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## **Practices and Rationales of Embodied Philanthropy**

Since the 1990s, when the body was confirmed as both an object of popular and critical attention, it has also become philanthropic. A growing group of initiatives have called on participants to pledge their bodies to raise funds for and awareness of a variety of causes ranging from medical research and community support to conservation and foreign aid. These campaigns operate by having participants temporarily alter their appearance or modify their habits and concurrently collect donations (typically including a personal registration fee that doubles as one's own donation) to support a cause. Where one can be a donor or a sponsor without participating, to be an embodied philanthropist is to channel philanthropy through the body and its capacity to evidence philanthropic engagement. The body's semiotic aspect thus differentiates embodied philanthropy from even the more bodily-dependent forms of philanthropic behavior, such as volunteering one's time or labor, and medical philanthropy.

In Australia, home to Movember – perhaps the biggest global success story in embodied philanthropy – these sorts of campaigns have proliferated. More than a dozen homegrown and international embodied philanthropy fundraisers dot the annual calendar. Some have been national (and increasingly international) mainstays for more than decade while others attract minimal amounts of attention, operate only briefly and then fade away. Despite the numerous permutations of bodily engagement and causes supported, understandings of the reasons and mechanisms for the philanthropization of the body, both in the Australian context and globally, remain largely unexplored, especially from an organizer's perspective. Embodied philanthropy is accordingly an area in the sector where, “practice appears to be outstripping research” (Scaife et al., 2016, p. vi).

This paper posits embodied philanthropy as a class of initiatives with its own logics, mechanisms and effects. It uses an approach grounded in cultural studies of the body, notably Annemarie Mol's (2002) theory of multiple ontologies, to examine why and how the body has become philanthropic across durational appearance, activity and abstention campaigns and argues that the affordances and versatility of the body make it both easy to give from a participant's perspective and multiply useful for organizers. Mol's theory allows for a framing of the body as multiple, constituted as many different – even contradictory – philanthropically useful entities depending on how one seeks to understand it. As it is constituted by organizations with goals of publicity, participation, education/awareness and

fundraising, the body can become an income-generator, billboard, martyred example, producer of emotion, pedagogical space, exemplar of good health and/or style project. Where the body has become a locus of cultural and personal meaning giving rise to myriad personal body projects, charities have aligned their needs with existing or enticing potential body projects among would-be participants. Bodily participation can thus take on a range of philanthropically useful and personally desirable forms, all encompassed within a single action.

A series of micro-case studies of recent Australian embodied philanthropy campaigns explains the largely discursive processes by which philanthropic organizations constitute participating bodies as strategic entities. Each one uses textual (supplemented by visual) analysis of campaign websites to probe how the body is made philanthropic. Mol's notion of multiplicity is used to illustrate how a given campaign's multiple bodily enactments, while each serving a particular goal, can simultaneously be at odds with one another without undermining an initiative's success. This paper provides a way for those working in the nonprofit sector to better understand the ways in which the body can be used philanthropically, in turn allowing them to more effectively design embodied initiatives that both appeal to would-be participants and concurrently meet broader objectives.

## **Literature Review**

### *Context for Research – Australia*

The Australian philanthropic scene is similar to that of many affluent Western states in terms of volunteering and giving – both elements involved in embodied philanthropy participation – as well as emerging trends. As a relatively recent phenomenon, however, embodied philanthropy is virtually absent from the literature on either volunteering (on the part of participants) or donations (from either participants or their sponsors), which makes it particularly difficult to determine its impact, scope or alignment with extant trends.

Sector-wide, volunteering rates peak among those between 34 and 44 years old, but remain stronger among older rather than younger demographics (Gray et al., 2012), where time pressures and uncertainty about the benefits of volunteering influence participation rates (Merrill, 2006). The kinds of organizations supported depend on a factors such as one's stage

of life and contact with the types of organizations seeking volunteers (Gray et al., 2012). Those who identify as religious are more likely to volunteer, but the influence of other variables, including gender, education, age and employment complicate the overall picture, as do considerations of cultural and linguistic diversity (Scaife et al., 2016, p. 8).

