

ROLE MODEL EFFECTS ON  
HEALTH COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Master of Arts  
in the Department of Communication Studies,  
Indiana University

August 2007

Accepted by the Faculty of Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## DEDICATION

The work on this thesis and masters degree was made possible through the love and support of many, many friends and family. I am grateful to those who encouraged me along the way, picked me up before I gave up, and helped me cross the finish line, triumphantly. I would especially like to dedicate this thesis to my children, Sara, Henry and Jack Googasian, whose love and support was the inspiration behind every class, every paper and finally to this graduation day. I am so honored to be your mother and so proud of the persons you are becoming. Thanks for sharing this milestone with me every step of the way.

Sara, what a treasure you are to me. As a daughter, you inspire me to be the best mother and role model I can be every day. You are cherished for all that you are and for all the love and support you gave me through this process.

Henry, your infectious charm and wonderful sense of humor not only got me to laugh – but made me realize what was truly important in this whole process ... the love of those around me. I hope I am half the encouragement to you that you have been to me.

Jack, your love and care during these past four years have been a precious gift. You instinctively knew when I needed encouragement along the way – and gave it so willingly. You are wise beyond your years and I love you for it.

And especially to Steve – twenty years ago our life together began. It has been a fantastic journey sprinkled with challenges and triumphs along the way. I wouldn't change a single moment. You are my love and my life. You believed I could do this from the very beginning, and your support never wavered. I love you so very much.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths...” Proverbs 3:5-6

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Richard and Sharon Amluxen – growing up you created a loving home and a belief in me that I could accomplish anything I set out to do. Always supportive, never failing. Even though Dad isn't here with us as I graduate, I feel his presence in all that I do. I love you both for the gift of education and so much more.

To John – who at the beginning of this adventure told me “I guarantee that you can get all you want from this program even if I must do it all myself!” I took you literally! You provided a source of encouragement and got me to think about my education, communication and culture in meaningful and enriching ways. You told me I was bright and capable – and refused to let me quit. I'm a much richer student and possess a greater depth of understanding because of your encouragement and teaching.

Dziekuje!

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through  
experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened,  
ambition inspired and success achieved.

Helen Keller 1886-1968

## ABSTRACT

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### ROLE MODEL EFFECTS ON HEALTH COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

The pursuit of a healthy lifestyle has become an important activity to large portions of the population. Health information and research has become readily available to the general public via the Internet and other communication vehicles and public health programs. As information becomes accessible, so too does the opportunity for individuals to take added ownership in seeking their own health care. The purpose of this research was to examine the role of gender in the decision that leads to individuals seeking regular health care. It focuses on the motivations that influence men and women when managing their regular preventative care. Despite the disparity in health care utilization between men and women, both positive and negative role models positively influence health and wellness. Constructs of masculinity and femininity continue to impact the utilization of health care procurement. Improving our health and providing a role model for our children offers the greatest potential for improving the health of our nation.

John Parrish-Sprowl, Ph. D., Chair

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