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Are Post-1996 K-12 Public School Dress Codes a Form of Sexualization on Women?

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ARE POST-1996 K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL DRESS CODES A FORM OF SEXUALIZATION
ON WOMEN?

By

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A capstone project submitted for
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Abstract

Dress codes have been prevalent in the United States K-12 public school system for decades, although not mandatory. The use of dress codes by school officials and administrators as a stated means of addressing gang violence and promiscuous behavior has steadily increased since the 1950s. However, not until the 1996 Presidential State of the Union Address, did modern school dress codes begin to formalize. My hypothesis is to analyze if these dress codes changed to accommodate the suggestions from the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996 guidelines issued by the Department of Justice as a result of that address), and if so, did these new codes contribute to the sexualization of women and influence identity formation? The first part of my method will be a meta-analysis of the literature (i.e., the history of public school dress code requirements in the United States, differences in dress codes between genders, and research on how dress codes influence women's self-concept). The second part of my research will be testing if there is a discrepancy in modern dress codes by gender by analyzing the publicly available dress codes of 50 randomly selected elementary, middle, and high schools from three school districts in the Inland Empire. The analyses of the literature and school data will serve as a case study of school dress codes. If dress codes serve as a form of gender discrimination and sexualization, then these analyses will provide information and implications for future educational policy recommendations and K-12 school dress code reform.

Keywords: dress codes, gender discrimination, meta-analysis, K-12 public schools, sexualization, women

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Introduction

Dress codes in the United States have emerged ever since the 1950s and have continued to develop over time. However, dress codes did not become an official concept until 1996, when President Clinton's State of the Union Address and the Department of Education and Justice's Manual of School Uniforms (1996) advocated for U.S. public school districts to adopt a dress code policy to combat school violence.

However, research has found that dress codes are adversely affecting women by inadvertently sexualizing women via the dress code policies. Dress code policies are forcing women to perform an 'appearance' of gender that the school and the district administrators use as physical markers of sex and gender, in order for women to conform to traditional gender identities (Butler, 2009; Happel, 2013). These dress code policies specifically reference women's behavior and appearance, which in turn can lead to women being sexualized. This sexualization then creates an imbalance of power between the female students and the school, affecting how women perceive themselves, and how they act and perform their gender (Butler, 2009).

To add on, sexualization also negatively affects women's development. Women begin to see their bodies as distractions in school which will lead to women seeing their bodies as burdens (Arn, 2017; Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998). This practice reinforces gender inequality in education (Glickman, 2016; Morris, 2005) and causes women to be viewed as sexual objects (Harbach, 2016; Raby, 2010; Whisner, 1982). This effect can lead women to feeling emotional distress, develop lower self-esteem and self-concept (Smith, 2012; Slater & Tiggermann, 2016; Starr & Ferguson, 2012) which can then affect them in school and the workplace (Whisner, 1982). However, literature has not examined at what frequency schools' dress codes reference

women in comparison to dress codes that are geared towards combating school violence or dress codes that are geared towards men.

The purpose of this study is to fill the gap in the literature by exploring if there are dress code policies in the United States post-1996 that are specifically geared towards women in the K-12 public school setting. This question will be answered by collecting data and analyzing the dress code policies from three randomly selected school districts in the Inland Empire and comparing the frequency of female-specific dress codes in comparison to male-specific dress codes and school violence-specific dress codes. If the data collected concludes that women are being targeted at a higher frequency than male students, school districts will be able to see how their current dress code policies can lead to negative developmental issues and the sexualization of their female students.

Definition of Terms

Dress Codes

For the purpose of this study, we modify Joseph's (1986) definition and define dress codes as rules or regulations regarding a student's appearance, dress, and/or behavior that is dictated by the school in the hopes of fostering good behavior, suppressing student's actions, and enforcing the school and/or school district's identity.

School Violence

For the purpose of this study, the definition of school violence will be defined as assaults (with or without weapons), bullying, sexual assault, hazing, or implied threats whose intents are to physically, emotionally, and socially affect students in regards to their gender, cultural, religious, or ethnic values. (National School Boards Association, 1993; Volokh & Snell, 1998; Barchmann & Schulenberg, 1993; Workman & Freeburg, 2006). These actions can be seen via

messages of fear and intimidation, such as verbal taunts, verbal or gestural threats, profane language, obscene gestures, or exposure to messages that display offensive or obscene symbols, signs, slogans, or words (National School Boards Association, 1993, p. 28).

Literature Review

History of K-12 Public School Dress Codes

Ever since the 1950s, dress codes have been a concept in the United States, with school phrases, ‘Dress Right, Act Right’, being used and enforced to curb juvenile delinquency (Anderson, 2002, p. 4). This expanded in the 1960s when, in response to increasing gang violence, “school administrators stipulated the length of girls’ skirts [and prohibited] blue jeans, motorcycle boots, and back leather jackets” (Anderson, 2002, p. 4). “Between 1992 and 1996, twelve states enacted laws allowing school districts to formulate dress and uniform relegation for students” (DeMitchell et al., 2000, p. 31). In addition, specific schools implemented dress codes, with Cherry Hill Elementary in 1997 being the first public school to adopt uniforms, and Long Beach Unified School District in 1994 being the first school district to adopt a district-wide uniform dress code policy (Anderson, 2002, p. 4). The sociological perspective communities in the United States and the press had about school dress codes in 1995 indicated that dress codes were “implemented in inner-city public schools due to the rising involvement of children and youth in crime and gang violence” (Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998, p. 115). This rise in violence is discussed by a former gang member in Los Angeles, who states that students who wore a Dallas Cowboy jacket are automatically affiliated with the gang, Crips, which can then lead to these students being killed due to said affiliation (Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998, p. 118). “Mass-media accounts present three primary rationales for adults’ support of school dress code implementation: prevention of gang-related violence, prevention of competitive dressing and

clothing theft, and the imposition of discipline” (Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998, p. 117). These dress codes are implemented by schools in the hope that deterring students from wearing gang-affiliated clothing will save them from accidentally being killed for said affiliation and better help students in the future by enforcing healthy behaviors (Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998, p. 118-119).

