

# **The phenomenology of interest-excitement**

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## Summary

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Interestingly, and quite strangely, interview methods have hardly ever been used to investigate the experiential mysteries of emotion. Interest-excitement is an emotion that has undergone less research than other emotions. Thus, the present study has two goals: First, to *describe different aspects of the phenomenology of interest-excitement*. What are the typical characteristics of the experience of interest-excitement? Secondly, to *consider and assess whether interview methods in general and the affect consciousness interview in particular are suitable* for exploring the subjective experience of emotion and whether such methods can enrich and replenish our knowledge of emotions.

The sample in the present study consisted of healthy, non-clinical people, varied on several factors. The approach was qualitative and based on thematic analysis of data collected with the affect consciousness interview (ACI), an interview intended to tap the subjective experience of basic affective states and their organization within the individual. After recruiting, the author carried out the interviews, transcripts and the analysis.

The paper presents what appears to be typical eliciting event/scenes, 2) awareness cues, 3) tolerance, and 4) expressions of interest-excitement. The typical experience of interest-excitement involves different nuances of experience: physiologically (energy), feeling states (glad, enlivened, calm, anxious), cognitive changes (curiosity, motivation, focus), facial expressions (staring, smiling), vocal expressions (eager, loud, talking a lot), and conceptual expressions (making questions, stating opinions, discussing topic) e.g. The author believes that the ACI and other open or semi-structured interviews are highly suitable for the study of the experience of emotion and can enrich and replenish our knowledge of emotions.

This paper is the first of several theses on the phenomenology of emotions supervised by O. A. Solbakken.

Key words: phenomenology, subjective experience, affects, emotions, interest-excitement, the affect consciousness model, the affect consciousness interview, thematic analysis.

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Kjetil Johansen Amundrud

Oslo, April, 2009.

*“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.”*

Albert Einstein

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## **Introduction**

In the behavioural era, emotions were considered unsuitable for scientific study. Furthermore, emotions were usually understood as simple states of activation and arousal that made us lose our rationality (Silvia 2006). Nowadays, after the work by Arnold (1960), Plutchik (1962), Tomkins (1962, 2008), and Izard (1971, 1977) among others, emotions are considered worthy and suitable for psychological research, and the study of emotions is a dynamic and flourishing field. Today the importance of emotion is generally accepted, for example as central in cognition, and as a system underlying personality. No longer is emotion regarded an obstacle for rational behaviour. To quote Viscott (1976): “Our feelings are our sixth sense, the sense that interprets, arranges, directs, and summarizes the other five” (p. 11).

One generally accepted component of emotion is subjective experience (Hilgard, & Atkinson 2000); usually referring to the “feel”, felt affective state or experiential aspects of emotion. In the present study the more inclusive term “the phenomenology of emotion” is adopted, in an attempt at acknowledging the wide variety of experiential aspects potentially contributing to subjective emotion experience. In the behavioural era this component was of course regarded unsuitable for scientific exploration. It may be that the subjective experience of emotion has suffered under this attitude in modern emotion psychology as well: E.g. LeDoux (1998), one of the most prominent affective neuro-scientists of our time, exemplifies this position by claiming that... “The conscious feelings that we know and love (or hate) our emotions by are red herrings, detours, in the scientific study of emotions” (p. 18). Interestingly, even though aspects of subjective experience has been described as central to emotions for more than a century by a number of researchers (James, 1890/1981; Cannon, 1927; Arnold & Gasson, 1954), this has undergone far less research than other components, such as e.g. affective neural processes or facial expressions of emotions.

In the end of the 80’s Ekman, Friesen, O’Sullivan, Chan, Diacoyanni-Tarlatzis et al. (1987) presented the groundbreaking study on the universality of facial expressions of emotions. Interestingly, the researchers excluded the affect-category interest-excitement. Ellsworth (2003), who worked with Ekman, regretted this exclusion back then and claims she regrets it even more now. Though interest-excitement was considered an emotion within certain theories, “interest, at that time, seemed like a tough emotion to sell” (p. 84). Interest-excitement was generally considered to be associated with cognition and intellectual pursuit,

and not defined as an emotion. The idea of reason and passion as two completely separate domains dominated.

Silvan Tomkins (1962, 2008) was the first to extensively treat interest-excitement as a form of primary emotion. Tomkins' view relates emotion and cognition as he emphasizes that without interest, no learning, sustained effort or creativity would be possible. Furthermore, Carroll Izard (1977, 1991, 2007), a former student of Tomkins' and also a prominent emotion-theorist, suggests that interest is the most basic of all emotions, a modal state of consciousness (Izard, 2007). Ellsworth (2003) claims that one of the first clear emotions expressed in newborn babies is interest, that it is motivating, and has a distinct "feel". One of the participants in this actual study said that interest-excitement is one of the emotions she experiences most frequently in every day life. Despite this apparently central role among many theorists, interest-excitement has not been studied as extensively as other emotions. Furthermore, suffering under the previously mentioned negative attitude towards the study of subjective emotional experience, this aspect of interest-excitement has received little scientific attention.

The research aims in this study are an attempt to remedy this state of affairs; they are thus specifically concerned with describing the phenomenology or subjective experience of the emotion interest-excitement as broadly as possible. Using the construct of affect consciousness as a theoretical point of departure (Monsen & Monsen, 1999) and a system for exploration of qualitative data termed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006); data collected with the affect consciousness interview will be presented. This interview is specifically designed to tap the subjective experience of basic affective states and their organization within the individual. Interestingly, and to us quite strangely, qualitative interview methods have hardly ever been used to investigate the experiential mysteries of emotion. This study thus has one primary and one secondary goal:

1. To *describe central aspects of the phenomenology of interest-excitement.*
2. On the basis of central findings in the present study to *consider and assess whether interview methods in general and the affect consciousness interview in particular are suitable* for exploring the subjective experience of emotion and whether such methods can enrich and replenish our knowledge of emotions.

## **Theoretical perspectives and relevant findings in research on emotions**

### ***Differential emotion approaches***

Among the first differential emotions theories were developed by Arnold (1960), Plutchik (1962), Tomkins (1962, 2008), and Izard (1977, 1991, 2007). In contemporary psychology the field of discrete emotion theories still grows (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Izard & Ackerman, 2000; Fredrickson, 1998, 2001). Most theorists agree that there is a central group of emotions, though there is no consensus on the exact number. Happiness, sadness, fear, anger and disgust are included in almost all the theories. Interest-excitement, surprise, guilt, contempt, embarrassment, regret, and jealousy are included only in some theories. Others deny that there is a group of basic emotions at all (Lazarus, 1991; Ortony & Turner, 1990).

### ***Components and inner coherence of emotion***

Ekman suggests (1992) that there are nine components of an emotion: distinctive universal expressive signals; distinctive physiology; rapid onset and brief duration; automatic appraisal; coherence among the emotion's components; appearance in related species; distinctive universals in the emotion's antecedents; and unbidden occurrence. Izard & Ackerman (2000) include distinctive *subjective experiences*, appearance in early life (Izard, 1978, in Silvia, 2006), and adaptive functions across the life span (Keltner & Gross, 1999; Oatley & Jenkins, 1992). There is a certain agreement in defining emotions as coherent clusters of these components. This means that the subjective, expressive, behavioural, and physiological aspects of the emotion should correlate (Reisenzein, 2000, Rosenberg & Ekman, 1994). The studies by Reeve (1993), Reeve and Nix (1997), and Langsdorf, Izard Rayias, and Hembree (1983) by themselves would probably partially function as evidence for inner coherence in interest-excitement. These studies used different methods involving both adults and infants. All in all, these studies suggest certain coherence at least among the subjective, expressive, and behavioural components of interest-excitement (Silvia, 2006).

### ***Positive emotions – fewer and less differentiated than negative emotions?***

Relative to negative emotions, some consider positive emotions to be few in number and rather diffuse (de Rivera, Possell, Verette, & Weiner, 1989; Ellsworth & Smith, 1988b).



Ekman (1992), Izard (1977, 1991, 2007), Tomkins (1962, 2008) typically identify only one positive emotion for every three or four negative emotions; an imbalance also reflected in English-language emotion words (Averill, 1980, in Fredrickson, 1998). According to Ekman (1992) positive emotions seem to have no unique facial expression, claiming they all share the so-called Duchenne smile. Positive emotions seem all to be characterized by a relative lack of autonomic activation (Levenson, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990), and when activation is present, it seems similar across the different positive emotions. On the experiential level this indistinctiveness is again present (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988a). When people recall past pleasant experiences their self-report of subjective experience show considerable inter-correlations among various positive emotion terms.

### ***Experience of emotion – experiential attributes***

Panksepp (2000) claims that five attributes of emotion covers people's emotion experience; feeling states, cognitive changes, autonomic changes, facial expression, and vocal expression. People experience the three first attributes as fairly similar in importance. Facial expression and vocal expression follow as the least important attributes. Though, individual differences are apparent; for example feelers vs. thinkers. Besides, it is assumed that consciousness always is coloured by an emotional tone, a claim also expressed by Izard (2007). Boucher and Brandt (1981) show that antecedents of many emotion experiences are similar across cultures.

### ***Emotion regulation - a response to the impacts of emotion***

Emotions disturb the individual's homeostasis. The function of emotion regulation is to restore this homeostasis. Gross (2002) focuses on three aspects of emotion regulation. The first aspect is that individuals increase, maintain, and decrease negative and positive emotions (Parrott, 1993). Emotion regulation may be both conscious, as when you push yourself away from something you don't like and unconscious, as when you quickly shift attention away from something upsetting (Boden & Baumeister, 1997). Gross (2002) makes a distinction between antecedent- and response-focused emotion regulation strategies, respectively a preparation and reaction to an emotional reaction. More specifically emotion may be regulated at five points in the emotion generative process; 1) selection of situation, 2) modification of situation, 3) deployment of attention, 4) change of cognitions, and 5)

modulation of experiential, behavioural, or physiological responses. The four first has a preparation focus while the last is focused on the reaction.

### ***Expression of emotion – bodily and vocally***

Bodily expressions of emotion refer to postures, gesticulation, facial expressions etc. The facial expression of happiness, anger, fear, sadness and disgust are considered to be universal (Ekman et al. 1987). That expression is a central part of emotion is obvious in as much as facial expression by some is considered part of the affect itself (Tomkins, 1962, 2008; Izard, 1977, 1991, 2008). Expression might intensify the affect and contribute to making it clear what kind of emotional state is dominant. In comparison to infants, adults' facial expression is normally more moderate, so even a small change in facial expression might be a signal of emotional change. There are also studies suggesting that there are covert expressions of emotion, not visible to the human eye in real time speed (Silvia, 2006).

Vocal expression is another part of emotion expression. Normally one can understand vocal expressions within three main categories (Johnstone & Scherer, 2000). *Time* centres on the duration of sound and pauses in the speech and the general speech rate. Intensity describes the energy in the speech signal, the loudness. *Frequency* illustrates the base level of the pitch, the range of the pitch, and the variability of the pitch during the utterance. For example, the emotion fear normally makes people talk more, more loudly, more up-and-down and with a higher pitch in general (Scherer, 1986).

## **Relevant perspectives and findings on the affect interest-excitement**

### ***Activation of interest-excitement***

Izard (1977, 1991, 2007), partly through theoretical speculation and partly through empirical investigation, identified that sources of interest may have certain general characteristics. Interest arises, he claims, in contexts appraised as safe and as offering novelty, change, a sense of possibility, complexity, startle, sexuality, reverie, and mystery (Izard, 1977, 1991, 2007; Tomkins, 1962, 2008; Kaplan, 1992). These contexts also tend to be appraised as important and as requiring effort and attention (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988b). *Change* might be the most general category of interest elicitors (Izard, 1977, 1991). Change allows for new of

different kinds of stimulation avoiding habituation. *Novelty* and *animation* are similar to the concept *change* (Izard, 1977, 1991). New faces, new clothes, new cars, animated faces elicit interest-excitement. If these stimuli are rare as well, it might interest you even more. An additional explanation of the infant's interest-excitement in human, animated faces as shown by Langsdorf et al. (1983) is that a kind of "social interest" is part of human nature. Wilson (1979) speculates that objects and individuals we encounter in our environment are likely to bring about a positive orientation: "Thus, in some cases, what we feel about objects or individuals may precede our "awareness" of previous contact" (p. 820). There might be a positive attitude toward "novel" objects or "strangers" that stimulate both an awareness of their existence and conscious attempts to approach them, and obtain knowledge.

### ***Antecedents and consequences of interest-excitement – feelings, thoughts, behaviours***

In studies of different emotion situations (Izard, 1972) participants were asked to write a brief description of the situations they visualized for each emotion. Interest was associated with reading, listening to lectures, intellectually stimulating discussions, new or unusual experiences including sex and drug experiences. Several situations involved sports and friends and acquaintances. Izard (1977), adapting Triandis' (1972) idea in the development of the measure "Antecedents and Consequences of the Emotions" was a rare attempt at empirically investigating aspects of the subjective experience of interest-excitement and other emotions. This measure presents a photograph representing the relevant emotion and asks respondents to write a brief statement of *antecedents* and *consequences* of that emotion in three categories; feelings, thoughts, and action. Izard (1977) found that among the antecedent *feelings* were: personal involvement, concern, feeling that you can gain something; desire to learn, gain knowledge, curiosity (interest itself); feeling active, energetic, feeling accepted, needed; enjoyment of something. Among the antecedent *thoughts* were; thinking was clear, efficient and logical; about desire to learn, gain knowledge; of some specific person or activity; about enjoyable people, activities; about life and future; of personal gains or benefits; of being accepted, needed; about a subject, related topics. Among the *antecedent* actions were; something with a specific person, or did something I like; something enjoyable; did something very well, did my best; something different, creative, original, discovering something; interesting things; something challenging, worked enthusiastically.

*Feelings* caused by interest included; desire to learn, gain knowledge; personal involvement, concern; interest itself; alert, active, energetic; self-confident, happy with self; involved in thought, inspired. *Thoughts* caused by interest included; clear, logical thinking; about particular subject, new things; about desire to learn, gain knowledge; of possible gain or benefit; of enjoyable and pleasant things. *Actions* caused by interest included; learns, gains knowledge, participates, and accomplishes something; did something well, my best; enjoys self; something meaningful, reflects interest.

### ***Interest-excitement – role and characteristics***

As we have seen, interest-excitement has been given different importance in different theories. Some understand interest-excitement as one of the basic emotions (Tomkins, 1962, 2008; Izard, 1977, 1991, 2007; Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) whereas Ekman (1992) and Isaacs (1998) do not. Others may even argue that interest-excitement is simply a non-emotional state of motivation or attention (Lazarus, 1991; Ortony & Turner, 1990). Interest is sometimes used interchangeably with curiosity, intrigue, excitement, or wonder, and shares conceptual space with challenge and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). What Csikszentmihalyi (2000) calls flow, or the enjoyment experienced when a person's perceived skills match the perceived challenges of a particular activity, can represent a form of interest. Flow is described as “beyond boredom and anxiety” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Interest, according to Izard (1977, 1991, 2007), is the emotion experienced most frequently, the modal state of consciousness, often in combination, and sometimes in conflict, with one or more of the other affects, with related cognitive structures and orientations that guide perception, cognition, and action much of the time. Interest-excitement is not only a necessary support for perception, but of the state of wakefulness (Tomkins, 1962, 2008). In our regular, repetitive day-to-day life interest-excitement keeps us going. In the absence of strong negative affect and high drive states (survival needs), people are typically experiencing some degree of interest-excitement, i.e. watching TV, reading the T-shirts of passers-by, and interacting with others. Even daydreaming, which distances people from the outer environment, cultivates a deeper engagement with internal sensations and thoughts (Singer, 1966). Tomkins (1962, 2008) claims that the faraway, avoiding interference, look may indicate excitement tracking an early memory or a novel idea.

Some theorists have posited that the momentary thought–action tendency of interest-excitement is simply to attend or orient. On the other hand, according to Izard (1977, 1991, 2007) and Tomkins (1962, 2008) the momentary thought-action tendency sparked by interest, is exploration, explicitly and actively aimed at increasing knowledge of and experience with the target of interest. “The interested eye” normally fixates on the source and rapidly explores it. The fixation part may go along with a “breathless” moment whereas the exploration may go along with rapid breathing. Tomkins (1962, 2008) regards this phases as respectively fascination and familiarizing. Hence, interest-excitement has dual phases. Izard (1977, 1991) claims that interest and the orientation-reflex are different phenomena. Furthermore, interest-excitement is different from surprise or startle, though absorption also is a phenomenon of surprise. Interest-excitement in combination with these reflexes makes it possible to remain concentrated for a longer time. Importantly, openness to new ideas, experiences, and actions is what makes the mindset of interest-excitement broadened, rather than narrowed, and if narrowed, focused or absorbed.

Interest-excitement is manifested in similar ways within the other sensory systems and species. An infant touches all the sides and parts of a toy. After orientating her nose towards a particular smell, the human being uses her nose more actively trying to recognize or understand the possible causes of this smell, linking it to prior experience. Pets and wild animals might show behaviour that can be described as interested-excited, by new, strange things, or other animals. They might circle around the source of interest-excitement, focus their vision, go closer and then withdraw before they go closer again, touching with the nose to get a really good smell or try to move it with their paws. It is the affect of tracking, looking, and listening.

