Transgression within Boundaries
- a qualitative study of excitement motivation among combat troops

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Abstract

Recent studies show that soldiers’ level of excitement increases when they are exposed to the hardships of war. However, we know little about what meaning the soldiers themselves associate with the general concept of excitement. Using qualitative interviews conducted with Danish troops before and after deployment to Helmand, Afghanistan, this article starts closing this gap. 38 interviews were conducted, (22 before deployment, 16 after). Here, two interviewees, selected by means of a concurrent quantitative panel study, are in focus. The in-depth analysis of these interviews – concurrently compared with results from the larger pool of qualitative and quantitative data – reveal that the soldiers sees the pursuit of excitement as intrinsically tied to their professional identity. They may be in it for the thrill, but they deny the notion that excitement is about breaching social norms. On the contrary, an important reason for being deployed is the prospect of gaining real soldier experience, and the more danger you have faced, the more you seem to emphasise this aspect. Accordingly, becoming a true soldier implies transgressing yourself while observing the norms of the military institution.

Keywords: Soldiers, Excitement, Sensation Seeking, Professionalism, Interpretive research
Introduction

I never really intended to study excitement. The idea came up when a military psychologist gave feedback on a survey on soldier motivation, I had developed. She told me – in a side-remark – that soldiers pay great heed to the prospect of danger. Following her comment, I added a couple of questions to the survey about excitement and also put in a supplementary probe in my qualitative interview guide. Honestly, I had expected excitement to matter less on the soldiers’ return. To my surprise, the quantitative results revealed the opposite. It mattered more.

Trying to comprehend that pattern, I learned that behavioural psychology had been using a construct similar to excitement – the sensation seeking scale – for decades. And that recent studies of soldiers’ sensation seeking not only show that excitement is important as a motivating factor, but also – as I found – that the deployment experience strengthens its significance (Parmak, Mylle, & Euwema, 2012; 2014). Elsewhere, I have suggested that these observations indicate that we should reconsider our view of excitement as a need and instead regard it as a desire: Excitement is not quenched by being nurtured. It is fed and strengthened (Brænder 2016).

With that knowledge, I returned to my qualitative data. Trying to grasp the meaning of excitement from the soldiers’ own point of view. After all, instead of only asking, in width, about the causes and consequences of excitement, we should also inquire, in depth, about the soldiers’ own perception of the concept. The result is the following article, addressing the research question *What does excitement mean for the soldiers themselves?*

Theory

By inquiring about "meaning", this can be categorised as an interpretive research question. This is the reason why it is later mentioned that this study should prioritise what Peregrine
Schwartz-Shea call the "thick description" research criterion (2006). This is also the reason why no hypotheses are stated towards the end of this theory section. Interpretive research questions cannot be answered using deductive approaches. Instead, interpretive research is an iterative process, in which the development of theoretical concepts and of the tools of measurement are part and parcel of the analysis itself, (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). That being said, we should not forget that all research question needs specification. Deductive questions are specified by means of hypotheses. Interpretive questions by means of new – open-ended – questions.

Excitement motivation is an umbrella term. It is a translation of the Danish term, *spænding*, which can be understood in both a narrow and a broad sense. Strictly speaking, the etymological equivalent to *spænding* is "suspense", and following this narrow interpretation of the word, it lies semantically close to what is defined below as "thrill and adventure seeking". Here, however, the term is understood more broadly as the wish to seek challenges with an unknown outcome. In that sense, it also lies closer to the etymological root of the word "excitement" ("ex-citare"), characterising that which "calls out" or "awakens" or a need or desire. Excitement motivation borders what other studies refer to as "arousal seeking" or "sensation seeking". However, whereas sensation seeking is most often seen as an individual or even biological need, the broader term excitement is preferred here to indicate that the wish to seek challenges may also be regarded as a socially mediated desire.

Intuitively, it goes without saying that excitement is important in war. War implies danger, hardships, struggles, fighting, and life-threatening events, and as long as human beings have told stories, these stories have always centred on how man has endured such challenges. We find danger fundamentally intriguing, and with sex and gossip as the only qualified competitors, stories of danger, and of coping with danger, constitute the "prima materia" of any given narrative. Fundamentally, this is what narratives are all about: They
recount tremors of everyday life. A state of normalcy is disturbed, tremored, by an event, by a state of exception (Franzosi 1998). This is the case in grand narratives, from literary classics (such as the Homeric Epoi) to Hollywood Blockbusters (such as the *Divergent* series). This is the case in the basest stories recounted by urban man (Labov, 1972).

The notion that sex and danger are constitutive for man is not new in the social sciences. Just consider the dichotomy between "eros" and "thanatos" in psychoanalysis (Freud, 1939; Žižek, 1994). Nevertheless, when it comes to explaining motivation, we often resort to very rationalist explanations. All motivational theory builds on assumptions about human nature. If humans are considered as rational beings, motivation is perceived as a matter of cognitive deliberation (Pinder, 2008). In that view, motivational choices can be reduced to calculated trade-offs. When the benefits are expected to outweigh the costs, we pursue a given course of actions. When the opposite is the case, we refrain from it.

Take the soldier’s choice of going to war – the focus of this article – as an example. Obviously, the soldier’s choice may imply a number of costs; first and foremost, the risk of being killed in combat. Accordingly, in order to go to war, he or she will need a really good reason, something to counterweigh the risks, to justify this choice. There is an array of good reasons to choose from, and also a number of reasons that might not be so good, either because they fail to match the costs or because they are not considered legitimate.

Traditionally, duty, patriotism, comradeship, and honour have been considered as good and noble causes for justifying the soldier’s sacrifice (Little, 1964; MacCoun & Hix, 2010; Moskos, 1971; Shils & Janowitz, 1948; Stouffer et al., 1949; Wong et al., 2003). On the contrary, pursuing economic rewards has been perceived as an illegitimate reason (Baker, 2008). However, what counts as a good reason changes over time. American soldiers serving in the Second World War saw "flag-waving patriotism" as thwarting the demand of undisputed "[l]oyalty to one’s buddies" (Stouffer et al., 1949). On the contrary, cohorts
recruited in the wake of 9-11 fought both for country and comrades (Eighmey, 2006; Wong et al., 2003).

In this article, danger is not seen as a reason to stay at home, as something that ought to be outmatched by good and noble causes. Instead, as mentioned above, recent quantitative studies (Brænder, 2016; Parmak, Mylle, & Euwema, 2012 & 2014; Sookermany, Sand, & Breivik, 2015) suggest that the fascination of danger plays a pivotal role when soldiers deploy to war. Moreover, they also show that on their return, the soldiers seem to strive for more danger than they did before. Accordingly, these observations suggest that the modern combat soldier does not serve in spite of the danger but because of the danger – a view that short-circuits the notion that motivation should be regarded as a rational trade-off between costs and benefits. Focus in the following is on what excitement motivation in general, and this observed development means for the soldiers themselves.

