

TEAM COHESION
BUFFERS AGAINST THREAT,
BUT DO ALL MEMBERS BENEFIT?

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INTRODUCTION

- › Service members may experience threat during deployment
- › Risk of decreased motivation, performance, and well-being (Bartone, 1989)
- › Resilience hypothesis: (internal and external) resources can buffer these effects (Masten, 1994)
- › Team cohesion - Total field of forces causing members to remain in the group
 - › performance (Shils and Janowitz, 1948; Griffith, 2002)
 - › health (less PTSD; Preez et al., 2012)
 - › *work engagement* (Oliver et. al., 1999)

TEAM COHESION

- › More cohesive teams:
 - › Provide emotional and instrumental social support
 - › Fulfil need for belonging
 - › Provide meaning to experiences at work ('band of brothers')

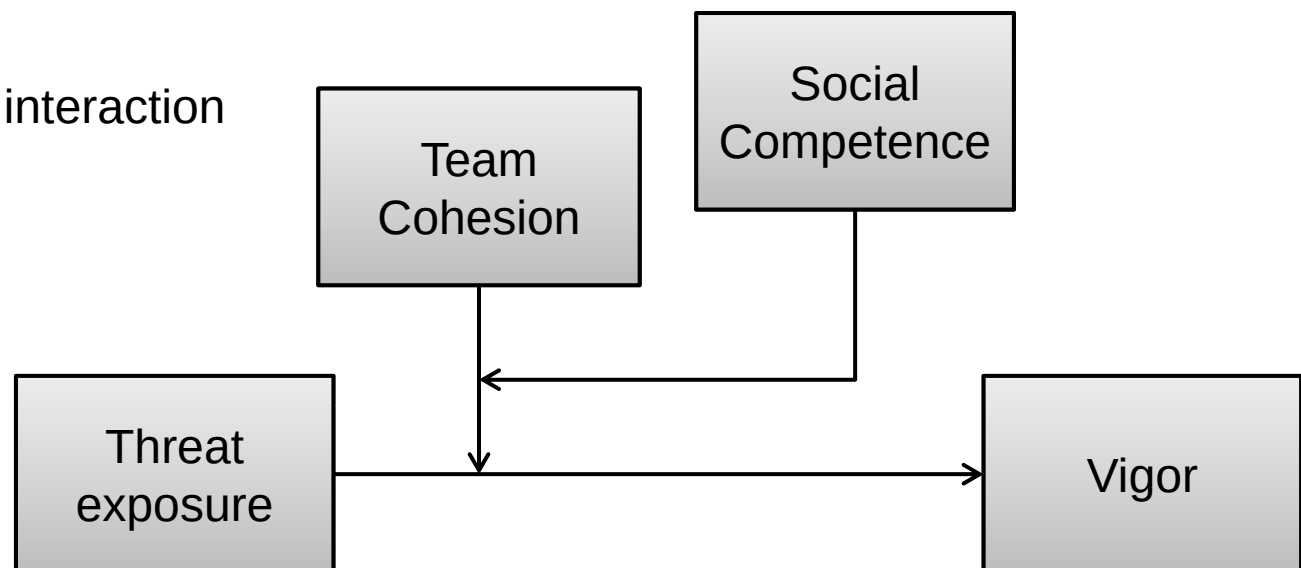
- › Debate about positive effect of team cohesion:
 - › direct/ conditional? (Griffith, 2007);
 - › unit-level effects vs individual-level perceptions (Breslau et al., 2016)

- › Previous research: interactions between internal and external resources (e.g. Kamphuis et al., 2015; Stetz et al., 2006)