### ***Interaction between interest and joy and interest and fear***

Izard (1977, 1991) stresses the interaction of interest and joy. Both in infancy and adulthood interest motivates us to act; i.e. reach a goal. Having reached this goal we might feel enjoyment. This joy might provide a relief, a period of rest and recovery, from the intense activity motivated by interest. Interest-excitement might cause an impulse to explore the strange and unknown, which might bring about anxiety. Then, because of fear we might withdraw or fly. Still, the excitement caused by exploration might again push us back to further exploration, producing an oscillation between interest and fear.

***Function of interest-excitement – a support for the necessary and the possible***

According to Izard and Ackerman (2000) the function of interest-excitement is motivational: “Interest motivates exploration and learning, and guarantees the person’s engagement in the environment. Survival and adaptation require such engagement” (p.257). Izard (1977, 1991, 2007), again building on Tomkins (1962, 2008), writes that interest is the primary instigator of personal growth, creative endeavour, and the development of intelligence; a support for the necessary and the possible; survival and reproduction, and endeavour and creativity (Tomkins (1962, 2008). Research from different areas demonstrates how interest-excitement has beneficial effects throughout the life span (Rathunde, 1995). “Undivided interest” in successful adolescents promotes growth of expertise (Rathunde, 1996, 2001). Feeling interested during an activity predicts how long you remain engaged in it, volunteer to repeat it, and the development of skill (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Fisher & Noble, 2004; Prenzel, 1992: Reeve, Cole, & Olson, 1986).

Fredrickson (1998, 2001), Kaplan (1992) and Berlyne (1971) among others suggest another function. Interest-excitement is adaptive because it motivates people to seek new experiences which can be helpful if unforeseen events occur. Every piece of experiential information that increases an individual's knowledge base might come of use one day if things become difficult or even life threatening (e.g., finding water, food, escape routes, or hiding places) (Kaplan, 1992). Fredrickson (2001) also emphasizes that positive emotions have intrapersonal functions such as the “undoing” of the autonomic effects of negative affect. The broaden-and-build model by Fredrickson (2001), which also includes other positive emotions, implies a role in long-term developmental goals, whereas its role in short-term survival is set a side. The effect of interest-excitement is seen only in case of difficulty.

Wilson (1979) convincingly demonstrates that sociability and social groups are something that has helped the human being survive and evolve throughout time as well as develop normally and stay healthy and whole (Harlow, 1953). Earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Adler (1938/1964, in Crandall, 1984) had already introduced his Gemeinschaftsgefühl, usually translated as social interest, as a key concept in his personality theory and regarded as an absolute prerequisite for personal adjustment. Shiota, Campos, Keltner and Hertenstein (2004) emphasize the important social role of interest-excitement and other positive emotions, relating it to the development and maintenance of different types of human relationships.

### ***Subjective experience – what it feels like to be interested-excited***

Izard, (1977) describes the subjective experience of interest-excitement like this:

“.. is the feeling of being engaged, caught-up, fascinated, curious. There is a feeling of wanting to investigate, become involved, or extend or expand the self by incorporating new information and having new experiences with the person or object that has stimulated the interest. In intense interest or excitement the person feels animated and enlivened. It is this enlivenment that guarantees the association between interest and cognitive or motor activity. Even when relatively immobile the interested or excited person has the feeling that he is “alive and active”” (p.216).

An important dimension of subjective experience is that of valence: pleasure and displeasure (Feldman-Barrett & Russell, 1999). Studies of the subjective experience of interest-excitement tie this emotion to a hedonic and active experiential quality (Izard, 1977). On self-reports past experiences of interest-excitement are characterized by higher feelings of pleasantness, self-assurance, impulsiveness, and tension (see figure 1). Bartlett and Izard (Izard, 1977) find that in an interesting situation interest, joy and surprise are the three dominating emotions. The positive emotions dominated the experience. Yet, negative emotions were present with fear and shyness as the two most dominating (see figure 2). Izard (1977) claims that because the interest situation is characterized by less pleasantness and more tension than the joy situation, the individual in the interest situation is relatively more alert and prone to person-environment interactions.

Figure 1  
*Aspects of experience of interest*

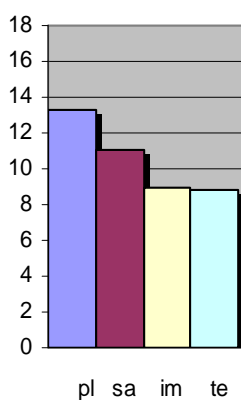


Figure 2  
*Emotion experience in an interesting situation*

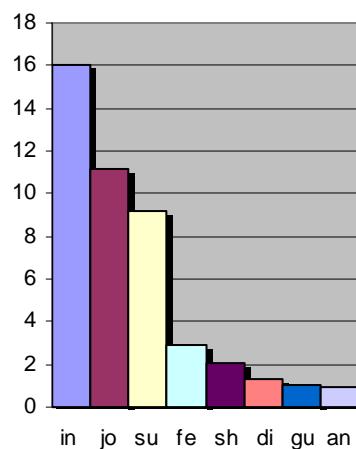


Fig. 1  
pl: pleasantness  
sa: self-assurance  
im: impulsivity  
te: tension

Fig. 2  
in: interest  
jo: joy  
su: surprise  
fe: fear  
sh: shyness  
di: distress  
gu: guilt  
an: anger

Adapted from Izard, 1977

Ellsworth and Smith (1988b) find that interest-excitement most often blend with positive emotions. In the Pleasure x Arousal model interest-excitement is located within the Pleasure–High Arousal field (Feldman-Barrett & Russell, 1999).

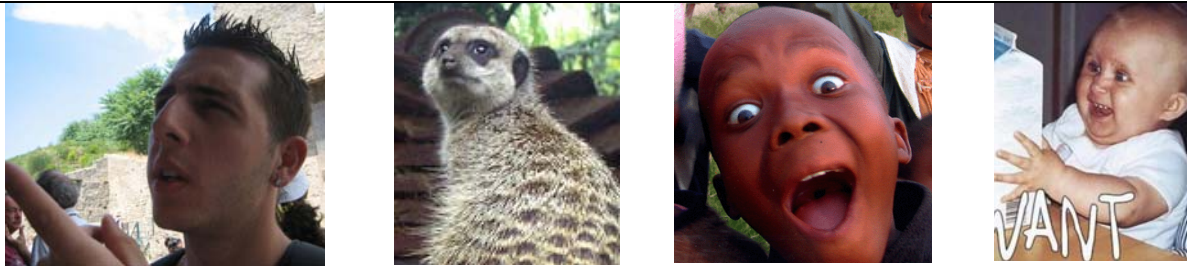
### ***Bodily expression of interest-excitement***

Because of the exclusion from the framework used by Ekman and coworkers (1987), there are only a few reports on the expression of interest-excitement. Reeve (1993) in his broad, exploratory study of interest expressions in adults finds that during an interesting film, people widen their eyelids more, blink and glanced away less often, spend less time with their eyes closed or away from the film, move their head less often, and keep their head more still. The overall pattern of expression of interest points out increased stillness of the head and eye movements associated with visual attention. Reeve and Nix (1997) find that eye contact with the work task is significantly correlated with self-reported feelings of interest and with feelings of perceived self-determination. In a study on facial expressions of interest during infancy Langsdorf et al. (1983) suggest that raised or lowered brows, widened and rounded eyes, squinted eyes, raised cheeks, opened and relaxed mouth, moved tongue, and pursed lips are expressions of interest. Camras, Meng, Ujiie, Dharamsi, Miyake et al. (2002), also studying infants, show that postural changes, more than facial changes, seem to influence rating of interest the most. More body stilling, more sober facial expressions, and a ceasing of distress and fuss are associated with higher rating of interest.

Tomkins (1962, 2008) and Izard (1977, 1991) suggest, based on observational data, that when people become interested, the eyebrows will be a slightly raised or lowered, the eyelids will be raised so as to sharpen the visual focus, the lips parted and the jaw dropped. This might refer mainly to interest. Excitement might be expressed differently (see below). The facial expression of interest-excitement is normally brief, lasting for ½ second to 4-5 seconds or more while the physiological activity and the subjective feeling of interest-excitement may last much longer. Table 1 presents pictures of interested and excited (facial) expressions; the curious face of a guy sightseeing in Pompeii, the vigilant meerkat on watch, and the excited kid and infant. Familiarization and fascination (Tomkins, 1962, 2008) respectively maybe argued.



Table 1

*The (Facial) Expressions of Interest and Excitement****Vocal expression of interest-excitement***

Research on vocal expression of interest-excitement comes along with research on boredom. Bored speech is generally slow and monotonous (Scherer, 1986). The base level of the pitch and speech rate both declines and the voice's pitch becomes less variable showing a smaller range of frequency. On the other hand, interested-excited speech shows a quicker rate and wider range of frequency. It is quicker and more varied in frequency. All languages appear to have words to distinguish between pleasure and displeasure (Wierzbicka, 1992), and valence is an organizing dimension of many emotion lexicons (Russell, 1983). Banse and Scherer (1996) in a study of recognition of emotion through vocal features, interest is the third most accurately recognized emotion (75%). Most of the mistakes are made in confusion with happiness.

**Theoretical framework for the present study*****The affect consciousness framework***

As can be easily seen there is a wide array of features that need to be studied for an exhaustive understanding of the phenomenology or subjective experience of interest-excitement, in principle all of the aspects detailed above may combine to give rise to the subjective experience of that emotion. All of these aspects or features can not be included in any one study, however it would be preferable if a reasonably wide sample of these aspects could be integrated within a coherent theoretical frame and studied accordingly. The theoretical framework used in this study, the affect consciousness framework (Monsen & Monsen, 1999), attempts such integration and is therefore deemed especially suitable for this purpose. This theoretical approach attempts an integration of Silvan Tomkins' (1962, 2008) affect- and

script theory within the bounds of modern self psychology, as advocated e.g. by Stolorow and Atwood (1996). In line with Tomkins, interest-excitement is understood as a basic affect. Interest and excitement are thus thought to lie on the same affective dimension, where both are regarded manifestations of the same basic affective signal, but differing in intensity so that the latter is regarded a more intense variant. According to Tomkins's (1962, 2008) script theory, affects are organized as scenes and scripts. A scene is defined as an event, perceived as having both a beginning and an end, which includes at least one affect and one affective object. In a more complete form, the scene includes people, time and space, bodily experience and more. A script refers to a fundamental way of organizing scenes and is an implicit rule wittingly and unwittingly constructed by the individual to help him/her to predict, interpret, respond, and control oneself in similar and therefore related scenes in life. Scripts are thus seen as the principal organizers of affective experience.

The affect consciousness construct (AC) attempts to describe the prototypical scripts organizing the experience of different emotions, and identifies a number of component parts of scripts that are thought to be central in understanding affect process and organization (Monsen & Monsen, 1999; Solbakken, Hansen and Monsen, 2009a). AC differentiates eliciting events, awareness, tolerance, and emotional and conceptual expressiveness of the affect. An emotion is assumed to be triggered by an eliciting event, coined scenes by Tomkins (1962, 2008), becoming the starting point for the individual's emotional experience. Besides, the awareness function is by nature focusing and selective with respect to how well the individual can notice, recognize and observe his own emotional reactions on basis of bodily and mental state changes. Tolerance of emotion refers to a) affect impact, i.e. the effect of affective activation on the individual, b) affect coping, i.e. voluntary and involuntary strategies for dealing with and managing affect, and c) signal function, i.e. capacity for using affects as conveyers of meaningful information about the world, self, and others. Finally, the emotional experience is complemented by the individual's ability to express emotion, non-verbally, as gesticulation, gestures, posture and tone of voice and so on, and verbally/conceptually, within the bounds of language describing emotional experience (Solbakken et al., 2009a). Interestingly, conceptual aspects of the expression of interest-excitement have hardly been mentioned at all in the research literature. The AC approach assumes that all these components take part in the conscious experience of emotion. Therefore, the approach to the subjective experience/phenomenology of emotion in this study seems broader in scope than what usually has been the case in previous studies.

### ***Affect, emotion, feeling – conceptual clarification***

There are many definitions of these concepts, some more complex than others, but most often little effort is made to differentiate between them. On a principal basis this study favours the view presented by Solbakken, Hansen and Monsen (2009b). They consider affects to make up the most basic level of affective activation. In line with Tomkins (1962, 2008) they believe affects are fundamental, evolutionary rooted categories of responses primarily aimed at securing survival. These responses include primary, adaptive action tendencies, bodily communication, signal function, and construction of structure. Affects amplify themselves and their activator resulting in a fusing of stimulus and response in coherent scenes. Affects also contribute to personality structure by the “internalization” of affective sequences.

Solbakken et al. (2009b) suggest that *emotion* refers to a more extensive concept, not consisting in only the affect signal, but relevant cognitive processes as imagination, expectation, memory etc. In their opinion, emotion, as it is described in much of the literature, gets a personal touch. The universal affect is coloured by processes that function differently from individual to individual. Hence, affect is a universal sign whereas emotion is a product of the person wittingly and unwittingly acting upon the affective activation. Finally, in Solbakken et al. (2009b) view *feeling* refers to those aspects of an affect-process (emotion) that is consciously available phenomenological experience, whether this is bodily sensations and/or mental contents.

However, for simplicity and since these concepts generally have been used more or less interchangeably in the literature, this is generally the way it is done in this study as well. When referring to other researchers, the terms are used the way these researchers do in their respective writings to ensure maximally correct representation of their views.

### ***Epistemological stand – a realist and constructivist view***

On the basis of a basically realist point of view, elements of constructivism complement the theoretical viewpoint. Affects are viewed something in its own right. They are thought to be situated in our neural systems as patterns of neural firing. Trough evolution emotion systems have evolved, from simpler systems in lower order animals, to the complex emotion system in the human nervous system. There are many special-purpose, genetically-dedicated circuits for

various emotions and motivations in subcortical regions shared by all mammals (Panksepp & Panksepp, 2000). On the other hand, affects and the experience of emotions are shaped by social context, culture and language as they are organized as scenes and scripts (Tomkins, 1962, 2008). Thus, emotions are essentially situated in our nervous system, idiosyncratically constructed and organized in scripts (Tomkins, 1962, 2008) and based on an initially bodily experience that becomes symbolic in interaction with our surroundings (Stolorow, 2005).

## **Research questions**

The following research questions were specified to describe different aspects of the phenomenology of interest-excitement and to evaluate the usefulness of interview methods in general and the affect consciousness interview in particular for exploring the subjective experience of emotion:

1. When people are asked to talk about their experiences of interest-excitement, what are the typical elicitors of interest-excitement they report? What are the typical bodily and mental characteristics of the experience of this category of emotion? What are its typical impacts? How do people typically say they cope with this category of emotion? What sort of meanings do they attribute to it? To what extent and how do they believe they typically express interest-excitement verbally and nonverbally?
2. To what extent are interview methods in general and the affect consciousness interview in particular suitable for exploring the subjective experience of emotion? Can such methods enrich and replenish our knowledge of emotions in any significant way?

## **Method**

### ***The affect consciousness interview – tapping the subjective experience***

The affect-consciousness-interview (ACI) (Monsen, Monsen, Solbakken & Hansen, 2008) is a semi-structured interview, used in clinical settings to get a profile of the patient's level of affect consciousness. Mostly it resembles an exploratory interview technique in the manner of H.S. Sullivan (1955) combined with a Rogerian reflecting and confirming attitude (Rogers, 1965). The latest version of the interview (Monsen et al., 2008) includes eleven emotions;

interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, fear-panic, anger-rage, contempt, disgust-revulsion, humiliation-shame, sadness-despair, envy-jealousy, guilt-remorse, and tenderness-devotion. The general questions deal with aspects specified in the AC-framework: What elicits the affect, what makes one notice the affect, what is the impact of the affect, how one cope with the affect, what does the affect signalize, and how does one express emotionally and conceptually the affect. As we have seen, these questions refer to the four main parts in the AC construct: 1) Scenes/Eliciting events, 2) Awareness, 3) Tolerance, and 4) Expressiveness. Tolerance consists of three different elements: Impact of, Coping with, and Signal function of affect. Expressiveness consists of emotional, nonverbal and conceptual expression of affect. Expressiveness includes degree of avowal of affect and typical ways of expression.

Initially the examiner says: “I would now like to talk to you about the way you can feel and what you might experience in different situations”. The first affect examined is interest-excitement. The interviewer asks “What makes you feel interested and excited?” or “Tell me about something that makes you feel interested and excited”? The participant responds. If the participant have problems recalling events connected with this affect, the interviewer gives help, either by reframing the question or by using other, similar affective concepts. After getting some scenes, the interviewer asks “How do you know that you are/feel interested and excited? (How do you sense, recognise, notice it?)”. The goal here is to get both mental and bodily cues. Hence, if the participant can only recall mental cues, the interviewer specifically asks for bodily cues, and vice versa. Then interviewer moves on to examine Tolerance. “When you are feeling interested and excited, how does this feeling affect you, what can this feeling do to you (Impact)? The next question is “When you notice that you are interested and excited, what do you do about this feeling (Coping)?” .Then “Do you believe that this feeling can tell you anything (Signal function)?” For the last part, expressiveness, the interviewer asks: “How do you feel about *showing* others that you are interested and excited? How do you think you show it?” Finally, the interviewer asks: “How do you feel about *telling* others that you are interested and excited? How do you typically tell others that you are?” Then the interviewer makes a statement to make clear that they have finished working with this affect and that they now will move on to the next. “I think this is it for this affect, now we’ll go on to joy-enjoyment...

