

Doctor Explains Why It's Not Prudish to Encourage Modesty

When a couple of young female passengers were [barred from boarding](#) a United Airlines flight because they were wearing leggings, the internet exploded with accusations of sexism.

When high school girls in Los Angeles [showed up to school](#) in spaghetti straps and off-the-shoulder tops, the dress code was deemed outdated.

And when actress [Mayim Bialik](#) and Olympian [Gabby Douglas](#) suggested that dressing modestly might protect girls against predatory attacks from individuals like Harvey Weinstein, both were nearly run out of town on a rail.

What these incidents suggest is that anyone who hints that modest dress is appropriate and helpful for females is irrational, out of touch, and completely unaware of a woman's mindset and needs.

But according to one doctor, such an opinion is opposed to reality. Writing in [Psychology Today](#), medical doctor Leonard Sax takes on the issue of school dress codes. Sax, also an advocate for [common sense parenting](#), explains that research shows a decided academic disadvantage for girls who dress in more revealing clothing. Even when isolated in a private room, young women dressed in swimsuits perform much worse than those in sweaters when given a math quiz. The opposite is true for young men.

The reason for this, Sax explains, is simple:

"We actually have quite a bit of research now on what happens when a girl or woman wears skintight leggings or a swimsuit. Often what happens is "self-objectification": the girl, or woman, assesses herself as an object on display for others.

And the more public the setting, the more likely self-objectification is to occur.

Self-objectification is distracting. It's hard to concentrate on Spanish grammar when you're wondering whether this outfit makes your thighs look fat. Girls who self-objectify are also more likely [to become depressed](#). They are less likely to be satisfied with their body. [They are more likely to engage in self-harm.](#)"

In essence, Sax seems to be inferring that those who encourage modest dressing are not the self-righteous prudes that we've made them out to be. Instead, their ideas may actually be the ones which are more accepting, considerate, and advantageous to females.

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