

THE MEDIA AND ORGAN DONATIONS: THE PRODUCTION OF DONATING SUBJECTS

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study with an exploratory approach, situated in the field of cultural studies, using the tool proposed by Michel Foucault for textual analysis. It aims at analyzing how discourses transmitted by the media affect subjects and institute them as organ donors. The analysis corpus was made up of articles from the Folha de São Paulo newspaper, which is considered to be the most influential in the country. These articles contain discourses that were analyzed and represent the way organ donors are recruited. The newspaper discourses are seen as culture artifacts that produce truth and influence subjects, determining possible actions that may be performed so that more transplants take place.

Descriptors: Means of communication. Organ transplantation. Organ donors.

RESUMO

Este é um estudo de natureza qualitativa, com abordagem exploratória, situado no campo dos estudos culturais, utilizando ferramentas propostas por Michel Foucault para a análise textual. Tem como objetivo analisar como os discursos veiculados pela mídia atravessam os sujeitos e os instituem como sujeitos doadores de órgãos. O corpus de análise foi composto por matérias do jornal Folha de São Paulo, considerado o mais influente do país. Tais reportagens põem em funcionamento discursos que foram analisados e que representam o modo como instituem doadores de órgãos. Os discursos do jornal são vistos como artefatos da cultura, que produzem verdades e governam sujeitos, determinando ações possíveis de ser feitas, a fim de que ocorram mais transplantes.

Descritores: Meios de comunicação. Transplantes. Doadores de tecidos.

Título: Mídia e doação de órgãos: a produção de sujeitos doadores

RESUMEN

Este es un estudio de naturaleza cualitativa, con abordaje exploratorio, situado en el campo de los Estudios Culturales, utilizando herramientas propuestas por Michel Foucault para el análisis textual. Tiene como objetivo analizar cómo los discursos propagados por los medios de comunicación atraviesan sujetos y los instituyen como donadores de órganos. El objeto de análisis es el periódico "Folha de São Paulo", considerado el más influyente del país. Los artículos de periódico ponen en funcionamiento los discursos que fueron analizados y representan las maneras cómo instituyen donadores de órganos. Los discursos del periódico son vistos como artefactos de cultura que producen verdades y gobiernan sujetos, determinando acciones posibles de realizar para que ocurran más trasplantes.

Descriptores: Medios de comunicación. Trasplantes. Donadores de tejidos.

Título: Medios de comunicación y donación de órganos: la producción de sujetos donantes.

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INTRODUCTION

“Donor and recipient. United by an act of love”. This sentence has opened the website of the Brazilian Association of Organ Transplantation (*Associação Brasileira de Transplante de Orgãos - ABTO*)⁽¹⁾ for a few years and represents the way people have been approached to donate organs and tissue. These convincing techniques are associated with testimonies of artists who encourage people to donate, poems written by possible donors, and reports of people who received organs and thank those who provided them. Therefore, the authors understand that the media is a space for spreading discourses filled with authority that affect us and recruit us as subjects⁽²⁾. Thus, it influences people’s lives and is capable of selling ideas, dictating ways of being, reinforcing identities, and pointing out paths⁽³⁾.

Surgeries for organ transplantation became possible when, in the 20th century, Aléxis Carrel developed a surgical technique to unite blood vessels, reestablishing circulation. This technique was fundamental to organ transplantation. In addition to this, there were experiments with animals and the first attempts in humans, which reflect the medical perception in the beginning of the 19th century that medicine made great advances in that time, as it remained for centuries below the edge of what was visible and enunciable⁽⁴⁾.

Law no. 9434/1997 determined that all Brazilians were potential donors, unless shown otherwise by changing the identification document or driver’s license with the statement that they were not donors. However, provisional measure no. 1718/1998 established that, in the absence of manifestation of the potential donor’s wish, the father, mother, child or spouse could refuse donation. After some reviews, law no. 10211, from March 23 of 2001, came into being, and organ donation became dependent on the authorization of the spouse or adult relative, obeying the successive line down to the second degree of the family⁽¹⁾.

The authors understand that the development of new surgical and preservation techniques, changes in legislation and media and publicity campaigns, as well as the donor’s and family’s will, raise the possibility of organ and tissue transplantation occur in our society. Moreover, these changes institute new knowledge regarding organ donation, changing the approach methods of powerful media

discourses. Such power requires discipline and is defined by a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, a game of rules and redefinitions, an anonymous system at the service of those who want or may use it⁽⁵⁾.

