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Beautiful People: The Past, Present, and Future of the Fashion Industry's Thin Ideal

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Beautiful People: The Past, Present, and Future of the Fashion Industry's Thin Ideal

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Journalism

by

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Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, 2018

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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ABSTRACT

Negative body image among women has become an extremely relevant topic in the last decade. The “ideal” female body image and what a person should look like according to marketing and advertising has become a highly controversial issue. This project seeks to show how the fashion industry has, over centuries, shaped how people think they need to look and in today’s time and show how it has been a root cause of issues like body image complexes leading to negative self-perception, eating disorders, mental illnesses like anxiety, depression and addiction, and even suicide. Over the last three to four decades, the problem has grown exponentially worse. However, there are organizations popping up that are celebrating people as they are. One of these organizations is the Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week. The people involved are separating fashion from what the ideal body is supposed to look like and bringing people of all shapes, sizes, colors and mentalities to the front of the line and showing the rest of the world that its ok to just be you.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nineteen-nineties, United States of America - things were booming. Economically, progress was moving at a rapid pace and life was good. That is, at least, what it looked like to a young, mostly white, male who idolized professional wrestlers, Jean-Claude Van Damme, and the Power Rangers. What that little boy did not realize at the time, and what I realize now, is that our youth was witnessing the rise of mass media, the peak of supermodels, and the establishment of rules that would, for decades, define what people saw as beautiful. While each one of these things happening at separate times could have resulted in a much different world, the combination of these things happening simultaneously created a chain reaction that would negatively affect the lives of young people all across the globe for years to come.

I was raised by a single father but never wanted for anything. I had more than a child my age could ask for. My dad was my life. I idolized him and all of his accomplishments. He coached my Little League teams and when I got older and he was not coaching any more, he was still at every game, and usually every practice. He was there to cheer me on but at the same time there was a lot of pressure on me to perform well. In my eyes, the happiness of my father was determined by the number of points I scored or tackles I made. If I did not perform well, I felt like a disappointment. This concept was the same with school and the same with life. My father was at his peak physical condition in the 1970s and 80s and was among the population of white American males who had the world in the palm of their hand and thought that any women who did not resemble the models in Tropicana and Victoria's Secret advertisements were the opposite of beautiful. This was not a thought process that started with him though. This is an example of how, for decades, people have been conditioned to believe what the definition of beauty is.

My father was still very active when I was young and I was expected to carry myself in peak condition as well, all the time being encouraged to try my hardest and to do my best. He meant to support me; he just did not realize what that pressure was doing to a young child. All of my life I have seen other parents exert this kind of pressure on their children as well and it can certainly affect a child's mentality. One of the defining points in my childhood is when I returned home from spending the summer with my grandparents and had put on some weight. My father's words cut me deep without him actually meaning any harm. He joked that I had gotten fat and while his statement was a joke, I remember seeing the disappointment that he was trying to hide.

From then on it was part of my life's mission to be fit and to look like all of my heroes did in the movies. In high school it was pretty easy to do. I worked out at school and after with my friends. I was always active, and I did all of the solo, high-impact and action sports that I could outside of school, but I had quit all team sports by the tenth grade. My father meant well and only wanted to be supportive of me, but the pressure from him to succeed beyond everyone else had become too much, resulting in arguments where I said things I could not take back and to repetitive rebellion due to not wanting to be normal. No matter what I did, I could not escape the weight of feeling like I had to prove myself in order to be worthy.

After high school, when life was not as carefree and responsibilities became more and more real, the time to work out and stay fit decreased. What I could control though, was my eating habits. My mother, who had her own set of issues and was not a part of my life, had been bulimic and her addiction to this disorder had been the reason of my conception. She had puked up her birth control and I was the result. Being young and not fully understanding the gravity of eating disorders, I began my own stent of controlling my weight through bulimia. This lasted off

and on for the better part of a decade where I changed my habits according to what I was seeing in the world, bouncing from anorexia to bulimia to excessive amounts of time to the gym.

As I got older and was able to manage my schedule better, I was able get back in the gym every day for multiple hours at a time. At one point I even stopped working so that I could draw unemployment and focus on working out because the idea of looking “sexy” was the only thing I really cared about. For the last several years, I have struggled finding the balance of a good work/gym/life routine but one thing that helped me was taking part in the Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week and becoming part of the family that grew from the people and community working together to empower each other. I am but a single example and while I did struggle in my own ways, there are so many others who have died, either from organ failure or by their own hand, in their attempt to be the “right” body shape and size.

My need to tell this story stems from my own personal experience with body image but also from how and where I was raised. Having spent most of my life in Arkansas, my morals and standards have been shaped and altered by the people I grew up around. As a child in this state, I was easily influenced by my peers and the adults in all of our lives. I remember in grade school, girls and boys both being called fat, the “your momma’s so fat” jokes completely demoralizing kids, and the states initiatives to reduce childhood obesity. These things, among all of the other insults and teasing, did not show us what we should do or look like but rather what we should not do or look like. Being an obese kid in the 90’s and 2000’s was almost a social death sentence. The way thinner children viewed heavier children was the beginning of our generation’s view on how to treat people who did not meet those ideal standards. Throughout my childhood, I saw more intolerance towards body weight than I did race. Being in the south and in the bible belt, this was a surprising realization. This intolerance towards the idea of being overweight did

influence on how I viewed beauty. I had posters of all of the skinny, tan, blonde, white women hung all over my room. I watched movies with actresses with fake breasts and altered bodies. When I pictured the sexual partner that I wanted, those were the attributes that I initially looked for. I am lucky enough that my shallow standards towards women were pushed aside not too long after I moved away from home and began to experience the world through my own eyes and develop my own set of values. I learned how I could love someone who did not meet those “sexy” standards that I had been saturated with throughout my entire life.

As a white, privileged, male, the question of why I should be the one to tell this story is a serious inquiry. Not only have I dealt with personal body image issues, but I have also grown to see the foundations on which all of my idealized views were built upon. I am also aware of these things and I have worked hard throughout the second half of my life to do better when it comes to inclusion and diversity. I know what it feels like to hate your own body, but I also know what it feels like to love your own body. The body positive movement is growing and the people who were once alienated for the way they looked, be it body shape and size, race, or a disability, are the people who are now making their mark on the world and changing it for the better.

This study was done to learn how individuals, large companies, and everyone in between can do their part to make the world we live in more hospitable to everyone, no matter what they look like. I wanted to know how social media affects individuals mental and physical health as well as the affects that not being inclusive can have on communities but also the success and lifespan of fashion industry. I chose Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week because it is an organization that truly showcases the impact, on multiple levels, that can occur when trying to make a difference.

THE PROBLEM AT LARGE

Negative body image among women has become an extremely relevant topic in the last decade (Perloff, 2014). The “ideal” female body image and what a person should look like in marketing and advertising has become a controversial issue. There are certainly some direct messages associated with body weight in the media (Brownbridge, 2018). Celebrities, fashion models, and show-hosts are often seen as role models, especially by the younger generations (Perloff, 2014). They appear to demonstrate what it is to be successful and popular and people of everyday life want to replicate that for themselves. Their body weight, appearance, and beauty are often associated with their popularity and wealth.

It is noticeable that the body size of women as portrayed in mass media has been steadily getting smaller. Marketers have discovered almost anything can be sold if it appeals to our sense of beauty or is considered attractive (Van Vonderen, 2012). The unfortunate thing is that what is considered attractive is being influenced by the use of social media and mass consumerism. In today’s time, *thin-ideal* media, a concept which has been looked at with interest by researchers in the field of social psychology refers to media images, shows, and films that contain very thin female leads. This is something that comes up a lot in fashion magazines, clothing catalogs and pop culture television shows (Brownbridge, 2018).

Thin-ideal media focuses on the idea that thinness is a healthy and desirable, even if it is damaging to a person’s wellbeing. Women are under extreme amounts of pressure to imitate the thin ideal of feminine beauty. As a result, these women experience body dissatisfaction, and a majority will vigorously pursue any means necessary in order to reduce their weight (Harper,

2007). Beauty sells, and this is somewhat of a problem when the media produces images unobtainable for most people, women and men.