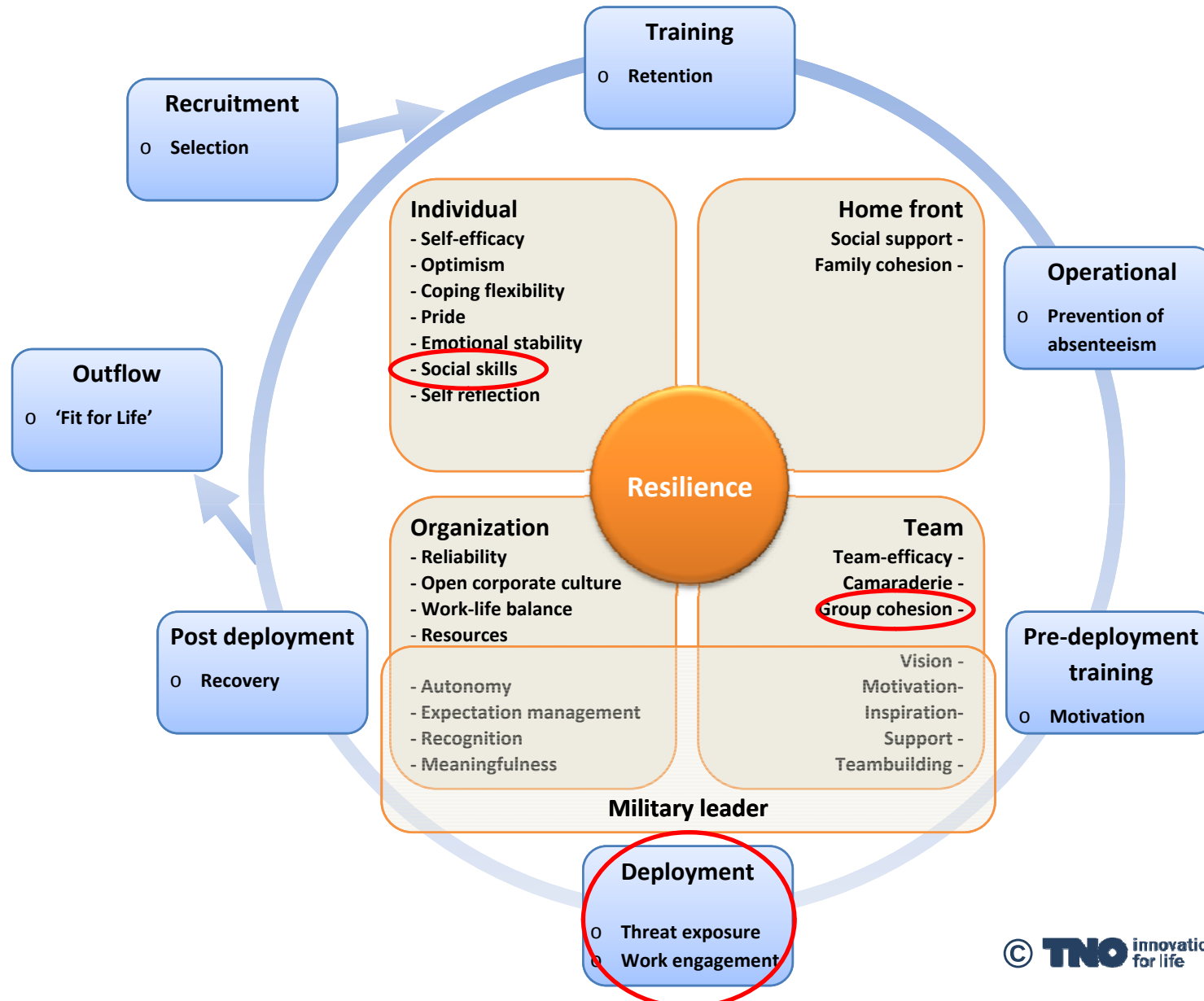
PRESENT STUDY

- › Potential prerequisite for positive effect of **team cohesion**:
 - › **Social competence**
- › Outcome measure: **individual vigor** →
high energy, persistence, and willingness to put effort in work

- › Hypothesis: 3 way interaction



MILITARY PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE MODEL (MPRM)



METHOD – SAMPLE

- › Longitudinal study
- › Standardized pre (T1) and during (T2) deployment questionnaire
 - › Voluntary participation and voluntary provision of personnel identifier
 - › T1 784 participants
 - › T1-T2 327 participants (42% could be matched to T1)

Sample	N	% F	M age	Description
ATF	41	5	37	Air Task Force Uruzgan
PTG	126	2	32	Police Training Group Kunduz
AP1	91	8	28	Anti Piracy 1
AP2	69	9	32	Anti Piracy 2

METHOD - INSTRUMENTS

- › Military Resilience Monitor
 - › Before deployment: cohesion and social competence
 - › During deployment: threat exposure and vigor