It can be difficult to evaluate interpretive research using the variance based research criteria presented in most method text books. Not only will interpretive studies fail to live up them, but these standards will be of little help in strengthening our interpretations. Accordingly, Peregrine Schwartz-Shea has suggested four new standards to be used in interpretive research, "thick description", "trustworthiness", "reflexivity", and "triangulation" (Schwartz-Shea 2006: 101ff.) Granted, each of these criteria can be seen as relevant in regard to this study. Here, however, focus will be on the first, because the research question specifically addresses what Malinowski in 1932 characterised as the endeavour "to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world" (1961: 25). Accordingly, the analysis below should centre on the social actors’ recognition of the scientific concepts we use, (in this case on the soldiers’ recognition of excitement motivation). This implies not only categorising "in vivo" (Strauss 1987: 33ff) terms, which we may find captures a similar meaning. Instead, we should inquire what meaning the
soldiers themselves attach to these words, and how this fits their world. Hence, some terms relevant to the outsider may not be interesting at all from the soldiers’ point of view. Other terms, which we would dismiss may be key to grasping their perspective. Take the concept "deployment bums" as an example. Soldiers use this term to describe other soldiers taking combat tours repeatedly. None of the two words in this concept (neither "deployment" nor "bum") indicates that this has anything to do with excitement. Yet, this term likens the redeploying soldiers to "ski bums" who give up other comforts for the pleasure of skiing all day long. And this idea of perceiving the hardships of deployment life as pleasurable, and the fact that the soldiers refer to those who pursue that pleasure too eagerly as "bums", indicate that excitement – or something equivalent – is part of their repertoire of motives, and should be studied more in-depth.

Resonating Kenneth Pike’s classical distinction between "emic" and "etic" approaches (Harris, 1976), Frederick Schaffer contrasts thick descriptions to "thin description[s] " (2014). A thin description is typically a survey questionnaire. It is based on predefined, abstract concepts, that we assume travel across contexts. Hence, using surveys we make bold statements about similarities and differences between people or groups without asking whether that assumption is itself justified.

For several decades, behavioural psychology has been using generic or "thin descriptions" of what is here is understood as excitement motivation. These measures include the MMPI, the Big Five indices, and, most prevalently, the sensation seeking scale (SSS) (Dahlen & White, 2006; Viken, Kline, & Rose, 2005; Zuckerman et al. 1964). Marvin Zuckerman has defined sensation seeking as "the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences" (Zuckerman, 1979). Sensation seeking is closely related to individual personality traits. It may vary across time and space, but it is nevertheless perceived as a very
deep-rooted aspect. Accordingly, it has been argued that sensation seeking should be seen as a biological, rather than merely individual or social, category (Daitzman et al., 1978). And although this claim is not uncontested (Rosenblitt et al., 2001), the scale is treated as an antecedent variable in most studies.

Since its introduction more than 50 years ago, the scale has been revised several times (Stephenson et al., 2007; Zuckerman, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1978). However, as in the initial version, the scale is still perceived as measuring a first-order reflective and a second-order formative concept consisting of four different dimensions: "boredom susceptibility", "thrill and adventure seeking", "experience seeking", and "disinhibition".

Granted, we cannot expect to grasp the "emic" meaning of excitement motivation comprehensively, by using an "etic" quantitative inventory as the sensation seeking scale. Yet, the scale’s sub-dimensions still offer a framework for structuring our analysis of the perceived meaning of this concept. And it is in this way that the use of the scale in the following should be understood: Here, the scale is seen as a heuristic tool. It is perceived as an unfinished roadmap. This map shows us some points of interest, and perhaps suggests – rudimentarily – how they are interconnected. Thus outlined, however, the map fits anywhere and nowhere. Our job, in the following, then, is to reveal how these points of interest are interrelated. This is done to ensure that the map fits the context in question: The soldiers’ perception of excitement motivation.

This means that the deductive, or "etic" conceptualisation of sensation seeking will not be regarded as carved in stone. On the contrary, when applying this rudimentary concept to this specific context, we should expect it to be revised. Moreover, this also means that the methods section will not aim at developing indicators of excitement motivation based on the operationalisation of the sensation seeking scale. Instead, the actual interrelations of these "points of interests" will only be revealed through the data analysis.
The predictive power of the sensation-seeking scale has been demonstrated in numerous studies explaining very different types of behaviour, such as drug use, sexual promiscuity, extreme sports, and military service (see, e.g., Dir, Coskunpinar, & Cyders, 2014; Holmes et al., 2016; Kelley et al., 2012; Kopp et al., 2016; Neria et al., 2004; Kelley et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Jeffrey Arnett has severely criticised the use of the scale, and offered an alternative measure, the "Arnett inventory of sensation seeking" (AISS) (1994). Even with only two dimensions, Arnett states that AISS constitutes a better predictor than SSS-V when it comes to explaining the behaviour that we would normally associate with sensation seeking (ibid: 291). This claim is partly supported by Carretero-Dios and Salinas (2008).

Arnett might be perfectly right in his critique, conceptually as well as methodologically. Nevertheless, Zuckerman’s four dimensions will constitute the point of departure of the analysis below. The reason for this is quite simple. The aim here is not to test the predictive power of either scale, but to understand the soldiers' perception of excitement motivation. And in that respect using four dimensions instead of two, enables us to keep the conceptual space more open. With that in mind, the general research question, addressing the soldiers’ perception of excitement motivation, is specified, first, by inquiring how do the soldiers perceive boredom susceptibility, thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, and disinhibition? Analytically, this question consists of two elements, one concerning the conceptualisation itself: do these dimensions resonate with the soldiers’ point of view? And another centring on their evaluation of these concepts: Do the soldiers perceive these aspects as motivating factors?

The second specification of the research question derives specifically from one of Arnett’s points of critique, questioning the validity of perceiving sensation seeking as a solely biological phenomenon. This echoes the crucial claim in psychoanalysis that desires, unlike needs, are always socially mediated (Bowie, 1991). A similar point has been made in a
number of sociological classics seeing the "enjoyment" experienced by drug users and gamblers as the result of a social learning process (Aasved, 2003; Becker, 1953; Bloch, 1951). In this context, the aforementioned quantitative studies, suggesting that soldiers’ level of excitement is susceptible to deployment experience, also supports this critique. One’s level of sensation seeking might be individual. Its basis and space of fluctuation might even be biologically determined. Nevertheless, in order to explain how the construct fluctuates, we need to take other factors, such as deployment, into consideration. And given that the soldiers’ level of sensation seeking can change over time, we cannot exclude the possibility that their perceptions of this phenomenon might also change. Accordingly, to address the general research question about the perception of excitement motivation, we should also inquire how excitement motivation – using the context-specific re-conceptualisation of Zuckerman’s four sub-dimensions – change over time?

