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CERLIS Series
Volume 5

Maurizio Gotti, Stefania M. Maci, Michele Sala (eds)

**The Language of Medicine: Science, Practice and
Academia**

CELSB
Bergamo

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CERLIS SERIES Vol. 5

CERLIS

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THE LANGUAGE OF MEDICINE:

SCIENCE, PRACTICE AND ACADEMIA

Maurizio Gotti, Stefania Maci, Michele Sala (eds)

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WILLIAM BROMWICH*

The Gift Relationship: Cultural Variation in Blood Donor Discourse

1. Framing the issue

In recent years by a process of interdiscursivity (Bhatia 2005) the rhetoric of the market has encroached into areas of professional discourse that were once immune to the characterisation of social interaction primarily in terms of the sale of goods and services. Whereas members of the public travelling by plane or train were once referred to as ‘passengers’, today they are increasingly ‘customers’; whereas hospitals once focused exclusively on ‘patient care’, they now have to rate the quality of ‘customer services’; whereas undergraduates were once ‘members of a college’, with the commodification of higher education they increasingly see themselves as ‘consumers’ who are required to tick boxes to indicate the level of satisfaction with the services provided. Against the backdrop of this shift in public and institutional discourse, this chapter examines the discourse of blood donation, an institutional practice that would appear to be an emblematic form of altruism (Piliavin/Callero 1991) rather than being subject to and dominated by market forces, as argued in the seminal study by Richard Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy* (1970). In his historical overview, he underlined the cultural importance of human blood as a symbol:

* The author wishes to thank the Marco Biagi Foundation at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia for support for the present study, and the participants at the CERLIS conference on *The Language of Medicine: Science, Practice and Academia* at the University of Bergamo in June 2014 for their perceptive comments.

Symbolically and functionally, blood is deeply embedded in religious doctrine; in the psychology of human relationships; and in theories and concepts of race, kinship, ancestor worship and the family. From time immemorial it has symbolized qualities of fortitude, vigour, nobility, purity and fertility. (Titmuss 1970: 15-16).

In Renaissance times blood transfusion emerged as a concept, though pioneering experiments were hampered by the lack of any scientific understanding of blood groups:

Some historians believe that the first transfusion was performed in 1490 in Rome on Pope Innocent VIII who lay dying of old age. It was proposed to rejuvenate him by injecting the blood from three young, healthy boys in his veins. [...] The boys died, the Pope died, and the doctor fled the country (Titmuss 1970: 17).

In advocating the need to study twentieth-century blood donor discourse, Titmuss (1970: 13) outlined his case as follows:

We believe this sector to be one of the most sensitive universal social indicators which, within limits, is measurable, and one which tells us something about the quality of relationships and of human values prevailing in a society.

Titmuss argued cogently that voluntary donation (the British model) produces blood supplies of better quality than blood collected in exchange for payment in response to market forces (the 'paid donor' model adopted in the US at the time, but now largely superseded). His study had a major influence on thinking about blood transfusion services. The impact of Titmuss's work was acknowledged by Healy (2000: 1637), who noted that "There has been essentially no commercial collection of whole blood in the United States since 1974, a policy change brought about in large part by the book itself". In addition, Healy (2000: 1653-4) outlined the specificities of the altruism intrinsic to blood donation:

It is easy to see why blood donation is thought of as an exemplary act of altruism. What could be more selfless than giving away one's own blood to a stranger in need? [...] With the exception of Titmuss's pioneering effort of 30

years ago, the role of institutions in producing volunteer donors has not been studied comparatively.

In the present study the focus will be on the construction of the identity of the (putative) blood donor in the public information materials produced by blood transfusion services in various national settings, in their attempt to persuade members of the public to volunteer to provide a good that is essential for positive health outcomes in a plethora of treatments. Suspicions about the risks for the donor may be an obstacle to voluntary blood donation, and popular beliefs have been documented in a study of public health in China (Adams/Erwin/Le 2009) but this topic will not be further pursued here.

This study of blood donor discourse takes as its starting point Bhatia's (1993, 2004) genre-oriented perspective. This perspective considers institutional settings when attempting an analysis of a particular genre:

Non-literary genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalized academic or professional settings. Genre theory tends to give a grounded or what sociologists call a 'thick' description of language use rather than a surface-level description of statistically significant features of language, which has been very typical of much of register analysis. (Bhatia 1996: 40)

Although in strictly anatomical terms blood donation appears to have universal characteristics, the profile of the (putative) blood donors in the public information and institutional discourse displays significant cultural variations across specific national contexts, and this study seeks to cast light on the encoding of these variations.

In methodological terms, the study will consist of a qualitative analysis of a corpus of public information material. The material in the corpus was posted online primarily in countries where English is the official language, one of the official languages, or the lingua franca, and it was collected by means of the search terms 'Reasons for giving blood' and 'Why give blood', from the sources listed in Appendix 1. A selection of articles from the media addressing the same issues is listed in Appendix 2, in order to cast light on differences between the institutional discourse and the media discourse. Whereas Bhatia's

(2005: 46) work on philanthropic fundraising analysed letters sent out for charitable causes, this study focuses on another form of philanthropy, blood donation, and the discursive resources used to promote it.

