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A Chronological History of Moderation Societies and Related Controversies

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Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has earned the right to serve as the standard by which all other mutual aid societies are judged due to its longevity, membership size, global dispersion, adaptation to other addictions and problems of living, and its influence on the professional treatment of addiction and the wider culture (Kurtz & White, 2003). While most of AA's predecessors and AA's contemporary alternatives share AA's abstinence-based approach to problem resolution (Humphreys, 2004; Room, 1998), there are groups before and after AA's founding that have advocated moderation as an alternative to complete and enduring cessation of alcohol consumption. The purpose of this brief chronology is to explore the history of such groups and the controversies that have risen around them.

- 1517 Sigismond de Dietrichstein organizes the Order of Temperance in Germany. The Order calls for an end to the custom of "pledging healths" (toasts)—a practice thought to promote intemperance (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1600 The German Order of Temperance is founded, with members pledging to never become intoxicated (to drink no more than 14 glasses of wine per day; Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1780- A number of moderation-based temperance societies are organized in America,
1830 Canada, England, Ireland, Wales, and other European countries (Cherrington, 1925-1926; Eddy, 1887).
- Early In Boston, temperance advocates found a brewery to provide beer to those who
1800s pledged to forsake ardent spirits (Eddy, 1887).
- 1825- Between 1825 and 1850, the temperance movement abandons temperance
1850 (moderation) and embraces total abstinence as a goal and legal prohibition of alcohol as a means of collectively achieving that goal. Temperance advocates recognize the presence in their own ranks of persons who kept the pledge to consume no distilled alcohol but continued to get intoxicated with wine, beer, and hard ciders (Sigorney & Smith, 1833).

- 1825-1880 Reform narratives of former drunkards christen attempts at moderation a “gradation in a drunkard’s career” (Woodman, 1843, p. 81) and proclaim unequivocally, “You cannot make a moderate drinker of a drunkard” (Gough, 1870, p. 155).
- 1826 The American Society for the Promotion of Temperance operates on the moderation principle for ten years before shifting its policy to total abstinence in 1836 (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1836 New Ross Temperance Society (Ireland), originally organized under a moderation pledge (to not use distilled alcohol), shifts its pledge to total abstinence (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1840-1900 Nearly all of the nineteenth century recovery mutual aid groups in America—Native American recovery circles, the Washingtonians, the Fraternal Temperance Societies, the Reform Clubs, and those groups associated with inebriate homes/asylums and addiction cure institutes (the Ollapod Club, the Godwin Association, the Keeley Leagues)—are committed to total abstinence (White, 1998).
- 1862 The Church of England Total Abstinence Society is founded. It changes its name in 1864 to the Church of England Temperance Reformation Society to allow membership of those not willing to pledge total abstinence (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1872 The French Temperance Society is founded on the principle that its members could consume distilled alcohol in moderate quantities but should avoid drunkenness (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1878 The League of the Cross for the Suppression of Drunkenness is organized within St. Lawrence Church in New York City. Members sign a pledge of partial abstinence, with men pledging to limit themselves to one of the following each day: three glasses of beer or cider, three glasses of wine, or two glasses of hard liquor. Women pledged to limit themselves to two beers, two glasses of wine, or one drink of hard liquor (Cherrington, 1925-1926; Eddy, 1887).
- 1879 The most notable of the early American moderation societies—the Businessmen’s Society for the Encouragement of Moderation—is founded by Dr. Howard Crosby and Colonel Henry Hadley in New York. Its members have the choice of four pledges: 1) total abstinence for a period defined by the member, 2) total abstinence from all intoxicants except wine and beer, 3) no alcohol consumption before 5 p.m., or 4) agreement not to be treated or treat others with alcoholic beverages (Cherrington, 1925-1926; Hadley, 1902). The society’s membership reaches more than 22,000 members its first year, with most signing the fourth pledge option (Eddy, 1887). The Church Temperance Society is similarly organized in 1881 in New York along moderation principles.

- 1883 The German Association against the Abuse of Spirituous Liquor is founded (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1895 The French Antialcoholic Union is founded in 1895. Its members pledge not to drink distilled alcohol and to drink fermented alcohol only in moderation (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1903 By 1903, France's National League Against Alcoholism has grown to a membership of more than 100,000. Members can choose from one of three pledges: 1) complete abstinence from all alcoholic beverages, 2) abstinence for a specified period of time, or 3) agreement to work for the League without signing an abstinence pledge (Cherrington, 1925-1926).
- 1934 Everett Colby founds the Council on Moderation with hopes of instilling a new value of moderation within a Post-Repeal America that had been split into Wet and Dry camps for over a century. The Council closes following attacks by Wets that the Council was too dry and attacks by Drys that the Council's moderation position was too wet (Roizen, 1991a).
- 1936 J.A. Wadell and H.B. Haig of the University of Virginia Medical Department and the Medical College of Virginia are commissioned by the state legislature of Virginia to produce a summary of the latest scientific information on alcohol. The resulting report so enrages legislators that they pass a joint resolution to guard the 1,000 copies until they could be burned to avoid reaching schools or newspapers (Roizen, 1991b; Waddell & Haag, 1938).
- 1939 The first edition of the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous notes:
- Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor—becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1939, p. 31).*
- 1962 Scientific studies beginning with Davies (1962) reignite the question of whether confirmed alcoholics can later achieve what Reinert and Brown (1968) christened “controlled drinking.” These early reports are followed by scholarly critiques of the “controlled drinking” research and its related controversies (e.g., Miller, 1983; Roizen, 1987; Rosenberg, 1993).
- 1974 Drinkwatchers International is founded in England. Drinkwatchers is organized within a larger service organization (Accept) that provides professional screening for appropriateness of the moderation goal and referral into moderation-based, weekly support groups led either by group members or by professional counselors