Data and methods
Below, I analyse individual interviews conducted with Danish combat soldiers before and after their deployment to Afghanistan in 2011. It is difficult to analyse both in-depth and in-width. Centring on "thickness" – as it is the aim here – impedes making broad sweeping and, contextually seen, "thin" generalisations. Accordingly, the main focus in the following will be on two interviewees only. There is not real remedy for this loss of generalisability. Yet, in order to strengthen the representativeness of these two soldiers and of their views, they were selected on the basis of their responses to the quantitative survey, which was conducted concurrently with the interviews, and included all members of their outfits. Likewise, in the following, these soldiers’ perceptions will be compared to broader patterns observed in the qualitative and the quantitative data.
In all, 216 questionnaires were handed in in the two rounds of the survey, with a balanced quantitative panel consisting of 78 soldiers (those who handed in a valid questionnaire both before and after deployment). 38 qualitative interviews were conducted; 22 before deployment and 16 after the soldiers’ return. The balanced qualitative panel consists of these 16 pre- and post-interviews.

In the quantitative study, the soldiers’ excitement- or risk-seeking motivation was measured using a three-item reflexive index. The wording of the items can be seen in table 1, below.

[Table 1]

The items may be seen as tapping aspects similar to those contained in Zuckerman’s inventory. Yet, the actual wording derives from neither SSS nor AISS but was chosen to fit this particular context. Likewise, neither the pre-deployment nor the post-deployment interview guide contained any questions specifically addressing Zuckerman’s or Arnett’s sub-dimensions. A copy of the pre-deployment interview guide can be seen in the appendix. Its first question simply inquires openly: "Why are you going to Afghanistan? " Likewise, the post-deployment interview commenced with an open-ended question: "Did the deployment live up to your expectations?". All interviewees responded to these opening questions. In case they had not, and to ensure that their reasons for going were kept in focus, the pre-deployment interview guide also contained a number of probes addressing different types of motivation.

By drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data, this can be characterised as a mixed method study. Based on a number of core distinctions (regarding sequence, dependency, and weighting), Cresswell and Plano-Clark (2011) identify six types of mixed
methods designs. The fact that the qualitative cases are selected to enhance our understanding of the quantitative findings, suggests that it should be categorised as an "explanatory mixed methods design". (Yet, since the aim here is to enhance our understanding of the soldiers’ perception of risk, we should understand the term "exploratory" broadly, as a claim about the “trustworthiness” of this elucidation (Schwartz-Shea 2006), and not as a matter of "hypothesis testing", which a positivist interpretation would imply (Lijphart 1971; Maxwell 2012).)

Figure 1, below, illustrates how the two soldiers in focus here, were selected on basis of their responses to the quantitative survey. The letters denoting these two interviewees, "E" and "G", were chosen randomly after transcribing the interviews in full. The figure shows the excitement motivation score of these two soldiers compared to the rest of their outfits before and after deployment.

[Figure 1]

As can be seen, all soldiers reported – on average – a higher degree of excitement motivation after their return than they had done before deployment. The dataset contains qualitative interviews with soldiers whose excitement motivation decreased following deployment and soldiers whose motivation increased. The responses by the two interviewees in focus here mirrors the general pattern. For this reason – and because they were both privates, and that none of them had been on a combat mission before – they were chosen as typical examples of the surveyed soldiers.

As already mentioned, interpretive research questions highlight the importance of working iteratively. Accordingly, the analysis was conducted with the combined aim of gaining knowledge about both the theoretical framework (What do we learn about the generic
construct of sensation seeking from these data?) and the empirical context (What do we learn about the soldiers’ specific perceptions of excitement by using this framework?). In practise, this means that the data were analysed in two steps, combining a grounded-theory approach with an in-depth reading of the selected quotations. First, the transcribed interviews underwent an incident-by-incident coding and an axial coding (Charmaz, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994) focusing on different motivational forms. The paragraphs centring on excitement motivation were then categorised, using a concurrently revised version of the sensation seeking framework’s dimensions. Hence, in accordance with the iterative nature of Grounded Theory, the four dimensions were adjusted to fit this particular context. The aim of this adjustment was to fulfil the two-fold purpose of using the sensation seeking dimensions to highlight different aspects of excitement motivation and to retain the uniqueness of the soldiers’ point of view.

This adjustment followed the second methodological step, in which the selected paragraphs were studied one by one semantically. The primary focus in that part of the analysis was on relations of identity and difference in the soldiers’ perception of excitement. The reason for this is that significance – grammatically and socially seen – is always articulated through such relations (Feldman 1995). Analytically, we should include both descriptive and normative articulations of similarity and difference. Descriptive articulations are truth-claims: Is a particular reason in accordance with the soldier’s own perception or not? Normative articulations are value-claims: Is a particular reason seen as legitimate or not?

However, these two modes of articulation can be difficult to tell apart. And, in practise, the "grey zones" often constitute the most important points of interest. A grey zone in this regard is where a descriptive or a normative claim calls for elucidation: Where e.g. a reason that we, offhand, would regard as illegitimate, is nevertheless seen as justifiable, (or vice-versa). Such grey zones are inherently interesting in qualitative studies. Whenever a
claim calls for further explanation, we gain a more comprehensive insight of both the nuances of this elaborated justification, and of the contours of the general distinction between what is truth and false, and what is right and wrong, in the context in question. Moreover, in this specific study, where focus is on excitement – a concept that by definition hovers between the desirable and the forbidden – such elucidations should be in focus.

Above, the research question was, analytically, divided into two sub-questions. To answer the first – about excitement as a motivating factor – the analysis below centres on how the soldiers justify the deployment using the sensation seeking dimensions as an analytical tool. To answer the second – about the development of excitement motivation – the analysis focus on how each of these, revised, dimensions are seen before and after deployment. To help structuring the study, three working displays were developed (Miles & Huberman, 1994): One conceptual, and two empirical. The first centres on the revision on the sensation seeking framework (table 2). The second on how the two interviewees in focus evaluate each of the revised dimension (table 3). And the third on the visibility of these dimensions across the 22 pre-deployment interviews (table 4). The three displays are used to wrap up the first part of the analysis centring on excitement as a motivating factor, and to reveal, albeit with caution, whether the observations made based on these two interviews, reflect a more general pattern. For the same reasons, the second part of the analysis is supported by three graphs drawn from the quantitative data, showing how dimensions resampling those analysed here, develop for all the deployed soldiers (figure 2a-c).

Observations

In the first part of the analysis, below, the sensation seeking scale dimensions will be addressed one by one. Each paragraph opens with the general, "epic" conceptualisation, taken from Zuckerman’s definition, followed by the revised conceptualisation, based on this study
(if relevant). Then, it is assessed how the soldiers evaluate that particular dimension. These revisions are only "emic" in the sense that they fit the soldiers’ own perceptions, but they are still retained in a one-line, general form. Lastly, going through the interview statements most relevant in regard to each dimension, these observations are substantiated one by one. Before turning to the development of the dimensions – in the second part of the analysis – the results regarding the perceptions are summarised.

Boredom susceptibility

Generally seen, boredom susceptibility is defined as "an aversion to repetition, routine, and dull people, and restlessness when things are unchanging" (Zuckerman, Eysenck & Eysenck (1978): 140). Following the analysis below, there was little need to revise that definition. It captures well, semantically, how the soldiers understand boredom. Moreover, it is characterised – in their own words – as an important aspect of their deployment motivation.

