

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Transnational Neo-Temperance**

*Julie Robert, University of Technology Sydney*

Temporary Sobriety Initiatives (TSI) are short-term campaigns through which participants refrain from drinking alcohol for a period of time, typically a month, and (although not always formally required) concurrently raise money for a sponsored charity by soliciting donations. Better known by names such as FebFast and Dry January, these increasingly popular initiatives fuse the current fashion of channelling philanthropic engagement through the body (as seen in charity campaigns such as Movember and charity fun runs) with the broader public health concerns seeking to address what have been deemed to be problematic drinking cultures in places such as Australia, the United Kingdom and Finland.<sup>1</sup>

Having begun in Finland 2005 but developed in earnest starting from Australia in 2008, these initiatives emphasise a combination of charitable giving, responsibility for one's personal health, and awareness of alcohol's effects and social ubiquity. From their origins as grassroots campaigns, TSI have multiplied and crossed borders. Like many social movements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, TSI have used existing philanthropic networks and the connectivity afforded by the Internet and social media to exceed their small-scale origins and become international movements and major fundraisers.<sup>2</sup> To wit, in 2017, Australia's Dry July campaign raised nearly 4.3 million (Australian) dollars, not counting the fund raised in its New Zealand and British spin-offs, and a British survey reported that roughly one in six members of the adult drinking population intended to have a Dry January.<sup>3</sup>

TSI portray themselves as novel and innovative responses to crises of binge drinking and the creeping cultural ubiquity of alcohol.<sup>4</sup> Cognisant of the reputation of temperance movements as archaic and moralistic organisations, most are at pains to keep temperance associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>5</sup> Despite the apparent and arguably deliberate disconnect between TSI and temperance, TSI have deep but unacknowledged roots in temperance. Like the transnational temperance movements that gained in popularity from the 1870s, TSI found greatest favour in English-speaking countries, spreading from the Antipodes first to Europe and then to

North America. They have effectively mobilised scientific arguments about health and economics to motivate commitment to (temporary) abstinent and moderation. They have also embraced the temperance tradition of using both personal commitment and collective action to address larger cultural issues springing from alcohol. Despite their overt Anglo-orientation, TSI most resemble temperance actions from continental Europe: drinking strikes, boycotts and temporary periods of abstinence. Far from being (just) facets of the embodied philanthropy trend then, TSI should be considered a form of temperance, albeit reinvented in and for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Wary of the temperance taint, they have followed the lead of many medical temperance advocates and eschewed any links with religion and refrained from making claims about how alcohol should be regulated.<sup>6</sup> They have instead focused on how individuals may use abstemious practices as ways to achieve the “super values” of health, along with philanthropic civic responsibility, that emerged as priorities in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> The practices of TSI, wherever they operate, are consequently grounded in a common neoliberal ideology focused on personalised, indeed embodied, civic responsibility that has allowed them to cross borders and take root in a number of locations.

This chapter proposes to consider TSI as neo-temperance campaigns that are united by praxis as much as by purpose. Using discourse and visual analysis of public-facing TSI self-presentations, notably websites, social media sites, press-releases, traditional media commentary and annual reports, this chapter considers how TSI, as both philanthropic and health initiatives, were able to cross national and cultural boundaries, all the while connecting to earlier temperance traditions.

## **Understanding TSI**

Owing to their novelty, TSI have not generated much scholarly inquiry. The majority of what circulates has been published with some involvement from the campaigns themselves. These caveats aside, the phenomenon is coming to be better understood.

Most TSI, even those that pitch themselves first and foremost to be sacrifice-driven fundraisers for worthy-causes, claim to change drinking cultures and/or promote healthier lifestyles. FebFast's initial stated objective, for instance, was "to influence Australian communities' thinking and behaviour around alcohol and other drug use".<sup>8</sup> One current of research has accordingly been evaluative, often undertaken in partnership with the organisation running the TSI, to establish the benefits of participation.<sup>9</sup> A large-scale survey of Dry January participants has established that even failed participation leads to less drinking in the six months following the campaign.<sup>10</sup> Independent clinical studies have also shown a one-month period of alcohol abstinence to be of some benefit in improving vital statistics.<sup>11</sup> These investigations, however, tend to reduce TSI to a mere 30-day period of sobriety, as though it were little more than an elimination diet. By consequence, they fail to consider TSI as organised campaigns that have made deliberate choices around their approach, marketing and overall public presentation.

Case studies of Dry January, FebFast and Hello Sunday Morning (itself not a philanthropic month-long TSI and thus different in structure and orientation to most of the other initiatives) have better recognised the role that TSI marketing and communications strategies play in encouraging individuals to change their behaviours and attitudes toward alcohol consumption.<sup>12</sup> While largely still evaluative, these studies have probed how the campaigns achieve their results and have identified factors such as the implicit philanthropic contract with sponsors – a form of semi-public commitment – and an overall focus on moderation, as important elements of their success.<sup>13</sup>

Lacking from most of these analyses of individual campaigns though is a sense of how TSI are not isolated or unique initiatives, but are in many respects very similar programs in terms of structure, aims, methods and even conditions of emergence, both within countries holding multiple initiatives and across national borders. The lack of comparative work has similarly meant that the choices made by organisers of specific TSI (the overtness of their public health messaging, the choice of charity supported, their timing, and overall strategic focus) have not been considered. Trade publications and discussions from within the philanthropic sector have engaged with these matters in limited ways, although little of this conversation has filtered over into scholarly

circles.<sup>14</sup> Emerging work by Henry Yeomans is starting to study TSI within larger theoretical paradigms, including their relationship to selfhood and regulatory frameworks.<sup>15</sup>

## **TSI On The Move**

TSI present a complicated timeline if one is seeking to trace their global movements. Where the first, *Tipaton Tammikuu*, and most recent iterations of the campaigns, including On The Dry, are relatively easy to identify and explain, the vast majority of initiatives, which emerged between 2008 and 2015, present complications to researchers seeking to understand the process by which the ideas for these enterprises were transmitted and taken up.