This procedure is repeated with all the affects until having finished the last affect, tenderness-devotion. In clinical work the goal of this interview is to map out the interviewee’s emotional

scripts. On all parts of the interview there are so-called probing-questions, additional questions, for clarifying scripts.

### ***Thematic analysis – identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data***

Boyatzis (1998, in Braun & Clarke, 2006) argue that thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (For accounts of thematic analysis see Boyatzis, 1998 and Braun and Clarke, 2006).

### ***Procedures***

*Preparation stage.* The supervisor of the study gave an introduction to the AC-model, the ACI; how to carry it out and scoring; and clinical AC-profiles. The preparation stage also included a short test interview not used in the data analysis.

*Recruitment and participants.* Seven acquaintances were recruited. With the snowball method seven additional participants were recruited. Three non-participating acquaintances contributed with four participants. Two participants were recruited randomly in the street. Then, seven acquaintances and thirteen strangers participated in the study. There were eleven male and nine female participants. The men were between 23 and 62 years, the women between 21 and 50 years, giving a total age span of 21 to 62. One male participant was excluded from further analysis for showing a clinical AC-profile indicating difficulty with this affect. Hence, the analysis of the phenomenology of interest-excitement is based on 19 participants (10 male, 9 female). Table 2 summarizes the participants' sex, age, occupation, and place of origin.

Table 2

#### *Participants' Sex, Age, Occupation, & Origin*

<i>N</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation, origin</i>
01	M	27	Meteorologist, southern Norway, city
02	F	23	Singer, teacher, southern Norway, village
03	F	25	Administration, student, the eastern part of southern Norway, city

04	F	24	Student, the eastern part of southern Norway, city
05	M	45	Incapacitated, student, the eastern part of southern Norway
06	F	23	Film director work, southern Norway, city
07	M	28	Athlete, computer work, the eastern part of southern Norway, village
08	M	33	Salesman, Middle-Norway, city
09	F	28	Nurse, the eastern part of southern Norway, city
10	M	44	Psychologist, Spain, Catalonia
11	M	24	Physiotherapist, student, the eastern part of southern Norway, village
12	M	29	Engineer construction, the eastern part of southern Norway, village
13	M	31	Administration, Spain, Basque Country
14	F	21	Student, the eastern part of southern Norway, city
15	F	27	Student, the eastern part of southern Norway, village
16	M	28	Teacher, the eastern part of southern Norway, village
17	F	36	Milieu therapist, the eastern part of southern Norway, city
18	M	43	Salesman, the eastern part of southern Norway, village
19	F	50	Administration, the eastern part of southern Norway, city
20	M	62	Lawyer, the eastern part of southern Norway, city

*City* refers to a small or big city or urban surroundings.

*Village* refers to a more countryside like place.

*Carrying out the interviews.* 16 of the (19) interviews were done in a therapy room at the Department of Psychology, University of Oslo. One interview was carried out at the participant's work office while two were done in the participants' private house. The duration of the interviews varied between 1.25 and 2.5 hours. Some interviews included a 10 minutes break somewhat after halfway. All the interviews were recorded on MD. All interviews were done in Norwegian except one that was done in English.

The description of carrying out the ACI (above) also functioned as our template since another intention of the data collection was to get AC-data on a normal population and exclude potentially clinical profiles before the phenomenological analysis. Therefore few additional leads were given. Although some respondents needed some reframing and guidance to get going, in general the questions remained open, leaving it to the interviewee to decide what to say. This should ensure that the respondents' statements were close to *their* experience and that the data were suitable for AC-analysis.

*Exploration, confirmation, reframing and guidance done by the interviewer.* Table 3 gives examples of exploration, confirmation, reframing and guidance was done by the interviewer carrying out the interviews (Refer to ACI-guide for initial question).

Table 3

*Examples of exploration, confirmation, reframing and guidance during interview*

Part	<i>Scenes/Eliciting events</i>
Reframing	<b>Can you describe a situation where you somehow feel eager or enthusiastic?</b>
Exploring	<i>Oh, my God, if something happens that makes me a little, when I'm getting some feelings, well, when the feelings respond, eh....</i> <b>What kind of feelings are you thinking about?</b>
Part	<i>Awareness</i>
Confirming	<i>I have never really thought about it, hehe.....</i> <b>Well, no, you may find these questions strange, something you maybe haven't given much thought</b>
Exploring and searching for cue	<b>The calmness you mentioned, is it a bodily calmness or a mental calmness? Do you notice anything particular bodily?</b>
Part	<i>Tolerance – Impact</i>
Confirming and exploring	<i>The feeling of interest and excitement?</i> <b>Yes</b> <i>Well, it depends if you mean afterwards, when you have tried to understand something or tried something out, or if you mean beforehand?</i> <b>Well, in the moment you feel</b> <i>No, if there is something I want to try then I work to, to manage it, eh, but....</i> <b>You made a distinction, somehow there was something beforehand?</b>
Reframing	<b>Anything else, anything else this feeling somehow does with you?</b>
Part	<i>Tolerance – Coping</i>
Reframing	<i>How you handle that feeling???</i> <b>What is it you somehow do with that feeling? Or do you do anything at all?</b>
Reframing and guiding	<i>Yeah, very....</i> <b>Yes, so it is something you try to preserve, what are you doing with the feeling?</b>
Part	<i>Tolerance – Signal function</i>
Confirming and reframing	<i>That's a very difficult question!!</i> <b>Yes..., being eager, does it tell you anything, yes?</b>
Reframing and	<i>.. What do you mean exactly??</i>



guiding	<b>Well, maybe, if you after having felt enthusiastic or keen, interested, if you then were left with some thoughts</b> ( <i>interrupted</i> )
Part	<i>Expressiveness – emotional – awovel</i>
Reframing	<i>How I show it?</i> <b>How you experience it when showing that you feel interested, eager?</b>
Guiding	<i>Eh...</i> <b>Is it OK for you to show it or do you feel inhibited?</b>
Part	<i>Expressiveness – emotional - typical expression</i>
Reframing	<i>.....?</i> <b>What do you think people can see, notice?</b>
Exploring	<i>..seem interested, eh</i> <b>What do you look like?</b>
Part	<i>Expressiveness – conceptual - awovel</i>
Reframing	<i>.....??</i> <b>Or how is it somehow to talk about it, to tell others that you are interested or eager, not to show it, but to tell it, how do you experience that?</b>
Confirming	<i>How I feel about that...</i> <b>Yes, how you feel about telling others that a person is interesting or that there is something you find interesting?</b>
Part	<i>Expressiveness – conceptual - typical expression</i>
Reframing	<i>How I tell it??</i> <b>How do you tell others that you are interested in something, how do you do that?</b>
Exploring	<i>Focus mostly on the matter that makes you eager, don't really describe the feeling</i> <b>Right, how do you think you describe the matter?</b>

*AC-profiling – exclusion of clinical profiles.* The recorded interviews were transcribed. From these transcripts the relevant statements were drawn out and placed in the diagram for analysis of AC. The respondents' diagrams were evaluated for level affect integration on the affect interest-excitement and one respondent's diagram was excluded.

*Thematic analysis of interest-excitement.* After ensuring that the profiles were non-clinical, the thematic analysis of interest-excitement was done. The different elements of AC of interest-excitement were divided for analysis. Scenes/Eliciting events made up one diagram for analysis, so did Awareness. Tolerance of affect consists of three elements; impact, coping,

signal function. The distinction was transferred also to the analysis of tolerance. Analysis of Expressiveness was done by separating emotional and conceptual expressiveness. Each diagram of the analysis consisted of 5 participants' statements. Hence, four diagrams, included all participants ( $4 \times 5 = 20$  (-1=19)). The thematic analysis was made in a bottom-up fashion, trying to understand the data as much as possible being free from theory, although the questions in the ACI crates some provision. From this open, yet still directed, point of view, the searching for repeating themes in-between diagrams, marking them with different colours, started. The construction of the analysis diagrams gave us a good general view of five and five data sets. The completion of the analysis was done by moving back and forth between each analysis diagram to get the overall thematic picture. The description the analysis diagrams provided was poorer than the full transcripts. Therefore, there was also a moving back and forth between these diagrams and the (full) transcripts (See Appendix, *Phases in the thematic analysis*, and *Creating categories*).

Anecdotic statements that would enrich our phenomenological understanding of interest-excitement and shed light on theories of interest-excitement were also noted in the process.

*Defining and naming categories – a challenging phase.* Having completed the thematic analysis, the naming of themes started. This was a challenging part for two main reasons; deciding for neither to specific nor to general categories; when is it possible to say that statements form a theme?; and choosing some names, and not others, for these categories. The general categories that emerged trough the thematic analysis were analyzed further.

The analysis part also included control of data interpretation and categorization by an auditor several times, resulting in some reinterpretation of data, categories, and their designations.

*Production phase.* Parts of the interviews that were carried out in Norwegian have been translated so as to be able to give examples of participant's statements. During the translation process it was both intended and attempted to maintain the oral character, not only the meaning, of the participants' statements.

## Results

The results are presented in the manner the ACI is constructed; 1) eliciting events/scenes 2) awareness, 3) tolerance; consisting of impact, coping, and signal function, and 4) expressiveness, emotional and conceptual. Every part is summarized in a figure.

### *Eliciting events/scenes – the elicitor of affect*

It is assumed that an affective activation is elicited by an event. During the process of data analysis, marking statements with different colours, certain themes seemed to emerge. After several controls by the auditor and some subsequent adjustments, the themes were given the following denotations: *Opportunities for development*, *Opportunities for communion*, *Objects of personal identification*, *Aesthetics*, *The extraordinary/unexpected*, and *Novelty/Change*.

*Opportunities for development – the evolving human being.* In general, *Opportunities for development* are situations that seemed to be associated with learning, development and coping with the demands of life and other challenges, for example at work, in relationships, or in activities. The following were some of the respondents' statements: "something I want to achieve", "growth potential, just fine if it's difficult", "a situation that apparently isn't easy make me interested, it's challenging", "When things you have planned and worked for end up the way they are supposed to", and "when I am given the responsibility for something".

*Opportunities for communion – the social human being.* Interest-excitement role in bringing humans together, creating a social space, was evident in this study, called *Opportunities for communion*. In the present study participants said that they feel interested when spending time with family and friends; sweethearts; people at work; others sharing the same interest; meeting new people; possible sweethearts; others' friends; or humans in general. Respondent 17 said: "in sports, then I'm really keen, with my sister and other veteran athletes, with my boyfriend, being keen and involved so that it will function, and make my network function, contact with friends and family – organize things when I've got time".

*Objects of personal identification – the personal human being.* Another theme that emerged, associated with eliciting interest-excitement, is named *Objects of personal identification*, including things that appear to have some personal relevance for the individual.

It can refer to what the participants somehow identify themselves with: Political issues, a leading person in a personally relevant field, ethnic group, health and dieting, travelling, and cooking, and sports and athletics and so on. Respondent 11 said: "...things happening in the world, unsolved conflicts, that I find interesting and exciting, ....., very concerned about human rights and animal rights, and I am very fond of things that has to do with travelling, travelling programs, cooking, cultures". Respondent 2 said: "..... to pass by a circus might be interesting, persons that look special or different..." This was a respondent having roots in a special ethnic group. Interestingly, this category of elicitors had great variability, supporting the well-known notion that interest can be invested in just about anything under the sun that the individual feels some form of identification with (Tomkins, 2008).

*Aesthetics – the admiring human being.* It is commonly said that beauty fascinates the human being. Confirming this, a theme called *Aesthetics* appeared to be present. "Beauty", one way or another – music, poetry, art, theatre, movies, human beings, same sex or not, seemed to elicit interest-excitement. Respondent 4 said: "Quite frequently on jazz concerts, if I read I nice poem, if I listen to nice music, maybe in the meeting with art..." Another respondent said: "A very beautiful person".

*The extraordinary/unexpected – the attentive human being.* Another theme that seemed to emerge from the analysis was called *The extraordinary/unexpected*. It seemed to refer to what is different from the normal, and mysterious, maybe what surprises and startles people, either it is an action, a person's appearance, a situation, or uncertain things. Respondent 16 said: "things you're a little curios about, superstitious things, life after death, things you can't know for sure". Respondent 2 said: "...someone that started fighting the other day,....., people that look special or different". Respondent 15 said: "...a person that does something extraordinary". Respondent 1 said: "Surely you can get eager if you have to, if you end up in a dangerous situation". This category might explain the closeness of interest-excitement and surprise/startle, even if the two concepts are distinguished by Izard (1977, 1991) and Tomkins (1962, 2008), and fear or nervousness connected with interest-excitement.

*Novelty and change – the curios human being.* A last theme that seemed to emerge referred to new things and change, called *Novelty/change*, probably a very broad category referring to anything new or changed, so as the individual might avoid habituation (Izard, 1977, 1991) Participants in this study said that new things, new people, new places make

them interested, as well as change. “I think it very exciting to get to know new people”. “New things, a change, of course to learn new theoretical things”. “I am excited about having new experiences, when travelling for example, then I’m really involved, motivated and eager”.

*Category overlap – mutually exclusive vs. a more detailed picture.* Some statements refer to more than one type of eliciting event: E.g. “something new and special that can somehow increase my level of knowledge”. This statement refers to Novelty/Change, the Extraordinary/Unexpected, and Opportunities for development. Statements presented in the above can also refer to several categories. Hence, the categories are not mutually exclusive. It would be very difficult and maybe hardly useful at all, to create such categories. Rather, what has presented here is an attempt at describing eliciting events of interest-excitement in more detail.

The findings are summarized in figure 3 (see next page).

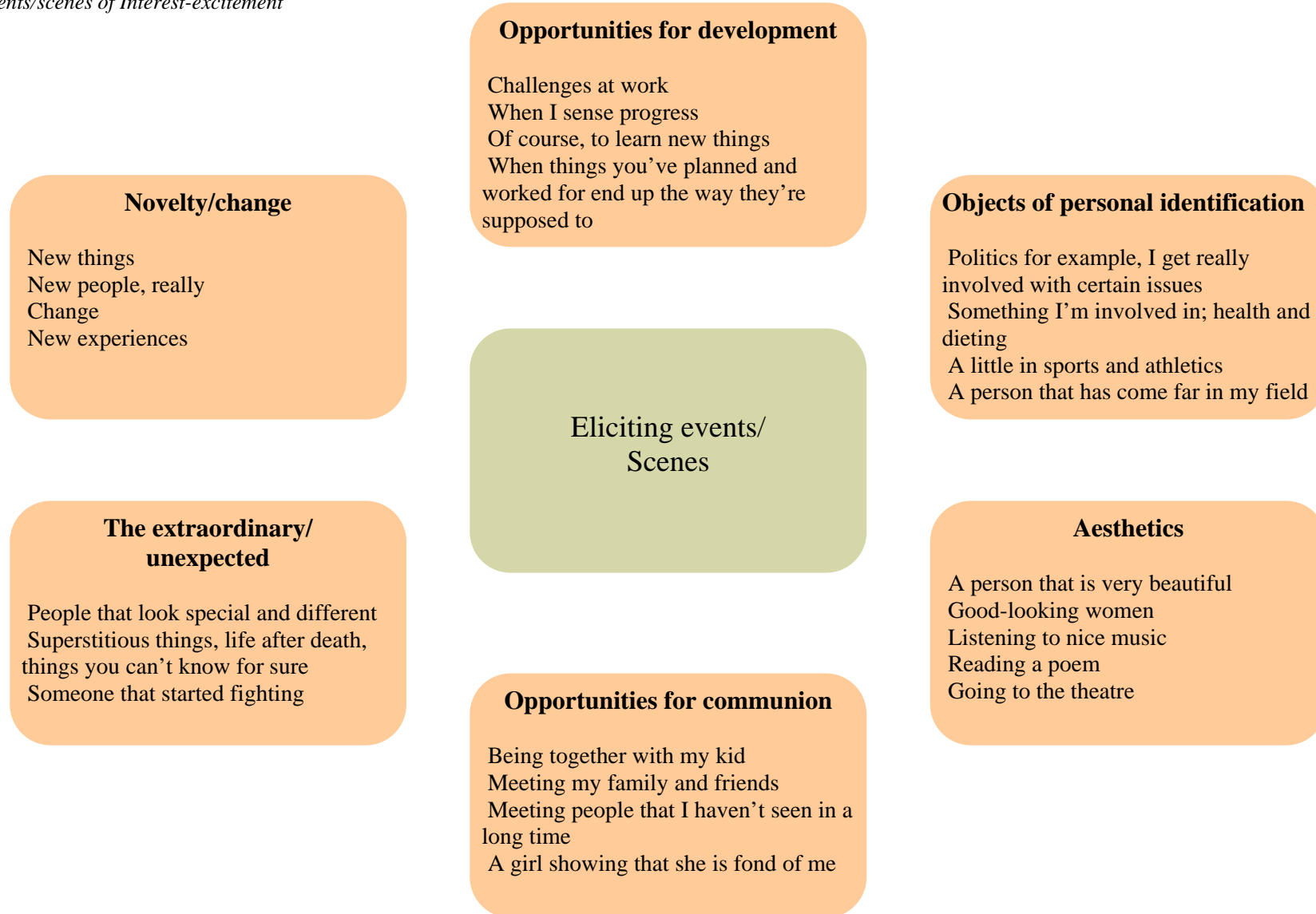
#### ***Awareness – mental and bodily cues relied on to recognize affective***

Awareness of affect refers to how people notice that they are activated by an emotion. The analysis process was like that described above (see Eliciting events/Scenes) searching for bodily and mental cues. The analysis showed that the cues consisted of several nuances. In general, the participants said that the cues were experienced as mainly *either* mental or *bodily*. Some statements referred to cues that were difficult to categorize as either-or, and were therefore categorized in a mixed category. In addition, one finding was that what the participants referred to as awareness cues and impact of affect showed similarities; E. g. energy, motivation, positive valence. Yet, the awareness cues appeared more differentiated. This indicates that the participants noticed the affect by its impacts as well as its awareness cues.