Embodied philanthropists in Australia represent a range of demographics, largely depending on the type of participation required and these constraints cut across broader trends in volunteering. Studies of campaigns where participants give up alcohol, for instance, are most popular among women in their 30s and 40s (Robert, 2016), a finding that aligns with general rates of volunteering. This kind of embodied philanthropy nonetheless excludes segments of the population who do not drink alcohol, such as members of certain religious communities, who often volunteer at higher rates than the general population (Merrill, 2006; Scaife et al., 2016). Gender specific campaigns like Movember similarly present a very biased sense of their participants as volunteers, a fact that strengthens the case for considering embodied philanthropy as class of prosocial engagement rather than on a campaign-by-campaign basis.

Giving to embodied philanthropy campaigns is typically done as “everyday giving,” or the unplanned or irregular donations to non-profit organizations that accounts for most individual donations in Australia. After a downturn due to the Global Financial Crisis this kind of giving has rebounded and donations have surpassed pre-2008 levels (Scaife et al., 2016). Most Australian embodied philanthropy campaigns emerged during this re-establishment period. In this class of giving, religious or spiritual organizations draw slightly more than a third of all monetary gifts, while community/welfare services and medical research respectively account for approximately 13 and 10 percent of monies donated, albeit from a large pool of donors – 70% and 58% of the population respectively – in smaller amounts (Scaife et al., 2016, p. 20). The causes supported by embodied philanthropy align with these latter two sectors and the trend toward smaller individual donations also holds true. The full extent of giving via embodied philanthropy, however, is yet to be determined.

It is reasonable to suspect that embodied philanthropy campaigns compete, at least to some extent, with one another and with more traditional ways of soliciting donations. There are, for instance, three national, month-long fundraisers predicated on abstaining from alcohol and few participants sign up for more than one (Robert, 2016). If and precisely how embodied philanthropy, either as a whole or in particular iterations, detracts from other forms of giving

(or volunteering) or whether it reaches audiences not previously engaged in philanthropy is yet to be determined. The impact of successful embodied campaigns in bringing attention and funds to particular causes, however, is clear from the examples of Movember (Wassersug et al., 2015) and the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge (Ward & Edmondson, 2015).

The foregoing examples also attest to the immense potential of demonstrative and social media enhanced fundraising and awareness raising campaigns operated on a peer-to-peer model. The low cost and potentially wide reach of social media has resulted in giving “becoming less private, more social and more experiential” (Scaife et al., 2016, p. v). These models, especially valuable for their ability to reach younger groups (Miller, 2009) are growing in importance and embodied philanthropy, which has garnered attention for its use of social media – not least because of the attention to the self and the body fostered by social media (Bravo & Hoffman-Goetz, 2015; J. Jacobson & Mascaro, 2016) – constitutes an important subset of these mediated peer-to-peer initiatives.

### *Embodied Philanthropy*

Part of the difficulty in understanding the role embodied philanthropy plays in the third sector arises from the variety of activities that can be designated by the term and the lack of any systematic study. One branch of scholarship has focused on event-style fundraisers such as sponsored runs, walks or rides, often referred to using Samantha King’s catch-all term “thons” (Edwards & Kreshel, 2008; King, 2006; Klawiter, 1999; Olivola, 2011; R. Taylor & Shanka, 2008; van Batenburg, 2013). Although classed as peer-to-peer fundraisers (Miller, 2009; Scaife et al., 2016, p. 22), owing to the direct solicitation of donations among participants’ networks, most studies have focused on the relationship between the event and the cause supported as part of a larger exploration of the culture of benevolent behavior around specific causes. Scholarship in this vein often takes a critical stance concerning who is targeted by these campaigns, who is excluded and for what reasons (J. L. Jacobson, 2010; King, 2012; Sulik, 2011). Seemingly of lesser importance is the central role of the body; this despite the fact that the body is core to not only to the fundraising, but also to related agendas oriented around martyrdom, empathy and health promotion that link philanthropists, the wider public, and beneficiaries. A second group of studies, often coming from disciplines such as kinesiology, has paid greater attention to the role of the utility of the body in both historical and contemporary recreational (Erikson, 2011) and physical (Schultz, 2010)

activism. Although not generally framed as philanthropy, these initiatives echo many of its goals and methods, notably using the body to publicize a cause and, in some cases, fundraising.

