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Perceptions Of Dress Code Compliance

Kristen Nicole Leighton

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PERCEPTIONS OF DRESS CODE COMPLIANCE

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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This thesis, submitted by Kristen N Leighton in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.


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Title Perceptions of Dress Code Compliance
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Kristen Leighton
November 19, 2017

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ABSTRACT

Recent media coverage of middle and high school dress code controversies has called into question the fairness of such regulations on students' clothing. The current study investigated gender differences in reactions to dress code violations and how reactions varied based on the race of the student who violated the dress code. The current study also explored how individual differences in hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and social dominance orientation influenced judgments about dress code violations. Judgments about dress code violations were not found to vary based on the gender of the participant or race of the target. Social dominance orientation, however, emerged as a significant predictor of severity of the rating of the dress code violation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Dress codes for students are common in middle schools and high schools and can be defined as, “formal, written rules regarding what students are allowed to wear to school.” The intended purpose of dress codes is to create and maintain a suitable learning environment for all students, but in reality, they disproportionately target female students and enforce gender inequality. Dress codes help perpetuate the myth that women are responsible for how men view and objectify their bodies, as they contain more rules pertaining to clothing worn by female students and these rules are often enforced to promote modesty in female students. As a result, these rules may lead to the over-sexualizing of female students’ bodies. Through early exposure to dress code rules, young women are taught that their sexuality is constantly being evaluated by others and that society allows women to be judged by, and reprimanded for, their clothing choices.

Controversies regarding sexism in dress codes have made recent appearances in the media. For example, several female students at a New Zealand high school were told to wear their skirts past their knees. The reported reasons for requiring longer skirts was to protect female students, stop impure thoughts in male students, and create a positive work environment for male staff (Roy, 2016). In another example, a school in Vermont held a meeting for female middle students about their attire, while male students were allowed to play games in their classroom. During this meeting, female students were told their clothes were distracting the male students. One student reported that staff told them

it was for their own good because male students were looking up female students' skirts when they walked up the stairs (Savage, 2016). As reported in the news story, the policy states, "longer apparel is required because it preserves the dignity of the wearer and is consistent with our school's respectful community norms" (Savage, 2016). In another news story, a 16-year-old female student from Ottawa, Canada chose to wear a tank top with straps at least three fingers wide, which is in accordance with the school's dress code policy. However, her male teacher interrupted class and asked her to cover her shoulders because her straps were not as wide as *his* three fingers ("Dress code under fire," 2016).

These news stories provide examples of how dress codes teach young female students that women, not men, are responsible for how men view, judge, and treat women. Furthermore, male behavior may be excused based on what a female is wearing. Dress codes, by stating that the goal is to teach female students to dress modestly, reinforce the sexist belief that a women's value is related to her perceived purity. Additionally, punishment for dress code violations causes students to miss class, receive suspensions, or be shamed in front of peers. In Florida, a female student was required to change into a large, bright yellow shirt and red sweatpants with the words "dress code violation" printed largely across them (Klein, 2014). This communicates to students that it is acceptable to shame women based on their clothing. Dress codes may seem blameless and inconspicuous on the surface, but they are actually a reflection how society views women and thus work to reinforce gender inequality. The theories of ambivalent sexism, social dominance orientation, and intersectionality of race and gender provide insight into the negative impact school dress codes have on society.

Ambivalent Sexism

Dress codes work as a means to reinforce, maintain, and teach sexism to students. Ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) can be applied to dress codes as a way to recognize the role these rules play in perpetuating sexism. Ambivalent sexism theory explains that society holds ambivalent views of women because sexism includes both benevolent and hostile feelings, beliefs, and actions toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Ambivalent sexism theory suggests that gender-based discrimination consists of two seemingly conflicting but interconnected dimensions: hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism is defined as the negative and derogatory attitudes one holds toward women and is a more overt, or obvious form of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2011). Discriminatory actions and beliefs that are commonly ascribed to blatant sexism fall into this category. “Slut shaming” young women who wear revealing clothing is an example of hostile sexism. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is defined as holding superficially positive, yet stereotypical, attitudes towards women and characterizes women as pure creatures who need to be protected, supported, and cherished by men. It is a more covert, or less obvious form of sexism. Benevolent sexism often takes the form of seemingly affirmative beliefs about women, but these beliefs are actually patronizing in nature (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Benevolent sexism encourages women to endorse and participate in traditional gender roles. Telling young women to dress modestly to protect their virtue is an example of benevolent sexism.

Ambivalent attitudes toward women exist because women hold a unique position in society where they are simultaneously adored and put at a disadvantage. Benevolent sexism capitalizes on how society places women at a disadvantage, but uses quasi-

complimentary attitudes to ensure the gender inequality is not challenged. The traits respected and encouraged by benevolent sexism are the same traits that keep women in subordinate roles within society. These include traits such as being warm, compassionate, and caring which seem positive, but may prevent women from achieving positions of power. Women who choose to challenge or fail to adhere to benevolent sexism ideals—such as career-oriented women—are met with hostile sexism. Hostile sexism aims to justify traditional gender roles and male power through disparaging characterizations of women. This system of rewards and punishments prevents women from challenging gender inequality.

Societal Attitudes of Ambivalent Sexism. Benevolent and hostile sexist ideologies are embodied in the common societal attitudes regarding women (Glick & Fiske, 2011). These common societal attitudes include attitudes of paternalism toward women, gender differentiation, and heterosexual relations which work together to legitimize power differences and justify gender inequality in society. Each attitude plays a separate and unique role in maintaining women's subordinate role within society. Such attitudes toward women are embedded within society and influence interactions, perceptions, and notions of women.

The first attitude is paternalism toward women and refers to interacting with women in a similar manner as a father dealing with a child (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This attitude embodies the power differences between men and women in society. Dominative paternalism, the hostile piece of paternalism towards women, treats women as less than fully competent adults who therefore require the authority of a male figure. Dominative paternalism perceives women as naïve and in need of men to take care of them. Men take

on an authoritative role dictating the correct choices women should make. For example, men may dictate how women must behave in order to be taken seriously (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Protective paternalism, the benevolent piece, advocates that women require protection. According to the attitude of protective paternalism, men should protect and provide for women because of their authority, power, and greater physical strength. This contributes to the idea that women need men to protect them, but it also allows men to dictate when women should be protected and when women are responsible for hostile sexist actions of men. In other words, protective paternalism dictates women require protection but only when they conform to traditional gender stereotypes (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Second, the attitude of gender differentiation refers to gender roles and stereotypes common in society and reinforces the power differences between men and women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Gender differentiation characterizes men as being more suitable for higher-status roles because positive masculine traits are perceived as qualities necessary for leadership. The hostile piece of gender differentiation is competitive gender differentiation. Competitive gender differentiation is an attitude where men gain self-confidence through negative stereotypes of women. For example, by assuming women are only concerned with teasing or distracting men, men, in turn, have the power to dictate how women should dress in order to be respected by men. Gender differentiation is represented in society when women, but not men, are encouraged to dress modestly. Complementary gender differentiation, the benevolent portion of gender differentiation, is supportive of traditional gender roles. Through benevolent complementary gender

differentiation, women are assigned traits that create a need for men to depend upon women, such as a man needs a woman to take care of the home (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

The last societal attitude is heterosexual relations (Glick & Fiske, 1997). This attitude embodies men's dependency on women as sexual partners. An example of this is represented in the saying, "women: can't live with them, can't live without them." Heterosexual relations are a powerful source of ambivalent attitudes toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Heterosexual hostility, the hostile piece, reflects men's tendency to view women as sexual objects and fear that women will use their sexuality to gain power over men. This attitude is epitomized when men assume a woman is acting as a "tease" or plans to use her sexuality to "trick" men. Intimate heterosexuality, the benevolent piece, romanticizes women as sexual objects. This attitude perpetuates the idea that having a female partner is necessary for a man to be complete and that men deserve a good woman to take care of them. The intimate heterosexuality attitude is illustrated in how society views women's breasts. For example, it is acceptable for female breasts to be used in advertising yet individuals may be uncomfortable seeing female breasts used for breastfeeding (Zaikman & Marks, 2014).