Thus, before deployment, interviewee G states that he "would never consider going to for instance Kosovo or Lebanon. It doesn’t appeal to me at all" (Interviewee G, p. 3, lines 4-5, before deployment). What does not appeal to him are the tasks involved in going on a primarily constabulary mission: "In for instance Kosovo, where it, it tends to be a bit of a coffee club, where they walk around and are not really carrying arms" (ibid, lines 11-13). He wants to go to Afghanistan because he expects things there to be less dull. After his return, however, interviewee G has changed his view on this Theatre of War. Although he would like to go on another deployment, he would avoid tours to Afghanistan because, as he describes it: "there isn’t enough action" (Interviewee G, p. 17, line 14, after deployment). Escaping boredom is still important to him. But his pre-deployment expectations were not met: "There is no doubt that we were all really surprised by how much guard duty there was,
and how many times we were just sitting on base and were really bored" (ibid, p. 18, lines 7-9).

Interviewee E also sees avoiding boredom as a key element of serving abroad. He also distinguishes clearly between constabulary missions, as tours to, e.g., Kosovo, and more risk-prone tours. Yet, contrary to interviewee G, he returns satisfied:

INT: […] do you think, in light of your experiences with ISAF 11, that [the deployment] lived up to your expectations?
E: Yes, it did. Clearly. It was a good deployment, dammit. There isn’t much negative to be said. We had a lot of guard duties to begin with, but that was cut down, and we found a good balance. […] none of us had been deployed before, apart from Kosovo, where the threat assessment is very different. […] after about a month, it was perfect being down there. (Interviewee E, p. 14, lines 6-15, after deployment)

Thrill and adventure seeking

Zuckerman, Eysenck & Eysenck defines thrill and adventure seeking as "expressing a desire to engage in sports or other activities involving speed or danger" (1978: 140). Here, that definition is slightly revised for two reasons. First, the specification of "sports or other activities" seems a bit off target in this context. Second, the feelings aroused by sports may be comparable to those aroused by war, a point which is emphasised by the soldiers themselves. Yet, the key element of motivation is the expectations associated with a certain activity, not what the activity involves in reality. Instead, for the soldiers, thrill and adventure seeking is defined as "expressing a desire to engage in activities expected to arouse a feeling of danger". And as will be shown, they regard this as an essential part of their deployment motivation.

Before deployment, interviewee G sees a tour to Afghanistan as a way of
finding out – well – all the time trying the excitement, trying to be exposed to the pressure, really, where you’re all the way out there, where you’re seriously in the shit, where it really, really isn’t fun at all. (Interviewee G, p. 3, lines 7-9, before deployment).

For interviewee G, deployment is about identifying his own limits by trying something that he has never tried before and that he cannot try anywhere else. Likewise, interviewee E sees the tour, and the risk of being exposed to combat, as his prime motive for going:

E: […]. So, well, yes, excitement will probably come, and I think, like, everybody hopes that we’ll have some excitement, we do.

INT: Excitement as action or?

E: Well yes, the first time you are shot at. Then none of us knows how we’ll react. You’ve never had the slightest thought about that, do you, because none of us have been deployed before. It’s something like that. What happens the first time, and how is it? (Interviewee E, P. 2, line 5-11, before deployment)

Experience seeking

In the sensation seeking scale, experience seeking is operationalised as "the seeking of experience through the mind and senses, travel, and a nonconforming life-style". The soldiers’ perception of experience is very different (Zuckerman, Eysenck & Eysenck, 1978): 140). First, whereas Zuckerman initially saw this as linked to novelty (a view also reflected in Arnett’s revision of the scale), the soldiers seem to emphasise the practical dimension of experience. In this context, experience seeking is not about trying something completely new,
it is about transferring what you know in theory to practical skills. Second, this also means that this is a much less individualist dimension than Zuckerman’s emphasis of "the mind and senses" and "nonconforming lifestyle" would suggest. Instead, the soldiers strive for acquiring a practical knowledge that is socially defined by the norms of their profession and hence also reflecting a large degree of rule-abidance and conformity. Accordingly, this dimension is defined here as "the seeking of experiences that can only be achieved by means of special skills". Along with the need for arousal, nurtured by their thrill and adventure seeking, both soldiers regard experience seeking as a very important motivating factor, and see this tour of duty as a way of gaining real soldier experience.

In one way, this is very much aligned with the notion that deployment to combat is a way of self-realisation. This is what soldiers are trained for. This is what interviewee G states when – again, referring to Kosovo – he states the following:

I think that when you’re going to be a soldier and deployed as a soldier, then it is to do a soldier’s job and not for instance to go to Kosovo and keep guard at demonstrations and things like that, so I think it’s much more police work in that way. So, I mean, I would rather go out and be a real soldier and do the things soldiers do [...].

(Interviewee G, p. 3, lines 13-17, before deployment)

Gaining experience is a matter of using your skills, and in that view, it moderates or helps us understand an important point in regard to the transgression of our boundaries for thrill and adventure seeking. For these soldiers, combat exposure might be a way of challenging themselves, but it is not about taking chances. Combat experience is an extraordinary experience. However, the point is that as a soldier, you know how to cope with this
experience. This interaction between the excitement of pushing your boundaries and being trained to do so in the right way – between thrill and adventure seeking and experience seeking – is thoroughly described by interviewee E:

E: How, er, does it, like, feel when someone is actually trying to kill you, someone, then it is really exciting, and very frightening as well.

INT: but that, that it is exciting, that it is frightening, [these perceptions] are not […] mutually excluding, or?

E: No, no. I don’t think so. I don’t think so. Because when it’s exciting, well then it’s also a bit, yes … there is a danger in all excitement. If I drove motor races, or something in Formula 1, well, then there is also excitement in taking this curve a bit faster than you normally do, but there is also a greater risk in it. I dive a bit myself, don’t I? I also think it is really exciting to do wreck diving, but there is also a risk in it. You just need to practise, practise, and practise and then take your precautions.

(Interviewee E, p. 2, lines 12-23, before deployment)

*Disinhibition*

According to Arnett, Zuckerman’s conceptualisation of disinhibition is both methodologically and substantially problematic. His methodological critique is a priori correct: By including questions about actual behaviour in the measure, the sensation scale includes what it is supposed to predict. Whether Arnett is right in his substantial critique is, however, an empirical question. We cannot, beforehand, reject the possibility that soldiers pursue a military career to transgress social boundaries. After all, soldiers are expected to breach two of the most fundamental norms in human life, the prohibition of killing and the obligation of self-preservation. Accordingly, the dimension is redefined simply into "the
desire to break social boundaries". In that way, it does not imply what it is supposed to predict and it fits the soldiers’ point of view. Yet, as we shall see below, although the soldiers have a clear idea about the motivating power of disinhibition, they reject that this plays any role for them at all.

Boredom susceptibility, thrill and adventure seeking, and experience seeking compose the excitement motivation of combat soldiers. The same cannot be said about disinhibition. For these soldiers, excitement is not just about trying something new. It is about trying something new within a fixed set of rules. In that light, it is evident that they explicitly deny that they are driven by disinhibition, by a desire to break social boundaries.