This project seeks to show how the fashion industry has, over centuries, shaped how people thought they needed to look and in today's time; body image complexes leading to negative self-perception, eating disorders, mental illnesses like anxiety, depression and addiction, and even suicide. In 2018, participants aged 18–30 years were recruited in proportion to U.S. Census characteristics, including age, sex, race, education, household income, and geographic region. Participants self-reported social media use on the basis of a list of the top 10 social media networks, which represent more than 95% of social media use. Among the 990 participants who were not depressed at baseline, 95 (9.6%) developed depression by follow-up (Primack, 2021).

Depression is highly prevalent in the U.S., and its incidence is increasing. Depression accounts for more disability-adjusted life years than all other mental disorders and was recently declared to be the leading global cause of disability by the World Health Organization. In the U.S. alone, the economic burden of depression exceeds \$200 billion annually from reduced worker productivity, increased medical expenses, and suicide (Primack, 2021).

These Findings expand our understanding of social media affect and its relationship with individual's risks of developing depression symptoms (Chen, 2020). However, there are organizations popping up and celebrating people as they are. One of these organizations is the Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week. The people involved are separating fashion from what the ideal body is supposed to look like and bringing people of all shapes, sizes, colors and mentalities to the front of the line and showing the rest of the world that its ok to just be you.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

CLOTHING

Clothing that was created to express the social status of its wearer dates back in history all the way to ancient Egypt (Shaw, 1999). When associated with trends and fashion, clothing can be used to express as a person's culture and revolves around their personal activities and interests, their goals and their place in society (Venkatasamy, 2015). It relates to self-expression and how they want to be seen through the eyes of others. These perceptions are framed by cultural norms impacting on gender, age, and social attitudes and represent the 'zeitgeist' or the "spirit of the times" – changing lifestyles within the current social climate (Apeageyi, 2008, p. 1). In the United Kingdom, clothing was constructed on an individual basis well into the twentieth century (Brownbridge, 2018). This individual approach enabled the tailor or dressmaker to adjust garments for each specific wearer. Manufacturing skills and the application of body measurement were established within this context but now the industry has moved into a scale of mass production and is geared toward the thin ideal body type (Brownbridge, 2018).

It has been established that fashion dissemination is the collective behavior through which a style spreads beginning with its introduction by clothing providers to adoption by mass consumers (Apeageyi, 2008, p. 1). This mainly involves the flow of information, ideas, and products between different levels of the market, and promotion by marketing activities. Women are more aware of fashion and trends than ever before due to excess of celebrities in the media, the countless number of fashion magazines, and media outlets. It further signifies that buyers know what they want and desire to imitate their preferred celebrity's style choice (Apeageyi, 2008, p. 1). Body size of advertising models has gained increased attention due to the high numbers of

advertisements that portray thin female models, some of whom are unrealistically thin. This type of exposure to such models can negatively affect women's mental health and their behaviors.

Body image refers to the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of individuals with respect to their bodies. Internalization of ideals of beauty leads individuals to estimate the difference between their own bodies and this ideal, triggering body dissatisfaction when this ideal cannot be achieved. This can become a serious public health problem among adolescents because it generates a series of damaging conditions such as compromised emotional well-being, low self-esteem, symptoms of depression, and disordered eating. Body dissatisfaction affects adolescents in different ways: Boys tend to suffer sociocultural pressure encouraging them to have bigger, more muscular bodies, while girls are under pressure to have a thin body. The pressure may come from parents, friends, dating partners or even from the media, which appear to exercise a strong influence on adolescents (Uchôa, 2019).

Media influence may lead adolescents to internalize patterns of physical beauty, resulting in dissatisfaction with their own bodies when they are unable to match up to these patterns. In the constant search for an 'ideal body', adolescents may begin to develop risk behaviors for the development of eating disorders (Uchôa, 2019). The following table displays results from a study on the "Influence of the Mass Media and Body Dissatisfaction on the Risk in Adolescents of Developing Eating Disorders." The results show the classification of adolescents for eating disorders risk, body mass index (BMI), body dissatisfaction, and mass media influence, by gender (Uchôa, 2019).

TABLE 1

Instruments	Classification/<i>p</i> Value	Girls	Boys	Total	<i>p</i> Value
Eating attitudes	No Eating Disorder risk	46.9%	46.3%	93.2%	≤0.001
	Eating Disorder risk	5.4%	1.5%	6.8%	
BMI	Accentuated thinness	0.3%	1.0%	1.3%	0.006
	Thinness	1.0%	0.4%	1.4%	
	Normality	39.3%	34.4%	73.7%	
	Overweight	9.3%	8.0%	17.3%	
	Obesity	1.1%	2.8%	3.9%	
	Severe obesity	1.2%	1.3%	2.5%	
Body image (BSQ)	No dissatisfaction	32.4%	38.9%	71.3%	≤0.001
	Slight dissatisfaction	9.9%	5.2%	15.1%	

TABLE 1 CONT.

Instruments	Classification/p Value	Girls	Boys	Total	p Value
	Moderate dissatisfaction	5.2%	2.6%	7.8%	
	Severe Dissatisfaction	4.5%	1.2%	5.7%	
Media influence (SATAQ-3)	Low	26.4%	28.3%	54.7%	
	Moderate	14.0%	13.3%	27.3%	≤0.001
	High	11.7%	6.3%		

The substantial attention that has brought to the industry has resulted in some contemporary firms beginning to portray plus-sized advertising models. One of the companies on the forefront of this movement is Unilever’s Dove campaign, “Real Beauty.” Even though change is happening, the thin female models are still dominant in the 150-billion-dollar apparel industry (Janssen, 2013). With 67% of women in the US being a size 14 to 32, plus size campaigns are increasing rapidly. The brand, Lane Bryant wanted to give these women voice in their own way, so they produced slogan t-shirts with hashtag #PlusIsEqual. When the shirts were released in stores and online outlets, selfies from customers showing up across social media platforms. The Lane Bryant campaign also included billboards, commercials and magazine ads with models stating why #plusisequal. For the brands grand finale, they held a runway show

during New York Fashion Week, showcasing full figured models with the key message, that plus size women are here and should be treated just like all other women. Other campaigns include SWIMSUITSFORALL's, #BEACHBODYNOTSORRY, Gabi Gregg's #FATKINI, and Cosmetic Giant MAC's, "MACnificent Me" campaign (Thomas).

THE THIN IDEAL

The fashionable female silhouette has changed with time and the body has been manipulated frequently in acquiescence (Apeagyei, 2008, p. 1) Apparel has been considered as a way of transforming the perception of a person's body in order to change their silhouette depending on the latest trend and fashion (Almond, 2013). The process involves a perpetual change in clothing and appearance. Body image leads individuals to actively manage this appearance. As consumer practices towards shopping changes and the focus is directed at satisfying an individual's physical needs, their views on body size and shape impact their evaluation of clothing fit (Apeagyei, 2008 p. 1). Large numbers of policy makers suggest that warning labels be placed on idealized media images to inform viewers that the images have been digitally altered or enhanced, as a means of ameliorating the negative psychological effects of such media images (Slater, 2012).

THE FASHION INDUSTRY

The fashion industry has been under fire for years for using unrealistic body sizes to promote the sale of clothing. Typical Western fashion models in today's society wear sizes 0-4 and are approximately 5'10" in height and weight 110 pounds. These body dimensions greatly contrast those of the average American woman who wears a size 14, is 5'3" in height, and weighs 166 pounds (Farrar, 2014). The idealized body, constantly shown to women and considered what people prefer to see, can have a negative impact on the average female, since many women

suffer from a negative and self-criticized body image when they compare themselves with others (Farrar, 2014). Altogether, social comparison creates negative emotions, such as body dissatisfaction and disappointment (Choi, 2016). The sociocultural influences thought to contribute to eating disorders include the thin ideal body image created for women, the significance of appearance in the female gender role, and the importance of appearance for women's societal success (Stice, 1994).

In terms of psychology, the extravagance and all the carefully curated drama of the industry, has become something so inseparably linked to the identity of Fashion Week and style that we can no longer separate the fantastical from actual wardrobes. With the rise of social media, society feels increasing pressure to consume, display, and participate in the phenomenon that is modern consumer society. This curated idea of chasing that “fashion dragon” is not sustainable; ecologically, healthy, or mentally (Brocca, 2018).

