

Beliefs About the Effects of Alcohol on the Personality of Oneself and Others

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Abstract. The distinction between the effects people expect alcohol to have on themselves and on others is poorly understood. This study employs the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality for investigating these two types of beliefs. Participants responded to short personality questionnaires with instructions to describe themselves and an average young man while moderately intoxicated; they also described their actual and desired personality trait levels. Intoxication was believed to decrease Conscientiousness and increase Neuroticism as well as Extraversion for actors as well as observers alike, while predictions for Openness and Agreeableness depended on the rating target. Profile similarity analysis revealed that, although both types of beliefs reflected socially undesirable trait levels in domains other than Extraversion, actor-expectations were less undesirable than observer-expectations. Implications of the findings suggest that the FFM can be profitably used to study intoxication-related beliefs.

Keywords: expectations, alcohol, personality, Five Factor Model

People believe alcohol intoxication to result in various cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes. These intoxication-related beliefs are crucial for the psychology of alcohol consumption in several respects. First, along with the values attached to the outcomes inherent in these beliefs, they form the backbone of drinking motives (Cooper, 1994) that are the proximal causes of drinking decisions (Cox & Klinger, 1988). Second, the very state of intoxication is defined by the interplay between intoxication expectations and ethanol pharmacology (Moss & Albery, 2009). Finally, beliefs about the effects of alcohol on other people influence social cognition in relevant situations (e.g., Room, 2001). While the first two functions of intoxication-related beliefs are relatively well understood, their role in social cognition has rarely been studied. A necessary prerequisite for filling this gap is a better understanding of the differences between intoxication-related beliefs concerning oneself (i.e., actor-expectations) and other people (i.e., observer-expectations). This study aims to advance such an understanding by analyzing both types of beliefs in a common coordinate space of person-related beliefs – the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality (McCrae & John, 1992).

A considerable asymmetry is often observed between the way people perceive themselves and other individuals (Jones & Nisbett, 1987; Watson, 1982). A few reports suggest that such differences also exist in the beliefs about alcohol intoxication outcomes (George & Dermen, 1988; Leigh, 1987; Leigh & Stacy, 1993). The general principle of cognitive self-enhancement is one likely contributor to these asymmetries (for a review, see Hoorens, 1993). For example, consider the findings according to which college

students rate their own personality traits in more socially desirable terms than the personality of an “average student” (Alicke, 1985; Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1995; Krueger, 1998). However, when it comes to the role of self-enhancement in intoxication-related beliefs, the evidence is contradictory. While Leigh (1987) found that alcohol was believed to enhance socially undesirable behaviors more for other people compared to oneself, George and Dermen (1988) reported simply larger effects for others irrespective of social desirability. We would like to clarify this issue.

Toward a Comprehensive Description of Intoxication-Related Beliefs

Unfortunately, the existing psychometric measures of alcohol expectations (such as the ones used in the previously cited studies) may not be optimal for recording intoxication observer-expectations. These measures usually contain items that have been selected based on their ability to predict actual drinking behavior. However, it is improbable that the set of intoxication outcomes underlying individual’s drinking motivation (e.g., tension reduction, mood enhancement) exactly matches the outcomes relevant from the perspective of a social perceiver (e.g., aggressiveness, talkativeness). Therefore, mapping observer-expectations cannot be exhaustively completed using the existing actor-expectancy questionnaires. Rather, an unbiased set of possible drinking-related changes in important psychological aspects is required.

Instead of creating this set from scratch, we intend to use the facets of the FFM, which is an empirically validated and comprehensive model of psychological traits (e.g., Allik & McCrae, 2002) that has already been successfully applied to various phenomena beyond personality self-ratings. For instance, its traits are well suited for describing a wide range of states people experience in real-life situations (e.g., Bleidorn, 2009; Fleeson, 2001) and in specific contexts and roles (e.g., Heller, Watson, Komar, Min, & Perunovic, 2007). For the current purposes, it is important that the FFM is also a useful tool for studying beliefs regarding other people such as national (Terracciano et al., 2005) or only-children stereotypes (Möttus, Indus, & Allik, 2008). Taken together, these findings suggest that the FFM may function as a close approximation of the implicit schema people use to think about themselves and others (Baresi & Moore, 1996) and, as such, could be considered as an unbiased set of psychological features that intoxication may influence.