Accordingly, when explaining what it means to him to pursue the thrill of excitement, interviewee G states right away that it should not be regarded as a kind of bloodlust:

[… it isn’t war in that way that’s important. It isn’t, like, war glorification or anything, me thinking we should just go down there, and we should just [go] down there and kill some towelheads, and they should just have a proper thrashing and all. It isn’t in that way at all […]. (Interviewee G, p. 10, lines 1-4, before deployment)

Likewise, interviewee E also stresses that his desire for this "major experience" should not be mistaken for an uncontrolled lust for action or "adventure" as he denotes it:

[… well, it is not because I’m, like, thinking, wow, I’m going on an adventure, it isn’t that, but still, it’s a major experience, it is, isn’t it? Going involves a great risk, so it isn’t just fun and trickery, or what to call it, adventure (…). (Interviewee E, p. 1, lines 18-21, before deployment)
Offhand, E’s distinction between "adventure" and "experience" seems to run counter to the conceptual distinction between thrill and adventure seeking and the disinhibition dimensions. It should be clear, however, from the quote above that the signified content of adventure in E’s perception is different from that entailed in Zuckerman’s coining of thrill and adventure seeking. As shown above, E states that there is no excitement without a certain amount of risk and that searching for excitement therefore entails gaining experience, that is, to "practise, practise, practise, and then take your precautions". Hence, according to E, the thrill of danger should be approached through thoroughly regulated procedures. An adventure, on the contrary, signifies quite the opposite. An adventure is unregulated and spontaneous, it is associated with "fun and trickery", and according to E, this is not what he strives for.

The revised sensation seeking dimension – a general pattern

Table 2, below shows Zuckerman’s initial coining of the sensation seeking dimensions and the revised, general, definitions used here.

[Table 2]

Two things should be emphasised in regard to these revisions. First, the Danish word *oplevelse*, often used in the interviews, can be translated both as "experience" and "adventure". Accordingly, depending on the interpretation, some statements may be categorised either as addressing the experience seeking or the thrill and adventure dimension. This is taken into consideration in the analysis, above, so that statements concerning what you gain from an occurrence are associated with experience seeking, and statements focusing on the occurrence itself are seen as associated with adventure seeking.
Second, this study’s most wide-ranging reinterpretation of the sensation-seeking framework concerns exactly the experience-seeking dimension. As mentioned above, the soldiers’ perception of experience is closely linked to the possibility of acquiring professional skills. This implies widening the semantic space in which excitement can be understood. Above, excitement motivation was defined as the wish to challenge oneself by seeking the unknown. It is also in this sense that the revised view of experience seeking should be understood as the soldiers’ wish to seek the challenges of deployment life to see if – and here the uncertainty comes in – he can transform his training into practical soldier skills. Accordingly, statements merely expressing that the interviewee likes his job have not been seen as articulating experience seeking.

Table 3 sums up how the two soldiers in focus here perceive each of the revised dimensions.

[Table 3]

As can be seen, while the soldiers perceive three of the four dimensions – boredom susceptibility, thrill and adventure seeking, and experience seeking – as important, they explicitly deny that disinhibition plays a role for them.

The question is, of course, to what extend the observations made on basis of pre- and post-deployment interviews with two soldiers can be generalised? As mentioned, the interviewees were chosen because they matched patterns observed in the survey data. Yet, their apparent representativeness in regard to these particular – and "etic" – measures, tell us little about the general applicability of their actual views. To alleviate problems in this regard, all pre-deployment interviews have been coded using the revised sensation seeking framework.
The display shows, first, whether the soldiers interviewed mentions excitement as a motivating factor. Second, whether they do so unasked. And, third, which of the dimensions they seem to emphasise the most, illustrated by short quotations taken from each interview. Four do not mention excitement at all. And out of the remaining 18, only 14 do so unsolicited. Yet, as should be clear from the categorisation and the quotations in the display, both the perception and the evaluations made by E and G seem to be generally applicable across the interviews. The dominating modes of excitement are experience seeking and thrill and adventure seeking, followed by boredom susceptibility. But in the case that disinhibition is mentioned, they dissociate themselves from it (cf. interviewee H).

The development of the dimensions

The analysis above centred on how the soldiers perceived and evaluated each of the four dimensions. It did not, however, utilise the panel structure of the data allowing us to study the development of these dimensions. As mentioned above, the quantitative data used for selecting the cases, showed that the soldiers’ desire for excitement increased over time. In that respect, excitement motivation seem to be susceptible by wide-ranging changes in the social environment (in this case, by the deployment itself), and thus challenging the view that that associated concepts, such as the sensation seeking scale, should primarily be seen as an antecedent variable.

If we look at how the dimensions develop in the qualitative data, boredom susceptibility seems to change little for the two interviewees in focus here. As shown above, they may reach different conclusion concerning the actual level of boredom while being
deployed. Yet, on their return, both soldiers use this as a main criteria for evaluate their tour of duty. And although other studies reveal how soldiers become more cynical following deployment, the same can be said about their view of disinhibition. They still dissociate themselves from breaching norms as a motivating factor. Nevertheless, as will be shown below, they view norm abidance in much more practical terms.

In the post-deployment interviews, the soldiers were asked about their best and worst experiences during this tour of duty. According to interviewee G, his worst experience was when one of his buddies was killed by an IED. Given the close bounds established between fighting men, this is one of the things soldiers fear the most, often more than being killed themselves. Nevertheless, when describing how he coped with this, interviewee G still does not allow himself to give in to his baser inclinations. He explicitly denies that revenge played any role at all for him. Instead, he merely describes the death of his comrade as a question of chance:

G: [...] we [...] knew each other so well. [...] Nobody was afraid to talk about it or anything. It really helped a lot.

INT: What about something like a motive for revenge, to make things even? Did that play a role afterwards? 

G: I know it did for some of the boys, but it didn’t for me. Because the situation was as it was. Well, that it just wasn’t our day, and he is unlucky, and it [the IED] goes off. (Interviewee G, p. 22, lines 8-18)

The consistency of this norm – of not giving in to baser needs – is also reflected in the post-deployment interview with E. When asked about his best experience, interviewee E describes a mission on which he and his sergeant cleared a compound. After the fighting was over, he
had to search the bodies and collect the weapons of the Taleban warriors who had been killed in there. When describing that situation, standing over the disfigured bodies of the defeated enemies, he emphasises the importance of treating them right.