The first TSI, albeit without an obvious philanthropic component, began in Finland. A submission to a German Ministry of Health initiative to collect information on novel approaches to combat binge drinking reports Finland's Alcohol Free-January, subsequently rebranded as *Tipaton Tammikuu* [Dropless January], having begun in 2005.<sup>16</sup> The report speculates about origins linked to a political campaign in 1942 and ties to the labour movement, a feature of Finnish temperance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it ultimately posits the modern iteration as the initiative of various, unnamed, non-governmental organisations concerned with combatting substance abuse which launched in earnest on a national scale in 2007.<sup>18</sup> The Finns, subsequent to the popularisation of the *Tipaton* model have laid claim to the concept, citing it as a self-corrective measure developed by a population aware of its alcoholic excesses.<sup>19</sup>

Despite being first, what became *Tipaton Tammikuu* appears to have grown in relative isolation from the larger group of philanthropic TSI that appeared in Australia as public campaigns in 2008. This disconnect likely stems from a simple language divide, for *Tipaton* operates only in Finnish, a language not readily understood or often encountered outside of Finland or its expatriate circles.<sup>20</sup>

Where *Tipaton* began as a deliberate public health undertaking, the next volley of TSI all claim to have their origins in largely private citizen action that snowballed of their own accord into larger movements. The public self-presentations of these campaigns

champion a founder's moment of inspiration that was able to be capitalised upon, expanded and turned into a successful philanthropic initiative. Thereafter, these initiatives spread to other contexts and also proliferated in locations that already had successful TSI. Although two of these TSI, the Australian iterations of FebFast and Dry July, sprang up in 2008 with no apparent connection between them, the lag between them and the first of the British (2011) and Canadian (2012) TSI suggest that the claims of innovation must be weighed against ubiquitous and unrecognized processes of cultural transfer occasioned through what Manuel Castells refers to as mass (self-) communication.

The first of the TSI to self-generate was Australia's FebFast, which recounts the story of its origin in banal terms:

The idea for turning an alcohol free month into a fundraising activity was conceived at a barbeque a few days before Christmas in 2006. A guest at that barbeque, and now FebFast's CEO, was Fiona Healy. She and a friend, Eliza Anderson, then followed through on what they thought was a good idea in February 2007. The pair raised \$910, which they donated to YSAS Pty. Ltd. (the Youth Substance Abuse Service) Victoria's largest service provider for young people who have problems with alcohol and substance use. From there Fiona decided to turn the concept into a fully fledged charitable trust.<sup>21</sup>

FebFast, as the public iteration of the campaign became known, launched in time for February 2008 and ran four more campaigns as an independent organisation. It folded as a separate legal and financial entity in October 2011 when it was acquired by YSAS, the charity it first supported, to be an in-house fundraising campaign.<sup>22</sup>

Dry July similarly began as a small-scale philanthropic project among friends, Brett Macdonald, Phil Grove and Kenny McGilvary, in Sydney in June 2007. As noted in the first of the charity's annual reports, a health scare prompted the trio to raise money to support adults in their community undergoing cancer treatment through a donation to the oncology unit of their local hospital.<sup>23</sup> The next year's campaign was intended to be only slightly less modest in scope: a group of 10 friends working toward a target of AUD\$3000. Local media in Sydney nonetheless heard of the initiative and launched the group's challenge to a wider audience and 1049 people

wound up raising over AUD\$250,000.<sup>24</sup> That year, Macdonald and Grove created the Dry July Foundation to run the annual event and disburse funds to the beneficiary organisations.<sup>25</sup>

The cultural circumstances, notably a peak in public discourse and concern about binge drinking and alcohol-related violence, that allowed both FebFast and Dry July to launch as successful public campaigns in Australia in 2008 do not fully account for their quieter private origins some years earlier.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the inspiration for the independently conceived ideas to forego alcohol as a way to raise money for a worthy cause are difficult to trace, but deeply engrained norms, practices, and views of alcohol provide grounds for speculation.

The tradition of the new year's resolution, a vow of self-discipline after the excesses of the festive season (which in Australia extends until the end of January on account of summer holidays), is widespread. The phenomenon was even rebranded, thanks to a *Daily Mail* article from 2002, as "Janopause".<sup>27</sup> The neologism, used to designate the phenomenon of a teetotal January in a generic sense rather than as a concerted campaign, received much more publicity in 2012 after the British Liver Trust criticised the practice as a faddish hollow gesture.<sup>28</sup>

Periods of self-sacrifice are common religious practices and the Christian tradition of a Lenten fast, which is often enacted through the foregoing of a particular pleasure such as sweets, smoking, or alcohol, are part of the cultural vernacular for many people in contexts with a predominantly Christian heritage even if the practice has been popularly abandoned. That said, an alcohol-free Lent was recently reinvented as a TSI in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune's* #AlcoholFreeFor40 campaign, begun in 2016, as a lifestyle and wellness challenge following the customary excesses of Mardi Gras and carnival season.<sup>29</sup>

These potentially unacknowledged precedents were also likely to have coupled with larger patterns within the philanthropic sphere. Embodied philanthropy, the process of channelling philanthropy through the body's actions, habits, and surfaces, has been gaining in popularity, both through durational campaigns centred on a calendar month, such November's Movember fundraiser, which began in Melbourne in 2003,

and event-style fundraisers (long-distance walks for breast cancer, charity 10K runs), which were at peak popularity around the same time as TSI launched.<sup>30</sup> The public in places like Australia, the UK and Canada, especially those who attuned to various kinds of philanthropic behaviour, had thus already accepted the premise that charitable activity could come from doing something unconventional and potentially a little self-serving (insofar as one could use a charity campaign as a way to get fit, lose weight or justify a radical change to appearance) with one's body. It is into this larger and shared cultural ethos, with both FebFast and Dry July already in full operation, that British and Canadian TSI began. Each of these campaigns claimed that they too were the inspired idea of their founders.