Although this approach has not been empirically tested, personality has been related to alcohol expectancies on a conceptual level. Specifically, an integration of major structural models of intoxication outcome expectations yielded a circumplex model around the valence and arousal axes (Goldman, Del Boca, & Darkes, 1999). These are the same dimensions that are central in the study of affect (Remington, Fabrigar, & Visser, 2000) and consequently relate to the FFM personality traits of Neuroticism and Extraversion (e.g., Davidson et al., 2002; DeYoung, 2010). Noting the similarities between the intoxication expectancy circumplex and recurring themes within personality research, Goldman and colleagues (1999) concluded that people can be said to drink “in order to change, temporarily at least, their personality.”

In summary, the proposal to use the FFM personality framework for studying intoxication outcome expectations is in line with several developments in personality as well as psychological alcohol research. Therefore, we describe intoxication-related beliefs regarding self and other people within the FFM coordinate space to study their similarity and relations with socially most desirable levels of personality traits. We address these goals by analyzing the similarity between profiles of mean personality ratings collected using a single measure with different instructions.

Methods

Measures

Personality trait levels were assessed using a short personality measure, the National Character Survey (NCS) (Terracciano et al., 2005). Although the NCS was originally devised for the measurement of national stereotypes, it has been successfully applied to other stereotypes (Möttus et al., 2008), self-rated personality traits (Realo et al., 2009)

and social desirability ratings (Allik, Möttus, & Realo, 2010). The NCS consists of 30 bipolar items with a 5-point Likert-type scale designating *strong agreement* (5 or 1), *moderate agreement* (4 or 2), and *indecisiveness* (3) with either of the bipolar descriptions (e.g., “Friendly, warm, affectionate” vs. “Cold, aloof, reserved”; “Dutiful, scrupulous” vs. “Unreliable, undependable”). Each item corresponds to one of the 30 facets of the most widely used instrument tailored to the FFM, the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The facets can also be used to calculate scores of the five higher-order domains of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

In this study, the NCS was administered with four different instructions:

1. In order to obtain personality ratings, participants were asked to “describe honestly their own personality.”
2. Actor-expectations were measured with an instruction to “describe yourself while moderately drunk.”
3. Observer-expectations were measured with an instruction to “describe an average young man while moderately drunk.” The target was always specified in this questionnaire as a “young man” in order to reduce confounding rating variability due to target age and sex.
4. An instruction to “describe yourself as you would like to be” was used to measure socially desirable levels of personality traits.

To reduce the confounding effect of different levels of intoxication being associated with different outcomes, the term “moderately drunk” was defined in the instructions of the relevant measures as “a result of 2–4 standard drinks (the exact estimation is not possible as the effect of alcohol depends on weight and overall state of the organism). One standard drink roughly equals 0.33 l of light beer, cider or cocktail, a glass of wine, or a shot of strong liquor.”

Participants and Procedure

The study relies on data collected from two samples. A sample of young males provided ratings for all four profiles analyzed in this study (Sample A), while a sample of middle-aged adults provided additional data on observer-expectations (Sample B). Sample A included 100 young men (age range: 19–29, $M = 22.9$ years, $SD = 3.2$) recruited using e-mail and poster adverts on campuses of the University of Tartu, Estonia. Of these, 66% were university students, 22% recent graduates and 12% with secondary education not enrolled in higher education institutions. On average, Sample A drank at least a few times a month during the past year, which was also the most common drinking frequency among young Estonian men (age range: 16–24 years) in a representative survey (Tekkel, Veideman, & Rahu, 2009). In terms of drinking quantities, our sample had more heavy drinkers (64.9% vs. 34.5% drinking 100 g or more per week), far fewer abstainers (4.3% vs. 30.9%)

and similar proportion of moderate drinkers (16% vs. 19.5% drinking up to 40 g and 14.9% vs. 15% drinking 50–90 g per week) compared to the representative Estonian sample (Tekkel et al., 2009).