However, it was not until 1996, when the idea of dress codes reached the national level when Clinton addressed the same concerns the media and schools had discussed since the 1950s and 1960s. In 1996, during President Clinton’s State of the Union Address, President Clinton stated that dress codes should be utilized by schools to “teach character education ... good values and good citizenship [and to] stop [teenagers] killing each other over designer jackets,” (Clinton, 1996). This then led the Department of Education and Justice to create the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996), where U.S. public school districts were provided with a guide in regards to dress codes. The *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996) clearly states that “the decision whether to adopt a uniform policy is made by states, local school districts, and schools” (p. 3). However, the intent of both Clinton’s State of the Union Address and the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996) was to advocate for the use of dress codes and uniforms in order to decrease gang violence and improve the school environment.

Following Clinton’s State of the Union Address and the publication of the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996), questions regarding the effectiveness of school dress codes began to emerge. Sanchez, Yoxsimer, and Hill’s (2012) research investigate “public middle school students’ opinions on the benefits of wearing a school uniform” (p. 345). The results highlighted how students perceived the dress codes as beneficial since there was a decrease in discipline, gang involvement, bullying, and an increase in safety, ease of going to school, confidence, and

self-esteem (Sanchez et al., 2012, p. 345). This study showcases that the goal President Clinton and the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996) had with enforcing dress codes was successful. However, another study conducted by Brunσμα and Rockquemore (1998) tested if school uniforms “decrease substance use and behavioral problems and increased attendance and academic achievement” (p. 54) and found that student uniforms were only slightly correlated with higher achievement scores but no significant increase in academic preparedness or decrease in drug usage. This study and others call into question whether dress codes affect student behavior in positive or negative ways, which then leads to research focusing on the effects dress codes could have on certain segments of the student population.

Consequences of Dress Codes on Women

Despite the fact that the *Manual of Schools Uniforms*’ (1996) original intent was to decrease gang violence in public schools, research has shown that certain dress code policies are being rationalized for reasons outside of decreasing gang violence. This in turn causes dress codes to be aimed toward women, which in turn leads to these women being sexualized. Over time, researchers have added to education-centered literature by studying the prevalence of gendered dress code policies and the effects these dress codes have on women.

Arns’ (2017) study gathered and analyzed 56 California high school handbooks to determine the rationales for dress code policies and which groups of people do dress codes target (p. vi). Arns’s (2017) study showcases that rationales provided by the 56 high school handbooks disproportionately targeted girls of color, boys of color, and white girls (p. vi). This idea contradicts that of President Clinton and the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996,) which states that dress codes are to be used to primarily respond to violence within schools. Arns (2017) makes the conclusion that dress codes are “aiming to reduce disruption by removing the stimulus

that is causing the distraction. However, when the distraction is the female body, girls are faced with the undue burden of conforming to gender restrictive dress codes that aim to desexualize their bodies by sexualizing them” (p. 5).

Crockett and Wallendorf (1998) studied the sociological perspectives that come from school dress codes being enforced. The consequences of dress codes being geared specifically towards female students are that “dress codes serve the latent function of affecting the construction of gender” (Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998, p. 124) since dress codes that specify uniform or uniform-based clothing places a greater restraint on female students. Another analysis that Crockett and Wallendorf (1998) makes is that dress codes and prohibitions “appear to represent an attempt to regulate and control the display of feminine sexuality as if it represents an unwarranted temptation or distraction for boys” (p. 124). This analysis is the same that Arns (2017) made, which is that the female body is seen as a distraction and a hindrance to boys, and by trying to hide female students’ bodies, the school is sexualizing their female students.

Glickman (2016) studies how gender restrictive dress codes are affecting female students. Glickman expands on Arns (2017) and Crockett and Wallendorf (1998) studies by looking into the LGBTQ community, specifically transgender students. Glickman (2016) makes the argument that dress codes are created to “preserve the socially constructed gender roles of men and women” (p. 272). In the context of transgender students, if they do conform to the gendered society labels them to be, they are negatively affecting their gender identity which may lead to “lowered academic performance, higher dropout rates, and increased disciplinary action” (p. 264). For CIS female students to conform to dress codes they have to “take additional steps to ensure that they are not disrupting the learning environment at school” (Glickman, 2016, p. 272).

These dress code policies are then “reinforc[ing] hegemonic behavior and preserv[ing] gender inequality in education” (Glickman, 2016, p. 272).

Harbach (2016) adds on to Glickman’s (2016) ideas by stating that dress codes “operate within a larger cultural context- one in which women are frequently sexualized and portrayed as ‘sex objects’ valued primarily for their sexual appeal” (p. 1041). Harbach (2016) supports these claims by utilizing examples of schools’ treatment of dress code policy on women. Such schools include schools from Illinois, New Jersey, Florida, and so on, with schools having girls go through clothing checks and wearing shame suits. Harbach (2016) then discusses the effects this sexualization has on women by stating that sexualization can “negatively impact cognitive and physical function, mental and physical health, sexuality, attitudes, and beliefs about gender and sexual roles, hinder men’s ability to interact intellectually with women, increase overall sexism and bias, limit girl’s educational aspiration and performance, and contribute to harassment, violence, and exploitation of girls.” (p. 1042). Therefore, Harbach’s (2016) claims that dress codes sexualize female students when trying to limit and control their clothing choices, matches that of Arns' (2017) and Crockett and Wallendorf’s (1998) conclusions.