Initiatives involving sponsored but temporary changes to the body have largely been studied in the same way as event-style fundraisers, which is to say mostly in relation to the cause supported and in isolation from similar initiatives. These campaigns have garnered considerable media commentary (Dempsey, 2011; Dockterman, 2014; Hodge, 2011; Longano, 2013; Pryor, 2010) but academic study has substantively neglected their philanthropic components in favor of examining their function as health promotion or awareness raising vehicles (Jackson, 2016; Renold, 2017; Robert, 2015) or examples of marketing success (Cherrier & Gurrieri, 2014; Fry, 2014; Wassersug et al., 2015). Notable exceptions here are found in the works of Jacobson (2010), Jacobson and Mascaro (2016), Ventresca (2016), Bravo and Hoffman-Goetz (2015) and Robert (2013), which focus, at least partially, on the philanthropic implications of particular campaigns.

Where analyses such as King's (2006) have endeavored to explain why embodied philanthropy developed when it did, they conclude that embodied initiatives are a response to twinned neoliberal public health and philanthropic agendas that focus on self-care and/or fitness and discourses of civic engagement. Participants internalize governmental power in such a way that the refashioning of the body and embodied behaviors are made purposeful demonstrations and enactments of a body that serves the imperatives of personal responsibility for health and wellness and prosocial commitment. The satisfaction of these intertwined imperatives is an example of how embodied philanthropy caters for participants' mixed motives (Martin, 1994; Van Til, 1998), as well as serving the needs of campaign organizers and state-level objectives. Such macro-level analyses contextualize the embodied turn but do not provide much insight into what the body itself provides to a campaign. New work on cause-related apparel and other forms of conspicuous compassion, however, is more attuned to the immediate context of the body and begins to explain the philanthropic benefit of actually wearing such merchandise in terms of what it signals to others about the wearer's prosocial nature (Rogers, 2014).

## **Methodology and Scope**

To counter the limitations of campaign-specific studies, which have prevented systematic consideration of the body's role as the central (and increasingly important) mechanism by which these philanthropic projects are carried out, this paper uses seven micro-case studies that each highlight a particular enactment of a philanthropic body. The cases are all drawn from contemporary Australian initiatives or international campaigns operating in Australia. A two year-long survey (July 2013-June 2015) of a major metropolitan newspaper for mentions of embodied philanthropy campaigns was used to identify initiatives notable enough to have attracted a degree of mainstream media coverage. From this list, two appearance-based (Movember, Red My Lips), two abstention (FebFast, Dry July) and two activity-based (September, Walk in her Shoes) campaigns were selected. This range aptly illustrates the prescribed bodily enactments across the three most common types of durational embodied philanthropy. Within these three categories, the more prominent campaigns with considerable public profile and/or numbers of participants were selected due to their cultural impact and likelihood of becoming (or having become) models for new initiatives, both locally and internationally. Furthermore, this choice aligns the causes supported with some of most common sectors (religious organizations aside) for donations of Australian charity dollars: community services, medical research and international aid.

Each case study relies on textual, specifically close reading, and (to a lesser extent) visual analysis of official campaign websites from 2013 to 2016. This approach combines careful attention to the words and images selected by campaign organizers to determine both what is being communicated and how it is being conveyed and follows the humanistic approach to advertising first elaborated by Stern and Schroeder (1994). These micro-level analyses are subjective, although this aligns with principles of close reading that are open to multiple, even conflicting, processes of signification (DuBois, 2003). This subjective interpretation is also likely to reflect the general public's varied reception of the websites. Participants' views, whilst sometimes featured as testimonials, function as part of the main public presentations of a campaign and accordingly highlight their exemplary status for campaign organizers and are considered as such. Matters of how participants might modify or deviate from the bodily enactment(s) prescribed by campaign organizers to effect different kinds of philanthropic embodiment to those dictated sit outside of the current study.

## **How Philanthropy Becomes Embodied**

Annemarie Mol's (2002) concept of multiple ontologies, elaborated in her theorizing of the body in various healthcare contexts, provides a framework for understanding how the philanthropic body becomes the range of "tools" necessary for the success of a campaign. Mol argues that a body is enacted through practices and contexts that constitute it as something potentially different each time it is "staged, handled, performed" (40-41n), even when these processes occur simultaneously. Rather than supplanting each other, these multiple bodies all "hang together" to create a complex assemblage that remains both whole and multiply constituted (Mol, 2002, p. 55). The key to perceiving these multiple embodiments is a matter of focus, for "the multiplication of objects [appears] when we focus upon the practices that enact them" (Blackman, 2008, p. 125).