In society, the production of discourse is, at the same time, controlled, selected, organized and redistributed. Not everyone has the right to say everything, to speak at will regarding any circumstance and any subject; as well, no one is authorized to speak without satisfying certain demands, determining its operation conditions⁽⁵⁾. This study is based on the presupposition that the discourses of newspaper articles discipline and rule the subject through a means that becomes public, in which the lives of the individual and the population are repeatedly rediscussed and rethought. The texts allow the emergence of discourses that combine subjectivity and skill, providing the illusion that anyone is capable of directing their own choices active and rationally – in other words, the illusion that personal choices are indeed personal⁽⁶⁾. These discourses are transmitted in a space, the newspaper, which becomes an arena of truth and knowledge, acting on the constitution of subjects, composing the art of ruling⁽⁷⁾. The ruling of subjects provides sufficient artifacts so that, by knowing how the transplantation process takes place, including its conditions, benefits and possible obstacles, they have a comprehensive knowledge regarding the subject and feel in the position to make a decision considered to be true.

These discourses constitute knowledge that contributes to nursing activity, health research and teaching, especially for those who work and produce new knowledge related to organ transplantation. Therefore, this study, which is the result of a master’s degree dissertation⁽⁸⁾, aims at analyzing how the discourses transmitted by the media permeate subjects and recruit them as organ donors. Ethical principles were followed and the project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee under the number 11-0348.

METHODS

This is an exploratory qualitative study, approaching the field of cultural studies in its English strand, which aims to understand the complexity of the events and the processes under which identities

are formed and transformed, and the several social practices viewed as cultural. Cultural texts are the place where meaning is negotiated and fixed, and the artifacts produced by the media “are representation practices, inventing senses that surround and operate in the cultural arenas where meaning is negotiated and hierarchies are established”⁽⁹⁾.

The analysis corpus was the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, which has the largest print run and circulation in Brazil⁽¹⁰⁾. The authors have read the texts of the newspaper published since 1997 – when it became available on the Internet and, concomitantly, there were great changes in organ donation in Brazil – up until 2008. The intention is to examine the subject positions that are at stake in relation to donors, and then to point out the social domains and relationships that cross and permeate them. In the search, the descriptors organ donation and organ transplantation were used. Among the 513 located articles, 64 corresponded to the study proposal.

In the textual analysis, discourses were examined based on the referential of Michel Foucault, using the discourse and ruling tools, perceiving the texts as monuments for the construction of organ donors. Since they are used to remember and think, they are like a starting point for thought and action, working as a reminder and warning⁽¹¹⁾. This analysis was based on the presupposition that the discourses of the newspaper articles rule subjects, assuming that which Foucault mentioned as the right disposition of things in order to lead them to a convenient purpose⁽⁷⁾. Similarly to this researcher, the authors believe that subjects are constituted in discourse societies, which have the purpose to conserve, produce, and spread these discourses throughout a space and distribute them according to strict rules, without depriving the holders from possession due to this distribution.

RESULTS

It is understood that the newspaper uses resources to transmit opinions and approaches to subject of donation and transplantation, which sometimes is made with persistence and sometimes with silence. The newspaper follows the process of organ donation and transplantation, at times more insistently and at other times less, depending on the events that stand out, transmitting knowledge regarding it. Based on the analysis of the articles

(Table 1), it was possible to extract discourses that the newspaper has transmitted, which are grouped and presented as follows.

Legislation

The old transplantation law generated many articles during the course of its legalization and change, since the advantages and disadvantages of the law were discussed and people considered to be famous and/or experts on the topic wrote to the newspaper. A great number of people declared themselves to be non-donors in face of the old law transmitted by the newspaper, as shown by the following statements:

[...] non-donor (E1). [...] specialists discuss the theme, agree that the law was an advance, but diverge on its application (E2). [...] the new transplantation law misses the target [...] it is considered a failure (E3). [...] they supported the law, holding on to it as a last hope. They were not sufficiently informed that it consisted of false expectations, which will hardly stand firm (E4).

According to the newspaper articles, despite being considered an advance, the approved law did not reach the target aim of increasing the number of donors. This seemed to be the last hope of patients and caused false expectations. The changes in the law generated statements from experts, such as the Ministry of Health and the president of the ABTO, which were transmitted by the newspaper.

As of this change in donation authorization, family members are the ones to determine whether the removal of organs in case of brain death may occur [...] the method had the opposite effect [...] The demand for the authorization manifestation on the driver's license is unnecessary and annoying. [...] the measure announced by Serra is historical [...] the family must be sovereign on the decision regarding donation (E5). [...] this should be a warning for them. No one else trusts this class. They believe they are going to die in the hospital, and their organs are going to be sold (E6).