The blood donation discourse of the institutional actors, in particular organisations such as the Red Cross, Red Crescent, Magen David Adom, national and regional blood transfusion services, health ministries, information departments and international bodies such as the World Health Organization and the European Blood Alliance, is instantiated in multimedia texts with a variety of rhetorical purposes:

- **PROMOTIONAL:** argumentative texts to recruit new donors;
- **ORGANISATIONAL:** logistical details;
- **TECHNICAL:** eligibility and deferral criteria;
- **SCIENTIFIC:** donor/recipient blood group compatibility.

For present purposes the focus will be on the promotional materials, though a selection of texts relating to the remaining three rhetorical purposes will also be considered where relevant. The study is structured as follows. Section 2 examines cases of argumentation based on altruism. Section 3 considers enlightened self-interest, while Section 4 examines self-interest. Section 5 brings together the various strands of argumentation, using matrix diagrams to compare the institutional and media datasets. Section 6 concludes the analysis.

2. Altruism

The institutional materials in the present study are characterised prevalently, though not exclusively, by an appeal to altruism. The study started from the preconception that altruism would in all probability be the sole argumentative strategy, but a systematic analysis of the data does not support this hypothesis. In many cases the authors of the material opt for a judicious mix of altruism, self-interest and enlightened self-interest, reflecting their own perception of public opinion, but in the institutional discourse in most of the national cases

under examination an appeal to altruism prevails, albeit not as the only discursive resource employed by professional healthcare writers. A brief overview of elements of altruism in the various national settings will now be given, with the references for each of the excerpts listed in Appendix 1.

The Australian Red Cross, with a dialogic question-and-answer format, foregrounds altruism while providing scientific and technical information, including the fact that blood products are used not just for transfusion but also for the production of life-saving immunisations, thus including an oblique reference to enlightened self-interest, as the potential donor is also the potential beneficiary of vaccinations. The use of the first person pronoun is evidently intended to involve the reader as an active participant and as a potential donor capable of empathy towards those in need of a blood transfusion:

(1) **Why should I give blood?**

Blood is vital to life and for many people blood donors are their lifeline. Currently only 1 in 30 people give blood, but 1 in 3 people will need blood in their lifetime. (Australia)

On the other hand, the Bangladesh Red Crescent begins with an appeal to national identity (“Across Bangladesh...”) but then widens the frame of reference by mentioning “your contribution to humanity”:

(2) **Across Bangladesh**, every day there remains an urgent need for all types of blood groups. [...]. Your donation can save the lives of many, make a difference or simply make you feel great about your contribution to humanity. (Bangladesh)

In the Finnish Blood Bank public information material, altruism does not predominate but reference is made to:

(3) People who genuinely wish to help patients. (Finland)

The Hong Kong Red Cross attaches great importance to altruistic motives in appealing for blood donors to come forward:

- (4) There is no substitute for blood. In order to provide fresh blood products for treatments of patients with chronic diseases or in need of surgery because of illness or accident, we entirely count on the generosity of our blood donors to donate on a continuous basis. (Hong Kong)

In the case of Iceland, as in Finland, altruism is not promoted explicitly, but it is implicit in the rather understated tone of the factual information, mentioning donors and donation:

- (5) There are about 7-8.000 donors who donate blood at least once a year. Almost 2.5 per cent of the population in Iceland are registered donors. (Iceland)

In India the appeal to altruism is explicit, accompanied by a tone of urgency:

- (6) Universally, ‘Blood’ is recognized as the most precious element that sustains life. It saves innumerable lives across the world in a variety of conditions. Once in every 2 seconds, someone, somewhere is desperately in need of blood. [...] We positively believe this tool can overcome most of these challenges by effectively connecting the blood donors with the recipients lives. (India)

The ‘Find-a-Donor’ function and reference to “connecting the blood donors with the recipients” imply that this is not classic altruism by which: “The recipient is in almost all cases not personally known to the donor: there can, therefore, be no personal expression of gratitude or other sentiments” (Titmuss 1970: 74). The Blood Bank India Recent Updates section highlights this distinction: M.A.I., [B+], is listed as a donor available for donations and the search function allows visitors to Find More Donors.¹ None of the other blood banks in this study provide a matching service, that seems to detract from Titmuss’s principles of altruism.

In the case of Ireland, altruism is the overarching principle, though the mention of “our hospitals” (inclusive *we*) and the various factors giving rise to the need for transfusions could be interpreted as enlightened self-interest, with altruism being tempered by self-preservation:

1 < <http://www.bloodbankindia.net/index.php>>, 10 October 2014.