IMPACTS

Research over the last two decades shows that the occurrence of eating disorders appears to be increasing. Health care professionals have reported what some consider to be epidemic rates of these disorders in recent years, particularly among adolescents (Hawkins, 2014). The rate of development of new cases of eating disorders has been increasing since 1950. According to the sociocultural model of eating disorders, adolescent females in our society quickly learn that being skinny elicits many forms of social reinforcement, achievement, and rewards whereas being overweight is associated with various social punishments such as social isolation (Fuller, 2010). Therefore, repeated exposure to the successful thin-ideal portrayed by the media leads some girls and women to overinternalize the stereotype (Hawkins, 2014).

Despite collected evidence of the negative effects of exposure to media-idealized images, the level to which body image, and eating related disturbances are caused by media depictions of gendered beauty ideals remains controversial. On the basis of the most up-to-date meta-analysis of experimental studies indicating that media-idealized images have the most harmful and substantial impact on vulnerable individuals regardless of gender (Dakanalis, 2014).

CHANGING THE THIN IDEAL

Research has recognized that fuller-sized and obese people were considered unhappy, unconfident, unattractive, and identified a huge level of discrimination and negativity towards the overweight (Almond, 2013). Things are changing and measures are being taken to include women who do not fit the thin ideal. Yes, there are organizations like NWAFFW, Dove and the YMCA who are striving to break the stigma but there are other ways that the industry can appeal to these people. Presenting and describing a body as voluptuous could be a more palatable way to repackage and reconceptualize the larger-sized (Almond, 2013). Plus-size models made headlines in 2015, signaling a shift towards greater size diversity in fashion. Robyn Lawley became the first plus-size model featured in a swimsuit issue of *Sports Illustrated*. Developments indicate this is not a passing fad, as important institutional changes have occurred within modeling agencies and designers are responding to a consumer-driven demand for a greater representation of larger models in the fashion landscape (Czerniawski, 2016).

Health professionals, educators, and parents should make it a priority to work with the fashion industry, the media, the entertainment industry, and legislators to take responsibility for the body image messages and nutrition misinformation that are being sent to our youth and adults (Martin, 2010). Rather than making a virtue of unhealthy weight gain, the emphasis is on embracing people as they are and empowering them to make positive choices about what they

can wear and how they are perceived. This in itself is far more Likely to promote a holistic sense of self and personal health. People who feel good about themselves treat themselves better across the board (Almond, 2013). The gradual elimination of separate modeling divisions and increased media presence of plus-size models like Lawley and Graham mark a progressive move by fashion to embrace larger bodies (Czerniawski, 2016). The cultural production of fashion successfully generates new visual languages that can destroy barriers. Human beings have used the way they decorate their bodies through a "Presentation of self" (Goffman 1959).

III. THE FILM

This paper is half of the entire project. In addition, I have produced a feature-length documentary film, titled, Beautiful People. The documentary follows Arkansas designers, creative directors, models, apparel merchandising experts and professors in their efforts to help break the stigma of the thin ideal from an area of the country that most would not think of as being diverse and inclusive. The film also highlights the efforts of Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week and its creatives, to be more inclusive of all other body types such as well, including a variety of races and ethnicities, physical and mental disabilities, gender and sexual orientation. This film is really about a place, that most would likely assume is far behind when it comes to being diversly progressive, defying its own negative stigmas.

The main characters will be made up Rosie Rose, a designer who incorporates diversity and inclusion on the runway in almost every aspect of the word, Brittany Allen, a designer who was recently on BRAVO's 'Project Runway' during a season focused on diversity and inclusion of race, size, sexual orientations and lifestyles, and Robin Atkinson, the President and Creative Director of Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week (NWAFFW), who has used her organization to promote diversity and inclusion on the runway and in editorial photo and video shoots. It will also feature Dr. Laurie Apple, an apparel merchandising expert and professor at the University of Arkansas. Gabrielle Korn, the former editor-in-chief of Nylon Magazine and Director of Fashion and Culture at Refinery29 and is now the director of inclusion and diversity at Netflix. It highlights three main models; one who is a plus size model and advocate to this very cause, a model who has down syndrome but has already been breaking stigmas of what people say she can and cannot do, and a primary NWAFFW black female model who does not fit the typical ideal body type.

Finally, the film will show case two other local designers who break the stigmas of gender and race both locally and nationally. The plot begins with a voiceover about the history of the fashion industry, how decades of mass media have helped develop the thin ideal and how it has bled over and grown with the use of social media and the effects that it has on young people. It continues with characters talking about where the fashion industry is now and some of the problems this new movement has faced and what the economic benefits are in increasing who you're marketing to, followed by the characters showing what it is that they are doing to combat these issues through their own artwork and careers. I have filmed the designers in their workspaces, making clothes, fitting models, doing photo shoots and finally, their shows during fashion week. All of this combines to create a story about the good work people are doing to change the world and make it a safer more equal place to exist mixed with knowledge and facts of how unrealistic stigmas set by media outlets have been at the root of some mental and physical health disorders. The film will end with a montage of inspirational soundbites from the characters to leave the audience feeling hopeful and empowered.

LOG LINE

For too long the way people view themselves has been influenced by who and what they see portrayed as beautiful. This is a story about the ways people and organizations in the state of Arkansas are redefining beauty and contributing to breaking stigmas of fashion.

ACCESS

The first time I ever attended an NWAFW show was to do a story for my Broadcast Television II class and that very night I fell in love with everything that this event represented. The next season, I applied to be a model and was selected by Richard Cotto, one of the designers featured in the film. Every season after that for 2 years, I modeled for more and more designers and along

with them, the workers at NWAFFW and the models, we formed a close-knit family. We all became very close to one another and we were able to open up about our personal experiences. Through this process I learned how the new vision of this organization was truly making people's lives better in so many ways. We all felt accepted, and I knew that I had to tell this story. Since I had become such a big part of the organization itself, I had immediate access to anything and everything. I spent the next several seasons filming instead of modeling.

PRODUCTION TIMELINE (BY SEMESTER)

SPRING 2019

I model in my second to last season of NWAFFW as I begin preparing to film. I arranged the process with the CEO of NWAFFW, some designers and a model. Between the spring and fall season, I film with designers and models during different editorial shoots and promotion events.

FALL 2019

I walk in my last ever runway show while at the same time running multiple cameras throughout the weekend. Between 2 static cameras and 1 handheld camera, I was able to capture a great amount of footage. During this time, I establish multiple filming sessions for the spring of 2020.

SPRING 2020

The COVID-19 Pandemic hits and shuts all work down. Flights, travel and interviews are canceled or postponed. The only thing that I can do is wait.

FALL 2020

I'm able to reschedule almost everything and what I could not, I find a character or event to replace it with. I travel to Austin, Texas on the funds given to me by the Department of Journalism. I wrap shooting in November of 2020 with my interview with Dr. Apple.

SPRING 2021

I finish post-production. The film is edited and what footage I was not able to get myself, I obtain from other local videographers, stock footage sites, and archival material. Beautiful People is completed in time for a defense in April of 2021.

CHOICE OF SHOTS

This film will not have some of the typical shooting and editing styles as other contemporary fashion films where everything is meant to flatter. Like others though, what I choose to show has meaning and reason. I tend to show shots that are not what people might consider, flattering. Shots that show exposed bellies, disabilities and other things that typically cause people to avert their eyes. I have lengthy shots of people walking down the runway and of people's faces and bodies because I want the audience to look at these things. This is my attempt to bring a sense of normality to these everyday realities. I want to break the stigmas, the fetishes, and the ideals that body shape that we have been programmed to be attracted to.

AUDIENCE

The intended audience is any young person who scrolls through Instagram bombarded with photos of "pretty" people and the parents of said young people and the anyone who thinks about the impacts of the clothes they choose to wear. It is large brands who refuse to market to anyone who is not below a size 4 and to international fashion weeks who continue to show super skinny models on the runway. The audience is anyone involved in the fashion or apparel industry and anyone affected by it, which in reality is anyone who puts on clothing. The secondary audience is the rest of the world, to show them the daily struggles and effects of what it is people are comparing themselves to. As of now my distribution will be what I can afford. I will enter it

into film festivals, domestic and international, I will try and sell it to streaming services but if I have no luck with that, I will put it on amazon prime and push it through social media.