Consequences of Hostile Sexism. Experiencing hostile sexism can negatively impact the lives of women. Consequences of hostile sexism tend to be more apparent and understandable within society. Even though hostile sexism is more overt and easier to identify, hostile sexist ideas affect how women are judged.

In a study conducted by Masser and Abrams (2004), hostile sexism was associated with negative evaluations of a female candidate applying for a managerial role. Subjects who endorsed hostile sexism were more likely to be vigilant about the

candidate's gender and allowed irrelevant characteristics to play a significant role in the employment decision-making process. The authors conclude that when a woman poses a threat, hostile sexism will serve to reinforce gender inequality (Masser & Abrams, 2004).

Research by Hurst and Beesley (2013) demonstrated that experiencing sexism and sexist discrimination has many negative psychological and emotional consequences for women. Sexist discrimination has been defined as various sexist events occurring across multiple domains of experience and sexist events are gender-specific, negative life stressors that are considered to be widespread in women's lives (Hurst & Beesley, 2013). Results demonstrated that, when compared to general life stressors, sexist events and discrimination have a greater impact on the physical and mental health of women (Hurst & Beesley, 2013).

Additionally, experiencing sexist discrimination has been associated with an impairment of academic performance (Adams, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, & Steele, 2006). According to research conducted by Adams and colleagues (2006), the consequences of gender-based discrimination on women's achievement are so strong that the mere suggestions of a sexist belief can negatively impact performance. In a series of experiments women were exposed to the suggestion that a male instructor held sexist beliefs. The suggestion of sexism was enough to have a negative influence on women, as demonstrated by worse performance on a logic test when compared to women who did not receive the suggestion that their instructor held sexist beliefs (Adams et al., 2006).

Lemonaki, Manstead, and Maio (2015) found that exposure to hostile sexism is likely to decrease feelings of security and comfort in women, as well as undermine their collective self-confidence. This reduction in feelings of security in women decreased the

likelihood of social competition, in other words, they were less likely to compete socially with men (Lemonaki et al., 2015). Research suggesting that hostile sexism is often directed toward women who fail to fall into traditional female subtypes, such as feminists and career women, may explain why women are resistant to engage in social change after experiencing hostile sexism.

Consequences of Benevolent Sexism. Benevolent sexism is especially harmful to gender equality due to its covert nature and ability to go undetected. According to Barreto and Ellemers (2005), benevolent sexism is a subtle way to maintain women's subordinate position in society. Since it often goes undetected, the effects of benevolent sexism have widespread consequences for women. The adverse consequences of benevolent sexism are then increased and extended because it is often not recognized and not challenged as sexist in nature (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005).

Benevolent sexism represents multiple barriers to equality for women, apart from its supportive relationship to hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2011). Benevolent sexism has consequences for gender equality because it maintains gender stereotypes that place women at a disadvantage.

Additionally, exposure to benevolent sexism has been demonstrated to undermine women's involvement in social change (Becker & Wright, 2011). While the stereotypes present in benevolent sexism may seem positive in nature, they actually work to undermine women's resistance to gender inequality. Becker and Wright (2011) argue that women's exposure to benevolent sexism works to provide justification for existing gender inequality by flattering women into active cooperation with a patriarchal system. Benevolent sexism may work to gently guide women into accepting gender inequality

and discourage involvement in social change (Becker & Wright, 2011). Alternatively, hostile sexism, often used as a basis for denying women equal access to power, can inspire women to act towards social change (Becker & Wright, 2011).

Jost and Kay (2005) investigated how exposure to benevolent sexism increased system justification for gender inequality among women. According to the system justification perspective, the belief that every group in society experiences some advantages and disadvantages should increase the sense that, on average, the system is fair and legitimate. The complementarity gender stereotypes of benevolent sexist ideologies increase system justification by supporting the seemingly positive stereotypes of women. Research suggests that women's exposure to complementary gender stereotypes leads to increased support of the status quo of gender relations (Jost & Kay, 2005).

Further, exposure to benevolent sexism is not only harmful because it reduces women's involvement in social change, but it also has consequences for women's cognitive abilities. Research suggests that exposure to benevolent sexism is worse than hostile sexism for women's cognitive performance (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). Benevolent sexism may reinforce the idea that women should be remembered for stereotypically feminine qualities, such as their kindness, rather than their achievements or competence. This minimization of women's performance is detrimental because it suggests possessing traditionally feminine qualities is more important for women than ability (Dardenne et al., 2007). This study demonstrates that seemingly, inoffensive benevolent sexist remarks create a mindset of self-doubt, decreased self-esteem, and

uneasiness in women where cognitive performance is impaired by the subtle detrimental consequences of benevolent (Dardenne et al., 2007)

Interaction of Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. Ambivalent sexist ideas are not mutually exclusive. Instead, the subjectively positive and negative attitudes of ambivalent sexism illustrate the mutually reinforcing ideologies used by society to maintain gender inequality. Research has demonstrated a positive, moderate correlation between the hostile and benevolent subscales of the ambivalent sexism inventory (Glick & Fiske, 2011). This suggests that some people hold conflicting attitudes toward women. Glick and Fiske (2011) suggest that opposing views are attributed to different subtypes of women. For example, benevolent sexism is related to the positive appraisal of women in traditional gender roles, whereas hostile sexism is related to the negative appraisal of women who violate traditional gender roles. Thus, hostile sexism may work to punish women to do not conform to traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 2011). Benevolent and hostile sexist ideals work together to maintain gender inequality.

Research conducted by Abrams, Viki, Masser, and Bohner (2003) suggested that individuals who scored high in benevolent sexism were more likely to blame a victim of an acquaintance rape when compared with individuals who scored low in benevolent sexism. Results support the perception that benevolent sexism may account for high victim blame because a victim may be perceived as behaving in an inappropriate manner. Additionally, hostile sexism was significantly associated with rape proclivity in response to the acquaintance rape scenario (Abrams et al., 2003). Benevolent sexism, in this example, may assist in creating a belief in a just world where women must accept

responsibility for putting themselves at risk. These results suggest that benevolent sexism may create a climate that allows hostile sexist behavior to exist.

Benevolent sexism may offer protection and affection from men, but that protection is withdrawn for women who fail to conform to traditional expectations of women. Ambivalent sexism theory suggests that hostile sexism is often directed at women who display non-traditionally feminine traits and benevolent sexism is directed at women who fulfill traditionally feminine roles (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997). For example, women who are career focused often display traditionally male traits such as assertiveness, ambition, or competence and are often victims of hostile sexism. Women who strive for more traditional roles, such as being a homemaker, are often described as being warm, caring, or sociable and are more likely to be victims of seemingly positive benevolent sexism (Glick et al. 1997). Glick and colleagues (1997) argue that the above examples illustrate the role of both hostile and benevolent sexism as a means to control women and keep them in a subordinate role.