E: Well, these human beings. They were mutilated, to put it mildly. They had been struck by a missile and two bursts of a 30mm machine gun, so …

INT: They were knocked about?
E: Yes, they were. But I get the body parts collected. But although they were dead, you actually treated them with respect and arranged them in a decent way, before leaving them again. […]

INT: Now, you say that you treat those dead enemies with respect. Is that something you do because you have to? Or is it because, that is just what you do?
E: Well, I could have treated them as bad as can be, but somehow, then, I hold the opinion that now we have killed these guys, and then we have taken the most cherished of their possessions. Well, in my world, life is the most cherished of your possessions. You have taken that away from them […]. You might just as well spend that extra minute it takes to arrange them in a decent way and, okay, cover the worst [damaged] parts with their own clothes. (Interviewee E, p. 18, line 11 and p. 19, line 15, after deployment)

For interviewee E, profaning the dead bodies of his enemies is simply not an option. On the contrary, treating the dead with respect is an ethical obligation. As interviewee G, he emphasises the importance of playing by the rules – as a human being and a soldier.

As already mentioned, the items used to capture excitement motivation in the quantitative survey (table 1) were not developed using existing sensation seeking measures.
Nor did they draw on the revisions, made on basis of the qualitative interviews, analysed here (table 2). Nevertheless, as also mentioned, the wordings of these items seem to capture the point of view expressed in the revised version of the thrill and adventure seeking (4h) and the experience seeking dimensions, respectively (4g, which also emphasises the prospect of gaining practical experience). Accordingly, when focusing on the development of the thrill and adventure seeking and of the experience seeking dimensions, we may actually compare our qualitative findings with the general pattern found in the quantitative data.

Figure 2a-c, below, show the development of the two dimensions for soldiers in the balanced panel.

[Figures 2a-c]

While the importance of both dimensions seems to increase following deployment, thrill and adventure seeking clearly remains the most important factor (figure 2a). However, subdividing the soldiers into two groups, depending on the amount of combat they actually saw during deployment, reveals a somewhat different pattern. The soldiers who saw the least amount of actual combat (figure 2b) regard both dimensions as less important than those who saw most combat (figure 2c). When we focus solely on the latter, the importance of experience seeking seems to increase significantly, while thrill and adventure seeking remains at a constantly high level.

The question is then whether this pattern is also reflected in the two qualitative interviews in focus here? Given that they both report a large degree of combat exposure after deployment, they should fit the pattern shown in figure 2c, reflecting a constantly high level of thrill and adventure seeking, and a steeply increasing level of experience seeking. This seems to be the case. While both soldiers mention experience seeking and thrill and
adventure seeking in the pre-deployment interviews, their remarks also indicate that they perceive the latter as the most important aspect of their motivation on their return.

Accordingly, before deployment, they see this tour of duty as a personal endeavour, a way of testing themselves, as a means to self-realisation:

[…] Now, I’ve recognised, now, that this is probably the ultimate way of testing myself – to find out what I can, and what I cannot. So it is, clearly, one of the things, well, self-realisation, to find out what I can, and what I cannot. And where’re my limits? (Interviewee G, p. 1, lines 8-11, before deployment)

On their return, however, experience seeking, defined as the ability to use one’s professional skills, plays a much more profound role for these two soldiers. Again, this becomes clear when we look at their descriptions of their best and worst experiences.

When asked what the best part of the deployment was, both interviewees state that this was when everything they had trained for worked smoothly:

Well, the best experience down there, that’s clearly when you enter a firefight, and you can see that, that it works […]. Well, that you can see that all the boys do their job as they should and that people react as they ought to and that our NCOs and officers can make the right decisions and things like that. (Interviewee G, p. 18, lines 4-8, post-deployment interview)

Interviewee E is even more specific when referring to the particular incident when he and his sergeant, just the two of them, had to raid the compound:
Well, this is something you need to be 10-12 men for, on paper. But it just worked out perfectly, and we did it without any trouble. It went bloody well, and it really showed that we could cooperate, even though it was a major challenge. (Interviewee E, p. 18, lines 6-9, after deployment)

In both these instances, the soldiers state that the possibility to convert training into practice is what makes all the difference. Conversely, when interviewee G describes his disappointment with this deployment, it is exactly because he thinks that they were not allowed to use their skills: "Well, I didn’t feel that the education we’d received, that it was used for what would’ve been most expedient" (Interviewee G, p. 18, lines 3-5, post-deployment interview).

This logic also applies when the soldiers are asked about their worst experiences. As mentioned above, Interviewee G refers to death of his comrade:

[…] The worst is not the impact itself but more seeing him afterwards. It wasn’t that we were up there to clean up the place either […]. The worst part was clearly to see him lie on the stretcher and be carried off, all lifeless.

(Interviewee G, p. 21, lines 10-14, after deployment)

Interviewee E talks about "[…] the night the British died" (ibid, p. 22, line 8). In an old nearby Russian minefield, two British soldiers were killed and two were wounded. Locked down in the patrol base, his group could just follow what happened over the wireless:

"Dammit, it wasn’t fun to lie down there and know that I just can’t do a thing (…)"

(Interviewee E, p. 18, lines 17-18, after deployment).
What these two narratives have in common is that they both refer to events in which the soldiers could not convert their skills into practice. They could not fight back but were left as passive observers. They could not act according to their professional standards. In this way, both E’s and G’s descriptions enable us to understand why the quantitative data indicate that those soldiers who, on their return, had been exposed to the hardships of the war regarded experience seeking as the most important aspect of their deployment (Brænder 2016): They were able to use their professional skills. This is a plausible explanation why thrill and adventure seeking, on the one hand, and experience seeking on the other, seem to "swap roles" following deployment, when theoretical expectations are replaced by practical knowledge.

Discussion

The analysis above led to two main conclusions regarding the soldiers’ perception of excitement. First, disinhibition, defined as the desire to breach social boundaries, is not regarded as a legitimate reason for deploying or for your conduct while "in country". Second, thrill and adventure seeking was clearly the most important motive before deployment, but for the most battle-hardened soldiers, experience seeking – understood as the need to use your skills in practice – appeared more important on their return. In the following, the implications of these two points will be discussed in turn.

From a normative point of view, the observation that soldiers deny the importance of disinhibition is comforting. They might be sensation seekers, but they are not in it for bloodlust. Instead, they emphasise the importance of playing by the rules. The soldiers’ thrill and adventure seeking, their "desire to engage in activities arousing a feeling of danger", that is, their desire to transgress their personal boundaries, can only be fulfilled within a strictly rule-bound framework.
This logic of "transgression within boundaries" is also known elsewhere. Religious rituals constitute an obvious example. Encountering the "wholly other" takes place within a highly regulated framework (Turner, 1995; van Gennep, 1960). Sociological studies suggest that the boundedness of social behaviour can also be found well beyond the confines of highly regulated organisations such as the military and religious communities. Hence, a central point in Becker’s classical study of "Outsiders" (1997) is that social rules (including the rules that single out a particular act as "deviant") are always the rules of a given social group and that the minority, perceived as outsiders by others, often regard themselves as the true insiders.