IMPACT GOALS

I hope to do more than just create a film. My intentions are to use my film and research to help influence larger Fashion Week organizations and apparel brands to be more inclusive and diverse. I want this to lead marketing professionals to start including more diverse models in their advertising and showing these larger companies how marketing to a more inclusive audience can improve their sales. Finally, I want to show people of all ages that they can be beautiful in their own way and that they do not have to put themselves through the daily stresses that lead to mental health issues and eating disorders. My goals are to help save the young people who are so negatively affected by mass media.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the end, the combination of visual written research that this project will depict will be an honest and unadulterated view into the effects of the media on females and males alike and what it's like to be involved in the fashion industry through an organization that wants to see the whole thing change and allow people to become comfortable in their own skin. I have done my best to stay unbiased and show the facts of the situation. I wanted to make the audience feel something and that is exactly what I set out to do with the production of this film.

I started this project because I knew I wanted to be better and to do better when it came to treating people how they deserve to be treated. While I had already set out on this path of self-enlightenment, during the filmmaking process, I learned how much more can be done by myself and especially the rest of the world – specifically those people in power who decide what their brands will sell and who they will market to. Things are getting better when it comes to social equality but there is still a long way to go.

I am a journalist, and I am a filmmaker but at the heart of everything, I am a storyteller. And as storytellers, it is our job to wonder. It is our job to be curious on how to make this world a brighter place and then ask how to do so. It is in stories not yet written, of journeys soon to be taken, where creative responses to such questions are likely to be found (Lorimer, 2014). In the words of the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower and humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

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VI. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **RQ 1:** How are certain organizations, Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week in particular, changing the ideas of the “thin ideal” within to counter act the major effects that mass media has on females and their psyche?
- **RQ 2:** Is there evidence that what these organizations are doing is having a positive impact on females, and to what extent?
- **RQ 3:** Are females and males alike feeling more comfortable in their own skin and style after participating in such an inviting arena such as NWA Fashion Week?
- **RQ 4:** Do females participating in NWA Fashion Week suffer from anxiety, depression, and negative body image and how do they feel about what the organization is striving to do?
- **RQ 5:** What have been some of the implementations due to this kind of stress and anxiety?
- **RQ 6:** How do they view the fashion industry as a whole?
- **RQ 7:** What do they think the industry should do to help change the stigma of being thin?
- **RQ 8:** Does social media and mass media play a part in how they view themselves and how develop a sense of style, and to what degree?

APPENDIX B

GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **IQ 1:** Does social media affect how you style yourself?
- **IQ 2:** Does social media cause you anxiety or depression when you're using it?
- **IQ 3:** Do you compare yourself to the people that you see on social media?
- **IQ 4:** In your life how has the mass media affected how you feel about yourself?
- **IQ 5:** Are you happy with who you are right now?
- **IQ 6:** Does being involved in the fashion industry put extra strain on how you live your life?
- **IQ 7:** How does NWAFFW compare to the norms of the fashion industry?
- **IQ 8:** What do you see NWAFFW doing to change the idea of the thin ideal?
- **IQ 9:** What do you think the organization can do to continue breaking the stigma of the thin ideal?
- **IQ 10:** Do you think breaking this stigma will benefit the organization or not?
How so?
- **IQ 11:** What do you think the fashion industry is doing to young female's mental states?
- **IQ 12:** What is it like being involved in the fashion industry?
- **IQ 13:** Do you think fashion and social media are connected? How so?
- **IQ 14:** Why do you participate in the fashion industry?
- **IQ 15:** Have you been involved in fashion organizations other than NWAFFW?
How do they compare?

- **IQ 16:** How would you like to see the fashion industry evolve?
- **IQ 17:** What can be done to influence that idea?
- **IQ 18:** Do you know anyone that suffers from anxiety or depression because of the way they look?
- **IQ 19:** Is your favorite thing about being part of the industry? What is your least favorite thing?
- **IQ 20:** Do you think seeing more “Average” types of models will be a good thing for the industry? What about for people’s wellbeing?
- **IQ 21:** What is the one thing you would change first about the fashion industry?
- **IQ 22:** What sets NWAFFW apart from other fashion organizations?

APPENDIX C

MAIN CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Shane White – Narrator
Dr. Laurie Apple – Apparel Merchandising Professor at the University of Arkansas
Robin Atkinson – CEO; Interform Arts
Rosie Rose – Designer
Ro Bailey – Model
Bruce Davis – Designer
Brittany Allen – Designer
Sarah Connolly – Plus-Size Fashion Influencer and Model
Richard Cotto – Designer
Abwe Abedi – Tailor
Mary Borman – Model

APPENDIX D

A TIMELINE OF FASHION AND IDEAL BODY TYPES

Ancient Egypt (c. 1292 – 1069 B.C.) - Slender, Narrow Shoulders, High Waist Symmetrical Face. Ancient Egyptian society promoted a sex-positive environment where premarital sex was entirely acceptable, and women could divorce their husbands without shame.

Ancient Greece (c. 500 – 300 B.C.) - Plump, Full-bodied, Light Skin. Ancient Greece worshiped the male form, going so far as to proclaim that women's bodies were 'disfigured' versions of men's. In this time period, men faced a much higher standard of beauty and perfection than women.

Han Dynasty (c. 206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) - Slim waist, pale skin, large eyes and small feet. Small feet are one aspect of Chinese beauty that has continued for hundreds of years. During the Han Dynasty, Chinese culture favored slim women with long black hair, white teeth and red lips. Historically, the Chinese people have favored women with ultra-femininity.

Italian Renaissance (c. 1400 – 1700) - Ample bosom, rounded stomach, full hips, and fair skin. During the Italian Renaissance, it was the wife's duty to reflect her husband's status, both in behavior and outward appearance. A full body, light hair and light skin all were thought of as the superior indications of beauty.

Victorian England (c. 1837 – 1901) - Desirably plump, full-figured, cinched waist. The era of the corset. In this time period, women cinched their waists with tight-fitting undergarments to give the perception of the desirable hourglass figure. This time period lasted through the reign of Queen Victoria, considered by many as one of the most influential figures of the time.

Roaring Twenties (c. 1920s) - Flat chest, downplayed waist, bobbed hairstyle, and a boyish figure. Beauty in the 1920s featured an androgynous look for women. They wore bras that flattened their chest and wore clothing that gave them a curve-less look. Women even shortened their hair, leaving behind the long-held belief that long hair signified beauty and desirability.

Golden Age Of Hollywood (c. 1930s – 1950s) - Curves, hourglass figure, large breasts, slim waist. The boyish figure trend did not last for long. One decade later, the hourglass figure is back. The classic example of this ideal woman's body is Marilyn Monroe, the Golden Girl of Hollywood.

Swinging Sixties (c. 1960s) - Willowy, thin, long, slim legs, and an adolescent physique. Peace, love and thin seemed to be the motto of ideal beauty for women in the 1960s. "Swinging London," a term used to describe the flourishing fashion and cultural scene of London in the 1960s, influenced women's dress and style in America during the same period.

Supermodel Era (c. 1980s) - Athletic, svelte but curvy, tall with toned arms. This time period brought about an exercise-crazed phenomenon. Workout videos were all the rage, encouraging

women to be thin, but also fit. This era also saw an upswing in anorexia, thought by some experts to be caused by a widespread obsession with exercise.

Heroin Chic (c. 1990s) - Waifish, extremely thin, translucent skin, androgynous. The celebrated body of this time period was a woman who looked thin, frail and neglected. Model Kate Moss was the heroine of this heroin decade—pale, withdrawn and thin.

Postmodern Beauty (c. 2000s – Today (2021)) - Flat stomach, “healthy skinny”, large breast and butt, with a thigh gap. Kim Kardashian is an example of the poster woman of ideal beauty standards for the modern woman. Women are expected to be skinny, but not too skinny, with large breasts and a big butt, all while maintaining a flat stomach. Women increasingly are seeking plastic surgery ‘fixes’ to achieve this look.