Ambivalent Sexism and Dress Codes. The theory of ambivalent sexism provides a framework for understanding how dress codes perpetuate hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs that promote gender inequality. Although dress codes are intended to be enforced equally between both genders, female students may receive an unfair amount of attention and restriction in their clothing choices. Dress codes reinforce benevolent sexism through the use of traditional gender stereotypes. For example, dress code rules that focus on modesty are associated with female students, whereas rules that focus on professionalism are more likely to be associated with male students (Leighton & Terrell, 2016). In addition, telling female students to dress modestly as to not distract male students

reinforces the myth that men are not responsible for how they treat women. Female students are exposed to benevolent sexist ideologies from a young age through their experiences with dress codes. At the same time, male students are taught that benevolent sexist ideologies are acceptable by repeatedly seeing their female peers held to higher dress code standards.

Dress code regulations also reinforce hostile sexism because they are more stringent for female students, resulting in greater consequences for female students (Klein, 2014; Roy, 2016; Savage, 2016). The negative consequences female students receive when they fail to live up to strict and biased standards are representative of hostile sexism. When female students fail to follow dress codes, even with minor infractions, they are confronted by teachers and embarrassed in front of their peers (“Dress code under fire,” 2016). When a student violates the dress code, common punishments include wearing an oversized t-shirt, changing into gym clothes, or being sent home to change. These punishments employ public shaming and contribute to hostile sexist attitudes toward women.

Dress codes, even when they claim to be gender-neutral, are perceived to be primarily directed at female students (Leighton & Terrell, 2016). Research regarding common dress code items and their intended purpose demonstrated how female students may be targeted by dress codes. Respondents answered questions regarding 14 gender-neutral typical middle and high school dress code items. According to respondents, five applied only to female students, while just one applied to only male students (Leighton & Terrell, 2016). This demonstrates the undue burden placed on female students regarding their attire. In addition, when an item applied only to female students, the intended

purpose was reported as modesty, while when items that applied to both male and female the intended purpose was reported as professionalism, student safety, or diversity and inclusion. This illustrates how women experience greater regulations surrounding what they may wear and how these rules exist for female modesty.

Dress codes established in middle and high schools introduce the double standard of ambivalent sexism to women early in life. Female students may learn that they will not only be treated differently than male students but are also responsible for their male counterparts' inappropriate behavior at the same time. The benevolent sexism of dress codes teaches women that it is their role to dress modestly because men cannot control their own thoughts about women's bodies. When female students deviate from dress codes the shaming associated with this deviation is associated with hostile sexist beliefs. Via these complementary forces, young women may learn that their body is free to be judged by others and that they are responsible for other people's thoughts about their bodies.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender Identity

Research addressing how ambivalent sexist attitudes are applied to women of color has been limited. One theory regarding the interconnections between race and sexism suggests that stereotypes and perceptions associated with racial groups may influence the application of hostile and benevolent sexism (McMahon & Kahn, 2016). For example, Caucasian women are often stereotyped as innocent and pure, thus fitting with benevolent sexism, while African-American women are stereotyped as antagonistic and hypersexual, thus more likely to invoke hostile sexism (McMahon & Kahn, 2016). Positive stereotypes of African-American women also exist in modern culture (e.g., the

strong Black woman) but they are in contradiction to benevolent sexist ideas of women which include submissiveness, fragility, and inherently pure (McMahon & Kahn, 2016).

The general idea that a single identity of an individual can only be understood in relation to other social categories of one's identity is known as intersectionality (Mohr & Purdie-Vaughns, 2015). For example, personal experiences related to gender can only be fully understood when one's race is also considered. Within common social categories of identity, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, each dimension has a typical prototype. A prototypical default representative of women's rights issues may be a straight White woman, thus overlooking the experiences of women who do not fit this prototype. This process excludes other members who share that identity, such as women of color and non-heterosexual women. This exclusion of members with intersectional identities, or an individual who is excluded across at least two social identity groups, is called intersectional invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

The model of intersectional invisibility predicts that African-American women are at risk of being perceived as atypical women and atypical African-Americans (Mohr & Purdie-Vaughns, 2015). Intersectional invisibility also applies to people who have more than two subordinate identities. For example, African-American lesbian women suffer from ethnocentric definitions of femininity, androcentric definitions of African-American identity, and androcentric definitions of gay identity (Mohr & Purdie-Vaughns, 2015).

Empirical research on dress codes is limited and is an important new area in understanding the role ambivalent sexism plays in the lives of women. Additionally, it is important to ensure that research on sexism considers more than just the experience of

White women. Attitudes and effects associated with ambivalent sexism may be applied differently to women of color, as explained by the theory of intersectionality. Based on the theory of intersectional invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), dress codes may affect women of color differently than white women.

Social Dominance Theory

Social dominance theory helps explain the role dress codes play in maintaining and disseminating gender-based inequality. Additionally, social dominance theory provides a framework for studying how race and gender may intersect to create bias in the construction and enforcement of dress codes. Strict standards for women's clothing and the emphasis on women's bodies as a distraction reinforces group-based inequality between men and women. Early exposure to dress code requirements may influence women's acceptance of gender-based inequality.

According to social dominance theory, group-based social inequalities are prevalent in all modern societies and appear to be self-sustaining (Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003). Cultures of group-based discrimination are prone to reproduce and reinforce the current inequalities by constructing mechanisms through which the disparity is maintained (Schmitt et al., 2003). Societies create ideologies that promote group inequality in order to minimize group conflict (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). When such ideologies become widely accepted, they become "self-evident truths" within society (Strube & Rahimi, 2006). Inequality between groups becomes legitimized by the now self-evident ideologies, called hierarchy legitimizing myths, that promote, justify, and maintain group inequality (Pratto et al., 1994). The term myth is used to demonstrate that these ideas are widely shared and become self-evident truths within

society (Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 1996). Group-based hierarchies reproduce and reinforce themselves through individuals who have a general preference for hierarchical structures versus egalitarian structures (Schmitt et al., 2003).

Maintenance of Group-Based Hierarchies. Social dominance theory postulates that three social strategies exist to establish and maintain group-based hierarchies (Sidanius et al., 1996). The first strategy— aggregated individual discrimination— includes instances where members of the dominant group tend to discriminate against individual members of the subordinate group. Discrimination may be overt or covert based on a number of factors (Sidanius et al., 1996). Overt discrimination is open, public, and obvious. An example of overt aggregated individual discrimination is blaming a female victim of sexual assault for her clothing choices, thus blaming the victim of the crime and not the male perpetrator. Covert discrimination is less public, harder to acknowledge, and more subtle than overt discrimination. An example of covert aggregated individual discrimination is how a female news anchor may receive excessive attention when she wears the same outfit, but male news anchors are rarely criticized for their clothing choices.

Institutional discrimination is the second strategy used to establish and maintain group-based hierarchies. This strategy includes assigning positive social value disproportionately to dominant group members while subordinate group members excessively receive negative social value (Sidanius, Pratto, & Levin, 2004). Traditionally, this has included men working outside of the home, while women became homemakers and raised the children. More recent examples include the disproportionate number of male CEOs, the wage gap, and the continued assumption that women must choose

between having a family or career. Institutional discrimination also exists in dress code requirements for female students when compared to male students, as female students have more restrictions on their clothing choices and are held to a higher standard than male students.

The final strategy employed to establish and maintain group-based hierarchies is behavioral asymmetry (Sidanius et al., 1996). Behavioral asymmetry describes behaviors between dominant and subordinate groups that perpetuate group-based inequalities (Sidanius et al., 1996). Individuals attitudes and behaviors are a function of their groups status within society (Heaven, 1999). As a consequence, these behaviors reinforce current group-based hierarchies.