#### ***Bodily cues – energy, alertness, pleasure, tension***

The analysis showed that bodily cues appeared to be characterized by four different qualities called *energy, alertness, pleasure, tension*. Furthermore, it is intended to show possible behavioural and internal aspects of these cues.

Figure 3  
*Eliciting Events/scenes of Interest-excitement*



*Energy.* Participants said that they might become aware of interest-excitement by the energy it gives. On the behaviour level respondent 2 said: “Moving more” whereas respondent 14 referred to the internal level: “getting energy, much more vigour.

*Alertness.* Respondents said they might become aware of interest-excitement by the fact that it makes them physically alert. Respondent 11 said referring to behaviour: “I’m raising myself markedly, kind of staring a little”. The statement made by respondent 8 referred to the internal level as well: “Then you get a little awake, alert, the body automatically awakens, you get on your toes.”

*Pleasure.* Subjects said they might notice interest-excitement by a sense of pleasure, a good bodily feeling. Respondent 19 said: “That is simply a good, positive, nice feeling, bodily, a little like a happy feeling. On the behaviour level respondent 13 said: “you smile”. Obviously, smiling might also be an expression of joy, and it is unclear whether it refers to a presence of enjoyment-joy or pleasurable sensations associated with interest-excitement *pr* see.

*Tension.* Participants said that they might become aware of interest-excitement by a sense of tension. On the behavioural level respondent 18 said: “Just running around looking forward to...” Respondent 13 and 14 referred to the internal level: “A little nervous” and “It might tingle a little in the stomach”. Respondent 16 described a more intense experience: “You can feel the heartbeats, my forehead gets warm, and my nerves are a little on the edge, like when I’m competing”.

*Mental cues – an attentive, active, and open mindset and pleasant, and anxious valence tone*

Mental cues seemed to be characterized by two major aspects: An active, awake, and open mindset and thought-content characterized by a pleasant valence tone containing anxious and nervous elements.

*Curiosity.* Respondents said they notice interest-excitement by the curiosity it creates. Participants wanted to know more. Respondent 4 said: “I might get very curious, kind of unacceptable curios, eagerly curios”. Respondent 19, the second oldest respondent, also mentioned curiosity.

*Focus/goal-direction.* Participants said they notice interest-excitement by a sense of *focus, goal-direction*. Respondent 18 said: “You know that you can block out a lot of other things coming to your mind, things that are probably always there, and it’s just to focus”. Respondent 16 described an intense experience of focus: “I can hardly get what the pupils are saying because it is like this process is going on in my head”.

*Impulse/drive to act.* Subjects also said they notice interest-excitement by an *impulse to act* that it creates, either the felt impulse or the act itself. Respondent 17 said: “I’m getting a very strong desire to go there and tell them, give feed-back, no matter whom it is”. Respondent 2 said “want to do something about it”, clearly motivated. Respondent 16 said: “Then I ask a lot of questions”. This statement exemplifies a common pattern in this study, to notice the affect based on one’s own behaviour. The example of motivation also strengthens a view that awareness of interest-excitement is (also) a result of its impacts.

*Joy and contentment.* Joy and contentment is a mental cue participants associated with interest-excitement. Respondents said that they feel glad, happy, and joyful. Respondent 19 said: “a little like a happy feeling”. Respondent 20 said: “Mental satisfaction, a self-confidence boost”.

*Positive anticipation / Optimism.* Positive anticipation made participants aware of interest-excitement. One respondent said he gets a positive look on the future. Respondent 18 said: “just running around looking forward to [it]”.

*Enthusiasm.* Feeling enthusiastic also appeared to be a mental cue in noticing interest-excitement. Respondent 11 said: “suddenly feel that you get an enthusiasm, you get a stronger feeling than you had earlier”.

*Anxiousness.* Participants said that a slightly anxious or nervous sensation might make them aware of interest-excitement. Respondent 8 said: “joy, happiness, satisfaction, uneasiness, a mixture of very many different thoughts spinning around in my head”.



*Cues that could not be easily categorized as either mental or bodily*

Generally, the cues that the respondents said that made them aware of interest-excitement were experienced as *either* bodily *or* mental. On the other hand, some of the statements described cues that could not easily be characterized as either mental or bodily. These cues seemed to be a combination of mental and bodily nuances. Individual differences in cognitive styles or type of affect might influence the subjective experience of the emotion. Lambie and Marcel (2002) suggest that certain emotions cause certain focuses: E.g. fear is found to be the emotion most likely to be reported as a bodily experience (Oatley & Duncan, 1992; Scherer & Wallbott, 1994), happiness is found to be the emotion least likely to be reported as a bodily experience, and anger is found to be the emotion most likely to be reported in terms of awareness of the world under an emotional description (Lambie, 2000). The following statements were characterized as bodily/mental: “I get really restless”, “might get a little sparkling”, “As if the soul frees itself a little inside the body”, and “a strange calmness comes over me”.

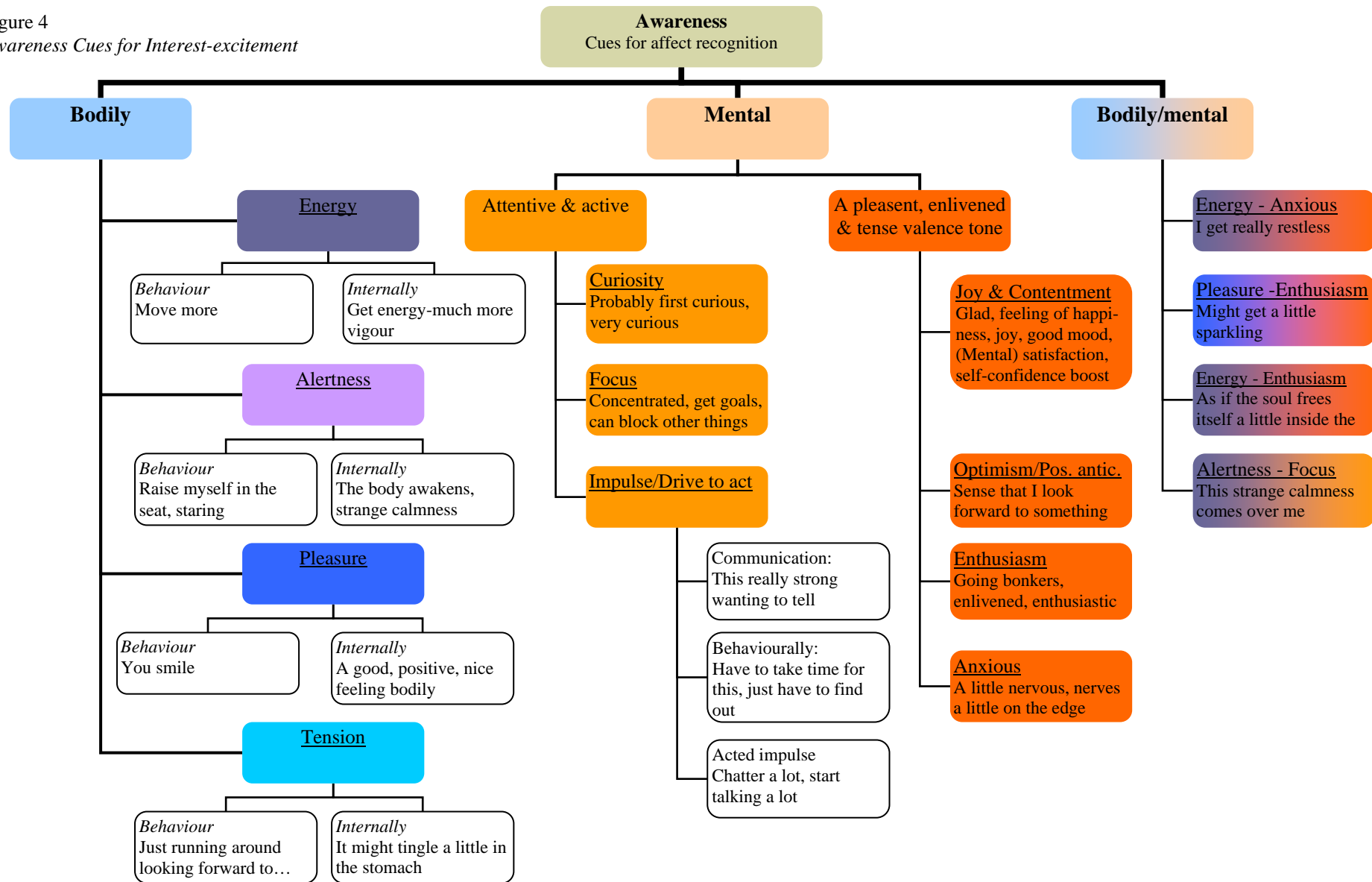
Furthermore, speculating that awareness cues of affect may be experienced as both mental and bodily, an attempt at describing the statements “blending” characteristic follows: E.g. “might get a little sparkling” may refer to a blend of bodily “pleasure” and mental “enthusiasm”. Another possible way to analyse this statement would have been to differentiate between bodily, and the two mental parts, an active mindset and pleasant thought-content, creating a three-folded awareness cue. In this case the same statement may refer to blend of pleasure, impulse to act, and enthusiasm.

The findings are summarized in figure 4 (See next page, Mental/bodily cues: The composition of colours illustrates how mental and bodily cues may contribute to the undifferentiated cues.).

***Tolerance – how the individual is moved by, handles and understands the emotion***

Tolerance for affect refers to how the individual is moved by, handles, and understands an emotion. The analysis process was like described above (see Eliciting events/scenes). The understanding of tolerance for affect includes three different parts - impact, coping, and signal function - presented separately.

Figure 4  
Awareness Cues for Interest-excitement



*Impact – functional and other changes caused by the affect*

All affects have an impact on the individual; some consequence or change. Remember that the question asked in this section of the interview was: When you notice that you are interested-excited, how does that feeling affect you? The analysis showed that when being interested-excited the participants felt that they gained more energy, being in a mostly pleasant and glad state, a sense of higher motivation, activity, focus, and goal-directedness. Interest-excitement was also associated with feelings of anxiousness, nervousness or increased tension. The increased motivation is shown in a desire to work hard (sustained effort) and more exploratory behaviour. Changes in cognition are seen in more mental work and the ability to concentrate, even becoming absorbed and focus on a goal. As previously mentioned, there is considerable overlap in categories emerging from answers to this question and those emerging from answers to the formerly described awareness question, indicating perhaps, as speculated here, that it is the impacts of an affect that become the cues for noticing that affect. Nevertheless there were also a number of themes emerging from the impact analysis that was not present in the awareness analysis, especially regarding the functional effects of interest-excitement, and potential vulnerabilities or negative reactions to having this emotion.

*Having more energy.* The impact of interest-excitement was related to having more energy. The data indicated that there were different nuances and intensities involved. On a clearly bodily level respondent 4 said: “maybe I even jump up and down”. Respondent 3, referring more to the inner experience of having more energy, said: “Getting a little hyped up, of course one gets energy”. It may be that respondent 14’s statement referred to energy on the mental level: “I have more vigour to continue doing what makes me excited”. Regarding intensity respondent 19 said: “surely it gives me a little energy” while respondent 9 said: “gives me much, much more energy”.

*Feeling good and enlivened, and a little anxious or tense.* The impact of interest as pleasant seems to be found both on a mental and a bodily level. On the mental level there is “glad, happy and joy”. “A satisfaction” might refer to a more bodily experience. As respondent 1 said: “... if it’s something I find funny, sure, then I am getting very glad, getting a satisfaction, I think, if I can achieve something, then maybe I’m getting happy”. The impact of interest-excitement also seems to be related to a sense of heightened tension or anxiousness; “A little scared”, and “nervousness” are examples of this on a more mental level.

Anxiousness or tension on a more bodily level may be found in statements like “kind of having the jitters”, “kind of feeling that the heart beats a little more”, and “tensions”.

*A sense of higher motivation, an ability to work hard, and explore.* Interest-excitement appeared to make the participants more motivated. The respondents said that they feel a boost in motivation and that they really want to do something: “I want to work more with the ideas or what I see”, “motivates me to go on”, and “want to keep on the same track, with the girlfriend or training”, and “I just want keep on going over and over”. It appears that interest-excitement made *sustained effort* (Tomkins, 1962, 2008) more likely. Respondent 17 said: “it motivates me to go on, giving me this kind of new force”. It appeared that interest-excitement influenced participants to try new things, to broaden their experiences, to *explore*. Respondent 20 said: “I have to try it, thinking that this is something for me, it looks exciting and funny, feeling that I have to learn more about this”.

*More mentally active, a sense of being goal-directed, concentrated and absorbed.* Respondents said that interest-excitement could make them more reflected, systematic, organized, concentrated, or even absorbed, and sense that they have a goal. As respondent 2 said: “Perhaps it only makes me think about something, then the thought itself is more interesting, and not really the shop, actually, ....., I feel like working more with the ideas or what I see, understand, develop it”. Absorption seems to be an impact of interest-excitement. As respondent 7 said: “Then the phone may just go on ringing, I don’t answer, in a way it’s like, I am in the middle of a problem, I don’t get angry I think, but I just don’t hear, .... if someone talks to me, then maybe I’m not so attentive, I get really self-centred”. Respondent 10 said: “To concentrate, to focus on the object, my interest, I don’t think about anything else”.

*The relations between interest-excitement and negative affects and exhaustion.* Occasionally, the impact of interest-excitement appeared to be associated with subsequent negative affects such as shame, sadness, and guilt. Respondent 1 said: “being too eager, then maybe people at work think I don’t show enough humility”. Respondent 3 said: Too excited..., then in a way I’m just taking up space”. These statements might indicate an association with shame if the excitement gets out of its accepted proportions. Respondent 7 said “I get really self-centred, ....., sometimes you have to take the clue from your girlfriend and...”. This statement may have referred to both shame and guilt. A consequence of interest-

excitement may also be sadness if the outcome is not as wished. Respondent 8 said: "... it can make you sad, with a girl you like and you don't get the feedback you want, maybe starting to ruminate". Respondent 16 said: "If you are interested in a girl, and she says something that you think is not very nice, it bothers you, then, what she says really bothers me". One could speculate that it is probably not possible to become sad about anything which you have not been or are interested-excited about, and that the potential objects of sadness are necessarily also current or previous objects of interest-excitement.

The increased level of energy might also lead to exhaustion. Respondent 17 said: "it might drain you for strength as well, being so enthusiastic all the time, if you get a lot of nagging from others".

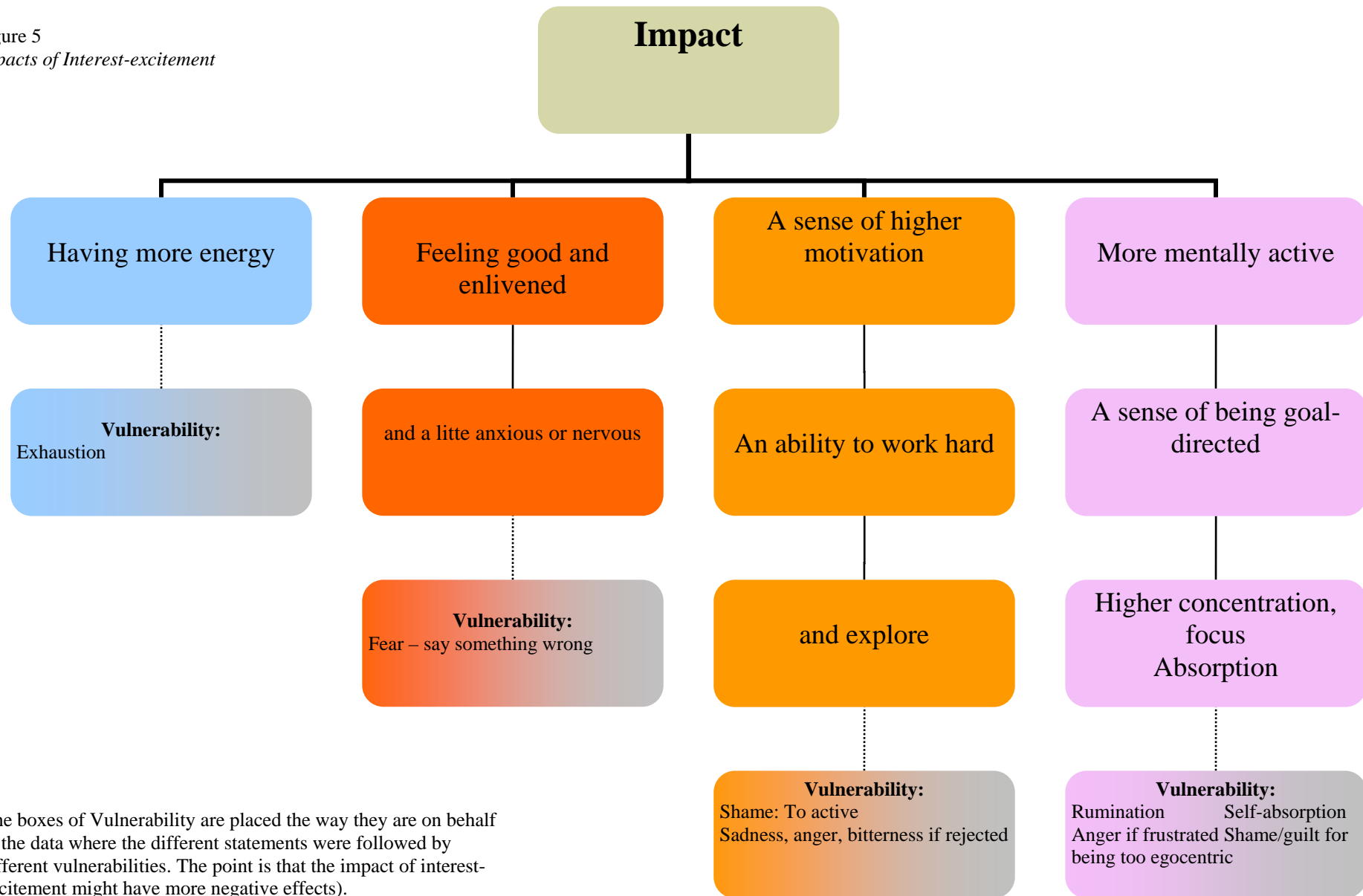
The findings are summarized in figure 5 (see next page).

