bradshaw, & Mendelson, 2016; Children's Law Center, Inc, 2018; Hines, King Jr, & Ford, 2018). Some examples of these subjective and trivial acts include an 8-year-old charged with felony assault for hitting a teacher, a 14-year-old charged with battery for pouring

chocolate milk on a classmate, a 7-year-old being handcuffed for crying after being bullied, and many more just like these (Advancement Project, 2005; Hines, King Jr, & Ford, 2018).

Weisburst (2019) suggests that the presence of police officers in schools negatively impacts overall school culture by overstepping educator authority and compromising the safe school atmosphere in addition to perpetuating stigmatism towards disciplined students, in turn reducing student confidence. This stigma carries over to teachers' attitude toward students. "Research has shown that, in general, a record of misbehavior can significantly impact decisions about punishment...In school, teachers can become more retributive in punishing children with a history of misbehavior than children without this history..." (Okonofua, 2016, p. 6). These retributive punishments may relate to educator preconceived notions about student behavior, thus setting up a cycle by which students with a history of disciplinary referrals receive harsher consequences than their peers no matter what the reason for their disruptive behavior, much like in the criminal justice system. This then leads to increased reliance on exclusionary practices and the cycle continues after students return to school. Cycles like this can be better understood through the lens of Critical Race Theory.

### **Critical Race Theory**

While racial exclusion has traditionally been brushed off as a minor inconvenience to democracy, the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the analysis of educational policy and practice looks much deeper into the foundation of policies and practices. (Brown, 2018). Instead, scholars have suggested that racism is persistent and deeply engrained in all aspects of life and education (Brown, 2018; Scott, Moses, Finnigan, Trujillo, & Jackson, 2017). This suggests that



racial discrimination can be identified in many laws, policies, and practices evident in American education.

Critical Race Theory provides a framework in which to investigate reasons for disparities in racial school disciplinary practices. CRT can be defined as an “intellectual movement and loosely organized framework of legal analysis based on the premise that race is not a natural, biologically grounded feature of physically distinct subgroups of human beings but a socially constructed (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of colour” (Britannica, n.d.). Critical Race Theory was derived from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) with the intent of drawing attention to the ways in which the legal and political system perpetuate racial inequities. While CLS was first used predominantly in legal studies, it has since expanded into education, women’s studies, ethnic studies, sociology, and more. Additional spin-offs of CLS include Latino-critical (LatCrit), queer-critical, and Asian-critical theories. This is because racial inequities have been identified and highlighted across various studies.

Critical Race Theory recognizes that race is a social construct, developed by white colonists (Scott, Moses, Finnigan, Trujillo, & Jackson, 2017; Brown, 2018). Arguing against the claim that the Black race is biologically inferior, CRT recognizes all humans as equal despite the oppressive actions society takes toward minority subgroups.

Tenets of CRT as noted by Allen, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso (2000) include:

- (1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism (Race and racism are permanent and intertwined with other forms of oppression/discrimination.),
- (2) challenge to the dominant ideology (opposing the narrative of objectivity and equal opportunities),

- (3) the commitment to social justice (eliminating racism),
- (4) the importance of experiential knowledge (understanding that storytelling is legitimate and appropriate), and
- (5) the use of interdisciplinary perspectives (analyzing race and racism in a historical and contemporary context)

CRT has recently become a hot button topic in education due to current national events and movements, which will be discussed later. This hot button topic has forced race and racism to be considered in the analysis of educational policy and practice.

**Evolution of Racism:** The discourse around issues of racial oppression occurring throughout the educational system is not a new topic. Oppression has long occurred in the United States, particularly with Blacks and other minority groups. Racism, defined as “the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), is deeply engrained in American society. For nearly 400 years Black people were enslaved and even upon their freedom from enslavement, they have been incredibly disadvantaged (Gross & de la Fuente, 2020; Horowitz, 2019; Loury, 1998; Martinez & Glantz, 2018). From inequitable opportunities for jobs, education, and housing, to limited voting rights and increased imprisonment, American society has always placed Black people on the back burner.

**Related Current Events:** While some argue that slavery has ended, the effects of slavery are evident generation after generation (Horowitz, 2019; Loury, 1998; Gross & de la Fuente, 2020). In many cases, the negative effects for Blacks have arguably been overlooked, ignored, or determined unimportant. For instance, in late June 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Arizona

laws that limit minority citizens' access to voting. While it was publicly known that the laws negatively impacted minority voters, the Supreme Court stated that the unequal impact was "minor." In addition, redlining, or "withhold[ing] home-loan funds or insurance from neighborhoods considered poor economic risks" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), has been widely practiced despite laws to discourage unequal opportunities for housing. A 2018 study found Blacks were turned away from housing loans at significantly higher rates than whites and other minorities (Martinez & Glantz, 2018). Despite what non-Blacks may believe, the Black American population is still highly disadvantaged to this day. Racial inequities in school discipline and the plethora of consequences that go along with over-discipline are evidence of this disadvantage.

First posted as a social media hashtag in 2013, Black Lives Matter (BLM) has progressed into what some call the largest movement in U.S. history. The movement began after the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who shot and killed a Black teenager, Trayvon Martin, who was walking in his father's neighborhood in Sanford, FL. In 2014 the BLM movement strengthened after Eric Garner was killed by a police officer in Baltimore, MD who put him in a prohibited chokehold. In 2020, the movement expanded widely with thousands of protests all over the country due to several high-profile killings. Within two months in early 2020, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd were murdered by police in Louisville, KY and Minneapolis, MN, respectively. Their stories have been widely publicized with law enforcement's treatment of Black individuals being highly criticized. Taglines "Justice for Breonna" and "I can't breathe" (the statement both Eric Garner and George Floyd made during their deaths) have gained momentum across social media platforms since their deaths. In addition to extrajudicial killings

of Black people, there are many instances of oppressive actions towards Black people today, such as inequitable voting and housing rights. These oppressive actions are precisely what supporters of CRT aim to highlight and reframe.

I would argue that the oppression of Black people is not only present in our adult society, but in school discipline as evidenced by racial inequities. With police killings of Black people making so many headlines, the topic made its way into school discussions by students and teachers alike. Many educators addressed student-led concerns and curiosities and some educators used Critical Race Theory as a framework within which to make sense of current events. This caused media and parental backlash across the country and resulted in attempts to ban the teaching of CRT in schools. In 2021, roughly half of the states in America were under fire by the media for banning or attempting to ban the teaching of Critical Race Theory in schools. For example, Florida's recently passed amendment 6A-1.094124 explicitly states that Critical Race Theory should not be mentioned, and that instruction "may not define American history as something other than the creation of a new nation based largely on universal principles stated in the Declaration of Independence." Many who argue against its teaching state that using CRT in schools would indoctrinate children into believing negative things about the country. However, others would argue the exact opposite. Some conclude that the government wishes to conceal anything that goes against the picture-perfect image of a great nation (Pew Research Center, 2020).

The efforts to ban CRT and thus the denial of systemic racism only contributes to increased inequity. If schools and institutions are ignoring racism, it continues to occur and expand. I contend that this is directly connected to racial disparities in school discipline. As

previously stated, students who are disproportionately disciplined in schools fall further behind academically, lack the ability to engage socially with peers, and are seen as persistent troublemakers who are then treated more harshly. These same students then experience police presence in their schools, which means that discipline becomes more confrontational.

Essentially, societal racism led to fear of criminal activity transitioning into the school system. This fear led to implementation of zero-tolerance policies, which –perhaps unintentionally- led to criminalized student behavior. The same racism seen in the court system outside of schools (disproportionately Black) is mirrored in the school discipline data. Many argue that the harsh discipline is intended to “[push] out allegedly low-performing youths in an era of high-stakes testing, and [perpetuate] the structural racism that has resulted in the over-criminalization and incarceration of people of color...victimizing younger and younger people of color” (Advancement Project, 2005, p. 16). Hines, King Jr., and Ford would agree: “Despite the perceived intent of zero-tolerance to safeguard school staff and children from acts of violence, students of color have been targeted for punishment for minor offenses in ways that have fundamentally questioned the original intent of the law.” (2018, p. 2). In addition, several researchers suggest that serious danger posed by students is actually very rare (Hirschfield, 2008; Losen, Hewitt, & Toldson, 2014; Okilwa, Khalifa, & Briscoe, 2017; Weissman, 2015).

In summary, Critical Race Theory provides a lens through which we can analyze both historical and current events. CRT emphasizes the permanence and relevance of race and racism while seeking social justice and an end to racist practices. With discourse on racism being a hot button topic in education, it is imperative to consider the racism in light of current and historical events such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the enslavement of Black people.

**White Scholars Using CRT:** Some have argued that Critical Race Theory should not be utilized by whites as it could lead to whites colonizing CRT to further their own interests (Bergeson, 2003). However, researchers using CRT to inform their work do not have to be any particular race to advance social justice. Bergeson states, “Finally, white scholars must join the fight to legitimize research that utilizes alternative methods such as CRT, that comes from the lived experiences of individuals who have traditionally been marginalized and considered unimportant to scholarship, and that grows from the passion of doing research to effect changes that will benefit people of color” (2003, p. 60). In addition, limiting the utilization of CRT to non-whites goes against the tenet that race is a social construct and that racial labels construct categories that have no biological basis. Therefore, I contend it is appropriate to proceed with the use of CRT as a theoretical framework for this study.

