

## Reflection Paper

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“A picture is worth a thousand words.” More often than not, a cliché is a cliché because of the veracity found within its words, and through utterance of this particular idiom, truth indeed resounds. With the click of a button, a person *behind* the body of a camera determines the frame through which viewers will see a body *in front* of said camera. Accurately reflective of reality or not, depictions are forged in minds of individuals as they consume and accordingly perpetuate ideals reflected within such images. Living in a society which is characterized by patriarchal heteronormative ideals, females are subjected to inferiority inside and outside the workforce, as they are faced with abounding inward and outward obstacles.

Being a photographer and a woman who has first-hand experience as to fashion photography’s damaging infiltration into women’s lives, I also realize that research in this area is not uncommon. Generating a nuanced hypothesis through utilization of, not only relevant but unexpected and timely materials as well as methodologies, I navigated a pathway through advanced scholarship and trail blazed a unique off-road through which I proposed an original thesis. Expounding upon the research of Jean Kilbourne, I contributed to her discussion by introducing nuanced language and harmful cultural implications produced by my artifact of study – most specifically, the physical, visual, and metaphorical *flattening* of women through Gucci’s 21<sup>st</sup> century advertising.

Doing so entailed application of materials across a wide array of disciplines, ranging from analytical and interpretive pieces on photography and feminism, to historical news articles and self-empowering books directed toward everyday women. Some of the scholars I referenced were Sonja and Karen Foss, incorporating their research into my methods section, as I applied a

feminist ideological perspective. I also established a nuanced framework through employing self-reflexive Creative Analytic Practice, and as such, I was inspired by feminist duo-ethnography conducted by Callie Spence and Karen Paisley. Additionally, tapping into everyday materials which both scholars and non-scholars access readily, I leaned heavily on the perspective of Sheryl Sandberg and her exhortation toward women to confidently assert themselves in the workplace and everyday life. Finally, by incorporating accurate, precise governmental records of population counts and applying the lens of relevant history, I contextualized my research in order to provide an educated lens through which to view my analysis. Gleaning viewpoints of multiple newspapers, both for and against the artifact, I gained a well-rounded perspective.

My information was collected through myriad outlets, including exposure to materials through classes and research through the CSUSM database. Incorporation of articles and books read for my Communication and Women's Studies classes, I utilized wisdom I gleaned through my on-campus learning experience. Developing relationships with faculty, I heeded advice given and gladly sought out suggested materials. Additionally, through implementation of skills imparted to me by library staff, I perused CSUSM's library databases – particularly ProQuest – and collected pertinent information, including resources which applied both scholarly and historical context. In particular, news articles provided background for proper analysis of my artifact. Such contextualization included delineating economic and cultural relevancies as well as exigencies which set the scene for inevitable reinforcement of patriarchal heteronormative ideologies.

Persistence is the name of the game when it comes to research. Utilizing articles referenced by reputable authors and prior written works, I navigated my way through the jungle

gym of scholarship, and in effort to incorporate particularly relevant citations and quotes from other work, I sought out and found original sources in the library stacks. Research is not an easy task, but if it were, it would hold far less value than it does. Thus, flexibility is essential, and as I adjusted my search terms, I spent hours perusing articles which I both did and did not incorporate into my research. Coming across writings which did not back my perspective or viewed fashion photography from a different avenue were particularly interesting to come across, as it widened my perspective on my particular artifact.

Though I stumbled across countless diverse articles analyzing fashion photography's perverse effects on the female population and society at large, I constructed an original thesis regarding an artifact which received little prior academic study within the discipline of feminist research. The way I incorporated my sources allowed me to back up the physical, visual, and metaphorical implications I believe are correlated with Gucci's images. Finally, addressing questions regarding societal outcomes and female perpetuation of ideals necessitated this timely and original rhetorical criticism, ultimately conducted to generate increased awareness.