The UK's Dry January, run by the public health and advocacy group Alcohol Concern, report their origins as the personal health project of Emily Robinson. Robinson gave up drinking for the month of January in 2011 to help her train for a long-distance run. Having begun work at Alcohol Concern in the intervening year, Robinson repeated her personal project in 2012 and, inspired by her initiative, her new employer hosted a kick-off event for Dry January in May 2012 in advance of a first public outing in January 2013. This first campaign attracted 4350 participants.<sup>31</sup>

In Quebec, the *Défi 28 jours sans alcool* [28 Days Sober] ran for the first time as a major public event in 2014, albeit under the bilingual and oddly translated Soberary – *Les 28 jours les plus longs de ta vie* [The longest 28 days of your life]. The event is cited as the brainchild of friends Jean-Sébastien Chouinard and Antoine Théorêt-Poupart.<sup>32</sup> Chouinard notes the genesis of the campaign as a December 2012 idea that took root among a small group of friends who abstained from alcohol in February 2013 and used Facebook to motivate and publicise their project.<sup>33</sup> Chouinard and Théorêt-Poupart encouraged participation by hosting an exclusive party, to begin at midnight on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, for those who managed to abstain for the whole month.<sup>34</sup> The Jean Lapointe Foundation, a Montreal-based drug and alcohol charity running both residential treatment and education programs, subsequently approached them about launching the idea on a larger scale incorporating it as an in-house fundraiser, much as YSAS had incorporated FebFast into its organisation.<sup>35</sup>

The same explanations that help to rationalise the near simultaneous emergence of the Australian campaigns were likely also influential in the development of the British and Canadian TSI. Sharing a language, traditions of Lent and new year's resolutions, trendy experiences with embodied philanthropy and larger preoccupations with health and wellness, these locations had a common cultural ethos, which might have made the TSI premise a logical response to local circumstances. Theories of multiple discovery, which hold that innovations are often made independently (and also in many cases simultaneously), may thus indeed validate the claims of independent grassroots action concretising into highly similar campaigns in different locations, in some cases, at a few year's remove from one another.<sup>36</sup>

Discourses of TSI as solely *sui generis* programs or grassroots initiatives nonetheless need to be weighed against the highly visible and mediated way in which they operate. TSI have, from the outset, encouraged participants to blog, post, and fundraise online. TSI operate as digital entities that have successfully employed connectivity of the Internet, the viral potential of social media and even digital giving platforms and apps to publicise their presence and objectives.<sup>37</sup> The practices of what Manuel Castells calls mass self-communication have been pivotal in the spread of social movements and have more generally led to unprecedented levels of information exchange about even banal phenomena.<sup>38</sup> TSI participants accordingly use social media and other platforms to broadcast their involvement in TSI or even their reactions to TSI as local campaigns among their potentially international networks. In doing so they communicate the core TSI premise to potentially vast audiences. Even the reporting on TSI in conventional media has become integrated into these communications networks through the practices of hyperlinking and sharing. The idea of the TSI has thus been able to circulate freely for nearly a decade, a situation that may contribute to explanations of how TSI were able to arise "organically" in Australia, the UK and in Canada.

The emphasis on TSI being homegrown solutions to local problems enacted by inventive individuals, a discourse reinforced in "Our Story" style narratives, is nevertheless a strategic framing of the origins stories. Every one of the origins narratives emphasises the ordinariness of the TSI founders; they attend barbecues, have friends who will join them in unconventional projects, suffer through health

scars, struggle with exercise commitments, have jobs, and like parties. Crucially, they also drink and enjoy doing so. In short, they are the everyday member of society, somebody relatable whose small personal action, far from radical but still irregular in societies where drinking is a social norm, was a vital part of what became an important social movement. They are (or at least were) neither authorities on the alcohol question nor exceptional individuals, just people who acted on an idea.

Explaining how TSI came to be in New Zealand and how they came to proliferate in Australia and the UK is a more traceable process. It relies less on vast, potentially global networks of individuals than on existing professional and organisational networks within the philanthropic sector.<sup>39</sup>

The Finnish and Irish TSI being the exceptions to the rule, TSI direct the funds they raise to two types of charitable initiatives: drug and alcohol education and treatment services or cancer support and research organisations. Each of these sectors operates as an international network of charities and community service organisations with similar aims. Moreover, the sharing of information and strategies through publications, conferences, and personal connections is common.<sup>40</sup> These specialised circles operate in addition to the broader philanthropic or third sector forums, such as the Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration, that promote novel and successful approaches to shared concerns.<sup>41</sup> Where temperance movements beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century utilised existing commercial and cultural ties, notably the transatlantic link between the United States and Britain and the imperial ties of the Commonwealth to spread their messages, TSI have similarly utilised existing networks to grow internationally.<sup>42</sup>

Within the drug and alcohol treatment and education circles, FebFast is the foundational TSI. Having noted the success of both FebFast and Dry July's first public campaigns in 2008, Life Education, an Australian charity promoting healthy living education programs for children, founded Ocsober, in time for October of that same year.<sup>43</sup> FebFast was also the first TSI to generate an international spin-off. FebFast New Zealand, run in support of the New Zealand Drug Foundation, began as a loosely allied campaign of its Australian inspiration in 2011 but was ultimately abandoned in December 2015.<sup>44</sup> In that interval, after the expansion to New Zealand,

Dry January came into being and the campaign that would ultimately become the *Défi 28 jours* allied itself with the Fondation Jean Lapointe. Although all three TSI claim origins independent of one another they share a common model of being in-house fundraisers for alcohol and drug prevention and treatment organisations, a situation that suggests a unity of operational strategy if not of inspiration.

The spread of TSI within the international network of cancer charities is more directly traceable to Dry July and its influence. The campaign, which began in Sydney and launched publicly in 2008 expanded to New Zealand in 2012 using the same fundraising model: an independent foundation serving as a clearing-house to make grants to other charitable interests.<sup>45</sup> Dry July is also credited as having inspired both Cancer Research UK's Dryathlon, which launched in December 2012 in time for a January 2013 event, and Macmillan Cancer Support's Go Sober (for October), which is an official partner of the Australian Dry July initiative.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the Australian and New Zealand versions, the British adaptations of the campaign were incorporated into established, national cancer charities as fundraisers. A small amount of local adaptation was also employed in the shift from the Southern to the Northern hemisphere, as a mid-summer period of sobriety (in July) would have met with significant popular resistance, even for the worthiest of causes.

