UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN

College of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

A Historical Perspective on the Linguistic Representation of Women in Women's Magazines

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the (Master) Degree in (Applied English Language Studies)

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Abstract

The language used to construct women's identity is a reflection of the ideas and notions of a society in which women's magazines are being printed. The language used in these magazines has changed considerably over time. However, have there been many significant changes to amend the stereotypical archetypes found in women's magazines? Or has the change been merely a revolution in portraying a woman's image and appearance?

In this research I aim to answer the question; how is language used to portray women in women's magazines? This is done by firstly reflecting on what the traditional feminine stereotype is. Secondly, I demonstrate through gender-focused research analysis that language reflects ideologies and is used to construct the social identity of the female. Finally, I will focus on how, over time, the text of Good Housekeeping magazine consistently encodes traditional femininity. This will be examined through the discourse analysis (DA) of Good Housekeeping, ELLE, Red, and Harper's Bazaar from 1930 to 2014.

It is argued that the language used to portray women today speaks to women through the same stereotypical lens as the roles assigned to them in the past, requiring women to maintain the roles of caretaker, nurturer, cook, teacher, designer, etc. while emphasizing physical appearance and attractiveness.