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Introduction

Cancer is a major global health concern, causing one in four deaths in the United States alone (Siegel et al., 2011). The most common cancer among women is breast cancer, and the most common cancer among men is prostate cancer (Siegel et al., 2011). In men, the disease affects an internal organ – the prostate – that is hidden to all but his doctor, but in women, the disease affects a very visible and gender-defining body part. A man who has prostate cancer will still outwardly look like a man, but a woman who has undergone a double mastectomy loses two obvious gender markers: her breasts (Broom, 2001; Davis, E., 2008; Manderson & Stirling, 2007; Schulzke, 2011). The ways in which women and men deal with these two types of cancer are reflected in the media (Clarke & Robinson, 1999), particularly in articles about health in women's and men's magazines. Studies have shown that female-centered magazines have a significant impact in readers' perceptions of body image (Duncan, 1994; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003); however, little research has been done comparing the discourse used to discuss cancer in female-centered versus male-centered consumer magazines.

Magazines are important sources of information because readers see them as convenient sources of information about health care (Clarke & van Amerom, 2008). Magazine articles are permanent, printed resources that can be referred to again and again, unlike television programs that are often considered ephemeral (Andsager & Powers, 2001). In addition, the format of magazine articles, which often combines elements of news and entertainment (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003), may have a greater impact on a reader's perception of his or her personal risk for cancer (Andsager & Powers, 2001).

Although there is often a perceived masculine bias in news reports, it is unlikely that a male-dominant bias will be present in magazines with a predominantly female readership since

most of the articles are written by and for other women. Andsager and Powers (2001) found that the women's magazines they examined – *Good Housekeeping*, *McCall's*, and *Ms* – supported a woman-centered approach to covering breast cancer. They defined “women-centered” as having a focus on women's needs to obtain mammograms or practice self-examinations, as well as discussing the difficulties women of color or women living in remote areas have in obtaining relevant medical treatment. In contrast, men's magazines often reinforce negative behaviors – eating too much red meat or drinking too much alcohol – instead of informing their readers about the advantages of regular medical check-ups and early cancer screenings (Stibbe, 2004).

In addition to providing their female readers with general information about breast cancer, *Good Housekeeping*, *McCall's*, and *Ms* featured breast cancer patients' personal stories, which could be more encouraging to cancer patients than more impersonal, preventative care reports in the same magazines (Andsager & Powers, 2001). Women tend to prefer supportive communication more than men (Surbone, 2008), which supports typical assumptions about women and communication (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Wood, 2009). This suggests that women would rather read someone's firsthand account of dealing with an illness rather than a scientific article about a medical condition. McKay and Bonner (2002) describe personal accounts of illness as “pathographies” – interpretations of how an individual or group is influenced by a disease, which include both autobiographical and biographical narrative descriptions. Although Andsager and Powers (2001) found that the magazines they examined provided “useful, complete, and socially conscious information about breast cancer” (p. 180), only one article referred to African American women; this is unbalanced coverage because more African American women develop and die from breast cancer than do white, Hispanic, or other women in the United States (DeSantis et al., 2008).

Since cancer alters a person's sense of identity, patients must make sense of their illness in terms of their specific social and personal contexts and relationships (Davis, E., 2008; Manderson & Stirling, 2007). Women are stereotyped as nurturers and caregivers (Broom, 2001; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Wood, 2009). As such, they face difficulties when undergoing cancer treatment because they become the care-receiver rather than the care-giver (Sulik, 2007a, 2007b). The male stereotype promotes the image of someone who is more concerned with his favorite sports team than with his health (Sulik, 2007a, 2007b; Stibbe, 2004; Toerien & Durrheim, 2001). Modern man, however, "is neither explicitly romantic nor overly sensitive (like women and wimps); nor, however, is he degrading, boorish or excessively sexually demanding (like the 'macho man')" (Toerien & Durrheim, 2001, p. 42). When facing cancer, it appears that both genders must undergo significant changes in their self-images: Women must become more selfish and me-centered, and therefore more masculine (Sulik, 2007a), while men must become more submissive and dependent on others, and therefore more feminine (Toerien & Durrheim, 2001).