As new TSI have emerged, they are likely to have been inspired by both the freely circulating ideas for TSI-style experiences and the formal fundraising apparatuses that have developed around such campaigns. The Irish Heart Foundation accordingly launched On The Dry for January 2015 as a campaign derivative of earlier examples, even somewhat replicating Dry January's logo, a cup of tea adorned with cocktail garnishes (including the iconic umbrella), in its visual branding.<sup>47</sup> In the American context, journalist John Ore claims to have quietly begun the practice of what he dubbed Dryuary in 2005, although he concedes that interest in it began to accrue mostly once Dry January had launched in the UK.<sup>48</sup> The Dryuary designation remains a generic one unaffiliated with any particular campaign or cause, although Dryuary (note the absence of the *n*) commenced in 2015 as a fundraiser for alcohol self-help group Moderation Management, whose program has always included an initial month-long period of abstinence before returning to moderate drinking.<sup>49</sup>

As more TSI have popped up, often many in the same national context where they vie for limited charity dollars and publicity, tensions between them have also arisen. In the UK, this has given rise to Dry January organisers criticising the organisations behind Dryathlon (Cancer Research UK) and Go Sober (Macmillan Cancer Support) for undermining the public health message and their parent charities siphoning money away from the much smaller Alcohol Concern organisation.<sup>50</sup> TSI that are aligned with drug and alcohol support organisations have tended to stress health or alcohol-related behaviour change in their public communications.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, those affiliated with cancer charities have typically placed greater emphasis on the fundraising elements of their campaigns.<sup>52</sup> Dry July has even gone so far as to remove any mention of improved health, wellbeing or alcohol awareness for participants or communities from their mission statement between the 2013 and 2015 campaigns.<sup>53</sup> This has resulted in greater elements of gamification in their advice to participants about fundraising, as well as communication strategies that seek to distance them from any accusation of moralising, being anti-alcohol or even from mentioning the relationship between drinking and cancer.<sup>54</sup>

### **TSI: Temperance Reinvented**

TSI, as the example of Dry July shows, have not always keen to be associated with the lingering image of temperance prevalent in most English-speaking societies. The reputation of the temperance movement, often erroneously understood in the singular, centres on its most extreme forms, which championed total both total personal abstinence and state-imposed prohibition. As Virginia Berridge prefaces her report on the potential lessons for 21<sup>st</sup> century policymakers from the temperance campaigns of the past, “most people associate it with outdated attitudes, rigid moralism, narrow religion and an uncompromising attitude towards the consumption of drink”.<sup>55</sup> Anti-temperance attitudes, epitomised in Australia by the maligned figure of the *wowser*, are thus never far from TSI and are guarded against.<sup>56</sup> TSI, however, have capitalised on many of the legacies of temperance, including their international philanthropic networks, their mustering of both medical and economic arguments, the utility of public commitments, and even some of their lesser-known forms of involvement to create popular campaigns.

Although temperance movements are well understood in local and national contexts, groups such as the International Order of Good Templars, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the World Prohibition Federation, all of which came to prominence in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, exemplify the transnational reach of temperance.<sup>57</sup> The bulk of the membership in such organisations was located in the United States, the UK, and, to a lesser extent, the settler colonies of the Commonwealth such as Canada (mostly among its English, not French-speaking population), Australia and New Zealand. As a result, English came to serve as a *lingua franca* for their print cultures (newspapers, journal, pamphlets) and biennial conferences, the networks through which "like-minded individuals openly exchanged temperance-related ideas, information, and innovations".<sup>58</sup> Historians have accordingly been critical of the movement's pretensions to true internationalism, noting how cultural differences, especially in the wine-drinking regions of Southern Europe, generally saw abstinence and prohibition-oriented temperance societies fail to make inroads in these areas.<sup>59</sup>

TSI, despite having crossed borders, operate in a similarly restricted in pattern of internationalisation. Their reach is largely limited to affluent English-speaking contexts and the non-English language campaigns, such as the Montreal-based *Défi 28 jours* (which nonetheless operates fully bilingually in French and English) and the Finnish *Tipaton Tamikuu*, are notable linguistic exceptions to the Anglo-dominant rule. Reactions to TSI in places such as France also replicate the poor reception temperance campaigners received. French media commentary on Dry January and the base premise of a dry month tends to frame them as something of a health fad at best and at worst, a crutch for societies (unlike their own) too prone to alcoholic excess.<sup>60</sup> Claims to temperance internationalism and worldwide adherence, whatever the reality, were nonetheless strategic for the organisation and the movement as a whole insofar as these assertions legitimised the cause and allowed it to transcend purely local concerns.<sup>61</sup>

TSI by contrast remain quiet about the transnational character of their initiatives. The grassroots origin stories occupy pride of place on campaign websites, the most visible public presence they have, and even affiliated campaigns, such as Go Sober and Dry July in Australia and New Zealand, have relegated discussions of their partnerships to

industry-insider publications and seldom read annual reports.<sup>62</sup> These silences likely owe a great deal to the strategic importance of being seen to address local concerns.

Philanthropically, donors have historically preferred national and especially local causes.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, there is a monetary incentive for TSI to emphasise their grassroots origins and local rather than global impact. As a result, TSI have increasingly allowed participants to channel their fundraising to local causes. Dry July, for instance, moved to allow participants to nominate a hospital or cancer centre of their choice to receive the proceeds of their individual fundraising efforts.<sup>64</sup> Dry January also recently changed its policy so that participants could select a particular charity to split the proceeds of their fundraising with parent organisation Alcohol Concern.<sup>65</sup> This capacity for more directed giving aligns with broader trends in the philanthropic sector where donors wish to exert greater control over their gifts.<sup>66</sup> In a public health sense, changing the drinking culture toward one of moderation, a goal for many TSI, would most immediately be seen at the local level, for instance through a decrease in anti-social behaviour in one's immediate environment.