### **Evidence-Based Solutions Aimed at Decreasing Disciplinary Referrals**

Many researchers have looked for best practice solutions to decrease overall discipline records and close the racial discipline gap because there is a plethora of data explaining factors that result in Black students being disproportionately represented in school disciplinary records (Rafa 2019; Alege & Johnston, 2020; Gonzalez, 2015; Children’s Law Center Inc., 2013; Dhaliwal, Chin, Lovison & Quinn, 2020). Such recommendations have included implementation of positive behavior interventions and/or restorative practices, and professional development for educators, all of which will be explored in depth below.

**Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports:** Positive Behavior Supports, sometimes referred to as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) or School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS), is a school-level plan implemented to improve school culture and

decrease undesired student behaviors. PBIS focuses on prevention of undesired student behavior via emphasis on positive school culture and effective communication. This can look like student incentive programs, school-wide posters stating expectations, positive reinforcement of desired behaviors, and more. When implemented with fidelity and continuous educator training, PBIS has shown to decrease overall office referrals and student suspensions. However, even though PBIS reduces overall disciplinary referrals, racial discrepancies are still significant in schools where PBIS has been implemented. Baule (2020) claims that PBIS does not address the racial disparity without making a conscious effort to address racial inequalities explicitly. This can be done by emphasizing the need for PBIS efforts to address racial inequalities during educator training on PBIS. In addition, data has shown that PBIS is less likely to be implemented in schools with higher rates of minority students, yet reasons for this are unknown. (Baule, 2020; National Association of School Psychologists, 2018).

**Restorative Practices:** Restorative practices, sometimes referred to as restorative justice, are aimed at building student social-emotional competence, problem-solving skills, and self-regulation strategies. Restorative practices are often an alternative to exclusionary practices like suspension and expulsion. This type of practice is essentially aimed at restoring youth to eliminate undesired behaviors and reinforce desired behaviors through a one-on-one mediation aimed at behavior reflection and modification. Many districts have implemented restorative practices in an effort to counteract the increasing suspensions and expulsions caused by zero-tolerance policies.

Johnstone (2001) describes restorative justice as a meeting held in a safe space with a trusted facilitator (teacher or administrator) who guides the offender (and victim, if applicable)

“towards constructive dialogue and a mutually agreeable resolution” (p. 1). Johnstone further explains that the offender is urged to take ownership for their actions and the resulting consequences and is then urged to reassure the victim or facilitator that the events will not be repeated.

While the intentions of restorative practices are positive, data on school disciplinary outcomes show that many educators and administrators prefer the faster, hands-off approach of administering punishment. I would argue this is due to the overwhelming amount of work and decisions educators face every day. This focus on punishment rather than resolution is evident in both school discipline and the criminal justice system. In addition, the National Association of School Psychologists states, “Although research has found restorative justice techniques that address students' misbehavior in school to be effective, they are less likely to be implemented in schools with larger percentages of Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged youth” (2018, p. 3). Referring to a study by Payne and Welch (2013), it was noted that schools with high populations of Black students rely more on punitive approaches and are less likely to implement preventative techniques. I would argue this is related to educator preconceived notions about behavior of Black students.

**Professional Development for Educators:** Perhaps one reason why PBIS and restorative justice have not narrowed the racial gaps in school discipline is because they have not addressed educators' professional development needs. Many researchers have argued that professional development opportunities for educators are an essential component to any strategy to decrease the racial gap in school discipline. One study seeking to increase the equity in school discipline found that implementation of PBIS was more effective in decreasing the overall



number of disciplinary referrals when adequate training and follow-up were provided (Baule, 2020). Additionally, Losen, Hewitt, & Toldson (2014) stated that in regard to racial disparities in school discipline, both cultural misunderstandings and a lack of cultural competency contribute to the issue. I would argue that this cultural misunderstanding can be seen as teachers misperceiving typical behavior exhibited by Black students as behavior that should be disciplined. For instance, a student who typically talks loudly or plays around physically with peers may be subjectively perceived as a disruptive, aggressive student, meaning the disciplinary referral for this student is based on subjective interpretations of the student's behavior. Homing in on the necessary content of professional development has pointed many researchers to educator bias.

Implications of educator bias have led to many schools and school districts providing professional development surrounding social/cultural competency. These trainings cover topics such as diversity and inclusion, racial and social justice, culturally responsive education, and positive school environments (NEA Center for Social Justice, 2021) with a goal of improving educator best practices in order to decrease overall discipline referrals and racial discrepancies in school discipline.

The Education Commission of the States reports that 26 states proposed legislation in 2016-2017 to mandate alternative discipline, or alternatives to suspension, including the utilization of professional development for educators to improve their management and discipline (Rafa, 2018). These professional development opportunities are aimed at helping educators become more aware of their own biases and the effect these biases have on their work.

Despite the benefits of training on implementation of alternative discipline measures, trainings surrounding educator bias prove more challenging.

### **Biases and Their Impact on the Effectiveness of Best Practice Solutions**

As race and racism have become more prominent topics of discussion in the field of education, many researchers have drawn attention to the role of educator biases (Dhaliwal, Chin, Lovison, & Quinn, 2020; Ferguson, 2003; Rudd, 2014; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005; Strauss, 2018). It is important to note the difference between racism and biases. Vanessa Coppes notes that “Bias is a conscious or unconscious prejudice against an individual or group based on their identity... Racism is what happens when that belief translates into action,” (2020, para. 8). Biases are beliefs held by individuals whereas racism is negative biases put into action. Biases are prejudices against a group of people based on their identity whereas racism occurs through a structural inequality to that group of people based on their identity (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2021; Project Implicit, 2021; Coppes 2020; and Ruhl, 2020). In short, negative bias leads to racism. Biases, whether positive or negative can be explicit or implicit. Both can impact someone’s actions.

**Explicit Bias:** Explicit biases include “preferences, beliefs, and attitudes of which people are generally consciously aware and can, when willing, identify and communicate to others,” (Daumeyer, Onyeador, Brown, & Richeson, 2019, p. 3). Just because people are aware of their biases does not mean they will identify or acknowledge them to others. Consider the 2005 study by Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell in which whites struggled with the dissonance of having their ideology about white privilege challenged. When asked about their own biases, most people know what they are not supposed to say to fit into societal norms. They instead exhibit

discomfort or even engage in the behaviors they claim to be innocent of while verbally explaining their perceived innocence. It is challenging to get an honest reflection, even when people are enlightened on their own biases. Many either will not tell of their own biases or will believe they do not have any.

Despite lack of acknowledgement of their own biases, educators' biases impact their practice, including their discipline practice. The report to congressional requestors by the United States Government Accountability Office addressed the link between educator bias and disciplinary practices:

Teachers and staff sometimes have discretion to make case by-case decisions about whether to discipline, and the form of discipline to impose in response to student behaviors, such as disobedience, defiance, and classroom disruption. Studies show that these decisions can result in certain groups of students being more harshly disciplined than others. Further, the studies found that the types of offenses that Black children were disciplined for were largely based on school officials' interpretations of behavior. (2018, p. 10)

Educator bias is implicated in this report, which ties back to students with prior disciplinary records being more likely to receive harsher consequences, as previously mentioned. The Advancement Project (2005) similarly discusses the lack of evidence showing Black students misbehave more in addition to a lack of evidence showing correlation between student socioeconomic status and racial discipline disparities, stating, "Race does however, correlate with the severity of the punishment imposed with students of color receiving harsher punishments for less severe behavior," (p. 8). Backed by multiple data sources documenting racial ties to disciplinary consequences, this actively demonstrates that the behaviors exhibited by Black students are no more severe than the behaviors exhibited by white students, yet the consequences are undeniably harsher for Black students.

However, some educators may associate bias with a stigma and argue against having discriminatory beliefs. As previously mentioned, many will not acknowledge their biases. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) describe the barriers of asking people about their biases. They emphasize the difference between explaining a person's thought process in a hypothetical situation (explicit bias) versus asking someone why they did something (implicit bias). While people can oftentimes explain their thought process, they cannot explain the mechanics behind how their thought process works. This is why it is likely inaccurate to rely solely on verbal reports of bias, which will be further discussed later.

**Implicit Bias:** Explicit biases are at a conscious level, but humans also have biases that exist at an unconscious level. Implicit biases, or “associations and reactions that emerge automatically and often without awareness,” are instinctive and difficult to change, regardless of if we agree with them (Daumeyer, Onyeador, Brown, & Richeson, 2019, p. 3). In essence, implicit biases are internal and often unconscious whereas explicit biases are external and conscious. For example, when probed with the term “superhero,” one may picture a white male due to the fact that superheroes are more commonly depicted as white males in the media. This immediate mental picture stems from one's implicit bias and would be extremely challenging to change. The same individual who holds that implicit bias might verbally express frustration over the difficulty of finding images of Black or female superheroes online. One can explicitly say they want to see more Black or female superheroes online but implicitly still associate superhero with white male.

Recent research has shown that educator implicit bias is heavily implicated in racial disparities in school discipline (Rudd, 2014; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005;

Ferguson, 2003; Dhaliwal, Chin, Lovison, & Quinn, 2020; Strauss, 2018). The connection between educator bias and discipline disparities has even been documented in federal reports by the United States Government Accountability Office (2018) in which national data was analyzed and detailed disproportionately high numbers of Black students being suspended and expelled. This report suggested educator bias was connected to discipline disproportionalities due to the widespread inequities despite school type or location.

Biases are not only held by individuals. They are also held by groups of individuals. The phenomena of “bias of the crowd” are the collective biases within an organization or group, which tend to be more stable and better able to predict discriminatory behavior than individual biases (Armstrong, 2021; Kofman, 2018; Payne, 2017). This is because beliefs held within a group or organization are stronger and steadier than those of a single person. Just as Critical Race Theory suggests race and racism are central throughout society, the bias of the crowd phenomenon is central throughout buildings or organizations. Therefore, it is important to consider biases held on a larger scale.