Hierarchy Legitimizing Myths. Another way societies create, maintain, and justify group-based inequality is through the use of hierarchy legitimizing myths (Sidanius et al., 1996). Hierarchy legitimizing myths are beliefs and social ideologies which intellectually justify group inequality (Quist & Resendez, 2002). The more widespread and accepted a legitimizing myth is within society, the easier it is to maintain the current level of group-based inequality (Sidanius et al., 1996). Examples of hierarchy legitimizing myths include the idea that women should be caregivers because they are more nurturing than men and the idea women cannot have both a successful career and family. Individuals in dominant groups are more likely to believe hierarchy legitimizing myths (Quist & Resendez, 2002). Dominant group members are motivated to maintain their group dominance through the use and growth of hierarchy legitimizing myths, which provide justification and maintenance for their in-groups power (Strube & Rahimi, 2006).

Hierarchy legitimizing myths may be supported by members of subordinate groups, even when they harm that group (Sidanius et al., 2004). As hierarchy legitimizing myths become increasingly ingrained into the unconsciousness of a culture, they are sustained by subordinate groups. According to social dominance theory, both dominant and subordinate groups participate in the legitimization of hierarchical group inequality (Pratto et al., 2000). Subordinate group members may support hierarchy legitimizing myths because it elevates their social status. For example, a woman who supports hierarchy legitimizing myths about other women may gain the respect of her male counterparts, thus elevating her social status when compared to her female peers.

Social Dominance Orientation. Within social dominance theory, an important individual difference exists, called social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994). One's level of social dominance orientation refers to the degree to which an individual prefers intergroup relations to be equal or hierarchical. Individuals who are high in social dominance orientation support group-based hierarchies and believe that social groups differ in value (Pratto et al., 2000). On the other hand, individuals who are low in social dominance orientation support group equality and oppose group differentiation of status and power. Social dominance orientation predicts levels of acceptance or rejection of various ideologies about group relations in society (Strube & Rahimi, 2006). High social dominance orientation strongly predicts support of ideologies and hierarchy legitimizing myths. For example, individuals who score high on the Social Dominance Orientation scale tend to score higher on scales of racism, sexism, and right-wing authoritarianism (Pratto et al., 2000).

According to social dominance theory, the higher status held by an individual's group correlates with a higher level of social dominance orientation (Levin, 2004). For instance, social dominance orientation tends to be higher for men than women and correlates with sexist ideologies (Pratto et al., 1994). Research suggests that the higher one's social dominance orientation, the more that person supports beliefs that maintain inequities between men and women (Rosenthal, Levy, & Earnshaw, 2012).

Members of subordinate groups may also score high in social dominance orientation (Sidanius et al., 1996). Regardless of their in-group status, individuals who support group dominance are more likely to obtain higher social roles than more egalitarian members (Pratto et al., 2000). For example, subordinate group members with high social dominance orientation and low in-group identification will favor the outgroup (Sidanius et al., 2004). Individuals who favor group-based inequality will identify more with the dominant out-group because members of the dominant group support group-based inequality whereas their own in-group members will not. Identifying with the dominant out-group will also provide the subordinate group member high in social dominance orientation with greater access to resources (Sidanius et al., 2004).

Societies maintain group-based inequalities through hierarchy legitimizing myths. Individuals who score high in social dominance orientation are more likely to support and perpetuate hierarchy legitimizing myths (Pratto et al., 2000; Sidanius et al., 1996). Further, there is a correlation between the higher status of an individual's group and their level of social dominance orientation (Levin, 2004). Conversely, individuals with higher status roles within a particular social group, even a non-dominant group, tend to have higher levels of social dominance orientation (Sidanius et al., 2004)

Social Dominance Theory and Dress Codes. Sexism is not one-dimensional and gender hierarchy is maintained by treating women who conform to traditional gender roles benevolently and treating nonconforming women with hostility (Fowers & Fowers, 2010). In order to manage this ambivalence, individuals place women into various groups. Women are often subtyped regarding their sexuality; for example, chaste for conforming women and promiscuous for non-conforming women. In addition, benevolent sexism may work as a legitimizing myth by disarming women's resistance to sexism (Fowers & Fowers, 2010). Evidence exists demonstrating that social dominance orientation is related to sexism. Kteily, Sidanius, and Levin (2011) demonstrated that an individual's level of social dominance orientation is positively correlated with future ambivalent sexism scores.

In conclusion, social dominance theory explains how societies work to maintain inequalities between groups. Dress codes maintain gender-based inequality through the use of hierarchy legitimizing myths, individual discrimination, institutional discrimination, and behavioral asymmetry.

Rationale for the Current Study

The main purpose of the current study was to better understand gender differences in reactions to dress code violations and how these reactions vary based on the race of the target. The study was a factorial design with two factors: gender of the participant (male vs. female) and race of the target (Black female vs. White female). The dependent variables were whether a dress code violation had occurred and the perceived severity of the dress code. A second purpose of the study was to explore how individual differences

in hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and social dominance orientation moderate participant's judgments about the dress code violation.

It was hypothesized that a significant gender difference would be detected, with male participants judging the violation more severely and endorsing harsher consequences for the violation than female participants. It was also expected that the skin tone of the student in the image would have a significant effect on how severely the dress code violation was judged. The dress code violation of the student who appears to be a Black student was expected to be judged more severely than the dress code violation by the student who appears to be a White student. A two-way interaction between participant gender and skin tone of the target was also anticipated, with male participants being especially punitive to the target who appears to be a Black student.

Relationships among individual differences and the dependent variables were also explored. Differences in judgments based on skin tone were expected to be more pronounced for participants who score high in either domain of sexism and/or social dominance.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The sample for this study included 409 participants (men, $n = 161$; women, $n = 248$). Of those participants, 159 were recruited through a large Midwestern university psychology department's research participation system in exchange for course credit. Participants recruited through the university were primarily women ($n = 103$) and ages ranged from 17 to 42 ($M = 20.45$, $SD = 3.32$). Participants recruited from the university's research participation system identified as Caucasian (88.7%), Native American (4.4%), Asian (3.8%), Hispanic (3.8%), African American (1.9%), and/or Other (2.5%). An additional 250 participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk in exchange for a small monetary incentive for their time (\$.50). The majority of these participants were also women ($n = 145$) and ages ranged from 18 to 75 ($M = 34.6$, $SD = 12.03$). Participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk identified as Caucasian (82%), Asian (8%), Hispanic (5.2%), African American (4.8%), Native American (1.6%), and/or Other (1.6%).

Materials

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire that assessed several common demographic items such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, and level of education.

Images. The target image consisted of a woman wearing yoga style pants and a t-shirt. The image was obtained from a news story about high school dress code violations and included a student who did not meet the school's dress code standards because she was wearing yoga pants and her bra strap was visible. The image was cropped to omit the young woman's face. The skin tone of the image was manipulated digitally to create a lighter-toned versus darker-toned image.

Four other images were presented as filler stimuli to control for demand characteristics of participants. The filler stimuli images were acquired from additional news stories about dress codes. Each image was cropped to omit the student's face. Two of the filler images were of male students who were wearing basketball style shorts down to their knees and sleeveless shirts.

The last two filler images featured female students. One of the female filler images consisted of a student wearing jeans, a shirt with a cardigan, and a fashion scarf. The final filler image shows a student wearing a skirt that reaches approximately as far as her fingertips and a slight V-neck shirt. All images are presented in Appendix A; Appendix B includes information about the original media source for each image. Each filler stimulus image was digitally manipulated so that participants were randomly assigned to see either an image that depicted a student with a darker skin tone or a lighter skin tone. Thus, the unique combination of filler images was randomized for each participant.