Although the temperance myth is one of religiosity and moral arguments, the movement had a strong scientific component that is often forgotten. Specialised temperance groups, among them the Scientific Temperance Federation and the International Temperance Bureau, were particularly active in this space, especially in promoting temperance education.<sup>67</sup> Groups such as the WCTU also routinely advanced medical and economic arguments for abstinence and prohibition.<sup>68</sup> The national tenor of temperance organisations in France was also strongly medical and scientific in nature, often inflected with Lamarckian eugenic thinking.<sup>69</sup>

Scientific temperance was understood in broad terms. It sought not only to inform the population about alcohol's effects on individual and population health – the facets of the enterprise that would most resonate for contemporary observers – but to understand alcohol's social and economic effects through lenses that would now be understood as social scientific.<sup>70</sup> Education was central to the mission, for although temperance campaigners embraced moral suasion arguments, “they were confident that, since sin was due to ignorance, knowledge would turn men from vice to virtue”.<sup>71</sup> Educational objectives were also accompanied by calls to action, notably to

lobby the state to fund the treatment of alcohol problems and to promote temperance education.<sup>72</sup>

Scientific temperance is most fully redeployed in the ways that TSI use both medical and economic arguments to highlight the effects of alcohol and to use these points to influence drinking behaviour. To avoid being labelled censorious or moralising, however, they have often employed a light touch when doing so. The *Défi 28 jours* and Dry January websites for instance feature calculators in which participants can input their estimated weekly consumption of beer, wine and spirits to determine both the financial and caloric costs of their usual drinking habits.<sup>73</sup> In the case of the Montreal-based initiative, the results of the calculation are expressed as relatable in-kind units: the number of tickets to Montreal Canadiens' hockey games that could be bought and how many servings of the infamous artery-clogging, post-drinking snack of poutine could be consumed for an equivalent amount of alcohol. Without veering into health moralism, these calculators serve an educative purpose and function as part of a rational choice model to change behaviours, a version of the scientific reasoning that medical temperance campaigners argued would prove to be decisively influential.<sup>74</sup>

Health, more so than economics, has proven to be a major motivator for TSI participants and thus a focus for TSI discourse. Dry July's Australian website, which previously touted the pleasures of drinking for sacrifice-driven fundraising purposes, for the first time included a Wellbeing section with diet, exercise and relaxation tips in 2014 in an apparent move to cater to the wishes of participants who were increasingly swayed by healthy living motivations.<sup>75</sup> The Wellbeing micro-site attracted more web traffic than the main website.<sup>76</sup> The story of Dry January founder Emily Robinson's training for an endurance sporting event links temporary sobriety and improved physical capacity.<sup>77</sup> The branding strategy of Dryathlon plays up the associations with sport and sporting charity challenges. Its website features "Dryathletes" in athletic gear, connoting both the health benefits of exercise and the kudos that tend to accrue for those who undertake a sports-based charity fundraisers.<sup>78</sup> FebFast, one of the TSI that most accentuates health outcomes (a logic confirmed by its now equally prominent campaign revolving around sugar) uses participant

testimonials to suggest that a month off alcohol will improve everything from skin complexion to workplace productivity.<sup>79</sup>

If for many temperance organisations, health and other scientific arguments were important but subordinate to the persistent and central concerns of morality and social order, TSI have overwhelmingly elevated health to the preeminent position. The #AlcoholFreeFor40 Lenten TSI, which is organised by registered dietician and newspaper columnist Molly Kimball, even encouraged participants to do before and after medical tests consisting of 7 separate blood tests to definitively prove the health benefits of temporary sobriety.<sup>80</sup> This is largely due to the increasing importance that many Western societies have attached to health, a concept that has become, in Robert Crawford's estimation, a super-value.<sup>81</sup> Following neoliberal currents of individualised responsibility, however, health is often interpreted by TSI as personal and physiological health – sleep, digestion, weight, hepatic function, energy levels – and less as population or public health, especially concerning matters such as the aggregated population level impacts of alcohol consumption. Groups such as Alcohol Concern, which Berridge likens to temperance organisations insofar as its main aim is to change drinking cultures, nonetheless stand apart from this trend, often in confrontational ways – as evidenced by comments made to a third sector media outlet – to take the matter of alcohol education among participants more seriously and to not subordinate this objective to fundraising or to subsume it as part of a wellbeing initiative.<sup>82</sup>

The care for treatment of those affected by alcohol dependence, the lesser-recognised part of scientific temperance, has also been taken up by TSI. While temperance organisations mostly lobbied the government to assume such functions, TSI operate in a neoliberal climate of increasing privatisation of social services.<sup>83</sup> They have thus become more directly involved in care for individuals who abuse alcohol and other drugs. Both FebFast and the *Défi 28 jours* serve as in-house fundraisers for drug and alcohol education and treatment services. Both fuse the educational and activist elements of scientific temperance by using embodied forms of philanthropic engagement to raise money to support these endeavours and to create experiential or kinaesthetic empathy among participants for the clients of these services. As *Défi* participant and promoter Anne Lise argues on her blog, the 28 days

of the February campaign correspond to the maximum length of stay at the Maison Jean Lapointe rehab facility.<sup>84</sup> Interviews with FebFast participants also revealed a sense of empathy with the beneficiaries of their fundraising, youth with addictions. As 34 year-old “Karen” noted, “I just don't think there’s enough done in the public arena to make people aware of what our youth are going through”.

Although TSI participants pledge sobriety for only a month and members of temperance organisations have traditionally had to foreswear alcohol (or spirits depending on the era and the cultural context) for longer – even permanently – both TSI and temperance campaigns have recognised the value of public commitment. For some temperance movements, the pledge was a catalyst for adherents. As Eriksen frames it, taking the pledge was deciding “to begin the task of personal improvement within the religious framework provided by the [temperance] organisation”.<sup>85</sup> In many cases though, it proved to be more symbolic than practical. For many who took the pledge of the Irish Total Abstinence Society headed by Father Theobald Mathew, the vow was less of a binding commitment than a declaration of hopeful intent.<sup>86</sup> Records from Finnish temperance organisations that required lifelong pledges of total abstinence tellingly reveal patterns of expelling (and subsequently readmitting) their members for drinking.<sup>87</sup>