Morris’ (2005) research ties in with Harbach’s (2016) study by showcasing a specific example of teacher’s perceptions of the female body and what is appropriate for female students to wear. For example, Mr. Henry believed that dress codes should be used to teach girls what is “acceptable and gender-appropriate [behavior]” (Morris, 2005, p.35). Another example is seen with Ms. Adams who identified black girls' style of clothing to be “overly sexual and Ms. Adams sought to reform” the style of clothing of these students (Morris, 2005, p. 32). This controlling idea found amongst teachers and in dress codes, teaches girls that their “bodies are offensive and

in need of discipline and that they do not have control over their bodies like male students do” (Morris, 2005, p. 42).

Raby’s (2010) research adds to the previously discussed literature by looking into eight focus groups of secondary students in Southern Ontario and analyzing the female student’s response to dress codes. Raby (2010) found that the participants were aware of specific and fine details of school rules and were willing to discuss and challenge these rules (p. 339). In addition, participants were also aware that rules regarding dress codes unfairly targeted girls (Raby, 2010, p. 340). For example, participants, Catherine and Janice, discuss spaghetti straps being banned and how they wish to wear such clothing due to the heat but are denied due to the school not wishing for the skin to be exposed (Raby, 2010, p. 340). The participants also note that “girls who are more developed are more likely to be told to go home and change, (Raby, 2010, p. 341). This analysis ties in with Morris’ (2005) and Harbach’s (2016) idea that women’s bodies are seen as sexual objects, so when a female student is deemed as more sexual, they will be critiqued and asked to look more presentable in regards to the gender standards the school established. Raby (2010) makes the conclusion that dress codes “reproduce gender inequalities by narrowing ideas of acceptable female sexuality and policing anything considered excess” (p. 347).

Smith (2012) expands on the previously discussed research articles by discussing how dress codes are important for the development of self-identity, but dress codes currently are threatening the development of self-identity by having rigid policies that are gender-based, creating stereotypes (p. 252). In regards to women, “perpetuating gender conformity not only causes severe emotional distress to young people by forcing them to compromise their feelings in order to satisfy what is deemed acceptable but also stifles the growth of our society as a whole,

limiting people's ability to see beyond rigid gender roles and classification" (Smith, 2012, p. 259).

Whisner (1982) adds to the growing literature by investigating how gender-specific clothing regulation can affect women. Whisner (1982) states that if a woman does not conform to a certain appearance, they may see "loss of employment, arrest, expulsion, or suspension from school" as a result (p.74). Whisner also states similar findings to those of Happel (2013) and Harbach (2016), which is that female bodies are "considered to be inherently sexual," which leads to females facing unique and disproportionate amounts of policing that males will not experience. This type of regulation then legitimizes the sexual objectification of women and girls (Whisner, 1982).

Consequences of Sexualization on Women

As discussed in the previous literature above, one effect of dress codes on women is that dress codes sexualize female bodies. This process is often referred to as the sexualization of young women, which has negative effects on their development. Many studies have seen a correlation between sexualization amongst young girls and women and low self-concept, self-efficacy, and academic performance. What is important to note about sexualization is that the effects are more impactful on women, especially minority women, since they are more susceptible to the negative consequences of sexualization and sexualized gender stereotypes and they are more prone to having lower self-esteem in comparison to men and white women.

Carlson, Uppal, and Prosser (2000) study the "ethnic differences in the global self-esteem for Hispanic, African Americans, and White early adolescent girls" (p. 44). They found that there was a link between ethnic identity and self-esteem, for example, "Hispanic girls reported significantly lower-esteem" (Carlson et al., 2000, p. 44). They also found that adolescent girls

were more vulnerable to lower levels of global self-esteem in comparison to adolescent boys (Carlson et al., 2000, p. 44). These findings concur with Kling et al.'s (1999) findings which conclude that 83% of their sample saw lower global self-esteem amongst female adolescents in comparison to male adolescents. In addition, Harper and Marshall's (1991) study found that overall, girls reported more problems and lower levels of self-esteem than did boys. In addition, girls had more issues in regards to developing interpersonal relationships, personal adjustment, health, and family issues (Harper & Marshall, 1991).

Continuing the conversation, Behm-Morawitz and Mastro's (2009) research investigates the effects of 328 female undergraduate students being exposed to sexualized female videogame characters, specifically in terms of gender stereotyping and self-concept. The study found that exposure to sexualized female characters can lead to more negative viewpoints and lower self-esteem, which is an important conclusion given that women are already prone to having lower self-esteem in comparison to men. Their research concluded that female self-efficacy was also negatively impacted when females were shown over-sexualized images of female video game characters.

Slater and Tiggemann (2016), like Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2009), also researched how exposure to sexualized media affects girls, in particular, how television and magazines affect six to nine-year-old girls. Slater and Tiggemann's (2016) study 300 six to nine-year-old girls by interviewing each girl after they have been exposed to sexualized media with a sexualized message and body image attitudes (p. 19). The interviews found that exposure to sexualized media saw a correlation with a negative body image developing amongst the girls, which also lead to further issues such as body dissatisfaction, depression, and self-esteem (p. 19). 54% of girls indicated a desire for a thinner figure, which brings forth concerning results that

demonstrate that body dissatisfaction can lead to negative psychological health conditions such as eating disorders and negative self-esteem and self-concept (Slater & Tiggemann, 2016, p. 22).

Starr and Ferguson's (2012) research also focuses on six to nine-year-old girls, but they examine self-sexualization with these girls by using paper dolls (p. 463). The study found that "girls overwhelmingly chose the sexualized doll over the non-sexualized doll for their ideal self" (Starr & Ferguson, 2012, p. 463). These results showcase that girls are being sexualized at a young age, which means that when they are teenage girls and are exposed to more sexualized mass media, they can develop more sexualized attitudes and behaviors (Starr & Ferguson, 2012, p. 464). As seen with the Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2009) and Slater and Tiggemann's (2016) studies, an increase in sexualized attitudes and behaviors can lead to greater body dissatisfaction, lower self-esteem, and objectification by others.