Appendix E

SCRIPT

Speaker	Soundbite
00:00:02 Archival Voice	<p>Here is the latest look from Paris filmed in Paris, flattering new creations by Dior Balman Lamba, another top Parisian couturier.</p> <p>The silver and Gold from Versailles inspired this stunning gown with embroidered gold and jewels and billowing sat and the flowing White Velvet stole provides a lovely accent for a lovely gown. Just another creation from petty that you gals will be wearing before long, you hope.</p>
00:00:37 Shane	<p>From the moment, we come into this world we are in the flow of. In motion of everything that came before us everything that has set a standard. And in our world beauty has been that standard.</p>
00:00:50 Archival Voice 2	<p>A one piece, Bahama Blue Halter Mile in the new cover stitch and over this. A heavy Terry cloth robe with flared skirt and contrasting.</p>
00:00:59 Shane	<p>An Orthodox that's defined what we're expected to be. But those expectations have been costly. And the payment for not being perfect has been judgment and rejection. For decades fashions created what attractive is. Creating a thin ideal the premeditated concept of what you're supposed to look like. But things are changing. The truth of beauty is being recognized. The industry is evolving and fashion is moving forward.</p>
00:01:49 Dr. Apple	<p>Historically, models have always been thin, and that's usually who designers. Really</p>

designed for they are, they designed for the model because that's who's going to present it on the runway. That's who's going to give it its first look. They also do designs for obviously celebrities that have an ideal what you think of as an ideal body type, and so. So I think what we see in the media what we see in television and film is not necessarily reality based upon a body type situation. But a lot of designers. They do have to show their merchandise on a live person in that live person usually is. A very tall very thin model ideal. I think the consequences of in the past has happened really in the print media. That happened first so women would get magazines in the Mail. They subscribe to the magazines before the digital age. And they would see these models and they would see what these models were wearing in the print version of a catalog or a magazine and they would think that that's what they're supposed to look like so the ideal really came from print from the beginning. If you look all the way back to even the Sears and Roebuck catalog when it started. Years and years and years ago the models were very attractive thin women.

00:03:33 Robin

In the 90s, I think is really when it became most devastating because there was that idea that perf was massively underweight right and that being like clinically underweight with something to strive for and so you look at models in the. In the 90s or in the late 90s and then the idea of like heroin Chic is like that's a devastating condition for your body to be in this is absolutely no way you can survive like that.

00:04:06 Dr. Apple

So a lot have turned to eating disorders and eating disorders are. Pretty much it's a product of what they see who they're trying to emulate

<p>00:04:37 Robin</p>	<p>what the media has tried to put in front of them as an ideal body type, an ideal person and so you see that Anorexia becomes a problem bulimia has become a problem but that's both for male and females so we see both happening in both genders.</p> <p>In the last couple of years, Paris Fashion Week actually outlawed models under a certain body mass index because it's just now. Not it's not actually feasible to be that size so they took it upon themselves to say like no if you're under this BMI. You can't be on the runway because we can't advertise that image. Like we can't say that's something you should be because at that point, you're actually sick and so that's a huge step. In a good direction now do they have plus size women on the Paris runways. No, not yet that you know they're not going that far but it is starting to understand that there is an ideal that was set that was literally, killing people.</p>
<p>00:05:25 Sunshine</p>	<p>This is Robin Atkinson, she is the CEO of N.W.A.F.W. and Arkansas art and fashion forum.</p>
<p>00:05:31 Robin</p>	<p>Hello!</p> <p>I don't come from a standard fashion background. So I don't feel the pressure of other fashion organizations on us.</p> <p>But for the first year and a half, I was the only Technical employee and 2 weeks before the spring 2018 shows. This person joined my team,</p> <p>I come to what we do from very much an art background and then art thinking through things as an arts organizer and so for me. It's about quality and like aesthetic quality and I don't necessarily see a barrier on aesthetic</p>

quality on a size. We live in it, kind of very. Polarized? Automized social climate with a lot of echo chambers, and a lot of people sort of talking to people only like themselves and a lot of that is created through silo ING of people into categories and then speaking to them. In those respective categories, so a lot of that happens, because mass marketing mass media sort of like LA New York based creative production has for a long time, so skipped over a lot of different kinds of people and focus very specifically on a certain aesthetic of perfect. And so a lot of people feel that they are currently not being spoken to and I think that you know what in our sort of humble way we can start having or at least visually. Speaking to a much broader group of people just by showing themselves back to them. And saying, like, we're recognizing that you exist as a human being, here is some images of people who might look like you. Because with fashion you are necessarily working with bodies. You have a choice of which bodies you're working with and so it's really easy to as you as we realize that as it's like well. We're going to have to have models where there are people who are going to have to be wearing these garments. Let's be really purposeful and how we make the choices of who those people are. And then once we started with that as a sort of metric it was really easy for that to just continue growing as we worked with more people. So if at first. The goal was to just have racial diversity across the board. Then the next thing was well if you're going to have racial diversity. You also need to be body positive and size inclusive. So if that, then comes into play. Then we also need to be really aware of trans gender and gender non binary model. And once that sort of opens up. We also need to be really inclusive of differently abled people and so sort of like each time we do an event

Music

00:09:46 Robin

or a photo shoot or work with a different designer. The sort of concentric circles of inclusion kind of broaden out as we find what our blind spots are and the goal is to just. Each time we hit that that moment of like this is a group of people who have been presented on a runway or who haven't been presented in fashion. The response is like with a sort of sense of radical inclusivity like OK well? How do we make it work?

So with fashion you're actually just working with people. The images, you're creating are of people. It's really hard to deal with fashion without thinking about the human form. And so for me, it was great because now I'm in a position where I get to choose who's going into images, which is a really powerful position to be in an I think a lot of times people who are in that position are looking for like the most perfect specimen of a human they can find because they're trying to sell an ideal. And I was much more interested in. Let's find some people like what do actual people look like an elevate that image to as high as we can elevate it? You know, we have one designer who has shown with us every season that I've been around Ann and has consistently been pushing the boundaries far beyond where I thought we could go and so I have to give her a lot of credit. Next up is the black apple award winner, Rosie Rose and Ive seen this shit. Ive seen it and it dope. So rosy rose has every season without fail included someone who had already fallen who is outside of even our own blind spots so for instance, this season when she brought the model out with the. Stomach tubes because she has the intestinal that intestinal disorder that blew me away like had me in tears

00:12:37 Rosie

because that was something that I hadn't thought about I hadn't thought about that kind of visible. You know that kind of visible difference being on the runway and for her to so gracefully integrated into a show. I think that you know what Rosie is doing is so much more than fashion design when it really comes down to it. I think that Rosie is at heart really an artist. Who likes thinks about the human body as a canvas and so her work is so much more inclusive and so much more radically inclusive than anybody else, I mean, she is pushing the other designers to change what they're doing because she's making them look bad. Which is good. It's a good kind of competition, but you can't go up after Rosie and have 10 thin tall. White woman. You just can't? What are you doing? You know so I think Rosie 's she's to be honest really helping push us farther than I would have thought we could go.

Yeah. Creative people that are waiting to. Have you know a stage basically to put their stuff on and show people an you know when people think of Fashion Week. They think of like LA Paris, New York, but there's no reason why you know other areas can't have I don't know the same creativity and? And cool ideas and I think people around here that that live around here really appreciate. Getting to see what's locally being produced too. I'm happy to see more and more like plus size bloggers and fashion gurus and stuff because they are comfortable with themselves and they're saying that people like it's OK to be the size. You don't have to apologize for you know for what size you are or. Not being the perfect you know, Barbie body type or whatever like. Because yeah kids like do look at those things and. It is hurtful when you don't see. Anybody your size and then you

look in the mirror and you're like well. I don't look like those people that I'm seeing you know in magazines and on the runways and stuff. So yeah, we, we need more size representation and more different body types and just everybody should see somebody that represents themselves you know. Yeah. It really is important. I feel like there's just like been this pervasive notion that. To be a model or to, I don't know I don't want to say to be beautiful, but to be like fashionable that you have to be a certain body type, you know that you should be thin and white and those are the beauty ideals that get celebrated. And so there's this whole huge group of people that get left out of that that aren't that and they just kind of it. It almost makes you just you know turn your head away from it, because you go. Both there's nobody there like me, you know what I mean, it's hurtful really. If you teach them that anybody can be a model and that any I don't know different beauty types are. You know celebrate different beauty types, I guess is what I'm trying to say. Then they naturally kind of go Oh that's normal you know what I mean, like it's not a new thing to them like for my kids, they are so used to seeing models of all different sizes and stuff that it's not surprising to them. They're just like oh that's just totally normal, so just trying to Kind of normalize different genders and different body types ethnicities, etc. As far as like. This is someone that is beautiful. I think it's just like really good for people in general. I mean, not even just kids. But I think it's just something that we all I don't know could be a little bit. Kinder and a little bit more accepting and it's just good for the human race in general to kind of spread those. Feelings you know, and values of. Appreciating everyone for their differences, you know, and that your differences can actually be. The thing that makes you really unique and wonderful and