A more recent and concrete, but still similar example is provided by Kerr and de Kock (2002) in their study of Dutch hooligan violence. Kerr and de Kock claims that the death of Carlo Picornie was not the most surprising result of the staged fight between Ajax and Feyernoord supporters. Considering that supporters from both sides showed up well-equipped with "steel poles, chains, bats, and hammers" (ibid: 2) and cunningly avoiding police interference, it is more surprising that only one person died. In accordance with classical studies of sacrifice, Kerr and de Kock argue that sometimes a person must be severely hurt, or even die, in these fights. Otherwise, it becomes too difficult to maintain the illusion that such outbursts of violence constitute a fundamental breach with prevailing social norms (Girard, 1979). However, this does not alter the general point that in these staged fights, participants still observe a number of informal rules. Blood may be spilled, and hatred may be nourished, but most often, participants walk away healthy and ready for the next fight day.

The denial of disinhibition and the logic referred to as the transgression within boundaries are closely linked to the increasing importance of the experience-seeking dimension observed in the interviews. Again, it should be emphasised that what is here
referred to as experience seeking is quite different from the conceptualisation in the sensation seeking inventories. In this study, it refers to "the seeking of experiences that can only be achieved by means of special skills". For the soldiers, such skills are encompassed in their professional training. In other words, for the soldiers, experience seeking refers to the desire for using their training in practice and, ultimately, their desire for using the fighting skills they have learned, and to go into real combat.

Both the quantitative data – used to select the interviewees in the first place – and the analysis of the two interviews, suggest that experience seeking becomes more important following deployment. This tells us something important about the relationship between experience seeking and thrill and adventure seeking. As mentioned above, the uncertainty regarding the expected outcome is what enables us to define both dimensions as aspects of excitement motivation. Thrill and adventure seeking concerns whether you can actually push your personal barriers, and experience seeking whether you can actually realise in practice what you have learned in theory. In that respect, both dimensions contain an element of self-realisation. However, thrill and adventure seeking is individual. For the true thrill seeker, serving as a soldier with other soldiers is a necessary condition for trying to push his or her own limits by going into combat. It is a means to an end. For the experience seeker, however, serving as a soldier is the actual end. Again, combat is a necessary condition, but for the experience seeker, realising yourself through combat means becoming a true member of a community, of the military profession.

Conclusion

This study has shown that from the soldiers’ point of view, excitement motivation is closely linked to professional identity. The data analysed consisted of in-depth interviews, conducted before and after deployment, with soldiers going to Afghanistan. Two interviewees, selected
as typical cases, were in focus throughout the study. To mend for the loss of generalisability, the observations were compared to patterns in the qualitative and the quantitative data collected concurrently with these interviews. The soldiers’ unsolicited responses revealed that they also distinguished between different aspects of excitement motivation, roughly fitting Zuckerman’s distinction between boredom susceptibility, thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, and disinhibition. However, although recognising it as a potential motivating factor, the soldiers explicitly denied that disinhibition played any role for them at all. Just as importantly, the soldiers had a very different notion of experience seeking than the one laid out in the sensations seeking framework. Instead of associating experience solely with novelty, they primarily viewed it as a way of gaining practical knowledge. And whereas the thrill of the danger seemed to be most important motivating factor before departure, gaining real soldier experience played a more significant role for soldiers who have seen actual combat when they return.

It is for these reasons that it is argued that among combat troops the overarching concept of excitement is best understood as "transgression within boundaries": Transgressing social boundaries means violating the cognitive scaffold of their professional identity. They seek individual thrill and adventure, the conceptual negation of boredom, but they do so within confines set by the standards of the collective military profession.

For the outsider, these standards can be seen as a straightjacket, limiting the unfolding of the individual’s "need for varied, novel and complex sensations". For the soldiers themselves, however, the military profession as a whole – including the boundaries it establishes – is what enables them as a group to seek a kind of experience that they could gain nowhere else.
References


Maxwell, J. A. (2012). The Importance of Qualitative Research for Causal Explanation in Education. *Qualitative Inquiry* 18, 655-661


Table 1. Operationalization of excitement motivation, quantitative analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable number</th>
<th>English translation (Original Danish wording in parentheses)</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4f</td>
<td>“I will participate in the mission to transcend my barriers” (Jeg deltager i missionen for at prøve mine grænser af)</td>
<td>.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4g</td>
<td>“I will participate in the mission to gain real combat experience” (Jeg deltager i missionen for at få egentlige kamperfaringer)</td>
<td>.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4h</td>
<td>“I will participate in the mission for the adventure” (Jeg deltager i missionen for oplevelsernes skyld)</td>
<td>.771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s Alpha .84

Notes: All items were measured using 5-point Likert-scale questions with the opportunity of replying “not applicable/will not answer”. The present tense wording shown here (I will participate [...]) was used in the pre-deployment survey. The post-deployment survey used a present perfect tense (I have been participating [...]).
Table 2. Summary: Perceptions of the sensation-seeking dimensions. Zuckerman’s initial operationalisation and the soldiers’ point of view as articulated in the interview data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Zuckerman’s initial operationalization</th>
<th>The soldiers’ point of view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thrill and Adventure Seeking</td>
<td>“expressing a desire to engage in sports or other activities involving speed or danger”</td>
<td>“expressing a desire to engage in activities expected to arouse a feeling of danger”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Seeking</td>
<td>“the seeking of experience through the mind and senses, travel, and a nonconforming life-style”</td>
<td>“the seeking of experiences that can only be achieved by means of special skills”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinhibition</td>
<td>“the desire for social and sexual disinhibition”</td>
<td>“the desire to break social boundaries”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom Susceptibility</td>
<td>“an aversion to repetition, routine, and dull people, and restlessness when things are unchanging”</td>
<td>“an aversion to repetition, routine, and dull people, and restlessness when things are unchanging”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disinhibition</th>
<th>Experience seeking</th>
<th>Thrill and Adventure seeking</th>
<th>Boredom susceptibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Going involves a great risk, so it isn’t just fun and trickery (…)”</td>
<td>“You just need to practise, practise, practise, and then take your precautions”</td>
<td>“(…) this is the ultimate way of testing myself”</td>
<td>“We had a lot of guard duty to begin with, but that was cut down, and we found a good balance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“it isn’t, like, war glorification”</td>
<td>“[to] be a real soldier and do the things soldiers do”</td>
<td>“(…) trying to be exposed to the pressure”</td>
<td>“(…) Kosovo or Lebanon. It doesn’t appeal to me at all”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Working Display. Dimensions of excitement motivation in all pre-deployment interviews, ISAF 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Mentions excitement (unsolicited)</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
<th>Categorisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“It’s my job. (...) [You want] to see if what you spend your time on really works”</td>
<td>EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>YES (NO)</td>
<td>B: “Because I want to try it (...) because I want to experience it (...)” INT: “That is experiencing the excitement or to experience?” B: “Yes, experiencing the excitement”</td>
<td>TAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“Because it is such a diverse job. (...) trying your limits, to be part of the cohesiveness, in here”</td>
<td>TAS &amp; EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>YES (NO)</td>
<td>“Experiences which you cannot buy for money elsewhere. (...) it is great being deployed”</td>
<td>EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“and on top of it, I am a medic, and I want to make use of that (...) and then it is also a great adventure”</td>
<td>TAS &amp; EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“I do it to test my limits”</td>
<td>TAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“I have always wanted to find out where my own limits are (...) out as a real soldier, and do the things, soldiers do”</td>
<td>TAS &amp; EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“In my case, the adventure seeking has been thoroughly quenched. What [it is] is the professional pride (...) and the comradeship. (...) You can compare it to a carpenter who doesn’t fulfil his test piece, (...) You cannot just be a soldier back home. That is shirking, goddammit”</td>
<td>EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>NO (-)</td>
<td>“It’s my job”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>NO (-)</td>
<td>INT: “But it isn’t as if, you don’t feel like, I want to go and have some action, or?” J: “Nope, I don’t. Not at all”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“mirrors my civilian [life] as well. Well, I like excitement, parachuting, climbing, motorbike racing, and stuff like that”</td>
<td>TAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>NO (-)</td>
<td>“I have an interest, actually, in going. Professionally, simply”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“a professional thing as well, (…) I have been in the system for almost eight years now. And I think, at a given point of time, you want to try those things”</td>
<td>EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“actually just a boyhood dream experiencing another world, to try and have lot of adventures you just cannot have at home in your everyday life”</td>
<td>TAS &amp; EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“been in Kosovo before. It wasn’t such a sharp mission. (…) The overall topic, I think, is the excitement”</td>
<td>BS &amp; TAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“It’s my craft, and it is a job I like, (…) you are also out there for the adventure and the experience”</td>
<td>TAS &amp; EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>YES (NO)</td>
<td>“I want, honestly, some backbone experience, to see if this is something for me (…) It is an adrenaline kick, isn’t it. (…) It is like if you go out parachuting”</td>
<td>TAS &amp; EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>NO (-)</td>
<td>“You get a lot of excitement by going, you do, but that is not what is driving me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“to try some of the things, I have been training for the past year”</td>
<td>EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>YES (PARTLY)</td>
<td>“my motivation for being in the armed forces, it is (…) that you aren’t pinned down in routines”</td>
<td>EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“Kosovo was more a constabulary task. So now, I would like to try, to try it and see. Of course there are changes, but also to see how it is”</td>
<td>BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>YES (YES)</td>
<td>“because it is a personal wish (…) I want to go down there and experience it”</td>
<td>EXP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DIS = “Disinhibition; BS = “Boredom susceptibility”; TAS = “Thrill and adventure seeking”; EXP = “Experience seeking”
Figure 1. Mean scores. Before and after deployment. ISAF 11, 2011.