(7) **Irish Blood Transfusion Service**

Giving blood makes it possible for many people to lead normal healthy lives. Every year thousands of patients require blood transfusions in our hospitals, because they are undergoing surgery, recovering from cancer or have been in a serious accident. (Ireland)

In the case of Israel the appeal to altruism is aimed at international visitors:

(8) **Give Blood in Israel.**

ARE YOU PLANNING ON VISITING ISRAEL?
THE GREATEST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE IS THE GIFT YOU LEAVE
BEHIND.
GIVE THE GIFT OF YOUR BLOOD WHEN YOU VISIT! (Israel)

In the case of Malta a factsheet is provided, including some statistical information, such as the fact that a normal donation is one unit of blood, though altruistic reasons clearly predominate:

- (9) These are few blood facts, why people with an altruistic attitude might want to become blood donors.
- A large number of people depend on the continued generosity of others who are healthy.
 - For the sick person who needs transfusion, blood may be the difference between life and death.
 - Maltese blood donors are enough to cater for the local requests, help us keep it this way.
 - If you started donating at 17 years of age and donated 3 times a year up to the age of 68, you would have donated over 69 litres of blood.
 - Donors do it out of a sense of duty, and don't expect anything back.
 - Blood is needed every day.
 - Donating blood saves lives. (Malta)

In the case of New Zealand, altruism sets the tone. The donor will provide a gift that is a lifesaver, saving up to three lives with one donation and making a difference in the community, while connecting with fellow 'Kiwis':

(10) **Why should I donate blood**

It isn't every day you can do something to save someone's life - but that's exactly what you do every time you donate blood. Blood is a priceless gift - a lifesaver.

Even the best trained medical personnel, using the most advanced equipment can become helpless in the event a patient needs blood. [...]

- Help save the life of up to 3 people with a single donation of blood
- Make a difference in your community by helping others
- Develop a sense of commitment to and connection with your fellow Kiwis. (New Zealand)

Singapore also places the accent on altruistic motives, in a text interspersed with statistical, technical and scientific information:

- (11) Blood contains many life-saving components that can help to treat different illnesses and injuries. For many people, blood donors are their life-line. Your blood donation could help save the life of an accident victim, a patient with severe anaemia, a person undergoing major surgery or even a newborn baby. [...] And with an aging population and more sophisticated medical procedures, the demand of blood is increasing. (Singapore)

None of the argumentation in the Singapore text makes reference to self-interest: the emphasis is entirely on altruism. In the case of South Africa, altruism again comes to the fore, but the appeal is reinforced by reference to the fact that the number of blood donors is insufficient:

- (12) Whether you're AB+ or O-, we need your blood.
1. **Blood saves lives.**
Every unit of blood donated can be separated into its constituent parts and used to enhance the lives of up to four recipients.
 2. **There's no substitute.**
Unfortunately, there is no known substitute for blood and it cannot be replicated due to its complexity. Only real blood will do.
 3. **Blood is in short supply.**
Because the need for blood is so unpredictable [...]. (South Africa)

Sri Lanka is particularly significant, as it was selected by the World Health Organization (WHO) to promote World Blood Donor Day 2014, promoting 'Safe Blood for Saving Mothers'. The text in the corpus of institutional materials was produced by the WHO, which plays an important institutional role in promoting blood donation. Altruism is key to blood donation efforts in Sri Lanka, a particular kind

of altruism associated in the official discourse with Buddhist values, particularly generosity. Donation is construed primarily as a collective act timed to coincide with and celebrate Full Moon Day, an annual religious holiday, rather than conceptualised as an individual medical procedure as in Western countries. Sri Lanka has eliminated the practice of collecting from what Titmuss called 'paid donors': all blood donations now come from voluntary donors:

- (13) Sri Lankans attach special importance to the act of blood donation. "Because most Sri Lankans follow Buddhism, blood donation is religiously and culturally accepted and very much a valued concept," says Dr Namal Bandara, Senior Registrar of the National Blood Transfusion Service. This year, Sri Lanka is the host country for the global event of World Blood Donor Day. The day also coincides with Poson Poya (Full Moon Day), an annual religious holiday that marks the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and is a time for generosity and celebration. Sri Lanka has already established a tradition of encouraging people to give blood every month when the moon is full. Social groups organize blood donation sessions on this day on their own premises – often temples, schools or universities. [...]
In just 10 years, Sri Lanka has achieved remarkable success in reaching a self-sufficient blood supply. [...] The safest source of blood is from regular, voluntary unpaid donors whose blood is screened for infections. WHO calls for all countries to obtain 100% of their supplies of blood [...] from voluntary unpaid blood donors by 2020. (Sri Lanka)

In Sweden, as in the cases of Finland and Iceland, the appeal to altruism is not explicit, but implicit. One possible explanation for the almost complete lack of argumentative discourse and the prevalence of informational content is that Sweden has managed to recruit five per cent of the adult population as donors, that compares extremely well with other countries (the figure for Iceland is 2.5 per cent), suggesting that the authorities seem to take it as given that members of the public will act in an altruistic fashion, reflecting high levels of reciprocal trust, a form of social capital in Swedish society (on social capital theory, see Putnam 1995, 2000 and Putnam, *Social Capital Measurement and Consequences*).²

