

# Blood donation within the family: the transmission of values and practices

Johanne Charbonneau, Anne Quéniart, Elisha Laprise  
Research Chair on Social Aspects of Blood Donation, INRS, Canada

## Background and aims

Previous research suggests that blood donation is a type of prosocial behaviour that is most influenced by family socialization. Donors, more often than non-donors, come from families with members who also give blood. Our study aims to examine the role of family in the transmission of practices and values associated with blood donation. Diverse forms of transmission were explored, notably imitation (modeling), direct initiation via parent accompaniment to blood drives as well as certain social determinants such as religion.

## The study was led in Canada in the province of Quebec



## The role of Héma-Québec

Quebec has an organization created in 1998 by the Ministry of Health and whose mission is to supply:

- Blood components and substitutes
- Human tissue
- Cord blood

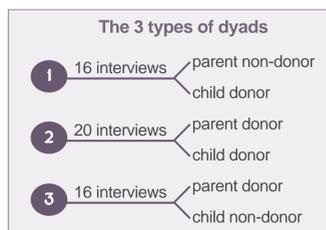
## Method

- Qualitative study
- Data collection through semi-structured interviews
- Donor recruitment with the collaboration of Héma-Québec

### Selection criteria

- Parents aged 40 and above
- Children aged 19-30
- At least one donation each year over the last 3 years
- Respondents were diversified based on main socio-demographic indicators

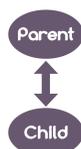
## Thematic analyses of interviews through a comparison of 3 types of parent-child links (dyads)



- Average duration of interviews: 45 minutes
- The study took place over a 6-month period
- Families were recruited based on the Héma-Québec database PROGESA
- The study received ethics certificates from Héma-Québec and INRS

## Transmission

- An interactive social process
- A person 'transmits' values or objects to another person who 'inherits' them
- Transmission can take place in both directions



## Forms of the transmission of altruistic values explored in this study

### Direct form

- **Imitation (modeling)**  
Children imitate the altruistic practices of their parents
- **Parent-child discussion**  
Taboo-free discussion on blood donation within families

### Indirect form

- **Encouragement to get involved as a volunteer**  
Transmission of values through practice; young people inherit altruistic values by participating in volunteer activities

Age	Dyad 1 Parent non-donor Child donor		Dyad 2 Parent donor Child donor				Dyad 3 Parent donor Child non-donor				Total		
	Parent		Child		Parent		Child		Parent			Child	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F
18-21							1						1
22-30			5	3			4	5			4	4	25
31-49					2								2
50-64	1	5			4	3			4	4			21
65 et +	1	1			1								3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>20</b>				<b>16</b>				<b>49</b>		

## Our Results point to 2 kinds of families

### Family A

Blood donation is 'part of life'

14 out of the 26 interviewed families

PD/CD dyad = 8

PD/CND dyad = 4

PND/CD dyad = 2

- Blood donation has been transmitted within the family for more than one generation
- Parents make children aware of it early on by inviting them to attend a blood drive
- The members of one same family go to a blood drive together
- Parents not involved in blood donation transmit a state of mind, a set of values
- For the child, becoming aware of the importance of blood donation at a young age influences the desire to become a donor
- Blood donation is not a taboo subject
- Child donors express their desire to transmit the importance of blood donation to their children or those around them

"You often see children coming with their parents. That's how I started, actually. I went with my father, he gave blood, I wasn't old enough to donate."

"It's mainly a personal initiative. . . . If people ask me, I'll say, 'If you feel like it, I'll go with you'. But I'm not the type to want to convince you, you know, I don't proselytize."

"My children give blood ... my father did, too. My husband's father gave blood. I was never able to donate. It's because of my weight, I don't weigh 100 pounds. My spouse donates regularly."

### Family B

Blood donation is defined as an individual act

12 out of the 26 interviewed families

PD/CD dyad = 2

PD/CND dyad = 4

PND/CD dyad = 6

- The practice of blood donation is seen as a personal act
- Blood donation activities are not immediately shared with family and friends
- Certain parent donors act as motivators for their children, all while considering donation as a personal act
- Other parents consider that this activity lies outside family activities
- In some families, a trace of transmission can be observed in terms of the importance of generosity
- The children were generally exposed to blood donation as young adults, through blood drives organized in their schools or colleges
- Donors were introduced to blood donation by people outside the family (circle of friends, work, school)

"I talk about it with my parents, they know I donate regularly. If they want to follow my example, that's great. I already tried convincing them to stop smoking, it never worked. Trying to convince them to go donate blood, I don't see why it would work any better, it has to come from you."

## Discussion

The practice of blood donation is not always a result of direct transmission in the family. This can be explained by the fact that even if it is a fundamentally prosocial practice, blood donation is more individual by nature than other prosocial practices. It is also worth noting that even when the choice to donate blood is presented as the result of an individual decision, respondents' statements suggest that other influences may have played a significant role, especially hearing about this practice at school and having had an opportunity to donate in a school setting.

Our results therefore suggest the following recommendations:

### For type A families

- Organize blood drives as part of 'Family Days' that allow blood donation to be a family activity
- Pursue development of a pedagogical kit program in line with blood donation in order to offer elementary and high schools materials so that teachers can make children aware of the cause of blood donation, and in order to enable the organization of blood drives involving student volunteers, thereby encouraging parents to come give blood.

### For type B families

- Increase the visibility of blood drives, and if possible permanent collection centres, while emphasizing the freedom of the act of donation. This provides an easy way to add donation to other activities such as shopping, having a coffee, etc.
- Pursue blood drives in higher education institutions so as to interest young adults in blood donation

## References

- Alessandrini, Megan (2007). «Community Volunteerism and Blood Donation: Altruism as a Lifestyle Choice», *Transfusion Medicine Reviews*, vol. 21, no 4, pages 307-316.
- Attias-Donfut, Claudine, «Le double circuit des transmissions», dans Claudine Attias-Donfut et Alain Rozenkier (dir.), *Les solidarités entre générations : vieillesse, familles, État*, Paris, Nathan, 1995.
- Heyman, Noa (2004). *Intergenerational Value Transmission Through Philanthropy and Charitable Giving*, Long Island, Adelphi University, Department of Philosophy, PhD Thesis.
- Lee, L., J. A. Piliavin et V. R. A. Call (1999). «Giving time, money, and blood: Similarities and differences», *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 62, no 3, pages 276-290.
- Misje, A. H., V. Bosnes, O. Gasdal et H. E. Heier (2005). «Motivation, recruitment and retention of voluntary non-remunerated blood donors: a survey-based questionnaire study», *Vox Sanguinis*, vol. 89, no 4, pages 236-244