Scale	Source and Example	Alfa	#	M (SD)	R
Threat Exposure	Deployment Stressor Questionnaire (Bartone, 1998) → <i>To what extent did you experience: Troops in Contact, IEDs, attacks, ...</i>	.90	3	1.35 (.67)	1-7
Cohesion	Morale Questionnaire (Van Boome et al., 2007) → <i>In my team, we get along well</i>	.88	4	4.11 (.57)	1-5
Social competence	Newly developed (Delahaij et al., 2014) → <i>I like meeting new people</i>	.81	4	3.88 (.53)	1-5
Vigor	Adapted version of UWES (Schaufeli et al., 1996) → <i>At work, I feel energetic</i>	.93	4	4.11 (1.10)	1-7

RESULTS – MODEL FIT

- › Hierarchical regression analysis
 - › Controls for mission (model 1)
 - › Enter effects of team cohesion, social competence and threat (model 2)
 - › Enter two-way interactions between variables (model 3)
 - › Enter three-way interaction between variables (model 4)

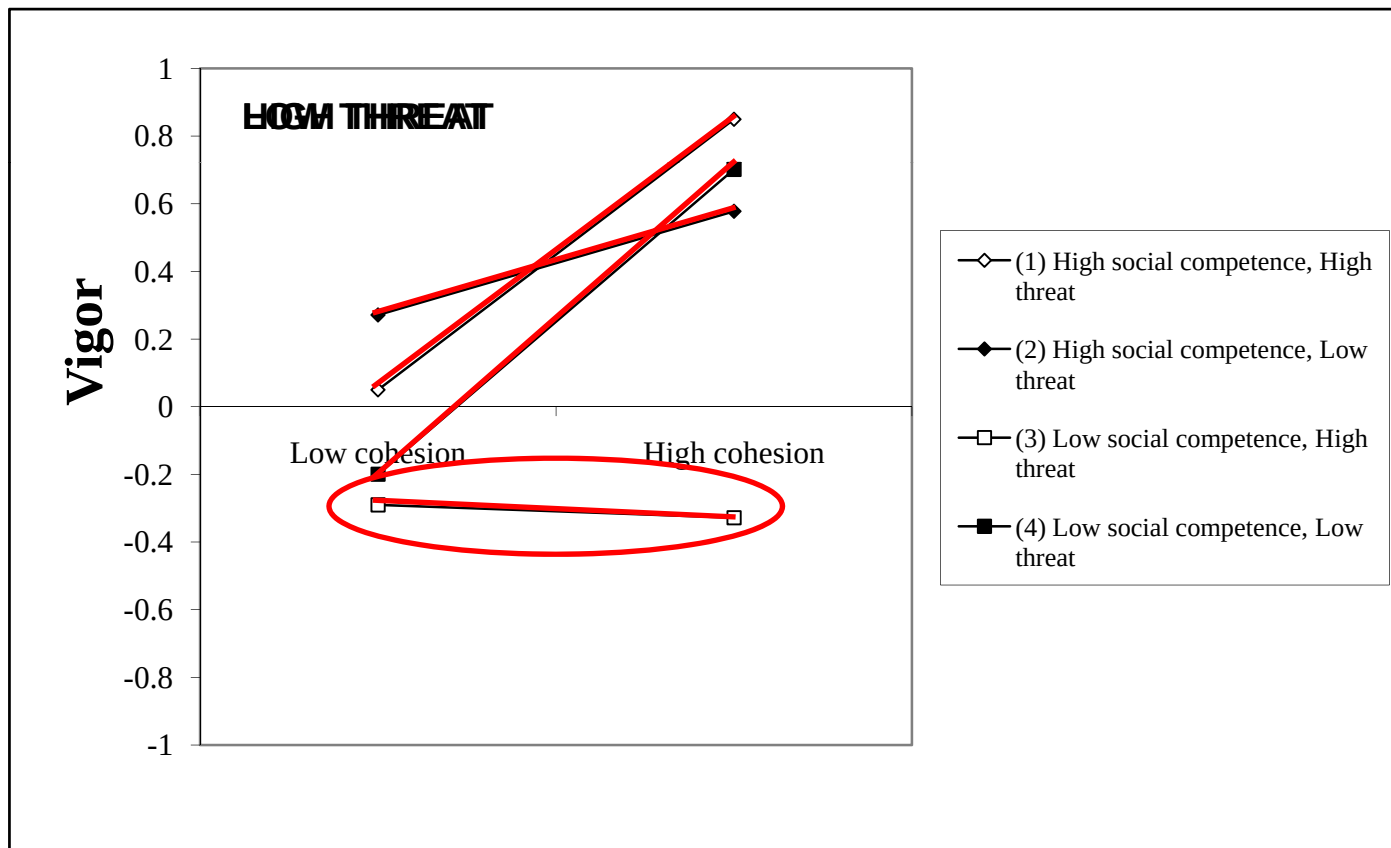
Results for Vigor:

Model	R ²	R ² Change	p
1	.08	.08	.00
2	.29	.21	.00
3	.29	.00	.93
4	.31	.02	.00

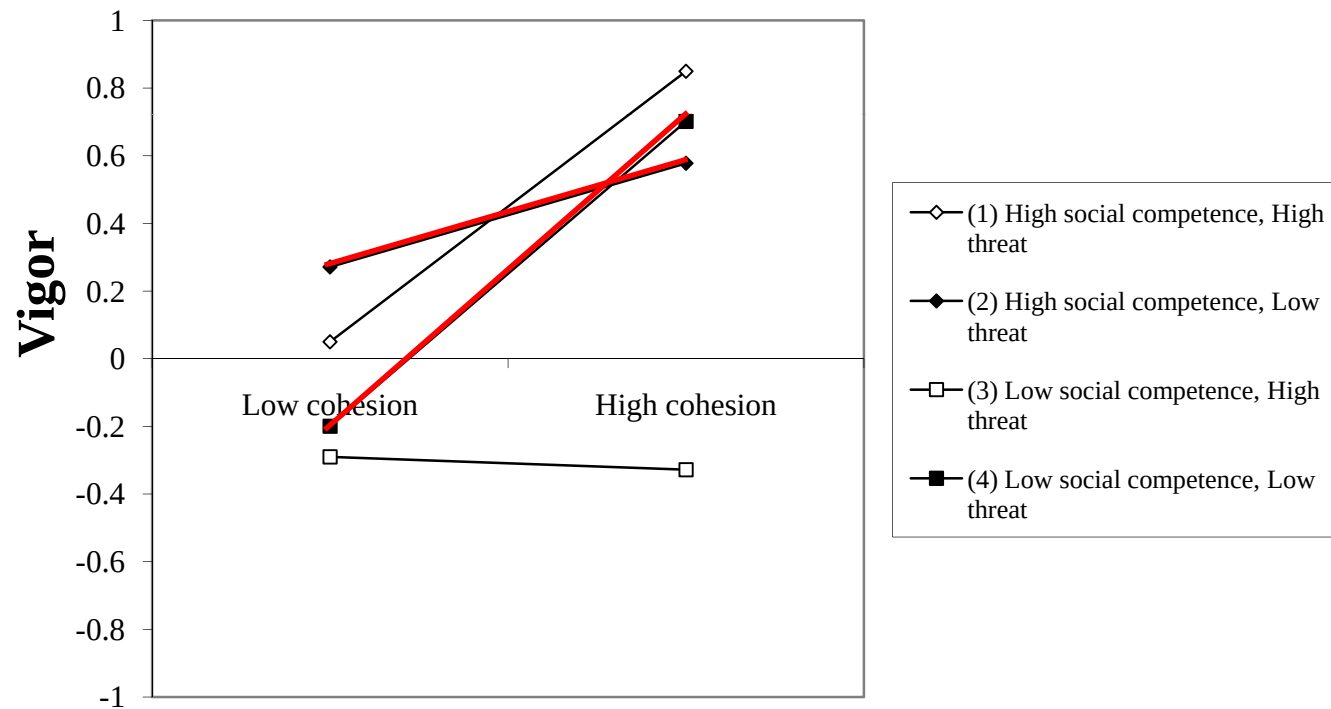
RESULTS – REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

	B	SE	p
Social competence	.33	.05	.00
Threat exposure	-.13	.05	.02
Cohesion	.30	.05	.00
Cohesion x social competence	.01	.04	.77
Threat X Cohesion	.00	.05	.99
Social competence x Threat	.14	.05	.04
3 way interaction	.19	.05	.00