The logic of the Mol's body multiple is useful for thinking about embodied philanthropy insofar as it explains how the body can be or serve as many things at once to both participants and campaign creators. Because it takes on many roles and fulfills various functions – these often coinciding – for the vested parties, multiplicity is a central premise of embodied philanthropy. As will be discussed below, multiple ontologies also provides a way of making sense of potentially conflicting and arguably mutually exclusive ontologies, for a body performing the roles prescribed by a campaign can still be wholly philanthropic even if it embodies philanthropic enactments that are, in isolation or with only a singular focus, at odds with one another.

### *Body as Income-Generator*

The body's capacity to generate income is traditionally associated with work and labor (Shilling, 2005). In embodied philanthropic contexts, however, the body's activities, surfaces or privations become means of raising money, a capacity that demonstrates how versatile the body can be when framed in terms of philanthropy. Dry July, an initiative that is predicated on a month free from alcohol, notes the many ways – head-to-head contests, the Designated Dryver Service (a form of ride-sharing) and the Golden Ticket, a \$25 donation that provides a 24-hour reprieve from sobriety (Dry July, 2013) – in which the sober body can raise money for adult cancer centers. Dry July has been very successful in this aspect of its efforts – in



2016 it raised \$AUD 3.7 million (Dry July, 2016) – although scholarly attention to this aspect of the campaign is virtually non-existent (for the exception see van Batenburg, 2013) compared to its public health potential (Goodyear, 2013; McCreanor et al., 2013; Pennay et al., 2014; Pettigrew & Pescud, 2015).

The core impetus for fundraising in Dry July’s abstention-based campaign is the social, and by extension financial, valuation of the sacrifice of bodily pleasures. This monetization of sacrifice is at odds with understandings of the concept that are most often linked to rationales, such as religious devotion or patriotism, for which we typically resist assigning monetary value. Dry July nonetheless urges its participants to quantify the value of bodily sacrifice. The Designated Dryver Service is technically a form of labor (akin to the work performed by a chauffeur or taxi driver), but it is the act of being the sober friend with a car that creates the necessary preconditions for donation and the imputed equivalency between the driver and the dryver that helps to establish the amount to be donated. Similarly, the Golden Ticket affixes a value to a day of reprieve, a calculus that when reversed places a value on sobriety. The \$25 exemption, for example, is described as “a Wonka-esque pass to the magical kebab-scented world of a good night out” (Dry July, 2013). By emphasizing the sensual pleasures that can come from drinking, the implicit argument is that the participant should be compensated for foregoing them or be willing to pay to indulge. Dry July’s rhetoric here implicitly vaunts the lived, experienced difficulty of participation and discursively posits the sacrifice one worthy of remuneration.

### *Body as Billboard*

Appearance-based campaigns are quintessential examples of using the showiness of the body for philanthropic ends. Social and cultural theorists of the body would argue that this is the body’s presentational (Shilling, 2008) or communicative (Blackman, 2008) capacities being channeled for philanthropic ends. Movember, which calls on men to begin November clean-shaven and to grow mustaches, is perhaps the best example, for the participant’s eponymous “mo” has become *the* recognizable symbol of not only the campaign, but also the range of men’s health causes (notably prostate cancer research) it supports. Mo Bros become “walking, talking billboards for the 30 days of November [who] through their actions and words raise awareness by prompting private and public conversation around the often ignored issue of men’s health” (Movember, 2013). Where billboards provide “high frequency of

exposure in an environment with relatively little clutter” (C. R. Taylor & Franke, 2003, p. 151), the mustachioed man, at least during November, becomes an attention-getting sight (Wassersug et al., 2015).