2 Robert Putnam <<http://www.oecd.org/innovation/research/1825848.pdf>>, 14 October 2014.

- (14) **Blood Donation in Sweden**
 You are visiting Geblod.nu (Giveblood.now) which is the Swedish Blood Centre's official website. [...] Sweden is self sufficient in blood products, but new blood donors are always welcome. [...]. Almost five per cent of the population are registered donors. (Sweden)

In contrast, Blood UK takes pains to make explicit the altruistic motives for giving blood, with regular donors helping to save lives:

- (15) **Why give blood?**
 Donated blood is a lifeline for many people needing long-term treatments, not just in emergencies [...] Ever since a national blood service was first created in 1946, we have relied on the generosity of blood donors [...]. We are indebted to our regular donors for their role in helping us to save lives. (UK)

Moreover, Blood UK personalises the discourse with a collection of Amazing Stories or testimonials told by both donors and recipients, all of whom are identified by name and with a colour photograph.

With regard to the blood donor discourse from US institutional sources (excerpts 16-29), altruism does play a role, but it is part of a judicious mix of motives, and not always the predominant one. In addressing the question 'Why Donate Blood?' the American Red Cross outlines the following motives, but the predominant theme is not altruism. A 'special reason' may be an oblique reference to altruism, but potential donors are not required to donate for altruistic reasons, as other reasons will do just as well. The important thing is that 'you'll feel good' and there will be health benefits – for the donor:

- (16) **You don't need a special reason to give blood.**
 You just need your own reason.
 Some of us give blood because we were asked by a friend.
 Some know that a family member or a friend might need blood some day.
 Some believe it is the right thing we do.
 Whatever your reason, the need is constant and your contribution is important for a healthy and reliable blood supply. And you'll feel good knowing you've helped change a life
SOME HEALTH BENEFITS
 You will receive a mini physical [...]. (US American Red Cross)

As in the case of the UK, testimonials are included, accompanied by photographs portraying (real or fictional) donors rather than potential beneficiaries. With limited space given to altruistic motives, the psychological benefits for the donor are a recurrent theme:

- (17) I'm a Red Cross blood donor that won't give up. [...] I love donating blood. The thought of being able to help save three people's lives every time I go makes me feel like a better person. (US American Red Cross Testimonials)

The US Armed Services Blood Program adopts the slogan 'Give to the Red, White and Blue'. Totally separate from the American Red Cross, the Program collects donations from US civilians to support the armed services. The website does not discuss altruistic motives, presumably because it is evident to donors that their blood will be allocated to the armed services. Hence the discourse focuses on practical matters:

- (18) CAN I DONATE?
Most healthy adults are eligible to give blood, however, there are some reasons a person may be deferred from donating temporarily, indefinitely, or permanently. (US Armed Services Blood Program)

The mission of the Boston Children's Hospital is clearly of a totally different nature and the discourse is shaped by this fact, with altruistic motives coming to the fore:

- (19) ONE pint helps FOUR children
Less than 5% of the population donates
It takes 30 minutes to donate, platelets take a little longer
Our patients need your help
We are nearby in your neighbourhood
There is no substitute for human blood and platelets
Platelets from A-positive donors are acceptable for 100 per cent of the population
There are always shortages of blood and platelets, especially during the summer and winter holidays
More than 24,000 patients need blood at BCH each year
It's a great way to give back. (Boston Children's Hospital)

The Florida Blood Centers adopt a mix of altruistic and non-altruistic motives in the blood donor discourse, with altruism as the leitmotiv. Demographics are mentioned in connection with ‘our growing and aging population’ and unusually there is a reference to generational change:

- (20) For decades this nation relied on a large pool of blood donors from ‘The Greatest Generation’, the heroic World War II veterans who considered blood donation to be an on-going patriotic duty. Sadly, that generation is fast disappearing. (Florida)

The US Give Spot Give Blood website specifies ten reasons to give blood, but only the last of these reflect altruistic considerations:

- (21) You will be someone’s hero – you may give a newborn, a child, a mother or a father, a brother, or a sister another chance at life. In fact, you may help save up to three lives with just one donation. (US Give Spot)

The US Indiana Blood Center also lists ten reasons to give blood, all reflecting altruism, except for the mini-physical:

- (22) **Top 10 Reasons to Donate Blood:**
1. Donating blood saves lives.
 2. It is a good way to give back to your community.
 3. The act of giving is selfless.
 4. You receive a free mini-physical.
 5. Every two seconds someone needs blood.
 6. The blood supply needs constant replenishment.
 7. One pint can help up to three people.
 8. Most people are eligible to donate blood.
 9. There is no substitute for human blood.
 10. You will have someone’s undying gratitude.