In the articles, a questioning language towards the emotions of the readers stands out, appealing to their feelings through expressions such as historical, sovereign, dying in the hospital, and sold organs, which seems to touch and raise compassion in face of the events reported in the newspaper articles. The former law, which had not

Excerpt	Analyzed articles
E1	Maria E. 9 entre 10 se negam a doar órgãos no PA [9 in every 10 deny donating organs in Pará]. 1997 [Cited on Aug. 6, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff070323.htm .
E2	Martins L. Lei de transplante é 1º passo para solução [Transplantation Law is the 1st step to a solution]. 1998 [Cited on Aug. 27, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff11029819.htm .
E3	Maior problema não é atacado [Major problem is not addressed]. 1997 [Cited on Aug. 27, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff190745.htm .
E4	Abbud Filho M. Cidadania e a doação de órgãos [Citizenship and organ donation]. 1997 [Cited on Sept. 4, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff290410.htm .
E5	Oliveira V. Só família vai poder autorizar doação de órgãos [Only the family can authorize organ donation]. 2000 [Cited on Sept. 5, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff1708200028.htm .
E6	Ignorância e descrédito médico causam polêmica sobre doação [Ignorance and medical discredit cause controversy regarding donation]. 1998 [Cited on Aug. 27, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff110114.htm .
E7	Nazareth, R. "Autorizei na hora", diz filha ["I authorized immediately", says daughter]. 1998 [Cited on Aug. 6, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff070125.htm .
E8	Rim novo deixa Márcio crescer [New kidney lets Mario grow]. 1998 [Cited on Sept. 4, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/folhatee/fm120112.htm .
E9	Doação e esclarecimento [Donation and explanations]. 1998 [Cited on Aug. 21, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/opiniao/fz29129802.htm .
E10	Alerta nos transplantes [Alert in transplantations]. 2006 [Cited on Aug. 21, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/opiniao/fz2504200603.htm .
E11	Borges encontra atletas transplantados [Borges meets transplanted athletes]. 2002 [Cited on Aug. 11, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/equilibrio/eq1605200225.htm .
E12	Ator Norton Nascimento morre em SP [Actor Norton Nascimento dies in São Paulo]. 2007 [Cited on Aug. 21, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq2212200719.htm .
E13	Fortino L. Jovem é o melhor candidato a doador [Youngsters are best donor candidates]. 1998 [Cited on Aug. 5, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/folhatee/fm120110.htm .
E14	Alves C. Brasil estuda técnica de doação espanhola [Alves C. Brasil studies Spanish donation technique]. 1997 [Cited on Aug. 11, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff100239.htm .
E15	Bernardes B, Figueiredo L. Governo faz campanha para tirar dúvidas sobre doação [Government runs campaign to clarify doubts regarding donation]. 1998 [Cited on Sept. 5, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff150111.htm .
E16	Leite F. Campanha vai estimular doação de órgãos [Campaign will encourage organ donation]. 2003 [Cited on Sept. 5, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff1511200314.htm .
E17	Bebê de um ano e meio recebe fígado de Milena [18-month-old baby receives Milena's liver]. 2006 [Cited on Aug. 11, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff2212200635.htm .
E18	Westin R. Família autoriza doação de órgãos de Eloá [Family authorizes donation of Eloá's organs]. 2008 [Cited on Oct. 31, 2008]. Available online at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff2010200801.htm .

Table 1 – List of articles analyzed in this study.

Source: Folha de São Paulo (internet), <<http://www.folha.com.br>>. 1997-2008.

been well accepted as it caused fear in the population, was soon modified and the decision regarding whether or not to donate organs was transferred to the families.

The newspaper publishes a chronology of facts that takes the reader into the story: first comes the news, then the decision the family member made, then the deceased patient's wish. The final purpose of this mobilization is to save lives and provide better quality of life to these people, who are able to take less medication and even find a partner, similar to the following case:

Her mother had brain death [...] I authorized right away [...] I am sure she would approve the donation [...] commercialization, I don't know. The fact is that we are going to save many lives (E7). It is much better than the hemodialysis needles. I take three drugs so that my body won't reject the kidney and to control pressure. [...] he even got a girlfriend (E8). The transplantation law unified the donation system for the first time [...] But it could not solve the problem of the lack of donors satisfactorily [...] there are people who suspect their organs are going to be trafficked [...]. Besides, there are religious convictions and reactions of sentimental order that must be respected (E9).