Sample B consisted of 105 adults (age > 29), 55 men ($M = 37.2$ years, $SD = 7.3$) and 50 women ($M = 39.6$ years, $SD = 8.6$), found using personal contacts of an experimental collaborator. In Sample B, 72.4% of the participants had higher education, 20% had unfinished higher education, and the remaining 7.6% had secondary education. Some 48% of the participants reported drinking at least a few times a month during the previous year, a figure comparable to the 39.3% of men and women between the ages 25 and 64 reporting the same drinking frequency in a representative study (Tekkel et al., 2009). In terms of the amount of alcohol consumed in a week, slightly lower percentage of our sample abstained (13.3% vs. 20.9%), more drank moderately (40% vs. 20.9% drinking up to 40 g and 22.9% vs. 20.9% drinking 50–90 g) and fewer drank heavily (22.9% vs. 45.8% drinking more than 100 g) compared to the representative sample of Estonians (Tekkel et al., 2009).

Participants responded to the questionnaires in a dedicated online environment (<http://www.eformular.com>). The questionnaires required about 20 min in total and could be completed at a freely chosen time. All participants gave informed consent and they could ask for feedback about their personality test scores. The study was confirmed by the Ethics Review Committee on Human Research of the University of Tartu.

Profile Analysis

We operationalize the constructs of interest of this study as personality profiles comprised of ratings on the 30 bipolar NCS items obtained with the four different instructions. These profiles were constructed and analyzed in five steps:

1. standardization of ratings;
2. assessment of intraprofile agreement;
3. creation and description of mean profiles;
4. differential analysis of interprofile similarity;
5. identification of points of divergence and convergence between the profiles.

All collected ratings were first standardized to combat the normativeness problem in subsequent profile similarity analysis, i.e., the tendency of all rating profiles to resemble each other irrespective of rating target (Furr, 2008). Single-item raw scores from all the NCS measures used (i.e., personality, actor-expectations, and social desirability from Sample A and observer-expectations from both samples) were converted to z -scores using the means and the standard deviations of the personality ratings of young men [z -score = (raw score – M)/ SD , where M is the mean and SD the standard deviation of the given item in Sample A personality self-ratings]. We decided to use personality ratings from Sample A to standardize observer-expectation data from Sample B as the target of these ratings – a young man

– exactly matched the demography of Sample A. Due to the standardization procedure, the personality self-ratings of young men became the common coordinate space in which all other belief categories would be compared.

As Neuroticism is the only domain where lower trait levels are considered socially desirable (e.g., Konstabel, Aavik, & Allik, 2006), the scales measuring Neuroticism were reversed (by changing the signs of their z -scores) before the subsequent analysis. Then the agreement between individual raters (i.e., the intraprofile similarity) was assessed for each profile by calculating intraclass correlations (ICC). The ICC decomposes the total variance in ratings into two components: The variance related to differences between the traits to be rated (“effect” variance) and the variance related to interindividual differences between “judges” (“error” variance). The higher the trait variance in relation to the interindividual variance, the higher the agreement among raters. We used the version of intraclass correlation that estimates the absolute agreement between single measurements, i.e., ICC(A,1) (McGraw & Wong, 1996). Note that, because of the standardization procedure, two aspects of profile similarity – elevation and scatter – were removed from the individual ratings leaving profile shape to influence these ICC scores.

In the third step, the standardized scores were averaged within the four rating conditions yielding the mean profiles to be analyzed. In addition to the facet profiles consisting of mean scores of single items we also computed the higher-order FFM domain scores. The similarity of the mean profiles was analyzed using a differential approach recommended by Furr (2010). This involved separate measures for the three core aspects of profile similarity: Elevation assessed by mean absolute differences between the profiles, scatter assessed by mean variability differences and shape assessed by Pearson correlations. Note that, while the standardization procedure in the first step removed the elevation and scatter associated with interrater differences, the elevation and scatter of mean profiles originating from differences between rating targets remained intact.

In the fifth and final step we identified the most prominent points of convergence and divergence between the profiles. In this analysis we looked at the 30 facets as well as the five domains of the FFM. Because all profiles were standardized with respect to personality self-ratings, profile distances can be interpreted in terms of standard deviations of self-rated personality scores. We report all differences between pairs of facets exceeding one standard deviation in addition to all differences between the five domains.