Brown (2019) researched 77 girls from four public schools, and the results showed that a girl's greater knowledge and endorsement of sexualized gender stereotypes predicted lower academic self-efficacy and lower mastery goal orientation. This information is particularly troubling since the sample's demographic consisted of 45% White, 21% Latinx, 19% African American, and 14% multiracial, meaning that these consequences of sexualized gender stereotypes can affect girls no matter their ethnic background.

Brown's (2019) research was based on and confirms earlier "experimental studies, [such as] when girls were shown pictures of sexualized girls (Pacilli, Tomasetto, & Cadinu, 2016) or played with a sexualized doll" (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014), and the girls in those experiments performed "worse on a math task and a test of working memory, and showed restricted occupational aspirations, respectively, than girls who saw nonsexualized girls" (p. 523-524). Another example is seen with McKenney and Bigler's (2016) research that found that girls who

valued and internalized positive attitudes about sexualization or believed sexualized gender stereotypes saw low performances in math, language arts, science, and social studies in comparison to girls who did not have positive attitudes about sexualization.

Nelson and Brown's (2019) study examines "the relationship between girls' sexual gender stereotypes endorsement and their academic motivations, beliefs, and [general] motivations" (p. 603). The study found that greater sexual gender stereotypes saw "more negative academic outcomes, particularly among girls who perceived themselves to be highly typical for their gender" (Nelson & Brown, 2019, p. 613). This conclusion matches those made by Brown (2019), Pacilli et al. (2016), Sherman and Zurbriggen (2014), and McKenney and Bigler's (2016) research, which concludes that there is evidence that girls being exposed to sexualized gender stereotypes can lead to girls developing negative social-emotional skills, decreased classroom participation, and decrease academic achievement and motivation.

The results discussed in the body of literature paint a picture of how women, especially minority women, are susceptible to self-esteem and other social cognitive issues. In addition, the consequences sexualization has on women, also leads to women and minority women developing poor social development skills, specifically in regards to motivation, academic performance, and achievement. However, there is a lack of literature analyzing the frequency of gendered dress codes in school districts. Once the research is conducted regarding this topic, the findings will determine whether or not the fear of women being implicitly sexualized in K-12 public schools is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Research Question

Are post-1996 K-12 public school dress codes in the United States only geared towards violence reduction or are they disproportionately geared towards female students?

Hypothesis

I hypothesize that dress codes are not only geared towards violence reduction but are also geared towards female students. If my hypothesis is true, the conclusion can be made that the K-12 public dress code policies of my participants are not only following the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996) recommendations but are also enforcing implicit biases that the female body is a distraction and a sexual object, leading to the sexualization of women in K-12 public schools.

Methodology

Population

Data will be collected from three randomly selected school districts in the Inland Empire which will be a stratified sample with equitable cell sizes. For the study, School District A has seven high schools, seven middle schools, and seven randomly selected elementary schools. For the study, School District B has five high schools, six middle schools, and six randomly selected elementary schools. For the study, School District C has four high schools, four middle schools, and four randomly selected elementary schools. The high schools and the middle schools for the three randomly selected school districts were not randomly selected because they are the total number of high schools and middle schools for each school district.

Data Collection

All data concerning demographics and suspension types is based on the school districts' 2018-2019 information. Dress codes are based on the most recent information found on each school or school district's website.

Data regarding ethnic percentages of the schools were collected from the public internet database 'DataQuest California Department of Education' at the following link: dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest. The following ethnic groups were counted: Hispanic or Latino, African

Americans, White, Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, Two or More Races, and Not Reported.

Data regarding the number of suspensions of the schools were collected from the public internet database 'DataQuest California Department of Education' at the following link: dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest. For suspension rates, suspensions were counted based on the reasoning behind the suspension. The incidents include the following: violent incident (injury), violent incident (no injury), weapons possession, illicit drug-related, defiance, other reasons.

Data regarding gender breakdown of the schools were collected from the public internet database 'Ed Data Education Data Partnership CDE/EdSource/FCMAT' at the following link: ed-data.org/school. The gender was broken down in the binary terms of male and female.

Data regarding a specific school's dress code policy was located on the school's public website. The dress code policy ranged from being the school's own dress code policy, another school's dress code policy, the district's dress code policy, or did not mention a specific dress code policy. If the specific school's dress code policy was not on its own website, it will either state that its policy belonged to another school or will direct the user to the website of the school's school district dress code policy. If a specific school does not have a dress code policy, the school's school district dress code policy will be referenced.

In regards to analyses, I will collect data from the three different school districts' high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools that were selected. Throughout the rest of the article, I will refer to high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools collectively as '*three levels of schools*'. Demographic, gender, and suspension rates will be compared to each other to see if there is a significant difference between the different levels of schools. Analyses from these three categories will also inform what we should be expecting in the three levels of

schools' dress codes based on the initial history and purpose of dress codes mentioned earlier in the article.

In regards to the analysis of the dress code policies themselves, I will first analyze the reasonings provided for having dress code policies and the policies themselves to see if the schools and school districts are following the accommodations and suggestions made from the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996), specifically, in regards to drug and gang violence. Second, I will analyze and compare the dress code policies between the different levels of education and see if there is a high relevance of female geared dress codes in comparison to violence geared dress codes and male geared dress codes.

Demographics

School District A

The total school district population from the selected high schools, middle schools, and randomly selected elementary schools totals 23,984.

In regards to ethnicity, 61.8% are Hispanic or Latino, 22.1% are White, 6.8% are African American, 3.8% are Asian, 1.8% are Two or More Races, 1.4% are Filipino, 0.4% are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.3% are Pacific Islander.

In regards to gender, 50.7% are male and 49.3% are female.

In regards to suspension, the total number of suspensions across School District A's randomly selected schools is 2,477 out of 23,984. As for the reasons, 45.6% are violent incidents (no injury), 28.6% are defiance, 19.5% are illicit drug-related, 2.5% are weapons possession, 2.1% are other reasons, and 1.7% are violent incidents (injury).