Legislation is a recurrent subject in newspaper articles, particularly when it comes to changes in the law. The discourse "is not the only thing that translates the struggles or the domination systems, but that which people fight for, the power people wish to get control of"⁽⁵⁾. Recurrently, specialists and health professionals, mainly physicians, are present in the articles, since they are given the power to establish certain truths regarding the human body, diseases, transplantations, etcetera. These professionals state truths regarding the way to lead the transplantation process, to arrange the patients on the list, to distribute the organs in the most righteous manner possible and advise the adoption of determined measures.

Clarifications

The newspaper transmits opinions that aim at enlightening the population. By pointing out vulnerabilities and issues that gain materiality, the newspaper shows its role of giving voice to the infamies that may involve the process of organ donation, manifesting their concern through their texts.

[...] the situation is concerning [...] there is no control over who has access to the single list. The registration order may be easily changed [...] (E10). [...] I was surprised, I didn't know there was an athlete category [...] have the breath of a champion [...] to remove the stigma that the transplanted subject is an aberration. We are only different because we received the gift of a second chance at life (E11). [...] death happened due to cardiac failure secondary to a pulmonary infection [...] the Beneficência hospital did not inform the date when Nascimento was hospitalized (E12).

Post-transplant life is brought to the newspaper so that probable donors know that there is life after transplantation. Famous athletes, such as the swimming champion Gustavo Borges, watch and comment on competitions created by transplanted subjects. Newspaper articles report on a certain athlete category, the transplanted athlete, with champion's breath and point out that transplantation is not an aberration, making it clear that everyone can and should donate organs. Even if this announced award, a second chance at life, is not well explained, the advantages, qualities and disadvantages are, since the death of transplanted subjects is only reported briefly in the newspaper.

That is what occurred following the death of the actor Norton Nascimento. The articles explained briefly that the actor had had anorgan transplantation but remained silent regarding his life as a transplanted subject, sticking to portraying his professional journey and that he left behind a wife and three children. By talking about what appears to be known, discourses become more fragile and uncertain, the wish for truth is ignored as "a prodigious machine aimed at excluding all of those who, point by point, tried to avoid this truth, in which truth assumes the task to justify interdiction and define craziness"⁽⁵⁾.

Young, between 15 and 22 years of age, living in a big Brazilian city [...] the person who dies due to external causes (homicides and traffic accidents, for instance) has a great chance of suffering brain death without damage to most of the organs, which transforms this person into a potential donor [...] 76% had a violent death [...] that the law is only going to have a real effect when young people become adults (E13).

The profile of the best donor candidate is described in the newspaper, showing that young people who die are in better condition to donate organs, since they usually do not present with chronic

diseases and suffer violent deaths, which would cause brain death without causing harm to the organs, as well as because they live in the city and are more exposed to high-risk situations. The awareness of young people from childhood reinforces the way to lead the behavior of men; that is, subjects must be influenced when they are children so that certain behaviors are expected once they become adults⁽¹²⁾. Therefore, instead of warning young people to take care, avoid exposure to high-risk situations and not to become donors, such discourses seem to reinforce the attitude of young people as possible donors.

Constituting truths

Pointing out donor countries, institutions and successful cases seems to be the discourse used by the newspaper to constitute truths regarding organ donation and, consequently, recruit donors.

[...] Spain is considered the country with the best model and the best structure for organ transplantation. It is the world champion in this type of procedure. [...] a group of 30 Brazilian physicians and technicians are going to learn the methodology used in Spain. [...] they are going to learn techniques in Spain that include the approach to the family of a potential donor. [...] the physicians and technicians are going to become monitors in the implementation of the new organ donation law(E14).

The newspaper states that the methodology used in Spain is being studied, repeating that this country is a champion and an example to be copied. This seems to be the point: copying good examples through a methodology that reduces waste, increases the number of transplantations and reduces waiting list. These excerpts highlight the group who is going to learn the techniques that work in Spain, in order to become monitors of its implementation in Brazil.

[...] enlightening campaign [...] radios and TVs [...] on prime time [...] with specialist physicians in the area (E15). My family already knows it, I am a donor [...] the best inheritance you can leave [...] your wish shall be made, be a donor. Using slogans like these, The Ministry of Health intends to reduce by at least 3% every year, until 2007, the waiting list for solid organs and to eliminate it for corneal transplantation. A new campaign is going to be released next week for donors to convince their families. There are still cultural questions and lack of information, said the Health Minister yesterday (E16).

