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Women's Self Perceptions and Fashion Industry Rhetoric

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Recommended Citation

Cody, Grace, "Women's Self Perceptions and Fashion Industry Rhetoric" (2021). *Senior Honors Projects*. Paper 893.

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GRACE CODY (Communications and Public Relations)

Women's Self Perceptions and Fashion Industry Rhetoric

Sponsor: Stephanie West-Puckett (Writing and Rhetoric)

Clothing choice is both an extremely personal and public project of self-making. Young women, particularly those of diverse size and race, must navigate a hostile fashion industry as they develop body image awareness and self-perception. This study critically examines the limited and limiting rhetorics used in the fashion industry and explores the effect those rhetorics have on the development of women's body images. Using secondary research as well as primary research in the form of surveys and interviews conducted at the University of Rhode Island, this study provides candid and personal accounts of women's feelings towards the fashion industry and its effect on their self perceptions. Findings indicate that the clothing and the fashion industry do have a substantial impact on women's feelings towards their bodies. Major sources of frustration for women include the idealization of cis-gendered, white, slim body types and the use of vanity-sizing and size segregation. Finally, it is important to understand that the fashion industry has the power to both mark and unmark female bodies. Of late, progressive changes in the fashion industry are showing the promise of promoting inclusivity and body-positivity for women, including those women at the University of Rhode Island.