Results

The intraprofile agreement was highest among the ratings of observer-expectations ($ICC = .40$, $k = 205$, $p < .001$), moderate for ratings of actor-expectations ($ICC = .26$, $k = 100$, $p < .001$), and small for social desirability ($ICC = .08$, $k = 84$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that individual raters from differ-

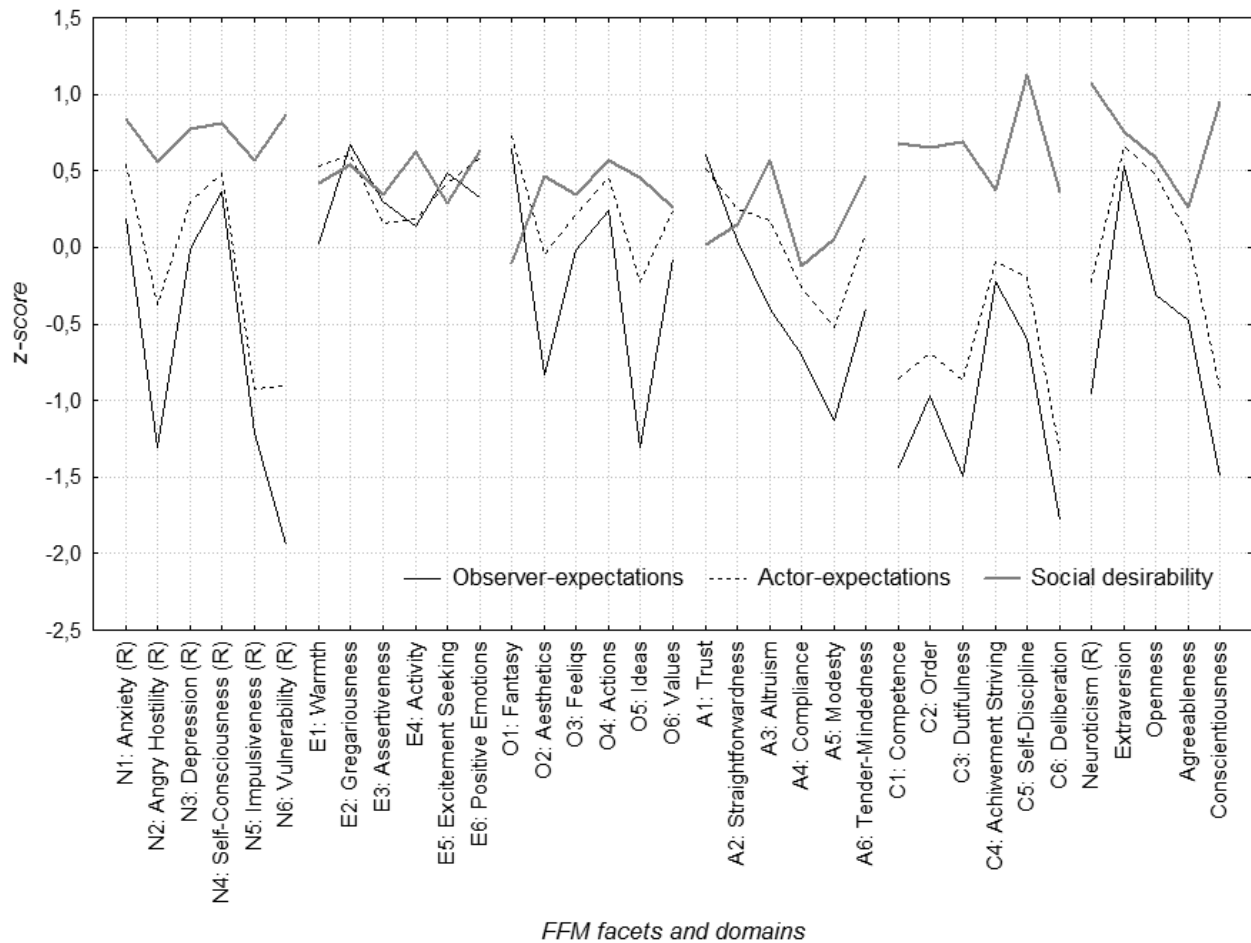


Figure 1. Standardized mean Five Factor Model facet and domain profiles reflecting actor- and observer-expectations of intoxication outcomes and socially desirable trait levels in relation to average personality of young men. R = reversed scale; z-scores calculated using the mean and standard deviation of personality self-ratings of young men (Sample A).

ent age and gender groups describe the observer-expectations target (i.e., a young intoxicated man) in a highly similar manner. To further test this implication, we constructed three averaged observer-expectations profiles based on ratings by demographically homogeneous subsamples: young men (Sample A, $n = 100$), middle-aged men (males in Sample B, $n = 55$), and middle-aged women (females in Sample B, $n = 50$). Treating these three mean profiles as separate “judges” we found a large intraclass correlation ($ICC = .97$, $k = 3$, $p < .001$), suggesting strong agreement among them. As both analysis suggested the observer-expectations are shared between raters from different demographic groups, we used a single grand average observer-expectations ratings profile in subsequent analyses.