Dress Code. A typical high school dress code was presented to participants for use in evaluating the images. This dress code is presented in Appendix C.

Dependent Variable Questions. A series of questions were created to first ascertain whether participants judged the clothing to be a violation of the dress code. Participants were then asked a series of question to assess their perceptions of the degree of severity of the violation. Appendix D includes the questions used to evaluate the images. Participant perceptions of the dress code violation severity were based on a composite score of the 12 Likert-type items, where participants were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with a series of statements using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) response scale.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, a 22-item Likert-type, self-report measure used to assess attitudes toward women. The ambivalent sexism inventory is composed of two subscales—hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. The hostile sexism subscale measures prejudice against women and women’s rights. The benevolent sexism subscale reflects a positive view of women, but only as they fit into traditional gender roles. Each subscale is composed of 11 items with a response scale that includes six options that range from Disagree Strongly (0) to Agree Strongly (5). A sample item from the hostile sexism subscale is “Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist”; a sample item from the benevolent sexism scale is “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.” The following Cronbach alphas are based on the current sample: the total scale (both subscales) $\alpha = 0.955$, the hostile sexism subscale $\alpha = 0.952$, and the benevolent sexism $\alpha = 0.926$.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto et. al., 1994). Participants completed a modified version of the Social Dominance Orientation scale, a 14-item self-

report measure with a response scale that includes six options that range from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). Sample items include “Some people are just more worthy than others” and “to get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on others.” The following Cronbach’s alpha is based on the current sample was $\alpha = 0.960$.

Procedure

This study employed a 2 (skin tone of target: Black vs. White) X 2 (participant gender) between-subjects design. Participants completed the study online. After obtaining informed consent, participants completed a demographic questionnaire and then were randomly assigned to evaluate one of the two target images (Black female student vs. White female student). Participants also completed the ASI and SDO scales. All participants read the same sample high school dress code and were asked to evaluate the four filler images in addition to the target image. The five images (target image plus four filler images) were presented in a randomized order. After viewing each image, participants answered the dependent variable questions about whether the clothing represented a dress code violation and the severity of the violation.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Data Preparation

Participants who provided only demographic information but did not provide answers about the dress code violation were removed from the dataset. Table 1 displays the frequency of participants who indicated that a dress code violation occurred as a function of the independent variables of interest (gender of participant and race of target image). The equal distribution among participants who indicated that violation occurred compared to those who reported that no violation occurred is noteworthy as the frequencies are roughly equal across all categories. The image clearly displayed two different violations—the student was wearing yoga pants as well as an off-the-shoulder shirt (refer back to Appendix A), yet almost half of participants did not indicate that a dress code violation occurred. A series of chi-square analyses indicated no significant differences based on the gender of the participant or the race of the young woman depicted in the target image.

To create a continuous dependent variable, the mean of the 12 Likert-type statements about the severity of the dress code violation was computed to create a composite score. The mean of these items represents the perceived severity of the dress code violation where a higher score represents a judgment of a more severe dress code violation. Cronbach's alpha was computed for these items, indicating high internal consistency, $\alpha = 0.938$. Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for each of the 12 items as

well as the composite variable, first for all participants and then for only those participants who initially indicated that the outfit represented a dress code violation.

Correlations

Correlations among the composite dependent variable, sexism, and social dominance orientation were calculated to determine which variables should be included in subsequent analyses. Although several personality variables were significantly correlated with the perceived severity of the dress code violation, the effect sizes were small. These correlations are displayed separately by gender of participant in Table 3. In women, benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, total sexism, and social dominance orientation were all significantly correlated with the perceived severity of the violation. However, in men, only social dominance orientation was significantly correlated with the perceived severity of the violation.

Analysis of Variance

A 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (skin tone of target) ANOVA indicated no significant two-way interaction between gender of participant and skin tone of the target, $F(1, 405) = .300, p = .584$. The main effect for participant gender on the severity rating of the dress code violation was also not significant, $F(1, 405) = .723, p = .396$. The main effect for target skin tone on the severity rating of the dress code violation also did not reach significance, $F(1, 405) = 1.268, p = .261$.

Regression Analyses

Based on the correlations between personality variables and the dependent variable, multiple regression was used to explore participant gender, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and social dominance orientation as predictors of the perceived

severity of the dress code violation. Two multiple linear regression analyses were conducted—one analysis for participants who initially indicated that no violation had occurred and another analysis for participants who indicated that a violation had occurred. All predictors were entered simultaneously. Interestingly, social dominance orientation was the only significant predictor of judgments of dress code severity, but only in participants who indicated a violation had *not* occurred. These analyses are presented in Table 4. For participants who indicated that a violation had not occurred the total variance accounted for by the model was 9.4%. For participants who indicated that a violation had occurred the total variance accounted for by the model was 8.8%.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The goal of the current study was to better understand gender differences in perceptions of dress code violations in high school students and how perceptions vary based on the race of the target student. It was hypothesized that significant gender differences would exist between men and women in judgments of the severity of dress code violations. However, this hypothesis was not supported. It was also hypothesized that the skin tone of the target student would have a significant effect on the perception of the severity of the dress code violation. This hypothesis was also not supported.

This study also explored the role of individual differences in hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and social dominance orientation on perceptions of dress code violations. The hypothesis that individual differences would predict perceptions of dress code violations was partially supported. Although correlations were observed between these individual differences and perceptions of dress code violations, social dominance orientation was the only predictor that reached significance in the regression model, and only for participants who initially indicated that a violation had not occurred. This may have been related to the association between social dominance orientation and hostile sexism. For example, men's level of social dominance orientation was moderately, positively correlated with hostile sexism (Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007).

Implications

Recently, controversies about sexism in school dress codes have gained increased media attention. For example, in Harrisburg, North Carolina a high school senior received a 10-day suspension for wearing a shirt that rests just off her shoulders, even after she put on a jacket as requested (Mendis, 2017). Too often, concerns over what female students wear to school interfere with their ability to learn. In El Paso, Texas students reported feeling humiliated and missing important class time due to the enforcement of a dress code they call sexualizing and demeaning to female students. While school administrators state the dress code is intended to keep the students focused on instruction, female students say they cannot get the same education as male students because they often miss whole class periods for minor dress code violations (Hunt, 2017). Within recent dress code controversies, similar themes often arise in support of high school dress codes. Dress codes for students are supported because they “protect” female students from the “impure thoughts” of male students and teachers (Roy, 2016). Female students’ clothing may be “distracting” to male students (Savage, 2016) and the clothing of female students should be “modest” (Klein, 2014). However, these ideas all shift the burden of policing male behavior onto female students. Additionally, enforcement of sexist dress codes places female students at an unfair disadvantage in the school environment.

Based on recent controversies, it was important from an intersectional framework to explore whether students of color may be disproportionately affected by a system that is already inherently sexist. The positive implications from the data presented here are that the race of the target student did not seem to influence participant judgments about

her attire. Additionally, male participants did not seem any more likely to report that a violation occurred or to judge the student with a darker skin tone more punitively.

Although null results are often disappointing, this pattern of results may indicate that dress codes are not necessarily more likely to be unfairly applied to female students of color, at least in the current sample, and this is a result to be cautiously optimistic about.