However, US Knoji lists eight reasons, only two of which may be said to be truly altruistic:

- (23) If You’re a Universal Donor, You Owe It To World To Donate Blood
 Donating Blood Is Healthy
 Donating Blood Is Personally Rewarding
 Donating Blood=Incentives

Donating Blood Saves Lives
Donating Blood Increases Your Own Awareness of Cholesterol Levels
Donating Blood is Free
Donating Blood Makes You A Stronger Person (US Knoji)

In the same vein the US Lee Memorial Blood Center lists five reasons for giving blood but altruism is not at the top. In fourth place on the list, saving lives appears to be just one motive among many others:

- (24) Giving Blood is Safe.
Giving Blood is Easy.
Giving Blood is Fast.
Giving Blood Saves Lives.
Giving Blood Helps Your Community. (US Lee Memorial)

The New York Blood Centers give pride of place to altruistic motives, starting with somebody enjoying good health after 50 transfusions:



- (25) Thousands of men, women, and children need donated blood products each day, and this need could not be met without the dedication of volunteer blood donors. Current processing techniques allow a single blood donation, when separated into components, to help save at least three lives. Your blood donations help treat cancer patients, traumatic accident and burn victims, newborn babies and mothers delivering babies, patients undergoing surgery, and many more. (New York Blood Centers)

The Ohio Community Blood Center highlights altruism, using the rather unusual terms *responsibility* and *caring* to characterise the relationship between the individual and the community:

- (26) Blood donation is a community responsibility [...]. About one in seven people entering hospital needs blood. Our blood supply comes from caring donors like you. [...] It takes about one hour of your time. When you give blood, it gives someone another smile, another hug, another chance. It is the gift of life. (Ohio)

Stanford provides a list of reasons for giving blood without attempting to develop the topic of altruism that appears as one of several possible motives:

- (27) **Can my one little donation really help?**
YES! Each individual donation can be separated into blood components (packed cells, plasma, cryoprecipitate) that can benefit multiple patients. Your donation helps save lives. (Stanford)

The US Military Blood Program, that collects blood from members of the military, unlike the US Armed Services Blood Program, that collects blood from civilians for the military, does not deal at length with altruism, but it is briefly mentioned:

- (28) **Donors can:**
Save up to three lives with a single donation!
Give blood every 8 weeks or give platelets up to 24 times per year.
Help a fellow service member when they need it most.
(US Military Blood Program)

Rather than focus on motives, the US Military Blood Program provides organisational, scientific and technical information about blood groups, compatibility criteria, eligibility and deferral criteria, due to the fact that the blood donor discourse is a reflection of the specific institutional setting. In the military, it seems to be taken for granted that service personnel will donate blood as part of the ethos or community of practice. There is no reason to explain the need to come forward as a blood donor, since the entire military population potentially falls into this category. This lends further weight to Bhatia's argument

that to achieve an adequate characterisation of a particular genre, the institutional setting should be taken into account.

The University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) lists five reasons for giving blood, most of them altruistic:

(29) **Top 5 Reasons to Give Blood**

Your donation could save up to three lives.

Someone needs blood in the U.S. every two seconds.

A single car accident victim can require up to 100 units of blood.

It is the right thing to do, and will make you walk a little taller.

UMMC uses more than 36,000 units of blood a year. (US Maryland)

Finally mention should be made of the blood donor discourse of WHO, where the emphasis is on altruistic reasons:

(30) **Why should I donate blood?**

Blood is the most precious gift that anyone can give to another person – the gift of life. A decision to donate your blood can save a life, or even several if your blood is separated into its components – red cells, platelets and plasma – which can be used individually for patients with specific conditions. (WHO)

Concluding this overview of altruistic reasons in blood donor discourse, the focus now turns to argumentation based on enlightened self-interest.

3. Enlightened self-interest

In a number of cases there is an appeal to potential donors to reflect on the fact that one day they themselves may need blood donated by others. This should be distinguished from autologous donation, in which patients give blood for their own use in elective surgery. Enlightened self-interest features prominently in the South African appeal:

(31) **You could be next**

It's not a nice thing to consider, but the fact is that you, a close friend, or a family member could well be the next car accident victim or surgery candidate requiring a transfusion. Wouldn't it be good to know that our stock levels are adequate? (South Africa)

At the Lee Memorial Blood Center in the US, potential donors are informed that their blood is for the benefit of those within the Lee Memorial Community. Unlike blood donated to the Red Cross or the Armed Services, it is not allocated to a national blood bank:

(32) **Giving Blood Saves Lives**

Your donation will help ensure an adequate supply for both children and adults who are patients within Lee Memorial Health System.

Giving Blood Helps Your Community.

All donated blood stays to help the patients within Lee Memorial Health System. (US Lee Memorial)

An appeal to enlightened self-interest is to be found also in the case of a British donor who needed a life-saving transfusion following an accident. Here the line between donors and recipients is blurred: they are no longer conceptualised as separate categories but as a fuzzy set (Lakoff 1987: 22), since donors may themselves need donations in the future.