#### *Coping – behaviours to handle the impacts of the affect*

It is assumed that the individual will have to deal with the impacts of affect in some way or other, and that there would be a number of different ways of coping with the impacts of interest-excitement. The analysis of Coping showed that behaviour could often be categorized as what was coined *expanding* or *contracting*, respectively possibly connected with a pleasurable and a more non-pleasurable feeling tone. Another way to deal/cope with interest-excitement that emerged, was enjoying the moment, which might be considered a form of expanding behaviour, but separated because of the latter's obvious, specific action tendency and the valence focus of enjoying.

*Enjoying the moment.* A way to cope with interest-excitement that seemed to emerge from the analysis was enjoying and appreciating the moment. Respondent 10 said: "Being in this kind of state, I am enjoying the present moment, and at the same time, sometimes at least, I remember, last time we had some friends coming to our home, I had to go out to buy some, some wine and I was really pleased to be with these friends, and this kind of reflective attitude and I thought that's so nice that I can experience this kind of pleasure", may indicating an association with joy.

Figure 5  
Impacts of Interest-excitement



*Expanding behaviour – following the direction indicated by the affect.* One typical way to cope with the impact of interest-excitement that appeared to emerge from the analysis was following the motivation or direction indicated by the affect. Participants said that when feeling interested-excited they explore, go from thought to action, broaden their knowledge and experience, be creative, socializing, expressing their opinions, solve problems etc. It appeared that coping with interest-excitement involved a higher action readiness than normal, also suggested by Izard (1977). Respondent 9 said: “well, I want to learn more about things that make me enthusiastic, then I take action”. This clearly indicated the influence interest-excitement might have on learning. The case of problem solving seemed to be further associated with a pleasant or unpleasant state afterwards. Respondent 7 said: “I am feeling interested-excited only spontaneously doing this or that, having solved a problem or not, the feeling changes, if I make it then I feel content”. Respondent 4 made an association with creativity and enjoyment: “Maybe I even try to intensify it by thinking “oh, I have to go home and write about this” or “I should do this more often”.

*Contracting behaviour – suppressing the affect impulse.* A number of participants in the study mentioned that coping with interest-excitement involved some kind of control or down-regulation. If the intensity of the affect is lower, or there are some personal or social inhibitions present, the respondents could restrain themselves, not following the motivational direction of the affect. The social environment, respect for other people’s private life, or one’s own sensitive areas made the participants cope with interest-excitement in a more controlled way. Respondent 17 said: “I have to interpret the others to a certain degree, now and then I have to grab my self by the neck and calm down so the others can follow, I can get to excited, then I have to restrain myself a little”. Respondent 3 said: “Sometimes I have to be careful that I don’t get so interested that I am invading, if I feel that I get a little too curious, then I pull back, curbing myself a little”. Respondent 8 said: “sometimes it just passes by, one starts thinking a lot, outcomes, what might happen, what might not happen, why it happens, how it’s going to happen in what way, ....., if you can control the situation or these thoughts, then you’re are on safe ground.” Respondent 11 said: “It can be quite exciting, but somehow I really don’t think much more about it, forgetting it, not thinking more about it, to a certain degree it depends on how enthusiastic I am,...

This type of coping behaviour may be associated with fear and shame. Contrary to expanding behaviour, “opening up”, contractive behaviour may be a defence against these, and other, negative emotions. The findings are summarized in figure 6.

*Signal function – the informational value of the affect*

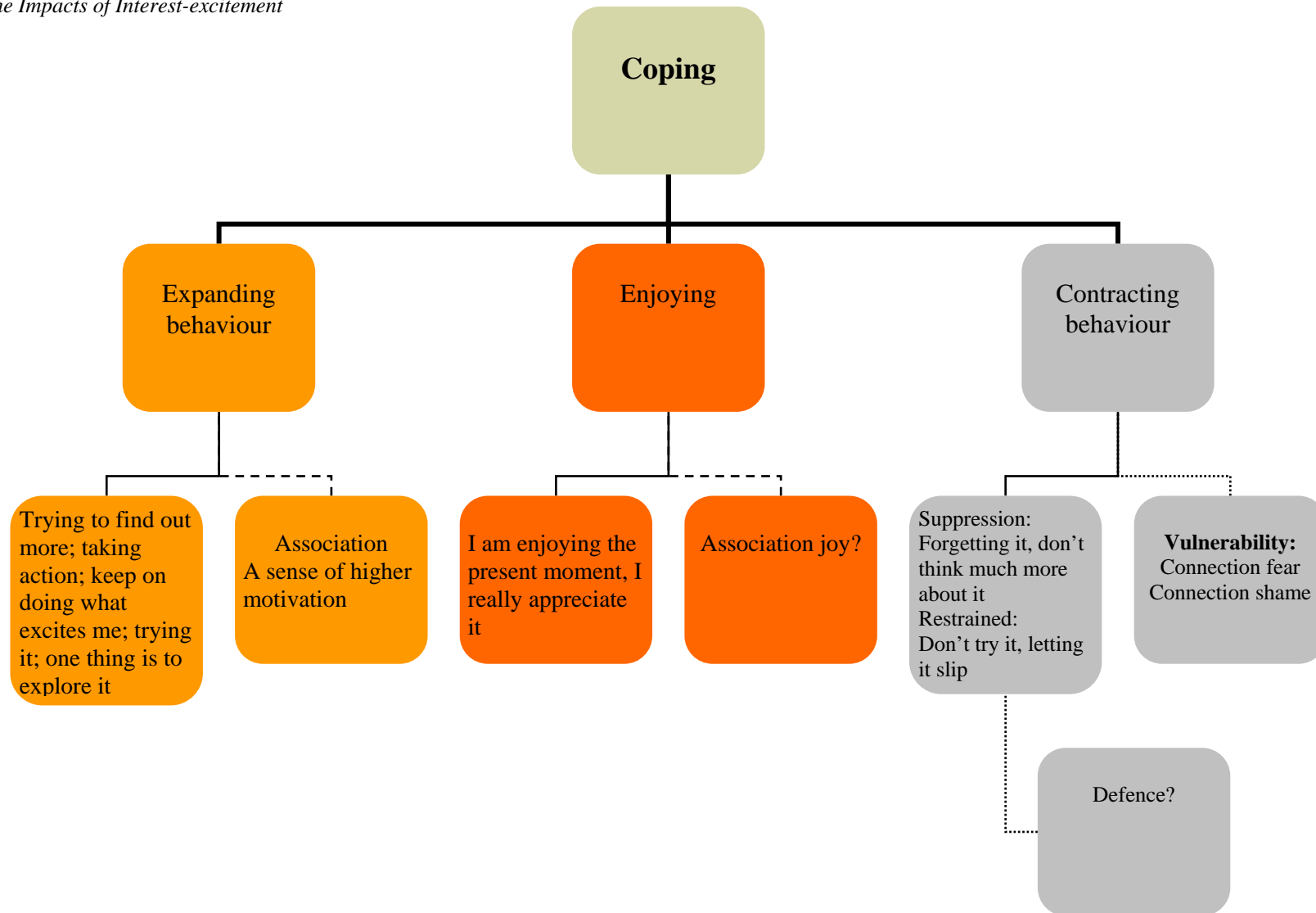
Interest-excitement, as well as all other affects, is believed to have an intrinsic signal function, conveying information (Tomkins, 1962, 2008). It brings some kind of message that might be personally important or relevant. The analysis showed what appears to be three main themes the participants associated with interest-excitement; I. e. personal development/learning, a sense of identity, and an imperative to act.

*Personal development/Learning.* The respondents associated interest-excitement with opportunities for personal development, learning. This referred to the process of learning from experience, making you meet similar situations in a more functional way and understand yourself better. Respondent 11 said: “it depends, but, I guess, mostly connected to concrete situations from which I can learn, I make experiences of situations from which one later on can learn things”. Another respondent said: “I see a potential to develop afterwards”.

*A sense of identity and meaning.* Participants also associated the signal function of interest-excitement to identity and personal meaning. It signals who we like, what we like, what we stand for etc, who we are basically. Respondent 2 said: “analyze yourself, then maybe you’ll come to why this interests you, trace it back to other things that have happened in the past, learn something about yourself”. Respondent 6 said: “It clearly tells me what I like and don’t like; what I’m interested in and not; who makes me interested and who doesn’t”. Respondent 16 said: “if you are interested in something, then maybe it says something about you as a person, if there is a person that is very calm and never has tried anything new, and then he suddenly gets interested in how it would be to bungee jump, then maybe this is because there is something in his mind, in his self, there might be some drives/needs around.....”.



Figure 6  
Coping with the Impacts of Interest-excitement



*Imperative to act.* Another aspect of information mediated by the activation of interest-excitement is an imperative to act. The subjects feel that they *should* somehow act. “This is something I have to do”. Another participant said: it tells me...., maybe I should continue doing this, maybe even develop into something more.

Respondent 4 drew the line of learning, meaning and action further making an association with beliefs and values. Interest-excitement for this person might be associated to a more fundamental meaning and a moral guide for action. “It might tell a person what is important in the world and then maybe give this person a sense of meaning, meaning is relative, yet it might even show you the way to a more profound truth”. Therefore, the imperative to act might be driven personally or by a (social) institution. Personally refers to when the individual feels obligated to act because of a personal matter. Institutionally driven imperatives refer to when the individual feels obligated to act because of moral, convictions, fundamental truth etc. A mixture of personally and institutionally driven imperatives might be normal, as the individual often internalize social norms making them his/her own. Institutional imperatives and fundamental meaning were not central themes. Rather, it shows the multitude of aspects that interviews such as the ACI might generate. A summary is presented in figure 7 (see next page).

### ***Expressiveness – degree of avowal and ways of expressing***

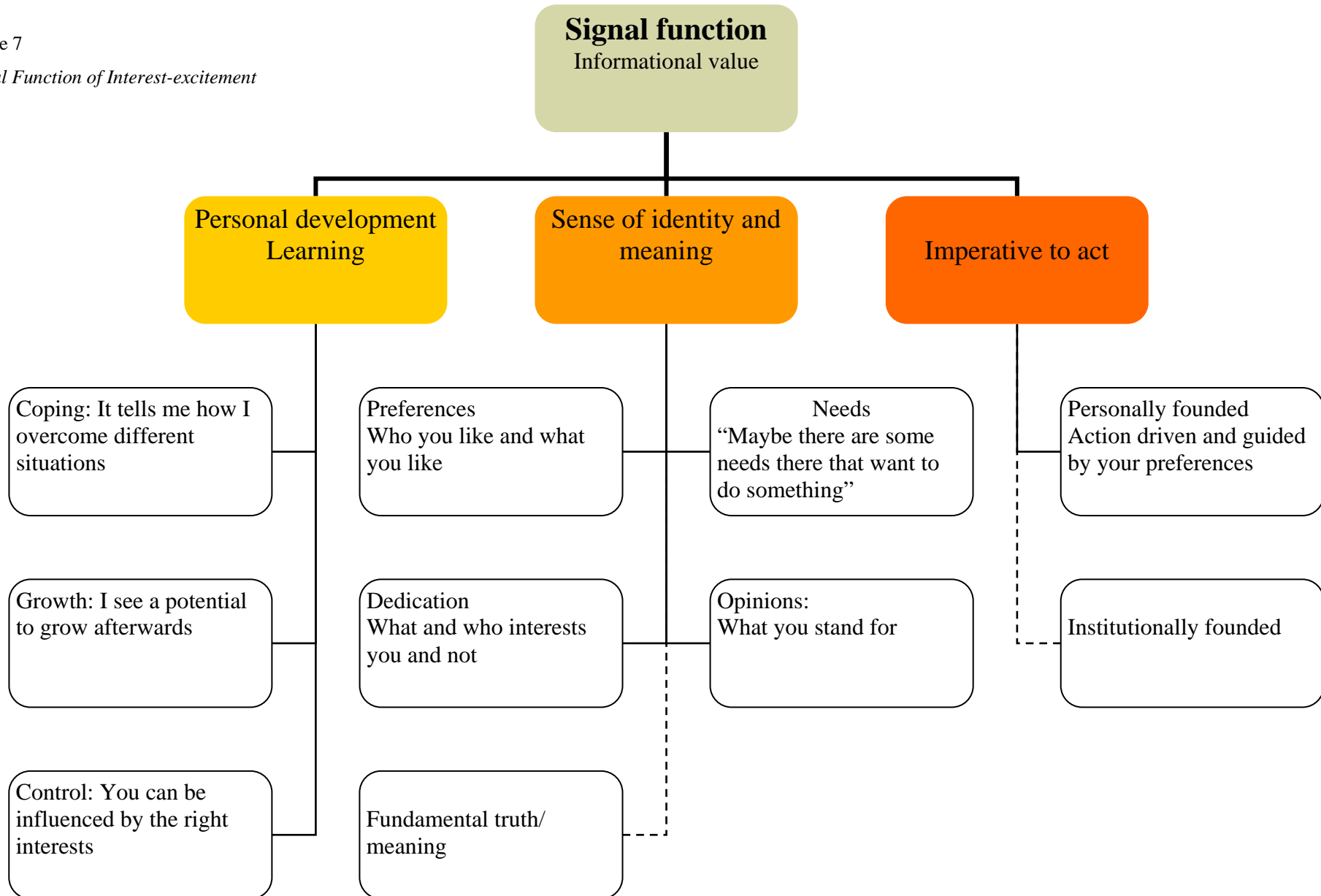
Expression of affect might be a central part of emotion itself, as some claim that it even *is* at the core of the affect (i.e. Tomkins, 1962, 2008). The ACI distinguishes emotional from conceptual expressiveness. Again, the analysis was completed as has been described above.

#### ***Emotional or nonverbal expressiveness***

The analysis showed that the respondents claimed that they quite openly can *show* signs of interest-excitement to others, especially in a private sphere, but also in a more social setting. In general, their degree of avowal is relatively high, i.e. expressions of interest-excitement are openly acknowledged. Still, there were inhibiting factors present, for example the nature of the topic or object of interest-excitement. Also, parents, colleagues, strangers, and other people’s opinions seemed to be factors that could decrease the degree of avowal.

Figure 7

Signal Function of Interest-excitement



The typical way to express interest-excitement seemed to be through what was called expanding expressive behaviours. This was shown through enthusiasm; both bodily and vocally, adapted emotionality, and including social behaviour. On the other hand, findings also showed that expressions might be more contractive. A sense of being the only one feeling interested-excited could inhibit the participants' expression of affect; so could Jante's law, strangers, work situation, parents, and a very high intensity of the affect, fear of failure if trying and personal topics. These two opposites might constitute a dimensional continuum and refer to how it appears that participants in this study cope with affect: through expanding or contracting behaviour. Furthermore, the obvious similarities between coping and emotional expressiveness may suggest they are both part of a whole emotion experience, a script.

Respondent 11 summarized many of these aspects when saying: "something that really absorb me, then I can show it quite strongly, if I am excited about something then I am not afraid of showing it, though it depends on who you are discussing with, if others agree or disagree, it's easier to show real enthusiasm and eagerness if I'm with someone I know very well, being on the same wavelength so to speak, feeling that they have the same interests as I do". Respondent 1 said he showed it like this: "I talk a lot, enlivened; enthusiasm, absolutely, my body language, and how I talk a lot, maybe I have to get it my way, there are some people with whom I have to act slightly different because they can't handle it, you can't be really straightforward with everyone.