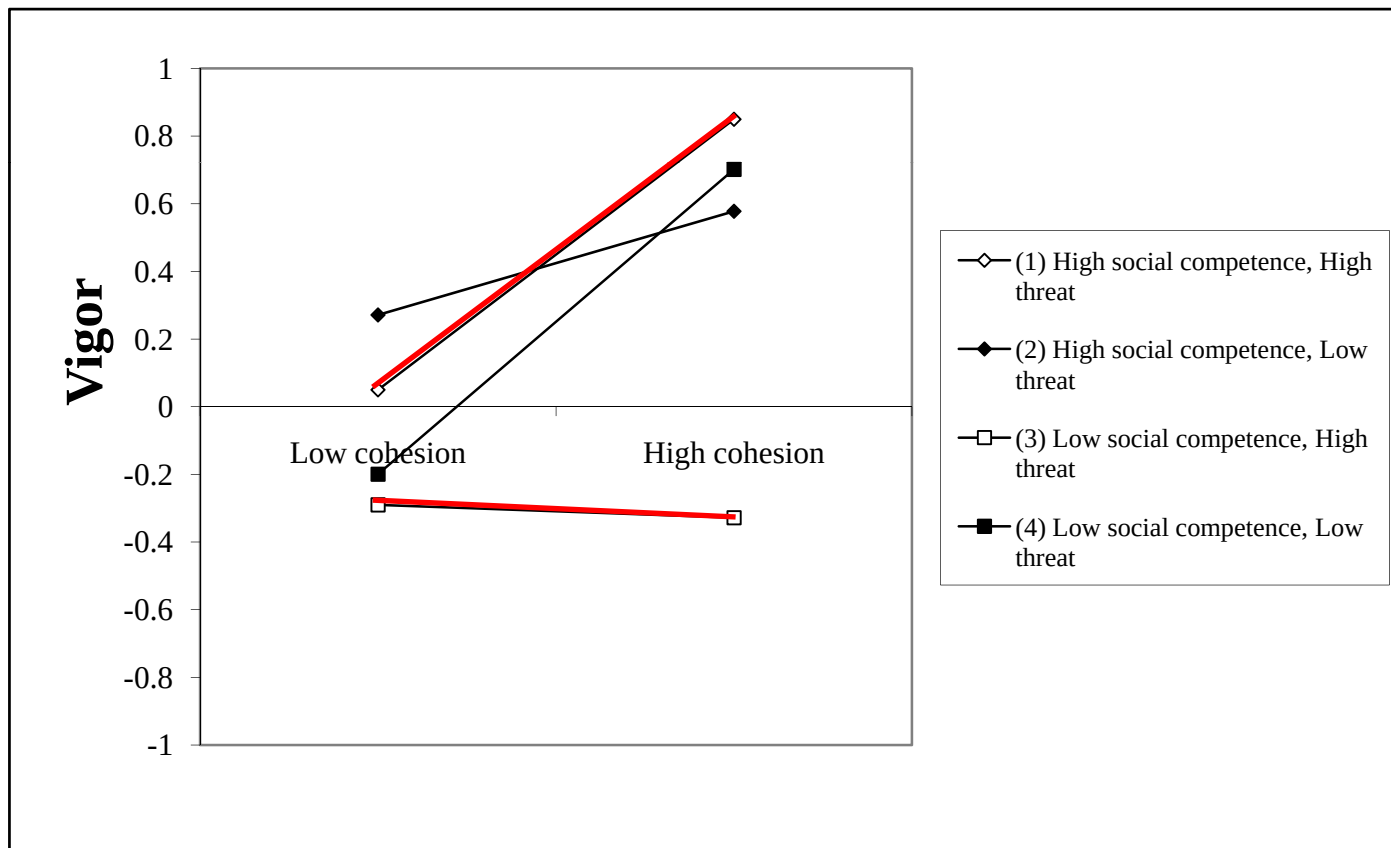
RESULTS – SIMPLE SLOPE ANALYSIS



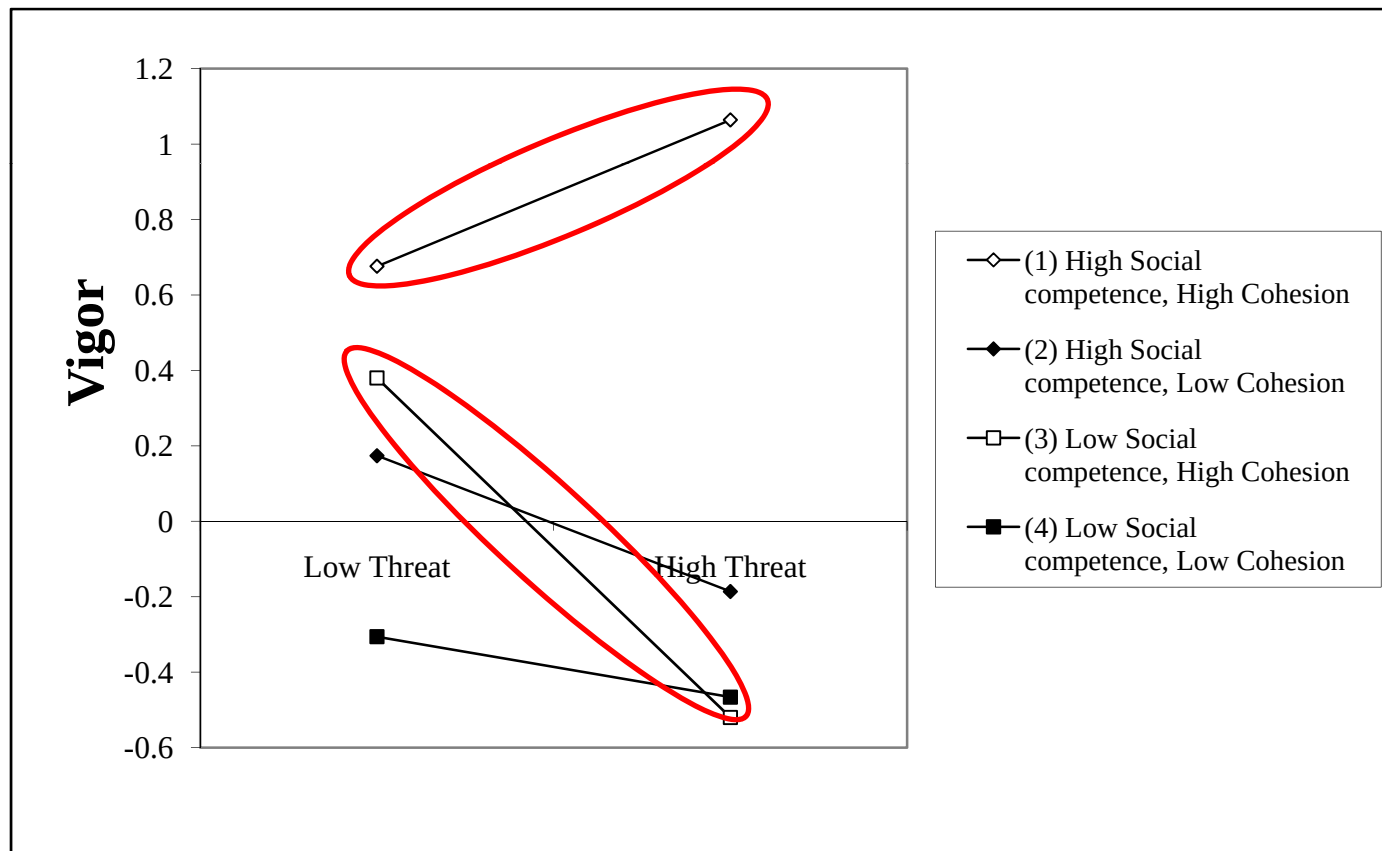
LOW THREAT



HIGH THREAT



ALTERNATIVE GRAPH



CONCLUSIONS

- › Threat exposure negatively influences vigor
- › Social competence and team cohesion positively influence vigor
- › But effect of cohesion depends on social competences in high threat situations (3-way interaction)

- › When threat exposure is low:
 - › Everybody benefits from a cohesive team
 - › In non-cohesive teams, socially competent do better

- › When threat exposure is high:
 - › Socially competent benefit from buffering effect of cohesion, but the less socially competent don't
 - › In non-cohesive teams, socially competent do better

DISCUSSION

Potential mechanism:

- › Low threat situations → team cohesion does not necessitate social skills
- › High threat situations → lots of emotional processing, social support → more difficult for members with less social competences
- › More research necessary to unravel dynamics of interdependence of resources (e.g., diary studies?)

Limitations:

- › Threat exposure: self report & low mean
- › Multilevel analyses were not conducted

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for research

- › Interplay between internal and external resources require more attention
 - › Value of internal resources may depend on presence of external resources
 - › And vice versa

Practical implication for military leaders:

- › Cohesion is important...
- › but may not be enough
- › Also select / train on social competences
- › Less socially competent, more need for individual support after threat exposure?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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