Even with formal, written rules the decision seems to be subjective and at least partially, influenced by certain personality traits. Although hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) was moderately correlated with judgments about dress codes for male participants, social dominance orientation was the only significant predictor in the regression model. Social dominance theory (Pratto et al., 1994) explains how group-based inequalities are supported within society. Group-based hierarchies are reinforced through individuals who have a general preference for hierarchical structures (Schmitt et al., 2003). Although social dominance orientation was not related to judgments about dress code violations based on the race of the target, the question of whether females are disproportionately affected by dress codes, compared to males, was not explored in this study, but such differences, if they exist, are likely also tied to social dominance orientation.

While several of the hypotheses were not supported, the results of the current study are interesting nonetheless. First, the roughly equal distribution among participants who indicated that a violation occurred versus those who reported that no violation occurred highlights the subjective nature of dress code enforcement. The image clearly displayed two different violations based on the example dress code. This image was taken from an actual dress code violation from Staten Island, New York, which highlights that such subjective judgments have real-world implications. Second, social dominance

orientation emerged as a significant predictor of how severely participants rated dress code violations, but only for participants who initially indicated that a violation did not occur. This result is perplexing. It may be the case that people high in social dominance orientation are more punitive in general, but this does not explain why only those participants who initially indicated that no violation had occurred would then be more punitive and severe in subsequent responses.

Limitations

Several limitations of the current study exist, which may explain the lack of significant results. To start, the current study used images of teenagers that were collected from real-life dress code controversies. Since the sample included only adults, it may be that a number of participants did not have strong opinions about the violations in question. Therefore, future research should focus on perceptions of dress code compliance within the workplace and include images of adults as target stimuli.

Another potential limitation may be that the study only included a target female student. Dress code violations may be perceived differently when they occur in male students. Future studies should use pre-rated images of male and female students to create targets who are judged to be as equivalent as possible across several traits who exhibit the same dress code violation(s) to assess differences in severity ratings based on the gender of the student.

A final limitation may be that the target dress code violations were not clear enough to elicit strong responses. The equal split between participants who reported a violation occurring suggests that the stimulus may have been too subtle. Future research may consider displaying a more obvious violation(s) while still being cautious about potential ceiling effects

Table 1

Distribution of Participants Indicating a Dress Code Violation Occurred as a Function of Condition

Participant		Did a violation occur?		Total
Gender	Target Race	No	Yes	
Female				
	White	53 (45%)	65 (55%)	118
	Black	53 (46%)	63 (54%)	116
	Total	106 (45%)	128 (55%)	234
Male				
	White	42 (50%)	42 (50%)	84
	Black	36 (54%)	31 (46%)	67
	Total	78 (52%)	73 (48%)	151

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Severity of Violation Composite Variable

Item number	All participants		Reported a violation	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	1.87	1.36	1.84	1.42
2	1.90	1.46	1.88	1.56
3	2.06	1.63	2.12	1.81
4	1.94	1.63	1.94	1.58
5	1.91	1.51	1.95	1.67
6	2.01	1.49	2.10	1.61
7	3.08	2.25	3.12	2.34
8	2.66	1.84	2.88	1.97
9	2.50	1.96	2.56	2.11
10	2.07	1.58	2.07	1.68
11	2.07	1.66	2.11	1.82
12	3.45	2.37	3.50	2.51
Composite Score	2.83	1.51	3.73	1.43

Table 3

Correlations Among Personality Variables and Composite Dependent Variable (Severity of Dress Code Violation)

Variable	Violation Severity	Benevolent Sexism	Hostile Sexism	Total Sexism	SDO
Violation Severity	1	.048	.163*	.118	.214**
Benevolent Sexism	.217**	1	.637**	.899**	.378**
Hostile Sexism	.188**	.651**	1	.910**	.599**
Total Sexism	.221**	.988**	.919**	1	.543**
SDO	.167**	.343**	.499**	.468**	1

Note. Correlations for men appear above the diagonal; correlations for women appear below the diagonal

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 4

Regression Coefficients Split by if a Violation Occurred

	B	SE B	β	<i>p</i>
No Violation Occurred				
Constant	1.290	.202		<i>p</i> < .001
Gender	.152	.143	.078	<i>p</i> = .289
Hostile	-.098	.084	-.127	<i>p</i> = .245
Benevolent	.065	.084	.078	<i>p</i> = .439
SDO	.263	.072	.310	<i>p</i> < .001*
Yes a Violation Occurred				
Constant	2.639	.295		<i>p</i> < .001
Gender	.149	.209	.050	<i>p</i> = .475
Hostile	.192	.106	.178	<i>p</i> = .071
Benevolent	.101	.106	.083	<i>p</i> = .340
SDO	.093	.108	.071	<i>p</i> = .391

Note. For participants who indicated no violation occurred $R^2 = .094$. For participants who indicated a violation did occur $R^2 = .088$.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Dress Code Violation Images

Target A (White skin tone)



Target B (Black skin tone)



Filler A (White skin tone)



Filler A (Black skin tone)



Filler B (White skin tone)



Filler B (Black skin tone)



Filler C (White skin tone)



Filler C (Black skin tone)



Filler D (White skin tone)



Filler D (Black skin tone)



Appendix B

Original News Reports of Dress Code Violation Images

Target and Filler Image A

Some students continue to defy Tottenville High School dress code

Tottenville High students from left: Laura Candelieri, Joanna Candelieri, Christina Zakaria and Christina Candelieri pose for a photo wearing shorts and a tank-tops, a no-no as per the dress code, which has some students and parents hot under the collar. Monday September 8, 2014. (Staten Island Advance/Anthony DePrimo).

On September 15, 2014 at 12:39 PM, updated September 15, 2014 at 7:09 PM

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Shorts and halter tops may have disappeared with cooler temperatures, but some Tottenville High School students continue to defy the school's dress code, with students and parents focused on the overall discipline code they say is too punitive. School officials rounded up and detained more than 200 students last week for defying the dress code.

The code prohibits "tank tops, low-cut blouses, tubes/halter and midriff tops" as well as "short-shorts" and "mini-skirts," and mandates that "all shorts/skirts must be at relaxed hand-level" and also prohibits "visible undergarments."

According to students and angry parents, the school staff and administrators were pulling students from the hallways who they deemed were dressed inappropriately. Some of the girls were handed grey Tottenville athletic T-shirts or gym shorts to put on, before they could return to class. Others were forced to wait while a parent was called.

Students also complained the dress code discriminates against female students.

The move is part of an overall enforcement of existing school rules and discipline code by acting interim principal Joseph Scarmato, whose daughter is also a Tottenville student.

Scarmato unleashed parent anger by sending home a six-page "contract" spelling out rules and regulations. The document had to be signed by the student as well as a parent or guardian and returned to the school.

In it, Scarmato explains that the regulations are necessary to prepare students for college and the workforce.

The disciplinary code lays out punishments for infractions, which range from an hour-long detention, to Saturday detention, and suspension.

Some took to Twitter to express what they thought of the code.

We are seriously going to have problems in Tottenville I can't wait to see how this turns out.

Still some SILive readers defended the dress code and Scaramuto's efforts to raise standards at the South Shore school, one of the largest public high schools in the city.

"There are approximately 4,000 students enrolled in Tottenville High School; 200 students have been identified as not complying with the dress code. That's approximately 5% of the student population. So 95% of the students have complied with the existing dress code that is now being enforced by the new administration. The dress code will continue to be enforced. Let's move on," Community Education Council President Michael Reilly posted on his Facebook page.

Filler Image B

Kentucky student violates high school dress code with exposed collarbone

Aug. 17, 2015 at 6:23 PM

Eun Kyung Kim

School has barely started in some parts of the country, but the annual battle over dress codes has already surfaced at one Kentucky high school.