- (Ruzek, 1987; Winters, 1978a). Group members are also provided a *Drinkwatchers Handbook* (Ruzek, 1982; Ruzek & Vetter, 1983) that outlines safe drinking guidelines and suggestions on how to successfully moderate one's drinking. Because of Accept's insistence on professional screening and professional oversight of group meetings, Drinkwatchers is never able to establish itself as a purely mutual aid group (Humphreys, 2004).
- 1976 The publication of an evaluation of alcoholism treatment commissioned by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism generates a firestorm of controversy when it (the Rand Report) reports findings that some alcoholics return to moderate drinking (Armor, Polich, & Stambul, 1976). A second report was issued that softened the initial report's conclusions (Polich, Armor, & Braiker, 1981).
- 1973- In tandem with the Rand Report controversy, Drs. Mark and Linda Sobell publish
1978 a series of scientific reports documenting that some alcoholics achieve controlled drinking (Sobell & Sobell, 1973, 1976, 1978). These reports are followed by a re-evaluation by Pendery, Maltzman, and West (1982) that challenges the Sobells' findings and their professional integrity. The Sobells weather blistering personal and professional attacks in spite of being later cleared of wrongdoing by two separate scientific panels (Dickens, Doob, Warwick, & Winegard, 1982; Trachtenberg, 1984).
- 1980 The American Atheists Alcohol Recovery Group (AAARG) is founded by Madalyn O'Hair, Jon Murray, and Bill Talley.
- 1983 John Talley organizes fledgling AAARG groups into the American Atheists Addiction Recovery Groups Network and later reorganized the groups as Methods of Moderation and Abstinence (MOMA). MOMA offers a secular, moderation-based support framework and also calls for the legalization of all psychoactive drugs. MOMA does not produce sustainable support groups, but it does mount a legal challenge against mandated AA attendance that forces the Veteran's administration to provide secular alternatives to AA (MOMA, no date).
- 1985- New research extols the positive effects of moderate drinking (Barrett, 1991;
1993 Ford, 1988); the first "how-to" books on controlled drinking are published (Miller & Muñoz, 1982; Sanchez-Craig, 1993; Sobell & Sobell, 1993; Vogler & Bartz, 1982).
- 1993 In early 1993, Audrey Kishline develops the idea of Moderation Management (MM)—a moderation-based support group alternative to AA. After writing a pamphlet describing how such an alternative might work, she is encouraged by her mentor, Vince Fox, to expand the pamphlet into a book proposal. Within weeks, she has a contract with See Sharp Press. She writes the book, *Moderate Drinking*, between March and September 1993, with coaching from Fred Glaser

- and Ernest Kurtz. In the process of researching the book, Kishline makes direct contact with Henry Fingarette, Stanton Peele, Mark and Linda Sobell, Martha Sanchez-Craig, Jeffrey Schaler, Fred Rotgers, Alan Marlatt, and Charles Buff—all of whom exerted an early influence on MM (Personal Communication with Audrey Kishline, October 24, 2003).
- 1993- In December 1993, the first Moderation Management group is held in the
1994- basement of a church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. *Moderate Drinking: The New Option for Problem Drinkers* is published by See Sharp Press in 1994 and is followed the same year by a Random House/Three Rivers Edition of the book. More than 50 MM groups are started in 1994. The novelty of MM's approach generated considerable media coverage in such venues as *Psychology Today*, *Health*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Business Week* as well as such media appearances as ABC's *Good Morning America* and an episode of the *NBC Show* entitled, "Can Alcoholics Drink?" In the midst of this flurry of activity, MM was incorporated (in 1995) as a non-profit organization with Audrey Kishline, Brian Kishline, and Jeffrey Schaler serving as MM's first board members.
- 1995 A special issue on controlled drinking is published in the international journal *Addiction*, and the first empirically based guidelines for moderate drinking appear in the *American Journal of Public Health* (Sanchez-Craig, Adrian, & Davila, 1995).
- 1996 MM's first Internet listserv ("Controlled Drinking") is started by Audrey Kishline and Jeffrey Schaler through St. John's University in New York.
- 1996- The media frenzy surrounding MM continues between 1996 and 1997, with
1997- reports on MM appearing in *Psychology Today*, *USA Today*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Good Housekeeping*, and an appearance by Audrey Kishline and Fred Rotgers on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. MM listserv participation dramatically increases during 1997.
- 1998- The first evaluations of MM are conducted (Elkus, 1999; Kohl, 1998).
1999- Concerns about the centralization of leadership for MM as a national organization and for local MM groups lead the NY MM group to implement a rotating leadership model for meeting facilitation.
- Larry Froistad, a member of MM's internet listserv, confesses online to murdering his five-year old daughter, triggering considerable controversy and publicity about MM members' failure to report the confession (three members did report the confession but were severely criticized for doing so). The event triggers professional discussion about the limits of confidentiality in online support groups as well as the responsibilities of professionals who participate in such groups.