The need for this deliberately timed facial hair to differentiate itself from any ordinary mustache explains why many of the mustaches featured in Movember materials are intricately styled or appear on people (such as young Caucasian or East Asian males) who would not stereotypically sport mustaches. They must be recognized as body *modifications*, something that makes them deliberate, and not simply a lack of conventional grooming (Featherstone, 2000). For the campaign, the “mo” must be the sole and ultimate communicator, for it links the personal act of grooming and the purposeful acts of advocacy and awareness-raising. The campaign’s success reinforces the link between the mustache and the cause because the initiative’s renown, especially thanks to social media (Bravo & Hoffman-Goetz, 2015; J. Jacobson & Mascaro, 2016), short-circuits the need for participants to actively engage in awareness raising-discussions. The hairy upper-lip, effective billboard that it has become, now does the talking.

In cases where the form of embodied participation required does not draw attention to itself as distinctive or uncharacteristic, the billboard functionality of the body – the core embodied role in appearance-based campaigns – is lost, as is its effectiveness. It is partly for this reason that the now defunct Fanuary (UK/Australia) and Julyna (Canada) campaigns that asked women to style their pubic hair for a cause, failed. As critics argued, it would have been more “billboard-like” to encourage women to not wax or shave and thus defy conventional standards of grooming by allowing pubic hair to be seen when it typically is not than it would to encourage a conformist, depilated look (Dault, 2011; Dempsey, 2011; Smith, 2011). To rob the body of its ability to be noticed and noted as doing something for a cause – to be a billboard – vacates its philanthropic potential and disincentivizes participation (and the need to fundraise) in favor of simply adopting a look or a behavior.

### *Body as Martyred Example*

As with sacrifice-driven abstention initiatives, campaigns based on martyrdom, which can be understood in a secular sense as great suffering for a cause (Olivola & Shafir, 2013, p. 92), seek to capitalize on the (perceived) difficulty of the form of embodied participation.<sup>1</sup>

Research suggests that aligning a cause benefitting those who are perceived to suffer (for instance the sick or the poor) with increased levels of difficulty or suffering among the fundraisers can positively influence the amount of money that a campaign can raise (Olivola, 2011). Some campaigns, such as the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Research Foundation's Steptember, have accordingly *represented* the participant's body as undertaking feats that exceed normal exertion. Unlike event-style fundraisers that often do require above-average levels of commitment, training and exertion, the appeals to martyrdom and sacrifice that are typically made by activity or abstention-based embodied philanthropy initiatives focus on the discursive construction of martyrdom and sacrifice. This is because campaigns must walk a fine line between achievability, which keeps barriers to participation low (Ralley, 2014), and fundraising potential via appeals to heroic behavior.

Steptember's mountains challenge, an increasingly important source of funding for the Alliance (Herbert et al., 2016), reframes the initiative's now common goal of walking 10,000 steps a day for 28 days (Steptember, 2013a) in a way that heightens the perception of the task's difficulty. "The Mountains" consists of "virtually climb[ing] the highest peak on each continent," (Steptember, 2013b) a feat that can be accomplished as a team of four when each person successfully reaches their daily target. Here, ambitious but achievable efforts are cast as feats of Herculean exertion: "Each participant will reach all seven summits and the top of their virtual mountain by the end of the Steptember if they reach their target steps per day" (Steptember, 2013b). The differences between regular walking and mountain climbing aside, the assertion is misleading, as it is only collectively (and not individually) that the team's members would amass enough steps to have virtually scaled each of the seven peaks. (It would be odd though to boast of having climbed a quarter of the way to the summit of each of these 7 peaks.) To construe the body's limited philanthropic actions as akin to an epic exploit nonetheless creates different resonances around exertion with important financial consequences, to say nothing of the legitimizing of the cause that occurs when people are seen to martyr themselves for it.

### *Body as Instigator of Emotion*

The bodies of the beneficiaries of philanthropy have, in the tradition of televised concerts for famine relief and child sponsorship advertisements, long been used to elicit an affective and largely guilt-inspired financial response from donors (Manzo, 2008; Small & Verrochi,

2009). Embodied philanthropy, however, has made the participant's body a vector for such feelings and donations by making the participant's body mimic that of the beneficiary, a situation that could be considered a form of directed kinesthetic empathy (Reynolds & Reason, 2012).