- (33) Blood donor Doug Collier first donated at the young age of 17. In April 2012, Doug's lorry overturned and he was rushed to Wigan Infirmary where doctors battled for ten hours to save his life. (UK)

In Israel, enlightened self-interest is institutionalised in the MDA-Blood Insurance Program, with blood donors receiving a written guarantee that they and their family will receive blood when necessary, as Family Credit Donors (Titmuss 1970: 82):

- (34) FOR ISRAEL RESIDENTS ONLY: All volunteer blood donors are offered the MDA-Blood-Insurance program, which grants further credit of blood for the donor and his/her immediate family members for one year following the donation. (Israel)

It is possible to characterise this as a gift relationship, as part of a mutual aid arrangement, based on the insurance principle, by which those who benefit from the system make a contribution. This brings to mind Malinowski's (1922: 167) observation about gifts and counter-gifts in the Western Pacific as "one of the main instruments of social organisation [...] and the bonds of kinship".

4. Self-interest

It was initially expected that the institutional discourse would focus entirely on an appeal to altruism but this expectation was not confirmed by the data. As noted above, one strand of blood donor discourse deals with health benefits – for the donor, who receives a free health check. This is developed at great length on a number of blood donor websites, especially in the US. The following list of reasons to give blood begins with the offer of free juice and cookies, and continues with other supposed benefits such as the chance to lose weight and to be excused from heavy lifting, before reaching the point where the donor is placed "on an equal footing with the rich and famous". Paradoxically, an act that seems to be emblematic of altruism is motivated by a long list of self-centred considerations:

(35) **Top 10 Reasons to Give Blood**

The American Red Cross is constantly encouraging people to donate blood. That's why they came up with this list of the Top 10 reasons to give blood. Read their motivations, and see if any of them resonate with you.

1. You will get free juice and cookies.
2. You will weigh less – one pint less than when you leave than when you came in.
3. It's easy and convenient – it only takes about an hour and you can make the donation at a donor center, or at one of the many Red Cross mobile blood drives.
4. It's something you can spare – most people have blood to spare... yet, there is still not enough to go around.

5. Nobody can ask you to do any heavy lifting as long as you have the bandage on. You can wear it for as long as you like. It's your badge of honor.
6. You will walk a little taller afterwards – you will feel good about yourself. [...]
8. It's something you can do on equal footing with the rich and famous – blood is something money can't buy. Only something one person can give to another. [...] (US Give Spot).

The same line of reasoning appears on the Knoji Blood Donation website:

(36) **Donating Blood Is Healthy**

From a health standpoint, I can't think of a better way for people with high blood pressure, migraines, or high cholesterol to let go of some waste. I do it to help with my blood pressure and migraines, as unloading two pints of blood [sic] is the best way for me to relieve pressure in my brain and my body. Furthermore, donating blood changes the iron levels in your body, thus helping, and sometimes preventing, heart disease. [...] Giving blood is one of the safest and easiest ways to reduce levels of iron to healthy levels. Also, giving blood decreases the risk for heart attacks in men. (US Knoji)

In genre theory terms, the Give Spot and Knoji texts display a degree of genre mixing between institutional discourse and media reports, so they may be considered of marginal interest here.

In addition to the institutional sources, this study also considered a selection of media reports that were found to focus overwhelmingly on self-interest, regardless of country of origin, as shown below:

(37) **Donating blood is as good for YOUR health as it is for the receiver**

Research discovered donating blood can help reduce the risk of heart attacks and cancer.

It has this effect by reducing iron levels which can thicken blood and increase free-radical damage.

Beneficial for weight watchers too as people burn 650 calories with every pint donated. (Media-6 Daily Mail UK)

(38) **Eight Benefits of Donating Blood. That You May Not Know About**

Blood donation is good for your health. It reduces the amount of iron in the body and reduces the risk of heart disease. According to studies published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, blood donors are 88% less likely to

suffer a heart attack. This is simply because when someone gives blood, iron is being removed from their system, which can significantly cut the risk of heart disease. (Media-1 Life Hack USA).

(39) **Donate blood regularly to stay healthy: Harsh Vardhan**

New Delhi, June 16: People can safeguard themselves against cancer and heart attacks by donating blood regularly. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said at an event here Saturday on the occasion of the World Blood Donation Day. Urging people to donate blood more often, Harsh Vardhan said: "Regular blood donors, according to medical researchers, are 80 per cent less prone to diseases like heart attack, cancer, etc." (Media-11 India).

5. Strands of argumentation in the discourse

In each of the institutional appeals an attempt was made to identify the predominant strand of argumentation and the results are set out in the following matrix diagram. Although the discourse of altruism (upper left-hand quadrant) is predominant, the discourse of self-interest (upper right-hand quadrant) also plays a significant role, and enlightened self-interest (lower left-hand quadrant) is also well represented, along with a strand focusing on organisational, scientific and technical issues (lower right-hand quadrant).