School District B

The total school district population from the selected high schools, middle schools, and randomly selected elementary schools totals 21,409.

In regards to ethnicity, 72.1% are Hispanic or Latino, 14.1% are African Americans, 7.1% are White, 2.7% are Two or More Races, 1.6% are Asian, 1.5% are Filipino, 0.7% are Pacific Islander, and 0.3% are American Indian or Alaska Native.

In regards to gender, 50.5% are male and 49.5% are female.

In regards to suspension, the total number of suspensions across School District B's randomly selected schools is 1,904 out of 21,409. As for the reasons, 62.4% are violent incidents (no injury), 15.2% are illicit drug-related, 12.1% are defiance, 4.0% are violent incidents (injury), 3.4% are weapons possession, and 2.9% are other reasons.

School District C

The total school district population from the selected high schools, middle schools, and randomly selected elementary schools totals 58,645.

In regards to ethnicity, 69.5% are Hispanic or Latino, 12.8% are White, 10.5% are African Americans, 2.5% are Asian, 2.2% are Two or More Races, 1.5% are Filipino, 0.4% are Pacific Islander, and 0.3% are American Indian or Alaska Native.

In regards to gender, 51.0% are male and 49.0% are female,

In regards to suspension, the total number of suspensions across School District C's randomly selected schools is 5,719 out of 58,654. As for the reasons, 55.0% are violent incidents (no injury), 18.2% are illicit drug-related, 15.8% are defiance, 5.6% are violent incidents (injury), 3.0% are weapons possession, and 2.5% are other reasons.

High Schools

The total high school population for school districts A, B, and C totals 28,217.

In regards to ethnicity, 68.7% are Hispanic or Latino, 12.9% are White, 10.8% are African American, 2.6% are Asian, 1.8% are Two or More Races, 1.7% are Filipino, 0.4% are Pacific Islander, 0.8% Not Reported, and 0.4% are American Indian or Alaska Native.

In regards to gender, 51.2% are male and 48.8% are female.

In regards to suspension, the total number of suspensions equals 2,997 out of 28,217 students. As for the reasons, 44.4% are violent incidents (no injury), 25.4% are illicit drug-related, 20.7% are defiance, 5.6% are violent incidents (injury), 2.7% are weapons possession, and 1.3% are other reasons.

Middle Schools

The total middle school population for school districts A, B, and C totals 17,556

In regards to ethnicity, 72.0% are Hispanic or Latino, 11.3% are White, 9.4% are African Americans, 2.4% are Two or More Races, 2.1% are Asian, 1.4% are Filipino, 0.8% are Not Reported, 0.4% are Pacific Islander, 0.3% are American Indian or Alaska Native.

In regards to gender, 51.5% are male and 48.9% are female.

In regards to suspension, the total number of suspensions equals 2,357 out of 17,556. As for the reasons, 65.7% violent incidents (no injury), 12.2% defiance, 11.5% illicit drug-related, 4.8% violent incidents (injury), 3.2% weapons possession, and 2.6% other reasons.

Elementary Schools

The total elementary school population for school districts A, B, and C totals 12,157.

In regards to ethnicity, 66.4% are Hispanic or Latino, 14.3% White, 11.0% African American, 2.8% Asian, 2.6% Two or More Races, 1.3% Filipino, 0.7% Not Reported, 0.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.4% Pacific Islander.

In regards to gender, 50.4% are male and 49.6% are female.

In regards to suspension, the total number of suspensions equals 365 out of 12,157. As for the reasons, 76.7% violent incidents (no injury), 10.7% violent incidents (injury), 3.8% weapons possession, 3.8% illicit drug-related, 3.6% other reasons, 1.4% defiance.

Analyses and Predictions Based on Demographics

In regards to ethnicity, we see that across the three levels of schools and the school districts individually, that they have similar ethnic breakdowns to one another. Hispanic or Latino students are the highest percentage, then it is White students or African American students. The next groups are Asian, Two or More Races, or Filipino students. Lastly, the smallest percentages are either Pacific Islander, Not Reported, or American Indian or Alaska Native students.

In regards to gender, the gender breakdown is the same amongst the three levels of schools and across the three school districts, which is that there is an almost even split between males and females students, slightly favoring male students.

In regards to suspensions across the three levels of schools, the highest percentage of student suspension was found in middle schools with 13.4%, followed by high schools with 10.6%, then with elementary schools with a significantly smaller 3.0%. When comparing via the school districts, the highest percentage of suspensions was found in School District A with 10.3%, followed by 9.7% from School District C, then School District B with 8.9%.

The information regarding suspensions can allow us to conclude that dress code policies regarding drug and gang violence should be more prevalent or more detailed in middle schools' dress code policies and perhaps also School District A. However, all school dress code policies should have dress codes geared towards violence reduction, which would support the historical reasoning for having dress code policies as discussed earlier in the article. In addition, since the gender breakdown is almost even across the three levels of schools, there should not be dress code policies that are geared towards females. If there is evidence that dress code policies are being geared towards a specific gender, it can be concluded that dress code policies are aimed to not only reduce violence but also aimed to control a women's sexuality and gender.

Analyses Plan of K-12 Public School Dress Codes

Dress Code Classifications

For the purpose of the study, the dress code policies that will be counted, compared, and analyzed will be under the classifications of 'Safety Precaution', 'Violence Reduction', 'Gang Attire', 'Boy', and 'Girl'. The reason behind this is because the purpose of the study is to see if there is a large proportion of dress codes that are classified under 'Girl' in comparison to other classifications. This information is important because if there is a substantial amount of dress codes classified under 'Girl', it means that dress code policies are being geared towards females instead of being geared towards violence reduction and gang attire as discussed by President Clinton's State of the Union Address and the *Manual of School Uniforms* (1996).