Despite general research on magazines' treatment of cancer, few studies have been done on the type of short pathographies published in magazines, although these articles are the type of human interest story magazines tend to publish (McKay & Bonner, 2002). This paper will use pathographies found in two magazines, one with a predominantly female readership and one with a predominantly male readership, to discover any gender-related differences in the types of discourse used. Based on current research, the expectation is that men's magazines will present cancer-related topics in ways that preserve traditional masculine stereotypes. Stibbe (2004) found that men's magazines like *Men's Health* downplay the effects of negative lifestyle choices since those choices are often at the core of what defines an American male. Likewise, the

expectation is that women's magazines will present health articles in ways that reinforce traditional female stereotypes (Clarke, 1999; McKay & Bonner, 2002), particularly when discussing mastectomies and reconstructive surgery designed to make a breast cancer patient look like a "whole" woman (Davis, E., 2008; McKay & Bonner, 2002). By examining articles in two gender-specific publications, generalizations can be made about the impact gender has on public discourse relating to cancer.

Methods

Articles were chosen from the web sites of two leading print magazines, *Woman's Day* and *Maxim*, which represent two distinct gendered perspectives. *Woman's Day* depicts an image of femininity, family, and home: "Woman's Day is the trusted friend of more than 20 million women. With our 'yes-you-can' attitude, thoughtful advice and easy solutions, we inspire readers to live well every day" (Woman's Day, 2011). *Woman's Day* was selected to represent women's magazines partly because it has "woman" in the title and because it is the largest circulating print magazine specifically designed for women; the magazine has a published circulation of more than 3.8 million copies (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2011). This is smaller than its competitor *Good Housekeeping*, which has a printed circulation of about 4.3 million (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2011), but it is less likely for a man to read a magazine with "woman" in the title than he would a generic "housekeeping" magazine.

Maxim presents an image of devil-may-care masculinity: "Maxim stands out because it's funny, sexy, useful, and bold. ... Maxim arms guys with the tools to live a better life, and have more fun doing it" (Maxim, 2011b). *Maxim* has a printed circulation of more than 2.5 million (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2011) and reaches an online audience of more than 4.2 million

per month (Maxim, 2011a). *Maxim* was selected over *Sports Illustrated*, which could be viewed as a competitor for male readers with its printed circulation of about 3.2 million (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2011), because *Maxim* is overtly masculine and often sexist (Davis, J., 2005), while *Sports Illustrated* aims to present balanced sports coverage.

Articles were found using the search function on the two magazine's web sites: womansday.com and maxim.com. "Cancer" was used as a keyword and returned more than 1,200 results on womansday.com. Of these, more than 300 were categorized by the site as "articles;" however, only 281 were accessible because the number of links provided varied each time a search for "cancer" was attempted. The search results returned articles published online between May 1, 2008, and November 8, 2011. These articles may not be the same as the articles that appeared in the print versions of *Woman's Day* during the same time period. A keyword search for "cancer" on maxim.com returned only 170 results, even though the available data appears to date to January 1, 1999, the date listed on the earliest item used in this study. However, maxim.com only provides links to the first 10 pages of results, so the total number of *Maxim* articles was reduced to 100 due to limitations on the web site. Again, the online search results may not reflect the number of articles published in the print magazine.

The discrepancy between the number of results from womansday.com and the results from maxim.com may be based on the amount of articles made available online, or it is possible that *Maxim* does not produce as many articles about cancer as does *Woman's Day*. Since there were so few results from *Maxim*, all web page results with "cancer" on them were included in this study. If an article did not directly mention "cancer," or if "cancer" only appeared on a page as part of a link to another web page, the article was omitted. Duplicate search results were also omitted from this study. There were 62 articles omitted from the *Woman's Day* results and 16

omitted from the *Maxim* results. In total, 219 *Woman's Day* and 84 *Maxim* articles were examined.