For TSI the commitment to sobriety is deeply intertwined with their philanthropic objectives. Where most campaigns require participants to make an initial donation that doubles as a registration fee, the pledge is less likely to be forgotten or taken for granted, as there is already a financial as well as a moral commitment. The highly public digital platforms on which TSI operate encourage participants to share their commitment with others in their social networks and to solicit donations from them. When these donations come, they create implicit contracts between participants and donors, for as research with TSI participants has shown, the participants feel a greater obligation to abstain lest they disappoint their sponsors and fail to deliver upon their promised full month of sobriety.<sup>88</sup> Failure to live up to one’s commitment, a scenario that temperance histories indicate to be highly probable, are also framed financially, for most TSI offer purchasable reprieves from sobriety in the form of Golden Tickets, Time Out Passes or similarly styled paying exemptions.<sup>89</sup> Dry January, the TSI most committed to public health outcomes, does not offer such exceptions and has

condemned other British TSI for what it perceives to be their prioritisation of fundraising over the educative function, in line with scientific temperance logics, of a full month of abstinence.<sup>90</sup>

The imbrication of fundraising and initiatives aimed at changing the drinking culture are evidence of the ways in which TSI operationalise alcoholic abstinence. While many temperance organisations in the Anglo-American and Commonwealth traditions connected projects such as women's suffrage to temperance activities, temperance generally remained the core objective.<sup>91</sup> Temperance traditions in Northern Europe by contrast have long histories of using temperance activity as a political tool. Prescribed periods of total abstinence or partial abstinence in the form of bans on spirits consumption, for instance, were called for and acted upon in both Finland and Germany. From the 1870s, alcohol boycotts came into use in Finland as a form of radical protest among factory workers. The practice spread and gained popularity, such that in 1898 approximately 70 000 Finnish workers pledged to drink no distilled alcohol for a least a year.<sup>92</sup> Members of the German Social Democratic Party similarly called for a schnapps boycott in 1909 as a form of protest against new taxation regimes.<sup>93</sup> These precedents of episodic sobriety, which Sulkunen cites as important aspects in the development of nationalism and political consciousness for an expanding working class, may help to explain why the TSI model first took root in Finland. The drinking strikes and boycotts, with their high rates of attrition, also highlighted the practical concern of feasibility for groups that would seek to use abstinence or temperance as a means for achieving other objectives.

## **Conclusion**

A 2005 Joseph Rountree Foundation report argued that current policy objectives around alcohol might benefit from looking to the temperance movement for lessons on education, scientific messaging, the role of individual action and international cooperation.<sup>94</sup> While TSI were as yet virtually unknown or non-existent, the report proved prescient. Begun as individual responses to concerns about drinking cultures and in recognition of the important social and cultural role that alcohol plays, one that could be leveraged for sacrifice-driven fundraising purposes, TSI have transformed

themselves from novel yet isolated campaigns to major events and fundraisers operating on three continents.

The success of early TSI in Australia was, following in the international models of the temperance tradition, replicated in many other countries in the English-speaking world. While third sector networks of charitable and community organisations provided some of the infrastructure for the dissemination of the TSI model, participants were instrumental in publicising the central idea of a month of sobriety as a way to do good, both for oneself and for others. Where TSI used the convenience of web-based platforms to recruit local participants and to build their presence on social media, these tools also facilitated the internationalisation of these campaigns.

Although each TSI operates according to a different mix of priorities around personal health, cultural change and philanthropy, they have all framed alcohol as both a potentially problematic product and one that is central to many people's lives: so central in fact that to forego it is considered to be a genuine sacrifice that comes – or with fundraising objectives in mind should come – at great cost. Launched in settings where public responsibilities, both financial and social, have been privatised and responsibility for one's health has become as great a civic responsibility as community or philanthropic engagement, TSI have emerged as convenient campaigns through which participants may fulfil these responsibilities. Thanks to the social-media driven ways in which TSI operate, participants may also be widely recognised as doing so.

In contrast to temperance campaigners who left archives of information for historians to use in the writing of temperance history, TSI have left few definitive indications of their genesis and growth. What is clear, however, is that TSI, neoliberal and networked campaigns that they are, function as a 21<sup>st</sup> century neo-temperance movement, complete with local cultural adaptations and differences in strategic emphasis. With the unpopular and stereotypical image of temperance as the cautionary tale to be avoided, TSI have managed to appeal to publics equally weary the temperance ideology, but not unreceptive to its core tenets of wanting to change drinking cultures as a matter of personal and social importance.

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- <sup>1</sup> For more on embodied philanthropy, see Robert, *Practices and Rationales of Embodied Philanthropy*.
- <sup>2</sup> Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*.
- <sup>3</sup> Dry July, *Dry July - Homepage*; YouGov, *New Year's Resolutions Survey*.
- <sup>4</sup> For more on how Australian TSI eventuated from public concern about alcohol, see Robert, 'Temporary Sobriety Initiatives: Emergence, Possibilities and Constraints'.
- <sup>5</sup> Berridge, *Temperance: Its History and Impact on Current and Future Alcohol Policy*.
- <sup>6</sup> Woiak, "'A Medical Cromwell to Depose King Alcohol": Medical Scientists, Temperance Reformers, and the Alcohol Problem in Britain'.
- <sup>7</sup> Crawford, 'Health as a Meaningful Social Practice'.
- <sup>8</sup> FebFast, *FebFast Annual Report 2008/2009*, i.
- <sup>9</sup> Studies undertaken with either direct or indirect TSI involvement include de Visser, Robinson and Bond, 'Voluntary Temporary Abstinence from Alcohol During "Dry January" and Subsequent Alcohol Use'; Cherrier and Gurrieri, 'Anticonsumption Choices Performed in a Drinking Culture: Normative Struggles and Repairs'; Robert, 'Temporary sobriety initiatives as public pedagogy: Windows of opportunity for embodied learning'; Fry, 'Rethinking Social Marketing: Towards a Sociality of Consumption'; Hamley and Carah, *One Sunday at a Time: Evaluating Hello Sunday Morning*; Carah, Meurk and Hall, 'Profiling Hello Sunday Morning: Who are the Participants?'; Hillgrove and Thomson, *Evaluation of the Impact of FebFast Participation. Final Report*.
- <sup>10</sup> de Visser et al., 'Voluntary Temporary Abstinence from Alcohol During "Dry January" and Subsequent Alcohol Use'.
- <sup>11</sup> Cabezas and Bataller, 'Alcoholic Liver Disease: New UK Alcohol Guidelines and Dry January: Enough to Give Up Boozing?'; Mehta et al., *Short Term Abstinence from Alcohol Improves Insulin Resistance and Fatty Liver Phenotype in Moderate Drinkers*; de Visser, Robinson and Bond, 'Voluntary Temporary Abstinence from Alcohol During "Dry January" and Subsequent Alcohol Use'.
- <sup>12</sup> Cherrier and Gurrieri, 'Framing Social Marketing as a System of Interaction: A Neo-Institutional Approach to Alcohol Abstinence'; Fry, 'Discourses of Consumer's Alcohol Resistant Identities'; Fry, 'Rethinking Social Marketing: Towards a Sociality of Consumption'; Carah, Meurk and Hall, 'Profiling Hello Sunday Morning: Who are