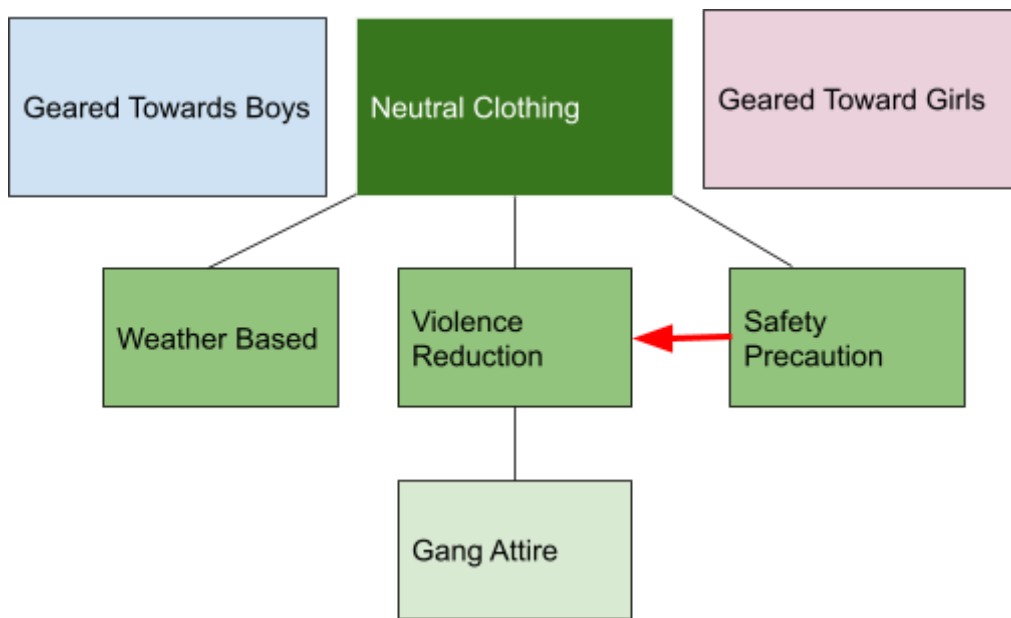
Please note that many of the schools have similar or the same dress code policy that differs in the type of clothing or objects that they include in their lists. For the sake of analyses, these similar dress code policies were combined together given that the intent behind the dress code policy was the same across all the schools. However, if a dress code policy contained

keywords that were unique and not used in other dress code policies that were similar, that specific dress code was listed by itself and not combined with other dress code policies.

Lastly, when analyzing the dress code policy, multiple categories were created. However, only the dress code policies mentioned earlier in this section will be analyzed due to their relevance to the purpose of this study.

Figure 1

Classifications of K-12 Public School Dress Codes



When determining what dress codes fall under the ‘Boy’ category, it was decided that codes that mention ‘boy/male’ or include male-specific clothing will be added to this category.

When determining what dress codes fall under the ‘Girl’ category, it was decided that codes that mention ‘girl/women’ or included women-specific clothing and referenced specific female body parts will be added to this category.

Any other clothing that did not fall in the two gender-specific categories were then automatically part of the ‘Neutral’ category, a category that included dress code policies that

referred to the entire student body. In the ‘Neutral’ category there are three subcategories: ‘Weather-Based’, ‘Violence Reduction’, and ‘Safety Precaution’.

When determining what dress codes fall under the ‘Weather-Based’ category, it was decided that dress codes that mention specific weather conditions will be added to this category.

When determining what dress codes fall under the ‘Violence Reduction’ category, it was decided that codes that specifically referenced activities, items, or language that was deemed ‘violent’ by the school, county, police, or literature will be added to this category. Under this category there is a subcategory, ‘Gang Attire’, which is a category that includes dress codes that specifically reference gang or gang-related activities, items, or language.

When determining what dress codes fall under the ‘Safety-Precaution’ category, it was decided that codes that specifically reference safety reasons, or whose goals were to maintain the safety of its students, will be added to this category. Please note that dress codes under ‘Violence Reduction’ are interconnected with the ‘Safety-Precaution’ category since dress codes that are part of the ‘Violence Reduction’ are aimed to reduce violence to ensure the safety of the students.

Results

Table 1

K-12 public schools’ dress codes location of dress code policy.

Location of Dress Code Policy	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Totals
Found on School's Website	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 1/4	School District A: 2/7 School District B: 1/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 4/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 2/4	10 out of 50 (20%) schools had their own dress code policy.

Referenced/Direct ed to School District's Dress Code Policy	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 1/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 5/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 4/5 School District C: 1/4	18 out of 50 (36%) schools had their dress code policy direct users to the school's school district dress code policy.
No mention-Reference School District's Dress Code Policy	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 2/4	School District A: 5/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 2/7 School District B: 1/5 School District C: 1/4	22 out of 50 (44%) schools did not have a dress code policy or links on their website. For the study, will refer to their school district's dress code policy.

Table 2

K-12 public schools' justification for having dress codes.

Keywords Used for Justifying Having a Dress Code Policy	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Total
Eliminate/Minimize Distractions/Disturbances for students	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 6/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 6/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 0/4	36 out of 50 (72%) schools had the following keywords in their reasoning for having dress code policies.
Prevent hazard to student's Health/Safety	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 5/7 School District B: 5/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 4/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 0/4	32 out of 50 (64%) schools had the following keywords in their reasoning for having dress code policies.
Have students present themselves in an	School District A: 0/4 School District	School District A: 2/7 School District	School District A: 2/7 School District	17 out of 50 (34%) schools had the following keywords in

orderly, neat,, and acceptable manner to facilitate learning	B: 0/4 School District C: 4/4	B: 1/6 School District C: 4/4	B: 0/5 School District C: 4/4	their reasoning for having dress code policies.
No Reasoning Provided	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) schools did not have a reason for having a dress code policy.

Table 3

K-12 public schools' dress codes and frequency of specific dress code policies of the following classifications: safety precaution, violence reduction, gang attire, boy, and girl.