	<p>that that's what people really love about someone. Instead of being something that excludes you. Stories I've heard from New York Fashion Week I've heard things like. Runway models who can't come back the next season because they've gained half an inch on their ways. I mean that has gotta just make you feel terrible and they're already dieting and stuff, and you know, then they're like crash dieting. Even more to try and be the right size for it. It's not healthy at all.</p>
00:17:44 Ro	<p>Rosie has always been a pioneer for diversity before it was before it was a thing before it was cool before people were like. Yeah, we should start doing this Rosie was doing it from the beginning, so it's like Rosie 's kind of telling people to catch up. Rosie has always been someone who embraces the extraordinary and. She's always been a person too. Be a cheerleader for you, if you're if you're different.</p>
00:18:13 Rosie	<p>I grew up in Eureka Springs. My parents had an art Gallery. So I kind of grew up in the backroom of the art Gallery like literally. They had like a playpen in the back. When I was a baby. An you know all the way up through my childhood, I remember. Having receptions meeting artists and all you know artists are really interesting. There's a lot of like interesting characters and stuff, an getting exposed to all these different styles of Art. As well as my parents artwork also my dad was a sculptor and my mom was a batik artist so batik is like a fabric art where you are dying waxing and dyeing layers of fabric to make an image. And so I kind of picked up. I think some skills from each of them as far as I still incorporate hand dyed fabrics into my work and then my dad. Uhm? Did these amazing</p>

	<p>sculptures that a lot of times would have like textures built into them. So I do a lot of things that are like that. With textures, you know, maybe making a dress and then adding a texture all over to it. An another thing that he was really great about is he was really a champion of body diversity. Before that was really a popular thing. I mean I think he even passed away before that became like the body positive movement even really happened. But like one of his sculptures that. That I remember really. You know most was he did a sculpture that was. Of my mom when she was pregnant with me and people would come into their Gallery and make fun of it. And I remember people coming in and like throwing a jacket over it or saying things like well, I don't want to see naked pregnant woman like an you know and he was always really mad. Ann would be like this is beautiful. This is life being made and. You know an in all of his sculptures. He did a lot of figural sculptures. He always used curvier figures, so I think that like. I was raised seeing that as being beautiful and normal and just seeing the human body as being beautiful.</p>
00:20:47 Sarah	<p>So she reached out to me and asked me if I wanted to walk and I how could I turn that down. You know as someone who's a size 28.</p>
00:20:57 Rosie	<p>Jacket that is like really kind of crazy right now, but we just want to get it the right size so I'll after you get that on I'll help you with the jacket.</p>
00:21:03 Sarah	<p>I'm fine with crazy. So I then learned that I had to go to model boot camp. And I was literally petrified. I</p>

	<p>actually took my mom with me because I was like I have no idea what I'm gonna get myself into like are these people going to be terrible. You know are they gonna make me feel bad for not looking like everyone else because I was operating under the assumption that just because. Rosie used a diverse group of people doesn't mean that everyone else will. And so. That I almost ran out at boot camp at least 3 times, just out of sheer terror.</p>
<p>00:21:52 Ro</p>	<p>Bootcamp those are like the most fun part that's where everyone Gets to know each other and we learn what the runway walk is gonna be because it changes each season. It may be a t-zone runway. It may be a L shape runway and maybe I shape runway. So we kind of learn what the process is and what the steps are as far as the runway walk itself.</p>
<p>00:22:17 Sarah</p>	<p>I look around after I kind of get out of the fog of being so intimidated. At being there right like I start to actually look around and absorb what's happening around me instead of just being petrified about what I'm doing and I realize that there are people who have visible belly outlines and there are differently, abled and they're all different races. And there are transgender models and everyone is being treated equally. On the same playing field. We're giving as much criticism and praise and helpful trading as everyone else. And so that was really empowering. I felt like. The people who were behind Fashion Week wanted me there, not just because of the number of followers. I have on Instagram. They wanted me there because of what I represented so when I walked for Rosie, the first time. I'm standing in the tunnel, waiting to be tapped out on the runway. An I'm shaking I'm petrified and I step out onto the runway and I</p>

hear the crowd react audibly. I was worried about being that exposed I was worried about what the audience reaction would be. I was worried about what the online reaction would be. But I actually. Realized that it was an opportunity for me to put my money where my mouth is. If I'm going to talk about all the ways. We deserve to be represented and how so many things should be normalized. Then I really need to step up to the plate and participate in that. Myself so that was a whole new experience of me, getting outside the box. And everyone is honestly just been so welcoming and truly championing getting people who look like our communities and beyond on the runway, but it really makes me hopeful for fashion between the coasts.

Here at local and regional fashion weeks. We have an opportunity to really impact the way people see themselves the way they shop and the way that they talk about the clothing that they put on their bodies and that carries them every single day. I figured out that fashion was the thing that I was passionate about but maybe. Not necessarily selling or designing so I left, I had an internship at Fashion Week. I went there and realized that things were very different than I thought they were people were certainly not as nice as I thought they were. So obviously I was plus size then still plus size now and I was covering straight size fashion. I was sitting front row at Tippy. I was in the Oscar de la Renta show. Room. So I was getting access to this world, but wanted nothing to do with me and at first. It was exciting right. You know you're getting in there, you feel like you belong and you're being accepted, but you're writing about something that doesn't want to have anything to do with you and the more personal style Began to pick up online in terms of the kind of content. People wanted to see the more I

	<p>realized that I was playing in an arena where I didn't belong. And so I started to question you know are people following me for my voice are they following me. For me because I have a utility to offer them in terms of what clothes look like on my body where I'm shopping. You know how I'm styling things so it begin to shift when I really started to question everything it was, it was. 23 years, then I think 'cause you know the shine had started to wear off a little. Ann I was getting a little sad, about feeling left out. I was sitting on the front row with tiny size 2 girls asking myself? Why am I here. And I will try to ask myself like if these people can do this? Why can't. I so in 2006. I started my first site and I haven't stopped creating content online. Since then, so it's 13 years ago.</p>
00:27:37 Robin	<p>So for me inclusion and diversity is a sort of ever changing boundary. Because when we started it was very specifically about racial diversity and that was really the thing that I was most focused on. Because I thought it was the most necessary to sort of really push back against in this area. Quickly became apparent that being limited to one kind of diversity is. Very unrealistic also very silly.</p>
<p>Music</p> <p>00:28:45 Robin</p>	<p>What it really is about, is creating an opportunity for anyone who enters the building in the audience to feel themselves represented back to themselves. So you know, or even on social media if you're watching us on social media. I want you to be able to see yourself in what we're doing whether it's you've got a little difference, or you're very short or you're very tall or you're very underweight or you're very overweight or man I mean, whoever you are. That's totally fine. It's totally OK and there's probably</p>

	<p>another person who is pretty similar to you and that person is on a runway. I mean that's huge right an and just that sort of uplift that you get of saying like that person looks like me an there a fashion model. Awesome. As cultural leaders, we, we really just have to focus on creating this space for people to find themselves represented so they don't have to seek that out. You know if I'm a young woman who may have doubts about my size or I have doubts about my build. Finding myself represented in popular media might keep me from going down that rabbit hole of you know competing to lose the most weight against other girls on the Internet or something like.</p>
<p>00:30:18 Dr. Apple</p>	<p>We just are seeing it in a faster realm because of the digital age. We have people that are blogging and Instagram. You know posts that are ideal kind of people they everybody wants to be like somebody that they follow on Instagram or some sort of social media and so. I think that when you look at the thin ideal when you look at the people that are contributing to the blogs. An the Instagram phenomenon. You'll see that a lot of a lot of these young women are trying to emulate what they see.</p>
<p>00:30:57 Sarah</p>	<p>It's so crazy to see all of the things that are will say socially acceptable for brands and capitalist ventures will say to use in their marketing to get our attention. And yet that people are still not one of those intersections that are represented.</p>
<p>00:31:18 Brittany</p>	<p>For instance, Victoria's Secret, not having women of all sizes that is a clear problem that I've always thought but also seeing other</p>