Articles from both magazines were read and categorized based on content in order to identify which articles were pathographies. The aim of this study is to compare female-centered and male-centered pathographies, which could be either autobiographical or biographical narratives of someone dealing with cancer. The other articles were excluded from this study since they fall beyond the scale of this project. *Woman's Day* articles were divided into six categories (Table 1): cancer prevention, nutrition, pathographies, awareness, pet care, and men's health.

cancer prevention	114
nutrition	52
pathographies	21
awareness	15
pet care	9
men's health	5
TOTAL	219

Cancer prevention includes 114 articles offering lifestyle and medical advice on how to reduce the risk of cancer. This broad category also includes articles about topics that may not seem obviously related to cancer prevention, such as menopause treatments, gum disease, and sexual health. *Nutrition* includes 52 articles featuring advice about the best foods to eat to

reduce the risk of cancer as well as recipes for cancer-fighting meals. *Pathographies* contains 21 biographical and autobiographical stories about cancer survivors and the families of cancer patients. Most of these stories are from “average” women, although three are interviews with celebrity cancer survivors. These pathographies will be used along with pathographies from *Maxim* as the data for this study. *Awareness* includes 15 articles that highlight breast cancer awareness events and charities. *Pet care* includes nine articles about cancer in cats and dogs. *Men’s health* contains five articles that urge readers to encourage the men in their lives to have regular cancer screenings.

The *Maxim* articles were sorted into nine categories (Table 2): metaphors, awareness, celebrities, user-submitted jokes, Hometown Hotties, pathographies, entertainment, nutrition and prevention.

metaphors	17
awareness	15
celebrities	12
user-submitted jokes	11
Hometown Hotties	8
pathographies	8
entertainment	7
nutrition	1
prevention	1
TOTAL	80

Metaphors includes 17 articles with “cancer” found in metaphorical, joking, or tongue-in-cheek contexts. *Awareness* includes 15 articles about general cancer awareness. *Celebrities* includes 12 articles featuring brief mentions of cancer by the celebrity being profiled, such as in an article about celebrity chef Guy Fieri helping his sister who has cancer. *User-submitted jokes* contains 11 off-color jokes that use cancer as part of the build-up to the punchline. *Hometown Hotties* includes 8 articles from the regular feature on the *Maxim* web site of the same name where women submit photos and a brief biography in order to be chosen the “hottest” woman of the month. Most of these instances of “cancer” were the women referring to a breast cancer awareness ribbon tattoo or to their support of cancer research. *Pathographies* includes eight biographical articles, mostly of professional athletes; these will be compared to the pathographies found in *Woman’s Day*. *Entertainment* contains seven articles that refer to a cancer patient who is a character in a movie or television show being reviewed. The last two categories, *nutrition* and *prevention*, are the same in *Maxim* as in *Woman’s Day*: The one *nutrition* article is related to food and urges readers to eat more sushi to reduce the risk of cancer, and the one *prevention* article describes the advantages of quitting smoking.

Results and Discussion

Although generalizations can be made about the treatment of cancer by examining articles from each of the categories described above, this paper will only focus on articles in the *pathographies* category of both *Woman’s Day* and *Maxim*. These pathographies include accounts of cancer survivors and caregivers. Based on the data, there are clear differences between the types of personal accounts found in the female-centered magazine and the types of cancer stories found in the male-centered magazine. First, there were almost three times as many articles classified as *pathographies* from *Woman’s Day* as there were from *Maxim*. There were

21 articles from *Woman's Day* that were pathographies and only eight from *Maxim*. Most of the personal accounts from womansday.com were compilations of several people's experiences, such as the article about breast cancer bloggers (Greene, 2010) and the two articles describing beauty makeovers that included women who survived breast cancer (Matthews, 2009; Matthews, 2010). One survivor story was written by a *Woman's Day* staff member whose article title asked, "You Have Breast Cancer... Now What?" Kandel (2008) offered readers nine steps to dealing with a diagnosis of breast cancer, ranging from "Scream, yell, and vent" to "Get support." The overall tone of the article was helpful and supportive: "Even though everyone's experience is different, here's what I wish someone had told me" (Kandel, 2008).

Some of the *Woman's Day* pathographies dealt with finding hope after a family member's illness. "Real Life: Angels Among Us" (Shannon, 2010) described how two women look to family members who have died of cancer – one a husband, the other a daughter – as a source of inspiration for their daily lives. Similar articles tell of a young woman whose father wrote letters to her and her sisters when they were little girls, before he died from cancer. Another woman's story explains how she found comfort and hope while visiting a library across from the hospital where her husband was receiving cancer treatment. Again, the pathographies in the female-centered *Woman's Day* emphasize the notion that women need to nurture and help others and that stories about dealing with illness need to focus on those aspects of femininity.