Figure 1 depicts the average profiles of the FFM 30 facets and five domains for actor- as well as observer-expectations together with socially desirable trait levels. The Neuroticism scales are reversed to match the general correspondence between social desirability and higher trait scores. Because of the standardization procedure (see Profile Analysis in Meth-

ods), the figure can be used to easily relate the mapped profiles to actual variability in personality self-ratings as zero on the y-axis represents mean personality trait levels of Sample A and one z-score difference is equivalent to one standard deviation of their variability. The figure illustrates that young men in our sample expected intoxication to induce moderate elevations in Extraversion ($z = .67$) and Openness ($z = .40$) together with a substantial decrease in Conscientiousness ($z = -.92$). Predicted changes were smaller for reversed Neuroticism ($z = -.22$) and trivial for Agreeableness ($z = .08$). The effects of alcohol on an average young man were believed to be even larger as observer-expectations differed substantially from personality self-ratings in Conscientiousness ($z = -1.49$) as well as reversed Neuroticism ($z = -.96$), Extraversion ($z = .53$), Agreeableness ($z = -.40$) and Openness ($z = -.31$). Socially desirable personality trait levels were predictably higher than personality descriptions in all domains: Reversed Neuroticism ($z = 1.07$), Extraversion ($z = .76$), Openness ($z = .59$), Agreeableness ($z = .26$) and Conscientiousness ($z = .95$).

Table 1. Shape, elevation and scatter (dis)similarity between Five Factor Model profiles reflecting actor and observer expectations of intoxication outcomes as well as socially desirable personality

	Actor expectations	Observer expectations	Social desirability
Elevation and scatter	$M = -.003$ $SD = .56$	$M = -.39$ $SD = .77$	$M = .48$ $SD = .29$
<i>Similarity estimates</i>			
Observer-expectations	$r = .94^{***}$ $\Delta_M = .37$ $\Delta_{SD} = .22$		
Social desirability	$r = -.18$ $\Delta_M = .50$ $\Delta_{SD} = .27$	$r = -.23$ $\Delta_M = .87$ $\Delta_{SD} = .49$	

Notes. Profile means and standard deviations are in z -scores; r = Pearson correlations (shape similarity), Δ_M = absolute mean difference (elevation dissimilarity), Δ_{SD} = absolute standard deviation difference (scatter dissimilarity); *** $p < .001$.

Profile Similarity Analysis

To further compare the profiles, we performed a differential profile similarity analysis by assessing the overlaps between profile shapes, elevations, and scatters. Table 1 lists pairwise Pearson correlations reflecting shape similarity and differences between profile means and standard deviations indicating elevation and scatter dissimilarity, respectively. As suggested by a large and significant correlation, the actor- and observer-expectation profiles had very similar shapes. However, the elevation of these profiles differed slightly. In addition, scatter difference indicated that the mean ratings varied more within the observer compared to actor profile. Some of these differences become meaningful when the two profiles are compared to the profile reflecting socially desirable levels of trait scores. Although low and not significant, the negativity of the correlations between both types of expectations and social desirability suggests that all intoxication outcomes are believed to resemble somewhat a mirror-image of socially desirable personality. This negative correlation is larger for observer-expectations suggesting that intoxication is believed to influence others in a more undesirable way than oneself. Furthermore, the observer-expectations profile lies below the average personality self-ratings level (z -score 0) almost by as much as the social desirability profile exceeds it. Actor-expectations meanwhile essentially match the elevation of personality ratings and are consequently also closer to being desirable than observer-expectations. In terms of scatter we found that social desirability ratings were the least variable followed by actor-expectations and observer-expectations.