CARE Australia's "Walk In Her Shoes" sees the participant's body mimic the behavior that the charity seeks to curtail for its beneficiaries. The act, walking 25, 50 or 100km in a week, is sponsored to support programs that will improve the lives of women and girls in the developing world. CARE links the participant's walking and that performed by those who will benefit from its interventions by having the relatively privileged Australian participants emulate the daily efforts of the future beneficiaries of CARE's programs. A testimonial attests to some of the ways in which participating generates carefully calculated empathetic responses. To a question about the challenges faced while "walking in another woman's shoes," the participant replied: "Physically it was tough. My feet and legs were tired, and all of me was tired by the end of the week" (Walk In Her Shoes, 2014). By requiring participants to find the time and energy to accommodate their philanthropic obligation, they will experience how the need to walk displaces other activities and how the physical burden of walking (albeit unburdened by heavy loads of water or fire wood) can be draining. These immediate outcomes reinforce the need for not only awareness, but also funds to redress these problems. The campaign thus generates knowledge about global poverty (Oguro & Burrige, 2016), empathy from participants and sympathy (both for participants and for the beneficiaries) from the sponsors by using kinesthetic empathy to engender emotional empathy about a seldom thought-about but relatable facet of a problem.

### *Body as Pedagogical Space*

Many health-related causes, which balance fundraising with health promotion goals recognize the importance of the body as a vector for learning (Shilling, 2010; Shilling & Mellor, 2007; Shusterman, 2008) and have turned to activity or abstention-based embodied philanthropy campaigns to prompt participants to learn about both the issues at stake in the campaigns and about their own health. The pedagogical function of these ostensibly philanthropic initiatives is confirmed by the scholarship that frames them as public health campaigns (McCreanor et al., 2013; Pennay et al., 2014; Pettigrew & Pescud, 2016), this despite the fact that the philanthropic aspect of such campaigns provides a socially acceptable

reason for abstaining (Cherrier & Gurrieri, 2012) and having a chance to experience the different circumstances that facilitate embodied learning (Robert, 2015).

FebFast, an abstention initiative supporting drug and alcohol treatment and recovery programs, links experiential learning about (for instance) the social role of alcohol and its effects on individuals. Testimonials boast of the (self) discoveries that participants have made: “I discovered a new love for virgin mary drinks and exercise! I even learnt how to run for fun! Thanks Febfast!”; “Febfast really made me aware of how much sugar was actually in food that I didn’t even know had sugar!!” (FebFast, 2015). Such statements elide the role of the body in the learning process, but by compelling participants to act differently, campaigns allow them a space in which to take note of unconscious behaviors or to experience and evaluate alternatives for themselves. When paired with messaging, such as testimonials, that vaunt the value of these different embodiments and code them as both better alternatives and valuable lessons to be learned, the experience becomes a way to learn by doing.

### *Body as Exemplar of Good Health*

If the participant’s body can be made into an inward-looking pedagogical space, the alteration of the body in ways that can manifestly communicate the benefits of embodied philanthropy is also important. Body modifications that are associated with health in particular are deemed to reflect greater physical capital for individuals and thus serve as markers of esteem (Shilling, 2013, p. 139). The FebFast website accordingly draws on participant surveys to argue that the desirable changes participants notice about themselves as a result were also evident to others: “Past febfasters have told us they slept better, their skin improved, and they exercised more during their 28 days off alcohol. In fact, in 2010 a whopping 67% of febfasters told us their overall health improved. That, ladies and gentleman, is why you’re looking and feeling better” (FebFast, 2013b). The last sentence’s appeals to self-evident logic is signaled by the shift to the more conversational tone and the direct address of the reader. It is perhaps for this reason that the first of the six justifications of “Why it’s good for you” was “get beach hot” (FebFast, 2013b). Although attractiveness is far from being synonymous with health, the image of participant’s body as an exemplary body that demonstrates the signs of a healthy lifestyle is framed as self-evident, achievable and desirable.

Where responsibility to “look after oneself” has become a moral imperative of neoliberal regimes of biopower (King, 2006), demonstrating one’s adoption of healthy living practices is in itself something of a moral act akin to conventional forms of charitable giving. Moreover, where demonstrable effects are likely to be more convincing to prospective participants than promises or verbal testimonials alone, the participant’s noticeably healthier body or lifestyle becomes an advertisement, a billboard even, for the campaign in addition to promoting the cause and its objectives.

