

SOURCE INFORMATION FORM

EXAMPLE 2: JOURNAL ARTICLE, ESSAY, OR BOOK CHAPTER

1. **Bibliographic Citation** in APA Format:

Gill, R. (2008). Empowerment/Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(1), 35-60.

2. **Who?** Describe the author's field and qualifications.

Professor of Sociology, City College, London. Expertise in Media Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, Feminist Theory

3. **What?** Describe what the author wants to find out. What analytical questions do they ask; what hypotheses do they propose?

"Empowerment" is a buzzword of the day but the concept of empowering women has become almost absurd. Ads like the Wonderbra series and makeup adverts claim to be empowering. On *Sex and the City*, buying shoes seems to be empowering. What does this do, if anything, to actually empower women (pp. 36-37)?

4. **Why?** Motive. Why are they doing this? Why should we care?

Is this development evidence of the success of Second Wave Feminism in empowering women, or is it a new stage of oppression? We need to know how to read and critique these ads for what they really do.

5. **How?** What form does the investigation take? Scientific experiments? Close readings of texts? Comparison to other examples?

A literature review followed by close readings and analysis of specific ads.

6. **Thesis/Results/Findings/Position.** Restate the position that the authors take, the thesis or theses and major claims that they argue; or the results of their experiments.

Gill observes that in recent advertising (pre-2008), the "missing discourse of female desire" (Fine 1988) has been ameliorated somewhat by a "new emphasis [on] women's *sexual agency*" (37). Women are not passive, "straightforward objects of the male gaze" but persons with their own initiatives and desires (38). Gill quotes Douglas (1994): "advertising agencies [have] figured out how to make feminism ... work for them ... Women's [lib has] metamorphosed into female narcissism unchained as political concepts like liberation and equality [are] collapsed into distinctly personal, private desires" (39); so, as a political movement, feminism is vitiated. Douglas's analysis has come to new fruition in what Gill calls "Midriff" ads in which women are "always up for it" and no longer passive (41-46). They are still objectified and now also "subjectified" in that "they must ... understand their own objectification as pleasurable and self-chosen" (45). Instead of being *done to* by a sexist ad industry, the oppression is now narcissistic, internalized, self-enforcing. "Hot Lesbian" (fake lesbian) ads are similarly created for the male gaze, fetishizing same-sex attraction (49-52). The women are otherwise much like the midriffs—sexualized and styled for maximum impact on the male gaze (Mulvey 1975). A "vengeful" female type is also discussed (46-49) [indicating, in Mulvey's psycho-analytic terms, continued castration anxiety and male fear of and hostility toward women]. "Obsessive and slightly unhinged, the figure of the woman set on revenge [has] nothing to do with contemporary girl power, but rather with its opposite: powerlessness. She cannot really change things, but simply [reacts] with an angry, vengeful gesture"—throwing away his golf clubs; kissing a hot Italian dude—"that may feel cathartic but leaves the status quo of gender relations intact" (47).

7. **So what?** What do the authors think is the larger significance of their findings?

Young women today have lost the thread of second-wave feminism and think that they are dressing and presenting themselves just for themselves. We need to get them to wake up to the new and more insidious forms of oppression.

8. **Limitations:** What limitations, if any, to the authors ascribe to their findings?

9. **Your notes:** Gill doesn't really offer limitations but she implicitly refers to a particular moment in an evolving media landscape; therefore her critique can't be assumed to apply to other contexts