<p>ALTRUISM</p> <p>Australia Bangladesh Hong Kong India Ireland Malta New Zealand Singapore Sri Lanka UK US Boston US Florida US Indiana US New York US Ohio US Maryland WHO</p>	<p>SELF-INTEREST</p> <p>US American Red Cross US Red Cross Profiles US Give Spot US Knoji</p>
<p>ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST</p> <p>Israel South Africa US Lee Memorial</p>	<p>ORGANISATIONAL / SCIENTIFIC / TECHNICAL ISSUES</p> <p>Finland Iceland Sweden US Armed US Military US Stanford</p>

Figure 1. Primary focus of blood donor discourse in institutional texts.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the various strands of argumentation in the media reports, revealing a sharp contrast with the institutional discourse. Whereas in the institutional discourse there was a focus on altruism as the main motivation for blood donors, with some attention to enlightened self-interest and organisational, scientific and technical information, in the media reports the focus was primarily on self-interest, mainly considering the health benefits for the donor rather than the recipient.

<p>ALTRUISM</p> <p>Media-9 Hull Daily Mail Media-12 Jamaican Gleaner</p>	<p>SELF-INTEREST</p> <p>Media-1/ Media 2 Life Hack Media-3 Health.com Media-4 Health24.com Media-5 360 Blog Net Media-6 Daily Mail Media-7 Guest Blogger Matt Media-8 Dr Mercola Media-11 One India</p>
<p>ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST</p> <p>(None in this sample)</p>	<p>ORGANISATIONAL / SCIENTIFIC / TECHNICAL ISSUES</p> <p>Media-10 Nigeria Daily Times</p>

Figure 2. Primary focus of blood donor discourse in media reports.

6. Concluding remarks

This study investigated aspects of argumentation in the institutional blood donor discourse of a number of English-speaking countries and states, examining the strands of discourse based on altruism, enlightened self-interest and self-interest. Institutional and cultural variations were identified, not simply reflecting different national contexts, as in some instances cultural variation was identified also within the same national context. A stark contrast was evident between on the

one hand the discourse of the institutional actors, in which altruism tends to prevail, along with elements of enlightened self-interest, and on the other hand the media reports, where self-interest clearly predominates.

Healthcare professionals seeking to identify a judicious mix between the various motives to persuade blood donors to come forward to become regular donors might wish to compare their discursive practices with those characteristic of media reports as some mutual learning appears to be possible. Regardless of the specific approaches in the various national contexts, it is evident that public health information professionals need to continue to pay close attention to blood donor issues, also exploring the possibilities afforded by social media.³ To conclude, the ongoing need for effective public health information is evident in this quotation from the Yelp review by a San Diego blood donor who was ‘weirded out’ not by the needles or the blood, but by the ignorance of potential donors:

- (40) I gave blood on one of their busses today. It was clean. Staff were funny and friendly. [...] They give you juice and cookies after your blood donation. What weirded me out as I filled out the questionnaire, people were stopping by and asking HOW MUCH THEY’D GET PAID TO DONATE BLOOD, then walking away when they learned what donating meant. Donating means helping others in need because you’re a good person and you want to make a difference, whether it’s by GIVING your time, money or even blood. I don’t know if it’s true or just marketing, but the blood bank always says it has a blood shortage. So make a difference and donate blood today.⁴

3 Such as <<https://www.facebook.com/nbts.srilanka>>, 15 October 2014.

4 <<http://www.yelp.com/biz/san-diego-blood-bank-san-diego5?osq=Blood+Donation>> 14 October 2015.

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- Putnam, Robert 1995. Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6/1, 65-78.
- Putnam, Robert 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Titmuss, Richard 1970. *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Appendix 1. Source Texts (10 October 2014)

1. AUSTRALIA Australian Red Cross Blood Service
<http://www.donateblood.com.au/why-donate/faq#faq_312>
2. BANGLADESH Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
<<http://www.bdracs.org/donate-blood>>
3. FINLAND Finnish Red Cross Blood Service
<http://www.veripalvelu.fi/www/blood_donation>
4. HONG KONG Hong Kong Red Cross
<http://www5.ha.org.hk/rcbts/enarticle.asp?bid=9&MenuID=3#.U58pvPmSwx4>>
5. ICELAND Blodbankinn
<<http://www.blodbankinn.is/blodgjafar/english/>>
6. INDIA Blood Bank India
<http://www.bloodbankindia.net/about_us.php>
7. IRELAND Irish Blood Transfusion Service
<http://www.giveblood.ie/Become_a_Donor/Give_Blood/Why_Give_Blood/>
8. ISRAEL Magen David Adom
<<https://www.magendavidadom.org.au/support-mdm/give-blood-in-israel/>>
9. MALTA Ministry of Health
<https://ehealth.gov.mt/HealthPortal/health_institutions/units/nbts/become_a_donor/why_should_i_donate_blood.aspx>
10. NEW ZEALAND New Zealand Blood Service / Te Ratonga Toto O Aotearoa
<<http://www.nzblood.co.nz/give-blood/donating/why-should-i-donate-blood/#.U58oRPmSwx4>>
11. SINGAPORE Health Sciences Authority
<http://www.hsa.gov.sg/publish/hsaportal/en/health_services/blood_donation/why_donate.html>
12. SOUTH AFRICA Blood Transfusion Service
<<http://www.wpblood.org.za/?q=tidbit/7-good-reasons-donate-blood>>
13. SRI LANKA World Health Organization
<<http://www.who.int/features/2014/world-blood-donor-day/en/>>
14. SWEDEN Geblud Nu
<<http://geblod.nu/blodgivning-in-sweden/>>
15. UNITED KINGDOM Blood UK
<<http://www.blood.co.uk/giving-blood/why-give-blood/>>
16. US AMERICAN RED CROSS
<<http://www.redcrossblood.org/donating-blood/why-donate-blood>>
17. US AMERICAN RED CROSS TESTIMONIALS
<<http://www.redcrossblood.org/donating-blood/donor-community/donor-stories>>
18. US ARMED SERVICES BLOOD PROGRAM

