



## Validation of the Drinking Motives Questionnaire - Revised in six European countries



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### HIGHLIGHTS

- This paper assesses the validity of the DMQ-R (Cooper, 1994) among university students in six different European countries.
- Results provide support for similar DMQ-R factor structures across countries.
- Drinking motives have similar meanings among European university students.

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### 1. Introduction

Alcohol consumption above recommended limits has been associated with increased risk of suffering adverse physical, psychological, and social health outcomes (Anderson & Baumber, 2006; WHO, 2012). There is particular concern about alcohol use among university students, with research highlighting that drinking more than recommended limits is particularly common in this group (Lorant, Nicaise, Soto, &

d'Hoore, 2013). Studies have shown that people drink alcohol for many different social and psychological goals (e.g. Cooper, Kuntsche, Levitt, Barber, & Wolf, in press; Ham & Hope, 2003) and drinking motives represent the functions that alcohol use serves for individuals (Gmel, Labhart, Fallu, & Kuntsche, 2012). To date, there has been a lack of cross-cultural studies comparing university students' motives to consume more than recommended limits (Lorant et al., 2013), so it is unclear if motives vary between university students in different countries. Prevention efforts must be based on knowledge of motives and functions that drinking serves for young people if we are to reduce the likelihood of university students suffering negative outcomes from their alcohol consumption (Kuntsche & Kuntsche, 2009).

Inspired by Cox and Klinger's (1988, 1990) Motivational Model, Cooper (1994), proposed an instrument to measure the motives for alcohol use - the Drinking Motives Questionnaire Revised (DMQ-R).

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**Table 1**  
Sample and subsamples characteristics.

Countries	Gender (%)			Ethnic group (%)					Age	
	Female	Male	Other	White	Mixed	Middle/Near Eastern	Asian	Black	Mean	SD
Denmark	68.0	32.0	–	97.3	2.7	–	–	–	21.97	1.66
England	73.5	26.2	0.3	72.2	5.7	0.3	17.7	3.1	19.58	1.52
Germany	75.0	23.9	1.1	92.5	3.8	1.1	1.9	0.8	21.66	2.18
Italy	74.1	25.9	–	89.4	6.1	2.7	0.4	–	21.93	1.81
Portugal	71.3	28.7	–	99.7	–	–	–	0.3	20.70	1.83
Switzerland	72.4	27.0	0.6	92.0	3.0	0.3	3.6	–	21.76	1.98
Total	72.3	27.3	0.4	90.0	3.5	0.6	4.5	0.8	21.16	2.04

Specifically, Cooper's model crossed the dimensions proposed by Cox and Klinger (1988, 1990), valence and source, creating four motives for alcohol use: (a) internally generated, positive reinforcement motives (drinking to *enhance* positive mood or well-being), (b) externally generated, positive reinforcement motives (drinking to obtain positive social rewards), (c) internally generated, negative reinforcement motives (drinking to *cope* with negative emotions), and (d) externally generated, negative reinforcement motives (drinking to *conform* or avoid social censure and rejection). Since then, the DMQ-R has been widely tested and validated in different age groups: adolescents (e.g. Cooper, 1994; Hauck-Filho, Teixeira, & Cooper, 2012; Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2006; Kuntsche, Stewart, & Cooper, 2008); university students (e.g. Martens, Rocha, Martin, & Serrao, 2008; Simons, Correia, & Carey, 2000) and adults (e.g. Cooper, Frone, Russell, & Mudar, 1995; Mezquita et al., 2011). With only a few exceptions (e.g. Martens, Cox, Beck, & Heppner, 2003; Mezquita et al., 2011), the four-factor model proposed by Cooper has consistently shown the best fit to the data. As regards the predictive power of the motivational model, several studies have shown the link between drinking motives and alcohol behaviour (e.g. Foster & Neighbors, 2013; Foster, Neighbors, & Prokhorov, 2014) and the predictive power of each motive for different patterns of drinking behaviour (e.g. Cooper, 1994; MacLean & Lecci, 2000; Simons et al., 2000). For example, Cooper (1994) found those who drink for internal motives (coping or enhancement) drink more and more often than those who drink for external motives (social and conformity). Alternatively, Simons et al. (2000) found that enhancement and social factors correlated with alcohol use, and that coping motives were positively linked with drinking problems. Similarly, a more recent study has shown that coping motives were related to alcohol problems (Kuntsche et al., 2008). This study also found that enhancement and coping motives are positively correlated to risky drinking.