Conflicting research has been published on the effects of individual biases versus bias of the crowd on disciplinary practices. Anyon, et al. (2017) sought to investigate individual versus systemic effects of bias by looking at disciplinary records from a location standpoint. The researchers noted that some spaces, such as classrooms, can be considered “owned” because they belong to a particular teacher and students. Others, such as hallways or restrooms, can be considered “unowned” because they are shared by many teachers and students. The researchers analyzed the students’ demographics of disciplinary referrals written when students were in each of those spaces. They found that the overrepresentation of Blacks in these disciplinary referrals

occurred across a variety of locations and highlighted that students were most likely to receive disciplinary referrals in the classroom with the teachers they see on a regular basis, which mirrored results found by Scott, Hirn, and Barber (2012) in a similar study. I would argue that this is due to educator implicit bias that is especially evident with those students they see frequently. This, combined with additional aspects in their data analysis, led the researchers to suggest that “systemic biases in discipline policies and practices are greater than the sum of prejudicial decisions made by individual teachers, administrators, and support service providers [such as counselors or speech therapists] who have weak relationships with students of color,” (Anyon, Lechuga, Ortega, Downing, Greer, and Simmons, 2017, p. 11).

Further, in discussing individual biases versus biases held within a crowd, Payne, Vuletich, and Lundberg (2017) suggest that the social phenomenon of implicit bias is more stable in situations than in the minds of individual people, meaning a widely held bias within a crowd is less likely to change than a bias held by a single person. Ford also noted that “the most insidious and pervasive form of racism operates at an institutional level” (2016). In essence, biases held within an organization, crowd, or situation tend to be stronger and more reliable or predictable. Because of this, it is important to consider how bias of the crowd plays into the educational system and school environments.

**Why Best Practice Solutions Are Not Working:** Some argue that trainings alone may not be enough. Dhaliwal, Chin, Lovison, and Quinn (2020) note that implicit bias is a much more complicated concept than one which can be addressed in a training. Additionally, providing a training may be beneficial to developing awareness of biases but lack the ability to help educators make positive changes in their day-to-day way of work. Will (2020) agrees that

training must be both in-depth, requiring teachers to analyze their own biases and the effect they have on students, and coupled with policies intended to prevent student harm caused by biases. Additionally, with any trainings some participants are bound to dismiss the content or learning objectives as irrelevant to themselves. This may be true considering researchers who have documented the inability of some people to acknowledge their own biases. A 2006 study found that many participants partaking in professional development, when faced with discomfort surrounding white privilege, were unable to transfer the sense of dissonance to arguments regarding discrimination against other groups. (Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell). Essentially, this means educators felt uncomfortable when discussing white privilege, but did not see how other groups may have felt the same way regarding discrimination.

Armed with data supporting factors and plausible solutions, many districts and independent researchers have implemented new ways of work with the aim of decreasing overall discipline records and closing the racial discipline gap. However, many researchers have found that although the number of discipline records may decrease upon implementation, the racial gap does not significantly change. I would argue that educator bias plays a key role in the hindrance of effective implementation aimed at reducing racial discipline disparities.

### **Research Questions**

Understanding factors related to racial disparities in school discipline along with research-based best practice strategies to reduce the racial discipline gap have proven ineffective in actually doing so. It is crucial to consider implications that limit the effectiveness of these best practice strategies in order to progress towards more equitable discipline in schools. This study seeks to determine if there is a positive correlation between levels of implicit bias and disparities

in discipline records for students from various subgroups. The guiding research question is: Are low levels of educator explicit/implicit bias related to equitable school discipline practices?

### **Chapter Summary**

Racial disparities in school discipline occur widely throughout the United States. Factors that contribute to these disparities include poverty, school funding, police presence, and the utilization of exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion.

Critical Race Theory provides a lens to analyze the policies and practices within the educational setting. This lens homes in on the systemic racism present in American history, the educational system, and educational policy.

Best practices solutions such as implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), restorative practices, and social-cultural competency training for educators have been implemented in an effort to decrease the racial discipline gap. Despite lowering overall numbers of discipline referrals, these best practice solutions do not reduce the racial gap. This is likely due to educator biases prohibiting the effective implementation of measures intended to provide more equitable discipline.

Both explicit (conscious) biases and implicit (unconscious) biases have been implicated as possible causes of persistent racial gaps in school discipline. Bias of the crowd also plays into Critical Race Theory and educational policies that promote disparities in school discipline.

This study sought to analyze the relationship between educators with low levels of bias (implicit and explicit) and equitable disciplinary practices.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this study was to determine if there are correlations between the levels of educator bias (both implicit and explicit) in various K-12 public schools and the levels of equity in school discipline in those same schools.

This chapter will review the research design, participant population, and instrumentation used in this study. This will be followed by a description of how data will be collected and analyzed as well as a chapter summary.

### **Purpose and Research Question**

Efforts to further understand factors related to racial disparities in school discipline and implementation of evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing the racial discipline gap have been ineffective. The implications for Black people must be considered when researching the limited effectiveness of these evidence-based strategies in progressing towards more equitable discipline in schools. This study sought to determine if there is a positive correlation between levels of implicit/explicit bias among educators and disparities in discipline records for students from various subgroups. The question I attempted to answer is: Are low levels of educator explicit/implicit bias related to equitable school discipline practices?

I hypothesized that explicit and implicit racial bias would be associated at the school level with Black-white gaps in school disciplinary outcomes. In particular, I expected that increases in both types of bias would be positively associated with the observed disciplinary gaps (i.e., more bias is associated with a larger gap). I hypothesized that explicit racial bias would be more strongly associated with gaps in disciplinary outcomes than implicit racial bias.

## **Research Design**

This exploratory quantitative study utilized a survey design and aimed to collect data on both implicit bias and explicit bias. Fowler (2014) identified types of survey data collection including phone, mail, personal interviews, internet, and group administration. Of these, data collection occurred via internet utilizing Qualtrics. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, group administration was not feasible, thus independent remote administration was necessary. Additionally, research suggests that participants may be more likely to participate truthfully in internet-based surveys versus phone or in-person interviews (Kennedy, 2019; SmartSurvey, 2021; Weisbrod, 2020) and when they are independent from other participants (Cohen, Gunia, Kim-Jung, & Murnighan, 2009 and Lelkes, Krosnick, Marx, Judd, & Park, 2011). This could be especially important for the explicit bias instrument because participants may be more likely to truthfully acknowledge their conscious biases when completing the survey online versus in-person or over the phone.

## **Population**

Educator participants were recruited from public K-12 schools within a large urban school district in Florida. Educators consisted of both teachers and administrators due to the role of each in identifying, documenting, and determining consequences for student misbehavior. Demographic information collected included participant gender and race in addition to their current school/region. Participants were also asked about the number of years they have been employed at their current school. The differentiation of their experience may help clarify any relations found between participant and school data, meaning any bias found would take into consideration if the educator was at the school at the time of student discipline data collection.

Participant gender and race were also be used to help clarify any relationships found between participant and school data.

The district in which participants and discipline data came from employed roughly 8,000 teachers and served over 111,000 students in the 2019-2020 school year. This includes 44% Black, 32% white, and 14% Hispanic students. Economically disadvantaged students make up 52% of the population and 16% are classified as students with disabilities.

Participants were recruited from all K-12 public schools within the district. I aimed to have roughly 300 educator participants in the sample. This is about 3.8% of the teacher population within the district. According to Raosoft (2004), this response rate relative to the population sample provides a 5.55% margin of error.

Discipline data was collected via state reporting from public K-12 schools within the same large school district in Florida. Demographic information collected included student gender and race as well as their school/region. Discipline data included offense type and consequence administered. For the purpose of this study, proportionality was defined as those schools where demographic discipline data was within 5% of demographic enrollment data. For instance, a school with 45% Black students enrolled was considered to have proportionate discipline if the discipline data for Black students is between 40 and 50%.

It should be taken into consideration that the most recent data at the time of collection via state reporting was from the 2020-2021 school year. This is important to note because near the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the COVID-19 pandemic began and schools went 100% remote for the last three months. Many schools continued to have remote options for the 2020-

2021 school year. This is important to note as student attendance via remote platforms during the pandemic may not provide as accurate discipline data as typical trends.

### **Sample**

All surveys were sent via email to teachers and administrators from all K-12 traditional public schools within the district. A total of 5,590 potential participants were emailed requesting participation. Based on the recruitment emails sent to potential participants, those whose completion could be utilized in data analysis constitute 3% of the total requests (Race IAT n=177; Weapons IAT n=123; Explicit Bias Survey n=134). A total of 396 participants began the Race IAT, of which 193 were assigned a *D*-score (a rating given upon completion of the survey; to be discussed fully in Chapter 4). Those not assigned a *D*-score either revoked consent to participate, did not complete the survey, or were invalidated in the analysis done by IATgen based on speed (i.e. clicking through without reading). Of the 193 results, 16 participants did not respond to demographic information which meant their responses could not be connected to the school at which they are currently employed, leaving a total of 177 participants who completed the Race IAT survey. Tables 2-3 below show demographic breakdowns of educator participants in the Race IAT by race/gender (Table 2) and race/gender and longevity (Table 3). As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of educator participants identify as white females, which is fairly aligned to the educator population as a whole in this county.