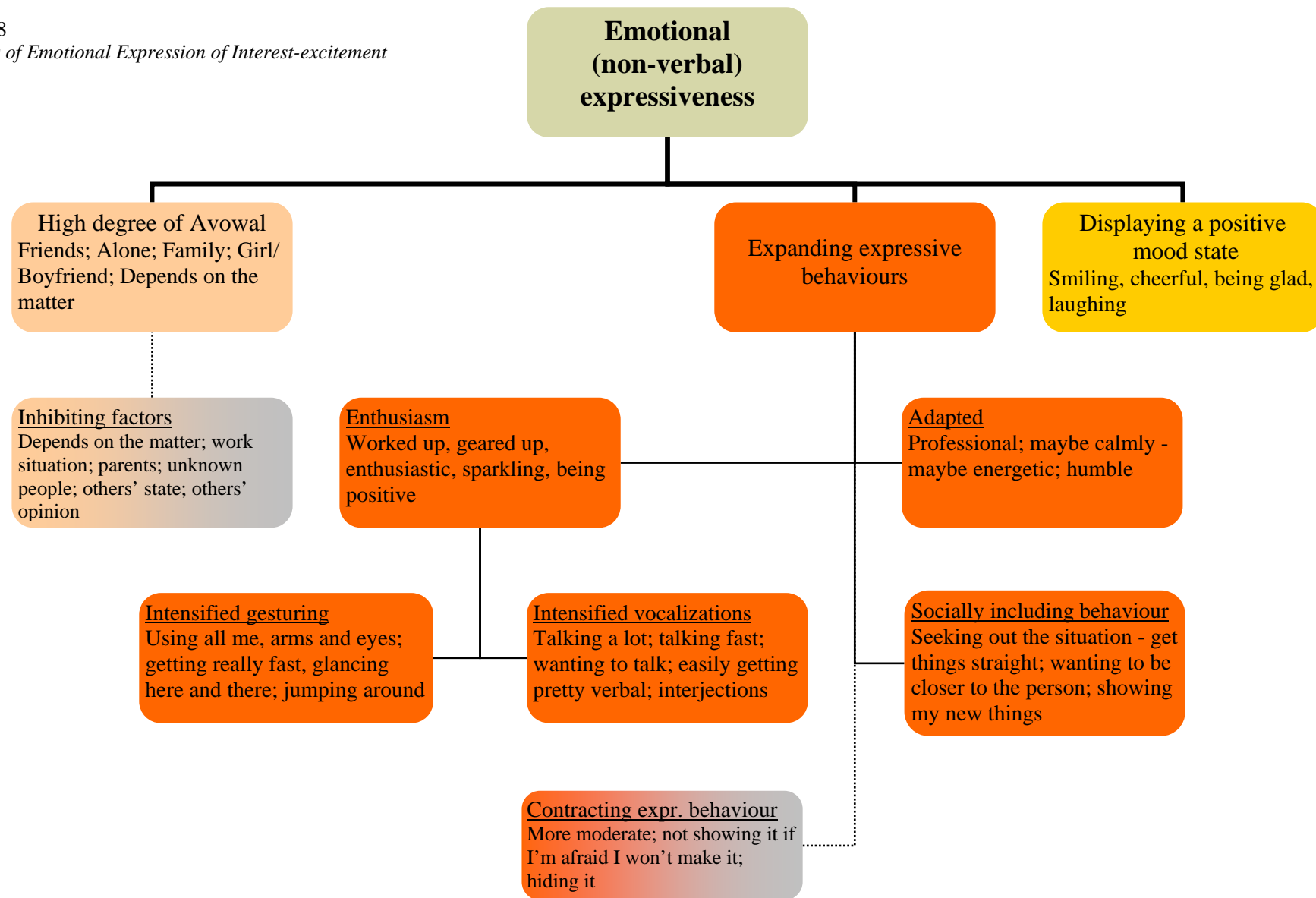
Besides, descriptions of the nonverbal behaviour seem to be characterized by displaying a positive mood state. The participants said that they smile, are cheerful, glad, and laughing, another possible association with joy-enjoyment.

The findings are summarized in figure 8 (see next page).

#### *Conceptual or verbal expressiveness*

The analysis showed that the respondents claim to be able to *speak* quite freely about their interest-excitement. As with emotional or nonverbal expressiveness, conceptual expressiveness was characterized by a relatively high degree of avowal and with similar inhibiting factors.

Figure 8  
Aspects of Emotional Expression of Interest-excitement



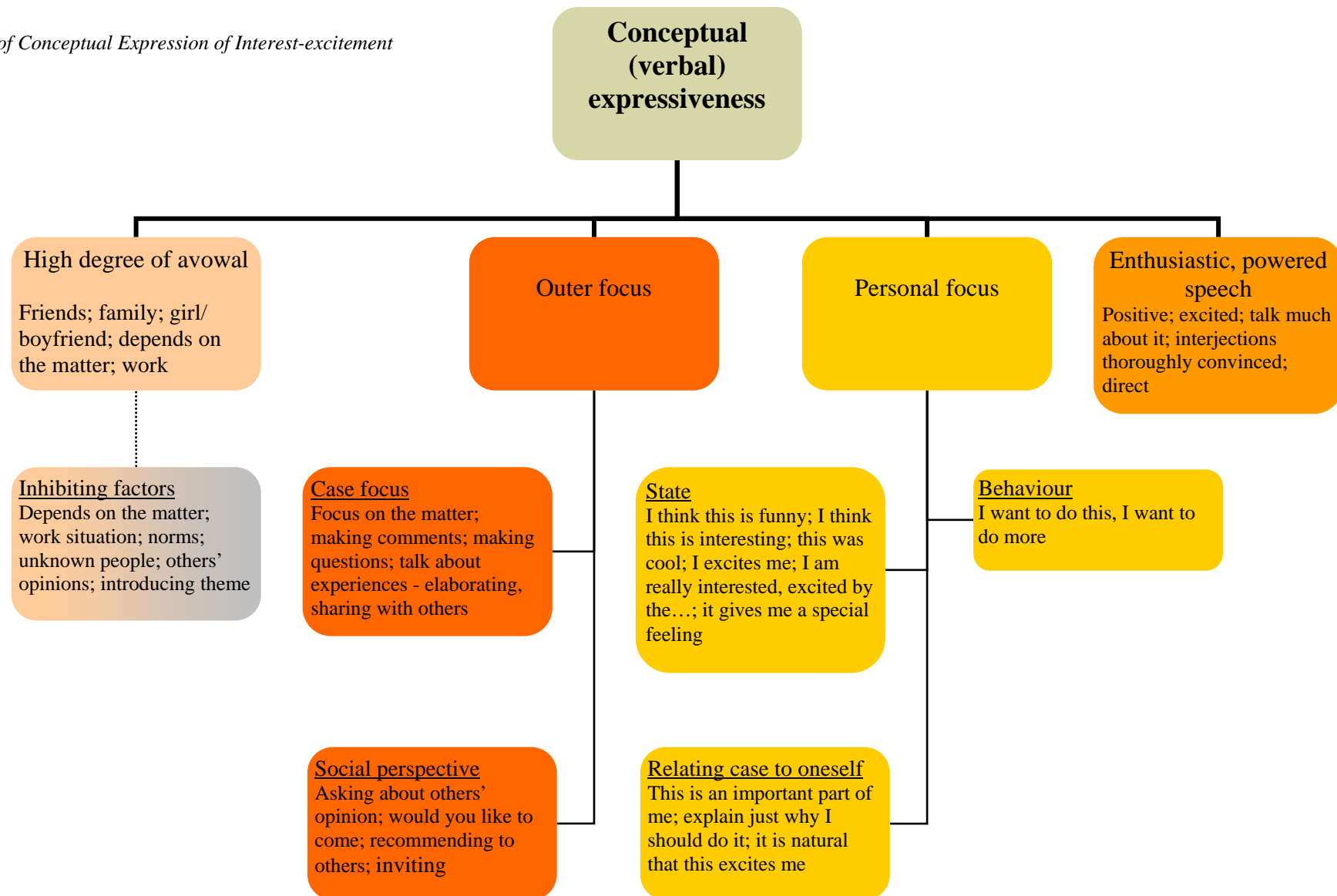
Furthermore, the way the participants said they talk when feeling interested-excited seemed to be characterized as enthusiastic, and powered. The respondents described themselves as positive, excited, direct, thoroughly convinced when they speak, talking much, using interjections etc.

Two different styles regarding focus seemed to appear: A personal or internal focus and an outer focus. Subjects referred to internal state with expressions like: “I think this is funny, interesting”, “It gives me a special feeling”, “I am excited by the...” and so on. Participants expressed desired behaviours: “I want to do this”, “I want to do it more”. Respondents could also explain why something made them interested-excited by relating it to themselves; I.e. “This is an important part of me”. The outer focus was presented by participants focusing on the topic; making comments, discussing, and through a social perspective; asking about others’ opinion, recommending, inviting, more than referring to the how they actually *feel*.

Respondent 2 said: “That’s not a problem, I like to talk about it, usually I do, well, always really, I don’t hide so much....., I talk a lot about it, maybe I make questions about the topic, I just chatter, just chatter, asking what they think: “is it just me that...?”, “how would you solve this”; if it was an activity: “would you like to join”, talking about it, quite simply, a lot”, exemplifying both the high degree of awoval and a social perspective. On the other hand, respondent 14 added other aspects: “Usually, I say it straight out, “I like it” or “It makes me excited”, “I would like to do it more”, or by saying: “well, I find this interesting”, maybe I say it in a keen way, enlivened and geared up”, expressing clearly how she *feels*, and also describing *how* she talks emphasize that when interested-excited she might talk more enthusiastically.

A *high* degree of awoval might be the natural, evolved characteristic of interest-excitement. Through the impact of having more energy, and the enthusiastic ways of expressing, not expressing appears un-natural; maybe even a process that can cause the appearance of negative affects. In the folklore this might be described in the proverb: “It is better to regret something you have done (expanding behaviour), than something you haven’t done (contractive). Still, Tomkins (1962) suggests that pseudo- or backed up emotional expressions, prescribed by the culture’s non-acceptance of pure emotional expressions, eventually cause psychopathology. The findings are summarized in figure 9 (see next page).

Figure 9  
Aspects of Conceptual Expression of Interest-excitement



## Discussion

Zajonc and McIntosh (1992) ask “What is it that we feel when we feel happy, sad, or disgusted?” (p. 70) and replied that it is changes in brain blood temperature (in the hypothalamus) caused by facial action. The present paper favours the view that this is not what we *feel*, but underlying factors. To understand what we feel, the experience of emotions, it is important to distinguish the *exact content* of the experience from *what underlies it*. The hypothalamus and its functions might be of interest, but cannot answer the question: “What is it that we feel when we feel interested-excited, or happy, sad, angry etc. for that matter. LeDoux, as quoted in the introduction, exemplifies a clearly negative attitude towards this subjective aspect of emotions, indicating that a negative mind-set toward subjective experience of emotion still is present in scientific circles, a clearly deliberate standpoint taken by some, and maybe more un-reflectively by others. Lambie and Marcel (2002) claim: “..., emotion experience is of legitimate interest in its own right and is important to people: Study of it needs no functionalist justification” (p.219). Emotions make things matter. As one respondent in the present study said the experience of interest-excitement can be very clear: “The sensation is very easy to notice..... feeling interested or not”.

The primary goal of the present study has been to describe central aspects of the phenomenology of interest-excitement. Since the broad approach to the study of phenomenology adopted in this study yield a large amount of data, a summary of the results are presented in *Concluding remarks*. First, the findings in the present study will be related to previous findings.

### *Relating findings from the present study to previous findings*

The present study confirms findings from previous studies. Some examples follow. The results of this study describe interest-excitement in similar manners to the positive affect x negative affect-model and the pleasure x arousal-model (Feldman-Barret & Russel, 1999). Interest-excitement is a positive affect. Concerning the pleasure x arousal-model it seems that the experience of interest-excitement, one way or another, always is somewhat pleasant. On the other hand, interest-excitement doesn't necessarily have to be associated with high arousal. The high arousal may more correctly reflect excitement than interest, so that these terms, as hypothesized, may represent different intensities of the same underlying affect.



Remember that Izard (1977) demonstrates that when people feel mainly interested they also feel joy and surprise. Particularly, this study confirms the relation between interest-excitement and joy, maybe both because of the pleasant experience of the affect itself, and because it may lead to the affect joy. As in Izard's studies (1977), the experience of interest-excitement included negative emotions, for example fear as exemplified by both awareness cues (tension, anxious), impact (a little anxious or nervous) and coping (contractive behaviour). Izard (1977) also shows that interest is related to experience of high pleasantness, feeling self-assured, impulsive and tense. In the present study interest-excitement appeared most often to be *pleasant*. "Even if it's intense, it's not unpleasant", one respondent said. Being *self-assured* is shown e.g. by being convinced when speaking and feeling a self-confidence boost. *Impulsivity* may be shown in high readiness for action. One respondent said he sometimes have problems holding back. Finally *Tension* is exemplified in both thought and behaviour. One respondent said he could get almost angry if frustrated during problem solving. Another said he simply felt a little on the edge.

Absorption has been claimed to be an aspect of interest-excitement. Total engrossment in an activity or in one's perceptual world (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) reduces or removes second-order awareness, such that in the extreme one is in an almost trance-like state of immersion and non-observation. This is in concordance with statements in this study mentioning loosing sense of time and an ability to block out other things.

Gross (2002) focuses on three aspects of emotion regulation. The first aspect is that individuals increase, maintain, and decrease negative and positive emotions (Parrott, 1993). This study show results that appear similar, called expanding and contracting behaviour, which implicates both positive and negative feeling nuances, enjoyment and nervousness: "I enjoy it" and "you just have to handle it, push yourself through it". Gross (2002) also distinguished between conscious and unconscious emotion regulation. This study presents examples of emotion regulation that might implicate different levels of consciousness. "I simply forget it" seems to be an example of an unconscious phenomenon. On the other hand, the respondent who said he starts thinking a lot about what and where, and possible outcomes – trying to control and predict, seems like a much more conscious way to regulate emotion. Still, conscious emotion regulation might include unconscious elements, and vice versa. If you feel less because you don't act the way the situation and feeling "prescribes" (James,

1890/1981) (an example of contractive behaviour), maybe you find that situation less interesting-exciting and you might therefore “simply forget it”.

The present study indicates that the phenomenological experience of elicitors and vocal expressions of interest-excitement neatly mirrors previous findings in the field utilizing different methodological approaches (Izard, 1977; 1991; Kaplan, 1992; Berlyne, 1960; 1971; Scherer, 1986). Regarding categories of eliciting events, the higher degree of specificity of the categories in this study may say more about what elicits interest-excitement than previous categorizations. Based on Scherer's (1986) classification of acoustical dimensions in emotions interested-excited speech might be characterised as moderately varied in amplitude, extremely varied in pitch, having a up-and-down pitch contour and high tempo, rhythmic in a tonal-major tone. This fits well with respondents saying that they may speak fast and loud, in an enlivened way.

### ***Findings that appear new or add nuances to previous findings***

*Surprise appears to be less strongly linked to interest-excitement in this study.* Izard (1977) shows that surprise was clearly present in the emotional experience of an interesting situation. Feeling surprised appears to less present in this study, though. This finding might be the one that differs most from the Bartlett-Izard study (Izard, 1977). How to understand it, on the other hand, is an open question. It could be that the element of surprise would have been greater with a higher number of young participants. The participant that most clearly mentioned surprise was 24 years old. Maybe we stop being surprised when we grow older. Surprise might be associated with a momentary loss of control of directed behaviour, a kind of fascination (Tomkins, 1962, 2008) or an ability and openness to new experience which may decrease with age. An adult, settled life situation, or university studies might impose other demands on the individual, more build than broaden so to speak (Fredrickson, 2001). Biologically it might be that the evolutionary clock guides interest-excitement towards broadening experiences earlier in life. When building becomes the most important this might also explain the close relation that appears to be between interest-excitement and joy. Reaching goals is enjoyable (Izard, 1977, 1991), both because it is a cultural value and because it enhances feelings of self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954).

Another potential explanation for this discrepancy may be the differences in methodological approach. In the Bartlett-Izard study participants were instructed to recall and imagine a situation in which they had been interested or excited and then asked to complete the Discrete Emotion Scale (DES) describing that situation on three Likert-scale type items thought to be relevant for each of a number of affective states. The three items or adjectives describing interest-excitement are attentive, concentrating and alert, while surprise is described by the adjectives surprised, amazed and astonished. The prescription by the self-report measure might then prompt the participant to describe the interest-excitement experience as surprising even though this would not have been spontaneously offered in a more open interview situation. Also there is the possibility that surprising situations are almost inevitably interesting, while on the other hand interesting-exciting situations not necessarily are surprising, thus a possible spurious association might be produced by those respondents who recall surprising and interesting situations when completing the DES. This matter cannot be resolved here, but importantly when not prompted to refer to surprise by the structure of the measure used, it seems respondents to a far lesser extent associate interest-excitement and surprise.

*Interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy – evidence for conceptual differentiation?*

Some researchers (de Rivera, Possell, Verette, & Weiner, 1989; Ellsworth & Smith, 1988b) suggest that positive emotions are less differentiated than negative emotions and seem to have no unique facial expressions, all sharing the so-called Duchenne smile (Ekman, 1992). Smiling is also a way participants in this study say they express interest-excitement, and the data indicate that the experience of interest-excitement is associated with enjoyment.

Even though participants mention smiling as an expression interest-excitement, on the other hand, another nonverbal expression of interest-excitement is also stated as seen in e.g.: “I’m raising myself in the seat, kind of staring a little; gazing here and there”. A question is if smiling is an expression of enjoyment, rather than interest-excitement, considering the tight relationship between the two emotions. Another view is that smiling, as a prosocial behaviour, is an adaptive expression of interest-excitement since this affect is associated with more person-environment interaction (Izard, 1977). Remembering Tomkins’ (1962, 2008) suggestion that interest-excitement has dual phases, fascination and familiarization, the different expressions of interest-excitement may be related to this duality.