<p>00:31:32 Gabrielle</p>	<p>brands. Now, call them out and bring that up and say you know this is yes, it might be a fantasy but all women have fantasies.</p> <p>Social media reflects the stigmas. The young women already face in some cases, people are creating an alternate reality that then becomes aspirational for other people. And I think everything you see on line has to be taken with a grain of salt, but especially when you look at the images that people choose to post up themselves. Because you have to think about the thought that went into it. You know how they're choosing to portray themselves versus how they probably. Work 99% of the time.</p>
<p>00:32:01 Ro</p>	<p>It causes suicidal thoughts. It causes depression. It causes self-esteem issues and it's really detrimental to a young person 's mind.</p>
<p>00:32:14 Bruce</p>	<p>Social media is A The Devil. Sometimes you know it's like growing up and certain people feel like they have to look a certain way to be accepted. You know you have all these IG models. They get paid for being beautiful. Then there's the filters.</p>
<p>00:32:35 Rosie</p>	<p>Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week has been having. Conversation sessions where they invite the public to come, and they'll have different speakers about things like. Science diversity. Race issues, racial inclusion, and. Just kind of like connecting some of the. Some of the people in the area that are really influential with the public and making it making them accessible so that you can ask them questions you can. You know, like</p>

<p>00:33:54 Sarah</p>	<p>Sarah Conley, for instance, is a plus size Blogger and she does beauty. And fashion blogging. And they've had her talk to the designers about including more sizes. Talk to us about diversity and. Also, she's made some really great points about. The size of the market that is not served right now.</p> <p>I've Had so many challenges in my life, obviously in 13 years a lot can happen to you. You know, I did everything from going viral in my underwear from the photo shoot and getting into an Internet fight with Oprah and having cancer and so you know, all of these crazy things happen to me but what I think, really galvanized an audience around me was that I started speaking truth to power in the fashion industry. I started saying that the way that they were showing women and the way that they were targeting plus size women was not OK. The way that these models didn't look like for customers the way that their size ranges weren't.</p>
<p>00:34:32 Rosie</p>	<p>I think that is something that people need to hear. Because like we've all grown up looking at the same things and society promoting this idea of thin beauty.</p>
<p>00:34:59 Rosie</p>	<p>So to hear from Her an hear from her in person. You know that. Not only do you, I don't know, you relate to her on a human level of like do I really want to say no to this wonderful kind person in front of me who's telling me that. Designers aren't making her size. Why would I not do that? You know what I mean, but then also from a marketing perspective, why would you miss out on over half of the market</p>

<p>00:35:38 Sarah</p>	<p>There are studies that say that the plus size apparel market is billions of dollars. An opportunity being left on the table, they even talk about the teen plus size apparel market and how there are so many teens who don't actually shop in the junior section because they can't find their sizes.</p>
<p>00:35:52 Robin</p>	<p>The sizing options that are currently on the market, which is like you know zero through 12. Being standard isn't enough. The fact of the matter is that America is larger than that. So the few brands that have scaled up to embrace larger sizes and to think more inclusively about sizing are doing really well financially because there's such a desire in the market for it. So I think that, beyond just the ethical need for it. It's also pragmatically a business decision.</p>
<p>00:36:29 Brittany</p>	<p>Consumers are calling out brands like Victoria's Secret and brands that you know like Brandy, Melville, but only you know carry up to like large in her pieces and her size 2 are really double zeros like. That's not that doesn't make a woman feel good like if I'm putting on a pair of pants and they want to size. It really, really small and I have to buy you know a 34 versus a 28 and another brand that doesn't make me feel good and that doesn't make. Me look at that brand as. You know that they respect me in my body and what I look like and what my size is they want me to be a smaller size.</p>
<p>00:37:15 Robin</p>	<p>We're changing the sort of local landscape and expectations of representation in the local landscape and then because we do sit in the</p>

<p>00:38:11 Sarah</p>	<p>backyard of such a giant institution you know, having Walmart. Right next door is definitely not to be discounted the amount of imagery that they produce for the world is huge.</p> <p>It actually brings a lot of opportunity in terms of providing this platform in terms of bringing people who have a genuine interest in the apparel business to Northwest Arkansas and people who are also willing to support this creativity. An this opportunity that Northwest Arkansas actually brings an if you if you look at the map, the corner that we're in, you know it's 4 hours to Kansas City. It's six hours to Dallas like we are in the middle of an area that doesn't have. A lot of awesome cosmopolitan places around it, and so I love that it's become this hub of art an inspiration and motivation for so many people, you know, even outside of fashion.</p>
<p>00:39:22 Rosie</p>	<p>For everybody that lives here in Northwest Arkansas. To get to You know, actually see what the artists here are doing. 'cause there isn't really another place for us to show our work. Fashion isn't always seen as an art form even you know it's not a. Classical art form. It's not like you know if you're a painter or sculptor, you can find a Gallery to show your work at, and you can have a show there. But for us, yeah, it's really important to have. Somewhere that it elevates all of our work to a higher level, I think is even getting noticed, you know, and I don't know all over the country, really. I mean, I think people have been like oh wow Arkansas, you know, like they're surprised, but there's a lot of really good fashion here.</p>
<p>00:40:18 Robin</p>	

<p>Brittany</p>	<p>It's really nothing but positive which is why it's so easy to keep doing it because we're getting national attention for having a diverse runway from outlets like Nylon magazine, which is the you know it has a 20 year legacy of finding the hippest coolest things in the country. So to get that kind of spotlight for the work we're doing is huge.</p> <p>Northwest Arkansas fashion week was kind of the very first fashion week that I ever did in fashion. So it was really convenient because I was at the university of Arkansas and it was Northwest Arkansas fashion week. That was happening simultaneously while I was in school. So I did graduate at the U of a and then I went to SCAD, but I always came back to do Northwest Arkansas fashion because it was kind of like home base. You know, you always have that, like fashion week home base, you always go back to no matter how big or small each of you get</p>
<p>00:40:41 Shane</p>	<p>So what was it like for an Arkansas girl to be on Project Runway.</p>
<p>00:40:46 Brittany</p>	<p>So it's like what are the statistics of me. You know, making a show like Project Runway when everybody is from you know, New York or they're from Los Angeles or really big cities that I don't have those resources to be able to showcase something like that. Yeah, so this last season of Project Runway that was on season 18 it was really about including. You know it was, it was the season of diversity really because it was the first season that we had a nonbinary individual as a model. We had models of all sizes. All genders and it was really quite beautiful because whenever you were handed a model card. You didn't know what you were getting which is exciting for me because I love to</p>

	<p>design. For all bodies. So it was like this season of just everybody was included and it doesn't matter who you are or where you're from it was. Just pure talent, I think that that's also what the viewers really focused on is like this is we're just watching the talent kind of unfold and we're not really judging anybody on who they are.</p>
<p>00:43:56 Announcer 2</p>	<p>You guys ready for fashion week?!</p>
<p>Dr. Apple</p>	<p>I think the more that we show that and put that foot forward. I think a larger stage is going to pick up on that as well. And so I think we have a great opportunity to showcase who we are as people in Arkansas and in the in the industry in Arkansas.</p>
<p>00:42:48 Robin</p>	<p>There are creative producers who are moving back from the coasts. To wherever they're from or wherever they want to be, wherever it's cheaper to exist, who have been part of this sort of larger industry.</p>
<p>Brittany</p>	<p>They see that inclusion and diversity is an issue and it needs to be kind of Broadcasted And if it starts with places like northwest Arkansas Fashion Week. There's no excuse for like New York Fashion Week or Milan or Paris. There's no excuse for these big fashion weeks that have models and agencies and people that have dreams to you know be involved in fashion shows they have no excuse to not show inclusive and diverse models an representation for consumers.</p>