**Table 2**  
*Race IAT: Participant Race and Gender*

Gender	Race					Total
	White/ Caucasian	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Alaskan/ American Native	Other/ Prefer Not to say	
Male	23	4	1	0	3	31
Female	94	32	1	1	15	143
Non-binary	1	0	0	1	0	2
Total	118	36	2	2	18	176

**Table 3**  
*Race IAT: Participant Gender/Race and Longevity*

Years Employed at School	Gender/Race									Total
	Male			Female			Non-binary			
	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	3	0	0	15	5	3	0	0	0	26
2-3 years	8	0	0	21	12	3	0	0	1	45
4 or more years	12	4	4	58	15	11	1	0	0	105
Total	23	4	4	94	32	17	1	0	1	176

In addition to completion of the Race IAT, participants were sent the Weapons IAT and Explicit Bias survey. Fewer educators completed these surveys than the Race IAT, perhaps due to the order of survey links in the recruitment email. A total of 176 participants started the Weapons IAT, of which 48 were incomplete and 5 did not provide identifiable information, leaving a total of 123 to be used for data analysis. A total of 168 participants started the Explicit Bias survey, of which 134 were usable for data analysis. The remaining 34 participants were excluded due to incompleteness (n=24) or lack of identifiable information provided to link

participant to school (n=8). Tables showing the demographic breakdown of participants for the Weapons IAT (Table 4) and Explicit Bias Survey (Table 5) are provided below.

**Table 4**  
*Weapons IAT: Participant Gender/Race and Longevity*

Years Employed at School	Gender/Race									Total
	Male			Female			Non-binary			
	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	1	0	0	12	2	2	0	0	0	17
2-3 years	6	0	0	19	4	2	0	0	1	32
4 or more years	11	4	3	44	10	2	0	0	0	74
Total	18	4	3	75	16	6	0	0	1	123

**Table 5**  
*Explicit Bias Survey: Participant Gender/Race and Longevity*

Years Employed at School	Gender/Race									Total
	Male			Female			Non-binary			
	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	2	0	0	11	2	2	0	1	0	18
2-3 years	6	0	0	18	6	3	0	0	0	33
4 or more years	10	5	4	45	14	5	0	0	0	83
Total	18	5	4	74	22	10	0	1	0	130

## **Instrumentation**

Explicit and implicit bias data were collected via Qualtrics. The instrumentation for explicit bias data collection utilized similar questions as the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay 1986). Implicit bias data utilized similar questions and format as the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Qualtrics was used in order to adapt the original Modern Racism Scale survey items to this study's needs and collect data electronically as well as to overcome the barrier of being unable to collect official data from this study's participants through the IAT website.

**Explicit Instrumentation:** Anti-discrimination laws put into place in the 1950's and 1960's reversed the openly racist legal system (McConahay, 1986); however, anti-Black feelings and racial conflict remained (Campbell, 1971; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981). The Modern Racism Scale was created to measure racial attitudes in the general public according to the classification of "old fashioned" versus "modern" racial prejudices. The term "old-fashioned" was used to describe racial attitudes prevalent prior to the reversal of the openly racist legal system whereas the term "modern" was used to describe prevalent racial attitudes after the implementation of anti-discrimination laws in the 1950s and 1960s.

Despite nearly 40 years having passed since its creation, the Modern Racism Scale is relevant today due to the prejudicial attitudes still prevalent across the United States, as evident in current events such as extrajudicial killings of Black people. Similar to the Modern Racism Scale, this study aimed to measure explicit biases through the utilization of a questionnaire. The original survey was adapted to better fit the education context, specifically with student

discipline, as well as 21<sup>st</sup> century events. The questionnaire consisted of 10 Likert-scale items which asked participants to rate whether they agree/disagree with statements on a scale of 1-5 where 1 represents “strongly disagree”, 3 represents “neutral”, and 5 represents “strongly agree.” Sample questionnaire items included, “Most misbehavior in my classroom/school comes from Black students,” “Black students tend to be more violent/aggressive,” and “I find it easier to relate to white students.” These researcher-created items were similar to items on the Modern Racism Scale but took into consideration the school environment. Therefore, some items referenced school-age students instead of the Black population as a whole. Additionally, some items were reverse-scored, such as “Black students make the best model classroom citizens” and “In general, Black students are better behaved than their white peers.” This aimed to correct for agreement bias, which is when participants tend to disproportionately indicate a positive or negative response option. The complete instrument is located in Appendix A.

It should be noted that while the original instrument is titled the “Modern Racism Scale,” there is a difference between racism and bias. The purpose of this study is not to label individuals as racist or having racist tendencies, but instead to identify levels of bias. I acknowledge that biases can be both positive and negative, and that racism occurs where negative biases meet power and action. This instrument was designed to provide data on participant levels of explicit bias by scoring their self-reported agreement with statements that are either biased or unbiased. The instrument relates back to the research question by informing me on educator bias in relation to student discipline data at the corresponding school at which the educator is employed.

**Implicit Instrumentation:** The Implicit Association Test (IAT) was developed in 1998 by Greenwald and Banaji (Project Implicit, 2011). Participants sort words, phrases, or pictures



into two categories, which enables researchers to measure implicit biases that people are not aware of or refuse to admit.

The test is a double categorization task with four categories, of which two are relevant to the specific stimulus. An example provided by the official website is sorting flowers and insects into groups “pleasant” and “unpleasant.” The flower and insect sort may contain words such as tulip, dragonfly, beautiful, and sting. The four categories in this example might be flower, insect, pleasant, and unpleasant. Participants sort using response key “E” to indicate the object or word on the left side and “I” to indicate the object or word on the right side of the screen. At times, response keys will be shared which creates hesitation in participants, since the IAT measures the speed and accuracy of classification. For instance, if the participant must select “E” for flowers and unpleasant terms and “I” for insects or pleasant terms, they may hesitate to select “E” for the term “dirty” due to not immediately relating the term with flowers. The speed of association is related to implicit bias levels due to automaticity of relating an item to a stimulus that occurs from one’s levels of implicit bias.

Grout (2013) noted that utilizing test-retest and Cronbach measures, the IAT test proved more reliable compared to other implicit attitude tests. Still, one report noted that test-retest reliability measures should be at least 0.7 and that the IAT is only 0.5 (Nguyen 2019). However, Project Implicit’s website has a disclaimer that the test should not be retaken over and over again due to concerns of reliability that may occur if over-practiced (i.e., increased speed/accuracy due to practice, not lack of bias).

Despite the aforementioned concerns, the IATs have been widely utilized and cited in research since their inception, including being utilized in over 300 published reports and cited in

over 800 articles within the first ten years of their creation (Azar 2008). Like those who continue to utilize this instrument, I have found it to be the best instrumentation option for measuring implicit bias when compared to alternatives such as SC-IAT (Single Category Implicit Association Test), GNAT (Go/No-go Association Task, BIAT (Brief Implicit Association Test). These alternative instruments to measure implicit bias are not as widely used as the IAT and measure associations with less controversial topics like chocolate.

By analyzing the results of the IAT-like survey at a school level within the district, the bias of the crowd can be better understood in relation to the actions taken reactive to student (mis)behavior. Essentially, participant response data can be analyzed in groups compared to their corresponding school's student discipline data. The IAT scoring convention changed in 2003 towards a new scoring algorithm (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji) where higher scores reflect greater implicit biases. The new scoring algorithm takes into consideration more factors than the original scoring algorithm, including correlations to self-reported measures as well as latency calibration. In essence, the test scoring was revamped to produce more accurate results.

Participants were asked to take two IAT-like surveys in random order. They were expected to take each test only once in order to ensure the initial score was as reliable as possible. One test contained the same items as the Race IAT, which indicates if the participant has a preference for white or Black people. The Race IAT categories were White People, Black People, Good, and Bad. As noted in Appendix B, there were six photos of white faces and six photos of Black faces. The words in the Good category were laughing, cheerful, lovely, fantastic, happy, enjoy, joyful, and spectacular, whereas the words in the Bad category were failure, horrific, rotten, gross, poison, detest, pain, and bothersome. The second IAT-like survey I

utilized contained the same items as the Weapons IAT, which indicates if the participant relates weapons or harmless objects to Black or white people. As can be seen in Appendix C, the categories for the Weapons IAT were White People, Black People, Weapons, and Harmless Objects. The items for White People and Black People were the same photos from the Race IAT, which had six faces for each category. The Weapons category had six pictures of weapons including three different guns, a set of brass knuckles, a knife, and dynamite. The Harmless Objects category had six pictures, which included a backpack, keys, a notebook, a toothbrush, an umbrella, and a wallet.

Participants were presented with instructions at the start of each IAT-like survey. These instructions directed them to put their index fingers on the “E” key (left) and the “I” key (right) and use these keys to identify which category the item belongs to, as one category was presented on the left side of the screen and the other on the right side. Participants were told at the beginning of each block to go as fast as they can while being accurate. If they selected the correct key, the next item would appear. If they selected the incorrect key, a red “X” would appear and they would have to select the correct key before moving on to the next item.

After the initial grouping of items into the White People/Black People categories and Good/Bad or Weapons/Harmless Objects categories, a new block had participants sort items into key pairings. For the Race IAT, participants used the same key to respond when a photo of a Black person or a positive word were presented and used another key to respond when a photo of a White person or a negative word were presented. Key pairings were reversed in the other critical block such that participants use one key to respond when a photo of a Black person or a negative word were presented and used another key to respond when a photo of a White person

or a positive word were presented. For the Weapons IAT, this same key pairing would occur with White/Harmless Objects and Black/Weapons in one block and White/Weapons and Black/Harmless Objects in the other block. For both the Race and Weapons IAT, the order of the critical blocks was randomized, so one participant may see White with Good and Black with Bad first whereas another participant may see White with Bad and Black with Good first.