*Interaction between interest-excitement and shame.* Izard (1977, 1991) discusses the interaction between interest and joy and interest and fear (See also Introduction). Not only does the present study confirm Izards' view on interactions, it also describes what appears to be an interaction between interest-excitement and shame. Statements related to impact, coping, and signal function and expressiveness of affect may exemplify this interaction (See Results). These findings are in concordance with Tomkins (2008) postulation that innate emotional vocalizations are inhibited. Pseudo- or backed-up emotional expressions are expressed instead. The findings in this study may imply that this inhibition not only affects vocalization, but also bodily behaviour.

*A tendency to mention hedonic tone more than previously found.* Hedonic tone typically appears in dimensional accounts (e.g., Block, 1957; Davitz, 1969; Russell, 1980) and sometimes in component ones (Frijda, 1986). Still, many other accounts simply fail to mention it as a feature of emotion experience (e.g., James, 1890/1981; Mandler, 1984; Schachter & Singer, 1962). In diary studies, very few respondents spontaneously mention it. On the other hand, if one asks explicitly, almost everyone will agree that hedonic tone is a pervasive feature of emotion experience (Lambie and Marcel, 2002). Therefore, Lambie and Marcel (2002) suggest that "hedonic tone is sometimes assumed to be too obvious to report or to be an entailed property of the emotion that is being reported or that the assumed task demand is to report only substantive or discrete objects of experience" (pp. 226). This study does not confirm this tendency. Rather the opposite is the reality. The participants in this study tend to spontaneously mention a hedonic tone, mainly a pleasant tone, though having anxious nuances. This favours the view that ACI is suitable for studying the subjective experience as differences have been brought forth, and that valence, hedonic tone, is a central emotional dimension. Another factor that might explain this difference is personality differences in introversion and extraversion between studies and the affects studied. Different affects are associated with different focuses.

*Similarities between awareness of and impact of interest-excitement.* The findings in the present study indicate that there are similarities between how participants become aware being interested-excited and how this influences them. On the other hand, there are also differences as awareness cues are more specific than impacts. It may indicate that it is normal to rely partly on both awareness cues and the impact of the affect to recognize it.

*Non-analyzable qualia or distinguishable nuances.* Some argue that pleasantness is nothing but bright pressure in the chest and unpleasantness dull pressure in the abdomen (Koch, 1913; Nafe, 1924, in Frijda, 1986). Although the findings of this study show that pleasantness *is* experienced bodily, the experience seems both to be something else and more differentiated. The pleasant sensation is associated with additional body parts, maybe a bodily feeling associated with the whole of the body as well. The pleasantness is also experienced on a mental level. It might be argued that the mental life and the body experience cannot be separated. Anyway, it appears that pleasantness *is* more than a bright pressure in the chest.

### ***Dimensional understanding of interest-excitement***

The dimensional approach is obviously important to understand the phenomenon of emotions more analytically and it is central in emotion research. Most often three dimensions are included; activation, valence, and potency (Fontaine, Scherer, Roesch, and Ellsworth, 2007).

Data show emotional nuances of different intensities and qualities. Therefore, interest and excitement as emotions can be understood as different intensities along the same, or at least along closely situated dimensions. This view is in accordance with Tomkins view (1962, 2008). Interest weakens distress in infants (Ellsworth, 2003). Statements about concentration, contentment, and “a strange calmness comes over me” may indicate a decrease in activation in a modal state (Izard, 1977, 1991, 2007) and be close to Csikszentmihalyi’s flow (2000). On the other side, there might be high activation and pleasantness: “you can also go bonkers, just running around being happy, looking forward to...” Interest-excitement’s relation to a pleasant feeling state is without doubt present. Yet, anxiousness and tension is also associated with the emotion, complementing the understanding of interest-excitement along the dimensions activation and valence. The emotional dimension *potency* may be referred to in this study by statements like “self-confidence boost” and “working hard”.

Interest and excitement might be more different on activation than on positive valence, even though the higher activation in excitement may intensify the experience of pleasantness. Another way to understand it is that during a feeling of interest the pleasant tone might be shadowed by high concentration, absorption or flow, motivation, urges to act etc. This might also be an explanation why interest has been understood as an intellectual emotion or a non-

emotional state. A future study that distinguishes between interest and excitement explicitly may shed new light and modify this understanding.

Fontaine, Scherer, Roesch, and Ellsworth (2007) claim that the potency – control dimension is of particular interest for emotion research. Its meaning is not limited to social and interpersonal experiences of dominance and submissiveness, as has been suggested in the past (e.g., Russell, 1991). It is also characterized by specific vocal response characteristics and action tendencies, such as wanting to take initiative versus being apathetic. Low potency-control is particularly relevant for emotion researchers who are interested in the biological underpinnings of emotions, as this dimension also captures parasympathetic forms of activation, such as weak limbs and gastrointestinal symptoms. This can explain how interest-excitement might energize and tranquilize. Furthermore, the phenomenology of interest-excitement in the present study also captures i.e. expressive and behavioural aspects referring to Fontaine, Scherer, Roesch, and Ellsworth's (2007) way of understanding potency.

Fontaine, Scherer, Roesch, and Ellsworth (2007) introduce a fourth dimension of emotion, unpredictability, closely related to surprise by suggesting that surprise “may in fact refer to a particular quality or dimension of emotional experience based on appraisal of novelty and unexpectedness” (p. 1054). Unpredictability has not emerged in most previous general studies of the dimensions of emotion. Yet, uncertainty is an important dimension in many appraisal theories (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003), and unexpectedness in the form of interruption was central to Mandler's (1975) model. It might be that uncertainty is more a consequence of (idiosyncratic) cognitive processes rather than an underlying dimension and a characteristic of the (basic) affect, or something different from emotion. Anyway, there appears to be differences related to the concept of surprise both in the findings in this study, Izard (1977) and Fontaine, Scherer, Roesch, and Ellsworth (2007) which imply that taking these questions further ought to be done to clarify the picture.

#### *Considering and assessing the suitability of the theoretical and methodological approach*

*Theoretical approach – generating unanticipated insights?* This broad approach to the phenomenology of emotion connects the emotion to the world – experience and behaviours. Tomkins (1962, 2008) suggests that emotion has fusion power, connecting events together as a whole. His suggestion may receive some support from findings in the present study: E. g.

the statement describing an eliciting event: “something that I’m involved in” may be in line with the mental awareness cue enthusiasm; the impact more energy; trying to find out more when coping; the signal function that this is something one has/wants to do; and emotional expressions like gesticulation and clear and direct oral expression. This may be a coherent expression of the affect from the beginning to the end of the scene. It is like enthusiasm is present in all parts. The data also show hedonic associations when talking about the different parts in the ACI. One might wonder if these emotional “threads” are examples of the fusion power, not only connecting events, but also the different aspects of emotion experience.

*Methodological approach.* Usual methods for studying affect/emotions include word association lists, rating scales, physiological measures, video studies of facial movement, voice-studies of emotional language and so on. Interview methods have hardly been used. Furthermore, subjective experience is a generally agreed upon aspect of emotion. Yet, emotion research has not asked participants openly about *their* experience of emotions. The methods have rather most commonly consisted of grading theoretically derived lists of words for estimation of some kind of emotional aspect/dimension. Thus, research has commonly defined experience by theoretical means rather than opening up for the more idiosyncratic or individualized interpretations of people in the world, maybe forcing participants to focus on aspects they otherwise would not have given attention. In this respect the present study attempts a more open approach, emphasizing the respondents’ highly individual experience of emotion.

*The affect-consciousness interview – generating unanticipated insights?* The way the ACI is designed with its open questions might let subjectivity in emotional experience appear more clearly. Hopefully, what has been explored in this study really is the emotion the way it is experienced by the individual. Another factor that might contribute to subjectivity and validity is the interview-situation itself. The face to-face, in-the-moment setting, might yield more impulsive, and therefore more personal, and valid responses than for example word check lists, or especially diaries, where the time elapsing from an emotion episode to the time of writing often is long and peoples’ answers therefore might be shaped by more extended reflection. Compared to these methods, it is possible that the interview to a higher degree gets hold of what appears first in the participant’s consciousness. What appears first might also be closer to how the emotion is experienced, and probably more subjective than responses given after much thinking and remembering.

The results show that, although given the same questions, the participants' answers seem to uncover individual differences in emotion experience. Some responses refer more to an internal aspect than other responses that seem to have an external reference. The following two statements of Scenes/Eliciting events exemplify this possible difference: "Something that I'm involved in" (internal) vs. "reading a nice poem" (external). The internal statement refers more to an experience, whereas the external statement refers more to behaviour. On *Awareness*, respondent 1 refers very much to energy and excitement, both experientially and behaviourally: "I get enlivened probably, getting energy I think, start talking a lot". On the other side, respondent 19 refers mainly to pleasant awareness cues, both mentally and bodily: "simply a good, positive, nice feeling bodily, good feelings, a little like a happy feeling, curios, eager, joy".

On *Tolerance* participants in this study describe different impacts of interest-excitement. Respondent 12 says, referring to a cognitive aspect: "want to immerse myself, get more alert, more concentrated" whereas another respondent focused on energy: "It really has a lot to do with energy, I have more vigour, I am able to keep on going". On *Coping* respondent 16 refers to an expanding way of coping whereas respondent 17 is more focused on a constructive way of coping. On *Signal function* respondent 18 focuses on a negative side of interest-excitement: "if you get too eager then maybe you can't stay focused on other things, things that you maybe should have thought about". Respondent 14 says that this affect tells her something completely different: "Tells me that this is something I like, that it excites me and maybe that I should continue doing it, make something out of it".

On *Expressiveness* respondent 19 focuses on behaviour, inner experience and appearance: "seeking out the situation, getting things straight, talking about it, you can see it on my eyes, maybe I am calm, maybe peppy". This respondent also differentiates between different intensities (peppy-calm). Respondent 3 is much less detailed about how she expresses interest-excitement: "an eager feeling inside". Respondent 12 describes talking to others when feeling interested-excited like this: "I guess I focus most on the topic, describing it positively of course". Whereas respondent 14 seems to have a more internal directed focus: "I usually say it straight out: "this is something I like; it excites me; I want to do it more; I think this is interesting", maybe I say it in an eager and enlivened way".



These examples clearly show that the participants focus on different aspects when describing their emotion experience. These differences may mirror differences in the real emotion experience as well. It indicates that the ACI, and other open or semi-open interviews, in addition to generating insights into the prototypical aspects of the experience of emotions, might yield findings that add important knowledge about the idiosyncratic elements of emotional experience.

### ***Thoughts regarding limitations of the study***

*Thematic analysis, bottom up, and language – different challenges.* Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is a qualitative method that is flexible, easily and quickly learned and done, and accessible even for researchers with little or no experience with qualitative research. The experience of the present analysis process can not completely confirm this argument. Thematic analysis also challenges the researchers. What are really the patterns present in the data? The flexibility may be hard to deal with as well. Having a bottom-up perspective makes it unclear what to look for. In this study there were large quantities of data to have in consideration which of course makes the thematic analysis and bottom-up perspective more challenging.

The bottom-up perspective is also difficult to maintain perfectly. Prior knowledge is continuously affecting cognition in certain directions, maybe leading the researcher to see things that fits. It may be more realistic to use the bottom-up perspective as a view that the researcher should strive to keep as much as possible. Human language itself, as a system, may impose certain top-down qualities to the understanding of data. Certain emotion words have certain connotations and relative place in language compared to other emotions words. Even if language may systemize the bottom-up perspective, it is important to remember that without any system organizing data, then what is there to find?

The use of credibility checks (Elliot, Fischer, and Rennie, 1999), for example by an auditor controlling the research process, as was used in this study, is a means to control that the research and analysis is not too extensively coloured by the idiosyncrasies of the researcher doing the principal data-analysis. However, one can never be certain that other researchers regarding the same data would not come up with other categories than those identified in the present study.

*Conceptualization, schematizing effects, and introspection.* One trouble with interviewing people about their experience emotion is that we cannot be sure if what they *tell* us is exactly how they *experience* it. Emotions may be clear experientially, but vague when spoken of. Still, as researchers, it is the closest we can get. The retrospection is another possible factor of uncertainty. Memories fade. Another problem is that the participants' report of emotion experiences may not truly reflect the experiences themselves but may be due primarily to schematizing effects. For example, Rimé, Philippot, and Cisamolo (1990) argue that reports of bodily awareness in emotion merely reflect social schemata, such that if a culture has a folk psychological stereotype that people are "hot" with anger or "cold" with fear, then they will retrospectively report feeling hot with anger regardless of whether they actually felt hot at the time of the experience.

There are many (philosophical) critics to the introspective approach to studying emotional experience (Brentano, 1874, Köhler, 1929, Sartre, 1948). Reflexivity transforms awareness and the creation of subjectivity. The "me" who does the becoming aware becomes part of the awareness, rather than just being its condition. Another major consequence of introspection is loss of the relation between subject and object. The intentional relationship between an emotion and the world is lost when for example anger is described as unpleasant plus high activation.

The presence of an interviewer might interfere with or make the retrieval process of memory more difficult. On the other hand, maybe the one-to-one setting, if experienced as safe and personal, can give participants in psychological studies a sense of being important and cared for and be more genuine in their statements.

*Social desirability – a confounding factor particularly present in interviews?* A general problem in all research is social desirability. Of course, this problem might be very present in a social situation like an interview. For example, none of the respondents in the present study said sex was interesting or exciting. The response that most closely touched this theme was "nice ladies". This might be social desirability or it might be that sex isn't typically experienced as an elicitor of interest-excitement or the participants distinguish sex from other interesting-exciting things. Sex might not have the inner characteristics that we found typical of eliciting events, on the other hand it is reasonable to assume that sex would be classified as interesting and exciting if we asked respondents more directly. Still, even if

there might be a certain bias in the way the respondent answered, there are also examples that can be considered as characterized by a high degree of openness. One respondent said answering what might make her interested or excited: “Someone that started fighting the other day”. This does not appear to be a socially desirable answer like “poetry”, “art” etc. might be.

*Emotions and memory – the role of suppression and salience.* In the study of emotions problems might be caused by the emotional memories themselves. Intense memories might take a disproportionate big place in memory making it difficult to retrieve more modest memories, or they may be totally unconscious, too hard to deal with consciously. On the other hand, emotional memories might also be easier to remember as they are more personally relevant than neutral memories maybe leading to genuine and rich recollections.

*Problems with the sample, recruited participants not showing up for the interview.* A problematic factor in this study is related to recruitment and participants. First of all, it turned out to be difficult to recruit strangers in the street. Very many were asked, in different ways, and of these only two showed up in the end. Hence, parts of the data are based on acquaintances’ interviews and there is a considerable part of strangers who participated in this study after recruitment done by the same acquaintances. Of course, this might mean that the participants in this study are more similar than they would have been otherwise. Also, one weakness in the selection of participants might be education level as this appears to be from mainly middle to high.

Six strangers never met for the arranged interview. Are the participants in this study different from them? This might be the case. Sensitizers, so called high-anxious subjects (Asendorff & Scherer, 1983) might amount to a great part of the recruited participants that never met to the interview since they tend to exaggerate the potential threat in a situation. If this is the case the sample may consist of so called repressors. Asendorff & Scherer (1983) offered scientific grounds for the classic distinction between repressor and sensitizer styles of emotional responding. Repressors exhibit low self-reported emotionality, but high indices of physiological and expressive changes. Sensitizers are more consistent, reporting high emotionality combined with high physiological and expressive reactivity. This might question to what extent the results of this study can be generalized. On the other hand, sensitizers may also take special pains to expose themselves to experienced threats: The youngest female participant said after the interview that she tries to do things (the interview) even if it feels a

little scary. Personality traits are not taken into consideration in this study. Introverts for example pay more attention to the inner experience. Then, a group of participants with an introverted bias may colour results with a dominantly inner quality.

*Cultural differences – individualism, emotionality.* In cultures coloured by different values, for example fellowship contra individualism, and cultures with a higher acceptance of emotional expression, the phenomenology of interest-excitement might look different. *Opportunities for communion* may be an even more common antecedent of interest-excitement in collectivistic cultures than what was found in this study, maybe shadowing the role of the more personally focused. Likewise, *Opportunities for development* could be culturally sensitive as well. The common belief about the southern Europeans as more emotional than northern Europeans does not seem to hold in this study. Even if this question was not studied extensively, and just two Spaniards participated in the study, their profiles seemed not to be strikingly different. Then again, for interest-excitement the phenomenology may be similar for southern and northern Europeans, while the phenomenology of other affects, for example anger, might be more different.

#### ***Can the findings in the present study be generalized?***

Lack of possibility for generalization of findings is one common problem related to qualitative research. The non-clinical, varied, balanced, and relatively large sample of participants, and the thorough approach the ACI offers, favours the view that the results of this study may have some general application value to the phenomenology of interest-excitement among the normally functioning part of the population. Nevertheless, replication of the present analysis with data gathered from other samples would be a useful supplement in a discussion of the general applicability of these findings.

#### ***Contribution to knowledge***

On the basic level of research this study adds knowledge to the phenomenological understanding of maybe the most basic emotion there is – interest-excitement. Through interviewing, a different method than usually adopted, the results replicate and confirm a number of previous findings from a more personalized, subjective perspective, as the respondents independently decided what constituted the emotional experience when

answering the questions, without relying on derived word lists e.g. Knowledge about this emotion from such a perspective is extremely scarce.