Stacie Dunn's daughter recently got sent to the principal's office for failing to wear a shirt that covered her collarbone, a violation of the school dress code at Woodford County High School.

"So this is my daughter at school today. I had to come to the school because according to her school principal what she is wearing is out of dress code and inappropriate for school," she wrote on her Facebook page, posting a picture of her daughter at school wearing jeans, a tank top and a white cardigan. "When I got there I found a group of female students standing in the office due to being out of dress code also."

She criticized the school for enforcing a dress code that forbids girls from showing their collarbones "because it may distract their male class mates. This is ridiculous!" she continued in the photo's caption. "Parents are being called away from their important jobs and students are missing important class time because they are showing their collarbones! Something needs to change!"

Dunn said she went to the school with a scarf but that her daughter got sent home anyway after being accused of giving the principal "an attitude." She posted another photo of her daughter, asking of the principal: "What did he want her to tie it like a noose around her neck!"

Scott Hawkins, Woodford County Schools superintendent, said the high school's dress code has been in place for more than 10 years.

"Our school administration has been very open with students and parents alike, that if they feel like changes need to be made, they are open to suggestions," he told TODAY.com. "It just needs to be measurable so that it can be consistently enforced."

"The whole idea behind the dress code is to make sure you have a safe learning environment and that's what we're trying to create," he said.

According to the high school's dress code policy, shirts must have crew-neck collars that do not dip below the collarbone.

“There’s nothing magical about the collarbone itself other than that’s just a point of reference, kind of like your knee would be for the length of shorts, or the length of a skirt,” Hawkins said. In Kentucky, student dress codes are a school-level decision, meaning that school districts don’t set the dress codes for individual campuses.

Dunn, who did not immediately respond to TODAY.com requests for comment, noted on her Facebook page that her daughter's principal had recently called her to set up a meeting. He said “he would be willing to amend the dress code if I was willing to put together a proposed dress code that was realistic, measurable and professional that everyone, including lawyers could agree too! Sounds like I have some work to do!”

“It was never my intent to ‘bash’ anyone, merely to draw attention to what I feel was an injustice in our school system,” she said in a subsequent Facebook post. She insisted her issue was with “the ridiculous dress code, not in the conduct of the faculty.”

She said the principal also has met with a group of high school students about making “a reasonable dress code change proposal” to take before the school board.

Filler Image C

Opinion: Sexist RHS Dress Code Promotes Prejudice

September 16, 2015

By Hannah Metzger, Columnist

The concept of dress code is simple — students should dress professionally and appropriately while in this professional environment. However, at Rangeview High School the faculty has

taken the dress code policy way too far. The current dress code at RHS drastically over sexualizes the bodies of our adolescent students and is targeting Rangeview's female population. Information from the attendance office provided by Lillie Dean-Hoy stated that last year at RHS, 196 students were dress coded. Over 75% of those students were female. That's approximately 150 female students dress coded as opposed to only 46 male students. And it is only getting worse. Already this year there have been 40 students dress coded, 35 of which were female and only 5 male. Some faculty blame the students for the difference in male to female dress code violations

However, it is not the students that are the problem, it's the system. Female students at RHS are targeted by the dress code, being forced to hide body parts that are nowhere near inappropriate or sexual.

Girls being punished for showing their shoulders or thighs is not only an example of the ridiculous over sexualization of the female body, but it also promotes gender inequality.

By taking female students out of class, sending them home, and even going to the point where they are suspended because their attire is seen as "distracting" to the male student body, the School Board is valuing the education of male students above the education of female students.

Rangeview's faculty would rather have female students miss valuable lessons and class time than risk their male classmates being distracted by an exposed shoulder; which is clearly shown through the 75%-85% of "dress codes" being that of female students.

These double standards are not only unfair, but are unsafe and poisoning the minds of our students. By blaming the female students for their male peers staring at them, the schools are promoting rape culture and victim blaming. They are also viewing the male students as beings of impulse, not able to control themselves or their actions. This encourages the idea that "boys will

be boys” and women need to adjust and learn to protect themselves rather than men learning how to control their urges. This unfair and stereotypical view of the students is proven by the recent dress code statistics. Last year, pulling female students away from their education because of clothing over three times more than males shows the student body whose education the RHS faculty prioritizes.

Also, the unequal enforcement of the dress code at Rangeview High School completely ignores females as sexual beings. Taking a walk down the halls at RHS you can see male students wearing shorts, tank tops, crop tops, and sometimes even strutting through the commons after strength class with no shirts at all. But male students are rarely punished over their attire.

“I think that if the dress code is going to be enforced it needs to be enforced equally,” said Rangeview Junior, Alexis Andrew. “A guy shouldn’t be able to wear a cut out shirt with his stomach and chest hanging out if I can’t show my shoulders. The dress code only applies to girls at this school”.

Rangeview Junior Mariah Stechelan agreed with Alexis, saying, “I’ve literally seen guys walk around in speedos, but yesterday I almost got dress coded because my shirt exposed my shoulders. That’s ridiculous”.

This double standard ignores the fact that adolescent females have sexual urges and impulses just like males. And if male students can be so easily distracted by the female body, than female students can be equally distracted by the male body.

Dress codes are an important and necessary concept for all schools to have in order to keep the environment professional and appropriate. However, the current system is far too drastic and targets the female student body. Changes need to be made in either the policy or the enforcement

of it in order to promote equality and the desexualization of the human body at Rangeview High School.

Filler Image D

Students protest Ann Arbor middle school dress code

Sarah Myers-Levitt, an eighth-grade student at Forsythe Middle School, organized a protest of the school's dress code she says is unfair and mostly targets girls. Alex McDougall | The Ann Arbor News on June 08, 2015 at 5:40 AM, updated June 10, 2015 at 4:53 PM

Students at an Ann Arbor middle school are speaking up against a dress code they say is unfair and arbitrary.

Sarah Myers-Levitt, an eighth-grade student at Forsythe Middle School, organized a protest on Friday, May 29, involving 80 students wearing clothing teachers say violates the dress code.

Girls wore shorts, and some boys joined in, wearing muscle shirts, Sarah said.

According to an email to parents from Interim Principal Tamber Woodworth, the staff asked students to change and did not discipline any students.

But days later, Sarah said, some girls wore the same shorts they did during the protest to no comment from staff members.

For three years, she said, she's had teachers send her to the office saying her clothing, such as shorts or a crew neck, short-sleeve shirt, violates the school's dress code. Until the last two weeks, she said, she was too intimidated to speak up for herself. But she decided it was time to speak up.

First, Sarah went to Instagram and posted about the dress code.

"For the past three years of my life, dress code has distracted me more than anything else at school. Constantly making sure my shirt is pulled down in the hall, avoiding certain teachers,

getting called down to the office to change and just sitting there in the morning, out of ideas for 'appropriate' things to wear. My mother would not let me go to school if I wasn't dressed modestly, and she sees me every day before I walk out that door," she wrote to many responses from her peers.

The Ann Arbor schools administration responded to The Ann Arbor News' request to talk about the dress code by sending a copy of the letter sent by Woodworth.

Other middle schools have had rumblings about the dress code this spring.

The Ann Arbor schools' student handbook describes inappropriate dress as, "Dressing or grooming in a manner which interferes or disrupts the educational process, interferes with the maintenance of a positive teaching/learning climate or compromises reasonable standards of health, safety and decency."

According to Woodworth's letter, "some students came to school dressed in a manner that violated the current dress code, i.e., muscle shirts, short shorts and spaghetti strap tops.