Development of excitement motivation in balanced panel (bars, n = 78), and in cases selected for qualitative analysis (lines, interviewee E & G).
Figure 2a. Mean scores. Before and after deployment. ISAF 11. 2011.

Development of “thrill and adventure seeking” and “experience seeking” in balanced panel (bars, n = 78).
Figure 2b. Mean scores. Before and after deployment. ISAF 11. 2011.

Development of “Thrill and adventure seeking” and “Experience seeking”. Balanced panel (n = 39) of soldiers reporting least combat exposure after deployment.
Figure 2c. Mean scores. Before and after deployment. ISAF 11. 2011.

Development of “Thrill and adventure seeking” and “Experience seeking”. Balanced panel (n = 39) of soldiers reporting most combat exposure after deployment.

* p>.05, ** p>.01, *** p>.001

(P-values signify the probability that the observed development would occur if – in the assumed population – there was no correlation between deployment and the variable in question).
Appendix: Translated Interview Guide: Pre-deployment interviews, ISAF 11
[Practical remarks in squared parentheses]

Briefing [not on record]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Practical questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical questions</strong></td>
<td>(Danish wording in parentheses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal information</td>
<td>“What is your name?” (Hvad hedder du?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[for enabling later comparisons with post-deployment interviews. To maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, this part of the interview will not be included in the transcription]</td>
<td>“What is your rank?” (Hvad er din rang?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What is your service number?” (Hvad er dit M/A-nummer?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for being deployed to Afghanistan</td>
<td>“This study is about motivation, about why you do as you do. Why are you going to Afghanistan?” (Dette er en undersøgelse af motivation, af hvorfor man gør, som man gør. Hvorfor tager du til Afghanistan?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOTIVATION PROBES</strong></td>
<td>[only to be asked unsolicitedly if there is no reply on the open question above]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Idealism (Idealisme)</td>
<td>“Are you fighting for a free Afghanistan?” (Kæmper du for et frit Afghanistan?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Patriotism (nationalisme)</td>
<td>“Are you fighting for Denmark?” (Kæmper du for Danmark?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Group cohesion (gruppetilhørsforhold)</td>
<td>“Are you fighting for your buddies?” (Kæmper du for dine kammerater?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Who do you perceive as your buddies – is it particular individuals, is it people from your platoon, is it people from your company?” (Hvem ser du som dine kammerater – er det bestemte enkeltpersoner, er det folk fra din deling, er det folk fra dit kompagni?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal interest (Egeninteresse)</td>
<td>“Are you fighting because of the salary?” (Kæmper du for din løn?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Are you fighting because of the excitement?” (Kæmper du for spændingen?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Relation to other groups
(Forhold til andre grupper)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Danish politicians</td>
<td>“This is a photography of the PM, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, visiting Afghanistan [show photography]. What do you think of Danish politicians visiting the troops in Afghanistan?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Danske politikere)</td>
<td>(Her er et billede af Statsminister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, der besøger Afghanistan [vis billede]. Hvad synes du om, at danske politikere besøger tropperne i Afghanistan?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Humanitarian aid workers in Afghanistan</td>
<td>“What do you think of those working for humanitarian aid organisations in war and conflict areas, like e.g. Afghanistan?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Nødhjælpsarbejdere i Afghanistan)</td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om dem, der arbejder i nødhjælpsorganisationer i krigs- og konfliktområder som eksempelvis Afghanistan?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Private military contractors in Afghanistan</td>
<td>“What do you think of those working for private Military companies in war and conflict areas, like e.g. Afghanistan?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Privatansatte militærfolk i Afghanistan)</td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om dem, der arbejder for private militære selskaber i krigs- og konfliktområder som eksempelvis Afghanistan?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other NATO forces</td>
<td>“What do you think of other NATO forces present in the theatre of war in Afghanistan?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Andre Nato-styrker)</td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om andre Nato-styrker, der er til stede i kampzonen i Afghanistan?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afghan politicians</td>
<td>“What do you think of Afghan politicians?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Afghanske politikere)</td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om Afghanske politikere?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afghan policemen</td>
<td>“What do you think of Afghan policemen?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Afghanske politifolk)</td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om Afghanske politifolk?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afghan military personnel</td>
<td>“What do you think of the Afghan National Army, ANA?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Afghanske militærpersonel)</td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om den afghanske hær, ANA?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afghan civilians</td>
<td>“What do you think of Afghan civilians?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Afghanske civilbefolkning)</td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om den Afghanske civilbefolkning?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Taliban</td>
<td>“What do you think of the Taliban?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Hvad mener du om Taliban?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>”Is Taliban a worthy opponent?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Er Taliban en værdig modstander?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Debriefing [not on record]