- <http://www.militaryblood.dod.mil/Donors/can_i_donate.aspx>
19. US BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
<http://www.childrenshospital.org/~media/About%20Us/Blood%20Donor%20Center/BCH_Walk_Pcard_2013_Back.ashx>
 20. US FLORIDA BLOOD CENTERS
<<http://www.wftv.com/news/news/9-reasons-for-donating-blood/nFCPF/>>
 21. US GIVE SPOT
<<http://www.givespot.com/lists/giveblood.htm>>
 22. US INDIANA
<<http://raiseyoursleeve.org/2011/06/16/top-10-reasons-to-donate-blood/>>
 23. US KNOJI
<<http://blood-blood-donation.knoji.com/why-donate-blood-8-reasons-why-you-should-give-blood/>>
 24. US LEE MEMORIAL BLOOD CENTER
<<http://www.leememorial.org/bloodcenter/reasons.asp>>
 25. US NEW YORK BLOOD CENTER
<<http://nybloodcenter.org/donate-blood/become-donor/>>
 26. US OHIO COMMUNITY BLOOD CENTER
<<http://givingblood.org/donate-blood/where-to-donate.aspx>>
 27. US STANFORD BLOOD CENTER
<<http://bloodcenter.stanford.edu/donate/faqs.html>>
 28. US UNITED STATES MILITARY BLOOD PROGRAM
<http://www.militaryblood.dod.mil/Donors/about_blood.aspx>
 29. US UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND MEDICAL CENTER
<<http://umm.edu/about/blood-drives/top-5-reasons-to-give-blood>>
 30. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
<<http://www.who.int/features/qa/61/en/>>

Appendix 2. Media Reports on Blood Donation (10 October 2014)

- 1- Bradbury, Amanda. Eight Benefits of Donating Blood
<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/8-benefits-donating-blood-that-you-may-not-knowabout.html?utm_source=post&utm_medium=blooddonationisgoodforyourhealth&utm_campaign=innerlink>
- 2- Abialbon, Paul. Five Health Benefits of Donating Blood
<<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/5-health-benefits-donating-blood.html>>

- 3- Swalin, Rachel, 4 Unexpected Benefits of Donating Blood
<<http://news.health.com/2014/06/13/4-unexpected-benefits-of-donating-blood/>>
- 4- Cabuco, Janelle. The Health Benefits of Donating Blood
<<http://www.health24.com/Lifestyle/Your-Blood/The-health-benefits-of-donating-blood-20140610>>
- 5- Sarajeon. Ten Reasons to Give Blood <<http://360blog.net/article/10-reasons-give-blood>>
- 6- Robertson, Emma. Donating blood is as good for YOUR health as it is for the receiver. *Daily Mail*. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2333882/Donating-blood-good-YOUR-health-receiver.html> >
- 7- Guest Blogger Matt. 3 Big Reasons to Donate Blood
<<http://staywellblog.walgreens.com/medicines-pharmacy/blood-donation/>>
- 8- Dr Mercola. The 'Selfish' Reason to Donate Your Blood
<<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2012/09/01/too-much-iron.aspx>>
- 9- Wright, Emma. New Year's Resolution. *Hull Daily Mail*.
<<http://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/Make-New-Year-s-Resolution-blood-like-supergran/story-20371300-detail/story.html>>
- 10- Adejoro, Lara. Why Do Blacks Not Donate Blood? *Nigeria Daily Times*, 25 May 2014. <http://www.dailytimes.com.ng/article/why-do-blacks-not-donate-blood>
- 11- Vardhan, Harsh. Donate Blood Regularly to Stay Healthy
<http://news.oneindia.in/health/donate-blood-regularly-to-stay-healthy-harsh-varadhan-1466583.html>
- 12- The Gleaner. Give Blood, Save a Life. *Jamaica Gleaner*. 11 June 2014.
<<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20140611/lead/lead4.html>>