"The students were asked to change into appropriate attire for school. Most of them had a change of clothing with them that was appropriate for school. A few of (the) students did not have a change of clothes and their parents were called. Most parents brought a change for their students."

Sarah's disagreement with the dress code and enforcement has different aspects: dress rules that aren't standard, inequitable enforcement and emphasis on girls wearing clothes that don't distract boys.

It's a theme her mother, Karen Myers, and other Ann Arbor parents share.

To Sarah, the common fingertip-length short or skirt rule is arbitrary and unfair. Some students have longer arms, some have shorter arms, she said.

Karen Myers noted some students are more developed than others in middle school.

"I don't like the idea that girls are responsible for not distracting boys," Myers said. "Boys are responsible for their own impulses."

Jen Talley, another Forsythe parent, agrees with Myers about the messages sent to girls.

At ages 12 and 14, girls should be worrying about their education instead of short length, she said. Bella Preissle, a Forsythe Middle School eighth-grader, wears shorts she says school officials say were inappropriate.

Bella Preissle, the daughter of Shawn Preissle, is an eighth-grader at Forsythe Middle School. Preissle said her daughter participated in the protest by wearing shorts and a sleeveless, button-down shirt. She has worn the shorts to school without incident before the protest and since, but that day, staff asked her to change.

Sarah also finds enforcement unfair. Some teachers repeatedly call out certain girls for violating dress code, while other girls who wear similar clothes fly under the radar, she said.

Sarah recalled an incident when a boy got in trouble for wearing a T-shirt with marijuana on it and staff members told him not to wear it again. Girls, on the other hand, are kept out of class until they change, she said.

"Unless shorts are really short and riding up, I don't see a problem," she said.

Getting pulled out of a classroom because of distracting clothes, Sarah said, is more distracting and takes away from her time learning more than the clothes.

Forsythe Middle School often is hot, she said, and wearing shorts on warm days is a matter of comfort.

"It's about how I feel," Sarah said. "I want to be able to focus."

Talley said it's difficult to find shorts that are long enough, she said. She pointed to a Land's End catalog that had longer shorts for girls, priced at \$29 each.

But shopping at Target, Kohl's or Meijer is more difficult.

"If you don't want to spend \$29 (and instead find) budget shorts at Target, you can't," she said.

Her sixth-grade daughter at Forsythe, Amelia, hasn't had a problem with the dress code because she often wears shorts for boys for their practicality and functionality. But her younger daughter, Abbott Elementary third-grader Lila, prefers girls' shorts, and Talley worries she'll have problems in middle school.

Amelia said she doesn't understand the big deal about spaghetti strap tank tops.

"Boys know girls wear bras," she said.

Preissle said she didn't have a problem finding clothes for her son, who is now graduated, but most stores don't carry shorts that are fingertip length for her daughters.

She suggests school officials look at the dress code every two to three years.

"They need to adjust dress code according to where the world is right now and not to send kids home when they can simply say, 'You have a warning,'" she said.

At Abbott, Talley said, she's heard nothing about dress code. Sarah and Karen Myers said they've heard nothing about dress code at the high schools.

At Tappan Middle School, students had planned a similar protest, according to an email dated June 3 from Principal Jazz Parks and Assistant Principal Chris Roberts.

"Despite what some students seem to believe, there have been no changes made to the current policy. Our dress code expectations are no different than they have been for the past several school years," the email stated.

At Tappan, student dress expectations are:

Students are expected to wear shorts/skirts/pants that come to at least mid-thigh.

Students who choose to wear leggings should make sure that the leggings are not see-through and that undergarments and body parts are not visible through the fabric.

The straps on shirts need to be thick enough in width to cover undergarments.

Shirts should have full side seams.

Both boys and girls need to wear shirts that cover the midriff area.

Undergarments should not be visible.

Hats, hoods and bandanas may not be worn inside the school building (except for religious and/or medical purposes).

Pants and shorts are to be fitted or belted at the waist to prevent sagging below the waistline.

Appendix C Dress Code

The following dress code was presented to participants:

Students are expected to show good judgment in dress and grooming. Students are asked to dress respectfully and appropriately for the school climate. The following items are not allowed:

- Items containing inappropriate language or symbols (alcohol, drugs, sex, profanity, etc.)
- Clothing that is frayed, has holes, or tears
- Hats and caps
- Low-cut tops or low cut pants/short tops which create exposed skin or undergarments including open back and off-the-shoulder shirts
- Pants worn below the belt line
- Leggings or yoga pants (unless the shirt or skirt worn over the top reaches to the students' finger tips)
- Spandex or other skin tight pants or shorts (unless the shirt or skirt worn over the top reaches to the students' finger tips)
- Sleeveless shirts
- Gang-related clothing
- Spaghetti strap tank tops
- Pajamas or other sleepwear items
- Skirts or shorts which do not reach to the students' finger tips
- Bare feet
- Clothing which shows too much skin

Appendix D Dress Code Questions

Please answer the following questions based upon the outfit you just viewed and the following dress code.

Students are expected to show good judgment in dress and grooming. Students are asked to dress respectfully and appropriately for the school climate. The following items are not allowed:

- Items containing inappropriate language or symbols (alcohol, drugs, sex, profanity, etc.)
- Clothing that is frayed, has holes, or tears
- Hats and caps
- Low-cut tops or low cut pants/short tops which create exposed skin or undergarments including open back and off-the-shoulder shirts
- Pants worn below the belt line
- Leggings or yoga pants (unless the shirt or skirt worn over the top reaches to the students' finger tips)
- Spandex or other skin tight pants or shorts (unless the shirt or skirt worn over the top reaches to the students' finger tips)
- Sleeveless shirts
- Gang-related clothing
- Spaghetti strap tank tops
- Pajamas or other sleepwear items
- Skirts or shorts which do not reach to the students' finger tips
- Bare feet
- Clothing which shows too much skin

Does this outfit violate the dress code? Yes No Not sure

Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements:

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 6 7 (strongly agree)

1. This is a severe dress code violation
2. This student should receive a consequence for this clothing choice
3. This student showed poor judgment
4. The student's outfit is in poor taste
5. This student intentionally violated the dress code
6. This student's outfit is immodest
7. There is nothing wrong with this outfit
8. This student's outfit is unprofessional
9. This student is responsible for the violation
10. This student's outfit is distracting to their peers
11. This student should be held accountable for peer distractions based on their clothing
12. This outfit meets the guidelines

Note: Items 7 and 12 were reverse-coded to create a composite variable.

Appendix E

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement using the following scale: 0 = disagree strongly; 1 = disagree somewhat; 2 = disagree slightly; 3 = agree slightly; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly.

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
3. In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men.
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
5. Women are too easily offended.
6. People are not truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
7. Feminists are seeking for women to have more power than men.
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
13. Men are incomplete without women.
14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
18. Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
21. Feminists are making unreasonable demands of men.
22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Note: When participants answered questions in Qualtrics, the response scale was listed from 0 to 5, but the data were downloaded as 1 to 6. Thus, descriptive statistics that are presented in the document are based on a scale from 1 to 6.

Appendix F

Social Dominance Orientation

1. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
2. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.
3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.
4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.
5. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
6. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.
7. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
8. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.
9. It would be good if groups could be equal.
10. Group equality should be our ideal.
11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life.
12. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.
13. Increased social equality is beneficial to society.
14. We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally.
15. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible.
16. No group should dominate in society.

Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree); items 9 through 16 are reverse-coded.

Note: The original Social Dominance Orientation scale has a 1 to 7 response scale, but we modified the scale here to be consistent with the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory response scale (i.e. no neutral option).

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