In spite of the increasing number of studies using the DMQ-R, a literature review indicated that most studies were conducted in the USA (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2005). In response, researchers have validated the DMQ-R in Brazil (Hauck-Filho et al., 2012) and Switzerland (see Kuntsche et al., 2006; Kuntsche et al., 2008). However, additional studies are needed to demonstrate the validity and reliability of the instrument across other languages and countries. Indeed, even if there is strong evidence that the DMQ-R is a valid and reliable instrument to assess adolescents' and young adults' drinking motives widely, there is a need to check if results from the four-factor model are consistent across countries in order to acquire meaningful knowledge on the significance of the cultural embedding of drinking motives. Thus, the aim of this study was to assess the validity of the DMQ-R among university students in six different European countries.

## 2. Method and materials

### 2.1. Participants

University students in six European countries – Denmark, England, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland – participated in the present study, which aimed to assess their patterns of alcohol use. In total,

1903 university students (72% female, age range 18–25,  $M = 21.16$ ;  $SD = 2.04$ ), who reported drinking alcohol, completed the DMQ-R. There were 297 students from Denmark, 385 from England, 268 from Germany, 264 from Italy, 352 from Portugal, and 337 from Switzerland.

Table 1 contains data on the study characteristics of the subsamples. Most participants were female; male participants accounted for between 26% and 32% of each subsample. The vast majority of participants described themselves as white (over 90% in all subsamples except the English, where 72% described themselves as white). Participants from Portugal and England were significantly younger than participants from the other countries ( $F(5, 1894) = 94.020$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ). No other significant differences between the samples were found.

### 2.2. Procedures

Data for this study were collected as part of a larger study comparing university student drinking behaviour across Europe.<sup>2</sup> Responses were collected through a self-administered questionnaire hosted on a secure server, containing a standardized set of questions on the following topics: demographics; alcohol-related beliefs; drinking motives; awareness and knowledge of government guidelines on alcohol consumption; perceptions of local and national drinking culture; perceptions of portrayals of alcohol use in marketing and mass media; and past and current alcohol use.

The survey was presented to participants in their “home” language, permitting a naturalistic comparison between countries. Students were recruited via several methods including e-mail, face-to-face invitations and advertisements on social media sites (Facebook and Twitter). To aid recruitment, a lottery prize draw was offered as an incentive in each country, except Portugal. In Germany, Switzerland and England, research participation credits were offered to psychology students. The success of each recruitment strategy varied across countries. In Germany, Switzerland, Portugal and Italy recruitment was primarily done in response to emails sent to students by administrators in each university. In contrast, in Denmark and England recruitment was essentially conducted through social media (Facebook and Twitter).

### 2.3. Measure

The DMQ-R (Cooper, 1994) is a 20-item measure of motives for alcohol consumption. The structure proposes four motives for alcohol consumption: conformity (e.g., “so you won't feel left out”); coping (e.g., “drinking to forget your problems”); enhancement (e.g., “to have fun”); and social (e.g., “because it helps you enjoy a party”). Instructions were made asking participants to consider 20 motives why people might be inclined to consume alcoholic beverages. Then, using the five-point Likert scale (ranging from almost never/never to almost always/always) students were invited to decide to what extent their drinking behaviour was motivated by each of the motives.

<sup>2</sup> More details (e.g. procedures, results etc.) are available contacting on the study by contacting the authors.

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