

WHOSE MAN AT HIS BEST?:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MASCULINE IDEALS IN *ESQUIRE* MIDDLE EAST AND
THE AMERICAN *ESQUIRE*

Brian Heffernan

Mary Kay Blakely, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Men's magazines craft and produce representations of masculinity while also acting as a forum for gender norms to be circulated, negotiated and contested. As magazines follow globalization trends of other media, research into how gender norms are also globalized within their texts is imperative. In November 2009, *Esquire* magazine launched its first issue of *Esquire* Middle East. The purpose of this study is to determine (1) the defining characteristics of the *Esquire* "Man at His Best," both in *Esquire* Middle East and the flagship publication and (2) what the differences imply about the magazines' respective readerships. These questions were researched by using discourse and constant comparative methodologies to analyze the editorial texts in the first three issues of *Esquire* Middle East and the corresponding three issues of the American *Esquire*. The archetype of the Middle Eastern Man at His Best particularly stressed the importance of cross-cultural appeal, physical prowess, being a "single actor," and having an interest in appearance and fashion. Interesting aspects of the American Man at His Best included him embracing the role of family man, expressing interest in the world of food and cooking and struggling to reaffirm his masculinity.