1998- MM is subjected to scientific scrutiny in a series of publications (Elkus, 1999;
2006 Humphreys, 2003; Humphreys & Klaw, 2001; Klaw, Horst & Humphreys, 2006;
Klaw, Huebsch, & Humphreys, 2000; Klaw & Humphreys, 2000; Klaw, Luft, &
Humphreys, 2003; Kohl, 1998; Kosok, 2006).

2000 On January 20, 2000, MM founder Audrey Kishline announces on the MM
listserv that she is no longer able to safely moderate her drinking, that she is
seeking the goal of complete abstinence, and that she will be joining AA and
also attending meetings of Women for Sobriety and SMART Recovery.
On March 25, Audrey Kishline is involved in a vehicular crash that kills
Richard Davis and his 12-year old daughter, LaSchell. Kishline's blood alcohol
concentration at the time is .26—more than three times the legal limit. She is
charged with two counts of vehicular homicide. Following treatment for severe
injuries she sustained in the crash, Kishline enters an inpatient alcoholism
treatment program and subsequently pleads guilty to vehicular homicide and is
sentenced to four and a half years in prison.

There are several aftermaths to the Kishline events. The events trigger vitriolic
debate within the alcoholism field. One camp argues that the incident proves
once and for all that people with alcohol problems cannot achieve or sustain
moderate drinking and that the MM experiment is a proven failure. Another camp
argues that, since Kishline had left MM and joined AA, this incident proves the
failure, not of MM, but of AA. On July 11, a statement is released from 34
alcohol studies scholars calling for a stop to the use of the Kishline incident for
ideological gain. The scholars concluded that: "Recovery from serious alcohol
problems is a difficult goal, and there are different paths to it. We believe that the
approach represented by Alcoholics Anonymous and that represented by
Moderation Management are both needed."

Kishline's exit from MM triggers several changes. First, MM's 501C-3
corporation is signed over to the New York MM group, and a new MM board of
directors is formed. MM meetings in New York City and the MM national
offices are relocated to the offices of the Harm Reduction Coalition—a move
necessitated by the loss of permission to meet at the Smithers Addiction
Treatment and Research Center. In the post-Kishline era, MM survives, expands
the number of its groups, and publishes a new MM basic text (Rotgers, Kern, &
Hoeltzel, 2002).

In January 2000, Dr. Alex DeLuca, the long-tenured Director of the Smithers
Addiction Treatment and Research Center, provides permission for the local
Moderation Management group to hold weekly MM meetings at the Smithers
facility. A *New York Magazine* article entitled "Drink Your Medicine" is
published on July 3 (and disseminated through other newspapers) that conveys the
impression that the Smithers Center has abandoned its abstinence philosophy. Dr.
DeLuca resigns amidst growing public controversy, including a Smithers

Foundation advertisement in the Sunday *New York Times* and *New York Post* that christens MM “an abomination.”

Well-known addiction experts Drs. Anne Geller and LeClair Bissell post a statement on the Addiction Medicine Listserv on July 13, 2000, chastising their colleagues for rushing to comment on the story of Dr. DeLuca and the Smithers program without first checking their facts. They characterized the entire affair as a “religious war without the use of any medical, scientific or even collegial common sense.”

The issue of controlled drinking by alcoholics gets substantial media coverage, including programs on *20/20* and *Larry King Live*.

- 2002 MM reports 10 active face-to-face meetings (Moderation Management Network, 2002).
- 2004 MM reports 12 active face-to-face meetings (Kosok, 2006).
- 2006 Ana Kosok’s survey of MM reveals a membership that is predominately middle-aged (44 years), female (66%), White (90%), college-educated (94%), employed (80%), married (54%), and with an annual income of over \$50,000 (77%). More members report using the Internet format than participating in face-to-face MM meetings. The drop-out rate for new members is reported as 61%, with an acknowledgement that “leave-and-return” is a common pattern (Kosok, 2006).
- 2010 MM reports having 16 face-to-face meetings in 12 states (White, 2009)

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