These two IAT-like surveys were selected in order to determine participants' overall feelings towards white versus Black people in general as well as which race they believe would more likely represent or possess weapons versus harmless objects. The survey results of the perceived threat Black students may pose to teachers relates to school disciplinary discrepancies stemming from high levels of educator bias. These measures of participant implicit bias were used to give insight to the associations made by participants within their school environment.

### **Data Collection**

**Explicit Data Collection:** Participants were recruited via email invitation that was planned to be sent out weekly for six weeks. It should be noted that educator email addresses are publicly available on all school websites within the district. Due to an unforeseen barrier with the school district, email invitations were only sent out once. The survey began with a notice of informed consent. If a participant declined, they were taken to the end of the survey and thanked for their time. The survey concluded by asking demographic questions that were used to help to classify participant responses in data analysis. As previously stated, this included participant gender, race, school of employment, and length of time employed at that school. Participants were reminded again that their responses were confidential.

**Implicit Data Collection:** Participants were asked to take two IAT-like surveys in random order. It was hypothesized that schools which have high levels of implicit bias as reported by the IAT-like surveys or high levels of explicit bias as reported by the Qualtrics survey would also have high levels of discipline racial disparities.

### **Data Analysis**

This study aimed to answer the research question “Do low levels of educator explicit/implicit bias predict equitable school discipline practices.” Therefore, I looked at the relationship between the variables of bias and discipline. I hypothesized that higher levels of educator bias relate to higher levels of inequitable discipline practices and that lower levels of educator bias relate to higher levels of equitable discipline practices.

Regression analysis looks at how variables maybe related in terms of prediction or explanation (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). In this study, the average educator bias (independent variable) was analyzed to determine if it could predict or explain the level of equitability in disciplinary practices (dependent variable). Simple Linear Regression was utilized to analyze the dependent and independent variables in terms of explanation. This was done separately for explicit and implicit bias. If a positive correlation was apparent, levels of educator bias would increase at the same rate as inequitable discipline.

### **Chapter Summary**

Implicit and explicit biases were measured in educators from local public schools in the southeastern United States. Their biases were measured through two implicit association tests in

addition to a Likert-style questionnaire consisting of 10 items. Data was analyzed to seek correlational trends across the different instruments.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this exploratory, quantitative study was to determine if educator bias is related to racial inequities in school discipline. The research question I aimed to answer was “Are low levels of educator explicit/implicit bias related to equitable school discipline practices?” The primary goal of answering this question was to identify next steps needed to avoid barriers in the implementation of evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing the racial discipline gap.

In this chapter I will review the findings of quantitative data including student discipline data and educator implicit and explicit bias data. I will also review a brief qualitative ad-hoc analysis based on student discipline data findings and other post hoc analyses derived from the study results.

### Quantitative Analysis

**Student Discipline Data:** Exclusionary practices, as mentioned in chapter 2, are disciplinary practices that remove a student from the learning environment. These are primarily in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion. The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) collects data on the number of student suspensions at all public schools in the state. They report the racial identification of all students receiving one or more in-school-suspensions, students receiving one out-of-school suspension, and students receiving multiple out-of-school suspensions. If, as I argued in chapter 2, exclusionary practices negatively impact students academically and socially, then being suspended multiple times would be expected to have the most pernicious effect on students. Therefore, the data point used in this analysis was

the percentage of multiple out-of-school suspensions that were administered to Black students. If there is no bias in either direction, it could be assumed that disciplinary rates for Black and white students would mirror their relative population within a school.

Utilizing school discipline data from FLDOE, each school from which there was at least one participant was assigned a discrepancy score. This score is essentially the discrepancy between rates of Black enrollment and Black suspension. For example, a school with an enrollment of 40% Black students where 35% of multiple out-of-school suspensions were administered to Black students would have a score of 5%, calculated by subtracting the school enrollment rate of Black students minus the multiple out-of-school suspension rate of Black students, or 40% minus 35%. These scores could also be negative. Consider a school with an enrollment of 20% Black students where 50% of multiple out-of-school suspensions are administered to Black students. This school would have a score of -30%, again retrieved by subtracting the school enrollment rate of Black students minus the multiple out-of-school suspension rate of Black students, or 20% minus 50%.

As previously stated in chapter 3, a school with proportionate or equitable discipline could be expected to have demographic discipline data within 5% of demographic enrollment data. In this study, a discrepancy greater than 5% in either direction is viewed as indicative of inequitable disciplinary practices based on racial demographics. The schools in this study had discrepancy scores ranging from -61.4 to 79.7, with a mean score of 12.82 and a median score of 12.0. The positive mean and median may indicate higher levels of racial discipline discrepancies. I will discuss; however, how this may not be the case considering directionality of the discrepancy is important and possibly deceiving. I chose to use the actual value of discipline



discrepancy scores rather than absolute value because I think the directionality is as important to note as the discrepancy itself.

**IAT Surveys (Implicit Bias):** The IAT is a relative survey, meaning it does not provide the researcher with an absolute assessment of someone's implicit biases toward one group. Rather, it provides a relative measure of how positively participants view two entities in relation to one another (Carpenter et al., 2019). For instance, let's reconsider the example provided to describe the IAT in chapter 3. Participants might be asked to group insects and flowers into groups "pleasant" or "unpleasant." The IAT results would not indicate that participants think one is pleasant while the other is unpleasant; however, results would show which participants view as *more* pleasant. Likewise, findings in this study do not suggest that participants have a high degree of bias. Rather, they provide a relative measure of educator bias.

IATgen is an online source to create and analyzes IAT surveys (Carpenter et al., 2019). As previously discussed, participants first complete a "practice block" followed by "critical blocks" in which participants complete the task as fast as they can after practicing the initial task of grouping the stimuli into two categories (e.g., classifying an image of a white man as "white" or "Black"). The results of the combined practice blocks and critical blocks are then used to identify the standard deviation, which is the difference in average speed per participant across items. IATgen then assigns a *D*-score to each participant, which is determined by dividing participant scores by the standard deviation for the pair of blocks (either practice or critical). The *D*-score can be either positive or negative. A positive *D*-score indicates the participant associates the first target with a positive bias and the second target with a negative bias whereas a negative

*D*-score indicates the participant associates the first target with a negative bias and the second target with a positive bias.

In this study, the first target is “white people” whereas the second target is “Black people”. Therefore, a positive *D*-score indicates the participant associates white people with a more favorable bias (for the Race IAT) or less harmless (for the Weapons IAT) than Black people. A negative *D*-score indicates the participant associates Black people with a more favorable bias (for the Race IAT) or less harmless (for the Weapons IAT) than white people.

**Explicit Bias Survey:** Responses from the Likert-style explicit bias study were assigned numerical values for each survey item. Item answer choices were on a 5-point scale that ranged from “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neutral,” and “Agree,” to “Strongly Agree”. These responses were assigned a corresponding number, with “Strongly Disagree” being -2.0 and “Strongly Agree” being 2.0. Four items were reverse-coded and reverse-scored. Responses to each of the ten questions were totaled to provide each participant with a survey “score.” Higher average scores would be indicative of a higher rate of explicit bias, assuming a participant answered honestly. Lower average scores would indicate less explicit bias. It should be noted that the N for the Explicit Bias Survey was lower than the N for the Race IAT, possibly due to the order of survey links in the recruitment emails.

**Quantitative Survey Results:** Data sets for each of the three surveys were run separately in SPSS as a linear regression analysis. Independent variables taken from the survey responses included participant race, gender, and longevity as well as their *D*-score (for the IATs) or their explicit bias score (for the Explicit Bias survey). The dependent variable for each survey was the discrepancy between multiple out-of-school suspension rates for Black and white students

compared to their percentage in the school population. This variable, noted as “Multiple out-of-school discrepancy” in Tables 6 and 7, was calculated from subtracting the enrollment rate of Black students minus the multiple out-of-school suspension rate of Black students. Again, the discrepancy scores ranged from -61.4 to 79.7, with a median score of 12.0, possibly indicating higher levels of racial discipline discrepancies. Bivariate correlation for the Race IAT and Explicit Bias Survey is displayed in Tables 6 and 7, respectively. The Weapons IAT correlation data were very similar to the Race IAT data. This survey had the smallest N and no real distinction can be made from the Race versus Weapons IAT, so the Weapons IAT data was omitted from reporting. As can be seen from these tables, participant race, gender, and longevity do not correlate with the out-of-school discrepancy scores. This suggests that for this study, none of these variables predicts or explains the discrepancy between Black student enrollment and rate of multiple out-of-school suspensions.