Pathographies from *Woman's Day* also include men's perspectives. "Men Who Support the Fight Against Breast Cancer" (Gekas, 2011) describes the ways five men dealt with a loved one's diagnosis of breast cancer by starting support organizations. These men describe themselves as "co-survivors" of breast cancer, and although the article is about men, again the overall theme is about support: both providing support to a sick wife as well as men seeking

support from other men who have had to shift to the role of caregiver for a spouse with breast cancer. This emphasis on support confirms the expectations that women readers would prefer to read articles about personal experiences from a nurturing perspective even when the main subject of the pathography is male.

The pathographies found on the *Maxim* web site provide a different picture of cancer. Of the eight articles identified as pathographies, most are short accounts of a male athlete's diagnosis of cancer and how he overcame the disease. Very little is mentioned about giving or receiving support or care. Two brief accounts praise professional baseball player Jon Lester of the Boston Red Sox for beating lymphoma and then returning to pitch a no-hitter (Dobrow, 2009; Maxim staff, 2009). Another brief pathography is part of "Hockey's toughest bastards" (Maxim staff, n.d.), which lists Mario Lemieux's "Tough Guy Cred" as, "He beat cancer." The article continues to praise Lemieux's masculinity and strength, bypassing any supportive or nurturing language that might have appeared in a woman's magazine. "Not only did he let the disease sideline him for all of two months, on the day of his final radiation treatment, he went out and scored a goal and an assist against Philadelphia" (Maxim staff, n.d.).

The only *Maxim* pathography that was similar to those found in *Woman's Day* was "Grant Achatz is the real Iron Chef" (Schollmeyer, 2008), a story about an award-winning chef who survived Stage 4 squamous cell carcinoma, a cancer of the tongue. The language in this pathography balances the need for cancer treatment with concern for the side effects, as well as with the support the cancer patient received. This structure was found in most of the pathographies from *Woman's Day*; in fact, Schollmeyer (2008) could be reprinted verbatim in *Woman's Day*, and the magazine's predominantly female readership would accept Achatz's story

without question. Reprinting a pathography from *Woman's Day* word-for-word in *Maxim*, however, would be highly unlikely.

Conclusions

Pathographies found in magazines with a gender bias follow the stereotypes associated with the gender. The stories in the female-centered *Woman's Day* focused on the caring nature of women and the need to reach out to others, both to give and receive support when dealing with a serious illness like cancer. The stories in the male-centered *Maxim* glossed over cancer and its effects on the person with the disease and his or her family. Instead of being talked *about* as in the female-centered magazine, cancer was an issue talked *around* in the male-centered magazine. Most of the search results on maxim.com returned uses of "cancer" as part of a joke or metaphor. Only one *Maxim* article presented a pathography comparable to the ones found in *Woman's Day*: "Grant Achatz is the real Iron Chef." *Woman's Day* provided the most comprehensive coverage of cancer, with dozens of articles about cancer prevention and nutrition. Again, this supports the image of women as caregivers since mothers tend to set doctors' appointments as well as family menus.

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Appendix A: List of pathographies from womansday.com

1. You have breast cancer... now what?
2. Bounce back from anything
3. Momfidence: Stop, kiss, and listen
4. Beyond books: How libraries can help
5. Colleen Zenk Pinter's battle with cancer
6. A Hodgkin's disease survivor story
7. A survivor's story: Jaclyn Smith
8. For the man who hated Christmas
9. Real-life beauty makeovers
10. Catching up with Dorothy Hamill
11. WD makeovers: Teacher edition
12. The power of a letter
13. 5 breast cancer bloggers share their stories
14. Real life: Angels among us
15. True stories: One person who changed my life
16. Real life: Going from wife to caregiver
17. Personal essays: The stigma of illness
18. Louisville gets healthy
19. Reader spotlight: Sweet Charity
20. Men who support the fight against breast cancer
21. A car accident saved my life

Appendix B: List of pathographies from maxim.com

1. America's drunkest presidents
2. Baseball preview: The All-Maxim Baseball Team 2009
3. Big Bird
4. Grant Achatz is the real Iron Chef
5. An interview with Roger Ebert on voluptuous women...
6. Most stirring sports moments of the decade
7. 25 infamous juice heads
8. Hockey's toughest bastards

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