

# Safety, Dignity & Belonging

## Studying the School Discipline Experiences of Black Girls in Atlanta

### Why This Project...

In schools across the United States, racial and gender biases compound to influence school discipline policies and practices, leaving Black girls disproportionately punished. Nationally, [Black girls are consistently the most over-disciplined](#) compared to girls of all racial groups.

The educational experiences of girls of color in the South are uniquely informed by racial and gender biases riddled with both historic and cultural nuance. Girls of color are often mischaracterized as deviant, unladylike, too adult, loud, or simply “too much” and penalized for cultural and self-expression.



### Youth Participatory Action Research

**Youth participatory action research (YPAR)**, is an opportunity for young people, whose power is often underestimated or disregarded, to study social problems that impact themselves and organize for systematic, institutional and cultural change. This project connects these research principles and frameworks to legal scholarship and advocacy, called **legal youth participatory action research (LYPAR)**.

### Who We're Looking For

3-5 Black girls, grades 9-12 (recent high school graduates will be considered too) who have an interest in social justice  
(Other girls of color also considered)

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[idra.news/SafetyDignityResearch](https://idra.news/SafetyDignityResearch)



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### What Participating Girls Will Do

As a participant in the cohort you will learn

- **Learn** about issues of gender, race, bias, adultification, school pushout, restorative justice, and civil rights in education through engaging workshops;
- **Identify** a problem or issue and construct a research question driven by the experiences and curiosities of students;
- **Receive** training on qualitative research methods, like surveys or listening sessions;
- **Implement** research methods of your choosing, create findings, and make recommendations to be published in a report; and
- **Lead** presentations about their research and recommendations and participate in opportunities for advocacy.

### Similar and Related Research

Examples of participatory action research or similar methods that focus on the experiences of Black girls and girls of color in schools include the following.

- [Keep Her Safe: Centering Black Girls in School Safety](#), National Women’s Law Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center – NWLC, SPLC, and Black girls and young women enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools co-authored a report exploring the experiences young women and girls have with school safety and school policing.
- [New Suns: Using YPAR with Black Girls to Combat Misogynoiristic Educational Policies](#), Parker E. Foster – In this manuscript, Foster discusses YPAR as an opportunity to center Black girls in discussions of punitive school discipline policies with a goal of dismantling sexist and racist educational policies.
- [The Leftover Kids: Centering Black Girls’ Stories of Overdiscipline within Ecological Systems Using a Youth Participatory Action Research Approach](#), Jady Harris – In this study, three participant-researchers with experiences of overdiscipline explored their identity and school discipline experiences through storytelling and analysis.



### About the Lead Researcher

Makiah Lyons is an Equal Justice Works fellow hosted by IDRA, working to implement a fellowship project centering Black girls and their intersectional experiences with school discipline and pushout in the Atlanta area. As a part of her fellowship, Makiah is crafting a youth participatory action research project developed with and co-led by Black girls.