**Table 6**

*Means, SDs, and Pearson correlations for the Race Implicit Bias survey among the multiple out-of-school suspension discrepancy, participant D-Score, and participant longevity, gender, and race.*

Variable	Mean	SD	2	3	4	5
1. D-Score	-0.24	0.48	-0.04	0.00	0.13	0.13
2. Multiple out-of-school discrepancy	13.19	28.03		-0.04	-0.03	-0.07
3. Participant Longevity	1.45	0.74			-0.06	0.02
4. Participant Gender	0.84	0.40				0.06
5. Participant Race	0.45	0.71				

Multiple R-squared: 0.007537, Adjusted R-squared: -0.01568, F-statistic: 0.3247 on 4 and 171

degrees of freedom,  $p$ -value: 0.8611, N=176

**Table 7**

*Means, SDs, and Pearson correlations for the Explicit Bias survey among the multiple out-of-school suspension discrepancy, participant explicit bias score, and participant longevity, gender, and race.*

Variable	Mean	SD	2	3	4	5
1. Explicit Bias Score	-1.69	4.01	-0.07	0.23	-0.22	0.12
2. Multiple out-of-school discrepancy	13.54	29.32		0.02	0.03	0.01
3. Participant Longevity	1.48	0.72			-0.12	0.04
4. Participant Gender	0.81	0.45				0.04
5. Participant Race	0.42	0.69				

Multiple R-squared: 0.006, Adjusted R-squared: -0.026, F-statistic: 0.185 on 4 degrees of

freedom,  $p$ -value: 0.946, N=130

**Post Hoc Analysis:** Due to these null findings, a post hoc analysis was done to see if other factors could help explain the school discipline discrepancy. These data are shown in Table 8. The first analysis showed that individual variables (participant race, gender, and longevity) did

not predict the school-level discipline discrepancy. Therefore, I decided to see if a school-level factor, average annual income for the zip code in which a school is located, correlated with school-level discrepancy data. Specifically, I was interested in whether disciplinary discrepancies were higher in schools with lower income than those with higher income. I chose to investigate this variable based on literature by Losen, Hewitt, and Toldson (2014) previously discussed in chapter 2 that suggests schools with lower socio-economic status tend to have less qualified teachers. This literature also suggests schools with lower socio-economic status may have inequitable discipline, which is why I aimed to see if these variables were related. This income variable may help determine if less qualified teachers have greater bias that could be linked to higher rates of discipline inequity. To illustrate this added piece of data, Table 8 shows the survey participant demographic breakdown by range of zip code average income. Table 8 data used participant information from the Race IAT as that survey had the highest N of 176. As can be seen, the bulk of participants work at schools where the average household income is between \$75,000 and \$99,999 annually. It should be noted that the average annual income for the entire county was \$78,975 at the time of data collection (Cubit Planning, Inc 2022). This means that most respondents were at schools that fall within the county average for annual income.

**Table 8***Race IAT: Participant Gender/Race and School Zip Code Average Income*

Average Income for School Zip Code	Participant Gender/Race									Total
	Male			Female			Non-binary			
	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	White	Black	Other	
\$39,500- \$59,999	7	0	0	18	15	4	0	0	0	44
\$60,000- \$74,999	5	2	0	21	8	3	0	0	0	39
\$75,000- \$99,999	9	2	3	42	8	9	0	0	1	74
\$100,000- \$130,000	2	0	1	13	1	1	1	0	0	19
TOTAL	23	4	4	94	32	17	1	0	1	176

*Note.* Income is a household annual average based on the zip code of the school participants are employed at. Income retrieved from Cubit Planning, Inc. (2022)

Another regression analysis was run with independent variables of average income by zip code, percent of Black students in total school enrollment, percent of in-school suspension administered to Black students, percent of single out-of-school suspensions administered to Black students, percent of multiple out-of-school suspensions administered to Black students, and a discrepancy rate taken from subtracting the percent of Black student enrollment minus the multiple out-of-school suspension rate. This post hoc analysis was run with all discipline data points reported by FLDOE to determine how in-school suspension compares to out-of-school suspension rates of Black students at schools with varying socio-economic statuses. Specifically, I was interested to see how schools with higher incomes utilized various methods of exclusionary practices compared to schools with lower incomes. The relationship between these variables and

the discrepancy in multiple out-of-school suspensions can be seen in Table 9. A total of 67 schools are represented in the post hoc analysis, ran with the schools employing participants from the Race IAT due to highest rates of participation compared to the other two surveys.

**Table 9**

*Post Hoc Analysis: Means, SD's, and Pearson correlations among the multiple out-of-school suspension discrepancy, income for school zip code, population of Black students, and discipline rates of Black students for in-school suspensions, single, and multiple out-of-school suspensions.*

Variable	Mean	SD	2	3	4	5	6
1. Zip code income	74996.81	21679.37	0.03	0.69	-0.55	-0.36	-0.40
2. Multiple out-of-school discrepancy	12.82	28.62		0.08	0.15	0.06	0.79
3. Black enrollment	41.14	23.88			0.81	0.69	0.68
4. Black in-school-suspension	51.93	29.80				0.59	0.61
5. Black Single out-of-school suspension	53.24	29.04					0.47
6. Black Multiple out-of-school suspension	53.97	38.77					

Multiple R-squared: 0.02, Adjusted R-squared: -0.01, F-statistic: 0.71 on 2 and 64 degrees of freedom,  $p$ -value: 0.50, N=67 schools

As noted in Table 9, neither income nor Black enrollment predicted the multiple out-of-school discrepancy at the school level. However, while not statistically significant, Black enrollment was a better predictor than income. In other words, while individual and school level factors in this study did not directly correlate to the discipline discrepancy, a Black student attending a school in a higher socio-economic status school is not safe from experiencing

disproportionate discipline but may experience less of a discrepancy versus attending a school with a higher enrollment rate of other Black students.

Additional dependent variables such as in-school-suspension rates and single out-of-school suspension rates were not run in the original or post hoc analysis. This was due to lack of variance in these other measures and to maintain research integrity.

### **Qualitative Analysis: Two Cases Suggest a Murkier Picture**

While the multiple out-of-school suspension data point was selected as most important for this study, it should be noted that this can be deceiving when considering schools as “equitable” or “inequitable” in their discipline rates by racial demographic. For example, using only this data point may make schools appear to be more or less equitable than they might be considered when looking at other data points. This murkier picture was seen when assigning schools their discrepancy scores and I thought it was an important point to share when reviewing correlational data. For this brief case study, two schools will be presented to illustrate how the picture may be more complicated than might appear when utilizing only the multiple out-of-school suspension data to determine evidence of discipline equitability.

**Case One:** Elementary School A’s student population was 23.7% Black, 40.1% white, 14.6% Hispanic, and 21.6% multiracial or other minorities. No Black students received multiple out-of-school suspensions. This means that the school’s multiple out-of-school suspension discrepancy score was 23.7, which is the percent of Black students enrolled (23.7%) minus the percent of Black students receiving multiple out-of-schools suspensions (0%). However, the school’s in-school-suspension rate is 90.9% Black, meaning that of all the in-school-suspensions, 90.9% of them were for Black students. Further, the school’s single out-of-school suspension



rate is 100%, meaning that all the students who received one out-of-school suspension were Black. So, while Elementary School A's nonexistent multiple out-of-school suspensions of Black students may seem like a positive thing, there is a large discrepancy with in-school suspensions and single out-of-school suspensions, both of which negatively impact Black students. In other words, while Black students at Elementary School A were never suspended out-of-school more than once, they were far more likely to receive an in-school and single out-of-school suspension than would be expected upon their percentage in the school population.

**Case Two:** Another example is High School C, which had a student population of 47% Black students, 30.5% white, 9.3% Hispanic, and 13.2% multiracial or other minority students. The school's multiple out-of-school suspension rate was 100% Black students, meaning that all the students receiving more than one out-of-school suspensions were Black. Their discrepancy score of -53% came from subtracting the total school enrollment of black students (47%) minus the percentage of multiple out-of-school suspensions of Black students (100%). This negative score suggests that Black students are receiving exclusionary discipline at a rate far below what would be expected based upon their percentage of the school population. I think it is alarming that all students receiving multiple out-of-school suspensions were Black. However, while it is certainly inequitable that 100% of the students who received multiple out-of-school suspensions are Black, this score does not take into consideration that the in-school suspension rate and single out-of-school suspension rate are almost identical to the school enrollment breakdown for all racial groups. In other words, High School C had equitable discipline data when considering school population, in-school suspension rates, and rates of those suspended out-of-school one

time but because the multiple out-of-school suspension rate was 100% Black students, their discrepancy score for this study makes the school seem incredibly inequitable.

Schools such as these were somewhat common in this study. In fact, eight schools were similar to High School C in that in-school suspensions and single out-of-school suspensions were comparable to student enrollment but multiple out-of-school suspensions were highly disproportionate. Additionally, 18 schools were similar to Elementary School A in that the discrepancy score was negative because no Black students were suspended out-of-school multiple times. There were not patterns in the murkier cases based upon grade band of the school. In other words, it cannot be said that Elementary School A is typical of the elementary schools in this study, or that High School C is representative of the high schools. This should be considered when trying to determine whether there is a discipline discrepancy at a particular school. In some cases, multiple out-of-school suspension rates may not provide an accurate picture. Equity is more complicated than a simple score because of cases like these.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the study analyzed data from roughly 3% of the targeted educator population. A total of 67 schools of employment for study participants were coded with a discrepancy score that was calculated by subtracting the percent of Black student enrollment minus the multiple out-of-school suspension rate of Black students. Participant individual level variables included participant race, gender, and length of time employed at their school (referred to as “longevity”). No significant correlations between individual level variables and school discrepancy scores were found. Two sample schools were highlighted to illustrate the complexity of discipline equity in terms of in-school suspensions, single, and multiple out-of-school

suspensions. Post hoc analyses were run with a school-level variable of average annual income by zip code surrounding participant schools. This variable also showed no correlation to school discrepancy scores. However, while not significant, higher socio-economic status of schools was not a shield to inequitable discipline of Black students. Analysis of individual and school-level variables provided null findings.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter presents a study summary as well as conclusions drawn from the data presented in chapter 4. Study limitations will be reviewed followed by a discussion of recommendations for future research.

