As an organization committed to creating inclusive and supportive school environments for all kids, Gender Spectrum knows that racism, in many forms, shows up in our schools and too often thwarts the educational success of students of color.

The New York Times’ recent story, “Schools’ Discipline for Girls Differs by Race and Hue” illustrates how racial and class-based identities combine with gender to create different and disparate outcomes for youth.

The article tells the story two 12 year-old girls who were suspended for writing graffiti on the walls of the gym bathroom. One student was released after her parents paid $100 in restitution. The other was intimidated by a police officer, forced to admit to allegations of criminal trespassing, and put on probation. The youth that suffered harsh legal consequences was black, while the girl who was let go was white.

Citing data from the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, the article states:

“…from 2011 to 2012, black girls in public elementary schools and secondary schools nationwide were suspended at a rate of 12 percent, compared with a rate of just 2 percent for white girls, and more than girls of any other race or ethnicity.”

Research conducted at Villanova University in a study titled the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health touches on an important intersection of race and gender, stating:

“There are different gender expectations for black girls compared with white girls...and there are different expectations within cross-sections of black girls. When a darker-skinned African American female acts up, there’s a certain concern about their boyish aggressiveness...that they don’t know their place as a female, as a woman.”

The difference in punishment given to students across and within varying races is undoubtedly influenced by existing expectations and assumptions around gender. These studies reinforce that those of us working to create gender inclusive schools, must take into account the intersection of gender, alongside other identities such as race and class, if we want to serve all students.

Anyone interested in sharing about the roles gender and other pieces of identity play in their own personal story, can do so on by clicking here.

You can read the entire article here:

You can read the entire Villanova University study here:
http://www88.homepage.villanova.edu/lance.hannon/ColorismSuspension.pdf