The campaigns that encourage organ donation migrate their focus. A decade ago they aimed at clarifying doubts; currently they aim at encouraging donations. Highlights present two different ways of recruiting donors, showing a difference in focus and approach over the years, causing a displacement of what is transmitted by the newspaper. At the time when changes took place in donor legislation, there seemed to be a greater concern regarding the communication and information provided to the population regarding the determination of the law. In the last few years, it is observed that the discourse proposes to persuade people by selling organ donation as an act of kindness, the best inheritance someone can leave.

Nevertheless, even if discourses change, the target of these attempts is still the families, since they have the power to decide on the organ donation of deceased relatives. It is understood that the practice of discourse repetition, as used in the articles, aims at ruling people, leading them to this convenient purpose. Therefore, there is a regulated truth that establishes a relationship of power/knowledge in the subjects⁽¹³⁾. The discourse regarding organ donation constitutes a system of truth; that is, a social agreement that says it is true. This system of truth establishes a set of knowledge, forming a discursive field that has truth effects in the knowledge field of organ donation, with subsequent effects of power⁽¹⁴⁾.

Tragedies are reported by the newspaper to show how certain acts may result in the positive actions of people. These are the cases of people who died unfairly, who are victims of atrocities of fate and those who suffer attempts on their lives.

[...] organ of a girl who suffered brain death after a tooth extraction went to a boy with hepatitis [...] suddenly [...] the boy was registered on the transplant waiting list the day before yesterday, after the physicians found he could die in two days if he did not receive a new organ (E17). [...] for the mother, it was very difficult to understand that the heart was still beating. That was difficult [...] she ended up asking this question. In the midst of all this suffering, the family is going to make many people happy (E18). [...] by the affection she had for people, I believe this is what she wanted, said her cousin [...] it was at the same time sad and happy [...] happy because she finally got her heart. Sad because of Eloa's death and the suffering of her family (E19).

Unexpected deaths that become great deeds of giving provide visibility to transplantations and fame to those who authorize donations in moments of grief and loss. This was the outcome of Eloa's kidnapping, a girl who was shot in the head by her ex-boyfriend who kept her and a friend hostage for over 100 hours in the apartment where he lived. Her death touched everyone and was repeatedly published. Despite the tragedy, the episode was exorcized by the donation of her organs. The donation authorization represented comfort to the family, demonstrating the powerful act of giving and assuming great meaning, especially in the elaboration of the loss of dear ones. It seems that, on the occasion of these great disasters in which death becomes public, recipients begin to exist for the donors and, therefore, donation becomes another way of overcoming the pain and suffering caused by death.

The newspaper discourses emphasize that transplantations give life and reinforce the fact that the decision is a sovereign attitude of family members. In order to accomplish this, they approach subjects through words, emphasizing that people who donate are generous, help others, can overcome the pain due to their loss, save many lives, and receive their moment of fame, among others. On the other hand, the main barrier to donations is the refusal of the family, an attitude that is silenced in the articles. In these cases, the newspaper portrays those who do not donate their loved one's organs as uninformed people without conscience who permit death without having helped others, and who lose the opportunity to leave the most valuable inheritance: the gift of life to others who depend on them. People feel in a position to assume such behavior to be remembered as good people, and the discourses do not indicate the possibility that people may not want to donate their organs. Foucault, by saying what comes to the eyes, discourses that become more fragile and uncertain, says that people ignore the wish for the truth⁽⁵⁾.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Provided with Foucault's tool, this study aimed at analyzing discourses transmitted by the newspaper, highlighting the way they subjectify and recruit subjects to donate their organs. It is not the authors' intention to state what is right or

what is wrong, but to let the knowledge emerge that makes us think. Studies like this one contribute to the work of nurses and other health professionals, raising questions regarding the instituted practices, as they show other ways of looking at this theme than those that seem to be already constituted in the nurse's education. It is understood that these discourses represent truths regarding the donation of organs, allowing readers to identify themselves in the writings and to assume certain positions instead of others. The newspaper excerpts were seen as a powerful media artifact that, through the texts, transmit truths that influence donors.

It is observed that repeated discourses in the articles seem to always indicate the same purpose: performing more transplantations. Therefore, more donations are necessary, and the newspaper invests in the publication of discourses that evoke truths, define actions that may be taken and aim at reaching the families, who retain the power of decision-making regarding the donation of organs of their relatives. Hence, subjects who donate their organs feel that they decided to do so of their own free will, that it is the right thing to do, a rational decision, with the illusion that their personal choices are indeed personal.

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