This study was designed to address the problem of persistent disproportionate discrepancy of discipline of Black students in K-12 public schools. Black students in the United States receive exclusionary disciplinary consequences at higher rates than would be predicted based upon their percentage in the school population (United States Government Accountability Office, 2018; Losen, Hewitt, and Toldson, 2014). The over-discipline of Black students is widely reported and efforts to reduce the racial discipline gap have been unsuccessfully implemented. The purpose of this study was to determine if educator implicit and explicit bias is related to the disproportionate discipline of Black students. The ultimate goal is to alleviate barriers that may cause efforts to make discipline more equitable to fail. The research question for this study was: Are low levels of educator explicit/implicit bias related to equitable school discipline practices?

Student discipline data from each of the schools was obtained to determine the equitability of out-of-school suspensions for Black students compared to the overall enrollment of Black students. Discipline data included the enrollment percentage of Black students as well as the racial breakdown of disciplinary consequences. These consequences included in-school suspensions, single out-of-school suspensions, and multiple out-of-school suspensions, the latter of which was used in this study to determine equitability compared to student population.

## **Discussion**

Findings in this study were null. While it was hypothesized that high levels of educator bias would be correlated to higher rates of discipline discrepancies, that was not the case for this sample. Neither individual level factors such as participant race, gender, and longevity, nor school-level factors such as average income surrounding the school were found to predict discipline discrepancies. While this study has been one of null findings, there is still something to be learned from it. An analysis of the study's constraints presents many opportunities for future research to further impact the field of education.

In chapter 2, I discussed the negative impact of exclusionary practices on student academic achievement and how the acts leading to punitive discipline are often subjective and trivial. While it was not significant, the correlation between Black enrollment and multiple out-of-school suspension of Black students was higher than the correlation between school average income and multiple out-of-school suspension of Black students. In other words, being in a school with a higher average income doesn't shield Black students from discriminatory disciplinary practices but plays less of a role in discipline disparities than the enrollment population of Black students. This fits with the literature from chapter 2 in which the United States Government Accountability Office reported that the disproportionate discipline of Black students was widespread regardless of level of school poverty and other factors (2018). While this study was unable to establish a link between levels of bias and discipline disparities, they still exist. Whether those disparities are due to biases or other factors remains an open question.

The findings of this study do not consider how educator bias may affect student academic success or what acts lead to the disciplinary actions taken. These may be starting points for future research, which will be further discussed below.

As noted in chapter 4, there were no significant correlations between participant longevity, gender, or race and measure of implicit or explicit bias. This is surprising given the literature reviewed in chapter 2. It could be that participants did not answer the explicit bias survey truthfully. This is similar to the 2005 study by Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell I discussed in chapter 2 where participants struggled to acknowledge their own biases. Participants who completed the surveys volunteered their time to do so. It is possible that only educators open to the touchy subject and who have fewer negative biases provided data for the survey.

As mentioned in chapter 2, biases held within an organization tend to be stronger and more predictable than individual level biases (Payne, Vuletich, & Lundberg, 2017; Ford 2016). Unfortunately, there was not a similar percentage of educators from different schools, meaning those who participated may not be an accurate representation of views at their school. This also prevented me from being able to measure bias of the crowd, since most schools had one to three participants.

As discussed in chapter 4, discipline equity is more complex than a single data point. For this study, I identified the percent of multiple out-of-school suspensions administered to Black students as the best to use due to the pernicious effects of repeated exclusionary practices on student academic and social achievement. However, this proved to be deceiving for some schools that may not have had their whole equitability story told by just that data point. Again, Elementary School A did not have any Black students suspended out-of-school more than once,

which may appear more positive in terms of equitability. However, their in-school suspension rate and single out-of-school suspension rates were significantly higher than their population of Black students. Similarly deceiving, High School C had in-school suspension and single out-of-school suspension rates very proportionate to the population but had a deceiving discrepancy score due to the only students receiving multiple out-of-school suspensions being Black. It may be worthwhile mentioning that many Black scholars studying racial inequities in school discipline lump together exclusionary practices when looking at data points. While avoiding this lumping for the study at hand allowed me to dig deeper into exclusionary practices individually, it does muddy the picture when comparing this study to others previously conducted.

As noted in chapter 4, 26 schools represented in this study had similarly deceptive disciplinary data as Elementary School A or High School C. Data from Elementary School A might lead some to wonder how common multiple out-of-school suspensions are in elementary schools. Unfortunately, they are very common, as evidenced by the participating elementary schools in this study. Twenty-five of 37 schools had students suspended out-of-school more than once. Even more shocking is the fact that in 10 of these schools 100% of the multiple out-of-school suspensions were Black students. This must have a very pernicious effect on those students who may not fully understand why they are not allowed to go to school. In fact, this goes along with literature discussed in chapter 2 by Weisburst (2019) and Okonofua (2016) who suggest that a negative stigma is placed on students by both law enforcement officers and teachers. They argue that this stigma leads to further disciplinary actions that would not be expected based on the severity of behavior but can lead to increased exclusion. This ties back to a loss of instructional time, which may be especially bad for elementary students who are still

learning the foundational knowledge and skills that the rest of their school careers will build upon. It also ties to a loss of time for social development, which is again especially bad for elementary students who are still learning to socialize adequately. Finally, this ties to the theoretical framework used, which suggests that race and racism is inherently present in all aspects of life, including school discipline.

The theoretical framework used in this study was Critical Race Theory (CRT). Ironically, controversy regarding CRT in schools may have affected this study's findings. The impact of the political climate in the state on this study provides only a brief glance into how larger societal factors can affect issues such as school discipline. Shortly before the surveys were deployed, Florida passed legislation prohibiting any discussion of Critical Race Theory in public school classrooms. This legislation created anxiety for many educators in the state. Some educators expressed fear that completing a survey about racial biases could result in retaliation or getting terminated from their job. Others said that racism shouldn't be talked about at all, or that the survey instruments were biased. In fact, 21 people reached out via email to say they would not be filling out the surveys and sharing their concerns after participation request emails were sent. It is impossible to speculate how many other potential participants had those same concerns but did not reach out to express them. However, the very tenets of CRT are what makes this survey so important. Specifically, tenets two through four discuss the need to challenge dominant ideology, commit to social justice, and utilize experiential knowledge. In regard to the study at hand, challenging more educators to be honest about their biases, committing to providing racially equitable discipline, and using the feedback of students affected by disproportionate discipline are important in moving forward.



Critical Race Theory can link to additional aspects of the survey, such as which educators were included in the sample and which acts led to the exclusionary discipline. Considering the feedback I received about hesitation to complete the surveys or pushback about the survey content, it is possible that those who did participate hold fewer negative biases than those who elected not to participate. Additionally, each of the 26 schools with deceptive discipline data has some metric showing evidence of a discrepancy and inequity. This may be related to literature from chapter 2 suggesting that Black students are targeted for punishment of minor acts (Hines, King Jr., & Ford, 2018).

### **Limitations**

Due to the convenience sample of this study, data are not likely generalizable. Whereas the demographic breakdown of the educator sample is similar to the demographic breakdown of educators in the district, the number of participants per school was too low to confidently make conclusions about the study's findings. This also meant the confidence intervals were not ideal. A total of 176 educators participated, and they came from 67 schools. As noted in chapter 3, this represents 3% of the target population and 42% of the schools in the district. The small number of participants per school meant that it was not possible to investigate the bias of the crowd. It is unlikely that participants in the sample are an accurate representation of the views of all educators at their schools. If participation were required instead of requested, a true test of outcomes may prove very different.

Several factors contributed to low response rate including the political climate in the state and the point in the school year at the time the survey was deployed. Regarding the political climate, race was a very touchy subject at the time this survey was sent out, as previously

discussed with the implementation of the ban on discussing CRT in schools. I also attribute low participation due to the time of year the emails were sent out. Email requests were sent out between April 18<sup>th</sup> and April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022, which is about one month away from the last day of school. This time of year, teachers and administrators are typically very busy with other tasks related to the closing of the school year and extra tasks tend to be put aside. Additionally, this time frame was during the statewide assessment window, when many schools are “shut down” from technology due to testing protocols, which limits the time that educators can access their emails and complete the online surveys. Despite the reason for lack of participation, limited participants per school may have contributed to lack of findings. It is possible that with more educator participants per school, findings that are more consistent with extant literature could be present in the data.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was limited in terms of the number of educator participants per school. A study using the same instruments and methodology as this may be beneficial if deployed at a different time of year with fewer time restraints. Alternatively, a similar study with a larger sample and more educators at each school could take a multi-level modeling approach that may prove beneficial in interpreting possible correlations between individual variables and school-level variables. It may also prove beneficial to look into discipline discrepancy differently as this study showed directional discrepancies which were both positive and negative. Future research may look at other metrics aiming to provide a less murky picture of discrepancy scores.

It may be beneficial for future research to consider further examining school-level factors such as evidence-based strategies implemented to reduce discipline disparities, as discussed in

chapter 2. Specifically, research can look into which evidence-based strategies, if any, are used at schools with various levels of discipline disparities. For instance, chapter 2 discussed evidence-based strategies such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, restorative practices, and educator professional development opportunities.

In addition to these school-level factors, future research may benefit from examining professional development experiences on an individual level. For instance, do teachers who have attended diversity or cultural competency trainings have lower rates of bias compared to teachers who have not attended such trainings? This might be the case because educators who have attended meaningful professional development on biases, diversity, and/or cultural competency may implement strategies that allow them to put their own biases aside in the education and discipline of all students in their classrooms. This may also tie to police presence in schools, which has previously been tied to an increase in exclusionary disciplinary practices. It may be beneficial to consider the trainings that officers have completed and how this may impact their involvement in student discipline.