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the Participants?'; Hamley and Carah, *One Sunday at a Time: Evaluating Hello Sunday Morning*.

<sup>13</sup> Robert, *The Loi Evin: Ambiguous Pedagogies of Responsible Drinking*; Cherrier and Gurrieri, 'Anticonsumption Choices Performed in a Drinking Culture: Normative Struggles and Repairs'; Yeomans, 'Blurred Visions: Experts, Evidence and the Promotion of Moderate Drinking'.

<sup>14</sup> Third Sector, *Analysis: The Three Dry Campaigns - Compare and Contrast*; Chapman, *Cancer Research UK's Dryathlon*. A notable exception to this trend is Robert's 2016 study of the near simultaneous emergence of a group of 4 Australian TSI. See Robert, 'Temporary Sobriety Initiatives: Emergence, Possibilities and Constraints'.

<sup>15</sup> Yeomans, *The Rise and Rise of Dry January: Implications for Embodiment, Self and Regulation*.

<sup>16</sup> Varamäki, *Alcohol-free January*.

<sup>17</sup> Sulkunen, *History of the Finnish Temperance Movement: Temperance as a Civic Religion*.

<sup>18</sup> Varamäki, *Alcohol-free January*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cook, *European Press Review* - 22/01/2012.

<sup>20</sup> Tipaton Tammikuu, *Tipaton Tammikuu*.

<sup>21</sup> FebFast, *Financial Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2008*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> YSAS (Youth Substance Abuse Service), *YSAS Annual Report 2010-2011*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Dry July, *Dry July Annual Report 2009*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> For more on these circumstances, see Robert, 'Temporary Sobriety Initiatives: Emergence, Possibilities and Constraints'.

<sup>27</sup> Friedland, *Eatymology: The Dictionary of Modern Gastronomy*, 116.

<sup>28</sup> BBC, *Detoxing in January is Futile, Says Liver Charity*.

<sup>29</sup> Kimball, *No Booze for 40 Days: Take This Challenge to See Health Benefits of Popular Lenten Sacrifice*.

<sup>30</sup> Robert, *Practices and Rationales of Embodied Philanthropy*; Jacobson, *Moustachioed Men and Marathon Moms: The Marketing of Cancer Philanthropy*; King, *Pink Ribbons, Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of*

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*Philanthropy*; Jeffery, A *Qualitative Study of the Motivations of Runners in a Cause-Based Marathon-Training Program*.

<sup>31</sup> Dry January, *Our Story*.

<sup>32</sup> Défi 28 jours, *Notre Cause*; Fondation Jean Lapointe, *Défi les 28 jours les plus longs de ta vie*; Chouinard, *Défi 28 jours: 4 Keys To Success*; Chouinard and Théorêt-Poupart, *Soberary - les 28 jours les plus longs de ta vie: Public Event Invitation*.

<sup>33</sup> Chouinard, *Défi 28 jours: 4 Keys To Success*.

<sup>34</sup> Chouinard and Théorêt-Poupart, *Soberary - les 28 jours les plus longs de ta vie: Public Event Invitation*.

<sup>35</sup> Chouinard, *Défi 28 jours: 4 Keys To Success*.

<sup>36</sup> Simonton, 'Multiple Discovery and Invention: Zeitgeist, Genius, or Chance'.

<sup>37</sup> See, in particular, Chapter 16: New Technologies in Scaife et al., *Giving Australia 2016: Literature Review*.

<sup>38</sup> Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*.

<sup>39</sup> Castells argues that social movements 'are networked in multiple forms' and that such networking 'includes social networks online and offline, as well as pre-existing social networks, and networks formed during the actions of the movement'. *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>40</sup> Breeze and Scaife, *Encouraging Generosity: The Practice and Organization of Fund-Raising across Nations*.

<sup>41</sup> Ralley, *FebFast Strategy*; Chapman, *Cancer Research UK's Dryathlon*.

<sup>42</sup> Schrad, *The Transnational Temperance Community*, 257.

<sup>43</sup> Ocober, *Ocober - Home*.

<sup>44</sup> NZ Drug Foundation, *Five Wonderful Years of FebFast NZ*; Ralley, *FebFast Strategy*.

<sup>45</sup> Dry July New Zealand, *Dry July NZ Trust Annual Report 2013-14*.

<sup>46</sup> Third Sector, *Analysis: The Three Dry Campaigns - Compare and Contrast*.

<sup>47</sup> On The Dry, *On The Dry - Official Twitter Feed*.

<sup>48</sup> Ore, *Why I've Given Up Alcohol During 'Dryuary' For Ten Years Running*.

<sup>49</sup> Moderation Management, *Why Dryuary*; Moderation Management, *What is Moderation Management?*

<sup>50</sup> Third Sector, *Analysis: The Three Dry Campaigns - Compare and Contrast*.

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<sup>51</sup> FebFast, *Why It's Good For You*; Ocober, *Ocober - Home*; Dry January, *Dry January*.

<sup>52</sup> Dry July, *About*; Go Sober, *About Go Sober*; Dryathlon, *Dryathlon - Home*. A curious but recent exception has been Ocober, which in its 2017 campaign set an ambitious target of \$AUD700 for donations for each participant, a significant turnaround in their rhetoric, which had previously focused on alcohol awareness messaging, and a major point of contrast with campaigns such as Dry January which only recently introduced fundraising. See Life Education Australia, *Ocober - How to Raise \$700*.

