

# The Next Great Scandal: Photoshopped Modesty

There's a new censorship scandal afoot: it involves school yearbook pictures, a little too much skin, and some lousy Photoshop skills.

Blond, smiling ninth-grader Riley O'Keefe was one of the "victims" of some aggressive photoshopping of her yearbook pictures by high school administrators. O'Keefe's original school picture featured a gray sweater over a low-cut black tank top that exposed her cleavage. That scoop-neckline became straight, covering O'Keefe's chest. She was incensed as she found that dozens of other girls had also had their chests photoshopped out.

Some of the girls felt "sexualized and exposed" by the digital alterations, *The New York Times* reported. O'Keefe said the school should "recognize that it's making girls feel ashamed of their bodies."

O'Keefe's response may seem natural in the modern world of liberated sexual self-expression. But it also shows how upside down and confused that same sexualized self-expression is: modesty standards are now considered a form of sexual exploitation.

These young girls seem rather confused, not realizing that they are simply parroting society's textbook answers, which really don't fit their situation. The opposite of their claims is true, for how can girls feel sexualized and exposed when those photo alterations were performed in order to eliminate the very exposure that can sexualize them?

The confused indignation of these girls would likely come as no surprise to family physician, psychologist, and author Dr. Leonard Sax. In his book [\*Girls on the Edge\*](#), Sax explored some

of the challenges, fears, and concerns young women are dealing with today, and one of these issues is modesty.

Sax credited feminist author Germaine Greer's 1970 book *The Female Eunuch* for creating this problem, saying that Greer's "main assertion—that female modesty is a consequence and manifestation of the patriarchy—has achieved the status of established fact in contemporary gender studies." He continued:

The corollary—that female immodesty is a sign of liberation—is now widely accepted. Girls today are coming of age in a culture in which teenage girls strip off their clothes at the beach or compete in wet T-shirt contests for the amusement of teenage boys. What's especially weird about those competitions is that both the girls and the boys seem to believe that the girls' parading their unveiled bodies is somehow modern, hip, and contemporary.

Thus it comes as no surprise that the girls with the doctored yearbook photos would view themselves as sexualized and exposed, for the ideas advanced by Greer's feminism have infiltrated society and turned the concept of modesty on its head, labeling true sexualization of women as a good thing, while labeling modest standards of dressing as oppressive. Sax explains:

By chastising feminine modesty as a symptom of patriarchal oppression, Greer provided support to the idea that pole dancers are liberated women. Her argument became so intrinsic to contemporary feminism that many people today don't even know where it came from. If you even hint at an objection to 'Girls Gone Wild,' you may find yourself labeled as a reactionary who favors a 1950s style patriarchy.

From what I've seen from headlines, pretty much everyone is up in arms against the school that doctored the yearbooks to remove cleavage. I just wonder if we're barking up the wrong

tree, for as Sax implies, the more we preach liberation through minimal clothing, the more damage we will be doing to our daughters' minds and bodies.

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Image Credit:

Bartram Trail High School Yearbook via The New York Times