Specific Dress Code Policies		Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Total
Feet must be safely covered with shoes that have to be worn at all times.	Safety Precaution	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 1/4	School District A: 5/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 5/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 4/4	26 out of 50 (52%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards safety precautions.
Sandals must be held in place with a heel strap.	Safety Precaution	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 2/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 2/4	25 out of 50 (50%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards safety precautions.
No face or body piercing that are deemed unsafe.	Safety Precaution	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5 School	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared

		C: 0/4	C: 0/4	District C: 0/4	towards safety precautions.
No earrings that spike dangerously through the ear towards the head.	Safety Precaution	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards safety precautions.
No wallet chains, metal belts, steel-toed shoes, spiked jewelry (spiked bracelets, chokers, spikes embedded in the body, etc.), or potentially harmful accessories.	Safety Precaution	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 2/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 5/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 4/4	28 out of 50 (56%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards safety precautions.
No clothing that is unsafe.	Safety Precaution	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 3/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 2/4	9 out of 50 (18%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards safety precautions.
Chains, spiked necklaces, bracelets, etc. that can be used as a weapon cannot be worn or carried.	Violence Reduction	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 2/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	2 out of 50 (4%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards violence reduction.

Skin art that is obscene or libelous or incites students are to be covered.	Violence Reduction	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 2/4	2 out of 50 (4%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards violence reduction.
No clothing, jewelry, personal items, hats, backpacks, symbols, etc. that show vulgar, sexually suggestive, nudity, discriminatory, racial supremacy, religious prejudice, Iron Cross, obscene, libelous, or contain threats, weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia.	Violence Reduction	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 4/4	50 out of 50 (100%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards violence reduction.
No clothing that the police department has identified as gang attire.	Gang Attire	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 2/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 2/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 2/4	10 out of 50 (20%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards gang attire.

No clothing, accessories, style of hair, etc. that refers or denotes affiliation to any gang and/or group.	Gang Attire	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 5/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 2/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 2/4	29 out of 50 (58%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards
No clothing that references the gang's 'silent code'.	Gang Attire	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 2/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 2/4	8 out of 50 (16%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards
Male tank tops must be form-fitting under the arm so that the chest is not exposed.	Boy	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards
No clothing that is too tight, too short, or distracting (fishnet fabrics, halter tops off-the-shoulder, low-cut tops, bare midriffs, and excessively short skirts).	Girl	School District A: 7/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 2/4	School District A: 6/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 5/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 2/4	43 out of 50 (86%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.

Dresses, shorts, and/or skirts need to reach to the fingertips with hands down on the sides or be within 'bounds of good taste' (i.e: no shorter than mid-thigh) and continue to cover student buttocks, undergarments, and upper thigh while they are walking, sitting, bending, or reaching.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 3/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 3/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 0/4	31 out of 50 (62%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
No strapless clothing or blouses with only one strap.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 2/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	3 out of 50 (6%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
No clothing should reveal cleavage or midsections and should cover the back.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
Leggings, tights, stretch, or yoga pants require a shirt	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy

that extends past the buttocks.		School District C: 0/4	School District C: 0/4	School District C: 0/4	that was geared towards girls.
Leggings are not to be worn by themselves.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
Short shorts are not allowed.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 6/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 5/5 School District C: 0/4	17 out of 50 (34%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
Clothing with straps (spaghetti straps, etc.) must be at least 1' wide.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
No strapless, halter tops, tube tops, spaghetti straps less than 2'.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 2/4	2 out of 50 (4%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
For females: A jacket or cover-up is worn to conceal brief clothing that reveals bras or bare midriffs is not acceptable.	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 2/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 4/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 2/4	8 out of 50 (16%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.

Abbreviated or scanty clothing is not acceptable (excess cleavage, see-through shirts, exposed midriffs, or buttocks).	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 1/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.
No clothing that is sexually suggestive (low-cut garments, strapless, off the shoulder tops, bare midriffs, spaghetti straps, or backless tops).	Girl	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 1/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/6 School District C: 0/4	School District A: 0/7 School District B: 0/5 School District C: 0/4	1 out of 50 (2%) of schools had this specific dress code policy that was geared towards girls.

Discussion

The first part of our question was to see if violence reduction was being addressed in the 50 schools' dress code policies, given that the history of dress codes in the United States centered around the idea that dress code policies can help reduce gang violence. Research has shown that all schools had a dress code policy that was geared towards reducing violence in schools. For example, the specific dress code 'no clothing, jewelry, personal items, hats, backpacks, symbols, etc. that show vulgar, sexually suggestive, nudity, discriminatory, racial supremacy, religious prejudice, Iron Cross, obscene, libelous, or contain threats, weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia' was in all 50 schools' dress code policy. In addition,

dress codes that were geared specifically to address gang violence were listed amongst many of the schools, such as the dress code ‘no clothing, accessories, style of hair, etc. that refers or denotes affiliation to any gang and/or group’, which was found in over 58% of schools. Lastly, 64% of schools stated that the reason for having dress codes was to prevent any hazard to student’s health and safety. Overall, these results highlight how the K-12 public schools of the Inland Empire are concerned about violence in their schools and are using dress codes to address the problem.

The second part of the question was to see if the 50 schools’ dress code policies are also enforcing gender roles and sexualizing women. Based on these results, we can conclude that the dress code of the 50 schools does disproportionately gear specific dress code policies towards females in comparison to males. Except for one high school in school district A, all other schools had one or more dress code policies that were geared towards girls. Only one high school in school A district has one dress code policy geared towards boys, hence, we are seeing a disproportionate number of dress codes being geared towards controlling the behavior and clothing of females. It is also important to note the language that these dress codes are using. Words such as distractive, scanty, sexually suggestive, and the mention of body parts such as buttocks, upper thigh, and cleavage paint a picture that schools are trying to control the image of the female body under the belief that the female body is a distracting sexual object. This mindset is further seen in the schools’ dress code reasonings, with 72% of schools stating that dress codes are to eliminate and minimize distractions. Hence, the female body alongside violent and gang imagery is coded as dangerous to a student’s education. Based on the results we can conclude that the K-12 public dress code policies of the Inland Empire are not just following the *Manual*

of School Uniforms (1996) recommendations, but are also enforcing implicit biases that the female body is a distracting sexual object that hinders the learning experience of students.

