



Living the revolution: #CropTopDay

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Andrea Mrozek and Rebecca Walberg are currently writing a book about the effects of the sexual revolution in women's lives. They are inviting women of all ages to fill out this short, [anonymous survey](#) to help inform their research.

#CropTopDay. If you haven't heard of this, it's a student protest over dress codes and a battle for women's rights. There's also a connection to women's relationships. (Stay tuned for more on that.)

A few weeks ago, a high school student, Alexi Halket came to her

Toronto public school wearing a top that looked like a sports bra. She was sent to the principal's office and told she would need to rethink her wardrobe. Instead of complying, she used social media to launch a protest against what she saw as discrimination. After all, boys down the hall were playing basketball without their shirts on. If you thought she looked sexual, you had the problem. This is the meme that continues to pop up on social media.

Some see her point, while others think dress codes are there for a reason.

Yet when Canadians make the claim that a high school dress code is perpetuating rape culture (itself a relatively new term) there is something else going on—something worth examining. This is particularly true if we contrast with the years prior to the 1960s, before the sexual revolution ignited in our culture.

More freedom, less commitment

Broadly defined, the sexual revolution opened up sexual freedoms, particularly for women. Back in 1969 when the revolution was younger, Time Magazine featured a bikini-clad Raquel Welch on the cover. The disapproving letters poured in. Clearly, what women wear, and where, has been controversial for a long while.

Yet more than merely opening up what women could wear, the sexual revolution had an effect on the family. And by this, one could say, it took a toll on the family. Concepts like obligation, commitment and honour waned, while freedom soared.

(Freedom, itself a good thing, isn't what makes a family or marriage tick, since family and marriage by their nature constrain and obligate us, for example, by demanding that we live with the same people for life.)

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More confusion, less consensus

Back to #CropTopDay. Whether or not young people today are even aware, the sexual revolution is the backdrop and the impetus for the thinking that undergirds the protest.

If male students can play basketball shirtless is it reasonable that female students wear the equivalent of swimwear in the gym too? Should women also be allowed to go topless, as some have advocated in the past? Is a crop top sexual? Does it depend who wears it, or where? If a man or woman notices said crop top, are they sexualizing the wearer?

These are all questions that can only be asked post-sexual revolution.

The present tension over dress codes shows us something. While one segment of society now feels that any limits on women with bare skin in public are unacceptable, others still think some fashion choices simply aren't appropriate. Raquel Welch's controversial Time cover was published in an era when it was unthinkable for anybody to wear beachwear other than at the beach – much less in the classroom or at work.

The difference between then and now is that today, there is less consensus and more confusion about what constitutes "appropriate."

Twenty-first century rules and norms are ever evolving, ever changing. And this is as true of modern relationships as it is of dress codes. There is no longer one place to wear a particular item of clothing. There is no longer one place to exercise sexuality—some find the mere idea of sex being constrained to marriage entirely laughable.

And as far as changes have already gone, some say we have not yet gone far enough to overturn patriarchal traditions. Others claim that the "new normal" suits neither men nor women, and has led to confusion on the way to unhappiness.

Looking at the legacy of a revolution

How has the sexual revolution affected the way women experience sexuality, romantic relationships and family? And how are these new freedoms and public norms working for women of all ages?

If you are a women of any age (high school to retirement and beyond) and of any personal history, consider filling out this short, anonymous survey about what your experience of the sexual revolution has been. There is no right answer; we want to learn about your experience. The results will be considered *only in the aggregate* as we research and write a book on the effects of the sexual revolution on women's relationships.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SexualRevolutionSurvey2>

#CropTopDay appears to be about dress codes, and to a certain extent it is. Yet the debate behind it has bigger implications for women's rights post sexual revolution. We are interested in that debate—and what it means for women's relationships.

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