

Simply sexist?

Business



“ Your shorts are too short.” “ You’re showing too much skin.” “ Stop distracting your peers.” Ever notice these phrases being said to boys? Probably not. These sentiments are almost always aimed at girls.

Many students see the difference between the limitations on what females can wear compared to what males can wear and the bitter reality of it. School dress codes body-shame girls, discriminate and even censor those dressing against the norms of society. Dress codes are imposed upon students based largely on gender identity, limiting students’ choice of clothing to prevent “ distractions” largely among male students. According to a recent study done by the National Center for Education Statistics, around 58% of schools in the U. S.

enforce “ strict dress code[s].” Most schools have the usual rules about too much skin; shorts can be no shorter than your fingertips and bare midriffs are not to be shown. But an NY Post article talked about a school in North Carolina that banned skinny jeans and leggings with the exception that skirts and dresses “ must cover the posterior.” These rules formalize the shaming of not only female skin, but also the shape of the female body. According to Oxford Dictionary, body shaming is “ the action or practice of humiliating someone by making mocking or critical comments about their body shape or size.” The ban on skinny jeans and leggings shames a person’s figure, as does the ban on tank tops or any other form of tightly fitted clothes.

Although not directly saying a person’s body is too fat or curvy, the rules imply it. Likewise, dress codes are oppressive to the LGBTQ community. Many schools frown upon cross-dressing of any kind. According to the 2009

New York Times article, “ Can a Boy Wear a Skirt to School?” a cross-dressing Texas senior was sent home because his wig violated the dress code. Even more recently, a 2015 poll done by GLSEN reported

22. 2% of students were being prevented from wearing clothes deemed “ inappropriate” for their legal sex. Another 13. 2% of students weren’t allowed to wear clothes supporting the LGBTQ community. On the other hand, there are schools like St. Paul who focus on reforming their rules.

St. Paul abolished specific words like “ bosoms, bottoms and bellies” from their dress codes as mentioned by a reporter in the Star Tribune. Their rules help by erasing gender stereotypes. In the end, dress codes are sexist. If the goal is a good learning environment, rules specific to the female form clearly do not further this. Neither do rules prohibiting LGBTQ identification.

Schools must evolve in their thinking. Male-oriented and heterosexual-only mindsets must change. The change must continue within our schools and their rules.