Implications

The implications of the results are that it adds to the ongoing dialogue discussing how young females are being sexualized at a young age. The fact that the dress codes that are geared towards girls contain language such as distractive, scanty, and sexually suggestive, which creates the image that females are sexual objects and pose a distraction to the male population (Harbach, 2016; Crockett and Wallendorf, 1998). In addition, these dress codes are also enforcing female students to perform a specific appearance that reinforces traditional gender roles and dictates what is appropriate for girls to wear (Butler, 2009; Happel, 2013). Hence the school and school district administrators are regulating and controlling how female students express their femininity, limiting female expression (Crockett and Wallendorf, 1998). Overall, by trying to limit how female students dress, schools and school districts are reinforcing the idea that the merit behind the female boy is solely based on its sexual appearance (Harbach, 2016).

This phenomenon then leads to the female students of these randomly selected schools being sexualized at a young age, which leads to further ramifications throughout their K-12 education and beyond. For example, while these gender-specific dress codes reinforce gender stereotypes, female students may experience emotional distress since they are being limited in their expression and are being told that their bodies are distracting sexual objects towards the male population (Smith, 2012). In addition, because these female students are being sexualized they may develop low self-esteem, which is particularly worrying given that young adolescent girls are already prone to having lower self-esteem in comparison to their male counterparts (Carlson et al., 2000, p. 44). To add on, female students may also develop a negative self-concept

from the gender-specific dress codes, which can then lead to the development of negative body images, body dissatisfaction, depression, and the development of sexualized attitudes and behavior (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2009; Slater & Tiggermann, 2016; Starr & Ferguson, 2012).

The effects discussed above are especially concerning given that there is a large Latinx population across the three levels of school, with African Americans being the third largest ethnic population. Hispanic girls tend to have lower self-esteem, hence they will be more vulnerable to the negative effects of being sexualized throughout their K-12 education (Carlson et al., 2000). In regards to African American female students, there is a stereotype that African American females are overtly sexual in regards to their body and style of clothing, hence, they are more at risk of being forced to obey their schools' dress code policy. In regards to their education career, the consequences discussed above can affect female students' education career with these students experiencing lower academic self-efficacy, lower mastery goal orientation, lower performance scores, and a decrease in academic motivation (Brown, 2019; McKenney & Bigler, 2016; Nelson & Brown, 2019). To add on, these consequences can also lead to negative effects on how a female student is disciplined. These negative consequences can then lead to females acting out against gender-conforming rules, which can then lead to expulsion or suspension from school (Whisner, 1982). These consequences can also translate after K-12 education, where former female students continue to act out against oppressive dress codes or female geared rules, which can lead to loss of employment opportunities and even arrests (Whisner, 1982). In addition, the disproportionate number of female geared dress codes are evident across the 3 levels of schools, which is important to note because this means that the

negative consequences of sexualization discussed can be evident in female students as early as Kindergarten.

Limitations

There were many limitations throughout the study. First, the study only focused on the Inland Empire, specifically three randomly selected school districts. This means that the information gathered may not be applicable to larger areas such as Southern California or the United States. Second, some of the data may not be as reliable or accurate for the current day. For example, the data collected in regards to the schools' population, ethnic breakdown, and suspensions were from 2018-2019, so it may not be an accurate reflection of these schools' current population. Another example is seen with the location of the schools' dress code policy and whether or not students are given physical copies of their schools' dress code policy. If this is the case, the list of dress code policies that were gathered and analyzed may not be as accurate and may change the conclusions of the study's results. Lastly, even though the study provides evidence to the disproportionately female-g geared dress code, there is no evidence that showcases those female students have to adhere to these dress codes. This lack of evidence makes it difficult to state that female students in these schools are being sexualized and experience negative consequences. Instead, the current study can only state that there is significant evidence that showcases female students are being disproportionately targeted via their schools' dress codes, which may lead to them experiencing sexualization and the negative consequences that come from that phenomenon.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future studies will be to measure the self-esteem and academic outcomes of girls in the schools with dress code policies that are more geared towards females in

comparison to schools that have a more neutral or no dress code policy. Such examples of studies can be conducting a qualitative study where female students are interviewed about their experience and the effects of their school's dress code. Based on those findings, research can be conducted to add to the literature of whether there is a correlation between sexualized dress codes and a women's development of self-esteem, self-concept, and identity. Another avenue for further studies will be to research if the punishments and responses to violation of dress code differ by gender. Are there more frequent punishments given to dress code violations that have to do with violence or dress code violations that are geared toward females? Another asset will be to research how punishments and responses to dress code violations may differ based on the ethnic background of the student. To add on, future studies may expand on this current study by looking at larger sample sizes, more schools, a different region of the United States, and studying the frequency female students have to adhere to female-geared dress codes. These additional approaches will add to the ongoing dialogue about whether K-12 public school dress codes have policies that are disproportionately targeting female students.

In regards to recommendations based on my research's conclusions, it will be important to take action at the correct level of administration. For example, 36% of schools directed users to their school district's dress code policy, and 44% of schools did not have a dress code policy on their website. This highlights a pending question, which is whether or not schools are able to incite change or do students, parents, and teachers have to advocate for change at the correct level of administration to ensure the maximum possibility of success. Further discussion that goes towards answering this question can provide students, parents, and administrators with the proper information to enact change for the betterment of the future and social development of female students.

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