

## War is war – or is it? Different genres show different metaphors for cancer

Eve Sweetser

Schuyler Laparle

UC - Berkeley

UC - Berkeley

[sweetser@berkeley.edu](mailto:sweetser@berkeley.edu)

[schuyler\\_laparle@berkeley.edu](mailto:schuyler_laparle@berkeley.edu)

Keywords: metaphor, cancer, frames, blends, discourse genre

Since Sontag's (1978) claims that women were presented as victims by constant use of cancer metaphors taken from war, there has been major progress in the study of metaphor and its place in discourse. Semino et al. (2015) find that patients and medical professionals use both Combat metaphors and Journey metaphors about cancer, and in similar proportions. We (Laparle & Sweetser, 2018) have offered evidence that not all "combat" metaphors are equally victimizing of patients: *You go kick ass, girl* as a comment on a breast-cancer blog is very different from *My body is being invaded*. A crucial difference is the mapping of particular roles from the source Combat frame to the target Cancer (or Cancer Treatment) frame: a patient's role is more volitional and active when seen as combatant than as invaded territory. We have been examining multiple discourse genres about cancer; our corpus includes material from published patient-blogs, medical websites and popular-audience scientific sources, and scientific journals. Each genre has its own profile of metaphoric mappings, and of frequencies.

Scientific journals focus on physical mechanisms of cancer development and treatment, not on patient experience. The metaphors include BODY IS ECOSYSTEM, CELLS ARE PEOPLE, BODY IS NATION, CANCER CELLS ARE INVADERS. Extensions of these include T-CELLS ARE PATROLS AGAINST INVADERS, and further blends, such as CANCER CELLS ARE AN INVASIVE SPECIES, and CANCER TREATMENT IS ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT. At the cellular frame-level, scientists are "on the side" of T-cells against Cancer cells, but the Patient's whole body and personhood are backgrounded.

Patient blogs, unsurprisingly, take the patient's viewpoint metaphorically as well as literally. CANCER (TREATMENT) IS A JOURNEY and CANCER (TREATMENT) IS WAR/COMBAT are pervasive: the Patient is the Traveler and Self-defender. Absent in scientific and medical genres are metaphors such as CANCER IS A KIDNAPPER - "kidnapping" the Patient from her regular life onto an involuntary Journey with Cancer (CANCER IS AN ABUSIVE COMPANION is also attested). Roles in Combat metaphors also vary: alongside Cancer as an Attacker, Patients "fight back" and "pop back up when knocked down." Here the whole Body is mapped, and even more saliently the Person (Self); the Self, not the Body, is the metaphoric Traveler, Combatant or Kidnappee, with the entailed emotional viewpoints of these roles.

Public medical websites and popular science naturally lie between, trying to make science accessible to patients, while also empathizing with patients' experience. Here, CANCER IS A JOURNEY mingles with T-CELLS ARE PATROLS, as writers try to bridge the gap between Cells and Personhood.

Different genres show distinct profiles of metaphors for cancer and treatment. Identity of lexical material (e.g. attack, invade) or even of frames does not guarantee identity of metaphoric structure or inferences: the specific frames, roles and mappings are crucial to the discourse message.

### References

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