In clinical work knowing what is normal can serve as a comparison point for psychopathology. The AC-construct understands psychological problems in the light of maladaptive emotional scripts, involving both positive and negative emotions. For clinicians favouring emotion theories, and especially the AC-model, this study may be useful; i.e. knowing what is the functional, adaptive phenomenology of interest-excitement may also be a way to evaluate the degree of psychological dysfunction and a way to guide therapy. By its non-clinical sample of respondents this study contributes to the description of the functional, adaptive of interest-excitement. Interest-excitement has positive influence on personal development and social bonding. It can make it easier for therapists to evaluate patients' progression, and likelihood of being able to function in work, maintain relations with friends and establish a love relationship and eventually a family; shortly; deal with task of life adaptively and maybe also enjoy life more i.e. This also suggests that further studies, on the other affects in the ACI, will be of use.

### **Concluding remarks**

The primary goal of this study has been to present a picture of the phenomenology of interest-excitement in a healthy, non-clinical sample from a broad theoretical perspective. The author believes that through this point of view it has been possible to present a multi-faceted picture of interest-excitement that approximates, as far as possible within a unified theoretical frame, the totality of the experience of emotion and connects it to the world through behaviours and expression. The study has presented what might be typical experiential reports of elicitors, 2) awareness cues, 3) impacts, 4) ways to cope with, 5) informational value and 4) non-verbal and conceptual expressions of interest-excitement in this particular sample.

The phenomenological experience of elicitors of interest-excitement appear to include categories named opportunities for development and communion, novelty/change, aesthetics, the unexpected/extraordinary and objects of personal identification. Bodily awareness cues for interest-excitement include energy, alertness, pleasure, and tension. Mental awareness cues include curiosity, focus, impulse to act, joy and contentment, optimism, enthusiasm, and anxiousness. The subjective experience of the impacts of interest-excitement include having

more energy, feeling good and enlivened, and a little anxious, a sense of higher motivation, an ability to work hard and explore, a sense of being goal-directed, focused, or even absorbed. Coping with interest-excitement appears to be characterized by two opposites – expanding and contracting behaviours. Expanding behaviour is associated with actions to increase knowledge, trying things, keep on doing things. On the other hand, contracting behaviour is associated with not trying things, not showing interest, or simply forgetting things. A third way to deal with interest-excitement appears to be a mental state associated with enjoying or appreciating the moment. The experience of the signal function, or informational value, of interest-excitement is associated with personal development, sense of identity and meaning, and an imperative to act. Emotional expressiveness is associated with high a relatively degree of avowal, expanding expressive behaviours: enthusiasm in gesturing and voice, and socially including and flexible expressive behaviours, and displaying a positive mood state. Conceptual expressiveness is also coloured by a relatively high degree of avowal, an outer or personal focus, and an enthusiastic, powerful speech. The experience of interest-excitement is also associated with certain vulnerabilities; e. g. impacts involving negative emotions such as fear and shame, suppressive coping behaviours, lack of expressiveness.

Readopting a more traditional and narrow understanding of the subjective experience of emotion, the subjective experience of interest-excitement can be very much by described like Izard (1977, See *Subjective experience – what it feels like to be interested-excited*) does, although adding the valence nuance “*Feeling good and enlivened, and a little anxious or tense*” might complement the description even more. Compared to Izard (1977), the association between surprise and interest-excitement appears less clear in this study. This study demonstrates a sample where hedonic tone is spontaneously mentioned as an experiential aspect, contrary to findings where study participants doesn’t mention this aspect (until asked specifically). Furthermore, it seems plausible to distinguish between interest and excitement as different intensities along the same dimensions.

The secondary goal of the present study has been to consider and assess whether interview methods in general and the affect consciousness interview in particular are suitable for exploring the subjective experience of emotion and whether such methods can enrich and replenish our knowledge of emotions. Based on the present findings and experiences with the analysis of interest-excitement, the author believes that the ACI and other open or semi-structured are highly suitable for the study of the experience of emotion and can enrich and

replenish our knowledge of emotions, as findings of this study both 1) confirm previous findings using other methods, 2) show individual differences in the experience of emotion and 3) question previous findings on for example surprise and hedonic tone. Even if there are problems related to interviewing people about the way *they* feel emotional experience, it may be a way to achieve knowledge about emotion experience more like the way it is really experienced.

*“In questions of science, the authority of a  
thousand is not worth the humble reasoning  
of a single individual.”*

Galileo Galilei

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix A.** *Phases in the thematic analysis*

The figure describes how the processes started with raw material from the AC-analysis of interest-excitement and subsequent colouring stages and control stages of the emerging themes.

### **Appendix B.** *Creating categories*

*Creating categories* is a synopsis of what constituted the themes and subsequent categories in the present study. Statements that led to the category are shown. The category itself is in bold letters.

## Appendix A. Phases in the thematic analysis

### 1) Raw material from AC-profiling

<i>Attention</i>	<i>Typicality</i>			
<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05 Excluded</b>
I get enlivened probably	Move more	Maybe it tickles a little	as if the soul frees itself a little inside the body	A little afraid to get too eager
Get energy I think	Get curious	probably get energy	want to seek out this again	Instead of going the walk completely, then maybe I back out
Start talking a lot	Want to do something about it	might get very curious, not completely acceptable	sense a kind of enthusiasm	
	Get goals	curious, keen curious		
	Find out more	Then my thought are turned upside down, I just have to find out this or that		
	very concentrated			

### 3) A more complete analysis

Attention	Typicality				
01	02	03	04	05 Excluded	2 <sup>nd</sup> order cat
I get enlivened probably	Moving more  Get curious	Maybe it tickles a little  probably get energy	as if the soul frees itself a little inside the body	A little afraid to get too eager	Enthusiasm
Get energy I think	Want to do something about it	might get very curious, not completely acceptable curious, keen curious	want to seek out this again	Instead of going the walk completely, then maybe I back out	Energy
Start talking a lot	Get goals  Find out more  very concentrated	Then my thought are turned upside down, I just have to find out this or that	sense a kind of enthusiasm		Impulse to act  Focus  Curiosity  Tension

2) Themes appear

Attention	Typicality				
<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05 Excluded</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> order category</b>
I get enlivened probably	Moving more	Maybe it tickles a little	as if the soul frees itself a little inside the body	A little afraid to get too eager	Enthusiasm
Get energy I think	Get curious	probably get energy			Energy
Start talking a lot	Want to do something about it	might get very curious, not completely acceptable curious, keen curious	want to seek out this again	Instead of going the walk completely, then maybe i back out	Impulse to act
	Get goals		sense a kind of enthusiasm		Focus
	Find out more				
	very concentrated	Then my thought are turned upside down, I just have to find out this or that			

#### 4) Overall stage 1-20

01	02	03	04	05
Attention	Typicality			contrast
get calveforned probably	Move more	Maybe it tickles a little	or it's not, and then I smell a little inside the body	A little afraid to get too eager
Get energy I think	Want to do something about it	probably get energy		Instead of going the walk
Start taking a lot	Get goals	might get it opposite, curious, not completely acceptable, curious, been curious	lost it to it opposite, <b>detest</b> <b>dislike</b>	then completely then maybe I back out
	Find out more		under an form for emma-laine	
	very concentrated			
		Then my thought are normal upside down, I just have to find out this or that		

06	07	08	09	10
I get quite sugar. I think	Suddenly I've spend 4 hours on a computer problem	You feel in the body the body farms	A lot of of energy	really excited. I can't my heart
Get enthusiastic	I couldn't fix	a little like awake, alert	glad get <i>interested</i> to	the happiness or course
Then I ask a couple of questions	I just can't put <i>it</i> away become (?)	the body automatically awakens, you get on your toes	to know more more	body temperature going up
		then a lot of thought crash into the mind.	very realities	<i>Feeling of happiness</i>
		pride, happiness, satisfaction, unhappiness		excitement and participation
		different themselves into		pleasures

Assessment				
11	12	13	14	15
I really rate myself in the seat	Well, I can get a little worried and concentrated	There's nothing A little nervous	nothing it might tingle a little in the stomach	Exercising probably few get cramps
kind of starting a little	One thinks very often you can get stronger	Oh, much good	getting energy, much more vigorous	Want to find out more
suddenly feel that you get an outlet	that concentration feeling that that you had earlier	think there's things can get even better	secure that there is something which I want to know	If it's a person want to talk and know to know
find it exciting			forward to try myself to find out if I can do it	

[illegible]

## Transcripts



**Appendix B. Creating categories****1/2**

<p><i>Scenes/Eliciting events</i></p> <p>”new things”  ”new people, really”  ”change”  ”when something new happens”  ”new experiences”  <b>→ Novelty/Change</b></p> <p>”if you end up in a dangerous situation”  ”somebody started fighting the other day”  ”people that look special or different”  ”a person that does something extraordinary”  ”superstitious things, and life after death, things you can’t know for sure”  <b>→ The extraordinary/ Unexpected</b></p> <p>”A situation that’s not apparently easy might make me interested in the challenge”  ”Challenges at work”  ”When I sense progress, for example physically”  ”Of course to learn new, theoretical things”  ”When things you have planned and worked for end up the way they are supposed to”  <b>→ Opportunities for personal development</b></p> <p>”in relation with my kid”  ”I’m interested in my friends, my family, people”</p>	<p>”when I meet family and friends”  ”to meet people that I haven’t seen in a long time again”  ”In the meeting with other people that gives me something”  <b>→ Opportunities for communion</b></p> <p>”Something in which I’m involved, health and dieting”  ”politics for example, I get really involved in certain issues”  ”some in sports and athletics”  ”a person that has come far in the field”  <b>→ Objects of personal identification</b></p> <p>”A person that is very beautiful”  ”good-looking women”  ”listening to nice music”  ”reading a nice poem”  ”going to the theatre”  ”if there is something I kind of like”  <b>→ Aesthetics</b></p> <hr/> <p><i>Awareness</i></p> <p>Get energy, much more vigour, move more, a lot of energy  <b>→ Energy</b></p> <p>Raise myself in the seat, kind of staring, get on your toes, hot forehead, you get a little like awake, the body automatically awakens  <b>→ Alertness</b></p>	<p>You smile, a good, positive, nice feeling bodily, pleasure  <b>→ Pleasure</b></p> <p>Just running around looking forward to, it might tingle a little in the stomach, maybe it tickles a little, the body fizzes  <b>→ Tension</b></p> <p><b>→&gt; Bodily cues</b></p> <p>Probably first get curious, very curious, want to find out more  <b>→ Curiosity</b></p> <p>Very concentrated, get goals, can block out other things  <b>→ Focus</b></p> <p>This really strong wanting to tell, have to take time for this, just have to find out, start talking a lot, chatter a lot  <b>→ Impulse/Drive to act</b></p> <p><b>→&gt; Cognitively awake, active</b></p> <p>Glad, feeling of happiness, joy, good mood  <b>→ Enjoyment</b></p> <p>(Mental) satisfaction, self-confidence boost  <b>→ Contentment</b></p> <p>Sense that I look forward to something, anticipation  <b>→ Anticipation</b></p>	<p>A little nervous, my nerves are a little on the edge  <b>→ Anxious</b></p> <p>Going bonkers, enlivened, enthusiastic  <b>→ Enthusiasm</b></p> <p><b>→&gt; A pleasant, enlivened &amp; tense valence tone</b></p> <p><b>→&gt; Mental cues</b></p> <p>I get really restless  <b>→ Energy - Anxious</b></p> <p>Might get a little sparkling  <b>→ Delight - Enthusiasm</b></p> <p>As if the soul frees itself a little inside the body  <b>→ Energy - Enthusiasm</b></p> <p>A strange calmness comes over me  <b>→ Alertness – Focus</b></p> <p><b>→&gt; Bodily/Mental cues</b></p> <hr/> <p><i>Tolerance - Impact</i></p> <p>I get energy from it, surely it gives me a little energy, it really has a lot to do with energy - much more vigour  <b>→ Having more energy</b></p> <p>It might drain you for power being so enthusiastic all the time  <b>→ Exhaustion</b></p>	<p>It might make you happy, I get more happy, I like a lot, a satisfaction, feeling of pleasure  Get a little hyped up, maybe I even jump up and down, , it arouses feelings in me, excited  <b>→ Feeling good and enlivened</b></p> <p>A little scared, nervousness, anxiousness  <b>→ and a little anxious or nervous</b></p> <p>.. afraid of saying something wrong; a lot of different thoughts running around in my head  <b>→ Fear</b></p> <p>Creates a motive power, with my child and working out, I just want to do more, maybe I see the movie several times, think positive of other things as well,  <b>→ Sense of higher motivation</b></p> <p>Thought becomes action, go-ahead spirit – you have to work this out  <b>→ An ability to work hard</b></p> <p>Want to learn something new, this explorer kind of thing - want to find out more, I want to try this, makes me think about something  <b>→ Exploration</b></p> <p>To excited..., then in a way I just take up space  <b>→ Shame</b></p>
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Continuing...

Creating categories				2/2
<p>It can make you sad with a girl you like and you don't get the feedback you want, you can get negative thoughts → <b>Sadness, anger, bitterness</b></p> <p>Do something to achieve something, make me priority in a certain way, then there is a point of focus → <b>Sense of being focused, goal-directed</b></p> <p>A little more control, systematic, more control, more concentrated, get more alert → <b>Increased concentration</b></p> <p>Want to work more with the thoughts, I don't think about anything else, loose concentration about everything else really → <b>Absorption</b></p> <p>Rumination, self-absorption Anger if frustrated Shame/guilt for being too egocentric → <b>Vulnerability</b></p>	<p>→ <b>Enjoying</b></p> <p>I pull back a little, then I curb myself a little, sometimes it just passes by, I don't think much more about it, I forget it, I can get to excited, then I have to restrain myself a little → <b>Contracting</b></p>	<p>can show you the way to a more profound truth, what you should spend your time on, what you ought to do → <b>Institutionally driven</b> → <b>Imperative to act</b></p>	<p>get easily pretty verbal, interjections → <b>Intensified vocal</b> Professional; maybe calmly - maybe energetic; more humble → <b>Adapted</b> Seek out the situation - get things straight; want to be closer to the person; show my new things; inviting → <b>Socially incl. behaviour</b></p>	<p>Focus on the topic; making comments; making questions; talk about experiences - elaborating, sharing with others → <b>Case focus</b></p> <p>Asking about others' opinion; would you like to come; recommending to others → <b>Social perspective</b> → <b>Outer focus</b></p> <p>I think this is funny; I think this is interesting; this was cool; I excites me; I am really interested, excited by the...; it gives me a special feeling → <b>Expressing state</b></p> <p>This is an important part of me; explain just why I should do it; it is natural that this excites me → <b>Relating case to oneself</b></p>
	<p><i>Tolerance – signal function</i></p>	<p><i>Emotional expressiveness</i></p> <p>Maybe I show it most when I'm alone, with friends, for this kind of feeling I don't make a huge difference between private and work, certain people you are close to, whom you can tell everything, with friends → <b>High degree of avowal</b></p>	<p>More moderate; don't show it if I'm afraid I won't make it; hide it → <b>Contracting behaviour</b></p>	
	<p>I see a potential to develop afterwards, you can learn something about yourself, you might be directed more by the right interests, I can learn from the experiences I make in situations, tells me how I cope with different situations → <b>Personal development</b></p>	<p>More moderate with parents, at work more professional, if I feel that I'm the only one who have a taste for it, depends what it is, if a girl doesn't seem interested, I don't just start talking about it → <b>Inhibiting factors</b></p>	<p>→ <b>Expressing expanding behaviour</b></p>	
	<p>Tells me what I like and what I don't like, who that interests me and who doesn't, maybe it says a little about what kind of guy he is, what you mean really, There might be some needs that want to do something → <b>Sense of identity and meaning</b> (Personality, topics, other persons, opinions, nature)</p>	<p>.. enthusiasm, absolutely; ...enlivened; surely burns a little; worked up; geared up; being positive; sparkling → <b>Enthusiastic style</b></p>	<p>Smiling, cheerful, being glad, laughing → <b>Displaying a good a mood state</b></p>	
<p><i>Tolerance - Coping</i></p>	<p>Indulge myself in, something that I have to get done or want/wishes to get done → <b>Personally driven</b> Might tell a person what is important in the world, maybe it</p>	<p>Use all me, arms and eyes; a lot with body language, get really fast, glancing here and there, jump around → <b>Intensified gesturing</b></p>	<p><i>Conceptual expressiveness</i></p>	<p>I want to do this, I want to it do more → <b>Expressing behavioural wish</b> → <b>Personal focus</b></p>
<p>I try to find out more, I take action, I keep on doing what excites me, I'll try it, one thing is to explore it → <b>Expanding</b></p> <p>I am enjoying the present moment, I really appreciate it</p>		<p>I talk a lot; talk fast; want to talk,</p>	<p>I tell others as fast as possible; persons you are close to; that's easy; [work] trying to be neutral, but at the same time I'm not hiding my interest → <b>High degree of avowal</b></p>	
			<p>Depends on the topic; work situation; norms; unknown people; others' opinions; introducing theme → <b>Inhibiting factors</b></p>	<p>Positive; excited; talk much about it; interjections thoroughly convinced; direct → <b>Enthusiastic, powered speech</b></p>