	<p>And I think that other fashion weeks in bigger cities could take a look and say your audience may get more enthusiastic if you open those doors a little bit.</p>
Shane	<p>Production industry for fashion right here in Arkansas.</p>
Brittany	
00:44:01 Sarah	<p>The people here treat fashion as art, which it is. It's art you live your life and everyday an art is meant to provoke. It's meant to challenge your ideas.</p>
00:44:13 Gabrielle	<p>I think racism and fat phobia and sexism and homophobia like all of the things that hold marginalized people back. Do tend to be magnified in industries based on aesthetics like fashion, so this is what I love so much about this place and is Fashion Week, the things that I've been fighting for in New York. They're already being done here like the diversity of this Fashion Week is so far ahead of what New York is doing it's like it's really amazing..</p>
00:44:51 Ro	<p>It's a standard it's something that's Set in stone like OK, if this is something that you want to be a part of then this is what we're trying to do are you willing to do that.</p>
00:45:03 Richard	<p>What started as an idea of? Wanting to make something for the community has turned into. A beacon in the northwest part of Arkansas, it's amazing, although. Social responsibility that they've taken upon themselves at this point. Let's throw fashion out the window. It's about what they've morphed fashion into and what it can do for society. And for your</p>

	<p>community. Your immediate community. So to me that is worth celebrating much more than any runway. Manhattan textile Ella Partake Avaaz Yummy. The past 3 years. Has touched a lot of minority groups has helped people in many different ways. That. It's incredible and it's been done all through. Art.</p>
<p>00:46:20 Abwe</p>	<p>Working with them open a door to teach some other people How they can be in the future? How's they can do in the future, especially some leads. And they don't know any. Thing to do here they can work only cleaning but when they add some knowledge some skills to learn how to solve they can do something else. More than cleaning and knowing how to solve opens the door for them to help community. With their clothes.</p>
<p>00:47:47 Rosie</p>	<p>We can at least try our best to include, you know. Just. A large range of sizes of genders. You know people with different abilities. Which has been something that I've been trying to do more an I've been really happy to find some models. Who are, you know, kind of disability advocates who want to show other people with disabilities like hey, you can do this to?</p>
<p>00:48:22 Model</p>	<p>Both hands love it nice to meet you.</p>
<p>00:48:29 Shane</p>	<p>Tell me a How you hope to motivate people through the fashion?</p>
<p>00:48:34 Mary</p>	<p>To see other people like screaming your name being happy and just have fun and. Just how it works because seems like a bunch of multiple cameras. And there's like pictures and they</p>

	<p>put it on Facebook. I'd be like wow. That's really cool. That's great So yes, so that other people can see what it looks like so that they will know like how that's pretty cool. I do that, and then maybe they had a chance to do it, too.</p>
00:49:16 Shane	<p>What'd you wear?</p>
00:49:18 Mary	<p>I wore this pretty dress on Thursday night it was like black and pretty.</p>
00:49:43 Mary	<p>So. I think it's possible. For everyone to do it because. I think it's great for everyone to do it, too because it's possible.</p>
00:49:57 Rosie	<p>I think we have a tendency to. See our own flaws as being really noticeable an other people don't even look at that other people when they look at a picture of somebody. Like when I look at a picture of someone, usually the first thing I notice is someone's eyes, someone's expression an you know trying to see path. Just Their physical image to sort of see their who they actually are. And people do get really hung up on what their physical body is, and you know, that's just your, It's just the vessel that carries you.</p>
00:50:43 Robin	<p>Which is a really interesting designer because his you know he's more classically trained than almost any of the designers that we have on the runway. He's like a full-blown pro and he's probably the best tailor that we have and so for him to play with these, like very masculine construction techniques. And put them into a more feminine kind of form, and then put it on a male model is a really</p>

00:51:24 Richard

interesting sort of interplay with his total disregard for gender norms What I do really appreciate about Richard is that he's just absolutely not interested in the binary.

I know it's going to sound strange for a lot of people because some people don't grasp the concept that. Within a human being, there can be so many different variations. Aside from what you see underneath on the surface so. That is ingrained in my culture. And it's something that I think that. Our current society is battling through so. I think it's important for people to maybe not accept it 'cause not everybody will accept anything but to understand. The foundation of an individual. So that they would understand what makes them unique. What makes them different? What makes them diverse from you basically.

Dare to be unique and different. And Dare I say, and hands on the word dare. To battle it is a battle you have to be mentally prepared you have to be. Mentally strong to wear what I do. Because I have taken it to a level where I don't care about blurring lines at this point, I don't care about. Taking it step by step, I at this point, I've reached the level where I've created a line that is about empowerment. That's where it goes down to and the moment that you feel powerful and comfortable in your own skin. The world can crumble around you and you'll still survive so. The word dare to be that person dare to be you dare to be unique dare to be different dare.

00:53:25 Robin

There's a lot of different kinds of audiences. An if you're only speaking to one, you are unfortunately making a really bad business decision because people across the cultural

	<p>spectrum and across race barriers and across economic barriers. All want to be spoken to and they all want to see themselves represented back in the media. So, if you want to keep up you have to change who you're talking to.</p>
00:53:51 Brittany	<p>Wear whatever the hell you want to wear. And do whatever you want to do when it comes to self-expression and fashion and consuming by whatever makes you happy and makes you feel the most proud of yourself.</p>
00:54:05 Dr. Apple	<p>I think it's really important to be to recognize people in the diversity that we have in the design community because there are a number of different designers. That are out there that are all kinds of diverse backgrounds. One of the things that I think people don't realize is historically there have been designers in a minority of a minority, but they just have not been recognized because they were a minority and for instance, Jackie Kennedy had a designer. That was African American, and she was a very great designer. But she didn't. She wasn't well known because of just really her race and where she was where she had come from.</p>
00:54:47 Bruce	<p>For me being a black male designer of course, people are gonna automatically put me in the category of oh urban wear you know it seems as though. Black people in the industry are kind of like the Scapegoats and certain situations like you know, OK well. If we have just one black designer. You know it. It means that we're being inclusive. It means we're being done. There's you know instead of looking at their actual talents. You know they're looking like OK well. There's a black</p>

	<p>person they design. It is what it is we did our part, but one thing I could say about northwest Arkansas is that they go. The extra mile. You know, not only do they want to see designers of different backgrounds different colors, but you also know they want to see. Different aesthetics when it comes to fashion so. I'm being inspired by you know. Women, who are in their late 50s late 60s who come from a different country and they have a different take on fashion. And so automatically as a creative. I'm being inspired by their story. You know, and I want to know more about them.</p>
00:56:00 Abwe	<p>From my country, I had almost 25 years of experience in sewing. One thing I know about Fashion Week is they protect communities. They help community to learn New skills who can help them in their future.</p>
00:56:22 Gabrielle	<p>Aspirational for everyone and accessible for just about no one whether it's because you can't afford the clothes, You can't fit into them or you don't see yourself represented in the images at them.</p>
00:56:33 Ro	<p>When I was growing up to not see a Barbie doll that look like me or to not see a woman that looks like me in a magazine. It can be devastating because we try to fit into the mold that we see so if we don't see ourselves, then we don't want to be ourselves representation is extremely important. Because. It's hard for young people to see themselves wearing certain brands or paying for certain brands if they can't see themselves in that brand so that's why diversity is important.</p>

00:57:17 Mary	For me, it makes me feel pretty up there and just walk down and see a bunch of people being happy, smelling not like Stardust makes me much better.
00:57:34 Ro	If we could just use a little bit more empathy than this world would be a lot better. I know it's easier said than done. But we see ourselves in representation. It's not just about us, it's about everybody. It takes unity, it takes patience, and it takes acceptance. So, without any of those things. Nothing is going to. Get better.
00:58:06 Richard	Be strong. That's all I can say.
00:58:11 Sarah	I think it's really about pursuing the things in your heart that make you happy that you're doing just for you and not for anybody else. Don't listen to everybody else because people individuals are miserable.
00:58:23 Brittany	People are miserable and they're going to take those things out on you, and it has to do with more themselves than you but they're going to come at you with you know. Toxic things to say about you know how you're not supposed to wear that, or you're not supposed to do that with your hair, or your nails or men aren't supposed to wear a dress like. Wear whatever you want wear like it's. Fashion is such a self-expression that it only has to do with the way that you see yourself and the way who you want to so just be who you want to be and Wear. Whatever you want and people will get over it, miserable people will get over it.
Music	That's it. Period.

01:00:16 Shane

Northwest Arkansas Fashion Week is really changing that idea there. They're showing the world that anybody can be a model no matter what you look like who you are? What your orientation Is it's just they're showing it showing you all you have to do is be you and that the world is going. To be OK with that.