### *Body as style project*

If questions of appearance can be entwined with an altruistic impetus (Nguyen, 2011), appearance-based embodied philanthropy initiatives trade in appeals to personal aesthetics as part of their recruiting and thus ultimately fund- and awareness-raising efforts. Where the body modification dictated defies convention, as the Movember moustache often still does, the association with a cause can be the excuse that legitimizes the otherwise suspect style project (J. L. Jacobson, 2010). In most cases though, the body modification, be it sudden or gradual, aligns with norms and therein harnesses the motivations that have made make-over culture a thriving industry (Jones, 2008; Wegenstein, 2012) for philanthropic ends.

The Red My Lips campaign uses a stereotypical symbol female sexuality – lips made red with lipstick – to draw attention to issues surrounding sexual violence: “One of the most common misconceptions about sexual violence is the belief that it is provoked by sexual attraction or desire. This rape myth often leads people to blame victims based on how they looked, what they were wearing, how much makeup they had on, if they flirted with their attacker, etc. Since it is historically connected with sexuality and attraction, red lipstick seems a fitting weapon with which to combat these damaging myths” (Red My Lips, 2016). Red My Lips exemplifies the way in which the body is called upon to express a philanthropically-determined aesthetic, but one that aligns with dominant trends among the campaign’s target demographic. This arguably frivolous makeover act, however, is recast as purposeful and what otherwise might have been dismissed as vanity that distracts from larger, more serious concerns for women (Bordo, 2004; Wolf, 1990) can be made into not only a legitimate philanthropic act, but an educational one as well (Renold, 2017). Red My Lips accordingly speaks the power of the stylish and altruistically styled body in its assertion that “This is not about VANITY. It's about VISIBILITY” (Red My Lips, 2015).

## Discussion and Analysis

Durational forms of embodied philanthropy do not break with previous frameworks for charitable giving or engagement, but they do represent an extension of these rationales into new territory that more than ever recognizes the centrality and multi-faceted usefulness of the body in philanthropic projects. The body multiple, to reference Mol, is useful precisely because of its multiplicity, notably in the way that it allows campaigns, seemingly effortlessly, to satisfy to the many rationales that people may have for participating and the multiple objectives that organizers must meet. While catering for mixed motives and needing to get the most out of a single prosocial act are hardly new philanthropic imperatives (Eikenberry, 2009; Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012; Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009; Richey & Ponte, 2011; Wirgau et al., 2010), embodied philanthropy trades on the body's abilities to be many things (to participant and organizer alike) and to communicate this engagement with minimal effort, a key consideration when resources and effort are determinants of what people are prepared to give (Bekkers, 2006; Meslin et al., 2008). Economy and demonstrability are thus two key benefits of embodied philanthropy.

Philanthropic bodies are economical from an organizer's perspective because they allow the various enactments necessary to campaign success to coalesce. Collecting a registration fee and having a participant go about their daily activities with a highly visible sign of their philanthropic participation on their face transforms a regular awareness raising campaign (for instance one conducted via traditional and social media) and fundraiser into an event where paying participants amplify the official message and *show* the cause to have supporters in the community, something that further legitimizes it as worthy of support and the issues as worthy of attention and/or action.

For participants, a singular embodied act, such as abstaining from alcohol or walking a certain distance every day, can satisfy many motivational desires. One may set out to be a good example for one's family (exemplar of good health) and to drop a few pounds (style project) while raising money for a good cause might be little more than a justification or an accountability measure (Cherrier & Gurrieri, 2012), albeit one that nets dollars for the charity. Furthermore, participants get to live their altruism and get to demonstrate it for the duration of the campaign every time they refuse a drink, lace up their sneakers or simply step

out with a philanthropically coded appearance, something that typically earns them plaudits for prosocial behavior (Frank, 1996). For both organizers and participants then, the body's semiotic potential (Featherstone, 2007; Gill et al., 2005; Sweetman, 2012), which is to say the way in which it is easily evidenced to be legitimately philanthropic, crucially draws attention to the contribution and reinforces it, thereby amplifying its effect (Rogers, 2014).