Additionally, future research may benefit from looking further into educator longevity. More specifically, future research may consider whether individual bias is affected by bias of the crowd depending on educator time spent at their school of employment. In other words, are first-year educators outliers due to not being socialized in the same way as others at their school? Again, this can tie into police presence at schools. In many schools, a different officer is present each day, while in many other schools, one officer is permanently assigned to that school. Future research may benefit from looking into the consistency of officers present and the impact on racial equity in student discipline.

Lastly, future research should consider other points addressed in chapter 2, such as the impact of exclusionary practices on student academic achievement and the acts leading up to disciplinary actions. It would be beneficial to study how educator bias impacts students academically. It would also be interesting to see if disciplinary actions taken for more subjective or trivial acts are more likely to occur at schools with higher racial discrepancies in discipline. Another important topic from chapter 2 is Critical Race Theory. Because of the possible impact the banning of discussing CRT had on this study, it may be beneficial for future research to consider the equitability of discipline in schools where CRT is prohibited versus allowed.

### **Implications for School-Based Educational Leaders**

While results of this study were unable to connect educator bias to inequitable school discipline, there are some key takeaways that may be important for school-based educational leaders. First and foremost, educational leaders should be aware of and fully understand their school's discipline data, especially as it relates to any inequities across racial groups. These leaders should be knowledgeable of factors that lead to inequitable discipline and how these factors affect their school and students.

Additionally, school-based educational leaders should be aware of their own biases and how their biases impact their staff, teachers, and students. Leaders may find it useful to attend and have staff attend professional development opportunities aimed at cultural competency and social justice.

Lastly, a firm foundational knowledge of the issue at hand and a willingness to make change should be at the heart of educational leaders. Without acknowledging the issue of racial inequity in school discipline, change cannot be effectively created and sustained. Similar to the

tenet of Critical Race Theory that racism is deeply engrained in society, I would argue that bias is deeply engrained in the manner in which we as educators discipline students. Just as avoiding the talk about race will not solve the issue of racism, ignoring inequitable discipline will not solve the issue of making it more equitable.

### **Conclusion**

This study provides a starting point for future research to build on in efforts to reduce the racial discipline gap in school discipline. If educator bias can be shown to relate to the disproportionate use of exclusionary practices on Black students, future steps can be taken to address this need in order to alleviate the barriers that prevent equity-aimed interventions from successfully leading to equitable discipline. While this survey may have produced a different outcome had there been fewer constraints, it is a good launching pad for future research. I am hopeful that efforts to ensure discipline data is proportionate to enrollment data are increasingly successful and that barriers preventing the successful implementation of the efforts can be overcome.

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### Appendix A – Explicit Bias Instrumentation

1. Disciplinary consequences administered are fair and do not discriminate against Black students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

2. Black students are disciplined harsher for similar incidents as white students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

3. Black students make the best model classroom citizens.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

4. Schools that serve primarily white students do not experience as many discipline issues as schools that serve primarily Black students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

5. Black students are more likely to correct their behavior when the consequences are severe.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

6. In general, Black students (mis)behave at the same rate/intensity as their white peers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

7. In general, Black students are better behaved than their white peers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

8. I find it easier to relate to white students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

9. Schools that serve primarily Black students receive all of the resources they need.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

10. Most of the violent/aggressive behaviors in my classroom come from Black students.

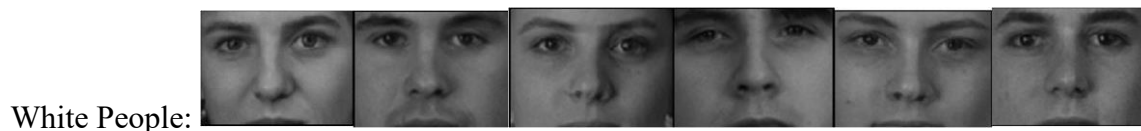
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

## Appendix B – Implicit Bias Instrumentation 1: Race IAT

\*\*\*Note: The following words/images were used throughout the survey:

Good: Laughing, Cheerful, Lovely, Fantastic, Happy, Enjoy, Joyful, Spectacular

Bad: Failure, Horrific, Rotten, Gross, Poison, Detest, Pain, Bothersome




For each of the Blocks, a Target word/image will appear. See above for all words/images present in the survey. Participants will select “E” if the word/image matches the word on the Left or “I” if the word/image matches the word on the Right. An Introduction box will appear at the start of each block and is shown below along with two sample items for each block.

Block 1


Introduction:

<b>Black People</b>	<b>White People</b>
+	
<p>Instructions: Place your left and right index fingers on the E and I keys. At the top of the screen are 2 categories. In the task, words and/or images appear in the middle of the screen.</p> <p>When the word/image belongs to the category on the left, press the E key as fast as you can. When it belongs to the category on the right, press the I key as fast as you can. If you make an error, a red X will appear. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</p> <p>Please try to go as <i>fast as you can</i> while making as few errors as possible.</p> <p>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 1:

<b>Black People</b>	<b>White People</b>
	

Sample 2:

<b>Black People</b>	<b>White People</b>
	

Block 2

Introduction:

<b>Bad</b>	<b>Good</b>
+	
<p>Now, the categories have changed, but the rules remain the same. Please try to go as <i>fast as you can</i> while making as few errors as possible. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</p> <p>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 1:

<b>Bad</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Happy</b>	

Sample 2:

<b>Bad</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Evil</b>	


Blocks 3 and 4 Introduction:

Sample 1:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Good</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Bad</b>
+	
<small>Notice the four categories have been combined again, but in a new configuration. Please practice this combination now, and remember to go as fast as you can while making as few mistakes as possible. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</small>	
<small>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</small>	

Sample 2:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Good</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Bad</b>
<b>Terrible</b>	


<b>White People</b> or <b>Good</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Bad</b>
	

Block 5:


Introduction:

White People	Black People
<p data-bbox="706 598 722 619">+</p> <p data-bbox="375 714 1055 777">Notice the categories from before have switched sides. Please practice this new configuration now. Remember to try to go <i>as fast as you can</i> while making as few errors as possible. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</p> <p data-bbox="527 787 901 808">When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 1:

White People	Black People
	

Sample 2:

White People	Black People
	

Blocks 6 and 7:

Introduction:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Bad</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Good</b>
+	
<p>Notice the four categories have been combined again, but in a new configuration. Please practice this combination now, and remember to go as fast as you can while making as few mistakes as possible.  Correct errors by hitting the other key.</p> <p>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 1:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Bad</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Good</b>
<b>Horrible</b>	

Sample 2:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Bad</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Good</b>
<b>Glorious</b>	

Conclusion

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.  
Your response has been recorded.

### Appendix C – Implicit Bias Instrumentation 2: Weapons IAT

\*\*\*Note: The following images were used throughout the survey:



For each of the Blocks, a Target image will appear. See above for all images present in the survey. Participants will select “E” if the image matches the word on the Left or “I” if the image matches the word on the Right. An Introduction box will appear at the start of each block and is shown below along with two sample items for each block.




Block 1


Introduction:

<b>Black People</b>	<b>White People</b>
+	
<p>Instructions: Place your left and right index fingers on the E and I keys. At the top of the screen are 2 categories. In the task, words and/or images appear in the middle of the screen.</p> <p>When the word/image belongs to the category on the left, press the E key as fast as you can. When it belongs to the category on the right, press the I key as fast as you can. If you make an error, a red X will appear. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</p> <p>Please try to go <i>as fast as you can</i> while making as few errors as possible.</p> <p>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 1:

<b>Black People</b>	<b>White People</b>
	

Sample 2:


<b>Black People</b>	<b>White People</b>
	

Block 2


Introduction:

<b>Weapons</b>	<b>Harmless Objects</b>
+	
<p>Now, the categories have changed, but the rules remain the same. Please try to go <i>as fast as you can</i> while making as few errors as possible. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</p> <p>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 1:

<b>Weapons</b>	<b>Harmless Objects</b>
	

Sample 2:


<b>Weapons</b>	<b>Harmless Objects</b>
	

Blocks 3 and 4 Introduction:

Sample 1:

<b>Black People</b> or <b>Weapons</b>	<b>White People</b> or <b>Harmless Objects</b>
+	
<p>Now the four categories you saw separately will appear together. Remember, each word/image fits in only one of the four categories. The label/item colors may help you identify the appropriate category.</p> <p>Use the E key for the two categories on the left and the I key for the two categories on the right. Again, try to go as fast as possible without making mistakes. Correct errors by hitting the other key. Practice this combination now.</p> <p>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 2:

<b>Black People</b> or <b>Weapons</b>	<b>White People</b> or <b>Harmless Objects</b>
	


<b>Black People</b> or <b>Weapons</b>	<b>White People</b> or <b>Harmless Objects</b>
	

Block 5:


Introduction:

<b>White People</b>	<b>Black People</b>
+	
<small>Notice the categories from before have switched sides. Please practice this new configuration now. Remember to try to go as <i>fast as you can</i> while making as few errors as possible. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</small>	
<small>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</small>	

Sample 1:

<b>White People</b>	<b>Black People</b>
	

Sample 2:

<b>White People</b>	<b>Black People</b>
	

Blocks 6 and 7:


Introduction:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Weapons</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Harmless Objects</b>
+	
<p>Notice the four categories have been combined again, but in a new configuration. Please practice this combination now, and remember to go as fast as you can while making as few mistakes as possible. Correct errors by hitting the other key.</p> <p>When you are ready, please press the [Space] bar to begin.</p>	

Sample 1:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Weapons</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Harmless Objects</b>
	

Sample 2:

<b>White People</b> or <b>Weapons</b>	<b>Black People</b> or <b>Harmless Objects</b>
	

Conclusion

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.  
Your response has been recorded.