Single Trait Analysis

The analysis of distances between single domain and facet scores (i.e., identification of points of divergence and con-

vergence) reveals that while actor- and observer-expectations are very similar in Extraversion (absolute $\Delta = .14$), they differ in Neuroticism (absolute $\Delta = .73$) and Openness (absolute $\Delta = .79$) as well as Conscientiousness (absolute $\Delta = .57$) and Agreeableness (absolute $\Delta = .56$). It is also noteworthy that, for Openness and to lesser extent for Agreeableness, the expected changes not only differ in distance, but are also in the opposite direction from the mean level of actual personality traits represented by z -score of zero (see Figure 1). On the facet level, absolute differences close to or above one standard deviation between actor- and observer-expectations were observed in O5: Ideas as well as reversed N6: Vulnerability and N2: Angry Hostility where predictions for oneself were associated with higher (i.e., more desirable) levels than expectations regarding an average young man.

Mean domain scores associated with actor- and observer-expectations differed substantially from desirable levels in Conscientiousness (absolute $\Delta = 2.44$, and $\Delta = 1.87$) and Neuroticism (absolute $\Delta = 2.03$ and $\Delta = 1.30$, respectively). In Openness and Agreeableness, however, only the observer-expectations differed notably from desirable levels (absolute $\Delta = .90$ and $\Delta = .74$ compared to $\Delta = .11$ and $\Delta = .19$ for the two traits, respectively). By contrast, in Extraversion both the observer-expectations (absolute $\Delta = .23$) as well as actor-expectations (absolute $\Delta = .09$) were relatively close to desirable levels. The facets where distances between actor- or observer-expectations and desirable levels exceeded one standard deviation were N6: Vulnerability, C3: Dutifulness, C6: Deliberation, C1: Competence, N2: Angry Hostility, N5: Anxiety, O5: Ideas, C5: Self-Discipline, C2: Order, O2: Esthetics, and A5: Modesty. In all of these and most other facets the actor-expectations were more desirable than the observer-expectations.

Finally, the single trait analysis also revealed facets in which ratings on either of the intoxication expectations profile matched or exceeded the socially desirable levels. Absolute differences between desirable levels and at least one type of intoxication expectations remained below .3 for E1: Warmth, E2: Gregariousness, E3: Assertiveness, E5: Excitement Seeking as well as E6: Positive Emotions; O3: Feelings, O4: Actions and O6: Values and finally A2: Straightforwardness. These traits may constitute the positive outcomes people expect to achieve by drinking. For two facets – O1: Fantasy and A1: Trust – the levels believed to accompany intoxication in fact exceeded the desirable levels by .5 to .83. The desirability of these two expectations remains unclear.

Discussion

This study described beliefs about the effects of alcohol intoxication on the personality traits of oneself and an average person and investigated the extent to which either type of beliefs reflects socially (un)desirable trait levels.

The findings can be used to relate alcohol intoxication expectations to personality variability, to differentiate actor- and observer-expectations, to assess the contribution of self-enhancement mechanisms to this distinction, and finally to encourage future research of alcohol intoxications involving the FFM.

Expected Effects of Alcohol on Personality

The FFM is a comprehensive and reliable trait taxonomy that was recently applied to phenomena other than personality self-ratings including beliefs people hold about other individuals such as gender stereotypes (e.g., Allik, Mõttus, & Realo, 2010; Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). Participants of this study were asked to describe themselves and others in the state of intoxication using 30 facets of the FFM. We found that young men expect to become much less conscientious and notably more extraverted, somewhat more open to experience and slightly more neurotic after consuming 2–4 standard drinks compared to their stable personality. As intoxication outcome ratings were standardized in relation to personality self-ratings, the size of these expectations can be said to range roughly from a fifth to a whole standard deviation of actual personality variability within the respective domains. Alcohol effects predicted for an average young man were generally even larger, ranging from a third to one and half standard deviations. The observer-expectations profile included a substantial reduction in Conscientiousness, large increase in Neuroticism, notable elevation of Extraversion, reduced rather than enhanced Openness, and finally decreased Agreeableness relative to stable personality. To our knowledge, this is the first description of the effects people expect alcohol to have on personality. As this study dealt only with the effects of moderate quantities of alcohol on young males, future replications are required to test the applicability of this pattern to a wider range of intoxication effects.

Differentiating Actor- and Observer-Expectations

The profile similarity analyses performed in this study indicated that the two types of intoxication outcome expectations were strongly related, as suggested by their high shape similarity and relatively small elevation and scatter differences. However, some notable distinctions can still be drawn. First, we found that the participants agreed more among each other when describing the effects of alcohol on an average young man than while describing the effects on themselves. In fact, raters agreed on the observer-expectation profile as strongly as two people typically agree on the description of an actually existing person they both know (Mõttus, Allik, & Pullmann, 2007). In addition, small differences in profile scatter suggest that standardized rat-

ings within the observer-expectations profile are more variable (i.e., extreme) compared to actor-expectations profile. The overall mean of the observer-expectation profile is also lower than the mean of expectations profile.