The philanthropic body, however, need not be harmonious in its philanthropic functions. It can be deeply at odds with itself across its many enactments and still be fruitful for a campaign, an affordance of, as Mol theorizes, the body's multiplicity. A FebFast or Dry July participant, for instance may diminish their ability to be seen as a martyr for a cause or as learning how to navigate social situations without drinking if they make extra monetary contributions through the purchase of 24-hour reprieves from their pledged sobriety. Conversely, to not allow such exemptions might set the threshold of commitment too high and serve as a deterrent for potential participants, costing a campaign in terms of both fundraising and awareness raising. By nonetheless allowing such reprieves, campaign organizers show strategy in their design, for they not only allow but also encourage the body to be both income generator and (mostly) martyr and pedagogical space, all of which serve the initiative's objectives, albeit to varying degrees. These ostensible contradictions are always rationalized on campaign websites (FebFast, 2013a) and the steadily growing rates of participation, publicity and funds raised attest to fact that the convergence of these philanthropic embodiments, despite their contradictions and the potential accusations of hypocrisy, do not necessarily constitute poor campaign design.

## **Conclusion**

Although embodied philanthropy (especially in its durational forms) is a recent phenomenon, the proliferation and growing importance of this kind of peer-to-peer and often social-media enhanced campaign, despite divergences relative to what exactly the body must do to be philanthropic, necessitates broad studies in addition to research on particular initiatives. This paper has attempted to do some of the initial work in this regard by venturing reasons, with a focus on campaign organizers and the purposeful bodily enactments they script, why and how the body has become the new go-to vector for philanthropy. The body's capacity to do, communicate and be many things simultaneously, often with little to no extra effort for



participants, has allowed it to respond to the needs of would-be philanthropists and philanthropic organizations alike.

Where embodied philanthropy is only just coming to be recognized as a distinct category of philanthropic engagement, there is ample scope and need for further study, especially in ways that transcend the single-cause, single-campaign model. The extent of embodied philanthropic participation and giving in response to it, for instance, has yet to be tracked. Further research is also needed on the participants. Who are they? Why do they take up these initiatives? Do they do so for reasons different than more traditional forms of philanthropy? Do they make the campaign their own or deviate from the scripts set out by organizers? If so, how, why and to what effect? Undoubtedly, each of the bodily enactments examined in the foregoing micro-case studies could also inspire a series of deeper explorations and generate more theoretically and empirically nuanced understandings of how the body becomes – both in theory and in reality – a vector for charitable giving, awareness raising, behavior change and personal gratification. This attempt to come to grips with the bodily preconditions and implications of philanthropy is nonetheless a necessary first step in recognizing how and why the body is increasingly central to philanthropy.

For those working in the third sector, this study provides a framework for understanding and analyzing the work that the body can do. It also underscores the importance of strategic campaign design. The body's capacity to simultaneously be many things to organizers and participants is what makes it easy to give, even if that gift is only a partial fulfillment of all that the body can be to a cause. Moreover, contradictory embodiments are not, perhaps contrary to popular logic, nonsense or hypocrisy making. Rather they are strategic deployments of multiple philanthropic embodiments that emerge when we focus on these various facets of a philanthropic bodily practice.

Overriding all such concerns and of crucial importance in campaign design, however, is the need to embrace the body's ability to communicate and announce itself as philanthropic. For appearance-based campaigns, this is potentially easier, but requires the philanthropic enactment to be both visible and understood as philanthropic, as task whose individual burden on participants can, as in the case of Movember, be lessened with effective recognition messaging. For abstention or activity-based initiatives, the need for verbal reinforcement about the nature of philanthropic participation might be greater, but the

sacrifice or effort required to participate may lead to greater potential for income generation. For all kinds of durational embodied philanthropy, the ability for participants to work on their own bodies in ways that align with their own body projects is key to recruitment, but participation should yield recognition, a legitimation of behavior, or both. Consequently, campaign organizers ought to consider the priority they accord to each of their objectives and tailor their embodied philanthropy campaigns with the limits and affordances of different philanthropic embodiments in mind.

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<sup>1</sup> Meanings of martyrdom take on different connotations depending on the field in which it is discussed, with social, political and theological uses of the term each taking on inflections that are more precise than the wider use that has been adopted in many English-speaking contexts today. For more see Rona M. Fields' (2004) *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-Sacrifice*.

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