<sup>53</sup> Dry July, *Dry July 2013/2014 Annual Report*; Dry July, *Dry July 2014/2015 Annual Report*; Dry July, *Dry July 2015/2016 Annual Report*.

<sup>54</sup> Dry July, *The Dry July Campaign*; Dryathlon, *Willpower Test*.

<sup>55</sup> Berridge, *Temperance: Its History and Impact on Current and Future Alcohol Policy*.

<sup>56</sup> Room, 'The Long Reaction Against the Wowser: The Prehistory of Alcohol Deregulation in Australia'.

<sup>57</sup> Schrad, *The Transnational Temperance Community*; Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930*; Fahey, 'Temperance Internationalism: Guy Hayler and the World Prohibition Federation'; Blocker, Fahey and Tyrrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: A Global Encyclopedia*.

<sup>58</sup> French and German, the languages of the European aristocracy, were displaced as the dominant languages of the temperance movement as it became a more middle and working class cause toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Schrad, *The Transnational Temperance Community*, 263.

<sup>59</sup> Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930*, 63-64, Schrad, *The Transnational Temperance Community*,

<sup>60</sup> Cassely, *Le "Dry January" est-il une bonne tradition pour arrêter de boire*; Korda, *Pourquoi la résolution de ne pas boire d'alcool en janvier fonctionne-t-elle si bien?* For more on French perceptions of the British as problematic drinkers, see Robert, 'Oppositional Symbolic Values of Language Display, or The Case of 'English' Drinking in France'.

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- <sup>61</sup> Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*.
- <sup>62</sup> Third Sector, *Analysis: The Three Dry Campaigns - Compare and Contrast*; Dry July New Zealand, *Dry July NZ Trust Annual Report 2013-14*.
- <sup>63</sup> Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission*, 41.
- <sup>64</sup> Dry July, *Our Beneficiaries*,
- <sup>65</sup> May, *Dry January Campaign Opens Up to Other Charities Through Virgin Money Giving*; Dry January, *Dry January - Fundraising*.
- <sup>66</sup> Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission*; Eikenberry, *Giving Circles: Philanthropy, Voluntary Association, and Democracy*.
- <sup>67</sup> Woiak, "'A Medical Cromwell to Depose King Alcohol': Medical Scientists, Temperance Reformers, and the Alcohol Problem in Britain"; Edman, 'Temperance and Modernity: Alcohol Consumption as a Collective Problem, 1885-1913'.
- <sup>68</sup> Tyrrell, 51-53.
- <sup>69</sup> Prestwich, 'French Workers and the Temperance Movement'.
- <sup>70</sup> Berridge, *Temperance: Its History and Impact on Current and Future Alcohol Policy*.
- <sup>71</sup> Krout, *The Origins of Prohibition*, 125; Edman, 'Temperance and Modernity: Alcohol Consumption as a Collective Problem, 1885-1913'.
- <sup>72</sup> Berridge, *Temperance: Its History and Impact on Current and Future Alcohol Policy*, 21; Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930*, 51-53.
- <sup>73</sup> Fondation Jean Lapointe, *Défi les 28 jours les plus longs de ta vie*; Dryathlon, *Dryathlon - Home*.
- <sup>74</sup> Woiak, "'A Medical Cromwell to Depose King Alcohol': Medical Scientists, Temperance Reformers, and the Alcohol Problem in Britain', 343.
- <sup>75</sup> Dry July, *Dry July: Wellbeing*; Robert, 'Temporary Sobriety Initiatives: Emergence, Possibilities and Constraints'.
- <sup>76</sup> Dry July, *Dry July 2014/2015 Annual Report*, 6.
- <sup>77</sup> Dry January, *Our Story*.
- <sup>78</sup> Dryathlon, *Dryathlon - Home*; Taylor and Shanka, 'Cause For Event: Not-For-Profit Marketing Through Participant Sports Events'.
- <sup>79</sup> FebFast, *Why It's Good For You*; FebFast, *Fast-Quotes*.

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- <sup>80</sup> Kimball, *No Booze for 40 Days: Take This Challenge to See Health Benefits of Popular Lenten Sacrifice*.
- <sup>81</sup> Crawford, 'Health as a Meaningful Social Practice'.
- <sup>82</sup> Third Sector, *Analysis: The Three Dry Campaigns - Compare and Contrast*.
- <sup>83</sup> Robert, 'Temporary Sobriety Initiatives: Emergence, Possibilities and Constraints'.
- <sup>84</sup> Anne Lise, *Défi 28 jours: On commence l'année 2014 par une bonne action*; Yeomans, *The Rise and Rise of Dry January: Implications for Embodiment, Self and Regulation*.
- <sup>85</sup> Erikson, 'Recreational Activism: Politics, Nature and the Rise of Neoliberalism', 66.
- <sup>86</sup> Bretherton, *Against the Flowing Tide: Whiskey and Temperance in the Making of Modern Ireland*, 158-159.
- <sup>87</sup> Sulkunen, *History of the Finnish Temperance Movement: Temperance as a Civic Religion*, 98-99, 211.
- <sup>88</sup> Cherrier and Gurrieri, 'Anticonsumption Choices Performed in a Drinking Culture: Normative Struggles and Repairs', 238-239; Robert, *The Loi Evin: Ambiguous Pedagogies of Responsible Drinking*.
- <sup>89</sup> Dry July, *The Dry July Campaign*; FebFast, *FAQ*.
- <sup>90</sup> Third Sector, *Analysis: The Three Dry Campaigns - Compare and Contrast*.
- <sup>91</sup> Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930*, 224-225.
- <sup>92</sup> Sulkunen, *History of the Finnish Temperance Movement: Temperance as a Civic Religion*, 206.
- <sup>93</sup> Roberts, *Drink and the Labour Movement: The Schnaps Boycott of 1909*.
- <sup>94</sup> Berridge, *Temperance: Its History and Impact on Current and Future Alcohol Policy*.

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