Some of these differences between the actor- and observer-expectation profiles can be explained by the assumption that beliefs regarding oneself are rendered more positive than beliefs about others via self-enhancement mechanisms (Hoorens, 1993). We tested these hypothesis by assessing the similarity between the two expectation profiles and a profile of socially desirable levels of personality traits obtained by asking participants to describe themselves as they would like to be (e.g., Konstabel et al., 2006). We found that the general principle of self-enhancement indeed influenced intoxication-related beliefs. While both types of intoxication expectation had a weak negative relationship with social desirability, the observer-expectation profile lay further away from desirability and had a slightly larger negative correlation with it than the actor-expectations profile.

FFM as a Framework for Studying Intoxication-Related Beliefs

In this last section we discuss some of the limitations and implications of our findings to encourage future research of intoxication-related beliefs employing the FFM. First of all, the overall approach of this study could be criticized on the grounds that intoxication cannot actually alter personality when defined as a relatively stable pattern of behaving, thinking, and feeling (Johnson, 1997) with a biologically stable neural substrate (McCrae & Costa, 2008). However, upon closer look this contradiction is illusory, as intoxication induces changes to the manifestations of personality traits such as cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses while expectations regarding these changes belong to the self-image of a person. Because alcohol intoxication can interfere with the network defining observable manifestations of personality, using a valid model of personality to study intoxication-related beliefs is also feasible.

This feasibility is further supported by the questions for future research raised by this study. As a first example, consider the relationship between our findings and drinking motivation (an idea suggested by a reviewer of this study). We found that, even though our participants expect intoxication to alter them in an undesirable direction on many traits, they continue to consume alcohol. This mirrors other evidence from alcohol-expectancy research suggesting that decisions to drink are not governed by the expected positive outcomes alone, but rather by the balance between the expected positive and negative outcomes (for a review see Goldman et al., 1999). Employing the FFM may help to discover new types of negative as well as positive outcomes and their relation-

ships with drinking motivation. For instance, the current finding suggests that expected alcohol-induced shifts toward ideal trait levels in Extraversion and Openness outweigh the probable undesirable changes in Neuroticism and Conscientiousness. Future studies could identify whether individual differences exist in this overall pattern and how they might relate to drinking motivation and behavior.

Employing the FFM to describe temporary alcohol-induced changes may also help to relate these to more stable individual differences. As an example consider the implications of our finding to the question of the origins of intoxication expectations. These beliefs emerge from at least two sources of information: individual experiences with intoxication and social learning from observations of others under the influence of alcohol (Jones, Corbin, & Fromme, 2001). The route involving social learning in turn reflects at least two sources of variability: the transient effects of intoxication as well as the stable personality differences of people who tend to drink more than others. The latter has already been described in terms of the FFM and involves high Neuroticism, low Conscientiousness, and low Agreeableness (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Rooke, & Schutte, 2007). This profile mirrors the changes alcohol is expected to induce in others (and with the exception of low Agreeableness in oneself). Future studies employing the FFM may be able to assess the relative contribution of the different sources of information to the formation of intoxication-related beliefs.

Conclusions

Using the terms of the FFM, people can be said to expect alcohol intoxication to substantially reduce Conscientiousness and to elevate Neuroticism as well as to enhance Extraversion. Profile similarity analysis reveals that two types of such intoxication-related beliefs – actor- and observer-expectations – resemble each other on a general level, but can be differentiated on the basis of interrater (i.e., intraprofile) agreement, profile elevation, and scatter as well as mean values on specific facets and domains. More specifically, observer-expectations by different people are more similar, include more extreme values, and consist of on average lower trait scores compared to actor-expectations. These differences appear to be systematic in relation to socially desirable levels of personality traits with the observer-expectations being less desirable. An important exception to this pattern involves Extraversion, for which alcohol-induced changes are believed to be similar for both actor- and observer-expectations, and match the socially desirable level. The findings of the present study and their possible implications for future research illustrate the feasibility of studying intoxication-related beliefs within the FFM framework.

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